

ACE Aotearoa submission to:

Ministry of Education: Education Act Update 2015

Executive Summary

The purpose of education in early childhood and schools is to help grow children and young people into independent, contributing adults who are positively engaged in society and make constructive contributions to their families, communities and wider society.

The goals within education should focus effort to ensure that our education is “fit for purpose”. ACE Aotearoa supports the three goals identified in the discussion document and so has focused our submission on how those goals can be achieved.

Aotearoa/ New Zealand is part of a global community which values education. The post 2015 United Nations’ education goal is “Quality Education – Lifelong learning for all”.

ACE Aotearoa shares the view that quality education / lifelong learning for all is central to our economic and social progress. We also hold the view that quality education happens when the learning process is exciting, engaging and tailored to the individual student’s learning needs and style and sets the learner on a course of meeting and overcoming challenges throughout their lives. We recognise that lifelong and intergenerational learning are essential for acquiring and maintaining relevant skills and knowledge as personal circumstances and industry/ society’s needs change.

Our submission focuses particularly on the first two questions being consulted: These are:

What should the goals for education be? And;

What process should be used for setting a national priorities statement for early learning and schooling?

About ACE Aotearoa

Adult and Community Education (ACE) Aotearoa is the lead body for adult and community educators and a voice for adult learners. We are a Te Tiriti o Waitangi based not-for-profit organisation. One of our key values is “Whakamanahia Te Tiriti o Waitangi: Enlivening Te Tiriti o Waitangi”. That means, in everything we do, we respect Tino Rangatiratanga, embrace the spirit of full partnership and work to achieve true equity. We actively promote and support the diversity of lifelong learning in Aotearoa New Zealand. In particular, we work across the sector and with government and communities to foster collaboration and cooperation so that educators, providers and adult learners are well supported. We are a membership organisation, and represent both our members and the wider sector – always with a focus on what works best for learners. We provide advice and direction for policy development and implementation. We work in partnership with government and have been funded in recent years to improve the accessibility, coherence and quality of learning for adults.

ACE Aotearoa consulted with its members and others involved in community and adult education to develop this submission.

SUBMISSION

Overview

Our submission describes evidence that the current system delivers uneven results, which are statistically predictable, both in terms of ethnicity and gender. That is an unfair system. Many leave school believing they are dumb, slow learners and they are or become disengaged from society. A system that consistently fails learners in this way cannot be described as quality education.

A proportion of those people at a subsequent stage in their life engage with ACE providers to rebuild their confidence, achieve their learning goals and create a sustainable, satisfying livelihood. That type of ACE is a safety net which should not be needed.

ACE Aotearoa recognises intergenerational involvement as an essential contributor to quality education. Children are part of families/ whanau/ aiga, and much of their learning takes place outside of the school. When families/ whanau / aiga feel alienated from the education system, children will have greater difficulty having positive experiences there. We submit that in order to have quality education in Aotearoa/ New Zealand, there must be provision for individually tailored study programmes to fit each learner's needs, and to engage and encourage families/ whanau/ aiga to be a positive part of the children's education experience.

The Taskforce on Regulations Affecting School Performance reported (2014) that the Education Act 1989 focuses on structures and institutions. We submit that it is time for the Education Act to be revised to focus on the provision of quality education so that all those who go through the education system emerge with a love of learning and the confidence to overcome challenges in the increasingly disruptive work and living environments that they will meet throughout their adult lives.

This will require organising education provision so that courses are tailored to learner needs making education accessible to learners with different styles and paces of learning. That is affordable when it is recognised that investment at the time of education (0years- 18years) is more cost-effective than the later system failure "investment" in alienated, disengaged young adult/ adults through the justice and health systems¹.

1. What should be goals for education be?

Lifelong and intergenerational learning are essential for acquiring and maintaining relevant skills and knowledge as personal circumstances and industry needs change. Early childhood and school education should help grow children and young people into independent, contributing adults who are able to sustain satisfying and productive livelihoods. The goals we set for education must result in a society of proactive, energetic, intergenerational learners.

We endorse the existing goals identified in the public discussion document and suggest the following four goals (slightly amended from those published) be incorporated into legislation.

Goal 1: early childhood and school education should help grow young people who are confident, connected, actively involved, lifelong learners with a love of learning, (cf NZ Curriculum)

¹ Ministry of Education workshop data, drawn from Integrated Data Initiative, 2014

- Goal 2: each learner will achieve his/her potential (cf Te Marautanga o Aotearoa);
- Goal 3: the education environment will actively encourage intergenerational learning, where learners and their families affirm and extend their connecting links with the family and the wider world (cf Te Whāriki).
- Goal 4: their education experience will equip school leavers to become independent, contributing adults who are able to sustain satisfying, productive and prosperous livelihoods.

ACE Aotearoa considers the goals as identified are BHAGs²- that is, challenging, but achievable. Our focus is on why, and how we should strive to reach them.

Why Should We Achieve These Education Goals?

School Experience Strongly Influences Attitudes for Life

Goals for education need to be set taking into consideration the wider context and role of education in the life of an individual. Experiences in the school system impact the individual's entire life - including their confidence, their earning power and their ability and willingness to engage positively within society³.

Well People Need Lifelong Learning

Society is changing rapidly. Developments in technology, and changes in environment, population and industry drive a growing consensus that the future will be very different from the present, and that the nature of work will be continuously disrupted, as well as the quality/quantity of leisure time are difficult to predict.

There is also growing consensus that an individual will have four or five different kinds of employment or livelihood during their lifetime. Easy access to lifelong and intergenerational learning are essential for the maintenance and acquisition of relevant skills and knowledge as individual circumstances and industry needs change.

Educational Non-achievement is Costly for the Tax-payer

Educational non-achievement is a cost to government and a barrier to full productivity for individuals and for New Zealand. In 2013 the cost to the state of those between 16 and 23 years old was estimated at over 4 times higher for those with no qualification, than for those with a Level 3 qualification⁴. For many the experience of failure in the compulsory education system leaves them with a resistant attitude toward formal or structured learning.

The findings from the Adult Literacy and Lifeskills (ALL) Survey 2006 showed that around 43 percent of the New Zealand adult population have less than optimal literacy skills, and 51 percent have less than optimal numeracy skills. This means that there are up to one million adults with literacy and numeracy needs that stop them reaching their full potential.

² "Big Hairy Audacious Goals" from Collins, J & Porras, J., *Built to Last: Successful Habits of Visionary Companies* (Harper Business Essentials) Paperback – June 24, 2004

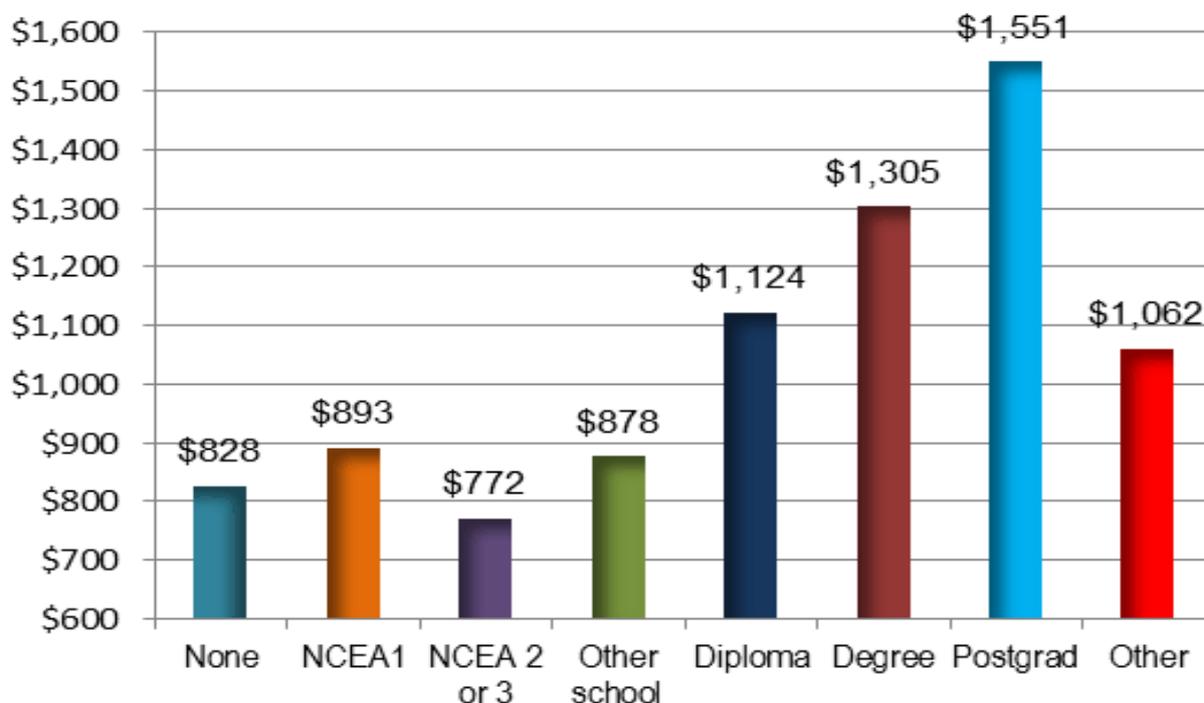
³ FOOTNOTE RE IMPACT OF EDUCATION-PWC VAVA ETC

⁴ Ministry of Education workshop data, drawn from Integrated Data Initiative, 2014.

Educational Achievement Creates Positive Economic Impact

The relationship between education and earning power is well documented. The graph below (with the descriptive paragraph) is derived from Statistics NZ data, and published at www.enz.org. It shows that overall higher qualifications lead to higher salaries.

Average Weekly Wages by Qualification Level in 2014



Graph 1: Average weekly wages by qualification level in 2014; copied from www.enz.org

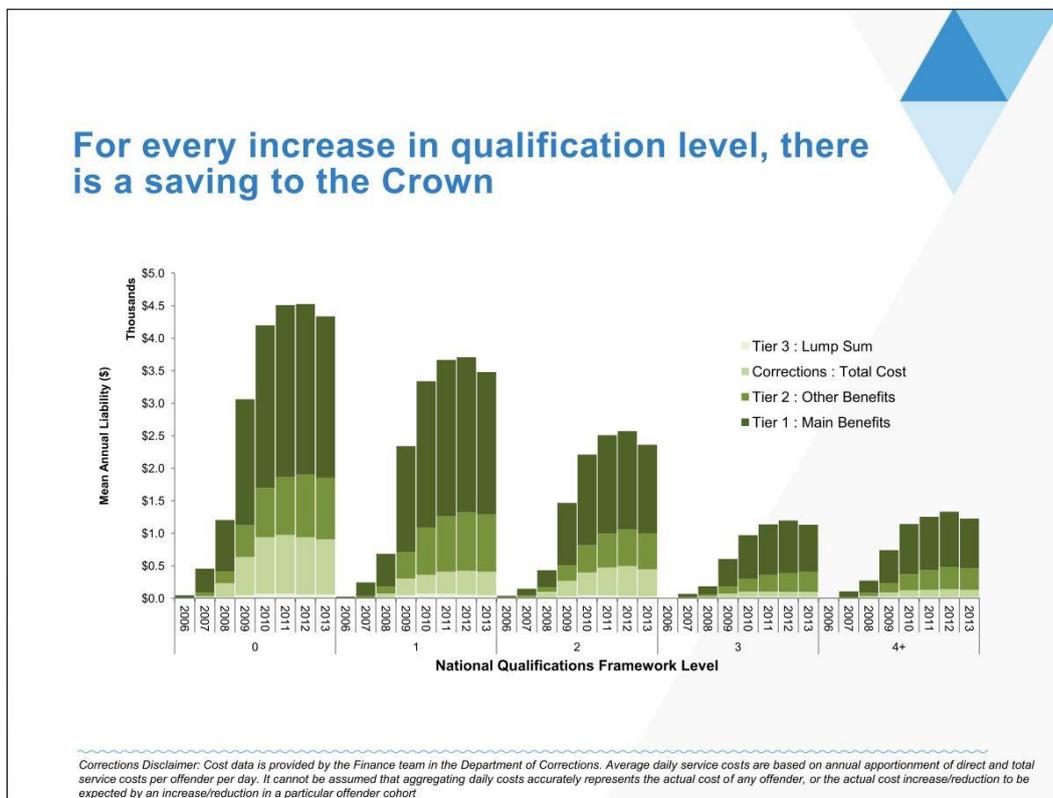
Better education enables greater participation in the workforce, and also is associated with better decision making about personal health and lifestyle, and more positive participation in other sections of society. Two New Zealand based studies by Price Waterhouse Cooper^{5 6} identified the marginal improvements in earnings (particularly as higher qualifications lead to improved salaries/ wages), as well as reductions to the State in welfare payments, health costs and justice related costs. While there can be (and has been) debate about the exact quantum of the positive economic impact, there is no argument with the fact that there is a positive economic impact. This positive effect is both for the learner, as a higher income and expanded future earning, but also for the economy as a whole, derived from the higher tax take and lower costs for each individual.

The following graph comes from research carried out by the Ministries of Education and Social Development. It shows that, in general, as educational qualifications increase, the amount spent by the taxpayer to maintain the person decreases. The data are from the IDI (Integrated Data Infrastructure) database, and are for a cohort born 1 July 1990 to 30 June 1991 (about 55,000 individuals, numbers by qualification level shown along the x axis).

5 Value Added by Voluntary Agencies "Counting for More" PWC 2007

6 Economic evaluation of Adult and Community Education Outcomes PWC 2008, ibid

The cost to the state of educational non-achievement increases as those who have left the education system with no qualifications progress through their lives. For those with no qualifications, the effect is dramatic. The following graph shows the average cost to the state by qualification level for this group.



Graph 2: Average cost of state funding over eight years (ages from 16-23years) as a function of qualification level.

It is of course possible to extrapolate those costs for the remaining three to five decades of life expectancy for people in Aotearoa to make an estimate of the total cost over the lifetime for a person who never achieves a higher qualification or earns a living income.

What Are the Main Barriers?

Determinants of Educational Non-achievement

As a society we have matured beyond the traditional view that all people who do poorly at school are “dumb” or unintelligent and increasingly there is evidence that educational non-achievement is not a single or simple condition. Apart from intellectual capability, there can be a number of different contributing factors, with some individuals experiencing more than one. Some of the most well documented and well recognised are set out below.

Cultural Mis-match

When a student is not comfortable in the cultural environment prevalent in the educational institution, learning performance is detrimentally affected. A child acquires around 25% of his/her knowledge through school, with the majority of learning undertaken outside the educational environment. When the educational environment or culture does not fit easily with

the learner's home/ dominant environment or culture, the learner's motivation to perform at school, and his/her actual performance will be detrimentally affected.

Perhaps the most often discussed "cultural mis-match" is that for Māori children/ young people. In addition to the Māori medium education movement (eg Kohanaga Reo and Kura) which validates tangata whenua culture and language in the education setting, there are examples of improved education performance by Maori children and young people in other educational facilities once those facilities show overt respect and recognition for Tikanga Māori and Te Reo, and the child/ young person's wider whānau.

Immigrants and refugees are other groups which have clear "cultural mis-match" identifiable through ethnicity. Pasifika young people are likely to have better educational performance if they are confident and proficient in their own language culture⁷. Some immigrants, and many refugees have a lower level of performance in school due to a lack of previous education and little or no English.

The strength of the "ethnicity factor" is indicated through ability to predict aggregated school achievement levels by ethnicity, as shown in the tables below (from Education Counts www.educationcounts.govt.nz). Even more importantly, the ability to influence the "ethnicity factor" as a determinant of achievement may be indicated when the results for 2009 are compared to the results for 2013.

Comparison of percentage change in 17 year old students meeting University Entrance requirements 2009-2013 by ethnicity.

Ethnicity	2009 %	2013 %	Difference ▲	RANK ▲	ACTUAL RANK 2013
Maori	23.8	30.8	7.0	5	5
Pasifika	19.6	29.2	9.6	3	6
Asian	53.2	62.4	9.2	4	1
MELAA	37.0	48.3	11.3	2	3
Other	33.1	45.6	12.5	1	4
European/ Pakeha	51.7	56.2	4.5	6	2

*Gender*⁸

There are indications that gender may also have an impact on achievement levels in the schooling system.

Data published by the Ministry of Education show that female 18-year-olds (81.6%) achieved at a higher rate than their male counterparts (75.8%) and were 7.7% more likely to attain the equivalent of NCEA Level 2 or above in 2013. From 2011 to 2012 this gender gap in

⁷ Pasifika success as Pasifika – research report sponsored by Professional Development Steering Group 2014
⁸ Indicator Report from www.educationcounts.govt.nz

achievement decreased from 9.9% to 7.0%, then increased to 7.7% in 2013. From 2011 to 2012, males saw higher percentage point increases in achievement compared to their female counterparts. In contrast, from 2012 to 2013 females saw higher percentage point increases in achievement.

Overall, it would appear that the education system “works better” for girls than for boys.

Socio/economic Disadvantage

Another area which has recently received a considerable amount of public attention is concern at children who do not have sufficient or nutritious food, stable or adequate housing, or warm/ waterproof clothing. The “Kids Can” initiative involving partnerships between government and some businesses (eg Fonterra and Meridian) is providing milk in (some) schools, and clothing for (some) children. There are also websites where members of the public can support a child (or more than one) through direct donation.

“Statistics tell us that the literacy gap starts early: low income children lag by 16 months on school entry and many children who start behind struggle to get to literacy standard before the end of school”.⁹ Raising literacy is seen as a poverty reduction strategy in both the UK and the US¹⁰. Successful intervention requires collaborations, rather than persisting with siloed delivery of education and other services. By taking a more holistic, intergenerational, lifelong approach, such as that developed by the National Literacy Trust in the UK, we could begin to make sustainable gains in improving literacy.

Intergenerational Factors

Intergenerational influences are also linked to the socio/economic variable (as well as of course to the cultural/ ethnicity variable). Data released by the Ministry of Education highlight that 87% of those children with the highest risk of not achieving NZQA level 2 have a primary caregiver with no school qualification.

Similarly, children with some learning disabilities (such as dyslexia) may have older family members who have had similar issues during their schooling. Engaging positively with those adults, particularly when they are the primary caregiver, may help the child/ children to overcome some of the very real difficulties they face at school on a daily basis.

Breaking the intergenerational cycle of educational failure requires engaging the adults who are the most significant others in the lives of their children, and helping those adults to re-ignite a love of learning, and in many cases to learn/ develop skills to foster their children’s learning success.

Emotional/ Trauma/ Illness

The other area¹¹ well documented (in psychological literature), which is influential in determining educational performance relates to emotional or physical trauma, and illness suffered by the student. Events which can generate emotional trauma can include, for example, marital/ family relationships changes, death of a significant other, lack of stable living circumstances, or psychological or other abuse. Events which can generate physical trauma can include accidents, or physical abuse as examples.

Similarly, in addition to creating overall “unwellness”, illness can also result in emotional or physical damage (or trauma), depending on its severity and duration. There is some evidence

⁹ Alison Sutton, 2015, Adult and Community Education, Summer Newsletter, ACE Aotearoa, 2015

¹⁰ Alison Sutton, 2015, Adult and Community Education, Summer Newsletter, ACE Aotearoa, 2015

¹¹ Understandably, the Ministry of Education does not collect or present statistics on these variables.

that children who grow up in middle to higher socio-economic, culturally supportive environments and have not suffered any severe trauma during their childhood/ adolescence are taller, more physically 'well', better at performing tasks which require mental or intellectual engagement, and more confident or resilient when confronted with adverse circumstances. That also points to the likelihood that many people who under-achieve in their education may experience more than one detrimental factor; e.g. cultural mis-match and socio-economic disadvantage; socio-economic disadvantage and illness or trauma.

Learning Disabilities

The other key area which results in no or low educational achievement is that of learning disabilities. The education system tends to regard these learners as not 'under-achieving' because there is a diagnosis or condition which 'accounts' for the low performance, and provides services for those with severe learning disabilities through the "Special Education" system.

Within the education (school) system there have been and are some intensive remedial interventions which may assist the child/ young person while they are at school. Children with learning disabilities are likely to lack confidence and self-esteem, and also display a-social or even anti-social behaviours. If not addressed, these characteristics follow the child as s/he grows up, and may intensify as the negative experiences (including frustration) continue.

There is some evidence that adults with learning disabilities are over-represented in the negative indicators of well-being: unemployment or transient employment, mental health issues, suicide, and relationship difficulties. That is attributed not only to a lack of skills (including life skills) but also to the frustration which develops as the adult is aware they are 'under-performing' relative to others.

Once again, a cost/benefit assessment supports effective intervention where possible, thereby reducing the economic and social cost of a non-productive adult, as well as reducing the suffering of the individual at all ages. Over the past decades significant progress has been made in developing specific courses or programmes that are effective in dealing with some learning disabilities, including for example mediated education (Feurestein) and neuro-science based non-invasive and intensive interventions, such as the Arrowsmith Programme¹², which have had success in addressing some of the more intransigent learning disabilities.

Breaking the Barriers- Achieving the Goals for Quality Education

Making our education system "fit for purpose"

If the purpose of the system is established as quality education, with all students emerging as confident, connected lifelong learners we will need more ability within the education system to tailor courses and study styles to individual learner's needs and styles- we need to become truly "learner centred".

This will require inclusion of whanau/ family/ aiga both to support school based education and contribute to its richness, and greater ability to consider the broader life and needs of the learner, when then begins the collaboration with other sectors, in the style of whanau ora.

¹² B Arrowsmith-Young, *The Woman who Changed Her Brain*, 2012; also <http://www.arrowsmithschool.org/>

One of the challenges in the goals - like those currently identified in the NZ Curriculum - is that we are talking about ALL children/ young people/ learners. To achieve the goals we must develop the mind-set of “how to do it”, not “that child does not fit”.

An attitudinal shift is required so that ALL learners are enabled.

In addition, we can no longer describe with any accuracy the shape or demands of work in the future. Perhaps the most certain element is that disruptive change will continue, the pace of change will increase and individuals are most likely to need more than one - even up to five or six - forms of livelihood through their adult lives. Quality education will result in citizens who continue to be productive and constructive contributors to their community and society.

The principle is clear and simple. The difficulty of implementation is not under-estimated. Some innovative educators have already implemented the approach, with good results.

2. What process should be used for setting a national priorities statement for early learning and schooling?

The following discussion is based on the need for “quality education- lifelong learning for all” outlined in our discussion above.

In preparing our submission, we have talked with a range of parents, providers and others with an interest in education, asking each what are the national priorities for early learning and schooling. There was no consensus in the responses. No one could identify a “national statement” although there were several ways of identifying current priorities.

Several identified the relevant Better Public Service Goals (BPS)

in 2016, 98% of children starting school will have participated in quality ECE

in 2017, 85% of 18-year-olds will have achieved NCEA level 2 or an equivalent qualification;

Others referred to the Ministry of Education Statement of Intent 2014-18, where the first five of six priorities refer to the education system¹³

- 1 Raise teaching quality and leadership
- 2 Use information more effectively to lift achievement
- 3 Target resources to address disparity in achievement
- 4 Engage children and students, and their families and whānau to sustain participation and transitions in education
- 5 Create a modern learning environment

We agree with the BPS and the listed priorities, and also endorse the approach being set out in the Ministry’s Statement of Intent 2014-18.

We found confusion about the national priorities for early childhood education and schooling, and whether there is currently a national statement of those priorities. That is in contrast to the Tertiary Sector where the priorities are set out in the Tertiary Education Strategy (TES)

¹³ The sixth priority refers to the Tertiary system (A more outward facing and engaged tertiary education system), with the Tertiary Education Strategy (TES) 2014-2019 setting out specific priorities.

every five years as a statutory requirement, and there would be few engaged in that sector (at least in service delivery) who were unaware of the TES.

We submit that the process to set a national priorities statement for early learning and schooling should be equivalent to that used to set the Tertiary Education Strategy: there should be extensive consultation (see below), the statement should cover a period of up to five years and have statutory status.

Because of the enduring impact of the education experience on an individual, it is important that the consultation process should be extensive. In addition to the consumers (including students, family/ whanau/ aiga), and education professionals, it will be important to consult with the Tertiary Sector, including the ACE sector, industry, and interested professionals.

Consumers are likely to be most effective at identifying those factors which facilitate their positive engagement in the education system as well as those which are most likely to be barriers.

Education professionals are likely to be most effective at identifying practical considerations within the system.

The Tertiary sector, including ACE, is likely to be most effective at identifying key strengths and weaknesses observed in the older (17 years and over) learner as well, and together with industry is likely to be most effective at identifying emergent (and existing) skill shortages and changes in work trends.

Interested professionals (such as neuroscientists, psychologists and social scientists) are likely to be most effective at identifying scientific advances (such as recent developments in neuroscience) and related therapies or services which can be included to ensure that quality education is truly accessible to all.

The statement must be time limited as because of the pace of change across all aspects of society and the economy. We are aware that the future nature of work will be radically different from the current nature of work; (just as the industrial revolution changed the nature of work in the late 19th century) and that both the pace and the magnitude of change are increasing.

Conclusion

Our submission describes evidence that the current system delivers uneven results, which are statistically predictable, both in terms of ethnicity and gender. That is an unfair system. Many leave school believing they are dumb or stupid, slow learners and they are or become disengaged from society. It is difficult to describe the system those learners have experienced as quality education.

Instead we propose that clear goals are set for success in education that is achievable by all. This will require delivery approaches which are flexible and inclusive.

We submit that it is time for the Education Act to be revised to focus on the provision of quality education so that all those who go through the education system emerge with a love of learning and the confidence to overcome challenges in the rapidly changing work and living environments that they will meet throughout their adult lives.

We submit that in order to have quality education in Aotearoa/ New Zealand, there must be provision for individually tailored study programmes to fit each learner's needs, and to engage and encourage families/ whanau/ aiga to be a positive part of the children's education experience.

That quality education is affordable when it is recognised that investment at the time of education (0years- 18years) is more cost-effective than the system failure "investment" in alienated, disengaged young adult/ adults through the justice and health systems¹⁴.

Recommendations

1. That the following four goals are included in the revised/ updated Education Act:
 - Goal 1: early childhood and school education should help grow young people who are confident, connected, actively involved, lifelong learners, (NZ Curriculum) with a love of learning;
 - Goal 2: each learner will achieve his/her potential (cf Te Marautanga o Aotearoa);
 - Goal 3: the education environment will be actively encourage intergenerational learning, where learners and their families affirm and extend their connecting links with the family and the wider world (cf Te Whāriki).
 - Goal 4: their education experience will equip school leavers to become independent, contributing adults who are able to sustain satisfying, productive and prosperous livelihoods.
2. That the approach to achieving those goals is the consistent implementation of learner centred, individual appropriate, tailored courses and styles
3. The process for setting a national priorities statement for early learning and schooling should involve extensive consultation, cover a period of up to five years and have statutory status, equivalent to that of the Tertiary Education Strategy.

¹⁴ Data on cost of failure