



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

*Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga*

Te pakeke hei ākonga

*Māori adult learners*

This series covers research on teaching and learning in literacy, language and numeracy and analyses of international surveys on adult literacy and numeracy.

**Author**

Dr Colleen McMurchy-Pilkington  
Email: c.mcmurchy@auckland.ac.nz  
Telephone: 09 623 8899

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# HE MIHI

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*Whakarongo ake ki te tangi a te manu  
E karanga nei, Tui, tui, tuituia.  
Tuia ki runga, tuia ki raro  
Tuia ki roto, tuia ki waho  
Ka rongō te ao, ka rongō te pō*

*Tuia ki te kāwai tangata  
I heke mai i Hawaiki nui  
I Hawaiki roa  
I Hawaiki pāmamao  
I te Hono ki Wairua  
Ki te whaiāo, ki te ao mārama  
Tihei mauri ora!*

Tēnā tātou i ō tātou tini mate e takoto tīraha nei i runga i ō tātou marae, i runga hoki i ō tātou papakāinga, huri noa i te motu. Kua uwhia rātou ki ngā taumata kōrero e tika ana nā reira tukuna rātou kia okioki i runga i te moenga roa.

Āpiti hono, tātai hono, koutou te hunga mate ki a koutou.

Āpiti hono, tātai hono, tātou te hunga ora ki a tātou. Tēnā tātou katoa.

E mihi atu ana ki ngā tauira pakeke, ngā pou ako, me ngā tumuaki o ngā pūtahi mātauranga I whai wāhi ki te kaupapa e kīa nei *Te pakeke hei ākongā*. I te kore koutou ka kore te manu nei e rere ki tōna taumata.

Nō reira, tēnā rawa atu koutou me ngā whakaaro I puta I tēnā, I tēnā, o koutou.

Kāti ake i konei, raurangatira mā, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā tātou katoa.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The purpose of this research project, *Te pakeke hei ākongā: Māori adult learners*, has been to capture the perspectives of learners, tutors and providers as to how language, literacy and numeracy in foundation learning programmes can best be optimised for adult Māori learners.

There is a paucity of research that gathers the voices of Māori adult learners and Māori tutors in foundation programmes, and providers of foundation programmes. This research report attempts to fill that gap.

There is a range of providers of foundation programmes in Aotearoa New Zealand, from the more traditional providers of tertiary education like the universities and polytechnics through to private training establishments (PTEs), iwi providers and whare wānanga. Groups and individuals from these providers, including students, tutors and chief executive officers (CEOs), were interviewed for this research. All those interviewed were Māori.

Foundation courses from levels 1 to 5. The younger Māori learners, around 20 years old or younger, who leave school with no qualifications and limited skills tend to go into the early level courses. By contrast, the more mature students and those who leave school with some National Certificate in Educational Achievement (NCEA) credits are more likely to go into level 3 or 4/5, to strengthen their academic skills or to give them confidence before moving to a degree programme.

The classes in foundation programmes are generally small and intimate, enabling one-to-one or personalised teaching of the students. The adult Māori learners enrol for a range of reasons: they were sent by Work and Income, they need to prepare for a specific job or further training, they want to be a role model for others, or they want to support their own children's learning.

All the programmes teach numeracy and literacy, either as the main focus or in relation to a pre-qualification like motor trades, teaching or nursing. A few courses focus on te reo Māori, and also include numeracy and literacy.

PTEs and iwi providers expect to deliver more than literacy and numeracy skills; they aim to celebrate the Māori identity of their learners and usually teach Māori tikanga and sometimes Māori language as well. Staff are often whānau; that is, they are usually closely related or members an extended family. This reinforces the whānau atmosphere in the classroom. Staff in traditional providers are less likely to be related, although they do foster a whānau atmosphere.

Māori tutors reinforce and strengthen their Māori learners' identities through ensuring that Māori tikanga and values like whakapapa, manaakitanga, whanaungatanga and kotahitanga pervade the teaching and learning environment. Māori tutors ensure their Māori learners are able to learn and study in a Māori-centred environment. Apart from some tutors in the traditional providers, all tutors are supported by their provider in professional development for literacy and numeracy. Most are undertaking national certificate training.

In teaching their foundation course students, the tutors use 'real-life contexts' that connect to the Māori learners' lives, needs and interests. They encourage collaborative work, empower the learners to make choices, and encourage the learners to set their own goals, thus giving them a sense of personal responsibility.

Without exception, the tutors devote many hours to their work, which includes being available and supporting students outside designated class hours. They build strong, positive relationships with their students.

All Māori learners interviewed talked about the comfortable whānau environment created by their tutors, who were seen to be passionate, caring and patient. Learners commented on the different environment and atmosphere that they experienced in their secondary schooling years.

In the adult programmes the classes were small, the students were treated with respect, they felt very comfortable, the environment was success-oriented, and was permissive (they could smoke in the intervals, they were not 'bawled out' for coming in late), the students were valued, and the whānau atmosphere created an interdependence among the students. Māori values were strongly evident in the day-to-day life of the classroom and tuakana/teina ways of working were encouraged. Their Māoriness was valued.

The Māori learners felt their tutors were teaching them and their needs rather than a set curriculum. This was in contrast to their school days. They acknowledged that they were learning more than numeracy and literacy. They were learning social skills (how to get along with other people), survival skills, how to study more effectively, cultural skills and knowledge (Māori tikanga, whakapapa), work employment skills, self-confidence, te reo Māori (in some instances), self-respect and respect for others. Their learning was more interactive, it related to everyday life, and in maths it was more hands-on. Their tutors explained and clarified things and made learning fun.

Barriers to learning included costs (e.g. fees) and travel to their course, although providers in smaller towns often provided transport. A large number had no support outside the course. And many found that a completed foundation studies course did not necessarily guarantee entry into a diploma or degree, particularly at another institution.

While providers were grateful for Tertiary Education Commission funding, they all stated there was not enough money to fully support students and staff (particularly for professional development release). Iwi providers need opportunities to provide programmes that develop capacity and leadership amongst their people.

There are many positive things happening in foundation/bridging programmes for adult Māori learners. The positives need to continue, but there are areas that need further consideration so that Māori learners can successfully move on to further tertiary education with confidence.

# 1 INTRODUCTION

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The purpose of this research project, *Te pakeke hei ākonga: Māori adult learners*, is to capture the perspectives of learners, tutors and providers as to how language, literacy and numeracy in foundation learning programmes can best be optimised for adult Māori learners.

An earlier literature review, by Benseman et al. (2005a), noted an absence of studies relating to foundation programmes for indigenous people. This current research proposal begins to fill a gap in knowledge about adult Māori learners in foundation programmes in Aotearoa New Zealand.

The research aims to explore the following key questions in relation to adult Māori learners:

- Where are we at?
- Where could we move to?
- What has made a difference for those learners who consider their teaching/learning to have been successful?
- What will it take to meet/achieve learner, community and iwi aspirations in language, literacy and numeracy?

## 1.1 The literature

This review of relevant literature focuses on concepts central to the project's aims. In particular, the review centres on recent publications regarding optimum learning conditions for Māori learners. While these publications have their focus mainly on the compulsory education sector, there are generic principles regarding learning which, we argue, cross sectors. Also addressed in this review are recent research findings and information from a literature review which examines language, literacy and numeracy in foundation programmes at the tertiary level.

Ministry of Education publications demonstrate an awareness of and concern for the underachievement of Māori students. In 2005, only 33 percent of Māori students attained NCEA Level 2 (the Pasifika rate was 45 percent), 25 percent of Māori school leavers left secondary school with little or no formal attainment, and only 73 percent of Māori stayed in secondary school until Year 12 (Ministry of Education, 2006). While Māori participation rates in tertiary education are high in comparison with other ethnic groups, their involvement tends to be at sub-degree level (Ministry of Education, 2006). State-funded foundation tertiary programmes, which scaffold learners into tertiary learning, are a partial response to concerns based on unsatisfactory secondary school statistics.

The research conducted by Bishop et al. (2001) examines effective learning and teaching strategies for Māori-medium education. The authors describe how successful teachers create a “culturally responsive context for learning” (p. 206). The effective teachers they describe create culturally appropriate and responsive contexts for learning by:

- creating caring relationships
- creating structured, positive and cooperative environments
- recognising and building on prior learning and experiences
- using feedback
- sharing power.

Bishop et al. (2001) place considerable emphasis on the importance of Māori learners being secure in their identity. Being proud of who one is and where one comes from appears to be an important overall factor for academic success.

Macfarlane (2000) describes an approach to behaviour management that is an amalgam of contemporary theory and traditional Māori discipline. More recently, in *Kia hiwa ra* (2004), Macfarlane focuses on culturally responsive pedagogy. He argues that infusing the five cultural concepts of whanaungatanga (relationship building), manaakitanga (an ethic of caring), rangatiratanga (teacher effectiveness), kotahitanga (bonding), and pumanawatanga (classroom morale and teacher attitude) is likely to have a positive impact on students' learning and on teachers' teaching.

In a review of the literature on Māori pedagogies, Hemara (2000) states that information on Māori pedagogy is patchy and the written record is limited. He maintains that:

“... the way Māori educated themselves and their young appears to be applicable today. Many of the hallmarks of Māori education prove that traditional values and operating standards can be translated into contemporary contexts”. (p. 81)

According to Hemara (2000), there was a close relationship between the traditional curricula and the spiritual, social, intellectual and physical well-being of the learner and their community. Formal learning usually took place in a whare wānanga but much of the learning was carried out informally in social settings, sometimes in one-to-one situations. This allowed for the development of social interdependence. Kaumatua with their vast knowledge, wisdom and reflection were deemed to be essential to the learning process. Different media, metaphors, allusions and relationships helped to render the unfamiliar more familiar.

Although preferred Māori pedagogies have been described as group-oriented, this does not preclude individualised or one-to-one interactions taking place (Hohepa et al., 1996; Ka'ai, 1990). Two studies carried out in Kohanga Reo demonstrate that group activities and group settings are widely favoured, but there are many extended dyadic and personalised interactions (Hohepa et al., 1996; Ka'ai, 1990). The discourse in these Māori pedagogical settings differs from the typical discourse patterns that one would expect to see in a Western educational context. The concept of whānau is embedded in Kohanga Reo and Kura Kaupapa Māori contexts (Smith, 1997; Royal Tangaere, 1997) as the children learn about whānau responsibilities of caring and sharing, and looking after each other. However, it is argued:

“Simply introducing opportunities to display, for example, cooperative behaviour, in isolation from other Māori pedagogical values, beliefs and practices may not be very effective for Māori children's learning.” (Hohepa et al., 1996, p. 39)

In a research study with Māori learners at a tertiary institution, Martin et al. (2004) highlight positive lecturer characteristics and pedagogical practices as defined by the adult Māori learners, including being positive, approachable and committed to students, and encouraging collaborative and cooperative work. Whakawhanaungatanga (making or renewing relationships), is an integral aspect of the lecturers' practices as they provide activities that encourage interaction and the establishment of positive working relationships between the Māori staff and Māori students. Staff encourage a whānau atmosphere and students call them whaea (mother or aunty) and matua (father or uncle).

Various studies have articulated the importance of relationships in the teacher/learner interaction. This is especially important when students are members of minority ethnic or marginalised groups (Bishop et al., 2001; Carpenter et al., 2004; Hawk et al., 2002). The study by Hawk et al. (2002) includes a section on the tertiary context. It appears that, whatever the age

group of the minority ethnic group learner, it is preferable that a relationship is established with a teacher prior to any formal instruction taking place. The prior relationship better facilitates successful learning outcomes.

The study by Benseman et al. (2005b), *Pedagogy in practice: an observational study of literacy, numeracy and language teachers*, is one of the few empirical studies based on the observation of practice. The authors observed 15 literacy, language and numeracy teachers working in New Zealand tertiary institutions. Their overview of the context has relevance for this project as they describe, in a sense, the macro set in which the subset of foundation learning programmes targeted specifically at Māori sits. The authors identified issues to do with:

- teacher status and background (only a small number held specific qualifications related to adult education or literacy, numeracy and language)
- physical environment and teaching resources (varied, with computers mainly used for word processing rather than computer-aided teaching)
- generic teaching (there were committed, positive, supportive teachers, teachers talked more than learners, questioning was important, there was limited discussion and debate)
- forms of provision (one-to-one and group teaching were both effective)
- the teaching of literacy, numeracy and language skills (e.g. there was a small range of teaching methods, there was limited deliberate teaching of reading, writing and spelling, numeracy teaching was linked to diagnosed learning needs, speaking and listening skills were seen as important means of building social and personal skills).

A further study by the same authors, Benseman et al., (2005a), found that quality tutors:

- have positive attitudes
- are approachable
- create positive and supportive learning environments
- use learners' experiences in learning contexts
- are supportive in times of crisis
- help learners set realistic goals
- balance challenge and support for their learners.

These characteristics have links to this current study.

As evidenced above, there are a growing number of New Zealand-based research studies on foundation learning programmes. None to date relate to teaching in te reo Māori, or to Māori programme provision. This project's purpose is to capture the perspectives of learners, tutors and providers as to how language, literacy and numeracy in foundation learning programmes can be optimised for Māori learners.

The following section describes the methodologies used to address the project's purpose.

## 1.2 Methodology

There were two main Māori researchers involved in carrying out this research: Colleen McMurchy-Pilkington and Kimai Tocker. The first step was to gain ethics approval from the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee. There was a purposeful selection of participants to cover a range of providers of foundation programmes for adult Māori

learners. Email and phone contacts were made to providers and tutors. Oral explanations were given of the research project and this was followed up with letters. Written permission was received from those who agreed to participate.

A range of providers took part in this research from the following areas: Auckland, Whangarei, Whakatane and Gisborne.

Two advisory group meetings were held, although not everyone attended both meetings. The author attended for one day a Learning for Living training session for tutors run by a Ministry of Education facilitator. This was a valuable exercise because it enabled the author to experience some of the pedagogical strategies, to become familiar with some of the resources, and to network with some tutors and providers.

Throughout this research project an effort was made to ensure there was a Māori-centred approach (Jahnke & Taiapa, 1999; Smith, 1997) that followed tikanga Māori whenever possible and the mana of the participants was foremost in the planning and processes.

Kaupapa Māori research is an attempt to retrieve space for Māori voices to be heard (Mead, 1996). This report is heavily laden with the voices of Māori participants in the study. Their voices are rich in detail. In kaupapa Māori research there is a strong link between cultural values and practices, and emancipatory goals (Smith, 1997). One of the aims of the research is to ascertain what some of the factors are that benefit adult Māori learners in foundation programmes. It is expected that the findings will be empowering for Māori learners and give important messages for tutors of Māori learners.

Smith (1997) writes about some characteristics of kaupapa Māori research. These include a centring of Māori philosophy and principles and being Māori. Kaupapa Māori research reinforces the importance of Māori language and culture and takes for granted the validity and legitimacy of being Māori and of Māori knowledge. Māori processes, unlike Pākehā ones, include whakawhanaungatanga (making or renewing relationships), settling the wairua (inner sense of well-being or spirituality), manaakitanga (respecting Māori customs and striving for a collaborative process).

The research methods in this study involved qualitative individual and focus group interviews, as kanohi ki te kanohi approaches are considered culturally relevant for Māori communities (Mead, 1996). All the participants and the two researchers were Māori. Language contexts used were largely English although some responses were bilingual.

To manaaki our participants we provided kai (food) before or during the interviews, and provided a koha (donation) of a book on action learning for use by the student participants in their classrooms.

Triangulation of the data was achieved through interviewing three groups of participants: students, some of their tutors, and in three institutions the CEO as the provider's representative.

The group interview for the students was a valuable process because the participants who were known to each other were able to share ideas and support each other. It was also considered a culturally safe environment because there was no pressure on an individual participant to talk all the time; having others present allowed for quiet reflection of thoughts as needed.

In this research, adult Māori learners were asked questions designed to draw out what they perceived as important factors and conditions for their successful learning. These questions were designed to gain responses about students' perceptions of themselves, learner factors, learner gains, teaching and learning factors, and environmental factors.

Further questions explored student aspirations, perceptions of their abilities, their achievement, and their learning prior to and during their studies, motivation for attending and continuing their studies, what assisted their learning (including teacher pedagogy), and what some barriers to their learning might be. Social, cultural and economic factors that may have enhanced or hindered their learning were explored.

Tutors were asked some questions about demographics, to explain their teaching practice, how they supported Māori learners in their learning, their teaching strategies, how they perceived their own abilities in literacy, numeracy and language, their teaching environment and how they were supported (or not) by their institution.

Providers were asked about their aspirations for Māori learners, the goals of the foundation programme, the level of support they provided for both staff and Māori students in the foundation programme, funding sources, barriers to their support, how staff were selected and professional development provided, facilities and support provided for Māori students, and what it would take to meet their aspirations for the future.

Iwi groups were asked questions similar to other providers, as well as their aspirations for their tamariki and mokopuna for the future and what it would take to meet these aspirations for the future.

In total there were interviews with five CEOs, eight tutors, and 12 groups of adult Māori learners (often referred to as students in this report), making a total of 92 students. Quotes from the participants are used extensively throughout this report as they had important stories to relate. Tutors' and providers' and some adult learner quotes are indicated after the quote. Where the quote is not referenced, the speaker is an adult Māori learner.

The following table is a breakdown of those interviewed for the project.

**Table 1**  
The interviews

Provider type	CEO interviewed	Tutors interviewed	Number of student groups	Number of students
PTE	3	5	6	50
Iwi-based/ wānanga	1		3	18
Traditional providers	1	3	3	24

## 2 WHERE ARE WE AT?

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### 2.1 Who are the providers?

There are a number of institutions that provide foundation programmes for adult Māori learners. These range from traditional providers through to private and iwi-based providers. Traditional providers include polytechnics and universities. These have been termed ‘traditional’ because they have a long history of providing tertiary education or formal education beyond schooling. Courses run by these traditional providers range from certificates and diplomas through to degrees. However, it is only since the 1990s that polytechnics have offered degrees and until a relaxation in the entry requirements for those over 20 years of age, universities did not usually run foundation or bridging programmes, although they ran “*Head Start*”, programmes.

Private Training Establishments, or PTEs, are more recent entrants in the field of adult education, although several PTEs advised that they have been in existence “for a very long time”, nearly 30 years. Iwi providers have a strong iwi base and are often set up as a PTE. In addition to iwi providers there are whare wānanga, which were formalised under the Education Amendment Act 1990. Whare wānanga are funded in a range of ways including EFTS (Equivalent Full Time Students), and capital grants from Treaty of Waitangi settlement claims. Of the three wānanga in Aotearoa New Zealand, one is iwi-based, another is strongly linked to an iwi but does not provide education exclusively to people from that iwi, and the other wānanga is more pan-tribal, enrolling Māori from all over the motu (islands) as well as having growing numbers of staff and students who are non-Māori.

### 2.2 The aims of the providers

The aim of the traditional providers in their foundation courses is mainly to scaffold their students into further tertiary study at diploma or degree level. Their courses are more likely to be at levels 3, 4 and 5. There is strong expectation that the learners will enrol in further tertiary courses at their institution.

PTEs, iwi providers, and wānanga may encourage their students to enrol in further courses, or to get a job, or to go to another tertiary provider. Additionally they consider they have an additional purpose over and above literacy and numeracy.

*To provide capability and capacity for [iwi], to raise knowledge and practice of that knowledge – tikanga and language. Ultimately it's to grow leaders for [iwi] encouraging people to come home and contribute to the nationhood of [iwi]. It's also to grow people who are here; we are in dire need of leadership for our people so we need to grow our own. (CEO, iwi provider)*

*The main focus is to take second chance learners and get them into a position using literacy/numeracy but also incorporating Māori kaupapa and positive thinking, working on values as well to help them as individuals because we've come out of mainstream education, where we know that doesn't happen and it's why so many Māori students fail. (Māori CEO, PTE)*

The PTEs in this research project tended to deliver literacy or numeracy programmes at level 1 or 2, as “there’s a huge group of Māori people who have to have a prerequisite. They’re never going to be good enough at that stage to get into level 3 programmes.” (Māori CEO, PTE). At the foundation levels 1 and 2, tutors had to work on telling the students “you’re not a failure” and “attitudinal stuff” like building confidence and self-esteem. Additionally, “there’s a lot of

stuff here done on values within a smaller environment... Once they get to level 3 they've got a really good chance of continuing on" (Māori CEO, PTE).

*We're developing pathways for them to be able to go on and also for their whānau, so what they're learning here, they learn to read and write but they've also got skills they can teach their own kids and their whānau as well. (CEO, PTE)*

As well as their foundation level 1 and 2 course, one PTE ran a foundation level 3 programme on contract to a polytechnic, and at two different sites. The iwi provider also delivered a level 5 course that was designed to scaffold students into degree courses like teaching, social work or Māori studies. "The kids or real beginners go to a training opportunities course at level 3... The capable, mature ones go to level 5" (CEO, iwi provider). The level 3 course was "not too threatening" and tutors talked to students about future options.

*A lot of students who do that [level 1 or 2] will pathway into [polytechnic] into some of their degree programmes and so on. So it's a bridge for them to be able to access degree courses in time. (CEO, Māori PTE)*

The iwi provider and one of the traditional providers "used a two-pronged approach" (CEO, iwi provider). Their students "didn't often want just study skills" so te reo Māori (Māori language) and tikanga were the main basis of the course, with additional papers that combined all the skills of "research, writing and reading". One of these providers also included a foundation paper on numeracy that was largely designed to scaffold the students into a teacher education degree delivered by that provider.

In summary, the foundation courses were at NZQA Levels 1, 2, 3 or 4/5. The younger Māori learners, around 20 years old or younger, who left school with no qualifications and limited skills, tended to go into the early level courses. The more mature students and those who left school with some NCEA credits were more likely to go into levels 3 or 4/5 to strengthen their academic skills or to give them confidence before moving to a degree programme.

### 2.3 Funding and fees

Funding is provided by the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) or the Ministry of Social Development based on the aims of the programme, although "it is never enough for our needs", lamented one CEO (PTE). Funding for traditional providers is based on EFTS and additional fees are usually paid by those enrolled in the courses. Foundation courses are subsidised by the government at a lower rate than the diploma or degree courses. If students pay fees, they are at a much lower rate than diploma or degree courses. Students' fees in PTEs are usually non-existent or are minimal. However, one iwi provider advised that their fees were \$2,900 for a one-year level 5 foundation course.

According to one CEO, most students who pay course fees get loans or have a Training Incentive Allowance, which is a transition allowance for those on some form of state-provided benefit. Some students obtain scholarships from their iwi or from elsewhere.

### 2.4 The staff

Some PTEs, wānanga and iwi providers are whānau-based; that is, many of their staff come from the same iwi, or they are often family members related to each other in some way. One PTE shared:

*My husband and I set up [the PTE] and I'm the Director of Curriculum, he's the Managing Director. We have two others and they're both our daughters... It's a whānau, it's not an organisation. (CEO/Tutor)*

Several other Māori PTEs we visited had husband and wife teams involved as well as other whānau members. The whānau concept seemed to permeate the whole PTE or iwi group as an organisational model from management, staff and down through to the students. These relationships were not identified as problematic in any of the student or tutor interviews.

*All our teachers and that are related. Pretty much related. So like all their whānau come.*

*We get to know their whānau and stuff.*

*They let us in on that sort of thing. Our tutor doesn't have to necessarily let their students interact with their personal family eh but they do. They're like, oh this is aunty blah-blah, and uncle blah-blah.*

This whānau structure is in sharp contrast to traditional providers, who employ individuals solely on the basis of their qualifications, experience and fit to the job at hand. The tutors in the traditional institutions visited tended to have a bachelor's degree and were studying at the next level, whereas most of the tutors in the non-traditional sector tended not to have a degree, although many of them had a diploma or certificate or were studying for the National Certificate in Literacy Education (Educator) or the National Certificate in Adult Teaching (CAT).

## 2.5 The students

The students had enrolled on the courses for a range of reasons. Most of the students were there voluntarily although it appeared some had been sent on the course because they were not old enough to leave school or get a job, and thus they had nowhere else to go.

*I didn't want to go to school. (Student who left school at 13 years old)*

*Yeah my old lady was going to get fined if I didn't go. (15 year old)*

*I got kicked out when I was 13 for drugs and oh the Board of Trustees told me they didn't want me back and then I got expelled from their school and I've been out of there for about two years now and then I came here, forced me, like reported me to come here sort of thing... the Ministry of Education came back to me and told me that if I didn't come here or go back to school my mum was going to gaol.*

Tutors shared why they thought students came to their programmes.

*They don't like the system within schools. We have the alternative education programme and with that because they're under the age of 16 they have to be in school so this is what the programme was developed for and just keeping them up with the school curriculum but in a different environment that is much more relaxed, which meets their needs... Sometimes looking for some sense of belonging. (Tutor, small-town PTE)*

*They're illiterate, have high needs in learning. But at the end of the day, wherever they're living wants them to pay their way. So they're going through life not being able to read or write well and get a job. (CEO, PTE)*

*I think what they found with the programme that we have it very much gave them a pathway and a direction where they can make decisions after being with us where they wanted to head. (Tutor, small-town PTE)*

*Not everyone is suited to institutional type training in terms of say polys or even bigger institutions. We are small and that's suited for some and it's about giving the learner a choice of where they want to learn, what they need to learn, how they want to learn. It's all about choice and having choices. Some people are just not willing to go into a non-Māori environment. (Tutor, small-town PTE)*

Some students were enrolled because they wanted to prepare themselves for further study or to gain skills that would make them more employable.

*I've missed out on a lot of jobs cos of not being able to read.*

*If we're wanting a better society we [should] actually have foundation levels 1 and 2 where we need to be bringing in so much support to get them to foundation level 3 and beyond. It's a huge social need because disengaged people who are just dependent on benefits and things, if we're going to get them out of that cycle and you know it's amazing growth when they actually see they can do it. (Tutor, PTE)*

Some of the students were motivated to study so they could help their children with their homework or better engage with their family.

*It was actually watching my little brother and sister; they can read better than me. They're 9 and 10 and they asked me to read them a story before they go to bed and it was pretty embarrassing at how well they can read, better than me.*

*I want to be able to help my children with their homework.*

*When I was 40, my partner was 38 and he got killed in an accident and I thought life's really short and I have to do something now.*

Students who were attending the te reo Māori course were wanting either to go on to further tertiary study or to be a role model for their family.

*I came to support my whānau and to extend my own knowledge so that I can help my boy and his cousins and his mokos.*

Younger students on the early level foundation courses were usually there for social reasons as one CEO outlines.

*...we've taken the socially disadvantaged. It's about making them acceptable to society. Because they're not acceptable.*

(Researcher) *Their behaviour?*

*Their behaviour is not, and it's not until they've come through this step that they're able; it's not that we're moulding them, we're giving them knowledge. If you want to survive in this world this is the beginning. Whether or not you [the student] take this path is entirely up to you...*

*...allowing them to make decisions of their own on their future... I think giving them the tools of life really for themselves. (CEO, PTE)*

## 3 LEARNERS' PERSPECTIVES

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Almost overwhelmingly, and on more than one occasion within the interview Māori learners talked about feeling comfortable. As well as the comfort of the physical environment, the strong relationships that their tutors had established with them was evident and gave learners a sense of belonging to a whānau, where each member is cared for and respected. This comfort came from having tutors who were either Māori or who had a strong understanding of Māori values and wairua such that they could connect with Māori learners in a spiritual/emotional way. Comfort came from the emotional security of “belonging to the whānau”.

This section considers adult Māori learners' perspectives of their tutors. It examines the characteristics and practices of tutors, how Māori learners perceive their learning environment, the contrast between school days and being an adult learner, and some of the barriers to further learning.

### 3.1 Characteristics of the tutors

All the Māori learners spoke highly of their tutors. They identified such characteristics as caring, patience, approachability, passion, firmness, humour and commitment as being strongly evident in their relationships and interactions. Nesbit et al. (2004, p. 95) advise that accounts and recollections of radical educators confirm “that great teachers are those who bring honesty, compassion, humour and passion to their work”. According to the adult Māori learners interviewed, these qualities were evident in their tutors.

#### **Caring nature**

All Māori learners signalled the caring nature of their tutors. Strong relationships between the students and their tutor were evident from the way the students talked about their tutors and from the researchers' observations of them working together. These observations were incidental to the interviews rather than planned. For example, while the researchers sat in classes waiting for the interviews to begin, or walking through the campus on their way to an interview or sharing a meal together, they often observed interactions between tutors or the CEO and their students.

*She does it with kindness.*

*She speaks to us, not yells.*

One CEO stressed that he selected staff who were caring towards the students.

*Māori or Pasifika background if we can but as importantly we need to have staff here who have a heart for the people because the people that we're dealing with here, it's like they don't care how much you know until they know how much you care...we can upskill them [tutors]; we can't teach them to have a heart. (CEO, PTE)*

#### **Belief in the students**

Students not only felt cared for but a belief in their ability to be successful was communicated to them both orally and in the actions of the tutors.

*Yeah we're sky rocketing and then when you're at school you're sky rocketing straight down to the ground into the dirt.*

## **Patience**

Explanations and actions of the tutors demonstrated their infinite patience. No matter how confused the learners appeared, the tutors spent time with them to explain and re-explain the learning, sometimes three or four times.

*Oh he was very patient, yeah. I think that's what a good teacher is about, having that patience because you are going to have people like me in the class.*

*You might not be able to [do it] because you are struggling, here they individually come and help you.*

*And he always clarifies things; he'll go over what he expects of us several times and he's quite patient.*

*I admire his patience. If we still don't understand he'll go over it again. He doesn't get hoha.*

## **Approachability**

The approachability of the tutors was appreciated by the students and this extended beyond the formal class times.

*The tutors here get quite offended if we don't ask for help. At school you want to ask for help but they don't want to give it. Here they want to give you help and you don't need it because they've already helped you so much and they still try and help you some more. If they have a problem they'll come whether it's after hours or not. (Tutor, PTE)*

## **Passion**

Almost all the students considered their tutors were passionate about their work and tutors communicated this passion in their actions and body language.

*It's the passion that comes through as a teacher, enables everyone I think to just go that little bit more.*

## **Firmness**

As well as strongly caring for their learners, tutors were clear and firm about having rules and setting boundaries and communicating these to the students. This also extended at times to 'tough love'.

*Like I forgot and so he'll feel like pulling us by the ear and teach us one on one even without the whole class. That's pretty cool. (Student, PTE)*

*She loves us like we're her own kids. That's how she treats us. She'll flick our ears if she has to; she won't really do it, but you know she will! (Student, traditional provider)*

*She's our friend but she knows the boundaries.*

## **Humour**

The learners commented on the humour of their tutors: "Yeah having fun, being humorous". Having a sense of humour seemed to make tutors more human and approachable.

*He was humorous and just made it more easy to pay attention.*

*They got a sense of humour... And nothing is ever too serious.*

## **Commitment**

Students were aware of the commitment of their tutors, who worked hard on their behalf.

*110, not just 90 percent.. Yeah its 110 percent every day you might as well say. Even when we're on like 50 percent they're still on their 110.*

## **3.2 Practices of the tutors**

Tutor practices reinforced the positive relationships between tutors and the learners. Tutors acted as mentors, set achievable challenges for the students, and based their teaching in real-life or hands-on contexts.

### **Reality teaching**

Unlike their schooling experiences, the students reported that their tutors taught them in a practical, more hands-on way that made links to contexts they were familiar with. Tutors immersed them in the environment rather than relying on a book to gain feedback or learning. Examples included being involved in powhiri, manaakitanga (e.g. working in the marae kitchen, catering for manuhiri) or looking after each other, form filling, reading the newspaper, going on trips or being shown 'how to' in a workshop, followed by 'having a go'.

*We tell him a problem we've got and he'll tell us his experience and how to solve it and we'll go into the workshop and he'll show us.*

Linking the teaching of new skills to students' experiences or prior knowledge is necessary to optimise students' learning. The learning has real meaning and the students feel there is strong relevance to themselves.

*He relates things that happened to him, experiences, and they translate straight into my life. They're very real and they give me good ideas on how to go about studying and making that study work and he keeps reminding me that study smart is not hard.*

Real-life contexts will be discussed further from the tutors' perspectives in the next chapter.

### **Guiding and mentoring**

Māori learners looked up to their tutors and respected them in their roles. They were seen as a mentor who guided and supported them towards success.

*She's a real awesome support person.*

*She guides us through everything.*

### **Setting achievable challenges**

The tutors got to know the students well and set them challenges or tasks that stretched them in their Zone of Proximal Development (Drewery & Bird, 2004).

*We managed to learn how to go through obstacles that you never experienced before.*

### **Interesting teaching**

Students wanted their tutor to make learning interesting.

*Just to hold our attention because if we're not paying attention we won't learn anything.*

## Supporting learning

The learners reported on activities or strategies used by their tutors to support their learning and to maintain a whānau atmosphere. These included having regular class meetings, going on trips so they could 'live' or gain practical experiences, workshops, work experiences, attending a formal lecture so we know "what it's going to be like going to real lectures" (Student, traditional provider).

Most of the learning contexts involved supported group work or working with a partner, although one student noted that their tutor at times encouraged him to "experience things by myself rather than listening to the teacher or reading from a book".

Learning is also supported when the students are not made to feel embarrassed when they make mistakes.

*My kaiako acknowledges me as an individual, as a tane with all the skills a 50 year old has...so I don't feel less. I don't feel reduced when I have to sit here and make mistakes because we're really learning. What I'm learning is about making mistakes and it's really embarrassing sometimes to make a mistake but the environment is such that you soon lose that embarrassment and shame; you lose it in this environment. (Mature student)*

## 3.3 The learning environment

Māori learners' perspectives on the learning environment are discussed under the physical, spiritual/emotional, academic and social aspects of the environment.

### Physical environment

Tutors went to great efforts to ensure there was a safe, friendly physical environment that was conducive to learning. The environment and atmosphere were comfortable, and students could relax and "we don't need to sit up properly".

*It's also really important in an adult environment for them to feel comfortable...we make sure that it's a really nice environment. It's a really positive environment. The teachers model that and so it's somewhere they really want to come... somewhere that they can relax and feel comfortable because if they're not comfortable in the environment, which happens in a lot of schools, they're not going to learn. (Tutor, PTE)*

Students commented that foundation courses are a great change from their formal schooling. It is not four walls and a whole lot of desks: "No, we're free", and "We can make the space ours." One of the rooms visited had beanbags and large, round balls for the students to sit on and do their work. On another site, students had painted a mural on the walls in their room with and Māori patterns so it was more like a marae setting rather than a formal classroom. Students felt they had ownership of their space. If the room became too heated or noisy, tutors made changes to ensure there were a minimum of distractions in the physical environment.

*We designed the room pretty much when we first came in. All the tables, all the chairs were stacked up in the corner of the room and we all entered into the room and he asked us, one of the first questions was 'How do you want to set up your room? Do you want to sit on the floor? Do you want to set up the tables? Put them like this? Leave it up to you'. So that's when it first started. It's like our whare.*

The physical environment had a family-like atmosphere, with small, intimate classes. Many of the learning activities were interactive, with hands-on experiences. Everyone helped each other to accomplish the tasks.

*It's all about family and togetherness and right from the very beginning of the class she said this is what I want you to learn. We are a family. Basically that was it, that's what she got us to learn first, that fact that we are family and that we're here to help each other rather than just let us carry on as at school and be our own little silos. She made us interact, which was good because she made it a family gathering. (Student, traditional provider)*

### **Spiritual/emotional environment**

The tutors, all of whom were Māori, took cognisance of the wairua or spiritual side of their learners. Māori values were manifest and lived in the learning environment for example, manaakitanga, tautoko, whanaungatanga including shared kai (food). Students appreciated their tutor “because she’s Māori and so she can understand” and this was particularly important if they had to take time off to attend a tangi (funeral).

*There's a strong wairua in our class.*

Māori values were very much evident in the operation of the teaching and learning environment. All of the learners talked about the whānau or family atmosphere that their tutors had created and encouraged in a range of ways.

*We're all family.*

*I think the whānau environment is good.*

*I bridged here because they had a great Māori environment.*

*There's heaps of students here but there's heaps of Māori teachers to encourage the Māori students to succeed. (Student, traditional provider)*

*I'm sometimes evilling everybody out to suss them out; they just come in all happy, cheery and sweet. You get that happy, cheery vibe anyway in the morning from Aunty A and Aunty D, and Aunty M lifts up her extra bit too. [Tutors are called aunty.]*

Whanaungatanga, or positive, strong relationships among students and between tutors and students, was built into the everyday life of the class. Students were encouraged to manaaki or care for each other.

*I base the programme on whanaungatanga and I spend a lot of time on this. It's really about supporting one another as a whānau. (Tutor, traditional environment)*

*Whanaungatanga is strong at the wānanga.*

*And we all get along here...whereas if we're on the streets we would have killed each other.*

### **Living as Māori**

The physical environment of the classes visited often reflected Māori culture, and tikanga Māori was evident in the daily practices of the class. Each day usually begins and ends with a karakia.

*One of the things we do before we start our class is we do a mihi everyday and I think that was one of the main things that helped us break down our speaking barriers.*

*We have a lot of discussion on karakia. It's not made compulsory [there are a few Pākehā in this class]. (Tutor, traditional environment)*

*We begin and end each day with a karakia. (Student, wānanga)*

*Karakia at the beginning and end of the day. We have Māori values and rules; they're just common sense, all the good, positive values that we want everybody to have [including non-Māori who come to this PTE] but we find it really empowering for our Māori students to come into an organisation like that, many of whom actually don't even know their own identity...helping them along with that because...until they know themselves they can't move on. (CEO PTE)*

Most students were taught and encouraged to share on a regular basis their pepeha and to recognise their whakapapa connections to those in their class or with visitors. Some of the Māori learners did not know much about their Māori connections or about Māori values or tikanga. These aspects became an added teaching area for the tutors, who recognised the importance of each student knowing who they are. Thus the student was being strengthened both academically and culturally.

*Tikanga is a big thing if someone passes away. You go, you can't wait. Everything is dropped. Being able to just go and know when you ring your tutor it's going to be accepted.*

The above student mentioned that “Māori know Māori, there's always connections. Someone always knows you or your whānau”. She cautioned against saying you are going to a tangi as an excuse if you aren't really going to one. Someone will know someone who knows your whānau and they will know if there has been a death or not. “We were told to never say your grandfather has died [as an excuse to be absent] otherwise it could happen.” Another student talked about how “most Pākehā don't understand; they don't look at it from your perspective” if you have to go to a tangi. They think you should “only go to a funeral if it's immediate family”.

### **Tautoko or support**

As noted earlier, the classroom operated like a whānau, where there was an expectation that each person would support and care for the others. The Māori concept of ako – to be both a learner and a teacher – often came into play when those who knew more or had completed their activities supported those who hadn't. The tuakana or more expert learner supported the teina in his or her learning (Pere, 1988).

*The young ones help us. (Mature student)*

Tutors created an environment whereby students would support or tautoko each other in their learning. This was seen as a normal aspect of the whānau environment.

*We can do our work, help each other out.*

*My mates support me.*

*Hard for me to speak up and ask questions but it's a friendly atmosphere for me.*

*Yeah some people come into this course that don't even know how to read simple words and now they're learning everyday things because everyone encourages everyone.*

*[When you don't pass an assessment] you know all the bro's are going to look at it and go 'oh bro, I told you that you have to change that, or have to change that'.*

*We seemed to have built up a relationship between all of us. If one was struggling then we'd just have a chat about it and whoever could help would help so that just made it that much easier, not so much easier but the weight less heavy.*

In being supportive the environment was non-judgemental and there were no 'put-downs'.

*If you're not sure, you put your hand up and no one judges you or takes the fun out of you – we all support each other.*

*Not being put down and being made to feel like a nothing. (Mature student)*

*Everyone's like a family and that's really good. Nobody puts anybody down.*

*No put-downs, absolutely no put-downs.*

### **Self-belief and confidence**

Tutors worked hard to undo what many of these Māori learners had learnt from their school days, that is, a lack of belief in themselves. Feelings of success and being able to achieve have to be internalised and many of the adult Māori learners were showing signs of believing in themselves after many years of seeing themselves as a failure or not being good enough.

*I can count to 120 no problem!*

*[How has the course helped you?] Positive things, yeah the positiveness here that, you know if you're getting it from here then it makes you think well if I carry on [to further tertiary] I might get the same help from those people there too, so it will be easier.*

*Things we've achieved hanging up on the wall, like posters. Our stuff that we've done are hanging on the wall. You know just a quick reminder you can do it.*

*I've learnt more than I ever did at school. Here my reading's picking up, I know how to spell more words and how to talk properly, you know to other people. Yeah I like it here.*

*My reading's just picked up. My maths has gone up and up. I can read a paper now – I can read anything!*

*We worked for it [our mark]. We done it ourselves. We were proud of what we done. I didn't know we can do that.*

One of the tutors expressed his concern that, despite the effective work being done with adult Māori learners at the foundation level, as the students left and moved into a degree environment they were likely to be going back to an environment similar to secondary school – an environment that was not conducive to their learning.

*There was always that preparation to get them to that tertiary education. I think our youth or a lot of our young people, what they're seeing is they go from the school system into this system [foundation] which they're very much conducive to learning within this environment. Then back they go into a tertiary education, the polytech or whatever, and one teacher at the front again, so they're stepping back into that environment. That will be the only reason why they probably won't step there. They're more than capable of doing it but I think what they rebelled against at the start is very much that. (Tutor, small-town PTE)*

### 3.4 Academic environment

#### **Hands-on**

The academic environment was organised in a way that contributed to learner success. Students were often given ‘hands-on’ activities, things that they could physically manipulate to assist their understanding. Examples included interactive games for learning, constructing, making a chart, crosswords, engaging in art, craft, drama or music for expressing ideas and developing language. It is not by coincidence that these activities also involved group or collaborative work as they built whanaungatanga, interdependence, and reciprocity that drive class relationships and ways of working.

*If we haven't finished we just get others in our class to help us get through the units.*

#### **Group and individual achievement**

Group work was encouraged, with students scaffolding and supporting each other. However they also received clear messages about doing their own work where necessary. If they desired to move to other forms of tertiary education, students had to learn to complete tasks by themselves at times as tertiary assessment systems are geared towards individualistic task completion.

*We support each other but we've got to have your own answers – we just help them try and understand the question.*

Ways of working were both constructive and co-constructive although none of the tutors interviewed were able to articulate or theorise how they taught.

*Like the tutor, he really just puts the ideas there and everyone, when he makes us do a group activity we have to build the information up ourselves with our own knowledge and we share it between each other.*

*We use our life experiences and different personalities, whatever intelligence, whatever you call that, awareness of different things and stuff and like the different groups, the different people that you work with like you learn different things off them.*

#### **Success-oriented**

Learners were given several opportunities to pass their assignment tasks in an environment that was success-oriented rather than failure-focused.

*We get three chances (to pass) – we get another test paper to fill out and we learn it again or he'll help us. (Student, PTE)*

All the students spoken to were passing their assignments. With positive expectations from tutors, and extra support from the classroom whānau and the tutors, all learners were successful. Anyone not passing usually had a large number of absences and ended up leaving the course or deferring.

Completed successful work can be reinforcing to the learner.

*Sometimes when I'm aggro and I look up at the ceiling and along the walls and I see a piece of work that we've done together, sort of snaps me out of my bad vibes and wakes me up.*

## Clarifying

Unlike some of their schooling experiences, Māori learners related that their tutors took a lot of time to explain what they may not understand.

*She explains it more clearly and what she specifically wants...and you go away and do it.*

*She will explain the question a bit more clearly or in a different way and then she'll go through it with us.*

## Support from outside the classroom

The younger students tended to believe they did not have support outside the site of learning, although a few talked about family members' support.

*I have huge support from my grandmother and all of my aunts and uncles who are Māori. (Te reo course)*

*My nan, I try to like get her to teach me Māori. She's like really strict man, far out. (PTE)*

In contrast, the mature students were often encouraged in their studies by their family or those around them.

*My kids keep me going...the encouragement "oh good you should have started ages ago. You should be a teacher".*

*My aunty and my cousins and all that.*

*And just showing your kids that you can do it, don't give up and learn how.*

## 3.5 School days

When talking about their present learning contexts, the Māori adult learners made an inevitable comparison with their previous restrictive learning contexts at school.

*It's [present context] better than the school way, better than school.*

*It's the school, their system don't work in the school anymore. They don't give you freedom... They give you instructions.. that's it, you listen to them, you don't get a choice.*

Learners recalled their teachers, their beliefs about schooling and some of the activities they engaged in at school.

### School teachers

Most of the Māori learners recalled that many of their teachers did not seem interested in teaching them at school. Either the teachers seemed under pressure to complete a pre-set syllabus or curriculum, or else the Māori learners could not keep up with the middle to top range in the classroom and got left behind. The Māori learners believed their teachers did not support them and assumed they did not want to learn. This resulted in loss of interest by the student and the teacher focusing on those who did want to learn, that is, those who were keeping up with the teacher. In time, many of the 'non-learners', who did not see much purpose in being at school, 'were kicked out' or dropped out of school.

*Yeah I didn't have really good intelligence when I was at school. I left cos I was having problems with the teacher at the school I was at... and I just had to quit and find a job or a course.*

*Well, when I used to go to school, all the ones that couldn't read properly, it was like, oh you go and sit over there in the corner and just stay there. That's why I played up at school. Well it wasn't really worth going to school if they were going to stick you in the corner.*

*Another student pipes in: I know how you feel cos I was like that!*

*I got kicked out when I was in Form 3. Yeah, you know that sucks. Cos I wasn't learning at school because the teachers...if they're just going to stick you in the corner!*

*I left school when I was 15. They did the same thing over and over you know. It's just, here's a sheet, do that!*

*I was hardly ever in class because they gave me too many responsibilities. The library, ...pedestrian crossing, before school, after school. I had to babysit one of my teacher's children when I was nine. Every day, just doing dishes in the staff room, doing messages, everything. So I was hardly ever in class so I got behind.*

*Learning the same thing over and over again. You should have the chance as a teenager to be able to talk to your teacher but there, they don't even give you a choice to talk. It's not talking, it's yelling. They start yelling at you so that makes you raise your voice.*

*And it gets out of hand. And it all ends up back on your shoulders, the student's shoulders, not the teacher and yet the teacher was where the problem started.*

They recalled that their teachers did not care about them or they put them down.

*She was a put downer and yeah all the teachers didn't care, they go smoke, want to go to lunch, come back from lunch, and they take their time.*

A Māori learner who had attended a Kura Kaupapa school eventually lost interest in school and left because they “gave us kapa haka all the time”.

### **What students did at school**

About one-third of the Māori learners who were not successful at school admitted that they had not been ideal pupils at school: “I was the worst student ever”. Maturity may have led to one learner reflecting, “Students need to meet teachers halfway.” They talked about getting smart to the teacher, distracting others and trying to get expelled. It is likely these activities had some relationship to the way that teachers perceived the Māori learners and the lack of encouragement they were given to participate or achieve success. One interviewee talked about drinking and smoking at school and blamed this on being given no boundaries by the teachers. On the other hand, many of the young participants (under 20 years old) in this study saw being able to smoke at intervals and when they finished their work in their foundation programme as an incentive or a reward to turn up each day and participate in their learning. They felt that, unlike at school, their tutors treated them as adults.

Several acknowledged they were good at sport and this became their focus rather than academic pursuits. Others admitted they were too shy to put up their hand to ask the teacher for clarification and thus slipped behind, eventually leaving school. About a quarter of the students

said that someone close to them either got very ill or died and so they left school to look after their relative or because absences left big gaps in their learning. A number lamented they left school at 13, 14 or 16 years and the majority of those interviewed stated they had left school with no qualifications. In one group interviewed, several of the students were 15 years old and amongst this group was a 13 year old who had absented himself from school and it appeared that no school would take him back.

### **Beliefs about teachers**

Most students recalled their secondary school teachers in uncomplimentary and negative terms. “Some [teachers] were there for the money and didn’t care about us.” One believed that “if an individual teacher has joy in her work, enthusiasm and interest this leads to a good atmosphere [for learning]”. Interestingly this sentiment about enthusiasm appeared to apply to all of the interviewees’ current tutors, but were largely absent in their teachers from school.

## **3.6 What are they learning in foundation programmes?**

The aims of the foundation or bridging courses are to build literacy, language and numeracy skills that will enable adult Māori learners to move on to further study or to prepare them for positions of employment.

Whether the learning of other skills was intended or not, the students were also learning a lot about themselves, their identity, and social skills.

### **Study skills**

Not all of the courses included numeracy, but literacy and language learning were a key focus. Students expected to improve their reading and writing, and a small number related that they could not read at all before they joined their course. Some of the courses teach the students about learning styles so they can better understand themselves as a learner.

Two groups of students, one group attending a university and the other an iwi-based Māori PTE, had enrolled in the foundation course to learn te reo Māori. Although te reo Māori was a strong feature of the foundation certificate, modules for literacy and numeracy were included.

### **Literacy skills**

Literacy skills include oral language confidence or, according to one of the students, “how to talk better”. Written language involves learning about grammar, spelling, sentences and paragraphs.

*We learnt to read and write more.*

*Having the literacy lady here at the centre is even better because it ensures that we’re doing it the right way.*

*I’m picking up words that I understand.*

*Just to upskill my reading, yeah so I know what I’m doing on the job, cos there’s a lot of reading...you get a piece of paper with where all the pipes go and all that, but I couldn’t read it.*

*Upgrade the learning skills and learn what we missed out there and they teach us here literacy, numeracy and all that stuff and computer work.*

*When I started here I went down to the two-letter words. And I know how to write a six, seven, and, eight-letter word now, and spelling – she’s [tutor] primo!*

*We've just gone through learning how to construct a bibliography and speed reading, stuff like that, how to plan.*

Students were given lots of tips on how to approach writing an essay as well as “learning ways of structuring our essays”. They were also taught “how to double check my work”, an aspect of being a successful learner. This included learning how to use a dictionary and to look up the meaning of words.

*Learn to write it down and look up the meaning of it in the dictionary and then try to find where the word came from and what context and then to understand it, so enjoying that.*

As their oral and written skills grew they were taught how to present their assignments for sharing, using information technology. Most students had access to computers for some of the time and learnt how to use the library catalogue online or a search engine to research topics they wanted to study. They were encouraged to “do a lot of reading research” as they became more confident with reading.

Alongside the building of confidence in their learners, tutors encouraged them to consider going into further courses and eventually into a degree. “We were getting tips on what to do to get a degree,” related one learner confidently. This comment came from a student who was studying at a traditional provider.

### **Numeracy**

About three-quarters of the students indicated they did not like mathematics and found “mathematics a culture shock but hey you’ve got to learn it”; or were not good at it (mathematics anxiety). However, they had begun to enjoy it with their tutor from the foundation programme.

#### **The usefulness of mathematics**

*I need my mathematics because I have my engineering but yeah I need mathematics.*

As their confidence and skills in numeracy grew, the students found themselves discovering more about the nature and function of maths

*Made us realise mathematics is not just about number.*

*When you do mathematics here he describes how we use numbers and the numbers are becoming something that’s going to be carried on through life.*

*This year mathematics has really helped me.*

#### **Feelings about maths**

*I find the activities fun, not just a piece slapped in front of me and then do it.*

*She was just speaking all this number language that I can’t decode but now I can.*

*I really enjoy mathematics now – more involved rather than just listening to someone speak (boring).*

*Maths learnt is a lot more helpful than the ones I learnt at school.*

*I hate percentages and decimals so everything [in mathematics] is fine apart from that.*

### **Pedagogical strategies for numeracy**

This change in attitude towards mathematics is related to the strategies their tutors used to teach them numeracy.

*We played games and he would always asks us the answer.*

*He would give us guidelines on how to use formulas and when to use formulas to work it out and tell him.*

*Just always interacting with us.*

*Made us feel like we can enjoy mathematics rather than be afraid of mathematics.*

*If we were in trouble he would go into depth; he did not go too fast. (Student, traditional environment)*

*We would feel confident asking for help.*

*[I liked] playing mathematics games and problem solving.*

*Keep learning new things everyday in mathematics and learning different methods and different strategies.*

*Well she writes down some sums and talks to me about them, and she also sets some homework for me to do. I've only had two lessons with her and most of my sums seem to be right, so I'm very happy. I've cottoned on to what she's telling me. (Mature student)*

*It's just that they are teaching us properly, that's what it comes down to. Explaining it properly. (Mature student)*

Two tutors from the same PTE outlined how they taught numeracy, while another tutor talked about focusing on hire purchase agreements.

*Mathematics is used with tools we teach them like with music, carpentry, bone carving, because in everyday life whether they realise it, they're doing a form of numeracy. It's up to us to make them realise that they are, because in music you've got beats, you're reading, you're reading music, you're forming music by doing all these things, mathematically and literacy wise. (Tutor, PTE)*

*Mine was DIY stuff, being able to use a tape measure, read a tape measure, being able to calculate and things like that. So I think in our environment there is literacy and mathematics going on but it's done hands-on. It's not done as a mathematical lesson. They eventually do write it in a book. (Tutor, PTE)*

*Yeah it was a good exercise doing the budget in class and then having a look at the costing if they wanted to get anything on hire purchase and how long it would be over time and what the interest rate attached to that is. (Tutor, PTE)*

A tutor from another PTE also outlined how music became a context for teaching mathematics and literacy.

*Music software programs are pretty easy to use and some of the peers are using them quite competently. We do numeracy through music... [Tutor] uses his for half beats and quarter beats and that type of thing so fractions goes into music well. (Tutor, PTE)*

This tutor went on to relate how he used “a band of ex-trainees performing up in Auckland this weekend” as a budgeting mathematics exercise about “getting their costings together and that sort of thing”.

Another tutor advised that he gave the students a worksheet and sat amongst them. He was interested in reinforcing their self-developed strategies, where these were evident.

*If they don't know how to do it then I'll do it with them. I prefer to see how they do the equations before I show them how I do my equation because if they've already got a method that works for them then we'll go with that one.* (Tutor, PTE)

The mathematics tutor at one of the traditional providers, whose foundation programme staircases into a teaching degree, informed us that he bases his teaching on Poutama Tau, a Māori-medium programme based on the Early Numeracy Project in primary schools. This programme gives children new strategies to do the four basic operations of mathematics. Most children have only one strategy to do an algorithm and Poutama Tau sets out to change their thinking and encourages them to see other possibilities. Early Numeracy and Poutama Tau have proved effective with non-Māori and Māori teachers and learners respectively.

### **Cultural skills**

Many of the tutors taught the students aspects of Māori tikanga, much of which then became a lived part of the life in and beyond the classroom, as noted earlier. One group had regular kaitahi (shared meals) with the degree students, with each group taking turns to be responsible for the preparation of the meal. They were learning catering and quantities and collaboration with each other, but also the importance of manaakitanga and whanaungatanga.

A number of groups shared that they had learnt about the Treaty of Waitangi from their tutors.

### **Social skills**

During the interviews a number of the younger ones communicated that they had come to the course reluctantly. Many of them had been sent by Work and Income to learn skills that would increase their potential for gaining employment or increase their likelihood of gaining entry to further training or a degree course. All the courses had small numbers, which raised the importance of each learner getting along with others in the class. Tutors encouraged an interdependent environment, whereby each learner helped others in the class and in turn was not afraid to ask others for support.

*You learn how to work with different people, that's choice.*

*Cooperate with people.*

*[I learnt to] participate.*

Relationships, or getting along with others and respecting each other, were a very important part of being a member of the class whānau.

*Be kind to people. Be loving.*

Students had the following advice to offer tutors of programmes, based what they saw in their own tutors.

*To develop a student-teacher relationship as [tutor] does. She has one with everybody.*

*We just share each other's opinions. I think it's important, so she [tutor] has our support and she listens.*

*Treat you like family.*

### **Survival and life skills**

Those who had been unemployed or were at home prior to commencing their course had to learn some basic life skills and work habits like “getting up early in the morning”, how to be punctual, time management, goal setting, prioritising, and even how to get oneself to the course (arranging transport).

*It's just little and it's silly but we went to a restaurant [on a class trip] and [tutor] taught us to eat properly and it's just really little but who else is going to sit there and tell us how we should do it and how else are we going to know, so I thought it was pretty important. (Student, traditional environment)*

*She always reminds us to have good time management and you know if you're going to study you can't just study on an empty brain; you need to go and have some kai (food) and then come back again...she taught me about preparing myself for next year.*

*Good thing about this course, it's based on everything, life itself!*

In relating their teaching to everyday contexts and to the students' needs, these skills were incorporated into the literacy and numeracy activities.

*Like people come in and tell us, or if you want tenancy stuff like that. They teach us our rights and all that and about drugs and alcohol, the effects it does on you.*

*We learn about life. Screen printing.*

*Body building.*

*And how to make your own CDs and stuff.*

Some of the tutors prepared personal or group challenges for the learners from time to time so you could “prepare yourself to go through difficulties and obstacles”. Later as a class they would talk about how the students set about meeting the challenges and in the process share strategies for surviving life in future study or employment. Students were learning about resilience and persistence.

*What surprises me is that every day we just learn something completely different. The kaupapa is set for us and sometimes there's no structure but we learn a lot of life skills and that's what I think we miss out on in schools, is just general life skills and yeah I'm grateful.*

### **Work/employment skills**

Three groups of students interviewed were learning numeracy and literacy as preparation for a trade or a profession. Additional learning areas included effective work habits, computer skills, how to work with children (pre teacher aide or teacher training), learning to find problems in cars, and safety and some basic workshop skills (pre motor trade training). Some of these courses involved going to work experience once a week.

## **Te reo Māori**

Two courses, although called foundation studies, were in fact te reo Māori courses that included two or three modules on study skills or preparing for studying in a tertiary environment. One of these programmes included a course on numeracy.

Māori learners who were learning te reo Māori learnt first through English and then in Māori to improve reading and writing during the course, although there was a strong emphasis on spoken and aural Māori.

## **Self-respect and the self**

Many of the younger learners commented that they had been learning about themselves and “about our characters”. Some of the tutors had spent time at the beginning of the course encouraging students to talk about their early learning experiences and how these influenced their feelings about learning.

*A process where you're trying to find the true feelings...finding yourself like our personal lives.*

*And they don't yell at you so you can't yell back.*

One tutor also reflected that the students often look to their family or others for approval when in fact the power is within them. They must learn to like and respect themselves rather than seek it externally from others.

Learning about the self involves being able to articulate and talk about important values in life and what the students themselves value.

*Here we've got respect for each other.*

*Need to respect other people and other people's opinions. I wasn't like that before. I was like ratty as, all the time. Looked at me wrong I'd get ratty. So yeah teaches you to hold your cool, keep cool and calm, collect and breathe it out.*

This also included considering what they wanted to do in the future and learning how to set goals to work towards attainment of what they aspired to. Discussion sometimes led to some of the challenges they might need to be aware of for the future.

An increase in self-confidence, with a resolve to continue in the learning journey, appeared to be a result of learning about oneself, “just have somebody point me in the right direction”, and the course “taught us to have enough confidence and strength in ourselves to progress to the next hill I suppose”.

*It's all about self-motivation...this bridging course I think it enables you to say I can do everything because I know who I am now and I know what's in front of me.*

*I was very shy and I never used to talk and at the start when I got up to say something I just cried but now I feel more confident because I know who I am, where I'm coming from and I know where I am heading.*

*To me that's what it is about, Māori not having confidence because they've always been put down and in this learning environment it just gave them...that strength to overcome being whakama, you know shy... Whereas after learning who they were...they've got it all there. I just felt that yes, each one of them will progress and do very well. (Mature student)*

Additionally they learnt that life may not have always been as they would have wished but there was no point in laying blame on someone else.

*As we were talking I came to realise that people are responsible for themselves and so we don't take on their baggage although we do help them to carry their bag and I think each of us learnt that.*

### **Sense of responsibility**

One of the areas most of the younger students talked about when discussing differences between their current learning context and their school days was the ability to be able to make choices and being trusted by their tutors and supported to make choices. At school they were told what to do and were bound by rules that they felt they had no say over. They felt as though there was no trust and no choices.

*Just like school except it's with family you might as well say, and you get freedom and choice.*

A mature student talked about some of the other mature students on her course, several of whom had been in jail. She said they could go back to their old life when they came out but they “make a choice and come to a place which is like this, an awesome place, and change their future”.

Giving students choices helps them to have a sense of responsibility, but so does asking them to do things they may not want to do.

*I do little subtle things to engage them. Sometimes they have to work with others they don't know or like. It gives them a taste of what is to come. (Tutor, traditional environment)*

## **3.7 Barriers to further learning**

All the students talked about the positive aspects of their learning environment. However, there were external barriers to their learning that they shared.

### **Travel**

Some of the learners expressed that travelling to their learning site was a barrier. Several of the small-town PTEs had their own vans that they used to collect the students each day. But one of the CEOs advised that funding was running out for this venture.

The iwi provider CEO said they used to provide transport for trainees but there was no longer funding for this. In the smaller centres some students walked or came on the bus, a few drove or shared transport with another student and some were dropped off by whānau. This could be problematic if the person they were dependent on for their ride was sick or on holiday.

One student commented that she found it hard to get to the PTE.

*Cos petrol costs, half the time I'm on empty, I'm thinking am I going to make it the next day? I'm worried about petrol all the time. I daren't go out at weekends, cos I'm worried about saving petrol.*

When one of her fellow peers asked her if she had applied for the petrol allowance, she replied they didn't give much, only \$17 a fortnight. One of the other students commented that “\$17 ain't gonna give you a week's gas; that's only a day”.

## **Fees**

Money was a barrier for many students. Although the majority of courses were free, or very low (\$100 in the case of one traditional provider), there was a range of fees among the providers. The traditional providers charged \$500 and \$1,500 respectively, and one of the PTEs charged \$2,900.

*It's free, everything's free.*

*At school they always hassle my parents about paying school fees and it's supposed to be free.*

Even if their course was free, cost was seen as a barrier for many wanting to continue on to further training courses that charged fees.

*No [I wouldn't feel confident enough to go to polytech] you're just looking at a big student loan. (Student, PTE)*

*You get heaps of money [from a student loan] but you've got to pay that back.*

*I'm not going to get a student loan because those are hard to pay back because you've got interest and all those other things.*

*I don't want no damn stupid loan following me till I die!*

In contrast to the above comments, a recent study suggests that in New Zealand those in the lower socio-economic classes are not necessarily deterred from entering tertiary education because of a fear of incurring student debt (Kemp et al., 2007). Further, neither gender nor ethnicity appears to be a deterrent to taking out a student loan. This finding is contrary to results from the United Kingdom.

## **Whānau support**

More of the younger students indicated that they had no support outside the course. Some related that their family did not care about them or their study.

*I don't think I get much support from home; from my boyfriend I do...but from everyone else it's almost like I'm doing a foundation course and it's not that important.*

*My family don't interact with me. This is my time away from them.*

Several of the tutors stated that some of the younger students had been kicked out from home, had drugs or alcoholism in the family and were left to fend for themselves. One CEO of a PTE expressed a concern about several students who were homeless and said that she wished her PTE was able to provide hostel accommodation. Another tutor had taken in one of the young female students as a boarder because she had nowhere to live.

## 4 TUTORS' PERSPECTIVES

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### 4.1 Who are the tutors?

The tutors, who were all Māori, came from varied backgrounds. A number had trained as primary school teachers, and others had come from office work or teacher aiding. One tutor had been a student on a foundation programme and had graduated to tutor. All of them had learnt many of their skills on the job, which included the training they had attended for foundation programme tutors. All of the tutors we met and interviewed appeared strongly committed and passionate about their work and cared about their students. Most tutors were hired not just for their qualification (or despite not having the necessary qualifications) but because they worked well with young adults.

*I advertised specific needs...and yeah he walked in the door and he didn't have the qualifications like you have to...but he's highly focused and taking the time to achieve those [necessary qualifications]. He'd worked with kids, he'd worked in a hostel type situation where he and his wife were caregivers for a boarding school. So I thought he'd be great working with young people and he was mature and he had a trade behind him so he's always been around a teaching environment and he had quals that suited the position and he could add to the programme. (CEO, small-town PTE)*

Another tutor had been hired because, as well as being a trained teacher, he had qualifications in music. The CEO “went and watched him out in the public”. She went to “specifically watch how he interacted with the people that were there and whether or not that would work with kids”. The CEO was impressed and she had “this gut feeling that he could possibly suit the job so I offered it to him”.

One of the traditional provider's two tutors had not been engaged in training for foundation level learners. These two tutors did have a bachelor's degree, and both were still studying; one was enrolled at doctoral level but foundation teaching was not his main area of teaching.

### 4.2 Professional development

All institutions supported their tutors in their ongoing professional development. All had been involved in the Literacy Aotearoa or Learning for Living programmes, except for the tutors from one of the traditional providers.

*The professional development is definitely offered to us and if we see a programme we'd like to do we come forward and talk to [CEO] about it...she encourages us. (Tutor, PTE)*

*Our tutors attend the Bridging Conferences and Accelerated Learning conference. They also attend workshops by Workbase. (CEO, iwi provider)*

*It's online and [CEO] lets us go to the wānanga. They hold them every two months or so. (Tutor, PTE)*

*We're very much on professional development;, it's happening all the time, continuously. (Tutor, PTE)*

*Yes we get support in our professional development. Our fees are paid if we study here. But I haven't done any foundation course stuff. (Tutor, traditional provider)*

Professional development took a number of forms, from bringing experts in, and attending courses, to providing professional development for each other.

*Yeah the Learning for Living last year from July to December and then it started up again this year...strategies for reading. It's been fantastic and the diagnostic tool was really interesting to look into too. (Tutor, PTE)*

*The resources that came out of it were great and we're implementing the strategies right through the whole centre so it's been hugely beneficial. This year I've started a National Certificate in Adult Literacy Education. (Tutor, PTE)*

*Next week we've got professional development. [MoE tutor] is coming in to do some workshops, peer observations so it's been great. (Tutor, PTE)*

A CEO who had spent many years teaching at all levels of the compulsory sector and at foundation levels commented:

*I train the teachers (tutors) because we find actually it's really hard to get people. It's really a specialised job and so we bring people in with the right attitudes and you can teach them a skill. You can't teach them to have a heart. (CEO, PTE)*

The tutors at this PTE were also involved in studying for national diplomas in adult education or literacy.

Another CEO who supported the staff professional development expressed concern about new initiatives – in particular, the Foundation Learning Quality Assurance (FLQA).

*But I do have an issue particularly with the new FLQA coming in as well because...you know the funding from the government. We're going to have to involve our tutors in a lot more professional development and it's very costly in terms of time. ... I'd like to be able to afford to be developing people ongoing but just there's more and more requirements put on us.*

*So that's one day required for all of us to study together so that's three replacement tutors needed to pay for, for the day...for small organisations like ourselves it's challenging. (CEO, PTE)*

In addition, this CEO shared that their students did not always like having replacement tutors as they were not used to having changes and the “tutors don't always like that [leaving their classes] do they?”

### 4.3 Setting the environment

The tutors placed great importance on setting a safe, comfortable learning environment for the students, which includes a whānau atmosphere. All of the students reported that they felt comfortable, that their tutors were approachable and that they felt valued and cared for. This did not preclude the tutors from being firm and setting boundaries for the students, as reported earlier.

*Yeah it's [the tutor] being able to relate to a Māori student because we've got to feel comfortable in our learning environment. If we don't there's no way in hell we're going to learn because if we're not comfortable, of course we're not going to show up to class. You've got to be comfortable especially with Māori. We're quite picky.*

*I have a whānau board and I encourage students to put their photo up. Their art work is on the walls; they can see their work on the wall. They stamp their own mark on the room. It's their whānau class. (Tutor, traditional environment)*

*We have this aunty and uncle relationship happening. Even [Pākehā MoE facilitator] she gets called aunty [when she visits the class to give feedback on the tutors] and she's not related or anything and she's an aunty but that's how we work with the kids. (Tutor, small-town PTE)*

Students appreciated that they were allowed some freedom and choice especially when it came to being allowed to have breaks and to smoke during class breaks. This made the environment comfortable for them. One tutor noted that:

*...allowing them to make decisions for their own future, it's about making up your own minds, being able to decide to go out for a cigarette without wondering who's going to come around the corner and catch them. (Tutor, PTE)*

#### 4.4 Multi-tasking roles

Although the foundation programmes are designed to teach language, literacy and numeracy skills, most of the tutors considered they had a role “to help them [students] grow and understand about themselves and develop really what is a lot of latent potential” (Tutor, PTE).

Some of the tutors talked about the work they did after teaching hours for the students.

*They know that we're always there for them so I think that's the difference [between a Māori and non-Māori provider]. It's not just a tutoring role, there's more to it. Pastoral care. (Tutor, PTE)*

The dedication and time commitment were evident in the story from a tutor who recounted that one of the trainees was waiting for her ride when the tutor finished at 4.30 pm. She asked the young girl, “What's happening?” The tutor persisted in trying to get a response.

*...and it turns out she's staying in a caravan in [Name] Road and she doesn't want to go there by herself. The whole story unfolds but unless you take the time you're never going to get to the bottom of the story and she's not going to be a learner. She's very intelligent; she passed her first assessment in mathematics but she's ground to a halt in the last three weeks because this has been going on in the back. (Tutor, PTE)*

Availability of tutors outside class hours was a common theme identified by the staff and students.

*One of the other ways [of supporting learning] is that he makes himself available on an individual basis outside of school hours after class for us to go and talk to him. During lunch breaks, we can ask him questions. We can present him with some stuff that we're doing and ask him if he'll help us with it so he makes himself available outside of the normal classroom hours. That's one of the things I like too.*

One of the students talked about getting a letter from Work and Income, going down to make an appointment, which could take about an hour, and having to go back to the appointment subsequently, which could be two weeks away. Some of the providers had a liaison person who knew the right person to contact and could phone on the student's behalf. They used their contacts for the students, “just knowing the system basically to try and help them” (Tutor, PTE). Sometimes this role was carried out by the tutor if there was no liaison person.

*I think because all of these people are WINZ beneficiaries, the major need is that support around interaction with government agencies. You know they get into so much problems and have so much stress because they don't know what they don't know. (Tutor, PTE)*

*It's necessarily a holistic education that we have to give them because...if they've got problems going on in their lives, they're not going to be able to concentrate on learning so you actually have to address all of it. (Tutor, PTE)*

## 4.5 Pedagogic strategies

### Resources

Tutors used a variety of resources and techniques to engage their students in their learning. All the classes, except in one of the traditional providers, were small – under 20 students, and more often around 10-12 students. Tutors talked about working one on one, in pairs, in small groups, and with the whole class. Because of the small numbers it was fairly easy for the tutors to have time to engage with the students individually.

*Yes, the less trainees the easier it is. I think the ones that are struggling, it needs to be a smaller group. One on one?*

*Yeah and I think they like doing it in pairs. Because they are quite close the trainees get on really well. (Tutor, PTE)*

Some of the tutors used “a lot of whiteboards and huge pads and get it as interactive as much as possible”, while another tutor reported, “We don't use the board that much.”

### Real-life contexts

Tutors put a lot of thought into integrating the teaching of skills into contexts that were relevant to students' lives so they could make connections between the skill being taught and the activity.

*A context that's real-life so that they can use or see the skills that they're gaining in a real-life situation. Today we were doing data entry so we made up a whole lot of freight data and pretended we were on a data entry. You've just got to put it into real-life situations. (Tutor, PTE)*

*That's where I think the real-life context, actually you know it's more useful. Like if somebody is going to go flatting, they'll be interested. (Tutor, PTE)*

*Looking at a tenancy agreement, like we were talking about reading text. That sort of text would be useful to them... They work out their budget. (Tutor, PTE)*

*If she can see us stressing or having trouble she'll come over and help us, or she'll pull out a game of scrabble and that will help our literacy and our spelling.*

Other real-life contexts mentioned by the tutors included going on a visit somewhere as a valuable opportunity to teach literacy and numeracy skills in context.

*We could actually integrate literacy and mathematics into a lot of activities. It might even be if you're going on a bus somewhere, you know you can work out the kilometres to where you're going, look at the signs on the way as well. (Tutor, PTE)*

*We've been to Woolworths budgeting, we've been to Big Save and looked at how much it costs over time and done a budget and we've been to shops and looked at 30 percent and how much that would mean in an actual sale. So there are a lot of outings or things that you can do... you don't have to ask for money for buses. (Colleague tutor)*

One of the PTEs had a recording studio as they also taught a music course. This studio was used for the foundation students: "We're using that tool to help the learners learn more." Music as a learning context was discussed in a previous section.

## 4.6 What they're giving students

### **Independence**

Because it is easy to build a dependency between them and their students, the tutors introduced the students to outside agencies so they would know where to go when they left their current institution.

*Today we were doing service providers, community service providers, social services, so we went to visit [name] health provider, WINZ, the law centre and actually went into places and got brochures and discussed why you would come here and what hours it's open and things like that. So those are meeting needs directly because they may have a situation that comes up they want down the track and they're going to remember... (Tutor, PTE)*

The tutors have built relationships with these agencies and they are invited in to do workshops with the trainees and "the trainees recognise the people that come in...so it just places the connection for them" (Tutor, PTE).

### **Valuing people**

Tutors felt that the programme met its goals because it valued people. The focus was on the people rather than the programme (unlike secondary school which tends to focus on the curriculum and teaching to exams or assessment). The programmes were built around the learners' needs rather than the tutors telling the learners what they should be doing.

*Our basic goal is really the uplifting and enhancing of each person. (Tutor, PTE)*

*We put our heart and soul into the programme. It's still exciting to me after 14 years. Others say to me you're excited about your work. You have passion. (Tutor, traditional environment)*

### **Sense of responsibility**

One of the aims of the tutors was bring the students to a point where they could reason themselves and understand their actions and choices they made in taking their actions.

*Look where we are now, and is that our fault? We can't say entirely, we can't blame it all on the teachers [from school] because at the end of the day it's our choices for what we do but you know you look at those examples [of teachers yelling at them].*

Most of the tutors told their learners:

*It's really over to yourself. This is the opportunity we're going to give you; from here on you go on your way, always knowing that you can come back and get support from us. (Tutor, PTE)*

Attendance, especially in comparison to secondary school days, was generally much higher. “There’s very few of our ones [students] that actually drop out and if they drop out it’s because of personal circumstances” (CEO, PTE). This comment is in line with research that suggests students are less likely to withdraw from their course if the environment is welcoming and safe, students have a sense of belonging, there is no prejudice and a range of activities is offered (Rivers, 2005).

## **Empowerment**

Tutors endeavoured to build confidence in their learners so they were empowered to do more for themselves and to go on and continue to grow their skills.

*If we change the mindset of the adults, that’s why I’m so keen on adult education because you have such an impact not just on their lives but on the whole family and on the whānau. They have skills they can take out into the community; that’s really exciting for us.* (Tutor, PTE)

An example given by one of the PTEs was of a 55-year-old Samoan woman who had attended the ESOL class. From there she went to a foundation programme at a polytechnic, and then on to a college of education to study for an early childhood qualification so she could set up her own Samoan early childhood centre. Another example was a student who had become a teacher’s aide with the PTE and had begun studying for her Bachelor of Education at a university.

As well as using a tenancy agreement as a context for literacy, students can be taught about social responsibilities and rights.

*We can empower our people to know their rights and to be confident enough to stick up for their rights.* (Tutor, PTE)

Empowering students includes having high expectations of them and communicating this through actions and words.

*I think our tutor has very high expectations of us and he makes us work. Like he expects us to have our assignments in on time and stuff like that. Actually he is a kind of a slave driver really, in a good way!* (Mature student, iwi provider)

*He helps me to help myself.*

Changing the learning environment is also empowering for the learners, giving them some choice.

*In our learning environment as a Māori, they took away the clinical sort of teaching and that’s what I am finding here. They’ve taken away the clinical, you have to do this, you have to do that, you know, it’s more the learning. Yeah this is what you need to learn. Do you want to learn this? It’s not you have to do this, you have to do that.*

## **Respect and self-respect**

Students learn to respect others when they are respected.

*They’re not like teachers and yell; they respect us and everything.*

*We respect our tutors because they respect us.*

*Self-esteem [is the big pressing need for students] – It is a real issue because that's the whole guts of it and to be honest, once you're self-confident in yourself you can do anything and it's just trying to show them that they can achieve certain things as far as it goes. (Tutor, PTE)*

### **Students come back**

A number of the tutors reported that their ex-students often came back to see their tutors and report on how they have been getting on after they have finished their course.

*Lots of people come back to us and say that you know this is my goal and now I've achieved it. Another came back and she's doing a diploma. (Tutor, PTE)*

## **4.7 Barriers to students' learning**

Students' home and social problems were seen as a barrier to their learning. These appeared more obvious in the small centres than the larger cities but this may just have been because the tutors were geographically and socially closer to the students so there was more awareness of what was going on in the students' lives.

*Sometimes family is a barrier, because if they're not attending it could be because they have to look after other siblings or weren't able to get in because mum was drunk. (Tutor, PTE)*

*...keeping tabs on them when work is coming up as far as fruit picking, the harvesting and things like that are concerned because for a lot of them it's financial because they're not only working for themselves; for example, they're working for the family. (CEO, small-town PTE)*

*Childcare is a barrier for some. I say to them you need to be home if your baby is sick. They need to know their children are their priority but sometimes they have no support services available to them. (Tutor, traditional environment)*

*I have had an 18 year old, a 45 year old, and a 60 year old turn up at different times with a black eye. They come to my class but they don't go to their others [classes]. The rest of our class support them until it [black eye] goes. (Tutor, traditional environment)*

*I would say for our kids it's about getting up and getting here on time and the choice between either learning and getting some form of qualification or going to work. (Tutor, PTE)*

*Issues, homelessness, no food, mum got beaten up last night. It's just so hard. (Tutor, small-town PTE)*

*Don't get me wrong but we have a lot of issues – WINZ, police, courts, drugs, alcohol. Trying to get people to take responsibility for their fines, community. Taking responsibility really. (CEO, small-town PTE)*

*Money is a barrier for our young people. Last year we had one trainee didn't want to come on this trip. The reason was he had no shoes. Families are a barrier. (Tutor, small-town PTE)*

## 5 PROVIDERS' PERSPECTIVES

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One of the providers from a PTE said they had seen a gap.

*We had this vision. We know that there's a whole swag of well, not just Māori kids but a whole swag of people who are leaving school without having fulfilled their potential and we saw this as an opportunity to give them a second or third or whatever chance.* (CEO, Māori PTE)

One PTE had a teacher aide in every class who could work on individual programmes with some students. “And that’s pretty unique. The research talks about it being one of the most effective tools as far as helping, the impact on teaching but it’s a cost because you’ve got to pay for two staff” (CEO).

*We really encourage our staff to grow, so it's not just our students. We really focus on our staff as well because we think that that's really empowering for them, and we subsidise our staff with their quals. We make sure they realise they're valued.* (CEO, PTE).

One PTE talked about giving their staff a \$50 voucher on their birthday, taking them out at the end of the term, giving them Easter eggs, and having fun with them.

*This sector is quite a poorly paid sector in comparison to [local polytech] and university, but the conditions, that's why we really focus on the conditions of work and make sure it's a fun place to be. Their hours of work aren't too long, the students finish at 2.30 and then on Friday they finish at lunchtime so it gives staff time for preparation because I think that's really, really important.* (CEO, PTE)

PTEs and iwi providers send their tutors on training courses, “out to different funded projects that MoE are doing”. Most seem also to have teacher-only days, where they do training for each other or bring someone in. This does not seem typical for the traditional providers who tend to focus on staff gaining academic rather than professional qualifications. That is, as noted earlier, the staff were engaged in completing a bachelors degree or were enrolled in a postgraduate diploma or masters course although not necessarily related to the teaching of the foundation course. Staff not teaching at degree level or above do not have to have a degree themselves or to be engaged in research that underpins their teaching. They could be perceived by other academic staff as not needing additional qualifications and not as academically skilled.

## 6 FINDINGS

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Although the focus in this research has been on the adult Māori learners and their learning, it has been important to examine the factors and dynamics that surround these learners. Fenwick & Tennant (2004, p. 55) maintain that learning does not occur in a vacuum, but rather:

“[T]he context of a person’s life – with its unique cultural, political, physical and social dynamics – influences what learning experiences are encountered and how they are engaged”.

This research on adult Māori learners has confirmed what some other researchers have discovered. Effective teachers are passionate about their work, are approachable, are positive, patient and caring, and both challenge and support their learners (Carpenter et al., 2002; Martin et al., 2004).

Effective teachers create a culturally responsive context for their learners through building strong, caring relationships with their students in a whānau atmosphere, basing their teaching on prior learning and contexts relevant for the students, developing social interdependency amongst their learners, ensuring there is opportunity for one-to-one, paired and small group learning (Bishop & Glynn, 1999; Bishop et al., 2001; Hawk et al., 2002; Hohepa et al., 1996; Macfarlane, 2004). Adult Māori learners’ voices demonstrate that their Māori tutors in this research are effective teachers.

Additionally, the Māori tutors reinforce and strengthen their Māori learners’ identities through ensuring that Māori tikanga and values, like whakapapa, manaakitanga, whanaungatanga, kotahitanga, pervade the teaching and learning environment. Māori tutors ensure their Māori learners are able to learn and study in a Māori-centred environment.

While this study may confirm what some other researchers have suggested or implied, there is a point of difference. There is a paucity of research that gathers the voices of Māori adult learners, Māori tutors in foundation programmes, and providers of these programmes. Māori researchers have examined traditional contexts (Hemara, 2000), Kohanga Reo as a context for learning (for example, Hohepa et al., 1996; Kai’i, 1990), Kura Kaupapa Māori (Bishop et al., 2001; Mead, 1996; Smith, 2003), Māori at secondary level (Macfarlane, 2004), Māori tertiary learners at degree level (Martin et al., 2004); and non-Māori researchers have written about Māori learners in mainstream school (for example, Hawk et al., 2002; Carpenter et al., 2002), and there has been extensive research on foundation learners and tutors in non-Māori settings (Benseman et al., 2005b).

Māori voices speak strongly in this research about their experiences as adult learners, as tutors and as providers. What are some trends that come from their reflections? The interviews of the Māori learners, their tutors and providers in this study suggest the following.

### 6.1 The learners

- Adult Māori learners are strongly likely to be successful learners in foundation programmes because their classes are small, and their tutors are passionate about their teaching and care strongly about those they teach.
- It is imperative that learning contexts are holistic, that is for success in academic skills, the social, spiritual and cultural welfare of the student must also be taken into consideration.
- Foundation programmes assist Māori learners to gain self-confidence.

- Growth in the concept of self-identity is enhanced through tutors creating opportunities for Māori learners to know and articulate their whakapapa links.
- Māori adult learners speak highly and positively of their tutors.
- There are many cultural, social, and economic factors in Māori learners' contexts that need to be addressed before successful academic outcomes are evident, including a strengthened understanding of who one is and where one comes from.
- Many adult Māori learners need to build their self-efficacy and self-esteem in order to be successful learners at tertiary level.
- There are marked contrasts between the learning contexts of secondary schools and foundation programmes for Māori learners.
- The context of foundation programmes and the pedagogical strategies of the tutors appear to be effective in assisting adult Māori learners to strengthen their literacy and numeracy skills.
- There is a range of reasons why students enrol in foundation programmes and there is a range of levels to meet these needs.
- A whānau atmosphere appears to be an effective learning environment for adult Māori learners.
- Building strong relationships, connectedness or whanaungatanga through out the structure and contexts for adult Māori learners is imperative.
- Teaching literacy and numeracy skills at a foundation level is most effective in contexts that are relevant to the learners.
- The learning contexts of foundation courses are in strong contrast to Māori adult learners' experiences at secondary schools, as the following table suggests.

**Table 2**

Comparison between learners' experiences of foundation programmes and secondary schooling

<b>Foundation programmes</b>	<b>Secondary schooling</b>
Holistic learning: whole person; in and out of school	Compartmentalised
Informal contexts	Formal contexts
Related to learner needs	Curriculum driven
Practical/hands-on/applied	Abstract
Situated/specific/contextualised	Generalised skills
Relationships important	Limited time for relationships
Connectedness	Isolated and disconnected
Whānau-based, collaborative, interdependent	Individualistic and independent
Cultural identity affirmed	Cultural identity usually not deemed important
Small and intimate	Large and public
Fun, active	Boring, passive
Ownership (own class, own space)	Shared classrooms, non-ownership
Goals set by student	Goals set by school
Empowering	Control

## 6.2 The tutors

- Tutors are dedicated, passionate, care for their students and put in long hours for the academic, social, spiritual and cultural welfare of Māori learners.
- Tutors build strong positive relationships with their Māori learners in foundation programmes.
- Tutors focus their teaching in contexts that are relevant for their learners' needs and interests.
- The tutors teach their students with an eye to the future – preparing them either for the employment market or for higher education.
- Tutors are currently engaged in professional development that is beneficial both for their own teaching and for the learning of their students.
- Pastoral care of their students is time consuming.
- Tutors need to be able to articulate why they are teaching the way they are. Further, they could benefit from having an understanding about cognitive constructivism, social constructivism, and Māori learning theories.
- Tutors play an important role in adult Māori learners' learning. In the words of MP Tariana Turia:

“Once ignited, the light of learning can never be extinguished.” (Turia, 2006, p. 6)

- Tutors teach people more so than curriculum.

The following table summarises some of the differences the adult Māori learners perceived between their tutors in their foundation programme and their teachers from secondary schools. However, the final point was added by the researchers, who noticed that the tutors' training tended to focus on teaching strategies and content (what and how to teach literacy and numeracy), whereas secondary teachers seem to learn about their content/discipline first and then devote some time to learning how to teach.

**Table 3**

Comparison between learners' experiences of foundation tutors and secondary teachers

Foundation tutors	Secondary teachers
Caring and supportive	Uncaring and detached
Teach the person	Teach curriculum
Made connections (to learner's experiences)	Subject-focused
Patient	Impatient, busy
Kanohi ki te kanohi (face to face)	Disconnected
Strong relationships	Limited personal contact
Caring extends beyond classroom	Limited to school context
Training: about teaching strategies and content-linked	Training: content specific and maybe pedagogy second

### 6.3 The programme

- Level 1-3 foundation programmes appear to be better suited to smaller, more intimate learning environments.
- There is a range of levels for foundation programmes that suit different needs of adult learners.
- Some foundation programmes staircase into higher-level foundation programmes while others staircase learners into degree programmes or employment.

### 6.4 The providers

- There are some differences between traditional providers and PTE/iwi providers – particularly as to purpose, class sizes and the qualifications and experience of the tutors.
- Tutors seem to be more valued by PTE/iwi providers than the traditional providers. There appears to be a hierarchical system of tutors among traditional providers. Those tutors who gain higher qualifications tend to teach the degree courses; degrees are not seen to be necessary for teaching in a foundation studies programme.
- Small-town providers may be preparing their students to leave the small-town environment (that is, many of the students who now have strengthened skills may need to leave their town to gain lucrative employment or enter higher education).

**Table 4**

Comparison between traditional and non-traditional providers

<b>Traditional providers (e.g. universities, polytechnics)</b>	<b>Non-traditional providers (e.g. PTEs, iwi-based, wānanga)</b>
Large, unfriendly	Smaller, intimate
Impersonal	Personalised
Academic, qualification focus	Student needs focused
CEO/Dean detached	CEO involved, known
Staff professional development – academic or qualification focus	Staff professional development – learner needs-focused

## 7 WHERE TO FROM HERE?

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The following recommendations arise from this report.

- That foundation programmes have low staff /student ratios.

*It is imperative that class numbers are kept small to enable the tutors to form positive one-to-one relationships with Māori learners and to work to the specific needs of diverse learners.*

- That adult Māori learners in foundation programmes be charged no fees or minimal fees.

*There is an equity issue here. Māori students on foundation programmes still require advanced tertiary qualifications that will entail commitment of a further three years or more of study plus fees or loans. Therefore the pre-degree year should be at minimal cost.*

- That providers employ staff who have a passion for foundation studies, and who have special skills to form strong, positive relationships with Māori learners.

*All the tutors interviewed in this study had a passion for their work and their Māori students attested to the strong qualities of their tutors.*

- That funding and development of resources to support teaching and learning in foundation programmes be ongoing, particularly in relation to the foundation learning progressions for listening, speaking, reading, writing and numeracy.

- That the Tertiary Education Commission provide ongoing staff professional development in literacy, language and numeracy.

*Feedback from the tutors on the government-funded professional development was very positive.*

- That tutors be given professional learning opportunities to increase their understanding of theories of learning. Tutors are involved in professional development about what to teach and how to teach Māori learners but they should be able to articulate why they are teaching the way they are. Tutors could benefit from understanding about cognitive constructivism, social constructivism, and Māori learning theories.

*Opportunities exist for this in the new Adult Literacy Educator qualifications, which attract study grants. Tutors, whether they are part time or full time, should be supported by their organisations to enrol.*

- That barriers for Māori learners moving into higher education from foundation programmes be eliminated.

*There appears to be a gap or a gatekeeping issue, in staircasing into further tertiary education at diploma or degree level. Gaining a level 4/5 foundation certificate does not necessarily provide entry to university or polytechnic degree courses.*

- That successful completion of a foundation programme at level 4/5 ease the transferability and entry into another provider.

*This is a further issue of gatekeeping and restricted access for Māori students in moving from one provider to another.*

- That mentoring schemes for Māori learners in their early years of tertiary study or higher education be supported with funding.

*While providers appear to be providing an effective basis as laid down in the foundation programmes, some Māori learners still appear to have a measure of dependency. Further mentoring at the beginning of degree-level courses would ensure sustainability of the benefits of the foundation programmes so Māori learners are scaffolded into independence.*

- That the Tertiary Education Commission provide funding for some release time for staff as part of the professional development package.

*There is a cost to the provider for staff absences on courses and professional development. Providers are willing to support their tutors but, particularly for the smaller providers, this cost is difficult to find in an already decreasing budget.*

- That tutors have opportunity to attend relevant conferences and to network with staff from other providers.

*Conferences on bridging programmes, and accelerated learning as an example are useful venues for tutors from small providers to network and to exchange ideas.*

- That iwi providers have opportunities to gain access to appropriate support and funding to enhance their aim of developing capacity and leadership among their people.

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