

Introduction

1. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft programme *Directions for Education Renewal in Greater Renewal*. Ako Aotearoa: The National Centre for Tertiary Teaching Excellence is an organisation funded by both central government and the tertiary education sector to support the best possible outcomes for tertiary learners. Our work towards this focuses on building a variety of strong and collaborative relationships with tertiary organisations, practitioners and learners across the entire sector, in order to enhance the effectiveness of tertiary teaching and learning practices.
2. Ako Aotearoa's primary focus is on tertiary education. We have therefore largely confined our comments to the overall direction of the programme and proposals for the post-compulsory sector.

General Comments

3. Overall, Ako Aotearoa welcomes this document and its recognition that not only have the earthquakes significantly affected education in the region, but also that a strong education sector will be key to rebuilding a strong Christchurch. As noted on page 7 of the report, this also represents an opportunity to develop innovative approaches to deal with issues facing not only Christchurch but many other parts of the country (such as network of provision issues).
4. We recognise that at this point much of the precise detail around implementation of the programme and its proposals has yet to be decided, and these decisions will influence the effects of the programme 'on the ground'. As an organisation with significant experience in promoting high quality practice and outcomes in all areas of tertiary education, Ako Aotearoa would be very interested in assisting the Ministry of Education, Tertiary Education Commission (TEC), and/or the proposed Education Advisory Body (EAB) with developing or providing feedback on the specific detail of these initiatives.
5. A particularly important element of successfully implementing specific proposals and the programme as a whole will be clearly defining and understanding what successful implementation 'looks like' in practice. Ako Aotearoa therefore recommends that the Ministry of Education, TEC and/or the EAB develop clear success indicators/ measures for each expected goal and proposal before the programme is implemented. Alongside this should be a robust monitoring and evaluation strategy to capture the contribution of specific initiatives to these indicators. This will not only allow Ministers, government agencies, and those in Christchurch to understand performance and refine the programme as needed, but will also allow lessons to be captured for use in other regions and potentially other portfolio areas.

6. Ako Aotearoa strongly supports the proposed 'Network Model' approach to provision and agrees with the potential benefits outlined in the report. Given that many of the long-term issues facing greater Christchurch are similar in nature, if not in scale or context, to those facing other regions this approach may prove a model for other parts of the country.

Goals, Principles and Leadership

7. Ako Aotearoa generally supports both the overall goals and those specifically for post-compulsory and international education. It is notable, however, that this part of the programme does not contain any reference to successful transitions and pathways. Although these are referred to at later points in the document, the critical impact of transition processes on student outcomes means that achieving this should be recognised as a key element of the programme (as recognised in the discussion and proposals covering the post-compulsory sector). We therefore recommend that a goal be added which explicitly refers to effective transitions and pathways, both within education and between education and employment.
8. Ako Aotearoa also supports the guiding principles laid out on page 17 of the report. However, with regard to the principle '*Getting the best value and outcomes for Crown investment*', it is critically important to recognise that part of this is ensuring the maintenance and enhancement of quality education. As acknowledged on p16, quality is a key component of value, and both quality teaching and capacity for quality education are referred within the list of 'achievement methods'. The importance of quality should therefore be explicitly recognised in this statement of principle.
9. The proposed Education Advisory Body has, in principle, clear potential to add value. The success of the proposed programme will rely strongly on links both within the education sector and with all external stakeholders. The EAB provides not only a vehicle for ensuring the programme is implemented in a regionally responsive way, but also a forum for building communication and relationships between these parties that may outlast the current post-earthquake period.
10. However, it will be important to be as clear as possible how the Body's functions and activities relate to existing processes that affect the education sector. For example, tertiary organisations will need to have clarity around how the EAB's responsibility for the post-compulsory element of the programme relates to the TEC's responsibility for negotiating investment plans with tertiary education organisations and monitoring performance against those plans. If such relationships are not clearly understood by education organisations, government agencies, and the Body itself, the EAB may actually create confusion and hamper effective education provision in the region.
11. It is also difficult to make significant comment on the proposed Body without more detail regarding its operation. For example, it is unclear what the reference to the EAB being 'led' by the Ministry of Education and TEC will mean in practice, what level of autonomy or power the Body will have to vary details of the programme and how components are implemented, or how the membership will be determined. All these elements could significantly affect how the Board goes about its work, and how it engages with education organisations and the Christchurch community.
12. Ako Aotearoa strongly supports the proposed Waitaha Education Authority and Pacific Advisory Group, including the proposed representation of these bodies on the EAB.

Post-Compulsory Education

13. Ako Aotearoa broadly supports the six proposals relating to Post-Compulsory Education, but has some questions and comments relating to the measures that are intended to achieve them. These are described in more detail below. Once again, these comments should be read with the caveat that much of the impact and effect of the proposed methods will depend on how they are implemented in practice.
14. We do note that currently this report appears to minimise the position of the industry training system, with no mention of industry trainees in its discussion of pre-earthquake tertiary education, and most discussion being framed in term of tertiary providers. Industry Training Organisations (ITOs) have a statutory mandate for skill leadership in their industries, extensive experience in arranging workplace-based training, and a long history of working with providers for off-job components of that training. These organisations will or can be key contributors to achieving the proposals outlined in this section, particularly 4.3, 4.4 and 4.6.
15. Ako Aotearoa supports the discussion and proposal 5.1 relating to international education, insofar as it relates to those in tertiary education.

Proposal 4.1

16. In the current climate of fiscal constraint, it is appropriate to consider whether some rationalisation of provision is appropriate. This can not only reduce costs (to education organisations as well as to government), but can also lead to increased overall quality of provision and a less complicated system for learners to navigate. It is, however, important that any such rationalisation is driven primarily by the interests and needs of learners.

Proposal 4.2

17. As with proposal 4.1, it is clearly important that provision is sustainable at all levels, whether individual courses/programmes, particular providers, and the overall network of provision. Promoting increased external investment, encouraging organisational change that leads to efficiencies, and encouraging collaboration are all effective methods of doing so. However, it should be noted that achievement points 2 and 3 relate more strongly to desired outcomes from post-compulsory education, rather than the sustainability of the system.

Proposal 4.3

18. Ako Aoteroa supports this proposal, and particularly the emphasis within achievement point 3 on improved transitions between secondary and tertiary sectors.

Proposal 4.4

19. Ako Aotearoa strongly supports this proposal, and particularly the fourth, fifth, and sixth achievement points. Explicitly encouraging employers and workplaces to consider the role they play in education will not only likely increase the 'stockpile' of skills available to industries (both regionally and nationally), but may also encourage firms to consider how they develop and make use of those skills and thus improve productivity. Similarly, as noted earlier, ensuring the existence of effective secondary-to-tertiary and education-to-work transitions are critical for achieving good long-term outcomes for learners.

Proposal 4.5

20. Ako Aotearoa supports this continued commitment to actions that will address the needs of specific groups within our education system. However, the lack of detail makes it particularly difficult to provide more specific commentary here. For example, it is unclear precisely who are (and are not) envisaged as the relevant priority groups under this proposal, or what forms improved support for marginalised learners will take, and yet decisions around these points will have a significant impact on the efficacy and appropriateness of this proposal.

Proposal 4.6

21. Ako Aotearoa supports this proposal, but is concerned at the lack of mention of Private Training Establishments (PTEs) within the achievement points. For example, it is unclear why achievement point 2 should focus only on the relationship between Institutes of Technology & Polytechnics (ITPs) and ITOs, and why achievement point 3 does not include reference to both PTEs and ITOs. Similarly, in point 4, it is unclear why ITPs at least are not included as part of this relationship, given that undertaking research to support vocational learning and technology transfer is a core government expectation of ITPs.

Conclusion

22. In conclusion, Ako Aotearoa would like to reiterate our support for the overarching direction of the goals, principles, and proposals outlined in *Directions for Education Renewal in greater Christchurch*, and we look forward to the future release of the Implementation Plan. We would also like to repeat our offer to support and assist with the implementation of this programme.

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