

THE STORY OF CTME

The Christian Theological and Ministries Education Society (CTME) grew out of changes in the tertiary education scene in New Zealand in the last decade of the twentieth century.

The Stage is Set – 1989 a Crucial Year

In 1989 the only forum bringing together post-secondary theological education providers in New Zealand was the New Zealand Association of Theological Schools – an elite group of Theological College and University Religious Studies Departments. Only that year had NZATS opened their door to membership for the Bible College of New Zealand which had by then been teaching degree level biblical and theological studies for over fifteen years (through the Melbourne College of Divinity and Australian College of Theology). By 1989 a number of a new generation of Bible Colleges were also well established in the fast growing independent and charismatic streams of the New Zealand church scene.

1989 was also significant as the year in which the Education Amendment Bill was introduced bringing sweeping changes to the tertiary education scene. This Bill opened the way for a new level of public recognition for “Private Training Establishments” as key players in tertiary education through the establishment of the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA). The Act incorporating NZQA charged it with responsibility to rationalize tertiary education generally in New Zealand by defining, and in some cases protecting the use of, terms such as Certificate, Diploma, Degree and University, as well as establishing procedures for registering, approving and accrediting tertiary providers and their programmes. Alongside these “gate-keeping” duties, NZQA also had power to serve as “gate-openers” for credible tertiary providers who had previously been excluded from government recognition and funding. These roles were to prove significant for both the older established and newer providers of Christian theological and ministries education.

Catalytic Meeting

In October or November 1989 Bible College of New Zealand called together representatives of the full range of Theological and Bible Colleges to meet their Principal-Elect, Dr John Hitchen, due to assume the BCNZ National Principal’s role in January 1990. The immediate sense of common interests and concerns surfacing at that meeting, and the awareness of the significance of the Education Amendment Bill then before parliament, called forth a unanimous commitment to keep meeting periodically as a group of theological educators in the days ahead.

Initial Phased – 1990-1992

Over the next few years meetings of this same group were held at least twice each year. Preparations were well in place so that NZQA hit the ground running when the Education Amendment Act became law in June 1990. For all tertiary education providers the NZQA processes of “registering” as Private Training Establishments, gaining “approval” of our programmes and becoming “accredited” to deliver those approved programmes became the focus of the meetings of provider representatives. NZQA personnel, particularly Alan Male and David Lythe, attended our meetings to explain the always changing requirements as we encouraged and assisted each other with the considerable demands of compliance. In the process we came to understand each other and to appreciate the varieties of emphasis and approach to our educational task. We began to grapple with the task of differentiating the levels of training and education we were offering, using the NZQA definitions of Levels and credits and the peer moderation processes they introduced.

In early 1992 NZQA began working towards setting up standard setting bodies for each education sector across the tertiary spectrum, and to developing a National Qualifications Framework and a Unit Standards approach to assessment. This gave fresh impetus for those involved in ministry training and theological education to come together and decide how cooperatively they were prepared to work with NZQA in these areas.

By that time, early 1992, the range and diversity of our group was also evident. We included theological colleges, Bible schools and specialist ministry training organisations. These included official denominational Colleges, interdenominational colleges serving a range of churches, representatives of University Religious Studies and Theology departments, and independent training providers with a very specific constituency. We embraced short-term post secondary Certificate programmes, through a range of Diploma level programmes to undergraduate degree and post-graduate qualifications. Those involved in teaching religious education in State, Independent and Christian Schools also attended the sector meetings as the best forum through which they could share common

concerns relating to NZQA developments. The group demonstrated a more inclusive functional ecumenism than any other church-related body in New Zealand at the time, with mainline Protestant, Catholic, Evangelical, Pentecostal, Charismatic, and Adventist groups involved.

By the 11 July 1992 meeting the group had also reached consensus on a number of key principles that were to guide its relationships and programme for the next decade:

- We were Christian in the sense that we welcomed tertiary education providers who endorsed the historic creeds of the Christian Church and accepted for themselves the designation Christian;
- Providers involved in Christian theological education and equipping for a range of Christian ministries were welcome in the group (hence the designation “Christian Theological and Ministries Education” Sector - CTMES”);
- We were committed to protecting the theological integrity of each member, and to the right of each provider to control the teaching content and distinctive ethos of its programmes;
- We were committed to working together for educational quality and healthy professionalism in our programmes;
- We recognised the need to protect the right of providers to be free to choose the extent to which they would participate in any state sponsored systems for our sector;
- We accepted responsibility to be salt and light within the wider tertiary education scene in New Zealand; and
- We agreed on the need for public accountability for the use of any public funding received in our sector.

The group agreed at its 11 July 1992 meeting to work together with NZQA as long as those distinctives could be preserved.

Developing Relationships with NZQA, 1993-1996

During 1992 NZQA moved to appoint working groups with the goal of establishing suitable “National Standards Bodies (NSBs)” for each sector. The CTME Sector in October 1992 elected a representative group to act in this capacity for our Sector and NZQA accepted the nominees as their “CTME Sector Advisory Group”.

Most tertiary education sectors quickly developed “Industry Training Organisations - ITOs”, but such a body did not fit the needs of our sector. NZQA emphases moved, for the next few years, towards centralized approval, accreditation, and moderation systems and our Advisory Group shared in developing and implementing criteria for our sector.

In 1993 NZQA began putting massive resources into developing “Unit Standards” for assessing education across Levels 1-6 of its developing National Framework. In consultation with our Sector and on the Advisory Group’s recommendation NZQA appointed Helen Martin as the Unit Standard Writer for our Sector. Helen embarked on a major scoping exercise in which she won the respect and cooperation of the whole Sector before commencing what would become a four year process of consultation, establishing “expert panels” for each subject domain, and then writing, trialling, reviewing and registering on the National Framework, Unit Standards for the whole gamut of education and training offered across our Sector. The standard and quality of Helen’s work significantly influenced the whole NZQA Unit Standard development process.

The process also greatly enriched the process of theological education across our Sector – regardless of whether providers did or did not choose to utilise the Unit Standards approach to assessment. Helen’s work identified the comparative levels at which different providers were working. The whole process confirmed the importance of intentionally developing quality management systems for the various aspects of our educational task. The consultation process brought teachers together to address at new depths the outcomes of our teaching and assessment methods. The better understanding and mutual respect that has produced have proven beneficial for all involved in the process.

As this work progressed the representatives of our various programmes continued to meet at least twice a year to keep abreast of other NZQA and Ministry of Education developments and to encourage each other in the processes of compliance. Jack Zoutenbier developed further another overflow of Helen Martin’s work when he was contracted

to write up the sector's proposals for a range of national awards at Levels 3-6 to be registered on the National Qualifications Framework. Seemingly interminable delays were to mean this task was not completed until 2003.

Ongoing Developments, 1997-Present

From 1996 onwards NZQA and the Education Ministry went through a number of changes in priorities each demanding Sector adjustment and response.

Standards Setting and Quality Assurance: Once ITOs were operating NZQA lost interest in pursuing NSBs for other Sectors like ours. The Advisory Groups were abandoned. Unit Standard development and review was scaled down. The earlier very effective peer-based moderation systems were centralised and then trimmed back to a minimum. The inherent issues regarding responsibility for standard setting are still unresolved in 2004, with fresh attempts on NZQA's part to delegate standard setting responsibilities to National Quality Assurance Organisations – which look strangely like the original NSBs.

Government Funding for our Sector: Attention turned, from 1996, towards bulk funding grants being trialled for Private Training Establishments that would lead eventually to the use of Equivalent Full-Time Student (EFTS) numbers as the currency for determining levels of government support for PTEs in our Sector. The extent of such funding would become increasingly dependent on the ranking of tertiary education according to government, or Cabinet, socio-economic priorities and goals, which would leave our Sector keen for government funding support in recognition of the significance of our contribution to the welfare of our society, but always unsure as to the extent to which such funding might be forthcoming.

A Single or Dual System for Standardising Programme Design and Quality Assurance: The entrenched refusal of the University sector to accept the application in their sphere of key aspects of NZQA's legislative powers meant our Sector also became involved in the tug-of-war over whether NZQA-type quality assurance procedures would apply in all tertiary education or whether a dual system would recognise a distinction between "provider-designed" and "NZQA Unit Standards-based" awards. This has led to NZQA moving increasingly from operating centrally controlled quality assurance and moderation systems towards the auditing of Industry Training Organisation regulatory powers and provider controlled quality management systems. In our Sector providers operate both within and outside the University systems, and both with NZQA Unit Standards-based awards and with their own provider-designed awards. The original intention of NZQA bringing a uniform, easily understood consistency to levels and standards across the Tertiary Education sector generally has had a significant degree of success in our Sector, but is far from complete.

Re-assertion of Ministry of Education Control through TEC: since the turn of the millennium the dominant factor in CTME Sector affairs has moved from NZQA to the Ministry initiated Tertiary Education Commission or TEAC as it was in its formative stage. Now the government has moved away from funding approved education providers towards purchasing educational services according to its own social goals and economic priorities, our Sector has had to come to grips with the Charter and Profile regime for defining our contribution to society and for gaining access to potential funding. The Sector is thus vulnerable to the changing dictates of government policy if it wants to retain access to public funding. Two Sector responses have followed these developments.

A Sector Association for the CTME Sector: For many years the Sector considered the advantages of becoming legally incorporated in its own right. This was accomplished in August 2002 with the incorporation of the CTME Society. This provides the necessary foundation for ongoing developments, whichever way external factors may move.

The Sector members in recent years have also had to give attention to possible ways of rationalising our diverse programmes, avoiding duplication, and increasing cooperation between providers, if we want to retain access to government funding, or if we are to ensure a significant ongoing contribution to the wider tertiary scene without government funding assistance.

These are current issues. Our fifteen year history to date has taught us the value of consulting and listening to each other's insights and experience. It has also shown that the one reasonably certain thing about government involvement in our Sector is that policies will change and that they tend to change in recurrent cycles.

Moreover, this history also suggests that we are now also in a strong position to turn towards the other than government-oriented functions for which we first came together. Namely, as our Society Constitution puts it:

1. To provide a forum for mutual interchange, understanding and professional encouragement of providers of Christian Theological and Ministries education in and from New Zealand.
2. To represent sector interests to Government bodies, departments and agencies as requested by the members to Government bodies, departments, and agencies, to other educational agencies, or to any other bodies impacting upon the operation of members.
3. To foster high standards of quality assurance and ethical practice amongst providers.
4. To represent the members in establishing and implementing policies and procedures for determining appropriate nationally recognised qualifications and quality standards for our sector.
5. To develop and sustain effective relationships with comparable bodies serving our sector internationally, and with comparable bodies serving other educational sectors.
6. To promote self-critical and forward-looking evaluation of trends and developments within theological and Christian ministries education in our region.

John Hitchen
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