

# HE AWA ARA RAU

## A JOURNEY OF MANY PATHS

The Journey of our Rangatahi Māori Through Our Education System



The journey of our rangatahi Māori through the education system can be likened to paddling a waka



down a braided river. New research (BERL, 2019) has tracked two cohorts of rangatahi from 11 to 22 years old (49,476) and 13 to 25 years old (29,898). This report summarises this research to tell the story of 100 rangatahi Māori starting their journey on the awa.

Their journey begins with a destination framed by the dreams and aspirations of their parents and whānau, all of whom wish for their tamariki to do well and be equipped to lead a life characterised by prosperity, wellbeing and opportunity.

As they flow down the river these tamariki become rangatahi, a range of pathways open up and the routes taken feed into their direction and their final destination.

These branching pathways create an impression that rangatahi are always making a choice about their journeys - that is not the case. The pathways taken arise from not only the options presented to them, but also the other unseen currents they are battling (factors not observed in the data, i.e. socioeconomic), over which they have no control and from within a

system which has failed to support generations of young Māori to achieve their potential. For many, equal access to choice is an illusion, and all too often, educators believe that the destinations of rangatahi are determined in advance.

This document explores the many paths our rangatahi take, from leaving school through tertiary study and on into the workforce. The intent is to elevate the focus from individual circumstances to understanding the awa our rangatahi are traveling upon, the deeper patterns, forces and currents that shape their options, directions and destinations.

Our hope is that by 'seeing' the awa we will better understand where we should focus our collective efforts to keep it free from any barriers so our rangatahi stay in their learning flow.

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# HE KUPU WHAKATAKI

## INTRODUCTION

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*Haea te awa, wāhia te awa*

*Putā i tua, putā i waho i te pakiaka o te rākau*

*O maere nuku, o maere raki, o maere o te mara whenua*

*I ruka Tāne, i raro Tāne*

*Pakupaku Tāne, te Rakiihi o Tāne*

*Nohoka o te ariki e*

*Hoatu e Tāne ki uta!*

This report is a collaboration between BERL, Waikato-Tainui, The Southern Initiative and Tokona te Raki: Māori Futures Collective of Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu. As a first step, research was undertaken to understand the journey of our rangatahi through education into employment. This report summarises this research (BERL, 2019) and begins to identify where the key levers of change lie and possible solutions.

Rangatahi Māori represent the fastest growing sector of New Zealand's population and as such will be key drivers of our future. The opportunity is significant; making the right choices now could eliminate the current income gap of \$2.6 billion per year for Māori and move us closer to a future where we all share the benefits of living a good life with whānau determining their own futures.

We hope this report will provide clarity in terms of the priorities, choices and changes we need to make in the years ahead. We have a bias towards collective action and invite those who share our passion for rangatahi to use this report as a tool for change in any way you choose – we all have a part to play in transforming our awa for the future therefore we invite you to join us on our journey of transformation. Ki te hoe!

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# TE WHAKAKITENGA NUI

## OUR VISION

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**Imagine a future where an equitable education system enables all rangatahi to be inspired by their future, confident in their culture, thriving in their work and empowered to succeed as Māori whatever pathway they choose. Their lifelong education journey – both at school and beyond – is future-focused and assisted by all those who can make a difference. Our vision is one of self-determination, empowerment and tino rangatiratanga.**

**It speaks to the heart of our belief that every child has the right to a good education, meaningful employment and a decent income in order to thrive in a free, fair and just Aotearoa.**

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The current education system however, is not designed to deliver on this vision because it is geared to work for some but not others. Systemic bias is evidenced in the increased rates of Māori students being stood-down, expelled or streamed into lower level classes and the low expectations of Māori to achieve (Blank et al., 2016; Bolton, 2017; Education Counts, 2019; Turner, 2015). This is seen in the disparity of NCEA results. These behaviours create self-fulfilling prophecies where educators can create the outcomes that confirm their own bias.

We know that affordable housing, a healthy home, a stable income and a connection to the whenua and whakapapa, are all major drivers of educational attainment for rangatahi. They are also sites where structural racism and systemic bias play out. While socioeconomic family background is known to be the biggest predictor of school success, it is also crucial to identify and address how systemic bias is reproduced through the education sector.

These biases have created an education system that channels many Māori towards low-skill, low-pay menial jobs that fail to create a platform for whānau wellbeing. We all have a responsibility to start righting this wrong by addressing the problem at its root cause – systemic bias.

Systemic bias needs to be identified and addressed across the education sector. Deficit thinking amongst educators is hugely damaging – it needs to be brought to the fore and challenged. All educators must be proactively culturally responsive and passionate champions of Māori success.

Rapid technological change and a fast growing Māori population mean we need to be addressing inequalities now – we need to re-wire our education systems so all rangatahi are inspired, equipped and prepared for the future.

# HE AWA AUKATIA

## A JOURNEY INTERRUPTED

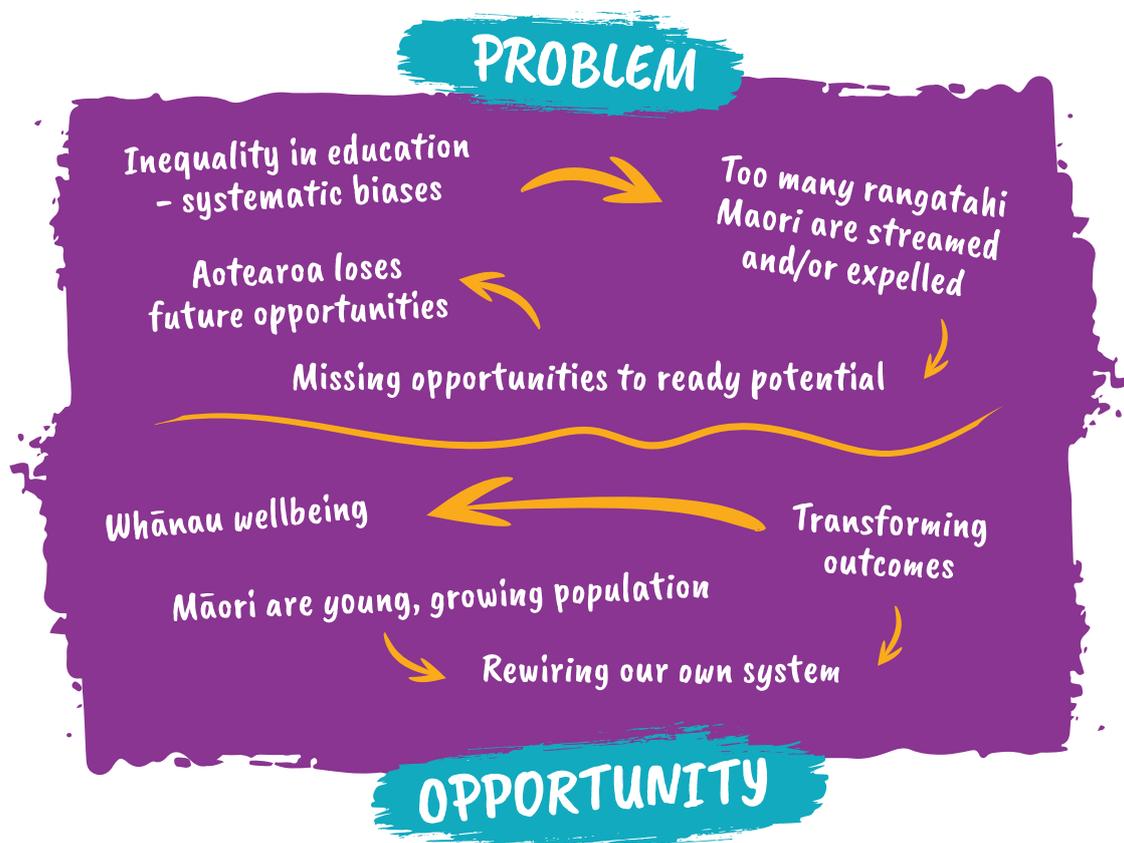
The journey of rangatahi through the education system can be likened to paddling a waka down a braided river. There are many paths they can follow to reach their chosen destination but they need to be empowered to make informed decisions to chart their own course and avoid getting stuck.

Māori are a young, growing population and will become an increasingly significant share of the future labour force. Data tells us that the current education system is failing to provide the “tools for success” for many tamariki. While we know there are a number of contributing factors that need to be addressed, equity in education is key to their journey and a crucial catalyst for transforming outcomes.

Our education system still carries a racist legacy where Māori culture is seen as a barrier to success and Māori are channelled into unskilled labour. These outcomes don't happen by chance, and have been influenced by historical racism in education.

This is a challenge that can be solved but solutions lie in addressing inequalities at their source and redesigning our awa to ensure our rangatahi lead us into the future.

***Rangatahi need to be properly equipped for the journey.***



The journey from education to employment and wellbeing should be like flowing down a healthy awa – an interconnected ecosystem built and maintained over time with care. Change starts with us ‘seeing’ the awa our tamariki are travelling, and knowing where we should focus our collective efforts to keep them in the flow. That includes teachers, schools, educators, whānau, agencies, tertiary providers and employers. It’s about working collaboratively to keep the awa healthy and flowing freely without any barriers/blockages. We all have a role to play in designing the education experience that provides the tools for rangatahi to reach their dream career.

New research (BERL, 2019) has tracked two cohorts of rangatahi from year 11 to 22 years old (49,476) + year 13 to 25 (29,898) years old. This report summarises this research to tell the story of 100 rangatahi Māori starting their journey on the awa.

### Kaiaraki / Guides



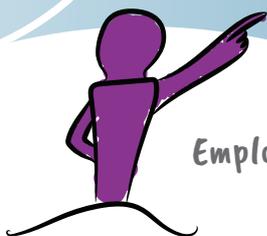
Educators



### Kaitiaki / Guardians

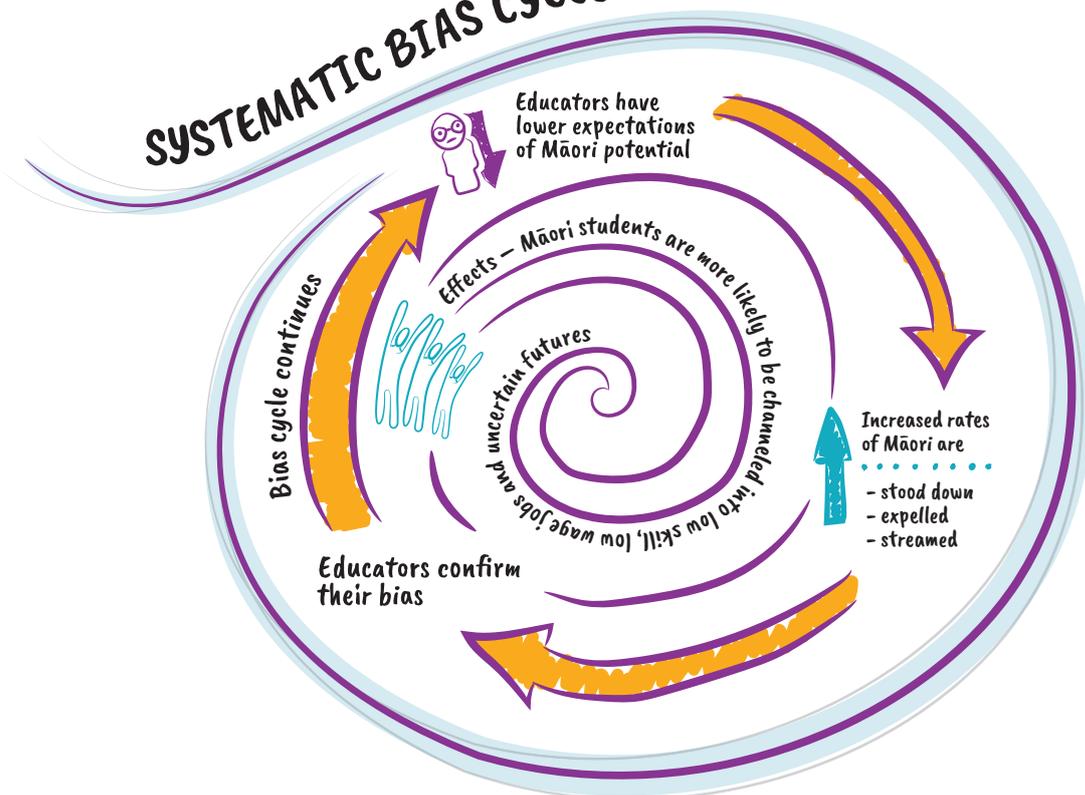


Government



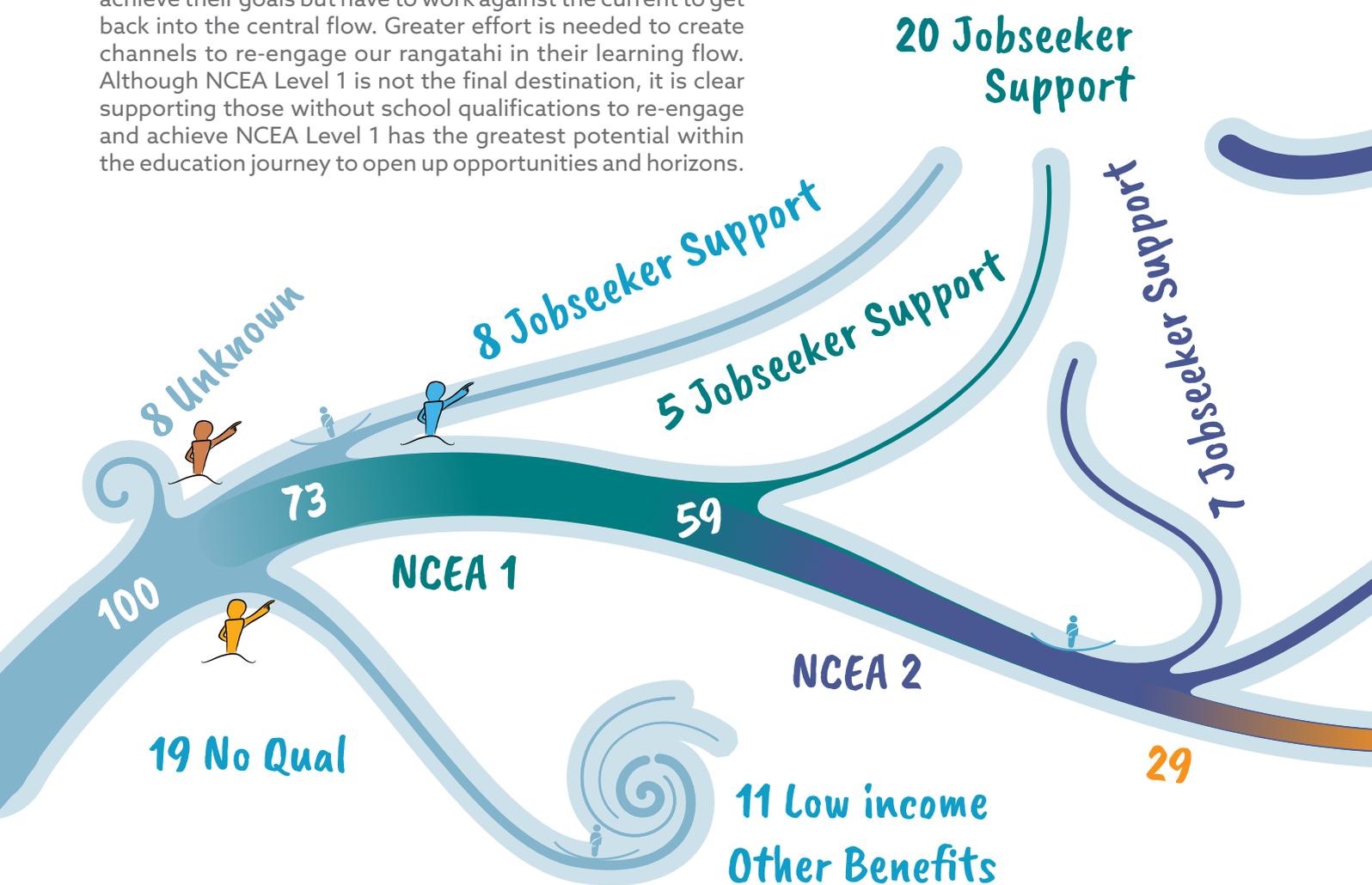
Employers

## SYSTEMATIC BIAS CYCLE



# THE STORY OF 100 MĀORI SCHOOL LEAVERS

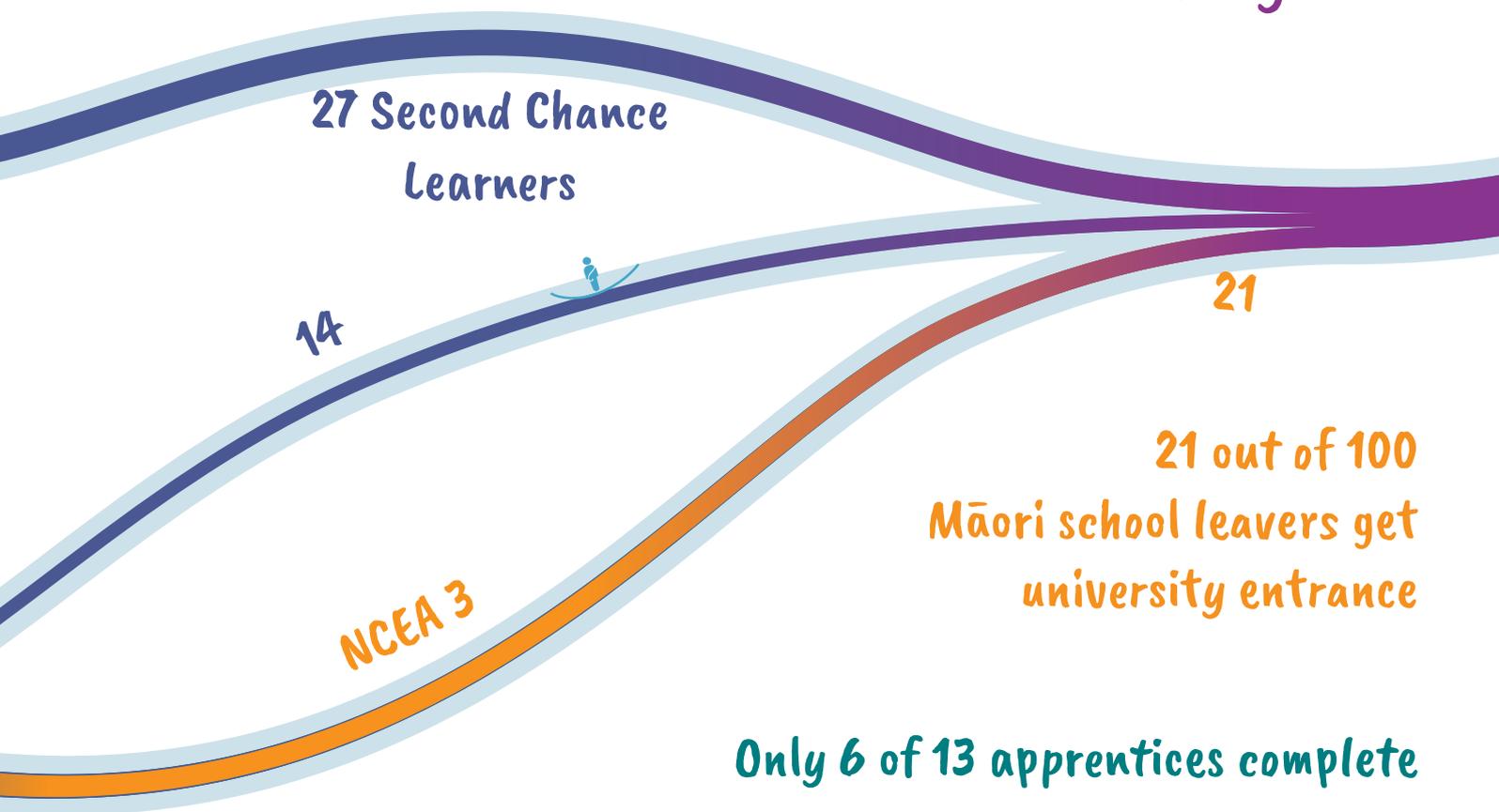
No-one needs to be left behind. Those stuck in tributaries can achieve their goals but have to work against the current to get back into the central flow. Greater effort is needed to create channels to re-engage our rangatahi in their learning flow. Although NCEA Level 1 is not the final destination, it is clear supporting those without school qualifications to re-engage and achieve NCEA Level 1 has the greatest potential within the education journey to open up opportunities and horizons.



Continuity is an important factor in maintaining engagement in education. From 100 Māori school leavers, none achieved NCEA level 1 or NCEA level 2 with a merit or excellence endorsement and did not continue onto the next NCEA level. When looking at Māori medium, compared with all Māori, students that complete their whole school journey in Māori medium schooling have higher achievement levels.

The journey following school is not always linear. Some rangatahi will leave school without qualifications and go onto a benefit, gain employment and go back onto a benefit. After doing this for some time, they may also pursue tertiary education. New research (BERL, 2019) identified 27 of the original 100 do just that and are identified as “second chance learners” in the diagram.

## 62 Start Tertiary Study



Apprenticeships are practical, low-cost, on-the-job education experiences which allow rangatahi to earn while they learn. Those who complete their apprenticeship have similar lifetime outcomes to those who achieve degree-level qualifications. Leaving early, particularly for labouring jobs, can result in a short-term increase in income, but significantly diminishes the likelihood of long-term income growth.

Improving completion of apprenticeships will grow the skills of the New Zealand labour force, fill shortages in qualified tradespeople and contribute to greater prosperity for their whānau.

# TE ARA MĀTAURANGA MATUA

## THE JOURNEY THROUGH TERTIARY EDUCATION

14 of the original 100 get a degree-level qualification, which remains a strong predictor of long-term prosperity.

A disproportionate number of rangatahi leave school after completing NCEA Level 2 to go on to Level 3 certificates at PTEs. Unfortunately those that do will earn significantly lower wages by age 25 than those rangatahi who stayed longer at school.

12 Do Not Complete A Qualification

48 No Tertiary Qualification  
19 Not in Employment

18 Complete Levels 1-3 | 5 Not in Employment

There are providers in the tertiary education sector that are indebting our rangatahi and providing them with qualifications that don't result in better employment outcomes or higher incomes. We need to investigate decommissioning tertiary study that is evidenced to result in poor employment and income outcomes. We also need to arm our rangatahi and whānau with better information so they can make informed decisions about what tertiary study to pursue and complete.

14 Complete Degree and Above

2 Not in Employment

17 Complete Levels 4-6  
5 Not in Employment

# TE ARA MAHI

## THE JOURNEY INTO EMPLOYMENT

### Age 22

Of the 19 rangatahi leaving school with no qualifications 11 are on a work or health related benefit and eight are in employment – their average income = \$20,000 (the living wage is approximately \$40,000).

At age 22 only a very small percentage of those in employment are earning \$40,000 and that's because they engaged in further education or training. By comparison those who left with Level 1 achieve an average annual income 24% higher (\$48,000) than those with no qualification. Those with level 3 have the lowest average working income – equal to students with no qualifications – however many of this group are in tertiary education and only working part-time.

### Age 25

Of the 50 with no tertiary qualifications, 31 are in employment. Of the 30 with higher qualifications, 25 are in employment (although a high percentage are under-employed working in retail and hospitality – low paying jobs).

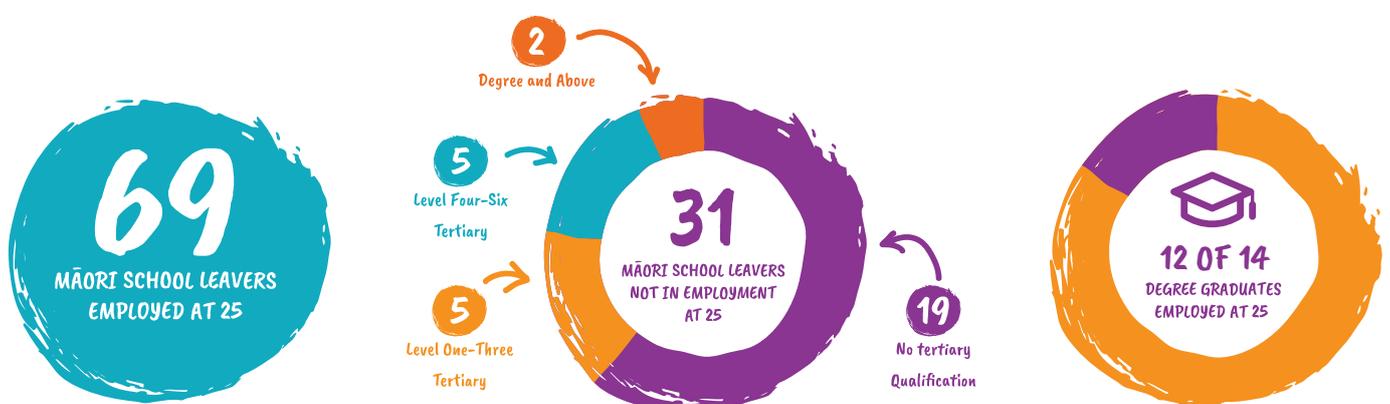
13 Bachelor's Degree

12 National Certificate L4

6 National Certificate L1-3

We know that life-long learning is key to educational wellbeing and a thriving whānau and this starts with rangatahi being excited by and engaged in their learning journey. A welcoming, inspiring and culturally affirming environment ensures rangatahi want to come to class or work each and every day – because they know they are welcomed and cared for as Māori.

A strong sense of culture and identity is like an outboard motor on their waka and boosts their success. Creating educational and work environments where rangatahi are welcomed, engaged and inspired, is something we can control and influence, but it requires the hardest change of all – a change in our attitude!



KO TE MĀTĀPUNA KI UTA,  
KO TE KAWENGA KI TAI

## CURRENT AWA

### UPSTREAM CAUSES

Systematic bias influences the upstream choices, policies and funding priorities that create obstacles for rangatahi.

Deficit views of Māori drive educators and employers to have lower expectations of rangatahi.

Archaic monocultural teaching practices push higher numbers of rangatahi out of our education system.

Increased numbers of Māori constrained in lower level tertiary study.

Increased rates of Māori stand-downs and expulsions exiting rangatahi from education.

Increased number of Māori constrained in low-skill, low-pay, low-security jobs.

THAT CREATE  
THE CONDITIONS  
THAT RESULT IN

### DOWNSTREAM IMPACTS

An Aotearoa where our future risks being constrained by growing inequalities.

# UPSTREAM CAUSES, DOWNSTREAM IMPACTS

## DESIRED FUTURE AWA

### UPSTREAM CAUSES

Systematic bias in education addressed upstream and all the way downstream.

Collective focus on removing obstacles and diversions for our rangatahi.

Created welcoming, inspiring and culturally affirming learning environments.

An education system where everyone has the opportunity to thrive across their life-long learning journey.

More Māori completions for secondary, apprenticeship and higher education.

Equality of achievement for rangatahi Māori.

THAT CREATE  
THE CONDITIONS  
THAT RESULT IN

### DOWNSTREAM IMPACTS

A free, fair and just Aotearoa in which every child realises their right to good education, meaningful employment and a decent income to support a life of dignity, opportunity and tino rangatiratanga.

# KI TE HOE

## ADVANCING CHANGE

### Actions we can take today to create a better tomorrow



#### Educators can:

- ▶ **Use the teaching tools** to measure your practice and seek professional learning to upskill and increase your knowledge of te ao Māori and progress your cultural competency as a kaiako.
- ▶ **Understand your role in the awa** - use your influence to encourage others to create a culture of care. There is nothing more powerful than letting rangatahi know you care and will do whatever it takes to help them achieve their goals.
- ▶ Be prepared to **reflect on your own practice** and challenge your own attitudes. Teachers have the greatest power to challenge and dismantle racism in the awa.
- ▶ There are **no bystanders** in an awa - you are either going with the flow or blocking it. Talk with your colleagues about the changes you can make and call out bad behaviours that block progress.



#### People in government can:

- ▶ **Shift policy settings** to tackle antiquated, punitive and racist approaches towards behaviour management and implement more evidence-based restorative approaches.
- ▶ **Design for life-long learning** - education needs to be a life-long journey to accommodate future skill needs. We need a dynamic and agile education system that keeps Māori engaged in learning so that they are always growing to meet emerging opportunities and never left behind.



#### People in tertiary can:

- ▶ **Reduce support and funding** for tertiary level study that is evidenced to not contribute to our young people's employment prospects or increased earning potential.
- ▶ **Arm our rangatahi** with better information on quality tertiary study, including the likelihood of future employment and earnings.
- ▶ **Ensure the cost** of obtaining the tertiary qualification is reflective of the type of future income a young person is likely to earn.
- ▶ **Tighten the gap** between tertiary providers and employers to ensure that the skills and competencies rangatahi are gaining are valued in the market and likely to be well remunerated.

## Tributary 1: The streaming of Māori

***“The biggest travesty in New Zealand education and the thing that would make the biggest difference to the spread of our results would be to completely abolish streaming.”***

Professor Bill Barton, University of Auckland

An example of the damage done by streaming is the number of rangatahi Māori placed into foundation maths often referred to as ‘cabbage maths’. A te reo Māori teacher explains:

***“It’s called cabbage maths and cabbage science and they’ve even come up with a code name that doesn’t offend the teachers. They call it kāpeti maths, kāpeti science now. Those are the new names they use so the teachers don’t get upset about it. Teachers have lower expectations of them and there’s no expectation to push themselves. And then they start disengaging with the rest of the school because of the fact that they don’t feel valued in those classes.”***

Once streamed into these foundation classes, it can be difficult for students to get back into a class that offers them the opportunity to be successful with NCEA in that subject, and this in turn severely restricts career choice.

How students are streamed is in itself problematic. Bias and deficit thinking play a key role in this. The number of Māori placed in foundation classes is way out of proportion to non Māori. This is systemic racism.

Streaming at Year 9 and 10, impacts down river, an example being Level 1 NCEA algebra. This is often a prerequisite for Level 2 mathematics and other subjects such as physics, and therefore impacts on career choices such as medicine. It is assessed by an external exam known as MCAT or Mathematics Common Assessment Task. Students that achieve MCAT have very positive education outcomes.

Two-thirds of Māori students that achieve MCAT leave school with NCEA Level 3 and 56 percent of Māori that achieve MCAT gain university entrance – almost three times the Māori average. Despite its link to positive outcomes, more than half of Māori do not attempt or are not given the opportunity to attempt this assessment. This is but one small example of how our awa channels many Māori away from future opportunities and towards poverty or lower paying jobs.

What happens when a school stops streaming and opts for mixed ability classes? Horowhenua College made this decision in 2017 (Education Gazette, 2019). Even they were surprised by the changes that followed. More students chose to continue with maths, they were better engaged in class and NCEA results for Māori and Pasifika students increased.

# THE STREAMING OF MĀORI

## CURRENT AWA UPSTREAM CAUSES

Policy makers create NCEA measures that reflect Eurocentric views of achievement.

School leaders create policies that create more barriers for Māori including streaming and not recognising cultural capital.

Teacher bias results in lower expectations of Māori.

Streamed rangatahi feel the teacher thinks they are dumb. This results in disengagement, poor teacher relationships and diminished self-confidence.

An education system where teacher bias constrains rangatahi opportunities and pathways.

THAT CREATE  
THE CONDITIONS  
THAT RESULT IN

## DOWNSTREAM IMPACTS

Poorer Māori outcomes with teacher bias creating self-fulfilling prophecies.

# IN OUR EDUCATION SYSTEM

## DESIRED FUTURE AWA

### UPSTREAM CAUSES

Policy settings that shift behaviours towards more evidence based and restorative approaches.

Teachers have a strength-based approach with high expectations of Māori.

School environments focused on Māori thriving.

Welcoming, inspiring and culturally affirming learning environments that grow life-long learning opportunities.

Better taura engagement.

Better kaiako relationships

More Māori secondary completions and progression into higher education.

THAT CREATE  
THE CONDITIONS  
THAT RESULT IN

### DOWNSTREAM IMPACTS

More rangatahi staying in their learning flow.

An education system rewired to focus on Māori thriving.

# TE HURINGA O TE AWA

## CHANGING THE FLOW

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Everyone benefits from a healthy awa that supports all our rangatahi to thrive but we need key people to act as kaitiaki to change the flow. Teachers, educators, employers and people working across our public institutions can work together to keep our tamariki in their flow and reach their dream careers. Policy-makers can enact a suite of upstream policies that support the needs of all rangatahi and their whānau that continue throughout their learning journey.



### People in government can:

- ▶ **Grow a large cohort of new Māori teachers.**
- ▶ **Revisit policy around compulsory achievement** to address cultural capital (e.g. kapahaka).
- ▶ **Design policy to drive the shift** from punitive to restorative behaviour management practices.
- ▶ **Design policy that advocates** for the removal of streaming practices at individual school level.
- ▶ **Tie cultural competencies** and bi-cultural teaching practices to teacher appraisals as outlined in the Teaching Council Code & Standards.
- ▶ **Mandate culturally responsive professional learning** for tauwi teachers across all schools.



## Educators can:

- ▶ **Stop streaming Māori students** - modern learning environments create a great platform for mixed ability classes where the focus is on scaffolding each student from where they are to a higher level so everyone gains.
- ▶ **Stop the exclusion of Māori boys** - there are well proven alternatives (e.g. Huakina Mai) to these archaic practices that are often the beginning of pushing our boys out of education early.
- ▶ **Make Māori language and culture seen and heard in the classroom** - Māori students tell us 'pronounce our names correctly', 'ask about our whānau', 'we want to see our culture visible in our physical environment and the curriculum', 'we like it when teachers use te reo', and 'don't equate identity to skin colour'. Have high expectations of Māori - put in the effort to get to know them and take pride in their success.

## Tributary 2: The Positive Flows of Māori Medium Education

The evidence shows Māori language and culture are protective factors that enhance Māori success. Even within Māori communities, we can still be influenced by the notion that success requires rangatahi to leave their culture behind. Many whānau choose to pull their tamariki out of kura kaupapa to attend an English medium high school due to the belief this creates more options and better prospects for tamariki. Our data shows the opposite to be true.

Compared with all Māori, taura that complete their whole school journey in Māori medium (e.g. kura kaupapa and where kura) have higher achievement levels. 78 percent of Māori in Māori medium achieve NCEA level 1, compared with 70 percent of Māori in English medium schooling. Yet for taura that participated in Māori medium primary schools, but attended English medium high schools, 63 percent achieved NCEA level 1.

Here Māori medium education is like a booster where the longer you stay in Māori medium, the further it will take you. Across the board this demonstrates the protective power of Māori language and culture and the importance of creating culturally sustaining teaching and learning environments for our tamariki.

Māori medium education needs to be recognised as an exemplar for all English medium schools to follow and learn from, in redesigning teaching and learning practices so that they work for Māori. This part of the awa does not need to be corrected as its working well for rangatahi. We just need to increase the numbers flowing into Māori Medium Education.

It's important to note that most Māori medium schools use mixed ability grouping and do not stream rangatahi.



# KEI TUA I TE WAHAPŪ

## IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

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*Inequality is not inevitable. If we commit to work together the future is something we can create rather than inherit. We know collaboration is a key part of the solution and with the right commitment, choices and actions we can make the future better - ki te hoe!*

*"There comes a point where we need to stop just pulling people out of the river. We need to go upstream and find out why they're falling in."*

*Desmond Tutu*



## DISCLAIMER

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This report, was designed to accompany a more detailed technical report Education Awa: Education Outcomes for Māori (2019) produced by BERL, Waikato-Tainui, The Southern Initiative and Tokona te Raki: Māori Futures Collective of Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu. Further detail on the methodology and technical notes can be accessed at [www.berl.co.nz](http://www.berl.co.nz)

# RĀRANGI PUKAPUKA

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