

Reform of Vocational Education TEU discussion paper.

TEU VET Advisory Group, July 2019



Summary

In 2018 leaders from across the vocational education sector agreed that “staff, student, iwi and community engagement must be part of all planning and decisions in vocational education and training”. The members of Te Hautū Kahurangi | The Tertiary Education Union stepped up to fulfil their part by engaging in the ITP Roadmap 2020 meetings across the country, holding forums, and setting up an ongoing reference group.

We continue to talk about what will ensure our vocational education system provides the comprehensive foundation and ongoing

innovation needed in broad fields of practice for professions and lifelong vocations. We want a system that lets students develop an awareness of self and culture, knowledge of practice, the technical base of practice, and the attributes needed for the integration of students into both professional life and society.

This paper details some of our latest thinking, which falls into five broad categories outlined in this opening – people; collaboration and differentiation; coherent learning and support; trust of staff; and, resourcing.

He tangata, he tangata, he tangata

Any reform must put Te Tiriti o Waitangi and people at its heart. Building and maintaining relationships is at the core of strong vocational education and training.

System-wide collaboration and differentiation

Any reform must include responsive teaching, learning, innovation and research that meets iwi and community need. All processes in the system must encourage collaboration and sharing of good practice. This is only possible if trained polytechnic staff are included in setting standardised processes and curriculum, and in tailoring these to the needs of their students, communities, and industries.

Integrated and coherent learning

The best journey for learners is the one where the system supports them to integrate on- and off-job training as they deem fit. This must be facilitated through strong industry to tutor relationships and well-resourced support services.

Trust and respect for staff

Decision-making must involve collegial processes where staff expertise and experience is valued. This means flatter institutional structures, strong engagement with employer representatives, and co-creation of learning and innovation on campuses, and between them.

Resourcing

Resourcing must be provided at a level and manner that enables system-wide collaboration between providers, and between those working and studying in the system.

Each of these ideas is elaborated further in this document.



Methods

This overview is drawn from reference group meetings held from March to June 2019. The expertise and experience of the group was drawn out through structured conversations with Dr Sandra Grey, TEU's Political Officer and other national team members. The aim was to dig deep into some of the questions arising after the Government released the core documentation on the Reform of Vocational Education.

A clear vision

To make a substantial difference to the way the vocational education system is running, we must begin with a common set of values and purpose. TEU members have agreed on the following definition of vocational education and training, and hope others in the sector will work to build on this foundation:

Vocational education and training provides the comprehensive foundation and ongoing innovation needed in broad fields of practice for professions and lifelong vocations. It does so through developing an awareness of self and culture, knowledge of practice, the technical base of practice, and the attributes needed for the integration of students into both professional life and society. This can be provided at all levels of education and includes research-based vocational bachelors and postgraduate degrees taught in institutes of technology and polytechnics, and wānanga.

Teaching and learning is based on applied research and the ongoing development and evaluation of applied, workplace, and community/iwi/hapū situated methods. Students will be inspired to be lifelong learners, employees, employers, entrepreneurs, and to exercise their rights and obligations as citizens. This approach will enable them to participate in collectively addressing and advancing the major issues of their time (environmental, social, cultural, technological, and economic), including the ever changing needs of industries and the labour market.

In Aotearoa New Zealand, the vocational education sector, like the tertiary education sector as a whole, has the responsibility to convey a deeper understanding of the shared Tiriti history of this country and to support and encourage innovative ways to practically implement the obligations agreed by the two Tiriti partners (iwi Māori and the Crown). The Tiriti relationship means our sector is also able to offer and develop unique teaching, learning and research practices of students and staff, and governance and management models that serve to strengthen our understanding of each other and the world we live in.

Vocational education and training is a powerful instrument that contributes to the full development of the human personality, social mobility, the reduction of inequality, and the betterment of society.

We must have a strong definition of what VET is for and what it can achieve. A strong definition and clear purpose statement will enable us to improve the public perception of vocational education and training.

This, accompanied by the end of a competitive market model in the tertiary

education sector, will help to ensure parity of esteem with other parts of the tertiary education sector.

From this basis we can set the outcomes desired and the path that we must travel to achieve these outcomes.

Outcomes desired from VET

For individual learners

- Well rounded citizens who can contribute to both the world of work and society
- A desire and aptitude for life-long learning and innovation

For staff

- Places of work where student and staff well-being is taken seriously
- Places of work where staff are listened to, trusted, and respected
- Places of work where co-creation, collaboration, and the critic and conscience function flourish
- An acceptance and enhancement of the strong collective voice of staff through the union on both employment and professional matters

For communities and society

- Regular interactions between staff responsible for teaching/learning and community leaders to ensure the needs of each community are addressed
- Good jobs for VET staff so they can continue to be engaged both on-campus and in their communities
- Innovative and creative VET spaces that contribute to addressing issues that come from social, political, technological, scientific, and climate change locally, nationally, and globally

For current and future employers

- Well trained employees who have both technical skills, knowledge, practices, awareness of interpersonal relationships, and the attributes needed for the integration into the world of work

- Engaged and enthusiastic employees who can and will continue to develop and grow both their skills and knowledge base

This range of outcomes must be achieved for learners, staff, communities, society, and employers. Only this will allow those in vocational education and training to address some of the social, scientific, cultural, environmental, and economic issues facing us all.

We have witnessed the narrowing of the definition of tertiary education and training in New Zealand over the past decade. The

narrowed focus on contributing to labour market productivity and economic growth does an injustice to both the VET system and our communities.

We cannot evaluate the impact of what we do in vocational education until we have agreed on a definition for VET and the set of outcomes set out in the agreed definition.



The path to achieving strong outcomes

The right culture in vocational education spaces

At the heart of vocational education and training are relationships – between teachers and learners, between peers, between staff and employers, between educational providers and industries, between the local teaching/learning institutions and iwi/hapū and community.

The pervasive culture of our tertiary education system is individualised, privatised and marketised. This creates a continual tension for staff who are working to deliver what is best for students in their communities, as a public good, in a co-operative, non-commercial manner. (For more on this see Proctor-Thomson and Sedgwick, *The State of the Public Tertiary Education System* 2019).

We need to reorient the VET system to focus on the well-being of all who are impacted by the system. We propose five broad categories for attention in the Reform of Vocational Education's first phase - people; collaboration and differentiation; coherent learning and support; trust of staff; and, resourcing.

1) He tangata, he tangata, he tangata

Aotearoa's VET system must put Te Tiriti o Waitangi and people at the heart; this means embracing kaupapa Māori and inclusive education approaches.

One example provided was the *Effective Teaching Profile*, Otago Polytechnic. It encompasses Manaakitanga, Mana motuhake, Nga whakapiringatanga, Wānanga, Ako, Kotahitanga (<https://tekotahitanga.tki.org.nz/About/The-Development-of-Te-Kotahitanga/Effective-Teaching-Profile>).

All within the system must speak, listen, hear, and act in cooperation and genuine consultation, without fear.

Staff need encouragement and time to develop both formal and informal relationships with iwi, community, and employers locally and nationally.

"We must make sure that individual staff have the space and resources to build relationships"

There is a need for staff to maintain regular contact with industry, so that they can find on-job placements and respond in the multitude of spaces where they teach to the latest developments in industries.

Local advisory committees and national standards bodies with industry representatives sitting at both levels will ensure interaction with those designing and teaching courses for the industry.

2) Systems-wide collaboration and differentiation

“Innovation needs space and collaboration so that ideas can bounce off each other.”

Institutional collaboration requirements

We need to ensure there are clear definitions and vision statements for all parts of the vocational education system, and all of these must focus on teaching, learning, and research/innovation outcomes. This approach will allow differentiation based on strengths and ensure there is breadth of provision across NZ – no one size will fit all communities, learners, and employers. These definitions and clear vision statements (set in the context of our aspirations for the system as a whole) will ensure we can minimise duplication and end unhealthy market competition.

To design an integrated programme of study, there must be guidelines set out on the core knowledge and skills, and the time-frame in which they would be attained. Some examples given of good practice include the Bluebook for IT; and, the integrated Engineering qualifications used at Unitec and other institutions.

Industry should help design what needs to be assessed (what people need to demonstrate to show learning). Trained teaching staff have the skills to do the assessing.

One area in which there can be stronger integration to benefit students and staff is in educational technology. Currently 14 of the 16 ITPs use Moodle as their preferred student learning system. There are benefits in moving to a single system. First, there is being able to provide standardised training. Second, resources could be put into improving a single platform which would allow more innovations in IT infrastructure, rather than every ITP having to invest in innovation and improvements.

For small institutions with limited resources there are benefits in using economies of scale when it comes to technology and other resources. For example, medical imaging technology is expensive. Smaller institutions would be able to get quality base materials for courses if there was a systems-wide approach.

Building strong infrastructure to serve the entire vocational education system requires robust conversations involving educational IT specialists, piloting of systems, and sound evaluation of any changes.

One benefit of moving to integrated student learning and student management systems is that we will have a stronger data set from which to do analytics on student performance and experiences.

Similar moves may be possible around student management systems where there are many more variations of systems currently in play.



Staff and student collaboration requirements

All working and studying in vocational education must have the space and authority to fulfil the role of critic and conscience – this means being able to actively critique existing social, scientific, political, and economic norms, elites, and institutions.

Collaboration between parts of the system is crucial so that students can move around easily and without penalty. If a student needs to move from an apprenticeship back into a class-room their on-job learning should be recognised. Similarly if someone has been learning in a campus-based workshop or lecture theatre, that should be recognised if they move into an apprenticeship. Greater integration and collaboration on curriculum will also allow students to move centres and polytechnics easily, even if mid-way through a qualification, as their prior learning will stack up across the country.

Ultimately, a single employer collective agreement covering all staff working in the NZIST will further stabilise this part of the tertiary education sector, by providing a framework of terms and conditions that reinforce the valuable contribution staff make to the achievement of our shared goals for vocational education. To enable this to continue the government and its agencies must continue to work closely with unions representing staff in the sector.

3) Coherent learning and support services

Students need clear advice and support to move seamlessly from on-job to on-campus modes of education and training. This can best be done in an integrated system where each part has clear roles.

Industry training organisations or skills bodies should only be involved in standard setting, not in delivery.

There needs to be integrated on and off job learning for many industries.

“Beware of any moves which mean a whole lot of unpaid internships as we see in the US. We don’t want exploitation of our students.”

With on-job training we need a system where the placement and ongoing support of students is well coordinated and built on sound relationships. Both polytechnic and industry training staff have strong relationships with industries and bringing these two groups together will only

strengthen the experience for learners and employers.

There will be a strong benefit for on-job learners in any plans to move their placement and supervision into an ITP, as they will be part of a large community of learners. Added to this all learners will benefit from both academic and pastoral care services, including access to strong advocacy and representation in students' associations.

There needs to be extensive investment in support services now and in the future, seeing them as crucial to student success. This means the tertiary sector engaging with other parts of the public and community sector to ensure we meet students where they are. All learners, no matter where they learn, must have access to teaching and learning support, and support services.

"We shouldn't go to units of learning cobbled together. What we need for students is sound careers advice, coherence in programmes so they understand the breadth of their industry, and scaffolding that enables them to move around and up when they want or need to."

For many industries there is a need for a block-course to kick start learning journeys, followed up by a mix of on and off-job education and training.

4) Trust and respect for staff

We need to move to collegial decision-making at each level of the system – this

means staff must be trusted, and their expertise and experience is valued. In order to ensure collegiality it is important to have flatter structures headed by 'academic' leaders.

All staff and students in a vocational education and training system need the space and skills to embrace co-creation and co-production of teaching, learning, and knowledge development.



To enable co-creation that benefits all New Zealanders there must be academic freedom for all staff and students in order that the institutions they work and study in fulfil their collectively held critic and conscience functions.

In a strong, integrated vocational education system the critic and conscience function set out in the Education Act must be held by all public institutions.

Furthermore in all teaching and learning spaces there must be room for co-creation and innovation, while balancing this with teaching baseline skills and knowledge.

“A carrot, is a carrot no matter which institution you are chopping and cooking in. But there are different approaches used by tutors. When making that broth one tutor will talk about how they learnt their technique in Scotland from a cook in a mansion, another will talk about learning in the kitchen of their childhood when helping to prepare broth for a sick family member. A person’s history, learning, and the society around them determines exactly how they’ll teach. So the curriculum might say we all need to teach students to make a broth, but how we teach can’t come out of a box.”

5) Resourcing

Funding must be set at a level which ensures accessible, quality, public vocational education and training; and,

responsible autonomy measures to ensure the broad outcomes set out above are achieved.

If we want a world-class VET system, where students learn modern skills and knowledge, the institutions within the system need up-to-date technology, infrastructure, and machinery in all learning spaces.

A world-class VET system requires adequate staffing levels, and time and funding for ongoing professional development for all staff.

It is crucial that there is an acceptance of the need for equity funding to ensure that the most vulnerable learners and staff are supported to fulfil their potential.

All learners, whether on job or on campus, must be supported financially so they can concentrate on their learning journey, not financial survival.

Next steps in the process

The Minister of Education, Chris Hipkins, acknowledged at the TEU 2019 conference: “We cannot make this system better without your help and without your cooperation.”

After nine years of our voices being ignored by leaders in the sector and the last government, we appreciate the many opportunities we’ve had to share our experience and expertise.

However, like the Minister, we know this must continue. Staff and students must be a part of decision-making at all levels if all who study, work, and benefit from the system are to flourish.

Tertiary education is a public good – we all must commit to it. TEU members have shown the ability and preparedness to step up and propose the following approach if the reforms progress:

- TEU members will commit to fortnightly reference groups to discuss ongoing vocational education issues, change, and best-practice to contribute both at the institutional and government levels.
- TEU leadership teams at the national and local levels will prioritise VET reform conversations and activities that advance student, staff, and community needs.
- We seek agreement that local leaders of the TEU will have paid-time to adequately fulfil their role in the reform processes. Having appropriate time-release for these leaders to engage fully will be of benefit to students, all staff, employers, and the government.
- TEC and any transition agency commit to monthly face-to-face meetings to share the reference group analysis; but also to talk through what expertise/advice they need.
- Where major changes are proposed, TEU requests that the government agencies commit to meetings at all ITPs with staff as has been done in the ITP Roadmap.
- We request the government make provision for strong staff and student representatives at all levels of decision making as our experience and expertise is vital to a strong VET sector.
- In any reformed vocational education system staff must have a voice in senior leader appointment processes.
- We propose a formal process be set up to ensure that there is a transparent and fair transfer of any employees and their collective agreements as soon as possible. And there must be sufficient funding is made available to support this work through the transition process.
- The majority of TEU members in the sector are covered by collective agreements that have been negotiated in good faith with current employers, and all contain consultation and transfer of employment clauses. These must be complied with once any final decisions are made about the shape and structure of any new entity. Employers also have an obligation under the Employment Relations Act to consult with employees when making any decision that may impact on the collective interest of employees.

