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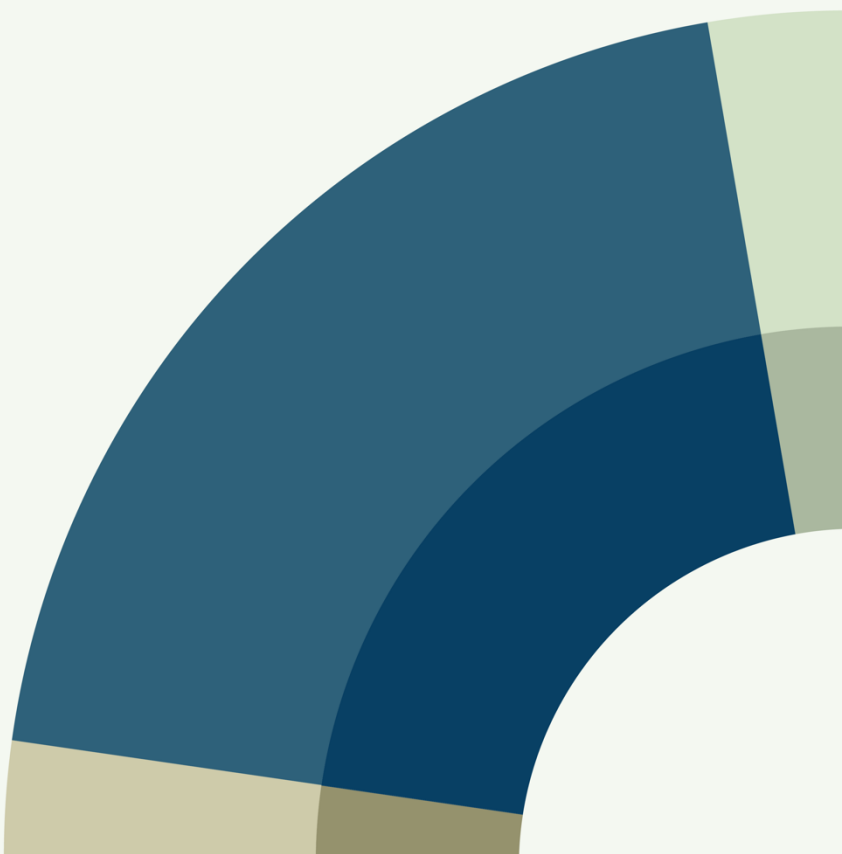
INTERNATIONAL COMPARATIVE REVIEW

ACCOUNTABILITY POLICY

Summary of country report (3 pages)

Authors: AI generated with human checking
November 2025 v1.0

New Zealand



Authorship. This AI generated summary has been created and checked by the CES team (see ces.partners/resources/methodologies). It is based on the original Country Reports created by EPPI. The author of the full report has not made final checks for accuracy.



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The EPPI Centre

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New Zealand – AI generated Accountability Policy summary

RQ1: Purposes, Values and Aims

The accountability system in New Zealand aims to ensure high-quality, equitable education through transparent governance, responsible use of public resources, and fostering continuous improvement. The stated aims are explicitly linked to broader governmental goals of enhancing economic growth and improving societal well-being. Core values include collaboration with and engagement of stakeholders, evidence-based decision-making, and independence and impartiality. Inclusion is prioritised through culturally responsive practices, promoting Māori success as Māori, and ensuring appropriate support and resources for disabled students. Recent shifts in priority emphasise increased evidence-based decision-making and a stronger, explicit focus on achieving equity for all learners. These shifts are evident when comparing the Education Review Office's (ERO) strategic intentions for 2020–2024 and 2023–2026.

RQ 2 – Levels, measures, and mechanisms of accountability

New Zealand's accountability structure operates at national, community, and school levels. At the national level, the Ministry of Education (MoE) oversees the entire system, establishing curriculum and standards. The Education Review Office (ERO) conducts external reviews and evaluations of schools and the system, reporting to the Minister of Education. The New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) manages the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) assessment system and qualifications framework. The Teaching Council sets professional standards for teachers and manages registration and certification. At the school level, Boards of Trustees (BoT) are accountable to the MoE for planning and reporting, to the ERO for external evaluations, and to parents and local communities for student achievement outcomes. Principals report monthly to the BoT and must make student achievement public. Teachers are accountable to the Teaching Council for meeting the Practising Teacher Criteria through the Professional Growth Cycle (PGC).

Accountability employs regulatory compliance, performance monitoring, and professional approaches. Key measures include the School Improvement Framework (SIF) and School Evaluation Indicators (SEI), which guide ERO reviews and school self-evaluation. NCEA results provide standardised achievement data, published nationally by NZQA and reported locally by schools. Boards of Trustees are required to submit annual updates of the school charter, provide variance analysis, report on student achievement, and maintain financial accountability. ERO reviews assess quality and publicly report findings, monitoring underperforming schools more frequently.

Mechanisms linking accountability to improvement involve setting standards (National Education and Learning Priorities, SIF, Teaching Council Standards) and building capacity.

The PGC replaced appraisal to focus on professional growth and reduce compliance. NZQA provides professional support through resources and workshops. Although parental choice is cast as a mechanism of accountability, external standardisation focused on achievement targets may constrain internal priorities. The ERO performs regulatory and reporting functions, using the SIF/SEI to evaluate schools and inform future improvement.

RQ 3 – Managing change and policy processes

The Ministry of Education (MoE) is the Government's lead advisor, implementing the Education and Training Act 2020. Policy and accountability reforms are set by Ministers or Cabinet after consulting MoE, with implementation carried out by agencies such as ERO, NZQA, and the Teaching Council. The 2020 Act aimed to be less prescriptive. Key reforms include replacing burdensome teacher appraisals with the Professional Growth Cycle (2021–2023), due to appraisal systems failing to improve quality. The Chief Review Officer of ERO implements accountability policy by administering reviews and publishing reports. Periodic review of accountability frameworks is not legislatively required.

RQ 4 – Assessments of effectiveness and evaluation

Evaluation of the accountability system is conducted by the Ministry of Education as part of its regular stewardship role, and the ERO conducts national evaluations, sometimes at the Minister's request. A formal Performance Improvement Framework (PIF) review of ERO was conducted in 2012 by lead reviewers from government agencies. Success metrics identified in that review included gaining higher public trust, increasing evaluation capacity for schools, and demonstrating effectiveness in achieving significant lifts in achievement, particularly for Māori and Pacific students. The PIF review led to operational changes, including ERO restructuring and shifting its approach toward complementary evaluation. Although unintended consequences are not formally monitored, they are indirectly captured through research and feedback, which may inform policy refinement.

RQ 5 – Historical, cultural, and political influences

The accountability system is significantly influenced by historic and political factors, primarily neoliberal globalisation, which reframed education for international competitiveness and efficiency starting in the late 1980s. The 1989 Tomorrow's Schools reforms moved governance toward a neoliberal, market-oriented structure. Accountability mechanisms often reflect colonial legacies, particularly meritocratic ideals that tend to overlook historical injustices and clash with Māori collectivist values (Mātauranga Māori). Accountability frameworks align with human capital theories, viewing learning as a quantifiable output through standardised tests ("testocratic" logics). This reliance on data and performance comparisons creates a governance model where competitive public assessments render teacher and student behaviour governable.

RQ 6 – Impact on outcomes and workforce

Research evidence is absent regarding the accountability system's impact on overall student performance, engagement, attendance, motivation, or teacher retention. However, accountability policies are linked to emotional strain; teachers reported feeling "very fragile" and "pretty anxious" due to pressure to raise student results. External inspections create significant workload demands, with one school leader spending nearly three weeks preparing data and presentations for the Education Review Office (ERO).

A major theme is the tension between prioritising external compliance, driven by Ministry demands, and internal educational priorities. Principals often viewed external evaluation as performative, dedicating substantial time to "packaging of data" to "present the best face of the school" rather than pursuing authentic improvement. Stakeholders criticised the inconsistent quality and expertise of external evaluation partners, noting that some lacked the depth of understanding required. Appraisal was frequently perceived as a "tick-box exercise" focused on compliance, described as "rushed and minimal," and lacking meaningful follow-up. Pressure to achieve standardised targets led to data distortion and "credit-grabbing behaviour," such as holding students near the NCEA Level 2 threshold to meet targets.

Timeline - recent accountability reforms

- **1989: Tomorrow's Schools reforms** aimed to improve student achievement and increase parental involvement. Established a decentralised, market-oriented system, devolving governance to Boards of Trustees.
- **2019: Removal of teacher performance appraisal** Appraisal systems were considered burdensome. Removed teacher performance appraisal as an accountability instrument.
- **2020: Education and Training Act 2020** aimed to be less prescriptive. Outlined new responsibilities for school boards, including Te Tiriti o Waitangi obligations.
- **2021–2023: Professional Growth Cycle (PGC):** Replace appraisals with a trust-based, holistic approach focused on professional growth and reduced workload.
- **2023: New planning and reporting regulations:** Replaced previous requirements like school charters and National Administration Guidelines.