

A close-up, slightly blurred photograph of a basketball net. The net is primarily black with a prominent red vertical stripe running down the center. White 'X' patterns are woven into the black mesh. The background is out of focus, showing more of the net's structure.

THE EFFECTS OF COVID-19 ON MĀORI EDUCATION OUTCOMES

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01 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents a critical analysis of salient local research focused on the effects of COVID-19 on Māori education outcomes. In particular, the research looked at how well whānau coped and were able to provide education to their tamariki in the home; the innovations whānau adopted during lockdown to provide structure; and the solutions that supported Māori to improve education for their tamariki.

We compared these trends with international research on education outcomes for indigenous, ethnic minority and disadvantaged populations.

In summation, the research highlights:

- There is a paucity of kaupapa Māori-designed and -led research into the impacts of COVID-19 on Māori educational experiences, particularly during lockdown.
- Diverse whānau Māori realities meant the lockdown experience varied depending on whānau socio-economic status, employment status, level of access to food, safe and secure housing, internet, digital devices and information technologies, safe and warm housing, and levels of mental health and wellbeing.
- The educational inequities that existed pre-COVID were exacerbated and brought to the fore, particularly with regard to the digital divide and equitable access to devices and Wi-Fi connectivity.
- Impoverished and working-class whānau are more 'exposed' to the negative impacts of COVID-19. Emerging international research in the United States of America and Great Britain supports this.

- Despite the challenges, many whānau, hapū, iwi and Māori mobilised and innovated to create online fora focused on education, health and wellbeing initiatives and the dissemination of evidence-based information related to COVID-19.
- The impacts of COVID-19 will be acutely felt by rangatahi Māori who are over-represented in the jobs most impacted by COVID-19, such as retail, manufacturing and tourism. These are also the jobs that rangatahi who leave the education system would ordinarily step into as 'first jobs'.
- Māori women are disproportionately affected by the impact of COVID-19 on employment with women bearing the brunt of COVID-19 job losses. This situation could have a flow-on negative impact on Māori education because research indicates that Māori women are at the centre of whānau Māori and have a significant influence on tamariki and rangatahi education outcomes.
- Iwi, Māori and community organisations designed and led solutions that were up and running long before Crown agencies were able to disseminate resources to whānau. Iwi and community organisations worked in step with their communities providing essential resources directly to whānau as well as valuable intel to Government agencies.
- Māori-designed and -led research, policy, innovation and practice informed by robust empirical data and tupuna wisdom are integral to the development of fit-for purpose and sustainable solutions. The key principles that should underpin this work include rangatiratanga, empowerment and equity.

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 OF THOSE WHO CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE. OUR VISION IS ONE OF SELF-DETERMINATION, EMPOWERMENT AND RANGATIRATANGA.

02 INTRODUCTION

This research report was commissioned by Te Pūtea Whakatupu Trust and aims to explore the effect of COVID-19 on the delivery of education to Māori tamariki, with a particular focus on three key questions:

1. How well did whānau Māori cope during the country's lockdown to be able to provide education to their tamariki in their homes?
2. What are the innovations that Māori adopted to provide learning structure to tamariki in the homes during this period?
3. What, if any, solutions supported Māori to improve education for their tamariki?

03 BACKGROUND

The research covers the period, 1 April 2020 to 31 July 2020. The key dates related to the initial impact of COVID-19 on the New Zealand education system were:

- 21 March – Government announced a five-stage COVID-19 alert level system and declared New Zealand to be at alert level 2.
- 23 March – Government announced a move to alert level 3. Schools and early childhood education (ECE) providers closed for the majority of students but remained open for essential workers' children.
- 25 March – Government shifted to alert level 4, which resulted in a full national lockdown for six weeks.

- 27 April – Government shifted to alert level 3. Schools reopened for the children of essential workers only.
- 14 May – Government shifted to alert level 2. Schools and ECE providers reopened for all children.
- 8 June – Government announced a move to alert level 1, and level 2 health and safety guidelines were removed.
- 2 August – A second wave of COVID-19 emerged in Auckland. Auckland was declared to be in alert level 3, and the rest of the country moved to level 2.

As at 20 August 2020, there were 1,654 confirmed and probable cases. Of these, nine per cent, or 143 cases, identified as Māori (Ministry of Health, 2020a).

04 METHODOLOGY

The research is based on a critical review of relevant literature, research, webinars, online media articles, radio podcasts, think pieces and commentary related to the effects of COVID-19 on Māori education outcomes.



05 KAUPAPA MĀORI APPROACH

A kaupapa Māori research lens was applied to the framing and development of this paper. This approach values and celebrates te reo me ōna tikanga, mātauranga Māori, the power and agency whānau hapū and iwi hold to determine and implement their own solutions, recognition that colonisation has not ended and is experienced through intergenerational trauma that negatively impacts on Māori outcomes today, and acknowledgement that structural and institutional racism not only exists, but is perpetuated and maintained by the status quo (Grootveld, 2013).

The research net was cast wide to search relevant data and/or research related to Māori and COVID-19. This approach acknowledged the interconnectedness between Māori education, health and wellbeing, employment, housing, social and economic outcomes. This information was sourced online, and many articles were sent to the researcher via personal and professional networks. Key word search combinations included, but were not limited to: Māori and COVID-19 research, data and reports; Māori education and COVID-19; Māori/indigenous health and COVID 19; tamariki and COVID-19; education and COVID-19 research; indigenous peoples and COVID-19; poverty and COVID-19, social class and COVID-19.

Māori education scholars have produced a large body of empirical evidence which speaks to the systemic institutional and structural racism and biases that are perpetuated and maintained within our education system. This paper draws on their robust scholarship to contextualise the research findings.

06 RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

A key research limitation is that most of the research for this paper was carried out during the national lockdown and therefore was heavily reliant on online information sources available at the time. There was a lack of empirical research led by and for Māori, particularly with regard to the effects of COVID-19 on whānau and their tamariki. As a result, this research included a range of secondary sources, such as radio reports, news articles, press releases and webinars. International research focused on the impact of COVID-19 on indigenous communities was sparse, however the public health research focused on ethnic minorities and disadvantaged populations, particularly in the United States of America and Europe is growing and provided useful insights.

BACKGROUND

COVID-19 exposed two main existing issues, the broken New Zealand education system and child poverty, so it is important to know what the current state was before the pandemic.

07 THE IMPACTS OF COLONISATION ON MĀORI EDUCATION

In order to better understand the root causes of education inequality and inequity, and dismantle them, it is useful to examine the context and history of Māori education in Aotearoa. A history marred by colonisation and the impacts of this genocidal imperialist process on indigenous peoples globally (Ngata, 2020; Walker, 1990).

In general, COVID-19 exposed the underlying inequities within the New Zealand education system and shone on a light on them for us all to see (Spoonley, Gluckman, Bardsley, McIntosh, Hunia, Johal and Poulton, 2020). For decades, Māori educationalists have posited the devastating role that colonisation has played – and continues to play – on Māori educational and life outcomes (Mikaere, 2011; Penetito, 2010; Smith, 2013). Colonisation, they argue, is not over, and it still an ever-present force in the lives of whānau, hapū, iwi and Māori communities, reinforced by structures, institutions and ideologies, which seek to maintain the status quo (Blank, Houkamou and Kingi, 2016).

According to Berentson-Shaw (2018) stark education inequities are a direct result of New Zealand's racist and bias education system.

She states:

'New Zealand has one of the most unequal education systems in the world and the gap between the highest and lowest performing students is being exacerbated by the effects of poverty' (Berentson-Shaw, 2018a).

In Unicef's Innocenti Report Card, which looked at the gaps between the highest and lowest performing pupils in OECD countries, New Zealand ranked 33rd of 38 for educational inequality across preschool, primary school and secondary school levels (Chzhen, Gromada, Rees, Cuesta, and Bruckauf, 2018).

This poignant report showed how under-resourced and stressed families and communities, the concentration of resources across generations, and racism and bias in the educational system have all contributed to the unbalanced education system, thus having a detrimental impact, particularly for Māori and Pasifika students.

In response, Berentson-Shaw outlines a range of solutions to transform education inequities in New Zealand, including:

- Giving all children access to high-quality preschool learning opportunities
- Ensuring all children achieve a good minimum level of core skills
- Reducing the impact of socio-economic inequalities by steps like integrating children with different family backgrounds into different schools
- Closing gender gaps in achievement
- Producing better data to understand how inequalities develop and persist in different contexts
- Focusing on equality, not just averages.

08 THE IMPACTS OF CHILD POVERTY

Within the context of New Zealand, the literature is clear, Māori and Pasifika children experience poverty and hardship at a disproportionate and inequitable rate. The latest Statistics New Zealand child poverty data from June 2019 shows:

- Around 170,000 children remain under the very lowest poverty line of 40 per cent 'After Housing Costs' (AHC) income
- Almost one in four Māori children are living with material hardship (about 23 per cent), compared with 29 per cent of Pasifika children (about 29 per cent) and 10 per cent of European children (Statistics New Zealand, 2020).

A recent statement made by the Child Poverty Action Group (2020) calls out racism as a key contributor and enabler of poverty in New Zealand:

'The fact that the burden of poverty is inequitably shared and has a disproportionate impact on Māori and Pasifika children indicates that racism implicit in policy design has helped create and maintain child and whānau poverty in New Zealand' (Professor Susan St John, Child Poverty Action Group, Feb 2020).

Furthermore, a 2018 report on child poverty builds a case for policy change by challenging assumptions about the underlying causes and experiences of poverty in Aotearoa. The report focused on shifting the blame (often directed towards Māori and Pasifika) and stigma associated with poverty. It uses case studies to highlight the power of kaupapa Māori, whānau and community led solutions to address the complex drivers of poverty (Berentson-Shaw, 2018b).

09 FINDINGS

The research findings are presented in three sections to align with the three key research questions:

- Whānau experiences of lockdown
- Whānau educational innovations
- By Māori for Māori solutions.

10 WHĀNAU EXPERIENCES OF LOCKDOWN

How well did whānau Māori cope during the country's lockdown to be able to provide education to their tamariki in their homes?

The COVID-19 lockdown saw young Māori students battle with unequal access to digital technology – devices and Wi-Fi – stymieing their efforts as learning went online (Radio New Zealand, 29 July 2020).

The lockdown period shone a light on the range of existing inequities, disparities and divides within our education system, as we as potentially exacerbating them (Hood, 2000:13).

The data shows how the extent to which Māori coped and were able to provide education to their tamariki in their home during the COVID-19 lockdown varied significantly. For example, a comprehensive survey of school leaders, whānau and students across the country suggests that what was doable and worked for one whānau and their tamariki in one area, did not necessarily work for another whānau and their tamariki in another area (Hood, 2020).

Emerging local and international research indicates that the degree to which whānau coped during lockdown was shaped by the levels of access they had to basic needs and resources, namely: a device and Wi-Fi connectivity (Institute for Fiscal Studies, 2020); a safe, violent-free home (Bradbury-Jones and Isham, 2020), food (Kira, 2020); whānau support (Te Pūtahitanga, 2020); well-planned online learning programmes (Hunia et al, 2020); and engaged school educators (Franks, 2020).

LACK OF ACCESS TO INTERNET AND DEVICES

Reports estimate about 145,100 tamariki did not have access to the internet going into lockdown. The President of Te Akatea Māori Principals Association and principal of Whāngarei's Ōtangarei school commented that people outside communities like his don't realise the level of poverty and don't understand how powerful a physical object can be (Hood, 2020).

The research notes how the lack of access to suitable digital devices had flow-on effects for students, negatively impacting their mental health and resilience, and senior students being worried about their future prospects. The research highlighted the inequality that currently exists in the system and the structural barriers that have a direct bearing on education outcomes. As well as lacking the digital tools for learning, the research highlighted how many whānau did not have access to information due to a lack of internet connectivity. Finally, the report showed how some schools are prepared for online learning and some are not, and how critical it is for Government to partner with iwi to design and develop solutions that best meet the needs of whānau at a local level.

CLASSIFIED EXPERIENCES OF COVID-19

The research hints that Māori experiences of the COVID-19 lockdown are classed, with a strong correlation between the socio-economic status of whānau and the degree to which they had a negative experience or positive experience in a lockdown environment. Data from the United States of America paints a similar picture.

Reich (2020) argues that COVID-19 shines a light on a new kind of class divide, resulting in the emergence of four new classes:

- The remotes – professionals, managerial and technical workers who are well off compared to the other three classes.
- The essentials – nurses, doctors, homecare workers, truck drivers, warehouse workers, police officers, firefighters, military, sanitation workers, food processors, farm workers who are at the front line and often lack adequate protective gear, sick leave, health insurance and childcare.
- The unpaid – retail, tourism, cleaners and personal service workers unable to work, with limited leave, many of whom have lost their income and ability to support and feed their families.
- The forgotten – everyone for whom social distancing is nigh impossible because they are packed into places the public can't see – prisons, jails, camps for migrant workers, homeless shelters, nursing homes and native American reservations (Reich, 2020:1).

While the Aotearoa experiences of COVID-19 are not as stark or dire in comparison to the United States of America, Reich's description of these new classes is a critical reminder and cautionary note about the intersect between socio-economic status and health and education outcomes. For example, whānau living in poverty and hardship prior to COVID-19 experienced even greater hardship during lockdown. This finding is unsurprising given the social, cultural, educational and economic inequalities (and inequities) whānau experience within contemporary Aotearoa.

Wright (2020) researched the risks and benefits to children and whānau attending school during COVID-19 alert Level 3. In particular, she examined public health research published in the United States of America, which explored the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on child health and wellbeing, particularly for ethnic minorities. She highlighted a study on school closures and child poverty as an emerging social crisis, which was carried out by Van Lancker and Parolin (2020) focused:

Children in low-income households are more likely to live in conditions that make distance learning more difficult where, for example, access to online learning, suitable books, study space and heating may be more limited.....Prolonged school closures have the potential to exacerbate adverse social and health consequences for children living in poverty (Van Lancker and Parolin as cited in Wright, 2020:4).

Bradbury-Jones and Isham (2020) identify how school closures and lockdown placed additional stress on whānau and created the conditions for social isolation, psychological risks and economic vulnerability to manifest. It also increased the risk of intimate partner violence (IPV) often referred to as domestic violence in New Zealand. The New Zealand police reported a 22 per cent increase in family harm investigations compared to before lockdown and, similarly, Women's Refuge noted a 20 per cent increase in calls related to domestic violence (Radio New Zealand, 2020).

As COVID-19 alert levels are reduced and/or fluctuate, Wright advocates the need to understand the risks to teachers that increasingly return to school, particularly at kōhanga reo and kura kaupapa Māori where many kaiako (teachers) and kaumātua (elders) may be at greater risk of being infected by the COVID-19 disease.

KURA (SCHOOL) PERSPECTIVES

In an article written in the New Zealand Education Gazette, Frank (2020) reported on the ways in which principals of kura Māori and mainstream schools stayed connected with Māori students during the lockdown. She states:

As teaching moved from classrooms to family homes, New Zealand was forced to reckon with the huge inequalities in its education system. Tens of thousands of students without laptops or internet access, unable to engage in online learning. Schools that had to put teaching on the backburner while they figured out how to feed families. But the inequality isn't something that can be patched with a Chromebook or a food parcel, teachers say. New Zealand already has one of the most unequal education systems in the world, according to Unicef. COVID-19 could widen that gap – but it could prove an opportunity to close it (Franks, 2020:1).



Principal of Te Kura Māori o Porirua noted how quickly whānau mobilised to learn and support online learning and delivery for their tamariki and acknowledged the innovation and support from Kaiako Māori across the country who generously shared advice, resources, lesson plans and tips. The level of anxiety students felt about falling behind academically was an issue that many Māori principals were dealing with:

The anxiety levels of our teenagers, of our wharekura students, we're all [kaiako Māori] going to have to work hard so their academic pathways aren't restricted. The equity issue for me is the biggie, Māori tamariki are the ones most at risk [of not] entering university. A lot of their engagement relies on body language, they rely on kanohi ki te kanohi. You can't check what that looks like – if they're at home, in a bedroom, trying to work things out on their own, it just adds to their anxiety (Tukukino, S., as cited in Frank, 2020).

Kaiako at Te Kura Reo o Waikirikiri in Tūranganui-a-Kiwa emphasised how access to devices and internet was challenging because of job cuts in the forestry industry, which placed financial pressures on many whānau within their community.

For a lot of our parents, buying food and essentials is the limit of their income, they don't have the finances to support Wi-Fi or a device that's capable of doing anything more than a text. All the food we had, the KidsCan stuff, we distributed to our whānau and just emptied out everything (Abraham, A., as cited in Franks, 2020).

At Mātāuri Bay in Te Tai Tokerau, Te Kura Kaupapa Māori o Whangaroa, internet connectivity and access to devices was an issue for some whānau, for example:

One whānau has three levels of students, they are welcome to jump in with whichever teacher is online, at whatever level, in any of their brothers' and sisters' classes. But many whānau have no connectivity, and these are the ones we feel for. I've had to say to parents, 'Don't fret, if you have no connectivity turn the TV on [to the Māori language learning channels] and connect with that' (Epiha, H. as cited in Franks, 2020).

To summarise, in the face of significant lockdown challenges, some whānau thrived, some whānau survived and some whānau existed. The innovations to support learning varied depending on whānau circumstance, socio-economic status, health and wellbeing. Iwi, community and volunteer organisations supported whānau with unprecedented levels of direct support.

It is too early to discern the cumulative impact of lockdown on educational achievement and learning outcomes, but the preliminary local and international data is cause for concern.

THE DOWNSTREAM EFFECTS OF LOCKDOWN

As research into the effects of lockdown and COVID-19 on Māori educational outcomes emerges, preliminary data highlights issues that are cause for concern. In particular, the issues relate to early school leavers, the rise of mental health challenges, and impacts on Māori rangatahi at both ends of the education spectrum i.e. Māori university students and Māori NEETS (rangatahi not engaged in employment, education, training or school), and the negative impacts on Māori employment outcomes.

EARLY LEAVERS

Anecdotal evidence from principals in low-decile secondary schools in Northland, South Auckland, Porirua and Wellington, suggest that when schools closed for level 4 lockdown, many Māori and Pasifika senior students walked out of the gates for the last time. These rangatahi have secured jobs to support their families, taken on caring responsibilities for siblings or grandparents, or just became disengaged during lockdown (Gerritsen, 2020). The cumulative effect of this trend is there will be a generation of young Māori and Pasifika who have left school without qualifications with minimal buffer against changing labour market forces in a COVID-19 environment.

RISE OF MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES

The rise in anxiety levels among school-aged children, as a result of the disruptions caused by COVID-19, is a reality that whānau, educators and mental health workers are expected to manage within a mental health system that is significantly under resourced (Patterson, Durie, Disley, Rangihuna, Tiatia-Seath, and Tualamali'i, 2018).

The New Zealand Principals Federation surveyed its 800 members and reported that principals were crying out for more mental health support, especially at primary level. Principals emphasised the need for increased investment to provide pastoral care and additional learning support in the wake of COVID-19 (New Zealand Principals Federation, 2020). International public health research into the impact of COVID-19 on the mental health of students and children supports the arguments put forward by educators in Aotearoa. The uncertainty created by COVID-19 has a direct impact on the mental health and wellbeing of school-aged children, particularly those who were in confinement for long periods of time (Lee, 2020).



11 IMPACTS ON MĀORI NOT INVOLVED IN EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT OR TRAINING (NEET) AND UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

Feedback from NEET providers across the country that deliver a range of innovative programmes to support Māori NEET students showed how COVID-19 has exacerbated the challenges this cohort experienced pre-COVID-19.

The NEET cohort represents a generation of young Māori aged 15-22 years old, the majority of whom have low literacy levels, limited whānau support, alcohol and drug dependency, low levels of self-esteem, motivation, confidence and agency, and complex behavioural and mental health challenges (Te Puni Kōkiri, 2020). The challenge ahead is to provide ongoing support for this cohort within the context of a vocational training environment that is significantly impacted by the labour market pressures created by COVID-19, resulting in fewer entry-level jobs and greater competition.

Te Mana Akonga (TMA - National Māori Tertiary Students Association) released a research report that details the educational and wellbeing impacts of the COVID-19 lockdown on Māori university students (Akuhata-Huntington, 2020). The report draws on the results of a survey that was rolled out nationally to Māori students at each of the eight universities of Aotearoa [New Zealand]. It identifies a number of impacts that the lockdown had on students, however the report argues that this is just the tip of the iceberg and there are many more challenges that Māori students face every day:

- Financial struggles were a key theme with more than half reporting increased financial stress.
- One in five students reported having dependents who relied on them financially.
- More than one third agreed that lockdown had made it more difficult to afford essential bills.
- Online learning also proved challenging – one in four students did not have access to strong, reliable Wi-Fi or internet for online learning.
- 55 per cent of students reported their experience of online learning to be negative.
- Nearly three-quarters of students reported the overall impact on their education had been negative.
- 52 per cent of students felt more sad than before lockdown.
- 76 per cent felt more anxious.
- 84 per cent felt worried about their academic progress.
- 52 per cent indicated they did not feel valued as a student by their institution (Akuhata-Huntington, 2020:12).

Mental health was an area of significant concern, and the report includes strong recommendations on how the government and universities can better support and enable Māori students both post-COVID and in the future, with clear expectations that students are involved in all aspects of action.

12 EMPLOYMENT IMPLICATIONS

COVID-19 directly impacts Māori employment (and unemployment) and therefore has a material effect on the ability of whānau to support positive learning and educational outcomes. In May 2020, Heys, Olsen and Shorter presented research focused on the economic impacts of COVID-19 for Māori. Based on their analysis of relevant employment statistics available, they concluded:

- The next couple of years will be tough from an employment (job loss/gain) perspective, particularly for Māori.
- Conservative estimates suggest that close to 40,000 Māori could be put out of work over the next two years.
- Māori unemployment could rise to over 16 per cent.
- Hospitality and construction jobs are most at risk – hospitality should bounce back, but construction might not (Heys et al, 2020).

For women, and in particular Māori women, the impact of COVID-19 is stark. Employment statistics captured by Statistics New Zealand showed that roughly 11,000 fewer people were in paid employment as a result of lockdown. Of these, 10,000 were women (Vergara, 2020). Moreover, Reid (2020) highlights the unprecedented gendered impacts that is emerging as a result of the economic downturn created by COVID-19, she states:

The looming economic downturn will have a unique gender bias, not seen in previous recessions. Women dominate in sectors affected by the COVID-19 containment measures, and the burden of non-paid work falls to women, even more pronounced during the lockdown. (Reid, 2020:2).

Morris (2020) posits that the lack of robust analysis of the gendered impacts of government policies by key government agencies is a direct expression of patriarchy and maintenance of the status quo. Morris presents solutions that include, implementing a government procurement strategy that incorporates social goals and equity for women, especially wāhine Māori and women of colour and supporting community-based, not-for-profit, job-creating initiatives with social goals for women.

The ideas are out there, and they can be put into action immediately. We just need to look beyond the shovels to the carers, the planners and of course, the visionaries (Morris, 2020:2).

Tangata whenua, community and voluntary sector play a critical support and advocacy role in the lives of whānau and communities and make a valuable contribution to education outcomes. Based on the findings of a national COVID-19 impact survey carried out across the tangata whenua, community and voluntary sector in May-June 2020, the Centre for Social Impact found:

- A sizable number of participating organisations took a hit during lockdown, however they mobilised, moved with agility, and in some cases did, and are still doing, more with less.
- Effective leadership and fast action by government was matched by people and communities across Aotearoa.
- High trust models of funding, flexibility and mutual respect between local and central government, philanthropy and the sector created the conditions for some stunning outcomes for communities (Centre for Social Impact, 2020:2).

The survey showed that, following the first lockdown, the sector is in a fragile, finely balanced position. There remains a significant gap in the available and funded resourcing for tangata whenua, community and voluntary organisations to deliver services.

To summarise, a complex mix of social, cultural, political and economic forces shaped and influenced the extent to which whānau were able to cope during the lockdown. This is nothing new for whānau Māori who experience inequitable outcomes daily. COVID-19 exposed these longstanding inequities. The paradox is that COVID-19 created the conditions for some whānau and communities to exercise their agency while simultaneously exacerbating the hardship experienced by other whānau and communities. The data indicates that Māori employment outcomes, particularly for women, will be negatively impacted. Given the position of Māori women in the whānau, as providers, carers, nurturers, influencers and educators – the impact on Māori education outcomes could be significant.

13 WHĀNAU EDUCATION INNOVATIONS

WHAT ARE THE INNOVATIONS THAT MĀORI ADOPTED TO PROVIDE LEARNING STRUCTURE TO TAMARIKI IN THE HOMES DURING THIS PERIOD?

Despite the barriers in terms of accessing digital devices and Wi-Fi, a plethora of examples emerged online in social media (Facebook), and in traditional media (Radio New Zealand, Māori related television programming) showing how whānau, hapū, iwi and Māori communities designed bespoke education

and wellbeing initiatives. The proliferation of whānau-led online education initiatives using Facebook, zoom and Skype showed how whānau adapted and innovated to support their tamariki learning.

A sample of whānau-led education innovations delivered on Facebook included:

- Smith whānau – Weekly facilitated session with whānau 'experts' on topics ranging from Te Tiriti o Waitangi, Mātauranga Māori and finance and accounting
- Asher whānau – Weekly tamariki kai cooking classes
- Morrison whānau – Daily te reo tips, karakia and kupu hou for whānau.

Nationwide, whānau across both motu engaged in online karakia, fiktoks, master chef cooking and karaoke competitions.

Online Facebook pages and communities were created to disseminate facts and positive messages to whānau, hapū, iwi and Māori communities in regard to COVID-19. These groups included:

- Te Rōpū Whakakaupapa Urutā – National Māori Pandemic group
- #Manaaki20 – Whānau Ora Commissioning Agencies
- Protect our whakapapa
- SKIP – Strong whānau connections.

Online wānanga were established during lockdown to disseminate mātauranga about a range of kaupapa Māori, including:

- Mahi a Atua – Di Rangihuna and Mark Kopua
- Kōkōmūka – Paraone Gloyne, Che Wilson, Pania Papa, Rangi Matamua
- Māramataka – Heeni Hotereni
- Living by the stars – Rangi Matamua
- Tēpu Talks – Ngati Maniapoto
- Te Paepae Waho – Che Wilson
- Kia ora Māmā – Kahurangi Milne
- Māori Minutes – Quinton Hita
- Mindfulness – Ariana Potaka and Gail Bosmann-Watene
- Kia Mau – Robyn Kahukiwa.

In addition, Māori Television and the Ministry of Education provided online learning resources and daily education focused programming for tamariki and rangatahi, including:

- *Online learning resources – Ki te Ao Mārama, Kia Manawaroa, Learning from Home*
- *Hardcopy learning packs sent to whānau*
- *Māori television – Mauri Reo Mauri Ora.*

While an evaluation of the effectiveness of these innovations is yet to be undertaken, this sample of examples are testament to the level of agency and creativity whānau, hapū, iwi and Māori communities and organisations, businesses and entrepreneurs engaged in to support tamariki learning experiences and wellbeing at home.

14 BY MĀORI FOR MĀORI SOLUTIONS

WHAT, IF ANY, SOLUTIONS SUPPORTED MĀORI TO IMPROVE EDUCATION FOR THEIR TAMARIKI?

The Māori education research and scholarship clearly demonstrates how Māori children who experience a strong sense of connectedness in their families and communities experience greater wellbeing outcomes, including educational wellbeing (Smith, 2012; Mhuru, 2020). This notion is supported by the Education Review Office's Wellbeing Report (2014), which states:

Schools in New Zealand that focus on building these connections, most notable cultural ones for Māori students, have been able to rebalance educational wellbeing (Education Review Office, 2014:6).

The need to invest in by Māori for Māori solutions to improve educational outcomes for tamariki in a COVID-19 world is a common theme across the literature. According to rangatahi data published by BERL (2020), there were 71,079 Māori rangatahi in Aotearoa between the ages of 15 and 19. This cohort will be leaving formal secondary education during the most severe impacts of the response to COVID-19.

Rangatahi Māori will be a generation disrupted. The question becomes, what are rangatahi to do? Historically, it was entry level positions such as retail, hospitality, and some manufacturing that are were attractive for rangatahi coming out of education. However, given the new reality, these might not be available. Also, not all rangatahi are interested in further formal education. Policies and plans by iwi and government need to ensure credible options, whilst considering the demographic structure of Māori and the inter-generational aspect of decisions made now for rangatahi in the immediate future (BERL, 2020:4).

The research points out that rangatahi are not being prepared for future opportunities and how the education system, prior to COVID-19, was not addressing the shifting population demographics in order to create fit for purpose solutions for the future.

The response to COVID-19 has strengthened the pressure and has exposed existing fault lines in our society that need to be addressed.

The world was already changing; the response to COVID-19 has hastened this change (Ibid:2).

In addition, a report produced by Waikato-Tainui, Tokona Te Raki, BERL and The Southern Initiative (2019) looked at the journey of 100 rangatahi Māori through the New Zealand education system. Using the awa as a metaphor for a braided river (the education system), the research tracked two cohorts of tamariki – 11 to 22 years (49, 467) and 13 to 25 (29,898) and mapped their journey along the awa.

The research identified the need for those in government to:

- Grow a large cohort of new Māori teachers
- Review policy around compulsory achievement to address cultural capital (kapa haka)
- Design policy to drive the shift from punitive to restorative behaviour management strategies
- Design policy that advocates for the removal of streaming practices at an individual school level
- Tie cultural competencies and bicultural teaching practices to teacher appraisals
- Mandate culturally responsive professional learning.

Similarly, the research implored educators to:

- Stop streaming Māori students
- Stop the exclusion of Māori boys
- Make Māori culture seen and heard in the classroom.

In conclusion, the report highlighted the positive success and impact of Māori medium education and the need to draw on what works within these contexts to support Māori learners in mainstream education contexts. These kaupapa Māori principles and elements of success could apply to supporting programmes and responses to COVID-19 in education now.

Furthermore, in a post-COVID 19 world, Spoonley et al (2020) advocate a focus on sustaining and enhancing social cohesion as a collective priority, and in particular finding innovative ways to enhance a sense of belonging, inclusion, participation, recognition and legitimacy. They state:

For Māori, social cohesion speaks to the strength of the collective and a sense of identity and belonging (as Māori). When social cohesion is strongly present, it is likely to be an expression of mana motuhake (Māori living as Māori) (Spoonley, 2020:6).

Two critical elements are required to help achieve social cohesion with success, building of trust and transparency between Māori and non-Māori.

15 RANGATIRATANGA

Given Māori histories and experiences of pandemics, it was no surprise that Iwi and Whānau Ora and Māori providers exercised leadership and rangatiratanga pre, during and post-lockdown. Border patrols in Te Tai Tokerau, Te Tairāwhiti, Taranaki and Te Whānau a Apanui were established to protect local communities vulnerable to the pandemic (De graaf, 2020).

The formation of Te Rōpū Whakakaupapa Urutā – The National Māori Pandemic Group was a direct response to the need for Māori voice, leadership and representation to influence the national response to COVID-19 (Te Rōpū Whakakaupapa Urutā, 2020). Whānau Ora commissioning agencies, Te Pūtahitanga o Te Waipounamu and the Whānau Ora Commissioning Agency, in partnership with Māori providers and Iwi mobilised to deliver immediate responses to whānau and community needs across the country. The speed at which these kaupapa Māori organisations were able to mobilise and deliver directly to communities was hugely impactful. The Whānau Ora COVID-19 website is an online repository filled with stories and articles about the ways in which whānau and community responded to the needs of their communities and is a celebration of whānau and community spirit, diligence, agency and determination.

The early findings of a survey carried out by Te Pūtahitanga o Te Waipounamu during the lockdown found many whānau struggled to fund the money to purchase food, pay for rent, power and internet to help them stay connected. The impact of reduced incomes and job loss was reflected in whānau not being able to pay for power, heating and/or firewood, an important need for whānau living in Te Waipounamu (Te Pūtahitanga, 2020).

Professor Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2020) presented a counter narrative about pandemics to dispel the fear and anxiety within Indigenous communities. Professor

Smith highlighted indigenous skills around 'survival' and resilience and shared examples in Aotearoa-New Zealand of Māori ways of organising that inspire and provide hope. Examples include kura kaupapa Māori, kōhanga reo, and whare wānanga. Smith shared ideas about post-pandemic ways of being grounded in indigenous wellbeing by putting into practice every day acts of resistance grounded in who we are as indigenous peoples – i.e. song (waiata), dance (haka, kapa haka), composition, the arts (weaving, carving), weaving, writing, māramataka practices, and mahi maara. The message was clear, by Māori for Māori solutions work and are even more relevant in a COVID-19 context.

Iwi-led research produced by Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei in partnership with University of Auckland assessed the effects of lockdown on whānau and highlighted the positive impact Iwi made when they distributed more than 400 chromebooks to whānau (Hunia, Salim, Mcnaughton, Menzies, Gluckman, & Bardsley, 2020). The Iwi was alarmed by the high number of whānau struggling with remote education challenges, and in response conducted surveys to understand the specific issues and level of support needed within the Iwi. The research found that of 668 rangatahi aged between 12 and 17 years – including 217 senior students studying NCEA – more than 50 per cent only had, at best, an internet-enabled phone in the household to use for remote learning.

EQUITY

Māori public health advocate, Dr Rhys Jones (2020) challenges the establishment (mainstream and the Crown) to accept and implement an equity approach to responding to COVID-19. He states:

A pandemic strategy that relies on existing leadership and structures, and utilises conventional approaches, will fail to achieve equitable outcomes for Māori. It may work well for those it has been designed to work well for – predominantly middle-class, Pākehā New Zealanders. First and foremost, there must be Māori governance and leadership at all levels of the pandemic response – nationally and within DHBs, as well as across all other sectors.... Critically, every aspect of the pandemic response needs to have equity at its centre.

The Ministry of Health's initial COVID-19 Māori Response Action Plan attempted to provide a framework for applying an equity approach in the Crown's pandemic response strategies (Ministry of Health, 2020b). However, Te Rōpū Whakakaupapa Urutā rejects the notion that the Crown should lead the pandemic response. The same equity approach must be applied to Māori education strategies and responses to COVID-19, with a purposeful focus on Māori governance and leadership at all levels with equity at its centre.

EMPIRICAL DATA AND TUPUNA WISDOM

Kia Puta Ki Rangiātea, a report produced by Tokona Te Raki: Māori Futures Collective and BERL in 2020, posits four possible future scenarios to consider when planning Māori futures living with, through and beyond COVID-19. The four scenarios tell the story of how Aotearoa might approach the challenge of economic and social recovery following the COVID-19 pandemic, and how these approaches will affect whānau, hapū, and iwi.

The four Māori futures scenarios are:

- He rā anō ki tua – a new day dawns – a future premised by oritetanga (a thriving and equitable future)
- Nau mai ki te ao hou – a new world emerges – a future premised by rangatiratanga (leading and shaping the future)
- Te hokinga ki te wā mua – back to work – a future where everything is back to worse than normal
- Te hokinga ki te ao tawhito – back to basics – a future where everything is about survival.

The report advocates starting with Māori and Pākehā (the Crown) making a commitment to work together as Treaty partners, and states:

We believe the pathway towards our te pae tawhiti (preferred futures) rests on making an early commitment to work together, as Treaty partners, embracing the strengths of both cultures to create a better future than we have ever experienced before. This is the purest expression of our vision of Rangiātea, drawing upon our tūpuna wisdom and shared strengths to stretch beyond the known to reach a new destination. E kore au e ngaro, he kākano i ruia mai i Rangiātea (Tokona Te Raki & Berl, 2020a:13).

A second report published by Tokona Te Raki and BERL (2020b) highlights how a significant proportion of rangatahi are employed in sectors negatively impacted by the response to COVID-19. For example, the entry-level jobs (i.e. retail, manufacturing and hospitality) that rangatahi might ordinarily seek might not be available and/or there will be twice the competition, in the near future as a fallout of COVID-19. The report implores educators and policymakers to take action and be cognisant of the changing demographics and need to engage rangatahi Māori in the development of future solutions:

The future is not just human, it's Māori. Our faster growing population will have an ever-increasing role in leading our nation forward. Furthermore, the skills in greatest demand in the future are intrinsically social and human. Our cultural values and strengths as Māori are a source of immeasurable value to us as Māori, and to Aotearoa. They are also going to be in hot demand in the new work order (Tokona Te Raki & BERL, 2020b:8).

Furthermore, the research recommends that educators and policy makers:

- Design programmes for life-long learning – education needs to be a life-long journey to accommodate future skill needs.
- Explore dynamic and agile education systems that keep Māori engaged in learning so that they are always growing to meet emerging opportunities and never left behind.
- Invest in a new curriculum to teach enterprise skills and creativity.
- Address the digital divide – ensuring rangatahi have access to an internet connected device for recreation as well as education.
- Recognise not all skills are learned formally – rangatahi benefit from having a device to tinker with.
- Empower whānau to make the home a place for learning.

The Māori futures work reinforces the need to draw on both empirical data (qualitative and quantitative) and tūpuna wisdom to shape and make future solutions. Māori have a history of resilience and innovation that must be remembered, valued, recognised and most importantly actioned.

16 RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

The evidence showed how the effects of COVID-19 on Māori educational outcomes is an emerging field of research scholarship with limited kaupapa Māori led empirical research accessible during the writing of this report. However, the data showed how whānau experiences of lockdown and living in a COVID-19 environment were varied and nuanced. Some whānau innovated to support online learning in the home, other whānau were simply not in an economic position to do so.

The structural barriers and inequities that existed pre-COVID-19 were exacerbated when the country went into national lockdown in March 2020. Whānau living on the poverty line (or close to it) experienced a level of hardship unimaginable to many New Zealanders. It is important that their stories are told to build the case for collective change and action. The research team remains cautiously optimistic that increased investment will be directed towards indigenous led and informed research on the impacts of COVID-19, to inform and deepen our understanding of what works and does not work for whānau and tamariki learning and education outcomes in an ever-changing pandemic environment.

A potential area of future research is to examine the extent to which tamariki and rangatahi and whānau located in Kaupapa Māori, Māori medium education settings have increased protective factors around them to reduce the negative impacts of COVID-19 on educational outcomes in the short, medium and long-term. The emergence of new classed identities is also a research area that could yield important insights to inform Māori futures thinking. Māori-designed and -led research speaks to the power of by Māori for Māori solutioning in order to shape, create, make and take the futures that our tamariki deserve. The key principles that underpin this action are rangatiratanga (self-determination), equity and valuing tipuna wisdom alongside empirical research and scholarship.

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