

Ako Aotearoa's Submission - National Education Learning Priorities and Tertiary Education Strategy

November 2019

Nā āheitanga ā-mātauranga,
ko angitū ā-ākonga
Building educational capability
for learner success

Ako
AOTEAROA

Ako Aotearoa’s submission on the new Tertiary Education Strategy 2020-2025

Ka pū te ruha, ka hao te rangatahi | As an old net withers, another is woven

Introduction

[Ako Aotearoa](#) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the content of the draft National Education and Learning Priorities (NELP) and Tertiary Education Strategy (TES) consultation documents, and to contribute to the changes ahead for education in Aotearoa New Zealand. We fully support the Government’s vision for an integrated education system. While our focus is firmly on the tertiary part of the system, we believe that much of the work we have led, supported and delivered over our 11 years of operation has had positive impacts on secondary-tertiary transitions, and is transferable into early childhood, schooling and workplace education.

The work we do is underpinned by our [Shared Strategic Agenda | Koronga Rautaki Mahitahi](#) which we launched a year ago. This succinct document outlines not only what Ako Aotearoa prioritises into the future, but offers a shared understanding for the tertiary sector, government agencies and the wider community around the key priorities and what we need to work together on to achieve success for our diverse life-long learners.

Key channels we share this knowledge through include our successful and highly-regarded [professional learning](#) and development programme based on new knowledge generated from our change projects; our funding of change-driven research [projects](#) towards positive impacts particularly for all tertiary learners; raising awareness and prestige for teaching and learning across the tertiary landscape – through the national Tertiary Teaching Excellence Awards and the Ako Aotearoa Academy of Tertiary Teaching Excellence; strategic forums and events, including [Tuia Te Ako](#), the [Pacific Tertiary Education Fono](#); [Talking Teaching](#) and Ako Aotearoa Project Fund [Colloquium](#).

Two Priorities | Five Objectives

It is positive to see the initiative to integrate the NELP priorities with the TES priorities and align the strategic direction of, and vision for, early childhood, primary, secondary and tertiary education, as it will promote connectivity, continuity and collaboration. However, little reference is made of opportunities for cross-sector collaboration. Some guidance in this respect would be helpful. This could be inserted on p. 26 under the heading ‘Promote interdependence, collaboration and accountability’, although cross-sector collaboration is not solely applicable to Objective 5.

Measuring and monitoring for success

Ako Aotearoa is supportive of all five high level objectives. These, however, need clear connections added to set and uphold expectations to enable system change.

For example, it would be essential to set and monitor achievement of progress and outcome measures for each objective expected over the 5-year TES implementation duration.

These should build on progress outcomes, for example, for Māori signalled in Ka Hikitia and for Pacific Peoples in the Pacific Education Plans and for adult literacy and numeracy in the TEC Literacy and Numeracy Strategy.

For example, tertiary educators are expected to engage in professional learning and development (PLD) in literacy, numeracy and cultural capability. These PLD opportunities could be extended to the compulsory sector, so that learners receive literacy and numeracy support at an earlier age.

Te Rūnanga Māori for Ako Aotearoa has noted the Draft Tertiary Education Strategy (the strategy), agreeing that the strategy:

- Emphasises equity rather than equality of outcomes. This doesn't align with the Tertiary Education Commission emphasis on 'parity of outcomes'. Equity can also reflect dominant groups limiting equality of outcomes for vulnerable groups;
- Homogenises whānau and ākongā which over-generalises the specific needs of whānau Māori;
- Doesn't capture the different needs of Māori learners;
- Needs to be more inclusive of the student voice;
- Is progressive about challenging racism, bias, and institutional racism; but doesn't go far enough to set a standard for the cultural literacy or capability of Pākehā or non-Māori educators;
- The strategy assumes the main model for Māori success is mainstream-whitestream led, which is underpinned by an assumption that it is non-Māori educators who will change the face of tertiary education by upskilling in te reo and other cross cultural capacities.
- This does not recognise the need for more Māori leadership, more Māori educators and more engagement with Māori communities to advance Māori by Māori for Māori;
- The strategy should take advantage of the opportunity regarding New Zealand history being taught in schools; it should front foot this initiative, for example, by adopting a policy whereby staff and students undertake courses in Māori Studies (Te Reo, Māori Society, Tikanga Māori for example) as is practice in some overseas institutions.

Pivotal work completed by Ako Aotearoa through the [Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Cultural Capability](#) contract funded by the Tertiary Education Commission. This programme for building foundation sector educational capability has immense potential for positive change for the foundation sector – through the [Tapatoru / Foundation Professional Standards Framework](#) and new workshops and courses, plus the roll-out of our programme of digital badging. Acknowledging 'culturacy' should also sit alongside literacy and numeracy, and this is further expanded on below in relation to our work on Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Cultural Capability. Ideally this will mean that primary and secondary pupils will be taught properly with the basics of literacy, numeracy and Māori culturacy and that by the time they reach tertiary level we are not needing to do catch-up teaching of these fundamental skills with adult (mainly Māori and Pacific) learners. Note as a minor point that the combined consultation document format, at times, makes it unclear whether goals apply to all or some parts of the education system, so some consideration might be given to formatting and rewording to make this clearer.

Objective One: Learners at the centre

While the proposed priority is positive, a further priority should be accorded to strengthening learner pathways and progression into higher qualification levels, both within and between tertiary education organisations (TEOs), and particularly for underserved learners. Adding this priority would link more clearly with the related indicative supporting actions and include progress and outcome measures for the 5-year period.

Objective Two: Barrier-free access – Great education opportunities are within reach for every learner

As for objective one, we are supportive of a focus on strengthening pathways, including through innovation in learning support, curriculum design and technology that is learner centred, affordable and accessible to all, including at any time and any place.

We encourage the Ministry to draw on the evidence base Ako Aotearoa has collaborated on and funded with the tertiary education sector, for example, in relation to the following priorities:

[Māori learners](#); [Pasifika learners](#); [Technology in learning benchmarking / elearning](#), and [Adult literacy, numeracy and cultural capability](#).

Objective Three: Quality teaching and leadership

We agree that these two themes should be together under one objective and endorse and welcome their inclusion, particularly as there was little mention of either in the 2014-2019 TES. Ako Aotearoa is also very supportive of the comments noted on page 20 of the discussion document related to lifting the quality of teaching in reference to RSLGs and CoVEs – expanded on below.

In relation to the focus on page 20 “Celebrate excellence through the Teaching Excellence Awards,” it is clear that successful awardees in Ako Aotearoa’s Tertiary Teaching Excellence Awards frequently come from organisations that exhibit a strong culture of support for and investment in teaching and learning. [Awardees](#) from this process continue to actively meet to share good practice, including through the [Talking Teaching](#) Symposium. Further exploring and including incentives or measures for organisations, for example, through institutional awards or broader citations as part of the Tertiary Teaching Excellence Awards would be worthwhile, and has been shown to be of value in [Australia](#), and in the United Kingdom through [Advance HE’s](#) Fellowships and Awards. The Otago Polytechnic in 2018 received the prestigious Baldrige-affiliated [Performance Excellence Study Award](#), measured against core performance excellence criteria to determine organisational excellence by world-class standards. This work could inform advice to government to support teaching and learning improvement and sector educational capability building.

Professional Standards Frameworks

Ako Aotearoa has led discussion and work over the past decade into the viability of a Professional Standards Framework (PSF) for New Zealand. In February 2019 we released the commissioned report, “Professional standards for Tertiary Teachers: A Synthesis of recent work and initiatives”, prepared by Gordon Suddaby. This report aimed to set out all the past work including international examples, the key advantages and challenges, suggestions for how to use a PSF, and the “what next”. The discussion has been framed around two key questions: 1. Does Aotearoa New Zealand’s

tertiary education sector need a PSF?, and 2. If so, what benefits could it bring to organisations, teachers and learners? Certainly, organisations adopting a PSF have reported benefits to all three areas:

1. Teachers: teaching capabilities and professional development, ethics and accountabilities
2. Learners: a more student-centred approach, better teaching quality and student support
3. Organisations: educator career enhancements, pathways to better practice, reputation, learner outcomes

The challenge and opportunity is to explore how professional standards can be used in the diverse tertiary sector in Aotearoa New Zealand. For example ACE Aotearoa has led the way with ACE teaching standards. Through our ALNACC programme, Ako Aotearoa has developed Foundation Teaching Standards, or Tapatoru (discussed further below). In addition, through our Memorandum of Understanding with United Kingdom based Advance HE, Ako Aotearoa is exploring how we can further develop services of value both in Aotearoa New Zealand and also internationally. There is also much the tertiary sector can learn from Taitaiako, cultural standards for teachers in compulsory schooling. In 2018 Ako Aotearoa also established a sector working party to explore what a vocational education teaching standards framework with a Mātauranga Māori foundation would look like for Aotearoa. This work is stalled due to lack of funding. There is a need to further our understanding of how best to recognise quality teaching across a range of teaching and learning contexts and to enable staff to recognise their strengths and refine their practices.

At the request of the TEC, in 2018 Ako Aotearoa started work on a multi-pronged approach to address the issue of tutor quality in foundation education. One key aspect of this work is the rollout and adoption of the [Tapatoru - Foundation Learning Professional Standards Framework](#). We designed the Tapatoru in consultation with the sector and released it with TEC endorsement in December 2018. The Tapatoru is designed to continue the work of professionalising the foundation education workforce across the diverse range of contexts funded by the TEC, including Whare Wānanga, ITOs, PTEs, ITPs and in workplaces.

In the past, there was always a work stream for strengthening foundation-level educator capability leading to better learner outcomes in the TES, especially in the context of those working with Māori and Pasifika learners.

The focus on foundation education appears to be missing from the current draft document. Furthermore, we recommend including the Tapatoru - Foundation Learning Professional Standards Framework in the TES.

While interest in this framework is growing, we believe a clear direction is required for the foundation sector to embrace the Tapatoru and build it into organisational strategies. We therefore recommend including the Tapatoru - Foundation Learning Professional Standards Framework in the TES. This could include an expectation for TEOs to utilise the Tapatoru as an ongoing measure to recognise professional competence. The key benefit will be a more robust measure of confidence in TEOs over time with regards to the professional competence of educators in foundation education.

Literacy and Numeracy and Cultural Capability

There is no reference to a renewed Tertiary Education Commissions Literacy and Numeracy Implementation Strategy. We recommend that it is referenced in the TES.

One of the main barriers to learners accessing education opportunities, achieving outcomes and engaging in lifelong learning is learners' levels of literacy and numeracy skills. Although these are mentioned under the measure 'Create a wide range of education options and delivery modes to enable lifelong learning' (p. 19), the critical role of literacy and numeracy skills urges the need for this to be a thread woven through the five Objectives. Literacy and numeracy need to continue to be a prominent feature of the TES and an urgent priority, from early childhood education, through primary and secondary to tertiary education. In addition, we recommend that the TES includes measures where possible that would help meet and align with the relevant United National Sustainable Development Goals.

Presently, literacy and numeracy are only mentioned under Objective 3, and not even as distinct action points. Literacy and numeracy are critical to all five Objectives, so we propose integrating literacy and numeracy across the five Objectives to ensure they are visible and remain a priority. Also, the statement on p. 20, 'Improve the effectiveness of adult literacy and numeracy education', seems to imply capability building for practitioners that needs to be more explicit. This is an area that has been reviewed by the TEC and it would be helpful that the TES refer to existing TEC investment in this area. Ako Aotearoa has been funded by the TEC since 2015 to undertake work to support building of sector educational capability, most recently through the [Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Cultural Capability](#) ALNACC programme.

Consideration should also be given to including *te reo Māori Literacy and Numeracy* to reflect *te reo Maori* as an official language of this country. There is compelling evidence that Māori medium education creates Māori learner success, perhaps much more so than English language medium. *Te reo Māori* is a major priority for Government along with New Zealand History.

In September 2015, New Zealand adopted the United Nations' [17 Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#) and 169 targets. These set out a universal agenda to achieve sustainable development globally, known as Agenda 2030.

[SDG 4](#) is to "***Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning***". Literacy and numeracy skills are indispensable for lifelong learning. SDG target 4.6 reads: "***By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy***".


We will have to work hard to achieve this target in New Zealand, and to do this requires it to be an explicit target in the TES. In particular, it is critical that the TES refer to the existing TEC investment in this area. Ako Aotearoa has been funded by the TEC since 2015 to undertake work to support Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Cultural Capability.

Please see Appendix 1. for additional collated feedback with future insights gathered from our staff, Board, Rūnanga and Caucus members.

We look forward to holding further discussions with you on the content of our submission in due course.

Nā mātou noa, nā

Ako Aotearoa

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Helen Lomax". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Helen Lomax

Director | Ako Aotearoa

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