

NEW ZEALAND ASSOCIATION FOR RESEARCH IN EDUCATION
TE HUNGA RANGAHAU MĀTAURANGA O AOTEAROA



The McKenzie Award 2010

Cathy Wylie

Cathy has worked as a social science researcher for more than 30 years, most of that time in education. She has made a real difference to New Zealand education and continues to do so. Cathy has led a number of long-running research projects that continue to yield rich data. Since 1989 she has led NZCER's national survey series which undertakes research on the impact of policy changes in New Zealand schools, focusing primarily on leadership, governance, teaching practices, school choice, and the coherence of the system as a whole. The surveys provide invaluable information for the education sector and for international scholars interested in the impact of these reforms. Cathy's views are regularly sought by visiting delegations and she has been invited to contribute numerous papers and presentations on this topic both nationally and internationally.

Cathy has led the landmark New Zealand study, the Competent Children/Competent Learners project since the 1990s. This study has followed over 500 young people from just before the age of 5 until now, when they are just over 20. The design of the project was ahead of its time with its complex view of the contribution of education to both cognitive and attitudinal competencies, as well as the role of family resources and relationships, activities outside school, friendships, values and experiences. This study has yielded considerable insight into the long term impact of quality early childhood education, the complex interplay between cognitive and attitudinal competencies and into the way learning opportunities foster the development of positive learning identities.

Cathy ensures that the implications of her work are carefully detailed for policy makers. This commitment to the research-policy interface is evident in her work tracking the impact of the school reforms. It is also demonstrated in the many articles she writes, such as her 1998 review of the literature on the use of vouchers in education. Her leadership in policy-focused research was recognized by her being selected to review special education in 2000.

Cathy's work is underpinned by strongly held values, including a deep belief in the importance of quality public education. She is committed to robust research that is focused in areas that really matter in education, that is methodologically sound and that takes account of the complexity of issues in education. She lives these values in her work and in the way she constantly seeks to deepen her knowledge of both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies. This has enabled her to use the best design possible for the question in hand. She models being the life long learner that we all promote as being essential to thriving and contributing to the world of today.

She is a very worthy recipient of the NZARE McKenzie award.

