

ACE Sector Strategic Alliance submission Draft Tertiary Education Strategy 2014 – 2019

Introduction

The ACE Sector Strategic Alliance¹ (Strategic Alliance) is recognised as providing leadership and exists to collaborate for the advancement of Adult and Community Education (ACE) in Aoteroa, New Zealand. The Strategic Alliance comprises representatives of eight different national organisations who deliver a wide range of ACE opportunities for adult learners. It provides leadership to the ACE Sector, is a voice for emerging issues for ACE, fosters collaboration at regional and national levels, encourages research and policy development for the ACE Sector and regularly engages the wider ACE sector.

The draft Tertiary Education Strategy 2014 – 2019 (draft TES) provides government's long term vision for a more flexible, strategic and outward-facing tertiary system highly competitive internationally and a major contributor to a sustainable New Zealand economy.

ACE

The ACE sector is unique to the tertiary education system in that it:

- is part of an established international movement to improve education outcomes for all
- offers adults opportunities to self-direct their learning
- encourages lifelong learning in a supportive and informal environment
- achieves a range of social and economic outcomes for individuals and communities that are not always directed toward qualifications, employment or further education.

Government's wider expectations include building a tertiary education system that can contribute to improved outcomes for individuals "and society as a whole". New Zealand's society includes citizens of all ages and diverse as well as vulnerable communities that the Strategic Alliance recognises as having a contribution to Aotearoa. The ACE sector works with adult learners of all skill and knowledge levels, gets people "hooked on learning" confident and ready for change and often they are "learning to learn".

The Strategic Alliance supports the six strategic priorities of the draft TES:

1. Delivering skills for industry
2. Getting at-risk young people into a career
3. Boosting achievement of Māori and Pasifika
4. Improving adult literacy and numeracy
5. Strengthening research-based institutions
6. Growing international linkages

In saying this, the Strategic Alliance submits that the draft TES can better reflect the contribution of tertiary education in improving learning, social and economic outcomes for individuals and society in general by seeing the role of tertiary education as greater than preparing people for work or further study.

¹ ACE Sector Alliance members are: ACE Aotearoa, English Language Partners NZ, Federated Workers Education Association, Literacy Aotearoa, Pasifika Education Centre, Rural Education Activities Programme Aotearoa New Zealand, Te Ataarangi.

The ACE sector supports and promotes lifelong learning and plays key roles in the four strategic priorities. The sector is well respected for its work internationally although this is not recognised in the draft TES.

The Strategic Alliance would like to see a return to the use of “Adult and Community Education”. ACE is about adult learning in the community and the concept of “community education” is quite different. ACE plays a vital role in advocating for community to have opportunities to achieve their full potential within their whānau and wider community. The Strategic Alliance understands the real-life social and economic challenges faced by vulnerable communities. ACE is part of an established international movement to make education accessible to all and through education, address issues of social, political and economic importance. It is about empowering adults and communities to make good decisions for themselves, their families, and their wider environment. ACE is promoted and supported by UNESCO and the OECD.

The draft TES can be expanded to meet government’s needs and expectations which the ACE sector can deliver on.

Engagement

The draft TES needs to be more permissive of ‘engagement’ in tertiary education and learning rather than promoting engagement to gain a qualification or employment. ACE engages adults who have not experienced prior success in education as well as those who have and have genuine learning needs that are met by the ACE sector. Some adults need to re-train or up skill to move into a different career. Not all are ready for formal tertiary education provision. ACE plays a role in “bridging” adult learners into further higher learning pathways, learners who may not yet have the confidence or skills to complete a qualification.

Benefits/Outcomes of Tertiary Education

The draft TES is silent on the raft of other outcomes that benefit society other than qualifications and employment. Other outcomes include individual and group empowerment, equity, active citizenship, personal and collective critical awareness and sustainable development. There is little mention of social or cultural outcomes for learners except in reference to expectations of tertiary system performance.

Indicators of Success

As well as making the role of ACE more visible across the strategy some of the *Indicators of Success* could better reflect the ACE sector’s contribution to better outcomes for society as a whole.

Delivering skills for industry - Ensuring older adults have adequate skills for industry is just as important as it is for the young who are entering employment. Rapid changes in technology and labour market needs require opportunities for all to up skill to meet need.

The Strategic Alliance **submits** that the second indicator for success for this strategic priority is re-worded as follows: “There are opportunities and pathways for adults returning to the workforce or retraining in industry”.

Getting at-risk young people into a career - People need qualifications as well as good employment prospects. ACE supports both young and older adults with complex learning needs who are not employed or studying, to “learn to learn”. ACE also provides a pathway for learners into further/higher education.

The Strategic Alliance submits that the third indicator for this strategic priority be re-worded in the following way: “There are better pathways from unemployment and inactivity to education, including ACE, that result in improved employment outcomes and continued engagement in ACE/education”.

Boosting achievement of Māori and Pasifika – Māori and Pasifika make up a significant number of the population without qualifications. A higher proportion of both groups leave school with no qualifications and a sense of ‘failure’ in education. The draft TES’s focus on increased participation and completion of qualifications misses the key step which ACE covers, assisting adults (Māori and Pasifika) to gain confidence to get ‘back into learning’.

There is an opportunity for the draft TES to better consider and reflect the importance of Intergenerational learning to these communities. There is much evidence of the role of whānau and the influence of family, parents and extended family on a young person’s lifelong learning journey that builds whānau/family success.

We are also concerned no reference to the Tertiary Education Commission’s, Pasifika Framework 2013 – 2017 as the anticipated outcomes it outlines will overlap with the indicator success in this strategy.

Improving adult literacy and numeracy – The draft TES’s focus on adult literacy and numeracy in the workplace fits with government’s push to achieve better employment outcomes and productivity. However adult literacy and numeracy issues exist across communities where if addressed, could bring benefits to education, wider society and economy.

We submit that there are better pathways (ACE provision) that result in greater opportunities to engage with literacy, language and numeracy that is responsive to individuals, whānau and diverse groups at all levels of society, not just in the workplace.

Growing international linkages - We would support the inclusion of an indicator of success such as measuring how well ACE in New Zealand has met its commitments under UNESCO conventions.

Delivering the Strategy

The Strategic Alliance **submits** that the draft TES reconfirm government’s commitment to quality lifelong learning for all people that contributes to confident and sustainable communities. This can be better reflected in delivery of the strategy by being re-worded in the following way:

<p>Adult and Community Education providers receiving TEC funding</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage with learners who initial learning was not successful • Assist those seeking pathways into tertiary learning • <i>Contribute to</i> literacy, language and numeracy skills for work, study and community wellbeing.
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General Comment

The draft TES is silent to the role of wider ACE provision other than the priorities for which it is currently funded. ACE encourages lifelong learning assisting in growing confident communities whose members actively participate in society.