

# Adult and Community Education (ACE) in Aotearoa New Zealand

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#### What is Adult and Community Education (ACE)

- Adult and Community Education (ACE) is a diverse and vibrant part of New Zealand's education system.
- It offers non-formal and community-based learning opportunities for adults.
- The focus is on **lifelong learning**, personal development, social inclusion, and community engagement.
- ACE helps people build confidence, develop skills, and engage more fully in society.
- ACE has evolved over 65 years as a response to social change – not just a space for learning, but a platform for empowerment, particularly for Māori and marginalised communities.





## A Brief History of ACE in NZ

- ACE has roots in 19th-century workers' education, Māori wānanga, and faith based-run initiatives.
- 1960s–70s: Social movements (e.g. Māori rights, feminism, peace) influenced movement-based education; growth in lifelong learning.
- 1980s: Māori education initiatives grew (e.g. Te Ataarangi), but ACE suffered under neoliberal cuts.
- 1990s–2000s: ACE was absorbed into the broader "tertiary" sector; policy became more vocational and economically driven.
- 2010s–2020s: Further marginalisation of non-formal ACE, exacerbated by funding cuts and digitisation. Covid-19 intensified inequalities but also opened new avenues for digital learning.



# What Makes ACE Unique?

- Learner-centred: Often informal, tailored to learner needs and aspirations.
- Community-based: Delivered by a wide range of providers, including NGOs, iwi, schools, churches, and libraries.
- Flexible and responsive: Targets hardto-reach learners, including Māori, Pacific peoples, refugees, and the elderly.
- Often offered free or at low cost to remove barriers to participation.





#### Who Delivers ACE?

- Schools with adult and community education programmes
- Wānanga and PTEs (Private Training Establishments)
- Community organisations and NGOs
- Libraries and local councils
- Iwi and marae-based education providers

These groups work in partnership with government agencies to deliver funded programmes.



## **Government Support and Policy**

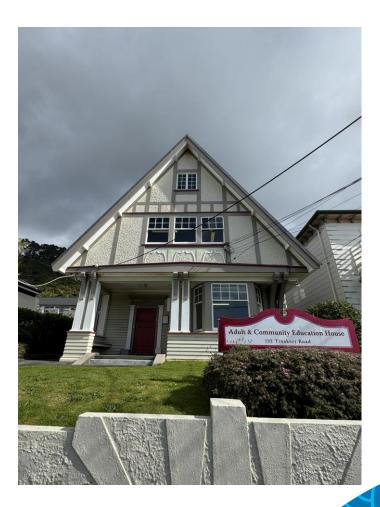
- Funded primarily through the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC).
- The ACE fund supports learning aligned with government priorities like:
  - Literacy and numeracy
  - Community resilience
  - Māori and Pacific success
  - Pathways to further learning or employment
- Recent strategy: Tertiary Education Strategy 2020–2025 prioritises lifelong learning and equity.



#### **ACE Aotearoa – National Voice for ACE**

- ACE Aotearoa is the national umbrella organisation for adult and community education.
- ACE Aotearoa was formed through successive sector reforms and activism, merging organisations like NZACCE and NRC. Its roots lie in a sector that resisted cuts and reasserted the social purpose of education
- Advocates for the sector, builds capability, shares best practice, and promotes the value of lifelong learning.
- Key roles:
  - Policy advocacy at national level
  - Professional development and training for ACE providers
  - Hosting national hui and conferences
  - Publishing research and sector news
  - Promoting Te Tiriti o Waitangi in education

Our work ensures that ACE remains relevant, equitable, and innovative.





# **Why ACE Matters**

- Increases social cohesion and community wellbeing
- Improves employment prospects and readiness for further study
- Supports intergenerational learning and whānau development
- Reduces isolation and promotes mental health and confidence
- Vital for digital inclusion and helping people navigate a changing world



# **Looking Ahead**

#### Challenges:

- Limited funding
- Data and impact measurement
- Access for rural and marginalised communities

#### Opportunities:

- Cross-sector collaboration
- Embracing digital learning
- Targeted support for underrepresented learners
- Strengthening Māori and Pacific-led education initiatives



## ACE – Education for All, for Life

- ACE plays a crucial role in building an inclusive, resilient, and empowered society.
- It is a space where education meets community development.
- With organisations like ACE Actearoa leading the way, the future of lifelong learning in Actearoa has it challenges and many opportunities.

#### **ACE** stories

 The Hui – Maranga programme <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PkXsFqnh\_P0">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PkXsFqnh\_P0</a>

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## **Questions**

