

**Te Rautaki a Rangahau Mātauranga
o Aotearoa 2021-2025**
NZCER Strategy 2021–2025



E hī ake ana te matau ki te whaiiao ki te ao mārama

Vision

Education is about nurturing ākonga, realising potential, and helping communities thrive.

Purpose

Our purpose centres on whakatere tōmua / wayfinding.

Whakatere tōmua is our mahi. Our purpose—through research, resources, and services—is to find ways for kaiako, ākonga, and whānau to have the best possible education experiences and outcomes.

Te Tiriti o Waitangi

Our work is driven by a strong commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Te Tiriti o Waitangi is the founding document of Aotearoa. Signed in 1840 by leaders of hapū and the Crown, Te Tiriti o Waitangi affirmed Māori rights as tangata whenua and provided a place and a model of governance in Aotearoa.

Te Tiriti o Waitangi provided a basis for ongoing, power-sharing relationships between tangata whenua and all others who would come in later years. Central to this power-sharing was a commitment to live together in the spirit of honourable relationships and to take the best possible care of each other. This requires the injustices caused by colonisation to be addressed and for all New Zealanders to engage in creating a positive future that honours the vision of Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Te Tiriti o Waitangi requires our education system to achieve equitable outcomes for Māori as Māori. As a research and development organisation, we are committed to honouring Te Tiriti o Waitangi. We value the importance of Māori language, culture, and identity in all our practices.

Values

Our values shape our culture and what we care about.

We value motuhake—our independence; pono—strong ethics; auahatanga—creativity and innovation; mahi ngātahi—collaboration; and rangatiratanga—leadership. Paramount to these are:

- **Whanaungatanga**—we value relationships and reciprocal partnerships
- **Manaakitanga**—we respect others and treat them with generosity and care
- **Ako**—we value learning and are also on this journey.

Draw up the hook into the world of light

About NZCER

We deliver quality research to influence education policy and practice.

- We aim to improve learning by influencing education policy and practice.
- We are actively committed to the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi to help us uphold mana Māori, whakamana Māori.
- We strive for high quality research. Research is integral to the publications, resources, services, evaluations, and advice we provide.

Whakatere tōmua

***Whakatere tōmua anchors our aspirations—hai punga te wawata
kia rere ki whea atu, ki whea mai.***

Whakatere tōmua is about utilising the concepts of wayfinding—the voyaging spirit, navigation, and waka—as ways to describe the NZCER mahere. The concept of wayfinding or navigation prompts and provokes images and values that are located in the action of stepping off solid land that we know well, and accepting the challenge to embark on new journeys. We will travel across sometimes familiar, and sometimes uncharted, waters.

Background

We are an independent statutory body that works for public good in education.

NZCER was established in 1934 with philanthropic funding from the Carnegie Corporation. In 1945, we became an independent statutory body, and we operate under the New Zealand Council for Educational Research Act 1972. The Act sets out our official functions:

- (a) to foster the study of, and research into, educational and other like matters, and to prepare and publish such reports on these matters as may in its opinion be necessary or of value to teachers or other persons
- (b) to furnish information, advice, and assistance to persons and organisations concerned with education and other similar matters.

The Board of NZCER has five elected members (chosen by an electoral college) and one member appointed by the Minister of Education. The Board can co-opt up to three more people to be members of the Board.

Our staff include Research & Development, Sales, and Business Support teams. Te Wāhanga is a team of kairangahau who give priority to kaupapa Māori research.

NZCER operates for public good in education. Our revenue comes from multiple sources, including contestable research contracts, a government grant called Te Pae Tawhiti, and sales from our resources and services. Te Pae Tawhiti enables us to build a research programme that complements and enhances our contract work. We bid for work that aligns with our strategic priorities and areas of expertise, and focus on mahi that we believe will have an impact in education.

Strategic priorities

Our strategic priorities help us achieve our purpose. We have four strategic priorities and associated actions.

1. Decolonising education

Taia te wai (o te waka) kia pai ai te whakatare ki uta ki tai

Bail the water (of the canoe) so it may manoeuvre shoreward and seaward

This strategic priority is about developing decolonising approaches in education. According to Linda Tuhiwai Smith, “decolonization” is concerned with having “a more critical understanding of the underlying assumptions, motivations and values that inform research practices”.¹

By bringing a decolonising focus to our work, we aim to deepen our own and others’ awareness of the inequities caused by colonisation. These inequities continue to shape our education system and result in negative consequences for ākongā, whānau, and aiga today. Through our work, we aim to highlight not only the benefits of tino rangatiratanga for Māori, but also self-determination for Pacific peoples.

Developing decolonising approaches in education needs to be ongoing. It will require sustained and collaborative efforts to identify and challenge inequities, and to influence both systemic change and everyday practice. It will also require research that is co-designed and collaborative, and that works for the participants and their communities.

NZCER will:

- develop and embed a vision for decolonising education through our work
- review our own methodologies and resources with a decolonising lens
- make visible the inequities and systemic issues in education and shed light on ways to address those inequities
- seek to increase our mahi with genuine partnerships, particularly with tangata whenua
- aim to influence how people think about decolonising education through our research, resources, and services.

2. Upholding mana Māori, whakamana Māori

Hai punga te wawata

Anchoring our aspirations

This strategic priority is about advocating for the right of Māori to learn as Māori. We are committed to making a significant contribution to Māori education. We will do this in ways that bring about positive change in policy and practice, support Māori aspirations, and benefit Māori learners.

Our strategic actions build on our history in this area. We will focus on the revitalisation of te reo Māori me ōna tikanga to help build sector capability, and ultimately contribute to the future vision of te reo Māori becoming a normal part of daily life. We will also actively engage with Māori in kura, Māori-medium, and English-medium settings through providing access to research, resources, and services to support ākongā, kaiako, and whānau to learn as Māori.

Within this strategic priority, NZCER’s wayfinding mahi is about building on the portfolio of kaupapa Māori research. We will actively seek work that challenges us to embark on new journeys that focus on upholding mana Māori, whakamana Māori, and Māori aspirations.

NZCER will:

- actively engage with Māori to ensure our work connects with, and creates opportunities for, ākongā Māori
- advocate for kaupapa Māori research, resources, and evidence that uphold Māori data sovereignty and mana Māori
- act as an advocate and motivator in the revitalisation of te reo Māori me ōna tikanga
- support kaiako in English-medium schools with their bicultural aspirations for all ākongā.

3. Improving equity for ākonga and equity in education

Kia kotahi te hoe

Working together as one

This strategic priority is about finding ways to realise the strengths, hopes, and dreams of every ākonga.

Through our mahi, we want to support and cater for under-served groups in the education system. This includes disproportionate numbers of Māori and Pacific peoples, those from low socioeconomic backgrounds, ākonga within the rainbow (LGBTQIA+) community, and ākonga with disabilities, neurodiverse needs, special needs, and additional education needs. These people are an asset to our communities with strengths to realise and share with others.

Our work in this area will challenge the status quo and seek to explore ways to ensure ākonga flourish because of their education experiences, from early learning to adult learning. Clear recommendations are needed for policy and practice about ways to improve equity and excellence in education. Further investment focused on equity will improve our ability to meet the needs of diverse groups of ākonga.

Strengthening our connections with kōhanga reo, puna reo, kura, whānau, hapū, iwi, aiga, communities, and other learning support organisations that are focused on supporting diversity will help to improve equity for ākonga, and equity in education.

NZCER will:

- undertake research and make policy recommendations in areas where equity and excellence in education could be improved
- work with diverse and under-served groups to find ways for all ākonga strengths to be revealed and supported through our mahi
- invest in making improvements to the inclusiveness and accessibility of NZCER's assessment and survey resources
- seek partnerships to jointly influence and advocate for equity and excellence in our education system.

4. Influencing the future of education

Takiritia te rā (o te waka), kia kau takawiwini kia kau takawawana ki tua o te pae tawhiti

Unfurl the sail (of the canoe) so it may glide fearlessly and boldly beyond the distant horizon

This strategic priority is about leading thinking to navigate our potential futures in education. We live in turbulent times with unprecedented change. Education needs a systems thinking approach, with research and resources to help us make sense of the social and environmental issues, rapid changes in digital technologies, and increased uncertainty. As wayfinders in educational research, we have a leadership role in bringing to light the evidence, options, possibilities, and consequences of future education policy and future teaching, learning, and leadership practices.

We will take a leading role in analysing how well the education system is working to achieve its aims. We strive to be leading contributors in curriculum, assessment, systems, policy, wellbeing, sustainability, school leadership, kaiako development, and teaching and learning. We will use research evidence to challenge the status quo, and to reveal options for teaching and learning in innovative and sustainable ways.

The complexities ahead of us will require collective efforts. As an independent organisation we are well placed to help lead and facilitate the required connectedness. Working with complementary expertise across research, practitioners, whānau, hapū, iwi, aiga, communities, policy makers, philanthropics, organisations, and associations will help us achieve greater impact across the sector, from early learning to lifelong learning as adults. Through our collective endeavours, we have the potential to further our aspirations—ensuring the best possible education experiences and outcomes for people in Aotearoa, the Pacific, and beyond.

NZCER will:

- build carefully reasoned theoretical models to influence and shift how people think about the world
- actively seek opportunities that push boundaries, encourage innovation, and promote future-focused practices in education
- continue to strengthen the ways we can support and influence a diverse and complex education system that learns from research and evidence
- develop partnerships to realise opportunities for significant and positive impact in education.

Our strategic success criteria

Our success is largely measured by our ability to influence and enable positive outcomes in education. The following statements describe the key outcomes we're striving for during the period of this strategy. Through our mahi,

- decolonising approaches in education are being more widely discussed, understood, and used in education research, education policy, and practice
- Māori educators—kaiako and tumuaki—are giving positive feedback about the usefulness and relevance of our mahi to support and enhance their own practice
- improvements to equity are occurring and this is frequently acknowledged by groups under-served in education
- a wide range of clients and stakeholders are frequently engaging with our future-focused leadership, research, and resources as they find value in our mahi and can describe the positive impact of our contributions
- policy makers and practitioners are frequently influenced and make changes to benefit ākonga, kaiako, and whānau
- NZCER is increasingly known for our strengths as a bicultural organisation.

How we'll implement this strategy

This strategy sets our priorities and shapes our mahi with a framework upon which we develop our Mahere ā-Tau Annual Plan. It guides our decision making for Te Pae Tawhiti, the opportunities we seek through contestable project work, the investments we make in our resources and services, the focus we give to our business support, and the plans we put in place to support our staff learning and development.

We will continue to grow our diversity, capability, and expertise across all roles in the organisation. This is critical to our success and the outcomes we're striving for.

Partnerships are a recurring theme across all four strategic priorities and will only be fully realised through genuine partnerships and relationships with tangata whenua. We believe in reciprocity and working together with complementary expertise to achieve greater impact. Strengthening current and establishing new relationships will be an ongoing aspect of our of day-to-day mahi.

1 Smith, Linda Tuhiwai. (1999). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples*. Zed Books and Otago University Press.

