



## President's Comment 1

4th February 2010

### **From the SPANZ Office**

#### **2010 Symposium Update**

*Thank you to everyone who has registered their interest in the 2010 SPANZ Symposium & 23rd AGM being held in Queenstown from the 21st - 24th March 2010.*

*Registration forms and brochure will be emailed out next week and able to be downloaded from our website.*

*Don't forget to book your travel and accommodation.*

#### **Contact Us**

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Dear Colleagues

A belated happy New Year to you all! 2010 lines up as an action-filled year with the implementation of the New Zealand Curriculum, planning for the implementation of the new level 1 NCEA standards in 2011, and collective agreement negotiations all being on the agenda. The introduction of national standards is an issue that we observe as interested bystanders, although I rather suspect that the whole compulsory sector will be drawn into the debate as the year progresses.

During the holidays I attended the 23rd International Congress for School Effectiveness and Improvement (ICSEI) in Kuala Lumpur. Mary Sinclair (Executive Trustee Cognition Institute) is on the ICSEI governing board and they put together an excellent programme with outstanding keynote speakers. One such speaker was Dr John MacBeath who explored how different countries have approached the issue of school improvement and innovation in their attempts to close achievement gaps. He, along with several other presenters, was highly critical of "high stakes testing" at an early age and emphasises the need for assessment that reflects, not shapes, what is learned. In support of his argument MacBeath referred to the work of several influential people and the following snippets are examples:

- From Sharon Nichols and David Berliner (How high stakes testing corrupts America's schools) – "Campbell's Law" – "the greater the social consequences associated with a quantitative indicator (such as test scores) the more likely that it is that the indicator itself will become corrupted – and the more likely it is that the use of the indicator will corrupt the social processes that it was intended to monitor".
- From the Archbishop of Canterbury – 2009 Christmas Day sermon – on the topic of dependency – "and in the case of children we shall do our level best to turn you into little consumers and performers as soon as we can ... we shall test you relentlessly in school ... we shall worry you about your prospects and skills from the word go; we shall do all we can to make childhood a brief and rather regrettable stage ..."

There is compelling evidence from overseas that highlights unintended consequences of education reform policies that have populist appeal.

Best wishes for a great start to the school year.

Peter Gall  
President