

# Rangatahi opportunity – A literature review

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## Waikato Wellbeing Project

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THE UNIVERSITY OF WAIKATO



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*Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato*

# Rangatahi opportunity– A literature review

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November 2021

**Te Ngira | National Institute of Population Research**

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# Introduction

## 1.1 Purpose of this review

In Aotearoa New Zealand, existing literature draws together both international and local bodies of knowledge regarding rangatahi<sup>1</sup> aspirations, what rangatahi require to thrive, key influences, barriers experienced, and innovative opportunities to improve outcomes with our young people. Such reports focus on rangatahi and whānau wellbeing, rangatahi experiences in education, as well as transitions from education to employment. Recent literature has acknowledged and critiqued the focus on deficit-framed, or negative statistics, describing the experience of Māori and Pacific rangatahi in Aotearoa New Zealand. Importantly, there has been a shift towards recognising the systemic and structural causes of the reported “under achievement” for young Māori and Pacific in education, employment, and other wellbeing related outcomes. In parallel there is increasing understanding of the specific strengths of Māori and Pacific communities that foster wellbeing and engagement of rangatahi, and recent research conducted in Aotearoa New Zealand has highlighted innovation within local communities to both respond to the barriers our rangatahi face and boost these strengths.

The purpose of this review is to provide a high-level overview of key themes from relevant literature on rangatahi in relation to the following research questions, as provided by the Waikato Wellbeing Project:

- What do our rangatahi require to thrive?
- What are the aspirations of our rangatahi?
- Why and where are our rangatahi experiencing barriers to successfully transition through education to further study, employment and/or training?
- Who and what are the key influencers, systems and/or factors that enable rangatahi to thrive?
- Where should our collective energies be focused to make the greatest impact for our rangatahi?
- What solutions or ideas would make the greatest difference to our rangatahi and their whānau?
- How might we involve whānau, rangatahi and employers to create insight and breakthrough?

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<sup>1</sup>This report uses the term 'rangatahi' throughout to encompass young people, younger generation, youth.

How might we collaborate with young people, whānau, schools, the community and each other to identify which initiatives to scale for impact that lead to our rangatahi being on a positive pathway to have many life options?

There are significant inter-relationships between many of these questions. This review provides key themes according to each question, but it is important to note the inter-connections of each question, and therefore the importance of the themes across these aspects of wellbeing for rangatahi. Some of these relationships are identified in the report where relevant.

## **1.2 Information sources**

As requested, this review draws together key themes from the following reports:

- Thriving Rangatahi – Literature Review (Vodafone Foundation New Zealand 2019)
- Thriving Rangatahi – Data Driven Perspectives Report (Vodafone Foundation New Zealand 2021)
- The Attitude Gap (Auckland Co-design Lab 2016)
- Know Me, Believe Me (Auckland co-design lab, Ministry of Education & The Southern Initiative 2020)
- He Awa Ara Rau (The Southern Initiative in collaboration with Waikato Tainui 2019)
- The Early Years Challenge (The Southern Initiative 2017)
- Te Rito – Insights from Learners (Te Pūkenga 2021).

## Key themes and insights

### 2.1 What do rangatahi need to thrive?

**Rangatahi** require positive life experiences to thrive.

Having positive life experiences is about having “the ability and opportunity to participate in education, employment, leisure, recreation and civic activities” (Vodafone Foundation NZ, 2021, p.11; 2019). Such positive life experiences are key contributors for the ability of rangatahi to build skills, connections, resilience and self-efficacy. Having positive life experiences act as protective factors that can mitigate the risk of vulnerabilities and/or support rangatahi to cope with challenges. This requires equitable access to opportunities through the provision of positive conditions that meet the needs specifically of Māori and Pacific rangatahi. A prerequisite to accessing positive life experiences is having access to an adequate standard of living through the equitable, appropriate and effective provision of meaningful material resources to rangatahi and their whānau.

**Rangatahi** need to be supported by culturally affirming environments to thrive.

Research has found that students who were thriving were “proud of their Māori culture, and identities, could “be Māori” as ākonga, rather than having to leave their culture outside” to succeed” (Webber and Macfarlane, 2018 as cited in Ministry of Education, 2020, p.17). Evidence shows that Māori students do much better when education reflects and values their identity, language and culture and that these are protective factors that enhance Māori success (Ministry of Education, 2020; The Southern Initiative & Waikato Tainui, 2019). Māori learners thrived when tutors recognised Māori strengths and were understanding affirming and passionate about their learners succeeding (Te Pūkenga, 2021). Rangatahi supported in their development of their cultural identity and self-concept are then better able to buffer systemic challenges to thriving (including experiences of discrimination).

## 2.2 What are the aspirations of our rangatahi?

**Rangatahi aspire to give back to their whānau and to help their community, and future generations.**

Research determines that rangatahi place great importance in giving back to their whānau, and rangatahi research participants describe how their desire to succeed centres around being able to help whānau, community and future generations (Auckland co-design lab, Ministry of Education & The Southern Initiative 2020). In particular, for rangatahi whose families were facing significant adversity, 'giving back' to whānau who had sacrificed to provide for them was a key aspiration for success (Auckland co-design lab, Ministry of Education & The Southern Initiative 2020). For many rangatahi, their whānau is their number one priority (Auckland co-design lab, 2017).

**Rangatahi want their strengths, cultural identity and worldview to be recognised and supported.**

"Māori values and principles are integral to providing support and engagement Māori learners needed" (Te Pūkenga, 2021, p.5). Research found that rangatahi had a desire for their environments to be more holistic. For example, they wanted learning environments "that were physically, culturally and emotionally and spiritually safe and included the wellbeing of whānau" (Te Pūkenga, p.5). Rangatahi want their learning experience to be based on and reflect their real-world experiences. They want teachers and other members of society that they engage with to actively weave in students' everyday lives into their learning, and to value their existing knowledge base (Ministry of Education & The Southern Initiative 2020; Te Pūkenga, 2021). Māori rangatahi also wanted to see themselves reflected in a variety of ways within the environments they engaged with, such as in the workforce, learning spaces, curriculum and institutional events. In the education sector specifically, rangatahi Māori want their learning environment to acknowledge the valuable skills, competencies and experience Māori learners brought to the table (Te Pūkenga, 2021).

## 2.3 Why and where are our rangatahi experiencing barriers to successfully transition through education to further study, employment, and/or training?

Rangatahi experience barriers because of the effects of structural inequities.

Structural inequities reduce young people's ability to participate in systems of education, as well as in employment, health, and civic society (Vodafone New Zealand Foundation, 2021; Auckland co-design lab, Ministry of Education & The Southern Initiative 2020; The Southern Initiative, 2017). Income inequity in particular is a significant factor driving exclusion and disadvantage (Auckland co-design lab, Ministry of Education & The Southern Initiative 2020; The Southern Initiative, 2017; Vodafone Foundation NZ, 2021; 2019). Young people's pathway to study and employment are at greater risk when they experience adverse circumstances early and over a sustained period (Vodafone Foundation NZ, 2021; 2019). The Southern Initiative found that "the five most common risk factors for vulnerability for households with two-year olds is living in deprivation, income tested benefit, highly stressed by money problems, crowded households and maternal depression" (The Southern Initiative, 2017, p.7). Intergenerational links to income inequity, associated with systems failure for Māori and Pacific whānau, have also been identified, with mothers receiving a benefit increasing the likelihood of rangatahi receiving a benefit themselves (Vodafone Foundation NZ, 2021). Inequitable experiences of poverty have a negative impact on rangatahi attendance and engagement with learning and school (Ministry of Education, 2020). Living in poverty and deprivation increases the risk of frequent changes of school, ill health, inadequate food and clothes, and limited access to other resources required for wellbeing. These factors all influence the ability of rangatahi to engage with their education in a sustainable way (Auckland co-design lab, Ministry of Education & The Southern Initiative 2020).

It is also well understood that living in deprivation increases exposure to and experiences of toxic stress and trauma. Both are known to impact cognitive development by affecting executive functioning such as the ability to learn, plan and focus, which means children find it difficult to interact and learn early in their education journey (Auckland co-design lab, Ministry of Education & The Southern Initiative 2020; The Southern Initiative, 2017). Exposure to 'sustained and severe stress' as a result of living in deprivation can also affect executive functioning in terms of how we understand problems and the ability to reason, set goals, navigate challenges and to regulate emotions (Auckland co-design lab, Ministry of Education & The Southern Initiative 2020).



Living in deprivation also influences the trajectory of engagement in tertiary education which may further limit future employment opportunities and outcomes. Excluded and disadvantaged<sup>2</sup> young people are more than twice as likely to attend low decile schools, where they may receive fewer opportunities. Consequently, these rangatahi are less supported in their engagement with or achievement in higher education (Vodafone Foundation NZ, 2021). Research in Aotearoa has shown that "fewer than 1% of excluded and disadvantaged rangatahi go on to complete tertiary study in their early twenties" (Vodafone Foundation NZ, 2021, p.7). In turn, tertiary educational achievement is often expected now by employers across a wide range of sectors and businesses, therefore rangatahi from disadvantaged circumstances experience inequitable access to low-paid, casual and insecure employment opportunities with little ability to develop skills, qualifications, and increase their salary (Auckland Co-design lab, 2017; Vodafone Foundation NZ, 2021; 2019).

**Systemic racism acts as a barrier from rangatahi engaging and succeeding in education, this is a barrier to further study, employment and/or training.**

Racism is an organised system of oppression involving ideologies of superiority (and inferiority), which serves to privilege some racial/ethnic groups over others<sup>3</sup>. Research for this report on systemic racism focused on the education sector, however eliminating the experience and impact of racism across health, education and social sectors in Aotearoa is increasingly being recognised as key for achieving rangatahi wellbeing. For generations, Māori have been subject to an education system that has denied the expression of the Māori worldview, culture and language. Māori have been assessed and measured within the framework of Pākeha privilege. Historical colonial influences driving racism can still be seen in contemporary structures today. This is demonstrated by a focus on individual social backgrounds, parenting "failures" or "dysfunction" and other influences contributing to "deficit thinking" - where the educational underachievement of Māori is attributed to students rather than to the inadequacies of the education system. The intergenerational trauma and disadvantage of colonisation, systemic racism, and the ongoing racial bias, discrimination and privileging of Eurocentric views and systems, continue to disadvantage Māori and Pacific rangatahi within the education system and beyond (Vodafone New Zealand Foundation, 2021). The failure of the education system has led to low expectations for Māori and Pacific performance and achievement, practices such as class streaming, and has denied opportunities for Māori and Pacific rangatahi to participate in

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<sup>2</sup> Exclusion and disadvantage as determined by living in neighbourhood with high levels of material deprivation (Deprivation Index rating of 8 or higher), and based on the finding that one in three young people who live in these areas experience exclusion and disadvantage (Vodafone Foundation NZ, 2021).

<sup>3</sup> Talamaivao et al. (2020) Racism and health in Aotearoa NZ: a systematic review of quantitative studies NZMJ, 133: 1521

meaningful career pathways. This represents ongoing racism (Auckland co-design lab, Ministry of Education & The Southern Initiative 2020). In essence, the education system still “carries a racist legacy where Māori culture is seen as a barrier to success and Māori are channelled into unskilled labour” (The Southern Initiative & Waikato Tainui, 2019, p.6).

#### **Lack of accountability, responsibility and coordination between educators and employers.**

There is lack of responsibility, accountability, and coordination amongst the multiple players in the education to employment journey (Auckland co-design lab, 2017). Research in South Auckland found that the challenge that employers and young people face is “a complex clash of norms and expectations, which could be overcome through greater preparedness and proximity between different groups involved” (Auckland co-design Lab, 2017, p.5). This environment where employers and rangatahi have vastly different behavioural norms, expectations, cultures, and generational differences is widened by the lack of early understanding and exposure of young people to work opportunities. The lack of accessible networks and support intensifies this disconnect and there is a widespread view that clear accountable coordination between agencies to support the young job seeker is required (Auckland co-design lab, 2017). Research found that those with the greatest opportunity for early influences (schools, whānau and community) had little or no specific resources to support rangatahi understanding of work. In addition, employers had little incentive or ability to understand young people and tended to hire rangatahi who were ‘easier’ or ‘low risk’, often reinforcing inequities (Auckland co-design lab, 2017). Government agencies and providers in the tertiary education sector also hold some accountability for the disconnect between education and employment by indebting rangatahi (including with benefit obligations) and encouraging qualifications that may not result in better employment outcomes or higher incomes (The Southern Initiative & Waikato Tainui, 2019).

## 2.4 Who are what are key influencers, systems, and/or factors that enable rangatahi to thrive?

**SOCIAL CAPITAL: Whānau, peers, teachers and community are key influencers for rangatahi – having positive relationships with these groups enable rangatahi to thrive**

When rangatahi have a range of positive relationships in their lives, these relationships act as protective factors and enable rangatahi to thrive. Some research describes that the experience of having stable and responsive relationships is the single most important factor for healthy development (The Southern Initiative, 2017). Having healthy and supportive whānau connections has been shown to build cultural efficacy, positive Māori identity development and promote educational achievement (Auckland co-design lab, Ministry of Education & The Southern Initiative 2020). Social networks, in particular peer to peer groups, can also positively influence behavioural outcomes of those most at risk from vulnerability (The Southern Initiative, 2017). Learning environments with adults who foster positive stable relationships help to inspire them and make it easier for rangatahi to learn (Auckland co-design lab, Ministry of Education & The Southern Initiative 2020). These relationships between peers and with teachers are also a key influence in the successful transition within the educational environment, such as from intermediate to high school, by helping rangatahi to find their place (Auckland co-design lab, Ministry of Education & The Southern Initiative 2020). Within the community, relationships foster neighbourhood integration which can reduce mobility and help create connection to community. This is a further protective factor against poor and inequitable outcomes. Relationships in the community can also build strong connections to, and awareness of the world of work (Auckland co-design lab, 2017). In particular, connection with coaches or mentors helps rangatahi to build an understanding of positive societal experiences including the world of work, this is especially true for rangatahi who do not have access to similar role models in their own lives (Auckland co-design lab, 2017).

**CULTURAL CAPITAL: Rangatahi to thrive when their culture is understood and valued, particularly in education and employment systems.**

Culturally affirming environments ensure rangatahi want to engage with education and/or work because they know they are valued and cared for as Māori. “A strong sense of culture and identity is a key mechanism through which education and work environments can give opportunity to and invest in rangatahi” (The Southern Initiative & Waikato Tainui, 2019, p.11). Within spaces of learning, taking a strengths-based approach and having meaningful cultural intelligence is fundamental to supporting rangatahi to thrive (Auckland co-design lab, Ministry of

Education & The Southern Initiative 2020). Similarly, within the world of work, awareness of cultural differences supports the integration of rangatahi.

Other key influences, such as financial resources have been documented elsewhere in this report.

## **2.5 Where should our collective energies be focused to make the greatest impact for our rangatahi?**

**Collective energies should focus on improving whānau wellbeing in the early years by addressing inequity in welfare, health, and housing systems.**

*"If we want to create a more equitable thriving society for rangatahi we must invest in the early years and support young parents to interrupt ongoing cycle of exclusion and disadvantage"* (Vodafone Foundation New Zealand, 2021, p.14).

Addressing the structural inequities that influence the deprivation and experience of exclusion for rangatahi and their whānau would make the greatest difference to the wellbeing, opportunities, and outcomes of our rangatahi. Solutions lie in addressing inequities at their source, including racism and systems failures (The Southern Initiative & Waikato Tainui, 2019). Lack of resources for whānau undermines efforts at systemic change and creates negative impacts for the whole of society. It is imperative that everyone has at least "enough to meet their basic needs around food, housing, health, clothing and social/recreational participation" (Vodafone Foundation NZ, 2021, p.20). Improving access to material goods through lifting rates of benefits to an adequate level, supporting a living wage, ensuring equitable access to adequate, safe, healthy and affordable housing will make the biggest impact to the wellbeing of rangatahi living in deprivation. Even taking measures to reduce one stress factor for whānau earlier on in the lives of rangatahi "can impact on children's outcomes" (The Southern Initiative, 2017, p.18; Vodafone Foundation NZ, 2021; 2019). While risk reduction is one aim addressed through attention to specific determinants such as income, stress and housing; thriving and succeeding (according to rangatahi aspirations) should be the primary focus, and this requires a whole-of-system focus on equity.

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Collective energy should be focused on addressing equity in education.

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*"We don't need to fix our young people. We need to fix the systems that view them through a deficit lens- systems which consistently exclude them from opportunities"* (Vodafone Foundation New Zealand, 2021, p.3)

Whilst a number of factors need to be addressed, "equity in education is key to their journey and a crucial catalyst for transforming outcomes" (The Southern Initiative & Waikato Tainui, 2019 p.6). Achieving equity in education needs to involve input from a range of key stakeholders across the system. Policy settings should be reset to support dynamic and responsive education systems that keep Māori (and Pacific) rangatahi engaged in learning (The Southern Initiative & Waikato Tainui, 2019). Policy should also encourage growth in the cohort of Māori (and Pacific) teachers, "revisit policies around compulsory achievement to address cultural capital, tie cultural competencies into teaching practices and teacher appraisals, and mandate culturally responsive professional learning" (The Southern Initiative & Waikato Tainui, 2019, p.14). Educators can utilise te ao Māori and grow their cultural competency. Teachers also have a role at the individual level to influence others to have a culture of care and to challenge and dismantle racism. Māori medium education offers a framework through which equity in education can be achieved, however this must be a whole-of-system response. English medium schools can follow and learn from Māori medium education to redesign their teaching and learning practices so that they work for Māori. Māori language and culture needs to be genuinely valued, seen and heard in the classroom (The Southern Initiative & Waikato Tainui, 2019). A similar approach is required to foster outcomes for Pacific rangatahi, recognising the ethnic diversity of our rangatahi communities in Aotearoa.

## 2.6 What solutions or ideas would make the greatest difference to our rangatahi and their whānau?

Creating the conditions for systemic reform through partnering with Māori at all levels of decision making is required for initiatives that will have a positive impact on outcomes for rangatahi and their whānau.

In Aotearoa New Zealand, we have consistently failed to follow through on significant system reforms required to deliver outcomes on tax, care and protection, welfare and education (Vodafone Foundation NZ, 2021). Reforming the systems that support all New Zealanders and their wellbeing, and that achieve equity, requires working in genuine partnership with whānau, hāpu and Iwi. Governance, decision-making, and meaningful partnership are critical to our Te Tiriti o Waitangi obligations. Further, by tackling and reforming the systemic drivers of disadvantage, the dignity of our most vulnerable rangatahi and whānau will be restored. By creating the systems that are anti-racist and which adequately support our most vulnerable and excluded rangatahi and their whānau, we will be able to ensure meaningful participation in society (Vodafone New Zealand, 2021). Partnering with Māori has already led to the development of successful practices being delivered by Iwi, innovative, effective and unique service delivery models. Centred around a Māori world view, services like Whānau Ora enable better whānau outcomes. Whilst working in partnership with Māori at all levels of the system could lead to solutions and experiences that support rangatahi and their whānau, adequate and timely funding needs to support these priorities (Te Pūkenga, 2021).

Supporting and scaling innovation across schools, businesses and the community to support rangatahi and their whānau.

Literature has highlighted the need to grow, support and reward partnerships and connections between local schools, whānau, community, education providers and businesses. Such partnerships should either support whānau to increase their own capabilities or increase the visibility, awareness and opportunities for education to employment pathways. In this way, communities can lead change for themselves. "The critical enablers of community agency are power and trust, with resources flowing as a consequence - so that communities are able to design, deliver and evolve services that work for their people" (Vodafone Foundation NZ, 2021, p.23). Some solutions identified in the literature were services that provided whānau with connected support that is individualised to meet the wide range of holistic needs (Te Pūkenga, 2021). These included services that focused on creating whānau led solutions through relationship building, creating safe,

nurturing, low stress engagement that frees up capacity for “the development of problem-solving skills including planning, goal setting and self-regulation” (The Southern Initiative, 2017, p.21). Whānau have reflected that the experience of being valued, respected, developing genuine relationships, learning from one another and building new skills has fuelled their confidence and sense of purpose. This allowed them to “tackle new challenges and make positive changes in themselves, their relationships, homes and communities” (The Southern Initiative, 2017, p.24).

Other innovations such as those that promote schools to focus on employability, coordination across the education, whānau and work continuum, and programmes that provide access to coaching and mentoring for young people should also be supported and scaled. Research in South Auckland identified some innovative practices already in place such as partnering with local community organisations, education providers and Iwi to support young people to apply for jobs (Auckland co-design lab, 2017). Tools supporting employers to connect with and develop rangatahi in employment were identified as another avenue worthy of investment (Auckland co-design lab, 2017). Notably, this literature highlights that supporting and scaling innovation may also require re-evaluating and re-direct funding and resourcing models to “follow young people” through their journey, placing funding where the greatest opportunity for impact can occur (Auckland co-design lab, 2017, p.86).

## **2.7 How might we involve whānau, rangatahi and employers to create insight and breakthrough?**

**Include the voices and lived experience of whānau, rangatahi and employers to create insight and breakthrough.**

To create wellbeing outcomes for rangatahi, we must provide whānau, rangatahi and employers with the conditions for systemic reform and transformational change. Central to enabling systemic reform are honouring the voices of those who are excluded, stigmatised and disadvantaged by the current systems. This expertise must be promoted into positions of power and influence within the decision-making spaces of “government, philanthropy and service providers” (Vodafone New Zealand Foundation, 2021, p.21). This involves actively increasing diversity around the ‘board table’ and deliberately including those whose communities will be impacted in decision making processes. Within government, what this can translate to is taking concrete action on the recommendations and rulings of advisory groups and other experts, and similarly aligning the research imperative.

By providing better support to bridge understanding between educators, employers, whānau and rangatahi, we can create insight and breakthrough for rangatahi in education and employment.

*"Bringing the different parties together and building understanding of and empathy for one another's point of view helps to collapse the gap" (Auckland co-design lab, 2017, p.6).*

*"We need key people to act as kaitiaki to change rangatahi journey through education and employment. Teachers, educators, employers, and people working across our public institutions can work together to keep our tamariki in their flow and reach their dream careers. Policy makers can enact a suite of upstream policies that support the needs of all rangatahi and their whānau that continue throughout their learning journey." (The Southern Initiative & Waikato Tainui, 2019, p.18)*

Literature highlighted how rangatahi and their whānau need to gain a better understanding around tertiary education and pathways into employment. Findings from the Ka Awatea project showed that "when whānau, Iwi and the wider community were invested in education, positive school behaviours and a Māori student commitment to school completion, success improves" (Auckland co-design lab, Ministry of Education & The Southern Initiative 2020, p.19). Because rangatahi identify that their whānau has the strongest influence on them, collaboration with whānau has the potential to provide critical improvement in journeys through education to employment (Auckland co-design lab, Ministry of Education & The Southern Initiative 2020). One significant way that whānau and rangatahi can be supported to make informed decisions about tertiary study and pathways to employment is to involve whānau more directly in careers and advice around job-seeking (Auckland co-design lab, 2017; The Southern Initiative & Waikato Tainui, 2019). A practical way to support this is to provide whānau with access to, and the means, to share information, data, technical tools and skill, and to equip them with advice on how career pathways might be navigated or achieved. Involving whānau more directly in career and job-seeking advice grows their awareness and ability to support their young people (Auckland co-design lab, 2017).

Another way to create insight for rangatahi is to foster relationships built on whānaungatanga and manaakitanga with staff, better connections with employers, and sharing ideas with mentors and tuākana. These connections all help learners feel welcomed and enhance their sense of belonging within education and employment (Te Pūkenga, 2021). Additionally, through their connections with mentors and individuals working within roles in the community, rangatahi can be supported to develop better understandings of the different pathways that they could take, as well as learn how to take advantage of early opportunities to build long-term employment plans (Te Pūkenga,



2021). Having such guidance through a 'whānaunga' and 'manaakitanga' relationship with mentors allows rangatahi to find the right path early and builds learner confidence.

Finally, employers need help to gain cultural safety and competence in order to integrate and support rangatahi and their whānau into the workplace. Through establishing shared values, employers are able to increase their understanding of, and capability to, manage and support an increasingly diverse workforce (Auckland co-design lab, 2017).

## **2.8 How might we collaborate with young people, whānau, schools, the community and each other to identify initiatives to scale so our rangatahi are on a positive pathway to have many life options?**

Co-design is a tool of collaboration that takes a human centred approach. When embedded in Kaupapa Māori principles and works across multiple agencies, co-design is effective in developing and identifying initiatives that work for and have a positive impact on whānau and their rangatahi.

Co-design deliberately involves those impacted by an issue as active participants in the definition, design and delivery of responses (Auckland co-design lab, Ministry of Education & The Southern Initiative 2020; The Southern Initiative, 2017; 2020; Auckland co-design lab, 2016). Underpinned by the understanding that peoples lived experiences are equivalent to other forms of evidence and that we can use insights together to generate new perspectives, opportunities and solutions, co-design is increasingly used in public policy development (The Southern Initiative, 2017). Co-design allows us to get to grips with the complexity of the issues and contexts in which communities are trying to navigate by bringing together a diverse set of people in a system. The benefit of co-design is that it supports communities, whānau and their rangatahi to shape local solutions that will work for their unique environment, issues and capability (The Southern Initiative, 2020). Using co-design is also sustainable because those who have helped develop initiatives are "likely to continue with ideas, initiatives and ways of working" after their involvement with the co-design process (The Southern Initiative, 2020, p.22). Finally, opportunities to integrate outcomes of existing co-design processes, and ensure knowledge transfer, should be maximised to reduce the risk of rangatahi participant burden, biased engagement, and ineffective delivery.

## Strengths and Limitations

This report provides a high-level overview of key themes within specific literature around rangatahi wellbeing. In doing so a number of strengths to this review may be highlighted. All of the information sources utilised have been published within the last five years and all have focused on work in the Aotearoa New Zealand context, allowing for provision of a concise overview of the current national thinking within this field. The reports also draw on both international research and findings from the perspectives of individuals in Aotearoa New Zealand. Through the focus on literature that has used methodologies and principles of Kaupapa Māori and co-design, the findings presented within these reports highlight the lived experiences and voice of rangatahi, their whānau and other members of the community. This is a key strength of both the literature and the themes that arise in this report.

Whilst this review benefits from the strengths of the existing research and reports, there are a number of limitations to note. Whilst the research and reports utilised all focused on the Aotearoa New Zealand context, and findings will generally be applicable to the experiences of rangatahi in the Waikato region, some of the research conducted, particularly insights from data, would be different in the Waikato context. 'Rangatahi' are of course a broad group, with diverse backgrounds and experiences, and therefore specific research is needed to ensure themes and interventions are appropriate for the specific context and setting. Further, due to the high-level presentation of themes in this review, some of the nuanced insights provided have not been explicitly included. This review also focused only on the findings of the specific information sources outlined and there is a wealth of additional research and knowledge that has not been included for consideration. Within the literature there was important research with and for rangatahi Māori, critical to ensure an equity-led focus, and also to meet obligations under Te Tiriti o Waitangi. There was little mention or focus on other important rangatahi with respect to wellbeing, such as Pacific rangatahi, the rainbow community, those with disabilities, or others with diverse experiences, needs and outcomes. Finally, existing research findings are limited in their ability to speak to the ongoing impacts of COVID-19 and the additional barriers or pressures this brings to rangatahi in their journey through education and employment.



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