

## Editorial

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In a recent issue of *The Journal of Special Education*, James Kauffman discussed special education as he viewed it today, and highlighted implications for special education in the next century. Kauffman (1999) highlighted ten characteristics of special education today, a number that are applicable to the Australian setting. These characteristics include ignorance of history, apologetic for existing, preoccupation with image, unrealistic expectations, easy targets for scam artists, and immobilised by anticipation of systematic transformation (p. 244).

As the new century approaches, Kauffman's discussion has a message for the status of special education in Australia. For example, the number of students receiving their education program in regular school settings is increasing. This transformation in our schools has been associated with a down sizing of special education programs in universities and education systems. In other areas of education, there is an ongoing evolution and/or manifestation of education programs that have little or no research support.

It is possibly time for special education to reconsider its historical developments, and revisit what is meant by special education. A central plank of special education has been the use of research on which to develop education programs. The research has been used to evaluate programs, and to push the bounds forward to enhance programs.

Education systems, as they are influenced by fiscal pressures, are finding it increasingly difficult to undertake this program development. Universities are also finding the opportunities to undertake comprehensive programs of research in special education more difficult due to down-sizing of programs, and reduced opportunities to fund research programs.

The recent green paper on research in universities indicates the need for university – industry links. Special educators in schools and

universities need to take advantage of this proposed development to support each other in enhancing the future of special education and the educational outcomes for students with special education needs. The failure to contribute to these projects could lead to: history being ignored; use or maintenance of programs that research has clearly failed to support; and setting of expectations that do not lead to positive outcomes for students with special education needs.

A forum to promote quality education programs is AJSE. Researchers are welcome to submit manuscripts to the journal for consideration as per the guidelines inside the back cover. An up-coming issue of the journal will focus on the education of students with high support needs. Dr. Mark Carter from Macquarie University will be the guest editor, and readers are encouraged to submit articles to AJSE for consideration in this special issue. Invitations from overseas researchers have been issued, and contributions from Australia and New Zealand would be a welcome addition.

In another special issue of AJSE due for publication in December, 2000, the topic will be numeracy and students with special needs. Guest editor will be Dr. David Chard, University of Texas at Austin and a member of the AJSE Editorial Committee. This area of educational programs receives little attention in the literature, and it would appear timely to raise issues surrounding it. (Further information on this issue should be directed to the Editor.)

This issue of the *Australasian Journal of Special Education* highlights work conducted in a range of school settings. The opening paper in this issue by Chalmers and associates, is a continuation of a paper in the previous issue. This paper discusses the results of a survey completed by teachers of students with high support needs. The results of this survey showed barriers to implementing best practices were those relating to insufficient funding, human resources and time

for instruction. The need for ongoing professional support was a significant point of discussion.

The effects of inclusion in the regular classroom are often represented in terms of policy and theoretical frameworks. Forlin outlines a study involving 17 primary school teachers, all of whom have a student with special education needs in their class. The picture from inside the four walls of the classroom is discussed and implications for inclusive education practices highlighted.

Lepelaar and Kemp report the results of a study investigating the impact of attending a preschool in which a high proportion of students with special education needs attend. Results were reported in terms of early reading, language and social skills, and discussion of these results highlight again the effects of quality education programs.

Le Roux, Graham and Carrington provide an interesting insight into the area of students diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome. The study discusses issues relating to curriculum, instruction and the classroom and school environment. The results highlight the proximity of quality of education programs for students diagnosed with Asperger's and other students in a regular primary school classroom.

These four articles highlight the need for ongoing research in the area of education for students with special education needs. Failure to foster ongoing research programs between universities and schools is important as special education may well become "lost in space" (Kauffman, 1999).

David Evans PhD  
Editor

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