

ACE Strategic Alliance

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New Zealand Productivity Commission
PO Box 8036
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Wellington 6143

Issues paper: New models of tertiary education

Tēnā koutou,

Thank you for meeting with our chair, Wendel Richardson, on 14 March. We appreciated your time and interest.

This is a hard copy of the submission from the ACE Strategic Alliance on the “New models of tertiary education: Issues paper”.

Please contact us below if you would like further information or clarification.

Ngā mihi

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ACE Sector Strategic Alliance submission New models of tertiary education inquiry

Introduction

The ACE Sector Strategic Alliance¹ (Strategic Alliance) is recognised as providing leadership and exists to collaborate for the advancement of Adult and Community Education (ACE) in Aotearoa, New Zealand. The Strategic Alliance comprises nine different national organisations, which deliver a wide range of ACE opportunities for adult learners. It provides leadership to the ACE Sector, is a voice for emerging issues for ACE, fosters collaboration at regional and national levels, encourages research and policy development for the ACE Sector and regularly engages with the wider ACE sector.

The inquiry will explore the big trends affecting the tertiary education system, consider how new models can help the system respond positively to them, and consider system and institutional settings that encourage or inhibit new models.

“New models” are new and improved ways of achieving an end. In this inquiry new models could be improved ways of facilitating learning or better ways of delivering tertiary education. New models could potentially include different policy, regulatory, funding and quality assurance arrangements. The inquiry will consider models that already exist or are emerging in New Zealand, as well as things happening in other countries that could be adapted to local conditions.

New models of tertiary education, New Zealand Productivity Commission

Adult and Community Education (ACE)

The ACE sector is unique to the tertiary education system in that it:

- is part of an established international movement to improve education outcomes for all
- offers adults opportunities to self-direct their learning
- encourages lifelong learning in a supportive and informal environment
- achieves a range of social and economic outcomes for individuals and communities that are not always directed toward qualifications, employment or further education
- encourages intergenerational learning to promote enhanced well-being for all
- values education for its own sake

¹ ACE Sector Alliance members are: ACE Aotearoa, Community Learning Association Through Schools Inc (CLASS), English Language Partners NZ, Federated Workers Education Association, Literacy Aotearoa, Pasifika Education Centre, Rural Education Activities Programme Aotearoa New Zealand, Te Ataarangi, Vice Chancellor’s Committee

This submission will address questions 7, 8, 24, 34, 39, 56, 58 and 59-65.

The Strategic Alliance seeks to represent a perspective that is not reflected in the current new models of tertiary education inquiry. The ACE sector has a high focus on learners who are Māori, Pasifika, English language learning for refugees and migrants.

We would like the inquiry to expand its focus to include the notion that productivity comes from both education itself and the well-being generated by those who are supported by the ACE sector who have not succeeded in previous formal education.

Lifelong Learning

"Technological displacement of people from their jobs is happening faster than the education system can keep up²"

The relationship between education and earning power is well known; higher qualifications lead to higher salaries³. This positive effect is both for the learner, with higher income and expanded future earning, and also for the economy as a whole, derived from the higher tax take and lower costs for each individual.

The value of adults engaging in ongoing learning has been well documented⁴. Adults who participate in informal/non-formal education have been found to develop increased confidence, improved mental and physical health and well-being, more positive social participation and better living arrangements⁵. Individuals with skills live more independently and give back to their community. These international findings have been replicated in a 2008 independent survey of 595 ACE learners in Aotearoa New Zealand⁶.

Education must therefore prepare adults to re-engage in education when they need to, so they can progress to higher education and training levels and achieve a satisfying livelihood.

Low Starting Point of ACE Learners

ACE learners generally have a low base from which to start tertiary education often due to not having the appropriate skills to learn (organise learning materials for future use) or those who have had damaging experiences in the compulsory school system (finished or dropped out of school with no qualifications). Learning how to think, how to learn and how to collaborate are key focuses for ACE.

² Reich, Professor Robert B. "Future of Work conference." Auckland, New Zealand. 23 March 2016. Keynote Address.

³ www.enz.org

⁴ ACE Aotearoa 2013

⁵ NIACE (National Institute of Adult and Community Education) – The Facts – www.niace.org.uk/thefacts

⁶ Survey of ACE Learners, section 5, in PriceWaterhouse Coopers Economic Evaluation of Adult and Community Education Outcomes. 2008

“The illiterate of the 21st century won’t be those who cannot read and write but those who cannot learn, unlearn and re-learn”.⁷

Ensuring all adults have adequate skills for industry is just as important as it is for young people who are entering employment. Rapid change in technology and labour market needs require opportunities for all to up skill to meet these needs. ACE aims to foster confidence in learners to help create more independent learners who are productive members of society.

ACE sector providers work with many people who have left school without qualifications, and are uniquely positioned to provide feedback on the tertiary education system.

Educational non-achievement is a cost to government and a barrier to full productivity for individuals and for New Zealand. In 2013 the cost to the state of those between 16 and 23 years old was estimated at over 4 times higher for those with no qualification, than for those with a Level 3 qualification⁸. For many the experience of failure in the compulsory education system leaves them with a resistant attitude toward formal or structured learning.

Although there are a few polytechnics and increasing number of PTEs delivering ACE-in-communities funded courses, the inquiry seems to focus on higher learning institutions. ACE learners are not ready for higher-level learning. ACE learners are most often pre-foundation learners and come with a variety of barriers such as language, cultural mismatch, gender, socio/economic disadvantages, intergenerational factors, emotional/trauma/illness or learning disabilities. ACE providers work toward increasing confidence in a person to the point where they feel confident to contribute to society or go on to further learning.

Formulaic Funding Tension and Tailored Learning

Funded and unfunded ACE education delivers high value by supporting the learner’s needs academically, socially and developmentally, often developing the skills and attitudes to begin the learning process.

ACE providers are able to deliver education in places where there are no other opportunities to study. There are costs to operating in isolated locations because of economies of scale. Organisations such as REAP, CLASS and Literacy Aotearoa work in isolated/rural locations. An organisation like English Language Partners NZ is able to deliver English language tuition to adult refugees and migrants so they can pursue aspirations for themselves and their families, and participate in all aspects of life in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Tertiary education funding is currently outcomes focused. The ACE sector’s strength is the knowledge of how to progress learners, generally from a very low base of skill, to become contributing and productive members of society. An

⁷ Alvin Toffler, 1970, Future Shock

⁸ Ministry of Education workshop data, drawn from Integrated Data Initiative, 2014

innovative measure of the funding spend could be a learner's level of progression.

Creating an Innovative System

The Strategic Alliance believes that a truly innovative model of tertiary education would be tailored to the learner. It would include a measure of progression for those learners that can be identified as pre-foundation or second-chance learners. An innovative system would reconsider what the government expects as outcomes from tertiary education. Currently the inquiry looks at trying to find a different approach to achieve the same outcomes.

The ACE sector has always followed a learner needs focused approach and would be regarded as innovative by design within the tertiary education sector. With a focus on the learner, ACE programmes are able to achieve educational progress for their learners and reduce social service pressure by creating independent and confident New Zealanders.

Some ACE providers provide childcare and transport, which are often barriers to learning. English Language Partners also has a volunteer home tutoring programme for learners who are not confident enough, or who face other barriers that prevent them from attending a class, to learn outside the home.

Tertiary education providers need the incentive to innovate and move towards new models.

Conclusion

The Strategic Alliance would like the inquiry to consider the following points when investigating new models for tertiary education:

1. Lifelong learning is fundamental to allowing all adults to be productive members of society in an environment where technology and job functions are changing rapidly. The ability for a person to adapt and learn more quickly and more regularly will allow them to continue to participate and achieve a satisfying livelihood.
2. Tertiary education includes pre-foundation learners who require an education that supports them to re-start the learning journey. Supportive provision for these learners to develop the right level of skill, including literacy, numeracy and language acquisition, and attitudes that allow them to participate towards growing personal confidence and educational independence.
3. Tertiary education funding could be reviewed to take into account the progression of the learner. This is especially important for pre-foundation learners who require a level of support that is tailored to the learner to ensure their successes are maximised (this needs the resourcing and policy to enable it to effectively meet the needs of learners).
4. An innovative model of tertiary education would focus on learner needs, remove barriers to learning and allow for equitable access for all learners. It would consider more than outcomes and view their educational journey as lifelong. It would also consider different teaching methods and supports to enable learners to engage in higher learning.