

WHEN DOES IT GET ANY EASIER?: BEGINNING TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES DURING THEIR FIRST YEAR OF TEACHING

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ABSTRACT Studies of beginning teachers' readiness to teach indicate a range of areas in which these teachers feel nervous about teaching, prior to beginning their first teaching position. Studies of the first year of teaching demonstrate that the reality shock of teaching is something that affects beginning teachers in a variety of ways. The literature on the stages of teacher development tells us that the "survival" stage in teaching can last throughout the whole first year of teaching. This New Zealand study follows seven beginning teachers through their first year of teaching and identifies the points at which the teachers began to say, "I'm getting on top of it now".

INTRODUCTION

Studies of the beginning teachers' readiness to teach indicate a range of areas in which these teachers feel nervous about teaching, prior to taking up their first teaching positions (Housego, 1994; Lang, 1996; Weinstein, 1988; Wilson, Ireton & Wood, 1997). Studies of the first year of teaching, across several decades, demonstrate that the reality shock of teaching is something that affects beginning teachers in a variety of ways (Battersby, 1981; Carre, 1993; Corcoran, 1981; Hanson & Herrington, 1976; Olson & Osborne, 1991; Pataniczek & Isaacson, 1981; Ryan, 1971; Veenman, 1984; Wideen, Mayer-Smith & Moon, 1998; Zeichner & Gore, 1976; Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1985). The literature on the stages of teacher development tells us that the "survival" stage in teaching (Kagan, 1992; Katz, 1977; Reynolds, 1992) can last throughout the whole of the first year of teaching.

My own interest in this topic arises out of work undertaken earlier (Lang, 1996), which studied the feelings of preparedness to teach of beginning teacher graduates of The University of Waikato's primary preservice teacher education programmes. During interviews for that research, once the participants had begun teaching, beginning teachers identified the struggles they had had in surviving their first year of teaching. Tiredness, stress on personal and family relationships, and the lack of balance in their lives between work, domestic responsibilities, and leisure activities were mentioned by many of the participants. As well, poor access to support structures and resources within their schools had placed stresses on these teachers and had exacerbated their struggles to survive as teachers. During interviews in the latter part of their first year of teaching, several teachers identified points in the year when things had begun to get a little easier, when they felt they were now getting on top of some of the aspects of life as a teacher. That is, they were beginning to move beyond the survival stage.

This aspect of teaching - the survival process in the early part of one's career as a teacher - is one about which there is little research evidence in New Zealand. The School Support Service advisers, attached to the traditional providers of

preservice teacher education in New Zealand, co-ordinate induction programmes for beginning teachers in which a high proportion of new teachers participate. However there is little New Zealand data, other than anecdotal evidence, on which advisers can base planning for these programmes. The New Zealand Teacher Registration Board expects that all beginning teachers will have an induction programme within their schools, designed to meet their individual needs. Knowledge about the survival process for beginning teachers (how long it takes to get to a point where teachers are feeling they are doing more than simply “. . . getting through the day in one piece” (Katz, 1997, p. 7) may assist both the School Support advisers and individual schools in designing their advice and guidance programmes.

The literature on teacher development suggests that there are at least four developmental stages through which teachers pass during their careers. The amount of time teachers spend in each of the stages may vary considerably, and this variance can be dependent upon a number of factors, including the teacher's own self concept and feelings of self efficacy; the context in which they begin teaching and continue to teach and the support provided in that context; and circumstances outside the school such as family and social factors.

The four stages of teacher development are variously described in the literature. Katz's descriptors are useful: survival, consolidation, renewal, and maturity (Katz, 1977). The first stage, survival, may continue beyond the first year of teaching for some, depending upon circumstances. For others it may be a few months. Others still may even be beyond the survival stage right from their first day of teaching. The survival stage is the one in which teachers ask questions such as: “Can I get through the day in one piece? Without losing a child? Can I make it until the end of the week - the next vacation? Can I really do this kind of work day after day? Will I be accepted by my colleagues?” (Katz, 1997, pp. 7-8). During the survival phase there are many things on which beginning teachers rely to help them survive - from yoga and meditation through to dependence on alcohol; support from colleagues within the school to counselling from trained specialists. Partners and families are important, as are things like handy hints for time and resource management and getting through paper work and other tasks.

Whilst the literature identifies the survival phase in beginning teaching as almost an essential part of the process of learning to teach, it is also identified that some beginning teachers do not actually experience this phase, or go through it only fleetingly and are competent teachers from the very beginning of their careers.

Recent studies (Harker, Gibbs, Ryan, Weir & Adams, 1998; Mansell, 1996) indicate that the percentage of teachers leaving the New Zealand teaching workforce is significantly high. Mansell's study in particular identifies that a high proportion of teachers leave the service within the first five years of their careers. Teacher shortages in New Zealand in the mid to late 1990s can be attributed in part to this teacher attrition. For beginning teachers, how they survive the first year, if they do, can be a significant factor in decisions about remaining in the profession.

This study is part of a larger, longitudinal research project which explores the experiences of beginning teacher graduates of the primary teacher education programmes at The University of Waikato. The aim of this study was to identify the following:

- Can beginning teachers identify points in their initial year of teaching at which they feel they get beyond the survival stage?
- Which things help beginning teachers survive during their initial year of teaching?
- What can beginning teachers identify, if anything, that might have been helpful to have learned about in their preservice teacher education programmes, but which they did not learn about?

The purpose of this particular aspect of the project is to examine the process of beginning teaching by studying, in particular, the progress through survival to the consolidation phase. The results will influence teaching in the university's courses, as well as the work of the University's School Support advisers in assisting with the induction of beginning teachers into the profession during their first two years of teaching.

It was not until the 1980s that the notion of mentoring, then already extant in business and government organisations, was adopted in education and began to be formalised in New Zealand. The induction of beginning teachers prior to 1990 was an informal process within the school, with largely cursory checks of teacher competence being made by Department of Education inspectors near the end of a teacher's first year in the profession. Now, the New Zealand Teacher Registration Board requires that all beginning teachers have a programme of advice and guidance specifically tailored for them during their first two years teaching, and a 0.2 time allowance to support this induction process is provided in the first year of teaching. Even though formalised induction processes have been in place for some 18 years, it would appear from conversation with advisers in the School Support Services, who co-ordinate beginning teacher induction programmes, that much of what comprises these induction programmes is based on trial and error and does not seem to be based on the research literature on the stages of teacher development.

This paper reports the responses of seven Year 1 teachers, to a survey completed at the end of 1998, which for most of them was the end of their first year as teachers. Two of the participants began teaching half way through 1998. Four of the seven had undertaken an intensive 13-month Primary Diploma of Teaching programme for graduates (Beth, Di, Paula and Rahera). The other three had completed a four-year concurrent programme from which they graduated with the Primary Diploma of Teaching and a Bachelor of Education degree (Hilary, Kathie and Louise). The survey comprised three questions, as follows:

1. Has teaching started getting any easier for you yet? If so, when did it start getting easier? Can you pinpoint for instance, which term of the year?
2. What things have helped you survive? This may be things like physical exercise, supportive partner, great tutor teacher, finding a good way to organise your diary, going on a time management course.
3. What things can you identify now, that you would have liked to have had included in your preservice teacher education programme at university, that would have helped you survive?

LENGTH OF SURVIVAL STAGE AND WHAT IS SURVIVED

All but one of the seven identified that things began getting easier for them in the second half of the school year, that is after teaching for two terms of 10 weeks each. Two of these were people who began teaching in term three of the four term school year. Paula's and Louise's responses were typical:

I felt that the first two terms were the survival period for me. I got run down (especially in winter months) and sick on several occasions - lost my voice twice! In Term 3 I felt a lot more relaxed and discovered that I did not have to do everything in one day and that some things just had to wait. I feel happy and confident about taking on next year's new class . . . (Paula, November 1998).

Louise talked about the stress of each day as well:

The stress factor was my main concern. Being anxious about every day. Long hours are put in prior to each day to help counteract some of it. Each term improves. Perhaps the beginning of Term 3 was when I really started getting into the swing of things. In Term 2 I began to do this, but there were still anxious feelings at times. Now, since the beginning of Term 3, I am relaxed and take every day as it comes (Louise, November 1998).

Kathie was the only one of the seven who had not found the earlier part of her year more stressful than the latter, saying "I have actually found the whole year easy (over all! I have had a few difficult times)" (Kathie, November 1998).

The teachers had to survive a range of difficulties, from illness to being attacked by a child. Many of the stresses appeared to derive from the high expectations the teachers held of themselves, such as those mentioned above by Paula - the feeling that everything needed to be done in a day. Energy levels and the long hours of work were particularly noted. Raheera, who was teaching in a Māori¹ language class, which was supposed to be total immersion in the language, had stresses unique to her situation. She wrote:

I won't say it's getting easier, but at least I'm not stressing over things, e.g. worrying about resources not being in Māori. I've come to accept the fact that Māori resources, especially in reading material for this age group [year 7-8, 11-13 year olds], are just not available. I gather whatever materials I need for a study unit, whether it be in pakeha [English] or Māori and the children read them. My job is to translate kupu hou [new words] for them, e.g. crystal unit - tioata etc. I used to fret over this, in thinking I'm not doing my job properly - but I was making myself sick. I realised about midway into the third term that I was making things difficult for myself by trying to translate everything before giving it to the children to read (Raheera, December 1998).

WHAT HAS ASSISTED SURVIVAL?

The most commonly mentioned factors that had helped these teachers survive their first year of teaching were:

- planning their teaching as part of a group of teachers
- support from their tutor teacher²
- keeping up-to-date with planning, marking and administrative tasks
- getting lots of sleep

Louise's comment summed up the first of these:

Working in a syndicate [group of teachers teaching similar class levels] is great because of joint planning. It helps familiarise you with *all* [curriculum] documents. You don't feel like you are on your own . . . Being in a big school is a bonus. Lots of people are therefore teaching children of the same age level. There are therefore lots of people to bounce ideas off, and many motivating/stimulating classrooms to see with lots of exciting ideas (Louise, November 1998).

Beth, who was teaching part-time in a much smaller school than Louise, also had positive things to say about planning and teaching together with another teacher. She also commented that it enabled her to combine the role of mother of a young child with that of teacher:

Team teaching has meant my planning is halved - brilliant for me as a mother - I can spend more energy being *reflective* (still so important) (Beth, November 1998).

The significance of their tutor teacher was mentioned by five of the seven teachers - four of them because they had received great support, the fifth had had support, but felt she had been restricted by her tutor teacher at some times. Paula said:

My tutor teacher was my most valuable resource - she has helped me to survive this year (Paula, November 1998).

Louise had had a similar experience:

Supportive tutor teacher in the first term. She helped me plan my first three days [Term 1] in detail, and then we went from there (Louise, December 1998).

It is interesting that two of the participants did not mention tutor teachers at all, despite this being one of the prompts in the question about things that have helped them survive. These two mentioned other people and things that had helped - one could presume tutor teachers were not significant for them.

The uniqueness and special difficulties of Rahera's situation arose again in relation to her tutor teacher. Being one of only two Māori on the staff at her school

meant potentially she had few, if any, colleagues who understood the particular difficulties of teaching in the immersion class. She said:

It was pretty hard "yak" at first given the fact there were only two brown faces on staff . . . Credit for my survival in the first two terms at [school] has to go to my tutor teacher (a woman) and to the other member of our syndicate (also a woman). Many a time I have cried on their shoulders and both their support has been "awesome". Although both these teachers are Pakeha [white New Zealanders] they have empathy for Māori and the Māori language (Rahera, December 1998).

Rahera also identified the need for support people who shared her cultural background and who were more likely to understand the nature of her job as an immersion teacher. More Māori teachers joined the staff later in the year and provided a support network.

The last two terms, especially Term 4 I have become more relaxed (not that much) because we now have five brown faces, and we meet once a fortnight to blow off a bit of steam - it's great. I come away from our meetings whenever they may be with a little less weight on my shoulders (Rahera, December 1998).

Arguably the need to have support meetings over and above the other meetings involved in school could place greater stress on Rahera and other teachers in her situation. More meetings mean less time for other things.

Keeping on top of the paper work is another factor that has enabled these teachers to survive. For some this had meant getting to school early so that they can get on with tasks without interruptions from colleagues, parents and children, and when they were fresh and able to concentrate. Both Paula and Kathie mentioned this. Paula said:

I get to school by 7.30a.m. each day - I find this time before school great preparation time rather than at 3.00p.m. when there are often meetings or I am just too tired (Paula, November 1998).

Kathie's comments echo this:

Keeping ahead with planning and keeping on top of marking is a key to keeping teaching stress-free . . . I find at the end of the day I'm tired - so I go home and have a rest before doing a couple of hours work at night. I also go in to school early in the morning when I'm fresh and there's no-one around to distract me (Kathie, November 1998).

Kathie even went as far as saying she aims to have work commitments completed two days before the set deadline which ensures she finishes things on time without undue stress.

Sleep was important and was identified by Di, Kathie, Louise and Paula. Louise combined this with advice about eating and being critical of yourself - the latter being mentioned in several responses and described earlier in relation to those teachers who felt they needed to get everything done in a day. She put it like this:

Look after yourself, get plenty of sleep, eat healthy, don't be too critical of yourself and compare yourself to other teachers and their children's work. *I know it's very easy to do* (Louise, November 1998).

Support from people other than tutor teachers was something also identified - often this support was from outside the school. Both Beth and Hilary mentioned their partners as key supports in their survival. Beth said "I wouldn't be where I am today if it weren't for the support on my partner" (Beth, November 1998). Hilary went further and described the help she had had from her partner, also a teacher, which she needed but did not receive from her school. She said she had been helped to survive by:

my supportive partner who has assisted with the practical support that was lacking at school e.g. planning, assessment, and moral support for philosophical emphases (Hilary, November 1998).

Hilary had felt at odds with some of the values in her school and had needed moral support from outside to stay true to her beliefs. She also identified another beginning teacher colleague who got her through tough times, providing support from outside the school - she described this as:

having another beginning teacher who was "an ear" for desperate days, a friend at another school.

Paula talked about the need to communicate with others when there are difficulties, if a teacher is to survive. Her comment was:

talk to others about your worries/concerns at school, don't tackle big problems alone (November 1998).

She also said to survive effectively as a teacher, she needed to remind herself that there were other more important things in life than her job. She said:

Give time to your family - they are more important than your work (Paula, November 1998).

There was a range of other support systems and survival techniques, which varied widely and which were related by these teachers in their responses.

For Louise, a key factor in her success as a beginning teacher was living with her parents. She said she had been helped by:

Living at home and having a supportive family. Eating well. Not having to worry about the stresses of flatting (November 1998).

Louise also mentioned that focussing on teaching alone and not taking on any outside activities had helped her, particularly in the first term. Having a reliable car also made a difference for Louise - "one less stress, especially if travelling some distance to work". She had also managed to find time to relax and do other things at the weekend. Louise had advice for other beginning teachers about using parent

helpers to help them survive. She recognised parents can sometimes make stress for teachers, but she put it this way:

Parent help. It is invaluable. Get as many as you can. They don't all bite. But be *wary*. Some are full on! I've had some difficulties. It wasn't me that had the problem (as my principal stated). It was her. Some parents can go overboard. So be prepared. Speak to your tutor teacher about any concerns. Even discuss any issues that *could* arise and how tutor teacher deals with them. Don't let a parent disrupt your programme. Make an appointment after school (Louise, November 1998).

Louise also discussed her perception of how beginning teachers might fare in schools of different socio-economic decile rankings³, saying she believes being in a middle ranked school is probably easier for a beginning teacher. She said:

I think I survived well in a decile 4 school. I wouldn't want to start in decile 1 or 10. Both have pros and cons, as research shows. Don't make it too hard for yourself in your first year, with *really* difficult children (decile 1) or many very very involved parents (decile 10). It can be daunting. One of my friends is finding decile 1 a struggle mentally. It's draining (Louise, November 1998).

Both Beth and Rahera mentioned exercise as a means of aiding the survival process. Beth had kept fit, saying:

I joined the gym soon after I started teaching (I realised fast that I couldn't fit my usual walking etc. into my daily routine). Exercise has been an important factor for me (increased energy and feel good attitude) (Beth, November 1998).

Rahera, on the other hand, said "Next year I must organise myself into getting more exercise", recognising that exercise may have helped her with her particularly stressful situation.

Rahera also identified that having had children of her own may have made her better prepared for teaching and therefore more able to cope and survive. She said

I think my being older and having children of my own has played a major part in my survival. I may not have teaching experience, but I definitely have life experience (Rahera, December 1998).

Di attended a motivational course part-way through the year and found the things she learned on the course helped her survive. She also said time to herself with a good book was important, and that she used television to numb her mind when stressed.

Hilary commented that an important factor in her survival was having a belief in herself, even though this had to be encouraged by others. This echoes the

comments of Louise, reported earlier about not being too critical of yourself, and the recognition that it's all too easy for teachers to be highly critical of themselves.

THINGS THE TEACHERS WOULD HAVE LIKED TO HAVE HAD INCLUDED IN THEIR PRESERVICE PROGRAMMES

All seven teachers were striving to do their best and in most cases had taken around six months to get beyond survival stage. When describing things they would have liked to have learned prior to beginning teaching, so that survival could be easier, there was a range of responses. However there was very little commonality in the needs identified.

Beth had completed an intensive 13-month preservice programme for graduates and said:

Overall I can't think of a better programme for me. Teaching has been equivalent (*or less*) stressful than last year [as a full time student in the intensive programme] (Beth, November 1998).

Beth did identify that she felt reading/language was a weakness area for her as a teacher, and that this was seen as one of the most important areas of the primary school curriculum. She had become stressed as a result, and said:

I feel that my reading/language training was totally inadequate - as a result this is a weakness area (particularly small group reading) - realistic time management is so important here as are skills. This has been stressful at times because of the value placed on this area of academic development (Beth, November 1998).

Di was the teacher who had faced an attack by a child and as a result felt she would have liked to know more about how to handle such situations. She said she would have liked:

a small course on how to protect yourself from the children. I was attacked by a child in Term 2 and I know now how not to get into confrontations, yet I would have liked to have learnt this another way (November 1998).

Hilary's plea was for "an outline of what to expect - in terms of support in professional development etc.". Hilary felt she had not been adequately supported in her school but was uncertain how much support she should expect and how demanding she should be about insisting upon it.

Kathie's focus, in terms of her perceived needs, was on curriculum. Her list is as follows

- More practical teaching experience - it is a lot more valuable than book learning!
 - Ways of making science more "hands on" for the children
 - Creative art activities to use
 - More curriculum ideas overall
- (November 1998).

In some ways, these are “small” wishes, and given that Kathie is the teacher who identified she had not really felt herself to be in survival mode at all during her first year teaching, it could be that she has “skipped” the survival stage completely and has been operating at the next level, which Katz (1977) refers to as the “consolidation” stage. It may be that Kathie is now looking at refining her curriculum knowledge and even moving into some areas of specialisation or expertise.

Louise’s list of things she would have liked to have had included in her university programme, and which she felt would have helped her survive, is longer:

- Practical ideas for things to do in the first week at school (and on *first* day) e.g. “Me” unit, class rules etc.
 - Ice breakers
 - Ideas for how to deal with parents - this I haven’t found easy initially
 - List of things to have prepared for the first day i.e. resources - poems, charts
 - Class to make resources (there are never enough)
 - Ideas for how classes can be set up effectively
 - Ideas for how to get programmes up and running and in what order
 - Long term planning in maths. Ideas for how to run maths e.g. how grouping can be used, what units are good to start with
 - Examples of long-term planning in language-literacy. Even though we planned a programme, it would have been great to see others (even in different levels). We may not get a job teaching in the area we planned a programme in
 - Oral language - I don’t remember being taught anything
- (November 1998).

Paula identified a short list of aspects of teaching she would have liked to have known about, and these differ in the main from those described thus far:

- more help and information on how to write reports
 - how to teach children to actually read - one to one and in a group setting
 - how to extend highly intelligent children in your class i.e. extension programmes
 - more information and help on dealing with antisocial behaviour and children with behaviour difficulty
- (November 1998).

Rahera’s needs were focussed on her role as a teacher in a total immersion Māori class:

As you know my case is a little unusual, but people did warn me not to jump into this job (rumaki [immersion]). I would have liked to have gone more in-depth into the curriculum books, especially the English/Language curriculum document. I still use both books Māori/English. I find this makes things easier as some of the kupu

[words] in the Māori documents I am still coming to grips with (December 1998).

Rahera's comment highlights the extra workload carried by teachers in total and partial immersion Māori language classes, in terms of the resources available, or rather not available to teachers and children, but also the fact that teachers in these classes are coming to grips with new vocabulary, especially new terms in the various primary school curriculum areas. These words are not commonly known in conversational Māori. Specialist education terms are regularly being developed by the Māori Language Commission for terms such as mathematical concepts.

Rahera undertook the intensive preservice programme for graduates and as such did not study second language acquisition and techniques for teaching in the Māori language. This puts her at a disadvantage in terms of preparation to teach in such settings, in comparison with her colleagues in the specialist four-year Rumaki [immersion] teacher education programme which specifically prepares teachers for work in the immersion context.

Amongst the above comments about teacher needs, the area of language-literacy education is the only one which is identified by more than one of the seven teachers, and this may be, as Beth says, because such a high level of importance is placed on it in schools, and it is also an area in which parents can be critical of teachers if they perceive classroom programmes to be inadequate.

The fact that there are no other common needs appears to indicate that the teachers who did not have the particular needs that were identified by others of their colleagues must have learned about those things somewhere. All the needs listed are elements of the preservice programmes at The University of Waikato, including their attendant practicum experiences. One could speculate that perhaps student teachers take in preservice course content with lesser or greater emphases depending on their beliefs about themselves and what their future as teachers might be like. That is, perhaps some student teachers don't see the relevance of particular elements of their programmes or that they will need to apply particular theory or learning when they have a class of their own. Comments made by beginning teachers in other studies (such as Lang, 1996) indicate that beginning teachers do recognise that perhaps they can't learn everything about their job whilst they are at university and that some things are learned "on the job" in their first year of teaching. Perhaps beginning teachers lose sight of the fact that in New Zealand the first two years of teaching, prior to full registration, are a continuation of their teacher preparation and that the reason they are assigned a tutor teacher is for that very purpose - the continuation of their preparation. Louise, for instance, cites a long list of needs, but also identifies that her tutor teacher support was only strong in Term 1 of the school year - perhaps if this had continued throughout the year she might not have such a long list. Aspects of teaching such as detailed models for writing reports to parents about their children, as identified by Paula, are idiosyncratic to individual schools and are best handled by working alongside the tutor teacher (although a general introduction is included in the university programme). Paula undertook the intensive programme for graduates, which does not include the compulsory separate course on assessment, which students in the four-year programme had undertaken. This aspect of teaching is covered in the intensive course in an integrated manner in the curriculum and professional practice courses. The fact that she had not undertaken the assessment course may, however, partially account for her feelings of uncertainty about writing reports.

Comments about ideas for curriculum and about which topics to teach in which order are interesting, as these aspects of classroom life are also idiosyncratic to individual schools' long term plans, to individual classrooms and to individual children or groups of children, and the emphasis in teacher education in New Zealand is that programmes in each curriculum area should be designed based on children's identified learning needs at the time. Another interpretation might be that Paula and Louise were seeking "recipe type" answers to questions about teaching. The literature tells us that teachers seek such responses at times when they are uncomfortable about innovation or when they do not reflect on their teaching. Perhaps both these teachers were so busy with student teacher and beginning teacher demands, that they did not have time to stop and reflect. Perhaps they were teaching in environments where innovation was not actively encouraged, or where "recipe" approaches for teaching were modelled by other teachers.

However the fact that beginning teachers have identified these needs for ideas about curriculum may mean we at The University of Waikato need to be more specific about aspects of teaching about which student teachers should inquire and have practice in during their practicum block work in schools.

SUMMARY

The voices of these seven beginning teachers are significant voices. They are the voices of Year 1 teachers and need to be heard. What they say can inform our understanding of what is needed in the design of high quality teacher education programmes and what it means to try and put into practice what is learned in such programmes - with all the attendant fears, stresses and successes. Any interpretation of these voices has to be tempered by what we already know about how neophyte teachers develop in their confidence and competence to teach.

NOTES

1. Māori is one of two official languages in New Zealand, the other being English. Since the early 1980s there has been a revival of the Māori language and the emergence of pre-schools and schools which teach in this language. However teaching resources to support these developments are still scarce.
2. Tutor teachers are designated colleagues who are paired with individual beginning teachers in the same school for the first two years of teaching, and who work alongside them in a programme of induction and professional support, leading towards full registration as a teacher. A time allowance to facilitate the first year of this programme has been negotiated by the primary teachers' union with government, as part of the Primary Teachers' Collective Employment Contract.
3. New Zealand schools are ranked in deciles according to the socio-economic status of their surrounding catchment areas. This ranking is used in part to decide on funding allocations. A decile 1 school is the lowest ranking, with decile 10 schools being in wealthy areas.

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