

This paper was first written in 2014 and appeared in a slightly longer version in the “Australasian Journal of Gifted Education” in that year. There have been various developments in gifted education and in the work of those cited here since that time, and a brief summary is included at the end. However, the story it tells cites many elements still relevant today, some of which could potentially serve as guidance for new programmes, while the fundamental question it asks – where to from here – is, if anything, even more relevant now than it was back in 2014. – Rosemary Cathcart, June 2023.

***Abstract:** Gifted education in New Zealand has undergone significant change over the past three decades. This paper traces some factors in that process. In particular, while it is warmly acknowledged that others too have played crucial roles in bringing about these changes, this paper places on record for the first time a connected account of one component in that development which has spanned the full three decades, involving various stages and many people. It concludes with that most important question, where to from here, and suggests some factors for consideration.*

Will this history have a future?

Building gifted provision for New Zealand – and a challenge for the future

Rosemary Cathcart

How does one develop a relevant and valid curriculum for gifted learners?

Over the past thirty years one search for an answer to that question has been quietly evolving in New Zealand. It has been a long and carefully structured process, drawing into consideration not just curriculum itself but the various other factors that directly impact on how – and whether – such a curriculum can be delivered. This developmental process is, as it should be, an ongoing process, but it is reported here so that other researchers and practitioners can review its findings so far and the possible relevance of those findings for their own work.

I am able to write about this in some detail because I was involved in this process from the beginning; I trust readers will forgive me if therefore I refer at times to my own work. But there are also numerous other people who have made significant contributions at various stages to this development, particularly over the last twenty years. Their work should be recognised, and I have sought to include as many of their names as I can in this paper. My apologies in advance to any who may have been inadvertently omitted.

The process began with the formulation of a relatively simple four-part framework as a basis for developing an enrichment programme for primary school gifted children. Later this framework came to be known as the REACH model. Some readers may have heard of this, and perhaps also have heard the story of the events which led to its birth. But until now neither the detail of that early history has been recorded nor the subsequent development into a far more complex structure embracing, not only a model, but also related tools and strategies and other innovations, including a specific suggested curriculum outline. This paper seeks to create that record. The question for readers is whether the significance of what is recorded here is purely historical, or directly relevant to our further development in this field.

Beginnings

The initial REACH model began in a very informal way, a sort of gifted education version of No. 8 wire, and certainly with no pretensions at that stage to be a model that could be copied by others. As has been described several times elsewhere, it came into being when a determined grandmother (whose name I have unfortunately never known) marched formidably into the school where I was based at that time and demanded that the principal should provide something appropriate for her gifted granddaughter. The principal, having been told (not by me!) that I had recently

A gifted education version of No. 8 wire...

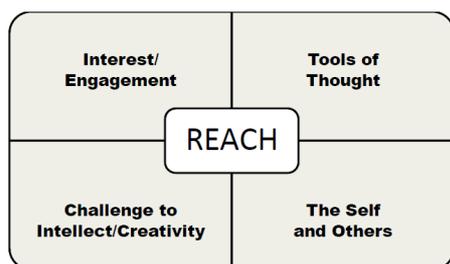
been elected national chairperson of the NZAGC, rushed rapidly to my door and informed me that I was to provide an ‘enrichment programme’ – immediately!

But where to start? Like nearly every other teacher in that era, giftedness had not featured anywhere in my training. My experience was as a parent. Surely there would be examples to guide me? In New Zealand’s largest city, I found just two: Elwyn Richardson’s superb but narrowly focussed creative writing programme which was catering for only about eight or nine children when I saw it, and a school with a resource room where the materials on display seemed to me uninspiringly conventional. I went back to the only other source of knowledge I could then locate – parent experience – not just my own, but that which I’d heard from so many other parents as I served on the Auckland and then the national committee. In so doing, I was wiser than I then knew: Linda Silverman’s research through the Gifted Development Center with some 6000 children and their parents has amply demonstrated the excellent knowledge parents of gifted children have about their offspring.

The parent perspective

It was the parent perspective which provided the key to what was then developed and which has remained central to all the work done since with this model, namely that an effective gifted programme should take as its starting point the specific *needs* of the gifted child, recognising that in several significant ways, these needs are *different* from those of the non-gifted child.

This led to the formation of four key concepts based on those needs:



1. Generating or re-generating an interest in learning: gifted children are inherently curious and enquiring, but parents were reporting that this was often lost at school.
2. Tools of thought: ensuring gifted children had access, not just to advanced work, but to the learning skills required to work at those levels; parents were saying that resources at the appropriate level were often not available or not permitted, and that advanced skills were not necessarily taught.
3. Providing genuinely demanding challenges to encourage the development of intellectual and creative potential: again, parents were reporting that the programmes offered to their children typically lacked such challenge,
4. Fostering the child’s emotional, social and ethical development: some of the parents’ deepest concerns were about children feeling lonely, not fitting in, being bullied or teased, seeing themselves as somehow inadequate; many also reported their children’s sensitivity to others being hurt, including animals, and their very real concern with issues of justice and the unfairness they often saw around them.

A Kiwi approach

These four concepts are inseparable components of a whole: they need to work together to provide effectively for the gifted child, but they are capable of varying emphasis to meet individual differences. In other words, it is a *holistic, child-centred* approach. A particularly important point about this is that it is an approach entrenched in the minds of New Zealand teachers since the historic declaration of Prime Minister Peter Fraser in the 1930’s:

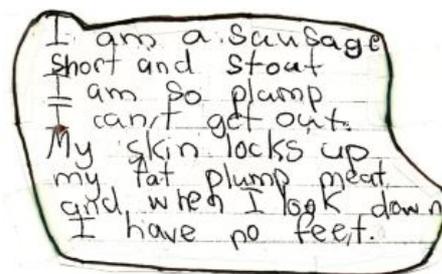
The government’s objective, broadly expressed, is that every person, whatever [her or] his level of academic ability, whether [she or] he be rich or poor, whether [she or]

he live in town or country, has a right as a citizen, to a free education of the kind for which [she or] he is best fitted and to the fullest extent of [her or] his powers.

Arguably, nowhere else in the world would an educator's immediate and instinctive response to a perceived gap in the system be to construct an inherently child-centred process. Some years later, I was to discover the immensely valuable writings of distinguished specialists in the field such as Hollingworth, Roeper, Silverman, Tolan and others who were also deeply concerned with the whole child, but they were not necessarily reflecting education's mainstream in their country. In New Zealand, it *is* part of our teaching culture, despite occasional governmental straying from the path, and that is one of the factors we in this country have had the opportunity to utilise when we are constructing provision for the gifted.

Early development

Work with children began in 1985. Despite – or perhaps because of – the almost accidental beginnings of the programme, it was clearly necessary to take a scrupulously careful approach to its implementation. Thus every lesson was constructed with a view to developing strategies that would be effective in meeting the needs identified in the four key concepts. The need then was to record and evaluate at every step of the way, so at the end of every lesson, comprehensive notes were made straightaway on the strategies trialled and on children's responses – their individual and group level of engagement, specific comments and questions they had put forward, the work they produced. Samples of their work which illustrated particular points were recorded or copied and kept; in some cases, the originals were donated to the record by the children. These records provided the material for careful ongoing review and evaluation of both concepts and strategies. At the end of each term, parents and children were surveyed for their comments on the programme, and these too contributed to its ongoing development.



Annabel Snow, age 7, sausage factory project

In effect, it was a co-constructed programme, a fact rightly recognised in the foreword to the book which eventually resulted, *They're Not Bringing My Brain Out* (a title which is itself a quote from one of the participating children), where the children's 'huge enthusiasm, originality, humour and intellectual honesty' was acknowledged as the author's 'guide and touchstone'. A roll of all the children who had taken part was included to mark this fact. (Incidentally, when, ten years later, a number of the children were contacted to ask permission to include examples of their work in *They're Not Bringing My Brain Out*, every single one still had their Enrichment Programme workbook).

Enter an Old Master...



It was at this fortuitous stage that Professor George Parkyn became involved. A tall-ish man with a flowing mane of white hair, a commanding presence and an immensely generous spirit, he was one of New Zealand's most eminent academics in education. Holder of three Masters degrees in addition to his doctorate and winner of a Carnegie Fellowship and various other awards, his career included 14 years as Director of the New Zealand Council for Educational Research, during which time, as well as working in New Zealand, he travelled widely throughout the world, studying various educational research centres, participating in conferences, and carrying out research projects. For instance, he undertook the research which led to a change in our university exam system and assisted Australia to set

up distance learning. He went on to act as a consultant for UNESCO and then as Margaret Jacks Visiting Professor at Stanford University, and finally served as Professor of Comparative Education and Head of Department at London University before retiring to New Zealand to continue lecturing part-time.

He was also deeply interested in gifted children throughout his entire career. He wrote the first full-length book on this subject to be published in New Zealand, back in 1948, and continued to produce papers on the topic right up until 1984. In 1975 he delivered a major paper at the very first World Conference on Gifted and Talented Children, and in the same year he became Founding Patron of the newly formed New Zealand Association for Gifted Children.

It was in his role as Patron that I eventually met him through my own involvement with the NZAGC. I shared with him the work that I was doing with the Enrichment Programme and the thinking that lay behind its construction. He in turn shared with me the papers he had written, and also began my introduction to the literature in the field. He became deeply interested in the structure I had constructed as a basis for the programme, and as our discussions continued, he expressed the view that it provided a practical manifestation of the theoretical concepts he had put forward in his own papers – in other words, in his view, it sustained analysis and had theoretical as well as practical legitimacy. It is a matter of regret that the onset of the crippling motor-neurone disease which ultimately reduced him to complete immobility meant that he never had the opportunity to put those views into a final paper. On the contrary, I ended up editing his existing papers during the last year or two of his life for publication by the New Zealand Council for Educational Research – but that's another story.

Renzulli? - !

Parkyn's validation of the structure that had been developed was deeply encouraging. Equally important was being introduced to the literature on giftedness. I learned to my delight that there were others in New Zealand who were also working in the field, particularly Don McAlpine at Massey and Dave Freeman in the Inspectorate.

But also there was the wider international field. The first material that Parkyn introduced me to was Renzulli's Enrichment Triad, as it was then known. This had three stages, (1) 'Type I: General Exploratory Activities', designed to identify a specific interest area which engaged the student and to which he or she exhibited a gifted level of response; (2) 'Type II: Group Training Activities', which focussed on developing relevant skills to enable the student to work on a specific challenging topic or 'problem' in the identified area; and (3) 'Type III: Individual and Small Group Investigation of Real Problems', which envisaged students having access to a resource room away from the regular classroom so that they could work on their topic or 'problem'.

It was immediately clear that there were strong similarities between this eminent researcher's three stages and the first three stages of the structure underlying the enrichment programme. But there were also three significant differences. Firstly, the Triad's stages were to be implemented sequentially. The structure the enrichment programme was using was based on the view that all aspects needed *simultaneously* to be part of the programme. Secondly, the gifted student's access to the Triad was envisaged as being episodic: only when the student came up with a particular topic of interest would he or she proceed to skill training and then access to the resource room. The student would then return to regular class until such time as he or she was identified as having shown interest in another problem. The enrichment programme approach was that such opportunity should be an integral and continuous part of

the gifted student's learning experience. Thirdly, there was no mention of the emotional or social issues so commonly part of the gifted child's life experience.

Renzulli came to New Zealand a few years later to present at Massey, and at this conference he was asked why emotional and social issues were not included in his model. 'Not my field', he replied and moved on to the next question. More than a decade later, he was to come to a very different conclusion, producing his major paper on socially constructive giftedness and the co-cognitive traits. Meanwhile, the similarities that existed between his Triad and the independently developed enrichment programme model seemed a further encouragement to continue working along these lines. Parkyn certainly thought so.

Reaching out and growing further

A little bit of personal history has to come in here. By late 1987, teachers were beginning to ask for workshops demonstrating the programme, its concepts, and the strategies that had emerged, and then for this in book form. Before I could tackle this, my husband had an accident which took him out of fulltime work for a couple of years and of necessity I returned to secondary teaching during this period, meaning that my involvement in gifted education was temporarily almost fully suspended. However Naida Glavish, later to become president of the Māori Party and to be involved in Māori health issues, was then providing superb leadership in the school's immersion programme where students not only learned the language but were taught and assessed in Māori for most other subjects. I took the opportunity to become involved and owe her much for her patient introduction to things Māori and her continuing support in this through to the present day as I have sought to understand this in a gifted context.

By 1990, I was able to return to the gifted field. The next four years saw several relevant developments. Firstly, teachers' professional development had just been de-centralised, and I was part of a Ministry contract looking specifically at how schools would manage this new responsibility, followed by a contract working on this topic with newly appointed principals. These contracts had nothing to do with gifted education, but were invaluable as professional development in teacher education.

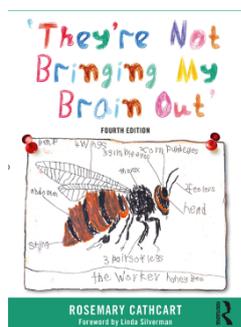
Meanwhile Anne Sturgess, then with the Special Education Service in West Auckland, was taking a very forward-looking initiative. Deeply interested in gifted children, she believed that they should come within the scope of the SES. This was not in the SES contract with the Ministry, so Anne persuaded her SES manager to set up a gifted advisory role on a trial self-funding basis in an attempt to prove to the Ministry that this *should* be included. Anne then generously invited me to take on this role, one I am sure she would have filled very successfully herself. In this position, it was possible both to work face-to-face with numerous worried parents from a variety of backgrounds and to extend professional development work with schools. The position, initially confined to West Auckland, rapidly expanded as other SES offices learnt of what we were doing. I ended up travelling round the country taking more workshops, including one for SES personnel themselves, and organising a national conference held in 1994 in Palmerston North.

It had become increasingly obvious from these contacts with teachers throughout New Zealand that there was a huge gap in teacher awareness of the needs of gifted children and at the same time extremely limited opportunity for teachers themselves to address that gap. Therefore I approached the Auckland College of Education, suggested that this become a part of the post-graduate Advanced Studies for Teachers diploma offered by the College, and volunteered to write and teach two papers for this purpose. All of this had to go before the College's Council for approval. Some members were openly skeptical. One Council member, a school principal, said he'd only ever come across one gifted child in his entire teaching



career and that he'd taught the boy 'everything he needed to know' because he'd taught him how to use a softball bat. Comment appears superfluous. However, a sufficient number of Council members were persuaded to agree, the papers went through, and were taught for the next four years, succeeding in at least two of those four years in becoming the most highly rated of all the AST papers at the time. One teacher who performed outstandingly well while taking these papers was Marilyn Stafford, who was later to play a key role in the One Day School (described later).

All of this work within the SES and through the College of Education, was learning experience, providing valuable multiple further opportunities in different settings to keep reviewing the concepts which lay behind the structure developed for the enrichment programme. What consistently came through was that parents were continuing to express the same concerns, reinforcing the view that these were valid as a basis for the structure, and that teachers were responsive to the strategies the original enrichment programme had evolved.



During these years too, a format known as the 'Multi-Dimensional Model' was developed to help teachers in planning lessons that would effectively incorporate all the key concepts of the REACH model. This appeared first in a teachers' manual I wrote in 1994 in response to teachers' requests for some such publication, *They're Not Bringing My Brain Out*. (This model in its final format can now be found in the 4th edition, 2020, pp 205-206).

At this time back in the mid 90s I was also completing a Dip.Ed. at the university. My supervisor was the professor and head of department. He greeted me on my first appearance in his office with the comment, 'Oh another middle-aged housewife trying to fill in time'. He also told me on a later occasion that in his view gifted children 'did not exist'. As is doubtless self-evident, it took some time for either of us to feel respect for the other, though we eventually did. But it was a useful experience, a first encounter with the dismissive attitude sometimes to be found in universities towards anyone who for whatever reason is working outside the ivory tower. I understand that, but it is not always a legitimate response.

From solo to centre

In early 1995, it became apparent that, despite the accumulated evidence submitted to it by SES, the Ministry was not prepared to change the SES contract to include gifted children. I faced a personal choice. The SES was happy for me to continue, but I was increasingly conscious of being just one person trying to fill a very wide role. The Deputy Principal of Auckland College of Education had once said to me, 'If you want to push gifted education, get yourself appointed as director of a resource centre. Then you can do it.' Yes – but along with multiple other responsibilities. Hmmm.... And so the idea of a specialist gifted education centre was born.

The concept was to create a national centre which would give *visibility* to gifted education and which would have a range of *integrated* functions, supporting parents, teachers, children and researchers, and from this strong base to engage in *advocacy* for gifted children. It would also provide a forum for further exploration and development, not only of the basic REACH model, but of the strategies and curriculum concepts emerging from its use. This was to prove a sound and effective structure. A foundation charter was written to embody these purposes in written form.

The centre opened in July 1995, in a room generously made available by Ponsonby Intermediate. There was (of course!) no funding for furniture, phone, stationery, etc, and let



us not mention salaries. The Cathcart piggybank was seriously busy for that first year. But we got under way, with teachers' workshops in Auckland and elsewhere, parent consultations, and, a little later, 'Challenge Centre' sessions: we built a collection of the most difficult puzzles we could find and invited schools to bring in groups of children to spend a few hours working intensively with these. One intriguing but particularly fiendish puzzle always seemed to attract any male principals who were accompanying the children. We would find the principal somewhere in a corner, oblivious to the children and muttering to himself as he tried to solve the puzzle. None of them ever did. Nor did we, to be honest. It hardly needs to be said that it was eventually solved by a child.

We had just two staff for that first year, myself and Rory Cathcart. Rory came in for a month or so to help me set up the centre, became deeply committed to what we were doing, and stayed for several years. He was inherently a 'big-picture' person who grasped the underlying purposes of the centre and was invaluable as a colleague in thinking our way through the many decisions we made in translating those purposes into practical actions. When One Day School started, he proved to be a 'natural' with the children, especially useful as he was usually the only male adult present. He was also the person who thought to name the centre after George Parkyn who had died the previous year, an absolutely appropriate tribute to this great and humble man.

We also were ably supported by an Education Advisory Panel. I set this up because I felt it was absolutely crucial for the work of the centre to be rigorously scrutinised by experienced fellow educationalists, not to be reliant solely on whatever I might dream up. Two of the people on that panel were Lynn Berresford and Michael Townsend. Lynn for years offered very wise and caring advice on the assessment and counselling aspects of the centre's work; we met often in Mt Eden for breakfast to discuss particular issues. Michael was quite simply the best scrutineer one could ever possibly imagine, very perceptive, shrewdly analytic, immensely supportive but ready always to challenge ideas and ensure they were thoroughly well thought-through, an invaluable role.

Fulfilling the Charter

Over the following years, the centre undertook a wide range of activities in fulfilment of the purposes declared in its Charter. Professional development for teachers was a key activity: this was part of my own role. Scores of workshops were run, not only in the cities but also in smaller centres from tiny Ahipara in the north to Queenstown, Gore and Invercargill in the south. They were delivered on behalf of individual schools, universities, colleges of education and various teacher associations, often on a repeat basis for the same institution. Over time, this included workshops and seminars for principals, deputy principals, curriculum specialists, early childhood teachers, pre-service teachers, classroom teachers at both primary and secondary levels, school counsellors, RTLB, and on one notable occasion, together with Roger Moltzen, the Education Review Office. Evaluation checklists for participants were a routine part of these workshops and provided further information for review. We also ran three major national conferences, with John Hattie, Francoys Gagne and Australian Louise Porter as keynote speakers.



We provided a consultation service for parents, and Sue Breen and I together developed and ran a short parent course, which, if I remember correctly, was the starting point from which Sue was to launch her important and highly successful Small Poppies programme for gifted preschoolers. We ran holiday programmes for children on a wide variety of topics – I remember one where a lecturer in Ancient History came to teach a fascinated group of gifted youngsters how to write in hieroglyphics.

Professional development was of course one form of advocacy, but advocacy was also needed at government and Ministry level. Parent power was again the useful lever. An angry parent, denied by her school the opportunity to send her child to our One Day School programme, went straight to her neighbour who conveniently happened to be Deputy Speaker of the House. The result was a phone call to us to say two Ministry officials were on their way. It was January. In humid Auckland. The two officials arrived clad in their business suits and identical trench raincoats, clutching briefcases. Rory and I – the only ones available in holiday time to meet them – sat them down on our battered Salvation Army armchairs in the underground church crypt which was at that time our home. To their undying credit, neither official blanched. They were also honest enough to say neither of them knew anything about gifted education.

It was actually a positive starting point, especially as it also coincided with the publication of a set of papers edited by Don McAlpine and Roger Moltzen under the title *Gifted and Talented: New Zealand Perspectives*. Then in 1998, ERO published a report called *Working with Students with Special Abilities*. This combination of factors prompted the Ministry to form the first Advisory Group on Gifted Education, tasked with identifying ways to meet the needs of children in this category. This in turn resulted in the publication in the year 2000 of the booklet *Gifted and Talented: Meeting Their Needs in New Zealand Schools*.



At about the same time, both the George Parkyn Centre's political advocacy and the Advisory Group's recommendations helped to bring about the then Minister's decision to hold a **Ministerial Working Party on Gifted Education**.

In 1999, we took parent power a step further and held an election meeting at which each Party's education spokesperson was invited to present their Party's policy on gifted children. With Advisory Panel having already made some recommendations, Labour MP Trevor Mallard saw the need and promised a Ministerial Working Party. We pursued this with him after the election, and it was indeed established, with a number of major outcomes, most significantly the change to the official education regulations (NAG I [iii]) which made it mandatory for schools to identify and cater for gifted children and the 'Talent Development Initiative' which provided funding for a number of projects exploring provision for gifted children.

More commitments

In its initial Charter, the George Parkyn Centre had made a commitment to making its services accessible to all gifted children, including gifted children from low-income families and gifted Māori children. These issues were included in our advocacy to government, but we also needed to find ways to reflect them in our own work.

Sue Breen, while working at Tamaki Education Centre in the heart of some of Auckland's low-income suburbs, had set a strong example with the programme she set up there to reach gifted children in low decile schools, a genuine pioneering step. But with not one cent of government funding available at first or for several years, we could not initially do very much to follow in her footsteps, apart from not charging for parent consultations when that seemed appropriate. But once One Day School (described below) was established, we moved to introduce a scaled set of fees, with parents selecting to pay at the level they could afford. (And yes, many did choose to pay at the highest level and did not take unfair advantage of what we were trying to do). By that time too, an increasing number of schools were funding or part-funding children's attendance. Some years later after I had left the Centre, its Trust

Board, a different body from the Advisory Panel, elected to remove the scaled fees, but acknowledging the reality of gifted children from low income families, the constraints they face and also the valuable attributes they can bring with them, remains integral to the model and curriculum whose development is being described here, and forms part of all ongoing professional development work associated with it. It remains a key issue.

Reaching out to Māori children then and now presents an even more complex challenge. Our intentions may be good, but we cannot simply unilaterally decide to be inclusive. Not only do we have to hold the door open, we have to be prepared to go right through that doorway ourselves with our eyes wide open for what we may learn. Māori and Pakeha perspectives on giftedness are fundamentally different. Until we learn to see through each other's eyes and value what we see, we cannot really make sense to each other. Yet that learning *can* be done, and can bring with it greatly enriched understanding – a very relevant example of Aristotle's comment, that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. In New Zealand we increasingly have wise guides to help us with this, with Jill Bevan-Brown, assuredly one of this country's *taonga* (treasures), as the inspirational leading spirit for us all, along with others such as Angus Macfarlane and Melinda Webber also making very valuable contributions. It is an area where New Zealand is exceptionally fortunate in having the opportunity to draw on the richness and strength that can evolve when two cultures seek to embrace each other. This is deeply true for the field of giftedness. It too must be an integral part of continuing developmental work in this field in this country. It is equally a relevant issue in other countries, including Australia, which have an indigenous minority population.



Jill Bevan-Brown

I began slowly to grasp something of this when working with Naida Glavish, first when teaching at the same school and then through all the years since. In 1992 we presented a joint workshop, later reported in *Their Future: Our Challenge*, as *Tall Poppies* was then called (Vol.17, No. 3, December 1992; the paper is on the REACH website). In the same year we organised a *hui* (meeting) on Māori and Pasifika giftedness, held at Mt Albert School; those attending included Neil Reid who later cited our work in his report to the next Asia-Pacific Conference. There was little opportunity to pursue this in depth during the foundational years of the centre and the One Day School but with generous support and guidance from both Jill and Naida, that journey continues in various ways through professional development work. In 2009, for example, REACH Education organised a teachers' conference very directly involving local gifted Māori students, one of whom delightfully used dance to introduce keynote speaker François Gagné.

One Day School – a major innovation

Some ten months after the centre had opened, we met with our own Education Advisory Panel to review the work so far and to consider future directions. The most significant issue that had emerged at that point was that, because of their relatively small size, primary schools often had only one or two gifted children in an age group and could not therefore provide these children with any opportunity to work with and be challenged by equally able minds or to experience being accepted on an equal footing with other children. The most obvious solution was to create a central venue where gifted children who were solitary in their own schools could come together on a regular basis, to learn in ways matched to their learning needs and to be in an environment where *they* were, as one gratefully said, the 'normal' children.



Thus One Day School was launched, in May 1996. I asked Marilyn Stafford if she would share the teaching with me, a role she filled

superbly well, as she later did as head teacher, and, still with almost no money, we went about finding our first venue (the underground crypt) and starting our first classes.

There were of course numerous systems to be put in place, but three in particular are relevant to this paper. Firstly, our teaching programme was based on the REACH model and on the strategies that had been developed in association with it. One of the features of the REACH model was it had purposefully developed an integrated approach. Thus, for example, advanced skills, such as thinking skills, were taught in context, not in isolation. This is not, of course, a new approach. Research has long made it clear that this is the most effective way to ensure skills are embedded, whatever the level of ability. But an important advantage of applying this approach across all our planning was that it allowed for greater flexibility in response to individual need and created more opportunities for student choice and the empowering effect that has, especially for young minds inherently geared towards thinking for themselves.

Secondly, aware that our ‘target group’ of children particularly included those gifted children for whom regular school was not providing adequately and who were therefore most in need of this type of provision and support, we were especially concerned to ensure that our assessment procedures would be effective in identifying underachieving as well as achieving gifted children. We therefore sought to gather data about each child from as many sources as possible. Parents completed a very comprehensive questionnaire detailing the child’s development from early childhood on and including responses to school, social relationships, behavioural traits, learning behaviour as seen at home, specific interests, and so on. All available school data was taken into account, including teacher comment where that could be obtained. Dated examples of the child’s creative work in any field were evaluated against a set of criteria developed for this purpose. The child him or herself met with the programme director for an extended interview in a relaxed setting which focussed on encouraging the child to talk about his or her interests and ideas about the world and the nature of things and thoughts about his or her own future. Where a psychological assessment had been carried out, that information formed part of the material to be considered; later when funds permitted we ourselves were able to purchase a Woodcock Johnston III and add this to our data gathering. At the time that we did so, we went back and asked a number of children who had been assessed without this assessment tool and a number who had been previously assessed by other psychologists using tests such as the WISC to go through the WJ III, and we then compared the outcomes, which in both cases we found to be strongly in agreement with our own original findings. If there was any other relevant information available, such as a child’s initiating a community project or winning a special award, that too was considered.

Thirdly, it was obviously necessary to develop some way of assessing the effectiveness of the One Day School programme and reporting on it to those concerned with its outcomes. Quantifiable data in the traditional sense – grades, marks, national standards! – seemed largely irrelevant in the context of what we were trying to achieve.

We therefore firstly developed a report form based on the four key concepts of the REACH model, with a number of criteria listed under each concept. Our One Day School teachers reported on whether the child met these criteria consistently, often, sometimes or rarely, with, of course, space for comments or recommendations. It is relevant to remember that these key concepts included:

1. the child’s *interest in learning* – motivation, curiosity, engagement, persistence;
2. *advanced learning skills* in the key areas of observation, study and research, communication, thinking and reasoning, and organisation;

3. the development of the child's *intellectual and creative potential*, evidenced in response to the provision of rich intellectual and creative stimuli, demanding challenges for mind and imagination, the use of humour, flexibility and opportunities for choice and taking ownership;
4. the child's *emotional, social and ethical development*, seen in, for example, perceptiveness of response to lesson content, developing confidence and skill in group interaction, interest in global issues, etc.

We also developed a form which allowed the children to report on One Day School itself and to advise us on what they considered to be its strengths or areas with room for improvement. (Interestingly, one frequent comment was that what children most liked about One Day School was that it was 'hard'). For some years this was completed every term, and then as numbers increased we changed to every semester.



An evaluation form also went to parents and to the child's regular classroom teacher. This form asked, again not about quantifiable data, but about more subjective measures, such as, with parents, a child's renewed interest in learning, willingness to talk about learning experiences during the programme (as opposed to 'What did you do at school today?' – 'Oh nothing' reported so often by parents), developing friendships (often for the first time), and even factors such as children racing out of bed and urging parents to hurry up on their One Day School Day in contrast to reluctance to venture forth on normal school days.

In these ways we were collecting a considerable amount of data, in a form that meant that, not only were we assessing children's progress, we were also assessing our own effectiveness in meeting their needs. When we eventually won a Ministry contract which provided some scholarship funding for the programme, we suggested this approach as the way we would meet the Ministry's reporting requirements. At that stage we had somewhere between two and three hundred children enrolled, and so we had sufficient data to enable us to make some reasonable quantitative analysis of our survey responses. The Ministry was entirely satisfied with that approach. For the record, one of the most common comments from parents was that One Day School had re-generated a child's lost joy in learning and changed their whole outlook on themselves. I still am approached in the street by parents who want to tell me, and I quote, that One Day School 'saved my child's life'.

Regrettably, we heard from several colleagues at one point during this period that one university lecturer was telling people that One Day School had no basis in research. The lecturer in question had not visited One Day School and had made no enquiry about the programme, its contents or its development. It was an attitude reminiscent of the professor who had decided on first appearance to label me as a time-filling bored housewife and with about as much substance. Nonetheless, such derogatory remarks have an unfortunate tendency to gather a currency of their own, so it is not surprising – but very disappointing – that those comments continued to be repeated in some quarters as an authoritative analysis.

In fact, of course, initial support had come from Parkyn's review of the REACH model, we had drawn on the work of people like Don McAlpine and Neil Reid as well as sources such as Linda Silverman's material on behavioural characteristics in developing assessment procedures, and our substantial networking and the conferences we organised as well as ongoing reading of the literature in the field gave us continuing opportunities to engage with both researchers and practitioners and reflect further on our own practice. From 1997 on, One Day School itself opened its doors to researchers, and some fifteen or so individual researchers came at various times on various interesting projects, such as behavioural change

in children involved in One Day School. Almost all of these people came via Auckland University and Michael Townsend. We ourselves had consistently sought through our own evaluation measures referred to above to achieve some degree of triangulation of our data. Thus we felt that we had a reasonable claim to be providing an evidence-based programme according to the following definition: ‘a strong theoretical foundation; intended for a developmentally appropriate population; quality data collection and procedures; and evidence of effectiveness’ (*Research Review*, September 2007, downloaded from www.evidencebasedassociates.com/reports/research_review.pdf).

In the year 2000, we put the centre itself under the spotlight when, in a submission to the Ministry of Education that we called “Surfing the Bell-Curve”, we carried out a survey of gifted education centres in many other countries. We found that the structure we had independently built for the George Parkyn Centre shared the same characteristics as the centres surveyed elsewhere, and we noted that work associated with some of these centres had produced a number of the major advances made over the previous thirty years in the understanding of giftedness and the development of appropriate strategies for identifying and catering for gifted students.



Finally under this heading, Sue Barriball, our deputy director, always thoughtfully analytical in helping us review our practice, suggested a fifth component for the REACH model, ‘*Evaluating our Learning*’. The concept behind this is that learning how to critique our own work is a skill which becomes increasingly important as a child grows towards maturity and adult independence. It is a skill which is particularly necessary for any individual who is in any sense ‘going beyond the known’ – researcher, artist, technical innovator, anyone who is a creator or leader in his or her own field. Thus we teach the child to ask him or herself questions such as: ‘Have I been resourceful in seeking answers? Have I examined my findings critically and objectively? Where to from here? Can I generate questions to take this learning further?’ In essence this concept is about empowering gifted learners to take ownership of their own learning, and about helping them to discover that they can initiate and manage this process for themselves.

The full story of all One Day School’s adventures, challenges and achievements deserves a paper all by itself. Some were comic – who else has run a classroom in a fire station because the neighbours thought having gifted children in the preferred venue at a local rugby club would lower the value of their properties? And anyway, who else has chosen a rugby club as a teaching venue for gifted children? But all were interesting, and by the time I left the centre, there were 18 venues in various parts of the country, with some 600 gifted children enrolled.

What shall we teach them?

As I was later to write in *Tall Poppies* (Vol.25, No. 1, 2000), ‘One of the most interesting challenges involved in developing a genuinely effective programme for gifted learners lies in finding an answer to the question, ‘What shall we teach them?’ ... The most natural response to this question might seem to be to teach to the child's own interests... [but] the most serious difficulty inherent in this approach is that it can result in a curriculum unacceptably narrow in scope and is at risk of becoming that “potpourri of activities that are disjointed and haphazardly selected” against which Clark has so cogently warned us.’ (Clark, B. 1988, *Growing Up Gifted*, 3rd edn, Merrill).

So how were we to proceed? One of the factors on which research appeared to be unanimous was that gifted children characteristically displayed learning behaviour which in some significant respects was recognisably different from the learning behaviour of the non-gifted child. Specifically, they were *conceptual* learners: not content with knowing that a thing was so, they wanted to know *how* and *why* it was so, they looked for connections, they explored

possibilities, they speculated on outcomes, they argued the rights and wrongs that might be implicit in the issue they were investigating. They sought a sense of the big picture as well as a grasp of the detail. All of this was consistent with the kinds of observations parents and teachers reported, and with our own experience of these children.

Bearing this in mind, Marilyn and I decided from the outset of One Day School to use a thematic approach. This gave children maximum flexibility to explore a topic in depth and from differing perspectives, demonstrated the links between different disciplines relevant to the topic, and allowed for children bringing to the task different passions and different areas of giftedness. Coincidentally, just one month after One Day School had begun its first classes using this approach, an article by Tracy Riley appeared in *Tall Poppies* (Vol. 21, No.2, 1996) in which she presented a strong case for using conceptual themes in this way, describing them as a 'natural outgrowth' of curriculum differentiation for the gifted.

Eventually, however, one comes inevitably back to the question, *which* themes? Riley had listed almost 50 possibilities. But were they all equally important? Or was there some hierarchy of understandings?

The conceptual curriculum

Once again our New Zealand heritage pointed the way to an answer. Way back in 1975 Parkyn was already writing about the importance of including ethical awareness in gifted education and linking this to global issues of significance for the whole human race, saying in summary, 'Our very survival depends upon a new concern with the quality of human life in its relationship to the finite world we inhabit.' (from his speech to the First World Conference, later published in *To the Aesthetic Road*, NZCER, 1995, p.6). Since then, numerous other writers in many fields have recognised the importance of these ideas and the absolute necessity of encouraging such global awareness.

Parkyn's comments had always seemed to me to hold a profound truth. Now, with One Day School, there was an opportunity to explore this in some depth. The result was the formulation of a 'conceptual curriculum', a work which sought to identify a number of key ideas as a framework for developing programme content. These key ideas are:

- The gifted child: the renaissance child?
- An understanding of the concept of science
- Perceptions about maths
- The geography of the world
- How does change happen in the world?
- How do human beings survive in the world?
- How do human beings live together?
- How do humans share ideas? Feelings?
- How can we make sure changes are good?

Each of these key ideas was followed by a series of questions designed to stimulate possible directions for exploration, not just of factual knowledge, but of the underlying *concepts* involved. For example, under 'How does change happen in the world?', the following ideas were listed:

- Why isn't everything the same as it was a hundred or a thousand years ago?
- Looking at real changes in society: analysing causes and processes, evaluating consequences, developing an understanding of how change happens;
- Looking at the impact of the individual - real situations;
- Achieving an awareness and an acceptance that each human being *can* make a difference;
- Integrating this with their vision for their own future life roles.

All of this had its origins in thinking by New Zealanders working in the field, and it clearly inherently involves opportunities to explore our cultural and social values.

This material was developed in full in the *Tall Poppies* article mentioned above and again in my book, *Gifted Programming Made Practical*, (Essential Resources, 2010); the original article can be found on the REACH website, www.giftedreach.org.nz.

As a footnote, it's perhaps worth explaining that reference to a 'renaissance child'. This was explained in the original article as follows:

The Renaissance Man was a cultured person, someone expected to be both well informed and interested in all spheres of knowledge, including both the sciences and the arts. With the growth of knowledge, and the speed of invention and discovery during the past century, we have become a race of specialists, often neither aware of nor interested in others' specialties or of the impact of one on the other. The concept of global awareness reminds us that this cannot continue and that we must re-assert the interdependence of our various spheres of knowledge. The Renaissance Man (and Renaissance Woman) must re-emerge in a new and deeper sense.

In practice....

Even before these ideas appeared in written form, they were being shared with One Day School teachers who responded with some of the most intriguing and challenging lessons it has ever been my privilege to see. Many were very complex with multiple challenges and opportunities, but let us take two examples that can be described quite briefly. Usha Pandit, a high school English teacher with a double Masters, working with our youngest One Day School children, our six and seven year olds, got them first to invent 'machines of the future' – and then to explain the social benefits of the machines they had designed. One youngster, I remember, designed a time machine and explained that its social benefit would be that at the end of the day you could go back to put right whatever mistakes you had made during the day. (Don't you wish you had one?) Inventing future machines is a fairly routine activity; grasping and exploring the concept of social consequences took it to a quite different level of



thought and perception for these very young children. Later, working with our oldest children, 10, 11 and 12 year olds, Usha asked them to define what was meant by 'civilisation'. When a fair degree of consensus had been reached about all the high-level attributes they felt described a civilised society, Usha quietly produced a picture of an Indian woman living in an obviously very poor village, photographed taking water for the family from a nearby stream, and asked, 'Is she civilised?' Again, children were challenged to think at a completely different level, and were made conscious of a whole range of issues inherent in the topic that had not previously occurred to them. Both these lessons demonstrate the way in which the various aspects of the REACH model were integrated in the teacher's planning and delivery.

There were multiple benefits for children observable from this approach. Kate Niederer was at that time our specialist in maths with our older children. One boy came to us with a school report of limited ability in this field. Kate sensed that this was wrong. She took him through to sit School Certificate maths some three years in advance of the usual age. When he passed with a score in the high 90's, she kept working with him and arranged an ongoing liaison with the Professor of Mathematics at the University of Auckland. That's life-changing teaching, and while there have certainly been caring and observant teachers in regular classrooms who have similarly supported children not recognised by colleagues, the structure of the One Day School, along with Kate's own insightfulness and skill, created an environment which greatly strengthened the likelihood of such recognition and of such sustained follow-through.

A different but equally telling example was provided by a little girl whom I shall call Jenny who came to us with an assessed IQ of at least 160 but who was seriously withdrawn. Jenny never volunteered answers in the group, never asked questions, always produced absolutely perfectly correct work but without a shred of revealed personal opinion or feeling. Jenny chose to sit in the darkest corner of our underground crypt, where we still then were, and made no attempt to mix with others. One day shortly after she arrived, the class made self portraits on large A2 sheets of paper. Jenny's self portrait was one inch square. It was drawn in black and white. She ruled a box around it. That portrait made me want to cry, still does at the memory, for what it said about that child. Jenny continued to be quietly exposed to the One Day School way of doing things. Slowly, change began to happen. And then, a couple of terms later, another of our teachers – quite coincidentally, it wasn't a regular task – asked the children to do a self portrait, using a large A2 sheet. Jenny's portrait filled the whole page. It was in colour. Her shoulders were back. She was smiling. Jenny had found where she belonged.

Taking the conceptual curriculum one step further still; making differentiation a realistic option

For years work had focussed on developing effective teaching strategies to implement the needs-based structure of the REACH model. Much of this work involved helping teachers to change their ideas about the structure of their lessons. For many it was initially novel and a little scary to employ choice as fully as the model had suggested and to provide the degree of student ownership that this carries with it. Others found it genuinely difficult to move from thinking primarily about content and skill acquisition to including abstract conceptualisation as a component for their gifted students.

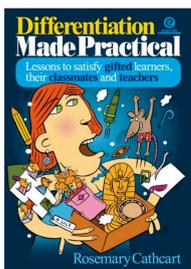
Issues like these prompted a search for ways of helping teachers come to terms with making changes in the strategies and approaches they were accustomed to and had often been using throughout their teaching careers. Change is never easy, especially when you work under constant pressure, as teachers do. Part of the problem, it was readily apparent, was that most material on differentiation looked both extremely complex and extremely time-consuming. An example is the *sixteen-point* 'Curriculum Criteria Checklist' listed in Clark's *Growing Up Gifted* (6th edn., Merrill Prentice Hall, 2002; p. 452). Teachers found this altogether overwhelming, especially if they were not entirely convinced of the need to help gifted children. If we expected teachers to differentiate for gifted children, there had to be an approach that was simpler to take on board and yet retained the intellectual rigour necessary to the task.

Ultimately this search led to the novel formulation of just a three-question structure to guide planning for differentiation. This immediately appears much less daunting to the busy classroom teacher, and therefore has a much greater chance of being at least attempted. Certainly, despite its apparent simplicity, this is not an 'easy fix'. It still requires practice and some adjustment of established patterns of lesson development. Nevertheless, it appears to be the case that this approach can often provoke greater depth of thought about differentiation than do apparently more complicated structures. In the end, this can produce greater teacher as well as student satisfaction.

These three questions are:

- [1] *Why* should we teach this? Why does it matter for children to know about this?
- [2] What *concepts* do children need to have or to develop to understand this topic in depth?
- [3] What *issues* might arise when exploring this topic? How can we use these to help build values?

What makes this approach genuinely different and why it is effective is that its three questions ask teachers, not just to focus on what they want the children to learn, but to start by critically examining their *own* thinking about the topic being proposed. When this happens, very interesting shifts in perspective and depth of thought tend to take place, valuably including a closer alignment with the way gifted children think, and generating for teachers themselves a sense of freshness and heightened interest. This can then be deployed into creating truly differentiated material, using a framework such as the Multi-Dimensional Model.



This structure appears to have no parallel anywhere else, but to have been developed first in this country. It is now integral to all the professional work done through REACH Education. It is fully explained in the resource manual, *Differentiation Made Practical* (Essential Resources, 2010), along with some comprehensive examples, of which my personal favourite is a lesson on walls – yes, walls! (“Does an igloo have walls and a roof, or just walls, or just a roof?”.....)

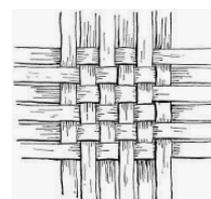
Taking professional development one step further too

Teacher education aims to ensure that skills and understandings taught in theory are eventually successfully transferred to the teacher’s work in the classroom. Comfortably in agreement with common sense, research has confirmed that such transfer is most effective and most enduring when the teacher has an opportunity to trial in practice what has been studied in theory and to review and reflect on the outcome with the ongoing guidance of the lecturer or mentor.

One-off workshops can have real value as a first introduction to new ideas and, we hope, as a way of igniting interest in learning more. But by their very nature they cannot provide that opportunity for practice under guidance which research tells us is so necessary. For that to happen, a course structure of some kind is required.

This, then, was the obvious next step in the developmental process this paper has been describing. The AST papers taught some years earlier through the Auckland College of Education had shown that such a course was viable, and all the work done over the intervening years had provided ample material for adapting and updating that older course content. An unsolicited grant from the Minister of Education, given in recognition of the work already done and specifically intended for professional development, meant that funds for development could be made available. However, the George Parkyn Centre’s Trust Board, conscious of ongoing financial needs, was of the view that the running of such a course would not be financially feasible. In practice, that concern has not materialised. But at the time, because it seemed so important to maintain the impetus of the development already so far advanced, REACH Education was separately established to focus exclusively on professional development in gifted education, with the development and delivery of a course as its key aim.

After several months of intensive writing, reading and review, the course was ready. It was built around three inter-dependent strands, (1) recognising the gifted learner, (2) identifying and understanding the needs of the gifted learner as a basis for planning appropriate provision for this child, and (3) practical strategies for meeting these needs. To quote the course prospectus, ‘These three strands are linked together to form an in-



depth exploration of how giftedness impacts on the child's experience of learning and of daily life, and of how we as educators can respond to make that experience positive and productive.'

Course content and structure

- Course content is firmly grounded in the research in the field, drawing on both international and New Zealand research findings. For example, writers cited include Renzulli, Gagne, Gardner, Sternberg, Silverman, Piechowski, van Tassell-Baska, Kingore, Urban, Riley, Bevan-Brown, Parkyn, Clark, Roeper, Tolan, Fiedler, Dabrowski, Betts, Niederer, Gulu, Mendaglio, Lind, Sword, Vialle, Bruzzano-Ricci, Langille, Hébert, Karn, Tapper, Porter – this list is by no means complete but indicates the extent of consultation. Every course module is accompanied by a range of readings in the field.
- While the REACH model, the three-question planning tool and the Multi-Dimensional Model are used as frameworks for the teaching strategies section of the course, participants are made aware of other available models and encouraged to check these out.
- From the beginning, the material covered in the course has included cultural difference, with a special focus on Māori but also with reference to Pasifika and Aboriginal students, twice-exceptional students, gifted students from low-income families, visual-spatial learners, and the role of parents and whānau (family group).
- Participants are provided with a wide range of assessment tools and guided in their use.
- As the course proceeds, resources and readings include exemplars drawn, not only from accepted expert practitioners, but also from outstanding work by the course participants themselves, a deliberate step to underscore the practical achievability of the strategies and techniques being taught.
- The entire course is carefully reviewed word by word every year, one result being that it has grown from the initial ten modules to twelve. The final module is accompanied by a very comprehensive five-page evaluation questionnaire for participants to complete, the results of which assist the annual course review.
- There are three assessment components:
 - the feedback sheets attached to each module which specify readings and/or practical tasks to be completed and reported back to the tutor by the time the next module is due;
 - an in-depth case study of an individual possibly gifted child (with, of course, consent forms and confidentiality requirements), leading to recommendations for that child's ongoing learning programme, and
 - a final detailed practical assignment relating directly to the participant's own teaching situation.
- Participants who successfully complete these three components may be awarded a Pass, a Pass with Merit, or a Pass with Distinction.



Participants at on-campus workshop

REACH Education has been proactive in seeking external accreditation for this course. Right at the outset it submitted the case study component of the course to Michael Townsend, then Associate Professor in the Faculty of Education at Auckland University, and to the Chair of Otago University's Ethics Committee for comment on ethical issues and received positive feedback from both. It consulted with NZQA to ensure the use of the word 'certificate' was legitimate before naming the course as the 'Certificate of Effective Practice in Gifted Education'. Later, in the absence of appropriate quality assurance processes in this country either for gifted programmes or for programmes offered by providers outside major

institutions, REACH sought and gained accreditation through the Australian Council for Education Research PDI format (now sadly a discontinued scheme), held discussions with the New Zealand Council for Educational Research about establishing an equivalent format here (supported by the NZCER director but vetoed by her Board as possibly representing a conflict of interest) and finally won endorsement from the US Institute for the Study of Advanced Development, the only course so far to be so endorsed by them. REACH tutors are selected for their depth of knowledge and experience in the field, and over time have included such well-known names in the field in New Zealand as Pearl Naulder and Sue Barriball.

The first delivery of the course took place in 2006. Over the years several hundred teachers have successfully completed it. It is delivered online to provide maximum accessibility, and one outcome of this has been that it has been undertaken not just by New Zealand teachers, but also by teachers from Australia, India, China and Thailand.

It remains the first course of its kind to be established in New Zealand which so directly links theory with practical outcomes and which is appropriate both for those who wish to improve their knowledge and skills for their own classroom practice and for those who are interested in subsequently continuing study at a higher level.

Broadening out

As interest in gifted learners has started to grow in this country, one of the very pleasing developments has been to see more research being undertaken. Valerie Margrain's valuable work on children who learn to read as preschoolers ('precocious readers', to use her term) is an early and fascinating example. Immensely important work on Māori perceptions of giftedness has become available, and more recently material on giftedness in Pasifika cultures has begun to emerge. Twice-exceptional learners have also become a topic of interest.

Reverting briefly to my own involvement, an issue that has been of interest to me from long before I became involved with gifted education was the role education could play in encouraging the development of emotional maturity and of ethical concepts translated into ethical behaviour. I had always been much in sympathy with Freire's view that education could either serve to maintain the status quo, or to change it; the latter purpose appealed most. Thus in developing the REACH model it seemed inherently obvious that providing for gifted children should take into consideration their emotional, social and ethical development, given the significance this has for their possible future life roles as leaders in various fields. Subsequently I was to find firstly that Parkyn too was also firmly of this belief and later that others had also written eloquently on this issue, beginning way back with Leta Stetter Hollingworth. Jumping ahead to the present day, following on from Renzulli's assertion in his 2002 paper on 'co-cognitive traits' that we currently do not understand why or how some people emerge to offer ethical leadership in society, the focus of my own work at present involves research into the feasibility of identifying the potential for such leadership in young people as a first step towards encouraging its growth into maturity.

Summary

This paper has demonstrated the development over almost three decades of a comprehensive interlinked body of work covering multiple aspects of making provision for gifted children. It has included the development of:

- A framework based on the identified different needs of gifted children to act as a structure for programme development;
- A substantial range of practical teaching strategies to implement the different aspects of the framework;
- A lesson design (the Multi-Dimensional Model) which supports teachers in using these strategies in a coordinated way;

- A ‘conceptual curriculum’ which provides a suggested course of study with a set of key ideas and supporting key questions;
- A planning tool which both makes differentiation accessible and realistic and empowers teachers in reviewing and extending their own thinking, and which is thought to be unique in the field.

It has produced resources and materials including three teachers’ manuals, numerous articles, assessment tools, surveys and other items.

This body of work has been shaped by its holistic, child-centred approach, and as such it is firmly grounded in New Zealand’s traditional education philosophy. There has been a continuing proactive effort both to learn and to share an understanding of Māori perceptions and insights in relation to giftedness.

The fundamental premise of this work was validated at the outset by the most eminent academic New Zealand has ever had involved in gifted education. Every step of its subsequent development has been informed by the research in the field, drawing from both New Zealand and international sources. Every step has been subject to careful review and evaluation. Extensive surveys have consistently been undertaken to assess the responses of those participating in children’s and teachers’ programmes. In the absence of locally available processes, accreditation has been sought and gained from respected agencies elsewhere, a first for New Zealand.

There has been a sustained highly proactive effort across the whole period to share whatever has been learned and developed in ways that would benefit gifted children and their parents and teachers. This began simply with responding to requests for teacher workshops and can now claim a history, perhaps a record number, of some hundreds of workshops delivered throughout the country to virtually every level of the profession. It has involved the establishment of the country’s first specialist gifted education centre, of its first specialist professional development agency, and of its first fully online professional development course. Five successful national conferences have been held, various leading international experts brought here, and a major symposium is now being organised involving, at their own suggestion, the prestigious Columbus Group, reflecting the respect accorded to the work chronicled here.

This body of work and all the activities that have emanated from it have also made possible strong political advocacy, particularly through the George Parkyn Centre.

The relevance of this body of work was already becoming evident when in 2004 in an unsolicited media release Trevor Mallard, as Minister of Education, wrote that it had ‘shaped the broad and diverse approaches we have to gifted education in New Zealand’.

Where to from here?

2015 marks the 30th anniversary of the beginning of the development of the REACH model, the 20th anniversary of the foundation of the George Parkyn Centre, and the 10th anniversary of the establishment of REACH Education.

Thus it seems timely, not only to ensure that there is an accurate and informed historical record of this process, but also to acknowledge all those who have played a part in its development, both those specifically named in this paper and the many others not individually named but who contributed in various ways, for example as teachers in One Day School, researchers liaising with the George Parkyn Centre, educationalists supporting the Centre’s Advisory Panel, and earlier tutors in the first years of the REACH course.

But it is also timely to ask what the future holds for gifted education in New Zealand.

This question is very immediately pertinent at the present time.

The George Parkyn Centre, while always acknowledging and actively promoting awareness of international research, was firmly grounded in an approach developed in New Zealand using New Zealand values and perspectives, and from the outset the support of New Zealand research and practice in this field was seen as an integral part of its function as a national centre. The REACH consultancy has continued that approach.

In this writer's view, a national gifted education philosophy, in whatever country it is established, should surely *also* have as a significant part of its purpose and function the promotion of research and practice directly relevant to that country. It should be responsive to the particular issues affecting gifted education in its territory. It should be ready to explore cultural and social values and perspectives which shape local responses to gifted learners – and, indeed, which may bring unique insights to the understanding of giftedness of benefit to the wider gifted community beyond its own shores.

For New Zealand, that certainly does *not* mean simply adhering only to the REACH model for ever and ever amen without possibility of critical review or further development in other directions. As this paper has shown, that original simple structure has itself demonstrated how the process of change and development can unfold over time.

But more importantly, it has also shown that it is possible to grow sustainable approaches which reflect and meet international criteria in the field but which are firmly grounded in our culture and our values and responsive to the needs of our gifted learners. That is a precious attribute that could – surely *would* – be lost if we merely copied what has been developed elsewhere in countries with different cultures, different values and sometimes very different education systems.

So, as we look to the future, what choice will be made about the substantial body of learning and experience that has been described in this paper? Will it continue to be built on and to act as a resource which values New Zealand insights and perspectives? Or will it simply be relegated to the drawer marked 'historical' which is then firmly closed and the knowledge it represents left to gather dust? In short, will this history have a future?

Update, June 2023

Over the past nine years, REACH has continued to offer its certificate course and to develop it further. In 2017 it won the USA's National Gifted Association's Professional Development Network Award, and in 2020 the NZQA assessed it as equivalent to 15 credits at Level 6 on the New Zealand Qualifications Framework. Ongoing review led to an expansion to 13 modules, and the course has continued to attract overseas participants, including teachers from Singapore, Sweden, Malaysia, Jamaica and Germany.

In 2015, the Columbus Group symposium was held in Auckland, attracting participants from throughout New Zealand and also from Australia. Contact with the Group continued, and in 2017 Rosemary was invited to become a member of the Group, the first person outside the US to be so invited.

In 2020, Routledge UK published the 4th edition of *They're Not Bringing My Brain Out*, this time with an introduction by Dr Linda Silverman, subsequently reviewed in the international journal, *Roeper Review*.

2022 saw the introduction of an additional course, the four-module “Gifted Intensive”, intended to provide an alternative introduction to the field for busy classroom teachers.

Developmental work has continued, with a particular focus on Māori perspectives on giftedness and ways of creating a bi-cultural approach to defining and identifying giftedness. Other ongoing work has included liaising with the Enrich programme in Invercargill to support its yearly assessment of potential candidates, joining with the Ngā Potiki iwi in Tauranga in an Events and Opportunities project, being part of the Gifted Aotearoa project, participating in the Ministry’s Gifted Advisory Panel, and providing support for individual parents on request.

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