

Draft Tertiary Education Strategy 2010-2015

Literacy Alliance submission

November 2009

General commentary on the draft Tertiary Education Strategy 2010-2015

1. The Literacy Alliance notes the strong focus on young people (up to 25 years old) in the draft Tertiary Education Strategy 2010-2015. As the majority of the workforce of the next 25 years is already in work, the Literacy Alliance believes that New Zealand must focus more on their skill development while employed to make sure their skills are used effectively. This extends to all age groups, as over 50% of the current workforce had no post school qualifications as measured in the 2006 Census. Among this group, over 40% of people aged 25-29 had no post school qualifications.
2. Recent funding to stimulate the embedding of literacy and numeracy within industry training has been valuable for trainees, individual workplaces, industries, ITOs and providers. The Literacy Alliance advocates for the continued investment by Government in the capacity of the tertiary system organisations as an important part of improving the performance of the system. Monitoring of literacy and numeracy activity alone will not bring about the ongoing improvements required.
3. The Literacy Alliance suggests that intensive literacy and numeracy is included in Youth Guarantee, trades academies and training opportunities for unemployed people to assist this sector to re-engage in the workforce.
4. As the demand for intensive workplace literacy development continues to grow, the Literacy Alliance is interested to work with the Government to ensure that the supply of expert services is available to those that need it.

Will the proposed approach to targeting, improving system performance, and supporting high quality research, help realise the Government's 3-5 year priorities?

5. The Literacy Alliance agrees that the approach of the Government in the next 3-5 years to have more adult learners gain literacy, language and numeracy skills will help realise the draft policy priority of, 'continuing to assist adult learners to gain the literacy, language and numeracy skills for higher level study or skilled employment'.
6. The Literacy Alliance welcomes the intention of the Government to invest in the following literacy and numeracy related areas in the next 3 to 5 years:

- a. Continuing to work with providers to embed literacy and numeracy in Levels 1-3 (Section 2.2.1 draft Tertiary Education Strategy)
 - b. Continuing to support intensive literacy programmes in workplaces (Section 2.2.1 draft Tertiary Education Strategy)
 - c. ACE providers addressing the needs of second chance and foundation learners (including Maori, Pasifika and ESOL) (Section 2.2.1 draft Tertiary Education Strategy)
7. The Literacy Alliance would like to see specific mention of continuing to work with ITOs to embed literacy and numeracy in industry training in Section 2.2.1 of the draft Tertiary Education Strategy.

Do the Government's expectations of providers and industry training organisations accurately and fully reflect the contribution these sub-sectors and the sector as a whole, can make to realising this strategy?

8. The Literacy Alliance notes that the strategy is light on mechanisms for how the strategy will be realised. It suggests the following organisations and programmes be included for their important contribution to realising the potential of the tertiary training system:
 - a. ITOs, who have the ability to leverage their existing relationships with industry to raise awareness of literacy and numeracy need and to develop embedded literacy and numeracy approaches that respond to that need
 - b. Programmes such as the Council of Trade Unions Learning Representatives programme that train workplace representatives to identify learning needs, break down barriers to learning and provide support to co-workers for completion of training and qualifications
 - c. Expert organisations such as Workbase, Literacy Aotearoa and English Language Partners New Zealand who can work with employers and industry to advise on and support the delivery of in-house literacy and numeracy training programmes
 - d. Trained workplace trainers/assessors/mentors who assist with identifying the needs of employees and provide, arrange or support embedded literacy and numeracy training.
9. These organisations and individuals have a vital role in building awareness within workplaces and preparing 'fertile ground' or good learning cultures that will support vocational training opportunities.

Will the early indicators of progress provide an accurate indication as to whether or not the system is making progress towards Government's goals for tertiary education?

10. The Literacy Alliance agrees that measuring the number of people participating in qualifications that improve their literacy, language and numeracy skills is a valid indicator of progress towards the Government's goals for tertiary education. The Literacy Alliance assumes that this measure will collate enrolment data from ACE educators, Polytechnics and Wananga qualifications with embedded literacy and numeracy, industry training qualifications with embedded literacy and numeracy and intensive literacy and numeracy interventions.
11. The Literacy Alliance also recommends that the Government monitors:
 - a. Employer awareness of literacy and numeracy as an indicator of the required cultural shift within workplaces
 - b. Employer investment in workforce literacy and numeracy development
 - c. The educational capacity of the sector through monitoring the uptake and completion of adult literacy and numeracy educator qualifications.
12. The Alliance also notes that due to the varied nature of embedded literacy and numeracy delivery mechanisms in the sector, viewing monitoring of literacy and numeracy simplistically is problematic. We encourage the Government to recognise the broad range of assessment needs that literacy and numeracy programmes have, (diagnosis of a learner's needs, formative assessment, summative assessment, measures of workplace productivity gains, quality assurance of learning delivery/management and measures for funding purposes) and to acknowledge the need to augment the National Assessment Tool to meet the varying needs across the sector.

Concluding remarks

13. The Literacy Alliance welcomes any opportunity to discuss the issues in this submission with the Minister of Education or officials from relevant government agencies.
14. Our members value sharing 'what works for our organisations'. This will continue to build an evidence base for how literacy and numeracy skills can be developed in both traditional and non-traditional forms of adult education.
15. By collaborating as an Alliance, the member organisations believe that a more robust, fit-for-purpose and efficient approach to planning for workforce literacy and numeracy development for current and future employees is possible.
16. The Literacy Alliance is keen to work with Government on adult literacy and numeracy skill development solutions.

Background to the Literacy Alliance

The Literacy Alliance is a collaborative project between non-governmental representative bodies on both the demand and supply side of literacy and numeracy provision in New Zealand. We advocate for robust, non-partisan solutions that support the alignment of provision with the needs of learners and industry.

Ako Aotearoa has provided 18 months of funding to enable the group to build understanding of and plan effective responses to changes and initiatives for literacy and numeracy within the tertiary education and business sectors. Founding Alliance members include; Industry Training Federation, Business NZ, New Zealand Council of Trade Unions, Workbase, Literacy Aotearoa, English Language Partners New Zealand¹.

¹ NB: ITPNZ was also a founding member of the Literacy Alliance. This organisation has now dissolved and we await notification from the new representative organisation regarding their interest in becoming part of the Alliance.