



## **NZEI Te Riu Roa symposium 'Right people, right place, right time' Held 15 June 2009, Centra Hotel, Auckland**

### **Notes from Wrap up session**

Nancy Bell

Opening the symposium, Paul Goulter NZEI Te Riu Roa stated the organisation's commitment to quality ECE and appropriately qualified teachers. He stated that the symposium aimed to examine the issues around teacher supply, there would be no one right way forward but hopefully we would be able to identify what we could and could not agree on.

On behalf of us all I would like to thank NZEI Te Riu Roa for its leadership in bringing this group together, representing many ECE employer perspectives.

Speaking on behalf of Ministry of Education, Karl Le Quesne provided projections regarding the supply of qualified ECE teachers, based on current assumptions around population growth, ECE uptake and ECE teacher qualification completion. These projections did not factor in any future ratio changes.

- Across ECE teacher led services currently 61% of teachers are qualified and registered and 20% are enrolled in teacher education programmes.
- While the proportion of qualified teachers has been keeping pace with growing ECE enrolments on an upwards trajectory, the gap is now starting to widen.
- To achieve the proposed 2010 target of '70% qualified and 10% in training' the sector needs 79% of its teachers to be qualified by next year.
- MOE projections show that 70% will be qualified at best, leaving a gap of around 1500 teachers. Worst case projections put this figure around 2,700.
- There will be regional and centre variations (as there are now).
- There appears to be no way that the sector can meet the proposed 2010 target.
- 2012 looks more achievable because it requires '70% qualified and 30% in training' and allows a longer timeline to get there.



Karl identified several possible policy pathways under MOE consideration and sought feedback:

- Delay regulating the 2010 target.
- Regulate a lower target (ie less than 70%).
- Don't regulate the target but continue to incentivise services to employ qualified teachers through the funding bands.
- Allow other qualifications to be acceptable for licensing purposes (eg NZ primary teachers, or overseas teachers who are able to register here as primary teachers). This last proposal would be unlikely to provide the number of teachers required however.

So the teacher supply issue is alive and well, and unlikely to abate in the near future.

Alongside this there are strategies in development for increasing children's participation (eg Counties Manakau) which will require more teachers.

So, where did we get to today? What did we agree on? Where are our points of disagreement?

Without having consulted the room, I am going to try to identify some key areas of agreement and difference that I have intuited from discussions here today.

I think we agree that:

- There is a shortage of qualified ECE teachers and this is creating stress within the sector. The data presented here today by MOE resonates with our collective experience.
- The 2012 100% qualified ('70% qualified and 30% in training') target should remain. Each employer who spoke here today stated commitment to achieving this target. (Time did not permit us to explore our views relating the 2010 target in light of MOE's latest projections.)
- Enrolments in initial teacher education (ITE) programmes should be increased and centre-based ITE programme models should be retained as these that enable unqualified teachers to gain recognised qualifications.
- The current caps on ECE ITE providers' funding is a barrier to getting teachers qualified and should be removed.

- Teachers should be reflective of the communities where they teach including Māori, Pasifika, men and ethnic communities. We affirm the work being done by ECE Menz to increase the proportion of men teaching in ECE to 10%.
- “If you get it right in Manakau you’ll get it right anywhere” – this area lags behind in access and participation and we need to really understand the barriers and enablers and make it happen for these children, the largest growing and most ethnically diverse community of NZ.
- We share the concern that only 45% of teachers in Pasifika immersion centres are qualified.
- There is no one right teaching qualification nor one right pathway to a qualification. There is interest in exploring pathways for primary qualified and registered teachers and others holding relevant qualifications.
- We support Te Kohanga Reo National Trust to chart its own pathway with regard to teacher qualifications in the spirit of tino rangatiratanga.
- Good employment practices are needed to recruit and retain teachers, supported by strong governance.

Areas where we held different opinions related to our views on the past policy directions and what constitutes the current problems and appropriate solutions. NZCA’s views feature largely here (in disagreeing with the some of what has been said today) and for that I make no apology.

- *The introduction of the teacher targets has created a teacher shortage in a sector which was well staffed previously. An alternative view is that the same labour pool of unqualified teachers still exists, however the sector was not well staffed previously as the quality of its teachers was not high enough.*
- *The introduction of qualified teacher targets has been bad for families and children because it has created high staff turnover. What is the evidence for this claim? We need more than anecdotes to assess systemic claims. Another perspective is that a very large number of previously unqualified teachers have gained recognised qualifications through centre-based ITE programmes during this time period, achieving a qualitative shift across the sector which benefits children and families. In addition there has been widely accessible recognition of prior learning through a variety of providers, with applicants able to undertake challenge tests for up to 2/3 of a teaching diploma. The experience of NZCA was that many applicants with prior qualifications were successful in gaining some credit and then went on to complete a qualification. Notably the people who entered the process with*

experience working in ECE but without prior qualifications did not fare well.

- *Unqualified teachers can be excellent caregivers of babies and toddlers.* While no-one disputes that some individuals may be naturally responsive to children, at a systems level there is evidence that a largely unqualified teaching workforce has led to less than high quality practice. ERO reports taken from the time when the majority of staff in infants and toddlers services were untrained (2005-8) tell a different story, with teachers in almost half of these centres failing to 'foster and extend children's interests and ideas' learning and a number having poor quality interactions. This is of particular concern in the light of the research identifying developmental risks for infants and toddlers in poor quality services. The rationale for the quality strand of the ECE strategic plan was based on widespread agreement that the quality of NZ education and care services was highly variable, ranging from excellent to poor. International indicators of good practice (eg OECD) include ECE teacher qualifications for all age groups. There is a widespread view that teachers of under 2s need to be more specialised, not less qualified, than teachers of older children because of the high level of sensitivity required, the vulnerability of this age group and the support needed by many parents.
- *Newly qualified teachers are not always able to work effectively with infants and toddlers hence qualifications may not be desirable or useful for teachers of young children.* An alternative viewpoint is that becoming a fully competent teacher takes 5 years of study and experience, including a well planned advice and guidance programme. Expecting a new graduate to function as if s/he were an experienced teacher is unrealistic and not an expectation of our primary and secondary teachers.
- *The strategic plan, 'Pathways to the future: nga huarahi arataki' (2002), offered only one strategy (teacher qualifications) for improving quality.* This statement overlooks the substantial professional development work supporting implementation of 'Te whaariki' and 'Kei tua o te pae ECE assessment exemplars' by the sector over the past 5 years as well as the groundbreaking collaborative research work carried out by the Centres of Innovation. Our sector is visibly different as a consequence, notably in its focus on recognising and responding to learning, the quality of conversations between teachers, children and parents about learning and the way in which research informs our work. However centres tell us it is difficult for unqualified teachers to participate in these conversations.
- *The current strategy to get teachers qualified has failed and we need a new one.* An alternative point of view is that the strategy has been very successful, delivering almost 5,000 additional qualified and registered teachers in a very short timeframe and that it needs to be continued, albeit with an additional investment in areas that are lagging behind.

Sarah Farquar concluded her presentation by saying ‘we need to get there faster’ and advocating for recognition for a wide range of alternative qualifications. My question is ‘where is it that we want to get?’ and my plea is that this is not a case of ‘back to the future’.

Thank you again to NZEI Te Riu Roa for this opportunity to come together and for offering me the last word today. I look forward to working with the sector to find solutions to the issues outlined today which maintain our vision of a fully qualified teaching workforce and high quality ECE for all children.