

AUSTRALIAN EDUCATION UNION

Position Arising from the Curriculum Policy

as adopted at the
2007 Annual Federal Conference

- 1 The AEU believes that it is important that there be an open and wide debate on **the learning needs of students in the twenty-first century**. This debate should:
 - Acknowledge that knowledge and the organisation of knowledge is always in a state of reconceptualisation, and curriculum development needs to reflect this. At the current time, there is a particular need to look at the curriculum needs of students in the twenty-first century who will be spending their lives in a world undergoing rapid and fundamental change;
 - Value the inputs of all stakeholders, and in particular value the expertise of teachers and those with expertise in curriculum development ;
 - involve all stakeholders such as parents, the general public, community organisations, and the business community;
 - be conducted in a rational and informed manner, based on appropriate processes such as those outlined in the A Guide To Productive National Approaches To Curriculum Work produced by the Australian Curriculum Studies Association;
 - include consideration of the appropriate forms of national comparability/consistency and cooperation and develop proposals for a workable and flexible level of national curriculum cooperation/consistency/ collaboration/ framework.
- 2 It is important to note that to date states and territories:
 - have been attempting to grapple with the issues around these curriculum needs, leading to new theories and ideas and new expressions of appropriate curricula;
 - have in general based this on consultation and discussion with the profession and other stakeholders;
 - may need to implement further discussion and refinement of some of this;
 - have in several cases created problems through rushed and inadequate consultation and implementation processes including an unwillingness to give schools the extra planning time and resources needed.
- 3 The processes of curriculum development should be open and widely discussed and must give due recognition:
 - to the expertise and experience of teachers who implement the curriculum on a day to day basis, including through their involvement in curriculum committees;
 - to teacher unions as a preferred way of expressing these views collectively as a profession;

- to curriculum authorities and education department officers with ongoing responsibility for and expertise in curriculum areas;
 - to the inter-relatedness of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment and reporting.
- 4 The AEU condemns the Federal Government, supported by conservative commentators and elements of the media, for attacking teachers and denigrating the critically important work they do in educating the nation's children by:
- creating a debate based on scare tactics rather than rational debate;
 - using tactics designed to intimidate and silence those who do not agree with them rather than welcoming a range of viewpoints and an intelligent debate;
 - failing to acknowledge success in international tests;
 - providing dubious research and interpretation of data and seeking and concentrating on negative aspects and results rather than an honest examination of improvements as well as areas in need of further consideration;
 - basing the debate on false standards and the mythology of a past golden age, rather than a vision for the future;
 - using the debate to seek to re-impose an outdated curriculum that will not serve students well in the future;
 - seeking to enhance its political control of the curriculum through undermining public confidence in current practices in schools;
 - setting up an undesirable state versus federal dichotomy rather than working in partnership with the states and territories to the benefit of all Australian students.
- 5 In 2007 the AEU, (including its Branches and Associated Bodies), will, in conjunction with ACSA, other professional associations, IEU, principals associations, parents, departments, state and territory ministers and any other supportive parties where appropriate:
- Hold national and state and territory forums around key curriculum and quality teaching issues;
 - run a series of articles in journals and professional magazines;
 - hold briefings of journalists and education reporters;
 - work to inform other unions, the ALP and other political parties and individual politicians of the AEU position;
 - create an email network of supporters prepared to join in the public debate.
 - consider conducting a National Inquiry by a Committee of Experts.
 - commission articles, reports etc.
 - seek to engage with ACCI, BCA and others about the need for a futures oriented curriculum.