



Introduction

This submission has been written by, and on behalf of, the primary and early childhood student and beginning teacher members of NZEI Te Riu Roa. We refer to ourselves as the Young Members Network (YMNI).

Even though we recognise that the nature of a 'vision' can be light on logistics, we feel that it is irresponsible releasing a document so vague and lacking in detail, yet suggesting such controversial changes to structures that affect student and beginning teachers in New Zealand. We have made some assumptions to what the working party means in each proposal, but we have also included questions, which we would like answered.

The fact that early childhood education is completely ignored in this submission is a reckless oversight, and one that has angered members of YMNI. We strongly believe that early childhood teachers and trainees/students are part of the teaching profession.

We also feel like much in this 'vision' is opinion stated as fact, and that many of the claims made are not substantiated by research.

Furthermore, the working party has written in the executive summary: "*Such professional leadership must be owned by the profession and distinct from government or industrial bodies*". We feel that this document is hypocritical of this statement as it is highly political, very leading, and light on details; and with little consultation time for the profession to negotiate how they want to lead themselves.

Initial Teacher Education and induction

Proposal 1: moving toward initial teacher education being provided only at postgraduate level (so that entry into teaching is dependent on holding a postgraduate qualification)

The proposal and accompanying diagram are vague and confusing.

- Will the second year of the post graduate qualification be full time or part-time study?
- When will teachers graduate from their post graduate qualification? End of the first year?
- How, if at all, will the last year of study and the first year of registration relate to each other? How will the new Registered Teacher Criteria (RTC) fit in with the last year of study?
- When are teachers assessed against the graduate teaching standards? In the first diagram ('Vision' document, pg 6) it looks as if it's at the end of registration whereas in the diagram on page 13 it looks as if it's at the end of the first year.

YMN make the assumption that the second year of the postgraduate qualification is full-time study for a year, and at the end of that year trainees will be awarded a postgraduate teaching qualification. Although we do support the idea of further teacher education extending into first and second year teaching, we believe that this proposal is unnecessary and unworkable.

a) Our first issue is with workload. Anecdotally we know that beginning teachers struggle managing the challenges of teaching a class and being in a new school for the first time, as well as managing the first year of their advice and guidance programme. In comparison with other professions, beginning teachers are expected to take on the same responsibilities as those with 20 years in the classroom from the first day of the job.¹ Making the assumption that the last year of study would be an addition to the advice and guidance programme, our beginning teachers made several comments.

From a beginning teacher currently completing an education Masters:

On paper it looked manageable, like I could comfortably complete the Masters part time while teaching full time. However in reality school workload has made it a costly and difficult experience, as teaching requirements often spill into all hours of the day and all days of the week (2nd year teacher).

A second beginning teacher questions the role of the tutor teacher, something not clarified in the proposal:

Although tutor teachers and beginning teachers start out with the best intentions, due to the hectic nature of teaching advice and guidance programmes are never as thorough as people would like. The idea that tutor teachers could also assist first year teachers through their last year of study is unrealistic and adds an unmanageable level of stress to entering the teaching profession. If this was the case, I don't think I would have gone into teaching (2nd year teacher).

Although the 'vision' plans to raise the "attractiveness of the profession", this proposal has the opposite effect. YMN is also concerned that beginning teachers could be perceived as 'half a teacher', in their first year of teaching, and viewed as such by parents and colleagues.

b) Our second issue is with the assumption that all primary and early childhood students have full-time, permanent employment directly after graduation. Principals working in schools from Wellington to Gisborne were surveyed in January 2010 about the employment status of beginning teachers in their schools. The results favoured fixed term appointment in primary teachers' first year:

First year teacher	Permanent 37.5%	Fixed Term 62.5%
Second year teacher	Permanent 71.68%	Fixed Term 28.32%

In the early childhood sector the statistics are better, but fixed term employment is still prevalent in the first year of teaching:

First year teacher	Permanent 82.8%	Fixed Term 16.4%
Second year teacher	Permanent 92.23%	Fixed Term 5.83%

As you can see, especially in primary, it is common practice to employ first year teachers using a fixed term agreement; the group that this 'vision' directly concerns. In the best case scenario, a teacher on a fixed term agreement could possibly complete their first year of teaching, first year of registration and last year of study in a one year fixed term teaching position. However, as well as the increased stress of this scenario, if there is any suggestion of the teacher's post-graduate qualification extending beyond one year this will be negatively affected by the fixed term agreement ending. Currently this scenario is troublesome enough

¹ Patrick, Rachel. "Where are Beginning Teachers' Stories About Learning to Teach in Culturally and Socially Diverse Secondary School Classrooms?" *Teaching and Education Conference Papers*, 2007.

for those trying to complete two years of teacher registration while in fixed term employment.

There is also the case of some students not wanting to enter the teaching profession directly after graduation. Some choose to travel, have children, take time out to pursue different career paths, and have the flexibility to apply and hold provisional registration within 5 years of graduating. It would be unfair to penalize these individuals, who could argue that their break from education gives them more experience in the classroom when they return, and force them to enter teaching straight after study (especially after 4 years!).

c) YMN sees the proposal to cut down a three to four year course into one year of study unnecessary. The working party writes: “the undergraduate degree provides the generic academic skills and subject specific knowledge which allows for a greater focus in the postgraduate qualification on the skills necessary to be an effective teacher” (‘Vision’ document 14). This may be the case for secondary, where teachers do need subject specific knowledge, but this model will not work in primary and early childhood education, where teachers are required to have broad knowledge of all curriculum areas.

A beginning teacher commented:

Primary teachers spend three years learning the general subject knowledge that they need to be able to become teachers. It’s ridiculous to think that a 1 year qualification can encompass all of that knowledge and prepare the graduates for the classroom. It’s important to have that general knowledge base prior to teaching, as once you are out there in the classroom it shifts to being able to deliver that information (2nd year beginning teacher).

Similarly, the working party seems to assume that a three or four year teaching qualification will not build students “generic academic skills”. YMN argues that these qualifications do, and, unlike non-education bachelor’s degrees, these qualifications build academic skills within an education and teaching context.

We also have several concerns about how vague the structure of this undergraduate qualification is. The working party suggests that students undertake a previous qualification in a “schooling subject” (‘Vision’ document 13). If the party are encouraging students to focus on ‘schooling subjects’, then surely, nothing can be more relevant than a 3-4 year education qualification? Furthermore:

- Who decides what these schooling subjects are?
- What are these decisions based on?
- Will there be a wide range?
- Does that mean students who have undergraduate qualifications in ‘non-schooling subjects’ will not be allowed to enter teaching?

Proposal 2: addressing the balance between the number of teachers being trained and the number of appropriate placements available for trainee and beginning teachers.

Again, this statement is too vague. What is the issue?

- Is the working party suggesting that there are too many graduates and too few jobs?
- Or is the working party suggesting that there are too few graduates and too many jobs?

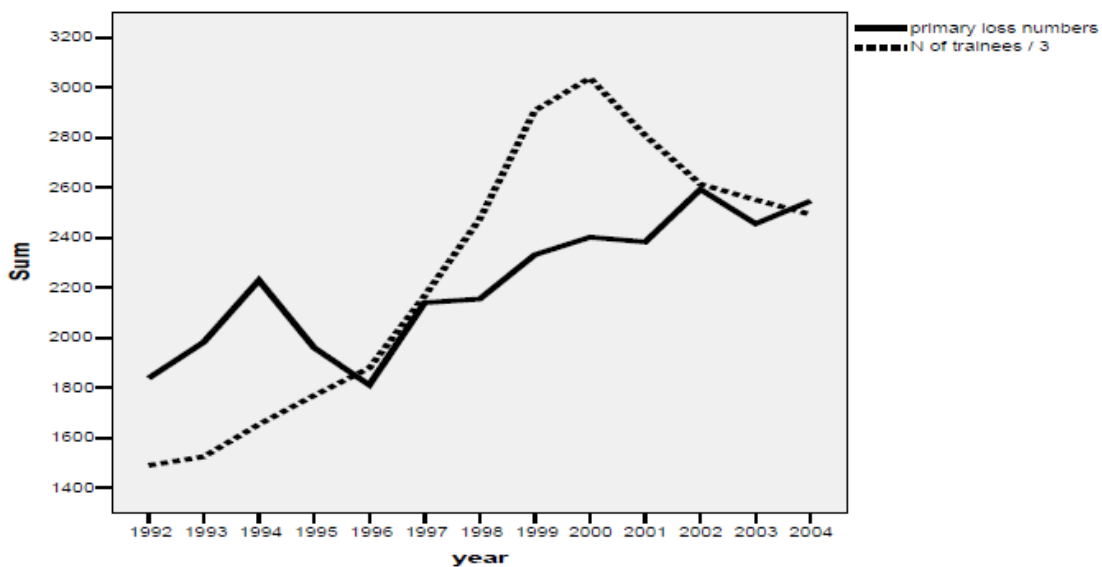
YMN assumes that the working party is referring to the first statement, and suggesting that we have too many graduating teachers in New Zealand. Frustratingly, the working party does

not back up this statement with research at all, and student and beginning teacher members of NZEI do not widely report challenges in finding a job after graduation at present.

James Chapman (Pro Vice-Chancellor at Massey University College of Education) and Richard Harker (Professor of Educational Research and Development), write:

Loss rates from the profession have shown a slow rise over the past decade, but with the negatively skewed age distribution of current teachers [...] increasingly large cohorts of teachers can be expected to leave over the next few years as the peak age group reaches retirement age. It is for this reason that we would argue that an over-reliance on the projected small decline in the numbers of students over the next few years is an inadequate basis on which to predict the demand for teachers, or to control the numbers in teacher education programmes. [...] Considering the age structure of the profession, this rate will certainly increase more rapidly over the last decade (49).²

Figure 12: Primary: Teacher Loss and Trainee Numbers



Although this data is from 2004, and Harker and Chapman wrote their article in 2006, we can see in the graph that the trend for attrition is rising, and the number of graduates decreasing. This, along with the anecdotal responses from beginning teacher members of NZEI, suggests that if there actually is an ‘imbalance’ between the number of teachers being trained and the number of placements, more graduates need to be attracted to the teaching profession, rather than the opposite.

Proposal 3: ensuring that trainee teachers are accepted initial teacher education programmes only after being assessed with a “disposition to teach” through a formal selection process.

Again, this proposal is too vague. In the discussion document the phrasing is “disposition to teach”, and in the ‘vision’ document the proposal is worded as: “selection for teacher education will depend on academic merit and on demonstrated ability in the cognitive skills important to teaching” (13). We have several questions:

- Is a disposition to teach assessment against academic ability and cognitive skills?

² Harker, Richard and James Chapman. “Teacher Numbers in New Zealand: Attrition and Replacement”. *New Zealand Journal of Teacher’s Work* 42-55, 3.1 (2006).

- How about character?
- How will this assessment happen?
- Will students have to achieve certain grades to be allowed into teaching?
- Who assesses and decides on assessment criteria? Universities, outside bodies, lecturers?
- Will it be monitored nationally or locally?
- Has the working party heard about the New Zealand Teachers Council (NZTC) review into Initial Teacher Education programmes?

YMNers are frustrated that the working party implies that there is currently no assessment of students before entry into a teaching qualification, and ignores the work already being done in this area. In April 2010, NZTC released the Draft Proposed Requirements for Initial Teacher Education Programmes, which focuses on academic entry to education programmes, assessing competency in:

- Literacy and numeracy
- Information technology
- Te Reo Māori
- English language for English as an additional language candidates

In addition to this rigorous assessment, the draft also requires a visual interview, and involvement of the profession in the selection of candidates.

This draft has undergone extensive consultation with members of the primary, early childhood and secondary sectors, and is supported by student and beginning teacher members of NZEI. The working party makes the statement later in the ‘vision’ that NZTC needs to be “refocused” to set clear requirements for entry to the profession (Discussion Document 7). This draft indicates that this work is already successfully happening, and the working party hypocritically ignores this.

Proposal 4: changing how initial teacher education is delivered to strengthen links between trainee and beginning teachers, and teacher education providers and schools.

YMN supports strengthening the links between ITE and schools, but feels that the working party’s solution: “by altering the structure of ITE and provisional registration” is too narrow minded (‘Vision’ document 12). YMN suggests that one of the ways to achieve this is to look to the sector for suggestions, and believes that changing how ITE is delivered in a ‘one size fits all’ approach in order to strengthen links will not work across different training institutions. YMN also encourages the working party to look to the education unions NZEI and PPTA, who are already undertaking work to strengthen links between trainee and beginning teachers.

We feel, like most of this ‘vision’, that this proposal is only half-baked, and have a number of questions and points for consideration:

- There are a large number of schools compared to the limited number of ITE providers. This poses challenges for linking every school with a training institution, particularly for isolated schools.
- Has the working party considered the extra workload for teachers that will be part of these ‘strengthened links’ (such as tutor teachers)? They make the worthy statement of specific training for those who are “leading the development and induction of beginning teachers within schools”, but make no mention of funding, or release time (“Vision” document 14).

- How exactly does the working party propose to strengthen the ties between trainee and beginning teachers? This is not elaborated on at all.
- How will this proposed change to the ITE structure actually encourage schools to interact with training providers?

Reward, recognition and progression

Proposal 1: providing career development opportunities to support effective teaching and progression through the profession

YMN does not agree with the working party’s opinion that teachers currently are not able to “take ownership for their development and make career choices”, and that they are unsupported in this capacity (“Vision” document 15). Similarly, we do not support the wild claim that the “attractiveness of teaching as a profession” needs to be improved. There is no research cited in the proposal to verify either of these statements.

Professional development, as outlined, is supported by YMN, but only partly. If there is to be increased professional development, we want it negotiated and shaped by the sector for the sector, rather than imposed by a government working party.

Proposal 2: creating greater flexibility for principals to use resources at their disposal, such as salary units and non contact time, to provide opportunities for teachers to upskill and to reward their increased skill and capability.

YMN does not agree with the working party’s assumption that teachers need incentives to become effective teachers. One of our beginning teachers wisely pointed out:

This proposal would further increase a lack of trust that teachers are doing the best for their children- it is a very low trust model, and one that will perpetuate this myth (2nd year beginning teacher).

We also see this proposal at odds with a previous statement in the “vision”: “If teaching is to be seen as a high status profession much greater emphasis is needed on continued learning by teachers within schools supported by clear and strong professional leadership and the sharing of effective practice across schools” (2). We believe that the model of individual rewards proposed by the working party will not create an environment where teachers feel comfortable to share effective practice, and if anything, will create damaging competition.

Proposal 3: setting clear standards so that effective, transparent and robust judgements of teacher capability and performance can be made.

YMN strongly dislikes the language used in this proposal, and repeated throughout the “Vision”. We believe that effective teaching cannot be measured in terms of “productivity” (‘Vision’ document 9) and performance. We believe that if measures were put in place to generate this data (such as National Standards), the quality of teaching would be negatively affected.

Leadership within schools

YMN believes that teachers deserve to have a secure job and pay they can rely on, rather than units distributed on the whim of the principal. Our beginning teachers are worried that if

principals were in charge of rewarding “teaching excellence”, they would be reluctant to voice their professional opinion if it varied against the principal’s.

We are concerned that these proposals, in conjunction with the reward, recognition and progression proposals, could cause teachers to focus less on teaching, and more on proving that they’re teaching, with emphasis on what the principal sees as reward-able outcomes.

Leadership of the profession

YMN believes that the majority of proposals in this section illustrate a lack of understanding and research by the working party. They make the sweeping claim, again unsubstantiated by any research, that “direct representation of teacher unions on NZTC may led to emphasis on employment conditions and industrial matters rather than professional leadership” (Discussion document 7). They then carry on to portray teachers as renegades with no ethical accountability: “NZTC’s Code of Ethics is more a guideline than a robust set of standards against which teachers are expected to align” (Discussion document 7). YMN is frustrated with the working party presenting these biased opinions as fact, and, as beginning teachers, know and view the Code of Ethics as a “robust set of standards”.

Furthermore, the working party mention “entry to the profession” as one of the areas to ‘refocus’ NZTC, but (as stated earlier) completely ignore the comprehensive review of entry to training institutions that NZTC are near completing.

YMN agrees with part of the proposal and would like to see NZTC given greater importance as a professional body for teachers. However we believe this has to be achieved through increased sector representation on the council, and letting NZTC operate as an independent body, not as a crown entity.

Representatives of YMN would be happy to speak to this submission to expand on our ideas.