Student Voice in Aotearoa New Zealand:

The state of play and the context we face

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AKO AOTEAROA
NATIONAL CENTRE FOR TERTIARY TEACHING EXCELLENCE

nzusa
supporting students nationally since 1929

Presentation Plan

- Who we are: NZUSA and Ako Aotearoa
- The New Zealand tertiary education system
- Recent history
- Current policy settings
- Our current work
  - Student Voice Project
  - Summits
  - Learner Advisory Panels
  - Short and lower level courses
- Challenges for the future

The New Zealand Union of Students' Associations

Our Vision is for a Universal, Barrier-free Education system

To achieve our vision, we believe the tertiary education system should have:

- High quality learning and teaching practices
- Outstanding student experiences and learning environments
- Excellent levels of student support
- No financial or otherwise unfair barriers to education
- Equitable access and support for achievement
- Students valued as members of an academic community that contributes to the creation and dissemination of knowledge
- Student voice valued and supported by strong, independent and democratic student organisations
- A real commitment to lifelong learning
- Adequate funding and support for the professions which provide this public good

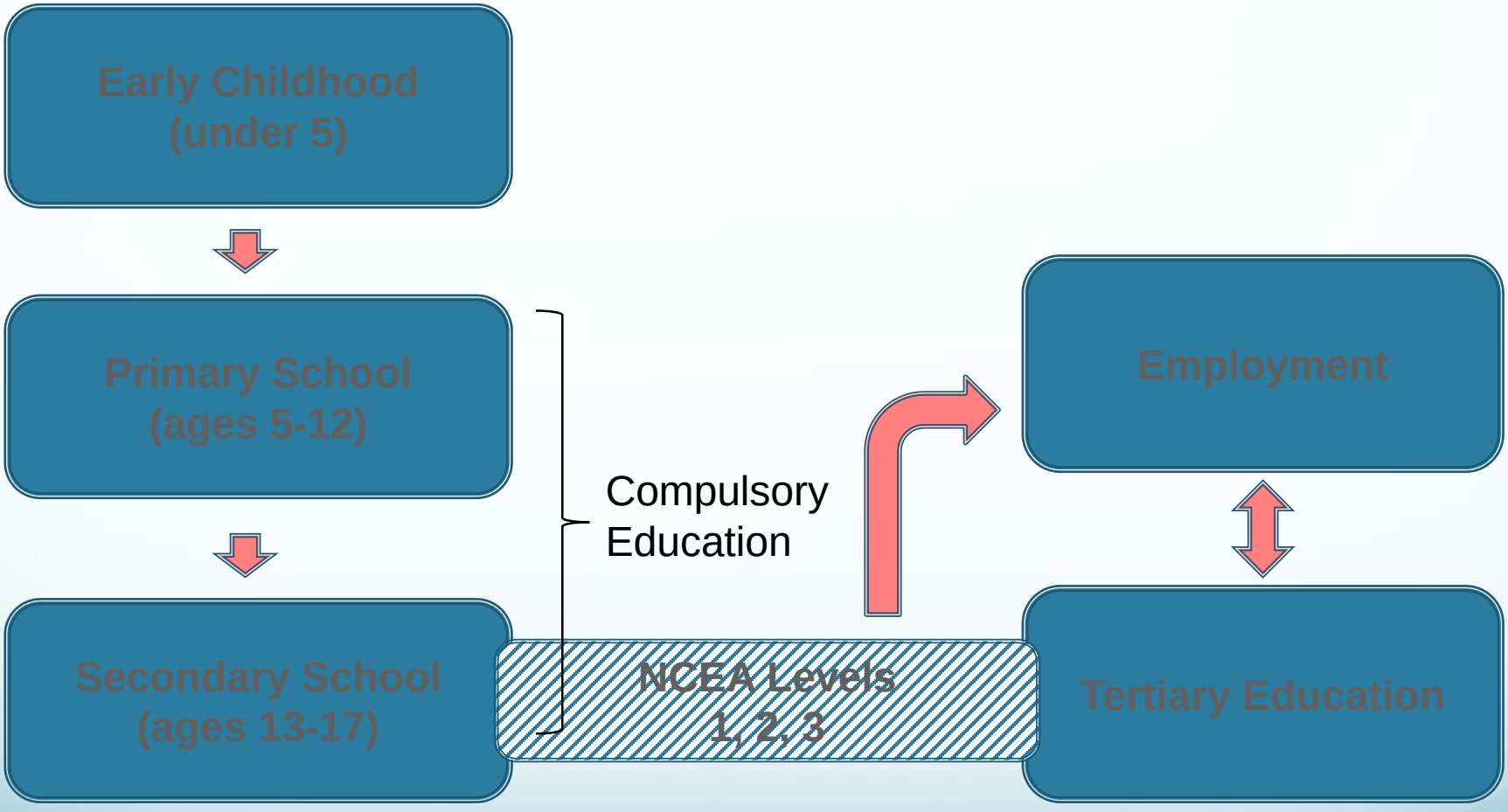
Ako Aotearoa: National Centre for Tertiary Teaching Excellence

Through a focus on enhancing the effectiveness of tertiary teaching and learning practices, the Centre will assist educators and organisations to enable the best possible educational outcomes for all learners.

Key activities:

- Supporting research and sharing good practice
- Providing professional development for tertiary educators
- Leading strategic discussion on relevant issues

New Zealand's Education System



The New Zealand Qualifications Framework: Backbone of the System

New Zealand Tertiary Education Organisations

Public sector (Tertiary Education Institutions)

- 8 Universities: Almost entirely levels 7+.
- 18 Institutes of Technology & Polytechnics (ITPs): Mainly levels 1-7, with an emphasis on applied disciplines.
- 3 Wānanga: Varying focus from wānanga to wānanga. Work within an explicitly indigenous framework.

Private sector

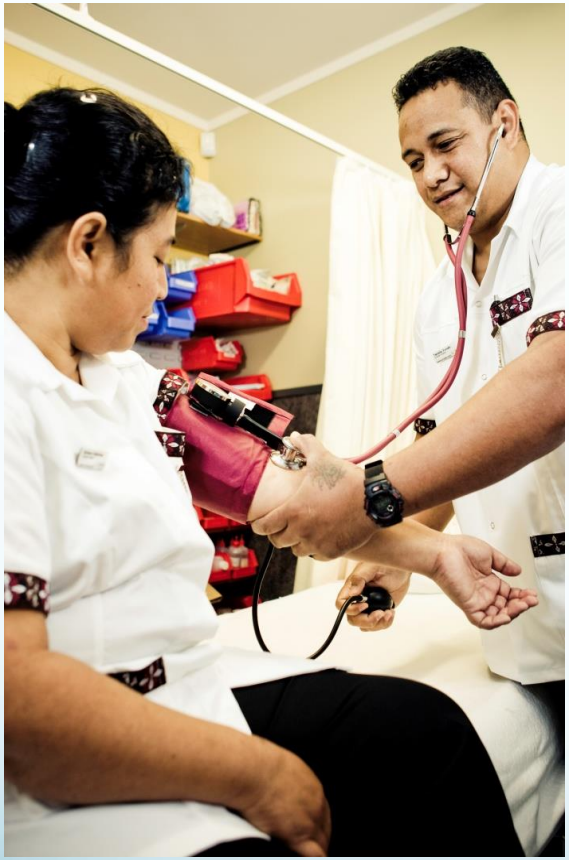
- ~600-700 Private Training Enterprises (PTEs): Privately-owned and specialised (usually only a handful of qualifications) at levels 1-7.
- 10 Industry Training Organisations (ITOs): Industry-owned but government-recognised bodies for training and skill development in industries. Arrange workplace-based education mainly at levels 2-4.

Policy Settings Through 90s/ early 2000s

- Heavily free market approach. All parts of the sector encouraged to compete with each other.
- Key goal was simply to maximise participation.
- Assumed competition and informed student choice would drive up quality…
- No clear drivers to incentivise *successful* participation.
- Quality assurance had input and systems focus (i.e. 'audit').

Leads to Tertiary Education Advisory Commission (2000 - 2001)

Policy Settings early 2000s Onwards



- More strategic approach guiding government investment.
  - *Tertiary Education Strategy.*
  - Negotiated Investment Plans.
  - Prioritisation of Māori and Pacific success in tertiary education.
  - Prioritisation of success for 16-24.
- Greater focus on organisations' performance, including Education Performance Indicators (EPIs) and evaluative quality assurance.
- Mandatory Reviews of Qualifications (from 2008)

Policies Affecting Student Voice in the Late 2000s

- 2009 Removal of staff and students from Polytechnic Councils
- 2011 Introduction of “voluntary” student (non-universal) membership
- 2011 Regulation of Compulsory Student Services Fees, including the requirement to consult with student representatives
- 2015 Removal of students and staff from University Councils

Supporting Effective Student Voice

- The self-assessment model in the non-uni sector
- Strong existing student representation throughout the university sector
  - Class rep systems
  - Students on Academic Boards/Senates, involved in QA and QE
  - Representation mirrored in peak structures
- Rhetoric of accountability
- Potential of CSSF regime

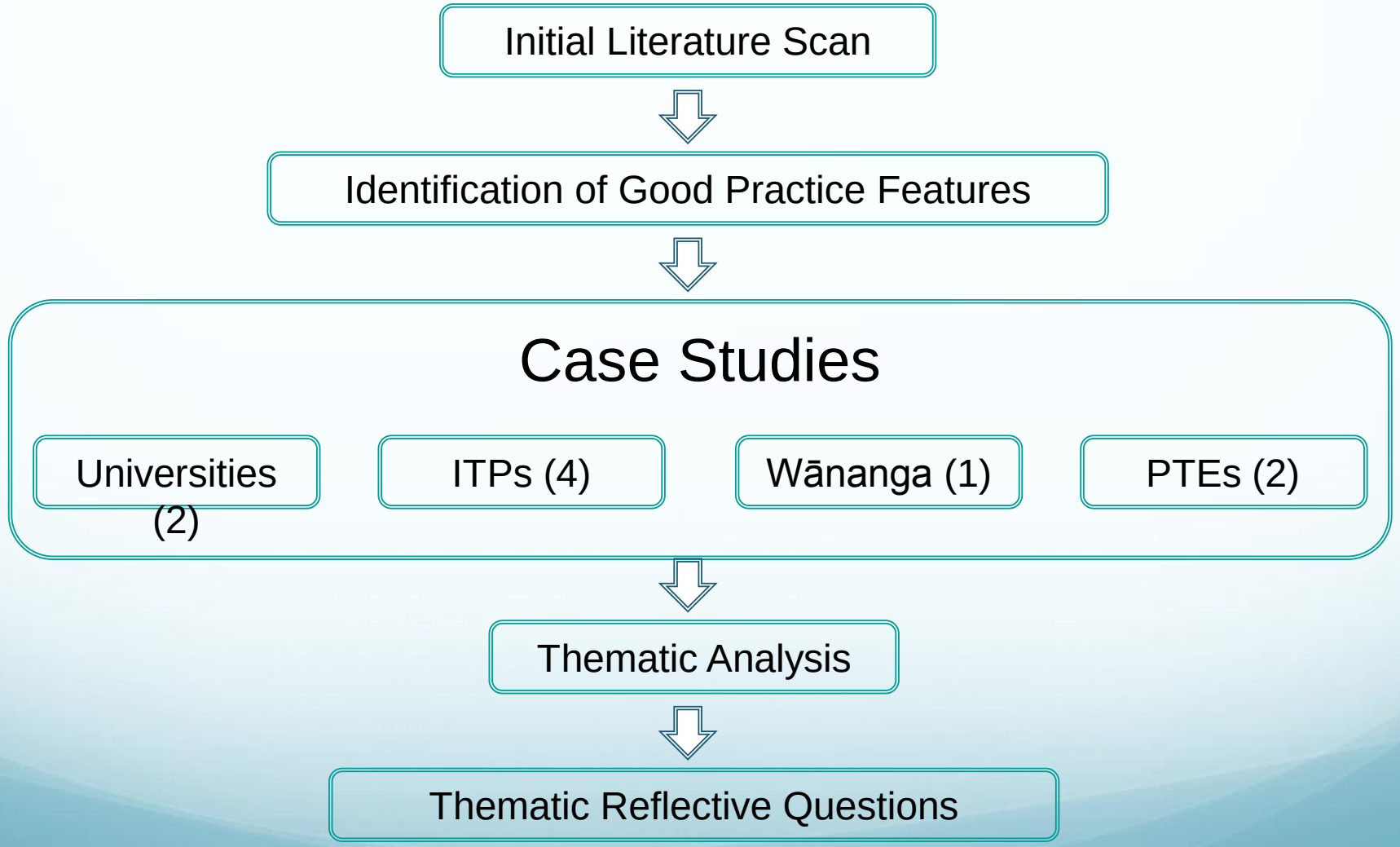
Discouraging Effective Student Voice

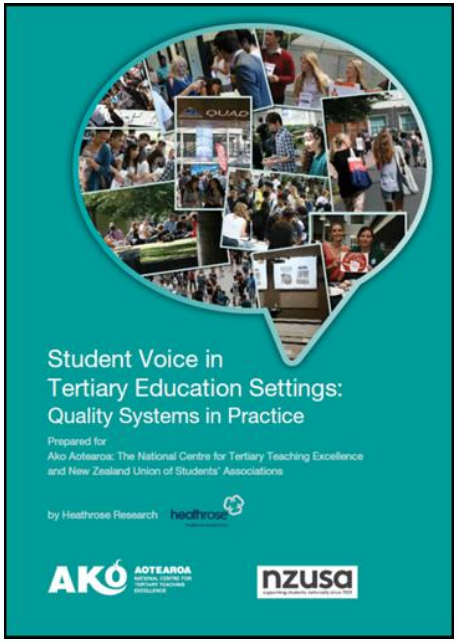
- “Voluntary” student membership
- Changes to governance arrangements
- Customer model of accoutability
- Financially viable ITP sector
- Weaknesses, fragility of students’ associations and some unfortunate history as barriers to overcome

Collaborative Activities

- NZUSA and Ako Aotearoa both committed to the student voice, so are collaborating on activities to support student voice in this environment.
  - Student Voice in tertiary education settings
  - Student Voice summits 2014 & 2015 (& CSSF summit 2015)
  - Learner Advisory Panel Project
  - Short and lower level courses (Waiariki) project

Process


Initial Literature Scan
Identification of Good Practice Features
Case Studies
Universities (2)
ITPs (4)
Wānanga (1)
PTEs (2)
Thematic Analysis
Thematic Reflective Questions


Student Voice in
Tertiary Education Settings:
Quality Systems in Practice
Prepared for
Ako Aotearoa: The National Centre for Tertiary Teaching Excellence
and New Zealand Union of Students' Associations
by Heathrose Research
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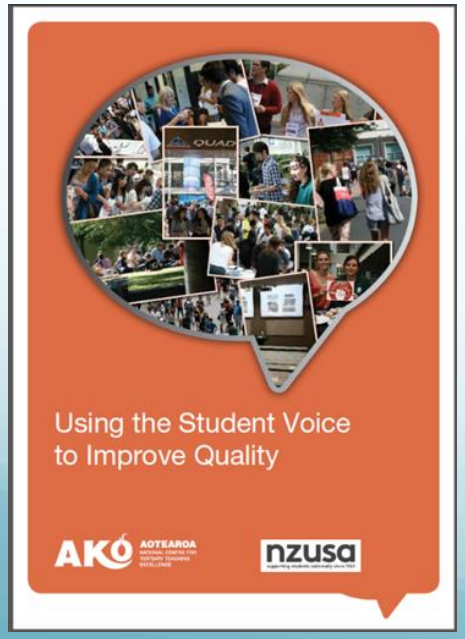
Using the Student Voice
to Improve Quality
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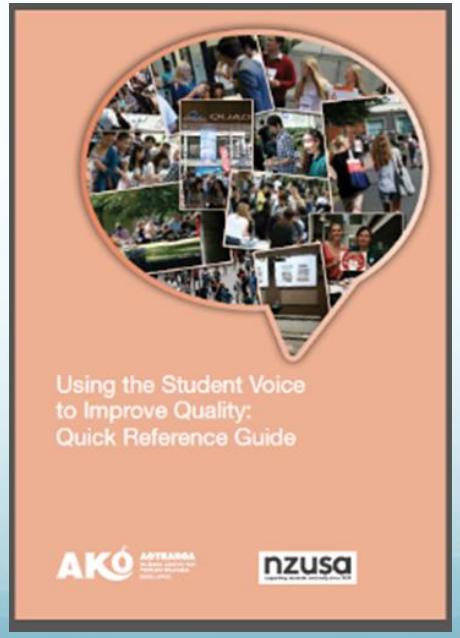
Using the Student Voice
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Quick Reference Guide
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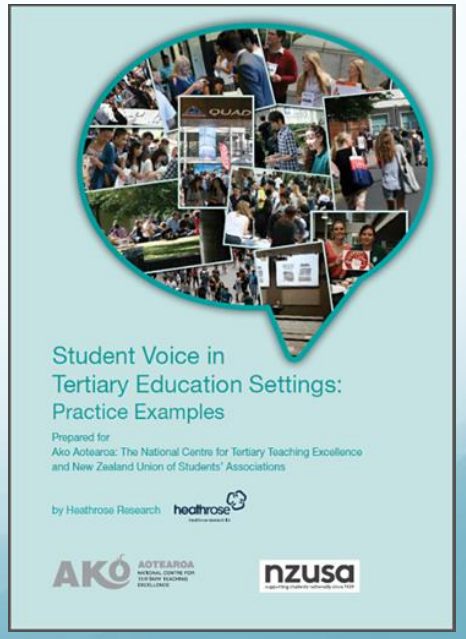
Student Voice in
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Practice Examples
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Features of Good Practice

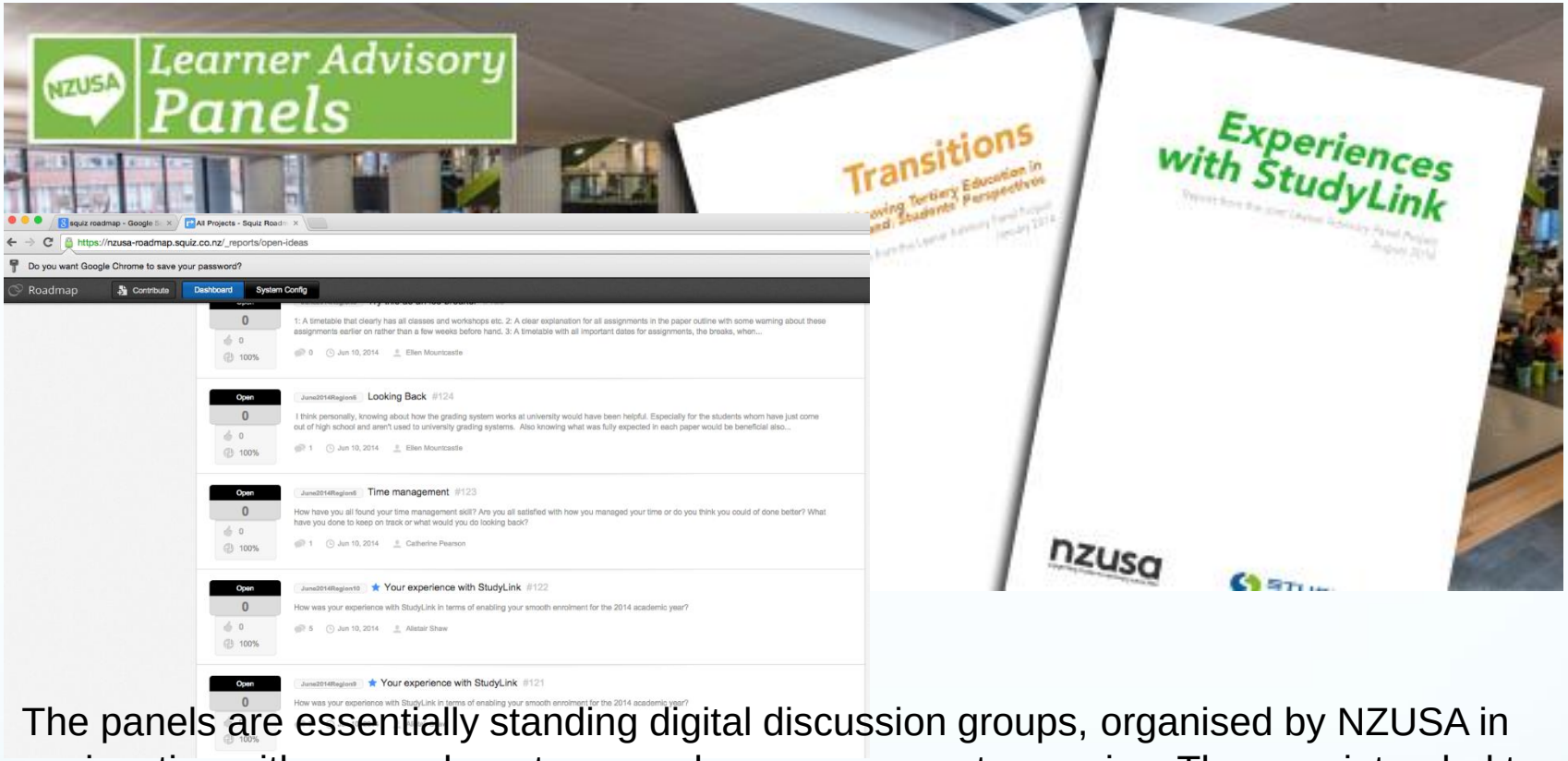
- Organisations have a range of representative systems that enable all students to have a voice.
- Students are resourced so that they are able to undertake representative work in a supported, meaningful and knowledgeable way.
- Students actively engage in student representative systems
- Quality enhancement actions incorporate the student voice.
- The organisation exhibits a culture of representation that values the student voice.

Themes for Action

- Establishing the partnership.
- Legitimising the student voice.
- Establishing clear roles for those who ‘deliver’ student voice.
- Providing training for those who deliver student voice.
- Providing adequate resources to support student voice.
- Explicitly ‘hearing and heeding’ the student voice.

Summits in 2014 and 2015

- 2014 ITP and 2015 ITP and university (separately)
- Purpose was to create a space for student voice and ensure is on the agenda
- Share good practices and try to thereby lift everyone's game
- Especially important in ITP sector but also self-assessment model and EER processes provide strong lever for change



The panels are essentially standing digital discussion groups, organised by NZUSA in conjunction with research partners such as government agencies. They are intended to capture student voices to both arm representatives to be better able to speak for students but also to directly influence change in the interests of students.

Ako Aotearoa supports the LAPPs as "*a significant step forward in enhancing the involvement of students in the implementation and operation off government policy in tertiary education. It allows the systematic and regular collection of feedback from learners about how the tertiary system works for them.*"

Improving representative systems in short and low level courses (at Waiariki)

- The project aims to identify the barriers currently restricting participation by these identified student groups and to develop strategies, methods and good practices to overcome them.
- These would then be shared across the sub-sector.
- It will use focus groups to identify and refine the strategies, road-test them with the learners involved, before rolling them out into courses.
- It is action research, whereby strategies will be clarified and questions for enquiry identified, data collected and analysed from focus groups, and then tested against feedback from staff and learners as the strategies are implemented.

Summing up: Challenges

- Resources, both for NZUSA and Ako Aotearoa, but also within institutions where the key staff are being pulled in multiple directions
- Mixed messages about student voice: student/learner centred is part of the ofifical discource but actual policies work against this
- Lack of an overall framework such as the Scottish Student Engagement Framework
- Some key agencies seem disconnected or focussed elsewhere, the sector remains disjointed and poorly coordinated
- Having to operate institution by institution and dependent on key personnel and their commitment (and time) within those institutions
- Managing the perception of NZUSA as a political voice of students and our commitment to quality and student voice as being “above politics”

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NZUSA website: www.students.org.nz

Student Voice Project online: www.akoaotearoa.ac.nz/projects/student-voice-effective-representation-and-quality