



Newsletter

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End of Term 'Bits n Pieces'

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Kia ora tatou, talofa lava, malo e lelei, greetings.

It's the end of another month, and, in particular, it's the end of Term 1. My favourite morning talk show host noted yesterday that 25% of 2010 is already over, gone, and is forever irretrievable. As I sit here contemplating this particular newsletter, I wonder, 'what in March was newsworthy about education?' Needless to say, what springs first to mind is the on-going debate over National Standards.

'Debate' is probably a misnomer, however, because that implies a 2-way discussion, and I don't see much participation on the part of the Minister of Education or her Ministry. She noted recently that the NZEI is engaging in 'last year's debate'. That's one way to silence your critics: 'Oh, that's old hat; we've moved on now'.

Mind you, was the NZEI slow off the blocks with its strategy to 'try before you buy'? The question will be asked by future generations of education historians whether the NZEI ought to have been more vigorous about that strategy in 2009, when in fact it seemed rather to engage in a no-win 'let's stop this altogether' strategy last year.

Something that pricked my attention, but received only passing comment on the www.mockingbird.co.nz blog page ('Stirring it up'), and nothing at all in the media, was the hefty rise in the cost of Teachers' Registration renewal. The cost increase of about \$100 may still mean that the overall cost is low by comparison with other professional bodies (which it will be), but the question that will still linger in some people's minds is what precisely it is that the Teachers' Council *does* for teachers.

This may be an unfair question. For example, look at Pat Newman's contribution to the 'Stirring it up' page for an answer to that question. No doubt, the Teachers' Council website (<http://www.teacherscouncil.govt.nz/>) will flesh that response out. Still, there will be many who will simply see the Teachers' Council as a licensing body. Once the fees do go up, and the first few teachers have to re-register under the new fees, wait for the squeals and the demands to Principals and Boards that they pick up the tab.

On the question of 'picking up the tab' – another newsworthy item was the recent effort by a national newspaper to ramp up the temperature at a large South Auckland college whose recently arrived Principal has required a higher standard of dress from the teachers. What is interesting about stories like this one is to read the comments of other readers – a bit like listening to talk-back.

Like any other debate, there is a range of opinion, but like so many debates,

there is also plenty of evidence of muddled thinking as well as the elements of clear thinking. One example of muddled thinking is the notion that the 'Board and the school' should pay for the smarter clothes. Admittedly, teachers may not be the best paid professionals about, but how does a base of around \$44000 (assuming that most teachers now begin with a degree) prevent one from buying one or two professional looking outfits every few months? No doubt there's money for a pair of Levi's.

Call me old-fashioned. There is the argument that 'it doesn't matter what the teacher looks like, as long as the students are learning'. This sounds persuasive, although one wonders how seriously a student might take a teacher who has not shaved in a few days, is wearing holey jeans and a smelly Led Zeppelin t-shirt? I suspect there is more to teaching and learning. Paulo Freire claimed that 'there is no teaching without learning' (the title of chapter 2 of his last book, *Pedagogy of Freedom*). There he stated:

...although the teachers or the students are not the same, the person in charge of education is being formed or re-formed as he/she teaches, and the person who is being taught forms him/herself in this process. *In this sense, teaching is not about transferring knowledge or contents* (Freire, P (1998), *Pedagogy of Freedom*, pp 30-31. Emphasis added).

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Indeed, not only is the medium the message, the *messenger* is the message, and if teachers think that students do not pay attention to the message (verbal and non-verbal) emanating from the messenger, then they probably pose a mental health and safety threat to their students. A 'couldn't care less' attitude is not a mark of an educated professional; one does not need to look like a beatnik to teach critical thinking.

Finally, the *Dominion Post* drew attention to comments made to a group of South Island schools by long-time education critic, Kelvin Smythe. He has called on Dr Graham Stoop, the Chief Education Review Officer, to resign. Read the text here: <http://www.networkonnet.co.nz/index.php?section=education&id=194>. Kelvin Smythe is in fighting form, and is making a 'call to arms'.

What Kelvin is saying is that Dr Stoop has failed in his moral duty, as he allowed the Minister of Education to get away with playing fast and loose with the evidence gathered in 2007 by ERO. Again, ERO blundered in 2009 when coming to their conclusions about the poor use of reading and writing assessment evidence by Year 1 and 2 teachers in New Zealand schools. This report has been used by the Minister to strengthen her hand in the National Standards debate. I made some comment in December, which you can read here: http://www.nzherald.co.nz/education/news/article.cfm?c_id=35&objectid=10616219&pnum=0.

With space run out and Easter upon us, all I can now do is wish you have an enjoyable break away from school, and that you spend more time with your families. To those for whom Easter is particularly special, Happy Easter!

Business Activity in 2010



Mar 2010

Business Activity

- O n - g o i n g N Z C implementation work (whole staff workshops & committee work)
- Principal appraisal
- NZC implementation process winding-up

Mar 2010

Client Schools

Avondale Primary School
Whau Valley School
Kaikohe Christian School
Sancta Maria Catholic Primary School
Kaikohe West School
St Mary's School, Avondale

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- Quality
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- Principals and Senior Managers are busy professionals
- Middle Managers need support and guidance
- Schools have to achieve results

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