

Support Staff Workforce Strategy: Terms of Reference

Introduction

1. Support staff are employed by boards to deliver effective and efficient support services for teaching and learning and the day to day running of schools. Their work contributes to education services equipping all students with knowledge, competencies and values to be successful citizens in the 21st century.

Purpose

2. The parties (the Ministry of Education, NZ Educational Institute Te Riu Roa, and NZ School Trustees Association) agree to establish a tripartite work programme on support staff workforce strategy.
3. The parties undertake to:
 - identify and assess whether there are potential workforce issues which are seen to hinder the effective use of support staff, using a process of research and consultation,
 - seek to identify attainable workforce change initiatives that will improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the support staff workforce, and
 - write a report to the Secretary for Education with their findings
4. The focus of this work programme is about what improvements can be achieved with what we have, within the existing operating model of self-managing schools.
5. The work programme will provide a forum for the parties to work through the process in a consultative, cooperative and constructive manner. The parties are committed to undertaking this work together in good faith and completing it in a timely manner.

Guiding principles

6. Any recommendations arising from the working group will reflect
 - current government policy, and that
 - support staff are employed in self-managing schools.
7. The principles outlined below describe the essential characteristics of education services and will be used as a gauge with which to test options for improvement. The principles are:
 - a. Education equips all students with the knowledge, competencies and values to be successful citizens in the 21st century.

- b. Education must lift the levels of literacy, numeracy and qualifications attainment for every student, and particularly Maori and Pasifika students.
- c. Education must provide value for money and deliver the best outcomes for every student.
- d. All involved have a shared responsibility to work effectively and collaboratively to achieve the best outcomes for students, especially those students with special education needs.
- e. To achieve a capable and competent workforce, roles and accountabilities must be well defined and contribute to educational outcomes.
- f. All staff are appropriately skilled for their role and managed consistently and fairly by their supervisors, managers and school leaders.
- g. Improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the support staff workforce will be cost neutral and within existing funding.

Education Workforce Strategy: Context

- 8. An effective and efficient education workforce is vital for supporting teaching and learning and the day to day running of schools. The Government's intent is that all schools are appropriately staffed, ably led and have a high quality and productive teaching and non-teaching workforce.
- 9. Workforce planning supports medium to long-term change in response to Government priorities, internal education sector needs and external change drivers.
- 10. The support staff work programme will be managed as a separate initiative under the Ministry's workforce strategy umbrella. The Ministry expects that the findings of the working group will inform future policy.

Background

- 11. With the Government focus on value for money across the public sector, along with shifts in educational policy and a new curriculum, it is timely to review the contribution of the support staff workforce and look for opportunities to improve effectiveness and productivity.
- 12. The support staff workforce in schools is large and diverse, covering many different occupational groups and falling broadly into two areas: positions that support teaching and learning and positions supporting school administration and management. Since 1990, numbers have substantially grown to over 20,000 support staff in schools. Anecdotally, the biggest occupational group in terms of numbers are teacher aides, and this is also where the workforce has experienced the most growth.

13. A number of factors have influenced the growth and shape of the support staff workforce employed by schools in the last two decades – the biggest factors have been the introduction of self-managing schools and Special Education 2000 which saw the mainstreaming of students with special education needs.
14. Support staff are employed by each board to meet the identified and specific need of their school. As with any workforce, Government and boards continue to monitor the level of outputs received for the investment made, and consider ways to increase productivity, value for money and student outcomes.
15. In 2008, the Government provided just over \$1 billion in operational funding and boards raised an additional \$560 million locally. Approximately \$400 million of operating budgets is spent on support staff salary and wages each year, representing a major investment for the Government and boards.
16. All schools will benefit from increasing productivity and efficiency in their support staff workforce. The rapid growth over the past 20 years reflects increasing expectations from Government and the community, and the high value that boards place on this part of their workforce.

Scope

17. The initial scope is to establish a better understanding of issues relating to the efficiency and effectiveness of the support staff workforce. For example, issues may relate to achieving consistency in the use of this workforce, availability of appropriate professional development, and effective supervision and mentoring.
18. The work programme will be structured so that it builds on information from other reviews but does not duplicate any work. Related work includes:
 - the Review of Special Education, established in response to public concern around the delivery of education services to children with special education needs, and
 - recent operational grants reviews.

Out of scope

19. The general areas of funding and remuneration have been extensively researched and reported on in previous years and are out of scope for this work programme.
20. The following specific topics are out of scope:
 - Remuneration and pay structures
 - Terms and conditions within collective agreements
 - Review of the funding model for the support staff workforce
 - Duplicating activities in the Special Education Review
21. The review may touch on boundaries between teaching and non-teaching roles and effective professional relationships with teachers and school leaders. It is not intended that the focus of the work group is diverted away from the support staff workforce.

Working Group Membership

22. The proposed membership is:
- Ministry of Education: Fiona McTavish, Ming-chun Wu, Maryann Nesbitt
 - NZSTA: Colin Davies and two NZSTA representatives: James Abernethy and Peter Gall
 - NZEI Te Riu Roa: Geraldine Ryan and two NZEI Te Riu Roa members: Helen Burnet and Vicki Signal.
23. External quality assurance advice will assist the working group in achieving high quality analysis and well considered findings that meet the principles described here. Advice will be requested from a senior academic in a relevant area of public policy, workforce planning, human resources or organisation design with a good general knowledge of the education sector.
24. Academics, researchers and practitioners with particular subject expertise will also be invited to contribute to investigation of specific issues.

The proposed approach

25. It is proposed that this review will be carried out in two phases:
- Phase One will scope issues and make a recommendation on whether there is sufficient agreement to proceed to Phase Two.
 - Phase Two will develop strategy and policy recommendations.
26. Phase 1 Scoping - this phase includes the following activities:
- Agree milestones, activities and time requirements
 - Agree approach to issues analysis
 - Information gathering on existing workforce issues and best practice,
 - Identification of existing best practice in:
 - Support staff roles in supporting teaching and learning
 - Support staff roles in supporting the day to day running of schools
 - Support for school leadership
 - Leadership and management of support staff roles
 - Identification of emerging trends in employer requirements
27. Analysis of issues will be evidence based and will take account of differing perspectives.
28. Expected outputs from Phase 1 include:
- A summary report on key issues
 - A progress report to the Secretary for Education with a recommendation on whether to proceed with Phase 2
 - A joint substantive communication to be released to NZEI Te Riu Roa members, NZSTA boards and the Ministry of Education.
29. The starting point for Phase 1 includes the following areas: how support staff can best contribute to improving educational outcomes for students, best-practice

models of delivering support services, describing skill sets identified to best perform the role(s), professional development, career pathways, workforce quality, accountability, and how to address these within existing funding.

30. Phase 2 Strategy Development - this phase will include the following activities:

- Agree milestones, activities and time requirements
- Develop assessment model and prioritise initiatives
- Assess benefits of possible workforce change initiatives
- Estimate one-off implementation costs
- Identify how to fund initiatives within existing funding levels
- Test approaches with key sector stakeholders and focus groups

31. Expected Phase 2 outputs include:

- Progress reports to NZEI Te Riu Roa members, NZSTA and the Ministry
- Separate issues papers, if agreed to be useful,
- A recommendations report to the Secretary for Education, and
- A joint final report for publication

Note: the decision to publicly release the recommendations report rests with the Secretary for Education.

Working Group Process

32. Each party will manage the selection process for their representatives.

33. Purchasing external quality assurance services is the Ministry's responsibility and will be carried out in consultation with NZEI Te Riu Roa and NZSTA.

34. The working group will seek input from boards, Principals, Secondary Principals Association of NZ, New Zealand Principals Federation, Post Primary Teachers Association, NZ Teachers Council and other interested parties.

35. Information gathering activities will include:

- Reviewing national and international research
- Input from sector groups and academic expertise
- Data gathering e.g. surveying, exploratory studies
- Testing assumptions and conclusions from different perspectives
- Further analysis of existing data
- Use of school visits to contextualise the research findings
- Information sharing with concurrent reviews, such as Special Education

36. An escalation process will be developed to manage decisions on scope arising during the work programme. Overlapping boundaries with other workforce reviews will be managed by the Ministry.

37. An agreed process will be established for releasing communications on progress to members of NZEI Te Riu Roa, NZSTA and the Ministry. The final terms of reference will be provided to the Service and Food Workers Union.

38. Any recommendations must be workable within existing funding and funding processes and consistent with:

- Government policy,
- the school self-managing model,
- advice from the Special Education Review, and
- preferred directions for change shown by research and experience.

Timeframes

39. The parties expect to complete Phase 1 work activities by the end of March, with the Phase 1 report completed by the end of April 2010. The Phase 2 final report to the Secretary for Education will be completed by the end of 2010.

40. This timetable will be revised, if necessary, once the Terms of Reference are approved and the first working group meeting scheduled.

Work Programme Funding

41. The Ministry will fund the secretariat for this work programme, including, reasonable travel costs for NZEI Te Riu Roa and NZSTA representatives, and reasonable research and consultation costs associated with the work. Budgets for travel and associated costs will be agreed before the working group commences. Budgets for specific research and consultation activities will be agreed before work is commissioned. Purchasing processes will comply with the Ministry's purchasing policy.

Terms of Reference Approval Process

42. Once the draft terms of reference is agreed, each organisation will manage its own approval process.

Approved: 2 February 2010