

Submission on Te Ara Paerangi Future Pathways Consultation

New Zealand Council of Deans of Education

Executive Summary

This submission is made on behalf of the New Zealand Council of Deans Education¹.

The submission notes that the Green Paper presents a narrowly defined research, science and innovation system, one focussed on the natural sciences. Despite telling the reader that within the document “‘research’ when used as a single word should be read to encompass all activities usually understood as such, including but not limited to research into the arts and humanities, social research, and natural sciences”, the body of the green paper fails to address any area of endeavour beyond the natural sciences. We submit that, should MBIE retain this narrow focus moving forward, the research, science and innovation system will be unable to meet the priorities and needs of Aotearoa New Zealand.

We submit that social inclusion, cohesion and well-being should be the primary focus of the research science and innovation (RSI) system. This focus can only be achieved when social research and research into the arts and humanities are equitably treated within RSI infrastructure and funding.

Our submission is that educational research and the development of the educational ecosystem in postcolonial Aotearoa New Zealand (the mix of formal and informal education provision, educating New Zealanders across and regardless of the target audience of the systems) should be a key component of the RSI system in the future. We recommend the formation of an Education Research Council with the primary purpose of **improving educational outcomes** across the entire education ecosystem, establishing clear national education research priorities, and leading the sector in its development of a research infrastructure capable of supporting an existing and developing education research workforce.

Introduction

This submission is made on behalf of NZ Council of Deans of Education (the Council), representing educational researchers in the seven universities of Aotearoa New Zealand where education studies and initial teacher education are taught.

Te Ara Paerangi recognises the fundamental role that a vibrant research environment contributes to addressing intractable, wicked problems and enhancing collaborations across disciplines, sectors and knowledge areas. Within a reconceptualised research environment, there is the opportunity to establish processes and systems to do this in a multidisciplinary way that prioritises partnerships, equity and multidimensional solutions. This submission addresses the role of educational research in such a dynamic, connected research community, and its contribution to enhancing social outcomes across the country, including those related to both the economy and well-being.

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The Council endorses the need for the creation of a modern, future-focussed research system and sees educational research as central to this system. We note that the consultation document provides a definition of research that is inclusive of research into the arts and humanities and social research, including research in universities. However, in the process and within the consultation document itself these disciplinary areas are all but invisible (in the text and accompanying photographs). In launching the consultation process, Minister Woods referred to key priorities of the government being health and the economy. Minister Verrall referred to the need for a dynamic, connected and diverse research community, although she specifically referencing research science and innovation. Evidence-based, quality education policy and practice underpin New Zealand's capacity to engage in science and innovation, and all other forms of research. Educational research also brings unique expertise to complex and pressing social issues. Therefore, education, and educational research, must also be central to a reconceptualised research infrastructure.

We note that education across its whole spectrum (see definition below) is critical to the health and well-being of the future of Aotearoa New Zealand. Educational disparities and inequities are frequently cited by politicians and the public as a source of shame for our society. The education and schooling system fails many groups – Māori, Pacific, the disabled, LGBTQIA+ students. The Council shares society's concerns with these inequities and their consequences. We further note that in the face of similar inequities in Health the government invests heavily in health research, via the Health Research Council (HRC), costing in the order of \$380 million in 2021/2022 (against Vote Health of approximately \$24 billion in the same period). Through Vote Education government spends \$15 billion on education provision (2012/2022) and about \$1.5 million set aside each year solely for educational research. We question why a government invests 250 times more in Health research annually than it does on Education research, given adverse social effects of education disparities in Aotearoa New Zealand.

These differences in research funding (even accounting for the high cost inherent in some of the biomedical research funded by the HRC) suggest that governments are not looking for ways in which to address Aotearoa's educational disparities. It is the Council's firm view that addressing these through a well-supported research programme has the potential for major impact on the future of Aotearoa New Zealand.

The centrality of education to a functioning society is recognised in UNESCO's (2017, p. 28) description of education as both a human right and an "enabling right", since access to (quality, evidence-based education) enables people to access their other human rights².

Educational research, and the broader education system, plays a critical role in addressing social issues, both now and in the future. A robust and equitable education ecosystem is fundamentally concerned with democracy and the preparation of citizens able to participate actively and effectively in a robust democracy. Perhaps more than at any time since the Enlightenment, Western democracies face a crisis rooted in issues of disinformation and misinformation, climate change, increasing income inequality and social dislocation.

Key Definitions

For the purposes of this submission, the following definitions are provided for Education and Educational Research as they relate to our responses to Te Ara Paerangi.

² UNESCO. (2017). *Education 2030 - Incheon declaration and framework for action*. Retrieved from <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002456/245656e.pdf>

Education is the broad field of disciplinary practice that is a source of theoretical and applied knowledge across an education ecosystem that encompasses early childhood education, compulsory education, tertiary education, work-based learning, adult and community education, professional learning, and any other fields of practice where education is implicit. It is intergenerational, inter-community, transdisciplinary, formal and informal, focussed on multiple dimensions of knowledge and skill, and contributes to social and community well-being. Notwithstanding education's standing in its own right, it also informs many other disciplines in many ways, contributing to complex multidisciplinary solutions to problems. Within the wide spectrum of educational provision, there are multiple and complex factors that lead to the perpetuation of inequalities which can only be addressed with sufficient recognition and corresponding resource.

Educational Research

The American Educational Research Association³ defines educational research thus:

Education research is the scientific field of study that examines education and learning processes and the human attributes, interactions, organizations, and institutions that shape educational outcomes. Scholarship in the field seeks to describe, understand, and explain how learning takes place throughout a person's life and how formal and informal contexts of education affect all forms of learning. Education research embraces the full spectrum of rigorous methods appropriate to the questions being asked and also drives the development of new tools and methods.

While our submission draws on this definition, the interpretation of it within Aotearoa New Zealand, in particular in relation to our unique bicultural context, requires specific consideration. In our space, this includes a scholarship founded in partnership, a design-based approach, a consideration of our educational history, and bicultural collaboration informed by mātauranga Māori. This unique ecosystem requires localised solutions. In the wake of the devastating Christchurch mosque attack we also recognise educational research as critical for informing our ability to live together (Delors, 2013⁴) in increasingly multicultural, multifaith communities. While previously, education policy has drawn heavily on ideas from elsewhere, we would argue that our unique New Zealand ecosystem requires localised solutions.

Educational research in Aotearoa New Zealand is often 'close to practice', generating practice change as well as scholarship and theoretical development. Educational research that is both knowledge-creating and applied is fundamentally important to any understanding of human and social development, an issue of equal importance to development of our country's economy, which is a significant thread in Te Ara Paerangi.

³ <https://www.aera.net/About-AERA/What-is-Education-Research>

⁴ Delors, J. (2013). The treasure within: Learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together and learning to be. What is the value of that treasure 15 years after its publication? *International Review of Education*, 59(3), 319-330. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11159-013-9350-8>

1. NGĀ WHAKAAROTAU RANGAHAU - RESEARCH PRIORITIES

1.2.2 What principles could be used to determine the scope and focus of research priorities

1.3.2 What principles should guide a national research priority-setting process and how can the process best give effect to Te Tiriti?

1.4.2 How should the strategy for each national research Priority be set and how do we operationalise them?

Research principles and priorities determine ‘what counts’, what will be counted and what is funded. There is ample evidence that what should count in Aotearoa New Zealand sits beyond issues of science and innovation that are the overwhelming focus of the Green Paper. As outlined above, Aotearoa New Zealand, like many Western democracies, faces complex, multifaceted issues and problems that require more comprehensive understandings and collaborative, multidisciplinary solutions.

Social Inclusion and Cohesion

The Green Paper ignores the role of the RSI system in addressing issues of social polarisation and exclusion and these are absent from research priorities the paper suggests. These are arguably the most pressing issues we face as a nation. They are also issues that are faced by democracies across the Western world. Locating social inclusion at the heart of national research priorities is critical. Research that aims to improve integration and connectedness will require multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches if it is to be productive. Factors like well-being do not exist in isolation nor are they located in a single sector but have impact across society. Educational practice is a key contributor to well-being and social inclusion, with its key role in preparing citizens to challenge the status quo responsibly and effectively and find new ways to address intractable problems. Educational research, conducted in Aotearoa New Zealand is key to developing context-specific ways of educating for inclusion, whether this be through the inclusion of mātauranga Māori in the formal school curriculum or the developing digital literacy in the elderly.

Learners’ Voices

The Green Paper is largely silent on a broader research environment. We argue that a reconceptualised research infrastructure must centre the voices of people. In the education context these include diverse learners and practitioners, their family, whānau, and community; issues of equity; and how to develop success strategies for those who are currently underserved by education and other disciplinary areas. These are critical priorities for Aotearoa New Zealand. We define ‘learners’ broadly, including those engaged in ECE, primary, secondary and tertiary education; Māori medium education; Pasifika education; professional development; community education; alternative education; and those engaged in learning in other community contexts such as workplaces. These voices should be central to determining the future of education and all must be attentive to their voices.

Rangahau

Te Tiriti-based approaches and research that honours Te Tiriti is of critical importance to any reconceptualised research infrastructure. While Te Ara Paerangi explicitly acknowledges rangahau, how rangahau is understood in a reconceptualised system is critical to successful establishment of future research priorities and funding. The recent debates around mātauranga evidence the precarious nature of Māori knowledge.

‘Kaupapa Māori research is about challenging the 'ordinary' or notion of normal that has been constructed by the dominant culture, and seeks to identify and uphold Māori views, solutions and ways of knowing. It is about empowering Māori people, voice, processes and knowledge.

Kaupapa Māori research addresses issues of injustice and social change. Writers who work in Kaupapa Māori research talk openly about research that has to be transformative, it has to produce positive change instead of simply reproducing the same old same old status quo.’⁵

When considered in the context of social cohesion and postcolonial practices as outlined above, partnership research grounded in Te Tiriti o Waitangi and mātauranga Māori is critical to determining and improving futures in Aotearoa New Zealand and must be located centrally in a reconceptualised system.

Research across the Educational Spectrum

Small pockets of funding are available to education through initiatives such as the Teaching and Learning Research Initiative (TLRI) and Teacher-Led Innovation Fund (TLIF) and these are welcome funding pools. However, they provide funding for relatively short-term practice- and school-based research. The definitions of education and educational research above show the breadth of education and the potential for much more comprehensive and complex investigations into educational issues that impact generationally and intergenerationally. We would want to see priorities established that support research beyond the schooling sector to maximise the potential of educational research across the lifespan and into all corners of education in the wider societal ecosystem.

Design and Evaluation

In education, but potentially in other disciplinary contexts, there are insufficient parameters and an underdeveloped understanding of what quality evaluation and evaluative research looks like. Evaluation and evaluative research needs both a definition and clearer understandings of the cost of high-quality evaluation.

For education and other disciplines there is potential to reconceptualise ‘research and development’ as a design and research approach which still requires systematic inquiry. This would use a design-based, co-construction approach to research that includes multiple voices – Māori, learner, etc. This requires an agreed process, as existing processes are not set up for co-constructed research. This, again, goes to the issue of what we define as research. Grounded, theoretical, applied – research can be all these things, and is all of these things in a range of disciplines. Research goes well beyond the scientific or innovation foci of the Green Paper.

There is the opportunity to define critical priority areas for educational research and determine what impact means. This is not limited to educational research. There continues to be research in isolation from implementation and impact in many disciplines. The research system needs to be more thoughtful about the role of and funding for professional learning and the opportunities for assisting with the translation of research outcomes into real-world practice for professionals in a range of disciplines. There are currently credibility gaps with research consumers who continue to perpetuate unsuccessful practices and inhibit progress to, for example, addressing education inequalities.

Research Timelines

⁵ <http://www.rangahau.co.nz/rangahau/31/>

Research for the policy sector tends to require short timeframes which are not conducive to determining impact and outcomes such as described above. The education sector has significant knowledge about what has impact in educational settings and has the potential to capture and utilise this further with longer lead-in and funding timelines. Current constraints around capacity, policy and funding timelines, and issues related to access to longitudinal data, limit ability of educational researchers to turn knowledge into impactful practice. They also impact the ability of government to make policy on the basis of quality, evidence-based, longitudinal research. In the education sector this often manifests in policy that is not based on sound educational research or educational research relevant to the specificities of the Aotearoa New Zealand context.

A related issue is that of decoupling research timelines and funding from political cycles to enable longitudinal and multidisciplinary research to maintain momentum and ensure continuity of funding.

The Role of Technology

Another area not strongly evident in the Green Paper is the role of digital technologies as mediators of learning and of information/disinformation. The Covid situation has highlighted the challenges but also the possibilities in this domain. Well-researched, accessible technology solutions can be instruments of social change, not only in educational research, and should be a central consideration and priority in the reconceptualised research environment.

2. TE TIRITI, MĀTAURANGA MĀORI ME NGĀ WAWATA O TE MĀORI TE TIRITI - MĀTAURANGA MĀORI AND MĀORI ASPIRATIONS

2.2 How would you like to be engaged throughout the Future Pathways programme?

2.3 What are your thoughts on how to enable and protect mātauranga Māori in the research system?

A Te Tiriti-based approach is fundamentally important to not only what we do in Aotearoa New Zealand, but also to how we approach research. Further to our statements in section 1 (above), nurturing mātauranga Māori in the system begins with conceptualising and enacting research and rangahau within postcolonial frames. Educational research is central to this, given the role education plays in striving for and achieving a more equitable and inclusive society.

Issues of precarity, which are considered further in section 5, are at the heart of considerations of mātauranga Māori.

Educational research in Aotearoa New Zealand is well placed to lead the way in a new research infrastructure that honours Te Tiriti and mātauranga-based work. Some of the most groundbreaking work on decolonising the research space comes from educational thinkers in Aotearoa New Zealand (for example, Smith, 1999; Bishop, 1998; Bishop & Glynn, 1999⁶).

⁶ Bishop, R. (1998). Freeing ourselves from neo-colonial domination in research: A Māori approach to creating knowledge. *Qualitative Studies in Education*, 11(2), 199-219.

Bishop, R., & Glynn, T. (1999). *Culture counts: Changing power relations in education*. Dunmore Press.

Smith, L. T. (1999). *Decolonising methodologies: Research and indigenous people*. University of Otago Press.

3. TE TUKU PŪTEA - FUNDING

3.2.1 How should we determine what constitutes a core function and how do we fund them?

3.3.2 Do you think a base grant funding model will improve stability and resilience for organisations? How should we go about designing and implementing such a funding model?

As indicated in the Green Paper, Aotearoa New Zealand does not currently have a base funding structure and, for education, this is a major contributor to the issues outlined in this submission. This applies particularly to research timelines, longitudinal studies, and overall access to research funding. Base funding could open up opportunities to progress studies which contribute to a range of trans and multidisciplinary research outcomes, and also contribute to social inclusion, well-being, and other government priorities. Base funding could make a very significant difference for educational research. Schools of Education in Aotearoa New Zealand rate highly on international rankings for research, generally positioned in the top 2-3% globally, and have achieved this without significant funding. It is not hard to imagine what more could be achieved with enhanced funding through a base grant and beyond.

However, a clear definition is needed of what that base funding looks like, as is a formula that determines how research is funded beyond a base grant. The following are some considerations that relate to core functions and funding.

Translational Research and Impact

Many existing avenues for educational research funding limit the scope and scale of research and result in largely descriptive outcomes. We need to move to a funding system that sustains longitudinal approaches, ongoing collaborations and multidisciplinary. This includes translational research that not only identifies solutions but assists in systematic implementation into practice over time and requires adaptation by context in order to provide impactful outcomes. *Growing up in New Zealand* is an example of what can be achieved through large-scale, multidisciplinary, longitudinal research. How could such initiatives be expanded with an education focus in future research funding models?

A key component of translational research and resulting impact is ensuring that education, and other sectors, has access to data systems and large datasets for complex, multidisciplinary research. The current low funding levels for educational research limit the ability to develop education-specific large datasets, but the issue is bigger than this. Some existing datasets are not set up in ways that allow education researchers to easily access and interpret data and improve research and practice outcomes, so rethinking data requirements and establishing improved and new datasets within reconceptualised data systems is needed. A key part of this establishment is determining whose voices are evident in the datasets. So too is transparency about what datasets are available, what their functionality is, and how to access them. While there are exceptions (e.g., the National Monitoring Study of Student Achievement (NMSSA) currently hosted by the University of Otago), too much data is locked behind access obstacles and passwords. A national integrated data system that provides information pertinent to educational research and accessible to education researchers is required. A reconceptualised funding system must factor in such considerations.

Education Research Council

A reconceptualised funding system could result in a single, overarching research body that determines research priorities and allocates funding across the whole research spectrum in Aotearoa New Zealand. While it could be argued that this would lead to a coherent and coordinated approach, it is

clear from the history of educational research that this would potentially create an ongoing precarious situation for the education sector. In the 1980s, the Ministry of Education had its own research division that engaged in and funded research. The move to CRIs excluded education, and the existing situation leaves educational research seriously underfunded and without a cohesive system for determining priorities and funding across the ecosystem.

While we see the value in a single integrated system, it would require a legislative framing and structure that ensured that the importance of education and educational research to Aotearoa New Zealand, including to research and innovation more broadly, is recognised in research priorities and funding.

Therefore, we recommend the formation of an education research council that operates in a similar way to the HRC. This would have as its primary purpose and mission the **improvement of educational outcomes** across the entire ecosystem and would:

- establish, monitor, and adapt clear national education research priorities
- establish and support a research and innovation agenda and associated strategy, while allowing for investigator-driven or field-generated proposals
- ensure multidisciplinary approaches to complex educational and societal research problems and foster partnerships and collaboration that enhance well-being, social and economic outcomes
- manage an education research funding stream to build the infrastructure needed to ensure better research outcomes and impact across the entire research and education environment
- set and progress a programme and strategies for the recruitment, capability development, and retention of a research workforce, including developing the capability to diagnose and solve issues that are critical to equity and better outcome overall
- advise the Minister of Education on national education research policy
- advise on education research priorities for Aotearoa New Zealand.

Such a system would promote coherence and agreement amongst providers, funders and users about the 5 to 10-year vision for research, including the predicted impact of educational research.

A coherent, cohesive, integrated, connected research environment would have enhanced credibility with end users and learners, and greater potential as a catalyst for change and practice improvement. It would, however, also allow space to explore questions that arise because of unintended gaps in policy or priorities.

For education, the consideration and implementation of these changes to the ecosystem would see educational research firmly embedded in the RSI landscape.

4. NGĀ HINONGA – INSTITUTIONS

4.4.1 How do we design collaborative, adaptive and agile research institutions that will serve our current and future needs?

4.4.2 How can institutions be designed to better support capability, skills and workforce development?

4.4.3 How should we make decisions on large property and capital investments under a more coordinated approach?

4.4.5 How do we design Te Tiriti enabled institutions?

4.6 How do we better support knowledge exchange and impact generation? What should be the role of research institutions in transferring knowledge into operational environments and technologies?

See section 3 regarding the establishment of an Education Research Council or consortium.

5. TE HUNGA MAHI RANGAHAU - RESEARCH WORKFORCE

5.2 How should we include workforce considerations in the design of research Priorities?

5.3.1 What impact would a base grant have on the research workforce?

5.3.2 How do we design new funding mechanisms that strongly focus on workforce outcomes?

Capability of the research workforce is a critical component of ongoing development of the research environment and is a central consideration for education. While there is significant talent in the existing research pool, building of capability is central to the ability to undertake good educational research.

Achieving a modern, future-focussed research infrastructure for Aotearoa New Zealand requires a rethinking on many levels, not least in terms of capability and research workforce development. This will necessarily entail skilful, culturally responsive social and community-level interventions in tandem with technological and infrastructure developments. Knowledge and skills in developing community adaptiveness and resilience, understanding differential vulnerabilities, creating and sustaining partnerships with marginalised groups, and ensuring broad-based participation, reside in education and the social sciences.

Consideration must factor in issues of precarity that impact negatively in education and beyond. Provision must be made for consideration of community development alongside researcher development, given the close and intricate relationships between education and the wider community.

Postgraduate students are a vital part of any research ecosystem. A funding council would necessarily identify and implement models to strengthen their development and retention, as graduates, in the research system. This means addressing the current precarity inherent in research systems and stopping attrition of these early career researchers and postdoctoral candidates who are impacted by multiple factors including the lack of funded positions (particularly in education and social sciences) and the incessant balancing act of commitment to whānau and aiga alongside work and study demands.

The following are ways to progress issues of equality, representation, and social cohesion.

- Increased recruitment and retention of Māori and Pasifika postgraduate and postdoctoral students with associated funding to ensure longevity and support in key roles.
- Consideration of the structure of doctoral programmes, including potential for four-year doctoral programmes which could include internships as an important component, including for ministries such as the Ministry of Education. Three-year doctoral degrees militate against some of the best minds being engaged in the development of policy or reconsideration of existing practice. A change could help Aotearoa New Zealand determine what doctoral preparation looks like.

- A coordinated effort to determine the key issues key ministries are working on, with university-based senior research fellows embedded in policy development teams, contributing to policy change, contributing to enhanced practice environments and, in the process militating against barriers such as communication gaps in dissemination of research.
- Internships and fellowships would create new options for doctoral graduates – moving the options beyond a focus on academic careers and into policy and practice change. It is within these processes that some of our best minds could contribute more to the policy and practice environments.

6. TE HANGANGA RANGAHAU - RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURE

6.2.2 How do we support sustainable, efficient, and enabling investment in research infrastructure?

See section 3 regarding the development of and Education Research Council or self-governing consortium.