Curriculum Reform and Communication Divide: Parental Perspectives from Auckland

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Thesis Abstract

Aotearoa New Zealand is currently undergoing a significant curriculum reform (Te Mātaiaho) focused on strengthening knowledge progression and instructional uniformity through the structured "Understand, Know, Do" framework. While the macro-systemic reform aims to clarify national learning expectations, its ultimate efficacy depends heavily on the communication dynamics operating across the home-school interface. Utilising Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems theory and UNICEF's Social and Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) framework, this study examines how parents and caregivers in the superdiverse Auckland region navigate this rapidly shifting educational landscape.

The research employs a mixed methods design to investigate how informational asymmetries and systemic instability affect caregiver engagement with curriculum changes. Primary quantitative and qualitative data were gathered via a survey of 46 local caregivers, which was triangulated with a qualitative thematic analysis of public media articles from Radio New Zealand and digital discourse on Reddit up to March 2026.

The findings reveal a persistent communication divide between institutional policy directives and community comprehension. Although caregiver motivation to support student learning remains high, fragmented curriculum understanding; driven by technical jargon and rapid policy churn; combined with structural communication barriers, continues to limit opportunities for meaningful home-school collaboration.

The study argues that for educational reforms to achieve equitable outcomes, institutions must transition away from passive information delivery toward culturally responsive, relational, and multi-channelled communication strategies that are genuinely aligned with the diverse linguistic and structural realities of families.

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Glossary of Te Reo Māori Terms

Term	Definition
Aotearoa	The Māori name for New Zealand, meaning “the land of the long white cloud.”
Awhi Rito	The protective outer leaves of the harakeke (flax) plant. Represents parents, family, and community who surround and nurture the child.
Hihira Weteoro	Mandatory phonics and phonemic awareness checks used in Māori-medium education settings.
Iwi	A tribe or large kinship group.
Hapū	A sub-tribe or clan; the primary kinship group responsible for local governance and cultural identity.
Harakeke	New Zealand flax. Used as a cultural metaphor for human development, ecology, and intergenerational care.
Ka Hikitia	The Ministry of Education strategy that supports Māori educational success and equity.
Kanohi ki te kanohi	Face-to-face interaction; a cultural protocol emphasizing presence, trust, and direct dialogue.
Kaupapa Māori	A Māori-centred philosophy, framework, and set of principles guiding research and practice.
Kura	A school or learning institution.
Māori	The Indigenous people of Aotearoa New Zealand.
Pā Harakeke	An Indigenous ecosystem model based on the flax plant, centring whānau values, collective worldviews, and communal care.
Pāngarau	The Mathematics and Statistics learning area in Te Mātaiaho (New Zealand Curriculum).
Pasifika / Pacific Peoples	A term used in New Zealand for peoples who originate from or identify with the Pacific Islands.
Pākehā	New Zealanders of European descent.
Rito	The central inner shoot of the harakeke plant. Represents the child at the heart of the family and educational ecosystem.

Tāhūrangi	The Ministry of Education online curriculum and assessment portal/platform.
Tamariki	Children.
Te Mātaiaho	The refreshed New Zealand Curriculum (2024–2027), focusing on structured knowledge progression.
Te Reo Māori	The Māori language.
Te Reo Rangatira	The Māori language and literature curriculum for Māori-medium settings.
Te Tiriti o Waitangi	The Treaty of Waitangi (1840); the founding document establishing partnership, protection, and participation between the Crown and Māori.
Te Whāriki	New Zealand's national early childhood curriculum framework.
Vā	A Samoan and wider Pasifika concept referring to the relational space between people; nurturing the vā emphasizes respect and relational harmony.
Whānau	Extended family, whānau network, or wider community group.
Whanaungatanga	The practice of building and maintaining meaningful relationships, kinship, trust, and belonging.
Whakataukī	A traditional Māori proverb or saying.

(Education Review Office [ERO], 2023; Ministry of Education, 2022; New Zealand Council for Educational Research [NZCER], 2023; Te Tāhūrangi, 2024)

Attestation of Authorship

"I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor used artificial intelligence tools or generative artificial intelligence tools (unless it is clearly stated, and referenced, along with the purpose of use), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning."

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05 July 2026

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1. Introduction

This section provides the foundational context for the research, establishing the background of the study. It begins by outlining the current educational landscape in Aotearoa New Zealand and the changes being implemented during the 2025-2026 academic window.

1.1 Background and Context

Aotearoa New Zealand, is currently undertaking a major curriculum reform (Te Mātaiaho) aimed at strengthening knowledge progression, improving national consistency in teaching and assessment, and clarifying learning expectations (Ministry of Education, 2025). The shift from broad achievement objectives to the 'Understand, Know, Do' model (Ministry of Education, 2025) reflects the Ministry's intention to provide clearer expectations about the disciplinary knowledge and practices students are expected to develop. Auckland, as the country's most diverse and rapidly growing region, presents a particularly complex educational landscape where families navigate varied cultural expectations, communication practices, and levels of access to information (Fan & Chen, 2001; Goodall, 2021). The motivation for this research arises from observing how uneven parental knowledge shapes engagement in, expectations of, and support for their children's learning conditions that must be addressed for the curriculum reform to be meaningful, equitable, and responsive. (Education Review Office, 2023a; Spoonley, 2020). Consequently, this study investigates how critical policy shifts are communicated across the home-school interface within this rapidly evolving educational ecosystem.

1.2 Partnerships Between Schools, Families, and Communities

Bolstad et al., (2012) national research synthesis on future-oriented learning found that effective curriculum implementation in Aotearoa New Zealand depends on strong, reciprocal partnerships between schools, families, and communities. Within this context schools hold the professional responsibility for interpreting curriculum expectations, but parents, caregivers, community, and community groups contribute essential cultural knowledge, contextual insight, and ongoing support that shape how learning is experienced by children. As Bolstad et al., (2012) emphasised:

> "What is needed is, not more effort focused on the parts of this system, but strategies designed to put these ideas together: to join all this up in a way that is driven by a coherent set of shared ideas about the future of schooling and its purpose and role in building New Zealand's future." (p. 2)

This perspective aligns with contemporary educational research that conceptualises curriculum implementation not as a top-down delivery of content, but as a relational and collective process (Fullan, 2007a; Goodall, 2021a). The emphasis on relational practice and shared responsibility reflects a broader shift toward curriculum enactment.

In an educational landscape governed by highly structured mandates, the role of families shifts away from localised co-design and moves toward a model of synchronized support. For a learner's immediate environment to remain coherent, the school and the home cannot operate as isolated silos. Instead, institutional implementation requires a communication framework that treats parents not as passive recipients of policy updates, but as active, informed partners who possess the clarity required to reinforce new pedagogical benchmarks within the home.

1.3 Changes to the New Zealand Curriculum

The "2024-2027 Curriculum Refresh" reform in Aotearoa New Zealand, often referred to as Te Mātaiaho (Ministry of Education, 2024), is rolled out in a multi-year phased approach spanning from 2024 to 2027. This transition moves the system from broad achievement levels to more specific, year-by-year phases of learning.

The structural rollout of the national curriculum overhaul and its accompanying qualifications framework is partitioned into four distinct chronological phases. This aggressive timeline dictates the operational demands placed on school leadership and directly shapes the speed with which schools must translate and communicate deep pedagogical shifts to their parent communities.

1.3.1 Phase 1: Mandatory Enactment of Foundational Learning Areas (2024-2025)

The initial phase of the reform represents a rapid transition in both curricular content and pedagogical philosophy (see Table 1 for a detailed comparison of pedagogical shifts). In 2024, schools were tasked with embedding Aotearoa New Zealand's Histories (ANZH) within a refreshed Social Sciences framework, requiring schools to communicate a bicultural, localised narrative of history to whānau (see Table 2 for the phased roll-out schedule).

A major statutory pivot occurred in Term 1, 2025, when the Ministry mandated the immediate implementation of the refreshed English curriculum for Years 0-6 and the updated Mathematics and Statistics curriculum for Years 0-8 (Tāhūrangi, 2024) This phase marked the systemic institutionalization of cognitive-science approaches through two major structural mandates (Table 1):

- **Structured Literacy:** Schools were required to replace legacy "balanced literacy" practices (such as multi-cueing) with an evidence-based structured literacy instructional model in phonemic awareness, synthetic phonics, and decoding Years 1-2 (Table 1; Table 2).

- **Structured Mathematics:** Moving away from open-ended, inquiry the updated mathematics curriculum enforced explicit, teacher-directed instruction, rote skill mastery (such as the systematic memorization of multiplication tables and number facts), and a highly sequenced, year-by-year progression (Table 1; Table 2).

1.3.2 Phase 2: Structural Expansion & Mandatory Assessment (2026)

The 2026 academic year marks the vertical expansion of this knowledge-rich paradigm into secondary schooling, paired with a highly prescriptive data-tracking framework. From Term 1, 2026, the updated English curriculum became mandatory for Years 7-13, alongside the Mathematics and Statistics framework for Years 9-13 (Tāhūrangi, 2025; Table 2).

To monitor compliance and ensure the fidelity of the Phase 1 literacy and numeracy mandates, the Ministry introduced mandatory phonics checks (and Hihira Weteoro for Māori-medium settings) alongside compulsory twice-yearly standardised progress tracking for Years 3-8

(Ministry of Education, 2025; Table 1). This policy saw the deployment of the new Student Monitoring, Assessment and Reporting Tool (SMART), and Progressive Achievement Tests (PATs), while establishing a clear schedule to phase out older platforms such as e-asTTle by the end of the year (Table 1).

Table 1

Overview of Key Curriculum & Pedagogy Shifts

Core Structural and Pedagogical Changes in New Zealand Education		
Dimension	**Previous Framework (2007 NZC)**	**Updated Framework (Knowledge-Rich / Science of Learning)**
Core Curriculum Architecture	Outcomes-focused with flexible local curriculum design; broad level bands (Levels 1-8 across multiple year groups).	Knowledge-rich, year-by-year explicit sequence ("Understand, Know, Do" framework) outlining what to teach, when, and how.
Early Literacy (English / Te Reo)	Whole-language approach and balanced literacy, focusing on contextual cues and varied reading strategies.	Structured Literacy rooted in phonics, explicit decoding, phonemic awareness, vocabulary development, and mandatory phonics checks.
Mathematics & Statistics (Pāngarau)	Inquiry-based and flexible strategy approach; broad multi-year levels.	Explicit teaching based on cognitive load theory; emphasis on foundational number facts, structured arithmetic, and daily practice.
History & Social Sciences	General social science concepts; optional	Mandatory Aotearoa New Zealand's Histories (ANZH)

	incorporation of local/national history.	integrated across primary and lower secondary schooling.
Assessment & Progress Tracking	School-determined assessment tools and variable tracking intervals.	Mandatory standardised twice-yearly progress assessments (e.g., e-asTTle, PATs, or SMART) for Years 3-8, plus Year 1-2 Phonics Checks.
Senior Secondary Qualifications	National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) Levels 1, 2, and 3.	Mandatory NCEA Literacy & Numeracy Co-requisites (from 2024), moving toward the NZ Certificate of Education (NZCE, Year 12) and NZ Advanced Certificate of Education (NZACE, Year 13).

Note. Adapted from Ministry of Education (2022, 2024, 2025) policy documents and ERO (2023) evaluations. This table contrasts the foundational pedagogical shifts from the flexible, inquiry-based 2007 New Zealand Curriculum to the prescriptive, knowledge-rich model of the 2024-2027 Curriculum Refresh.

1.3.3 Phase 3: Systemic Convergence and Universal Implementation (2027)

By January 2027, the flexible transitional and trial periods permitted for non-core learning areas officially conclude. From Term 1, 2027, primary and intermediate settings (Years 0-8) must achieve full statutory compliance across Science, Social Sciences, Technology, the Arts, and Health and Physical Education (Table 2). Concurrently, junior secondary settings (Years 9-10) are required to universally enact all learning areas under the refreshed national curriculum framework, completing the macro-systemic realignment of compulsory schooling (Ministry of Education, 2025; New Zealand Principals' Federation, 2024; Table 2)

1.3.4 Phase 4: Senior Secondary Qualification Overhaul & NCEA Phasing (2028-2030)

The final phase represents a structural departure from previous assessment models, involving the systematic replacement of the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) with a streamlined, subject-based qualification framework aligned with the refreshed senior secondary curriculum (Table 1; Table 2):

2028: NCEA Level 1 is structurally decommissioned at Year 11 and replaced by the Foundational Skills Award, a qualification strictly focused on validating core literacy, numeracy, and baseline academic competencies.

2029: NCEA Level 2 is replaced at Year 12 by the New Zealand Certificate of Education (NZCE), which requires students to study a minimum of five subjects on a transparent six-point grading scale (A+ to E).

2030: The transition concludes with NCEA Level 3 being replaced at Year 13 by the New Zealand Advanced Certificate of Education (NZACE), establishing a highly rigorous, internationally comparable matrix for tertiary and vocational entry.(Tāhūrangi, 2024)

Table 2

Mandatory Implementation Timeline by Learning Area

Phased Roll-out Schedule for Schools (2024-2030)		
Implementation Year	**Primary & Intermediate (Years 0-8)**	**Secondary (Years 9-13)**
2025	Mandatory implementation of updated English (Years 0-6), Mathematics & Statistics (Years 0-8), Te Reo Rangatira (Year 0-6), and Pāngarau (Years 0-8).	Trialling refreshed content; mandatory NCEA Literacy & Numeracy co-requisite requirements active.

2026	Mandatory Phonics Checks (Years 1-2) and twice-yearly standardised assessments (Years 3-8). Updated English for Years 7-8.	Mandatory teaching of updated English and Mathematics & Statistics for Years 9-10 (giving secondary lead-in time for NCEA alignment).
2027	Mandatory implementation of Science and Social Sciences (including Aotearoa NZ Histories).	Mandatory implementation of all updated learning areas across Years 9-10.
2028	Preparation for remaining learning areas.	Full rollout of refreshed curriculum across Year 11; introduction of new foundational literacy/numeracy qualification.
2029	Mandatory implementation across all remaining primary areas (The Arts, Technology, Health & Physical Education, Learning Languages).	Rollout of refreshed curriculum across Year 12 alongside the new NZCE qualification.
2030	Full consolidation of refreshed curriculum (Years 0-8).	Full rollout of refreshed curriculum across Year 13 alongside the new NZACE qualification.

Note. Source: Ministry of Education policy directives (2024-2026). The phased roll-out schedule outlines mandatory statutory compliance dates across primary (Years 0-8) and secondary (Years 9-13) sectors.

The transition from a flexible, outcomes-based educational model to a highly prescriptive, year-by-year structured approach introduces significant complexity for the home-school relationship, potentially creating a gap between institutional practice and parental understanding (Education Review Office, 2023). It highlights an urgent need for clear, transparent communication and genuine partnership, recognising that curriculum reform cannot succeed unless parents and

caregivers can navigate these technical shifts and feel empowered to support their children's learning (Mapp & Bergman, 2021)

1.3.5 Structured Literacy and Structured Mathematics: Relational Friction Points

The introduction of Structured Literacy and Structured Mathematics within the current curriculum paradigm reflects an alignment with global cognitive science approaches of learning (Bolstad et al., 2012). In practice, this shift requires students to master foundational academic codes sequentially.

Within the English learning area, structured literacy prioritizes systematic phonics, and explicit text structures (Ministry of Education, 2026) marking a significant departure from balanced-literacy frameworks. Consequently, a critical friction point emerges at the home-school interface: when home-reading practices still rely on historical home strategies (e.g., multi-cueing or guessing from context) that directly contradict classroom approaches, children experience cognitive confusion, while parents experience role ambiguity.

A parallel pedagogical shift in structured mathematics replaces student-led inquiry with an explicit instruction in foundational mechanics and procedural fluency. (Ministry of Education, 2025; (National Mathematics Advisory Panel, 2008).

If parents attempt to support their children using the flexible, strategy-heavy methods of the past twenty years, their input directly clashes with the explicit, sequential rules being taught today, resulting in student misconceptions and reduced caregiver confidence (Hattie & Yates, 2014).

Both structured approaches depend on highly precise terminology (e.g., phonemic blending, place-value partitioning, multiplicative reasoning) that can alienate families, particularly in superdiverse contexts like Auckland where linguistic diversity heavily mediates parental sense-making (UNICEF, 2019; Averill et al., 2016) Without proactive, double-coded communication that translates specialized terms into culturally accessible dialogue, rapid policy shifts risk fracturing home-school relational trust.

1.3.6 The 2024 Histories Pivot as a Precursor to Communication Friction

To fully understand the communication, divide surrounding structured literacy and mathematics, it is necessary to contextualize these changes within broader instability of curriculum refresh. The phased rollout of Aotearoa New Zealand's Histories (ANZH) and Social Sciences framework throughout 2023 and 2024 served as an early indicator of institutional policy shifts (Ministry of Education, 2024).

The rapid shift from highly flexible, localised iteration of the "Understand, Know, Do" (UKD) model toward a centralized, prescriptive "knowledge-rich" framework forced school leaders to repeatedly alter institutional messaging within a twenty four month period (New Zealand Principals' Federation, 2024; Table 3).

As detailed in Table 3, the initial 2023 framework allowed schools significant local flexibility to co-design curricula with hapū and iwi, focusing on decentralised, student-led inquiry. However, subsequent policy adjustments rapidly centralized this approach, mandating specific historical knowledge blocks, explicit teaching, and standardised timelines across every year level.

This structural instability highlights the core problem of this thesis; policy transitions stall not due to pedagogical intent, but due to systemic communication breakdowns across ecological tiers.

Table 3

Structural Comparison of Curriculum Frameworks Implementation

Feature	Original UKD Framework (2023 Implementation)	Refreshed Knowledge-Rich Framework (Current Model)
Content Structure	Organised around broad, locally adaptable big ideas (Understand), national contexts (Know), and inquiry practices (Do).	Structured around explicit, year-by-year knowledge blocks with specific historical events and dates mandated.

Pedagogical Focus	Heavy emphasis on local, school-designed curriculum and student-led inquiry learning.	Focus on explicit, systematic teaching of foundational historical knowledge and global contexts.
Local vs. National Balance	Highly decentralised; prioritised local hapū, iwi, and community histories.	Centralised; balances local narratives with a standardised national and global historical timeline.

Note. Adapted from Ministry of Education (2023, 2024) curriculum frameworks and New Zealand Principals' Federation (2024) policy commentary. This table compares the structural and pedagogical shifts within Aotearoa New Zealand's Histories (ANZH), illustrating the transition from the decentralised 2023 Understand, Know, Do (UKD) model to the centralised Knowledge-Rich framework.

In 2024, schools were communicating messages focused on localised identity, biculturalism, and flexible student inquiry. By 2025, the institutional script shifted entirely to enforce structured phonics, numerical recall and standardised knowledge milestones. The rapid change in policy objectives generated significant systemic volatility, leaving schools insufficient lead time to stabilise internal procedures before attempting to re-educate the parent communities (Ministry of Education, 2025).

Consequently, the structural comparison in Table 3 is not merely background context for a single subject area; it serves as empirical evidence of the systemic instability that directly effects parental confusion and home-school mesosystem before the literacy and mathematics mandates were even deployed.

1.4 The Curriculum Refresh and the Centrality of Communication

The systemic transition toward a knowledge-rich educational paradigm within the 2024-2027 Curriculum Refresh represents more than a structural realignment of classroom pedagogy; it fundamentally alters the foundational vocabulary of the home-school partnership (Education

Review Office, 2023; Ministry of Education, 2022). Consequently, this study positions communication not as a secondary administrative task, but as the central, deterministic mechanism that dictates the operational success of curriculum implementation (Goodall, 2021; Hill & Tyson, 2009).

When the ministry's policy directives mandate rapid, technical shifts in foundational learning; such as explicit instruction frameworks and structured literacy metrics; the home-school partnership is placed under acute strain (Baird et al., 2023; Ministry of Education, 2023; Tunmer & Chapman, 2015).

In the absence of strategic, multi-channelled, and culturally responsive communication, technical changes to a curriculum inevitably generate conceptual opacity (Emerson et al., 2012; McLean et al., 2020; Summerville et al., 2024). Within Auckland's distinct, superdiverse landscape, this opacity risks transforming public policy into a mechanism of technical exclusion, disproportionately marginalising communities navigating linguistic variations or digital divides (Education Review Office, 2023; May, 2019; Spoonley, 2020). Centring communication within this research framework acknowledges that the ultimate benchmark of educational reform is not merely its statutory enactment, but the clarity and equity with which it is mediated across a learner's entire social ecology (Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Epstein, 2011; Goodall, 2018).

In diverse urban contexts like Auckland, the ultimate efficacy of these reforms depends heavily on culturally integrated communication strategies. Rather than relying on uniform institutional notices, schools must deploy double-coded communication. In practice, this requires the design of messaging that simultaneously satisfies the rigid, technical accountabilities of the Ministry of Education while being actively tailored, framed, and translated to align with the cultural protocols and linguistic preferences of local families. This dual-layered approach is essential to bypass institutional or digital barriers, ensuring equitable participation for historically underserved Māori, Pasifika, and migrant communities (Berryman & Eley, 2017; OECD, 2020b; Vaioleti, 2006)

1.5 Purpose of the Study

Within the context of the 2024-2027 Curriculum Refresh in Aotearoa New Zealand, this research examines how parents and caregivers as the "first and most enduring teachers" (Ministry of Education, 2020) in a child's life understand a rapidly shifting educational landscape (Epstein, 2011; Ministry of Education, 2023). By investigating parental sense-making (Posey-Maddox et al., 2016; Spillane et al., 2002) of the "Curriculum Refresh,"(Ministry of Education, 2025) this study seeks to uncover the meaningful ownership, the mix of expectations, hopes, and worries that arise when national policy is put into practice in local schools

A central factor in this process is the communication that comes from the Ministry of Education and from schools. In a digital-first era, where instructional updates are frequently mediated through complex portals, the quality of this dialogue is a primary determinant of whether families engage as empowered partners in reciprocal learning or act as passive recipients of information (Mapp & Bergman, 2021).

The geographic focus on Auckland is analytically significant due to the city's status as a highly populated, superdiverse urban centre. The Education Review Office, (2023) has identified that communicating the complex elements of the national curriculum reform to parents in the Auckland region is uniquely challenging due to the immense diversity of its population. Currently, a significant gap exists between the highly prescriptive, structured nature of the national rollout and the varied cultural worldviews, linguistic backgrounds, and educational expectations of Auckland's communities (Spoonley, 2020). If the implementation relies solely on rigid, institutional jargon, it risks creating systemic barriers to inclusion for Māori, Pasifika, Asian, and migrant families. This thesis aims to address this issue by investigating how these diverse communities interpret and understand the ongoing curriculum shifts. By analysing the alignment between school communication practices and parental aspirations, this study seeks to provide insights that can inform the development of more culturally appropriate communication strategies, ultimately supporting a more equitable implementation of the new curriculum.

To explore these relational dynamics comprehensively, this thesis is structured into five subsequent chapters:

Chapter 2: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework provide a critical synthesis of curriculum enactment, home-school partnerships, and educational equity during periods of rapid systemic change. Utilizing Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Theory alongside UNICEF's Social and Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) framework, it establishes the theoretical architecture for evaluating how macro-systemic policy updates impact the home-school mesosystem.

Chapter 3: Methodology outlines the mixed-methods research design used in this study, detailing the dual digital and physical recruitment strategies used to gather survey data from 46 Auckland parents alongside public media discourse.

Chapter 4: Findings present the quantitative and qualitative data analysis, using thematic mapping to highlight the explicit technical gap experienced by families navigating the structured curriculum shifts.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Recommendations contextualizes these findings within the wider international movement toward the science of learning, evaluating how institutional messaging directly impacts relational trust and parental agency before outlining actionable, culturally responsive communication strategies for diverse urban schools and highlighting pathways for future research.

Chapter 6: Conclusion synthesizes the overall study by directly addressing the core research questions, summarizing the thesis's empirical contributions to educational policy rollout and implementation.

2. Literature Review

This section critically examines the existing literature to establish a foundation for the study. It captures key discoveries around curriculum implementation, role of caregivers in educational excellence and how caregivers navigate shifting pedagogies. Because effective communication is the vital link that enables caregivers to understand and engage with new educational frameworks.

2.1 Introduction

Curriculum reform does not occur in isolation; it is shaped by the research, theories, and global practices that inform how learning is understood and how educational change is enacted. Building on the context established in Chapter 1, this chapter reviews the literature relevant to understanding how parents make sense of curriculum change in Aotearoa New Zealand. It is organised into several interrelated areas. First, it examines international and national perspectives on curriculum implementation, highlighting global principles of coherence, clarity, and community partnership, and it situates the New Zealand Curriculum Refresh within these wider trends. Second, it explores research on home-school partnerships, communication practices, and parental engagement, emphasising the central role of clear, culturally responsive communication in linking policy to practice. Third, it considers the role of community in multicultural educational contexts, paying particular attention to how schools, families, and communities interact in superdiverse settings such as Auckland. Fourth, it examines issues of diversity and equity, focusing on how ethnicity, language, migration histories, and socioeconomic factors shape parental access to information and curriculum understanding. Finally, the chapter identifies the research gap and outlines the conceptual framework guiding this study, drawing on Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Theory (BEST) (Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) and UNICEF's Social Behavioural Change Communication (SBCC) (UNICEF, 2020) model to explain how ecological and behavioural factors influence parental sense-making during periods of curriculum reform.

2.2 Curriculum Implementation: International and National Perspectives

For many families, particularly in diverse urban regions such as Auckland, curriculum shifts can feel abstract or inaccessible. Research indicates that uneven parental understanding of curriculum content, learning expectations, and pedagogical approaches directly limits the effectiveness of home-based academic support (Fan & Chen, 2001; Hill & Tyson, 2009). This knowledge gap often persists because school communications are frequently technical, monolingual, or digitally dependent, creating disparate barriers for families from diverse linguistic or socioeconomic backgrounds (Education Review Office, 2023; OECD, 2021).

Within the New Zealand context, these socioeconomic disparities are explicitly tracked by the Equity Index the system that replaced the school decile framework in 2023 to measure the statistical socio-educational hurdles facing different student communities (Ministry of Education, 2021). Crucially, while a school's Equity Index rating dictates its state resourcing, funding alone cannot replace the social infrastructure of learning; parental engagement remains one of the strongest overall predictors of student success regardless of a school's demographic profile (Jeynes, 2012; Redding, 2000). When schools actively overcome these structural hurdles by implementing relational, culturally responsive communication, students experience greater continuity, stronger motivation, and deeper engagement (Berryman & Eley, 2017; Bishop et al., 2014).

Moving beyond passive broadcasting toward active parental empowerment requires a structural shift in school communication (Epstein, 2011; Mutch & Collins, 2012). To translate engagement into improved student outcomes, schools require what Mapp and Kuttner (2013) conceptualize as a Dual Capacity-Building Framework, where staff and families are mutually supported to understand new curriculum structures. Without intentional, plain-language, and multimodal communication strategies, transition toward a knowledge-rich curriculum risks producing a participation-poor reality, where the protective benefits of informed parental support remain concentrated among privileged demographics (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013; OECD, 2021).

To understand how these dynamics unfold in Aotearoa New Zealand, it is useful to situate current national reforms within broader international implementation research.

2.2.1 International Perspectives on Curriculum Implementation

International research consistently shows that curriculum implementation is not simply the delivery of new content but a complex social, relational, and community embedded process (Aoki, 1986; Fullan, 2007; Priestley et al., 2015). Across diverse education systems, successful implementation depends on clear communication, teacher capability, community partnership, and alignment between policy intentions and classroom realities (OECD, 2020).

High-performing and equity-focused systems prioritize these relational mechanisms through distinct structural strategies:

- **Finland:** Positions curriculum implementation as a collaborative process grounded in institutional trust, teacher professionalism, and strong family partnerships. Schools adapt national goals to local contexts, treating home-school dialogue as essential for pedagogical coherence (Sahlberg, 2011; Vitikka et al., 2012).
- **Ontario (Canada):** Embeds equity, Indigenous knowledge, and family partnerships within its curriculum reforms, recognizing that caregivers must understand the purpose and structure of curriculum change to effectively scaffold learning at home (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2014).
- **Singapore:** Supports implementation through structured communication systems, parent education initiatives, and clear institutional guidance that helps families navigate major pedagogical shifts (Tan, 2018).

Across these jurisdictions, three overarching imperatives emerge: (1) curriculum change requires systemic coherence and clarity; (2) implementation fidelity is strengthened through community and family partnership; and (3) communication functions as the vital mechanism linking macro-level policy to micro-level home practice.

2.2.2 Curriculum Reform in Aotearoa New Zealand

A significant body of New Zealand research highlights that curriculum reform often unfolds within conditions of instability and political churn. Thrupp, (2017) argued that schools in Aotearoa operate under persistent policy churn, where rapid, overlapping reforms create turbulence that undermines coherence and teacher capacity.

This policy implementation speed is vividly demonstrated in the contemporary New Zealand curriculum overhaul a 'once-in-a-generation' reform that has rapidly evolved from its initial bicultural foundation into a highly prescriptive, knowledge-rich mandate (Hipkins, 2024; Ministry of Education, 2024). While early iterations of Te Mātaiaho emphasised Te Tiriti o Waitangi principles and Kaupapa Māori values as foundational anchors, subsequent policy updates under the current administration pivoted toward an essentialist model (Ministry of Education, 2025; Stanford, 2025). This framework deprioritises progressive, discovery-based teaching methods in favour of instructional uniformity, rote skill mastery, and explicit, teacher-directed pedagogy focused on core academic benchmarks.

Similarly, Wylie's, (2021) longitudinal New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER) national surveys show that teachers experience chronic workload pressure, insufficient time to learn new initiatives, and declining trust in system-level decision-making . Scholars in inclusive education like (Ball et al., 2012; Bourke & Mentis, 2014; Slee, 2011) caution that top-down policy enactment places severe strain on school infrastructure, while, Fullan, (2007) notes that accelerated change often generates operational confusion that undermines the collaborative trust required for equitable implementation.

Conversely, proponents of structured curriculum reform and knowledge-rich models offer a critical counter-perspective on implementation pace, arguing that rapid nationwide standardization is an essential engine of educational equity (Hirsch, 2016; Young, 2013). From this viewpoint, slow or highly decentralized rollouts perpetuate systemic inequity: well-resourced schools adapt quickly, while disadvantaged schools suffer from prolonged implementation lag, widening achievement gaps (Pritchett, 2013; World Bank, 2018). Furthermore, implementation literature indicates that drawn-out transition periods risk "lethal mutations" of core principles,

where evidence-based pedagogical mechanics are diluted before achieving fidelity across classrooms (Fullan & Quinn, 2016; Steiner, 2017).

However, sector feedback in Aotearoa reveals that compressed timelines can inadvertently compromise the very communication channels needed to engage families; Early in the rollout, Whangārei Principals' Association, (2024) cautioned that the speed of the curriculum changes was overwhelming schools administrative capacity. These concerns were validated empirically by New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER, 2025) primary school survey data, which revealed that 71% of principals felt the rollout pace was inappropriate, with nearly half (48%) reporting that the reforms demanded total structural overhauls to their mathematics and literacy programs without adequate lead-in support. Rather than opposing the core pedagogical shifts, peak bodies have repeatedly highlighted that compressed 12-to-18-month deadlines force leadership into administrative triage, prioritizing compliance over the deep professional development and community engagement required to translate changes for parents.

This transition is further compounded in secondary education, where the structural transformation of NCEA (phasing in new awards and returning to a traditional A-E grading scale) replaces familiar assessment metrics. Within this evolving landscape, clear institutional communication is paramount. As the OECD (2017, p. 3) emphasizes, 'clear communication with parents is essential for ensuring coherence between curriculum intentions and learning at home.' When this coherence breaks down, the structural rift between classroom instruction and home support widens a danger particularly acute in Auckland due to its extreme demographic and linguistic superdiversity (Spoonley, 2020).

2.2.3 Global Perspectives on Curriculum Implementation and Family Support

This section looks at the global perspectives on curriculum communication, and family support in its implementation. Drawing on frameworks established by the United Nations through the educational and child focussed mandates of UNESCO and UNICEF.

2.2.3.1 UNICEF and SDG4: Learning as a Collective Responsibility:

UNICEF's global education work emphasises that curriculum reform must be understood within a broader ecosystem of relationships between schools, families, and communities. Sustainable Development Goal 4 (UNICEF, 2019) identifies inclusive, equitable, and quality education as a shared societal responsibility. Families are recognised as essential partners in supporting learning, particularly during periods of curriculum change. UNICEF (2019) has highlighted that parents' understanding of curriculum expectations directly influences children's confidence, engagement, and achievement. Crucially, UNICEF's (2017) Social and Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) framework posits that fostering parental ownership during systemic reform requires moving past traditional, passive "information delivery" paradigms. To translate technical pedagogical concepts into actionable home support, institutions must deploy strategic, multi-channelled communication designed to mitigate systemic uncertainty, align role expectations, and foster supportive behavioural adoption within the home environment (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2011; Michie et al., 2014; UNICEF, 2017). This perspective reinforces the importance of clear, accessible communication between schools and families during the 2024-2027 Curriculum Refresh.

2.2.3.2 UNESCO: Curriculum as a Societal and Cultural Process

UNESCO's Global Education Monitoring Report (2021) described a curriculum as a cultural and societal process rather than a purely technical document. From this perspective, effective curriculum implementation requires alignment between national goals, local contexts, and community values. The GEM Report emphasised that culturally grounded curricula those that reflect learners' identities, languages, and histories are more likely to support engagement and equity. Communication is identified as a key mechanism for enabling families to understand curriculum expectations and participate meaningfully in their children's learning. This framing aligns closely with the aims of the New Zealand Curriculum Refresh, which seeks to strengthen cultural responsiveness, local curriculum design, and partnerships with whānau and communities.

2.2.3.3 UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education

Report from United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education, (2022) emphasised that education systems must be co-constructed with families and communities, recognising them as active participants in shaping learning environments rather than passive recipients of policy. The Rapporteur (2021) highlighted that curriculum relevance, cultural alignment, and equitable access to information are essential conditions for realising children's educational rights. These principles are particularly salient in diverse urban contexts such as Auckland, where linguistic, cultural, and socioeconomic factors influence how families access, interpret, and act on curriculum information (Education Review Office, 2023, Spoonley, 2020). Ensuring that institutional communication is clear, culturally grounded, and accessible is therefore essential for fulfilling educational commitments and advancing equity across Aotearoa New Zealand.

Together, these global frameworks reinforce that curriculum reform is relational and community-centred, aligning closely with the aims of the New Zealand's Curriculum Refresh.

2.3 Home-School Partnerships, Communication Practices, and Parental Engagement

The role of effective communication in cultivating successful home-school partnerships cannot be overemphasised. Rather than being determined by the sheer volume of information a school broadcasts, meaningful parental engagement depends heavily on the relational quality of the interactions between educators and families (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Hill & Tyson, 2009; Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). This interactive process is fundamentally an act of sense-making. When a school issues information regarding curriculum changes, parents do not passively absorb it; instead, they actively interpret the data through the lens of their own cultural, linguistic, and experiential backgrounds (Posey-Maddox et al., 2016; Spillane et al., 2002). Consequently, when communication is clear, reciprocal, and culturally grounded, it builds the relational trust necessary to transform standard institutional messaging into active parental agency, allowing families to confidently understand school goals and reinforce learning at home (Hill & Tyson, 2009).

In Aotearoa New Zealand, this relational dimension is not merely a mechanism for managing urban diversity, but a structural obligation anchored in the country's bicultural foundations. Under Te Tiriti o Waitangi, educational institutions are mandated to uphold partnerships that respect indigenous Māori cultural protocols, a framework that has fundamentally shaped the domestic approach to home-school relationships (Berryman & Eley, 2017). Consequently, within superdiverse urban settings like Auckland, this bicultural baseline must expand to encompass complex migration histories and linguistic groups, meaning that communication must extend beyond one-way notifications to become a dialogic, trust-building practice (Education Review Office, 2023). Meaning in this context is negotiated through active participation and reification within relationships of mutual engagement (Wenger, 1998). When schools communicate curriculum changes in ways that explicitly respect both indigenous obligations and diverse community aspirations, they strengthen the ecological mesosystem the critical developmental bridge and alignment between home and school environments (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006).

Conversely, critical scholars caution that framing home-school partnerships purely around relational alignment risks masking underlying power asymmetries between schools and diverse families (Lareau, 2011; Nakagawa, 2000). Critics point out that "partnership" discourses often operate as normative, institutional expectations where schools define acceptable forms of engagement, inadvertently penalizing parents whose cultural or socioeconomic practices do not fit institutional norms (Baquedano-López et al., 2013; Vincent, 2010). Furthermore, placing heavy responsibility on home-school alignment can obscure structural inequalities such as resourcing constraints or systemic bias by shifting the burden of educational success onto domestic environments and parental compliance (Fine, 1993; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011).

Taken together, home-school partnerships cannot be considered peripheral to curriculum reform but are central to how families interpret, engage with, and support educational change (Bishop & Berryman, 2006; Education Review Office, 2023; Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). Communication practices that prioritise clarity, reciprocity, and cultural responsiveness are therefore critical for equitable parental engagement during the 2024-2027 Curriculum Refresh (Education Review Office, 2023).

2.4 The Role of Community in Multicultural Educational Contexts

"Schools, families, and communities share a responsibility for the learning and development of children" (Epstein, 2011, p. 4). This theory further highlights the centrality of community in shaping how families understand and engage with schooling. In multicultural settings such as Families in Auckland are not passive users of school information but active collaborators, co-educators and custodians of cultural knowledge that shapes children's identities and learning experiences (Bishop & Berryman, 2006; Epstein, 2011; Macfarlane et al., 2014). This relational orientation is consistent with the obligations under Te Tiriti o Waitangi for schools to support Māori aspirations for language, identity and self-determination and at the same time to cater for the needs of the diverse cultural communities that make up contemporary Aotearoa New Zealand (Macfarlane et al., 2014; Ministry of Education, 2018). As Bishop and Berryman (2006) emphasise, effective educational relationships are those "where power is shared, culture counts, and learning is interactive, dialogic, and spiralling," (p. 259) highlighting that equitable engagement depends on communication practices grounded in reciprocity, respect, and cultural responsiveness.

Across many cultural groups, including Māori, Pasifika, Chinese, South Asian, Middle Eastern, African, and Latin American communities, learning is understood not as an individualistic pursuit, but as a collective endeavour supported by extended family and community networks. Within the context of Aotearoa New Zealand, this collectivistic dynamic aligns closely with the indigenous concept of whānaungatanga, which prioritises kinship, shared responsibilities, and a sense of belonging. To illustrate how this principle operates in practice, Macfarlane et al. (2007) drew on longitudinal educational field research to define the ideal communal ecosystem:

> "Community is a safe and friendly environment where people live in healthy relationships based on caring and support in a family atmosphere; a place where everyone knows and looks out for each other and their surroundings in an atmosphere of bonding of everything and everyone." (p. 68)

When schools design curriculum communication that ignores this communal infrastructure, they risk alienating the very networks that sustain student learning, a vulnerability noted by ERO

(2023) evaluations showing that unmediated, purely individualistic reporting formats significantly reduce caregiver engagement across collectivist community groups.

For Pasifika communities, home-school dynamics are explicitly governed by core cultural values such as vā (the nurturing of relational space), respect, service, and family cohesion (Ministry of Education, 2018). Similarly, within East Asian and Chinese paradigms, educational engagement is shaped by a deep sense of intergenerational responsibility, academic diligence, and structured respect for institutional authority. Rather than viewing language and behaviour as neutral tools, these traditions treat learning as an explicitly moral and relational practice dictated by socially accepted modes of communication, thinking, and acting (Guo, 2012; Li, 2010a).

While these collectivist values are broadly shared across Asian communities, research cautions against a pan-ethnic flattening of diverse Asian identities, which frequently erases the distinct experiences of South Asian populations (Mukherjee, 2022). This distinction is analytically vital within the Auckland context, where South Asian communities including Indian, Pakistani, and Sri Lankan families constitute a massive and rapidly growing proportion of the urban demographic. These families often bring highly distinct migration histories, specific linguistic requirements, and community-based educational practices that differ substantially from East Asian models. Failing to account for these distinct cultural frameworks in school communications risks further marginalizing South Asian communities by reducing their diverse aspirations to a single, monolithic narrative (Mukherjee, 2022).

These diverse cultural orientations shape expectations of communication. Māori and Pasifika whānau often favour kanohi-ki-te-kanohi (face to face) interactions (Luafutu-Simpson, 2011), while Chinese and South Asian parents may value clarity, structure, and respect for teacher authority but face linguistic or conceptual barriers when communication is highly technical or monolingual (Li, 2010). For migrant and refugee communities, English-only communication, digital-first platforms, or unfamiliar curriculum terminology can create additional challenges. This is consistent with evidence that many Asian immigrant families are less likely to speak English at home and that limited English proficiency creates multiple educational barriers (S. Tan & Haque, 2024).

However, educational administration and governance literature highlights the operational boundaries and potential friction of deep, decentralized community co-design during periods of systemic reform (Desimone, 2002; Supovitz, 2006). Scholars note that expecting individual schools within superdiverse urban centres to establish highly localised, multi-directional consultation systems creates severe resource strain, operational inefficiencies, and quality variances across school zones (OECD, 2020). Furthermore, research on parental role construction indicates that inviting open co-design does not uniformly align with all cultural paradigms; many migrant communities particularly from East and South Asian contexts demonstrate a strong preference for clear, direct, and authoritative institutional guidance, perceiving invitations to negotiate curriculum decisions as a failure of professional institutional authority (Ho, 2006; Pomerantz et al., 2007). From a system-wide equity perspective, clear, structured communication therefore serves a vital structural function: rather than relying on ambiguous collaborative negotiations, accessible and transparent messaging protects finite school leadership capacity while ensuring that all communities receive consistent, high-quality curriculum guidance regardless of localised resourcing constraints (OECD, 2020; Supovitz, 2006).

Across these bodies of literature, a consistent theme emerges, curriculum reform succeeds only when communication is clear, culturally responsive, and relationally grounded. Whether viewed through global frameworks (UNICEF, UNESCO), national policy shifts, or the lived realities of diverse communities, parental understanding is shaped by the accessibility of information and the quality of school-family relationships. This synthesis highlights institutional communication as the vital mechanism linking policy intent to domestic practice. Given the extreme demographic and linguistic diversity across Aotearoa New Zealand, effective communication cannot rely on a standardised, one-size-fits-all model; rather, achieving equitable curriculum implementation requires a multimodal, multilingual, and relationally embedded strategy (Education Review Office, 2023; Wylie, 2021).

These diverse cultural orientations demonstrate that communication cannot be one-size-fits-all; it must be relational, multilingual, and culturally grounded to support equitable curriculum implementation.

2.4.1 The Relational Context of Curriculum Implementation

This relational framing becomes critical during periods of reform. The Ministry's shift from familiar, holistic terminology toward more technical frameworks such as Structured Literacy, Structured Maths, and the highly specific assessment benchmarks of the new Phases and Progressions model effectively alters the communicative code of schooling (Chamberlain et al., 2021). As ERO's (2023) evaluations on reporting clarity demonstrate, when schools adopt technical metrics without deliberate explanations for caregivers, over 60% of families from non-dominant backgrounds report feeling alienated from their child's learning progress, transforming potential partners into passive observers (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990).

The necessity of keeping parents explicitly informed during a curriculum rollout is underscored by empirical evidence linking specific types of home-based support to student outcomes. When evaluating which parental behaviours yield the highest academic returns, Hill and Tyson (2009) established that:

"Parental involvement that was focused on academic socialization; that is, communicating expectations for education, fostering academic aspirations, discussing learning strategies, and planning for future educational goals had the strongest positive relation with achievement." (p. 758)

Thus, as Mutch and Collins (2012) argue, communicating the complex goals of the 2024-2027 curriculum reform is not an administrative checkbox; it is the fundamental mechanism that equips families with the cognitive clarity needed to enact academic socialization at home.

Drawing on Bourdieu's (1977) theory of practice, research indicates that when schooling relies on specialised or institutionally privileged language, families with less cultural capital face heightened barriers to participation. Cultural capital, in this educational context, refers to the inherited social assets, institutional familiarity, and linguistic fluency that allow socioeconomically privileged parents to seamlessly decode school expectations. Bourdieu famously noted that "every established order tends to produce the naturalization of its own arbitrariness," (p. 164) suggesting that institutional codes often privilege those who already understand the logic. In practice, as Delpit (1995) and Lareau (2011) caution, unless the rules of

this 'culture of power' are explicitly demystified through accessible messaging, institutional jargon operates as an implicit gatekeeping mechanism that systematically privileges resource-rich families.

Conversely, scholars in cognitive science and curriculum design argue that explicit, highly structured frameworks serve as powerful tools for educational equity, rather than inherent barriers to participation (Castles et al., 2018; Sweller, 2011; Young, 2013). From this perspective, moving away from holistic or implicit educational models reduces reliance on home-based academic priming, thereby levelling the playing field for families who lack inherited institutional familiarity (Delpit, 1995; Hirsch, 2016). Proponents contend that clear, standardised benchmarks demystify school expectations by providing unambiguous targets, ensuring that essential cognitive skills such as foundational literacy and mathematics are explicitly taught in the classroom rather than implicitly expected to be fostered at home (Kirschner et al., 2006; Young, 2013). When accompanied by transparent school communication, this technical specificity ceases to be an exclusionary code and instead functions, as Young (2013) asserts, as a democratic mechanism that makes learning expectations visible and attainable for all communities.

This relational dimension is profoundly explained by the traditional Māori conceptual framework of the harakeke (flax) plant. Within Māori knowledge traditions, the harakeke serves as a structural metaphor for human development and communal interdependence, a philosophy encapsulated in the foundational whakataukī (proverb) (Tāhūrangi, 2025),

Unuhia a te rito o te harakeke, kei whea te kōmako e kō? Ki mai ki ahau, he aha te mea nui o te ao? Māku e kī atu: He tangata, he tangata, he tangata. (If you remove the heart of the flax plant, the bellbird has nowhere to rest or to sing. If you ask me what the most important thing in this world is, I will answer: It is people, it is people, it is people.)

The harakeke metaphor serves as a reminder that children flourish only within strong, nurturing ecosystems. Contemporary research on the social brain reinforces this, showing that emotional security and relational coherence are prerequisites for deep cognitive processing (Hood, 2020; Immordino-Yang, 2019). As Bryk and Schneider (2002) confirmed across longitudinal school reform data, structured curriculum design is only effective when embedded within high-trust

relationships; without this relational coherence, institutional changes increase cognitive load and undermine student engagement.

When schools communicate curriculum goals in ways that respect community aspirations, they reinforce the critical dynamics of the mesosystem structuring a powerful alignment between home and school that provides a stable frame for student development. While the national Curriculum Refresh, framed as Te Mātaiaho (Ministry of Education, 2022), initially placed identity and belonging at its core, the successive shift toward more prescriptive, knowledge-rich models in the recent 2024-2026 updates introduce distinct systemic complexities for families. In this period of accelerated reform, as NZCER national survey data underscores (Wylie, 2021; ERO, 2023), transparent school communication is the indispensable bridge preventing a structural disconnect between macro-level state policy intent and micro-level family practice.

2.4.2 Communication in Education

Within the context of Aotearoa New Zealand's current reforms, communication functions as the primary conduit through which curriculum shifts are interpreted, enacted, and understood. UNESCO (2021b) emphasised that effective education systems depend on strong partnerships between schools, families, and communities, and that curriculum implementation requires inclusive dialogue and shared responsibility. This communicative barrier is particularly salient within Aotearoa New Zealand's current curriculum reform environment, where technical terminology regarding phonics, decodable texts, and structured progressions (Ministry of Education, 2025, 2026) is intimately familiar to educators but remains largely opaque to parents. As Earl & Timperley, (2015) noted, "clarity of communication is essential if assessment and curriculum reforms are to influence learning" (p. 34), reinforcing the premise that structural policy shifts cannot meaningfully shape domestic practice without a shared understanding.

In the context of Aotearoa New Zealand, researchers have problematised the monocultural enactment of partnership. Ritchie & Chan, (2016) argued that even under earlier, explicitly relational curriculum frameworks like *Te Whāriki*, many educators continued to rely on static, Western discourses that failed to bridge the cultural distance between institutions and diverse ethnic communities. This historical critique takes on renewed urgency within the current reform

climate. As the education system pivots away from these holistic, flexible frameworks toward highly prescriptive, knowledge-rich mandates, the structural risk of default monocultural communication is significantly amplified. To prevent the technical jargon of the new reforms from further alienating communities, institutional communication must deliberately move toward authentic, reciprocal relationships. This is effectively framed through the *Pā Harakeke* model, an indigenous ecosystem approach that explicitly centres *whānau* (family) values and collective cultural worldviews as the primary lens through which any new curriculum changes must be translated (Ritchie & Chan, 2016).

2.4.3 Parental Sense-Making

Parental understanding of educational reform is fundamentally driven by what organizational sociology defines as sense-making. Rather than receiving institutional data neutrally, individuals actively organize unfamiliar or unexpected stimuli by filtering new information through their existing cognitive frameworks (Weick, 1995). Within educational research, parents interpret incoming curriculum messages through the lens of their own deeply held beliefs, personal histories, and distinct sociocultural contexts rather than absorbing the information exactly as intended (Coburn, 2001; Spillane et al., 2002). This active, interpretive construction becomes the primary mechanism through which families decipher information about their child's daily learning and evaluate the wider education system. These sense-making processes become acute during periods of rapid systemic reform. When confronted with unfamiliar terminology such as the explicit mechanics of Structured Literacy, the cognitive strategies of Structured Mathematics, or entirely revised assessment benchmarks caregivers rely heavily on historical mental models of schooling to evaluate what these structural shifts signify for student learning outcomes (Coburn, 2001; Spillane et al., 2002).

Rapid systemic reform can easily create an institutional gap in pedagogical language, severely straining the structural coherence between home and school environments (Aitken & Sinnema, 2008). Without the intentional translation of abstract policy into accessible, concrete action, there is a distinct risk of parental disengagement, alienation, or heightened anxiety regarding student achievement (Timperley, 2011). Consequently, the execution of these mandates is

increasingly evaluated not merely as a technical update of classroom content, but as a deeply relational process (Fullan, 2007).

Beyond its cognitive dimensions, sense-making is fundamentally a relational process shaped by institutional culture. Relational trust operates as a core resource for educational change, built incrementally through daily interactions grounded in mutual respect, personal regard, professional competence, and integrity (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). During major curriculum shifts, this accumulated trust functions as an interpretive lens through which families evaluate institutional messages. When school communication is transparent, respectful, and culturally responsive, it generates social capital it generates social capital as the networks of trust, shared values, and mutual understanding that enable cohesive community alignment (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Mutch & Collins, 2012). Research indicates that high levels of relational trust reduce the cognitive dissonance and anxiety often triggered by rapid policy change, facilitating alignment between domestic practices and evolving school expectations (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Spillane et al., 2002).

In addition, sense-making literature demonstrates that cultural worldviews significantly shape how institutional authority and communication codes are decoded. As Durie (2006) and Macfarlane et al. (2014) observe, when educational messaging fails to account for diverse cultural paradigms, a cognitive misalignment occurs between school intent and community interpretation. Without communication frameworks that recognize and accommodate distinct relational expectations and linguistic backgrounds, technical curriculum updates risk being interpreted as an opaque institutional code rather than a transparent educational roadmap (Coburn, 2001; Durie, 2006).

Parental engagement literature consistently notes that "the home learning environment has a greater influence on children’s achievement than parental involvement in school activities" (Goodall & Montgomery, 2014, p. 403). However, literature on domestic academic support highlights that parents can only support learning when they understand what is being taught and why pedagogical approaches have changed. Goodall, (2018) conceptualizes this shift as moving from passive parental *involvement* in school events toward active *engagement* in learning itself.

As Goodall (2018) and Mapp and Kuttner (2013) demonstrate, when institutional communication lacks cognitive clarity or relational grounding, families are often forced to rely on outdated instructional models or misinterpret curriculum benchmarks, restricting their capacity to reinforce classroom learning at home.

2.5 Diversity and Equity

Auckland's status as a superdiverse region (Spoonley, 2020) presents a unique set of variables for curriculum implementation. With over 40% of residents born overseas and 180 languages spoken in local schools (Education Counts, 2025; Ministry of Education, 2025), urban diversity functions not as a uniform category, but as an intersection of distinct migration histories, socioeconomic status, and varying cultural expectations of schooling.

2.5.1 Culturally Responsive Pedagogy as an Equity Scaffold

Culturally responsive pedagogy remains the foundation of educational equity in Aotearoa New Zealand, even as the 2024-2027 Curriculum Refresh introduces more prescriptive, knowledge-rich structures. As Bishop et al. (2014) emphasized that relationships of care and identity affirmation are not secondary to the curriculum; rather, they function as the foundations for acquiring foundational knowledge . In his model of relationship-based learning, Bishop (2019) highlights that effective leaders and educators "create a family-like context for learning by rejecting deficit explanations for learners' learning, caring for and nurturing the learner including their language and culture and voicing high expectations" (p. 51).

It has become particularly important for schools to engage in these relational practices since the removal of explicit statutory Treaty obligations for school boards, a policy shift that effectively transferred the responsibility for Te Tiriti-aligned engagement directly to the classroom level (Ministry of Education, 2022). With over 60% of Auckland learners identifying as Māori, Pasifika, or Asian (Education Counts, 2025), literature cautions that institutional communication that fails to reflect these identities risks systemic marginalisation. Drawing from Heifetz & Linsky, (2002), scholars note that community resistance to institutional change rarely stems from a rejection of learning itself, but rather from an acute fear of losing familiar cultural ground and navigating

systemic uncertainty (Berryman et al., 2020; Heifetz & Linsky, 2002). To bridge this gap in diverse urban contexts like Auckland, school communication strategies must extend beyond uniform institutional notices by adopting double-coded communication. In practice, this requires designing messaging that simultaneously satisfies the rigid, technical accountabilities of Ministry of Education mandates while being actively translated, framed, and contextualised to align with the cultural protocols (tikanga) and linguistic preferences of local families (Berryman & Eley, 2017; OECD, 2020; Vaioleti, 2006). This dual-layered approach is essential to bypass institutional and digital barriers, ensuring equitable participation and relational trust for historically underserved communities.

2.5.2 Information Access and the Digital-Knowledge Divide

Equitable information access is a prerequisite for civic and educational participation (UNESCO, 2021). However, global digital inequities in connectivity and literacy are mirrored within Aotearoa New Zealand, where digital skill gaps, not just hardware access, shape parental participation (Hargittai, 2010). In other words, when parents cannot navigate the specific platforms used for curriculum updates, their capacity to advocate for their child is fundamentally curtailed.

Empirical national research confirms that digital inequities persist along distinct socioeconomic and ethnic lines (Department of Internal Affairs, 2019). As curriculum reforms introduce advanced, highly technical content areas like artificial intelligence and data science, there is a risk of a widening knowledge gap between digitally resourced and digitally marginalized communities. For many migrant families, these structural barriers are compounded by a dual layer of exclusion. caregivers must concurrently navigate unfamiliar digital interfaces while deciphering specialized pedagogical terminology presented in a non-native language (Helsper, 2021; S. Tan & Haque, 2024).

Helsper (2021) conceptualizes, digital exclusion not as a binary of haves and have-nots but is produced through the complex interaction of access, digital literacy, and meaningful engagement. Within Social and Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) literature, effective communication is defined not as passive information transmission, but as an intentional mechanism designed to address structural barriers and foster caregiver self-efficacy (UNICEF,

2020). SBCC frameworks emphasize that multimodal, plain-language, and culturally grounded communication strategies are essential to prevent technical policy updates from worsening existing social stratification, ensuring that information access does not depend solely on pre-existing digital or institutional capital (Helsper, 2021; UNICEF, 2020).

2.5.3 Sector Critiques of the Curriculum Refresh Rollout

The implementation of the New Zealand Curriculum Refresh has been widely critiqued by sector leaders as a predominantly top-down initiative that insufficiently engages those most affected by the change: teachers, students, and their families. Hood (2020) and the New Zealand Principals' Federation, (2024; NZCER, 2025) observed that the rollout has functioned as a policy directive generated in an external environment that exerts direct, pressure on schools without allowing them to participate in co-design. Literature on educational governance indicates that such top-down implementation trajectories increase institutional uncertainty and constrain opportunities for localised sense-making (Desimone, 2002; Hood, 2020). In the absence of strategic, multi-channelled communication pathways, technical changes to curriculum design inevitably generate conceptual opacity for caregivers and school leaders alike (Emerson et al., 2012; McLean et al., 2020; Summerville et al., 2024). Within superdiverse urban contexts, this opacity risks transforming national educational policy into an unintended mechanism of technical exclusion, disproportionately marginalising communities navigating linguistic variations or digital access divides (Education Review Office, 2023; May, 2019; Spoonley, 2020).

A central concern within these critiques is the reliance on unidirectional communication channels, which scholars identify as insufficient for building relational trust or parental capability during rapid policy shifts (Epstein, 2011; Bryk & Schneider, 2002; UNICEF, 2017, 2019; UNESCO, 2021). One-way dissemination strategies such as mass emails, static policy summaries, or automated digital portal notifications only transmit information. They fail to establish the relational conditions required for families to interpret, question, or meaningfully internalize new pedagogical expectations. As Epstein (2011) and Mutch and Collins (2012) argue, unidirectional messaging positions parents as passive recipients of policy decisions rather than active partners in learning.

This unidirectional framework directly conflicts with international guidance from UNESCO, (2021) and UNICEF (2017, 2019), which emphasises that curriculum reform should be a relational, participatory, and locally grounded effort to achieve sustainable success. Implementation literature shows that when communication flows exclusively from the bureaucratic system to the community, it undermines the trust, shared values, and cultural responsiveness that are foundational to equitable implementation (ERO, 2023). Consequently scholars caution that unmediated Curriculum rollout risks being perceived not as a collaborative effort toward educational equity, but as a technocratic restructuring that overlooks the lived realities and cultural aspirations of diverse whānau (Berryman & Eley, 2017; Hood, 2020).

2.6 Reflective Note on the Literature and Search Strategy

During the conceptualization of this study and the formulation of its research questions, a deliberate and systematic search was undertaken across major educational databases (including sage publications, AUT Library, Auckland Library and NZCER Index) to identify empirical counter-perspectives specifically studies arguing against the necessity of home-school communication, relational trust, or parental engagement during major curriculum shifts.

Unsurprisingly, explicit empirical literature advocating for the exclusion of families or defending unidirectional, non-reciprocal institutional communication as a superior model for student outcomes is virtually non-existent in contemporary educational research. Across international and Aotearoa New Zealand contexts, scholarly consensus overwhelmingly affirms that relational trust, home-school alignment, and clear communication are beneficial for student success (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Mapp & Kuttner, 2013).

However, to ensure a robust evidential base and guard against confirmation bias, competing interpretations and systemic critiques were actively sought and integrated through three distinct theoretical counter-perspectives:

1. **Policy Implementation & Administrative Efficiency:** Literature in educational governance (e.g., Fullan, 2015; Levin, 2010; Supovitz, 2006) highlights the structural necessity of

centralized, uniform policy directives to prevent extreme localised implementation variance, regional inequality, and school leader burnout during rapid national rollouts.

2. **Cognitive Science & Standardised Curricula:** Debates within curriculum theory (e.g., Castles et al., 2018; Hirsch, 2016; Young, 2013) contend that explicit, standardised frameworks democratize knowledge access and reduce reliance on inherited home-based cultural capital, contrasting with constructivist or co-designed relational models.

3. **Critical Sociology & Power Asymmetries:** Critical scholars (e.g., Baquedano-López et al., 2013; Lareau, 2011; Vincent, 2010) caution that normative "partnership" discourses often mask structural power imbalances, where institutional expectations privilege dominant cultural norms and position relational trust merely as a mechanism to secure parental compliance.

Instead of assuming that schools and parents share information smoothly, this study digs into the real problems. It looks at why communication breaks down between government policy implementation, school messages, and how families actually understand what is going on.

2.7 Identifying the Research Gap

While the preceding synthesis of empirical literature and competing, theoretical paradigms confirms the pivotal role of home-school partnerships, a critical analytical gap remains in how institutional communication ecosystems are conceptualized and evaluated. Although extensive scholarship explores policy design and classroom enactment, far less attention has been given to the systemic communication mechanisms that mediate relational trust, cognitive clarity, and parental agency across superdiverse communities. By applying a Social and Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) lens within Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Theory (BEST), this study addresses this gap by investigating home-school communication systems as the primary object of inquiry. In doing so, it positions Aotearoa New Zealand's 2024-2027 Curriculum Refresh not as a isolated policy evaluation, but as an active empirical case study, a high-stakes stress-test revealing how institutional communication practices facilitate or hinder educational partnerships under conditions of rapid change.

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The theoretical work of Bronfenbrenner (1979) and Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) demonstrates that human development and institutional adaptation are shaped by the microsystem (the immediate environments of the home and classroom) and the mesosystem (the quality of the relational connections between those environments). However, current educational literature lacks empirical evidence regarding how schools strategically design and deploy communication to foster the collaborative home-school behaviours required to strengthen these vital mesosystemic links during structural upheaval. While this thesis uses the 2024-2027 New Zealand Curriculum Refresh as its case study, it addresses a broader, transferable issue: how strategic institutional communication can be leveraged as a systemic mechanism to support families through major curriculum transformations.

2.7.1 Theoretical Rationale: Integrating SBCC and Bioecological Systems Theory (BEST)

The literature shows that parents' understanding of curriculum change is heavily mediated by institutional communication practices, relational trust, localised cultural context, and the broader ecological systems in which families and schools interact (Emerson et al., 2012; Epstein, 2011; Goodall, 2018; Pushor, 2015). Yet few empirical studies examine these dynamics through a communication-centred lens that accounts for both behaviour-change processes and the broader ecological context (Hoover-Dempsey, 2005; McLean et al., 2020; Michie et al., 2014). Even fewer investigations employ methodological frameworks capable of tracing how parents interpret, respond to, and act on curriculum information across nested ecological layers (Goodall, 2021; Hornby & Blackwell, 2018; Jeynes, 2016; Wilder, 2014). Consequently, prior research has tended to describe communication practices casually rather than critically analyse the

behavioural and bioecological mechanisms through which parent understanding is formed (Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Fishbein & Ajzen, 2011; Epstein, 2011).

This theoretical gap provides the direct rationale for adopting an integrated, dual-framework design that embeds UNICEF's Social and Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) framework within Bronfenbrenner's Bio-Ecological Systems Theory (BEST) (Bronfenbrenner, 2005; UNICEF, 2017). Although Urie Bronfenbrenner originally developed his model in 1979 as a general psychological framework for human ecology and development, it has since become a foundational framework in educational sociology to map the structural complexities of school-family-community ecosystems (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). However, while BEST provides the structural architecture of these nested environments, it lacks a dedicated mechanic to measure information transmission. To resolve this, this study incorporates UNICEF's SBCC framework a multi-level communication model originally formalized across international development, education, and health sectors to evaluate how individuals and community networks process, internalize, and act upon complex structural information (UNICEF, 2017, 2023). This theoretical synthesis is strongly reinforced by relationship-based learning models in Aotearoa New Zealand. As Bishop (2019) asserts,

> "When teachers are able to create a relational context for learning and use effective teaching and monitoring practices within this context, the combination of these two forces, plus their monitoring and responding to learners' progress and the impact of the processes of learning, significantly improves learning." (p. 35).

By embedding Bishop's relational emphasis into the combined SBCC-BEST framework provides the analytical capability to trace how macro-level policy directives operate as dynamic, equity-driven mechanisms within the localised microsystems of caregivers' everyday lives.

This theoretical integration aligns with established global practices; organizations such as UNICEF and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) anchor their Social and Behaviour Change (SBC) strategies in Bronfenbrenner's framework via the Social Ecological Model (SEM).

These institutions utilize SEM as a structural architecture to design and evaluate multi-layered communication initiatives across complex environments.

The strategic intersection of Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory and Social Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) is vividly demonstrated in UNICEF's Early Childhood Development (World Health Organisation et al., 2018; UNICEF, 2017) initiatives and the joint global COVID-19 pandemic response led by UNICEF and the CDC (UNICEF, 2020; Centre for Social and Behavior Change, 2020). In its international ECD programs such as the implementation of the Nurturing Care Framework UNICEF utilizes the Social Ecological Model (SEM) to move beyond just educating parents (individual/microsystem); they simultaneously train community health workers (mesosystem) and deploy mass media to dismantle cultural nutrition taboos (macrosystem). This same multi-layered, eco-systemic approach was vital during the COVID-19 crisis, where both agencies recognized that top-down public policy mandates (societal level) would fail without synchronized interventions across the other ecological rings. By actively combining targeted health literacy toolkits to address personal vaccine hesitancy (individual level), providing toolkits for intra-familial guidance (interpersonal level), rewriting administrative safety guidelines for schools and workplaces (institutional level), and partnering directly with trusted local faith leaders to reshape community compliance (community level), the CDC and UNICEF successfully proved that sustainable behavioural change requires reinforcing communication triggers across every single concentric layer of human society simultaneously.

Applying this integrated model to educational reform addresses a critical gap in traditional policy implementation studies. While structural frameworks like BEST effectively map the nested environmental layers surrounding the learner (from the micro-level home-school interface to macro-level policy shifts), they do not inherently provide the communicative mechanisms required to navigate transitions between these layers. Conversely, SBCC supplies the precise operational mechanics such as audience segmentation, double-coded messaging, and feedback loops necessary to drive behavioural adoption and relational trust across those structural boundaries. Scholarly evaluations of educational system transformations (e.g., Earl & Timperley, 2015; Goodall, 2018, 2021) demonstrate that curriculum shifts frequently stall not due to

pedagogical flaws, but due to communication breakdowns across ecological tiers. Combining BEST and SBCC thus provides both the structural map and the operational engine, offering a dual framework that explains how macro-level curriculum policy is translated or mediated within the micro-level realities of whānau engagement.

Methodological Gap: Bridging Macro-Audits and Micro-Case Studies

Beyond these theoretical limitations, a significant methodological gap persists in the current literature surrounding curriculum implementation. Existing evaluations of major educational reforms in Aotearoa New Zealand traditionally rely on macro-level, quantitative compliance audits, such as standard institutional reviews or large-scale ministry surveys, which track broad participation rates but provide limited visibility into the, localised realities of parent sense-making(Thrupp, 2017; Wylie, 2021). Conversely, qualitative micro-level studies often isolate individual school case studies without contextualizing those experiences against broader regional socioeconomic or ethnic data trends.

This methodological bifurcation leaves a critical empirical gap, as it fails to capture how macro-systemic policies directly disrupts micro-systemic behaviours over time (Thrupp, 2017). Addressing this limitation requires an integrated mixed-methods approach that pairs stratified quantitative survey with qualitative thematic analysis, this research design allows for the empirical triangulation of data. This dual-method framework is structurally necessary to capture both the statistical scope of the regional communication divide and the deeply lived, culturally mediated experiences of Auckland's superdiverse whānau as they navigate rapid institutional change (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; ERO, 2023).

This research gap is particularly acute within Auckland's superdiverse landscape, where rapid demographic shifts have generated intense linguistic and cultural pluralism (Spoonley, 2020). These dynamics introduce complex macrosystemic influences, as varying cultural expectations of schooling heavily mediate how families interpret institutional mandates. Currently, there is a lack of localised empirical research exploring how SBCC interventions, such as multimodal information channels, translated policy resources, or kanohi-ki-te-kanohi (face-to-face) dialogue,

can bridge the dual structural barriers of digital exclusion and specialized pedagogical jargon (Helsper, 2021; UNICEF, 2020).

Literature cautions that without an intentionally strategic and equity-oriented approach to school communication, the prescriptive nature of a new curriculum risks becoming a mechanism of technical exclusion (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Delpit, 1995). When school messaging relies on technical jargon or exclusive digital platforms, it risks reinforcing existing social stratifications by exclusively privileged families who already possess the high digital and institutional capital required to seamlessly decipher the education system.

Finally, the compressed timing of reforms introduces a unique operational pressure. Rapid, shifts in assessment, mathematics, and literacy frameworks create challenges that generate systemic uncertainty and community anxiety (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002; Hood, 2020). Under these conditions, information delivery alone is insufficient; communication must function as a relational anchor. This thesis addresses this vacuum by examining which specific communication channels and framing strategies are most effective in fostering the educationally powerful connections and relationships (Education Review Office, 2015, pp. 4, 11) required to anchor communities within Auckland's superdiverse communities.

2.8 Research Questions

Research title: Curriculum Reform and the Communication Divide: Parental Perspectives from Auckland

Question: An investigation into policy implementation communication, trust, and community engagement, Through the NZ Curriculum Reform.

RQ1: What are parents' baseline levels of understanding, cognitive clarity, and confidence regarding school-led information sharing, and how effectively does institutional communication convey complex educational changes?

RQ2: What primary structural, linguistic, and channel-based communication barriers inhibit effective home-school information sharing, reciprocal dialogue, and active home-school partnership?

RQ3: How do the intersecting cultural, linguistic, and socio-demographic realities of Auckland's superdiverse communities mediate how families build institutional trust, interpret school communication, and enact educational partnerships?

3. Methodology:

This chapter outlines the methodological approach used to investigate the research questions. It explains the study's research paradigm, researcher's positionality, theoretical framing, design, participants, data sources, and analytic procedures. The chapter also details the ethical considerations, trustworthiness strategies, and limitations that shaped the conduct of the research. Together, these elements establish the methodological coherence necessary to address the aims of the study.

3.1 Paradigm

This study is situated within a pragmatic research paradigm (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018), which recognises that complex phenomena are best understood through the integration of diverse evidence. Pragmatism avoids strict divides between positivist and interpretivist approaches. Instead, it focuses on using whatever methods are most useful for answering the research question. This paradigm is particularly well-suited for investigating parental engagement, where capturing both broad measurable patterns and deep contextual insights is essential for a comprehensive understanding.

Within a pragmatic worldview, quantitative and qualitative data are viewed as complementary strands of inquiry. Quantitative survey items allow the study to identify macro-trends in parental awareness, while qualitative open-ended responses provide the necessary nuance to explain the reasoning and lived experiences behind those patterns. Pragmatism thus provides the philosophical scaffolding for a mixed-methods survey design, moving the research beyond mere description toward a functional, practical understanding of curriculum interpretation.

Furthermore, pragmatism aligns with the applied nature of educational research in Aotearoa New Zealand. As the 2025-2026 reforms have direct, ongoing implications for schools and families, this study adopts an outcome-focused orientation. By prioritising methods that generate actionable insights, the research remains grounded in the realities of Auckland's

superdiverse landscape, where cultural, socioeconomic, and digital factors intersect to shape how parents' access and interpret information.

As a researcher with a professional background in communication, data analysis, and digital storytelling, I acknowledge that my positionality inherently shapes the lens through which this study was designed and interpreted. My interest in the Curriculum Refresh was sparked in 2025 by my personal experience as a bilingual parent of two daughters entering the school system in Auckland. As a member of a non-dominant ethnic community for whom English is a second language, my dual positionality as both an academic researcher and a parent sensitized me to the, multi-layered hurdles facing diverse families. Navigating Aotearoa New Zealand's schooling system firsthand revealed the cognitive and administrative friction caregivers experience when attempting to decipher specialized pedagogical jargon, changing assessment metrics, and digital parent reporting portals during periods of rapid policy shift. This lived experience provided a vital reflexivity throughout the research process, enabling a nuanced interpretation of how institutional messaging is decoded within superdiverse home environments.

My outsider status regarding the formal education sector serves as a methodological asset; it allows me to approach parental perspectives without the burden of institutional assumptions or professional jargon. However, to maintain reflexive rigour, I have employed several strategies to mitigate bias. All interpretations are strictly grounded in the empirical data and the study's theoretical frameworks, specifically Bronfenbrenner's Bio-Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) and UNICEF's Social Behavioural Change Communication (SBCC)(UNICEF, 2017). This ensures that the analysis remains focused on the documented voices of the participants rather than my personal narrative, providing a balanced and ethically sound account of parental engagement.

3.2 Integrated Theoretical Fram ework: The Bioecological Communication Model

This study is guided by two complementary, theoretically integrated frameworks: UNICEF's Social and Behavioural Change Communication (SBCC) model and Bronfenbrenner's Bio-Ecological Systems Theory (BEST), which together operationalise the research design, data collection, and analytical approach. While SBCC provides the communication-centred mechanics necessary to evaluate how parents receive, interpret, and adapt to curriculum information, Bronfenbrenner's theory provides the vital structural architecture needed to diagnose where and why these communication streams succeed or fracture.

While Bronfenbrenner's BEST was originally conceptualized as a psychological framework for human development, and UNICEF's SBCC emerged from public health communication sectors, this study proposes that their integrated application offers a robust, novel framework for educational policy analysis. By applying BEST's structural layers alongside SBCC's communication metrics, this research design is uniquely equipped to trace how macro-level institutional messaging actively manifests within the micro-level realities of the home.

3.2.1 Bronfenbrenner's Bio-Ecological Systems Theory (BEST)

Bronfenbrenner's Bio-Ecological Systems Theory offers a structural lens for understanding how children's learning environments are shaped by multiple, interacting layers of influence. Rather than viewing parental engagement as an isolated behaviour, the model positions families within a nested ecological system in which each layer from immediate relationships to broader societal forces affects how parents interpret and respond to educational change (Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). This framework is particularly suited to analysing curriculum reform, where communication, policy, and family context intersect to shape parental sense-making.

At the centre of the model is the microsystem, which includes the child's immediate relationships and settings, such as home and school. Parental engagement occurs within this layer, but it is

heavily influenced by the mesosystem, which represents the quality of interactions between these settings. A strong mesosystem is characterised by reciprocity, trust, and regular communication conditions that enable parents and teachers to share expectations and co-construct learning support (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). When communication becomes inconsistent or unidirectional, the mesosystem weakens, reducing parents' ability to confidently engage with new curriculum expectations.

Beyond these relational layers, the exosystem captures the policy and organisational environments that indirectly shape family experiences. Curriculum reforms, ministry directives, and school-level administrative pressures sit within this layer. Although parents do not participate directly in these decisions, they experience their consequences (Bronfenbrenner, 1979)

The macrosystem encompasses the cultural, ideological, and societal values that influence how families interpret educational change. In Aotearoa New Zealand, this includes debates about national identity, biculturalism and Te Tiriti o Waitangi, multiculturalism, and the purpose of schooling. These wider narratives shape parents' expectations, trust in institutions, and interpretations of curriculum reform, illustrating the macrosystem's role in shaping parental meaning-making (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

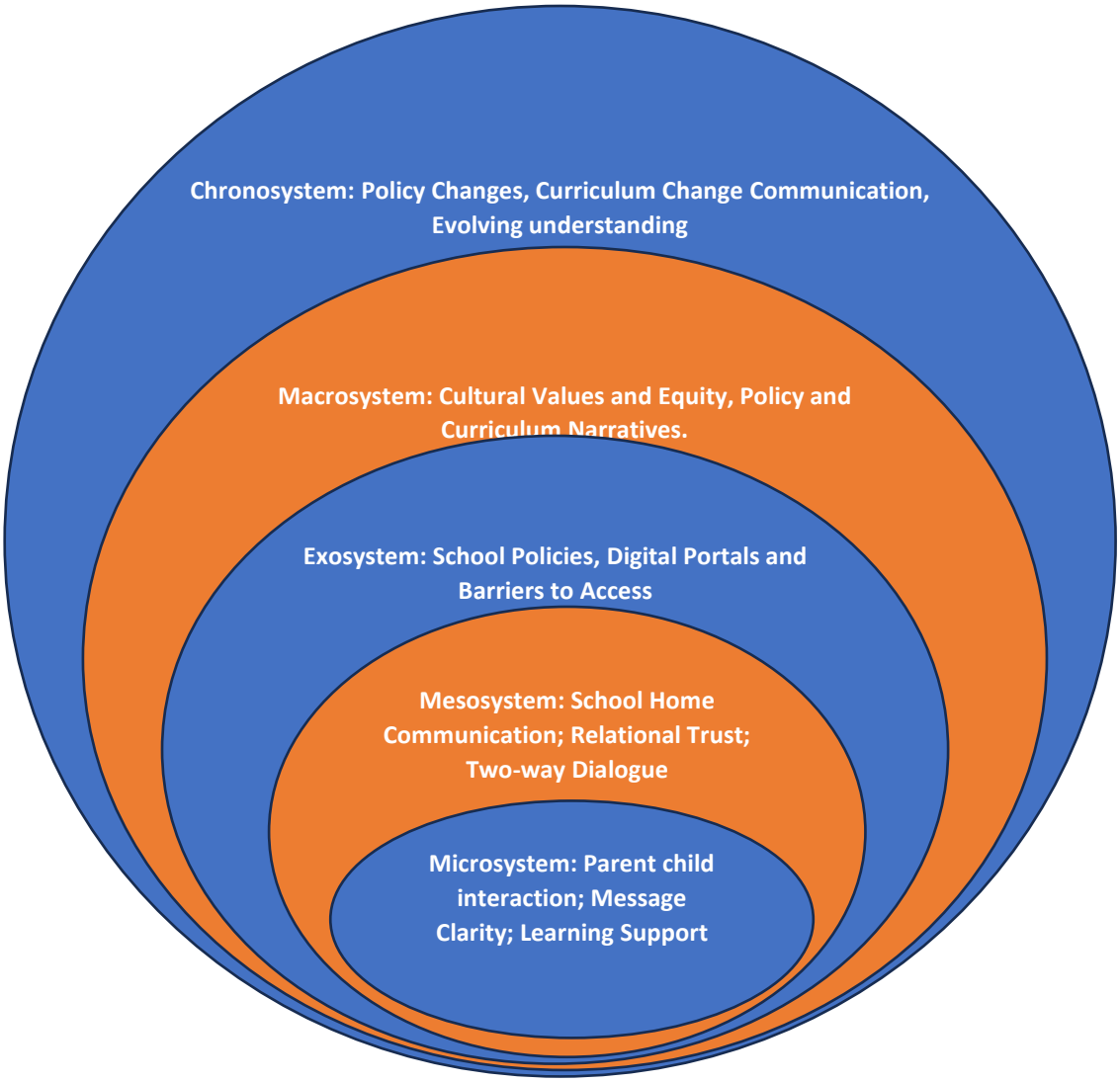
Finally, the Chronosystem introduces the dimension of time, recognising that the pace and sequencing of reforms influence how families and schools adapt. Bronfenbrenner (1994) formalised this temporal layer to account for how change unfolds across historical epochs and how transitions, such as rapid policy shifts occurring within compressed windows, affect immediate developmental contexts. Later developments in bioecological thought (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) reinforce this notion, highlighting that localised human engagement is never static but is continuously renegotiated amidst the interplay of shifting structural, cultural, and temporal forces.

Together, these ecological layers provide a comprehensive framework for analysing the communication divide identified in this study. BEST highlights that parental engagement is not

simply a matter of information access, but a multi-layered phenomenon shaped by systemic conditions, relational dynamics, and temporal pressures.

Figure 1

Ecological layers influencing Home-school Communication



Note. Adapted from Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1994, 2005; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006).

3.2.2 Communication as the Mechanic: The Role of Social and Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC)

UNICEF is the global body that formalised Social and Behaviour Change Communication as a framework used across education, health, and development sectors (UNICEF, 2017, 2019) Social and Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) provides a communication-centred framework for understanding how individuals and communities receive, interpret, and act on information. Originating in public health and development communication, SBCC emphasises that behaviour change is not achieved through information dissemination alone but through communication that is audience-centred, culturally grounded, iterative, and relational (UNICEF, 2023). This makes SBCC particularly relevant to educational contexts where parents must make sense of complex policy shifts such as the Curriculum Refresh.

A core principle of SBCC is that effective communication begins with a deep understanding of the audience's needs, motivations, cultural contexts, and barriers (UNICEF, 2023). Applied to schooling, this means that parents' awareness, confidence, and engagement are shaped not only by what information is provided but also by how it is framed, delivered, and reinforced. SBCC therefore positions communication as an active process of meaning-making rather than a passive transfer of information (UNICEF, 2023). This aligns closely with the study's focus on parental interpretation of curriculum change, where clarity, accessibility, and cultural resonance are essential for equitable engagement.

SBCC also highlights the importance of two-way communication and dialogue-based engagement (UNICEF, 2023). Behavioural change occurs when families have opportunities to ask questions, express concerns, and co-construct understanding with educators. One-way channels, such as mass emails or static policy summaries, may raise awareness but do not build the relational trust or cognitive clarity required for parents to confidently support new learning expectations. SBCC therefore provides a theoretical rationale for examining communication preferences, perceived barriers, and the relational dynamics that shape parental engagement.

Finally, SBCC offers a practical framework for analysing both quantitative and qualitative data in this study. Survey items measuring awareness, confidence, and communication preferences reflect SBCC's emphasis on audience segmentation and message accessibility. Meanwhile, qualitative responses illuminate behavioural drivers, cultural expectations, and relational factors that influence how parents interpret curriculum information. Together, these insights support a communication-equity perspective, positioning SBCC as a critical lens for understanding how families navigate the Curriculum Refresh.

The synergy between these frameworks ensures that the study moves beyond a simple description of what parents know. Instead, it enables an analysis of how communication interventions function within a complex social ecology to either facilitate or constrain equitable participation in the 2025-2026 Curriculum Refresh. Figure 1 synthesises these ecological layers to illustrate how communication processes operate across the microsystem to the chronosystem within the context of the Curriculum Refresh.

3.2.3 Operationalizing the Intersection: Mapping SBCC Mechanics Across the Bio-Ecological System

To maintain analytical rigor, this thesis does not treat curriculum reform, digital discourse, communication practices, media discourse, digital discourse, cultural diversity, information access, school-home partnerships and parent engagement as separate or competing research domains. Instead, all eight dimensions are integrated within a unified Public Communication and Policy Dissemination Framework. The primary object of inquiry remains how public educational policy is communicated, translated, and received across the public information ecosystem during a period of major national curriculum reform. To move beyond employing theoretical perspectives as disconnected or parallel lenses, this study constructs an integrated bioecological communication framework. While Bronfenbrenner's theory maps the structural architecture of influence across nested ecological layers, UNICEF's Social and Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) provides the granular mechanics that explain how messages move, transform, or fracture across those boundaries. Communication is conceptualized as the connective tissue that

breathes life into the ecological system; without effective communication mechanics, the structural links between layers collapse into an informational divide.

Table 4 outlines the alignment between Bronfenbrenner's ecological system layers and the operationalized Social and Behavioural Change Communication (SBCC) dimensions used in this study. This structure ensures that both macro-institutional messaging and micro-level caregiver experiences are systematically captured across the mixed-methods research design.

3.2.3.1 Microsystem (Home & School Environments):

- *SBCC Focus:* Individual cognitive clarity, message accessibility, and direct self-efficacy.
- *Operational Mapping:* Within the microsystem, SBCC evaluates whether curriculum updates are framed in accessible, actionable language to support parent involvement in home learning.

3.2.3.2 Mesosystem (Home-School Interface):

- *SBCC Focus:* Dialogue-based engagement, feedback loops, and relational trust.
- *Operational Mapping:* The mesosystem represents the relational space between home and school. In this space, SBCC distinguishes between one-way administrative broadcasting (such as automated emails or portal posts) and two-way dialogic channels (such as parent-teacher consultations and feedback forums). SBCC evaluates how different communication methods impact home-school relationships and mutual trust.

3.2.3.3 Exosystem (School Leadership & Ministry Governance):

- *SBCC Focus:* Audience segmentation, channel selection, and institutional messaging strategy.
- *Operational Mapping:* School boards, leadership teams, and Ministry policymakers make decisions within the exosystem. SBCC serves as a diagnostic

tool to evaluate whether institutional decision-makers tailor channels and messaging for superdiverse, linguistically varied whānau or utilize a standardized communication strategy

3.2.3.4 Macrosystem (Societal Norms & Bicultural Reform Narrative):

- *SBCC Focus:* Cultural resonance, framing, and ideological trust.
- *Operational Mapping:* The macrosystem encompasses national policy debates, cultural values, and Te Tiriti o Waitangi obligations. SBCC evaluates how policy messaging aligns with families' cultural worldviews and lived realities, examining the relationship between macro-level curriculum shifts and community engagement.

3.2.3.5 Chronosystem (Temporal Reform Trajectory):

- *SBCC Focus:* Iterative messaging, campaign sequencing, and adaptive communication.
- *Operational Mapping:* As curriculum reform unfolds across multi-year implementation timelines, SBCC mechanics evaluates communication as a multi-stage process that adapts over time in response to community readiness and feedback and informs for change in public information strategy.

Table 4

Integrated BEST SBCC Methodological Framework

Integrated Bioecological SBCC Communication Framework			
Ecological Layer (Bronfenbrenner)	**Systemic Domain & Boundaries**	**SBCC Communication Focus**	**Operational & Empirical Mapping**

Microsystem	Home & School Environments (Immediate, face-to-face settings directly experienced by the learner and family)	• Individual cognitive clarity • Message accessibility • Direct self-efficacy & agency	Evaluates whether curriculum updates and pedagogical shifts are framed in accessible, actionable, and non-jargonistic language to empower parents in supporting home learning and active participation.
Mesosystem	Home-School Interface (Interconnections and communicative interactions between microsystems)	• Dialogue-based engagement • Two-way feedback loops • Relational trust building	Differentiates between passive, one-way administrative broadcasting (e.g., automated portal posts, generic emails) and authentic, two-way dialogic channels (e.g., interactive consultations). Evaluates how communicative modes impact mutual trust and home-school partnerships.
Exosystem	School Leadership & Ministry Governance (Settings that indirectly impact the learner through structural decisions)	• Audience segmentation • Strategic channel selection • Institutional messaging design	Serves as a diagnostic tool to evaluate whether school boards, principals, and Ministry policymakers tailor communication channels for superdiverse, linguistically varied whānau, or default to standardized, one-size-fits-all strategies.
Macrosystem	Societal Norms & Bicultural Reform Narrative(Overarching cultural, ideological, legal, and socio-political context)	• Cultural resonance & framing • Ideological trust • Double-coded alignment	Evaluates how macro-level policy messaging aligns with families' cultural worldviews, tikanga, and lived realities. Examines how curriculum shifts navigate Te Tiriti o Waitangi obligations alongside

			public media and socio-political narratives.
Chronosystem	Temporal Reform Trajectory(Socio-historical changes and multi-year rollout timelines)	• Iterative messaging • Campaign sequencing • Adaptive communication	Tracks communication mechanics across compressed multi-year rollout timelines (e.g., 2024-2030). Evaluates whether public information strategies adapt iteratively over time in response to community readiness, feedback, and evolving implementation capacity.

Note. This integrated framework describes the integration of SBCC in Bioecological layers and directly informs the mixed-methods design and the development of the survey instrument described in the next section.

3.3 Research Design

The research design provides the logical structure that connects the research questions to the investigative methods, ensuring the study remains coherent and theoretically aligned. To capture the multi-layered realities of Auckland's diverse educational context, this study employs a concurrent mixed-methods design. This approach is purposefully selected to integrate the measurable breadth of quantitative data with the descriptive depth of qualitative insights, providing a comprehensive view of parental engagement.

3.3.1 Mixed methods:

Within complex educational ecosystems like Auckland, single-method approaches risk flattening the systemic data, as they frequently fail to fully capture the operational tension between top-down institutional broadcasts and localised community reception (Creswell & Creswell, 2018;

Greene, 2007) Quantitative data alone may map the frequency of school-to-home information transmissions, but it cannot adequately register the cognitive friction or structural resistance experienced by caregivers navigating those messages (Shannon-Baker, 2016). Conversely, relying solely on qualitative narratives risks losing sight of broader demographic patterns and structural regularities across the region.

To resolve this methodological limitation, this study proposes a mixed-methods design that functions as a tool for empirical triangulation (Johnson et al., 2007). By pairing a quantitative survey tool with the qualitative thematic analysis of public media commentaries (RNZ) and open-ended caregiver responses, the research design is uniquely capable of capturing both the statistical scope of communication reach and the deep, contextual friction of community interpretation. This dual-approach directly ensures that the tension between institutional policy delivery and actual parental meaning-making is critically isolated rather than obscured.

3.3.1.1 Quantitative Function (The What):

Closed-ended survey data provide the empirical patterns, frequencies, and demographic insights required to map the exosystemic influence of the Curriculum Refresh (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). This approach allows for the identification of variations across home language, migration history, and digital access factors central to Bronfenbrenner's ecological model.

3.3.1.2 Qualitative Function (Why):

Integrating Primary and Secondary Narratives: The qualitative component of this study functions as the Why, providing the deep insights necessary to decode the microsystemic realities of Auckland families ((Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018)). To ensure a robust and ecologically valid analysis, this study integrates primary data from open-ended survey responses with secondary data from public discussion threads on Reddit and articles from Radio New Zealand (RNZ).

3.3.2 Survey Design and Data Collection

The following section outlines the development and administration of the survey instrument used to operationalize the research design.

Reflecting the study's pragmatic orientation, the research design rejects a rigid philosophical commitment to either pure quantitative positivism or pure qualitative constructivism. Instead, the research employs a predominantly quantitative design with embedded qualitative elements. The primary instrument is a structured questionnaire developed to evaluate parental knowledge of the 2025-2026 Curriculum Refresh, perceptions of systemic changes, and self-reported levels of engagement. The survey was designed to balance standardised metrics with descriptive latitude, ensuring that participants could articulate lived experiences that structured items might overlook.

3.3.2.1 Instrument Components

The questionnaire consists of three functional components:

Demographic Indicators: Data on ethnicity, household income, school type, and geographic zone were collected. These variables act as ecological indicators, allowing the study to identify how engagement differs across Auckland's diverse communities.

Quantitative Measures: A series of closed-ended items, including 5-point Likert scales and multiple-choice formats, provides quantifiable measures of awareness and confidence. These items facilitate statistical cross-tabulation against demographic variables.

Qualitative Open-Ended Feedback: Open-ended feedback was collected both through a concluding free-text section and through selected survey questions that required more substantive elaboration. These qualitative responses allowed parents to articulate their concerns, reasoning, and contextual experiences in their own words. This layer of narrative data provides the interpretive depth necessary for SBCC-aligned analysis, revealing the "why" behind the patterns observed in the quantitative strand.

3.3.2.2 Sampling Strategy: Purposive Stratified Approach

To ensure a robust understanding of Auckland's educational landscape, a purposive stratified sampling approach was employed. This strategy moved beyond convenience sampling to ensure the inclusion of schools reflecting the full socio-economic, geographic, and pedagogical diversity of Aotearoa New Zealand's largest city.

3.3.2.3 Geographic and Socio-Economic Representation

The sample was categorised into four primary zones to capture variations in community demographics and urban development:

- Central Auckland: (e.g., Owairaka, Mt Roskill, Gladstone)
- South/East Auckland: (e.g., Papatoetoe, Māngere, Point England)
- West Auckland: (e.g., Kelston, Avondale, Halsey Drive)
- Northern Region: (e.g., Bayview, Remuera)

A critical dimension of the design was the inclusion of the full socio-economic spectrum via the Ministry of Education's Schooling Equity Index (EQI) framework (*CHESS POWER*, 2026; Education, 2025; Ministry of Education, 2022, 2023). By sampling schools with EQI scores ranging from 344 to 569, the research captures perspectives from both high-resource environments and communities requiring significant equity funding. This dual-lens approach references both EQI and historical decile ratings and ensures the sample accounts for the long-term socio-economic realities of the Auckland Isthmus.

3.3.2.4 Governance and Pedagogical Diversity

The inclusion of both State (Public) and Private/Independent schools was essential for analysing:

Curriculum Autonomy: How different governance models interpreted the Top-Down mandates of the Curriculum Refresh.

Communication Practices: Variations in institutional communication capacity and parent expectations.

Cultural Responsiveness: By including schools in South and East Auckland with high Māori and Pasifika populations, the research aligns with the priorities of *Ka Hikitia* (Māori Education Strategy) (Ministry of Education, 2020) and the *Action Plan for Pacific Education*(Ministry of Education, 2020) .

3.3.3 Recruitment

The recruitment strategy was designed to ensure voluntary, anonymous, and equitable participation across Auckland's diverse communities. To mitigate these recruitment barriers, this study utilised a multichannel recruitment strategy, combining independent digital outreach with localised physical distribution. This dual-method approach was intentionally designed to bypass the traditional gatekeeper effect inherent in institutional educational research, wherein school administrations or formal institutional boards act as filters that can restrict or bias researcher access to parent networks (Busher & James, 2012; Wellington, 2015) By operating outside official institutional channels, the data collection reached caregivers directly through digital touchpoints such as geo-targeted Auckland community networks and parenting forums alongside physical touchpoints, which involved dropping off physical invitations to participate directly within the Auckland communities.

3.3.3.1 Recruitment via School Newsletters

Participants were initially recruited through study invitations embedded in school newsletters. This approach leveraged an existing mesosystemic channel (the established school-home link) to ensure the invitation arrived from a trusted source.

Method: Schools distributed a brief overview and a QR code/link to the anonymous online survey to the caregivers of children enrolled in school through their newsletter. Invitation to the survey attached as Appendix A

SBCC Alignment: This method provided a low-friction entry point for parents already engaged with school communications and ensured participation was entirely self-selected and non-coercive.

3.3.3.2 Recruitment via Flyers in Auckland Libraries and Superstores

To broaden the sample beyond those actively checking school emails, flyers were displayed on public noticeboards in Auckland libraries and high-traffic community superstores.

Rationale: These locations serve as neutral, high-traffic community hubs that attract diverse demographic groups.

Method: Flyers included a QR code for private, discretionary access to the survey, supporting broad and equitable access for parents who may feel marginalized by formal educational settings. Framed through an SBCC lens, this physical modality acts as an intentional equity intervention; it actively lowers the behavioural friction of participation and ensures an inclusive pathway for caregivers who may feel marginalized by, or distrustful of, formal educational settings. Recruitment flyer is attached as Appendix B.

3.3.3.3 Push-to-Web Strategy

To address the limitations (digital exclusion, email fatigue, algorithm filtering, and parental disengagement from school apps.) of purely digital outreach, a Push-to-Web phase was implemented via physical mail (letterbox drops). Push-to-Web is an established survey methodology wherein offline recruitment channels, such as physical mail, are strategically deployed to direct prospective respondents to an online data collection instrument.

Targeting Off-Grid Parents: This method was specifically selected to reach parents who may be digitally excluded, those who generally do not utilise school portals (e.g., HERO, Seesaw), and those who have opted out of email communications.

The Physical Intervention: Physical invitations provided a printed copy of Recruitment Flyer (attached as Appendix B), offering a direct URL and QR code to the survey while maintaining strict anonymity.

Methodological Impact: This targeted intervention proved essential for the study's approach, nearly doubling the initial response pool from 25 to 45 participants which later increased to 60 participants. This increase not only improved the number of respondents of the quantitative data but also expanded the diversity of the qualitative voices captured in the findings.

3.3.4 Secondary Data: Media and Digital Discourse

To provide a broader contextual layer to the primary survey data, this study incorporates qualitative media analysis from two key sources: Radio New Zealand (RNZ) https://www.rnz.co.nz/ and Reddit https://www.reddit.com/r/newzealand/, r/auckland

3.3.4.1 Radio New Zealand (RNZ): The Institutional Discourse

As New Zealand's primary public service broadcaster, Radion New Zealand (RNZ) serves as a key platform for official, professional and expert perspectives on public policy.

Method: A targeted sample of seven written articles published on the RNZ website regarding the 2024-2027 Curriculum Refresh were selected for analysis. These seven articles were chosen because they captured recurring sector concerns while representing key institutional voices, including policymakers, government officials, teachers, principals, and sector experts. Analysing these articles made it possible to identify the themes emphasized by actors working within the education system and compare them with the qualitative themes emerging from the caregiver survey data.

Function: This data represents an exosystemic influence, illustrating how Ministry-level decisions and curriculum reforms are interpreted, communicated, and evaluated by institutional decision-makers and those responsible for implementation. Rather than presenting a single institutional narrative, the RNZ articles analysed here reveal a spectrum of sector perspectives, from supportive alignment with reform goals to concerns about workload, clarity, and feasibility.

To address the mediated nature of public discourse, this study explicitly treats RNZ (Radio New Zealand) media reports not as neutral, unmediated objective records of educational events, but as discursive and framed media representations.

In alignment with critical media analysis and framing theory (Entman, 1993; Hall, 1980), the methodology recognizes that journalistic coverage is shaped by institutional editorial practices, newsroom sourcing, key-informant selection, and specific narrative framing techniques. Rather than using RNZ coverage to establish baseline empirical facts about policy implementation, these reports are analysed as a secondary discursive layer specifically to examine how public media constructs, amplifies, or simplifies policy narratives surrounding the New Zealand Curriculum Refresh.

By analysing RNZ reports as media constructions, the study critically evaluates the gap between formal institutional messaging, media representations, and the lived, localized sense-making of diverse whānau and school communities.

When analysed alongside digital discussions (Reddit threads), this data helps map the broader communicative environment in which families navigate and interpret curriculum changes.

3.3.4.2 Reddit: The Grassroots Discourse

The r/newzealand and r/auckland subreddits serve as online platforms for community-generated public discourse. Reddit was selected to capture naturally occurring, community-generated discussions that reveal how caregivers, teachers, and community members make sense of education policy in real time. Unlike formal media reporting or structured survey responses, Reddit threads capture spontaneous, qualitative data, allowing to observe how people interpret, challenge, or support curriculum changes in unprompted context. The platform's anonymous structure provides a medium where participants discuss their experiences and perspectives who often feel unable to express concerns publicly through official channels.

Selection Method: A sample of seven discussion threads specifically discussing the Curriculum Refresh, primarily those posted in direct responses to RNZ news articles published during the

2025-2026 reform period, were analysed and 37 distinct sub-threads were systematically extracted and analysed for recurring themes, perceived implementation barriers and user sentiments. Analysing these threads alongside the corresponding news articles allowed the study to observe how official communication is received, interpreted and reframed within public discourse.

Function: Digital discourse on Reddit serves as a proxy for macrosystemic public statement, capturing the raw, unfiltered concerns of caregivers and educators. It reveals hidden narratives such as usability of digital portals, and community perspectives toward rapid policy shifts, or peer-to-peer advice on navigating the reforms that participants might self-censor or omit in a formal survey environment.

3.3.5 Qualitative Data Corpus and Triangulation Framework

To evaluate caregiver and community sense-making surrounding the 2024-2027 Curriculum Refresh, qualitative data were gathered across primary survey feedback and a directly interconnected digital media discourse network.

3.3.5.1 Dataset Composition and Relational Sampling Design

The qualitative analytical corpus comprises primary open-ended survey responses (n=46 respondents) triangulated with a purposively sampled digital discourse network 14 interconnected macro-nodes):

1. **Primary Caregiver Survey Quotes (n=46):** 42 Open-ended responses collected directly from caregivers regarding school communication practices, assessment clarity, resource needs, and cultural alignment.
2. **Contextualizing RNZ Media Articles (7 articles, 33 quotes):** Public news articles from Radio New Zealand (RNZ) explicitly selected to corroborate, ground, and contextualize the macro-level policy concerns, implementation speeds, and sector critiques raised by survey parents.

3. **Relational Reddit Discussion Threads 7 primary threads containing 37 analysed sub-threads/comment branches):** Community discussion threads selected specifically because they directly shared, linked to, or debated those exact 7 RNZ news articles. Across these 7 main discussion threads, 37 distinct comment threads/topical sub-branches were analysed to capture unmediated, real-time caregiver and educator sense-making in direct response to mainstream policy reporting.

Table 5

Qualitative Data Corpus and Triangulation Architecture

Source Category	Sample Count (n)	Primary Data Type / Sampling Rationale	Role in Triangulation
Caregiver Survey (Qualitative Quotes)	42 qualitative inputs	First-person open-ended survey feedback	Primary Empirical Core: Localised, lived caregiver experiences of school communication.
RNZ News Articles	7 media articles analysed comprising 33 quotes	Purposively selected news reporting matching parent concerns	Macrosystem Context: Contextualizes and validates parent concerns against wider policy reporting.
Reddit Discussion Threads	7 main threads (comprising 37 analysed sub-threads/comment branches)	Primary discussion posts directly linking to or discussing the 7 RNZ articles	Mesosystem Sense-Making: Captures organic digital dialogue and debate triggered by the RNZ coverage.
Total Qualitative Corpus	**112 primary qualitative text units**	**Interconnected qualitative network**	**Methodologically closed triangulation loop**

Note. This table details the qualitative data corpus and the structural logic of the multi-source qualitative triangulation architecture.

3.3.6 Scope, Depth, and Conceptual Integration of the Study

To ensure analytical depth while addressing the multi-dimensional nature of institutional communication, this study establishes a clear conceptual hierarchy among its key constructs. Rather than treating curriculum reform, media discourse, digital channels, and cultural diversity as separate, parallel streams of inquiry, the thesis integrates them into a single, structured analytical framework where home school partnerships and parental engagement form the core object of study.

As illustrated in the theoretical hierarchy below, the eight core dimensions identified in this research are organized into four functionally distinct layers:

3.3.6.1 The Core Target Phenomenon (Primary Dependent Domain):

Home-School Partnerships & Parental Engagement: The fundamental subject of investigation is how relational trust, agency, and collaborative home-based learning behaviours are fostered or constrained within school communities.

3.3.6.2 The Primary Systemic Mechanism (Intervention & Process Layer):

Communication Practices & Information Access: Institutional communication serves as the operational mechanism being evaluated. The study investigates how schools' package, translate, and disseminate complex pedagogical information, and how structural barriers affect equitable information access.

3.3.6.3 The Empirical Context & Catalyst (The Case Study):

Curriculum Reform: The 2024-2027 New Zealand Curriculum Refresh serves as the specific, high-stakes empirical backdrop an active stress-test or catalyst through which baseline communication ecosystems and parental sense-making are examined.

3.3.6.4 The Channels & Mediating Context (Explanatory & Ecological Layer):

Digital & Media Discourse (Channels): Digital platforms (e.g., school apps, portals) and wider public/media narratives represent the specific communicative channels and discursive environments through which policy information is transmitted and interpreted.

Cultural Diversity (Mediating Reality): Auckland's superdiverse demographic context operates as the critical mediating lens, determining how intersecting cultural worldviews, linguistic backgrounds, and social capital influence how communication is decoded and acted upon by whānau.

By organizing these dimensions hierarchically rather than horizontally, the study maintains tight analytical focus on home-school communication and engagement, using the surrounding digital, media, cultural, and policy elements solely to explain how and why communication divides occur in superdiverse urban settings.

3.4 Ethical Considerations

In accordance with the institutional requirements of the Auckland University of Technology, this study was designed and executed in strict compliance with the ethical principles governing research involving human participants and public digital datasets. Formal ethical approval was reviewed and granted by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC) on 19 September 2025 under the reference number 25/284. Subsequently three amendments to data collection methodology was approved on 13 November 2025, 19 February 2026 and 9 March 2026. No primary recruitment or empirical data collection commenced until full, unconditional institutional approval was secured.

Because this research design employed a mixed-methods approach utilizing both human participants and secondary digital texts, the ethical framework was operationalized across two distinct dimensions: participant protection and digital data ethics.

3.4.1 Primary Data: Survey Questionnaire

Formal ethical approval was obtained from all relevant institutional bodies before any recruitment or data collection methods were deployed. This process occurred at three distinct levels: first, formal ethical clearance was granted by the AUT Human Research Ethics Committee; second, organizational permission was secured from the leadership of each participating school. These approvals covered the use of both digital survey links and localised physical invitation distributions, ensuring full protection of participant anonymity and voluntary consent. The approvals are attached in Appendix C. The ethics approval application focused on autonomy, informed consent, and the do no harm principle:

Informed Consent: Before beginning the survey, all participants were presented with a Participant Information Sheet (PIS). Proceeding to the first question constituted implied consent.

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal: Through the Participant Information sheet (PIS) participants were informed that their involvement was entirely voluntary. They were free to withdraw at any point during the survey by closing the browser window.

Anonymity and Confidentiality: No identifying information (names, IP addresses, or contact details) was collected. All demographic data (ethnicity, income, school region) were analysed in aggregate to ensure individual families could not be identified within the Auckland region.

Data Security: Raw data were stored on a password-protected, university-approved cloud drive and will be retained for 6 years before being securely destroyed by the university.

The participant information sheet is attached as Appendix D and survey instrument is attached as Appendix E.

3.4.2 Secondary Data: RNZ and Reddit ethical considerations:

In addition to primary survey data collection, this study incorporates secondary qualitative analysis of publicly available digital media and forum commentaries. Formal ethical approval for

the collection and thematic analysis of these public datasets was secured under the umbrella of the AUT Human Research Ethics Committee clearance protocol.

Because these secondary sources differ in their production and expectations of privacy, they were handled according to distinct ethical protocols: Crucially, formal ethics approval was obtained prior to the inclusion of these digital sources, ensuring that the use of public and media data adheres to strict academic standards regarding privacy, copyright, and the de-identification of individual contributors.

Radio New Zealand (RNZ) Permission: Formal clearance was sought and obtained from RNZ to utilise their transcripts as part of this study's qualitative dataset. The RNZ email consenting to the inclusion of interviews and news articles relevant to the current study is attached in Appendix F. All data from RNZ are treated as professional public articles. Attribution is provided to the original opinion piece's (journalists, experts, or politicians) as they were writing in an official, public capacity.

Reddit (Social Media Discourse): Public Domain vs. Privacy: While Reddit is an open forum where users are aware their posts are public, this study recognises the context of original intent. Users may not have intended their comments for academic research.

De-identification: To protect the digital privacy of individuals, all Reddit usernames have been removed.

Paraphrasing for Privacy: Where a direct quote was highly unique or potentially identifiable through a search engine, the study employed paraphrasing or masking of specific details while retaining the original meaning and sentiment. Paraphrasing was done with the help of Microsoft Copilot to ensure clarity, accuracy, and the removal of any traceable elements. This approach maintains participant anonymity while preserving the integrity of the underlying message.

Non-Interference: This was a non-interventional study; passive observation was adhered, to ensure the naturalistic integrity of the discourse. All data drawn from Reddit was collected in its naturally occurring form. No prompts, interventions, or researcher-generated stimuli were

introduced. This ensured that participants' expressions, interpretations, and interactions remained authentic and unaltered, preserving the naturalistic integrity of the discourse. By maintaining this passive observational stance, the study captures genuine processes rather than reactions shaped by researcher involvement.

3.5 Data Analysis

The survey generated both quantitative and qualitative data, requiring a mixed-methods analytical approach. Closed-ended items were analysed using descriptive statistics and cross-tabulations to identify patterns across demographic groups, levels of curriculum awareness, and parental engagement. The open-ended questions were analysed thematically to capture parents' perspectives, concerns, and suggestions in their own words.

3.5.1 Data Cleaning Process

Raw survey data is often messy, so several cleaning steps were necessary to ensure accuracy and reliability. Data cleaning involved screening for missing values, inconsistencies (spelling, use of capital and small letter), and typing errors prior to analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The raw survey file was exported from Qualtrics and opened in Microsoft Excel, where initial screening was conducted to identify incomplete or invalid responses. For a modest dataset, spreadsheet-based cleaning in Microsoft Excel was appropriate and allowed efficient screening for missing values and inconsistencies (Microsoft Corporation, 2024). In line with the information sheet, participants who exited the survey before completing the core demographic section were removed. Thus, from 60 surveys that were started, 14 had to be removed, leaving a final data set of 46 completed surveys.

The dataset was then checked for missing values, and formatting inconsistencies. Text-based responses were standardised (e.g., variations in spelling or capitalisation), and categorical variables were reviewed for internal consistency. For multi-select questions, responses were combined into a single column using comma-separated values to allow accurate counting and visualisation during analysis. These steps ensured that the dataset was clean, consistent, and

ready for descriptive statistical analysis and visualisation. Data cleaning was performed along the following parameters:

Handling Multi-Select Answers: Several questions (like ethnicity, subjects of struggle, and barriers) allowed parents to select more than one option. Custom scripts were written to combine the different options in one column. This ensured that if a parent selected both Math and Science, both were accurately represented in the final counts.

Percentage Calculations: To ensure an accurate representation of the data, percentages for each survey item were calculated based on the number of actual responses received for that specific question, rather than the total sample size (n=46). This straightforward approach ensures that skipped or missing questions do not distort the findings, allowing for a direct and reliable comparison of responses across different caregiver groups**.**

3.5.2 Data Analysis Procedures and Operational Layers

The analysis of the research data followed a systematic, multi-layered pipeline divided into three main operational phases: descriptive quantitative profiling, relational cross-tabulation, and multi-source inductive thematic analysis. All quantitative processing was centralized within Microsoft Excel, while qualitative text streams were processed using Reflexive Thematic Analysis.

3.5.2.1 Quantitative Analysis Protocol: Microsoft Excel

Microsoft Excel served as the primary tool for data cleaning and descriptive statistical analysis. Given the sample size (n=46), the platform offered a transparent and structurally appropriate interface to manage the dataset efficiently without requiring specialized statistical programming software.

To safeguard data integrity, a systematic data-cleaning protocol was executed within the spreadsheet. This involved running logical validation checks to isolate missing values, reconcile incomplete responses, and standardise categorical variables into consistent numerical codes.

To establish a verifiable audit trail, data processing was structurally segregated across a sequential multi-sheet architecture. By preserving the raw, unedited survey inputs on an isolated baseline sheet and executing all subsequent filtering and data transformations on separate operational layers using explicit cell formulas, the entire analytical pipeline remained fully transparent and reproducible for auditing purposes.

Following data sanitization, the quantitative analysis proceeded across two distinct operational layers:

Layer 1: Descriptive Baseline Analysis: The first stage involved generating frequency distributions (raw counts and percentages) for every survey item. This descriptive baseline served two primary analytical functions:

Demographic Mapping: By quantifying variables such as ethnicity, geographic zone, and household income, the analysis established a microsystemic profile, ensuring the findings are situated within the specific socio-economic realities of the Auckland region.

Attitudinal Benchmarking: Frequency counts for Likert-scale items provided a high-level overview of parental awareness, confidence levels, and communication dissatisfaction regarding the Curriculum Refresh.

Layer 2: Relational Cross-Tabulation: To move beyond aggregate frequencies, cross-tabulation was used as the primary analytical technique for examining the interactions between variables. This method allowed the research to move from surface level trends to a deeper more contextualized investigation of the relational and structural dynamics influencing parental engagement.

Disparities and Structural Barriers: Pinpointing exactly where specific demographic or linguistic groups encountered systemic friction. For example, this involved mapping whether lower rates of digital access directly correlated with decreased comprehension of the rapid curriculum shifts, thereby identifying pockets of technical exclusion.

Communication Consistencies and Strengths: Identifying "bright spots" or resilient communication pathways within the data. This meant uncovering specific institutional channels (such as localised face-to-face dialogue or translated physical resources) that successfully generated high clarity and trust among caregivers, regardless of their socioeconomic or demographic backgrounds.

Divergent Alignments: Revealing instances where parental interpretation and behavioural adaptation diverged significantly from institutional expectations. This dimension highlighted areas where the Ministry's intended policy framing failed to align with how superdiverse families practically contextualized the changes within their home microsystems.

3.5.2.2 Qualitative Synthesis: Multi-Source Thematic Analysis

To interpret the rich narrative data generated across the survey's open-ended responses, Reddit threads, and RNZ articles, the study employed Reflexive Thematic Analysis. This interpretive process followed an inductive, "bottom-up" approach, meaning that data coding and theme development were driven entirely by the semantic and latent content of the text itself, rather than being forced into pre-existing theoretical frameworks (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2019). By prioritizing this inductive pipeline, the resulting thematic architecture remained grounded directly within the lived experiences of the participating caregivers and the wider localised social discourse (Thomas, 2006).

The qualitative analysis layer followed Braun and Clarke's (2006, 2019) six-step framework, executed as an iterative pipelineThe qualitative data from the 46 primary survey respondents, alongside secondary text from Radio New Zealand (RNZ) and Reddit, was processed through the following six iterative operational phases:

1. **Familiarization:** The analysis began with an intensive, immersive reading of the unedited qualitative corpus. Raw text responses from Auckland caregivers were compiled alongside relevant RNZ article transcripts and localised Reddit logs. Preliminary, unstructured notes were taken to document immediate semantic patterns, such as recurrent mentions of curriculum confusion, cultural mismatch and anxieties, school capacity limits teacher workloads, trust in governance and temporal anxiety regarding implementation timelines.

2. **Coding:** Next, the data moved into formal, line-by-line open coding. Conceptual labels were assigned to discrete, meaningful units of text across all datasets to capture explicit friction points and communication drivers.

3. **Generating Initial Themes:** Once the open coding was finalized, codes sharing similar conceptual characteristics were grouped into broader, candidate thematic clusters. During this phase, localised codes like Digital Portal Friction, One-way Email Blasts, and Jargon Barriers were mapped together into an initial, macro-level candidate cluster focused on communication delivery failures.

4. **Reviewing Themes:** Candidate themes underwent a two-level interpretive quality check. First, coded extracts were re-read to ensure internal cohesion within each theme. Second, the themes were evaluated against the entire dataset to ensure they accurately reflected the balance of sentiment across both primary survey participants and secondary unmediated public threads. Potential themes lacking sufficient empirical evidence across the data streams were collapsed or discarded.

5. **Defining and Naming Themes:** The remaining themes were refined to capture their core conceptual and structural essence. At this stage, working titles were converted into academically rigorous headings that mapped directly onto the study's different layers. For instance, the descriptive category App Issues and lack of information was refined into *Communication and transparency*.

Cross-Dataset Triangulation and Synthesis: The 33 quotes from 7 RNZ articles were coded to examine how mainstream journalism framed these exact parental concerns. Concurrently, the 37 sub-threads across the 7 linked Reddit discussions were analysed to evaluate how community members decoded, contested, or validated the news coverage.

Thematic Aggregation: Coded data across all three interconnected levels were merged into seven overarching thematic domains:

Theme 1: Communication & Transparency (e.g., portal gaps, reporting ambiguity).

Theme 2: Perceptions of Curriculum Clarity (e.g. concepts of syllabus, availability of textbooks).

Theme 3: System Instability and Constant Change (e.g., too m

Theme 4: Governance Trust and Political Influence (colonial mindsets, politicisation)

any changes happening, pace of change, implementation frenzy)

Theme 5: Cultural Responsiveness & Identity (e.g., te reo Māori visibility, Te Tiriti obligations).

Theme 6: Support Needs (e.g., non-AI feedback, resource requirements).

Theme 7: Teacher Workload and Capacity Limits (e.g., teacher training, implementation push).

6. **Producing the Report:** The analysis culminated in the narrative architecture of the finding's chapter. Vivid, highly illustrative quotation exemplars were extracted from the survey feedback, investigative journalism pieces, and online posts to substantiate each theme. These data features were woven into an analytical commentary that explicitly connects raw community sentiment to the overarching structural evaluation of the 2025-2026 Curriculum Refresh.

3.6 Limitations and Delimitations

To provide a clear scope of the research, this section identifies the study's delimitations and limitations. It clarifies the deliberate boundaries set for this investigation as well as the constraints that influence its overall applicability and context.

3.6.1 Methodological Limitations

Despite the strengths of the mixed-methods design, several limitations must be acknowledged:

Self-Selection Bias: The study relies on voluntary participation. Parents who are highly engaged or particularly concerned about curriculum changes may be over-represented in the data compared to the general parent population.

Sample Size and Generalisability: Although the sampling captured a wide range of geographic and socio-economic backgrounds, the final sample size (n = 46) limits the extent to which the findings can be generalised statistically. A fully representative sample of Auckland caregivers would require more than 380 participants to meet a 95% confidence level with a 5% margin of error. Because achieving population-level generalisability was not the aim of this study, the quantitative results are presented as descriptive patterns, not predictive claims. The strength of this sample lies instead in its role within a mixed-methods design. When these descriptive trends are combined with the rich qualitative data, the study achieves strong localised transferability, offering meaningful insights into how Auckland caregivers navigate communication about curriculum change without claiming to represent all New Zealand families.

Digital and Linguistic Exclusion: Administered exclusively online and in English, the primary survey faces inherent digital and linguistic self-selection biases (Couper, 2000; Wright, 2005). Within Auckland's superdiverse landscape, this design disproportionately favours digitally connected, English-proficient demographics with the time and technology to engage. While the physical Push-to-Web mail intervention broadened the initial recruitment reach, participation ultimately required a smartphone or computer to scan the QR code or access the URL. Consequently, digital participation and English proficiency remains confounding factors, meaning the final dataset likely under-represents marginalized families facing the steepest technological and communication barriers within the educational ecosystem.

Depth of Inquiry: Quantitative items constrain the depth of responses. Although open-ended feedback and secondary media analysis provided narrative richness, the study lacks the interpretive and dialogic depth that interviews or focus groups might offer.

Temporal Boundary: The dataset incorporates information and responses available only up to March 2026. Because the Curriculum Refresh is an evolving reform, any policy adjustments, updated Ministry guidance, or shifts in communication strategy occurring after this date fall outside the study's analytical scope.

3.6.1.1 Methodological Reflection: Language Access and Recruitment Design

While the recruitment strategy intentionally sought to engage a culturally and socioeconomically diverse cross-section of Auckland caregivers, the operational decision to deploy recruitment materials and survey instruments primarily in English represents an important methodological boundary. In superdiverse urban settings where over 180 languages are spoken (Education Counts, 2025), the linguistic framing of recruitment invitations inevitably shapes who chooses to opt into empirical research.

To ensure transparency, the considerations surrounding language access at the design and recruitment stages are evaluated below across three dimensions:

Design-Stage Rationales and Trade-offs:

Construct Focus: The primary empirical focus of this study was evaluating how caregivers navigate, decode, and interpret formal school communication which is overwhelmingly produced and distributed in English across New Zealand state schools. Using English survey instruments enabled a direct evaluation of how caregivers interact with the actual linguistic and conceptual registers used in everyday school notices and curriculum updates.

Instrument Integrity: Translating complex Likert-scale items and specialized pedagogical terms across multiple community languages (e.g., Samoan, Tongan, Mandarin, Hindi) without formal cross-cultural validation risked introducing semantic variance or measurement distortion across sub-groups.

Methodological Self-Critique and Future Research Implications:

Inadvertent Exclusionary Dynamics: Relying on English recruitment invitations may have inadvertently created a structural barrier for recent migrants, refugees, or English Language Learner (ELL) caregivers who possess distinct, highly valuable insights into institutional exclusion.

Recommendations for Future SBCC Frameworks: Future iterations of Social and Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) research in superdiverse education systems

should incorporate co-designed, translated recruitment pathways and bilingual community researchers to ensure full equity of voice across all linguistic micro-layers.

3.6.2 Delimitations

The scope of this research was intentionally bounded by the following parameters:

Empirical Focus and Case Study Boundary: The empirical investigation is delimited to the 2024-2027 New Zealand Curriculum Refresh. Rather than functioning as a comprehensive evaluation of national education policy in its entirety, this contemporary reform initiative serves as the primary case study to examine the broader dynamics of public policy translation, caregiver sense-making, and institutional communication design.

Geographic Focus: The study is delimited to the Auckland region to explore curriculum communication within a high-density, superdiverse urban environment.

Participant Focus: This research centralizes parents and caregivers as the primary unit of analysis. While school leadership and educators play essential role in institutional delivery, the empirical scope of this study is focused on audience reception. By examining how institutional policy messaging is decoded, understood, and experienced withing microsystems, the research addresses a critical gap in understanding the home-school mesosystem during a macro-systemic policy shift.

Secondary Data Source: Secondary data was restricted to RNZ and Reddit to capture a high-contrast comparison between institutional and grassroots discourse. Other social media platforms (e.g., X, LinkedIn, Instagram) were excluded to maintain a manageable and focused qualitative dataset.

Time Frame: Although the Curriculum Refresh spans 2024-2027, this study focuses specifically on the 2025-2026 implementation phase. This timeframe captures the heightened period of institutional policy delivery, assessment benchmark shifts, and public political debate, providing a real-time window into caregiver sense-making during active reform. Prior curriculum

frameworks (such as the 2007 New Zealand Curriculum) and prospective policy phases beyond 2027 fall outside the analytical scope, except where participants explicitly cite them to contextualize current understanding.

Transferability: While the empirical findings are generated within the specific context of New Zealand's multicultural and educational environment, the analytical framework (integrating Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model with SBCC dimensions) is designed to inform transferable principles of multi-layered public communication design across complex social systems.

4. Findings

This chapter presents the findings from the online survey examining parents' and caregivers' awareness, experiences, and perceptions of the new curriculum in Auckland schools. The results are organised into three sections: Descriptive Analysis, Cross-Tabulations, and Thematic Analysis, which also incorporates excerpts from Radio New Zealand articles and paraphrased contributions from a Reddit discussion forum to triangulate the results coming in from the survey responses. Consistent with the study's mixed-methods design, the analysis reports observable patterns in the data without interpretation. The chapter begins with an overview of the demographic profile of the forty-six participants whose responses form the basis of the findings.

4.1 Descriptive Analysis

The following section presents the descriptive results of the survey, outlining the observable patterns in caregivers' responses without interpretation. These findings summarise the demographic characteristics of participants and report their levels of awareness, engagement, and experience with the new curriculum. The purpose of this section is to provide a clear, factual account of what the data shows before moving into deeper analysis in the subsequent thematic section.

4.1.1 Participant Overview

A total of sixty parents and caregivers began the online survey instrument. Following participant information sheet, respondents retained the right to withdraw from the study at any point during the foundational demographic matrix by terminating their browser session. This option was used by fourteen respondents (23.3%) as they exited the survey prior to completing the foundational demographic matrix. Consequently, the final verified dataset comprises forty-six responses (76.7%), which serve as the empirical baseline for all subsequent descriptive, cross-tabulation, and thematic analyses.

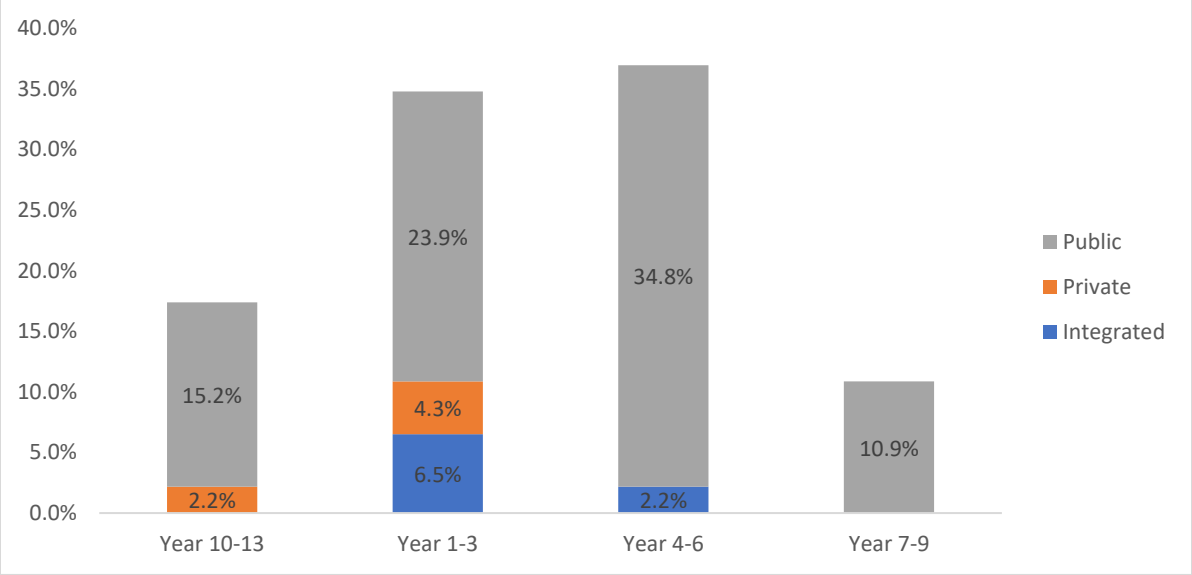
The demographic profile of the macro-sample (N=46) is presented across its relational, institutional, geographic, and socio-economic variables below:

Caregiver Relationship and Family Structure: The cohort was predominantly composed of parents (93.5%, n=43), with minor representations of legal guardians (4.3%, n=2) and grandparents (2.2%, n=1). Most families involved had either one (45.7%) or two (45.7%) school aged children, while the remaining Most families involved had either one (45.7%) or two (45.7%) school aged children, while the remaining 8.7% (n=4) managed three or more children.

Institutional Context and Year Levels: In terms of institutional enrolment, most respondents' children attended public state schools (84.8%, n=39), followed by state-integrated schools (8.7%, n=4) and private institutions (6.5%, n=3). Students were predominantly concentrated within the primary schooling tiers, with 37.0% (n=17) enrolled in Years 4 to 6 and 34.8% (n=16) in Years 1 to 3. The remaining sample spanned senior secondary cohorts (Years 10 to 13 at 17.4%, n=8) and intermediate cohorts (Years 7 to 9 at 10.9%, n=5). These findings are presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2

School Type and School Year Levels



Geographic and Ethnic Distribution: Geographically, respondents spanned the broader Auckland region, with the highest concentration residing in West Auckland (37.0%, n=17), followed by North Auckland (19.6%, n=9), South Auckland (15.2%, n=7), and East Auckland (10.9%, n=5), while 17.4% (n=8) of respondents omitted this question.

Figure 3

Ethnicity of Respondents

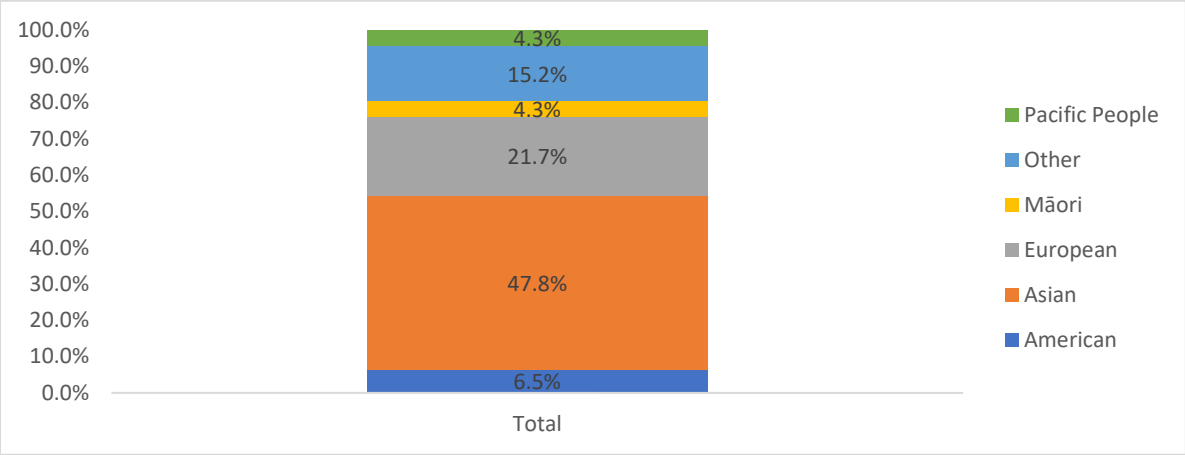
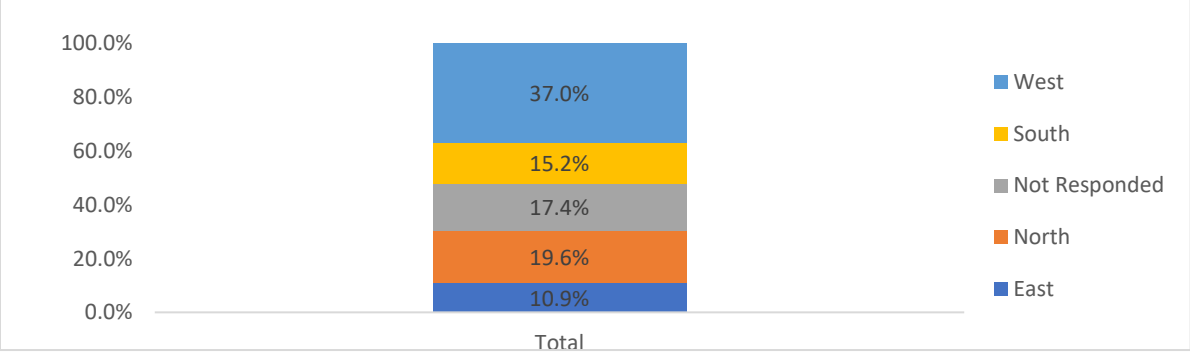


Figure 4

Geographic Location of Respondents

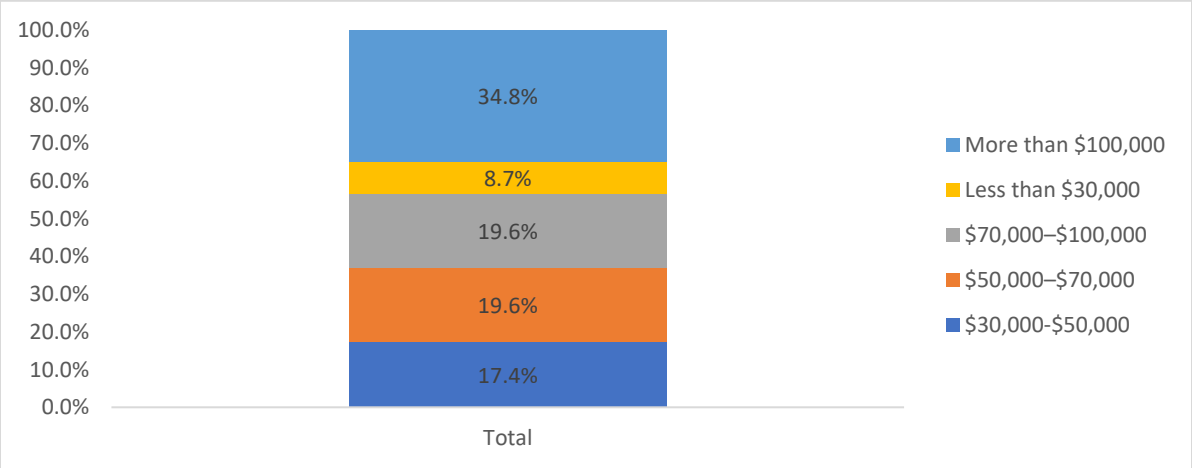


The ethnic composition of the sample was diverse: the largest single demographic group identified as Asian (47.8%, n=22), followed by European (21.7%, n=10), American (6.5%, n=3), Māori (4.3%, n=2), and Pacific Peoples (4.3%, n=2). Additionally, 15.2% (n=7) of the sample identified with mixed, multi-ethnic, or alternative backgrounds including specific configurations such as Māori-Dutch, Pakistani-Dutch, Māori-European, South African, and Middle Eastern heritages. Due to the modest baseline sample size (n=46) and to maintain analytical viability during cross-tabulation, these distinct configurations were consolidated under the aggregate categorical label of 'Other' within the quantitative dataset. These are presented in Figure 3 and Figure 4.

Socio-Economic Stratification: Financially, the participating households reflect a broad socio-economic continuum based on annual household income. The largest income group reports an annual income exceeding $100,000 NZD (34.8%, n=16). The remaining sample was distributed relatively evenly across middle- and lower-income brackets, with the $70,000 to $100,000 range accounting for 19.6% (n=9), the $50,000 to $70,000 range accounting for 19.6% (n=9), and the $30,000 to $50,000 range accounting for 17.4% (n=8). Households reporting an annual net income below $30,000 comprised the final 8.7% (n=4) of the sample. These findings are presented in Figure 5.

Figure 5

Income Profile of Families

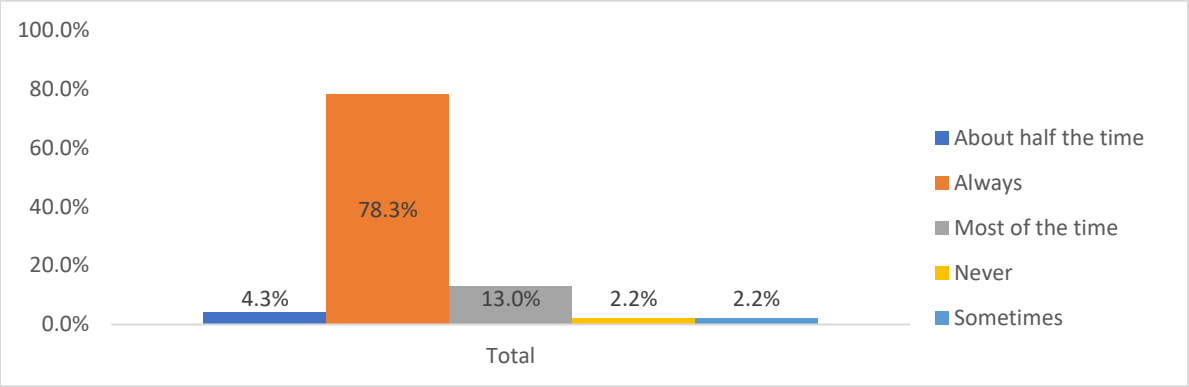


4.1.2 Parental Involvement:

The survey dataset demonstrates high levels of parental involvement across multiple vectors of direct communication, institutional monitoring, and formal engagement. A substantial majority of respondents (78.3%, n=36) indicated that they *always* attend parent-teacher meetings, followed by 13.0% (n=6) who attend *most of the time*, 4.3% (n=2) who attend *half the time*, 2.2% (n=1) who attend *occasionally*, and 2.2% (n=1) reported *never* attending these scheduled sessions. These findings are presented in Figure 6.

Figure 6

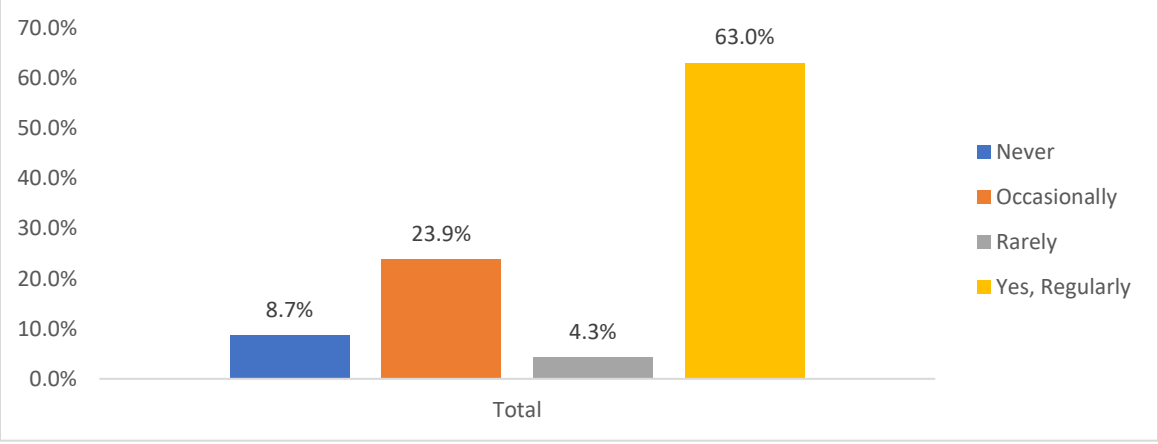
Caregivers' Attendance at Parent-Teacher Meetings



This commitment is mirrored in how families interact with school learning management systems. According to the survey results participating caregivers utilize digital school portals to monitor academic progress, with 63.0% (n=29) accessing them *regularly* and 23.9% (n=11) doing so *occasionally*. In contrast, a small minority of respondents reported that they *rarely* (4.3%, n=2) or *never* (8.7%, n=4) log into these platforms. These findings are presented in Figure 7.

Figure 7

Caregivers' Use of School Digital Portals

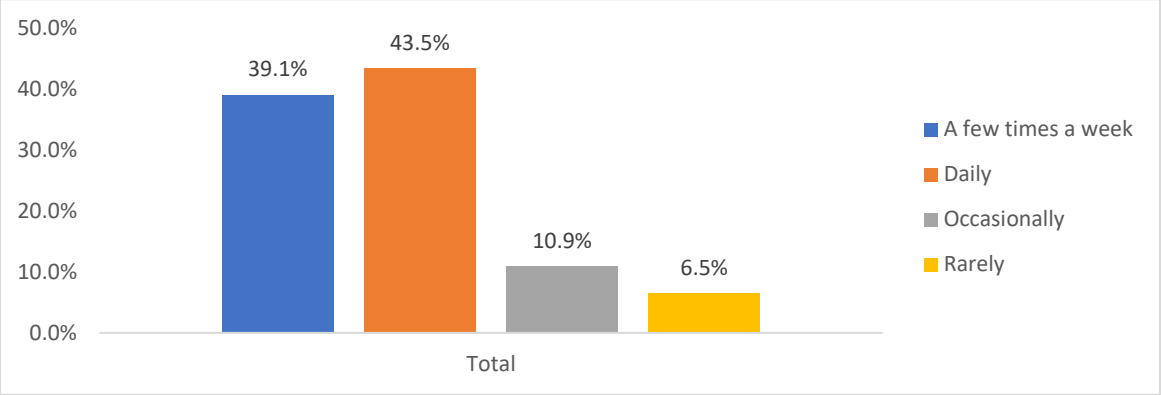


In terms of immediate home-based interactions of caregivers with school going children about daily school activities survey data suggests, 43.5% (n=20) of caregivers reported *daily*, and 39.1%

(n=18) do so *a few times per week,* with 8.7% and 4.3% *never* and *rarely* (respectively) discussed the daily school day. These are presented in Figure 8 below.

Figure 8

Caregivers' Dialogue with Children About School Activities

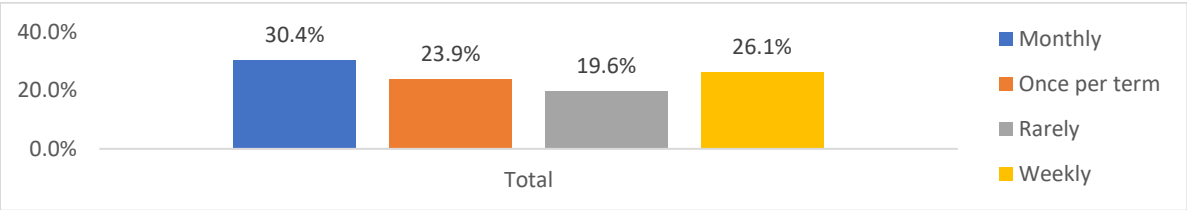


Direct, hands-on support for homework tasks showed greater variance across households. While 32.6% (n=15) assisted with homework *a few times a week* and 15.2% (n=7) provided support *daily*; a notable 30.4% (n=14) of respondents reported that they *never* assist with homework tasks.

Active communication with institutional staff, such as classroom teachers or school principals, varied from weekly (26.1% (n=12), monthly (30.4% (n=14), once per term (23.9% (n=11), or rarely (19.6% (n=9). These are presented in Figure 9.

Figure 9

Caregivers' Frequency of Communication with School Staff

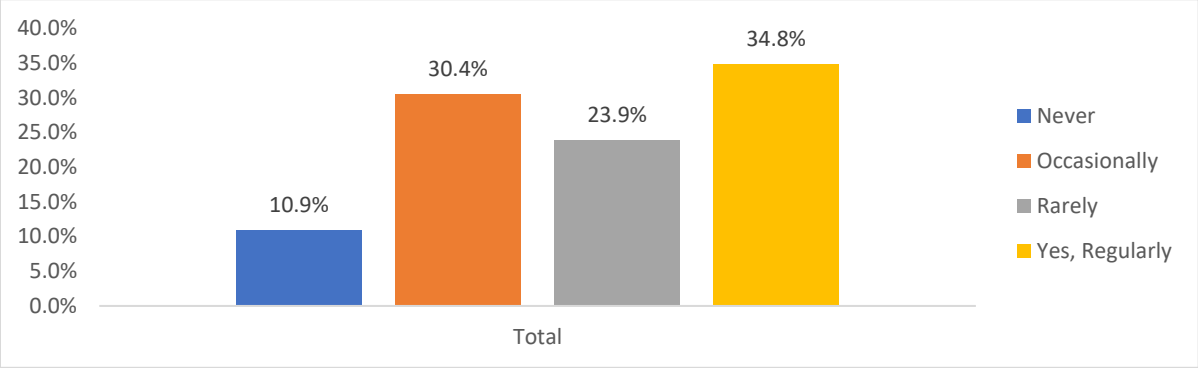


In terms of helping at school functions, such as volunteering or institutional sports events, (34.8% (n=16) participated *regularly* and (30.4% (n=14) *occasionally*, while a smaller proportion (23.9%

(n=11) participated *rarely* and (10.9% (n=5) *never* in these school activities. These findings are presented in Figure 10.

Figure 10

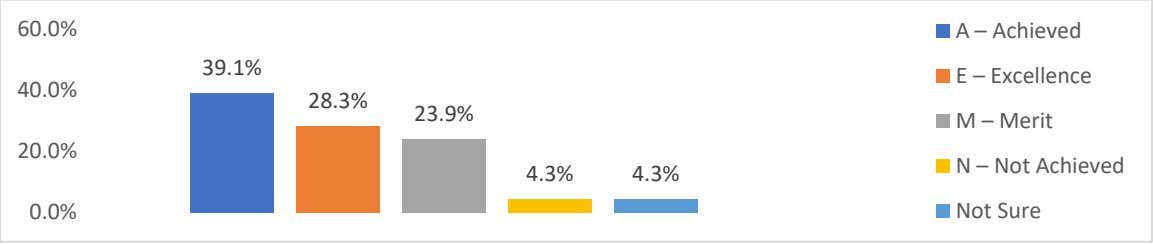
Caregivers' Involvement in School Activities



For the question about caregivers' evaluation of their children's overall academic performance, 39.1% (n=18) of respondents reported a baseline performance at the *Achieved* level, while 23.9% (n=11) reported *Merit* achievement, and 28.3% (n=13) recorded *Excellence* outcomes. *Not Achieved* outcomes accounted for 4.3% (n=2) of the sample, with an identical 4.3% (n=2) stating they were *not sure* of their child's current academic performance. These findings are presented in Figure 11.

Figure 11

Academic Performance Reported by Caregivers

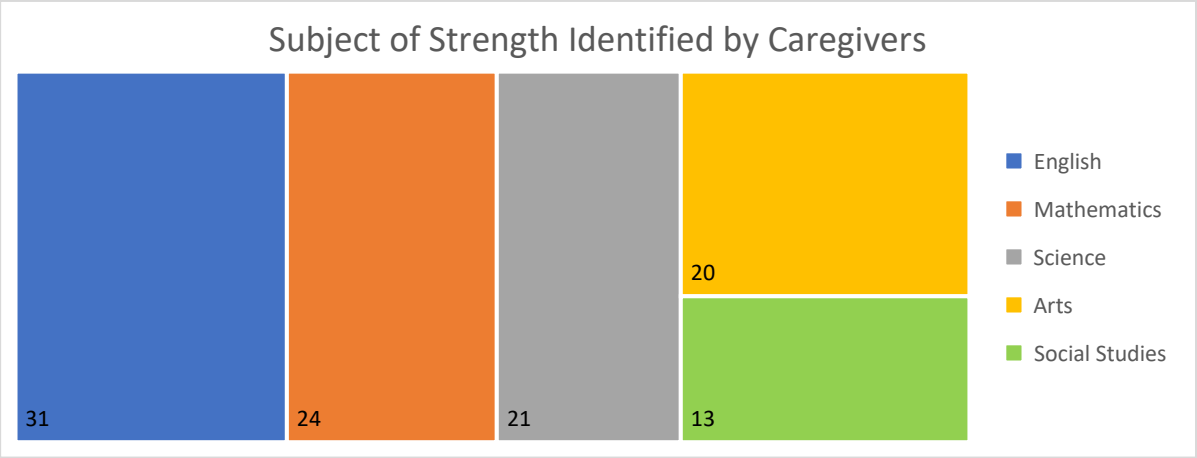


Because participants were permitted to select multiple core academic areas for performance tracking, specific subject proficiencies and challenges were evaluated via total cumulative mentions across the macro-sample. English and Mathematics were identified as the primary

areas of student strength in this sample, receiving 31 and 24 mentions respectively. These were followed by science (21 mentions) and the arts (20 mentions), while social studies was selected as an area of strength by only 13 respondents. These findings are presented in Figure 12.

Figure 12

Subject of Strength Perceived by Caregivers

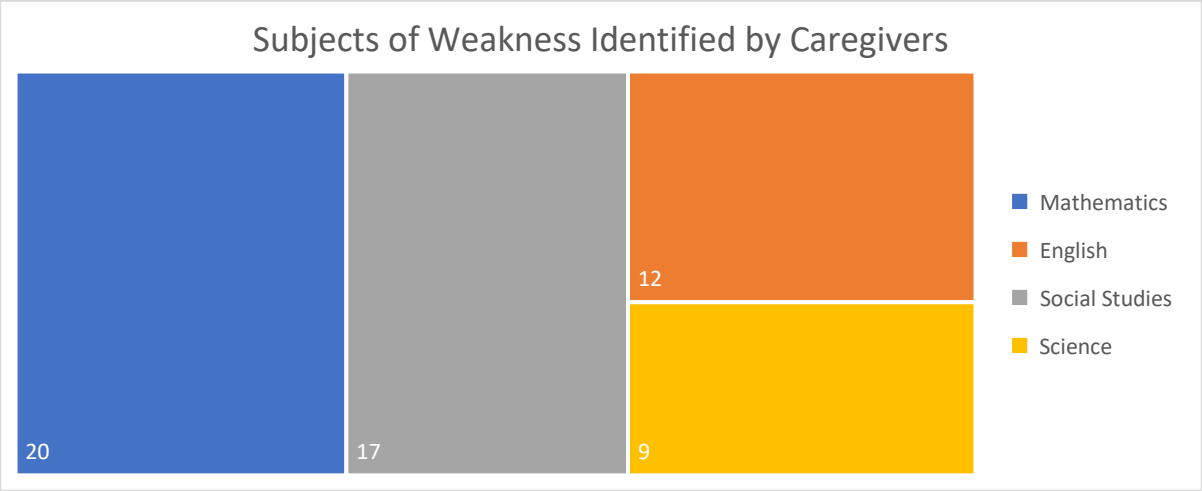


Parallel to these strengths, the data highlights localised academic challenges. Mathematics, which 24 respondents considered one of their children's strongest subjects, was also among the most frequently listed area of difficulty with 20 mentions, across the dataset. Social Studies was identified as the second most challenging subject area with 17 mentions, followed by English (12 mentions) and Science (9 mentions). These findings are presented in Figure 13.

Finally, a total of seven entries demonstrated an explicit overlap where a single caregiver identified a specific subject as both an area of strength and an area of difficulty for their child. Mathematics accounted for the largest share of these overlapping responses (3 entries), followed by Science (2 entries), English (1 entry), and Social Studies (1 entry).

Figure 13

Subjects of Weakness Identified by Caregivers

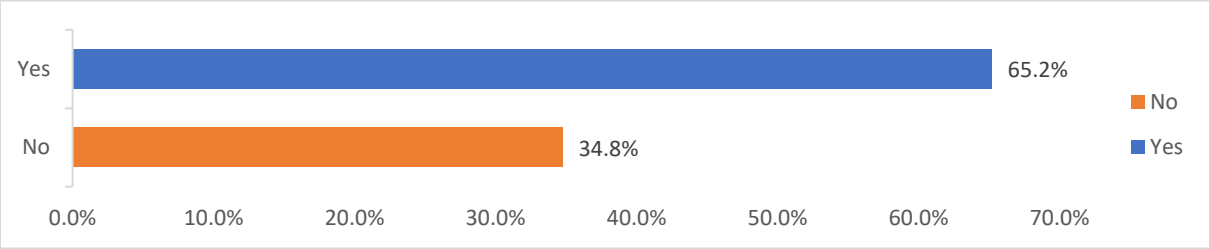


4.1.3 Awareness of the New Curriculum

Descriptive analysis of caregiver awareness demonstrated that a majority of the sample (65.2%, n=30 out of 46) were aware of the curriculum change, while the remaining 34.8% (n=16) reported no baseline awareness. Represented in Figure 14.

Figure 14

Caregivers' Awareness of Curriculum Reform

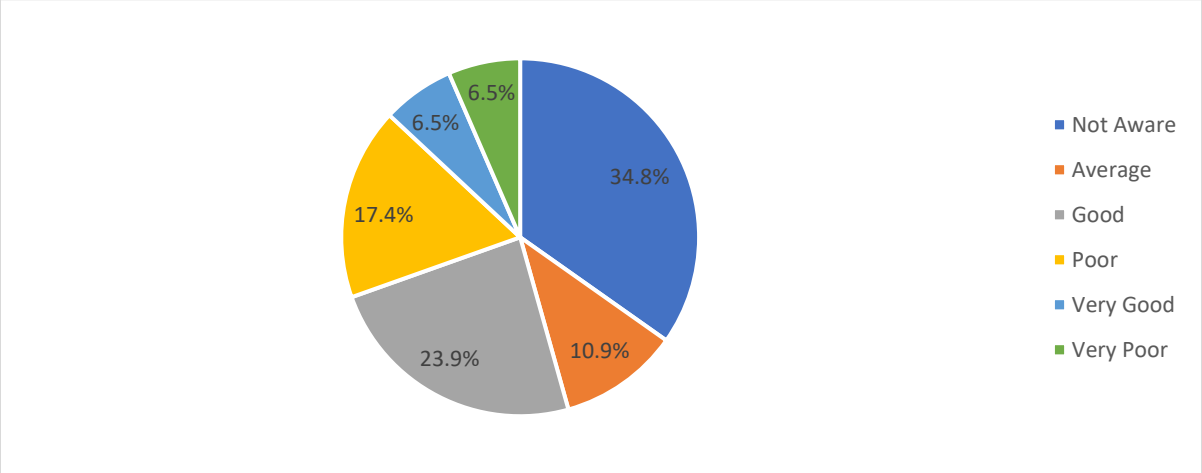


However, even though most respondents were aware of that the curriculum would be changing, the majority of participants indicate that they do not know much about the proposed changes. Among the total sample pool, only 6.5% (n=3) evaluated their understanding as *Very Good*, while 23.9% (n=11) rated it as *Good*. Conversely, a combined 37.0% of respondents reported their

understanding as either *Average* (10.9%, n=5), *Poor* (17.4%, n=8), or *Very Poor* (6.5%, n=3). These are presented in Figure 15.

Figure 15

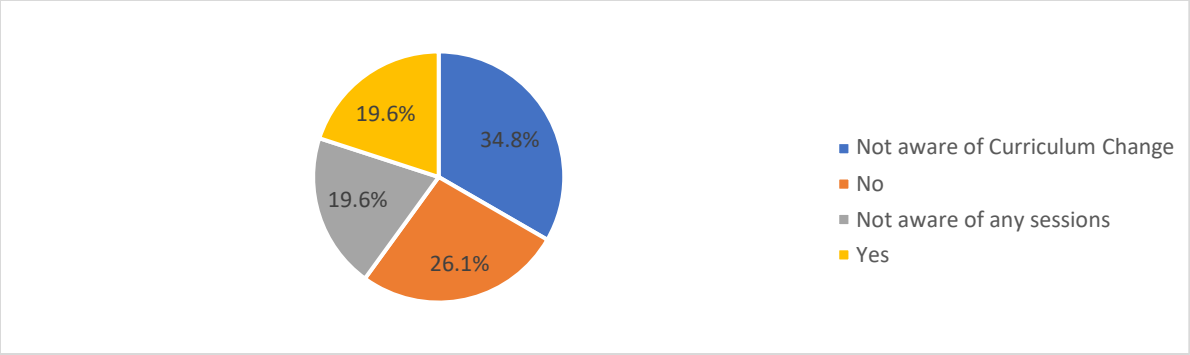
Caregivers' Understanding of the New Curriculum



Attendance at school-led curriculum information sessions or workshops was low across the sample. Only 19.6% (n=9) of respondents said they had attended a workshop or briefing on the curriculum updates, while 78.3% (n=36) had not attended any such sessions.

Figure 16

Caregivers' Attendance in School Led Sessions on Curriculum Reform

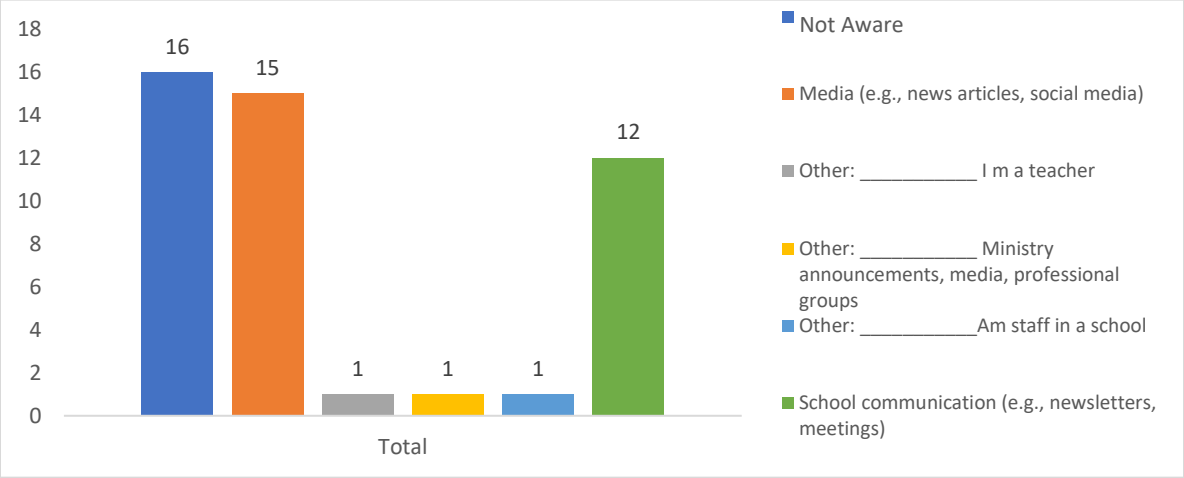


Of those who had not attended, 19.6% (n=9) said they were unaware that their child's school was offering them. This data is presented in Figure 16.

Caregivers reported three main sources of information about the curriculum reform. Independent media, including social media and news articles, was the most common source, cited by 32.6% (n=15) of respondents. Direct school communication, such as newsletters and meetings, accounted for 26.1% (n=12). The remaining 6.5% (n=3) said they learned about the changes through their professional links to academia. Whereas, 34.7% (n=16) were not aware of curriculum change. These findings are shown in Figure 17.

Figure 17

Caregivers' Identified Channels of Information About Curriculum Change



4.1.4 Curriculum Content and Perceptions:

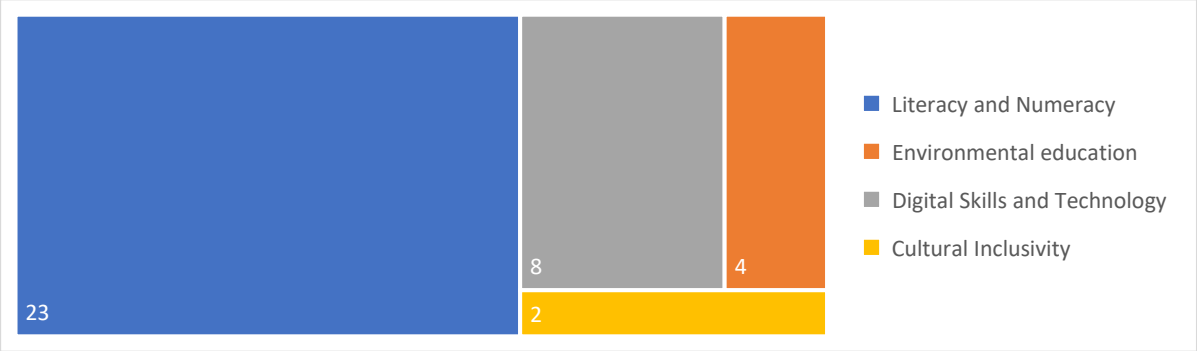
Descriptive analysis of the specific policy pillars within the curriculum refresh demonstrated that caregiver knowledge was predominantly concentrated on the literacy and numeracy components. Because this question allowed respondents to select more than one option, the total number of recorded responses exceeds the number of participants, and the recorded responses are counted as mentions.

Each selection is counted individually, which expands the dataset and reflects the multi-dimensional nature of caregivers' experiences. Within the sample, caregivers made 23 mentions of literacy and numeracy as the core focus areas of the reforms. Other legislated curriculum components received substantially lower recognition across the cohort, with digital

skills and technology receiving eight mentions and environmental education receiving four mentions. These are presented in Figure 18.

Figure 18

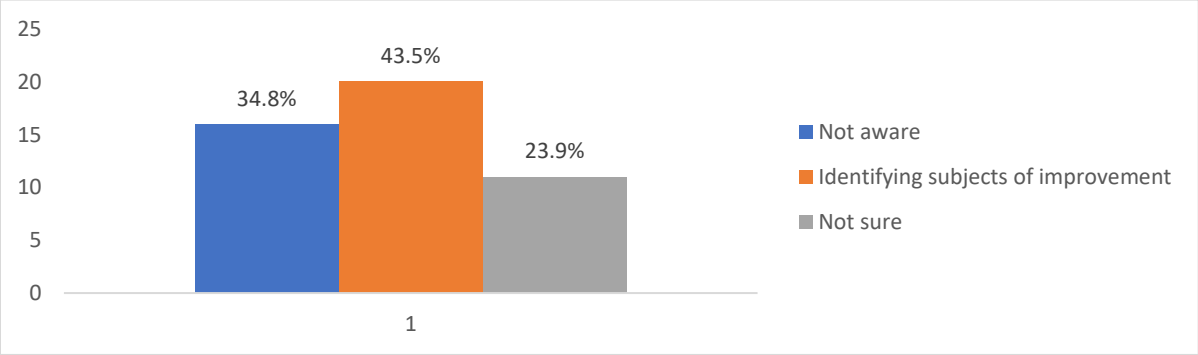
Perception of Caregivers about Focus Area for Curriculum Change



The reported impact of the new framework across specific subject areas revealed varied parental visibility over academic progress. A total of 43.5% of caregivers (n=20) identified at least one subject area showing noticeable student improvement under the new guidelines. These are presented in Figure 19.

Figure 19 :

Percentage of Caregivers identifying Subject Improvement

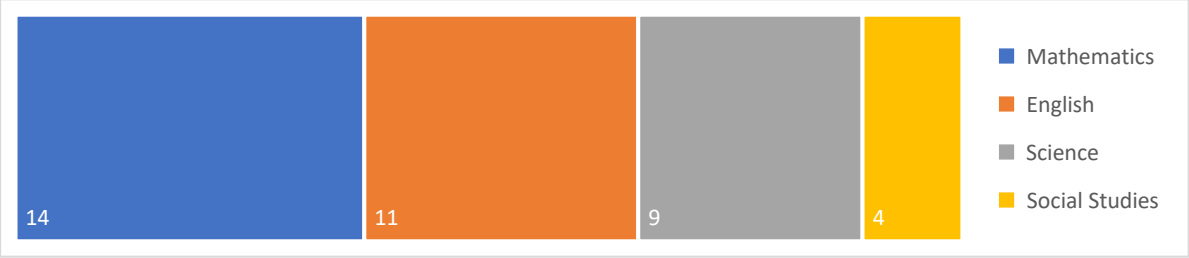


Because participants were permitted to select multiple fields, outcomes are tracked via cumulative frequency counts: Mathematics emerged as the primary area of perceived improvement (14 mentions), followed by English (11 mentions), Science (9 mentions) and Social Studies (4 mentions). In contrast, 21.7% of the sample (n=10) stated they had no knowledge of

any academic improvements occurring in any subject area under the current framework. These are presented in Figure 20.

Figure 20

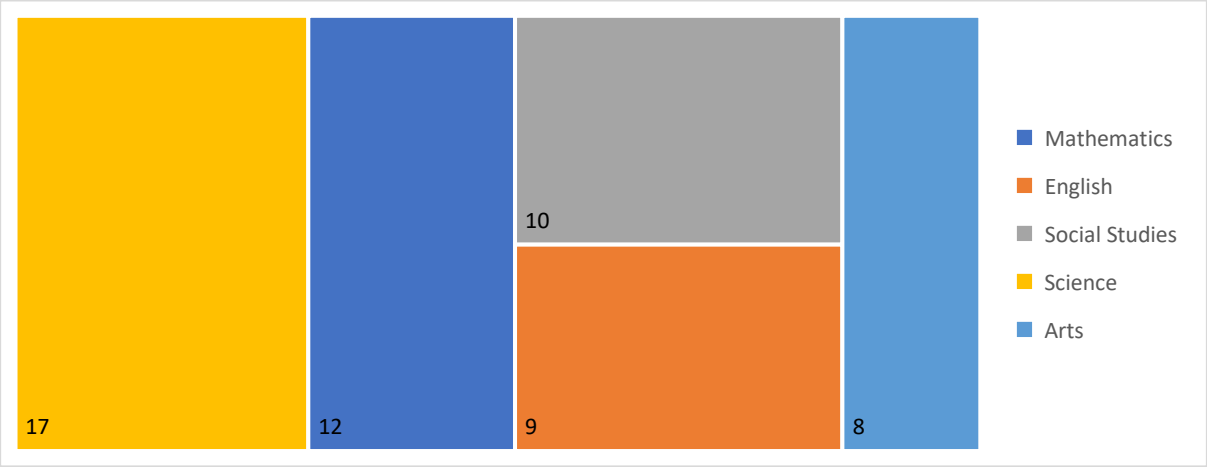
Perception of Caregivers About Subject Improvement



When asked to identify which subjects require structural expansion or greater instructional attention within the current curriculum layout, Science emerged as the primary area of caregiver concern, receiving (17 mentions) across the dataset. This was followed by Mathematics (12 mentions), Social Studies (10 mentions), English (9 mentions), and the Arts (8 mentions).

Figure 21

Caregivers' Identification of Subject Requiring More Improvement



Within the open-ended text fields accompanying this inquiry, two respondents explicitly emphasised the necessity of restoring targeted instruction in Aotearoa New Zealand histories, Te

Tiriti o Waitangi (Treaty of Waitangi) content, and *te reo Māori* learning opportunities. These are presented in Figure 21.

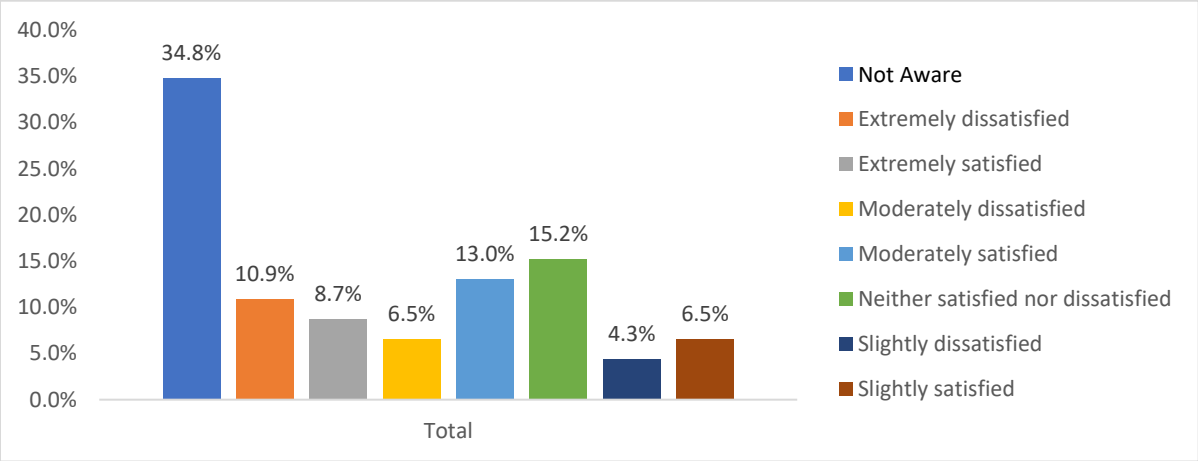
Furthermore, Participants also voiced a desire for expanded curriculum integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) frameworks and progressive digital competencies. These suggestions were accompanied by recurring statements from caregivers noting that a lack of structured, transparent institutional information from schools actively prevented them from evaluating whether any substantive classroom or subject-level improvements had occurred.

4.1.5 Curriculum Implementation Satisfaction and Future Preparedness:

Caregiver satisfaction regarding the active implementation of the updated curriculum framework demonstrated a broad statistical spread across the scaling metrics rather than a single prevailing community consensus.

Figure 22

Caregivers' Satisfaction Levels of Curriculum Alignment with Future Preparedness



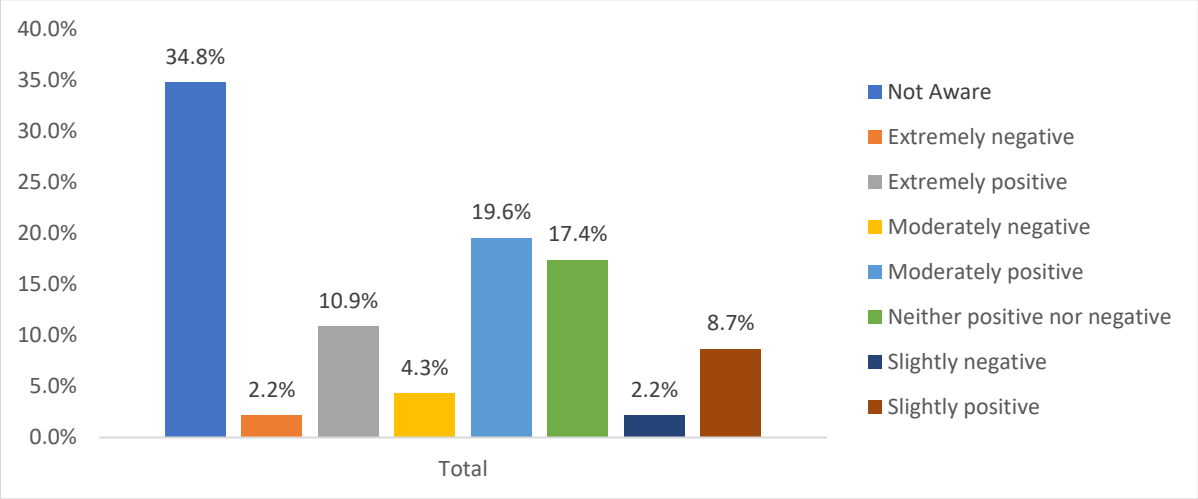
The largest single proportion of respondents positioned themselves at the midpoint of the evaluative scale, selecting neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (15.2%, n=7). This neutral baseline was lined by positive sentiments, with 13.0% (n=6) of caregivers reporting they are *moderately satisfied*, 8.7% (n=4) *extremely satisfied,* and 6.5% (n=3) *slightly satisfied*. Conversely, explicit structural dissatisfaction was recorded across 21.7% (n=10) of the cohort, distributed between

those identifying as *extremely dissatisfied* (10.9%, n=5), *moderately dissatisfied* (6.5%, n=3), and *slightly dissatisfied* (4.3%, n=2). These are presented in Figure 22.

When evaluating the long-term potential impact of the curriculum refresh on their child's future opportunities, the analytical distribution revealed a cautious but positive-leaning outlook across the sample. A combined 39.1% of caregivers expressed optimistic expectations, with *moderately positive* emerging as the most frequent descriptor at 19.6% (n=9), followed by *extremely positive* at 10.9% (n=5) and *slightly positive* at 8.7% (n=4). A substantial segment of the cohort remained strictly neutral regarding long-term projections, with 17.4% (n=8) selecting *neither satisfied nor dissatisfied*, while the remaining 8.7% (n=4) anticipated negative future outcomes. These are presented in Figure 23.

Figure 23

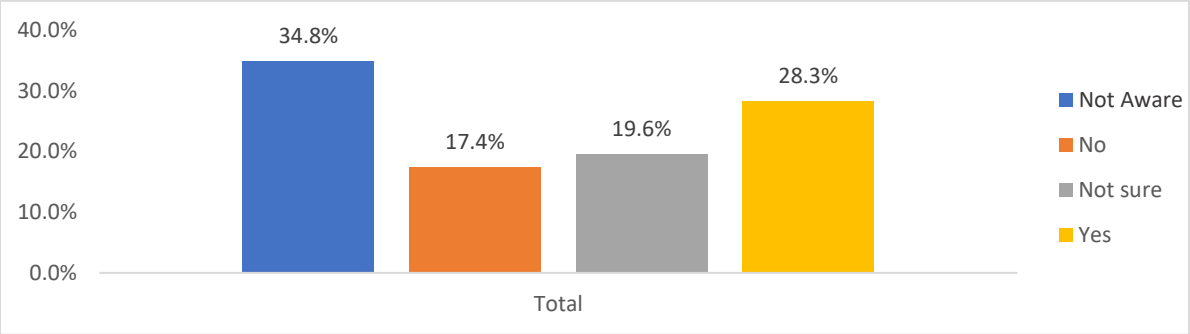
Caregivers' Perception of New Curriculum and Future Outcomes



When evaluating the perceived alignment between the updated framework and student needs, most caregivers (28.3%, n=13) agreed that the curriculum modifications align with their child's learning requirements. Conversely, 19.6% (n=9) reported uncertainty about it, and 17.4% (n=9) expressed disagreement with the alignment of curriculum change policy with future readiness. These are presented in Figure 24.

Figure 24

Caregivers' Perceived alignment of Curriculum with future needs

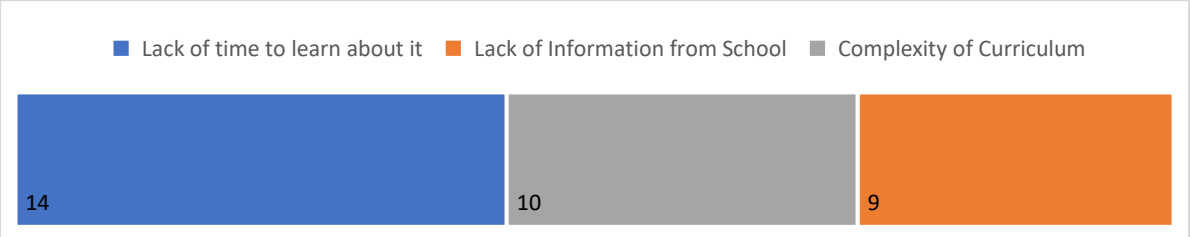


4.1.6 Barriers to Understanding and Support Needs for Understanding the Curriculum

The survey results identified localised barriers reported by caregivers in relation to engagement with the updated curriculum framework, alongside targeted forms of support identified to bridge current informational gaps. Regarding the specific challenges limiting engagement, a subset of 30 respondents interacted with this item, with 54.4% (n=25) identifying at least one structural obstacle and 6.5% (n=3) reporting no challenges faced. From the remaining 39.1% (n=18) 34.8% were not aware of curriculum changes and 4.3% (n=2) who were aware did not answer this question.

Figure 25

Caregivers' Identification of Barriers to Understanding the Curriculum



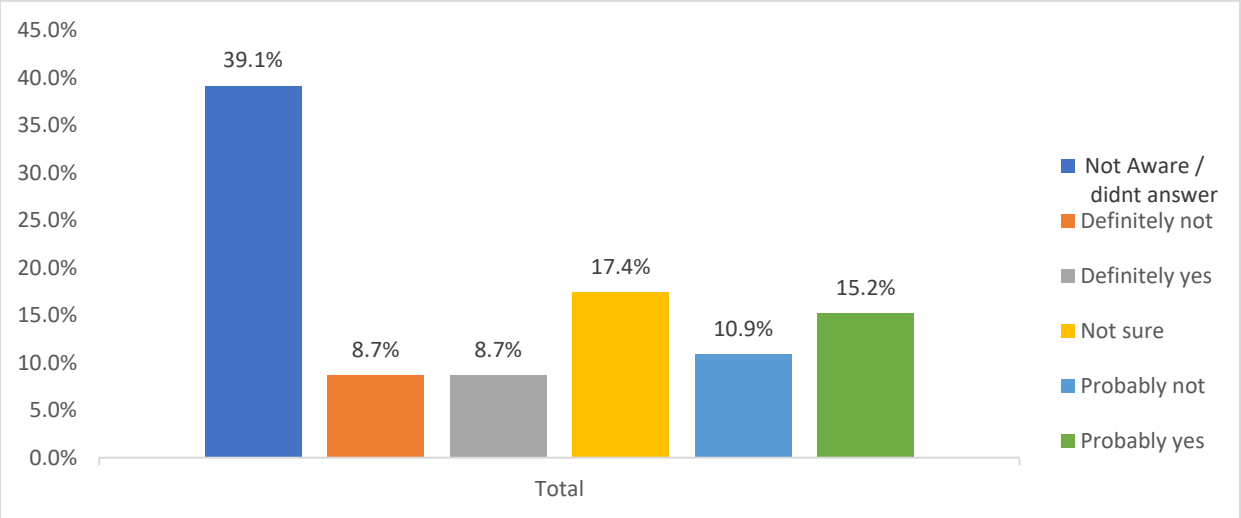
The most prominent obstacle identified was as a lack of time to learn about the modifications (14 mentions), followed by the perceived complexity of the curriculum itself (10 mentions) and

an insufficient distribution of information from the school (9 mentions). These are presented in Figure 25.

Qualitative text entries within these rows provided expanded context for these structural frictions. Caregivers cited a distinct lack of foundational “clarity from the Ministry of Education”, “an absence of physical textbooks”, and an overriding sentiment that institutional changes were being executed too rapidly. Specific technological and sociological concerns were also raised, with one respondent noting a lack of curriculum-specific documentation on digital parent portals, while another expressed concern that the rapid policy revisions represented a structural regression aligned with a colonial past.

Figure 26

Caregivers’ Perception of School Provided Resources Adequacy



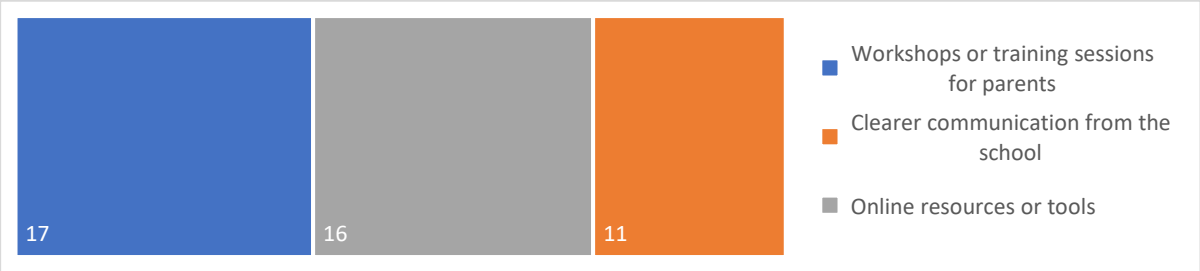
This underlying struggle for clarity was mirrored in caregiver evaluations of the informational resources currently distributed by educational institutions. The cohort demonstrated a highly fractured perspective rather than a clear community consensus regarding resource adequacy. The largest single group of respondents remained structurally uncertain, with 17.4% (n=8) stating they were not sure if the provided resources were adequate. While a combined 23.9% (n=11) maintained a positive evaluation divided between those who selected *definitely yes* (8.7%, n=4)

and *probably yes* (15.2%, n=7), a combined 19.6% (n=9) felt the institutional resources were insufficient, split between *definitely not* (8.7%, n=4) and *probably not* (10.9%, n=5). The remaining 39.1% (n=18) were either not aware of curriculum change (34.8%) or did not answer this question (4.3% (n=2)). These are presented in Figure 26.

In response to these informational gaps, participants identified specific, forms of support. Because this item allowed for multiple selections, data trends were analysed through cumulative frequency mentions across the macro-sample. The most requested strategic interventions were dedicated *workshops or training sessions* for parents (17 mentions), closely followed by *online resources or tools* (16 mentions).

Figure 27

Support Requested by Caregivers to Understand Curriculum



Additionally, the need for *clearer communication from the school* administration was emphasised across 11 caregiver responses. Individual qualitative suggestions further suggested the provision of physical textbooks to families alongside the implementation of regular, highly transparent student assessment updates to track individual progress through the new curriculum tiers. These are presented in Figure 27.

4.1.7 Summary of descriptive findings

1. Participant Profile & Demographics

Household Structure: The sample was heavily dominated by parents 93.5%, n=43, with the majority managing either one 45.7% or two 45.7% school-aged children.

School Context: A vast majority of respondents' children attend public state schools (84.8%, n=39), predominantly concentrated in primary school tiers: Years 4 to 6, 37.0%, n=17 and Years 1 to 3, 34.8%, n=16.

Ethnicity & Location: The highest geographic concentration was in West Auckland 37.0%, n=17. The largest ethnic group identified as Asian 47.8%, n=22, followed by European 21.7%, n=10, and 'Other' (mixed/multi-ethnic backgrounds aggregated for analysis) at (15.2% n=7).

Socio-Economic Spread: The largest income group reported an annual household income exceeding $100,000 NZD 34.8%, n=16, while the remaining sample was distributed across middle- and lower-income brackets.

2. Parental Involvement & Academic Tracking

High Institutional Engagement: Caregivers showed strong baseline engagement: 78.3% always attend parent-teacher meetings, and 63.0% regularly log into digital school portals to monitor progress.

Home-Based Variance: While 43.5% talk to their children daily about school, hands-on homework support varies widely 32.6% help a few times a week, but a notable 30.4% never assist with homework.

Student Performance: Caregivers generally report positive student achievement based on New Zealand's NCEA-style metrics, with 28.3% reporting Excellence and 23.9% reporting Merit.

Subject Strengths vs. Weaknesses: English (31 mentions) and Mathematics (24 mentions) were cited as top subject strengths.

Paradoxically, Mathematics was also flagged as the top area of difficulty (20 mentions), followed by Social Studies (17 mentions).

3. Awareness and Understanding of the New Curriculum

The Awareness Gap: While 65.2% of caregivers were aware of the curriculum reform, their depth of understanding is very low. Only 6.5% rated their understanding as "Very Good," whereas 37.0% rated it as Average, Poor, or Very Poor.

Low Workshop Attendance: A striking 78.3% had not attended any school-led informational workshops, with 19.6% stating they were completely unaware that sessions were even being offered.

Information Sources: Caregivers primarily learn about the reforms through independent media/social media 32.6%, rather than direct school communication 26.1%.

Perceptions, Satisfaction, and Future Preparedness

Focus Areas: Caregivers clearly recognize literacy and numeracy as the core pillars of the new reform.

Perceived Improvement: 43.5% notice academic improvements under the new guidelines, specifically pointing to Mathematics (14 mentions) and English (11 mentions). Conversely, 21.7% have no knowledge of any subject improvements.

Desire for Expansion: Caregivers feel Science (17 mentions) requires the most structural expansion and instructional attention. Qualitative feedback also highlighted a desire for more AI/digital literacy integration, as well as maintaining targeted instruction in te reo Māori and Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Mixed Satisfaction: There is no community consensus on the rollout. While 28.2% lean positive (ranging from slightly to extremely satisfied), 21.7% express explicit dissatisfaction, and the largest single group (15.2%) remains strictly neutral.

5. Barriers to Engagement & Support Needs

Primary Obstacles: For those facing challenges, the biggest hurdles to understanding the new curriculum are a lack of time (14 mentions), the complexity of the curriculum (10 mentions), and insufficient school communication (9 mentions).

Resource Deficit: The community is fractured over whether school-provided resources are adequate: 23.9% say yes, 19.6% say no, and 17.4% are unsure.

Requested Support: In relation to the reported informational gap, caregivers explicitly requested dedicated parent workshops/training sessions (17 mentions) and the development of targeted online tools and resources (16 mentions).

4.2 Cross Tabulation Analysis

This section examines the associations between demographic variables and caregiver engagement metrics to identify systemic patterns across the sample. By cross-referencing income brackets, geographic locations, and ethnicity against curriculum awareness and satisfaction levels, the analysis describes how these measures varied together. These cross tabulations identify disparities in reported resource accessibility and institutional communication and provide a foundation for the subsequent thematic analysis.

4.2.1 Demographics and Access (Equity)

Analysis of these intersecting variables, identifies disparities across population groups. This demographic lens can inform designing of targeted interventions that foster equity and ensure no community is left behind.

4.2.1.1 Awareness of Curriculum Change versus Ethnicity

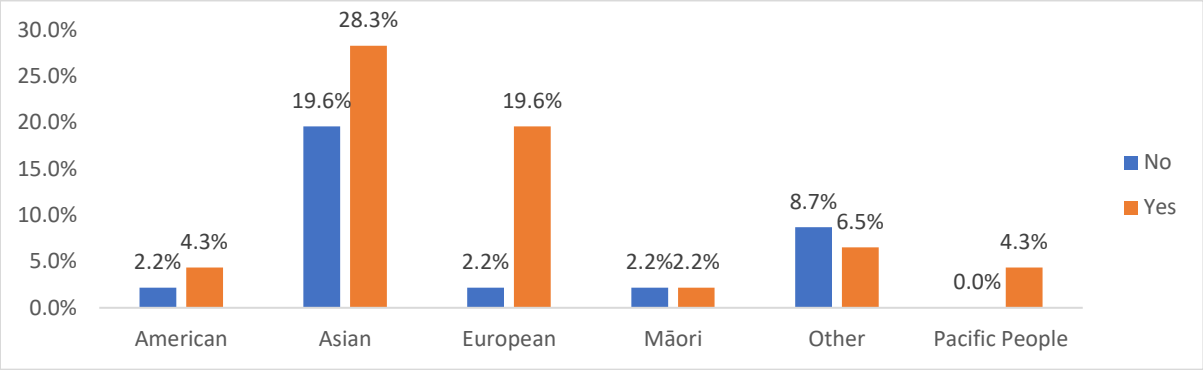
When demographic background was examined alongside baseline curriculum awareness, distinct variations in communication reach emerged. One of the key variables was ethnic background, as highlighted by the distribution across the total sample (n=46) European caregivers demonstrated strong message penetration; they accounted for 19.6% (n=9) of the total sample reporting baseline awareness, compared to 2.2% (n=1) who were unaware. Similarly, Pacific caregivers accounted for 4.3% (n=2) of the total sample, all of whom reported being aware (0.0% unaware), while American caregivers comprised 4.3% (n=2) aware and 2.2% (n=1) unaware respondents.

Conversely, awareness was highly divided within the Asian caregiver group, which represented the largest demographic block in the study. Out of the total sample, 28.3% (n=13) of Asian respondents reported being aware, while a substantial 19.6% (n=9) remained completely unaware signalling that message reach within this superdiverse cohort was deeply fragmented. Caregivers identifying within the "Other" ethnic category recorded a reverse trend, representing

the lowest proportional awareness with 8.7% (n=4) of the total sample reporting they were unaware compared to 6.5% (n=3) who were aware. Finally, Māori respondents were perfectly split, with aware and unaware individuals each accounting for 2.2% (n=1) of the total sample. These are presented in Figure 28.

Figure 28

Ethnicity vs Awareness of Curriculum Change



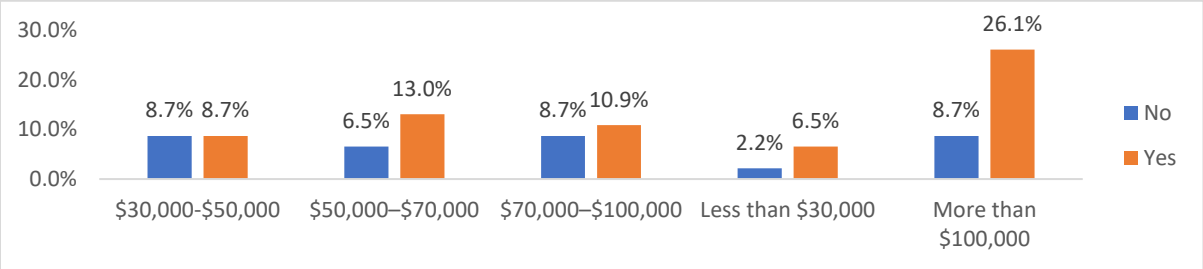
Note. This figure shows that curriculum reform messages were not evenly aligned with their cultural codes. With European's the alignment was very clear whereas for others the alignment differed substantially.

4.2.1.2 Income versus Awareness of Curriculum Change

Cross-tabulation of baseline curriculum awareness against annual household income variations across income groups. Caregivers earning more than $100,000 constituted the largest single economic bracket within the total sample (34.8%, n=16), capturing the highest concentration of message penetration. Within this high-income segment, 26.1% (n=12) of the total sample reported baseline awareness of the curriculum changes, while only 8.7% (n=4) remained unaware. A similar difference was visible within the $50,000 to $70,000 bracket (19.6%, n=9), where 13.0% (n=6) of total respondents were aware of the updates, compared with 6.5% (n=3) who were unaware.

Figure 29

Household Income vs Awareness of Curriculum Change



Conversely, the remaining income strata exposed much more fragmented or closely divided awareness patterns. Respondents within the $70,000 to $100,000 bracket (19.6%, n=9) were nearly split, with 10.9% (n=5) of the total sample indicating they were aware and 8.7% (n=4) indicating they were unaware. This communication divide was even more pronounced in the $30,000 to $50,000 range (17.4%, n=8), where respondents were perfectly split, with aware and unaware individuals each accounting for an identical 8.7% (n=4) of the total sample. Finally, among the lowest-earning respondents making less than $30,000 (8.7%, n=4), a minor baseline of awareness was maintained, with 6.5% (n=3) of the total sample reporting they were aware of the changes and 2.2% (n=1) reporting they were unaware. These are presented in Figure 29.

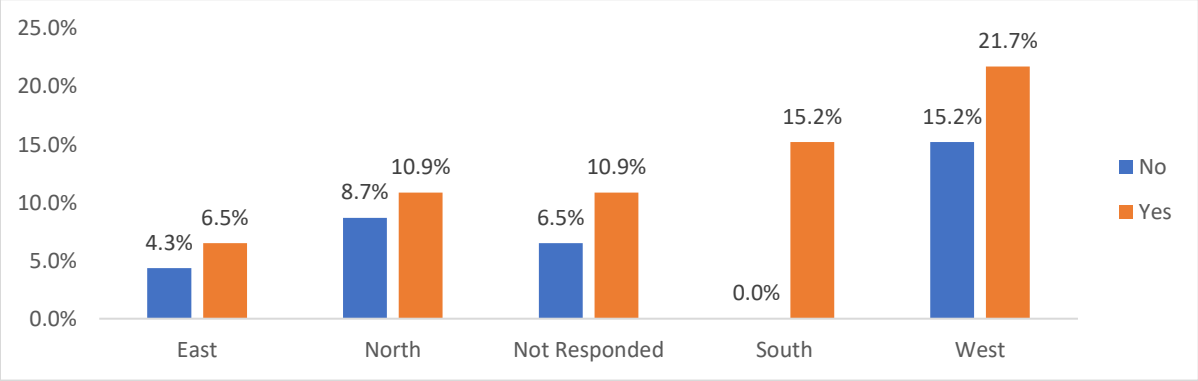
4.2.1.3 Awareness of the Curriculum versus Geographic location

Cross-tabulation of baseline curriculum awareness against the geographical region of the participant's school within Auckland revealed distinct variations in communication reach across the sample pool. Caregivers with children attending schools in West Auckland constituted the largest regional cohort within the study (36.9%, n=17), displaying a notable internal divide in awareness. Within this West Auckland group, 21.7% (n=10) of the total sample reported baseline awareness of the curriculum changes, while 15.2% (n=7) reported no awareness. In the North Auckland cohort (19.6%, n=9), a similarly close distribution emerged, with 10.9% (n=5) of the total sample indicating they were aware of the updates and 8.7% (n=4) indicating they were unaware.

The remaining geographic sectors demonstrated more concentrated or localised awareness trends. Respondents from South Auckland schools (15.2%, n=7) indicating full baseline awareness and 0.0% (n=0) reporting non-awareness. In the East Auckland sector (10.9%, n=5), 6.5% (n=3) of the total sample were aware of the modifications, while 4.3% (n=2) were unaware. Finally, among the participants categorized under the "Not Responded" bracket for regional school data (17.4%, n=8), 10.9% (n=5) indicated baseline awareness, while 6.5% (n=3) recorded no awareness. These are presented in Figure 30.

Figure 30

Auckland Regions of School/Respondent vs Awareness of Curriculum Change



Note. This figure shows that something was happening differently in South region where the awareness of caregivers about the new Curriculum was 100%.

4.2.1.4 Ethnicity versus Digital Portal Use

Cross-tabulation of digital school portal utilization frequencies against participant ethnicity reveals distinct, non-uniform distributional variations across the demographic segments. When evaluating these patterns by engagement tiers across the total sample (n=46), most digital interactions are concentrated within high-frequency usage habits.

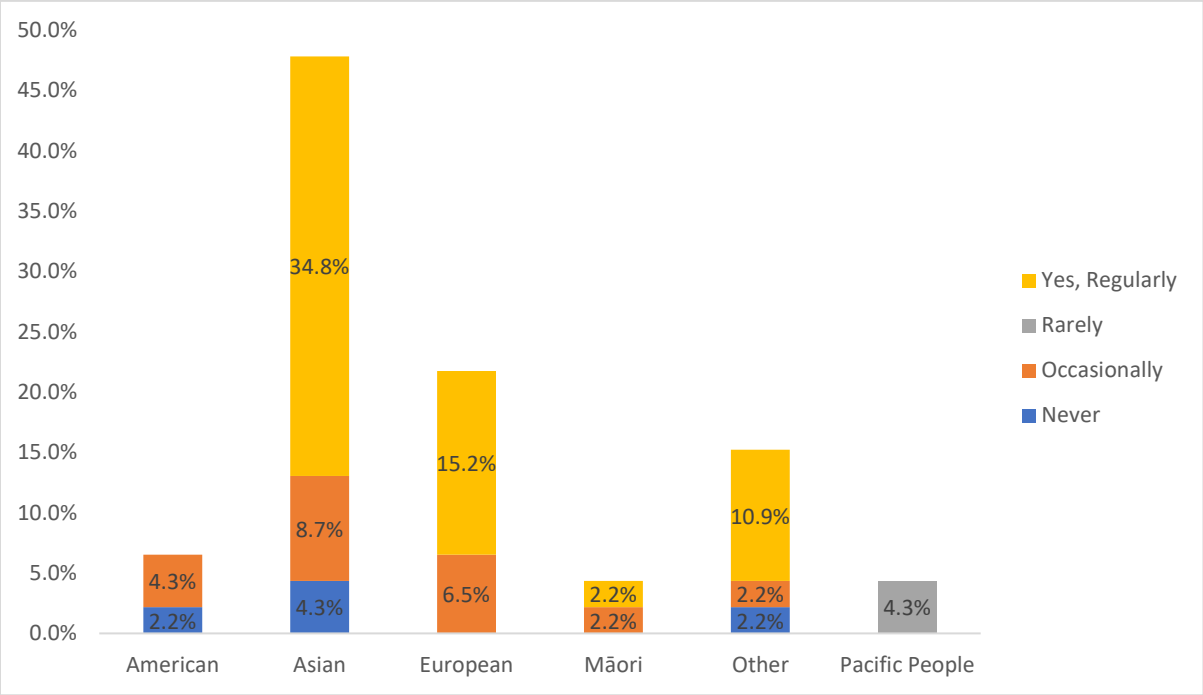
Regular Digital Engagement:

Regular portal utilization emerged as the dominant behaviour across the sample, representing 63.0% (n=29) of all respondents. This high-frequency tier was heavily anchored by the study's two largest demographic blocks: Asian caregivers, who comprised 34.8% (n=16) of the total

sample, and European caregivers, who accounted for 15.2% (n=7). The remaining baseline of regular users was filled by respondents within the "Other" ethnic classification at 10.9% (n=5) and Māori respondents at 2.2% (n=1).

Figure 31

Ethnicities of Caregiver vs Digital Portal Use



Note. This figure shows the ethnicities of caregivers and the use of digital portals to understand the communication from school.

Occasional Digital Engagement:

Occasional portal use accounted for 23.9% (n=11) of the total dataset, displaying a highly varied distribution across nearly all ethnic configurations. Within this middle tier, Asian caregivers represented 8.7% (n=4) of the sample, followed closely by European caregivers at 6.5% (n=3). American caregivers made up 4.3% (n=2), while Māori and "Other" respondents each represented an identical 2.2% (n=1) of the total cohort

Low-to-No Digital Engagement:

A small but critical fraction of the sample (13.0%, n=6) operated within low-frequency or non-utilization frameworks, exposing key touchpoint gaps. Complete non-utilization ("Never") accounted for 10.9% (n=5) of the overall sample, driven by Asian (4.3%, n=2), American (2.2%, n=1), and "Other" (2.2%, n=1) caregivers. Crucially, the "Rarely" utilization category was populated exclusively by the Pacific Peoples cohort, who accounted for 4.3% (n=2) of the total sample and reported no other form of digital tracking. These are presented in Figure 31.

4.2.1.5 Income versus Digital Portal Use:

Cross-tabulation of digital school portal utilization frequencies against participants' annual household income levels revealed specific distributional patterns across the cohort. When evaluating these engagement behaviours systematically across the total sample (n=46), portal interaction trends do not track linearly with socioeconomic standing, showing complex dynamics across different brackets.

Regular Digital Engagement:

High-frequency portal utilization was visible across all socioeconomic tiers, representing the baseline standard for most households. The highest concentration of regular users sat within the More than $100,000 bracket at 17.4% (n=8) and the $50,000-$70,000 bracket at 15.2% (n=7) of the total sample. Caregivers in the $30,000-$50,000 bracket accounted for 13.0% (n=6) of regular users, followed by the $70,000-$100,000 tier at 8.7% (n=4). Notably, the lowest economic group earning Less than $30,000 demonstrated absolute internal behavioural uniformity, with all its respondents accounting for 8.7% (n=4) of the total sample and reporting regular usage exclusively.

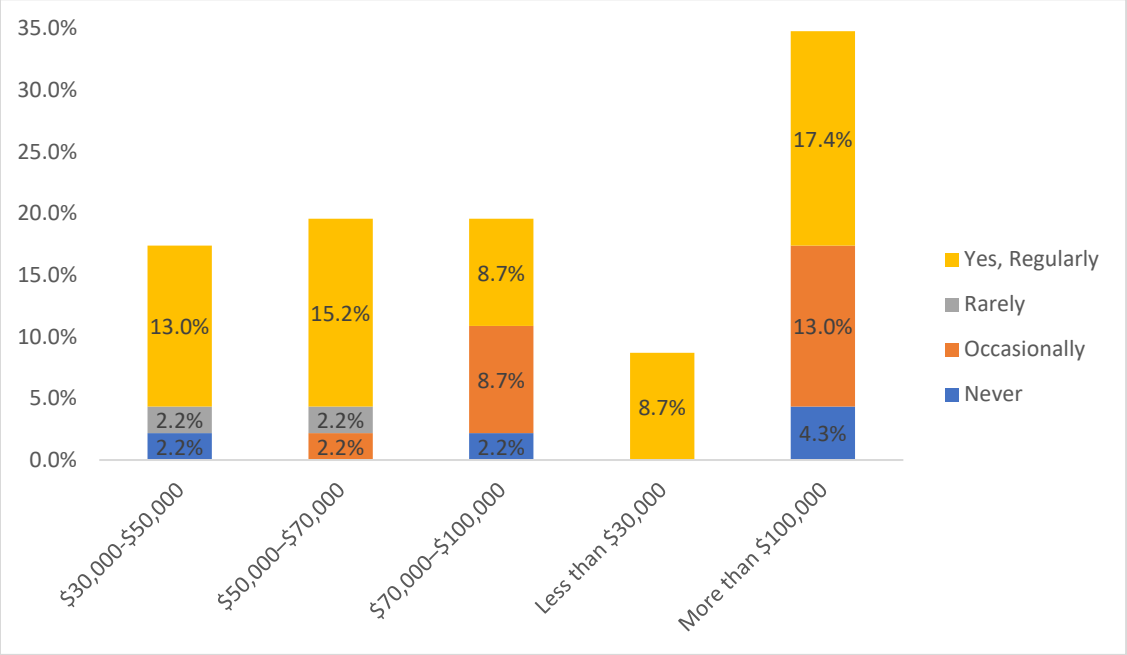
Occasional Digital Engagement:

Middle-tier portal usage was sharply confined to only a few economic categories. It was most heavily prominent within the high-income More than $100,000 bracket, accounting for 13.0% (n=6) of the total sample. It appeared more moderately within the $70,000-$100,000 tier at 8.7%

(n=4), while appearing as a minor fraction (2.2%, n=1) in the $50,000-$70,000 group. No occasional utilization was recorded among households earning less than $50,000.

Figure 32

Household Income vs Digital Portal Use



Note. This figure shows that lower income families are not digitally disconnected with their children's school portals.

Low-to-No Digital Engagement:

Minimal or absent interaction with school systems accounted for a small subset of the cohort, exposing distinct pockets of low engagement. Infrequent usage *Rarely* was recorded at identical levels (2.2%, n=1 each) in both the $30,000-$50,000 and $50,000-$70,000 brackets. Meanwhile, complete non-utilization *Never* was driven by a 4.3% (n=2) share from the More than $100,000 tier, alongside equal 2.2% (n=1 each) contributions from the $30,000-$50,000 and $70,000-$100,000 brackets. These are presented in Figure 32.

4.2.2 The Engagement Dynamics

This subsection examines how engagement measures varied across participant groups and describes patterns of reported participation and disengagement.

4.2.2.1 Providing Homework Support versus Understanding

Cross-tabulation of caregivers' self-rated understanding of the curriculum refresh against the frequency of direct homework support reveals specific distributional variations across the cohort. Across the total sample (n=46), high-frequency home-learning support co-occurred with several levels of curriculum understanding, indicating no clear descriptive association between frequent homework support and high curriculum comprehension.

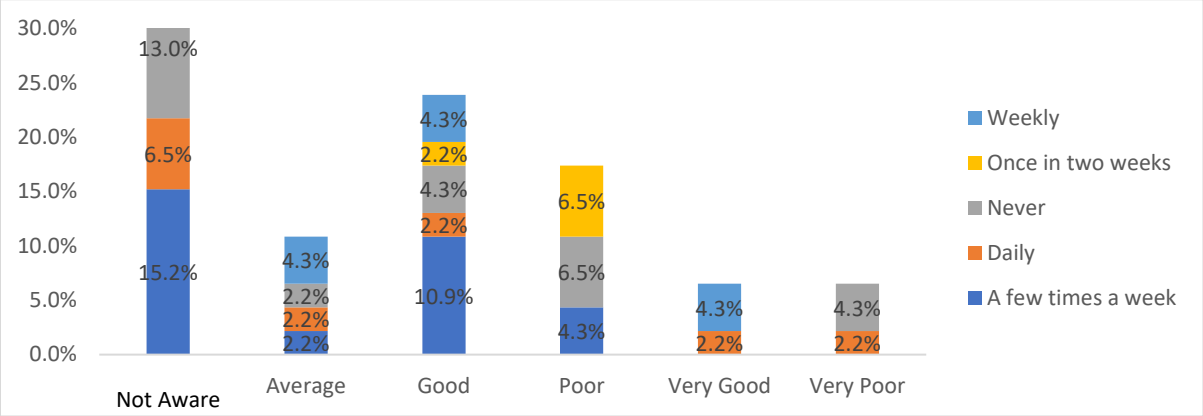
The Not Aware of curriculum change category constituted the single largest bar in the study, accounting for 34.8% (n=16) of all participants. This unaware bracket was heavily populated by caregivers who assist with homework *A few times a week* (15.2%, n=7) or *Never* (13.0%, n=6), alongside a smaller share of *Daily* homework supporters (6.5%, n=3). Further down the spectrum, the Very Poor understanding category accounted for 8.7% (n=4) of the total sample, split evenly (4.3%, n=2 each) between those who *Never* provide support and those who provide it *Daily.*

The Poor understanding category made up 17.4% (n=8) of the total sample, and included caregivers who *Never* help with homework (6.5%, n=3), those who do so *Once in two weeks* (6.5%, n=3), and those in the *A few times a week* segment (4.3%, n=2). Meanwhile, the *Average* understanding tier accounted for 10.9% (n=5) of the overall cohort, displaying minor, even distributions of 2.2% (n=1 each) across nearly all support frequencies, except for the *Once in two weeks* bracket (0.0%, n=0). Confident curriculum awareness patterns were distinctly visible but tightly clustered. The *Good* understanding classification formed the second largest bar in the chart, capturing 23.9% (n=11) of the total sample. This category was strongly dominated by caregivers who support home learning *A few times a week* (10.9%, n=5), followed by those who help *Never* (4.3%, n=2), *Daily* (2.2%, n=1), *Once in two weeks* (2.2%, n=1), and *Weekly* (4.3%, n=2).

The highest tier of comprehension, *Very Good*, at just 6.5% (n=3), supported exclusively by *Weekly* (4.3%, n=2) and *Daily* (2.2%, n=1) homework helpers. These are presented in Figure 33.

Figure 33

Homework Support at Home vs Understanding of The Curriculum



Note. This figure shows that higher frequencies of homework support were not consistently associated with higher reported understanding of the new curriculum in this sample.

4.2.2.2 Parent-Child Learning Conversations versus Understanding

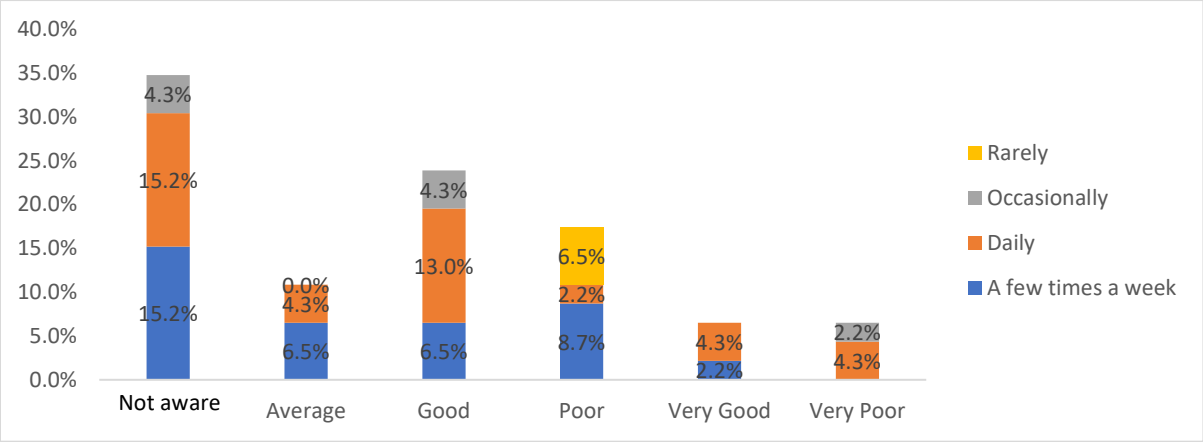
Cross-tabulation of caregivers' self-rated understanding of the curriculum changes against the frequency of informal home-based discussions regarding the school day revealed distinct distributional patterns. Caregivers who discuss school progress with their children every day, constituted the largest segment of this matrix (43.5%, n=20 out of 46). Within this highly communicative group, 4.3% (n=2) reported an *Average* understanding of the curriculum updates, 13.0% (n=6) reported a *Good* understanding, 2.2% (n=1) reported a *Poor* understanding, 4.3% (n=2) selected *Very Good*, and 4.3% (n=2) recorded a *Very Poor* understanding, while 15.2% (n=7) indicated that they do not know about the curriculum changes.

The remaining behavioural tiers show similarly distributed conceptual metrics across the cohort. Among the respondents who engage in these discussions several times a week (39.1%, n=18), 6.5% (n=3) selected an *Average* understanding, 6.5% (n=3) selected *Good*, 8.7% (n=4) selected *Poor*, and 2.2% (n=1) recorded a *Very Good* understanding, while 15.2% (n=7) stated they had no prior knowledge of the curriculum reforms. For caregivers who discuss school topics only

occasionally (10.9%, n=5), the responses were split between *Good* (4.3%, n=2) and *Very Poor* (2.2%, n=1), with the remaining 4.3% (n=2) identifying as unaware of the changes. Finally, within the lowest interactive tier where caregivers rarely discuss school progress with their child (6.5%, n=3), all 6.5% (n=3) of the respondents recorded a *Poor* understanding of the current framework. These bivariate engagement distributions are captured in Figure 34.

Figure 34

Daily School Conversations at Home vs Understanding of Curriculum



Note. This figure shows that more frequent discussions with children about their school day and activities were not consistently associated with greater reported knowledge or understanding of the new curriculum in this sample.

4.2.2.3 Communication Frequency with Teachers versus Understanding

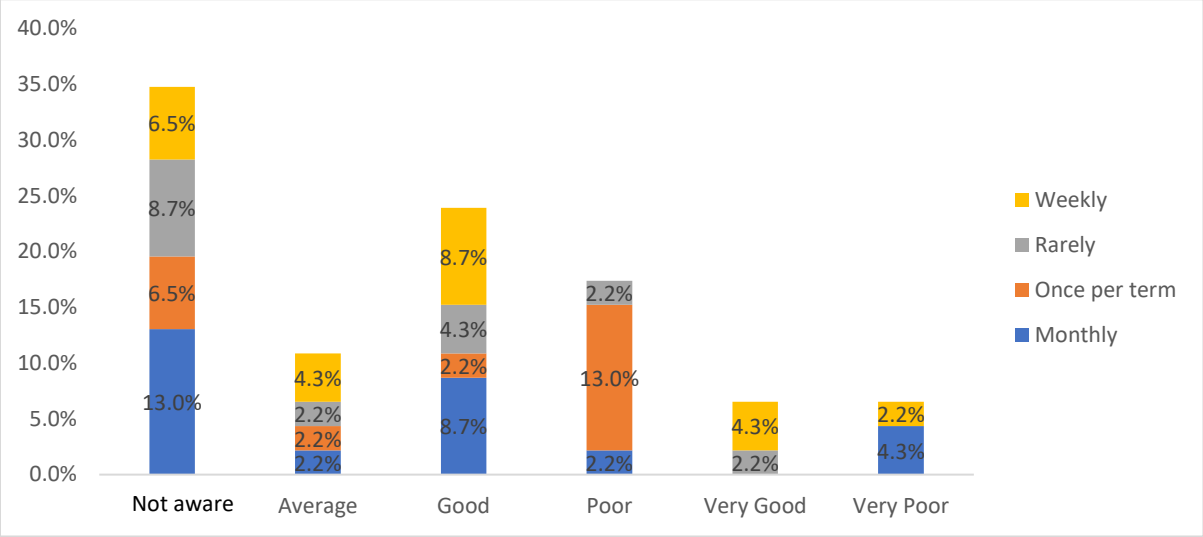
Cross-tabulation of caregivers' self-rated understanding of the curriculum changes against their frequency of direct communication with classroom teachers and school leadership revealed highly distributed conceptual profiles across all interactive tiers.

Pockets of minimal to absent curriculum comprehension represented a substantial portion of the dataset. The Not Aware category constituted the single largest bar in the study, accounting for 34.8% (n=16) of all participants. This unaware bracket was heavily populated by caregivers who maintain a *Monthly* communication cadence (13.0%, n=6), followed by those who interact *Once per term* (6.5%, n=3), *Rarely* (6.5%, n=3), and *Weekly* (6.5%, n=3). Further down the spectrum,

the Very Poor understanding category accounted for 6.5% (n=3) of the total sample, including 4.3% (n=2) share from the *Monthly* bracket and a 2.2% (n=1) share from *Weekly* communicators.

Figure 35

Communication with Teacher vs Understanding of Curriculum



Note. This figure shows that more frequent communication with teachers and school representatives was not consistently associated with higher reported curriculum understanding in this sample

Moderated-to-low conceptual metrics were distributed fluidly across varying transactional patterns. The Poor understanding category made up 17.4% (n=8) of the total sample, heavily dominated by caregivers who communicate with school staff Once per term (13.0%, n=6), with minor contributions from *Monthly* (2.2%, n=1) and *Rarely* (2.2%, n=1) interactive brackets. Meanwhile, the Average understanding tier accounted for 10.9% (n=5) of the overall cohort, displaying narrow distributions of 4.3% (n=2) for *Weekly* communicators alongside identical 2.2% (n=1 each) shares across *Monthly, Once per term*, and *Rarely* engagement tiers.

Confident curriculum awareness patterns were distinctly visible but fragmented across the interactive continuum. The Good understanding classification formed the second largest column in the chart, capturing 23.9% (n=11) of the total sample. This category was led by *Weekly* and *Monthly* communicators at identical levels (8.7%, n=4 each), followed by those who interact

Rarely (4.3%, n=2) and *Once per term* (2.2%, n=1). Finally, the highest tier of comprehension, Very Good, remained a small outlier at just 6.5% (n=3) of the total dataset, supported by *Weekly* (4.3%, n=2) and *Rarely* (2.2%, n=1) communicators, with no representation from the *Monthly* or *Once per term* brackets. These bivariate institutional communication distributions are presented in Figure 35.

4.2.2.4 Attendance at Parent Teacher Meeting versus Understanding

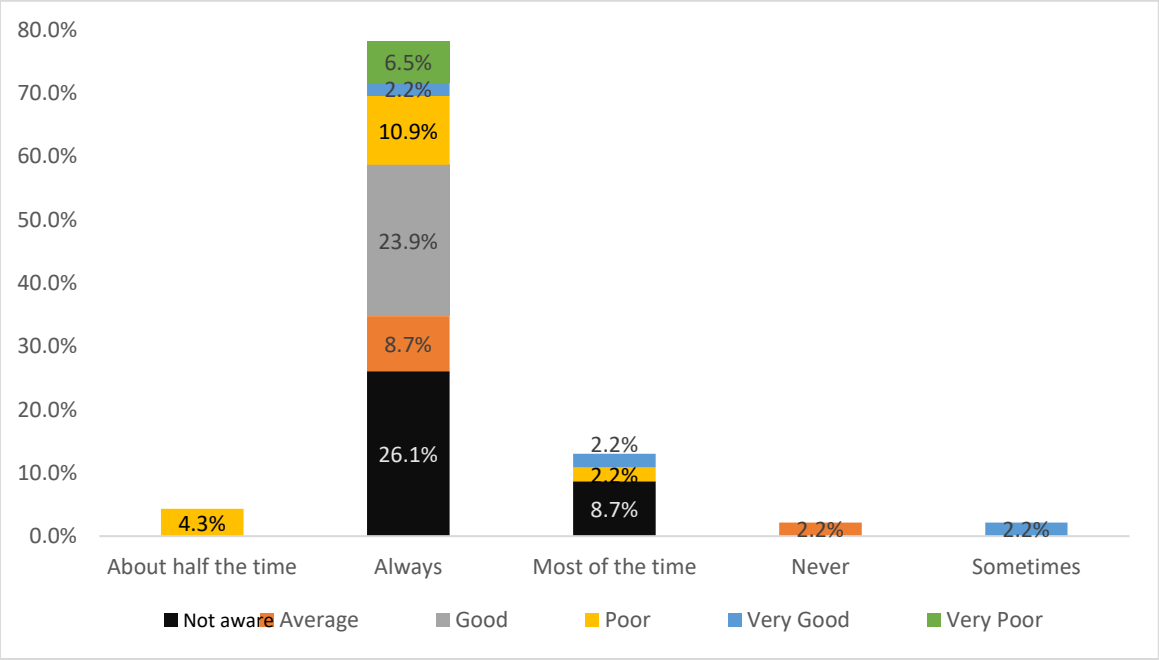
Cross-tabulation of caregivers' self-rated understanding of the curriculum changes against their reported frequency of attendance at parent-teacher meetings revealed highly distributed conceptual profiles across all institutional engagement tiers. Caregivers who always attend parent-teacher meetings constituted the dominant segment of this matrix (78.3%, n=36 out of 46).

Within this group, 8.7% (n=4) reported an *Average* understanding, 23.9% (n=11) reported a *Good* understanding, 10.9% (n=5) selected *Poor*, 2.2% (n=1) selected *Very Good*, and 6.5% (n=3) recorded a *Very Poor* understanding, while more than a third of this group (26.1%, n=12) indicated that they do not know about the curriculum changes. For respondents who reported attending these meetings most of the time (13.0%, n=6), 2.2% (n=1) reported a *Poor* understanding and 2.2% (n=1) selected *Very Good*, while the remaining 8.7% (n=4) noted they had no prior knowledge of the reforms.

Caregivers who attend parent-teacher meetings A*bout half the time* comprised 4.3% (n=2) of the total cohort, with all 4.3% (n=2) explicitly recording a *Poor* understanding of the current framework. The respondent who reported attending meetings only sometimes (2.2%, n=1) evaluated their understanding as *Very Good*. Caregivers reported never attending scheduled parent-teacher sessions (2.2%, n=1), the single respondent (2.2%, n=1) recorded an *Average* understanding of the curriculum updates. These bivariate institutional attendance distributions are illustrated in Figure 36.

Figure 36

PTM Attendance vs Understanding of the Curriculum



Note. This figure shows that attendance in parent teacher meetings was not directly related to understanding of the new curriculum.

4.2.3 The Barriers to Sense-Making

This section examines the structural and cognitive obstacles that stakeholders reported in relation to interpreting and understanding complex institutional changes.

4.2.3.1 Income versus Barriers to Understanding

Cross-tabulation of the reported barriers to curriculum engagement against annual household income levels provided information on the specific distribution of structural and informational challenges across different socioeconomic segments of the sample. Because this inquiry allowed participants to select multiple overlapping obstacles, the data trends were evaluated through localised cumulative frequency counts within each income bracket. For this reason, baseline participation rates within each bracket fluctuated due to varying numbers of respondents who indicated they were entirely unaware of the curriculum changes.

Within the $30,000 to $50,000 income bracket (n=8), 4 respondents were not aware of the curriculum change. Unpacking the multi-selection combinations for the remaining 4 active respondents yields a total of 5 individual category selections alongside the parents' own thoughts. This cohort's selections included a *lack of information from the scho*ol (2 mentions), the *complexity of the curriculum* (1 mention), and a *lack of time to learn about it* (1 mention). Additionally, 2 unique entries were recorded under parents' own thoughts, consisting of one caregiver specifying a '*lack of information on parent portal'* and another noting that the *'current changes reflects trending of colonial past'.*

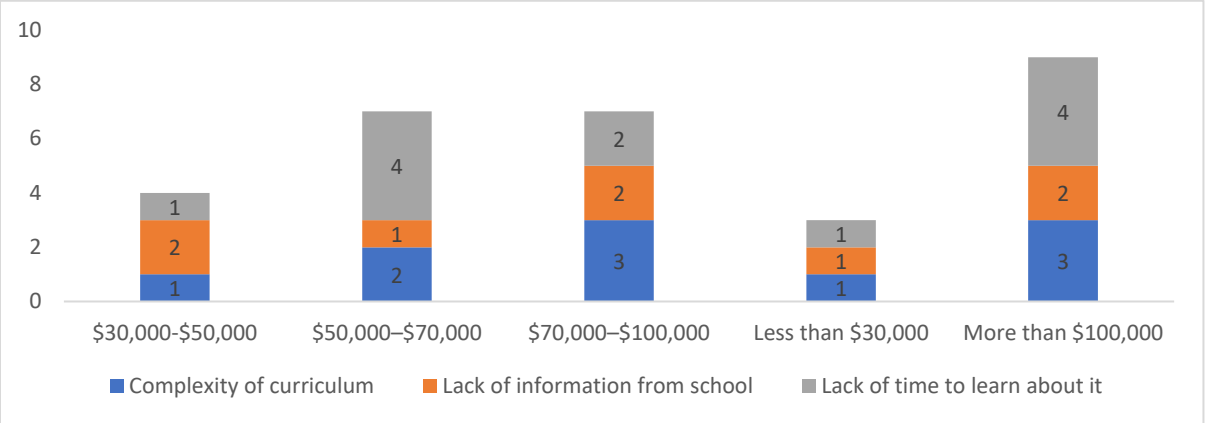
For respondents within the $50,000 to $70,000 income bracket (n=9), 4 respondents were not aware of the curriculum change. Unpacking the choices for the remaining 5 active respondents revealed a total of 7 individual category selections. Within this bracket, operational constraints were highly visible, led by a *lack of time to learn about it* (4 mentions), followed by the *complexity of the curriculum* (2 mentions), and a *lack of information from the school* (1 mention). No independent open-text thoughts were submitted by parents in this socioeconomic bracket.

For the $70,000 to $100,000 income bracket (n=9), 4 respondents were not aware of the curriculum change. Unpacking the choices for the remaining 5 active respondents highlighted a total of 7 standard category selections alongside 3 entries representing the parents' own thoughts. The standard selections were led by the structural complexity of the curriculum (3 mentions), followed by a lack of time to learn about it (2 mentions) and a lack of information from the school (2 mentions). This tier also registered 3 unique qualitative inputs, where one parent explicitly stated an '*absence of physical textbooks'*, and a second specified that '*there is not any issue'*.

Within the lowest income bracket earning less than $30,000 (n=4), 1 respondent was not aware of the curriculum change. The remaining 3 active respondents demonstrated complete structural uniformity, with no overlapping choices or open-ended comments. This cohort contributed exactly 1 standalone mention to each primary category as they divided their feedback across the complexity of the curriculum (1 mention), a lack of information from the school (1 mention), and a lack of time to learn about it (1 mention).

Figure 37

Household Income vs Barriers to Understanding



Note. This figure show the household income of respondents and the perceived barriers to understanding.

Finally, the highest income cohort earning more than $100,000 constituted the largest overall segment of the sample (n=16). Five respondents from this group indicated that they were not aware of the curriculum change. Unpacking the multi-selection blocks for the remaining 11 active respondents resulted in 13 standard category selections alongside 3 entries capturing the parents' own thoughts. Operational and structural friction dominated this high-income tier, led by a lack of time to learn about the framework (6 mentions), followed by a lack of information from the school (4 mentions), and the complexity of the curriculum itself (3 mentions). Parents' qualitative inputs yielded 3 unique entries from this group's personal feedback, with one parent explicitly citing a '*lack of clarity from the ministry of education*', a second noting that '*further detail [is] to be determined*', and a third stating the updates are irrelevant to my child's private school. These bivariate barrier distributions and unpacked categorical frequencies are shown in Figure 37.

4.2.3.2 Barriers to Understanding versus Ethnicities

The dataset contains a total sample size of 46 respondents, categorised across six ethnic cohorts. Out of these 46 parents, 16 were completely unaware of the curriculum changes, and 2 respondents who were aware of the curriculum change but did not answer the barriers

questions, leaving empty entries in the questionnaire. The remaining 28 parents (60.9%) were aware of the changes and went on to identified specific barriers they associated with learning more.

Because the questionnaire utilised a multi-select framework, the 28 caregivers who demonstrated initial awareness of the impending changes generated a combined total of 33 individual barrier mentions. Upon count of each barrier entry, A *lack of time to learn about it* emerged as the most prominent constraint, accounting for 14 mentions (35.7% of all recorded barriers), followed by the *complexity of the curriculum* with 10 mentions (28.6%). Institutional communication gaps, classified as a lack of information from the school, registered 9 mentions (25.0%), while alternative specific barriers or localised write-in responses accounted for the remaining 6 mentions (10.7%).

When these individual barrier selections were disaggregated across ethnic classifications, localised variances in parental concern emerged across the sample cohorts. The Asian cohort, consisting of 12 aware respondents, generated the highest total volume of feedback with 15 discrete barrier mentions. Within this demographic segment, operational constraints were heavily cited, led by a lack of time to learn about the curriculum framework (6 mentions) and a lack of information from the school (4 mentions) and *complexity of the curriculum* gathered 3 mentions, while alternative or custom qualitative write-ins yielded 3 mentions. These custom entries specifically detailed distinct issues, with one caregiver stating there were No Textbooks, another declaring There is not any issue, and a final respondent highlighting a lack of updates on the parent portal.

The European cohort, which comprised 9 aware respondents, contributed a cumulative total of 12 individual barrier mentions. In contrast to the operational focus of the Asian cohort, the European demographic group focused primarily on structural design elements, identifying the complexity of the curriculum as their main impediment (5 mentions). This was followed by a lack of information from the school (3 mentions) and a lack of time to learn about the new systems (2 mentions). The final 2 entries from this cohort consisted of standalone, custom write-in

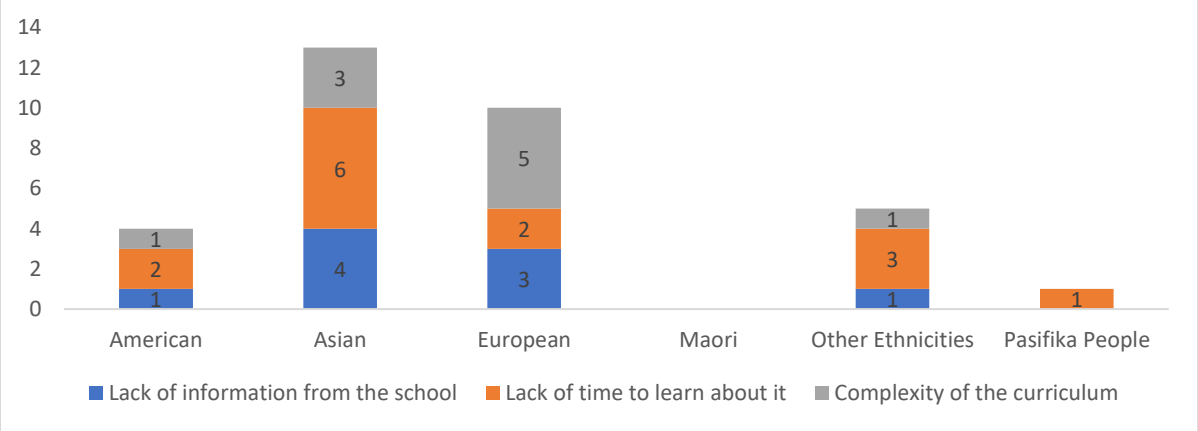
responses; one respondent noted that the *detail to be determined*, while another stated the transition was *irrelevant to my child's private school*.

Within the American cohort, 2 aware parents provided a total of 5 barrier mentions, which included a lack of time to learn about the curriculum (2 mentions), a lack of information from the school (1 mention), and the complexity of the curriculum framework itself (1 mention). This group also logged 1 custom qualitative write-in mention explicitly noting that there were “too many changes happening” simultaneously.

Māori cohort recorded zero active barrier entries across the tracking matrix, although 50% of the respondents were aware of the curriculum change.

Figure 38

Ethnicity vs Barriers to Understanding



Note. This figure shows the ethnicity of respondents and their perceived barriers to understanding of curriculum. Here we can see that Māori caregivers haven’t picked any barrier.

For the Pacific People cohort, 2 aware parents recorded a cumulative total of 2 individual barrier mentions. This cohort's entries were split between *lack of time to learn about it* (1 mention) and a distinct historical write-in response (1 mention) asserting that the curriculum transition Reflects *trending of colonial past.*

Finally, the Other Ethnicity cohort, composed of 3 aware parents, generated 6 total barrier mentions. *lack of time to learn about it* (3 mentions), alongside a single mention each for a *lack*

of information from the school (1 mention) and *complexity of the curriculum* (1 mention). The remaining entry was a localised custom write-in (1 mention) *lack of clarity from the ministry of education*. These bivariate barrier distributions and unpacked categorical frequencies are presented in Figure 38.

4.2.3.3 Attendance in School Organised Sessions versus Understanding of Curriculum

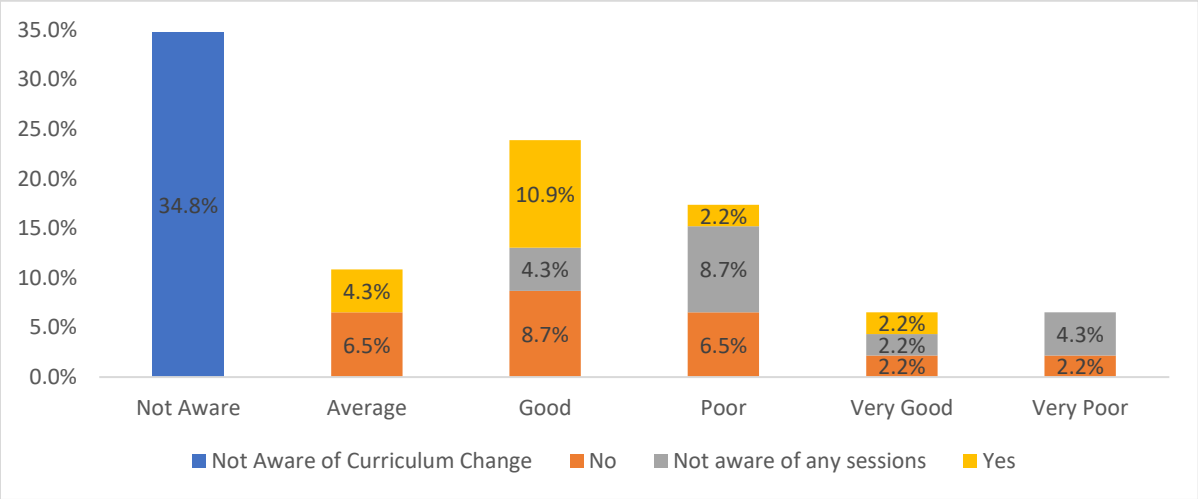
Cross-tabulation of caregivers' self-rated understanding of the curriculum changes against their direct attendance at school-organised briefing sessions or workshops reveals highly distributed conceptual profiles across all participation categories. Caregivers who indicated that they did not attend any institutional information sessions constituted the largest active valid segment within this matrix, representing 26.1% (n=12 out of 46) of the total surveyed sample. Within this non-attending cohort, metrics spanned all five evaluation levels: 8.7% (n=4) of the total sample reported a *Good* understanding, 6.5% (n=3) reported an *Average* understanding, 6.5% (n=3) selected *Poor*, 2.2% (n=1) recorded *a Very Good* understanding, and 2.2% (n=1) selected *Very Poor*.

For respondents who stated they were entirely unaware that informational sessions were being offered by their child's school (19.6%, n=9), negative understanding evaluations predominated; these accounted for 8.7% (n=4) *Poor* and 4.3% (n=2) *Very Poor* understanding ratings across the total sample, balanced against 4.3% (n=2) *Good* and 2.2% (n=1) *Very Good* ratings.

Interestingly, among the caregivers who actively attended dedicated, school-led curriculum workshops or briefing sessions (19.6%, n=9), understanding scores also remained distributed. This attending group was split between a *Good* understanding at 10.9% (n=5), an *Average* understanding at 4.3% (n=2), a *Poor* understanding at 2.2% (n=1), and a *Very Good* understanding at 2.2% (n=1). While Unaware of curriculum change caregivers accounted for the remaining 34.8% (n=16). These are presented in Figure 39.

Figure 39

Attendance in curriculum change sessions vs Understanding



Note. In this sample, attendance at school-provided curriculum-change sessions was not consistently associated with a higher reported understanding of the new curriculum.

4.2.4 Impacts and Implementation Perception

This section examines the association between stakeholder perceptions and evaluations of curriculum implementation, while distinguishing perceptions of policy formulation from perceptions of practical execution.

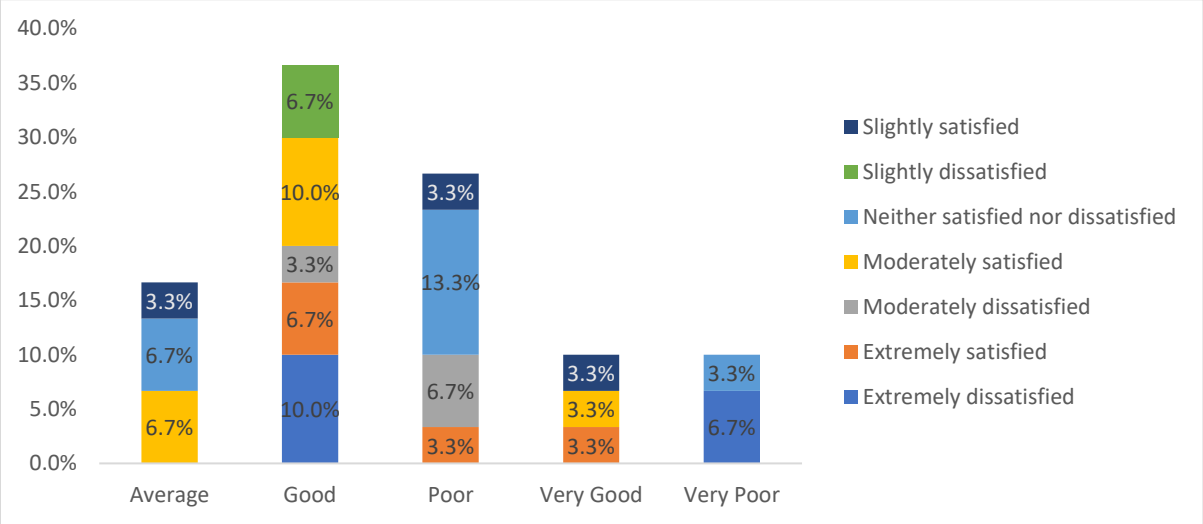
4.2.4.1 Understanding of Curriculum versus Satisfaction with Implementation

Cross-tabulation of caregiver satisfaction levels regarding curriculum implementation against their self-rated understanding of the framework updates revealed highly distributed evaluations across the entire descriptive continuum. Caregivers reporting a *Good* baseline understanding constituted a prominent analytical segment within this cross-tabulation; within this tier, responses were widely distributed, featuring participants who reported being *extremely dissatisfied* (6.5%, *n*=3), *moderately satisfied* (6.5%, *n*=3)), *extremely satisfied* (4.3%, *n*=2)), *moderately dissatisfied* (2.2%, *n*=1), and *slightly dissatisfied* (2.2%, *n*=1)). For respondents identifying with an *Average* understanding of the modifications, sentiments were concentrated primarily across the central and positive intervals of the metric, split between moderately

satisfied (4.3%, *n*=2), neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (4.3%, *n*=2), and slightly satisfied (2.2%, n=1).

Figure 40

Understanding of Curriculum vs Satisfaction of Curriculum Implementation



Note. This figure shows how caregivers' reported satisfaction with curriculum implementation varied across levels of reported curriculum understanding.

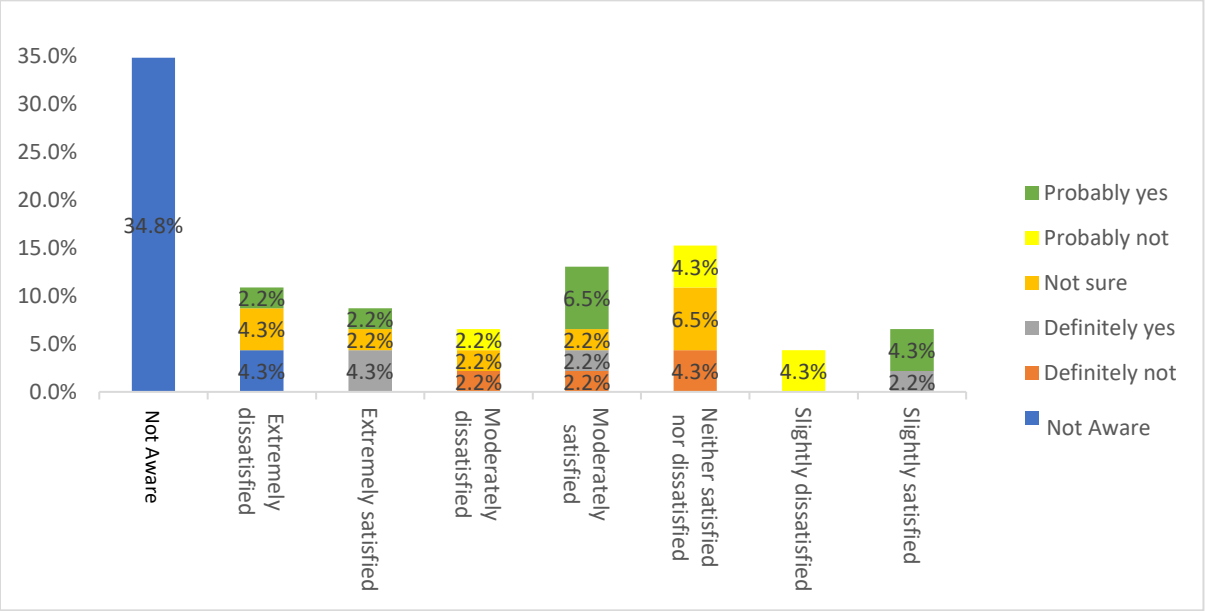
The remaining conceptual tiers demonstrated parallel structural variance or localised dissatisfaction clusters across the sample. Participants reporting a *Poor* understanding of the curriculum changes were distributed across neutral and negative evaluation categories, including those who were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (8.7%, n=4), moderately dissatisfied (4.3%, n=2), and slightly satisfied (2.2%, n=1). Conversely, caregivers tracking within the highest conceptual bracket of a *Very Good* understanding selected positive or neutral descriptors exclusively, split evenly between *extremely satisfied* (2.2%, n=1), *moderately satisfied* (2.2%, n=1), and *slightly satisfied* (2.2%, n=1). Finally, within the lowest conceptual stratum where caregivers recorded a *Very Poor* understanding of the curriculum refresh, responses were limited to *extremely dissatisfied* (4.3%, n=2) and *neither satisfied nor dissatisfied* (2.2%, n=1) indicators. These bivariate satisfaction distributions are presented in Figure 40.

4.2.4.2 Satisfaction with Curriculum Implementation versus Perceived Adequacy of School Communication

Cross-tabulation of caregivers' evaluations regarding the adequacy of school-provided informational resources against their reported satisfaction with curriculum implementation reveals highly distributed perceptions across all measurement intervals. Caregivers who identified as extremely dissatisfied with the implementation framework were distributed across negative and neutral resource evaluations, with 4.3% (n=2) having selected *probably not*, 4.3% (n=2) *not sure*, and 2.2% (n=1) *definitely not*. For respondents recording moderate dissatisfaction, entries were split evenly across the lower end of the metric, with 2.2% (n=1) having selected *definitely not*, 2.2% (n=1) *probably not*, and 2.2% (n=1) *not sure*.

Figure 41

Satisfaction of Implementation vs Adequacy of Resources Provided



Note. This figure shows how caregivers' reported satisfaction with curriculum implementation varied alongside their evaluations of the adequacy of school-provided resources.

The central and moderate satisfaction intervals demonstrated parallel structural variance across the sample matrix. Participants who were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the implementation process were distributed across *definitely not* (4.3%, n=2), *not sure* (4.3%, n=2),

and *probably not* (2.2%, n=1) responses. Caregivers identifying as slightly dissatisfied selected *not sure* (2.2%, n=1) and *probably not* (2.2%, n=1) exclusively. Within the positive dimensions of the satisfaction metric, caregivers who were slightly satisfied were represented evenly between *not sure* (2.2%, n=1) and *probably yes* (2.2%, n=1).

Finally, respondents with the highest satisfaction brackets displayed more optimistic resource evaluations. Caregivers who reported being moderately satisfied were distributed evenly across neutral and positive resource tiers as they selected *not sure* (4.3%, n=2), *probably yes* (4.3%, n=2), and *definitely yes* (4.3%, n=2) for this question. Similarly, the cohort identifying as extremely satisfied selected positive indicators exclusively, split evenly between *probably yes* (2.2%, n=1) and *definitely yes* (2.2%, n=1). These bivariate resource adequacy distributions are captured in Figure 41.

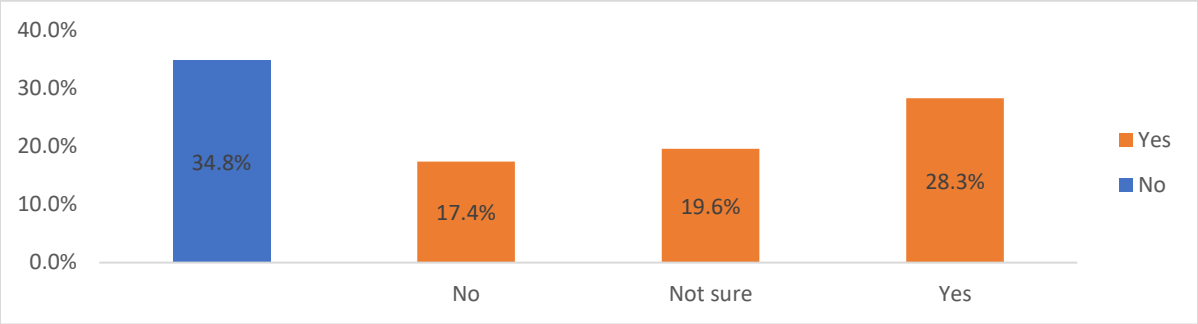
4.2.4.3 Awareness of Curriculum Reform versus Future Preparedness of New Curriculum

Cross-tabulation of caregivers' perception regarding whether the updated framework adequately prepares students for future challenges against their baseline curriculum awareness revealed a stark distributional contrast between the two cohorts. Caregivers who reported being entirely unaware of the curriculum reform constituted 30.4% (n=14 out of 46) of the total sample pool. Within this specific unaware subgroup, 100.0% (n=14) of the respondents explicitly selected the negative metric, stating they do not believe the new curriculum provides adequate preparation for future disruptions.

In contrast, the cohort of caregivers who possessed baseline awareness of the curriculum modifications (69.6%, n=32) expressed a highly distributed range of views across the evaluative scale. Within this aware group, 43.5% (n=20) recorded a positive evaluation, agreeing that the framework provides adequate structural preparation. Meanwhile, 30.4% (n=14) selected the neutral indicator, and the remaining 26.1% (n=12) recorded a negative assessment, stating that the curriculum does not provide adequate preparation. These bivariate preparedness distributions are illustrated in Figure 42.

Figure 42

Awareness of Curriculum Change vs Direction for Future preparedness



Note. This figure demonstrates that all caregivers who were aware of the curriculum change are not sure about the curriculum content to be future focussed.

4.2.5 Future Needs

This section uses cross-tabulation to examine associations between stakeholders' demographic characteristics, involvement in their children's schooling, and identified future support needs.

4.2.5.1 Understanding versus Support Type

Within the non-participatory baseline segment, 16 caregivers left both the understanding rating and the support intervention selection blank due to lack of awareness regarding the curriculum changes. An additional 2 caregivers recorded a current understanding level of *Very Poor* but did not select any forward-facing support interventions, resulting in zero recorded mentions.

Among caregivers reporting a *Very Poor* understanding who did interact with the support options, requested interventions generated only (1 mention), which came as their own comment as in *Other: None Needed* category.

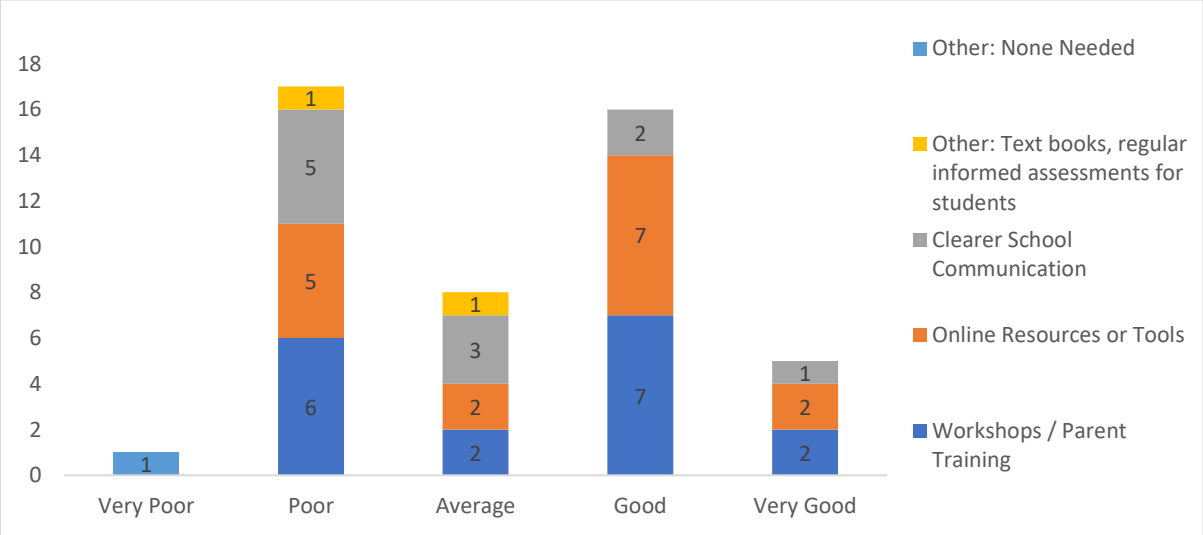
For respondents within the *Poor* understanding bracket, 17 cumulative mentions were recorded. This cohort demonstrated a highly distributed need for multi-channel assistance, encompassing requests for parent workshops or training sessions (6 mentions), clearer communication from the school (5 mentions), and online resources or tools (5 mentions). This tier also included a suggestion write-in (1 mention) requesting that the institution '*prove that it's not boot camp for*

ethnic children promising distancing in social norms from other ethnicities but integrate using less human or plastic technological means'.

Caregivers within the *Average* understanding bracket reported 8 cumulative entries. Within this group, clearer communication from the school was the most frequent request (3 mentions), followed by online resources or tools (2 mentions) and workshops or training sessions for parents (2 mentions). This group also yielded a single one participant suggested (1 mention), *Other: Textbooks, regular informed assessments for students.*

Figure 43

Understanding of Curriculum vs Support Requested by Caregivers



Note. This figure shows that the types of support requested by caregivers varied across self rated levels of curriculum understanding.

Within the *Good* understanding tier, requested interventions were highly concentrated across 16 cumulative mentions. Caregivers in this band focused heavily on direct-engagement platforms, resulting in an equal division between online resources or tools (7 mentions) and workshops or training sessions for parents (7 mentions), while *clearer communication from the school* received (2 mentions). No entries were logged for custom write-ins or alternative selections within this tier.

Finally, *Very Good* understanding recorded 5 cumulative mentions. These responses were distributed relatively evenly across the tracking grid, including requests for *online resources or tools* (2 mentions) and *workshops or training sessions for parents* (2 mentions), alongside a single request for *clearer communication from the school* (1 mention). These are provided in Figure 43.

4.2.5.2 Digital Portal Use versus Preferred Support Type

Cross-tabulation of the requested forms of assistance against caregivers' frequency of digital school portal utilisation highlighted the specific distribution of desired institutional interventions across different levels of digital engagement. Because this inquiry allowed participants to select multiple overlapping support mechanisms, data trends were evaluated through localised frequency metrics across the tracking grid.

For caregivers reporting a *Good* understanding, institutional demands focused strictly on standalone, direct-engagement tools rather than general school updates, split equally between online resources or tools (7 mentions) and dedicated parent workshops (7 mentions), with only 2 mentions allocated to clearer school communication.

Conversely, caregivers navigating a *Poor* understanding demonstrated a highly distributed need for comprehensive, multi-channel support systems. This cohort logged 6 requests for parent workshops, 5 requests for online tools, and 5 requests for clearer communication from the school. This tier also included a custom qualitative write-in (1 mention) requesting that the '*institution prove that it's not boot camp for ethnic children promising distancing in social norms from other ethnicities but integrate using less human or plastic technological means.*

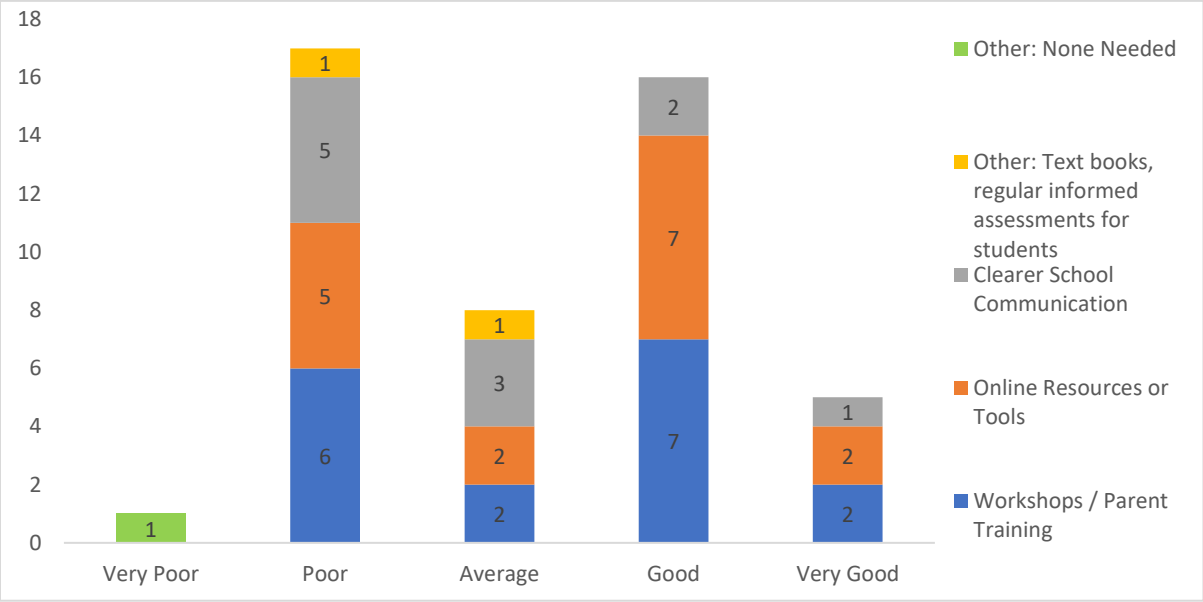
For caregivers situated in the *Average* understanding bracket (8 total mentions), clearer communication from the school emerged as the primary standalone requirement (3 mentions), *online tools* (2 mentions) and *parent workshops* (2 mentions). This group also made a custom write-in request (1 mention) highlighting a need for *student textbooks and regular, informed assessments*.

The *Very Good* understanding tier accounted for 5 mentions, namely *online tools* (2 mentions), *workshops* (2 mentions), and *clearer school communication* (1 mention).

Caregivers selecting a *Very Poor* understanding logged only 1 mention for a custom None Needed entry, while the remaining two individuals in this tier did not select any support channels. These patterns are represented in Figure 44.

Figure 44

Digital Portal Use vs Support Requested by Caregivers



Note. This figure shows that caregivers across levels of digital portal use also requested other forms of communication and support for understanding the curriculum and assisting their children.

4.2.5.3 Income versus Preferred Support Type

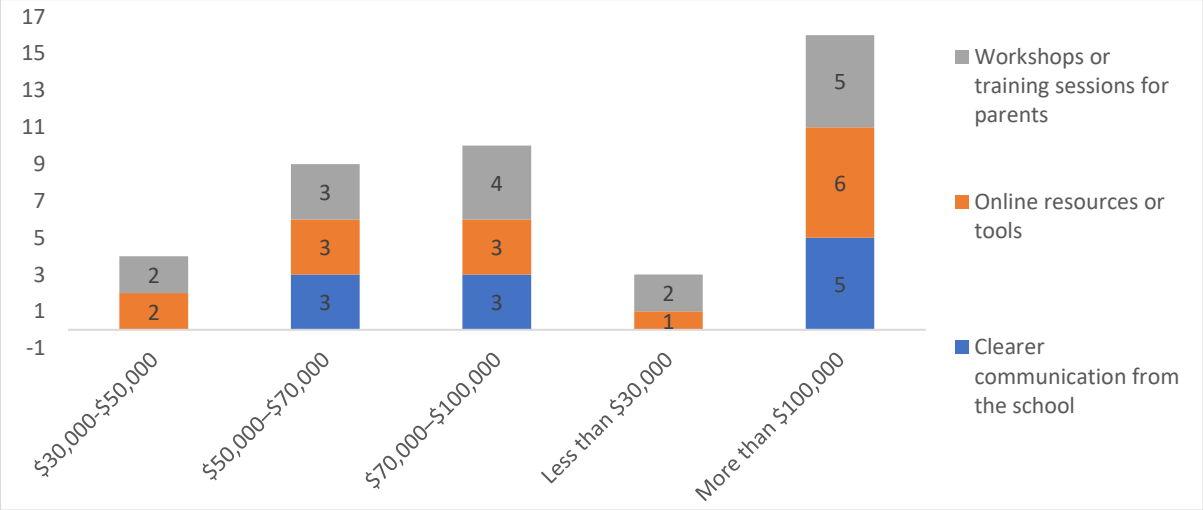
Cross-tabulation of the requested forms of assistance against annual household income levels highlighted the specific distribution of desired institutional interventions across different socioeconomic segments of the sample. Because this inquiry allowed participants to select multiple overlapping support mechanisms, data trends were evaluated using localised cumulative frequency counts within each income bracket. Caregivers earning between $30,000 and $50,000, requested the provision for *online resources or tools* (2 mentions) and *workshops or training sessions for parents* (2 mentions), while logging zero mentions for *clearer communication from the school*.

For respondents within the $50,000 to $70,000 income bracket, 9 cumulative mentions were recorded. These entries consisted of 3 mentions for clearer communication from the school, 3 mentions for online resources or tools, and 3 mentions for workshops or training sessions for parents.

Caregivers within the $70,000 to $100,000 bracket reported 10 cumulative entries. Within this group, workshops or training sessions for parents was the most frequent request (4 mentions), followed by clearer communication from the school (3 mentions) and online resources or tools (3 mentions).

Figure 45

Household Income vs Type of Support Requested



Note. This figure shows that reported support preferences varied across household-income groups, with different groups recording different frequencies of requests for guidance and communication.

Within the lowest income bracket, featuring those who earn less than $30,000 a year, requested interventions were concentrated across 3 cumulative mentions. Caregivers in this band prioritised workshops or training sessions for parents (2 mentions) over online resources or tools (1 mention), while recording zero mentions for clearer communication from the school.

Finally, the highest income cohort earning more than $100,000 recorded the largest volume of feedback within this matrix, accounting for 16 cumulative mentions. These responses were distributed across the tracking grid, led by online resources or tools (6 mentions), followed by clearer communication from the school (5 mentions) and workshops or training sessions for parents (5 mentions). These bivariate support distributions are illustrated in Figure 45.

4.2.6 Summary of the section

This cross-tabulation analysis evaluates the structural relationships between demographic variables (ethnicity, household income, geographic location), communication channels, and caregiver engagement metrics regarding the New Zealand curriculum refresh. The data reveals a complex landscape where message penetration is highly fragmented, and traditional institutional touchpoints do not automatically guarantee deep curriculum comprehension.

1. Demographics and Access Equity (Sections 4.2.1.1 - 4.2.1.3)

The Communication Reach Divide: A stark divergence in baseline curriculum awareness exists across demographic lines. European caregivers showed high message penetration (19.6% aware vs. 2.2% unaware). Conversely, the Asian cohort the study's largest demographic block showed deep fragmentation, with 28.3% aware and a substantial 19.6% completely unaware. Māori respondents were split evenly (2.2% aware / 2.2% unaware).

Socioeconomic Gaps: Higher household income correlates with stronger communication reach. Caregivers earning over $100,000 represented the largest segment and captured the highest concentration of message penetration (26.1% aware vs. 8.7% unaware). Mid-to-low-income brackets (under $50,000) were highly divided or perfectly split (8.7% aware / 8.7% unaware), exposing a clear communication divide.

Geographical Trends: Regional data across Auckland highlights localised variances. The West Auckland cohort (the largest regional group at 36.9%) displayed a notable internal split (21.7% aware vs. 15.2% unaware), while South Auckland recorded localised, full baseline awareness among its respondents (15.2% aware vs. 0.0% unaware).

2. Digital Engagement Trends (Sections 4.2.1.4 - 4.2.1.5)

Dominance of High-Frequency Use: Regular school portal utilization is the baseline standard for most of the sample (63.0%). This tier is heavily anchored by Asian (34.8%) and European (15.2%) caregivers.

Non-Linear Income Dynamics: Portal interaction does not track linearly with wealth. Interestingly, the lowest economic group (earning less than $30,000) demonstrated absolute behavioural uniformity, with 100% of its respondents reporting regular usage. In contrast, complete non-utilization ("Never") was driven paradoxically by a 4.3% share from the highest income tier (over $100,000), alongside minor contributions from middle-income brackets.

3. The Engagement and Understanding Disconnect (Sections 4.2.2.1 - 4.2.2.4)

The Home Learning Paradox: High-frequency home learning support does not automatically translate to high institutional curriculum comprehension. The "Not Aware" category was heavily populated by caregivers who assist with homework *a few times a week* (15.2%) or *daily* (6.5%).

Conversations vs. Comprehension: While 43.5% of caregivers discuss the school day with their children daily, 15.2% of this highly interactive group remained completely unaware of the curriculum updates. Furthermore, 100% of caregivers who rarely discuss school progress recorded a "Poor" understanding.

Institutional Contact: PTM (Parent-Teacher Meeting) attendance is exceptionally high (78.3% always attend), yet 26.1% of these dedicated attendees indicated they do not know about the curriculum changes. Similarly, Weekly or Monthly face-to-face communication with teachers did not prevent a substantial portion of caregivers from landing in the "Not Aware" or "Very Poor" understanding brackets.

4. Barriers to Sense-Making (Sections 4.2.3.1 - 4.2.3.3)

Primary Constraints: Across the 28 caregivers who were aware of the changes and identified barriers (generating 33 multi-select mentions), A lack of time to learn about it emerged as the top constraint (35.7%), followed by Curriculum complexity (28.6%) and Lack of information from the school (25.0%).

Ethnic and Socioeconomic Variances in Barriers:

Asian Cohort: Focused heavily on operational friction, citing *lack of time* (6 mentions) and *lack of information* (4 mentions).

European Cohort: Focused primarily on structural policy design, citing *curriculum complexity* (5 mentions).

High-Income Brackets: Dominated by *lack of time* (6 mentions), with unique write-ins citing a "lack of clarity from the Ministry of Education."

Information Session Shortfalls: Among caregivers who actively attended dedicated school-led workshops (19.6%), understanding scores remained highly distributed rather than universally high, demonstrating that current informational delivery methods face clear cognitive or communicative roadblocks.

5. Implementation Perceptions and Future Needs (Sections 4.2.4.1 - 4.2.5.1)

Satisfaction Ties to Comprehension: Caregivers with a Good understanding displayed highly fragmented satisfaction levels (ranging from extremely satisfied to extremely dissatisfied). However, those with a Very Good understanding recorded positive or neutral satisfaction exclusively, while those with a Very Poor understanding clustered heavily around extreme dissatisfaction.

Communication Adequacy: Implementation satisfaction directly mirrors how parents perceive school communication. Extremely dissatisfied users felt resources were "probably/definitely not" adequate, while highly satisfied groups selected "probably/definitely yes" with zero negative ratings.

Divergent Future Needs: Cross-tabulating current understanding against future needs reveals a shifting spectrum of demand:

Unaware Parents: Demand baseline access (*clearer/more frequent updates* and *translated packets*).

Low-Comprehension Parents: Demand interactive and simplified guidance (*workshops, Q&A nights*, and *summary sheets*).

High-Comprehension Parents: Demand practical execution tools (*at-home learning resources* and *direct portal access*).

4.3 Thematic Analysis

Following Braun and Clarke's (2006, 2019) reflexive thematic analysis framework, primary survey write-ins, 7 Radio New Zealand (RNZ) articles, and 37 Reddit sub-threads were analysed using a unified coding scheme detailed in section 3.4.5.

The following themes integrate survey responses with publicly available commentary from RNZ and Reddit that were analysed descriptively to contextualise parent perceptions and barriers to understanding.

4.3.1 Theme 1: Communication and Transparency

Across the qualitative survey responses, Radio New Zealand (RNZ) reporting, and Reddit discussions, participants consistently highlighted communication and transparency as central issues shaping their ability to understand and engage with the curriculum reform. Survey respondents expressed profound uncertainty or limited access to clear information, offering baseline comments such as "I'm not sure," "Don't know," "No idea," "we are clueless," and "No insights." This qualitative sentiment reflects quantitative survey trends where 34.8% (n=16) of caregivers reported no baseline awareness of the curriculum updates. Even among those with prior awareness, a combined 37.0% (n=16) evaluated their understanding as Average (10.9%, n=5), Poor (17.4%, n=8), or Very Poor (6.5%, n=3), with only 6.5% (n=3) rating their knowledge as "Very Good"

Caregivers articulated specific needs for clearer guidance, noting that greater transparency about learning goals, clearer communication on assessment expectations, and regular parent teacher engagement would strengthen collaboration between home and school to better support localised learning outcomes. This was reflected in support requests, where clearer school communication was explicitly demanded across 11 caregiver write-ins, alongside requests for

parent workshops (17 mentions) and online tools (16 mentions). Parents also sought more explicit direction regarding their role in supporting learning at home, with one stating that more information on how parents will have to support their *Tamariki* (children) would be highly beneficial, specifically noting a need for guidance on homework assistance or extra tutorial allocation.

Figure 46

Word frequencies on Reddit Developed by Wordart.com



Note. The words and phrases used in Reddit threads were used to make this illustration by https://www.wordart.com

Caregivers described gaps in the utility of existing institutional communication tools. Although 63% (n=29) of the respondents regularly utilize digital school portals, open-ended responses revealed that portal usage does not necessarily correspond to pedagogical clarity. One respondent commented that "we have ClassDojo (a localised classroom communication and behaviour tracking app) but it's for class activities rather than academic performances," while another identified a critical lack of curriculum information on their school's parent portal. These

responses indicated that communication challenges were not only about transaction frequency but also about the semantic clarity, pedagogical relevance, and accessibility of the information provided. This information gap was further evidenced by the finding that 78.3% (n=36) of caregivers had not attended any school-led curriculum workshops, with 19.6% (n = 9) noting they were unaware that such sessions were being offered.

Reddit contributors expressed comparable frustrations, highlighting how unclear and opaque the reform process felt from the outside. Across localised threads, several users described the pace and volume of changes as overwhelming, noting that the direction of the reforms seemed uncertain and that executive decisionmakers appeared distant or inaccessible other contributors commented on difficulties locating up-to-date curriculum information, mentioning instances where key documents or links had disappeared from official sites.

Concerns were raised about the readiness of senior-level curriculum materials, with contributors reporting that their children were already being taught under new NCEA structures despite the corresponding curriculum documents not yet being publicly available. Across Reddit communities, there were repeated calls for greater institutional openness, with users emphasizing that if curriculum redevelopment is genuinely necessary, the process must be transparent, well-explained, and publicly justified.

Similar themes regarding communication vulnerabilities were found in the analysis of the RNZ dataset, particularly across system-level decision making and school-level reporting practices. Sector representatives, including teacher union leaders and school principals, described limited opportunities for meaningful engagement with government agencies. This was underscored by a prominent interviewee in ‘Impossible deadline’: Union questions shorter consultation period for Māori curriculum (Paewai, 2024), who stated that "there’s been very little consultation… since the beginning of this government." (para. 9)

These communication challenges were mirrored in how rapid reporting changes were conveyed to families. In *Standardised report cards will help children who change school’s principal (Palmer, 2024),* an Auckland principal noted that the Ministry's newly mandated achievement language moving to a rigid rubric scale of "emerging, to exceeding" would "take some time to get used to."

(para. 11) This highlighted the immediate difficulty parents face in interpreting new reporting terminology without clear, plain-language institutional translation. Taken together, these perspectives indicate that communication and transparency were persistent concerns across all data sources, where a lack of proactive information architecture left families and educators operating in a critical knowledge deficit.

4.3.2 Theme 2: Perceptions of Curriculum Clarity

Across the qualitative survey responses, Reddit discussions, and RNZ reporting, participants expressed a wide range of views about the clarity, coherence, and usability of the curriculum framework. In the open-ended survey data, 21.7% participating caregivers described deep uncertainty about what their children were learning and how curriculum expectations were being operationalized by their schools. Quantitatively, this sense of ambiguity reflected a broader cohort trend where only 6.5% (n=3) of respondents rated their curriculum understanding as "Very Good" and 23.9% (n=11) as "Good," while a combined 34.8% evaluated their comprehension as Average (10.9%, n = 5), Poor (17.4%, n= 8), or Very Poor (6.5%, n = 3), alongside 34.8% (n=16) who reported no baseline awareness at all. When asked to identify specific obstacles limiting their engagement, structural complexity emerged as a major barrier, accounting for 28.6% of barrier selections (10 explicit mentions across the dataset). Some respondents emphasized the need for more structured, physical learning materials to bridge this home-school gap, with one parent explicitly noting that "children must have proper textbooks so that parents can clearly understand what they are learning in school and about their progress." This demand for material clarity aligned with wider resource evaluations, where 19.6% (n = 9) of caregivers deemed school-provided resources inadequate ("definitely not" or "probably not") and 17.4% (n = 8) remained uncertain

Others highlighted a lack of structural transparency in school updates, noting that the "syllabus breakdown and concepts of syllabus should be discussed properly." While a small number of survey respondents expressed general optimism offering comments such as "I am happy with the education system" and "It sounds good, in an old school way, better for future generations" the dominant narrative among caregivers was characterized by persistent challenges in deciphering

curriculum expectations or tracking student progress. This was further reflected in overall implementation metrics, where 21.7% (n = 10) of the cohort expressed explicit structural dissatisfaction, and 17.4% (n = 8) disagreed that the curriculum changes aligned with future student readiness.

Concerns about curriculum clarity were particularly pronounced among survey respondent caregivers of gifted learners. One parent reported that "my child is gifted but the skills are not being managed in class, and my child is always bored," while another characterized the revised framework as "restrictive… particularly regarding gifted children… no flexibility or room extension (or remedial support for those struggling)." These qualitative insights suggest that highly prescriptive curriculum structures were perceived as a direct constraint on a teacher's capacity to differentiate instruction for diverse learning needs.

Reddit discussions reflected many of these same caregiver anxieties, situating local frustrations within broader public debates regarding national curriculum design, structural coherence, and implementation consistency. Digital contributors frequently described widespread confusion surrounding the reform timeline, noting that draft syllabi were being inconsistently utilized across regions and that the definitive direction of the policy shift remained unclear. Some users questioned the technical credibility and professional development of the curriculum text itself, citing claims that segments of the primary school documentation had been generated using artificial intelligence (AI) tools, which led contributors to characterize the resulting materials as poorly synthesized or pedagogically unreliable.

Other forum participants highlighted the risk of curriculum overload, arguing that the prescriptive nature and sheer volume of the new content risked overwhelming frontline educators, restricting instructional flexibility, and displacing skills-based learning models. This anxiety persisted even among users who viewed specific technical adjustments, such as structural elements within the new mathematics framework, as a positive step forward. Collectively, these online discussions demonstrate how curriculum clarity was evaluated by the public through a combination of localised domestic experiences and broader ideological stances.

At a sector-wide level, RNZ reporting exposed extensive institutional concerns regarding the clarity and internal consistency of the government's curriculum changes. In the article *Education groups unite to oppose government's school curriculum overhaul* (Gerritsen 2024, *para. 7)*, sector spokespeople argued that the revised materials lacked logical cohesion and were overly dense, describing the primary syllabus as being " It is full of knowledge, rich objectives, over 1000 objectives from year zero to eight, they're not coherent." This sense of structural overload led professional representatives to declare that "these curriculums cannot go ahead," signalling a widespread sector consensus that the scale of the revisions rendered them unworkable for schools. This institutional resistance was driven by deeper concerns regarding the philosophical trajectory of the changes, with one representative warning that (Gerritsen, 2024, *para. 16)*,

> "We do believe that some of the things that we believe are driving this ideology are definitely not good for our country and not good for our children and we do believe that if we don't stand up and have a conversation, then these ideologies may become something that the country has no choice but to take on board."

suggesting that a lack of consultative dialogue risked embedding inconsistent educational models permanently into the system.

Frontline educators similarly reported that the rapid sequencing of the rollout caused severe operational stress. In *New maths, English, science resources rolled out at schools after teachers bemoan delay* (Radio New Zealand, 2024), a primary teacher described the start of the school year as an "extremely frustrating and stressful start," demonstrating the practical toll that delayed or ambiguous curriculum guidance takes on classroom preparation. This lack of clear, evidence-based grounding was supported by professional testimony in *Ex-ministry staffer accuses government of ignoring education experts, teachers* (Nine to Noon, 2024), where a former ministry employee argued that stable policy requires drawing on "the best people and the best evidence… to make that a really solid piece of work."

Finally, RNZ reporting emphasized that curriculum clarity is a fundamental prerequisite for effective family partnership. In *Standardised report cards will help children who change schools - principal* (Palmer, 2024), a school leader noted that student "success happens when the families

are heavily engaged with the schools… [and] those young people for whom that partnership is not strong are often the ones not achieving." Taken together, these data streams reveal that while minor pockets of confidence existed, the prevailing experience was one of fragmentation, where ambiguous frameworks limited the capacity of both parents and teachers to interpret the new educational landscape.

4.3.3 Theme 3: System Instability & Constant Change

Across the survey respondents, RNZ articles and Reddit discourse, the 2025-2026 curriculum environment was consistently characterized as an unstable, highly volatile space that generated significant compliance and navigational difficulties for schools and families. In the qualitative survey data, parents frequently expressed confusion regarding the rapid timeline of the rollout, with one caregiver asking, "I want to understand why was there a sudden change [sic] in curriculum and why is it rushed?". Quantitatively, this institutional volatility was reflected in barrier evaluations, where a lack of time to learn about the updates emerged as the single most prominent obstacle, accounting for 14 explicit mentions across the dataset (30.4% of the total sample)

Other respondents characterized the mechanical implementation as rushed and poorly supported, noting that "the new curriculum is implemented in a frenzy. Teachers didn’t [sic] get training and the curriculum was implemented. how [sic] will the students in older classes will [sic] adapt to this change". Overall, 54.4% (n=25) of respondents interacting with this inquiry identified at least one structural obstacle restricting their engagement.

This structural instability was accompanies by caregiver anxiety regarding learning progression, as families sought to understand how mid-year adjustments might affect outcomes: "Mathematics curriculum is getting revised during the term how will that impact the students learning." Furthermore, parents linked this systemic instability to a breakdown in reporting metrics, stating that "the only way to improve collaboration is to timely provide test results with non-AI feedback… not 6 months past the failure." Ultimately, one caregiver summarized the wider climate of curriculum change as simply having "too many changes happening."

Reddit contributors echoed these systemic critiques, framing the rapid structural adjustments as disruptive and procedurally uncoordinated. Forum discussions highlighted how the continuous, rapid release of revised curriculum versions destabilized school operations, making long-term lesson planning impossible for teaching staff. Educators participating online noted that major content revisions were frequently handed down after they had already spent significant personal time developing localised classroom resources.

Participants expressed concern regarding the misallocation of professional resources, with users describing instances where mandatory teacher-only days dedicated professional development sessions funded by the Ministry were spent training on specific curriculum frameworks that were subsequently amended or replaced by policymakers almost immediately afterward. These digital accounts illustrate an environment where ongoing changes to documentation eroded professional confidence and generated operational friction across classrooms.

These patterns of systemic turbulence were corroborated by sector stakeholders within RNZ coverage. In Education groups unite to oppose government's school curriculum overhaul (Gerritsen, 2024), professional representatives identified a combination of factors specifically "the direction, the pace, and the lack of genuine consultation" as primary drivers of system-level distress. The administrative toll of these compressed timelines was further detailed in ‘Impossible deadline’: Union questions shorter consultation period for Māori curriculum (Paewai, 2024), where educational leaders described government implementation schedules as "pretty much an impossible deadline."

Interviewees argued that by prioritizing ideological speed over established sector experience, the rollout left schools exposed to a "huge amount of changes" without providing the necessary breathing room for new materials to settle into practice. While minor structural changes within the literacy and mathematics frameworks were viewed as potentially positive, the consensus across RNZ reporting was that the system was forcing "too much change too fast," resulting in an unstable environment that can potentially complicate the structural planning capabilities of New Zealand schools.

4.3.4 Theme 4: Governance, Trust & Political Influence

The curriculum reform process was frequently discussed by stakeholders in relation to wider concerns regarding state governance, political motivation, and the erosion of institutional trust. In the survey data, several caregivers raised questions regarding the underlying drivers of the rapid policy shifts, asking "why was there a sudden change in curriculum and why is it rushed?" Quantitatively, this underlying scepticism was reflected in implementation evaluations, where 21.7% (n = 10) of respondents expressed explicit dissatisfaction with the curriculum rollout,

For parents, this lack of structural transparency translated into feelings of personal alienation from the school system, reflected in expressions such as "I'm not sure" and "No idea, we are clueless" when asked to evaluate the changes. This qualitative sentiment aligns with cohort metrics showing that 34.8% (n = 16) of caregivers reported no baseline awareness of the curriculum updates, while 25.0% (n = 9 mentions) cited a lack of information from school as a primary barrier to their engagement.

Furthermore, the qualitative data captured ideological tensions regarding perceived political bias within classroom content. When evaluating institutional guidance, 19.6% (n = 9) of caregivers evaluated Ministry and school-provided resources as inadequate ("definitely not" or "probably not"). For instance, one parent voiced frustration with the historical framing of current lessons, stating "Ref current curriculum. It's failing my child. Him saying something to me about colonization without any balance is not OK. The expectations aren't high enough." Conversely, another caregiver highlighted how systemic political or cultural dynamics created exclusionary environments for minority students, remarking that the "colonial mindset of classmates and teachers is making my children feel inferior in school and around people."

Reddit discussions similarly portrayed the 2025-2026 reforms as a process compromised by political agendas rather than objective educational needs. Commenters argued that the accelerated speed of the rollout pointed to a politically mandated timeline detached from classroom realities, expressing frustration with the perceived lack of a cohesive, long-term educational vision from the Ministry of Education. Users demanded greater democratic

accountability, noting that if massive structural redevelopments are to be publicly funded, the rationale must be explicitly justified rather than masked by distant decisionmakers.

These concerns over governance and political interference were reflected within RNZ's reporting, which detailed executive level decision making. In *Ex ministry staffer accuses government of ignoring education experts, and teachers*, a former ministry official provided a detailed account of the curriculum development process from an institutional perspective. The official detailed major structural departures from standard democratic policymaking, stating that established curriculum writing groups were abruptly disbanded: decision-makers were (Nine to Noon, 2024), "getting rid of entire contributing groups and replacing them with people that had previous relationships with the minister."

In Nine to Noon, (2024) the informant reported that certain policy decisions were omitted from official documentation, describing an internal directive regarding record-keeping practices, "we're not going to write this down… so it's not OIA able [subject to the Official Information Act]." The official concluded in Nine to Noon, (2024) that the curriculum refresh had become heavily politicized through a top-down approach characterized as "we're not interested in talking to the people who know… it's a sort of 'my way or the highway' approach." These accounts reflect a reform environment characterized by friction between institutional decisionmakers and sector representatives, highlighting themes of declining public trust, diminished consultation with educational experts, and concerns surrounding administrative oversight.

4.3.5 Theme 5: Cultural Responsiveness and Identity

Themes pertaining to cultural identity, Treaty commitments, and equity were prominent across the qualitative corpus. Caregiver survey feedback highlighted concerns surrounding the potential marginalization of indigenous perspectives and history under the updated curriculum directives This perspective was reflected in qualitative statements such as "Bring back Aotearoa Histories and honour te tiriti," alongside localised anxieties regarding identity retention:

> "I am worried that the removal of Māori words in school books [sic] and other initiatives to reduce exposure to Māori in schools will make it hard for my child to learn her language. I'm tired of this racist government throwing out years of progress."

In contrast, other caregivers welcomed the shift away from bicultural frameworks, explicitly stating that they "love the removal of excessive treaty study." These survey responses reflect a varying community perspectives regarding the appropriate role of treaty-based education in domestic schools.

These ideological divisions also shaped how families experienced cultural safety within the wider school environment. One respondent reported that the " the Colonial mindset of classmates and teachers is making my children feel inferior in school and around people," while another argued that the new curriculum simply "reflects trending of colonial past." Concerns regarding cultural assimilation were also identified, with one caregiver emphasizing that institutions "Prove that it's not boot camp for ethnic children promising distancing in social norms from other ethnicities but integrate using less human or plastic technological means." Others expressed discomfort with what they perceived as an uncritical ideological focus on structural oppression, noting that their child's lessons on colonization lacked balanced contextual framing.

Reddit conversations reflected similar debates, focusing on the swiftly changing demographics of urban centres such as Auckland, where participants observed that "43% of Aucklanders were born overseas. Certain users contended that, although significant multicultural immigration, Te Tiriti continues to be the core constitutional document of the education system, denouncing the new curriculum as "woefully weak in any indication of that". In contrast, other authors challenged the continued applicability of a purely bicultural Māori-Pākehā framework in a superdiverse society, stating: "We ceased to be bicultural when Chinese and Indian individuals arrived." Some utilised localised frameworks of immigration and linguistic assimilation to contend that educational institutions should concentrate solely on core competencies, observing that, in their experience, immigrant students improved their English proficiency when immersed in conventional structures without having to understand cultural context.

RNZ reporting provided critical institutional context to these debates, documenting a sector-level predicament regarding the government's formal retreat from statutory Treaty obligations. In *Urgent Waitangi Tribunal inquiry into government's removal of schools' Treaty obligations* (Bailey-McDowell & Natanahira, 2024), educational experts warned that stripping Te Tiriti from

core educational mandates carried critical constitutional consequences. Interviewees focused specifically on the legislative removal of Section 127 of the Education and Training Act the statutory clause that legally required school boards to give effect to Te Tiriti, achieve equitable outcomes for Māori, and integrate indigenous language and customs into the environment.

Experts noted that removing Section 127 (Bailey-McDowell & Natanahira, 2024), "clearly deprioritizes Māori and Te Tiriti o Waitangi," with consequences for *tamariki* (Māori children). Qualitative accounts from sector representatives interpreted these legislative adjustments in relation to political dynamics and historical governance frameworks, with one representative remarking that: "two nations made this deal… then one nation turns around and swallows the other one up". These institutional critiques, paired with observations in *Education groups unite to oppose government's school curriculum overhaul* (Gerritsen, 2024) that the rapid layering of reforms actively undermined culturally responsive teaching practices, show that cultural identity remains one of the most highly contested and emotionally tense lenses through which the 2025-2026 reforms are interpreted.

4.3.6 Theme 6: Support Needs and Parental Role Clarity

Variance emerged across all data sources regarding the specific operational roles parents are expected to execute under the revised curriculum, as well as the structural resources required to fulfil those obligations. In the qualitative survey data, socioeconomic and structural constraints significantly shaped a family's capacity to absorb these new educational responsibilities, a vulnerability underscored by descriptive findings identifying "a lack of time to learn about it" as the most prominent obstacle to curriculum engagement (accounting for 35.7% of all recorded barriers). This division was starkly evident when contrasting different caregiving realities. On one hand, professionalized or dedicated caregivers reported high capacity and clear intent to manage curriculum tracking, with one respondent mentioning: "I am their nanny and it's my work to understand their curriculum and prepare them for school." Conversely, socioeconomically strained families reported feeling entirely unable to engage with complex institutional expectations due to competing survival demands, as explained by a parent: "Being a single parent it's already hard to make ends meet with doing two jobs.... [sic] No time to engage with school

related issues [sic].... Why do parents have to be involved with curriculum and learning." Cross-tabulation data further corroborates this disparity, showing that while high-income brackets (earning over $100,000) concentrated their feedback around time constraints amidst high awareness, lower-income and time-poverty groups were left disproportionately vulnerable to informational vacuums created by top down communication gaps.

Furthermore, the qualitative data demonstrates that role confusion is experienced differently across the economic spectrum. While lower-income families face total informational barriers, higher-income brackets actively leverage their structural capital to peer past school-level communication, generating unique write-in responses that explicitly target upstream governance, citing a "lack of clarity from the Ministry of Education."

This division emphasizes the necessity for explicit institutional guidance. 34.7% survey respondents reported a total vacuum of communication regarding the curriculum change, offering basic refrains such as "I'm not sure," "Don't know," and "No insights." Parents explicitly identified that "the only way to improve collaboration is to timely provide test results with non AI [sic] feedback, inform the student of their grades and offer ways to cover weak points on time not 6 months past the failure." They sought practical, plain-language toolkits, noting that "more information on how parents will have to support their *tamariki* would be beneficial eg. [sic] help with homework or extra tutorial time."

Where proactive, accessible communication architecture was established, parents reported highly positive collaborative outcomes, with one noting: "The revised curriculum encourages stronger communication and shared responsibility between parents, teachers, and students. By staying informed about what my child is learning and actively engaging with teachers through regular updates or meetings, we can better support my child’s progress at home and school. This collaboration ensures consistent learning goals, timely feedback, and a more personalized approach to my child’s education." However, where schools failed to communicate this relevance, a deep sense of alienation occurred, demonstrated by caregivers who dismissed the entire state reform process as completely "not relevant to my child's private school."

The domestic tensions surrounding the execution of the revised curriculum are further illuminated by localised online forum discussions, which reveal a deep divergence in how caregivers conceptualize and negotiate their educational responsibilities. As documented in the public dataset, digital contributors heavily debated the fundamental boundaries of domestic responsibility. Some participants asserted that a caregiver's active, vested interest and direct involvement in home learning act as non-negotiable prerequisites for student achievement, arguing that an ongoing parental commitment to reinforcing educational values within the home microsystem is vital to prevent students from struggling academically.

Conversely, other commentators highlighted that widening gaps in classroom resources specifically rising class sizes, a severe drop in funding for teacher aides, and the systemic redirection of gifted and talented education budgets have radically altered the parental mandate. Rather than acting as equal collaborative partners, parents of neurodiverse or advanced learners expressed that they are increasingly forced to assume highly intensive, defensive advocacy roles. These accounts suggest that under-resourced public institutions frequently fail to manage classroom differentiation adequately, leaving families with the burden of privately buffering their children against systemic shortfalls or accepting what they perceive as a diminished standard of public education.

Furthermore, the discourse underscored how structural inequities manifest as severe barriers for families attempting to navigate complex institutional shifts. Contributors noted that the rapid rollout fails to account for classrooms featuring highly diverse student cohorts, such as those with significant English as a Second Language (ESL) requirements or specialized neurodivergent needs, such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Forum users argued that without explicit, well-funded support mechanisms and pedagogical transparency from the state, these institutional changes threaten to leave vulnerable student populations marginalized and structurally detached from core curriculum objectives. Together, these digital perspectives reinforce the qualitative survey findings, demonstrating that parental role clarity is heavily contingent upon the state providing clear, realistic expectations alongside the structural resources necessary to fulfil them.

These structural needs were directly reinforced by school leaders within RNZ reporting. In *Standardised report cards will help children who change schools - principal* (Palmer, 2024), educators emphasized that for parental partnership to succeed, the state must provide accessible, high-quality, and completely free curriculum-aligned assessment resources. Furthermore, leaders warned that the newly mandated assessment language moving from traditional grades to a rubric scale of "emerging to exceeding" remained highly opaque to families, stating that the terminology "may take some time to get used to." This reporting complexity is severely compounded for highly mobile, lower-income families who frequently change schools, making it incredibly difficult for a transient parent to make consistent sense of their child's academic tracking. Collectively, these findings demonstrate that effective parental engagement is heavily dependent on institutions providing explicit role clarity and acknowledging diverse structural family circumstances.

4.3.7 Theme 7: Teacher Workload & Capacity Limits

Across all analysed data sources, teacher workload limits and systemic capacity constraints were identified as major structural barriers undermining the viable execution of the curriculum refresh. In the qualitative survey responses, participating caregivers expressed explicit concern regarding the frantic pace of the changes and the lack of professional preparation time allocated to frontline staff. One parent observed that "the new curriculum is implemented in a frenzy. Teachers didnt [sic] get training and the curriculum was implemented. how [sic] will the students in older classes will [sic] adapt to this change," adding that the mid-term revision of the mathematics framework was bound to destabilize core student learning. This caregiver perspective reflected a widespread public realization that educators were being forced to implement massive pedagogical shifts without receiving the fundamental institutional training or structural resources required to support their students.

Reddit threads populated by primary and secondary educators provided detailed, firsthand accounts of the acute professional exhaustion generated by these top-down mandates. Contributors described the administrative execution of the NCEA Level 1 rollout as severely mismanaged, highlighting the extreme inefficiency of introducing critical structural updates after

teachers had already spent their uncompensated summer leave preparing annual course resources.

Furthermore, teachers expressed deep frustration regarding the systemic instability of professional development protocols. Multiple users noted that they were legally required to attend consecutive "teacher-only days" reallocated school days dedicated strictly to professional training courses to upskill on the new mathematics framework, only for the Ministry of Education to discard or significantly alter that specific curriculum version within days of the session's completion. This continuous shifting of compliance targets, combined with what educators described as highly convoluted, error-prone official documentation, resulted in countless uncompensated hours spent modifying lesson plans, severely limiting the capacity of staff to focus on actual classroom instruction.

These accounts of professional strain were fully validated by data within RNZ reporting. In ‘Impossible deadline’: Union questions shorter consultation period for Māori curriculum (Paewai, 2024), sector leaders issued formal warnings that drastically compressed consultation timelines would severely impact teacher well-being and classroom efficacy, forcing unworkable workloads onto an already strained workforce. These concerns were reinforced in Standardised report cards will help children who change schools - principal (Palmer, 2024), where school principals noted that the education sector had been "hit by a huge amount of changes last year" and desperately required a period of stability to "let all this new material settle."

Principals strongly critiqued the design of the government's "knowledge-rich" frameworks, warning that they forced teachers away from deep conceptual instruction into an administrative exercise of "surface level teaching… tick charts… [and] objectives which will be easily assessed." Finally, in New maths, English, science resources rolled out at schools after teachers bemoan delay (Radio New Zealand, 2024), representatives emphasized that smoothly implemented, pre-developed resources are critical to protect teacher’s capacity when major content changes are introduced. Taken together, the findings across all platforms demonstrate an absolute consensus: the accelerated scale and rushed pace of the 2025-2026 curriculum overhaul placed

an unsustainable burden on the New Zealand teaching profession, severely threatening the systemic viability of the entire reform agenda.

4.3.8 Summary of Thematic Analysis

While the preceding sections present the descriptive, quantitative patterns emerging from the cross-tabulations, those results only capture the structural dimensions of caregiver experiences. To develop a holistic understanding of the contemporary educational landscape, this section transitions to a qualitative thematic analysis. This analysis synthesizes open-ended survey feedback from Auckland caregivers alongside public media commentaries from Radio New Zealand (RNZ) and localised digital discourse on Reddit.

Through systematic thematic coding across these data streams, seven core themes emerged. These themes capture the specific relational, operational, and ideological frictions occurring across the educational ecosystem. To provide a central reference point for the subsequent analysis and discussion, these themes are summarized in the roadmap below:

Theme 1: Communication and Transparency: Highlights severe informational vacuums and a lack of semantic clarity or pedagogical relevance in existing school communication tools.

Theme 2: Perceptions of Curriculum Clarity: Documents deep caregiver and educator anxiety regarding structural overload, lack of coherence, and a prescriptive framework that restricts instructional flexibility for diverse and gifted learners.

Theme 3: System Instability & Constant Change: Captures the frantic, compressed timelines of mid-term policy adjustments that disrupted lesson planning and eroded stakeholder confidence.

Theme 4: Governance, Trust & Political Influence: Exposes deep concerns regarding top-down executive mandates, the exclusion of sector expertise, and deliberate workarounds to avoid statutory transparency laws.

Theme 5: Cultural Responsiveness and Identity: Illustrates highly polarized ideological divisions regarding the crown's formal retreat from Treaty obligations, fears of indigenous language erasure, and concerns over cultural assimilation.

Theme 6: Support Needs and Parental Role Clarity: Reveals a stark socioeconomic divide in caregiving capacity, where a vacuum of explicit home-learning guidance leaves disadvantaged families structurally alienated.

Theme 7: Teacher Workload & Capacity Limits: Outlines an absolute sector-wide consensus that the accelerated scale of the overhaul forced unworkable administrative burdens onto an exhausted teaching profession, compromising systemic viability.

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter's empirical findings reveal the intricate social, operational, and ideological tensions currently undermining Auckland's educational ecosystem. These findings have identified a substantial disparity between overarching curriculum mandates and individual domestic comprehension by integrating quantitative cross-tabulations with qualitative insights from caregiver surveys, public media (RNZ) articles, and localised internet discourse on Reddit. The research indicates that structural factors such as socioeconomic status, ethnic stratification, and significant regional instability fundamentally determine a caregiver's ability to intercept, understand, and implement the directives of the Curriculum Refresh. Nonetheless, these localised patterns cannot be assessed in isolation; they are indicative of broader systemic misalignments. The subsequent chapter will engage in a thorough discussion to elucidate the deeper structural implications of these findings. Chapter 5 will analyse the empirical findings through the theoretical frameworks of Bronfenbrenner’s Bioecological Systems Theory and Social and Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) framework, assessing the systemic opportunities, institutional power dynamics, and evolving parental self-efficacy that characterise the present home-school relationship and parents' perceptions of the reform.

5. Discussion

This study examined how caregivers in Auckland navigate, interpret, and make sense of systemic educational changes during the rollout of the New Zealand Curriculum Refresh (2024-2027). This research took place during a period (2025-2026) of rapid policy change, contested political narratives, and uneven institutional communication practices. While the preceding chapter detailed the empirical results of the survey dataset (n=46), this chapter synthesises those findings to address a critical sociological and educational question: How do institutional communication practices shape, facilitate, or hinder curriculum sense-making and engagement among Auckland's culturally and linguistically diverse parents during a period of large-scale educational reform? To unpack this, question, the discussion explicitly addresses three core research questions:

- What are the baseline levels of parental awareness, cognitive clarity, and confidence regarding the 2024-2027 Curriculum Refresh? (RQ1),
- What primary structural, linguistic, and channel-based barriers inhibit effective parent sense-making and home-school alignment during this reform? (RQ2),
- How do the intersecting cultural, linguistic, and socio-demographic realities of Auckland's superdiverse communities mediate how families interpret institutional communication and navigate curriculum change? (RQ3).

These questions are evaluated in the following sections through a dual theoretical framework.

5.1 Overview: An Integrated BEST and SBCC Discussion

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (BEST) is utilised to map the structural friction occurring between the micro-, meso-, exo-, and macrosystems of the educational ecology. Concurrently, Social and Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) principles are applied to evaluate the efficacy of the information delivery models and to analyse how strategic messaging failed to bridge these systemic layers. By synthesising these two frameworks, this chapter moves beyond a descriptive account of parental dissatisfaction, exposing instead a systemic communication divide within New Zealand's contemporary educational landscape.

5.1.1 Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Theory (BEST)

Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Theory (BEST) offers a powerful explanatory structure for understanding the communication divide identified in this study. By examining how pressures in the exosystem and chronosystem constrained school-level communication and destabilised the mesosystem, the model clarifies why parents remained confused despite high engagement. The following subsections apply this BEST lens to interpret the key themes emerging from the findings.

5.1.2 UNICEF's Social Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) Framework

UNICEF (2017) defined Social and Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) as a systems-oriented, human-rights-based, people-centred approach designed to promote positive and measurable changes in behaviours, social norms, and structural conditions affecting children and communities. This approach is grounded in evidence, community participation, and an understanding of the cognitive, social, and structural drivers of behaviour.(UNICEF, 2017a)

5.2 The Paradox of presence: Logistical Proximity & Domestic Information Gap

This section presents the paradoxical finding that logistical ease does not guarantee informational equity. It discusses how physical proximity to the school site can exist alongside a profound domestic information gap, hindering the ability of caregivers to meaningfully engage with the ongoing pedagogical shifts.

5.2.1 Attendance Awareness Paradox

The empirical findings of this study negate the traditional institutional assumption that parental presence at school-led events automatically yields a clear understanding of curriculum policy. Descriptive patterns within the gathered dataset highlight a notable divergence.

In the survey responses caregivers demonstrated exceptionally high metrics of physical and digital participation while frequently reporting limited familiarity with the details of ongoing reforms. Specifically, 78.3% (n=36) of surveyed caregivers reported that they a*lways* attend

scheduled parent-teacher meetings, and 63.0% indicated they *regularly* utilise school-managed digital parent portals.

Despite this high-density institutional proximity, 34.8% of the total sample indicated no prior awareness of the macro-level curriculum updates in Figure 36. Furthermore, within the 65.2% cohort of parents who possessed basic baseline awareness that a reform was occurring, only 30.0% evaluated their understanding of its pedagogical mechanics as functional. The cross-tabulation matrix points to a descriptive disconnect within the most active tier: over a third (26.1%, n=12) of the caregivers who *always* physically attend school meetings explicitly recorded that they did not know about the curriculum changes at all, while an additional 17.4% (n=8) evaluated their personal comprehension as "poor" or "very poor."

When interpreted through BEST, these patterns suggest a friction point at the mesosystemic level. Yet the physical microsystem of the school is functioning smoothly in terms of logistical compliance; parents are both actively logging in to the digital portal and physically walking into classrooms. Similarly, the parent-child conduit within the domestic microsystem is highly functional, active, and emotionally dense.

This paradoxical disconnect between high operational attendance and low cognitive clarity indicates that physical proximity across the home-school interface may not automatically result in educational alignment or shared understanding. This empirical finding aligns closely with the work of Goodall (2021) and Fullan (2007), who argued that true educational partnership is a deeply relational process rather than a series of top-down administrative actions or transactional logging into digital parent portals. Combining high logistical compliance (such as impressive parent-teacher interview attendance and regular portal activity) for successful policy mediation, echoes the critiques of passive information dissemination raised by Mutch and Collins (2012). In an educational landscape marked by the rapid, technical introduction of Structured Literacy and Mathematics, the lack of plain-language, dialogic translation can contribute to an information gap for families. While the school and domestic microsystems function smoothly in isolation, the mesosystemic conduit exhibits structural communication friction. Without a transition toward strategic, relational communication that moves past generic, one-size-fits-all notices,

institutional proximity may obscure an underlying communication gap, leaving even highly engaged families with limited insight into the pedagogical mechanics of the ongoing reform.

5.2.2 The Relational Silence of Domestic Conduits

A notable dimension of the communication divide becomes evident when evaluating the cross-tabulation between the frequency of parent-child conversations regarding school and the caregivers' actual baseline understanding of the curriculum changes in Figure 34. Educational policy frameworks frequently assume that active relational dynamics within the domestic microsystem naturally facilitate information flow, operating under the premise that daily parent-child interactions serve as an informal channel for monitoring academic shifts (Epstein, 2011). However, the empirical findings of this study present a contrast to this assumption, illustrating a descriptive disconnect between daily conversational routines and conceptual structural awareness. The descriptive cross-tabulation demonstrates that high relational engagement does not guarantee cognitive alignment: While nearly half of the cohort of caregivers indicated that they engage in daily conversations with their children about school, this high relational engagement is not uniformly associated with structural policy awareness. A notable proportion of parents within this highly communicative domestic bracket reported no prior awareness or indicated ambiguity regarding the structural mechanics of the Curriculum Refresh. Conversely, comprehensive baseline understanding was neither exclusive to, nor linearly guaranteed by, the frequency of these domestic dialogues.

From an SBCC perspective, this finding underscores the strategic danger of an institutional reliance on passive, unstructured, and unmediated communication pathways. The immediate parent-child relationship is typically unequipped to decode abstract, fast-changing pedagogical frameworks. While children can organically report on daily operational occurrences, classroom activities, or immediate tasks, they are rarely positioned to act as primary vectors for complex exosystemic policy translations. By failing to provide caregivers with direct, and accessible frameworks using plain language, the families are often left attempting to piece together a macro-level structural overhaul through secondary, highly localised child reports.

The empirical observations suggest that exosystemic instability, which a participant described as "frenzy" of the rollout, may operate as an unmediated barrier to function effective communication, rather than approaching communication as a purposeful attempt to enhance understanding and behavioural efficacy. Consequently, descriptive patterns point to a scenario where parents maintain high relational engagement with their children's daily experiences while possessing limited knowledge of foundational educational framework that guides their learning.

This dependence on children as informal knowledge brokers highlights a potential weakness within the home-school mesosystem, aligning with existing research that cautions against passive policy mediation. Goodall (2017) and Harris and Goodall (2008) have observed that active parental engagement in a child's daily school activities is essential for cultivating a supportive home learning environment; however, there is a clear difference between localised homework monitoring and overarching curriculum understanding. When institutional notices lack clear, straightforward explanations of systemic changes, the communication dynamic risks falling into an unmediated pattern where the child becomes an informational broker between state educational demands and the home environment. These dynamic echoes with the critique by Mutch and Collins (2012), who suggest that anticipating intricate pedagogical transformations such as the technical shift towards "Understand, Know, Do" progressions to emerge from child-parent dialogues can reflect a gap in institutional messaging. A gap in direct institutional communication may lead parents to depend on incomplete, secondary feedback from students, potentially undercutting the "educationally powerful connections" advocated by the Education Review Office (ERO, 2015). Because of this passive information flow, a family's capacity to collaboratively promote learning at home can be impaired, transforming what should be a true partnership into an uncertain process.

5.2.3 The Homework-Comprehension Divide: Task-Based Entanglement vs. Pedagogical Architecture

The empirical cross-tabulation tracking home learning support frequencies against systemic policy awareness further illustrates a mesosystemic friction point. The quantitative dataset points to a descriptive Home Learning Paradox; the "Not Aware" category was heavily populated

by caregivers who actively assist their children with homework either a few times a week (15.2%) or daily (6.5%).

These empirical patterns suggest that parents can be deeply entangled in the micro-level tactical mechanics of schooling such as physically sitting down and helping their child navigate daily mathematics worksheets or reading tasks while maintaining limited visibility of the macro-level pedagogical architecture driving those tasks.

When interpreted through, these patterns point to structural friction in the construction of home-school links. The domestic microsystem is operating at a high behavioural frequency; parents are actively dedicating temporal and emotional resources to co-construct learning tasks.

However, when assignments lack explicit macro-level contextual framing, home learning activities risk functioning in a pedagogical void. Caregivers are often placed in a position of a localised task-completion supervisor, frequently detached from the foundational curriculum renewal directives, structural transformations, or pedagogical philosophies (such as the transition to Structured Literacy or explicit Mathematics models) that govern the formulation of those tasks.

From an SBCC perspective, these patterns highlight the limitations of viewing homework merely as a transactional student requirement rather than a prime relational communication channel. Within an integrated behaviour change model, every activity that leaves from the school microsystem into the domestic microsystem should serve a dual purpose: reinforcing student learning while simultaneously providing caregivers with context.

In absence of accessible, plain-language summary frameworks or explanatory entrances to daily assignments, schools can underutilize a high-frequency communication channel. They leave highly dedicated parents behaviourally mobilised at the kitchen table yet completely isolated from the systemic educational narrative occurring at the institutional level.

5.3 The Breakdown of the Mesosystemic Link

The informational bridge connecting the two microsystemic spheres exhibits notable structural friction. To examine how this mesosystemic connection operated during the reform, the data reveal several intersecting factors.

5.3.1 Frontline Triage and Teacher Temporal Pressures

To analyse how the home-school connection operated during the Curriculum Refresh, the educational ecology can be evaluated as a dynamic framework of human actors navigating temporal constraints. Within Bronfenbrenner's Chronosystem framework, the rapid velocity and compressed timeline of the macro-level policy rollout corresponds to reported temporal deficits within the school Microsystem for frontline educators.

The qualitative analysis indicates strong thematic alignment between Theme 3 (System Instability & Constant Change) and Theme 7 (Teacher Workload & Capacity Limits) and the informational gaps documented in Theme 1 (Communication and Transparency). According to analysis of RNZ articles presented in chapter four, educators repeatedly articulated that there was simply "little time to prepare for the new curriculum" alongside a "frustrating start of the new term."

Before teachers could translate complex pedagogical shifts to caregivers, qualitative accounts indicate they experienced an intensive internal triage phase, struggling to digest, internalise, and restructure their own daily classroom practices under temporal pressure. When exosystemic timelines provide limited temporal space for professional internalization, a school's capacity to construct relationally dense communication pathways can be constrained.

Under significant workload adjustments, frontline educators, frequently relied on automated, standardised digital default notifications to fulfil basic outward communication. Crucially, this qualitative synthesis demonstrates that the automated school portal can function primarily as administrative compliance mechanisms. Amid elevated administrative demands, the portal enabled schools to fulfil formal notification requirements, though standardised digital broadcasts may not provide the interactive platform required for dialogic sense-making with caregivers..

These empirical patterns align closely with established literature addressing policy implementation dynamics and institutional workload capacity. The descriptive relationship between temporal velocity and reduced communication frequency presents an empirical parallel to Thrupp's (2018) conceptualization of policy churn and Wylie's (2021) analysis of administrative volatility in Aotearoa New Zealand. When external governance structures demand rapid, technical pedagogical shifts such as the implementation of Structured Literacy and Mathematics frameworks without allocating dedicated professional development and communication resources, the school's capacity to mediate policy for its community can be limited.

As reflected in digital discourse on Reddit, the observed informational gaps do not appear to stem from institutional apathy or a lack of parental desire for engagement. Rather, these patterns point to an ecological dynamic where limited temporal capacity constrains relational engagement, leading to a reliance on one-way digital transmissions that left the domestic microsystem with limited insight into the curriculum's underlying pedagogical architecture.

5.3.2 The Whisper Network Effect and Distortion Waves

Descriptive data indicates that 32.6% (n=15) of caregivers with baseline awareness of curriculum change obtained their information from media sources, including news articles and social media in Figure 17. Consequently, when formal institutional channels are perceived as complex or slow to update, the resulting information void does not necessarily signal caregiver's disinterest. The qualitative and quantitative patterns suggest that caregivers frequently access alternative, informal informational spaces for clarification. These places include mass media platforms, localised peer networks, school-gate discussions, and neighbourhood digital forums, such as local Facebook groups or community subreddits.

Within these informal peer settings, parents engage in collaborative decoding, attempting to collectively make sense of both mass media reporting and brief school notices. While this "Whisper Network Effect" (Johnson, 2023) provides immediate emotional validation and mutual support, it operates without institutional verification. Without direct, grounding from official school channels, peer-to-peer interactions risk combining sensationalised media narratives with

localised speculations. This can contribute to misinterpretations of the Curriculum Refresh within the community, potentially altering how families interpret institutional actions.

This reliance on informal, unmediated networks illustrates a descriptive pattern of how information vacuums influence the relational dynamics of the educational ecosystem. When formal exosystemic communication channels lack semantic clarity, families may construct what Mutch and Collins (2012) identified as ad-hoc interpretive spaces to bypass institutional barriers. However, as noted in the work of Goodall (2017) and Fullan (2007) when the flow of educational information shifts primarily to unverified peer-to-peer conduits, the capacity for collaborative educational partnership can be constrained. Instead of fostering the "educationally powerful connections" championed by the Education Review Office (ERO, 2015), the unmediated interaction between media reports and community concerns can shape a divergent interpretive framework. These empirical patterns suggest that while parental engagement remains high, a lack of proactive, plain-language institutional communication, allows informal networks to become primary sense-making venues, which may widen the communication gap within superdiverse communities.

5.3.3 The Media as a Macrosystemic Wedge

Within Bioecological Systems Theory (BEST), the mesosystemic link connecting home and school microsystems is supported by direct channels sustained by direct school newsletters, parent portals, and face-to-face interviews, maintaining a harmonious, predictable flow of educational expectations. However, when a parent bypasses official channels and extracts information primarily from mass media or public digital forums, external macrosystemic discourse enters the domestic sphere in an unmediated form. This dynamic can place a notable cognitive load on the caregiver. Because macro-level media reporting inherently lacks immediate localised context, caregivers are left to interpret how broader national debates apply to their child's immediate classroom environment. This dynamic can create uncertainty and perceived misalignment within the home microsystem before the school has had the opportunity to contextualise messaging.

This reliance on external coverage during informational vacuums illustrates a descriptive pattern within the home-school mesosystem. When families navigate politicised, macro-level policy

shifts without local mediation, they may lean toward patterns of defensive sense-making identified by Mutch and Collins (2012). Furthermore, as over a third (32.6%) of the aware cohort relied on mass media, this approach diverges from the "educationally powerful connections" advocated by the Education Review Office (ERO, 2015). Rather than a collaborative framework where information flows through trusted, school-mediated relationships, families receive an unmanaged stream of national media discourse. As Goodall (2017) and Fullan (2007) observe, when the primary vector for curriculum interpretation shifts from authoritative home-school dialogue to polarised public arenas, institutional trust can be compromised. These unmediated macrosystemic influences present a risk of isolating families, leading caregivers to navigate policy updates with limited direct guidance, which may further contribute to communication divide across Auckland's superdiverse educational landscape.

5.4 Chronosystemic Time Poverty and the Socioeconomic Bifurcation of Support Needs

The home-school mesosystem is continually shaped by temporal forces within the chronosystem, including both the rapid timing of the Curriculum Refresh and the everyday time pressures experienced by caregivers. These temporal dynamics appear to interact differently across household context, higher income caregivers reported time poverty mainly as a barrier to supporting learning at home, while lower income families reported compounded constraints of both time limits and institutional communication gaps. Consequently, standardised communication strategies may overlook the temporal realities of Auckland's superdiverse communities, highlighting time as a potential factor in educational inequity.

5.4.1 Survival-Driven Schedules versus Professional Corporate Overspill

The cross-tabulation analysis revealed that barriers to curriculum understanding differed markedly by household income, suggesting that families navigate distinct ecological pressures. Descriptive survey patterns show that "lack of time to learn about it", reflecting what OECD (2021) and ERO (2023) was most frequently selected at distinct points along the economic spectrum particularly within the middle-income ($50,000-$70,000) and higher-income (over

$100,000) cohorts (Figure 37). In BEST terms, this represents a notable chronosystem factor, suggesting that while the temporal pressures of daily life restrict parents' ability to engage with complex information, the root drivers may differ ranging from survival-driven work schedules in middle-income households to high-demand professional commitments in higher-income brackets.

In contrast, the lower income bracket present in the data ($30,000-$50,000) most frequently identified *"lack of information from the school"* as their primary barrier. This pattern points to a potential exo system gap, where institutional communication exhibits limited reach or resonance with lower-income families. From an SBCC perspective, these descriptive trends suggest that one-size-fits-all communication strategies may show limited alignment across diverse cohorts because different groups face structurally distinct hurdles. Lower-income families may benefit from targeted, proactive, and accessible school-led outreach to bridge the informational gap, whereas middle and higher-income families who have accessed information independently may require highly structured, time-efficient, and concise formats to accommodate their chronosystem constraints. These findings reinforce the need for segmented, equity-oriented communication approaches that recognise the diverse ecological realities of Auckland's families.

5.4.2 Exosystemic Informational Isolation in Lower-Income Brackets

The cross-tabulation analysis revealed that the demand for additional support channels was distributed across all income brackets in Figure 45, displaying distinct variations in preferred modalities. Higher-income parents (over $100,000) d reported broad demand across multiple modalities, leaning slightly toward "Online resources or tools" (6 mentions) while matching their desire for "Clearer communication" and "workshops or training sessions" (5 mentions each) in the quantitative survey. These responses suggests that while these families face acute chronosystem constraints (time), they seek a multi-channel approach that combines self-paced digital flexibility with structured institutional engagement.

Conversely, the preference for "workshops or training sessions" emerged prominently in the middle-income ($70,000-$100,000) cohort (4 mentions) and remained a consistently steady choice among lower-income groups earning under $50,000 (4 mentions combined). From an

SBCC perspective, this pattern indicates that the desire for relational, structured support is not exclusive to a single economic class. However, for lower-to-middle income families who previously highlighted institutional information gaps and time poverty, in-person workshops may prove particularly effective as such sessions would_provide a dedicated, structured space to process complex curriculum shifts without the burden of independent digital navigation.

5.5 Ethnic Stratification and the Institutional Segmentation Gap

The cross-tabulation analysis in Figure 28 reveals notable demographic variations in awareness of the Curriculum Refresh, challenging conventional assumptions regarding how educational communication lands across cultural groups.

5.5.1 The European Cohort: Cultural Capital Alignment and Default System Penetration

To evaluate the intersection of demographic variables and message penetration, the analysis must precisely interpret the proportional distribution of baseline awareness across ethnic cohorts, particularly regarding the European caregiver dataset.

While raw totals can occasionally obscure proportional realities in superdiverse samples, the cross-tabulation of Figure 28 demonstrates that European parents recorded the highest internal rate of message penetration within the study:

- 90.0% (n=9) of European respondents tracked as fully “Aware” of the Curriculum Refresh.
- Only a solitary respondent (10.0%, n=1) remained “Unaware”.

When interpreted through Bronfenbrenner’s BEST framework, this high concentration of baseline awareness suggests a close operational alignment between the exosystemic information source the Ministry and institutional school boards and the European domestic Microsystem.

From an SBCC perspective, this pattern is indicative of a shared cultural capital advantage. The top-down, text-dense administrative notices and mainstream media reporting organically mirrored the systemic expectations, historical modes of institutional interaction, and linguistic baselines of this demographic cohort.

5.5.2 The Asian Cohort: Monolithic Categorization and Internal Fragmentation

Most notably, Asian parents constituted the absolute largest share of the sample:

They accounted for a dominant 43.3% of all “Aware” respondents in the sample (59.1% of Asian respondents), while simultaneously comprised 56.3% of the entire “Unaware” cohort (40.9% of Asian respondents).

When interpreted through Bronfenbrenner’s BEST framework, this dual concentration challenges simplistic, deficit-model assumptions that attribute communication gaps to generalised parental apathy within migrant communities. The fact that the Asian cohort simultaneously represents the majority of both the informed and uninformed sectors suggests that while domestic microsystems may be receptive, mesosystemic channels vary in their capacity to mediate exosystemic policy directives evenly across the population..

From an SBCC perspective, this division presents an empirical parallel to Spoonley’s (2020) analysis of superdiverse context of Auckland region which illustrates how standardised policy rollouts can interact unevenly with diverse populations, risking technical exclusion for families navigating linguistic or digital divides. Historically , public policy rollouts in Aotearoa New Zealand have treated broad ethnic classifications such as "Asian" that group diverse communities together. This generic broadcast strategy risks assuming a uniform audience, completely ignoring vital intra-group variations such as:

- Language proficiency and English-as-an-additional-language (EAL) barriers,
- Length of residency in New Zealand (e.g., recently arrived families versus established citizens), and
- Distinct localised media consumption habits and trusted community-embedded networks.

Consequently, while the standard, text-heavy digital transmissions successfully reached a critical mass of the Asian community who possessed the linguistic or structural capital to decode them, other respondents within the same broad classification experienced limited reach from those same channels.

These descriptive patterns indicate that high aggregate awareness can mask localised information gaps. While, the European cohort highlighted strong alignment with default institutional channels, the split in the Asian demographic highlights the limitations of that single default.

These findings suggest that addressing communication divide may benefit from moving beyond, non-segmented information delivery. For Auckland's superdiverse populations, achieving balanced message penetration suggests segmented, multi-channel SBCC approaches that acknowledge intra-community diversity, ensuring that access to information is dictated by intentional design rather than demographic probability.

5.5.3 Whanaungatanga, Pā Harakeke, and the Violations of Te Tiriti o Waitangi

Significantly, the high baseline of European awareness serves as a vital diagnostic foil within the broader discussion of the communication divide. It indicates that communication reach was non-uniform across demographic cohorts, illustrating effective reach within some groups while highlighting gaps in others.

To evaluate message penetration under Research Question 3, the analysis considers baseline awareness within the bicultural context of Aotearoa New Zealand. Within the dataset Māori respondents represented a smaller sample proportion, split evenly, with 2.2% of the total sample registering as “Aware” and an identical 2.2% tracking as completely “Unaware” of the Curriculum Refresh.

When interpreted through Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological framework, this 50/50 division must not be framed through a deficit perspective as indicating localised parental apathy. Rather, they point to potential Exosystem misalignment where standardised, top-down digital broadcasting methods fail to consistently reach or engage Māori Community.

From an SBCC perspective, automated digital transmission completely lacks the relational engagement pathways necessary to foster an enabling communication environment. By treating all demographic cohorts as a uniform audience, the institutional rollout overlooked the core tenets of culturally responsive practice and the foundational principle of *whanaungatanga* the

deliberate cultivation of relational bonds, trust, and shared understanding between schools and communities.

Heavily relying on passive digital notifications, presents challenges for aligning with the reciprocal partnership principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Rather than an interactive framework where information flows through trusted community relationships, automated notifications risk prioritizing administrative reporting over relational bicultural engagement.

This descriptive pattern aligns conceptually with the pā harakeke metaphor discussed in the literature review.

While educational institutions focused heavily on shifting classroom instruction for the *rito* (the child), the non-segmented rollout provided limited contextual detail to the *awhi rito* (the parents and whānau) to support that growth at home. When information gaps exist among whānau, the supportive mesosystemic structures surrounding the child can be constrained.

Rather than fostering a healthy, interconnected ecosystem, standardised broadcasting models risk framing caregivers as passive recipients rather than active educational partners. This observation aligns with findings from the Education Review Office (2023), which emphasised that culturally responsive, localised communication is essential for equitable engagement.

5.6 Digital Portal Utilization Dynamics: Administrative Compliance vs. Relational Sense-Making

School portals have become the central digital link between homes and schools during curriculum reform, but they do not always cater to parent needs. Schools tend to use these platforms for administrative compliance uploading standardised documents and tracking engagement while parents rely on them for relational sense-making as they try to interpret unfamiliar curriculum changes and maintain communication with teachers. This section analyses how parents navigate these portals and highlights the friction that arises when administratively oriented platform design exhibits limited alignment with caregivers' relational and interpretive needs during educational policy change.

5.6.1 The Lower-Income Digital Presence Paradox

Empirical findings suggests that digital portals frequently parents into administrative monitors rather than curriculum partners. The cross-tabulation data tracking digital parent portal utilization against ethnicity and annual household income uncovers stark, non-linear patterns that challenge conventional assumptions regarding socioeconomic digital divides. Traditional educational literature frequently correlates lower household income with structural exclusion, assuming a digital divide driven by a lack of devices or connectivity. However, descriptive cross-tabulation results (Figure 32) show that all caregivers in the lowest income tier earning under $30,000 recorded regular portal usage 100% (n=4). Conversely, complete non-utilization was reported among respondents in the highest income tier, representing 4.3% (n=2) of caregivers earing income of more than $100,000.

When evaluated through Bronfenbrenner's BEST framework, this pattern indicates that the domestic microsystem of lower-income families is highly disciplined, proactive, and structurally primed for institutional interaction; these caregivers are highly compliant digital actors.

From an SBCC perspective, however, frequent digital portal access does not automatically translate into effective communication. Despite their digital presence, these lower-income households still reported a severe lack of baseline information and clarity as their primary barriers to sense-making. This indicates that while the digital channel itself achieves total physical penetration, the communication remains pedagogically inert. The portal functions as a transactional tool for administrative compliance tracking daily attendance or behavioural points and not as a transformational medium for relational sense-making.

Consequently, when institutions conflate login frequency with successful information adoption, highly present lower-income families risk remaining structurally insulated from meaningful curriculum insights within automated systems.

5.6.2 Cultural Misalignment Within the Pacific Peoples' Cohort

Ethnic disaggregation of digital habits exposes a critical localised meso systemic gap in Figure 31. While regular portal use was heavily anchored by the study's two largest blocks of Asian (34.8%)

and European (15.2%) caregivers the Pacific Peoples cohort (n=2) populated the “Rarely” utilisation category exclusively, recording zero representation in either occasional or regular tracking tiers.

This distinct distributional variation represents a severe mesosystemic vulnerability. A school portal that relies on self-directed parental retrieval assumes a universal, standardised, and text-heavy digital behaviour. For the Pacific cohort, this passive channel fails to align with culturally responsive communication frameworks.

In the context of Pacific educational engagement, effective information exchange is historically rooted in collective dialogue, oral transmission, and relationally dense spaces, rather than isolated interaction with an abstract digital interface. When institutions rely primarily on automated digital notifications as the primary method for broadcasting complex curriculum updates, standardised broadcasting can present an informational barrier. The "Rarely" metric must serve as an empirical diagnostic indicator that the chosen communication channel is culturally misaligned with the community’s ecological preferences.

5.7 Regional Volatility and Localised Ecological Pockets: The West vs. South Auckland Divergence

The implementation landscape of the Curriculum Refresh reveals geographical variations alongside demographic and socio-economic. Cross-tabulation of baseline awareness against Auckland’s schooling regions captured in Figure 30 illustrate localised variations, challenging the assumption that centralized policy broadcasts achieve uniform reach across a diverse metropolitan region. This geographic divergence is illustrated when comparing reported awareness in West Auckland against South Auckland.

In West Auckland the study's largest regional cohort representing 36.9% of the total sample caregivers displayed an internal divide, with 21.7% reporting baseline awareness balanced against a substantial 15.2% who reported unaware. Interpreted through Bioecological Systems Theory (BEST), this split points to mesosystemic friction within the regional educational ecosystem. Despite residing within the same regional catchment, nearly half of the West

Auckland families reported no awareness regarding the curriculum change. These patterns suggest that standardised, top-down broadcast models may exhibit limited adaptability, variations in school-level leadership capacity, or differing densities of community information networks. The West Auckland data suggest that geographic proximity to regional centres does not automatically guarantee consistent information flow when home-school connections face implementation pacing constraints..

Conversely, South Auckland emerged as an unusual, highly successful ecological pocket within the dataset. Representing 15.2% of the total sample, South Auckland respondents recorded baseline awareness of the curriculum changes. When viewed through the lens of UNICEF's SBCC framework, this high proportion of reported awareness suggests the presence of an effective communication environment within those localised networks.

Rather than indicating that South Auckland families possess more discretionary time to independently navigate complex ministry documentation, this localised success pattern points to a relationally grounded mesosystem configuration. South Auckland educational networks are historically characterised by robust, community-embedded relationships, strong inter-school clusters, and culturally responsive communication pathways that rely on collective dialogue rather than automated digital broadcast (ERO, 2023).

In this context, local school leadership and community networks may have acted as intermediary communication buffer. These frontline actors intercepted the confusing, fast-changing messages from the exosystem (the Ministry) and translated them into plain-language, and culturally relevant narratives for their communities.

This regional disparity provides empirical evidence of this study: a centralised, non-segmented curriculum implementation alienates certain segments of the community while depending on localised institutional dynamics for effective policy implementation.

5.8 Negotiating Identity: How Cultural Capital and Political Volatility Shaped Parental Sense-Making

As parents confronted a rapidly shifting curriculum landscape, their interpretations were filtered through both their cultural resources and the volatile political environment surrounding education. This section explores how these forces shaped parental identities and influenced how they made sense of reform.

5.8.1 Statutory Workarounds and the Erosion of Democratic Institutional Trust

In this study, *Theme 5 (Cultural Responsiveness and Identity)* identified divergent views on Te Tiriti o Waitangi, colonial history, and New Zealand's national identity. Surveyed parents responses ranged from calls to “bring back Aotearoa Histories and honour te tiriti,” to support the “*removal of excessive treaty study*.” RNZ articles analysed in this study situated these tensions, withing a wider sector debate including concerns that the refreshed curriculum framework was “devoid of anything to do with Te Tiriti”.

The qualitative data and media commentaries also indicate limited trust in the institutions directing the rollout. Caregivers and educators described the reform as being shaped by "shadowy decisionmakers" and "far-right ideologues”, and recorded perceptions that officials were "not interested in any of our expertise." RNZ reporting similarly raised concerns about procurement and appointments, including claims that established educational experts were replaced by individuals with "previous relationships with the minister."

These tensions indicate a contested macrosystem in which groups hold competing, views of the values and histories that a national curriculum should represent. These patterns reflect what Thrupp (2018) conceptualised as policy churn; a cycle of rapid, politically driven reforms that create instability within schools.

This ideological division shaped caregivers’ interpretations of the Curriculum Refresh. Some viewed the changes as cultural erasure, whereas others regarded them as a necessary correction. The curriculum therefore functioned not only as an instructional framework but also as a site of

political contestation over national identity, historical representation, and the place of minority histories.

From an SBCC perspective, this polarisation constrained the formation of an enabling environment, which refers to the critical foundational layer required for positive social and behavioural adaptation. SBCC establishes that when a policy framework is associated with threats to identity, the target audience may resist the messages and subsequent communication. Because the exosystem (Ministry of Education) communication approach did not sufficiently address these sensitivities through culturally differentiated and trust-building strategies. As a result, families may have interpreted school-level communications through existing concerns about cultural exclusion or political influence, reducing the potential for broad-based support.

5.8.2 Upstream Failures: High-Income Critiques of Ministry Governance

The breakdown of information flow cannot be attributed solely to school-level administration; the findings indicate weakness in macro-level governance. This is explicitly captured in the barrier analysis, where the highest-income brackets (earning over $100,000) who represented the single largest segment and captured the highest message penetration (26.1% aware vs. 8.7% unaware) reported responses explicitly citing a "lack of clarity from the Ministry of Education".

From a bioecological perspective, this pattern points to an exosystem-level communication problem. Higher-income caregivers may have greater structural, linguistic, and cultural resources for accessing and interpreting school communications. Nevertheless, respondents in this group still reported difficulty understanding the reform, suggesting that access to information did not necessarily produce clarity.

The fact that these parents directly diagnose a lack of clarity from the Ministry indicates that the pedagogical instability, shifting timelines, and dense jargon of the Curriculum Refresh were visible at the apex of the educational system. The communication divide, therefore, appears to reflect both localised delivery constraints and weakness in upstream policy communication.

From an SBCC perspective, limited clarity at the central level undermines the development of an enabling environment. When a macro-environmental policy rollout is perceived as volatile or

poorly translated by central government agencies, it injects immediate confusion into the entire communication pipeline. Schools are left to translate ambiguous national mandates, while parents are left to analyse dense, fast-changing pedagogical frameworks on their own.

The write-in data suggests that parental frustration was associated not simply with resistance to change, but with the perceived absence of a clear, stable, and accessible national account of the reform. Although these responses cannot establish causation, they indicate that central communication practices may have contributed to reduced institutional trust across the wider educational ecosystem.

5.9 Channel Efficacy: One-Way Automated Broadcasting vs. Dialogic Spaces

This study's empirical findings significantly contest the claims that digital platforms like Class Dojo, Seesaw, and Hero serve as democratic instruments that inherently improve transparency and close historical communication divides (Bates et al., 2021; Thomas, 2022). Although schools relied heavily on digital communication during the Curriculum Refresh, some parents described these platforms as “not beneficial” and as providing “merely images” of “class activities instead of academic performance.” These responses suggest that greater access to digital updates did not consistently provide the contextual or evaluative information that some caregivers sought. Studies examining digital school-home communication present conceptual limitations when evaluated against these empirical findings (e.g., Selwyn, 2004; Goodall, 2021). These studies rest on the unverified premise that enhancing the speed and availability of digital information inherently improves parental understanding.

From an SBCC perspective, this reflects a severe channel-effectiveness failure: information was abundant, but lacked the narrative, context, and two-way dialogue required for authentic sense-making. Digital tools can only support sustainable behaviour change when they function as dialogic spaces that foster mutual trust and shared meaning. Instead, the digital platforms deployed during the rollout functioned merely as, one-way notification systems, offering minimal clarity regarding shifting curriculum expectations or actual longitudinal student progress.

This interpretation is consistent with Mapp and Kuttner's (2013) Dual Capacity-Building Framework, which emphasises relational trust and shared capacity and with Epstein's (2011) Overlapping Spheres of Influence, which highlights that home-school alignment is a product of relational communication quality, not the volume of automated administrative messages. In BEST terms, these digital tools did not fortify the mesosystem; instead, they contributed to its erosion by overwhelming caregivers with superficial phone notifications while systematically withholding the deep, descriptive clarity required to support domestic learning. Within the parameters of this study, "more tech" did not bridge the communication divide; it actively intensified it.

5.9.1 The Information Session Shortfall: A Critique of Linear IEC Models

Participation in school-facilitated curriculum information sessions did not correspond with uniformly high knowledge ratings. The quantitative data indicates that among the 19.6% of caregivers who participated in these specialised curriculum information sessions, the resulting knowledge ratings were widely varied.

When assessed through a Social and Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) framework, this distributed performance acts as an empirical critique of conventional Information-Education-Communication (IEC) models. Linear IEC methodologies work under the presumption that communication functions as a, top-down conduit: if an institution merely organises information and disseminates it, an audience will inherently assimilate and embrace it.

Several mechanisms may account for this variation. Standardised delivery may not have adequately explained specialised terminology or accommodated differences in caregivers' prior knowledge, language proficiency, and familiarity with curriculum documents. Viewed through SBCC and bioecological frameworks, movement from awareness to functional understanding is more likely when communication is dialogic and responsive to these different starting points.

5.10 Support Needs Mobilization: Segmenting Caregiver Demands by Understanding Level

To fully realise the diagnostic power of UNICEF's SBCC framework, communication strategies must move beyond treating an audience as a monolith and instead analyse how specific barrier profiles dictate the support mechanisms required to build behavioural self-efficacy. The cross-tabulation detailing requested support needs versus caregivers' comprehension of the curriculum Figure 43 provides critical, empirical direction for this segmentation. The patterns that emerged from the data demonstrate that a parent's position along the comprehension spectrum directly determines the specific institutional channels they require to bridge the communication divide. The empirical results show a stark, strategic divergence between cohorts. Caregivers who currently possess poor or minimal baseline understanding of the Curriculum Refresh overwhelmingly concentrated their demands around interactive, high-touch interventions, specifically selecting dedicated informational workshops, face-to-face training sessions, and plain-language explanatory toolkits.

Conversely, those parents who claimed to have good or moderate understanding tiers shifted their priorities away from introductory workshops, focusing instead on structural resources, including targeted online tracking tools, access to physical textbooks, and regular, detailed assessment updates. When interpreted through BEST's lens, this distribution uncovers the shifting nature of mesosystemic needs.

For families isolated in complete informational vacuums, abstract or self-directed digital notifications are functionally ineffective; they require a relational, dialogic space to establish an initial linguistic and conceptual baseline with the school. Once that baseline is established, however, the caregiver's ecological need transitions from basic message penetration to ongoing structural maintenance. From an SBCC perspective, this non-linear demand curve serves as a vital blueprint for institutional intervention. It establishes that a singular, unsegmented approach such as merely sending out more automated portal alerts fails two groups at once.

For the low-comprehension group, more automated alerts simply increase the exosystemic noise; for the high-comprehension group, it fails to provide the granular, actionable data they need to meaningfully co-construct learning at home. Ultimately, these cross-tabulated support profiles reveal that the path toward equitable curriculum communication relies on a dual-track strategy. Schools must implement supporting frameworks, such as in-person seminars, to engage structurally alienated parents, while simultaneously enhancing digital and physical monitoring mechanisms to maintain the involvement of functionally aware families. Bridging the communication divide requires recognizing that parental self-efficacy is dynamic, and that institutional support must be as highly segmented as the community it aims to serve.

5.10.1 Dynamic Parental Self-Efficacy and the Evolution of Ecological Needs

The cross-tabulation of current curriculum understanding against preferred future communication modes in Figure 43 reveals a striking, non-linear progression in caregiver demands. Rather than showing a uniform ask for a single communication type, the dataset reveals a clear transition of future needs that directly tracks alongside a caregiver's level of comprehension.

Caregivers reporting poor or minimal understanding more often requested interactive and accessible forms of support, including information workshops, face-to-face sessions, and plain-language explanatory materials. Caregivers reporting moderate or good understanding placed greater emphasis on resources that could support ongoing involvement, including online tracking tools, printed textbooks, and regular assessment information.

When evaluated through Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological framework, this distribution may indicate changing mesosystem needs: caregivers with limited understanding require opportunities to establish a shared conceptual basis with schools, whereas those with greater understanding seek more detailed information and practical resources for supporting learning at home.

From an SBCC perspective, these findings support a segmented rather than uniform communication strategy. Automated notifications alone may not meet the needs of caregivers who require explanation and dialogue, while caregivers with stronger baseline understanding

may need more specific and actionable information. The data therefore support a dual approach: relational, accessible support for caregivers with lower comprehension, alongside detailed monitoring and learning resources for those already familiar with the curriculum. Because Figure 43 identifies associations rather than causal effects, these approaches should be tested rather than assumed to improve understanding or engagement.

5.11 Material Efficacy: Correlating Resource Adequacy with the Axis of Caregiver Satisfaction

A foundational tenet of UNICEF's SBCC framework posits that perceived satisfaction and institutional trust are closely associated with perceived utility and accessibility of localised communication. When informational materials lack semantic clarity or practical utility, communication channels can experience reduced credibility. This pattern is highlighted in empirical cross-tabulation correlating caregiver satisfaction levels against their perceptions of school-provided resource adequacy presented in Figure 41. The data suggests that the perceived adequacy of informational resources is associated with caregiver satisfaction, though this relationship does not display a linear progression. Instead, the data reveals a distinct concentration of high satisfaction among caregivers reporting fully adequate resources, contrasted with notable variations across the remaining cohorts.

Figure 41 cross-tabulates caregiver satisfaction with perceptions of the adequacy of school-provided resources. The pattern indicates an association between positive judgements of resource adequacy and satisfaction with implementation, although the relationship is not uniform across all response categories. Caregivers who were extremely satisfied selected only "Definitely Yes" or "Probably Yes" for resource adequacy. By contrast, extremely dissatisfied caregivers were distributed across "Probably Not," "Not Sure," and "Definitely Not," while responses in the neutral satisfaction category were similarly dispersed.

When analysed through Bronfenbrenner's BEST lens, this correlation highlights how material resources function as the primary link between the school and home microsystems. The physical informational resource be it a curriculum explainer toolkit, a translated policy guide, or a localised

assessment rubric is the tangible object that passes through the mesosystemic conduit. When this object is perceived as adequate, complete, and respectful of the caregiver's intellect, it stabilises the interface, validating the parent's efforts to engage and securing optimal implementation satisfaction. Conversely, perceptions of inadequate or ambiguous resources may make it more difficult for caregivers to interpret curriculum changes and support learning at home.

Ultimately, these descriptive patterns suggest that bridging the communication divide is closely associated with material quality rather than transmission volume alone. The empirical trend indicates that increasing communication frequency without clear contextual detail may show limited effectiveness in elevating caregiver satisfaction. These findings suggest a need to prioritize the structural adequacy and clarity of informational resources,, ensuring that distributed information provide clear, accessible guidance that supports caregiver self-efficacy and strengthen the home-school partnership.

5.12 Circular Friction Points

The study revealed two recurring friction points that surfaced independently across parent accounts, each creating its own cycle of strain within the home-school relationship. Each influenced how caregivers interpreted curriculum information and school expectations during the Curriculum Refresh. This section outlines these friction points and explains how each one generated its own circular pattern.

5.12.1 The Mathematics Paradox: High Stakes and Fragile Alignment

Mathematics emerged as a uniquely polarising subject in this study, functioning as both a site of success and struggle. Survey data showed that Mathematics was the most frequently identified area of strength (24 mentions) while simultaneously being the most frequently identified area of difficulty (20 mentions). It was also the subject most perceived as showing improvement under the Curriculum Refresh (14 mentions), yet it was equally the subject most often cited as needing additional attention (11 mentions). This polarizing dynamic presents a key descriptive finding in itself. It suggests that the shift toward Structured Mathematics, with its emphasis on explicit

instruction, cumulative sequencing, and procedural fluency, has heightened parental expectations and anxieties. In BEST terms, Mathematics appears to be a high-stakes microsystem domain where home-school alignment is particularly sensitive to pedagogical shifts. From an SBCC perspective, subjects with strong emotional and cultural weight will benefit from relational, dialogic communication strategies rather than increased transmission volume alone. Parents need clear explanations of instructional methods, assessment expectations, and the rationale behind structured approaches to interpret their child's progress. The dual perceptions surrounding mathematics therefore reflect not confusion on the part of caregivers, but a communication environment that has not kept pace with the emotional and pedagogical information needs of caregivers navigating high stakes academic subject.

5.12.2 The Inclusion Gap

Qualitative and descriptive findings suggest that the reform's emphasis on standardised sequencing, procedural fluency, and Understand-Know-Do progressions highlights a potential Inclusion Gap for learners at varied points along the achievement spectrum. Parents of gifted and talented students expressed concern that the new curriculum was effectively constraining their children's potential. One parent noted that their child was "feeling bored and can do much more" than the baseline expectations provided, while another described the curriculum as "restrictive" with "no flexibility or room [for] extension." These concerns emerged despite the survey showing that 67.4% of children were achieving at Merit or Excellence levels, suggesting that high achievement did not translate into confidence that the curriculum could support differently abled learners.

At the same time, parents of slow learners (responding to qualitative question) and those with diverse learning needs reported that a rigid, one-size-fits-all framework lacked the differentiation required for their children to thrive. This aligns with qualitative comments describing the curriculum as "too prescriptive," "overloaded," and lacking the scaffolds necessary for students who require additional support. The dual pattern of gifted learners feeling capped and struggling learners feeling unsupported indicates that the reform's pursuit of standardisation inadvertently narrowed the pedagogical space available for diverse learners.

In BEST terms, this points to a possible mismatch between; the exosystem to design an inclusive framework, and the varied learning profiles present within classroom microsystems. Standardised curriculum structures may show limited adaptability to varied developmental trajectories, cultural backgrounds, and learning profiles present in Auckland's classrooms. This finding aligns closely with Kearney's (2011) argument that institutional standardisation can produce "informational and pedagogical exclusion," (p.11), where the needs of diverse learners are overlooked in favour of systemic consistency and administrative simplicity.

From an SBCC perspective, the findings support more differentiated communication. Curriculum communication from schools tended to focus on mainstream or baseline progress, leaving parents of children with different learning needs without the specialised, relational, and future-focused information they need to advocate effectively for their children. Parents of gifted learners lacked clarity about extension pathways, while parents of learners who need additional support lacked guidance on accommodations, supports, and differentiated expectations. Consequently, communication strategies prioritizing uniform broadcasts over segmented outreach present an informational barrier for families navigating non-standard learning trajectories, limiting the relational clarity needed for effective home-school collaboration.

5.13 Policy Addendum: Curriculum Contestation, Ideological Volatility, and Communicative Stability (October 2026)

While the empirical foundations of this thesis were established during the initial phases of the national Curriculum Refresh, the educational policy environment in Aotearoa New Zealand experienced heightened turbulence, debate, and legislative revision between March and October 2026. The accelerated rollout of standardised assessment benchmarks, structured literacy mandates, and revised mathematics progressions became a central battleground in wider national political debates. As the nation approaches the general election, curriculum design has transitioned from a professional pedagogical framework into a primary site of political contestation and ideological entrenchment. Key provisions of the reform trajectory have been publicly debated, selectively repealed, or subjected to further policy rewrites, leaving the

ultimate shape and timeline of the national curriculum in a state of operational flux heading into 2027.

From a Bioecological Systems Theory (BEST) perspective, this rapid legislative flux represents a severe destabilization at the *macrosystem* level (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). When state-level policy intent is subject to continuous political revision, the structural signal transmitted down to the school microsystem becomes fragmented. For school principals and teachers, operating in an environment of shifting statutory obligations creates profound administrative fatigue and institutional ambiguity. Educators are forced to translate unfinished or contested mandates into daily classroom practice while simultaneously attempting to explain these shifting benchmarks to anxious communities.

This macrosystemic instability directly strains the *mesosystem* the critical relational bridge between home and school. When national policy messaging is contradictory or constantly changing, caregiver trust in institutional authority is tested. For Auckland's superdiverse, multilingual, and migrant communities, political contestation creates acute cognitive dissonance. Caregivers attempting to navigate unfamiliar digital portals, new assessment metrics, or specialized pedagogical terminology must do so against a backdrop of public media debate regarding whether those very metrics will be retained, amended, or scrapped altogether.

Consequently, this state of policy fluidity underscores the vital role of Social and Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) as an institutional stabilizer (UNICEF, 2020). When the macro-policy environment is undefined or contested, localised school communication cannot rely on static administrative notices or top-down ministerial broadcasts. Instead, it must function as a proactive, relationally grounded buffer that dismantles uncertainty, demystifies political rhetoric, and provides whānau with actionable clarity regarding their child's immediate learning.

Ultimately, the political volatility of late 2026 demonstrates that curriculum implementation is never a purely technical rollout; it is an inherently socio-political and relational process. In times of systemic uncertainty, timely, inclusive, and targeted school communication is not merely an administrative convenience it is the indispensable mechanism required to shield home school

partnerships from broader political turbulence and ensure equitable educational outcomes for all learners.

5.14 Summary

This discussion chapter has systematically unpacked the macro-systemic rollout of the Curriculum Refresh through a Social and Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) framework, structurally mapped across the mesosystemic layers of Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Theory (BEST). By triangulating a 46-participant survey of a superdiverse Auckland caregiver cohort with qualitative media articles from Radio New Zealand and grassroots discourse from Reddit, this study illustrates notable communication gaps within the home-school mesosystem. Rather than serving as an equitable bridge, current institutional communication architecture functions as a top-down, unmediated broadcast that isolates families, treats parents as detached observers, and fails to honour the reciprocal, consultation-driven partnership implied under Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

The core insights synthesized across this discussion are categorized into three defining thematic dimensions:

5.14.1 The Failure of Passive Policy Mediation and Digital Techno-Optimism:

These empirical findings present descriptive contrasts to assertions that digital platforms (e.g., Hero, Seesaw, Class Dojo) serve as inherently democratic tools that close historical communication divides. Instead, the data reveals that relying on automated, unmediated digital pipelines shifts the burden of policy translation directly onto the family unit. This passive mediation acts as a second-level digital divide, where a school's operational efficiency comes at the expense of true parental comprehension. Within this sample, communication reach varied across cohorts, as illustrated by the Māori subgroup where 50.0% reported no prior awareness of the curriculum updates, pointing to potential gaps in institutional outreach.

For Indigenous and Pacific communities, the institutional shift from relational, face-to-face engagement to transactional digital notifications actively fractures the relational and communal space that historically binds home and school together. Utilizing an ecosystemic metaphor of family interconnectedness, the data demonstrates that while macro-systemic directives focused heavily on transforming classroom instruction for the individual student, they effectively starved parents and the wider family structure of the linguistic and conceptual clarity required to support that academic growth at home. This communication vacuum forced Pacific families to experience top-down policy shifts as colonial impositions rather than equitable partnerships, a finding directly substantiated by qualitative write-ins explicitly asserting that the rollout "reflects trending of a colonial past."

5.14.2 The Polarization of Circular Friction Points:

Finally, the empirical breakthroughs of this research expose two major internal friction points where administrative standardization collides with the diverse realities of the domestic microsystem. The Mathematics Paradox reveals that the shift to Structured Mathematics has accelerated immense parental anxiety, acting simultaneously as the top reported area of strength (24 mentions) and difficulty (20 mentions). Concurrently, The Inclusion Gap demonstrates that the curriculum's rigid, standardised progressions act as a restrictive "ceiling" that caps extension for gifted learners (despite a 67.4% cohort achievement at Merit/Excellence), while simultaneously presenting an unyielding "barrier" devoid of necessary differentiation for neurodiverse and slower learners.

5.14.3 Systemic Conclusion

Ultimately, this discussion demonstrates that a standardised, "one-size-fits-all" broadcast model is fundamentally flawed. It paralyzes low-comprehension parents by withholding accessible entry points, while alienating high-comprehension parents by failing to provide advanced pedagogical tools. To achieve true educational equity, school communication architecture must move away from static, transactional compliance checks. Instead, it must evolve into an agile, responsive,

and tiered pipeline that actively matches the diverse linguistic capital, cultural worldviews, and shifting self-efficacy profiles of the superdiverse communities it is mandated to serve.

5.15 Limitations

While this study provides critical, theoretically grounded insights into the localised execution of the Curriculum Refresh within Auckland, it is essential to acknowledge several structural and methodological boundaries that condition the generalisability and scope of the findings.

5.15.1 Sample Size and Geographic Boundaries

First, the finalised sample size was modest (N=46) and strictly constrained within the urban and suburban parameters of the Auckland region. While Auckland represents an important macro-demographic context due to its superdiverse population, the localised nature of the sample means that the findings cannot be reflexively generalised to smaller provincial towns, rural school communities, or low-density regions across Aotearoa New Zealand. Communities outside of major urban centres navigate entirely distinct environmental and institutional dynamics, which likely alter how macro-systemic educational policies filter down into home environments.

5.15.2 Recruitment Dynamics and Dataset Cleaning Thresholds

Methodologically, the deployment of a hybrid recruitment strategy which combined open digital newsletter links with a physical, unaddressed "Push-to-Web" letterbox intervention helped expand initial engagement but precluded the calculation of a traditional, exact response rate. Because the survey was designed to be completely anonymous to encourage candid feedback regarding a highly politicised and sensitive policy topic, no tracking codes or identifying markers were attached to the physical leaflets or digital links. While this anonymity protected participant privacy, the exact total number of eligible caregivers who viewed the invitations remains unquantifiable, which makes it impossible to determine the standard response percentage.

Furthermore, initial analytics reveal that a total of 60 participants actively accessed and initiated the online survey instrument. To protect the empirical integrity of the study, a strict completion and qualification threshold was enforced during the data-cleaning phase. Fourteen entries were

excluded from the final analysis due to severe item non-response, mid-survey breakoffs, or failure to meet core eligibility criteria of completing the baseline questions of the survey, leaving a verified, high-integrity dataset of 46 fully qualifying responses. While this rigorous screening process narrowed the final sample size, it ensured that the subsequent mixed-methods analysis was anchored strictly on robust, substantive, and fully completed data matrices.

5.15.3 Methodological Boundaries of Descriptive Analytics

Because the final dataset fell below the threshold required to safely execute heavy inferential statistical modelling without inviting errors, the quantitative dimension of this thesis deliberately avoided hypothesis testing, regression analysis, or the calculation of inferential p-values. Cell-size constraints within specific demographic subsets such as the Pacific Peoples cohort (n=2) and the lowest economic stratum (n=4) statistically restricted the determination of absolute causal links. Instead, the study intentionally relies on descriptive bivariate cross-tabulations and visual percentage distributions to isolate structural patterns and directional trends across income, ethnicity, and geography. This descriptive focus serves as a precise ecological map to diagnose the proportional depth of the communication divide without claiming absolute causal determinants or macro-systemic mathematical generalizability.

5.15.4 Self-Selection Bias

Finally, the research design is vulnerable to self-selection bias. The caregivers who independently chose to initiate and complete a survey regarding curriculum adjustments were, by definition, already highly integrated into or exceptionally affected by school systems. This is empirically validated by the study's descriptive profile, which indicates unusually high baselines of institutional compliance, such as exceptional parent-teacher interview attendance (78.3%) and regular digital school portal utilization (63.0%). Consequently, the dataset may underrepresent the perspectives of structurally marginalised or deeply alienated families who have completely withdrawn from school communications. The communication divide identified in this thesis must therefore be interpreted as a conservative estimate; the informational gaps and cognitive ambiguities captured here exist among highly engaged parents, suggesting that the structural divide may be even wider among families experiencing total institutional detachment.

5.15.5 Exclusion of Institutional and Supply-Side Perspectives

This thesis did not investigate the supply-side or operational realities of school staff, principals, or Ministry of Education officials. The empirical architecture was explicitly designed to capture the "consumer-end" reception of policy within the family microsystem. Consequently, while the data highlights severe breakdowns in the communication channels managed by schools, this study does not evaluate the internal institutional constraints such as administrative underfunding, lack of professional development time, or systemic workload fatigue that influence how school leaders structure their communication strategies.

5.15.6 Separation of Communication Policy from Pedagogical Efficacy

This study did not evaluate the technical merits, pedagogical validity, or educational efficacy of the Curriculum Refresh itself. The analysis operationalises no stance on whether the macro-systemic shift toward a knowledge-rich model, Structured Literacy, or standardised twice-yearly reporting is inherently beneficial or detrimental to student achievement. Rather, the scope was strictly bounded within the dual intersection of a Social and Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) lens and Bioecological Systems Theory (BEST).

The analytical focus was restricted entirely to diagnosing the transmission, translation, and relational mediation of the policy text as it filters down from the institutional exosystem, across fractured mesosystemic conduits, and into the domestic microsystem. The focus on evaluating the structural noise-barriers and channel dynamics means that, this thesis remains a study of ecological communication breakdowns and stakeholder engagement, and not a critique of localised classroom pedagogy.

5.15.7 Longitudinal or Post-Implementation Tracking

This research design did not employ a longitudinal methodology to track how parental perceptions adapt over the entire life cycle of the 2024-2027 rollout. Because data collection strictly concluded in March 2026, the study operates as a cross-sectional diagnostic snapshot. It captures community anxieties and structural disconnects at a highly volatile precipice specifically, during the introduction of the Phase Two expansion and does not attempt to capture the

stabilisation or normalisation of these practices once they became fully embedded in school routines later in the year.

5.15.8 Institutional and Sector-Level Sampling Bias in Public Media Datasets

The qualitative triangulation component of this study relied on secondary media articles from Radio New Zealand (RNZ) to capture sector-level insights, which introduces distinct institutional sampling boundaries. While the RNZ dataset provided an invaluable, record of the macro-systemic dialogue surrounding the Curriculum Refresh, media archives are inherently shaped by journalistic selection criteria and the structural parameters of public broadcasting. The commentaries and testimonies featured within these articles primarily amplify the perspectives of formalised sector leaders, union representatives, and highly vocal institutional actors who possess the systemic platforms to critique policy rollouts publicly.

Consequently, while these data matrices offered exceptional depth regarding macro-level workloads and institutional friction, they risk over-representing organised political resistance while under-representing the localised, varied, and quieter operational realities of everyday frontline educators working on the ground. Acknowledging this boundary, the RNZ data was treated strictly as an interpretive proxy for macro-systemic and institutional discourse, instead of an exhaustive, statistically representative census of the entire New Zealand teaching workforce.

5.15.9 Exclusion of Direct Classroom Microsystem Observations

Finally, this study did not involve direct observations within the school microsystem, such as tracking classroom implementation or parent-teacher interaction dynamics in real-time. By relying on retrospective survey instruments and secondary digital commentaries (Reddit), the analysis prioritises the cognitive and emotional realities experienced by caregivers. While documenting the physical, behavioural executions of policy within school spaces would have added a valuable dimension to the analysis, it fell beyond the scope of this study.

While immediate communication strategies address the operational demands of specific policy updates, home-school partnerships must be conceptualized beyond the confines of individual

curriculum rollouts. Sustained, relationally grounded communication with whānau and local communities represents a foundational, long-term investment in institutional infrastructure. By cultivating continuous dialogue, relational trust, and mutual accountability during periods of relative stability, educational institutions build enduring social capital and organizational resilience. This proactive communicative infrastructure ensures that when future policy mandates, systemic disruptions, or curriculum shifts inevitably occur, schools do not have to establish trust or decipher communication channels in a state of crisis. Instead, they can leverage an established, equitable framework of engagement that honours community aspirations, bridges institutional divides, and maintains stability for learners across all ecological layers.

5.16 Implications and Recommendations

This section outlines the strategic and practical insights derived from this study, extending beyond immediate education policy to offer actionable frameworks for institutional leadership across diverse public sectors. By embedding these recommendations, organizations can transition from reactive, episodic messaging toward building enduring communicative infrastructure and sustainable stakeholder trust.

5.16.1 Recommendations for Longterm Educational Partnership

The empirical and theoretical insights yielded by this study demand a fundamental paradigm shift in how educational policy changes are communicated in Aotearoa New Zealand. If the intent of the Curriculum Refresh is to achieve true equity, institutional communication must move away from top-down, standardised broadcast models and toward a decentralised, relationally driven framework.

During periods of major policy reform such as the 2024-2027 New Zealand Curriculum Refresh and its ongoing senior secondary rollout through 2030, schools often activate engagement mechanisms reactively to explain specific operational updates. However, the findings suggest that the success of such communication depends heavily on the pre-existing relational baseline between the school and its community.

To build institutional resilience for present and future reform cycles, educational leaders should approach whānau engagement as a long-term investment in relational trust capital. Rather than treating home–school communication channels (e.g., digital platforms, kanohi ki te kanohi hui, translated policy summaries) as temporary conduits for information delivery, institutions must institutionalize these pathways as permanent relational bridges.

Establishing a continuous, culturally responsive communicative infrastructure offers three strategic benefits for superdiverse urban school communities:

1. Absorbs Policy Shock: It creates a trusted relational baseline that mitigates misinformation, anxiety, and ideological friction during unexpected or complex policy shifts.
2. Nurtures Long-Term Trust (Whanaungatanga): It honours principles of kanohi ki te kanohi and the Pā Harakeke model by treating whānau as permanent partners in educational governance rather than passive recipients of policy.
3. Enhances Institutional Capacity: It equips schools with pre-established feedback loops, allowing leaders to gauge community sense-making and adjust communication strategies proactively rather than defensively.

Ultimately, conceptualizing whānau engagement as an infrastructure, rather than an episodic campaign ensures that educational institutions build lasting capacity to navigate systemic change alongside the communities they serve.

Within the educational landscape to operationalise the principles of whanaungatanga and honour the reciprocal partnerships implied under Te Tiriti o Waitangi, actionable interventions (SBCC aligned) are required across the five systemic tiers of BEST: the macro-, exo-, meso-, micro-, and chronosystem levels.

5.16.2 Macrosystem-Level Implications: Public Institutions and Policy Design

At the macro level, the Ministry of Education needs to recognise that centralised, one-size-fits-all communication rollouts inherently privilege families with high baseline cultural and digital capital while marginalising superdiverse communities.

5.16.2.1 Mandate Equity-Led Audience Segmentation

Future national policy rollouts should abandon the assumption that a uniform digital update is an equitable communication strategy. The Ministry should establish an institutional framework for audience segmentation informed by Social and Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) principles that explicitly accounts for intra-group diversity (e.g., distinguishing between length of residency, language proficiencies, and media preferences within the broad Asian demographic).

5.16.2.2 Provision of Localised, Multi-Lingual Resource Toolkits

Rather than distributing clinical, English-centric digital explainers, the Ministry should co-design and fund culturally responsive, multi-lingual resource kits. These toolkits must be translated into community languages dominant in superdiverse hubs like Auckland (including Mandarin, Hindi, Samoan, and Tongan) and formatted for diverse media consumption habits, such as short-form video and audio explainers.

5.16.2.3 Funding Inter-Sectoral Community Hubs

Financial and structural resources should be directed toward embedding educational policy updates within existing, trusted community infrastructures. By partnering with ethnic community centres, local libraries, and religious institutions, the Ministry can decentralise information delivery, utilising established networks to reach parents who are structurally isolated by mainstream channels.

5.16.3 Exosystem-Level Implications: Media Discourse, Regional Networks, and Community Infrastructure

At the exo-level, parental awareness is heavily shaped by environments that do not directly involve the child yet powerfully dictate the information ecosystem surrounding them. In

Auckland's superdiverse landscape, this primarily concerns mainstream and ethnic media, regional educational directorates, and localised community networks.

5.16.3.1 Mitigating Polarising Media Narratives

Public discourse surrounding major policy rollouts such as the NCEA reforms or the implementation of Structured Literacy is frequently sensationalised or highly politicised in mainstream news media. To counter this, regional educational bodies and school clusters (such as Communities of Learning) must shift from reactive crisis management to proactive media mitigation. This can be operationally achieved by deploying sentiment analysis tools as an early-warning diagnostic mechanism.

5.16.3.2 Strategic Partnerships with Ethnic Media and Digital Diasporas

Since a significant portion of Auckland's superdiverse population relies on non-mainstream news sources, regional educational networks must form deliberate partnerships with ethnic media outlets (e.g., Chinese, Indian, and Pasifika radio, print, and digital news agencies). Furthermore, regional policy communicators should engage with digital diaspora spaces such as localised WeChat groups, Facebook community pages, or WhatsApp networks. Leveraging these trusted, pre-existing channels allows schools to bypass institutional gatekeepers and insert accurate, translated curriculum information directly into the community's daily digital streams.

5.16.3.3 Activating Regional Ministry Directorates as Communication Conduits

The Ministry of Education's regional offices (such as the Auckland office) should act as active buffers between macro-policy design and meso-school realities. Rather than leaving individual schools to independently interpret and translate complex policy documents, regional directorates should deploy specialised communication liaison teams. These teams can work across local school clusters to ensure that messaging regarding the Curriculum Refresh is unified, accessible, and contextually relevant to the specific socioeconomic and cultural demographics of the local catchment.

5.16.4 Mesosystem-Level Implications: School Leadership and Institutional Strategy

At the meso-level, school boards and leadership teams must actively cultivate the *awhi rito* ('the stalk' representing the caregiver) to ensure the *rito* ('the sprout' representing, the child) is holistically supported through curriculum transitions.

5.16.4.1 Diversify Institutional Communication Channels

School leaders should conduct immediate internal communication audits to evaluate reliance on automated school apps or digital portals. Recognising that these platforms often reinforce digital exclusion and a transactional dynamic, schools must diversify their outreach. This includes maintaining hybrid options that blend digital delivery with physical invitations, translated newsletters, and localised ethnic media notices.

5.16.4.2 Establish Culturally Responsive Advisory Groups

To dismantle top-down communication dynamics, Auckland schools, particularly those in highly diverse catchments, should establish parent-led cultural advisory groups. These groups can serve as vital bicultural and multicultural bridges, advising school leadership on the relational mechanisms (such as face-to-face engagement) required to share complex curriculum updates meaningfully.

5.16.4.3 Shift from Transactional Reporting to Relational Dialogue

School policies regarding parental engagement must be reframed around whanaungatanga. Rather than treating informational evenings as passive, lecture-style briefings on new curriculum models, schools should structure these events as reciprocal, consultation-driven dialogues. This ensures that parental anxieties are actively heard and navigated, positioning families as primary partners rather than detached observers.

5.16.5 Microsystem-Level Implications: School-Family Interface and Local Practice

At the micro system-level, the immediate interface between the classroom and the home must be fortified through intentional, contextualised relationship building.

5.16.5.1 Professional Development in Intercultural Communication

School leaders need to equip staff with professional development focused on Interpersonal Communication (IPC) and culturally responsive communication. Teachers and front-line administrative staff require the tools to recognise how varying cultural capital and historical institutional distrust can impact a parent's willingness or capacity to engage with complex educational jargon.

5.16.5.2 Co-Constructing Visual and Practical Knowledge Assets

To bridge the gap between classroom instruction and home life, local educators should co-construct highly visual, practical summaries of curriculum changes alongside parents. In line with the recommendations of the Education Review Office (ERO, 2023), these assets should explicitly show what the change looks like in practice for the child, bypassing dense educational theory in favour of clear, transparent examples that demystify new learning models.

5.16.6 Chronosystem-Level Implications: Temporal Pacing and Transition Windows

At the chronosystem-level, the effectiveness of educational communication is heavily dictated by temporal factors, including the rapid pacing of policy rollouts and the specific structural transition points in a child's academic journey.

5.16.6.1 Establish Temporal "Breathing Room" for Policy Adaptation

The rapid, overlapping implementation of multiple curriculum reforms (e.g., simultaneous shifts in literacy, mathematics, and NCEA structures) creates cumulative cognitive fatigue for families trying to keep pace. The Ministry of Education and school boards must design communication timelines that build in deliberate stabilisation periods. Rather than clustering major informational drops during peak institutional shifts, schools should space out curriculum explanations chronologically across the school year to allow parents adequate time to process and normalise one change before the next is introduced.

5.16.6.2 Targeted Proactive Interventions at Major Academic Junctions

The chronosystem highlights how a family's communication needs change over time as a student moves through different educational phases. School clusters should implement targeted transition communication frameworks specifically aimed at caregivers of children entering critical milestone years (such as Year 1, Intermediate transitions, and NCEA preparation years). For example, the finding that early-year parents feel uniquely disconnected from curriculum-level updates highlights a specific time-based vulnerability. Schools must address this by initiating relational, high-transparency onboarding dialogues at the very beginning of these academic phases, instead of relying on retroactive updates after the transition has occurred.

5.17 Directions for Future Research

The structural disconnects and communication gaps exposed in this thesis open critical pathways for future academic inquiry. As New Zealand's educational landscape continues to evolve, further research is required to track the long-term equity impacts of policy rollouts.

5.17.1 Transferability to Future Policy Narratives and Interdisciplinary Domains

While this inquiry empirically evaluated the 2024-2027 New Zealand Curriculum Refresh as its primary case study, the integrated Social and Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) and Bioecological Systems Theory (BEST) framework developed in this research is intentionally designed as a transferable, cross-sectoral analytical model. Systemic communication divides between macro-level policy design and micro-level community reception are not unique to education. Across public administration, state institutions frequently struggle to translate specialized technical mandates into accessible, relationally grounded dialogue for superdiverse, multilingual populations.

Consequently, the findings and methodological architecture of this thesis offer a reusable blueprint for public communication design across broader policy environments:

- **Public Health & Community Medicine:** Navigating complex clinical updates, vaccination schedules, or health policy shifts among culturally diverse cohorts where institutional trust and plain-language translation are critical.

- **Civic & Environmental Governance:** Communicating climate adaptation mandates, urban planning reforms, or local government policy changes that require sustained community buy-in rather than top-down administrative broadcasts.
- **Social Services & Migrant Settlement:** Designing inclusive communicative pathways that reduce administrative friction for English Language Learner (ELL) families navigating complex state bureaucracy.

By framing whānau engagement and community communication as an enduring communicative infrastructure rather than a temporary crisis management tool, this framework equips public institutions to maintain institutional resilience, preserve community trust, and navigate political volatility across future policy rollouts.

5.17.2 Longitudinal Tracking of Policy Implementation

This study captured a distinct window of time during the active rollout of the Curriculum Refresh (2024-2027). It is highly recommended that future longitudinal research focuses on tracking whether parental awareness levels normalise, or if anxiety dissipates, as these curricula changes become fully embedded in classroom practice. Tracking these cohorts over a three-to-five-year period would reveal whether institutional communication strategies naturally mature or if structural gaps permanently calcify.

5.17.3 Large-Scale, Stratified National Inquiries

To build upon the localised insights established in this research, a large-scale, nationwide study utilising a broader stratified sampling strategy is required. A Ministry-funded or larger institutional project could scale the survey instruments used here to capture thousands of responses across diverse regions (e.g., comparing urban Auckland with rural Northland or Southland), providing the statistical power necessary to map the segmentation gap on a national scale.

5.17.4 Deep-Dive Qualitative Case Studies into Specific Ethnic Sub-Cohorts

This study revealed a critical dual reality within the broad Asian demographic, demonstrating that generic broadcast communication fails to account for substantial intra-group diversity. Future qualitative research should move beyond monolithic ethnic labels altogether. There is a clear need for targeted, phenomenological case studies or culturally responsive inquiries focused on specific sub-cohorts such as recent multilingual migrants, established multi-generational families, or distinct linguistic communities. Such work would illuminate the explicit media consumption habits, cultural expectations, and communication preferences that shape how different groups interpret school transparency. By attending to these sub-group dynamics, researchers can generate more precise, culturally grounded insights that avoid the flattening effects of broad demographic categories.

5.17.5 Evaluative Studies of Co-Designed, Relational Communication Pilots

As schools seek to shift away from transactional broadcast models, future research should examine the effectiveness of small-scale relational communication pilots at the grassroots level. Evaluative or action-research studies documenting a school actively co-designing its curriculum communication strategy with its local Māori and ethnically diverse communities using whanaungatanga-led frameworks would offer a powerful empirical blueprint for culturally responsive practice. Such research could track how co-design processes influence trust, clarity, and engagement over time, providing evidence for scalable approaches that honour relational accountability while meeting the communication demands of curriculum reform across Aotearoa.

5.18 Chapter Summary

Chapter Five has systematically contextualised the empirical, thematic, and secondary media datasets through the theoretical convergence of Bioecological Systems Theory (BEST) and Social and Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC). This discussion has critically analysed the

structural, channel-based, and socio-demographic noise barriers at the home-school interface, revealing the specific factors that contribute to Auckland's educational communication divide.

Following a rigorous self-critique of the intentional limitations and structural constraints of this cross-sectional inquiry, the chapter demonstrated the broader conceptual significance of the findings by establishing the transferability of the SBCC-BEST framework to future policy narratives and interdisciplinary domains. By framing whānau engagement as a communicative infrastructure rather than a temporary crisis-management tool, the discussion articulated how this model extends beyond educational governance to inform public communication design in healthcare, civic administration, and social policy rollouts. Finally, these insights were translated into a practical, multi-faceted framework of equity-focused and relationship-centred recommendations aimed at empowering policymakers, communication design scholars, and local school leaders. Having established a comprehensive analytical and operational framework, this thesis now transitions to its concluding chapter, which synthesises the findings in relation to the primary research questions and offers final reflections on the future of educational partnerships in Aotearoa New Zealand.

6. Conclusion

This study investigated how institutional communication practices shape, facilitate, or hinder curriculum sense-making and engagement among Auckland's culturally and linguistically diverse caregivers during a period of large-scale educational reform. By examining the execution of the 2024-2027 New Zealand Curriculum Refresh within the Auckland region, this research has mapped the structural, channel-based, and socio-demographic frictions occurring across the educational ecology. This concluding chapter synthesizes the empirical and theoretical insights detailed throughout the discussion, directly addressing the three primary research questions.

6.1 RQ1: What are parents' baseline levels of understanding, cognitive clarity, and confidence regarding school-led information sharing, and how effectively does institutional communication convey complex educational changes?

The research establishes that baseline levels of parental awareness and cognitive clarity regarding the 2024-2027 Curriculum Refresh are deeply fragmented and compromised. While the majority of caregivers possess a basic baseline awareness that a reform is occurring, actual functional degrees of understanding regarding its underlying pedagogical mechanics remain exceptionally low.

6.1.1 The Paradox of Presence:

Exceptional metrics of physical and digital participation do not automatically yield a clear understanding of curriculum policy. Over a third of the highly active caregivers who universally attend school meetings are entirely unaware of macro-level curriculum updates, while a significant portion of regular portal users evaluate their comprehension as poor or very poor. This demonstrates that physical and digital proximity across the home-school interface fails to translate into cognitive alignment or shared understanding.

6.1.2 The Domestic Information Gap:

High relational engagement within the domestic sphere does not guarantee structural policy awareness. Daily parent-child conversations regarding school are fundamentally unequipped to decode abstract, fast-changing pedagogical frameworks. Because complex updates do not filter organically through child-parent dialogues, an institutional reliance on children as informational brokers forces families to attempt to decode a macro-level structural overhaul through secondary, localised child reports.

6.1.3 The Homework-Comprehension Divide:

Caregivers are frequently entangled in the micro-level tactical mechanics of schooling such as assisting with daily worksheets while remaining completely blind to the macro-level pedagogical architecture driving those tasks. Because assignments lack explicit contextual framing, homework functions in a pedagogical void, compelling caregivers to function as task-completion supervisors detached from the foundational curriculum renewal directives.

Caregiver's confidence is undermined by an unstable educational landscape characterized by rapid policy adjustments, dense jargon, and shifting timelines. This informational deficit is not driven by caregiver indifference, but by a top-down, transactional communication strategy that fails to deliver a stable and accessible national narrative.

6.2 RQ2: What primary structural, linguistic, and channel-based communication barriers inhibit effective home-school information sharing, reciprocal dialogue, and active home-school partnership?

The study identifies a clear causal chain of structural, temporal, channel-based, and semantic barriers that actively inhibit effective parent sense-making and fracture the home-school mesosystem.

6.2.1 Temporal Constraints and Frontline Triage:

Under the pressure of rapid implementation timelines, frontline educators are structurally forced into a state of intensive internal triage, struggling to digest and restructure their own daily

classroom practices. Lacking the temporal nutrients and cognitive bandwidth required for professional internalization, schools face an acute time deficit that severely limits their capacity to construct meaningful, relationally dense communication pathways.

6.2.2 Digital Portals as Compliance Shields:

Overwhelmed by administrative burdens, schools increasingly rely on automated, minimalist digital default notifications. Rather than acting as transformational mediums for relational sense-making, digital platforms (such as ClassDojo, Seesaw, and Hero) function merely as clinical, one-way notification systems. They serve as administrative compliance shields that allow institutions to technically fulfil the requirement of parental notification while systematically withholding descriptive clarity and two-way dialogue.

6.2.3 The Macrosystemic Wedge and Whisper Networks:

When formal institutional routes are viewed as slow and complex, parents actively shift to alternative, informal microsystems for clarification, including mass media, localised peer networks, and community subreddits. Without official verification, this whisper network effect risks blending sensationalized media narratives with localised rumours, entrenching systemic misinterpretations. Bypassing official channels introduces a macrosystemic wedge into the domestic sphere, imposing an intense cognitive load on caregivers who must independently translate polarized national debates into localised classroom contexts.

6.3 RQ3: How do the intersecting cultural, linguistic, and socio-demographic realities of Auckland's superdiverse communities mediate how families build institutional trust, interpret school communication, and enact educational partnerships?

In Auckland's superdiverse environment, a family's capacity to intercept institutional communication is fundamentally mediated by intersecting cultural, linguistic, geographic, and socio-demographic realities.

6.3.1 Socioeconomic Bifurcation and Time Poverty:

Time poverty restricts parents' ability to engage with complex information across the economic spectrum, driven by survival-driven work schedules in middle-income households and high-demand commitments in higher-income brackets. Nonetheless, the lowest-income demographic is distinctly marginalised due to an institutional inability to furnish clear information, compelling carers to rely on self-directed digital retrieval and leaving marginalized families cognitively excluded.

6.3.2 The Ethnic Segmentation Gap:

Broad ethnic classifications, particularly the category of "Asian," treated by institutional models as a singular, monolithic entity. This blanket broadcast strategy completely ignores vital intra-group variations in language proficiency, length of New Zealand residency, and localised media consumption habits. Consequently, text-heavy digital transmissions leave a substantial portion of the community behind, accentuating internal fragmentation and masking profound inequities under raw numbers of awareness.

6.3.3 Violations of Te Tiriti o Waitangi:

The high baseline of European message penetration reflects a default system penetration that organically mirrors the cultural capital, linguistic baselines, and historical modes of interaction of the dominant demographic. In contrast, the clinical, automated digital rollout completely lacks the relational connectivity necessary to foster an enabling environment for treaty partners. By prioritizing administrative box-ticking over the deliberate cultivation of relational bonds, the implementation framework fails to honour the reciprocal, consultation-driven partnership implied under Te Tiriti o Waitangi, effectively starving caregivers and community of the contextual nutrients needed to support learning at home.

6.3.4 Regional and Institutional Volatility:

The uneven landscape of the curriculum rollout is explicitly geographic, showing a deep fracture in West Auckland where families are heavily isolated in informational vacuums contrasted against unusual success in South Auckland. This regional divergence demonstrates that centralized

broadcasts fail to account for localised blockages, proving that the current model depends on localised institutional luck and robust, pre-existing community-embedded networks rather than intentional, equitable design.

6.4 Final Summary

In conclusion, this thesis demonstrates that parental alienation and the resulting communication divide are not localised failures of parental interest or school intent. They are the inevitable ecological byproducts of an educational system that prioritizes ideological speed over professional internalization and relies on automated digital broadcasting at the expense of relational dialogue. For future curriculum iterations to succeed in Aotearoa New Zealand, policy architecture must abandon generic, non-segmented information delivery. Moving forward requires a fundamental paradigm shift toward highly segmented, multi-channel, and equity-focused Social and Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) strategies. Only by investing in relationally dense, plain-language, and structurally resourced communication pathways can institutions honour relational accountability, elevate caregiver self-efficacy, and cultivate true educational partnerships across Auckland's superdiverse communities.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Invitation to the survey

"Are You a Parent in Auckland? Share Your Thoughts on new School Curriculum"

Hi everyone,
My name is Samra Jabeen Hanif, and I am a Master of Creative Technologies student at Auckland University of Technology in New Zealand. Under supervision of Ann Morrison, *Associate Head of School - Research School of Future Environments*; I'm conducting a university research project exploring how parents understand and engage with the revised school curriculum, and how factors like ethnicity and household income may shape these experiences.

If you are above 18 years and a parent or caregiver of a school-aged child in Auckland, your insights would be incredibly valuable.

What's involved:
A short, anonymous survey that takes approximately 20–30 minutes to complete. No personal or identifying information is collected.

Why participate:
Your input will help inform more inclusive curriculum design and support culturally responsive approaches to education. The results of the survey will be available on Ann Morrisons (research supervisor) profile at https://academics.aut.ac.nz/ann.morrison/teaching

Survey link: https://aut.au1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_aYmoK1D9WwTgxRY

OR

Please scan this QR code to begin survey

-z

If you want a paper based survey please talk to the school administration to provide you with a copy.

Thanks for considering, and please feel free to reach out if you have any questions about the study at yvv1603@autuni.ac.nz
Samra Hanif

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on type the date final ethics approval was granted, AUTEC Reference number type the reference number

Appendix B

Recruitment Flyer

AUT

"Are You a Parent in Auckland?

Share Your Thoughts on new School Curriculum"



If you're above 18 years and a parent or caregiver of a school-aged child in Auckland, your insights would be incredibly valuable.

What's involved:
A short, anonymous survey that takes approximately 20–30 minutes to complete. No personal or identifying information is collected.

Why participate:
Your input will help inform more inclusive curriculum design and support culturally responsive approaches to education. The results of the survey will be available on Ann Morrisons (research

supervisor) profile at https://academics.aut.ac.nz/ann.morrison/teaching

Survey link: https://aut.au1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_aYmoK1D9WwTgxRY

Please scan this QR code to begin survey

Thanks for considering, and please feel free to reach out if you have any questions about the study at vvv1603@autuni.ac.nz
Samra Hanif (student researcher).

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 19th September 2025 final ethics approval was granted, AUTEC Reference number 25/284

Appendix C

Ethics Approvals



Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC)

19 September 2025

Ann Morrison
Faculty of Design and Creative Technologies

Dear Ann

Re Ethics Application: **25/284 Parents' Knowledge and Perceptions of the New Curriculum in Auckland Primary and Secondary Schools**

Thank you for your responses to AUTEC's conditions.

Your ethics application has been approved for three years until 19 September 2028.

Non-Standard Conditions of Approval

1. Remove the reference to Consent Form at the end of both Information Sheets;
2. On the paper-based survey Information Sheet:
   a. Remove the reference to 'conducted online' from the costs section;
   b. Include advice that 'a separate sheet contains details of how to return survey';
3. It is recommended that the use of the term 'year' is used consistently in the public facing documents as opposed to 'grade'.

Non-standard conditions do not need to be submitted to or reviewed by AUTEC unless requested but must be completed before commencing your study.

Standard Conditions of Approval

1. The research is to be undertaken in accordance with the Auckland University of Technology Code of Conduct for Research and as approved by AUTEC.
2. All public facing documents must have the AUTEC approval number and be of a high standard of spelling and grammar. Dates on the Information Sheet(s) and Consent Form(s) must be consistent.
3. Any amendments to the project must be approved by AUTEC prior to being implemented.
4. A progress report is due annually on the anniversary of the approval date.
5. A final report is due at the expiration of the approval period, or, upon completion of project.
6. Any serious or adverse events must be reported to AUTEC, this includes unforeseen issues that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project.
7. AUTEC grants ethical approval only. You are responsible for obtaining management permission for access from any institution or organisation at which your research is being conducted and you need to meet all ethical, legal, public health, and locality obligations or requirements for the jurisdictions in which the research is being undertaken.

The application number and title need to be referenced on all correspondence related to this project.

All forms are available online http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/researchethics

For any enquiries, please contact the Secretariat at ethics@aut.ac.nz
(This is a computer-generated letter for which no signature is required)

The AUTEC Secretariat
Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee

Cc: yvv1603@aut.ac.nz

Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC)

13 November 2025

Ann Morrison
Faculty of Design and Creative Technologies

Dear Ann

Re: Ethics Application: **25/284 Parents' Knowledge and Perceptions of the New Curriculum in Auckland Primary and Secondary Schools**

Thank you for your request for approval of amendments to your ethics application.

The amendment to the recruitment protocol (post box drop) has been approved.

Non-Standard Conditions of Approval

1. Please send through the recruitment flyer for post box drop for completion of file.

Non-standard conditions do not need to be reviewed by AUTEC but must be completed and sent through for file if requested.

Standard Conditions of Approval

1. The research is to be undertaken in accordance with the Auckland University of Technology Code of Conduct for Research and as approved by AUTEC.
2. All public facing documents must have the AUTEC approval number and be of a high standard of spelling and grammar. Dates on the Information Sheet(s) and Consent Form(s) must be consistent.
3. Any amendments to the project must be approved by AUTEC prior to being implemented.
4. A progress report is due annually on the anniversary of the approval date.
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7. AUTEC grants ethical approval only. You are responsible for obtaining management permission for access from any institution or organisation at which your research is being conducted and you need to meet all ethical, legal, public health, and locality obligations or requirements for the jurisdictions in which the research is being undertaken.

The application number and title need to be referenced on all correspondence related to this project.

All forms are available online http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/researchethics

For any enquiries, please contact the Secretariat at ethics@aut.ac.nz

(This is a computer-generated letter for which no signature is required)

The AUTEC Secretariat
Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee

Cc: yvv1603@aut.ac.nz

Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC)

19 February 2026

Ann Morrison
Faculty of Design and Creative Technologies

Dear Ann

Ethics Application: **25/284 Parents' Knowledge and Perceptions of the New Curriculum in Auckland Primary and Secondary Schools**

PROVISIONAL APPROVAL OF AMENDMENT

The amendment to the data collection protocol (taking data from RNZ website, Reddit discussions, The Education Hub and LearnWell.co.nz.) is approved subject to:

1. Provide the full term of RNZ;
2. Assurance that the researcher is complying with the terms and conditions of the Reddit platform;
3. Provide how ethical principles will be considered when taking posts from Reddit to be used as research: how permissions will be gained, consent for use of direct quotes obtained, data validity and bias considered given the demographic profile of Reddit users, etc.;
4. Provide how permission will be gained to take data from each of the identified sources (the RNZ website, The Education Hub and LearnWell.co.nz) that complies with their usage rules and copyright. For further information please use the library resources https://library.aut.ac.nz/about/copyright-at-aut;
5. Provide a data collection protocol that describes a framework for data collection (What is being collected, how identified and how collected).

Responding to requests for further information

Provide a cover letter to respond to all outstanding ethical concerns. This includes addressing concerns raised in the application as the original answers in the application form should not be edited. **Do not resubmit your EA1 application** unless specifically directed to in the conditions.

Please track or highlight changes made to new versions of existing study documentation (Information Sheet, Consent Form, Advertisement etc). Both tracked and clean versions of updated documents should be provided when responding to a provisional approval.

The Committee is always willing to discuss with applicants the points that have been made.

When the conditions have been met, you will be notified of the full approval. Full approval is not effective until all the conditions have been met. Data collection may not commence until full approval has been confirmed. If these conditions are not met within six months, your application will be closed, and a new application will be required.

Please use the application number and study title in all correspondence with us

If you have any enquiries about this application, please contact us at ethics@aut.ac.nz.

(This is a computer-generated letter for which no signature is required)

The AUTEC Secretariat
Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee

Cc: yvv1603@aut.ac.nz



Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC)

9 March 2026

Ann Morrison
Faculty of Design and Creative Technologies

Dear Ann

Re: Ethics Application: **25/284 Parents' Knowledge and Perceptions of the New Curriculum in Auckland Primary and Secondary Schools**

Thank you for your responses to the conditions for the amendment to your ethics application.

The amendment to the data collection protocol has been approved.

Standard Conditions of Approval

1. The research is to be undertaken in accordance with the Auckland University of Technology Code of Conduct for Research and as approved by AUTEC.
2. All public facing documents must have the AUTEC approval number and be of a high standard of spelling and grammar. Dates on the Information Sheet(s) and Consent Form(s) must be consistent.
3. Any amendments to the project must be approved by AUTEC prior to being implemented.
4. A progress report is due annually on the anniversary of the approval date.
5. A final report is due at the expiration of the approval period, or, upon completion of project.
6. Any serious or adverse events must be reported to AUTEC, this includes unforeseen issues that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project.
7. AUTEC grants ethical approval only. You are responsible for obtaining management permission for access from any institution or organisation at which your research is being conducted and you need to meet all ethical, legal, public health, and locality obligations or requirements for the jurisdictions in which the research is being undertaken.

The application number and title need to be referenced on all correspondence related to this project.

All forms are available online http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/researchethics

For any enquiries, please contact the Secretariat at ethics@aut.ac.nz

(This is a computer-generated letter for which no signature is required)

The AUTEC Secretariat
Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee

Cc: yvv1603@aut.ac.nz

Appendix D

Participant Information Sheet

Parents' Knowledge and Perceptions of the New Curriculum in Auckland Primary and Secondary Schools

Kia Ora,

You are invited to participate in a research study on Parental Knowledge and Perceptions of the New Curriculum in Auckland Primary and Secondary Schools. This study is being conducted by Samra Jabeen Hanif from Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand. Other research team members include Associate Professor Ann Morrison, Research Supervisor. The study is being carried out as a requirement for Master of Creative Technology.

What is the purpose of this research?

Curriculum reform in Aotearoa New Zealand has introduced significant changes aimed at enhancing equity, cultural responsiveness, and future-focused learning. While these reforms are designed to benefit all learners, their success depends in part on how well parents understand and engage with the new curriculum.

In Auckland, where ethnic and socioeconomic diversity is pronounced, understanding how parents from different backgrounds perceive the curriculum is essential. This study aims to investigate parental awareness, understanding, and attitudes toward the new curriculum, and to identify barriers to engagement and information access. The inclusion of ethnicity and household income will allow for layered analysis of equity-related factors.

How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

You have been invited to participate in this research because you have responded to our online advertisement for the survey, through QR code scanning and you have identified yourself as a parent of student from year 1 - 13.

Or you have scanned code from one of our invitation sheets posted on the advertisement boards at different places/platforms.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

This survey is anonymous; no names or personal details will be collected. We are only interested in your answers to the questions. You can stop at any time by closing the browser or app, and any responses

entered will be deleted. Returning a completed survey means you agree to take part in the research.

What will my participation involve?

You are invited to take part in a research study exploring Parents' Knowledge and Perceptions of the New Curriculum in Auckland Primary and Secondary Schools. Your participation may involve completing an anonymous online survey.

The survey includes multiple-choice and open-ended questions, taking approximately 20-30 minutes to complete. No personal identifiers will be collected or stored, ensuring complete anonymity.

Participation in any component is entirely voluntary. You may skip any question or withdraw at any time. By participating, you contribute to research that may influence future policy frameworks around education reforms.

What are the benefits?

This research offers distinct benefits across stakeholder groups. Participants, primarily parents and caregivers, gain a meaningful opportunity to influence curriculum development by sharing their lived experiences and educational priorities. Their anonymous input ensures that diverse family perspectives are represented in school decision-making. Researchers benefit from authentic, community-grounded data that enhances the validity and relevance of findings, particularly in equity-focused curriculum reform. For the broader community, the study contributes to more inclusive and responsive educational practices across Auckland schools, supporting systemic change that reflects cultural diversity, accessibility, and shared values.

What are the costs?

This research will be conducted online and will take approximately 20-30 minutes of your time.

Will the results of the study be published?

The results of this research will be published in a Master's thesis. This thesis will be available to the general public through the AUT library. Results may be published in peer-reviewed, academic journals. Results will also be presented during conferences or seminars to wider professional and academic communities. You will not be identifiable in any publication as this is an anonymous research study.

What are the discomforts and risks?

There are no discomforts or risks associated with participating in this study.

What will happen to information about me?

The data collected in the study is un-identifiable, meaning your responses will be anonymous.
No, directly identifying information will be collected for this study.
The data for this study will be stored securely on AUT servers and will only be accessible by the researcher and supervisors.
Participation in this research is entirely voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time for surveys before submission by closing the browser window. Once submitted, all responses will be anonymous.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

You will be able to find a summary of the research findings on Ann Morrisons (research supervisor) profile at https://academics.aut.ac.nz/ann.morrison/teaching

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Ann Morrison ann.morrison@aut.ac.nz
Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTEC, ethics@aut.ac.nz, (+649) 921 9999 ext 6038.

Who do I contact for further information about this research?

Please keep this Information Sheet for your future reference. You are also able to contact the research team as follows:

Researcher Contact Details:
Samra Jabeen Hanif
Email: yvv1603@autuni.ac.nz
Project Supervisor Contact Details:
Ann Morrison
Email: ann.morrison@aut.ac.nz

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 19th September 2025 final ethics approval was granted, AUTEC Reference number 25/284.

Appendix E

Questionnaire for the Survey

Please check only one box per question unless advised otherwise.

Questionnaire Survey:

1. **What is your child's current year level?**

   ☐ Year 1-3

   ☐ Year 4-6

   ☐ Year 7-9

   ☐ Year 10-13

2. **What type of school does your child attend?**

   ☐ Public

   ☐ Private

   ☐ Integrated

   ☐ Other: _____

3. **The school is in which region of Auckland?**

   ☐ East

   ☐ West

   ☐ North

   ☐ South

4. **What is your relationship to the child?**

   ☐ Mother

   ☐ Father

☐ Guardian

☐ Other: _____

5. **How many children do you have currently enrolled in school?**

☐ 1

☐ 2

☐ 3

☐ 4 or more

6. **What is your ethnicity? (Select all that apply)**

☐ Māori

☐ Pacific Peoples

☐ Asian

☐ European

☐ Other: _____

7. **What is your household income range?**

☐ Less than $30,000

☐ $30,000-$50,000

☐ $50,000-$70,000

☐ $70,000-$100,000

☐ More than $100,000

8. **What was your child's most recent overall grade or academic performance level?**

☐ E- Excellence

☐ M - Merit

☐ A - Achieved

☐ N - Not Achieved

☐ Not Sure

☐ Other e.g. - Working Towards, At expected level, Above expected level, Well above expectation. _____

9. How often do you receive updates or academic reports from the school.

☐ Weekly

☐ Monthly

☐ Once per term

☐ Rarely

☐ Never

10. **How often do you review your child's grades or academic reports?**

☐ Weekly

☐ Monthly

☐ Once per term

☐ Rarely

☐ Never

11. **Which subject(s) does your child excel in? (Select all that apply)**

☐ Mathematics

☐ English

☐ Science

☐ Social Studies

☐ Arts

☐ Other: _____

12. **Which subject(s) does your child struggle with? (Select all that apply)**

☐ Mathematics

☐ English

☐ Science

☐ Social Studies

☐ Arts

☐ Other: _____

13. How often does your child get homework?

☐ Daily

☐ A few times a week

☐ Occasionally

☐ Rarely

☐ Never

14. **How often do you help your child with their homework?**

☐ Daily

☐ A few times a week

☐ Occasionally

☐ Rarely

☐ Never

15. **How often do you discuss your child's school day or learning progress with them?**

☐ Daily

☐ A few times a week

☐ Occasionally

☐ Rarely

☐ Never

16. **How often do you attend parent-teacher meetings?**

☐ Always

☐ Often

☐ Sometimes

☐ Rarely

☐ Never

17. **Do you use any digital tools or platforms to monitor your child's academic progress (e.g., school portals, apps)?**

☐ Yes, regularly

☐ Occasionally

☐ Rarely

☐ Never

18. Please give the name of the platform (if none type NA) _____

19. **How often do you communicate with your child's teachers, or school manager or principal (e.g., via email, phone, or in person)?**

☐ Weekly

☐ Monthly

☐ Once per term

☐ Rarely

☐ Never

20. **Do you participate in school activities or events (e.g., volunteering, attending sports days)?**

☐ Yes, regularly

☐ Occasionally

☐ Rarely

☐ Never

21. **Are you aware of the recent changes to the school curriculum?**

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Not sure

If your answer is No then please conclude this survey as the rest of the questions are not relevant to you.

22. **How did you learn about the new curriculum? (Select all that apply)**

☐ School communication (e.g., newsletters, meetings)

☐ Media (e.g., news articles, social media)

☐ Other parents

☐ Other: _____

23. **How would you rate your understanding of the new curriculum?**

☐ Very good

☐ Good

☐ Average

☐ Poor

☐ Very poor

24. **Have you attended any school-organized sessions or workshops about the new curriculum?**

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Not aware of any sessions

25. **Do you know the key focus areas of the new curriculum? (Select all that apply)**

☐ Literacy and numeracy

☐ Digital skills and technology

☐ Environmental education

☐ Cultural inclusivity

☐ Other: _____

26. **Do you feel the new curriculum aligns with your child's learning needs?**

☐ Strongly agree

☐ Agree

☐ Neutral

☐ Disagree

☐ Strongly disagree

27. **Which subjects or areas do you think have improved under the new curriculum? (Select all that apply)**

☐ Mathematics

☐ English

☐ Science

☐ Social Studies

☐ Arts

☐ Other: _____

28. Which subjects or areas do you think need more attention under the new curriculum? (Select all that apply)

☐ Mathematics

☐ English

☐ Science

☐ Social Studies

☐ Arts

☐ Other: _____

29. Do you believe the new curriculum will positively impact your child's future?

☐ Strongly agree

☐ Agree

☐ Neutral

☐ Disagree

☐ Strongly disagree

30. **How satisfied are you with the implementation of the new curriculum?**

☐ Very satisfied

☐ Satisfied

☐ Neutral

☐ Dissatisfied

☐ Very dissatisfied

31. **Do you think the new curriculum adequately prepares students for future challenges (e.g., technology, global issues)?**

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Not sure

32. **What challenges have you faced in understanding the new curriculum? (Select all that apply)**

☐ Lack of information from the school

☐ Complexity of the curriculum

☐ Lack of time to learn about it

☐ Other: _____

33. **Do you feel the school provides adequate resources to help parents understand the new curriculum?**

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Not sure

34. **What additional support would help you better understand the new curriculum? (Select all that apply)**

☐ Workshops or training sessions for parents

☐ Clearer communication from the school

☐ Online resources or tools

☐ Other: _____

35. What additional insights or reflections do you have on the revised curriculum that could enhance collaboration between you, your child, and the school in supporting learning outcomes.

_____

_____

Appendix F

Radio New Zealand Consent for Data Use

Outlook

RE: [EXTERNAL] - Use of comments in academic research analysis

From Privacy <Privacy@rnz.co.nz>

Date Mon 2/23/2026 4:27 PM

To Samra Jabeen Hanif <yvv1603@autuni.ac.nz>

Kia ora Samra,

I believe the fair dealing exception under section 43 of the Copyright Act applies if you are using copyrighted content for the purposes of research. This is a statutory defence to copyright infringement and you don't need RNZ's permission to use the content in this manner.

Let me know if you have any questions. Good luck with your research thesis. Thanks Luke

From: Samra Jabeen Hanif <yvv1603@autuni.ac.nz>

Sent: Monday, 23 February 2026 4:20 pm

To: Privacy <Privacy@rnz.co.nz>

Subject: Re: [EXTERNAL] - Use of comments in academic research analysis

Dear Luke,

This is for my research for master's degree in creative technologies from AUT. It will be academic research and don't want to publish it in anyway other than just its current use as a research thesis.

Regards,

Samra Hanif