



VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF
WELLINGTON
TE HERENGA WAKA

Māori Performing Arts and Educational Outcomes Report

Dr Meegan Hall and Linda Bowden
January 2021

Māori Performing Arts and Educational Outcomes Report

1. Introduction

The uptake of Māori performing arts has long been associated with positive outcomes for Māori language and culture revitalisation (Royal 1997; Te Puni Kōkiri 2006). While some qualitative research also suggested a link between Māori performing arts and educational benefits (Whitinui 2008), until now, a quantitative study of the educational outcomes of undertaking Māori performing arts at secondary school level has not been completed.

Māori Performing Arts (MPA) was formally recognised as an academic subject by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) in 2002 and became part of the national New Zealand curriculum. Since then, national student enrolments in MPA as a subject or learning area have consistently reached between 4,000-6,000 per annum. Over the period of 2014-2019, the total number of students enrolled in the MPA subject area fluctuated within that range – 5016 in 2014, 4925 in 2015, 5410 in 2016, 4545 in 2017, 4152 in 2018, and 4738 in 2019. Within those annual totals, a smaller number chose to enrol in NCEA Level 1, 2 or 3 standards (2176 in 2014, 2084 in 2015, 2227 in 2016, 2092 in 2017, 1961 in 2018 and 2352 in 2019).

The NZQA provided the data for this report and defined MPA students as 'students entered for at least one Māori Performance standard'. MPA standards are in the NZQA domain 'Māori Performance' (field-Māori, subfield-Māori Performing Arts). The full list of MPA standards covered by this report can be found at <https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/framework/explore/domain.do?frameworkId=75879>.

This report looks at the students who were entered for NCEA Māori Performing Arts (MPA) Levels 1-3 standards in the six years spanning 2014-2019. It tests the hypothesis that students who undertook those standards as part of their learning programme performed better overall than those who did not. It presents an analysis of the data in two ways. The first considers the NCEA results of all MPA students compared with all Māori students in Years 11-13. The second considers the NCEA results of MPA students compared with the entire national student cohort in Years 11-13. The report concludes with a discussion of key findings, changes occurring in the education sector, and areas for further research.

2. Comparison of MPA and 'all Māori' student cohorts

The first comparison looks at the achievement of all students enrolled in MPA Levels 1-3 standards against the achievement of 'all Māori' students enrolled in any NCEA Level 1-3 standards across the years 2014-2019. The comparison also includes the attainment of University Entrance (UE).

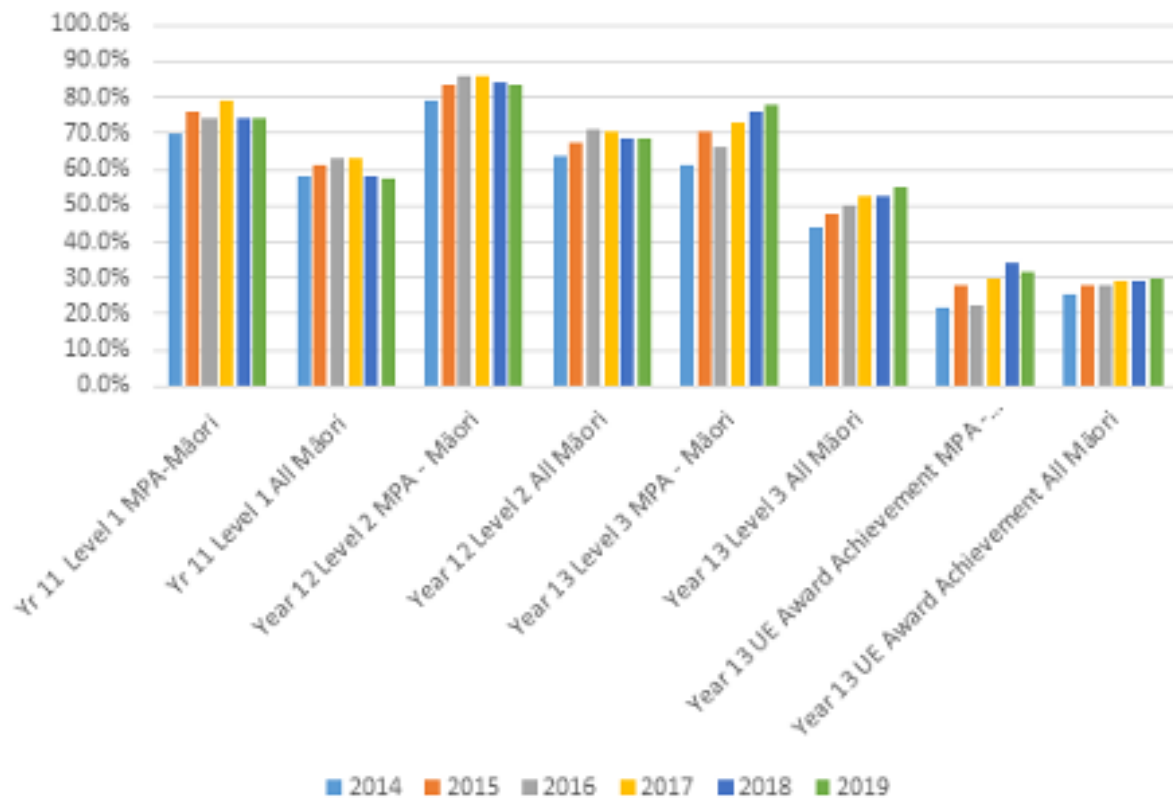


Figure 1: Comparison of NCEA results of MPA and ‘all Māori’ student cohorts 2014-2019.

The key finding from this comparison is that the achievement of the MPA cohorts was consistently higher than the ‘all Māori’ cohorts across all three levels of NCEA. The gap between the two cohorts is most pronounced at Level 3. At Levels 1 and 2, while the achievement of MPA students increased against the ‘all Māori’ cohorts between the years 2014 and 2017, they decreased in the years 2018 and 2019 thereby, closing the gap slightly between the two cohorts (although the MPA student outcomes remain at levels higher than in 2014).

The other significant finding from this comparison is that the UE outcomes for both the MPA and ‘all Māori’ cohorts are significantly lower than the Levels 1-3 outcomes. Results for the MPA cohorts have fluctuated and dropped below the ‘all Māori’ cohorts in both 2014 and 2016 – although, more recently, the MPA students outperformed the ‘all Māori’ students in 2018 and 2019.

3. Comparison of MPA and ‘all students’ cohorts

The second comparison looks at the achievement of all students enrolled in MPA Levels 1-3 standards against the achievement of ‘all students’ enrolled in any NCEA Level 1-3 standards across the years 2014-2019. The comparison includes the attainment of University Entrance (UE).

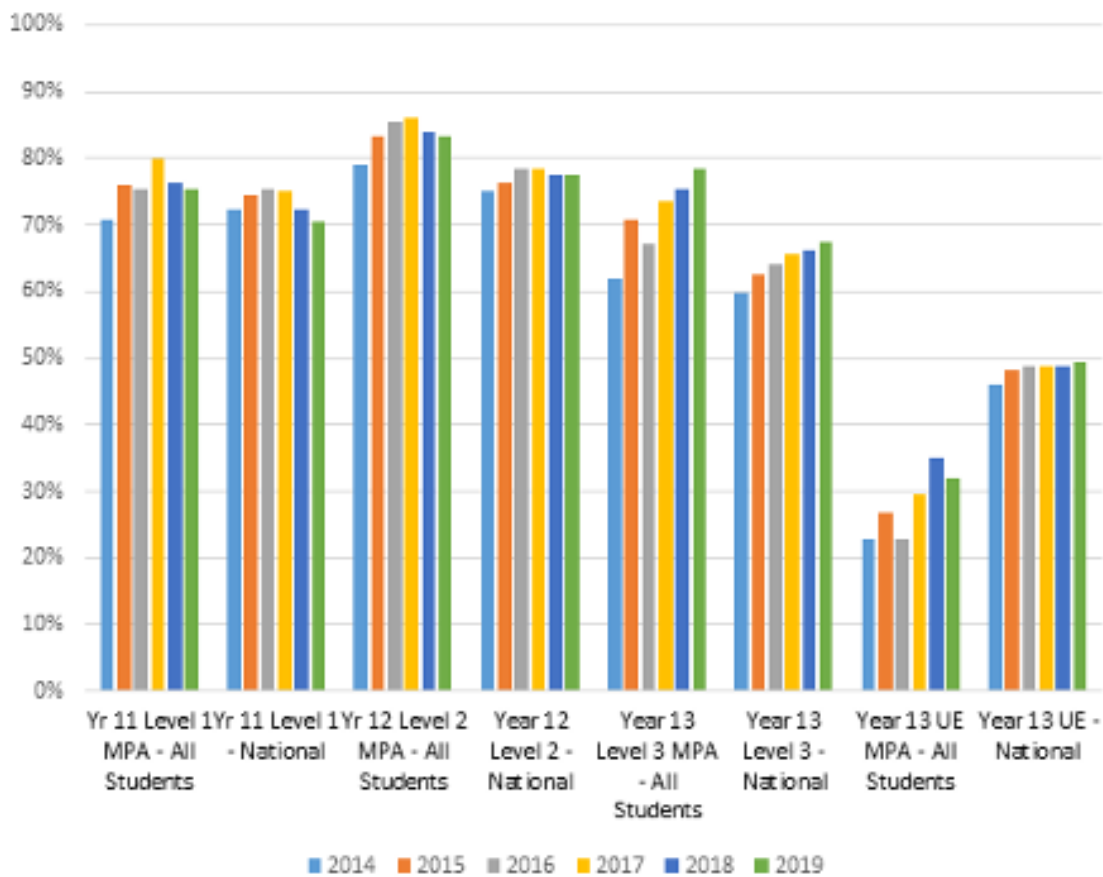


Figure 2: Comparison of NCEA results of MPA and 'all students' cohorts 2014-2019.

The key finding from this comparison is that the achievement of the MPA cohorts is consistently higher than the national student cohorts across the NCEA Levels 1-3. Once again, the gap between the two cohorts becomes most pronounced at Level 3. At Level 1, the gap between each cohort is less than 5% and at Level 2 the gap was increasing until 2017 but slightly lower results for the MPA cohort in 2018 and 2019 saw the gap begin to close. Also at Levels 1 and 2, the achievement percentages increased (or remained steady) between the years 2014 and 2017 but there was a decrease in 2018 for both the MPA students and 'all students' cohorts.

The only place where MPA students did not out-perform the other students in either of the comparisons is in UE outcomes. Across all six years, the UE achievement of the 'all students' cohort is considerably higher than the MPA cohorts. While the MPA cohorts managed to attain a 10% improvement in UE results between 2014-2019, there remains a gap between the MPA and 'all students' cohorts of around 17%.

Discussion

Clearly, there is a marked difference in the educational outcomes of MPA students and all other students in New Zealand secondary schools. This report provides clear evidence that MPA students have consistently and significantly outperformed 'all Māori' and 'all students' cohorts across an extended period. Further research is needed to explore all of the reasons why that might be.

The one area in which the MPA cohort does not outperform the 'all students' cohort is in UE attainment. This can be explained by the inequitable structure of the current NCEA system. At present, most of the students studying MPA can only earn Unit Standards. In some instances, MPA students can earn Achievement Standards from Dance, Drama or Music but that is not common practice. Unit Standards do not count towards University Entrance; only Achievement Standards from a list of approved subjects can contribute to a student's University Entrance tally. Thus, if a student chooses to study MPA at Level 3, any credits that they might amass in that subject will not be counted towards their UE. This is clearly impacting on the UE outcomes for MPA students.

This UE credits anomaly has been criticised by many students and staff in the education sector, and from those within the Māori performing arts community. It was raised during the public engagement process that was undertaken for the review of NCEA conducted by the Ministry of Education in 2018-2019. In May 2019, the Government announced a number of changes to the NCEA system, including the development of new MPA Achievement Standards across Levels 1-3. On 14 October 2020, draft Achievement Standards were released, and public feedback was sought by the Ministry of Education by 1 November 2020. The new MPA Achievement Standards are expected to be piloted in selected kura and schools in 2021. Once the MPA Achievement Standards are in place across New Zealand, the next change needed will be for MPA to be added to the list of approved subjects for UE.

Conclusion

Over the last six years, MPA students have generally achieved better NCEA results than the 'all Māori' student cohorts and 'all students' national cohorts. This is a significant finding and one that deserves further research to identify contributing factors and causes.

The issues identified in this report around the MPA student cohorts' attainment of UE are likely to be addressed through the implementation of the recommendations from the recent review of the NCEA. Close attention will need to be paid to the introduction of the new MPA Achievement Standards, and changes made to the approved subject list for UE, in order for the academic ability of MPA students to be fully recognised and appreciated.

References

- Royal, T. C. (1997, 4 February). *Mōteatea and the transmission of history*. Paper presented at the Ōtaki Historical Society, Ōtaki.
- Te Puni Kōkiri (2006). *Te oranga o te reo Māori i te rāngai ngā toi 2006: The health of the Māori language in the arts sector 2006*. Wellington: Te Puni Kōkiri.
- Whitinui, P. (2008). Kapa Haka counts: Improving participation levels of Māori students in mainstream secondary schools. *Mai Review*, 3(8), 1-14.

Dr Meegan Hall and Linda Bowden
January 2021