

# Tops on Technology

## New Zealand is a world leader in Technology education

In 2008, at an international conference in Glasgow, Professor Marc de Vries of Delft University of Technology announced that New Zealand is currently in the best shape internationally in Technology education. So, why are we being recognised for our Technology curriculum?

On his first visit to New Zealand last year, Professor de Vries' comments subsequently led to a conversation with the Minister of Education, and a year later, he is still enthused about our developments in Technology education: "I meant what I said; New Zealand is to be congratulated on your outstanding performance!"

Having been involved in establishing a teacher education programme for Technology when Technology was made a compulsory subject in secondary schools in the Netherlands, his work and research has naturally led him to look at how Technology is provided in other countries. New Zealand, in his opinion, has the "unique opportunity to show to the rest of the world how a new school subject can be built up in a sophisticated way".

So what is it exactly that sets New Zealand apart from the rest of the world in this essential learning area? Professor de Vries believes that it is a sound combination of policy making, teacher education, educational research and good teaching practice which differentiates our curriculum from other countries'.

"What I like particularly about the way Technology education is being developed and practised in New Zealand is that it is a well-orchestrated effort in which different actions come together; drawing from the philosophy of Technology in order to get a sound conceptual basis, educational research, curriculum development and political support. This combination is rare worldwide, contrary to what one would perhaps expect."

It is this rare combination that has also caught the interest of others in the Technology education field in Sweden. Both New Zealand and Sweden introduced Technology as part of the general school system in the late 20th century, and over the past few years Technology education experts in New Zealand have developed a close working relationship with their Swedish counterparts.

For most of us, it is not really clear what study in Technology actually involves. When the first Technology curriculum came out in 1995 our perception of Technology was mostly linked to concepts like the internet and ICT products such as cell phones and computers. However, although ICT and digital communication do play a significant role in the learning area of Technology, it offers much more. In New Zealand schools today Technology is offered in the areas of Materials, ICT, Electronics, and Food Technology.

The current curriculum aims to develop a broad technological literacy which equips students with skills and knowledge essential to all kinds of work and university study, and most importantly it enables students to participate confidently in a technological society and economy.

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Phil O'Reilly, Chief Executive of Business NZ

With the continual development of Technology education it is becoming increasingly recognised on a national level as well as by a growing number of local businesses and industries which appreciate the skills and knowledge that Technology develops in its students.

Phil O'Reilly, Chief Executive of Business NZ, recognises the benefits and relevance of Technology to local businesses.

"We want a more competitive economy fuelled by innovative Kiwi companies, and Technology education is a big part of getting that technology boost. I'd like to see those young people thinking about studying perhaps law, accounting or arts subjects to consider the benefits of STEM skills – Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths. These are the subject areas with the big payoff for enterprise."

Dr Andrew Cleland, Chief Executive of the Institution of Professional Engineers New Zealand, believes that Technology education is important in developing a high level of technological literacy, knowledge and expertise.

"The current Technology curriculum can provide the foundation to develop technology graduates vital to our future, and to ensure that every New Zealander can thrive in an increasingly technologically engaged society."

Although study in Technology can provide students with clear career paths to futures in a range of careers, getting there requires a little more hard work and tertiary education still plays an integral part in gaining skills, qualifications and of course getting that dream job. However, getting ahead in the game is always good, especially in our current economic climate.



From the top:

Engineer Dharendra Singh works with Year 5/6 students on designing a fitness course for the Papatoetoe Central Primary School playground.

Logan Glasson, a Year 8 at Westburn School, Christchurch, working with DoC staff, designed and built a remote stoat trap monitor to save conservationists wasting time checking traps.

Wellington High School students each designed and built a state-of-the-art lighting unit for the restaurant of a local nightclub.

According to Professor Bob Hodgson, former director of the School of Engineering at Massey University, taking Technology at secondary level can provide students with that head start.

"The Technology curriculum has now developed to a level that I strongly recommend it as a subject, both to students who have an interest in making a career in engineering, technology, or science, and generally as a means of better understanding the modern world."

Over the past few years, Technology education in New Zealand has gained momentum. In 2006, it was added to the 'approved subjects' list for university entrance and has since gained both national and international recognition as an essential learning area which seeks to empower and enable our children to be informed members of our ever-changing technological society.

To find out more about Technology education visit [www.techlink.org.nz](http://www.techlink.org.nz).