

# Editorial

In the very first bulletin published by NZCER, *Educational Research in New Zealand* (1935), Dr Beeby, our first director, stated that NZCER needed to feed the curiosity of teachers, in a way that acknowledged the demanding environment of the classroom. “The curiosity can die, or can grow, but cannot stand still”, he wrote. However, “it is not the business of the Council to satisfy it but to feed it.”

Over four decades later, he wrote that if NZCER “did nothing but ask intelligent questions it would have done a job worth doing. A few may even be answered. But intelligent questions, like most living things, breed; and there should be more unanswered questions in five years’ time than there are now” (*Biography of an Idea*, 1992, p.91).

These two quotes sum up NZCER’s mandate: to foster teachers’ curiosity and intelligent questioning by providing evidence-based research and information in a way that is both relevant and accessible to teachers and the wider community of interest. In particular, **set** enables researchers to share findings that have emerged from the questions that arise as they attempt to develop a deeper understanding of current educational ideas and concerns. Our latest customer survey shows that there has been a 14% increase over the last 4 years in the uptake of research by teachers in planning classroom programmes.

It’s clear that teachers have always been keen to experiment and try new ideas, in the hope that they might enrich the educational experiences of their students. But in the past there have been all too few opportunities for them to document, reflect on, and share such innovations. The Beeby Fellowship is another vehicle for realising Dr

Beeby’s dream of giving practising teachers the opportunity to do this – and so feed the curiosity of other teachers. Each year, it enables someone who is actively involved in such an innovation to document it, analyse it, and write a resource about it. As Dr Beeby was at one time Assistant Director-General of UNESCO, it is highly appropriate that NZCER and the New Zealand National Commission for UNESCO are partners in this initiative.

Recently NZCER published the work of the 2000 Beeby Fellow, *Looking forward to teaching – a team approach to teaching in years 9 and 10*. It documents the exploration of Neil Potter and his colleagues in Invercargill as they pursued an idea that they thought would improve learning experiences and outcomes for students in Years 9 and 10. *Looking forward to teaching* provides a constructive road map for other educators who are interested in pursuing similar changes in their schools – particularly for those “in the middle”, the 10-14 age group. In this issue of **set** you will find an article summarising part of Neil Potter’s book, together with three other articles centring on innovations designed to address what Ruth Sutton has so memorably called “the muddle in the middle”.

This issue of **set** again demonstrates that there is no lack of curiosity or intelligent questioning within the New Zealand educational scene, and that there is widespread commitment to research projects that may enhance learning for New Zealand students.

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