



Submission on the Draft Digital Technologies | Hangarau Matihiko (DT | HM) Curriculum

To: Ministry of Education

Submitter: Rural Women New Zealand
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Proposal: This draft consultation proposes a new curriculum with the aim of preparing students for the increasingly digitalised workplace and society.

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About RWNZ

1. Rural Women New Zealand (RWNZ) is a not-for-profit, member-based organisation that reaches into all rural communities and has an authoritative voice on rural environment, health, education and social issues. RWNZ strives to ensure that all rural people have equitable access to services, inequalities are addressed by Government, and the wellbeing of rural communities is considered from the beginning of all policy and legislative development.

Introduction

2. RWNZ welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Ministry of Education on the draft Digital Technologies|Hangarau Matihiko (DT|HM) curriculum. Ensuring equal access to a quality education for rural communities is essential to achieving equitable learning outcomes for all students in New Zealand.
3. RWNZ is in support of the DT|HM curriculum and its intent to prepare New Zealand's students for the increasingly digital world. However, RWNZ is concerned about its applicability in rural areas, which struggle with equitable access to digital technologies. Achieving equity will be the main challenge in implementing the DT|HM curriculum.

Specific Comments

4. In 2017, the New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER) published, *Digital technologies for learning: Findings from the NZCER national survey of primary and intermediate schools 2016*. Responses to this survey highlight all of the major issues with implementing the DT|HM curriculum in rural areas. These include a lack of sufficient funding, training for teachers, and access to reliable internet connectivity.¹
5. The NZCER report shows that 22% of 231 teachers and 30% of 80 principals surveyed expressed concern about the funding and equity implications of including digital technology in the curriculum. The following quote from a principal adequately summarises the difficulties rural communities often face: "If this is to be done then there is a need to ensure that all schools will be digitally able to teach to this or respond appropriately. My school is not at this point yet. We are still trying to achieve wifi and have still to find funds to equip our tamariki with the technology. We also need to think about those kura who do not have access to much out in the country. How would they cope?"²
6. Although access to reliable broadband has improved in rural schools, not all rural homes and communities are as sufficiently equipped. For those in highly remote rural areas, who do not have access to reliable and affordable internet at home, there may not be a library, community centre or WiFi hotspot in the area to gain access. Effectively, rural students that

¹ Bolstad, Rachel. *Digital technologies for learning: Findings from the NZCER national survey of primary and intermediate schools 2016*. Wellington: New Zealand Council for Educational Research, 2017. PDF.

² Ibid.

do not have access to reliable internet will be unable to complete the coursework that is required out of school hours.

7. Before the DT|HM curriculum is implemented, RWNZ would like to see a strategic plan that describes how the curriculum will be made feasible for all schools in New Zealand. This plan should include a budget that will ensure all schools are provided with the adequate resources so that learning outcomes can be consistent across the country. The budget should be used for professional learning and development in the use of digital technologies for teachers; ensuring access to reliable internet connectivity both at school and in homes; and providing all schools and students with the same technology and other resources needed to implement the curriculum.

Conclusion

8. Rural Women New Zealand supports the transition to greater use of digital technology in education. However, the Ministry of Education needs to be aware that not all rural students, schools and communities have any or adequate access to internet connectivity. In order for rural students to have the same opportunities as urban students, they must be provided with the same educational resources and services.
9. RWNZ thanks the Ministry of Education for the opportunity to submit on this draft curriculum.

Please contact me to discuss our submission further.

Yours sincerely,



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