

HE TAONGA TE TAMAITI: EVERY CHILD A TAONGA STRATEGIC PLAN FOR EARLY LEARNING 2019-29

Submission from the Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand

The Teaching Council

1. The Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand (the Council), formerly the Education Council, is the independent professional body for teachers from early childhood education through to primary and secondary schooling in English and Māori medium schools and centres.
2. There are currently around 101,000 practising teachers in New Zealand.
3. The statutory purpose of the Council set out in section 377 of the Education Act 1989 (the Act) is “to ensure safe and high-quality leadership, teaching and learning ... through raising the status of the profession”.
4. We act in the interests of teachers to:
 - enable and support leadership to teachers and direction for the education profession, including teacher education and continued professional and leadership development;
 - establish and maintain criteria for teacher registration, standards for ongoing practice and criteria for the issue of practising certificates;
 - monitor and maintain the requirements relating to teacher conduct, competence and impairment;
 - establish and maintain the *Code of Professional Responsibility* for teachers.

A profession-led education system

5. The Council supports the vision of the Strategic Plan for Early Learning (*Strategic Plan*). We believe the teaching profession and the Council have a significant role to play in realising it. Our vision is to maximise the success of every learner in Aotearoa New Zealand through highly effective leadership and teaching. The goals we have set to achieve this are as follows:
 - The teaching profession takes collective responsibility for the learner journey and equitable outcomes for every learner.
 - The teaching profession delivers consistent high-quality teaching and leadership within and across learning environments.
 - Every teacher and leader embraces improvement, innovation and change.

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6. The Council believes that to provide high-quality teaching and leadership, both now and in the future, it needs to enable a connected profession working collaboratively with stakeholders to combine expertise and asking tough questions to help create solutions and grow professional knowledge. Enabling this vision for the profession is key to creating sustainable changes that will support our children and young people in reaching their potential.
7. The Council acknowledges that the scope of the development of the *Strategic Plan* was limited to the early childhood sector of the education system. However, in parallel with the development of this plan, other reviews, including the review of Tomorrow's Schools, and the development of an Education Workforce Strategy, are in progress.
8. In our view, it is important that care is taken to ensure that the system that emerges creates seamless educational pathways for learners, and strengthens the teaching profession, without adding barriers or structures that may work against that. The *Strategic Plan* and the report of the Tomorrow's Schools Independent Taskforce potentially establish structures that would separate Early Childhood Education (ECE) from schooling and create barriers for strengthening one teaching profession.
9. The *Strategic Plan* is missing an acknowledgement of the role of the profession, and of the Council in providing leadership and direction to the profession. It is important that the *Strategic Plan* reflects a vision for a collective teaching profession.
10. The Council, as the teachers' professional body, provides professional and regulatory services that give teachers voice, direction and leadership to grow and develop quality teaching practice that will strengthen outcomes for all learners.
11. As a professional body, the Council works collectively to develop the teaching profession by setting the standards for a high-quality workforce, striving to support our children and young people to be successful. It provides a platform for sharing, developing and innovating the profession's knowledge and practice to enable a world leading education system.
12. As the only organisation that engages with both early childhood and school education in Māori and English mediums, the Council strengthens a connected system supporting quality teaching across all settings for all learners. This is further strengthened and facilitated by our direct links to 131,000 registered teachers.
13. In the following discussion we make comments and recommendations on Goals 1, 3, 4 and 5 in the *Strategic Plan* that are the most relevant for the teaching profession.

It is important that the *Strategic Plan* reflects a vision for a collective teaching profession.



Discussion

Goal 1: Quality is raised for children by improving regulated standards

14. We support the recommendation of a 100% qualified ECE workforce in teacher-led centre-based settings, although in our view the goal should be stated as 100% registered teachers in ratioed teaching positions. Registered teachers, with current practising certificates, are required to demonstrate that they meet the *Standards for the Teaching Profession* and are bound by the *Code of Professional Responsibility* (the Code and Standards), they are required to continually progress their learning and be appraised by a professional leader. Both these factors come together to build a capable workforce and to give the public confidence in teachers.
15. The Council is able to lift expectations for teachers across the system through the Code and Standards, and Registration. An example of capability building across the system is the Council's new Registration and Certification policy to be released later this year, which highlights our expectation that from registration onwards, teachers will build capability in te reo me ngā tikanga Māori. They will need to signal a commitment to develop their capability in te reo me ngā tikanga Māori at registration and demonstrate their development and practise of te reo me ngā tikanga Māori at each practising certificate application.
16. Currently, in teacher-led ECE services, 50% of staff (including the person responsible) must hold a recognised qualification. So, not all adults in teacher-led ECE centres are required to be registered teachers. Under a 100% registered teacher requirement there may be a need to recognise other skills and knowledge that those outside the teaching profession bring to ECE centres. There is an opportunity to be more specific about the value such para-professional or non-teaching professionals add to the success and wellbeing of infants, toddlers and children, and consider how they should be funded and acknowledged in addition to ratioed or regulated teaching positions. An example would be contributions made by those who are able to offer languages and learning support. These other adults in ECE centres are key to supporting teachers and enabling every child to thrive in high quality settings that support their identity, language and culture.
17. The Council supports the recommendation to regulate new ratios for infants and toddlers. Ratios are integral to safe and high-quality learning. International research supports the view that teacher:child ratios influence the quality of care provided for provided for infants, toddlers and young children and support quality learning environments¹. In the Council's view, the implementation of a change to ratios should be tied to the goal of 100% registered teachers to enable this goal to be reached. Without the link between these, a move to 100% registered teachers could be harder to attain, due to a need for more ECE staff to be employed to cover the change in ratios and the likelihood that these extra staff would not be registered teachers.
18. Any changes to the regulation of qualifications in ECE will have an impact on student numbers in Initial Teacher Education (ITE). The proposed changes are likely to result in an increase in student numbers in ITE due to those already employed in ECE centres looking to upgrade their qualification, and others entering ITE. Because of this, the capacity of the ITE sector to deliver qualifications for registered teachers must also be considered. This is pertinent because a significant proportion of current ECE ITE qualifications are delivered by the Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics sector, which is currently undergoing structural change.

¹ (2002) Research on Ratios, Group Size and Staff Qualifications and Training in Early Years and Childcare Settings, Thomas Coram Research Unit Institute of Education, University of London



In addition, the Council is setting new requirements for ITE programmes that all providers will need to have in place by 2022. The Council proposes that before any decisions are made on the timing of changes to regulated qualifications, a more detailed plan is formulated with providers, the Tertiary Education Commission and the Council.

Goal 3: Investment in our workforce supports excellence in teaching and learning

19. We support the recommendation to strengthen Initial Teacher Education, and the Council has been working to do this. ITE is a critical contributor to the ongoing development of the teaching profession. The Council is about to release the ITE Programme Approval, Monitoring and Review Requirements (the Requirements), which represent a shift in our expectations for ITE. We want ITE graduates to be ready to teach and be well equipped to continue their development journey to full certification. The new Requirements seek to strengthen ITE programme design by:

- replacing the Graduating Teacher Standards with the *Standards for the Teaching Profession*;
- focusing more on the outcomes of programmes by establishing an assessment framework and new approval and moderation processes to provide confidence that each graduate meets the Standards (with support);
- strengthening expectations for quality professional experience placements;
- further developing the use of te reo and tikanga Māori in all programmes;
- formalising an expectation of authentic partnerships with schools/centres/kura and iwi;
- strengthening entry requirements in places while also enabling more flexible ITE programmes to meet emerging needs, especially to support growing the pipeline of future Kaiako into Māori medium settings.

20. The Council supports the recommendation to develop an ECE workforce supply strategy. The Ministry of Education is currently leading the development of the future-focused Education Workforce Strategy (EWS) which includes a focus on ensuring that the Initial Teacher Education system produces high-quality teachers through outcome-focused programme design, increased expectations about assessment and a demonstration of authentic partnerships with their community. Alignment of the EWS and the new ITE Requirements will make a significant contribution to raising the professional status of ECE teachers.

21. The Council supports the recommendation to improve professional learning and development (PLD). Every registered teacher, with a current practising certificate, has a responsibility to participate in professional learning and development. The *Standards for the Teaching Profession* require teachers to “use inquiry, collaborative problem-solving and professional learning to improve professional capability to impact on the learning and achievement of all learners.” However, the Council suggests that providing time and opportunity for professional learning should be an explicit part of the regulated standards for services.

22. There are a number of options that could be considered to support making PLD available to all teachers and services, including:

- the Crown providing centrally funded PLD for registered teachers;
- establishing PLD services with a Crown subsidy determined by centre ownership category;
- enabling teachers to access personal PLD from the professional body, the Council, on a payment for service arrangement.



23. The Council believes that there is value in leadership of professional learning at a whole of profession level, allowing specialisation for different sector needs and enabling system-level learning and cross-sector learning to be a feature of our system. Thus, the Council supports the proposed broadening of collaborative learning opportunities. The Council already has the mandate to provide leadership to teachers and set the direction for the teaching profession, and this could be used more effectively to meet the needs of teachers in ECE. The current proposals in the *Strategic Plan* consider ECE only, and the review of Tomorrow's Schools proposes PLD being delivered through many individual hubs. In the Council's view, these proposals work against building one strong, capable profession.
24. The vision in the *Leadership Strategy* is "to enable every teacher, regardless of their role or setting, to have the opportunity to develop their own leadership capability". As the professional body for all teachers, the Council believes that every teacher should have equitable access to leadership development provision, and to learning pathways that support their growth and development. We believe that every teacher should be entitled to this support regardless of the sector they teach in, in both education and care centres and kindergartens.

Goal 4: Planning ensures provision is valued, sufficient and diverse

25. We believe that ECE needs to be a part of, and support, a coordinated and cohesive education system. Key to this is building the capacity and capabilities of Māori medium settings. We think that more consideration needs to be given to building specific capacity in our system for Māori medium pathways across ECE, primary, secondary and tertiary education. Funding is part of this, but a broader system network strategy should be developed to enable it to happen. We support the recommendation of co-designing a funding model with Te Kōhanga Reo National Trust to ensure that ECE provision is available from ngā kohanga reo through to kura with strong Māori medium and bilingual pathways.
26. We recommend provision in the schooling sector is aligned in the development of ECE to enable a whole system that works to support all learners and all teachers.

Goal 5: The early learning systems continues to innovate, learn and improve

27. We support innovation in the ECE system. However, innovation by individual ECE services will not build the professional knowledge that is required for true cross-centre and cross-sector innovation to be successful. We support more innovation opportunities across the profession, bridging the gap between centres and schools, and with other partners. There is a need in the system for responsive, evidence-based innovation. Bringing research, policy and practice together to build knowledge about leadership practices and capabilities is a key principle of the *Leadership Strategy*.
28. The professional body is best-placed to enable the innovation and ongoing development of professional knowledge. We recommend that any innovation opportunities are developed across the profession.



Recommendations

29. The Council recommends that:

- the *Strategic Plan* and the review of Tomorrow's Schools are considered together before either is finalised;
- the *Strategic Plan* values the purpose of the Council as a distinct professional body, providing professional and regulatory services that give teachers voice, direction and leadership to grow quality teaching practice that will strengthen outcomes for all learners in Aotearoa New Zealand;
- higher rates of registered teachers and higher teacher:child ratios are priority areas for implementation of this *Strategic Plan*;
- higher teacher:child ratios are implemented in conjunction with the increase in the rate to 100% registered teachers in teacher-led centre-based settings;
- professional learning and development is funded and is a requirement for all Early Childhood centres and services;
- development of the Early Childhood Education system is aligned with the network of provision for schooling, to enable coordination and cohesion between sectors;
- innovation opportunities are developed across the profession, bridging the gap between centres and schools, and with other partners.

