

**NZEI TE RIU ROA RESPONSE TO THE
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION (ITE)
DISCUSSION DOCUMENT, SEPTEMBER 2004.**

1. Introduction

- 1.1 NZEI Te Riu Roa is the professional organisation and industrial union that represents the interests and issues of its 43,500 members. Our members include teachers in the early childhood and primary schools and centres, support staff in the primary, intermediate, and secondary sectors, advisers employed by the Colleges/Schools of Education and Special Education staff employed by the Ministry of Education.
- 1.2 NZEI is one of the largest unions and professional bodies in the country and has a long history of playing a positive role in the education sector. The national structures of NZEI include an elected National Executive, Te Reo Areare (NZEI Māori strand), and a number of specific sector advisory groups including the Principals' Council, the Early Childhood National Caucus, and the Primary Classroom Teachers' Advisory Group. The organisation also includes regional offices and field staff who regularly communicate with members at worksites on a range of professional issues. Extensive consultation with these groups contributed to the development of this paper.
- 1.3 NZEI congratulates the Ministry of Education on taking this step to engender informed discussion of initial teacher education (ITE) programmes in New Zealand, and intend its comments to inform this step.
- 1.4 NZEI believes it is particularly important that the 'pieces are put together' in such a way that these discussions do not subsume or misinterpret research, but rather, are informed by, and continue to inform, current research into initial teacher education. As well, it is important to include research supporting wide-ranging paradigms and views.
- 1.5 NZEI expects to participate in ongoing discussions which will serve to acknowledge and ensure that ITE is not looked at in isolation, but rather within a framework that includes the induction period, ongoing research, factors influencing learning outside the classroom, and consideration of the whole of a teacher's career and professional development. Currently, the framework is limited and this inclusion does not occur.

2. Comments on the Ministry's Discussion Document

- 2.1 While the Ministry's strategy will contribute to, and is informed by, wider work carried out by other agencies, there is little acknowledgement of the impact of factors outside of initial teacher education on student learning and achievement. These factors include, but are not limited to, support and professional development during the induction period and socio-economic factors impacting on student learning.

- 2.2 NZEI notes that the Ministry is relying heavily on research completed in 2001 in its current strategy development. While NZEI agrees with the emphasis placed on quality teaching in student performance, more recent New Zealand research (Professor John Hattie¹) indicates that factors that students themselves bring into the classroom result in differences in student achievement of up to 50%, plus another 5-10%, for home environment.
- 2.3 Hattie's study indicates that the variance range for the impact of quality teaching on performance is wide (16-59%). Concentrating on 'top-end' statistics must not occur at the expense of consideration and acknowledgment of the impact of other factors.
- 2.4 In other research, Professor Richard Harker² highlights the impact of socio-economic status on student performance. Although performance may be affected by quality teaching and/or teacher expectation, these are not the only factors.

3. The Initial Teacher Education (ITE) Environment

- 3.1 Given the rapidly changing nature of the tertiary environment in which initial teaching education occurs, it is disappointing that the Ministry's strategy is limited in the length of its focus. The strategy's two year focus is not long enough to evaluate new programmes in terms of content or graduate outcomes, particularly when institutions comment that mergers affecting the two largest providers of ITE will take at least two years to "bed-down", and the proliferation of new programmes continues.
- 3.2 NZEI advises that the two year scope of the strategy should be further expanded so that programme evaluations and research into programme effectiveness can be undertaken and appropriate evaluation can occur.
- 3.3 NZEI recognises that New Zealand is entering a tertiary environment where excellence in teaching practice and experience must be complemented by: content knowledge, a firm base in theory, and an understanding of the relationship and critical importance of factors and developments outside the classroom, and how these impact on student learning in the classroom. While this environment has been evident in schools for at least a decade, it is encouraging that the draft strategy seeks alignment in this area.

4. Changes to the New Zealand Tertiary Environment

- 4.1 Recent changes to the tertiary environment, in particular mergers of colleges of education and universities, and the impact of performance based research funding (PBRF) continues to impact on ITE programme development.

¹ Hattie, John, *Teachers make a difference: What is the research evidence?*, NZCER 2002 Conference

² Harker, Richard, Massey University, PPTA Annual Conference September 2004

- 4.2 NZEI recognises that mergers have both positive and negative consequences. On the positive side, it is hoped that association with research based institutions will enable quality ITE research.
- 4.3 *The Education Review*, August 2004³ reports that universities which had merged with colleges of education had lower PBRF scores than other universities. The PBRF report noted that the low scores of Waikato and Massey universities were in part attributable to, or significantly affected by, mergers with colleges and schools of education. It is vital that ITE academic staff can not only supervise and instruct student teachers and graduate students in teacher education, but that they are also engaged in high-quality research.
- 4.4 NZEI believes that it is imperative that the link between theory and practice is maintained and developed fairly, and with integrity. Expert practitioners must maintain recent experience in schools and centres, and ITE research capability must be enhanced and improved rather than masked, as in the case of recent PBRF exceptions made for newly merged institutions. This masking undermines public and government perception and confidence in teacher education, and ultimately the status of the profession as a whole.

5. Initial Teacher Education

- 5.1 NZEI supports and encourages quality teachers, and believes issues of consideration in the provision, funding and recognition of initial teacher education courses and qualifications are highly complex and significant. The scope, depth, content and delivery of teacher education programmes, including the support during induction and further professional development afforded to teachers, will determine the quality of teaching and learning for generations to come.
- 5.2 The adequacy of initial teacher education programmes continues to be a question of debate. The recent Education Review Office report indicates that there is some dissatisfaction with up to 30 % of primary, and up to 50% of secondary, ITE graduates. As well, there is anecdotal evidence to suggest New Zealand ITE is insufficient.
- 5.3 While some recent research indicates the length of the ITE programme⁴ has little impact on teacher competency at the end of the induction period, the shortening of initial teacher education carries the risk that the time for experience in schools is sacrificed first.
- 5.4 The variations in actual classroom experience (practica) during ITE may account for the differences in statistics reported for primary and secondary ITE graduates, although no comments regarding programme length were included in the ERO report. As well, applicants to primary and early childhood ITE increasingly have first degrees (currently up to 30 % of these applicants have first degrees) and undertake “shorter” programmes.
- 5.5 It is generally recognised that there are already too many programmes for a country the size of New Zealand. Currently, there is a vast

³ The Education Review, September 1-7 2004, New Zealand, p. 3.

⁴ Anna Marsich, Dunedin College of Education, discussion with NZEI re: Anna Marsich: unpublished research findings, August 2004.

number (over 155) of programmes available to people wishing to undertake initial teacher education in New Zealand schools. Most of these programmes are offered by six major providers on campus, and through satellite, centre-based or distance programmes.

- 5.6 During the last two years over 50 initial and other teacher education programmes have been approved. These approvals have occurred during a government moratorium on new programmes. Many of these programmes have been, and continue to be developed in response to industrial determinations. NZEI believes this is an example of the inappropriateness of applying the market model to education in a country the size of New Zealand.
- 5.7 In New Zealand, a history of criticism has influenced discussion and development of ITE⁵. Numerous ITE programmes have been put in place, and many additions and adjustments to existing programmes have been made to address these concerns. Curriculum requirements, assessment techniques, and the need to effect adjustment to the balance of practical and theoretical components of teacher education, have also influenced the development and modification of ITE programmes.
- 5.8 NZEI endorses the Ministry's report on beginning teachers which emphasise that "initial programmes of teacher education can never fully prepare a beginning teacher for the classroom."⁶
- 5.9 Mike Hollings, National Manager Analysis and Policy with the Education Review Office (ERO), commented on the importance of the pre-registration period stating that. "During the first two years of a teacher's career he or she makes the transition from a graduate trainee to a practising teacher, so it's really important that all beginning teachers get good support during both years of provisional registration."⁷ It is therefore concerning that the Ministry has chosen to focus solely on intake criteria and outcomes of programmes rather than on programme content or delivery, the question of whether there are too many programmes, and the relationship between the ITE programme and the induction period.
- 5.10 NZEI endorses the need for ITE qualifications, complemented by sector targeted professional development, which support quality teaching practice in the early childhood, primary and secondary sectors.
- 5.11 It is not only secondary teachers who require sound subject content. Teaching in early childhood and primary schools requires interaction with a range of students who are in their formative years of learning and developing skills and attitudes. Therefore it is imperative that all degree-based qualifications leading to teaching include substantive content based undergraduate study, followed by further study in

⁵ The Distinctive Contribution of Tertiary Education Organisations – A Tertiary Education Commission Consultation Paper, Tertiary Education Commission, Wellington New Zealand August 2004.

⁶ Renwick, R, *Support for Beginning Teachers, Final Report*. Ministry of Education Wellington

⁷ Hollings, Mike, National Manager Analysis and Policy with the Education Review Office (ERO), Media release, 28 September 2004,

theory and practice. NZEI endorses a professionally constructed 480 NZQA credit (4 academic years) pre-service teaching bachelors degree qualification, followed by an adequately resourced and supported two-year advice and guidance programme for all provisionally registered teachers, and recognises that within any course of ITE study must be opportunity to trial theories and ideas in a wide range of classroom settings.

- 5.12 NZEI supports affirmative action and believes that it is imperative that the teaching service mirrors the classroom demography. A teacher must understand culture as well as have proficiency in language. To progress this goal, and ensure quality ITE, bridging courses and scholarships should be offered to encourage enrolment of under-represented groups in programmes leading to teaching.
- 5.13 NZEI believes that the prescription of a minimum proportion of time for school-based practice will not resolve issues relating to the quality of programme content. It is critical that the value of the practicum is acknowledged and that the balance between subject content and teaching method or disciplinary knowledge and pedagogic knowledge is highlighted and maintained. NZEI endorses the continuing importance of enhancing research-practice links through the continued role of the expert practitioner in teacher education.
- 5.14 Recent surveys have reaffirmed the value placed by traditional providers on the partnership work of normal schools. NZEI advocates for an increase in provision and for a widening of the range of communities represented in these schools.
- 5.15 The diversification of ITE programmes has necessitated the development of other forms of school-provider partnerships. The efficacy of these new models is worthy of investigation as alternative or complementary models. It is important that the partnership concept is maintained and strengthened, and that resources are directed towards this as an expectation of quality ITE provision.

6. Beyond Initial Teacher Education Induction

- 6.1 The lack of recognition of the importance of the induction period, in the Ministry's ITE strategy is indicative of the piecemeal approach that continues to inhibit the development of a long-term strategic plan for teacher education.
- 6.2 The induction period is critical for establishing professional competence and reinforcing positive attitudes towards teaching as a personally fulfilling career.

6.3 Innovative programmes have been developed, exploring areas such as: immersion and bilingual education, closer relationships with schools, tailoring courses for new groups of mature-age entrants, cultural awareness training for teachers and targeting specific teacher supply issues. These programmes must be extended to offer targeted quality assured professional development for new teachers during the induction period.

6.4 New forms of partnership will need to be developed between teacher education institutions and schools, and schools will need to have the time, training and resources to adequately supervise and support teachers during the induction period.

Professional development

6.5 There is a need to view teachers as professional learners on a continuum of professional development, characterised by a quest for higher standards of teaching.

6.6 Currently, professional learning for teachers is strongly, if unevenly, encouraged and supported by the Ministry, school management, unions, professional bodies, and the wider school community. The importance of developing a longer-term strategy is recognised through the negotiations of the current agreements.

6.7 To strengthen the quality of teaching and to enhance the standing of the profession, professional development must be quality assured, appropriate to the needs of both the teacher and the school, and must be equitably available to all teachers.

6.8 Foundation, or initial, qualifications must be further supported by a programme of quality assured professional development during the first two years of practice appropriate to the needs of the newly graduated teacher.

6.9 NZEI supports on-going professional development of teachers throughout their careers as a key instrument in achieving and maintaining quality teaching practice.

6.10 It is imperative that the responsibility to provide equitable professional development opportunities is not subsumed by the user pays graduate teacher education programmes.

6.11 NZEI supports the ERO recommendations⁸ including:

- Strengthening the tutor teacher's role and status;
- Providing more targeted professional development for tutor teachers;
- Increasing time allowance for tutor teachers and beginning teachers during the second year of teaching;
- Increasing professional development capacity;
- Increasing mentoring and support groups for beginning teachers; and

⁸ Education Evaluation Reports, *The Quality of Year 2 Beginning Teachers June 2004*, Wellington, p. 2.

- Investigating the employment practices in some schools which disadvantage and exploit beginning teachers.

7. Attracting Quality Candidates to Teaching

- 7.1 Recruiting suitable candidates is a key factor in the success of any ITE programme. In New Zealand, the concept of a lifetime career is under challenge. Teaching as a career is not exempt from this challenge. NZEI maintains that there is a need to position the teaching career within the context of a more flexible working life.
- 7.2 The current teaching population in New Zealand, and around the world, is an ageing one. While there are increasing numbers of mature-age entrants to teaching as their second career, questions of retention and transferability of skills should become central themes in recruitment, initial training, and employment policies.
- 7.3 Questions of retention and mobility must be reflected in professional development and career path policies.

8. Diversity

- 8.1 NZEI supports the focus on improving outcomes for diverse learners. However, the definition of diversity must be widened to acknowledge the changing nature of the classroom demography and to include the recognition that all learners are diverse.
- 8.2 NZEI recognises the importance of appropriate educational provision for Maori, Pacific, and special need learners, and encourages the inclusion of targeted initial teacher education for these groups. In doing so, ITE must also include an understanding of the rights and educational needs of other groups, as well as an understanding of the commonly held values of individual and collective responsibility that underpin New Zealand society: including fairness, caring or compassion, non-sexism, and non-racism. The inclusion of human rights education in ITE would support such programmes in schools.

9. Quality Assurance and Monitoring of ITE Programmes

Quality Assurance

- 9.1 Critical to any examination of quality assurance of ITE programmes is the degree of resourcing, and the capacity development, of the New Zealand Teachers Council (NZTC).
- 9.2 NZEI supports the NZTC goal to establish a set of standards for ITE programmes that lead to registration as a teacher.
- 9.3 Quality Assurance of ITE programmes and the development of ITE standards by the NZTC must be adequately funded by the government.
- 9.4 Any move towards defining standards and affirming quality, must include a continuum that includes recruitment, ITE, the induction period, and the early years through to the remainder of a teacher's career.

Monitoring programmes

- 9.5 NZEI supports the development of independent robust ITE monitoring processes which include self-monitoring in addition to consistent reporting to the NZTC.
- 9.6 It is vital that the NZTC monitoring processes are supported and funded by the government to ensure fair and equitable determinations.
- 9.7 The monitors themselves will require training and support to give confidence to the providers, and the public, that the evaluations are appropriate, independent, consistent and fair.

10. **Conclusion**

- 10.1 NZEI shares the Ministry's goal to raise student achievement by supporting quality teaching. In doing so, NZEI recognises that ITE is not a separate domain, but is intimately related to curriculum development, school management and leadership; as well as the systematic introduction of high quality resources for teaching and learning.
- 10.2 NZEI shares the view of other education unions both in Australia and New Zealand, in that good teachers do whatever they can to enable each student to achieve his/her full potential, but for some students, targeted extra support and resourcing is needed to enable this to happen. Resourcing to lower decile schools may need to come in the form of targeted professional development, extra staffing, money and support.
- 10.3 NZEI supports the focus on improving outcomes for diverse learners. However, the definition of diversity must be widened to acknowledge the changing nature of the classroom demography and to include the recognition that all learners are diverse. Denying that some students face greater challenges within school because of factors beyond the school gate must not become an excuse for governments failing to deliver on equity.
- 10.4 The teaching workforce must reflect the demography of the classroom and programmes must be developed to support appropriate candidates through ITE.
- 10.5 NZEI considers that all learners benefit from quality teaching, and contend that additional and equally important influences include, but are not limited to, the availability of targeted professional learning and the development of professional standards.
- 10.6 While some evidence suggests that better qualified teachers may make a difference for student learning at the classroom and school levels, there has been little inquiry into the effects on achievement that may be associated with large-scale policies and institutional practices that affect the overall level of teachers' knowledge and skills.

- 10.7 Professional development and learning in both pedagogic and subject content, qualifications, experience, and education policies need to reflect the reality that teaching is a multifaceted activity that is influenced by the many elements of teacher quality.
- 10.8 ITE must reflect both the changing nature of society and the fact that the job of teaching is more difficult and more complex than ever before. There are issues to resolve, including links between initial teacher education and induction programmes, individual schools and sector-wide variations, responsibility and the kinds of support, mentoring and guidance appropriate to different teachers and the settings in which they work.
- 10.9 Any consideration of the quality of new teachers must also include consideration of the impact of socio-economic factors on student learning and performance. While acknowledging the importance of ITE as a critical contributor to the development of high quality teaching, NZEI encourages the Ministry to also develop longer term, holistic strategies to raise achievement and reduce disparity.

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