



FROM	Victoria University of Wellington Students' Association (VUWSA)
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TO	Productivity Commission: New Models of Tertiary Education
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SUBJECT	Victoria University of Wellington Student's Association Submission

Thank you for the opportunity to submit on the New Models of Tertiary Education Issues Paper.

We have prepared the following submission in consultation with a range of student representatives from Victoria University of Wellington. These include the elected student Executive at VUWSA, as well as student representatives on Faculty Boards (sub-committees of the University's Academic Board). An anonymous survey was also conducted with the same student representatives, for which some of the responses are included throughout this submission.

From the feedback received by VUWSA, we note the strengths of Victoria University include:

- Comprehensive and coherent courses
- supportive, helpful and approachable staff
- diverse range of learning resources and platforms provided
- integration of research in teaching and learning.

Nevertheless, there are a few areas that may need addressing and improving.

We ask that the Commission use comments in this submission as a measure of triangulation with the other sources of data gathered.

We would suggest the following points are the key barriers and opportunities in the New Zealand tertiary system:

- To remove competition for student enrolments due to it being a barrier for a cohesive, effective sector.
- Provide recommendations for the New Zealand universities to collaborate with innovation in the sector as well as degree programmes.
- Consider increasing an equitable approach to education of underrepresented groups with better enrolment targeting and supported localised degree completion initiatives.
- That a homogenous system be considered to provide better outcomes and allow for specialisation within certain areas.

The following submission looks specifically at a variety of the New Models of Tertiary Education issues paper questions.

Question 8. How does competition for student enrolments influence provider behaviour? Over what attributes do providers compete? Do New Zealand providers compete with one another more or less than in other countries?

The students provided feedback that related to the influence of student enrolment competition due to marketing spending and the institution's focus on intake numbers and not necessarily student achievement.

"It makes a perverse incentive for large marketing overspend and poaching of other institutions student's that may be best suited to other institutions. They compete for student numbers especially international students, government SAC funding, having an inefficient diversity of programmes and facilities."

"I feel as though there is competition between tertiary providers for a range of attributes such as academic ability, participation in extra-curricular activities and evidence of engagement. Given the competition for these attributes, the tertiary provider then offers scholarships which attract the best students that employ these abilities and also similar scholarships that cater to a range of cultures."

"The business model for New Zealand universities outline in figure 7 suggests that there is competition for world class staff, providing the best overall "student experience" and on getting as high international ratings as possible. While minimizing competition would improve some courses through inter university collaboration it would also take off the pressure to compete for the resources above

(and the financial benefits that come with successfully attracting large numbers of students), which could lead to an overall decline in quality.”

“Competition for student enrolments has led to what seems to be a disproportionately large spending on advertising which seems an inappropriate use of university funds. The attributes tertiary institutions compete over are often indistinct, but are broadly around quality of education, student experience and desirability of qualifications from the institution.”

“I think competition creates a better service for students and providers commit to show that they have better aspects. I think providers compete over student experience, the papers they offer and what the city can offer too.”

“It feels like providers seem to care more about the financial part of enrolments. There is no competition to get better results in terms of student learning and how it has impacted the student in regards to how much they have learnt. An example of this is in the Architecture and Design Faculty, where in the architecture faculty there used to be competition amongst peers for good grades and only a certain number would get through. In the past 2 to 3 years that number has increased quite a bit and the university is accepting people into the next year with a lower average. This is great for all those students wanting to learn, but it comes at a cost to the rest when you have 20 people in a tutorial stream and get to speak with the tutor for only 5 mins each.”

Overall the Commission should note the influence of competition on enrolments that does not address the quality of education to those enrolled. It creates unnecessary competition between institutions that results in high spending on marketing and inefficient programme diversification to get funding.

Question 16. How do New Zealand tertiary providers use student evaluations? How does this influence provider behaviour?

Students below comment that feedback is eagerly sought, however there is no knowledge as to how this influences provider behaviour.

“They use them to influence course delivery and content which is great. It influences them to provide the highest standard of teaching and facilitate a higher level of education quality.”

“Good that we have student feedback system and surveys. Student Experience Improvement survey has created some positive change. Student feedback on courses and teaching however don't really influence much change. We don't really get the chance to be completely frank about the quality of courses or teachers.”

There is also a lack of clarity around the purpose and outcome of student evaluations.

“I feel that my university is constantly looking for student opinion and evaluation of the way they teach and the content that they provide. This is done through student feedback forms that are handed out at the end of a lecturers teaching period and/or at the closure of a course's classes. However, while lecturers assure students that this feedback is highly regarded and acted upon (which I do not doubt), any changes made as a result of our feedback are not made known to the students. Therefore I cannot comment on how this feedback influences provider behaviour.”

“The multitude of factors which impact upon student evaluations and the difficulty in ensuring the quality of feedback (I have known many fellow students to just fill out the highest scores, leave little to no written feedback and spend the rest of the time chatting to one another while the lecture is out of the room) means that currently student evaluations influence provider behaviour very little. This should begin to change as evaluations move online and students are given more time to fill out the survey on their own, free of distraction. Yet more will need to be done. There needs to be a re-evaluation of how best to structure the student evaluations so that they are not only easy to fill out, but provide precise quantifiable feedback.”

“As with Victoria University of Wellington's class representative system, evaluations are primarily used to gather feedback on both lecturers and courses to identify any issues or areas of improvement.”

“I assume student evaluations are used to gain what the consumers want and that this influences their behaviour by responding to this feedback.”

“How this is evaluated. I think the university should be more proactive in this field so that students are pushed to perform better. Course coordinator/teaching assistants should sit down with individual student after each tri or at the end of the year and review their performance with them.”

The Commission should note the evaluations should be used to influence behaviour in relation to the teaching and learning in tertiary institutions as a formalised process that requires quantifiable changes that should be reported on.

Question 17. In what ways and to what extent do employers interact with tertiary providers in New Zealand? Are there practical ways to encourage employers to have greater or more productive involvement in the tertiary education system?

The respondents expressed a small amount of employer interaction and a keen willingness to have more practical experience for industry.

“They do not interact on a close basis. They are consulted on but are not regularly used in a practical basis for student courses and delivery. The extent needs to be a lot greater to prepare graduates for industry.”

“Guest lecturers and advisory boards for schools like the School of Government. VBS (Victoria Business School) also does an employment survey. But I think all this work needs to be more visible. As students we need to get a clearer understanding of our employability once we graduate, not just about how much we will earn but what skills we are getting that will complement a potential employer's needs.”

“Speaking only for my field (Science), I feel as though there is a lack of interaction between employers and my tertiary provider. I would like to see tertiary scholarships that offer internships to students that have worked hard and achieved well throughout their university life. This way, students attain some experience which is crucial to obtaining a job in their relevant field, and the employer can have someone working for them at no cost to the employer. Additionally, the employer may gain an excellent employee upon completion of such a scholarship. In this sense, it is a win-win.”

“The relationship between businesses and universities seems positive, however there could be more promotion done on the benefits of the soft skills (teamwork, critical thinking and general knowledge), which universities promote. There also needs to be a shift in strategy as technology allows more and more students to apply their skills to entrepreneurship initiatives and acting as their own bosses in self-employment. The issues report does not sufficiently address this.”

Students also commented on how the potential interaction could be linked to graduate opportunities.

“Employers often run 'Careers Expos' as an opportunity for soon-to-be-graduates to talk to people who work for certain employers and get familiar with exactly what that employer is. Also in some law and commerce courses, partners from employer-firms teach courses. Greater involvement by practitioners would not only give more practical skills to graduates prior to entry to the workforce, but also give employers a more comprehensive view of the pool of graduates they will employ from to allow the employer to tailor their transition process from inexperienced graduate to functional employee.”

"I think employers interact with tertiary providers to tell them what they want of graduates. However, I think there needs to be more of this across all career paths. Essentially just getting conversations started of what they want."

More options [are needed] for employers to target BA students

"There are many ways that future employers can get involved in the tertiary system. There are already examples of this happening in most faculties but I certainly think that this can be enhanced. More seminars for students and competitions held and sponsored by employers will definitely entice the students into that field or company."

Based on the comments above the Commission is encouraged to recommend further industry interaction in the tertiary system as an active part of the education process.

Question 22. Is the current architecture a good fit for a tertiary education system? What are its advantages and disadvantages? Are there good alternatives?

The following comments are first hand views of the tertiary system from a student perspective.

"It's not great. There is too much competition for students in a shrinking and growing expenses market. The alternative would be a more centralised model that focused on key strengths of university's in specialised degree areas."

"Universities seem to be competing a lot with each other, which is overall a good thing I think, but there are negative side effects. They're competing because they don't get enough funding from the Government. They pass this cost onto students through raising fees. While tertiary education seems to be considered a private good, students are struggling to afford tertiary education. We will pay for our education in taxes, and we will likely be heavily taxed in the future as the baby boomers reach retirement. Current students seem to be shouldering both high student debt and possibly high taxes in the future. That's not fair."

"Domestically yes, internationally no. There will need to be greater complexity in the style of courses offered if this is to be improved. MOOCs however are but one possible way to do this."

"The current architecture seems a good fit. Not perfect, but adequate. Currently a wide range of people have access to higher education which is extremely positive, however the requirement for institutions to gain as many enrolments as possible seems at odds with the job market. In many situations supply of graduates is much higher than demand for those same graduates. An alternative would be a funding

model that does not rely on numbers of enrolments but rather quality of education provided, as complicated as that may be.”

“I don't think the current architecture is a good fit as it is more of a bums on seat model rather than creating apt learning environment. An alternative model would be to not have it as commercialised.”

“Urgent work needs to be done in the next few years to all campuses to keep up with the ever growing enrolment list - things seem to be getting quite compact around university!”

The above comments address a need for the Commission to look into the enrolments model and weigh up what is a good fit for the New Zealand market and industry.

Question 28. In what ways does a focus on educating international students complement or undermine the other goals of tertiary education providers?

Students expressed strong views and questioned the aim of providing tertiary education to international students. There was also discussion regarding the obvious commercial gain of growing international student numbers impeding upon the quality of education attained.

“It allows for a diversity of student interaction and cultural awareness. However it takes the focus away from providing higher education to underrepresented groups domestically and focusing resources upon helping educate those most underrepresented in society.”

“International student education seems to be a big cash cow for tertiary providers and the Government. More need to be done to guide how they are embedded into the tertiary environment - what can domestic students gain from more international students and vice versa?”

“I think that educating international students complements the goals of tertiary providers, unless of course the tertiary provider is lacking or poor in a certain area. International students will then return to their home country and talk to others/tertiary providers in their home country about the experiences they had overseas. At the same time, accepting to educate international students may compromise any goals of the tertiary provider regarding grades obtained by the international students. It is my understanding that with most exchange programmes, an international student needs only to pass a course given discrepancies in grading between countries. Obviously I do not know what happens with this process, but as international students may not aim as high with regard to academic grades this may affect the average grade obtained for the university and consequently compromise any goal the university regarding grades obtained by their students.”

“International students should not be milked of cash in order to prop up failing domestic attendance. The numbers of international students are not enough to safeguard our universities economy, especially if another worldwide recession strikes. Nevertheless as long as there is no cap on how much international students fees can be raised by you can see how the temptation to exploit them remains. There needs to be a cap introduced. If a cap is not introduced international student fees will continue to rise rapidly, the latter will be put off by this, so expenditure on marketing will have to be increased and international specific courses, ultimately meaning that the extra money made through attracting international students will only go into attracting international students. So universities will be stuck on a hedonic treadmill. This can already be evidenced in the issue paper by how the increases expenditure on the international sphere was being encouraged by the government and universities.”

“Universities seem to see international students as an easy target for raising extra revenue rather than as actual students. Recent proposals such as outsourcing pre-degree programmes for international students seems completely contradictory to the point of university which is to seek and disseminate an increasingly vast body of knowledge. This could lead to an overall drop in the quality of education provided.”

“I feel it brings diversity and value to the tertiary providers. But I don't think they receive enough support. They are more used as a way to get more money than anything.”

“In general are thinking about the financial part of international students.. They seem to generate more revenue. But in saying that, I think that Victoria does well to put itself on the map and obtain a diverse range of students.”

The students were supportive of an increasingly diverse student population, however felt this is outweighed by the funding incentive of having more international students for budgetary purposes. VUWSA encourages the Commission to look into the international student market strategy for tertiary education and the perverse drivers of growth from the TEC funding model.

Question 30. What are the best measures to determine whether the tertiary education system is working well?

The simultaneous student views regarding the best measure of tertiary education.

“The list could include; Student completion rate, number of those first in family, those who are employed within one year of graduating and student recommendation and quality feedback”

“Graduate outcomes i.e. employability Number of students in tertiary education (increasing)”

“The proportion of the public who have degrees from higher education, the growth of business sectors which require up skilled workers and the quality of life experienced by those attending and have completed tertiary degrees.”

“Employment post-graduation. Mentally well students. Students who finish their degrees without crippling levels of debt. Alumni who can be seen to be making tangible good in the world.”

The following comments focus upon the important of student feedback.

“Student feedback, student grades, student participation in areas outside their studies, lecturer feedback (i.e. how they feel about how they teach, and services that the tertiary provider may need to obtain in order for them to teach in a better way), graduate and post-graduate employment rates.”

“To consult with the students as they are the consumers. Find out if they are finding it effective and also consult with the work force because at the end of the day it is them that need the specialised skills provided by tertiary graduates.”

“Feedback from students itself? Analysing grade and linking it to future employment (positions, salaries etc.?) Comparing us to different universities and how we teach/operate also may be a good option.”

Two clear measures from this consultation are graduate outcomes and student feedback during time of study. These measures are currently undertaken however the Commission is recommended to see how these measures can be prioritised within the sector.

Question 33. What are the significant trends in employer demand for tertiary-educated employees, and in student demand for tertiary education? How is the system responding?

The following comments are views of the employer trends the student market is currently facing, with a focus on soft skills and the increase in demand for degree holders with multi-disciplinary backgrounds.

“Industry is increasingly asking for students to have 'soft skills' that represent their work ethic. The system has not responded to the flexibility, adaptability and entrepreneurship graduates currently need to survive in the 21st century work environment.”

“Generally you are told you need a tertiary qualification to get a job. But this is very general. Lots of my friends go to university because they're told they should, do a BA and then struggle to find a job. We need to be teaching students the right skills and give them good career advice at high school.”

“Toward soft skills which are much more difficult to assess. Students rarely hear this however as they are continually pushed towards the 'professional' degrees of law and medicine for example. The systems response to this has been lacklustre at best primarily due to the difficulty in assessing soft skills. There needs to be greater emphasis put on taking a variety of courses, which will equip the student with the highest number of skills. Inter faculty engagement is crucial.”

“Employers have always demanded tertiary-educated employees and seem like they will always prioritise a candidate with a degree over a candidate without one. However due to the oversupply of tertiary qualifications in many sectors, employers are only taking the absolute best. The tertiary system itself is not responding to this. It continues to produce more graduates and aims to increase graduate output without factoring in growth of the downstream job market.”

“I think there is definitely more of a trend for employer demand for tertiary-educated employees as it is increasingly hard to gain access to the workforce without a tertiary qualification. Therefore, I think the system needs to be more aligned with what the workforce wants.”

“The student demand of education systems is much higher than the demand for tertiary educated employees. The supply is significantly higher than the demand in most cases.”

The comments explain the inertia between gaining a degree and the demands of graduates. The Commission is encouraged to explore how the student demand can be communicated to tertiary students in a manner that is responsive to graduate opportunities.

Question 36. What challenges and opportunities do demographic changes present for the tertiary education system?

The responses below focus upon the noticeable opportunities presented in the mature, international and disadvantaged students.

“We should be catering to an adult market and allow for more flexibility in retraining. Also to respond to industry demand for entrepreneurship, information systems and STEM subjects.”

“Ageing population and decreasing number of school leavers means less domestic students in tertiary education. Opportunity is around getting more international students.”

“There needs to be much more work done on attracting Maori and Pacifica students, our tertiary system is failing to meaningful improve the situations from minority demographics and no amount of fiddling with statistics will change that.”

“New Zealand is incredibly lucky to have such a high level of migration and to be so desirable to international students. The opportunity presented by that is that rather than simply indoctrinating those students with a tertiary education, the system can adapt and for mechanisms to interact with these students to improve and diversify the system, to make New Zealand tertiary education truly global but also much higher quality and effectiveness.”

“I think there is more a diverse range of students now not just the school leaver. Therefore, tertiary education systems need to adapt to this because there a mature student has different needs.”

“I think that there is definitely a level playing field in NZ. Everyone gets a fair chance to prove themselves in tertiary education and so it should be, but I think that there needs to be point that the system stops and reviews itself in order to proceed forward.”

VUWSA asks the Commission to use demographic trends as an opportunity to educate the aforementioned groups to create equity within the tertiary sector.

Question 37. What evidence is there on the effect of tuition fees on student access to, or the demand for, tertiary education in New Zealand?

The following remarks are comments from students regarding the access issues associated with tuition fees and perceptions of the available services.

“It reduces the access and ability for those that would most benefit from tertiary education being not able to afford it. The fees are increased and result in a cumulative effect that is impossible to keep up with.”

“Generally speaking there is inelastic demand. But at the lower end, cost is a big factor for our poorest families who don't even consider going into tertiary education in the first place. There is often debate around whether tertiary education is a public or private good. My view is that tertiary education is an extension of our compulsory education and is becoming more and more important in the job market. That means we need to start thinking of a new way of funding tertiary education to demonstrate that it is becoming more and more of a public good (and less of a luxury).”

“With the presence of StudyLink available for domestic students I feel that no matter the amount of student fees, all students have access to tertiary education. However, given this, the demand for tertiary education has therefore increased dramatically.”

“This is the wrong question. Fees steadily increase every year, and students continue to pay them by putting them on their ever-growing student loans. Therefore I would suggest that fees have no impact on the demand for tertiary education. The question should be how do student’s debt levels impact on demand? And to that I would say again, that it has no impact. Students simply accept whatever level of debt as inevitable. While they are studying very few students are aware or concerned about their debt level. After the education has been gained many people realise the reality of their debt but by then it is too late as retrospective regret does not affect demand at the outset.”

“I think the only reason there is still a significant demand for tertiary education is due to the student loan. Without it would be near impossible to study so tuition fees have a huge impact on student’s access to education.”

“I think that tuition fees are generally high in NZ, and that it makes it trick for people that cannot afford to get a good education. There are plenty people that have talent and are extremely smart, but are held back by the fact that they are their families can’t afford to give them higher education.”

Students commented on the relationship between the fees and access to loans that can accommodate such high fees, however the conversation around fees should be directed towards the focus upon the impact of debt.

38. What are the likely impacts of domestic student fees increasing faster than inflation?

Key points raised from this question included:

- Increased amount of hours worked decreasing the time for study.

– A smaller proportion are able to afford paying/repaying the fees.

- A sacrifice regarding cheaper, unhealthy accommodation.

VUWSA asks the Commission to consider such burdens when enquiring about tuition fee rises.

Question 46. What other trends provide challenges and opportunities for the tertiary education system?

The consultation provided a wide scope of areas that presented as trends to the tertiary system.

"...aging population, globalisation and increasing graduate competition."

"Challenge re internationalisation of tertiary education and competition of our institutions with the rest of the world."

"I think the growing amount of people attending universities these days provides a challenge to the tertiary education system in two ways; "... increasing lack of space and resources as student numbers rise and how to make a qualification stand out given that the majority of people attend university compared with a couple of decades ago."

"Increases in technology, but the challenge is the downswing in university attendance. The technological aspect could be used to strengthen their research abilities instead of relying so heavily on passing the cost onto a dwindling number of students."

"Increasing international student numbers offers opportunities for education to be globalised and multi-cultural which would improve the quality of the education. Increasing student debt is a strong incentive for a restructure of the tertiary system at a national government level, and for society to reconsider what place it affords to tertiary education."

"The fluctuation of the job market both acts as probably the biggest opportunity as well as challenge for graduating students these days."

The key trends can be summarised as globalisation, technological development and the increasing demands of graduates. These will help feed into the Commission's understanding of the tertiary education system.

Question 47. What trends are likely to be most influential for the tertiary education system over the next 20 years?

The students answered this question with an understanding that student demand will be a key influence.

"Decreasing school leaver numbers Increasing need for a tertiary qualification Graduation outcomes and employability."

"The increasing number of students wanting to attend tertiary providers."

“Increasing international students. Increasing debt. Decreasing demand for graduates.”

The demand - if tertiary education systems don't grow their resources and instead run the services that are already at capacity everyone's going to be negatively affected.

The capacity of tertiary institutions to cater to trends in demand is a consideration the Commission is asked to further explore.

Question 53. What measures have been successful in improving access, participation, achievement and outcomes for Māori? What measures have been less successful? Why?

Students responded to this question in favour of localised, targeted approaches with cultural considerations.

The in house programs that are supported by the university eg. Te Putahi Atawhai and Awhina that have a strong focus upon student completion and success careers.

“Successful measures: scholarships, outreach programmes, one-on-one tutoring/assistance, community presence on campus i.e. marae. Unsuccessful measures: lowering grade pass rates i.e. for scholarships. I personally do not feel as though this encourages achievement, but only encourages achievement of a lower standard to other ethnicities. If Maori want to be encouraged to do well, they should be pushed to achieve the same goals as other students.”

“The instigation and support of Maori student associations and Maori scholarships have been seemingly successful and it is difficult to think of anything missing in treatment of Maori at the Tertiary Sector. However a huge issue is the proportion of Maori that have access to tertiary education in the first place which is an issue to be addressed by the secondary schooling system and society as a whole.”

“Scholarships have been very influential, mentoring programmes and support systems make tertiary education a lot more accessible.”

Comments relating to scholarships are key to understanding how accessible education is, and how opportunities, such as scholarships, are important to students.

Question 71. What influences tertiary providers towards offering a broad or narrow range of course offerings? What are the advantages and disadvantages (for providers, students, and the sector as a whole) of a relatively homogenous system?

The students consulted largely spoke in favour of a homogenous system and explained the benefits of such model.

“A homogeneous system would streamline and allow for specialization at universities.”

“Enrolment numbers for each course, which reflect their funding through TEC. Homogenous system means institutions are distinct i.e. why did I choose Victoria? Institutions need to be more distinct i.e. capital city university.”

“Funding models that are based on enrolments encourage the broadest possible offering of courses in order to attract as many students as possible to one institution. The advantage of this is that one student can study a wider range of things simultaneously. Another advantage being that tertiary providers become a more comprehensive hub of skill and knowledge. The disadvantage of this is that it seems to produce market dominance by the institutions that were larger to begin with, and cuts out smaller, sometimes more effective, niche providers such as music and art schools, small craft schools and such.”

“The advantages is people are receiving quality education everywhere and won't be negatively disadvantaged if they can't go somewhere. However, I think that providing a homogeneous system is counterproductive as each tertiary institution is specialised to a certain degree. So capitalising on this is key.”

The students agreed that a homogenous systems provides better outcomes and allows for specialisation within certain areas.

Question 11. What are the benefits and disadvantages, in terms of students' learning outcomes, of bundling together research and teaching at universities in New Zealand?

Students in particular spoke in support of the presence of research incorporated into teaching at VUW, as they felt it added huge benefits in terms of learning for students.

“Teaching and learning complement each other and enhance the others capabilities. It also results in the highest degree of student achievement and relevance.”

“Disadvantage is that we get really good researchers who are bad at teaching. We need a better standard around teaching i.e. promotion criteria / appointment criteria / more funding for good teachers etc.”

“I think the benefits of doing this are huge. This way, students can participate in research and volunteer/assist if they wish to do so. This provides valuable experience and may propel the student into a future job or their own career prospects. A disadvantage may be the difficulties associated with obtaining funding.”

“It means that the best research material is easily accessible to students, it is also important however to note that those who make the best researchers are not always the best lecturers.”

“By bundling research and teaching, students are often taught things by the same people that discovered that thing. The closer to a source the teaching is done, the more likely it is that the student will understand and internalise that knowledge.”

“I think that it is definitely beneficial for all students to work together in most of the fields at Victoria. It is also for the University to make sure that they are using the research that they come up with to generate the potential of students' learning in the future.”

Research incorporated into teaching is an opportunity to enhance students' learning. The Commission should look into how to solidify and formalise this link in the tertiary sector.

Question 14. What other evidence is there about what makes for effective teaching in a tertiary environment? Is it different for different types of learning or student?

How can teaching effectiveness be best measured and improved?

Measures expressed by students included a range of ideas.

“Student feedback. A strong standard/benchmark that puts teaching and research on an equal playing field and balances out PBRF.”

“Effectiveness can be measured through different assessment forms. Exams while good at assessing large numbers simultaneously, make education more about being good at taking tests, rather than understanding and remembering concepts and developing ways of thinking. Oral exams are not cost-effective, but provide an excellent way to establish whether a student has actually taken on what they have been taught.”

Overall, the effectiveness of teaching is an area that requires specific research and priority. VUWSA acknowledges the Centre for Academic Development (CAD) as the main driving force in this area.

Question 43. What parts of the tertiary education system are challenged by ongoing technological change? What parts can exploit the opportunities created?

Students outlined key equity concerns as well as the place of technology within the learning environment.

“Distance learning because it gives more options and makes education more accessible. But also important that students are on campus to get the full student experience and social interaction.”

“The implications of an ever changing and improving technological world is that it is expensive for tertiary providers to keep up and continue providing their students with the best quality teaching using technology. In this sense, this creates intense competition between tertiary providers in terms of facilities/technology.”

“How to compete globally.”

“The proliferation of personal computers rather than paper has made it so many students do not write hard copies of their notes. In this environment exams and tests, especially open book exams, should allow the use of laptops to both sit tests, and refer to materials. Not necessarily the internet, but what is stored on the hard drive.”

“Some of the older generation struggle to keep up which can impact on learning. New technologies mean that online learning is a real occurrence and is making tertiary study accessible to the masses.”

“I think that even though the University tries, it finds it hard to keep up with new technology. Technology and the development of it definitely helps in aiding the learning of students in most cases.”

These quotes reference the different influences on pedagogy, assessment methods, equity in access, teaching methods and how to ensure less technologically knowledgeable staff and students are equipped for the change. The Commission is asked to consider such influences in their final suggestions.

Question 44. How has internationalisation affected New Zealand’s tertiary education system? What are the ongoing challenges and opportunities from internationalisation of the tertiary education system?

The students expressed positivity towards the growing internationalisation as an exciting opportunity for tertiary institutions.

“Challenge re internationalisation of tertiary education and competition of our institutions with the rest of the world.”

“It has put a great deal of pressure on universities to attract international students who they can charge a lot to. This needs to change. As earlier I recommend a cap on the raises, at a similar level to domestic rises. (International students would still pay more, but the gap between domestic and international will stop growing so much from year to year).”

“More international students. Good opportunity to globalise the content of education to be more multi-cultural and holistic.”

“The opportunities is it can increase the likelihood of NZ students being able to access international study but the challenges are if it impacts on domestic students ability to study as international students bring more money to the university.”

In summary, the internationalisation of the system is viewed favourable as an aspect for the Commission to further explore, as the above comments aren't just positive, they also express challenges.

Question 60. What are the factors associated with successful innovation in the tertiary education system?-

The students below gave considerable insight into their perception of the concept of innovation.

“More flexibility regarding introduction of programs - More communication between institutions - Poor regulation and incentives with EFTS competition If the barriers are lowered the University system in NZ could specialised and better cater to the need of students with more accurate resourcing and funding structures.”

“Successful innovation means that tertiary education becomes more of a public good and better embedded in society and government. If we are innovation leaders then the reputation and profitability of tertiary education will increase.”

If the barriers were lowered there would be more successful innovation naturally. The biggest issue in my opinion is the top down approach to university decision making, there needs to be a more bottom up focus and a system more based on praise for good ideas than for disciplining those who go too far out of the bounds set by the government. This would sacrifice a degree of conformity, hence increasing the risk of bad ideas. It will however also lead the way to exciting creative improvements through those

that are successful and could ultimately revolutionize our sector. However the government will have to be willing to provide a great deal more flexibility.”

“It appears that there is no innovation in the tertiary system. The organisation simply plods onwards, taking money in, pumping graduates out. The incentives in the sector need to be towards development, improvement of quality and new ideas rather than the broadest possible dissemination of existing, relatively low level thinking.”

“Innovation is necessary but unsure of what barriers are involved.”

Overall, the need for innovation was recognised; however, the current barriers are flexibility and a lack of leadership to enable innovation to be ‘bottom up’. The commission is requested to look at where innovation in the tertiary sector can be directed from in an effective manner that allows for successful innovation.

Closing Remarks

It is clear from our submission that the New Models of Tertiary Education is an opportunity for the Productivity Commission to recommend change to the tertiary sector that makes it more efficient, equitable and have high returns on investment that contribute to a better, highly educated society.

While this report presents some positive examples in the current model, this is not to diminish the validity of the number of issues raised within certain areas of the tertiary system. We hope that the information and analysis we have provided can be of use for the Commission in determining how to improve New Zealand’s tertiary system.

Jacinta Gulasekharam

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