

The Future of ACE

A policy discussion paper sponsored by the ACE Sector Strategic Alliance

Purpose

This policy discussion paper follows on from two previous papers about Adult and Community Education (ACE) in Aotearoa. The purpose of this paper is to discuss the merits of further government investment in ACE into the future.

“Education involves an allocation of scarce resource”

The first policy discussion paper outlined the “value proposition of adult community education” to the individual, family or whānau, community, society and the economy. It posed that learning is essential to life and promotes general health and wellbeing, encourages social cohesion, active participation in society and raises environmental awareness, at the individual, familial and community level.

Government’s national education goals for the New Zealand education system commit it to provide for New Zealanders access to a broad education and high quality programmes that deliver high levels of competency in literacy, numeracy and technology. The United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, to which New Zealand is a signatory, affirms this commitment and while evidence shows that many perform well in the compulsory education system, that same system is failing many Māori and Pasifika.

ACE in New Zealand caters for adult learners at all skill and knowledge levels. Adult learners choose to learn in community settings for many different reasons. Some come to ACE with a view to taking up a hobby or to extend their knowledge in a particular area not available in formal tertiary education. Some come to ACE to learn a new skill (parenting, craft, computing) and others come to ACE for a fresh start in learning where they may have been unsuccessful at school. Other adult learners simply want to keep their minds and bodies active and learn how to adapt to their ever-changing environment.

While there is general agreement that ACE and lifelong learning is important and benefits society as a whole, the key question remains: Who should pay for ACE? Currently ACE is funded by individuals (user pays), receives some government funding (for priority area /target populations), and small private sector/business contributions.

This paper looks at the current funding structure for ACE and suggests alternative funding options for the future.

New Zealand Tertiary Education Policy

Adult and Community education (ACE) is considered part of the tertiary education system and is regulated under the Education Act 1989. For many years ACE sector representatives on various advisory groups to government have advocated for a stronger policy direction specifically for ACE¹ citing concerns at the lack of national policies and structures, poor national data and analysis and inconsistent funding arrangements within the ACE sector.

¹ Koia Koia, Towards a Learning Society – The Role of Adult and Community Education. The Report of the Adult Education and Community Learning Working Party, July 2001, pg 14

During the 1980's New Zealand adopted a more competitive, market-based policy approach for tertiary education. It moved from an almost entirely free tertiary education system and relatively universal student allowances to a situation where fees are charged to students, student allowances are means tested by income and student loans are widely used.²

Tertiary policy in the late 1990's became more strategic, adopting a more centrally steered, regulated approach where tertiary education would be tied to national needs. While maintaining its competitive, market-based aspects, tertiary education policy focussed on increasing access and participation, introducing the concept of public/private cost sharing in tertiary education. Tertiary education and training funding was demand-driven increasing competition between providers, and creating some duplication of provision with a greater proportion of government funding going to sub-degree programmes.

The 2000 tertiary reforms were introduced to 're-balance' the tertiary system including refocusing the system on quality and relevance of provision, an increased role of government education agencies in guiding and supporting the sector, and a more controlled government investment approach to funding. These wider tertiary reforms have had a significant effect on ACE.

A national report by the Ministry of Education in 2008³ in preparation for CONFINTEA VI⁴ outlined some of the policy and legislative changes in ACE since 2001.

- The establishment of five national priorities for ACE in 2004, as articulated in the Tertiary Education Strategy 2007.
- Establishment of the Tertiary Education Commission and its role as funder and supporter of the ACE Sector.
- Funding changes. Creation of the ACE funding pool (covers TEOs, schools and community providers). To be funded ACE activities need to align with one or more of the five national priorities. From 2008 TEC began to move providers towards being funded through Investment Plans
- Quality assurance systems developed. Providers must show compliance with requirements set out in the quality assurance system.

These changes to the tertiary system are now firmly entrenched.

On 4 March 2014 the new Tertiary Education Strategy 2014 -2019 was released. It acknowledges the tertiary sector as a key player in the recovery and sustainability of New Zealand's economy, and that in times of fiscal restraint when demand for tertiary education is rising that government expects its investment to be used efficiently and effectively by tertiary organisations and students.

There is some reference to "social outcomes" and any reference to "ACE" has been replaced by "Community education – informal education that reflects a diverse range of

² McLaughlin M, Tertiary Education Policy in New Zealand, February 2003, pg6

³Ministry of Education, The Development and State of the Art of Adult Learning and Education: National Report of New Zealand, 2008, pg

⁴UNESCO has organised the CONFINTEA series of meetings on Adult Education every 12 or 13 years since the late 1940's. The Sixth CONFINTEA was held in 2009 in Brazil. Regional CONFINTEA are also held in intervening years.

community interests and need". The target learner groups which featured in the previous strategy (TES, 2010-2015) are no longer in the document.

The TES outlines government's strategic framework for the next five years and guides TEC's decision-making regarding funding. The absence of any reference to ACE or its former funded priority areas is cause for concern. However ACE is considered part of a "Community Education" appropriation.

While government may be of the view that there is sufficient policy that surrounds ACE, it is the ACE Sector's view that "ACE specific" policy needs to be developed as opposed to ACE being "included" or "absorbed" into tertiary education policy that focuses on acquiring formal tertiary qualifications, something which ACE does not necessarily offer.

Government's Role in Tertiary Education

In 2008 the OECD conducted a thematic review of Tertiary Education amongst 24 of its member nations. The review focused primarily on national policies for tertiary education. Key questions asked of relevance to this paper include the economic and social objectives of tertiary education; mobilising adequate funding resources; and national policies and mechanisms to ensure effective governance. The review described New Zealand's tertiary policy structure and design as 'innovative' though there was still room for improvement.

Comment was also made that while a top down (central steering) approach has seen effective changes in tertiary education in New Zealand, the methods used i.e. aligning tertiary systems to national goals and objectives, require high levels of trust and agreement by all involved in the system.

"Current policies appear to be intended to bring a degree of stability to a system that has been undergoing transformational change during the last two decennia. The system could greatly benefit in terms of both viability and dynamics, if this move towards greater stability was combined with a return of trust as a principle of governance. As has been argued ... there appears both evidence and belief in the fact that the actors within the system collectively underwrite the need and value to align the tertiary education system with the nation's goals and objectives. A context that seems conducive to an overall steering philosophy in which trust forms a key component. It goes without saying that this requires effort from all actors involved. Trust cannot be invoked from one side only."⁵

Governments set national goals and objectives according to their political beliefs and decide how they will be achieved. By aligning the tertiary system to its national goals and objectives governments make a call on what 'type' of education is of value and fund it accordingly.

While there is no dispute as to the importance of the current ACE funded priority areas, they should be viewed as the 'minimum' contribution of ACE to the Tertiary Education Sector and lifelong learning. ACE delivers many more benefits to society and the economy than just those it is funded for under the current TES.

⁵ Goedegebuure L, Santiago P, Fitznor L, Stensker B, van der Steen M, OECD Review of Tertiary Education, New Zealand, 2008, pg70

Without clear national policy specific to the ACE Sector which involves strategic data collection and analysis there is a missed opportunity to measure the ACE Sector's *real* public and private contribution to society. National policy designed especially for ACE would leverage off the sector's strengths i.e. ACE Sector ability to attract and retain fresh start learners and provide them with an alternative pathway into formal higher level tertiary education and ACE capacity to reach adult communities of learners, delivering education and learning opportunities they choose that enrich their lives and their communities.

Tertiary Education Funding

The International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century, proposed that funding for adult learning be at least 6 per cent of gross national product. In 2006 New Zealand was one of 14 member states of UNESCO to spend at least 6% of its GNP on adult education.

Government funding for all adult learning and education, both formal and informal, comes primarily through education appropriations. Total expenditure on education in 2013 was forecast to be \$12 billion accounting for 17.1% of all core crown expenses. The proportion of that funding for tertiary education is consistent at 30%, the same as for 2012 and in line with international recommendations.

The Tertiary Education Commission reported in 2013 that it is responsible for the allocation of \$4billion from Vote Education as well as funding for tertiary from other central agencies such as the Ministry of Social Development.

Since 2009 however government funding to the ACE Sector (part of the Tertiary Sector) has been reduced in order to achieve savings. Figures collected from across the ACE Sector over the past three years show a corresponding decline in government funded ACE programmes and learners nationwide.⁶ In contrast demand for non- government funded ACE is increasing (i.e. Chalkle). ACE providers and communities however struggle to meet demand where local resources are depleted.

In describing New Zealand's Tertiary Education system the OECD review report had this to say:

"The rationale for funding tertiary education rests on two main principles. On the one hand, reflecting public and private benefits of tertiary education, the costs of tertiary education, the costs of tertiary education activities are shared between the users and the State. Part of the funding is provided by the government to both institutions and students, and part by students and their families. On the other hand, the extent to which tertiary education is publicly subsidised depends on the relevance of activities – the extent to which they bring benefits to society. An assessment of strategic relevance is used to publicly fund courses and qualifications in tertiary education institutions."⁷

The key question then becomes what types of adult education have 'strategic relevance' and who decides this? Communities, government, individuals, the economy?

⁶ There were 75,500 ACE learners in 2010; 58,458 learners in 2011; and 45,652 in 2012. The corresponding decline in the number of ACE providers in 2010 there were 13,000 ACE provider, in 2011, 8,921 ACE providers, and 8,483 in 2012.

⁷ Ibid note 5, p20

New Zealand has had a user-pays tertiary education system since 1992. Along with government subsidies and private sector contributions to employee adult learning primarily in literacy and numeracy and professional development, the user pays system should give consumers more choice according to demand. Most learners choose programmes of interest to them or areas that are likely to lead to meaningful employment. Although funding decisions are made by governments the public needs its own opportunity to access and understand the private and public benefits of education in order to provide a check on government's decisions about what to fund.

“A guiding principle is to design a funding approach to meet the policy goals sought: excellence, relevance, access and capability ... A first difficulty, well exposed in New Zealand, is the ability to assess the relevance of courses to establish the degree of public funding. There needs to be a better understanding of public and private benefits from tertiary education as well as enhanced ways to identify those offerings which better serve society at large – e.g. those that respond to labour market needs, which foster innovation or serve communities' aspirations.”⁸

Breadth of the sector from an ACE perspective

“Adult education encompasses a vast range of programmes and activities. They may however be conveniently grouped within three different overlapping clusters: 'labour market', 'institutional', and 'community'.”⁹

The tertiary policy trend of the last three decades has seen an increase in funding for labour market¹⁰ and institutional¹¹ adult education that increases individual employability and readiness for the workplace. However, Community education¹² that contributes to both individual development and active citizenship has received less and less funding over the same time period.

ACE caters to adults of all skills and knowledge levels. Lifelong learning happens everywhere at any time and at any age. ACE exists on a 'continuum' of provision. At one end for example are informal one-off library lecture series that attract interested members of the community. At the other end of the continuum are lower level qualification tertiary programmes offered in the community and tertiary institutions that award certification on completion. Some of the following examples occupy the space along the ACE continuum.

The Katikati Community Resource Centre offers a successful community services hub where community members can access a range of social services. A number of ACE programmes are also available at the Centre from health and fitness, budgeting, parenting, cooking and beekeeping.

⁸ Ibid at note 6 p71

⁹ Tobias R, *Adult Education in Aotearoa/New Zealand – A Critical Analysis of Policy Changes, 1984-90*. University of Canterbury, 1990, pg3 Law, Michael (Chair) Report of the Working Party on Paid Educational Leave, Wellington, July 1985.

¹⁰ *Labour market education* traditionally labelled 'vocational' or 'professional' education and training to enhance employability, usually delivered in tertiary institutions, it is now available in private training establishments and in development units in the private and public sectors.

¹¹ *Institutional education* includes institutional based 'second-chance' education provided by schools, universities and non-credentialled adult community education offered by schools, polytechnics and universities. It includes learning for personal development, leisure and recreation.

¹² *Community education* includes forms of 'community-oriented' education offered by institutions but maybe undertaken by community groups and voluntary organisations such as WEA.

In response to community need the Centre offers courses to workers made redundant in the kiwifruit industry, to up skill them for work elsewhere.

Te Whangai Trust in South Auckland works in partnership with private companies, the Ministry of Social Development, Justice, Police and Corrections and others. The Trust established a large eco native plant nursery which provides much of it's income. People are referred to them from CYFS, Work and Income and Probation for a 12 week programme. The Trust then employs referees in their nursery. Through non-formal methods employees with high literacy and numeracy needs are mentored by others with superior skill to learn as part of a normal day's work. Learners leave the programme with basic budget skills, improved confidence and self-belief, a basic work ethic but most importantly a 'rest of life plan', designed by themselves, highlighting their dreams for the future and practical steps toward achieving those dreams.

Many wananga and polytechnics offer lower level tertiary education courses to assist adult learners to gain qualifications and entry into trades or professions. Weltec for instance offers level 1-3 courses in the trades which help the learners work toward an apprenticeship. They also offer courses for those already employed in the building industry to gain a National certificate in Carpentry (level 4). Wananga also offer level 1 – 7 courses in teaching, computing, business, te reo Māori and more. Learners often complete these courses and move either into employment or further higher level study.

Purpose of ACE – Lifelong learning

Lifelong learning is about developing educational potential outside formal education systems. Lifelong learners are agents of their own learning, who develop their own learning goals and choose their “preferred” learning method to attain those goals. Key features of lifelong learning are the acknowledgement of “prior learning” or “prior knowledge” and an appreciation of all branches and forms of knowledge, allowing people full development of their personality throughout their lives.¹³

The current political climate limits ACE Sector funding to programmes that assist fresh start learners back into learning, programmes that provide pathways for learners into higher level tertiary learning and assist those with high literacy, language and numeracy needs associated with the labour market.

“...the concerted modernisation of education and training systems to meet the challenges posed by contemporary social and economic macro-change – is now high on policy agendas ... however policy attention thus far typically focuses on vocational education and training of all kinds – public and private, inside and outside workplaces, formal and informal – rather than on general adult education.”

Policymakers need to further develop their view of the purpose of ACE and lifelong learning in New Zealand in order to maximise government investment in the vast learning opportunities available in the ACE Sector. Policymakers also need to adopt a stronger view of ACE as being both an *integral* part of the tertiary education sector as well as part of an international movement in lifelong learning.

¹³ UNESCO, Development of Adult Education, Recommendations from 1979 conference report, p2.

“We need to graduate beyond a discourse about formal versus informal education into one that recognises that the voice of demand is not one that Industry should have a monopoly on.”¹⁴

User pays, learning for career change

Recent trends across the world indicate that people are now experiencing more than one career in their lifetime.

“Major economic changes ... globalisation and market liberalisation, have destabilised labour markets in recent decades, resulting in unemployment and more volatile careers. At the same time, populations all around the world are ageing. Half the New Zealand population are now over 33 years of age and by 2051 half will be over 45. The mid-life bulge brings with it competition for jobs, especially more-senior positions. A third trend ... is “credentialism”, the increasing demand for more and higher formal qualifications, governing access to many areas of paid work.”¹⁵

Lifelong learning or education and training are more important now than ever. World-wide people who are affected by unemployment in later life are looking to up skill or retrain in order to stay competitive in the labour market. A research study carried out at Victoria University ¹⁶ found that learners aged 40 and over face different challenges compared to students straight from school. For many, time and finances were major barriers especially where people have families to support and mortgages to pay. The study found that mid-life education could be seen as a response to workforce change and ageing with participants motivated by a desire to improve their work prospects.

The study found on the basis of funding patterns and related characteristics that two distinct groups existed. The first group were people in full-time work, studying part time. They tended to be professionals studying higher level (master’s degrees, diplomas) qualifications, funding their own study along with employer contributions, have higher household incomes and fewer financial problems. In contrast the second group were mostly full-time students, or in part-time work, in first degree courses especially BA. They typically used loans, allowances and their own savings and had hardly any employer support. Few had a high household income and previous educational attainment was low.

Like the participants in the study above, ACE learners often face the same time and financial barriers. Many second chance learners who come to ACE seek opportunities to better their lives through acquiring new knowledge and skills. ACE offers them an introduction to a new area of learning, the possibility of studying toward basic and eventually higher level qualifications which they can then build on to support new careers. This process takes time.

Intergenerational learning and Aged learning

Intergenerational learning is where people of all ages can learn together and from each other. It is an important part of lifelong learning where generations work together to gain skills, values and knowledge. A reciprocal learning relationship between different generations builds social cohesion in our aging societies. Intergenerational learning is a

¹⁴ Driese T, “ PLACE: A Not So New Model of Investment in Community Education”. Keynote speech at ACE Conference: Confident Communities, 2013, Wellington.

¹⁵ Davey J, Funding education in mid-later life: a case study from Victory University of Wellington, Social Policy Journal of New Zealand: Issue 18 2002, pg1

¹⁶ Ibid above

commonly held practice in some Māori and Pasifika communities, particularly in the acquisition of language and culture.

Intergenerational learning is one way of addressing the learning needs of New Zealand's aging population where generations together, learn functional digital literacy. If digital literacy education for the elderly and marginalised is not adequately addressed they risk becoming further isolated within their communities.

Government policy needs to maximise the potential of the aged/retired workforce and encourage more of those approaching retirement to work part-time, volunteer, study and share their knowledge with younger generations.

CURRENT FUNDING - GOVERNMENT

ACE is considered part of the tertiary education system. It remains to be seen how ACE programmes will continue to be funded as there are now no set priority areas for government funding under the TES.

Recently however, the ACE Sector has received funding for Professional Development (PD). This fund has been instrumental in providing ACE educators, enablers and volunteers with opportunities to extend their skills and share information and examples of best practice, through workshops and annual conferences.

Several other government agencies (Social Development, Internal Affairs, Corrections, Māori development and Pacific development) fund community and family/whānau development and well-being programmes that include adult and community learning components. There are few instances of collaboration between business, government agencies and ACE providers.

Models and options for Government funded ACE

Working with the Ministry of Education

In an ideal world ACE provision would be fully funded. Foundation skills for youth and provision for learners under the three TES priority areas would continue. There would be a range of leisure programmes available to people based in school settings, utilising local schools after hours, and being included in the concept of schools as community hubs.

Access to technology and functional education would be free to all with a particular focus on access to senior citizens and those struggling with isolation. University of the Third Age would be free to all senior citizens.

Continuing education programmes in Universities would be subsidised and expanded. Tertiary institutions (universities, polytechnics, wananga) would partner with local communities bringing their qualifications "out" of institutions and into communities. Institutions would benefit from local community knowledge and communities would benefit from institutional knowledge and qualifications¹⁷.

Any organisation (business, industry, institution) could receive funding if they were providing high quality lifelong learning opportunities.

¹⁷ M. Omolewa " An African experiment: Adult Lifelong Learning as Empowerment and the Building of Confident Communities" Keynote speech at The Australasian Adult Community Education Conference 2013, Wellington.

Option One:

1. The following wording to be inserted into the Education Act 1989:

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

2. Ministry of Education develops an Adult and Community Education Strategy (ACE Strategy) and Action plan for, and in collaboration with the ACE Sector and communities for the next ten years. The ACE Strategy will set out clear goals for the ACE Sector, guide government investment and have a sufficient budget attached.
3. An ACE advisory group in partnership with TEC is set up to monitor and quality assure the delivery of ACE programmes.
4. ACE funding continues to be administered by TEC.

Over arching ACE Strategy – Cross Agency Collaboration

Some ACE programmes are funded by other government agencies whose roles have not traditionally been to provide ACE. Where cross-agency collaboration already exists (Te Whangai Trust programme) funding for the ACE component of these programmes has come from budgets other than Vote Education.

Cross-agency policy needs to be developed that acknowledges current cross-agency collaboration for ACE components of programmes delivered across services. This policy needs to articulate the importance of ACE provision to each agency’s strategic goals to provide a sound basis for ongoing funding from respective Votes.

Option Two:

1. An overarching Cross-agency and ACE Sector Strategy (the Strategy) and Action plan is developed. The Strategy would focus on areas of ACE need and provision across agency services, guide government investment and bring together all cross-agency budget allocations into one pool.
2. Current target groups are expanded to include the Elderly, Parents, Adults in Career Transition.
3. A Cross Agency and ACE Sector Funding Agency (outside of TEC) is established to receive and distribute all Vote funding to providers and programmes.
4. ACE providers make application for funding to the *Funder* with endorsement from their community.
5. An ACE advisory group in partnership with TEC is set up to monitor and quality assure the delivery of ACE programmes.

Local Education Activities Provision

Learning at any age delivers benefits to the individual, family, community, society and the economy. ACE is broad and diverse and could absorb much resource however the most cost-effective ACE is developed in response to community needs, and commonly involves intergenerational participation.

Central government would take the lead in encouraging ACE at the regional/local level (so would be in partnership with local government). Regional panels are established and become responsible for the administration of “funding” to improve access to adult and family/whanau/aiga learning. Each panel would include “stakeholder group”¹⁸ representatives, and would report to a central government funder.

The fundamental premise is that sustainable ACE requires a partnership approach between central government, local government, learners and their communities. A nationwide initiative such as this can only be led by central government with sound ACE policy (promoting and facilitating access to ongoing learning).

“Put ACE firmly back in place”. (Tony Driese)

“The new skyline of lifelong learning ... would be about movements built on the broad shoulders of wise and generous people. It would operate in an environment where communities were given greater control to articulate their demands, map their aspirations and be empowered with a purchasing capacity for learning.”

Option Three:

1. The following wording or similar be inserted into both Education Act 1989 and the Local Government Act 2002:

“Lifelong and intergenerational learning are necessary to ensure relevant skills are maintained or acquired as life circumstances and industry needs change.”
2. Ministry of Education (supported by strong policy advice) works in partnership with local government bodies to encourage ACE at the local level.
3. Four regionally based panels (Regional panels) are established to administer funding to improve access to adult and family/whanau/aiga learning, provide quality assurance and monitoring nationwide. This group reports to the central government funder (the Minister or TEC).

¹⁸ “Stakeholder group” representatives include, Maori and Pasifika community representation, majority ethnic, refugee/migrant community representation, local educational institution representation (schools, colleges, tertiary), local government and older adult and ACE Sector representation.