

# **SECONDARY TO TERTIARY TRANSITIONS CURRENT TRENDS**

**Andrea Thumath**

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master  
of Educational Leadership and Management  
Unitec Institute of Technology  
2019



## Declaration

**Name of candidate:** Andrea Thumath

This Dissertation/Research Project **entitled:** Secondary to Tertiary Transitions: Current Trends

is submitted in partial fulfilment for the requirements for the Unitec degree of : Master of Educational Leadership and Management

### CANDIDATE'S DECLARATION

I confirm that:

- This Dissertation represents my own work;
- The contribution of supervisors and others to this work was consistent with the Unitec Regulations and Policies.
- Research for this work has been conducted in accordance with the Unitec Research Ethics Committee Policy and Procedures, and has fulfilled any requirements set for this project by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee.

Research Ethics Committee Approval Number: **2019-1007**

Candidate Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Thumath', written over a light grey signature line.

Date: 21/10/19

Student number: 138 9127

## **Abstract**

The number of our young people transitioning from secondary to tertiary education in New Zealand continues to decline despite multiple interventions, policies and programmes put in place. This study focusses on the current trends in secondary to tertiary transition by investigating the perceptions of this transition from the perspectives of senior secondary and tertiary leaders.

The research was conducted in four Auckland secondary schools and one Auckland institute of technology. Four senior leaders from the secondary schools and three senior leaders from the tertiary institution were interviewed in semi-structured interviews to gather qualitative data to identify current transition trends across both sectors.

The study highlights the significant contributions across both sectors in the provision of secondary to tertiary transition programmes. Three central themes emerged from the research: the importance of collaboration, the value of pathway programmes and teams and the barriers created by policy versus practice. These themes and the feedback received from the leaders interviewed provided a set of recommendations.

The recommendations place a focus on: the establishment of an Advisory Panel including the various stakeholders from across each party involved in this transition, the establishment of dedicated transition pathway teams in both secondary and tertiary institutions and the call for our secondary schools to collaborate, sharing knowledge and resources across their wider community.

## **Acknowledgements**

Thank you first and foremost to the passionate and committed individuals that afforded me the privilege to interview them for this piece of research. There is an incredible amount of work going on across our communities, built on the desire to provide our young people with opportunities to explore their futures through some amazing programmes.

These programmes do not come about due to policy and funding alone. They come from the innovative minds of dedicated teams in our secondary schools and tertiary institutions coming together for the benefit of our young people in our communities. Thank you all for the time you gave to me to share your passion for this critical work, our young people are incredibly fortunate to have you in the roles you are in.

Thank you to my work whānau who have encouraged and supported me throughout this journey. It has been a particularly full on final year as this journey has come to an end and I will be forever grateful for the awhi and manaakitanga I've experienced from so many people across my institution.

Thank you to my wonderful Supervisor Dr Josephine Howse and Professor Carol Cardno my Associate Supervisor for your support. I appreciated your honesty, encouragement, keeping me on my toes and ensuring I was giving this research the effort it deserved.

# Table of Contents

<b>DECLARATION</b> .....	II
<b>ABSTRACT</b> .....	III
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b> .....	IV
<b>LIST OF TABLES</b> .....	1
<b>CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION</b> .....	2
BACKGROUND .....	2
RATIONALE .....	3
RESEARCH AIMS AND QUESTIONS.....	5
<i>Research Questions</i> .....	6
<b>CHAPTER TWO - LITERATURE REVIEW</b> .....	7
INTRODUCTION .....	7
COLLABORATION .....	7
PATHWAYS.....	11
BARRIERS .....	14
<b>CHAPTER THREE - METHODOLOGY AND METHODS</b> .....	17
INTRODUCTION .....	17
EPISTEMOLOGY .....	17
METHODOLOGY .....	18
<i>Rationale</i> .....	18
<i>Sample Selection</i> .....	19
<i>Semi-Structured Interviews</i> .....	19
<i>Validity</i> .....	22
<i>Ethical Considerations</i> .....	23
<b>CHAPTER FOUR – FINDINGS</b> .....	24
INTRODUCTION .....	24
INTERVIEW RESPONSES.....	25
<i>Question 1. What is your role in promoting the secondary to tertiary transition of senior students?</i> .....	25

Question 2. What is your understanding of the policy documents outlining secondary to tertiary transition of senior students? .....	27
Question 3. What are the main policy documents on this transition that you refer to? .....	30
Question 4. How effective are the current policy documents on secondary to tertiary transition? .....	32
Question 6. How do you collaborate with tertiary providers for the creation of these pathways? (secondary) .....	37
6a. How do you collaborate with secondary schools for the creation of these pathways? (tertiary).....	38
Question 7. What does the support look like for students engaged in these secondary to tertiary transition pathway opportunities? .....	39
Question 8. How do you manage the resourcing and funding required to support these transition pathway opportunities? .....	42
Question 9. How effective are these secondary to tertiary pathway opportunities? .....	44
Question 10. Do you monitor the ultimate progression of your students into tertiary education? (secondary question only).....	46
Question 11. What recommendations do you make for the future? .....	47
SUMMMARY .....	49
<b>CHAPTER FIVE - DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....</b>	<b>51</b>
INTRODUCTION .....	51
DISCUSSION .....	51
THE IMPORTANCE OF COLLABORATION.....	51
THE VALUE OF PATHWAY PROGRAMMES AND TEAMS .....	52
THE BARRIERS CREATED BY POLICY VERSUS PRACTICE.....	53
RECOMMENDATIONS .....	56
LIMITATIONS .....	57
FUTURE RESEARCH .....	58
FINAL WORD .....	58
<b>REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>APPENDICES.....</b>	<b>65</b>

APPENDIX 1: Secondary Leader Interview Schedule.....	65
APPENDIX 2: Tertiary Leader Interview Schedule.....	66
APPENDIX 3: Information Sheet for Participants.....	67
APPENDIX 4: Participant consent form .....	69

# List of Tables

Table 1: Summary of Emerging Interview Themes.....48



# Chapter One

## Introduction

### BACKGROUND

In New Zealand our education system is divided into five levels: early childhood, primary, intermediate, secondary and tertiary. Early childhood education is optional; the next three levels make up the compulsory part of our education system, and tertiary is optional as further education. All children must be enrolled in school by their 6<sup>th</sup> birthday and transition through from primary into secondary until year 13 (or post their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday if they decide to leave earlier). Schooling is compulsory and is intended to provide the foundations to prepare the young person for their next stage of career development, further education or employment. The New Zealand Government contributes significant funding into the higher education sector annually, investing heavily in making education accessible and as affordable as possible.

The focus of this study is the current trend of secondary school students transitioning into tertiary education in New Zealand, as transition rates nationwide have been declining since 2015 despite a number of interventions and changes in policy (Ministry of Education, 2015b, 2016a, 2017a). This issue presents significant concern to the tertiary sector due to the serious financial implications that are already affecting the sustainability of institutions, with the closure of programmes and the ultimate merging of 16 New Zealand institutes of technology. Further education or training is vital as research shows that young people without qualifications will earn at a lower level than those with qualifications throughout their adult life (Ministry of Education, 2015c, 2016c, 2017c) a trend also reflected internationally (Altbach, Reisberg, & Rumbley, 2010). Furthermore this lack of ability to earn a higher income will impact on quality of life, whānau and community (Iannelli, 2004; Middleton, 2008) and as participation in the labour force for

those with no qualifications in New Zealand has continued to decrease over the last 10 years (Ministry of Education, 2015c, 2016c, 2017c) this is now a concerning trend.

This research sought to establish leadership perceptions in four secondary schools and one tertiary institution of the transition challenges facing young people on the journey from secondary to tertiary education. The research also sought to identify successful strategies to improve this transition.

## RATIONALE

The 2010 and 2014 *Tertiary Education Strategies* have made addressing the need to increase the number of young people moving into tertiary a priority (Ministry of Education, 2010, 2014) and opportunities to engage our young people earlier have increased. Secondary to tertiary transition initiatives in New Zealand now take many forms: Youth Guarantee, The Secondary Tertiary Alignment Resource (STAR), Secondary to Tertiary Programmes (Trades Academies) and Gateway (Ministry of Education, 2010, 2014). Each programme provides opportunities for young people to experience tertiary in vocational pathway programmes and in some instances work experience, designed to support the learner to transition to higher level study, apprenticeships and employment (Ministry of Education, 2015c, 2016c, 2017c).

The concerted efforts to increase opportunities in these spaces through the Better Public Service 2012-2017 target of 85% of 18 year old's achieving NCEA Level 2 or equivalent qualifications (Ministry of Education, 2015b, 2015c, 2016a, 2016c, 2017c) has seen an increase in young people taking up these opportunities. This has also led to an increase in the number of young people achieving the minimum NCEA requirement of Level 2 (Ministry of Education, 2015b, 2016a, 2017b) and consequently an increase in young people under the age of 18 holding less than NCEA Level 3 enrolling in tertiary education and into lower level certificates (Ministry of Education, 2017b).

While there has been an increase in young people choosing to enter tertiary education under the age of 18 and entering into lower level certificates, the number of young people making the transition into tertiary education post year 13, holding NCEA Level 3 or above has been declining since 2015 (Ministry of Education, 2011, 2015c, 2016c, 2017c). With employment opportunities for those with no qualifications on the decrease (Ministry of Education, 2015a, 2016b, 2017b) in an economy where the cost of living continues to increase, quality of life and the ability to get ahead in life for our young people is now of critical concern.

In New Zealand, despite aforementioned interventions and other initiatives such as the Youth Training Incentive for young people not in employment (Ministry of Education, 2017a), the rate of young people not in education, employment or training (NEETS) remained steady in 2015 (Ministry of Education, 2016a) and increased in 2016 (Ministry of Education, 2017a) raising the question of whether these initiatives are in fact making a difference. The most recent *Profile and Trends: Tertiary Qualifications and Outcomes 2016* (Ministry of Education, 2017a) also states that in general:

People with a bachelors or higher qualification have the lowest unemployment rate. From 2015 to 2016, the unemployment rate for this group remained stable at 2.9 percent. This compared to 3.2 percent in 2011 and 2.5 percent in 2006.

The unemployment rate for people with no qualifications, at 8.2 percent, continues to be considerably higher than the rate for people with a bachelors or higher qualification. The unemployment rate for people with only a school qualification has been decreasing slowly. In 2016, this rate was 6.6 percent. (p. 10)

Therefore, as our secondary to tertiary transition rates decline, our rates for young people not in education, employment and training (NEETs) increase, as do our unemployment rates for those without a bachelor's degree or higher qualification. If a young person makes the choice not to go into further education or training, they are more likely to earn at a lower level than those with a qualification moving into their adult life (Ministry of

Education, 2015a, 2016a, 2017a). With research such as *School's out – what's next?* (Ministry of Education, 2011) and *Staying on at School: Improving student retention in Australia* (Lamb, Walstab, Teese, Vickers, & Rumberger, 2004) reporting that one of the most significant reasons for young people choosing not to transition from secondary into tertiary education, is the need/and or want for employment to support themselves or in many cases their whānau. This factor is contributing to a generation of young people that are likely to earn at lower levels than those with qualifications for the rest of their adult life.

The research project focussed on senior leaders in secondary education and senior leaders in tertiary education. It sought to identify their perceptions of the transition from secondary to tertiary education and the challenges students faced during the transition from secondary to tertiary education. Finally, it sought to identify ways in which secondary to tertiary transition could be improved.

## RESEARCH AIMS AND QUESTIONS

The aim of this research was to investigate the perceptions of senior secondary and tertiary leaders on the transition from a secondary school to a tertiary institution.

## RESEARCH AIMS

1. To investigate secondary school leader's perceptions of the transition for students from secondary to tertiary education;
2. To identify the tertiary transition challenges for secondary students from a tertiary institution leadership perspective;
3. To suggest ways of improving secondary to tertiary education transition.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the secondary school leader's perceptions of the transition for students from secondary to tertiary education?
2. What are the tertiary transition challenges for secondary students from a tertiary institution leadership perspective?
3. In which ways could secondary to tertiary transition be improved?

## DISSERTATION OUTLINE

*Chapter One, Introduction* provides the background to the research topic and the rationale for conducting the study with the research aims and questions clearly stated.

*Chapter Two, Literature Review* provides a review of national and international literature related to the transition between secondary and tertiary education.

*Chapter Three, Methodology* outlines the research design, method applied, sample and data analysis. The qualitative approach of semi-structured interviews is chosen to collect the multiple perspectives of senior secondary and tertiary leaders. The chapter also discusses the validity and ethical considerations that were taken into account when undertaking the research.

*Chapter Four, Findings* focusses on the findings of the research and data analysis gathered from interviewing senior leaders from within secondary and tertiary education. The findings are organised according to the themes that emerged from the study.

*Chapter Five, Discussions, Conclusion, Recommendations and Limitations* presents the conclusions from the study and makes recommendations to the senior leaders of secondary and tertiary education for improving practice during the transition from secondary to tertiary education.

## Chapter Two

### Literature Review

#### INTRODUCTION

Secondary to tertiary transition in New Zealand has been a key priority area in the past two *Tertiary Education Strategies* (Ministry of Education, 2010, 2014) and despite a variety of focused initiatives and funding streams, transition rates nationwide have failed to increase (Ministry of Education, 2015b, 2016a, 2017a). This chapter looks at factors that impact this transition, with a focus on the themes that have emerged from the review of literature. To begin I will look at collaboration and how it impacts on secondary to tertiary transition practice. Following on, I will explore the concept of pathways and how these impact on a young person's experience. Finally, I will examine the barriers that young people face in the secondary to tertiary transition space and how this impacts on their educational experience.

#### COLLABORATION

Authors Rayner and Corkill (2015) write of a collaborative project between the John Monash Science School and the Monash University in Melbourne, Australia. The two parties collaborated in the secondary to tertiary space to enable secondary school students to strengthen science education and transition into tertiary education. They identified a direct correlation between the issue of the declining student numbers selecting science as an option at the secondary school, and the need to upskill the teaching staff to bring about more relevance and new pedagogical approaches that would keep science relevant for its young people and promote enrolments into the university.

Both parties collaborated on the development of curriculum and resources and the University provided facilities, technology and learning experiences for the young people, and support for increasing the secondary school teacher's capacity in science education. Students and secondary teachers received mentorship from tertiary academic staff and opportunities to work on real projects and research set in a tertiary environment across a number of different disciplines. Students and teachers who have taken part in this programme have contributed to feedback that has brought about changes and a redesign of the programme contributing to the cycle of continuous improvement. Several authors support this collaborative approach (Crawford, Monson, & Searle, 2016; Education Review Office, 2015, 2016; Loader & Dalgety, 2008; Rayner & Corkill, 2015). The involvement in such programmes brings about changes to students' perceptions of previously disliked and undervalued subjects, fosters a desire to proceed into tertiary education, increases levels of engagement back at school, increases their confidence and resilience and gives them a great sense of self-belief in their own academic capabilities

Bryce and Anderson (2008) presenting their research of Australian students preparing a pathway from secondary to tertiary education, comment that students articulated the transition from one to the other as going from "being driven" to "driving yourself" (p. 45). These authors supported the need for students to be better prepared at secondary school for the pathway transition into tertiary education and supported the benefits of collaborative relationships in this space – such as the partnerships between the science school and the university.

The Education Review Office (2015) emphasises the importance of *collaboration* between secondary and tertiary providers to support effective transition practice. In order for the secondary to tertiary transition programmes to exist, there needs to be a reciprocal arrangement between both parties that ensures meaningful engagement and positive outcomes for the young people. Recently, the Education Review Office (2016) stated that tertiary providers are filling the gap for secondary schools where they are unable to meet the specialist curriculum needs themselves by providing: facilities, specialist teaching

staff, curriculum and moderation support. Furthermore, The Education Review Office advises that when both sectors truly collaborate this is to the benefit of the young person engaging in the secondary to tertiary transition programme. The young person gains an authentic experience of what that pathway may offer them as a career, giving them a clear vision of where they may wish to head.

The Secondary-Tertiary Programmes (Trades Academies) were officially launched in New Zealand in 2011, starting with 11 Academies and they have now grown to 24 programmes nation-wide (Education Review Office, 2015). These programmes were developed in collaborative partnerships between secondary schools and tertiary education organisations (TEOs). The intentions of these programmes are to increase student retention, increase the opportunities for young people to attain NCEA Level 2 and improve the transition space from secondary into higher education and further training or employment. In 2016, there were 6,900 young people engaged in Secondary-Tertiary Programmes, a 17% increase on 2015 (Ministry of Education, 2017b). Provision of spaces for young people in Trades Academies has grown since 2011 from just under 600 places, increasing by over double in the consecutive years of 2012 and 2013, reaching over 5,000 places in 2014 to now reaching just under 7,000 spaces in 2016. In 2018 1,060 additional places were opened up to current Trades Academies to bid for to increase their provision for 2019 (New Zealand Government, 2018).

The Education Review Office report: *Secondary-Tertiary Programmes (Trades Academies) What works and next steps* (2015), provided an evaluation of 15 of the 24 Trades Academies across New Zealand. At this time of this report there were 4,200 young people engaged in Trades Academies. The evaluation looked at the student experience journey: from enrolment through to completion of their secondary to tertiary programme, improvement levels of student outcomes, partnerships and how effective they were and the impact of these programmes on school and tertiary partner processes. This report noted, “Where strong collaboration was evident, the STP partners had a shared vision and made sound decisions, reliant on strong self-review practices” (p. 3). The report also highlighted that these partners worked well together to understand each other’s needs,



to mitigate the risks of different systems in order to remove barriers that impacted on the learner, and supported each other to navigate the complicated funding and requirement needs for each respective sector. Above all, it recognised that these partnerships provided positive educational opportunities and outcomes for young people who may otherwise be at risk of disengagement and not attaining their minimum NCEA Level 2, and that those that then went on to transition into Tertiary Education had a much smoother transition as they were comfortable in the environment they were about to enter, having had the opportunity to engage in it while still at school (Education Review Office, 2015).

The Educational Review Office report: *Vocational Pathways, Authentic and Relevant Learning* (2016) is a review of how secondary schools are implementing the Vocational Pathways Framework across their curriculum. The six sectors within the Vocational Pathways Rosette: Creative Industries, Primary Industries, Service Industries, Social and Community Services, Manufacturing and Technology and Construction and Infrastructure place the different employment sectors on equal levels, designed to level the playing field of career perceptions. There is room within this design for curriculum leaders within schools to work collaboratively across projects and also for schools to collaborate back out into each sector engaging industry and tertiary. They were designed to encourage schools towards a learner centric way of thinking as recommended by Lamb et al. (2004) and the Ministry of Education (2011). These authors recommended that engaging the students in authentic ways of learning and assessment to align more with the outside world of working, is preferable to reduce the lack of relevance, boredom and disengagement that many students experience at secondary school.

One of the core areas of focus of the Educational Review Office report: *Vocational Pathways, Authentic and Relevant Learning* (2016) was how well the Vocational Pathways Framework prepared young people for further education, from course to career choices. Careers advisors were found to be the champions within the schools for Vocational Pathways using the framework as a tool to support students in their choices of course selection and career choices, as early adapters to the Pathways and advocates for their use. Internally some schools were struggling to manage the complexities of

changing timetables and curriculum in order to truly integrate the Vocational Pathways across the school curriculum, while some turned their traditional ways of teaching and timetabling on its head and completely redesigned their learning and teaching delivery to align with the Pathways (Education Review Office, 2016).

The Education Review Office (2016) also found that due to the breadth and design of the Vocational Pathways, many schools are reliant on their partnerships and collaborating with other providers outside of their schools to meet the needs of their students and ensure the relevant sector related learning for each Industry. Outcomes from both of the Education Review office reports share the view that students who took part in these pathway programmes now understood the importance of a qualification. For these students, their learning transferred into their future workplace, each gained an understanding and start on their career pathway of choice at no cost to them, so they were more likely to move into meaningful work, training or further education (Education Review Office, 2015, 2016).

## PATHWAYS

Wiseman and Chase-Mayoral (2013) note that large numbers of students transitioning into tertiary straight from school were not prepared for entry into university. While they may wish to attend university, they require a period of transition to prepare them with the necessary skills to successfully navigate their first year. Each programme is affiliated with Universities from across the Arabian Gulf and are designed to support the young person's transition into tertiary education.

In New Zealand the *Pathways* that provide the means for the young person's experience of secondary to tertiary transition are now very broad, aligned with the Vocational Pathways curriculum and contextualized to the learners needs (Education Review Office, 2016). Whether it be: Careers advice, enrolments into Youth Guarantee, The Secondary Tertiary Alignment Resources (STAR), Secondary to tertiary Programmes (Trades

Academies) or Gateway (Ministry of Education, 2015a, 2016c, 2017b), each experience is affording the young person a taste of the career pathway they may wish to transition into.

In 2007 a provincial District Health Board in New Zealand launched a Programme Incubator designed to encourage Year 12 and 13 secondary school students, with a focus on engaging Māori and Pasifika who were underrepresented in the health labour force at the time, to embark on careers in health (Crawford et al., 2015). The initial programme saw the young people spend time with health professionals learning about their careers during visits to the schools. In 2011 this idea expanded even further, and a tripartite agreement came into place which engaged tertiary institutes from within the regions that provided relevant health qualifications. Research was undertaken following students who had taken part in this programme who were then mentored through their tertiary studies over a four-year period. Career guidance was identified as one key area of mentorship that is integral in supporting a young person to make the best decision when transitioning from secondary to tertiary education.

In New Zealand this guidance was strengthened in 2012 when the Government raised the educational outcomes for 16-17 year olds and prioritised Māori and Pasifika learners (Education Review Office, 2018) with the review of the Background Careers, Information, Advice, Guidance and Education policy and practice. The promotion of health-based careers for Māori and Pasifika students then received greater focus which further supported the Health Programme Incubator.

Multiple authors agree (Crawford et al., 2015; Education Review Office, 2016) that through exposure to pathway programmes, students have demonstrated improved attitudes towards learning, self-belief has increased and the students have a clearer understanding of where they may wish to head post-secondary school. The study by Crawford et al. (2015) focussed on how mentoring the student through their pathway experience, positively impacted on their education, their success and career development.

These findings were also echoed by the Education Review Office (2015, 2016) and Loader and Dalgety (2008) who stated that students engaged in pathway opportunities in education environments: are treated as young adults, are exposed to those working across their sectors of interest, are fostered in an engaging environment where they can learn from their mistakes, learn to balance practice and theory, experience the learning applied in the real-world context and enjoy their learning more. These factors then positively impact on their learning back at school as attendance, attitude, motivation and general school engagement improved contributing to better overall educational results.

The messages from the Education Review Office (2016), Loader and Dalgety (2008) and the Ministry of Education (2011) are all the same. The journey for young people through secondary school is clear, stay as long as you can and exit with the highest qualification you can, so your options are broad for your future. While each individual journey will be different, as will potential exit points depending on requirements, sound career advice and the opportunities to experience these pathways prior to leaving school, will be powerful influences.

The Ministry of Education report *School's Out What Next?* (2011) reinforces these messages by establishing that just over one third of students that exited school with lower levels of school achievement (generally NCEA Level 1 or less) were less likely to go onto further study. Approximately one third of those who achieved NCEA Level 2 would be likely to go on and study at diploma level and about the same again would likely not progress onto any further study at all. While just over 80 percent of those who gained NCEA Level 3 and the requirements for university entrance, were more likely to progress onto bachelor level study once completing school. The shared and similar findings of Education Review Office (2016), Loader and Dalgety (2008) and the Ministry of Education (2011) identified that the higher the secondary school exit qualification, the more likely was the chance for the student to study a higher level qualification.

## BARRIERS

Athanasou's (2001) longitudinal study of factors that influenced a cohort of Australian students in transition from secondary school to tertiary education, explores the factors that impact on the decision making process for young people when it comes to further educational or occupational pathways. The study identifies eight key areas: literacy, numeracy, gender, socio-economic status, geographical location, ethnicity, completion of schooling and vocational interest and describes them as a model for educational-vocational attainment. The focus in these key areas is to influence students from an early age to enhance learning outcomes. Using this model as a base to measure the achievements of the cohort participating in the study, the researchers established that within these groups of factors, some were out of the student's control such as: gender, ethnicity, geographical location and socio-economic status.

The findings above are also echoed in the writings of several other authors in later research (Higgins, Vaughan, Philips, & Dalziel, 2008; Lamb et al., 2004; Ministry of Education, 2011) suggesting little has changed to mitigate these factors over time. Athanasou (2001) suggests maintaining an awareness of the factors that are not easily changed or influenced, and influencing those factors that can be, to increase the chances of easing the transition for a young person from secondary to tertiary education.

Vargas (2004) identifies the knowledge gap that is possessed by students transitioning into tertiary education. This author notes that students who are: first in family, from lower socio-economic communities, from communities underrepresented in tertiary education, or lacking in personal connections within the educational institute they are looking to transition into, have a gap in College Knowledge.

Whereas Bryce and Anderson's (2008) research looked at the impact of the expectations of a young person's family on their post-secondary journey. Young people from lower socio-economic backgrounds were interviewed in order to gain insight into their decision-making process post their experiences at secondary school with specific focus on: the

ways in which their secondary school journey impacted their next step decision making, how they weighed up cost and benefits of next steps and what the barriers and enablers were for young people transitioning. Throughout this research young people were able to tell their own story, in the words of Bryce and Anderson;

Our purpose was not to generalise outcomes from the small sample of ten young people and nine family members. Instead, our purpose was to use a narrative-orientated interview approach to enable a deep understanding of issues raised by particular young people. (p. 42)

The stories that the young people shared presented a wealth of barriers: lack of finances, single parent families, family illness, first in family, pressure, unstable living arrangements bouncing from family to family and bad career advice, were common and constant barriers presented. From within this research a number of factors presented themselves which had the potential to mitigate the risk of many of the aforementioned barriers such as: engaging families in their young person's decision-making regarding careers as early as possible, commencing career advice in formal and informal ways from the very beginning of secondary school, provide opportunities for young people to develop resiliency and a better understanding of lifelong learning and opportunities for mentoring (Bryce & Anderson, 2008).

As identified by the Ministry of Education (2011) there are many barriers that impact on the young person's transition journey. These include: where they live, whānau influence, school decile, gender, the need to seek employment to support their whānau, disengagement at school and uncertainty of their direction of study. Lamb, et.al. (2004) comment further on the impact of whānau experience: with welfare, mental health issues and moving homes frequently, on the young person's ability and willingness to transition and to make choices regarding their future. The research of Higgins et al. (2008) also identifies that there is a correlation between life choices and the decision to leave school early, much of which is based on the influences and influencers in the young person's life.

The Education Review Office (2015) advises that when barriers are removed, or pathway programmes are in place, evidence has shown that positive change can occur in regards to a young person's attitude towards learning, their maturity, how and what they achieve and their transition into higher education, training or employment. Further studies have also shown that the decisions young people make are part of a cycle of decision-making, generally not a one-off decision. According to Higgins et al. (2008) the decisions a young person makes are impacted by many influences: influencers, life-style choices, cultural contexts, people of significance in their lives, finances, gender and ethnicity.

*Both Schools out – what's next?* (Ministry of Education, 2011) and *Staying on at School: improving student retention in Australia* (Lamb et al., 2004), report that a very significant barrier for young people choosing not to transition from secondary to tertiary is the need and/or want for employment. Whether it be to support themselves, their whānau or the desire for independence and earning rather than learning, many young people are choosing to leave and venture into the world of work post-secondary school (Lamb et al., 2004; Ministry of Education, 2011). As the labour market opportunities for young people with no or low qualifications are significantly less, this is one of the reasons why the New Zealand Government has placed priority around removing as many barriers as possible and supporting pathway programmes for young people while they are still at school with initiatives such as: The Secondary Tertiary Alignment Resources (STAR), Secondary to Tertiary Programmes (Trades Academies) or Gateway (Ministry of Education 2015 a, 2016b, 2017b) and Youth Guarantee Fees Free, Māori Pacific Trades Training and First Year Free for those who have left secondary school and are looking for opportunities to gain qualifications (Ministry of Education, 2010, 2014).

This review of literature has provided a foundation for the study that has guided the selected interpretive approach and selected method of semi-structured interviews that will be discussed in the following Chapter Three Methodology and Methods.

# Chapter Three

## Methodology and Methods

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter begins by outlining the rationale for selecting a qualitative approach for this research project which is about investigating the current trends of secondary school students transitioning into tertiary education in New Zealand, from the perspectives of senior secondary and tertiary education leaders. The data collection method of semi-structured interviews is discussed and linked to relevant literature, sample selection is explained and the data analysis strategies identified and discussed. Validity is discussed in relation to the chosen method of semi-structured interviews and finally ethical considerations are explained and discussed within the context of the four secondary schools and the one tertiary institution engaged in this study.

### EPISTEMOLOGY

The epistemological position (body of knowledge) chosen for this research was post-positivism: knowledge that is concerned with human nature, in particular with people and their environment (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011). A post-positivist view deals with people and observations of them, seen as opportunities full of learning and seeing what can be learnt from them (Bryman, 2012). Cohen et al. (2011) note that these learnings often create opportunities to challenge current theory and create new ones. According to Bryman (2012) and Merriam (2009) post-positivists recognise the influence of society and situations over scientific fact and the impact of social constructs on how individuals think and respond to given situations.



## METHODOLOGY

### RATIONALE

As this research involved people and educational institutions, it was subjective and sat within the body of social science. Therefore an interpretative approach to the collection and analysis of the data was applied (Bryman, 2012; Cohen et al., 2011). Bryman (2012) and Cohen et. al. (2011) describe interpretivism as the study of people, by people, requiring the researcher to gain an understanding of their participants' world, based on the participants' subjective experiences. Interpretivism focusses on understanding human behaviour, versus explaining human behaviour (positivism) and looks at how human actions influence outcomes. Therefore this approach is an appropriate way to investigate the beliefs of the senior leaders in secondary and tertiary education. Merriam (2009) suggests that "Interpretive research, which is where qualitative research is most often located, assumes that reality is socially constructed, that is, there is no single, observable reality" (p.8).

An interpretative research approach utilises qualitative methods of gathering data in order to be able to interpret how the participant views their own world (Cohen et al., 2011). This research approach as defined by Bryman (2012) and Merriam (2009) involves asking questions of people and their environments, observing their behaviour, social and cultural constructs, analysing documents and artefacts, writing about them and portraying them in relation to their individual social contexts. Cochran-Smith and Lylie (2009) note that this form of action research or practitioner inquiry is an important mode of educational research and a valuable way to identify opportunities for educational improvements and reform.

Merriam (2009) describes research as a way of systematically asking questions in such a way to understand the participants' experiences in relation to an experience, not simply to gather statistics or to establish a scientific number or data driven outcome. This author

states, “Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences” (p.5).

## SAMPLE SELECTION

For this research project, data was gathered through the use of seven qualitative interviews conducted with:

- Four senior secondary school leaders from a secondary school engaged with young people taking part in secondary to tertiary pathway programmes;
- Three senior leaders from a tertiary institution engaged with secondary to tertiary pathway programmes.

The research was limited to secondary schools within a similar area of a large region in New Zealand, and one tertiary institution that was located within the feeder area of that region.

## SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

An interpretative research approach was taken for this research project due to the need to gather data on people in their environment and their own subjective experiences (Chohen et al., 2011) and semi-structured interviews were selected as a means to collect the information. As defined by Fontana and Frey (2005) interviews involve two (or more) people and are a question and answer process that occurs between an interviewer and research participant, an exchange of dialogue that is designed to draw the story from the participant. According to Bryman (2012), the process enables theories to emerge from the research, rather than relying on the preconceived theories of others.

Several authors (Cohen et al., 2011; Krueger & Casey, 2014; Lichtman, 2013) agree that capable and prepared interviewers should have a deep understanding of their topic, understand all terminology (to be able to answer any questions of clarity around it), listen clearly and be able to recall any responses made by interviewees if needed later in the interview. As recommended by Lichtman (2013) the interview questions were well planned and thought through and the researcher was well prepared to conduct them, organised in their thoughts and methods of conducting the interview and was well informed in the process of conducting interviews. As described by Lichtman (2013), Cohen et.al. (2011) and Krueger and Casey (2014) the researchers' role when collecting the qualitative data from the semi-structured interviews was to become the lens by which the information was then filtered and interpreted to formulate outcomes and recommendations to improve practice.

The researcher needed to clearly define the aims of the research and to develop a set of priorities that sat within the questions. This process recommended by Bell (2007) supported the researcher to avoid going down a route of questioning that was too broad, and not being able to meet the aims of the research by coming to no conclusion. Bell also recommended that the researcher needed to be able to measure the responses of the participants, therefore the questions asked needed to be asked in a way that they were able to be measured, ensuring they were written clearly to avoid any ambiguity or uncertainty. The researcher also avoided asking leading questions that presumed the answer was clear already, or questions within questions – breaking them down into separate questions to be able to dig deeper into the data given. The following research questions were developed:

1. What are the secondary school leader's perceptions of the transition for students from secondary to tertiary education?
2. What are the tertiary transition challenges for secondary students from a tertiary institution leadership perspective?

### 3. In which ways could secondary to tertiary transition be improved?

The seven senior leaders were interviewed and the interview questions were provided to them one week prior to their scheduled interview time. All of the participants were provided with an information sheet (Appendix 3) and a schedule of questions (Appendix 1 & 2) prior to the interview. The researcher then requested that ahead of the interview that they read the information sheet and sign the consent form (Appendix 4).

The researcher presented a well structured set of interview questions in relation to the topic, that they understood clearly themselves, which according to Cohen et. al. (2011) is important as qualitative research is about gaining an understanding of an individual's experiences. The questions were relevant to the environment of the participant, the wording of the questions clear and precise and relative to the research topic of secondary to tertiary education transition. As defined by Lichtman (2013) one of the key skills required by the researcher to conduct the interview was the use of the interviewers own interpersonal skills of active listening, the ability to read people and remain alert to verbal and non-verbal cues, and the insertion of a little bit of appropriate humour. According to Krueger and Casey (2014) and Lichtman (2013) the researcher needed to ensure that the interview process was understood and ensured that adequate time was provided to answer the questions. Several authors (Cohen et al., 2011; Krueger & Casey, 2014; Lichtman, 2013) cautioned that if an interview was not structured well the quality of the interview experience and response could be negatively impacted. According to Bell (2007) and Krueger and Casey (2014) the order in which questions were asked needed to be in a logical way to ensure that any questions that were linked to each other would flow in such an order that they made sense to the participant.

## DATA ANALYSIS

Cohen et al. (2011) recommend the validation of data transcripts as an approach to ensure the accuracy and validity of the data gathered. The interviews of the four

secondary leaders and the three tertiary leaders were transcribed and transcripts of each interview was validated by the participants. The participants were given a period of two weeks to remove or to make any changes to their individual transcripts, and had the right to withdraw within that same time frame.

The transcripts of these interviews were thematically analysed to identify the key concepts, patterns and themes (Bryman, 2008). Once each transcript was verified they were colour coded according to common themes that emerged linking them back to the literature. The researcher then analysed the data using a thematic approach to identify the presentation of any common issues or themes.

This enabled the researcher to identify clearly the perceptions and challenges faced during the transition journey from secondary to tertiary education.

## VALIDITY

Schools were invited to take part on a voluntary basis, with the researcher requesting a volunteer who was a senior leader in their respective educational institution (secondary or tertiary) currently engaged in the transition of students from secondary to tertiary education. The volunteers from the secondary education sector were endorsed by the principals within each school as having sufficient experience and understanding of the research topic to ensure they were suitable interviewees, whereas the volunteers from within the tertiary institution were endorsed by the Executive Dean Academic.

Following the recommended approach of Cohen et al. (2011) to ensure the validity of the interview questions, the same clear, non-leading questions were asked, keeping to the same order of questions and format. Questions were worded clearly and precisely, were relevant to the topic and were exactly the same for each participant. Open ended questions ensured the respondent gave their own view, not one that is tainted by the

questions asked. This consistency of approach also included the time of day, location type and the setting up of the room where the interviews took place.

Cohen et al. (2011) noted that the validity of the research was imperative to ensure that it was useful and worthwhile. These authors also reminded us that as this research project was qualitative, it would involve the telling of stories that belonged to others. Therefore, it was critically important that the researcher remained honest, upheld integrity and honoured the stories they were telling.

There was an endeavour to triangulate the findings of the study with the two different perspectives of secondary leaders and tertiary leaders that provided a multi-perspective triangulation to achieve validity.

## ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

For this research project the participants were limited to four secondary schools and one tertiary institution currently engaged in secondary to tertiary transition programmes. All participants were adults so there are no ethical considerations that need to be taken in regards to under 16 year olds. An information sheet (Appendix 3) was prepared for all participants ahead of the signing of the consent form (Appendix 4) before the interview was conducted.

Bell (2007) cautioned that interviewees, schools, institutions and individual programmes need to be anonymous and confidential to ensure no harm be done to any of the participants. To avoid an imbalance of power similarly Bryman (2012) and Cohen et al. (2011) recommended the researcher held no position of authority or influence over any of the volunteers to avoid a conflict of interest and ensure anonymity and confidentiality.

The research proposal was sent to the ethics committee, revised with any feedback received and approved for commencement on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of March 2019.

## Chapter Four

### Findings

#### INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the findings of the interviews held with the four secondary and the three tertiary leaders. Following email approaches to the secondary schools and the tertiary institution, responses to the request for semi-structured interviews were high. Only one secondary school on the initial list failed to respond, so an alternative one was approached that responded quickly and was very enthusiastic to take part in this research. Leaders at the secondary schools and tertiary institution who were interested in taking part were quick to engage in interviews, eager to stress the importance of the opportunity to share their thoughts on current secondary to tertiary transition trends.

The semi-structured interview findings were analysed qualitatively and coded to identify similar themes. There were many positive correlations between the responses of the secondary and tertiary leaders across the majority of the questions, with many similar opinions and recommendations that provided a multi perspective triangulation to enable validity. Common themes were established across the responses and it was clearly established from all of their responses, that providing the best opportunities for young people in their schools and institutions sits at the centre of all they do.

Three main themes were identified throughout their responses: collaboration, pathways and barriers. The data is presented under each of the interview questions asked, with any differentiation between the questions asked of the secondary leader and tertiary leader clearly identified to show how data has been triangulated. These consolidated views are presented in a key finding related to each question. Participants were coded to clearly denote the area they came from, by using the coding structure of SL1, SL2, SL3 and SL4 for secondary leaders and TL1, TL2 and TL3 for tertiary leaders.

## INTERVIEW RESPONSES

### ***Question 1. What is your role in promoting the secondary to tertiary transition of senior students?***

The four secondary leaders interviewed all play key roles in policy and strategic setting of direction within their respective secondary schools. This responsibility gives them clear oversight and understanding of the wider school curriculum and therefore the opportunity to influence and create opportunities in the secondary to tertiary transition space. Subsequently they are some of the key relationship holders with their local tertiary provider, in most instances seeing them the key decision maker when it comes to the design of collaborative opportunities for their students.

Across the four secondary leaders interviewed, there was a range of experience when it came to engagement in the more recent initiatives such as Trade Academies. This experience ranged from very experienced with having been engaged from when Trade Academies were first established, to the more recently engaged. Two secondary leaders commented on their roles:

SL3: *So, I am the link person between my school and the local tertiary provider, and so my main role there is to develop close relationships so that we can look at opportunities that work for our young people. And then to really connect them with the young people at school, and look at those who are maybe not getting quite what they need in a mainstream setting and look for ways we can maybe complement that in the tertiary setting.*

SL4: *My role really is to make that happen and open up the space and ensure through a program that we've developed for our tamariki, that if they are going to go into that tertiary space, then that is definitely the space they want to go to and they can play with it, they can be a part of it before they even move into this space once they leave school.*



The tertiary leaders interviewed have all played roles in establishing secondary to tertiary transition programmes to support young people into tertiary education, while currently all employed at the same institution, one has had prior experience at another institution as well, providing a broad understanding and depth of experience to the interview responses. This gave particularly strong insights when it came to discussing resourcing such programmes as they had different experiences when it came to how such programmes were funded. Two tertiary leaders have commented on the development of a secondary to tertiary pathway in their institution:

TL1: *So my role has been around the development of strategy and opportunity really, about five years now, maybe a little longer. The secondary tertiary STP work, we are still relatively new in the ITP sector. We had an opportunity to engage in the network. I could see the value of that, the students, I could see the value out of talking to the community. My role has been one of opportunity, development of peoples' growth, planning, relationships to enable the activity to occur.*

TL3: *Okay, I've had several different roles in this. I've been part of the tertiary high school set up in XXXX, where my role was to oversee the faculty that facilitated 50% NCEA school type work and 50% into trades vocation, so they ended up with the NCEA results and a trade and an entry into either work or trades. That's one. Another one is here, where I've been head of bridging, and that was at the time the vocational pathways came out, so we took that as an opportunity to rewrite the programs aligned to the pathways.*

## KEY FINDINGS

Common across each secondary and tertiary leader is the responsibility to identify pathway opportunities for young people by looking for ways to partner with each other. One cannot happen without the other. In order for any of this to happen, secondary and tertiary leaders are managing a number of moving parts from funding to staffing, curriculum design and integration and the operational logistics involved in moving young people between secondary and tertiary. They must then promote this across their schools, tertiary institutions and community ensuring understanding and support from staff, students and whānau.

### ***Question 2. What is your understanding of the policy documents outlining secondary to tertiary transition of senior students?***

Responses to this question from the secondary leaders was mixed, ranging from focussing on their own internal school policies, to government policy to vague or no understanding of the specific transition policy documents available in this space. Those that have had more experience operating in for example the Trade Academy space, have a much stronger understanding of the policy and documents aligned with it. Two of the secondary leaders expressed reliance on the tertiary partner and Ministry of Education for support in understanding what is required of them. These same two leaders spoke of the schools need to develop their own ways of practice that best works for their students and school and seeking opportunities where they could find them due to not having had the same access to secondary to tertiary transition funded programmes as others. They had to work to find creative solutions to open up pathways for their students. Three of the secondary leaders commenting:

SL1: *Internally our own documents that involve secondary to tertiary students. Our curriculum document is a whole curriculum document built around students having coherence and relevance to their programmes and that programmes are*

*connected both within school, but also have a future pathway. In terms of our secondary tertiary the NCEA curriculum, broader curriculum it fits within that umbrella, and outside of this ones about the logistics of students being off site and out of class and all those things as well. So yeah. Um, then there are health and safety policies, so it comes into a number of documents and policy.*

SL3: *Probably not that good really, to be honest. In terms of policy, I guess we've developed our own ways of practice which work for our kids, so I guess the problem is you try and develop that practice and maybe without looking enough at what the policy is.*

SL4: *I guess our main knowledge in the policy really rests with the people who tell us about it. You know to go to you guys at the local tertiary provider and to the Ministry when we need to get some information. (SL4)*

The tertiary leaders also had varying understanding of the policy documents aligned to the secondary to tertiary transition space. From engagement in the establishment of a number of secondary to tertiary transition programmes and a sound understanding of the policy required to do so, to very little understanding of the policies. The two tertiary leaders with a broader understanding of this transition space spoke of the flexibility available through the variety of funding mechanisms, but drew attention to the fact they both were unsure that the actual funding models themselves aligned to these were right. The tertiary leader with less experience in this space spoke of the tensions between the needs of the multiple agencies engaged in the transition space. These tensions and conflict making it difficult to easily interpret and understand some of their supporting policy. The three tertiary leaders made the following comments:

TL1: *I'm pretty well versed in the policy that falls out of the youth guarantee under STP and it's one of the strategies that government put in place. It's got a variety of*

*different funding mechanisms and models of delivery. Which is good. Creates flexibility, although I'm not convinced that they've got the funding model quite right.*

TL2: *Exceedingly weak, actually. I understand the value proposition for secondary to tertiary transition. At the same time, I'm a little bit confused as to what was the rationale for the secondary to tertiary transition in the first place. And I'm not entirely convinced that NZQA, or New Zealand government, or even the TEC actually know what they want. I know what we do at the polytechs, and I know what they do at the school. So I understand, you know, you can actually see that and you can see both parties working together. You know, I can imagine there's a bit of tension from time to time. But you can see that both parties are working for the interests of the student.*

TL3: *Quite confusing. From the UK, my first experience with secondary tertiary transition was in the UK, and they call them special diplomas, where they took 14-year olds into a tertiary setting and you taught the vocational pathways. I found it quite confusing here, because they had so many different things going on. They have Gateway, they have Trades Academies, they have Vocational Pathways, they had day release at tertiary and that sort of thing, so that really confused me. It could be far better, it could be far more streamlined.*

## KEY FINDINGS

It is evident from the responses across both the secondary and tertiary leaders that there is wide divide across the understanding of the policy documents that relate to the secondary to tertiary transition of senior students. While those more experienced in this space appeared to have a clearer understanding than those newer to the policies, across all parties interviewed they spoke of the confusion of multiple policies, parties and practices.

**Question 3. What are the main policy documents on this transition that you refer to?**

Much like Question 2, varying degrees of understanding were demonstrated, the responses varied dependent on the leader and their secondary schools current access to secondary to tertiary funding streams. Secondary schools focussed on their own internal policy documents, the New Zealand Certificate in Educational Achievement (NCEA) through to the Ministry of Education policies focussed on Trade Academy, Dual Pathways Pilot and the wider Youth Guarantee suite of programmes.

While the depth of understanding varied immensely, the four secondary leaders all agreed that the current policies are: confusing, constantly changing, vary broadly from funding model to funding model, have complex guidelines depending on what funding was being accessed and are sometimes difficult to understand. The two secondary leaders that have been in the Trade Academy space for a while now and have well established Vocational Pathway programmes, both agreed that the policies are reviewed frequently enough that secondary schools are able to adapt their practices to ensure they are compatible and still employ some level of flexibility. This level of understanding however, reflective of the time they have been engaging with the policy, with their understanding growing over time. Two of the secondary leaders commenting:

SL2: *Okay, well, obviously we've got the Ministry documents, which are targeted at Trades Academies. And there are quite a number of those documents, and there's quite a lot of, it's a developing process so continually changes. I mean, it always was. And, in the first few years it was outstanding, because there were very few rules. That was in XXXX days, and we got involved because of our work with a Tertiary Institute and our proposal regarding senior students.*

SL3: *Well, I guess we have been really involved Dual Pathways Pilot, so in terms of knowledge, we knew about how that worked and we've wanted access to the Trades Academy stuff, but of course, we don't have access to that so that's why we don't really understand so much about that.*

These responses were also somewhat reflective of the tertiary leaders, each expressing a varying degree of understanding, dependant on length of time engaged in the secondary to tertiary transition space. Their combined feedback was that at a national level there are a number of confused models, with multiple agencies involved making decisions around establishing policy while not all in the same room. While the policies in play currently may be straightforward for our secondary schools, there are a range of disconnects between the various agencies engaged that create barriers for tertiary institution's to do the right thing for our young people. Across the tertiary leaders, it was felt that the Ministry of Education, Immigration New Zealand, Tertiary Education Commission, all need to be in the same room creating the policies around secondary to tertiary transition, consulting across the sector. Two of the tertiary leaders commenting:

TL1: *It's still an incredibly complex place to work. It's complex because there are so many tiers to the secondary to tertiary transition space. STP policy enslaved masters and until you get all those masters in the room being NZQA, the Ministry of Education, principals of secondary schools, ITPs, PTEs, until you get all those in the room to nut out that policy and implication around framework, it will continue to be a challenging space to work in.*

TL2: *Only what would be within our institution itself. And when you look at our policy documents you're looking at the child protection act. And obviously the documents which are written internally within the institution. But anything wider, then no. And to be honest with you, I don't believe it's that visible.*

## KEY FINDINGS

As with Question 2, a varying degree of understanding of the policy documents that relate to the secondary to tertiary transition of senior students presented itself in the interview findings. This lack of understanding translating into a varying range of knowledge across both the secondary and tertiary leaders. There was agreement across both sectors of the

complex and confusing nature of the range of policies related to secondary to tertiary transition, so much so that across the secondary leaders interviewed two of the secondary leaders and one of the tertiary leaders advised that they have very little understanding what the actual policies are.

***Question 4. How effective are the current policy documents on secondary to tertiary transition?***

This question again brought forward varied responses from the senior secondary leaders, due to current levels of access to the funding mechanisms that help in supporting these transition initiatives. Those with current strong levels of access, recognised that there were some barriers in place due to the complex nature of each different funding stream, that while it took work to juggle the different policies and it was not easy to do so, most policy was providing them with what they needed to support the programmes they have in place. One of these senior leaders who has been involved in the Trade Academy space since its inception, felt strongly that this piece of policy in particular was the best in terms of what is available. The constant re-evaluation of this policy in particular keeping it agile enough to respond to needs and remain flexible.

The senior secondary leaders with little or no access to some of the secondary to tertiary transition funding models were less positive about the effectiveness of the policies finding them difficult to access, then once assessed, difficult to understand. It was felt by one of the leaders that unless you were already engaged in the Trade Academy space in particular, it was fruitless trying to understand it as gaining access to funding was difficult. So why go to the trouble of gaining an understanding if you could not access it, or it was only going to be around for a limited time – in such cases as recent pilots such as the Dual Pathways. Two of the secondary leaders commenting:

SL2: *The documents from the Trades Academy recognising that they are still constantly developing, and therefore, if you don't keep reading it, it gets confusing, and*

*possibly ambiguous, but then it's really, I like the fact that it's developing rather than something that's outdated, or becomes outdated, and not knock any value, so I think it's brilliant. So, from that point of view, from that particular part of the ministry, I think it's good, rest of its crap.*

SL3: *Well, not very really, because I guess the thing is it's not easy to find out about. It's not... I'd like to think that if it was easy to find out about, I would know about it and you know, the problem is it seems like such a complicated area and things change often enough and if you're not within the sort of Trades Academy sort of side of things, everything else seems like quite a lot of hard work and it seems like it's always quite unsustainable, it's a pilot and you're dipping into that cash where you're trying to top it with it, as opposed to anything that's worth really getting to know about because it's sticking around.*

With a similar view, the tertiary leaders expressed concerns around the complexities of the different funding models, lack of confidence in those that created the different models and their understanding of the impacts that their decisions have had on those trying to partner and execute in these transition spaces. Decisions made to change policies that then impact the ability for tertiary institutions to deliver, too many policies which makes it confusing for all stakeholders and too many chiefs across a number of agencies making misaligned decisions. Two of the tertiary leaders commenting:

TL1: *I would say my experience with the effectiveness of the policy is limited. I still don't have confidence that the people who have created the policy have a really detailed understanding of how things work on the ground floor. I think the wonderful policies put together by smart bureaucrats in Wellington, but I'm not convinced that they have had a real detailed understanding of feedback from people of the various elements of this policy that are required to make it work.*

TL3: *Again, I still think they're confused. There's too many things going on and I think they could streamline a true pathway. I mean, if it's vocational pathways and TEC*



*strategy, take that and mould it into one strategy and policy document that everybody sticks to. What you've got is, you've got NZQA, you've got TEC and you've got the Ministry of Education, and there's three chiefs there. You need one person to mould it together.*

## KEY FINDINGS

As would be expected following on from the responses from Questions 2 and 3 regarding policies and the leaders understanding of them, varying degrees of understanding the effectiveness also presented themselves in the interview findings across both sectors. Further concerns regarding the complexities of the range of policies, funding and the impact this has on delivery were raised across each leader interviewed.

### ***Question 5 How does your school create pathway opportunities for secondary to tertiary transition?***

Each of the secondary leaders interviewed spoke of the need to identify and anticipate the individual needs of their students. With the exposure to the curriculum development that comes with their leadership roles, the leaders are then able to integrate opportunities into the school wide curriculum. Where gaps or partnership needs are identified, they then seek to find the opportunities for their students that will enable them to experience the pathway in a value added way. Identification of student needs is done in number of ways from paper based to face to face interviews, regardless the method it is individualised and revisited with students throughout their secondary journey.

The two secondary schools that currently offer a wider provision of activity have well established purpose built facilities, specialist staffing and access to funding models and streams that support the resourcing of their now well establish transition pathways. Students are timetabled into specific pathways classes that provide them with additional time to complete any additional secondary and tertiary work required for each subject,

additional pastoral care and connection to Industry Training Organisations. They have built this over time and have the volume of students that then justify full cohorts of students across a variety of pathway subjects. Students are provided with transportation support, specialist equipment and tools for their tertiary component and contextualised specialist additional classes if required.

A stark contrast is the limited provision in the two secondary schools that have limited access to additional funding models and streams, purpose built facilities, technology and specialist teachers. The schools are more reliant on accessing bits and pieces of funding and smaller scale opportunities. Collaboration with tertiary providers and across other secondary schools within their local area to provide these pathways was identified as a critical factor in creating these opportunities for their young people. Two secondary leaders describe their pathway opportunities:

SL2: *Well, obviously we've got the academies, and we've got a number of students in the academies. Pretty comfortable with most of the outcomes that we're getting. You know, the data that we've got shows a real improvement in terms of school results in fact, because of the fact that we've got nearly a third of our kids are involved in the academies, not necessarily funded, but involved in that. And, instead of being the bottom third in terms of achievement, the majority of those kids, are achieving, and NCEA's a classic example. At level two, we were getting a 50-60% pass rate, and now we're getting a 98%.*

SL4: *We designed a program, it's called XXXX for our students. What our programme focuses on is making sure that those doors are open for when our kids are ready to go through them, when they are ready to go through whether still in school or after. We've done everything we can to make sure those doors are open as opposed to get to their door and then have the wrong qualifications.*

The tertiary leaders identified different levels of engagement in providing secondary to tertiary pathway opportunities. The first leads a space that currently provides the majority of the tertiary institutions vocational pathway offerings to its local secondary schools. The

second was pivotal in setting up the institutions secondary to tertiary transition team, but in their current role is leading a space offering limited transition opportunities to secondary schools. The third has vast secondary to tertiary transition experience at other tertiary institutions and private training establishments. While differing in their experiences creating these pathways, all three agreed that strong partnerships with secondary schools, the right staff delivering to the young people while they were on their tertiary pathway experience and the right facilities. As with their secondary school counterparts, they also raised the difficulties that come with fragmented funding models with a lack of equity in access. Two tertiary leaders commented:

TL1: *The school I'm in at the moment is very limited and it's a work on for us. The school that I've come from, a good example for that would be a programme we created, it was designed and delivered from within that school which was one of the teams that sat within a wider bridging programme network. It was done in collaboration with the secondary schools. We started at NCEA level 2. We ran a pilot where we reviewed that, we tweaked it, we fine-tuned it, working with the secondary schools and their student feedback, and then improve that over a three-year period.*

TL2: *In the past, the secondary stuff was an add on, something else that we had to do, which was exceedingly unpopular. As it's become more embedded, I could go so far to say it's become business as usual. So it's still unpopular in some way, shape or form, and it's still not given the full attention that it deserves, but it is a vital piece of work.*

## KEY FINDINGS

Much like the difference of provision across each of the secondary schools interviewed, there also appeared to be differing levels of provision across the different areas within the tertiary institution. In both sectors, key factors that impact the provisioning of transition programmes equitability and consistently across both the secondary schools and tertiary institution, include access to different funding models and streams, specialist staffing and

resources required to deliver specialist disciplines. Both secondary and tertiary leaders also noted the large amount of work and support required to successfully implement transition programmes.

***Question 6. How do you collaborate with tertiary providers for the creation of these pathways? (secondary)***

For secondary school leaders the collaboration they undertook involved strong partnerships with tertiary providers, made easier in instances where they had dedicated tertiary transition teams in place. With the communication streamlined through one area at any provider, strong relationships and systems have been developed that ensure the students are well supported while they are at the tertiary provider. The importance of the tertiary institutions getting this right was stressed by one of the interviewees, easier they stressed in smaller organisations where they have the ability to be more agile and somewhat difficult in larger organisations with lots of moving parts and people. Strong collaborative relationships are key to these partnerships for all four secondary schools. Transition teams at the tertiary providers were identified across all interviews as making a big difference to the pathway experience, creating opportunities for secondary students to get to know the faces and spaces of tertiary in a supported and safe way, key to the positive experience and likelihood to transition. Two of the secondary leaders describe their collaboration:

SL2: *I mean the nature of the collaboration depends on the personnel to a very significant extent. There are some tertiary organizations that want to drive it, and we tend to clash. It's gotta be a partnership, and I think we have to respect the tertiary institutions, but it's for both. Some are in it for the money, and there's not all that much money, so it becomes a disappointment, but the majority, and certainly the ones that we work with, the individual people are outstanding. Sometimes the organizations that they work for are not necessarily conducive to outcomes that we all want, so the structures do need to improve in some. In other*

*organizations, the smaller ones in particular, they're obviously much more able to adjust quickly to different aspects.*

SL3: *Solely through a pathways team at the local tertiary provider. So, it's literally the connection between this team and the good thing is that is sustainable because we've been able to broaden those connections out from just myself and the lead there, to the wider team and the wider school area.*

***6a. How do you collaborate with secondary schools for the creation of these pathways? (tertiary)***

Strong, genuine partnerships with secondary school partners via a dedicated transition team has been pivotal, relevant curriculum and specialty teaching staff and a quality learning and teaching experience were all seen as key to collaborating with secondary schools for the creation of these pathways. It was also apparent that the tertiary institutions do not always get it right, instances in the past where curriculum was not engaging, relationships strained poor decisions made impacting the experience for students. Complex questions need to be asked in order to get the curriculum right and both parties need to be willing to compromise.

A dedicated secondary to tertiary transition team was identified by two of the tertiary leaders, describing the student support, administration, programme design and transitioning of the students into tertiary as a valuable model. The team able to work collaborative internally and externally to best meet the needs of the secondary schools and their students. Two of the tertiary leaders describe how they collaborate:

TL1: *Let me point out though, so where ITPs and PTEs get it wrong, is if they think they have the answer or the solution for schools. You have to build these together and that's difficult. The easy thing to do is to do it yourself and then go to Mike and go, "This is what we've got for you", because you don't have the collaboration between*

*secondary schools and the ITPs and the TEC around funding and all NZQA, but I don't believe that's in the best interest of the students. You need to have those complex conversations to get the design right, which is in the best interest of the students.*

TL2: *When we do collaborate, we go through one central source our Secondary Pathway team. I suppose it's our institutions policy now, which is an amazing, amazing call. We have had situations in the past where lecturers have gone rogue and agreed things which were probably in the best intentions but without consideration of the realities. And that backs you into a corner. Because what we'd end up doing then is not being able to fulfill our promises. We have an obligation to fulfill it. So we end up having to throw resource at it, coming out of the budget of the school. And that's only fair. We promised, we need to deliver. And then it adds extra tension and creates friction between staff members. Because obviously they've got to pick up the extra work. So coming up with the idea and then running through one central point of contact who can then test, evaluate and question, and then take the proposition forward is far more efficient and is far more effective than a member of staff making direct contact with the school.*

## KEY FINDINGS

Across both the secondary and tertiary responses the keys to collaboration were the same: strong, genuine relationships, transition teams, designing student centred experiences together, doing this with each other not to and re-evaluating when things don't go quite the way you expected.

***Question 7. What does the support look like for students engaged in these secondary to tertiary transition pathway opportunities?***

Two of the four secondary schools engaged in secondary to tertiary transition programmes have been so for some time now. The length of their engagement in this space appears to be enabling well-structured support systems, resourcing and integration within the wider school curriculum and timetabling. For those newer to these programmes, one discussed finding their feet after the first year, continual development and the importance of relationships and connections back into the local tertiary provider. The final secondary school has established a specific programme back at school, with a core focus on transition support whether that be into tertiary, apprenticeship or employment. The team within this programme providing the vital link and identifying opportunities and partnerships across the community for the benefit of their young people.

The four secondary leaders all acknowledged the level of support for their students required in the transition space was high. One school spoke of the support they provide to students that are not receiving strong support at home: additional life skills, organisation and resources to ensure the young people are able to transition into tertiary and independence. Another school spoke of the work they do in transporting their students from the school to the local train station on time to ensure that they are arriving at their course on time – and learning to use public transport. Examples such as these removing barriers that would otherwise prevent the young person participating in these experiences and supporting them towards independence post-secondary school. Two of the secondary leaders describe the support they provide:

SL1: *We transport, which is something that we as much as we want students to get independence in terms of what they do, a lot of our students just tend to be students that need to be transported, they need that support as in many cases they don't get it at home. We have had some staff come back and volunteer to help us to do it. It does mean that it takes away a potential barrier for the kids such as getting somewhere, being organised, having the right gear and support. The tertiary thing in terms of hopefully they all arrive together and that supports it and we want to take away some of those supports as the kids get older and move out of school, we found this makes it most successful.*

SL3: *To be fair, that would probably be an area we should work on more. It's that pastoral support area so in terms of the practicalities around organizing how they move between school and tertiary, that's sort of easy and once you've done it once, you sort of roll it over. So those supports are fine, but what needs greater support is the pastoral care of those students, particularly the ones who, for whatever reason, are struggling, and at the moment, no one is tasked with that particular responsibility and so that is a bit of a problem and the other area of support that really struck me with some of our students, I hadn't thought about it before, was the transition out of school. So, they've done the pathway through the local tertiary provider, they're ready to leave school and actually they need heaps of help and that's where we've really been access back into the pathways support structure at our local tertiary provider but it's not something that we really had happening in our school as a whole.*

All tertiary leaders spoke of the complex nature of the transition space. The multiple layers of policy, agencies and conflicting process that makes a large portion of the activity a lot more difficult than it should be was a common theme that presented itself. Two of the three tertiary leaders referenced the institutions secondary to tertiary transition team and the importance of that role and link between the secondary schools and the tertiary environment. A team such as this acknowledged as key to supporting tertiary experiences and transitions and improving the overall secondary to tertiary process. All tertiary leaders spoke of the time and resource heavy requirements required in order to support and execute this activity successfully. One of the tertiary leaders commented:

TL1: *From the perspective of this institution, I think it significantly improved under the dedicated secondary transition team here. The secondary transition team is a game changer. I think the support, not just from our student experience when speaking to them but, administration, back room, program design all the way through to helping students transition into tertiary I think is the model. I think it's*



*fabulous. I like the fact that this secondary transition team is now centralised back into the centre of the organisation.*

## KEY FINDINGS

Across both the secondary and tertiary leaders it was acknowledged that the secondary to tertiary transition work is extremely important and of immense benefit to the young people engaged in the experiences. Policy and the issues around the complexities of it a common thread throughout a number of responses across multiple questions, from a number of the secondary and tertiary leaders. Both secondary and tertiary leaders noted the benefits of dedicated transition links and teams, also acknowledging that in order to do this work justice, a significant investment of resource is required by all.

### ***Question 8. How do you manage the resourcing and funding required to support these transition pathway opportunities?***

All of the secondary leaders commented on the complicated variety and nature of funding transition programmes. In some cases, the variety of funding mechanisms available added to the complications. Those schools with well-established access to the full range of funding streams available for secondary to tertiary transition also appear to have well-established processes and programmes across their schools. In contrast, those with limited or no access to some of the funding provisions struggle to identify the resources, to fund the opportunities available to their students, which limits access to the secondary to tertiary transition programmes for their students. Two of the secondary leaders commenting:

SL1: *As there are various pots, pots of money, there's different sources, it does make it difficult. So, um, but what we've done is, is put them under the same people. So XXXX and I managed the budgets and we manage all of it, STAR the TEC gateway, the Trade Academy STP funding, all under the same people, all coming*

*into the same spend and out of the same spend area. So it does mean that we have overview, but it is different systems and so the reporting systems, and different requirements does make it complicated for us. Students need to be over here for this one and can be more freely over there for the other.*

SL3: *That's a big juggle. That is a problem because every year it means that it's not a particularly sustainable model going forward. There's always a bit of a question mark because the courses are very expensive for us and just this year though we've tapped into some Trades Academy funding but, in general, especially for things like the computer science course, we're funding a lot and there is a definite feel in the parent community that, you know, a donation... that you don't have to contribute to any of it.*

Similar themes presented themselves in the interviews with the tertiary leaders, the complicated nature of the multiple parties involved, policy and funding across the secondary to tertiary transition space adding layers of complexities that appear to make it a frustrating area to work in. One tertiary leader commenting that:

TL1: *It's complex because there are so many tiers to the secondary tertiary transition space. STP policy enslaved masters and until you get all those masters in the same room being NZQA, the Ministry of Education, principals of secondary schools, ITPs, PTEs, whatever there are two or three people that might sit there and work out what it looks like, TEC around funding... until you get all those in the room to nut out that policy and that implication around framework, it will continue to be a challenging space to work in.*

## KEY FINDINGS

Both secondary and tertiary leaders agreed that the secondary tertiary transition space is a complex space to work in when it comes to resourcing what is required to make it happen.

**Question 9. How effective are these secondary to tertiary pathway opportunities?**

All the secondary leaders stressed the importance and value of these opportunities. Regardless of the length of time a secondary school had been engaging across the pathway opportunities, every secondary leader interviewed commented on the deficit impact there would be without access to these pathways and the positive impact they were bringing to their schools and community. Two of the secondary leaders commenting:

SL1: *Oh, uh, it's huge you know, that we have close to 300 to 400 students go out, on some sort of program that link to some pathway. I was saying the other day what would it be like if we didn't have those. What would it be like? If we didn't have those pathways you know, whereas we've got this positive ethos of the school and students love being here, what would it be like without those, students just wouldn't want to be here. Because the pathways that we offered would just be like the old traditional subjects, it wouldn't be relevant, it wouldn't be authentic learning to them. So it is just a game changer in terms of keeping students in school, keeping them learning and crossing over into when they leave here into other pathways that are worthwhile.*

SL3: *Phenomenology effective, I think. Really, I think back to our first year which is probably the biggest and that was providing real clear pathways from school to work for kids via some high quality tertiary pathway and that is exactly what we should be doing. Those kids are often left scrambling around, for those who don't have connections within their families to get into whatever trade or post-school learning that they want to do, they're... if they don't have that support, then they're left scrambling around, so these pathways have really secured that sort of route for students.*

Likewise, all tertiary leaders shared the sentiments of the secondary leaders stressing the importance and value of these pathway opportunities, however there was some

discussion from one of the tertiary leaders regarding how you define 'effective', and how this contributes to the view of success. Two of the tertiary leaders commented:

TL1: *This experience, if it's a positive one gives them that self-belief, "Hey, actually tertiary is not as scary as I thought, I really like it and I know the people and they care for me and I'm being successful there, and I can see a line of sight in something that's of interest to me in automotive engineering or building carpentry or whatever it might be and that I'd need to know the detail", but they suddenly have, they looked, they get ideas and find an outlet for their passion and their learning. There's a lot of research that goes on to say once you find that light in those young people in terms of their learning pathway, the other subjects or the other areas of learning that weren't particularly of interest to them, suddenly become a lot more relevant.*

TL3: *If you're looking through a NZQA lens, so for qualification completion, not effective at all. If you're looking for getting students engaged in trades or employment, very effective because what we did there was, the framework of NZQA approval forced us into building a program that really wasn't fit for purpose, which meant as soon as those students got the opportunity to transfer onto a trades program or a vocational program, we encouraged them to do that which meant they were non-completers.*

## KEY FINDINGS

Across the secondary and tertiary leaders it was agreed the secondary to tertiary pathway opportunities were of immense value and contributed to valuable experiences for the young people involved and a pathway to tertiary education.

**Question 10. Do you monitor the ultimate progression of your students into tertiary education? (secondary question only)**

All secondary leaders spoke of the systems and process their schools have in place to do this, with three of the four talking to personalised methods of collecting the data: phone calls, emails and face to face dinners. One of the secondary leaders drew attention to the data that is now disseminated through the Ministry of Education that goes further than the year post secondary school, and is now looking at the retention and transition of students as they progress through their tertiary studies. Three secondary leaders commenting:

SL1: *We do, in April we phone every student from year 13 who left during the year as well, does the end of the year. Because when they leave where they say they'll go isn't always where they end up. So we call to just to check what the destination is, and track that over time.*

SL2: *We have our own destination data, which is more than just tertiary, or whatever it happened to be. There quite a number of kids that miss out on a formal tertiary. A lot of kids go to apprenticeships, or go to some sort of employment, and as a component of that employment they have tertiary provision.*

SL3: *Yeah, yeah we do and actually, because realistically we haven't been able to before, but now data is starting to come through from the Ministry which looks at retention in the course one, two years and then the qualification out of the course, so that's really good.*

## KEY FINDINGS

Evident across all of the secondary leaders, is that secondary schools are closely tracking the progression of students post-secondary school. While the methods may vary, the outcome of measuring progression is the same.

**Question 11. What recommendations do you make for the future?**

All secondary leaders recommended growing the secondary to tertiary pathway opportunities by continuing to look at ways in which our communities can partner and collaborate. Three of the secondary leaders specifically called for looking at ways in which the funding can be looked at to ensure the viability of the programmes for both parties. Comments from the four secondary leaders included:

SL1: *I think, yeah, just continuing to grow the experience for students going to tertiary is really important. Our students get to know the faces and the places with these experiences which helps them.*

SL2: *We need to find a way to deliver the tertiary provision in an economical manner for both. Tertiary and secondary. The problem is, the people, the kids that leave the school through tertiary component, you've got the teachers at the school still, and you're still paying the teachers, so we've got to pay the tertiary providers.*

SL3: *I guess I would like the Trades Academy model to be re-looked at. I don't think that, I mean I get why it started like that, but I don't think it benefits everyone.*

SL4: *Engage and partner with communities in a meaningful way.*

In this set of responses the commentary regarding multiple agencies feeding into the complexity of the policy and funding was once again prevalent. Two of the three tertiary leaders spoke to it directly while the third spoke more to the need for their own institution to be more responsive internally and externally when it comes to collaborating with stakeholders. The three tertiary leaders commented:

TL1: *If I start at the very top, my recommendations for the future is to get all those masters around the same table and continuing to have those complex*

*conversations. I think policy can be better and I certainly think implementation will flow easier out of an approved policy.*

TL2: *It needs to actually be seen as business as usual for our institute. We know that we've had problems recruiting our youth. Also as well, we need to find ways to be able to collaborate with the schools in a way that the respect is mutual.*

TL3: *To have a flexible framework, that students can come in and out, and to realign the measures, because the measures aren't always whether they've achieved a full qual, or employment.*

## KEY FINDINGS

All secondary and tertiary senior leaders advocated for opportunities to continue the collaborative efforts to provide secondary to tertiary pathway opportunities to secondary students. They also advocated for looking at ways to improve the complex funding and policy nature of this work, which currently impact the extent to which both secondary and tertiary can deliver on these pathway opportunities.

## SUMMMARY

*Table 1: Emerging themes*

<i>Themes</i>	<i>Key Findings</i>
1. The importance of collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Secondary and tertiary are looking for ways to continue to collaborate and cooperate</li> <li>• There is a need for improved communication and collaboration between the different agencies engaged in secondary to tertiary pathways</li> <li>• A notable shift was identified that sees Careers Advisors in secondary schools are now part of a wider pathways transition team</li> </ul>
2. The value of pathway programmes and teams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All secondary leaders noted the success of their programmes with a tertiary partner</li> <li>• The commitment and the passion of the secondary and tertiary leaders ensured the success of the secondary to tertiary transition programme</li> <li>• The value of dedicated pathway teams was recognised by all of the secondary and tertiary leaders</li> </ul>
3. The barriers created by policy versus practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The complex nature of multiple agencies and policies is causing confusion and frustration</li> <li>• There is inequitable access to funding streams available to support secondary to tertiary transition programmes</li> <li>• There are varying degrees of understanding of the wide range of policy documents relating to secondary to tertiary transition</li> </ul>

Inside each of these themes a number of common challenges were identified by the senior leaders across both sectors. These included: the mismatch of secondary and tertiary systems and process, the resources required to establish the pathway programmes and complexities of funding streams and policy and lack of equity of access to the aforementioned funding streams.



The data collected through the interviews was generated from the perceptions of senior leaders from four secondary schools and one tertiary institution. Three central themes emerged from the data: the importance of collaboration, the value of pathway programmes and teams and the barriers created by policy versus practice. These headings are now used for the discussion and conclusions that follow in the following Chapter Five.

## Chapter Five

### Discussions, Conclusions and Recommendations

#### INTRODUCTION

The following chapter links the key findings from the research interviews with four secondary and three tertiary leaders to the literature reviewed in chapter two. It seeks to build on literature reviewed about secondary to tertiary transition, with particular focus on the transition perceptions, challenges and recommendations for the future. This research was undertaken in four Auckland secondary schools and one Auckland tertiary institution, all engaged in the delivery of secondary to tertiary transition programmes.

The chapter places focus on major findings that appeared consistently throughout the research interviews that were found to be common across the secondary and tertiary leaders. It also discusses any findings that may deviate from the literature reviewed on secondary to tertiary transition. Finally, it makes recommendations to improve future practice for secondary to tertiary transition education practice and future research.

#### DISCUSSION

##### THE IMPORTANCE OF COLLABORATION

Both secondary and tertiary leaders in my study spoke of the significance of partnering for the benefit of students with a number of references to how much of this work is built on the goodwill and cooperation of both parties. This goodwill was necessary in some instances due to the lack of resources available in some areas and lack of access to the financial means needed to initiate some of this activity. This was echoed in the report of the Education Review Office: *Secondary-Tertiary Programmes (Trades Academies) What works and next steps* (2015), that highlighted the importance of collaborative relationships

across the both sectors. This was further supported by the Educational Review Office report: *Vocational Pathways, Authentic and Relevant Learning* (2016) which noted that the Vocational Pathways framework was designed to: encourage collaboration internally within secondary schools, cooperation externally with tertiary and industry and to encourage a learner centric model for the benefit of the student.

The research findings from both the secondary and tertiary interviews and the work experience and internship opportunities discussed showed that strong, genuine partnerships across the local community were critical for these to work for the benefit of the students taking part. A significant finding was that in some instances, there was a strong reliance on a pathways team to sustain the partnership between the secondary and tertiary pathway programme rather than an embedded process with high dependence on one individual. The Education Review Office report: *Secondary-Tertiary Programmes (Trades Academies) What works and next steps* (2015) supported this finding as it noted that the stronger the collaboration between both parties, the more effective the outcomes for students and the ability to self-review and to look for ways to improve these partnerships.

In line with the recommendations of Lamb et al. (2004), the tertiary leaders identified that students needed to be engaged in authentic learning environments that aligned to the real world and were that next level challenge while at secondary school. It was also noted that failure to do this is damaging to the experience of the students and the reputation of the institution. It is significant that the tertiary leaders interviewed noted the critical nature of the success of these programmes to provide future students for the tertiary sector.

## THE VALUE OF PATHWAY PROGRAMMES AND TEAMS

Perhaps the strongest finding to emerge across the secondary and tertiary leaders was the value of, and in some cases, reliance on pathway programmes and teams. Whereas, in previous reports such as the Educational Review Office report: *Vocational Pathways,*

*Authentic and Relevant Learning (2016)*, Careers Advisors in secondary schools were found to be the champions within their schools for supporting the students choices of course selection and careers. While the research conducted showed a different perspective emerging that the champions of vocational education went beyond the Careers Advisors in secondary schools. This work now requires dedicated pathway staff within each secondary school, and while the Careers Advisor has an important role in this, they are now an integral part of a wider team reflecting the investment of staff and resources to enable the secondary tertiary transition. This team reflects multiple people across multiple different roles within each secondary school, linking to form a team of people, each integral to the secondary to tertiary transition of their students.

The interview findings across all of the secondary schools clearly showed that each school has a dedicated team in place to manage the operation of tertiary pathway programmes. While the size of the team, the programmes offered and resources available differed considerably from one school to another, the four schools had each adopted innovative approaches to provide genuine learning experiences for their students in the best effort to support them on their career journey. They all noted the complexity of the process and the need to adapt the school timetable, to provide additional staffing and volunteers to support within the logistics of these transition programmes. This was supported by the Education Review Office (2016) which stated that in many cases these programmes involved a complete re design of the school curriculum.

## THE BARRIERS CREATED BY POLICY VERSUS PRACTICE

Perhaps the most interesting common barrier identified across all secondary and tertiary leaders was often the lack of access to funding and the varied levels of understanding of the secondary and tertiary policies pertaining to transition programmes. Half of the secondary leaders admitted that their lack of understanding, is in part due to the complexities of the policies themselves, putting them off venturing into some of the initiatives these policies could bring about. The changing nature alone of the transition initiatives at times making them unsustainable, and the lack of equity of access to a

number of the funding streams are a source of frustration and a major barrier to secondary to tertiary programme engagement.

Another barrier created by policy is the inequitable distribution of funding and the resources for the implementation of secondary to tertiary pathways. This barrier restricts the access in some communities to a number of these initiatives limiting in some instances the access and exposure to tertiary programmes that would provide opportunities for students to be involved in secondary to tertiary transition programmes. This finding is of concern as in order for these transition programmes to grow, the funding stream needs to be released with more equitable distribution along with targeted staffing and financial resources for viable implementation. For a number of the young people in these schools their only window of opportunity to participate in a tertiary programme is via the pathways programmes. If access to these is limited due to inadequate funding and resourcing, then their opportunity to develop and study within a tertiary context will be lost.

## CONCLUSIONS

Across all of the research interview findings, it is clear that four secondary schools and one tertiary institution are looking for ways to collaborate and to cooperate in order to sustain secondary to tertiary pathway opportunities for students. The study has illustrated the confusion and frustration experienced in regards to: the multiple funding streams, the need to deal with a broad range of agencies, the different policy and practice and the impact and constraint this has for secondary and tertiary leaders implementing the policy.

The lack of understanding by no means reflected the commitment and passion of the leaders in both sectors to ensure they were correctly supporting the secondary to tertiary transition programmes. There was an added complexity with the nature of multiple policies that in a number of cases work against each other in two different education systems, that are not naturally aligned. It is apparent that both the secondary and tertiary

leaders agree on the importance of secondary to tertiary transition and are providing as many opportunities to their students as possible to experience this.

All secondary school leaders noted that the success of their programmes and their partnerships with the tertiary partner involved are enhanced by the connection with a dedicated pathways team at their local tertiary provider. This pathway team supports the students for the transition by introducing them early to tertiary education while they are still in the safety net of their respective secondary school. The research of Wiseman and Chase Mayoral (2013) indicated that this transition is necessary as large numbers of secondary students enter tertiary education underprepared. These authors further recommended a period of transition to provide the skills essential to navigate their first year in a tertiary education context.

One of the findings was the strong increase in NCEA attainment across all of the secondary schools interviewed. The interviewees commented that the secondary pathways programmes had a significant impact with engaging young people at secondary school for a longer period by peaking their interest and providing opportunities for contextualised learning that students were interested in. This was confirmed by several reports and authors (Education Review Office, 2016; Loader & Dalgety, 2008; Ministry of Education, 2011) who noted that it was imperative for our young people to stay in school and exit with the highest qualification they can, as this provides them with a broader range of opportunities for their future.

Finally, in this time of change with the Reform of Vocational Education and the Tomorrow's School Review, it is significant that this research identified the incredibly varying degrees of understanding of the policy documents aligned to the transition of students from secondary to tertiary education. Whilst a small number of the senior leaders from both sectors could speak to some of the policies in place, a clear reliance on the knowledge of partners in this space and a lack of clear understanding of the policy was evident.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### **Recommendation One**

**An advisory panel consisting of representation from: the Ministry of Education, Tertiary Education Commission, Immigration New Zealand, secondary and tertiary institutions engaged in secondary to tertiary transition programmes, needs to be established.**

There needs to be a renewed collaborative approach to secondary and tertiary transition programmes with a panel established representing all of the agencies and interest groups currently involved in the development and integration of secondary and tertiary transition programmes.

With the Reform of Vocational Education underway and a Vocational Education Award an outcome of the Tomorrows School Review, mitigating the barriers that enable students to experience these pathway programmes needs to be a priority to ensure equitable access for secondary schools currently underserved.

### **Recommendation Two**

**Secondary schools need to prioritise and establish dedicated teams to focus on the resourcing and delivery of secondary to tertiary programmes.**

The findings conducted with four secondary schools and one tertiary institution have confirmed that specific focussed teams and integrated secondary to tertiary programmes are only viable if staff are allocated to implement with adequate financial resources. There is a synergy between the literature reviewed and the research conducted that confirms a close link between an increase in students' academic achievement from engagement in a secondary to tertiary pathways programme.

### **Recommendation Three**

**Tertiary institutions need to prioritise and establish a dedicated team to focus on the resourcing and delivery of secondary to tertiary programmes.**

The findings conducted with one tertiary institution have confirmed that a specific focussed team to integrate secondary to tertiary programmes provides a vital link for the establishment of secondary to tertiary programmes. This opinion is also reflected in the findings from the four secondary schools within the study.

### **Recommendation Four**

**Secondary schools should share their knowledge in this area across their respective community of learning to encourage collaboration and a cooperative approach to share staffing and resources for secondary and tertiary transition programmes.**

The findings conducted within the small sample of one tertiary institution and four secondary schools showed there was a willingness to collaborate and share best practice and opportunities for students.

### **LIMITATIONS**

This research was limited to a small geographical sample in Auckland that is transferable to other secondary schools and tertiary institutions participating in secondary to tertiary partnership programmes in New Zealand.

The study was limited to only one tertiary institution and four secondary schools. Therefore, findings can only be considered as indicators and not finite conclusions, as they are not representative of similar settings across New Zealand.



The study was a 60 credit dissertation which limited the duration and scope of the study to only the senior leaders of one tertiary institution and four secondary schools.

## FUTURE RESEARCH

This research has confirmed that there is potential for further research across a broader range of New Zealand tertiary institutions and secondary schools. There is also potential for a nationwide survey of current secondary schools and tertiary institutions actively participating in secondary to tertiary transition programmes.

The following are suggestions for further investigations building on this research:

- Increasing the scope of this research to include representation from both sectors across New Zealand
- Inclusion of parents, caregivers and industry stakeholders
- Document analysis of the full range of secondary to tertiary pathway policies
- Investigation of the educational performance indicator outcomes for students that transition into tertiary via a pathway programme, versus other straight from school students

## FINAL WORD

A significant concern is that transition rates from secondary to tertiary education across New Zealand have been declining since 2015 despite a number of interventions and changes in policy. This is mainly due to the serious financial implications that are already affecting the sustainability of tertiary institutions, with the closure of many of their programmes and the ultimate merging of 16 New Zealand institutes of technology. As research shows, further education or training is vital as young people without qualifications will earn at a lower level than those with qualifications throughout their adult life. The research conducted was timely, in the light of the restructuring of tertiary institutes

of technology. Therefore, it is critical in the future for secondary schools and tertiary institutions to address the limited access to tertiary engagement opportunities for secondary school students.

## References

- Altbach, P. G., Reisberg, L., & Rumbley, L. E. (2010). *Trends in Global Higher Education: Tracking an Academic Revolution*. Paris: UNESCO.
- Athanasou, J. A. (2001). Young people in transition: factors influencing the educational-vocational pathways of Australian school-leavers. *Education + Training*, 43(3), 132–138.
- Bell, J. (2007). The Trouble with Questionnaires. In *Research Methods in Educational Leadership and Management*. London: Sage.
- Bryce, J., & Anderson, M. (2008). What can be Learned from the Roller Coaster Journeys of Young People Making Ultimately Successful Transitions beyond School? *Australian Journal of Career Development*, 17(1), 41–49.
- Bryman, A. (2012). *Social Research Methods* (4th ed.). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Cochran-Smith, N., & Lytle, S. L. (2009). *Inquiry as Stance: Practitioner Research for the Next Generation*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2011). *Research Methods in Education* (7th ed.). Abingdon: Routledge.
- Crawford, R., Monson, K., & Searle, J. (2016). Mentoring tertiary students from a secondary school incubator programme focusing on health careers: Findings from a New Zealand study. *Journal of Applied Research in Higher Education*, 8(4), 424–438.
- Education Review Office. (2015). *Secondary-Tertiary Programmes (Trade Academies): What works and next steps*. Wellington, N.Z: Education Review Office.

Education Review Office. (2016). *Vocational pathways: Authentic and relevant learning*. Wellington, N.Z: Education Review Office.

Education Review Office. (2018). Background Careers, Information, Advice, Guidance and Education (CIAGE) policy and practice. Retrieved October 28, 2018, from Education Review Office website: <http://www.ero.govt.nz/publications/careers-information-advice-guidance-and-education-ciage-in-secondary-schools/background-careers-information-advice-guidance-and-education-ciage-policy-and-practice/>

Fontana, A., & Frey, J. H. (2005). The interview: From Neutral Stance to Political Involvement. *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 3, 695–727.

Higgins, J., Vaughan, K., Philips, H., & Dalziel, P. (2008). *Education Employment Linkages: International Literature Review*. Auckland.

Iannelli, C. (2004). Trends in the Patterns of Tertiary Entrance in Ireland, the Netherlands and Scotland. *European Educational Research Journal*, 3(1), 14–49.

Krueger, R. A., & Casey, M. A. (2014). *Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research* (5th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Lamb, S., Walstab, A., Teese, R., Vickers, M., & Rumberger, R. (2004). *Staying on at school: Improving student retention in Australia*. Melbourne: The University of Melbourne.

Lichtman, M. (2013). *Qualitative Research in Education: A User's Guide* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Loader, M., & Dalgety, J. (2008). *Students' Transition between School and Tertiary Education*. Wellington, N.Z: Ministry of Education.

Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.

- Middleton, S. (2008). *Engaging with the disengaged in Higher Education in Engaging Communities* (pp. 26–41). Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australiasia Inc.
- Ministry of Education. (2010). *Tertiary Education Strategy 2010—2015*. Wellington, N.Z: Ministry of Education.
- Ministry of Education. (2011). *School's out—What's next?* (p. 52). Wellington, N.Z.
- Ministry of Education. (2014). *Tertiary Education Strategy 2014—2019* (p. 26). Wellington, N.Z: Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment.
- Ministry of Education. (2015a). *Profile & Trends: New Zealand's Workplace-Based Learners 2014* (p. 19). Retrieved from Min website: <https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/series/2531/profile-and-trends-2014-new-zealands-workplace-based-learners-part-3-of-5>
- Ministry of Education. (2015b). *Profile & Trends: New Zealand's Annual Tertiary Education Enrolments 2014* (p. 30). Retrieved from Ministry of Education website: <https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/series/2531/profile-and-trends-2014>
- Ministry of Education. (2015c). *Profile & Trends: Tertiary Education Outcomes and Qualification Completions 2014* (p. 29). Retrieved from <https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/series/2531/profile-and-trends-2014-tertiary-education-outcomes-and-qualification-completions>
- Ministry of Education. (2016a). *Profile & Trends: New Zealand's Annual Tertiary Education Enrolments 2015* (p. 22). Retrieved from Ministry of Education website: <https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/series/2531/profile-and-trends-2015-new-zealands-annual-tertiary-education-enrolments-part-1-of-6>

Ministry of Education. (2016b). *Profile & Trends: New Zealand's Work-Based Learners 2015* (p. 22). Retrieved from Ministry of Education website: <https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/series/2531/profile-and-trends-2015-new-zealands-workplace-based-learners-part-6-of-6>

Ministry of Education. (2016c). *Profile & Trends: Tertiary Education Outcomes and Qualification Completions 2015* (p. 27). Retrieved from Ministry of Education website: <https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/series/2531/profile-and-trends-2015-tertiary-education-outcomes-and-qualification-completions-2015>

Ministry of Education. (2017a). *Profile & Trends: New Zealand's Annual Tertiary Education Enrolments 2016* (p. 30). Retrieved from Ministry of Education website: <https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/series/2531/profile-and-trends-2016-new-zealands-annual-tertiary-education-enrolments-part-1-of-6>

Ministry of Education. (2017b). *Profile & Trends: New Zealand's Workplace-Based Learners 2016* (p. 26). Retrieved from Ministry of Education website: <https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/series/2531/profile-and-trends-2015-new-zealands-workplace-based-learners-part-6-of-6>

Ministry of Education. (2017c). *Profile & Trends: Tertiary Education Outcomes and Qualification Completions 2016* (p. 36). Retrieved from Ministry of Education website: <https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/series/2531/profile-and-trends-2016-tertiary-education-outcomes-and-qualification-completions-part-2-of-6>

New Zealand Government. (2008). Government announces improvements to trades training programmes. Retrieved from <https://www.behive.govt.nz/release/government-announces-improvements-trades-training-programmes>

Rayner, G., & Corkill, P. (2015). Building Greater Capacity in Science Education: A partnership between a Secondary Science School and a Research-Intensive

University. *University Partnerships for Community and School System Development Innovations in Higher Education Teaching and Learning*, 5, 99–117.

Vargas, J. H. (2004). *College Knowledge: Addressing Information Barriers to College* Joel H. Vargas, Ed.D. Published by The Education Resources Institute (TERI) - PDF. Retrieved from The Education Resources Institute (TERI) website: <https://docplayer.net/2502569-College-knowledge-addressing-information-barriers-to-college-joel-h-vargas-ed-d-published-by-the-education-resources-institute-teri.html>

Wiseman, A. W., & Chase-Mayoral, A. (2013). Transitioning Roles of Post-Secondary Education and Community Colleges Worldwide. *Research in Comparative and International Education*, 8(2), 102–109.

# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1: Secondary Leader Interview Schedule

### Secondary-tertiary transitions: current trends

Name of interviewee:

Date of interview:

Name of interviewer: Andrea Thumath

1. What is your role in promoting the secondary-tertiary transition of senior students?
2. What is your understanding of the policy documents outlining secondary-tertiary transition of senior students?
3. What are the main policy documents on this transition that you refer to?
4. How effective are the current policy documents on secondary-tertiary transition?
5. How does your school create pathway opportunities for secondary-tertiary transition?
6. How do you collaborate with tertiary providers for the creation of these pathways?
7. What does the support look like for students engaged in these secondary-tertiary transition pathway opportunities?
8. How do you manage the resourcing and funding required to support these transition pathway opportunities?
9. How effective are these secondary-tertiary pathway opportunities?
10. Do you monitor the ultimate progression of your students into tertiary education?
11. What recommendations do you make for the future?



## **APPENDIX 2: Tertiary Leader Interview Schedule**

### **Secondary-tertiary transitions: current trends**

Name of interviewee:

Date of interview:

Name of interviewer: Andrea Thumath

1. What is your role in promoting the secondary-tertiary transition of senior students?
2. What is your understanding of the policy documents outlining secondary-tertiary transition of senior students?
3. What are the main policy documents on this transition that you refer to?
4. How effective are the current policy documents on secondary-tertiary transition?
5. How does your school create pathway opportunities for secondary-tertiary transition?
6. How do you collaborate with secondary schools for the creation of these pathways?
7. What does the support look like for students engaged in these secondary-tertiary transition pathway opportunities?
8. How do you manage the resourcing and funding required to support these transition pathway opportunities?
9. How effective are these secondary-tertiary pathway opportunities?
10. What recommendations do you make for the future?

## APPENDIX 3: Information Sheet for Participants



### INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS

#### **Title of Dissertation: Secondary to tertiary education transitions: current trends**

My name is Andrea Thumath. I am currently enrolled in the Master of Educational Leadership degree at Unitec Institute of Technology and seek your help in meeting the requirements of research for a Dissertation course which forms a substantial part of this degree.

The aim of my project is to investigate secondary school leaders' perceptions of the transition for students from secondary to tertiary education and identify the tertiary transition challenges for secondary students from a tertiary institution leadership perspective, to suggest ways of improving this transition.

I request your participation in the following way:

I will be collecting data using an interview schedule and would appreciate being able to interview you at a time that is mutually suitable. I will also be asking you to sign a consent form regarding this event. The interview venue will be your school and the duration of the interview will be 45 minutes. You will be provided with a copy of the interview transcript to check for accuracy and will be asked to verify this within a week of receipt of the transcript.

Neither you nor your organisation will be identified in the Dissertation. I will be recording your contribution and will provide a transcript (or summary of findings if appropriate) for you to check before data analysis is undertaken. I do hope that you will agree to take part and that you will find this participation of interest. If you have any queries about the project, you may contact my supervisor at Unitec Institute of Technology.

My supervisor is Dr. Josephine Howse and may be contacted by email or phone.

Phone: (09) 815 4321 ext 8348

Email [jhowse @unitec.ac.nz](mailto:jhowse@unitec.ac.nz)

Yours sincerely

Andrea Thumath

**UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: (2019-1007)**

**This study has been approved by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee from (date) to (date). If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Committee through the UREC Secretary (ph: 09 815-4321 ext 8551). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.**

## APPENDIX 4: Participant consent form



### CONSENT FORM – ADULT PARTICIPANTS

**RE: Master of Educational Leadership and Management**

**DISSERTATION TITLE: Secondary to tertiary education transitions: current trends**

**RESEARCHER: Andrea Thumath**

#### **Participant's consent**

I have been given and have understood an explanation of this research and I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered. I understand that neither my name nor the name of my organisation will be used in any public reports

#### ***Interviews***

I agree to this interview being recorded. I understand that I will be provided with a transcript of the interview for verification and that I may withdraw myself or any information that has been provided for this project up to two weeks after the return/confirmation of my verified transcript.

**I agree to take part in this project.**

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: (2019-1007)**

**This study has been approved by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee from (22 March 2019) to (22 March 2020). If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Committee through the UREC Secretary (ph: 09 815-4321 ext 8551). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.**



## DISSERTATIONS

### RESEARCH BANK UPLOAD FORM (LIBRARY)

**Full name of author:** Andrea Thumath

**Full title of the dissertation:** Secondary to Tertiary Transitions: Current Trends

**Practice Pathway:** .TE MIRO POSTGRADUATE

**Degree:** Master of Educational Leadership and Management

**Year of presentation** 2019

**Associated URL link(s) (OPTIONAL for example ORCID ID):** .....

**Principal Supervisor:** Dr Josephine Howse

**Associate Supervisor:** Professor Carol Cardno

#### Permission to make open access

I agree to a digital copy of my final dissertation being uploaded to the Unitec institutional repository (Research Bank) and being made viewable worldwide.

#### Copyright Rights:

Unless otherwise stated this work is protected by copyright with all rights reserved.

I provide this copy in the expectation that due acknowledgement of its use is made.

AND Copyright Compliance: I confirm that I used no substantial portions of third party copyright material, including charts, diagrams, graphs, photographs or maps in my dissertation or I have obtained permission for such material to be made accessible worldwide via the Internet.

---

**Signature of author:**

**Date:** 21.11.19

---

**ADMINISTRATION**

**Email this form and final PDF of dissertation to David Church [dchurch@unitec.ac.nz](mailto:dchurch@unitec.ac.nz)**