



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

*Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga*

# Walking in Step

Tertiary education providers and their stakeholders –  
a path to collaborative communication

# Tertiary education providers and their stakeholders – a path to collaborative communication

This leaflet reports on a study, carried out in 2005, that examined the level of contact between New Zealand's tertiary education providers and their stakeholders. The study also looked into the quality of that contact.

The research was conducted by a team from the Waikato Institute of Technology. The researchers,

the Ministry of Education and the Tertiary Education Commission thank the tertiary education organisations and the stakeholders who took part in this study for their contribution.

You can read the full study report at:  
[www.educationcounts.edcentre.govt.nz/research/tertiary/research-stakeholders.html](http://www.educationcounts.edcentre.govt.nz/research/tertiary/research-stakeholders.html)



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The cornerstone of the government's tertiary education reforms is the Tertiary Education Strategy 2002-07. The strategy emphasises the importance of tertiary education organisations interacting with stakeholders as they plan their educational activities and especially, as they develop their charters and profiles<sup>1</sup>. This is to ensure that tertiary education meets the needs of employers and communities and contributes to New Zealand's national goals. So, to monitor the progress of the sector towards meeting the strategy goals, it is necessary to find out about the sector's contact with its stakeholders. The research described in this note looks at how much contact there is and how good it is at producing results.

## Key findings

- Contact between tertiary education providers and stakeholders is wide ranging:  
*e.g. formal advisory committees, ad hoc meetings, teaching-oriented collaboration.*
- Information about provider / stakeholder contact varies in quantity and quality.
- Stakeholders generally perceived providers as too busy and/or under-resourced to have intensive and positive contact with them.
- Providers perceived contact to be satisfactory.
- Provider views on their contribution to stakeholders' social and economic goals varied widely.
- Contact that creates a result requires reciprocal relationships and a common sense of purpose.
- Industry in-house trainers have very little contact with tertiary education providers / stakeholders.

### Tertiary education providers:

colleges of education, institutes of technology and polytechnics, private training establishments, universities, and wānanga.

### Tertiary education stakeholders:

employers, industry, industry training organisations, local and central government sectors, Māori, parents, Pasifika, schools, etc.

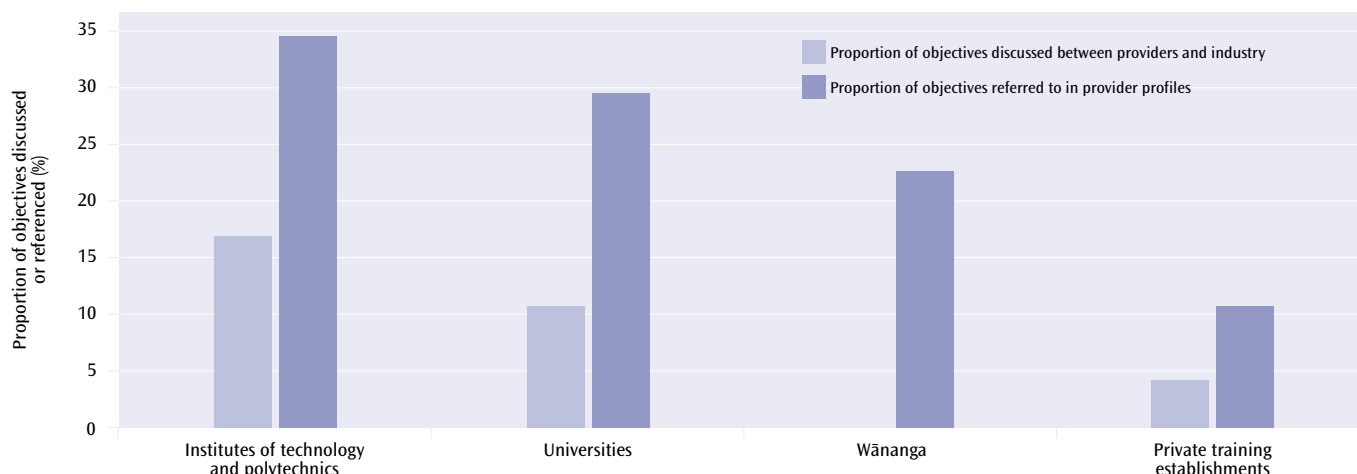
## Study aim and approach

The study aim was to measure the quantity and quality of contact between tertiary education providers and stakeholders. There were three parts to the study:

1. The 2005-07 provider charters and profiles were analysed. References made to the Tertiary Education Strategy (2002-07) and stakeholder contacts were rated.
2. A postal survey of providers was held to obtain details of their contact with stakeholders.
3. Focus group interviews were held with key stakeholder groups.

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<sup>1</sup> A charter is a statement that sets out a tertiary education organisation's strategy. It describes how the organisation's mission is linked to the Tertiary Education Strategy and explains how the organisation contributes to national goals and to the needs of stakeholders. The profile describes the organisation's objectives for the next three years and links them to the charter and to the Tertiary Education Strategy.



Provider contact with *industry* stakeholders on the 35 objectives of the Tertiary Education Strategy 2002-07

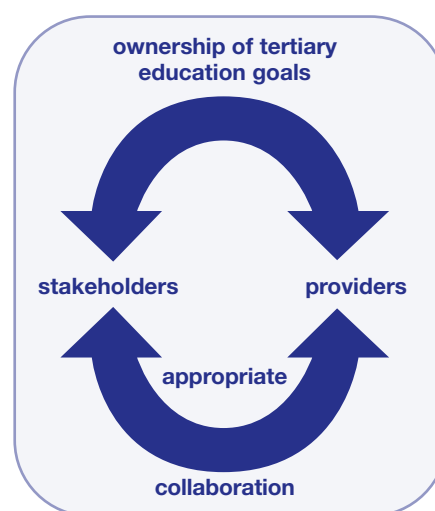
## Inspired communication – the way forward

The researchers argue that it is possible to foster contact between providers and stakeholders that creates results. That is, communication is able to take place when:

- an atmosphere of mutual respect is present
- regular provider / stakeholder meetings take place
- responsibilities for calling meetings, recording decisions and follow-up action are assigned
- stakeholders / providers agree on the aims and goals for the contact, and
- that all relevant points are tabled – and openly and frankly discussed.

## Common purpose needed

To create effective partnerships, it was considered important for providers and stakeholders to have a shared understanding of New Zealand’s economic and social goals and the national goals for tertiary education.



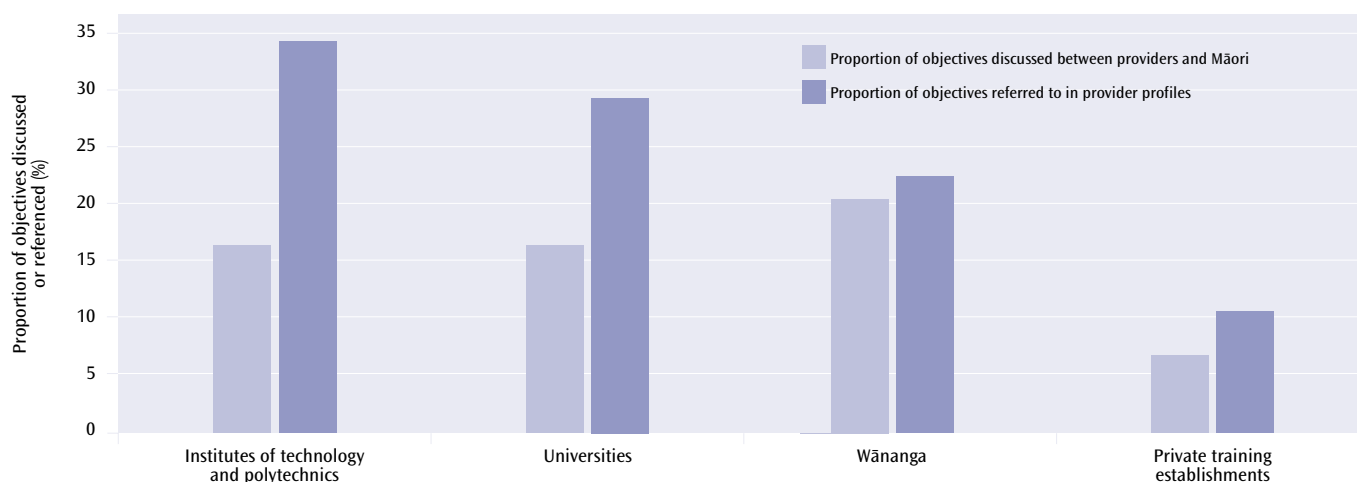
The report includes a detailed section on how to create an environment that will encourage provider / stakeholder collaboration.

## More study findings

The following suggestions were included in the study:

- That ‘inspired advisory committees’ be developed by providers as the hub where stakeholders’ contact is created.

*These committees are able to create results – they are focussed on common goals, structured, accountable and involve providers and stakeholders who are innovative and mutually respectful.*



Provider contact with *Māori* stakeholders on the 35 objectives of the Tertiary Education Strategy 2002-07

- That providers develop a simple way of collecting stakeholder contact information.
- Stakeholders regularly review their training needs while working in partnership on tertiary education and national social and economic goals.

### Resourcing issues

Funding issues were raised by some stakeholder groups in a number of contexts.

For example, joint research projects between providers and stakeholders need to be adequately resourced. Another example referred to a need for more staff support for students.

Some focus groups observed that ‘lean’ industries were not able to build contacts with the tertiary education sector due to lack of funding. On the other hand, stakeholders generally felt that the providers did not make sufficient contact with them because ‘providers were too busy’.

### Ticking off the boxes

There also was a stakeholder perception that the focus of providers is more on completing their reporting requirements – ‘ticking the right boxes’ – than on creative contact with stakeholders.

### Economic and social goals

Stakeholders struggled with the question does ‘tertiary education’, or do ‘tertiary education providers’, contribute to economic goals. The views varied widely. Only two groups felt that tertiary education contributed to economic goals. Similarly, provider views on this question were diverse. In general, providers viewed their contribution to their stakeholders’ economic goals to be moderate to substantial. However, some providers felt they had no or minimal impact on Pasifika economic goals.

Māori stakeholders saw the tertiary sector as the key to their achievement of economic and social goals. Contact with Māori was more intense than with any other stakeholder group. Graph 3 above shows contact with Māori by provider type.

In contrast, Pasifika stakeholders generally viewed their contact with providers as not contributing to their social goals.

Providers generally ranked their contribution to stakeholders’ social goals higher than that made to economic goals.

### Responding to industry

Private training establishments were seen as more able to respond to rapidly changing industry requirements. The researchers suggested that streamlining of quality management in larger institutions would enable them to respond within shorter timeframes.







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The study on stakeholder engagement was jointly commissioned by the Ministry of Education and the Tertiary Education Commission. The report's title is *Engagement of key stakeholder groups with the tertiary education providers*.

For a copy of the study report visit:

<http://educationcounts.edcentre.govt.nz/publications/tertiary/research-stakeholders.html>

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