



MAXIM
INSTITUTE

DISCUSSION PAPER

TOMORROW'S
TEACHERS:
RECRUIT, (RE)TRAIN
AND RETAIN

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Our education system is facing severe challenges, and our school-aged students are struggling. The reasons are many, but there is one factor that dwarves the rest—the greatest asset in any classroom: teachers. This paper argues that we need to ensure that we have a sufficient flow of teachers coming into New Zealand’s classrooms, that they want to stay in the profession, and that they are adequately trained and supported.

We have record low numbers of teachers available to fill vacancies in New Zealand’s schools, and nearly half of our secondary schools are employing untrained or unqualified teachers. The future doesn’t look any sunnier; the turnover of secondary teachers was 19% over 2021-2022, and exit surveys cite “improved career opportunities” and “better remuneration” for many of those departures. But we are not replacing these losses: enrolment in Initial Teacher Education has been dropping for years, and schools are depending on an unreliable supply of international teachers to fill the gaps.

There are reasons to hope that teacher recruitment may improve. Recent pay agreements could make the teaching profession financially more attractive. COVID-19 disruptions have become a thing of the past and truancy rates have turned a corner.

However, this education landscape has been decades in the making, and its characteristics are not unique to New Zealand. Since the 1990s, significant changes in the profession have changed both the “how” and the “what” of teaching. These have had an impact on how teachers themselves are taught, and how they are supported in their professional development. There is evidence—both from Aotearoa New Zealand and from overseas—that teachers are not being sufficiently well equipped to teach effectively or to manage classrooms.

Some countries, like the United Kingdom, have already identified and addressed some of these deficits. It changed its curriculum nearly 10 years ago, and its educational outcomes began to improve. This year, Australia mandated evidence-based content based on the science of learning be part of all Initial Teacher Education.

There are pockets of effective teacher training in New Zealand, however the majority of new teachers are still being sent into schools without being equipped—for instance—to apply relevant cognitive psychology to their teaching practices. In addition, the national curriculum in use since 2007 is, by design, not highly prescriptive. This adds to teachers’ workloads as they must create localised content, and the quality of teaching varies widely based on each teacher’s ability to do that.

In the lead-up to the election, most political parties are proposing changes to our education system. However, they aren’t addressing how teachers themselves are prepared to enter a crucial and challenging profession. Both the Ministry of Education and the Teaching Council bear responsibility for ensuring the best evidence is applied to teacher education. This is what they must do to support our teachers and, by extension, our students.

INTRODUCTION

One piece of the education puzzle dominates all other in-school factors. No matter where each child comes from and what the curriculum dictates, it is the teacher who greets the class each morning and who shapes their educational experience.

An effective teacher knows how to manage a classroom and how to impart knowledge. Teachers maintain an environment where students can learn, they leverage principles related to how we obtain knowledge, and they determine what and how students learn.

As the education system in Aotearoa New Zealand grapples with declining academic performance, challenges to students' well-being, and a crippling shortage of secondary teachers, it is worth asking: is the way we're currently training and employing teachers working? The recently resolved pay negotiations highlighted the belief that teaching is not valued as it should be, pay is not as competitive as it once was, and working conditions are not attracting and retaining the professionals that schools—and students—need.

New Zealanders are about to elect our government for the next three years, and each party has its own priorities for education. In this paper, we argue that teachers should be the highest of their priorities, and we provide an overview of how we are currently training and recruiting primary and secondary teachers.

We also discuss the scope of teacher shortages—where they are the most critical, what the short-term forecast looks like, and what is being done to address this. Then, we examine what could be done to address the deficiencies we've identified in teacher training. Finally, we evaluate what political parties are proposing in relation to teaching.

THE IMPORTANCE OF EXCELLENT TEACHERS

Professor John Hattie, a New Zealand researcher and the director of the Melbourne Education Research Institute, is known internationally for his “Visible Learning” studies. These break down the factors that positively influence learning in schools, using the findings of thousands of meta-analyses run on hundreds of thousands of smaller studies to rank more than 230 factors. These fit within a handful of domains such as “school,” “student,” “teacher,” and “curriculum.”

One factor, called “collective teacher efficacy,” has consistently led the field. This phrase refers to how a group of educators build a culture, share ideas and resources, and help each other hone their teaching practices.

Characteristics under the domains of teacher and teaching practice together make up another 14 of the top 20 significant influences in Hattie's December 2017 list. By contrast, only four of the top 20 are student-specific, such as “self-efficacy” and characteristics relating to students' prior knowledge and background. Just one of the top 20 is related to the curriculum.¹

This doesn't mean that a good teacher can always overcome negative influences on a student's education or that ineffective teaching will prevent students from progressing. The positive influence rankings range from the marginal—“student control over learning” at .02 and “non-immigrant background” at .01—to “collective teacher efficacy” at 1.57. There are more than 230 positive factors that sit between those, the majority of which have minimal impact on their own.

What the cluster of teacher-related factors at the top of Hattie’s rankings does tell us is that the most effective way to ensure children receive a good education is to provide them with excellent teachers. This is particularly critical for the estimated 20% of students who are considered neurodiverse—those with diagnoses such as ADHD, dyslexia, processing disorders, and giftedness. Teachers without a grounding in the science of learning are less likely to understand the methods that have been proven to best help these students progress.²

WHO TEACHES THE TEACHERS?

Today, most teachers arrive on the job having completed a Bachelor of Education or postgraduate teaching certificate at a university. Until about 25 years ago, that was not the case. Teachers used to be trained by colleges of education that were government entities, and local education boards determined programme content. Then, in 1985, the Ministry of Education began funding a three-year Diploma of Teaching programme, and within the next few years, it began regulating all educational services.³

Dr Kevin Knight, MNZM, has been involved in teacher education throughout these changes. “In the ’80s, the mantra was, ‘Teaching needs to be a degreed profession,’” he said. The teachers’ colleges began collaborating with universities that provided some of their courses, and one by one, they ended up merging. By 2007, none of the old colleges remained as independent training institutions and undergraduate primary teacher training went from a three-year diploma to a three-year degree. This happened “without the intended lifting of standard taking place,” Knight said. “It was nothing more than credential inflation.”⁴

Despite the shift to more academic settings and centralised oversight, New Zealand lost expertise in teacher training. “Seasoned teacher educators were required either to complete PhDs and become active researchers or leave the profession,” Dr Michael Johnston wrote. Those who didn’t leave had to meet new research expectations in addition to the actual work of mentoring trainee teachers.⁵

As a result of this shift, much training of teachers is undertaken by academics, some of whom have limited classroom experience. Mentors, who give feedback on practical work in the classroom, are most often classroom teachers whose own teaching practice could have deficiencies.⁶

The Ministry of Education also began approving new programmes run by polytechnics and organisations such as Te Wānanga o Raukawa and Laidlaw College, partly in response to a shortage of teachers.⁷ As of 2020, about 64% of ITE students were enrolled in universities, 23% were in private training establishments, and most of the remainder were in institutes of technology, polytechnics, and wānanga.⁸

Some training institutions have also been formed to serve specific and critical needs in education. Ako Mātātupu: Teach First NZ was established a decade ago to train teachers for low socio-economic communities and in-demand curriculum areas. It offers an employment-based Postgraduate Diploma in Secondary Teaching. Applicants must be committed to working in schools with significant Māori or Pasifika enrolment—ones that often lack high-decile schools’ advantages when recruiting teachers. The two-year programme has roughly 60 in each cohort.

Michelle Johansson, Kaitiaki of Ako Mātātupu, said that to improve the quality of education in New Zealand, “there needs to be more linking of hands across the nation.” She has been in more than 100 schools over the past 10 years and has seen some teachers doing excellent work. “It is important to share those pockets of excellence,” she said.⁹

However, most of the programmes that have sprung up over the past 25 years are similar to the programmes in universities, Kevin Knight said. In 1996, he co-founded the New Zealand Graduate School of Education (NZGSE), a private teacher-training organisation in Christchurch where he still serves as Manahautū, or “navigator.”¹⁰

The NZGSE emphasises highly supported classroom experience and the psychology of learning taught by practitioners. It requires more time teaching in the classroom than typical university programmes and in-classroom mentors are specialist teacher educators rather than working teachers. These mentors explicitly connect the theory being taught to practice—something a classroom teacher may or may not do, depending on the soundness of their own practice.¹¹ NZGSE students can’t graduate without consistently demonstrating competencies that fulfil 60 criteria, and they have an open-ended time frame in which to accomplish this.¹²

OVERSIGHT OF TEACHING STANDARDS

The Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand is the body that oversees the registration and monitoring of the nation’s ITE programmes and sets the standards for registered training institutions. It’s an independent statutory body previously known as the Education Council and, before that, the Teachers Council.

Dr Michael Johnston, a senior fellow and education specialist at the New Zealand Initiative, said that the Teaching Council’s standards are too broad and that only two of the six standards explicitly focus on effective teaching. He also said there is no rigorous assessment to see that ITE students are meeting the Council’s criteria, and this lack of focus on effective teaching is reflected in the courses offered. Johnston and a colleague conducted a thematic analysis of about 220 courses that form universities’ ITE programmes. They found only two course descriptions that seemed to have anything to do with the science of learning. However, he said that social justice—which is valuable but not core to understanding how we learn—“is massive.”¹³

He is among the educational experts who see declining literacy and numeracy achievement as a result of a “misguided and ineffective” pedagogy that emphasises sociological perspectives over evidence-based methods of teaching foundational skills.¹⁴ In other words, guiding ideologies and their application aren’t tethered to which ideas and practices best help students learn. Results from a study of 405 New Zealand primary school teachers illustrate what happens when trainees aren’t taught to translate theory into good practice before moving into the classroom:¹⁵

There was a large dissociation between teachers’ beliefs about spelling and their frequency of use of specific instructional practices associated with those beliefs (e.g., phonological awareness, orthographic knowledge). The mismatch between beliefs and reported practice appeared to be due to lack of professional knowledge regarding implementing explicit spelling instruction and finding time to teach spelling within the curriculum.

John Etty, Associate Headmaster at Auckland Grammar School, sees first-hand the gaps that new teachers have in their training. “Research into cognitive psychology relevant to teaching has come in leaps and bounds over the last 50 or even 20 years, but this hasn’t filtered through to teacher training in most cases,” he said. His school is in partnership with 11 other schools and Waikato University’s School of Education to provide an in-school teacher programme. While he sees potential for their home-grown efforts to help with the supply of well-prepared teachers, he considers the NZGSE to be among the best training programmes in New Zealand.

“Their programme is high quality,” he said. “If the Ministry was looking to take a model and upscale it, that would be a really good one.”¹⁶

The level of support NZGSE offers its students is a key reason the model is favoured by many practitioners and teacher trainers. Our current reality, however, as many universities are cutting programmes and staffing levels, is that the human resources needed to offer that level of supervision and instruction may be in short supply.

Leading up to this election, both major parties have identified deficits in literacy and numeracy instruction.¹⁷ However, neither of their solutions starts with ensuring training institutions are preparing teachers to teach these subjects well, nor do they admit that they have overseen changes to the curriculum and to teacher education that have contributed to these deficits.¹⁸

Research shows that a “structured literacy” approach to reading and a structured approach to writing, “with frequent and specific feedback,” is particularly helpful for students who have fallen behind.¹⁹ These have not been the preferred approaches to teaching literacy in New Zealand for the past two decades. Teacher training has promoted a student-led approach, which is associated with exacerbating performance gaps between students.

When the youngest of today’s teachers were themselves learning to read, the education pendulum had already swung away from more structured approaches and towards student-led learning. In 2020, a UNICEF study found that 35.4% of New Zealand’s 15-year-olds struggled to read and write.²⁰ That cohort is now beginning university; is it possible that a full third of those now training to become teachers lack the basic skills they will be tasked to teach?

The Teaching Council has recognised the danger of deficits like this self-perpetuating. It is in Phase 2 of a “multi-year ITE (Initial Teacher Education) journey” in which it is reviewing its requirements of the sector. A report released in 2022 said that new entrants need to pass literacy and numeracy assessments equivalent to University Entrance, and that the Council is “lengthening and strengthening” the requirements for minimum professional experience.²¹

Identifying these weaknesses is an important start, but whether the Teaching Council’s standards will be enough to overcome existing deficiencies remains to be seen. Once on the job, teachers must renew their practising certificates from the Teaching Council every three years. To do this, they must demonstrate participation in professional learning and development with nationally determined priorities. This can range from a one-off seminar to a postgraduate degree. These national priorities were updated in 2020 to include, for the first time, assessment for learning and curriculum design.²²

Improving the quality of teacher supply is an important part of the educational improvement puzzle, and the Teaching Council and training institutions play a crucial part. However, the nation’s principals are equally concerned about another puzzle piece that is threatening to dwarf them all: we need more teachers.

TEACHER SUPPLY AND RETENTION

The number of teachers available to fill vacancies in New Zealand’s schools has fallen to record lows, and the teacher shortage has become particularly acute for secondary schools. In the PPTA’s 2023 Secondary School Staffing Survey Report, which 127 principals responded to, 48% reported that they had employed untrained or unqualified teachers.²³ Those schools employ, on average, 1.3 untrained or unqualified teachers. The report notes that this is “almost double the previous high for permanent appointments and two-thirds higher for fixed term.” Between 2013 and 2019, there was very little change in untrained or unqualified appointments (from 0.25 to 0.26 on average), so there has been a recent and significant increase.²⁴

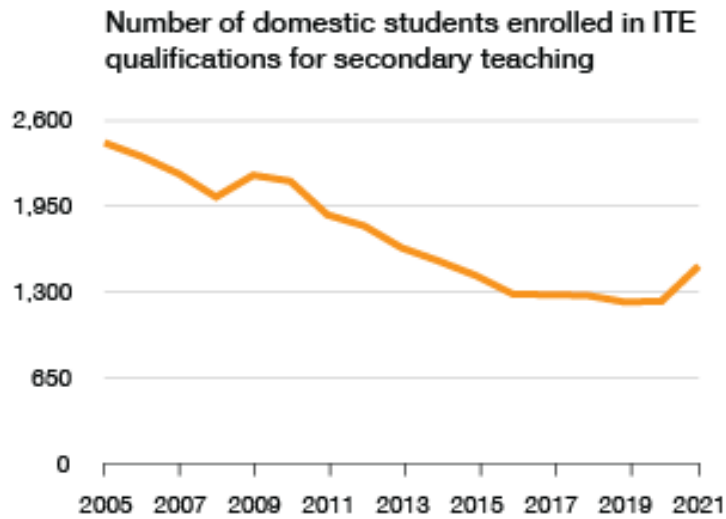


Figure 1.

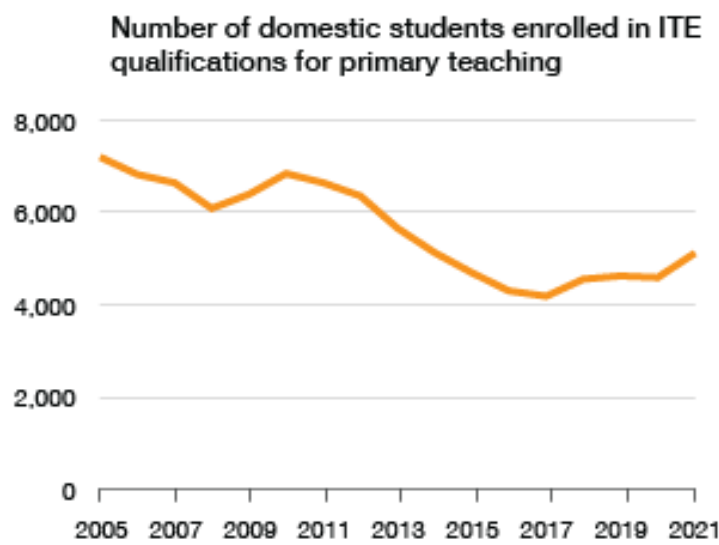


Figure 2.

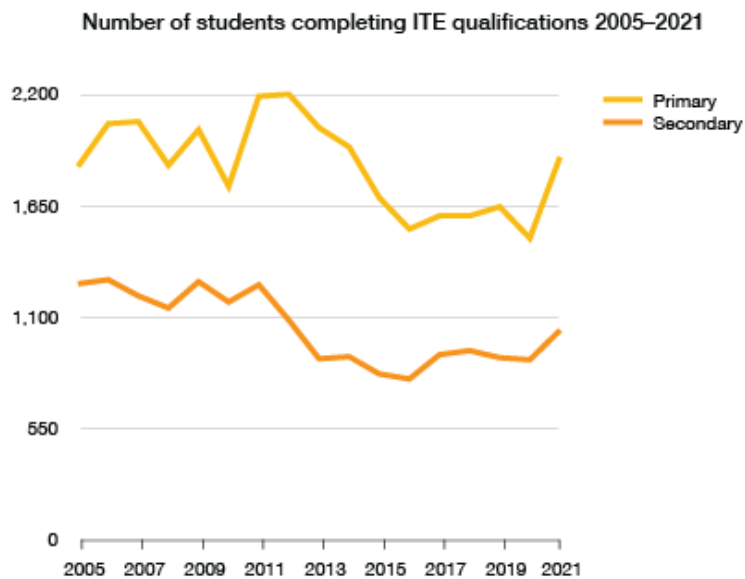


Figure 3.

Source: Education Counts, Initial Teacher Education Statistics

This situation would be worse if schools weren't relying on overseas recruitment. The average number of New Zealand-trained applicants per classroom position at secondary schools has dropped to 1.55—nearly half the previous low of three.²⁵ John ETTY said that at Auckland Grammar School, all recent appointments have been from overseas. This solution, he said, isn't ideal: "You're hesitant to shortlist overseas candidates, because you're not sure they'll show up." In 2022, it took nine months to get one teacher from South Africa. He has seen an improvement this year, with another overseas appointment taking just four and a half months.²⁶

In some subject areas, it's more common than not to receive no New Zealand-trained applicants. Of the principals surveyed, 30% had to cancel or transfer classes due to lack of staffing.²⁷ Subjects that are most likely to face shortages include chemistry, dance, technology, economics, STEM, and Te Reo.²⁸

Principals of public schools have limited means to attract teachers with in-demand subject knowledge or incentivise experienced teachers to remain in the profession. There is also a dearth of male teachers—men make up only 15% of primary teachers and 36% of secondary teachers.²⁹ Teachers' unions have successfully negotiated pay agreements that don't allow the salary incentives that would attract specialists, encourage people to work in remote areas, or help retain people who might be tempted to find employment in better-paid sectors.³⁰

Some principals are now teaching on top of their other responsibilities. Schools are relying more heavily on reliever teachers, subjects have been cut, and in some Auckland schools, students have been asked to stay home.³¹

The Ministry of Education's own forecasts suggest the situation will get worse for secondary schools. Its optimistic "high supply" model predicts a shortage in absolute teaching numbers to begin in 2025 and for numbers to decline for at least three more years—even assuming recruitment policies are as successful as hoped. Student numbers are set to remain steady, between 28,090 in 2023 and a peak of 28,590 in 2025, falling slightly to 28,340 in 2028. The Ministry's "low supply" model sees an absolute deficit in secondary teacher numbers begin this year. This deficit will grow to 620 teachers by 2025. The model doesn't include estimates of teacher numbers beyond 2025.³²

For primary schools, the Ministry of Education predicts a decrease of nearly 1,000 students between 2023 and 2028 while the number of available teachers increases.³³ Some schools and some roles may still be understaffed, but the forecast for primary schools is not nearly as bleak as for secondary schools.

Looking at the supply of future teachers currently enrolled in Initial Teacher Education, it appears likely that the shortage of NZ-trained secondary teachers will worsen. The number of students enrolled in ITE for secondary teaching in 2021 was little more than half of what it was in 2005. For primary teaching, enrolment numbers were about three-quarters.³⁴ However, numbers enrolled in 2021 were slightly improved from 2016–2020, which could be the beginning of a positive trend.

In 2012, the University of Auckland had 499 students graduate with a Bachelor of Education in Teaching. In 2022, only 165 people graduated with that degree—a decline of 67%. The steep drop-off from 2021, when 218 graduated, may partially be due to COVID-19 policies affecting both teacher education and the contexts in which potential teachers saw themselves working. The numbers were steady for the three years prior, following a steady decrease.³⁵

This downward trend for enrolments is nationwide and is reflected in the number of teachers registered. The

Teaching Council of New Zealand reported that in 2022, the number of registered teachers with a current practising certificate or LAT grew by 449, or 0.4% of the 109,441 total—“a significant decline in the growth trend from the three prior years.”³⁶

One principal quoted in the 2023 Secondary School Staffing Survey report wrote that “recruiting overall is the biggest stressor of the moment.” They went on to say that “attracting quality NZ-trained middle leadership candidates is even more challenging than quality classroom teachers.”³⁷

The Ministry of Education has been taking steps to address the shortage. In 2022, it budgeted \$24 million for initiatives to recruit international and domestic teachers by:³⁸

- extending grants that help pay for overseas relocations and finder’s fees;
- creating additional roles in the New Zealand Qualifications Authority, Teaching Council, and Education Payroll Limited in order to help with processing times;
- waiving International Qualification Assessment Fees;
- increasing the number of Career Changer Scholarships available;
- creating 100 places in “school-embedded Initial Teacher Education schemes that allow trainee teachers to be trained in schools while studying remotely”; and
- expanding a scheme that “connects beginning and returning teachers to teaching positions in schools with high need and incentivises them to stay in the role.”

In August 2023, Education Minister Jan Tinetti reported that over the prior 18 months, 301 domestic teachers had been recruited, and 1055 teachers on work and resident visas had arrived in the country. These numbers (which include early childhood educators) appear to be in line with the ministry’s targets, so its “high supply” projections could be realised.³⁹

While international recruitment has made up for much of the deficit in local teacher supply, it is not a reliable solution. Schools now receive about twice as many applications from overseas candidates as from local ones, but international teachers are only one-sixth as likely to be considered suitable for the role.⁴⁰ Suitability criteria include teaching competence, recognised secondary teacher training, relevant tertiary subject qualifications, and appropriate communication skills.

Even when candidates are suitable, as Auckland Grammar School’s experience illustrated, there are additional hurdles. International candidates are more costly to recruit, usually require work visas, and then must navigate differences between cultures and educational systems.

Principals shared examples of common frustrations with international recruitment in the staffing survey. One hired three teachers from overseas the previous year; the first worked a total of two weeks and then resigned, the second declined the job two days before they were due to start, and the third had yet to receive a visa.⁴¹

The supply from overseas may also be dwindling. International applications for registration in New Zealand declined in the first half of 2023, and principals are reporting a shift in the makeup of candidates. Many used to come from countries with similar educational systems such as the UK, Canada, and the US. Fewer teachers are applying from those quarters now. Southeast Asia and Fiji are more likely to be the source of applicants now—places where many Kiwis hail from, but where there are more significant differences in language and educational norms.⁴²

Ultimately, teaching conditions must be addressed in order to make teaching a better long-term career choice for people with in-demand skills. Pressures on the education sector are self-perpetuating. A shortage of experienced teachers has led to greater demands on those who remain. And this—particularly in the wake of COVID-19 disruptions—has contributed to more teachers exiting the profession. The turnover for 2021-2022 was 19.1%, more than half again the 12% turnover the year prior. Exit surveys cite “improved career opportunities” and “better remuneration” as the two main reasons for teachers’ departures.⁴³

One principal identified the Ministry of Education itself as competition for teachers: “We are now losing classroom teachers to positions at Te Kura and as advisors in the Ministry as teachers perceive these to be a better deal in terms of managing work and life. This is particularly for those teachers who have considerable experience in the classroom, but are needing to look elsewhere to avoid burnout.”⁴⁴

Secondary schools, in particular, have seen an upward trend in the number of teachers leaving for non-teaching jobs. Retirement remains the most common reason at 31% of resignations. However, leaving teaching altogether has grown from 16% of resignations in 2013 and 17% in 2019 to 25% in 2023.⁴⁵

A Curia poll of 1000 New Zealand voters in July 2023 underlines the many challenges those seeking to attract teachers face. Those polled were asked, “Which one of these options would be most successful in making teaching a more attractive profession?” There is no clear winner. Nearly a quarter chose “better teacher/student ratios,” followed closely by “more flexible pay scales” and “higher salary scales.” Workloads, students’ mental health challenges, declining achievement, lack of staff, truancy, frequent changes dictated from above—the challenges facing the profession are complex and interrelated.

Better teacher/student ratios	24%
More flexible pay scales	21%
Higher salary scales	20%
Unsure	18%
wMore discipline allowed	10%
More professional development	6%
Use of AI	1%

Months of widespread strike action from both primary and secondary teachers ended mid-2023 with new pay agreements. Closed schools and crowds marching in support of teachers added to teaching’s image as an embattled profession. However the outcome has made the salaries more competitive at a time when unemployment is relatively low and there are other employment options available.

The Secondary Teachers’ Collective Agreement that expired 30 June 2022 had base annual salaries for beginning teachers at \$51,358. The highest level (a subject or specialist level 9 qualification on the NZQF, masters or doctorate) was paid \$90,000.⁴⁶ A pay agreement finalised in August 2023 will increase the range to \$64,082–\$103,085 by the start of 2025. In addition, there will be a \$5,000 payment for all teachers, an additional \$1,500 for PPTA members, and a contribution up to \$710 to renew teaching practising certificates.⁴⁷

The current Primary Teachers’ Collective Agreement, which was negotiated earlier in the year, lifted base salaries to \$55,358 in 2023. The base will increase to \$60,736 by the end of 2024. The highest salary level is now \$95,400

and will rise to \$100,000 by the end of 2024.⁴⁸

As important as these agreements are, they are not as significant or as long-lasting as the preparation of teachers who will, ideally, mentor generations of students. They must be well prepared to manage their classrooms and teach a diverse range of students. Replicating the best of teacher training will not just improve outcomes for students; it will also improve teacher retention and raise the status of teaching as a profession.

Currently, Australia is overhauling its own teacher training. Recent changes have caught the attention of New Zealand's Education Minister, Jan Tinetti, who has asked for a report but has not signalled whether it's a path the current government is interested in pursuing.⁴⁹ Following Australia's own drop in reading performance, its education ministers are requiring universities to use evidence-based practices for their Initial Teacher Education. Those that don't within a two-year window risk losing accreditation.⁵⁰ They will, however, receive funding to integrate these core subjects related to the science of learning:⁵¹

- **The brain and learning:** content that provides teachers with an understanding of how the brain processes, stores and retrieves information;
- **Effective pedagogical practices:** literacy and numeracy teaching strategies, as well as teaching in a way that supports how students' brains work;
- **Classroom management:** ways to foster positive learning environments, such as establishing rules and routines and modelling desired behaviour; and
- **Responsive teaching:** content that ensures teachers teach in ways that are culturally and contextually appropriate and responsive to student needs.

The new nationwide strategy has shown promise on a smaller scale in Canberra. Four years ago, Ross Fox, the Director of Catholic Education Canberra Goulburn, retrained all 1,500 of his teachers using the evidence-based methods that are about to become standard. An independent review that found 42% of their students were underperforming in reading in 2019, before the retraining, reported that only 4% were underperforming after, in 2022.⁵²

Fox attributed this improvement to a teaching method that is based on current research. It's one that stands in stark contrast to the student-directed learning and "exploring education through societal power structures" that he said had been promoted in Australian universities.⁵³

ELECTION 2023: WHAT OUR PARTIES ARE SAYING

National Party education spokeswoman Erica Stanford said that the issues currently being addressed by Australia's education ministers are relevant here. "I've spoken to many graduate teachers who have said to me that they feel completely unprepared to teach in the classroom," she said. "They don't know effective pedagogy, they don't know how to teach a child to read."⁵⁴

She has not offered an unqualified endorsement of the Australian solution, however. Instead of targeting the content of teacher training directly, Erica has spoken about a common practice model with a focus on the science of learning and changes to registration requirements and the national learning priorities in education. If that doesn't have the desired outcome, then she would consider "stronger levers."⁵⁵

National also proposes an exit exam for teaching graduates to demonstrate expertise in reading, writing, maths

and science instruction. Existing teachers would be required to undertake professional development in teaching the basics.⁵⁶

We have discussed what the **Labour Government** has put in place to help recruit more teachers, and the pay agreements reached after the past year's negotiations. The party also states that the upcoming curriculum refresh will "reduce teacher workload by providing greater clarity and guidance."⁵⁷

NZ First is the only party to directly address ITE. Its education policies, which remain online from the 2020 election, propose re-establishing Teachers Training Colleges "to address the deficiencies in many Initial Teacher Training courses."⁵⁸ It is not clear how separating teacher training from universities would, on its own, accomplish this. Our earlier discussion points broadly to a lack of practical, evidence-based instruction and high-quality mentoring as the most critical deficits. The nature of the training institution doesn't necessarily dictate its methods.

The party also wants to shore up support for teachers in the classroom in the form of learning support coordinators.⁵⁹ This would ease the challenges of classroom management.

While the **Green Party's** education policy states that, "teachers and other educational staff should be valued, with good pay and conditions," its strategic priorities don't address specifics of pay or conditions.⁶⁰

ACT is proposing an annual fund equivalent to about \$5,000 per FTE teacher. Principals could use it to award staff who show excellence in teaching according to the school's own criteria. Teachers and those considering it as a career would also have the potential to earn above the upper limit in each pay band.⁶¹

ACT also wants to introduce a Student Education Account for every child from the ages of 2 to 18, from which parents can apply \$12,000 a year to any registered institution they can enrol their child in. This would fuel the growth of independent schools and, by extension, a greater variety of workplaces for teachers. ACT believes that "the ability to work for a fully-funded independent school outside of union contracts will give teachers much greater leverage to improve their conditions across the education sector."⁶²

It is impossible to predict exactly how the diminished power of unions and greater competition for teachers would change teacher's pay, working conditions, and potentially even training options. It has the potential to drive a greater focus on outcomes and reduce the government's ability to set schools' priorities.

Te Pati Māori's education priority is to overhaul the system by (among other things) promoting Māori content, language, models of delivery, and staff numbers. Specifically, the party would require all schools to have Māori staff in senior leadership—a challenging mandate given that many schools are already struggling to find experienced staff.⁶³

CONCLUSION

Our education system's most critical need is for more and better equipped teachers. While we recognise that pay must keep pace with equivalent professions and workloads should, in many instances, be reduced, the training of teachers has received little attention.

The past three decades have brought significant changes to who is training teachers, what they are being taught, and how they are being supported in their learning. Many of those changes and the ideologies fuelling them have resulted in teachers being less equipped to teach effectively and often unprepared for practical challenges such as classroom management.

Still, New Zealand does have excellent teachers as well as teacher trainers who apply up-to-date knowledge of the science of learning to the profession. We can also see examples overseas of evidence-based teaching practices improving educational outcomes. These methods ought to be defined and endorsed by the Ministry of Education, and the Teaching Council should require them of accredited institutions. In addition, the teachers currently committed to teaching this nation's students should have the opportunity that those employed by Catholic Education Canberra Goulburn had—access to training that will make the good work they do more effective.

Addressing teacher training comes with the challenge of evaluating the merits of different ideologies, and some of the positive results will come many years down the track. However, it is the most essential foundation for not only improving student's learning, but also for addressing the challenges addressed here. Better equipped teachers will be more effective at mentoring new teachers, more able to manage classrooms, and they will be more likely to remain in the profession longer. This, in turn, will create a more positive and attractive work environment. The best solutions to challenges in education start by helping teachers.

ENDNOTES

1. Visible Learning, “Hattie Ranking: 252 Influences And Effect Sizes Related To Student Achievement,” accessed 16 June 2023, <https://visible-learning.org/hattie-ranking-influences-effect-sizes-learning-achievement/>. Our upcoming report on the New Zealand Curriculum discusses in more depth how a deficient curriculum can have a disproportionately negative impact on under-resourced schools and students while those who have access to high-quality teaching and resources continue to perform well.
2. Neurodiversity in Education Coalition, *Unlocking the Enormous Potential of Neurodiverse Learners*, 2023, 9.
3. Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand, *Creating an equitable future-focused Initial Teacher Education (ITE) system: The new ITE Requirements—the journey so far*, 22 February 2022, 22.
4. Kevin Knight, interview with author, 9 May 2023.
5. Michael Johnston, *Save Our Schools: Solutions for New Zealand’s Education Crisis*, The New Zealand Initiative 2023, 12, 41.
6. Ibid, 42.
7. Kevin Knight, interview with author, 9 May 2023 and Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand, *Creating an equitable future-focused Initial Teacher Education (ITE) system: The new ITE Requirements—the journey so far*, 22 February 2022, 22.
8. Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand, *Creating an equitable future-focused Initial Teacher Education (ITE) system: The new ITE Requirements—the journey so far*, 22 February 2022, 23.
9. Michelle Johansson, interview with author, 13 June 2023.
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