



President's Comment 12

5th May 2010

Dear Colleagues

Initial Teacher Education (ITE)

A great deal of discussion and research has been generated on the quality and robustness of ITE. Having sat on the NZ Teachers Council for 3 years, participated in a reference group and informed by my own experience as Principal, standards have improved.

My remaining concerns however are:-

1. Not all ITE providers interview applicants for teacher training, apparently due to cost. I find this remarkable and unacceptable! Given the importance of communication skills, personal qualities and inherent disposition to the craft of teaching, a personal interview should be a pre requisite. It seems to me that the only 'sure fire' way to assess the suitability of candidates for teaching is to test this through the interview process.

Accepting candidates on the basis of a written application is fraught with risk. The major one being if ITE Providers get it wrong we are left with an inferior pool to select from. The knock on effect for our students as we know can be disastrous. I have interviewed a number of teachers who had recently gained registration. It was clear to me in the first few minutes they were unsuitable to teach in my school and probably any other. Regrettably this scenario is played out all too frequently in schools throughout New Zealand.

2. Although the NZ Teachers Council has a standard of 'criminal convictions' which will prevent teaching graduates from being registered, there is no national standard for acceptance in ITE Providers. This strikes me as a huge waste of tax payers money in training them and is doing a disservice to those undergoing the training. It also means some other suitable candidate misses out. A national set of standards needs to be accepted by ITE Providers.
3. A number of ITE Providers send lecturers with little or no school teaching experience to assess teacher trainees on practicum in schools. This seems to me somewhat bizarre given they are assessing classroom management and curriculum delivery in a school context.
4. I am not satisfied that sufficient emphasis is placed upon graduates being 'fit for purpose' in specific areas of importance for the secondary sector eg. NCEA, assessment practices, diverse learners.

I appreciate ITE providers only have a year with students and a great deal to cover. We also bear some responsibility to teach these things ourselves but I am not sure if the correct balance has been struck.

A set of guidelines is due to be released shortly by the NZTC which will hopefully address these issues. I will continue to raise these matters on your behalf at the next Reference Group to be held on the 14th of May 2010.

Trade Academics

The considered opinion of most Secondary Principals is that the establishment of Trade Academics is an excellent idea. Any initiative that gives secondary school aged students an opportunity to succeed, obtain meaningful qualifications and lifts self esteem should be celebrated.

Previous Comments

Comment 11 - 29.04.10

Violent Crime & School Bullying, Review of University Entrance, Sound Advice from a Judge, Working Voice & STA, School Balls.

Comment 10 - 22.04.10

Mangatepopo Gorge Tragedy Coroners Report, Technology Curriculum, National Standards, SPANZ Union.

Comment 9 - 31.03.10

BOT Elections, Jurisdiction over Students After Hours, Monster Parents.

Comment 8 - 25.03.10

New SPANZ Executive, SPANZ Union, NZ Teachers Council Registration Fee Increase.

Comment 7 - 18.03.10

Farewell to Peter Gall - previous President of SPANZ..

Comment 6 - 11.03.10

Ministry of Education and NZQA Regional Seminars.

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An article in NZ Teacher (March 2010) entitled 'Opportunity Knocks' did rankle with me and deserves comment. In it Stuart Middleton is quoted as saying '...If schools had exploited the flexibility of the NCEA it would have achieved more than it ever will do'.

The point here is that most Principals are fully aware of the flexibility provided by NCEA but are frustrated by a lack of resourcing and staffing to provide those alternative pathways within the school context. If Secondary Principals were given an extra classroom fully equipped with hard materials equipment and a teacher, we too could do marvelous things!

Principalship Growing a Thick Skin!

I quickly discovered that you won't last long in Principalship if you are a sensitive soul trying to please everyone. The following 10 reasons illustrate why Principals can't win and shouldn't worry too much about it:-

1. If they make quick decisions and follow up immediately, they're autocrats; if they're slow in making decisions, they're indecisive.
2. If they speak up for innovative learning programs, they're on the bandwagon; if they're cautious about new programmes, they're living in the past.
3. If they visit classrooms, they're being nosey; if they don't, they just don't care about what's going on there.
4. If they attend conferences for Principals, they're goofing off; when they don't, they're unprofessional.
5. If they call staff meetings, they have no regard for teachers' time; if they don't, they don't believe in democratic administration and the value of teamwork.
6. If they punish students, they don't understand children; if they don't, they're weak disciplinarians.
7. If the school office is running like clockwork, they're dictators; if the office is a mess, they're poor administrators.
8. If they speak the language of education, they're jargon experts; if they don't, they're professionally illiterate.
9. If they turn up late for school in the morning, they're taking advantage of their position; if they're there early, they're eager beavers.
10. If they try to do all the work themselves, they don't trust anybody; if they delegate as much as possible, they're lazy.

Taken from 'An Education Book of
Enlightening Lists'
Compiled by Jarvis Finger
Ferntown Publications 1996
P.S. An excellent resource

Principal's PA Conference

You will shortly be receiving information about the 2010 Principal's PA Conference to be held on August 12th & 13th. Principal's PA's/Secretaries are fundamental to our ability to do our jobs well. This conference is a professional development opportunity for your PA. It has been well organised with a wide range of expert speakers and workshops. It also provides wonderful networking which from feedback on previous conferences PA's gain a great deal from.

I strongly encourage you to affirm and recognise your PA's by permitting them to attend this conference. It is a tangible way you can recognise their value and their need for on going professional development.



Patrick Walsh
President

