

Webinar 'Tuia Te Hononga Tāngata, Tuia Te Hononga Ao: Taking the Pulse of Distance Learning in Aotearoa New Zealand'

Presenters: Michael Barbour, PhD, Director of Faculty Development and a Professor of Instruction for the College of Education and Health Sciences at [Touro University California](#), and Derek Wenmoth, founder of [FutureMakers](#)

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The [recording](#) is available on YouTube and the [slides](#) on Slideshare.

Kristina Hoeppner 00:03

Tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa. I'm Kristina Hoeppner. I'm a member of the Executive Committee, of Flexible Learning Association New Zealand. Sorry, I'm always one to say Aotearoa New Zealand; Flexible Learning Association of New Zealand and would like to welcome you to our latest webinar, this time with Derek Wenmoth and Dr Michael Barbour. To get us started and also situated in today's session, let us start with a karakia. Tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa.

Kristina Hoeppner 00:54

So it was my absolute pleasure to welcome you to today's session that has been scheduled really, really briefly. So thank you so much for having seen all the announcements because Derek and Michael just very recently published their report 'Tuia Te Hononga Tāngata, Tuia Te Hononga Ao: Taking the Pulse of Distance Learning in Aotearoa New Zealand'. And so it is fantastic to have them both here today.

Kristina Hoeppner 01:27

Michael joins us from California, where he is the Director of Faculty Development and Professor of instruction for the College of Education and Health Sciences at Touro University California. And Derek Wenmoth is not too far away from most of you, living in

the Wellington region, and he's the founder of FutureMakers, which he established after stepping back from his position as Director of eLearning at Core Education. And both of them, for those of you who have been involved in distance learning, distance education here in Aotearoa New Zealand, are no new names. So let's welcome our friends, and I'll hand it over to the two of them so that they can tell us a bit more about the report and whatever they'd like to share that might not even be in the report. Over to you two.

Michael Barbour 02:23

Thank you. Thanks so much. And thanks for that introduction. I'll just start sharing my screen here. So yeah, so as Kristina mentioned, I'm Michael Barbour, my colleague, Derek Wenmoth is there at the top of the screen as well, or I guess, depending on where you're situated the side of the screen, in my case. And this is a report that we've been actually talking about and hoping to do for quite some time now. And this over the past, I guess about six months or so we finally got the opportunity to actively engage in it. And so we're here just to tell you a little bit about it today.

Michael Barbour 03:09

So to get started, the first thing I want to say is that we had a number of organisations that provided either financial sponsorship or financial backing to this particular project or in kind sponsorship for it. My own university put up a nice grant that allowed me to come over and do a lot of this work. The Educational Partnership and Innovation Trust put forward some funding, which is allowing us to extend some of the report which we'll talk a little bit about at the end. Derek and his organisation, FutureMakers, were able to do contributed in kind fashion as well as FLANZ themselves are the website hosts for the project going forward, and we intend to make this an annual project. So that'll be an annual in kind contribution that FLANZ is making for us. And as someone who's done other reports similar to this, I'll be honest and say that, you know, without the contributions of these folks, this type of report just doesn't happen.

Michael Barbour 04:15

So as Kristina just dropped in the chat there, the website for this is flanz.org.nz/dl-pulse or you can just do the easy thing and click on the link in the chat, and that'll get you there, although don't go there until another 53 minutes from now because that'll you'll lose us.

Michael Barbour 04:40

So the idea for this report, the first thing is backing for this report came about with some other work that Derek and I were doing well over a decade ago. Basically, the precursor to FLANZ was DEANZ and 12 years ago, I guess 13 years ago now, I had a

sabbatical at the time, and was over there and did one of the first national studies into virtual, the Virtual Learning Network in New Zealand, and then a couple of years later, Derek and I because in between those two reports, Derek actually did one for the what was the Virtual Learning Network community at the time offering three sort of ways in which they could become sustainable. So two years later, we did together a second report that sort of looked at all the different recommendations that had been made in those two reports and other things that were being published at the time to try to come up with what should unfold in at least the virtual learning sector at the time.

Michael Barbour 05:41

In both of those reports, one of the key recommendations was, we actually needed to do a national study because while there were pieces that were getting known as terms of how much activity was happening in different sectors, there was no sort of global perspective in terms of what was happening within the school sector broadly speaking. You know, we had some good data from some of the Virtual Learning Network clusters at the time, others not so much. You know, Te Kura at that the time was still the Correspondence School had a lot of information that was available. There wasn't much coming out of the health schools at that point in time. I have no idea how many if any of the privates that we looked at, were operating at the time, my guess is at least one or two of them, I believe, were operating back then, but I don't think it was more than that.

Michael Barbour 06:33

So we wanted to create this national study, and the idea behind the national study was to mimic the type of thing that we had seen going on in Canada. And this is the one that I've been responsible for in Canada for the last 16, we're in the 17th year now and in the US. And as you can see, in the US, they actually beat me to it by a couple of years. But we had these other examples in North America that really took a good look at what was happening and in terms of governance and activity all across the country. And that's really what we were looking for in the New Zealand context. One of the obviously, differences between Canada and US and New Zealand was over in North America it was obviously done by jurisdiction, by province or state whereas there wasn't a need to do that in New Zealand because it was just one single jurisdiction, which presented some of its own challenges.

Michael Barbour 07:31

Now, knowing that and I don't recognise all of the names in the audience, but I only recognise, I think, two or three as being in the school sector. And so for those of you that distance learning in the school sector might be a little bit new or a little bit unfamiliar, one of the things that we do in the report, and I'm just noticing that I made a

typo here. So the nice thing about not doing in presentation mode, I can fix things up as I'm going along. One of the things that we do have in the report that takes up the first, probably 10 or 12 pages is a little look at the history of how distance learning has evolved over time in the school sector. And I won't spend a lot of time at this, but it's interesting to note that for those of you who are in the tertiary sector, the stages aren't all that different, but I think there's some interesting nuances along the way. So this idea of shift going from, you know, an initial start with more correspondence based education to playing around with educational radio and instructional television and then initially with computer assisted instruction and then really moving into the virtual learning environment with video conferencing, and which ends up turning into environments like this as the technology and the bandwidth gets better. That I think is a common journey that those of you in the tertiary environment are probably familiar with because many of your own institutions that have any experience with distance learning probably had a similar type of context, similar type of trajectory.

Michael Barbour 09:10

One of the things that happened in the school sector that I think is a little bit different is what starts to happen after we get the development of virtual learning. Because what ends up starting is you get some support from the Ministry of Education for these individual clusters as they were called at the time. And there is a great deal of growth that starts to happen. And while that's happening, independent of that, we start to see this kind of growth that's happening in the urban environment although that tends to be focused more on blended and hybrid learning, although they didn't call it hybrid learning at the time than it does the more distance virtual learning that you see in the rural and remote environments. While all this is happening, you have the Correspondence School that is going through its own evolution to a more virtual environment although because of the nature of the organisation, they're moving more into an asynchronous online environment and moving into, you know, creating a lot of instructional materials and developing an asynchronous instructional model that can be delivered through a learning management system.

Michael Barbour 10:27

So there are all these sort of things happening in that 2000s and early 2010s, teens type timeframe. So then else that while I know my tertiary colleagues are familiar with, but it was a little bit different for them, were the cycles that we call the cycles of consultation, I would have call it a death spiral of consultation, to be honest with you, because you end up - there's a parliamentary enquiry on 21st century learning, there is a consulting company that really has little history in this space at all that's contracted to, you know, come up with a plan for going forward. If you want to go back, that first report that I

mentioned, that we did back in 2011 was also funded by the Ministry of Education. You know, so there's a number of these cycles that are happening again and again. And really, it's just going and covering the same ground. You know, the one that was done by that consulting company I mentioned, even before they finished their process, the government was already announcing that it was going to be folded into the larger review of Tomorrow Schools, which it was, but it got like two paragraphs in a 200-page report. So I'm not sure how much really it was folded in, as opposed to just being an afterthought that was dropped in somewhere along the line because they said, 'Oh, we forgot, we were supposed to mention something about distance and virtual learning in here. Let me write up a couple of paragraphs and figure out where I can put it.'

Michael Barbour 12:02

You know, and then many of you are likely familiar with the Education Amendment update that we went through, which introduced and approved CoOLs, and then before the first one could even be approved, they were repealed when the new government came into, to play, and then much like happened in the tertiary environment, you know, when COVID came around, we had that great pivot to remote learning, not distance or online learning, but remote learning. And we're now just starting to get back into a new normal as we come out of that. And so while there are some parallels, I think, with the tertiary sector, I think there are some unique aspects that were happening in the school sector that I think were important along this. And for those of you that haven't had a chance to look at the report, if you are in the tertiary sector, and this is an area you're interested in, I think those ones particularly as we get into this starting with that section there. So that middle part, I think is probably the part that would be a little bit different than what you guys would have experienced in the tertiary environment.

Michael Barbour 13:14

So to the actual study. So what we were looking to do was for the 2023 school year, so the most recent school year that had been completed, we were looking to essentially identify all of the providers of distance learning throughout the country, providers of distance learning at the school sector level throughout the country, and then find out essentially how they were governed or regulated or operated in terms of the structure that they worked under. How they were resourced because depending on the type of school that they are, and what they did, they were resourced in many cases very differently. And then exactly what level of activity - what was the extent of the activity that was happening? How many students were we talking about? And beyond just how many, you know, individual students, what does that look like in terms of a larger number, proportionally speaking.

Michael Barbour 14:09

So in order to undertake this, so we created a survey that we sent out to all of the providers of distance learning that we could find, and oftentimes, we were finding new ones as we were actually in the midst of the research itself. In many cases, we had to do follow-up interviews. Now in some cases, those interviews were in person. In most cases, it was emailed back and forth as we were trying to figure out exactly what things meant because one of the main challenges we did come up with is that there wasn't a common language that people had as we were going through and even ourselves - if you looked at our original survey that we sent out, I think we use three different terms in the same survey for the notion of a distance learning provider because there wasn't that sort of common language.

Michael Barbour 15:00

And then we did a great deal of document analysis, particularly around certain types of schools. There was a lot of regulatory texts that we could actually go through and use to help us figure that out. As we developed profiles for each of the individual providers, we sent them back to the folks in charge of the programmes, to the of the schools or programmes to ensure that we got things accurate. And there was a bit of back and forth with those where our main concern was, was around accuracy as opposed to whether or not - and there were some disagreements about how folks felt they were portrayed, but you know, we felt, Derek and I, as we went through it focused upon you know, did were we misinterpreting things, were we getting things wrong, as opposed to where we presenting them and necessarily a positive or negative or neutral light? So that's sort of how we put that together. Derek, I don't know, if you want to add anything in terms of process that I might have missed?

Derek Wenmoth 16:02

No, I think you've captured what was going through my mind, Mike, carry on.

Michael Barbour 16:06

All right. So getting into the meat of this, the first thing we had to do, and this pulls into actually really the first, it really helps us with the crux of the first two research questions that we were looking at. As I mentioned, we didn't have a common language in terms of how to talk about these different providers. I use the term even in the table, we were still struggling with this when we started the report. And we use the term 'entities' in the report. I think, as we've started to flesh this out a little bit more, and as we're moving forward, now, I think 'providers' is the term we're going to come into because 'entity' seems like it's something that should be out of a Marvel movie or something like that, you know. But 'providers,' I think, is a much better way of looking at it.

Michael Barbour 16:56

So we came up with two broad types. There were some that were defined from a legislative standpoint as schools and then there were others that simply just weren't defined by legislation. And we chose the term 'programme' for those particular ones. Now we chose 'programme' for a couple of reasons. One is because most of the other terms we were thinking of were used either by the Ministry of Education or had specific legislative meaning that didn't include these types of distance learning providers. We thought about, well, we did think about things like entity, we thought about organisations, trying to think some of the other terms we were bending about, Derek, off the top of our head...

Derek Wenmoth 17:45

No, those are the main ones we talked about, but yes, there were several.

Michael Barbour 17:49

So and the first ones were kind of easy. The schools because you know, it's written right into the Education Act. It defines what they are and the different types of them. So that was the easy one. The programme was a little bit different, more difficult. And then we then subdivided things between - we were initially talking about public and private for both of them. But because programmes weren't necessarily schools, and in theory, even the non-profit ones were still private entities, even if they weren't working for the most part, and in many cases, they worked with both public and private schools, although the vast majority of the people they worked with were public schools or state schools, but they did work with both. So trying to come up with a little bit of a nomenclature around that. So at least within the legislation, the public schools that we identified as either currently having or having historically had been providers of distance learning, obviously, Distance School, which is one of the legislative items, which right now, Te Kura is the only entity, the only provider that is indicated as a distant school in the legislation. There are also special institutions and there were four of these, the three health schools and the deaf school. There are state schools that do provide distance education. So not that participate in one of the programmes below but ones that actually provide, and we did identify and highlight one of those, we're quite confident that there's a lot more of them going forward, but it's up to, your know, us and for that matter them to help us self identify who they are. Historically, there have been some tertiary institutions that have provided school level learning. We weren't able to identify any that we're doing it during the 2023 school year, but if you go back especially in that history section, we even mentioned specifically some that had done that in the past. And then there were private schools that were there as well.

Michael Barbour 20:03

If you've been following the news over the last couple of weeks, I'm guessing that when we do next year's annual report, there'll be another category in the public one because we've already had media reports where two of those private schools have mused about coming - about applying to become charter schools. I don't think either of them have actually put in applications for it yet. I'm not sure if the applications are actually available to do that yet, to be honest with you, but there have been media reports that at least two of them have been thinking about doing that. So next year, there will likely be five up there in that public school category.

Michael Barbour 20:42

And then moving down to the programmes, we divided them up. There were two main programmes right now that operate in a non-profit way with the vast majority of their schools that they work with being a state school. Both of them I think, have some private school involvement with them, but those private schools that are working with them work the same way that any public school would. And then there was one programme that operated entirely as a for profit entity. And so depending upon where you fell on this particular matrix, if you were on this particular table, largely dependent upon both how you were regulated and how you're resourced or how you are governed and how you are resourced.

Michael Barbour 21:33

So moving to the providers that we actually found, I should have put this slide a little bit later on and thinking about it, but it's here now. So this is it. So the public distance learning schools that we have, so those that fell either under the distance school or in all honesty, the special educator, the special institution category, those were Te Kura, the three health schools, and the Deaf Education New Zealand programme. The two non-profit programmes, Kōtui Ako and NetNZ, the one state school or public school that we knew of that we're providing distance learning, were Rosmini, which basically they had three particular programmes that they were providing. And that lead was actually provided to us by one of the leaders of one of the non-profit programmes that were out there. For those of you who are in the room, if you are aware of other brick and mortar schools that are actually providing distance learning opportunities for students at their and other schools, we would love to know who they are because we'd love to start to include those in.

Michael Barbour 22:50

As you can see, on the right side of the screen, we had nine private school programmes that were able to identify. I should note that two of them didn't actually enrol any students during the - during the 2020 or sorry the 2023 school - the 2023 school year. And so basically the first one up there 3H School International and then the last one, Pinnacle Global, didn't enrol any students during the most recent school year that's finished. And but because this was our first report, we wanted to include them. As best we could tell. 3H may have enrolled students during the 2022 school year, and then have ceased to exist. As best we can tell, Pinnacle only got started in 2021, and they are still trying to enrol their initial students because they still seem to have a presence online. I don't know if they have students in this school year or not. I guess we'll find that out in about 10 months or so when we start to do the next one. And as I mentioned, two of them, the ones that have been mentioned in the media are AGE School, I assume they do the initials because they capitalise the AGE. So I assume it's not age school, I think it's AGE School, and Crimson were the two that have been mentioned in media reports as potentially move into that charter school classification. And then as I mentioned, there was one for profit programme in Spectrum.

Michael Barbour 24:26

So if you're looking at how these programmes are governed, and again, it goes back to, you know, the chart that we were looking at here, so anything that's up in this school category has - there's language about it in the Education Act. So as you're looking at the distance special and private schools, all of them specifically have language around them about how they operate. And in the case of the Distance School, which would be Te Kura, it's extensive. When you go to the actual report, the - our profile around Te Kura is by far the longest, it's about three to four times longer than any of the others. And the main reason for that is simply because there is so much regulation that they have to follow between what's in the Education Act, what's published in the New Zealand Gazette, plus they have a - well all schools have to follow a collective agreement, either with the primary or the secondary unions, Te Kura actually has a separate collective agreement with the PPTA around how they operate. So there's additional provisions that go above and beyond what would be normal, what would be the normal expectation for a regular teacher for Te Kura. So because of that, that's, you know, what we say about their programming and about their resourcing and about their numbers are about the same length is what we have for most of the others. But the - what we've got to say about their governance is just there's there's so much there. And the more we dug into it, particularly as we started to get into the actual, you know, wording of how the legislation was put together, how different regulations were put together in the New Zealand Gazette, even just various provisions in the collective agreement that they've got with the teachers unions, it was quite, quite extensive.

Michael Barbour 26:24

As you can see here, the basically the Education Act is all that governs privates, special schools, have both stuff in the legislation as well as in the Gazette that they have to follow. And the two public, or the to non-profit actually, I should fix that; is why I don't post my slides till afterwards because I keep thinking of the non-profit programmes as being public programmes. But to keep with what we've got in the report, I call them non-profit here. Both of those are set up as charitable trusts. So they're governed by a trust document that they have to follow. And then each of the trusts have boards that overseeing the folks who are actually running the programming. And, and in full disclosure, I'm on the board of one of those two particular programmes and have been for programmes there for quite some time. I don't know if you want to add anything at this stage, Derek?

Derek Wenmoth 27:34

Yeah, pretty comprehensive Michael, carry on.

Michael Barbour 27:38

All right. And so when it comes to resourcing, as well, what you're finding is the resourcing for the most part for the schools are all largely dictated by either the Act or the Gazette, to be perfectly honest with you. So in the case of the private schools, they have the ability to apply for some public funding, but for the most part, their provisioning, resourcing is done almost, I won't say almost exclusively, but the vast majority of it is through tuition dollars. The special schools have very specific guidelines around how they're funded. And for the most part, they get funded at roughly the same level or higher than what a regular state school would be. And then Te Kura has, again, this this really convoluted process depending upon if you are a full-time student or dual enrolled student or if you are an adult student or if you are a - they've got three or four special categories in there, and each of them have different funding formulas that apply to them. Generally speaking, you can look at them and say that they get about 50% of the FTE that a regular state school would get for most of their students. But that doesn't apply to all of their students because of the really detailed nature of the funding formula that they have.

Michael Barbour 29:12

In the case of the non-profits, they historically have gotten some services that were provided by the Ministry of Education. In many cases throughout the years, they've had contracts that provide some of the provisioning, but most of their their resourcing comes from their member schools. So their member schools basically have dependent

on the programme, in some cases, it's an initial fee, and then the provision of a teacher that gets you X number of enrollments, or if you aren't able to provide a teacher you would provide the monetary equivalent for doing so. And then while not on this page, the for profit programmes, those are really the X Factor in here because they are essentially a private business. So there is nothing that regulates them beyond the fact that their students for the most part have to be enrolled as homeschool students under the Education and Training Act. Beyond that, they get no, all of the resourcing comes from private tuition dollars. And there, they have no regulatory environment, they have no larger governance structure in terms of a board or anything like that. It is basically the owner of the for profit programme is, is the law, if you will [laughs], there's not really another way to sort of describe that aspect of it.

Michael Barbour 30:47

In terms of the activity, this is the stuff that really got us because the governance stuff, even without knowing what the common language was, if you wanted to go to an individual programme and look up how they were governed, you could kind of figure that out because you knew where to look, this is the type of information that really was largely new to us. And as you see, it's still not as refined as what we would like it. So you see here supplemental would be those that are taking one or more courses online. So these are brick and mortar students that are enrolled in a course or two or more from the distance learning provider. If you're looking at the legislation, it would be the dual enrollment students that are a part of the Te Kura environment. Full time are those folks that aren't part of a brick and mortar environment at all, although that is a little bit misleading in the case of the health schools. So you can see how they're sort of broken down there.

Michael Barbour 31:55

The numbers for the health schools are, like I say, it's a little bit misleading and that's why there's one asterisk there because we pulled out the numbers of students that we knew were also being served by Te Kura because we actually knew what those numbers are, but some of these students, so if I were to use, say the, the Northern Health School as an example of those 1,900 students that are there, some of them are actually in, back in their brick and mortar classrooms for maybe a day or two a week and then still being served by the Northern Health School. Some of them are at home all of the time, and a teacher from the Northern Health School actually physically comes to them and teaches them at a distance, the rest of the time, in some cases, they will come to a centre, one of the I think it's 16 or 17, that the Northern Health School has throughout the northern region. So the exact number of those that 1,905 that are actually truly at a distance is something that not even the Health School themselves would be able to give us an

accounting of unless they sort of went through the enrollment one by one and figured out okay, what is this student doing now? And because the goal for the health schools are to get those students to reintegrate back into their traditional brick and mortar face-to-face environments that number would change literally on a daily basis. Even the number itself that includes the number of unique students that they had. So at no point during the last school year, did the Northern Health School actually have 1,905 students at any given time. They might have had 800 in the first week and then 900 in the second week, but only 700 of them were in the first week. So they had 200 new students. So really, now there's 1,000 different students that they've worked with because 100 of them have gone back to their, you know, so that kind of changing environment really makes that difficult for them to come up with.

Michael Barbour 34:02

When we look at the numbers that we're getting from Deaf Education, Kōtuiti Ako and to a lesser extent NetNZ, there are some of those students that are also enrolled in courses in Te Kura. So if I'm taking a course from Te Kura and I'm also taking say a course from NetNZ, I'm showing up twice on that list, but I'm only one unique student. So when I look at that total of 13,691 at the bottom, I could be counted in there twice. In fact, if I was taking a course from one of the privates for example, and NetNZ and Te Kura, I could show up in there three times. If I happen to have gone to a health school for a month during the school year, I couldn't be in this chart four times. You know, so the number of unique students that we have and that's one of the reasons why we have the tilde there at the bottom because we aren't really sure exactly what the exact number is. And that's also one of the reasons why we provide that range for the full time because there's a lot of leeway that you see in there.

Michael Barbour 35:13

The other problem that we had is with the private programmes because so many of them did not participate in our data collection that we had, while we were able to get the number of students that were enrolled in those particular schools, most of those schools, at least all the ones with the three asterisk by them, they had a in person option and a distance option. So of say, for example, the 92 students at AGE School, 91 of them might have been in the in-person school and only one of them might have been taken a distance. For that matter, 91 of them could have been taken at a distance, and they might have had a physical school of only one though that's kind of unlikely because why would you have a full school for one student, but you get what I mean. So those numbers could be the bottom end of that number that's there, or could be the top end. And until we can get their participation in this study, it'll be difficult for us to really get a sense as to the exact number that we have here.

Michael Barbour 36:21

Now, if you break it down, sort of, you know, by some of the categories that we have here, you start to get some some interesting figures. So here on this table, you can see we've got the total number of students that are in each of those particular environments. So the total number of primary students across the country, the total number of secondary students, the total number that are in composite school, especially home based education, and so on. And then you can see, at least based upon our figures from table from the previous table, what we think are the number of distance learning students in each of those different environments. And you can get a sense as what proportion that is across the country.

Michael Barbour 37:04

So as an example, and obviously, the special institution or special school category is skewed because it's all the health school students, but about two thirds of the health school, you know, about two thirds of special students take some form of education at a distance. Less than 1% of primary school students across the country are enrolled in one or more distance learning opportunities, approaching 10% of secondary students, and again, you know, with all the caveats that we were talking about earlier in terms of the, you know, the inability to count some of these numbers, but when you look at it this way, you know, it really gives you a sense as to how some of this is a little bit different. And even when you look at the home based education one, we've got, you know, 0.1 in there as our number, but we really aren't sure about that. You know, the New Zealand Homeschool Association, I can't remember the exact name of if now off the top of my head when I reached out to them and ask them about the different, you know, services, they don't provide the broker. And when you read through on their website, the different services that they broker, many of them do seem like the self paced distance learning type things that a lot of the private schools are providing. So my guess is, is that a lot more of those 10,777 home based education students are probably engaged in some form of distance learning through one of these brokers that are provided by one or more of the homeschool associations that are in throughout the country.

Michael Barbour 38:51

So when we're looking at the activity, there's, you know, a couple of, I guess, broad takeaways that you want to make. When you calculate it all up, it works out to about 4% of all students in the school sector had enrolled in and I call it courses, really, it's distance learning opportunities because depending upon the level that they're doing, and when you look at the things being offered at the, by the special institutions like the Health School and deaf education, in many cases, they're not courses that they're

offering, it's programming that they're providing. So, but about 4%, so roughly almost one out of every 20 students in the country last year took at least some kind of distance learning opportunity. That vary significantly depending on the type of school and the level of the student. And, you know, when you look at sort of the range, I think it's - we can safely or comfortably estimate that about 1% of the primary population is engaged in this. We're getting close to 10% of the secondary population that's engaged in this type of learning. My guess is while we don't have the data, if we were looking at historic data or as we continue to collect this over time, we'll have seen that if we look back in time that both of those numbers have grown significantly. And I think that if we, as we move forward, we'll see both see them continue to grow.

Michael Barbour 40:25

As an aside, I can tell you that in Canada, it's about 6% of all K-12 students are all students in the school sector, that are engaged in some form of distance learning. And in the US, it's estimated between 5% and 8%. So New Zealand, as a country, is basically roughly in the same ballpark as those two other jurisdictions that we actually have national data for. But that's sort of kind of where we're sitting right now, in terms of, of the activity.

Michael Barbour 40:58

The other thing that I should have mentioned back in the methodology slide that I mentioned now, obviously, this is traditional distance learning opportunities. So these are planned distance learning opportunities. It's not the remote learning type environments, the hybrid learning type environments that we've seen, put in as temporary measures due to, you know, COVID, or other natural disasters, that it seems to always inflict you guys just about every school year lately. You know, these are ones where the I like to call them traditional distance learning ones, ones that were planned and thought out and intended for this delivery, regardless of circumstance, as opposed to those that were just put in place because of circumstance. I don't know if you want to add anything about the activity Derrick?

Derek Wenmoth 41:53

No, I'm just pleased, you're raised the bit about hybrid because that was a big part of our discussion. And to deliberately exclude them was was an important part of making sure our focus was just on, you know, the traditional conventional distance ed providers and like in Michael saying, we would expect or you'd anticipate a rise in these numbers, given the current level of kind of interest in the way things are working. So this is providing an excellent benchmark, I think.

Michael Barbour 42:28

The only other thing that we - and we really hadn't intended to collect much data on this, but as we started looking at the nature of programming because you notice, it's - we didn't have a research question around instructional models. But really, there were three dominant models that emerged as we started looking at how folks provided programming. There was the asynchronous model. And this is the model that Te Kura uses where they have a teacher that's responsible for creating online course content, and that's housed in a learning management system. And then they use all of the tools of the learning management system to actually deliver that course. So it's not a correspondence model, just gone online, which in all honesty, when you look at the history of Te Kura, as they started to move to online initially, that is really what it was. In the past, I'm going to peg it at about eight years or so, Derek, you might be able to give me a firmer number on that. But in the past eight years, I think they've really done a good job of moving beyond an online version of correspondence education, to truly providing asynchronous online learning. And, you know, it wasn't like a switch that just eight years ago got turned on. This has been something that they've been developing over time.

Michael Barbour 43:50

Most of the other programmes, so when we look at the special institutions, when we look at the non-profit programmes that are out there, even the state schools or the public schools that are providing distance learning, the majority of instruction that they provide is a synchronous model of instruction. And then when it comes to the privates, most of them tend to be using a self paced independent learning model. That's sort of a nice way of saying that it looks a lot like a correspondence model, except for instead of focusing around courses, it focuses around the individual student. So in most of these environments, the first thing that happens is the teacher that is assigned to the student would meet with them and come up with an individualised or personalised learning plan, and then from that point on, it looks very much like what our traditional correspondence education would have looked like. And that's how I won't say all because Crimson and One School Global in particular, as well as Mount Hobson really are different than that. But the other six that are there, they really utilise this independent learning model. And in many cases, not even with instruction or with, you know, the printed packets or the asynchronous content that they create themselves. In many cases, it's stuff that's least actually several of them use a Christian based programme out of the U.S. that has a lot of controversy associated with it, to be perfectly honest with you.

Michael Barbour 45:27

So that's not something we necessarily intended to look at. Something as we move forward, we will probably spend more time diving into and hopefully trying to be able to provide some good examples of this kind of environment because, as an example, those that are using primarily the synchronous model, some of the lessons that were being learned from how to create effective ways in the asynchronous one could come in handy. Ways in which the programmes that are primarily using the asynchronous model could be incorporating more synchronous into their environment and finding good examples that we can leverage to show that, I think, would just improve the delivery of distance learning for all of the schools and programmes to be honest with you.

Michael Barbour 46:18

So as we're getting with about 10 minutes left or so, I just wanted because I anticipated, I would do most of the talking as I've been going through here. And so I wanted to give well Derek, and then I can play off and if something comes to mind, you know, we've done this study now. We've got a couple of others that are either close to being finished or that we're just starting, you know, so we've had a chance to do a real sort of systematic dive into this in a very relatively short period of time. So I want to give Derek a chance to sort of, as we've looked at this over the past couple of months, if there are things that I haven't had a chance to touch on that you really wanted to underscore before we sort of open this up to questions.

Derek Wenmoth 47:03

Thanks, Michael Look, I think, in the interest of time, particularly if there's not a lot to add to what you're seeing, because I think you've given a very good overview, the only thing I did want to just draw attention was on that previous slide, I think, it is a lot there that will resonate for people on this particular webinar because the interests that we've long held in the tertiary sector around the choice or the structure of the model, the link between asynchronous, synchronous, the things that Michael has outlined, is where there's a real curiosity as more and more online or distance education occurs.

Derek Wenmoth 47:41

And it's a personal perspective that it came out through some of our interviews and studies to find out the extent to which the choice of model is often predicated simply on a personal hunch or a particular disposition of the group, organisation, or even individual rather than necessarily being linked strongly to anything that we would say as grounded in research. And as Michael was starting to talk about, you know, we're getting a lot of nuanced decision making now also between a one size fits all model that may be characteristic of a particular organisation, without drilling down and saying, 'Well, actually, sometimes the modality will vary depending on the particular subject or

focus for instruction, for example, or the nature of the group or individuals taking place.' So I think this is an exciting area for future research, not just within the project we've done, but it within distance ed more broadly.

Michael Barbour 48:51

So before we open it up to questions, just want to let you know that we had a secondary study that we were doing in this where we were interviewing stakeholders from across the country involved in the school sector, some directly involved, some indirectly involved, many government agency and other support organizations, asking them about sort of what their vision of a future ecosystem for schools in New Zealand was. So we're, Derek will be presenting that at the FLANZ conference next month, and we hope to have a paper that we can submit to the Journal of Open, Flexible and Distance Learning shortly thereafter, probably in the conference edition, fingers crossed. And right now we actually, I made the mistake of sending it out during school holiday. So I'm gonna have to start sending reminders now, next week that people are actually back from school holidays. But we did send out a we and this is largely we were able to do because of the funding we got from the Educational Partnership and Innovation Trust, we were able to ask the providers that we've identified for data that they had from 2019 through 22 so that we would have, including the one study we've just done, we'd have five full years of data, a pre pandemic year, three sort of pandemic influenced years, and then ideally, I would like to think that 23 was sort of our first post pandemic year. And that'll really give us a good sense as to be able to figure out some of that. So again, the website is there. And we've got about seven minutes for questions.

Kristina Hoeppner 50:29

... but also Derek for presenting your report and some of the findings. Michael, do you maybe want to jump out of the screenshare, so that it's easier to see everybody? So yes. Do we have any questions?

Rachel Whalley 51:01

Yeah, I do. I was going to give everybody else a chance to ask first (laughs). It has just occurred to me, as you were presenting, and I spent some time going through the report yesterday, as you're probably aware, Michael, because I was fiding through some questions, but I've just thought to that in the model for the VLN that schools actually provide programmes, and I wonder, did you discuss whether schools should also be appearing there as being contributors and participators in their own right?

Michael Barbour 51:36

Yes, we did have that conversation, actually. I think we even have some language about that in the nomenclature section of the report. Because in programmes in general, and this is not just a New Zealand situation, this is what happens in North Americans, it's what happens in Australia as well, and at least in two programmes I'm aware of in England, they have that co-op model that you guys are familiar with where you either through membership or through contribution become a member of the cooperative. And you basically contribute to the cooperative in the form of providing a teacher who is actually the one who's providing the distance learning. And you then receive an equal amount. And if you want more, you contribute more, and - but the reality is that wouldn't happen without some kind of broker. So if the VLN clusters didn't exist, it might happen in one or two schools might partner with each other to do that kind of thing. And, and we saw that, actually, as a good example, the Illinois Virtual High School that's one of the ways, one of the ways in which it was formed.

Michael Barbour 52:57

I was in Canada working at a school that was providing distance learning to five or six schools in my district. But even within those five or six schools, none of my classes had more than single digit enrollments. I had a colleague that I had met at an AP reading a couple of years earlier, and reached out to him because I knew he taught at least through the courses we were offering and asked him if he would take his in person class, and partner with my distance students so that I'd have enough people to have discussions and stuff like that, in the learning management system. Essentially, I was providing distance learning to him and he was providing distance learning to me. But it wouldn't have gone beyond our two schools had there not been some sort of broker that was there. So it was that brokerage aspect that made it become a programme. So that's why we decided to do that.

Michael Barbour 53:50

Because the other thing that you run into with that is if you have, I'm just going to make up some numbers here now. But if you have a VLN cluster that has six schools that can't provide a teacher, so they provide the money, so that cluster then provides the teacher, they're the provider, but then if they also have 20 other schools that are able to provide a teacher now you've got 20, providers, well 21 if you count the programme there. None of them would exist without the cluster in the first place in terms of the distance learning provider. So that's why we chose not to do that. And if you look at the way in which we presented Rosmini in the report, we focused upon the programmes that were outside of the scope of their involvement with any of the VLN clusters. But no, we debated that a fair amount because we were trying to figure out because we figured

there's going to be a lot more like the Rosminis and I'm probably pronouncing that wrong because I don't know where the dash should be in terms of the...

Rachel Whalley 54:52

Rosmini. Yeah, I just sort of think...

Michael Barbour 54:55

There's a lot more like that out there to be honest with you. Maybe the VLN participating in one of the clusters?

Rachel Whalley 55:03

Yeah, from the health of things that were, you know, taking the pulse, I guess, from from their perspective as around, you know, who's engaged, it's just a different level from looking at students, from looking at it schools because schools sort of go through the system system, if that makes sense. You know, the participation of schools is something that we've always reported on, and it's and I've just noticed, well, it's one of the elements that's missing out of this report.

Michael Barbour 55:33

Yeah, I think at some point, we say the total number of schools that were in there, and if we didn't, it's only because we weren't able to get that data from everybody because we wanted to be consistent in what we were providing. And you know, the other thing that brings up if you look at like the health schools as an example, or, you know, while the deaf education, any of the three special institutions or four special institutions, in many cases, they are working in partnership with those special institutions. You know, do we count all of those folks as being providers because they are providing some distance learning aspects when you look at it. So it it was a decision as to where you draw the line and we looked at the line in terms of those that were brokering services, which is also why we use the broad term of 'provider'.

Kristina Hoeppner 56:21

Thank you Michael for answering Rachel's question and looking at the time, unfortunately, that's all the time we have today for the questions. However, Michael, you had already alluded to the fact that people can catch up with Derek at the FLANZ conference that we're having in just a few weeks, I did also put the link into the chat. So please do come along to not just listen to Derek but many others who are presenting their research and their ideas and projects at next month's conference in Tāmaki Makoto, Auckland. If you are not yet a member of Flexible Learning Association of New

Zealand, we'd definitely also like to invite you to join us so that we can provide more of these webinars, and I'm sure that Derek and Micah will have a few more webinars lined up in the coming weeks to talk about the report. And if you catch any of them, you do have more opportunities to ask them any questions that thank you...

Michael Barbour 57:32

Actually, we have one with NEX coming up next month, NEX. And that is going to be more focused on because it's more of a K-12 audience, we'll probably spend a lot more time talking about and trying to dissect what we learned about those three instructional models because I think that'd be something that would be of more a greater interest to that audience, probably less on the policy and the resourcing aspect because other than the individual leaders, the teachers probably aren't interested as much in that. And then in early September, we have one with the Educational Partnership and Innovation Trust, which will probably focus a little bit on both this study as well as that future looking study that we were talking about. So if you go to all three, you'll get a slightly different perspective on the research, depending upon the audience.

Kristina Hoeppner 58:23

Perfect. And Michael and Derek, if you can send me all the links to those events that you've just mentioned for the registration pages, I'm happy to include them into the follow-up for this webinar when I'm going to send out the link to this recording and that'll happen once I've corrected the transcript. And then you have easy access to all those links. So thanks everybody. And now just our karakia before we are all heading off to do some other things. Kia whakairia te tapu. Kia wātea ai te ara. Kia turuki whakataha ai. Kia turuki whakataha ai. Haumi e. Hui e. Tāiki e! Kia ora. Thank you, everybody. See you next time.

Michael Barbour 59:15

Thank you.