



**UNICEF NZ Submission on the Independent
Taskforce report: Tomorrow's School Review-
Our Schooling Futures, Stronger Together –
Whiria Ngā Kura Tūātitini**

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He Mihi

Nā te hiahia kia titiro, ā, kite ai tātou te mutunga. Huitia te rito o te harakeke, kei hea te kōmako e kō? E pātai atu ahau ki a koe, He aha te mea nui o te ao?... He tangata, he tangata, he tangata o te ao.

You must understand the beginning if you wish to see the end. When you slice open the heart of the flax plant where will the Kōmako sing? What is the most important thing in this world? It is people, it is people, it is people.

UNICEF New Zealand welcomes the opportunity to comment on the **Tomorrow's School Review report: *Our Schooling Futures – Stronger together – Whiria Ngā Kura Tūātinini***; and along with many in Aotearoa New Zealand, would like to see the best outcomes and more investment in improving the wellbeing for all tamariki and their whānau, families and communities.

Making sure Aotearoa New Zealand tamariki and their family and whānau rights to health and education are being understood, incorporated in policy and in legislation, is necessary if we are to truly identify where, what, and whose needs are, and are not being fully met. It is a delicate but transformative time for Aotearoa New Zealand, where at some levels change is inevitable. However, change requires participation from the diversity of NZ's people if we are to understand the complexities and diversity of all tamariki and their whānau, families, and communities.

This submission provides key points and recommendations informed by our independent partners, local communities, health and education professionals and advocates, and UNICEF employees.¹ There are varying levels support and strengthen the proposed Tomorrow's Schools Independent Taskforce report. We also raise concerns about whether further consultation is required to ensure equitable outcomes for the diverse needs for all. We welcome the opportunity to be further consulted prior to the implementation process.

Introduction

UNICEF NZ is mandated by the United Nations Assembly to advocate for the protection of children's human rights, to help meet their basic needs and to expand their opportunities to reach their full potential. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC) ratified by NZ in 1993, was implemented to inform advocacy and uphold children's rights in policy and practice and in law.

Other UN Conventions such as the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), The Convention Elimination on all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and along with our very own Te Tiriti o Waitangi, are all legal instruments and frameworks that UNICEF NZ applies when addressing any theory of change that will impact tamariki. UNICEF is also a member of the Children's Convention Monitoring Group (CMG) that monitors the New Zealand Government's implementation of UNCROC.

The role of advocacy under the UN umbrella in Aotearoa New Zealand requires UNICEF NZ to seek to understand what a good healthy, safe, fulfilling lifestyle is for tamariki, rangatahi, and their whānau, families and communities living in Aotearoa New Zealand. Recently, there

¹ Consultation with our key independent partners, communities, kura and school teaching staff and parents, UNICEF employees and hauora/health professionals and educators have informed the recommendations and advice in this submission.

has been a focus on increasing our domestic presence and advocacy responsibility. This is important to note and demonstrates our ability as part of global Unicef child rights advocacy branch to bring focus and conviction to this work in Aotearoa NZ. The focus on equitable outcomes requires us to specifically report and monitor NZ efforts in education equity which relates to this submission.

Factors that build educational equity are critical for policymakers interested in improving resources in communities and families for the purposes of educational wellbeing. It is important they reflect on how specific policies and/or instruments/frameworks can lead to negative impacts and additional stress if applied incorrectly. Reducing stress and working with families to self-identify goals which lead to achieving wellbeing, is key to creating positive opportunities that utilise education as a key agent of change for all generations of learners to come.

UNICEF NZ specific comments on the Eight Key Issues

1. Governance – Ngā Mahi Whakahaere

- a. We agree recommendation two (*local Education Hubs are established to best support these populations*) and the intent for certain arrangements of boards not effectively representing or including communities, particularly for Māori, Pacific whānau and those parents of children with disabilities or additional learning needs.
- b. Page 49, bullet point four: speaks direct to the Crown's obligation under Te Tiriti o Waitangi and addresses Kaupapa Māori education settings to be an incentive to initiate co-design with iwi Māori to ensure they are connected and provide parallel pathways for ongoing support and promotion of kaupapa Māori ākonga and Te Ao Māori perspectives.
- c. We agree there is a need to support boards in decision making particularly for administrative and financial matters. Many boards have been struggling due to the lack of capacity and capability to manage their assets.
- d. However, we do not support a total shift from the Boards Governance statute to the Education HUBs as many boards are achieving successful outcomes through their integrated approaches.
- e. We would also like to know what the long-term administrative costs are to keep these HUBs operating.
- f. We would like to see a national plan of action to pilot the Education HUBs in specific regions to provide a robust strength-based evidence approach. There would need to be at least several pilot sites identified based on several criteria such as low to high decile and high deprivation, low to high socio-economics and population diversity.

2. Schooling Provision – Ngā Momo Kura me Ngā Hononga

- a. We agree there needs to be more support for transitioning between schools particularly for those transient whānau and families.
- b. We agree kaupapa Māori schooling has not been sufficiently supported and many barriers have contributed to systemic attitudes and behaviours of racism

and discrimination. The lack of Government investment and limited support of full immersion of Kura Kaupapa and wharekura is perhaps one contributing factor.

- c. Consideration to include more integration and acknowledgement of other learning mediums such as at Kura Kaupapa to inform any future developments and plans to incorporate Te Ao Māori perspective, such as in the use of te reo Māori in the curriculum.

3. Competition and Choice – He Tauwhāinga He Kōwhiri

- a. We support the findings and discussions regarding schools becoming more segregated and competition impacting on students, whānau, families and communities. This adds to the complexity of issues that further disadvantage communities impacted also by poverty and inadequate housing.
- b. We disagree that out of zone students' enrolments should be capped, given the lack of evidence to prove that this has any impact on national enrolments, recruitment and retention.
- c. Consideration to understanding what the proportion of students are who are attending out of zone schools and understand the reasoning behind this. It is too presumptive to make absolute assumptions of what might be the reasoning behind this transition.

4. Disability and Learning Support – He Mahi Āwhina i te Ako

- a. We support the Ministry of Education to facilitate a national strategy and policy in Disability and Learning Support.
- b. We recommend a whole-of-government national action plan to addressing the number of complexities such as mental health, suicide, addictions, family and sexual violence and child abuse that continues to impact on our most vulnerable.

5. Teaching - Ngā Mahi Ako

- a. We agree recruitment, training and retention of our teachers/Kaiako should be a shared responsibility between government agencies, education providers and schools.
- b. The duration of professional learning and development must be increased for all teachers, from new entrant teachers through to ongoing learners of the trade.
- c. We support the provision to ensure diversity of teachers/Kaiako to best relate to the population of students and their whānau, families and communities.
- d. We suggest ongoing training, particularly culturally responsive competency training, be made mandatory. Additional resources should be made readily available for kaupapa Māori, Pacific, Asian and migrants' learners.

- e. We also encourage further discussions of pay parity and see this as a matter of priority given the low retention and recruitment rate of teachers and recent national strike actions.

6. School Leadership – Ngā Mahi Ārahi Kura

- a. Page 102 refers to the implementation of the *Teaching Council proposal of a leadership strategy*. We agree there is a need in lifting the quality of our schools and teaches to better support the education of all children and young people.
- b. We recommend you consider a diverse range of leadership skills that best reflect characteristics and cultural attributes relevant to the young generations of today.
- c. Furthermore, activating a cultural shift to support relationship interdependence for the benefit of all learners/ākonga is paramount.
- d. We recommend you continue providing on the job training tailored to advancing their skill sets.

6. School Resourcing – Ngā Rawa Kura

- a. We support the implementation of the equity index and expect an increase of fair distribution of funding to go to disadvantaged schools.
- b. Increasing special needs resources is crucial. We would like to see an increase in investment by 2021.
- c. Consistency in addressing poor equity rates is a not just a national issue but a global.²

7. Central Education Agencies – Ngā Tari Pokapū

- a. We support integrated policy functions to ensure that all policy development is coherent and incorporates the perspective of the school, students, whānau, and the communities and region.
- b. We support the replacement of existing Ministry of Education regional offices. However, are unclear that the Education Hubs are the best option, as many see this change as a replica.
- c. We recommend you consider piloting the Education Hub theory of change, with an option for schools to have the flexibility to opt in and out.
- d. It is important to have an independent evaluation office in mitigating risk of any unconscious political bias when there is a change of government.

² Read OECD PISA review report; the Equity in Education Report; and the UNICEF's annual Innocenti Report Card:

<http://www.oecd.org/education/school/programmeforinternationalstudentassessmentpisa/33680709.pdf>

<http://www.oecd.org/education/equity-in-education-9789264073234-en.htm>

<https://www.unicef-irc.org/article/1825-results-report-2017-now-available.html>

Summary of Recommendations

key recommendations to be considered:

1. UNICEF NZ agrees cultural and structural transformation shift is required to provide flexible and diverse ways of teaching and learning.
2. We would like to see the stewardship function between the Ministry of Education and the sector, strengthened.
3. We recommend additional consultation is required with parents and the communities.
4. We support explicit reference and commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi under obligations of the Crown and Māori relationship to inform the implementation of kaupapa Māori settings.
5. We recommend you utilise international legal instruments, such as UNCROC, UNDRIP, and CEDAW to complement the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, biculturalism, and to help to support teaches to educate our young citizens understand the rights of a child.
6. We agree an overhaul of funding for disability and learning support services is overdue.
7. We recommend that a whole-of-government approach to addressing the multiple complexities experienced by many underrepresented groups should be made a priority.
8. We are unclear whether school governance should be devolved to the Education HUBs. We recommend you consider a piloting scheme approach prior to any national roll-out.
9. Furthermore, schools should have the ability to opt in and out of the Educational HUB approach.
10. We support the *Equity Index* approach and would expect consideration of need to include special needs training; professional development; ongoing mentoring support; and clear career teaching leadership pathways are attainable for existing teaches.
11. We recommend working closely with learning mediums such as Kura kaupapa Māori and Rudolf Steiner Waldorf kura/schools, particularly as they work from a holistic and integrated approach that puts the child at the centre, and reinforces the supportive arms of their whānau, hapū, iwi, and communities.

Concluding comment

Along with our explicit constructive criticism noted in this submission. Further conversations with various individuals and groups did express their genuine concern that the localised feel of the schools may be lost as a result of a top-down management approach.

We need to ensure education creates a strong sense of belonging and pride for all tamariki, whānau, families, communities, and educators. It is not just about the teaching and learning, but also is about upholding the traditions of nurturing, caring and sharing.