

Chapter 10

Community Education in New Zealand: Entrepreneurship Programs Illustrating Tensions and Challenges

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ABSTRACT

The U.S. community college model does not currently operate in New Zealand. In addition to university and vocational programs at polytechnics, further education within the community is provided through open-entry, low-cost, “night-school” courses run from various high schools and community centers. Courses once covered “general interest” subjects to basic academic and vocational skills with significant government subsidies. However, government funding changes now prioritize programs containing core numeracy and literacy components, leading to the cancellation of some nonconforming classes. This raises questions regarding the role of community education for delivering certain programs. For example, many non-subsidized business and entrepreneurship courses are provided through night-school education. To illustrate this type of community education program, entrepreneurship courses taught in four different night schools are described. This chapter will help readers understand the nature of community education in New Zealand and the challenges it currently faces.

ADULT AND COMMUNITY EDUCATION IN NEW ZEALAND

There are several options available to New Zealand high school leavers wishing to pursue further study. Some will choose university courses (approx. 10% of population aged 15 plus) or vocational and pre-degree qualifications (approx. 5% of adult population) programs hosted by polytechnics (Ministry of Education, 2017b). While universities and polytechnics are the best known and most highly regarded

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sources of further education, there is a large proportion of adult students in programs not associated with certificates or degrees. One option for non-degree learning is available through the many Adult and Community Education (ACE) 'night school' courses hosted by high schools and other community centres across the country. With 4,000 students currently enrolled in community education centres around New Zealand, there is a clear need for those who have chosen employment but who wish to continue their studies, independent of constraints associated with higher qualifications. However, this chapter will focus primarily on 'Community Learning in Schools' (CLASS) programs which provided the setting for the entrepreneurship study. Entrepreneurship education in New Zealand is available at both secondary and tertiary levels. In the high school classroom, entrepreneurship appears as part of the business studies curriculum and as a separate subject in select schools. People considering entrepreneurship as a vocation may wish to enrol in one of New Zealand's university or polytechnic programs. CLASS programs also offer courses in entrepreneurship but at understandably lower academic levels than institutions of higher learning.

The New Zealand CLASS community education night school is different from the U.S. Community College model (that does not currently operate in New Zealand). New Zealand adult and community education is designed to serve local communities with low-cost, open entry, predominantly evening courses in a range of academic, vocational and personal interest disciplines (ACE Aotearoa, 2013). Courses are generally non-formal and uncredentialed and, at the discretion of the tutor or school, may or may not follow a nationally prescribed curriculum. Thus, courses cannot generally be used to meet prerequisites for study at a higher level or be transferable for credit at other institutions.

While this approach to program delivery might appear arbitrary by national education standards, community education centres retain unrivalled flexibility, remaining responsive to the needs of the communities they serve. Such an approach also positions community education as an ideal environment to host courses that may not neatly fit traditional learning models. This has led many business and entrepreneurship programmes to adopt CLASS night-school community education as their delivery vehicle of choice. As a studied discipline, entrepreneurship has proven particularly contentious for institutions of higher learning.

This chapter will illustrate the nature of community education in New Zealand by focusing on the New Zealand community education night school as a setting for entrepreneurship programs, highlighting the many contradictions faced by both providers and learners. To support these ideas, a study of entrepreneurship programs, involving 269 participants across four different community education night school courses over three years, will be also be discussed.

ORIGINS AND POLICY FOR ADULT AND COMMUNITY EDUCATION IN NEW ZEALAND

The origins of New Zealand community education can be traced back to 1842, just two years after the signing of the nation's founding document – Te Tiriti o Waitangi (The Treaty of Waitangi) (Dakin, 1996). At this time, community education courses were modelled on the British Mechanics' Institute – a professional body dedicated to providing the technical and scientific foundations for professional practice in a range of disciplines (ACE Aotearoa, 2013). By 1870 over 100 institutes had been established nationwide. In this organisation, the seeds had been planted for the first formal national community education provider in the form of the Workers Educational Association (WEA) in 1915 (Dakin, 1996). The

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