

5th April 2019

ISANA NZ (International Education Association) is the peak body for practitioners in the International Education sector. ISANA NZ supports the Reform of Vocational Education (RoVE) proposals which will see 16 ITP's merge as a single entity to be called the New Zealand Institute of Skills and Technology (NZIST). At the same time, ISANA NZ has three areas of concern regarding the RoVE proposal:

- international student wellbeing
- support for practitioners/educators dealing with international students and
- potential regional impacts.

With MOE funding support and Education New Zealand sponsorship, ISANA NZ is currently co-leading work to enhance professionalisation across the international/export education sector. We see in the RoVE proposal opportunity for a step-change in improving international student experience and developing professional pathways for ITP/PTE staff engaging with international students. International education substantively benefits ITP/PTE education in two ways:

- international student fees which are an important revenue stream, and
- international students' cultural capital, which enrich global citizen perspectives in all programmes of study and people-centred programmes in particular

International student wellbeing

ISANA NZ recommends a special consideration of the impact of the proposed merger on international student wellbeing. It is imperative that international students throughout New Zealand have a high level of support while pursuing their studies. World class student support should optimally reflect tailored, proactive approaches rather than passive services-in-waiting. Centralising staff and services across a wide catchment area risks the loss of personal connection and rapport with international students which may exacerbate the adjustment challenges and stressors they negotiate.

With the risks involved with RoVE there are also opportunities. The proposed merger could present an opportunity to implement a professional standard for international student engagement nationwide. This standard could enhance intercultural knowledge and skills, enrich ITP/PTE teacher and student services training and propagate culturally responsive pedagogy across subject areas using the centralised model. Recent research led by Assoc Prof Ly Tran, Deakin University, shows there are gaps in ITP/PTE teacher knowledge in relation to international student learning needs. The development and implementation of evidence-based, tailored practice for international students is an area of specialisation for ISANA NZ. ISANA NZ is willing to work with the Ministry to ensure international students welfare needs are met during the reform process.

We are also ready to work more closely with tangata whenua to forge a unique bicultural approach to international student engagement that champions *he tangata he tangata he tangata* and sets New Zealand apart as a study destination.

Wellbeing of ITP staff engaging international students

The proposal to produce administrative and management hubs appears to offer advantages in delivering cost efficiencies and matching training with industry demands. There are also inherent risks with restructuring, and supply-side services as in the last twenty years these have often borne the brunt of cost-cutting exercises, rationalisation and restructuring in the tertiary sector, which has impacted morale and loss of continuity.

In this proposed restructure there is opportunity to address the needs of lecturers, tutors and student support services that are engaging international students. Providing these staff with clarity in relation

to job security and canvassing their needs in relation to working conditions, qualifications and career pathways will be important. Such assurances and consultation would assist in maintaining and stimulating morale.

ISANA NZ is currently delivering workshops on professional boundaries and self-care practice for international education practitioners because of the complex student needs they are dealing with. We are ready to work with the Ministry to appropriate this professional development work to support a centralised development and delivery of professional standards for Vocational Education practitioners supporting international students.

Regional impact

ISANA NZ shares the government's desire to share the benefits of international education with the regions. While the proposed reforms seek to unify practice and resources nationwide, there may be unintended effects for the regions. We think there are a number of risks.

First, the introduction of a regional study incentive for international students is due to expire at the end of 2021, which would likely coincide with RoVE's implementation. Regions could lose international students if a region-specific policy is not implemented. Further, many education providers rely on education agents. With a single entity there may be a loss of incentive for agents to send international students to the regions. If regional international recruitment offices were maintained, we believe it would help target regional skill shortage areas while spreading international education in the regions.

Also, the announcement of RoVE has been perceived within parts of the international education industry as impacting reputations for quality delivery. Quality international education providers fear losing their identity and a perception from abroad is that hard-won reputations for international student recruitment may be lost. ISANA NZ's view is that careful consultation is needed with agencies such as Education NZ, agents and international directors to address reputational risk.

In summary, the current proposal to centralise ITPs provides a unique opportunity to enhance the sector's engagement with international education. This is an opportunity that needs to be seized. A significant proportion of ISANA NZ members work for vocational education providers and our association is ready to contribute to further consultative work and assist with the development of policies that ultimately advance the vocational education sector.

On behalf of ISANA NZ,

Yours Sincerely



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