

4 May 2016

Productivity Commission

This submission from the council of the Waikato Institute of Technology, Wintec, refers to that provided to the Commission by the Institutes of Technology and Polytechnic Chief Executives.

The Wintec council is strongly in support of that submission, which we believe comprehensively addresses the main issues that we would like the Productivity Commission to consider, and also provides some supporting detail which can be built on as required by the Commission.

The education sector is, of course, a complex one with numerous ways in which it interacts with business, the community, and many Government services. In most respects, in the Wintec council's view, the tertiary education system is very successful; but nonetheless there is room for improvement.

The Wintec council would like to emphasise the following three significant barriers to maximising the effectiveness of the ITP sector:

1. There is a major impediment which arises from the public perception of ITPs. This is well set out in the Chief Executives' submission, and in papers recently produced by the ITPs. The Wintec council strongly supports the concern that the public perception is an outdated one, and that there is a responsibility with Government and its agencies to ensure that attention is paid to this particular matter. It is an impediment to the effectiveness of the functioning of the system overall, and its relationships with employers. More importantly, in our view, it creates a barrier to many students who would otherwise gain enormously from participation in ITP education and training services. This has been well illustrated by the "engineering education to employment (E2E)" project, which provides a very good case study.
2. The funding system overall, whilst it has many strengths, still does not go far enough to encourage flexibility and innovation. Considerable attention is quite rightly paid to detailed management of certain aspects of the system, but this does not provide sufficient emphasis to the important strategy of enabling ITPs to encourage learning, innovation and applied research which will feed through into strong social and economic benefits. This is covered in more detail in the Chief Executives' submission.

3. Internationalisation is a vital strategic and economic opportunity for ITPs. The impacts of a global economy, coupled with exciting advances in technology, are leading to fundamental changes in the way many businesses and organisations are run, and the very nature and shape of businesses in the future. This has profound implications for the priorities in training and education, and ITPs are very well placed to respond to these drivers.

Internationalisation of education contributes beyond the tertiary education sector. It not only provides opportunities to build an already substantial export industry for New Zealand, it also helps to breakdown some of the traditional barriers to international trade by creating new networks in other countries, new “ambassadors” for New Zealand and new frameworks for building international linkages. The economic importance of this to New Zealand, a small trading nation in a globally connected world, cannot be underestimated.

This needs to be under-pinned by a strong alignment of the relevant strategies and operations of the various relevant Government agencies. While we acknowledge the considerable improvement in the last few years, we believe there is quite a lot more that can be done to enable ITPs to participate even more strongly and effectively in internationalisation, and particularly, in the development of education and training services in other countries.

Finally I congratulate you on a very thorough issues paper and look forward to hearing about the outcome of your deliberations.

Yours sincerely



Mary Cave-Palmer
Chair of Council