



## Editorial

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*Joint Editors*

2004 has been an intriguing year for education in general and, specifically, for early childhood settings, schools and teachers. Toward the end of the year, the Education and Science Committee released its report on teacher education while the New Zealand Teachers Council finally published its ethical code for the teaching profession. Contributions to this second issue of the journal explore enduring struggles that lie behind all these developments: from curriculum change, ethics and the mentoring of student teachers to broader issues of political censorship, student debt and the creation of a treaty-based society.

In November 2004, the Education and Science Committee released its Report, *Inquiry into Teacher Education*. Its recommendations included the following:

- that minimum standards be developed for entry into teacher training courses, and that these be applied nationally
- that the education profession establish consistent and transparent national exit standards
- that training programmes be provided to help principals apply the Satisfactory Teacher Dimensions consistently and that nationally moderated registration standards be applied when recommending year 2 teachers for full registration
- that the five approval and quality assurance agencies work together to ensure there is a unified set of standards with common approval and quality assurance mechanisms for the approval of teacher education courses.

In December 2004, the New Zealand Teachers' Council completed the legislatively mandated process of developing an ethical code for all registered teachers. This *Code of Ethics* will take effect from January 2005 and become in effect 'the one code to rule them all': a reference to the fact that the early childhood sector, NZEI and PPTA already had long-standing codes of ethics in place which had been developed by each sector for the sector through substantive consultation processes with their members.

While few would object to the principles of the code (justice, autonomy, responsible care and truth) or the idea that teachers have responsibilities (termed obligations) to pupils, parents/guardians and whanau, society and the profession, the issue is how the code will be used in centres and schools by teachers, parents and management, and by the Council itself. The dilemmas of combining the aspirational and disciplinary intents of the Code are complicated by inevitable tensions and conflicts within the code itself, given that it requires teachers to have a strong foundation of ethical knowledge and to exercise considerable professional judgement when working through the dilemmas their daily practice presents.

2005 will be a critical year for teachers and teacher education. On the one hand, we may view the inquiry and the code simply as occupational issues that are the preserve of teachers and the profession. On the other hand, they may be viewed as indicators of a burgeoning agenda of political involvement by the State in the work of teachers and teacher educators. What is obvious is that for the educational control

agencies of the State, 'outcomes' and 'standards-based' approaches to education, teachers, centres and schools are seen as the only way to meet the two core national goals of 'raising achievement' and 'reducing disparity'. We would argue that not only is there an absence of evidence that such approaches are effective in meeting these goals but that they are actually harmful, distrustful, disempowering and disrespectful to all the members of the educational community.

The fundamental issue comes down to one of voice – who decides how student teachers should be educated, what labour market should be in place for teachers, what kinds of schools and early childhood centres are we trying to create, what sort of teachers do we want, and what influence should the State have in these areas? In our view, a dogmatic new public management executive that talks down to the teaching profession, the tertiary sector, and the educational community at large now controls state education in this country. This does not sit well with our vision of a democratic, public education system. In the election year of 2005, what, as educationists, will we do to call for change?