

## **Submission on Final TEAC Report**

This submission focuses on the role of universities in lifelong learning and adult education. It is based on the belief that none of the reports currently available to government does full justice to this. In addition it raises questions about some of the other recommendations on ACE.

1. We believe that universities have a key role to play in the field of adult and community education. With continuing financial support from the state we see the universities making a unique and valuable contribution to the following:

- the preservation and enhancement of cultural traditions and the promotion of critical awareness, sensitivity and appreciation of cultural, scientific, and artistic traditions, and the dissemination of information, insights and understandings of these traditions;
- the promotion, preservation and strengthening of traditions of democracy and active citizenship and the provision of appropriate support for community development;
- the provision of support and assistance to adults, who for whatever reasons, were 'cooled out' of formal education when they were young, to enable them to return to study in pursuit of their educational, cultural, occupational and social goals;
- the provision of appropriate and timely education programmes in support of economic development and in order to maintain and upgrade the knowledge, skills and capacities required in the professions and more generally in the labour market; and
- the promotion and facilitation of lifelong learning, including undertaking research and the provision of academic and professional teaching programmes and support for practitioners engaged in lifelong learning.

2. It is clear that TEAC has drawn substantially on the report of the Adult Education and Community Learning Working Party to formulate its proposals for the funding of ACE. This report recommended that ACE should be funded through a separate ring-fenced fund. Although this 'separate ring-fenced fund'(p35) may well be appropriate and necessary to ensure adequate, ongoing public funding of some forms of ACE (and in particular those forms of community-based education which have been very badly neglected and devalued for a number of years), we are not convinced that all forms of ACE should be funded by government in this way.

As noted in the Working Party's report, ACE is a highly differentiated sector and learning opportunities within ACE range from those offered by community groups and voluntary organisations to those offered by schools, polytechnics, colleges of education, wananga and universities. Some forms of ACE, including that provided by universities, may best be funded by other means which include the proposed Single Funding Formula based on their charters

and profiles.

In particular, then, we have serious reservations concerning:

- any proposal to fund the total university contribution to ACE through a separate ring-fenced fund. This would have the effect of further marginalising these contributions and functions within the universities themselves.
- the likely effects of establishing a separate ACE ring-fenced fund along the lines indicated in ghettoising or marginalising ACE within the wider tertiary context. This would be particularly serious if ACE providers were to be precluded from seeking public funds from other tertiary sources including access to research funds and the Strategic Development Fund.

3. It may be argued, as the Adult Education and Community Learning Working Party has done, that the funding of all forms of ACE from a single dedicated fund together with the distribution of these funds through the proposed local and national networks is necessary to promote and ensure cooperation between institutions and community organisations engaged in ACE programmes.

We would argue however that local and national networks are currently insufficiently well developed and may over time be insufficiently robust or stable to manage the funding allocations required. Moreover there are other mechanisms available within the proposed TEC structure to ensure that ACE providers remain committed to the kinds of goals and processes required for cooperative and participatory programme development. These mechanisms could be provided within the framework of charters and profiles and we would support the establishment of a small but strong ACE Board as recommended by the ACE Working Party.

4. Despite the fact that TEAC's fourth report (p. 19) predicts long-term increases in the number of older learners, and in spite of the recognition by TEAC in its earlier reports of the value of lifelong learning and the importance of experience and the recognition of prior learning, it seems that TEAC's fourth report does not give full recognition to the considerable value of the traditional more or less open entry for adults to many tertiary education programmes. In opting for a relatively extensive merit-based system of entry to all undergraduate degree places based on a new, higher entrance qualification (p. 64-66), the Commission seems to conclude, in spite of some ambivalence, that one set of measures of merit should be made to fit all potential undergraduate students. We reject this conclusion.

In the interests of equity and to ensure that those who miss out on formal schooling at age 15, 16, 17 or 18 are encouraged to re-engage when they are somewhat older, a high degree of open entry for mature students should be retained.

There is a good deal of evidence to suggest that many people from working class

backgrounds, and especially women and Maori, are far more likely to move into tertiary study as mature students than as students straight from school, and that, with adequate support, they are likely to do so successfully. Many adults bring to their studies a number of strengths. These include high levels of interest and informal knowledge and commitment as well as experience relevant to their studies and greater self-understanding.

Although bridging courses etc have their place they should not constitute further unnecessary hurdles to be overcome before re-entry. For these reasons there are good reasons why a wide range of such courses and support services should continue to be offered in the universities as well as at other tertiary institutions and in community organisations.

(If any rationing of tertiary studies is in fact needed - and nowhere is this demonstrated adequately - we could accept raising the age of open entry - or provisional open entry - to perhaps age 23 or 24).

5. It seems that the adoption of some TEAC recommendations is likely to have the unintended consequence of further fragmenting the tertiary sector and reinforcing existing hierarchies of tertiary institutions. This would be contrary to TEAC's stated intentions. The proposal to separate the funding of teaching and research (p. 111) is one such recommendation which is likely to contribute to this. It is likely that this will give rise to increasing competition for places at elite research institutions, together with increasing pressures on university administrations to withdraw the best researchers from teaching in undergraduate programmes and to offer fewer bridging and support programmes. This may well have the effect of making universities more exclusive rather than inclusive and cause them to disengage from their communities. In this way this proposal runs counter to TEAC's own philosophy.

From the point of view of adult students and potential students (as well as many others) this will have several negative effects. There may well be fewer opportunities, facilities and resources available within universities to provide the support necessary to enable students who have previously missed out on education to bridge the gaps and re-engage as adults (P, 154). In addition such students are likely to lose the opportunity to engage at undergraduate level with university teachers who are also active researchers - a key motivating factor for many adult students (as well as others).

6. Overall, then, we believe the following are necessary if the universities are to make a more effective contribution to lifelong learning and ACE:

- universities and other institutions should be encouraged to include clear statements of their proposed contributions to ACE within their charters and profiles which should be

negotiated with TEC;

- universities and other institutions should be eligible to receive government funding through TEC for their ACE contributions in terms of their charters and profiles on the basis of the Single Funding Formula rather than out of a separate ACE fund;
- a strong ACE Advisory Board should be established: to provide TEC and the Minister with advice on all aspects of lifelong, adult and community education including relevant aspects of charters and profiles, to establish and maintain local and national networks, and to provide advice and support to individuals, organisations, groups and institutions involved in ACE;
- in the interests of equity and to ensure that those who miss out on formal schooling at age 15, 16, 17 or 18 are encouraged to re-engage when they are somewhat older, a high degree of open entry for mature students should be retained (if rationing of tertiary studies is needed - and nowhere is this demonstrated adequately - we could accept raising the age of open entry - or provisional open entry - to perhaps age 23 or 24);
- in the interests of the universities and students, funding for most forms of research and undergraduate and postgraduate university teaching should be closely linked rather than being separated as proposed in the report.

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