Vocational education and training reform in Aotearoa New Zealand: The value of educators and education in a new VET environment

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The Education and Training Act 2020 provides an opportunity to transform the Vocational Education and Training (VET) system in Aotearoa New Zealand to ensure participants are successfully prepared for participation in the current and future workforce. The authors of this paper discuss current reforms in the VET system beyond the changing of components and the assignation of requisite tasks. While change to processes and systems can have an impact on VET outcomes, the kind of change that transforms individual lives and life chances depends on the decision-making and approaches made possible only by individuals 'at the coalface.' Indeed, changes to training programmes and processes alone cannot give effect to improved outcomes. The authors suggest that it is educators, the often unnamed and invisible workforce that will provide the basis for transformational VET based change. The VET workforce who daily mediate training programmes and curriculum as educators, facilitators, trainers, instructors and teachers are central to the transformation of VET. Indeed, the most challenging and complex of changes within the Review of Vocational Education *(RoVE) is one that is not yet accounted for or named – the VET education workforce. The authors call for a recognition of educators in VET and an acknowledgement of the centrality of their work in change. A case for planning and strategy that provides direction for the education and training workforce to build their knowledge and capability for a new VET is presented, without which the opportunity for transformational reform is at risk of being lost to componentry change.*

Keywords: vocational education and training, VET, TVET, VET educators, VET reform

Introduction to a new VET

The reform of vocational education and training (VET) in Aotearoa New Zealand through the Education and Training Act 2020 incorporating the Education (Vocational Education and Training Reform) Amendment Bill is a unique opportunity to reconfigure VET for the benefit of students, employers and industry. The Act repealed the Industry Training and Apprentices Act, 1992 and was passed by Parliament in September 2020.

The Education and Training Act 2020 brings the most substantial range of changes in vocational education and training (VET) in a generation. Importantly, it legislates for one large polytechnic body known as Te Pūkenga, New Zealand Institute of Skills and Technology (NZIST). The Act disestablishes the 16 existing New Zealand Institutes of

Technology (ITPs), also commonly referred to as Polytechnics, and the Industry Training Organisations (ITOs). The New Zealand Institute of Skills and Technology (NZIST) is tasked with the provision of vocational education and training, and to be supportive, flexible, and relevant to the workplace.

The newly formed Te Pūkenga brings polytechnics under one umbrella allowing for regional characteristics and variations. Te Pūkenga will engage with the newly formed Workforce Development Councils (WDCs) and other regional boards to bring about a responsive, collaborative, and future focused, vocational education and training environment through the WDC role of ensuring currency, engagement of employers and establishment of standards. Te Pūkenga presented its operating model in October 2021 and a Business Case in November 2021 (Te Pūkenga, 2021).

The journey from policy to practice has a range of complications and challenges, when policy directions involve multiple organisations, wide ranging tasks, and an intent to create change. In this paper we search for and analyse the presence of 'teaching and learning' as it appears in The Education and Training Act (2020) and the associated Charter for the newly established Te Pūkenga. We will consider the proposed operating model for Te Pūkenga. Our focus is unashamedly on learning and teaching as central to an education and training environment and as the 'business' of providers of vocational education and training.

Te Pūkenga is tasked with bringing about a range of significant changes in VET in Aotearoa New Zealand. The changes are not just structural, but cultural and go to the heart of VET teaching in Aotearoa New Zealand. The expectations are: to have improved outcomes, to engage in culturally responsive, inclusive and student-centred learning, and more students and trainees enter the workforce or advance to further training or education. This is transformational work and requires change across all aspects of VET in New Zealand.

Whilst the Charter (Education Act, 2020) for NZIST and the Minister of Education's Letter of Expectations points to the wider focus for the organisation, it is noteworthy that NZIST is firstly an education and training organisation, and an identified part of the Aotearoa New Zealand education system. Foremost in the goals Te Pūkenga has set for itself is increasing equity and supporting students or 'learners.' Advancing education in this area relies significantly on strong and effective learning and teaching created and managed by well supported educators. While the charter for Te Pūkenga makes promising reference to learning and teaching that is supported by evidence and best practice, the proposed operating model is light on the processes and supports that ensure good teaching and evidence based practice.

The impetus and responsibility for the supply, capacity and skill of education-based practitioners and trainers within the VET system sits with Te Pūkenga. However, while the Education and Training Act identifies the importance of teaching and learning supported by research, evidence, and effective practice as central to the Charter for Te Pūkenga, the recognition of educators, teachers and trainers is slight in documentation.

Central to any successful VET system is the supply, innovative capacity and skill of teaching practitioners and trainers. Our focus is on how the notion of teachers and teaching as an important aspect of learning and training manifests in policy and in the stated ongoing direction of Te Pūkenga. We begin by looking at learning in the new VET, the role and value of teachers to a successful VET system; we consider the lack of clarity around the shape of the existing education workforce for Aotearoa New Zealand's new VET system; we take a closer look at some of the proposals, structures and intentions

regarding learning and teaching in Te Pūkenga, and finally make a few suggestions around linking learning and teaching to success for the new entity to contribute to better outcomes for the people who choose Te Pūkenga as their pathway to work.

Learning in a new VET

The stated intention to place 'learners' at the centre of the learning environment in the new VET model is clearly laid out in the Act. Similarly, the notion of student-centred learning is referred to in the associated Charter and Te Pūkenga's own Operational Model (Te Pūkenga, 2021). However, the notion of student-centred learning is acknowledged to be complex in definition and practice in VET (Elen & Clarebout, 2007). Certainly, student-centred approaches provide a useful goal for VET where learning is central, and students and teachers can work more collaboratively.

The focus on student-centred approaches echo the research and practice in the area of vocational pedagogies in Europe through Cedefop (2015). While acknowledging that the term 'learner centred' can be a 'fuzzy' concept in research literature and less than well defined in practice, the idea that different approaches to vocational teaching may engage learners and increase motivation, increase the control people have over their learning and give greater emphasis to outcomes of individuals as well as their attitudes and capabilities (Cedefop, 2015) is worth consideration for an Aotearoa New Zealand context. There is a huge and untapped potential to develop a greater understanding of vocational pedagogies in Aotearoa New Zealand drawing on research and experience from Europe and other countries where VET and the recognition of specific pedagogical approaches for VET are further recognised and developed in research and practice (OECD, 2015; OECD, 2021).

However, for many lecturers, trainers or academics engaged in teaching and training in Aotearoa New Zealand-based VET, unravelling the implications of student or learner centredness for their practice may require some significant support. Teaching and training in a student-centred environment require the 'unlearning' of traditional and often well entrenched ways of working in education and requires planning and significant resourcing (Claxton, 2014).

While a strong pastoral environment is central to the Te Pūkenga model (Te Pūkenga, 2021), acknowledging that the direct learning and training experience and the relationship between learners and those tasked with making meaningful, connected, and relevant learning experiences will be central to meeting the goals for Te Pūkenga.

The ability to be adaptable in the teaching environment, to enact cultural responsiveness and promote equitable outcomes requires significant support, experience, and expertise. If pass rates are to improve and VET outcomes are to meet the goals of equity and cultural responsiveness, some significant focus and development planning for the VET workforce is essential based on knowledge and data that begins with the current VET teaching and training environment. This knowledge will be a first step to developing a future VET teaching and training environment able to undertake the large task laid out for a transformed VET (OECD, 2021).

Whether the learning environment is online, in the classroom, lecture theatre, studio or workplace, a transition to student-centred learning is a complex change for many in the VET education system. Teachers, tutors, instructors, trainers, and lecturers will need to undergo some exceptional learning experiences themselves to undertake the kind of change required to transform the VET learning experience in this way (Cedefop, 2015).

In providing a student-centred learning environment, teacher and educator attitudes and competencies become central. It is not possible to provide student-centred learning if educators are not skilled and schooled in what this means in terms of what they do for and with students and trainees (Baglow, 2016). Many educators and those involved in VET teaching and learning have not experienced learning environments that exemplify this kind of learning. Educators will tend to teach the way they have been taught (Bird, 1991) and without adequate support will continue to use the approaches they know; in many cases a traditional, transmission style of teaching (Maurice-Takerei, 2015). The same is true for other key notions advanced by the documentation associated with Te Pūkenga, centrally, cultural responsiveness, inclusivity and equity as core principles named within the Charter.

These core principles have little chance of being realised without VET workforce development. However, with little mention of teachers, trainers or teaching in any of the documents provided so far, it is unclear whether the reality of this workforce and their work is known. For example, what does student-centredness mean for the development of workplace learning? What does a culturally responsive VET environment look like? How will we know when we are achieving inclusivity? What is the current state of equity in the system and how will we improve it? How will pass rates within VET be improved to meet the expectations laid out for Te Pūkenga?

While there is much to build on in our knowledge and understanding of existing VET pedagogies (Alvunger & Grahn Johansson, 2018; Cedefop, 2015; Cox & Prestridge, 2020; Lucas, 2014) including the types of learning that occur in workshops, practicums and project-based environments, there is also much to be learnt and developed in the Aotearoa New Zealand context which will be of value to teachers and trainers so that they become significant contributors to achieving improved outcomes for students and trainees (RoVE, 2022).

Industry training organisations and polytechnics in VET

Polytechnic teaching is only a part of the VET environment in Aotearoa New Zealand. ITOs have had a significant role in VET since their inception in 1992 under the National Government's Industry Training Act (1992) and their influence has grown since that time. The 1992 Act repealed the Apprenticeship Act (1983) and apprenticeships were transformed. Under the changes apprentices became industry trainees, training agreements replaced apprenticeship contracts and a time-served model was replaced by competency-based unit standards and qualifications under the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA). ITOs took responsibility for apprenticeship training through the writing of standards and qualifications, the moderation of standards and the arranging or purchasing of off-job training.

Unfortunately, success and completion rates under ITOs were disappointing. The proportion of trainees completing a qualification, at the intended or higher level, within five years of commencement decreased and the five-year qualification completion rate decreased under their purview (Education Counts, 2021a). Ongoing reviews of the work of ITOs in the late 1990s and 2000s identified concerns about low completion rates, and a wide variance of performance across industries (Maurice-Takerei, 2015). Various reports during the 2000s identified a lack of consultation with stakeholders, a high level of funding with low-level returns, a low level of completions and credit attainment, patchy coverage, phantom trainees (Cabinet Business Committee, 2013), and concern was expressed when ITOs set up and operated as Private Training Establishments (PTEs), engaging in off-job

training in competition with other providers. During this time the number of people enrolling in industry training dropped. In 2013, measures to manage the ITO environment were under way and quality assurance mechanisms through NZQA were initiated (Maurice-Takerei, 2015).

Clearly, the work of an ITO is different to that of a polytechnic and while the education and training workforce might be brought together under a single moniker, educators and trainers working under the umbrella of ITOs or polytechnics have had different understandings of the purpose of their work; they will work differently and align themselves with different and at times opposing goals.

Educators within polytechnics, for example, have aligned their purpose with the supporting of students and trainees through qualifications. ITOs have had a purpose more closely aligned with supporting industry and employers (Maurice-Takerei, 2015). These differing notions of the goals and purpose for education and training, while not insurmountable will likely make a difference to how Te Pūkenga will succeed in terms of the outcomes put forward in the new Charter (Hipkins, n.d.), and the goals it has set for itself.

Now, as ITOs begin to merge with Te Pūkenga, and the industry training workforce becomes more strongly aligned with educational processes and goals, it becomes even more important to have a basic understanding of the scope of the VET teaching and training workforce to help us understand the kind and level of support required to create a change in outcomes. While the clarity of focus on the workplace as the destination for VET students that the ITOs bring to the learning and teaching mix is vital, simply renaming an organisation and making structural changes will not create the transformational change that is required for Te Pūkenga to meet the goals set out in legislation and the goals it specifies for itself.

Role and value of teachers

The importance of good learning and teaching to the achievement of desirable outcomes has long been acknowledged in the Aotearoa New Zealand education system. This is apparent in requirements for teachers to hold qualifications in teacher education and to be "inspected' or latterly "performance reviewed" for the effectiveness of their teaching (Te Ara, 2022; Tearney, 2014). The early childhood sector has recently demonstrated this value (as required by the Ministry of Education and the early learning Action Plan, MoE 2019) in the strengthening of its tertiary teaching qualifications requirements, and at the other end of the system some PTEs have seen the value of linking achievement in tertiary teaching qualification to pay scales, advancement, contractual requirements and ultimately successful transition to the workforce for their students.

Internationally, the research literature affirms the relationship between teacher education and professional learning and the achievement of outcomes for students (e.g., Guthrie & Clayton, 2019) including the work of Aotearoa New Zealand's John Hattie and others demonstrating through meta-analysis the link between a range of teacher practices and student success (Hattie, 2015).

The myth that content experts working in a post compulsory education environment need no teacher education and professional learning is gradually dissipating, moved on by rates of change in education and the society it serves, and accelerating under pandemic induced conditions that bring notions of how to teach effectively into sharp and urgent focus. Janet Hobley's (2021) work, for example, proposes the need not only for understanding of signature pedagogies and pedagogical content knowledge in the

vocational subjects, but also technological, pedagogical, content knowledge. Further, to ensure a flexible, innovative, future-responsive workforce that can respond to and contribute to change in our industries, a minimal, current skills focus will not serve. The work of Spencer and Lucas (2021) in Scotland on the identification and teaching of the meta-skills that are part of an effective workforce in the vocational industries demonstrates the complexity of the task of teaching today's technical skills, and also of teaching those capabilities of wider, productive, sustainable workforce participation and contribution. The difference between short run and long run goals is neatly described by Verhaest et al., (2018). Thus, complex and relevant teacher knowledge is not obtained by osmosis but by rigorous teacher education and professional learning immersed in research, practice, mentoring, critique and innovation.

Vocational Education and Training in New Zealand has reached a moment in time where teacher education and professional learning for vocational teachers can become a given, not a nice to have, and consequently the new system may be underpinned by effective learning and teaching and thus achieve greater assurance of successful outcomes. The 2020 course completions in the Te Pūkenga grouping representing our future generation of the vocational workforce are consistent with previous years at 25% plus failure rate overall, Māori 35% failure rate and Pacifica 34% (Education Counts, 2021b). While it would be naïve to suggest this could be solved only by better teaching (Strathdee & Cooper 2017), gender, race, social class, and poverty are long term intractable barriers that replicate themselves in education systems including VET. However, education sits at the intersection of the issues impacting achievement and equity and this is where we may build action, expectation, requirement and resourcing into legislation and policy. The first hurdle in this desire for excellence is to know the teaching workforce as it exists and then create a development plan.

Tertiary teachers and VET teaching in Aotearoa New Zealand

The tertiary education sector in Aotearoa New Zealand covers the range of post school education and training from Foundation level to Masters and PhD. Tertiary teachers, therefore, can be involved in teaching across a broad range of qualifications and levels. In 2010, Ako Aotearoa researched and published information from a wide 'stocktake' on tertiary teaching qualifications, institutional support and requirements (Ako Aotearoa, 2010). It is noted in this report the range of requirements for university teaching and polytechnic or PTE teaching. In general, universities require a high level of education in a discipline and do not require a teaching qualification while requirements for polytechnics and PTEs place a higher value on work experience in a discipline. Most organisations also do not require teaching qualifications as a condition of employment, although some organisations will require some minimal short course as it fits. Given the vast changes in the tertiary education environment in the last two decades, it is becoming increasingly apparent that teaching qualifications, even of a basic type, provide opportunities to improve teaching (Ako Aotearoa, 2010; Duignan at al., 2016).

It is noted that the lack of requirement for teaching qualifications as an entry point for teaching at tertiary level is very different to the qualification requirements to teach at any other level in Aotearoa New Zealand. From Early Childhood Education to Secondary Education, degree level teacher education or training is a condition of employment as a teacher. As well as qualifications, registration with a professional body is a requirement for being a registered teacher in the schooling sector and in Early Childhood Education. Furthermore, increasing qualifications are linked to pay scales. Australian VET researchers

have long called for similar measures in the VET environment, including a professional body for VET teachers (for example Dymock & Tyler, 2018; Guthrie & Clayton, 2019) and qualifications linked to pay scales which provide an opportunity for recognition of education and training linked to work.

In the range of legislative and organisational documents that are available and which provide a basis for the newly formed Te Pūkenga, there is little evidence or recognition of teaching or educators, whether they are trainers, teachers, workplace-based assessors, or educators. Terms such as 'staff' are ill defined. What is interesting is that in the VET environment there is a range and variety of teaching and non-teaching staff roles. Some roles are focused entirely on learning and training and some are not focused on skill and knowledge development or the provision of learning opportunities to students or learners. For example, staff who undertake the important administrative, quality assurance, management and business focused roles.

The Charter for Te Pūkenga in the legislation provides a list of responsibilities and tasks for the new organisation. Much of the work identified is associated with consultation with reference to the range of other organisations, most newly formed under the Review of Vocational Education (ROVE). In particular, Workforce Development Councils are central to the development of standards and are required to bring the demands of employers and other industry-based voices to the process for standards development. While it is essential that VET learning is current and relevant in its content, the absence of assurance around teaching quality and effectiveness creates a gap in the process of building future workforce capability.

Te Pūkenga has a unique opportunity to shape, upskill and transform the teaching and training workforce community for an improved VET environment. The fact that there is little reference to educators means there is an opportunity to start at the beginning and devise appropriate supports for educators and trainers.

As the concept of a VET sector for Aotearoa New Zealand emerges and continues to take shape, there is an opportunity to consider the value placed on teaching and training. Worthy of consideration is a deeper understanding of the types of knowledge and skills that might be required for this sector of education as different to schooling or university. There is no doubt that vocational pedagogies are strongly contextual and emerge from the context and type of learning that occurs.

The polytechnic system has traditionally had a range of staff to undertake the myriad of roles involved in the provision of a range of learning programmes to a range of students. Divisions have existed through the collective contracts made in collaboration with the unions involved in the tertiary education sector. Academic (teaching) staff have been provided for under academic contracts. There has been a vast range of administrative work involved including that associated with quality assurance and compliance, interacting with NZQA and Tertiary Education Commission, programme and course development, internal moderation as well as 'business' associated tasks such as enrolments and accounts, student support services, and, as with other large businesses, marketing and human resource functions. Most activities associated with learning and teaching have been undertaken by 'academic staff.'

Those staff that have traditionally sat under the job title of 'Academic staff' in VET are a broad and varied group. They are engaged in teaching activities from level 1 – 7 (certificates and diplomas) and degree and post graduate level. The frequently termed 'staff' in documentation developed by Te Pūkenga also refers to administrative staff and industry based trainers and assessors working within former ITOs.

Current data from Tertiary Information (2021) provides a description of the VET workforce across age, ethnicity, PT/FT, role (academic, research, allied) and sorted for VET into Te Pūkenga and PTEs. There is no across-sector data on qualifications. While this information is a useful starting point, there is much work to be done to match strategy to staffing to job descriptions and to expected outcomes. The Tertiary Information spreadsheets identify the difficulty of presenting information, making comparisons or identifying trends because of the multiple methods used to gather data from former subsidiaries of Te Pūkenga and the varied ways of defining and naming roles (Tertiary Information, 2021a). Considering the impacts of the proportions of part time staff, the numbers of Māori and Pasifika staff, the age profile of staff and the distribution and level of roles under this situation, it is difficult to develop a whole picture of the workforce and this works against setting informed strategic goals and planning effectively.

It is clear through the Operating Model provided by Te Pūkenga that the organisation has tasked itself with some weighty and important goals including equitable outcomes for all students. It is, however, important to note that generating a teaching workforce that will undertake the work set out in equitable and insightful ways will require some significant planning and development. There are instances across the Te Pūkenga subsidiaries of considerable excellence and the diversity of approaches is understandable given the previous fragmentation of VET provision, however, under Te Pūkenga there is a huge opportunity to develop and design the workforce strategically, consistently and with a focus on success for educators, students/trainees and their industries.

Professional learning and qualifications for a new VET

It should not be assumed that professional learning and tertiary teaching qualifications are available and of high quality across Aotearoa New Zealand VET. The inadequacy of professional learning and leadership development opportunities in the VET sector is highlighted by Baglow (2016). Baglow suggests that VET educators have little guidance in terms of relevant and useful education and training related to their work and/or have engaged with professional learning that does not lead to promotion or improved conditions. Many VET educators will undertake what is on offer in their organisations, sometimes under duress, and with little information as to how to judge the quality of the offerings or whether those qualifications will be recognised or lead to changes in remuneration or career path progression (Maurice-Takerei, 2015).

When exploring professional learning preferences and experiences in six institutions in Aotearoa New Zealand, Duignan et al., (2016) noted the importance educators placed on recognition of professional learning. The authors noted educator concern at the lack of recognition for much professional learning either voluntarily or as part of an organisational requirement. While the study showed a variety of preferences for professional learning and a variety of opinions from practitioners about the kinds of professional learning and development that support them in their work, that which is directly relevant and experiential (Duignan et al. 2016) is highlighted as preferred. Participants in the study also identified the importance of the quality of the facilitator to their interest in and benefit from professional development.

What is evident from the 2016 study by Duignan et al. and the work of Baglow (2016) is the lack of tailored, recognised and relevant professional learning opportunities linked to recognised and high status qualifications in VET. Professional learning that is linked to the strategic goals of Te Pūkenga pitched at a national level and provided by skilled facilitators engaged with research will provide a glimpse of an opportunity to meet the

requirements laid out for Te Pūkenga. This will also meet the requirement for teaching and learning to be supported by research, evidence and best practice proposed in the Te Pūkenga Charter.

As with Australian VET researchers, for example Guthrie & Clayton (2019), we call for higher education to be involved in the development of degree-based programmes for VET educators, teachers and trainers. Currently there are few degree level qualifications tailored to the particular requirements of VET teachers and trainers. Such qualifications will provide a practical and valuable career pathway for educators and engage them with current research and practice. In recent commentary on the development of the Aotearoa New Zealand VET sector, the following points were proposed by the authors to outline relevant principles, examples, and policy and research support for a planned approach to people development in the new VET environment (summarised here):

- preparation and induction for teaching/training
- qualifications relevant to and contextualised for VET (preferably at degree level)
- high quality continuing professional learning linked to professionalisation of the VET educator workforce
- the maintenance of industry currency
- developing an evidence base through high quality VET-based research (Maurice-Takerei & Anderson, 2022)

Legislation for change

The Minister of Education, who is leading the reforms, acknowledges in his Letter of Expectations to Te Pūkenga, "The recent response required by providers to the Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the current inequity in the system" (Hipkins, n.d.). What can be found in the current legislation and associated documents that may address the critical issues in Aotearoa New Zealand education with regard to student success and equity of success in the case of VET?

Change may come quietly but more likely through a significant planned or unplanned disruption. Aotearoa New Zealand has had the disruptions to education caused by the pandemic prompting an almost overnight shift to online learning. Can the creation of Te Pūkenga also disrupt sufficiently to create a change to the success and equitable success of vocational students/trainees?

The Functions of Te Pūkenga are clearly outlined in the Act (2020) and appended to Hipkins (n.d.). They refer to the provision and arrangement of a variety of education and training from foundation to degree level and higher level education. The requirement to be responsive to the needs of regions and 'learners,' industries, employers and communities is outlined. The Functions also refer to improvements in consistency and quality of outcomes for the tertiary education system as a whole and for Māori in particular.

The Charter for Te Pūkenga (Hipkins, n.d.) identifies expectations and priorities for the organisation. Under this section in the legislation teaching and learning gets a rare mention, that is, Item g: "teaching and learning is supported by research, evidence, and best practice," and further identifies the importance of meeting the needs of all learners. In particular there is a requirement for culturally responsive delivery approaches (Item e).

The Letter of Expectations has a focus on learners, industry and organisational viability. While putting learners at the centre of the new system is admirable and essential, the absence of statements to acknowledge that the learning interface between students,

industry/workplaces, curriculum and quality is occupied by a specialist in content and pedagogy, that is, a teacher, educator or trainer; the essential connector of a joined up education system is missing. The use of the term "learner" exacerbates this problem by characterising the student as a recipient of preprepared delivery (McVet) rather than a collaborator in the development of authentic practice, innovation and sustainable contribution to the industries that will employ them. The 'absent' teacher is then not resourced in professional learning and qualifications to be a vital, current, learning partner and their role is limited to that of a conduit of information rather than as the skilled and knowledgeable designer of ako (the reponsive and reciprocal relationship between learning and teaching).

At the time of writing, the Operating Model has been designed and out for consultation. The Operating Model notes acknowledge that the purpose of reform is to be transformational and that change will occur over time:

> The Operating Model is an important component of this, as it sets out the fundamental design of Te Pūkenga and sets the foundations for future design and implementation activities. The steps that will build on the Operating Model design include: detailed organisational design, organisation structure, roles and responsibilities, job descriptions, and the strategy or business plan(s) for Te Pūkenga. (Te Pūkenga, 2021)

What is missing between the Operating Model and its implementation and development into a transformational structure is a focus on learning and the management of change to that learning. Otherwise it is "whirring around determinedly in a system too often maintained on its current path by the compelling force of the domestication of innovation and failure of leadership to carry change into practice" (Anderson, 2015, pg 1). The question must be asked, is Te Pūkenga a sufficiently disruptive force to ensure change to the success rates of students? Is new learning for staff available and available now? Is it compelling and startling, or is the Model focused only on the important need to:

- remove unnecessary duplication of functions and delivery via consolidation, driving economies of scale?
- improve cost controls and capital management within the sector? (Hipkins, n.d.)

The Ako Networks (Te Pūkenga, 2021) embedded in the Operating Model provide a structure for connecting the parts of Te Pūkenga. With much new learning already achieved around connecting digitally, there is potential to overcome the existing parochialism of the subsidiaries and to implement an as yet invisible plan for workforce development.

The Te Rito Outcomes Framework (Te Pūkenga, 2021) further details equitable outcome statements by grouping stated outcomes and providing measures associated with student success including retention, transition to higher education, and increases in employment following education and training. These proposed improvements in fundamental outcomes of VET are very welcome but not yet attached to knowledge, skills and action in teaching.

Planning and resourcing a new VET

The legislation and supporting documents offer expectations, goals and structures. However, these goals are not new to the sector. Issues of equity have remained a challenge (see course completions data for Te Pūkenga and ITOs above). A change is

needed and this includes changes to programmes and teaching. There is an opportunity to transform VET and see the goals outlined realised. Not, however, without a plan. A plan to ensure more equitable outcomes, higher rates of retention and transition to higher education along with an increase of employment following education and training will require a systematic and planned approach to workforce development. Many VET educators, trainers and teachers (Maurice-Takerei, 2015; Duignan et al., 2016) will not have the tools to develop and provide "future-focused," "relevant" learning which incorporates "universal design," "culturally inclusive and informed" teaching and training that is "personalised and practical" and "sustainable" (Te Pūkenga, 2021, Appendix 10, pp. 87-91). Despite ongoing attempts to generate equitable outcomes in the compulsory sector, equity remains elusive (Thrupp & Hill, 2019). It is not enough to simply state that 'learners are at the centre', or that 'equity is a fundamental consideration'. A whole organisation change, as proposed by Te Pūkenga, requires a system-wide commitment and complex planning. Indeed, the goal to "become a connected, relevant, and future-focused education provider driven by innovation, research, data driven decision making and teaching excellence" (Te Pūkenga, 2021, p. 4) will require a strategic approach, the development of new ways to work and a commitment to new methods of collaboration and co-construction

A need to gather success where it exists across the sectors and change 'staff development' into a dynamic, strategic activity led by those who have demonstrated success must be seen as a vital way to putting learners at the centre of the model.

The goal to employ teaching staff who have the required knowledge and skills to teach well and the ability and willingness to undergo professional learning to increase their skills and knowledge would be a very good first step.

It is noted that the primary school sector has identified the extent of racism in their sector and thus may provide learning for the VET sector (Alansari et al., 2020; Teachers Council of Aotearoa, 2021).

What next? – The challenge for new VET

Developing a culture for learning and teaching that positions VET to achieve the outcomes identified in the range of documents associated with Te Pūkenga will indeed take some serious workforce planning. The planning and response to planning for Te Pūkenga can be seen in text and diagrammatically at https://xn--tepkenga-szb.ac.nz/. Inclusion, progression, cultural responsiveness and other aspects of learning and teaching will require significant focus and the support of research, experience and expertise. We are fortunate to have funding for a national organisation (Ako Aotearoa) with potential to provide some leadership and strategic engagement with Te Pūkenga and the pedagogies associated with VET.

A 2021 OECD report on teaching and leading in VET identifies four key policy recommendations for strengthening VET teaching and leadership, which are:

- ensuring VET teacher supply through a variety of mechanisms including by providing flexible pathways
- innovative pedagogy
- VET teacher training
- a strengthened leadership

This 2021 report builds on a range of reports of studies undertaken in several countries and follows on from a 2015 report (OECD, 2015) that clearly outlines the centrality of a skilled and knowledgeable vocational teaching workforce, one with a balance of teaching skills and 'up-to-date industry experience' essential to any successful VET system.

Just how a VET system in Aotearoa New Zealand plans to support VET teaching and provide a basis for the development of a knowledgeable and skilled teaching workforce will be critical to the success of the newly formed system. Identifying the VET workforce and the accompanying skills and knowledge already existing and required for the future will be crucial. At the outset it must be acknowledged that standards and assessments alone do not provide a basis for effective VET, rather it is the expertise of educators. Highly skilled occupational experts and their knowledge and experience of learning and teaching are vital to a healthy VET system.

Current outcomes demonstrate that teaching effectiveness as measured by completions and transition to relevant work are not consistent or equitable. There is a need for purposeful planning, resourcing and timelines for the two key elements of organisational change. The structure of the teaching workforce (identified by mapping organisational strategy to outcomes and job descriptions to people) and the capability of the workforce (identified by mapping existing skills to the structure, identifying gaps and strengths, planning qualifications and professional learning requirements) must be addressed to ensure success. Otherwise, this enterprise will be   prey to more of the same achieving more of the same.

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