
High Level Executive Summary: *Quality Teaching, Research and Development* **Māori Medium**

BACKGROUND

The Quality Teaching Research and Development Project (QTR&D) was funded by the Ministry of Education. The exploratory project was developed collaboratively between the ministry, university academics, research facilitators, schools, teachers, students and their communities. The tenet was that teacher inquiry, supported by productive learning partnerships, is a critical contributing factor to improving the quality of teaching and learning outcomes for students.

The focus of this summary is on the Māori Medium which involved a university team, two school based hubs (settings) of teachers with in-service teacher educator support and a provider to support on-line communication and materials development. The aim of the project was to improve the quality of teaching and learning outcomes for students in Māori medium education, within designated contexts (particularly Tikanga-ā-iwi). QTR&D within Māori Medium was managed by Māori for Māori. All the participants collaborated to meet the expressed aspirations of the hubs located in the participating kura. The outcomes of this project will inform policy, and future research and development work with teachers in schools in Māori medium contexts. This project focussed largely on inquiry in Tikanga-a-iwi.

QTR&D project principles

The principles that underpin the design of QTR&D include:

- recognition that 'culture counts'
- use of ako (reciprocal teaching and learning)
- development of productive partnerships and joint construction of knowledge and learning processes by all participants
- use of multiple, structured opportunities to learn
- development of high quality evidence-based practices to enhance Māori and Pasifika student outcomes
- use of collective inquiry processes which engage teachers' personal theories
- development of culturally inclusive and responsive learning communities.

Kaupapa Māori research principles

The research team for the QTR&D Māori Medium also aimed to adhere to kaupapa Māori research practice in the research design, research implementation, analysis, report writing and dissemination. The key principles of kaupapa Māori include the development of a political consciousness, promoting te reo Māori, Māori cultural aspirations and resistance to the hegemony of the dominant discourse (Bishop,

Berryman, Cavanah & Teddy, 2007¹). Kaupapa Māori ideas range across a variety of contexts and content and include Māori achieving increased autonomy over their own lives and cultural welfare. Kaupapa Māori research was developed amongst many different Māori groups across a wide range of educational sectors including Kohanga reo, kura kaupapa Māori, Wharekura, wānanga, iwi education authorities.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES OF THE QTR&D: Māori Medium

This project developed a number of strategic objectives designed to inform and provide direction for teacher professional learning within Māori medium kura.

- **Teacher inquiry**, supported by productive learning partnerships, is a critical factor which contributes to improving the quality of teaching and learning outcomes for all learners. Teaching is a complex activity where opportunities both within the classroom (such as meeting the needs of diverse learners) and from beyond the classroom (requirements of administrators, the ministry, and researchers) are challenging for teachers. Setting up processes to encourage teacher inquiry helps teachers to address the challenges they face and to sort out ways to change their practices over time.
- **Teachers as researchers:** other professional development approaches have generated valuable insights into the processes of teaching and learning, but teacher inquiry includes the voices of those closest to tamariki – the classroom teachers. As researchers, using an action research model, teachers can investigate their specific challenges, and generate their own knowledge about the issues they face. The aim of QTR&D Māori Medium was for teachers to use this knowledge to facilitate changes to their practice to enhance learning outcomes for Maori students.
- **Teacher reflection** was built into the skills the teachers strengthened in the project. The aim was for each teacher to keep a journal of structured reflections on what was being achieved, based on emerging evidence. In particular they were to focus on the impact of their changing practice on student outcomes.
- **Professional reading** encouraged teachers to investigate the issues and challenges they faced and to search for ways to resolve them. The aim was to make links between research and practice.
- The teachers were enrolled in undergraduate or postgraduate papers, involving a research requirement. The aim of this was to increase the teachers' professional knowledge, and provide opportunities for them to **advance their careers**.
- **Learning communities** give teachers the opportunities to process meaning and the implications of new learning with colleagues and other professionals. The QTR&D Māori Medium aimed to use professional learning communities

¹ Bishop, R., Berryman, M., Cavanagh, T., & Teddy L. (2007) *Te Kōtahitanga Phase 3 Whānaungatanga: establishing a culturally responsive pedagogy of relations in mainstream secondary school classrooms*. Report for the Ministry of Education, Hamilton: Māori Education Research, University of Waikato, Tauranga: Poutama Pounamu Research and Development Centre, GSE Ministry of Education.

so that the teachers' shared knowledge would benefit students' learning outcomes.

- The project established **online engagement opportunities** so that teachers could share their learning across schools, and have good access to online information.
- The project **established the co-ordinator role** for each hub to support communications between multiple parties, documentation of processes and outcomes as well as for the leadership of the in-school/hub programmes to further support teacher inquiry.
- In order to achieve more effective teaching practices, the project offered teachers the opportunity to **develop new knowledge and skills** in relation to their subject areas, their pedagogical practices, use of research and their understanding of how students learn.
- The project aimed to address the specific **needs of participants** as teachers working in Māori medium contexts. In particular it looked at the availability of resources, workload, the use of te reo as the language for learning across the curriculum, and the multiple roles and expectations of teachers in kura kaupapa.
- **Developing and enhancing key relationships** was a focus so that there would be sufficient support, feedback, and accountability for all the participants, and with students, parents, and whānau.
- There was a commitment to **create links to students' cultural and social contexts**. This is often harder for urban kura to achieve.
- The project intended to find ways to **publish/present participants' stories so that they could contribute to the evidence base for quality teaching and learning in Māori medium schooling**.

Overall the aim was to refine and explore the elements of QTR&D as a potential national professional learning and development structure to support student outcomes within Māori medium settings.

OVERVIEW OF THE QTR&D RESEARCH APPROACH AND PARTICIPANT PROFILES

The project was underpinned by available evidence that enabled Māori medium teachers to focus on collaborative inquiry and evidence-based pedagogy that would improve learning outcomes for Māori learners in kura kaupapa Māori.

The QTR&D Māori Medium hubs commenced in 2007, and initially involved 43 participants from six kura kaupapa Māori working in two hubs; three kura formed one rural hub and three formed a hub based in Auckland city.

There were 26 classroom teachers who continued with the project. They included a mix of beginning and experienced teachers, though more than half held positions of responsibility in their kura. All had teaching qualifications from a range of pre-service institutions. Four had postgraduate qualifications.

As part of the QTR&D Māori Medium the teachers were provided with the opportunity to enrol in a university course. The purpose of the course was to develop teachers' understandings about action research processes, and to encourage them to engage in systematic inquiry into their own teaching practices. Many Māori medium teachers involved in this programme enrolled in a course. All teachers, regardless of whether they were involved with the papers, were supported by the hub co-ordinator and their team which generally included RTLBs, via the in-school support programme.

In addition to the teacher participants, some of the RTLBs enrolled in the university course. The Hub Co-ordinator and RTLBs ran in-school support which included: in-class support and observations, providing feedback and giving advice, acting as a 'critical friend', supporting the teachers with their academic work and meeting project requirements. The in-school support programme provided another level to support teacher inquiry.

There were also research facilitators from Te Puna Wānanga who assisted the teachers and RTLBs in their university enrolments and work, and supported the teachers' development of their action research projects.

In one of the hubs most of the teachers and RTLBs gained papers towards academic qualifications. This encouraged a number of the participants to continue with their qualification completion which would lead to salary increases. In addition these teachers participated in in-school support sessions facilitated by RTLBs. Twelve teachers changed schools during the project and one hub was discontinued, which had an impact on paper completion rates.

An additional provider was contracted to provide online support for the project.

Project stages

There were four key stages in the project.

1. November 2006 – June 2007: initiation and ownership.
2. July 2007 – December 2007: reconnaissance and exploration.
3. January 2008 – July 2008: action, reflection and refinement.
4. June 2008 – October 2008: critique, evaluation and dissemination.

Each stage was focused on collecting evidence of changes in teachers' classroom practices that impacted positively on student outcomes. The focus on student outcomes was important in terms of kaupapa Māori research aims, which are to produce evidence that will enable Māori to achieve increased autonomy, and make a difference for, and accelerate the success of Māori learners in school.

FINDINGS

It is important to note that many valuable learning activities that occurred in the participating schools were not documented. However the primary focus of the QTR&D trial hub was to test the effectiveness of particular models of professional learning that impact positively on student outcomes in specific contexts.

Positive outcomes for teachers

- In the area of curriculum implementation some teachers developed their understanding of how to turn learning intentions into positive learning experiences for students. They made connections between pedagogical knowledge and their subject content knowledge. This enabled them to develop students' knowledge, understandings and social inquiry skills. Teachers were also better able to transfer effective pedagogical approaches developed through their inquiry in Tikanga–a-iwi to other learning areas.
- Some teachers improved their understanding of learning intentions. They were able to set student learning goals, which were specific, clear and challenging but not beyond the students' reach. This gave students a better sense of why they were doing tasks. This is a critical component of formative assessment, a key focus of this project.
- QTR&D Māori Medium aimed for teachers to be able to critically reflect on and analyse the changes they made to their practice. In this project the teachers developed their awareness of this skill and noted more specifically how their practice changed. Some teachers reported that their students picked up on the value of reflective skills for their own learning.
- The targeted professional readings raised the levels of professional discussion in kura. The readings challenged teachers' assumptions and beliefs and generated new or different ways of thinking. Many teachers admitted that their beliefs about teaching and learning came from their own school experiences and needed to change so that students would have positive classroom experiences.
- A number of teachers chose the teaching and acquisition of the vocabulary of their Tikanga-a-iwi topic for their inquiry. Their investigations provided valuable insights in to the complexity of this teaching task. Teachers realised that they needed to improve their own knowledge and explicit use of linguistic terms in order to help students gain vocabulary knowledge in a broad range of curriculum and language contexts.
- Teachers commented on the value and benefit they gained from the opportunities that the QTR&D hub gave them to establish or reinforce learning communities. Some learning communities worked within a kura, and others were across kura which enabled teachers to share ideas with others working in the same curriculum area, or age level. Even though some teachers dropped out of the academic papers they still participated in the learning communities. Sharing professional issues and teaching dilemmas with other teachers is a way to improve teacher effectiveness, student learning, and professional satisfaction.
- Teachers commented on an increase in tau-utuutu (reciprocity), where they acted as each other's critical friends. They saw this as being particularly beneficial for classroom observations and feedback.
- All teachers commented on the benefits gained when members of the school leadership team were involved with the project. Where the tumuaki were involved the schools had more positive results from the professional learning.

One important outcome was achieved when tumuaki provided time within staff meetings for professional discussions.

Positive outcomes for students

Kura kaupapa Māori were able to establish valued outcomes specific to students' learning needs. They were not pre-set by the QTR&D project. These student outcomes included behaviour and relationship aspects which made a difference to students, as well as academic ones.

- Although it was difficult to measure, the teachers became more aware that changes in their practices did lead to changes in student behaviour and inter-relationships, for example giving positive feedback to each other.
- Most teachers changed their teaching in ways which made it more personalised to meet their learners' needs. For example, some teachers consciously taught the specialised language students needed to make better sense of their learning.
- One teacher with a specific explicit teaching focus was able to measure an improvement in her students' number knowledge. Others described using summative evidence to track their students' achievement.
- Most reported gains in student achievement were based on observations and anecdotal evidence, which showed increased student confidence, improved classroom relationships, increases in writing and Tikanga-a-iwi outputs. Some teachers measured this using initial baseline data with follow up assessment tasks.
- A number of teachers introduced student self-assessment practices to help students be more self-reflective and aware of their own needs. Teachers described situations where students consciously used some of the new concepts and language, and talked with confidence about their learning.

Positive outcomes for collaborating partners

Some kura held the view that some education support agencies underserved Māori-medium education. It was a critical aspect of this project that agencies involved in QTR&D engaged positively with teachers and kura.

- According to teacher feedback and feedback from RTLBs, the involvement of the RTLBs in the project was successful. They were able to establish more purposeful support in their work with teachers which enhanced their professional relationships. The RTLBs Māori will be important for sustainability of the project gains beyond the termination date of the contract.
- The facilitators from Te Puna Wānanga gained greater understanding of the operational realities of kura kaupapa Māori, which could also benefit the teaching practice component of their pre-service teacher education work.

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

The QTR&D Māori Medium hub provided many insights and lessons about future provision and conditions needed so that more effective teacher professional learning can take place in Māori medium kura, leading to improved student outcomes.

- The teacher participants had a range of different prior training, qualifications, and professional experience. Some had different levels of competence in te reo Māori. Some were familiar with the Marautanga o Aotearoa redevelopment, and some knew less about classroom management, curriculum and pedagogy. Teacher diversity and readiness for professional learning are important factors to consider in professional development provision.
- The aim of the project was to raise student engagement and achievement through supporting and changing teacher practice. QTR&D in the Māori medium context requires the participants to gain enhanced knowledge of Tikanga-a-iwi, as well as to learn about teacher inquiry and action research, critical reflective practice, use student data and be able to measure student achievement. Progress was made in these areas, but teachers need more time and opportunity to practice what they have learned.
- There were some institutional differences which resulted in challenges for participants to deal with. For example: the enrolment procedures of the university were complex and time consuming; the university was not always well placed to take account of the pressure points in teachers' workloads; some kura had in place a different approach to teaching and curriculum delivery from what the QTR&D Māori Medium and the academic courses proposed.
- There are challenges to do with a qualification based professional development programme. For example: funding issues; pressure to succeed academically; some people wanted to participate but not have to do formal qualifications; others really appreciated the opportunity to combine professional development with upgrading their qualifications.
- Kura kaupapa Māori are still relatively recent in terms of their development and are by no means a homogenous group of schools. Tino rangatiratanga aspirations have to be taken into account, and consultation and flexibility are necessary when providing teacher professional learning. There is considerable teacher burn out and high staff turnover in many kura, including among the tumuaki. One kura had to withdraw from the project to work through the issues it was facing. There is still more to be learned about teaching, learning and research models that are effective for Māori medium contexts.
- The schools had minimal base line data to measure current student achievement levels. The teachers had little experience to draw on in this area, and were unfamiliar with how to make use of data when they did collect it.

The university courses needed to up-skill teachers on assessment, data gathering, exemplar and data analysis in order to develop the skills of teacher inquiry, which is a basis for action research.

- Community involvement was an aim of the project as part of the commitment to kaupapa Māori research. There are some issues about this to consider. For example the challenge around the needs for teachers to have increased professional autonomy while responding to community input; the time and complexity of engaging, setting up and having meaningful discussions between the kura and the community.
- QTR&D for the Māori medium aimed to openly invite kura participation, and to establish trust between, and clear roles and responsibilities for all collaborating partners and providers – teachers, researchers, the institutions, the ministry, and the provider of on-line support. There were some inconsistencies of expectations in provider contracts which meant that the roles and responsibilities were not always clear. The full report indicates that many teachers did not have the expertise required, access to computers at home, or time to engage in online community learning, and preferred face to face contact to develop stronger whanaungatanga. This potentially valuable online resource was used only as a communication tool to pass on information.