



THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

Faculty of Education

Te Kura Toi Tangata

Waikato Journal of Education

Te Hautaka Mātauranga o Waikato

Volume 18, Issue 1: 2013

Special Edition:
Reclaiming and reframing
teacher education in Aotearoa New Zealand



WAIKATO JOURNAL OF EDUCATION

TE HAUTAKA MĀTAURANGA O WAIKATO

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The Wilf Malcolm Institute of Educational Research (WMIER), which is part of the Faculty of Education, The University of Waikato, publishes the journal.

There are two major submission deadline dates: December 1 (for publication the following year in May); June 1 (for publication in the same year in November). Please submit your article or abstract to wmier@waikato.ac.nz.

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Subscriptions: Within NZ \$50; Overseas NZ \$60

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Publisher: Faculty of Education, The University of Waikato

Cover design: Donn Ratana

Printed by: Waikato Print

ISSN 1173-6135

Waikato Journal Of Education

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Editorial introduction: Reclaiming and reframing a national voice for teacher education <i>John O'Neill, Sally Hansen, Peter Rawlins and Judith Donaldson</i>	3
Policy driven reforms and the role of teacher educators in reframing teacher education in the 21st century <i>Diane Mayer</i>	7
Is initial teacher education a profession? <i>John O'Neill</i>	21
Rapporteurs' report: Is initial teacher education a profession? <i>Beverley Norsworthy</i>	33
Teacher education policy in New Zealand since 1970 <i>Noeline Alcorn</i>	37
Rapporteurs' report: Teacher education policy in New Zealand since 1970 <i>Andy Begg and Barbara Allan</i>	49
Towards equity through initial teacher education <i>Dr Airini</i>	53
Rapporteurs' report: Towards equity through initial teacher education <i>Chris Jenkin and John Clark</i>	67
From preparation to practice: Tensions and connections <i>Mary Simpson and Lexie Grudnoff</i>	71
Rapporteurs' report: From preparation to practice: Tensions and connections <i>Monica Cameron and Walt Rutgers</i>	83
What are the characteristics of exemplary initial teacher education programmes in countries similar to Aotearoa/New Zealand? <i>Peter Lind</i>	87
Rapporteurs' report: What are the characteristics of exemplary initial teacher education programmes in countries similar to Aotearoa/New Zealand? <i>Peter Lind, Barry Brooker and Beverley Cooper</i>	101
What should initial teacher education programmes for 2022 look like and why? <i>Jane Gilbert</i>	105
Rapporteurs' report: What should initial teacher education programmes for 2022 look like and why? <i>Letitia Fickel and Julie Mackey</i>	117

What evidence-base do we need to build a stronger theory-practice nexus? <i>Lisa F. Smith</i>	121
Rapporteurs' report: What evidence-base do we need to build a stronger theory-practice nexus? <i>Judith Donaldson and Kama Weir</i>	131
Who should develop initial teacher education policy and why? <i>Judie Alison and Sandra Aikin</i>	135
Rapporteurs' report: Who should develop initial teacher education policy and why? <i>Graham Jackson and Jenny Ritchie</i>	147
Special Interest Group report: Tātaiako: Cultural competencies for teachers of Māori learners <i>Jen McLeod and Pani Kenrick</i>	151
Special Interest Group report: Early Childhood Education <i>Kerry Bethell</i>	155
Special Interest Group report: ICT/eLearning competencies in ITE <i>Mary Simpson</i>	159
Special Interest Group report: Learning languages in ITE <i>Adèle Scott</i>	163
Special Interest Group report: Literacy and numeracy competency of ITE students <i>Beverley Cooper and Bev Norsworthy</i>	165
Special Interest Group report: Inclusive education in ITE <i>Missy Morton</i>	171
Special Interest Group report: Sustainability in initial teacher education <i>Jenny Ritchie</i>	175



Rapporteurs' report: What are the characteristics of exemplary initial teacher education programmes in countries similar to Aotearoa/New Zealand?

Presented

Peter Lind (*New Zealand Teachers Council*)

Rapporteurs

Barry Brooker (*University of Canterbury*) and **Beverley Cooper** (*University of Waikato*)

In his introduction, Peter Lind referred to the 'social conscience' messages of the opening keynote speaker, Alan Scott, and song writer Woody Guthrie. He outlined the three major purposes of his paper as being

- to identify the characteristics of exemplary initial teacher education programmes from the international academic literature;
- to outline how these programmes prepare teachers to improve the educational outcomes for all learners; and
- to explain the implications for New Zealand initial teacher education programmes.

The key message of Lind's presentation and paper was that we must build strong partnerships between initial teacher education providers and schools/centres.

Referring to the research of Cameron and Baker (2004), Cochran-Smith and Zeichner (2005) and Goodlad (2002), Lind argued that initial teacher education does not have a robust empirical research base. He noted that although there are effective models of initial teacher education, evidence of these is fragmented and not well 'marketed'. Teacher educators need to make explicit the tacit knowledge of teacher education, and communicate the complexity of teacher education (and teaching) to teachers and policymakers. One way this can be done is through stories or narratives told in context, as has been done by Korthagen and colleagues at the University of Utrecht (see for example, Korthagen & Vasalos, 2005). This work, along with the school-based models of teacher education in England, has also contributed to the ongoing debate regarding the locus of control of initial teacher education (ITE).

Having established the shortcomings in the research base for initial teacher education, Lind did present research findings from several countries where common



factors in exemplary teacher education had been identified. Lind stressed the need for partnerships between tertiary providers and schools. Such partnerships can be viewed on a continuum (Day, in Rossner & Commins, 2012), from simply 'lending a class' at one end, through to a full partnership with collegial learning and fully aligned processes at the other. Under current pressures, ITE providers are more likely to use a practicum model that can best be described as 'lend a class'. The goal is to work towards a stronger partnership between the university (or other ITE provider) staff and teachers in schools and centres, to develop collaboration and communities of practice.

One example of a closer partnership is the CUSP (Collaborative University-School Project) programme at the University of Waikato. Here a nominated teacher within each partnership school is designated an honorary lecturer for the university. A co-constructed professional practice and inquiry paper is taught in the school setting by both faculty lecturer and honorary lecturer. Student teachers are placed in classrooms in pairs for one day per week, culminating in a three-week practicum. In his paper, Lind referred to *Te Aho Tātaurangi: Bachelor of Teaching Māori Medium/Diploma Māori Education* and the *Postgraduate Diploma in Teaching (Secondary) Field-Based* as examples of positive partnerships models. It was pointed out by participants that these are, however, small and as yet unproven programmes.

Lind made several references to the 'scope of practice' of teachers, principals, associate teachers, and teacher educators, which, although different, also have elements in common. There is a need for those in education to understand the 'unique' elements of each scope of practice and respect each other's roles.

Lind then referred to three of his five key findings related to exemplary teacher education programmes: 1) entry requirements and selection of students, 2) building strong connections through partnerships, and 3) induction of beginning teachers. To focus the initial discussion, he asked whether entry to ITE programmes in New Zealand is current highly selective.

One participant endorsed University Entrance as an entry requirement for applicants under 20 (although it is not without its problems) and noted that selection is more difficult with students over 20 and believes providers are more likely to 'take some risks' with selection from this group. Another participant noted that her institution involves principals in the selection process. This gives principals more ownership and results in it being less likely that they will criticise the selection process and standard of ITE students. She also mentioned that there is a risk of bias in the selection process, as those involved in selection are likely to (unconsciously) have a preference for students 'like themselves'. This reduces the likelihood of providing the diversity in the teaching workforce needed to cater for all students, including Māori, Pasifika and students with disabilities. It was noted that achieving such diversity may require positive discrimination and 'foundation studies' to enable a greater number of students to meet entry requirements. The need for mentoring and support for students once they are in the programme was also discussed. A related issue that was raised several times was the need to look more closely at the literacy and numeracy levels of all ITE applicants.

Another problem identified was that of attracting the desired applicants, as applicants who are sought after for teacher education, e.g., Māori, physics, maths and high academic performers, are also sought after by other professions. It was noted that teaching is not a 'sexy' profession to be in, particularly with current negative media (and political) attention. There was also discussion of teacher supply and whether it is

ethical to offer a large number of places in teacher education programmes when there are a limited number of jobs available. Those present noted the need for a broader and longer-term view of teacher provision and teacher education, and they did not want to have initial teacher education EFTS prescribed.

From the discussion a need for further research, perhaps commissioned by TEFANZ, was identified

- to see if there is a correlation between the selection rating/score of applicants and the performance/grades in the teacher education programme;
- to document best selection practices; and
- to provide an analysis of students who do not gain entry to ITE.

The important relationship between the school/centre (associate teacher), the ITE provider (lecturers/tutors) and the student was noted. It was reiterated that for partnerships to work there has to be communication and sharing, and valuing of each other's knowledge and expertise.

Some examples of activities that build positive partnerships that arose from the discussion are

- providing professional development for associate teachers;
- holding shared seminars;
- using the field-based component to strengthen the partnership;
- having students in schools/centres on a weekly basis;
- involving associate teachers, not just principals, in the partnership discussions;
- developing 'lead associate teachers', who gain qualification credits for their professional development;
- co-constructing (associate teachers and lecturers) goals/standards for school/centre-based ITE activities;
- giving greater recognition to the work of associate teachers locally and nationally (through industrial collective agreement; and
- working in conjunction with PPTA, NZEI and similar groups.

The need to raise the EFTS value for ITE, in order to have the resourcing required to improve the implementation ITE programmes in general, and partnerships in particular, was also noted.

Finally, the importance of students having an opportunity to teach following completion of their teacher education programme was emphasised. Graduates need a greater likelihood of gaining a teaching position than at present. This has become more difficult as many teachers in New Zealand are now continuing to teach beyond the age of 60. There was also discussion on whether Limited Authority Teachers (LATs) take positions that would otherwise be available for beginning teachers. It was noted that Scotland guarantees a one-year teaching position following graduation, and the question was raised (but not answered) as to what happens in Scotland after the first year.

In summing up, Lind stated that the government has made it clear that any changes to teacher education will need to be fiscally neutral, and there is an agreed need to strengthen the partnerships between the ITE providers and schools/centres. He then posed the question and challenge of whether initial teacher educators would accept a

trade-off of having teacher education programmes that were of higher quality and more expensive per student if that meant taking in fewer ITE students.

It was noted from the floor that Lind's key findings made no mention of needing programmes that are 'ethical' and 'educational'. Lind's response was that although this is not explicitly stated in the paper, it is a given.

In conclusion, Lind noted that we are grappling with difficult and challenging times and that we need to build communication, collaboration and partnerships. He referred to Karl Popper's moral and philosophical optimism, an optimism that we definitely need in our current initial teacher education environment. As expressed by Popper, we do not know if we can bring progress, but it is incumbent on us to try.

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