

***Can Secondary-Tertiary Programme (STP) courses help
students to stay in education for longer?***

Some Students' Advice for a Higher Impact of STPs

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Abstract

A number of New Zealand students enrol in additional education courses while in their senior years at high school in New Zealand. These courses are run by tertiary education providers; some are polytechnics, some are other publicly funded training establishments and some are privately run providers.

Traditionally, polytechnics were tertiary institutions where students learnt a trade or skill and came out with a degree equivalent qualification; universities offered academic degrees. Other training providers were the same as polytechnics in offering non-degree qualifications. This has changed in recent times and polytechnics now offer some degree courses too.

This study came about because of the frustration of trying to keep track of students who were enrolled on these additional courses, called Secondary – Tertiary Programmes at a high school. As a dean, trying to help these students to succeed in both educational realms, was difficult.

The study reveals some insights from both students and administration staff. The issues that have been identified have been analysed and possible solutions and suggestions for improvements have been given.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In New Zealand, students typically go to secondary school from the age of 12/13 (Year 9) until age 17/18 (Year 13). Academic performance is typically assessed in the last three years. In Year 11, students attempt to achieve Level 1 of the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA). In Year 12, they attempt to complete Level 2 and some students stay on for Level 3 the following year. If a student leaves school with no formal qualification, career and job prospects are very low.

Traditionally, after school, there were universities for the academic students and polytechnics for the students who did not want to follow an academic pathway. Universities offered degree courses whereas the polytechnics offered lower level qualifications such as diplomas and certificates. These were often for particular trades or jobs such as builders, mechanics, tourism, retail workers etc. Added to this were other private, tertiary providers who trained people for jobs in industries that needed specific skills, such as typing or computer work, hairdressing, agriculture, horticulture etc. These providers were mostly called academies and a few were called colleges. Now, students can obtain degrees from universities or polytechnics and the other providers can award diplomas and certificates to a higher level than before, as long as they are registered with the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA), who oversee and monitor all official qualifications awarded.

Every state funded school in the country is rated on a scale and given a decile number. The decile rating is calculated using: "Census data for households with school-aged children in each school's catchment area. The data uses household measures such as income, parents on a benefit, occupation, education, and household crowding... Decile ratings are re-calculated every 5 years, after each Census" (Ministry of Education, n.d.). The lower the decile number, the more funding a school receives because of the higher proportion of students from low socio-economic households.

In the school where this research took place, there were deans of each year level. The dean followed the students through the years and so knew them well

by the time they were in Year 11. One of the deans' jobs was to look after the pastoral needs of the students, which meant that they tried to help students to achieve to their highest level and make sound choices for their future. Part of this was to advise students on course choices and their best pathway to achieve – whatever level they were aiming for. Monitoring students as they progressed through the senior years was exceptionally important as students could meander through the year but not achieve, if they were not careful. It was this part of the role that was frustrating and led to this research as the monitoring was not easily done when students were enrolled at two institutions and the computerised student management systems were not able to 'talk to each other.'

Secondary schooling marks an important time in the life of a young person. It is a formative time when learners can develop a greater awareness of the world and have opportunities to pursue education, training and employment opportunities linked to their future. As educators, we need to be responding to the diverse abilities and aspirations of all students in helping guide them through this decision process. We also need to be helping all students to achieve NCEA Level 2, which is now the lowest desirable level for a student to leave school with.

Secondary Tertiary Programmes (STPs) were developed to provide more relevant learning options for senior secondary students who are motivated by a trades or industry-related career. They were also intended to increase the retention of at students who were at risk of disengaging from education and training. The first STPs were established at the beginning of 2011 and there are now 24 STP providers country-wide. They were established as part of the Labour government-led education reforms, which included a whole tranche of changes to education and training in New Zealand. Schools and tertiary education institutions could get extra government funding to design and offer STPs. The funding was enough to entice some institutions to get on board and find partner schools.

These STPs allow students working towards NCEA Level 2 to spend part of their time in a secondary school and go off-site, typically to a polytechnic or

other education provider, where they take part in courses, which develop specific skills for work in a trade occupation. Those occupations could be in traditional trades such as builder, carpenter, electrician, fitter and machinist, mechanic, automotive technician etc. or other trades such as chef, retail worker, horticulturalist, agricultural worker etc. Statistics from Education Counts (n.d.) suggest that trainees who completed a qualification were over 40% more likely to have completed a qualification of the same level or higher over the next 9 years. The same source also states: “School leavers who obtained upper-secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary qualifications were more likely to be employed if they had studied in vocational rather than general programmes.” This suggests that students who do not complete tertiary education but who complete STP courses will be more employable than those who do neither.

As a year 12 Dean with a number of students on the STP courses, I personally felt that there is a lack of information sharing between the institutions involved. I felt disconnected with the part of our students' lives when they are at the other institutions. I could not easily access their academic and attendance data and when I did get it, it was too far out of date to be useful. In this respect, the students could not be as easily supported or helped when needed. This hindered me when I wanted to help improve those student outcomes. This must be rectified.

The Education Review Office (ERO) is the New Zealand government department that evaluates and reports on the education and care of students in schools and early childhood services. Recent Education Review Office reports (2013) found that there is a “need for schools to be far more innovative in responding to the individual pathways of each of their students. Effective secondary schooling is moving away from offering a programme that is suitable for most students and towards identifying and responding to the aspirations, strengths, culture and needs of every student” (p.1). Education Counts (n.d.) statistics show that while the overall number of apprentices is remaining steady, the number of Māori and Pasifika people completing these qualifications is rising. This suggests that the alternative pathway that is offered, suits these trainees more than a purely academic pathway. STPs can lead directly to

apprenticeships, which could suggest that if more Māori and Pasifika students complete these programmes, they have the pathway straight to their apprenticeships. This could also suggest the opposite – that the high number of Māori and Pasifika apprentices is directly related to the numbers completing STPs. Data to prove either of these suggestions has not been found.

Statistics released by The Ministry of Education (hereafter identified as The Ministry) show that when compared with other groups, Māori and Pasifika have the lowest proportion of people with degrees or higher qualifications. By 2030 30% of New Zealanders will be Māori or Pasifika, therefore it is essential that tertiary education providers improve their delivery to these groups. The Ministry research points out that higher-level qualifications bring people the greatest benefits, including better income and employment opportunities. This research will collect data from Māori and Pasifika students, who often take more practical subjects (such as workshop or food technologies) at school, to see how they could potentially benefit by completing STP courses and pursuing further education or training after secondary school. The importance of the promotion of STPs in leading more students to stay in education or training will also be examined.

Introducing their Ka Hikitia document (n.d.), The Ministry states on their website: “Quality education provision and strong engagement with everyone who has a role to play in education will make the most powerful difference to Māori students’ educational success.” With this in mind, this research included voices of current and past students, institutions and schools. The research participants came from my local school community and the tertiary providers associated with the school. This particular school is low decile whereby a large proportion of students come from low socio-economic families. In addition to that demographic, participants identified as Māori or Pasifika. Thus, this study investigated those aforementioned aims of the Ministry.

At both a governmental and a local level, many want an education system that delivers equitable and excellent outcomes. In their Ka Hikitia document (2009), The Ministry identifies an element of success, which is to create strong educational pathways, and support transitions during a Māori student’s

educational journey to promote better educational outcomes. Robinson, Hohepa & Lloyd (2009) further explain that: “senior secondary school qualifications are critical for students, not only for the knowledge and skills they represent but also because they serve as gateways to higher education and employment” (p. 59). The aim of this research is to do that – to explore how best to support those transitions through STPs to improve outcomes.

McGirr’s exploratory data about unemployed young people shows that: “around two-thirds of the medium and high risk young people received a welfare benefit, and around three-quarters were long-term NEET” (not in Employment, Education or Training) (2019, p. 1). She identifies two factors that stand out as key to why some young people experience limited employment over longer periods of time. They are the so-called soft skills and lack of work experience. She further identifies a number of characteristics of young people at risk of long term unemployment, one of which is leaving school with no or low qualifications. STPs address all of these factors, thus giving participants a greater chance of not being in this group of NEETs.

The Tertiary Education Strategy (2014) claims that providing better information to support young people’s career choices has increased participation in tertiary education. They add that there were significant gains in performance for Māori and Pasifika learners (p.11). There is recognition however, that more needs to be done to reduce the number of young people not gaining qualifications or work experience they need for a career. This supports my view that information sharing between institutions needs to be improved and expanded. Students need to have their entire record of learning accessible. Student pastoral support currently comes mainly from the high school, which is where the relationships have been made over their years there. This needs to continue with the addition of the information from the other provider to improve overall outcomes. Hopefully these changes will lead to more of our school (and other low-decile schools) students staying in education for longer and will give more defined pathways to higher education or careers for them too.

If the results of the research indicated that communication could be enhanced by a computerised system, then this idea would be passed on for further

development or research as it is outside the scope of this research. Outcomes and understandings from this research will be shared with other schools and institutions to help improve outcomes for more students. There could also be other benefits of better relationships between institutions, such as course sharing where there are teacher/skills shortages.

The most important question at this stage is how the administration of the courses, in all of the institutions involved, can be improved to benefit students.

What are STPs and their purpose?

ERO's 2015 report states: "Secondary-Tertiary Programmes (Trades Academies) give students in Years 11 to 13 opportunities to gain skills and knowledge across a range of trades- based and technology training options. Students combine studies towards their NCEA and a nationally transferrable tertiary qualification at Levels 1, 2 or 3" (p. 4). The appendix to this report then goes on to clarify that the purpose of the STP is "...to raise each student's achievement of the NCEA Level 2 qualifications..." (p. 39). It was, however, this researcher's understanding that STPs are for Level 2 students only. It became clear, during the research, that students are also able to do Level 3 courses or enrol on Level 2 courses when they are in Year 13 (studying Level 3).

The STPs are part of an initiative to foster partnerships between secondary schools and tertiary education organisations (TEOs), which are mostly polytechnics. The purpose is to give students more opportunities to gain qualifications in practical subjects, an area that schools do not necessarily have all the resources to teach in. Essentially these can lead directly to a trade pathway. It should be noted at this point that a trade does not necessarily have to mean a building and construction type job. The subject selections in high schools do not cover a wide range of subject areas so STP courses are also offered in the hospitality trades, beauty, outdoor education, electro-technology, primary industries and retail.

The vision of STPs was to prepare students for employment opportunities within their local community, which would allow young people to remain in their community. They were also “providing effective programmes for students who might otherwise not have succeeded in secondary school” (ERO, 2015; p.37). They were to meet a need; to give opportunities to young people who were at risk of disengaging from education.

In the review of the courses in 2015, almost 40 percent of students identified as Māori and 11 percent as Pasifika. These courses are either attractive to these populations or they are being directed towards them – either way, it is good that the courses serve these students. As suggested earlier, whichever reason it is that is bringing these students to the courses, it should be identified and worked on to further improve participation.

Where did STPs come from and when?

The Secondary –Tertiary Programmes (STP) are based on a partnership between schools, tertiary and industry organisations. They are designed to deliver an NCEA Level 2 qualification that is complemented by the stakeholders involved. This should lead to a vocational qualification that is also fully transferrable, allowing students the option of moving to a different institution the following year.

STPs were developed to provide a broad range of learning opportunities for senior secondary students, who are motivated by a trades career, to ensure they stayed engaged in education for longer. They were developed in 2010. An ERO report in 2013 stated: “partnerships between the leaders in schools and TEOs were strengthening, although there were still areas for improvement” (p.2). Tapasā (2018) describes one of the effective Pacific pedagogies as leading “the development of adaptive expertise within and between education networks to enable reactive practices that are most effective with diverse Pacific learners” (p.17), supporting that idea of strong partnerships giving advantages to Pacific learners in particular. Effective partnerships depend on strong leadership.

The Ministry Operational Policy and Guidelines (2017) states that “The programme must deliver sufficient NCEA Level 2 credits to enable the student to successfully attain the NCEA Level 2 qualification upon completion of the course (this may be a multi-year course). The programme includes school based and tertiary based NCEA Level 2 credits.” Funding is provided to schools by the Ministry of Education and is divided between the institutions involved. Tertiary lead providers are funded by the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC).

Trades Academies were the first example of a secondary-tertiary programme. These ran at schools and were developed to provide further opportunities to gain practical skills and lead young people to move into an apprenticeship. These no longer run as they have been superseded by the STPs. In some areas, there were then Dual Pathway Programmes (DPP) which were the forerunner to the STPs. One example was in Auckland where a cohort of students was enrolled on a logistics course, which ran at their school as well as being run at the Manukau Institute of Technology (MIT). They were also doing work experience and being tutored by employees at a local logistics company. In 2014, over 4200 students were enrolled on various courses around the country. These courses were run using different models but under the same Ministry guidelines. These models are described briefly below.

Mixed model providers

In these STPs the lead provider is either a school or a tertiary education organisation. Students from a number of partner schools spend most of their week in their school and one or two days at the tertiary provider. This is the most common model, catering for more than 3,000 students.

Single school model providers

These operate with a single school and that school is the lead provider. Students either attend school and the TEO, or remain at school all the time and the tertiary provider comes to the school to run courses.

National providers

These STPs provide courses, including on campus/farm block courses, for students from across the country. In some cases, courses are provided at the student's school. The tertiary providers are Industry Training Organisations (ITOs) and Private Training Establishments.

Secondary-Tertiary Partnership Pilots

These STPs operate in the same way as the TEO led, mixed model providers. However, they are funded according to a formula that is very different from that used for the other models.

What are the main issues for schools and TEOs?

There is a lack of understanding at tertiary institutions about what information needs to be shared and the timing of that sharing. For example: in a high school, student attendance is sent to caregivers via a messaging service at a set time every morning. Therefore, the school needs to have that data from the tertiary institution before that time each morning. Likewise, communication and how to share information and data are issues when the student management systems do not "talk to each other". The additional data needing to be shared includes progress reports, attendance and pastoral care information. This last one is a particularly interesting one as the pastoral care needs are the responsibility of both partners.

In addition to information sharing about current STP students, the courses need to be more widely advertised and people – staff, students and whānau - need to be better informed so that they have a better understanding of the courses and expectations. There is currently very little understanding by any of these parties. This has possibly led to a high number of student withdrawals from the courses. Some students are legitimately withdrawing but others choose not to attend any more but do not withdraw officially.

This researcher's experience of working with students enrolled on STP courses is that there is no strong leadership evident from either the school or the polytechnic. There is no single person in the school who takes full responsibility for the leadership of the STPs on the school site. There is the administrator but he is not the person who deals with the TEOs for anything other than student enrolments etc. There was no evidence to suggest that anyone at the polytechnic took responsibility for the leadership of the courses in terms of a direct link with the students either. ERO concur in their 2015 publication, stating that although there are several aspects of leadership that are working well, there are also, "some aspects that could be strengthened" (p. 29). One particular aspect was that there were examples of things that arose in the TEOs that were not discussed with the partner schools. This could give rise to tensions between the STP and the school. As noted above, solving this is vital if the programmes are to be successful.

Why am I doing this?

The world needs a new type of learner who is diverse, dynamic, innovative, and ever-evolving. Technology encourages students to see this shift from just 'knowing stuff' to 'doing stuff'. The researcher sees that having those real-life experiences during their courses will hopefully enable students to transfer knowledge and improve their performance in classes at their school. A TEO Director has already declared that there is a change in attitude to learning when students are participating in STPs; this is indicated by improved attendance, motivation and achievement (ERO, 2013). More needs to be done to transfer this to the school also; to improve those factors there as well as in the tertiary institution. This research looked at the way the STPs are promoted and run as well as who they actually cater for. Suggestions are made for improvements to the administration of the programmes.

In my role as a senior Dean at the high school where this research took place, I was responsible for students engaged in programmes. There were issues that

arose during two years that I felt needed to be addressed. The issues were around the promotion and administration of the programmes rather than the instruction. A further stage of this research would involve talking to staff from other schools to establish their protocols and find out how their relationships with the tertiary institutions are.

Specific suggestions for the improvement in the administration of the programmes were made. These will be under three headings:

- The promotion of the programmes;
- The sharing of students' attendance and achievement data;
- Leadership of the programmes.

It has been proven multiple times (ERO, Ministry of Education) that when parents and whānau are involved in the construction of a learner's pathway, there are greater impacts and higher success rates. The STPs give schools a massive opportunity to engage with families/whānau to achieve this. Heading into this research, it was believed that this is not visibly happening so there needs to be some development around this aspect.

Finally, the previous programme that used to run at the research site certainly did give a defined pathway for further career and study. The Canterbury Tertiary College (CTC) was run in the school so students stayed on the same campus at all times. It was also taught by specialist teachers who knew a lot of the students already, which was good for relationship building. Timetables were structured to allow this to happen without jeopardising other subjects and students left school (mostly) with a guaranteed apprenticeship. Much water has passed under the bridge since CTC was finished and it was limited to one area of study but it can be used as an example of a successful system with great outcomes for participants. It would be of great benefit if the STPs could bring equally successful outcomes as CTC did.

Chapter 2: Literature review

The New Zealand Curriculum (2007) was developed to set a clear direction for teaching and learning in the new millennium. "...It is the work of many people who are committed to ensuring that our young people have the very best of educational opportunities" (p. 4) and...[it] encourages students to look to the future..." (p. 9). Its focus on principles, values and key competencies is an acknowledgement that discipline content alone will not produce the resilience necessary to achieve in the twenty-first century. Supporting this, Bolstad & Gilbert (2012) argue that reproducing existing knowledge can no longer be education's core goal. Instead, they say, "the focus needs to be on equipping people to *do things with knowledge*, to use knowledge in inventive ways, in new contexts and combinations" (p. 4).

The rate of change in the twenty-first century is exponential. Keeping up is a challenging process and possessing a range of skills and dispositions that will assist life-long learning to cope with this change will become an important goal in education. Technology Education provides an excellent vehicle to facilitate and promote these twenty-first century learning needs. The subject area known as Technology encompasses a broad selection of subjects including Workshop, Design, Digital, Food, Fabrics, Biotechnology, Electronics and other practical subjects that address human needs.

New Zealand Curriculum (NZC) 'front end' learning in New Zealand includes the:

- Vision – young people who are: confident, connected, and actively involved, life-long learners
- Principles – high expectations, cultural diversity, inclusion, learning to learn, community engagement, coherence, future focus and Treaty of Waitangi awareness
- Values – excellence; innovation, inquiry and curiosity; diversity; equity; community and participation; ecological sustainability; and integrity

To this we add the Key Competencies – thinking; using language, symbols and texts; managing self; relating to others; and participating and contributing

(Ministry of Education, 2009). Proponents of the NZC believe this mix of learning and competencies will deliver twenty-first century learners. Schools too must now be responsive to the changes needed by the twenty-first century. Examples of responsive schooling as identified by the Education Review Office (2013) include:

- an extensive range of vocational and academic options
- purposeful partnerships with others in the community to support student learning and development

This is where the STPs fit in. However, those purposeful partnerships are not only with other academic institutions. ERO further recommends a number of actions, including:

- increasingly work with families, whānau and iwi to develop student pathways to education, training and employment
- identify and implement the innovation required to support the pathways and success of priority learners, including the development of academic courses for Māori and Pasifika learners

The administration of these STPs was the focus of this study.

Data shows that post school qualifications improve students' future income and employment opportunities. For example, since 2012, the trend in the employment rate for people with a post school qualification, aged 15 and over shows a faster rate of increase for Māori than for non-Māori. There has also been a steady increase in retention in school and more Māori students are enrolling and achieving in tertiary education. It has been recognised that the government, TEOs, and schools need to continue to work together to support at-risk young people entering tertiary education, higher levels of study and on to employment (Ministry of Education, 2014). As educators, we are constantly being told that what works for Māori students works for everyone, hence the focus of this literature research being on Māori education and achievement.

There is some information about how our Māori and Pasifika students learn in the current state education system but there is clearly room for improvement.

The New Zealand education system can do more to ensure excellent and equitable outcomes for all learners as suggested in Te Kotahitanga (2009) and Tapasā (2018). Te Kotahitanga is a kaupapa Māori research and professional development project that seeks to improve the educational achievement of Māori students in mainstream secondary schools. The aim was for the leaders to better understand Māori student experiences in the classroom, then develop a means of passing understandings on to teachers in a way that might lead to improved pedagogy. The main objective is to reduce educational disparities through raising the educational achievement of Māori children (Bishop, 2010). The Tapasā Cultural Competency Framework is designed as a tool that should be used by leaders, teachers and boards of trustees to build the capability of all teachers of Pacific learners across all education sectors (Ministry of Education, 2018). This is also supported by the Ngāue Fakataha document (2016), which stresses the importance of strong leadership and governance to build the strengths of parents, students, teachers, board of trustees members, and professional leaders in securing successful outcomes for students.

Up until the 1960s state education supplied to Māori “was not of an equal standard to that supplied to Pākehā – rather it was based on curricula that channelled them into non-academic areas and away from access to academic qualifications” (Hokowhitu 2014, p.190). This subjection to a limited education confined them to physical labour and, consequently to the lower classes. Of course, this would not be the case now, with manual workers being highly paid and respected. Researchers working on the Te Kotahitanga project reveal that students spoke time and time again about the problems that traditional approaches to teaching posed for their learning. They could just not cope with the teacher writing notes endlessly on the board or talking at them for long periods of time. They could not learn from this style of teaching (Bishop, 2010). However, this almost supports the historic reasoning behind the unequal education standard of education just described.

Some research anecdotally supports this theory that Māori and Pasifika students are more “hands-on learners.” Therefore, having access to STPs with

less classroom time and a more practical focus would seem to give an advantage to those learners. Brendan Hokowhitu challenges this by stating: “Māori were offered a limited curriculum based upon their perceived natural affiliation with physical skills” (p.193). He advises that, historically, this would have been to supply cheap agricultural labour. However, many Māori parents did not agree with this and wanted more for their children. “Today, Māori parents want an education system that values Māori students by demonstrating that it values their culture” (Hokowhitu, 2014; p.200).

The 2003 Māori Tertiary Education Framework (MTEF) insists that learning environments must be both inclusive of Māori communities and students and specific to reflect the ways of learning preferred by Māori students. A more specific guide to these ways of learning must be provided. One of the goals of this framework is to gain greater knowledge of the basic needs of Māori learners. The framework also states that Māori should be able to see themselves and their culture reflected in these institutions (p.28). This last point is clear to see in most institutions now, with bilingual signage, art, on-site whare, etc.

Looking at how STPs could help young people directly into tertiary education is logical. If they have a positive experience in the tertiary institution, they are more likely to be comfortable with seeing further education as a possible path. Another of the goals of the MTEF is to increase numbers of Māori entering tertiary education straight from secondary school. The way to do this is seen as developing strong links between regional Tertiary Education Organisations and secondary schools to acquaint rangatahi (youth) with the tertiary environment (p. 33). Information about the potential benefits of undertaking tertiary study and the course options within the tertiary education sector must reach every Māori compulsory school student and their whānau. Co-operation between the compulsory sector and TEOs to support learner transition into tertiary education must also be encouraged. These can be achieved through better advertising in secondary schools, with particular relevance to STPs.

Chu et al. (2013) point out that at the secondary level, there is evidence that Pasifika students—more so than other cultural groups—report being more

motivated when their teachers show they care about their learning (going beyond caring about them personally). They also declare that research is needed to address gaps in knowledge of culturally responsive pedagogies at all levels. Again, this information would be extremely useful to support this research.

A fundamental premise of both the Pasifika Education Plan and the New Zealand Curriculum is that regular, positive input from parents in support of their children's learning has a strong part to play in young people's success. Further research commissioned by The Ministry (2016) states that Pasifika parents typically have high levels of respect for teachers and often feel it is disrespectful to appear to be challenging teachers. At the same time, however, participating parents acknowledged that they and parents in general need to add new ways of supporting their children's learning such as asking deep questions of teachers about their children's learning and progress, and providing feedback to the school (p. 8). This echoes the sentiments of the MTEF. Adding more support to these plans, the Ministry also recognises that the future tertiary education system needs to be more outward-facing and engaged if it is to meet the needs of a growing economy, and new technologies. "This means having strong links to industry, community, schools, and the global economy" (2014, p. 6).

In the report *Educationally powerful connections with parents and whānau* (ERO, 2015), it was identified that students would benefit if teachers and leaders explored better ways to involve parents and whānau. Although this was specifically with reference to designing and implementing responses to potential student underachievement, it makes sense that parent and whānau involvement would be beneficial in other decisions too. Further, research evidence describes how Maori students learn best when whānau, iwi and educators work together with them on their learning (Bishop, 2010; Durie, 2011; Ministry of Education, 2009). This parent/ whānau engagement is not only different for different people but it changes with the age and stage of the student too. So, by having collaboration and partnerships, opportunities are extended to allow students to become confident, connected, actively involved, lifelong learners, which is the aim of many educators. The same is true for

Pasifika students. Research has indicated that regular contact, by the educational institution, with the home is associated with higher achievement for Pasifika students at all levels of the education system (Chu, Cherie, Glasgow et al., 2013).

Even with all this research finding that high quality, two-way communication between home and school was important at all school levels, too many parents still feel undervalued and uninformed. Bishop, Berryman & Wearmouth (2014) conducted research for The New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER) and found that parents do not think there is enough information given to them about students' course options or transitioning to tertiary education or employment. In their Pasifika education research from 2016, Tongati'o, Mitchell, & Kennedy give us the Talanoa Ako Cycle (Talanoa ako is 'talking together about education'). This is very descriptive and actions are backed by facts from extensive research about Pasifika students. There does not seem to be a Māori equivalent even though there is research into Māori education.

Despite recent gains in participation and achievement by Māori and Pasifika students in higher education, The Ministry (2014) recognises that more progress is needed to ensure that;

- Māori benefit from the higher wages that come with higher qualifications.
- Conditions for strong, vibrant and successful Pasifika communities are created, that can help to build a more productive and competitive economy for all New Zealanders.

Although STPs have been running for nine years now, there is little research on any part of the programmes. It was not possible to find any evidence of research into the actual question of how STPs could improve educational and career outcomes for any students let alone Māori and Pasifika students. It was also not possible to find recent evidence of data showing the efficacy of the courses in promoting further study or a career pathway. ERO data found only shows numbers for the end of 2013:

- 81.1% of students who completed their programme achieved a minimum of NCEA L2.
- 82.4% of all students exiting their programme made a positive transition.
- 83.1% of the Māori students who completed their programme achieved a minimum of NCEA L2. This percentage is higher than the national achievement rate.
- 74.3% of all Māori students exiting their programme made a positive transition.
- 87.4% of the Pasifika students who completed their programme achieved a minimum of NCEA L2. This percentage is significantly higher than the national achievement rate.
- 85.9% of all Pasifika students exiting their programme made a positive transition.

These numbers are encouraging but they are too old to be of use in following the progress of the STPs as a positive intervention.

Further research reveals that the average percentage of trainees completing a qualification at the same level as, or higher than, the one enrolled in over the following ten years is:

- 44.2% of European people.
- 42.4% of Māori people.
- 44.9% of Pasifika people.

This is for any course at any institution and does not factor in STPs as far as can be seen.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

This study employed a qualitative design by using naturalistic inquiry methods and case studies. These methods were chosen as they reflect the nature of the research, which is not in a laboratory setting. Lincoln & Guba (1984, p.11) assert that, “naturalistic inquiries *a/ways* take place in the field, that is, in natural rather than contrived settings.” More recently, Creswell (1994) identifies qualitative studies as being useful as they tend to deeply explore topics and develop theories to explain participant behaviour. He also indicates that a qualitative study has the advantage of gathering materials of participants in their natural context and setting, helping to eliminate contrived findings. If this research were to be expanded and taken further to include family, whānau, iwi, community etc. then these contexts and settings would be explored when gathering materials.

In the early stages it was more prudent to use a case study approach to identify the natures of the students’ and administrators’ reactions to the questions, the researcher/student interactions, and the contexts of the students and administrators. Yin (2014) agrees and even stresses that multiple-case designs, such as this is, may be preferred over single-case designs (p. 63). This qualitative case study is an approach to research that facilitates exploration of a phenomenon within its context using a variety of data sources. Supporting this, Lincoln & Guba (1984, p. 50) divulge that the case study report is the choice for naturalists and the “...naturalistic paradigm is *the* paradigm of choice...” for ongoing inquiry in almost every discipline.

Baxter & Jack (2008) assert that: “This qualitative case study is an approach to research that facilitates exploration of a phenomenon within its context using a variety of data sources. This ensures that the issue is not explored through one lens, but rather a variety of lenses which allows for multiple facets of the phenomenon to be revealed and understood.” It is also deemed that trying to design naturalistic studies before the studies are undertaken is virtually impossible (Lincoln & Guba, 1984). The researcher therefore expected phenomena to be revealed during the process and considered variables as they appeared.

Also supporting this method, Wolf & Tymitz state: "...naturalistic inquiry attempts to present "slice-of-life" episodes documented through natural language and representing as closely as possible how people feel, what they know, how they know it, and what their concerns, beliefs, perceptions and understandings are". (as cited in Guba 1978; p. 3) These were the pieces of data that were needed to enable changes to be suggested.

Yin (2014) is adamant that all cases in case studies must be treated equally. All conditions, questions etc. must be totally replicable. Using this as a guide, all student participants were informally interviewed, individually, in a space in the school where they felt comfortable. Other participants were interviewed in a mutually agreeable place (eg., their work place or a café). They were all asked the same starter questions and their thoughts and comments were recorded through note taking and audio recording. Participants were able to choose not to be audio recorded or for the recording to be stopped at any point too. Depending on how they responded to the starter questions, some additional follow-up questions may have been asked. They were given the option of not answering the question if they did not feel comfortable to do so. It was anticipated that the interview would not last for more than 20 minutes but they would not be cut short if quality information was being relayed. The starter questions are listed below:

- What did you know about STPs before you signed up or enrolled?
- Where did this information come from (older sibling, Careers etc.)?
- Why were you interested in doing a course initially?
- How did your family/whānau support you in your choice?
- How well did you think you would achieve while being enrolled in two courses at the same time?
- How did you rate your overall achievement by the end of the year?

Analysis identified commonalities and differences in student understanding and background knowledge of the above descriptors. Analysis of this information also identified goals for subsequent changes to the administration of the secondary-tertiary programmes.

Ethical considerations

Ethics were seriously considered during this research. Research ethics are the moral principles that guide the research process. In order to protect the participants a high level of ethical conduct has to be developed. The Code of Ethics for Registered Teachers delivers four fundamental principles for professional interactions:

- **Autonomy** to treat people with rights that are to be honoured and defended,
- **Justice** to share power and prevent the abuse of power,
- **Responsible care** to do good and minimise harm to others,
- **Truth** to be honest with others and self.

Further, “application of the Code of Ethics shall take account of the requirements of the law as well as the obligation of teachers to honour the Treaty of Waitangi by paying particular attention to the rights and aspirations of Māori as tangata whenua” (np.).

The following list is regarded by most researchers to be the key ethical principles for conducting research (ERHEC, 2018; Mutch, 2005; NZARE, 2010).

- Do no harm (beneficence)
- Voluntary participation
- Informed consent
- Avoid deceit
- Confidentiality and anonymity

During this project, there was familiarity with, and respect of these principles. This was not just for the duration of the project but will continue after completion too.

Added to these principles were two key concepts for conducting research with Māori participants. Firstly, there is the concept of whanaungatanga, which refers to the building and maintaining of relationships in the Māori context. That relationship builds through shared experiences and working together which provides people with a sense of belonging.

Secondly, the concept of manaakitanga, which refers to sharing, hosting and being generous. That includes the process of showing respect, generosity and care for others. This must be kept in mind at all times to maintain the mana of the participants and to show equity between the researcher and participants.

To this end, the researcher requested feedback from a Kaiārahi (Māori guide) at the high school, about the appropriateness of the questions and research methods. These were confirmed as appropriate before any students were communicated with. All students were treated with the same set of ethical considerations.

Data gathering

A random selection of 19 students from the last three years of the Secondary Tertiary Programmes were approached by the researcher and asked if they were willing to contribute to this study. Emails were sent to all participants from of the last three years and all positive responders were then enrolled.

Participants were then given an information letter and a consent form which they had to sign and return. Participation in the interview was entirely voluntary and the participants had the right to withdraw at any stage. None of them did feel the need to withdraw so all original responders became the participants. Following informed consent by them and/or their caregivers, they were asked for an agreeable time to meet for the interview. Additionally, the principal and the board of trustees were also given an information letter and a consent form to sign and return. All forms were signed and returned by all these people.

It was hoped that other participants would be students who may have been aware of the programmes but did not enrol in any but only one of the

participants fitted this description. Other participants were staff who had administrative roles both at the school and the tertiary institutions. The study aimed to find out what awareness there was about the programmes and where it comes from. It also aimed to find out what prevents students from or encourages students to enrol.

Data gathering was focussed on the ways students are made aware of the programmes on offer, as well as how the courses are promoted generally. Follow-up questions were posed to establish what student beliefs and expectations of the courses were and where they were heading in their studies or careers. Other questions served to ascertain knowledge of the administration of the courses with respect to whom students could talk to about various issues and how to leave the course if they wanted to. The expectations and understandings (or concerns) of family and whānau were documented when they were divulged.

Adult participants – administrators at the institutions – were interviewed and asked the same starter questions to be sure of uniformity and to add validity. The responses to the questions are detailed in the Research Findings section of this paper. Information was gathered using questions during an interview to ascertain programme knowledge, understandings of learning dispositions, values and motivational factors of a range of students from each of the last three years. Interview transcripts were then studied and information collated. Analysis identified commonalities and differences in student understanding and background knowledge of the above descriptors. Analysis of this information then identified goals for subsequent changes to the way courses are promoted and administered. It also pointed to how students, families and whānau could be more involved in the decision making process.

This data gathering was based on the students' experiences, thoughts, and evaluations, which has provided a baseline to make suggestions about how to better promote/ target the courses. Students were identified by pseudonyms to protect their identity. Yin (2014, p. 74) suggests that being a good listener means, "receiving information through multiple modalities – for example, making keen observations or sensing what might be going on..." To this end,

physical reactions during interviews were noted. These were then interpreted as part of the transcription. No participant withdrew or asked for the recording to be stopped at any point during the interviews or afterwards.

The first step was to go through the interview data and break it down into meaningful units, treating the information sensitively. This was followed by grouping together elements in categories and themes, depending on how they fitted into answering the questions posed. There was also some analysis of information that appeared as part of the process but which did not fit into any category. Themes emerged and these were separately interpreted.

It was important to get the views from both the administrators and the students, as their views may have been quite different. What students understand may not be what adults think they are communicating. Maybe one culture sees things one way but another sees it differently. Data synthesis confirms and denies the perceived problem areas. This method was also an attempt at triangulation, to bring credibility to the data, as recommended by researchers (Cresswell 2012; Lincoln & Guba 1984; Mutch 2005). There was a need to be receptive to emerging ideas and new themes were recognised as the data was analysed.

In the case of this study the researcher acknowledged that she was implicated in the research by having been involved with some of the students as a dean and advisor in their subject choices. She is also an established Technology Teacher. Heron admits that having this tacit knowledge of the system is an indispensable part of the research process and if it is not used, the value of the inquiry is reduced (as cited in Lincoln & Guba, 1984; p.198). However, the researcher was also aware that there could have been some perceived power differential between her and the students. To mitigate this, she made it very clear that she was currently a student herself and as such she had no say over what happened in the school. Participants were informed that they could have a support person with them. Students were also assured that their participation would have no link whatsoever to their assessment or performance in any way.

The researcher has also been self-reflexive as her own observations, biases and values could have been transferred into the results of the questions. A firm attempt has been made for this not to happen. The researcher needed to let the data guide her thoughts rather than her own ideas based on prior knowledge and literature.

The intention was to have at least twelve students from across three years to interview. Unfortunately, replies were received from only seven respondents who were happy to help with the research. These seven were all from this year and last year, with the majority being from last year. The ethnicities of the students are one European, two Māori, one Pasifika and the remainder are Fijian. This means that the research is biased in two ways: by only having students from two years and the ethnic spread. However, the responses from both years are remarkably similar so there is confidence that the data still speaks to the issues highlighted.

Care was taken to refrain from eliciting information that could lead to accusations of any sort. Some interviews were short as the students were not very talkative and it would not have been appropriate to put any pressure on them. Some interviewees do not have English as their first language so their transcripts have, in some places, been altered to clarify their intended responses and to protect identity.

Chapter 4: Research Findings

This chapter shows what was determined from the research. It starts with the format, analysis and discussion of the conversations and interviews with the administrators of the programmes at each of the institutions. Using case study analysis, discussion of the interviews is given and conclusions are drawn from their side. The second section is the student voice. Again, case study analysis is followed by some discussion and conclusions from their responses.

Administrator Interviews

Each interviewee was a case for study. For all interviews, the given answers to the questions are *italicised* and the clarification of terms and discussion follows. The careers coordinator at the high school is the STP administrator there. At the first institution, the manager and the administrator were both there so the replies to the questions are from both. There were also two people interviewed at the second institution. The person in charge of STPs was interviewed first and then the Director of Student Services was interviewed at a later date. Both sets of replies are recorded below.

The careers coordinator at the high school

An appointment was made to speak with the careers coordinator, telling him what was being done, so that he could be prepared to answer my questions. The interview took place in his office at the school and notes were made on his whole demeanour as well as recordings of his answers. There were a few interruptions by students coming to talk to him during the interview. He was asked the following starter questions:

- How do students find out about the STP courses?
- How are students selected for STP courses?
- Who is on the selection panel?
- What are the selection criteria?

- Do family/whānau have enough input into the course selection?
- Who develops the curricula?
- What constitutes success?

The STP courses are publicised in the notices and at tutor time. The polytechnic came in to do a presentation this year.

The school notices should be read out to every class first thing in the morning. Tutor time is the name of the class that the tutor teacher takes for 45 minutes every week, for specific instruction and administration. The tutor teacher is the person with whom every student should have more of a relationship. They are the ones who make contact with home and have the interviews with parents/whānau. There are many issues with this system as each individual teacher has their own way of conducting the tutor time. It is well known in the school that some teachers do not always read the notices (because they forget). They also often do not get read if there is a reliever. Since the notices are read out at the beginning of the day, there are often students absent (due to lateness) so they will not get to hear them.

The polytechnic has not been to do a presentation in the school before. There was no elaboration about the presentation. The coordinator's manner was quite dismissive in his brief reply – as if he thought that was enough and whatever the polytechnic do is their concern.

This year there were 55 interested students but when it came to actually signing up, only 24 enrolled. There are limitless places – The school can enrol as many as we want.

This was explained as being quite normal. There is always approximately a 50% drop out between initial sign up as interested and actual enrolment. There is no follow up of those students who do not sign up. Having a bigger group and chasing students to see if they have just forgotten or don't know the process

would involve more action, which appears to be not something this person wants to be doing.

There are no interviews done at school.

The coordinator relayed that he checks the student's attendance is above 80% and looks to see that the course fits their intended pathway or that they have a definite interest in changing path.

There are no selection criteria except what is mentioned above.

When pushed on this, he told me that the tutor teachers do this part, which did leave me wondering if it happens at all, in some cases. Do the tutor teachers know that they are an integral part of the process even?

I check that family/whānau agree with the choice.

There is a space on the form that must be signed by a parent or caregiver. This is the only input that they need to have. There is no discussion involving anyone at the school or tertiary institution, so we rely on each student's and family/whānau having a discussion at home – which may not happen if a student merely puts a form under someone's nose and asks them to sign it for school.

Students attend set courses at the polytechnic.

There was no discussion about whether the school does or should have any input into the course or indeed if the course content was known.

The criteria for passing/ success are that the student gains the certificate that they are entered for.

This is the expectation of the tertiary institute so that is his expectation too.

When asked what else he could tell me about the STPs, the coordinator offered a few extra comments. He mentioned that if we send students on STP courses as an intervention, it doesn't work. They will not necessarily change or succeed. He also added that the polytechnic should send attendance data to the school.

Their expectation, apparently, is that it stays above 80% too. There are issues with the data not being sent through sometimes and with the timing of when it gets sent through.

The coordinator was asked what his actual role description was as I am aware that one of the deputy principals has oversight of STPs in her job description too. His take on that was that the deputy principal has oversight of the STPs but there is no clear role description for either of them so far as he knows. He was defensive when it was suggested that this would mean that he is meant to be the administration person with the deputy principal as the overseer. This was not done to provoke him but to seek clarification.

The coordinator also mentioned that he has heard that the polytechnic has told them (the high school) that they are going to cut down on the number of options available for STPs from next year. He did not know any more detail though.

The tertiary institution staff

For these interviews, appointments were made by calling the relevant staff at each tertiary institution. They were asked if they were willing to be interviewed for this research and when they would be able to do that. Meetings took place at their offices at the time that was convenient for them and, once again, notes were made on their demeanour as well as recordings of their answers.

Interviewees were all asked the same following starter questions:

- Who is on the selection panel to accept students onto the STP courses?
- What are the selection criteria?
- Are students interviewed?
- Who attends the interview (do many family/ whānau attend)?
- Who develops the curricula for the courses?

- How are tutors selected to run the STP courses?
- Do tutors get extra PD or help given they are teaching younger students than they might be used to?
- What constitutes success at your institution?

Institution 1

Most courses were never quite full so there has not been a need for selecting of students. This changed this year when we had a waiting list for some courses.

So there has never been a specific need for selection until this year. The shift this year was seen as a result of more people knowing about STPs and hearing about the successful students. To make selection, the managers met with students and decided which ones to take initially, based on their attitude and attendance and achievement data.

This institution wants information from schools about the students' attendance and achievement so they know what they are working with. We work with the schools to give and receive this data.

This is not just for selection; it is always done for all students. The information flow is a two way street – the institution sends data back to the schools so that they know how the student is tracking with attendance and achievement. Currently this is all done by email, as there is no system that can accommodate this. There is a staff member working on a sheet to standardise the process of requesting information.

Late enrolments are not seen as a positive thing. As we have previously discussed, this is often when a school approaches the Academy and requests a place for a student. That is usually when the student is in a negative space or has no credits and the school is at a loss as to what else to do. This is when this institution feels like a dumping ground.

There had been a general discussion about how this institution is funded etc. as the researcher was not sure about their processes. One part of the conversation had been about how schools or students find out about the courses and another had been about the length of courses i.e. if some were short courses or half a year. There has been a tendency in the past for schools to try to push students into courses to try to get some credits or so that they are not in school for at least some of the week if they are not doing well at their school. This is also what the administrator at the high school meant when he said, "if we send students on STP courses as an intervention, it doesn't work."

If there is ever contact with families, it is always positive. Some come in just to see what kids are doing etc.

The institution presumes that the school has done all the meetings with family/whānau prior to them enrolling. If there is ever any need for contact with home, it is to relay positive things and to get them to come to a celebration at the end of the year. If there are negative issues with students, the staff work with the student in an adult way to resolve issues. In rare cases, the school also has to help.

All STP courses are two days per week courses. We also have STAR courses.

This institution has courses that are worth a large number of NZQA credits, therefore students need to be there for two days per week. The courses are mostly heavily practical so that takes more time to assess. Secondary Tertiary Alignment Resource or STAR courses are programmes that are funded via secondary schools so that students have the opportunity to try out different industries and gain NZQA unit standards at the same time. They are like 'taster' courses, where students come out and work in a small group at the training centre and local farms or businesses. The programmes usually run for one day a week for five to eight weeks, however days and lengths of the programmes are often flexible. They are run at many tertiary education providers including universities, polytechnics and private training establishments.

We also contract out to [a local Ford dealership] and AgChallenge using trades academy funding. Those two places take students to learn skills that we cannot teach. Funding is legitimately transferred to them as a provider.

There is a call for courses that this institution would like to offer but with their current staffing and size, they cannot. That is why they contract out to the other two facilities to provide specific training for students.

Schools are not always clear on how the courses are funded so we get questions from them about this. The schools do not fully understand how STP works.

It seems that more schools are signing up to access STP courses for their students but as this comment clarifies, there is a lot of mis-understanding about STPs still. It surprised the researcher when she was told how many schools have a relationship with this institution.

We teach set courses to achieve certificates. The aim is to get between 40 and 60 credits at Level 2 and 3 for a whole year (or two) course. Success is based on the contract (which all students have). Also that even if they are not gaining all the credits, the student is attending, interested and learning.

This is important to some students who come with come with good intentions but are not able to complete written tasks for example.

Tutors are interested in working with kids. They mostly approach us because of this interest. We then train them and put them through qualifications to teach/instruct.

This institution has not had to advertise for staff for a long time. As they say, people approach them. These may be professional people or farmers who have downsized or sold their farm or graduates but they all want to teach in this environment.

Progression is measured. Students are checked when they arrive then at intervals and at the end of the course. They must go up at least one step unless they are at L4 Numeracy or L5 Literacy already.

Many students are not at this level so they need to have extra tuition to reach that level. Other progression is measured by assessment to NZQA standards and the institutions own set of expectations.

Institution 2 – person in charge of STPs

There are 450 STP places for the whole of the greater Christchurch and South Canterbury region, funded by the TEC (Tertiary Education Commission).

This is interesting because it is different to what the coordinator at the high school told the researcher. The funding means that schools do not have to have any financial input into the students.

There are 30-odd schools signed up.

That is the number in the whole region that stretches from Kaikoura to about Twizel and from the East coast to the West coast.

Nearly all courses are always oversubscribed. Students are taken on a first in – first served basis not on selection criteria.

Schools just have to send in their completed forms for enrolment. This institution believes that the schools themselves would do any selecting.

The high school signs an endorsement form to say that they agree with the selection. Student advisors get the forms and then talk to the individual students. Conversations include finding out what the student might need (which could be extra help with something or physical help). Family/ whānau are there if they want to be there.

The endorsement forms are signed by the high school STP administrator. The student advisors do not get to meet the student until the beginning of the year.

Attendance is taken twice daily and emailed to the school directly. The expectation is that if they are not at their course, they are at school. No follow up is done for non-attendance.

This is clearly not happening at the high school that is the centre of this research.

Quarterly WoFs are sent to [the high school STP administrator] for every student, by email. The results of the courses come out in November. All students are enrolled to complete a certificate.

This is a spread sheet that details what credits the student has gained, what their attendance is over that period and if there are any concerns. It has comments that resemble a school report.

The certificates and courses were developed in collaboration with schools. They are needs based and follow vocational pathways. The course content also leads directly into full-time courses for the following year.

The comment about the course being developed in collaboration with schools is good to hear because we can assume that they are set at an appropriate level. This institution has been clever to link these STP courses directly to their own courses to allow a smooth transition for students signing up for full time study the following year.

Courses are all signed off by NZQA and academic staff.

This ensures that qualifications are legitimate and transferrable to other institutions.

There are whānau evenings every year to celebrate the completion of the year and to talk about future courses that the student can sign up for, having completed the STP.

This confirms the intention of the institution to sign up as many students as possible for the following year.

The tutors are all the regular full-time tutors who teach other courses too. They treat STP students the same as regular [polytechnic] students.

No special training is given. Teaching STPs is part of some tutors jobs.

There are 12 to 18 students in each programme – small classes.

This means there is less need for extra training as this is the same class size as the polytechnic's own classes.

If a student is not achieving or not attending, a student advisor is notified and a conversation is had between the student and the advisor. The school will only be notified if it is really necessary.

The student advisors are the people who deal with the students for everything except instruction. They do all the pastoral care and the administration tasks needed while the student is at the polytechnic.

If a student does not make an effort to succeed or leaves part way through the course, it is a problem because they are taking up a space that another student could be on.

The polytechnic would prefer that students officially withdraw from courses if they need to because until they do that, the polytechnic cannot offer that place to anyone else who might be on a waiting list. If students do not withdraw but do not attend, at some point, they are sent a withdrawal letter so that their place can be given to someone else.

Data is kept on completion rates. Non-completion of the certificate means non-completion and not a success.

This echoes the school administrator's comment that it is only deemed a success if a student completes a certificate.

There are meetings held with the schools twice a year to look at processes and administration.

There was no detail about this as it is seen as a general catch up.

This polytechnic is working on some proposed new programmes and the application process.

Again, no detail about the programmes or what the changes in the application process might be.

There is currently only one course that has a mid-year entry. It is difficult to manage mid-year entries because of the funding. Keeping enough funding for the number of students who might enrol is a risk. Those students are often a risk as the school might just be using STP as a dumping ground for students who are at risk of not achieving.

Very good points.

Data is kept about where each student goes after STP.

So they could look at how many students enrol on their courses and how many go to employment or other education. If the student is in year 12 at school, they can still go back to full time at their school and complete level 3 NCEA if they want.

Institution 2 – Director of Student Services

Most of the replies to the questions were the same or very similar so just the extra information is detailed here.

There is always a conversation with the student and either a parent/ caregiver or a teacher from their school.

This is good to hear. This department is responsible for the pastoral care of the students so this would be an important part of the enrolment process.

The polytechnic assumes that an interview has taken place at school to make sure the student is on the right course and that family/ whānau are supportive.

So there is no interview at all with this department it is just a conversation which is usually with the school because they are the ones who have the relevant data about the needs of the student.

Attendance is taken twice per day and termly WoFs are created for every student. If a student is not succeeding, student advisors try to help them.

This first piece of information has been heard from the other staff at the polytechnic (above). The second piece is critical because it shows another side to the story. There is some pastoral care for the students to try to help them if they are struggling.

If there is an incident that requires it, the advisor or tutor will phone home to discuss it.

There was a follow up question that elicited this comment. The question was around their process if something more serious occurs e.g. if a student is caught stealing or fighting or bullying etc.

If there are issues involving tutors and students, support is given to the tutors (with differences between older students and school students).

Once again, it was asked what the process might be if there was an incident of any sort between the tutors and students. The reference was that the student was not on the same level and so potentially was not able to learn and maybe even started to cause issues for the tutor. This was asked because it was already ascertained that no extra training or professional development is given when tutors have these younger students in their classes.

The polytechnic will be expecting new enrolments for the following year, in September.

This is certainly earlier than was expected. It is often the case that the high school administrators are chasing students at the beginning of the school year, to get their forms completed.

The discussions and interviews with the administrators were analysed using thematic analysis. The themes that emerged were then labelled and grouped. The labels were: selection, administration and student support. Some comments came into more than one group, especially comments about the selection process which are also administration tasks.

What was heard from the different administrators at the different institutions is that there is no consensus on all processes. This makes the processes disjointed and has an effect on the students in terms of their care. This finding confirms the aforementioned ERO report, which pointed to a lack of leadership and therefore a lack of understanding between the institutions.

There are also some other discrepancies with the different responses to some questions, which confirm initial hunches.

The high school thinks that there are unlimited places but the polytechnic reveals that there is a fixed number and that it is first-in, first-served. This is a worry with more schools apparently becoming interested, as the number of places for each school will diminish with the increase in the actual number of schools involved.

According to the polytechnic, the WoFs get sent to the high schools at the end of each term but this high school administrator claims that the school does not get them until two weeks into the following term.

The fact that the tertiary institutions mark attendance every day but the high school does not receive it suggests a communication break down. This could be part of the systems not 'talking to each other' or it could be that the way the data gets sent, means that it gets lost e.g. sent to spam email. Further research could answer both of these two conundrums.

The high school administrator did not have any idea about where the course content came from but the polytechnic was clear that the courses had been developed in collaboration with the high schools. Part of this is no doubt due to

the administrator having not been involved until recently. The polytechnic is also being smart about their content as they can lead students straight into further courses with them – a smart business move!

There is a different view on what constitutes success at the various institutions. For two of them – the school and the polytechnic – success is when a certificate is completed. For the third institution, success is seen as a student who is interested and attending a course and making an effort. Further research could reveal what the implications are for those students who attend the third institution i.e. do they then go on to complete further education because they have tasted success in their own realm?

Student case studies

The courses attended by the participants at this particular high school were varied. They were: Certificate in Hospitality, Sustainability and Outdoors L2, Electrotechnology L3, Intro to Automotive and Engineering L2, Beauty Therapy and Salon Skills and NZ Certificate in Cookery L3. The letter L denotes the level on the New Zealand curriculum. Some courses require one day per week attendance at the polytechnic and some require two days, depending on the course.

Each student has been assigned a pseudonym and the following are the transcripts from the interviews. After the interviews, there is a section on the themes that emerged and the commonalities of the responses.

Curtis and Marty attended courses this year and the other participants attended last year. I could not get any responses from any students from the previous year even after sending two lots of requests sent on my behalf by the Student Services staff at the polytechnic.

Faith

Faith is an 18-year-old female. She is a quiet and shy individual who gives little away of herself. We conducted the interview in an empty classroom next to where her friends were sitting during their lunch break. Faith was relaxed and looking forward to the end of the year and finishing school.

Faith's replies to the first question, asking what she knew about the STP courses, before she signed up, were vague and prompted her to ask questions to clarify.

This suggests unfamiliarity with the name of the programme, to the point that she eventually asked, *"What does STP stand for?"* This series of questions really emphasise that people are not familiar with the name of the programme even if they know what they are doing and what course they are attending.

When it was clarified to her what STP stood for and that it was the course that she did last year, Faith giggled, slightly amused that she didn't know the name.

Her explanation was: *"Yeah, from school and you get credits. You get to learn stuff that you couldn't do here. You get experience, credits, work experience."*

Of course we cannot tell if she did know this before she started or if it is just that she knows it now.

When asked where she got that information from, Faith answered that it was from the careers advisors. To clarify, she was asked if that was where she first found out about it. Her reply was that she *"had found out about it from someone else she knew who was doing a diploma at the polytechnic."*

This answer points to the fact that perhaps the programmes are not being widely advertised.

In answering the following questions, Faith revealed that she went to see the careers advisors, where she got some course information and then she *"just signed up."*

When asked why she was interested in doing a course initially, Faith's reply was that she "*was interested in beauty therapy.*" Wanting to be certain of the reason for her choosing the course, she was asked if it was because it is not done at the high school. Naturally her answer was yes.

With her body language at this point, there were some suspicions that the reason may have been, partly at least, that her friend was doing the course at the polytechnic. The researcher is also aware that Faith's best friend chose to do the same course.

Faith's family supported her choice to do the course – "*Yeah, yeah very happy*" in fact!

The answer to "how well did you think you would achieve while being enrolled in two courses at the same time?" was the question, "*Like how much credits I'll get?*"

This is interesting because it suggests that Faith believes that success at this point is about how many credits you get and does not seem to consider that passing the course is also achievement.

When it was clarified with, "so you might have been thinking, well, I've got to do two lots of work - to do your school work and you have to do your polytechnic work. Did you think you were going to be okay with it?" Faith further revealed with visible unease: "*I thought I would be OK. Yeah, except for like one... one subject.*"

It was clear at this point that Faith was remembering an uneasy feeling, making her look away and become thoughtful. This is taken to be because normally, although quiet, Faith is confident and works hard to succeed.

Clarification of this previous comment was needed so Faith was asked why she thought one subject wouldn't be okay. Her answer was that she missed out two hours of that subject. She was acutely aware that that was half of the class time. However, she quickly followed that with the statement "*But I did alright.*"

Normally, each subject in the senior school is taught four hours per week. Missing half of that could jeopardise success. Faith was clearly concerned but

then quick to point out that actually, she did not need to be concerned as she was fine in the end.

At the end of the year, Faith rated her achievement well. For clarification, she was asked if she got a diploma or certificate, because the researcher was unclear at this point which course had been completed. This was not clarified because Faith's understanding was, "*It was like, you don't get a certificate.*"

The researcher is not sure about this. The impression given, was that students actually got a certificate or diploma if they successfully completed the course. The researcher did not want to push it in case there had been an issue.

When asked if she actually completed the course, Faith asserted that she had completed the course and got her level two NCEA. She was happier now.

Steve

Steve is an 18 year old male who attended an Outdoor Education & Sustainability course last year. He is a keen sportsman who prefers to be out running around rather than cooped up inside. Steve gives very brief answers so more information had to be elicited from him with a few extra questions. The interview was also conducted outside in the sun as Steve would feel more comfortable there than inside.

When asked what he knew about his STPs before he signed up, his reply was simply "*nothing.*"

This was followed up with: "Nothing at all? No-one had told you anything, you didn't know anything?" To which his answer was a matter-of-fact, "*nope!*"

The question then was, how did he find out about them?

Steve revealed that he had gone to the 'careers expo' in the school hall. There had been something on a board that caught his attention. He had then gone with his mate (who was interested in the same course) and asked the careers advisors about it. They signed up immediately. Steve did not look at any other courses because he liked the look of the Outdoor Education & Sustainability.

When Steve was asked why he was interested in doing that course particularly he confirmed (what was already known about him) that he is always happier outdoors and he *“thought it would be a fun course.”*

To clarify, he was asked: *“you didn't really know too much about the course at that point?”* to which he confirmed this was the case. He looked disappointed at this point.

When asked how his whānau supported him in his choice, Steve replied that: *“they didn't care.”* The interpretation of that was that he is free to make his own decisions about his education at this point rather than his whānau not caring.

Steve was confident, when asked how well he thought he would achieve at the beginning of the year with being enrolled on two courses, that he would achieve. When asked how he rated his achievement at the end of the year, his reply was a succinct, *“Good. I passed.”*

Marty

Marty is an energetic, polite and chatty young man who did a Cookery course last year and is doing a Sustainability and Outdoor Education course this year. His passion is to be a chef but because he is also sporty and he has enough credits to pass this year already, he decided to do another course this year as a bonus. Marty was very relaxed and almost in holiday mode as we talked. He was happy to have had another successful year.

Marty's reply of, *“Not much. I'd heard of them and I was talking to [the careers coordinator] and he gave me the run-down”*, when asked the first question, was fairly standard.

Standard because it is very clear that students are not really aware of the programme or courses.

Since he suggested that he had heard of the courses, there was a clarifying question posed to Marty. His reply was that he got interested when he found out about them from the careers advisor. Marty's clarification was: *“He gave me*

advice and when I said what I want to do he was like ah yes, you can do this course and it's two days a week and blah, blah, blah."

This was interesting that Marty mentioned that he had been told it was two days a week at this point so a check was made to be sure.

Marty was sure that the advisor told him about all the other options stating that he was told that there are one day a week courses as well.

When asked why he was interested in doing the course initially, Marty replied that: *"it was because it gave him the option to further his knowledge from school."*

Again, for clarification, he was asked if "it was just because it wasn't offered at the school really." His reply was affirmative.

Marty was fully supported by his family and *"felt fine about it at the time"*, when asked about how well he thought he would achieve while being enrolled in two courses.

This was great to see Marty's confidence in himself. He mentioned an important point in his next statement, which was that "the time I had off was enough to keep on top of work as always." The importance of this is that students get some study periods during their week at school because of the timetabling. The idea is that they use this time to keep up with subjects that they might be missing some classes of. Marty realised that this had worked for him.

Marty gave the impression that he had been very happy doing the course and it had all worked out well for him. This was affirmed by his reply to the question of how he rated his achievement by the end of the year - *"100% Good. I passed."*

Clare

Clare is an outgoing, fun-loving young lady who has a go at anything she can. She has done a lot of extra-curricular activities such as Duke of Edinburgh and taking part in experiential education days at the local military base. She has

done well at school and was in a high-spirited mood when we met as she had secured a job with Camp America for their upcoming summer season.

Clare had a slightly different answer to the first question about how much she knew about the STP courses. She associated them with a class in the school called Gateway, suggesting that they were linked.

Her explanation of, *“they are usually for free if you do Gateway. So if you did Gateway then you could do other courses like that to get a qualification”*, was interesting. There are not costs for any courses offered at the school but as tertiary education has a cost, it is presumed that that is what Clare was intimating.

Clare’s presumption at this point was that she could not do an STP course if she did not take the Gateway class. She was very clear that she didn't want to do Gateway.

In fact her demeanour was suggestive that that class is below her. That is true to a certain extent as Gateway is offered to students who might not be doing too well in academic classes; students who would normally be transitioning (hopefully) into employment directly from school; students who would not be moving on to further education.

Clare had been interested in doing Outdoor Education as a class at school but it was not offered any more so she was talking to the careers advisor about her predicament. This is where she found out about the STP course in Sustainability and Outdoor Education. The advisor did let Clare know that there were other courses on offer but she was only interested in that one.

When asked about why she was particularly interested in doing a course, her answer was quite obvious in retrospect – *“because I wanted to do Outdoor Education and the school didn’t offer it any more.”*

Clare’s parent did not support her in her attempt to do an STP course. She explained that once she found out about the courses, she told her parent and tried to get the forms signed but was denied that. When she told her Mum, *“she didn’t like the fact that I would be missing a whole day at school. She said that*

as much as I do ok, it's not worth missing a day of school in order to go and bum round." This was the only reason for not allowing Clare to do the course (missing a whole day of school each week).

Clare was obviously still unhappy about her parent's decision at that time. She was sure she would not just be 'bumming around' but her Mum was not so sure.

With respect to how well she thought she might do if she had enrolled on the course, Clare was confident that she *"would have done pretty well."* When asked further, she stated that, *"there's other people at this school are doing it and there's no worries for them."*

Clare added at this point that she had just remembered that she went to a *"taster day kind of thing when I was originally going to do it but they offered tourism."* This was indeed a taster day that she had been to the previous year. Students could experience a taster of the courses on offer but since the course she 'tasted' was Tourism, she was not interested.

The interview continued with the same questions as for everyone else but since Clare had not actually done the course, they are not as relevant. Clare passed everything at school, gaining her Level 2 NCEA. She was asked if she had anything else to offer but she said, no.

Since students can still do courses when they are in Year 13, Clare was asked if she wanted to do one this year instead. She was obviously still not happy with her Mum's refusal to let her do a course and stated that she was *"still not allowed to do it this year!"*

Charlie and Amy

Charlie and Amy are very good friends and are mostly found together when not in separate classes. They were happy to have finished classes and were looking forward to leaving school but also not looking forward to it! They were happier to be interviewed together than separately, especially Charlie because he is so shy and awkward with answering questions from adults.

The pair did separate courses but on the same day of the week. Charlie was doing Hospitality and Amy was doing Beauty Therapy course.

Charlie started out by declaring that all he knew was, *“there is a course from school”*, when asked how much they knew about STPs. After a bit more probing, which only elicited the same answer, they were asked if they knew how long the courses were for. Amy said: *“it was for one day per week for the whole year”* and that they had got this information from the careers advisors at the school.

To clarify, they were asked if the advisor approached them to take a course or if they went to see him or had been to the careers expo. They both explained that they had a friend who had done a course so they decided to go and see the careers advisor to find out if they could do one too.

It was not clear at this point whether they knew what courses they might want to do, so they were asked the order of events. They said that they knew there were courses so went to see the careers advisors about what courses there were, then had to decide which courses they wanted to do.

When asked why they were interested in doing a course initially, Charlie answered that he, *“was interested in hospitality and there was a course at [the polytechnic] and then school.”* Amy, on the other hand, *“wanted to learn some new skills.”* Upon checking, Charlie did confer that he was interested in hospitality because that is his intended career path.

Both students revealed that their families fully supported their choices to do STP courses.

The question of how well they thought they would achieve while being enrolled in two courses at the same time elicited the same answer as the others – they both were confident that they would achieve. They thought they would pass NCEA Level 2 and complete the course successfully too.

Interestingly, when Charlie answered this question, he followed it with...*“last year I was.”* Amy agreed with that too. This prompted the question of whether they were doing a course this year too. They both said that they: *“started then it was all off.”* Amy was doing Business this year and Charlie had started the next

level of Hospitality. Neither of them continued because Amy had had *“some issues with the teachers down at the polytechnic.”* An opening was left for them to talk about it but they did not seem to want to elaborate so the regular questions continued.

Both students confirmed that they had passed their courses at the polytechnic and felt that they had been successful. They declared that they had got their certificates and also passed NCEA level 2.

Curtis

Curtis is a confident student who has had issues with attendance at the high school. He was doing an Automotive Engineering course last year and continued this year too. He really wanted to tell his whole story as he was interviewed. As a result of this, there is a lot more detail about other aspects included in this script. They are relevant details of his experiences and could easily have happened to other students but had not been divulged by them. Curtis was in a fine mood and exceptionally happy to have completed high school when the interview took place.

Curtis’s first explanation of what he knew about the STP courses was a surprise. *“STP is the course where you do half school, half [the polytechnic]. I just thought of it as like an opportunity to be able to do both things. So to achieve your NCEA 2 or 3 or whatever it is you're going for, and still be able to learn your career.”*

Once again, it is not absolutely verifiable that he thought this before he went to find out about the courses. More evidence was sought with follow-up questions.

Still, Curtis was sure that he had gained *“information from teachers and other people who have done the course.”* He then went to speak to the careers advisors. In answering the question about whether he got good information, Curtis declared that he had and added that he was also told, *“how much of a good course it is. How many credits it offers.”*

This was the first time any of the students had mentioned anything like this much detail.

Curtis had a genuine reason for his interest in the course that he chose initially. He explained that he has been into mechanics, since he was very young. It has always been a passion for him. In fact, *“anything car related, engineering related was always a passion so when I had the opportunity to do a course I just wanted to jump straight into it.”*

The course that Curtis chose was actually taught at the high school. This meant that clarification, of his reasons for not carrying on with it at the school, was asked for. His clarification turned out to be revealing. His take was that doing the subject at school *“is more like a base level,”* whereas at the polytechnic there are qualified people teaching the classes. He asserted that there was a *“higher degree of knowledge that you learn”* at the polytechnic. He further clarified that *“it's especially better able to demonstrate knowledge - if you already have prior knowledge, to people who understand it.”* His explanation of this is that he could demonstrate his knowledge to people who are more highly trained in their field. He felt that the teacher at the high school thought he was “a hotshot” but the teachers at the polytechnic thought, *“this kid actually knows what he's doing.”*

Curtis's parents definitely supported him to do the course.

When asked about his opinion on whether he thought he would pass both the course and NCEA Level 2, Curtis was honest and revealed that he thought he would not get Level 2. However, he *“knew that I would kind of excel - get credits at [the polytechnic].”* He went on further to declare his reasons for that:

I wasn't worried at all about not getting the credits at [the polytechnic], especially due to the fact that [they are] quite flexible and they help a lot; help you achieve those. So basically, as long as you turn up every day at [the polytechnic], and you give your 100%, you will achieve those credits. You know there's no in between. If you can't do something, the teachers won't just give up on you, they kind

of teach you, they guide you they will help you, they work you through it. As for school, the teachers will try to do that but then again there is always a cut off date or...a teacher isn't going to just totally 100% stop teaching a class and teach you if you can't do anything. [The polytechnic] was good for that. [They have] got one -on - one as well as class lessons.

It was also clarified that what this means for him, is that it is easier to succeed under those conditions and with those teachers.

Continuing, Curtis pinpointed one of the major issues for him (and the teachers) as he described how it was difficult to get his class work done when he missed two lessons each week.

Of course we have heard from the other students that they just have to be more self-controlled and work during their study periods in order to keep up. Also, as it has been stated, Curtis had issues with attendance and this continued when he was on the course. It is surprising that he was even allowed to apply for the course when his attendance was not up to the demanded level for entry, which is 80%.

Curtis was adamant that his teachers at the high school did not understand what was going on at the beginning of the year – they did not know why he was missing some classes and were assuming that he was bunking. He even claims that the teachers, *“were quite mad about it as well.”*

At this point there was a conversation about how the old Canterbury Tertiary College (CTC) courses were run. This included the fact that students were always on-site so there were no issues with getting attendance or with students missing a few classes per week because of timetabling. Curtis gave his opinion on this in a revealing way. For him, it was a positive thing to be able to have those *“two days off with new people, new teachers, new way of being spoken to.”* He further asserted that, *“it teaches you a lot of things that kids will not learn by staying in school.”* His take was that going to the polytechnic shows you how real work can be – *“you're going to know what it's like to actually be in that industry... work where there's timelines, you know there's that frantic rush.”* He

went on to declare that the courses teach you skills that students would not get to learn until they get out of school.

The next comments from Curtis show just how different his attitude was towards his work at the polytechnic compared to school. He talked about the new environment that he was in, at the polytechnic, and how safety was more important. This is interesting because safety at the high school is a major component of the courses there too.

Curtis's opinion was that doing an STP course shows students how to be independent. He described how his days were, saying: *"When you get instructions you go and do it, you don't baby around after the teacher."* He described how the teacher would tell students to go away and try their best and then if they get stuck, the teacher would be there. If someone put their hand up he would, *"come and give you one on one, and teach you how to do it, and then go on. Then once everyone's passed that phase he'll walk back to the front and you're given new instructions, repeating the process over and over again, which is cool. And I was really grateful that I had the tutors like I did."*

This is interesting from a teacher's point of view because that is exactly how a normal technology classroom would work.

When asked about his achievement by the end of the year, Curtis claimed that the polytechnic begged him to stay. He said he got all his credits there. When asked about his high school success though, he admitted that he had only got seven credits.

Again, this is interesting because under normal circumstances, some interventions would have been put in place for a student who was getting so far behind. Students should have 60 credits by the end of the year, including any they get from the courses at the tertiary institution.

After admitting that he had got so few credits, he was asked if he then had to do a big catch up. This prompted Curtis to point out a lot of aspects of the course administration that had been problematic to him. He had been accused of bunking both school and his course and was threatened with removal from the school due to his poor attendance. He denied all of this, claiming it was the

problems with the attendance data, timetabling and progress data between the two institutions. He also claimed that the process for marking attendance at the high school had changed so that added to his frustrations and got him into more trouble.

Curtis then went on to declare that he was told he had to be in all his classes pushing it to complete work and gain as many credits as he could before the end of the year. He added that, *“this pressure is not okay - pressing you to get credits.”* Curtis has now passed level 2 NCEA though.

It was obvious at this point that Curtis was very frustrated and he continued with a tirade about how the school systems are [rubbish] and that he got so sick of it all and felt pressured. He clearly had some issues with the way he was monitored by the school but seemed to be okay about the tertiary institution.

Overall Analysis of the Student Interviews

From the responses to the first question, it is clear that most participants did not know what STP stood for which, I feel, is not surprising for this age group. Only two out of the seven participants had any idea about the courses before they signed up. Two others knew some friends who did courses so were aware that there were some but didn't know anything about them. These responses clearly show that the STPs are not well advertised or promoted.

My suggestion of possible ways the issue could be rectified is by advertising and promotion to students during the year. It would also help if the teachers, support staff and deans knew about the programmes and were supportive of students enrolling. If teachers, support staff and deans are supportive, then they can help with the promotion and can also target students based on their better knowledge of them. To do this, there would have to be an information session delivered to all staff together. Courses available, value of the courses and what pathways they open up, as well as timetable issues would all be discussed.

Responses to the second question were polarised. Students either knew someone who had done a course before or they were told about the courses by the careers staff. Again, this points to a lack of knowledge about the courses due to a lack of advertising or promotion.

All students answered the third question in a similar vein – that they wanted to do something that was not offered at the school. They also wanted to stay at school to pass NCEA Level 2 though. This suggests that these students want to broaden their horizons beyond the school but are also thinking responsibly about their future with respect to gaining Level 2.

No students who enrolled on the courses had any issues with their family/whānau. Clare was the one participant who was found who had wanted to do a course last year but her mother did not let her. Her mum thought that Clare would be “bum[ming] around” instead of attending all her classes at school. I suspect this was partly because Clare’s mum (and therefore also Clare, herself) did not have enough information about the course and how it all works. She also wants the best for Clare and believes that she should excel academically if she is to be successful in life.

Students were all very confident when answering the questions relating to how well they thought they would achieve and how well they did achieve. Faith was the exception to this, having concerns about one of her subjects because she was going to miss half of the classes. She did succeed in the end though, passing the course and gaining Level 2. Curtis was certain he would pass his course but was less sure about the school part. He suggested that teachers would give up on him because he was not attending all classes so they thought he was skipping school.

A common theme amongst the student responses was that they were able to keep up with their school-work, even if they missed some of the classes, because they had ‘study periods’ during the rest of their timetabled classes. These ‘study periods’ are times when the students do not have timetabled classes but it is the expectation that they sign in with someone (usually the librarian) and catch up with work that they have missed by being on their STP courses.

Case reports are the ideal vehicle for communicating with consumers. This research identified the benefits of teaching higher curriculum levels, learning dispositions and higher-order thinking skills in the senior secondary school, which could help change the current emphasis on content-driven programmes. That was beyond the scope of this paper. However, the message will be delivered.

Using a business model as an example, we should recognise that the student is, in a way, the customer of the school, which is the service provider. What students feel and the way they see things is legitimate. If they perceive that they don't know how to enrol, un-enrol, who to ask for help or information, then that is a legitimate issue. Course administration staff may think it is obvious or easy but the students may not think so. The thoughts may also differ across different groups of students. In a business world, if things did not change to make it better for the customers, then the business would fail. Schools should not be failing to provide a decent service to students. Implementing the recommendations from this research will improve the service and outcomes for more students.

These findings confirm that the original hunch about the lack of promotion and advertising of the STP courses was correct. They also show that students choose to do the courses (with one exception) because the subject matter is not offered at the school. Students who choose to do the courses are confident in their own ability to succeed, both NCEA and on the course. They were all successful at the completion of the year too.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This section lists the parts of the research that were conducted and poses questions and answers for how they were conducted. Without a doubt, the biggest hold up to this research was gaining ethics approval from the university. This was not foreseen and the researcher takes some responsibility for this. It is certainly worth noting for any further study though, that the process can take a long time and lead to delays in starting the actual research process.

Conducting the research

The difficulties in contacting and recruiting participants for this study were not foreseen and had a major impact on it. For future reference to anyone attempting to contact this generation of people, it is important to be able to use something other than email to communicate with them. This generation do not use email. Ethics forbid direct requests via the preferred method, which would be messaging either on a cell-phone or through an App such as Messenger or What'sApp.

Some researchers and academics may see it as inappropriate to conduct research in the way that it has been done here. Interviewing students in a classroom or library room may not seem regular; interviewing students sitting on some steps outside may seem totally inappropriate but being part of this school community and understanding the culture is important. As clarified earlier in this text, Lincoln & Guba (1984, p.11) assert, “naturalistic inquiries *always* take place in the field, that is, in natural rather than contrived settings.” This is precisely what has been done because of the researchers understanding of the internal culture of that school and the people within that community.

The students

Students are treated differently in tertiary education than they are in secondary. In tertiary education institutions, students are treated as young adults and are held to workplace expectations by tutors. Students who can adapt to this are more likely to persevere and get more out of the time at the tertiary institution. Students are often working in mixed-age settings and tuakana-teina relationships (where the students share knowledge) develop. Tutors report that this also helps students to stay on course.

We are working with and within several different cultures. It is not enough to just see culture as Māori, Pasifika or Pākehā; the culture of the area and socio-economic groups also form a culture. As was stated above, this was taken into account with the participants of this research as the school itself has an innate culture, which the researcher is also part of. If the participants are relaxed in their surroundings, they will be more relaxed about talking and answering questions.

The administrators

There is a preference for one particular institution only at the school. This means students are not given the full range of opportunities that they could be given, which could disadvantage some students. Other schools are very open to both of the tertiary providers that were spoken to.

It is not enough to share information between the two organisations. One of the required actions described in Ka Hikitia (2009) is that schools should share information with each other and with their Maori communities. For organisational success, “develop and implement communications strategies to increase effective sharing of information that will lead to a step up in the performance of the education system for and with Maori students.” Additional to this, the New Zealand Curriculum document (2007) sets out the requirements for boards of trustees. Each board is required, through the principal and staff,

“to develop and make known its plans for improving the achievement of Maori students,” in consultation with the school’s Maori community (p.44). The improvements to be made to the STP reporting system will add to this, supplying evidence for future planning.

Recommendations

This section looks at recommendations for various parts of the administration of the STPs. The recommendations are mostly aimed at the high school but there are areas where the interested institutions must make changes to enable improvements to the running of the courses. The biggest issue is that of ownership at both the high school and the polytechnic. Both institutions need to have a designated representative who leads the administration and is known to students as their go-to person.

Promotion

When it comes to promotion, not only do students and staff need to be educated about STPs but the school community do too. I would recommend information going out in the school newsletter and all communications, before the time when the students need to be signing up for the courses. It might also be prudent to ‘feature’ a successful student during the year with a brief article to be sent out too.

All tertiary institutions should have space and time to promote their courses to ensure maximum choice for students. This would be in the form of presentations, advertising in all school communications to the community, articles in the school newsletter, talks at senior assemblies. A major improvement would be a presentation to school staff at the appropriate time of year i.e. term 3, when students are signing up for STPs. This would give teachers the required information to be supporting students with choices and offering advice on alternatives based on their knowledge of the students in their care.

As mentioned, it became clear during the research that students are also able to do Level 3 courses or enrol on Level 2 courses when they are in Year 13 (studying Level 3). This is not widely known by staff or students in the high school. There is a number of students who are missing out because of this lack of knowledge and promotion of this opportunity.

Information sharing

Not only does information need to flow between the institutions but also within the school. Teachers are seldom aware of which students in their classes are on courses, then wonder why they suddenly disappear for some or all of them part way through term 1. Deans are also sometimes not informed in a timely manner, which students are attending which courses. They should not have to request that information or field questions from teachers who want to know where students have gone.

The school teachers and the course tutors need to be sharing their course content so that the courses can support each other and potentially, resources could be shared.

It is already known that information sharing in regards to administration of student data is difficult. This is because of the different student management systems in use. This is one barrier that should be able to be smashed with the introduction of a raft of new systems available to educational institutes (both secondary and tertiary).

Timetabling

I have been told numerous times, by several timetablers, that it would be a simple thing to create timetables that would work for students who need to be away for one or two days to attend these courses. It is time this was actioned.

Following up

Students will sign up for courses for several reasons – one of them being to get out of school for a day or two per week. This is not a valid reason for applying to do a course. Follow up meetings with students should happen where they are fully informed about the course content and teaching. Only then should their enrolment be accepted.

The preceding recommendations apply to all administrators as well as the principals and Boards of Trustees of the high schools.

It is known that the curricula of schools and TEOs rarely inform or complement each other (ERO, 2015). However, when students experience complementary curricula, they can see the relevance of their learning and find it easier to make progress. This is why there is a recommendation to have the school and TEOs communicating more clearly and widely to include this aspect.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that the students who finally see the relevance of their learning, after being on an STP course, will go on to succeed at school in that year or will continue with school the following year. It is recommended that this evidence be collected and these students tracked for future success.

Chapter 6: Conclusions

This research has added value to secondary education by identifying issues related to the running of Secondary Tertiary Programmes. The aim is now to make progress on the recommendations on how to improve the leadership and administration of these programmes. Some of this may be done with the possible addition of a new information sharing system (if needed). Effective partnerships depend on strong leadership and the leadership, in this case, is lacking.

The original intent of the research was to look at STPs with particular reference to helping our Māori and Pasifika students. It became clear early on however, that the whole system needs to be refreshed before we target these groups.

To improve the study, it would have been better to have a bigger cohort of participants from more years. It would also have been more meaningful to have expanded the study to include input from a number of schools. This would be a logical next step for further research in this area.

The study offers opportunities to inquire into the computer systems currently in use at each institution and how they may be used to more effectively share information. It may also open a door to opportunities for a new system that includes the student and their whānau or family as clients; a system where the student is central and they are in control of their own data.

Some other questions emerged from the discussions and research findings. These would need further study to answer.

- Do the tertiary institutions concentrate more on completion of their course or are they supporting the students in gaining L2?
- How well do we (in high schools) really support students to realise their potential? Do we only look at the “go-getters” or can we open our eyes to the others?

This second point was noted in the research when one of the institutions clarified that they see success as being a personal gain for the student but that may not be a completed certificate or diploma. There should be recognition that those students who realise that they enjoy an aspect of education, will most likely continue with it. Those are the students who don't turn up to school but do turn up to the course and do the work. They may not be able to work at the same rate as others and so may need extra time and there should be an allowance for this too.

The important point, which could not be answered in this research, was the question of whether the courses are a better fit for our Māori and Pasifika students, when compared to “pure schooling”. Also whether STPs enable a better transition and a higher rate of these students moving into tertiary studies. We do know that there has been a steady increase in retention in school and more Māori and Pasifika students are enrolling and achieving in tertiary education. However we are a long way from achieving the goals and targets set in the Ka Hikitia – Managing for Success document (2009).

Additionally, The Ministry's Ngāue Fakataha document (2016) aimed at improving Pasifika success clearly underlines the importance of strong leadership in education. It also advocates for “all involved parties to have the opportunity to talk together and develop plans and approaches that will build the strengths of parents, students, teachers, board of trustees members, and professional leaders in securing successful outcomes for students” (p.12). This is a strong support for the improvement of communication across all groups even for the STPs – but preferably for the whole education sector.

Evidence collected for this paper reveals that specific actions must be taken to improve the administration of the Secondary Tertiary Programmes. It includes the students whose educational lives we are trying to improve. Part of this is the relationships between the organisations involved must be strengthened to allow better communication and a higher level of care for students. These changes will also serve to improve student outcomes.

There must be fairness and equity in information about the different tertiary providers. The conversations with the high school careers coordinator and with

one of the tertiary provider's staff revealed that there is no relationship there. This is neither fair on the tertiary provider nor on the students who are potentially missing out on the opportunities there.

If the recommendations are used, systems will be clarified for and between the institutions involved. Processes will be clarified and followed to ensure full student support is given. There is a disconnect between the school and the tertiary providers with regards to who does what part of the administration; this will be remedied.

Information about STP courses will be widely distributed through the school staff. It is not known about and certainly not understood by most staff. There will be an information sharing session at the beginning of each school year to educate staff about the processes and the positive reasons for students attending STP courses.

Further research would reveal how other improvements could be made, using input from family/ whānau, teachers, iwi and the wider school community.

The question of whether we should be targeting certain students for STP courses has not been answered during this research either.

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