

NZEI Te Riu Roa Review of Special Education 2010

Submission

March 2010

Due: to the Ministry of Education by 19th March 2010

Our Profile:

NZEI Te Riu Roa (NZEI) is a 127 year old professional organisation and industrial union that represents the interests and issues of its 49,900 members. Our members include:

- teachers in primary, area schools, and the early childhood sector
- principals in mainstream primary, kura and special schools
- support staff in early childhood and compulsory schooling sectors
- advisers employed by the schools and faculties of education in universities
- specialist education staff employed by the Ministry of Education.

The interests of all children as learners in schools and centres are at the heart of what we do.

NZEI Te Riu Roa believes students with special educational needs have the right to quality public education and the right to participate in the New Zealand Education System¹.

Our vision for special education:

The vision of NZEI Te Riu Roa for special education is stated in the special education section of NZEI Te Riu Roa policy document (see annex 1). The high level principled statements set out the expectations of NZEI Te Riu Roa on the rights of students to participate in education; and the shared responsibility of Government, the education sector and community to provide services and fulfil expectations of quality teaching and learning.

NZEI Te Riu Roa is committed to work with the Ministry of Education to ensure that students with special educational needs receive quality education through:

- a needs-based and non contestable provision
- specialist staffing levels so that there is equitable provision within manageable caseloads
- special education teacher aides and support workers who have sufficient hours to do a high quality job and be an effective support for teachers and students
- job security for teachers, specialists and support staff, through centrally funded positions
- safe and secure learning environments and workplaces.

NZEI Te Riu Roa acknowledges that special education is a complex policy area and requires a whole-of-government approach.

NZEI Te Riu Roa believes building collaborative relationships with parents/family/whānau, schools, communities, and agencies will provide the solid foundation for ongoing improvement in educational outcomes for students with special educational needs.

¹ NZEI Te Riu Roa Special Education Policy s B1

NZEI Te Riu Roa believes students with special educational needs benefit most when relationships between home, family/whānau, relevant agencies and centre/school/kura are established at the earliest opportunity and are maintained throughout a student's learning pathway².

Introduction

NZEI Te Riu Roa welcomes the opportunity to contribute and provide feedback for the Review of Special Education 2010.

NZEI Te Riu Roa believes that an achievable outcome for students with special educational needs and their parents/families/whānau is to place the student at the centre and ensure that the systems and processes that surround the student, work primarily for the student. In the context of the Government's value-for-money framework and an assumption of no extra funding, this is a key outcome to work towards.

NZEI Te Riu Roa understands value-for-money in the context of special education is different from the Governments and is detailed throughout the submission. NZEI Te Riu Roa opposes outcomes in special education being measured against economic growth, well-being, and stability.

NZEI Te Riu Roa believes the most important element to this review is that there is no 'one' change that would improve outcomes for all students and parents/family/whānau.

Should this review show that a change is warranted, NZEI Te Riu Roa believes that a significant injection of funding, resources, Government commitment, and stakeholder involvement would be needed to evaluate any possible change and to assist with any resulting implementation.

NZEI Te Riu Roa believes that due to the sector having undergone a number of changes and reviews in the past twenty years, the sector requires time to stabilize and concentrate on the many successful aspects that are within the system.

NZEI Te Riu Roa believes that within the context of no extra funding, the current 'mixed model'³ is the correct model to continue with. The current mixed model has the ability to meet the diverse needs of students without any geographical or social barriers. Dis-establishing the current model will not provide value-for-money and will not provide economic benefits.

In light of the 'baseline' cuts occurring at the Ministry of Education, NZEI Te Riu Roa believes it is crucial to acknowledge that the specialist itinerating staff are frontline staff and remain employed by the Ministry of Education.

² NZEI Te Riu Roa Special Education Policy s B3

³ NZEI Te Riu Roa believes a mixed model incorporates mainstream schools, Ministry of Education itinerating specialists, Kura, special schools and their satellites, and other variations that meet the geographic and social needs of students and parents/family/whānau.

The following sections will answer the questions from the discussion document and highlight concerns for NZEI Te Riu Roa.

Demonstrating Value-for-money

The Government's understanding of value-for-money is different to that of NZEI Te Riu Roa.

NZEI Te Riu Roa agrees with the need for transparency in Government decision making.

NZEI Te Riu Roa believes quality public education is fundamental to economic growth, well-being, and stability.

NZEI Te Riu Roa does not agree with outcomes in special education being measured against: "economic growth, well-being and stability"⁴ (the Government's underlying rationale for value-for-money).

NZEI Te Riu Roa believes value for money, in the context of education, is evident in outcomes such as:

- a nationally consistent high quality public education system
- high quality initial teacher education
- high quality trained support staff
- high quality specialist staff
- ongoing and high quality professional development
- effective relationships between the student, teacher, and parent/family/whānau.

NZEI Te Riu Roa believes that should there be any funding or resourcing saved as a result of this review these should be reinvested back into special education.

Question 1a) What is needed to help schools succeed?

NZEI Te Riu Roa believes success is demonstrated when⁵:

- effective teaching is delivered by a qualified and registered teacher
- the Principal is the pedagogical leader of the school
- the teacher is the pedagogical leader in the classroom and is supported by trained professional support staff⁶
- itinerating specialist staff are given the opportunity to collaborate with students, parents/families/whānau and teachers
- students are placed at the centre of learning to enable the student to achieve social and educational outcomes
- parents/family/whānau assist with nurturing student learning

⁴ Treasury, Demonstrating value-for-money, 2008

⁵ Ministry of Education, Schooling Strategy, 2005

⁶ Stevens. H, Effective Teachers' Aides, 2007

- the New Zealand Curriculum⁷ is implemented – ensuring that students with special educational needs can achieve educational outcomes that align with the curriculum
- special education staffing and funding entitlements are used effectively at school level, through establishing guidelines and school policies
- the professional development and capability-building within school includes: principals, registered teachers, specialists, and trained professional support staff receiving ongoing relevant professional development about special education and diverse learners⁸.

NZEI Te Riu Roa understands that in certain situations, success may also involve attitudinal changes by the schools to students with special educational needs. In a 'no extra funding' context this can be achieved by learning from successful models within schools and commitment by the Ministry of Education to inject the appropriate resources to enable this to occur.

NZEI Te Riu Roa believes the professionals working with students with special educational needs, are crucial in supporting and guiding quality learning.

NZEI Te Riu Roa is presently engaged in a Support Staff Workforce Strategy with the Ministry of Education and New Zealand School Trustees Association (NZSTA), to consider ways in which support staff in schools can be more effective and efficient in doing their job. Over the next year, this important work will form a framework for the future of support staff work and describe how they can best work with teachers and students in schools to support high quality educational outcomes for all.

1b) How could schools work together to succeed?

NZEI Te Riu Roa supports the notion of schools clustering together to work out solutions that best meet their local educational community needs and acting on those solutions. NZEI Te Riu Roa believes that the Ministry should encourage and/or facilitate these cluster meetings.

NZEI Te Riu Roa encourages further research in this area, particularly focusing on models that produce opportunities that share the understanding of improved educational outcomes for students. Producing a strong evidence base will encourage an attitudinal shift regarding special education as may be required in some schools⁹.

▪ **Network of Successful schools:**

NZEI Te Riu Roa believes that Option A/current system/mixed-model¹⁰ is the appropriate model. In the context of value-for-money, it is not economical to dis-establish a system that is already well-established and, most importantly, is on track to meet the needs of all diverse learners and their parents/families/whānau.

A mixed-model can best meet the needs of students, schools, and parents/families/whānau when it is well resourced and supported. In the current

⁷ Ministry of Education, New Zealand Curriculum, 2007

⁸ NZEI Te Riu Roa Special Education Policy, s D5

⁹ Wylie, C, 2000, page 33

¹⁰ See footnote number 3

'no extra funding' context, this model will prove to be 'value-for-money', in both, an educational context and seen as a cost effective/neutral option. New Zealand Institute of Economic Research (NZIER) found that the mixed model is appropriate and is the one that is followed internationally¹¹.

2) What needs to be done to make transitions work better?

There is a lot of emphasis on transition in the review document but for many parents the most important transition is from home to the early childhood service, which is not mentioned in the discussion document.

NZEI Te Riu Roa believes transitions from early childhood services to school is an area where extra funding for the first six to eight weeks of schooling could ease transitions markedly.

NZEI Te Riu Roa believes that in order to achieve the quality educational outcomes for students with special education needs during times of transitions, teachers, specialists, and parents/family/whānau require time to share knowledge and information. Also, they require time to plan and to build relationships to support the student through their learning journey.

3) How could services be better coordinated and focused on the needs of students and families?

NZEI Te Riu Roa believes that the student's needs must always be placed at the centre of any process and/or system¹², which in turn must fit around the student - not the student around the system.

NZEI Te Riu Roa agrees with the need for fluidity in the distribution and coordination of resources, however always in the context of the student's need at the centre.

NZEI Te Riu Roa believes that the Ministry of Education is a key agency with a pivotal role in leading the coordination of services across agencies.

4) What arrangements for funding, decision-making, verification, and fundholding should we have?

NZEI Te Riu Roa believes that the provision of special education should be needs-based and not contestable¹³. The current model of fundholding is not contestable and should remain that way.

NZEI Te Riu Roa believes that the Ministry of Education is an essential agency that has the capabilities to equitably distribute resources, based on the needs of

¹¹ NZIER, Special education resourcing framework: Draft report to Ministry of Education, 2009

¹² NZEI Te Riu Roa Special Education Policy, s C1

¹³ NZEI Te Riu Roa Special Education Policy s D1

students. NZEI Te Riu Roa acknowledges that this does not necessarily mean an equal distribution of resources, but does mean the provision of the best possible teaching and learning irrespective of geographic location, socio-economic circumstance or disability¹⁴.

5a) How can individually targeted services and supports be made more efficient?

NZEI Te Riu Roa believes, within the context of no new funding, that individually targeted services/support can be made more efficient by assisting schools with their use of resources.

NZEI Te Riu Roa believes that there are schools successfully implementing models of good practice in this area. Encouraging clustering of schools to discuss good practice, would be a positive and effective method of disseminating this information and would encourage more schools to succeed in this area.

NZEI Te Riu Roa believes Individual Education Programmes (IEPs) should be used as a 'living document or tool' for the student, parents/families/whānau, teachers, and support staff to engage in the learning process and extending the learning into the community and society. Furthermore, this involves active participation and collaboration of the people involved to set purposeful outcomes and, collectively and continuously, act on them.

5b) Is the current mix of programmes, services and support right and does it provide value for money? What changes would you suggest?

In the current context of no new funding available, it is difficult to see how changes to the current mix of programmes and services will provide value for money.

NZEI Te Riu Roa believes that the mix of programmes, services and support needs to be reviewed when there is an upturn in the economy and when there is allocated funding for the review of this.

6) How can the quality of services be improved?

It is vital that all teachers have the essential curriculum knowledge and are confident and skilled to deliver the curriculum to all students in the class, regardless of the diverse needs of each learner within the classroom.

Research shows that support staff and teachers must work together within the classroom to achieve best educational outcomes for students with special educational needs¹⁵. Support staff, in most cases, develop personal knowledge of

¹⁴ NZEI Te Riu Roa Special Education Policy, s D3

¹⁵ Rutherford, Gill. University of Otago, 2009.

the student with special educational needs and have a strong bond established with the student¹⁶.

Quality is determined by teachers, parents/families/whānau, and specialists together making decisions/choices by placing the student at the centre¹⁷.

NZEI Te Riu Roa believes developing and sustaining a specialist workforce is critical to the provision of quality special education. The ability of this workforce to collaborate with teachers, support staff, and parents/family/whānau to achieve quality educational outcomes for students is central to providing a quality public service.

7) How can families and schools be better informed?

NZEI Te Riu Roa believes that the key to being accountable and keeping parents/family/whānau informed is building effective relationships.

A first step in this process is the genuine, reasonable and significant participation of parents/family/whānau in the development of the students individual education programme (IEP).

Wherever possible, the student must also fully and genuinely participate in the development of a reasonable plan, and in the development of information about their progress.

8) What does successful special education look like and how should we measure it?

NZEI Te Riu Roa believes successful special education is achieved through placing the student's learning and social needs at the centre and providing them with support and resources in a timely manner.

The student's curriculum must be designed based on the New Zealand Curriculum and adapted to meet the individual needs of a student. The inclusion of indicators for attendance, participation, engagement, and achievement are essential.

IEPs should be used as a tool to collaborate with students, parents/family/whānau, teachers, and specialists for quality educational outcomes. IEPs should be used as 'living documents'.

¹⁶ ibid

¹⁷ NZEI Te Riu Roa Special Education Policy s C1

9) When things do not go well, what arrangements should be in place to resolve issues?

NZEI Te Riu Roa acknowledges that all students have unique needs and are to be treated as individuals, therefore educational outcomes and services which benefit certain students may not benefit others¹⁸.

10) What is the most important change that would improve outcomes for children and young people with special education needs?

NZEI Te Riu Roa believes there is no 'one' change that would improve educational outcomes for students in the context of no extra funding.

NZEI Te Riu Roa believes that in the past 20 years the sector has experienced a large number of changes and reviews. Many of these changes have occurred without giving the sector time to settle and take ownership of the changes. Another significant review and change would de-stabilise the sector and will potentially have a greater negative impact on students with special education needs.

Should the Government shift to another model a significant injection of funding, resources, Government commitment, and stakeholder involvement would need to be allocated specifically for this.

The following sections are focused on the successful elements of special education.

A mixed model system:

There is a need for the range of models currently available for parents/family/whānau and students, due to the geographical and socio-economic diversity of students in the New Zealand education system. A mixed model approach to funding and resourcing is appropriate.

The New Zealand Institute of Economic Research (NZIER) report: Special education resourcing framework found that: "Given the mix of students and mix of schools, the framework clearly indicated that a mixed model is appropriate. This model is followed internationally.¹⁹" There is no other model, in the context of 'no extra funding,' that will meet the needs of all, if not most, students with special educational needs.

A mixed model is the status quo in terms of what the system currently incorporates, eg: a mix of mainstream schools, Ministry of Education itinerating specialists, Kura, special schools and their satellites and other services that meet the diverse geographical and socio-economic needs of students²⁰.

¹⁸ NZEI Te Riu Roa Special Education Policy s C1

¹⁹ NZIER, 2009, page 33

²⁰ See footnote 3

Decisions about which option is best suited to a student should be made collaboratively by the student (where possible), parents/families/whānau, teachers and other professionals²¹.

Ministry of Education Specialist Staff:

NZEI Te Riu Roa believes an important component of special education provision is the, relatively small, specialist workforce most of whom are employed by the Ministry of Education.

A successful model would ensure the ongoing recruitment and retention of these staff for the education sector many of whom are in short supply within New Zealand and also internationally²².

NZEI Te Riu Roa believes it is critical for this specialist workforce to remain in an environment where they can work as a team, and be supported through career development opportunities, ongoing professional development and manageable caseloads. This will enable the specialist workforce to provide high quality service delivery and ongoing improvement in educational outcomes for students and their parents/family/whānau.

Individualised Education

NZEI Te Riu Roa believes all students have unique needs and are to be treated as individuals²³. As with all learners, learning for students with special education needs means placing students at the centre, respecting and responding to their learning needs²⁴.

NZEI Te Riu Roa believes there are two critical elements of high quality individualised education, these are:

1. acknowledgement of teachers and their ongoing professional development needs to ensure they have the confidence, skills, and knowledge to educate all students, regardless of their diverse needs
2. a collaborative approach to understanding the student's needs where the teacher, support staff, and specialists have a strong knowledge of the learning continuum and are able to identify and work to meet individual learning needs with parents/family/whānau that is specific to the identified needs of the student²⁵. This relationship is crucial for the ongoing development and learning of the student.

NZEI Te Riu Roa believes that students with special educational needs require an Individualised Education Programme (IEP), which sits within the New Zealand Curriculum framework.

The Ministry of Education will be aware that there is research, reviews and ongoing development in the sector to make IEPs more of a collaborative and effective tool.

²¹ NZEI Te Riu Roa Special Education Policy s B3

²² Department of Labour, 2008, Long Term Skills Shortage List

²³ NZEI Te Riu Roa Special Education Policy s C1

²⁴ ibid

²⁵ NZEI Te Riu Roa Special Education Policy s C3

NZEI Te Riu Roa believes this is important work that should be completed and followed through.

Use of 0.1 and 0.2 allocation of extra teacher time:

NZEI Te Riu Roa believes that students with special educational needs have the right to high quality teaching and learning by trained and registered teachers who have a strong knowledge of the New Zealand Curriculum and are capable of working towards greater educational outcomes for the student²⁶.

NZEI Te Riu Roa supports the access to extra teacher time for students with high or very high special educational needs. NZEI Te Riu Roa supports the need for greater accountability and transparency in mainstream schools around the use of 0.1 and 0.2 allocated teacher time.

Resourcing the sector:

NZEI Te Riu Roa encourages fluidity in the distribution and coordination of resources and funding in the sector.

The current moderation system for ORRS, in the context of no new money, is appropriate. The ability to moderate, nationally, the needs of resources for students with special educational needs is crucial for the student's rights to education. This has implications on social justice and equality.

²⁶ NZEI Te Riu Roa Special Education Policy s C3

Conclusion:

NZEI Te Riu Roa believes that students with special educational needs must always be placed at the centre and ensure that the systems and processes that surround the student work, primarily, for the student.

The Government's value for money drive cannot ensure better educational outcomes for students with special educational needs. Should the Government decide to shift away from the current model a significant injection of funding, resources, Government commitment, and stakeholder involvement would need to be allocated specifically to consider this.

NZEI Te Riu Roa opposes outcomes in special education being measured against economic growth, well-being, and stability.

NZEI Te Riu Roa believes that in the current context of no extra funding the current 'mixed model'²⁷ is the correct model to continue with. Disestablishing the current model will not provide value-for-money and will not provide economical benefits.

NZEI Te Riu Roa believes that the provision of special education should be needs-based and not contestable²⁸. The current model of fundholding is not contestable and should remain that way.

In light of the 'baseline' cuts occurring at the Ministry of Education, NZEI Te Riu Roa believes it is crucial to acknowledge that the specialist itinerating staff are frontline staff and remain employed by the Ministry of Education.

NZEI Te Riu Roa is concerned about the misconception that exists within Government that the sector is 'broken' and needs fixing.

There is the need to let the sector settle from previous changes and reviews and let the sector take ownership of these changes. Successful stories and exemplars of good practice will emerge if given time.

NZEI Te Riu Roa would like to thank the Government for the opportunity to contribute and provide feedback for the Review of Special Education 2010.

NZEI Te Riu Roa would like to make an oral submission in Auckland on Friday 16 April.

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²⁷ NZEI Te Riu Roa believes a mixed model incorporates mainstream schools, Ministry of Education itinerating specialists, Kura, special schools and their satellites, and other variations that meet the geographic and social needs of students and parents/family/whānau.

²⁸ NZEI Te Riu Roa Special Education Policy s D1

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Annex 1 - NZEI Te Riu Roa Special Education Policy

A. Policy Scope

1. Students with special education needs are not defined by those special education needs. Their right to participate in the New Zealand education system is the same as that for all other students.
2. The special education policy statements:
 - Are supported by the standards of the Right to Education framework – Availability, Accessibility, Acceptability, and Adaptability (*Human Rights Commission, 2004, p261*).
 - Add the special education perspective to, and complement NZEI policy.
 - Are neither sector nor setting specific. Rather, they represent and have been developed from the collective strength of NZEI members' experience and knowledge and their work across the education sector whether as teachers, specialists or support staff.
 - Represent the perspective and aspirations of NZEI members. They are not intended to represent perspectives of special education lobby groups, parent groups, networks, or other agencies.

B. The Right to Education for All

1. NZEI asserts the right to education for all students within a quality public education system.
2. In a quality public education system the culture of centre/school/kura is conducive to supporting children, young people and their whānau. This means each centre/school/kura:
 - Embraces diversity and is accepting of all students. The culture/mauri/essence/uniqueness of each student is acknowledged and valued
 - Is supportive of students, staff, whānau/family.
 - Has policies and procedures in place and in practice.
3. Education is a shared responsibility with all involved contributing and working together so that learners succeed. Students with special education needs benefit most from relationships shaped from this shared responsibility when:
 - Relationships between home, family/whānau, relevant agencies and centre/school/kura are established at the earliest opportunity and are maintained throughout a student's learning pathway. These relationships are especially important at times of transition and change.
 - Decisions about the most appropriate centre/school/kura are jointly made by whānau/caregivers, teachers and other professionals.
 - There is clear communication. Information is shared between whānau/caregivers, students where appropriate, centre/school/kura staff, agencies and the community.
4. Cultural, physical and emotional safety is paramount. NZEI notes the tension between balancing the rights of individual students with the rights of all students, staff, whānau/caregivers and community.

C. Quality Teaching and Learning

1. All students have unique needs and are to be treated as individuals. Learning for students with special education needs means placing students at the centre, respecting and responding to their learning needs.
2. Quality teaching and learning for students with special education needs means:
 - Learning is student-centred, meaningful and relevant. Outcomes include both social and academic achievement.
 - Strengths are nurtured and celebrated.
 - Students are safe and secure.
3. This can be achieved when:
 - The curriculum is accessible to all students.

- There is a range of readily available resources both material and staffing to meet individual need.
- Teachers have a strong knowledge of the learning continuum and are able to identify and work to meet individual learning needs.
- Teachers have the primary responsibility for students learning and are well supported and resourced to do this.
- Teachers, support staff and specialists work together and there is clarity and acceptance of the role of each.
- Learning goals are jointly understood and everyone works towards them.
- Strong effective support systems are in place and are responsive to the needs of students, their families/whānau and teaching staff.

D. Support for Special Education

1. The provision of special education should be needs-based and not contestable.
2. NZEI supports the ongoing maintenance of a range of learning environments within a coordinated service. This is best demonstrated when:
 - Provision is appropriate to need, is in place on entry and remains throughout the system.
 - There are clear pathways within the service with access to, and between a continuum of learning environments, and where transition issues are minimised.
 - Parental choice is balanced between the needs of the child and the equitable provision of specialist resources that enable the placement.
3. The rights of the students to access the curriculum and the ability of staff to provide quality teaching and learning should be assured. Ensuring needs are met is a collective responsibility.
 - Locally, centre/school/kura, family/whānau, the community and relevant agencies are responsible for working together to make decisions appropriate to the teaching and learning needs of students.
 - Government is responsible for providing the resources to enable the best decisions to be made to ensure students' learning needs are met.
 - The Ministry of Education as the key central agency has the responsibility of working together with local education communities to ensure resources are provided as equitably as possible. This does not necessarily mean an equal distribution of resources, but does mean the provision of the best possible teaching and learning irrespective of geographic location, socio-economic circumstance or disability.
4. Special education provision should be tangible. This means:
 - Transparent and easily accessible processes for funding, staffing, property, transport, materials, or professional learning for staff.
 - Clear and available information for centres /schools/kura and families/whānau.
 - Timely access to the appropriate specialist or agency and the provision of close support and guidance as needed.
5. For NZEI this would be achieved by ensuring:
 - Time for preparation, planning, and building relationships with family/whānau, agencies, teachers, specialists and support staff.
 - Ongoing professional learning so that well qualified teachers, specialists and support staff build their expertise and knowledge.
 - Sufficient specialist staff with the experience and understanding to work in Miro Maori classes/centres.
 - Access to up to date research and best practice is readily available.
 - Teacher staffing levels provide for appropriate student numbers.
 - Specialist staffing levels so that there is equitable provision and manageable caseloads.
 - Special education teacher aides and support workers who have sufficient hours to be an effective support for teachers and students.
 - Job security for teachers, specialists and support staff through centrally funded positions.

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- Safe and secure learning environments and workplaces.
6. NZEI notes the implications for:
- Initial teacher education and the need to include special education components in programmes.
 - Sufficient government funding to ensure an effective and equitable provision.