

Policy settings for supporting foundation learning

A summary of the White Paper presented by Ako Aotearoa in March 2022

Introduction

The Ako Aotearoa (National Centre for Tertiary Teaching Excellence) Manako programme, formerly known as the Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Cultural Capability (ALNACC) programme, continues our partnership with the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) to enhance educational capability across Aotearoa New Zealand. Embracing our roots and expertise in literacy, numeracy, and both Māori and Pacific cultural capability, Manako expands our commitment to delivering inclusive and effective education, informed by the values and needs of all New Zealanders.

Why are we submitting a summary of our White Paper?

In March 2022, the Ako Aotearoa ALNAAC team (now Manako) presented a White Paper to the Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education at the time. Mr Hipkins responded that he welcomed ‘a wider discussion in literacy and numeracy needs across Aotearoa’, and that he had asked the Ministry of Education (MoE) and the TEC to meet with us to work through our ideas in more detail to inform the Government’s work in this area.

To date no progress has been made in the discussions, and, given that we now have a new Government, it is timely to revisit the issues raised in the White Paper, as they continue to be of great concern.

What was the focus of the White Paper?

The Paper outlined the challenges facing tertiary foundation education and called for action to address these challenges.

The primary challenges included:

- » adults are entering the workforce without the basic skills needed to function effectively, including Language, Literacy and Numeracy (LLN) and learner agency
- » the constant demand for higher skills across industries, and our inability to meet this demand
- » the growing number of adults entering tertiary education with low LLN skills.

The recommendations presented included:

1. Re-prioritise adult language, literacy and numeracy, and cultural capability as a national imperative.
2. Develop a LLN Implementation Strategy, setting clear objectives and milestones.



3. Increase funding of key projects that support the tertiary foundation education and training sector, such as the [Tapatoru Ako Professional Practice Award](#).
4. Dedicate the Adult Literacy Educator Fund to organisations and educators committing to engage in professional development.
5. Fund educator participation in professional development programmes supported with Ako Aotearoa digital badges.

What is the current situation?

The challenges described in the White Paper urgently need to be addressed:

- » Recent survey data indicate a growing number of learners leaving school with low literacy and numeracy skills. This number increases every year.
- » The tertiary sector is under more pressure than ever to deal with this.
- » In the compulsory school sector, a record number of children are failing NCEA in Reading, Writing and Numeracy.
- » Trends in the International Maths and Science (TIMSS) study reveal a steady decline in numeracy: By year 9 fewer than 10% of learners are working at the appropriate level.
- » Aotearoa New Zealand has recorded its worst ever results in the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) tests of reading and maths.
- » The best way to lift learner outcomes is to build educator capability, but there is inadequate funding for professional development to meet the growing need.
- » The TEC Literacy and Numeracy Implementation Strategy expired in 2019 and urgently needs renewing.

What is the proposed action?

The adult language, literacy, numeracy, and cultural capability work, delivered by the Manako team, is funded by the TEC to build sector capability in the tertiary foundation education sector and to provide advisory work to the TEC and MoE. It also aligns with the Government's intention to lift LLN levels in schools.

Key actions to address the challenges outlined in the White Paper include the following:

1. Improved policy settings

We propose a ministerial directive for us to work with the TEC and MoE to address the challenges outlined in the White Paper through improved policy settings.

2. A national Language, Literacy and Numeracy Strategy

A strategy is urgently needed to address the language, literacy, and numeracy crisis and to provide direction and guidance to the sector, set objectives and define progress measures.

3. Investment in educator capability building

Quality instruction and well-trained educators are the key factors that lead to learner success. Investment in educator capability building is needed to ensure a qualified TEO (Tertiary Education Organisation) workforce.

