



SUBMISSION

to the

Education and Science Select Committee

on the

Education Amendment Bill (No 2)

06 August 2010

The PPTA is the union representing around 18,000 teachers in state secondary, area, manual training and intermediate schools, as well as tutors in community education institutions and principals in secondary and area schools. PPTA represents the professional and industrial interests of its members, including those working in alternative education centres and activity centres. More than 95% of eligible teachers choose to belong to the union.

1 Introduction

1.1 The New Zealand Post Primary Teachers' Association, representing some 18,000 teachers in state and integrated secondary and area schools and other State institutions employing secondary teachers welcomes the opportunity to present a submission on this Bill.

1.2 In this submission, the Association will focus on only two aspects of the Bill; the implications of the changes to zoning and the secondary-tertiary aspects. In view of the fact that private schools are recipients of public money the Association can see merit in establishing a great range of tools to monitor their performance but, as our formal position is that they should not receive public money in the first place, we make no comment on these clauses.

2 Clause 6 How to select applicants who live outside home zone

2.1 The fundamental difficulty PPTA has with this clause is that it is simply adding to the select and favoured group that has enhanced choices with respect to schooling. The majority of New Zealand parents send their children to the local school because that is what is logical, affordable and convenient for them. Only a relatively privileged group of New Zealanders have the option of buying in a particular area or claiming rights of entry through particular religious or familial status. As well, these parents must also have the money, time and lifestyle that enables them to send their children to a school outside their local area. The ideological position that all New Zealanders ought to have such a choice is nonsense because it is a physical impossibility to deliver on everyone's first choice – clearly many would be making do with second, third and even fourth choices. Moreover, it is in the nature of these

things, that those parents with the least resources will be most likely to find themselves with Hobson's choice.

- 2.2 PPTA's view is that as the state compels students to attend school from the age of 6 until 16, it has an obligation to ensure high quality education is available in every local school. In practice, since the inception of Tomorrow's Schools, there has been a systematic polarisation of schools along ethnic and social class lines.¹
- 2.3 The evidence both nationally and internationally is that in a selective school system, it is the school that has the choice not the parent. Schools look to smooth the entry path for those students who will bring most credit to the school academically or through sport and the arts. At the same time, they seek to exclude the more challenging and demanding students who require much more intensive support.
- 2.4 This cannot be dismissed as an ideological position as it has strong support in the literature. A recent analysis of the 2006 global PISA data concluded that allowing schools to effectively control admissions leads to social and academic inequality:

"To sum up, it seems clear that, more than the margin given to families to select between different schools (parental choice), what fundamentally matters when it comes to assessing school segregation is the margin given to schools to intervene in student admissions. When considered with regard to the policy debate, the implications of this conclusion are relevant and have already been underlined in other studies (West, 2006): in order to generate the contextual conditions that could lead to an increase in social heterogeneity within schools (and, consequently, to higher rates of equity in the academic outcomes obtained by students and schools), more public control of student admission processes

¹ Hughes, Lauder, Watson, Hamlin, Simiyu. 1996 *Markets in Education: Testing the Polarisation Thesis* (Smithfield) MOE.

Fisk E and Ladd H 2000 *When schools Compete. A cautionary tale*. Brookings

applied by schools with a high level of admissions autonomy is needed.”²

- 2.5 The rhetoric of choice conceals a covert agenda which accepts increased social segregation as an acceptable price to pay for the provision of increased educational options for a wealthy minority. This is certainly not a strategy that is going to lead to any significant improvement in achievement. A recent OECD publication: *A Family Affair: Intergeneration Social Mobility across OECD Countries*³ notes that:

“According to suggestive new OECD evidence (Causa and Chapuis 2009) increasing the social mix of students within schools could increase the relative performance of disadvantaged students without any apparent negative effects on overall performance.”

Certainly the country that regularly comes out on top in global comparisons of school achievement, Finland, confidently attributes its success, at least partly, to:

“ ...comprehensive schools that offer all children the same top quality, publicly financed education – not only excellent teaching but counselling, health, nutrition and special-education services as well – seems to play a key role in building a high-performing education system. Good schools for all, not for some, are the core value that drives education in Finland.”⁴

- 2.6 It is not a fiscally responsible strategy to have the taxpayer build and maintain a school in one location only to have to provide extra accommodation in a neighbouring school which has temporarily become flavour of the month. For the wider community there is the cost and inconvenience of extra traffic on the roads at peak times adding to pollution, congestion and delays as parents ferry their children across town to the school of choice.

² Miquel Àngel Alegre* and Gerard Ferrer *School regimes and education equity: some insights based on PISA 2006 British Educational Research Journal Vol. 36, No. 3, June 2010, pp. 433–46* ISSN 0141-1926 (print)/ISSN 1469-3518 (online)/10/030433-29

³ A Family Affair: Intergeneration Social Mobility across OECD Countries. Economic Policy Reforms. Going for Growth 2010 Retrieved from <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/2/7/45002641.pdf>

⁴ Erkki Aho, Kari Pitkanen and Pasi Sahlberg *Policy Development and Reform Principles of Basic and Secondary Education in Finland since 1968*. World Bank Education Working Paper Series. May 2006

2.7 In summary, except for paragraph (f) {the new (e)} in clause 6, this section serves only to confer a benefit on already well-endowed parents by giving them direct access to what are likely to be high-decile schools. As well as being unfair to all other parents it is educationally unsound and socially divisive. The concept of winners and losers has its place in sporting events but it should not be a principle that ever applies in a compulsory school system.

3 Secondary Tertiary Programmes

3.1 PPTA supports the clauses (7, 8 and 9) that enable students to pursue alternative pathways towards work and further education while still at secondary school, though it does have a question about which institution is responsible for ensuring the student attends the tertiary part of the secondary-tertiary programme. In contrast to the proposals around Schools Plus, the current model does not resource secondary schools for checking on students who are working off-site.

3.2 PPTA also supports clause 31B (a) which ensures that secondary schools may be actively engaged in any secondary tertiary programme that may operate for their students and 31B (3) which requires members of a provider group to work “in a cooperative manner.”

3.3 Aside from that, PPTA believes the whole approach to the secondary/tertiary interface as set out in this bill is misguided and unlikely to be particularly effective.

3.4 There is extensive evidence that the most successful initiatives with respect the secondary tertiary interface have been the Gateway Programme and the Secondary Tertiary Alignment Resource (STAR), both based in secondary schools yet the approach taken in this bill is to establish a new bureaucracy, “the provider group”. The extensive involvement of the Secretary for Education 31C, 31 D 2, 31E, 31G (1) and (3), and of the Minister 31 B(1), 31F and 31H in overseeing the process tends to confirm the suspicion that the model proposed is not robust and there is no expectation it will work without constant central oversight.

- 3.5 The fact that it has been necessary to mandate in legislation that the provider group members must take all reasonable steps to work cooperatively (31C(2)(f)) indicates where this may well come unstuck. Regardless of any legal directive to work together, the reality is that schools will have funding either partially or wholly removed from them once a student moves into the ambit of the provider group.
- 3.6 While this may appear logical to financial advisers in the ministry of education who have no practical experience in secondary schools, it fails to account for the reality that virtually all secondary school costs are generated at the beginning of the year. There are no savings for a secondary school should a student leave during the year. It will have to continue to run programmes for other students in the course regardless, yet it will have funding removed. This proposal, coming as it does on top of the similarly ill-advised proposal for quarterly roll audits, means that a powerful disincentive to cooperation has been built into the whole process.
- 3.7 PPTA is disappointed that the legislation has not built on the successful models of secondary/tertiary partnership which have been trialled and positively evaluated. In most areas of the country, secondary schools, ITOs, polytechnics and some private providers have established working partnerships over a number of years which successfully support students into work or further training. It is difficult to understand why this model has been abandoned and replaced with a complex local structure which, from its inception, will be undermined by problems with the funding formula. It will lead to fragmentation and atomisation and the inevitable financial risk that accompanies any proposal that has small amounts of funding trickling through numerous institutions.
- 3.8 PPTA is also concerned that the issues around technology and trades in schools continue to be addressed from the wrong end! Establishing trades academies is like putting a new roof on a house without dealing with the faulty piles. In February 2007, PPTA presented to the Education and Science Select Committee about the parlous state of technology delivery in secondary schools: a constantly evolving curriculum with little professional development for teachers,

achievement standards that are so unsatisfactory schools have given up and are mostly offering industry based unit standards; facilities that were designed more than fifty years ago and are completely unsuited to the new technologies; lack of funding for the much more expensive materials required to teach subjects like electronics, loss of focus on skills in year 7 and 8 and, most worrying of all, an inability to recruit and retain technology teachers with appropriate practical experience.

3.9 At the time of the presentation, the Select Committee was chaired by the late Brian Donnelly who noted that “in all his years as a principal technology was the most appallingly supported initiative he had ever come across.” The Committee agreed with PPTA that a vision for technology was needed. We are still waiting.

3.10 The proposals enshrined in this legislative change are not that vision. They fit the description of New Zealand education policy as described by ex-Deputy Minister of Ontario, Professor Ben Levin on his visit here earlier this year, “lots of good projects; no strategy.” Accordingly, PPTA recommends that the Education and Science Select Committee not proceed with the changes under 31 A to 31 L and instead ask the ministry of education to provide it with advice on more effective models of secondary-tertiary partnerships.