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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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## Te Hautaka Mātauranga o Waikato

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## Rapporteurs' report: Who should develop initial teacher education policy and why?

### Presenters

**Julie Alison and Sandie Aikin**

### Rapporteurs

**Graham Jackson**  
Massey University

### Jenny Ritchie

Te Whare Wānanga o Wairaka, Unitec Institute of Technology

The education unions in Aotearoa New Zealand have a long and proud history of standing up for the rights and professionalism of teachers, which has included advocating strongly for parity of pay and qualifications within the sector. Despite the encroachment of the neoliberal policy era, they continue to be a strong voice for teachers and to advocate on behalf of quality education provision. Sandie Aikin's comment, "We are a small country. If we can't get it right who can?", provides a frame for reviewing, summarising and commenting on the presentation and discussion of the above paper. The paper sought to present the case for the involvement of both NZEI and PPTA in making policy in the area of initial teacher education, and while the full text is available for readers elsewhere in this volume, the salient points are worth visiting as an introduction to the discussion that followed.

The case for union involvement is built on the following claims:

- that the development of initial teacher education policy, like all education policy, should be a collaborative effort between tertiary institutions, the government agencies and the profession;
- that the teacher unions are unions of professionals, in which the professional and industrial functions co-exist and are sometimes inseparable;
- that teacher unions represent around 95% of teachers in state schools; and
- that, as the paper states, unions have a "moral imperative and coherent epistemological position".

The ensuing discussion ranged freely in both sessions. The primary points are summarised below.



Under the general heading of collaboration, considerable attention was given to the roles of the New Zealand Teachers Council (NZTC) and the Ministry of Education. The NZTC was commended for its push to retain the craft element in initial teacher education (ITE) and its stance that appraisers of student teachers should be registered teachers. The NZTC was seen as a firewall between the thrust of PBRF and the core business of ITE. It was also considered that this role was under threat, and worth supporting. The Ministry of Education was characterised as a 'border-raider' with little knowledge of what actually goes on in the NZTC, and was cautioned to stick to its knitting. Universities, one delegate suggested, could learn to do collaboration better. Even when in desperate situations they may tend to adhere to a policy of 'we know best'. It was noted that a number of groups are not represented on the NZTC, including Māori, early childhood educators, principals associations (NZFP) and tertiary education providers, along with NZEI and PPTA advisory groups. The position of the NZTC and the unions regarding the registration of appraisers was not universally accepted. The changing profile of the teacher education workforce could be seen as part of the reframing of ITE instead of being problematised. A move away from a deficit model in regards to outsider involvement was urged. Because lecturers visit classrooms/education settings as teacher educators not teachers, the registration requirement and the assumptions underlying it are problematic.

Discussion also turned to the twin professional-industrial functions of the unions. In the introduction of the 0.2 FTE release time for first-year Provisionally Registered Teachers for instance, the two threads are inseparable. Discussion in both sessions, however, focused more on the industrial role. The Teach First NZ programme (University of Auckland) was discussed at length, sparked by the union position that the literature review that the PPTA had recently commissioned had not come out strongly against this model, as implemented overseas. The industrial issues that arose in the discussion included concerns regarding the extra load on staff, payment for mentoring, funding, and the supernumerary nature of the year 2 and 3 positions in that scheme.

The difficult nature of the relationship with the Deans' Committee (New Zealand Council of Deans of Education) was also raised in both sessions. Concerns were expressed that the Deans had never sought a meeting with the unions on ITE matters, that the Deans themselves had deep philosophical differences in their relationships with the Ministry of Education and each other, and that the changes currently being promoted would see large numbers in lecture theatres, early childhood education qualifications being moved along with primary and secondary to be solely available at graduate level in some programmes, and micro-managing within the institutions. The question was posed: how does ITE remedy the default voice of the Deans' Committee? It was suggested that TEFANZ has a role here, but needs more traction and grit and a bigger voice. It was also intimated that there was a willingness of collaborative spirit from the Deans' Committee as indicated in their representation at this particular TEFANZ conference.

The notion of a mandate for policy formation in ITE being given to the unions by their strong representative base was not directly addressed in follow-up discussion. It was however noted that the 'old guard' of lecturers within ITE valued the importance and responsibilities of the collective, which has, to a certain extent, been swept aside by the accommodations made within university culture, by the PBRF environment, and the changing profiles of the faculties of education.

The fourth plank in the union platform, that of the moral imperative, went unchallenged. Participants forewent a potentially interesting debate that may have unpacked the argument that the moral and ethical claims to be involved in the development and operation of teacher education are validated by a vision of education as a human right and public good, as the paper authors argued. The unions derive moral authority, it is suggested, through their powerful accountability to a wider group. It was not made clear what the “coherent epistemological position” referred to in the paper might contain with respect to ITE, so the moral and epistemological high ground that was claimed was not required to be defended.

Several other channels of discussion were opened, which are briefly summarised in this final section. The practicalities of teacher preparation came in for some attention. The critical part that practica, associate teachers (ATs) and by extension mentor teachers play in the preparation of teacher novices, and the raft of attendant issues including funding, career paths for ATs, and the provision of professional learning environments were all visited. Neither did standards, both Graduating Teachers Standards (GTS) and Registered Teacher Criteria (RTC), escape scrutiny. Points raised ranged from scrapping the GTS in favour of the RTCs, which provisionally registered teachers will be working with a month after graduation anyway, to Graeme Aitken’s critique of the standards as reductionist.

To return to our opening quote, how close are we to getting it right in initial teacher education? Will allowing the teacher unions into the policy bedroom result in offspring characterised by higher quality recruitment, preparation and induction? Or will the shotgun weddings between the colleges and universities, as one delegate suggested, continue to result in offspring covered in sticking plaster solutions? What is salient in the current neoliberal policy environment is the importance of collaborative relationships between educators, teacher educators, researchers, and policy makers, and that the representative groups for these sectors, such as the two teacher unions and TEFANZ, have a vital role to play in influencing future education policy determination.

