



New models of tertiary education

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What are the benefits and disadvantages, in terms of students' learning outcomes, of bundling together research and teaching at universities in New Zealand?

On the whole, there are clearly more advantages than disadvantages.

Hearing directly from someone who is carving out new insights from the frontiers of knowledge, sharing their insights, knowledge and passion is wonderfully inspirational for students at all levels and motivates them to learn and achieve substantially more.

The discovery of new knowledge and the excitement and aspiration that creates gives inspirational content to teaching. Research is the search for new findings and knowledge, the expression of curiosity. What a perfect match with teaching!

Although it is reasonable to have some undergraduate teaching done by skilled communicators who are substantially less effective as researchers, nevertheless it is vital that students at all levels are directly exposed to people who are at the top of their field in terms of research and analysis.

It is important that all academic staff undertake research but the nature and level of their teaching should suit their capabilities.

We therefore disagree with the final Recommendation R12.17 that Government should relax its statutory requirements for research-led teaching of degrees. Allowing a full separation between teaching and research would drastically harm both teaching and the wider learnings from the tertiary education experience.

Q12

What value is attached to excellence in teaching compared to excellence in research when universities recruit or promote staff?

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In our view they ought to be given equal value and priority. Some of the largely anecdotal material in the Issues paper which claims that teaching is grossly undervalued compared to research is a combination of misleading colourful comments and generally rare examples.

Q43

What parts of the tertiary education system are challenged by on-going technological change? What parts can exploit the opportunities created?

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A higher proportion of students who are Maori, Pasifika, from lower income families or who are otherwise disadvantaged are particularly dependent on establishing positive personal peer and student-lecturer relationships in order to succeed academically or in other important aspects of their personal development. Technological change which reduced these essential face-to-face interactions, particularly any changes introduced principally to reduce costs, would mean that many otherwise capable students would fail to learn as much or to complete their courses, and that inequality and alienation in New Zealand society would increase.

Most parts of tertiary education can and should exploit technology, digital learning and technological change more but in order to enhance human learning interactions rather than to replace them.

The experience with international MOOC completion rates of 2-10% is evidence that courses delivered principally on line will not advance New Zealand graduate learning, and will positively substantially reduce completion rates. Evidence is also available on the low completion rates in large countries like the US in those institutions where digital learning is the main form of teaching.

Most students need a campus and personal support- a place to study and learn apart from other responsibilities and distractions-for instance as found in overcrowded households. It also enables synergistic interactions with the best minds from diverse backgrounds, disciplines and belief systems.

There is no evidence to suggest that at any level of learning (early childhood, primary, secondary or tertiary) technology can replace the need for quality teaching. Technology used well should enhance learning but you still need quality teachers, a close and safe environment for testing ideas and for debate. This is not found on line where you commit your early thoughts in writing and potentially permanently versus testing an idea in a safe environment under the guidance of a teacher. It is an optimum environment for learning. Much thought goes into a campus with different styles of learning spaces for group work, silent work, laboratories, green open spaces, places to meet for discussion over food, recreation facilities, support groups and networks and clubs. All this as against sitting in your bedroom looking at a screen. This is not great for your wellbeing let alone your learning.

We are therefore concerned that sections of the report and findings and 11.2 and 11.4 that imply that teaching that was entirely or predominantly digital would provide the same quality of

learning. On campus education must be the predominant component to be effective, particularly at degree level.

We are strongly opposed to Finding F12.11 about the establishment of a Student Education Account (SEA) as making up a significant component of tertiary education funding. Such a system would be devastating for planning and continuity of teaching, research and staffing at tertiary education providers and would be almost equally harmful for Government and employers in term of labour force, economic and social planning and provision. The idea that individual students, particularly school leavers, are better equipped to envisage the long-term future of learning, employment and society than are government, employers, and tertiary institutions is very unconvincing.

We are opposed to recommendation R12.29 that Student Loan Scheme borrowers should be charged interest. The report is rightly critical of disadvantage facing students who are Maori, Pasifika or from low income family backgrounds but this proposal would discourage many people from such backgrounds to commence tertiary studies and prevent others from completing their courses.

