

NCEA Still on a Rocky Road to Acceptance

Almost 6000 Post Primary Teachers' Association (PPTA) members voted at the beginning of November on whether to support the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA), which will replace School Certificate, Sixth Form Certificate and University Bursary.

While 65 percent voted in principle to its introduction, 82 percent thought there were inadequate policies, procedures and resources for its implementation.

The qualification has been roundly criticised by the education sector and parents.

The NCEA has been a contentious issue for teachers, their union and the education sector for the past five years, PPTA president Graeme Macann said in a statement. "There were some

schools at which the majority of teachers were clearly against it, and there are obviously issues there that still need to be addressed," he said.

In September, a report by the Education Forum, made up of educationalists and business people, said the NCEA had potential to cause great harm. It was irresponsible to introduce an untried system that had no international precedent and throw out respected qualifications in the process, and its introduction should be put on hold pending an independent review, the report said. The Forum recommended the Government either scrap the NCEA or at least redesign it.

Victoria University Professor of Education Cedric Hall said it was unreliable and combined the worst aspects of external examinations and internal assessment.

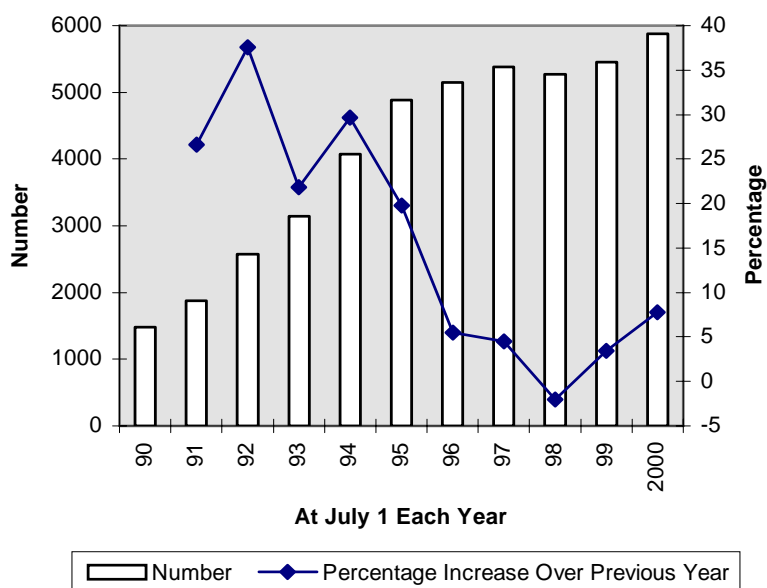
Peter Calvert, spokesman for the Christchurch-based lobby group Concerned Teachers reckons just on half of teachers are prepared to ban work on the NCEA. Over 90 percent of teachers want a time allowance provided -- if the new qualification is to proceed -- for they are convinced it will increase their workloads, just as the ministry has admitted. They want the PPTA executive to ban any more work on the NCEA until the Government provides the resources for them.

"It is this year's 65,000 third formers who are three-year guinea pigs. In 2002 they face NCEA

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Number of HEs Hits New High

Figure 1: Home Educated Students in NZ



Official Ministry of Education figures for the number of home educators in New Zealand at 1 July 2000 show 5,877 students belonging to 3,309 families. This is still less than 1% of the total school-age population. It is a 7.8% increase over the 5,451 official home educators of 1 July 1999 and a 297% increase or almost three times as many home educators since the 1,479 recorded in the first year of the Tomorrow's Schools regime of 1990, exactly 10 years ago (see Figure 1).

66% of the 5,877 were in the primary age range, from 6 to 12, with the largest single age group being 10-year-olds, who numbered 311 boys and 283 girls. Male students comprised 52% of all HEs.

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Level One, not School Cert; then in 2003, they will have the NCEA Level Two in Form Six. And finally in 2004 they will be looking at NCEA Level Three, not Form Seven Bursary.

“Research and overseas experience shows that the new qualification will leave students with a worthless piece of paper – unlike current awards,” said Mr Calvert. “If at the end of three years (the NCEA) falls over, and we predict that it will fall over, those students will be left with a qualification that means nothing for their whole secondary schooling.”

On the other hand, Education Secretary Howard Fancy has defended the NCEA, saying it was as credible as the current qualifications and would challenge superior students.

Associate Education Minister Steve Maharey said he was pleased by the PPTA survey results. “While teachers have indicated that they have some issues with the implementation, I am heartened at the endorsement

given to the need for change,” Steve Maharey said. He indicated that the traditional examination system has passed its use-by date. The NCEA, with its mixture of external examinations and internal assessment, offers an exciting system that challenges the most gifted students while providing all students with an opportunity to gain a qualification that will show prospective employers what they can achieve.

Education Minister Trevor Mallard made a decision earlier this year to delay the NCEA’s implementation in order to work on the process for transition. That includes quite intense professional development for teachers. The Government also recognises that the transition period and the first few years of the new system will impact on teacher workloads.

And the PPTA Executive, perhaps not fully reflecting their members’ views, said they “endorsed the result of a ballot of members on the National Certificate of Educational Achievement and approved its continued implementation.”

It is still unclear if home educators will have access to the NCEA qualification. There have been indications that some and possibly a majority of the NCEA Achievement Standards, or units of learning, could be completely externally assessed. This would

be good news for home educators. But how many Achievement Standard exams would it take to get an NCEA qualification? The answer varies and is rather complicated. What is the cost of each exam? There is as yet no answer to this one.

For information opposed to the NCEA, see:

www.concernedteachers.com

For information about the NCEA’s development and implementation, see:

www.minedu.govt.nz/goto/NCEA

or

www.nzqa.govt.nz/ncea/index.html

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For the 12 months ending 30 June 2000, there were 1,535 students who commenced home education (an 18% increase over the number who started in the previous 12 months). However, during this same period there were 1,109 who finished home education. Of these, 203 quit within a year of starting, and a further 250 quit before they’d reached the two-year mark (see Figure 2 below). Again there is a high annual turnover for unknown reasons.

About 79% of HEs reside in the North Island. The country’s highest number of HEs per capita is in Northland where they are 1.8% of the school-age population.

TEACH Bulletin

is a monthly publication of the Home Education Foundation, and is concerned with those things which may impact on home educators. Articles will deal with political developments, statist and professional trends, correspondence with educationalists, and other items of general interest to home educators. Information herein is not to be construed as legal advice. Opinions expressed in TEACH Bulletin are those of the writer and should not be assumed to reflect those of the Home Education Foundation Trustees or Board of Reference Members.

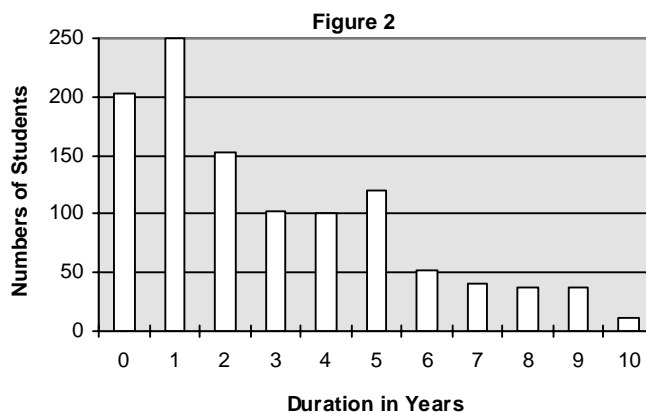
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Hear, my son, your father’s instruction, and reject not your

Duration of Home Educated Students Finishing Between July 1999 and July 2000



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Gatto's Latest Book

The enormous volume (410 pg.), *The Underground History of American Education*, by New York Teacher of the Year 1991 John Taylor Gatto, is a sprawling work of history, political philosophy, and citizen activism. Two major publishers liked the book enough to offer Gatto sizable advances -- on the condition that he trim the pages and mute the language. He refused. Schools, he says, are irretrievably broken. "We need to kill the poison plant we created," Gatto has written. "School reform is not enough. The notion of schooling itself must be challenged." His alternative: to get rid of institutional mass-production schools, allow every imaginable experiment to blossom, make free public libraries universal, and expand hands-on apprenticeships. Homeschooling returns the most important responsibility right back to where it belongs: the parent. Do all parents do it better than anyone else? Some do, some don't. But are there any experts whom you can point to who do it better than any homeschooler picked at random? No. Home schools have proven that two hours a day is enough for intense academic work. In a home school, the kid does 95% of the work. But in a school system, since it's an indoctrination system, a teacher has to do 95% of the work.

"These pages burn with insight and controversy. You cannot read this book without changing the

way you look at schools." — Pat Farenga, President, *John Holt Associates*.

"The most important book on education I have ever read. It will open your eyes and, God willing, change your children's lives. — Mary Pride, Publisher, *Practical Homeschooling*.

TEACH Forum 2001

This completely open home education leadership forum is held annually in various parts of the country as an opportunity for interested parties to meet other HEs from all over to discuss any and all issues of common concern, both local and national, and plan whatever further action seems appropriate.

Past TEACH Forums:

Feb 96 in Palmerston North
Mar 97 in Wellington
Feb 98 in Palmerston North
Feb 99 in Palmerston North
Mar 00 in Christchurch

The TEACH Forum for 2001 is planned for Auckland in March or April. More details in the *TEACH Bulletin* of January 2001.

Shall We Now Supply Needles at Kindergartens?

A news story in mid-October told of a Wellington couple who objected to the way a kindergarten was proposing to handle a possible health emergency involving their child. The child is diabetic, and should the three-year-old go into a diabetic coma, as unlikely as that might be, she would require an emergency injection of glucose. But the kindergarten teachers cannot give such an injection as it is against the policy of the Wellington Region Free Kindergarten Association.

The parents have withdrawn their daughter from the kindy. The policy was criticised by Children's Commissioner Roger McClay and Diabetes Youth

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Wellington president Crystal Bridger. The association was asked to review its policy, which covered its 55 member kindies, for other associations do not have such bans.

This seems somewhat disturbing for it deals with fairly important and invasive issues. The ban is on kindergarten teachers giving emergency injections or suppositories. That is, the Wellington Free Kindergarten Association has reservations about its teachers using a needle and syringe to inject a substance into a child or pushing a suppository medicine into a child's anus. The association's concerns are fairly obvious. Yet they are criticised by no less a person than the Commissioner for Children. Is giving a glucose injection to a comatose three-year-old a procedure so simple and fail-safe that any kindy teacher there could do it? Yes, the teachers all have First Aid Certificates and will have received training, but how often, do you suppose, would they actually use this skill? And would the skill still be remembered and sharply honed when the emergency actually arrives? Apparently, only 70% of ambulance paramedics have the proper qualifications to administer glucose injections, yet the expectation is that 100% of kindy teachers can do it, no problem. And are kindergarten refrigerators the best places to store life-saving medicine? Are kindies expected to safely and hygienically store supplies of needles and syringes? Who is checking to ensure the medicine is current and that the needles haven't been tampered with by either curious children or neighbourhood drug addicts?

The parents who criticised the kindy seem to have an amazingly cavalier attitude to the well-being of their daughter, to the seriousness of her condition and to the implications of insisting that a kindy should provide specialist health services not even all paramedics can provide. But then there are the other kindies which apparently *do* allow their teachers to carry out these medical

procedures, often in the absence of any written policy to cover it. Some would wonder which is the more concerning: the attitude of the critical parents or the "can-do" practises of some kindies.

The Wellington Free Kindergarten Association is to be commended for its sober approach to forming a sound policy in a life-and-death area of concern. As for other kindy associations and the Commissioner for Children, I for one shall remember not to ask them to babysit.

Home Education in Thailand

Last November, the Thai government introduced a home school system that allows parents to educate their children at home. Since then, a total of 50 families, either dissatisfied with the cramming style of school education, fearing the spread of drugs among students or trying to keep closer contact between family members, have started teaching their children at home.

Yutthachai Chalermchai, a 45-year-old magazine editor who works from his home in Bangkunun, 20 kilometers south of Bangkok, is one of the pioneering parents. His two sons, 14-year-old Saipan and 12-year-old Sarntor, decided in May to study at home instead of going to school.

"I was disappointed in the schools, which put too much emphasis on cramming knowledge. They don't respect children's opinions, so it is impossible for children to learn at school how to think or live on their own," Yutthachai explained. He cut his work hours in order to make more time for his sons.

Yutthachai takes charge of his sons in various volunteer activities to learn about politics, economics and social studies in a direct way. His wife is responsible for teaching them English, and the boys learn mathematics from Yutthachai's dentist friend and Buddhism and traditional Thai music from their grandfather.

"We have come closer to each other and have more conversation than before. I also noticed my sons have developed a stronger sense of responsibility through participating in volunteer activities. They have enough academic skills, too," Yutthachai explained.

"I used to do only what the teachers told me to do when I was at school. Now I can try my hand at all sorts of things. I can make friends with people of different ages through the volunteer activities," Sarntor said.

The Education Ministry decides whether applicants are capable of providing education at home depending on what ideas and environment the parents can provide for the children, not on the parents' academic backgrounds. The home school curriculum is left up to the parents. If they provide the children with 12 years of schooling, as in ordinary government education, then the children are regarded as having completed ordinary schooling and are allowed to take entrance examinations for universities.

Chotchoeng Chutinthon, a 55-year-old medical doctor living in Bangkok, is credited with starting the first home school in the nation. "When I started, it was completely illegal. But I don't regret what I have done."

"The idea of home-schooling enables parents to provide their children with the best educational opportunities," said an official of the education policy research institute at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok. "But I am not sure if it is suitable in this society, where both members of a couple often work outside the home."

(Submitted by Brian Covert of Osaka, Japan. Article first appeared in *The Daily Yomiuri* of Monday, 30 October 2000, by Seiji Hasegawa, Yomiuri Shimbun Correspondent.)