

## Editorial

Considering the curriculum - whether it relates to pupils with special educational needs or pupils with more ordinary learning needs - raises inevitably a question of values. It is not just what we teach, but why we teach it and how we teach it that are the issues of critical importance.

Special education has always led the way in making reality of child-centred rhetoric. Special schools and special classes in ordinary schools have, in this regard, made a pioneering contribution. Twenty-five years ago, when mainstream education in Ireland was engaged in grappling with the demands of a new integrated and activity-based national curriculum, special education (through IATSE's forerunner, the National Association of Teachers in Special Education founded in 1968) was in a position to provide meaningful in-service support to teachers by way of courses and seminars. Motivating children through teaching styles that involved imaginative and practical utilisation of the curriculum were values, inherent in special education practice, that had the potential for much wider mainstream applicability.

Twenty-five years on, primary education is once again, on the threshold of introducing a revised national curriculum. Intensive work over the past five years by the teacher-led working groups of the NCCA has produced, we understand, material which will recognise the advances in information technology, arts, science, European awareness and social, health and personal education issues. The revised curriculum will also endorse the principles of child-centred, activity-based, integration oriented education affirmed in 1971. There is, of course, a danger that in the face of syllabus overload, these principles will remain only at the level of rhetoric and aspiration. At a special education conference in England in the mid-1980's, a "three-Rs" approach to curriculum values was articulated: Relationships, Respect and Response. A reflection on the many nuances of these concepts, related to each curricular area, drew some surprising and illuminating insights. Special education - being in its essence a values question - commands the integrity to remind all teachers that the curriculum must serve the child, and not the other way around.

It has been a great honour, and a pleasure, to have been editor of this journal over the past decade. I want to pay special tribute to the current and past members of the Editorial Board who have, through their dedication and determination made each issue a publication of consistent quality. In a particular way, I wish to thank the special support given to us always by the Special Education Department of St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra through its Director, Páid McGee. Finally, I want to wish warmest congratulations to Patricia Lynch on her appointment as Editor. Slán agus buíochas.

**SEAN GRIFFIN**  
Editor