

7 February 2020

The Hon. Chris Hipkins
Minister of Education
By e-mail attachment

Tēnā koe Minita,

We want to acknowledge the efforts you and the select committee have made in balancing the many and varied needs of the vocational education sector, and the roles of the many stakeholders.

We are still extremely concerned, however, about the issue of the academic freedom of NZIST staff with regard to their expertise in designing and delivering tertiary education. A related issue has to do with who is responsible for designing Workforce Development Councils (WDCs). We will address these two issues in turn.

Balancing teaching/learning expertise with industry knowledge

We acknowledge the provisions in the Bill, as it has been reported back from the select committee, that require WDCs to collaborate with NZIST and other parts of the tertiary education system.

However, WDCs still have the right to override the professional expertise of staff in NZIST. We think it is important to ensure that the rights given WDCs are appropriate – setting graduate attributes, the core curriculum to be covered in broad terms, and capstone assessments in cases where appropriate. But how teaching and learning is enacted on-campus, on-line, and on-the-job is something that those providing training, (including those arranging and supporting training and providing other support services to ākonga/learners) must have sufficient power to determine. This is vital to ensure ākonga/learners acquire the skills of an active and resilient citizen, including vocational training that is broader based and more future oriented than just the skills needed by employers in a particular place at a particular time. We understand that transmission of those latter skills is also vital and that WDCs will be designed in part to ensure that transmission occurs. However, some pedagogical decisions, including the mix of provision, must be entrusted to our teaching staff to establish in collaboration with learners and employers.

We have two recommendations:

- ➔ Ensure that appropriate structures and processes are in place in the VET system so that current teaching/learning/support staff are central in teaching/learning decisions, including those made by WDCs
- ➔ Explicitly limit the oversight and rights of WDCs to core vocational training at L3 to L6. We believe that limitation is already implicit, but it is nowhere stated in the legislation.

Designing Workforce Development Councils for the good of all

The collaborative design approach used for the development of NZIST has been highly successful. This approach involves ITP, ITO, employer, learner, iwi, and community representatives working together at the table to ensure diverse experiences and expertise is fed into the design of both structures and processes.

We urge you to ensure that the development of the WDCs is approached in the same manner. The unified system will only work if there are high levels of collaboration from day one – and that means collaboration now, while we are designing the rules that will shape the system.

- ➔ TEU members can provide sound assistance in helping to shape the structure and function of WDCs, particularly with regard to the expression of standards, the guidance given on curriculum and the design of assessments.
- ➔ We also urge you to ensure that ITO staff at all levels are represented in these design conversations, not just the CE and second tier managers. As we have demonstrated repeatedly in the RoVE process, it is crucial to hear from those working directly with ākongā/learners and employers.
- ➔ Lastly, to ensure the voice of ākongā/learners as workers is included in the design and development of the WDCs, we ask you to ensure that unions representing employees in the industries to be covered by WDCs are also included in the design process.

Thank you for your attention to these matters. We look forward to your response.

Sharn Riggs
National Secretary, TEU

Michael Gilchrist,
National President, TEU