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Te Hautaka Mātauranga o Waikato

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



# WAIKATO JOURNAL OF EDUCATION

## TE HAUTAKA MĀTAURANGA O WAIKATO

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Submissions for special sections of the journal are usually by invitation. Offers for topics for these special sections, along with offers to edit special sections are also welcome.

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## **Rapporteurs' report: Towards equity through initial teacher education**

### **Presenter**

**Dr Airini**

### **Rapporteurs**

**Chris Jenkin**

Auckland University of Technology **and**

**John Clark**

Massey University

Recruitment, programmes, retention and systemic issues regarding society were the main topics of discussion.

### **Recruitment**

It was noted that academic staff in other subjects such as medicine and engineering go into secondary schools to encourage enrolment in vocational programmes but this does not usually happen with teaching. Often recruitment of school-leavers into teaching is left to university liaison staff. There is a need to strengthen relationships with secondary schools in order to recruit school-leavers into teaching by having academic staff be actively involved in the recruitment process and participate in university open days. In particular, universities must be responsive to what the community wants for Māori and Pasifika students, given that many of them enrol in education programmes. Initial teacher education (as well as other teacher education programmes such as field-based) selection panels should have academic, teacher and community representation. One of the ideas that drives recruitment is that a whole generation of teachers will leave the profession by the end of the decade so we need to create programmes for graduating students who will replace them.

### **Programmes**

Universities must be clear about the makeup of the teaching workforce and the types of programmes required to prepare people to become teachers. There will be a continuing need for both specialist and mainstream initial teacher education (ITE) programmes for



Māori and Pasifika students, although it still remains unclear why Māori and Pasifika students tend to choose mainstream over specialist ITE programmes. There is anecdotal evidence of Māori and Pasifika students doing better in mainstream than in specialist ITE programmes; why this should be so remains problematic.

With the current focus in schools on cultural diversity, teachers and ITE students need to understand what skills children require in literacy and numeracy to succeed in achievement. Further, teacher education programmes must help students, as new teachers, avoid doing damage in schools by interacting with students in culturally inappropriate ways—they must be able to adapt, listen, interpret body language and avoid stereotyping.

Cultural competencies are appropriate to all graduates, not just those in ITE. Universities can make changes to how they teach by providing students with opportunities to lead discussions. This should not be limited to ITE but extended as a matter of principle across the university more broadly amongst all graduates. While it is recognised that this sort of change may be uncomfortable for universities, it would make a powerful contribution to developing a deeper level of understanding and social engagement. One of the features of intellectual life is the presence of multiple answers within institutions that organisationally like things to remain the same. Universities ought to live with uncertainty and in the spirit of critical reflection should not promote just one answer but invite discussion.

In terms of defining success, one of the reasons for underachievement in schools can be explained by educated Pākehā teachers not teaching what interests Māori and Pasifika students. Kohanga reo is a very good example of successful practice outside of the system. It may well be that, educationally, everything good for Māori lies outside the system. Additionally, there are problems with teachers putting Māori students and Pasifika students into the same basket, since this does not take account of the important differences between Māori and the various Pasifika cultures. There is also a tendency for teachers to teach as though all students are in the top percentile when the evidence of the ‘long tail of underachievement’ suggests that to do so is to seriously disadvantage underperforming children.

## **Retention**

Since the mergers of the colleges of education with the universities, it is clear that academic staff are giving less time to academic support for Māori and Pasifika students due to an increased focus on research, especially since the introduction of PBRF. Consequently, there is a growing need for academic staff to mentor Māori and Pasifika students to succeed. There is a problem with first year retention with a number of Māori and Pasifika students withdrawing from ITE programmes even before the first assignment is submitted. Why this is so is unclear. This could be further explored within the Tertiary Education Commission’s research framework to look at Māori and Pasifika achievement and the role that TEC could play in the retention issue.

While it was acknowledged that students often benefit by having teachers from their own culture, it was also pointed out that it is not always the case that a teacher of a particular culture always relates better with students from the same culture. An example was given of a Samoan-born teacher and New Zealand-born Samoan students.

Concern was expressed about the lack of resources to develop relationships to deliver on parity. Opportunities should be taken to talk to the Ministry of Education. We have a pretty good idea of the answers but need the resources to implement sound policies and practices and get the institutions on board.

### **Society**

Some of the most pressing issues are systemic in nature, which raises the question of the ability of the universities to make changes. ITE might struggle to make much difference, as it is clear health, income, prison, drugs and the like are beyond the reach of school resources. Solutions to these issues cannot be solved by schools alone.

The underachievement of Māori and Pasifika students is a major concern and should be at the very heart of ITE programmes. In the 1980s Māori were still rural but this is now reversed with the bulk of students being urbanised. One effect of this on Māori is institutional racism, which is something ITE programmes must continue to address. A review of teachers indicated that they don't know how to engage with Māori and their families. Their lack of confidence in working successfully with Māori students has implications for ITE.

