

16 April 2018

**New Zealand Principals' Federation (NZPF) Submission on the
PROPOSED REPEAL OF COMMUNITIES OF ONLINE LEARNING, AND CHANGES TO
CORRESPONDENCE EDUCATION**

To: The Ministry of Education

Personal Details:

Agency: New Zealand Principals' Federation (NZPF)
Designation: National Executive
Address: National Office, PO Box 25380, Wellington 6146

The New Zealand Principals' Federation (NZPF) is the largest professional organisation for lead educators representing the interests of 2,259 Principals of Primary, Intermediate, Area and Secondary Schools. Principals are from public, integrated and independent schools and are spread throughout New Zealand. NZPF aims to be the most influential advocate for school principals to enable high quality, well supported leadership for school learners in New Zealand.

We thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed repeal of communities of online learning and changes to correspondence education.

Introduction

In our original submission, opposing the establishment of Communities of Online Learning School (COOLS), NZPF objected to COOLS at several levels. We opposed their establishment for many of the same reasons we opposed charter schools.

We opposed COOLS that could be established by private sector bodies who were not required to teach the national curriculum or employ registered teachers. We recognised that students with challenging behaviours might be encouraged to choose the COOLS option, so schools could divest themselves of the difficulties of managing these particular young people, even though these are the very students who require higher levels of pastoral care which they would not receive in the COOLS environment.

Given the online options already available to our young people through Virtual Learning Network, amongst others, any gaps in subject offerings or networking opportunities for young people in isolated school communities was already covered.

We also objected to COOLS at a more philosophical level and quoted one of the seven

principles of learning as outlined by the OECD:

'Neuroscience confirms that we learn from social interaction – the organisation of learning should be highly social.

Cooperative group work appropriately organised and structured has demonstrated very clear benefits for achievement as well as for behavioural and affective outcomes. Cooperative methods work for all types of students because done well they push learners of all abilities.'

Our own NZ Curriculum also states in the key competencies section that we should have a focus on relating to others, participating and contributing. In our view maintaining ongoing social interaction, conversations and cooperative group work through on-line learning when students are in isolation from each other, is not achievable. Setting up a schooling option to isolate students is counterproductive to successful learning.

In answer to the four questions posed on COOLS:

1. We support the repeal of the COOLS option
2. New Zealand is well experienced in the delivery of online and distance learning, having operated Te Kura for many years. In addition, Massey University has led the world in many aspects of distance and online education. Both are excellent resources for the development of further distance education options. In our view, technology options that allow high levels of interaction and cooperative learning opportunities, which are well structured and carefully monitored by expert teachers familiar with the distance medium of teaching, are essential to successful distance learning, especially at the primary and intermediate levels.
3. Schools require much more than infrastructure to successfully deliver distance learning that is meaningful. The distance teacher requires a special set of skills not normally required of the classroom teacher. It would be helpful to include distance education as a part of the Initial Teacher Training programmes. Further, there may be limited numbers and variety of online options at present and insufficient skilled people to develop them. Strengthening resources for the Virtual Learning Network, and other providers who currently work with schools, would allow more young people, especially in rural areas, to access learning opportunities not currently available to them.
4. The most important influence on any young person's learning is the teacher. It will be the quality of the teacher controlling the distance learning that will dictate the success of the programme, not the technology or infrastructure. Online distance learning options will not be a successful substitute when a young person needs learning support or is at risk of disengagement. Young people in these categories require higher levels of face to face teaching and support, using online options only for reinforcement or practice learning.

Whetu Cormick
PRESIDENT
NZPF
whetu@nzpf.ac.nz

PO Box 25380
Wellington 6146

Level 8 The Bayleys Building
36 Brandon Street

THE MOST RESPECTED AND INFLUENTIAL ADVOCATE FOR NEW ZEALAND'S SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

ph:+64 4 471 2338
fax:+64 4 471 2339

email: office@nzpf.ac.nz
web: www.nzpf.ac.nz