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**Feedback Form:
Tertiary Education Strategy (TES) 2014-2019 Consultation**

Proposed long-term focus areas

Build international relationships that contribute to improved competitiveness

Agree/Disagree/Don't know

Comments:

In principle this makes sense. It is important to link our tertiary sector to the rest of the world and to ensure that we are constantly developing world class programmes and pedagogy. However, ChangeMakers does have some concerns regarding attracting large numbers of international students to NZ. Unfortunately, given the current capped funding environment more international students often means there are less places available for refugee-background students who need access to foundation and ESOL courses to begin their tertiary education. Higher number of international students can result in refugee background students not realising their right to tertiary education; a right New Zealand has agreed to in a number of international conventions. These include the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights that requires States provide access to higher education on non-discriminatory terms and measures to ensure full participation in education.

Support business and innovation through development of relevant skills and research

Agree/Disagree/Don't know

Comments:

It is important for collaboration and relationships to be built and maintained between tertiary institutions and business, and for the work of each sector to inform the other. Strong relationships between tertiary institutions and business also help ensure that students have the opportunity to gain work/intern experience while studying and begin to build relationships with employers. For refugee backgrounds students this is an important step in helping them secure employment and realise their career aspirations.

Improve outcomes for all

Agree/Disagree/Don't know

Comments:

It is pleasing to note the gains made in increasing the participation of Maori and Pasifika students and the proposed continued focus on these groups. ChangeMakers would like to see this focus extended to included students from refugee backgrounds. Equity of access and opportunity is an important part of the vision for New Zealand's tertiary education system. The 2010-15 Tertiary Education Strategy (TES) reflects the New Zealand

Government's legal requirement to enable all New Zealanders to enjoy their right to education, stating that the tertiary sector 'should respond to the diverse needs of all the groups it serves'.ⁱ The TES notes that for groups who do not have equitable access 'this will mean providing targeted services to create an inclusive environment for a diverse student body'.ⁱⁱ

There are many well-documented barriers to tertiary education achievement commonly shared by refugee-background studentsⁱⁱⁱ (many of which have also been documented in studies of Pasifika tertiary education issues). These include:

- difficulty in adapting to western and independent learning styles
- lack of culturally familiar courses
- lack of culturally responsive orientation and support
- family and community demands / lack of community support
- lack of role models and mentors
- difficulties in making friends and 'fitting in'
- English literacy difficulties
- history of very broken education
- financial hardship
- concern about family members still at risk in refugee camps or country of origin
- health issues
- feeling alienated by the academic environment
- lack of information about tertiary programmes and difficulty in making appropriate study choices
- lack of knowledge from university staff about the specific needs of refugee-background students
- lack of awareness of 'mainstream' student support services.

These barriers could be addressed by recognising refugee-background students as an equity group alongside Maori, Pasifika students, and students with a disability. While one university has already recognised refugee-background students in its equity policy and others are implementing targeted support mechanisms, equity recognition would ensure all refugee-background students, regardless of where they undertook their tertiary study, would be supported to achieve.

Continue to improve the quality and relevance of tertiary education and research

Agree/Disagree/Don't know

Comments:

The development of relevant, quality tertiary education is key to ensuring that tertiary students have the skills, knowledge, and capabilities to contribute. A component of this work needs to ensure that tertiary education delivery models reflect changing technology and allow for widespread participation to enable all groups to realise their rights to tertiary education.

3. Do you think tertiary education should have any additional or different focus areas?
See below.

4. The draft TES proposes six priorities. Please indicate whether you agree with having these as priorities and indicate if you believe these will effectively drive change. Please comment on how these priorities could be improved.

Should this be a priority in the TES?

Priority 1: Delivering skills for industry

Yes/No/Don't Know

Comments:

We agree this should be a priority but the focus needs to be on the development of skills and capabilities rather than a 'communication of knowledge' approach. For students from refugee backgrounds there is a need to ensure they have the necessary English language and numeracy skills to succeed at tertiary institutions and in the workforce. For this to occur, students from refugee backgrounds need support to help navigate the tertiary sector and ensure the programme choices they are making match employment opportunities and their career aspirations.

Priority 2: Getting at-risk young people into a career

Yes/No/Don't Know

Comments:

This is critical for young people from refugee backgrounds. Many arrive with either little or interrupted schooling and limited English. These young people are placed in a school year group that matches their age rather than their class placement being based on an assessment to determine where they would be best placed to succeed in an Aotearoa New Zealand school environment. The current system presents significant challenges, challenges that continue when these students leave school and begin exploring how best to realise their tertiary education and career aspirations. To enable these young people to succeed there is a need for targeted support that includes courses on English language for academic study, foundation courses that cater specifically for non-English speaking backgrounds, and support mechanisms such as specific orientation programmes and study groups. The provision of these support mechanisms are best achieved through the recognition of refugee background students as an equity group.

Priority 3: Boosting achievement of Māori and Pasifika

Yes/No/Don't Know

Comments:

Yes we would like to see the achievement of Māori and Pasifika students remain a focus. There are however similarities between the challenges Maori and Pasifika students face and students from a refugee background. While it is pleasing to note the increase participation rates and success of both Maori and Pasifika students, ChangeMakers is keen to see similar increases among refugee-backgrounds students. Equity recognition for refugee-backgrounds students will enable this to be achieved.

Priority 4: Improving adult literacy and numeracy

Yes/No/Don't Know

Comments:

This is critical for adults from refugee backgrounds to be able to participate in Aotearoa New Zealand. Some of these adults have had little in the way of formal education and may struggle to learn in a structured classroom environment. Adult literacy and numeracy programmes need to reflect people's different learning needs and provide a variety of delivery mechanisms such as home tutoring and one-on-one support.

Priority 5: Strengthening research-based institutions

Yes/No/Don't Know

Comments:

This is a qualified yes as this should not occur at the expense of the development of pedagogy that improves student participation and achievement outcomes.

Priority 6: Growing international linkages

Yes/No/Don't Know

Comments:

Another qualified yes. As noted above, ChangeMakers has some concerns regarding attracting large numbers of international students to NZ which can result in reduced opportunities for refugee background students to staircase into tertiary education.

5. Do you think tertiary education should have any additional or different priorities?

The recognition of refugee-background students as an equity group. This should be prioritised as support for refugee-background students is often delivered in an ad hoc manner and relies heavily on the goodwill of staff. Equity status recognition would improve access to TEIs for refugee-background students to achieve an 'equal place with other members of the community.'

Over the last 10 years, equity funding has been provided to TEIs to help meet the extra costs of supporting Pasifika (as well as Māori and students with disabilities). A Ministry of Education review of this funding scheme found it was '...seen as one of the singularly most influential initiatives to improve the provision of support services to assist Pasifika tertiary success and achievement.'^{iv}

The investment per person of realising significant increases in participation and achievement among Pasifika tertiary students is minimal. Equity funding ranges from \$133-\$444 per full-time student, per year, which over the last two years has constituted around quarter of a percent of the total government expenditure on tertiary education. It's our expectation that, given a similar amount of expenditure, significant improvements will be seen in enrolment, retention, and completion rates of refugee-background students in tertiary study.

6. In the system expectation's section, the TES outlines roles/expectations for tertiary education organisations (TEO), providers, industry, and students. Are these correct?

YES / NO / Don't Know

In particular we agree with the focus on access, achievement, and outcomes. Equity recognition for students from refugee-backgrounds would improve access, achievement and outcomes and address the issue of students from refugee-backgrounds are not accessing or completing tertiary study.^v

On behalf of ChangeMakers Refugee Forum I would like to thank-you for this opportunity to have input into the Tertiary Education Strategy 2014-2019.

For more information contact:

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Tim O'Donovan
General Manager
15th November 2013

References

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- ^{iv} Ministry of Education. (2003). *Review of the Implementation and Effectiveness of Special Supplementary Grants Funding for Maori and Pasifika Students at Tertiary Education Institutions from 2001-2002: Pasifika Report*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.
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