Authentic partnerships

The purpose of Initial Teacher Education (ITE) is to prepare graduates who are able to maximise the success of every learner in Aotearoa New Zealand through highly effective teaching. Traditionally, ITE has been perceived as the sole responsibility of higher education institutions with schools and ECE centres functioning as sites for practical experience (Harford & O'Doherty, 2016). However, internationally there has been a growing recognition that teacher preparation must be strengthened, and that this is a shared responsibility between ITE providers and key stakeholders (Council of the European Union, 2014). A growing body of research suggests that these partnerships "might enhance the learning of student teachers and better prepare them to be successful" (Zeichner, 2010, p. 89) and that a "more collaborative and balanced approach to theory and practice needs to be achieved" (Jones et al., 2016, p. 109). As such, ITE providers internationally are being "challenged to re-think the ways in which they interact with schools … to optimise the rich learning experience they can provide" (Jones et al., 2016, p. 109). In particular, there has been a global shift towards deepening the quality of practical experiences, with a focus on the development of stronger partnerships between ITE providers and key stakeholders (Allen, Howells & Radford, 2013; Darling-Hammond, 1994, 2006).

The new Teaching Council ITE programme approval requirements will require all programmes to be developed with and supported through authentic partnerships. The Teaching Council sees partnerships as "a relationship in which there is mutual cooperation and responsibility between individuals, namely persons and organisations, or groups for the achievement of a specified goal" (Lynch & Smith, 2012, p. 133). However, the Teaching Council recognises that the nature of these partnerships will vary depending on the context, community and programme. Authentic partnerships ensure that ITE programmes are well integrated, to avoid "theory" and "practice" being enacted separately by different institutions (Whatman & MacDonald, 2017). Authenticity in partnerships occurs through arrangements and negotiations to ensure all partners have a shared understanding of their respective roles and responsibilities (Martin Jenkins, 2018). Additionally, the "quality and depth of partnerships [are] critical" (Martin Jenkins, 2018, p. 22). Authentic partnerships can include, but are not limited to, partnerships between ITE providers and schools, ECE centres and kura, community groups, local iwi and/or hapū.

It is well recognised that time and resource pressures can be experienced by partners in partnerships (Bloomfield, 2009 as cited in Allen, Howells & Radford, 2013), where "quality partnerships … may require additional resourcing/focus over the long-term" (Martin Jenkins, 2018, p. 5). Given that authentic partnerships require this additional time and resourcing, the Teaching Council wants to be pragmatic about what can be expected from ITE providers and the nature of partnerships at the initial stage of programme approval.

The Teaching Council would reasonably expect to see evidence of partnerships beginning to be formed, partners having a role in the development of Key Teaching Tasks (KTT) within the programme, plans for the development and expansion of the partnership, and programme development that addresses the theory-practice divide. At initial approval, the Teaching Council would also expect to see partners involved in the planning and design of professional experience placements, including requirements and expectations, roles and responsibilities of those involved. In addition, the Teaching Council would expect to see partners having input into the design of assessments within the programme. The Teaching Council would expect to see partners involved in the selection and entry processes of students, as well as partners involved in the development of professional learning and development for associate/mentor teachers. The Teaching Council would also expect that local iwi would be meaningfully involved in programme design.

Once time and resourcing settings have been adjusted to fully allow for authentic partnerships to thrive, the Teaching Council would expect that authentic partnerships would be more feasible for ITE providers to form and maintain, particularly as "there is evidence that partnerships can be strengthened over time, if sufficient investment is made" (Martin Jenkins, 2018, p. 5). The Teaching Council would expect to see increased evidence of strong and collaborative relationships with partners, where authentic partnerships have been established sufficiently to enable to enable each partner to have a shared responsibility for teacher preparation.

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