



VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF
WELLINGTON
STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION

BILL	Education Amendment Bill (2012)
DATE	20/01/2013

Victoria University of Wellington Students' Association (VUWSA) wishes to submit our opposition to the Education Amendment Bill. We wish to be heard in person.

We oppose the bill for three reasons:

- 1) We oppose the privatisation of education
- 2) We have major concerns about the welfare of our graduates as teachers at charter schools
- 3) We oppose the employment of untrained teachers

1) The Privatisation of Education

For over 30 years VUWSA has opposed the privatisation of education. Our members have used Student Representative Council resolutions over that period to determine VUWSA's policy in this area. The most relevant resolution, specific to the compulsory sector, states that we:

“strongly oppose increased state aid to private schools.”

This opposition stems from our belief that “the New Zealand education system should provide equality of opportunity for all New Zealanders” (SRC 03/86). The privatisation of education, in our view, undermines the real equal opportunity for all New Zealand students to engage in quality education. These concerns have been

born out in various studies from the United States which measure the impact of charter schools on local state schools, showing roll bleed from the state schools and subsequent loss of capitated funding. The gap in the quality received by students at different institutions prevents us from seeing this policy as having a benign effect on the equality of opportunity of students.

We are confident the current legislation ushered in by Tomorrow's Schools provides sufficient flexibility for communities to innovate, manage and govern their schools. Schools like Unlimited show that education innovation is entirely possible.

2) The Welfare of our Graduates

Experience from the United States indicates that charter schools have the potential to undermine fundamental conditions for teachers.

Because charter schools can sidestep collective agreements, there is no guarantee of minimum standards for their teaching staff beyond that within legislation. For most New Zealanders, the pastoral care, professional development and work/life balance held within these collective agreements is essential in producing and maintaining a relevant, energized and valued teaching force. The freedom of charter schools to shirk these responsibilities undermines these standards, and the welfare of our graduates.

In addition, the prevalence of individual contracts in charter schools has the potential to hurt new graduates more so than other more experienced teachers. More specifically, these beginning teachers have less ability to articulate their labour value to prospective employers. A lack of teaching positions available in the market might also lead our graduates to take on more responsibility than they are ready or willing for, at lower pay. This will most likely have detrimental effects on the quality of education experienced by students attending such schools.

In the United States, conditions at many charter schools have included longer working hours, frequently with after-hours availability provisions, and pay below that received by teaching staff in comparable positions at state schools.

The most concerning conditions, some of which are outlined above, leave VUWSA convinced that charter schools will result in high teacher turnover and undermine the opportunity for our graduates to be nurtured as beginning teachers in their initial years of work. Mentoring ^{JC}relationships, articulated ^{JC}expectations and a culture of pedagogical investment in beginning teachers are essential to creating a strong and effective teaching force.

3) Employment of Untrained Teachers

Training teachers to a high standard is fundamental to building a strong and effective teaching force. Allowing untrained teachers to assume the role of teachers undermines the overall effectiveness of the force. It might also detract, in general, from the value of proper teacher training.

We believe the existence of Limited Authority to Teach (LAT) positions strikes the balance between professionalism and occasional flexibility required by most schools in teaching staffing.

Furthermore, the employment of untrained teachers directly undermines the value of our graduates' degrees. Our graduates have worked hard for at least 3, sometimes 5 years. With the Government's signaled changes around increasing the training of teachers (addition of post-graduate), it is puzzling that the Government seeks now to allow untrained teachers into the classroom. Either the Government is committed to a higher standard of teaching (and training), or it is not.

Please feel free to contact us with any questions or inquiries you might have.