

Submission

by

**THE
NEW ZEALAND
INITIATIVE**

to the Education and Workforce Committee

on

The Education and Training Amendment Bill (No. 2)

June 2025

Prepared by:

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1. INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 This submission on the Education and Training Amendment Bill (No. 2) is made by The New Zealand Initiative (the **Initiative**), a Wellington-based think tank supported primarily by major New Zealand businesses. In combination, our members employ more than 150,000 people.
- 1.2 The Initiative undertakes research that contributes to developing sound public policies in New Zealand. We advocate for the creation of a competitive, open and dynamic economy and a free, prosperous, fair and cohesive society.
- 1.3 The Initiative's members span the breadth of the New Zealand economy. The views expressed in this submission are those of the authors rather than the New Zealand Initiative's members.
- 1.4 This submission addresses two aspects of the Education and Training Amendment Bill, No. 2 (ETAB2), both pertaining to the school system; the School Board Objective Proposal and the Initial Teacher Education Proposal. Aspects of the Bill pertaining to universities are covered in a separate submission.
- 1.5 The Initiative supports both of these proposals. Indeed, the School Board Objective Proposal reflects a recommendation in a 2023 report from the New Zealand Initiative.¹ We suggest minor amendment to this proposal below.
- 1.6 We would welcome the opportunity to appear before the Committee to speak to this submission.

2. The School Board Objective Proposal

- 2.1 The Initiative supports the proposal to make educational achievement the paramount objective for school boards, with the other objectives framed as supporting it. Public schools are funded by taxpayers to educate young people. The other board objectives do not in themselves justify the public funding of schools.
- 2.2 The Initiative also supports the proposed new board objectives of (1) taking all reasonable steps to ensure that students attend school, and (2) ensuring that principals and staff use good quality assessment and data to monitor students' progress and achievement.
- 2.3 The second new objective (use of assessment and data) will assist principals and teachers to identify students who are falling behind curriculum expectations, enabling them to provide timely learning support. It will thereby support the paramount objective of enabling students to attain their highest possible standard of educational achievement.
- 2.4 The new objective to ensure the use of assessment and data could be improved by adding a responsibility for schools to monitor schools' aggregate data longitudinally. Doing so would provide valuable information on changes in the effectiveness of teaching over time. This would also support the paramount objective.

¹ M. Johnston. (2023). *Save our schools: Solutions for New Zealand's education crisis*. The New Zealand Initiative.

2.5 Recommendation:

Amend Section 127(2)(b) to read:

“to ensure that the school uses good quality assessment and aromatawai information: to monitor and evaluate students’ progress and achievement, including any assessment or aromatawai specified in a foundation curriculum policy statement; and to monitor assessment data longitudinally.”

3. The Initial Teacher Education Proposal

3.1 The Teaching Council is New Zealand's professional body for teachers, established under the Education and Training Act (2020). Two of its core functions are to set professional standards for teachers (Standards for the Teaching Profession) and to approve Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programmes. The two functions are related: The Teaching Council must be satisfied that graduates of a proposed ITE programme will be on track to meet the Standards before it can be approved.

3.2 ETAB2 seeks to bring the Teaching Council's functions of standard setting and ITE approval closer to government by requiring the Council to:

- Consult the Minister of Education before making alterations to the teaching standards or requirements associated with certification;
- Consult the Secretary of Education when performing functions associated with standards of qualifications and approval of teacher education programmes, and consider their advice, and;
- As part of their annual reports, report on how it considered relevant government policy statements.

3.3 The Initiative supports these amendments. They would be a step towards ensuring that the criteria for teacher registration reflect teacher competence. They would also contribute to improving the quality of Initial Teacher Education (ITE). A more complete picture of the Minister's intentions for ITE and teacher registration is laid out in the *Statement of Government Policy Relating to Teaching Council functions*.²

3.4 The current Standards do not effectively certify teacher competence. Many ITE programmes are not providing new teachers with the knowledge and skills they need. In the following sections we lay out reasons and evidence for this.

Standards for the Teaching Profession

3.5 To be lawfully entitled to practice in New Zealand, teachers must be registered and certificated by the Teaching Council. The *Standards for the Teaching Profession* are the criteria against which teachers' competence to be certificated is assessed.

3.6 The Teaching Council describes the current Standards as having a “high level” design, “so that every practitioner can apply them to suit the context they are working in.”³ However, their ‘high level’ design means that they are insufficiently specific to provide reliable benchmarks for assessing teachers’ competence.

² New Zealand Gazette (2024). *Statement of Government policy relating to Teaching Council functions*. New Zealand Government. <https://gazette.govt.nz/notice/id/2024-go6031/pdf>.

³ Education Council. (2017). *Our Code, Our Standards: Code of Professional Responsibility and Standards for the Teaching Profession*. Education Council, 14.

- 3.7 The Standards are a critical lever for influencing the focus of Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programmes, because graduates must be on track to meet them.
- 3.8 A 2023 report from The New Zealand Initiative showed that university-based teacher education programmes provide almost no coverage of teaching methods shown by scientific research to be effective.⁴ The current Standards do not require teachers to demonstrate proficiency with such methods, giving ITE providers little incentive to focus on them.
- 3.9 The government is currently developing a new, knowledge-rich curriculum for use in New Zealand schools. Successful implementation of this curriculum will depend on teachers being proficient in science-backed pedagogy. Adjustments to the Standards are therefore necessary to ensure that new teachers are equipped with the pedagogical content knowledge they will need to teach the new curriculum well.
- 3.10 The Teaching Council has recently consulted on a revised set of professional standards for teachers. The proposed revision is an improvement on the existing set of Standards. It includes new standards relating to content knowledge, pedagogical expertise, and assessment. However, the revision remains 'high level.' It is therefore difficult to see how it will support more rigorous assessment of teacher competence.

Initial Teacher Education

- 3.11 The ITE programmes provided by universities, which graduate some 90% of newly-qualified teachers, leave many poorly prepared for the classroom. A 2024 report from the Education Review Office (ERO) showed that nearly two-thirds of beginning teachers are underprepared for the classroom.⁵
- 3.12 University ITE programmes have insufficient focus on teaching practice informed by scientific evidence. They provide too little practicum experience and the quality of mentoring during practica is inconsistent.⁶
- 3.13 Some non-university providers – notably The Graduate School of Education and The Teachers' Institute – provide far higher quality ITE than university programmes. Teachers-in-training enrolled with these providers spend most of their time learning in schools. Both of these providers use models under which teachers-in-training spend most of their time learning in schools. Both have strong mechanisms to ensure high-quality mentoring. Both also have much more course content relevant to preparing teachers-in-training for the realities of the classroom. However, it is difficult for providers like these to compete with established university programmes.
- 3.14 Government currently has very limited influence over ITE programmes. They are approved by the Teaching Council which, at present, makes decisions without the involvement of the Ministry or Minister. The universities, which account for a large majority of ITE graduates, have academic freedom, enabling them to set the content of their programmes without Government oversight.

⁴ M. Johnston and S. Martin. (2023). *Who teaches the teachers? Reforming Initial Teacher Education in New Zealand*. The New Zealand Initiative.

⁵ Education Review Office. (2024). *Ready, set, teach: How prepared and supported are new teachers?* Education Review Office.

⁶ M. Johnston and S. Martin. *op cit*.

Justification of support for the Initial Teacher Education Proposal

- 3.15 Government currently lacks system-level oversight of the pre-service training and certification of teachers.⁷ Teachers' professional standards and the approval of ITE programmes are both overseen by the Teaching Council. As evinced above, the Teaching Council has failed to ensure that new teachers are well prepared for the classroom through either of these functions. We therefore support the Minister's intent, set out in a Cabinet policy paper at the end of 2024, to tighten accountability and transparency mechanisms over the Teaching Council.⁸
- 3.16 Ideally, professional bodies like the Teaching Council should carry out their functions independently of government. However, the Council has failed in its key roles of setting professional standards for teachers and upholding the quality of ITE through its approval function. There is now an urgent need to improve the quality of teaching in New Zealand's schools. The Initiative therefore supports the measures in ETAB2 to increase government oversight of the Teaching Council.

Risks and mitigations

- 3.17 There is a risk that the new requirements that ETAB2 will place on the Teaching Council will lead to a politicisation of the profession. In particular, the requirement to consult with the Minister on alterations to standards and certification requirements, will enable successive Ministers to substantially influence the direction for the teaching profession. While that influence is warranted at present, ETAB2 potentially leaves these functions of the Teaching Council vulnerable to volatility associated with the political cycle.
- 3.18 A longer-term solution might involve legislation setting out mandatory characteristics of professional standards for teachers and ITE programmes.⁹ This legislation should require standards to be specific and measurable. It should require ITE programmes to ensure that teachers-in-training spend enough time in schools and stipulate criteria to ensure that in-school mentoring is of high quality. It should require both to focus on teaching approaches evinced by scientific research. This would restore the autonomy of the Teaching Council to determine professional standards and approve ITE programmes leading to registration, within appropriate parameters.

We appreciate the opportunity to submit on this legislation and hope that the Select Committee finds our comments constructive.

⁷ Hon. E. Stanford (2024). *Cabinet Paper: Providing clear direction to the Teaching Council through a Statement of Government Policy and policy decisions on initial teacher education*. Ministry of Education. https://web-assets.education.govt.nz/s3fs-public/2025-01/51%20-%20Providing%20clear%20direction%20to%20Teaching%20council_Redacted.pdf?VersionId=BJOA..H8DudgFOESk_SIFJRePuRZiLh7.

⁸ Hon. E. Stanford, *op. cit.*

⁹ M. Johnston and S. Martin., *op cit.*