



Editor's introduction

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As this edition of *Curriculum Perspectives* goes to press, the world continues to experience economic and social disruption prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The World Health Organisation suggests that hundreds of millions of people are at risk of falling into extreme poverty, while the number of undernourished people, already in the tens of millions, will increase rapidly. It is critical that educational developments in the face of the pandemic and other socio-political issues and existing humanitarian crises should be informed by deep and meaningful curriculum thinking.

Scholars from various nations share their research in this edition. Luecha Ladachart's article raises some important issues in relation to Thai preservice biology teachers' orientations to teaching science. These include initial conceptions of teaching and learning shaped by personal epistemology notably those related to telling and listening. Ladachart argues that the curriculum for science teacher education should facilitate more inquiry-based orientations in ways that challenge and broaden preservice teachers' initial conceptions to better align with inquiry-based instruction.

In the next paper, Sandy White Watson, Xiaojun (Gene) Sha, Betty Thomas George and Michelle L. Peters examine three commercially prepared elementary school level science curricula in order to ascertain their alignment to the *Next Generation Science Standards* (NGSS) which have been adopted for use in 19 US states, including Washington DC. The authors call for rigorous and appropriate instruments to be utilised to fairly and comprehensively examine curricula for NGSS alignment, and they warn against relying on flawed reports that recommend particular curricula to guide school instruction at the expense of others.

Sylvan Blignaut takes us to South Africa in her reflective paper on some of the unique challenges educators face as they aim to transform the curriculum in postcolonial societies. The

author draws from several contemporary theorists to advocate for social justice and a schooling system and curriculum whose function should be the cultivation of compassionate citizens. In advocating for the curriculum to be considered as an instrument of social change, Blignaut reminds us of its potential to foster a more equal and humane society.

Pfurai Chimbunde and Christine Maserole Kgari-Masondo share the findings of their research into the challenges teacher in a range of contexts face as they work to implement the new Zimbabwean 2015–2022 Social Studies Curriculum. Informed by insights from *Ubuntu* philosophy, the authors argue for curriculum change to be located within the context of the specific school and local community so that teachers' voices and local knowledge are heard and valued.

In the next paper, Helen Penridge discusses the ways in which an iconic Australian picturebook, *The Rabbits* (1998) written by John Marsden and illustrated by Shaun Tan, can be used as a stimulus to prompt young people's historical understanding and awareness - or historical consciousness - in the classroom. Penridge's case study is based on her application of Jörn Rüsen's (2004) four-level taxonomy of historical consciousness to investigate the potential of this allegorical and historical picturebook which depicts a representation of the British colonisation of Australia over time. Penridge contends that this approach can prompt young people to consider various Australian contemporary issues ranging across Indigeneity, colonisation, modernity and environmental degradation.

US researchers, Katia Ciampa and Zora Wolfe, share their findings from a pilot study that investigated the potential of instructional resources to assist fifth and sixth grade (elementary) teachers in one public school district integrate character education into their content standards-aligned curriculum. The authors make clear that despite character education's longstanding inclusion in US schooling, notably, its promotion as a means to create safe schools, reduce peer cruelty, and improve social climate, and develop individual capacities and skills; many elementary teachers find it challenging to incorporate character instruction into their classrooms. Some barriers include the pressures of high stakes testing,

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insufficient teaching time, and lack of teacher professional learning opportunities. Whilst limited, findings indicate that the provision of time for cross-grade level teacher collaboration, opportunities for co-teaching with a character education coordinator, and drawing from literature to develop character traits, and community-based learning, serve as enablers for the participating elementary school teachers.

Over the past decade, *Curriculum Perspectives* has published a range of papers about the strengths and weaknesses of the Australian Curriculum. By way of contributing to this curriculum scholarship, the paper in the Australian Curriculum section of this edition addresses the nature of Australia's first official national curriculum with a particular focus on whether it meets the learning needs of students with disability. Deborah Green and Roger Slee remind us that including *all* learners in education, and respecting, valuing and applying diverse knowledges, capabilities and lived experiences as the foundation for learning and achievement is not an option; that it is both a legal requirement and also a prerequisite for a democratic education. In Green and Slee's critical analysis of the development of the curriculum and what was finally produced, they make clear that the official curriculum falls short of securing an inclusive education entitlement for *all* young people. As this paper is a revised version of a chapter in *The Australian Curriculum: Promises, Problems and Possibilities*,¹ it serves as 'taster' for the ACSA publication.

On the matter of curriculum entitlement, there is a powerful argument that young Australians are also entitled to experience a quality arts education in dance, drama, media arts,

music and visual arts. The Point and Counterpoint section, the first in this journal to address the significant role the Arts play in education, has a particular focus on the ways in which the Arts can develop transdisciplinary connections across the curriculum. It has been expertly guest edited by Emeritus Professor Robyn Ewing and I am indebted to Robyn and her team of international scholars for providing such an insightful collection of papers. Collectively, the papers make clear the potential of arts-rich pedagogies across the curriculum and remind us how critical it is for the Arts to take its rightful place in *any* curriculum that claims to foster curiosity, imagination, creativity, compassion and connection.

As the final piece for this edition of the journal, Susan Caldis reviews *The Power of Geographical Thinking* (2017), edited by Clare Brooks, Graham Butt and Mary Fargher. This publication is part of Springer's series on International Perspectives on Geographical Education.

I would like to remind readers that if you came across books that you think should be reviewed in *Curriculum Perspectives*, please contact Dr. Mallihai Tambyah at the Queensland University of Technology at m.tambyah@qut.edu.au

I hope you will enjoy reading this edition.

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¹ Reid, A., & Price, D. (Eds.), (2018). *The Australian Curriculum: Promises, Problems and Possibilities*. Canberra: Australian Curriculum Studies Association.