

July 2009

Special points of interest:

Tyranny of the tick box

- ◆ Inhibits thinking under guise of time saving
- ◆ A managerialist tool
- ◆ Possibilities presented by the New Zealand Curriculum



Timeline for implementing National Standards

Oct 2009

*National Standards are gazetted, published and distributed to schools

*Boards include implementing National Standards as a priority in their 2010 charters

2010

*Standards come into effect and schools are required to use them to guide teaching and learning

*Schools report to parents about their child's progress and achievement against the standards

*Schools develop their 2011 charters, which will include baseline data and targets against National Standards

2011

*Schools work with the standards and report to parents about their child's progress and achievement against the standards

*Schools work to National Standards targets set out in their 2011 charters

2012

*Min of Ed receives annual reports that include school-level data against targets set for National Standards achievement

Newsletter



The tyranny of the tick-box: undermining the New Zealand Curriculum

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

It has been on my mind for some time now to make some comments about tick boxes and what they could possibly mean in the big picture of education. It may come as a surprise to some that I would try to link tick boxes to a more general understanding of education, however there are some substantial connections. These connections are the reason for the title of this piece.

Tick boxes certainly abound – and they seem to make life easier, which is exactly what is fundamentally wrong with them. Tick boxes are a double-edged sword. On one level, their apparent ease of use suggests that the user does not have to think very deeply, if at all. Not thinking in education is however akin to a surgeon not planning before undertaking a procedure. The trouble is that whereas the disorganised surgeon could end up killing the patient, the potentially lifelong damage caused by an unthinking teacher to a student or class of students could take much longer to surface.

On the other hand, if the bureaucrats or politicians want to deliver a dramatic new change – usually in return for the latest pay rise – the implementation of tick boxes makes it seem as if the onerous new requirement is not so bad, after all. Now it can be argued that *all* the teacher has to do is to complete the tick boxes, whilst observing the students, for example. In this way, the bureaucrats and politicians can get the 'data' required that proves the job has been done or

establishes what or to what extent 'learning' has occurred.

Both points can be shown to have more fundamental links to education, and interestingly, the points are related. The central link is to the trend in post 1980s education to 'managerialism'. This essentially refers to the various efforts by neo-liberal governments to make education and teachers more accountable to the tax payer, usually by trying to micro-manage through policy.

A major point of division between educators and bean-counters (such as the good people at Treasury) is that the former are concerned with ideas, development and the flowering of individual autonomy, whilst the latter are simply concerned with the hard bottom-line. Clearly, 'bottom-lines' need to be established as indubitably as possible. The question is not so much 'what are children learning?' as it is 'how much are children learning, and how do we know for sure?'

This is one reason for the emergence of outcomes-based education and the proliferation of standards (and most recently, National Standards). Keeping track of a myriad number of standards and AOs can be a complex task; however with the help of a tick box, short work can be made of it.

The New Zealand Curriculum is a keen topic for all right now. The key competencies potentially add another layer of AOs to the ones we already have. There are some differences however. One of these is that the key competencies can become the filter or the lens through which curriculum

content is taught.

Secondly, the nature or intent of the key competencies is not nearly so prescriptive as AOs or standards. Furthermore, they can be formulated to meet the needs of a specific school community whilst retaining the gist of the rather broad outlines in the New Zealand Curriculum.

A third point of difference is that the key competencies, especially around the areas of *thinking* and *managing self* give schools the opportunity to develop what I would consider to be the central aim of education: the development of critical and autonomous thinkers.

Allied to this development in students is an associated development amongst teachers. This is the renewal of an ethical teaching profession whose members are active, autonomous and critical in their own right, rather than the compliant tick-boxers the managerialist reforms of the past 20 years have helped to create.

The use therefore of unit planning sheets that list the 5 key competencies with a tick box next to each represents a missed opportunity. All this does is to encourage the sort of mindless and unthinking approach that robs teachers of their right to be ethical professionals.

Whilst some schools have chosen to 'tick off' their 'compliance' with the demands of the Ministry, there are schools that have carefully thought through an entire process of curriculum implementation. Clearly, the latter will not be tick boxing.



**MOCKINGBIRD
EDUCATION MANAGEMENT
CONSULTANTS**

Po Box 54220
Bucklands Beach
2144

Phone & Fax: +64 9 537 6773
Mob: 027 433 8330
info@mockingbird.co.nz

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Congratulations to Paul Coakley, currently DP of Holy Cross School, Henderson, on his appointment as Principal of St Pius X School in Glen Innes.

Business Activity

July 09

Business Activity

- BOT consultation on new Principal Appointment process
- On-going NZC implementation work

July 09

Client Schools

Kaikohe West School
St Pius X School
St Mary's School, Avondale
Wesley College

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For Board Members: Secondary Principals to get Revised Professional Standards

Professional standards for secondary principals are being revised. Principals play a critical role in leading change and improving student outcomes. These practices are explained in Kiwi Leadership for Principals (KLP) and will be reflected in the revised professional standards.

The standards are closely aligned to the KLP and the categories are the same as the areas of leadership practice described in that document: Culture, Pedagogy, Systems, and Partnerships and Networks.

Boards of trustees will find it helpful to see a copy of the draft standards on the New Zealand Secondary Principals Council website: www.ppta.org.nz/index.php/nzspc-home

The standards are expected to be completed by October 2009. This will give school boards time to incorporate the revised standards into principals' performance agreements for 2010. (Source: www.edgazette.govt.nz/Articles)