

# FLANZ panel of equity and inclusion in flexible learning (Part 2)

Online panel on 5 April 2022

Panelists:

- Claire Amos, Principal / Timuaki of Albany Senior High School
- Stephen Marshall, Director for the Centre for Academic Development at Victoria University of Wellington
- Steve Leichtweis, Head of the E-Learning Group at the University of Auckland

Moderator: Kwong Nui Sim, Senior Lecturer at Auckland University of Technology

**Kwong Nui Sim** 00:11

Kia ora. Good afternoon everyone. Thank you to see so many of you here. As we all know, this is the part two from the last year's panel discussion, which was very well received. So we thought you'll be nice to have the second part of the discussion and thank you very much to all the speakers willingly participate in today's discussion again. So I'm Kwong Nui. I'm a Senior Lecturer at Auckland University of Technology. In a minute, I will ask our speakers to briefly introduce themselves as I can see, there are quite a few new audience in the group for this session. Before that, I would like to say this session will be recorded. So if you would like to turn off your camera, feel free to do that. And we do have the live transcription function being turned on, and we will check through the transcription before we share that in public later. So yes, over to you, Claire, would you like to say a few words?

**Claire Amos** 01:14

Good afternoon. Kia ora. My name is Claire Amos, and I am the Principal / Timuaki of Albany Senior High School here in Auckland and have also sat on a number of reference groups and advisory boards in the educational technology space and serve on the NetSafe Board and the N4L Advisory Board.

**Kwong Nui Sim** 01:35

Thank you, Claire. Stephen.

**Stephen Marshall** 01:39

Hi everyone. I'm Professor Stephen Marshall. I'm the Director for the Centre for Academic Development at Victoria University of Wellington, been in the sector for decades. And my interests are in how the whole tertiary system operates as a system and also the role that technology plays in helping us see new ways that we might enact tertiary education in the future.

**Kwong Nui Sim** 02:06

Thank you, Stephen and Steve.

**Steve Leichtweis 02:09**

Tēnā koutou. Good afternoon everyone. My name is Steve Leichtweis. I am the Head of the E-Learning Group at the University of Auckland. And that is a central learning and design team for the university. My interests are in technology enhanced learning. I also have an interest in the use of data to inform better learning design, and I also have connections in a vice presidential role with ACODE which is the Australasian Council for Online, Distance, and eLearning and routinely have conversations with our peers at the Australian and other New Zealand universities around some of the very issues that we're going to hopefully delve into today.

**Kwong Nui Sim 03:04**

Thank you all. As we all can hear, all three speakers are the experts in flexible learning for our schools or tertiary education sector, both at the national and international level. So what we are going to do is, I'm going to ask the panel to share their perspective on the questions. But for the audience, feel free to jump in by raising your hands or put in the chat box or turn on your mic. If you want to say something or ask a question. I will keep an eye and we do have Kristina in the background, helping me to organise everything. So the first question is, as we all know, this is the third year now into global pandemic or maybe we shall say is post-pandemic not sure. So, for all the speakers today are the challenges from the start in 2020s still important today, especially in the New Zealand context? This is especially when New Zealand was kind of having COVID-free for one year in between. So who would like to start sharing?

**Steve Leichtweis 04:22**

I can kick off. So the short answer is no. I would argue that one year of being COVID-free has not given us any special advantage whatsoever. And in fact, it may have - it might make the discussion a little bit more difficult because we actually haven't been under the same level of stress and really haven't necessarily had the risks of what this means for learning and teaching going forward. Whether that's secondary or tertiary going forward. And I think what we would have seen initially, at the start of the pandemic, was a very reactive stance from every education provider. And what that meant is a lot of staff went above and beyond what is normally expected. It was pretty much all hands on deck to make sure that teaching continued, and that required extra time and effort from everyone going forward.

We can't keep asking our staff to behave in the same way, with expectations for heightened workload, and the stress that comes with that, and the different ways of delivering. And so thinking, going forward, it's more about being proactive and making this sustainable in a way that people can make it work within their normal lives without that extra all consuming workload that most of us experienced. And that requires focusing on staff and capability development and growing their comfort and capability at doing this long term.

**Stephen Marshall 06:22**

I think we've - I agree completely. And I think we've burned through a number of different types of capital in the last couple of years. We've burned through the sort of pent up capacity for people to, as you say, to do above and beyond, and now just weary and exhausted. We've burned through capital in

terms of financial resources for the universities, particularly where we've had some amount of a buffer because of international students that were present domestically, that's essentially dried up for this year.

We're starting to see real challenges right across the sector in terms of domestic enrollments and people's behaviours. But more generally, I think we've lost the willingness to do things differently because of the sense that this was only going to be for a short time, and I think people have now crystallised into a view that there are things that are going to continue to be disruptive and to affect us for years to come. And that's quite confronting as people have found the last couple of years disorienting and unaligned to how they believe they should be doing their job and what they believe their job involved.

So I think we're going to start seeing an increase in people finally, just leaving the system, particularly as the borders open, and it's possible for particularly, Victoria has a very high proportion of international staff. I won't be at all surprised to see a number of those people simply go back home to the countries that have come from in order to recover purely because they've lost the capacity to continue to be part of the system we're in.

And we continue to have completely random disruptions that we haven't experienced previously that are more challenging. And as Steve says, we had a year of relative quietness. We've had an invasion of a third of our campus and the impact of that on the rest of the operations of the university. We've had essentially all of the students in our halls of accommodation locked in their rooms for a fortnight while they recover from COVID. And that's been incredibly disruptive to the well being of the students and really is disrupting staff's sense of what it is that they can achieve in their courses this year. So people, I think there's a sense that this is possibly going to be the hardest year of the time since the pandemic hit us.

**Claire Amos 08:58**

Yeah. And I would add to that in the sense that I think one of the biggest changes we've seen in recent times is we've shifted from complex to more complex in the sense that we were doing complex work, learning how to move our learning online. But at least up until very recently, it was discrete: We were either face-to-face, or we were all working with all of our students online. And what has been the most challenging part of this year so far, is having to escalate genuinely hybridised learning and getting your head around what that looks like in a secondary context, and doing it in such a way that was clear enough for the students but also sustainable practice for the teachers when you've got very active unions and other parties also speaking up to make sure that there was never an expectation for teachers to be going above and beyond their workload expectations. As both the Steven's have mentioned that idea of that sort of resource and capital and goodwill that we saw people dipping into for the last two years has really come to a bit of an end.

And, you know, I'm concerned about what I think is more of a wellbeing pandemic [chuckle] really than a COVID pandemic that we're stepping into now. And the increased sort of, like how, like, I've seen staff wobbly that I've never seen wobbling in the last few months, and I've seen staff who have come down with COVID and have been knocked sideways by what I assume is the impact of long COVID on

their health and wellbeing. And these are teachers who managed complex situations with ease, who, you know, I'm lucky to be in a school where we've got one-to-one devices and highly skilled staff and pretty competent group of students who have been supported to work both face-to-face and online. But I don't think we have necessarily been prepared for the impact of the illness on those players in this piece as well. So it's not just about getting your head around hybrid learning, it's about how do we support a workforce and a student body who are actually both physically and emotionally unwell a lot of the time.

I also worry about the fact that the thing that hasn't changed is the digital divide. And if anything, us going back into school, and school being open, and us simply just being responsive to students who are at home because they're isolating because of family members or because they are themselves unwell, doesn't shine a light on those students who don't have universal WiFi access and don't have universal device access because quite frankly, if they go a week with some worksheets in a workbook, they'll be fine, they'll come back into the system *radiradira*. So I don't - I think the pressure and the heat has come off that issue a little bit, and actually, it's the worst time for it to come off that issue. I think that we need to ensure that we're still having that conversation in terms of ensuring that there is universal basic WiFi for every New Zealander, that there is adequate appropriate device for every student in their high school and that teachers are actually proactively being supported to get their head around strategic approaches to hybrid learning rather than ad hoc, poorly designed approaches to learning.

And all of this is happening while our leaders are being diverted into being managers of vaccine mandates, or up until very recently, we've been given the job of managing masks and enforcing mask wearing in our schools. I've been walking around the school with a CO2 monitor [chuckle]. And doing that work and being engaged in conversations around ventilation. So just at a time when we actually need to probably doing some of the most sophisticated, complex work that you can ask for, i.e. really well designed hybrid teaching and learning, there's actually a whole lot else that's being asked of our school leaders, and a whole lot of challenges that both our students and our teachers are facing that meaning that that isn't necessarily feeling like it should be as much of a priority as it needs to be, if that makes sense.

**Stephen Marshall** 13:42

Yeah and I think you're highlighting that one of the challenges we face, and I would say this is across the educational system in New Zealand, is a relatively weak organisational structure and the capacity to enact systems that do a bit of the heavy lifting for people in terms of understanding how to solve some of these problems, rather than putting it on to people that they have to make their own individual solutions, either at a school level or classroom level, or within an academic situation as individual academics. And historically, we have had, particularly in the university system, a culture of great independence of action, which is all very well, when we're talking about relatively forgiving environments like physical classrooms.

And long experience working with digital technologies, particularly, has taught me that you can't focus on turning everybody into technical experts. You can't focus on everybody having particular tools and technologies. You have to think about the thing as a complete system and put in place the dynamics

that allow things to work well, even for the people who are not able or interested or willing to engage in, in detail professional development and training for people who don't have always the latest and greatest, both in terms of bandwidth for device or even particular types of devices. And solving those problems is not something that we can do as individual academics, as individual teachers, they have to be things that we act on collectively. And that requires a certain willingness to engage with this problem collectively rather than defending the ditch on a particular way of doing things that historically may well have worked, and worked extremely well.

**Claire Amos** 15:42

And I think as well, we see the the real tension that we see in a lot of areas, particularly in secondary education, with the concept of self governing schools, and the desire to hold on to this real sense of how we do things here at this school, and you then combine that with an education system that has become nearly consultative to a point. And until the point of just like paralysis, you know, where we constantly seeing, you know, questionnaires, surveys, research groups, discussions about what we could possibly do and there's this desire to make everyone feel like everyone has been heard, ad nauseam, but then actually very little happens because actually, you ran out of runway, when you consulted for so long [chuckle].

**Stephen Marshall** 16:40

Yeah. It's - people often become very upset when the conversation of larger scale thinking has bought into to any area, particularly in the education space. And a lot of people react very badly to ideas of sort of standards and common systems. And they believe that that dehumanises what we're doing and takes away the creative component of their work. And I, I don't, I'm not convinced by that argument because I don't think people's creativity is enacted through the organisational systems.

**Claire Amos** 17:15

And they can become enabling constraints...

**Stephen Marshall** 17:18

Exactly.

**Claire Amos** 17:18

... they can become the mechanism that then frees people up to focus on what really does matter. And I often say, and I don't know if it's the same in your sectors, that actually, we have a lot of educational leaders that step away from being the leader of teaching and learning within their school. And actually, the way that we're designed and the fact that you are running around looking after your buildings and CO2 and ventilation and X Y, Z, actually becomes a really handy out for educational leaders who don't wish to be or don't see that their core job is actually being the leader of learning within their school. And I think with technologies, there could have easily been some systemic decisions that, you know, we've that we've seen in our spaces around things like student achievement data and the centralisation of student data and what have you, and what that then would have enabled us to do in terms of working smarter and more quickly with how we manage assessments online. And track progress and those sorts of things.

**Steve Leichtweis 18:31**

It's not surprising. I think when you are in a position where you're being forced to consider all sorts of new things, which you might not be comfortable or capable of using, it's kind of the first expectation of a change management processes that there will be resistance. And if you can't, as an organisation, explain and articulate the why we need to do this as an institution to move from point A to point C, and you can't get people on board, you're going to see that kind of resistance and pushback about all the things that would make it possible as an institution to move forward in this new environment.

**Stephen Marshall 19:13**

Interestingly, I would suggest that in many cases, I've seen more pushback from change from managers and leaders who are concerned that change compromises their comfort and control of something as opposed to the change being experienced by the people who are actually doing the thing affected by the change. And I'm a large proponent of distributed leadership and this idea that we take our ego a little bit out of some of these things and stop worrying about the fact that we're calling the shots or telling people what they should be doing and controlling and managing and micro reviewing every decision that's being made and except that we can put in place good systems that delegate leadership and responsibility closer to the people who are directly doing the work. And you trust that people will do the right thing provide you with the right tools. And then with good systems, you're collecting information that allows you to see patterns, which might not be good outcomes and then concentrate on helping people would trace those.

So I think that the whole change resistance narrative, it's really depressing, actually going into the leadership literature and education and seeing so many people writing about essentially strategies that create false agendas. So creating a narrative of a crisis, well, we don't have to create one, we've got one at the moment. But all too often people create or put themselves in a situation where they can as a leader say, oh, 'It's not my fault. It's the money, we don't have enough money.' Therefore, it's very sad, but we're not - they're not prepared to engage even without that crouch to basically open up to the people that they're working with and have an open conversation about the things that can be done and help people co-discover solutions for them.

And it's been interesting with the project I'm leading at the moment to redo our learning management system. We started 18 months ago going around the university running workshops with people. We said, 'Don't worry about what technology we buy, just tell us what you'd like to do.' And that was students, academics, professional staff in different places, managers at different levels. And we just tried to get them to think about what it is we could do, particularly with the experience of the pandemic coloring the view of the world and giving it some spice, but really being very open to hearing from other people what it is that they'd like to see happen. And we developed the project, a set of requirements and a plan and an agenda for an acting that plan with those people in a co-developed way.

The people that we're getting pushback from are senior leaders who don't feel that they were in control of that. And that to me is a cultural problem. And I think we are at risk - I see this with Te Pūkenga where rather than let things work through with the polytechnic sector, the minister has taken all of the things into the middle and imposed something and is now trying to work out how to make that work. I

think there's some real challenges in how we enact change. And some of our models are not helping us in that space.

**Claire Amos** 22:23

Do you think we've got a challenge as well, where I think because we've been in slight sort of crisis mode, that there's been a focus a bit of a focus on what we can do to get by at the moment before we return to some sort of norm, rather than saying, let's be excited about what we're learning at the moment as a foundation of where we want to go. Like I don't know about you, but I feel like we've lost all of those futures thinkings conversations that we used to have, like, I feel like five, six years ago used to be all of this aspirational thinking about anytime, anywhere assessment, you know, flexible learning inside and out of the school, you don't need to be based in school to learn well, you know, we've proven that you don't need to be in school to learn. But actually, we're fixating on and it feels like the government is fixated on getting kids back into school. And you know that doesn't mean that I don't value having our young people face to face. I absolutely do.

Like I think the wellbeing, their social connection is at the heart of them feeling good about the community they're in and doing really powerful learning. But I don't think they need to be in school 100% of the time. Like I actually think that we've done incredible learning over the last two years where we'd set up a really nice clear structure, where we built flexibility into the DNA of our teaching and learning: Monday and Tuesday structured, more direct, more direct instruction, more directed classes, were going on online, Thursday and Friday, you're expected to get on with your learning, and your teacher then was switched to coach mode and can support you and help you out. You know, in my ideal world, we would have had permission to come back into school and be encouraged to, in essence, keep going with it. And yes, we could. And we have done that. And we do have flexible learning days and rostered at home days and all the rest of it. But it's seen as a mechanism that we can do for now because it's how we're coping with staffing and staffing shortages. It's not seen as well, we've done you know, we've made some real headway and have some real learnings.

We would like to now support our schools to amplify and sort of use as a foundation for where to next and you know, and I know that one of my dear colleagues Maurie Abraham is on the call today and he's watching along and we've had these discussions for years in terms of leaving to learn and creating school campuses that are far more sort of flexible in terms of our young people coming and going. And I haven't seen, I haven't seen from a national level a sense of excitement of how we could harness our learnings and how we could use that to move to a more flexible tomorrow.

Like, actually, I look at what we're doing within NCEA and it feels like a step backwards. It feels like a return to basic. I hear narratives around concerns around literacy and numeracy, and the subtext is a need to go back to basics. I see the stuff that's happening of the review of the New Zealand Curriculum, and there's a subtext that we need to go back to basics and more structured, significant learning that makes sure we are all learning the same things. And there is a determination to look at young people who are hemorrhaging in terms of their literacy and numeracy, and they're pinning that on the potentially poor teaching and learning. And they've got their head in the sand about the fact that it's poverty. It's about disenfranchisement. It's about all sorts of social and health and economic issues that these young people are finding themselves in those positions. It doesn't mean that there isn't always

things we need to revisit and review and make sure that people are learning the skills that they need to learn.

What I worry is that we've missed a very real opportunity to have laid the foundations for an even more exciting future. Rather than it being sort of oh shit, shit, we've done what we can we've done what we can, quick get the kids back into school, quick, let's make sure this structure and make sure there's rigor. And, and we're not, we're not using this opportunity in the way that we might as a system, I think some of us are doing it anyway, I would count me and Maurie that sort of camp, I think we just get on and we do what we think is right for our young people. And we do as much as we can get away with and still keep our community on board. But I don't know if it's necessarily being supported and encouraged on the systemic level.

**Steve Leichtweis 27:07**

I think from our perspective, I can speak from Auckland's experience in the last two years. It's either by - it's our good fortune or just dumb luck that our 10-year learning and teaching and university vision came up for renewal. So we have new senior leadership, a new VC, new top level decision making group who undertook and have been undertaking a review of who we are as an institution and how we teach and how we deliver and how we research obviously, as well. And that's all been informed by the experiences of the last two years with the pandemic. And, you know, we're in a position now where the recommendations are going out for consultation to the wider university. And specifically things like less direct instruction, if it can be recorded and made available for students to engage with asynchronously however that suits that's the way it should be done.

If the students come on to campus, it should be for the higher metacognitive kind of learning opportunities, the application, the analysis, that kind of top level stuff. And that is, you know, the attempt there is to provide more flexible options for how students engage with their learning because living in Auckland is not a cheap experience for students, and they are making strategic decisions on a daily basis of do I work? Do I stay home to look after the family? Or do I go on to campus and the price of getting on campus and staying on campus for a couple of hours is a real cost. And if we're only getting them in there to aggregate around a lecture theatre where somebody talks about them, that's a complete waste of time. Now, we're in a position now where we have a lot of academics who grew up within that camp that solely campus based experience.

And, you know, these recommendations go before the university community and while I'm expecting that there will be a lot of pushback because the resilience is wafer thin. The change fatigue is real, and many are just hoping that we can return to normal [laughter] and like because, you know, you know, you know teacher presents for a blended or online space is a completely different set of skills than the teacher presents required for face to face instruction, or teaching.

**Stephen Marshall 29:47**

I think it's also - I think there's a complete complex problem of identity going on here as well. And I'd say this would probably be true as much for teachers as it is for academics, which is that we have a very, very strong sense of what it is to be an academic. And each person has a slightly different sense of that. I'm sure each teacher, similarly, very strong sense of being a teacher and constructing that

identity in a particular way in terms of relationships with other people. And I think part of the challenge we face and helping people continue to keep up with the necessary changes that we're going to be experiencing, is showing them how they can strengthen their identity in new and important ways and not lose the things that they really hold at the heart as to why they're even here in the first place. And I think it's a - we shouldn't be treating this as a conversation about people being change resistant or about technical skills. We need to recognise that we're a values driven part of society. We exist to make the world a better place with without any humility in that. And that strong passion for the subjects we teach for the students we engage with that's something that we have to try and sustain even as we look at, well, do we really need to be worrying about those buildings that we've used historically to create that dynamic?

And I think the real challenge there and was we experienced this a bit in conversations on the university about returning to travel, and there's a lot of angst about the the international conference, for example, as a tool for helping new and emerging academics develop their identity. And the model historically has been you go to conferences, you meet peers, you meet more experienced people, you build connections, you develop your identity and your branding. And there's some really challenging questions about how do we do that in a world in which we don't do that physical travel quite as much that we find other forums and other ways of engaging with each other. And I've been telling people around our campus that it's as basic as doing things like introducing your junior colleagues or even their PhD students to how you use and tools like Twitter and connecting them up with peers, just to keep up with what's happening in the social conversation in the scholarly area as much as the formal published conversation. I think we have to get better at helping people build their sense of belonging in a space, which is which feels fragile and broken, and if we can't do that, I'll respect the old fashioned way.

The other point I was going to make though is that, as well as sort of selling that hope, and having a sense of how we try and get there, I think one of the things that it's really important for people in leadership roles to be thinking about now is we believe the world will improve in terms of our capacity to do the things we want to do, we're not constantly going to be stuck in lockdown, we're not constantly going to be challenged by financial constraints and other controls that are disrupting our world. Sometime in the next two or three years, I expect the world is going to be a better fun, more fun place to be in and to do the work that we do. The institutions and the organisations that do what you're talking about, Steve, right now, in terms of building the capacity to be actively present in that space, two or three years from three years from now, are really going to push through that and make great gains very rapidly. The organisations that draw their head in and become very defensive but don't try and do that work, that just try to get by and and cope with the most expedient strategy are going to find themselves quite broken and then have to discover how to do things while everybody else is moving ahead beyond them.

So I think you mentioned the futurism conversations Claire, I think right now is the time that we're talking about futures, but also to do that in a smart way to be drawing on people like Nicholas Taleb's concept of the black swan, which is that the future is going to have things that are really going to throw you for six - genuinely things that you just couldn't possibly predict the pattern. But if you design your thinking, if you think about the models of teaching or things that you want people to achieve, without committing yourself to very specific mechanisms and very specific ways of enacting resolve to get that,

I think you are then much more capable of coping with an unpredicted future. When we're planning for our new learning platform, we don't have a single model that we're planning to enact. I have a capability that I want to give our organisation that will play out in ten different ways. Hopefully, one of those sustains itself to pay the bills, but I don't know which one it's going to be.

**Claire Amos** 34:44

Yeah, I do think there's an opportunity for us to make sure that we design some optimism into these discussions as well. Like I noticed the other day when I was talking to my middle leaders so all my HODs and actually all of my staff at sub briefing and I was talking about, you know why it is we have to double down on our hybrid teaching and learning strategies, you know that we need to make sure that we're doing that really effectively. But also talking about the very discrete structuring that we're doing to try and sort of ingrain and embed behaviors that support students becoming more self directed and to develop learning agency, i.e. designing for students to be leading their own learning on a Thursday and Friday. I kept highlighting that because this is the first step of a really exciting, whole lot of other steps we can then take.

And I think that it's important that whilst we know, our teachers and our educators and our academics are feeling exhausted and are at the end of the the energy in terms of what they can do, actually, optimism and excitement about where we might go to beyond here can actually also be really re energising. And I think we run the risk of getting caught in a really sort of negative hole otherwise [laughter]. Look, I actually think we're in a desperately exciting time within our particular school. I am concerned though, that it isn't system wide that that conversation isn't system wide, that we aren't all getting a you know, we're so busy going oh my god, getting through it all and feeling like we're being hammered to do all sorts of administrative roles around COVID and pandemic management that we've lost sight of the importance of optimism and curiosity and where we might go from here.

**Kwong Nui Sim** 36:51

Yeah, thank you so much, all three.

**Claire Amos** 36:55

Isn't that a nice caveat for having [inaudible; laughter]. Nice, nice to where we are going? Sorry.

**Steve Leichtweis** 37:01

I was just gonna say. I was just gonna say before we got to the second question [laughter] that, you know, I think all three of us probably have a really positive view of where this could all go, whether it's secondary or tertiary. And my fear, my personal fear, within my institution, I guess this might be similar for others in their various places is that in our drive to get to this more student centric, flexible space, we forget the first thing that is being staff centric and providing all of the resources and capacities and support so that the staff themselves can help get us to that place that shiny better place that we want to be.

**Kwong Nui Sim** 37:51

Yeah, thank you, Steve, that actually leads into the second question quite nicely. And thank you for unpacking the challenges in such a detailed manner, and I'm sure the list goes on. And especially if I

may some of the challenges actually existed before COVID, but the COVID and large size of the challenges to today's situation. So quite a few - all of you have touched on about moving forward and the challenges of wellbeing, support to enact the change, and so on, so forth. So what do you think could be or should be done better to support our students and staff and whānau?

**Claire Amos** 38:37

I actually think we need to do some really boring pragmatic things like I, if I was the Minister of Education, and I was hitting into this next budget, I would just get rid of the discussion around the provision of internet and devices. And because that can be solved with money for the most part. I know we've got some rural properties, and we do have some challenges with our grid and, and reach in some areas, but universal basic WiFi being like water, like you know, power, like something that everyone has access to. I would also make sure that there are resources for - we have the healthy lunches program in the Ministry of Education where are communities that need it have been given resources to work with their community partners to resolve the poverty and hunger issue so that they can work with partners to provide free lunches. I would love to see the equivalent of that for devices in schools and where it is needed. They're just being very real targeted funding to make sure schools can work with their communities to find a solution that's appropriate for them and their context. Not a one size fits all, not rolling out iPads or Chromebooks to the entire country. Let's make it a community and partnership based solution.

And then I would pour massive amounts of resources in to supporting our teachers and upskilling them because actually, you can't get to the really interesting discussions until we've all reached a base level of digital literacy and learning design competency. I actually think we've forgot the learning design competency part of it. I think we focus very much on the technical skills and that is part of learning design competency, but I talk to teachers day in and day out and often discover that they don't actually really understand what it is to be a learning and assessment designer because if you want to have co-constructed creative learning programs that are really relevant and exciting for our young people, and you want to design genuinely responsive assessment processes and design assessment processes that really do reflect the curriculum and the levels of the curriculum and an understanding of what it is they're actually assessing, there's a whole lot of learning design literacy that goes into that. And so I would be pouring a shitload of time and resources and giving staff embedded time. Like I know, in other countries, they have, you know, far more noncontact time built in because you realise that the best professional development is often done in house, we just need more flexibility around noncontact time of teachers and how we can upskill them and support them within their own thing.

So I would do those three things: Let's sort of solve the WiFi issue, let's solve the device issue, and let's put a shitload of resourcing and to giving people time and potential resources and access to the right facilitators to really upskill people and get them to do it quickly. I know from leading ICT PD contracts years ago, if you have a plan, and you have the resources, you can shift people quickly.

**Steve Leichtweis** 41:50

[multiple speakers] That is the same for tertiary.

**Stephen Marshall** 41:55

I'd argue that one of our biggest problems is that with - New Zealand sort of very neoliberal country, it's in its DNA of thinking about how the world operates, the market has tanked. And we've allowed a market model of what it is that education should be doing to pervade us to the point where we don't even realise that we're using market language and models to frame up the problems that we have. I'd love to see the entirety of the education system in New Zealand, treated as a public infrastructure. Now, that's that's a problem because, frankly, particularly in Wellington, our water and our sewerage not so hot these days. But I think there's a concept there.

And if you thought about our place as a social institution and thought about our collective responsibility as a country to enact that infrastructure well, then we look at a funding model that's about the needs and the scale of the populations that we have, not just the employers, and that isn't based on how many students I can get, this is how many students you can get. It's based on this population needs this level of education and fund to that level of education to the standard that we want to achieve for the country. And decouple ourselves from these market models. Because right now, what's happening in the university system is that we have a government who's managing the pricing model to try and deal with the debt issues. They've given most of the money to the students as living costs because they're aware of the cost of living issues. But we're being eroded in terms of the resources that we have available inside the university to work with them. And so our teachers find themselves with larger and larger teaching loads, larger and larger classes, more and more pressure to work with students without the supporting resources to enable those people to be well prepared and well enabled to succeed. And that's degrading the nature of the experience that people are able to achieve.

And referring to the conversation I made earlier, the passion and the commitment about individuals means that's part of the problem. They are trying desperately to make this work so that they deliver an educational outcome for the people that they have in their classes to the extent that they believe should be achieved. And yet, we're not enabling them to do that because the the entire funding model, the entire management of the system, is set up to just edge away at that year after year after year. And at some point, if you overreach and then it just collapses away, and you suddenly realise that for the last five years, we literally haven't been able to do anything, we just deluded ourselves. And I really do think there's some risks that we're getting close to that point. Not only in New Zealand, I would say that this unsustainable vision of what it is that education does is true in many countries that have thought of themselves as having very good education systems and are discovering that maybe they don't and...

**Steve Leichtweis** 45:00

and, of course, what did we do at the start of the pandemic? Most tertiaries turned around and said, 'Hey, we're going to take a hit to our budget, our income, so we're going to set up a voluntary leave scheme, and we're gonna get people to retire,' which of course, then they didn't fill those positions, which is a, you know, a vicious cycle that we've just set up where that heightened expectation and workload on staff is only magnified by the fact that they're now potentially doing one and a half jobs, and ...

**Stephen Marshall** 45:28

... then we lost the tutors, we lost a lot of professional staff because those tended to be the people who left rather than people in permanent academic roles. So that there isn't that team enabling teaching to take place to make the organisation successful, and we're essentially having to rebuild those things. And then those are a consequence of a broken funding model. They're a consequence of a broken regulatory model in the way that the TEC in the M are thinking about the tertiary system is that they're losing sight of that necessity.

**Kwong Nui Sim** 46:09

Anything to add, Steve or Claire before the final question maybe [chuckle] just looking at the time [laughter].

**Claire Amos** 46:17

I wonder if we are actually getting anywhere close?

**Kwong Nui Sim** 46:22

Yeah. The last one is just, I suppose. Yes, global pandemic is a crisis, but I wonder if you have seen any silver lining in terms of innovation that we can progress from the current situation onwards? Or what sort of economic innovation that you think could be, could we have within the flexible learning aspect?

**Claire Amos** 46:53

I think the silver lining is the voice that's been gathered from students about how much they relish the actual flexibility of what went on over the last two years. So we've actually got a shitload of evidence that backs up hunches we always had about students wanting to have more choice over how they use their time, how much ownership they have of their learning. I think the risk that we run is not listening to the voices, that we, we don't actually take that and learn from it, and instead, we listen to some other voices over here that are worried about a loss of rigor and standards, and actually, we disregard the voices of our young people who have, I think, been really loud and clear about what they have enjoyed. But there's other things I haven't enjoyed. They didn't like having to be at home, they want to be able to have social connection, and come in and all do all of that. But it doesn't have to be one thing or the other. We can have social connection, we can have these physical bricks and mortar communities that are thriving. But we can also set up protocols and processes and mechanisms whereby we can encourage greater flexibility and student choice about what they learn and where they learn and the timelines by which they learn.

It's bonkers, that we're going back to a far more structured, in terms of timeline NCEA, for instance, at a time when we should be double downing on fixable assessment practices. It was only five years ago, six years ago that we used to be at national conferences and had really exciting talks from the then head Chair of the NCQA that used to talk often about anywhere, anytime assessment and secondary education. Now should be the time we we're going back to those conversations and saying, we've learned kids love flexibility. We learned that they love being face to face with their teachers, but that doesn't need to come at the expense of the flexibility that we discovered was really powerful over lockdowns.

**Steve Leichtweis 48:53**

I'd say that student centric desire is certainly well and truly ensconced at Auckland. That's the that's the target that we're aiming for. The process to which we get there or how we get there is yet to be decided. And what does flexible or student centric look like for a University of Auckland student? I'm not quite sure. Ask me this question in a year's time and I'll tell you how we've gone with, with this consultation of our new learning and teaching vision and education vision for the university.

We will probably still have plenty of students who want to come to the University of Auckland, and they will probably still be entirely successful, despite possibly the best or worst efforts of some of our academic staff who will also have as part of their their workload, a major expectation around research and I you know, I have to be completely mindful that some people come to this university to work because of the affordances that it provides to their particular research agenda of that focus and that teaching is very much a side project for them. And but, you know, I'm really hopeful that the conversation that has been opened up by the awareness and the risk that the pandemic has signaled to us as a university, is going to change the way that we work with students. And that will be far less of a campus only based learning experience, and far more of a flexible and blended style of engagement.

**Stephen Marshall 50:39**

I think one of the things that's come out of this is that I'm hoping for an elevated level of discussion now as we try and continue to draw on some of the things that we've experienced over the last couple of years. Historically, I've had a number of conversations with people saying, well, that possibly couldn't work that's just it's science fiction, what you're talking about. Well, funnily enough, I've experienced something that they said couldn't happen in the last couple of years and that has basically worked. So I'm hoping that that will help us have better conversations about our potential, in fact, to do greater things, and for people will be more confident that we can do those things.

But I also think we've learned how important it is that we pay attention to the whole thing that we pay attention to all of our students and to all of our staff. And we think about the collective relationships we have across that system. The last couple of years have made it very hard for people to hide away in a physical classroom and not have to worry about what anyone else is doing in their classroom. Things have become much more connected and much more visible and much more consequential in a larger scale. And I think that's an important thing to lean into and to experience for a while. And I'm hoping that that will continue to happen.

I think it's also made - it's actually really important to pay attention to the fact that we should celebrate some great successes. I have no clue how we would have been able to do what we've been able to do in the last couple of years, even five years ago. Five years ago, we didn't have large scale video platforms in order to manage the lectures. Yes, there's a little bit of stuff around the edges, but there's no way in hell I could have coped with the scale of demand. We didn't have Zoom, we didn't have the debate, we had Skype. Does anyone remember how bad Skype is? Imagine doing a class with 400 students attending a lecture in Skype: wasn't going to happen. So we've been incredibly fortunate that - even the Rugby World Cup. And as much as I know that there are problems with the bandwidth for some of our schools, many of the cities have coped with a massive deployment of people back into

their home and working, using video conferencing and other tools because the infrastructure was present and capable of serving that need. That was the Rugby World Cup that created that infrastructure.

So some of these things, we do need to be able to acknowledge we've done them well, we've done them better than we could have possibly expected. We were able to sustain some forward momentum for many of our courses and programmes, even for our students overseas that couldn't come to us and country. So I think we need to get better at celebrating those if we want people recognise the value in them and continue to reflect on them moving forward. So that's that's the other key message, I guess.

**Claire Amos** 53:34

I would also love to know how we can re-stoke teachers excitement around futures thinking as well because I do feel like you know, I understand we've been absorbed by dealing with what we're doing and in essence, realising a lot of those things we talked about at past futures thinking conferences. But I do think there's an opportunity for us to reignite those discussions and hopefully reconnect, talking and getting excited about where this all could go and should go.

**Steve Leichtweis** 54:09

On a highly transactional kind of way of thinking, I think the only thing that would excite a lot of the staff that I work with right now is if I came to them with a tool that reduced their workload by about half. That would be an exciting conversation, but I'm not sure what that tool is yet.

**Stephen Marshall** 54:28

General purpose AI. It's not that far away [laughter].

**Kwong Nui Sim** 54:33

Great. Thank you all three speakers, Claire, Steve, and Stephen, very, very good insights, as you can see lots of positive comments in the chat box. And so last one minute, maybe, any question or thoughts from the audience? Anyone?

**Stephen Marshall** 54:53

There is a question in the chat about how I feel about the new tertiary education strategy objectives. Yeah, by the way, I just want to preface this by this is me as an academic speaking and not my university. Just because I'm pretty confident that my university's senior leadership team would want to express things differently. I think the current tertiary education strategy objectives are dreadful. I think they are lacking in ambition. I think they lack an awareness of the rich complexity and future potential of the tertiary system. I think they are neo-liberally defined in ways that are performative and regulatory rather than ambitious and setting in place an agenda for a powerful tertiary system really driving success for New Zealanders. I think it was a dreadful job. And it just continues, unfortunately, a succession of incredibly badly framed tertiary strategies. I think the school system, as somebody not in that system, at least has seen evidence of ambition for great improvements in that system, but occasionally in the language. I'm afraid to show the tertiary ones - I gave this feedback when the Ministry came calling a while back about this. I am not inspired by that strategy.

**Kwong Nui Sim** 56:19

Cool. Any last piece of words of wisdom, Claire or Steve, before we close the webinar?

**Steve Leichtweis** 56:28

I think we've covered everything except the other a couple of questions that we never got to.

**Kwong Nui Sim** 56:33

Oh, is it privately message to you because I didn't get any here? Oh, must be.

**Stephen Marshall** 56:40

In the original email. There is still a place for face-to-face. I think and I absolutely. We just have to maximise the impact of it and do the things that we do well face-to-face, and not waste that because it's an incredibly expensive business thing to do. But if it's necessary, and that's you do the necessary things, you don't hide them.

**Claire Amos** 57:03

And if anyone happens to be an architect of the upcoming budget and is in a position to make sure we get universal, basic WiFi, devices for all students, and a whole lot of resourcing for our staffing that'd be awesome. Thank you. [laughter]

**Kwong Nui Sim** 57:25

Thank you, Claire, thank you, Steve, and thank you, Stephen, and for your time and your insights, very useful, and I'm sure the audience will find it very beneficial as well. And thank you so much to all the audience for attending this session. Wish you all the best and stay safe. See you next time.

**Stephen Marshall** 57:44

Thank you.

**Claire Amos** 57:46

Thank you.

**Steve Leichtweis** 57:46

Kia ora.

**Stephen Marshall** 57:46

Have a great day.