



Media release 18 March 2022 – For immediate release

RANGATAHI-LED RESEARCH REINFORCES INEQUITY IN OUR EDUCATION SYSTEM

Putting the mauri into the numbers was the starting premise for [Ngā Tapuae](#), a ground-breaking research project which combines big data insights with whānau voice. A partnership between Māori Futures Agency, Tokona te Raki and the Social Wellbeing Agency (SWA) the research set out to identify and support levers of positive change in a bid to improve the experiences of rangatahi transitioning through education and into employment pathways.

Not only was this a first in terms of combining quantitative and qualitative research findings, even more powerful was that the whānau insight gathering was led by a team of rangatahi Māori researchers from Tokona te Raki.

Rangatahi research lead Hinepounamu Apanui-Barr says, “With the focus on rangatahi transitions, we saw an opportunity to begin exploring rangatahi-led research working with Kairangahau Māori, researchers who our participants felt comfortable with and who they could easily relate to. Not only was this hugely valuable in capturing more meaningful data insights, but also by being engaged in the research, our Kairangahau gained an understanding of how to use big data (IDI) to build a picture of the system, and to demonstrate how whānau voice and nuanced stories of lived experience can make qualitative data more meaningful and how it can guide research.”

While the research approach differed, the overarching story it tells reinforces the same message – Aotearoa has a broken education system lacking in cultural equity

– one where many of our rangatahi are forced to cut their education journey short due to practices such as streaming, or to choose education over culture – both of which impact negatively on their wellbeing and result in lost opportunities for higher education and training.

One significant finding was the higher rates of University Entrance attainment among rangatahi attending kura kaupapa. This positive finding sends a strong signal for the need for greater support for Māori medium education. It was recently reinforced by [Te Kura Huanui: The treasures of successful pathways](#), the report prepared by the Education Review Office which highlights the importance of rangatahi being happy and confident learners with a strong sense of who they are as Māori being key to their educational success.

Ngā Tapuae builds on the work of collaborative research reports with Business and Economic Research (BERL): *The Education Awa: Education Outcomes for Māori and He Awa Ara Rau, A Journey of Many Paths*, which tells the story of 100 rangatahi Māori navigating their educational journey (BERL 2019). Like these two reports Ngā Tapuae aims to effect systems change in the education sector that will result in equitable outcomes for future generations of rangatahi.

“We have gathered the data that tells an extremely powerful story of the need for change. Therefore, this research cannot be in isolation – if we are to drive systems change and create equity/ mana motuhake we must build on the findings and create the solutions that will ensure fair and equitable futures. After all it’s what every parent wants for their tamariki and what they should expect”, Dr Eruera Tarena, Executive Director, Tokona te Raki.

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[Ngā Tapuae Full Report](#)

[Ngā Tapuae Summary](#)

