

After interviewing many people from all walks of life, reading numerous online articles, and dissecting peoples thoughts I have compiled a list of ideas and opinions. I have no answers or results more a compilation of thoughts. Some possible ideas and a few statements which may invoke discussion. There are a few quotes here that I totally disagree with, but it's someone's opinion and therefore needs consideration.

### **facts**

☞Of the 15,000 early childhood teachers, only 167 are male.

☞Latest Ministry of Education figures show just one in five teachers is male, compared with 42 per cent in 1956. Some primary schools are now staffed entirely by women.

☞Secondary schools have been the last bastions of men in the classroom, but now even their numbers are starting to dwindle. In the past two years the number of male secondary school teaching graduates dropped by about 8 per cent.

### **comments**

Former Auckland University Faculty of Education Dean Dr John Langley says men won't necessarily teach boys better than women, but they have an important social and emotional role to play with boys that women simply can't fulfill.

He says this function of male teachers is even more critical as more families are raised by single mothers. Some kids don't have much involvement with men at all until they come across a male teacher at secondary school.

Langley says educators need to start discussing what it means to be male these days, and what is acceptable male behaviour.

In a recent article he wrote: "When topics like this get identified many and various hackles get raised. This is an issue that needs to be discussed and debated and none of us, either male or female, should be afraid to do so. Frankly, it is dangerous for a society to ignore issues of importance because the dominant view at the time happens to see them as unfashionable."

"We are developing a society where no one is prepared to take risks. We are trying to sanitise children and we shouldn't be doing that."

Langley believes the most significant deterrent for men is the pay. "It's a no-brainer," he says. "We've got to up pay."

The maximum a teacher can earn unless he or she is a principal or deputy-principal is \$70,000.

Are there any other solutions to the male teacher shortage? Langley believes advertisements targeting men would help, as would scholarships and financial incentives and support - moves which would undoubtedly breach human rights laws, he says.

Langley is conscious of increasing male teacher representation in university publications, but there have been accusations of sexism, because images of male teachers or trainees were out of proportion to the number of men who were actually teaching or studying.

"We either carry on as we are and do nothing and accept the consequences, or we have to take some drastic steps."

And it's not just about increasing the number of men teachers. There needs to be a discussion around what sort of men we want to come out of our education system - "what is a good bloke these days?"

Male teachers are now not only rare, but may be afraid to behave like normal people because of possible accusations of abuse, or sexism, or perpetuating sexual stereotypes. Part of it is knowing what it means to be a decent male - what do males do? What relationships do they need to form? What do you say to people?"

"It is not just about achievement. It's about becoming a man and a good one and being proud of it."

"It's about having men to talk to, talking about men's stuff and being comfortable doing that."

"It's about seeing what you might become when you get older and admiring that."

"Most importantly, it is about knowing and understanding what real success is and striving for it."

### **is pay an issue**

☞One of the key requirements towards being a happy healthy human is to have a balance of masculinity and femininity in one's persona. Since these last couple of generations have shifted the emphasis of child rearing from parents to government employees said employees need to take responsibility of ensuring our children are exposed to masculinity. Males and female children that is. To bring back balance then simply copy the capitalism model. If you want something such as more male teachers. Pay more. I promise it will work. \$\$\$ talks.

☞I would like to see some assistance with tertiary fees. Having just completed a Graduate Diploma in Primary Teaching, I have been left with a debt of \$15,000 for fees and living expenses. As my wife works fulltime and earns a decent salary, we sit right on the cusp of being eligible for any tax relief or reasonable childcare assistance. This meant hardship for the family (of four) and extra stress on my wife as she struggled to support the whole family while I undertook full-time study. The offer of subsidised study as advertised by TeachNZ just makes my blood boil. Where is the support for regular, hard-working people like ourselves? I write to TeachNZ and they offered the kind of empty rhetoric we are used to hearing from politicians on a daily basis. The Government has repeatedly sent out the call for male teachers but what are they doing to support us and give us a helping hand to rise to the challenge? Very little. No wonder so few men want to apply. Middle income, middle-class (i.e. educated), New Zealanders seem to fall by the wayside in all of the Govt's schemes.

☞Simple supply and demand - pay them more.

☞It has already been mentioned, but obviously an increase of salary would make teaching a more attractive job.

~I think it's perfectly obvious! Raise teachers' pay by a large percentage so that more ambitious, clever, well qualified men will see it as a career worthy of their abilities and effort. Guarantee smaller class numbers and streamline or facilitate the paperwork and compliance required.

~The major problem is New Zealanders expect quality education without paying what it's worth. Many would glorify a man who makes a fortune in the parasitic foreign exchange dealer world than pay decent salaries to people who make a real contribution to our country.

~As a teacher, I've seen many wonderful men come into teaching, but they don't last, as they find they can make more money far more easily out of teaching. Ergo - pay more. Make the job more manageable. I know the general public sees the holidays and quotes "short hours" but that is simply not how it is. Teacher fatigue is a serious on-going problem. I've been a teacher for 25 years, and all my own children earn more than me.

~"It's a no-brainer," he says. "We've got to up pay."

~The maximum a teacher can earn unless he or she is a principal or deputy-principal is \$70,000.

~There are many reasons I guess and mostly always stated as lack of pay and the allegations of abuse concerns, but these I believe are only part of the issue.

~I'm an NZ male primary teacher who has quit teaching in NZ and gone to Japan. You asked, "How do we attract more male teachers?" Well here is my list of things that should be changed or done but probably won't: (1) stop being so PC mad. When a child needs a hug or comfort, male teachers shouldn't have to be scared of being accused of being a child molester! (2) go back to the basics of teaching, don't have an airy fairy curriculum with no substance. (3) pay them a good salary

~Increase pay to a point where vocational interest does not lose out to financial hardship. When are we going to start valuing our educators?

~As a 36-year-old male currently studying to become a primary teacher most people tell me I must be mad. I don't believe that the salary is the only consideration otherwise we would have a lack of teachers altogether (although that is likely to be the case very soon as the majority of currently practicing teachers are due to retire in the next 10-15 years). Schools are reluctant to take on beginning teachers. I believe less than 10% of university leavers stay in the profession as they simply cannot find schools to take them on. There is no incentive to study to become a teacher. Unless you can receive a Maori or rural scholarship, I have yet to meet anyone who is on either, you must rely on benefits and/or a student loan which can give you \$150 weekly that you have to pay back and is impossible to live on. Get a job I hear the taxpayers saying (and I was once one of you and said the same) but try finding an employer that is flexible enough to work around your university commitments and will let you have 4-8 weeks off each year for practicum, that employer does not exist. Why would anyone want to put yourself through 3 years of poverty with no hope of a job at the end of it?

~We have a dire shortage of all teachers at the moment because of poor pay and conditions. I don't see more quality teachers of either gender entering and remaining in teaching while the core issues are not addressed. Teaching is not respected in the community, the pay rates are low compared to people with similar qualifications and expectations.

~Pay teachers on ability rather than on longevity.

~I am a young professional (23) who looked at a teaching career after two years in the corporate world. The main barrier I faced was the low pay compared to what the corporate world was offering. Although I believe money is not the most important factor of a job, the level I could achieve in a teaching career was far inferior to the corporate industry. Raising teacher's pay and keeping it rising in line with inflation would definitely make teaching a more viable solution for males like myself. There will always be pay disparity between the two careers but the perceived emotional reward from teaching will go a long way to making up for that disparity. However, at the current level that gap is too great to bridge even with altruistic tendencies considered.

### male teachers at risk?

~I'm a recent school leaver who considered all areas of teaching when deciding on my next level of study/training. I know I'd be good at it - in fact if I were to go by the standard set out in this article for a "good bloke" I'd be brilliant. Just what the industry is looking for. It became immediately apparent, however, that while a shift to a practical subject-teaching role at a secondary school later in my career would be a viable and enjoyable option for me I would not touch primary school teaching with a barge pole. It's not that the job does not appeal. It's nothing to do with the salary - this profession was crossed off the list in the first round of eliminations. It's not because of the promise of mountains of paperwork either. It's because I would never be willing to risk my reputation and personal well-being to the extent that modern male primary school teachers do. These men are remarkably brave - one misunderstanding can ruin not only a career but a life. It's a volatile environment and just not worth the darn risk. At least to my mind. And if I am indeed representative of the target "good bloke" the industry needs, then this is an attitude shared.

~Are you serious! Why would any man want to be a teacher? Men aren't even allowed in the room alone with another kind. What kind of underlying message does that send to men?. Basically that they are all dirty predators who can't be trusted or respected. It's no different than in the past when blacks couldn't eat in the same restaurants as whites. It tells them that they are not equal or as valuable. If you want men to teach them give them the respect they deserve and stop treating them like dirty predators!

~Men are such easy targets as there is no consequence to falsely suggest, or accuse a man of sexual harassment, or in this case children tampering. There's no excuse for child molestation but by the same token it is not a crime to falsely suggest a man is one.

~There are many reasons I guess and mostly always stated as lack of pay and the allegations of abuse concerns, but these I believe are only part of the issue.

~I'm an NZ male primary teacher who has quit teaching in NZ and gone to Japan. You asked, "How do we attract more male teachers?" Well here is my list of things that should be changed or done but probably won't: (1) stop being so PC mad. When a child needs a hug or comfort, male teachers shouldn't have to be scared of being accused of being a child molester! (2) go back to the basics of teaching, don't have an airy fairy curriculum with no substance. (3) pay them a good salary

~After hearing that male teachers need to have another teacher in the room if they are alone with a student, I can see why the numbers are falling. Who needs that? This proves that some so called do gooders think that all males are sexual predators. When I went to school some of my best teachers were men.

~As a young professional male who is returning to New Zealand after teaching in Korea, I think others have already addressed the main issue, that being principally the stereotyping of male teachers as sexual predators of some form. This popular stigma is well entrenched and in this current environment it would only take a couple of false claims to ruin a male teacher's career. Even if these claims proved false they would impact his decision to continue in this current career. Principally due to this popular hostile environment, less men will enter teaching, and more and more young students will be deprived of male role models. Personally while I enjoy teaching, I am extremely hesitant to enter a teaching position in New Zealand.

~Get rid of this ridiculous image of all men as either predators or bumbling idiots! When did we become a nation of PC manhaters who view every male as a threat? Perhaps the media could indulge in less of the emotive trial by media of every male accused (not convicted, never mind exonerated!) of misconduct.

~As far as primary teaching goes, I would never suggest men become primary teachers as there is a bullying culture in teaching that leaves men working with children vulnerable to unfounded accusations.

~Not only that but there are some serious reasons to avoid being a male teacher in NZ. People tend to think that male teachers are interested in children sexually and that's a hard stereotype to ignore and even harder to live with if you are a legitimate guy actually keen to teach children and be a role model for them. I am a single man with no kids and I assume that if a man without kids applies to be a teacher there would be some underlying suspicions as to his motives. And hence people don't bother. There is too much threat of a parent or female teacher complaining

~It's already too late. Men are ill-advised to go into teaching. The risks of future fictitious claims against them are now real. The "wimen's movement" we have to thank for this. All men are predators aren't they?

~Try improving the level of security available to the few males left, otherwise you can expect the percentage to continue to decline.

### **summary statements / considerations**

#### **male teachers at risk**

~The perception of the community that male teachers are at risk was staggering for me. It just never crossed my mind that so many people think that teachers can be labelled predators. There is that perception though.

~As a young male teacher in a secondary school the prospect of being followed or stalked by girls, and or face accusations are possible and real. This happened to me when I was stalked by a special needs girl. You deal with it maturely and move on. BUT the risk is there.

~As a young male teacher in an intermediate school the hormonal imagination of impressionable girls (it only takes one) in your class / school can be daunting and difficult to deal with. This again is a very real issue.

~As a young male teacher in a primary school you must ask what touching of children is appropriate. For me a hug is OK but it depends on the circumstances. Where is the line?

~As an early childhood male teacher how comfortable do you feel about toileting issues with little girls and boys.

#### **pay issues**

~The big one here is paying to train. Teachers come out with a debt of 15 to 20k and they are going to go and work for the taxpayer in a public school system. 5% may work in private schools and other teaching options exist overseas but 95% of teachers will work for the Govt in NZ public schools. Trainees should be reimbursed their fees per annum for each year they spend in the public school system. If their fees were 20k then they would have their debt reduced by 20% per annum until their debt is gone.

~Trainees should be paid some sort of allowance while training to get them through.

~If you are paid to train and have your debt wiped will this increase the quality of applicant ?

~The maximum a teacher can earn unless he or she is a principal or deputy-principal is \$70,000. This is not good enough to entice the quality teacher in todays society.

~On pay issues should all these mickey mouse training providers be chucked out the door, they are grabbing fees from anyone who wants to be a teacher and ruining the quality of trainee. a way to stop this is to "Cap" the number of trainees selected nationwide or to "cap" the number of trainees who get paid to train. This might un-entice some of the lesser quality applicants.

#### **enticing the right men**

~Discussion needs to be had around role models.

~Young men need to see teaching as most important job. Convince younger men there is personal satisfaction in the job which you can't gain from any other profession. Society needs to change its perceptions too.

~We need to raise the male dimension in our primary schools to ensure we develop well rounded future men. We need men who are real participants in children's learning. Men who are unafraid to talk one to one with students and greet them in male ways and who are supported to positively challenge. Men who are observed by children, interacting positively and successfully with other men, and indeed with women. Men who can be themselves and show their sense of humour in a career that I believe is one of the most rewarding, exciting and fun careers one could have.

~School guidance counsellors just don't promote teaching - teachers don't promote teaching. To change the perception of teachers we as teachers need to drive the change.