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TEACHER SELECTION : A DELPHI INVESTIGATION

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment  
of the requirements for the Degree  
of Master of Education at  
Massey University

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### ABSTRACT

This study used the Delphi Technique to investigate weaknesses of Division "A" (primary) teacher selection procedures in New Zealand.

Some of the major criteria on which New Zealand Division "A" (primary) teacher candidates are selected are:

- a] Personal qualities overt (e.g. sense of humour)
- b] Personal qualities covert (e.g. initiative)
- c] Academic ability (including communication skills)
- d] Involvement (e.g. with children)

A review of the literature as it relates to these criteria revealed:

- 1] The existence of apparent discrepancies between candidates' academic ability and intelligence and their success in teaching.
- 2] The personality traits and characteristics of teachers on entry to training show no consistent relationship with success in teaching.
- 3] The criterion of experience with children (involvement) is based more on common sense than research evidence.

The results of the three round Delphi confirm and extend the findings of the review of the literature by indicating that there are eleven major and significant weaknesses in Division "A" (primary) teacher selection procedures

in New Zealand. In this light and in the context of recent overseas innovations in teacher selection, the present study concludes by making eight recommendations for change.

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## INTRODUCTION

Currently there is world-wide concern to improve the quality of the teaching force (Wilson, 1985). One manifestation of this is renewed interest in the selection of applicants for entry to teacher training. Selection has become salient because in most countries in Europe, and in parts of the USA and Canada, a quota system has been imposed on admissions to primary and some secondary teacher education programmes. In these instances, an "open door" policy to teacher education has been dispensed with and selection from the applicant pool has been introduced. In this situation close consideration has been given to the criteria on which selection decisions should be based and the means by which evidence might be collected on the extent to which candidates meet these criteria.

In New Zealand, both the criteria on which Division "A" (primary) teacher candidates are selected and the means by which evidence is collected have been established for over thirty years. However, three recent trends have emerged which, when combined, have heightened the need to review Division "A" (primary) teacher selection procedures in New Zealand. First, Division "A" teacher selection procedures have been subject to intense criticism (Ramsay, 1979; Freyberg, 1980). Secondly, and in support of these criticisms, there is a body of research and much speculation to suggest that present teacher selection procedures do not reliably predict success in teaching (Purdie, 1977; Norman, 1978; and Whalley, 1978). Thirdly, historically there has been a surplus of candidates for teaching over places available in training (see Appendix 2, page 114).

Despite these three trends, studies which have investigated the specific weaknesses of Division "A" teacher selection procedures in New Zealand have not been forth-

coming. Accordingly, the purpose of the present study was to investigate the weaknesses of the criteria on which Division "A" selection decisions are based and the weaknesses of the means by which evidence is collected on the extent to which candidates meet these criteria. The research tool used to achieve the aims of this study was the Delphi Technique.

The study begins in the following chapter by reviewing the literature as it relates to the procedures which are used in New Zealand to select Division "A" (primary) teacher candidates. Following this, a description of the procedures which are used in New Zealand to select Division "A" teacher candidates is given in Chapter Two. Characteristics and applications of Delphi are outlined in Chapter Three, as also is the selection of the sample.

Chapter Four gives details of the results from each round of Delphi, and discusses the findings in the context of the research reviewed in Chapters One and Three and concludes by making recommendations for change.

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## GLOSSARY

### Teachers

Unless otherwise stated, the "teachers" in this study are primary teachers. In New Zealand, primary teachers in training are classified as Division "A". This is distinct from other groups of teachers such as Secondary teachers (Division "C") or kindergarten teachers (Division "E").

### Applicant

In this study, a person who has filled in an application form for Teachers' College but who has not been admitted to a course of teacher training is termed an "applicant".

### Trainee

The term trainee applies to a person who is training at a Teachers' College.

### Beginning Teacher

Following graduation from a Teachers' College, trainees are placed in certificating positions in schools for two years. Teachers in certificating positions are called "Beginning teachers". At the end of their two years in a certificating position, beginning teachers may or may not be "certificated".

### Certification

Each beginning teacher's performance is evaluated by a New Zealand Department of Education Inspector of primary schools. The inspector then recommends whether a beginning teacher be certificated or not. Once certificated, the teacher is deemed by the Director General of Education in New Zealand to be eligible for appointment to permanent teaching positions in the primary service.

### Candidates

In some cases it is necessary to use a term to describe

the pool of applicants, trainees, and beginning teachers. In this case, the term "candidate" is applied. Candidate is used in the sense that applicants, trainees, and beginning teachers have in common the objective of being certificated and of "becoming" a teacher.

### Training

"Training" refers to the period of time trainees spend in a Teachers' College as well as the period as a beginning teacher in a school up to the point of certification. For primary applicants, training at college is three years, reduced to two years for applicants with university credits or similar qualifications.

### Selection and Withdrawal

Selection is distinct from withdrawal. Withdrawal refers to candidates who, of their own accord, decide not to continue with a career in teaching. With withdrawal, the candidate makes the decision to leave. Selection refers to the process of deciding which candidates are suitable for teaching. Decisions to reject candidates are usually made by the staff of the Education Board, the Department of Education or the Teachers' College.

### Interview Committee

This term is used to describe the group of people who interview candidates. Sometimes the group is referred to as the selection committee or the selection panel.