

# Long-Term Insights Briefing

Realising the potential for technology to support personalised and tailored learning in the future

October 2024



New Zealand Council Of  
Christian Social Services

## Tirohanga Whānui | Overview

The New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services (NZCCSS) welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the Education & Training Amendment Bill 2024. We support the kaupapa to consider how the government can realise the potential for technology to support personalised and tailored learning in the future, through the Long-term insights briefing process. NZCCSS welcomes the opportunities that technology presents for the future of education and advocates for the LTIB to reflect a holistic and accessible approach to learning and development.

Our main points are:

- 1. That the LTIB reflect a holistic understanding of education**
- 2. That the LTIB consider known challenges to the use of technology in education**
- 3. That the scope of the LTIB be broad and holistic**
- 4. That the LTIB support development of long-term, non-partisan commitments within education**

## Taunakitanga | Recommendations

We raise the following points and recommendations for consideration:

### **1. That the LTIB reflect a holistic understanding of education**

Our report [Te Kōrero mō ngā Tamariki](#) (NZCCSS, 2024) explores the context of middle childhood in Aotearoa and shares information and evidence that highlights what is needed to support children's holistic development during this period. Technology offers many opportunities to support this and other stages of development beyond simply being a learning area of the curriculum. We are concerned that the LTIB focus on education holistically, rather than specifically on academic attainment.

“While the impact of ICTs (digital technologies) on student achievement has been thoroughly investigated by researchers, other aspects related to school life that are also affected by ICTs, such as equality, inclusion, and social integration have received less attention” (Timotheou et al., 2022, p.6717, explanation added).

As an example, we see potential for technology to enable increased investment in social and emotional learning to support future workforce needs:

“The specific skills that will be required for future occupations and careers are difficult to predict, and this points to transferable social and emotional skills as important foundations for future resilience” (MBIE et al., 2023, p.13).

Technology offers new opportunities in relation to social and emotional learning, as well as pastoral support for students. This is reflected in the increase in online tools and resources to support this

learning area and a broader societal increase in digital health services. While these changes may have been fuelled by a pandemic and health system under pressure, they are likely to persist beyond these crises and enable social and emotional learning initiatives and services such as counselling to be more accessible to all students.

Similarly, we see opportunities for technology to improve current barriers to education, such as accessibility. This includes the ability to provide specialist learning to large groups of students or remote communities, to engage children in different approaches to learning that may be more suited to them and to provide for situations where students cannot learn within a physical school environment. Technology also provides cost-efficiencies that can enable learning and achievement in different forms, such as micro-credentials, online internships, and broader intercultural or international connection than can be found in one's own community.

Technology has shifted the educational approach needed to support children's learning and the acquisition of skills needed for modern society. However, changes to the foundations of teaching are required to see these opportunities realised. An example of this is the move from teaching information itself vs. teaching information literacy and the skills needed to navigate and assess the validity of such vast amounts of information as are found online today. Haworth (2024) highlights this shift, demonstrating the importance of investment in areas such as school libraries to enable students to fully participate in and benefit from the changes that technology has brought and will continue to bring to learning. It is fundamental that we "address relative under-investment in education sciences and build the New Zealand education research and evaluation evidence base" (Ministry of Education, 2023, p.33). This will aid in ensuring the need for such shifts in practice are recognised and integrated into education delivery in a timely manner.

**Recommendation 1: That consideration within the LTIB of the opportunity's technology presents reflect a holistic understanding of education and child development.**

## **2. That the LTIB consider known challenges to the use of technology in education**

NZCCSS identifies the following challenges, among others, to the use of technology in education including:

- a. Pace of change: This is a significant challenge to the use of technology in education. Educators and our education system struggle to keep up with the changes that are occurring. Unlike other areas of the curriculum, children and young people frequently display more advanced capability in these areas than those positioned to educate them. Significant investment is needed in the areas of developing specialist expertise within the Ministry of Education and sector leadership and integrating developments in technology into curriculums at a pace that is useful. This is essential if New Zealand wishes to have an education system that is suitable for our own nation and comparable and/or competitive internationally.
- b. Workforce capability: This presents a challenge to the use of technology within schools and other education settings. Greater prioritisation of professional development focused on growing technology skills, fluency and confidence, is critical to seeing students well-supported in this area. Equally teacher training programmes must be at the forefront of technological change to ensure that the learnings brought into the education system by new kaiako are fit for purpose and do not result in a knowledge and skills-deficit that schools/education providers become responsible for rectifying.

- c. **Accessibility:** This is a current challenge to the use of technology in education and will continue to limit the extent to which children and young people benefit from the opportunities that technology presents. Greater investment is urgently needed to remove barriers to access for groups of children and young people, and communities, that are disproportionately disadvantaged and to signal a genuine commitment to equitable access. He Whakaaraara (2024) describes the digital divide in Aotearoa and its impacts on education for tamariki Māori and other groups, such as refugee children. Affordability, rural connectivity and a lack of culturally appropriate content are found to be contributors to this divide.
- d. **Government and sector leadership:** Policy priorities and sector guidance must provide justification for education providers to prioritise and invest in digital technologies alongside other aspects of the curriculum. As stated in the current digital technologies area of the curriculum, focus must be placed on students gaining literacy in being both effective consumers of, as well as contributors to, the field of digital technologies.

**Recommendation 2: We advocate for the LTIB to consider how barriers to effective use of technology in education can be overcome.**

### **3. That the scope of the LTIB be broad and holistic**

We believe that the LTIB should focus on the opportunities offered across all aspects of the education system (students and their families, teachers and teaching and wider system issues). These areas are inter-connected and it would be difficult to focus on one in isolation. A literature review focused on the impacts of digital technologies on education found that integration of digital technologies in education was impacted by the following factors: digital competencies, socioeconomic school context and emergency situations, teachers' personal characteristics and professional development, students' socioeconomic background and family support, administration and data management processes, connectivity, infrastructure and government support, and school leadership and management (Timotheou et al., 2022, p.6715).

We also believe that the LTIB should focus on the whole education system (early learning, schooling, tertiary) to ensure a cohesive and holistic approach at all stages of education. This is consistent with the government's focus on a lifespan approach to child and youth wellbeing and ensures that the focus will not only be on the stages themselves, but on the transitions that occur throughout and between these stages. To reflect a truly holistic view of education, particularly in 10-20 years time, the LTIB may extend beyond these learning institutions to consider what other organisations and contexts are relevant to the use of technology in education in future.

**Recommendation 3: That the scope of the LTIB reflect the interconnected factors that impact effective use of technology in education and a holistic view of education across the lifespan.**

### **4. That the LTIB support development of long-term, non-partisan commitments within education**

We believe that this area of education requires us to be courageous and invest in developing the expertise, capability and resources across the sector that will enable us to fully benefit from the opportunities that technology offers and to position our education system at the forefront of change. This can only be achieved through commitment to and investment in the delivery of a non-

partisan, long-term strategy that is protected from policy swings that occur with a change in government.

**Recommendation: NZCCSS advocates for cross-party agreement on education strategy to maximise investment in this area.**

## Tohutoro kua tohua | References

Haworth, A. (2024). Children's Librarians. In Wilson, M J., Hurst, N A., Hamlin, K M. & Mackay, R P. (2024). *Te Kōrero mō ngā Tamariki* (pp 91-92). [https://nzccss.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/NZCCSS\\_Te-Korero-mo-nga-Tamariki\\_May-2024.pdf](https://nzccss.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/NZCCSS_Te-Korero-mo-nga-Tamariki_May-2024.pdf)

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## Ko wai tātou | Who we are

NZCCSS has six foundation members; the Anglican Care Network, Baptist Churches of New Zealand, Catholic Social Services, Presbyterian Support and the Methodist and Salvation Army Churches.

Through this membership, NZCCSS represents over 230 organisations providing a range of social support services across Aotearoa. We believe in working to achieve a just and compassionate society for all, through our commitment to our faith and Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Further details on NZCCSS can be found on our website [www.nzccss.org.nz](http://www.nzccss.org.nz).

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