Kai tu tangata ai tātou, puta noa i te ao

We will stand with confidence and competence anywhere in the world

Enabling students to become life-ready, study-ready and work-ready in Te Tai Tokerau – Northland

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HEI TOKO PROJECT FUND AKO AOTEAROA

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Executive Summary

Access to tertiary and higher education in Te Tai Tokerau (Northland) is fraught with challenges engendered by a range of factors; not least a history of deficit reporting. Yet it is also an area that is rich in opportunity and resources, including its high percentage of Māori population, and strong cultural heritage of Te Reo and Te Ao Māori.

The two partners in this project, Te Matarau Education Trust and NorthTec (Te Tai Tokerau Wananga), share a common commitment to improving educational achievement in Te Tai Tokerau. This commitment is to equip learners and their whānau to participate fully in social, community and political life, and to support decisions which lead to an improved quality of life and a transformation of the region.

In 2015, Te Matarau and NorthTec surveyed 1269 students from more than 30 NorthTec programmes, inquiring about their experiences of the barriers they had encountered in accessing tertiary education, and the motivations and intentions that had strengthened their commitment to embarking on a tertiary qualification. Data collection, analysis and reporting was guided by kaupapa Māori research methodology, drawing on an extended literature review, and Ako Aoteroa's Te Tauaki Ako framework (Appendix A). The overarching approach is one of action research, with the report authors meeting regularly to reflect, refresh and renew our understanding of the emerging themes, their significance and the implications they have for the 'Call to Action', and the Action Plan Priorities, which were the key objectives of the project.

In the report which follows, key findings and discussion have been grouped under three categories of aspirations: 'Life ready', 'Study ready', and 'Work ready' with a recognition of the interconnectedness between these categories. The following selection provides a snapshot of key issues and drivers:

Motivation:

- The desire for work was the most common motivation for enrolling in tertiary study
- 52% of learners planned to undertake more study at a higher level
- Approximately half of the learners who responded want to stay in Te Tai Tokerau

Challenges:

- The majority of our learners faced significant challenges to successfully completing their tertiary study
- Study affordability and finances were an issue for approximately one third of our learners
- Whānau and childcare commitments were identified as a major challenge to starting or completing their course of study for many of our learners
- 38% of our learners didn't have access to reliable transport
- Approximately one in five learners had no drivers licence
- 30% of learners did not have internet access
- More than half our learners did not live in family owned homes and 37% were renting

Our learners' study needs:

- Additional support to develop literacy and numeracy skills and competencies was needed
- Qualifications that are recognised in the workplace
- Work experience
- Access to transportation
- References and introductions to employers, or the social confidence to do this
- A culturally appropriate and relevant learning environment
- Excellent teaching for a range of learning styles and preferences

This study and work to date was always only ever intended as the first step in designing real strategies and solutions – from the region and for the region informed by evidence. Accordingly, the report concludes with a plan for praxis: new practices guided by action research and reflection, within a framework which is measurable and accountable. We have named this plan 'A Call to Action' (Figure 1) to indicate our commitment to seeing this inquiry through to practice.

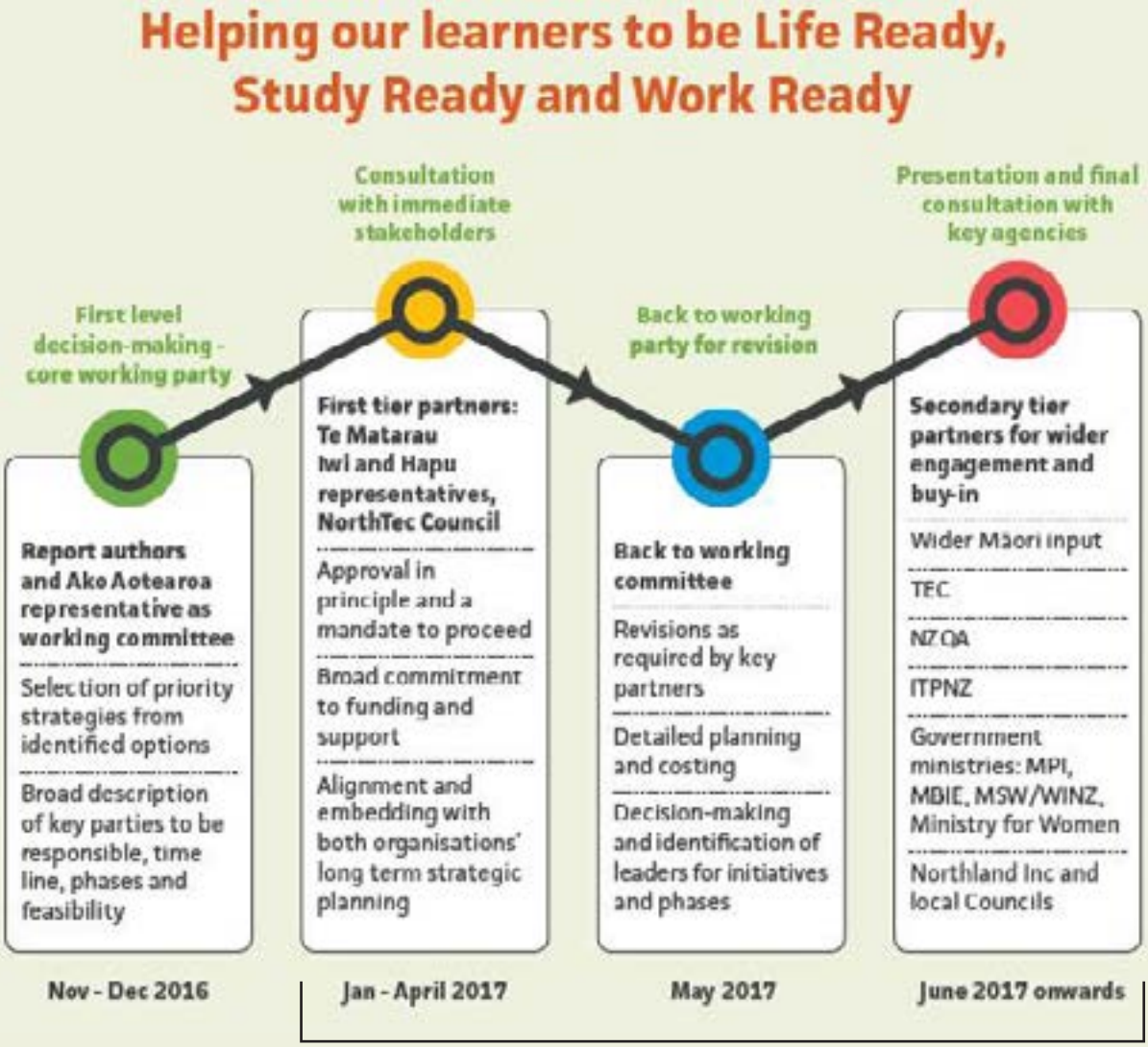


Figure 1. A Call to Action

2017-2018 Action Plan implementation

The report concludes with a brief outline of our proposed Action Plan priorities and possible strategies which will inform the next phase of our mahi (work):

- Priority Tahi: Partnerships and stakeholder engagement
- Priority Rua: Leadership
- Priority Toru: Learners and graduates
- Priority Wha: Staff capability
- Priority Rima: Inclusive environments

Te Pae Tawhiti (Vision)

Kia tu tangata ai tatou, puta noa i te ao

(We will stand with confidence & competence anywhere in the world)

Te Kaupapa (Mission)

Kete riki, Kete Tangariki

Taken from the scenario where in traditional times, our people would help the elvers (tangariki) scale obstacles such as waterfalls by using kete (kits) to scoop them up and help them on their journey.

(To assist our people in their life's journey while serving them through a collaborative and holistic learning approach)

Tikanga (Core Values)

He tangata – A focus on people development
Tu tangata – A sense of affiliation is key
He tirohanga Māori – A Māori world view
Tu motuhake – Promote Self reliance
Mahi tahi – Team work and cooperation

He Korero Whakataki
– An Introduction

Pita Tipene, Chairperson Te Matarau Education Trust

Te rohe o Te Matarau extends from Cape Reinga to the southern reaches of the Kaipara Harbour.

Kete riki, kete tangariki is a local pepeha or proverb that explains how migratory silver belly eels descend the many streams to make their way to the Pacific Ocean to spawn in autumn of each year. At some stage, the eggs of these eels are brought back to Te Tai Tokerau on the ocean tides and eventually the glass eels transform, taking on their dark colour to become elvers (tangariki).

These tangariki journey up the river tributaries as they look to return to the habitat of their parents. When they arrive at obstacles such as the waterfall at Otiria, they work together to clamber up the falls. They are also assisted by the local people who use kete (woven flax baskets) to scoop them up and convey the elvers to the top of the falls.

'Kete riki' means small kete as the locals would use different sized kete and what fell through the larger kete were caught by the smaller meshed kete. Hence the saying – kete riki, kete tangariki.

This pepeha exemplifies the Te Matarau vision of assisting our people in their life journey. It also emphasises that this assistance must be carried out using a Māori world view and the application of identity as a core focus of pastoral care. This research with learners from Te Tai Tokerau Wānanga (NorthTec) we have helped to support allows us all to see what the specific challenges are, and provides a context for future actions, which will lead to solutions.

Philip Alexander-Crawford, Chief Executive Te Matarau Trust

Te Matarau or 'many faces' refers both to the various Te Tai Tokerau hapū and iwi members of this group working together for a common purpose, as well as to the many learners who are seeking an education and require support and assistance as they undertake their life journey.

Te Matarau can trace its creation to a targeted education kaupapa of Māori and Pasifika Trades Training in 2013. It has since developed to capture wider educational, social and wellbeing challenges for Māori and Pasifika in Te Tai Tokerau. This present research extends the collaborative approach that we see as needed to help drive greater outcomes and to support one of our key pou:

> *"Organise, promote and arrange opportunities and facilities to provide access to educational opportunities in Te Tai Tokerau for Māori and Pasifika learners to improve their levels of achievement."*

Māori see the need to be directly leading and providing the work required to help our people and Te Matarau was formed to be such a vehicle. As Mere Skerrett puts it in her review of the gains in educational outcomes made through inclusive pedagogical leadership at interactional and relationship levels: "What is good for Māori is good for the nation!"

We value our strong relationship with NorthTec and recognise the opportunity that this joint research gives us to identify solutions and develop a robust action plan at a time when NorthTec is developing a strategy to work in these changing times. Together we believe we hold a pivotal role in helping Māori and non-Māori achieve their aspirations.

Mark Ewen, Acting Chief Executive Te Tai Tokerau Wānanga (NorthTec)

Te Tai Tokerau Wānanga (NorthTec) is based in Te Tai Tokerau and is the region's largest provider of tertiary education. It awards certificate, diploma and degree level qualifications and delivers at campuses, marae, learning centres and other sites across the Te Tai Tokerau region.

Yet NorthTec's role is more important than merely awarding qualifications; it has a vital part to play in sustainably uplifting Te Tai Tokerau socially, culturally, economically and environmentally by upskilling its people. We will not achieve this by simply making information available for learners in the classroom; this same information can be accessed via the Internet in almost any location nowadays. We will, however, achieve this by truly facilitating learning. This can and will happen in a variety of locations, both physical and virtual, with the learner always at the centre of the learning environment.

To be able to truly facilitate learning, our learners have to be ready and able to study. They must not only aspire to achieve in life, but expect that if they work hard, this can and will occur. Many of our learners face external barriers or difficulties which can prevent them from accessing quality learning. It is perhaps tempting to follow the traditional deficit models and focus on these problems, and compare our outcomes with other regions or areas. Yet the current situation cannot be used as an excuse by ourselves, or our learners, for non-success.

This report collects the evidence via quantitative and qualitative data from our learners to inspire our actions. It provides us with the areas, the scale and the direction for our mahi to improve outcomes for Te Tai Tokerau's tertiary learners, and as a result, Te Tai Tokerau. It should be viewed as an opportunity for improving the outcomes of our learners through our own work, and through collaboration with all our partners and stakeholders.

This report signifies the end of the first, and perhaps easiest stage of the mahi. Our thanks at this stage to those who assisted in the production of this report: the learners, the tutors and other staff of NorthTec, Ako Aotearoa, the authors, and most of all, our Te Matarau partners. The next stage of the research will involve a Call to Action. Ma mahi, kia ora.

The Context

Te Tai Tokerau is known in English as Northland, and in legend, as the tail of the fish of Maui. The only city is Whangarei, with a population of 54,400; only two other towns have more than 5000 residents: Kerikeri (7110) and Kaitaia (5600).

Northland is a single electorate, with three local government bodies: Far North District Council, based in Kaikohe; Whangarei District Council, based in the city centre; and Kaipara District Council, based in Dargaville. Te Tai Tokerau is also the name given to the Māori electorate seat for the area. The region's economy is based on agriculture, fishing, forestry, horticulture and tourism. Larger employers include wood and paper manufacturing industries, and Marsden Point, New Zealand's only oil refinery.

TeTai Tokerau, with its temperate climate and abundant marine life, was one of the first places in Aotearoa New Zealand to be settled by both Māori and Europeans. From long before the Northern Chiefs signed He Whakaputanga (the Declaration of Independence in 1835) the signing of Te Tiriti o Waitangi (the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840), Te Tai Tokerau was a centre of political movements, influence, and trade. Yet as the seat of power moved from Russell to Auckland, then to Wellington, Te Tai Tokerau's geographic isolation took its toll on the region. It hampered economic development, and restricted employment and educational opportunities. Alienation of Māori ownership of the whenua (land), introduced diseases, migration to the larger cities for work and ongoing policies of assimilation set a new landscape that often hindered progress for Māori.

Neo liberalism fuelled 'Rogernomics 'of the 1980's created more drastic change around infrastructure, employment and the social fabric.

The present Te Tai Tokerau population has the lowest proportion of people in the 15 to 40-year age group of any region in the country as young people move south seeking employment. It also has the highest number of people (48%) living in rural areas, as the region has few urban centres.

There is a long-term and sustained 'deficit' accounting of this 'geography of disadvantage' in much political, economic and social commentary. Certainly there are any number of metrics in which Te Tai Tokerau falls behind the New Zealand average, and it is tempting to say that people growing up here are getting 'a bad deal':

- The median household income in Te Tai Tokerau is low ($46,900) – significantly lower than the NZ median of $63,800, and personal incomes are also low, with large gender differences ($7,000-$10,000 greater for men than women, depending on age and location).

- Unemployment is 9.7% in Te Tai Tokerau, compared to 7.1% across New Zealand; but 19.8 % for Te Tai Tokerau Māori, compared with 15.6 percent for the total Māori population.
- 6.9% of households in Te Tai Tokerau have no access to a vehicle – about the same as New Zealand overall, but in Te Tai Tokerau there are fewer public transport alternatives.
- Internet access in households is low by NZ standards at 62.5%, (the New Zealand average is 76.8%).
- 72.6% of people over the age of 15 have a formal qualification, compared with 79.1 percent of people in New Zealand. For Te Tai Tokerau Māori, this is lower still at 61.1 percent, compared with 66.7 percent for the total Māori population. This is directly reflected in employment patterns: the most common occupational group in the Te Tai Tokerau Region is 'managers', and 'professionals', but for Te Tai Tokerau Māori, it is 'labourers' (Statistics NZ, 2015).

This may paint a gloomy picture, and there are doubtless ample stories of broken homes, dysfunctional family units, crime, long term welfare dependency and educational underachievement – as there are anywhere if that becomes the focus of inquiry. But there are also stories of resilience, growth and success, often founded in some of the region's unheralded strengths, or in pockets of innovative practice. It is the objective of this 'call to action' to highlight some of these opportunities and to lay the foundation for a widespread uptake.

Tangata Whenua

One of the region's most distinct and valuable features is the high number of people who identify as Māori. Te Tai Tokerau has 3.6 percent of New Zealand's population, but 7.5 percent of New Zealand's Māori population; put another way, Māori comprise 32.4% of Te Tai Tokerau's population, compared to 14.9% of the total New Zealand population. This equates to a strong cultural heritage with commitment to retaining language and traditions. Some other ethnic groups such as Pacific Islanders and Asian are below the New Zealand average.

Ngapuhi and hapū of Te Tai Tokerau have maintained that they never ceded sovereignty in the signing of the 1840 treaty. This was affirmed by the findings of the Waitangi Tribunal in their landmark ruling in 2014.

Educational Achievement

Higher achievement in education is key for Te Tai Tokerau to have better outcomes in health, employment and social, cultural and environmental wellbeing. People who attain higher levels of education are better able to participate in social, community and political life and make informed, balanced choices. This position is clearly outlined by the Ministry of Education's (2008) Ka Hikitia – Managing for Success. The Draft Māori Education Strategy 2008-2012, which states:

> "Māori success is Aotearoa New Zealand's success. Māori enjoying educational success today provides the basis for Māori and Aotearoa NZ's success tomorrow" (p. 7).

Educational policy now rightfully takes a 'Māori potential approach' that seeks to shift the focus from addressing problems and disparities to expanding on the successes. This is the philosophical position adopted by the partners in this present study, and is embedded throughout the core principles which guided this project.

Guiding Principles

The principles that have guided this research are based on work around kaupapa Māori and mātauranga Māori frameworks by Māori educators including Graham Smith, Linda Smith, Leonie Pihema, Mereana Selby and Ako Aotearoa's Māori Caucus.

The latter have developed a series of guidelines, known as Te Tauākī Ako, aligned with the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, and designed to support not just theoretical understanding, but also ways of working. As such, they support the kaupapa of Te Matarau and this research. Key tikanga drawn from this framework which guided the research included the emphasis on relationships, respect, collaboration, learner-focussed outcomes and a commitment to maintaining and valuing high standards throughout the project.

There are a good number of New Zealand models and frameworks designed to support work which researches, reports on and informs policy and practice in higher education. Many of these models draw on kaupapa Māori principles to guide good practice, and a number of these are represented in the literature referenced by this report.

Both Te Matarau Education Trust and NorthTec, the two project partners, have their own mission and vision statements with associated values and goals, as do many of the iwi and hapū in Te Tai Tokerau. The challenge is the praxis. What do the practical steps look like and what is the cost of implementing these? Unless an institution is prepared to make systemic changes and invest the putea (funds) and mahi needed there is inevitably a low chance of success, however it is acknowledged that the changes needed are wider than merely an investment of resource and work.

In order to find solutions to the challenges presented, there was a need to review existing literature which could point to solutions. Yet this was tempered by realising the limitations placed on external research which either studied small cohorts, or researched cohorts who were different or in different contexts from the learners we have in Te Tai Tokerau. Any recommendations produced here in order to develop an Action Plan to guide future initiatives would have to work within this understanding. The project team developed the following principles to articulate internally and externally, the context and purpose of this mahi:

Guiding principles for NorthTec and Te Matarau Education Trust's aspirations, strategic objectives and priorities should:

- Be fully relevant to Te Tai Tokerau learners and partners, and the Te Tai Tokerau context
- Have clear goals and a vision of what constituted success
- Include a process for continual evaluation and measurement of the effectiveness of the solutions
- Be bounded within a process for reviewing the above and implementing further improvements.

The Study

This 'Call to Action' is founded in our sense that Te Tai Tokerau with its geographic challenges, distinctive demographics and rich cultural heritage, needs and deserves local input to discover and empower local solutions. The region receives a lot of attention from educational researchers, policy-makers and funding organisations – and yet the issues of low participation, retention and completion in tertiary study for our learners persist. With the direct involvement of iwi in education research and development comes the opportunity for iwi partnerships to initiate research that focuses on capability and capacity building of our own people.

In 2015, Te Matarau and NorthTec instigated an inquiry into learners' experiences of the barriers they had encountered in accessing higher education and the motivations and intentions that had led them to overcome these and embark on a programme of study. Learners from over 30 NorthTec programmes, from Foundation to Bachelor level, were invited to complete a questionnaire within the first few weeks on campus over Semesters One and Two. Class tutors facilitated the approach to learners and collection of papers, which were then forwarded to an external consulting company, Perceptive Research, to analyse.

Once data had been entered, comparative analysis was conducted against a number of variables, including programme level, discipline, trade versus non-trade, region within Te Tai Tokerau, and Māori versus non-Māori. In addition, a significant amount of verbatim comment was collected which was analysed according to thematic content. Two researchers worked on the analysis of the qualitative categorisation to reduce the impact of any bias. A total of 1269 surveys were collected (829 in Semester One and 440 in Semester Two).

Throughout the project, an important aspect of this research was the pursuit of an 'action research' approach whereby learning was viewed as a "transforming praxis" involving "a constant cycle of renewal". Current intentions are to resume surveying new learners each semester, at NorthTec and perhaps other private training or trade organisations (adding to the substantive dataset already captured) and initiate real time responses to the need identified.

Figure 3: Gender and location of survey participants

A Kaupapa Māori Research Design

To paraphrase the well-known principles of Kaupapa Māori, what is needed is research by us, with us, and for us

"Much research about Maori is also merely descriptive, telling us what we already know, yet not proposing any solutions or action that can be taken for change. We know about the low socio-economic status of Maori, the high crime and imprisonment rates, the high unemployment and low educational attainments. We now need research that informs solutions" (Cram, 2014)

The research design, implementation and reporting has been guided by kaupapa Māori methodology and principles using the Ako Aotearoa Te Tauākī Ako framework (see Appendix).

The size of the existing sample, its Te Tai Tokerau specific focus and the willingness of learners to be involved helps create its authenticity, and establishes a solid basis for developing bespoke initiatives to assist our learners to realise their potential and be part of the rich opportunities Te Tai Tokerau has to offer. The following sections draw on evidence generated through this research as a basis for action, and a foundation for change.

Limitations

Two limitations must be noted: First is the high number of 'not-specified' responses in the above demographic categories. In the original survey, due to a desire to keep the process as brief and streamlined as possible, learners were asked to enter their student ID numbers, with the intention of populating demographic data from their student records generated as part of the enrolment process. However, it soon became clear that inaccuracies or skipped questions meant that a lot of the data was incomplete. In Semester Two, changes were made to the survey questionnaire, whereby learners were asked to complete their demographic details themselves, which improved, but did not completely solve the issue. A particularly significant item for this research is that of ethnicity; iwi are major stakeholders in the research and were naturally interested to see uptake from their own members. Even where learners had identified as Māori, many had chosen not to identify their hapū or iwi – possibly because this was unknown, or for personal reasons. Initial attempts to estimate this information by region were soon abandoned with the recognition that contemporary patterns of mobility and diaspora mean that many Māori now live away from their traditional lands. This is therefore an aspect of the survey instrument and design which will be revisited in future roll-outs.

A second limitation is that all data was collected from NorthTec learners – understandably as this organisation is one of the two project leaders. However as the intention is to guide actions to enhance access to post-secondary education for all learners across Te Tai Tokerau, the survey has been made available to other providers to ensure representation and alignment of strategies.

Findings

Overview: Improving access, overcoming barriers and preparing our learners

Our learners comprise both school leavers and those who may have been away from formal education for ten, twenty, or more years. As such, there is a vast range of life, academic and workplace experience. One commonality, however, is the difference from learners in the compulsory (primary and secondary) sectors in that the tertiary learners attend by choice – although of course, for some, tertiary education may not be their first choice. It is also important to acknowledge that many adult learners have extensive family and work responsibilities. External issues such as transport, finance, health, social and recreational roles, and relationships can affect not only their access to study, but also the learning process once they are there. Adult learners of all age, have complex and multi-faceted lives, and it makes sense that until they can manage life outside the classroom, they will find it difficult to focus their full attention on succeeding within it.

Figure 4: Key challenges to starting/completing a course of study

Life ready

Study affordability and finances

Nearly a third of learners found money issues to be a challenge when starting or completing their course of study. This was easily the most significant barrier to accessing tertiary qualifications for the learners in our sample, and is amplified when the third most cited issue, frustrations with accessing Study Link, is included in the mix. (Student allowances are an income-related, non-repayable weekly payment to cover living expenses during tertiary study; student loans cover course fees, course-related costs and living costs and must be repaid, with interest, at the end of the study period. Emergency and hardship grants are for special circumstances, and must also be repaid).

Prior to study, many learners have been receiving a benefit from Work and Income New Zealand (WINZ), usually 'Jobseeker Support' or 'Sole Parent Support'. In some cases, people can continue to receive supplementary payments, but for most, enrolling as a fulltime learner will mean a transfer from WINZ support to StudyLink. Most learners in our study (72%) didn't feel that the difference in the amount between the Studylink allowance and WINZ benefit had any direct effect on them.

A quarter of those who said they were affected by the difference between Studylink and the WINZ benefit said that Studylink paid less, and that they experienced financial hardship because of this (e.g. trouble paying for food, transport or other bills). Just under 10% said they were actually better off.

Q. Does a difference in amount between the Studylink allowance and a WINZ benefit have any direct effect on you?

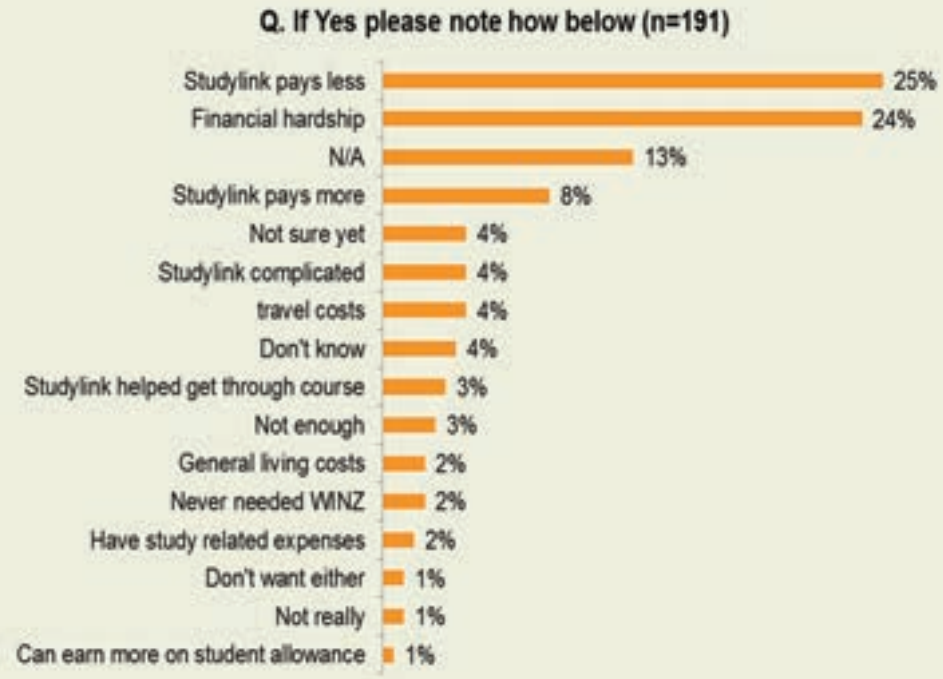


Figure 5: Impact of changing benefits

Significance

As noted earlier, tertiary learners have busy lives and many calls on their resources. Younger learners are unlikely to have substantive savings to assist them with expenses while studying, and are likely to be unprepared to manage debt, encountered for the first time with a student loan. Mature learners may have households and dependents to provide for, with fixed costs which make a loss of income (e.g. from employment, or a higher-paying benefit) hit hard. Many are also working alongside study, often in seasonal or shift work positions, with the obvious associated likelihood of increased stress, exhaustion or illness. In addition, the geography of Te Tai Tokerau, with its isolated rural and semi-rural population has an impact on financial factors. Rural learners face considerable additional costs to participate in education compared with their metropolitan counterparts. Additional costs can relate to transport, relocation expenses, and ongoing housing costs when living away from home to access education.

> *"Two years ago, a national graduate study commissioned by Universities New Zealand, supported by the Tertiary Education Commission … revealed that one in six … students were living in significant financial distress" (Barback, 2014, p. 1).*

> *"In many cases, up to 80% of a student's time goes towards meeting the last 20% of his or her financial responsibility. This places enormous strain on students' academic performance" (Govender, 2013)*

Transport and Travel

One of NorthTec's trades tutors shared a story to illustrate some of the challenges learners have to overcome, just to get to class. It involved a commercial painting class with 14 learners, none of whom had a driving licence. They were good at trades, he said, they could pass the course but they couldn't get to work placements, and once qualified, they wouldn't be able travel to work, and so wouldn't be able to progress. While such a high number of learners in one class without a licence is unusual, it is indicative of a widespread issue that affects almost a quarter of the surveyed learners. Transport issues were not surprising, given only 38% hold a full driver's licence, and one in five had no licence at all. While two thirds of learners have access to reliable transport, nearly 25% of learners didn't have access to transport or hold licences (or were learning for their licence).

Q. What drivers license/s do you currently hold? (Multiple choice)

Q. Do you have your own transport or access to reliable transport?

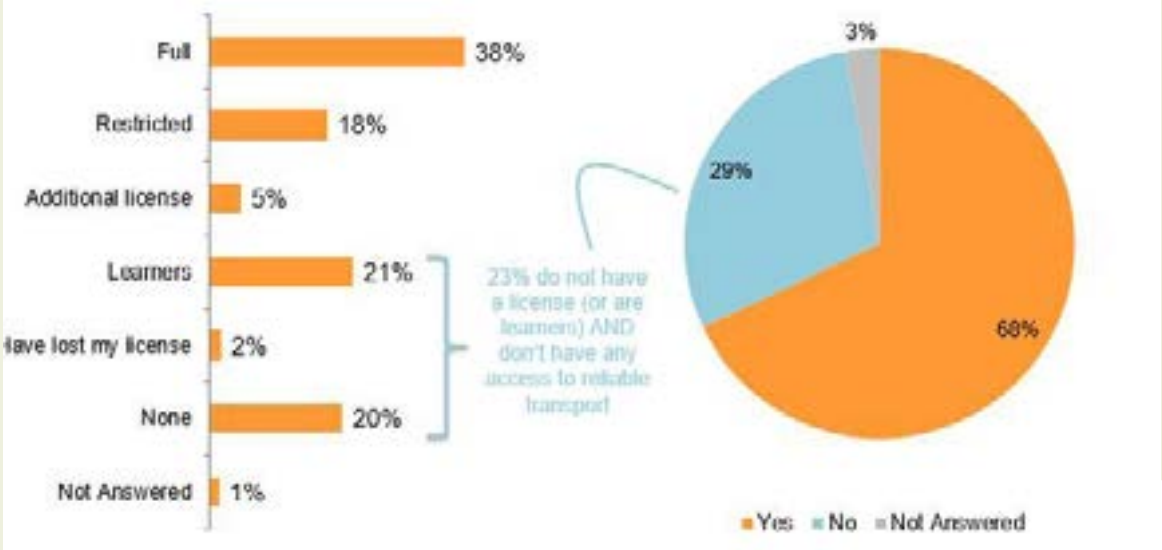


Figure 6: Transport issues

Just over a third (38%) of those who didn't have access to reliable transport walked to their course, while a further quarter (26%) relied on other friends and/or family. Buses were utilised by fewer than one in five (17%). Only 4% cycled; others relied on a course van, their tutor, they hitchhiked or travelled by homestay vehicle.

Significance

Car ownership per household in Te Tai Tokerau is on a par with the rest of New Zealand, and learner licences and vehicle access may well be similarly situated, but what is different is the considerable restriction of other options, and especially public transport. Regional learners face a longer commute to study and higher transport costs, creating further educational disadvantage. Uncertain or unaffordable transport affects attendance and achievement.

Home Life and Accommodation

In our study, only 49% of learners were living in a privately owned family home; this rate is lower for Māori than non-Māori, and lower in all regional locations besides Whangarei. The most common alternatives for all learners were either rented accommodation, or staying/ boarding with friends and relatives.

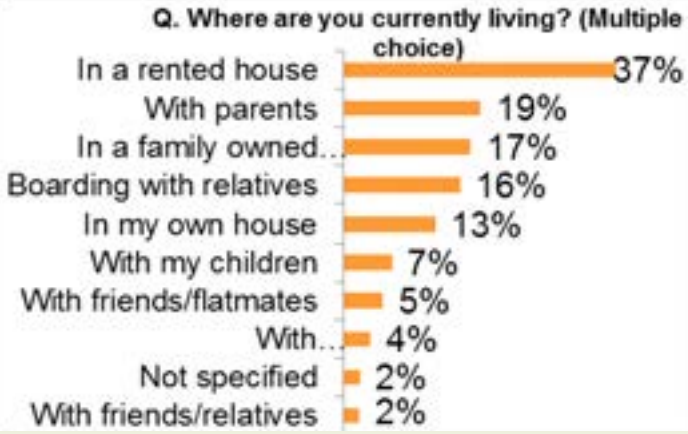


Figure 7: Accommodation

Significance

Te Tai Tokerau, and particularly Whangarei, has been affected by the ongoing Auckland housing crisis. Investors buying properties in the low-to-medium price band mean that there are fewer affordable properties for locals, alongside reduced security and rising costs for renters. For the 37% of learners who rent, this adds to their financial vulnerability and is a potential distraction, or barrier to accessing and completing study.

For those younger learners who are still in a family/ whānau household, this may not be a first choice, but rather one of necessity due to a lack of alternative options, such as the institutionally owned student hostels and housing available in larger metropolitan areas.

> "One of the biggest hurdles for some students to overcome was an actual lack of support from whānau. Most students felt that this resulted from a change in the role of the student in the household, and the fact that study took the focus off the whānau at times, which was not something the household had experienced before" (Watt & Gardiner, 2016, p. 18)

In a region with lower incomes, higher unemployment and higher crime levels than most other areas of the country (Statistics NZ, 2015), home may not always be the most conducive environment for study either. Numerous studies (e.g. Theodore et al., 2016; Webber et al., 2016) attest to the disadvantages learners from lower socio-economic backgrounds face which can include: low uptake of preschool education, parenting with minimal educationally supportive activities such as reading aloud or playing cognitively stimulating games, less parental involvement with schools, poorer health, overcrowding, more single-parent households, irregular work schedules, and a greater likelihood of moves between school districts.

Such studies often support attendance in Foundation and Bridging programmes as a transition step, however such proposals need to be aligned with student demand and interest in pursuing such courses.

Finally, learners living at home may also be subject to a number of demands and commitments which compete with study for their time and attention. Typical demands would be childcare or caring for an unwell family member, as well as working to make a financial contribution.

Where home life is identified as providing challenges for learners to meet their educational potential, some institutions have termed those from low socio-economic backgrounds as an 'equity group' for which they will actively intervene to remove barriers to improve access, participation, retention, progression and success.

"International research shows whilst demographic characteristics (such as ethnicity, age, gender) are commonly used to identify groups most disadvantaged, the underlying factor impacting on access is socio-economic status" (Tertiary Education Commission, 2010, p. 1)

"Children in low socio-economic families were more likely to have missed out on the kinds of family, school and community support that tend to foster academic achievement" (Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 8)

"… social status arising from one's parents, family and other peers has an influence on decision-making, and … social ostracism was an important consideration for people. In other words, if parents and peers do not value education and socio-economic success, any individual who aspires to academic success stands to lose social status by acquiring it. Māori may also lack information on how to succeed in socio-economic terms as a consequence of their social networks" (Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 9)

Technology and Internet Access

In our study, three in ten learners did not have internet access at home. Figures for internet connectivity were slightly more favourable for learners living in Whangarei city, and slightly less for those in the different regional locations. Overall, for those without the internet at home, over half couldn't, or chose not to access internet at a community facility. Those who did, generally used a branch of the public library, or the NorthTec campus. In contrast, the majority of learners with internet at home had an internet enabled device at home.

"Our world heavily relies on Internet technology for everyday communication, education, and work. Over time, students without Internet access will face massive disadvantages, including:

- Lack of basic research skills
- Lack of networking skills
- Inability or extreme difficulty in pursuing a degree in higher ed
- Difficulty searching and applying for jobs
- Insufficient qualifications for many jobs"

(Di Marco, 2014)

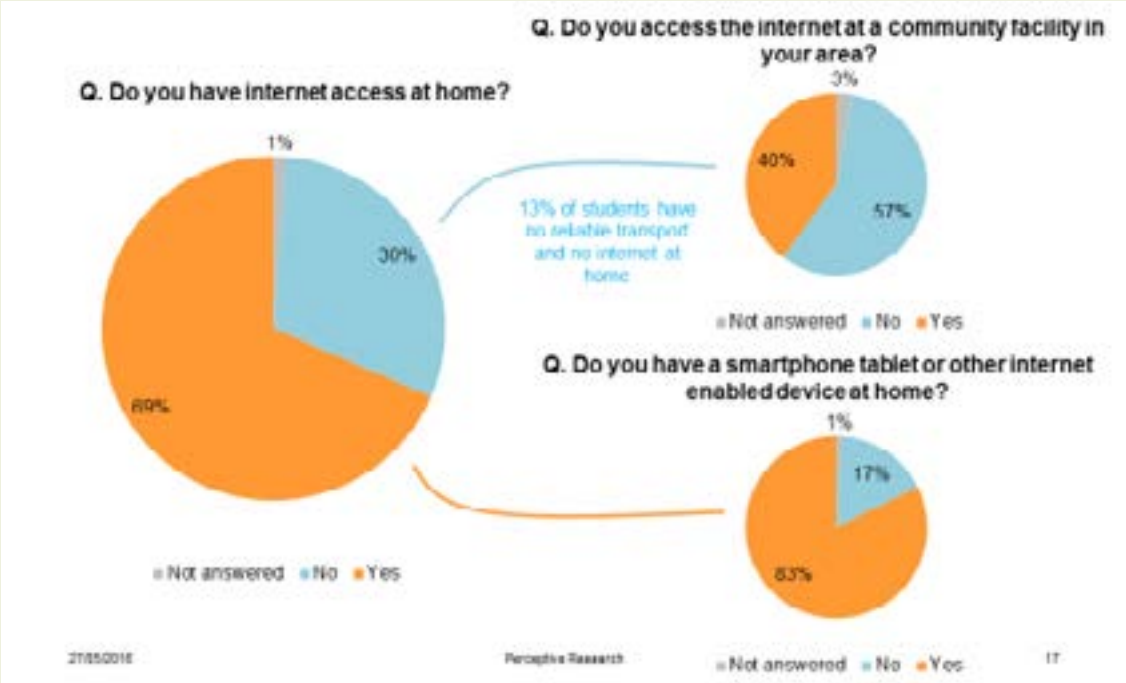


Figure 8: Internet access

Significance

Technological innovation is undeniably changing the way higher education providers teach, and the way students learn. Many programmes are offered as online, blended and flexible learning options. Delivery in classrooms can incorporate digital media and online resources. Learners download readings and upload assignments, they preview content and connect with team members for group work conducted in online meeting rooms and stored in Cloud repositories. It is clearly a significant barrier to accessing education, therefore, if a learner cannot access the internet once off-campus.

Study Ready

The move to higher education for most learners entails a change of both academic and social culture and a period of adjustment. For instance, it is quite natural for new learners to be unfamiliar with terminology and processes, to be concerned about different teaching styles and intimidated by workload, to be worried about letting themselves and family down, and to be unsure of how to relate to peers, lecturers and tutors. Two barriers to access at this point are inadequate academic preparation and disengagement. The inability to adapt to a new and unfamiliar environment often causes learners to withdraw or perform at a lower academic level. There can be significant psychological as well as financial costs, and this can result in individuals who are lost to further formal learning for long periods, or entirely.

A recent Teaching and Learning Research Initiative report showed that, from 1998 to 2003, 33 percent of the equivalent full-time student (EFTS) allocation in New Zealand was taken up by learners who dropped out in their first year of study.

Another more recent, though smaller-scale study found that the main elements impacting on retention and graduation of learners are:

- Family situations and unplanned events – personal situations impacted on learners heavily
- Under-estimation of the commitment required for tertiary study/workload
- A limited understanding of the multiple aspects of study support

In this case, 40% of learners on average did not complete the programme they had enrolled into, with half that number (20%) giving up within the first few classes.

For learners to achieve their educational, employment and life goals, they need to be study ready and ready for tertiary level education. Assisting learners to assimilate into a higher education learning environment involves a number of factors, including successful transition pathways, understanding their academic background and needs, providing a culturally appropriate and relevant learning environment, teaching and learning that caters for a spectrum of learning styles and preferences, and clear routes to higher level study and life-long learning (Chauvell & Rean, 2012).

Transition Pathways

In our study, almost a third of the sample had neglected to give their age, on either their enrolment form or the survey itself, but in a general sense, over a quarter of our learners were school leavers under 20, which is almost equally matched by learners over 40, who were upskilling for work, looking for a change in career, or referred by WINZ as a strategy to exit from Government welfare assistance. The next largest group were learners in their early twenties, followed by those in age brackets between 26 and 40. Therefore there is no single transition pathway, with learners coming from school, other trade training, workplace, and unemployment.

There are some likely commonalities, however. When learners first enter higher education they are leaving somewhere that is familiar to begin formal learning again in a new and different place. Many learners do not express confidence in their own ability—they do not trust or value their own thinking, and this needs to be bolstered during the transition process. Many may be second chance learners, who have struggled in school. Others may be first-in-family learners, with no family background in valuing a higher education qualification, or a lack of understanding of the process or the work involved.

Significance

A lot of work needs to happen before learners even enrol. Several sources (e.g.Durie, 2009; Govender, 2013) suggest that it is critical that learners, their parents and whānau have a good understanding of the qualifications framework and the importance of prerequisite requirements, as early as when they are making choices about secondary school subjects. Ongoing liaison and career counselling with goal setting and planning are important too.

Once learners begin their programme, induction/ orientation processes are an important element in swift and successful enculturation, and a sense of community and belonging. These can be institution-wide but also programme specific. A large number of learner withdrawals occur in the first weeks of each semester.

Early identification of learners who are at risk/vulnerable for whatever reason, and those with academic and cognitive 'gaps' in their underpinning knowledge is also essential in order to put support plans in place to manage the transition.

Three elements which need to be taken into account during the period of transition:

- Relationships are very important to students when it comes to making decisions
- Family influences are particularly strong throughout research on transition
- Work is no longer something that happens after study; many students now combine study and employment, partly due to economic pressures and partly a preference for keeping options open (Vaughan, 2003).

Figure 9: Impacts on student persistence (Swail et al., 2003)

Academic Needs

Whatever transition pathway has brought learners to tertiary study, many will present with some shortfall in the skills they need to succeed. In our study, only 7% of the learners who completed the survey specifically mentioned reading, writing and maths as challenges, with a few more adding comments noting concerns about existing skill level or a lack of skills needed. However, the timing of the survey at the beginning of their study may have affected this response, with logistical items such as money and transport being more top-of-mind. It is more than likely that our learners share the wider New Zealand student population's spectrum of academic and literacy proficiency.

Significance

Learner competencies identified as essential for today's tertiary learners include:

- academic literacy (reading, writing, digital literacy, and oral literacy)
- information literacy (finding, evaluating and using information)
- critical thinking (problem solving, reasoning and analysing)
- learning to learn (personal qualities, reflective learning, time management, preparedness for learning)
- e-literacy and e-learning (digital technologies, e.g. computers and internet access, mobile phones and tablets)

Providers are required to become major drivers of literacy, language and numeracy (LLN) provision in their regions; the Literacy and Numeracy for Adults Assessment Tool is just one element. The hours of learning needed to achieve LLN skills' gain vary between studies, usually from 35 to 100. A major review of LLN delivery and results identified three key focus areas for providers; 'knowing the learner', 'knowing the demands', and 'knowing what to do'.

> "A well-functioning society is one where everyone has the basic building blocks to participate in and contribute to their communities. The ability to read and write is one of these basic building blocks, as is general numeracy. Around 40% of adults in Aotearoa, New Zealand have literacy and numeracy skills below a level needed to use and understand the increasingly difficult texts and tasks that characterise a knowledge society and information economy" (Whatman et al., 2011).

A Culturally Appropriate and Relevant Learning Environment

Our learner population contains an even split of males and females and a wide age range. In our study, just as on our campuses, the largest single ethnicity is New Zealand Māori, followed by New Zealand European/Pākehā, with smaller groups of other nationalities. Yet learners are not just groups and sub-groups, defined by the labels (such as "Māori", "first-in-family", "Generation Y" etc.) but also individuals. We live in a society which is individualistic and all expect (to some degree) to be "masters of our own destiny". There is a lot of evidence that learners are more likely to succeed when their values and cultural backgrounds are acknowledged and respected, and when learning is relevant and connected. Organisations need to find ways of assimilating diverse learners into existing institutional culture, and they also need to adapt their policies and practices to embrace the cultural capital that learners bring with them.

The Tertiary Education Strategy 2014 - 2019 contains directions to support all individuals to achieve their aspirations, but also has a particular emphasis on improving Māori achievement and supporting Māori aspirations. Given NorthTec and Te Tai Tokerau's large Māori population, it makes sense to look to studies of what works for Māori learners, in developing a blueprint for the way forward.

> For a modern individual, identity is multiple, complex and constructed…Instead of a one-size-fits-all model of individuality and equality, we now need new and different ways of thinking about individuality that allow difference to be expressed as difference, rather than deficiency, lack or exclusion (Gilbert, 2000, p. 109).

Significance

In order for a holistic, inclusive approach to supporting learners to occur across the organisation, programme design and teaching and learning delivery needs to be informed by all stakeholder groups. The voice of the learners needs to be heard, and leaders and managers need to model and champion the philosophy. A top-down, bottom-up model also demonstrates the distributed leadership 'from the front, from the side and from behind'. This is advocated by management, educational and kaupapa Māori theory. In the classroom this translates into the need to use culturally appropriate, nonracist teaching approaches aimed at supporting academic success, where cultural pride and mana are strengthened through class activities.

Māori values and protocols which can be utilised in programme design:

te noho ā marae—marae kinship.

te hononga ā-iwi—shared iwi links.

te noho hei whanau—deliberate act of teamwork.

te noho rūmaki—protocols and customs.

kanohi ki te kanohi—face to face (implies frankness).

te manaakitanga—fostering relationships.

te tuwheratanga—openness.

te whakapono—trust.

Preferred Maori learning approaches are based on Maori values and practices such as ako (teaching and learning as simultaneous activities for educators and learners), manaakitanga (looking after and supporting people), aroha (love), awhi (help), tautoko (support and help), and tuakana/teina (relationship where an older or more experienced learner guides a younger one).

Maori learning success is enhanced by whanau support.

Maori learners placed particular importance on the relationship with their educators. One-on-one attention initiated by the educator is key to building this connection. Successful relationships were trusting, respectful and helpful. (Whatman et al., 2011, pp. 6-7)

Excellent Teaching for a Range of Learning Styles and Preferences

We didn't ask learners about this in the survey, so no concrete data can be reported. However the topic is included here as a natural continuation from the need to create a culturally inclusive, personalised learning environment.

Contemporary theories about adult learning are emphatic about the need for teachers to build effective, learner-centred practice. It is also widely accepted that in any group of adults there will be a wide range of individual learning style differences. People think and feel differently as they solve problems, create products and interact. Individual learning styles are influenced by personality, intelligence, education, experiences, culture, and sensory and cognitive preferences. This has led to the development of numerous models and tools. Some recent examples are phenomenon-based learning, problem-based/inquiry-based learning, cooperative learning, connected learning and the 'flipped classroom model'.

Strategies for building a learner-centred practice:

- Creating a culture around completion. Linking students' learning to a future career with strong career guidance offered through the process. The end target of employment gives learning purpose
- Empowering students to make decisions about topics, forms of communication, and selections of materials encourages them to assume greater ownership and responsibility for their engagement in learning
- Building in instructional conditions, such as student goal setting, self-directed learning, and collaborative learning
- Being accommodating to students' personal circumstances
- Having a sense of humour
- Applying assessment practices to improve learning. Tutors and students have clear information about learning outcomes. Feedback is provided that impacts positively on students' motivation, and teachers adjust their teaching to take account of the results of assessment
- Including activities to build student-tutor interaction
- Establishing class rules and values (Alton-Lee, 2003; Honeyfield & Fraser, 2013; Vaughan, 2003)

Significance

In tertiary settings, teachers often teach the way they were taught (the 'apprenticeship of observation'), because they may receive little formal training in teaching before entering the classroom. Over time, teachers develop and refine their own technique and style through their own teaching experiences. If institutions wish to guide and shape this frame of reference, it is essential that planned interventions occur that suit teacher and learner needs and the overall context.

Questions to guide teachers' reflection (Haigh, 2006)

- Do you arrive early to class and take time to mingle with students and chat to them?
- Do you make it possible for students to chat to you?
- Do you try to use students' names?
- Do you encourage the students to talk with each other?
- Do you greet your students?
- Do you thank your students for contributions they make to class?
- Do you give the students opportunities to draw on their own experiences?
- Do you share information about yourself and your experiences?
- Do you acknowledge students' different cultural backgrounds?
- Are you transparent about paper and assessment requirements?
- How do you respond to student questions?

Higher Level Study and Life-long Learning

Two thirds (66%) of NorthTec respondents in the survey said they planned to look for a job after their course, although half also said they planned to go into higher study at some stage, and a large group were still undecided.

Are you planning to undertake more study at a higher level in the future?

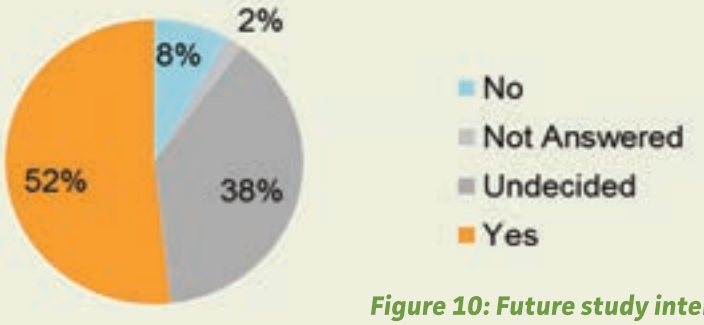


Figure 10: Future study intentions

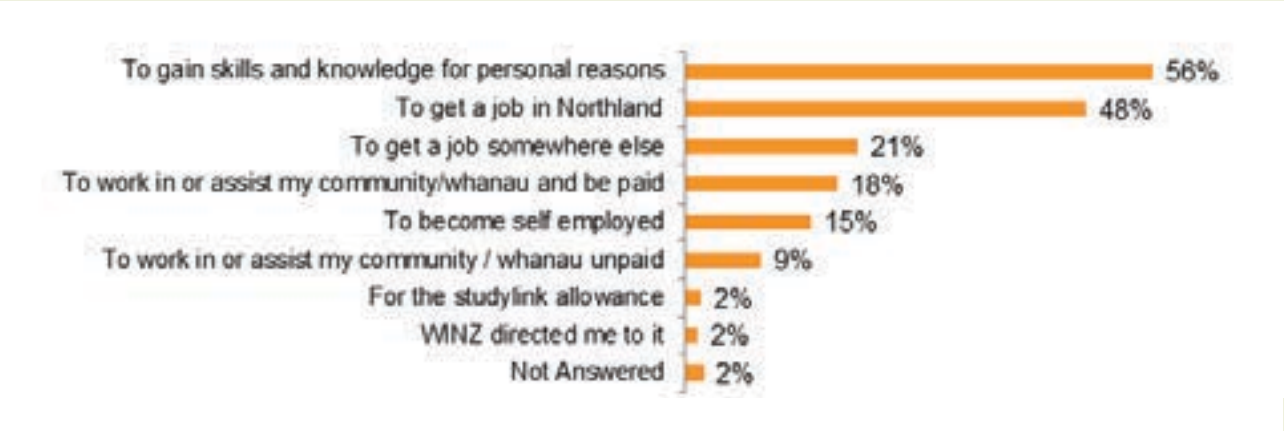
Significance

These numbers were exciting: learners in their first few weeks of tertiary experience were seeing the value, recognising the journey ahead, and enthusiastic about continuing the momentum. Where traditionally the focus has been on encouraging enrolment in programmes, followed by improving success and completion, there now needs to be an equally strong institutional emphasis on ensuring that barriers to access do not erode these aspirations for higher level study and achievement.

Temperature-taking with students halfway through programme:

- My goal at this stage is to…
- Tutors/the organisation can help me by…
- One of the best things I have done at [institution] is…
- One of the things I have learnt by attending [institution] is…

Work Ready



Other reasons or comments	N=
Improve my knowledge/skills	52
Improved chances to get a job	30
To improve myself	19
To work in a certain industry	18
Credibility / hold a qualification	14
Financial	12
For family	9
Location	9
Help people	7
Contribute to community	5
Entry to university / foot in the door to studying	4
Apprenticeship	4
Study something I enjoy	3
Any / all of above	2
Other	15

Figure 11: Work goals

One of the main reasons learners choose to study at a tertiary level is to enhance their career prospects. Given the rising costs of education and levels of debt on graduation, it is especially important that learners (and their families) feel their investment has been money well spent. In addition, learners' engagement and motivation is more likely to be maintained if they can see the relevance of their studies to their future careers. Today, a qualification alone is no longer enough to guarantee a graduate a career; employers are looking for 'work-ready' graduates who can demonstrate job specific skills in addition to the content covered in class.

The Desire for Work

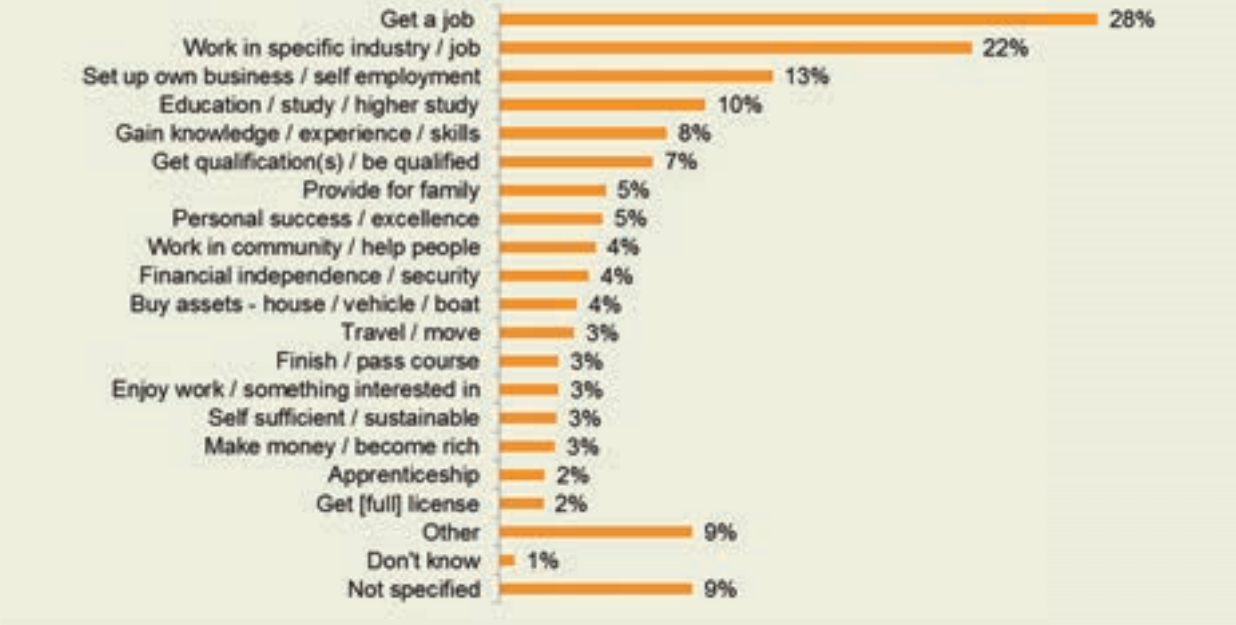
The learners in our research sample were predominantly motivated to study; they were there to gain skills and knowledge for personal reasons, or to get a job in Te Tai Tokerau.

> "To be employed is to be at risk, to be employable is to be secure" (Hawkins, as cited in University of Edinburgh, 2011)

> "Many young people are not work ready. Talk to any employer in New Zealand who has tried to take on new staff recently and this will be one of their key gripes ...[and] employer's expectations increase as the level and type of study undertaken increases" (Twaddle, 2014).

The most common goal for the future was simply to get a job (28%), while a further 22% were looking for work in a specific industry. For those learners who were looking for a job, one in five said they were hoping for a job in Trades (e.g. Building, Electrician, Painter etc), while 16% were interested in a job in the Health & Social Services industry (e.g. Nursing, Psychology, Social Work etc).

Q. What are your goals for the future? (Multiple choice)



Q. What job are you hoping to get in the future?

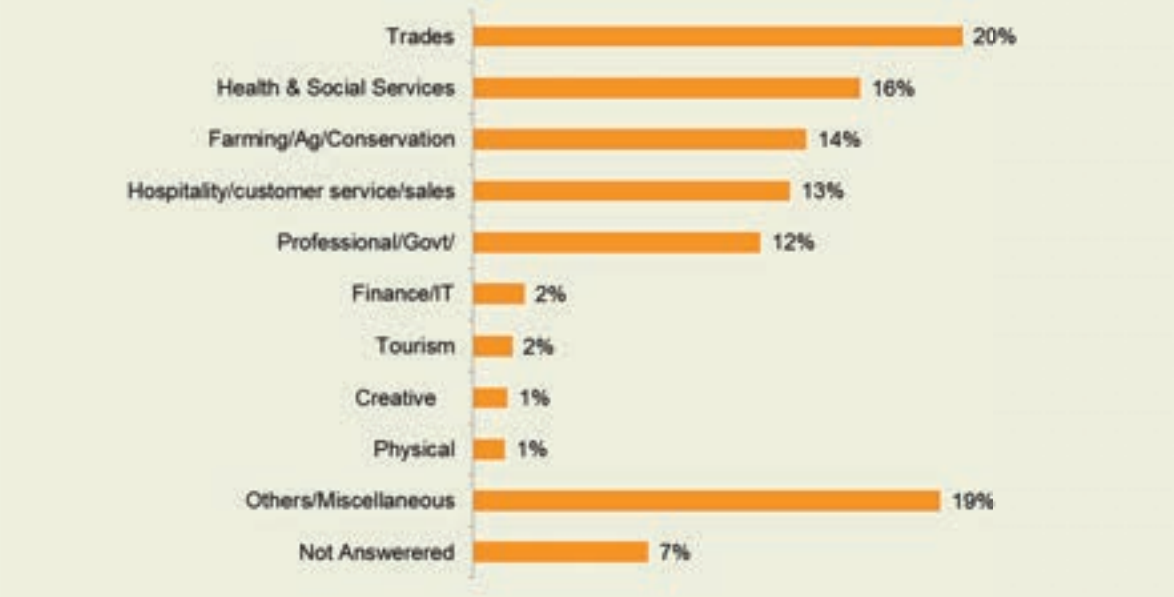


Figure 12: Longer term goals

An additional line of questioning with direct bearing to learners' desire for work was about location and mobility. Half of the learners wanted to stay in Te Tai Tokerau (50%), while just over a quarter were undecided (26%). Most of the remainder would shift to where the jobs were (including Auckland and elsewhere in New Zealand, and Australia) or would have considered moving if they were financially able to do so. But of those wanting to leave the area, 26% already knew that they would want to come back, and a further 38% were undecided.

Significance

A large proportion of learners were studying because they wanted work. They wanted work which would allow them to stay in Te Tai Tokerau, or to return home to settle in the future. Programme offerings must therefore align with the region's industry sectors and community needs. The forecast for employment and job openings in Te Tai Tokerau over the next five years is one of slow, incremental gains, rather than huge leaps forward, as in some of New Zealand's busier centres (Infometrics, 2016; Te Tai Tokerau Iwi Chief Executives' Consortium, 2015). One area where new and growing areas of economic opportunity have been identified in a post-Treaty settlement environment is the growing Māori economy and asset base.

> "With a growing Māori population, Treaty settlements and increased growth of Māori businesses and industries, iwi will focus on core assets such as fishing, forestry and farming. However, future opportunities will include more productive use of assets and moving up the value chain in the primary industries.
>
> There are potential new opportunities in aquaculture, eco-tourism, geothermal energy, horticulture, properties, social housing stock on a commercial basis, infrastructure, water and waste management, water storage and irrigation, honey, mineral extraction and management of underutilised Māori freehold land".
>
> (He Tangata, He Whenua, He Oranga, 2015).

> "Technological advances could make a large proportion of existing jobs obsolescent in the coming decades. A frequently quoted example is driverless cars, which could make taxi drivers redundant… The jobs most at risk are those with lower wages and requiring low levels of educational attainment." (New Zealand Productivity Commission, 2016)

Skills and Competencies for Work Readiness

Te Tai Tokerau's economy relies to a considerable extent on primary industries. However the region cannot afford to disregard the significant shift taking place in advanced economies worldwide, from manufacturing to emphasising information and knowledge services. Knowledge itself is growing ever more specialised and expanding exponentially. Information and communication technology is transforming the nature of how work is conducted and the meaning of social and working relationships. So-called 'soft skills' such as managing time, problem-solving, decision-making, information sharing, teamwork and innovation are seen as key in today's enterprises.

The learners in our study recognised this as well; required skills/competencies and good personal attributes (e.g. confidence, professionalism) were ranked ahead of qualifications on their own. They also require work experience, transport, introductions and references, and job-finding skills.

> "No longer can students look forward to middle class success in the conduct of manual labour or use of routine skills - work that can be accomplished by machines. Rather, whether a technician or a professional person, success lies in being able to communicate, share, and use information to solve complex problems, in being able to adapt and innovate in response to new demands and changing circumstances, in being able to marshal and expand the power of technology to create new knowledge and expand human capacity and productivity (Binkley et al., 2010, p. 7).

Q. List three things that would assist you to get a job when you ccomplete this course.

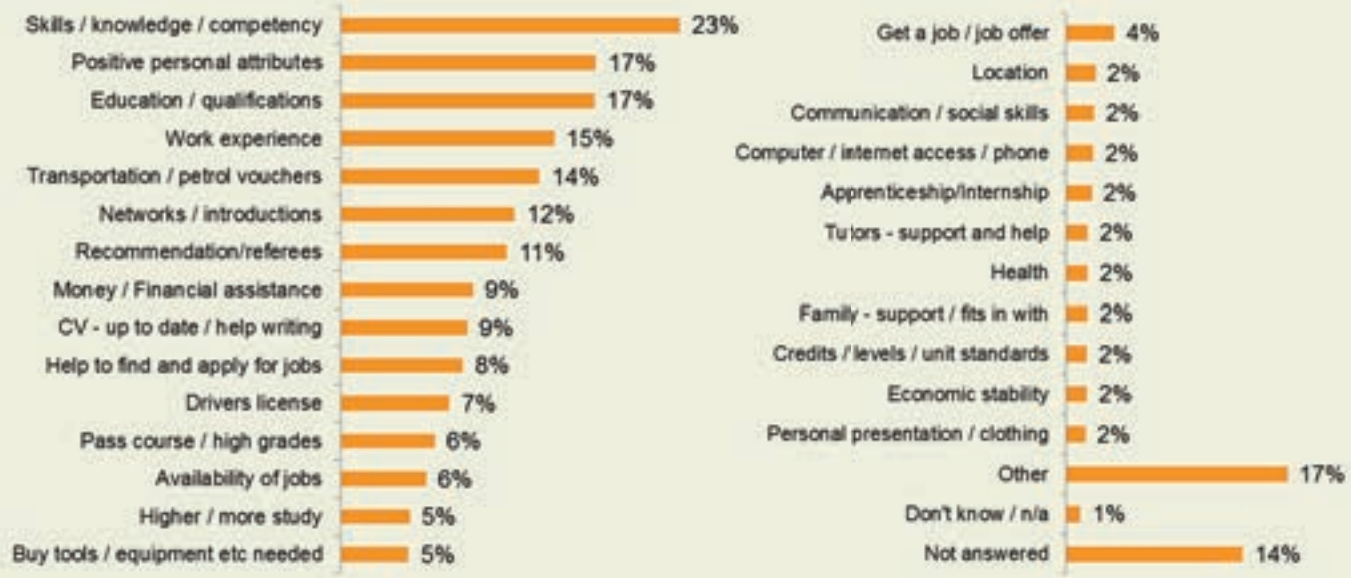


Figure 13: Support needed for employment

Significance

With subject-specific knowledge rapidly becoming outdated, learners need to be what has been termed 'work ready plus' - not just work ready for today but work ready plus for tomorrow. The 'plus' comes from a range of literacies, from understanding change, and from being creative and inventive - not just 'regurgitative'. There is a sizeable literature about what desirable graduate attributes should entail; two representative models are those of Scott (2015) and Binkley et al. (2010).

Key skills that employers look for – Ministry of Business, innovation and Employment:

- communication skills
- customer service skills – in person, on the phone, and online
- ability to work well in a team
- literacy and numeracy skills
- confidence in learning about and using computers and technology
- planning and organisational skills
- initiative and a can-do attitude
- problem-solving skills
- good work habits and independence
- understanding of health and safety (Twaddle, 2014)

Figure 14: professional and graduate capability framework (Scott, 2015)

Ways of Thinking
1. Creativity and innovation
2. Critical thinking, problem solving, decision making
3. Learning to learn, Metacognition

Ways of Working
4. Communication
5. Collaboration (teamwork)

Tools for Working
6. Information literacy
7. ICT literacy

Living in the World
8. Citizenship – local and global
9. Life and career
10. Personal and social responsibility – including cultural awareness and competence (Binkley et al., 2010).

Action plan

Call to action!

We don't just want to talk about change for Te Tai Tokerau learners – we want to bring it about! We therefore propose an "Inwards-Outwards" model of engagement with stakeholders to ensure the work carried out in this project informs praxis – new practices guided by action research and reflection – with selected key actions ascribed to key agencies within a framework which is measurable and accountable.

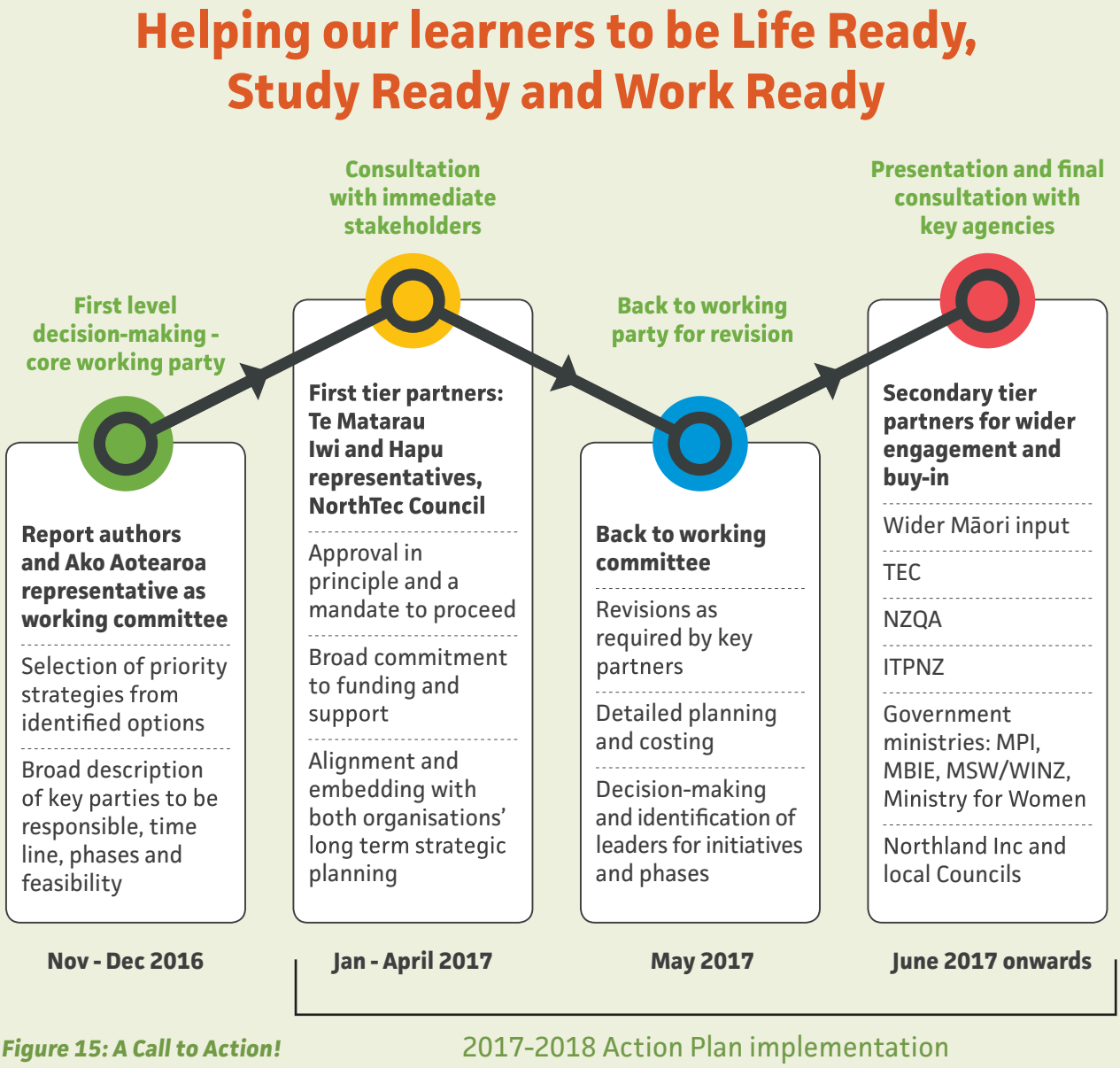


Figure 15: A Call to Action!

Action Plan Priorities, Strategies and Measures

The following five priorities are intended to be only indicative of the possible mahi to be undertaken in the next phase of this project. They are included here as we have always intended that this study be about action, and not just an information-gathering exercise. They represent the first level of decision-making by the core working party and consulting stakeholders – as outlined in the Call to Action (Figure 15) schematic diagram.

The 'aspirations' and 'possible strategies' sections represent some general thoughts garnered from the research about possible targets to aspire to, and possible strategies to get there. These aspirations would need to be discussed and agreed in hui, and in many cases the possible strategies are already occurring or well-advanced. Nevertheless, as an objective outside provided view they provide food for thought and a suggested starting point for mahi.

Priority Tahi:
Partnerships and stakeholder engagement

Our strategic objective:

To have effective partnerships with all stakeholder groups including Māori and Industry that enhance NorthTec's leadership, the experiences of learners and graduates, staff capabilities and help to create an inclusive learning environment

Our aspirations

- Involve stakeholders in strategy and policy development so as to merge educational strategy with business strategy that enhances sustainability and relevance of educational delivery in the area
- Use stakeholder knowledge and tikanga in the running and educational delivery of NorthTec
- Help facilitate a greater understanding by stakeholders of each other's aspirations and objectives as well as learner needs and goals
- Governance at a NorthTec Council and senior management level enacting the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi

Possible strategies to achieve the aspirations

Governance/management

- Investigate co-investment opportunities for programme development

Senior leaders, educators, support staff

- Facilitating learning through partnerships and collaboration, including developing opportunities for off-site co-curricular learning, e.g. internships, work experience, graduate positions

External stakeholders: Community, whānau, employers, industry

- Involve stakeholders on new and redesigned programmes and incorporate Te Tai Tokerau mātauranga into qualifications

- Develop an expectation and formal consultation processes to promote stakeholder input into NorthTec strategy, funding, strategic and investment plans, and campus redevelopment

- Encourage and support further staff membership / representation on industry forums, community associations etc.

How will we know we are successful?

- Audit of all management and advisory panels and committees shows shared and equitable membership and representation
- Minutes of senior leadership and governance meetings show input from all attendees are valued, considered on merit and recorded
- Records of peer-esteem show staff membership and contributions to external organisations are increasing

Priority Rua:
Leadership

Our strategic objective:

Leadership that is cohesive and community-engaged, and spread throughout the institution.

Our aspirations

- Organisational leadership fosters a culture in which every learner and staff member reaches their full potential and is encouraged to excel
- Leadership takes steps to foster a culture in which all stakeholders have a voice, with open communication and transparent policies and practices so that there is sharing of kaupapa and a better alignment between community priorities, business opportunities, industry requirements and learner needs
- The leadership help lead community inspired change that will support learners

Possible strategies to achieve the aspirations

Governance/management

- Open communication to build a culture of trust, not blame
- Weekly attendance at cultural component so that senior leadership can be seen as respecting, understanding and living tikanga of the

Senior leaders, educators, support staff

- Revisit institutional vision, mission and goals for full staff buy-in and invite feedback about any gaps or discrepancies
- Extending opportunities to recognise and celebrate successes of staff and learners

External stakeholders: Community, whānau, employers, industry

- Creation of partnerships that help bridge the learner to employment (experience and paid mahi)

community including Māori models of kaitiakitanga (sustainability) in conservation of resources and guardianship of land, language, history and people

- Establishing safe and secure mechanisms for staff to feedback and feed forward concerns, issues and ideas to senior leadership
- Regular Q and A forums with staff and senior leadership, reported and made available through the intranet
- A weekly or bi-weekly email address from the CEO to all-staff, updating all on 'institutional health' – strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats etc.
- Breaking down barriers between senior leadership and staff with increased management presence at social events, team meetings
- Revisit internal mechanisms for promotion/progression and institutional merit awards
- Continuing to gather and analyse data and using that to inform responsiveness

- Increasing opportunities and uptake for staff to lead, or co-lead short term projects with scaffolded support and recognition for contribution

- Partnerships with Industry, Crown organisations, Māori and iwi/hapū groups, Whānau Ora and social service providers presents a key opportunity to help learners address the barriers they are experiencing
- This may include the negotiation of processes (eg Study Link) and or funding mechanisms that will, with modification, better achieve outcomes sought

How will we know we are successful?

- Workplace satisfaction survey
- HR records – e.g. staff turnover, complaints
- The makeup of council, senior leadership and consultative groups reflect the face of the community

Priority Toru:
Learners and graduates

Our strategic objective:

To ensure that every learner enjoys an outstanding and successful learning experience that assists them to become life ready, study ready and work ready

Our aspirations

- An inviting and welcoming environment is established at first contact and for the duration of study based on whakawhānaungatanga
- Graduates who are work-ready, and work-ready plus, with capabilities and competencies for a changing workplace (Figure 14)
- A stakeholder focused approach to identifying and addressing the needs of the communities, learners, industry and stakeholders to ensure the programme delivered are of relevance and applicability to all
- Students recognise and demonstrate personal growth, success, confidence and satisfaction as an outcome of the study experience
- To instil a passion for lifelong learning
- To provide solutions for challenges to accessing or completing study that are outside students' control
- Respecting literacy for Māori as including becoming literate in te reo Māori and Te Ao Māori (Māori world views)

Possible strategies to achieve the aspirations

Governance/management

- Language, literacy, computing and numeracy skills embedded in all Level 1-4 programmes
- Consult with learners on a regular basis on their needs and views on issues that affect them and the institution
- Involve learners in the development of the learning environment online and on physical campuses
- Use more local imagery in marketing materials to reflect the learner base including the use of te reo and Māori imagery

Senior leaders, educators, support staff

- Individual learning plans for each and every learner
- Orientation weeks with student-centred (rather than programme-centred) activities to socially and academically integrate students
- Early detection of 'at risk' students – from tutor interviews and/or diagnostic testing to develop academic and pastoral support plans, and/or counselling and mentoring systems
- The development of ePortfolios for students to capture and showcase skill-set development and achievements

External stakeholders: Community, whānau, employers, industry

- Promote further campus visits by external agencies and community organisations, such as Budgeting Advice, and by large employers, e.g. KPMG, banks etc, as well as trades/contractors
- Investigate partnerships for public transport provision, subsidies, carpooling and driver training, with regular monitoring of outcomes and effectiveness where these are provided externally

	• Financial literacy - provide budgeting courses as embedded or free-standing optional electives in Foundation and Bridging programmes to build basic understanding • Targeted mentoring tuakana/teina model of older and younger mentorship • Include career planning and work-related skills, such as interviews and job applications in all programmes • Specific actions / programmes focused on increasing the number of work experience opportunities for learners	• Welcome whānau involvement in the learning process and at formal occasions • An oversight committee with wide representation from all providers and users, to ensure programmes are aligned with employer and industry needs • Consider opportunities to link with the Tū Maia initiative or similar agencies for co-delivery or workshops

How will we know we are successful?

- Continued improvements in success and completion figures
- Graduate first destination surveys, especially around employment
- Re-enrolment in higher level qualifications

Priority Wha:
Staff capability

Our strategic objective:

Staff make a significant difference in their learners' experience and in their communities.

Our aspirations

- Ensure all staff understand the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and how it relates to their job
- Provide safe learning opportunities for staff to develop their skills and knowledge and cultural competence in applying Te Tiriti to their role
- All teaching staff have an education qualification that underpins excellent teaching and learning to support all learners

Possible strategies to achieve the aspirations

Governance/management

- Ensuring all teaching staff are informed and supported to deliver inclusive practice, with this as a professional development funding priority, for example Kia eke ki te taumata - Success for Māori in tertiary education and Hei Toko: Enabling Māori Learner Success (Ako Aotearoa)
- Support staff to attend professional development workshops and incorporate new learning into their practice, e.g. Ako Aotearoa Professional Development Workshop series
- Support staff to complete higher qualifications
- Develop the physical environment at all NorthTec campus to include iwi and hapū imagery
- Revisit institutional policies around recognition and reward for staff achievements and successes
- Acknowledge staff achievements publically – in all staff meetings, media stories, annual reports, institutional newsletters etc.
- Revisit institutional policies around professional development resourcing (financial and workload allocations)
- Evaluate all job applicants for an understanding of the community they wish to serve

Senior leaders, educators, support staff

- Encourage all staff to use te reo Māori and tikanga Māori
- Supporting research that is relevant to the communities served and the learners being aware of the importance of kaupapa Māori research
- Ensuring that Māori centred research is commissioned or led by Māori
- Respecting Mana whenua to identify appropriate priorities and practices for research

External stakeholders: Community, whānau, employers, industry

- Design recruitment policies in consultation with stakeholders to attract, support and retain high calibre applicants

How will we know we are successful?

- Increases in the number of staff completing higher qualifications, attending professional development training, and achieving research outputs, such as presentations, publications and professional memberships
- Evaluations from Ako Aotearoa post-workshop Impact surveys, especially recording changes to practice
- Establish a "cultural audit", e.g. Bevan-Brown's (2000) checklist of "environment, personnel, policy, process, content, resources, assessment and administration" followed by a "Māori cultural input action plan" to address identified gaps. The objective being is seeing mātauranga Māori as a taonga
- Māori are satisfied that research is relevant to them as Mana whenua/Māori communities

Priority Rima:
Inclusive learning environments

Our strategic objective:

- All learners' values and cultural backgrounds are acknowledged and respected, and learning is relevant and connected
- Learning is active and participatory, is relevant and applied, and challenges, inspires and transforms

Our aspirations

- Policies and practices embrace a diverse cultural capital, and assist students from all backgrounds to transition into the institutional culture
- A holistic, inclusive approach supports all learners across the organisation, programme design, and teaching and learning delivery, where cultural pride and mana are strengthened through class activities

Possible strategies to achieve the aspirations

Governance/management

- Leadership reflecting the makeup of the community it serves
- Culturally-specific learning spaces and support, e.g. noho marae, marae-based learning, whānau rooms, tutorials especially for Māori learners, specialist academic and pastoral support personnel. 'Whānau Group Concept' for holistic sharing, reflection and aroha (Harker-Wilcox, 2010)

Senior leaders, educators, support staff

- Setting and sharing high expectations for all learners, with some element of one-to-one planning and feedback with students to 'personalise' the learning environment
- An emphasis on relationship building: student-teacher and student-student. Establish/formalise buddy, mentor and tuakana- teina structures: 'no student left behind'

External stakeholders: Community, whānau, employers, industry

- Growing external strategic and collaborative relationships through whānau, hapū and iwi networks, as well as community and industry. Includes liaison and advisory board membership, on-site invitations and open days, shared lunches and celebrations at a programme level

- Providing more part time and flexi-start programmes to accommodate seasonal work
- Offering multiple entry and exit points so that students can complete 'mini qualifications' and build up to a full Certificate or Diploma over an extended timeframe
- Free te reo, waiata, kappa haka, waka ama etc. classes and clubs outside class

How will we know we are successful?

- Monitoring and reporting on uptake and success of any of the above initiatives selected

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Appendix A:

Te Tauaki Ako kaupapa Māori framework

The purpose of this document is to provide a framework that underpins how we support Māori learners and educators but also informs how we work for all learners.

It also reflects the dimensions that we believe organisations and educators working within a kaupapa Māori context should address and incorporate into their business practice.

Ako Aotearoa is committed to being an organisation that is based on the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi. This commitment is underpinned by robust internal systems, strategies that specifically relate to positive outcomes for Māori learners and an organisational structure that includes a Māori Caucus comprising respected Māori tertiary educators, two of whom sit on the Ako Aotearoa board. It is intended that this is a living document that is continually referred to and reviewed in the operation and development of Ako Aotearoa's service delivery.

Kaupapa	Whakamārama	Tikanga
Whakapapa	Genealogy, heredity	Understands and celebrates the origins of the wider organisation and the whakapapa of the individuals within it Understanding the organisation and its place in the sector Understanding the whakapapa of knowledge and our place in that whakapapa i.e.Tane-nui-ā-Rangi Understanding and recognising the validity of the history, perspectives, beliefs and values of Māori in Aotearoa
Wairuatanga	Spirituality, belief, faith	Is inclusive of moemoeā and matakitetanga – vision Recognises and respects other belief systems Recognises wairuatanga as an integral component of an individual along with taha tinana (physical), taha hinengaro (intellectual), and taha Māori (family) Integrates wairua into all practices
Whanaungatanga	Kinship, relationships	Understands the relationships between individuals, iwi, hapū and pan Māori groups and how to promote, establish and manage mutually beneficial relationships Strong support systems for members of the organisation Maintaining strong relationships with key stakeholders
Mana	Authority, reputation	Building, valuing, promoting and protecting the reputation of Ako Aotearoa Recognising and respecting the authority and reputation of whānau, hapū , iwi and Māori groups around the country
Te Reo		Respect and value for te reo Māori Promoting and using te reo Māori Promoting and supporting excellence in the teaching and learning of te reo Māori

Mātauranga Māori	Māori Knowledge	Promoting Mātauranga Māori to the tertiary sector Promoting discussion and use of Māori learning frameworks
Kaitiakitanga	Guardianship, conservation, sustainability	Sources of knowledge acknowledged and respected Valuing the longevity of the organisation Establishing systems to ensure the sustainability of the organisation Ensuring that practices are consistent with conservation and sustainability of natural resources
Manaakitanga	Hospitality, generosity	Manaakitanga is integrated into all aspects of our service Educators and learners are the focus Guidelines and processes are culturally appropriate user friendly and accessible to client groups Is inclusive and readily shares information
Whakanui	Respect, value	Valuing our people and stakeholders Valuing the contributions we receive from all parts of the sector Valuing excellent and good teaching and good learning practice
Kotahitanga	Unity	Promotes and encourages collaboration Is focussed on positive outcomes for Māori learners and national Māori development
Whakamana	Empowerment	Empowering Māori by aspiring and working towards being a TOW based organisation and increasing capability to service Māori Empowering teachers and learners Empowering the sector to do better for Māori teachers and learners
Akoranga & whakaakoranga	Learning & teaching	Being learner focussed Understanding learner needs Identifying, encouraging and promoting excellence/emancipatory praxis in teaching
Taunaki	Evidence based	Basing research on sound methodology Research has a practice focus All assertions and frameworks are supported by robust evidence particularly around outcomes for learners
Kairangi	Excellence, high standards	Maintaining high standards of project and research evaluation Maintaining and valuing high standards in the work we do

Note - This document has its origins in work that has been carried out into kaupapa Māori and mātauranga Māori frameworks by many notable Māori educators including Graham Smith, Linda Smith, Leonie Pihema, Mereana Selby and Ako Aotearoa's Māori Caucus.

About the Authors

Philip Alexander-Crawford (MIndS, BAM, LLB)

Born in Kaikohe, Te Tai Tokerau and living as a teen in Whangarei, Phil is of Ngati Hine, Ngapuhi, Ngati Rehia, Scottish and English whakapapa. His whānau value education highly and he has bachelor degrees in law and management, a Masters in Indigenous Studies and is completing a Masters in Professional Practice. This has enabled him to complete mahi teaching at a tertiary level. His kaupapa includes helping change learning environments to work more effectively for a wider range of learners. He is presently Chief Executive of Te Matarau Education Trust which is a Te Tai Tokerau based iwi and hapū based education trust helping Māori and Pasifika into trades training.

Mark Ewen

Mark was born in Ōtautahi (Christchurch) and spent his formative years in Whakaraupo (Lyttelton) New Zealand but also lived elsewhere in Te Waipounamu (the South Island). After leaving school and working in a number of roles he studied and worked in New Zealand, Australia and the United Kingdom and travelled overseas. He completed two Masters' degrees and a PhD with his PhD examined issues of sustainable development in Nepal.

Mark has presented at various conferences. His research and learning background is in sustainable development and tourism, environmental education, teaching and learning in higher education, and executive management. He has held a variety of management and leadership roles, and is presently Acting Chief Executive of Te Tai Tokerau Wānanga (NorthTec).

His home with his family is Taihika, in Te Tai Tokerau. His focus is the sustainable development of Te Tai Tokerau across economic, environmental, social and cultural contexts.

Cath Fraser

Cath is a Tauranga-based education contractor with a background in learning support and staff development in New Zealand's tertiary sector. She has qualifications in education and second language teaching, and delivers a number of professional development workshops for Ako Aotearoa around 21st Century educational concepts of active learning and student-centred delivery.

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Rachael Dennis

Rachael is an independent consultant with a background in human resource and project management, education and recruitment and works with education providers and businesses to lead and implement change. Rachael is experienced in leading the delivery of research and projects from inception through to implementation with her role in this project to manage the project team, the development of the survey and the collection and analysis of the data.

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A summary of the full report:
Helping students become life-ready, study-ready and work-ready in Te Tai Tokerau – Northland

Mark Ewen,
Philip Nitama Alexander-Crawford,
Rachael Dennis & Cath Fraser

More information at:
www.akoaotearoa.ac.nz/life-study-work-ready

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