



NEW ZEALAND COUNCIL FOR EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

TE RŪNANGA O AOTEAROA MŌ TE RANGAHAU I TE MĀTAURANGA

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NCEA a lightning rod for other concerns

A leading educationalist believes the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) may be acting as a lightning rod for other, more general concerns teachers and parents have about education.

Dr Rosemary Hipkins is a chief researcher at the New Zealand Council for Educational Research and author of a report out today called *Taking the pulse of NCEA*.

The report is a detailed analysis from NZCER's national survey of secondary school principals, teachers, trustees and parents, conducted in the second half of 2006.

It found:

- widespread support for NCEA (89 percent of principals in support, 60 percent of teachers)
- very little desire from principals, teachers, trustees or parents to go back to the old system or design a new one
- high levels of uncertainty among parents about NCEA
- concern in schools about how well NCEA is understood by employers and universities

NZCER found respondents fell firmly into a positive or negative camp in their attitudes towards NCEA. When this position was cross-tabulated with all other responses, NCEA appeared to be a focus for gathering together discontent with education more generally. This was particularly true for teachers and parents.

For example, teachers who were negative about NCEA were more likely to express concern about a wide range of aspects of their job, some unrelated to NCEA. These included workloads, recruitment and retention of teachers, the use of IT and the principal's relationship with staff.

There was a similar positive/negative split with parents. Parents who were supportive of NCEA were more likely than negative parents to say they were generally happy with their child's education, felt they knew what was happening in the school and believed they received good information about their child's learning programme.

She says NCEA appears to be strongest and most accepted in schools where there is an ongoing focus on how curriculum and learning needs to change to meet the needs of students in the twenty first century.

“NCEA actually opens up the possibility for schools to be quite innovative in how they deliver the curriculum and we know from other research that many schools are taking advantage of that to design courses to meet particular needs,” Dr Hipkins says. “But that’s quite challenging for teachers and parents with a more traditional view of what schools should be teaching and how.”

Teachers and parents who felt they had been kept in touch and involved with the changes were much more likely to be positive.

Dr Hipkins says there are lessons to be learned from the report for the introduction of the new national curriculum. It too contains challenging ideas for teachers and parents, and people need to be involved in the discussion about why the changes are being made.

For more information or to interview Dr Hipkins, contact NZCER communications manager Sarah Boyd on 04-8021468, or 027-231 4300.