

COMET Auckland report to Cognition Education Trust

Huia Hawke, COMET Auckland Manager Education Māori, November 2018

Youth Education Wānanga (hui) – held April 2018.

Tēnā tātou...

Introduction

This report describes the process and outcomes for a series of actions during 2018 aimed at hearing from Māori young people about their experience of education; and enabling them to share those experiences with each other and with people (especially educators) who are in positions to take action on issues raised.

The core part of the process was a youth wānanga held in April 2018 but the engagement before and after the wānanga has also been crucial and in particular has allowed us to increase the number and diversity of young people involved, and to support a Steering Roopu of young people to identify and share the messages emerging from the consultation.

Note that in our application we referred to the initial coming-together as a hui, but we are now referring to it as a wānanga. Wānanga is another word for hui but the word wānanga describes in-depth discussion and workshoping in a hui.

1. The hui...

What was the range of young people involved?

Most of the larger secondary schools in Auckland we approached to attend the wānanga. There was very high interest from those who lead Māori initiatives in the Colleges/High Schools. Unfortunately, the date of the wānanga was also a date for internal assessments NCEA in most schools. I approached attendance service agencies. They are responsible for a lot of our NEET's students. Although keen to attend, the timing and staffing of students, made it not viable for them to attend. The Auckland Girls Grammar Teen Parent Unit was invited. I visited them and two students along with a supervisor had planned to attend. Unfortunately, on the day, their babies were unwell. The Youth Justice Facility and I had intense conversations about their attendance. It was decided best we go to their centre to engage in the kaupapa. This is in the planning for 2019.

Representatives from Ngā Kura Kaupapa o Tāmaki Makaurau (Te Reo Māori total immersion colleges in Auckland) and Ngā Kura Tūarua o Tāmaki Makaurau (mainstream colleges/high schools in Auckland) attended the Wānanga/hui. At the 11th hour two key groups were unable to attend: an Alternative Education Group in Otara and a Young Dad's group Otara Health connection. The youngest attendee was a 14-year-old from De La Salle College and the oldest were represented in the Year 13 cohort from both groups. A group of slightly older young people from Ngāti Whātua o Ōrākei also attended to assist with leading the activities.

The shape of the wānanga was: After whakawhanaungatanga, the young people worked in groups to look at the messages from the Office of the Children's Commissioner's report, *Education matters to me*, on children's and young people's experiences of education. These messages proved valuable

starters for discussion, so the young people present could reflect on whether these messages resonated for them, and what their own experience was.

In the months since the wānanga we have worked with the young people to engage with more diverse rangatahi, realising that some of these groups are not able to come to wānanga so we needed to go to them.

Strive Youth Services team were very interested in our Kaupapa. We hosted a hui at Strive and many diverse youths came to the hui:

- The young mums in the room were the sure leaders of the group. A lot of the sharing was based on their life experiences and explaining why life became the way it is for them now. They love being mums, but they also shared they would like to be back in a learning environment.
- A lot of the youth were gang related. Association because of whānau or friends. These youth were very guarded, but when they did participate, the room stopped to listen.
- Present also were young girls who were on courses at MIT or MSD. These young ones were very articulate in their discussion and took on lead roles.

We have also had involvement from two young men who work in construction. We were thankful they took the time off work to contribute their thoughts and ideas.

There is a special group of young Māori boys who “sort of” attend school when they want to, who have participated also. I liaise with the DP of their school. He has signalled they are bright and gifted young men. They have been integral to group discussion and add great value to all of the young ones who are on this journey with us.

What were the key insights gained at the hui?

The key messages from rangatahi/Youth at the wānanga were:

- ❖ That Kura Kaupapa rangatahi felt sympathy/aroha for rangatahi who are at Kura Tūarua (mainstream schools). They could not understand or comprehend what Kura Tūarua taiohi are experiencing daily, in their mainstream kura. Kura Kaupapa rangatahi do not face issues of racism or any other issues rangatahi Māori face in mainstream kura. The distinct difference in what each cohort experiences made for interesting debate and listening. It was great for each cohort to gain an insight into each other’s life’s at school, at home and at play. All of this aside, the common factor is that they were urban rangatahi Māori who unless there was a platform like the hui, there could have been a high chance they would not have learnt how similar yet so different their life experiences were!
- ❖ There are significant notions of ideas or things already being decided for rangatahi Māori at home, at school and at play. Rangatahi want the opportunity to say what is important to them. They want to have a say in their life choices. Significant adults in each of their lives often think they know what is best for their rangatahi.
- ❖ To have MORE hui rangatahi Māori. The whakawhānaungatanga (getting to know one another, making relationships) was priceless. All of them learning with and for each other. Ataahua. (beautiful!)

Since the wānanga, a Youth Steering Roopu (YSR) has been working to bring together the themes from the wider consultation. The following are kaupapa (themes) the YSR have begun to synthesise and will look to unpack in the new year.

1. Racism – disrespect
2. Exposed to too much freedom makes you grow up too quick
3. High expectations from adults
4. “What’s your excuse!”
5. Health and Wellbeing
6. An inclusive environment

2. Outcomes

How have the messages been shared?

Messages and findings of the Hui have been reported to Tāmaki Makaurau Education Forum (TMEF) Hui in May 2018 (attended by iwi education representatives, Māori educators and other education leaders with an interest in Māori education in Tāmaki Makaurau). Representatives from the original wānanga from Kura Kaupapa and Mainstream schools attended the Forum to report back about the Youth Wānanga. They reported about the process the Wānanga undertook using Children’s Commission’s mahi, the *Education Matter to me series - Engagement of rangatahi and tamariki report*. They then put the Forum through workshops that they did at Wānanga, using the key insights (see attachments).

It appeared the Forum was a safe environment for rangatahi to share their thoughts without holding back. Letting the Forum know about racism in schools was a real thing for the Forum and examples of what happens in schools that for them is normal, really hit home with the audience. The Forum asked deeper questions and rangatahi responded with great pride and strength. Ka pai (good on them) to them! It was the privilege of the Forum to have our rangatahi share and sit in our group workshops. The forum knew how fortunate they were to hear pure and clear the voice of youth and the climate of education in schools for them today.

The environment was one where the Kura Kaupapa rangatahi could speak Te Reo Māori as if they were at school or at home. High levels of comfort for all our rangatahi at this Hui...beautiful!

The Youth Steering Group (YSR) also presented at the Ulearn Conference run by Core Education. Their presentation focused on the kaupapa (theme) of ‘Youth Māori deciding what is important to Youth Māori in education’, which is an area the YSR has been working on.

The YSR were part of the latest TMEF hui in October. The theme for the hui was ‘Have we come full circle?’ YSR were part of a panel, along with some of our esteemed kaumātua of Auckland, most of whom attended school 60 or 70 years ago. The idea was to ask a question about education and listen to the responses. How different were the responses from the kaumātua and YSR to a simple question like, ‘What did you like about going to school Uncle?’ What we found was, their experiences were not much different at all. Further information about this hui will be on our website in due course.

What next steps are in train or planned?

The Youth Steering Roopu (YSR) has become very diverse group since the first hui in April. We have met with many other Māori youth groups from different settings and undertook hui to engage their thoughts and how they see education for them.

The Steering Roopu will continue to share their findings in places and spaces where we know there are Māori Youth ages 14 – 19. The following have sent invitation for us to visit them: Youth Justice Correction Facility, Otara Health Young Dad's group, Teen Parent Unit Mt Eden, Alternative Education ACES Otara. We will visit other areas should they invite us to their mahi. The aim of this is to gather further insights as to whether or not the three or four kaupapa **are a thing** for these young people (i.e. whether other young people from diverse settings agree with these insights, or not). We are hoping these groups of youth will help to shape further the work of the Steering Roopu. Hopefully we will have representation from these groups of Youth on the advisory/steering Roopu.

NOTE: An email was sent to 16 schools who indicated they were interested in the Youth kaupapa but could not attend the hui in April due to me landing a date of internal assessments in High Schools and Colleges. There is still room for taiohi to join the advisory/steering roopu.

The next step will be for the Youth Steering Roopu to decide on a kaupapa (theme) as a focus for their and our work in 2019 and beyond. After that, they will design the kaupapa, i.e. shape mahi that will address one or more of the themes the young people have identified. This is planned for 2019.

All in all, we have a lot more mahi to do in 2019. I will be leading this mahi...

What are the indications so far that the wānanga is having an influence?

There is still so much we do not know as a group of Māori Educators and community. The humility, honesty and openness from the youth moved some of the Forum to tears.

The best indication at the time of our hui is we have new members volunteering to the table! School Principal and Ex school Principal...two Community members, Animation College representative plus our existing table.

Office of the Children's (OCC) is very interested in YSR. The YSR were part of the Good Life campaign about to come from the OCC. OCC is a proud partner to our mahi. They will be with us right the way through this journey.

Overall, the Hui was a two-way teaching and learning kōrero. Ako (reciprocal learning) at its best.

3. Evaluation

We collected feedback with an evaluation form. There were many comments about how appreciated it was to be with their peers. Learning about different school contexts and what is valued and not valued at and within different school contexts. Main message was...to Hui about each other's different walk and talks and an appreciation about each other's place of sharing kōrero. Learning how varied backgrounds shape perspective and interpretation. Value of the Hui to them I think was shown by a large number of Youth now volunteering of their time to be part of the Advisory/Steering Roopu.

4. Feedback to CET

The support from Cognition Education Trust meant that I could engage with groups without reservation, knowing I would be able to cover venue, travel, kai and other costs to bring groups of Youth together for the wānanga itself and for the many subsequent hui. I have been able to plan the kaupapa a lot further without constraints.

A lot of the logistics in the engagement of the rangatahi would have been extremely difficult if we did not have the support from CET. This important kaupapa is well worth every hui and engagement we have done thus far. Thank you so much for your thoughts and generosity.

Sooooo grateful! Kia ora.