

PPTA

NEW ZEALAND POST PRIMARY
TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION
TE WEHENGARUA

Briefing for the incoming minister

Seizing the moment:

Opportunities and challenges
for secondary education

October 2017



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T E R A C Y



PPTA overview

The New Zealand Post Primary Teachers' Association Te Wehengarua represents over 17,000 teachers and principals in state secondary and area schools and technology centres. PPTA is the professional and industrial voice of secondary teachers. It provides leadership on issues such as curriculum and assessment, teacher education, student welfare, funding and operations and Māori education. Teachers also speak and act collectively, through PPTA, on employment matters relating to wages and conditions, workload, health and safety and equity.

PPTA also supports individual members with employment relationship problems and professional issues with the Education Council.

Collective agreements

The association negotiates the Secondary Teachers' Collective Agreement, the Secondary Principals' Collective Agreement and the Adult Community Education Staff in Schools Collective Agreement with the Ministry of Education. It also jointly (with NZEI) negotiates the area school teachers' and principals' collective agreements. PPTA monitors the operation of the agreements and assists members with enforcement.

PPTA branches

There are worksite branches of PPTA members at each school. They meet to discuss local, regional and national issues and elect branch officers, led by a branch chairperson. Branches are grouped together as regions which organise and lead activities in those regions. Each region or group of regions elects an executive member or members who form part of the national executive. That executive meets five times each year to debate and form policy.

Māori representation

A Māori structure runs alongside that described above. Each region has a reo-a-rohe who participates in regional affairs to represent Māori teachers. Te Huarahi Māori Motuhake is the body which represents Māori members at a national level. It meets five times each year.

Annual conference

The highest decision-making body is PPTA's annual conference where delegates from the regions join the executive and Te Huarahi to determine future directions for the association.

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PPTA's priorities

The three main priorities for PPTA in 2017 are:

1 A long term plan to advance public education

New Zealand's leaders need to collaborate with teachers and communities to advance public education. The plan needs to be coherent, long-term and properly resourced.

- Empower students, teachers and parents to lead educational change.
- Review the outdated 'Tomorrow's Schools' model and come up with a plan with children at its heart.
- Make education about children, not money. Reverse the privatisation of education, including charter schools.

2 Fairness and equality for students

Each child is different and it is our role as teachers to bring out those unique strengths. We want all students to leave school equipped with the skills, confidence, values and knowledge that will allow them to make the most of every opportunity.

- Give children and families all the services they need in one place by making schools the hub of the community.
- Enable children to reap the benefit of small class sizes and more one-on-one teaching by increasing the number of teachers.
- Increase and apportion funding so every child gets the quality education they deserve.

3 Making teaching a desirable career

We need teaching to be a meaningful and respected career that people are proud to pursue.

- Raise salaries so graduates see teaching as a great career.
- Provide high quality professional development for all teachers to maximise their effectiveness in the classroom.
- Ensure teachers have more time to spend with each child by reducing over-assessment, unproductive box-ticking, and red tape.



Agencies and the sector

Current issues

While we have seen some improvements in recent years, it's PPTA experience that too often central agencies are fragmented, poor at implementation, and more interested in protecting their political masters than meeting the needs of the education sector. PPTA works closely with the Ministry of Education, the New Zealand Qualifications Authority, the Education Council and the Education Review Office. To a greater or lesser extent all of these agencies demonstrate these problems.

The work of the education sector agencies should be focused on the needs of students, teachers, schools and the education system. Too often the focus appears to be upward and inward, anticipating the needs of ministers and avoiding risks, rather than outward. It is constantly surprising how little many of the staff in central agencies actually know about schools.

Implementation of policy, and understanding its implications for practitioners, is a major area of weakness. Too often policies which create layers of

bureaucracy and paperwork are rolled out in schools with little understanding of the opportunity cost. There seem to be no functioning mechanisms for policy change to 'filter up' from schools to central agencies, and very few ways in which the profession and the sector can have meaningful impact on implementation – except for attempting to throw the brakes on.

Fundamentally, there is a lack of trust between the sector and central agencies. While there have been genuine attempts to improve this in recent years, and there are significant engagements occurring on a regular basis between PPTA, the other sector organisations and central agencies, the feeling from the sector is generally that this is on the agencies' terms, and pays lip service to bona fide consultation in order to get buy in rather than to genuinely work together.

Essentially, the 'free and frank' advice that the public sector should provide to the executive of government is too often lacking.

Solutions

1. Agencies need to focus on the needs of the education sector. They need to embed education expertise, and value it. Policy development, implementation and review should be co-constructed rather than top down.
2. The ministry and other agencies need to focus on building their in-house capacity for this work instead of relying on contracting with private providers.
3. Engagement with the representative bodies, particularly unions which have the greatest reach and legitimacy, needs to be formalised and normalised in agencies' work. The practice of hand-picking preferred representatives to be the 'sector voice' in consultative processes should be stopped.



Negotiating for positive outcomes

Teacher supply

Current issues

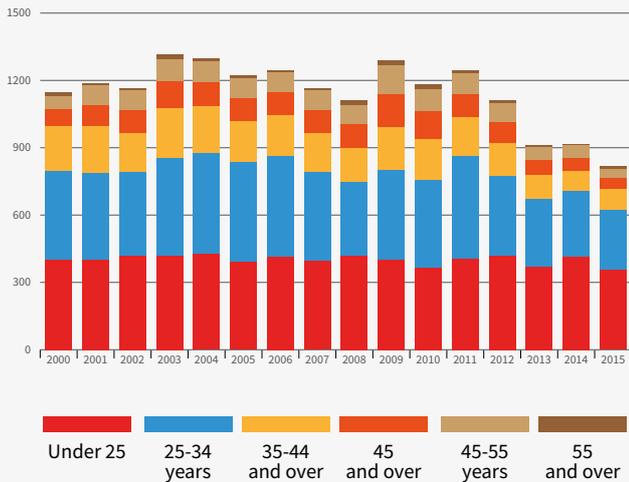
The shortage of secondary teachers is real, systemic and already having a negative impact on schools. These shortages are widespread, both geographically and across subjects, though more acute in some subjects and in some regions.

While there is no one single measure that can be used to demonstrate the extent of the shortage, there are a number of indicators that can be used, all of which demonstrate an aspect of the problem. These include rising numbers of teacher vacancies, decreasing numbers of students entering and graduating from initial teacher education (ITE), decreasing numbers

of suitable applicants for jobs, a declining relief pool and compromises that principals are making to staff their schools. These sit alongside trends including an aging workforce (20% of secondary teachers are over 60), projections of student numbers increasing steadily over the next six to eight years, and global shortages of teachers in many subject areas. A parallel problem is the increasing difficulty schools have in recruiting experienced teachers into middle leadership positions.

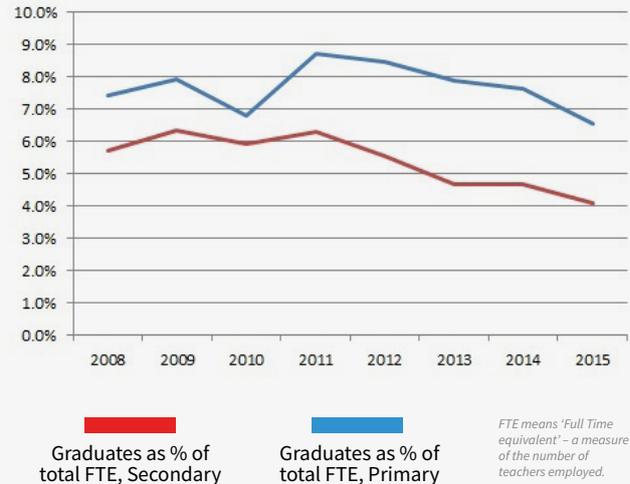
The following graph shows the number of graduates completing secondary initial teacher education, broken down by the age range of the graduates.

Students completing secondary ITE – by age



This graph demonstrates the marked decline in graduates compared to the total number of full time equivalents (FTE), by sector. While there has been a decline in new primary teacher graduates, the proportion of trainees remains significantly higher than in secondary.

Declining numbers of new teachers from 2008-2015



The Ministry of Education supply model has spectacularly failed to predict or adequately recognise or respond to the current crisis.

Solutions

1. In New Zealand traditional responses to teacher supply crises have included recruitment from overseas and creation of incentive schemes for trainees. Both of these have their place, but they are unlikely to solve the systemic problem.
2. It is likely that other responses, such as digital delivery methods or temporarily lowering certification requirements, will be proposed by the ministry as cheap responses. These come with serious quality and equity issues, so should be approached very cautiously.
3. For a systemic response, the government must commit to increasing the number of graduates from initial teacher education, better matching graduates to the needs of the system, and ensuring that teachers are not choosing to leave teaching prematurely. This will require substantial improvements in the pay and conditions of teachers.
4. Middle leadership positions have fallen even further behind in terms of pay, and the workload pressures at this level are almost universally acknowledged to be unmanageable.
5. The conditions that teachers work in are very transparent. Students considering their career prospects know more about teaching than almost any other job, thanks to having spent 13 of their formative years in schools. Making teaching desirable to them won't come about from marketing campaigns; it will require concrete actions that make teachers happy in their work, and keen to recommend it as a career choice to their students. Changing the perception of teaching as a job will require changing the reality of the job of teaching.
6. Since 2008 the average weekly wage has increased by 31.6%, whereas over the same period the top of the teachers' base scale has increased by only 17.5%. This means that the relative salary for secondary teachers has fallen from 1.75 times to 1.54 times the average wage. Restoring secondary teacher pay relativity would require instituting a top of scale rate of \$87,253 alongside substantial increases to management units and allowances.
7. Many regions and urban centres will also require innovative responses to housing and rental issues to address some of the more localised supply pressures.
8. There needs to be an independent review of the capability of the Ministry of Education's workforce planning process, models, measurements and advice.

Teacher well-being

Current issues

Secondary teachers' jobs are becoming increasingly complex and demanding. Long gone are the days when teachers taught their subject, there was an exam at the end of the year, and if students didn't do well it was blamed on them not working hard enough. Now teachers have to know and respond to students individually, mentor them, design a robust and rigorous curriculum and assessment programme, be available to students and whānau, be engaged in professional inquiry, and meet numerous new regulatory requirements.

While the content of the job has almost entirely changed, the context in many ways remains the same. Secondary teachers continue to often teach over 130 different students every week with minimal or no support. The structural aspects of schools have also changed little in thirty years.

New Zealand teachers' hours of teaching are amongst the highest in the OECD. Alongside this, high stakes assessment of students over three consecutive years is the norm in most NZ schools, unlike the sole final year assessment used in many other countries. We put too much pressure on both students and teachers.

NCEA workload has to be addressed. Excessive, unnecessary assessment is bad for students and teachers.

Change that is poorly planned and implemented also adds serious stress to teachers and students. Schools are complex places, and we do not have comprehensive training and support for managers and governors of schools.

Workload pressures have increased in complexity as well as quantity. This is particularly so at the middle leadership level and contributes to the difficulty in recruiting people into those roles.

A high proportion of new principals will be leading schools in 2018 and the role has put many school leaders under considerable stress.

A group of teachers who are particularly undervalued, and as a result under pressure in their work, are part time teachers, who are predominantly women. These teachers do not receive the same conditions as full time teachers, missing out on a fair ratio of paid non-contact time. They are, in effect, paid on average 12% less for each hour of teaching compared to full time teachers. PPTA has lodged an equal pay claim on behalf of these members, as a last resort after 16 years of unsuccessfully trying to resolve this through working groups and collective bargaining.

Solutions

1. Excessive, unproductive workload for teachers must be reduced.
2. Pressure on schools to 'deliver credits' for students rather than meaningful, quality educational experiences has a significant negative impact on students and teachers.
3. Changes, such as new policy initiatives, whether at a national level or school level, must be tested for impact on teacher and student workload and wellbeing.
4. Building a climate of professional trust and collaboration rather than compliance and auditing must be a priority. The government and the Ministry must learn to accept that teachers and schools are just as genuinely interested in their students' achievement and wellbeing as central agencies are, and in many cases know better what students' needs are.
5. Nearly 40% of new secondary teachers are appointed to fixed term positions, leading to high turnover of new staff and stress on teachers at a vulnerable time in their career. High rates of fixed term appointment are an acknowledged contributor to loss of teachers at this stage of their career. The government should consider ways to ensure that new teachers have secure employment in their first years of teaching. As a first step, schools must advertise any fixed term position with a genuine and legal reason.
6. Middle leadership positions simply cannot be treated any longer as teaching positions with some administration added. The administration role of middle leaders is now a considerable component of their job. Greater recognition of this is required if that job is to be manageable.
7. A review of the workload of school principals in a range of school sizes, types and stages is required.
8. The government should as a matter of urgency address the pay equity issue for part time teachers, by giving them pro-rated non-contact time.

Current policy directions and responses

Investing in Education Success (IES)

The roll-out of IES has been disappointing. The engagement with teaching staff and parent communities is often lacking when communities of learning (CoL) are established. Political interference, pressure to adopt a narrow range of ‘approved’ achievement challenges, inflexibility around leadership arrangements and membership have characterised the development of CoL to date. Increasingly the government has pushed more and more expectations onto the still-developing CoL system. On the other hand, where CoL are working well there is a high degree of enthusiasm amongst those involved, and members broadly continue to support the intentions of the initiative. PPTA has coordinated with other sector organisations to bring the initiative back on to its intended pathway. Several hundred of our members have taken on CoL roles.

Solutions

1. Stop delivering new policy initiatives through communities of learning.
2. Ensure that consultation around and co-construction of achievement challenges is given time and support.
3. Don’t expect quick wins from a policy that is such a significant change from 30 years of practice in the sector.
4. Be willing to accept criticism and make changes.

School funding

PPTA believes that the funding review should continue. The need for a comprehensive review has been supported by PPTA members over many years.

The proposed replacement for decile funding has many advantages over the current system, but there are a number of risks with it. Creating worse stigmatisation, whether through concerns over privacy, the language used, or publication of the proportions of students meeting certain measure thresholds, could be disastrous. Probably more significantly, without substantial extra investment, shuffling the existing decile funding to be targeted differently is unlikely to achieve the goal we all want – to increase educational equity.

The difference in capacity for schools to raise funds locally has a significant impact on the resources available for students, and this often exacerbates inequities rather than closes gaps. This must be addressed in the funding review.

Solutions

1. The funding review must aim to put significantly more resources into schools with the greatest need, including extra staffing, without reducing funding to other schools.
2. The review needs to incorporate an objective assessment of the adequacy of resourcing at the school and system level.
3. The funding review needs to be worked alongside the sector, with clear way-points for reassessing its direction. It needs to be an iterative process, but with a clear goal in mind.

Sector leadership vs political control

Education Council

While the work of the Education Council has in the most part been responsive to the sector and enhancing of teacher professionalism, the governing legislation is flawed. The functions are too broad and to a large extent unattainable by a body with the powers which it holds. Worst of all, the board is completely disconnected from the profession, with no accountability to teachers.

Solution

1. A significant rewrite of the Education Council's governing legislation is required to restore elected teacher positions on the council and limit its functions to be consistent with other professional regulators.

Collaboration vs market based solutions

While there have been some significant moves in the direction of increasing collaboration and shared responsibility between schools in recent years, in particular through communities of learning, there have also been moves in the other direction.

The creation of charter schools is one of these, along with the concept of communities of online learning (COOLs). Both of these are based on the idea that non-public providers can create better outcomes for students than public providers, and that competition between providers leads to improved outcomes. These premises are not backed by evidence.

Solutions

1. Back the public sector to be responsive, innovative and meet the needs of students, rather than relying on competition with private providers.
2. Reverse charter school legislation and privately-run COOLs.

Effective network management vs parental choice

While there have been some promising signs of a more fair and efficient use of the network in recent years, such as changes to zoning in the Education (Update) Amendment Bill, and the promising work with Christchurch secondary schools, the long term effects of a relatively open school choice policy remain strongly negative.

School rolls can fluctuate significantly in a short time, which is inefficient use of crown funds, and damaging to school cultures. Secondary schools in poorer neighbourhoods continue to have far smaller rolls on average than those in wealthy ones because of parental choice, which has an impact on the educational opportunities that can be offered to students remaining in smaller, lower decile schools.

Solutions

1. Plans, such as the one developed for Christchurch secondary schools, creating much more certainty for schools about their rolls should be developed for other parts of the country.
2. Inequitable transport arrangements for integrated schools, giving them preferential treatment, should be stopped.



Other issues

PPTA has developed detailed and evidence-informed policy proposals on a wide range of significant issues effecting secondary education. We would be happy to provide further advice on any of these topics, including:

- Māori education
- Pasifika education
- NCEA
- Careers education and guidance
- Safer schools
- Flexible learning spaces/innovative learning environments
- Initial teacher education
- Te reo Māori in schools
- Teacher professional learning and development
- Schools as community hubs

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