Education Report: Engaging on the priorities for the Tertiary Education Strategy

To: Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education

Date: 7 December 2018

Priority: Medium

Security Level: In Confidence

METIS No: 1169447

Drafter: Michelle Kynaston

DDI:

Key Contact: Ewan Delany

DDI:

Messaging seen by Communications team: No

Round Robin: Yes

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this paper is for you to:

Note the proposed engagement plan for the new Tertiary Education Strategy, including the proposed priorities that will inform discussions with the sector.

Note that officials are already holding discussions across Government to align the Tertiary Education Strategy with the Government’s wider priorities, and strategic priorities in other ministries.

Agree to the Ministry commencing a programme of formal engagement with stakeholders in the tertiary education sector to inform the new Tertiary Education Strategy, including a series of regional engagement events and an online national tertiary survey on the priorities set out within this paper.

Summary

1 This briefing follows a previous note of 14 November (METIS 1164759) and the conversation officials had with you on 19 November. It sets out the further detail that you asked for on the engagement plan for the development of the new Tertiary Education Strategy (TES).

2 You have agreed to develop and finalise a new TES by July 2019. This paper sets out further detail on the priorities that will inform the new TES and the proposed approach to sector and public engagement to ensure a successful TES with appropriate buy-in from stakeholders.
Recommended Actions

The Ministry of Education recommends you:

1. **Note** the proposed engagement plan, including the proposed content that will inform discussions with the sector.

2. **Note** that officials are already holding discussions across government to align the Tertiary Education Strategy with the Government's wider priorities, and strategic priorities in other ministries.

3. **Agree** to the Ministry commencing a programme of formal engagement with stakeholders in the tertiary education sector to inform the new Tertiary Education Strategy.

4. **Agree** to the Ministry undertaking a series of regional engagement events across New Zealand to hear from learners, providers, employers and others on their priorities for the tertiary education system in line with the priorities you have set out.

5. **Agree** to the Ministry undertaking an online national tertiary survey, similar to the national education survey, to run in parallel with the regional engagement sessions.

6. **Agree to proactively release** this paper with redactions where appropriate for policy matters under consideration.

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Andy Jackson  
Group Manager  
Graduate Achievement, Vocations & Careers  
7/12/18

Hon Chris Hipkins  
Minister of Education  
5/1/19
Background

1 You have agreed to develop and finalise a new TES by July 2019. You have indicated that you would like the TES to include a concrete action plan underpinning a higher level strategic vision, which will provide the sector with greater clarity regarding the Government’s expectations.

2 You are required under the Education Act 1989 to consult with the stakeholders in the tertiary education sector that you consider ought to be consulted, and with the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) before replacing a TES.

3 Broad buy-in to the strategic direction articulated in the TES is critical to its success. You have agreed to take an inclusive, high-engagement approach to developing the new TES; to engage relevant stakeholders throughout the drafting process, and to consult on a draft TES before a final draft is agreed.

Engaging with the sector and the public

4 You are undertaking a broad Education Work Programme (EWP) that will champion a high quality public education system for all New Zealanders. It is vital that the TES aligns with the other key parts of this, and informs and reflects the vision and values of your 30 year education vision.

We will reflect what we’ve already heard...

5 The Ministry has already heard from tens of thousands of New Zealanders about the future of education through the education summits, the Education Conversation | Kōrero Mātauranga, the regional fono and hui, and the online survey on the future of education.

6 The Ministry has examined the perspectives that have emerged from these conversations and we know that people have talked about a range of issues including:

- the importance of the teaching and learning environment, including flexible and individualised life-long learning pathways and project-based learning
- equal and balanced opportunities so that everyone can succeed
- the wider values and competences that underpin the education sector; and
- the importance of wellbeing, and meaningful connections between learners, providers and their communities.

...but we will need to go further.

7 The tertiary content that can be drawn from these conversations is useful as a guide for prompting further discussion but provides limited insight into how people view tertiary education. Many of the conversations have focused predominantly on school age education. To fill this gap we intend to engage broadly with the tertiary education sector, learners and those with a broader stake in tertiary education. This will include iwi, employers and worker representatives, tertiary providers, students, Māori and Pacific, and disability groups.

8 It will be important to hear from people who act as role models for learners including parents and whanau who are big influencers on pathways and choices for those transitioning directly from secondary to tertiary education.
It will also be important to hear from those who have been unable to engage with the tertiary education system or those whom the education system has failed, such as disability groups who have lower rates of transition into employment, to identify the barriers to equitable opportunities for all New Zealanders.

We will continue to engage with the sector and intend to commence a series of regional roundtables that include these groups in January and February, in a number of locations, so that we can understand the perspectives of learners, providers, employers and others across New Zealand and identify broad regional variations that may impact on the outcomes the tertiary system delivers.

We also intend to run an online national tertiary survey to capture views from those who are unable to share their feedback through these regional engagement sessions.

The feedback from the regional engagement sessions and the online national tertiary survey will help to inform the priorities that will be set out in the new TES.

Forming the TES priorities

There is already lots going on in tertiary policy...

The TES will also need to incorporate upcoming decisions made as part of key tertiary priorities, particularly:

- **Review of Vocational Education** – you have been assessing the vocational education system to understand how it can better meet the current and future training needs of learners, providers, employers, and New Zealand more generally. You are considering opportunities to strengthen vocational education and will be taking a paper to cabinet on this in December. We recognise that work on this has already included significant engagement with relevant stakeholders and that there will be further consultation if a major reform is agreed.

- **Fees Free** – ongoing work to embed and improve the fees free policy including monitoring the effects on participation, student achievement and costs of study and considering future policy design choices on eligibility and expanding support.

…and we’re exploring how your system priorities will inform the TES...

Our engagement activities, and ultimately the long-term strategic direction set out in the TES, will be informed by the priorities that you have discussed with us to date.

You have asked that engagement on the TES seeks sector and public views on:

- **Life-long learning**, including hop-on-hop-off education that fits with learners’ work and caring responsibilities. This could include delivering high quality flexible qualifications that are valued by employers, work-integrated learning opportunities and a greater recognition of the value of vocational education, as well as thinking about how learning opportunities can be accessed.

- **Career pathways**, including transitions from secondary into tertiary education and from education into work – helping learners to realise their potential, improved coordination between providers, and better informed student choice through high quality career advice and guidance and quality foundation
education where it is needed. This could also focus on the role of employers in engaging with education and training, eg. working with the tertiary sector to provide more work-integrated learning opportunities and to shape courses that respond to the skills needed for the workforce of the future.

- **Equity**, particularly for Māori and Pacific learners and for those less socio-economically advantaged – improved support for priority and at-risk learners, expanding fees-free learning opportunities, and creating a system that enables people from all social groups to access high quality learning opportunities. You have also indicated there is a need to think about what is needed in tertiary education with respect to learning support.

- **Technological advances**, including the implications for how and what the tertiary education sector delivers - understanding how the sector can provide learning opportunities that are responsive to increasing digitalisation, and maximise the opportunities that evolving technologies offer. This links strongly with the future of work and the need to be responsive to the changing skills requirements within our labour markets.

- **The role of government** in the provision of tertiary education. Considering how government’s role, in addition to being the primary funder, can support a cohesive, coordinated tertiary network that targets provision in priority areas, responding to regional needs and encouraging connections and collaborations that deliver a system that works for learners, providers and employers.

16 We intend to shape our engagement with the sector and the public around these themes, engaging at a high-level to allow scope for a range of different approaches to these issues. These discussions will inform the focus of the TES.

...and we will ensure that the TES aligns with other emerging strategies.

17 We will also ensure the TES is carefully developed in alignment with other strategies including Ka Hikitia, the Pacific Education Plan, the Early Learning Strategic Plan, the statement of National Education Learning Priorities, and the International Education Strategy. We recognise this alignment is vital to ensuring learners transition more seamlessly through the education system and to improving educational outcomes for Māori and Pacific learners.

Cross-Government alignment

We are engaging the education agencies...

18 We will need to work particularly closely with the agencies and organisations responsible for delivering actions outlined in the TES including the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) and the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA).

19 The TEC is required to give effect to the TES in exercising its functions, including decisions regarding the funding of tertiary education providers. The New Zealand Qualifications Authority must also have regard to the TES in exercising its functions.

20 MoE, TEC and NZQA officials meet regularly to discuss the direction of the new TES and some of the delivery challenges that might need consideration when developing a meaningful action plan.
... and holding discussions across Government.

21 The development of a new TES will require ongoing engagement with other Government organisations to ensure that the TES reflects Government’s over-arching strategic priorities and is aligned with key high-priority work programmes being developed across the Government ministries.

22 We are engaging with officials from other Government ministries to understand the tertiary sector’s relevance to other departmental priorities and to influence policy development in line with tertiary priorities.

23 We have so far particularly engaged with parts of the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) with regard to skills and employment and are working to support the development of the Research, Science and Innovation Strategy as part of a cross-government working group. We will also be engaging with the Ministries of Social Development, Justice and Health, and the relevant population agencies.

Risks

24 There is a risk that it may be difficult to engage with some stakeholders, with a number of EWP consultation processes running in parallel. We will seek to join up with other EWP consultation processes where possible.

25 Publishing a final TES by July 2019 sets an ambitious timescale for engagement, drafting, and consultation. There is a risk that a shortened engagement and consultation period may lead to a TES that does not accurately reflect the sector and others’ views. We will mitigate this by beginning focused engagement as soon as possible in 2019 on the broad strategic priorities and engaging the sector throughout the drafting process.

Financial Implications

26 The development of the TES, including costs associated with consultation, will be managed within the Ministry’s budget allocated for this work.

27 The direction set by a new TES may have financial implications. We will provide detailed analysis and costings of any financial implications before finalising the TES.

Proactive Release

28 We recommend that you release this paper with redactions where appropriate for policy matters under consideration.