



A summary report of engagement towards a new Tertiary Education Strategy

September 2019



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Engagement Summary

Background

For the first time ever, the Government is taking an integrated approach to the strategic priorities we set across learning, schooling and tertiary education – driven by the following five strategic objectives:

- Objective 1: Learners at the centre – learners with their whānau are at the centre of education
- Objective 2: Barrier-free access – great education opportunities and outcomes are within reach for every learner
- Objective 3: Quality teaching and leadership – quality teaching and leadership make the difference for learners and their whānau
- Objective 4: Future of learning and work – learning that is relevant to the lives of New Zealanders today and throughout their lives
- Objective 5: World class inclusive public education – New Zealand education is trusted and sustainable.

The two key instruments to focus practical change for ākonga are the Statement of National Education Priorities (NELP) and the Tertiary Education Strategy (TES).

The NELP expresses these objectives to help those who govern schools, kura, early learning services and ngā kōhanga reo focus their day-to-day work on things that will have a significant positive impact for children and young people

The Tertiary Education Strategy (TES) sets out the Government's long-term direction and medium-term priorities for the tertiary education system. These inform the Tertiary Education Commission's investment process, as well as supporting the TEC to communicate the Government's tertiary education priorities to tertiary education organisations (TEOs). TEOs are required to show how they will respond to these priorities, through their investment plans.

Introduction

A new TES is being developed which identifies the priorities and actions that give effect to the Government's overarching education outcomes and strategic objectives. The new TES will drive the system changes we need to build on our strengths, address current issues and realise the opportunities ahead.

To inform the drafting of the new TES, we wanted to hear from a sample of those who are often underserved by the tertiary system, or who we struggle to engage with. From January to July 2019, the Ministry of Education held over 50 engagements on the TES with: representative groups and peak bodies including for learners/ākonga¹ and staff; TEO senior leadership; Māori; Pacific peoples; disability groups; and government agencies around New Zealand.

We also spoke with learners/ākonga, staff and representatives and leaders across the system and throughout the wider tertiary network about the current system and opportunities for the future.

Throughout our TES engagements, we received a lot of feedback from those we spoke with about their experiences of the tertiary system, and how action and change may be fostered through the new TES. We heard about aspects of the tertiary system that could be improved, better supported or adapted for a future focus – TES engagement participants also spoke with us about a range of different actions they saw government and TEOs taking to contribute to this. This feedback has been used to inform the draft TES priorities and actions.

This report provides a summary of the discussions had throughout the country about tertiary education and the wider tertiary system.

¹ Ākonga is a te reo Māori term used here for learner, student, pupil, trainee or apprentice in the tertiary education system. While this term is used to describe individuals, we recognise learners/ākonga as indivisible from their whānau and families, identities, languages and cultures.

Executive Summary

Learners/ākonga in tertiary education told us:

Overall, it was clear that learners/ākonga view their engagement in tertiary education as an investment in their futures and as a vehicle to improve their employability and overall wellbeing outcomes. Learners/ākonga told us about their aspirations, and how they want tertiary education to help them fulfil those. We heard from learners/ākonga that they want powerful and well-supported mechanisms for them to engage with decision-making processes. Student voice and representation are important to enable learners/ākonga to understand and inform the tertiary system.

We heard that learners/ākonga have differing requirements for tertiary education throughout their lives, these can be influenced by their employment status, their families and whānau and their aspirations for engaging in the wider world. Access to tertiary education means access to a full range of lifelong opportunities for learners/ākonga and their whānau, and we heard from learners/ākonga that they want a tertiary education system which connects them meaningfully to the world of work and society.

Learners/ākonga shared with us the problems they encounter within and across the tertiary system, and the ways they want to see these resolved. We heard about the bias, discrimination and racism they encounter throughout the education system. They told us about the need for teaching and learning to be inclusive of their needs, aspirations, identities, languages and cultures, and that they struggle to see themselves in some of their tertiary environments and programmes of study. Learners/ākonga told us they expect their tertiary education experiences to be free from bias, discrimination and structural racism, but that this is not always the case.

From speaking with learners/ākonga, we know there are persistent barriers to access, participation and strong education and employment outcomes which must be addressed. We know that learners/ākonga expect us to work collaboratively with them and their whānau and communities to create systemic change. We know that successful outcomes are important to learners/ākonga, and the variety of roles they play as children, parents, employees, employers, leaders and engaged global citizens.

Staff working throughout tertiary education told us:

From speaking with staff, it was clear that our tertiary system comprises many passionate and skilled educators, leaders, mentors, administrators, researchers/kairangahau and support workers. We spoke with staff about their experiences as well as their aspirations for themselves and for learners/ākonga.

Teaching and general staff told us they want to be better supported in their personal and professional development. They spoke with us about wanting support to build key cultural competencies and develop culturally-responsive teaching and learning environments and experiences. They also shared with us some of their ideas about how to strengthen the connections between education and training with the changing future of work. Staff told us they want their roles as educators and as active stakeholders and resources within tertiary education recognised throughout the system.

Staff shared with us their concerns for learners/ākonga in the tertiary system who struggle against pervasive effects of bias, discrimination, structural racism and socio-economic disadvantage. They want to see a system that mitigates these barriers and empowers all learners/ākonga throughout their tertiary journeys.

We heard that the rigidity of regulation and resourcing in tertiary education needs to change, to allow staff to work in a more flexible and agile way. We heard that development of pedagogically diverse teaching methods and responsive pastoral support and care can be improved with more system flexibility. Staff spoke with us about wanting to have supported and sustainable ways to inform the decision-making and accountability processes within the tertiary education system. They want their expertise and experiences recognised in doing so.

From speaking with staff, we know there are opportunities to improve and strengthen tertiary education for learners/ākonga, staff and the system as a whole. We know that staff take seriously their role in facilitating, enacting and enhancing the experiences and outcomes of learners/ākonga across the system, but they need support to continue doing so. Staff want to work collaboratively to create change and build resilience within the system and for learners/ākonga. We know that successful outcomes for staff are inclusive of successful outcomes for learners/ākonga.

Engagement Methodology

Why we conducted TES-specific engagement

We wanted to hear the perspectives and experiences of those who are often underserved by the tertiary system, or who we struggle to engage with. As such, this TES engagement targeted groups and individuals whose perspectives might not come through strongly in surveys or formal consultation. We took a ground-up approach in targeting these perspectives by speaking largely with relevant tertiary education learners/ākonga and staff.

The Ministry of Education has conducted other significant engagement and consultation exercises over the last 12 months, wherever possible the feedback from this wider Education Work Programme (EWP) work has been reflected in the development of the TES. The Korero Mātauranga | Education Conversation, wānanga and fono which provided an overall view of the perspectives of New Zealanders on education, and the recent Reform of Vocational Education (RoVE) consultation work which targeted the vocational education sector are of particular significance to the development of the TES.

This TES engagement supplements our TES evidence brief and the previous engagement work done as part of the EWP to inform development of the new TES. The feedback captured by our TES engagement does not cover the full spectrum of learners/ākonga, staff and stakeholders throughout tertiary education, but instead provided invaluable insights into how we can improve how the tertiary system works for all involved.

How we conducted TES-specific engagements

We targeted the groups and individuals we engaged to:

- ensure we heard from those we often struggle to engage and consult with;
- gather feedback on the draft TES priorities, which were initially informed by the TES Evidence Brief, Korero Mātauranga | Education Conversations including the regional wānanga and fono, and by the Government priorities;
- discuss the experiences of learners/ākonga and staff of the tertiary education system, and potential solutions to the barriers they experience throughout their study and work.

TEO learners/ākonga and staff

We travelled to a selection of TEOs throughout New Zealand to speak with learners/ākonga and staff about their experiences in the tertiary education system and the issues they want solutions for.

To provide a broad range of feedback we engaged with learners/ākonga mainly in universities, as well as staff across different private training establishments (PTEs), wānanga, institutes of technology and polytechnics (ITPs) and universities.

We targeted learners/ākonga who we often do not engage with, we also targeted staff working across areas of tertiary education that we heard are in need of particular attention. This included teaching staff, staff working with disabled learners/ākonga, and staff who support transitions and pastoral care.

Peak bodies and representative groups

We met with key peak bodies and representative groups from across the tertiary education system. We attended a variety of hui to hear the perspectives of those working within and with the system.

Tertiary education stakeholders and communities

We also met with education stakeholders, other than learners/ākonga and staff, throughout the country to discuss their wider needs and expectations of tertiary education as well as the TES.

These TES engagements were conducted in person, and were shaped by a number of guiding questions

- *What are the key issues in the tertiary system?*
- *What can be done to address these?*
- *Do you agree with these proposed TES priorities?*
- *How could these be improved?*
- *What are the most important priorities for tertiary education for you? For your family and whānau? For your work and career?*
- *Do you have any examples of things that are working well in the tertiary system?*

Formal consultation on the draft TES

While this TES engagement sampled specific aspects of the tertiary system, including those we do not often engage and consult well, the formal public consultation on the draft TES will be inclusive of the full spectrum of learners/ākonga, staff and stakeholders in and around tertiary education. We will also further review the feedback we received from the Kōrero Mātauranga | Education Conversation and RoVE consultation as part of the formal consultation on the TES.

Who we engaged with

Learner/ākonga representatives from different TEOs

- Ngāi Tauira (NT), Ngā Rangahautira (NR), Ngā Tāura Ūmanga (NTU) at Victoria University of Wellington
- Waikato Students' Union (WSU)
- Massey University Students' Association (MUSA) and Albany Students' Association (ASA)
- AUT Students' Association (AUTSA)
- University of Canterbury Students' Association (UCSA)
- Otago University Students' Association (OUSA)
- New Zealand Union of Students' Association (NZUSA)
- Te Mana Ākonga (TMA)
- As well as attendees of the National Pasifika Students Fono with representatives from:
 - University of Otago Pacific Island Students' Association (UOPIISA)
 - Unitec Students Council (USC)
 - EIT Pasifika Students Group
 - Pacific Island Students of Ara (PISA) at Ara Institute of Canterbury
 - Lincoln University Pacific Islands Students' Association (LUPISA)
 - Otago Polytechnic Students' Association (OPSA)
 - MIT Student Council
 - Pacific Islands Management Students Association (PIMSA) and Pacific Law Students Association (PLSA) at the University of Waikato
 - Pasifika Student Council (PSC) at Victoria University of Wellington
 - Fale Niu (AUT Pasifika Students Association)

Teaching, research and general staff from across the tertiary education system

- University of Auckland
- Unitec Institute of Technology
- University of Waikato
- Victoria University of Wellington
- Ara Institute of Canterbury
- Otago Polytechnic
- University of Otago
- As well as Ako Aotearoa, including Te Rūnanga Māori and Pacific Caucus

The leadership teams of different TEOS

- Te Wānanga o Aotearoa
- Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiārangi
- Te Wānanga o Raukawa
- University of Waikato
- Ara Institute of Canterbury
- Toi Ohomai Institute of Technology
- The Design School
- Community Colleges NZ

Peak bodies and representative groups from across New Zealand

- Universities New Zealand (UNZ) Te Pōkai Tara, including Te Kāhui Amokura
- ACE Aotearoa, including the ACE Sector Strategic Alliance
- The Tertiary Education Union (TEU) Te Hautū Kahurangi o Aotearoa, including the TEU Council, Te Toi Ahurangi, Industrial and Professional, and Women's Committees
- Disabled People's Organisations (DPO) Coalition

Objective 1: Learners at the centre – Learners with their whānau are at the centre of education

Learners/ākonga in tertiary education told us:

The tertiary education system

Learners/ākonga told us that a unified approach from government is needed to engage and support their needs. We heard about the need for government agencies responsible for delivering and supporting tertiary education (including Ministry of Social Development, Inland Revenue) to work cohesively and efficiently.

Cultural competency

Māori specific cultural competency

Māori learners/ākonga talked about the difficulties of navigating culture clashes with staff especially with regard to cultural obligations such as tangihanga or whānau responsibilities. They related encountering a lack of cultural competency in TEOs to be able to understand and respond appropriately to their needs. Inflexibility on issues such as these has meant some Māori learners/ākonga have been unable to submit assignments, sit exams or continue with courses. Learners/ākonga talked about Māori being relegated to a 'little section' of the campus, usually where the marae is situated, a practice they find isolating and alienating.

Pacific specific cultural competency

Pacific peoples are diverse, and those we spoke with noted that a one-size-fits-all model to address Pacific needs and aspirations is insufficient. Learners/ākonga related to us experiences of culture clashes with other learners/ākonga as well as tertiary staff, which are significant barriers for Pacific learners/ākonga at points of transition. Pacific learners/ākonga felt strongly that their parents, families and church communities should be engaged throughout their education journeys. These networks need to be valued for their contribution to the wellbeing and success of Pacific learners/ākonga; they must be equipped with culturally and personally relevant support and information as to how the tertiary system operates. This is especially pertinent for learners/ākonga who are first in their family to engage in tertiary education. Pacific learners/ākonga told us they are motivated to engage in tertiary education to break down stereotypes and set positive examples and role-modelling for their communities. This social benefit needs to be actively considered in any solution developed to address Pacific needs and aspirations.

At the individual level

Learners/ākonga felt strongly that a culturally competent tertiary education workforce is key to developing responsive capabilities which cater to their aspirations and needs. These needs can include employability and wellbeing focuses but can also be broader such as language revitalisation and cultural, historical and traditional knowledge acquisition. Learners/ākonga want a system that embraces and harnesses the strength in their diversity.

Wellbeing

We heard a lot about how learners/ākonga want to see their wellbeing outcomes and experiences better supported throughout the system. In the most immediate sense, tertiary education provides a range of stressors for learners/ākonga. They told us that tertiary education is costly in and of itself, added to that are increasing rents, food and transport costs. Student associations told us that these factors contribute to increasing demand (and therefore pressure) on their advocacy work that can be overwhelming. Ākonga also

spoke with us about the need for health and wellbeing services to be better supported in the tertiary system. Common themes from learners/ākonga included the need for greater access to mental health services and support, and also for a health and wellbeing focus for teaching, learning and assessment.

A key aspect of wellbeing that many learners/ākonga spoke with us about relates to cultural and personal safety. We heard many accounts of interpersonal as well as structural instances of racism, discrimination and bias from learners/ākonga we spoke with. Learners/ākonga spoke with us about the impact of these on their health, safety and wellbeing. They felt that these pressures are not being systemically addressed, so continue to take a toll on ākonga wellbeing at an individual level, cohort level and have family, whānau and community effects. Learners/ākonga also told us of their need to see themselves in tertiary environments. They need to feel understood, valued and reflected in the make-up of tertiary staff, teaching and learning practices, modes of delivery and pastoral care and support. These aspects of tertiary education must respond to their needs and aspirations, and learners/ākonga want to be able to communicate these needs and aspirations themselves.

Pastoral care and support

Engaging in tertiary education means many learners/ākonga are away from their usual support systems such as families, whānau and communities. This can impact their initial transition and overall success. Learners/ākonga told us that support staff in TEOs are invaluable and ease the burden of study through building holistic and meaningful relationships. Learners/ākonga would like to see support staff being more proactive, to better help those who are shy, introverted or less likely to seek out support for themselves. They want to see the prioritisation of mental health services throughout the tertiary education system, and more support for those learners/ākonga who have caring responsibilities for children. Tuākana-teina type mentoring programmes also provide vital support, however, these are largely for first year students only, and we heard that learners/ākonga would like to see provision for these types of programmes expanded to include other year levels.

We heard that Māori-specific and Pacific-specific pastoral support is essential, and that these services must be maintained and developed further. Ākonga Māori told us that Māori staff and advisors are really needed, and that where they are in place they make a big difference to their experiences. They also want access to more Māori doctors, nurses, counsellors and support staff so their needs can be well met.

Student voice

Student voice is a major concern for learners/ākonga, particularly in the PTE and ITP sectors where student voice is decidedly limited. Learners/ākonga currently perceive student voice as being largely supported by student associations alone, this is seen as ineffective. They want effective ways to make themselves heard. Learners/ākonga want to see guidelines developed that support, protect and utilise student voice in TEOs and reflected that Te Tiriti o Waitangi is a useful guide for the system to build and respond to student voice.

We have heard that learners/ākonga felt student voice is critical to decision-making in TEOs and will be key in developing effective teaching and learning experiences and in designing and delivering pastoral care and support. Learners/ākonga want to be represented in these conversations at every level. They want processes to be as transparent as possible and for accountability to learners/ākonga in every TEO upheld. They suggested that compulsory student consultation embed both transparency and accountability. Additionally, at governance levels, student management/advocacy roles need to be paid positions. Without this resourcing this work is a burden/barrier for some students, especially considering the opportunity cost of paid employment elsewhere. We heard that student associations feel Voluntary Student Membership restricts student unions/associations from getting the resourcing they need to develop student voice.

General staff working in tertiary education told us:

Equity

General staff felt that achieving equitable outcomes for learners/ākonga is currently difficult due to the limited resourcing allocated to this work, and the narrow perspectives applied – they would like to have more opportunity to feed into resourcing and planning decisions to address this.

We heard specific concerns around equity for Māori, with staff reflecting that while Māori (among others) are wanted in the system, few meaningful provisions are made for them. There is a lack of culturally competent staff as well as culturally responsive and relevant teaching environments and content – staff want to see this improved. We heard that it is important to have leaders who fit a variety of demographics, this increases visibility for diverse success and provides more capability in dealing with disenfranchisement and disadvantage.

Wellbeing

We heard that the tertiary system needs to better recognise the community building aspects of tertiary education. In particular, the ways that tertiary education contributes to individual and community wellbeing, such as supporting our ageing population in maintaining cognitive and general health through participation in community.

Staff told us that they believe measures of learners/ākonga and staff wellbeing are key to improvement in the system. We heard that mental health continues to present a challenge for the system and this puts unnecessary strain on learners/ākonga and staff alike, as well as their wider whānau and communities.

We heard that dealing with both learners/ākonga and staff in a holistic sense is an important way to address their needs and support their aspirations. Staff are concerned that while this is a critical aspect of improving wellbeing in the system, there are many instances of support services, wellbeing surveys and professional development programmes being defunded or terminated. Addressing wellbeing requires a philosophical shift, to be supported by effective resourcing and shared responsibility and accountability throughout the system. This accountability, they say, will be better supported if staff voice is effectively utilised and staff have greater influence in decision making process.

Pastoral care and support

General staff told us that pastoral support critically needs to be integrated as core business of every TEO. Pastoral support continues to exist in ad hoc spaces, and while this allows for pockets of excellence it generally lacks any system thinking or coordination. General staff felt that often their work requires they meet the emotional and social needs of learners/ākonga as well as their immediate educational needs. They would like to see more resourcing to better recognise this pivotal aspect of their work. We also heard that pastoral care and student support must be included in the core business of TEOs.

We heard that mainstreaming both Māori and Pacific specific services continues throughout the sector and has a negative impact on staff and learners/ākonga. We also heard that it is imperative that these specific services remain and are well supported and developed. There was recognition that increasing high-quality and personalised pastoral care for learners/ākonga will require additional resourcing, particularly if additional responsibilities are imposed upon existing staff.

Student voice

We heard from general staff that learners/ākonga need effective ways to communicate their needs and aspirations to the tertiary education system. Staff felt that student life is too demanding – this often means that critical aspects of student voice work are left by the wayside as learners/ākonga must prioritise study and work. Allowing this to continue leaves learners/ākonga out of a critical feedback loop for TEOs and for the wider system.

Teaching staff working in tertiary education told us:

The tertiary education system

From the perspective of the teaching staff we engaged, tertiary education needs to be viewed and positioned as a public good, and in doing so should be outcomes driven. They viewed current structures of the system as rigid, inhibiting their ability to be more responsive to learners/ākonga needs. They felt that system settings that open up adaptability and responsiveness are critical, and that this represents a great opportunity for tertiary education to become more focused on learners/ākonga. They would like to see the role of tertiary in supporting community and citizenry better espoused, alongside the current role that tertiary education plays

in a range of outcomes throughout New Zealand. They suggested that improvements in this space would require strengthening accountability measures for decision-makers, and better promotion and increased implementation of best practice.

Equity

Teaching staff view the current conceptualisation of equity as too narrow, focusing primarily on gender and ethnicity, we heard that this needs to be broadened. They are particularly concerned with the lack of integrated and wrap-around support for international and disabled learners/ākonga, and consideration of the wellbeing and accessibility issues faced by some staff. Equity of access also needs better support, and teaching staff offered EIT's regional hubs as an example of an effective access model. Some teaching staff also told us that instating positive role models for Māori and Pacific learners/ākonga in the tertiary sector (i.e. a tertiary education workforce that is representative of Māori and Pacific populations) is needed to drive better outcomes for these groups. They note more resources need to be directed and applied to equity issues.

Student voice

To improve system functionality, some teaching staff discussed the impact that a national student survey could have. They posited that a national student survey would enable learners/ākonga to indicate their experiences regarding: quality of teaching and learning, overall experience (including campus environments), and graduate outcomes in terms of employability and wellbeing. They also suggested that this could be used as a qualitative metric to contextualise existing quantitative measures.

Leadership and management across tertiary education told us:

Ākonga centricity

We heard that TEO leadership view the tertiary education as currently described in terms of provision, and learners/ākonga are only at the centre if they fit into the structured system. It was important to those we spoke with that the TES, and therefore the system, revolve around learners/ākonga.

Equity

We heard that a system shift is required so the system takes a broad view of equitable outcomes. In particular, we heard that learners/ākonga success needs to be emphasised over equitable outcomes, learners/ākonga must be able to enjoy success, as themselves – not simply achieve parity with others. Addressing equity in this way will require a strengths-based approach, shifting from deficit theorising.

This broad view of equity needs to include accessibility, positive learning experiences, educational and employment outcomes - a focus on 'all' learners/ākonga will jeopardise this. Rather, a broad provision of interventions and systems to deliver personalised and well-informed support to learners/ākonga needs is necessary. Some TEO leadership told us they felt equity funding is insufficient, and is linked detrimentally to volume funding models. There was also a well-recognised need to change the conversation about how baseline-funding is used with some of those we spoke to feeling that equity funding should be used as a top-up and not treated as the only funding available for this work. We heard that this is a difficult shift to operationalise and support is needed from government. TEO leadership also told us that funding and measures of equity and equitable outcomes need to acknowledge 'distance travelled' by learners/ākonga through education, as not every learners/ākonga is equipped with the same skills and qualifications when they enter the tertiary system. Equity and equitable outcomes must also include the accessibility needs, positive learning experiences, and educational and employment success of learners/ākonga.

We received feedback that there is variable and inconsistent capability and capacity within TEOs to achieve effective equitable work and outcomes for learners/ākonga. We heard that there are often cultural competencies, teaching and research skills, cultural knowledge and languages that are needed to facilitate equity work, and that these capabilities are currently insufficient. Support is needed to build this throughout the system. TEO leadership felt that achieving equity for learners/ākonga requires agility – an example was discussed of the agile responses needed to support second-chance learners/ākonga or learners/ākonga who low prior educational attainment.

We heard a lot of feedback that compassionate, additional work is currently being carried out by key staff to resolve equity and wider pastoral issues for learners/ākonga – more support and a system view of this care and support is needed to build and share capability, and to build critical mass of capacity in TEOs and across tertiary education. Equity work needs to be shared across and throughout TEOs and across the system as a whole.

We heard that acknowledging and valuing diverse cultural identities is an important aspect of addressing equity. In particular, delineating population groups is seen as a good way to enable diverse worldviews to be engaged with, and reflected in the tertiary system. However, it will still be important to consider the intersection of issues for these groups as demographics shift.

TEOs reflected that the mainstreaming of tailored initiatives and support for Māori and Pacific learners/ākonga impacts on their outcomes – there is a loss of culturally competent support, and reduced employment opportunities for Māori and Pacific staff who can provide that support.

Some TEO leadership also told us that current qualification settings cause equity of access issues in the foundation education space. We heard persistent issues exist including learners/ākonga being unable to complete foundation qualifications in a single academic year.

Pastoral care and support

Much the same discussions were had as on the topic of equity, where general feedback centred on the need to build capability and capacity within TEOs to meet broad pastoral needs for learners/ākonga. We heard that delivering equitable and holistic pastoral care and support will require good support for the system to develop cultural competencies and language as well as a better understanding of learners/ākonga needs. TEO leadership again reflected that delivering effective pastoral support requires agility and flexibility.

Objective 2: Barrier-free access – Great education opportunities and outcomes are within reach of every learner

Learners/ākonga in tertiary education told us:

Funding

On the cost of tertiary education in general, learners/ākonga relayed that the overall cost of engaging in tertiary education – from fees to rent, to transport and food etc. – remains a barrier. We heard that fees for international students in particular are extremely high. Many learners/ākonga want to see free tertiary education for all. In lieu of that, some learners/ākonga told us they would rather see fees-free cover the final year of study rather than the first year, to encourage a focus on longevity and sustainability.

Student support

Ākonga had many concerns regarding student support, and specifically spoke with us about the student allowances scheme. Overall, they maintained that student allowances needed to be viewed by government as an investment, they felt this support needed to be strengthened to allow for better accessibility, and successful completions and outcomes.

Ākonga felt that thresholds for student allowances are inequitable and untenable for many. Means-testing parental income was viewed as unnecessary and inappropriate, as learners/ākonga often live at home out of necessity - and their parents, families or whānau often have other commitments and children which they are supporting. In this way they said parental income does not impact student income and therefore should not be considered by Studylink in determining student allowance eligibility. They found that student allowances are prohibitively difficult to apply for and do not cover day-to-day living expenses (with accommodation and travel are consistently increasing), with one learners/ākonga positing “We’d be better off on the benefit than studying”. They stated that information sessions where learners/ākonga are stepped through the application process have worked well, where available, and should be more widely available. For learners/ākonga older than 40, student allowance is only available for three years, and postgraduate students do not qualify at all. Learners/ākonga told us this is unfair and inequitable. We heard the age limit for student loans (55 years old) is a huge disadvantage for Māori, this policy disproportionately affects Māori as they are often caregivers when they are younger, with time and space to study coming later in life. Older students are not supported and yet they can be more vulnerable than younger students, as they are often second chance learners or upskilling/retraining out of necessity. Learners/ākonga want to see the postgraduate student allowance reinstated, and the student loan scheme made more equitable.

Scholarships

Ākonga told us that external and institutional scholarships are insufficient and very heavily Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) focused. They felt that in lieu of increased support through student allowances, that the breadth of scholarships awarded needs to be expanded to include more subjects, outside of STEM. They also reflected that scholarships are especially necessary for learners/ākonga in the later stages of study, and this needs to be better provided for.

Accessibility

On issues relating to accessibility, learners/ākonga reflected that universal design of tertiary education would be more appropriate than initiatives developed on an ad hoc basis. In general they felt that tertiary education environments needed to be better resourced to sustainably cater to accessibility and other support needs.

Transitions and pathways

The learners/ākonga we spoke with discussed their difficulties with transitioning from the compulsory schooling sector into tertiary education. They felt strongly that often first-year tertiary students are not well prepared for tertiary education. We heard of some issues with learners/ākonga not being well prepared from schooling with necessary literacy and numeracy skills, we also heard younger learners/ākonga struggle with transitioning into tertiary education as they may be suddenly confronted with working and supporting themselves, renting and travelling.

We heard that existing outreach programmes and transition programmes that allow learners/ākonga to visit campuses or meet tertiary peers work well to provide important pathway and programme information. Learners/ākonga related that this kind of mentoring and support early on in secondary school could help improve transitions by enabling them to build relationships and connections with tertiary education earlier. Learners/ākonga want early and many opportunities to familiarise themselves with tertiary education options and pathways as well as to identify and address any barriers they may experience (geographic, financial etc.) For learners/ākonga with accessibility or learning support needs, transitioning into tertiary education is made especially difficult by a discontinuity of support – students have to reapply for support (that is not always re-instated in a timely manner) or support options are limited (e.g. discontinuation of funding for assisted technology). Learners/ākonga want to see this prioritised and improved.

General staff working in tertiary education told us:

Accessibility

General staff told us that learners/ākonga are increasingly requiring accessibility services due to specific learning needs and mental health. Yet, accessibility services are under-resourced and, they say, there is a need to acknowledge that this work must be resourced in a needs-based way. They want to see a tertiary system that can anticipate changes such as these and solutions that respond to such changes designed and delivered. Additionally, they consider the 'one-stop-shop' approach to responding to such issues as unsustainable and in most cases ineffective. They acknowledged that across TEOs' accessibility services there has been some beneficial sharing of good practice, but, this needs to be well supported and resourced to build the overall system capacity and capability in this space. The strengthening of accessibility services will signal a strong cultural shift towards equitable outcomes and wellbeing focuses, in their eyes.

Some staff were concerned that while there is some established provision for some common accessibility barriers for learners/ākonga, there is not enough work being done to address specific learning disabilities and neurodiverse learners/ākonga. Nor does the volume-based funding model address these needs. They want to see environments where learning support is needed to be better structured and to be modelled across the system. This will also minimise ad hoc provision of these services. Inter-TEO collaboration and networking will be key to achieving this, but intra-TEO collaboration will be as equally important. They provided examples such as paid work for learners/ākonga studying towards mental health, mentoring and counselling qualifications, or, encouraging mentoring programmes to facilitate overall wellbeing.

Cultural competency

General staff viewed cultural competency as key to the professional development of all staff in the tertiary education system. We heard that critical to developing this is recognising and understanding the diverse contexts and histories of those within the system.

Māori specific cultural competency

We heard that the tertiary workforce needs to build cultural competency, and that a key aspect of this is increasing the number of teaching and general staff fluent in te reo Māori, as well as increasing the number of Māori staff overall. Developing the cultural competency of non-Māori and the wider tertiary system is seen as key to retaining Māori staff, as this will reduce the burden generally put on those staff members when cultural competency is lacking in an organisation. Staff spoke with us about the bicultural competency of Māori and Pacific staff alike, and that this needs to be valued and better recognised.

We heard that Māori staff turnover is high due to workload pressures and monoculture environments within organisations. There is a desperate need for more Māori leadership throughout the system, not just Māori in advisory roles, but to provide solutions for the issues that Māori (staff and learners/ākonga) encounter. Where Māori specific support is provided, this is usually limited. The workload of caring for all things Māori is too large for individual Māori advisors and support staff.

Pacific specific cultural competency

Pacific general staff felt strongly about improving the Pacific specific cultural competency of the tertiary workforce and wider system. One member stated “Pacific people are evolving, and always will” alluding to the adaptive and responsive tertiary education needed to better support Pacific learners/ākonga. They stated having Pacific staff in key leadership and management positions sent a strong signal of commitment to recognising Pacific people and Pacific contributions to tertiary education. These leaders provide an important platform for influencing a holistic view of education for all learners/ākonga. Pacific people in leadership positions need to be well supported and promoted across the system, as they provide invaluable leadership and positive role-modelling for Pacific learners/ākonga, their families and communities.

Transitions and pathways

General staff discussed with us a range of issues which impact upon learners/ākonga transitioning into tertiary education, from the uptake of accessibility services to the use of graduate profiles to inform the transition process. They felt that transitions for learners/ākonga into tertiary education need to be managed with learners/ākonga health and learning needs and aspirations in mind, as these can become more visible once they enter tertiary education. Barriers and needs may arise that had been missed throughout primary and secondary schooling, and more work on testing, diagnosing and co-designing solutions needs to be done. They consider transitional periods as key times in learners/ākonga education journeys for accessibility services to be utilised by TEOs. An important shift would include greater collaboration between TEOs and the schooling sector, with a focus on health and learning needs and aspirations to improve transitions into tertiary education.

Some general staff discussed with us how they utilise graduate profiles to ensure learners/ākonga have multiple opportunities and pathways in following their programmes. We heard that these work well as it is outcome based rather than completion based, and the outcomes are inclusive of job search, job match and how well learners/ākonga transition into work. Other general staff discussed the significant contribution of dual pathways and trades academy programmes with schools to learners/ākonga retention, as they are a significant mitigating aspect in EFTS drop-off factors.

Teaching staff working in tertiary education told us:

Transitions and pathways

Ākonga preparedness for tertiary study is a concern for teaching staff, and they posit that this varies across the different schooling qualifications (NCEA, CIB or IB). Some university teaching staff felt NCEA assessment is poorly matched with tertiary assessment and often this can be alienating and limiting for learners/ākonga. They also felt that young people are made to select programmes too early, and with limited resource and advice. They acknowledged that outreach programmes exist but they are not always effective, so more approaches are needed to inform and engage young people prior to their entry to tertiary education.

Lifelong learning

Teaching staff spoke with us about the ways they see lifelong learning approaches being embedded in the tertiary education system. They acknowledged the current emphasis on micro credentials, and felt that while they have potential, some serious thought needed to be applied to ensure these work well. We heard that micro credentials could work to form a blank degree (with no major/no minor), this degree could be comprised of courses from different providers and in different subjects. The major drawback discussed related to a lack of stair-cased and broad learning in this approach. Teaching staff spoke about their interest in diversifying teaching and learning practices, and programme provision to meet lifelong learning needs. They reflected that this would require investment and a flexible and agile approach. Additionally, this would require support staff to upskill and reskill to be able to provide this diversity of education.

Leadership and management across tertiary education told us:

Transitions and pathways

TEO leadership discussed with us the difficulties learners/ākonga experience in transitioning into tertiary education from schooling. Jumpstart programmes, outreach into schools and other pastoral support can improve this but are difficult to resource and fund within current settings. Specific comments were made that performance and volume-based funding do not enable effective transition systems, and that transitions are difficult for TEOs (particularly smaller providers) to manage without a system-wide approach to enable strong careers information, networking and connections.

We also heard that the types of learning and assessment learners/ākonga engage with for NCEA does not set them up well enough for tertiary education. Some examples discussed focused on the differences between NCEA assessment methods and the variety of tertiary education assessment methods. We heard that this can also impact successful transitions. We heard that there are concerns that successful foundation courses and programmes will be lost in ongoing reform work.

Lifelong learning

TEO leadership told us they felt the presence and promotion of alternate pathways (outside the traditional secondary schooling to tertiary education) are integral to lifelong learning. It is important to create more diverse pathways for learners/ākonga who do not solely rely on their performance in the schooling sector. We heard that TEOs are eager to be a part of planning and implementing lifelong learning options throughout tertiary education. There is wide recognition that learners/ākonga may be in and out of tertiary education over the course of their lifetime, and this needs to be well supported.

Lifelong learning is seen as a critical system especially in supporting ongoing career needs and entry into new career pathways for learners/ākonga. In terms of lifelong learning mechanisms (e.g. hop-on, hop-off training) we heard feedback that programme and course structure are critical to making sure these work well. Coherence of learning and preparation for the world of work is important to making sure that education provision targeted at lifelong learning is effective. We also heard that building micro credentials into qualifications is an increasingly important area of interest but that caution and effective planning must be used to make sure this is fit for purpose. Sound career advice informed by employers and industry are key.

Objective 3: Quality teaching and leadership – Quality teaching and leadership makes the difference for learners and their whānau

Learners/ākonga in tertiary education told us:

Teaching and learning

Ākonga discussed their need for tertiary teaching and learning practices and environments to reflect and affirm their identities, languages, cultures and aspirations so that all facets are engaging and relevant. We heard that change is needed so that cultural competency, employability, accessibility, and wellbeing are improved holistically throughout teaching and learning practices. We heard from learners/ākonga that teaching and learning needs to go beyond the classroom, that supplementary online content could be improved and made more widespread, and that transferrable 'work-ready' skills are important for preparing learners/ākonga for the world of work.

Cultural competency across the tertiary education system

Ākonga we spoke with discussed improving the tertiary education system by embedding and permeating cultural competency, enabling TEOs to take a stewardship role of culturally competent tertiary education in New Zealand. Learners/ākonga advised development of key cultural competencies require collaboration with Māori within TEOs, the tertiary system and across whānau, hapū and iwi. Cultural safety featured heavily in discussions, learners/ākonga felt this needed to be formally safeguarded through any system changes, ensuring this is sustainably committed to and valued. We heard a commitment on this front requires careful, meaningful consideration of the articles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

General staff working in tertiary education told us:

Similarly to teaching staff, we heard that insecure working conditions result in demanding workloads and unsustainable capacity and capability of the workforce. We heard that cultural competency and key professional capabilities need to be well developed throughout the workforce, staff want to be well supported to upskill, reskill and broaden their capabilities throughout their careers.

Teaching staff working in tertiary education told us:

Teaching and learning

Inclusive teaching and learning environments

Teaching staff told us they are eager to play a stronger role in improving teaching and learning environments to be more inclusive of the aspirations of both learners/ākonga and staff. There were specific comments made about decision-making processes excluding their input, and that these often impact of staff and learners/ākonga wellbeing as well as impede upon teaching and learning practices. They want to see a focus on these practices, including diversifying modes of delivery and building key teaching competencies. They spoke with us about the importance of this being done in ways which address mental health and wellbeing issues for staff and learners/ākonga, as well as providing for more work integrated learning or employment-facing options and employability skill acquisition for learners/ākonga. They felt learners/ākonga value being taught and developing transferable skills and attributes such as: confidence, pride, creativity, adaptability, problem-solving and resilience. Teaching staff viewed the development of these skills as critical to preparing learners/ākonga to respond to change, especially in the future context where employability and personal skills will be increasingly important.

They also told us that cultural competency was an important aspect of teaching capability, but needs to be better supported. They acknowledge the high expectations of ākonga Māori, and are cognisant of their want to give back to whānau are key aspects to their success in tertiary education. This was a key aspect of cultural competency that teaching staff wanted better support with.

In terms of evaluating teaching quality, teaching staff spoke with us about the need for more diverse methods of assessment for teaching and research. They find that student evaluations can be useful, and they would like to see other options explored and supported also.

We heard that intergenerational learning needs to be strengthened and recognised in the tertiary education system for better outcomes for learners/ākonga. Part of this would involve providing platforms for reflecting diverse cultures in the system as it is an integral cultural aspect for Māori and Pacific peoples. Staff felt that in foundation education, NCEA Level 2 is an ineffective indicator of preparedness for higher levels of study. They reflected that many students lack fundamental literacy and numeracy skills to cope with higher levels of study or are unwilling to do an intensive literacy or similar NCEA Level 2 programme if they have already gained a Level 2 qualification.

To resolve some of these issues we heard that TEOs could use more flexibility in qualification and programme development and monitoring settings. We heard that teaching and learning should be the focus, rather than assessment.

Online learning

Teaching staff spoke with us about their experiences with online learning – they felt that although online provision of teaching, learning and assessment can provide a powerful tool for teachers and learners/ākonga alike, there are some potential issues relating to over-reliance or poor design. Staff reflected that if online learning is intended to increase accessibility, the following considerations should be made:

- a digital and online focus can present a huge barrier to second chance learners, including older ākonga Māori, who are better served by face to face contact and support
- there are concerns that online-heavy provision can cause or exacerbate mental health issues as it can be isolating and unsupportive
- provision of regional learning online is problematic – as access to wi-fi, computers and other hardware and software can present serious barriers
- older, more mature learners/ākonga may be better suited for some online courses and programmes, however face to face teaching and learning is still required.

Workforce development

Teaching staff spoke with us about their teaching development needs. Some felt that tertiary teaching has become less attractive due to: loss of autonomy; compliance driven processes; risk aversion of government and of TEOs; a lack of equal employment opportunities and demanding workloads. Some staff felt disempowered by current governance configurations, with TEOs top heavy in staffing. Ultimately, teaching staff are looking for greater influence in decision-making processes, and for staff wellbeing to be a key consideration in institutional decision-making.

We heard that a major improvement for the system would be for teaching staff to receive better support throughout their career lifecycles. Emphases on administrative tasks and performance management is also seen as a major issue for teaching staff and in their view is a reflection of under-resourcing. They want more comprehensive support for teaching-focused academics and to see both research and teaching capabilities and pedagogies of new teaching staff actively enhanced and supported early in their careers, by more critically dividing their time and resource with a view to staff development at the fore. Many teaching staff also spoke with us about their concerns regarding the number of Māori staff in teaching positions throughout the system being too low, and that specifically the number of senior Māori teaching staff is limiting for developing the teaching workforce overall.

Working conditions

We heard that insecure working conditions (e.g. short term contracts) lowers teaching quality as it results in poor motivation and produces time constraints on planning. Often little opportunity is left for teaching staff to be ready for the academic year due to contracts only being confirmed at short notice or due to a drastic change in hours. Contract staff are often barred from training/professional development courses. Good professional development, inclusive of cultural competencies and diverse teaching and learning capabilities is seen by staff as key to a good tertiary education system – this needs support and improvement.

Leadership and management across tertiary education told us:

We spoke with TEOs about their perspectives on teaching and learning throughout the system. Overall, there was wide recognition that there are particular opportunities arising for TEOs to diversify their teaching and learning environments, provision and practice to meet future needs. Part of this requires ensuring equitable outcomes, wellbeing approaches and accessibility are key considerations in the ongoing design and delivery of teaching and learning. This also requires a clear focus on preparing learners/ākonga for their education, employment and personal needs throughout their lives.

We heard specific feedback about the issues TEOs encounter designing and delivering responsive and adaptable programmes, aimed at better supporting learners/ākonga with different needs. One major example discussed was the case of blended learning we heard that this provision could be improved with sufficient resourcing to cover:

- responding to changing online technology
- establishing technological infrastructure
- further evaluating and developing of the technology and facilities required
- staffing and general capability to deliver blended/adaptable teaching and learning
- training programmes to ensure learners/ākonga are well supported to engage online.

Objective 4: Future of learning and work – Learning that is relevant to the lives of New Zealanders today and throughout their lives

Learners/ākonga in tertiary education told us:

Transitions and pathways

Into tertiary education

Clear careers information about TEOs and tertiary education in general are seen as key to successful transitions. We heard that careers information at school can be insufficient and delivered on an ad hoc basis – though this varies depending on individual schools. Some learners/ākonga felt that their schools were not well connected with the tertiary system, often resulting in a lack of effective information on upcoming familiarisation programmes/events, relevant bridging and foundation programmes, and specific course and programme information. They found careers advice could often be too general, assumptive and not tailored to their specific needs and aspirations. Ākonga felt careers information could be improved for clarity through a system-wide approach. They felt careers information should include genuine portrayals of tertiary student experience, connections with current learners/ākonga in the tertiary system, and a diverse range of subjects, providers and pathways included. Families, whānau and communities need to be engaged with careers information also as they play a significant role in the choices made by learners/ākonga. Related to this, learners/ākonga reflected that while there are strong societal expectations to transition straight from high school to tertiary education, ineffective careers and pathways information made successful transitions difficult to achieve.

Out of tertiary education

Ākonga spoke with us about the good work done in the tertiary system to support learners/ākonga to transition into employment. We heard that existing work-placements provide good opportunities to contextualise their study in the world of work, and that the networks and connections they form are powerful tools for when they transition out of tertiary education. They felt transitions could be further improved with system coordination to minimise the variability of employment outcomes. Learners/ākonga told us that ensuring tertiary education is transformative is important for transitioning into work. They want their tertiary education experiences, teaching and learning, and resulting qualifications and skills to set them up well to navigate the world of work. This includes networking with prospective employers, gaining key transferable skills for the workplaces, and receiving careers advice and planning support that is informed by tertiary providers, employers and industry. Learners/ākonga told us they want employers to better engage in the retraining and upskilling of employees by understanding and connecting with the tertiary education system.

Ākonga want TEOs, employers and industry to be more involved in their transitions into employment by providing more work placements and experiences, and more provision for transferable-skill development (CV building, job interview preparation etc.) Learners/ākonga spoke with us about wanting to know that their tertiary education experiences and qualifications are fit-for-purpose in terms of their employability needs and aspirations. They felt that TEOs should continue to develop meaningful partnerships with employers and industry to leverage and broker new connections for learners/ākonga.

General staff working in tertiary education told us:

Transitions and pathways

They want to see high quality, timely careers advice and support for learners/ākonga, commencing at year 9, to remedy transition issues that arise as a result of the irrelevancy of some secondary school learnings to

tertiary education. This can be confronting for some learners/ākonga and they need the support to navigate this aspect. For second-chance learning, they want to see greater recognition of prior relevant work, caring and volunteering experience to ease the burden of re-engaging in education generally, and transitioning into tertiary education more specifically. In general they want to see better coordination and monitoring in relation to TEOs' performance in the transitions space to reduce inconsistencies across the system, and ensure better transition outcomes for learners/ākonga.

On transitioning out of tertiary education, general staff felt that TEOs need a stronger focus on enabling learners/ākonga to transition directly into employment, with appropriate support systems in place to facilitate this. This will need to be reinforced through TEOs working more collaboratively, and in support of employers.

Teaching staff working in tertiary education told us:

Teaching staff advocated for the adoption of a broader view of vocational education, and examples discussed focused on the vocational aspect of some postgraduate upskilling and training in subject areas such as medical and health sciences. They supported both micro credentials and regionally specific provision as good mechanisms to build flexibility and responsiveness in the tertiary education system. Some teaching staff also had significant concerns regarding the decline in delivery of different disciplines, such as in Humanities subjects.

Leadership and management across tertiary education told us:

We heard that an increasingly important aspect of tertiary education is ensuring that learners/ākonga are work-ready and well prepared to succeed in the changing world of work. It is seen as beneficial for learners/ākonga to introduce them to the world of work and the world of study while they are in a TEO. From some TEOs we heard that to enable this, the divide between tertiary education and 'industry and employment' needs to be eroded. Government support to break down this divide is important for TEOs, this includes support with rolling out work-integrated learning and placements.

We heard that skills development through tertiary education is key for those in employment as well as those outside of traditional employment. We also heard it is important that the employment focus of tertiary education for learners/ākonga needs to be supported by strong connections with whānau, employers, industry and TEOs. We heard that needs-analysis is required to allow for regional and localised provision and that it is important we understand what skills are needed and what skills are being trained. This allows for provision of outcomes, pathways into jobs and onto further career progression.

Objective 5: World class inclusive public education – New Zealand education is trusted and sustainable

Learners/ākonga in tertiary education told us:

Postgraduate and research learners/ākonga felt that the research output of New Zealand needs to be improved, and that they are eager to play a part in this. They felt tertiary education research is currently overly predicated on technical theses and publishing research papers. They would like to see improvements and changes in research programmes to be driven by industry links, which would have the added benefit of connecting and networking learners/ākonga with employability outcomes and opportunities. Learners/ākonga suggested that strengthening the research space would help fill the current gap in New Zealand industry indicated by brain drain in high tech industries, and improve the uptake of postgraduate research, with a long-term view for developing the research workforce. Ākonga Māori expect their culture and values to be visibly and seamlessly integrated throughout the tertiary system, including through research pathways and outputs.

Teaching staff working in tertiary education told us:

Research

In terms of research, teaching staff were largely concerned with the suitability of the Performance Based Research Fund (PBRF). They considered that the PBRF is gamed and creates unnecessary and unacceptable pressure on individuals. They posited that in reality our research universities are competing internationally rather than domestically, amongst each other. To this end, some suggestions were made that we establish a reference group at each university to judge that university's standing on the global stage, rather than using the PBRF as the reference point. This was seen as a way to harness New Zealand's 'can do' attitude and reputation, supporting innovation to be research-based and well evaluated. We also heard that it is important that multiple views, activities and approaches to research are better supported in the current research system. Māori, Pacific and indigenous research methodologies and activities are seen as areas of research needing the most immediate support, financially and more broadly.

Funding

Teaching staff felt that funding is a major design issue of the tertiary education system. They noted thresholds to be met by TEOs can be difficult to manage, and that a lot of funding is tied up in immovable overheads and infrastructure (e.g. buildings and student-centric spaces such as student hubs). There was some suggestion that contestable funds for responsive projects could mediate this. They are keen to see a move away from the current competitive, volume-based model, in their view this model drives key problems. These include profit and cost management as primary focuses; inequitable access – as funding does not meet the cost to supplement this; and staff bearing the brunt of cost saving measures as evidenced by high student to teacher ratios, reduced professional development, and inadequate student services.

Leadership and management across tertiary education told us:

The tertiary education system

TEO leadership told us that it is important for innovation and collaboration across the system of providers and organisations to be well resourced through investment by government. We also heard that investment in tertiary education needs to be geared towards employment and social outcomes, and not simply inputs and outputs such as participation and completion rates – this will take the focus from chasing resources to

chasing outcomes.

We heard that there are points of tension between globally-focussed education provision, and local accountabilities and community responsibilities. We heard that TEOs could be more focussed on their role as public institutions by demonstrating the wider role high-quality, world-leading institutions can and must play in society. Some TEO leadership teams felt that the public provision of tertiary funding should mean moving away from a competitive funding model.

TEOs told us they find compliance settings across the tertiary system hamper their flexibility and agility. They want to see an innovation culture within the system to be incentivised and supported instead. In particular, feedback told us that the ITP leadership felt their sector is permeated by low trust, but are looking for a high-trust model to foster innovation instead.

From the perspective of the TEOs we spoke with, parity of esteem across the various education provision types needs to be achieved. The disparities in esteem are reinforced by funding rates that provide higher subsidies according to the New Zealand Qualifications Framework (NZQF). We heard that effective system stewardship requires joined up government agencies and that this will progress the view of tertiary education as an investment in society and not simply in the economy.

We heard that flexible and agile responses of TEOs can be constrained by the level of risk, and how difficult risk can be to manage. For our system to be agile and flexible, those we spoke with felt that current funding systems work detrimentally as a one-size fits all model – funding settings that have consideration for broader learners/ākonga needs are necessary. Some specific examples were suggested such as providing for a longer completion time for those with learning difficulties or qualification settings which restrict doing another course at the same level as you have achieved a qualification especially in foundation courses.

We heard that from the perspectives of TEO leadership, diversity of education provision will support the current and ongoing diversification of the economy. In this way, they view tertiary education as a critical aspect of economic wellbeing in New Zealand.

The Tertiary Education Strategy as a tool and resource for the system

It was suggested that the functionality of the TES could be increased by including sub-sector specific goals and measures. We heard that the TES may operate more effectively if it provided more direction on how TEOs should strategise and respond, therefore encouraging more planning. We also heard that this can be difficult to achieve, that this level of complexity may be difficult to monitor and evaluate. TEOs spoke with us about the need for other Ministry of Education strategy work to align with the TES, so that the whole education system is well aligned and cohesively supported.

Tertiary education and Māori

A strong message we received from those we engaged was that tertiary education plays an important role in ensuring the survival and wellbeing of Māori as a people. We heard that Wānanga play a major part in this, but that the whole system has a shared responsibility for this. We also heard that Wānanga are relied upon to look after all things Māori, but this ignores the other good work done by other TEOs. Particular examples given included the broad and increasing provision of te reo Māori throughout the tertiary system.

We heard that an all-of-system approach is needed to find and create opportunities to 'activate workable partnerships' throughout tertiary education. A relationship approach needs to be emphasised which needs to include:

- consideration of more than just ākonga Māori, but must look for different practices and outcomes which centre on Māori objectives, aspirations and priorities
- a focus on Te Tiriti o Waitangi with clear goals and accountability measures
- Māori and the Crown working together to build biculturalism as a system, by creating mechanisms for workable partnerships..

We received feedback about the general capacity and capability of the tertiary system to support Māori to succeed as Māori, we heard that te reo Māori provision and capability must be improved and that this necessitates more Māori staff working throughout the system. We heard from some TEO leadership that te reo Māori programmes that are readily available, accessible, affordable, equitable and lifelong, need to be

offered across the tertiary system. We heard that Māori staff are needed to support ākonga Māori, and acknowledgement of this need is key.

International education

TEOs told us that improving international education in New Zealand requires cross-Government work, including with Immigration NZ. They also spoke to us about the importance of international education for their organisations, in terms of the education they provide, their reputations and their interface with the global education and research communities.

Research and innovation

We heard that research-focused TEOs continue to prioritise research excellence, we were told that diversity of research and innovation is increasingly important, and that specifically a diverse range of research and research activity must be supported including rangahau and indigenous research methodologies.

Funding

Many TEO leadership and governance teams felt that tagged funding is an important issue that needs to be well examined – in some instances we heard that tagged goals need tagged funding. There was also some feedback that without well supported mechanisms and accountabilities, tagged funding can be difficult for TEOs to manage.

We had a lot of feedback from TEO leadership about current funding and funding settings in the tertiary system. Some examples of where funding should be increased or more accessible were shared throughout our engagement. We also heard examples of funding issues that currently exist:

- equity funding settings are seen as currently insufficient for achieving equitable outcomes for learners/ākonga
- work-based teaching and learning are seen as important for both staff and learners/ākonga, however current resourcing does not support this well enough
- volume-based funding negatively affects smaller TEOs disproportionately as they are unable to operate the same economies of scale as larger TEOs
- volume-based funding negatively impacts high priority, small scale courses and delivery environments e.g. those with health and safety risks.
- flexibility in funding is required to better facilitate flexible study options, this is an area needing improvement.

Next steps

We received a lot of feedback from learners/ākonga, staff and other important stakeholders in our tertiary education system and network. This report provides only a summary of the wealth of information and advice we received during our pre-draft engagement.

The next steps include releasing a draft Tertiary Education Strategy for public consultation. This draft TES will include proposed priorities and actions. We will engage with the groups we have already spoken with as well as stakeholders, partners, employers and communities more generally throughout New Zealand about these priorities and actions. We will continue to reflect the feedback we receive and stories we are told in the development of the TES.



We **shape** an **education** system that delivers
equitable and **excellent outcomes**

He mea **tārai** e mātou te **mātauranga**
kia **rangatira** ai, kia **mana taurite** ai ōna **huanga**