

Submission for National Mathematics Curriculum Framing Paper

(or Documents for CVs - Not Classrooms)

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I can accuse you of creating documents you pass off as curriculum, but really they are just political motherhood statements only. It's something you create to appease politicians and others who know nothing about mathematics. But it might look good on your CV next time you apply for a job at OECD or anything else that pays much better than teaching.

These documents are completely unacceptable to present to maths teachers as a basis for what they do in the classroom.

Firstly, we must remove all reference to the word "numeracy" invented in 1959 by Geoffrey Crowther. He wasn't a mathematician, but needed to create a political motherhood statement called the *Crowther Report*. This word is used by snobs pretending to be experts where in fact they know absolutely nothing about mathematics. I call them the zero-knowledge experts.

We can't have a situation where a mathematics syllabus is a political document, not a mathematical one. If this happens, maths teachers will ignore such documents. In discussions I have had with teachers about the new NSW Board of Studies syllabus as well as all the documents from the National Curriculum Board, they have already decided - "We'll ignore them and just wait for the new textbooks to come out". Is this deemed appropriate and acceptable? Also, if you wish to assert your authority over teachers, perhaps you should know that most teachers don't even know you exist! For example, I recently explained to a group of maths teachers the significance of the *Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority Act 2008*, and none of them had a clue what I was talking about!

Whose interests are you serving with your documents? Politicians and other ignoramuses like newspaper editors as well as publishers and authors who are intent in turning education into dollars? Authors can boast about their involvement with these documents on their CVs but they do nothing for teachers or students. Syllabuses become documents for CVs, not classrooms.

We are sick and tired of review after review after review which results in nothing at all for teachers or students. It's just a big snob-club exercise and teachers are quite right to be cynical about the whole thing any time a new one comes out.

Take for example the 2008 *Stanley Report* on Numeracy. It provoked the following to be published on Terry Tao's website (and if you don't know who he is, you have no

business saying anything about modern maths):

It must be recognised by federal and state governments that it is *Mathematics* that is taught in schools, *mathematics* curricula that state or federal bodies need to outline for the use of teachers and textbook authors, and *mathematics* education that needs content and time guidelines. The use of any term other than “mathematics” in reviews, guidelines, professional development and the media [like “numeracy”] muddies the picture for teachers, curriculum developers, parents and others. While Australians are discussing what “numeracy” means, the rest of the world is focusing on better ways to teach mathematics, the content of teacher education courses and the time given to mathematics in these, as well as what research tells us about children understanding and learning mathematics.

So it is quite disappointing to see such a heavy emphasis in your documents on numeracy. This is really yet another reason for maths teachers to ignore you! Is that what you want?

The national curriculum agenda has failed in the past. If you continue down the same path of mountains of useless snobbish documents full of platitude and quite absent of any mathematics, the whole thing is doomed to fail, just as it has done in the past.

This failure is further guaranteed by the obvious contempt the snobs have towards teachers. A more recent example of this is *Transforming Education: Assessing and Teaching 21st Century Skills* from January, 2009. This is an affront to teachers, does not value the teaching and learning process, but instead asserts that making money for Microsoft is more important than what teachers think (and of course there is no brass razoo in it for teachers). If you want to have authority over teachers, you had better realise first that teachers will not allow Microsoft to dictate what they do in their classrooms or assessments. In fact I know a lot of teachers who will deliberately sing the praises of Microsoft’s competitors.

So here we have yet another example of snobbery gone mad. Snobs do not make good mathematicians. Teachers will not accept a new syllabus unless it is a clear improvement to what we already have. The only way that can happen is if mathematicians write the new syllabus, not snobs. All we have been getting so far is more crap from the snobs and no improvement whatsoever to what we already have.

Continue down this path and it is surely doomed. (Again!)

If you want a better example of maths resources for teachers and students, you can get it for free at my website, www.fourunitmaths.cjb.net