



Joint Briefing Note: Research, Evaluation and Development Strategy

To:	Hon Jan Tinetti, Associate Minister of Education		
Cc:	Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education		
Date:	3 May 2021	Priority:	Medium
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Purpose of Report

The purpose of this paper is to:

- I. set out how the Ministry of Education, the Education Review Office and the New Zealand Council for Educational Research are working together on research and evaluation to help achieve the Government's Education Work Programme 2021;
- II. outline the proposed joint approach to develop a Research, Evaluation and Development Strategy, as directed in the Education Work Programme.

Summary

- 1 The Ministry of Education, the Education Review Office and the New Zealand Council for Educational Research as the three education organisations mandated to conduct education Research and Evaluation are all working to achieve the priorities set out in the Education Work Programme 2021.
- 2 To ensure we continue building on our current work and strengthen the evidence base, a Research, Evaluation and Development Strategy will be developed as directed by Cabinet [SWC-21-MIN-0015 refers]. This will be developed in conjunction with key education sector stakeholders, such as Māori and Pacific researchers, research groups and university deans of education.
- 3 The proposed co-design process for the Strategy with education sector stakeholders, will begin with a series of hui to discuss the purpose and scope of the proposed work and the key areas to cover. These hui would also be an opportunity to hear from stakeholders about what their vision for education research, evaluation and development is, agree on the goals and identify and potential gaps in what's been

proposed. Once this series of hui is concluded, we will begin developing the Strategy and then consult more broadly and regionally to test our thinking.

Recommended Actions

The Ministry of Education, the Education Review Office and the New Zealand Council for Educational Research recommends you:

- a. **note** that Cabinet directed the Ministry of Education, the Education Review Office and the New Zealand Council for Educational Research to develop a Research, Evaluation and Development Strategy for the education sector

Note

- b. **agree** that the Ministry of Education, the Education Review Office and the New Zealand Council for Educational Research continue engaging with university deans of education and the relevant Māori and Pacific educational researchers and engage with others, such as the Teaching Council and peak bodies, to develop a Research, Evaluation and Development Strategy for the education sector

Agree / Disagree

- c. **agree** to include tertiary education in the proposed Research, Evaluation and Development Strategy, as this has not been considered to this stage

Agree / Disagree

- d. **agree** that the proposed Research, Evaluation and Development Strategy should have a 10-year horizon and a tri-annual review by three organisations responsible for this Strategy

Agree / Disagree

- e. **agree** to discuss this proposed approach with the Minister for Science, the Honourable Dr Megan Woods

Agree / Disagree

- f. **agree to not release** this briefing at this time, as these three organisations will need to engage with a range of external stakeholders that have yet to be consulted

Release/Not release



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3/5/2021



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16/5/2021



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Background

- 4 The Government has agreed the Education Work Programme 2021 (EWP 2021) [SWC-21-MIN-0015 refers] for its current term in Office. The EWP 2021 builds on the progress made in the 2018 Education Work Programme to help deliver excellent and equitable outcomes for all children and learners.
- 5 Education produces a significant amount of information about our learners, teachers and education providers. This information is important for the effective administration and governance of the education system, as well as helping teachers, school leaders and education organisations to analyse their impact and support improvement. Most of this data is collected by, and remains in, early learning centres, schools, kura and tertiary settings. A small fraction is used centrally for research, evaluation and monitoring.
- 6 As the three education organisations mandated to conduct education Research and Evaluation, the Ministry of Education (the Ministry), the Education Review Office (ERO) and the New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER) have been working together to outline how we are jointly working together to help the Government achieve the EWP 2021. Annex 1 sets out where the three organisations are researching, evaluating and sharing knowledge to support these priorities.
- 7 As stewards of the education system, the Ministry is responsible to the public and to the Government to provide information and evidence on what works for whom under what circumstances. The Ministry develops strategic policy for and delivers services to the education sector, while undertaking education research and analysis and monitoring education sector capability and viability. This involves coordination with other sector and government agencies and forums and some cross-sector work programmes. The Ministry also carries out a wide-ranging evaluation programme to guide policy development, improve implementation and determine the effectiveness of education interventions.
- 8 ERO is the government agency responsible for reviewing the performance of schools, kura, wharekura and early learning services and report publicly on the provision of education by those institutions. ERO uses this information and other research to report on what is happening at a system level, what programmes and investments are working to make a difference for learning outcomes. It evaluates education for groups of students (high priority learners), key aspects of provision (for example curriculum) and key issues (for example bullying or learner wellbeing) and shines a light on good practice. It does this for both English and Māori Medium education. ERO's independence from agencies that set policy and deliver interventions enables it to provide the government and public with assurance on the quality of New Zealand's education system and provision.
- 9 NZCER is established in legislation as an independent research organisation that carries out and disseminates education research and provides information and advice. NZCER develops and supports a range of research-based tools and services, including research across the system.
- 10 The EWP 2021 committed the three organisations to work together to strengthen the evidence base through an Education Research and Development Strategy (the Strategy) to continue to grow the knowledge base about what works.

Supporting the achievement of the Education Work Programme 2021

- 11 The 2018 EWP set out an ambitious three-year work programme to achieve the Government's objectives for education and to transform our education system into one that delivers excellent and equitable outcomes for all children and learners.
- 12 The EWP 2021 Cabinet paper reinforced the Government's education priorities and clearly pointed to the expectation that the three organisations work together to strengthen the evidence base through the Strategy. To this end, we are collaborating to ensure our work aligns, is complementary and has impact.
- 13 Research and evaluation functions are distributed across education organisations. Each group has a different role to play, access to different sources of information, and different strengths and capabilities. When functioning well, the research outputs each group creates come together and give us a powerful, multifaceted understanding of current challenges and how they can be most effectively overcome.
- 14 The creation of the Education Services Agency will affect how the Ministry of Education engages in Research and Evaluation both centrally and at the front line. This and ERO's new operating model and your instruction to develop an overarching research and evaluation strategy enables us to look again at how we can work together.

Research, evaluation and monitoring by the Ministry

- 15 The Ministry leads a number of evaluations focused on driving continuous improvement in the education system, as well as data and tool development and analytical products designed to support the priorities under the EWP 2021. For example, under the Barrier Free Access priority, the Ministry is carrying out an evaluation of the Free and Healthy School Lunch programme and developing analytical tools such as the Equity Index. The Ministry is also involved in cross-government evaluation programmes of work, such as Ka Hikitia.

Research, evaluation and monitoring by ERO

- 16 ERO has a national research and evaluation work programme to support the EWP 2021, in addition to its ongoing work reviewing services and schools. This includes work underway on research into attendance, evaluation of education provision for children in Oranga Tamariki care. It also includes developing quality frameworks for the teaching of Te Reo and Bilingual Pacific Education, as well as independent evaluation of specific initiatives to increase learner wellbeing e.g. counselling for primary school students.

Research, evaluation and monitoring by NZCER

- 17 NZCER produces a number of research reports through the Te Pae Tawhiti government grant programme. This research builds on NZCER's strategic priorities which are closely aligned to the EWP 2021 priorities. Under the quality teaching and leadership priority, NZCER is a partner in the delivery of the National Monitoring Study of Student Achievement. NZCER is also working with the Ministry of Education and ERO to run the Teaching, School and Leadership Practices Survey.
- 18 As outlined above, Annex 1 sets out in detail the key research and evaluation work of the three organisations to support the EWP 2021.

How the agencies work together

- 19 The three organisations collaborate across their respective remits as set out below.

Complementary work programmes (preventing duplication)

- 20 The three agencies use their different strengths to create complementary work programmes. The Ministry generally carries out more quantitative research and evaluation at the national/aggregate level to determine how the systems are performing. ERO uses quantitative tools as well but complements this with a strong focus on its added value from being in services and schools everyday enabling it to build a picture “from the ground up”. NZCER carries out a mixture of qualitative and quantitative and develops a range of tools and resources that support teachers and students.
- 21 The three organisations share and discuss our respective forward work programmes to ensure they are complementary and do not duplicate. The three organisations recognise that there is currently overlap in their work programmes and opportunity for greater coordination. The Strategy will address this by creating common shared priorities for our work programmes and a framework to ensure these priorities are achieved efficiently and effectively.

Sharing data

- 22 The three organisations consistently share data through the Application Programming Interface (an electronic system to transfer data between two machines) and we have protocols in place to share our findings. Data infrastructure is a key component in the ability to share data, and as such, the Ministry acts as the Secretariat for a joint education agency “Data Board” (which includes education sector agencies, such as ERO, NZQA and TEC, among others). The group meets six times per year and reports to the joint agency Education Digital and Data Board. In the regions, Ministry and ERO regional offices share data and work programmes.

Reducing burdens on the education sector

- 23 The agencies all use the working principle of “collect once but use multiple times” to ensure we limit the compliance on the sector. Other actions currently underway to reduce burden from the many collections carried out, for example streamlining applications for learning support, reducing the frequency of roll returns for secondary schools and implementing an online system for teacher registration and certification. We expect that the implementation of the Strategy will in itself lead to a reduced burden on data collection from the three organisations.
- 24 A concrete example of how work of the three organisations complements each other is the research, evaluation and monitoring on how the education sector is grappling with a new challenge, such as the response to COVID-19. This is something that has the potential to affect all parts of the education system, and where timely, relevant, and high-quality evidence is critical to inform system response. More detail about what each partner is doing in this space is attached in Annex 3.

Gaps in our evidence base remain

- 25 Whilst the three organisations work together to build the evidence base, there remain gaps and limitations. While we know aspects of ‘what works’, there are two

overarching challenges: (a) knowing better what works for whom, under what conditions, at scale across the life course; and (b) how to turn that knowledge into consistent practice at all levels.

- 26 There remains in New Zealand's education system an underdeveloped culture of research and evaluation and limited capability and capacity. The intention of the Strategy is to address this through creating priorities that support coordination of activities across the agencies, through building the research capability we need across the sector and by ensuring investment in education evaluation and research reflects the potential to improve the return from our investment in education.

A Research, Evaluation and Development Strategy for the education sector

- 27 The 2018 *Education Portfolio Work Programme: Purpose, Objectives and Overview* Cabinet paper [SWC-18-MIN-0004 refers] sets out the need to support strong research that delivers outcomes for all New Zealanders. The paper also outlined the aim to ensure the benefits of research are shared across New Zealand and that they contribute to our broader aims. The EWP 2021 committed the three organisations to work together to strengthen the evidence base through the Strategy to continue to grow the knowledge base about what works.
- 28 A well-developed Strategy can enable us to identify priorities for research, evaluation and development, investment decisions, strengthen our research evaluation and development capability and increase the use of evidence.
- 29 The three partners have been working to agree the scope of what this Strategy would cover. This is set out in more detail in Annex 2 and would include:
- a. Strategy goals
 - b. Principles to guide research, evaluation and development
 - c. How we can strengthen coordination of research, evaluation and development
 - d. Priorities for research, evaluation and development
 - e. How we develop capacity and capability
 - f. Proposals for enhancing the use of evidence.
- 30 Our vision is that this Strategy would cover a 10-year horizon but be a "living document", which means that it should be continually revised and updated to ensure its continued validity and usefulness for key stakeholders. This will be done periodically and jointly by all three partners.
- 31 Tertiary research, evaluation and development are important components of our overall understanding of how the sector works. We consider that the tertiary sector should be an integral part of the Strategy, so we recommend including this area within this work.

Engagement Process

- 32 Given the importance of this Strategy for the wider education and research sector, we propose a co-design approach to the development of this work. Co-design would include a strong focus on working with Māori and Pacific groups.
- 33 We propose an early engagement with Māori and Pacific research groups, university deans of education and other relevant research bodies through a series of hui. These

hui would aim to discuss the purpose and scope of the proposed work and key areas it will cover. It would be an opportunity to hear from these key stakeholders what their vision for education research, evaluation and development is, agree on the goals and determine if there are any gaps in what we have proposed.

- 34 Once we have concluded the series of hui, we would begin to develop the draft Strategy using the outline explained in this briefing. We propose to then consult on the Strategy with our co-design partners and also engaging the sector more broadly and regionally to test our thinking.
- 35 We expect to have a finalised version to you by the end of 2021.

Quick Wins

- 36 While development of the strategy will take time, we have identified several “quick wins” to action in the short term:
- a. Establishing a cross-organisation research and evaluation group to support the development of the strategy.
 - b. Develop an inter-agency short-term work programme covering the evaluation and research needed to support high-priority work such as Ka Hikitia, Pacific Strategy, Early Learning Action Plan, and emerging priorities.
 - c. Identify how education agencies can bring together expertise to get better value and insight from the data we gather (eg our student progress information, NMSSA, and Teaching in School Practice Survey).

Next Steps

- 37 Should you agree to this proposed approach, the three organisations will begin engaging with university deans of education and a range of Māori and Pacific researchers and research groups through a series of hui over the next three months.
- 38 We propose to develop a Research and Advisory Group comprised of Alex Brunt, Deputy Secretary EDK; Ruth Shinoda, Deputy Chief Executive ERO; Graeme Cosslett, Chief Executive NZCER, Māori and Pacific research group representatives and university deans of education representatives.
- 39 You may want to discuss this proposal with the Minister for Science, the Hon Dr Megan Woods.

Proactive Release

- 40 We recommend that this Joint Briefing is not released at this time. This is because the partners will need to discuss and meet with a wide range of stakeholders and we would want to prejudice the direction of these engagements.