

TWoA Submission – Productivity Inquiry

Our position

At Te Wānanga o Aotearoa our focus is on taura success. Success for us means delivering graduates with skills and knowledge, who are strong in their cultural identity, and connected with the world around them. Through our taura we seek to have a transformative impact on whanau and onto society as a whole.

Wānanga have always been innovative and we remain open to new ways of doing things that benefit our people and Aotearoa. Over the last 30 years our programmes have reached into thousands of homes across NZ – mostly without the assistance of broadband. We engage over 30,000 taura every year and give them hope for a better future and the confidence to take the next step. Overwhelmingly our taura are not on a linear path from school to study to employment.

Our submission

Before determining changes to the funding or regulatory system, we believe that there should be a more coherent vision for the future and the role of the tertiary education in Aotearoa. Do we want a system that provides for life-long learning, that recognises the broader benefits of education beyond an employment outcome, where Māori and Pasifika taura achieve at the same rate as pākehā? Or do we want a system where future generations get one shot at it and, if they get it wrong, they are forever consigned to a low socio economic class.

To this end, we consider that the future model of tertiary education should be a learner-centric system that supports life-long learning. In a world where technological change can make skills and knowledge obsolete within a matter of years, New Zealanders need, more than anything, a continuing ability to learn. As we have expressed to the Tertiary Education Commission as they develop the new Investment Approach, we consider that New Zealanders need to be able to reskill and upskill over the course of their lives to lift their aspirations and improve their lives and the lives of their whānau. Taura not only need the skills that employers want, but they also need the skills to continue to learn and develop over the course of their lives.

Response to the recommendations

Our response to the recommendations outlined in the report are as follows:

- Te Wānanga o Aotearoa remains ready, willing and able to partner with government to bring about a prosperous society for everyone. Once the future state has been determined at a political level, the regulatory and purchasing functions of government, and the role of tertiary institutions, should be designed around this (R12.1, R12.4).

- We submit that in order to realise a truly learner-centric system, the funding system must provide Crown-owned tertiary education institutions with a strong platform for sustainability so they have the freedom to focus on taura needs (R12.19, R12.20, R12.22, R12.30, R12.33).
- We are open to working with government on changes to the quality system that values mātauranga Māori (R12.2, R12.3, R12.8).
- We support in principle a taura-centric system that enables taura to tailor their qualifications and move freely between providers (R.12.5, R12.6, R12.18).
- We agree that government should discontinue Performance-Linked Funding (R12.7) as it has now outlived its usefulness.
- We agree in principle to reform of school-based career education and to the introduction of better sources of information (R12.9, R12.10). Beyond the promotion of career pathways, a strong feature of this should be on demystifying higher education and exposure to role models. This is vitally important for a large proportion of Māori and Pasifika taura who still do not have a parent or family member who have studied at tertiary level.
- We agree in principle to changes to the accreditation system to enable providers to be more responsive to the changing needs of our taura (R12.11-R12.15).
- In order to ensure the cultural prosperity of Aotearoa, we submit that the research funding system should be reformed to support the advancement of mātauranga Māori and rangahau (R12.17).