

**ACE Aotearoa submission to:
Select Committee Education and Science
Education Amendment Bill (No 2)
Submission**

General Statement

There is no recognition of lifelong, intergenerational learning in the Education Amendment Bill (No 2) (the Bill) or the Education Act 1989 (the Act). That is perpetuating the flawed perspective that only Educational Institutions can provide education, and that education ceases outside those institutions. Now is the opportunity to identify that formal education should be the catalyst for lifelong, positive and purposeful learning, and that tertiary education takes place under a wide range of settings and modalities.

Globally the focus of education goals is moving from early childhood education and primary (basic) education to Quality Education- lifelong learning for all.

Adult and community education (ACE) plays a key role in providing lifelong and intergenerational learning opportunities. Though ACE is considered part of New Zealand's tertiary education system, there is nothing in this Bill or the current Act that acknowledges its role in the education system. Not all ACE providers receive government funding however there are a significant number that do. It is important that lifelong, intergenerational learning is acknowledged in legislation.

Therefore we request that the words "lifelong and intergenerational learning are necessary to ensure relevant skills are maintained or acquired as life circumstances and industry needs change" are included in the Education Act through the Education Amendment Bill (No 2).

Overview of ACE Aotearoa and consultation undertaken

Adult and Community Education (ACE) Aotearoa is the lead body for adult and community educators and a voice for adult learners. It actively promotes and supports the diversity of lifelong learning in Aotearoa New Zealand and fosters collaboration and cooperation to the advantage of adult learners, educators and providers. ACE Aotearoa is a membership organisation which represents both its members and the wider ACE sector. It provides advice and direction for policy development and its implementation.

In putting this submission together ACE Aotearoa consulted with its members and those involved in community education.

Specific Comments:

The Education Amendment Bill (No 2) - General Policy Statement

In the Education Amendment Bill (No 2)'s general policy statement, the first public policy objectives is:

- To ensure that New Zealand's education sector is equipped to meet the challenges and opportunities of the modern learning context;

There is no definition of what the "modern learning context" means in the public policy context, within this Bill, the Act or otherwise.

Modern learning context

The current formal education system (ECE, Schooling, and Tertiary Education) is structured with learning opportunities segmented into institutions. However, people learn at different rates (faster, slower) and in a variety of ways (eg audio, visual, tactile, etc).¹ The legislation's exclusive focus on institutional based learning has the consequence of stigmatising all learners who do not fit the "norm" or the implied boxes, particularly if they learn more slowly or more specifically.

Defining the "modern learning context" requires re-framing our thinking about the education sector in New Zealand. If the modern learning context is a departure from the traditional institutionally based one it must include a wide variety of learning environments.

In addition, when thinking about the modern learning context, it is appropriate to also consider the global context. Globally there is recognition that technology changes are enabling borderless and rapid responsive education for all who have access. There is now discussion that the post-2015 United Nations' goal for education will be along the lines of "Quality Education – Lifelong learning for all".

As outlined in the policy discussion paper "The Value Proposition of ACE" learning is essential to life and happens everywhere.² The modern learning context includes more community-based centres of learning, learning in homes, on-line and digital learning, marae and library based learning. The number of work-based professional development and training programmes has also increased. Hence lifelong and often intergenerational learning occurs for those who have access to those programmes or courses.

Digital learning³ is now popular around the globe. Learners gain free access to online learning fora (such as the Khan Academy and MOOC), video tutorials and classes, teachers and coaches, and have the ability to self-direct their individual learning journey.⁴ For those with access to technology this kind of learning offers limitless opportunities. Digitally literate lifelong learners use digital learning to up-skill, keep current and ensure their knowledge is relevant to the society they live in now, and into the future.

¹ Walter Burke Barbe; Raymond H. Swassing; Michael N. Milone, Jr. (June 1979). *Teaching Through Modality Strengths: Concepts and Practices*. Columbus, Ohio: Zaner-Blosner. [ISBN 978-0-88309-100-5](#).

² ACE Aotearoa, "The Value Proposition of ACE" - Policy discussion paper, 2013 pg 3

³ Digital learning - learning facilitated by technology that gives learners an element of control over time, place, path and/or pace.

⁴ <https://www.khanacademy.org/about>
<http://www.mooc-list.com/>

Intergenerational learning

The importance of learning in the family context in New Zealand is well documented.⁵ Intergenerational learning where adult learning takes place simultaneously alongside child learning, empowers participants.⁶ Adults across the socio-economic spectrum can benefit from intergenerational learning because it addresses family and community learning aspirations.

Māori and Pasifika learning within communities, is a cultural practice. Kohanga reo, punana leo and aonga mata are more recent examples where intergenerational learning is used by communities to preserve Indigenous and Polynesian languages using early childhood learning settings, where elders play a key role as language experts. The Playcentre movement is also a strong example of intergenerational learning.

For Māori and Pasifika families in Manukau intergenerational learning is already proving successful.⁷ The City of Manukau Education Trust (COMET) has been running a successful family learning programme for 10 years. In 2013, 150 parents were enrolled in their year-long tertiary programme. The benefits to adult learners include a better understanding of their children's education, skills for work, higher study for themselves and a tertiary qualification – Level 2 Certificate in Family Learning and Childhood Development.

Finlayson Park School involve the whole family in their learning. Adult literacy and numeracy programmes held in school term-time allow parents access to their own child's classroom to become part of the lessons. The "Three Way Conference" involves teachers, parents and children in setting specific goals which are agreed and evaluated at the end of six months, when new goals are set.⁸

Computers in Homes, a programme that brings computer technology into high needs, low socio-economic homes is a well-utilised family learning programme. Using computers and the internet at home students can build on what they learn at school and research homework. The Stepping Up programme provides free, community-based computer and internet training for adults as a follow up to the Computers in Homes programme. It is designed for anyone with basic computer knowledge to develop their skills a step further in areas of direct relevance to their work and life. A key success of these programmes is the motivation created in adult learners to keep learning.⁹

The lack of recognition of lifelong and intergenerational learning in the education legislation devalues community and family-based learning. It also implies a disconnect between formal education and lifelong learning, when the appropriate message should be to identify education as a key catalyst for positive, purposeful, lifelong learning. It is worth highlighting that education legislation and policy which emphasises structured learning and institutions

⁵ Biddulph F,J,C, *The Complexity of Community and Family Influences on Children's Achievement in New Zealand: Best Evidence Synthesis*, June 2003

⁶ "A Tapestry of Understanding: Intergenerational Family Learning: Discussion Paper, COMET, 2006

⁷ Benseman, J. (2004). "I'm a different person now." An evaluation of the Manukau Family Literacy Program (MFLP).

⁸ <http://www.educationalleaders.govt.nz/Partnerships-and-networks/Building-community-relationships/Involving-parents-families-and-whanau/Finlayson-Park-School>

⁹ <http://www.computersinhomes.org.nz/outcomes>

further alienate Māori and Pasifika from an education system that is not seen as relevant to their learning experience.

Interface of ACE and Tertiary Education

ACE has been integrated into the tertiary education system through the Tertiary Education Strategy 2014-2019 (TES). The priorities around “improving adult literacy and numeracy,” “boosting achievement for Māori and Pasifika” both clearly include adult and community education, as does the “getting at risk young people into a career,” at least for young people aged 18 years or older. In addition, the “delivering skills for industry” priority of the TES, provides a pathway for individuals to up skill and reinvent themselves when changing careers or transitioning from unemployment to employment, so also includes ACE provision. Further, although not specifically mentioned, the “growing international linkages” priority directly involves the adult and community education sector through our close connections with ASPBAE (Asia South Pacific Basic Adult Education) and UNESCO, with whom we share information, and participate in joint initiatives as well as representing Aotearoa at ASPBAE hosted international events.

ACE providers see high numbers of adult learners who lack basic literacy and numeracy skills transitioning between careers or into employment. These learners find ACE courses are a good way to bridge into certificate and unit standard level courses and programmes.

An example of a learner transitioning careers is John a recipient of an Adult Learners’ Week Award in 2010. John represents many New Zealanders who because of injury or redundancy need to retrain or up skill. A former shearer, John had to change vocation due to a back injury. He wanted to pursue study in therapeutic massage but needed help with literacy to be able to complete the course. Through Literacy Southland, John completed the course then embarked on a degree in Sport and Recreation.¹⁰

ACE programmes often provide the bridge between low level literacy or numeracy skills and further training or higher level tertiary studies.

¹⁰ ACE Aotearoa “Adult and Community Education Spring Newsletter 2010” pg 8

Legislation and Policy

Lifelong learning

Lifelong learning is necessary for people to maintain or acquire current skills and connection to a rapidly changing society. New Zealand as a member of UNESCO and CONFINTEA is committed to delivering lifelong learning opportunities for its citizens.

Yet there are no references to “lifelong learning” in any public policy documents or legislation relating to the education sector.

The New Zealand Curriculum for schools includes creating “lifelong learners” in its Vision and outlines the desirable characteristics of such a learner.¹¹

It is notable that the Education Act is silent on both the purpose and the value of education.

Part 13 of the Education Act 1989 outlines general provisions relating to the development of New Zealand’s tertiary education system. Of the six objectives no reference is made to either the modern learning context, lifelong, intergenerational or even whānau learning.

The recent *Industry Training and Apprenticeships and Amendment Bill* also does not mention any of the above terms nor does it make explicit that maintaining skills for industry will be an on-going process, despite the relevant priority in the TES 2014-19 being identified as a key mechanism for that purpose.

Professional development bodies require and make provision for on-going learning to ensure an acceptable professional standard is maintained.¹² Equal recognition and support for lifelong learning across all types of industry, professions and workplaces is needed so people can maintain their skills and knowledge to live well in modern society.

Ongoing lifelong learning is part of the modern learning context and needs to be explicitly acknowledged in legislation and policy.

Recommendation

The following fundamental principal be included in the general policy statement of this Bill:

“Lifelong and intergenerational learning are necessary to ensure relevant skills are maintained as life circumstances and industry needs change”

¹¹ **Lifelong learners**

Literate and numerate

Critical and creative thinkers

Active seekers, users, and creators of knowledge

Informed decision makers

¹² <https://www.lawsociety.org.nz/for-lawyers/regulatory-requirements/continuing-professional-development>
<http://www.mcnz.org.nz/assets/News-and-Publications/Booklets/Continuing-Professional-Development.pdf>