Initial teacher education in change: But is it for the better?

SUMMARY

This paper examines the impact of new models of initial teacher education (ITE) that make greater demands on schools. It considers the effects on teacher workload and problems with new funding models, and seeks to find ways that partnerships between schools and teacher education providers can be better managed and teachers better recognised for their contribution.

CONTENTS

1. Introduction

1.1. PPTA's last annual conference paper on initial teacher education (ITE) was in 2001. At that time, we had been facing an increasingly virulent market in ITE as a result of the removal in 1990 of government regulation which limited provision of teacher education to six Colleges of Education. Over the following years, new institutions had picked up Equivalent Full-time Students (EFTS) for teacher education, and were chasing students to fill the places created.

1.2. Competition of this kind has never been known to deliver improved quality, and this was certainly true for secondary ITE, where the ability to prepare student teachers for a range of specialist subjects is essential to a successful programme. There was evidence of problems around selection, course depth and quality, and loose graduation standards, especially among some of the newer and smaller entrants to the "market".

1.3. Over the years since then, there have been some gradual improvements:

1.3.1. The number of providers of English-medium secondary ITE has dropped from its peak to a fairly stable nine providers: seven universities and two other providers (Bethlehem Institute and the Christchurch Graduate School).

1.3.2. Despite protests from some providers who resented "interference", the Teachers Council put in place in 2010 a robust set of requirements for courses and a system for approving and monitoring ITE programmes which includes practising teachers. PPTA hopes that these will remain in place under EDUCANZ.

1.3.3. Providers' selection processes appear to have tightened, and it is less common for PPTA to hear stories of clearly inappropriately selected students being placed in schools for practicum.

1.4. On the other hand, there have also been new problems:

1.4.1. New models of ITE have appeared that purport to improve quality, but make much bigger demands on schools.

1.4.2. The courses have become shorter, with consequent questions about quality and depth.

1.4.3. Despite evidence that secondary teacher supply issues are growing, the Ministry appears to have no plans to address these.

1.5. PPTA Annual Conference 2014 passed a resolution put forward by the Otago Region as follows:

That PPTA Executive prepare a paper to be presented at the 2015 Annual Conference investigating changes to initial teacher education provision and associated implications for teacher career paths, workload and funding in schools.

1.6. This resolution was very timely, as this paper demonstrates. As a way of addressing the issues outlined here, the paper proposes that a working party be established to develop a detailed Code of Practice to guide schools in their work with teacher education providers.

2. The changing face of ITE provision

2.1. **Masters programmes**

2.1.1. In June 2013, the Ministry of Education began a closed tender process with the universities, inviting them to submit proposals for "exemplary" postgraduate initial teacher education programmes. Extra funding was provided for successful bidders in order to facilitate "a much more integrated and collaborative approach between the ITE provider and the school".[1] To date, contracts have been let with six universities (Auckland, Waikato, Massey, Victoria, Canterbury and Otago) to provide Masters ITE programmes for both primary and secondary teaching. The opportunity to establish Masters programmes in ITE has been welcomed by universities, possibly because Masters students attract higher EFTS funding (1.5 EFTS) and contribute more to the university's ratings on the Performance Based Research Fund.

2.1.2. PPTA has never been convinced by the argument advanced by the government that moving to Masters qualifications would, of itself,

1 http://www.education.govt.nz/ministry-of-education/specific-initiatives/lifting-the-quality-of-initial-teacher-education-provision/

raise the status of the teaching profession. In practice, the government refuses to agree to salary rates that would make the profession more attractive, and continues to rely on overseas recruitment to plug gaps, usually with teachers who don't have Masters qualifications, ironically.

2.1.3. Furthermore, the Masters programmes for ITE began to be developed just at the same time that the government removed eligibility for student allowances for study at postgraduate level. This is likely to make them less attractive for already cash-strapped students, especially given that they are longer courses and have a heavier academic load, which will reduce students' ability to do part-time work to support themselves.

2.1.4. The Masters programmes will not solve everything in teacher education, although they appear to be the government's only policy. Ensuring an ongoing supply of secondary teachers in the right subjects, for example, appears not to be something the government is concerned about, with all ITE scholarships having been abolished three years ago, except those for teachers of Te Reo Māori and teachers for Māori Medium. This was on the pretext that there were no shortages, but this was never true for some parts of the country, and PPTA's monitoring of supply shows that shortages are now growing again.[2]

2.1.5. The contracts to deliver "exemplary" Masters programmes are short-term and providers are subject to intensive scrutiny from the Ministry of Education, the independent evaluators, and the Teachers Council. There is no guarantee that the extra funding, which is to facilitate closer partnerships with schools, will continue beyond the term of the initial contracts.

2.1.6. The academic load for the Masters students is heavier than for Graduate Diploma students, which reflects the higher level of the qualification. Because the courses are at Masters level, there is an expectation that students will work more independently than for Graduate Diploma level courses, and there is less direct tuition by university staff. This heavier workload has the potential to interfere with their ability to prepare for their teaching in their placement schools.

2.1.7. The academic entry levels are usually set at a B+ average in their subject degree study, which is slightly higher than is normally required for Graduate Diploma programmes (although for subjects not in short supply, a B+ average has quite often been required for those programmes too).

2.1.8. Student teachers doing Masters programmes are in schools a lot more than students doing Graduate Diplomas. They have sustained time in the same school, organised in a variety of ways, e.g. two or three days a week, four days a fortnight, four half days a week, etc. The theory is that this way the student will get to understand the full

2 http://www.ppta.org.nz/resources/publication-list/3377-secondary-staffing-repor

workings of the school, and come to be seen as "a colleague" rather than a visitor.

2.1.9. The students also do teaching blocks that are more like the traditional practicum blocks, at least one of which must be in another school with different characteristics from the one where they have spent the bulk of their time.

2.1.10. At the beginning of 2015, there were 93 Masters students in secondary across five providers, with an unknown number to begin in the mid-year at Auckland University. This was only about 10% of the total number of student teachers in secondary programmes this year.

2.1.11. The implications for schools of these programmes are discussed below in Section 3.

2.2. **Teach First NZ**

2.2.1. In addition to these Masters level programmes, the government has provided substantial funding to Auckland University to run a pilot, in conjunction with the Teach First New Zealand Trust (with a raft of private supporters), the Teach First New Zealand ITE programme, which is linked to the international organisation Teach for All.[3]

2.2.2. This programme places up to 20 carefully selected "participants" in low-decile secondary schools in Auckland/Northland for two years. They receive a six-week preparation for teaching between mid-November and mid-January, and then are launched into schools where they teach up to 12 hours a week, with the help of an in-school mentor and visits by Auckland University staff. They are employed on fixed-term agreements for two years. During those two years they work towards a Postgraduate Diploma in Teaching. They are paid a salary, on the untrained rate in the STCA or its equivalent. They are on a Limited Authority to Teach for the two-year placement, and at the end are eligible for provisional registration.

2.2.3. This scheme is a pilot involving three two-year cohorts, with the third cohort to complete the course at the end of 2016. At the time of writing, there has been no commitment by the Ministry of Education to fund the scheme beyond that, nor does the course have Education Council approval for any further cohorts. Despite that, the Teach First NZ organisation is continuing to seek applicants for 2016 and 2017 cohorts on its website, with the following proviso:

> *The Teach First NZ programme is currently awaiting confirmation of post-pilot phase approval, which is expected around mid-2015. Offers are conditional on this approval.*[4]

3 http://teachforall.org/en

4 http://teachfirstnz.org/applications

2.2.4. When Teach First NZ was first mooted, PPTA commissioned Murdoch University in Australia to do a literature review of courses of this kind, which is available on PPTA's website.[5] Because the schemes under the 'Teach for All' umbrella[6] vary so much across the world, the reviewers were unable to draw firm conclusions as to the merits or otherwise of such schemes. As a result, PPTA has withheld judgment on the merits of the New Zealand course, pending the evaluation of the pilot being conducted by NZCER.

2.2.5. PPTA has heard positive comments on the programme from some of the principals involved. On the other hand, teachers report that the selection of the mentors is proving critical to the success of the programme. It is a problem that the mentor is often not in the "frontline" of the department in which the participant is placed. This can mean that for day-to-day curriculum and student management issues, the load falls on those with no time allowance and no remuneration.

2.3. **Graduate Diplomas**

2.3.1. All universities except Otago have maintained their Graduate Diploma ITE programmes. This is prudent, because numbers of places in the Masters programmes are limited, and not all applicants for ITE want to study at that level. Some applicants do not qualify, some realise that they cannot afford to do a Masters because course fees are higher and the unavailability of a student allowance.

2.3.2. It is also not yet clear whether graduates of Masters programmes, having spent more money on their study with less government assistance, will have a greater chance in the job market than students from Graduate Diploma programmes.

2.3.3. There are two secondary programmes which are not university-based and therefore have not been given the opportunity to offer Masters programmes: Bethlehem Tertiary Institute, and the Christchurch Graduate School.

2.4. **Shorter and more compressed courses**

2.4.1. Whereas ITE programmes, when they were delivered in Colleges of Education, used to be much the same length as the school year of 40 weeks, the gradual move to universities has meant that ITE courses now average 34 weeks, of which 14 weeks must be practicum, to fit in with the university year. This leaves less time than in the past for tuition on curriculum content, pedagogy and assessment, let alone on the more generic aspects of ITE.

2.4.2. The Graduating Teacher Standards do require that graduates cover areas such as:

5 McConney, A, Price, A, Woods-McConney, A. (2012). ***Fast Track Teacher Education: A review of the research literature on Teach for All schemes***, http://ppta.org.nz/resources/publication-list/2142-fast-track-teach-2012-litrev

6 Op.cit.

- Understanding of the personal, social and cultural factors influencing teachers and learners

- Knowledge of tikanga and te reo Māori,

- Understanding of education within the bicultural, multicultural, social, political, economic and historical context of Aotearoa NZ, and

- Knowledge and understanding of the ethical, professional and legal responsibilities of teachers.

However, the amount of time able to be spent on these appears to be minimal, and these areas are often taught in large lecture theatres with primary and secondary teachers together. The days of Teachers College lecturers modelling teaching methods through all of their delivery have long passed.

2.4.3. There is also a perception among secondary teachers that many ITE students appear in schools with minimal knowledge of curriculum content, pedagogy and assessment, with some members, including principals, complaining of yawning gaps in knowledge about such essentials as how the NCEA works.

3. Increased demands on schools

3.1. Past attempts to address partnership issues

The partnership between ITE provider and school has always been of critical importance to the delivery of quality teacher education. It has never been easy territory to negotiate, with issues for both sides of the partnership:

- *For providers:* Concerns about the availability of quality associate teachers, challenges over finding opportunities to ensure that they understood their role, and difficulties in getting honest assessments of students that would support removal of poor performers from courses;

- *For associate teachers and liaison teachers:* Concerns about inadequate responses from providers when student teachers proved challenging, excessive workload demands when working with poorly prepared student teachers, and an Associate Teacher payment that fails to reflect the importance of the role

There have been various attempts at solutions to these issues over the years, on PPTA's part seeking to define new career pathways and/or to negotiate improved payment for associate teachers, and on the providers' part seeking to establish ongoing partnerships with schools:

3.1.1. Career pathways work

3.1.1.1. One solution to some of this would be to build teacher career pathways in mentoring of student and beginning teachers. PPTA has made numerous attempts to work with the Ministry of Education on such pathways. In the workstreams following the Ministerial Taskforce on Secondary Teacher Remuneration[7], between 2004 and 2007, there was work done on defining a range of career pathways, one of which the Ministry of Education suggested could be called "professional support". This would be about leading the learning of others, including mentoring and coaching students and colleagues, and with a career and pay structure to reflect increasing skills and responsibilities, and relevant qualific - tions gained.

3.1.1.2. However, the only career pathway that actually emerged from that workstream, and it had already been agreed in principle during collective agreement bargaining, was the Specialist Classroom Teacher (SCT). That role was intended to grow, with more SCTs, some covering specialist areas rather than just the generic work mostly done by current SCTs. While many SCTs do have a role with student teachers, their work is more often with beginning teachers and experienced teachers who choose to work with them. That extension of the SCT scheme never happened, even though an evaluation of its early years showed it was a very positive initiative, both for schools and the SCTs themselves.

3.1.2. Better recognition of the Associate Teacher role

3.1.2.1. The STCA defines the Associate Teacher payment as being for "a teacher who has been assigned by the principal to assist in the practical training of teacher trainees..." and provides for the payment of "a minimum allowance of $3.19 for each timetabled hour of teacher trainee contact". These timetabled hours do not all need to be class contact times "but can include formally timetabled periods spent in such activities as discussion with teacher trainees, assisting the teacher trainees in preparing lessons, critical appraisals of teacher trainees' teaching, or other professional guidance related to the work of the teacher trainees placed with that teacher".

3.1.2.2. One of the problems with this wording is that it requires time spent to be formally timetabled, so it does not appear to cover mentoring provided in break times or after school, nor does it cover the spontaneous contacts that arise naturally during the course of a day.

7 Ministerial Taskforce on Secondary Teacher Remuneration (2003) http://www.ppta.org.nz/resources/publications/doc_view/29-ministerial-taskforce-on-secondary-teacher-remuneration

3.1.2.3. It also does not cover professional mentoring by people other than those formally assigned as associate teachers, and yet the Masters programmes seek to place students in a single school for half or even a whole year with the expectation that they will become seen as a part of the school staff.

3.1.2.4. PPTA has sought in previous STCA rounds to increase the amount of the associate teacher allowance but without success. A more expansive description of what it includes might help as a possible future solution.

3.1.3. **Partnership arrangements**

3.1.3.1. Over the last five years or so, teacher education providers have increasingly sought to sign up schools to commit to taking a guaranteed number of students, in return for certain services such as offers of professional learning and development by university staff, access to mentoring courses, extra funding, and the like. On the whole these partnerships appear to have been successful, but no provider has been able to secure enough partner schools to meet their full need for practicum places. With the extra demands on schools that partner with Masters programmes, this has become a potential area for conflict. (See 3.2 belo .)

3.2. **Excessive workload for teachers in partner schools**

3.2.1. With the arrival of Masters programmes, the pressure for partnership arrangements has increased significantl . It is important to note, however, that not all Masters programmes seek partnerships with whole schools. One university begins by approaching a selected teacher to mentor a student, then negotiates an arrangement with that teacher's school.

3.2.2. The Masters programmes demand a lot more from the schools that accept their students, and this is especially the case if schools agree to be partner schools. While the Ministry contracts for Masters programmes provide an extra $6,000 per student to support the increased time in schools, and the universities have to account for how this money is spent, there is no guarantee that all the money is used to recompense the teachers who are doing the work, in the form of payment and release time.

3.2.3. Most of the universities offering Masters programmes are negotiating Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with selected partner schools which cover responsibilities and remuneration. The financia provisions in these MoUs are sometimes deemed to be confidentia between the provider and the school's leadership, with school leaders being asked by the provider to not share the contents with their teachers, or choosing not to do so. When such absence of transparency occurs, it means that teachers in a school that has become a partner school for a Masters programme may not be aware of how much money is flowing into the school from the university, and what it is designated to cover, and must trust their principal to allocate the funds appropriately.

3.2.4. One Memorandum of Understanding which PPTA has seen had three categories of funding as follows:

- Funding for the Associate Teachers, Lead Teachers and Principals to work with the Masters students (67% of total);
- Funding for staff individual professional development including to upgrade qualificati ns, for any staff in the partner school (20% of total);
- Funding for PLD by university staff as requested by the partner school (13% of total).

3.2.5. This example shows that quite a lot of the money that is going into a school that partners with a Masters programme is potentially "invisible" to teachers unless the arrangements are made transparent. This is one of the major issues that could be addressed by a Code of Practice, as envisaged by Recommendation 2.

3.2.6. There is also a strong expectation, often expressed in the MOU, that teachers working with the Masters students will commit to extra PLD and even undertake postgraduate programmes in mentoring. While these programmes may be offered at reduced fees or even free, and may well be very useful, they require extra time on top of what is an increased role as an Associate Teacher or Liaison/Lead Teacher. While money certainly changes hands between the university and a partner school, it would be rare for it to be enough to fund teacher release time to compensate for this.

3.2.7. Issues also arise in these partner schools around excessive workload demands on particular teachers. School leaderships sign up to a guaranteed number of students who can be placed, but in not all cases have the teachers expected to act as associates been consulted first. In Otago's first year, the timeframe between them gaining finality about being able to offer the course and the beginning of the school year was so short, the university freely admitted that in some schools principals had informed the staff one day and the student teachers arrived the next. This was clearly unsatisfactory, and no doubt one of the reasons that the Otago course's first year was fraught with difficulties, with many Dunedin schools resisting taking students.

3.2.8. Otago and Waikato were the first two universities to offer Masters programmes, in 2014. Waikato started on a small scale, with ten students at secondary level and only two partner schools, with whom it already had close relationships. Otago, on the other hand, put all its eggs into the Masters basket, "suspending" its Graduate Diploma programme at the same time, so it was attempting to place a larger number of students - 19 (which dropped to 16 during the year). Other universities, and Otago themselves, have been able to learn from these early experiences.

3.2.9. The demand for partner schools impacts particularly on schools that are in university centres. Masters programmes operate a model where the students are in a home school all year, or at least for a whole semester, for a number of days a week, and at other times of the week have to be at the university to attend lectures. As a result, the ability to place student teachers in schools outside the immediate area of the university is very limited.

3.2.10. Provincial and rural schools are beginning to complain that they are seeing fewer ITE students as a result. Doing a practicum at a school is an excellent way for a student teacher to prove themselves, and many first appointments begin that way. The urban schools at which the Masters students are based are already less likely to have positions that are hard to fill, so this situation does a disservice to both the student teachers and provincial and rural schools.

4. Code of Practice (Recommendations 2 and 3)

4.1. This paper recommends that a working party be established to provide advice to the Executive on issues relating to the partnership between ITE and schools, develop ideas for teacher career pathways in this area, and to develop a Code of Practice for these partnerships. The working party would include not only PPTA members with relevant experience, but also at least one member of the group of secondary teacher education provider representatives who meet with PPTA twice a year. This would ensure that both sides of the partnership work together to develop the Code.

4.2. Recommendations 2 and 3 would require Executive to develop the details of the composition of the working party, its timeframe, process and its funding. Executive would ensure that the Working Party provided advice on the issues, developed a Code of Practice, advised Executive on its promulgation, and also reported to Annual Conference 2016 about progress towards having the Code adopted by schools and providers (Recommendation 3).

Recommendations

1. ~~**That the report be received.**~~
2. ~~**That a working party be convened to**~~
   a. ~~**Provide advice to Executive on issues relating to partnerships between schools and teacher education providers, and**~~
   b. ~~**Develop, for the next STCA round, ideas around career pathways associated with ITE and appropriate remuneration, and**~~
   c. ~~**Develop a PPTA code of practice for managing partnerships between schools and teacher education providers.**~~
3. ~~**That there be a report on progress to the 2016 Annual Conference.**~~

2015 Annual Conference Minutes

Minutes of the Annual Conference of the New Zealand Post Primary Teachers' Association (Inc) held at the Brentwood Hotel, Kilbirnie, Wellington, commencing at 9.45 a.m. on Tuesday 29 September, continuing at 9.00 a.m. on Wednesday 30 September and 9.00 a.m. on Thursday 1 October 2015.

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2. THAT a working party be convened to:

    a. Provide advice to Executive on issues relating to partnerships between schools and teacher education providers, and

    b. Develop, for the next STCA round, ideas around career pathways associated with ITE and appropriate remuneration, and

    c. Develop a PPTA code of practice for managing partnerships between schools and teacher education providers; and

3. THAT there be a report on progress to the 2016 Annual Conference.

Carried