

Perspectives on school funding and the cost of ‘a good kiwi education’

This is a summary of two independent reports prepared by Sapere Research Group as part of a range of exploratory work to scope a review of education funding systems for 0-18 year olds. The views expressed are that of the authors and not suggestive of Government policy direction or officials’ advice to Ministers.

The reports are focussed on the school sector and explore the cost of ‘a good kiwi education’, including for students with different profiles and/or on different pathways.

The qualitative report, *Perspectives on School Funding Model*, includes a review of relevant literature and funding approaches in other jurisdictions and the health sector. It reports the perspectives of 11 state and state integrated schools, from across a range of range of types, sizes, deciles and locations on the funding system.

Key themes in what the authors heard about schools’ experience with the current funding system were:

- Decile funding is useful, but there appears to be an increasing gap between decile ratings and the reality of individual students.
- Concerns about the level and nature of special education funding/support and the administrative burden and timeliness in accessing this support.
- Concerns about the adequacy of property funding, how the system responds to roll changes and perceived inequities associated with the age of buildings.
- The reliance on non-government sources of funding, with lower decile schools tending to have fewer avenues to raise money and increasing parental resistance to support schools through donations.

Within the collection of schools visited, the authors observed:

- While schools seek to be responsive to individual student needs, they do not generally think of costs at an individual student level.
- The principal’s ability to deal with financial management issues is critical, and potentially more challenging in primary schools which tend to have less administrative infrastructure.
- Capital and operating maintenance can take a great deal of principal time and effort.

The report *What is the cost of a good kiwi education?* explores a number of analytical techniques that have the potential to provide insights into the cost of a ‘good kiwi education’. These techniques explore the relationship between schools’ funding (public and total) and performance against specific metrics. The report reveals the challenges in objectively measuring this cost. Much more work is needed before this type of analysis would enable conclusive insights to be drawn.