



27 January 2021

S21.01

Submission to the Education and Workforce Select Committee on the Education (Strengthening Second Language Learning in Primary and Intermediate Schools) Amendment Bill 99-1

Introduction

- 0.1. The National Council of Women of New Zealand, Te Kaunihera Wahine o Aotearoa (NCWNZ) is an umbrella group representing over 200 organisations affiliated at either national level or to one of our 15 branches. In addition, about 450 people are individual members. Collectively our reach is over 450,000 with many of our membership organisations representing all genders. NCWNZ's vision is a gender equal New Zealand and research shows we will be better off socially and economically if we are gender equal. Through research, discussion, and action, NCWNZ in partnership with others, seeks to realise its vision of gender equality because it is a basic human right.
- 0.2. Graduate Women New Zealand (GWNZ) is a non-government, not-for-profit, charitable organisation. Our global body, Graduate Women International (GWI) was founded in 1919 and carries Special Consultative Status to the United Nations Economic and Social Council. As a national federation of GWI we are part of a network of similar federations and associations in 61 countries, with several branches of Graduate Women within NZ. GWNZ believes in empowering women through education, advocacy, and community. GWNZ aims to create positive differences in education and employment outcomes for girls and women both in New Zealand and globally. As part of our support of education in New Zealand we provide scholarships, grants, debates, seminars, conferences, and publications. We advocate for girls and women at the local, national, and also the international level by making submissions on bills and policy and initiating or supporting campaigns on specific issues. We also create spaces for women to flourish, to connect, and to support each other.
- 0.3. This submission has been written by NCWNZ with reference to the education resolutions¹ set over

¹ NCWNZ. 2012. 115 years of resolution. <http://www.ncwnz.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/115-years-Register-everything->

NCWNZ. 2019. Appendix "D": Resolutions of National Meetings 2011-2019.

<https://www.ncwnz.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Appendix-D-Resolutions-2011-2019.pdf>

the years by the NCWNZ membership and in collaboration with the GWNZ Public Affairs Convener.

- 0.4. NCWNZ and GWNZ are active supporters of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)² and urge the government to integrate them within the development of the Education (Strengthening Second Language Learning in Primary and Intermediate Schools) Amendment Bill.
- 0.5. While the SDGs should be considered as an integrated framework, we wish to draw particular to the following goals and targets:

SDG4 (Education): Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. We note in particular the following targets:

- By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and Goal-4 effective learning outcomes.
- By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, and children in vulnerable situations.
- By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy.
- By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.

- 0.6. Learning another language fosters an appreciation for the cultural traditions, religions, arts, and history of the people associated with that language. Greater understanding, in turn, promotes greater tolerance, empathy, and acceptance of others, which is vital for the ever-increasing multicultural NZ society.

1. The Specific Clauses

National Council of Women New Zealand (NCWNZ) and Graduate Women New Zealand (GWNZ) welcome the opportunity to make a submission on this important matter. However, both organisations consider that there are several major issues and queries that must be answered before they can fully support this Bill.

1.1 Clause 5, Section 60 C: Priority language programme

- i. The first is the lack of clarity around Te Reo, its preservation and teaching. That is a standalone issue with its own challenges and benefits. As stated in the Explanatory notes 'Te Reo Maori and NZ Sign language are, as the official languages of New Zealand, priority languages and will be resourced.' Therefore, it has to continue to be taught regardless. The reality is different from the ideal and making NZ a truly bi-lingual society needs planning, time, expertise, and resourcing. This needs to be worked out with Māori, not imposed on them. There is nothing mentioned in the explanatory notes as to whether the resourcing would be increased if a school chose to make Te Reo its priority language or how resourcing would be

² United Nations. About the Sustainable Development Goals. <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

shared if an additional priority language was also chosen.

- ii. The second issue is community languages e.g. Pasifika languages, or others that immigrants bring with them. Maintaining those languages is really important for their speakers and their descendants, but it is questioned as to whether the correct place for this compulsory education is in public primary schools. Many community groups arrange for these cultural activities outside of school time.
- iii. Ideally the chosen language would be foreign to all the students in the class (otherwise a raft of issues could arise), it would be a spoken, living language and it would need to be taught by a primary teacher professionally trained in both the language itself and the pedagogy associated with it for the age group. Learning a language at school is quite different from acquiring a native language as an infant and specialised skills and knowledge are essential. Native speakers are often not the best foreign language teachers, because they have no understanding of what English speakers find hard about their language.

1.2 Clause 60 C (1): Every board must, for each primary school it administers, prepare, adopt, and maintain a priority language programme in accordance with section 60D.

NCWNZ and GWNZ are concerned about the provision of teachers for the eight other priority languages, given that language departments are in decline at universities. In places such as Howick there would be plenty of Mandarin teachers and probably (but not necessarily) an option by the school community to teach Mandarin but the same would not be available for Samoan or Tongan in lower socio-economic communities such in Porirua or Otara. There is concern as to what would happen when a teacher of say, German, leaves the school, and the only replacement was a teacher of Japanese and the local high school offers Samoan. Nothing will be achieved at all and money and teacher energy, expertise, and goodwill will be wasted. Careful consultation, planning and cooperation between schools and the community would be required.

1.3 Clause 5, Section 60D: Consultation about priority language programme

- (a) Will local secondary schools be part of the community consultation re choice of priority language? NCWNZ and GWNZ would expect some reference to Communities of Learning. It would help if students moving to secondary school knew they could continue the same language there if they were enjoying it and making good progress.
- (b) 60 D (2) (c) refers to “the second language learning needs of the students at the school.” What if these needs are English as an additional language? ESOL is not mentioned in the bill. On the other hand, members considered that learning a foreign language provided a level playing field for students with English as an additional language so the ESOL argument is a two-edged sword.

Conclusion

Learning any language has huge cultural, cognitive, and personal benefits. On the positive side, if there was a strong desire from the community for a certain language to be taught, a guaranteed supply of teachers for at least 5 years, and a well-functioning Community of Learning, it could have merit. However, NCWNZ and GWNZ are concerned that there are too many unanswered questions to be able to support this Bill in its current form without considerably more detail being supplied. It is a citizenship right that the education system in Aotearoa New Zealand is broad based, inclusive, accessible to all New Zealanders and provides lifelong learning opportunities for all.

This submission was prepared by Rae Duff (NCWNZ) and Anne Stephenson (GWNZ) on behalf of our respective organisations.



Rae Duff
NCWNZ
Parliamentary Watch Committee



Anne Stephenson
GWNZ
Secretary