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Background to the Tertiary High School at Manukau Institute of Technology

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Introduction

This paper outlines the issues that the Tertiary High School Programme (THS) proposal seeks to address. Choke points operate at many points in the education system and these are briefly described. The issues identified are shared by a small group of western, English-speaking education systems. The Tertiary High School proposal was developed in order to address a key issue that results from the accumulation of issues and the filters of failure that impact on some groups of students more heavily than on others. The paper ends by detailing progress to this point.

Background to the THS Programme

The focus of the 2007-2008 Fulbright New Century Scholars Programme was Equity and Access in Higher Education. Dr Stuart Middleton, Manukau Institute of Technology was selected to be on this international “think tank” of twenty international scholars. Working on that initial focus, he sought to develop a model that brought together the key blocks to progression into post-secondary education and training. The various iterations of this work evolved into the emphasis on disengaged students and the response that became the Tertiary High School. Students seem to have difficulty and face road blocks in their educational journey at certain key points at each stage of the passage through the education system.

Early Childhood Education

We know that the advantages of access to early childhood education are an influence on progress in education at all later stages. New Zealand has uneven access to early childhood education with access in parts of Counties Manukau as low as 40%. This is obscured by a relatively high national level of access and even in the sub-region compilation of data can hide the fact that in certain communities, access is very low indeed. The “low road to failure” starts before schooling begins for many of our students. Access to two years of quality early childhood education is the first of the success dots that need to be connected for success in life.

K-12 Schooling

The set of factors that either inhibit or enhance the progress of students through the K-12 education system is well documented. The enhancers include such features as:

- Parental influence on educational choices
- Aspirations of students
- Having a foundation laid in Early Childhood Education programmes
- Literacy / numeracy development
- Structures of schooling systems that deliver support
- Academic preparation

Factors that inhibit progress are often the obverse face of those that lead to success and can include:

- Social / Cultural factors
- Academic preparation levels
- Parental influence
- Intellectual performance and readiness
- Economic factors
- Values / social factors
- Institutional features that lead to disjunction in progression

Issues within Further and Higher Education

A further set of factors impacts on post-secondary performance that sees graduation rates in tertiary still sitting at around 50% - this statistic has remained constant for over 60 years. Despite the filters of failure that have been applied to any one cohort, there is much still to be addressed at the tertiary / post-secondary level if academic outcomes are to be lifted. Finally - new definitions of access and equity – both measured in terms of the outputs of tertiary education – will be required if we are to make progress.

Shared characteristics between education systems

In undertaking the study it was noted that patterns were being repeated across international boundaries; the education systems in New Zealand, the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Canada and Australia were markedly similar. There was a reason for this – they all had similar histories and stories. Each of these systems had their historical origins in the early trend towards universal primary / basic education on the one hand and an elitist provision of higher education on the other. While everyone would have the benefit of that basic education, only a few would progress to higher education through the mechanism of the secondary school. These systems followed the achievement of universal basic education with a rapid drift attempting to achieve universal secondary education (post-World War II) and followed this with a more recent emphasis on increased participation in tertiary. This was possible only by growing Higher Education.

They share other characteristics: they are broken up by sector structures which produce major transitions for students; they have little emphasis on check-point assessments and now, no focus on readiness. This all happens within a homogenous secondary curriculum at a time when the student populations have never been more diverse. More relevant to the THS Project has been the inexorable move away from vocational and technical education.

Each of these education systems shares characteristics that are worrying. There are in each of them serious levels of disengagement from education from the age of 14-years, significant groups of inactive youths between the ages of 15- and 19-years (the NEETS – not in employment education or training) and large groups leave school without qualifications despite the growing skills shortages in each of these economies. In addition to this, issues remain with indigenous, low socio-economic status communities and migrant groups.

The new dimension that is placing these systems under pressure is a combination of changing demographics and changing economies. In New Zealand (and there are comparable patterns in the other systems) we are seeing the demographics change rapidly with Maori and Pacific Island groups growing at a fast rate while the growth of the conventional white middle class population is relatively shrinking. Or to put it another way – the conventional customers of tertiary education (white, middle class) is shrinking and the non-traditional groups, the under-represented groups, are becoming larger. The groups that education systems serve well is getting smaller, the groups that education systems have yet to provide equitable access and outcomes are getting larger. And this is happening quickly. In thirty years, over 51% of the City of Manukau will be Pasifika.

The impact of the demographic changes in New Zealand is obscured by the educational attainment of the new, recent, and now significant, group of Asian immigrants whose educational performance outstrips that of other migrant groups and, indeed, much of the traditional domestic community.

The changes in the economy are many but the critical one is the shrinking of the numbers of low skilled and unskilled jobs. These were the blotting paper of educational failure and many young people who had not found much reward at school could progress to low-skilled or unskilled employment and find their feet and direction in that setting. Now, educational failure is made obvious with painful, long reaching financial and social consequences.

These education systems focussed on quality for many years - this did not arrest the trends. They then focussed on increasing participation but this did not lead to increased academic outcomes. The focus internationally has now swung toward the transition from K-12 systems into post-secondary education and training. This has been made more urgent by the growing levels, some would say crisis, in disengagement among 15 – 19 year olds. The scale of this is constant across all these systems and in New Zealand we see:

- 25,000 15- to 19-year olds Not in Employment, Education or Training (“NEET’s”)
- 30,000 15- to 25-year olds Not in Employment, Education or Training (“NEET’s”)
- Cost of this NEET group is approximately \$1 billion per annum
- 20% of students have left school by the age of 16
- Maori tend to disengage from age 14
- Pasifika have high persistence but leave with no or few qualifications

How this situation developed

The changes that have led to this situation happened in the space of virtually one generation – 1970 to the present day. By the end of the Second World War, universal primary education had been achieved. There had always been a pipeline that involved perhaps 10% of the population who proceeded to secondary school and on to higher education. A lot of people did have some secondary schooling but this might have been one year or perhaps two years. By and large secondary schooling was not seen as critical to the futures of all young people.

In the baby boomers generation that came along after the Second World War, most students stayed at secondary school for two years but still only 10% had the full five years. This did not mean that education and training finished at the end of that relatively short time spent in secondary school. There were many other opportunities. Employment was easily available as the country enjoyed virtual full employment and employers had an appetite for on-the-job training. Professions such as teaching, nursing, business etc required much lower entry level qualifications than they do now and it was possible to set off on a career in one of the professions with two or three or four years secondary schooling. Those who did leave were

able to attend night classes which provided a wide range of opportunities to get vocational qualifications. There were apprenticeships readily available. A further point is that education had not yet produced a generation that looked down its nose at low skilled and unskilled employment. Manual labour retained a dignity.

But many of these opportunities were systematically stripped out of the system:

- unemployment was hardwired into the structure of the economy;
- employers in the new economic environment sought experience rather than potential;
- productivity concerns challenged “on the job training”;
- professions such as teaching, nursing etc demanded increasingly higher levels of entry qualifications;
- night classes became increasingly recreational as polytechnics converted vocational education and training into a daylight activity;
- the Government withdrew from the economy and took with it the bulk of the apprenticeships;
- we started to believe that we were above low-skilled and unskilled employment and sought immigrants to do those jobs.

This all led to an acceptance that five years of schooling was good; mass participation in tertiary became the next goal. But the numbers of students who were qualified for entry into traditional tertiary programmes were not increasing and the only way that increased participation could be achieved was to grow the tertiary education system downwards to include a large number of programmes at levels that once would not have been considered to be higher education.

As this situation developed the general academic curriculum replaced much of the vocational and technical curriculum in secondary schools (although some vocational programmes were available). And the phenomenon of disengagement was born.

This disengagement reached such levels around the English speaking world that governments responded. Here in New Zealand the 2008 general election saw both major political parties enter the election with similar policies aimed at addressing the issue. Schools Plus (Labour) and the Youth Guarantee (National) recognised that much more flexible pathways were required and that these should include the option of continuing one’s education in a setting outside a school.

Disengagement

There are three kinds of disengagement.

1. *Physical disengagement* is where students are not at school at all. This can be a steady permanent state (they never come) or an intermittent state (as in persistent truancy).
2. *Virtual disengagement* sees students attending school but their disengagement incrementally increases to a point where there is little learning being achieved and they face leaving school with little or no qualifications.
3. *Unintended disengagement* occurs at the post-secondary level. The students had done all that they believe they need to do, have attained minimum entry standards and have engaged with a course at post-secondary level. But a series of factors (wrong course decision, inadequate preparation for that course, unable to be socialised into the institution and so on) leads to disengagement. This requires a response within the post-secondary institution.

No one sets out to create disengagement – it is the unintended consequence of the trend towards universal participation in five years of undifferentiated secondary schooling. The Tertiary High School is a response to this situation.

The Tertiary High School Programme

New Zealand must address a set of educational issues that have become apparent and which include:

- the “leaking pipeline” in the compulsory education sector;
- meeting the urgent need for a variety of flexible pathways between secondary schools and tertiary education;
- raising levels of retention and success in further education and training;
- increasing the scale and levels of skills training in New Zealand.

A Tertiary High School Programme has been established by Manukau Institute of Technology working with a consortium of secondary schools that:

- combines the Years 11-13 of secondary schooling with Years 1-2 of tertiary education in a five year programme;
- delivers a programme that sees students gain NCEA Level 3 (or some other appropriate qualification) and the first two years of a tertiary qualification;
- works in a supportive environment that uses personal pathway plans, supplemental instruction and the resources of a large institute of technology.

Students targeted for this programmes are in general terms:

- underperforming and were considered likely to fail at school;
- interested in a career path that is appropriate to an institute of technology;
- from the Maori Community or Pacific Islands communities;
- from a low decile school and/or a low income family;
- first-in-family to undertake tertiary education and training.

The programme (30 hours of instruction per week) consists of:

Basic Sills

Language / Literacy Numeracy Digital Study Skills	Taught in a programme called <u>Developing Work and Personal Skills</u> which provides a sound base of skills taught to integrate with the work being tackled in the CTE elements of the programme. This programme element generates credit for NCEA
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Pathway Development

The development of a personal pathway plan has input from the programme elements, on specific introductions to further education and training and the experiences in the Preparing for Trades and Professions Programme

Career and Technical Education

In Year 1 the programme Preparing for Trades and Professions provides opportunities for students to undertake micro-programmes in a number of MIT trade and professional disciplines. This programme element generates credit for both NCEA and the MIT Certificate in Tertiary Studies.

MIT Qualifications

Students will during Year 1 and Year 2 develop the skills and qualifications required to enter MIT programmes in Year 2 and Year 3. This would lead to a two year CTE qualification which would include diploma and degree programmes depending on the academic level achieved and the pathway career pathway chosen by the student.

These courses are generally undertaken in scheduled MIT classes.

Support

Students are supported not only by the full range of student support available at MIT but also the close supervision and support of the programme staff including an Engagement Manager.

Key Features:

- Teachers are drawn from the secondary sector for the secondary elements and MIT staff deliver the CTE elements.
- The Programme caters for 80 students each year making a total for the programme when fully operational of 320 students.
- Students are be grouped in their THS cohort for the secondary elements and in small groups integrated into normal scheduled MIT classes for the CTE element.
- The programme is funded from both the secondary funding and tertiary EFTS funding sources.
- The THS is not a new or separate institution. It is in effect be a programme within MIT undertaken in collaboration with a consortium of secondary schools.
- The model has the potential to be replicated.

Defining Principles

A set of principles was developed to guide the development. These are outlined below.

Collaboration

- The Tertiary High School does not take students “out of school”; it keeps them “in school” but not “at school”.
- The Tertiary High School (THS) is a collaborative project between a set of partners - a polytechnic (MIT), government agencies (MOE and TEC) and a consortium of about 25 secondary schools in the Counties Manukau Region.
- Secondary teachers will work alongside tertiary teachers.

Students

- THS Students are selected in accordance with an agreed set of criteria.
- Students in the THS will be integrated and socialised into the tertiary institution.
- THS students are both “secondary” and “tertiary” students.
- The THS will make provision for each student to maintain meaningful and appropriate ongoing contact with their secondary school.
- THS students will undertake a personal programme of personal growth and development which will include a wide range of options.

Funding

- The concept of dual enrolment is central to the THS.
- Funding of the programme must be based on the needs of the students and be flexible, appropriate and equitable.

Curriculum / Programme

- The curriculum in the programme will have a vocational and technical orientation and direction.
- All work undertaken by students in the Tertiary High School will be part of credit bearing programmes.
- THS students will undertake their CTE qualification programme in normal scheduled MIT classes.

Pastoral Care

- The THS will place clear and strong emphasis on monitoring progress and supporting learning.

Programme Headquarters

- The THS programme headquarters will be used as a retreat space for students, for monitoring of progress, supporting of learning, delivering non-CTE qualification elements of the programme and the administration of the programme.
- There will be minimal duplication of facilities or services between THS Headquarters and MIT.

The Foundation Intake

The programme started in February 2010, a cohort of 46 students drawn from 14 secondary schools and made up as follows:

<i>Gender</i>	Male:	33	<i>Age (at 1 March 2010)</i>	14 years	3
	Female:	13		15 years	39
				16 years	4
<i>Ethnicity</i>	NZ European / Pakeha	17			
	NZ Maori	19			
	Pasifika	8			
				Samoan	4
				Cook Island Maori	1
				Tongan	2
				Niuean	1
	Asian	1			
	Other	1			
<i>School Deciles</i>	High Decile		(Deciles 8-10)	5	
	Mid Decile		(Deciles 4-7)	16	
	Low-Decile		(Deciles 1-3)	25	

Note: Two students (not included in the above figures) returned to their school after having been selected for the programme.

This programme is technically a programme at a polytechnic (MIT) offered collaboratively with secondary schools (Counties Manukau) with the support of government agencies. Through a process that involves schools, parents and MIT and applying agreed criteria, students in Year 10 who have potential but are unlikely to succeed in a school setting are identified and selected to enter the THS in Year 11. Within MIT the programme is a school within the Faculty of Education and Social Sciences and is called the *School of Secondary Tertiary Studies*. The programme is widely known by its generic description – a Tertiary High School.

It is intended that the THS students will complete their secondary schooling in terms of school leaving qualifications (gaining the equivalent of NCEA Level 2) and a two year Career and Technical Education (CTE) qualification in a discipline area taught at Manukau Institute of Technology. This CTE qualification could be a Diploma or the first two years of a degree.

The programme components have been outlined above. There are, however, some clear differences between the “subjects” in this programme and a conventional school programme. There is a focus and emphasis on “College Knowledge” (Conley, 2008) in the literacy, numeracy and technology components. The material taught is based on an assessment of the specific skills and understandings required to succeed in the CTE programme which is delivered in a context that features high levels of supervision and monitoring and which matches this with responsive support.

Students undertake a detailed and contracted personal development programme that will emphasise such activities as first language development (where appropriate), cultural and sporting activities (in conjunction with the school where appropriate) and a service education element. CTE qualification classes from Year 2 in the programme will be undertaken in normal scheduled MIT classes. But the CTE support programme which runs alongside those classes is undertaken within the THS Programme. All work and activity in the programme is credit bearing.