



The New Zealand Psychological Society

Te Rōpū Mātai Hinengaro o Aotearoa

Briefing to the Incoming Minister of Education 2017

On behalf of
The New Zealand Psychological Society, Institute of Educational and Developmental
Psychology

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December 2017

Executive Summary

We extend a warm welcome to the new Minister of Education. We offer our expertise, knowledge and support to you in your role of improving the education and wellbeing of all New Zealanders.

The following four priorities are identified as fundamental to ensuring that all learners are able to access the support they need.

Priorities:

- The need for timely and needs-based access to educational psychologists in the Learning Support Service.
- Improvement of the current assessment system via the provision of support for schools.
- Replenishment of the educational psychology workforce to meet the needs of the community .
- Practical and relevant research for effective change in schools.

1.0 Introduction

The New Zealand Psychological Society (the Society) is the largest professional association for psychologists in New Zealand, with more than 1800 members and student subscribers. The Society's collective aim is to improve individual and community wellbeing by disseminating and advancing the rigorous practice of psychology.

The Institute of Educational and Developmental Psychology (IEDP) is one of the subgroups within the Society. It is the only professional group in Aotearoa New Zealand that represents the work of professional psychologists supporting children, young persons, and their families within learning environments. Our members are at the forefront of research and innovation in designing and delivering systems of support for young people, particularly those at the margins of our society, their whānau, educators, and support agencies.

The NZPsS and IEDP welcomes the opportunity to engage with the Government about policy, service delivery, workforce, and service quality for the benefit of our tamariki and their communities.

2.0 Context

Psychologists working in education are integral to the identification, assessment and ongoing support of children with a wide variety of special needs throughout Aotearoa New Zealand. They work across the education, social services, and health sectors. All have a minimum of six years training to post Masterate level and the majority have additional qualifications and experience.

Educational psychologists have well established models of culturally responsive and inclusive practice, and are trained to work in a wide range of ways from systems level work that includes school-wide preventative programmes to highly intensive work with complex situations such as providing intensive wraparound services for children identified with severe behaviour or significant learning difficulties.

Educational psychologists play an important role in working with children who have an intellectual disability, learning disability, developmental disabilities (e.g. autistic spectrum), physical disabilities, sensory impairment, social, emotional or behavioural difficulties, and family or community challenges. They are able to provide skilled counselling.

A significant number of educational psychologists are employed by the Ministry of Education.

3.0 Shortage of Psychologists

We are concerned that the services educational psychologists can provide young people, whānau and school communities are seriously limited by the number of psychologists available. This has resulted in a form of rationing of services. There are currently 202 practicing registered educational psychologists and a number who are registered in the general scope.ⁱ As noted, the Ministry of Education is the largest employer of psychologists in education. They currently employ 172 full time equivalent psychologists.ⁱⁱ To meet the needs of a similar population, and provide an equivalent standard of care to Scotland, we would need to double the number of psychologists employed in the public sector.ⁱⁱⁱ The demand for educational psychologists to provide service and supports in the natural learning environments of tamariki and ākongā consistently exceeds the current capacity of staff in Learning Support for the Ministry of Education.

4.0 Limitations on the Psychologists' Scope of Practice

There are severe limitations placed on the work of educational psychologists through their contractual and service arrangements. Recent service delivery frameworks do not allow for the skills of educational psychologists working in the Ministry of Education to be fully utilised. At this time little counselling is able to be provided.

Educational psychologists are not contracted to assess students who are struggling with their learning in the classroom if they have not met the 'high needs' criteria for Ministry of Education assessment and intervention. This results in only the school-aged children with more extreme needs receiving services from an educational psychologist e.g. those on the Ongoing Resourcing Scheme (ORS) funded pupils and behaviourally challenging pupils. Those that have different but equally important needs such as literacy and numeracy difficulties, family or emotional problems are not given equity of access under the current funding arrangements.

As a result, there are long waiting lists for private educational psychologists to undertake assessments for students with a possible specific learning disability, mild global cognitive delay, moderate impairment associated with being on the autistic spectrum, and gifted children. Such assessments are only

accessible for those who can afford this service and it causes an inequitable level of support and access to resourcing, such as the well-recognised limitation for students in lower decile schools receiving NCEA reader writer support.^{iv}

The mental health and wellbeing of children in our schools and communities has been identified by the new government as a priority. International studies show that universal programmes for wellbeing are effective especially for those from less privileged backgrounds. Educational psychologists are trained to advise teacher programmes to address emotional wellbeing as part of the curriculum and work with teachers to develop New Zealand evidence-based programmes. My Friends Youth is an example of a New Zealand initiative in schools to support the resilience and wellbeing of all children. The national evaluation demonstrated the success of this pilot programme for teachers, and students in general, especially Māori and Pasifika students. These types of programmes require a long term commitment rather than piecemeal funding.

5.0 Psychological Research

Educational psychologists have been at the forefront of practical educational research and innovation. At present, those educational psychologists who do not work for a university are unable to carry out research and evaluation projects. They have no access to an accredited Ethics Committee to carry out such work. Access to an ethics committee and support to carry out this vital research would meet the government's aims to ensure that money is not wasted on untested, potentially harmful, or ineffective and costly packages that have not been trialled in the context of Aotearoa New Zealand. For example, international research questions the value of increasing the number of untrained teaching assistants rather than providing access to high quality teachers.^v

6.0 Examples of How Psychologists can Assist

ISSUE	POLICY CONNECTION	PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS/ACTIONS
<p>The need for timely and needs-based access to educational psychologists in the Learning Support Service.</p>	<p>Labour will comprehensively review the entire system of learning support so that resources are allocated based on individual needs assessment for each child, rather than each child having to meet the criteria imposed by the system.</p> <p>Labour will make it much easier for schools and parents to request a learning needs assessment for any child that may need additional learning support.</p> <p>Labour will progressively increase the level of funding provided for early intervention in early childhood education to better support those with identified additional needs</p>	<p><i>The members of the NZPsS and IEDP have an in depth knowledge and practical experience of delivering such services as well as interpreting and carrying out relevant research. The NZPsS has provided a comprehensive response to the Select Committees on Dyslexia, Dyspraxia and Autistic Spectrum Disorder^{vi}, Oranga Tamariki^{vii} and the Special Educational Needs Review.^{viii} We are available to speak to the advice in these documents.</i></p> <p>Government to review the structure of the current funding policy (Special Education 2000) to expand services provided by educational psychologists in Learning Support for children and young persons, whānau, caregivers and teaching teams in the early childhood and school sectors.</p> <p>Include the provision of assessment and intervention services to children and young persons who have a significant problem in accessing the curriculum, and those with emotional and/or family difficulties.</p>
<p>The need for improvement of the current assessment system</p>	<p>Labour will abolish national standards and work with experts and stakeholders to develop a new system that better acknowledges child progress and focuses on the key competencies</p>	<p>Educational psychologists welcome the opportunity to support the process of identifying ways to assess student learning that keeps the wellbeing and needs of the child at the forefront.</p>
<p>Shortage of educational psychologists</p>	<p>Labour will remove the cap on public sector employees so that the Ministry of Education can employ the specialists they need to support children’s learning.</p>	<p>Replenishment of the educational psychology workforce to meet community needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted funding to support the training and development of the educational psychology workforce including a focus on greater diversity of the workforce. • Develop a pathway for professional leadership roles for educational psychologists in the Ministry of Education. This would help both recruit and retain highly qualified practitioners that are currently lost to the system^{ix}. • Redevelopment of service provision frameworks in the Ministry of Education to expand in line with their ‘scope of practice’ as defined under the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act (HPCA). This would allow for the

		application of the broad range of knowledge and skills educational psychologists bring to school communities.
Enable educational psychologists to be at the forefront of practical educational research and innovation to improve the wellbeing our schools and communities	Meet the government’s aims to ensure that money is not wasted on untested, potentially harmful and costly packages that have not been trialled in the context of Aotearoa/New Zealand.	Educational psychologists employed within the Learning Support Services will be encouraged to engage in research to provide evidence for the effectiveness of their interventions, improve interventions, and help to inform Ministry of Education policy. Provide an ethics committee so that educational psychologists can deliver evidence-based interventions that are relevant in the Aotearoa New Zealand context.

7.0 Conclusion

Educational psychologists have a unique role in bringing technical skills, knowledge, counselling, and supervision to the wider sector while helping to frame problems and enable change. Using our skills, we can act as a ‘bridge’ and be key facilitators working across the communities and integrating programmes from Health, Social Work, and Education. We are also able to work with different age groupings of children while providing support to their families/whānau and to schools.

We look forward to discussing with the Minister of Education how we can contribute to enabling a first class education system for **all** children as we have been able to do for Labour governments in prior times.

ⁱ New Zealand Psychological Board, personal communication 25 August 2016

ⁱⁱ Ministry of Education. (2016). Briefing Note: Cabinet paper – Strengthening Inclusion and Modernising Learning Support. Retrieved from <http://www.education.govt.nz/assets/Documents/Ministry/Initiatives/special-education-update/Note-to-Minister-Strengthening-Inclusion-and-Modernising-Learning-Support-July-2016.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ National Scottish Steering Group for Educational Psychologists. (2013). Workforce Planning for Educational Psychology in Scotland September 2013. Retrieved from <http://www.aspep.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Work-Force-Planning-Report-October-2013.pdf>

^{iv} Redmond, A., & O’Callaghan, J. (2017, October 5). Hundreds more Kiwi students applying for exam help every year. Retrieved from <http://www.stuff.co.nz/national/education/97448018/Thousands-more-Kiwi-students-applying-for-exam-help-every-year?cid=app-iPhone>

^v Sharples, J., Webster, R., & Blatchford, P. (2015). Making Best Use of Teaching Assistants: Guidance Report. Retrieved from https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/uploads/pdf/TA_Guidance_Report_Interactive.pdf

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- ^{vi} The New Zealand Psychological Society. (2016). Submission to the Parliamentary Education and Science Committee for The Inquiry Into the Identification and Support for Students with the Significant Challenges of Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, and Autism Spectrum Disorders in Primary and Secondary Schools. Retrieved from <http://www.psychology.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/NZPsS-2015-Submission-into-Dyslexia-Dyspraxia-and-Autism-Spectrum-Disorders-in-SchoolsN1.pdf>
- ^{vii} The New Zealand Psychological Society. (2017). Submission to the Social Services Select Committee Inquiry into the Children, Young Persons, and Their Families (Oranga Tamariki) Legislation Bill. Retrieved from http://www.psychology.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/NZPsS-2017-Oranga-Tamariki-Select-Committee-Submission-3.3.17_636240953090041026.pdf
- ^{viii} The New Zealand Psychological Society. (2015). Submission to the Ministry of Education for the Special Educational Needs Review. Retrieved from <http://www.psychology.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/Submission-on-the-Ministry-of-Education-Special-Education-Review-June-2015.pdf>
- ^{ix} Personal communication: Ministry of Education, 28 August 2016