

Submission on: Educating New Zealand's Future Workforce

To: The New Zealand Productivity Commission

Introduction

1. NZEI Te Riu Roa (NZEI) is the professional organisation and union that represents the interests and issues of its 49,000 members. Our members are employed as teachers and leaders in the early childhood education and primary sectors (including Kura Kaupapa Māori and Wharekura), support staff in the early childhood, primary, intermediate and secondary education sectors, school advisers employed by universities, and Learning Support staff employed by the Ministry of Education.
2. The main objective of NZEI Te Riu Roa is to advance the cause of quality public education generally while upholding and maintaining the just claims of its members individually and collectively.
3. NZEI Te Riu Roa is one of the largest unions and professional bodies in Aotearoa and has a long history of playing a positive role in the education sector and on wider social issues affecting our members and the tamariki and whānau they serve.

General Comments

4. The aim of the report 4 - Educating New Zealand's future workforce: Technological change and the future of work is to answer four key questions:
 - How well does the NZ education system prepare people for future uncertainty?
 - Does the national curriculum help or hinder?
 - How well does the system promote flexibility and adaptability in students?
 - Are there attributes of the system that close off student options too early?

The report as it stands, while answering the question about attributes of the system that close off student options too early, fails to convincingly answer the other three key questions.

5. NZEI Te Riu Roa agrees that the current system reforms could lead to young people being better prepared for the future of work but notes that the purpose of education is broader than to produce workers.
6. The focus of early childhood education (ECE) and primary schooling is about building key competencies and capabilities that are required for good citizenship, healthy relationships and self-expression and the fulfilment of potential, not just building marketable employee skills.
7. This means that building more knowledge and consensus around the curricula amongst the public and policy makers, as well as teachers, would be useful. This would ensure a shared understanding of the importance of dispositions to learn and key competencies.
8. The work already begun by the current government on a shared vision for education must continue. The education system needs stability and cannot lurch back into a regressive GERM (global education reform movement) agenda, (including standardised learning and national standards) if there is a change of government. If this were to occur, it would be that New Zealand would see a more innovative or collaborative system, better implementation of curricula or innovation or better outcomes for learners.
9. The Institute strongly supports the New Zealand Productivity Commission's call for more teaching grounded in the key competencies found in the New Zealand Curriculum and more and better PLD to improve implementation. Sharing good practice in the use of both national and localised curricula is welcomed and should include reference to Te Whāriki and Te Marautanga o Aotearoa not just national curriculum.
10. While the recommendation about professional learning and development (PLD) is welcomed by NZEI Te Riu Roa, the focus of this PLD appears to be overly focused on system and structural changes rather than on curriculum and pedagogy. Furthermore, little mention is made of how teachers might encourage and develop resilience and self-management in learners.
11. Given the number of young people aged under 18, who identify as Māori or Pasifika, the report does little to address issues for these young people. Building capability and capacity

in educators to ensure they can support diverse students' language, culture and identity needs to be part of addressing this.

12. Digital inclusion is fundamentally an issue of inequity in economic and social capital. It needs a system level response not just a response from individual schools. NZEI Te Riu Roa has concerns about the potential commodification of learning in this space and the further introduction of privatisation despite a government focus on a quality public education system.
13. As more and more work takes place remotely, 24/7 or flexibly, the role of services and schools in building community and "third spaces" shouldn't be ignored. They are in many cases the last of state agencies physically in every town and small community and are important community assets for people in work, out of formal work or "in between" employment, as well as the children they serve. If the future of work creates more atomised or isolated work, then schools and services may have an even more important role in bringing people together.
14. The value of high quality ECE services cannot be overstated. However, if the nature and conditions of work in future, and the settings for ECE, parental leave and sustainable family incomes is not more child-friendly than our current settings, it is unlikely that we will see improved outcomes for our children or better prepared workforces.

Oral Submission

15. We welcome any occasion to speak to the New Zealand Productivity Commission about this submission.



Paul Goulter
National Secretary | Korimako Tangiata
February 2020