1. Overarching integration

We found:
- Providers understand the importance of integration, and staff see the programmes as integrating theory and practice better than other types of ITE
- The majority of partners schools and Student Teachers see and understand linkages
- Student Teachers finish programmes confident in their ability to create inclusive, responsive learning environments

This means:
- Programmes are meeting policy intention of improving integration: providers are more strongly focused on this than they are in other ITE
- Scope to further improve integration: Student Teachers’ and Mentor Teachers’ understanding of linkages and requirements could be improved

Providers all have a clear understanding of the importance of integrating theory and practice, and that this is a distinctive feature of the Masters programmes. All providers articulate a focus on teaching as inquiry and building the ability of Student Teachers to develop adaptive expertise. Survey feedback from providers demonstrates that they see the Masters programmes as being designed and implemented differently to other ITE programmes: the integration of theory and practice underlies all aspects of design and delivery.

There is scope to strengthen this critical aspect of the policy though: all programmes have room for improvement. In addition, a notable minority of key programme participants – partner schools and Student Teachers – do not see clear linkages or have poor understanding of integration.

Student Teachers feel well prepared to be continue to adapt their practice at the end of their programmes, expressing high confidence in their ability to critically reflect, use evidence, engage with research, and to undertake their own research in the classroom.

Key dimensions
- Demonstrable opportunities for Student Teachers to integrate theory and practice
- Evidence of linkages between coursework, assignments and placements

Data sources / gaps
- Provider survey
- Student Teacher and school surveys
- Site visits
- Qualitative interviews with providers

Exemplary standard
Theory and practice are integrated across all aspects of programmes

At last the balance between theory and practice is about where it needs to be.

(Principal survey)
INTEGRATION OF THEORY AND PRACTICE

2. Provider—school partnerships

We found:

- Most of the 111 current partner schools are in their 2nd or 3rd year; 36 schools have exited, turnover ranges from none to high across providers.
- Partnerships are solid and school staff are committed to involvement; however not all Mentor Teachers are well supported or communicated with.
- Partner schools make a strong contribution to design but many feel they could offer more.
- Ethnic diversity of learners in partner schools varies and deciles are higher than intended—2 providers have no low decile partner schools.

This means:

- Policy intention of programmes being run in partnership with schools is met.
- Building and maintaining relationships requires ongoing resource and effort; programmes with partner school turnover need to spend relatively more resource on finding and building partners.
- Partner schools’ learner profiles mean not all Student Teachers get adequate exposure to priority learners.

Partner schools are willing participants in the programme, and want to contribute to ongoing design and implementation. There is opportunity to increase schools’ involvement in future design: more school staff want to contribute (67%) than the number who feel able (44%).

Partnerships are strong enough to support ongoing operation, though providers view partnerships more positively than school leadership does. Schools are committed to ongoing participation, especially at the leadership level (92% of principals intend to continue)—Mentor Teachers within a school are more likely to turn over though: only 61% intend to continue. This is to be expected as individual teachers’ workloads and priorities change, and different Student Teachers come through the programme.

There are currently 111 partner schools — programmes with the largest cohorts need the most schools to provide placements for all their Student Teachers. On the whole providers have built good relationships with partner schools, with many schools continuing their involvement from year to year — some providers have had no or little change in their partner schools, while others have had high churn. Finding placements for Student Teachers in the secondary sector can be particularly challenging (with the need to match to the right subject).

The deciles of partner schools are higher than expected — overall only 20% are low decile (1-3); this is not appropriate for a programme predicated on giving Student Teachers sufficient opportunity to work with priority learners, and means that some Student Teachers only have experience of high decile schools. Again, there is a wide variation between partners: low decile partners range from 0% of the Massey and Waikato schools, to a high of 44% of the Auckland Secondary schools.

Key dimensions

- Partner schools contribute to ongoing design & implementation.
- Partner schools are willing participants.
- Providers and partner schools communicate effectively.
- Providers maintain a stable pool of suitable partner schools.

Overall judgement

- Not all expectations met.
- Practice continues at same standard.

Data sources / gaps

- Provider reports.
- Education Counts data about partner schools.
- Student Teacher and Provider surveys.

Exemplary standard

Partner schools & providers work together to build and deliver programmes.
3. Extended practicums

We found:
- Extended practicums provide additional opportunity to learn to practice and to integrate theory and practice — extended time in schools is widely seen as valuable
- Providers and schools are working collaboratively and constructively
- Student Teachers are not getting sufficient opportunity to work with priority learners, including Māori, Pasifika and learners with Special Education needs.

This means:
- Increased focus on practice is a distinctive and valuable feature of Masters programmes
- Practicums need to be located in environments that give adequate opportunity to work with priority learners, this may require using different partner schools

The structure of the practicums puts an emphasis on continuity. In all programmes, the number of days on practicum exceed the minimum requirement of the Education Council (70 days).

Providers put significant effort into the ongoing development of practicums, alongside partner schools. There is evidence of real collaboration with sharing of responsibility for feedback across a wide range of areas. Extended practicums result in Student Teachers gaining good insight into the realities and cycle of school life and developing quality relationships with learners.

Schools are willing partners in the extended practicums, but would like more opportunity to choose the Student Teachers they host, and practicum timings aren’t always ideal.

The time spent in classrooms means that Student Teachers get to develop their practice across a range of areas, including the opportunity to implement teaching as inquiry. However, the characteristics of the partner schools appear to be compromising the overall value of practicums. On the whole Student Teachers are getting little opportunity to practice te reo and tikanga. Over half of all Student Teachers, and close to half of all Mentor Teachers report limited opportunity to work with priority learners. As improving outcomes for priority learners is a high level objective of the Masters programmes this is a significant concern.

Differing views on opportunities to work with priority learners (quite a bit/a lot)
We found:
- Mentor Teachers are highly experienced teachers and mentors; 61% are committed to ongoing participation; workload is heavier than expected.
- A quarter of Mentor Teachers do not sufficiently understand the programme, including their own role; understanding appears to be improving over time.
- Student Teachers feel well supported by Mentor Teachers.

This means:
- Programmes are supported by adequate Mentor Teacher capacity; turnover and workload may need to be addressed.
- Outcomes for Student Teachers could be expected to improve if Mentor had a better understanding of the programme; professional development could more strongly engage Mentors.

The programmes are supported by capable and experienced mentors, who participate to strengthen the teaching profession and their own teaching practice. While Mentor Teachers participate for positive reasons, the experience of the programme has led to relatively low commitment to ongoing participation: only 61% intend to continue. This is not entirely surprising, as mentoring represents a significant addition to the teaching role – however workload is higher than expected, indicating that it is higher than for other types of ITE (almost all had mentored for other programmes previously). Low Mentor Teacher commitment has a resourcing implication for providers, as they will need to continue to find and professionally develop new mentors over time.

On the whole, Mentor Teachers are performing their role well – Student Teachers feel well supported across all expected areas. The fact that a quarter of Mentor Teachers do not fully understand their role or the programme however, is a significant concern. This has been an issue since the beginning of the programme, and available data (relating to three programmes only) indicates that the proportion of Mentor Teachers with low understanding has dropped sharply. Improving Mentor Teacher understanding of the programme needs to be a high priority for providers, this will better support achievement of the programmes’ objectives – enabling Mentor Teachers to assist the Masters Student Teachers to learn to develop the pedagogical skills and dispositions to create culturally responsive learning opportunities for priority learners.

Key dimensions
- Mentor Teachers are highly capable.
- Mentor Teachers understand the programme and their role.
- Mentor Teachers take advantage of professional development opportunities.
- Student Teachers are well supported by Mentor Teachers.

Exemplary standard
Mentor Teachers are highly capable and support Student Teachers to learn to practice.

Data sources / gaps
- Provider survey.
- Student Teacher and school surveys.
- Education Council and Ministry reports.
- Qualitative interviews.