



Education Report: Update on engagement on blended and distance education and next steps

To:	Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education		
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Purpose of report

This paper provides you with an update on engagement with the sector on blended and distance education within the schooling system. It also seeks your agreement to a medium term work programme to improve current full-time distance offerings and to grow the sector's capacity and capability to deliver blended and networked learning.

This work is closely aligned with more immediate work to support continuity of learning under the COVID-19 Protection Framework.

Summary

1. The use of digital technologies in education is more and more an everyday part of teaching and learning. Distance and blended education are a subset of the use of digital technologies in education. While engagement with the schooling sector found strong preferences for in-person learning, the current COVID-19 situation has accelerated the need for the education sector to be able to flexibly move between in person and blended or distance learning.
2. As a part of the COVID-19 Protection Framework, we are putting in place short-term measures to support schools and learners to ensure continuity of learning. In the medium term.
3. We propose that the work programme on distance and blended learning focuses on:
 - a. *Improving the provision of full-time distance learning* by responding to the Education Review Office's recent review of Te Kura, through existing work including the Redesign of Alternative Education Provision, the review of Te Kura's funding model, and the Review of interventions for students with the highest level of learning support need.
 - b. *Building foundations for blended education* by reviewing the role of Te Kura in the education system to enable better sharing of support and guidance, identifying

legislative or regulatory barriers to blended education, and working with schools and kura to ensure the infrastructure and support required for blended learning is in place.

- c. *Increasing collaborative learning opportunities* by resourcing dual tuition by a broader range of providers (including Virtual Learning Networks) and providing guidance and support to schools and kura on how to share blended and distance resources.

Recommended Actions

The Ministry of Education recommends that you:

- a. **note** that you directed the Ministry to undertake policy work on blended and distance education, including consultation to understand what improvements to the current settings are required [METIS 1213239 refers]

Noted

- b. **note** that work on blended and distance education sits within the context of the Ministry's broader work on the use and role of digital technologies in education, for which you are receiving separate streams of advice, including on:

- i. The Curriculum Refresh, from the perspective of general digital teaching and learning capability;
- ii. Ensuring continuity and emergency preparedness, including the response to COVID-19;
- iii. Digital inclusion and the broader digital education strategy

Noted

- c. **note** that the Ministry undertook targeted engagement with the schooling sector on their views on the preferred direction for blended and distance education in the medium term over May – August 2021

Noted

- d. **agree** to a work programme for blended and distance education which will explore options for:

- i. Increasing collaborative learning opportunities for schools, including considering options for expanding the roles of Te Kura, the Virtual Learning Networks and other blended education organisations;
- ii. Building foundations for blended education, including reviewing legislative settings for blended education to identify any barriers and the continued development of infrastructure to support schools to deliver blended education.

Agree / Disagree

Proactive Release Recommendation

- e. **agree** that the Ministry of Education release this briefing once it has been considered by you, 9(2)(f)(iv) _____.

Agree / Disagree



Ben O'Meara
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02/12/2021



Hon Chris Hipkins
Minister of Education

22/12/2021

Background

1. In January 2020, you agreed an approach to policy work on distance education using online learning, to improve flexibility within the schooling system and ensure equitable learning opportunities [METIS 1213239 refers]. At that time, you directed the Ministry to develop a work programme for blended and distance education which:
 - a. Identifies the degree of access and choice in distance education we want to enable and/or support;
 - b. Sets out clear functions, roles and responsibilities for high quality online learning across the school system;
 - c. Ensures resourcing and regulatory systems which assure online learning is high quality and will lead to excellent and equitable outcomes.
2. You agreed that the Ministry should approach this work by looking at options which both enhance the status quo to better enable and support existing provision, while also considering the role that the broader schooling system could have in making learning more flexible through blended and distance education.
3. When the COVID-19 lockdowns happened, the focus shifted to COVID-19 provision. Throughout 2020 and 2021 we have supported distance and blended education by providing devices to schools for their students and connecting families to the internet during lockdowns.
4. Between May-August 2021, the Ministry undertook targeted engagement with the schooling sector on their views on the preferred direction for blended and distance education in the medium term. Feedback from the schooling sector informs the options presented in this paper. In addition, the August 2021 outbreak of COVID-19 has moved our thinking forward, further highlighting the importance of ensuring resilience in the education system.
5. As we move into the next phase of managing COVID-19 through the COVID-19 Protection Framework (CPF), this report is focused on the medium term steps needed to improve blended education and distance learning settings.

The Ministry has a broad programme of work on the use of digital technologies in education

6. The diagram at Annex 1 provides you with a view of the broader context within which this work on blended and distance learning is situated.
7. The policy work that this paper focuses on has links to all these pieces of work but focuses on distance and blended education. Distance education provides access to learning and teaching without the need for the student or teacher to be physically present with one another. This is distinguished from face-to-face education which happens when the student and teacher are physically present together. Blended education uses a combination of distance and face-to-face learning, and can happen when the student is physically at school and accessing an online course delivered from elsewhere, as well as when a student is learning from home for part of their course.
8. Already having digital teaching and learning as a part of a school's face to face programme supports effective and quality shifts between onsite and emergency distance

learning when this is needed, as we have seen in terms of schools transitioning to distance learning in the initial and subsequent lockdowns.

9. We have provided guidance on the provision of distance education delivery by schools as part of the COVID-19 Protection Framework (CPF) [METIS: 1276791 refers]. Under the CPF, the balance of responsibility for supporting distance learning will shift from the national to the local level. This will align with the way many schools and services are already working. This shift underscores the need to make medium term changes to system settings to better support blended learning approaches.
10. Outside of our COVID-19 response, regionally based Curriculum Leads are now providing opportunities for kaiako to share and network effective practice. Senior Curriculum Leads are currently working on approaches and models to support kaiako with blended learning. From the beginning of 2022, teachers and kaiako will be able to engage with blended learning support at three levels – Self Directed, Guided and Supported. This will include face-to-face and online networking opportunities.
11. In the short term, we anticipate a higher demand from both schools and families for support to deliver blended or distance learning options, including for ākonga with high health needs, or as a result of teacher shortages. This is being addressed via broader advice on the education system response to COVID-19, which includes looking at how Te Kura and the VLN's might provide support to ākonga who may have extended periods of learning from home due to health needs. Ensuring alignment between this immediate response work, and the medium term work programme for blended and distance learning will enable us to build towards the desired goals.
12. Additionally, there is work underway on digital inclusion, including a refresh of the Ministry's education system digital strategy. This workstream is also closely intertwined with the CPF. As part of the response to COVID-19 lockdowns, the Ministry provided priority learners with devices and internet connectivity. Evaluation of this initiative found that digital access during COVID-19 lockdowns in 2020 supported learner engagement, and relieved stress for NCEA students. The Evaluation also found lockdowns led to changes in teaching practice in some schools, but there were many and varied barriers to achieving greater digital access.

Feedback from consultation with the schooling sector

13. Between May-August 2021, we invited a range of schooling sector peak bodies to share their thoughts on the future of blended and distance education. We met, either in person or virtually, with The Virtual Learning Network community, Te Kura, NZEI Te Riu Roa, Te Rūnanga Nui o ngā Kura Kauapapa Māori o Aotearoa, Ngā Kura ā Iwi o Aotearoa, te Akatea Māori Principals' Association of New Zealand, and Ko Taku Reo – Deaf Education New Zealand. We received written feedback from the Post Primary Teachers Association and New Zealand Area Schools' Association.
14. As part of our engagement, we tested four blended and distance education models with the schooling sector: Full-time distance education, collaborative/networked blended education, blended learning opportunities offered by the enrolling school or kura, and continuity plans for emergency distance education. The details of the four models are in Annex 2.
15. We asked if the models were performing as they were described in the school setting, what the barriers were to implementation, and what the support needs were for each model of delivery.

16. The reported benefits of digital technologies were that they enabled flexibility and learner agency. The groups we consulted agreed that digital technologies enable connections with experts and others in a student's peer group, which make learning a more authentic and engaging experience. There was consensus around the need for equitable access to technology.
17. Engagements indicated that the schooling sector has low appetite for major change in this space, which may highlight the size of perceived barriers in delivering high quality blended or distance education. This suggests that in the short to medium-term, our focus should be on building the foundations for high-quality digitally enabled learning, which the Curriculum Refresh is addressing through online pedagogical PLD, and digital onsite provision support. We have developed options based on this approach and sharing what is possible through blended and distance education.
18. A more detailed summary of the engagements is attached as Annex 3.

We need blended and distance education that provides excellent and equitable learner outcomes, builds system resilience and is future focused

19. Feedback from the schooling sector confirms the Ministry's view that blended and distance learning should continue to be seen as supplementary to, and not a replacement for, face-to-face learning except in circumstances where distance is the only option i.e., remote settings. The schooling sector told us face-to-face interaction is still the most important way to build and maintain relationships and that it is most beneficial for ākonga mental health, and this position is evidenced in the literature.
20. However, we are living in a reality where the use of blended and distance education is becoming a more frequent part of everyday learning, particularly in light of the need to transition between the classroom and home learning more often, as a result of emergency closures and physical or mental health issues for students and teachers. Anecdotally, we also heard that while it presented challenges, there were benefits for some ākonga as part of the move to distance education during lockdown.
21. Where blended and distance learning is required, there is widespread agreement that it is important to ensure that it delivers excellent and equitable learner outcomes. It is also vitally important that additional flexibility in the system for providing distance and blended education does not lead to the off ramping of vulnerable students from mainstream settings.

Proposed medium term work programme

22. We propose that a work programme for Blended and Distance learning would have the following overarching goals:
 - a. Ensuring delivery of excellent and equitable learner outcomes, and better meeting individual ākonga wellbeing and learning needs.
 - b. Improving education system resilience.
23. In order to move towards these goals, we consider that work is required in the following focus areas:
 - a. Full-time distance education: maintaining the current limits on access to full-time distance learning and focusing on quality improvement for those learners who access this mode of education.

- b. Blended learning: options to improve the flexibility of current offerings and enabling schools or kura to readily participate in blended learning.
- c. Collaborative/networked education: remove barriers in sharing online resources, either between schools or through VLN for schools and kura.

Full-time distance education

24. The feedback we received on full-time distance education aligned with continuing evidence that traditional full-time distance learning doesn't get the educational outcomes that come with face-to-face interaction¹. In the shorter term, as part of the CPF, there is likely to be an increased demand for full-time distance as part of the suite of options for ensuring continuity of learning for some ākonga. Work on this is being undertaken as part of the advice on the CPF.
25. Over the longer term, the Ministry considers that no further expansion of full-time distance provision is required. For those ākonga who do require full-time distance education, the focus should be on improving the quality of that provision.
26. The Education Review Office has recently completed its regular review of Te Kura, which looked at the role of Te Kura in the education system. The ERO suggested there are opportunities for Te Kura to continue supporting the resilience and capacity of the education system and its learners in times of crisis and to share Te Kura's experience in digitised curriculum and pedagogy more widely within the system.
27. ERO has recommended the Ministry review Te Kura's funding model in the context of the redevelopment of equity funding for the school system, formalise and strengthen the relationships with Te Kura within the Ministry's response and delivery systems, consider how Te Kura can play a greater role in the education system, and provide greater clarity on Te Kura's role in the wider education system in the long term.
28. The Ministry accepts the ERO's recommendations and considers that making progress on these areas will improve the quality of existing full-time distance provision. We consider that these recommendations are substantially addressed through the multiple streams of work under way across the Ministry that will have an impact on the Ministry's approach to Te Kura and its role in the education system. These include:
 - a. *The Redesign of Alternative Education Provision* which includes Te Kura's At-Risk gateways. An ideal state was developed with the Alternative Education sector and agreed by Cabinet in 2019, but implementation was delayed due to COVID-19. The Redesign is now being implemented incrementally, 9(2)(f)(iv)
 - b. *A review of Te Kura's funding*: Cabinet has previously agreed that Te Kura be included in the school donations scheme [SWC-21-MIN-0040 refers]. It is now receiving this funding on an opt-in basis, as with other schools. 9(2)(f)(iv)

¹ Darren Sudlow, Rachel Whalley and Amanda King. (2021) The Virtual Learning Network Community Pedagogy and Practice. *Report for the Ministry of Education*

- c. *The Review of interventions for students with the highest level of learning support need:* The second phase of engagement for the Review is now underway and runs to March 2022. The purpose of this phase of engagement is to unpack areas of the Scope as outlined in the Terms of Reference with a wider range of stakeholders: children and young people, parents and whānau, Māori and Pacific communities, the disability sector, the education sector, and Government agencies.

Blended learning opportunities offered by the enrolling school or kura

29. During consultation the schooling sector told us they thought Te Kura could help schools more with distance pedagogy by sharing expertise and online resources to help build schooling sector capability. We also heard that blended learning opportunities can be beneficial for diverse learners with specific needs who might be overstimulated in classroom settings. Digital platforms provide a way for students who are struggling in a classroom environment to have time to do their own thing in a personalised way. This needs to be balanced with providing opportunities to develop social and emotional skills which are better facilitated in an in person setting.
30. The schooling sector seeks guidance and support to provide onsite/offsite teaching and learning. Concerns were raised about staffing capacity to facilitate students learning online in school classrooms. A blended model has been difficult to adapt to for schools without extra funding and resourcing.
31. There is currently no systematic approach to blended education across schools in New Zealand. If schools have the resources to deliver content online and their students have devices to work from at home, on a school-by-school basis it is possible students have the opportunity to receive blended education. This means that blended education opportunities are inequitable as they are based on expertise and resources of the school and student. The Ministry is undertaking work which aims to address inequity of access to digital learning:
- a. The (Education Digital and Data) Strategy will outline a roadmap for current and future digital and data tools, processes, and capabilities – supporting the next 10 years of New Zealand’s education journey and enabling optimum learning and teaching through all parts of the system, and throughout a learner’s lifetime.
- b. 9(2)(f)(iv) [REDACTED]
- c. 9(2)(f)(iv) [REDACTED]
32. Further options for blended education in this space are as follows:
- a. **Consider Te Kura’s role in the education system:** In line with the ERO recommendation for the Ministry to consider how Te Kura can play a greater role in the education system, we suggest reviewing Te Kura’s role in the system to enable it to also provide support and guidance to face-to-face schools, as well as making Te Kura resources to schools more accessible. Te Kura could focus on

supporting digital curriculum and providing resources to schools implementing blended education.

- b. **Review legislation affecting blended education:** We recommend reviewing legislative settings to identify barriers to implementation of quality blended education, which could include the way schools collaborate and share resources and data with one another, to enable more blended education.
- c. **Strengthen the foundations for blended education in schools:** This includes consideration of staffing options for distance education, and ensuring there are physical spaces for students to work on distance curriculum. It is important students have a place they can go, and a staff member they can approach either in person or online about their distance courses. 9(2)(f)(iv)

- 33. Enabling blended education in Māori Medium settings is also a critical part of this work. During the engagements with Ngā Kura a Iwi o Aotearoa and Te Runanga Nui, we heard that there is a strong interest in blended education as a way of sharing scarce expertise, and that there was a desire for kura to be empowered to access a broader range of expertise. Opportunities such as sharing of te reo resources could address teacher shortages and offer localised curriculum for kura.
- 34. We will work closely with Māori medium kura on options for overcoming the challenges and barriers they face relating to blended and distance education. Working with kura will enable us to support solutions that are led by them, and which are likely to look different from the solutions for English Medium schooling.

9(2)(f)(iv)

- [Redacted]
- [Redacted]
- [Redacted]

Next steps

- 36. If you agree, we will progress work on detailed options for improving blended education and networked learning, as shown in the table below. This will include further discussions with key stakeholders, such as Te Kura, the VLN Community, and peak bodies in the schooling sector over Term one, 2022.

Focus area	Proposed work programme
Increasing collaborative learning opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore how Te Kura can play an expanded role in supporting schools • Explore options to improve access to shared and networked education resources
Building foundations for blended education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify legislative and regulatory barriers to blended delivery • Developing infrastructure to support blended and distance learning • Supporting schools to share online resources with one another

37. 9(2)(f)(iv)

Annexes

- Annex 1: Current work on digital technologies across the Ministry of Education
- Annex 2: Blended and distance education now and in the future State schooling system
- Annex 3: Summary of engagement with the sector.

Annex 1: Current work on digital technologies across the Ministry of Education

Work Area	Actions
COVID response/ Emergency preparedness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide digital native and easily downloadable resources that can be printed and used by schools, kura and ECE services • To support learners that must stay off-site for prolonged periods, we are considering other potential supports that could be resourced at a national level and delivered locally, such as learning at Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu or through the Virtual Learning Networks. • Distribute the remaining stock of learning packs to Te Mahau (Ministry regional offices) so that local decisions can be made about where additional support is needed.
Curriculum Refresh and digital technologies in education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digitising the national curriculum to better enable it to be made visible in each school's curriculum design (including ensuring that curriculum are digitally native) • Developing the Online Curriculum Hub will provide learners, family and whānau, and teachers and kaiako with quality assured, Ministry provided teaching and learning resources and tools that are easy to find and use. The collaboration tools for teachers will support teachers in localising digital curriculum resources and sharing them to develop effective practice • Driving adoption of interoperability standards for content, student information and digital curriculum to make information usable across a range of technologies and across organisations (schools) • The development of Records of Learning will mean that all ākonga benefit from a digitally enabled record of their learning, including 'real time' information sharing with families • Work to ensure that professional learning recognises that digital technologies should be a standard part of the teaching and learning toolkit. • Regionally based Curriculum Leads now established, providing opportunities for kaiako to share and network effective practice. From the beginning of 2022, teachers and kaiako will be able to engage with blended learning support at three levels – Self Directed, Guided and Supported. This will include face-to-face and online networking opportunities.

Digital inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The education contribution to achieving digital equity in Aotearoa: This piece of advice will supplement the more general joint advice being provided by DIA, MBIE and MOE to COVID ministers on how to close the digital divide. The advice will set out the education specific actions in the short and longer term. The future actions suggested in the advice will end up being actioned under the Education Sector Digital and Data Strategy. • Refresh of the Education System Digital Strategy: The Ministry intends to refresh the Education System Digital Strategy: Transforming Education for the Digital Age 2015 – 2020 this year (the Education System Digital Strategy). The refresh of the Education System Digital Strategy will be aligned to the cross-government Digital Strategy for Aotearoa. • Initial work with Ngaa Rauru Iwi to establish a virtual kura • 9(2)(f)(iv) [REDACTED] • 9(2)(f)(iv) [REDACTED].
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Annex 2: Blended and distance education now and in the future State schooling system

Blended and distance education now and in the future State schooling system

DRAFT NOT GOVERNMENT POLICY



	Full-time distance education	Collaborative / Networked blended education	Blended learning opportunities offered by the enrolling school or kura	Continuity plans for emergency distance education
Current State	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our Education law allows for multiple distance education schools to be established. The only State school in New Zealand which is designated as a distance school is Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu o Aotearoa (Te Kura). Distance schools are not schools of choice, and ākonga must meet the criteria set out in the enrolment policy to enrol, or the Secretary for Education must direct their enrolment. There is no Māori-medium equivalent of Te Kura. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools and kura can access government-funded dual tuition through Te Kura if gateway criteria are met. Schools and kura can agree to provide dual tuition to ākonga enrolled at other schools and kura (including Te Kura), in exchange for payment. Schools and Kura can become members of Virtual Learning Networks (VLNs) which largely operate through reciprocal teaching agreements and exchanges of services for payment. MOE contracts the VLN community to provide administration and coordination services, and provides some digital support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The expectation is that ākonga are on-site and attending for all of the hours that a school is open. Ākonga can be made exempt from attending school for purposes of attending the tertiary component of a secondary-tertiary programme off-site. Ākonga who are affected by a multiple timetable arrangement are only required to attend when their timetable is running. It is possible that ākonga may continue to "attend" from off-site as long as teachers can monitor their attendance virtually, using attendance code F. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> While all schools must have emergency plans, these plans are often focused on health and safety requirements. These emergency plans do not always include an approach to ensuring learning is continuous for all ākonga if distance education is needed. There is limited government provided support to help schools and kura identify what: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> scenarios they should plan for to consider or include as part of a comprehensive education-focused continuity plan (including whether ākonga and their whānau are digitally included, and what to do if they are not).
Future State	<p>Purpose:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide an option for ākonga who cannot conveniently attend a school for specified reasons. Extend to ākonga who choose to study by distance if they can show they have the supports in place to flourish <p>Outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ākonga who enrol in Te Kura have the support that they need to succeed in education. These supports are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> align to the support they would be entitled to in a local school setting designed to be fit for purpose in a distance environment Full-time distance education is engaged with as regularly as in-class education and learning opportunities are high-quality. 	<p>Purpose:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensures ākonga access to specialist knowledge (including in Mātauranga Māori) and the broad curriculum through collaborative or networked teaching. <p>Outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhances personalisation of the curriculum to respond to ākonga strengths, interests and aspirations. Reduces the negative impact of shortages of teachers and kaiako in specialist subject areas or with particular expertise. 	<p>Purpose:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Broadens learning opportunities in a community (e.g. hapū, iwi or employer) setting or at home. Provide flexibility to respond to ākonga need. <p>Outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ākonga have more control over the time, place, path or pace that they learn in. Ākonga studying by distance part-time can still access the high-quality learning opportunities and pastoral care they need to succeed. Blended learning is offered in a way that does not add to teacher workload or create disruption for ākonga learning on-site. 	<p>Purpose:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education focused continuity planning has been built into the student system in case: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> school or kura sites need to close temporarily due to pandemic or other natural disasters teachers or students can continue teaching or learning from home if they are required to isolate or are feeling slightly unwell (but not so unwell that they should take a sick day) ākonga do not miss schooling opportunities if they must attend tangihanga or other cultural customs. <p>Outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All schools and kura have education focused continuity plans in place and know when to use them. These plans take into account both kaiako and ākonga context.

To enhance blended and distance education, we need the right foundations in place for digitally enabled learning, these foundations are:



Digital technologies and infrastructure

Schools can access a high-quality Connected Learning Environment including:

- infrastructure
- devices
- services,
- software and apps.



School and Kura leadership

Understand the:

- role and importance of digital technologies for learning and future life
- value of flexibility and access that blended learning can enable.



Teacher and Kaiako capability

In areas of:

- digital fluency
- inclusive, culturally responsive and accessible curriculum design and practice
- in-person and distance education



Family and whānau relationships

Educationally powerful relationships with family and whānau, including supporting:

- family and whānau digital inclusion
- engagement in their child's learning
- input into local curriculum design



Engagement with the wider community

strengthen local curriculum and make learning more relevant by engaging with:

- hapū, iwi
- employers
- other education organisations

Māori-medium support for both digitally enabled learning and blended and distance learning will need to be designed to be consistent with Mātauranga Māori

Annex 3: Summary of engagement with sector

Context

Between May-August 2021, we invited a range of sector peak bodies to share their thoughts on the future of blended and distance education.

We met, either in person or virtually, with representatives from:

- The Virtual Learning Network community
- Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu o Aotearoa (Te Kura)
- NZEI Te Riu Roa
- Te Rūnanga Nui o ngā Kura Kaupapa Māori o Aotearoa
- Ngā Kura ā Iwi o Aotearoa
- Te Akatea Māori Principals' Association
- Secondary Principals Association of New Zealand
- Ko Taku Reo – Deaf Education New Zealand

We received written feedback from:

- Post Primary Teachers Association
- New Zealand Area Schools' Association

At the time of drafting, we had not received responses from:

- New Zealand School Trustees Association
- New Zealand Principals Federation

Some respondents saw potential in online and blended learning

- Some submitters saw the benefits of blended education in enabling flexibility and learner agency. For example, giving learners some control over where they learned (even if they stayed on the school site) could give learners who sometimes felt classroom environments difficult the space they needed to engage effectively.
- Submitters agreed that digital technologies enable connections with experts (including community, hapū, iwi, and employers) and others in their peer group (for example, connecting Deaf and Hard of Hearing learners) which could make learning more authentic, engaging, and reflect their identity, language and culture.
- Submitters believe that collaboration between schools who could share staffing, and with other subject experts, could be a valuable way to ensure equitable access to the broad and deep curriculum.

However, there are perceived risks when opening access to blended and distance education

- Although 'choice' is a key part of New Zealand's schooling system, some respondents believed that some children and young people would be 'encouraged' out of the in-person system, with some believing that this is already happening through Te Kura enrolments.
- Some submitters were concerned about the quality of the education opportunities delivered online and by distance.
- There were diverse perspectives on the ability of the online learning opportunities to be localised to provide rich opportunities. Some believed online resources were too centralised, and that the smaller the school the more difficult it would be to put effort

into localising and maintaining quality. Other submitters believed it was fairly straightforward to localise an online / blended learning programme.

There were diverse perspectives on whether relationships could be built and maintained online

- The building and maintenance of relationships between ākonga and Kaiako emerged as the most prominent theme from engagement. Stakeholders emphasised the value of relationships and questioned whether virtual pedagogies could promote an environment where the relationships between ākonga and Kaiako could be maintained.
- The views across stakeholders varied on whether the virtual space could provide an environment where relationships could be maintained, but most believed that it was possible. However, face to face interaction continues to emerge as the most important aspect to building and maintaining relationships, and for ākonga mental health.
- The danger of disengagement for ākonga due to a lack of interaction online remain a key concern for distance and blended learning.

We need to build the foundations for effective online and distance learning before increasing access

Students need to be digitally included before they can effectively engage with blended and distance education

- Socioeconomic status and equitable access to technology (devices and internet connectivity) and resources will be an ongoing issue that needs addressing before blended and distance education could be implemented.
- Students (and teachers) in rural communities are likely to be impacted by internet availability and affordability.
- Disabled learners may have assistive technology requirements that need to be met before they can learn online.
- Access alone is not enough, and learners need to be able to use digital technologies confidently and safely to engage in high-quality online and distance learning.

Schools also have inequitable digital access

- Digital infrastructure and technologies available for teaching and learning online are also a barrier.
- While high quality networked education has the potential to give isolated schools the opportunity to offer a broad and effective curriculum, it will be impacted by their ability to access and use the internet and other digital tools.

Building capability of the education workforce to use digital technologies, including to connect and collaborate, is important for effective teaching and learning

- Digital fluency and online teaching capabilities are seen as variable, and PLD for teachers to deliver virtual learning effectively was a popular topic during engagement. Stakeholders said teachers need to be able to deliver content online in class and by distance confidently.
- Ensuring virtual learning aligns within all cultural contexts, particularly in Māori and Pacific contexts is extremely important. Localising curriculum and including Māori and Pacific specific content in curriculum and learning activities are crucial to maintaining engagement and providing best outcomes for ākonga. Pedagogies must consider Māori and Pacific learners needs.

- To achieve equitable outcomes for all ākonga, collaboration with the community must happen. Consultation with Iwi, whānau and the Pacific community is important to shape policy advice. Listen to the concerns of differing groups and stakeholders. Schools should collaborate with their communities to ensure their pedagogies and processes fit within the community.

Attitudes are critical for success

- Attitudes about online learning in schools from staff, whānau and ākonga can be a barrier to engagement for schools considering implementing blended and distance learning. Stakeholders reported overcoming staff attitude in schools, particularly that of principals, can be a challenge for promoting virtual learning.

Resourcing is perceived to be the biggest barrier to networked learning

Networked / Dual-tuition resourcing is seen as inequitable

- Teachers and Kaiako do not feel like they have back-end support to have upskilled supervisors for students undertaking networked learning opportunities (through Te Kura dual-tuition or the Virtual Learning Networks).
- Te Kura receives dual-tuition funding but VLN participants do not. This is seen to be inequitable as there are fewer barriers to participating in Te Kura dual-tuition. There are limits to how schools can contribute to a VLN as:
 - small schools do not have the resources to contribute;
 - schools can share resourcing across themselves but cannot give it to VLN;
 - primary pedagogies are not well aligned to sharing subject teachers.
- On the other hand, as schools accessing Te Kura dual-tuition do not have to reciprocate or make a contribution to access dual-tuition funding, they may not take the same level of responsibility for supporting students who are enrolled in dual-tuition.

Resourcing providers that are not schools

- There was believed to be some benefit in using non-teaching experts to inform a local curriculum. In these instances, submitters commented that it was important that the teacher stayed responsible for overall curriculum implementation.
- However, the experts (e.g. local hapū) also needed resourcing to be able to contribute to effective learning opportunities. They also need to be recognised and valued for their expertise.

Staffing models are not designed for teaching in-person and by distance simultaneously

- Workload for schools and teachers was mentioned a number of times during engagement. The managing of workload as well as the size and capacity of school staffing were areas highlighted. Trying to keep young people engaged with school resources but having reluctance from some families to engage with other services leads to double loading of resources/staff on tasks.
- There is tension between providing the virtual learning aspect to a number of ākonga in a class, and still being able to teach ākonga in the same class in-person with the current resources schools are receiving. Staffing models have been hard to adapt to blended and distance learning.
- Capacity to provide distance learning(?) varies depending on ākonga preferences so is hard to judge broadly.

Distance education funding models do not sufficiently recognise the proportion of students enrolling through at-risk gateways

- Ratio is about one kaiako for 50 to 60 ākonga. Students at Te Kura with high needs don't get the same support as small classes in secondary schools.