

15 March 2022

Te Ara Paerangi Future Pathways Green Paper

NZCER submission

This submission has been written by a team at the New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER). It has been reviewed, and is supported by, the NZCER Board.¹

Established in 1934, NZCER is Aotearoa New Zealand's independent research and development organisation, operating for public good in education, under its own legislation since 1945. NZCER's current strategic priorities include decolonising education; upholding mana Māori, whakamana Māori; improving equity for ākonga (learners) and equity in education; and influencing the future of education. As a research and development organisation, we are committed to honouring Te Tiriti o Waitangi. We value the importance of Māori language, culture, and identity in all our practices.

Our key messages

- ❖ It is high time for *Equitable Education for the Future* to be a national research priority.
- ❖ Te Tiriti o Waitangi must be foundational to the design and decisions of Te Ara Paerangi, and to future governance and delivery of research in Aotearoa.
- ❖ Significant increase in government investment in educational research is needed. We support base funding for research organisations to enable significant research programmes, and to grow and retain research capabilities.
- ❖ NZCER's longstanding independence, political neutrality, national role, legislative functions, reputation and networks provide a strong platform to lead *Equitable Education for the Future* as a national research priority.
- ❖ We would welcome the opportunity to discuss our submission with you.

¹ <https://www.nzcer.org.nz/board>

1. It is high time for *Equitable Education for the Future* to be a national research priority

- 1.1. At approximately \$19.5 billion in 2021/2022, Education and Tertiary Education combined are the third highest area of government investment and expenditure by a significant margin, exceeded only by Health and Social Development.²
- 1.2. Education is key to Aotearoa New Zealand’s capabilities and capacity development across the board. It is difficult to see how we can improve our economic productivity, our health and wellbeing, address hobbling inequities, and constructively meet the challenges of climate crisis without a strategic and long-term programme of educational research. A national research priority focused on *Equitable Education for the Future* would make a strong contribution to building the knowledge, skills and capabilities needed to thrive in a complex world.
- 1.3. Globally, *Quality Education* is rated as the fourth most important sustainable development goal by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs.³
- 1.4. Yet measures of educational participation and gains, such as students’ school performance and their wellbeing, and inequities between different social groups, have given cause for concern for some time. Measures of adult literacy and numeracy also point to challenges, particularly among those with poorer health, patchy employment experience, and those who end up in prison. The pandemic has highlighted skills shortages that are hampering economic development and provision of sufficient social and health services. It has highlighted the importance of social cohesion and the significant social and personal costs when education struggles to serve all learners well.
- 1.5. “Today, education has to be about learning to thrive in a transforming world”.⁴ Te Ara Paerangi discusses some of the key transitions Aotearoa New Zealand needs to make to leverage opportunities in a rapidly changing world. This includes shaping a future economy that is more productive, resilient and diverse, improving social wellbeing, and navigating the challenges of just transition to a low-carbon, climate-changed future. Educational research has a key role if we are to make worthwhile future-oriented changes to teaching and learning that can help ensure that these key transitions can be achieved.
- 1.6. Our submission therefore identifies *Equitable Education for the Future* as a national research priority, so that educational research and development of research-based resources and tools can play the part they should and need to be playing to progress our country’s teaching and learning across the educational pathway from early childhood into adulthood. Substantive research is required to identify and develop equitable teaching and learning practices, strong curriculum, and systems that support them that are more suited to our complex realities. Education is a key contributor to our country’s future.

² Summary Tables for the Estimates of Appropriations 2021/22

³ <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

⁴ Hannon, V., & Peterson, A. (2021). Thrive: The purpose of schools in a changing world. p.xiv

- 1.7. As an applied field of study and with a natural focus on learning, educational research often gives considerable attention to processes of communicating its findings and their application so that findings can be used to best effect. This requires particular skill and capabilities and is necessary to bridge the highly complex space between research knowledge, policy, practice, and public understanding.
- 1.8. Including *Equitable Education for the Future* in the national research priorities should ensure useful linkages with STEM fields, help make scientific knowledge more accessible, and ultimately enhance all the national research priorities.
- 1.9. Te Ara Paerangi suggests climate change as a possible national priority research platform. This is an excellent example of a priority in need of a transdisciplinary approach. Educational research should be a vital part of this (and all) transdisciplinary priorities. If climate change as a national priority was deeply connected with educational research, there would be significant potential to effect generational change. NZCER has invested in a growing body of research into educational leadership in climate change. Lifting this mahi to sit within a national priority is a logical next step to further its impact. Hauora and wellbeing is another example where connecting educational research with other fields is essential for system-wide impact, innovation and change.
- 1.10. In relation to Te Ara Paerangi's questions about national priority setting, we support a national priority-setting process that
 - is in partnership with Māori and that gives effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi
 - gives stability to research and development in a core set of priorities that are fundamental to our social and economic wellbeing
 - can introduce shorter-term or new priorities where there is strong evidence of need for concerted research attention, or opportunity to leverage off findings in existing priorities or other research.

2. Embedding Te Tiriti o Waitangi

- 2.1. We believe that Te Tiriti o Waitangi must be foundational to the design and decisions of Te Ara Paerangi, and to future governance and delivery of research in Aotearoa.
- 2.2. A coherent systems-change approach is required to realise a genuine Te Tiriti o Waitangi partnership. We strongly support a Tiriti-led research system that gives effect to Māori research aspirations to achieve outcomes for Māori, enables and values mātauranga Māori, and invests in Māori research infrastructure and capacity. There is considerable work to be done here.
- 2.3. Māori development, and investment in advancing Māori research capability, is one way of strengthening partnerships, and honouring Te Tiriti o Waitangi obligations.
- 2.4. It is essential for iwi/hapū and Māori communities to be included throughout the full work programme arising from Te Ara Paerangi. We also believe that in order to give effect to Te Tiriti obligations, careful consideration about what learning needs to occur for the other Te Tiriti partner (non-Māori) is also required.

- 2.5. Some of the most influential educational research and development in recent years has come from Māori-led projects.
- 2.6. The following gives an example of how NZCER on a small scale is supporting kaupapa Māori educational research, and Māori research capability.
 - 2.6.1. For almost 20 years NZCER has coordinated the Teaching Learning and Research Initiative (TLRI) on behalf of the Ministry of Education. The TLRI was established in 2003 to build research capability and to have an impact on teaching and learning in Aotearoa New Zealand in the early childhood, school, and tertiary sectors. The TLRI invites applications each year from researchers and practitioners across Aotearoa to apply for up to three years of funding per project. The TLRI governance group saw the need for a kaupapa Māori pathway to ensure Māori decisions on Māori initiated research. This pathway, Whatua Tū Aka, was established to improve equity for Māori learners by supporting kaupapa Māori educational research and building kaupapa Māori research capability. Māori governance group members worked with Māori researchers, experienced in kaupapa Māori research, to frame this pathway.
- 2.7. Other ways NZCER is giving effect and embedding Te Tiriti o Waitangi into our organisation include our focused strategic priorities (decolonising education; upholding mana Māori, whakamana Māori; improving equity for ākonga and equity in education; and influencing the future of education), strengthening Māori representation, supporting co-leadership/design/decision-making, and growing capability in te reo and tikanga Māori for all kaimahi.
- 2.8. We would be pleased to discuss the formation of Whatua Tū Aka as a Māori led research innovation, or any of our organisational commitments to date as we continue on our own Te Tiriti o Waitangi – partnership journey.

3. Funding

- 3.1. We reiterate the importance of making *Equitable Education for the Future* a national research priority, with strategic goals and funding related to these goals. Without such a focus and framework, there is a real risk that educational research will atrophy.
- 3.2. Educational research and development have been overlooked for too long. In 2001, New Zealand spent 0.14–0.20% of total educational spending on educational R&D, less than Australia and six other OECD countries.⁵ Since then, the picture has worsened. The main sources of funding for educational research have narrowed. Some data analysis is undertaken by the Ministry of Education and the Education Review Office. The only dedicated continuing sources are NZCER's government grant, Te Pae Tawhiti, at \$1,452,000 per annum, and the Teaching and Learning Research Initiative (TLRI), at \$1,556,000 per annum, which NZCER administers.

⁵ OECD (2001). OECD Review – educational research and development in New Zealand: examiners' report. September 2001. Paris: author, CERI/CD(2001)4. [2674327.pdf \(oecd.org\)](https://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/4/2/2674327.pdf)

- 3.3. These sources of funding have not increased since 2005 for Te Pae Tawhiti despite a 41% decline in purchasing power, and since 2007 for TLRI (when the fund was decreased) with a 35% decline in purchasing power. The Ministry of Education, which was a key funder of educational research, has not funded any major external research or research-based development for over a decade. Evaluation has been funded by the Ministry, and some small pieces of research, though the results of these are not always publicly available. Some educational research and development has been included in the national science challenge, *A Better Start*, and some educational aspects are covered in the longitudinal study *Growing Up in New Zealand*, but only minimally.
- 3.4. Educational research in Aotearoa New Zealand is more dependent on government funding than in other Western countries because we lack foundations funded by philanthropists dedicated to education, such as the Carnegie Foundation in the United States. The philanthropic funding we have in education is largely invested in programmes working directly with students or educators. Not all of these programmes include accompanying research or evaluation.
- 3.5. Most educational research is currently small-scale since funding is not available for the more concerted programmes of work that are needed, including mixed-method research, large-scale studies, and longitudinal studies. Priority setting done well, and accompanied by meaningful funding, would enable more consistent progress, and less loss of research talent.
- 3.6. The infrastructure to use and build on research undertaken through post-graduate theses is absent. We no longer have the searchable database of all university postgraduate theses with an education focus that was funded and undertaken at NZCER through the then flourishing Best Evidence Synthesis programme in the Ministry of Education.
- 3.7. We support the case for base grant funding of research organisations, as outlined in Te Ara Paerangi.
- 3.8. NZCER has been fortunate to have had Te Pae Tawhiti, an ongoing government grant through Vote Education, administered by the Ministry of Education. We report quarterly to the Ministry of Education on our programme using this grant. Without this bulk grant, and the framing of it in terms of a partnership between NZCER and the Ministry, we could not continue our programme of high-quality, strategic and relevant educational research, which has also enabled experienced researchers to mentor and develop new researchers. Te Pae Tawhiti funding enables NZCER to provide a national centre for educational research and its dissemination, though not as substantially as needed.
- 3.9. There are increasing issues however with this grant's erosion in real financial terms. Any base grant funding by government for research organisations does need adjustment over time to take account of inflation.
- 3.10. We would be happy to discuss our experience of government grant funding with you. We would see an activity-based funding system as the most likely of the three options outlined on page 49 to support substantial focused research programmes that provide value for public money.

4. High priority research services

- 4.1. We are also heavily reliant on contracted work, including what we regard as high priority research services such as the National Monitoring Study of Student Achievement, the Wellbeing@School survey, the Assessment Resource Banks, and the Teaching, School and Leadership Practices survey. These services rely on deep knowledge of relevant research and respectful involvement of practitioners. They provide important information about the strength of teaching and learning that is needed to improve and progress what happens in schools, and the support schools are given. We have had issues with last-minute decisions curtailing expected funding, with increasing expectations of what the funding will cover, and currently, whole-of-government generic procurement rules that privilege new competition, even though ongoing review shows high satisfaction. As Te Ara Paerangi notes, competition costs of time and money can have negative impacts on research capacity.
- 4.2. We would recommend that high priority research services for education are brought together (some are within the Ministry of Education, namely the international assessments for school students and adults that Aotearoa New Zealand takes part in, some within NZQA, some within NZCER). A high priority research services centre would streamline more and better research use of the high priority research services, including essential data linking, and better use of expertise and networks. Such a centre would also make it possible to grow the data gathered and analysed and ensure it was fit for the purpose of supporting education so it can adapt to the more complex learning needs of a changing world. We will need more useful and innovative data-gathering tools and metrics that are well-founded, so that we can analyse student learning and achievement in relation to their class and school experiences and opportunities.
- 4.3. A high priority research services centre that is based outside the Ministry of Education and NZQA is also likely to be more trusted by educational services than the Ministry of Education. That would make it possible to grow the data available for research, allow for more timely and deeper analysis that can provide better support for the government education agencies' work, as well as the work of education providers and others to improve and progress teaching and learning.
- 4.4. If the high priority research services for education are not brought together in this way, then Te Ara Paerangi needs to consider and recommend better ways of government department funding and use of high priority research services than the present approach.

5. NZCER provides a sound platform for *Equitable Education for the Future* – a new national research priority

- 5.1. The report of the 2016 Strategic Refresh of the Health Research Council⁶ demonstrates the value to government, economy and society of a strategic approach to research for a core area if resourced commensurate with the magnitude of overall government and other interest and investment. Education is also a core area. Educational research too needs both a strategic approach and sufficient funding.
- 5.2. NZCER is neither constituted nor funded on the same basis as HRC but in our view it has the potential to provide a sound platform for *Equitable Education for the Future* as a national research priority.
- 5.3. NZCER has nearly 90 years of institutional experience in the delivery, administration and governance of educational research. Some examples of our experiences include:

5.3.1. **Delivery – Te Pae Tawhiti**

The NZCER Act includes the provision of a government grant - Te Pae Tawhiti. Whilst this funding is low, it enables us to deliver a small but coherent and rolling programme of research aligned to strategic priorities set by the NZCER Board. Te Pae Tawhiti is mainly undertaken by NZCER researchers, and focuses on kaupapa we believe will have strategic impact in education. With increased funding, there could be a more deliberate inclusion of stakeholders, greater investment to ensure that educational research attracts and retains Māori and Pasifika researchers, and a strong and far greater opportunity for transformative educational research in Aotearoa. NZCER's strategic priorities are strongly aligned to the proposed national research priority focus, *Equitable Education for the Future*, so the foundation is already in place on which to build a new national research priority.

5.3.2. **Administration, governance, and partnerships**

Effective governance is key to the long-term success of Te Pae Tawhiti and the TLRI. These research programmes each have a governance group with research expertise that approves or makes decisions about research proposals that must address each programme's strategic goals. These goals are broad, and are based on longstanding challenges in education.

Our experience over more than 15 years with these two programmes is that good strategy can be set within a programme, so long as those who set it have current research and area expertise, with good track records, are well networked in the area, including with government officials, and are clear about the need for research to contribute to improvement and innovation.

More recently, we have been strengthening the dialogue between the Ministry of Education, The Education Review Office, and NZCER. We have started working together to develop an educational research and development strategy. It aims to strengthen the cohesion between our existing frameworks, improve synergies,

⁶ Strategic Refresh of the Health Research Council: Report to the Minister of Health and the Minister of Science and Innovation (2016). [Strategic Refresh of the Health Research Council | Health Research Council of New Zealand \(hrc.govt.nz\)](https://www.hrc.govt.nz/strategic-refresh)

and awareness of opportunities across the educational research, evaluation and development landscape.

5.4. NZCER's longstanding national role in educational research and development and our well-established reputation and networks among the educational community and the government agencies responsible for education provide a strong platform to give life to *Equitable Education for the Future* as a national research priority.

5.5. We envisage three components of this base. The work in each would be framed by the strategic goals of *Equitable Education for the Future*, including links with other national research priorities.

5.5.1. **An expanded Te Pae Tawhiti** – increasing the government grant, enabling a sustainable national educational research and development centre that can undertake substantive and strategic research, while building and retaining expertise.

5.5.2. **High priority research services centre**, bringing the administration of national assessments and all international educational assessments Aotearoa New Zealand takes part in together, along with other national educational data from research-based tools, to ensure that educational research and development have important quantitative data readily available for analysis. This will enable much richer and more timely analysis because data currently gathered and housed or 'owned' separately could now be brought together to answer key questions. This makes the data much more useful for practice improvement and policy purposes.

Housing the high priority research services centre on an educational research and development platform means these services can grow with new fit-for-purpose robust tools in line with changes to teaching and learning, and through education services' trust of a centre that is not also a government department.

Bringing datasets together and ensuring fit-for-purpose data collection will also support more team-work across individual institutions, bringing different expertise together, and opportunities for post-graduate theses to be done as part of teams, encouraging more substantive theses, and the much-needed development and retention of statisticians well versed in educational and other data.

5.5.3. **An expanded TLRI** that can easily scale to fund research teams with substantial programmes. We envisage that these programmes would include providing opportunities for post-graduate and early career researchers. We envisage several pathways within this expanded TLRI model, including further development of the kaupapa Māori pathway, and a Pasifika pathway.

5.6. Critical to the design of each of these three components of an *Equitable Education for the Future* platform would be

- overall and component governance that is Te Tiriti based, and draws together research, practice, and policy expertise
- a partnership approach to work with educational practitioners and policymakers
- communication so that the results of the work can be put to good use in educational institutions and by government departments and others.

5.7. We would be happy to discuss our case for *Equitable Education for the Future* to be a national research priority, and the platform we outline here that would ensure its strength.

Ngā mihi nui



Graeme Cosslett

Tumuaki

Director | Chief Executive

Privacy - 9(2)(a)

[Redacted]