



Dr Peter Coolbear, Ako Aotearoa director, with Ralph Springgett, president of Massey University's Extramural Students' Society.

Responding to the learner voice

At the end of last year, Ako Aotearoa signed an agreement with Ralph Springgett, president of Massey University's Extramural Students' Society (EXMSS), to fund a student-led project aimed at finding out what tertiary learners at Massey University think of the quality of their tertiary education experience.

Titled "Review It", the tool builds on EXMSS's current "Rate It" tertiary paper rating system and will provide an online information forum for students to research future paper choices. The evaluation tool is carefully moderated and seeks to recognise teaching excellence as well as supporting continuous quality improvement. The initiative is part of what Peter Coolbear describes as Ako Aotearoa's "next critical steps to develop the debate with tertiary learners directly about their key issues concerning the quality of their education."

The EXMSS team expects "Review It" will deliver improved decision-making capability for students around paper choice and improved satisfaction in the choices they make.

Ako Aotearoa is excited about the project's potential to provide a model of an appropriately managed, learner-led evaluation tool that may, in time, be available to the whole tertiary sector. We see the value of this in providing robust learner-perspective information that can be triangulated against provider-driven evidence supporting quality improvement.

Review It!
Students helping students.

We look forward to updating you as this "Review It" project progresses.

Welcome

Welcome to Ako Aotearoa's first newsletter for 2010. I trust the year is beginning well for you and your learners.

This year is already shaping up to be a full and ground-breaking one for Ako Aotearoa. A key event will be the national hui for Māori tertiary educators and leaders, Tuia te Ako, which we are planning for August. Ngahiwi Apanui outlines our plans for this on page 2.

By the time you receive this newsletter, Associate Minister of Education, Hon Dr Pita Sharples will have launched our publication *Hei Tauria*, by Janinka Greenwood and Lynne-Harata Te Aika from the University of Canterbury's College of Education. Developed as a summary of their Ministry of Education-funded Teaching Matters Forum Project that surveyed exemplars of tertiary teaching practice for Māori, this publication provides a guide to the key factors to be considered in fostering success for Māori. We look forward to hosting Lynne and Janinka in a series of workshops around the country later in the year.

Other exciting developments include our continuing work with the Australian Council for Educational Research on the use of the Australasian Survey of Student Engagement in New Zealand. An outline of our project to pilot the use of this survey in the Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics sector is featured on the last page of this newsletter. We also look forward to supporting a collaborative project that will build on current use of the survey instrument in the university sector.

Meanwhile, we have commissioned TNS Conversa to undertake a major formative evaluation of Ako Aotearoa. As part of the evaluation, an online survey is being sent out to our contacts on Tuesday 16 March. If you do not receive it and would like to be involved, please email: Catherine.Frethey-Bentham@tns-global.com for a copy. The deadline for responses is Thursday 8 April. We appreciate hearing your views.

Dr Peter Coolbear
Director, Ako Aotearoa

Tuia te ākongā, tuia te ako, tui, tui, tuituia!

Ngahiwi Apanui, kaihautū Māori, outlines our first national hui for Māori tertiary educators and learners set for August this year.

August 2010 is shaping up to be an exciting month for Ako Aotearoa and Māori tertiary educators as plans for the national Māori tertiary educators' hui get underway. Titled Tuia te Ako (sewing together the teaching and learning), this inaugural Ako Aotearoa-sponsored event, will bring together up to 300 people working in Māori tertiary education: Māori tertiary leaders and teachers, iwi leaders, hapū and iwi groups running tertiary training programmes, graduates (local and overseas) and learners. The event is scheduled for 12–13 August at Wellington's Pipitea Marae.

Tuia te Ako is an initiative of Ako Aotearoa's Māori Caucus. Last year, the caucus came to the agreement there was a great advantage to be gained by holding one national Māori educators' hui, with the possibility of establishing it as an annual event on the Māori tertiary calendar.

Tuia te Ako is also part of Ako Aotearoa's brief to support tertiary teaching and learning, and, in particular, its commitment to support Māori educators and learners in Māori and mainstream tertiary education contexts. The hui will also be particularly valuable in assisting Ako Aotearoa to set its Māori strategy for 2010 onwards.

An organisational whakapapa (structure) has been established to plan and manage the hui. The whakapapa comprises a planning committee of tertiary educators from across the sector and an events team under the maru (umbrella) of Ako Aotearoa's Māori Caucus. This industrious bunch has already set the main themes of the hui, and approaches are being made to key Māori educators to make keynote presentations on those themes.

The themes are: Leadership in the Tertiary Sector; Māori/Iwi Advancement; Discussion of Māori Tertiary Issues; and Whakawhanaungatanga – building community among the Māori tertiary whānau.

The Māori Caucus and planning committee are keen to progress the discussion and debate about the alignment of Māori/iwi advancement



Tuia te Ako 2010

Tuia te ākongā, tuia te ako, tui, tui, tuituia

aspirations with Māori tertiary education. A main outcome of the hui will be to provide iwi leaders and Māori tertiary educators with the opportunity to discuss how this alignment may be better achieved.

A major factor in choosing Pipitea Marae as the venue was Ako Aotearoa's desire to build on the existing relationship with tangata whenua, Te Atiawa. An exciting recent development has been the establishment by Ako Aotearoa's Māori Caucus of its own kaupapa Māori framework called Te Tauākī Ako. One of the principles within the framework is "mana" – recognition of the authority of iwi within their rohe (region). Pipitea Marae has recently come under the joint ownership of Te Atiawa's Wellington Tenth's Trust and Ngāti Pōneke. Given its size, it became the logical venue for Tuia te Ako 2010.

As if that wasn't enough, powerful principles such as manaakitanga (hospitality, generosity), whanaungatanga (kinship, relationships), te reo and whakamana (empowerment) are also compelling reasons to hold the inaugural hui on the marae.

Confirmation of the keynote presenters for Tuia te Ako 2010 should be completed by the end of February. Intending delegates should look out for updates in future Ako Aotearoa newsletters and check our website www.ako.aotearoa.ac.nz for further information from the beginning of March.

Hei kōrero whakamutunga mā tātau katoa, nau mai haere mai e te whānau. Mā tō rourou, mā taku rourou e ora ai te iwi.

Funding update – Doctoral Scholarships

As part of the inaugural round of our 2008 National Project Fund, three Doctoral Scholarships were awarded to build research capability and capacity in the area of tertiary teaching and learning. The scholarships are \$25,000 per annum plus course fees. Each project is now under way and we are delighted to report on their progress to date.



Angela Feekery

Integrating Information Literacy and Developing Academic Voice in the New Zealand Tertiary Context

**Angela Feekery, supervised by Associate Professor Lisa Emerson
Massey University**

Angela's research examines how students develop information literacy skills and find their "voice" in academic writing. Using participatory action research, Angela will explore how information literacy instruction can be embedded into the disciplines to enhance students' information literacy and writing skills over the full undergraduate programme. Research suggests that poor information literacy is strongly related to unintentional plagiarism; therefore Angela's thesis findings will inform organisational policy that focuses on the prevention of plagiarism. Angela has already completed a literature review on information literacy, which was presented at the Tertiary Education Research in New Zealand (TERNZ) conference last November. The next stages include writing a literature review on action research as a methodology, and conducting preliminary interviews.



Kelby Smith-Han

An Investigation of Undergraduate Medical Students' Discourses of General Practice and Surgery

**Kelby Smith-Han, supervised by Dr Chrystal Jaye
University of Otago**

Kelby's research addresses the current workforce crisis in the area of general practice by examining the vocational choices of medical students. In particular, Kelby's research examines the discourses of learners within medical schools and teaching hospitals relating to general practice and surgery. This research will highlight the reasons graduate medical students enter general practice at very low rates compared with surgery, thus informing responses aimed at increasing the New Zealand general practice workforce. Kelby has conducted his in-depth interviews with first- and sixth-year learners and data analysis is under way.



Matiu Ratima

Māori Learning Māori: What Works for Māori Adults Learning Māori as a Second Language?

**Matiu Ratima, supervised by Professor Stephen May
University of Waikato**

Matiu's thesis examines the characteristics of successful adult te reo Māori learners. By quantitatively assessing Māori learners' te reo competence and triangulating this with qualitative data on the learning experience, the thesis will contribute to our current understanding of how to effectively teach te reo Māori as a second language to Māori adults. A literature review on second language acquisition has been completed, and the language proficiency test is currently being developed. Matiu also presented his work at the joint Ako Aotearoa/Teaching and Learning Research Initiative Colloquium last September.

BY BRIDGET O'REGAN

News from the Southern Hub

Tēnā koutou katoa. Welcome to the first Southern Hub news for 2010. In this issue we feature two events I was fortunate to attend in December, and highlight two recently completed projects. Unfortunately, however, the issue commences on a sad note. It is with much sadness that I write of the sudden passing away of Pat's husband, Chris, two weeks before Christmas. I am sure you join with me as I extend sincere sympathy and warm wishes to Pat and her family in their loss.



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Southern Hub-funded project team – Philippa Seaton, Paul Watson, Jane Mountier, Deborah Sims, all from Christchurch Polytechnic Institute of Technology.

Learners' Needs and Practice-based Learning Informing Tertiary Teaching

In this Southern Hub-funded project and report, Paul Watson and his team from the Christchurch Polytechnic Institute of Technology (CPIT) gathered information to assist educators to actively connect teaching with workplace learning.

While the project was based on the needs of practice nurses, the report and key recommendations for teaching and learning will be of interest and value to all educators and trainers involved in practice-based learning.

The first two phases of the study identified the priority educational needs of practice nurses related to child and youth health and described the practice-based learning experiences of these nurses. The team next determined the implications of these findings for transforming curricula and teaching practices in workplace learning, and developed a series of teaching and learning recommendations to guide and support practice-based learning.

The recommendations are grouped into the following areas:

- educational strategies
- teaching practice
- organisational supports
- strategies for effective learning.

Further details of these recommendations together with the full report are available through the "project outputs" link on the Southern Hub homepage: <http://ako.aotearoa.ac.nz/ako-aotearoa-southern-hub>.

Good Practice Publication Grants

Applications for the 2010 Good Practice Publication Grants (GPPG) are due by 5 pm, Friday 30 April. These grants provide an opportunity to obtain time and resources from your organisation to share your proven good practice, for publication by Ako Aotearoa. I encourage you to consider submitting an application for a GPPG. I am happy to discuss and provide support with applications so please feel free to contact me at any time. To see examples of the 2008 GPPG publications gathered together in an e-book on our website, go to: <http://ako.aotearoa.ac.nz/gppg-ebook>.



Māori Academic Professional Advancement Luncheon: Angus Macfarlane, professor of research, University of Canterbury and Bridget O'Regan, Ako Aotearoa Southern Hub coordinator.

Māori Academic Professional Advancement Luncheon

I was honoured to be a guest speaker at the Māori Academic Professional Advancement Luncheon, hosted by Manu Ao and Tū Mai Paerua on Friday 4 December. This was an occasion to celebrate and promote Māori academic professional advancement.

In his opening mihi, Tā Tipene O'Regan celebrated that there are more than 500 Māori PhDs in the country. In a cautionary note he added the majority of these are held by people aged 50 or older. It is imperative we promote and support young Māori in their study and encourage them to take advantage of the various funding sources for which they are eligible.

Associate Professor Rawiri Taonui and Professor Angus Macfarlane from the University of Canterbury spoke about government strategies, the challenges faced by Māori academics, performance-based research funding, and the links between mātauranga Māori and Western research concepts. As she shared her journey, Dr Mere Skerrett from the University of Canterbury drew links between her carving and weaving heritage and its influence on the major role she has played in Te Kōhanga Reo.

It was a great pleasure to speak about Ako Aotearoa and explore ways in which we can support and work with Māori in Te Waipounamu. Following on from the presentation, I look forward to working with Angus Macfarlane in his role of supporting Māori research.

Education symposium – ComBio 2009

We were delighted to have the opportunity to sponsor the education symposium that preceded the 2009 ComBio conference held in Christchurch in early December. Together with the 90-plus registrants for the event, I thoroughly enjoyed listening to the varied range of topics from an interesting group of presenters. These included the Invitrogen Education Award winner Dr Graham Parslow of the University of Melbourne. As he spoke on teaching with new technology for new generations, he warned of “feature creep”, reminding us that more add-ons and repackaging may not deliver any more effectiveness. At some stage, over-features detracts from value.

John Harper of Charles Sturt University introduced his free web-based programme Supermarket Botany – a botany resource for teaching and learning. The resource can be accessed at www.csu.edu.au/research/grahamcentre/education. In their presentation, Drs Keith Comer and Erik Brogt from the University of Canterbury's Centre for Teaching and Learning described a collaborative undertaking with the university's Biological Sciences lecturers. They used the results of focus group interviews with Year 2 students about what had helped prepare them for their second year of study, to enhance first year biology programmes.

These, and other presentations from the symposium are to be collated and shared on the Ako Aotearoa website shortly.

Perspectives of new trades tutors: Towards a scholarship of teaching and learning for vocational educators

In this Southern Hub-funded project and report, Selena Chan from Christchurch Polytechnic Institute of Technology worked with 13 tutors from five New Zealand Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics (ITPs) to find out about the “factors that contribute to how beginning trades tutors become teachers”. Interim findings were highlighted in our last newsletter. The project is now complete and the full report can be viewed via the “project outputs” link on the Southern Hub homepage: <http://ako.aotearoa.ac.nz/ako-aotearoa-southern-hub>.

The report will be of interest and value to educators and trainers involved in trades-based teaching and learning.

Demographic and historical information about the tutor's education, apprenticeship and workplace experience was gathered through questionnaires. Selena used interviews to investigate:

- the factors that motivated trades tutors to begin a teaching career

- their work history as trades people
- their experiences in learning the trade
- their workplace experience in training
- their perceptions of their role as tutors.

As a result of her study, Selena has formulated suggestions for organisations and staff to support trades tutors to cross the boundary between workplace trades/craft-based practice to teaching roles. These are:

- the importance of a learning organisation approach to staff development
- the establishment and continual nurturing of both internal and external communities of practice that value learning and teaching
- an improvement in the current induction systems at ITPs
- the alignment of trades tutors' workplace training-based conceptualisations of teaching and learning to extend the teaching of craft knowledge, for example, using the apprenticeship model to provide mentorship.

National Project Fund – project highlights from the 2008 teams

Last year was interesting and productive for the National Project Fund. Seven new projects were selected for funding (see *Ako Aotearoa Alert*, Issue 7) and will get under way this year. The 2008-funded project teams have undertaken an impressive range of activities to promote and disseminate their work. We are delighted to share a selection of their highlights to date.

Te Kupenga Mātauranga o Taranaki's project, Exploring How Marae or Māori Community Courses Contribute to, and Meet, Community Aspirations for Development of Taranaki Reo, Tikanga and Identity, led by Kataraina Houia-Rongonui, is now contributing to the Taranaki Māori Tertiary Education Strategy. This connection will allow the completed strategy to impact upon community-based learning opportunities in an evidence-based manner.

The project, Dedicated Education Unit: Enhancing Clinical Teaching and Learning, run by Willie Fourie and his team from the Manukau Institute of Technology and Manukau District Health Board, secured additional funding from ProCare Health Limited. The project will involve trialling a community-based dedicated education unit, the first of its kind in New Zealand. The project has generated broad interest, and has had site visits from the Waikato District Health Board and Waikato Institute of Technology.

Several project teams have caught the interest of the media. Dr Elana Curtis was interviewed by Jim Perry on the Radio Waatea Te Puutaatara Programme about her project Tātou Tātou/Success for All: Improving Māori Success in Health Professional Degree-level Studies. John Bitchener's project, Best Practice in Supervisor Feedback to Thesis Writers in New Zealand Universities, also generated attention from the New Zealand Education Review (for the October *Higher Ground* supplement last year) and *TDU Talk* from the University of Waikato.

Tim Parkinson's team had the opportunity to present findings to date from their project Engaging Learners Effectively in Science, Technology, and Engineering: The Pathway from Secondary to University Education to Nobel laureate Carl Wieman while he was visiting from the University of British Columbia. This was an exciting and valuable experience for the project team.



National Project Fund 2008 – pictured are two University of Auckland project team leaders Dr Elana Curtis (second from left) and Dr Rhys Jones (second from right), with their team members Associate Professor Papatangi Reid, Dr Mark Brown, and Kirsty Weir, Ako Aotearoa research manager.

Nicholas Huntington's project, ITO Workplace Assessment Structures, has produced a literature review, *Assessment of Learning in the Workplace: A Background Paper*, available through the Ako Aotearoa website. Dr Rhys Jones's team presented an interesting and stimulating paper at the TERNZ conference on their project Assessing Cultural Competency in Workplace-based Professional Education.

Finally, Professor Tania Ka'ai's project, Te Kāwai Kūmara – A Pilot for the Synchronous Delivery of a Common Postgraduate in Te Reo Māori across Multiple Sites, was approved for the Master of Arts in Te Reo Māori by the Committee on University Academic Programmes in November.

Clearly, 2009 was a productive and rewarding year for the teams. We look forward to the continuing success of these projects and maximising the potential benefit they will have for learners.

Ako Aotearoa's new strategic plan

Dr Peter Coolbear foreshadows the release of Ako Aotearoa's new strategic plan at the end of March.

Ako Aotearoa is in the final stages of developing its new strategic plan for the period 2010–13. The plan reflects our priorities in the context of the Government's new Tertiary Education Strategy, its focus on outcomes for learners and the attention now being placed on course and qualification completion rates.

Our previous strategic plan for 2008–09 concentrated on increasing the focus of the sector on the importance of teaching and learning. We are now an established organisation with a clear sense of purpose. Our challenge is to ensure that what we do has the maximum benefit for tertiary learning.

Supporting good teaching practice will remain a vital part of our work, but it is not enough. We need to ensure that good teaching results in better learning and success in tertiary education and training. That is why we will continue to promote evidence-based improvement of practice. At the same time, we must ensure the system as a whole supports good teaching and learning – this is not just about individual teachers, it is about working towards a world-class tertiary system that values and fosters teaching excellence and seeks to provide the best possible opportunities for all learners to achieve the best possible outcomes.

While our mission, vision and goals remain broadly the same, our strategic themes have evolved considerably. Our current thinking is our new strategic plan will have seven themes as follows:

1. enhancing the service standards of tertiary organisations and aspiring to excellence
2. evidence-based enhancement of practice at the individual and organisational level
3. strategic and sustainable support for Māori educators and learners within an Ako framework
4. supporting Pacific peoples' advancement through tertiary education
5. hearing the learner voice
6. working in partnership and maximising leverage
7. synthesising and disseminating information to enhance teaching and learning.



These themes are deliberately broad and provide the basis for key actions in the coming years. These key actions will be reviewed regularly, informed by consultation with the sector on an ongoing basis.

The Ako Aotearoa Board is expecting to sign off the plan at the end of February with a view to its publication before the end of March. Copies will then be available via: www.ako.aotearoa.ac.nz.

AUSSE pilot for ITP sector

Dr Peter Coolbear, Ako Aotearoa, and Dr Hamish Coates, Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), report on their collaborative work with New Zealand's Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics (ITP) sector to build their version of the powerful Australasian Survey of Student Engagement (AUSSE) tool.



Last December, Ako Aotearoa and ACER met with representatives of the ITP sector to discuss the project. This is the first time the sector will take part in a national study to determine student engagement, and it is exciting to see that 11 ITPs have committed to being involved in piloting AUSSE within their organisations in 2010.

The Australasian Survey of Student Engagement (AUSSE), designed and managed by ACER, was developed to stimulate evidence-focused conversations about students' engagement in university study. Developed from the North American National Survey of Student Engagement, the AUSSE builds on methodology validated over four decades.

Hamish Coates, ACER principal research fellow and director of AUSSE, explains the student engagement survey reveals important insights into students' studies that provide institutions with key information to help them better support, engage and retain students.

"Collecting feedback from students themselves is beneficial in that it provides key insights into what tertiary students are actually doing. AUSSE provides insights that can help institutions better support student learning and development, monitor academic

standards and outcomes and ensure students are getting the most out of their tertiary experience," Dr Coates says.

Dr Peter Coolbear believes systematic collection of evidence using proven, internationally validated tools is well overdue in New Zealand and this is a critical next step in the development of a systematic approach to the improvement of tertiary teaching and learning. "Such data will be hugely valuable in institutional self-assessment processes and in assisting institutions in their decision making about how best to support their students," he says.

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In all, AUSSE provides data on 13 dimensions of the learning experience:

- student perceptions on six areas of learning:
 - academic challenge
 - active learning
 - student and staff interactions
 - enriching educational experiences
 - supportive learning environment
 - work-integrated learning; and
- seven outcome measures:
 - higher order thinking
 - general learning outcomes
 - individual and social development
 - average overall grade
 - departure intentions
 - overall satisfaction
 - career readiness.

While the data sets are owned by each institution, data collected can be benchmarked against aggregated data for tertiary education institutions internationally.

Both organisations believe AUSSE provides information that is imperative to ensuring the quality and productivity of the higher education system.

The 2009 administration of AUSSE surveyed more than 30,000 students from 35 Australian and New Zealand universities. The results are expected to be released in the first half of this year. For further information go to: <http://ausse.acer.edu.au>; www.acer.edu.au; www.akoatearora.ac.nz.

Institutional research – building a stronger response to the student voice

To build on our recent collaborative work with the Australian Council for Educational Research on AUSSE mentioned in the article above, we are pleased to confirm our support for an Institutional Research Colloquium, which will be held at the University of Otago 28–30 April.

The colloquium is a continuation of the AUSSE university workshop held in December, and representatives from each university will be able to share insights on the effective uses of institutional research and explore how AUSSE data can be used in conjunction with other student surveys collected within an organisation. The group will also explore future projects relating to the use of institutional research, and foster ongoing relationships within the university sector. A peer-reviewed colloquium proceeding will be developed and shared across the tertiary education sector.



Institutional Research Colloquium – 28–30 April – University of Otago. Joint organisers are Dr Keith Comer, coordinator of the Academic Development Group, University of Canterbury (pictured here) and Dr Jacques van der Meer, coordinator of Student Learning Development, University of Otago.



The New Zealand Educational Theses Database

(www.nzcer.org.nz/edtheses)

Beverley Thomson, information services manager at the New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER), introduces an important database for researchers, practitioners and policy makers.

Built to provide support for research, teaching and professional development, this comprehensive database contains 9,000 masters and doctorate theses in education topics from New Zealand authors, as well as by New Zealanders at overseas tertiary institutions. It has been developed by the NZCER library, as part of the Ministry of Education's Iterative Best Evidence Synthesis (BES) Programme (www.educationcounts.govt.nz/themes/BES).

The database is accessible, well indexed and easy to use. Information includes bibliographic details, abstracts and, where possible, full text. Indexing is based on the descriptors of other well-known international education databases, such as ERIC, and adapted for New Zealand terminology. There are six education level descriptors: adult, early childhood education, primary, secondary, tertiary and training, along with advanced search options.

Please tell us of theses you think should be included, and any other feedback. You can send information to: Beverley.Thomson@nzcer.org.nz.

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