

Aide-Memoire: VET Survey - High Level Summary

To:	Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education
From:	Brendan Kelly, Deputy Chief Executive – Information Directorate, Tertiary Education Commission
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Purpose

1. To provide you with an update on the high level summary from our recent survey on the term “Vocational” with reference to Vocational Education and Training (VET).
2. We recommend that you release this aide-memoire in full once it has been considered by you.

Background

3. In June 2018, we provided you with a paper on the perceptions of vocational education and careers in New Zealand.
4. In our July meeting with you, you asked us to undertake a survey on the term “Vocational” prior to your engagement in the consultation process for the VET review and the ITP Roadmap.
5. In August we commissioned an online survey through Nielsen to:
 - Measure awareness, understanding and perceptions of the term Vocational Education and Training (VET);
 - Compare and contrast perceptions of VET with university education and;
 - Determine whether any alternative labels (applied, practical, technical, academic) are perceived more positively.
6. The online survey was conducted from 18 to 25 September 2018.
7. The online survey of 400 people aged between 16 and 54 was conducted to confirm or negate the theory that the term ‘vocational’ is contributing to negative perceptions of education and training.
8. There were two subgroups of interest for this research. 200 people aged 16 to 24 and 200 aged 25 to 54. The total sample was weighted to represent the New Zealand population on age, gender and region.

We want to provide you with the VET Survey Report summary

9. We are providing you with a summary of the findings while we take the survey detail into consideration. At a high level the survey found the term ‘Vocational’ is not very well known nor

understood. Only half of the New Zealanders surveyed within the sample of 400 (aged 16-54 years) have heard of the term. Of those that have, most can describe some aspect of vocational education and training. For those that haven't heard of it, there is some confusion about what it could mean.

10. The survey also found that there are also clear differences in perceptions of VET and University education – reinforcing some typical stereotypes. University is more likely to be seen as prestigious, quality, and for intelligent people. University is also better for a person's long term career and earning power. Interestingly, it doesn't necessarily mean you will obtain a job once you have completed your study. VET is seen as easier to get into, skills employers need now, easier to do, more accessible, and for more practical people.
11. Some of these perceptions are based on what the respondent did in terms of their own education, and their parent's education history – potentially reinforcing decisions respondents have made, as well as capturing family values/ experiences. There are also differences by age, gender and where you live. Younger people, in particular, appear to hold university in a higher regard – potentially perpetuating what has been marketed - that they need a degree to get ahead.
12. When asked about possible alternative terms, nearly four in ten think the term 'vocational' may put people off from considering this type of education. When provided with a list of alternatives 'practical' is the most appealing for a third of people. However, views were fairly evenly spread. When asked which is the least appealing, 15% also said 'practical', which is the same proportion who selected 'vocational'. So while 'practical' may be a slightly better option, it is still not ideal. On the plus side "practical" is probably easier to understand, but there may be a risk around what it is perceived to cover, which was not tested.

Next Steps

13. We want to provide you with advice once we have unpacked the survey responses particularly with respect to the VET review and ITP Roadmap considerations moving forward.
14. We will aim to provide you with the full VET survey report and our considered advice for usage of the report findings within the next few weeks.



Brendan Kelly

Deputy Chief Executive, Information Directorate
Tertiary Education Commission

17 October 2018

Hon Chris Hipkins

Minister of Education

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