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(Kay, 2015).

Quality Public Education Coalition (QPEC)  
**Enhancing Tertiary Education**  
 Submission to Productivity Commission

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**Enhancing Tertiary Education: Principles**

We stand for the following principles

- to sustain and enhance liberal, humanist tertiary education, building on concepts of scholarship, open inquiry, construction of knowledge
- to bridge vocational and liberal tertiary education
- to reject neoliberal transformation of the tertiary education sector
  - to reject 'vocationising' of tertiary education, especially moves to serve market-driven employer and employment goals
- to reject reductionist and restrictive education for non-degree learners
  - to acknowledge judicious use of online learning as support for tertiary education
  - to reject extensively converting the interaction of instructors and students into online delivery
  - to support tertiary education that addresses social, economic, ethical and environmental issues
  - to support tertiary education expressing an active awareness of inclusivity, human rights and social justice

## Abstract

We see an overwhelming case to maintain and enhance the liberal, humanist tertiary education institution.

We also see great potential benefit to vocational preparation from bringing together both vocational and liberal degree education.

We consider that the liberal, humanist model is severely threatened and already extensively damaged by pervasive neoliberal, market-driven developments. We therefore reject the sweeping reorienting of higher education to market-driven employment goals, the 'vocationalising' of liberal education.

We also reject reductionist and restrictive education for non-degree learners, oriented to industrial productivity, without regard for social or environmental benefit. We argue for a system that enables students to move freely between vocational and university education.

We recognise current online systems and platforms as valuable resources for teaching and learning. But we see grave dangers in extensively converting the interaction of instructors and students into online delivery. The thrust of Productivity Commission discourse would suggest just such an outcome, in its insistence on *new models, innovation* and use of *technology*.

We argue that all tertiary education students should have access to education that addresses social, economic, ethical and environmental issues.

## Consideration

*The greatest productive value that the tertiary education sector can offer to the nation and the world is a robust, well resourced and unfettered academic, professional and vocational existence. At its best, the tertiary education sector (tes) is a dynamic entity of inquiry and research activity, engaged in enlightened teaching and learning, inevitably making a profound and beneficial impact on society. In the following sections we will examine what is needed to achieve that best for academic, professional and vocational education areas.*

## **What are we doing with Tertiary Education?**

The Productivity Commission has invited responses from the New Zealand public with regard to 78 questions it has posed around how tertiary education should be adjusted in order to produce a more economically productive workforce. To systematically address these questions in detail would amount to tinkering with tertiary education in ways that may or may not produce an economically productive workforce, but entirely miss the point of what is needed for a productive society.

Nevertheless, in focusing on what we consider to be essential issues, we refer to the Commission's questions where relevant, to show the connection to some of the Commission's concerns.

There is a lot more at stake in this country and in the world today than finding ways for education to contribute to national economic advantage, as is referred to in the Education Act (tertiary education to address economic, social and environmental goals). Tertiary education cannot, then, be reviewed without taking into account the wider social and economic issues confronting New Zealand and the world. These issues challenge us to consider who we are as individuals and as a society. They challenge us to imagine an education that maintains, advances and protects social justice, inclusivity and equality. And they challenge us to educate for a better environment. We can only meet these challenges by questioning the "subordination of social policy...to the discursively constructed needs of the economy" (Jessop, 2002:152).

The overriding issue of today is climate change. We live with the threat of sustainability of the planet, yet our education policy in tertiary education is focused on the narrow parameters of national economic advantage and employability for jobs that are not currently available and others that will not exist in the future. This policy severely disadvantages young people.

Students need to be able to work with new information and solve previously unimagined problems such as fossil fuel extraction and how to accelerate the shift to renewable energy sources. To do this, we need a thinking population able to combine knowledge of science, society and ethics, and willing to explore fairly distributed and socially just solutions.

A significant urgent issue is wealth distribution and income. We know that since the global financial crisis of 2008, higher learning credentials do not guarantee employment (Brown and Lauder, 2013), so the mantra that education brings financial security ("learning is earning") is false. Instead, wages have been driven down or stagnated for university and non-university graduates alike, all of whom are vulnerable to unemployment, underemployment and casualisation.

The economy is such that more and more of us live with, or in fear of unemployment, homelessness and destitution. Yet university and vocational students alike can be channelled through courses that they are told will provide them with economic security.

Standing (2011) argues that the increasing levels of economic and social instability, or precariousness, experienced by most members of society in the neoliberal post-Keynesian welfare state, mean that “progressive struggle will take place around unequal access to and control of five primary assets” (p. 170). He summarises these assets as: economic security, time, quality space, knowledge and financial capital” (p. 171).

A return to liberal education values is needed, where system critique, meaningful innovation and creativity can unravel the economic fantasy, and imagine and develop life-sustaining and enhancing possibilities for all people in our society.

Technological advances also threaten an equitable distribution of wealth and income, enabling companies to lay off thousands of workers in New Zealand. A range of occupations is disappearing as technology replaces human beings in a number of sectors and industries such as agriculture, manufacturing and services (Rifkin, 1995). Employers are increasingly retaining and rewarding only those individuals who possess knowledge, skills and dispositions that cannot easily be replicated by technology (Brown and Lauder, 2013).

These issues demonstrate that we need a differently educated population for the challenges ahead of us today and in the future. We will not survive, let alone prosper, if we do not expand opportunities for a wider number of students, and provide them all with the potential to think socially, ethically and scientifically. Our society needs a more expansive, liberal education than is offered through a narrow, economic lens.

We therefore advocate sustaining and enhancing an enlightened, vibrant and strongly inquiring tertiary education sector that prizes the construction of knowledge, *free from external pressures to conform to socio-economic ideologies designed to serve forces and entities beyond the tertiary sector.*

### **Present-day neoliberal trends**

By contrast with the above formulation, the commercialisation of education contributes to increasing pressure to engage in instrumental learning, highly targeted and strictly functional. The construction of knowledge is constrained by the Government agenda, as for instance in the *Tertiary Education Strategy*, and a tendency to pre-determined knowledge.

Rather than creating critical thinkers, present-day tertiary education is swinging towards creating compliance. In a world of pragmatism, critical thinking is downgraded to comprehension and uncritical thinking is rewarded.

Instead of social capital, current education tends towards so-called *human capital*, with a limited and individual focus. Human capital theory links tertiary education directly to increased productivity (for the economy) and higher wages (for individuals). There are many weighty criticisms of this theory, suggesting that it should be approached very critically. In particular, it is noteworthy that 50% of American graduates are underemployed. Further, that apart from people in the top decile, the wages of educated males in the USA have not risen in the past thirty years (Lauder and Brown, in press). In New Zealand, data on the income levels of those with various graduate qualifications need to be read with caution: the level of underemployment is not always known.

In an earlier publication, Brown and Lauder (2013) argued that at least since the 2008 Global Financial Crisis, the basic premise of Human Capital Theory, “that learning equals earning” (p. 22), is simply false. First, higher education credentials do not now guarantee employment in middle class occupations because global capital can employ equally well-qualified labour for much lower costs in developing economies.

Second, technological advances and computerization have led to the standardization and automation of much that would formerly be considered knowledge work. This increases the bargaining power of capital, and decreases that of labour.

Third, business has learned how to differentiate knowledge work and “stratify” knowledge workers to the competitive advantage of their enterprise. As a result, they invest heavily in retaining and rewarding only those individuals who possess knowledge, skills and dispositions that cannot easily be replicated. “This is driven by an attempt to reduce the cost of knowledge work” (pp. 20 & 21).

There have been many attempts to revise Human Capital Theory and “prop it up” against the many empirical problems it has faced. Thus, for example, Levy and Murnane (2013) have analysed the tasks that computers will be able to do in the foreseeable future and those that they will not. They divide the current demand for tasks into five groups: (1) working with new information (2) solving unstructured problems (3) routine manual tasks (4) non routine manual tasks (5) Routine cognitive tasks. Of these, they note that the first two have been rising in demand between 1960 and 2009, while the latter three are experiencing declining demand.

It is the first two sets of tasks that computers cannot do. On this basis they argue that what is required is the education for *the foundational skills* related to tasks (1) and (2) since these are in demand. Their analysis is not without problems but if the analysis

is even moderately correct it will have profound significance for the tertiary education in the future.

Even more interesting is the analysis of Autor. Although he is determined to protect human capital theory from its critics, he recognises that for the theory “the stakes are high.” He acknowledges that: *“If machines were in fact to make human labor superfluous, we would have vast aggregate wealth but a serious challenge in determining who owns it and how to share it...Are we actually on the verge of throwing off the yoke of scarcity so that our primary economic challenge soon becomes one of distribution?”* (p.28) (our emphasis). Although Autor would say no to the question, it should be seen as an open issue. It may be that tinkering with tertiary education may entirely miss the point of what is needed for a “productive society.”

To summarise our position on Human Capital Theory: faced with what Brown and Lauder (2013) call the “global jobs auction”, governments have two basic policy responses. One is “to auction the future of work to the lowest bidder” (p. 25). The other is to abandon human capital-driven policies in favour of education that “builds the capacity for individual growth, experimentation, teamwork, divergent thinking and problem solving.” (p. 23).

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### **The Idea of a University Education**

The *tes* encompasses education in several senses. One is the teaching of students, including supervision of post-graduate studies. Another is the continuing and evolving intellectual growth of scholars and professionals in tertiary institutions, in a process of constantly becoming. This evolving community of scholars and professionals is an essential pre-requisite to creating a vibrant sector that enriches and sustains a country. That in itself recognises a further public education role through tertiary staff and institutions making research and scholarship publicly available and accessible, as well as contributing to public debate and discussion in mass media, open meetings, social events and processes.

Over 150 years ago, John Henry Newman recognised the role of tertiary education in *The idea of a university*. His concept of knowledge as an end “to pursue for its own sake” (p. 103) is of course, open to misinterpretation. We take it that it is not a move to create irrelevant ivory towers, but a declaration to promote fundamental inquiry into knowledge. Knowledge is valuable, says Newman, “for what its very presence in us does for us after the manner of a habit” (p. 104). It is

in this spirit that scholars such as Albert Einstein, Ernest Rutherford, Northrop Frye and Bertrand Russell have contended with ideas that nurture scholarship and ultimately contribute to practical existence.

NZ has numbers of such scholars, including J.C. Beaglehole, Paul Callaghan, Jane Kelsey, Jim Salinger, Marilyn Waring and Maurice Wilkins. Some have been notable for their contribution to interpretation of information, such as Lord Cooke, the legal scholar. And others have shown the practical importance of science and learning, as has Mike Joy from Massey, investigating water quality and pollution in NZ.

Famous names aside, the point is to recognise the vital importance of a strong and rich education sector that enables its participants, staff, students and researchers, to engage dynamically in the construction of knowledge.

Focusing on the NZ university scene, Malcolm and Tarling (2007), recognise Newman's seminal role in describing the concept of the university. Helpfully, they also acknowledge the ancient origins of universities, such as the University of Bologna. At its 900<sup>th</sup> anniversary event in 1988, they report, rectors and vice-chancellors formulated four fundamental principles supporting "the vocation of the university," viz., universities as autonomous institutions; linking of teaching and research; academic freedom; and promotion of the European humanist tradition (p. 18).

Malcolm and Tarling further recall a 1995 UNESCO document on "the proactive university," which amongst other features encompasses a community fully engaged in the search, creation and dissemination of knowledge," in the "pursuit of truth, defence and promotion of human rights, democracy, social justice and tolerance" (p. 22). Part of the social role of higher education, in this formulation then, is the betterment of society.

Elaborating on this enlightened concept of tertiary education, Malcolm and Tarling note Les Bollinger, President of Columbia University, who advocates the need to hold in mind "multiple angles of seeing things" to allow for an "extreme openness of intellect" (p. 23).

Contrasting sharply with the progressive and beneficial nature of the above notion of tertiary education, Malcolm and Tarling necessarily move on to the ideological, administrative and management changes that have altered NZ universities in the last 25 years. In brief, they describe a system re-created within a neoliberal mindset (see Harvey, 2005; Nobbs, 2014). Around the world, such restructuring has followed a familiar pattern of corporatising the tertiary sector, managerialism, high levels of accountability, increasing pressure to prepare work-ready

graduates, contractualism, secretive and autocratic decision-making and appointments, undermining of collegial committee processes.

Other witnesses to the above process include Davies (2005) (Australia); Gillies (2011) (UK); Cucchiara, Gold, & Simon (2011), Sleeter (2009) (USA); Grey (2013) (NZ). In a range of applications, one notes Moriarty (2009) and Sandlin and Clark (2009) on literacy; St Clair and Belzer (2007) on education research and management; Giroux (2012) on the interaction of university education and public intellectuals; and in a poignant focus, Rinne and Jauhiainen (2010) of Finland on "the ruins of the university." In NZ, Zepke (2012), in the spirit of Davies' (2005) analysis of Australian tertiary education, asks "What of the future for academic freedom in higher education in Aotearoa New Zealand?"

A detailed critique of neoliberal effects in education is found in Sears' (2003) account of developments in Canada. Sears contrasts the present-day focus on knowledge as a commodity, on one hand, with liberal education aimed at cultivating citizens, on the other (p. 215). Sears, that is, allows a higher purpose to knowledge than subjecting it to a market orientation (p. 207). But current marketised education, Sears argues, involves stringent discipline through "management by stress" (p. 72). "The endless drive for intensification of work," he suggests, "requires new forms of motivation to push people to try to meet ever-rising standards of productivity" (p. 71).

### **The Potential for Vocational Education**

It is important to recognise that while a "liberal" and "vocational" education can be conceptually distinguished, in practice they converge and overlap: a good liberal education is not divorced from the world of work, and a good vocational education builds on social advancement as well as industrial productivity.

Therefore, good vocational studies should be liberal, freeing people from blind conformity and rigid habits and releasing people to be agents of their own lives. Even in purely economic terms, Hanushek et al. (2011) point out that the skills generated by a narrow vocational education may become obsolete at a faster rate. They argue that vocational ("skill-based") as opposed to general (which they call "concept-based") education leads to slower adoption of new technologies.

As the educational philosopher, John Dewey noted, a person's "vocation" is not limited to her paid or unpaid employment ("job") but extends to all those aspects of a person's life in which she carries out tasks and performs roles: as parent, spouse, friend, community member, churchgoer, club member, community member, rate payer, citizen and member of the "global village." Vocational studies, therefore, should include not only the pursuit of industry specific knowledge, but also provide opportunities for learners to reflect on how to make the world a better place and debate the meaning of human improvement.



All qualifications, degree or non-degree, should involve a framework for analysing society and ethics, literacy, critical thought and science and technology. Indeed, when only around 25% of New Zealand students achieve a university degree, it makes sense from the point of view of the advancement of an ethical society, to provide a much broader curriculum to non-degree learners.

We can see that in New Zealand, vocational education is in dire need of an overhaul, when we look at other countries' achievement rates for apprentices. Apprenticeship completion and retention rates in New Zealand compare very badly to a number of OECD countries (OECD 2014). For example, Germany, Switzerland and Sweden enjoy apprenticeship completion rates above 80%, while New Zealand completion rates are around 50%.

There are a number of differences between New Zealand and these countries, in the tertiary education system as a whole, and (possibly as a consequence) in attitudes of society to academic and vocational education.

In the final section of this document, the discussion poses issues that relate to some of the questions raised by the Productivity Commission. In this section, we consider the Dual System in Switzerland, Austria and particularly Germany, with reference to Questions 21, 30 and 52.

New Zealand needs to review the low status of vocational education in the country, the reasons for this, and implications for quality teaching and learning.

*We envisage a powerful model of inclusive tertiary education, offering real advantages to knowledge and society, by bringing together academic and non-academic education in a process of interaction, sharing and exchange.*

## **Issues raised in the Productivity Commission's questions**

### **Academic endeavour** (cf Q 3-6, 11, 12, 26, 30)

The academic function of tertiary education involves first of all engaging in scholarship, often interdisciplinary, ranging from strictly focused to wide-ranging and comprehensive. A major characteristic is excellence in the learning concerned.

Scholarship demands the construction and co-construction of knowledge, through a process of critical inquiry, sometimes referred to as "reflective skepticism" (McPeck, 1990, p. 42). "It is active inquiry," says Cornbleth (1985), "rather than passive acceptance of tradition, authority, or 'common sense'" (p. 13). It involves *questioning the ideas we encounter*, she says. Likewise, "critical thinkers do not accept facts at face value," say Siegal and Carey (1989); "instead, they challenge the status of facts as

given" (p. 16). Critical thinkers, the authors add, want to examine the basis of facts or decisions.

Hence, the academic process involves forming critical, inventive and creative thinkers, who then contribute to *social capital*. Such a concept raises the social role of tertiary education, and in particular, the importance of acting as "critic and conscience" of society, enshrined in the Education Act.

### **International Vocational Education** (relating to Q 21, 30 & 52)

In countries where the qualification rate for non-degree students is much higher than in New Zealand, an entirely different approach to degree and non-degree education is taking place. Known as the Dual System, it begins with the valuing of vocational learning and apprenticeship, in countries like Germany, Austria, Switzerland (and to a lesser extent, the UK). In these countries, a wide range of occupations offer apprenticeships, with an increasing range of 'apprenticeable' occupations. These occupations cover not only trades (as in NZ), but also crafts and professional groups.

The system breaks down issues of status (even stigma) in tertiary education because 'apprenticeship' can include a wide range of occupations (e.g. from baker to banker). It also widens the pathways within apprenticeship. And it enables apprentices to more easily transition from a trade qualification to a degree, for example, in engineering or management. In some instances, an apprenticeship can be credited towards a higher education qualification (Hippach-Schneider et al., 2007) Vocational training is dedicated to achieving certain broad objectives: imparting the skills necessary for entering the labour market, laying the foundation for further education, and teaching the social and cultural skills that are required to participate in society (cf. Hövels, Roelofs, 2007).

Because of this higher level of acceptance of vocational education, a wider range of young people enter apprenticeships, and more of these young people also aspire to, and have the opportunity to continue from a vocational qualification to a degree qualification. Currently Germany is trying to increase permeability between vocational and academic learning, without academizing vocational education, by combining apprenticeship and a bachelor's degree within higher education (International Labour Office, 2013).

### **Teaching and Learning** (relating to Q 14, 15, 32 & 34)

#### *Education for social change*

We live with the threat of sustainability of the planet, yet our education policy in tertiary education is focused on the narrow parameters of national economic advantage and

employability for jobs that are not currently available and others that will not exist in the future. This policy severely disadvantages young people.

The economy is such that more and more of us live with, or in fear of unemployment, homelessness and destitution. Yet university and vocational students alike are channelled through courses that they are told will provide them with economic security.

Standing (2011) argues that the increasing levels of economic and social instability, or precariousness, experienced by most members of society in the neoliberal post-Keynesian welfare state mean that “progressive struggle will take place around unequal access to and control of five primary assets” (p. 170). He summarises these assets as: economic security, time, quality space, knowledge and financial capital” (p. 171).

A return to liberal education values is needed, where system critique, meaningful innovation and creativity can unravel the economic fantasy, and imagine and develop life-sustaining and enhancing possibilities for all people in our society.

#### *Respect in education*

We need to respect and harness the intelligence of all tertiary students, including and going beyond those undertaking degree-level education.

Learning should be fit for purpose but also wider than its immediate purpose in both university and vocational education.

To achieve this we need to trust in our students’ and teachers’ abilities, increasing funding, reducing compliance, and expanding the learning on offer for both groups.

#### *Trusting teachers*

We need to reward our tertiary teachers when they challenge ideas (whether they are scientific, philosophical, or practical), to teach outside of the unit standard, as in doing so, they provide a positive education model to their students. We need to support our teachers to educate. But the meaning of "professional" in teaching has shifted, because of the commodification of education and the increased demands for compliance in order to secure and maintain funding. Currently, we are no longer talking about the teacher as an educational activist, independent thinker and challenger of ideas, committed to the powerful education of his/her students. Instead we see a good employee, committed to the institution and to maintaining a job (such are the pressures on teachers today), ensuring all teaching requirements are met and checked off.

The professional teacher is now an administrator of education. Such teaching under-educates, but the world can't afford undereducated people unable to effect a positive change in society.

Even employers are calling for more: workers who possess knowledge, skills and dispositions that cannot easily be replicated by technology. They recognise that they need people who know how to work with new information and solve unstructured problems, rather than perform routine manual and cognitive tasks (which can be performed by a computer).

### *Relationship in learning*

Trust between lecturer and learner is a vital part of learning. To build that trust, instructors and students need to be able to meet with each other, face-to-face, on a regular basis. Jane Bluestein (2001) describes an emotionally safe environment for learning as one in which students can experience a sense of belonging, of being welcomed and valued, where they are treated with respect, dignity and acceptance; where they can make choices that influence their own learning, control various factors in the process of learning; and where they can express their feelings and opinions without fear of recrimination.

In a similar vein, Michael Eraut asserts that “relationships play a critical role in workplace learning, and . . . the emotional dimension of teachers work is much more significant than normally recognized” (2004, p. 255). In work that draws on a psychological view of learning, Knud Illeris (2002) discusses his three-dimensional model of learning, comprising the cognitive (rational, knowledge and skills focused), the social, and the emotional. He notes how cognitive, skills-focused learning has gained ascendancy in the world of work, at the expense of the other dimensions.

### *Short cuts and efficiencies*

On-line learning, introduced in the 1990s, has become a fashionable innovation in teaching. One of the main reasons for its popularity is its cost effectiveness: one teacher manages a greater number of students than would be possible in a classroom.

While a number of reports have claimed transformative effects of on-line learning, citing cost effectiveness and efficiency (see for instance, Parker and Gemino, 2001; Terry, 2001), other reports have revealed flaws. One such refers to high enrolments, lower take-up, and low levels of completion (Hill, 2013). Another cites the loss of a social experience of a learning environment or ‘place’ (Gordon et al, 2014), through partial or complete loss of face-to-face teaching.

In a 2014 summary report investigating Massive Open On-line Courses (MOOCs), Gordon et al found that “the costs of MOOCs tended to be understated because they are generally made by enthusiastic staff on a one-off basis [and that] when the costs began to be calculated properly as part of a business plan, they were much greater than expected, due to both technological and pedagogical issues” (unpaginated). Staff workloads increase and are often uncounted.

## **Institutional existence (Q 1)**

### *Creating potential for a strong tertiary sector*

In a healthy *tes*, governments put their trust in the tertiary institutions, in several ways. One is providing secure and adequate funding, for the institutions to function without needing to charge students fees. Another is by requiring and enabling the tertiary institutions to chart their own course, according to the demands of scholarship, without the intervention of government direction or their proxies such as the TEC. Such a situation is a recognition that tertiary education is an investment in the future of the country, best guided by the institutions that are actively engaged in the construction of knowledge.

In healthy tertiary institutions, there are internal cultures of collegiality and trust, demonstrating a sharing of resources, specialisation and knowledge. Institutional practices and structures exhibit recourse to peers, colleagues and professional organisations, including in decision-making and committees. Such institutions make long-term academic staff appointments, honouring tenure, thereby maintaining and strengthening institutional knowledge and continuity, and creating stable conditions for the growth of scholarship.

Overall, the above features contribute to constructing, evolving and sustaining enlightened and vibrant tertiary institutions.

### *Undermining the tertiary sector*

Combating the conditions outlined immediately above are growing practices that undermine the integrity of the tertiary sector. Governments have consistently underfunded tertiary institutions, thereby distorting the viability of the sector and requiring institutions to charge crippling fees of domestic students and outrageously exorbitant fees of internationals. Underfunding does more than make life hard for the institutions to survive. It exerts a blatant control from the centre over the institution.

There are moves to reduce campuses, for example by selling tertiary land. At the same time, managements are moving to shrink permanent "full-time" staff, replacing long-time lecturers with casualised appointments, and contracting out various kinds of tertiary structures, such as student services, to outside companies. The rationale for these moves is that they save costs and adjust the traditional campus and institution to growing numbers of part-time (off-campus) students. Hand in hand with this thinking is the belief that teaching can be increasingly delivered by online platforms. Hence there is constant talk and practice of change to teaching models, which results in extra load on instructors, because there are fewer people to share

the necessary work and because online teaching carries massive demands on staff to interact individually with students.

Meanwhile, there is pressure on tertiary institutions to teach to employment, which really means to employability, since there is no guarantee of employment after completing programmes of study.

Within institutions, there is growing insistence on compliance to institutional authority structures, with the effect that staff are increasingly operating in a climate of fear. In other words, tertiary institutions are now low trust workplaces. Part of the low trust functions through constant assessment of staff performance, resulting in rating staff, units and institutions in various ways, both internally and externally. Hanging over staff lives is the PBRF, which is often used in duplicitous ways to exert pressure on lecturers.

Many of the above features are glaringly evident in Unitec, though other tertiary institutions around NZ are heavily engaged in the same process. The outcome is that the institutions jettison highly qualified and experienced staff, painstakingly nurtured scholarship, rich and productive connections with industry and professions, committed and knowledgeable lecturers, extensive institutional knowledge and much of the potential for a stable and enlightened future existence. It doesn't just undermine individuals and specific institutions. It puts at risk the tertiary sector, along with its contribution to the nation and the world.

### **Productivity Assumptions**

Certain themes resonate in the main document and the 78 Questions of the Commission, with particular force in the light of the section immediately above.

One set of terms consists of *new models, innovation, technology*. Given the text of the Commission documents and the present-day context of market-driven forces in tertiary education, they would seem to suggest a push for whole-sale online teaching delivery.

We would like to offer a perspective on this concept: online delivery has a valuable support structure for classroom-based instruction; online can deliver some entire courses; online can provide and enrich resources like data-banks, websites and multi-modalities of relations. But the tertiary system should determine to retain the face-to-face interaction of classroom learning in the context of the enlightened and progressive education model described here. And it should therefore be very wary of the sweeping changes detailed above, given the strong reservations and critique made throughout.

### **Conclusions**

We argue to sustain and enhance the liberal, humanist, interdisciplinary tertiary institution that prioritises inquiry for the sake of constructing knowledge. This kind of institution is of fundamental value to scholarship, the tertiary sector, the people involved, the nation and the world.

We reject the wholesale reorienting of higher education to market-driven employment goals, the ‘vocalionalising’ of liberal education. We also reject narrow, disenfranchising, reductionist and restrictive education delivered to non-degree learners, where learning becomes subjugated to industrial productivity, without regard for social or environmental benefit. In the interests of human rights, democracy, and social justice, we argue against destructive neoliberal policies in tertiary education.

We argue for a system that enables students to move freely between vocational and university education. We believe that students should have the right and the support to complete degree and non-degree level qualifications. Finally, we argue that all tertiary education students should have access to a comprehensive education that addresses social, economic, ethical and environmental issues and contexts.

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