

# Where to next for lifelong learning in Aotearoa New Zealand

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# Purpose

Origins: What happened to the term and practice of lifelong learning?

Is the policy focus on front-end education investment a barrier to lifelong learning?

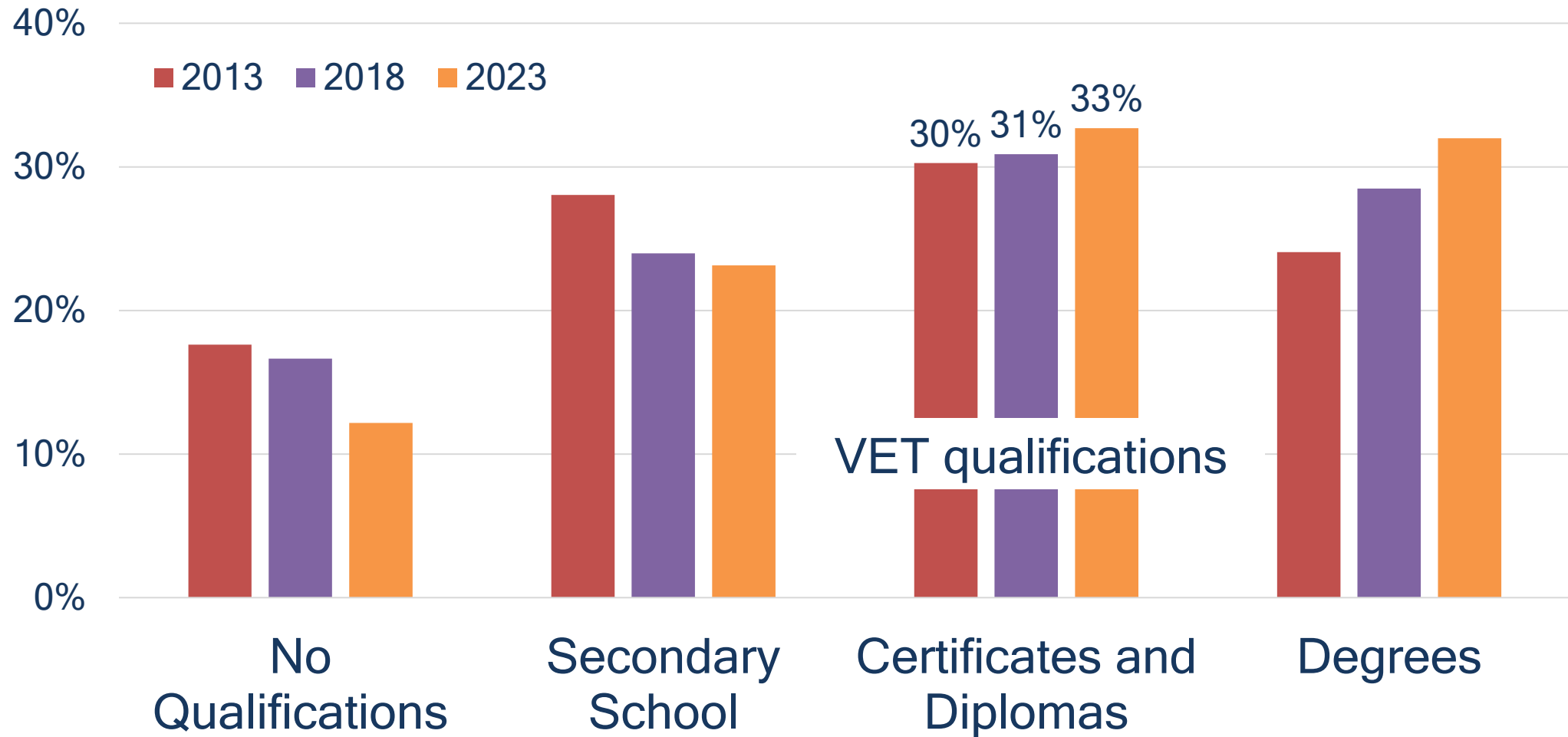
# Lifelong learning definition

UNESCO concept: Orientation to learn over the lifetime

Acknowledgement of the portfolio career need to retrain/upskill

Policy drivers: Social and economic benefits of human flourishing and higher skills

# Highest qualification – usually resident population (NZ Census)



*Note.* Proportion of population response, aged 15 years and over, for highest qualification in the census (Stats NZ, 2025)

# Lifelong education: Origins

1970s

Dealing with social change

Economic downturn

Second/third-chance adult learning

# The 1990s: New Model Access and Equity

1/3 of workers had no qualifications – crisis

International competitiveness

Market model

Industry training increased for workers

Loans, EFTS, skills training tied to LMO

# 2000s pivot to 'front-end'

21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills and NCEA

Modern Apprenticeships 18-25 year older

State support for short qualifications over degrees

Policy emphasis and funding redirected toward younger learners, still funded older workers



# 2010s: Tightening eligibility & incentives

Student Allowance: 65+ ineligible from 2014

Student Loan: 55+ = fees-only (no living/course-related costs)

Later-life transitions harder to fund

Changes to ACE and literacy (LLN) policies

# Lifelong learning: Still needed?

COVID-19 and rapid tech change

Second/third-chance need rising

Capacity gap in current policy levers

Literacy issues identified amongst school age student before COVID-19

Precarious work, portfolio careers remain

# Front-end vs Balanced systems

Central skills agency linking jobs ↔ skills:  
connected data (job trends, learners, workforce, immigration),  
coordination matters (e.g. - Jobs and Skills Australia, Skills  
Development Scotland, Canada's Future Skills Centre)

Implication: The need to design policy for continuous  
upskilling and transitions remains

# Implications of a youth-tilted system

Productivity: under-utilised mid/late-career capability

Inclusion: inequities compound over the life-course

Firms (esp. SMEs): persistent mismatches and shortages

# Solutions

Restore genuine lifelong access (revisit 55+/65+ settings)

Create a skills-jobs coordination function

Advocate for decent work that embeds learning

Restore funding for ACE

Increase funding to LLN in the community and workplace

# Thanks for listening - questions?

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