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

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TE HAUTAKA MĀTAURANGA O WAIKATO

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Special Interest Group report: Inclusive education in ITE

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University of Canterbury

Approximately twenty people attended this Inclusive Education in ITE SIG discussion, facilitated by Alison Kearney.

The key questions for consideration were:

1. What are the issues around inclusive education in initial teacher education (ITE)?
2. What are possible solutions to the issues around inclusive education in ITE?
3. What work still needs to be done around inclusive education in ITE?
4. What will inclusive education in ITE look like in 2022 and why?
5. What are the attitudes, values skills and knowledge needed by teachers to be successful in promoting and facilitating inclusive education?
6. How can those involved in delivering inclusive education in ITE work together to improve programmes and outcomes?

The wide-ranging discussion engaged with policy, research and practice (both past and present) as well as suggestions for more collaborative work across institutions and across SIGs with similar interests in 'social justice'.

Discussion: How can initial teacher education respond to the government's signal of Success for All 2014?

A general discussion was held regarding research into the preparedness of teachers for inclusive education as well as professional learning and development research in this area.

Theme: Constraints of time

If initial teacher education programmes move from undergraduate status to postgraduate, the difficulties of covering all material in a one-year programme were discussed. What should be the focus? There was a discussion around the belief by some students that they did not know enough particular diagnostic categories; however it was important for there to be a focus on differentiating teaching and assessment, etc.

In a one-year programme, can we be working better with our colleagues so that we have courses that address the issues we have in common? Can we make sure that on

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every practicum student teachers take responsibility for one student with special education needs? Working with students with special education needs should be built into all assignments (e.g., planning) and followed up with debrief and reflection on experiences. This is particularly important when initial teacher education students see not-so-good practices in their placements. (Do we have evidence that a three-year programme is always better than a one-year programme? We will have some idea with first TEFANZ exit surveys.)

Theme: Content—Skills? Attitudes? Beliefs? And ethos?

Participants discussed the issues of how to present ideas and materials; a course or courses? Infused/woven through? Early childhood education has success with the weaving through approach, but not sure if students and beginning teachers know what supports might be available, or notice if some support is required.

A major issue was highlighted and discussed around teacher 'ownership' or responsibility for students' learning (the 'elephant in the room'). Some schools/principals/teachers still believe that they are NOT responsible for ALL students. Students/teachers won't be interested in differentiating instruction if attitudes in schools are negative. We need to think about what we are modelling to other students in the classroom (and to our student teachers on practice) if a student with special education needs is attached to a teacher's aide or sent out of classroom.

Similarly, there is the issue of how we get all initial teacher education colleagues on board with initial education. This is not just something that the 'inclusive education' staff should be focusing on. A discussion on how we can share some of our strategies and frameworks was held.

How do we expose students and colleagues to people with disabilities living valued lives post school, so that their expectations about education for students with special education will be raised?

How do we make sure initial teacher education students get to know students with special education needs (at school and in the context of their families) and be involved in that student's learning? The discussion stressed the importance of hearing and learning from parents/families, and the importance of learning about advocacy (e.g. in courses that look at teaching for social justice). There was a brief discussion around the 2010 ERO report and the NZCER project developing a New Zealand version of the Index for Inclusion—could initial teacher education students look at a school with these indicators in mind?

Theme: Sharing our learning

In secondary education, how do we get to learn about exemplary programmes to use in initial teacher education?

The question was posed: Are identical conversations going on in some of the other SIGs (e.g., cultural competence, language/literacies)? Inclusive education is broader than students with special education needs—it is a much bigger piece of work. A key idea is that we are also learners and that we need to know our students as learners, forming relationships with students, families and colleagues. Do we have allies in these areas with common interests? It was pointed out that we need to start with the focus on

the child and that even though it gets harder as children go through school, it needs to be acknowledged that this is the system changing rather than the child.

Some ideas going forward

1. We need a community of people who are interested in initial teacher education and inclusive education—how can we share ideas? Share readings? Share research? Use the TEFANZ website (with email alerts)?
2. Could inclusive education (in its widest sense—students who have historically been excluded and marginalised in centres, schools and wider society) be a focus for the next forum, [it was held at the University of Canterbury in 25–26 July 2013] (with a possible link to DSE 2013 conference). Possible forum topic: 'Teacher education for inclusion'.
3. How do we support our initial teacher education students to sustain the ideas they've developed in a setting that is NOT inclusive? Even as brand-new teachers how can our graduates make a difference?