



SECTOR VOICES: The biggest challenge currently facing New Zealand education

EDUCATION REVIEW

Planning lessons,

James

grading papers

Monika

and dodging spitballs

Jennifer

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EDITORIAL

Overlooking valuable middle ground.

An editor's email inbox is an interesting place. On any given day, it will be brimming with press releases, story ideas, opinions, praise, and censure.

Every day, my attention is turned swiftly from the success of a school or tertiary organisation to the individual accomplishments of a student or young researcher, to a government initiative to be rolled out to all schools, to a submission on why various aspects of New Zealand's education system are in tatters.

For every email defending IES, charter schools, national standards, decile funding, EDUCANZ, there is at least one counter-email spurning each idea.

One thing, upon which everyone appears to agree, is that we want the best possible outcomes for every student.

The other thing, which nobody disputes, is that we haven't achieved this yet.

As I see it, this is our greatest challenge facing New Zealand education: learning to work together, in spite of our differing ideas, viewpoints, and experiences, to attain this unanimous goal of achieving better outcomes for all young people.

It isn't easy. Many issues in education are polarising. And while evidence-based practice provides a useful platform, for the most part we are working with emerging digital technologies to prepare students for a future that we can only speculate about. It is all new and different for all of us. No one can possibly have all the right answers.

Yet, in New Zealand education circles, I have noticed a tendency for groups and individuals to play the game of who can shout the loudest.

No one has half-hearted ideas. No one sits on the fence. No one lacks passion. And while it is good to be passionate, to take a stance, there is perhaps even more to be gained by approaching a new – or indeed an existing – idea in a measured, balanced, and objective way.

As things stand, seldom is there shown any willingness to listen – *really* listen, without defensiveness – to compromise, to admit that an initial stance may have been challenged, or even to acknowledge the merits of a differing viewpoint.

We have developed a culture of picking sides, of defence and attack. Any potential middle ground tends to be used as the battleground to push others to share the same viewpoint.

The real challenge, in my opinion, is recognising that our education system comprises many different voices, and finding a way to navigate our way collaboratively to achieving the end-goal.

Arguably, the most pertinent point in my day as editor of an education publication is when I turn my attention away from my computer and all those emails and pick up my children from school. In sharp contrast to the polarising content of my inbox are invariably two happy children buzzing with the excitement of their day's learning. My notion of what New Zealand education entails and represents shifts the instant I'm confronted with a sea of smiling kids bounding out of their classrooms.

My hope is that all the noise around the peripheries doesn't drown out their excitement for learning or weaken the excellent education they are clearly receiving.



Jude Barback
Editor, New Zealand Education Review

“... WHILE IT IS GOOD TO BE PASSIONATE, TO TAKE A STANCE, THERE IS PERHAPS EVEN MORE TO BE GAINED BY APPROACHING A NEW – OR INDEED AN EXISTING – IDEA IN A MEASURED, BALANCED, AND OBJECTIVE WAY.”

EDUCATION REVIEW

“The biggest challenge currently facing New Zealand education is...”

Sector leaders express what concerns them most about our education system.

TWITTER RESPONSES

Education Review took to Twitter to ask people to express in 140 characters or less what they feel is the biggest challenge currently facing education in New Zealand. Here is a sample of their responses.



EDUCATION REVIEW NZ
@EdReviewNZ

We're compiling supplement on: What's the biggest challenge currently facing education in NZ? Pls tweet your response for the tweet section!



BRIAN ANNAN
@annan_brian

@EdReviewNZ passive to active and interactive priority learners and families. Being connected is part of future prosperity.



CHRIS CURREEN
@ChrisCurreen

@EdReviewNZ the biggest challenge – brown schools and white schools. How could we let this happen?



IAN HALL
@ianwhall

@EdReviewNZ positive leadership needed at all levels to place a clear focus on lifting student achievement and engaging community support.



REBBECA SWEENEY
@BeccaSweeney

@EdReviewNZ achieving EQUITY; valuing diversity; reflecting multiple perspectives; at practice, system & policy levels. Defining these also.



GREGORY PATEL
@greg_patel

@EdReviewNZ National Government's persistent, deliberate attacks on what was a quality education system and is now in decline.



SAVEOURSCHOOLSNZ
@Dianne_Khan

@EdReviewNZ Inequality, inequity, and utterly dire special educational needs funding and support. #SOSNZ



MANDY HEIM
@HeimMrs

@EdReviewNZ personalised learning yet class sizes are still more than 2 and a half dozen.



FEE
@fee_holdsworth

@EdReviewNZ the perception that the "other" school will give a better education because of its decile rating



SAVEOURSCHOOLSNZ
@Dianne_Khan

@EdReviewNZ Biggest Problem in Education: Ideologically driven education policy instead of sound evidence-based policy. #GERM



HON HEKIA PARATA

Minister of Education

Eliminating the equity gap.

The biggest challenge is to ensure every child in every school is getting a better education every day of the school year.

We have nearly 770,000 young people enrolled in just over 2,500 schools across our country. The vast majority get what they need and do well. Our top students in New Zealand are top in the world, and our education system is well regarded internationally.

However, we have had, for some generations, a significant gap between those who do well and those who do not – it is called the equity gap. And New Zealand's is the biggest in the OECD.

Eliminating this gap is critical to the students themselves who otherwise leave school with no qualifications and matching low prospects. It is significant to their families, their communities, and ultimately, to our country.

We are a small country of just over 4.5 million people. We trade goods and services to the world to ensure we have the means to provide the quality of life we want for all New Zealanders. We are blessed with many resources, including many natural ones that are the basis of our substantial primary industries.

But the resource that is most critical and has the most potential is the one we carry around between our two ears!

We don't have a generation to waste in a country as small, smart, and sassy as ours – we must ensure that every one of our young citizens gets the best opportunity to develop their potential and to acquire the values, skills, and knowledge that equip them to be

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successful in a 21st century world, society, and marketplace.

Our education system is the engine room of that potential. Together with parents, whānau, communities, businesses, and government, we can all

play our part to secure their educational future – because it is most certainly a part of ours.

About 70,000 new entrants start school each year. As I have said, the vast majority of those do well, enjoy their education, and go on to further academic study, skills training, or employment.

But about 10 per cent do not. These young people are at the highest risk of poor education outcomes. We need to be alert to that risk and find ways to help them to be successful while also ensuring those who are doing well are helped to do even better.

Too many of those that have not fared well in our education system are Māori, Pasifika, come from poorer homes, or have special education needs – or a mix of all these.

We need to better target resources to these kids. And we need to ensure their travel along the pathway from early childhood to senior secondary is as well-supported as possible. They need to emerge from our \$10 billion education system with prospects of success in adulthood with the minimum entry level qualification of NCEA2.

Our biggest challenge, and my mission, is to ensure that their 30 hours of school, five days a week, 40 weeks of the year, for 13 years, adds up to a world class education in New Zealand.

Let's make sure that all Kiwi kids can fly!



CHRIS HIPKINS

Labour Spokesperson for Education

Steering focus from qualification attainment to preparing students for their post-school world.

New Zealand has an excellent education system. International studies regularly rank us among the best in the world, and we should rightly be proud of that. As we look to the future, our challenge will be to ensure we are delivering an education that is relevant for the 21st century, that embraces the unique diversity of our student population, and that equips all young New Zealanders with the skills they will need to reach their full potential.

The current Government's focus on national standards and qualification attainment risks narrowing the focus of our education system to only those

things that are readily measured, while many of the other equally important things are pushed to the side.

To thrive in their post-school world, today's students will need to be creative, adaptable, adept problem solvers, collaborative workers, and possess the ability to learn, unlearn and relearn on a regular basis.

New Zealand's curriculum is internationally recognised for its flexibility and innovation. We should be building on that strong foundation. Rather than developing systems that recognise and reward performance against narrow targets, we should focus on celebrating genuine innovation and creativity.

Rather than focus on the qualifications that students leave school with, we should be asking more important questions about where they are going. A school leaver with NCEA Level 2 could still end up on an unemployment benefit.

Are we willing to settle for that? Surely the true measure of success for our education system is what someone is doing 1, 2, or 5 years after they have finished their schooling?

Success doesn't mean turning out school leavers with exactly the same skills and attributes. It means identifying and building on the many varied and unique talents that our student population has. The right pathway for one could prove to be a dead-end for another.

The Labour Party will continue to advocate for a free, quality public education system that provides all New Zealanders with the opportunities they need to achieve to their full potential in life. We will continue to break down barriers to participation, recognise and celebrate success wherever we find it, and relentlessly champion the value of lifelong learning.

“ RATHER THAN DEVELOPING SYSTEMS THAT RECOGNISE AND REWARD PERFORMANCE AGAINST NARROW TARGETS, WE SHOULD FOCUS ON CELEBRATING GENUINE INNOVATION AND CREATIVITY.”



NANCY BELL

Chief Executive, New Zealand Childcare Association

More collaboration between ECE services.

The biggest challenge facing education in New Zealand is the waste of potential when our young people leave school without the knowledge, skills, and dispositions they need to participate in a fast changing, globally-connected, but increasingly divided world. The early years of life are where the critical foundations for future learning are developed, and for this reason, I want every child to access high quality early childhood education (ECE) that develops their competence as 21st century learners.

Around 96 per cent of our five year-olds entering primary schools have attended ECE but these figures are lower for children from poorer communities where there are often economic and social barriers to be overcome. As well, there are families who choose not to send their children to ECE because it does not sustain their family's language and cultural identity. This needs to change so that every child gets the best start.

If ECE is to make a difference for all of our children, then service quality really matters. There are over 5,000 ECE services in New Zealand and Education Review Office reports show these ranging across the quality spectrum. High quality services will invest in capable leaders, qualified teachers, and ongoing professional development. The fruits of this investment will show in responsive relationships with parents and whānau, thoughtful planning for and documentation of children's learning across a wide curriculum, and sensitive management of learning transitions. Children will be confident and competent learners: agile, connected, and contributing to their world.

ECE services are struggling to maintain this investment in quality because there has been rapid growth in provision and government funding has not kept pace with rising costs. More and more, ECE leaders are needing to focus on the 'business of ECE' in order to remain viable. They will likely do this in isolation, with multiple services competing for local enrolments.

All of this points to the need for strategic leadership that is values-driven, learner-focused, and able to form collaborative, purposeful communities. ECE providers need to work together to identify local needs and plan together how they can work together to meet these. Some of this work is taking place in Canterbury, where ECE services are part of wider learning communities involving primary and secondary schools. ECE services are well connected with families and have much to bring to these wider networks. As well as regulating and resourcing individual ECE services to deliver quality education, Government needs to promote and support system-wide collaboration. Already, it invests \$1.6 billion annually in ECE; this money needs to deliver quality for every child.

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JUDITH NOWOTARSKI

NZEI Te Riu Roa President

“... WE DON'T WANT A TOP-DOWN MANAGEMENT SYSTEM VIA IES THAT WILL ONLY DAMAGE COLLEGIALITY AND CREATE COMPETITION WITHIN AND BETWEEN SCHOOLS.”

Creating a shared vision for education – IES is not the answer.

Wherever you stand on the Government's Investing in Educational Success policy, there is one thing we can all agree on – this is the biggest education system change in a generation.

It presents a huge challenge for the Government because 93 per cent of primary teachers and principals have voted “no confidence” in it and it poses a similar challenge to educators because the government seems intent on ploughing ahead regardless.

The proponents of IES would have us believe that teachers don't already collaborate and share best practice. We do, but we don't want a top-down management system via IES that will only damage collegiality and create competition within and between schools.

We also want to collaborate with the Government. We want open sharing of ideas and genuine consultation with the sector and all education stakeholders to create policy that will make a positive difference.

Being “consulted” is not the same as being listened to – indeed, when NZEI members voted against the IES, the Prime Minister publically asked teachers to come back to the negotiating table and embrace the policy. Apparently, he did not grasp the irony in his words. Being presented with a fully-developed policy, and being asked to make it work, is not genuine consultation.

It is easy to comprehend the practical problem of having some principals and teachers out of their schools and

classrooms an average two days a week, and the financial aspect of how \$359 million could be better spent directly on students. The greater issue is how the IES fits into a broader suite of government reforms that are increasingly sidelining educators from discussion and input about the future of quality public education in this country.

This Government has thrust upon us policies that we know to be counter to quality education, most notably National Standards and charter schools, and the reduction of funding for fully qualified teachers in ECE centres. Calls for greater funding for special needs students have fallen largely on deaf ears, even though we have pointed out a potential source of \$359 million for the purpose. Meanwhile, the members of the new Teachers Council, EDUCANZ, will all be appointed by the Education Minister, rather than elected by the profession.

Combined with compliance and governance reviews and talk about moving away from decile funding to rewarding “value added” measurements (National Standards results), the stage is being set for further upheaval in the sector. The Government is trying to create the impression of a crisis in education (for example, PISA results) and the IES is simply one part of a campaign to impose a competitive business model on our schools.

We have a great public education system and we can make it even better. Changes need to be focused on the right reasons and in the right direction. Over the next few years, NZEI will be consulting with everyone who has a stake in public education – including politicians. Everything is on the table. For the sake of our children, it's time to create a plan and vision for the future of our schools that we can all buy into and work towards together. That is our greatest challenge.

JOHN MORRIS

Chair of the EDUCANZ Transition Board

Addressing the gaps in educational achievement through strengthening the teacher workforce.

New Zealand's education system is often heralded as world class, but a system that has one of the widest gaps in educational performance cannot truly be regarded as world class. In international tests, Māori and Pasifika are vastly over-represented in the lower end of the achievement spectrum of the PISA tests.

In the primary sector New Zealand students are way behind their international counterparts in all three core subjects in TIMSS and PIRLS international tests.

Over the years, various governments have introduced a plethora of reforms to close this achievement gap and raise achievement generally, each intended to be the 'silver bullet' that would lead to excellence and equity for all.

However, throughout this reform process teachers have been ignored as an integral part of education reform programmes despite the fact that the performance of our school system rests heavily on the quality of its teachers. Research in New Zealand and overseas has shown conclusively that more can be done to improve student attainment by improving the effectiveness of teachers than by any other single factor.¹ Moreover, the positive effects of high quality teaching are especially significant for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.²

It has been a major flaw in the education reforms of the late 20th and early 21st centuries that all the effort has gone into structural reform and the introduction of new curriculum and

assessment methodologies (that coincidentally have coincided with our falling world rankings) while the quality of teaching has been ignored.

The answer to this challenge is for policy-makers to recognise that the most valuable lever for system-wide improvement in student outcomes is improving the effectiveness of the teacher, and for the teacher to be seen as an essential and integral part – as partners – in the reform process.

Any improvement to teaching quality should start at the entry to teaching stage, a process that must be more selective and rigorous, taking into account aspirants' dispositions to teach. We also need to create a strong culture of teacher education, research, collaboration, mentoring, and sustained and relevant professional learning and development.

We must make teaching a career of first choice, a job for people with intelligence and understanding; people who have a real commitment to making a difference in student achievement. This is a difficult challenge that will require all the education agencies to collaborate and establish a career structure that adequately recognises and promotes good teaching, and will keep our best teachers in the classroom.

If this is done, teaching may well become a 'talent magnet' with the result that we will have a high performing and diverse pool of talented people being attracted to the profession.

If we do strengthen the teaching workforce, create a culture of continuous improvement within the profession and signal to the graduates coming out of university that teaching is a job that smart people do, then we have a chance of gaining excellence and equity for all.

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^{1 & 2} References available on request.



KAREN POUTASI

NZQA Chief Executive

Ensuring New Zealand qualifications remain credible, robust, and relevant.

What does the future hold? What will assessment look like in five years' time, and what will we be assessing? How will students be learning?

These are just some of the questions NZQA is asking as we continue implementing our Future State programme of work to meet the needs of 21st century learners. Our biggest challenge is to be responsive to the global and digital environment that students are living in, and to ensure

that New Zealand qualifications remain credible, robust, and relevant in an increasingly borderless, global environment.

The current generation is comfortable using technology – in fact, those under 12 have never known a world beyond the digital one. If students are living and learning in a world where technology is always at their fingertips in one way or another, then it makes sense that today's (and tomorrow's) students should also be assessed using technology that they are familiar with, in a digital environment.

NZQA is committed to its vision of assessment anywhere, anytime, online, and on demand. But what does that mean? It means that assessment can occur when students are ready, can be undertaken using technology, can occur

anywhere with internet access, and can happen 24/7.

Clearly, this won't be realised overnight, but over the past 18 months, NZQA has been trialling new processes and technologies so that we can understand more about what works and what is possible.

With this year's examination season coming to an end, there are two topical examples.

Earlier this year, we partnered with New Zealand Post to trial the digital return of marked examination booklets (from the 2013 academic year) to students. This year, we are doing the same, using RealMe – students will be able to securely access a digital image of each of their New Zealand Scholarship booklets, download them, print them or email them.

NZQA has also partnered with Language Perfect to pilot a computer based assessment for maths (Algebra). The pilot has helped us understand more about the development and delivery of computer based methods of assessment, in a real world setting. A report on the pilot will be published before the end of the year.

Innovation at NZQA is part of our collective strategic and daily thinking – meeting the needs of learners in a constantly evolving, digital age is our challenge and it is one NZQA is endeavouring to respond to.

We have added a large amount of information to the area of our website dedicated to innovation (www.nzqa.govt.nz). I encourage you to have a look at the work we've been doing and please do provide your feedback and thoughts on our Future State programme of work.

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– Dorothy Burt, Digital Learning Coordinator, Point England School

Schools across New Zealand have been introducing Google Chromebooks and Google Apps for Education in their classrooms.

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 for Education



“DECILE RESOURCING IS TOO POORLY TARGETED TO MEET EQUITY IN THE STAFFING OF SCHOOLS, THE QUALITY OF TEACHERS, AND INTENSITY OF SUPPORT SERVICES.”

ALLAN VESTER

Chairperson of the New Zealand Secondary Principals' Council

The growing segregation of communities by decile and the accompanying difference in educational achievement

The challenges facing education are many and varied. Some, such as 21st century learning, are positive. Others are challenges which are school specific – as in designing a curriculum that best fits local needs. Then there are the challenges facing education in its broader sense – such as the clear decline in motivation and engagement the longer students stay in the school system. However, at a systems level, the most pressing is the growing segregation of communities by decile and the difference in educational achievement that accompanies that gap.

The latest OECD report *Equity, Excellence and Inclusiveness in Education* [2014] notes, “Although poor performance in school does not automatically stem from disadvantage, the socio-economic status of students and schools does appear to exert a powerful influence on learning outcomes.”

In that same publication, when measuring “resilience” – the extent to which students beat the socio-economic odds against them and exceed expectations – New Zealand was ranked 16 countries below the OECD average.

Thankfully, New Zealand administrations have avoided the American approach. Linda Darling Hammond [2012],

argues that equal educational opportunity now exists and the continued low levels of achievement by some groups must be intrinsic to them, their families or their communities.

Our Education Minister recognises the vital importance of raising the quality of teaching and leadership. But more needs to be done to address the equity gap. Unless we can find a way to get those great teachers and leaders along with targeted resources into the communities exhibiting the greatest need then we may lift overall performance but not address our poor standing in the OECD in terms of equity of outcome.

Our resourcing model is based mostly around equality of resourcing. We need one that more accurately targets equity of resourcing. Decile resourcing is too poorly targeted to meet equity in the staffing of schools, the quality of teachers, and intensity of support services. This is much more a political challenge than an educational one, but it does require all participants to step back from a complete focus of what is best for their school to take a wider view of what is best for the whole system.

That’s hard to do in a system which is now predicated on competition between schools as a way of reducing complacency and improving performance. It’s also very difficult at a political level to convince communities where educational outcomes are positive that it’s worth providing more resources for those communities where outcomes are lagging behind.

ANGELA ROBERTS

Post-Primary Teachers' Association President

Overcoming competition in schools through IES, and addressing funding for equity.

I don't generally buy into the story of a crisis in education. People who try to convince you of one are usually trying to sell you something. There's been imminent calamity after calamity for much longer than I have been a teacher. They usually hinge on one or more of three things: demographics, globalisation, or technology.

All of these three present massive challenges to the education system. But the system has adapted to the changes they have wrought over the last 100 or so years (since we have had a mass, public education system), and it looks likely that it will continue to do so.

At PPTA, we help give out the study awards that are in our collective agreement. The applications of hundreds of teachers each year who want to continue their learning give me great optimism about the adaptability, curiosity, and professional dedication of teachers. In their applications, the connections between the work of teachers and the lives of their students are apparent – it's clear that we are really responding to the three big drivers of change I mentioned above.

Having said that, I'll describe two challenges that we face in the short and longer term.

Short term: Investing in Educational Success

Whether IES comes in through collective agreements (PPTA members are voting at present) or not, it will begin in 2015. While for teachers the most notable change is the introduction of new career pathways to share good practice, for the

education system, the formation of voluntary communities of schools is probably more significant.

The response to this will reveal how entrenched competition in schools is. Already, I have heard from teachers who would be keen to work across schools more, whose principals won't countenance it because of 'intellectual property' issues.

Promoting competition between schools has been the worst result of Tomorrow's Schools. 25 years on, we can begin to reverse that.

Longer term: Funding for equity

During this term, the Government is going to be taking a close look at school funding. Minister Parata has been dropping hints about this for years. And I agree with her to some extent – it is time that we do this. The last comprehensive review of school funding was in the early 90s. The expectations of schools have changed massively since then.

New Zealand's education funding per student is relatively low. We also don't fund students from poor backgrounds much more than wealthy – in fact, when the funds that schools raise themselves are taken into consideration, schools that serve predominantly poor students have pretty much the same resources as those in the leafy suburbs. This isn't right, as the barriers many poor students face are very different, and to give everyone the same chance to succeed in life should be a fundamental basis of the education system.

To do this well, we need to know what New Zealanders' expectations of a good education are and then work out how much that costs. There's a big process to go through, and I hope that the Government is up to it, and unlike in Australia with the Gonski review, will face up to the conclusions.



“... THE BARRIERS MANY POOR STUDENTS FACE ARE VERY DIFFERENT, AND TO GIVE EVERYONE THE SAME CHANCE TO SUCCEED IN LIFE SHOULD BE A FUNDAMENTAL BASIS OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEM.”

ALISON McALPINE

NZ Teachers Council Chair

To make the changes in practice to enable all learners to succeed.

The greatest challenge facing the education sector right now is to make the changes in practice that will enable all learners to succeed in a rapidly changing world.

With new technology, new ways of teaching and learning, and changes in the make-up and needs of the student population, teachers and other education professionals are facing a great challenge to ensure that all learners are achieving success.

Change is not something that should scare us or inhibit us. Instead, we can be confident that the education sector will embrace change in the same professional way it always has. New Zealand teachers enjoy a strong reputation internationally for the quality of their practice and their willingness to innovate. The change in secondary school qualifications that has occurred over the last fifteen years is a great example of how we have worked together to make necessary changes for the benefit of all students.

As education professionals, we have the opportunity to experiment with amazing technologies like never before. Social media, 3D printing, Google Classroom, the internet, video

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conferencing, tablets, and laptops – all of these are being used in 2014 as learning tools. Technology is not a silver bullet that makes anything possible, but it does provide many new learning opportunities.

I am inspired by the teachers I hear about who are boldly exploring these new technologies in their practice and using them as tools in their pursuit of student excellence.

Teachers are also innovating in other ways – thinking creatively about learning environments, trying out new approaches to student engagement and the like. Innovation is what drives teacher practice forward, and I commend teachers for their energy and focus in this regard.

We will best meet the challenge of change by continuing to build a culture of professional inquiry and collaboration.

The Teachers Council encourages all teachers and other education professionals to work together to evaluate current practice, generate new ideas, share strategies, and exchange knowledge. By making and sustaining connections between colleagues, between early childhood centres and schools, between organisations and between institutions, we can avoid doubling up and learn from the valuable experiences of others all for the benefit of our young people.



BILL COURTNEY

Save Our Schools NZ

The need to develop a shared vision for what we want our young people to achieve.

Arguably the biggest challenge we face is the need to develop a shared vision for what we want our young people to achieve.

Working together on "what" that vision needs to be for the next 25 years would be a fascinating task. But we need to start this now, as we have lost our way.

Early in 1939, Clarence Beeby worked with Peter Fraser, the Minister of Education, in the first Labour Government, to develop the vision of "Equality of Opportunity":

"The Government's objective, broadly expressed, is that every child, whatever his level of ability, whether he be rich or poor, whether he live in town or country, has a right, as a citizen, to a free education of the kind for which he is best fitted and to the fullest extent of his powers."

This vision endured through the second half of the 20th century, when many of our current leaders and policy makers were educated. It is disappointing to see so many of them fail to acknowledge the role that Beeby's vision played in their own success.

But in the late 1980s, Beeby's vision was replaced. Not by one created by educators, but by one that was hatched inside Treasury.

In October 1989, Tomorrow's Schools heralded the introduction of the quasi-competitive model for New Zealand education, based on autonomous, self-governing schools competing on their own.

As we have just passed the 25th anniversary of Tomorrow's

Schools, I believe it is time to call for a new vision – one that moves away from the damaging competitive model and its grossly unequal outcomes.

The growing level of dissatisfaction with inequality generally has highlighted how New Zealand still harbours deep feelings of fairness in its collective DNA.

How about this for a real challenge? A 25-year journey towards a time when there would be no evidence of the influence of a student's background or circumstances on their educational achievement.

Note I am not saying that everyone is going to end up the same, or that we will have some Soviet-style central planning system regulating common outcomes.

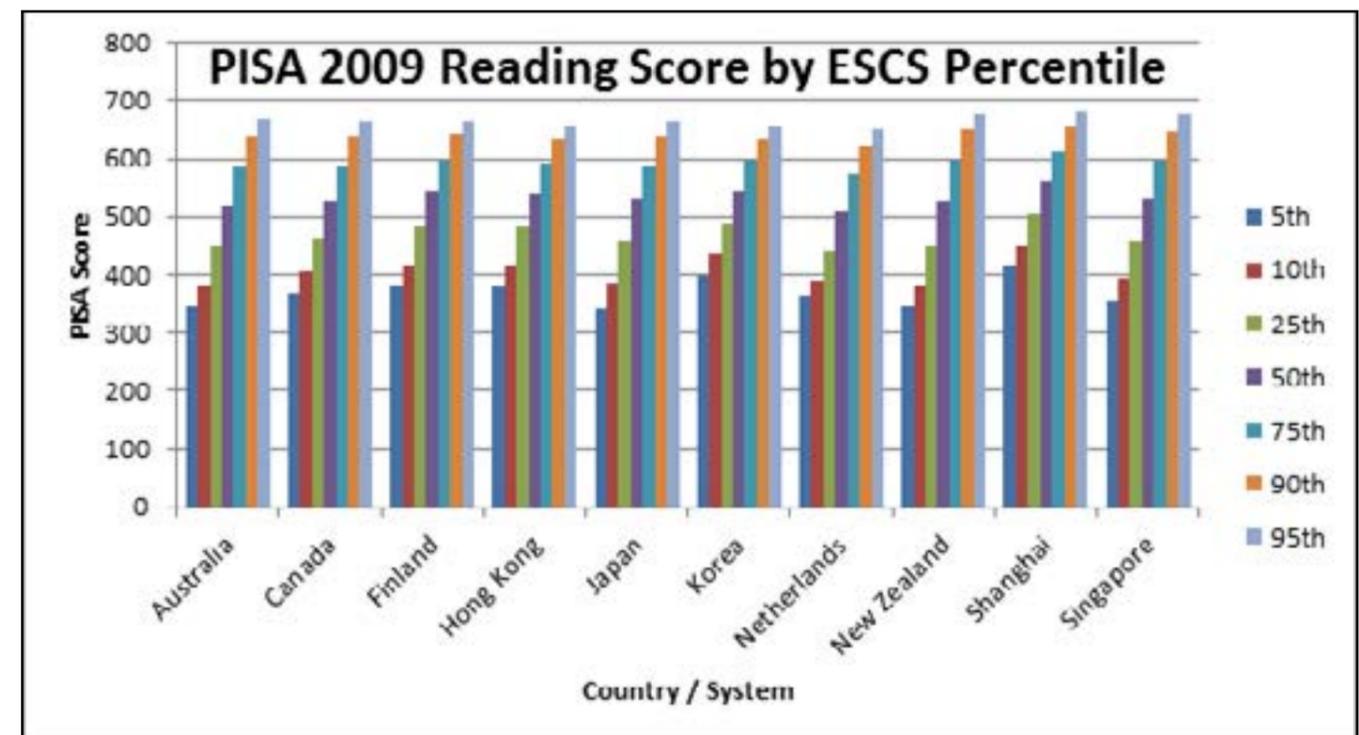
No. What I envisage is that when we display achievement results plotted against socio-economic background, we would not see the indisputable pattern we see now, where achievement goes up lockstep with rising socio-economic status.

Rather, we would see only a random effect, where you could not tell where any group of students went to school.

The real challenge we face is to create the environment that honours the motives and integrity of all sides in the education debate to create a better education system and a fairer society for the next generation.

A distinctly New Zealand model that is far removed from clichés and failed American theories.

“AS WE HAVE JUST PASSED THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF TOMORROW'S SCHOOLS, I BELIEVE IT IS TIME TO CALL FOR A NEW VISION – ONE THAT MOVES AWAY FROM THE DAMAGING COMPETITIVE MODEL AND ITS GROSSLY UNEQUAL OUTCOMES.”



ESCS is the OECD's index of Economic, Social and Cultural Status, derived from answers to questionnaires about the student's own background. The 5th percentile is the lowest 5 per cent of students on this index, and so on, up the scale.



CLAIRE AMOS

Deputy Principal, Hobsonville Point Secondary School

Making models of assessment more relevant.

Our greatest challenge is our national models of assessment at both primary and secondary level.

One of the biggest issues with national assessment is also one of the biggest bonuses – quite simply, national assessment is the ‘tail that wags the dog’ in education. What we measure (and publish) is what we get. We measure what is easy to measure but is what is easy to measure the right thing to measure?

I believe it is a huge problem because we aren’t actually measuring the right ‘things’, and if we aren’t measuring the right ‘things’, chances are that we are not teaching the right ‘things’. Of course, reading and writing are important and the learning areas measured at secondary level are also fine subjects to explore. However, I’m not sure they are still as relevant as they once were.

Our current models of assessment are based around a long-standing model of education that was born out of the Industrial Age and was based on meeting the needs of workers of that age. Now, particularly in New Zealand, we are facing a very different workplace, a knowledge-based landscape that requires some similar skills, but also many other skills not necessarily captured by the literacy and numeracy focus at primary and a set of siloed subjects at secondary, either.

So what skills do students need now

and how does assessment need to change to drive a re-focussing in our education system? The answer lies in our much-lauded document, *The New Zealand Curriculum*, but not in the learning areas that so tidily spell out the achievement objectives we tend to use as a skeleton on which we flesh out courses of study.

The NZC identifies five key

assumption that assessment is the ‘tail that wags the dog’, it is these five competencies, particularly when viewed through a future-focused lens that need to be assessed.

But we also need to rethink the whole notion of ‘assessment’. One-off tests and examinations measure little more than the ability to memorise and recall information

under stress. Assessment needs to make use of the tools that are now available. Digital technologies can be used to gather data over time, capturing and analysing learner skills in informal and regular low stress learning episodes. They can be used to provide rich portfolios of learning that go beyond a single project or subject.

What if we were to forgo examinations and instead poured our resources into an expansive national team of moderators who could provide both professional

learning around measuring progressions of competencies, as well as check-marking educator judgements of progress made? In a digital age, the notion of national and local educators pair-marking and giving feedback synchronously on rich multi-media, multi-subject learning portfolios is completely viable. Imagine a national assessment framework that was not just the same old subjects ‘anytime, anywhere’ but rather key competencies demonstrated ‘anytime, anywhere, anyhow’.

This is just one idea, one iteration of my moonshot thinking. However, it is this kind of re-imagined assessment system that just might help us drive a change in curriculum design in order to improve outcomes for all.

“... WE AREN'T ACTUALLY MEASURING THE RIGHT 'THINGS', AND IF WE AREN'T MEASURING THE RIGHT 'THINGS', CHANCES ARE THAT WE ARE NOT TEACHING THE RIGHT 'THINGS'.”

competencies: thinking; using language, symbols, and texts; managing self; relating to others; participating and contributing. Many may argue that these skills are already implicit in the learning areas outlined earlier – indeed the learning areas are still a fine context for teaching these skills. What I believe we need to change is the focus. Rather than the learning areas being the dominant foreground image and the key competencies a blur in the background, I believe we need to change the depth of field and bring the competencies into sharp focus so the “subject” softens to simply provide a context for learning.

This will only occur, I believe, if we change what we assess. Accepting the

TOM PARSONS

President, Secondary Principals' Association of New Zealand

Equity in educational opportunity for all.

What is the biggest challenge currently facing education in New Zealand?

FINDING AND

MAINTAINING EQUITY IN EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL STUDENTS.

As part of this challenge, there are four vital "contributors" on the go right now: National Standards; IES; EDUCANZ; and resourcing and leadership.

NATIONAL STANDARDS

National Standards remains a misunderstood issue – almost as misunderstood as NCEA was.

The introduction of NCEA was easier to implement than National Standards because it was better funded and had precedence with the old School Cert, Sixth Form Cert, and University Entrance. The better roll-out funding of NCEA allowed for quicker moderation between teachers and schools, and therefore, while difficult, actually ended up being successful.

There is definite light on the horizon for National Standards. The merit in National Standards is that for the first time in New Zealand's educational history, junior students can be compared against the curriculum levels' targets and consequently appropriate remedial/accelerated measures put in place to capitalise on this. Additionally, PaCT (Progress and Consistency Tool) will assist hugely with moderation as soon as the roll-out gains momentum.

INVESTING IN EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS (IES)

IES has generated a huge amount of debate and boisterous rhetoric. I am delighted to say it is at last gaining ground as the realisation that "Communities of Schools" will not only allow for career progression and sharing of best practice but will assist in keeping the best teachers in their classrooms. The biggest attraction in my mind is that IES is fully funded. That

hoary chestnut lately aired that the money should be spent instead to "stem poverty by providing, for example, school lunches", is in my mind completely contrary to the Chinese proverb "give me a fish (lunch) and I will eat it; teach me to fish (educate me) and I will survive and provide." There are other agencies we work with to assist with the health and wellbeing of our students. Let us take every opportunity we can as educators to educate them.

EDUCANZ

EDUCANZ has not as yet gained prominence, but it will. Already, the proposed body seems to have had its tasks expanded with a myriad of expected outcomes not only "leading the profession". Assuming the new body has the "buy in" from the many and various (and diverse) sectors, and this will be without doubt a Solomon-like task, EDUCANZ will fly. If the "chosen nine" who lead this group have the support of those sectors, thereby truly enabling the leading of the profession, the introduction of EDUCANZ will not only fly, it will soar.

RESOURCING

There is a widening gap between the rich and the poor in education. This is not confined to the decile debate currently hitting media attention. Education, running a close third behind the Ministries for Social Development and Health is the third highest item of Government spending.

Again, in line with comments on IES above, I believe it is unreasonable to expect this priority to change, no matter how strong our advocates may be around the Treasury table.

It is obvious we need to be sharper as to where we actually direct our resources. This change in emphasis is underway. I look forward to the consideration of a "form of wealth index", whereby those schools which receipt millions of dollars in international student funding, have generous Old Boy/Old Girl networks, set high scale school fees and enter into public/private partnerships actually share some of that financial

largesse with other schools not so well endowed.

I have long considered that the wealthier schools may well have a moral obligation to do so.

LEADERSHIP – "GOOD IS THE ENEMY OF EXCELLENCE"

Not one of the above challenges will survive and progress without GREAT leadership. Finding, developing, and retaining leaders of standing within education is as important a factor as any of those mentioned above. The educational leader of today and tomorrow bears no resemblance to the leader of yesterday. Apart from resourcing, the bulk of other challenges faced simply did not exist.

Many private and public organisations have proven leaders who have transitioned from good to great and have gone on to be "pathfinders" in their industry or sector. Yes there has to be a financial outlay and this has to be factored in to resources.

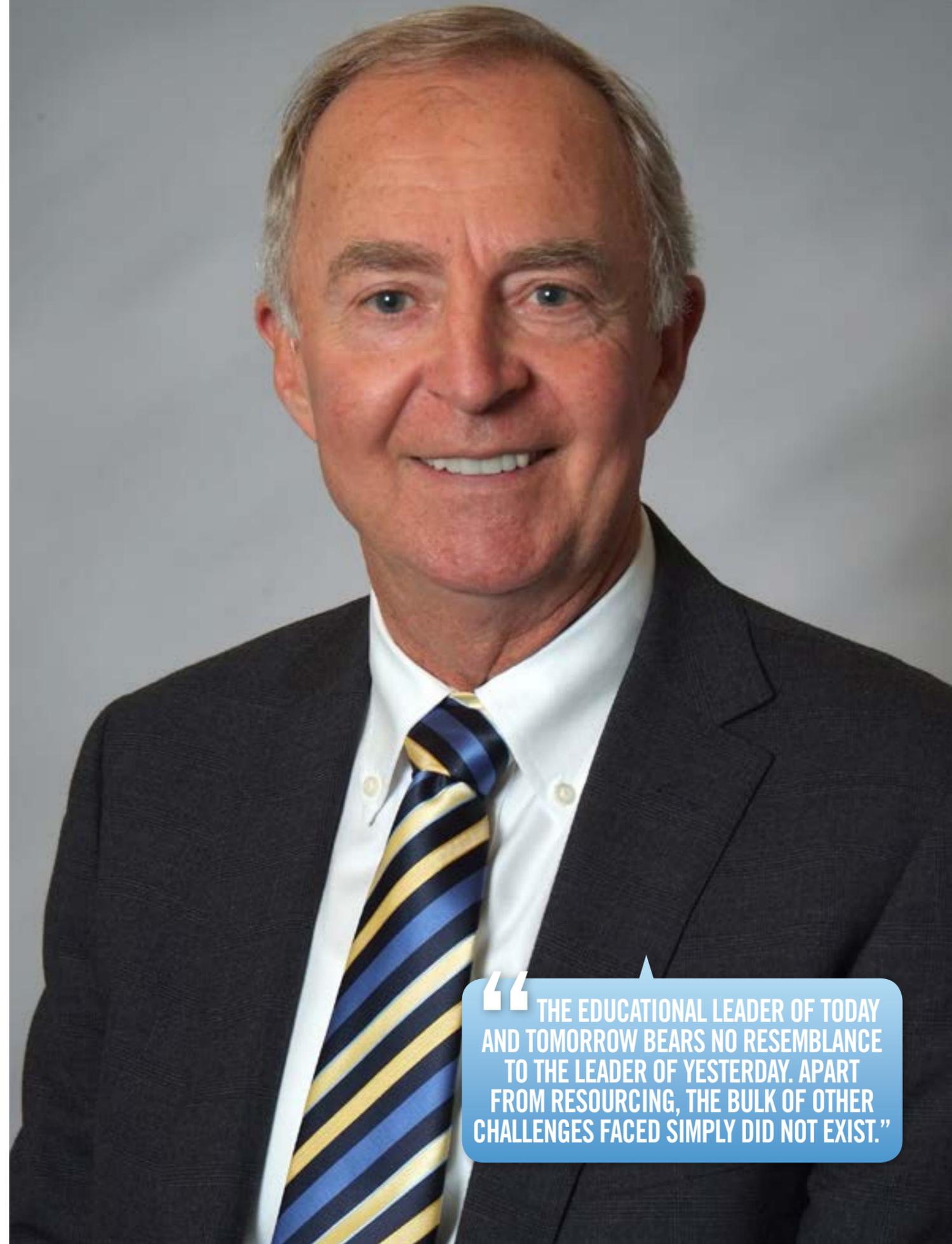
New Zealand's First Time Principals Course, currently subject to ongoing debate about the relative merits of theory versus practice, is too short in its duration to transition an already appointed leader.

The Aspiring Principals Course is also short, has few prerequisites for joining, and has no mandatory educational requirement for appointment to principalship, and to me, this is flawed.

In my view, the actual appointment process to principalship is also flawed. Irrespective how sincere a school board is in appointing a principal, their mandate is for three years, and if the going gets tough, or the appointment is not what they thought, they (the board members) can leave.

I think it is miraculous that education in New Zealand is so well served with the commitment principals make to a system so systemically flawed. We can do better.

If we get the big four above right then FINDING AND MAINTAINING EQUITY IN EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL STUDENTS should be a doddle!



“THE EDUCATIONAL LEADER OF TODAY AND TOMORROW BEARS NO RESEMBLANCE TO THE LEADER OF YESTERDAY. APART FROM RESOURCING, THE BULK OF OTHER CHALLENGES FACED SIMPLY DID NOT EXIST.”

STUART MIDDLETON

Director External Relations, Manukau Institute of Technology

A one-size-fits-all approach is not the answer.

Beyond a shadow of a doubt, getting higher levels of success for increased numbers of young people in New Zealand must be the key focus for action.

The extent to which young people are not achieving and the issues of later trying to meet their needs is well known and needs no further description. What to do about it, however, is less easily understood.

Take the analogy of the braided river as an extended metaphor for education and training. The river starts as one stream and as it progresses through its journey it develops different pathways of different lengths, extent, direction, and quality. But it never leaves the river, and eventually, it rejoins other streams to finally form the river that heads off into the sea.

The student journey through the education system, if it is to lead to successful outcomes, needs to reflect that braided river. As momentum develops, a student needs to be able to choose different approaches to learning, to identify other and new directions, and be able to experiment with those possibilities, while all the time retaining the option of returning to a main stream.

The education system pays homage

to such descriptions of learning as de Bono's seven hats but seldom are such approaches practiced to any great extent, with schools opting for a one size hat of uniform colour that must be made to fit all heads. This will not be adequate in the future just as it has, indeed, been ineffective in the past.

Our education system seems now to have reduced choice when compared with schools of fifty years ago.

Lord Baker of Dorking points to the distraction of the emphasis on a supposed future that would require workers that could meet the demands of a computerised, knowledge-based economy (which he calls "misguided optimism") and the theories of egalitarianism that suggested that to offer a programme based on a specific set of skills would limit students' choices in the future.

He set about redressing this and established a network of University Technical Colleges taking students to high levels of qualifications in the STEM area. The surprise is that these students enter the programme at age 14 and move out to employment or postgraduate work at age 18 years. He states simply that "we start the programme at age 14 because 15 would be too late, and they go on to work at age 18 because 17 would be too early."

The discussion of a pathways approach in New Zealand up to this point has had something of a focus on interventions that

will provide more success for increased numbers of students. Perhaps we need to start thinking more boldly and accept the challenges of considering how other systems provide for difference right across the success spectrum.

“PERHAPS WE NEED TO START THINKING MORE BOLDLY AND ACCEPT THE CHALLENGES OF CONSIDERING HOW OTHER SYSTEMS PROVIDE FOR DIFFERENCE RIGHT ACROSS THE SUCCESS SPECTRUM.”



PETER COOLBEAR

Ako Aotearoa Director

Addressing the problems with delivering effective vocational education.

Vocational education is always problematic. Whatever you do, you won't get it right. You will be accused of contributing to the skills shortage by not providing enough places for learners in trades and professions in times of rising demand. In times of falling demand, you will be criticised for contributing to over-supply.

If you make every effort to educate and train graduates to achieve outcomes collectively identified by a specific industry, there'll be someone out there who despairs of their work-readiness, someone else who thinks they are overqualified for the jobs they will do, and someone else who thinks they lack the innovative skills required in tomorrow's markets. It was ever thus, and to make it worse, we need to accept that there is considerable legitimacy to all these views. These pressures are almost inevitable, whether you are teaching at certificate level or at postgraduate professional; whether you are an education provider or an industry training organisation.

So what's the root of the problem? Probably two things. Firstly, that in general we accept too readily the demarcated roles between providers and employers (and it's hard not to when funding on the one hand and day-to-day demands of business on the other reinforce that dichotomy).

Secondly, that our funding system, policy settings, and sometimes even our educational practice default into regarding

our students and workplace trainees as commodities first and learners second. We sometimes forget that, given the opportunity and the right support, learners can (and should) have considerable agency for their own success. It is worth

“... OUR FUNDING SYSTEM, POLICY SETTINGS, AND SOMETIMES EVEN OUR EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE DEFAULT INTO REGARDING OUR STUDENTS AND WORKPLACE TRAINEES AS COMMODITIES FIRST AND LEARNERS SECOND.”

remembering, too, that the earlier this partnership begins, the better. Informed choice about careers is a critical motivator for individual learners. How many drop out of an apprenticeship or programme of study because the reality of the discipline is not what they expected?

It is increasingly accepted that good teaching practice in vocational education at whatever level pays close attention to

the transitions learners make from student or trainee into skilled employment. A common theme of good practice in the huge diversity of this kind of education is that it is a three-way partnership between educator, student, and employer. Each understands and addresses their own responsibilities and has clear expectations of what is reasonable to expect of the others. What's more, the partnership is an evolving one, with different inputs at different stages from the different players as an individual's career develops.

So how do we shift the dynamic to improving the effectiveness of the system for all? Firstly we need to acknowledge significant gains have already been made. Reframing the qualifications debate at both pre-degree and degree/postgraduate level to graduate attributes and graduate outcomes and to more broadly defined competencies/capabilities has, in my view, been a critical change for the better.

Nevertheless, we still have a considerable way to go. Strong relationships between employers and providers take time and even the strongest ones may need to be more thoughtful about and allow more input from the learners involved. Some may need more effective mediation by ITOs and/or professional bodies. Not least, we may need to look at our present funding system to provide better incentives for all this to happen ... but that's another story!

Ako Aotearoa has recently published "Learning in and for Work" a synthesis of the findings of our projects designed to enhance workplace learning over the last six years. This publication is accessible at: <https://ako.aotearoa.ac.nz/learninginandforwork>





PROFESSOR HARLENE HAYNE

Chair of Universities New Zealand, Vice-Chancellor of Otago University

Developing tomorrow's leaders and thinkers today.

The greatest challenge for New Zealand's universities is to act as incubators, brain trusts, social critics, businesses, and buskers, while delivering high quality, internationally-competitive education to develop tomorrow's leaders and thinkers.

In March next year, over 20,000 New Zealanders, most aged 18 or 19, attend their first university lecture. They will arrive with varied preparedness, engagement, and ambitions. Many will be taking the next step in an already successful academic career but some will lack fundamental skills in maths, science and English. Some will be away from home for the very first time. All will be excited. Most will be nervous.

What do these students want? They want to study toward an exciting degree at an excellent university that gives them outstanding future job prospects and pay. They want to learn, be challenged, make friends, and to reach their full potential. They want to be taught by people who are experts in their fields, engaging, and care about their students as people. This generation is also altruistic – they want to make a difference. They want all of this at a price they can afford.

What does New Zealand want or need? While a few sectors – like engineering or medicine – require work-ready graduates, most employers tell us they want graduates with a wide range of soft skills. These include strong analytical and problem-solving skills as well as good communication skills. They want team players with a “can do” attitude, and sound academic achievement.

What does the Government need? They need not only a skilled workforce, but they also a stream of capable citizens, agile thinkers and future leaders to contribute to our economic growth and our social wellbeing. They also need folks with sufficient maturity and self-control to be good parents, neighbours, and members of the communities in which they live.

Against this backdrop of collective needs and aspirations, we know that the nationwide first year “class of 2015” will include the future leaders, thinkers, innovators, artists, and humanitarians of New Zealand. On the basis of prior experience, we know that many of them will make important contributions not only to this country, but to the world at large.

We know that in the future, these students will go on to conduct ground-breaking research and translate it into useful technology and knowledge. They will help to cure debilitating diseases, create start-ups that generate new jobs, lead our political, business and social sectors, and teach and influence the generation that follows behind them. They will also be more likely to vote, earn a higher salary, pay more taxes, and stay healthier and out of jail relative to their counterparts who did not attend university.

So how can New Zealand's eight universities successfully deliver on these expectations – given the highly competitive

international environment and current constraints on funding?

The education pipeline needs to be joined up and work well, with schools delivering university-ready students with appropriate numeracy, literacy, and personal and social skills.

Quality career information along the pipeline will ensure that students have the right foundation to pursue their preferred study choices. But the best advice they can receive is to stick to the basics and keep their options open. Development is about change – including changing your mind about what you want to study once you get to university.

Universities will continue to work with employers to ensure our programmes are relevant and valued, but for the most part, employers have already told us what skills they want. Nurturing these skills will continue to be an integral part of university education, irrespective of a student's specific field of study.

As universities, we must be able to attract and retain top international academic staff who deliver quality teaching, based on quality research. We can do this by ensuring that we have adequate funding streams for research, reasonable staff/student ratios, and continued professional

development. We can also attract high-calibre academic staff by increasing our universities' rankings and reputations. In turn, increased rankings and reputation will also lead to increased numbers of international students who enrich our university environment, help globalise our education offering, and augment our income. Note that International students currently contribute \$900m a year to our GDP.

For a small island nation at the bottom of the world, we do pretty well when it comes to university education, but we can do better. Our sector knowledge, aspiration, and energy levels are high. We are committed to working with government to make our university system the best that it can possibly be. Collectively, we need to find new ways to unlock funding and increase opportunity.

It is critical that universities continue to nurture and deliver our future thinkers and leaders. If we succeed, New Zealand succeeds as well.

“FOR A SMALL ISLAND NATION AT THE BOTTOM OF THE WORLD, WE DO PRETTY WELL WHEN IT COMES TO UNIVERSITY EDUCATION, BUT WE CAN DO BETTER.”

TIM FOWLER

Chief Executive, Tertiary Education Commission

“... THERE ARE A NUMBER OF FORCES FOR CHANGE AFFECTING TERTIARY EDUCATION.”

Flexibility and resilience needed for tertiary education.

The New Zealand tertiary education sector has made significant improvements in the last five years. More people are studying towards higher level qualifications, more are studying full-time, and more people are completing more qualifications at a lower unit cost to taxpayers. Research quality has also increased.

However, there are a number of forces for change affecting tertiary education. The market for skills, talent, and educational services is becoming increasingly global. New Zealand's ageing population, urbanisation (particularly in Auckland), and changing ethnic composition all have effects. There are also social changes – learners are likely to increasingly want more flexible access to tertiary education provision to accommodate different aspects of their lives and make it easier to adapt to workplace change and lifelong learning needs. Industry and workplace

change are requiring learners and workers to upskill and adapt. Technology and new delivery models, such as e-learning and blended delivery, have the potential to lift tertiary education sector productivity.

Our tertiary education providers can be vulnerable to events such as natural disasters, as in Canterbury, and the periodic impact of demographic trends and rises and falls in the labour market.

We need a tertiary education system that is sufficiently flexible and resilient to adapt to these changes. Therefore, we need an outward-facing learner-focused system which:

- More effectively translates educational attainment for learners and the generation of research knowledge into better jobs, income, and net wealth for learners, and productivity gains for businesses and the economy.
- Supports priority learners – especially Māori and Pasifika – to successfully participate in the study levels and disciplines that are most likely to lead to better outcomes.

To achieve that, we need to find smart ways to reward relevance, innovation, and

focus, alongside quality and educational achievement. We also need:

- Better information about the outcomes of different types of education and training; and
- Timely access to comprehensive and accurate information, advice, and guidance for students, prospective students, and the people, such as their families, who influence student choice.

Where we have better information about tertiary education options and their outcomes – as with engineering and primary industries – we are already shifting investment towards the best delivery. The information available to prospective students in New Zealand has also improved substantially in the past 15 years. However, there is a lot more that can be done.

The Tertiary Education Commission is working with our partners in the tertiary education system to develop a new way of investing in tertiary education – one which focuses increasingly on relevance and on optimising the value for New Zealand from our \$2.89 billion per annum investment.



EDUCATION NEWS AT YOUR FINGERTIPS!

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