

## BA Business and Enterprise (BABE) – an impactful journey\*

An examination of an innovative degree programme, which is providing suitable and useful learning to employed mature students – a journey from local UK delivery to international partnerships.

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### Abstract

Although the Scottish Executive (2003) and Skills Sector Councils (Lifelong Learning UK, 2008) have published reports to highlight the value of lifelong learning, there is no clear or easy path for advanced entry to degree programmes in the UK. We became aware that there were an increasing number of mid-career workers who had achieved progression in their fields to a certain level without going to university, but now found themselves unable to advance without a degree qualification. BA Business and Enterprise (BABE) was developed to address the learning needs of this audience by Edinburgh Napier University (ENU) in 2007 as a one year 'top up' qualification, flexibly delivered, for students with recognised non-degree level prior learning or significant workplace experience. It targets employees of small and medium-sized business enterprises and not-for-profits, as well as members of the armed forces, who wish to study while they continue to work. Such students are not limited to one country, and this paper plots the BABE's journey across national and cultural borders to meet the needs of a niche student market. It focuses on the experience of Tai Poutini Polytechnic (TPP), a small New Zealand (NZ) polytechnic, which is now teaching the degree in partnership with ENU, in a new and innovative educational arrangement for the NZ tertiary sector. The paper describes the process by which an international qualification was adapted to suit the NZ market and the requirements of the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA). Further research will focus on evaluating the collaborative partnership model and the nature of its delivery methods, including an examination of the challenges, if any, of long distance degree provision and transnational education.

**Keywords:** *Enterprise education, entrepreneurial learning, experiential learning, work-based learning, cross-border collaboration*

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## 1. Background

ENU developed its BABE programme in 2007 to address the needs of non-traditional university learners; these were people already in the workforce who had perhaps undertaken some non-degree level study, and had progressed their careers to a certain level but now found they needed a full degree to move forward. Although advanced entry to degree programmes was available in the UK, there were no clear or easy paths for such students to pursue. ENU thus developed a one year 'top up' degree programme, which recognised lower-level qualifications and/or work experience as fulfilling the prior learning requirements of the first two years of a degree. Fifty percent of the top-up third year was designed as work based learning, to be flexibly delivered, a model which allowed students to continue to work full-time while completing university studies. Initially offered only on campus in Edinburgh, the degree has grown through a hub arrangement with regional partners across the UK, including two Royal Air Force (RAF) bases. Increasing demand for '*anywhere anytime*' learning opportunities was identified through programme evaluation monitoring in the 2011/12 and 2012/13 review periods, and in response, elements of online delivery, combined with face-to-face teaching, were added to the programme to provide a pathway for students requiring this flexibility. Approximately 500 students have now graduated from the UK hubs. A purely online service to international students followed, and ENU now offers its BABE degree to students in the Caribbean, Africa and Asia and as of 2015, NZ.

## 2. Problem Identification By TPP, NZ

In 2013, TPP, a small regional polytechnic based on the West Coast of NZ, had also identified a gap in the local market for a business degree which would meet the needs of non-traditional students. These students, many of whom had already completed non-degree level NZ Institute of Management (NZIM) or NZ Diploma in Business (NZ Dip Bus) programmes through the polytechnic, expressed keen interest in studying for a degree, but, like ENU students, were older, often had family responsibilities, and wanted to continue in full-time employment. The absence of suitable student friendly pathways in partnership with another NZ educational

institution led TPP to consider international options. The similarities in learner profiles (small and medium sized enterprises, not-for-profit organisations and defence forces), alongside the West Coast's need for innovative, entrepreneurial education courses to tackle deep-seated economic problems, combined to influenced TPP to partner with ENU and offer BABE in NZ. The first cohort of students began their studies in May 2015. This paper considers the process by which TPP and ENU decided to form a partnership and the route required in NZ to operationalise that decision.

### 3. The Nature Of Enterprise Education – Literature Discussion

This paper is based on the assumption that entrepreneurial behaviours *can be learned* and extant literature would suggest research in entrepreneurial learning to support this thinking has advanced significantly in the last two decades (Rae, 2005, 2007, 2012; Deakins and Freel, 1998; Karra *et al.*, 2008; Wang and Chugh, 2014; Rae and Wang, 2015); the academic work examined is about enriching our understanding of that learning process.

Rae's research (2005) offers a starting point for understanding entrepreneurial learning; he proposes that *'both entrepreneurship and learning are inherently constructivist, behavioural and social processes. The term entrepreneurial learning therefore means learning to recognise and act on opportunities, and interacting socially to initiate, organise and manage ventures'* (Rae, 2005:324).

Exploring the topic further, Rae (2007) and Harrison and Leitch (2005, 2011) provide us with further insights on entrepreneurial learning, suggesting it is:

- a dynamic process of awareness, reflection, association and application (Neck and Greene, 2011)
- a transforming experience and knowledge into functional learning outcomes (QAA, 2012)

- learning that includes knowledge, behaviour and affective or emotional learning (Cope, 2005; Wang & Chugh, 2014)
- affected by the context in which learning occurs, what is learned, and the delivery model of the learning (Politis, 2005; Neck and Greene, 2011; QAA, 2012; Penaluna & Penaluna, 2015)
- closely connected to opportunity recognition, exploitation, creativity and innovation (Lumpkin and Lichtenstein, 2005; Rae, 2012).

The importance of the forgoing in relation to this study is the strength of influence Harrison and Leitch (2005) have had in shaping entrepreneurial learning research as demonstrated by Wang and Chugh (2014), based on the citations of those articles included in their 2000 – 2012 literature review, post 2005. Rae (2007:32), supported by Hamilton (2004), and Cope (2005), builds on these insights by stating that:

*'...entrepreneurial behaviour is acquired through social learning, but formal education is only part of this process... it is therefore more helpful to regard entrepreneurial development as social learning, which is practised actively and behaviourally with others in cultural and organisational settings'*

This leads the debate on entrepreneurial learning into a wider context and to consider if Rae's (2007) argument of multiple dimensions to entrepreneurial learning is accepted; is there a role for formal tuition, such as that provided by universities and polytechnics? It is suggested that, given the position of this research (accepting that the entrepreneurial process and behaviours can be learned), we should be open to Rae's line of argument and acknowledge that there is a role for educators to play. This leads to the second question; how imaginative and innovative can tutors and programmes be in their learning and teaching strategies to embrace the needs of these learners and ensure what is offered is *'fit for purpose'*?

By fusing this process of entrepreneurial learning with cross border diversities (and similarities), there is, it is argued, an opportunity for this research to add to the current academic and practitioner conversation (Rae, Matlay, McGowan and Penaluna, 2014; Wang and Chugh, 2014; Rae and Wang, 2015).

### 3.1 *Understanding entrepreneurial learning – an experiential perspective*

Kolb (1984) was one of the earliest academics to propose that there was value in viewing the learning process from an *experiential* perspective, when he defined learning as ‘...*the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience*’. (1984:38). The importance of his work in influencing others stems from the four key features he highlighted which have been built on, enhanced and refined over the last three decades, as indicated beside each of the features:

- *emphasis on the process of adaptation and learning as opposed to content or outcomes* (Rae, 2005, 2007, 2012; Deakins and Wyper, 2010)
- *knowledge is a transformation process being continuously created and recreated* (Politis, 2005; Deakins and Wyper, 2010)
- *learning transforms experience in both objective and subjective forms* (Evers, 2011); and
- *to understand learning we must understand the nature of knowledge* (Harrison and Leitch, 2005, 2011)

Whilst there is obvious support for Kolb’s work, there are also limitations which need to be identified to offset ‘*blanket acceptance*’ of his thinking in relation to this particular research. The two elements which appear flawed are, first, the lack of mechanism for the learner to *reflect* (raised by Deakins and Wyper, 2010; Neck and Greene, 2011; Rae, 2005, 2012), a key aspect in entrepreneurial learning. Secondly, the model appears to sit in a domestic setting which does not take into account the complexities of operating across international borders and the associated multiple cultures, protocols and governance which need to be recognised; this latter issue is clearly of significance in relation to this study.

Rae (2007:30) embraces Kolb’s work when he notes that learning highlights the need for a ‘... *situated and active experience, rather than a purely educational and theoretical process*’. What is useful in Rae’s work (2007, 2010) is that it broadens the agenda of what entrepreneurs need to learn. He suggests a more formal

learning environment which concentrates on the academic *discipline* in isolation as the only content for learning could be a potential limitation. This alerts practitioners to the need for the curriculum to include *social elements* (how) and the importance of *contextualisation* (what and how) (Rae 2012). These points are echoed by Penaluna & Penaluna (2015), Wang & Chugh (2014) and Huang (2015), and have been experienced by the authors of this paper, on the basis of their professional practice roles in delivering entrepreneurship education over two decades.

### 3.2 *Changing landscape and the role of entrepreneurial education*

Pittaway and Cope (2007) and Deakins and Freel (1998) are among many within the entrepreneurship educator community who accept Gibb (1989) as being one of the earliest and most consistent academics to communicate and illustrate that, entrepreneurial learning is *different*, and that there is a need to look beyond traditional classroom tools to be effective in encouraging entrepreneurship (Penaluna & Penaluna, 2009). In support of this view of '*learning by doing*', and of the breadth of the content, Gibb (1989; 2002) argues further that entrepreneurs derive their knowledge needs from their business problems and opportunities. He claims three characteristics of entrepreneurial learning emerge:

- the desire for knowledge on a *need to know* basis (what);
- a concern for *knowing how* to do things (how); and
- *knowing who* to approach to establish effective networks (what, how and when).

The work of Gibb (2005) informed the agenda for '*Developing Entrepreneurial Graduates*' (NESTA, 2008), which aimed at placing entrepreneurship at the centre of higher education in the UK and was the precursor to the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) benchmark statements on Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Education (2012). The QAA statements provide higher education institutions with guidance and standards in curriculum design and assessment setting. QAA called for an increased focus on enterprise and entrepreneurship education. Propelled by a need for flexibility and adaptability, the employment market demands graduates with

enhanced skills who can think on their feet and can be innovative in a global economic setting. Dimensions of the benchmarks are based on:

- the political necessity for an infrastructure which supports and enhances enterprise development across the curriculum ( Wilson, 2011)
- better integration across subject areas with improved practice-based pedagogical tools, combined with enhance teamwork both internally and externally (The Oslo Agenda, 2006)
- learning that is meaningful, relevant and leads to skills that enhance lifelong learning (Department of Business and Innovation and Skills (BIS) (2011).

The QAA (2012:7) states that *'learning environments that encourage the development of creativity and innovation together with business acumen are rare...'*, and this desired status is one that ENU has been quoted as achieving. The feedback was provided through the UK quality assurance process resulting from external examination (Penaluna, 2013).

The work of Kolb (1984) and Gibb (2002) has more recently been built on by Huang (2015) who explores the following three dimensions of entrepreneurial learning as being related but expanded to reflect the current complex and rapidly changing landscape when engaging across national and cultural borders:

- know what (factual knowledge)
- know how (skills)
- know why (mental models)

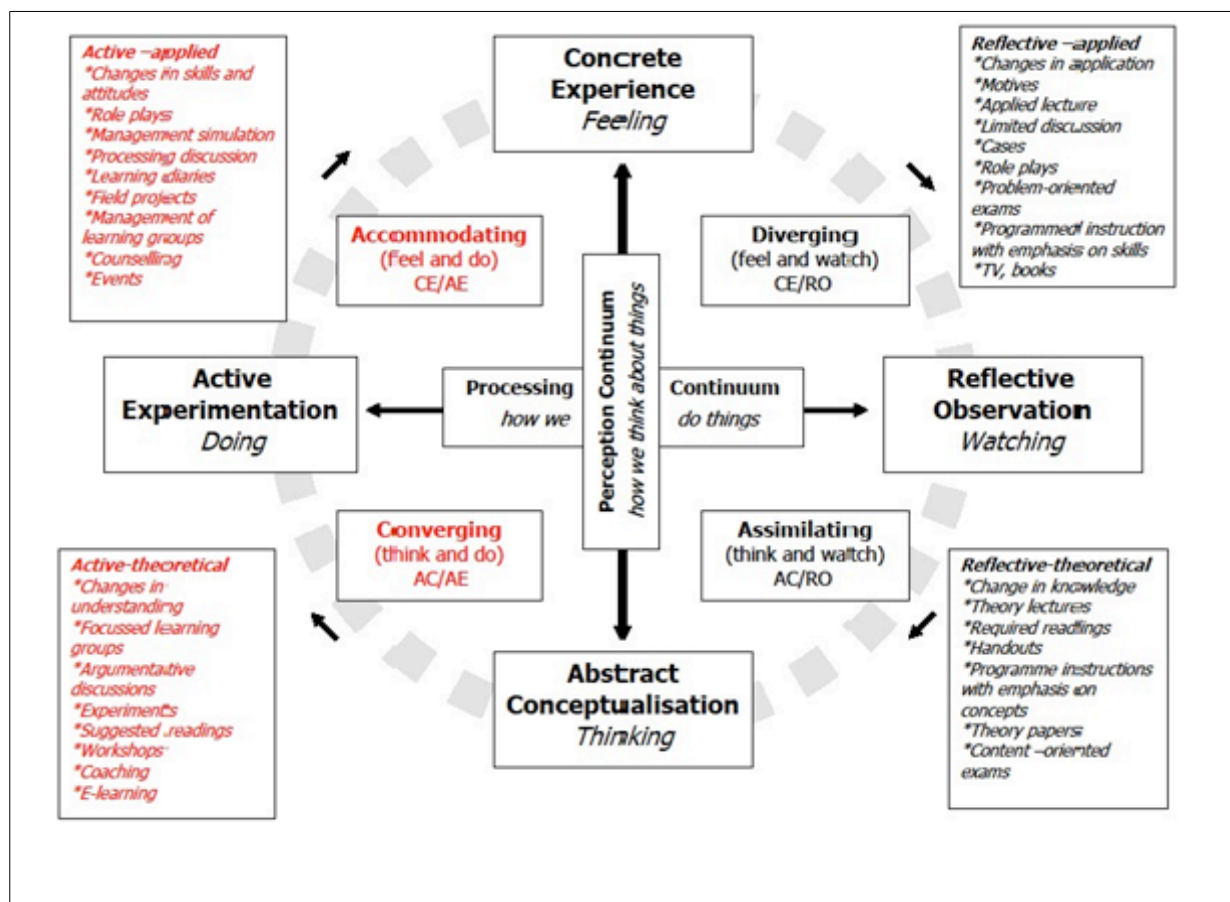
For the purposes of this research, Huang's exploratory paper opens up directions of study that can be examined and compared with both UK and NZ learners going forward.



### 3.3 Strategies to deliver entrepreneurial learning

Having considered the content element (know what) of enterprise education, this part of the discussion focuses on the value and application of experiential learning to entrepreneurial learning. The following diagram embraces Kolb's Learning Cycle (1984) with suggested teaching andragogies suitable for entrepreneurial learning based on studies by Garavan and O'Conneide (1994). When viewing the diagram, the boxes in each corner detail the learning tools and have been expanded to include more recent suggestions from empirical research by Pittaway and Cope (2007) and Rae (2012). What should also be noted from this diagram are the aspects to the left hand side in red, which, it is suggested are the more common entrepreneurial styles of learning, of *accommodating and converging* (Pittaway and Cope, 2007; Garavan and O'Conneide, 1994).

**Figure 1, Experiential learning approaches for entrepreneurial learning**



Compiled from Kolb (1984), Garavan and O'Conneide (1994), Pittaway and Cope (2007) and Rae 2012



Whilst there is still clear support for the foundations offered by Kolb, the last decade has seen challenges by Neck and Greene (2011) who argue it is not sufficient in our teachings to develop understanding, knowing and talking; there is as well an imperative to require learners to '*use, apply and act*'. This rationale is compelling based on context discussions at national at international levels, for preparing graduates for tomorrow's challenges (The Oslo Agenda, 2006; World Economic Forum (WEF), 2009; Wilson, 2011; QAA, 2012; Executive Core, 2015). The value in their thinking, in relation to the ENU learning and teaching assessment strategy, is the *practice* that is necessary by the learner. In the words of Neck and Greene, '*... learning a method, we believe is often more important than learning specific content. In an ever-changing world, we need to teach methods that stand the test of dramatic changes in content and context*' (2011:57).

What is particularly useful in this work is its;

- applicability and flexibility across multiple audiences (including across borders)
- suitability for unpredictable (and rapidly changing) environments
- requirement for continuous practice and reflection. It focusses on doing then learning, rather than learning then doing, making reflection an ntegrated part of the learner journey.

The following table outlines the key differences between a process and method approach to entrepreneurial learning and these reinforce the highlighted elements of Kolb's model adapted to deliver an effective experiential learning experience.

**Table 1****Process versus Method**

<b>Entrepreneurship as a process</b>	<b>Entrepreneurship as a method</b>
Known inputs and outputs	A body of skills of techniques
Steps	Toolkit
Predictive	Creative
Linear	Iterative
Precision	Experimentation
Tested	Practiced

Neck and Greene (2011:62)

It is these principles that have informed and shaped the learning, teaching and assessment philosophy of the BABE programme and influenced the delivery model of a flexibly blended learning approach. Examples adopted by the teaching team include learning diaries, role plays, field projects, coaching / counselling, focussed learning groups, suggested readings and all face-to-face contact delivered in workshop (not lecture) format. The feedback from students is gathered at the end of each trimester on a per module basis and each cohort has a student representative on the staff / student liaison committee. In addition, the programme team (UK wide) meets annually to reflect on student feedback and discuss how to enhance the learner experience. The consistent student feedback received is *'the value of the practice based and relevance of the learning and how students have been able to cross-fertilise what is discussed in the classroom to their organisations of employment'*.

The current literature (Neck & Greene, 2011; QAA, 2012; Rae, Matlay, McGowan & Penaluna, 2014; Huang, 2015; Penaluna & Penaluna, 2015) now provides a platform against which international developments and delivery models can be reviewed and refined to ensure we offer learning which best suits the culture and context of new learners from around the globe. The NZ experience with TPP has provided both opportunities and challenges, in developing the most effective delivery model, to

encompass the knowledge degree development requirements of NZ government (Tertiary Education Strategy 2014-2019, 2014) and local stakeholder expectations of the capability and capacity of mature graduate learners (Development West Coast Leadership and Governance Alumni, 2014), whilst continuing to adopt and adapt the UK elements of best practice.

## 4. Research Methods

Following early evidence of potential demand from various stakeholders, TPP staff began to investigate the possibility of offering a business degree programme in 2013. Before investing significantly in its development, however, it was important to carry out market research to determine if there was sufficient support from student groups. A copy of the questionnaire used to assess market interest can be found in Appendix I.

### 4.1 *Survey information from potential degree learners*

An online survey of approximately 250 people was conducted in May 2014. Those surveyed included NZ Dip Bus graduates from the West Coast, Wellington and the Ohakea Air Base, and Outdoor Recreation students. A total of 80 responses were collected (a 32% response rate) (Student survey, 2014).

Over half the respondents (65%) were female, spread fairly evenly over the 21-50+ age group, but with a majority aged between 30 and 50. Overall, 81% of respondents indicated interest in studying for a business/management degree at TPP, where their NZIM and NZ Dip Bus qualifications would be taken into account. Studying at another institution would have required complicated prior learning applications. *'I like the idea of doing all the training via the same provider'*, wrote one respondent, while several others noted the importance of completing a degree in the shortest possible time, with maximum cross-crediting: *"I'd be very interested to know what I can cross-credit from the NZIM and Dip Bus"*. One student said such a course would offer great opportunities for West Coast residents who otherwise missed out on higher levels of learning. She noted, however, that a link with another educational institution would

add depth and support to any such programme. Students from the Ohakea Air Force Base, where TPP had been running NZIM and NZ Dip Bus courses for many years, were particularly enthusiastic about a possible degree course: *“There would be a large uptake of this proposal at Ohakea”*, said one, while another wrote *“The sooner it can be delivered at Ohakea the better for me”*. The majority of respondents indicated they would prefer a generic management degree, although there was also a strong preference for a human resources specialisation. Delivery format preferences were for evening classes (44%), distance/independent learning (32%), or block courses (60%), the same formats already in use for TPP’s non-degree business programmes. (Note: respondents were able to select more than one response option). These choices were unsurprising, given that 80% of respondents indicated that they would wish to continue working full-time throughout their degree course, and 83% expressed a preference for part-time rather than full-time study; *‘Part time gives many the flexibility to continue working, particularly mature people’*, said one respondent, while another noted that her preference was full-time study, but *‘part-time was reality’*. An Auckland student said that block courses were essential if she was to be able to undertake further study, and few of these were available at Auckland educational institutions. About half the students thought their employer would support their study by paying course fees, while 28 thought they might get paid study leave and 13 unpaid study leave.

Overall, the survey indicated a high level of support for the delivery of a business degree at TPP, primarily due to TPP’s distinct delivery options (block courses and video conferencing, combined with face-to-face classes) and locations (West Coast, Ohakea). Student comments provided programme staff with invaluable feedback to assist with planning for a degree level programme which would best meet these needs. Having established that potential learners were definitely interested, the TPP faculty started to formulate what the degree might look like and this led to a review of both NZ and international options.

## 4.2 *Exploring International Opportunities - Common learner characteristics*

The analysis of the survey of TPP diploma student cohorts confirmed faculty thoughts regarding a level of interest in flexible business degree studies. What was also revealed were a number of key learner characteristics, which the teaching team found were not unique to the West Coast:

- Business students studied almost entirely part-time because they were often single parents with dependants; 63% of those responding to the survey were employed full time and a further 15% part-time. Other research supported these findings (Ross-Gordon, 2011)
- Those who wished to undertake degree studies typically faced barriers which made studying with conventional degree providers difficult or impossible. These barriers included employment and residential factors, programme structures and class scheduling which were not responsive to mature learner needs, and other situational factors. Again, other studies support the findings (Part-time learner in higher education, 2015).

TPP's initial plan was to partner with another NZ institution to offer a degree. It reviewed university and Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics (ITP) business degree provision in NZ, especially the Bachelor of Applied Management (BAM), which is offered by several ITPs, with close equivalents at some universities. Investigation of these courses, however, showed less than clear entry requirements, reflecting subject specialties and usually requiring assessment of prior learning (including Level 6 diplomas) on an individual basis. These findings strengthened TPP's desire to seek a degree structure that allowed *clear transition and pathways* from diplomas and other relevant prior learning to a degree qualification.

TPP sought a more innovative and entrepreneurial solution to meeting the specialist needs of its students, and undertook a preliminary investigation of UK undergraduate options (TPP Business degree: business case, 2014). This UK investigation resulted in an initial visit to ENU by TPP's senior business lecturer, which included an

introduction to the BABE degree and discussions with the BABE team. It was almost immediately evident that the ENU student cohorts were almost identical to those of TPP: military defence learners (the most common being airforce), small and medium sized business owners, college and polytechnic academic and support staff, and administrative and management staff in health and dentistry practices. Finally, the transition and entry paths were both clear and relevant.

A SWOT analysis (Appendix II) confirmed that the key strengths in favour of pursuing the BABE were, first, that students would be able to continue in employment while studying and use their workplace as their classroom, with real time assignments adding to their employment; and second, that they would be able to study on-line much of the time, while also having the option of attending face-to-face workshops. Finally, the BABE option gave them the flexibility to pursue their personal and organisational goals.

It was noted that while a BAM would provide students with portability between the several tertiary institutions around the country already delivering it, and that it was more readily recognised by NZ employers, overall, the global appeal of the ENU's BABE balanced this out (Hooker, 2014). TPP already offered its NZIM and NZ Dip Bus programmes at distance, using internet, video conferencing and face-to-face delivery methods, so the longer distance provision by ENU was seen as simply an extension of this well-established mode of operation. ENU's BABE was also being successfully delivered by distance around the UK and internationally, so both institutions were comfortable that distance would not be a factor in achieving an effective and efficient degree programme.

Other factors also influenced TPP's decision to adopt the BABE degree. Both the structure and content of the BABE with its entrepreneurial and experiential learning model was perceived as very relevant not only to TPP's students but also to the West Coast of NZ and key government economic development imperatives. These included:

- NZ's relatively low productivity and the clear link which has been established between innovation and productivity (Des Serres, Yashiro & Bollard, 2014; Smale, 2010)
- drives for innovative economic development, particularly relevant to the West Coast which has a recent history of significant downturn resulting from mining company closures and rapidly falling coal commodity prices (NZ Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, 2014)
- enterprising and innovative responses to positive developments and opportunities, such as in tourism, which are considered essential to ensure sustainable economic development (NZ Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, 2014)
- the development of a skilled workforce and businesses that effectively use and develop those skills which are seen as essential for thriving regional economies (NZ Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, 2014).

## **5. The TPP Case Study - Compliance And The NZ Qualifications Authority**

A pilot agreement and modus operandi was developed between ENU and TPP and a business plan submitted to and approved by the TPP Council early in 2014. An application for approval to deliver the new degree was then submitted to the NZ Qualifications Authority (NZQA) to validate the offering of an NZQA recognised award which included the ENU BABE as part of the TPP qualification. This section will discuss the process of that approval and the challenges faced by both partners in redefining a Scottish qualification to meet NZQA requirements.

The NZQA is responsible for the NZ Qualifications Framework (NZQF) which was developed in the 1990s. NZQA aims to ensure that NZ qualifications are credible and robust both nationally and internationally. Its international policy states:

*Our qualifications framework (NZQF) is world-leading. New Zealand was one of the first five countries in the world to develop a framework, in the 1990s.*



*We are working closely with our counterparts in countries around the world to increase its comparability with the qualification frameworks of our key immigration partner countries, and to support recognition of qualifications in these partner countries.*

*In a burgeoning global labour market, qualifications that are more portable between countries are increasingly important (NZQA, 2015).*

While other tertiary institutions around NZ have degree collaborations with international partners, it would appear the introduction of a qualification with the content and delivery style of the BABE was new to NZQA. When TPP made the decision to seek approval and accreditation for a business degree, there was an expectation nationally that TPP would adopt the same BAM qualification already offered elsewhere around the country. Word of innovation in qualification development travels fast in a small country, so TPP expected some pressure from the wider academic community on NZQA to decline approval for the proposed 'non-traditional' model. This pressure did not, however, eventuate. NZQA advised at early stage consultation that it was prepared to work through the approval application in the normal way, and that the transnational differences in qualification levels and the nature of the cross-border collaboration would be two factors among many which ENU and TPP would need to review, discuss and reconcile, if the partnership was to be supported.

The approval process for degrees and accreditation in NZ is that an institution presents a case including a very robust and defensible curriculum which will meet student and other stakeholder needs, and will demonstrate that the institution has the resources to deliver it. There is strong emphasis on research capability within the institution and there is an expectation that most teaching staff will both hold qualifications higher than the level at which they are teaching, and will be engaged in research. Institutions also need to demonstrate proof of capability to deliver against key indicators, including processes for compliance, quality and student management systems, and student support. Finally, there needs to be evidence of significant stakeholder endorsement that the curriculum is relevant and current, in order to ensure graduates meet the needs of the labour market.

The institution's case is heard and interrogated by a panel of peers and subject matter experts, along with an NZQA representative. The process usually takes two to three days of discussions and private panel meetings.

TPP is a newcomer in the degree delivery arena; its first degree level programme was commenced only in 2014. The BABE was only the institution's third application for a Level 7 (NZ) qualification, so to table a concept incorporating ENU's BABE as opposed to the more traditional applied business degree was considered (both internal and external to the organisation) a bold and innovative move.

Reservations were initially expressed by the NZQA panel about the structure of the degree; there were *'concerns that the ENU Year 3 component might be perceived as an add-on with little relevance to the previous two years of study'* (Cozens, 2014). This became a key discussion point over the three-day panel meeting and resulted in major changes to the degree application during the hearing period. NZQA wanted the degree to be a clearly *'scaffold-ed three-year inclusive programme of study'* which would lead to a NZ qualification, although the NZ Level 7 component would be delivered largely by ENU. It also wanted the ENU student learning outcomes to be subsumed into each Level 7 paper, so that TPP students were learning within a NZ context, but without losing the latest global approaches to entrepreneurial learning, business and enterprise brought by ENU. Integral to the NZ context is the country's unique founding document, the Treaty of Waitangi, whose principles underpin many aspects of government activity in NZ today. How this should apply in tertiary education is outlined by one of the country's leading Maori academics, Ranganui Walker:

*Quality in higher education for Maori (indigenous) people means the inclusion and reproduction of their own language, culture and whakapapa (epistemology) in both mainstream and wananga (indigenous) tertiary institutions. Implicit in this project is matching quality assurance requirements as defined by NZQA (Walker, 2005).*

Finally, the panel wanted to see NZ business law, human resources practices and other business applications tailored to the NZ environment included within the BABE course descriptors.

By the conclusion of the panel visit, TPP and ENU had agreed to revise the application to one for a *Bachelor of Business and Enterprise* (B BE), a new NZ approved and accredited qualification, which included a third year composed of the ENU courses, contextualised by TPP for the NZ environment. Students who completed the third year successfully would be awarded both the UK BABE degree and the NZ B BE qualification.

The NZQA validation panel changes were incorporated in a set of '*requirements*' which had to be met before the degree could be delivered. These requirements involved considerable rewriting of the ENU course descriptors by TPP staff, retaining the essence of the BABE learning outcomes for students but giving them the tools to apply these within NZ. For example, in the Innovation, Creativity and Enterprise module, the learning outcomes were expanded to require students to consider NZ business regulations and governance and to demonstrate their understanding of these through evidence gathered from the case study organisation. All three modules needed to reflect the incorporation of Treaty principles into the business environment. This work took several more months to complete, but the flexibility demonstrated by the ENU team to adapt their degree course to fit cross-boundary contexts made the process relatively straightforward. The factors which had made BABE the right choice for TPP in the first place (the similarity of student cohorts and the entrepreneurial learning model, flexibly delivered) meant that the changes needed to meet the NZQA requirements were centred around the edges of the proposal, rather than on the central principles which shaped the degree content.

The NZQA panel signed off the changes as meeting the requirements in April 2015 and in May 2015, thirteen students joined cohort one and embarked on this new chapter of the BABE programme journey.

The approved partnership between TPP and ENU now finds itself in the territory of Transnational Education (TNE) as described in a report by the British Council (McNamara 2013). The TNE discipline is an area that both parties believe will provide a further platform for taking the co-operation and collaboration between the institutions to the next level. The intention is to embrace the experiential and applied nature of the learning process across subject areas (e.g. hospitality and tourism) to ensure the focus is on the applied value of the learning for these mature working learners. Further research will be undertaken when the first student cohort finishes the degree programme (May 2016), which will analyse in greater depth the outcomes of their studies, as well as the challenges, if any, of long distance learning, but it has been particularly satisfying to receive anecdotal feedback from the students that they have already been able to develop new ideas that can add value to their employers as well as themselves. A preliminary survey (July 2015) has given some indication of this:

- *'the course is relevant to my job and immediately useful in my role'*
- *'I am already putting into practice the knowledge I have gained'*
- *'I never expected that something this unique would be available on the West Coast'*

## **6. Conclusions And Contributions**

This paper has discussed the global development of a one year degree programme which enabled the university to reach out to a new market niche and offer valuable learning to full-time working students. The qualification has appealed to those who would not traditionally attend university and the marketplace has grown from the UK to Europe and now NZ.

It is not entirely clear whether the antipodean partnership has developed a precedent-setting degree for NZ; that information is not readily available. Nonetheless, it is an innovative and entrepreneurial approach to collaboration in teaching and learning on a global scale. The development in NZ by TPP and ENU of an innovative business degree model, has provided a significant competitive advantage to both institutions. Further research and the experience of both organisations as delivery in NZ progresses, has prompted the two parties to recognise that the journey has taken them into the orbit of TNE and the associated avenues that this may offer. The focus in 2016 will be on the nature of delivery methods and the barriers, if any, created by long distance learning; surveys of TPP's graduating students will hopefully throw light on these and other issues associated with cross-border education.

It is hoped that educators around the globe may derive inspiration from the outlined curriculum development and delivery models. Equally, opportunities are abundant for alliances and academic networks for cross-border collaborations and this opens up potentially rich dialogue with the TNE discipline which has only been touched on in this discussion. A paper presented by TPP/ ENU team at the 3rd Asian ICSB SME conference in Sarawak in October 2015, for example, generated considerable interest in the idea of an imported degree and has led to discussions for further cross-border collaboration in South East Asia. The opportunities for joint research across continents is a priority, yet finding remarkably similar learner characteristics in different locations allows quick wins in respective countries, through sharing expectations of and with learners of best practice. These impacts can also cascade to give stakeholders early feedback in relation to the return on their investment in employees and local business owners. Anecdotal feedback from the employers of TPP's first cohort of students has already demonstrated that this process is taking place, and further analysis will be possible when these students graduate in 2016. Evidence from the UK graduates offers examples of improved business performance, enhanced business processes, business growth through acquisitions and mergers and raised aspirations by exiting military personnel as to suitable employment opportunities and successful conversation into job offers based on their

blend of experience and degree qualification.

Finally, the implications for policy makers relate to how an innovative delivery model with creative and applied assessment tools of an academic programme can simultaneously deliver practical outputs triggering: innovation, increased productivity and inspired management and leadership. Upskilling these mature working learners is therefore leading to constructive effects on personal and professional performance, and in the longer term, may result in positive impacts and metrics for economic development at local, national and international levels.

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## Appendix I Prospective Degree Learners Survey Questionnaire

We are interested in your views on the delivery of a Business/Management Degree at Y Polytechnic. Please take five minutes to complete the following survey. Your input is important to us.

1. I would be interested in studying a Business/Management Degree at Y
  - Yes
  - No
2. I want to specialise in a particular subject area...
  - Generic Management Degree
  - Human Resources Management
  - Accounting
  - Marketing
3. My preferred delivery format is
  - Evening classes
  - Daytime classes
  - Distance/independent learning
  - Block courses
4. My preferred learning location is

- Greymouth
- Westport
- Hokitika
- Wellington
- Ohakea

5. My employer would be willing to support my study through...

- Paid study leave
- Unpaid study leave
- Payment of course fees
- Support for work-based learning projects

6. If I was to do a degree I would want to study ....

- Part time
- Full time

7. I would continue to work while studying

- Part time
- Full time
- Not at all



8. Do you have any other comments or suggestions for us in regards to the subject of Business/Management degree delivery at Y Polytechnic
  
9. I am:
  - Male
  
  - Female
  
10. My age is:
  - 17-20 years
  
  - 21-30 years
  
  - 31-40 years
  
  - 41-50 years
  
  - Over 50 years

## Appendix II Analysis Of Degree Options And Pathways To be Adopted By Y

### Bachelor of Applied Management (BAM)

#### Potential Strengths

Range of subject specialties

National coverage (i.e. recognition by other providers)

Potentially smoother path to (NZQA) approval to offer a degree, but likely to be costly and time consuming.

### BA Business and Enterprise (BABE)

Specific focus on core business leadership development

Greater International recognition

Provides curriculum, assessment, moderation and capability judgement.

Potential to deliver complete degree without impact on student residence or work

#### Innovative

Student cohort characteristics for BABE at X almost identical to Y, including military component

Very clear benefits:

- Workplace based learning, linked to organisational as well as personal objectives
- Learning and activities designed to add value to business in which student is working
- Development of enterprising people able to respond effectively to challenges of modern businesses and organisations

Structure and blended delivery clear,  
compact and flexible

Clear pathways to and from

- NZ Dip Bus (2 yr ft)
- BABE (1yr) Total 3 years
- MEL (Masters in Entrepreneurial Leadership)

### **Potential Weaknesses**

Difficult to offer the many subject specialtie

Could result in low class sizes and would require greater range and number of delivery resources

Limited international recognition

No apparent way to deliver complete degree without gaining full degree accreditation

Benefit statements complex and less than clear

Confusing positions on pathways into degree

See websites for relevant ITP's and Universities

Challenge to gain government agency approvals

### **Potential Opportunities**

This degree is innovative

- Workplace based learning, linked to organisational as well as personal objectives
- Learning and activities designed to add value to business in which student is working

- Development of enterprising people able to respond effectively to challenges of modern businesses and organisations

The cohorts identified for Y are likely to be very significant nationally

Would provide considerable competitive advantage for Y

### **Potential Threats**

Inability to gain government/  
agencies approval/support  
Reaction from other ITP's and  
universities

Hooker (2014)