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Tracking of former Teacher Fellows

An evaluation of the Teacher Fellowship scheme in 1999 found that up to one fifth of Fellows did not return to their original school upon completion of their Fellowships (Jordan & Galt, 1999).

However, this does not necessarily mean that Fellows leave teaching, as some may remain in teaching but transfer to different schools, and others may leave classroom teaching but continue to contribute to the education system in other ways.

In order to determine the fate of former Teacher Fellows, we tracked them down and asked about their activities since completion of the Fellowship.

171 of the 180 teachers (95%) who were Fellows in the years 1994 through to 2001 were tracked down in May-June 2002.

Return to Teaching after the fellowship

Overall, 92% returned directly to school teaching after completion of their Fellowships.

This is broken down by Fellowship year in Table 1 overleaf.

Table 1: % Teacher Fellows who returned directly to school teaching

Fellowship Year	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Number Fellowships Awarded	17	19	19	15	16	18	36	40
Number Fellows Tracked	15	16	17	15	16	18	36	38
Number Who Returned to Teaching	15	15	17	14 [#]	15	16 [†]	31 [†]	34 [‡]
% Who Returned to Teaching	100%	94%	100%	93%	94%	89%	86%	90%
% expected to return*	89.4%	90.2%	91.1%	90.6%	90.4%	90%	89.7%	–

* This is the % of state and state-integrated school teachers, teaching in the year indicated, who would be expected to be school teaching in the following year. Calculated from Ministry of Education teacher statistics on loss and return rates (there is no data yet for 2001).

1 teacher who was counted as not returning was on maternity leave from their school

† 1 teacher who was counted as not returning was on secondment from their school

‡ 1 teacher who was counted as not returning was on sick-leave from their school

Thus, the great majority did return directly to school teaching after their Fellowships. The differences between the number who returned and the number who would be expected to return are not statistically significant.^[1]

Number who are still teaching

We found that 77% of former Teacher Fellows were teaching in schools at the time of the survey.

The percentages, broken down by year of Fellowship, and compared to the percentage who would be expected (from national trends) to remain teaching in schools are presented in Table 2 overleaf.

Table 2: % former Teacher Fellows school-teaching at time of survey, compared to national trends

Fellowship Year	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
% Fellows currently Teaching	73.3%	75.0%	88.2%	73.3%	62.5%	77.8%	72.2%	84.2%
% expected*	70.7%	73.2%	75.0%	76.8%	80.1%	84.1%	89.7%	–

* This is the % of state and state-integrated school teachers, teaching in the year indicated, who would be expected to be school teaching in 2002. Calculated from Ministry of Education teacher statistics on loss and return rates (there is no data yet for 2001).

Thus, for the years 1994-1997, Teacher Fellow data compares well with Ministry of Education statistics, although more recent Teacher Fellows appear to be less likely to be school-teaching at the time of the survey, compared to national trends. The differences between the percentages of ex-teacher Fellows who teach, and the percentages who would be expected to be teaching are not significant however^[2], except in the case of year 2000 Teacher Fellows, where $\alpha=0.001$.

At what point did the Teacher Fellows who left teaching leave?

Of the 40 ex-Teacher Fellows who are no longer teaching, 70% returned to school teaching after their Fellowships, but subsequently left.

There appears to be a trend that those who leave school teaching do not return. Only 2 of the 14 who left teaching directly after completion of their Fellowships subsequently returned to school teaching.

What Those Who Left Teaching are Doing

In total, 23% of 1994-2001 Teacher Fellows were not school-teaching at the time of the survey. But do the Teacher Fellows who leave teaching still contribute to education?

We found that that 17% were still contributing to the education sector as teachers of children outside the classroom, as tertiary or College of Education teachers, as developers of educational resources, or as advisers to schools or teachers. The breakdown of professions is:

- 2.9% – teaching children outside of school (at a zoo/museum/observatory/local government);
- 1.8% – teaching at a College of Education;

- 4.1% – tertiary teaching (at a polytechnic or university – not College of Education);
- 6.4% – developing educational resources (e.g. at Heurisko, ETITO, RSNZ);
- 1.8% – providing school/teacher advisory services;
- 1.2% – scientist/curator;
- 1.2% – other professions (sales rep, farmer);
- 1.8% – retired;
- 0.6% – ill;
- 1.2% – undertaking tertiary study;
- 0.6% – currently between jobs

Importantly, we find that a number of the Teacher Fellows who have left school-teaching have developed highly original schemes that educate many more students than would be possible within the traditional school setting. Some highlights are:

- A 1995 Teacher Fellow established the internationally acclaimed Linking Education with Antarctic Research NZ (LEARNZ) programme which has, over the years, taken several hundred thousand school pupils on virtual field trips;
- A 1998 Teacher Fellow joined the ElectroTechnology Industry Training Organisation and has developed the National Certificate in Electrotechnology qualification (NZQA registered) and the Bright Sparks competition for school pupils;
- A 1999 Teacher Fellow is now producing electronics kits to resource science and technology programmes in schools.
- A 2000 Teacher Fellow is now managing maths-online, an internet mathematics teaching programme which supports and assists thousands of teachers and pupils learning mathematics. This programme was this year acknowledged by winning the NZ Marketing Bizam Award for its category (*Marketing Magazine August 2002*)

Conclusions

In total, 94% of ex-Teacher Fellows are either still teaching in schools, or contributing in other ways to the education sector. Those who have left teaching have often taken part in, or initiated and directed highly creative, entrepreneurial enterprises that reach large numbers of students.

Three general factors can be expected to influence the number of Teacher Fellows that return to school teaching:

1. The environment within schools (which has been stressful for teachers in recent years);

2. The availability of jobs for teachers outside of schools;
3. Factors intrinsic to the Fellows. A highly motivated and resourceful person is more likely to make an application and to be successful in gaining a Fellowship, and such people may also be more likely to seize opportunities for change, and to run their new ventures successfully.

It remains to be seen whether the finding that more recent Teacher Fellows are less likely than expected to return to teaching is just a temporary aberration, or whether it is the beginning of a trend. Even if it is the beginning of a trend, this may not be a concern, given the finding that the great majority of those who leave teaching continue to contribute to the education sector, often in highly original and influential ways.

References

Jordan, S. and Galt, N. 1999 *The Science and Technology Teacher Fellowship Scheme: An Evaluation*; Education Department, University of Canterbury, New Zealand.

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[1] Using a binomial test (one-tail), α ranged from 0.186 to 0.581. α is the probability that the same sized random sample taken from the overall population, would have the characteristics of the Teacher Fellow population. Normally a score of $\alpha \leq 0.05$ is considered significant.

[2] For the years 1994-1999, using a binomial test (one-tail), α ranged from 0.08 to 0.565.