

Extracts from a Report of the New Zealand Committee of Inquiry into Curriculum, Assessment and Qualifications in Forms 5 to 7

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The New Zealand Minister of Education, Hon. Russell Marshall, appointed a Committee of Inquiry, chaired by Mr. J.A. Ross, Assistant Director-General of Education, to provide advice on curriculum assessment and qualifications in Forms 5 to 7.

Terms of reference

The committee's terms of reference (p. 3) were:

In the light of the Government's commitment to change the present requirements for University Entrance, the committee is to:

- a. recommend curriculum guidelines for Form 5, 6 and 7, taking into account the views of the working parties on the core curriculum, the public responses to the report "A Review of the Core Curriculum for Schools", and such other inquiries it may wish to make in relation to the core curriculum;
- b. consider methods of assessment for use in Form 5, 6 and 7, and make recommendations for the award of leaving certificates, including arrangements for the further development of such awards as are recommended;
- c. consider the implications for overseas users of the University Entrance Examination or of any other New Zealand award or examination that may be the subject of the committee's recommendations.

The committee is asked to give priority to issues concerning the sixth form, and to report on Sixth Form awards by 1 June, 1985.

In the first report (May 1985) to the Minister, the committee made recommendations on arrangements for sixth form awards from the beginning of 1986 when the University Entrance examination would no longer be held in Form 6 in New Zealand.

Recommendations

1. The committee recommends that Sixth Form Certificate should be the sole national award in Form 6 beginning in 1986.
2. Existing University Entrance subjects, and any other subjects already approved for introduction by the Universities Entrance Board should be

approved by the Minister of Education as nationally approved subjects for Sixth Form Certificate.

3. The committee believes that evening class students should have the opportunity to enter for Sixth Form Certificate subjects, and recommends that the regulations be examined and amended to set a minimum attendance time of 65 hours per course, and to include an exemption from the compulsory English requirement for such students.
4. Sixth Form Certificate grade allocations to schools should be moderated to ensure inter-school comparability, and in 1986 this should continue to be achieved on the basis of School Certificate results.
5. A right of review of the grades allocated to individual students in Sixth Form Certificate should be instituted and published.
6. The committee recommends that legislation be prepared and introduced to establish a Secondary Board of Studies with the status, functions and structures as outlined in Appendix B of this report.
7. The committee recommends that the staffing of the Department of Education be strengthened and reorganised to make it possible for the proposed Secondary Board of Studies to carry out its work efficiently.
8. The committee recommends that the Committee of Inquiry into Curriculum, Assessment and Qualifications in Forms 5 to 7 be used as a source of advice to the Director-General, and be consulted on matters of policy, in connection with the award of Sixth Form Certificate in 1986.
9. The committee recommends that the Minister note the committee's support for the principle of the Universities Entrance Board proposal for provisional entrance to university for students who have completed a sixth form year.
10. The committee recommends that the Tertiary Assistance Grants Regulations be amended to permit the grants to be received by all university students who have been granted provisional entrance.
11. The Universities Entrance Board should be encouraged to continue to offer an examination at sixth form level for students in Pacific countries at least in the immediate future.
12. The setting of grade totals in Sixth Form Certificate as equivalent to a pass in University Entrance should be discouraged, as introducing an undesirable pass/fail distinction into the award.
13. The Department of Education should initiate a comprehensive publicity campaign to provide information on Sixth Form Certificate for 1986.
14. A person or persons should be seconded full-time to the department to act as a source of advice and information on Sixth Form Certificate and to lead related training programmes for teachers.

South Pacific Islands Sixth Form examinations assistance

Because recommendation No. 11 is of particular interest to educators in the South Pacific Islands which use the New Zealand University Entrance examination, the discussion relating to overseas students (pp. 26-27) is reproduced here:

The terms of reference for the committee include the implications for overseas users of New Zealand qualifications of any proposed change. Approximately 5,500 candidates from the Pacific Islands enter for University Entrance each year, 4,500 of them being from Fiji. These students follow subjects as prescribed for New Zealand candidates, with the exception of English where a separate prescription exists. There are significant numbers of Island candidates in about 8 to 10 subjects. The qualification is used primarily as a credential in the islands. A South Pacific Board for Educational Assessment has been set up with the intention of providing Pacific countries with the expertise to enable them to replace overseas awards. However, developments are not yet at the stage where these countries can administer their own sixth form awards.

The committee understands that there is a demand in Pacific Island countries for an examination such as University Entrance to continue to be available for Islands students and that New Zealand is considered to be under some obligation to provide such an examination, at least in the immediate future. The committee therefore recommends that the Minister should advise the Universities Entrance Board to continue to make the examination available, preferably under a different name, but for a finite period of time. The committee recognises that funding would be required to sustain the operation of the University Entrance examination for the limited number of students involved.

Sixth Form Certificate has been available in the past to students in the Cook Islands, Tonga, and Samoa. The committee considers that this should continue to be the case in the Cook Islands, Niue, and Tokelau Islands because people in these groups have New Zealand citizenship. However, it does not believe the award is suitable for other island students, and that administration and supervision of the continuous assessment procedures and course approval procedures would pose too many difficulties for credibility to be maintained. Instead, support should be offered to Island authorities to develop their own awards of a similar nature. Sixth Form Certificate would continue to be available to New Zealand citizens overseas, additional to those in the Cook Islands, Niue and Tokelau Islands, through enrolment in the Correspondence School.

Reference

First Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Curriculum, Assessment and Qualifications in Forms 5 to 7. Wellington: Department of Education, 1985.