



Submission

To the Ministry of Education on
the

Changes to school board objectives and NELP
provisions

From Te Huarahi Māori Motuhake



About PPTA Te Wehengarua

PPTA Te Wehengarua represents the majority of teachers engaged in secondary education in New Zealand, including secondary teachers, principals, and manual and technology teachers.

Under our constitution, all PPTA Te Wehengarua activity is guided by the following objectives:

- to advance the cause of education generally and of all phases of secondary and technical education in particular;
- to uphold and maintain the just claims of its members individually and collectively; and
- to affirm and advance Te Tiriti O Waitangi.

This submission is from the PPTA Te Wehengarua Executive and is on behalf of all of our members.

About Te Huarahi Māori Motuhake

Te Huarahi Māori Motuhake (THMM) is the national Māori governing body of the Post-Primary Teachers' Association Te Wehengarua (PPTA). THMM is comprised of 20 member representatives elected on an iwi geographical basis by Māori members of the Association. Te Huarahi Māori Motuhake has the responsibility for making decisions that impact Māori members. Our role is to advise Māori members and to act as a channel for their concerns; to consider and represent those concerns to the PPTA Executive; and to liaise with Māori members and consult regularly with kaiako Māori on issues pertaining to secondary education.

Te Huarahi Māori Motuhake stands firm against the government demoting the place of Te Tiriti o Waitangi in the Education and Training Act by removing it as one of the four current primary objectives for boards in their governing of schools and placing it under one primary objective.

Our stance is grounded in a commitment to preserving and enhancing education for Māori learners within the public system, and working towards further innovation that better meets the mātauranga Māori needs of ākonga Māori.

We ask that the Ministry of Education consider all the points made by Te Huarahi Māori Motuhake and the rationale behind our opposition to the proposed changes to school board objectives and NELP provisions.

Feedback used to inform this submission has been collected from kaiako Māori and Te Huarahi Māori Motuhake who are at the chalk face of educating our ākonga Māori.

Recommendations of Te Huarahi Māori Motuhake on the changes to school board objectives and NELP provisions.

1. That the proposed changes are stopped and further, genuine consultation with all affected stakeholders occurs.
2. That the Treaty clause update does not alter clause 127 d(1) wording to ensure that plans, policies, and local curriculum reflect local tikanga Māori, mātauranga Māori, and te ao Māori; and¹
3. That the curriculum focus 'local curriculum' is not removed.

¹ Education and Training Act 2020 <https://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2020/0038/latest/LMS274508.html>

4. That National Education and Learning Priorities (NELP) are maintained in law.

We stand to affirm and advance Te Tiriti o Waitangi in education

Since the establishment of Te Huarahi Māori Motuhake in 1987, a primary objective of the PPTA Te Wehengarua has been to affirm and advance Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Te Tiriti). This means that Te Tiriti is at the forefront of all our policies and regulations, and that it must be used as a cultural lens for all matters that affect the educational sector.

As it currently stands, the introduction of all new statutory laws and amendments must be considered in the context of Te Tiriti. This is so our public education framework will continue to grow and develop for the benefit of all students, which includes specific focus on equitable outcomes for Māori students. Note that for the purposes of this submission, it is not our intention to educate the reader on the reasons why Māori students have experienced inequity in education, as this has been well documented historically.

The paramount function of Te Huarahi Māori Motuhake is to ensure that the primary Te Tiriti objective is being adhered to and complied with, specifically regarding any developmental policy and/or legislative changes that will impact the public education sector.

Kaiako Māori in kura auraki, kura-ā-iwi, kura kaupapa Māori, as well as whānau, communities and boards have worked hard over the years towards achieving equitable outcomes for Māori and are united in their opposition to these changes which diminish the rights of ākonga Māori. The demotion of the Treaty as an objective is a regressive step which threatens to undermine decades of progress in honouring Te Tiriti o Waitangi and must be strongly opposed to protect Māori rights and uphold the true spirit of the Treaty.

Treaty clause update

Proposal: Move Section 127(1)(d)(iii) about achieving equitable outcomes for Māori students to the beginning of Te Tiriti clause to make it more prominent. The intention is for the clause to require schools to give effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi and achieve equitable outcomes for Māori students, including by giving effect to the other requirements under this clause (section 127(1)(d)(i) which relates to tikanga Māori, mātauranga Māori, and te ao Māori and section 127(1)(d)(ii)) which relates to making instruction available in tikanga Māori and te reo Māori.

Te Huarahi Māori Motuhake believe this is another attempt to remove Treaty references in legislation and for the Government to step back from their obligation to uphold Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Te Huarahi Māori Motuhake Kaiako have provided the following comments to the proposed 127 Treaty clause change:

Te Hāpai-Ō (Māori Vice President PPTA): “This change is not merely a cosmetic adjustment; it significantly demotes the importance of school obligations under Te Tiriti o Waitangi. By focusing solely on equitable outcomes, this proposal reduces the rich obligations of Te Tiriti o Waitangi to a single, measurable metric, ignoring broader issues of cultural preservation and self-determination essential to Māori education”.

Kaiako: “Historically, such seemingly minor changes have often led to major erosion of Māori rights and autonomy”.

Kaiako:

“Te Tiriti in its’ intention to achieve equitable outcomes for Māori ākonga, including giving effect to the other requirements under this clause (section 127 (1) (d) (i) which relates to tikanga Māori, mātauranga Māori, and te ao Māori and section 127 (1) (d) (ii) relating to making instruction available in tikanga Māori and te reo Māori **must** remain explicit. This ensures that our ancestor signed a legitimate and binding document because they trusted the Crown’s responsibility in Niu Tīreni at the time”.

Kaiako:

“I utterly oppose this proposal”.

Kaiako:

“what needs to be articulated is that these measures to relegate the relevance of Te Tiriti in our society is TREASONOUS! Te Tiriti is our foundational document, and this diminishes its’ place within our statutes. Cognitive disconnect.”

Kaiako:

“Te Tiriti was placed within the statutes because it is recognised as our foundational document, hasn’t been adhered to by the crown, (how many cases in the Waitangi Tribunal has the crown won?) has resulted in Māori being usurped as one of the legal signatories of an internationally recognised contract, and is a means to rebalance the inequity within our society as well as cement the legal right of Tangata Tiriti to be here”.

Kaiako:

“It would then make it inequitable and will diminish rights for schools and tamariki outcomes”.

Kaiako:

“In Te Whakaputanga, ‘We, the true leaders have agreed to meet in a formal gathering (rūnanga) at Waitangi in the autumn (Ngahuru) of each year to enact laws (wakarite ture) that justice may be done (kia tika ai te wakaekanga), so that peace may prevail, and wrong-doing cease and trade (hokohoko) be fair’ - translation Dr Manuka Henare. I challenge the government to provide proven and tested examples that exemplify this or to return to the binding agreement of Te Whakaputanga if they choose to neglect and negate Te Tiriti”.

Kaiako:

“Māori are currently over- represented in the majority of statistics that have a very real impact on our day to day lives. If we remove the status on the importance of Te Tiriti o Waitangi from schools, we run the risk of turning the clock back by decades. Schools are a place to advance learning and support society as a whole. A successful Aotearoa that is participating at a world level, where Māori are thriving and able to participate. The world is interested in Māori, who we are and what we do. Our ākonga are the participants in this success, so to take the fabric that supports their learning and wellbeing, I strongly oppose this”.

Kaiako:

To move s127 (d) and to subsume it under an existing/new objective within s127, is to relegate it to be subordinate to another objective. Why would Māori agree to such an absurdity? I do not trust that it’s all about format, rather it’s a sly move that would materially affect the substantive outcome. Otherwise why change it? To consider moving this important and prescriptive provision is to deliberately downplay it’s cultural impetus and relegate TTOW to the back benches.

It could also act as a deregulation maneuver so that BOTs are not required to give cultural consideration to and emphasise importance of its Māori students, nor that this duty be directly linked to TTOW. (And the question needs to be asked, would Māori be afforded any legal rights without any reference or connection to TTOW?)

As TTOW currently sits in its own specific provision (and rightly so), it compels all BOTs to give express attention to achieving equitable outcomes for their Māori students.

TTOW is worthy of standing alone and having its own mana, and that it should be regarded separately from all other criteria.

Subsuming the TTOW provision into one objective with all other provisions, gives the false illusion, that TTOW has the same or lesser value than all other identified criteria, thereby deliberately trying to dilute the mana of TTOW.

My response is that you cannot legislatively reverse monumental māori educational and equitable progress, by relegating a statutory TTOW provision to an inferior legislative position than it had before, and expect that this move will result in this provision having the same mana as the other criteria it has been subsumed into.

Curriculum focus

Proposal: Change the term 'local curriculum' to 'teaching and learning programmes' to make clear that schools need to give effect to the national curriculum through their teaching and learning programmes. This is just a wording update and does not change the meaning of this clause.

The absurd claim that educators might confuse the term 'local curriculum' with the 'national curriculum' is being used as a justification for this change. In reality, it's the desire to remove the focus on ākonga learning about local history, culture, and the people of their rohe — and the truths that emerge from this — that is the true reason behind the push to eliminate the term local curriculum.

The teaching of 'local history' is the first time this nation has sought to address the one-sided view of history that has long been taught in our schools. The colonial view subsumed the indigenous experience to that of a by-stander. The 'local curriculum' has allowed indigenous truth and uncovered generations of hidden colonial myths that exist to empower the coloniser at the expense of those who were colonised. The truth will set us free.

Kaiako:

"the proposed change risks losing the cultural richness that 'local curriculum' conveys. It is important that our education system remains responsive not only to local communities but also continues to be instrumental in sustaining the kōrero tuku iho that has been shared with us by hapū and iwi. This connection is vital for ensuring that ākonga Māori see their culture and identity reflected in their education, fostering a sense of belonging and pride in their heritage".

Kaiako:

"Local curriculum is very easy to understand".

Te Hāpai-Ō, (Māori Vice President PPTA):

"I disagree with this proposal. The term 'local curriculum' emphasises the importance of adapting national curriculum frameworks to reflect local contexts, including iwi and hapū perspectives. Changing this terminology could lead to a more standardised approach that overlooks local cultural relevance, which is crucial for engaging ākonga Māori effectively".

Kaiako:

By using a simplistic and literal interpretation of these words, in conjunction with the currently unaffected TTOW framework, local curriculum has more attraction and learning potential, simply because the word 'local' implies and includes, a relationship with mana-whenua, or the local hapu of a kura.

Let there be no doubt that this is exactly what it means for Kaiako Māori in kura, when local curriculum is referred to. We automatically consider that it is appropriate for mana-whenua to be included. Would this whakaaro still be thought of in the same way, if the terms were changed to teaching and learning programmes?

Teaching and learning programmes do not have this definitive understanding and acceptance built into these words, the literal interpretation just means to teach and to learn, with no implicit connection, acknowledgement or importance given to any 'local curriculum'.

It would therefore not prescribe as current legislation does, for kura/BOTs to give mandatory consideration to mana whenua, hapu and iwi regarding any cultural or historical issues connected with a kura, or to more importantly, to teach our ākonga of the rich cultural history that is enculturated in the whenua and te taiao.

By getting rid of local curriculum and subsuming TTOW provisions to legislative inferiority, there is no compulsion on any schools to seek and comply with the rich local history of hapu who have mana whenua over the school or nearby whenua to the school.

These questions appear to be a specific and planned attack on Māori and TTOW in education, and it attempts to de-regulate what has already been legitimised in law and been given legal recognition in current educational policies. An attempt to destabilise local Māori input into kura, would undermine the cultural fabric that is rich in history and tikanga and is relevant for local kura and ākonga to learn.

It could be said that without having this relationship between mana whenua and kura, one could view it as an opportunity to stymie the local history and knowledge, and prevent this from being taught to ākonga by kaiako.

My answers to these questions highlight that there is a concerted effort to completely undermine the positive progress that Māori have attained over the last several decades, particularly by referring to, using and being immersed within a TTOW framework. The onslaught and targeted approach to dismantle the positive progress Māori have incrementally gained in education, specifically around the inequity of Māori students in education, has now become more apparent and is at risk more than ever.

Proposed changes to National Education and Learning Priorities (NELP)

Proposal: The Government is also asking for your say on whether to remove the requirement for a statement of National Education and Learning Priorities (NELP) from the law. If this change happens:

- A future NELP would not be issued.
- Schools and early learning centres would not need to follow a NELP.
- The current NELP is intended to stay in effect until it ends in November 2025.

Te Huarahi Māori Motuhake is opposed to the proposed removal of National Education and Learning Priorities (NELP).

The Statement of National Education and Learning Priorities (the NELP), a with rich local curriculum helps kaiako instill in each child and young person an appreciation of the importance of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and te reo Māori and this proposal puts all of this under threat.

Te Huarahi Māori Motuhake believes that this is another part of the coalition governments agenda to undermine, eliminate and move requirements to address Te Tiriti o Waitangi in educational legislation.

The Statement of National Education and Learning Priorities (the NELP) is a set of priorities designed to guide those who govern schools and kura (state, state integrated, and private), to focus their day-to-day work on things that will have a significant positive impact for children and young people. The priorities can be used alongside their own local priorities, and in conjunction with delivering a rich local curriculum, to help every learner/ākonga to progress and achieve their aspirations.²

“Teachers have a very important role in supporting tamariki to be successful in education. Many of the things they do to support tamariki are the same things that whānau are doing at home. The five best things whānau think teachers do to support tamariki to succeed are:

1. encouraging and supporting tamariki
2. knowing and caring about tamariki
3. listening to tamariki
4. teaching to individuals’ strengths and needs
5. embodying qualities and values that whānau admire.

Whānau value the expertise teachers bring in determining an individual’s learning strengths and needs. They most value teachers who are able to adjust their teaching practice to best support individual learning strengths, needs, and interests, and make learning enjoyable for tamariki”.³

The current NELPs ensure that learners, with their whanau, are at the centre of the strategic planning for schools and kura. They ensure investment in Kaiako through professional learning and development are treated as priorities and in particular the incorporation of te reo Māori and tikanga Māori. They also

² The National Education and Learning Priorities <https://assets.education.govt.nz/public/Documents/NELP-TES-documents/FULL-NELP-2020.pdf>

³ Poipoia ngā tamariki | How whānau and teachers support tamariki Māori to be successful in learning and education—COMPASS He whakarāpopototanga | Executive summary NZCER.

ensure that the contribution of research and mātauranga Māori is explicitly recognised and incorporated.

The removal of the NELPs further downgrades these priorities for school boards and kura thereby downgrading the importance of Māori culture, investment in teachers and freedom from discrimination. Not only does this proposal remove these objectives but it removes the ability for objectives to be directed through NELPs in the future.

Kaiako:

“NELP are important to schools strategic planning.”

Kaiako:

“This change suggests a lack of foresight and planning in our curriculum and disadvantages ākonga from connection and establishing them within the geographic location, that they learn in. Te Taiao is innately attached to our world view as Māori, it shows this government’s lack of connection to land and society. It also illuminates the governments’ lack of international awareness, particularly when climate, weather, war, communications increasingly dominate our international media”.

Kaiako:

“Under s5 of the Act, the issuing of NELPs requires that Ministers be inclusive and accountable in their decision-making. It also compels Ministers to give thoughtful consideration, not only to TTOW but also to consult with Māori and all other affected groups in Education.”

Conclusion

This proposal is a further example of the current government once again interfering with education to further coalition party’s political aspirations of subsuming Te Tiriti o Waitangi and paving the way for privatisation. In essence, this coalition government wants to eliminate Māori voices and visibility.

The proposed Treaty clause change is in fact a maneuver to change and diminish Te Tiriti o Waitangi in education. The result will be that Boards of Trustees will have no impetus to acknowledge, understand and implement Mātauranga Māori as required by Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

The removal of the term local curriculum and replacement with teaching and learning is another maneuver to subsume Mātauranga Māori. There will be less incentive to include hapū, iwi and whānau content, alongside the national curriculum, into what is being taught in our schools.

The proposed removal of the NELPs is a step further towards abolishing the obligation to uphold Te Tiriti based education and instead pave the way for profiteers.