

## EDITORIAL

The professional responsibilities of a Special Educator are both diverse and demanding. Among other things, the Special Educator needs to be continually sifting the professional literature for research, theory and programme advice to better guide classroom practice. He/She needs to be aware of the major controversies in the field and in many cases, the concerned Special Educator bears an unusual responsibility in acting as a source of information for regular teachers, administrators and parents. This role may be discharged passively, or more actively as a 'change agent', or as an advocate for children and parents. In the former role, attempts are made to modify attitudes and skills of colleagues while in the latter, the Special Educator might act on behalf of a child who is being evaluated for special placement, or who is being placed in a 'less restrictive alternative', or mainstreamed. Another role is to act as an informed critic of public policy or questionable practices.

In order to cope with these varied demands, Special Educators

- (a) have to accept these challenges, and
- (b) must have access to information to guide them.

This Journal has, as its basic purpose, the provision of such information.

In this edition, an attempt has been made to provide a range of papers to meet various needs. Dr. Sylvia Richardson, an educator and medical practitioner, is chairman of the Association for Children with Learning Disabilities. In such a role, she is in an excellent position to provide an informed commentary on recent U.S. Federal Policy which legislates education as a right for all handicapped children. Her recommendations on teacher development to meet the guidelines of PL 94 - 142, while written in the context of American teacher-training, are equally valid for Australian teacher education. Stan Halpin's paper focuses on one research study of variable factors in the direct and vicarious learning behaviours of a group of mentally retarded adolescents. He points to the implications of his research for classroom practice. Alan Hudson, Greg Murphy and Graham Clunies-Ross pose an interesting challenge when they suggest that Special Educators should be actively involved in the dissemination of information about efficacy and related studies on the controversial Doman-Delacato programme. The fourth paper by Stuart Stieler provides more research information to guide instructional strategies. John Burge reviews an interesting book which attempts to bridge theory and practice, and an account of The Isolated Children's Special Education Unit (Brisbane) is included as part of the Places of Interest series.

Another challenge to Australian Special Education lies in the continued documentation of theory and practice by professionals representing all facets of our field. I would make a particular plea to classroom practitioners to write papers about instructional programmes in special classes and submit these articles to the editorial committee of this Journal to be considered for publication. This would do much to broaden the range of our articles and would ensure that the Journal continues to meet readers' information needs.

JEFF BAILEY

Editor

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