



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga



Aspiration and Achievement

EDUCATION SYSTEM

BRIEFING TO INCOMING MINISTER

Friday 19 September 2014



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Guide to this document

Part 1: We must meet the needs of learners

It is important for New Zealand's future that we have a strong, learner-centred education system. Part 1 provides our Education System Achievement Story, our narrative of the performance of education. The Achievement Story outlines:

- ▶ growth in participation and engagement in education
- ▶ growing achievement of qualifications
- ▶ the need to ensure we maintain high skill levels
- ▶ the need to do more to ensure all learners achieve to their potential.

There is more we need to do to achieve these results for all New Zealanders. Part 1 identifies key opportunities to improve achievement for all learners, and outlines how we will realise those opportunities across the system. To do so, the Ministry will act as a system steward, working in partnership with teachers, leaders, learners and their whānau, and wider communities.



Part 2: More children are benefiting from early childhood education

Our Achievement Story highlights increases in early childhood education participation, and that we have put the foundations in place for world-class early education. Part 2 explains how we will support the sector to improve the quality of early childhood education provision and increase participation. We will do this by:

- ▶ building a stronger knowledge base to enable education providers and the Ministry to lift participation and quality
- ▶ working with the sector to ensure early childhood education benefits the children who need it most
- ▶ concentrating our efforts on raising the quality and effectiveness of early education
- ▶ ensuring children experience consistent teaching and learning across early childhood education and schools, and build dispositions for success in learning and life.



Part 3: More children and young people are achieving at school

Principals, teachers and schools have worked hard to raise participation and achievement in schooling, and our Achievement Story shows that we are now seeing results through National Standards and NCEA Level 2. Part 3 identifies how we can support the further gains we need in achievement by focusing on:

- ▶ boosting the quality of school teaching and leadership, including using the opportunities offered by new technologies
- ▶ improving practical help for schools
- ▶ getting it right for those students who need extra support to succeed.

Part 4: More young people successfully transition from school to tertiary education or employment

Good transitions from school to tertiary education and employment are key to ensuring lifelong outcomes from education. Our Achievement Story shows that NCEA Level 2 achievement is increasing, and we have created pathways and options that meet the needs of more young people. Part 4 sets out next steps to:

- ▶ enhance pathways and options to help young people gain NCEA Level 2
- ▶ retain students in education by creating smooth transitions from school to tertiary education
- ▶ provide students and their whānau with the information they need to make good decisions to transition from secondary to tertiary education
- ▶ work together with schools, tertiary providers and employers to ensure learners gain the relevant skills to be productive in the workforce.

Part 5: Tertiary education helps New Zealanders to succeed

Tertiary education is performing well for most learners, but there is more to do to enable all New Zealanders to achieve.

Part 5 identifies the need to improve the quality and relevance of tertiary education, and to ensure it reaches those learners who are not accessing education now. This includes equipping providers, learners and their whānau with the information they need for good decisions. To achieve this, we will:

- ▶ improve the relevance of tertiary education by supporting stronger connections between providers, employers and communities
- ▶ support all people to succeed by doing more to reach learners who might not otherwise participate or achieve in tertiary education
- ▶ apply a stronger focus to how government decisions can encourage tertiary education providers to be flexible and innovative.

Working with you

This section outlines how the Ministry of Education is ready to work with you to improve the performance of the education system, delivering on your priorities as Minister.





We must meet the needs
of learners

Part 1: We must meet the needs of learners

New Zealand has a strong and integrated education system that other countries look to as a model. Our young people are getting great results through their education and are using these to build pathways to a prosperous and fulfilling future. Participation and qualification achievement are rising overall. Learners with qualifications are more likely to be employed and earn well. These results are testament to the hard work of students, teachers and education system leaders.

Our system is effective for most students, but there is more to be done. There are opportunities to do better for more students by improving the quality, relevance and reach of education. We need to keep a focus on how well the system equips learners with the skills they need to succeed. We must ensure that learners who miss out early in life have opportunities to achieve in line with their peers, and that clear pathways through and from education are available for all. Government has a role to play in this change, particularly by enabling all teachers and leaders to provide the quality education that all learners deserve.



Education shapes New Zealand's future

Education increases the range of life choices and opportunities open to New Zealanders. Better educated people are more likely to be healthy, prosperous and satisfied with their lives. Higher educational achievement leads to higher employment rates and higher average income levels, as well as increased productivity and a more competitive economy. The more qualified people are, the more likely they are to be in paid work and to earn more. A range of social indicators are positively associated with higher levels of education, including levels of volunteering and civic engagement.

It is important that we make the best possible education available to our children and young people early in life. This is a huge opportunity, as the first and second decades of life are critical for learning and shaping a young person's future. Getting the right learning experiences at this time supports lifelong learning. For example, in their first eight years, children are developing symbol, language and communication skills that will support their ability to learn to read, write and use numbers. They are also learning how to interact and behave with others, how to think effectively, organise themselves and explore their world.

Learning builds from this foundation into a stronger focus on skills acquisition and knowledge development, while children and young people take increasing responsibility for their own learning. During this time, parents and whānau have the greatest overall influence on children's achievement. Parents therefore need to be able to support their children's learning in partnership with educators and make good decisions about their future pathways. Putting these foundation skills in place early prepares children for future success in education, society and the workplace. School builds on foundation skills by progressively extending and broadening the knowledge, skills, and competencies students need and equipping school leavers and tertiary students of all ages to participate in society. This includes having access to information, advice, clear pathways and relevant qualifications to help people identify and progress in their chosen careers.

Our education system must meet the learning needs of all New Zealanders, based on their culture and identity. As New Zealand changes, these needs are becoming more diverse. Teachers and leaders will continue to respond to these demands.

There are opportunities to do better for more students by improving the quality, relevance and reach of education. We need to keep a focus on how well the system equips learners with the skills they need to succeed

Success in education is critical for Māori to succeed as Māori. We need to ensure that the education system supports and sustains Māori language, identity and culture, and enables Māori to succeed in te ao Māori, New Zealand, and the world.

Our education system will focus on learners

Learners of all ages are at the centre of the education system. Around them are parents and caregivers, teachers and principals, tutors and lecturers, communities, iwi and all those others who work with and guide children and students to generate educational success. Learners increasingly take charge of their own direction, with continuing input from parents, communities and businesses.

We must ensure the system enables all learners to succeed personally and achieve educational success. This means being flexible, inclusive and responsive in every aspect of the education system, so that Māori enjoy and achieve success as Māori, achievement is increased and accelerated for Pasifika, and learners with special education needs feel they belong and receive the right support at the right time to maximise their potential.

The system operates as four broad parts or stages: early childhood education, primary and secondary schooling, and tertiary education. Each stage reflects the learner's growing capability and the structures and environment that best support this. We are working to make sure that the boundaries between the stages are increasingly fluid, not hard-edged, so that learners can experience smooth transitions at every stage of their education because teaching and learning are well connected.

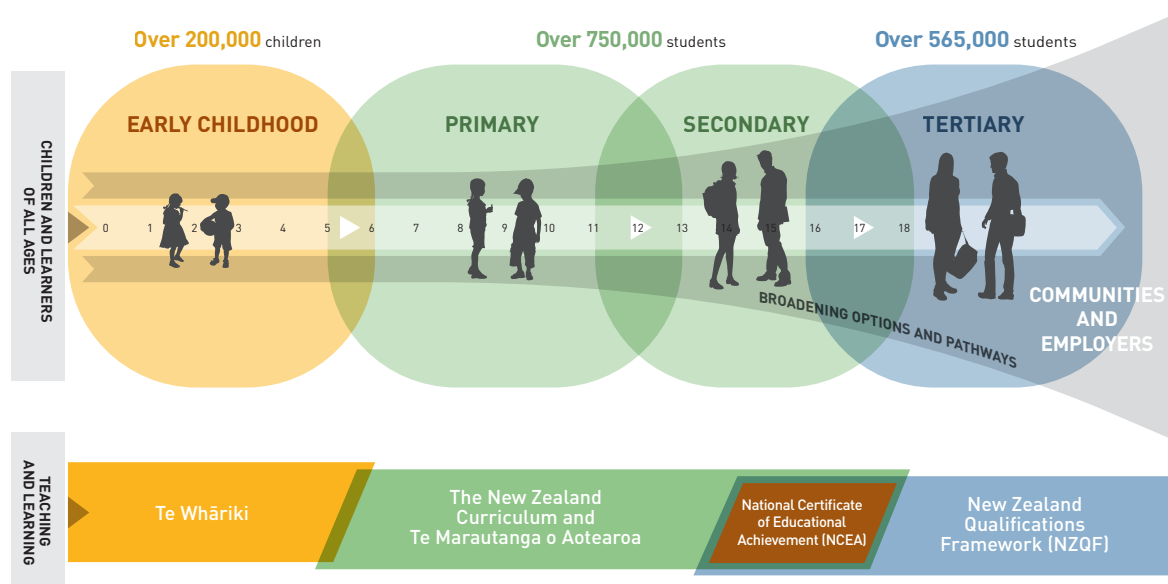
As learners progress, they can choose from a range of education settings and approaches. Most learners are in English-language settings, but the system enables learning in Māori-medium, Pasifika-language or bilingual settings that recognise and build on children's language, culture and identity. In early childhood education (ECE), education can take place at home or in a centre, and with trained teachers or facilitated by parents. In schooling, there are state, state-integrated, partnership and independent schools available, which offer distinctive purposes and philosophies of education. Tertiary education can occur on the job or in a classroom setting, and in an applied or theoretical context.

Education is a major investment for learners, their whānau and New Zealand. It is a large part of government spending, at \$14.5 billion in 2014/15. Education accounts for one dollar in every five (20% of the total \$73.1 billion) expected to be spent by government in 2014/15. Education spending includes all government support for early education through to advanced degrees and adult and community education. It also includes \$1.3 billion of student financial support for fees and living costs paid by the Ministry of Social Development. Learners and their whānau contribute to the cost through fees and donations; and through their time, energy and commitment to learning.



WE MUST MEET
THE NEEDS
OF LEARNERS

Figure 1. New Zealand's education system



PARENTS AND WHĀNAU with high expectations

Teaching at home and in ECE
Engaging with teachers and schools to support learning
Supporting young people to make good decisions and achieve

LEARNERS

increasingly independent and self-directed

EDUCATION PROVIDERS deliver quality teaching and learning:

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Over 200,000 children

Over 22,000 teachers

Over 5,000 ECE services

Over \$1.6 billion
government funding

kindergartens, kōhanga reo,
playcentres, education & care
services, partnership schools,
home-based care

PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLING

Over 750,000 students

Over 52,000 teachers

Over 2,500 schools

Over \$5.8 billion
direct government funding

state, integrated, independent
and partnership schools teaching
in Māori and English medium

TERTIARY EDUCATION

Over 565,000 students

Over 600 providers

Over \$4.2 billion
government funding incl.

\$1.3 billion
for student loans and
allowances

wānanga, industry training
organisations, employers,
private training establishments,
institutes of technology &
polytechnics, universities,
community providers

GOVERNMENT EDUCATION AGENCIES support the system with:

information and advice, quality assurance, support for teachers and leaders, assessment and qualifications, system stewardship and policy, funding and infrastructure, special education and student support.

Source: Ministry of Education and 2014 Budget Economic and Fiscal Update 2014-15 forecast core Crown expenses.

The Education System Achievement Story

Education is key to our well-being, social cohesion, and citizenship. It is crucial to New Zealand's ability to achieve sustainable and inclusive economic growth. Education contributes to these outcomes by:

- ▶ helping young children develop the cognitive and social skills they will use throughout their education
- ▶ equipping school and tertiary students of all ages with the knowledge, skills, and competencies they need to participate in our society and labour market
- ▶ providing advice, clear pathways and relevant qualifications to help people progress in their chosen careers and futures
- ▶ contributing to innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship, and directly producing new research and technology.

To deliver on these tasks, we need high levels of participation and engagement across ECE, schooling and tertiary education. In schooling and tertiary education, all students must attain high standards and acquire relevant skills to contribute to New Zealand's society and international competitiveness. We also need young people and adult learners to gain qualifications that will allow them to progress. It is essential that all people in the system achieve to their highest potential.

New Zealand has a strong and well-integrated education system. Our integrated approach to early years education and care, to inclusive education in schools, and to post-compulsory education are recognised as models for other OECD countries. Our foundations are strong and stable, providing a good base for the improvements we need to make.

A key feature of our education system are flexible, quality curricula: Te Whāriki in early learning, and the New Zealand Curriculum and Te Marautanga o Aotearoa in schooling. These curricula set out the dispositions, competencies, skills and knowledge New Zealand children need to succeed. Progress through the New Zealand Curriculum and Te Marautanga o Aotearoa is signposted through National Standards, NCEA and Ngā Whanaketanga Rumaki Māori.

We need high levels of participation and engagement across ECE, schooling and tertiary education. In schooling and tertiary education, all students must attain high standards and acquire the skills they need to contribute to New Zealand's society and international competitiveness

Our Achievement Story takes stock of data gathered across the education system to present an overview of how the system is performing the key tasks outlined above.

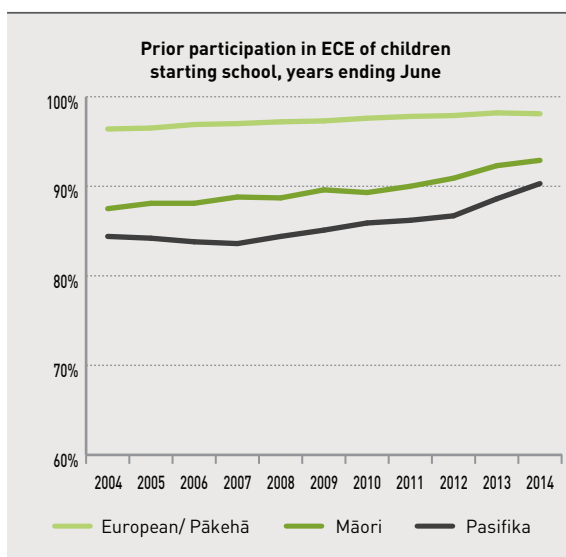


Participation is fundamental to achievement

Participation rates in education are high and increasing. The ECE sector has increased participation, so that now approximately 96% of children starting school have attended ECE. The persistent gap in take-up of ECE between children from European and higher socio-economic status backgrounds, and other children is reducing, but not quickly enough.

In Māori-medium education, engagement is generally high. However, fewer children participate in Māori-medium education at primary school than in ECE, and fewer again attend Māori-medium secondary schools/wharekura.

Figure 2. ECE participation rates are high and increasing

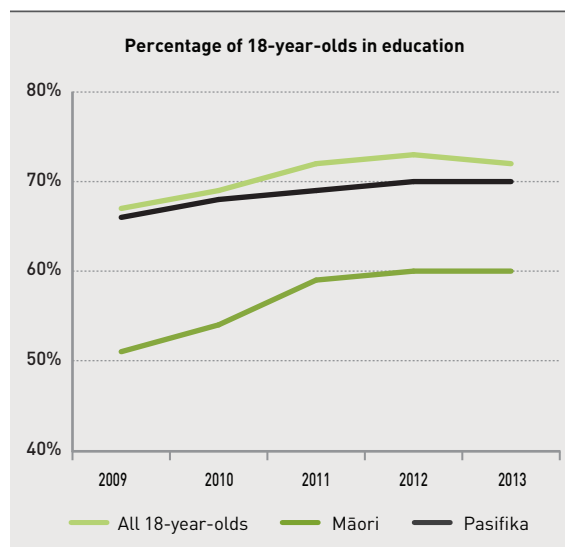


Source: Ministry of Education



Schools and tertiary education providers have also worked hard to increase the number of young people still engaged in school or other education settings by the time they turn 18.

Figure 3. More young people are staying in education

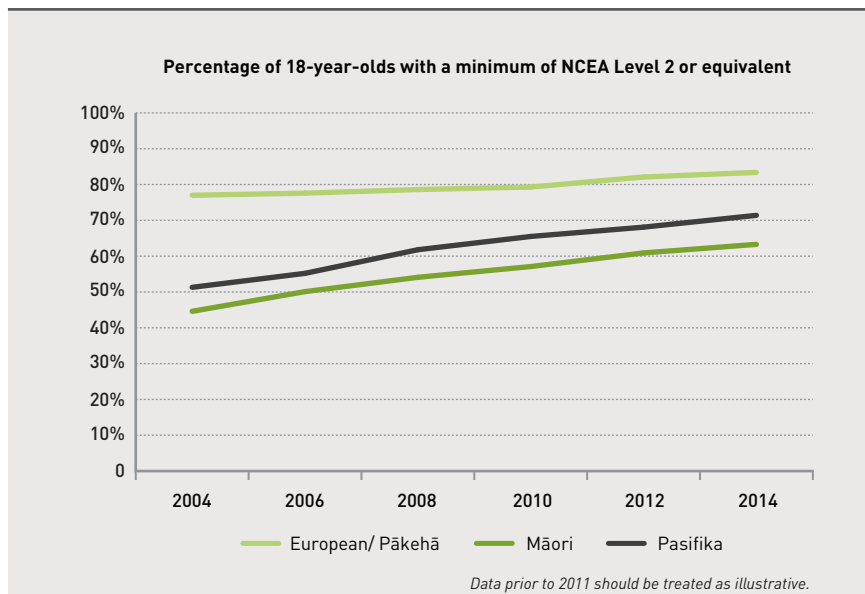


Source: Ministry of Education

More students are achieving qualifications

As well as staying engaged in education, more young people are making progress and gaining qualifications. More students are achieving National Standards and NCEA qualifications. National Standards results and NCEA Level 2 achievement for Māori and Pasifika students have risen faster than the rest of the population.

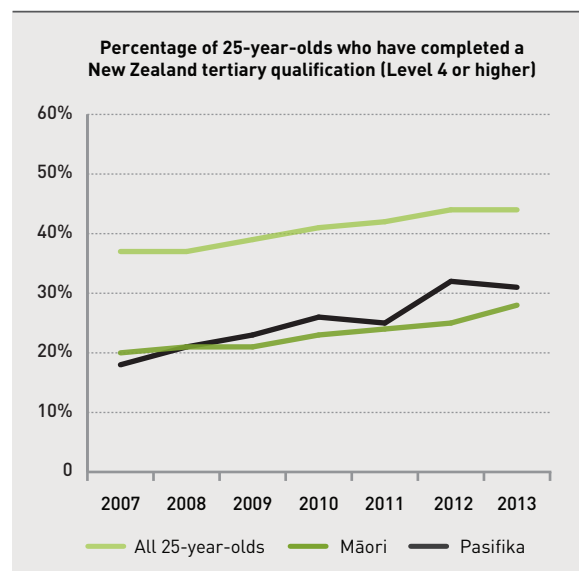
Figure 4. More young people are gaining school qualifications



Source: Ministry of Education

In tertiary education, more New Zealanders are completing qualifications at higher levels. However, some parts of the labour market experience persistent skill shortages and some employers report difficulty finding people with both an appropriate qualification and the skills needed to progress well on the job.

Figure 5. More 25-year-olds have gained tertiary qualifications at higher levels



Source: Ministry of Education

WE MUST MEET
THE NEEDS
OF LEARNERS



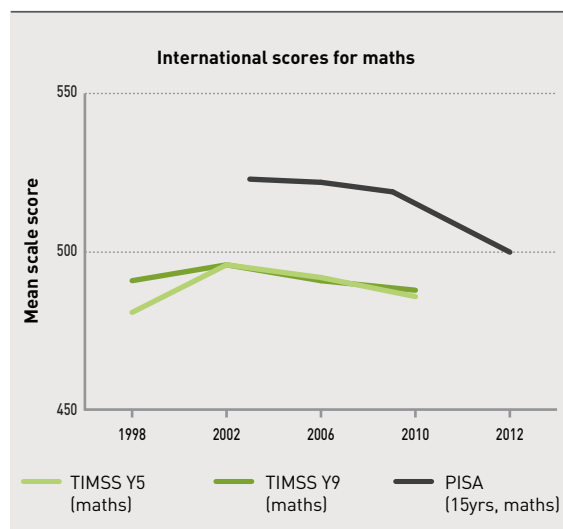
We need to keep a focus on the skills of learners

We are doing well on participation and the achievement of qualifications. But we need to maintain our overall skill levels, as skills make a huge difference to later achievement in study and work.

International studies (TIMSS, PISA) show that results for nine and ten year olds are declining in maths and science and that fifteen year olds are not doing as well as they have previously in reading, maths and science. In these studies and in these learning areas, New Zealand is not keeping pace with other high-performing countries.

There is also evidence from our national monitoring studies that the proportion of children meeting curriculum expectations reduces in some areas between years 4 and 8. In 2012, for example, 79% of Year 8 students were below the expected curriculum level in science.

Figure 6. International scores for maths are declining



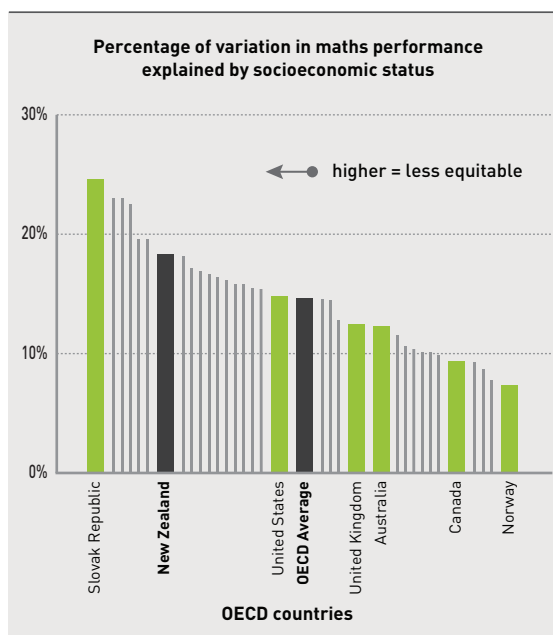
Source: New Zealand data from OECD and IEA.

There is more to do to ensure all learners achieve to their potential

Over many years, the New Zealand education system has been characterised by relatively high levels of disparity. At every stage, the system is less successful for Māori and Pasifika students and students from low-income families. For example, the OECD's PISA 2012 report shows that achievement in New Zealand is more closely linked to economic and social factors such as parental education and skills than in many other countries. However, achievement is influenced by more than just economic and social factors – quality teaching, expectations of performance, school leadership and when relationships between parents and teachers focus on learning make a large contribution to achievement.

We know that high-quality ECE can provide long-lasting benefits in educational achievement. Overall participation in ECE is high and continues to increase, with the gap in take-up of ECE between children from European and higher socio-economic status backgrounds and other children reducing, but not quickly enough.

Figure 7. In New Zealand, the relationship between socio-economic status and educational achievement is stronger than in other countries



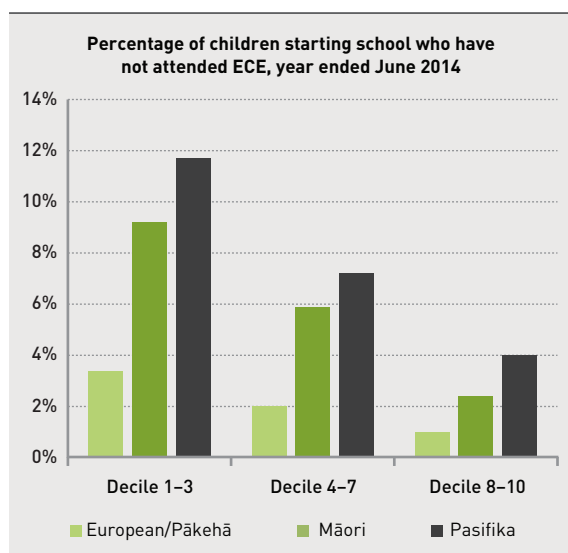
Source: OECD, PISA 2012.

WE MUST MEET
THE NEEDS
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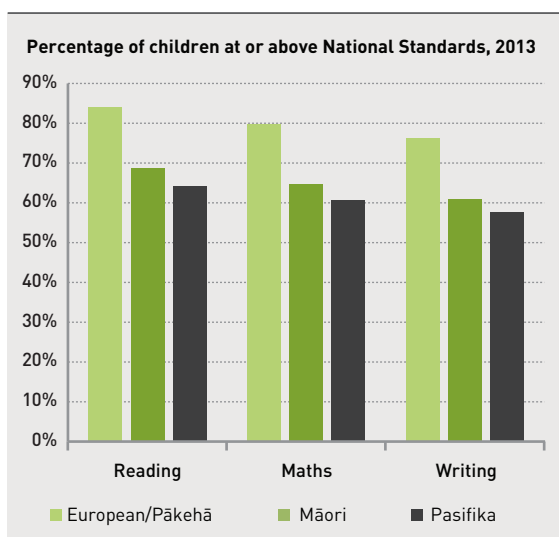
The system is not delivering well enough for children from low socio-economic backgrounds, and Māori and Pasifika students, despite improvements in overall achievement of National Standards and NCEA. For example, up to four in every ten Māori or Pasifika students are not attaining National Standards, compared to at most three in ten students overall. It is important that these early disparities are addressed, and students are retained and engaged in education so they can realise their potential.

Disparities in achievement continue in tertiary education. For example, Māori and Pasifika students who have achieved NCEA Level 3 are less likely to progress to degree-level tertiary education than their peers, and more likely to enrol in tertiary-level foundation education. Overall, Māori and Pasifika are also less likely to complete tertiary qualifications than their peers, despite recent increases in the rate of trades and profession qualification completions by Māori.

Figures 8 and 9. The system is not delivering well enough for Māori and Pasifika children



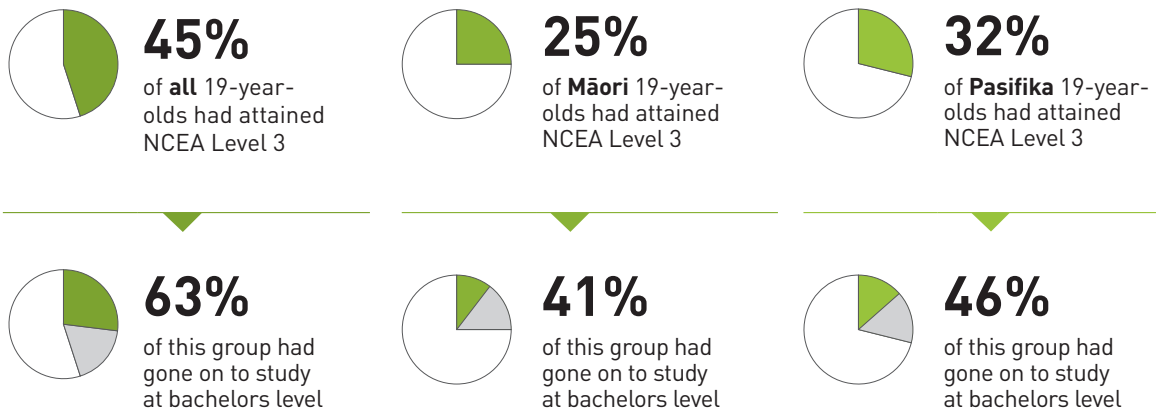
Source: Ministry of Education.



Source: Ministry of Education.

Figure 10. We need more young Māori and Pasifika people to do well at school and move on to degree-level study

IN 2013:



Source: Ministry of Education.



The education system has made valuable gains as a result of concerted effort by educators and leaders throughout the system. An example of this is the faster improvement in National Standards and NCEA Level 2 seen by Māori and Pasifika students than the rest of the population.

We need to maintain and build on these gains to really make a difference in the two key challenges now facing the education system – raising skill levels and ensuring all learners achieve to their potential.

We need to do more to improve achievement

As the Achievement Story shows, there is much more to be done to ensure education delivers for more students, particularly to raise skill levels and ensure all learners achieve to their potential. To get the results New Zealand and its learners deserve from the system, we need to:

- ▶ improve educational leadership, and the quality and relevance of teaching and learning
- ▶ engage more learners and their whānau in education and its results so that all learners can succeed.

The quality and relevance of learning is crucial to results because, for all learners, education is a means to achieve independence and success, as well as an end in itself. The competencies outlined in the New Zealand Curriculum and Te Marautanga o Aotearoa are what those people need for later success. Employers can help schools and tertiary providers ensure that students gain relevant, useful subject knowledge and skills by working with them on course content and experiences of work as part of study. If learners and their whānau can see the impact of their learning on their future choices and outcomes, they know they can expect results from the commitment and energy they devote to learning.

Improving quality teaching, supported by quality leadership, is the most important contribution the education system can make to improve learning, especially in the early years and schooling. This addresses the Achievement Story's evidence that students are not achieving as well as they must if they are to gain core skills and move on to qualifications. We must also support better quality education provision in senior secondary and tertiary education, and education that is well linked to New Zealand's changing needs, to ensure that learners are gaining relevant skills that support their success later in life.

New and emerging technology, combined with great teaching and strong leadership, provide an opportunity to transform students' achievement through education. Access to ultrafast internet will enable education providers to make the most of technology. Technology can also enable learners to present their learning in different and more creative ways to their peers and their teachers. Government



can play an important role in ensuring that no student misses out. We can work with communities to build on existing models that are getting technology to students who would not otherwise have it. And we can help the sector share what is working and apply the lessons learned elsewhere.

Technology will also transform how the system works. It will affect assessment practice, the use of, and access to, data; the way parents can engage with children's learning, administrative systems, communication, networking and collaboration. It will also affect the way government operates, the tools we use to drive our decision-making and how we support educators and the public. Given the speed of change, we need to build the evidence of what works as it emerges, enable best practice to spread, and grow innovation and success.

How we will work to raise achievement

Increasing engagement in education and its benefits will mean targeting support to those learners who currently miss out, and engaging more learners and their whānau in their achievement throughout education. We must support change led by the sector and parents, learners and communities. This recognises the need to put information and decisions in the hands of those who know most about their community's and students' needs. It also means recognising when specific support is needed by children, young people, adult students, teachers, or education providers, and then tailoring our response to those needs.

We can make improvements at each stage of the system, to ensure that we do better for all learners in education now. Over time, improvements in achievement early in the system will reinforce change later on and allow us to focus on the remaining areas of need.

Changes will also build on each other by reinforcing behaviours and cultures. For example, students and their whānau will take charge of their learning and pathways through education, and educators will demand data and information to drive even better performance. The Ministry plays a key role in the collection, analysis, interpretation and provision of this data and information.

We need to focus on the changes that matter most

In the early years, supporting the sector to lead change, we need to focus on quality and engagement, and:

- ▶ build a stronger evidence base of children's attendance at ECE, the quality of that ECE provision, and how to support children's learning progress
- ▶ work with ECE services, parents and communities to improve the participation of those children who benefit most from ECE
- ▶ concentrate our action on quality so that every ECE service delivers high-quality, early learning that is consistent across ECE and schools and that acknowledges and values children's language, identity and culture.

In schooling, we need to focus on more learners achieving curriculum expectations. To achieve that we need to focus on the quality of teaching and learning. We need to:

- ▶ continue to improve the quality of school teaching and leadership and partnership with parents
- ▶ improve the hands-on, practical help we give schools and those students who need extra support to succeed
- ▶ identify and extend the opportunities offered by new technology.





We can make improvements at each stage of the system, to ensure that we do better for all learners in education now. Over time, improvements in achievement early in the system will reinforce change later on

In senior secondary schooling and the transition to tertiary education and work, we need to focus on the quality and relevance of learning and on equipping learners and their whānau with the information they need to make good decisions. We need to:

- ▶ retain students in education by creating smooth transitions from school to tertiary education, and attract new learners who need to build their skills. It is easier to retain young people in education, than to re-engage them following an absence. We also need to ensure that learners can easily return to education and training after time away
- ▶ establish a common understanding of the skills and capabilities people need to succeed and provide clearer information to students and whānau so they can make good decisions about students' education. This will enable schools, tertiary providers, and industry to work together to better meet students' needs and reduce the likelihood of repetition for students
- ▶ encourage schools and tertiary providers to work together to deliver the best options for students, and to collaborate with industry so that learners gain the relevant skills to enter the workforce, and become productive members of the community.

In tertiary education, we need to focus on the quality and relevance of learning, on reaching the learners who are not accessing education now, and on equipping learners and their families with the information they need for good decisions. To achieve this, we need to:

- ▶ improve the relevance of tertiary education by ensuring that the skills it develops and the research it produces meet the needs of New Zealand's economy and society
- ▶ support all people to succeed by doing more to help providers reach learners who might not otherwise participate or achieve in tertiary education
- ▶ focus more strongly on how government decisions can support tertiary education providers to be flexible and innovative and have the information they need to deliver the improvements needed across the system.

A key task for the Ministry of Education, with other education agencies, is to make sure that the system works well as a whole for learners and our communities

We can achieve more together

New Zealand has a highly devolved education system. This means that providers have a high degree of autonomy and a range of ways to achieve success for learners. Solutions must be developed with teachers, leaders and the learners and their whānau. A key task for the Ministry of Education, with other education agencies, is to make sure that the system works well as a whole for learners and our communities.

In a devolved system, successes in raising achievement for all students may not be very visible to others or easily shared. We can overcome this issue through collaboration, which will help to share best practice on raising achievement for all students. More collaboration will also help to spread the benefits of the expertise we have developed and will help the educators in a community as a whole, rather than individual providers, take responsibility for every student's achievement.

The Ministry's role in the system is as a steward. As a central government agency, we have a unique role to gather and distribute evidence across the system, enabling the sector and learners to share successes and challenges. We will use this role to support change.



2





More children are benefiting
from early childhood education

Part 2: More children are benefiting from early childhood education



Early learning is fundamental to every child's development and future success

The Achievement Story highlights the growth in participation in early learning over the past decade. ECE services and communities have worked hard to engage more children from a diverse range of backgrounds. More children now attend early childhood education (ECE), starting earlier in life and for more hours per week. In 2014, 96% of children had attended ECE before starting school. However, Māori and Pasifika children, and children living in lower socio-economic communities, are less likely to have attended. ECE services have expanded provision to meet growing demand from whānau. Children's time in ECE services also allows parents to work, and to contribute to their community.

There is good evidence to show that high-quality ECE can make a valuable contribution to every child's early learning. New Zealand's ECE has the foundations of high quality. It is grounded in the world-renowned Te Whāriki curriculum framework. It is responsive to the diverse needs of children and to their culture, identity and language. It supports Māori to achieve education success as Māori.

Teachers in ECE are well-qualified compared to other OECD countries, and this is particularly the case for teachers of children aged under two years. The number of qualified, registered ECE teachers has tripled in the last ten years and we have one of the best adult-to-child ratios in the OECD.

We have a rich diversity of ECE provision that is led by teachers and by parents, provided in English, Te Reo Māori and other languages, and responsive to the needs of children and their communities. ECE includes all forms of organised education and care for children under 6, whether a group of parents, teachers, or a home-based educator is present with the children. Government meets around 80% of the total cost of ECE provision. Subsidies are available for up to 30 hours of ECE each week for all children from birth to the age of five years, and all children aged three to five can access ECE for up to six hours a day and twenty hours a week at no charge. Subsidy rates are tailored to the type of ECE and the age of children enrolled.

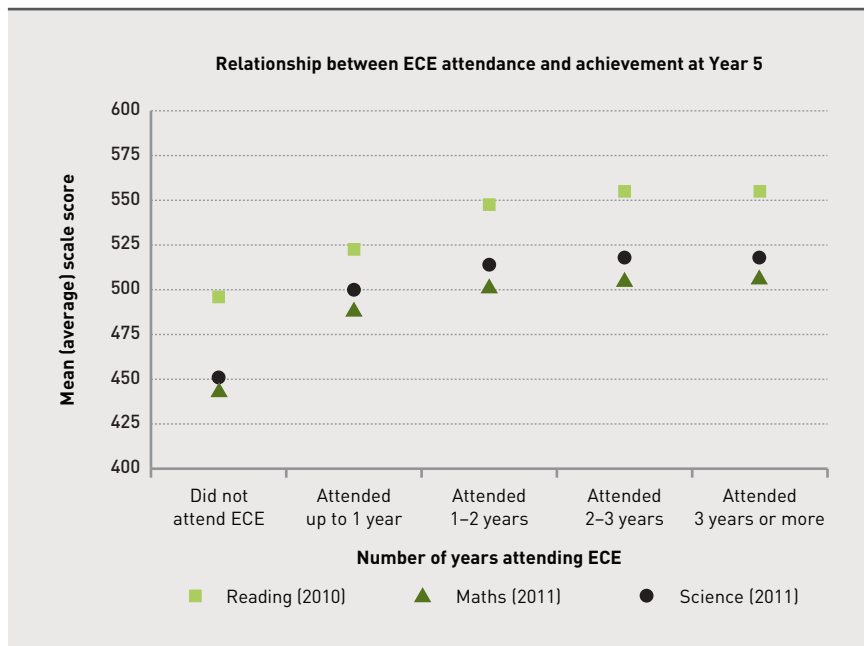
There remains a broad spread of performance across ECE providers. The Education Review Office (ERO) undertakes regular reviews of ECE services. Its reviews demonstrate wide variation in the application of Te Whāriki and in the responsiveness of ECE to the needs of individual children.

We need to lift the quality of ECE, and ensure it benefits the children who need it most

Parents, ECE providers and government have transformed ECE. The initial focus has been to build ECE provision which every child and family can access and feel welcomed by, no matter who they are. The next step is to ensure all ECE services deliver the best outcomes for New Zealand's children.

There are four key opportunities to further improve early learning and to ensure every child has the core skills they need for lifelong learning. We need to:

- ▶ build a stronger evidence base about children's attendance of ECE, the quality of that ECE provision, and how to support children's learning progress
- ▶ work with ECE services, parents and communities to improve participation for those children who would benefit most from ECE

Figure 11. ECE can make a valuable contribution to children's learning

Source: New Zealand data from IEA, TIMSS and PIRLS

- concentrate our action so that every ECE service delivers high-quality early learning. Quality ECE responds to and extends children's learning interests, especially language, culture and identity; and makes connections with children's lives
- ensure that across ECE and the early years in school, parents and children experience more consistent teaching and learning that acknowledges and values their language, identity and culture.

We are building a stronger knowledge base

Having good information and evidence is a key goal for the Ministry. High-quality information helps education providers deliver better and more responsive services, helps us provide better support to the sector, and better advice to government. We currently have limited information on who is accessing what types of ECE services for how long and how consistently, and what benefits they gain from the experience.

We have recently introduced the Early Learning Information system (ELI). This technology enables ECE providers to report attendance and enrolment information to the Ministry flexibly and online, and reduces compliance costs. The Ministry will use this

data to inform our advice to government, to guide priorities for ECE provision and to strengthen the connection between ECE and schools.

We are improving the information that we provide to parents and communities. We want to make sure they have the information they need to make choices about ECE and to support the early learning of their children.

Our New Zealand longitudinal study *Competent Children, Competent Learners* highlights the important role ECE can play. We want to better understand achievement in early learning and the benefits that children receive over time from attending ECE. To assist this, *Growing Up in New Zealand* will provide in-depth information on around 7,000 children born in 2009/10. Similarly, ELI will allow us to know more about how and where children are attending ECE, which can later be linked to how those children do in school.

More accurate and timely information about attendance would be a cornerstone of a new, improved funding system. We are looking to move from a paper-based funding system to an efficient approach that reduces compliance costs and is more transparent to all involved.

A new funding system would also offer the opportunity to focus resources where they are needed most – for example, to provide more resources for the children who would benefit most from ECE, and to support higher quality ECE and the effective implementation of Te Whāriki.

We must ensure ECE benefits the children who need it most

We are increasingly working with parents, whānau, community leaders, ECE services and other local contributors to identify and understand the barriers to children attending ECE. We then work with them to find appropriate solutions, matching local provision to the community's needs and values. We want to expand this approach.

Working with parents and communities in this way takes time and commitment. Increasing participation in early learning also creates additional costs to government. These are worthwhile investments given the long-term benefits for learning and ultimately for society and our economy.

To get the best value for children, we need to prioritise any additional resourcing to those communities where children still miss out on this opportunity, as well as to younger children.

For the most vulnerable children, ECE needs to be part of a coordinated package of support, alongside health and other social and community services. Meeting children's needs from the start maximises their chances to fully benefit from future education opportunities. Well-targeted, early support is a sound investment with great economic and social returns. We are working across government and the social sector to achieve this. The Ministry is already a key partner in the Vulnerable Children Action Plan and, through the work of Children's Teams with other agencies, we support individual children who are vulnerable to abuse and neglect.

As a result of this collaboration, we will provide better and more coordinated support for whānau. We need to help families to realise the benefits of early learning success for their children, including through attending high-quality ECE.

Weymouth Community Action Group

The Weymouth Community Action Group grows demand for early learning by connecting local parents, families and others with local ECE providers. Established by our Early Learning Taskforce, the group's eight services meet weekly, developing and putting in place innovative solutions that improve access to quality ECE.

One centre realised that most local families were eligible for a Work and Income subsidy and therefore they were able to offer 30 hours of ECE a week instead of the usual 20. This meant more children could enrol in their service, filling the roll within three days, and nearly doubling it after two months.

We need to concentrate our efforts to raise quality in ECE services

Many providers are highly effective. Key to their success is that they use good-quality information and tailor their teaching to each child's needs. These services also constantly review their teaching and engage closely with parents and whānau, and with the identity, language and culture of their communities. However, many services struggle to apply the early childhood curriculum framework, Te Whāriki, effectively in their programmes, or to fully reflect the particular needs and priorities of their children.

The sector's effectiveness in preparing children for future learning success will rely on:

- ▶ the engagement of children and the amount of time they spend in ECE
- ▶ the ability of services to implement the goals and aspirations of Te Whāriki
- ▶ the quality of teaching and relationships with children and their parents, family and whānau.

Our national-level information on quality needs to improve. We suggest that we work with the ECE sector to review the implementation of Te Whāriki. This would explore effective practice in the application and implementation of the curriculum framework, focused on achieving

In ECE, as in schooling, we will support educators to take the lead in improving quality, creating stronger professional leadership and standards

children's learning and development goals. We need to work with the ECE sector to jointly produce the support and resources that it needs to implement good practice consistently.

As we build our knowledge, we will continue to work closely with ERO, the ECE sector and individual providers in areas of low participation or where quality is at risk. To do this, we are establishing multi-disciplinary teams in our area offices. These teams will work more closely with local early childhood providers and schools to help them to identify what needs to happen to improve achievement, and how they can help get it done. Responses may include targeted, professional development to strengthen leadership and management, lifting the quality of teaching and improving providers' responsiveness to their communities.

In ECE, as in schooling, we need to support educators to take the lead in improving quality, creating stronger, professional leadership and standards. Educators and leaders understand children's needs and experiences best, and are well-placed to find and deliver solutions. We need to also work with the profession, and providers of initial teacher education and professional support, to ensure graduates more closely fit the needs of ECE services.

We need to improve the consistency of teaching and learning across ECE and schools

Children do better if they experience quality, consistent teaching and learning that is responsive to the diversity of their needs when moving from ECE into the early years in schools and kura. This transition can be particularly difficult if a child is moving from kōhanga reo into an English-medium school, so it is important that teachers can recognise the skills children gain in Māori-medium settings.



Transitions work well when:

- ▶ early learning providers generate rich information on children's strengths, interests and progress, and share this information with schools
- ▶ schools and ECE providers work closely to prepare for and manage transitions from ECE to school, so that a child's learning is uninterrupted
- ▶ parents know how best they can support their child's learning.

To achieve this consistency, we need to continue to work with parents, communities, ECE services and schools to:

- ▶ develop strong partnerships to support children's learning
- ▶ facilitate local approaches to implementing Te Whāriki, the New Zealand Curriculum and Te Marautanga o Aotearoa to respond to the strengths and interests of children
- ▶ enable the sharing of information about children's learning, including their strengths and interests
- ▶ support educators to use this information to create effective and responsive learning programmes for all educational settings.

3





More children and young people
are achieving at school

Part 3: More children and young people are achieving at school

Schooling gives our young people the foundations for life

By the time children start school between the ages of five and six, nearly all of them have attended some early childhood education. Building on and extending the foundation learning skills children have established, schools provide young people with the knowledge and skills they need to live rich lives and take an active part in society and the economy. Schools enable young people to gain:

- ▶ confidence in *all* curriculum areas, particularly in reading, writing and maths
- ▶ the skills and attributes they need to be successful in life and in work, such as resilience, adaptability, the ability to think critically and solve problems, team work, and the ability to independently find and use information
- ▶ a foundation qualification, such as NCEA Level 2, that will allow them to continue education and training beyond school in their chosen direction.

As outlined in our Achievement Story, principals, teachers and schools have worked hard to raise participation and achievement in schooling. As a result, more children are achieving National Standards, more young people are staying on in education to age 18, and more young people are achieving NCEA Level 2. Young Māori and Pasifika in particular have made significant gains on these measures in recent years.

We need to maintain these improvements in schooling. At the same time, the Achievement Story also makes it clear that we need to lift students' skill levels across the board and continue to rapidly raise achievement for the groups of students for whom the education system is currently unsuccessful.

It is imperative that the system responds better to the needs of Māori learners. Schools that have successfully raised achievement for their Māori students have done it through a comprehensive approach. Key aspects of this approach include:

- ▶ integrating students' identity, language and culture into the culture of the school and providing culturally-responsive learning experiences
- ▶ using a range of evidence, including student achievement data, to target teaching and other resources
- ▶ problem solving and sharing effective practices within and across schools
- ▶ setting high expectations and designing learning pathways accordingly
- ▶ providing early, intensive support for at-risk students
- ▶ building partnerships focused on achievement with parents, whānau and the community.

Actions that have been shown to lift achievement for Māori students are also likely to lift achievement for all students. If this approach becomes the norm for all schools, we expect to see results shift for all groups who are currently not well served by the education system.

We must act to ensure education delivers for all students

Although there is much more to be done to ensure education delivers for more students, particularly to raise skill levels and ensure all learners achieve to their potential, there are also clear directions for improvement. To take results from schooling to the next level, we must:

- ▶ continue to improve the quality of school teaching and leadership
- ▶ improve the hands-on, practical help we give schools
- ▶ get it right for those students who need extra support to succeed
- ▶ harness, embed and share the opportunities offered by new technologies, underpinned by high-quality teaching and leadership.



Quality teaching and leadership are key

In schools, quality teaching and effective school leadership are the most important factors shaping achievement. New Zealand has strong foundations of quality teaching and leadership in schools:

- ▶ a workforce of highly qualified and motivated teachers and leaders, who have huge scope to exercise their professional judgement and expertise
- ▶ a broad, modern, flexible curriculum that allows teachers to make school meaningful and relevant to the lives, interests and strengths of their students
- ▶ innovative assessment tools that support teachers to assess and build on the learning progress of every child, setting high expectations for all learners
- ▶ infrastructure that enables teachers and young people to access digital technology - with all the potential for rich learning this offers.

There are great opportunities to build on this base. Our focus is on initial teacher education (ITE), and on improving career pathways and professional development for teachers and school leaders, including getting the best teachers and leaders where they are needed most.

Quality initial teacher education lays the foundation for quality teaching

All professions are in a constant process of renewal. The key is to make sure that talented, motivated young people continue to enter the profession. We want our best tertiary students to make teaching their preferred career. We must also ensure that those entering teaching have the qualities and motivation to teach and the necessary depth and breadth of subject knowledge.

The starting point is to raise the status of the teaching profession. The teachers' professional body plays a key role in setting the standards for ITE programmes and for registration as a teacher. We need to work with school leaders and the teaching profession to:

- ▶ progressively enable them to take more responsibility for entry standards and the development of quality teachers and leaders
- ▶ set rigorous entry criteria for entering the teaching profession
- ▶ seek opportunities to promote the profession, such as profiling teaching and leadership excellence.

The New Zealand system for ITE is a relatively devolved, market-based model. There are 26 ITE providers across ECE and school teacher education, operating independently of each other. They effectively control entry to the teaching profession through their decisions on entry to ITE courses, although the teachers' professional body and principals also play a role. Other jurisdictions have a similarly devolved model, but few have combined highly-devolved teacher education with highly decentralised schooling.

The Teachers' Council has worked in recent years to improve its approval and monitoring of ITE programmes, based on the development of the Graduating Teacher Standards which outline the competencies required of all graduating teachers. The Council has also recognised the importance of induction and mentoring, and put significant effort into these areas.

Nevertheless, there are opportunities to improve the quality and preparation of graduate teachers for life as a teacher in New Zealand schools. The goal is to make sure that all new teachers have both the subject knowledge and the practical teaching techniques they need to get results for those students for whom the system has consistently been unsuccessful.

There is scope to get the recruitment and training of new teachers working better. We need to:

- ▶ get stronger connections between ITE provision and the needs of principals and their students
- ▶ support providers, the profession, and school leaders to raise the quality and standards of ITE programmes, to ensure that graduate teachers have the disposition, the practical skills and the subject knowledge to provide quality teaching to all students in their classrooms.

Evaluations of two ITE developments will offer insights into the way forward. New postgraduate teaching programmes are being trialled over the next three years, featuring more rigorous student selection criteria, more classroom experience, stronger support for associate teachers to provide better mentoring, and an active research and evaluation programme that will inform the quality of the ongoing ITE provision. Secondly, the Teach First programme places high-calibre graduates in schools serving low-decile communities. Participants commit to a salaried two-year programme that combines initial teacher training with hands-on experience in schools.

A deliberate approach to developing teachers and leaders, and getting them where they are most needed

Our decentralised schooling model has great strengths in that it enables principals, teachers and schools to make decisions and use resources in the way that best responds to the individual circumstances of their students and the school as a whole.

Otumoetai Intermediate School

Six years ago Otumoetai Intermediate School took a close look at student achievement and engagement, and found they were not making a difference in the lives of every student. The school took action to change this, focusing on building the quality of their teaching (based on best evidence) and designing an approach that would ensure students are well prepared for the transition to secondary school.

“Effectively what we’ve done is treat our teachers in the same way we treat our students. They’re all on their own personal and professional development pathway.”
Henk Popping, Principal.

There are strong indicators of high-quality teaching and that students are becoming self-motivated, highly-engaged learners.

School leaders have a profound impact on schools and on teaching and learning

However, this model can also mean that too much teaching expertise is locked up in individual classrooms, or that teachers do not have the support they need to collaborate effectively in all the ways that are needed to increase achievement. We can't guarantee that the students with the greatest needs will be taught by the best teachers, or that the schools facing the greatest challenges will get the strongest leaders. Teachers choose where they work, and schools choose who they employ – in each case, based on the opportunities at that point in time.

School leaders have a profound impact on schools and on teaching and learning. Leaders and teachers who get results promote teamwork and high-quality teaching, based on relationships with students, their parents and whānau, and other professionals. They collect and analyse achievement data and other information and use it to make decisions about allocating support and resources and for identifying areas for improvement.

We need better and clearer career pathways so that more teachers can make the most of their abilities and continue their development, progressing to more challenging and senior positions, within the classroom as well as into school leadership roles. There are opportunities to improve how teachers and leaders are developed through their careers, while making better use of the wealth of teaching and leadership expertise available across schools.

In developing teachers through their career, we rely heavily on externally provided, outsourced training as the main way to develop teachers' professional expertise and knowledge. Investments in professional learning and development (PLD) should be driven off student achievement information,

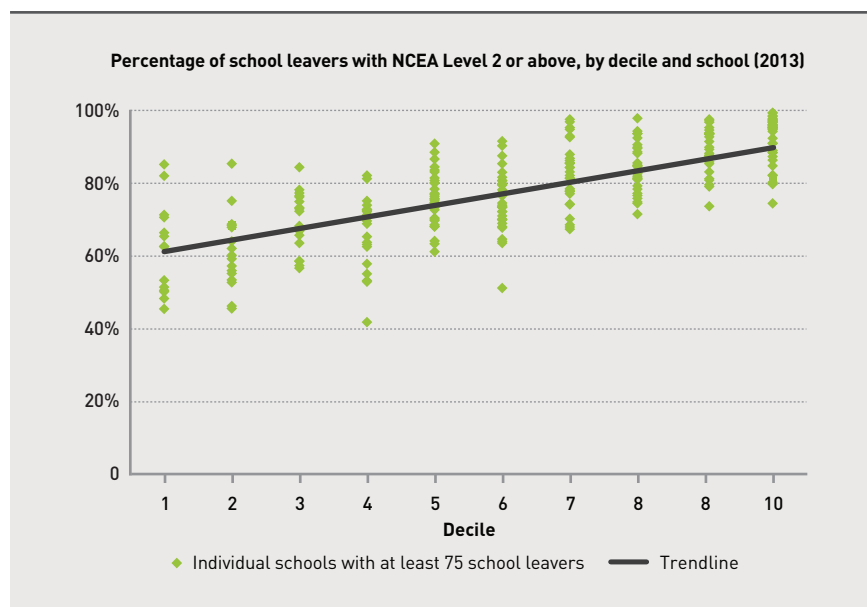
student needs, and school needs. They should reflect evidence about how PLD can best raise student achievement. We need to make more use of learning on the job through everyday practice and collaborating with colleagues. We need to ensure that coherent sharing of expertise is encouraged and promoted.

Our education system needs to be better at identifying and developing school leaders. We need to develop an integrated, whole-of-system approach to how we do this. This would include:

- ▶ identification of talented, future leaders
- ▶ making principal roles, particularly in schools facing the greatest challenges, more attractive for outstanding leaders
- ▶ a clearer, better-supported career path to leadership
- ▶ leadership development for all principals and for the whole senior management group in larger schools.

We also need to get more of the best teachers and leaders into the schools that most need them. To do this, we need to find ways to improve the attractiveness of roles in schools offering the greatest challenges to outstanding teachers and leaders. We could do more to help boards of trustees to appoint the best principals and teachers for their needs; and to help schools to provide mentoring, support and professional development for teachers. We could also look at ways to improve the working environment in high-need schools.



Figure 12. School-level achievement is widely distributed

Source: Ministry of Education

Hands-on, practical support for schools

Many schools do a great job at raising student achievement, including Māori achievement. In 2013, 85.2% of young adults who attended a Māori-medium¹ school as their last school, and who turned 18 during 2013, had achieved NCEA Level 2 or equivalent by their 18th birthday, either through schooling or through tertiary or vocational study. This was up 7.5 percentage points (or 9.6%) from the previous year's cohort.

However, some schools need more help to manage the challenges they face and raise achievement for their students.

To respond to this while maintaining the strengths of our system, the Ministry already offers differentiated support to schools. This needs to expand. There are three elements to this – resourcing, curriculum support, and providing more support, earlier, if things are not going well.

Getting resources to where they are needed most

Some schools in lower socio-economic communities do a great job for their students, and get results on a par with schools in more affluent communities. But disadvantage in their broader community and the way it affects their students is an important part of the picture for all schools in these communities.

Māori achievement plans

In 2014, the Ministry worked with schools and kura to develop plans to accelerate Māori Achievement (MAPs). MAPs enable schools and kura with low levels of achievement for their Māori students to identify evidence-based responses to meet the specific needs of individual students. MAPs are now being developed with secondary schools that have 50% or less of their Māori students achieving NCEA Level 2, and with these schools' contributing primary schools. Within these school plans, Whānau Education Action Plans support whānau to set their own goals for achieving NCEA Level 2 and work towards achieving them in partnership with schools and other education providers. The Ministry has developed 400 Whānau plans, and will develop a further 1500 over 2014/15.

¹ This figure is based on kura and wharekura with students in years 9-13.

We need to look at targeting more resources to schools in lower socio-economic communities. There are a range of centrally allocated initiatives that sit outside core funding and staffing, all with different criteria for entry. These could be bundled together and re-targeted, in ways that give schools more flexibility to implement solutions that meet their needs. The system that provides for additional funding for schools in these communities also needs review.

Curriculum support that is tailored to school needs

In the next three to five years, we have the opportunity to transform students' experiences of the curriculum using the power of new and emerging technology. New technologies also offer opportunities to strengthen parents' ability to engage effectively with schools.

Schools are rapidly adopting new technologies. By 2017, all schools will have ultrafast, secure and free access to the internet. But technologies alone are not enough. We need great teaching and strong leadership at all levels to realise the promise of technology to transform our education system.

We need to do more to help schools use high-quality data to raise achievement and to identify students whose learning needs accelerated support.

Not all teachers and schools are able to make best use of New Zealand's enabling curriculum. For example, many primary teachers report relatively low confidence in their ability to teach science.

We need to give some schools more help with the curriculum by:

- ▶ providing more guidance with school-based curriculum design
- ▶ developing mechanisms for teachers to be coached and mentored by subject matter experts
- ▶ offering curriculum content in some areas to be adapted by schools to their local conditions.

Getting more involved when things are not going well

We have been improving the help local Ministry staff give to schools in support of student achievement. We now work directly with schools to help them identify those learners who need additional support, and to work with their community to develop an improvement plan.

The next step is to better tailor our support to schools. We need to work with schools at the earliest stage we can to tackle any emerging issues quickly. Our role in this situation is to work with schools to help them identify solutions and find ways to deliver those solutions, responding to the circumstances and community of each school. We aren't always best-placed to provide that help ourselves, but will help schools find the best solutions, and people who have the skills to deliver them.

Getting it right for students who need more help

Our student population has become increasingly diverse, and children come to school with a wide variety of educational needs. The school's role is to work with parents and whānau and respond to the child's educational needs to help them achieve to their potential. This is a challenging job for schools, but it's critical that they get it right.

If children's educational needs are not met, they will not keep up with curriculum expectations. This is happening for too many students. Once they have fallen behind, the risk of them disengaging from education grows, as do the risks of poor life outcomes. The Ministry's role is to back schools and make sure they have what they need to help all students achieve.

To prevent students falling behind, classroom teachers need to be able to identify student needs early; and to have a range of teaching strategies and specialist supports (such as special education services) to assist their students. They also need to be able to establish partnerships with parents and whānau to improve achievement. This approach will work for the majority of students. The approaches to support quality teaching and leadership across schooling and to helping schools when they need it, outlined earlier in this briefing, will help to meet this requirement.



For some students, classroom-based approaches with their own teacher are not enough to keep pace with the curriculum. The education system has a number of centrally-managed interventions to help individual students who might or who have already become disengaged, or who are falling behind in their education. These interventions include:

- ▶ interventions to assist with learning for students and teachers – e.g. the Reading Recovery, Reading Together, Accelerated Literacy Learning, Accelerated Learning in Mathematics, and Resource Teachers Literacy programmes
- ▶ settings outside mainstream schools, such as Alternative Education Activity Centres, Teen Parent Units and Te Kura (The Correspondence School)
- ▶ enrolment and attendance services
- ▶ behaviour management – such as the Positive Behaviour for Learning programme
- ▶ special education services, programmes and early intervention.

These interventions are often targeted differently, and have different entry criteria and the evidence of effectiveness is not always clear. The Ministry needs to build a coherent, evidence-based framework for our interventions and support, and continue to improve how we work with schools and social sector agencies.

Excel Rotorua – a great place to learn

Excel Rotorua is a community-wide initiative to improve education outcomes for the city's children and young people. Excel is led by Te Taumata o Ngāti Whakaue Iho Ake Trust with the support of the Ministry of Education, and is one of a number of Social Sector Trials being run around the country. Ngāti Whakaue is an iwi with a long history of expertise in education, and strong relationships with the local education sector, who are coming together around a collective action plan.

The action plan includes 14 projects, supporting learners' well-being and achievement. Examples of progress so far include:

- ▶ agreement among ECE providers and schools to create an e-learning community across Rotorua, with a vision of ensuring all Rotorua children and their families have access to digital learning
- ▶ a sight and hearing screening partnership, with the Lakes District Health Board and Rotorua Energy Charitable Trust. This will ensure children who have sight and/or hearing impediments are supported to fully participate and engage in learning
- ▶ by building on existing networks and strengthening coordination between the local education sector, community and government, Excel Rotorua is making a real difference to children in Rotorua, particularly those from low socio-economic backgrounds.

Strengthening transitions

The transition from ECE to school, or from one school to another, is a key time when students can fall behind and become disengaged. We know that transitions from kōhanga reo or kura to English-medium school settings can be particularly difficult. We need to work with educators to make sure that all children and young people, particularly those in greatest need, experience good transitions at every point in their journey through the education system.

This includes improving transitions for young people who have already disengaged, by working with schools and alternative education providers to develop good pathways from alternative education back into mainstream education.

Keeping young people engaged in their middle and later years of school is crucial to their educational success, both in school and in tertiary education. Engagement at this stage is linked to a wide range of issues that schools can influence, including having a school culture that values and is responsive to the culture of the students, and finding curriculum choices and teaching methods that fire their students' excitement and interest. Schools that have raised the engagement and achievement of their students have found ways to do this. Efforts to improve student engagement can have a particular benefit for Māori students, who are over-represented in disengagement statistics.

The effort doesn't finish when students gain NCEA Level 2. We also need to help secondary school students make choices that will give them the best opportunities for success in tertiary education and their careers. Tertiary education providers can contribute to this by working more effectively with schools to ensure that students not only achieve good NCEA results, but also progress and succeed in the best options for them in tertiary education.

We work with other social sector agencies

We are working more closely than ever with other social sector agencies, community leaders and other local contributors. Examples include the Children's Teams, and our work with the Social Sector Trials and on youth mental health. We work with these partners to find appropriate solutions to meet the needs of learners and reflect the community's needs and values.

This is a growing focus for our work. Many of our at-risk students may be clients of other social services and need a coordinated package of support, but we sometimes still work in isolation. This means we miss out on information that could help us understand and address the issues for the whole child and on services that could help them.

We are increasingly looking to provide more holistic identifications, assessment and responses for the whole child and their whānau, rather than a series of poorly-connected, poorly-sustained interventions. The Whānau Education Action Plans and Excel Rotorua are examples of this approach.



4





More young people successfully transition from school to tertiary education or employment

Part 4: More young people successfully transition from school to tertiary education or employment

Good transitions make a real difference for learner outcomes

Effective transitions from school, through tertiary education, and into employment are central to long-term life and social outcomes for learners. Following social, economic and labour market changes in recent decades, qualifications are increasingly needed to get jobs or succeed in further education or training.

NCEA Level 2 is the key to further education and employment. Without a Level 2 qualification, students are less likely to be in a job with good career and earning prospects. Getting NCEA Level 2 shows that young people are building the key skills and competencies they need to succeed in the workplace and in tertiary education. It opens doors to other opportunities.

The Achievement Story shows that more learners are seizing these opportunities. There are more pathways available to achieve NCEA Level 2, and more students are achieving results. A key goal of our work in senior secondary schooling and foundation-level tertiary education (study at levels 1 and 2) is that as many students as possible achieve NCEA Level 2.

Better pathways and more study options are helping more young people achieve

From the age of 16, young people have a choice about whether to continue in education, and where they learn – at school, through partnerships between schools and tertiary education providers, at a tertiary education provider, or, if they find employment, in further training in the workplace. To ensure that

students make good choices, we need meaningful pathways and good support for students to progress from school in their chosen direction.

Schools and tertiary education providers are seizing on the flexibility of the NCEA within the New Zealand Qualifications Framework. The ability for young people to achieve NCEA in secondary schools or tertiary education is a real strength of our system. The learning that makes up each student's NCEA should be thought through and deliberate, and the choices it opens up should be clear.

For most students, staying in school until they have achieved at least NCEA Level 2 is the best option. But many other young people thrive in a different learning environment, through options offered by tertiary providers and workplaces. We need to provide a range of options in secondary schools, tertiary provision and across both (the secondary-tertiary interface) which suit students' learning needs and aspirations. In all of these options, it's important that a student's background and language, culture and identity are understood and valued.

The education sector and successive governments have worked to increase 15-19 year-olds' retention, engagement and achievement in education. This has included:

- ▶ developing NCEA as a flexible and meaningful qualification
- ▶ offering a broader range of choices in secondary schools and tertiary settings that are more relevant to students and relate to their future employment and career ambitions
- ▶ working with parents and whānau to improve decision-making and to better support success
- ▶ improving transitions and collaboration across the boundaries between secondary schooling, tertiary education and employment.

For many years, the route through school to university has been relatively clear, including links between NCEA and university entrance. But how NCEA contributes to other tertiary education opportunities, or to trades or technical skills development, or the workplace, has been less clear. We are working to ensure that the path from NCEA to tertiary education is clear for all learners.



Vocational Pathways

We've worked with the industry training sector to develop Vocational Pathways in six broad industry areas. Vocational Pathways help students plan their journey from learning to earning. Students can find the type of career path they would like to follow, and identify the courses and programmes they need to achieve their goal. The pathways enable students to structure their learning towards gaining credits that are valued by industry, while achieving NCEA Level 2 (or equivalent).

One of the most important developments since the introduction of NCEA has been the creation of new Vocational Pathways to achieve NCEA Level 2. New pathways are in place for:

- ▶ the creative industries
- ▶ manufacturing and technology
- ▶ the primary industries
- ▶ the social and community sector
- ▶ the services industries
- ▶ construction and infrastructure.

The new pathways provide confidence that, if a student completes the standards in a particular pathway, they should be able to undertake further education or training in their chosen industry or sector. This includes university options, since all of the sectors include a range of roles that typically require degrees.

Alongside these new pathways, new options have been developed with the education sector for young people to study towards NCEA Level 2. Using the new pathways, these new programmes have been designed to develop coherent skills and provide clear links to future opportunities. In 2015, there will be:

- ▶ more than 10,000 fees-free level 1 and 2 places at polytechnics, private training establishments and wānanga



- ▶ 5,250 places in secondary-tertiary programmes – typically Trades Academies that involve school students accessing some or all of their learning through tertiary or work-based opportunities
- ▶ over 450 places at school-based service academies, which are partnerships between secondary schools and the NZ Defence Force
- ▶ STAR and Gateway programmes enabling schools to provide options outside the classroom, and expose young people to future work and study options, while gaining credits for NCEA.

High expectations, collaboration, and a focus on outcomes will build on these gains

Recent initiatives have resulted in improvements in NCEA Level 2 achievement and clearer progression to tertiary education. We need to further strengthen the links between secondary schools, tertiary providers and employers. We need to do more of what we already know works:

- ▶ set targets for NCEA Level 2 and have high expectations of all students
- ▶ retain students in education by creating coherent, high-quality learning pathways informed by a shared understanding of the skills and capabilities people need to succeed

- encourage schools and tertiary providers to work together with industry to deliver the best options for students, so that learners gain the relevant skills to enter the workforce and become productive members of the community.

We need to set targets and have high expectations of all students

Setting targets has focused both government and the sector on the importance of educational achievement. It has mobilised effort across the education system. We think this is important and should continue.

To ensure that target-setting supports the delivery of coherent NCEA qualifications, we need to continue to work with the sector to ensure that:

- education providers focus on the competencies that are important for future citizenship, including science, languages and culture, rather than narrowing their teaching focus to concentrate on the specific standards they are teaching
- students achieving NCEA have also gained broader cognitive skills and capabilities, as reflected in the PISA assessments, and which are important for success in the modern world.

We also need to work to ensure employers continue to see NCEA as a good indicator of students' foundation skills and broader achievement. If the qualification does not meet this test, its value to future employers, and therefore to students, will be eroded.

We need all students to succeed and contribute to meeting these targets, including those with more limited options. For example, some young people may be gaining their education in learning environments such as teen parent units or alternative education. These environments provide education with a broader life skills focus that may be important for their students. Māori students are over-represented in these environments.

We need to maintain high expectations and not limit these young people's potential. We need to work to raise the achievement outcomes for students in these environments and better manage transitions from, and back into, mainstream education. We also see a significant role for the education sector to work alongside the wider social sector to maximise outcomes for these students.

Teen Parent Units are teaching and learning units attached to established secondary schools with co-located childcare facilities. They provide education for teenage students who are pregnant or already a parent.

Alternative Education provides education outside of mainstream classrooms for those under 16 who may have had problems at school, or have been excluded from school. The aim is for students to make a successful return to mainstream education, either at a school or a tertiary institution.

We need to provide coherent, high-quality, learning pathways

Young people deserve to achieve at least an NCEA Level 2 qualification which helps them broaden their education and employment options. We need to work with providers to help them deliver this for their students.

To assist this, we need to help schools and tertiary organisations increase the use of recognised pathways and enhance their curriculum. This will include helping them to more creatively combine subjects, or courses, into the pathways.

We also need to support tertiary providers and the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) to increase the use of NCEA Level 2, rather than tertiary-specific qualifications. This will deliver the original vision of NCEA as the foundation qualification for all 15-19 year-olds.

As well as achieving good NCEA results, students need to structure their NCEA so it works as a package and keeps their options open for future study. This will give them the best opportunities to move into and succeed in tertiary education and employment. For example, Māori and Pasifika students who achieve NCEA Level 3 are less likely

than other students to move on to study for a degree. For some of these students, earlier decisions about NCEA subjects have limited their options.

The next steps in the development of pathways are to extend their reach beyond Level 2 into higher levels of study in tertiary education and out into employment and to further build student, parent, whānau, and community awareness and understanding about the pathways. The more knowledge students have, the better equipped they are to make good choices about what, where and how they learn.

Education providers are making good progress in these areas and we need to build on this early success. For example, we need to continue to work with industry to define relevant, clear, and trusted pathways for students to further study and employment. We need to work with networks of providers across the community to deliver coherent and collaborative programmes that support learners' future success. We need to support providers to ensure that every student has a clear pathway and the right learning environment for them to achieve and progress.

Trades Academies

Trades Academies enable young people to undertake a combination of school and tertiary study while they are still at school. They are focused on achieving NCEA Level 2 and credits towards industry-set Level 2 National Certificates. One example is led by the Taratahi Agricultural Training Centre, the Primary Industries Trades Academy (PITA). PITA helps young people think about and experience many of the employment opportunities available in the primary industries. Taratahi has an integrated learning model that blends learning at school with learning on the farm. Students acquire part of their learning at school using resources developed in partnership with PITA, and have a full day out on the farm with PITA tutors to put theory into practice and gain relevant knowledge to support the theory. "There is nothing like being on the farm, it really prepares you," says Josie Whaanga, Ag in Schools Manager at Taratahi. "Time on-site doing practical learning helps keep the youth engaged in learning. The PITA also has a community feel and provides students with a solid foundation, raising their confidence and preparing them for the pressure at a higher level."

We need to collaborate more to do more of what works

We need to further strengthen the links between secondary schools, tertiary providers and employers, doing more of what we already know works. Effective collaboration will:

- ▶ retain students in education (by creating smooth transitions from school to tertiary education), and attract new learners who need to build their skills. It is easier to retain young people in education, than to re-engage them following an absence
- ▶ establish a common understanding of the skills and capabilities people need to succeed. This will enable schools, tertiary providers, and industry to work together to better meet students' needs and reduce the likelihood of repetition for students
- ▶ encourage schools and tertiary providers to work together to deliver the best options for students, and to collaborate with industry so that learners gain the relevant skills to enter the workforce, and become productive members of the community.

We need all parts of the education system to work together to provide the best learning environments for students. Strong involvement from employers and the wider community will ensure students have clear pathways to education and employment beyond school.

There are opportunities to provide clearer information to students and whānau so they can make good decisions about students' education, increasing the likelihood of achieving their goals for education or training beyond school. We also need to support tertiary education providers and industry organisations to work more effectively with schools, using new and existing pathways.

We need to ensure that learners can easily return to education and training after time away. This will be increasingly important as the skills required to find and maintain employment change. A particular focus will be low-skilled people who need to build their foundation skills. For these learners to succeed, employers and industry will need to work closely together to support skills development, recognition of prior learning, and different approaches, such as work-based trials.

5





Tertiary education helps
New Zealanders to succeed

Part 5: Tertiary education helps New Zealanders to succeed

Tertiary education performs well for most people

Tertiary education improves the lives of New Zealanders and contributes to a strong economy and society. It helps people to build their skills and produces high-quality research, contributing to the success of people, businesses and other organisations.

Tertiary education includes all learning after school, and involves learners of all ages. It includes higher education, applied and vocational training, and training in foundation skills where these have not been gained in school. It includes structured learning in a range of settings including workplaces, universities, polytechnics, wānanga and private training establishments.

The Achievement Story shows that the outcomes of tertiary education are positive, and are improving:

- ▶ educational achievement is increasing, with more people in study, in higher levels of study, and completing the qualifications they begin – including more Māori and Pasifika
- ▶ research performance is improving, with more and higher quality research products
- ▶ many students are seeing good outcomes from their study, with their efforts being repaid by better rates of employment and pay, and better health and social outcomes.

The tertiary education sector is responding well to the need to improve results for learners. It has met the increased demand for study and training in a changing economy. Students and government are getting better value for every dollar spent on tertiary education.

The outcome should be more than a qualification

Many students commit their time, effort and money to tertiary education with the hope of achieving a better career and greater financial independence. Tertiary education is about much more than economic growth, employment, and higher incomes, but focusing on good employment outcomes for students can also enhance tertiary education's contribution to other objectives such as social and cultural development. The kinds of skills needed for success in the modern economy are largely the same as those that help people to be creative, confident, culturally-enriched citizens.

In many cases, the most important result of tertiary education for learners and their whānau is whether a graduate has more choices after their study. The evidence shows that learners are achieving better outcomes on leaving tertiary education.

We need to improve relevance and reach in tertiary education

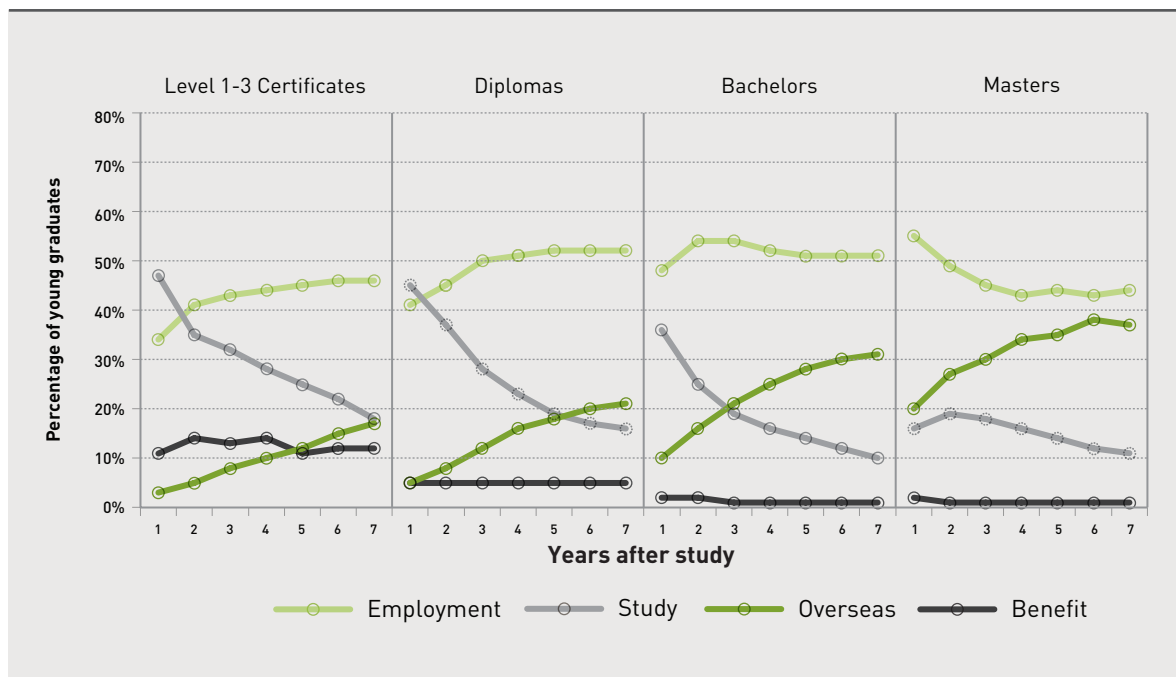
For tertiary education to deliver what New Zealand needs now and in the future, it needs to:

- ▶ improve the **relevance** of tertiary education by ensuring that the skills it develops and the research it produces meet the needs of New Zealand's economy and society
- ▶ support all people to succeed by doing more to **reach** learners who might not otherwise participate or achieve in tertiary education.

To do this, the system will need to focus more strongly on outcomes, and government will need to apply more focus to how its decisions can support tertiary education providers to be flexible and innovative and deliver the improvements needed across the system.

More relevant tertiary education means better outcomes for learners, and for New Zealand

Relevant education and research is important to deliver what New Zealand needs from tertiary education. This will mean ongoing work to maintain relevance as tertiary education, and the demands on it, in the face of changing expectations across the labour market. For example, as we move out

Figure 13. For young graduates, higher qualifications are linked to higher employment and migration rates

Source: Statistics New Zealand: Integrated Data Infrastructure

of the global financial crisis, employers are once again starting to find it difficult to attract people with the right skills.

More learners need to gain qualifications that lead to sustainable careers and futures, and tertiary education needs to meet the skills and research needs of society and the economy:

- ▶ students need to know what skills and qualifications will best help them achieve their career and life ambitions, the costs and likely pay-offs from different study options, and the pathways they should follow, so that they can make more informed choices about what, where and how they study
- ▶ education providers need to build stronger connections so they can better understand and respond to the needs of employers, communities and the economy. They need to know what employment and life outcomes their graduates are achieving to allow them to act to improve these outcomes
- ▶ the research delivered across the tertiary education sector needs to have more impact on the lives of New Zealanders.

We can improve relevance by using and sharing information more effectively. We need to:

- ▶ provide the right information, in the right way, to support students, as the key decision-makers, to make good decisions about what and where to study
- ▶ work with other government agencies to use information to drive strategic planning and investment, and to help providers make the best use of information.

We can also improve relevance by supporting stronger connections between providers, employers, and communities. This can support better outcomes for students and better, more relevant research products. There are some well-established links between employers, industries, and tertiary education, particularly in vocational education and the professions. Better employer input is required throughout tertiary education to focus more on student outcomes. This includes the skills and competencies to work across different cultural settings and to build strong communities.

As the Māori economy becomes a greater force, there will be increasing demand for workers who are competent in a Māori context, working in or with Māori communities and businesses. There are also examples of good knowledge exchange in particular areas between providers and industry, but

engagement between researchers and the users of their research needs to happen more often and more widely.

We now have a global market for skilled workers and strong international competition in tertiary education. New Zealand needs to offer competitive, responsive, internationally-recognised education that is of value for the learner. New Zealand's institutions need to build on their strengths in research and programme design, as well as export education, to create enduring relationships with overseas partners and show the quality and relevance of New Zealand tertiary education to the world.

We need to make tertiary education work for everyone

New Zealand will get the most benefit from tertiary education if people from all parts of our society can participate and reach their potential. Tertiary education providers currently serve most people well. However, to help everyone succeed, providers and government agencies need to improve outcomes for Māori and Pasifika learners, people from disadvantaged backgrounds, and those who need to build their foundation skills. Improvements to how tertiary education works for these priority groups are likely to provide benefits for all students.

Tertiary education providers will better support all to succeed if they have a stronger focus on learners and their diverse needs. There are examples of good practice, which can be shared more widely and built on. This includes providing high-quality, culturally responsive learning opportunities that build from learners' existing strengths, including those gained in Māori-medium education, and setting high expectations for all learners. It will also mean taking advantage of new technology to reach more learners, engage more deeply, and to enable learners to take greater control of their learning.

We can improve reach by better supporting all people to enter and progress through tertiary education. More information is available now, but people looking to enter tertiary education do not always have the right information or advice they need to make good decisions about what to study. Nor is it easy to see where different pathways can take them. And if more learners can complete qualifications, particularly Māori learners, then learners will maximise the return on their efforts. Information provision and pathways need to be designed to meet the needs of diverse and non-traditional learners.

Better information provision and pathways will mean:

- ▶ government agencies focusing on effective careers advice and guidance in schools and developing better, user-friendly information for prospective students
- ▶ government working with the sector to build from recent progress in developing pathways – such as the development of Vocational Pathways – to identify more and better ways to support learners
- ▶ tertiary education providers working more effectively with schools to support students to progress and succeed in the best tertiary education options for them, and with employers and industry to support learners to enter study through in-work learning or to build their skills.

We can also support more people to succeed in tertiary education if we target resources better. New Zealand's public investment in tertiary education is designed to promote broad access and participation. But some groups of learners may need extra support, assistance, or advice to make the move into tertiary education and to succeed once they are there. Reaching these groups is not only about providing financial support and assistance. It will also require providers to be increasingly innovative and flexible in meeting the needs of an increasingly diverse community and student body.

Government can support providers better to be innovative, flexible, and responsive through better targeting of support, sharing good practice and setting high expectations.

Funding and regulation should be more outcome-focused

The core features of New Zealand's approach to funding and regulating tertiary education are sound. But there are opportunities to further improve the way government regulates and funds tertiary education, to focus more on improving outcomes for learners.

A key opportunity is to improve the performance measures that inform students' study choices and the Tertiary Education Commission's (TEC's) funding decisions. We need to assess how we make best use of improved information to direct resources more effectively, to support innovation, and to manage cost and quality risks. We need to do this without unduly constraining providers' autonomy, and their ability to innovate and to respond to the changing demands of students, employers and the community.

The way we use performance information could be made more balanced and effective, to encourage tertiary providers to consider how well their students' qualifications equip them for success after completing their studies. This would also assist them to identify how well they are supporting New Zealanders from all backgrounds to succeed. Better performance information would also allow the TEC to make better-informed funding decisions and students to make better-informed choices about what and where to study.

The way the planning and funding system is designed and operated can also be improved, to support innovation by providers and ensure they are able to adapt to changes in demands from students, business and communities, and to technological change. This could include:

- ▶ easing constraints for high-performing providers and for qualifications that deliver good outcomes, so that providers can respond faster to student and industry demand
- ▶ the TEC being more active in reallocating funding to providers who are performing well and signalling when it will fund more student places in programmes with high demand, that are achieving good outcomes
- ▶ enabling the TEC to fund more innovative types of activity, such as consortia arrangements or to purchase programmes that require provider/industry connections.

Government currently controls all the revenue providers can earn for teaching New Zealand students through capped tuition subsidies and fee controls. We think there are potential benefits in giving high-performing providers more flexibility to increase fees for qualifications that are in high demand or that offer students the highest income premiums. This would increase providers' incentives to expand provision, and differentiate providers according to quality and reputation. Changes to fee regulation would be carefully considered due to the implications for student support costs (as much of any fee increase will be financed by student loans), the future shape of the network (as providers compete by differentiating themselves on prestige, quality and cost), and equity of access.

The shape of the tertiary sector needs to continue to evolve

To meet the changing needs of students, communities and the economy, and to capture the benefits of changing technology, New Zealand's network of public and private tertiary education providers will need to continuously adapt and innovate.

The high level of autonomy and competition in tertiary education is a strength that promotes student choice and innovation. Individual institutions manage their own investment and development. Much of the change that will need to occur across our tertiary education network will therefore happen progressively and independently of governmental intervention. Resources will shift across the network following changes in patterns of demand from students and employers, and as institutions invest in new ways of delivering education.

Government agencies will work with the sector to increase our understanding of how change will impact on the network, and to provide sector leaders with the information they need to manage change. Government can help tertiary education providers to adapt more quickly by ensuring that its funding and regulation systems are flexible and responsive.

Working with you

We will work with you to deliver on your priorities

The education system has a direct effect on the lives of all New Zealanders. It helps young children develop the foundations for future learning. It equips school leavers and tertiary students of all ages with the knowledge, skills, and competencies they need to participate in our society and labour market; it provides advice, clear pathways and relevant qualifications for them to progress in their chosen careers; it contributes to innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship, and directly to producing new research and technology.

In fulfilling these functions, the education system contributes to our well-being as a nation. It is key to our ability to build and sustain a healthy, inclusive economy.

The Ministry of Education works with its partners in government, and with education leaders, to improve the outcomes from education. We are the stewards of the education system.

Looking across the system, we see opportunities to improve the system's performance through:

- ▶ improving educational leadership, and the quality and relevance of teaching and learning
- ▶ engaging more learners and their whānau in education and its results so that all learners can succeed.

We will work with you to deliver on your priorities as Minister.

We can provide further advice as a basis for decisions you may wish to take on the issues and actions we have raised.

We look forward to working with you.





