

MĀORI CAREER INFORMATION SEEKING

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Abstract

This paper investigates how Māori secondary school students aged 16–18 years engage with information to assist them in making decisions about their future career options. Little has been written about how Māori access information and this article fills a gap in the literature. Research was undertaken in four secondary schools, using a questionnaire and focus group sessions. Of the 139 participants, approximately two thirds (94) had made a decision about their future career. The results of the questionnaire demonstrate a heavy reliance on interpersonal sources rather than electronic and printed resources. The people they seek information from are either friends, close whānau members or individuals that are working in careers they are interested in. Participants identified several barriers to getting the information they require including not knowing who to ask, not wanting to ask other people, people asked not always knowing how to help, and being overwhelmed by how much information is available.

Keywords

Māori information behaviour, Māori information barriers, Māori youth,
Māori career development

Introduction

This paper considers the role that information seeking plays in assisting young Māori to make decisions about their future career options. The data collected for this article was part of a

larger doctoral studies project that focused on the information seeking behaviours of Māori secondary school students in the 16–18 years old age group. Although other studies have investigated the career decision making processes of Māori youth, this study is the most

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comprehensive investigation into how they seek information to help them make these decisions. It therefore fills a major gap in the career decision making literature.

Statistical estimates from 2012 show that the overall population of New Zealanders is ageing due to low fertility and low levels of mortality, with the median age being 36.9 (Statistics New Zealand, 2012). For Māori the latest projections show that the median age will be 25.4 years in 2026, compared with a median age of 22.9 years in 2006. The Māori population is also forecast to grow at a faster rate than any other ethnic group in New Zealand and this is particularly obvious in the younger age groups where the youth population (aged 15–19 years) is on the decrease, except for Māori where this age group accounts for approximately 37% of the total Māori population. The high proportion of Māori in this age group means that there will be increased pressure on young Māori to successfully establish themselves in employment to help cement New Zealand's economic, cultural and social future. By successfully establishing themselves in careers, young Māori will assist in providing services, resources and tax revenue to support an increasingly dependent and substantially larger older population.

Māori leaders at iwi and hapū level as well as at pan-Māori hui (Hui Taumata, 2005) have identified that Māori are well placed to aid New Zealand's future prosperity by achieving at a higher level in the area of education advancement, thus providing an ability for Māori to transition from education to successful career pathways. Over the last decade these expectations have seen an unprecedented increase in the number of Māori accessing tertiary study (Education Counts, 2011). However, statistics demonstrate that educational success is not as obvious for Māori of school age as it is for other ethnic groups, as only 51.3% of Māori school-leavers had National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) Level 2 or above, which is the minimum entry requirement for access to university and other forms of higher learning

(Education Counts, 2012). The results from this research reveal that although the majority of respondents have clear ideas about their chosen careers, their information seeking strategies to learn more about their choice do not always leave them fully informed and satisfied.

Existing studies

Very little literature exists that focuses on the career development of Māori students. A very early study by McQueen (1945) attempted to provide a framework for the development of vocational guidance to solve the "Māori youth employment problem." McQueen recognised the need to develop the scope of career options available to Māori beyond farming and manual labour positions and sought to have Māori represented in the same range of vocations available to non-Māori. One of McQueen's recommendations was to employ vocational officers, preferably of Māori descent, with leadership and educational qualities who would focus solely on vocational guidance for Māori youth and would liaise with employers, parents, Māori communities, students, teachers and the general public.

More recent studies have been undertaken by Taurere (2010), Sultana (1988), Ministry of Women's Affairs (1995), Reid (2000), and Furbish and Reid (2001). Taurere (2010) discovered that Māori students wishing to make a successful transition to university were dependent on the careers advisors at schools exercising sufficient agency, as the complications of NCEA assessment had effectively marginalised the support able to be given by whānau. Sultana (1988) focused on educational factors that influenced the occupational choice of Māori students. Sultana identified a number of factors, including low expectations of teachers, fellow pupils and the pupils themselves. Some other factors such as the influence of peers and the influence and expectations of parents were also identified.

Sultana believed that one solution to this was to encourage the schools to take a proactive approach by encouraging Māori students to replicate the example set by the “Girls Can Do Anything” campaign and aim at a higher and wider range of career options.

Reid (2000) investigated the influences on the careers of Māori politicians. Her study revealed that parents had the strongest influence over their career directions. Another study by Furbish and Reid (2003) emphasised the need for Māori career counselling development to consider holistic issues, including Māori cultural and spiritual values.

The report prepared by the Ministry of Women’s Affairs (1995) focused on the career choices of Māori girls. This study revealed that the girls had high aspirations for their future careers, but lacked sufficient information about the qualifications or school subjects they needed to enter their chosen profession. Their main sources of information about career choices tended to be friends and whānau, particularly their parents, although the study noted that some parents were unable to help due to their lack of educational success or knowledge.

In summary, the existing literature on Māori career development has been heavily focused on describing the advisory roles that whānau members, careers advisors and educational factors have played in assisting Māori students to make decisions about future careers. As such the literature suggests that these decisions are made in a reactive rather than a proactive manner, such as information seeking would involve.

Māori information seeking behaviours

Literature on information seeking behaviours of Māori is also extremely scarce, with only a handful of resources having been published. In 1997, Te Rōpū Whakahau and the New Zealand Library and Information Association published *Te Ara Tika* (Szekely, 1997), a report

that focused on Māori information needs, which was viewed as a landmark study on how Māori engage with libraries and librarians. Although parts of the report touched on information literacy, there was little emphasis on aspects of information behaviour practices in it. Two other reports in a similar vein were produced by Auckland City Libraries in 1995 and 2001 which surveyed Māori living in the Auckland City area about their use or non-use of library services and resources. Results from the surveys illustrated a number of issues relating to information barriers that can probably be applied across all Māori age groups. The survey sample, however, covered a relatively small number of youth. The only other known publication that contains sections on Māori information seeking behaviour is Simpson’s report (2005) for the Māori Subject Headings Working Party which focused on issues of intellectual access to Māori information in libraries. Simpson employed a mixed methodology to collect her data, including a questionnaire for library and information professionals and focus group interviews with invited Māori academic staff, so youth were effectively disenfranchised from participating in this study. Parker (2003) focused on Māori interaction with technology and he highlighted the results from a national survey conducted in 2001 that emphasised the “digital divide” that existed in New Zealand, with only 34% of Māori households owning a computer and 65% of the survey’s Māori respondents having never used the Internet (only peoples of Pacific descent had a worse result at 76%). These figures are disturbing when it is considered that technology has a significant impact on effective participation in modern society.

In summary, the existing literature on Māori information seeking is limited, and what does exist devotes very little attention to the information seeking behaviours of Māori youth. Although there is an increasing emphasis on digital technology and its application as an information seeking tool, the information that has been published is not recent and again it is

unclear whether Māori youths were included within the studies mentioned. So this makes this literature of little value to what we know about information seeking as practised by Māori youth.

Career information seeking behaviour literature

There is an abundance of literature relating to information needs, uses, seeking and other aspects of information behaviour, with Case (2007) estimating that there are well over 10,000 publications in the field. However, the literature on career development and career information seeking behaviour in the library and information literature is very limited, with notable studies having been undertaken by Durrance (1993), Julien (1997, 1999, 2004), and DeHart and Bleeker (1988).

Durrance's writing in this area focused largely on the need for libraries to cater for the cultural and socio-economic diversity of those seeking career information and the likelihood that they will not only have varied information needs but also different ways of looking for information. DeHart and Bleeker focused on the need for those in the library and information profession to become more familiar with career information seeking resources and trends in career decision making so they could assist teenagers with their career information seeking behaviour. DeHart and Bleeker also urged librarians to devote more energy to researching different information seeking behaviours and their use in career decision making processes. If the latter has happened there has been very little published in the literature. A notable exception to this is the research undertaken by Heidi Julien. Her doctoral thesis focused on how information helps Canadian adolescents make career decisions. Results from her research revealed that although students got help from books and pamphlets, the most helpful sources for them were interpersonal sources, including

those working in careers of interest, their own observations and thinking, guidance counsellors, and students attending post-secondary institutions of interest to them. The participants in the research also emphasised the need for the sources to be trusted by those seeking the information.

Julien (1999) focused on the information barriers encountered by adolescents. Her study revealed a range of barriers including a lack of knowledge of where to go for help, whilst others thought that there were too many places to get help from—leading to a feeling that information was scattered. Julien also identified anxiety relating to career decision making processes resulting in respondents not knowing what questions to ask.

More recent studies on information seeking behaviours of teenagers have focused on the everyday information needs of urban teenagers; career information seeking is only one aspect of these studies. Agosto and Hughes-Hassell (2005) found that almost all the 27 teens that participated in their study were uncertain about their future career options. It should be noted that the authors stated that their respondents were aged between 14 and 17 years of age, but did not provide a more detailed breakdown of the number of respondents for each age, so it was difficult to ascertain whether the degree of uncertainty was due to there being higher numbers in the lower age levels, or whether there was stronger emphasis on going to college and deciding from there.

The international literature on career information seeking by youths is limited. It mostly focuses on capacity building in libraries and professional development of librarians to assist youth, if they should seek assistance from librarians. Only the research undertaken by Julien (1997, 1999, 2004) contributes to our understanding of how adolescents in Canada identify useful information mainly, through the utilisation of interpersonal sources.

In synthesising the three different strands of the literature review, it becomes obvious that

there is a paucity of knowledge about how Māori youths seek information and even less about how information impacts on their career decisions. The absence of knowledge in this area also extends to the wider international literature of career information seeking of youth, with the exception of the research published by Julien (1997, 1999, 2004). The absence of a strong body of literature leaves tremendous scope for further research in this important area.

Method

Schools with substantial numbers of Māori students in the senior forms (years 11–13, aged 16 and over) were identified from Education Review Office reports and invited to participate in the project. To ensure that a mixture of socio-economic, gender and age variations were available, the researcher chose two co-educational schools and one single-sex school for each gender.

The questionnaire consisted of 24 different questions and was designed to examine the sources used by the students to locate information. The questionnaire comprises the following parts:

- Part one—resources used for career information seeking
- Part two—resources used for completing homework tasks
- Part three—resources used for finding whakapapa information
- Part four—resources used for finding information about tikanga Māori
- Part five—focused on the information

barriers that students had encountered when seeking information

- Part six—collected personal information about each student and their parents

The information collected relating to homework tasks and finding information about whakapapa and tikanga Māori are not reported on in this paper, but do make a significant contribution to the author's doctoral dissertation.

Of the possible number of 190 participants, 139 completed questionnaires were returned. The 139 questionnaires had close to an even mix of responses from both genders with boys (71) slightly outnumbering girls (68). Not all respondents provided their age (12 non-respondents in this category), but the totals indicated a fairly even distribution across the 16- and 17-year-old age groups as illustrated in Table 1.

All questionnaire participants were also invited to volunteer to participate in focus group interviews. The questionnaires were collected at the end of each meeting, with care being taken to protect the anonymity of the participants with the focus group interest forms being collected separately from the questionnaires. In total, six focus groups were conducted over the four schools participating in the study. The size of the focus groups varied, but there were 45 participants altogether.

The focus group questions were centred on identifying what information channels participants accessed, information barriers encountered, and determining whether there were any perceived differences between seeking information in a Māori-centred environment or a Western cultural context.

TABLE 1 Age and gender distribution of questionnaire respondents ($n = 139$).

	16 years	17 years	18 years	No answer	Totals
Male	35	19	8	9	71
Female	27	30	8	3	68

Questionnaire results

The questionnaires asked whether the participants had decided what career they were going to pursue after they left school.

Of the 139 participants, 94 had decided what their future career interests were, 42 respondents were yet to make a decision, and the remaining 3 participants did not provide an answer to this question. The difference between genders was noticeable but not overly significant with 25 of the females having yet to make a decision and only 17 male respondents in the same category (see Table 2).

The low numbers for those indicating that they hadn't made a career decision could be attributed to the fact that by year 11, future career plans have a significant impact on subject choices for the NCEA. This is assessed over three levels, with the choices of the last two levels being largely dependent on the subjects studied at level one. For students intending to undertake study at a university or other higher education provider, subject choices at school can seriously impact on their ability to enter programmes such as medicine, veterinary science, engineering, architecture, fine arts and commerce.

Information sources

Questionnaire participants were asked to identify what information sources aided them in the process of either making or attempting to make a decision about their future career pathways. A list of 20 potential information sources was provided and in addition to indicating which resources they used, they were also asked to rate how useful they had been. The participants

were also invited to list and rate other resources that they had used that weren't already on the list.

In total, there were 1,124 responses to this section of the survey. Not surprisingly "Other" had the least number of responses (17), with all responses in this category rating these sources as useful or better. Some of the resources that were listed included open days at tertiary institutions, external tutors and advertisements.

Based on a five-point Likert scale with 1 equalling not useful and 5 equalling very useful, it was decided to rank the results according to the sources that received the highest number of scores ranked at 3 (useful) and above.

Using this method, the five most useful resources for those that had made a career decision were all interpersonal sources, with people working in careers of interest to the participants being ranked highest, closely followed by other whānau members (extended family members—in this case not parents or siblings), friends, and then by fathers and mothers (see Table 3).

The same resources also featured for the participants that had not made a career decision; however, they were in a different order, with fathers ranking as the most useful, closely followed by mothers, friends, people in careers of interest, and then other whānau.

The five least useful sources (excluding "Other") for both categories (made a decision and those that hadn't) are also dominated by interpersonal sources; however, it could be argued that some of these are personal sources that the participants have weaker ties to. Included amongst those in this category are guidance counsellors, hostel staff (three out of the four schools provided boarding facilities) and religious advisors (priests, ministers and pastors). The fourth interpersonal source

TABLE 2 Career decision made by gender distribution ($n = 136$).

Career decision	Male	Female	Total
Yes	50	44	94
No	17	25	42

TABLE 3 Most useful information resources for those who have made a career decision.

Most useful resources—"Yes" responses	Total 3+
People working in careers of interest	52
Other whānau	51
Friends	46
Father	39
Mother	35

TABLE 4 Most useful information resources for those who have not made a career decision.

Most useful resources—"No" responses	Total 3+
Father	25
Mother	23
Friends	18
People working in careers of interest	16
Other whānau	14

amongst the bottom five is siblings (brother/sister) and this could be due to a variety of reasons, such as differences in age and gender, but it also might just be a simple reflection of sibling dynamics within the family. Interestingly enough, careers advisors did not rank in the top five of useful sources in either of the categories. For those that had made a career decision, 31 respondents ranked careers advisors as useful or better, while for those who had not made a decision, only 13 ranked careers advisors useful or better, making them the ninth most useful source for those in the "yes" category and the sixth most useful source amongst those who had not made a career decision.

Focus groups

A significant portion of the focus group sessions focused on information barriers encountered by the participants and the information networks that they were active in.

A range of comments relating to careers were collected and most of these were centred on their desire to know more about the careers they were considering. These information needs

were quite specific in nature, as the following extracts show:

I'm considering accountancy as a career but I'm not sure whether I should go away to University or stay here and study at the local poly [technic] and possibly work at the same time, as I don't want a big [student] loan. I have asked some advice from other people like the careers advisor but I'm still confused as to whether I could get work in a local firm.

I wanted to know how much [money] could be made by journalists, so I looked on a website, but that wasn't much help, so I asked someone at church, who introduced me to someone who works at a paper. They gave me lots of information about the different jobs you can do as journalist, but didn't know a lot about what some of those jobs pay.

I want to be an engineer, but I'm not sure what Uni I should go to and what the different types of engineers do.

I really like history, geography and English and I'm not sure what careers would be good

for me, apart from becoming a teacher and that's something I wouldn't want to do.

These quotes demonstrate the distinct lack of certainty expressed by the students about how they could access further information to assist them in their career decisions. When probing further, it was discovered that this could be related to their reluctance to extend their information seeking beyond those they have a close relationship to, thus restricting themselves to a small pool of information. To counter this, some of the students indicated that they relied on members of their close and wider whānau to seek this information on their behalf and pass it on, thus avoiding any further uncertainty.

The discussions held during the focus group sessions also provided evidence similar to the trends identified by the questionnaire, in that people are the greatest source of information.

I really enjoy career evenings as you can speak to people in jobs that you are interested in.

I come from a big whānau and have lots of aunts, uncles and cousins who have different jobs, and heaps of advice, not that I always listen to it.

Me and my friends are always talking about jobs and things we want to do with ourselves when we are finished at school, we swap information about jobs and how much [money] you can make that we have got from others.

These quotes demonstrate the emphasis that the focus group participants placed on interpersonal interaction when the right connections are being made. In discussing the interactions at a careers evening or a careers fair, it was seen that the connections with individuals at a careers evening were valuable due to the expertise of these people and that any awkwardness over communicating with them was overcome through the knowledge that they are present to assist, and that any shyness on their part

could normally be overcome by having support from friends or whānau. The comment about not always listening to the views of the wider whānau members when discussed further was contextualised through its linkage to the "generation gap" between the teenager and some whānau members. The discussion also revealed that not all whānau members speak from an informed position, having not necessarily had relevant experience in the area being discussed. Although this may also be true of their friends, the fact that they are of a similar age and have similar views and experiences was seen as them being a highly valued source of information, particularly considering that they all have a wider range of networks that they draw on.

When discussing the types of barriers that they might encounter in looking for information the reactions from the students ranged from frustration to nonchalance. Tenacity was not an obvious trait amongst a number of the participants.

I don't always get the answer I want, but it doesn't really worry me, as it's not always that important.

I went to a careers fair and I asked the person at the [name of a tertiary institution] stand about building courses and apprenticeships and they referred me over to another stand [probably the Building Association] about that but they were too busy so I gave up waiting.

I was interested in knowing what I have to do to get a job during the holidays at [name of business], so I asked the careers advisor at school and he said he would find out from a friend of his and get back to me, but he didn't for ages and then it was too late.

Seeking information from others is quite often related to confidence, and those in the focus groups revealed that they were far less confident if the person the information is being sought from was not a close contact. There was also

an indication that if they did not obtain a clear or immediate answer then it was often difficult to summon the courage to ask again. Others indicated that if they don't get the information they need straightaway then it is not unusual for them not to persevere with their information enquiry, as their need has passed, or it was not important enough to bother.

Several students identified the need to ask for assistance from others as a barrier for them.

I went to a careers expo and just wandered around looking but I didn't find out that much because I didn't want to ask anyone for any more information, next time I might go with [friend's name] because she's really good at asking people things.

Sometimes I don't ask for things because I don't know what or who to ask.

I find asking people I don't know for help or for information really hard as I am really quite shy.

They [librarians] always look so busy and I don't always ask for help because I don't want to interrupt them.

The reluctance to ask others for assistance or for information was largely explained as not having the confidence to approach others, particularly people that were not well known to them. This was partly explained as not knowing what response they were going to receive, or not really knowing what to ask. The focus group participants indicated that they were generally happier to ask people if they knew them, or if they had friends in support, although they were also conscious of not looking silly in front of their friends, and this sometimes led them to try to get one of these friends to ask on their behalf.

Another barrier that was mentioned by at least one person in every focus group was related to the vast amount of information available.

I search Google for information but I always get so many hits and even when I put in new words there are still thousands of pages to choose from.

Sometimes I don't know where to start or what to believe because there is just too much information to choose from.

The overwhelming amount of information available, particularly from electronic sources such as the Internet, was another explanation provided for dependence on others (friends and whānau) for information. There also appeared to be a lack of knowledge of how to construct an effective search strategy for using tools such as Google, and a lack of awareness of the availability of other electronic information sources such as databases.

However, some other participants expressed their frustration at not being able to find enough information to help them choose their career path (particularly choosing the right tertiary institute to study at).

I am really wanting to be a sports focused lawyer, but I'm not sure what [law] school I should go to and I have tried to find out more about what I can do at each one, but it's really hard to find that info, because even though they all tell you what you can do, how do I find out which one is best for me and whether I have to do other [sports management] papers as well? I've looked at other sites than the law school ones but I've yet to find one that tells me enough.

Some of the information from the universities is more aimed at just getting us to go there and not at what we can do afterwards with their qualifications, especially if you don't get high marks.

When discussing these frustrations with the focus group members, it became obvious that they related back to the problems they have

in constructing search strategies or identifying the right source of information to satisfy their need. The lack of confidence to approach individuals outside their normal circle of friends and whānau also severely restricted their ability to obtain information that was beyond their circle's capacity.

In summarising the focus group results, it was obvious that there were similar themes to those that emerged from the questionnaire, such as a strong dependence on interpersonal information seeking, particularly in a safe information environment that includes friends and whānau members; difficulties in identifying the right information source for locating the relevant information they required; a reluctance to pursue information if they were unable to immediately find the answer they required; and that their ability to find information was often impeded by a lack of skills in searching or the inability to ask the right questions. However, the strongest theme to emerge from the focus group discussions was the heavy reliance on support from friends and closer whānau members.

Discussion

Like many other studies involving youth (Hsia, 1987; Fisher, Marcoux, Miller, Sanchez, & Cunningham, 2004; Agosto & Hughes-Hassell, 2005), this research confirms that the preferred method of information seeking is through interpersonal interaction with individuals. Unlike the findings from other aspects of this research project (undertaken for the doctoral qualification) that look at information seeking for educational achievement and for finding out more about Māori cultural practices and beliefs, the students were happy to seek information from people that perhaps are not as well known to them (people working in careers) as other personal information sources. In the focus groups the students stated that although they lacked that strong interpersonal link, they were able to get over their shyness or reluctance to

talk to "strangers" because they were determined to find out what they needed to know in order to succeed. In addition, the fact that in many of these situations students were able to have whānau support with them (either close friends or family members) when they approached these people helped them overcome any hesitancy on their part to engage with them. The focus group discussions revealed that the reason for a high dependency on interpersonal information sources was the perception by the students that they were more likely to get richer information about what careers were actually like from those who either had direct experience in them or who knew others that did. Friends were seen to be particularly useful in an information exchange context. That is, they would share and exchange relevant information with each other that they had picked up from their own information seeking endeavours.

Other sources of the interpersonal type were much easier to approach as they were familiar to the information seeker, either as a friend, parent or a wider whānau member. It is possible that interpersonal sources such as teachers, counsellors, religious leaders (ministers, priests and pastors) and elders (kaumātua/kuia) were less popular due to their status as authority figures and were therefore perceived as being less approachable and too judgemental. The lower ranking of career counsellors was surprising as it would be expected that individuals with these professional skills would potentially have a wealth of information, advice and contacts that would be of major benefit to the students. The implications of this research for students, whānau and the schools and staff involved in providing careers advice are that there needs to be a stronger level of engagement between the school and whānau and through their combined efforts this could lead to more successful information encounters. This collaboration would be particularly useful in facilitating careers workshops and/or careers fairs where the students would have an opportunity to engage with individuals representing the career

pathways that interest them. In presenting these opportunities the school and the whānau can ensure that the appropriate support structures are in place to provide the students with the confidence to engage in discussion with the career experts. The careers counsellors could also draw on these experts to visit and discuss with students the requirements of their particular field, thus again providing an environment that is conducive for the students to engage with them that the students feel comfortable in. The interaction between Māori students and career counsellors is an area where further research would be of benefit.

There was also an element of the generation gap evident in some of the comments made in the focus groups, and a sense of recognition that the “working world” is substantially different in comparison to what their elders had experienced in their youth. Focus group participants indicated that they had often exchanged information with each other as to how useful their conversations had been with various people, and if they had an unsatisfactory experience, then they would happily share it with their peers.

Another factor that became apparent during the focus group discussions was that although many of the students would have looked to their parents for advice and information regarding their decision over future career directions, they were conscious that in a lot of cases their parents were unable to assist them, due to lack of educational achievement (particularly if the student was interested in furthering their education at the tertiary level) and/or little experience outside their own working environment (particularly if they had no experience in the field that their child was interested in pursuing). However, several of the students stated that their parents did have contacts or networks that they could access either through cultural, recreational or social circles.

Sources that perhaps might be perceived by others as more trustworthy such as libraries, career expos, and websites were used less or

counted as less useful by those participating in this study. In the case of libraries, the students indicated that they were on the whole irrelevant to their needs and preferred not to visit or use them as a main source of information. This might be more to do with the fact that libraries are seen to be alien environments to them, particularly if their family have not been active library users. There also seemed to be a commonly held (although not universal) view amongst the focus group participants that the library was a place for “geeks” and not a “cool” place to be seen. They also believed that the items found there wouldn’t hold the information they require and that other sources were quicker and easier to use. It was obvious that the majority of the focus group participants perceived librarians as being discouraging, and when this was probed further it became apparent that this was associated with stereotypical views of librarians held in the wider society. This is obviously an issue for the library profession and libraries to focus their efforts on and it would be useful for there to be some research conducted on what libraries (particularly public libraries) are doing to promote their role in the career decision making process.

Conclusion

This paper has focused on how Māori secondary school students aged 16–18 years engage with information to assist them in making decisions about their future career options. In doing so it has addressed a gap in the career decision and information seeking literature. The principal contribution of this research is to show that Māori youth place a heavy emphasis on seeking careers information from other people, particularly friends, whānau members, other individuals well known to them, and individuals with experience in careers of interest to them. This research has also demonstrated that in the process of seeking this information, students encountered barriers that impeded their ability

to have their career information needs met. The barriers identified were related to the right information not being given by those asked, the overwhelming amount of information available, and the lack of expertise and effectiveness in searching for information. Whānau have a responsibility to ensure that they are available to support their teenagers in the process of seeking this information, so their information needs can be met. To ensure that the information that students obtain from these individuals is accurate, schools need to place a higher emphasis on engaging with experts in career fields of interest to students and facilitating opportunities for the students and their whānau to meet with them. Ensuring that there is an effective transition from education to careers for Māori youth is ultimately in the best interests of all New Zealanders as our future economic, social and cultural well-being will be highly dependent on their success.

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