

Differences

A number of comments made by the associates and the student teachers do not appear to match. Perhaps the most significant feature of the associate teachers' responses is that the great majority of the qualities they saw as contributing to the 'perfect' student teacher had to do with personal professional qualities. These were:

- showing initiative (21 responses)
- seeking help, asking questions, and communicating about problems (15)
- being enthusiastic and energetic (14)
- being able to act on advice (11)
- being well organised (11)

Quite why there were such a large number of comments from associates about personal professional qualities needs further investigation.

For their part, student teachers were clear that

- associates should allow them space to try teaching on their own (47 responses), as illustrated by comments such as, "...acknowledges and understands my need for complete autonomy" and, "...allowing you to have complete control over the class and classroom decisions" and, "...someone who is willing to give up their class" - (although it is to be hoped that student teachers recognise that their associates are accountable for the learning of the children in their classes)
- associates should actually want to have student teachers in their classrooms (17 responses)
- they, the student teachers, should not have to compete for teaching opportunities and their associate's time with student teachers from another provider who may also be present in the classroom (1 response).

Without further investigation, it is difficult to know what significance these responses hold. However, these and other related issues are the subject of an ongoing study which may reveal a clearer picture of the perceptions of both associates and student teachers regarding their roles.

But will they know the steps?

*This gutsy wind is reminiscent
of one years ago when I pushed
through wineberry and rata bush
and sheltered under pongas on a distant
hillside.*

*And huddled against one black body, I glanced
up, past flinging skirts
and the pongas danced.*

*Their arms flailed and touched and turned away,
tall stems pulsed to the windy band,
and around the edge of the floor
wineberry and fuchsias clapped their hands
in support.*

*Much later, I'd rather not have heard
of the yellow leviathan that roared
and stormed the ballroom floor
to crush the dancers and levelled
that place where I'd sat before
to watch the ponga revellers.*

*Did the driver know, when he left to wilt
the regimented corpses, he'd harmed
the limbs, their heads and upturned lilt
and proudly flung arms?
...I want to know his guilt.*

*But, no grass grew there
and a decade on, I saw
again, now ring-fenced, a ballroom floor
and a younger set,
hand in hand
thinly standing erect
and moving timidly to a windy band*

But will they know the steps?

Richard Ward