

CURRICULUM NETWORKING IN THE PACIFIC

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The countries in the South Pacific region are at different stages in their curriculum development, implementation and evaluation efforts but they all are faced with daunting challenges in curriculum related areas, and many of their curriculum concerns are similar in nature. This being the case, it is worthwhile establishing a mechanism that could be used to address the common concerns and foster their common interests. One such mechanism, which has been found very beneficial in similar circumstances, is networking.

Personal perceptions of the term "networking" make it difficult to provide a single definition of it. However, a broad definition is that a network is an association of institutions and/or individuals who share a common interest and accept the idea of collaborating and communicating with each other through shared activities and who expect to benefit from their participation. Thus networking is perceived as an effective mechanism to tap and pool scarce resources (e.g. expertise, funds) and to address issues or problems that cannot easily be addressed by a single individual or institution.

The idea of creating a Pacific Curriculum Network was first mooted by Professor Marten Shipman and subsequently endorsed in 1991 by Professor Peter Fensham, both of whom were External Advisers to the Department of Education and Psychology. Since then this possibility has received considerable support from the Department and the Institute of Education at the University of South Pacific, and practical steps have been taken to create a Pacific Curriculum Network. The Pacific Curriculum Conference of March 1991 also strongly supported the notion of an exchange of

curriculum materials on a regional basis. There are three reasons why we feel that this development is worthy of your support.

In the first place, the Curriculum Resources Unit, which is part of the Department of Education and Psychology, has been charged with an additional responsibility to develop and maintain a dynamic network of contacts throughout the countries of the region, as a focal point for sharing ideas, experiences and materials. It includes an information service to help teachers gain access to, or suitably adapt, teaching materials. This Pacific Curriculum Network can also facilitate discussion on curriculum renewal and other concerns relating to what we teach. The network also includes individuals and institutions who have accepted a commitment to the sharing of materials, approaches and information about curriculum practice. All the Curriculum Development Units, Teachers' Colleges and schools can join others in the network and participate actively for mutual benefit.

Secondly, the Network seeks to provide an effective vehicle for communication within the Region. With this aim in mind, the Department of Education and Psychology and the Institute of Education have jointly set up a bi-annual publication of which this is the first issue, to be known as the *Pacific Curriculum Network*. It is envisaged that this publication will provide a forum for the sharing of information, ideas and experiences and will help its readers keep abreast of new developments, methods and approaches in the field of curriculum.

Through the continuous support and active participation of the collaborators, the Pacific Curriculum Network will be able to support curriculum renewal and research, develop new perceptions and methodologies, access increased amounts of information, create understanding, mutual respect and trust and

improve efficiency. It is hoped that the Network will encourage the emergence of new interest groups and participating individuals and institutions. It should also be a cost effective means of sharing information and of optimising the use of available resources on a

collaborative basis.

Your contributions in terms of articles and/or suggestions would be most welcome.