

NZEI: AN ORGANISATIONAL REVIEW

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Executive Summary

Overview

This organisational review was commissioned by NZEI Te Riu Roa, to investigate whether NZEI's structures were appropriate given the challenges facing the organisation, and the fact that there has been no major review or fundamental change in structures since Tomorrows Schools. Structures facilitate the purpose, goals and strategies of an organisation. It is therefore necessary to examine goals and strategies and how structures enable or hinder their execution through the work of the Union.

The method adopted in undertaking this project was to consult widely through direct engagement with a broad cross-section of NZEI members, staff and structures and to supplement that with individual submissions via an on-line forum and through email. In addition, numerous submissions were received from worksite rep seminars and the deliberations of branches. The range of perspectives has been triangulated to create an accurate picture of how NZEI is, and how it needs to be, in order to be as effective an organisation as it can.

The volume and quality of the response to this process has been impressive, denoting a real interest among members and staff in the health of their Union and a desire to be involved in making it work better.

Context

Local affects of globalisation, greater complexity and interdependency and the growing fragmentation of markets and communities pose enormous challenges for our society. Economic and social well being are becoming increasingly difficult to sustain in a world that is also facing huge environmental challenges. In addition, major impending demographic shifts that will see the retirement of a 'bulge' of baby boomers over the next 10-15 years who will be dependent for their superannuation and health payments on a declining workforce made up of a rapidly growing proportion of Maori, Pacific Islanders and immigrants. Given poor educational outcomes for these population groups, it is fast becoming a national imperative to lift their educational attainment levels. Education is tasked with preparing people for this world.

Within education itself, the experience of NZEI members confirms the direction of these trends and their affect on education workers, schools, kids and the communities they come from.

Challenges facing education

The major challenges facing education, as confirmed by members, are as follows:

1. Poorly fed and treated kids from dysfunctional families display disruptive behaviours that affect the quality of education available to all.
2. Increasingly schools are expected to provide support and solutions for a whole range of broader social issues, yet are often not resourced to do so.
3. Teachers and principals have consistently reported the increasing stress and frustration they experience as they try to meet the emotional and workload challenges of dysfunctional kids, unsupportive parents, extra responsibilities, greater amounts of compliance-based bureaucracy, etc.
4. The teaching workforce is aging and it is becoming harder to recruit and retain suitable staff, particularly men.
5. There is declining confidence in the quality and relevance of teacher training from existing staff and trainees themselves.
6. New and emerging knowledge about how kids learn has major implications for educational practice and the design of the learning process. Teachers at all levels need to engage with this pedagogical content and incorporate it into their practice.

7. Big increases in Government spending in education have occurred over the last decade yet there is continual demand for even more resources. Government is increasingly asking where the return is on its investment.
8. Teachers and early childhood education workers believe that the wider community does not appreciate nor value the importance of education and therefore accords little status and respect to the profession.

It is also important to remember that despite these trends and issues, teaching can be, and often is, a very rewarding vocation, New Zealand primary schools achieve well in international terms.

In meeting some of these challenges a number of initiatives were identified in the course of undertaking the consultation phase of this project. They include:

1. Achieving a working consensus amongst all the key stakeholders in the sector that lifting educational practice is **the** key sectoral objective over the next 5-10 years
2. Translating that consensus into a series of “whole system” work-streams including: pedagogical leadership; attraction and recruitment of top quality trainees; re-design of teacher training to meet new forms of educational practice; professional development initiatives for existing teachers; better linkages between early childhood education and primary schools
3. Learning how to build and maintain effective working partnerships over time with key stakeholders
4. Working out how to scale-up successful intervention projects (eg literacy/numeracy strategies) so that they become mainstream
5. Shifting community attitudes about the value of learning
6. Improving community/school relationships and working with social funding and delivery agencies aimed at improving social well being.

Implications for NZEI and its strategies

Clarity of vision, goals, strategies, and priorities in achieving them are vital for the focus and coherence of any organisation, including NZEI. Currently, this clarity of purpose is missing. The organisation needs to develop explicit strategies for both the sector in which members work *and* NZEI itself to enable it to deliver on its strategies for the sector.

While not seeking through this project to develop a specific vision and goals (that is for NZEI itself to complete), the consultation phase of this project has identified the broad areas that need to be addressed by a direction setting process as:

Proactive sector leadership to improve the learning environment and educational outcomes for all kids, and, in so doing, lifting the quality of the work environment remains the core purpose and best means of representing and supporting members individually and collectively.

More specific goals designed to address current sector conditions might include:

1. Actively contributing to lifting educational practice to improve outcomes;
2. Teacher development, retention and professional standing;
3. Working in partnership with other sector partners, community agencies and local communities to achieve these objectives.

Many members' clearly articulated and like the idea of their union being visionary and influential on education issues. Such a vision and associated goals will help NZEI to rise above sectional interests and assist in focusing on key priorities.

This strategic focus is equally applicable regardless of who is in government. While some energy would almost inevitably be dissipated by the hiatus due to any change of government and/or policy, it will be even more imperative that the core strategic direction is advanced in the lead-up to the election as well as into the future.

To progress these goals the Union, for itself, might develop a purpose as follows:

NZEI will be as influential, relevant and effective as it can be in responding to the professional and industrial issues facing its members.

More specifically this means it needs to have the capability to:

1. Establish a clear and supported organisation-wide direction
2. Align all activities, decision-making and structures (nationally, regionally, sectorally, within interest groups) with this direction and monitor progress
3. Work collaboratively with other sector partners, while maintaining a strong and independent voice backed by member involvement
4. Adopt a learning orientation that encourages innovation, good process, and continuous improvement in all areas
5. Move quickly and decisively when required including the capacity for frequent and ICT driven “rapid response” communication, feedback and interaction with members
6. Make a commitment to the on-going renewal and development of activists, leaders and staff
7. Develop an organising orientation amongst all staff to enable the greatest level of member involvement in the widest range of activity.
8. Achieve organisational effectiveness in using resources and time including a commitment to minimising bureaucracy.

Having such specific organisational strategies and targets will in time enable NZEI to ensure that every decision, activity and process is aligned towards achieving its goals and priorities. It will also enhance NZEI’s ability to present a coherent ‘world view’ that represents a broad set of interests rather than a list of occupationally specific issues.

The key elements to consider in *setting* direction are to:

- i. maximise member involvement efficiently to build ownership
- ii. focus the process on setting broad direction based on member input rather than being overly prescriptive
- iii. have a limited number of goals and strategies that enable clear focus

A process aimed at achieving this is proposed in the body of the report. It aims to empower all parts of NZEI to be clear about their role then get on with their work within this agreed set of parameters.

A key theme emerging during the consultation phase was that NZEI does not currently have a clear strategic direction or an agreed set of priorities that can guide and drive its structures and staff in the conduct of their work. Nor is there an apparent connecting vision to unite all the varying interests inside the union. “Business as usual” can also overwhelm the Organisation leading to diffusion of focus and effort. A number of parts and people in NZEI also place their own interpretation on what is important.

Membership involvement

NZEI has a long and proud tradition in involving members in all aspects of its work. Considerable effort continues to be made in this area. Many members are happy to simply pay a fee and receive a service and are grateful that others attend meetings etc (instead of them). Meanwhile, NZEI has embraced an “organising” approach aimed at empowering members. In reality there is a continuum of membership involvement from inert to heavily involved.

The challenge for the future lies in experimenting with and continuing to create multiple pathways for busy members to be involved at whatever level suits them. Ease of involvement is the key, including the strategic use of social networking via email the Internet and mobile phones. A second key is a style of organising where every staff member of NZEI, including national office staff, is alert to the potential to create opportunities for membership involvement in every work situation they encounter.

A third key is in recognising that for members the distinction between industrial and professional issues is less important in the workplace where they both converge. There is significant opportunity for greater member involvement through professional issues.

Professional concerns need to be viewed as both vital for advancing the broader strategic objectives of NZEI (eg advancing educational practice) as well as organising opportunities in themselves. Furthermore, a holistic approach to work projects would also see the far more effective integration of professional and industrial staff resulting in more seamless work programmes

Strategy and structure

One of the hardest strategic and therefore, structural challenges for NZEI is to achieve a workable balance between a whole of organisation approach to setting and delivering on a strategic direction that everyone can relate to in some way while also ensuring that diverse voices are heard and properly responded to.

From the standpoint of an individual member or group who want to belong to the Union as a whole, the following conditions need to be satisfied:

- a clear sense of purpose, strategic direction and priorities
- ease of opportunity to be heard, and to observe follow-up
- continuing to achieve results
- a definable place for 'me' and 'my interests'
- pride from being associated with a respected and influential organisation

Structures

NZEI has largely left its core decision-making structures intact since well before the devolution that followed Tomorrows Schools. Some of them (branches, District Councils, Annual Meeting and the National Executive) work well some of the time. Some of them are redundant. To overcome the shortcomings of these structures, in an increasingly devolved and differentiated environment where identity and voice are increasingly important (and where amalgamations have taken place), a series of new structures, both informal and formal, have over time been 'bolted-on'. Some of these changes have been partly recognised in the Rules, others have not.

In sum this adds up to:

- a progressive side-lining of democratic structures largely because traditional structures no longer provide the level of member input needed to maintain effectiveness. People simply go around them!

- a proliferation of structures that make line of sight between a member and her/his organisation increasingly difficult to maintain
- a choking affect created by, in the memorable words of one experienced NZEI activist: “*too much fat and waffle,*”

This creates difficulty in ensuring that NZEI’s strategic priorities are facilitated by its structures, thereby diluting the overall impact of the Organisation. NZEI staff and elected representatives are hardworking people who are often not assisted in being as effective as they can be by the current configuration of structures.

The consultation phase of this project has identified a clear need and a mandate for some necessary structural changes that better support the strategies needed to contend with the emerging environment that NZEI and its members face. A draft set of criteria arising from the foregoing analysis that need to be satisfied in any revised structures might look like the following:

The structures will need to:

1. facilitate strategic direction setting and strategy delivery (eg good educational practice, sector partnership, balancing of professional and industrial interests etc.) with a whole of union focus
2. promote meaningful member involvement where both contribution and follow-up can be easily observed
3. meet the diverse needs of members within a whole of union context
4. promote cooperative and professional work practices
5. be cost effective and efficient
6. promote a learning and development orientation

In applying these criteria the following changes could be considered:

National Executive

- Major realignment around a governance (and not an operational) focus.

- Taking a 'whole of union' approach by dropping National Executive representation by occupational group in favour of seeking out the *best people across the whole of NZEI who are charged with representing all members* and advancing the goals of the organisation.
- A National Executive with ideally 9-11 members, including President, VP and Immediate Past President, elected by postal ballot across the whole union. In honouring Treaty obligations there would also be a Maori representative on the National Executive. A second-best option would be a form of regional representation based on numbers of members
- The National Executive would meet every 6-8 weeks with members fulfilling obligations around sub-committee work, constituency 'listening' and reporting in order to enhance their connectedness to the membership.

Biennial Conference

- The proposed process of strategic direction setting would culminate in a biennial conference involving no more than 150 delegates drawn from districts (or regions)
- Opportunity would also be provided for delegates to propose policy remits that were supported by their district or region

Regional Conferences

- In the year between Biennial Conferences, a regional conference would be held. The primary functions of this event would be to: promote a whole of union approach at a regional level; foster innovation and learning; ensure alignment of local activity to strategic priorities; promote networking and member participation.

Regional or District Councils

A revitalisation of regional membership structures to make them the clearinghouse for localised membership activity and they key unit for accountability and decision-making at a regional level.

Localised membership structures

- To facilitate ease of membership involvement *a range of local structures of equal status* would provide opportunities for members who so desire to participate in a forum of their choosing. The guiding principle that should determine the configuration of these local structures is *natural communities of interest*.
- They would include but not be confined to: existing or new branches (where any member can attend), Komiti Pasifika and Aronui Tomua; occupationally based networks (support staff, principals, early childhood education, special education groups such as resource, special needs, relief teachers, etc.); and different interest groups.
- A key requirement of such structures is to engage in activities that promote the relevance and visibility of NZEI and are aligned with strategic priorities.
- Local occupational networks for early childhood education, support staff and principals, would maintain links across regions and nominate representatives to be part of their equivalent National Advisory Group.
- These structures would essentially be self-organising, nominally funded and be charged with promoting local activity and involvement aligned to NZEI's strategic priorities.

National Executive Advisory Groups

Maintain the Support Staff, Early Childhood, Primary Teacher and Principals National Executive Advisory Groups. Membership of these NEAGs should be elected by and report to their local constituencies.

Maori structures

The suggestions about a process to evolve Maori structures in light of current imperatives and the strategic direction that NZEI settles on embodied in the observations on Maori structures as set out in section 6.1.3, need to be pursued.

Worksites and Worksite Reps

Recognition in the Rules of worksites as the basic unit of organisation in NZEI will acknowledge the structural changes that have taken place in the sector and the fact that this is where members are located and can most readily participate from.

Meeting design/learning orientation

Good quality information, relevant knowledge available at the gathering, good process design and facilitation to enable high quality discussion and a learning orientation are vital elements in every NZEI meeting, whatever structures are finally adopted.

At this stage, the particular shape of NZEI structures are less important than clarity and agreement around the criteria that have to be satisfied in designing them. Structures that *facilitate NZEI developing and executing its direction and priorities with meaningful membership involvement, accountability, and relative ease* are needed. This is the rationale for change.

Work organisation and practices

In the course of the consultation process a number of issues and suggestions to do with how staff are utilised to support strategic priorities arose, even though work organisation was not the primary focus of the review. NZEI is well served by dedicated, hard-working staff who sometimes have to struggle with bureaucratic work procedures. Recommendations arising from the consultation and analysis include:

- Explore how to achieve a better alignment between strategic direction and core staff structures, once strategy and structures have been agreed
- Facilitation of more seamless working together between industrial and professional teams
- Design work to enable greater flexibility so that the best fit-for-purpose teams available can be assembled as required

- A more deliberate project management orientation where cross functional teams with all the necessary skills (including communications and administration) are pulled together around defined pieces of work
- A need to facilitate more timely internal communications with all key functional groups on a regular basis. Meeting reps can then advise their co-workers of what is happening and how it might affect them
- Direct communication between people rather than funneling through senior managers
- Creating staff fora for national level discussion and debate amongst staff from all areas focused on translating priorities into achievable programmes of work that supersede localism. Local discussion can then focus on how to coordinate and deliver at a local level
- Developing a manual of good organising practice for current and future staff, as well as helping national office staff in adopting more of an organising perspective in their work.
- A useful rule of thumb that every staff member can ask in any work context is: *is what I/we are doing adding value to our strategic priorities; and is there a better way of doing it?*
- There is an urgent need to develop an ICT strategy to facilitate ease of member/member, member/organisation and staff/organisation networking and communication.

NZEI also needs to get better at dealing constructively with disagreement. Healthy tensions around important issues can be a source of energy and encourage innovation.

Capability and renewal

A recurring theme throughout this phase of the project is to do with how NZEI can build individual and organisational capability and renew its activists. Aside from meeting the conditions needed to satisfy a sense of pride and belonging, NZEI needs to develop an on-going programme of skill development for National Executive members, senior managers and staff members, F/Os, and to provide a leadership development pathway for worksite reps and other activists that will assist in meeting the goals of the Organisation.

Concluding comment

NZEI Te Riu Roa is a large, diverse and complex organisation with serious responsibilities not just to its members, but because of the very nature of their work, to their profession as well. It has been and in many areas continues to be a very successful organisation, achieving good outcomes for members and growing in size. Most members appreciate NZEI and believe it does a good job.

However, in a number of important respects it has become somewhat entangled with itself, and with good income, a reasonably friendly government and on-going success, it feels a little middle aged and 'paunchy.' Given the challenges facing the sector, identified by members and others, gaining greater organisational fitness and lifting performance in support of a more aspirational set of goals is becoming a growing imperative. Good results are likely to be harder to come by. There are already signs of new practices emerging on a number of fronts, but these progressive developments are episodic and not yet embedded across the organisation. The dominant culture, driven by old structures and fed by tradition, can impede organisational renewal and evolution.

The challenge for NZEI is whether being 'good enough' and not rocking the boat will do, or whether there is sufficient energy to strive for a more aspirational vision, with all that entails. Many of the members I have communicated with have already made that decision.

Recommendations on next steps

The primary intention of this report is to surface and table issues to do with the effectiveness of NZEI, particularly (but not exclusively) as they relate to structure. NZEI now has to digest and discuss its content and then work out how it wants to proceed.

A logical sequence from here would look like:

1. Wide discussion and debate among members and staff
2. Collation of feedback
3. Presentation of report and collated feedback to Annual Meeting in September for workshop discussion
4. Mandating of next steps (phase II) including confirmation of core goals and strategic direction (or agreement on process to do this); setting up project team to fine-tune structural re-design and implementation plan; working through operational implications in sequence.

Introduction

Virtually all reviews or reports connected to the education sector have over many decades referred to times of great change and challenge. It is almost a cliché. This organisational review of NZEI Te Riu Roa (NZEI for short) is no different. The challenges facing schools, teachers, communities and, by direct connection, our society's future well-being are considerable. It is entirely appropriate and timely that NZEI takes stock of itself as an organisation to ensure it is as effective as it can be in fulfilling its primary purpose, as specified in the Rules, of *“supporting and representing members, individually and collectively.”*

1.1 The mandate

The specific mandate for this project stems from a recommendation passed at the 2007 Annual Meeting calling for a review of NZEI's structures which has been acted on by decision of the National Executive. The motivation for the review stems from a combination of factors including:

- Concern at the proliferation of somewhat piecemeal structures and networks representing efforts to meet the needs of occupational and other sectional interests (not currently being met through existing structures) that have been “bolted on” to the formal structures of NZEI. These structural add-ons are perceived by many as possibly promoting sectional interests to the detriment of the collective good of NZEI, begging the question of whether some streamlining of structures may be appropriate.
- There has been much change within the education sector and the Union yet there has been no comprehensive review of structures and the whole organisation for a long time. (Fundamental membership structures such as branches and district councils have remained unchanged since before “Tomorrows Schools.”)
- Allied with this is a lingering sense that while NZEI has continued to achieve good results and is perceived as effective by its members (eg via the membership survey) it is not quite performing to its potential, its performance is uneven and needs to be lifted to meet the challenges ahead.

Thoughtful and well-designed evolution is needed.

NZEI needs to be commended for having the courage to engage an outsider with no particular “agenda” nor experience in this sector to explore its fitness as an organisation. This inevitably involves being opened up to close scrutiny, a deal of discomfort as cherished assumptions and long-held views are questioned, and some disquiet at the prospect of unsettling change. However, to the credit of those involved, courage has been shown in facing up to such scrutiny for the purpose of making NZEI as good as it can be for its members, and for those who work within it.

1.2 More than structure

Of course structures do not exist in isolation. They serve to facilitate the purpose, goals and strategies of the organisation. So to make sense of any structure it is necessary to examine what they are intended to facilitate which means looking at these organisational drivers and the extent to which structures enable or hinder their execution in an operational sense. Therefore, inevitably, a structural review ends up becoming a whole of organisation review.

While the scope of the review has widened this report focuses on the key organisational issues around strategy and structure and how effectively the different parts of NZEI are aligned. There are many matters that the review touches on in passing but cannot fully focus on. These have been earmarked for future attention once the fundamentals have been addressed.

1.3 Approach to the report

This report aims, as a whole, to:

- Describe the context and challenges facing NZEI
- Identify the kind of organisation NZEI needs to be to meet these challenges
- Describe the current state of NZEI
- Identify the key issues that need to be addressed to close the gap between the desired and actual state of the organisation
- Outline some proposals for moving forward

It is intended that this report will be widely disseminated and discussed throughout the organisation including at Annual Meeting in 2008. All of this represents Phase 1 of the review project.

In Phase 2, the outcome of these deliberations will then be translated into a work programme designed to come up with specific proposals for any agreed changes. These, in turn, will then be taken out for consultation before any final decisions are made.

This method explicitly acknowledges the importance of proper consultative processes, and allowing adequate time to achieve necessary change in large, slow moving organisations that rely on gaining consent and building ownership for change to be successful.

2. Method

NZEI Te Riu Roa is a large, diverse and complex national organisation. A single reviewer is therefore challenged in gaining sufficient understanding of how things work and in being exposed to a wide range of perspectives to enable both as many 'voices' to be heard as possible, and to be able to validate recurring themes.

My approach to this task has been to:

- Review reports and other internal documentation
- Develop a shared understanding of the real scope of the project and consult with elected and appointed leaders, the National Executive, Advisory Groups, Regional Secretaries and other staff members and to advise progress

- Meet with a cross-section of members including those engaged in the formal structures and networks (“activists”), as well as general members in their workplaces
- Meet with a cross-section of head office, regional and administrative staff
- Create opportunities for those I cannot get to meet (due to time and resource constraints) to have their say on key issues through Worksite Rep training sessions, an on-line forum via NZEI’s web-site, and general communications to members, as well as inviting people to submit their thoughts directly to me via email
- Meet with a number of external agencies and individuals who are connected to NZEI and the education sector and who can provide an outsider-looking-in perspective.

The nature of these meetings have been either facilitated sessions with larger groups, or more in depth conversations with individuals or small groups of 2-3 people, who have simply been asked to tell their ‘story’.

The intent behind this approach has been two-fold: to engage as many people as at many levels as possible in order to paint a well-rounded picture of NZEI; and to encourage a good cross-section of the organisation to reflect on the effectiveness of NZEI in relation to the challenges it faces. The more that people are open to thinking about what is needed, the more readily any agreed changes can be implemented.

In terms of a response to the opportunity, the number and thoughtfulness of submissions has almost been overwhelming (for a single reviewer!). There have been numerous postings on the on-line forum, hundreds of work-site reps have expressed their views via a structured portion of their training seminars, many branches have completed questionnaires, and I have received hundreds of written and emailed submissions and lots of individual phone calls. To add to that are the hundreds of people I have met in both formal and informal meetings, as well as individually, who represent a cross section of members from the fully to the barely engaged in union activities. As an exercise in hearing thought provoking contributions from individual members, it couldn’t have been more successful.

This consultation phase has enabled me to triangulate and test a wide range of different perspectives and to identify recurring themes. The breadth and depth of

the consultation and this triangulation of perspectives provides a good level of confidence about the efficacy of the information on which this report is based despite its qualitative nature.

2.1 Reviewers 'bias'

Overlaying this information is a conceptual orientation, a set of assumptions and a body of experience that I bring as a consultant. They can be summarised as follows:

- 'Organisation' itself (eg structures, systems, processes and culture) is a strategic tool that can be deployed effectively to advance the objectives of the organisation
- An orientation to learning and a developmental approach to organisations and the people within them is proving to be the best approach to creating greater responsiveness and leveraging this tool (of 'organisation') in volatile environments
- Organisations are complex living systems comprised of people mixed together with a whole array of expectations, formal and informal rules and processes
- Aligning vision, goals and strategies with structures and operating systems and processes is needed to achieve organisational effectiveness
- A core set of lived values provides a firm anchor in what is otherwise an ever-changing world
- Employee voice and smart participative processes bring huge benefits to any organisation but particularly to a membership based one
- A certain level of bureaucracy is essential in running any large organisation, however, it should be the minimum necessary
- Control and coordination of work is best located where the work is done rather than one or more levels above.

2.2 Acknowledgment

The enthusiasm of people in responding to this opportunity has been both surprising and encouraging. Members at all levels are intensely interested in the topics covered by the review and the health of their organisation with many keenly awaiting the opportunity to read this report and participate in subsequent stages in the review. I can only hope that this interest, enthusiasm and participation is encouraged and carried forward to subsequent stages.

I also wish to acknowledge the cooperation of all staff in responding to my requests for assistance in organising meetings and facilitating communications with members, particularly the Communications and Educators teams and the Regional Secretaries. No barriers have been put in my way at any stage.

3. Context

3.1 The bigger picture

This section aims to provide a very brief perspective on the context, particularly as it relates to the education sector, in which this review takes place. It is not intended to be a comprehensive environmental scan.

In the global environment we live in, no community is immune from the fast acting fall-out of decisions and actions taken by others. This is true whether we are talking about economic issues, political and social trends, environmental matters, cultural influences, or technological developments. People have to somehow find ways of living with the consequences of these decisions, process a complex array of information, absorb the pressures and make sense of it all, in the way they choose to live their lives, or else become marginalised. Social well-being can be measured by how well we manage to do all of this, how we support other citizens to also do well and how we hold the whole array of interdependent systems together and try and make them work for us.

Greater complexity and interdependency within and between the key forces that shape our lives, a loss of faith in many traditional institutions, ever increasing people mobility, and rapid change at virtually every level of society characterise our fast paced existence. For example, this is well demonstrated in the information and communications technology arena where information flows quickly through both formal (eg traditional media) and informal (eg the internet) channels enabling people to access data and opinion at a keystroke, quickly by-passing often distrusted conventional media and other institutional sources. Information and communication technologies are transforming social discourse.

Increasing numbers of busy people are going to their computer or mobile phone for their social discourse and “interpersonal” connections rather than to face to face meetings.

These currents of change also reveal a fragmentation of ‘markets’ and communities. Mass markets have had their time. While we can all unite around a common ideal from time to time, we also expect our highly differentiated needs to be met. This is no different for unions. These dynamics pose huge challenges for large democratically oriented organisations wishing to be responsive to their members, while keeping alive the powerful ideal of strength through unity and collectivism.

Equipping people to survive and thrive in these environments is largely the role of education. No wonder teachers and others in education often feel overwhelmed by the enormity of what they are asked to do! There is no more important task in society than preparing its citizens for life. As noted in the Ministry of Social Development’s 2007 Social Well Being Report:

“Knowledge and skills enhance people’s ability to meet their basic needs, widen the range of options open to them in every sphere of life, and enable them to influence the direction their lives take. The skills people possess can also enhance their sense of self-worth, security and belonging.

We live in a society where access to information and proficiency with technology are becoming more important. An inclusive society will increasingly require everybody to have high levels of knowledge and skills.

Knowledge and skills include education and training, as well as abilities gained through daily life. The experiences of very young children within their families affect their acquisition and use of knowledge and skills, and influence their capacity to learn. Adults acquire skills through their work and non-work activities – for example, parenting skills or skills relevant to recreation or leisure activities.

For many people, the acts of learning and mastering new skills are important in themselves. Possession of knowledge and skills can be integral to a person's sense of belonging and self-worth: many people define themselves by what they can "do", not only in employment but elsewhere in life.

Knowledge and skills relate directly to employment decisions and to career choices. Those with relatively few educational qualifications are more likely to be unemployed and, on average, have lower incomes when in work. This affects people's economic standard of living as well as their security and ability to make choices about their lives. Knowledge and skills are important for gaining access to services and for understanding and exercising civil and political rights."
(<http://www.socialreport.msd.govt.nz/knowledge-skills/index.html>)

The report also notes on the same page:

Participation in early childhood education contributes significantly to a child's later development. Going to a kindergarten, Kōhanga reo or some other early childhood service prepares children for further learning, helps equip them to cope socially at school and develops their bodies and minds to better prepare them for adult life. Quality early childhood programmes can help narrow the achievement gap between children from low-income families and children from more advantaged families."

This places the full range of NZEI members at the very heart of this challenge.

Of added importance in a New Zealand context are the educational challenges posed by demographic changes which will see a huge mass of baby boomers 'retiring' (starting from about 2010). These people will be dependent for their superannuation and health payments for the next 20-30 plus years of their lives on a shrinking workforce with rapidly increasing proportions of Maori, Pasifika, and immigrants. Given the disproportionately poor educational outcomes experienced by Maori and Pasifika in particular within the current system it is a national economic and social imperative (for both the workforce and the retirees!) that everyone in the education system can gear up to lift the educational attainment of our future workforce and citizenry.

It is also important to note that no single institution can be responsible for meeting all of these challenges. The very nature of these issues demands a high degree of coordination and working partnerships between key participants in both the education and social sectors aimed at creating greater cohesion in delivering more seamless services. NZEI's effectiveness can be significantly enhanced if it can recognise its interdependency and work with other stakeholders accordingly.

3.2 Challenges facing education

In determining whether NZEI structures are suited to delivering strategy it is important to first have a clear sense of the challenges that need to be addressed by the Organisation's strategy. As part of the review, an informal but widely participated-in survey of views about the big issues facing the sector has revealed a surprisingly high level of consensus, irrespective of position, location, size of workplace etc, among NZEI members on the key challenges and trends they are experiencing.

These often interconnected challenges are summarised as follows:

9. The price of educational and social failure (eg child poverty) among New Zealand's long educational "tail" is already being experienced by many workers in the system who report increasing levels of social stress being manifested in classrooms. Poorly fed and treated kids from dysfunctional families display disruptive behaviours that affect the quality of education available to all. A significant number of children are reported to arrive at school as 5 year olds already lagging behind in basic social and language skills.

10. Increasingly schools are expected to provide support and solutions for a whole range of broader social issues. Being nested in virtually every New Zealand community, schools are uniquely placed at the epicentre of these communities. This is both a strength and a weakness. This embeddedness comes with a set of expectations from both government

and parents about the social agency role of schools as vehicles for delivering a range of services that extend far beyond teaching kids. Schools are not currently geared up and resourced to fulfill this role and many in the sector question whether they should be, given their primary function is providing education. (In reality there may be little choice, or in fact in may be an opportunity, which, in both cases, then begs the question about realistic support levels for educational professionals.)

11. Teachers and principals have consistently reported the increasing stress and frustration they experience as they try to meet the emotional and workload challenges of dysfunctional kids, unsupportive parents, extra responsibilities (eg child health), greater amounts of compliance-based bureaucracy, new curricula, etc. These difficulties are compounded by the absence of any connecting vision for the sector that might make it all seem worthwhile in the cause of some agreed aspirations.

12. The teaching workforce is aging, many younger teachers are quitting after only a few years in the job (the average length of service is now reported as being 7 years), and it is becoming harder to attract and retain suitable staff, particularly men. While New Zealand can compare reasonably well on some education performance indicators with other OECD countries, there is a clear sense of impending crisis even before taking into account the demographic challenges ahead of us as a nation.

13. There is declining confidence in the quality of teacher training and its relevance to the challenges that teachers face both from existing teachers/principles and from the trainees themselves. It is also seen as more difficult trying to influence this training given that the Universities have assumed control of new teacher training.

14. Learning is a complex process. New and emerging knowledge about how kids learn has major implications for educational practice and the design of the learning process. Teachers at all levels need to engage with this pedagogical content and assessment knowledge and incorporate it into their practice over time. This is critical in switching *all* kids on in the classroom ("*making the system fit the need of kids rather than the opposite*"), especially given the social importance of meeting the needs of the significantly sized educational "tail."

15. Considerable net increases in Government spending in education have occurred over the last decade and yet there is continual demand for even more resources. Meanwhile, Government is increasingly asking where is the return on its (and the public's) investment, where is the evidence of it making a discernible difference? This poses a significant challenge to the sector as a whole in terms of its real and perceived effectiveness. In a small resource constrained economy there will be a growing expectation (from governments, the Treasury and perhaps even the public) that more 'value' is created with existing or only incrementally increasing resource levels, especially over the next 3-5 years.

16. Teachers and early child education workers believe that the wider community does not appreciate nor value the importance of education and therefore accord little status and respect to the profession. Naturally enough this flows through in the attitude of parents and their kids to teachers, and affects job satisfaction and recruitment.

There is a strong thread connecting many of these challenges. They tend to reinforce each other in cyclical patterns.

At the human level it is very apparent that life has just been getting tougher and tougher for many teachers, principals, specialist and support staff, in both early childhood and primary education. People feel worn down by the ever-increasing demands and expectations that they feel are imposed on them by government and its agencies, as well as by communities, and parents. Schools can sometimes seem like society's dumping ground. They also feel unappreciated in a world that shows declining levels of respect for both learning and teachers which can be manifested in disruptive, aggressive behaviour by both children and, on occasion their parents.

They also feel a sense of growing desperation at the numbers of their colleagues that are leaving and the difficulties in attracting suitable replacements. Teaching seems less like a vocation and more like a job.

They know that plenty of resources have been invested in the sector but it never seems to be enough. While many kids are doing fine, others are failing badly and are likely to keep on doing so.

Of course it is also important to remember that despite these trends and issues, teaching can be, and often is, a very rewarding vocation, New Zealand primary schools achieve well in international terms, and the classroom remains a reasonably benign work environment compared to many others. However, it is equally important to recognise, as many NZEI members do, that there are a number of deep and systemic issues to faces up to that create uncertainty and concern, as well as opportunity.

The things that would make the greatest difference to education are in many instances the toughest issues to deal with. There is no magic bullet. However, as noted above the stakes are high for kids, teachers and society as a whole, and so these challenges cannot be resiled from even though NZEI can only be a part, albeit a critical part, of the solution.

3.3 Improving educational practice

At a government policy level, structural (Tomorrow's Schools) and curriculum issues are regarded as having largely been dealt with. Education policy is now shifting towards improving educational practice based on research and experimentation aimed at lifting educational performance. In particular there is a new focus on the educational "tail" – non-achievers and those with literacy/numeracy problems. This is timely and presents a great opportunity to address some of the issues discussed above.

The Ministry of Education (MOE) with its big investment in early education and its focus on the tail believes that in making breakthroughs in these areas it will "lift all boats" as less disrupted classes will also free higher achievers to get on.

However, there are many issues to contend with in translating these good intentions into reality. Not least among them is the important role and contribution that education stakeholder organisations need to play in responding to these challenges. Current goals, priorities, structures, organisational cultures and practices adopted by these organisations (including NZEI) have contributed hugely to the system we have at present. Significant reform over a number of years will therefore be required by these organisations to re-position the sector to provide the leadership to address these challenges. To do so requires a large measure of courage and intellectual honesty in facing up to the modes of operating that characterise current practice. It will also take a lot of good will and determination to re-configure the system to make it work better.

At a sectoral level some of these issues, identified in the course of undertaking the consultation phase of this project, that need to be addressed include:

1. Achieving a working consensus amongst the key stakeholders in the sector (the Government – whatever its hue – the Ministry of Education, education sector unions, the Teachers Council, New Zealand Principals Federation, all the teacher education providers, the TEC, Early Childhood education organisations) that lifting educational practice (and switching all kids on in the classroom) is **the** key sectoral objective over the next 5-10 years, as is defining what that practice entails
2. Translating that consensus into a series of “whole system” work-streams including: pedagogical leadership; recruitment and retention of top quality trainees; re-design of teacher education to meet new forms of educational practice; professional development initiatives for existing teachers; better linkages between early childhood education and primary schools, at least in the first instance, to facilitate seamlessness
3. Learning how to build and maintain effective working partnerships over time with key stakeholders, including supporting other organisations when they take a lead on an issue
4. Working out how to scale-up successful intervention projects (eg literacy and numeracy strategies) so that they become mainstream

5. Shifting community attitudes about the value of learning and the critical role (and therefore status) of educational professionals

6. Improving community/school relationships and connectedness and working smartly with social funding and delivery agencies aimed at improving social well being.

These matters represent huge paradigm-shift challenges to the education sector and its constituent parts, particularly in how they might have to work together, yet the imperative of improving educational outcomes and the working lives of those who within it remains.

System and institutional interconnectedness in achieving education sector goals is increasingly obvious to many. Added to this is the growing practice of working in partnership as a means of trying to manage the relationships between different parties who need to co-operate to get any real traction in tackling such issues. Partnership practices are now a work method of choice in many different sectors as organisations realise their 'boundaries' are permeable, they are inter-dependent, and cannot achieve their objectives by their own efforts alone.

3.4 Implications for NZEI

NZEI can, if it chooses, play a vital leadership role in responding to these needs and opportunities. In some areas it can be directly influential, in others only indirectly, however in every instance it can be a leading voice. A significant proportion of the members I spoke to (both active and less so) could clearly see and articulate the link between these issues and what they mean for NZEI, its priorities and how it needs to function in this environment. Furthermore they were keen to be part of an organisation that is exercising effective leadership in these areas.

The implications for NZEI can be summarised as follows:

1. A key objective for NZEI is to become more influential and relevant (*“an essential to have rather than an obliged to have contributor”* as one person put it) in responding to the agenda of issues identified above. Proactive leadership on these issues and in building key cross-sector relationships to achieve greater political and policy leverage in progressing their resolution are seen as critical.
2. NZEI needs to have and articulate a clear vision, goals, strategic direction and set of priorities for the sector *and* for itself that stems from and is endorsed by members
3. NZEI needs to be very well informed about and have a higher public profile on key professional issues and in promoting the importance of education in the wider community.
4. “Professional” issues lie at the centre of the day to day world that NZEI member’s encounter now and in the foreseeable future. They are absolutely linked to workplace conditions of employment (the “industrial” issues). Improved educational practices, better linkages and system rationality, and an improving community environment would do much to allay the stresses and concerns of educational professionals. The old truism that *“a child’s learning environment is a teacher’s work environment”* has never been more apt.
5. Educational professionals can readily see the interconnectedness of professional and industrial issues. They come together in the workplace. More demanding and stressful working environments have generated an increased demand for improved working conditions. Staff retention issues lead to demands for higher salaries to attract new recruits and retain existing staff. Such improvements can, in turn, help lift educational outcomes. The challenge, as always, is not whether an ‘industrial’ or ‘professional’ emphasis in the work of NZEI dominates but how to skillfully manage the very close relationship between them so that each can leverage off the other without diluting each others potency. To retain its

professional credibility NZEI must honestly face up to good research outcomes backed by grounded membership experience and not fudge such issues because they may be inconvenient in advancing a particular industrial initiative.

Of critical importance in achieving these objectives is the ability to mobilise membership activity in support of such strategic priorities. The difference between NZEI carrying out business as usual as opposed to advocating on issues for which there is demonstrable membership support is absolutely apparent to the Ministry of Education. Members understand that this means:

- organising around professional (as well as industrial) issues that affect the working lives of members;
- enabling busy members to participate in a variety of ways according to their preferences and level of interest;
- simplifying the NZEI structures to make them more accessible;
- streamlining speedy information dissemination; and
- devolving more decision-making within agreed values and parameters rather than trying to maintain control

For NZEI there is a choice: continue on the present pathway of achieving acceptable results (for the moment anyway) in key collective agreements, retain a largely internal and separate focus, and fiddle with a few minor improvements; or take up the challenge of leading a more aspirational vision for itself and the sector in recognition of the educational and social imperatives of the time.

This is no easy challenge as members' satisfaction remains quite high (at least following the recent Collective Agreement settlements) and there is a degree of comfort in keeping on doing the same things. It is also quite demanding both intellectually and in terms of the energy needed to take up a more aspirational agenda. However, it isn't half as much fun or anywhere near as socially or educationally important to Aotearoa New Zealand as taking on new challenges. Furthermore, taking the easier and well-known path is less likely to re-position NZEI as an influential sector leader which is key to making NZEI attractive to be a part of and essential to its renewal.

4. Clear Vision, Goals and Strategies

4.1 *The Desired State*

Clarity of vision, goals, strategies, and priorities in achieving them are vital for the focus and coherence of any organisation, including NZEI. The organisation needs to develop explicit strategies for both the sector in which members work *and* NZEI itself to enable it to deliver on its strategies for the sector. There are two major elements to consider here: their content, or *what* NZEI is setting out to achieve; and the processes (or the '*how*') needed in putting them together. The overall objective is to establish a clear line of sight between a members experience at work and the clear strategic objectives of their organisation.

4.1.1 The content

While not seeking through this project to develop a specific vision and goals (that is for NZEI itself to complete), the consultation phase of this project, as referred to in Section 3 above, has identified the broad areas that need to be addressed by a direction setting process. This might be described as:

Proactive sector leadership to improve the learning environment and educational outcomes for all kids, and, in so doing, lifting the quality of the work environment remains the core purpose and best means of representing and supporting members individually and collectively.

More specific *goals* designed to address current sector conditions in a coherent and systemic way might include:

4. Actively contributing to lifting educational practice to improve outcomes;
5. Teacher development, retention and professional standing;

6. Working more closely to achieve these objectives with other sector partners, community agencies and local communities themselves.

None of this will be surprising to NZEI activists and staff. Most of the concerns expressed by members are encompassed within such goals. In fact members' clearly like the idea of their union being visionary and influential on education issues! Such a vision and associated goals will help NZEI to rise above sectional interests and assist in providing focus to help decide priorities.

It is also worth noting that such a strategic focus is applicable no matter who is in government. It is imperative that the core strategic direction is advanced in the lead-up to the election as well as into the future.

To make real progress towards achieving these goals at the level of 'organisation,' the Union, for itself (as opposed to the sector), might develop a purpose along the lines of:

NZEI will be as influential, relevant and effective as it can be in responding to the professional and industrial issues facing its members.

More specifically this means it needs to continue to develop the capability to:

9. Establish a clear organisation-wide direction that is understood and supported by a strategic (if not numerical) majority of members and staff
10. Align all activities, decision-making and structures (nationally, regionally, sectorally, within interest groups) with this direction and monitor performance towards agreed goals
11. Work collaboratively with other sector partners where possible, while maintaining a strong and independent voice backed by member involvement
12. Adopt a learning orientation that encourages innovation, good process design (eg of meetings!), and continuous improvement in all areas (ie. *always ask: why do we do it this way; is there another or better way; what do we need to do to make it work?*)

13. Move quickly and decisively when required including the capacity for frequent and ICT driven “rapid response” communication, feedback and interaction with members
14. Make a commitment to the on-going renewal and development of activists, leaders and staff
15. Develop an organising orientation amongst all staff (ie. “how can we meaningfully involve members in this activity?”) towards every aspect of what it does to enable the greatest level of member involvement in the widest range of activity. (In this sense all staff are ‘organisers.’ They just have a different orientation in their work.) Creating an ‘Organising Framework’ that clarifies expectations and provides tools and examples will be essential in making this happen.
16. Achieve organisational effectiveness in using resources and time including a commitment to minimum necessary bureaucracy.

Having such specific organisational strategies and targets will in time enable NZEI to ensure that every decision, activity and process is aligned towards achieving goals and priorities. It will also enhance NZEI’s effectiveness in working with the Ministry of Education by consistently presenting a coherent ‘world view’ that represents a set of interests rather than a list of occupationally specific issues.

4.1.2 The process

The key elements to consider in *setting* direction are to:

1. maximise member involvement efficiently to build ownership
2. focus the process on setting broad direction based on member input rather than being overly prescriptive
3. have a limited number of goals and strategies that enable clear focus

In a membership-based organisation bottom-up processes enable members to identify key issues and concerns and to simply be heard. It also exposes people to the “big picture” and helps them to appreciate where they fit, how they can contribute, and to better understand priority setting.

As noted in the 2006 Union Membership Survey (p. 22) conducted by UMR:

“NZEI is a large and complex organisation which organises a huge range of activities and has a diverse membership representing many different occupational and other interest groups. This makes it especially difficult for individual members to gain a strategic overview of the union as a whole, over and above any expected bias towards their own needs.” It goes on to add: *“A key organising strategy must be to find ways to break down membership silos by helping members see common areas of interest and take a long term view of priorities.”*

The Survey analysis also found that when members are involved they *“take a more positive view of the union and the value they are getting from it, and are also more inclined to take a longer and more strategic union wide perspective on issues and priorities.”* (P.22)

The second element reinforces the importance of focusing on direction rather than detailed strategic planning (a contradiction in terms as far as I am concerned). The orientation and intent of strategy, together with setting priorities (which, of course, change over time) are key in shaping both expectations and helping people to work out what they should be doing to support the agreed direction and priorities.

The third element is aimed at avoiding long “wish-lists” that try and incorporate everyone’s agenda resulting in a dilution of effort and resources across too broad a front. An agreed and supported direction backed by a limited number of priorities can help create the focus that generates the energy necessary to achieve results.

Putting all three elements together into an organisational process for NZEI might look something like the following:

Member involvement

Every two or three years members are sent (either in hard copy or by email or web-site posting) a two page summary of current direction, goals, strategies, priorities and progress to date. This is followed by a series of work-site visits (morning tea's, lunchtimes, after-"school") by Field Staff (and maybe Executive members and national office staff), as well as network, branch and work-site rep meetings to seek member views on current issues, priorities etc and to link these to the bigger picture of union activity. This process might take place over a 4-5 month period.

Collation and analysis

This information is collated by regions and forwarded to national office for analysis, research and consolidation into a new draft direction incorporating goals, strategies, and priorities.

(Note: In helping to decide strategic priorities the following criteria might be helpful:

- How does it promote member involvement?
- Does it promote collegiality/collectivism?
- Does it promote learning and development?
- Does it promote NZEI influence?
- Does it promote partnership with others?)

Membership Endorsement

This draft is sent out to all members (again, either by email or hard copy) for reflection and discussion. Their feedback is passed through local and regional structures and networks and then taken to either a series of regional conferences or a union-wide conference where it forms the core agenda item along with support papers and speakers. The conference(s) are designed to enable discussion, debate and amendment on the direction from a whole-of-organisation perspective before endorsing a new direction. This process would take the place of remit passing. The final result is again disseminated to members.

Executive implementation

The National Executive is then charged with overseeing the implementation of the direction for the next 2-3 years. Their primary role is to monitor progress towards agreed goals, assess new matters and issues against the general direction before deciding where they fit into the overall set of priorities. Members receive 6 monthly reports (as above) of progress consistent with the goals, targets and priorities.

This process is aimed at generating informed membership input into the direction-setting for NZEI and enabling staff and members to implement, and the National Executive to monitor and fine-tune, the direction.

A key consequence of this process will be to mandate and strengthen the Centre so it can provide clear direction and leadership (arising from member input) while simultaneously providing clear parameters for regional and local action.

Power from devolution

Crucially, this kind of process recognises one of the key realities about large, modern membership based organisations: to believe that the Centre (or National Office in this case) can *control* everything is sheer folly. The trend to fragmentation of “communities” to meet diverse needs and greater demand for individuality make this a pipe-dream. Paradoxically real power derives from having clear national goals, strategies, values and expectations which members have had a part in creating and then setting people free with the necessary resources to pursue them in their own contexts. This is not to promote anarchy but to recognise that when control and coordination of work is devolved to where the work is done, within agreed parameters, real productive outcomes will be achieved, thereby delivering genuine rather than illusory power to the organisation.

Of course there will be a number of grey areas where what to do or take on will not always be clear. NZEI also will need to respond to what external forces throw at it. There is also “business as usual” which is to do with time consuming work such as transacting negotiation of agreements and responding to individual member cases. However, a clear process of direction setting and prioritising will help ‘clear the lines’ and overcome the problem of trying to be all things to all people.

On-going implementation

It will also enable paid leadership, staff and various membership fora to focus their energies on activities that are most relevant and add greatest value to the agreed direction and priorities of their organisation.

All participants in union structures and staff need to be able to closely relate their work planning and activity to these goals and priorities, including having their own performance (and funding, in the case of structures) assessed in terms of its contribution towards them.

This will include regular staff discussions about how these priorities translate into activity in the context of changing circumstances so there is a constantly evolving consensus about priorities at a national and regional level. Fora that enable staff to focus on national level matters (rather than a regional orientation) will need to be designed. If staff are involved in these ways they are much better placed to make informed judgments of their own about how to make the best use of their time, given the unions priorities.

This might, for example, mean that a minority national occupational group or local interest group may be allocated a certain level of people and financial resources in a particular year to pursue their objectives within the context of NZEI's overall direction. They will be able to determine, with advice from staff members, how best to deploy that resource to achieve their goals. In some cases the staff allocation may take the form of a cross-functional team with a mix of skills (eg. research, advocacy, organising, and communications) which will work collaboratively in support of the group. The "project" will be evaluated to extract learnings that others can use.

Learning and review processes

It is worth noting that the learning orientation part of the proposed organisational strategy will be vital in bringing this approach to life. The more conscious design of meeting and other engagement processes (from workplace meetings, branch and network meetings, through to major conferences) is essential in lifting the quality and depth of discussion to do justice to more strategically focused content. The objective should be that in every instance they:

- have appropriate information/knowledge available to them to ensure discussion is informed
- are properly facilitated
- geared to discussion and learning (rather than rhetoric and resolutions)
- achieve some kind of outcome
- receive some feedback on their deliberations, or at least be able to observe follow-up

The second dimension to learning is the capacity to honestly review performance on a regular basis as an essential part of every project. If the orientation is towards learning then these processes, while facing up to the hard questions, will be focused on improvement rather than allocating blame. In turn this can contribute to a greater appetite for experimentation and risk taking – essential attributes in being able to adapt to changing circumstances.

Renewal and growth

A key concern expressed by many people during the consultation phase of this project was to do with the aging teacher and union activist workforce and the difficulties that posed for ensuring succession given the indifference of many younger people towards the union. Renewal has to be an on-going strategic priority that requires specific attention. NZEI assuming (and earning) the mantle of sector leader, getting to younger members via their own forms of communication and developing processes for talent spotting and pathways for leadership development are essential components for attracting younger members.

A specific and long term commitment to membership growth is also essential for two major reasons:

- to maintain and build membership numbers and finances and not take for granted that this will continue to occur naturally
- to create an orientation and develop practices among staff and worksite reps that are conducive to attracting new members

This approach implies that NZEI needs to stay abreast of the attitudes and needs of people who are entering the workforce and adjust the union 'offer' to remain attractive and relevant to them. Efforts in this area are patchy with some good work among student teachers and worksite reps in a number of areas but overall a half-hearted and non-strategic commitment to both growth in membership and renewal of activists.

4.2 The actual state

4.2.1 Content and process

The "Quality Public Education for the 21st Century" priority setting initiative for 2008 undertaken by NZEI covers many of the areas referred to in the previous sections and represents a good start in trying to ensure activity fits with priorities. However, it is incomplete in terms of the needs identified by members in making no particular reference to sector leadership, working in partnership, and working more pro-actively with communities and social agencies. While there are organisational goals such as "activism, collectivism, and leadership" there is little sense of the kind of internal strategies and organisational capabilities needed to deliver them.

The overall impression is that there is no apparent connecting vision to unite all the varying interests inside the union. This was very much a recurring theme during the consultation phase. (For example, a key leader noted: *"I am not clear what is our mark or what is our method these days. NZEI lacks a clear sense of identity and what it contributes to the world."*)

The absence of a connecting purpose inevitably leads by default to different interest groups (within their various structures) pursuing their own agendas that may or may not be aligned.

In turn there is also a sense of some disconnection between expressed goals and on-the-ground activity, with some notable exceptions that owe more to the enterprise and conscientiousness of a few individuals than to any organisational-driven imperative.

This disconnection is sometimes passed off as priorities being overwhelmed by “business as usual.” NZEI does engage in a huge range of activities across many fronts as it responds to the needs of a diverse membership. While there is a lot of truth in this claim, it also points to a top-down approach and a lack of coherence in the exercise of leadership in setting direction and priorities, as well as to structural inefficiencies (or perhaps ‘constipation’), which are explored in section 5 below.

The absence of a clear strategic direction and priorities can mean less enthusiasm and commitment from regional staff in carrying out the vast array of somewhat uncoordinated initiatives and work generated from National Office. They may not fully appreciate the relative importance of particular projects and are likely to be overwhelmed by the sheer volume of them. This can lead to Regional Secretaries making decisions about priorities to protect their staff and/or staff making their own choices about how they spend their time. A key consequence of all this can be NZEI under performing as things are left undone or not properly attended to.

As with all aspects of this Review, there are notable exceptions such as the planning and conduct of major industrial campaigns (eg the primary teachers’ Collective Agreement) and education programmes, both of which have been conducted with a high level of proficiency from conception and planning through to organisational delivery in the last few years. Nevertheless there is real unevenness in the application of these processes across the organisation – they are too person dependent which creates the risk that they could atrophy if a few key people left.

In practice the NZEI direction setting process is a combination of:

- The national executive supported by a few senior staff members, driving the content of somewhat top-down initiatives at Annual Meeting where

- people then get to vote on particular pieces of policy, largely without reference to what their constituencies might think.
- Branches sponsoring remits that, while they reflect some level of membership input, can often be quite disconnected from practical realities. This leads to the National Executive culling and ‘editing’ remits and effectively deciding which ones to work on
 - Specific strategy is then decided by the Executive and communicated to staff and members, who may only have a half hearted sense of ownership
 - Implementation is somewhat patchy and dependent on the work habits and discipline of individuals involved
 - Monitoring of progress against objectives and ensuring individuals are working on “target” and performing to agreed standards is not widely practiced in any transparent way.

At the level of meeting individual occupational group needs, process and performance is, again, patchy. Sometimes the process is exemplary, sometimes it is inadequate with many reports from minority occupational groups expressing disaffection with process (“*not very good at getting back to us*”) and outcomes (“*our claims were again dropped off when it came time to settle the agreement.*”). Clearly, it is important that each group understands the timing around actioning their particular set of issues and that there is a good process for initiating activity, carrying it out effectively and reporting back. These groups also need to appreciate that simply advocating a need doesn’t mean it will automatically be met! Good organising support and their own considerable effort is essential.

Clear direction setting and prioritisation together with the alignment of structures and work processes are essential in streamlining NZEI and lifting its performance from patchy to much improved and more consistent.

5. Membership involvement – from the ground up

The more NZEI can effectively mobilise and engage its members on any particular issue the more influential and successful it will be. This is the key challenge for unions. This section of the report focuses on current practices and suggests a small shift in strategic orientation, including some ideas for improvement. It briefly traverses a number of areas including: the servicing/organising debate; industrial and professional issues; the need to

create a variety of pathways for member involvement (including digitally); and engaging younger members.

5.1 Actual state

Naturally enough membership involvement or 'activism' (note that a reasonable number of people dislike the connotations of the term 'activist,' preferring to talk about 'involvement') is of central importance to NZEI in generating the power it needs to help convince others of the merits of its goals. It is also one of the areas that generated a lot of interest in the consulting phase and is of core importance in debates about industrial versus professional and organising versus servicing.

As noted in the 2006 Membership survey, and from the many submissions I received, a large number of members are either indifferent to or very happy with the service and outcomes they receive from NZEI and have no desire to participate further beyond maybe attending the occasional stop-work meeting on the collective agreement that covers them. They don't have any real sense of belonging to "their" organisation and are grateful there is a worksite rep available to provide information or go to union meetings (that they don't have to!).

This level of member satisfaction with NZEI is a significant achievement. This level of membership engagement with NZEI is also a reality that cannot be wished away. Many people are not interested in engaging further with NZEI even if it was easier to do so.

At another level there are those members who appreciate the opportunity to participate is available if they need it. Most don't use it but should they wish to, they are looking for easy access to information, quick response to their needs or queries and prompt attention to any issues including feedback on what has happened in relation to their concerns. From the perspective of an individual member this is not an unreasonable 'ask' and NZEI needs to continue to respond as well as it can to this level of demand for services.

At a third level are those members whom, for a variety of reasons, become active as either worksite reps, attendees at branch, network, or interest group meetings or through their involvement in occupational/professional/industrial issues. These people are often already busy and actively committed in other parts of their lives. They become exposed to the wider world of unionism and the ins and outs of how to work the 'system' to achieve their ends. They tend to be the attendees at Annual Meeting and to rise to elected positions in the Union. This is the group who need to regenerate from time to time.

NZEI has a long tradition and on-going commitment to involving members, and continues to experiment with different ways of doing so. The recent use of industrial campaigns to mobilise membership activity and the long-term growth in worksite rep activity attest to this. The seeds of good practice have been sown; however, there is less evidence that such practices are systemically and culturally embedded throughout the organisation. Conventional involvement is through branches, where to quote one respondent: "*membership driven can be a euphemism for a small number of members running the show for themselves,*" and more recently networks.

The orientation of activities designed to attract and involve members is not always cognisant of the real obstacles facing busy people who already have a plethora of work-related meetings to attend not to mention their own lives to lead (there were many submission on this). Further, both anecdote and direct feedback confirm that for the vast majority of people who are not committed activists, the last thing they want to do in their precious spare time is attend a somewhat boring meeting where the topics are almost invariably about something that doesn't relate to them. Union meetings are not the participation form of choice! Even many activists struggle to meet the array of responsibilities they take on. Furthermore meetings can disadvantage people who are reticent, less articulate or less mobile (nearly everyone as fuel prices continue to soar!). This time-poor state for many people is another critical reality that needs to be properly understood and accepted.

A significant minority of submissions and discussions also referred to the apparent paradox of NZEI as an institution that prides itself on promoting involvement, yet can sometimes be defensive and even resentful when criticised or 'hassled' by a dissatisfied group of members (often a minority group of specialist teachers). A number of these critics noted that when their voice was finally taken notice of, the issues in question were then 'taken over' by NZEI leaving little space for their on-going involvement.

5.2 Desired state

Practical reality suggests that given the numbers and range of members this notion of a continuum of involvement, from viewing membership as a form of insurance conferring rights to employment protection's and wage increases, through to fully fledged activism and everything in between, makes sense and should inform membership involvement strategies.

There is little point in assuming everyone is a potential activist. Those who expect and are happy with being provided a service are entitled to receive responsive and good quality service.

5.2.1 Visibility

The Review confirms that an essential part of providing a higher level of service, where people want to see what they are getting for their fee, is to do with the visibility of F/Os. Virtually all respondents rated F/Os as the vital face of NZEI. New Zealand is a high-touch society: people expect to form relationships with the organisation they belong to. Many members put down their loyalty to and involvement in NZEI to the relationship they have formed with their local F/O. Maintaining and building NZEI's on-the-ground capacity is vitally important.

5.2.2 Range of Opportunities

Given these realities (continuum of involvement and time poor members) it makes sense to provide a range of opportunities to make it easy for members to participate including such options as:

- going to paid stop-work meetings around wage claims etc
- participating in an on-line forum
- attending a local forum on a topical and relevant (professional?) issue
- being part of a finite campaign or set of activities around a particular issue

- joining in or even initiating a network whether it be around a particular set of professional, industrial or social issues
- becoming a work-site rep and attending training seminars and other events
- participating in a branch, Aronui Tomua or Komiti Pasifika
- Attending District Council
- Attending conferences and special meetings

Of course, many of these options are already available and are promoted or taken advantage of to varying degrees around the country.

The key to ensuring a culture of involvement lies in a commitment to continuing to create a variety of pathways for people to participate, and if they wish, grow their level of involvement over time.

This also means continuing to experiment with new ways of making it easy to involve people who have expressed some interest or have a need.

Leadership development programme

To support this objective a multi-level and accredited union leadership development programme can be put in place to help interested (and targeted) people expand their knowledge and skills. This can help create future generations of leaders. Current activists and Field Officers can help spot talent and provide mentoring support (especially in the early stages of 'baby steps') to help people through a stepped programme for expanding involvement rather than throwing people in the deep end with the risk of burning them off.

5.2.3 Relevance and value

Again, the test is relevance and the ability of any activity to add genuine value to members. Fora that advance professional knowledge or provide some handy tips for dealing with everyday classroom issues, for example, are considered likely to

attract more people. It is also about the quality of design and management of that activity as well as the ease with which it can be fitted in to their busy lives.

The style of organising required is one where every staff member of NZEI, including national office staff, is alert to the potential to create opportunities for membership involvement in every work situation they encounter.

Members are encouraged to find their own workplace solutions to issues, while individual servicing needs requiring F/O input are also addressed. Where an on-going level of involvement is needed (eg pursuing particular occupational issues) the sustained involvement of members with the requisite knowledge and networks, needs to be deliberately designed into the entire process.

5.2.4 Help Desk

The implications for the design and operations of the national members service centre (Help Desk) are clear. Any matter requiring passing on information, including queries about agreement entitlements and interpretation can be handled by trained staff in the centre once it is established. At the moment, there are plenty of examples of busy F/Os not getting back soon enough to answer queries or phone calls that could be quickly responded to by a call centre.

This frees up the precious time of F/Os to focus on matters requiring local knowledge and involving more complex workplace relationships (eg. members who are in genuine strife) which are best handled by the direct personal contact that a F/O brings. Distinguishing one form of servicing from another at the initial point of contact is vital to the success of a call centre. It will require good working coordination between the call-centre and F/Os. Field staff can also educate worksite reps and Principals in their areas to know about this distinction.

Of critical importance is an organisational and an individual commitment to have F/Os focusing as much of their time and energy on the developmental and enabling aspects of their work.

Taken as a whole, the approach outlined above renders the servicing/organising debate redundant. It isn't either/or, it is both, and within a context of supporting the strategic direction of the union!

5.2.5 Industrial/Professional

While a number of people within NZEI view having to deal with both professional and/or industrial issues as something of a curse it is in fact one of the greatest strengths of the organisation. Most unions would give an arm for the advantage of having two pathways for influencing workplace outcomes for their members. The challenge lies in consciously leveraging the connections between the two.

A key question to consider is should NZEI first and foremost look after the interests of its members or should it primarily be concerned with professional issues and on the improvement of education for kids?

The consultation process confirms the findings of the Membership Survey, that members tend to view (and assess) NZEI primarily as a union and place a priority on pay and improvements in working conditions. Smart well-designed campaigns around these issues have in recent years been successful in boosting involvement and reported membership satisfaction. And many teachers currently view the union as irrelevant to their teaching.

Yet, this involvement is episodic, despite the proliferation of Working Parties on unresolved issues. Interestingly, the great majority of issues that most concern members on a day-day basis (see section 3 above) could be classified as being of a professional nature with consequent flow-ons in many instances into industrial matters eg work environment.

It is also worth noting that most members are not naturally a very strident and militant lot. The nature of people who are attracted to the education of kids, together with a reasonably friendly work (and therefore, learning) environment

that is needed to do this successfully, combine to create a culture that is more, although not exclusively, inclined to debate and negotiate than to strike.

This suggests that while most members identify with NZEI as a union, there is significant opportunity for greater member involvement through professional issues.

There are also huge knowledge resources and experience available to NZEI through its members in supporting a much higher profile in advocating these issues. The content knowledge of members at crucial meetings with the Ministry (they have admitted as much!) can be decisive in making breakthroughs on professional matters.

In practice the potential to leverage the two is not fully explored or developed. 'Industrial' by its very nature is bound up in key events, dramatic and decisive moments, rhetoric and theatre etc and so is deemed more 'sexy.' This translates into everything being geared around bargaining including the attention of the National Executive and many staff members. Of course in reality, there are real time and resourcing issues to contend with as well as legal obligations for affected members to ratify settlements and so on. The touchstone issues also tend to be reasonably clear cut with membership opinion and pressure an important factor. And the outcomes are important for members' pay packets and working conditions.

By contrast work on professional issues tends to be more of a marathon than a sprint. Gathering data, writing submissions, attending endless committee meetings behind closed doors over many months, if not years, all add up to a more mundane and lower profile set of activities when contrasted with the fizz of industrial matters.

These differences (and other factors) have over time seeped into the culture of NZEI particularly at National Office level creating something of an "A" and "B" team mentality. While interpersonal relations are okay, work practices that seek to mine the interconnectedness of professional and industrial issues, as experienced in schools, leave much to be desired.

Professional concerns need to be viewed as both vital for advancing the broader strategic objectives of NZEI (eg advancing educational practice) as well as organising opportunities in themselves. Furthermore, a holistic approach to work projects would also see the far more effective integration of professional and industrial staff resulting in more seamless work programmes.

Further, any opportunity to extend or adapt union capacity and parameters should be welcomed. Education unions need to grab every advantage they can to influence the broader education agenda and in so doing demonstrate their continuing relevance. So the answer to the question posed towards the beginning of this sub-section, as supported by the weight of members considered views, is that it is necessary and advantageous to advance and balance both the industrial and professional roles of NZEI.

Initiatives that could enhance NZEI's presence in this space include:

- more explicit alignment of professional related matters with overall NZEI strategic direction
- professional oriented staff adopting more of an organising stance on professional issues by always seeking opportunities for greater membership involvement
- backing this with more regular briefings of F/Os and promoting local membership fora on key issues through local membership structures
- lifting the public and membership profile of professional work undertaken by NZEI
- bolstering the research capacity of NZEI and reviewing the capacity and specific capabilities of the Professional team to see if they are sufficient to lead this new emphasis or need to be enhanced
- investigating the development and delivery one to two day workshops for members on professional issues of importance to members (related to NZEI's strategic priorities) that are not currently part of a tertiary qualification or fall between the cracks of what is provided at a local level
- improving cross-functional alignment between professional and industrial work areas to ensure they are leveraging each others functional strengths (eg regular meetings on real joint projects).

Those involved in such initiatives need to be aware of the fact that the balance between industrial and professional is a dynamic one that is affected by the bargaining cycle and how and when professional issues emerge. The trick here may be to de-emphasise the distinction between the two and focus on bolstering capacity and leveraging the synergies between them, recognising that there will be cycles of intensity when the negotiation of collectives (where a number of 'professional issues may be resolved) is to the fore.

5.2.6 Use of technology

There was overwhelming support from nearly everyone I spoke to, for the greater and more strategic use of email and the Internet. Many positive comments on the on-line forum set up for this Review were received. There appears to be some reluctance to fully embrace this technology on the grounds that not all members can access the Internet. The obvious response is that many can, more soon will and this form of communication can also be supplemented by hard copy publications (albeit in fewer numbers) as it phases in.

The power of digital technologies should not be under-estimated. In a brief moment they can disseminate (or socialise) information and link people up in ways that quickly by-pass traditional means of communicating within unions (usually meetings). This has a tremendous democratising affect by stripping away the potential of people in certain positions to hoard knowledge and use it to confer status and power.

I have been advised that it would be relatively straightforward to create:

- Email with links to the NZEI web-site as the primary form of communication of information (new information would be signaled by emails being automatically sent)
- Personalising of what members receive based on them identifying their interests when signing on
- more opportunities for regular and managed on-line fora between people sharing an interest (whether at a regional level, within an occupational group, on a professional issue etc)

This would enable members to identify their interests on the NZEI website and thereafter only receive information relevant to those interests plus generic organisation-wide information. Over time members with common interests could be linked up on on-line fora, allowing them to investigate issues in greater depth. This simply provides another avenue for members to engage with each other or NZEI in a convenient way.

It would also be relatively easy to make greater use of mobile phones, where appropriate, for web-based text messaging about important meetings or sign-up days for student teachers. As one young member noted:

“NZEI is culturally a paper-based organisation. It needs to learn digital.”

The point is well made. It would require a deliberate strategic decision and a significant cultural shift from many people at NZEI to gear up to the far greater use of digital technology. For a start, the web-site would need to be of the highest quality backed by up-to-date research and information to support members' interests and queries. This would require significant new investment in both technology and staff as part of a broader technology development strategy.

5.2.7 Younger members

For younger, time-poor and less union-oriented members (the next generation of activists!) the regular use of Face-book and Bebo indicate a willingness and a capacity to 'connect' more and more in these ways.

Beyond that there are good examples of F/O and education staff working with students and provisionally registered teachers to make them aware of their rights, what the Union is all about etc. This provides a natural recruiting and union education advantage that would be the envy of most other unions. Ensuring this work is embedded so that it is always attended to, and is lively, relevant and engaging of younger potential members is essential. Younger members I met with also quoted free food, drinks and give-always at union run events as being particularly valued by students.

Again, enabling younger members to determine their own activities and agenda within the parameters of a wider strategic framework will help in making NZEI seem relevant and responsive.

A number of people also mentioned union fees for student and provisionally registered teachers being either waived or set at a nominal rate as being attractive. With such a start in terms of union contact, the act of becoming a full member once at work in schools will simply become the obvious thing to do.

5.2.8 Concluding comment

Whatever NZEI does it will continue to be a challenge to involve members in sufficient numbers to make real the claim of being a membership driven organisation. It is simply the nature of busy, modern life that there are so many ways for people to spend their precious time. There is no magic bullet. NZEI currently makes a lot of effort and devotes significant resources to doing just this. Many other unions pale by comparison. However, some of this effort is on the mark and some of it isn't. Again, the report card is patchy.

Yet, it is vital to the success of NZEI that the knowledge, intelligence and views of members are brought to bear in the most effective way possible. A commitment to engage members must be maintained and efforts to explore ever more effective ways of doing so, must evolve. Providing a wide variety of easy options and pathways for expanding involvement makes sense. Further, the more deliberate identification and nurturing of talent to help ensure renewal is also very important. The design of structures can facilitate this.

6. Structures

As noted earlier the point of structures is to facilitate the execution of strategy. To do this, structures need to be aligned with and serve strategy. This includes matters such as decision-making, ensuring that the right things are done at the right time and place, accountability, and in the case of a membership based organisation, facilitating involvement. NZEI structures are currently designed to

deal with competing but overlapping needs (geographical, occupational, workplace based and to do with identity – Maori, Pasifika, young persons, gays, women)

6.1 Overview of structures and their evolution

NZEI has always prided itself on the degree to which it encourages member participation in all aspects of Union business, and rightly so. There is a high level of membership engagement and a lot of effort is put into encouraging it. The Rules of the Organisation certainly provide for membership control.

The Rules provide for a structure that certainly worked well in the pre-Tomorrow Schools days where NZEI structures used to approximate those of the Ministry of Education, with the NZEI President being regarded, internally, as the equivalent of the Minister, the General Secretary the equivalent of the Secretary of Education and so on.

District Council's (DC) were empowered to deal with significant local education issues with local Education Boards. Being on the DC was a position of status to aspire to and contributed to many members viewing NZEI leadership positions as great places to acquire key skills helpful in progressing careers. Branches were places for members to raise important matters, put forward remits, and were also something of a training ground for seeking higher office.

In this environment, being elected to the National Executive meant that you had come through a quite rigorous process of learning the ropes about the union structures and processes, and you were likely to be well networked and politically experienced.

The devolution of authority to School Boards of Trustees and Principals effectively stripped away a substantial portion of the functions of Branch and DC's. The efficacy and utility of these structures has gradually eroded since then.

With the amalgamation of the Combined Early Childhood Union of Aotearoa (CECUA), and School Support Staff coming on Board as well as the emergence of parallel structures for Maori in the early 1990's, this dilution of the role and in the effectiveness of Branches and DC's was compounded. Specific provision was made to ensure the voice of these new groups of members wasn't swamped, by the establishment of national level Advisory groups and provision for a specified number of positions on the National Executive. In addition, Maori structures based on the historic structures on NZEI were established under the Rules with 3 National Executive positions allocated to Te Reo Areare.

Over the same period a number of special interest networks have been established to cater for specific groups of members (youth, women, Pasifika, gays) who were seeking a distinct voice, that presumably was not able to be adequately heard through existing structures. These groupings are provided for under Rule 3.4.13 and are supposed to fall within the boundaries of a branch, thereby leaving intact the branch as the core and legally sanctioned unit of membership participation and authority.

Beyond these changes, no other structural changes requiring an alteration in the rules have been made.

In sum, the core structures of NZEI, originally designed to reflect a centralised education system with some district autonomy, remain largely in place, despite the decentralisation of management to individual school level except, importantly, for the negotiation of salaries and working conditions which are still centrally determined. To these structures have been added a variety of networks and advisory groups designed to provide a more distinctive voice to a large and diverse membership. The net effect is a proliferation of formal (rule-based) and informal structures all of which are striving to be heard with still more groups wanting to add to the mix (eg. relieving teachers, special needs teachers, resource teachers, reading recovery teachers). And, of course, all these structures take time and money to service.

Given the challenges facing education and their implications for NZEI, the questions for NZEI to ponder include:

1. Are these structures still relevant and do they add sufficient value to our purpose and strategies?
2. Do we need them in this form, why and for what?
3. What could we do without, what should we keep and what do we need to create to ensure their effectiveness and relevance?

These questions are not posed for the sake of making change but are part of a movement of review and renewal that every organisation needs to make, to ensure it is evolving in response to the issues it faces.

With this purpose and these questions in mind, it is useful to focus in more detail on *the current state* of NZEI's structures, both formal and informal.

6.1.1 Branches

Branches have always been the core unit of member involvement in activity and policy setting within NZEI through the passing of remits for Annual Meeting and the nomination of people for elected positions. They are geographically based, can be formed if more than 25 members so decide (and are supported by a postal ballot among all members in the workplaces affected and approved by the National Executive), and have their own governance structures. They are funded by NZEI, depending on nominal membership numbers, in order to support local union activity whether branch initiated or simply to assist network, interest group and worksite rep activities. They have powers to invest funds and are required to have their financial statements audited annually. They tend to meet monthly or less frequently such as once per school term.

There appears to be a broad consensus on the current nature and effectiveness of branches which was largely confirmed during the consultation phase:

1. Branches are structured on strictly geographical lines with little regard for natural communities of interest (particularly obvious in Auckland and Christchurch).
2. The key functions of branches as a place to deal with local issues (including taking these issues to District Councils to raise with local Education Boards, prior to 1988) and as the primary means of disseminating information to members, have now being superseded.
3. Despite this diminution in role a number of branches are still very effective in being the organising hub for much local area member activity. These branches work hard to align this activity with perceived union priorities while others focus more on community activism. Their success tends to be dependent on dedicated groups of key individuals, or activists.
4. The majority of branches, however, are less effective with few attendees and little activity being generated. Some manage to attract reasonable numbers of members to certain events, others try hard to generate activity but suffer from factors affecting members attendance described in section 5 above, while yet others operate much like a small self-perpetuating social club (in some cases blocking others from participating or going to Annual Meeting).
5. Many branches tend to run formal meetings that deal with minutes and finances and then focus on workplace issues. This can be off-putting for new members who find the process clunky, old fashioned and often irrelevant. Other branches delegate such matters to an Executive group and endeavor to run informative discussions on current topics of interest.
6. It appears that members drawn from Primary Schools run a majority of branches even though they are supposed to be for all NZEI members. This can often mean that the timing of branch meetings is designed to suit teachers more than support staff or early childhood education workers, yet even then, busy members are already over-committed with work-related meetings and have to make choices about how they spend their diminishing discretionary time.

7. Small attendances and the power to pass recommendations and affect union policy creates a degree of risk of undemocratic takeover by small dedicated groups with a specific agenda who can potentially wield large number of votes. (This risk is off-set to some degree by the apparent contentment of many less interested NZEI members who are probably grateful that things are going okay and so they have no need to get involved). Interestingly, no-one raised any concerns about this during the course of the consultation process.
8. Branch funding is an on-going issue in a number of cases with financial practices (involving members' money) not always being what they should be. Depending on size, branches can receive considerable amounts of money and there is some history with some branches not always returning what remains unspent although they are required to under the rules. A significant number of branches find managing their financial responsibilities to be an onerous task, including finding appropriate people willing to take on these responsibilities.
9. Overall there is declining confidence within the union as to the efficacy of branches as currently constituted despite the continued effectiveness of a number of them. There is increasing evidence of staff tending to go around structures, where they are able to, rather than through them. However, a good number of individual submissions I received were strongly supportive of maintaining the status quo and preserving branches in their current form.
10. Dissatisfaction with branches as the sole vehicle for member participation (along with the amalgamation of other Unions with NZEI) has led over time to the establishment of a variety of networks (or in the case of Maori, Aronui Tomua which are equivalent to branches) where the diverse occupational or "identity" interests of NZEI membership can be catered for.
11. Where branches have organised and hosted development and learning oriented *events* involving good quality speakers and facilitated discussion, they have tended to get very good turnouts.

12. For many long-serving branch members, branches are a way of life. They serve an important social function that needs to be acknowledged.

It is interesting to note the variety of reasons given for low attendance at branch meetings by a good cross-section of the submissions I received, viz:

“Other commitments; committee work at school; classroom preparation time; clashes with other meetings and need to prioritise; didn’t know about them; childcare issues; confident NZEI is doing a good job; already well informed with union hand-outs; works-site reps keeps us informed; they only talk about primary school issues; more social content might help; travel time and cost; doesn’t really interest me; have a life outside of teaching; meetings are not relevant to our needs; Head office is doing the right thing so long as they continue to consult and keep us informed; no desire to be involved in organisational matters, branch meetings can be pretty boring.”

These views cover all the major bases of member (including branch attendee) opinion. Particularly noteworthy have been the comments to do with:

- being too busy
- not interested
- getting information in other ways
- contentment with good worksite reps
- happy that NZEI is doing a good job

All these categories of responses suggest that much of the *traditional* function of branches is now redundant.

6.1.2 Networks

As noted earlier, a variety of networks have been set-up to meet the needs of particular occupational and interest groups that were not being met through branches, or where an amalgamation required specific provision for a distinct voice within the structure of the larger union to ensure those used to having an independent voice were not drowned out as a minority.

Then again there are some members who choose to stay outside any formal or informal structures preferring to work in specific issues, then to retreat. As one respondent to the Review noted:

“Many of our best activists are outside of our formal structures.”

What follows is not a full analysis of every network and interest group but some analysis of the information collected on this topic during the consultation phase.

Early childhood education networks and their National Executive Advisory Group (NEAG) to the National Executive were established following the amalgamation of (CECUA) and NZEI to ensure the smaller group had a distinct voice within the larger union. At a local level there are some very active networks and some less active ones. This appears to be related to the drive, enthusiasm and history of activism of key individuals and the groups that form around them. A key strength of this section of members is that those on the NEAG are elected by and accountable to their local constituency networks. The networks are ‘live’ and are the option of choice for getting involved in union business.

This significant and growing section of members has undergone major change and development in recent years with the introduction of pay parity and recognition of the need for registered qualifications at every centre. Further, the sector has grown hugely as more parents join the workforce, and the for-profit centres proliferate in response to growing demand. This situation has recently been exacerbated by the government paying for a universal 20 “free” hours of child care.

There is major membership growth potential in this sector (currently with 4,000 union members and a potential for up to 15,000) yet there are signs of continuing ambivalence within NZEI, including amongst childhood educators, towards recruitment of private sector workers (against the 'publicly funded' goals of the Union) even though their continuing proliferation may undercut salaries and conditions in the sector at some point.

More to the point for the purposes of this Review, is the continuing feeling, expressed by many from this group of members, that early childhood teachers do not quite share the status of primary teachers, are not quite integrated in a cultural sense into the mainstream of the Union, and can be left to their own devices.

It is clear that there are some major on-going challenges facing the sector including the provision of facilities in deprived communities where there is limited private sector presence and no mechanism for new publicly funded centres to be built. There is also the issue of achieving greater collaboration between early childhood education centres and schools to help create more seamless transition for kids. While there have been a couple of NZEI organising efforts and an "Early Years" conference there is also a strong argument for a more sustained focus in this sector, particularly given its current status and future potential.

The **Support Staff** story is very similar with amalgamation with NZEI, establishment of a NEAG, and allocated places on the National Executive to ensure an effective voice. This membership group of over 11,000 members represents a diverse range of occupations in both primary and secondary schools - a group that is often at the very heart of running a school and is very deeply integrated into local communities. Yet, they too speak of struggling for identity and recognition in what is sometimes a status driven environment and even though their claims have received considerable attention in recent years, continue to feel somewhat marginalised in what is publicly perceived to be a "primary teachers union."

The Principals Council also serves as a NEAG. The role of Principals within NZEI remains an ambivalent one, particularly once the Tomorrow's Schools reforms cast them as local level employers with the right to hire and fire other NZEI members. This places them, other NZEI members and F/Os in an invidious position when it comes to disciplinary issues. However, for the most part there is

a high degree of collaboration required between all staff in schools in delivering good educational outcomes to kids.

Principals tend to be supportive (with exceptions) of NZEI and its objectives which makes on-the-ground organising and the life of worksite reps a whole lot easier. They also bring good leadership and thinking skills to the Organisation.

On the other hand they have dominated the leadership of NZEI through the holding of senior office positions for many years. A number of submissions I received were of the view that they:

- have excessive influence in NZEI in proportion to their numbers
- that a Principals perspective tends to dominate in dealings with the Ministry (the pre-eminent focus on Units, rather than generic salary increases for all teachers, in the recent Collective Agreement negotiations, was quoted on a number of occasions)
- can cultivate something of a top-down and didactic culture at odds with an empowered members organisation.

Principals themselves are questioning their involvement in NZEI. There has been something of a decline in their active participation in recent years (since the demise of Education Boards NZEI involvement no longer provides quite the same cachet when it comes to career opportunities and their expanded management responsibilities alters their relationship with teachers).

However, on balance NZEI is better off when Principals lend their influence, experience and leadership to the Organisation. What might help in allaying some of the concerns about their excessive influence is:

- an explicit airing of these concerns in a problem-solving rather than defensive setting
- greater effort on the part of principals to be aware of their impact and to actively cultivate other members' perspectives in ways that promote collegiality and ownership

- strategies to better enable other categories of members to participate in key leadership roles (eg. greater financial support for release from work, leadership development etc)

The **Primary Classroom Teachers Advisory Group (PCTAG)** is an interesting phenomenon in a union that is dominated in terms of numbers of members by primary school teachers. Its existence perhaps reflects concerns about the proliferation of different interest groups and a feeling that one needs to be in such a group in order to be heard! This may be true if looking just at the NEAG structures but out in the field primary school teachers are fully present in other union fora and their interests appear to be well catered for in the work programmes of NZEI.

It maybe that the experience of PCTAG puts into relief a key issue to do with all NEAGS which is that they appear to start from the perspective of self interest and tend to stay there in the absence of any overarching sense of a whole of NZEI purpose and a clear strategic direction.

Other network groups (eg. women, youth, Pasifika, Rainbow) have been formed at different times to provide a voice for particular interest groups. They do have an important purpose in that they:

- help to create a sense of identity for a defined group of members
- enable them to pursue issues of particular importance to the group
- provide a conduit for participation of members who might not otherwise get involved in union affairs

As with any network they depend for their success on: having a touchstone issue(s) or injustice that sparks interest (until it is resolved or fades away); a few key people who serve as network hubs; some sense of novelty at the beginning. Networks also tend to have a life-cycle and at a certain point are difficult and unnecessary to sustain unless there is genuine case for renewal.

These features provide some clues as to network management over time. Enabling and facilitating network development in response to real needs will continue to be important in providing member voice as well as fresh ideas and perspectives that can benefit the whole of NZEI. Recognising when that need has been met and/or interest is waning is also important because it signals the time to let the network go and divert scarce resources to emerging needs and new priorities. All of which suggests active support and monitoring by NZEI staff. It also means that people will need to be prepared to let go when the time comes and give some one else a turn unless they are prepared to maintain a network on their own.

Of course there are less formal networks that spring up and fade away quite independently of any NZEI resource and these are more likely to flourish via on-line fora.

6.1.3 Maori structures

Again, this section of the report does not pretend to be a comprehensive review of Maori structures and involvement in NZEI but reports on some of the information and views gleaned during the fieldwork as well as my own observations.

The development of parallel Maori structures within NZEI has their origin in 1989 and the early 1990's. Some of the motivating factors include:

- a desire to increase the involvement of Miro Maori members in NZEI as their participation in branch activity was minimal
- acknowledgement of Te Tiriti o Waitangi
- the desire of NZEI to be leader and innovator in the wider Union movement in honouring the Treaty and supporting biculturalism
- a desire to empower Maori members to deal with Maori-specific educational issues

There were many discussions and a long lead time in getting to the point of making a constitutional change (Rule 1.8.4 provides that “*the Institute shall give honour and effect to the Treaty of Waitangi with Maori and Tauitihi being equal parties in Institute operations.*”). Since this change was made a separate and parallel structure has been created, including establishing separate Maori staff positions (field staff and a leader, or Matua Takawaenga, based in National Office) focusing on supporting the specific work programme of Te Reo Areare (Maori National Executive) as confirmed by Te Kahui Whetu (equivalent to Annual Meeting) over the years.

Examples of this work in recent times include:

- promoting biculturalism within the wider teaching profession
- campaigning to increase the supply of Maori teachers within Maori medium education
- working on the Maori medium strand of the NZ Curriculum Project
- initiating efforts through kura and schools to support whanau in communities in their relationships with schools

These structures also work on many NZEI-wide issues from a Maori perspective, all the time developing their own tikanga to do with how Maori work within NZEI. The primary target group of these programmes are Maori medium education (eg Te Kōhanga Reo).

The number of Maori members within NZEI is approximately 5,000 with just about 1,500 choosing to work through the parallel structures, primarily Aronui Tomua (equivalent to branches). This means that over two thirds of Miro Maori members stay within ‘mainstream’ structures, although, as with many members in general, this may be a default rather than an active choice. It may also be due to a lack of awareness and understanding (and little promotional effort) among Maori about what Maori structures have to offer.

Aronui Tomua, like branches are patchy in their performance. Some work well and have developed experience and ways of working through networks that enable them to problem solve and provide advice on many member issues without resorting to F/Os, while others are poorly attended. Naturally enough they

have much smaller numbers of members attached to them, however, many do proportionately better than branches in terms of the percentage of active members who participate, and the most effective of them have an active grass roots presence.

Maori members involved in the parallel structures are firmly of the view that these structures are of equal status and equivalent to “mainstream” structures. In recent times Te Reo Areare sought equivalence with the National Executive however, quite widespread resistance to this has led to this initiative being shelved, for the moment. There are also on-going efforts to secure resources and entitlements and a feeling of resentment at any resistance to this. Such initiatives and resistance to them highlight important differences in interpretation over what being “equal parties in NZEI” actually means.

There is evidence of growing concern within parts of the ‘mainstream’ structures about the way in which these parallel structures have evolved. Concerns expressed to me include:

- a sense that the original intent behind establishing the Maori structures has been lost sight of with the national leadership perceiving Te Reo Areare to be more focused on achieving equal entitlements and resourcing rather than focusing on the many real issues facing Maori within education
- a feeling of growing separation, indicated in part by ineffective National Executive/Te Reo Areare communications so that parallel structures seem more like separate ones that don’t ‘talk’ to each other effectively
- This is beginning to lead to a growing gap in understanding between the aspirations of Maori structures and the expectations of the National Executive.

This divergence of aspiration and understanding is compounded by the perception held by the mainstream leadership that they will be accused of dishonouring the Treaty and Rule 1.8.4. It is important to qualify this discussion with the caveat that there is no major crisis or breakdown but more of a need to explore what Treaty partnership, within the same organisation, now means and how it might evolve to everyone’s benefit.

Investigating these issues in greater detail is beyond the scope of this Review. However, in looking for a way forward, I would offer the following observations:

- NZEI is probably still a predominantly monocultural organisation. This is due in part to a lack of coherence between the parallel structures and an on-going inability for each part to communicate effectively with the other. It is also due to the lack of understanding about Maori ways of working
- This has meant that Maori structures and the agenda they have developed is slowly diverging from what might be called the main currents of NZEI activity. Methods of work adopted by those working within Maori structures, their performance results and accountability for members' money etc are felt to be beyond the authority and reach of NZEI's National Executive. This is problematic for the mainstream but may be less so for Maori as they seek to determine their own destiny within NZEI, (and in some cases question whether in terms of their understanding of 1.8.4. the National Executive actually has this authority)
- Given the strategic direction proposed in this report in terms of both its content and process, the question of how Maori structures align their activities and efforts around an organisation-wide common purpose and set of priorities is problematic.
- In reality, Maori structures exist *within* NZEI as a whole and therefore need to be subject to overall organisational disciplines. Yet the need for Maori to build internal capacity, to shape their own destiny, to embed their culture and language and promote biculturalism, remains.
- Partnership is about and for *both* parties (even though they belong to the same organisation) contributing to and working towards each others success. It is a two-way street. To be successful, principled compromise, a problem solving approach and workable communication processes will be necessary. An updated understanding of what "equal parties" and honouring the Treaty now means is needed.
- As with all NZEI structures, the same questions need to be asked of Maori structures:
 - Are these structures still relevant and do they add sufficient value to our purpose and strategies?
 - Do we need them in this form, why and for what?
 - What could we do without, what should we keep and what do we need to create to ensure their effectiveness and relevance?

This is a piece of work that remains to be done. These observations need to be discussed in open and respectful conversations with agreed outcomes possibly

forming the terms of reference for a more in-depth review that is focused on confirming and evolving the partnership.

6.1.4 District Councils

The origins and function of District Councils (DCs) are briefly described at the beginning of section 6. As with Branches, their original function as a clearinghouse for the resolution of district level institute business with their equivalent Education Boards is now largely redundant. Currently, they serve as a conduit for disseminating information from National Office and fora for branches, Aronui Tomua, occupational and interest group networks etc to report on their activities and put up funding proposals. This means that they are NZEI wide (as opposed to occupationally or interest group specific) in scope. Some of them also convene workshops around topical issues.

Attendance tends to be low and effectiveness patchy although some DCs are effective in coordinating and supporting a range of NZEI activities at a district level and perform a useful networking function for a small number of activists. Many devolve discussion on financial matters etc to a small elected Executive group.

Overall there is a very real sense of them being structures which, in large part, have lost their essential purpose and have been surpassed by the evolution of a range of informal structures where the real business of NZEI is conducted.

6.1.5 Worksite reps

The (not so) new core structure for member involvement in NZEI is the workplace, with the worksite rep (WSR) being the key figure acting as a go between for members and the union as an organisation. Given the devolution ushered in by Tomorrow's Schools, this development is hardly surprising. While mentioned in the rules, the real importance of this core structure is not properly recognised.

Individual worksites are a natural unit of organisation – they are where industrial and professional issues converge, where members gather and talk, and where the reality of work in the education sector is directly experienced.

As noted earlier, supportive Principals can enable membership engagement and provide opportunities for worksite reps to fulfill a number of functions. The primary function of most WSRs is to distribute information and notices from the union office, to perform a range of tasks on-site on behalf of F/Os and to also pass on membership feedback and concerns to the union office. Some but not all WSRs also act as observers at disciplinary meetings.

NZEI offers a full, well designed and delivered training and development programme for WSRs. They also convene WSR meetings when major issues need to be considered to both brief WSRs and receive their feedback. These processes provide a very direct connection to members.

As expected the effectiveness of WSRs is directly related to the quality, skills and commitment of those nominated to the position. Many people are thrust, often unwillingly, into these positions either because no one else is prepared to take on the work or the position is not properly valued. This unfortunately devalues the position of the WSR and weakens the credibility of the union in the eyes of both employers and members.

Recognition of the critical importance of this role and the elevation of its status within NZEI and in the eyes of Principals, together with a sustained commitment to delegate development, are vital to NZEI's future.

I was surprised to find that proper recognition of delegates and provision for time off to attend to union business and attend meetings and training courses does not appear to have been regarded as a priority in agreement negotiations to date. The potential loss of EREL (legally sanctioned paid education leave) and a possible tightening of union right of entry provisions under a new National government pose real risks to NZEI's effectiveness at a workplace level.

6.1.6 Annual Meeting

Annual Meeting is the highest authority in the union. Even without having attended one, its status as a piece of theatre is legendary (as with many union conferences). Representatives nominated by branches, attend in their hundreds, along with their recommendations, while the 'top table' (according to a number of submissions at least) aims to orchestrate desired outcomes, and prospective National Executive members lobby for votes in what is largely a popularity contest (when there are sufficient numbers standing!) to get elected. Meanwhile a lot of members' money is spent.

A significant number of submissions on the merits (or otherwise) of Annual Meeting as a forum for informed debate and decision-making were received from members, many with considerable direct experience in participating in Annual Meetings. From these and other discussions the following analysis might be made:

- Annual Meeting is very much a scripted set-piece operation driven largely by the top table and the National Executive – none of which is surprising given its very traditional union meeting format
- Over the years the quality of participation and informed debate has waned (this may be a nostalgic view). This is partly due to those from the 'floor' having limited information available to them and the very nature of such meetings as somewhat blunt instruments as far as democratic participation is concerned.
- Quality is also affected by the limited opportunity, partially informed, and therefore somewhat narrow and parochial nature of recommendation formulation. This can sometimes mean that recommendations can either be voted down at the time or selectively taken up or interpreted according to "better informed" priority setting.
- More recently, the use of workshop discussions as a means of engaging more people in discussions has been growing as a feature.
- For many newer or first time delegates Annual Meeting provides a unique opportunity to be exposed to the full breadth and depth of NZEI business. Such gatherings can act as a catalyst for some people in getting more involved in NZEI business.
- For many others it provides either: an opportunity to maintain their involvement and continue their development as activists; reconnect with

- colleagues and network on a whole range of issues; or in some reported cases, to enjoy a week in Wellington staying in a nice hotel and eating at good restaurants at members' expense!
- It costs hundreds of thousands of dollars to stage and a huge amount of NZEI time and resource to prepare for and report back from.

One is left with the overall impression that if a cost/benefit analysis was applied to Annual Meeting it is unlikely it would survive in its current form.

It should also be observed that there is an important distinction to be made between large gatherings of members where vital networking and informed discussion and decision-making can take place, and expensive set piece traditions that deliver far less value.

An alternative process for direction setting has been proposed in section 4 of this report.

6.1.6 National Executive

The National Executive is the highest authority in NZEI in between Annual or Special meetings. It comprises 24 members drawn from the major occupational groupings in the Union and Te Reo Areare. So members are represented by occupation and identity, but not geographically. It currently meets monthly over two days, with a lot of additional work being performed by a series of standing sub-committees.

Historically, there was considerable competition for places (via election at Annual Meeting) on this high status and critical leadership body, with high calibre and experienced NZEI activists being attracted to stand. Gradually with devolution, heavier workloads, and increasing calls on people's time it is becoming harder to attract such people to stand for office. In recent years some positions have not

even been contested due a shortage of candidates. The time demands made on National Executive members are also onerous with huge reading and reporting workloads.

Further, the allocation of positions by occupational grouping creates another set of issues. Those groupings not represented on the National Executive feel they lack a voice and agitate to get “their” representatives also onto the Executive. There is also a tendency for sector representatives to focus heavily on their own issues and pay much less attention to those of the other sectors and even perhaps the issues facing NZEI as a whole. It can be argued that the President, Vice President, and immediate past President are the only people with a broad enough perspective to have a ‘whole system’ view. This narrower focus dilutes the quality of attention paid to, and undermines the effective exercise of leadership for, the overall development of NZEI. The National Executive needs to keep its ‘eye’ on the big picture to ensure that strategic priorities are to the fore in the work of the Union.

The National Executive is also extensively involved in the oversight of management issues as well as with governance. This greatly increases the workload. The range of issues and level of detail they are required to deal with is huge. Anecdotal stories of Executive members not getting around to reading or not being familiar enough with the contents of the hundreds of Appendices they are fed every year are common. In this situation it is likely that Executive members may pay more attention to whether a donation of \$2,000 should be made to some organisation than to a strategically important decision on a professional matter! Again this means that the hard questions may not always get asked thereby undermining the quality of decision-making, as recommendations are ‘rubber-stamped’ without good scrutiny.

It is also worth observing that in terms of effective governance, it is very difficult to achieve real coherence and good working practices with such a huge group (24) of people. 8-12 people on a governance board is considered good practice. Having more people involved does not necessarily improve the quality of representation or the calibre of work!

At a time when there are significant challenges for NZEI and its leadership, these problems loom large. An evolving strategic direction linked with organisational reform demands strong and effective leadership at all levels.

6.1.7 Paid Union Meetings (PUM's)

A final but increasingly important element to NZEI's structures, albeit an informal one in the context of Rules, is the paid union meeting (PUM), where members come together in numbers around a vital (usually industrial) issue in a series of meetings. Recent experience in assembling a whole membership engagement process starting with worksite rep meetings and culminating in a major series of PUM's provides a successful working example of the potential of such processes to engage large numbers of members. Clearly they are huge logistical exercises and are only likely to be used to progress or resolve major union-wide issues where the galvanising of member opinion and feeling is needed.

It is interesting to note that a number of members who attended the most recent set of these meetings observed that they were something of a squandered opportunity involving transfers of information and straw polls.

They felt more could have been made of the opportunity by the use of smarter meeting design and facilitation to advance understanding and deepen the level of discussion. This is an observation that can be applied to every form of member contact where a more explicit but seamless learning orientation would advance union organisation. The key is in trusting a well informed membership to conduct a good debate and to make good quality decisions.

It is also worth noting these meetings have no decision-making authority in terms of the Rules.

6.1.8 Concluding comment

NZEI has largely left its core decision-making structures intact since well before the devolution that followed Tomorrows Schools. Some of them work some of the time. To overcome the shortcomings of these structures, in an increasingly devolved and differentiated environment where identity and voice are

increasingly important (and where amalgamations have taken place), a series of new structures, both informal and formal, have been 'bolted-on'. Some of these changes have been partly recognised in the Rules and others have not.

In sum this adds up to:

- a side-lining of democratic structures largely because traditional structures no longer provide the level of member input needed to maintain effectiveness. People simply go around them!
- a proliferation of structures that make line of sight between a member and her/his organisation increasingly difficult to maintain
- a choking affect created by, in the memorable words of one experienced NZEI activist: "*too much fat and waffle*," which then takes a lot of effort and members money to service and maintain.

This creates difficulty in ensuring that NZEI's strategic priorities are facilitated by its structures, thereby diluting the overall impact of the Organisation. NZEI staff and elected representatives are hardworking people who are often not assisted in being as effective as they can be by the current configuration of structures.

6.2 Evolving Structures

6.2.1 Setting the scene

As noted earlier, this stage of the Review is not required to come up with specific recommendations for structural change. However, the preceding discussion provides a number of clues as to how structures might evolve. This section takes up that opportunity and looks at what can assist NZEI to focus on the important questions.

One of the hardest structural challenges for NZEI is to achieve a workable balance between a whole of organisation approach to setting and delivering on a strategic direction that everyone can relate to in some way while also ensuring

that diverse voices are heard and properly responded to: workable unity in diversity. This is always a challenge for broad based unions, which is what NZEI has become, even if still confined to the education sector.

6.2.2 Draft criteria

The consultation phase of this project has identified a clear need and a mandate for some necessary structural changes. A draft set of criteria arising from the foregoing analysis that need to be satisfied in any revised structures might look like the following:

The structures will need to:

1. *facilitate strategic direction setting and strategy delivery (eg good educational practice, sector partnership, balancing of professional and industrial interests etc.) with a whole of union focus*
2. *promote meaningful member involvement where both contribution and follow-up can be easily observed*
3. *meet the diverse needs of members within a whole of union context*
4. *promote cooperative and professional work practices*
5. *be cost effective and efficient*
6. *promote a learning and development orientation*

6.2.3 Implications for evolving structures

In applying these criteria to meet the strategic and structural needs of NZEI, a desired set of structures might have some of the following features:

National Executive

- Major realignment around a governance focus with the primary role being to oversee direction setting and then assessing progress towards agreed goals and priorities at an organisation wide level as well as monitoring the wider environment and adjusting direction if required. This would mean that all operational issues would be the responsibility of the National Secretary with the Executive again providing oversight against agreed budgets and goals.
- Walking the talk of a 'whole of union' approach by dropping National Executive representation by occupational group in favour of seeking out the *best people across the whole of NZEI who are charged with representing all members* and advancing the goals of the organisation. This would require Executive members to pick up portfolio responsibility for and become familiar with sector group and regional issues (through NEAG's – see more below) and to report back to their various constituencies.
- Implicit in this approach is a much-reduced National Executive with ideally 9-11 members, including President, Vice President and Immediate Past President, elected by postal ballot across the whole union. In honouring Treaty obligations there would also be a Maori representative elected by a ballot of Maori members or in some other way acceptable to Maori structures. There would need to be some rotation with perhaps no more than 2 members coming up for re-election each year to ensure a high degree of continuity. A second-best option would be a form of regional representation based on numbers of members (not necessarily existing District Boundaries which heavily penalise the Auckland region).
- The current arrangement of having a President, Vice President and Immediate Past President in addition to the other National Executive members would be retained for the purposes of providing continuity and development time amongst the elected leadership.
- The National Executive would meet every 6-8 weeks with members fulfilling obligations around sub-committee work, constituency 'listening' and reporting in order to enhance their connectedness to the membership. This may require Executive members to be paid for union work and back-filled at their workplace.

Biennial Conference

- As proposed in section 4.1.2 above a process of strategic direction setting would culminate in a biennial conference (held in one of Auckland, Wellington, or Christchurch to save costs) where earlier member input, research and background papers would guide and inform well designed participative processes aimed at developing a strategic direction for NZEI. The conference would also review progress against previous decisions on direction and priorities.
- Opportunity would also be provided for delegates to propose policy (not operationally related) recommendations that were supported by their district
- The conference would involve no more than 150 delegates drawn from districts (or regions)

Regional Conferences

- In the year between Biennial Conferences, a (two day?) regional conference would be held. The primary functions of this event would be to: promote a whole of union approach at a regional level; foster innovation and learning; assess and refine local activity to ensure it was aligned to strategic priorities; promote networking and member participation.

Regional or District Councils

A revitalisation of regional membership structures is suggested. These bodies would provide oversight and leadership for localised membership activity.

- In between Regional conferences, a regional or district council would be convened every school term to provide leadership, offer support, and monitor progress in carrying out the will of regional conference and to ensure on-going alignment of activity with NZEI's strategic priorities (eg

fostering partnership with other education sector organisations and local community agencies). A key function would be to oversee the coordination and collation of members views as part of the strategic direction process. These Councils would also be empowered to initiate their own activities in fulfilling their role.

- The Council would also be a forum for member opinion and a clearing house for workplace and interest group developments and concerns. An executive member would be required to attend and report to Council meetings on behalf of the National Executive *and* to keep abreast of local issues. They would also contribute to ensuring that follow-up of members concerns and issues can be readily observed.
- Any union member would be eligible to attend council meetings while other formal membership groups would be obliged to send at least one representative.
- The Councils would be managed by an elected Chair, deputy Chair and Secretary Treasurer who would receive an annual allowance to partially compensate them for their time. The Regional Secretary would be a defacto member of the Council and the elected Executive team, to provide advice, up-to-date information, assist in the management of the Council's finances and help ensure better alignment between these structures and the work of paid staff.
- The Council would be provided with an annual budget based on numbers of members, the primary purpose of which would be to fund local activity that supports strategic priorities, and which has a developmental orientation (workshops, fora, etc.). Specific proposals would be approved at meetings of the Council with the elected Executive having authority to make approvals in between meetings (and to get retrospective approval at the following meeting)
- Regions would also elect competent and representative delegates to biennial conference and put forward remits.

Localised membership structures

- To facilitate ease of membership involvement *a range of local structures of equal status* would provide opportunities for members who so desire to participate in a forum of their choosing. The guiding principle that should determine the configuration of these local structures is *natural communities of interest*. Time-poor people are more likely to participate in a group if they know or can relate to the others who will attend, they have some common interest; the meetings are reasonably close by and the agenda is relevant to their needs.
- They would include but not be confined to: existing or new branches (where any member can attend) and Aronui Tomua; occupationally based networks (support staff, principals, early childhood education, special education groups such as resourcing, special needs, relief teachers, etc.); and different interest groups.
- A key requirement of such structures is to engage in activities that promote the relevance and visibility of NZEI.
- It could be expected that where branches are currently successful they would be maintained. Where they are not they might wither and be disestablished.
- In the case of occupational networks, it makes sense to consider establishing project specific networks for separate occupational groups when “their turn” (as a priority) comes. This will enable higher levels of more considered involvement in project strategy and tactics, and a tighter focus on specific needs. Once these projects have run their course the network can then be disestablished in terms of any NZEI sponsorship, until the next time.
- Local occupational networks for early childhood education, support staff and principals, would maintain links across regions and nominate

representatives to be part of their equivalent National Executive Advisory Group.

- These structures would essentially be self organising and be charged with promoting local activity (projects) and involvement aligned to NZEI's strategic priorities.
- As noted above, they could develop learning and discussion fora around areas of need and apply for funding to the Regional Council if needed. They would not need to elect an Executive unless they wished to, nor have any on-going financial responsibility beyond that of ensuring that funded projects were properly managed.

National Advisory Groups

- As noted above it makes sense to maintain the Support Staff, Early Childhood workers and Principals National Executive Advisory Groups to provide a focus for their particular voices. Membership of these NEAGs should be elected by and report to their local equivalents.
- These groups could convene once per term with a specific mandate to provide strategic advice to the National Executive through the NE member allocated to them. Again their brief would be to both canvas, and consider member issues (within the broader context of NZEI strategic direction) and to ensure members are, in turn, informed about national deliberations and developments.
- Other occupationally based NEAGs could also be formed for a specific purpose then disestablished once that purpose has been fulfilled, or the project has finished.

Maori structures

The suggestions about a process to evolve Maori structures in light of current imperatives and the strategic direction that NZEI settles on embodied in the observations on Maori structures as set out in section 6.1.3 above, need to be pursued.

Worksites and Worksite Reps

Recognition of worksites as the basic unit of organisation in NZEI will acknowledge the structural changes that have taken place in the sector and the fact that this is where members are located and can most readily participate from. This means that membership opinion gathered from worksites, Paid Union Meetings and via worksite reps has great weight. It might be gathered through such meetings or expressed, for electoral purposes, by ballot.

Accordingly, WSR meetings are likely to assume greater importance and WSR training and development, as well as recognition in the Rules, and in terms of their rights to function effectively being established in Collective Agreements, becomes vital.

Meeting design

The comments set out in section 4.1.2 to do with the design and facilitation of every form of NZEI meeting is usefully reiterated here. Good quality information, relevant knowledge available at the gathering, good process design and facilitation to enable good quality discussion and a learning orientation are vital, in every form of NZEI meeting, whatever structures are finally adopted.

6.2.4 Concluding comment

At this stage, the particular shape of NZEI structures are less important than clarity and agreement around the criteria that have to be satisfied in designing them. Structures that facilitate NZEI developing and executing its direction and priorities with meaningful membership involvement, accountability, and relative ease are needed. Radical overhaul is not necessary and it may be that an evolutionary or staged approach to change will work best.

7. Work Organisation and Practices

This section primarily relates to the paid staff of NZEI. While how the Union's work is organised was not the main focus of the Review, it has a bearing on the effectiveness with which strategic priorities are delivered. If staff and work processes are not aligned with strategy and delivery structures then results will be sub-optimal.

The staff of NZEI are a dedicated and hard-working group who strive to be as effective as they can be within the context in which they operate. Sometimes this context is conducive and things work smoothly while other time's people have to struggle against the structures and work procedures that have been established.

Clearly decisions on structure will need to be made by NZEI before the most suitable forms of work organisation and work practices can be settled on. At that point a more comprehensive analysis of how work is organised can be undertaken. In the meantime there are a number of issues that arose during the consultation process that provide some clues as to how this might all be configured.

7.1 Work organisation

7.1.2 National office

Currently the major functions are industrial/professional (under one Assistant Secretary who also has line management responsibility for Regional Secretaries, communications and legal) and organisation/administration covering membership, finances, servicing the elected structures and general administration, under another Assistant Secretary. This means that staff

structures are based on function rather than supporting any particular strategic direction.

The major implication of this design is that there is often poor 'line of sight' and hence lack of ownership, for some staff involved in campaigns or other activities that span a number of functions (eg. administrative staff who are at the end of the line when it comes to carrying out some administrative function about which they have little to no prior knowledge, and therefore little appreciation of relative importance and priority). A number of respondents talked about working in silos where people end up focusing on their own group and interests often at the expense of others. Silos facilitate hoarding of information and bureaucratic procedure leading to diffusion of effort.

It should be noted that some staff ignore bureaucratic impediments and simply go and talk with whoever they need to, so there is a mix of modes.

While it is important for specialists to spend time together deepening their expertise, given the nature of NZEI's work, it is equally important that there is regular cross-fertilising of ideas between different specialisations. This is particularly the case when both disciplines are required to combine around specific campaigns.

Administrative staff spoke of a sense of loss of belonging, as NZEI has grown through amalgamation. Combined meetings of National office staff have been abandoned and communication processes have become weakened which has left some staff feeling a little like an after-thought and not really valued.

NZEI management structures and working methods tend to be quite hierarchical to the extent that status and the composition of work groups is determined more by position than by what you do and how it is done. There are two main implications here: team work, where the manager is focused on enabling a high level of team functioning is not facilitated; and NZEI does not always put the most appropriate and skilled people into the right room at the right time. Staff resources are precious and need to be used to greatest effect.

This suggests the need to further explore:

- *How to achieve a better alignment between strategic direction and core staff structures*
- *Facilitation of more seamless working together between industrial and professional teams*
- *the design of work to enable greater flexibility so that the best fit-for-purpose teams can be assembled as required*
- *A more deliberate project management orientation where cross functional teams with all the necessary skills (including communications and administration) are pulled together around definable pieces of work*
- *A need to facilitate more timely internal communications with all key functional groups on a regular basis. Meeting reps can then advise their co-workers of what is happening and how it might affect them*
- *Direct communication between people rather than funneling through senior managers*

7.1.2 National/Regional

In any organisation there is always a degree of tension between the centre and regions. Typically, the centre believes it is aware of the big picture and the politics of what is possible, while the regions are perceived as doing their own thing, pulling in different directions, and not being aware of the wider implications. On the other hand, the regions accuse the centre of having their heads in the air, being too close to the government/ministry and not being aware of what is happening on the ground. Of course, both are right at various times. This causes tension and frustration that can spill over into poor response and coordination. The challenge is to try and better manage these inevitable tensions. They won't go away.

The sheer volume of work, little or uneven guidance on priorities, and poor industrial/professional and national/regional alignment can lead to a proliferation of uncoordinated requests from national office to regional F/Os, asking for feedback or to consult members, that is almost impossible to comply with. In these circumstances, Regional Secretaries, in order to protect their F/Os from unachievable levels of demand some times have to make a call about what their staff should focus on. This can mean that little feedback is received by national office resulting in the Union's case or force of argument with the Ministry being weakened.

The earlier discussions in this report to do with strategic direction setting and prioritising together with their structural implications, if implemented, will assist in overcoming some of these difficulties. In addition, creating more of an organising orientation in the approach of national office staff and involving both regional and national office staff on some joint work projects will help in better aligning the efforts of both groups.

Again, the principle should be locating control and coordination of work at the level at which it is done rather than one or more levels above. If staff fully appreciate the strategic priorities and principles of member involvement of NZEI through helping to facilitate its development and the design of its implementation, they can be left to work out what to do within their various work teams.

This can then lift the focus of meetings of Regional Secretaries, Executive Officers and the National Secretary and Assistant Secretaries to a more strategic level. It will also shift the focus of the role of Regional Secretary to setting expectations and boundaries, monitoring performance and building the capability of their teams. Regions vs. the centre, professional vs. industrial, administrative staff vs. everyone else, are all luxuries that a national organisation seeking to grow in influence and effectiveness can ill-afford to indulge in.

There is real merit in considering mechanisms for creating staff fora for national level discussion and debate amongst staff from all areas focused on translating priorities into achievable programmes of work that supersede localism. Local discussion can then focus on how to coordinate and deliver at a local level.

7.1.3 Regional Offices

The work of regional offices is critical to the reputation and effectiveness of NZEI. F/Os in particular are the 'face' of the Union for both members and School Boards of Trustees, and other outside organisations. While there is some unevenness in the level of 'service' experienced by some members, there is generally a high level of respect for a hard working group of F/Os from both members and the Principals they deal with. Field staff numbers have been

growing in recent years to cope with a big rise in membership and a growing workload.

However, there is room for improvement in a number of areas:

- F/Os who don't come from an education background can sometimes struggle to get to grips with professional issues and their intertwining with industrial matters. Those coming from a union background can adopt a more hard-nosed approach in dealing with Principals (also members, of course) in a workplace environment that relies on a collegial culture to succeed. This can have the effect of diluting respect that members have for their F/O, and weakening the reputation of the union in affected workplaces. Recruitment practices and a proper capability development programme are two possible remedies. NZEI can ill-afford to present poorly to and inadequately represent members.
- While some F/Os are superb at their work of organising members, exercise good judgment and always seem to know the right thing to do, others are less sure and therefore less effective. There are currently no organising standards of practice to provide guidance to F/Os so that they know what they should be aspiring to do. Effective and time-efficient ways of managing personal cases, nurturing and developing Worksite Reps, good meeting design and facilitation, making the most of opportunities to involve members in time and cost-effective ways, are all examples of where some guidance would be helpful. Both good and not so good practices are passed on informally at present. A systematically and collegially developed manual of good organising practice would be a useful tool for current and future staff, as well as helping national office staff in adopting more of an organising perspective in their work.

7.2 Work practices and workplace culture

This second point, above, directly relates to the area of work practices. The structures that have evolved in NZEI and the workplace culture they engender

have tended to create a particular set of practices and a culture that has the following characteristics:

- As noted earlier, work practices can be bureaucratic with some procedures being practiced seemingly because they always have been. It may be that there is comfort in operating in certain ways whether they have utility or not. A useful rule of thumb that every staff member can ask in any work context is: *is what I/we are doing adding value to our strategic priorities; and is there a better way of doing it?*
- Planning in some instances can be over elaborate and very time-consuming with plans often overtaken by events. Again, guidance from a clear set of priorities and devolving as much planning and coordinating to those doing the actual work will be helpful.
- NZEI has traditionally been a very paper-based organisation churning out huge quantities of reports and communications. While this has kept everyone well informed about everything, modern ICT is now enabling the rapid transformation of paper based to electronic and digitally based communications. NZEI has begun to embark on this pathway but as noted in section 5.2.6 there is an urgent need to develop an ICT strategy (of the sort that will enable lap-tops to talk to the Unions data base, high levels of on-line interactivity, video-conferencing, and the greater use of mobile phones for mass and speedy communications).
- Ready access to up to date membership data by F/Os is needed, as is regular reporting on membership trends and composition that can inform a more deliberate approach to recruitment.
- Good meeting design where people are prepared, meetings are clearly focused on an agreed purpose, can make decisions including (who, what and by when) and adopt good follow-up processes will help ensure peoples' time is well spent.

- There is some evidence of unwillingness within NZEI to face up to hard issues, around both policy and performance, and a tendency to avoid conflict. New Zealanders tend to dislike conflict and criticism (even when constructive) and are prepared to suffer the consequences of resulting poor performance even though affected others resent this. Healthy tensions around important issues together with a problem solving approach, if well practiced, can be a source of innovation and renewal.

It should also be noted that there are many examples of highly effective work practices adopted by individuals and groups within NZEI. The above comments are aimed at establishing organisation wide work practices that directly support the sort of strategies and structures discussed in this report.

8. Capability and Renewal

The success of virtually all of the proposals in this package' of reforms about direction, member involvement, and the likely shape of union structures etc depend on the ability of NZEI to access and effectively deploy a particular set of capabilities, among both paid staff and active/elected members.

In recent years NZEI has experienced growing difficulty in attracting and recruiting both staff as well as elected leadership at nearly all levels. It is to be hoped that if these reforms are successful they will help make NZEI a desirable place to be involved with and work in. It is imperative that this intention is to the forefront of people's thinking when it comes to considering these proposals. Renewing both activists and high quality staff is essential.

Some of the capabilities that are needed to bring this process of renewal and evolution to life are set out below:

At governance and elected leadership level, a strategic orientation, a clear appreciation of the distinction between governance and management, good analytical, problem solving and communication skills, will all be necessary to be effective in these roles. A well designed training and development programme to ensure these key people are equipped for their roles is needed.

At a *senior management level*, a greater strategic orientation, the capacity to achieve alignment of activity, work methods, etc with that direction and the ability and willingness to adopt a more devolved management style, is needed to extract the most from any reforms that are agreed to. Creating contexts, modeling expected behaviours and values, enabling others to solve their own problems and organise their own work will all be needed. Good decision-making, problem solving, and communication skills are also needed by all senior managers.

High level policy analysis and an ability to tap into academic and policy thinking that will assist NZEI in bringing a credible and influential union voice to the big-ticket issues like improving educational practice are important capabilities that NZEI has to invest in and retain. Likewise NZEI needs to maintain the *capacity to engage with Ministers and senior policy analysts* on an equal footing. Mention has already been made of developing a body of organising practice and ensuring that F/Os and new staff members are familiar with and practice it.

Specific attention needs to be paid to creating both a:

- *F/O development programme* backed by a mentoring system that draws on the expertise of senior and experienced F/Os, and a
- *Membership leader development programme* (as proposed in 5.2.2 above)

Both of these programmes create pathways for people to develop their skills and expertise over time, thereby enabling them to take advantage of opportunities to advance their careers, while also helping to access and renew the capabilities needs in the future. These sorts of programmes can be developed over a 3-4 year period.

Incidentally, in the short term the skills and knowledge of key NZEI staff who hold huge knowledge need to be captured and transferred to other people in a deliberate process of mentoring and oral history gathering.

This emphasis in this report on capability development and good process design puts the work of NZEI's education team in the spotlight. Currently, they do an excellent job in worksite rep education and more recently in assisting a number of branches and DC's to think more carefully about their practice and how they might improve it. This review envisages a far greater role for an expanded team as NZEI adopts more of a developmental approach to its work.