

Institution: University of Northampton
Unit of Assessment: 25 - Education
Title of case study: School of Education –Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting (CAR) for Students with Disabilities
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>This study was undertaken for the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), undertaken by The University of Northampton in collaboration with the Australian Special Education Principals Association (ASEPA) and the University of Adelaide, Australia. It comprised a review of literature and current policy and practice in curriculum, assessment and reporting (CAR) for students with disabilities (SWD). It has informed ACARA's development work for the <i>Australian Curriculum</i>, which will see the full implementation of the first nationally consistent approach to curriculum in all states and territories by 2014. Focus on CAR for SWD highlighted underfunding for this group of students in all government initiative focusing on rolling out the implementation of the Australian Curriculum. \$A200m was announced in 2011/12 Federal budget with an additional \$A100m in 2013/14. This \$A300m is to support many of the themes articulated in the research. The impact on SWD is to ensure comprehensive access to school curriculum, assessment and reporting thus contributing to their more widespread inclusion within schools and society at large</p> <p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>The research originated as a result of pilot work undertaken in Western Australia, between staff at UoN (Fergusson Senior Lecturer, UoN, 2001 onwards; Garner, Professor of Education, UoN, 2005 onwards), State government and professional associations (ASEPA) between 2005 and 2008. It was substantially based on the involvement of UoN staff in developing a national (England & Wales) instrument to measure the achievement of SWD students in core curriculum areas. The approach adopted by the UoN team (Garner, Fergusson, supported by Rose, Professor of Education (UoN), 2001 onwards) in the Australian context comprised 3 parts: (i) literature survey – a systematic review of both the international and Australia-specific literature regarding SWD curriculum issues, (ii) thematic analysis – using a semi-structured interview with a small sample of practitioners; the instrument used a set of themes identified from the material surveyed in (i) to formulate the research instrument, (iii) analysis and commentary.</p> <p>The study challenged a widespread existing view in Australian States and Territories that curriculum arrangements for SWD should be considered separately from those of students within mainstream settings. Such an orientation prevailed in 2010 at the inception of the research study, in spite of national commitment to equality and educational inclusion.</p> <p>The study identified 6 key themes from its analysis; these were validated by a reference group of practitioners (school teachers and leaders). The findings highlighted 6 curriculum and assessment dimensions, which need to inform future deliberations about a 'national' approach in Australia for SWD: connected to achievement levels, fitness-for-purpose, inclusiveness, stakeholder involvement, enhancing pedagogy and accountability all supported by a trained workforce. The themes were subsequently incorporated within development guidelines and enabled Australian curriculum development for SWD to become more greatly aligned with progressive developments both in England/Wales and in some European national settings.</p> <p>The research undertaken met the requirements of the commissioning body (ACARA) in providing a review of national (Australian) and international research literature and scholarship on the provision of curriculum, assessment and reporting in respect of the learning of students with SWD, alongside an analysis of international, national (Australian) and jurisdictional (state) policies and practices.</p> <p>The literature scoping exercise provided a coherent and structured resource to inform the national curriculum debate for SWD. It (i) provided evidence from England and an indicative range of</p>

Impact case study (REF3b)

international sources, using a predetermined set of inclusion criteria for the references it utilised:

- (i) date (2000-2010)
- (ii) focus – curriculum/assessment/recording (CAR)
- (iii) context – schools and educational settings, both mainstream & special
- (iv) evidence-base – transparent & data-informed
- (v) accessibility – connected directly to policy and practice. The materials selected were reviewed by the project team, and their key features which connected to CAR, were summarised.

A Reference Group (8 members, comprising school-based practitioners (including head teachers) provided a mechanism to validate the research findings in the practical contexts of schools. This group identified an additional number of issues for policy-makers as a result of its involvement in the research process.

3. References to the research

1. Garner, P., Forbes, F., Fergusson, A., Aspland, T. and Datta, P. (2012) *Curriculum, assessment and reporting in special educational needs and disability: A thematic overview of recent literature*. Sydney, NSW: Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority. Item availability may be restricted.
2. Garner, P. and Forbes, F. (2011) An 'at-risk' curriculum for 'at-risk' students? Invited Presentation to: *Australian Curriculum Studies Association (ACSA) Biennial Curriculum Conference, Sydney, NSW, 07-09 October 2011*.
3. Garner, P. & Forbes, F. (2012) Disposable assets. Are special education teachers still needed in 21st Century Australian schools? *NISE Journal*, Yokohama, Japan
4. Garner, P. (2011) *Missing the bus? Opportunities to enhance CAR practices for SEND in Australia*. Keynote Presentation to the Australian Special Education School Leaders Conference, Fremantle, 17 March 2011
5. Forbes, F. & Garner, P. (2012) School leadership and special education: challenges, dilemmas and opportunities from an Australian context', in *Support for Learning*, 28 (4) (forthcoming)
6. Garner, P. & Forbes, F. (2013) 'At-risk' curriculum for 'at-risk' students? Special Educational Needs and Disability in the new Australian Curriculum. *Journal of Research in Special Education* | DOI: 10.1111/1471-3802.12022

4. Details of the impact

The research contributed to the first nationally consistent approach to curriculum for SWD in all states and territories in Australia (2009-2014). It was not until 2010 that SWD were seriously considered as learners and that specific curriculum considerations were needed to accommodate them as part of the Australian Curriculum. The research report has been pivotal in developing policy-awareness of this issue, and has been instrumental in helping to secure resources to support the initiatives it recommended (to the tune of \$A200m to 2012, with a further \$A100 from 2013). Moreover, by providing ACARA with a set of curriculum development themes, the study has helped to formulate a national discussion regarding curriculum arrangements for SWD. The following actions/events indicate the extent of this influence:

1. the report has been pivotal in the knowledge and understanding of some key senior policy makers within the ACARA organisation in relation to SWD (**Evidence1**)

Impact case study (REF3b)

2. the report has been used to shape the advice to teachers and the processes used in the development of the curriculum content in the Australian Curriculum (**Evidence2**)
3. The report has highlighted for ACARA the need to include in ACARA annual work plans the connection between curriculum and assessment for SWD (**Evidence3 & 8**).
4. the report has been influential in ensuring that meetings of the ACARA *Students with Disability Advisory Group*(SWDAG) has a standing item on its agenda addressing curriculum issues for this group of students (**Evidence3**)
5. Substantive elements within the report (notably, its 'Opportunities to Improve Provision' section) have been adopted as guiding principles used by ACARA to frame future curriculum and assessment planning (**Evidence3 &4**)
6. The report has been used to inform the members of the new assessment working party of ACARA (**Evidence 3**)
7. Demonstrating progression & sustainability of research networks, the study is being used (September, 2013) as the basis for an Australian Research Council (ARC) research proposal by a consortium of Universities in partnership with ASEPA, ACARA, Department Education Employment and Workplace Relation (DEEWR) and Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) to look at the impact on the implementation of the Australian Curriculum for SWD (**Evidence 9**)

Since the research has been presented to ACARA it has been used in a variety of ways, firstly as a discussion tool within the organisation with key policy makers and with the ACARA Students with Disability Advisory Group (**Evidence 3**). The group were regularly updated on the research findings in order to shape decision-making in a dynamic and evolving policy-making environment, against specific national timelines. As consultation was a major theme of the research findings and was made up of policy makers and major professional associations there was opportunity for wider consultation of several significant draft publications. This started with draft advice to teachers on SWD (**Evidence 2**) and progressed to additional content being produced in two subject areas, Mathematics and English (**Evidence 7**) for students who were yet to reach the first (basic) level of the curriculum. The sections in the research which addressed inclusion, appropriateness and flexibility contributed to the thinking that informed the curriculum development (**Evidence 3**). ACARA have used the research to inform writers not only in the four areas of the curriculum that have already been produced in Phase one of curriculum development (**Evidence 3**) but also to shape the thinking of the Phase two subjects that are currently under development. (**Evidence 3**)

There were key messages in the research that hold significance for the work-plan of ACARA going forward into 2014 and beyond. There was a decision for the purposes of ACARA's internal use to separate the two phases of the research into the published literature review and the internally useful policy and practice section. Many participants on the working group noted that the data should be used in a dynamic way by ACARA, as a starting point for discussions with the State and Territory administrations, especially in the areas of assessment and reporting (**Evidence 3**).

As a result of the heightened awareness the research provided, a number of subsequent initiatives were developed. The Federal Minister of Education convened a working party (including members of the SWDAG) to give advice on supporting SWD in schools. This group met on 3 occasions and used draft findings from the UoN research to help shape its feedback submitted to the Minister. The six themes can be seen woven through criteria and outcomes of the subsequent National Partnership - More Support for Students with Disabilities (**Evidence 5**). This A\$300m over 3 years is currently in year 2 of its roll out, and its usage as identified in the first progress reports of Western Australia (WA), New South Wales (NSW), and Tasmania (TAS) (**Evidence 6**) indicates clear reference to the six themes in the commissioned study (**Evidence 10**). Impressively NSW in their first progress report showed that 1800 teachers from 700 government schools (representing coverage of almost 25% of schools in the State) had participated in online training, based in part

Impact case study (REF3b)

on the themes identified in the study, in a variety of SWD categories to build the skills knowledge and understanding in order to better support SWD learning outcomes.

The suggested developments in curriculum provision for SWD, resulting in part and as evidenced, by the research conducted by the UoN team, have thus been widely considered at Federal policy level in Australia and, directly as a result of this, have brought resource benefits which have impacted positively on the educational progress of children and young people in its States and Territories.

Sources to corroborate the impact

1. Letter from the Federal Minister of Education plus other correspondence
2. Information Sheet
http://www.acara.edu.au/verve/_resources/Student_Diversity_Information_Sheet_2011.pdf)
3. ACARA Students With Disability Advisory Group Minutes and agenda documents
4. Various Publications 2011 – 2012
5. National Partnership Agreement for More Support for Student With Disability (2012)-
http://www.federalfinancialrelations.gov.au/content/npa/education/more_support_for_student_with_disabilites/national-agreement.pdf
6. More Support for Student With Disability National Partnership Progress Reports NSW, TAS and WA (2012)
7. Progressing to Foundation. ACARA Consultation Report (<http://www.acara.edu.au/default.asp>)
8. Shape of the Australian Curriculum v3.0 Oct 2011
9. ARC submission 2013 (result awaited)
10. Garner, P., Forbes, F., Fergusson, A., Aspland, T. and Datta, P. (2012) *Curriculum, assessment and reporting in special educational needs and disability: A thematic overview of recent literature*. Sydney, NSW: Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority. Item availability may be restricted.