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## **Opinion Editorial**

**Attention: Education and Political Reporters**

**14 September 2015**

**for immediate release**

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### **TEACHERS CAN – EDUCAN'T**

And behold, God gave the world EDUCANZ, and the sector looked at it, and was not particularly happy.

The replacement body of the old Teachers Council has its challenges ahead. Despite over 1000 submissions raising concerns about every aspect of its design, little was changed as a result of the select committee consultation process, and the new machine is now set to lead and speak for the profession.

The selected members of the governing board have their work cut out. There are many significant obstacles to overcome before EDUCANZ can claim that it speaks for anyone, with the possible exception of the Minister of Education, who appears to be calling all the shots.

The rhetoric which talks of the Council lifting the status of the profession and being its independent voice is found wanting at the first hurdle by its appointment mechanism. A cunningly crafted but Minister appointed Governing Board is no substitute for good democratic process.

The new Council has been formed in an environment of heightened public accountability. Elevating the status of the profession will not be achieved through increased external accountability, so there is an immediate contradiction between the Government's priorities and the Council's rhetoric. International educator Michael Fullan describes the necessary drivers succinctly enough. Capacity building trumps accountability. Collaboration, systemness and pedagogy beat individual effort and fragmentation. How does EDUCANZ plan to take the profession down this pathway? How will the EDUCANZ Board know that the people paying for its existence are on board and engaged?

Strengthening the notion of the true professional will not derive simply from imposed rules and external codes of conduct, but rather from powerful conversations with colleagues and the willingness of all players to become Teachers with a capital "T".

As the educational landscape becomes ever more complex, we need highly skilled and well prepared teachers. Despite recent reports to the contrary, the stories on the ground are of teacher shortages across the country, and others talking of leaving due to the ever spiralling complexity and pressure that teaching increasingly requires. Will the new body show some leadership for the wellness of its profession by demanding a stop is put to the constant and interminable change creating intolerable levels of stress?

There are many more questions to be asked, for example, with more and more expected of teachers, how does the notion of six week teacher training courses delivering teachers straight into classrooms stack up?

The deep concerns about National Standards, which have been well expressed since their inception in 2010, have not gone away. Principals and teachers continue to be concerned about the standards' impact on the delivery of a broad curriculum, and all involved in teaching recognise that the data which is trumpeted as proof of their success in the Public Achievement Information (PAI) reports remains as shonky as John Key first described it.

National Standards need a full and frank and independent review. Will EDUCANZ start this process...? It would certainly build confidence in their role of supporting the profession.

Secondary teachers have rejected any involvement with the new entity, and spoke out recently about their serious concerns for NCEA and its impact on student choice. They claim that NCEA has become a credit harvesting process, where the critical choices are avoided in favour of easy subjects, and passes. How does this situation serve our country into the future and what will EDUCANZ do about that?

EDUCANZ's enabling legislation requires a sampled annual auditing of teacher appraisal. For the vast majority of the profession who are performing to a high standard, this will be a meaningless exercise of compliance offering little of value. Poor teachers are seldom discovered through appraisal processes, but through the observations and judgements of team leaders, and feedback from students and parents. Once identified, it is a well-managed guidance and support process that is set in place that will hold them to account. It is a

developmental appraisal process that will grow the capability of the profession, not another audit.

It is likely from the deafening silence about the Professional Learning and Development Review that the Minister is planning to add that to the EDUCANZ job description, possibly married to future clusters of schools. The review has been parked in limbo for eighteen months and if this cluster destination is correct, it begs the question - where is the "systemness" to which Fullan refers?

All these matters bring us to the biggest question of all. With all the complexities and these weighty matters for EDUCANZ to resolve, how will the independent voice of the profession know that it is on track? What will it do if the message to the 'independent voice' from its stakeholders is - "well below the standard?"

It seems that the future of EDUCANZ is somewhat fraught. If as teachers expect, there is a sharp increase in registration fees, if the messages don't accurately reflect the wider professional view, if the PLD doesn't make sense or make a difference, if the conduct processes fail to adhere to the principles of natural justice, then revolt is in the possible.

And when that happens, there will be those who say, quite loudly and clearly, and with a wee curl of the lip, "I told you so."

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