Usability Testing Summary for:

Usability testing of education.govt.nz (Round 1)

Ministry of Education
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Executive Summary

Introduction

In December 2014, Optimal Experience conducted Usability Testing on the education.govt.nz website. We tested with five people who work in the education sector or are involved in early childhood education in order to:

- Identify any major usability problems with the education.govt.nz website.
- Uncover perceptions and general user feedback on the education.govt.nz website.
- Make recommendations to improve the user experience, including helping to prioritise appropriate usability improvements.
- Identify the website's areas of strength and provide positive usability findings.
- Test assumptions and if changes and updates to the website have improved the user experience.

Key findings

System Usability Score (SUS)

The education.govt.nz website achieved a System Usability Score (SUS) of 76%. A score of 68% is considered to be average.

A score of 76% indicates that people strongly agree that the website is easy to use. For example, a score of 50% would mean that respondents neither agree nor disagree that the website was usable and a score of 100% would mean that everyone strongly agreed that the website is usable.

This score is based on the ratings from the five test participants. While it is not statistically significant, it is a good indication of the website’s usability and offers a baseline against which future improvements can be measured.

Perceptions

All participants said that the website is Friendly, Helpful, Inviting, Trustworthy and Usable.

"Inviting, yes, more than the current one. The colour, the layout, the other one is beige, very boring and dull. And the font's bigger too."

"It’s definitely trustworthy. It’s a government website."

All participants said that the website is not Annoying, Dated, Hard to Use, Intimidating, Patronising, Time-consuming or Unattractive.

"I don’t think it’s annoying. The old one is worse."
Usability findings

The usability testing revealed the following **57** findings.

- **10 Positives**,
- **1 Severe** issue,
- **9 Major** issues,
- **12 Minor** issues,
- **and 25 Observations**.

The main findings and recommendations are:

**No critical findings or show stoppers.** Overall, the website performed quite well with only one severe usability issue being found.

- **R** Keep doing what you are doing.

**Broken or misleading links.** Participants got confused when links didn’t work or took them to a destination page they didn’t expect.

- **R** Ensure that there are no broken links.
- **R** Ensure that the link label sufficiently describes the link destination.
- **R** When linking to specific content, ensure that the link takes people to this content and not a generic landing page.

**Mega menu and search.** Some participants considered themselves searchers while others stated they like to use navigation. Both user groups were able to find what they were looking for eventually, but encountered some difficulties along the way. Several participants misspelled search terms and hence struggled to find the correct content. Participants were unsure about what was clickable on the mega menu and often inadvertently opened or closed it, creating some frustration. Smoothing some of these ‘rough edges’ may be all that is required to change the user experience from good to great.

- **R** Ensure that the site search returns all relevant search results and caters for misspellings or/and help users recover from misspellings (e.g. adding a ‘did you mean’ functionality).
- **R** Consider including URLs or breadcrumb trails in the search results to help users choose the right result.
- **R** Use consistent formatting throughout the site to indicate interactive content.
- **R** Consider highlighting interactive text on hover over, e.g. by underlining it.

Methodology

The Usability Testing was facilitated at Optimal Experience’s office in the Wellington CBD. We tested with five participants on their preferred device (four on laptop, one on iPad).

We asked participants:

- To talk about their role in education, their average workday and how dealing with the Ministry of Education fitted into that day, as well as their internet usage in general and interactions with education websites in particular.
- To use the website in order to complicate representative tasks.
To explain their current understanding and perceptions of the education.govt.nz website
Finally, to describe what they liked/disliked about the website and what they would change.

We used the same set of tasks to facilitate the testing, but didn’t test all tasks with all participants.

The findings from the Usability Testing are summarised in this report.

Test tasks

We usability tested with the following tasks:

Task 1: First impressions and explore the education.govt.nz site

Let’s have a look at the website we are going to look at today. I’m going to show you the website for just 5 seconds. Then I will hide it again and ask you about your first impression of it and what you saw.

Now have a longer look and tell me what comes to your mind when looking at this site.

Task 2: School terms and holidays

Let’s find out on which days schools need to remain closed next year.

Task 3: Traumatic incidents (using the site search)

Last Friday, a fire broke out in your ECE centre and one of the rooms got seriously damaged. Luckily nobody was seriously hurt, but it happened during opening hours and it was quite dramatic. There was smoke everywhere and a lot of the children are really upset and frightened. Find some information on the website that will help you deal with the aftermath. Try to use the site search to find this information.

Task 4A: Adult-Child-Ratio

The ECE centre you work at has decided to expand its services and enrol 10 more under-two-year-olds. There are some requirements that ‘ECE services must always have a certain number of adults for the number of children attending’. Find out if you need to hire more staff in order to deal with the increased number of children.

Task 4B: Awareness days

The centre you work at decided to do something special for Matariki next year. You have been put in charge of organising the event and you come to the website to look for some inspiration.

Task 4C: Medical retirement

One of your teachers has become seriously ill and they are no longer able to work as a teacher. They might be eligible for some financial assistance. Find out what needs to be done to apply for this financial assistance.

Task 5: Primary teacher salary

Find out what you would get paid if you were a Primary Teacher.

Task 6: Feedback form
You want to give some feedback about the website. How would you do this?

Task 7: Enrolment documents for ECE centre

You want to sign up your four year-old in a childcare centre in your area. Find out what documentation you need to provide.

Task 8: News item

The Ministry of Education recently announced new decile ratings for schools. Let’s try to find something about this on the Education.govt.nz website.

Task 9: Field of Remembrances

Find out how to set up a Field of Remembrances at your school.

Task 10: 5-out-of-5

The Ministry of Education has developed some resource to ‘inspire leadership conversations and actions’. The aim is to ensure that all children benefit fully from early childhood education. Let’s try to find this resource on this website.

Task 11: Feedback on labels

For this task, we are going to do something slightly different. We are going to do a pop quiz. The way it works is that I have a list of labels that are used on this website. I will read out a label and you tell me what you would expect to find under this label.

Participants

We tested with five people who work in the education sector or who are involved in early childhood education including:

- Three women and two men;
- Two Kindergarten teachers who use the internet frequently throughout the day and conduct most of the online research and communication for the ECE centre they work at;
- Two parents, one of which is a Playcentre Committee Member.
- One Advisory officer who previously worked as a High School Deputy Principal.

All participants used a laptop or desktop computer for work and only one participant now and then used a tablet to access education websites.

Three of the participants had never seen or used the education.govt.nz website, but all had used the current Ministry of Education website (minedu.govt.nz).

All five participants were highly computer literate and felt comfortable using the internet for private or work reasons.

None of the participants was currently working in secondary education.
Usability Testing Findings

Severity ratings

The following findings have been rated based on how often they occur, how many people they impact on and their impact on the usability of forms and the user experience. These ratings are:

- **Positive:** Good one!
- **Observation:** No usability issue, but needs to be noted.
- **Severe:** Issue constrains users, appears frequently or in crucial situations. Tasks might not be completed; data can be lost - immediate action required.
- **Major:** Issue makes it difficult to use the site, but users might recover - fix as soon as possible.
- **Minor:** Issue can cause irritation/confusion or occurs rarely - fix if resources are available.

- **Recommendation:** Potential option to improve usability or solve this issue.
Testing tasks

Finding 1: Task 1: First impressions

The coloured tabs were the first thing that most participants noticed on the site.

“The colourful boxes were useful.”

Finding 2: Task 2: School terms and holidays

Participants found the school terms and holidays quite easily.

Finding 3: Task 3: Traumatic incidents

We asked participants to use the site search to find information for dealing with an emergency at an ECE centre.

“That would pretty straight forward because I got the search terms right.”

Though there is a page about ‘Emergencies and traumatic incidents in ECE’ in the '0-6 Years' section, the search only returned a link to the 'Preparing for and dealing with emergencies and traumatic incidents' page in the '5-19 Years' section.

However, when asked to find the page by browsing, participants found the correct page in the '0-6 Years' section without problems.

R Ensure that the site search returns all relevant search results.
R Consider including URLs or breadcrumb trails in the search results to help users choose the right result.

Finding 4: Task 3: Traumatic incidents

One participant solved the task to find emergency information by going to 'Contact the Ministry' and finding the contact details for the Traumatic Incident team and one participant was expecting a contact number on the emergency information page.
Finding 5: Task 4A: Adult-Child-Ratio

Most participants found the information about ‘Adult-Child-Ratio’ quite quickly. Some found it on education.govt.nz and some on the legislation.govt.nz website.

“That wasn’t very difficult to find.”

Finding 6: Task 4B: Awareness days

Participants didn’t know what ‘Awareness days’ were and they even went to the ‘Learning tools and resources’ section, but instead of selecting the ‘Awareness days/weeks’ option they selected the ‘Play ideas’ option or used the site search to search for the actual event, i.e. ‘Matariki’.

“Awareness days isn’t very clear, maybe change it to cultural celebrations?”

R Consider changing the ‘Awareness days/weeks’ label.
R Consider including direct links to popular events on the ‘Learning tools and resources’ page.

Finding 7: Task 4C: Medical retirement

We only tested this task with two participants, but neither of them found the information. They weren’t sure where to get started on this task and therefore tried using the search, using search terms like ‘sickness’, ‘sickness allowance’, ‘sick to work’, ‘financial assistance for teachers’.

“I wouldn’t know where to start really. So I would go through the search.”

R Consider adding additional meta data to the page to cater for more common search terms.

Finding 8: Task 5: Primary teacher salary

All participants found salary information for Primary Teachers with ease, either on the education.govt.nz site or on the old Ministry of Education site.
Finding 9: Task 6: Feedback form

Not all participants found the Feedback form, but all found one way or another to provide feedback. Some went straight to the ‘Contact us’ section while others tried the social media icons in the footer.

Finding 10: Task 6: Feedback form fields

Participants assumed that they had to complete all the form fields.

“I would assume these are all required, so would fill them in.”

“I don't know by looking at it, I would just go and write something and it would kick me back to a start to show me what I forgot...”

R  Indicate with fields are mandatory or which ones are optional.

Finding 11: Task 7: Enrolment documents

Most participants went straight to the ‘Parents’ site and found the information there.

“That is very clear. Tells you all you need to know.”

Finding 12: Task 8: News item

Participants found the news item, either by clicking the ‘News’ panel on the homepage or by using the search.

Finding 13: Task 9: Field of Remembrance

All participants used the site search to find this information.

Finding 14: Task 10: 5-out-of-5

We only tested participants who worked in Early Childhood Education on this task. None of the participants knew what ‘5-out-of-5’ was, and though one participants had heard the term, she didn’t associate it with ‘inspiring leadership conversation and actions’. They usually came to the right section, i.e. ‘Educational leadership in ECE’, but didn’t associate ‘Leadership in early childhood education for '5 out of 5' children’ with the task.

One participant found the right information, because she relied on the key term ‘leadership’.
“I would be looking for leadership for teachers...”

**Website labels (Task 11)**

**Finding 15: ‘Early childhood’ label**

Participants associated with this label:
- Anything that relates to early childhood or to before Primary School
- Information about ECE centres and Kindergartens, e.g. how to enrol, requirements, dates
- Explanations what kind of services are available
- Information for parents and teachers.

**Finding 16: ‘Education service’ label**

Participants thought that ‘Education service’ was quite a broad label that could apply to anything the Ministry of Education does.

**Finding 17: ‘Education provider’ label**

Two participants thought that ‘Education provider’ described any place that offered education.
But one participant interpreted it as organisations or individuals providing services to schools, against payment.
Finding 18: ‘School terms and holidays’ label

Participants thought this label described when school starts and ends and public holidays.

“That’s simple.”

Finding 19: ‘Emergency management’ label

Participants associated this label with how to prepare for, what to do and who to contact in an emergency; an emergency being anything out of the ordinary like earthquakes, tsunami, or gunmen.

“Anything that deals with out of the ordinary day.”

Finding 20: ‘Vacancies’ label

Participants thought this label would cover any job vacancies in the education sector including anywhere in New Zealand. Some mentioned the Education Gazette in this context.

Finding 21: ‘Board of trustees’ label

Participants saw this label covering not only information about the ‘Board of trustees’, but also information for the board, including:
• Members of the board
• Roles and responsibilities
• Timetable of board meetings by area
• Submissions to the board
• Contact information.

Finding 22: ‘School forms’ label

Participants couldn’t quite agree on what the label ‘School forms’ would entail because it was such a broad term. Some thought it was about forms that the school needed, while others leaned more towards forms that parents needed when communicating with a school.

Finding 23: ‘Further education’ label

Participants thought ‘Further education’ was about up-skilling for teachers, e.g. ECE to Primary school or tertiary education, e.g. university or polytechnic.
Finding 24: ‘Medical retirement’ label

Participants were unsure what to expect under this label, but participants who were tested on task 4C made the connection that this would be financial assistance for teachers who are too sick to work.

“That’s probably what I should have searched for. I don’t know what to expect there. Sounds like that I can do if I am too sick to come to work. Or what the Ministry can do for me, how I can get some help with life.”

Finding 25: ‘Concurrence’ label

Only the participants who had worked in a secondary school knew what this label meant. He described it as “a particular way of managing schools”.

Finding 26: ‘Early learning’ label

Participants thought that ‘Early learning’ related to ‘Early Childhood Education’ and was information for parents on how valuable early learning is for children.

Finding 27: ‘5-out-of-5’ label

Participants weren’t familiar with the term ‘5-out-of-5’ and didn’t know what it meant.

Finding 28: ‘Learning tools & resources’ label

Participants expected this category under all three sections (Early childhood, School and Further education) and expected it to include links to external websites, and ideas on specific subjects (school) or play (ECE).

Finding 29: ‘Curriculum leadership and ECE’ label

Participants saw this as resources and information on specific area in ECE, mainly for head teachers and with links to people and contacts.

Finding 30: ‘Wellbeing in ECE’ label

Participants associated with this label with regulations for the physical and educational wellbeing of teachers and children.
Finding 31: ‘Learning pathways in ECE’ label

Participants wondered if this was the same as the curriculum leadership or curriculum for principals.

Finding 32: ‘Environments in ECE’ label

Participants thought that this label covered things like how to set up the ECE environment and any resources relating to that.

Finding 33: ‘Cybersafety in ECE’ label

Participants thought that this label covered the safety of children when using the internet, advice to set things up and what teachers are expected to do about that.

Purpose

Finding 34: Website purpose

Most participants thought that education.govt.nz is replacing the old mineedu.govt.nz site.

Navigation

Finding 35: Broken and misleading links

Participants were annoyed when links were broken or didn’t take them to the destination they expected.

For example the link to a news story in the Education Gazette that wasn’t there ...

“This is slightly frustrating, it sent me to a story, but it doesn’t obviously exist.”

“Broken links reduce trust in things, so everything that’s on there needs to be squeaky clean.”

(aged 17), an All Black captain, and one with the words “Known Unto God” to represent the unknown soldier. Read the Education Gazette story on the Fields to find out more.

... or the ‘What documents do I need to enrol?’ link on the ‘Parents’ site.
Enrolling and starting your child

- How do I enrol my child in an ECE service or Māori medium education?
- What documents do I need to enrol?
- What do I need on the first day?

R Ensure that there are no broken links.
R Ensure that links fulfil the users’ expectations and take them to the destination specified in the link name and not a generic landing page.

Finding 36: Mega menu hard to use

In general, participants liked the mega menu, but they struggled to use it, unintentionally and unexpectedly opening and closing it.

R Use consistent formatting throughout the site to indicate interactive content.
R Consider highlighting interactive text on hover over, e.g. by underlining it.

Finding 37: Unsure what is clickable

Participants sometimes missed links and navigation options because they didn’t realise that they were clickable, e.g. top level navigation options, Level 2 navigation options in mega menu.
Finding 38: Current section not obvious

Some participants felt that it needed to be more obvious which section they were currently in once they were within this section, e.g. 'Te Whāriki' page in the 'Teaching and learning' section.

In task 3, when asked to look for emergency information for ECE centres, participants often ended up in the 'School' section without realising it. Participants thought that this was the page they were looking for and didn’t notice that they were in the wrong section.

R Consider repeating the name of the section at the top of the page close to the page title or visually emphasising the label for the current section in the right panel.

Finding 39: Mega menu too big

Most participants found the mega menu for the '5-19 Years' section too big. They had to scroll to see all of it and it was hard to find the right navigation option.

"In early childhood it probably would be ok, but in schools, that would have taken me a long time to find something..."
R Consider showing only the top two navigation levels.

Finding 40: Top level categories

Participants liked the categorisation by age group, but one participant doubted that it would work well for school teachers.

"It’s quite good that you can just pick one age and stay in that section. The other areas are not for me."

"The tabs make sense; I would be looking at years 9-13; there is no secondary school that’s a bit clunky. This is not really the way that schools experience the world."

"Schools not separated from primary to secondary. But I am coming from a specific mind-set. It’s a broader site, but not as easy to use as a teacher."

R Test the website with Secondary School teachers.

Finding 41: Use mega menu for exploring

Most participants used the mega menu to get an overview of the site and they would often start a task by scanning the content of the mega menu.

Though in some case, participants missed information on the homepage, because they went straight to the mega menu and the menu was covering parts of the homepage, e.g. the ‘Find an ECE service’ link, ‘Find term dates’ link.

"I would look for a list of centres in my area, but I can’t immediately see that."

R Consider changing the placement of items on the homepage to ensure that important quick links are still visible, even when the mega menu is open.
**Finding 42:** Connection between ‘Parents’ and main site unclear

Participants were surprised when some of the links took them to a different website, i.e. the ‘Parents’ website, but most figured out pretty quickly that they were on a different site and how to get back to the main site.

Because the URL still ended with ‘education.govt.nz’ participants weren’t sure if they were on just a sub site or a totally different website.

Some thought that they needed to click the ‘Home’ link on the ‘Parents’ page to get to the education.govt.nz homepage, but when this didn’t work, they used the ‘education.govt.nz’ link in the top left corner or the Browser back button.

“I am still on the same site, but it looks different. What happens when I click home? - Ah no, it’s a different site.”

“So that takes me off, which is strange, I didn’t expect that. Based on footer it tells me it is the education site, but it looks completely different.”

“I feel like I’m somewhere that is targeted at me as a parent, but still somewhere on the education.govt.nz site.”

- Consider displaying links to both websites in the top bar of both websites.  
  Example:

- Consider making the links visually more obvious.

**Finding 43:** Linking to other websites

Participants had no problems in understanding when they were on a different site.

Most didn’t mind or even liked that they were redirected to different website for more detailed information.

“This is good, you are not regurgitating, putting the same information in two places. I would not have thought to look there, but it feels a lot more accurate there, feels like yes this must be the right information as this is the legislation site.”

“Yes, feels like they are working smarter not harder, no need to copy the same information over on the site again.”

“If I was organising it, I would have gone to Te Papa anyway, so it’s good that it is
One participant commented negatively on the fact that he was being redirected to other government websites which used different standards.

"Real pet peeve of mine to be pushed from a responsive site to a non-responsive one."

Site search

Finding 44: Prefer Google search

In general, participants commented that they preferred Google search to site searches, because Google was more reliable and accurate.

"I Google what I need, gets me to exactly where I want, rather than having to look around on their website."

Finding 45: Misspelled search terms

Participants found it annoying that the site search didn't return any results when they misspelled the search terms.

"Shame it doesn't offer Google like Did you mean if you mistype things."

- Ensure the site search caters for common misspellings.
- Help users recover from the mistake by providing search suggestions.
- Consider adding a 'Did you mean:' feature to the site search.

Finding 46: Search result destination unclear

Participants found it hard to tell where selecting a search result would take them. They usually didn't seem to have a problem selecting a search result, because the search result heading was usually quite descriptive and there were only a small number of search results.
Look and feel

Finding 47:  Fresh look

Participants liked the fresh look of the education.govt.nz site. They preferred this new look to the minedu.govt.nz site.

"Yeah, it's kind of fresh-ish, friendly-ish."

"Easier on the eye, colours make more sense, the brown melange on the old site was bad, this is much more focused on the internet user as opposed to a document driven thing."

"Nice and clear. Didn’t look too Ministry."

Finding 48:  Coloured tabs

Participants liked the coloured tabs. It was the first thing they noticed on the site.
Finding 49: Arrow on navigation tabs

One participant was wondering why the arrows on the navigation tabs were pointing sideways and not down, when the menu drop down and not sideways.

One participant clicked the arrows in the hope of seeing more options.

R Consider changing the arrows to pointing downwards or removing them.

Content

Finding 50: Bigger font size

Participants liked the bigger font size.

“This is better than the old one. The font is really small on the old [minedu.govt.nz] site.”

“The font is bigger, so it’s easier to read.”

Finding 51: ‘5-out-of-5’ resources

Once they got to the ‘5-out-of-5’ page, participants seemed to be quite interested in the ‘Written material’ such as the brochure and the wildcards.

“Ah little card things, I guess to stimulate conversation.”

“There is not a lot of support for very new teachers; this is very good to have this here, the stuff we learned the hard way.”

Finding 52: Feedback thank you page

One participant commented that the “Help us shape EDUCATION.govt.nz ...” blurb seemed out of place and inappropriate.

“It looks... it seems to be in the wrong place, that I have to read this first to get to the thank you.”
Finding 53: Wording on feedback form

Two participants seemed confused by the “Yes, I would like to help with the website redevelopment” check box.

“It looks... it seems to be in the wrong place, that I have to read this first to get to the thank you.”

R Consider changing this label to something that describes what people will be expected to do rather than the purpose of their involvement, e.g. “Yes, I would like to participate in research that will help with the improvement of this website”.

Finding 54: Adult-Child-Ratio for Playcentres

One participant was looking for adult-child-ratio information relating to Playcentres, but couldn’t find this information.
Finding 55: ‘5-out-of-5’ video content

Participants thought the video on the ‘5-out-of-5’ page was quite long and said that they wouldn’t have the time to watch it during working hours.

“Probably [would watch it] if I needed to but otherwise no. […] Maybe if it were a couple of videos divided up and then you can pick which was for you.”

“We don’t have enough time to play around with that and find out much more about this.”

Mobile devices

Finding 56: Response to touch

One participant used the website on a tablet. He often touched links, buttons or other interactive elements several times, because nothing seemed to happen in response to his first touch.

R Consider emphasising the visual response to user interactions.

Finding 57: Landscape view

When in viewed on a tablet in landscape view, parts of the website seemed to be cut off.
Appendix B – Restrictions

- This Report has been prepared solely for the purposes stated herein and should not be relied upon for any other purpose. We accept no liability to any party should it be used for any purpose other than that for which it was prepared.

- This Report is strictly confidential and (save to the extent required by applicable law and/or regulation) must not be released to any third party without our express written consent, which is at our sole discretion.

- To the fullest extent permitted by law, PwC accepts no duty of care to any third party in connection with the provision of this Report and/or any related information or explanation (together, the "Information"). Accordingly, regardless of the form of action, whether in contract, tort (including without limitation, negligence) or otherwise, and to the extent permitted by applicable law, PwC accepts no liability of any kind to any third party and disclaims all responsibility for the consequences of any third party acting or refraining to act in reliance on the Information.

- We have not independently verified the accuracy of information provided to us, and have not conducted any form of audit in respect of the Company. Accordingly, we express no opinion on the reliability, accuracy, or completeness of the information provided to us and upon which we have relied.

- The statements and opinions expressed herein have been made in good faith, and on the basis that all information relied upon is true and accurate in all material respects, and not misleading by reason of omission or otherwise.

- The statements and opinions expressed in this report are based on information available as at the date of the report.

- We reserve the right, but will be under no obligation, to review or amend our Report, if any additional information, which was in existence on the date of this report, was not brought to our attention, or subsequently comes to light.

- This report is issued pursuant to the terms and conditions set out in our engagement letter and the Terms of Business attached thereto.