Key Shifts: The Future Of Learning In A Global Context

A stimulus paper for The International Education Product Innovation Fund

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THINK NEW

NEW ZEALAND EDUCATION
Manapou ki te Ao

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The global pandemic has had a profound effect on New Zealand international education. To assist the sector recover and grow, in July 2020 the Minister of Education announced the *Strategic Recovery Plan for International Education*. This plan included an objective of exploring ideas for new products and services that support the transformation of international education to a more sustainable future, where New Zealand can credibly offer education that's good for us and good for the world.

This paper summarises ideas developed through a series of workshops conducted by Education New Zealand in 2020 and 2021 with a number of New Zealanders from a range of industries, who have experience in innovation, business strategy and new product development.

Whāia Te Pae Tawhiti

Pursuing Futures Beyond The Horizon

The global Covid-19 pandemic upended international education. Restrictions on travel emptied classrooms and devastated a sector reliant on many thousands of visitors to New Zealand. The industry has responded bravely and with entrepreneurial flair - but a return to business-as-usual is unlikely. Fresh thinking is required.

New Zealand has an opportunity to imagine and pursue a future beyond the visible horizon, whāia te pae tawhiti, and to set a course for the near horizon, te pae tata. In 2021, the government recognised this opportunity and provided ENZ with $10m over three years to encourage fresh thinking in the sector. The programme consists of three workstreams: (1) developing new products and services, (2) diversification of delivery methods, and (3) education pathways and centres. The workstreams are made up of small pilots with opportunities to assess, evolve and exit as they are run.

This paper relates to the first workstream - understanding, designing, and shifting from our present state to a more desirable and sustainable future state.

To do this we must understand the current changes in our sector, as well as taking an imaginative leap into the future by exploring new approaches. In keeping with our international education brand, this an opportunity to **Think New**.

Te Ao Hou

A New World

What might that new world look like? Listed below are key shifts in culture, society, and the global economy that we believe will influence the demand for international education. They fall into four categories.

1. Conventional to Cause

1.1 Kaupapa/cause

The rise of global movements and collective action.

We know that our youth are interested in global causes. We are starting to see the rise of global movements in response to global issues, whether that be the Me Too movement, Black Lives Matter, Action for Climate Change, or Indigenous rights. We are entering a time where collective action and impact matters, where the ability to join and participate in causes is borderless and fuelled by access to near-instant information and action.

Aligned to this movement is the rise of purpose-led organisations and leadership. Whether it's for-profit or not-for-profit, articulating purpose has become the centre of organisational strategy.

We believe this shift provides New Zealand international education with an opportunity to shift from offering courses to offering causes. This implies acting as cause-champions and as leaders for the good of people, place and planet, and to enlist cause allies in such movements through connected communities of learning and research. We think education could build on our nation's reputation as a neutral and trusted voice at the table in global forums. New Zealand has a reputation as a mediator; we are often seen as providing leadership in ways that combine care and ingenuity.

KEY INSIGHT: Align education programmes to causes of global significance. Position New Zealand as a contributor to the solutions and a New Zealand education as a pathway into a purpose-led career.

1.2 Epistemology/worldview

The rise of Indigeneity and diversity.

We are witnessing the rise of Indigenous knowledge and world views being embraced. The ‘diversity, equity and inclusion’ movement is breaking down barriers between siloed worldviews driven from primarily western and patriarchal paradigms. Many people argue the path that got us here is not the path that will get us there. The opportunity exists not just to acknowledge this, but to lead it; to challenge the status quo and create alternative solutions that are derived from an Indigenous and holistic worldview.

A similar disruption in the status quo comes from feminist, LGBTQ+ and environmental movements. New Zealand has a credible history in pioneering social change, from women’s suffrage to homosexual law reform, Indigenous rights and environmental protection. How could this reputation for social innovation be leveraged to create a unique educational offering?

Increasing epistemic diversity as an input creates an opportunity for growth and innovation of outcomes.

KEY INSIGHT: Develop education programmes that build on New Zealand’s reputation for pioneering social and cultural change to encourage learners to challenge the status quo and expose them to alternative worldviews, ideas and experiences.

1.3 Culture/Behaviour

From insular silos to open and collaborative.

The education sector, tertiary in particular, tends to function in silos, where providers view each other as competition rather than collaborators. We envision a more collaborative future where learners might access learning across multiple providers and not be disadvantaged by a change in institution or location. We see the value in collaborative ventures assembled around causes, based on each provider's strengths. These collaborations might be more cause-driven, convened around a need such as 'cleaner oceans' or around communities of interest, such as an iwi.

KEY INSIGHT: Develop learning programmes that draw on a wider range of sources and collaborators than is traditionally the practice.

1.4 Cross-disciplinary

From discipline focussed to cross-disciplinary.

Most occupations require people to work in cross-disciplinary teams, whereas education is primarily structured and delivered in disciplinary silos. Programmes that provide opportunities to work across disciplines create more opportunities and real-world relevance. An opportunity exists to develop these approaches across nations, sectors, and industries.

This becomes especially relevant when there's a shift from courses to causes. Solving complex problems requires complex understanding and cooperation from multiple disciplines.

KEY INSIGHT: Aligning learning programmes to causes or problem-solving implies providing a multidisciplinary approach to skills development and knowledge gathering. How could New Zealand provide a generalist approach to learning that sets up students to solve global problems?

2. Generalised to Differentiated

2.1 Post-colonial identity

Aotearoa/NZ distinct identity and global position.

Aotearoa New Zealand is often viewed as a leader in post-colonial development - that it is rediscovering and respecting its Indigenous population. This includes the growth of the Māori economy, the 'mainstreaming' of te reo Māori, setting of a global precedent like Te Awa Tupua Act conferring a legal personality on the Whanganui River, and our Tiriti o Waitangi claim and settlement process.

Locally, we feel we have a long way to go. Others, such as Australia and Canada, look to us for guidance. This provides a unique position on the global stage and an opportunity to tailor research and learning programmes in Indigenous/post-colonial relations.

KEY INSIGHT: Build on the global momentum for honouring Indigenous communities and wisdom by providing unique access and experiences of New Zealand post-colonial changes.

2.2 NZ's unique selling point

From landscape only to caring, safe, secure and innovative.

Global perception research over the past decade is highlighting a shift in global perceptions of us, beyond a place of natural beauty, to a place of care – a place that is safe and provides some stability and security relative to other countries. We are viewed as a place that has transparency and integrity.

We are also emerging through Covid-19 with a more distinct identity, particularly from Australia, and recent research suggests the world sees us as more progressive than our Australian neighbours. Partly this is due to our distinctive Indigenous cultures and partly due to not walking in lockstep with other western powers. We are seen as neither being strongly western or eastern, but something in between, reflecting our place in the Pacific and as part of Polynesia.

As the world's perceptions of us expand there is an opportunity to leverage that as a platform to stand on, a space of credibility and leadership.

KEY INSIGHT: Leverage New Zealand's reputation as 'good for the world', as a good place for learning that walks a line between East and West.

2.3 **Value**

From revenue extraction to values-based

Our prevailing model of international education views students as ‘imports’ and ‘exports’, using a model that focuses on a value proposition based on revenue extraction. This model is at odds with kaupapa such as ‘global citizenship’ and values like manaaki which are based on reciprocity that create a virtuous cycle and long-term partnerships.

It’s also at odds with circular economy thinking, where the shift is from extractive behaviours to recycling, reuse and reducing what is already in circulation.

The typical success measures for international education have been based on revenue and short-term fiscal targets, not long-term outcomes. Increasingly we are seeking to enter value generating partnerships underpinned by core values, such as manaaki, tiaki, and whanaungatanga with a wider sense and view of value beyond fiscal.

This provides an opportunity to explore new models for understanding and generating value.

KEY INSIGHT: Borrow ideas from the circular economy and Māori ideas of manaaki to reimage what value could mean for the provider and for the learner. Are there different ways to structure the ‘transaction’ or to create value that lasts much longer than a one-off programme?

3. Output based to Journey

3.1 Credentialing

From pre-defined and time bound to flexible and adaptive.

The days of ‘get your degree and get a job for life’ are well behind us. We require a more agile and scalable system that responds to changing needs - education in the right place, at the right time. There’s also a need to combine learning with earning and minimising debt.

This requires a more flexible, adaptive and scalable credentialing approach to learning. This could include the opportunity for recognition from non-traditional perspectives and entities, e.g. from industry or Indigenous knowledge experts.

KEY INSIGHT: What new methods of delivery, assessment and credentialing could meet the demand for ‘just right, just in time’ learning?

3.2 Learner Centred

From learners fitting to learner centred programmes.

There is a trend towards ‘user centred’ and ‘learner centred’ approaches to the design, development and delivery of learning. The rise of disciplines like Human Centred Design, Design Thinking, Experience Design and co-design are part of a new way to develop ‘fit for purpose’ learning that meet learner needs. If the education sector does not adapt and adopt these new approaches, it will be falling behind other sectors who are leading change and transformation based on these principles and approaches.

KEY INSIGHT: Consider the role of human-centred design in developing and continuously improving education offerings.

3.3 Lifelong learner

From doing a fixed duration course to life-long learning.

The traditional model of fixed duration programmes with a single point of entry and exit, structured around an academic calendar, looks out of step with modern learning needs. It is not driven by learner needs, and the timing of southern hemisphere academic year does not suit northern hemisphere seasons.

Increasingly learners are seeking to learn when they need to, at their own pace and in their own place, at times and days that work for them with a range of options for how to engage in learning, and they are likely to need multiple learning opportunities over their careers.

This requires a more agile model, with multiple points of entry, flexible timeframes, micro-credentials, short courses, executive courses - as well as traditional academic pathways.

KEY INSIGHT: Consider how programmes can form a network of learners, a community that maintains a learning connection at all stages of their careers.

3.4 Experiences not products

Give learners social, spiritual and intellectual experiences

Another shift we discussed is the move from merely selling products to creating experiences. This has long been the mantra of marketing departments and it reflects the desire of humans to form connections with others, the natural world and with brands. While it's true we must offer flexible, just in time learning that suits students where they are, there's an equal and opposite opportunity to use the 'New Zealand experience' of manaaki and whenua to build deep emotional bonds.

These opportunities are not mutually exclusive. It could be, for instance, that the online component of a New Zealand education meets the needs for flexibility and convenience, and the physical, in-person component is a curated immersion in New Zealand culture and landscape.

KEY INSIGHT: Consider what could go into a New Zealand experience to create life-long memories and bonds to Aotearoa.

4. Fragile to Adaptive

4.1 Pedagogy/modality

From site based to virtual and rhizomatic.

Our current education sector is wed to an academic model of delivery. Sir Ken Robinson described it as: *"designed, conceived and constructed for a different age…. conceived in the intellectual culture of the enlightenment and in the economic circumstance of the industrial revolution… organised along factory lines…where the most important thing about a learner is their date of manufacture"*.

This model is increasingly irrelevant to learners who have access to the world at their fingertips and are questioning the cost/benefit of a fixed-site learning model. We are seeing a shift online and also the emergence of communities of learning where the traditional hierarchy of teacher/learner is being broken down. The Māori principles of ako or akoranga, where both teacher and student are acknowledged as co-learners and the value of peer learning, could provide a model for learning.

The concept of rhizomatic learning describes this style of organic teaching. It draws comparison with an organism which learns in a less predictable and unstructured way, reacting to changing circumstances that unfold. The emphasis shifts from an individual didactic approach to a learning community which grows and expands as it learns.

Alongside this is the space to revisit and re-learn Indigenous pedagogy, exploring the positive aspects of the tradition of whare wānanga and tohungatanga, for instance. We are discovering one size does not fit all and there is recognition of value in diversity of pedagogy.

KEY INSIGHT: How can New Zealand create global learning communities, typified by greater dialogue and knowledge-sharing and the ability to adapt to learning styles, locations, and capabilities?

4.2 Structure

From fixed site domestic delivery to dynamic global infrastructure.

The shift to global, digital delivery is happening quickly. New Zealand risks falling behind the rest of the world. We do, however, have New Zealand companies showing the way, such as Auckland based educational software start-up Kami founded in 2013 by three Auckland university students looking for a way to digitally streamline their notetaking, now appearing in the Deloitte Fast 50 high growth companies. The tech sector could provide skills and knowledge to improve New Zealand educational digital capability.

The future will be less dependent on fixed site-based delivery, and even labs and tutorials are exploring ways to go online through use of tech like VR or simulations.

KEY INSIGHT: What learning 'infrastructure' change could provide your organisation with an opportunity to innovate and lead? How could you leverage digital tech and the NZ tech industry in your offering?

4.3 Leadership

From education sector driven to including industry and iwi driven.

The prevailing model of education is based on control by our sector agencies, academia and delivery entities who tend to design programmes for learners, rather than designing with learners. Our current model requires learners to fit the needs of the programme, rather than requiring programmes to fit the needs of the learner.

There are growing expectations from industry, government and iwi for education to be led by, or responsive to industry needs and to partner with iwi, Māori and Māori providers.

The current Reform of Vocational Education (RoVE) aims to be industry-led (through Workforce Development Councils), regionally responsive (through Regional Skills Leadership Groups) and to Honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi and support Māori-Crown relationships by partnering with iwi, Māori and Māori providers.

This is a significant shift in power and leadership to a more needs-driven approach to education that requires a change in academic culture and practice.

KEY INSIGHT: Co-create new programmes in partnership with end-users, including employers, iwi and communities.

4.4 Reciprocity

From an ‘inbound’ focus to one of reciprocity (in & out).

Our prevailing International Education focus has been on ‘inbound’ students as separate from a focus on ‘outbound’ students, without as much focus on generating opportunities that perpetuate long term reciprocity.

There is a need to focus on outbound opportunities to support our rangatahi into global learning opportunities and lay the foundation that will benefit future generations.

Markets and other nations are also becoming increasingly averse to ‘others’ exploiting their people and resources without clear return benefit or value. This requires shifting our domestic view of value largely based on ‘what’s in it for us?’ to one that gives equal weight to ‘what’s in it for them?’ or rather working with them to design and define that.

KEY INSIGHT: What international alliances could be developed that provide reciprocity for New Zealand rangitahi?

4.5 Intelligence

From IQ centric to EQ, CQ, DQ & AI.

The traditional academic model is based on intellectual intelligence whereas our contemporary world is increasingly valuing other forms of intelligence: emotional, cultural, digital and artificial intelligence. We see a future that will embrace and expand new forms of intelligence. This could include the soft skills such as EQ as well as augmentation by Artificial Intelligence, digital twins and the metaverse.

KEY INSIGHT: In the age of AI, consider the unique role humans could own in soft skills. And how could NZ play a role in augmenting AI 'knowledge'?

This pilot project programme is an opportunity to design and explore what the **Think New** brand could mean outside business as usual and within the safety net of a supportive environment for exploring and testing new and innovative approaches.

We invite you to embrace the challenge and make these shifts happen.

For more information and resources, visit **enz.govt.nz**

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