

Many graduates fail to get work

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Education reporter

New teachers are still struggling to find jobs, despite an apparent shortage of primary teachers.

A report from the Education Ministry's demographic and statistical analysis unit showed that from 2001 to 2006, only half of primary teacher graduates each year have managed to find a job three years after graduating.

Only about a third found a job straight after graduating.

The report, released to the National Party under the Official Information Act, said the employment rate for graduates was not expected to rise above 65 per cent because it was too difficult for schools to employ them in large numbers.

Ideally, the report said, beginning teachers should make up no more than 15% of a school's teaching staff.

Increasing the percentage of beginning teachers in the workforce was "neither practical nor desirable", it said.

About 730 extra teachers would be needed to reduce Year 1 class sizes. However, those teachers needed to be experienced enough to teach new entrants, which the report said was "generally not a task entrusted to beginning teachers".

Beginning teachers do not have a full workload and more experienced teachers must take time out of teaching to mentor

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the new graduates during their two years as provisionally registered teachers. This can make schools reluctant to employ them.

National Party education spokeswoman Katherine Rich said the figures were shocking.

"I think the Education Minister needs to have a good look at these figures. If we don't work harder to place these graduates, we run the risk of losing them altogether," she said.

"I'm not advocating any one particular solution, but this is a huge problem and we need to look at something to reduce the number of graduates going into other roles."

The problem would worsen as the workforce aged and

teachers retired, Rich said.

Ministry spokesman Iain Butler said the rate of graduates entering the profession was expected to increase this year as primary teacher supply tightened, but schools would still be constrained by the number of beginning teachers they could employ.

"For that reason, the ministry is trying to assist schools to recruit New Zealand and overseas-trained teachers with prior experience to fill some of their vacancies," he said.

Initiatives include fast-tracking immigration for foreign teachers, retraining teachers who want to return to the profession and relocation deals for teachers who take jobs in hard-to-staff regions.

New Zealand Principals' Federation president Paddy Ford supported a centrally resourced scheme to keep teachers in the country.

"I recently advertised two jobs at my school and of the 24 applicants, 23 were beginning teachers. I can't employ them all," he said.

"The Government should look at something like attaching teachers to schools. It would be a great way for them to get experience and to keep those teachers in New Zealand."

Incentives to encourage overseas-based teachers to return to New Zealand were good, but he would rather see those teachers stay in the country in the first place.

Career derailed after good start

Melissa Banks would like nothing better than to spend her days in a classroom, but finding a job in a New Zealand school has proved so difficult she is about to leave the country.

Banks, 25, graduated from Teachers' College in Christchurch in 2003 and headed overseas to teach in England.

"I wanted to do my OE and I thought a teaching degree would stand me in good stead in the UK," she said.

"I travelled around teaching at lots of different schools, which gave me loads of new skills and experience, as well as seeing a bit of the world."

After 18 months, Banks returned to New Zealand hoping to continue her career, but after a good start she has found it almost impossible to get a job.

"I got a job at Avonhead Primary School relieving the deputy principal in her class-

room, and I did some other relieving work there as well, which was really great," she said.

"But unfortunately, after a year they could not keep me on.

"After that I applied for bucketloads of jobs and sent out loads of CVs, but although I got a lot of interviews I couldn't get a job. There always seemed to be someone with more experience."

Despite having some experience, Banks is still classed as a

beginning teacher, meaning schools have to put in extra resources to help her.

"I can totally see where they (schools) are coming from," she said. "It is easier for them to employ someone with experience, but that doesn't help new teachers. There are loads of good new teachers out there."

Banks is now working as a restaurant manager in Akaroa and plans to go back to Britain to continue her teaching career.