



The Tuia Te Ako 2010 conference proceedings – *He takohanga Whakaaro* – is dedicated to the late Dr Maaka Laws, director of Te Pou Tokorau, Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiārangī. Dr Laws is pictured here with hui keynote Hana O'Regan, Faculty of Māori and Pasifika, Christchurch Polytechnic Institute of Technology.

Tuia te Ākongā. Tuia te ako, tui, tui, tuituia!

Ako Aotearoa and the Ako Aotearoa Māori Caucus are proud to announce the launch of *He takohanga whakaaro*, the proceedings of the inaugural Tuia Te Ako Māori tertiary hui held on 12 and 13 August 2010 at Pipitea Marae in Wellington. The proceedings include transcribed speech notes from the four keynote presentations and some of the panellists, summaries from the workshops, transcribed video excerpts from the keynote presentations and panel sessions, photographs, delegate contributions to te kohinga kōrero (the feedback wall), and a summary of comments taken from attendee evaluations.

The aim is to capture some of the wairua (spirit) of the hui, as well as share the rich kōrero (discussion) from the workshops of the four key themes: Rangatiratanga – Leadership, Whakawhanaungatanga – Building community, Whakawhitiwhiti whakaaro – Discussion of issues, and Ahu whakamuatanga – Iwi advancement.

The full, unedited version of the information collected from the workshops will also be made available at www.ako.aotearoa.ac.nz so that interested parties can undertake their own analyses.

He takohanga whakaaro is dedicated to the memory of noted academic, teacher, friend, and member of the Tuia Te Ako planning committee, Dr Maaka Laws. Maaka was an enthusiastic proponent of the hui and the work of Ako Aotearoa. His untimely death robs not only his whānau, but all of us of a valued and much-loved colleague.

Moe mai e te rangatira.

Welcome

This edition of *Ako Alert*, the first of the new year, has a wide range of articles that reflect the different dimensions of Ako Aotearoa's mandate. We have always held the belief that sustainable improvement in tertiary teaching and learning needs a holistic approach. However innovative and effective, improvements in individual practice will achieve only limited traction without active organisational support – system change may sometimes be necessary to incentivise organisational change.

The move to evaluative quality assurance by self-assessment is potentially one of those critical system changes that will precipitate a step change in the quality and effectiveness of our tertiary provision. Self-assessment requires us to examine the evidence that learners are actually benefitting from our individual and organisational practices to support learners. It requires us to unpack and challenge the assumptions behind what we do.

Whatever their limitations, the education performance indicators published last year show alarming variability in the performance of providers that, you might expect, are dealing with similar types of learners and addressing similar educational needs. Perhaps the most surprising aspect of all of this is that, without doubt, the best of our tertiary education is comparable with the best in the world, yet we do so little to lever off this. We do great things for many learners, but the data tells us that we are not meeting the needs of so many more.

This newsletter showcases a small fraction of the work we are doing to support the gathering of evidence to not only test practice, but to also improve it, and features projects with the potential to do so. We also look at ways in which we seek to share ideas and promote existing good and excellent practice. We find this exciting, and we trust it will enthuse you too as the new academic year gets under way.

With best wishes,

Dr Peter Coolbear

Director, Ako Aotearoa

The Academy symposium 2010 – Shine your light



Academy members Donna Buckingham, Phil Bishop, Dawn Garbett, Sam Honey, and Marc Wilson consider some alternatives to PowerPoint during a workshop presented by fellow Academy member Selena Chan.

The Hon Steven Joyce, Minister for Tertiary Education, officially opened the Academy symposium 2010 – *Shine your light* with a warm welcome to the 54 Academy members present. This year, the symposium focused on ways that the Academy members (all of whom are recipients of national Tertiary Teaching Excellence Awards [TTEAs]) can improve their career paths and their options for personal growth. Another key focus for the event was to explore how the group can promote their teaching to other practitioners across the sector.

Professor Marnie Hughes-Warrington, provice-chancellor (teaching and learning) at Monash University, gave a stimulating keynote presentation on curriculum design, incorporating elements of course design, the intersection of courses, learning spaces, and learning technologies. Marnie also facilitated a workshop on assessment and self-assessment, while Professor Sally Kift (Queensland University of Technology) gave members an update on recent Australian developments in quality and standards in higher education. Sally was the keynote speaker at the Academy's 2009 symposium, giving attendees her perspective on the first-year learner experience with her presentation *Designing first-year curriculum for student engagement, success, and retention*.

Just as importantly, the two-day symposium provided an opportunity for all of the members to share their own teaching tools and ideas, and demonstrate to their peers how they use their knowledge to help learners. Examples of the sessions include:

- *Kaupapa Māori in tertiary education* – Using kaupapa Māori principles to engage learners, with Sam Honey and Kelly Pender.
- *Not just a qualification: Getting students to integrate what they learn into their lives* – Motivating students by using clickers and influencing their values, with Selene Mize, 2009 Prime Minister's Supreme Awardee.
- *G+T on the rocks* – Experiences of talented undergraduate students in a tertiary environment, with Christine Rubie-Davies.

- *Did I jump or was I pushed?* – Reflections of four Academy members on how the award has changed their life and opened up opportunities that would not otherwise have been available to them.

Attendees were also treated to an evening of fun and hilarity with an entertainment session run by Academy Special Teaching awardee, Gary Bold.

The symposium serves to provide its members with new tools to enhance their own teaching practice, while sharing cross-sector and organisational experiences enables the members to take new approaches and teaching skills back to their own organisation to implement and share with peers.

Furthermore, from symposium discussions and personal requests, a programme of work has been developed for 2011. This programme is aimed to benefit teachers and organisations across the sector, and includes:

- establishment of a "tertiary teaching day" in each of the Academy regions to provide resources and tools for teachers, and to promote tertiary teaching to the wider sector. It is envisaged that this will become a regular event, where recognised excellent teachers can share their skills and ideas with others
- continued mentoring and support for potential TTEA applicants in both the general and the kaupapa Māori categories
- mining of the TTEA recipient portfolios to analyse, collect, and collate key information that highlights what makes an "excellent" teacher.

Attendee evaluations indicated that *Shine your light* exceeded expectations in every way. The members reiterated how important it was for them to have the opportunity to share their knowledge with peers, and to network with others who share the same interests and challenges.

Planning for symposium 2011 has begun. The event will focus on improving learning outcomes and equity for diverse learners in the sector.

Collecting evidence of learner benefit

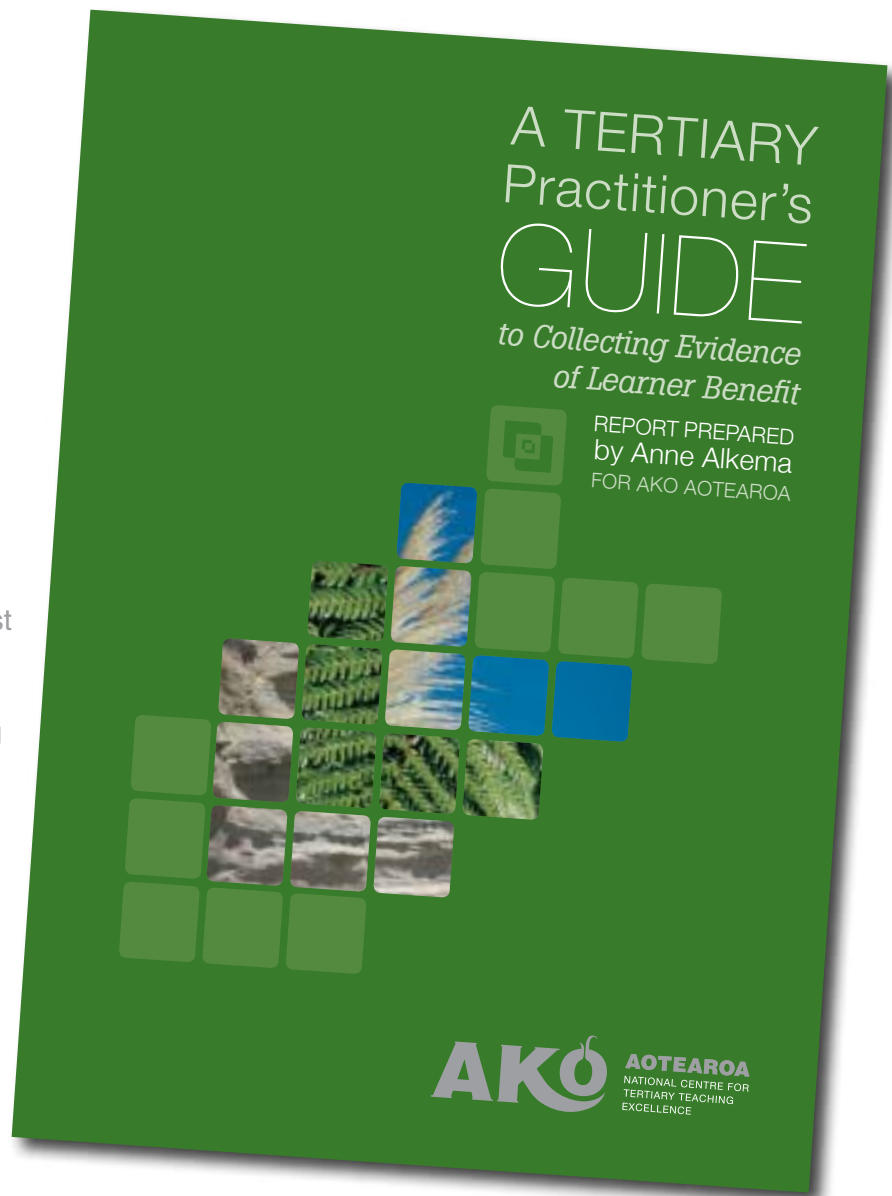
Nicholas Huntington, our senior project/research analyst, describes how this latest Ako Aotearoa publication can be used by practitioners as a plain-English introduction to gathering data on the effectiveness of teaching and learning.

“How do I know that what I am doing is working and making a difference to my students’ learning?” This is one of the most fundamental questions for any modern educator or trainer. Reflecting on what is and is not working for students and testing out new modes of teaching and learning are well recognised as key components of good professional practice. Furthermore, the current education climate is increasingly more demanding of practitioners to provide evidence for the success and quality of their practices, whether as part of professional development and promotion processes, organisations’ internal systems, or the requirements of external quality-assurance regimes.

However, while collecting evidence of what is and isn’t working is central to being a good practitioner, working out how to gather this sort of information can seem both daunting and time-consuming. This means that teaching practices may end up based on instinct and intuition alone, as practitioners can find it difficult to provide supporting evidence when their practices are questioned, and good practices can go unrecognised and unrewarded.

To help remedy this situation, Ako Aotearoa has commissioned a publication designed to assist educators in gathering such information. *A Tertiary Practitioner’s Guide to Collecting Evidence of Learner Benefit* has been prepared by Anne Alkema. It is a plain-English introduction to gathering data about the effectiveness of teaching and learning. It is not meant as a guide to undertaking research – there are many existing publications that provide advice on how to construct and conduct research projects. Instead, it is an introductory document intended to encourage and assist practitioners to consider how they can gather evidence to understand what is and isn’t working for their learners, and how they can share lessons from their successful and unsuccessful practices with others. One of the important assumptions of the guide is that collecting evidence does not need to involve large-scale formal research projects. Instead, it can – and should – become part of the normal professional practice of those teaching in the tertiary sector.

The guide begins by discussing why it is important to gather information about learner benefit. It then discusses how to approach the collection of evidence, considering the sorts of questions a practitioner might want to explore, and the types of evidence sources that might be appropriate to use for those questions. An appendix to the guide provides an overview of common data sources and collection processes, and some strengths and limitations of these.



The guide features a series of vignettes to illustrate how points made in the text relate to “real-world” practice. Other highlight boxes focus on associated issues, such as ethical considerations.

A Tertiary Practitioner’s Guide to Collecting Evidence of Learner Benefit is a beginning point and conversation starter for practitioners, rather than a last word. How to gather and use evidence as part of everyday practice is an area with many complex dimensions, and we intend to publish future documents exploring specific aspects in more depth.

The publication is available online via the Ako Aotearoa website, at the following url: <http://ako.aotearoa.ac.nz/collecting-evidence>. Print copies are also available by contacting us directly at info@ako.aotearoa.ac.nz

BY RUTH PETERSON

News from the Northern Hub

Welcome. As the new year gets under way, we want to wish you a successful 2011 and offer our support, once again, to bring about the best possible educational outcomes for your learners. In this issue, we bring you our recent regional activities.



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Project symposium

Eight Ako Aotearoa project teams from universities, wānanga, institutes of technology, private training establishments, and industry training organisations around the northern region were invited to meet at a symposium held in September 2010 at The Clubhouse in the domestic terminal of Auckland International Airport.

The teams presented their projects and, after each brief showcase, the members of the other teams had the opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback. The intention was to give the participants the opportunity to get objective input from their counterparts in other organisations. In some cases, the project teams had been working more or less in isolation, so the opportunity for feedback and professional discussion was invaluable to them. It also clearly stimulated the participants' interest in other Ako Aotearoa-funded projects currently under way in other organisations across the sector.

As had been experienced at Ako Aotearoa's two National Project Fund colloquia, there were useful exchanges of ideas between the project teams, and opportunities for new collaborations were identified. Discussion ranged widely and covered methodologies used, different underpinning pedagogies, current educational literature, project management issues, and how various problems might be solved.

The experience of listening to other teams also provided the participants with a reminder about the ultimate purpose of these projects: to generate sustainable improvement in tertiary education.



Project team leader, Dr Chris Naughton from New Zealand Tertiary College, presented to the symposium attendees on his in-progress regional hub-funded project, *Changing places: Exploring different conceptions of music education practice in order to support research-based innovations in practice.*

With these sorts of outcomes, the symposium was considered a success, and we are planning another for 2011.

New Northern Hub-funded resources on the Ako Aotearoa website

An investigation across four faculties at The University of Auckland into the strategies employed to identify and nurture talented students was completed in late 2010. The research team, led by Dr Christine Rubie-Davies, produced a report of their findings and recommendations, which is now available on the Ako Aotearoa website at: <http://ako.aotearoa.ac.nz/ako-hub/ako-aotearoa-northern-hub/resources/pages/what-about-our-talented-students-exploratory-study>

Early identification of highly talented students appears to contribute to their success and on-going participation in tertiary education. It was established that talented students often had multiple abilities, and, in some faculties, students needed to be multi-talented in order to succeed at the highest levels. In line with this, talented students were also thought of as possessing particular social qualities, such as

leadership, independence, good social skills, and the ability to work well with others.

The outcomes of the study will lead to the design and implementation of an intervention that is aimed at enhancing both the identification practices and the learning and experiences of highly talented students. The aim is increased numbers of students moving into postgraduate study.

Support for Tertiary Teaching Excellence Award (TTEA) nominees

Some larger institutions now have well thought-out processes for nominating and supporting staff members for a TTEA. The northern hub has supported a project through our regional hub fund to capture some of this expertise and make it available to all tertiary providers, in the form of a set of guidelines.

In 2010, a new nomination category in the TTEA was introduced for educators working in a kaupapa Māori context. The first recipient in this category was Te Kahautu Maxwell, who is a senior lecturer at the School of Māori and Pacific Development at The University of Waikato.

The success of Te Kahautu Maxwell highlights the diverse representation of educators in the TTEA across the northern region, and reinforces our efforts as an organisation to make the awards more inclusive across New Zealand.



Te Kahautu Maxwell, pictured here after receiving the inaugural Tertiary Teaching Excellence Award 2010 for sustained excellence in teaching in a kaupapa Māori context.

Dorothy Spiller (The University of Waikato) is leading the TTEA portfolio project *Portfolio Pointers* (pictured left) funded by the Northern Hub. She recently assisted us with a workshop, held at Unitec, to support nominees and other staff who are involved in the portfolio-development process. Judging by the depth of discussion and quality of the questions generated in the workshop, the guidelines will be a valuable resource.

Nominations and portfolios for the 2011 round of the TTEA close on 31 March. If you have not contemplated submitting a nomination for this year, we encourage you to consider preparing your portfolio for 2012. Feedback from people previously involved in the nomination process suggests that now is the right time to start thinking about preparing a nomination. The relevant documentation and supporting information is available on the Ako Aotearoa website: <http://ako.aotearoa.ac.nz/download/ng/file/group-4/tertiary-teaching-excellence-awards---2011-criteria-and-guidelines.pdf>



New Northern Hub projects

Since the last issue of *Ako Aotearoa Alert*, three more projects have been approved for regional hub project funding. It is anticipated that their outputs will be very useful for educators interested in case study-based learning, simulation-based learning, and student support.

One is a cooperative project involving The University of Auckland and Massey University working to build a series of data models for use in business education. This project, led by Dr Howard Edwards, senior lecturer in the Institute of Information and Mathematical Sciences at Massey University, is a response to the chronic shortage of up-to-date New Zealand exemplars needed for case study-based teaching programmes.

Another new project, led by Dr David Parsons (Massey University, Albany), explores the potential for creating simulation-based learning opportunities using mobile devices. The goal is to develop software that makes this sort of teaching resource easy to develop and use for the non-IT specialist.

The third project is a multi-institutional investigation into the student support strategies employed by the private training establishments in the Western Bay of Plenty. The project, coordinated by Dr Heather Hamerton (Bay of Plenty Polytechnic), involves gathering and analysing data from the providers and students around the region, with the results being fed back to allow each organisation to benefit from the collective wisdom identified in how best to support their students.

These projects are all now under way, and their outputs will be available on the Ako Aotearoa website in due course.

Around the region

Northern Hub staff have been holding meetings in both Rotorua and Hamilton as part of Ako Aotearoa's commitment to building a more supportive tertiary education network. As these were, in the most part, return visits to organisations and people who already had a good understanding of Ako Aotearoa, it allowed the discussion to focus on identifying the most pressing educational issues relating to learner success they may be facing, and how Ako Aotearoa might be able to help them address these issues.

We have identified some common issues different types of education providers are facing in relation to the same learner groups. These learner groups were targeted in the Ministry of Education's Tertiary Education Strategy as priorities for more effective support: Māori learners, Pacific learners, and learners under 25 years of age.

Armed with this information, we are planning a series of workshops around the region for 2011 to showcase the most effective teaching strategies and resources for these groups that Ako Aotearoa has targeted in its regional and national projects.





Literacy alliance members pictured here are (from left): Cushla Wilson and Bill Rosenberg, New Zealand Council of Trade Unions; Carrie Murdoch, Business New Zealand; Sandra O'Neil, New Zealand Council of Trade Unions; and Jeremy Baker, Industry Training Federation (ITF). Absent are members: Nicky Murray, Motor Industry Trade Organisation previously at ITF; Katherine Percy, Workbase; Bronwyn Yates, Literacy Aotearoa; and Claire Szabó, English Language Partners New Zealand.

The Literacy Alliance: Achieving strategic change in adult literacy

The Literacy Alliance was formed in 2009, with the support of collaborative project funding, under the Ako Aotearoa National Project Fund. The alliance is a group of non-government organisations with an interest in and commitment to adult literacy and workforce development. The alliance formed with the objective of working together towards achieving high-quality outcomes in adult literacy.

The collaborative partners – Business New Zealand, English Language Partners New Zealand, Industry Training Federation, Literacy Aotearoa, New Zealand Council of Trade Unions, and Workbase – represent different perspectives on matters relating to workplace literacy, and are therefore able to propose broad and inclusive future directions for enhancing literacy in the workforce.

As a group, they have achieved significant strategic impact. They have discussed a series of key issues with the Hon Steven Joyce, Minister for Tertiary Education. These include:

- the economic imperative for improving workforce literacy and numeracy
- the evidence-based link between investment in literacy and numeracy and productivity gains
- the need to expand beyond embedding when considering literacy in the workforce
- innovative approaches to target funding – the importance of maintaining a close link between practitioners and workplaces that can support literacy and numeracy development
- the willingness and commitment of the alliance to work alongside the government to improve workplace literacy and numeracy.

As a result of this dialogue with the minister, the Literacy Alliance has begun working with the Tertiary Education Commission to identify areas of potential action. Primarily, this work programme focuses on:

- effective leadership in workplace literacy
- defining the scale of delivery needed and appropriate implementation mechanisms
- the adoption of balanced performance measures
- developing an agreed framework for the quality of provision.

Literacy Alliance

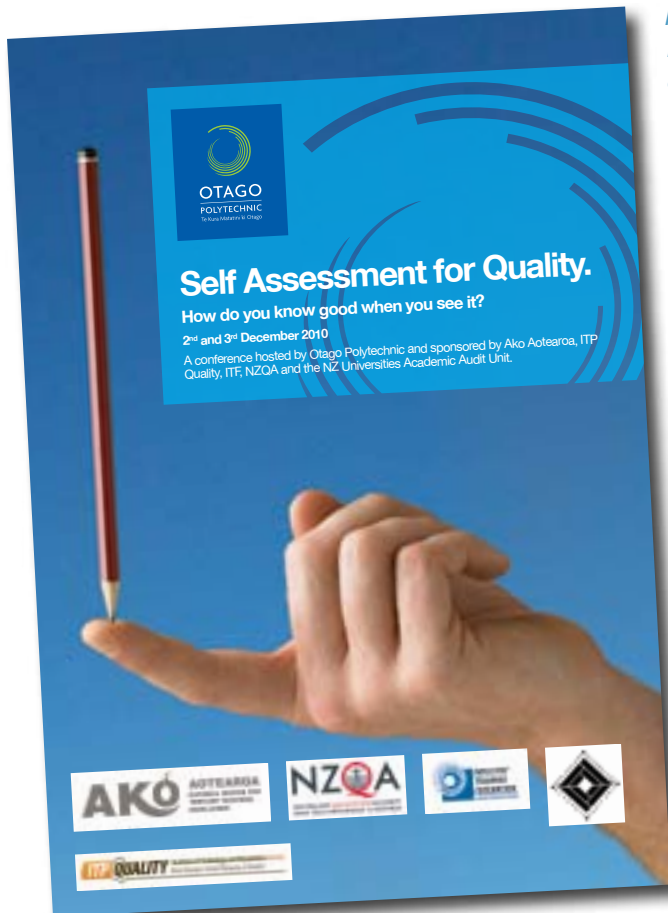
Alongside this work with the TEC, the alliance are working with The University of Waikato's National Centre for Literacy and Numeracy for Adults and the Ministry of Education's tertiary policy team to identify shared areas of interest for working together.

These collective efforts will result in a pan-sector strategy document, which will articulate a broader range of measures and organisations that can contribute to raising the levels of adult literacy and numeracy in Aotearoa, New Zealand. The alliance is planning a conference mid-2011 to share and discuss this strategy and related issues with the sector. We will have more information about the event on our website as it develops.

We are delighted with the outcome of this project, and we are confident that the ongoing activities of the alliance will have a sustained impact on quality of literacy provision. We look forward to updating the sector about the impact of the alliance in the future.

To find out more about the alliance and its work, please go to their community space on our website: <http://ako.aotearoa.ac.nz/communities/literacy-alliance>

Self assessment for quality: How do you know good when you see it?



Peter Coolbear reflects on a major conference held at the end of last year.

One of the highlights of the last quarter of 2010 was the self-assessment conference run by Otago Polytechnic in early December. Ako Aotearoa was delighted to be involved in the planning of this event, supporting it alongside New Zealand Qualifications Authority, Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics Quality, the New Zealand Universities Academic Audit Unit, and the Industry Training Federation.

ITF NZ Vocational Education and Training Research Forum 2011

Jeremy Baker, executive director at the Industry Training Federation (ITF), talks about their first forum for 2011.

The annual ITF NZ Vocational Education and Training Research Forum is to be held in Wellington on 27–28 April 2011. It is again sponsored by Ako Aotearoa as forum partner.

Its success is largely due to the practical focus of the event. We make a big point of selecting presenters who are able to say, “Here’s how the research was done, here’s what it found out, let’s talk about how you can use this to make some positive changes”. It is really important to us that the considerable effort that researchers put into their work is not confined to office shelves gathering dust.

As a result, there is a really good mixture in the audience of researchers and practitioners from industry training organisations, industry, and providers, who are interested in new initiatives for their work practices. We are particularly pleased that Professor Stephen Billett of Griffith University is returning to New Zealand to present the opening keynote address. He will speak about decision making and engagement in vocational education, arguing that the provision of vocational education needs to include space for engagement by learners, enterprisers, and teachers, as well as spokespeople for industry sectors.

Contact the ITF for further information about the forum: www.itf.org.nz or jenny@itf.org.nz

This two-day operational conference couldn’t have been more timely, at a point when tertiary education organisations and agencies are beginning to come to grips with new quality-enhancement processes that shift the emphasis to outcomes-focused evaluative self-assessment. In fact, demand was so high that the planning committee had to increase the registration limit twice.

There were 282 attendees that enjoyed two days of highly interactive workshops and discussion about the practicalities of self-assessment for organisational improvement.

For me, there were two striking take-home messages from this hugely positive event. The first was the extraordinarily high level of buy-in participants expressed for the principles of self-assessment and evaluative review. There is very wide support for the shift from a systems focus to an approach that focuses on improving outcomes for learners.

The second message is a more challenging one. Despite the best intentions, many workshop discussions drifted into the kinds of debate we have been having for the last ten years about what people believed were the best approaches (or barriers) to achieving learner success. These debates failed to address how evidence might be gained to test assumptions about the value of interventions. This is not always easy to do, and it is clear there is significant work to do here. **The message is we are at the beginning of a very positive cultural shift about how we address quality improvement in tertiary education, but it is a significant change of mindset. Both organisations and tertiary practitioners need to actively build their capability to engage.**

As part of its contribution to the conference, Ako Aotearoa will publish the proceedings. These are currently in editing – there was an enormous amount of discussion and debate! – and will be available as soon as possible.



Jeremy Baker, executive director of Industry Training Federation

Organisational Good Practice Publication Grants: Sharing organisation-wide good practice

Sustainable improvement of outcomes for learners isn't just about the improvement of individual practice. Strategic and systematic organisational support is also critical to enhance educational performance. This new funding initiative recognises and shares effective organisational strategies that have been shown to benefit learners.

We are delighted to announce the details of a new funding initiative designed to celebrate and share examples of good practice, to improve teaching and learning, at an organisational level. The organisational Good Practice Publication Grants (GPPG) scheme has been established as a new strand to our existing GPPG scheme, which celebrates individual and/or group good practice. Up to three organisational GPPG grants will be awarded during 2011. The maximum grant allocation is \$10,000 (GST inclusive).

The organisational GPPG scheme has been established to showcase organisation-wide strategies designed to improve teaching and learning that have been fully and sustainably implemented for at least two years. The scheme will promote suites of strategies that organisations know to be effective through robust evaluation or independent research demonstrating learner benefit. We would expect for the strategies to also be subject to ongoing review.

To meet the criteria of an organisation in this context, the strategies should involve either the whole organisation, or, particularly for larger organisations, an operational unit within that organisation. The operational unit must offer a portfolio of programmes or services (for example, a teaching department, college, faculty, learning support centre, or library). We would expect an organisational unit within a larger organisation to comprise a minimum of 10 full-time-equivalent staff.

The first closing date for applications for the organisational GPPG is **Friday, 6 May 2011, 5.00 pm**. All information, including guidelines, policy, and application forms are available on our website: <http://akooteaoroa.ac.nz/good-practice-publication-grants>

Details of our 2011 round of the individual and/or group GPPG scheme will be announced on the Ako Aotearoa website in April 2011.



Ako Aotearoa
Organisational Good Practice
Publication Grants 2011

Sustainable improvement of outcomes for learners isn't just about the improvement of individual practice. Strategic and systematic organisational support is also critical to enhancing educational performance. This new funding initiative recognises and shares effective organisational strategies that have been shown to benefit learners.

Now Seeking Applications
The Ako Aotearoa Organisational Good Practice Publication Grants (GPPG) have been established to showcase organisational strategies designed to improve teaching and learning that have been widely and sustainably implemented, and proven to be effective.

To be supported through this scheme, the organisational strategies must:

- Have been implemented for at least two years.
- Have been systematically evaluated either by way of robust evaluation or independent research to demonstrate learner benefit.
- Are subject to ongoing review.

Ako Aotearoa Good Practice Publication Grants:

- are open to any recognised tertiary education organisation
- focus on demonstrated good practice
- have a broad inclusive scope

The maximum grant allocation is \$10,000 (GST Inclusive). See back page for further information. Applications are due by Friday 5pm, 6th May 2011. For further information contact your Regional Hub or visit <http://akooteaoroa.ac.nz/good-practice-publication-grants>

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Our register of current tertiary education projects

Ako Aotearoa's online national register of research and implementation projects was launched in 2008 with the purpose of bringing together information about current tertiary projects into one place. We wanted to assist people preparing to undertake their own research or projects, helping them to determine what work is already underway in their area of interest.

We have just completed a significant update of the register, and it now includes information about more than 1,350 projects relating to tertiary education in New Zealand, completed or in progress dating from 2006 onwards.

New features of the register

New and improved search function: You can now search the register by project status (complete or in progress), topic, and discipline, or by funding body (such as, Ako Aotearoa National Project Fund, Teaching and Learning Research Initiative). You can also choose whether you want a brief or detailed description of projects from your search, and specify the number of results viewed per page.

Researchers will soon be able to update information about their projects directly: We are currently working on this functionality. This will also enable you to add new projects and edit details of your existing projects.

Download information from the register: Search results can now be downloaded into an excel spreadsheet for future reference. You can choose to export the entire register, or download just your search results.

Visit the register at: www.akooteaoroa.ac.nz/research-register, or access via the register icon on our website homepage.

We hope that you find these new features helpful. We look forward to receiving your



feedback on the improvements, or any information about projects that we have not yet included in the register. Email us at: info@akooteaoroa.ac.nz



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