

Teachers Matter



NZEI · TE RĪU ROA
NEW ZEALAND EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTE

Performance Pay / Skills-Based Pay

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Why are we discussing this?

In recent months there has been considerable discussion in the media about paying the 'best' teachers more. The National Government has made it clear that any wage and salary negotiations in the state sector must be very closely and demonstrably aligned with performance and productivity improvement. NZEI members need to start discussing how this can be achieved in a way that recognises and supports what we know about highly effective teaching that enhances student learning.

The collaborative practice of teachers is recognised as a strength of the profession and something that contributes significantly to student learning. Pay linked to performance and/or productivity automatically leads to individualising pay increases. Therefore it is important to make sure that any individualised pay mechanisms are developed to support and enhance collaborative practices rather than serving to undermine them.

It is well recognised that effective teachers make a significant difference to student achievement. There is also considerable research about what the knowledge, skills and attributes of quality teachers are. As well as highly effective pedagogy, these include displaying leadership, supporting other educators and contributing to professional learning communities therefore enhancing collaborative practice. We can be confident that identifying the knowledge, skills and attributes of effective teachers is also a process that supports student achievement.

Effectively, there are two generic remuneration models that purport to address the issue of recognising effective teaching practice: pay based on skills and knowledge or pay based on performance.

Skills-Based Pay

Skills-based pay is based on evidence that attests to the presence of teachers' knowledge, skills and attributes against transparent, valid and robust criteria developed around what we know about effective teaching. This eliminates most elements of subjective decision making.

A key element of any skills based pay model is that it is linked with an individual's commitment to ongoing professional learning and professional development – i.e. it is not a static model based solely on what skills a teacher has but also on what skills and knowledge they are acquiring. This creates an aspirational and future focused model for teachers and helps to build capability within the profession.

Because we know that effective teaching positively influences student achievement, the challenge is to develop objective ways to identify effective practitioners and provide them with access to additional remuneration. Skills-based pay is premised on identifying transparent, measurable criteria for teachers to meet and provide access to additional remuneration. The process also provides professional recognition for highly effective teachers who support other teachers.

The development of a practice-based attestation process as part of the primary Longer Term Work Programme (LTWP) is a significant step towards enabling the introduction of objective and effective skills-based pay models to recognise the knowledge, skills and attributes of effective teachers.

Performance Pay

The key question with performance pay is “what is used to measure performance?” In an education context the two common measures are either a subjective decision about perceived performance, or a measure based on student outcomes.

A performance pay model based on subjective decisions about performance can be contentious in that whatever criteria may be identified, it must always rely on a subjective judgement of teaching performance. It is usually a competitive model that pits teachers against each other and has limits on the allocation of performance payments regardless of merit.

A performance pay model based on student outcomes determines payment for teachers based on the achievement of their students, usually measured with standardised tests. This may deter teachers from teaching in areas where external factors have the potential to impact on student achievement outcomes. It also brings into play the consideration that a standardised measure of student outcomes would have to be introduced for this to be a valid measure. These performance pay models are commonly linked to education systems based on national testing regimes and league tables.

Conclusion

No one would argue against effective teachers being paid more. It is important for NZEI members to engage in discussions about how to do this in a way that is fair, robust and will enhance teaching and learning. The discussion needs to be about what effective teaching looks like and how to objectively identify this in teacher practice.

It must be emphasised that this discussion is about a pay model that would be complementary to, and not a replacement for NZEI seeking to negotiate across-the-board pay increases that maintain salary relativity with CPI increases.

Staffroom Discussion

Discuss the information about skills-based and performance-based pay models in relation to the following questions.

- 1. What do you think should be the criteria for determining additional pay?**
- 2. How could decisions be made about who receives additional pay and how much?**
- 3. What are the pros and cons for each model?**