

Principals Furious at NCEA review process! NCEA Review 2018 by Chris Hipkins: “Too Rushed, Not enough thought, Must do better! FAIL”. So the headline in the newspaper says. This coalition of Auckland principals probably has a reason to be furious, as they feel they have been locked out of the review around the changes that are being suggested to NCEA, and fear the impact these may have on the students at their schools. Even David Seymour (now he has more time on his hands/feet or whatever, after being knocked out of DWTS) from the Act party has climbed on board, slagging the Minister, stating the signatories to the advert in the newspaper have over 800 years of experience compared to the Minister. Wow, David, good point, so the experience of the teaching profession does count for something.

However, it is good to see that the Auckland Secondary Principals are pointing out the real issues facing education at this time. Teacher supply, “the training, recruitment and retention of quality teachers should be our No 1 priority. This requires immediate and urgent attention if we are to have a supply of qualified people for our classrooms” (ditto for primary classrooms). “A national discussion on core secondary curriculum needs to be had. To create an enduring qualification, the sector firstly needs to agree on what knowledge we want our students to learn at Year 11, 12 and 13.” Then and only then, when these things are secured, should we review the NCEA assessment system, with the starting point direct consultation with secondary school principals. (Surely, David, you don’t want all teachers to be qualified).

I find this of great interest when I see what the Primary Principals and teachers had to endure in the last ten years with National’s Standards. When national standards were introduced many of the Primary Teachers and Primary Principal organisations and school Boards across the country expressed their grave concerns around the implications on student learning and the school curriculum implementation. I don’t remember David Seymour from the Act party slagging the then Minister Anne Tolley, comparing her experience against that of the Primary Principals, who stood up against N S at that time. In fact, we were hounded for protecting the lack of accountability of the profession and looking after our own interests. Could this not be what is happening here? A group of conservative principals living in conservative communities, with conservative boards not realising that education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century has changed, and schools, and dare I say Secondary schools, may need to change how they deliver education. Surely the most important enduring qualifications we want our students to get are those competencies around the “how” of learning. When that is understood by students and teachers, the “what” part should look after itself.

The last thing we want is education is going through more political turmoil. We need bipartisan agreement on the future of education of our students. This must involve real dialogue of all interested stakeholders, but how much influence each stakeholder should have is going to be the difficulty. Get that wrong and we could commit another generation of students to the influences of self-serving groups.

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These views are personal and not necessarily those of the WPA