

# **OMEP Aotearoa submission to the Productivity Commission *New models of tertiary education*, due 21 November 2016**

Thank you for the chance to make a second submission to the Productivity Commission's report on *new models of tertiary education*.

The World Organisation for Early Childhood Education (OMEP), is an international, interdisciplinary, nongovernmental organisation (NGO) founded in 1948 in Prague, to benefit children under the age of 8 years throughout the world. World OMEP provides a meeting ground for representatives from a range of professions and nationalities, all concerned with the wellbeing, education and rights of young children and their families. OMEP is represented in more than 70 countries. It is affiliated to the United Nations (UN), working collaboratively with UNICEF, UNESCO and the Council of Europe.

The aims of OMEP Aotearoa New Zealand (OMEP Aotearoa) include fostering wellbeing and the optimum development of every child; promotion of quality early childhood education in all its forms; promotion of a bicultural approach to the provision of ECE; furthering the development of multicultural values and practices in ECE; support for research; and fostering of international communication and cooperation.

With our interest in early education, much of our focus on tertiary education is based on our experiences of teaching in Initial Training Establishments (ITEs). Teachers of the very young need deep knowledge across a range of disciplinary areas as well as knowledge of developmentally appropriate, individually appropriate, culturally appropriate and nationally appropriate curriculum. The model proposed in your *The Productivity Commission's 29 September 2016: Draft report* would not ensure such knowledge is gained or demonstrated. For the teaching profession, the critical issue is not about 'student demand' but about the professional requirements of teachers. Teachers are responsible first and foremost to their student charges and second to their community including parents and, thirdly, to their professional body. Their selection into ITE programmes as beginning teachers is made by members of the Early Childhood Education professional community, with intake into ITEs having selection panels prioritising student selections.

## Key messages: the on *The Productivity Commission's 29 September 2016: Draft report*

- Despite the Commission's claim that their definition of innovation includes 'innovations that improve access to education; lift the quality of teaching and learning; improve research; better meet the needs of students, society or the economy; reduce costs to students or government; or improve the satisfaction and engagement of students and staff are all valuable. Value is an improvement in wellbeing above and beyond the costs of that improvement' there is little evidence of innovation in the *Report*. It focuses largely on 'exchange value' in a competitive exchange environment. The Terms of Reference ensuring that the Productivity Commission reports considers risks, opportunities and overseas models including also the reports on 'Boosting Productivity in the Services Sector' and 'More Effective Social Services' make narrow assumptions about the purposes of education. The Ministers' terms of reference privilege employers, industry train/ers/ing and the labour market. With such a narrow focus, in a world where employment and work is changing, these stakeholders may not be the appropriate ones to advantage.
- The *Report* is uncritically based on twentieth century ideologies on Public Choice Theory and Human Capital Theory<sup>1</sup>, both of which are grounded in a belief of ever-expanding growth of jobs, the employment market and individual educational assets. While young children may take their place in a twenty-first century workforce, ECE may give a solid grounding, the future of work may be very different. One of the drawbacks of ECE is that it treats preschool centres as sites for teaching competencies for future workers. Teaching young children to think critically is seen currently as best practice.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Becker(1975) reference is forty years old. This, together with T. Shultz's work set the model for HCT. The 2010 (Becker, Hubbard & Murphy)paper cited in the PC references merely expands the initial thesis (utilising the vexed tool of IQ measurement), adding (married) women to the model. Yet its assumptions are straight from 20th century e.g. 'maternal education may benefit children more, because mothers spend more time than fathers with children'(p.15) although 'gender differences in the earnings, health, marriage, and other returns from college greatly narrowed after the 1970s'(p.21). This, despite (p.23) 'gender differences in the earnings, health, marriage, and other returns from college greatly narrowed after the 1970s'.

<sup>2</sup> E.g. the Reggio Emilia preschools have set critical thinking as a pedagogical priority. This, after world war 2 when the Italian citizens followed autocratic leadership uncritically they hoped such following would never happen again.

- You accept signalling and screening theories (4. 1, p.77) as a basis for skill-matching between employer and employee. Some academic work suggests that this is a poor tool<sup>3</sup> based on the belief that credentialism is a proxy for employees' outputs, which clouds societal inequities. Credentialism puts the onus for successful career navigation on the individual, while obscuring wider inequity issues.
- The Report is uncritically based, too, on late twentieth century economics of education as sites of supply and demand (of competition; inputs and outputs) rather than viewing education as a public good, available to grow national civil citizenry. While looking<sup>4</sup> overseas for new models, the Commission would do well to note the critique of tertiary education published recently<sup>5</sup> by Mary Sue Coleman, president of the Association of American Universities (07 October, 2016, Washington Post). '*Universities are forced to cut programs and services. The doors of access swing shut for the most vulnerable students. Stability and future viability are threatened. Public higher education, barring a significant change in direction, may soon be public in name only, no longer a public good but a private one*'. She also advocates for social science as well as STEM subjects.<sup>6</sup> This government seeks to ameliorate poor outcomes for target groups, but a model less focused on outcomes may be more affirming.
- We applaud the focus on 'Māori and Pasifika; at-risk youth' who may presently be excluded from tertiary education options. However, we argue that the ideological underpinning of the *29 September 2016: Draft report* with monetarist assumptions is exactly the ideological thrust that created the problem of disengagement with *Tomorrow's Schools* and the Education Act 1989.

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<sup>3</sup> Blaug, M. (1976). The empirical status of human capital theory: a slightly jaundiced survey. *Journal of economic literature*, 14(3), 827-855. Illich, I. (1971). *Deschooling Society*. New York: Harper and Row ; Mehmet, O. (2002). *Westernizing the Third World: the Eurocentricity of economic development theories*. Routledge. It can be claimed that 'class, race, gender, and citizenship shape both occupational and opportunity structures in contemporary societies and of how credentialism conceals and obscures this reality behind a rationale of technical necessity ("Credentialism." *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*. 2008. Retrieved October 01, 2016 from Encyclopedia.com: <http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1G2-3045300482.html>).

<sup>4</sup> A number of ITEs in universities, polytechnics and Private Training Establishment have down-sized because of low student intake numbers. This down turn comes directly from government policy and impacts on beginning teachers.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/grade-point/wp/2016/10/07/after-years-of-neglect-public-higher-education-is-at-a-tipping-point/> '*Since the Great Recession in 2008, the data regarding public funding for higher education are numbing. Arizona down 56 percent. Wisconsin, reductions of 25 percent. Pennsylvania, 33 percent. Illinois, 54 percent. If the stock market were trending like this, our nation would be in a dead panic. And yet, sadly, we are not....*

<sup>6</sup> [https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/why-social-sciences-re-just-as-important-as-stem-disciplines/2015/06/09/65f9b8e2-0bcc-11e5-95fd-d580f1c5d44e\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.25f54d35e225](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/why-social-sciences-re-just-as-important-as-stem-disciplines/2015/06/09/65f9b8e2-0bcc-11e5-95fd-d580f1c5d44e_story.html?utm_term=.25f54d35e225)

- As you note (citing Leach & Zepke, 2005) ‘Socio-economic status is a powerful factor and the strongest predictor of tertiary study ... [and] interpersonal information networks’ (p.56; 57). Student fees and debt remain a huge barrier. Student loan repayments, pressures to gain immediate rather than future employment and pressures on housing have added to low socio-economic student disengagement. Maslow’s hierarchy of needs is a well known tool for teachers prioritising their energy<sup>7</sup>. We suggest the new models cannot be examined in siloed isolation. The recommendation that students again pay interest on their student loans, will, we believe impact on this group in inequitable ways. We believe that the government could achieve its aims by revisiting the view of education as a public good that can nourish a democratic society and all its citizens, including those from target groups. An scheme like the 1960s apprenticeship schemes which gave young Māori life-skills could be emulated.
- There is a belief (which we believe is naïve) that new technology will democratically support better educated populations, with access to greater knowledge. Ewart Keep<sup>8</sup> says *[a]s over-qualification and under-utilisation grows (NZ wasn’t part of the OECD Adult Skills Survey, but Australia scored badly on over-qualification – 28% of workers held quals higher than those needed to get their current job), job re-design and work re-organisation become important if the productivity/GDP payoffs from investment in skill is to be maximised. E&T establishments have a role to play – SFC Skill Utilisation Projects. Skills need to mesh with the employment system, and the employment system may need to change to accommodate a more skilled workforce.*

While ECE teachers need and will need grounding in technology, nothing can replace the ability to think and seek out new knowledge. If beginning teachers graduate with these skills and attitudes, they will adapt to any new challenges.

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<sup>7</sup> Despite your assertion ‘The wānanga model itself was an important innovation in the tertiary education system, which radically expanded access to education for groups who were not previously participating in it’, it may not be able to be sustainable in the increasingly inequitable environment. *One in five young Kiwis live in poverty* <http://thewireless.co.nz/articles/one-in-five-young-kiwis-live-in-poverty>: “One of the findings was that young people from households experiencing socioeconomic hardship and living in rich neighbourhoods, did worse than young people from households experiencing socioeconomic hardship and living in poor neighbourhoods,” says researcher Associate Professor Simon Denny, from the University’s Adolescent Health Research Group...“Policies are needed that address household poverty alongside efforts to reduce socio-economic inequalities in neighbourhoods,” Denny says.

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.treasury.govt.nz/publications/media-speeches/guestlectures/pdfs/tgls-ewartkeep-slides.pdf>

- There is also a belief (again, naïve), based on institutions' self-promotion, that innovation is always progress. Students and staff will often view things differently from employers, and industry. The UNITEC example is a good illustration here, with analyses that have regard to 'fixed costs of staff' overlooking the fact that staff are often students too, with solid links to their formal and informal communities
- Knowledge is largely presented as skill-based, rather than a combination of 'knowledge, skill and attitude' which are locally constructed and applied collectively. To cite Coleman (2016), she noted that there is a tertiary education crisis in USA. *'We need to remind ourselves as a nation of higher education's true value and its return on investment, not only to the individual but to society. Our collective progress and prosperity hinge on quality higher education. It is the strongest argument we have for lifting up our public support of this critical public good.'* New Zealand emphasises private good over public, to civil society's detriment. Ewart Keep issued a *'warning to policy makers. The bad news on education and training is:*
  - *After 30 years plus of intervention and reform, all the easy problems are long since solved.*
  - *All that remain are the difficult, wicked, intractable, complex problems that the best minds brought to bear on them for three decades have failed to crack!'*<sup>9</sup>

He further notes that rather than being a simplistic/inadequate reading of Human Capital Theory. *'More qualifications = more skills = more productivity = higher wages ... is only partially and conditionally correct. Skills supply is subject to market failure, which justifies government intervention. Problem = market failure often means levels of training less than the government aspires to'* OECD *'benchmarking' drives policy: [t]he supply-push effect is a lot smaller and more conditional than policy makers imagined. Sometimes the main result is rising levels of overqualification. ..Supplying more skills may be the (relatively) easy bit! Policy often assumes (wrongly) that it is easy to synchronise/reconcile a range of actors'/stakeholders' requirements.* For beginning teachers and those returning to study they need critical mentoring and pedagogical knowledge and skills. While the benchmarking of teachers credentials has been raised in

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.treasury.govt.nz/publications/media-speeches/guestlectures/pdfs/tgls-ewartkeep-slides.pdf>

the past few decades, much of their head knowledge may not translate to day to day practice. Field-based and the provision of good practicums for students aim to facilitate praxis rather than skills. Tertiary education bodies need excellent relationships with centre people offering practicum mentoring. Recently the competition between ITE providers has meant that the professional mentoring and praxis is not always as ideal as it could be, as teachers seek to concentrate on their student charges rather than mentoring beginning teachers.

- *Technology cannot replace the role of critical teachers, using their knowledge of the student/s, the topic and the teaching methods<sup>10</sup>.*

The idea that teaching can be separated from active academic engagement may result in a focus on skill rather than knowledge. New Zealand universities sit ranked among the top globally based on academic publishing. Teachers who merely teach become skill-tutors, regurgitating ‘truths’ uncritically. While this may be applicable to some trades teaching, it does not apply to human professions such as teaching. Education is a relationship between teaching and learning. It is much about local face: face relationships: with other students, with lecturers/ tutors, with practicum placements, with the community of interest, and the wider society. Bronfenbrenner’s model underpins *Te Whāriki : He whāriki matauranga mo ngā mokopuna o Aotearoa: the Early Childhood Education Curriculum*. The tertiary institutions should be able to model such relationships. The assumption that the education market can be expanded, and improved with students seeking vocational support with vouchers is a poor one. This assumption is based on increasing internationalisation and immigration.

- Rather than divorcing students from universities with grounded infrastructure, students need access to, and critical engagement with, face to face contact with lecturers/tutors

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*A Virtual Mess: Inside Colorado's Largest Online Charter School - Education Week*

*At Colorado's 4,000-student GOAL Academy, just 1 in 4 students uses the learning software each day. The founder helped direct millions of dollars to his for-profit management company.<sup>10</sup>*

and real – rather /as well as than virtual – books and publications. Jeffrey J. Selingo <sup>11</sup> (4 Oct, 2016) noted that students, especially graduate students, need both traditional face to face teaching alongside MOOC . *Online education won't replace traditional undergraduate residential colleges, nor is it likely to replace face-to-face graduate education any time soon.* Ewart Keep says, talking about incentives to motivate students *targets, or planning and matching, are based on qualification levels and types as the indicator of desired outcomes, then they need to be good proxies of the skills, knowledge, competences required. If a market is to work, the exchange value of qualifications needs to be clear*

Beginning teachers, and others returning to tertiary education for professional development and credentials should be seeking knowledge as a 'transformative good'. The phrase used by Paulo Friere is a 'bottom up' 'flax-roots' concept of intellectual and moral linking to one's community. Praxis comes from theoretical dialogic engagement in the real world with real students, engaged in learning.

We refer you on this point to the material on education for the future in *Waikato Journal of Education ; Special Edition: Reclaiming and reframing teacher education in Aotearoa New Zealand* Volume 18, Issue 1: 2013. John'O'Neill (2013, p.34) talked about the fact that 'teaching is more complex than those outside teacher education understand [with issues of ]complexity of learning related to teaching and the need for continuing growth as features of teacher education'. He hoped that a new 'model would be developed collaboratively within educational communities and address issues such as how teacher educators are positioned, the difference between training and education, the emphasis on competency and lifelong learning, and finally how to bring different sectors to work together in a time where new approaches are impossible due to the [present]moratorium' on Initial Teaching Education programmes. He further 'suggested that more emphasis on the 'service' or 'public good' component of a profession may strengthen a view of teacher educators as professional. John concluded by emphasising the importance of collegial conversations and the development of a collaborative professional stance'. Such a stance would not work in the distributed model your *Report* favours.

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/grade-point/wp/2016/10/04/after-gaining-legitimacy-can-online-higher-education-replace-traditional-college/>

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