



SPEECH TO LIBERTAD Y DESARROLLO, SANTIAGO, CHILE 14 June 2013

Tena koutou

Buenos dias a todos

Gracias por recibirme!

INTRODUCTION

It is a great pleasure to be here in your beautiful country. I am honoured to have been invited to attend this event, to share with you the key elements of our education system, and to learn how we might work more closely together for the betterment of both our countries.

Thank you for inviting me.

New Zealand - or Aotearoa, to give it its Maori name, meaning "the land of the long white cloud" - shares similar terrain and temperatures to you, has an indigenous people and settler history, has a strong commitment to democracy and equality, and high aspirations for all its people.

Ko Hikurangi taku manga - Hikurangi is my mountain
Ko Waiapu taku awa - Waiapu is my river
Ko Ngati Porou taku iwi - Ngati Porou is my tribe

It is customary in New Zealand to introduce ourselves in this way, as Maori, the first people of New Zealand. And it is becoming more and more common with each generation that is born. This is both because of the way our society has developed biculturally, and because the value of identity, language, and culture has been embedded in our education system.

I am Maori. I grew up in my mother's tribe. I have brought my daughters up in my mother's tribe. I - and they - have had a first class education in the public education system of my country.

CONTEXT

Our education system is world class. It is top performing for the majority of our children and young people. We are very proud of many of the features in our education system. And we are on a continuous journey of improvement. Not least to ensure that those who are doing well may do better, but also that we meet the challenge of ensuring that ALL our young people can be educationally successful.

We are a small country of just over 4 million people, and we are the most distant developed economy in the world. You are across the vast Pacific Ocean to our north, and Antarctica is to our south.

We must trade to grow our economy, and increase the standard of living for all our people. Like you, we are endowed with natural resources. And, like you, we must strike the balance between developing those resources and maintaining a clean, and beautiful environment. Where we strike that balance is a constant source of debate in our country.

But our greatest resource is our people. And the greatest potential of our people is to create, innovate, develop, produce, and market. And the most important investment we can make is in the education of our people, and in the system that delivers it.

We must make sure that every one of our citizens has the best opportunity possible to learn, achieve, secure qualifications, acquire skills, have pathways to a successful and productive life.

Education has the transformative power to both grow our economy and strengthen the cultural and social backbone of our society. As it does yours. So I am pleased to be here to share with you our experience - our successes, our challenges, and our opportunities.

SYSTEM DESCRIPTION

Our education system is 96 percent of schools publicly funded, and 4 percent private. And the families that send their children to these private schools also pay the taxes that support the public system.

We have a very diverse range of schooling options within the system, and significant parental choice. We have single sex schools, and co-educational schools; we have faith based and secular; we have total immersion English instruction and total immersion Maori instruction, and we have bilingual options. We have year 1-6, 1-8, 7-8, 7-10, 1-13, 9-13 schools. We have very small, rural and isolated and very large, urban and metropolitan.

Education is free and compulsory from age 6-16 years, but children typically attend from 5-18 years. Early childhood education is not compulsory and is heavily subsidised, with approximately 95 percent of children starting school having their parents reporting that they have participated in ECE.

Transitions between secondary and tertiary education, academic and vocational, have clear pathways launched earlier this year that value the choices equally between training for a trade and studying for university. The labour market demands a wide range of skills and we want to make sure that all our students have options and the prospects of employment, career pathways, and high standards of living.

KEYS TO OUR SUCCESS

Our education system has a number of keys to its success. They are:

The expectation that all children and young people will have access to high quality, free, public education, with a diversity of choice for parents

Self-managing schools governed by parents elected democratically every three years

A highly qualified, highly skilled, highly trusted profession of high quality teaching and education leadership with continuous professional learning and development

A bicultural and bilingual national curriculum, based on learning areas and competencies, with the programme of instruction chosen by the school

Public accountability documents - an annual school charter with targets, and an annual report - that set out the schools aspirations, performance, and explanations

Assessment processes that are based on an high trust model of teacher judgments and subject examinations

A national qualifications framework that anticipates that anyone can be educationally successful at any time, with flexibility for personalised learning

A national review and evaluation process based on high trust of teaching quality, self-review, and accountability to parents using a targeted and differentiated review cycle

The use of a best evidence synthesis that draws together national and international research and evidence to underpin practice and approach

The increasing use of data, its definition, collection, analysis, and application to inform professional practice, to inform parents, to inform the student, and to inform the Government

Clear academic and vocational pathways, with better transitions from senior secondary to tertiary education, training and employment, with Youth Guarantee products to fund choices

Better Public Service targets that set clear, ambitious, measurable participation and achievement outcomes at each level of the education system

OUR SUCCESSES

New Zealand's top students are top in the world. Three out of four students, on average, get the qualifications they need to go on and be successful. New Zealand ranks in the top of the OECD's Programme of International Student Achievement (PISA), and does well in other international benchmarks such as PIRLS and TIMMS.

In terms of public expenditure on education, NZ ranks second in the OECD, and is the only country in the OECD where all spending comes from central government. As a percentage of GDP it is also high at 7.2 per cent - the third highest in the OECD.

Independent, external reports, rate system elements such as those outlined previously very highly, and the system overall as world class and top performing.

OUR CHALLENGES

While we are top performing for most of our students, we are not for all. Too many of those who are not being well served are those who are Maori, Pasifika, from poorer homes, and/or have special education needs.

Excellence and Equity is our challenge.

THE ANSWERS

They are, in school, quality teaching and quality leadership. Out of school they are strong parental engagement, and holding high expectations of every one of our children and young people. While there are of course many other contributing factors, stripped down, pared back, stated unambiguously, they are these that I have outlined.

And in New Zealand we are working on them all.

I shall end where I began. Our people are our biggest natural resource. Education is the most powerful, most transformative, and therefore most critical contribution our government can make to the standard of living of our people, and the quality of life of our society. Education builds the nation. Teachers are our nation builders. So we all need great teachers!

Tena koutou katoa - gracias - thank you!