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15 March 2022

Submission on Te Ara Paerangi Future Pathways Consultation

Faculty of Education and Social Work,
The University of Auckland, Waipapa Taumata Rau

Introduction

This submission, on behalf of the Faculty of Education and Social Work (EDSW) at the University of Auckland, Waipapa Taumata Rau, represents the collective voices of senior research staff in education, social work, counselling, and sport, health and physical education. The faculty endorses the need for the creation of a modern, future-focused research system and sees social science research as making a critical contribution to this, a contribution that is all but entirely ignored in the Green Paper.

Aotearoa currently faces several complex social challenges, not least of which are those arising from the COVID pandemic and its related social implications. Recent events on the lawns of Parliament demonstrate the limits to a science response in dealing with the social consequences of emergencies like the pandemic, the associated epidemic of misinformation and the social dislocation that results. An integrated, targeted research system that validates and funds social science research alongside science research, in an equitable way, has the potential to contribute to interventions and solutions to address such challenges. Wicked problems demand our combined expertise and Te Ara Paerangi offers the opportunity to develop policies, processes and funding mechanisms that will enable research that might tackle these challenges and result in social, economic, cultural, and environmental benefits that are enjoyed across society.

Funding for research in Aotearoa generally falls significantly below that of many other countries as a percentage of GDP. This underinvestment is extremely apparent when it comes to investment in education and social sector research. Enhancing the well-being and educational achievement of Aotearoa's children and young people are high priorities for both public and private sectors of Aotearoa. However, the current level of government investment in education and social sector research, science and innovation is not aligned with these priorities.

Health and well-being are often coupled in policy documents and yet well-being research is starved of funding. Such research is a critical component of the disciplines represented in EDSW, and the faculty's research contributes significantly to most issues of social well-being that impact the country. The adverse social effects of educational and social disparities in Aotearoa are closely associated with but potentially more far-reaching than health disparities. Well-being is a multidisciplinary issue with multidisciplinary solutions that require new and more inclusive approaches to funding.

Equitable funding is but one of the issues related to the future of research. This submission considers, therefore, the current and future location and role of social science research in a dynamic, connected research community, contributing to enhanced outcomes across Aotearoa.

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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?

National research priorities must address areas of national significance, addressing both government priorities and wider societal issues. In the short term this will include issues arising from the COVID pandemic, climate change, and technology. But addressing broader issues, such as threats to social cohesion, persistent income inequality and growing distrust of democratic institutions, is also critical to Aotearoa's future as a vibrant inclusive democracy and requires solutions that will arise from social science research conducted in Aotearoa's research institutions. The country's research priorities must consider all such issues holistically and enable them to be addressed in a multidisciplinary way. The complex problems impacting Aotearoa cannot be solved through the natural sciences alone.

Returning to the issue of well-being, for example, this generally represented throughout the Green Paper purely as a health concept, and contributions to individual and collective well-being such as literacy levels, feelings of belonging and inclusion are, therefore, largely invisible. These are integral, however, to both well-being and broader social cohesion and are critical priorities that are not addressed within the discussion document.

Principles guiding a national research priority-setting process should include those that assess and address the broad spectrum of Aotearoa's current and emerging priorities, not least the necessity for research-informed solutions for the ongoing intergenerational impacts of colonisation. Two major Royal Commissions of Inquiry are either underway or have recently reported back: Abuse in Care, and the Terrorist Attack on Christchurch masjidian. Both these Commissions heard stories of the profound impact of dislocation and isolation and the tragic outcomes of a loss of social cohesion in Aotearoa. Researchers should be able to look to Aotearoa's research priority settings to find the support they need to conduct research into the factors that led to such tragedies and to find durable and effective social responses to both right the wrongs and prevent future such occurrences. This is not the case at present, and the current settings in the Green Paper do not give us any certainty that this is what MBIE is considering for the future.

The faculty would like to see priorities that place a high value of achieving social cohesion and thus research that would support initiatives such as Māori health authorities, the devolution of approaches to child abuse and family violence closer to communities, and the development effective Māori medium education. These types of foci seldom appear in research or funding priorities and each of them requires a multidisciplinary approach. Science, innovation, or social science research alone will not address long-standing and deep-seated issues that create ongoing dislocation and inequity. Priorities should include those with impactful outcomes that benefit Aotearoa on multiple levels.

In the social sector, Aotearoa has a unique opportunity to strengthen and amplify its potential for world-leading innovation in developing, implementing and sustaining bicultural services and systems responsive to and in full partnership with Māori. Investments in this domain are essential to reducing current inequities and disparities. At the same time, they have the potential to make important contributions internationally. The foundations for leadership by Aotearoa as a global

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innovation hub in the development and testing of indigenous and decolonising service models (for example in child protection services) have been in place since the 1980s, but intentional investments in social and education sector innovation and research are needed to fully realise these opportunities.

Where and how funding is distributed is also central to an integrated, resourced and successful research environment. Te Ara Paerangi notes that 'Research, science and innovation will drive New Zealand's future prosperity and well-being. Combined, the public research organisations, including universities, CRIs, Callaghan Innovation, wānanga, te pūkenga, Ministries and other government organisations, represent nearly half of New Zealand's overall RSI investment. These organisations dominate the public good research areas…'. While the document makes some reference to communities and connectivity, these references are often bracketed – 'business and communities' – without specific attention to the challenges of community-based research. Communities are named and yet invisible in the statement above. Without better attention to research in and with communities, foundational issues of Aotearoa's social fabric will remain marginalised in terms of research and funding. As the statement above implies, communities are largely without available funding, therefore provision is mandatory if we are to progress a truly inclusive research environment.

Priorities should also consider the balance between commissioned research and investigator-driven research. While there is undoubted merit in research responses to government priorities, investigator-driven research in social sciences offers considerable potential to uncover emerging issues and drive innovation. The Green Paper does not indicate the possibilities that social science research can both address social issues and generate new knowledge but we have numerous examples of such research from this faculty on topics as diverse as literacy education, LGBT students' sense of well-being, and aspects of health and chronic illness in social services.

There are direct benefits from investing in education and the social sciences for the national economy, but there are of course numerous personal and social outcomes from having more effective education and social sector systems which are vital for creating a productive, sustainable, and inclusive future that works for all in Aotearoa.

Principles to set and address research priorities must ensure:

- A focus on **partnership** that goes beyond connectivity. True partnerships with iwi, for instance, may well have avoided the issues related to vaccination levels for Māori and Pasifika that still impact our health system.
- A legitimate and purposeful focus on **communities** alongside business that extends beyond rhetoric.
- Commitment to **impactful outcomes** that affect Aotearoa's people as well as economy.
- True **transdisciplinary and multidisciplinary** approaches to research that enhance outcomes for all in Aotearoa.
- **Equitable funding** that meets Te Tiriti obligations but also ensures distribution of funding across a wider range of research areas, including those with a focus on social cohesion.
- **Inclusive understandings** of factors leading to the setting of priorities and subsequent funding.
- A **balanced portfolio** of funded research that includes commissioned and investigator-driven research.

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

Implementing an effective, focused innovation strategy requires political and stakeholder leadership, established and trusted partnerships, and capable leadership. Engagement among government, iwi, community groups, social service providers, research and educational partners should seek a joint approach. Sector-wide high-level commitments will expedite investment and other resources to optimise impact. This requires government arrangements that can cut through the long-established agendas and priorities of individual departments and agencies.

Aotearoa will need to take a system wide approach to building high-level and devolved governance arrangements to underpin an effective and enduring focused innovation policy in the areas of education and social sector research.

The Government should set up high-level strategy bodies for education and social sector research with similar goals and principles as the Health Research Council. Such Councils would comprise key partners and stakeholders as members (government, Māori, community, social service and education providers, and researchers) to establish priority areas.

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?

The Green Paper highlights the importance of embedding Te Tiriti within the research ecosystem, in decision-making, in research design, in collecting advice and information, in our workforce, and in research outcomes. The current system does not work well for Māori and there are multiple areas where we see opportunities for this review to bring about the change needed to create a world-class research system that is unique to Aotearoa, including those outlined below.

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

Long-term creative thinking is required to ensure both mātauranga Māori and Māori participation is enabled and protected. This must occur at all levels of the system.

At a macro level, consideration should be given to appointing **Māori Science Advisors** in key government agencies/ministries with responsibility for connecting universities, CRIs, iwi, community, and industry researchers.

Our current system needs to be transformed to address existing issues such as the persistent and longstanding issue of inequitable educational outcomes for Māori and Pasifika students and students from low socio-economic communities. Efforts to increase the proportion of Māori researchers in the system must begin in New Zealand schools. Māori comprise about 5% of researchers in Aotearoa according to a 2020 paper in the Journal of the Royal Society of New Zealand. Initiatives and priorities require longitudinal consideration and a reconceptualised approach. For example, school outreach programmes in secondary schools could be funded long term to entice, recruit and retain Māori students into the RSI system. This might involve school holiday paid internships and/or mentoring from researchers in research organisations, which might

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address socio-cultural barriers to programmes such as poverty and/or the documented need of Māori students for enduring tuakana-teina relationships and role models.

Mātauranga Māori and/or Te Tiriti are often presented in RSI documents as 'knowledge to be exploited' for the benefit of, or affirmation of, Western science. For example, many organisations consider that they give effect to Te Tiriti obligations through activities such as the integration of mātauranga Māori perspectives, or the inclusion of hapū/iwi and Māori communities. This is often absent of consideration about what learning needs to occur for the other Te Tiriti partner – non-Māori. The future research system should involve requirements on organisations to take a less paternalistic approach to their Te Tiriti obligations – focussing less on what needs to be done 'for Maori', and more on what non-Māori staff need to learn 'from Maori', and what work needs to be led 'by Maori'. This has immense potential to protect mātauranga Māori.

4.   NGĀ HINONGA – INSTITUTIONS

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?

It is our strong view that Te Tiriti should underpin all aspects of research institution design and that the fundamental principles of an institution should reflect our foundational relationship with tangata whenua and our commitment to Te Tiriti. Our institutions must become places where mātauranga Māori and Te Tiriti o Waitangi are valued, fostered, protected and used responsibly. Our research must reflect and be mindful of Te Tiriti and must value mātauranga Māori as a way of understanding our world. Strong and enduring partnerships with iwi and community-led approaches will be vital in ensuring Te Tiriti is reflected in all aspects of the work carried out by our research 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?

Given current social pressures and inequities, achieving a modern, future-focused research system for Aotearoa requires a radical rethink on many levels, not least in terms of capability and 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 the social sciences. We therefore strongly encourage investments that support and incentivise collaborations aimed at bringing social science and education expertise into partnership with the technical and natural sciences in addressing a range of contemporary issues. Attention must be paid to reconceptualising the way institutions are set up and supported for such transdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approaches.

Consideration must factor in issues of precarity that impact negatively in social sciences and beyond. The notion of 'workforce development' can often be interpreted, in STEM for example, as pathways to or progression within industries. Provision must be made for consideration of community development. The COVID and vaccination response highlighted the progress that could be made

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quickly when partnership with community-led organisations occurred. Community capability development has huge potential.

Similarly, for Māori and Pacific postgraduate students, precarity looms large and work must be done to stop attrition of these early career researchers and postdoctoral candidates who are impacted by the incessant balancing act of commitment to whānau and aiga alongside work and study demands. The restructuring of four-year PhD programmes, increased internships into government agencies, and the recruitment and retention of Māori and Pasifika into research organisations are ways to progress issues of equality, representation and social cohesion.

Regional hubs should also be considered to include masters and PhD programmes being delivered regionally. Many Māori in Tai Tokerau, for example, cannot afford to move to Auckland for four years to do a PhD. Such regional hubs have the potential for enhanced results in terms of contribution to regional relationships, spaces, and places, including attention to well-being at grass roots level.

We envisage better preparation of PhD graduates and postdoctoral fellows for a diversity of career paths within education and social sector research via:

- **Transdisciplinary training**: provide students with a unique but wider set of transferable skills that can be applied in a range of job settings, hence the four-year PhD scheme proposed above where PhD students engage in a year with industry, government or other employer pathways.
- **Expanded access to Māori scholarship and understanding and application of Kaupapa Māori, and Mātauranga Māori.**
- **Mechanisms to link doctoral students with other institutions and sectors.** For example: Joint Graduate School (partnerships between universities), public sector Internships/postdoctoral programmes[1], commercialisation postdoc/internships, cross universities–multiple supervisor model, joint initiatives with iwi and Pacific research organisations.
- **PhD programmes that bring together government, industry, philanthropic organisations/NGOs, and academia** at the highest level of academic training to find solutions to society's most pressing problems. The University of British Columbia's Public Scholars Initiative[2] and the Swedish Institute of International Affairs Global Policy Challenges programme[3] are such examples.
- **Tailored programmes that prepare ECRs for success in diverse career paths**, both within and outside of academic research.
- **Stronger links to international opportunities and collaborations**, including bilateral arrangements with single countries (e.g., Australia, Singapore), or formal engagement within larger bodies, such as the Horizon Europe Fund[4] which has the potential to unleash a cycle of innovation by forging long-term relationships between European and local researchers. There may be opportunities in other regions.

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[1] The Australian Science Policy Fellowship Program is one example: https://www.chiefscientist.gov.au/australian-science-policy-fellowship-program

[2] https://www.grad.ubc.ca/psi#:~:text=UBC's%20Public%20Scholars%20Initiative%20(PSI,forms%20of%20scholarship%20in%20their

[3] https://www.ui.se/aktuellt/2021/forskarutbildningssamarbete-global-policy-challenges/

[4] https://ec.europa.eu/info/research-and-innovation/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe_en

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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?

The education sciences are where knowledge about knowledge transfer is created. Knowledge transfer is a complex process and is not simply the case of, for example, designing a dissemination plan or implementing yet another programme in schools. Education and social sector research not only identifies "what works" but also how to work with professionals and communities in ways that support them to implement "what works" in ways that are effective within that specific setting. This is vitally important in knowledge transfer because programmes and interventions can, and often do, have unintended effects. Some drug reduction programmes in schools, for example, have had the unintended consequence of increasing drug taking behaviour. Education about climate change intended to reduce people's carbon footprint may have an opposite effect if people end up feeling overwhelmed by a negative outlook. This is a particular risk given that international comparisons show that, compared to other OECD nations, Aotearoa's 15-year-olds have lower than average awareness of environmental issues and are pessimistic about the environmental future.

The complexity of such issues points, again, to transdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approaches so that the expertise inherent in a range of disciplines is maximised towards the solution of a range of issues.

Investing in the social and education sciences is also vital if we are to learn and get better at transferring knowledge from researchers and innovators to practitioners, policymakers and the public.

5.   TE HUNGA MAHI RANGAHAU - RESEARCH WORKFORCE

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

The proposed high-level governing body (see 1.4.2) would need to consider Aotearoa's workforce capabilities in any decisions around research priorities. Training highly skilled researchers takes many years, beginning in primary and secondary school, highlighting the importance of a whole of system approach to skill development. While we recognise the importance of targeting priority research areas, as well as the need for agility to respond to new and emerging issues as they arise, we must also prioritise developing and maintaining a strong skill base across the full spectrum of research if we are to have the talent available to address changing 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?

Our workforce must reflect the diversity of Aotearoa with a strong commitment to growing Māori and Pacific participation. **To achieve greater diversity, we need to consider a range of different mechanisms to support key cohort**s **(ECRs, Māori, Pacific) including targeted funding schemes or block grants for research institutions to build capability and capacity.**

6. TE HANGANGA RANGAHAU - RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURE

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

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As well as limited investment, there is currently no oversight board or similar structure in the system that works like the Health Research Council (HRC) to provide national strategic direction about research and innovation in either the education or social services sector. Such bodies could administer funds in relation to national education and social sector research priorities, foster the recruitment, education, training, and retention of those engaged in education and social sector research in New Zealand, undertake consultation to establish research priorities and promote and disseminate the results of education and social sector research. Establishing such bodies may be warranted given that strong social and education science is vital to the design, evaluation and theory building of effective social and educational innovations.

However, if the research infrastructure and associated funding is to be organised, then a priority is the avoidance of disciplinary competition in favour of transdisciplinary partnerships and collaboration to resolve pressing societal issues.

What would success look like for social science research in a reconceptualised system?

In a reconceptualised system, implemented as an outcome of Te Ara Paerangi, multiple enhanced outcomes for social science, and potentially the broader research environment, are possible. While we have considered these from a social science research perspective, there are links to the six key themes in the Green Paper and, therefore, most are relevant to a rethinking of a holistic research system and environment.

In a reconceptualised system:

1. Genuine partnerships with Māori and communities would sit at the heart of research and be acknowledged and funded as a legitimate and critical component of Aotearoa's research environment.
2. Research funding would expect transdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approaches that acknowledge addressing the country's complex problems requires complex investigations and inclusive solutions.
3. There would be equivalent funding for educational and social science research as for the health sector to reduce the existing disparities and acknowledge the pivotal role education and social practice can and does play in the well-being of Aotearoa's people.
4. There would be coherence and agreement amongst providers, funders and users about the 5 to 10-year vision for research.
5. A much stronger and stable funding stream would be developed to build the capability and infrastructure that is needed to ensure better research outcomes and impact across the entire research environment.
6. A workforce development plan would be established and would include developing the capability to diagnose and solve issues that are critical to equity, inclusion, and better outcomes overall for Aotearoa.
7. 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.
8. For social science research, including education and social practice, the consideration and implementation of these changes to the ecosystem would see social science research firmly embedded in the RSI landscape.