



TAFE NSW – New England Institute

Flexible Learning – Are We Hitting the Target?
May - August 2010
Project Coordinator – Kate Paff

Project Overview

New England Institute has been identified as a leader in Flexible Delivery for over 10 years.

This Project was seen as an opportunity for students to tell us how this system has worked for them.

The Project aimed to identify the particular needs of students who study through flexible delivery and how we can establish strategies to meet these needs.

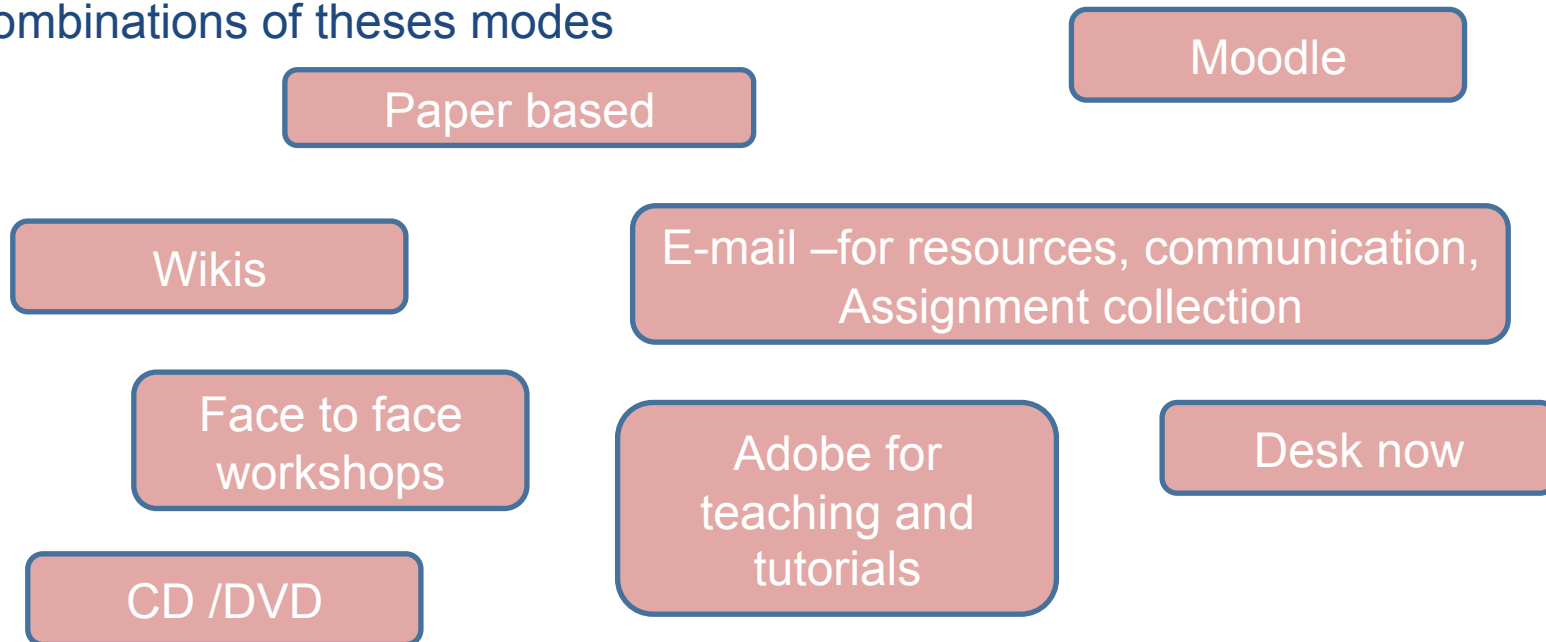
Project Scope

Fund One Courses were included from each faculty that delivers by the flexible learning method across NEI. A sample of courses was selected that are delivered by any form of flexible delivery method. A sample of courses that had more than 10 enrolments as at 14 May 2010 was included in the survey.

Objectives

- To measure student satisfaction of students that have undertaken courses through NEI that have been delivered by the flexible learning method.
- To use current data and new data to look at the students perspective on how they find the flexible delivery method of learning at NEI.
- To provide recommendations to the faculties of NEI on improvements to their delivery learning programs.

Ways Flexible Learning is Flexible- Delivery usually consists of combinations of these modes

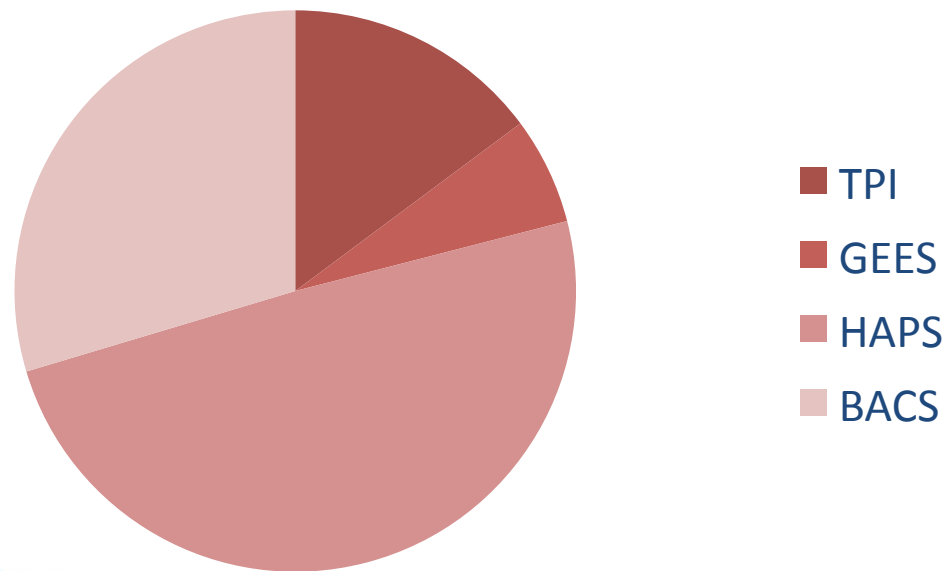


NB It was widely recognised through the course of the interviews that different cohorts of students require different modes of delivery.

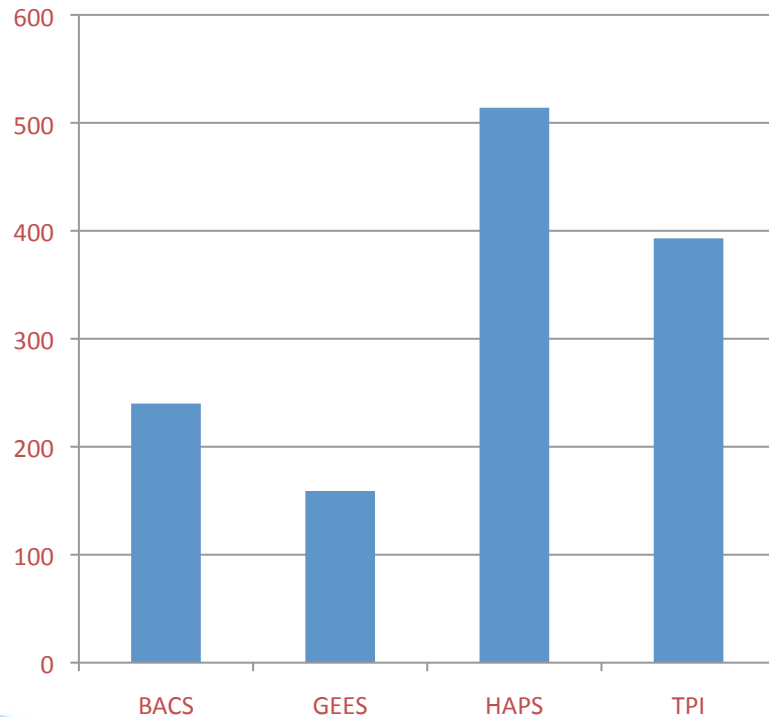
Data Analysis

The total number of courses available through flexible delivery for students to apply for from New England Institute at May 2010 was **81**

These were distributed across the four faculties as

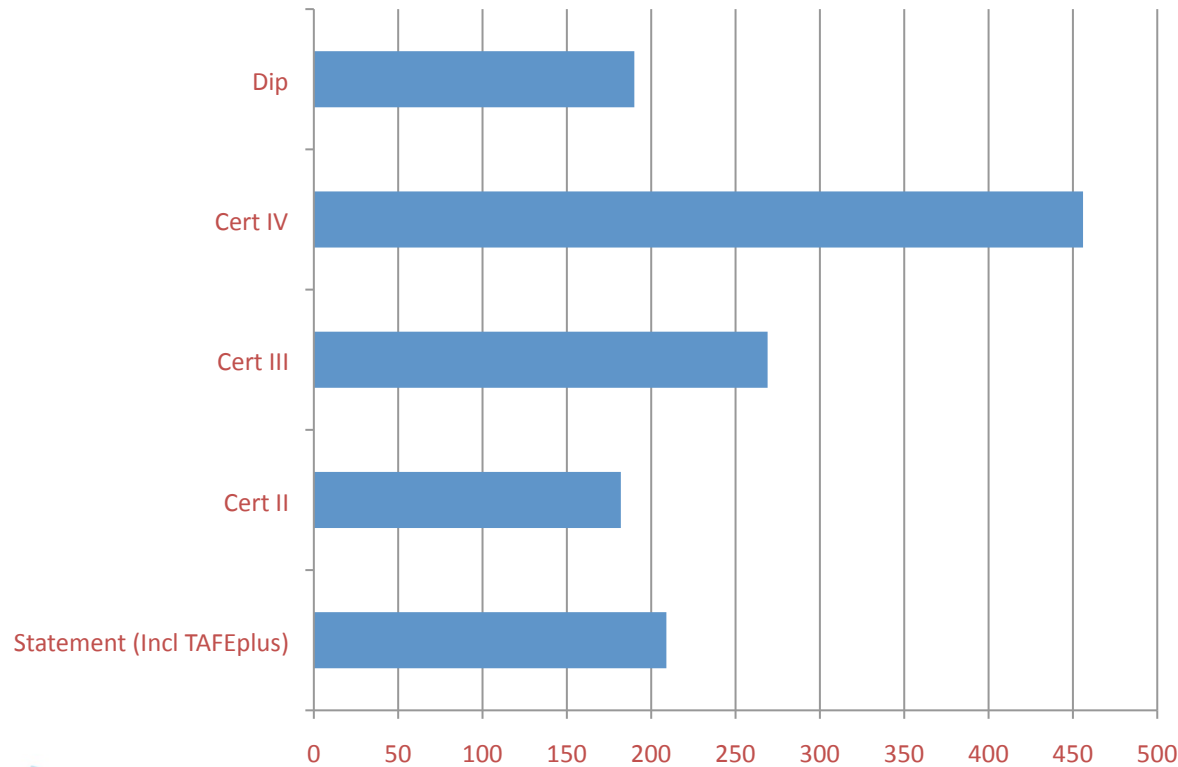


Data Analysis



The graph to the left shows the number of enrolments in flexible learning courses at May 2010, and the distribution across the Four faculties at New England Institute. A total of 1306 enrolments.

Data Analysis

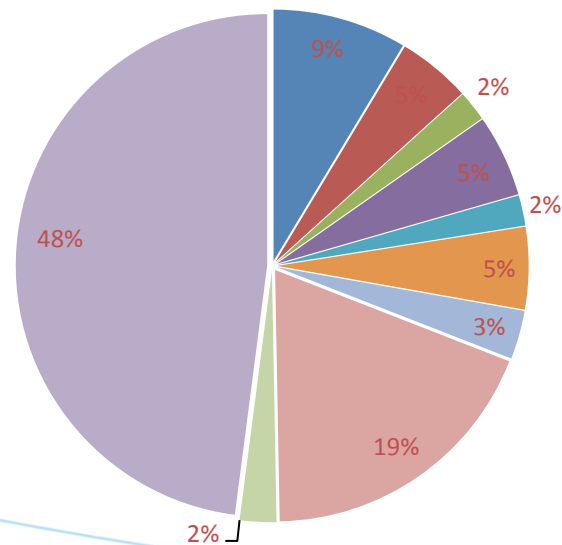


This graph shows the distribution of qualification levels that students were enrolled in, in May 2010 through flexible delivery across New England Institute.

Data Analysis

HAPS Flexi enrolments by student location

■ Armidale
 ■ Gunnedah
 ■ Guyra
 ■ Inverell
 ■ Kootingal
■ Moree
 ■ Narrabri
 ■ Tamworth
 ■ Walcha
■ All other



This graph indicates the geographical location of student enrolled in just one of the faculties . It indicates that almost half of the students enrolled with this faculty reside outside the New England Regional Area.

Summary of activities that were undertaken in the diagnostic phase of the project

Student surveys were seen as a key element in gaining insight in this project.

The survey chosen was the AQTF Learners Survey.

- 154 surveys were sent out both electronically and via post. Several e-mails bounced back, resulting in 137 surveys that were sent.
- Of those only 11 were returned which though a disappointing result still gave an indication of student perceptions. (8% Return)

Phone Interviews were conducted with both students and teachers.

- 20 student and 17 teacher interviews were conducted.

Liaison was maintained with the **Customer Service Centre** and the **Educational Development Unit** throughout the project.

Themes from the student experience

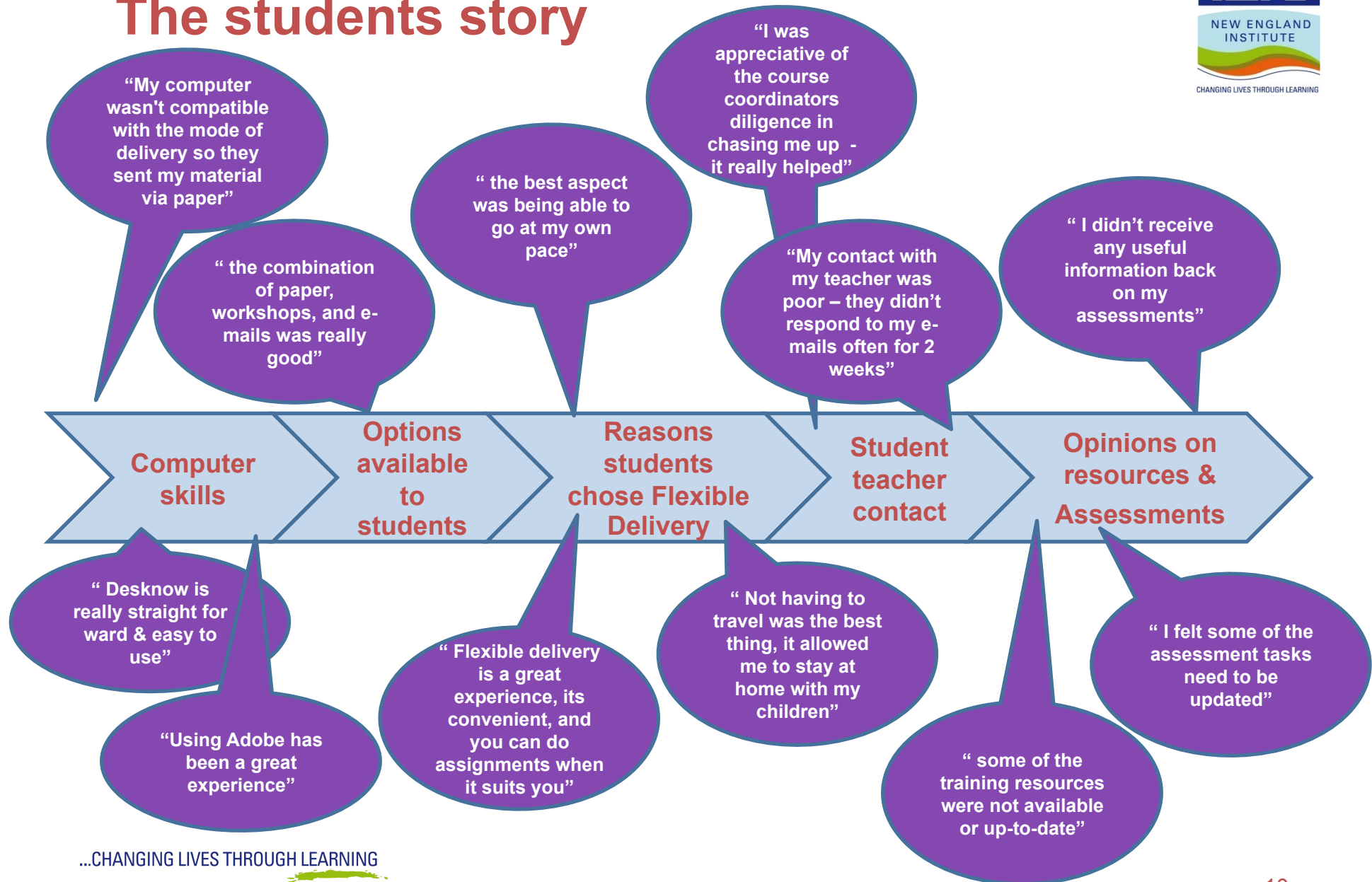
Positive

- The pace of learning
- It meets their expectations and is relevant
- Mixed mode delivery is highly praised
- There is a need to be self motivated and self disciplined
- Student teacher contact was seen as prompt and personal

Negative

- Getting on-line
- Out of date resources, or not user friendly or compatible
- Assessments out of date and often repetitive
- Poor student teacher contact
- Lack of knowledge of level of computer literacy required

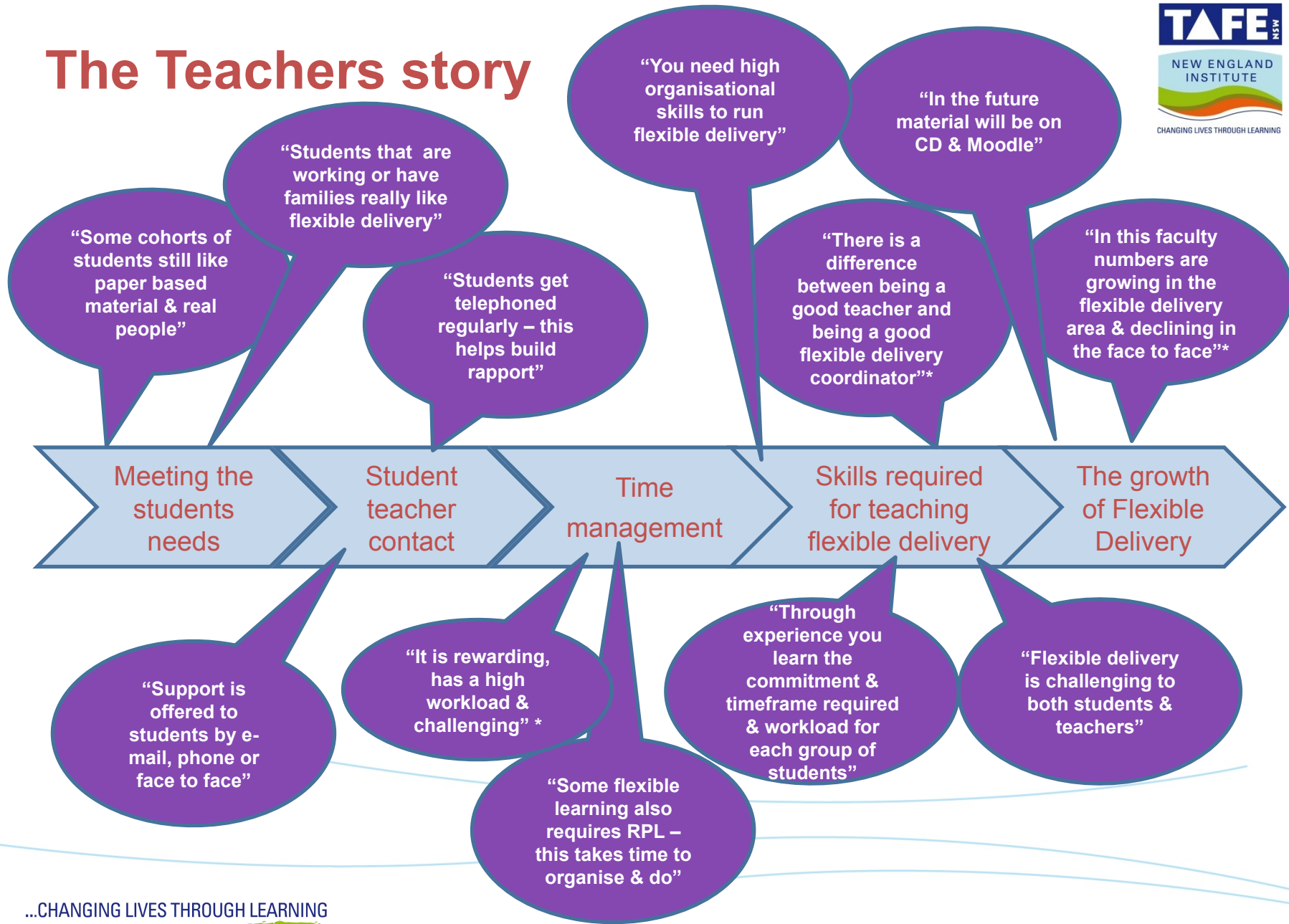
The students story



Themes from the teacher experience

- The rapid growth of flexible delivery
- What flexible delivery really means
- Teaching in flexible delivery is very different
- Time management
- Flexible delivery does meet the students needs
- On-line classrooms can help with student retention
- Regular contact with the student helps build rapport and makes the student accountable for their learning

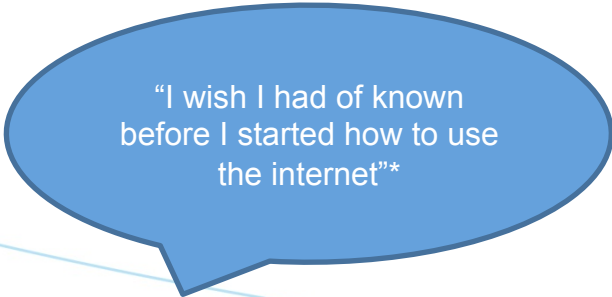
The Teachers story



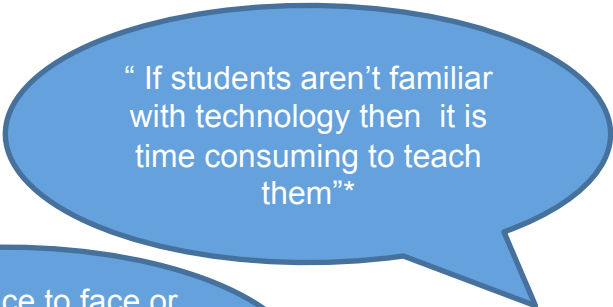
Barriers

Barriers were identified similarly on all interviews.

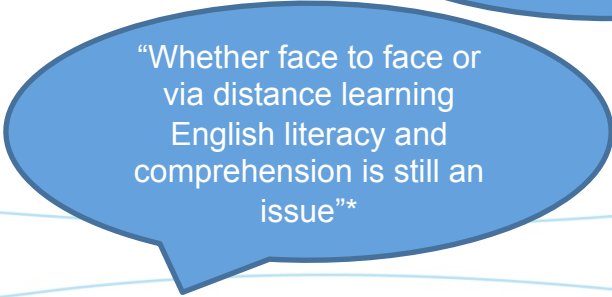
- **Poor or lack of internet connections**
- **Poor literacy / and numeracy skills esp. with comprehension of questions**
- **Poor computer literacy, no additional time available to teach computer skills**
- **E-mail accounts that can't take larger files or when the inboxes are full**
- **Fear of technology**



"I wish I had of known
before I started how to use
the internet"*



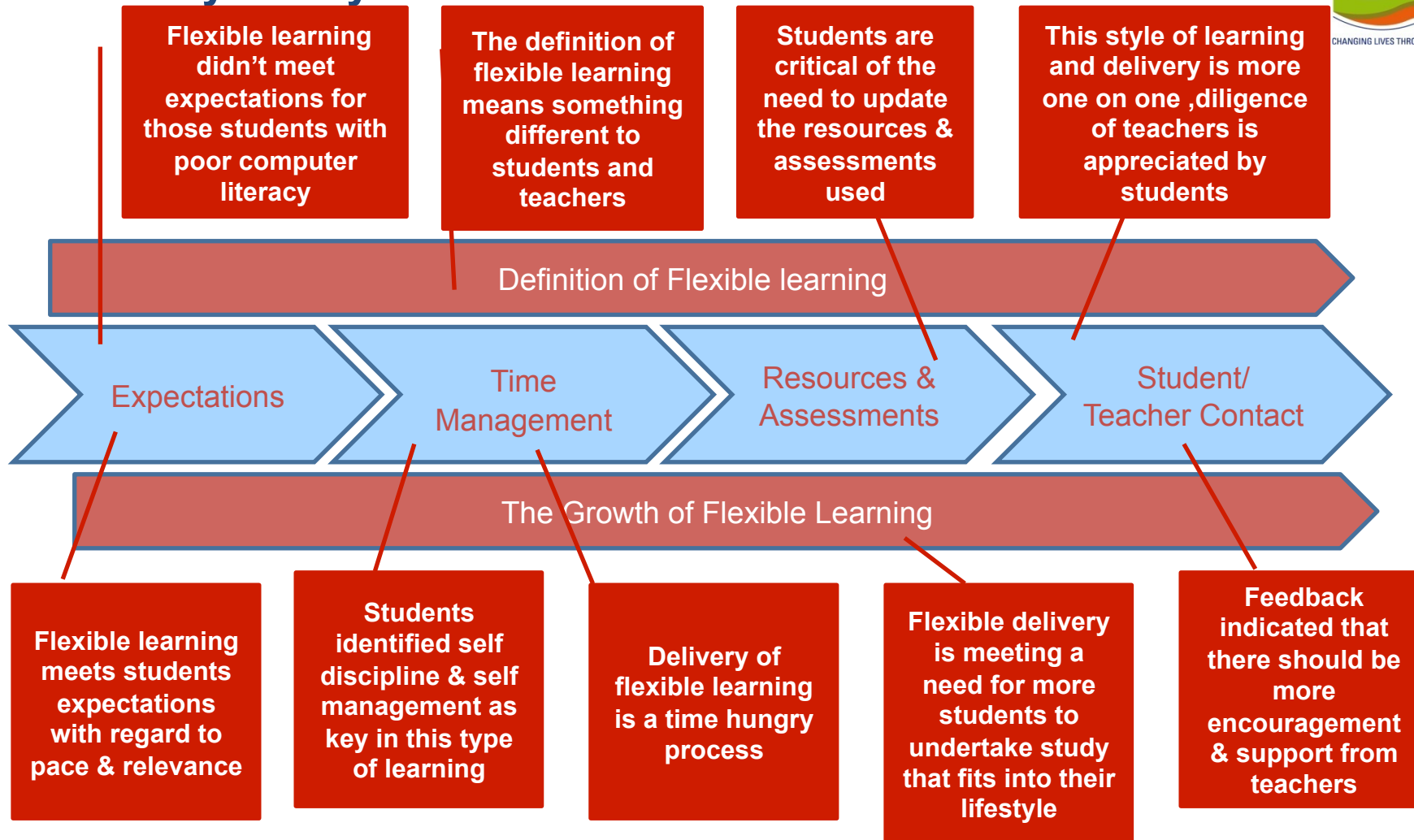
" If students aren't familiar
with technology then it is
time consuming to teach
them"*



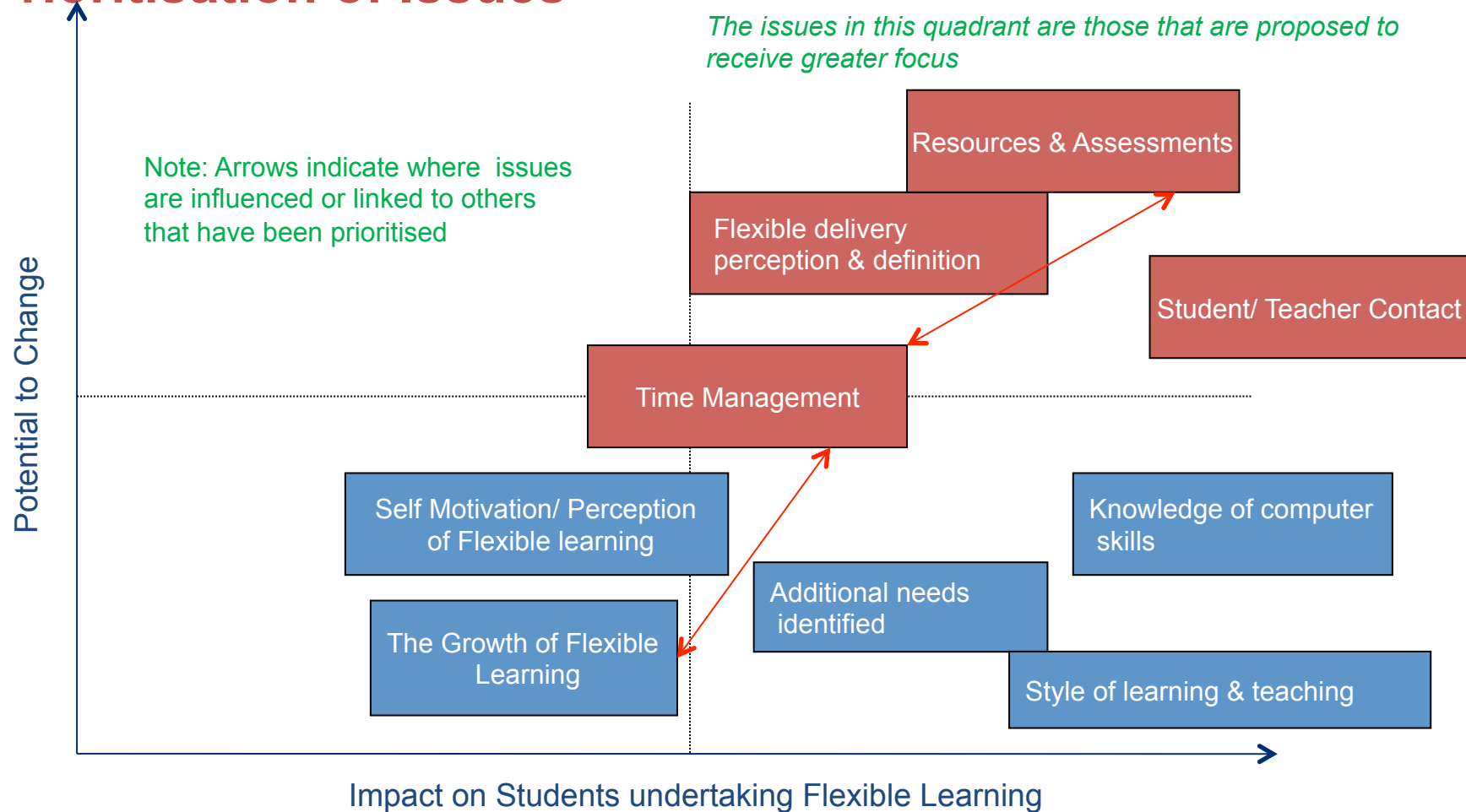
"Whether face to face or
via distance learning
English literacy and
comprehension is still an
issue"*

* Student and Teacher interview quotes

Summary of Key Issues



Prioritisation of Issues



Definitions:

Flexibility – to work at the times and places the learner chooses, and at the learners own pace.*

Flexible Learning – is a philosophy and an approach of which the use of technology is one, it is about the experience of the student or learner.*

Flexible Delivery - Refers to the actual process of the interaction between a student and the teacher or a teaching resource.*

* Ref :flexiblelearning.net.au – Definition of key terms used in e-learning Australian Flexible learning Framework Quick Guides series

Literature Review - Key Findings

The key issues in this project were no different to early surveys and projects by the Australian Flexible Learning Framework in the years of 2000-2005.

A project Titled “ Quality Features of Online Learning: the Learners View” 2002,found that the critical features of online learning were :

- Flexibility – to work at their own pace
- Teachers – who respond promptly
- Quality of materials – that are up to date, comprehensive and well designed

Literature Review - Key Findings

Other issues for students were

- Problems with technology and access to the internet
- Self motivation of the student
- Lack of teacher responsiveness
- Confusion – unclear instructions , need for clearer content
- Poor quality resource material

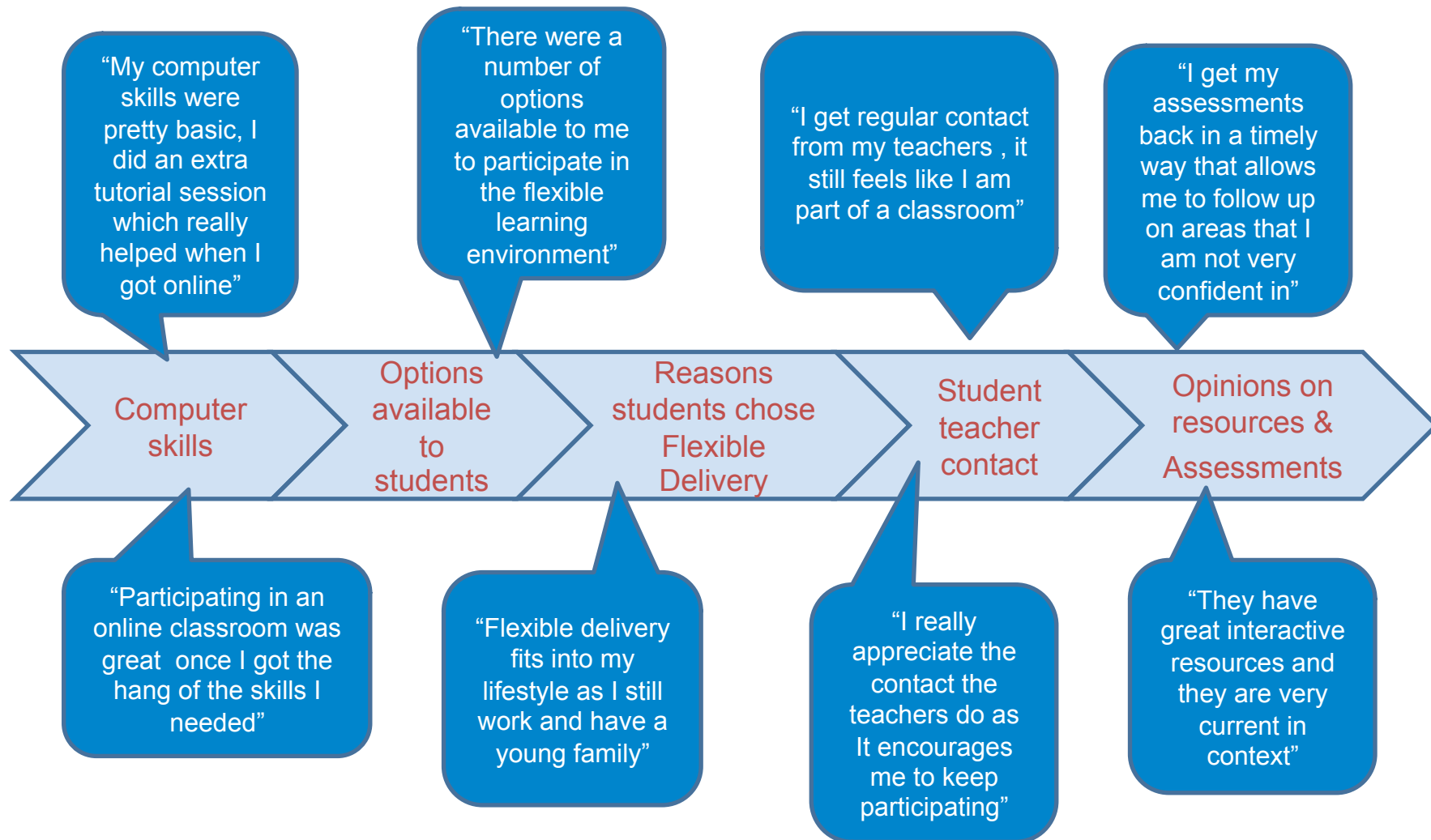
In this report it was acknowledged by teachers that they needed professional development of skills and resources .Also that the traditional approach to counting student hours does not adequately reflect the work that goes on.

Literature Review – Key Findings Cont'd

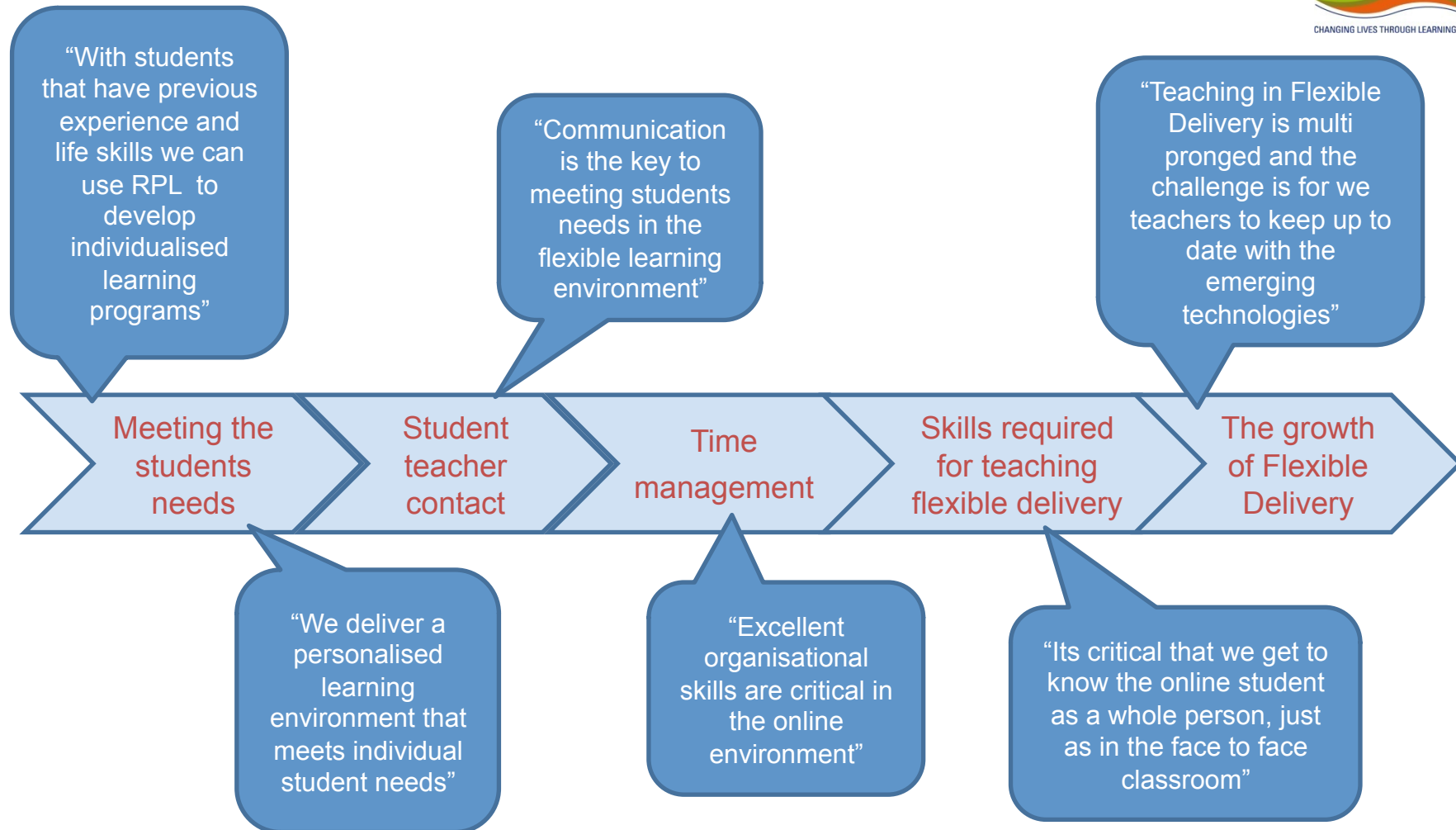
A report entitled “ Review of Flexible Delivery Practices in NEI”, 2007,one overall principle was identified;

“ The closer the relationship between the teacher and the student , the greater the success of the student. The more “links” in the chain of this relationship, the greater the possibility of miscommunication and oversight of tasks needed to be completed.”

The students story - The 'Future Story'



The “Future” Teachers story



Overview of Priority Issues and Selected Solutions

Priority Issues

Student/ Teacher Contact

Resources & Assessments

Flexible delivery
perception & definition

Time Management

Solutions Selected

Student contact
agreements

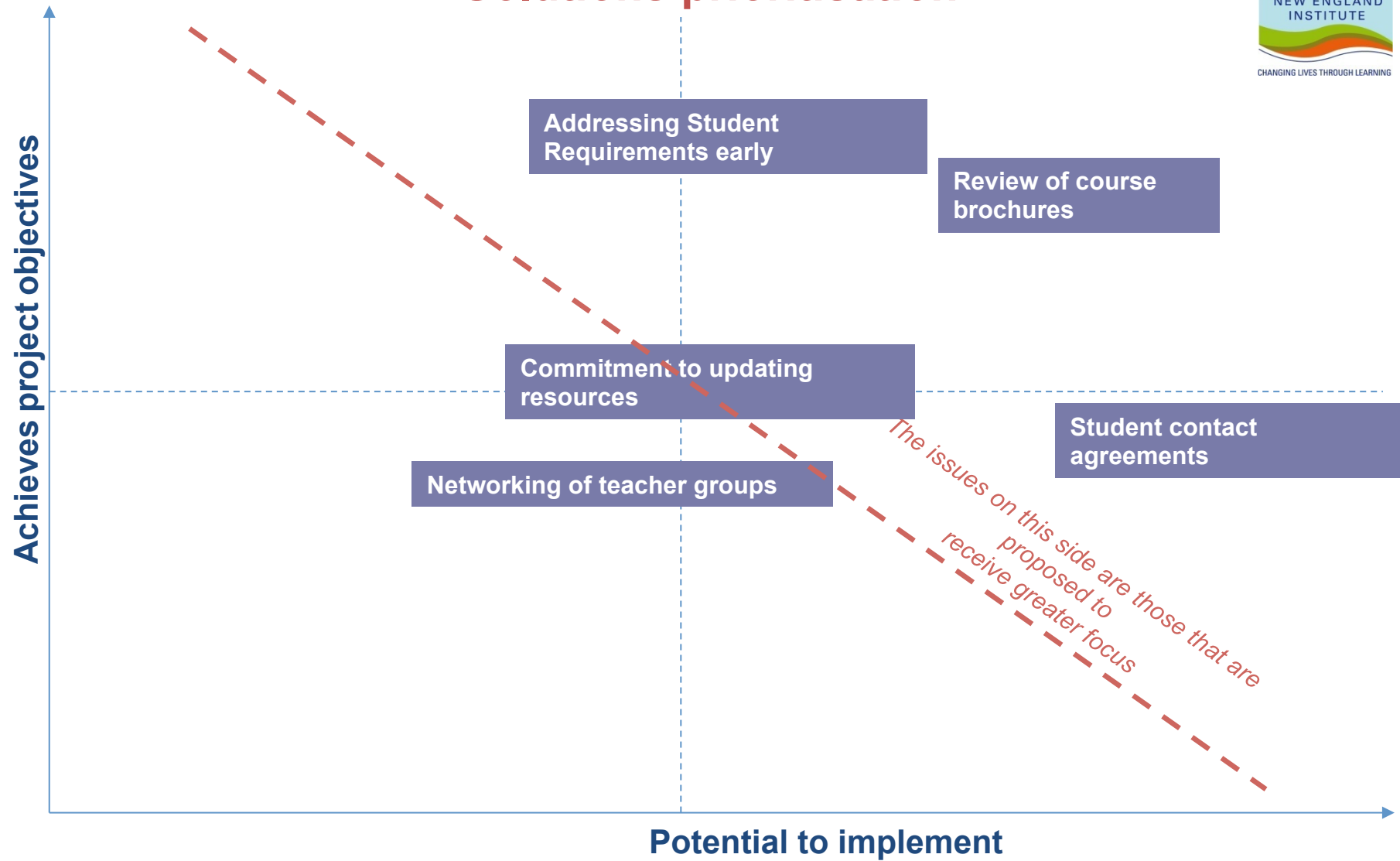
Review of course brochures

Addressing Student
Requirements early

Networking of teacher
groups

Commitment to updating
resources

Solutions prioritisation



Guiding Principles

Guiding principles for this phase :

- to formulate solutions that are achievable and of value to students.
- aim to be responsive, respectful of students needs, values and preferences.
- be efficient and effect actual outcomes for students.
- be timely given the current environment of review in the VET sector.
- will require to be of minimal impact to teaching staff and be integrated into their core business roles.
- minimise waste, and have associated minimal cost with any changes.

Critical Success Factors



Critical Success Factors for the implementation of the identified solutions include:

- Strong and clear governance structure
- Promotion of ownership to key stakeholders to ensure change process continues
- Resources to be allocated to allow for implementation and ongoing evaluation
- Local champions with clearly defined roles and accountability to deliver the project outcomes