AKO AOTEAROA
NATIONAL CENTRE FOR TERTIARY TEACHING EXCELLENCE

COLLABORATING ON TERTIARY TEACHING AND LEARNING

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AKO AOTEAROA

alert

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Unitec's dean of teaching and learning, Linda Keesing-Styles, introduces the inaugural International Conference on eLearning Futures to be held at Unitec from 30 November to 2 December this year.

This innovative conference will be one of the best local opportunities to participate in discussions and presentations at the cutting edge of e-learning. With a focus on a range of e-learning issues from pedagogy to strategy, policy, research, computer-assisted language learning, and artificial intelligence, there is something for everyone. The conference organisation is a collaboration between a range of different interest groups so it represents a broad range of perspectives.

We have attracted some high-quality keynote speakers who are profiled on the conference website www.icelf.org. Hopefully, a visit to the site will be enough to inspire you to factor this in to your professional development this year, or encourage you to submit a paper. Check out the deadlines for proposal submissions now so you don't miss these. They are closing soon.

Unitec is delighted to have the support of Ako Aotearoa in the hosting of this conference. The conference represents a fitting finale to the official implementation of Unitec's comprehensive e-learning strategy, which was initially inspired by the *Taking the Lead: Strategic management for e-learning* process and resources provided by Ako Aotearoa. The conference also provides an opportunity for many to share their experiences of improving and embedding e-learning, or to hear from others, local and international, on the latest in e-learning trends.

We look forward to seeing you there.

Welcome

As I write this introduction to the 15th edition of our newsletter, it is just after the Easter break and a good opportunity to reflect on the first quarter of the year. First and foremost, our very best wishes and utmost respect go to our colleagues across the sector in the Christchurch area who have done amazing things to re-establish tertiary provision in the region. Our thoughts are with you all. It is inspiring to see how tertiary practitioners and students have pulled together so positively and how collegial and innovative people can be when circumstances dictate. There are examples for all of us to learn from here.

Any successful endeavour in tertiary education is ultimately about the collaboration between teacher and learner. One of Ako Aotearoa's key strategic themes is "hearing and acting on the learner voice". We believe the student (or, more broadly, the learner) view is critical to achieving effective debate about improving tertiary teaching and learning. This newsletter provides some progress updates on the work we are doing with the Australian Council of Educational Research on improving our understanding of how students engage with tertiary study in universities and institutes of technology and polytechnics. The Australasian Survey of Student Engagement (AUSSE) is the most comprehensive evidence base of how students are involved (or not involved!) with their learning. In 2010 the AUSSE garnered information from nearly 13,000 New Zealand students – this is information we simply can't ignore.

In a similar vein, we also feature a major project supported through our National Project Fund on transitions of students from school to university study in science, technology and engineering. This project, led by Professor Tim Parkinson of Massey University, provides a four-way contrast between school students, university students, school teachers and university teachers. Understanding and reconciling the different expectations of these players is critical in enhancing access to science, technology and engineering professions. This project provides a framework to enable this to happen.

These projects are exciting work. They provide strong platforms to assist us in understanding what most supports students in achieving successful outcomes.

With best wishes

Dr Peter Coolbear
Director, Ako Aotearoa

Understanding what students are doing and thinking during their tertiary study.

AUSSE Australasian survey of student engagement

ACER

The Australasian Survey of Student Engagement (AUSSE) projects with the New Zealand university sector and institutes of technology and polytechnics near completion and a third project with the private training establishment sector begins. Peter Coolbear provides an update on the progress and potential of these collaborative projects with the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER).

In tertiary education, the quest for appropriate evidence to support practice improvement is often problematic, but the AUSSE provides an enormously powerful evidence-gathering tool from the student perspective.

Derived from its North American counterpart, the United States-based National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), AUSSE is, by a considerable distance, the most highly validated survey of student learning activity available for tertiary education in Australasia. In 2010 it was used by 55 institutions (mainly universities) across Australia and New Zealand, and results can be cross-referenced to 1,300 providers using the NSSE as well as to similar in other countries such as Mexico, South Africa, and China.

The AUSSE measures six dimensions of engagement (including academic challenge, active learning and student–staff interactions), plus seven outcome measures (for example, higher-order thinking, career readiness, departure intention, and overall satisfaction). It also provides a wide range of information on specific student behaviours.

Allowing internal, national, and international benchmarking, plus criterion referencing, the survey instrument provides a hugely powerful diagnostic tool for understanding how students are involved (or not involved) in their learning. In essence it is designed to move conversations about quality improvement from anecdotes about student attitudes and actions to a solid evidence base.

New Zealand universities and their students certainly see the value of this, with 10,665 students responding to the AUSSE survey in 2010. However, the AUSSE provides such a rich data source that providers have often been daunted by the sheer quantity of information it provides.

In response to this, the institutional-research community in New Zealand universities has been supported by Ako Aotearoa and ACER to develop a collection of papers that represent the first sector-wide attempt to evaluate what the AUSSE data tell us about student engagement in our universities. Working off their AUSSE data in particular, the group has developed eight papers on different aspects of students' experiences of university study. Chapters include an analysis of what the AUSSE tells us about Māori and Pacific experiences, gender differences in approaches to university study, and the relationship between employment and study. Each chapter has been written from the perspective of providing an evidence base for further informed discussion about how students' learning experiences and outcomes can be enhanced. We anticipate the book will be jointly published by ACER and Ako Aotearoa in the middle of this year.

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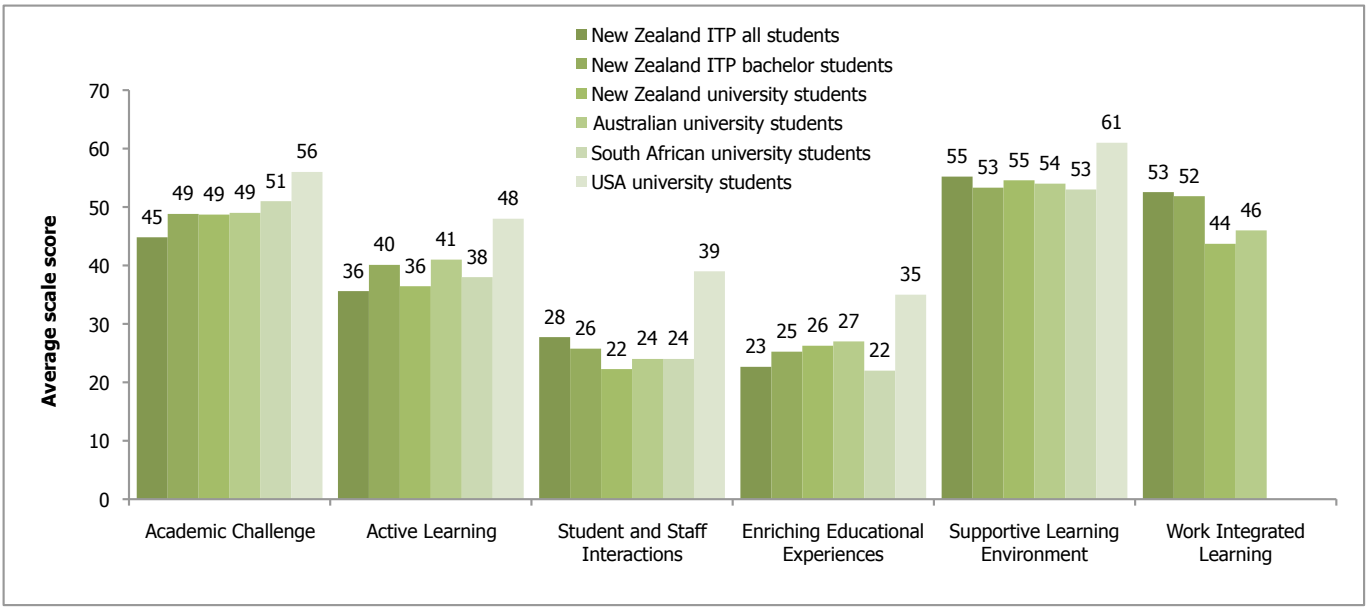
Average engagement scale scores – New Zealand ITP and university comparisons



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Given the potential of the AUSSE for universities, in 2010 Ako Aotearoa also funded a pilot of the AUSSE in 10 ITPs. Each ITP received its own institutional data last November and we held a workshop on the near-final draft of the ITP sector report with participants in March of this year. A total of 2,272 students responded across the sector. This allows us to draw a wide range of preliminary conclusions about how students are engaging with their studies in ITPs. For example, the sector data allow for some interesting comparisons between different levels of study and also allow us to compare different student groups. For example, the data point to some interesting (and surprising) differences between the experience of Pacific and Māori learners in ITPs; supporting other work that suggests that patterns of engagement (and disengagement) differ between the two groups.

The data set also offers the opportunity to compare engagement and outcomes for ITP and degree students, as well as those studying in New Zealand and internationally. The figure on page 2 provides just one example. Such figures need to be interpreted with care and must take into account the different demographics of students in different sets of institutions. However, if a time series of data is built up, this will provide a rich comparative picture of student behaviours and perceptions.

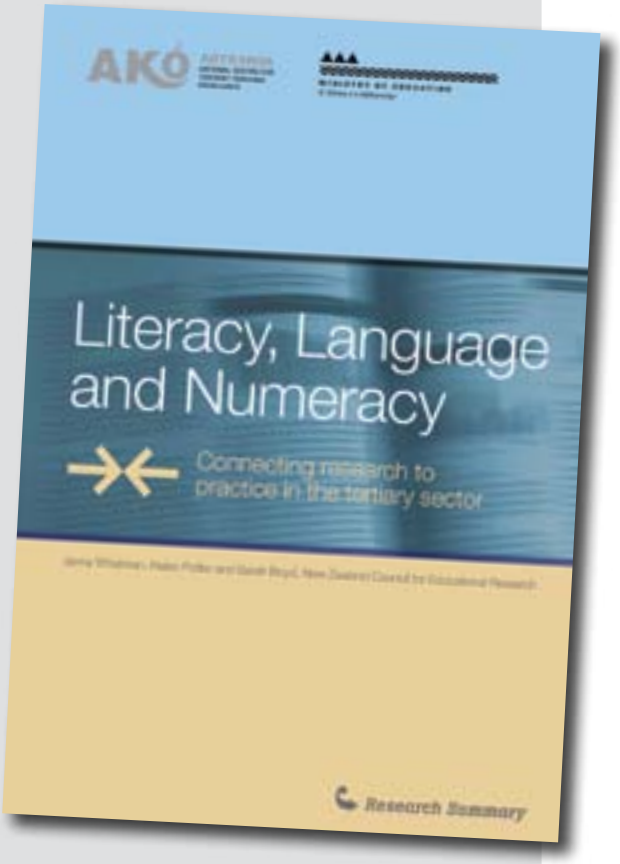
I should also note that the data set shows considerable differences in different statistics within the ITP group. Developing conversations about these differences within institutions is critical if the AUSSE is to be of any value. In the context of evaluative quality enhancement, those internal comparisons made by institutions with their own data sets against sector norms will be one of the most powerful routes to effective self-assessment in the future.

We expect the sector report for the New Zealand ITPs to be ready in early June. Again, it will be jointly published by ACER and Ako Aotearoa. We will be happy to facilitate workshops for individual institutions (or regional groups of institutions) on request.

Recognising the potential of this survey instrument, a further pilot with the PTE sector in collaboration with the New Zealand Association of Private Education Providers was initiated in March this year.

Connecting research to practice in literacy, language and numeracy

We are delighted to see that our recently released publication, *Literacy, Language and Numeracy: Connecting research to practice in the tertiary sector*, is already attracting a great deal of attention – particularly with the private training establishment and adult and community education sectors.



We collaborated with the Ministry of Education to commission Jenny Whatman, Helen Potter, and Sarah Boyd, from the New Zealand Council of Educational Research, to develop this resource. It comprises a research-summary document and a two-sided reference card for tutors and organisations. The work summarises key information from nine research reports recently published by the Ministry of Education on literacy, language, and numeracy (LLN).

We commissioned the development of these resources to provide LLN practitioners and tertiary education organisations with access to evidence-based information about good practice. Simply put, this document is about turning research into meaningful action – something we believe is critical for achieving positive change. We intend to share this information as widely across the tertiary sector as possible.

The summary document and reference card together identify a number of key questions for organisations and practitioners to consider.

- **For organisations**, these questions include: are you embedding LLN in a way that is effective for your learners? Do you have a coherent philosophy for embedding LLN? Have you considered having an "LLN champion" in your organisation to embed and promote LLN?
- **For tutors**, these questions include: how can you best meet your learners' needs with respect to LLN? Are the cultural backgrounds of learners being adequately acknowledged in LLN delivery? Does LLN teaching build on learners' existing knowledge and on their prior learning experiences? What additional e-learning support is given to adult LLN learners who might not be as confident working with these technologies?

Please email info@akoaotearoa.ac.nz to request printed copies, or go to our website at http://akoaotearoa.ac.nz/lln to download them in PDF format.

BY IAN ROWE

News from the Central Hub

Kia ora readers and welcome to Issue 15 of our newsletter. We hope you are enjoying a mild start to the winter months. This edition features three recently completed hub funded projects, each of which is now available via our website. We highlight another successful *Hei Tauira* workshop held at the Open Polytechnic in Lower Hutt and congratulate our central hub convenor, Janet Walke, who is a recent recipient of the highest accolade at the Universal College of Learning.

Completed regional hub funded projects

We are pleased to announce three more completed Central Hub projects. The teaching environments targeted in these projects are diverse, but they share a common aim to improve teaching and enhance learning outcomes for students.

Supporting accounting students to think critically

Led by Martin Turner from Victoria University of Wellington, and drawing on his previous research, the aim of this project was to develop a suite of Excel spreadsheets specifically designed to support authentic assessments in courses involving financial statement analysis. Martin used course materials and assessment methods that required students to make insightful analysis and discerning judgements that would assist the development of their critical thinking skills – thereby enhancing their overall learning.

The key findings of this research show that assessments need to:

- be customised for individual students
- be authentic (dealing with real-world scenarios)
- involve regular formative feedback as part of an integrated set of interventions
- support accounting students to experience high-level task relevance
- contain high-level conceptions of learning
- be intrinsically motivating
- require deep learning as a necessary precondition to develop critical thinking skills in students.

Identifying positive PTE tutor practices for Māori learner benefit

Anne Greenhalgh, Workforce Development Ltd, recently completed her hub project *Towards the identification of key tutor practices that are positively correlated with successful completion for Māori students within a PTE environment*. The project highlights what works well for Māori students in a private training establishment (PTE) environment and provides the groundwork for further exploration of the teaching practices of the tutors involved.

Using data from three previous years of Māori student completion and success, Anne identified courses with high achievement rates. Using questionnaires and focus groups, she was able to identify the characteristics of the learning environment in these courses that positively contributed to the Māori students' success.

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Universal College of Learning "Icon" – Janet Walke.

Icon status for Central Hub convenor

On behalf of Ako Aotearoa, I would like to acknowledge and congratulate Janet Walke, who has recently received the highest academic honour at the Universal College of Learning (UCOL) and been appointed as an "Icon". These appointments are made to academic staff members who have achieved sustained distinction and excellence in their fields of expertise. Janet Walke is the leader of teaching excellence at UCOL and is also the convenor of Ako Aotearoa's Central Hub.

UCOL's deputy chief executive Bonnie Dewart says that Icons exemplify the high quality of teaching at the organisation and the value placed on community and industry recognition: "These excellent academics are role models and mentors for other academic staff, and an inspiration to our students".

Based at UCOL's Palmerston North campus, Janet's role spans all three UCOL campuses where she takes the lead role in the provision of the Certificate in Adult Teaching (Advanced) programme and provides new lecturing staff with training and mentoring support.

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(These included being able to access learning through their language, having their culture valued, starting each day with a class meeting, singing waiata and using peer instruction and small group activities.) The students described aspects of their day-to-day learning that made it enjoyable, gave them a feeling of support, and made it easier for them to achieve good results.

Most of the factors identified by the students are already acknowledged as good teaching practice for working with Māori learners and are closely aligned with the findings in our publication *Hei Tauira*, referred to later in the article. What is particularly important about this project is that the research focuses specifically on the learning environment of a PTE with a high proportion of Māori students, and the findings can provide valuable assistance to other PTEs across the sector. It is exciting for us to support projects at a regional level that focus on Māori success in tertiary education.

The second part of the project has started and involves working with the identified course tutors to describe in detail their teaching practices that contribute directly and specifically to Māori student achievement. That research will provide practical guidelines and resources for other teachers working in a similar PTE context.

Teaching practicum in 21st-century New Zealand

This Central Hub project by Louise Starkey, Victoria University of Wellington and Peter Rawlins, Massey University, examined the learning experience of student teachers and their mentors during teaching practicums in order to describe a practicum model appropriate for 21st-century New Zealand.

Ideas about teaching, learning and mentoring are evolving, and the way that pre-service teacher education programmes are organised is changing. There is a movement away from the traditional "craft" of teaching learnt through "apprentice" modelling to teaching as a profession learnt through reciprocal reflective academic study. This is where theoretical models inform teaching practice, and teachers appraise those models in the light of their teaching experience.

Louise and Peter's report discusses the crucial role of peers in assisting student teachers to obtain meaning from their practicums. It highlights the nature of productive relationships between student teachers and their associate teachers. The authors suggest the curriculum needs better alignment between the learning activities of student teachers and their daily work as registered teachers. Finally, the report describes how practicums could be designed to move understanding of practice from a specific context to a more holistic approach with multiple teaching strategies.

The authors intend to use the data to write practicum guidelines for schools, make course design recommendations for pre-service teacher courses, and generate material to assist student teachers to get the most value from their teaching practicums. Those three reports will form practical resources for others involved in pre-service teacher education. The reports will be linked to this report when they are published.

For more details on these projects and their final reports visit the Ako Aotearoa website: www.akoaotearoa.ac.nz

Hei Tauira workshop at the Open Polytechnic

Since the launch of *Hei Tauira: Teaching and learning for success for Māori in tertiary settings*, Ako Aotearoa regional hubs have run workshops, facilitated by the authors Janinka Greenwood and Lynne-Harata Te Aika, both from the University of Canterbury.

Caryl-Louise Robinson (left) and Catherine Ross (right) from the Open Polytechnic, discuss *Hei Tauira* with its joint author and workshop facilitator, Janinka Greenwood.

The workshops are designed to encourage tertiary education organisations to explore how *Hei Tauira* can be applied to their organisations and teaching environments. The work identifies four exemplar programmes for Māori students across four different tertiary organisations, and has drawn together the key factors that contribute to those programmes being considered successful – as identified by the students, staff, organisations, and local iwi.

The Central Hub's most recent workshop was held at the Open Polytechnic. Lower Hutt provided a stunning, clear day for Janinka and Lynne-Harata to present their session to 37 teaching, allied, and management staff, accompanied by Caroline Seelig, Open Polytechnic's chief executive. By her presence for the whole day, Caroline acknowledged the importance of addressing the principles and issues contained in *Hei Tauira*.

The workshop commenced with an introduction to the findings of the *Hei Tauira* research. Participants then worked in small groups to plan detailed interventions that would address the research findings and lead to greater success for Open Polytechnic Māori students. Those plans were reported back and recorded in a plenary session. Feedback from the event was very positive and the chief executive indicated that management would build on the plans of what she considered to be a very worthwhile workshop.

The Central Hub would be pleased to host further *Hei Tauira* workshops. Please make contact with us if you are interested.

Building a stronger science future for New Zealand

Kirsty Weir describes the soon to be launched National Project Fund project Engaging learners effectively in science, technology and engineering: The pathway from secondary to university education*, led by Professor Tim Parkinson and his team from Massey University.*

Stronger connections between science, technology, and business are critical for positive economic development in New Zealand. The country's transformation into a high-value, innovative, knowledge-led economy and society will require a strong base of scientific and technical professionals. However, if completions in tertiary-level science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) continue to grow as slowly as they did in the early 2000s, there will simply not be enough graduates to meet future demand for STEM-based occupations.

As highlighted in the report *Looking Ahead: Science Education for the Twenty-First Century* recently released from Sir Peter Gluckman, the prime minister's chief science advisor, the key challenges facing science education relate to:

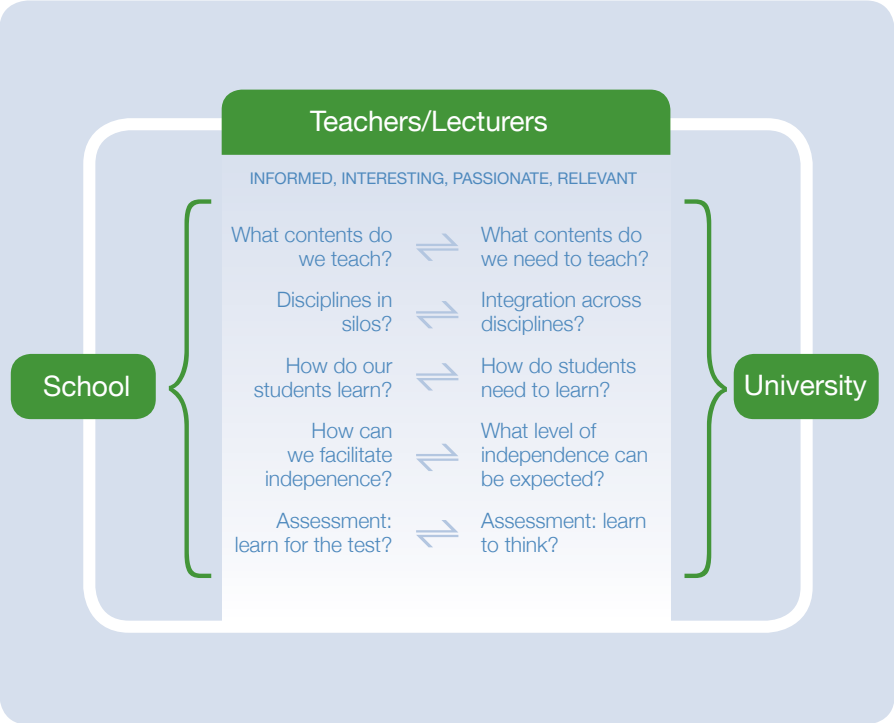
a) too many learners disengaging from science at secondary school

b) not enough learners continuing to study science after they leave secondary school, and

c) the need for science education to reflect the changing nature and role of science in our society. Understanding how we can enhance participation and success in science at tertiary level is therefore a key priority for education, and society as a whole.

In *Engaging learners effectively in science, technology and engineering: The pathway from secondary to university education*, Professor Tim Parkinson and his team from Massey University have identified key factors affecting learner engagement in the sciences at secondary and tertiary level. Learners at both school and university report being attracted to science because it is relevant, contemporary, and meaningful both to themselves and society more generally. However, while students report a high level of commitment to performance, it is clear that the "transmission" method of instruction most often used in science education does not stimulate interest and engagement in science.

Dialogic framework for collaboration between and within the secondary and tertiary sectors to promote engagement and to facilitate students' transition



The research also found evidence of a "culture of blame", where staff and students are more ready to attribute problems to each other than reflect on their own contribution. Similarly, university lecturers tended to blame the secondary-school system for not sufficiently preparing learners for university study. This culture may result in lecturers underestimating the breadth and depth of learners' knowledge as they enter university education, and therefore possibly teaching to the lowest common denominator or unknowingly communicating low expectations to their learners.

This research project further indicates that the single most important factor in learner engagement is the interaction between the teacher/lecturer and the learner. Effective science educators create relevant contexts for learning, promote self-directed learning, encourage learners' understanding of the scientific method, and incorporate a range of technological innovations into their teaching. The individual effectiveness of teachers is, of course, constrained by the organisational environment in which they work, thus a critical recommendation of this project is that organisations provide the necessary support for educators to improve their practice so as to maximise learner engagement.

To address these important issues, the researchers have developed a framework for promoting student engagement across the transition from secondary to tertiary study in STEM subjects. This framework presents key questions about engagement and transition, as described in the figure opposite.

We are looking forward to launching this project in the coming weeks.

For more information go to the project space on our website: http://akoaotearoa.ac.nz/projects/engaging-learners-effectively-science-technology-and-engineering-pathway-secondary-universi

Our collaboration with other agencies

Our senior research/project analyst, Nicholas Huntington, provides an overview of two collaborations between Ako Aotearoa and other agencies. One is an event focused on academic preparation and "bridging" programmes, the other is a project targeted at "priority" learners in the lower levels of the tertiary education framework.

A Strategic Direction for Bridging Education

Attendees at the recent A Strategic Direction for Bridging Education forum.

The future of bridging programmes and pathways to degree-level study was the focus of a forum entitled A Strategic Direction for Bridging Education, held by Ako Aotearoa in conjunction with the New Zealand Association of Bridging Educators, on 8 April.

Ensuring there are effective degree pathways for all students – not just the highest performers – is particularly critical in the current tertiary education climate. The Tertiary Education Strategy 2010–2015 (TES) identifies the need to increase engagement in degree-level study – particularly for young people, Māori, and Pacific learners. Moreover, the capped tertiary-funding environment, combined with an increasing focus on performance, is encouraging providers to ensure that those who enter degree study are appropriately prepared to succeed at this level.

However, at the same time, a combination of capped funding, investment advice, and growing enrolment pressures from the current economic climate, is leading some providers to reconsider the academic preparation and bridging programmes they provide. Additionally, while current policy settings emphasise collaboration, some providers seem to be encountering barriers to pursuing collaboration "on the ground".

This forum brought together approximately 25 invited participants from universities, private tertiary establishments, institutes of technology, and polytechnics – along with government agencies – to discuss these challenges and how the sector can respond to them. The discussion during the forum focused on three core questions: What are the main issues facing bridging education that need to be addressed? What do we need to know to address these issues effectively? And how can we improve collaboration between different providers and provider types?

In the forum's final session, participants identified actions for the group to pursue in the future. The two main proposals the forum agreed to explore included undertaking a stocktake of data and information about programmes across all sectors, and the possibility of some form of shared national qualification. These proposals are now being further developed by working parties drawn from the forum participants.

Material from the event, including a commissioned discussion paper, will be available soon as a short report.

Increasing educational attainment for "priority" learners

Ako Aotearoa, with support from the Tertiary Education Commission and Ministry of Education, is commencing a project to examine how our tertiary system can best serve the needs of learners at lower levels of the New Zealand Qualifications Framework. This project will be driven by an independent Educational Attainment Working Group (EAWG), which will consider existing international and national evidence and examples of good practice. The working group will focus on providing advice related to teaching and learning – although part of this will involve considering the context within which these take place.

For this project, we are using the term "priority learners" to describe the students served by these programmes. This is for two reasons. First, ensuring our system is serving these learners is not only an explicit priority established in the TES, but it provides a key vehicle for achieving other TES priorities. Second, the term "priority learners" emphasises the importance of this education. These programmes have significant potential to improve social and economic outcomes – particularly given that these levels are often an entry point for people who previously have been poorly served by our education system. Learners at this level are engaged in programmes that provide the basic, essential skills required for initial entry into the workforce, the development of further life-skills, and/or progression into further study.

In future issues of this newsletter we will feature the activities of the working group and will also include details of a series of public forums and visits from invited international experts.

The members of the EAWG are:

- Peter Coolbear (Ako Aotearoa; Chair)
- Jeremy Baker (Industry Training Federation)
- Christine Clark (Corporate Academy Group)
- Peter Conway (New Zealand Council of Trade Unions)
- Karen Davis (Victoria University of Wellington)
- Dr Shane Edwards (Te Wānanga o Aotearoa)
- Stuart Middleton (Manukau Institute of Technology)
- Phil O'Reilly (Business NZ)
- Pauline Winter (Auckland University of Technology).

If you have any questions about either of these pieces of work, please contact Nicholas Huntington at: n.huntington@massey.ac.nz

Te mahi ngātahi me te iwi Māori – Our work with and for Māori

Ngahiwi Apanui, our kaihautū Māori, brings an update on recent activities.

It has been a busy end of 2010 and beginning to 2011. Some robust and lively discussion has marked the beginning of 2011 for Te Rūnanga Māori – the Ako Aotearoa Māori Caucus. The outcome has been the approval of important documents that will shape our work with Māori stakeholders over the next three years: Te Hīkoinga Whakamua – The Ako Aotearoa Māori Strategy 2010–2013, *He Takohanga Whakaaro* – the Tuia Te Ako proceedings, and Te Tuku Karere – our Māori Communications Plan.

Te Hīkoinga Whakamua

The Ako Aotearoa Māori Strategy 2010–2013 was approved in December 2010. The draft was prepared in June 2010 after a round of strategic visits to Māori tertiary educators and put to the Tuia Te Ako Māori Tertiary Hui in August 2010. The feedback from the hui confirmed the general direction and themes of the plan, and a final draft was put to Te Rūnanga Māori, which they subsequently approved.

Information gathered in meetings in 2009 and 2010 with Māori in the tertiary sector was critical to the development of Te Hīkoinga Whakamua. This information is essential in order for Ako Aotearoa to shape programmes that support Māori educators and learners, so that we address the needs of Māori in the various parts of the tertiary sector. This year I have already had the pleasure of meeting with staff from Te Wānanga o Awanuiārangi, Unitec and Western Institute of Technology Taranaki and look forward to meeting with many more groups in the coming months.

Tuia Te Ako update

The hui-planning committee will be meeting this month to kick-start the planning for the next Tuia Te Ako hui. The event is planned for early 2012 and it is expected a date will be announced following this meeting. The committee is keen to take the learning from Tuia Te Ako 2010 to make this forthcoming hui even better. We will keep you updated with developments as the planning gets under way.

We are also excited to announce the release of *He Takohanga Whakaaro*, the proceedings of Tuia Te Ako 2010. The proceedings feature transcripts of the keynote presentations filled with valuable information and insights, as well as summaries of the workshop feedback from delegates and photos from the two days.

All hui delegates, sponsors, key Māori organisations, and other stakeholders will receive a hardcopy of *He Takohanga Whakaaro*. The document will also be available in PDF format via our website at: www.akoaotearoa.ac.nz/tuiateako

Tui, tui, tuituia!

A primary source for content relating to Māori in the tertiary sector

Te Tuku Karere lays the pathway for the development of our work to support Māori in the tertiary sector, drawing on input from Māori stakeholders to shape that work. Te Rūnanga Māori is keen to ensure that with all that we do in this area, we continue to focus on sharing kaupapa Māori with all parts of the sector.

One of the tools we consider pivotal to our communication with and support for Māori stakeholders is the Ako Aotearoa website. There are three key areas for Māori on the site:

1. our work with Māori educators and learners
2. Mātauranga Māori content for the resource centre
3. Tuia Te Ako community space.

At present, we are working on a project to develop a guide that will improve the accessibility of Mātauranga Māori content in the resource centre. Part of this project will involve identifying additional resources relevant to Mātauranga Māori that will be of value to practitioners and learners.

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