



31st January 2017

To the Committee Secretariat, Education and Science Committee

Parliament Building

Wellington

Online:

Re: Submission on Education (Update) Amendment Bill

Submission:

The submission is from the NZ Federation of Business and Professional Women (BPW NZ) Inc.

Our Organisation

BPW (Business Professional Women) is an international organization with representatives in over 100 countries. Our aim is to empower women and by extension children and families. Club members are involved in advocacy and raising awareness about issues such as equal opportunity and the status of all women in economic, civil and political life, ultimately working toward the removal of discrimination. We also aim to empower members through professional and personal development opportunities as well as mentoring and networking.

Our structure is comprised of a National Executive, 14 branches and a number of individual members in areas where there is no branch. We are an apolitical organisation.

International Status:

BPW International has General Consultative Status at the United Nations through the UN Economic & Social Council (ECOSOC). This enables BPW International to appoint official representatives to UN agencies worldwide and to accredit members to attend specific UN meetings.

BPW International upholds the outcomes of the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) Committee at state party level. BPW International upholds the outcome documents of the annual UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) which

BPW NEW ZEALAND

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evaluates progress, identifies challenges, sets global standards and formulates policies to promote gender equality and women's empowerment worldwide.

What is BPW NZ interest in the Bill?

"If you educate a woman, you educate a nation." Ghanaian proverb

BPW NZ's interest in this Bill is based on the importance of the education sector to women and children throughout New Zealand. Education is the most important way in which economic inequality is overcome and is an important factor in New Zealand's future economic success.¹ Education is especially important for girls from a poor socio-economic background, providing them an opportunity for a healthier, safer and freer outcome.² Education is an important way in which people are empowered, and BPW NZ's key mission is the empowerment of women, children and families.

General Comments: The Education (Update) Amendment Bill

BPW NZ congratulates the Ministry of Education (Ministry) on the Education (Update) Amendment Bill and the significant and numerous aspects of education policy it encompasses. We hope this is the first step toward legislation that results in an education system that truly, in the words of the Ministry, works to "lift aspiration, raise education achievement for every New Zealander".³

Submission

BPW NZ wishes to speak to five items related to this Bill. These are:

- The role of the Ministry in the education sector
- Legislating teacher competency
- Preparing students for the workforce
- The impact of poverty on educational attainment
- Inclusivity

¹ <http://www.treasury.govt.nz/economy/education>

² http://www.ungei.org/news/files/unicef_gebackgrounder_110406.pdf

³ <http://www.education.govt.nz/ministry-of-education/our-role-and-our-people/our-purpose-vision-and-behaviours/>



1. The role of the Ministry in the education sector

The mission of the Ministry is “to lift aspiration, raise education achievement for every New Zealander”. This means to raise up and enable students and teachers rather than to dictate or regulate to the sector. We find that the Bills objective to “strengthen the efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability of schools” is better suited to a corporate, private sector mission statement, rather than a policy objective for the education sector.

We find the increased involvement of the Ministry in and above the role of organizations such as the Teachers Council, PPTA, NZEI and communities themselves, is resulting in a more centralized and top-down education sector. We believe in a grass-roots approach, in which the expertise and passion of those working on the front-lines—living and working in communities—is prioritized. This is more conducive to achievement as supported by the introduction of Communities of Learning.⁴

2. Legislating teacher competency

When seeking to “strengthen the legal framework for managing teacher competency” we believe establishing a “Competence Authority” is counter-intuitive to empowering our teachers. Empowerment is best achieved through professional development, leadership opportunities, and the enhancement of the teaching process so that it is a highly desired and respected profession. This is supported by Treasury’s findings.⁵ Teacher performance is presently managed through the Teachers Council and this Bill involves the Ministry in a way that is disempowering and controlling rather than positive and uplifting.

3. Preparing students for post-school life

The consultation process for this legislation identified the importance of education in contributing to the development of well-rounded individuals.⁶ Students leaving school need to have the right qualifications for the workforce around them, as well as general reading, writing, mathematic skills, but also resilience, determination, confidence, creativity and critical thinking.⁷ This preparation for work and future life was considered one of the main goals of education.

We find it difficult to see how disestablishing Careers New Zealand and “refocusing” its functions within the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) will lend itself to meeting the

⁴ <http://parents.education.govt.nz/essential-information/news-stories/communities-of-learning/>

⁵ <http://www.treasury.govt.nz/economy/education>

⁶ <http://www.education.govt.nz/assets/Uploads/Executive-summary-of-submissions.pdf>

⁷ <http://www.education.govt.nz/assets/Uploads/Executive-summary-of-submissions.pdf>



above consultative findings. The TEC's strategy is "to ensure the tertiary education system can respond to change and continue to improve outcomes for learners and industry"⁸ rather than focusing on New Zealanders achieving their potential in the transition from school to the workplace. It lacks the focus on students themselves.

Science, Technical, Engineering, and Maths (STEM) jobs are becoming a bigger part of NZ's workforce and will continue to do so in the future.⁹ However, our PISA 2015 Science ranking saw New Zealand fall from 12th to 18th and in at Statistics New Zealand report from 2013 found women were underrepresented in many higher earning STEM professions.¹⁰ The relevant fields of studies for those professions were found to be dominated by men in the tertiary sector. BPW NZ would like the Ministry to lead NZ in being at the forefront of policy that encourages male *and* female students to be prepared for 21st century jobs and compete internationally.

4. The impact of poverty on education achievement

Twice as many children now live below the poverty line than in 1984, representing nearly 295,000 New Zealand children.¹¹ The Ministry has published the effects of poverty of education:

Poverty increases the likelihood of poor nutrition and other health problems, housing transience, unstable parent and caregiver relationships, negative peer group influences and other factors known to impact on educational achievement.

Poverty during the early years of childhood can be particularly detrimental, with negative educational effects persisting at least into the middle years of schooling, even when family incomes improve. The relationship between income and education outcomes is not linear - increases in household income have significantly greater impacts on education outcomes for children in low-income families than outcomes for children in high-income families.¹²

We note the absence of any amendments recognizing and addressing increasing economic inequality and the continuing problem of persistent poverty and its impact on education. Although we recognize issues within a child's home is within the remit of the Ministry of Social Development, we believe a holistic approach to a child's wellbeing is a more effective approach to addressing issues with education achievement. What can the Ministry of Education do to

⁸ <http://www.tec.govt.nz/focus/our-focus/business-strategy>

⁹ MBIE Occupation Outlook 2014

¹⁰ Statistics NZ Women at work: 1991–2013

¹¹ 2016 Child Poverty Monitor Technical Report <http://www.nzchildren.co.nz/>

¹² http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/indicators/definition/family-and-community-engagement/children_living_in_low_income_households



support schools and teachers in helping children living in poverty? What can the Ministry do to support schools and teachers in addressing inequality? This is especially important because in some cases teachers may be the only positive influence on a child. Student-teacher relationships are a key factor affecting student achievement.¹³ Surely, children living in poverty and the impact on education is the most important factor in limiting student as well as teacher achievement. The absence of addressing this in this update is indicative of the Ministry's preference to increase their legislative rights and involvement in the sector rather than on their mission—the achievement of students.

As an example, a teacher at a decile 6 co-ed college in the Hutt Valley keeps a bowl of fruit in her classroom. Not as a healthy perk for her students; rather because she knows some of her students walk into her classroom hungry. Many schools around New Zealand have initiated breakfast clubs or the like, because of children coming to school hungry. Teachers understand the negative relationship between hunger and learning, as discussed by the Ministry of Education¹⁴ and supported by many studies, such as the Tufts University Center on Hunger, Poverty and Nutrition Policy. We hope the Ministry of Education works to play an important role in supporting teachers and schools who uplift children living in poverty.

5. Inclusivity

The consultative process to this Bill referred to the importance of education being “inclusive of all students”. New Zealand has a lot to offer children in regards to a modern, evolving education system, however evidence shows that those living in poverty or with disabilities are not meeting the same achievement levels. They are also part of the “all” that we are morally and legislatively impelled to help achieve.

The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) is an international treaty adopted in 1979 by the United Nations General Assembly and ratified by New Zealand 1985. Article 10 in CEDAW's Convention requires the elimination of discrimination of women in education specifically.¹⁵ In August 2016, BPW NZ submitted a paper in opposition to the closure of Salisbury School in Nelson.¹⁶ The submission spoke of how girls and women with disabilities need to be provided with education and support; that there is higher risk for safety that is posed to girls and women with intellectual disabilities and that closing Salisbury School significantly affects the ability of girls and women with intellectual disabilities to be educated

¹³ <http://visiblelearningplus.com/> - Visible Learning, Tomorrow's Schools The Mindsets that make a difference in Education

¹⁴ http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/indicators/definition/family-and-community-engagement/children_living_in_low_income_households

¹⁵ <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/text/econvention.htm#article10>

¹⁶ <http://bpw.org.nz/>



safely. The submission noted how the education sector struggled to meet the needs of students, both male and female, with disabilities.

Conclusion

Ultimately, BPW NZ believes this Bill will need the support of further legislation to result in an education sector that meets the goals of the Ministry of uplifting all New Zealanders. Further legislation must do more to support and drive engagement and effectiveness within communities, to advance teachers and the teaching profession, to prepare students for the workforce, to uplift the many children still living in poverty and to be a sector that works for all New Zealanders, regardless of gender, family income, or physical or mental ability.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to our submission and we hope that our comments are of use to you.

On behalf of

New Zealand Federation of Business and professional Women Inc.

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