

OMEP Aotearoa submission to the Productivity Commission's *Draft Measuring and Improving State Productivity*, December 2017

OMEP Background - who we are:

The World Organisation for Early Childhood Education (OMEP) is an international, interdisciplinary, non-governmental organisation (NGO) founded in 1948 in Prague, to benefit children under the age of 8 years throughout the world. OMEP is represented in more than 70 countries. It is affiliated to the United Nations (UN), working collaboratively with UNICEF, UNESCO and the Council of Europe.

OMEP Aotearoa New Zealand (OMEP Aotearoa) has chapters in Auckland, Waikato, Wellington, Canterbury and Otago). Our members are early childhood educators, initial teaching educators, professional development contractors, students and others interested in the early years. OMEP Aotearoa seeks to promote research and the dissemination of knowledge about quality early childhood education. It acts as an advocate for children, their rights and their best interests. The aims of OMEP Aotearoa include fostering wellbeing and the optimum development of every child; promotion of quality early childhood education in all its forms; promotion of a bicultural approach to the provision of ECE; furthering the development of multicultural values and practices in ECE; support for research; and fostering of international communication and cooperation.

We want to acknowledge the contribution made by one of our national executive members, dr. Margaret Stuart, to this submission.

Draft Report -Summary of our concerns:

a) Your Education Backgrounder, *Productivity measurement case study: early childhood education*

It is with the above aims in mind that we make this submission on your *Draft Report*. We are deeply disturbed by the education illustrations that you refer to, drawn from your backgrounder *Productivity measurement case study: early childhood education* by Nicholas Green (November 2017/05). The author seems to be poorly informed about the context of education and

care of young children. We are particularly alarmed by the intention to possibly measure education as input and outputs.

We begin by quoting an international resistance to such measures penned in New Zealand at the *Reconceptualizing Early Childhood Conference*, Taupo, 2016 on behalf of international participants and members¹.

There is ample evidence of the low reliability and validity of standardized tests of children, especially in contexts of large-scale comparison (Meisels, 2004, 2006; Meisels & Atkins-Burnett, 2006; Madaus & Clarke, 2001; Raudenbush, 2005). Promoting and rolling out standardised assessment and comparison approaches regardless of overwhelming evidence that they cannot achieve their stated goals raises the question whether political and corporate profit interests are being privileged over valid research, children's rights and meaningful evaluation....²

We are heartened, however, by the speech (February 13, 2018) to your Commission by Finance Minister Grant Robertson that success as a country includes seeking a social dividend, rather than purely gross domestic product measures and more being done in each hour. He emphasised '[b]y placing wellbeing at the heart of what we do, we will be able to measure the extent to which our policies and investments are making real improvements to peoples' lives.' He further (15 February) referred to the **Living Standards Framework** and how it will support

- 'the health of the four capitals – natural, human, social, and physical/financial - and whether or not they are growing and likely to be sustained.
- Social and demographic inequalities in wellbeing, how the flow of current benefits affects long-term outcomes.
- How resource allocation decisions affect capital to improve current or long-term wellbeing³.

¹ Following publication of the Moss et al. article and efforts to have the OECD respond to the four proposals, the IELS issue subsequently expanded to another venue for critique and action, being raised at the Reconceptualizing Early Childhood Education (RECE) conference that took place in Aotearoa/New Zealand October 30 – Nov. 3, 2016. The presentations and discussions taking place within the RECE were complemented by debates and discussions within other Aotearoa/New Zealand organizations, including the New Zealand Association for Research in Education (NZARE). In one of two related motions the NZARE approved: "That members of the NZARE call on the New Zealand Government to not participate in the OECD IELS and urge Government instead to continue the work already begun with the MOE early Childhood Research Policy Forum, designed to produce appropriate outcome measures for early childhood education linked to the principles and strands of Te Whariki." (Proposed: Alex Gunn, Seconded: Linda Mitchell, 2016). Alan Pence, (2016). Baby PISA: Dangers that can Arise when Foundations Shift Alan Pence: A Call and Commentary. *Winter/Hiver 2016 54 Vol. 41 No. 3 Journal Of Childhood Studies* .

² Mathias Urban & Beth Blue Swadener on behalf of Reconceptualising Early Childhood Education – www.receinternational.org. (2016) *Democratic accountability and contextualised systemic evaluation: A comment on the OECD initiative to launch an International Early Learning Study (IELS)*. This was later published as Urban M and Swadener BB (2016) Democratic accountability and contextualised systemic evaluation. *International Critical Childhood Policy Studies* 5(1): 6–18..

³ Speech: Robertson - Institute of Public Administration Thursday, 15 February 2018, 3:47
[pmhttp://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/PA1802/S00140/speech-robertson-institute-of-public-administration.htm](http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/PA1802/S00140/speech-robertson-institute-of-public-administration.htm)

Green's uses of ECE curriculum, *Te Whāriki* (2017)

Such a view (LSF) is far from the measurement your *Draft* recommends. Young children are at formative periods of their lives, where they are learning to move, talk, think, relate, explore and create. Teachers are trained to use the New Zealand early childhood curriculum *Te Whāriki* (2017) in innovative ways, where belonging, contributing, communicating, negotiating and exploring are central to the young developing child. Strands are aspirational, rather than prescriptive goals. Development can be measured; education cannot. *Te Whāriki* is a nonprescriptive curriculum, where the 'how of teaching' is set out in the principles. The strands set out the possibilities of 'what children learn'. Nowhere is it suggested that an educational curriculum (*Te Whāriki*) could/should be the basis of productivity measurement. Such would be the very worst technocratic of the 'form and function' of education debate where the measurement of development seeks to drive education through the curriculum.

Quality EC education inevitably results in development but we believe that development can only be reported upon (assessment/stories of children's learning) but not controlled and measured. We refer you to *Learning Stories Constructing Learner Identities in Early Education* (2012)⁴

Your case study (Green, 2017) uses *Outcomes of early childhood education: Literature review* (Mitchell, Wylie & Carr, 2008). We argue that the first author, Linda Mitchell has long resisted such productivity mindsets, for example in *Teachers, parents, and whānau working together in early childhood education* (2006)⁵, as have other ECE academics. We note that Green refers to children's 'dispositions' in his case study, but later does not seem to be taking this holistic concept into account.

⁴ Margaret Carr & Wendy Lee, (2012). *Learning Stories Constructing Learner Identities in Early Education* London: Sage, which was shortlisted for the 2013 Nursery World Awards. See also 'Document of Learning Stories', a paper presented at the *Dialogue and Documentation: Sharing our Understanding of Children's Learning and Developing a Rich Early Years Provision*. Pen Green. Corby, United Kingdom.

⁵ Linda Mitchell, with Maggie Haggerty, Viv Hampton, and Ann Pairman (2006). *Teachers, parents, and whānau working together in early childhood education* New Zealand Council For Educational Research Te Rūnanga O Aotearoa Mō Te Rangahau I Te Mātauranga Wellington.; See too: Mitchell, L. (2017). Discourses of economic investment and child vulnerability in early childhood education. *Waikato Journal of Education*, 22(1), 25-35. doi:10.15663/wje.v22i1.552; Mitchell, L., & Rameka, L. (2016). Analysing belonging in the Australian and NZ ECE curriculum documents. In *NZARE Annual and AGM The Politics of Learning*. Conference held at Victoria University Wellington, New Zealand; White, J., Harrison, L., Mitchell, L., Wang, A., Peter, M., & Redder, B. (2016). Liberating longitudinal data sets for educational purposes: A GUINZ-LSAC investigation for the early years. In *NZARE Annual Conference 2016: The politics of learning*. Conference held at Victoria University, Wellington, New Zealand; Carr, M., Mitchell, L., & Rameka, L. (2016). Some thoughts about the value of an OECD international assessment framework for early childhood services in Aotearoa New Zealand. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 17(4), 450-454. doi:10.1177/1463949116680705. Many of these publications have been co-authored by OMEP Aotearoa members.

OECD International Early Learning and Child Well-being Study (IELS).

Green notes that Ministry of Education officials have told him that New Zealand is not currently involved in the OECD International Early Learning and Child Well-being Study (IELS). He suggests that New Zealand could join the IELS project at a later stage. We are particularly anxious about his comments (p.16) as a number of international and national academics recently have expressed grave concerns about IELS. There has been a concerted reaction to the OECD's suggestion of such assessments.⁶ For example, in 2017 OMEP executive members wrote⁷ about their concern in *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood* 17(3). More recently Moss and Urban have set out the international response in an article:

No country had publicly committed to participate, although we assume that the OECD is confident that it will receive the necessary support, else it would not have appointed an international contractor. We also know that some countries have said they will not participate, including Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Norway and Sweden. In the case of Germany, to give just one example, the government's decision not to participate in the IELS was influenced by a statement written by a coalition of national organisations that includes service providers, trade unions, parents' organisations and researchers; this brings together critical arguments against Germany's participation in the IELS, building on the lack of recognition of children's rights, diversity and sociocultural contextualisation of early childhood practices in the OECD approach (Urban and Swadener, 2016)⁸.

OMEP Aotearoa National Executive members Lia de Vocht, Glynne Mackey & Diti Hill (2017)⁹ again wrote in the New Zealand journal *Early Education*; voicing concerns that IELS may lead to enhanced competition between public, private and corporately owned ECE services in this country, as the results may be used inappropriately. The authors of *PISA for 5 year olds* (de Vocht, Mackey & Hill, 2017) note that academics such as Noddings; as well as Carr, Mitchell

⁶ See Moss P, Dahlberg G, Grieshaber S, et al. (2016) The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's International Early Learning Study: Opening for debate and contestation. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood* 17(3): 343–351. ; Carr M, Mitchell L and Rameka L (2016) Some thoughts about the value of an OECD international assessment framework for early childhood services in Aotearoa New Zealand. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood* 17(4): 450–454.

⁷ Glynne Mackey, Diti Hill, Lia De Vocht on behalf of OMEP Aotearoa (2016), Response to the colloquium 'The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's International Early Learning Study: Opening for debate and contestation', by Peter Moss, Gunilla Dahlberg, Susan Grieshaber, Susanna Mantovani, Helen May, Alan Pence, Sylvie Rayna, Beth Blue Swadener and Michel Vandebroek, *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood* 17(3) First Published December 1, 2016; pp. 447–449

⁸ Moss, P. & Urban, M. (2017). *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, Vol. 18(2) 250–258

⁹ de Vocht, Lia; Mackey, Glynne & Hill, Diti. 'PISA' for five year olds? A position paper on OECD plans for a global testing tool [online]. *Early Education*, Vol. 61, Autumn/Winter 2017: 27-28

and Rameka believe the greatest danger in such an instrument is ‘a one-world view’. Such a view puts at risk rich socio-cultural perspectives such as those assessments developed for use with *Te Whāriki*.

OMEP Aotearoa wishes to make the following comments on your *Draft Report*:

1. Public Service should position the public good, not the individual user, nor the minister, as its 'client'¹⁰. It should serve the wider public interest, without fear, favour, or narrow interpretations of 'value' and 'efficiency'. We are in direct opposition to your statements positioning the public as ‘clients’ and favouring ‘pricing mechanisms’ of any ‘social markets’. We are concerned at the use of economic terminology that situates the ‘competing firm’ at the centre of the education/health/ social development marketplace. Outcomes here, as are evident over the last thirty years of neo-liberal economics, is middle-class- and interest-capture of education/health and social development.

We draw the Commission’s attention to the Twenty-ninth session of the United Nations Human Rights Council, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to education, Kishore Singh Protecting the right to education against commercialization*, Agenda item 3. Singh concludes

‘Provision of education as the State’s responsibility: Regulatory framework centred on education as a public good: Education is a fundamental human right and a core obligation of States...However, education as a public function of States is being eroded by market-driven approaches and the rapid growth of private providers, with scant control by public authorities. ...

112. Education benefits both the individual and the society and must be preserved as a public good; social interest in education must be protected against its commercialization. ...
113. Guided by principles of social justice and equity, as well as human rights law, regulating private providers is essential to mitigate the potentially deleterious and negative effects on students, education systems and societies. In this, Governments can be inspired by numerous decisions by courts and emerging jurisprudence.
115. The State remains primarily responsible for fulfilling the right to education on account of its international legal obligations. ... The provision of basic education free of cost is not only a core obligation of the State, it is also a moral imperative. The

¹⁰ *Historic UN resolution urges States to regulate education providers and support public education*

Press release, 11th July 2016 In an unprecedented move, the resolution ... urges States to “recogniz[e] the significant importance of investment in public education to the maximum of available resources” and to “increase and improve domestic and external financing for education” so as to “contribute to education as a public good”.

State must discharge its responsibility as guarantor and regulator of education as a fundamental human right of every child.

2. The Productivity Commission should have regard to key historical facts about what ECE actually means in the broader context of EC and Aotearoa. Early Childhood Education prior to the Education Act 1989, as supported by *Education to be More and Before Five* was primarily viewed as an adjunct to the home, if not for the working classes, at least for the comfortable middle-class model of mother in the home¹¹. Several discourses, women's right to work, the desire of the state to compete in an open global market, without the tariffs and restrictions of a closed economy, and research demonstrating that early education supported cognitive and social development came together.

3. The Education Act 1989 supported a so-called open playing field where, early childhood and tertiary education, as 'firms' could compete for student-funded places in an education market. It was through this Act, and accompanying regulations and amendments that 'choice' and 'self-interest' entered policy. The Public Finance Act of 1989 brought the uses of terms such as contracted 'outcomes' to the fore.

Nesta Devine (2017) has written setting out the emergence of 'the two major theoretical streams of neo-liberalism: 'Public Choice Theory' and 'Human Capital Theory'', which she describes as being a 'creed rather than a logic'.¹² After setting out and discussing the emergence of these theories in the New Zealand context, she concludes:

'Clearly, neo-classical economics and its accompanying political theories are no longer fit for purpose. But simply decrying them will not replace them. However, their inadequacies can point the way for more adequate responses to contemporary issues.

If the argument that education is predominantly 'for' the economy no longer holds, as claimed by so many education officials and politicians, then we have to re-examine the relationship of the economy and education. We might well develop a consciousness that the benefits of the economy should be directed towards the people, e.g. through education, rather than educating people for the economy...

¹¹ See Helen May and her histories of early years education including; *Discovery of early childhood* (1997, 2013, NZCER Press); *Politics in the playground* (NZCER and BWB, 1991, University of Otago Press 2009); *School Beginnings* (NZCER 2005); 'I am five and I go to school' (University of Otago Press, 2011); and *People, places and plays in the 'child gardens' of Dunedin* (2014, Dunedin Kindergartens).

¹² Devine, (2017) Aims of Education in a post-neoliberal context. *Knowledge Cultures* 5(6), ISSN 2327-5731, eISSN 2375-6527. doi:10.22381/KC5620177

Generosity and altruism have to find a place in our concepts of ourselves again, and not be limited to characteristics of millionaires ‘donating’ portions of unspeakably large fortunes to a different ‘bunch’ of the poor to those who originally provided the money.

The ontological implications of the damage inflicted on our small planet by unbridled greed should cause us to think again about ‘humanism’ as the guiding principle and virtue of education. The post-neo-liberal world may only be possible if we learn to think in a post-human fashion, granting other species the right to co-existence’.

4. Moss & Urban (2017)¹³ note their meeting with OECD officials to discuss the IELS,

‘we were asked if our criticisms of the IELS reflected an outright rejection of a quantitative approach. That is not so. We believe that there is a time and a place for quantitative methods, and have indeed used them ourselves; there are many things that need counting. But we would add an important qualification: the findings produced by quantitative methods must always be treated critically and subjected to careful questioning and interpretation. Numbers, by themselves, tell us little, yet once set into a table, they readily acquire totemic status, being treated as if they were a true representation of reality. This is always the danger of projects such as PISA and the IELS – that what might be a useful source of documentation, to be carefully discussed and critically reflected upon alongside other forms of documentation, is reduced to a crude and unexamined tool of management. There are limits, also, to what quantitative methods can provide insight into; for example, we are not convinced that they can give sufficient insight into context and culture, the ‘web of inherited ideas and values, habits and customs, institutions and world views, that make one country distinct from another’, to which Alexander refers. Our overriding concern, therefore, remains that the IELS will end up, in the words of Loris Malaguzzi, as ‘a ridiculous simplification of knowledge, and a robbing of meaning from individual histories’ (cited in Cagliari et al., 2016: 378)’.

OMEPA Aotearoa hopes that any reconfigured responsibilities for the Productivity Commission will focus on the values of societal well-being, careful husbandry of the social, economic and natural environments, and adoption of more nuanced economic discourses such as those of Amartya Sen and Thomas Picketty.

We were interested to look at your purpose and values as noted on your website, and members made the following comments:

1. Your stated purpose is that of ‘supporting the overall well-being of New Zealanders, having regard to a wide range of communities of interest and population groups in New Zealand society’¹⁴. We found it interesting that the only community you had consulted with were Ministry of Education officials. Your vision is stated as aspiring to work ‘collaborative ... internally and externally; and a high level of professionalism and integrity’.

¹³ Moss & Urban 2017 *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, Vol. 18(2) 250–258

¹⁴ New Zealand Productivity Commission Act, 2010

We would like to make the point that there is a range of research into IELS, including that cited, by OMEP National Executive members. Given the diversity and complexity of the ECE community, consultation within the field may have given better information. Your review of the literature is very limited, and it does not take any of the recent research related to measuring children's learning into account.

2. You state that your Commission seeks 'wellbeing options for New Zealanders, whether economic, social, environmental and cultural' however, your measures are solely economic. Yet you miss the rich cultural, social and environmental values of tangata whenua, and offer little to tangata tiriti.¹⁵

Pihama (2017) at NZARE Conference noted

'individualism [i]s encapsulated in a schooling system driven by national standards, market driven privatisation, systemic racism and hierarchies of knowledge, languages and achievement that privilege some individuals over others. ...the privatised individual that seeks only self gain and does not contribute to the wider agenda of collective wellbeing'

We refer you to the 21 February 2018 release of the Labour Coalition Government's *Education portfolio work programme: Purpose, objective and overview*¹⁶.

Other considerations: Public service as response to public concerns

While this submission is confined to the domains of which we have specialist knowledge, we draw your attention to the introductory and concluding chapters of the recently released book *Social Investment- A New Zealand policy experiment* (Boston & Gill, 2018).

¹⁵ E.g. Pihama, L., (2017). Colonisation, Neoliberalism, Māori Education and the Illusion of Treaty Partnership. NZARE Conference, Hamilton. <http://www.nzare.org.nz/portals/306/images/Files/nzare-keynote-2018-Final-Pihama.pdf>. "Treaties are not made to be settled, Treaties are made to be honoured." The essence of making a difference within education for Māori lies in the need for Te Tiriti o Waitangi to be honoured. It is only then that the collective dream and vision for this country, for current and future generations can be realised'

¹⁶ <http://www.education.govt.nz/assets/Documents/Ministry/Information-releases/R-Education-Portfolio-Work-Programme-Purpose-Objectives-and-Overview.pdf>

Your briefing from Minister Joyce directed your report to cover

- how to measure efficiency/productivity in public services, taking into consideration measurement issues and how imperfect measures are most appropriately and usefully employed.
- the appropriate role of efficiency/productivity measures in public sector performance frameworks and the capability and systems that are needed to better measure, understand and improve productivity.

However, your *Draft* noted that there has been little buy-in from ministers, and that some ministries are proving more efficient than others. Your own commissioner, Graham Scott concludes (2018, p.477-97) that the measurement, using analytics and ‘big data’ has been problematic. Silos, Scott notes, are efficient ways to direct services and outcomes from ministers to ministries. Working effectively across ministries may be required in the future, but may not always be unproblematic.

Scott also notes ‘gravitational pull of the ministries’ which capture resources. He continues ‘there are limits to what can reasonably be expected by way of collaboration between ministries in the delivery of integrated, tailored services contracts’. Talking about the Canterbury DHB Scott suggests ‘success requires funder behaviours quite different from existing behaviours seen in many micro-managed funding contracts’. We suggest that the behaviours you seek to streamline in your *Draft Report*, may be the merely those that are easier to quantify.¹⁷ Measuring the cost-effectiveness and micro- and meso effects of pharmaceuticals, we suggest, is quantifiably easier than measuring knowledge, skills and attitude acquired through education and their long-term application to life and its complexities.

Warning about the scope and limits of Integrated Data Infrastructure (IDI), Scott suggests the ‘need for refined policies from which decisions about what goes into the IDI, and what should not, can be made. The situation is not at all clear at present and very fluid. Big questions remain to be answered. Generally, the state should have rights to the information that it needs for its legitimate functions’. Scott discusses the ethical and privacy issues pertaining to citizens under, for example, the Statistics Act. ‘The Government

¹⁷ Boston, Jonathan. *Social Investment: A New Zealand Policy Experiment* (Kindle Locations 10803-10804). Bridget Williams Books. Kindle Edition.; Kindle Locations 10818-10819

Statistician takes the confidentiality of this information very seriously. It is anonymised and controlled to protect confidentiality. Access to the IDI is carefully controlled with a preference for public-interest researchers'¹⁸. Efficiencies as plotted by inputs, outcomes and economic measures, may cut across the ethical, philosophical as well as the qualitative tasks required within the public services.

David Hanna (2018, pp 465-475) examines underlying assumptions and ministries' expectations which construct certain populations. For example, social development clients are constructed as 'needy/vulnerable' passive populations, with mechanical responses rather than being active agents (with rights, operating in an organic, living system). Positive changes, he continues, are defined as the success of the policy interventions, and its 'outcomes'. Hanna notes that increased focus on outcomes puts pressures on all involved in social services.

In the same vein as Mitchell, Carr and Rameka (2016) and de Vocht, Mackey and Hill (2017), Hanna (2018) examines the limitations of 'evidence- based policy', which he sees as often tightly controlled and where the problem fits the purpose of the intervention, away from any 'wicked problems'. He talks about policy hype, where '[a]ggregated data is presented in a manner to support the **impression** of positive change' (our emphasis). He concludes there 'is a growing body of science built on an understanding of humans as living systems ...[and] due to the complexity of human systems our ability to measure causal links between discrete interventions is not yet developed'. He suggests an organisational culture that grows trust and respect. We think this would be an excellent culture to grow in the state sector as they seek genuine, relational engagements with the public.

As noted, OMEP Aotearoa members include academics published in a range of international journals and publishing houses. We are happy to support your staff in a greater understanding of our discipline as qualitative, innovative and focused on the needs of communities.

¹⁸ Boston, Jonathan. Social Investment: A New Zealand Policy Experiment (Kindle Locations (Kindle Locations 10858-10860; 10861-10863). Bridget Williams Books. Kindle Edition.

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission on *Draft Measuring and Improving State Productivity*, (December 2017).

Signed

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lia de Vocht". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "L".

Lia de Vocht (PhD)

National President

OMEP Aotearoa
