



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga

Hangaia te mātāpuna o te mōhio

Learning foundations for Māori adults

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

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Mā te huruhuru, ka rere te manu : how can language and literacy be optimised for Māori adult learning success?

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Te pakeke hei ākongā: Māori adult learners

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Te piko o te māhuri, tērā te tupu o te rākau : language and literacy in marae-based programmes

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Hangaia te mātāpuna o te mōhio

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1 INTRODUCTION

Hangaia te mātāpuna o te mōhio can mean to build the precious gift of knowledge or to build the well-spring of learning. It symbolises the experience of Māori adults as they re-enter education to develop their literacy, language and numeracy.

This publication summarises three research projects that explore how success for Māori adults in the learning foundations of literacy, language and numeracy can be built on the foundations of Māori culture and identity. The programmes covered range from tertiary certificates at an equivalent level to school qualifications, to vocational diplomas, to bachelor's degree programmes. The breadth of courses recognises that, as New Zealand has open entry for over-21-year-olds, many first-year adult students studying at higher qualification levels may also need extra help with literacy and study skills. The research features pre-employment skills courses fully funded by government. It also investigates foundation or bridging courses for students seeking to strengthen their learning skills or improve their confidence before moving into higher-level study.

The three projects examine programmes taught by Māori tutors. They use a kaupapa Māori research approach, which 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 include whakawhanaungatanga (making or renewing relationships), settling the wairua (inner sense of well-being or spirituality), manaakitanga, (respecting Māori customs, and working together in and for a collaborative process). A key feature of all the projects is the prominence given to the voices of the Māori participants.

In kaupapa Māori research there is also a strong link between cultural values and practices, and emancipatory goals (Smith, 1997). The Ministry of Education thus expects that the findings from these current projects will be empowering for Māori learners and give important messages to tutors of Māori learners, managers, tertiary providers, policy makers and Māori learners themselves.

An additional objective for this research is to provide opportunities that will enable Māori researchers who are new to the adult literacy, numeracy and language learning area, and/or have had limited prior research opportunities, to increase their capability in this research area.

These three research projects are part of a broader programme of government education research that builds an evidence base on how to provide high-quality and relevant adult literacy, numeracy and language learning for adults.

1.1 Background to the research

School achievement data reveals that Māori students are underachieving in schools. In 2007, 34.5 percent of Māori students left secondary school without completing a qualification (Ministry of Education 2008, p. 53). Only 58 percent of Māori stayed in secondary school until the age of 17 (Ministry of Education 2008, p. 41).

While Māori participation rates in tertiary education are high in comparison to any other ethnic group, their involvement tends to be at sub-degree level (Ministry of Education 2008, p. 64).

State-funded tertiary programmes which scaffold learners into tertiary learning are a partial response to concerns about unsatisfactory secondary school statistics for Māori, but the degree to which these programmes are effective for Māori adult learners is only now being gauged.

1.2 Prior research

The three research projects focus on how learning for adult Māori students can be optimised in foundation learning or bridging contexts, particularly where culturally appropriate approaches to teaching and learning are employed.

The projects build upon recent research in New Zealand secondary schools that indicates that culturally appropriate pedagogies and teacher-student relationships are of vital importance for the success of Māori students (see Bishop et al., 2001; Bishop & Berryman, 2006; Mcfarlane, 2004).

The projects also extend the limited prior research examining Māori learners at the tertiary level. Of these prior studies, Martin et al. (2004), for example, highlight positive lecturer characteristics and pedagogical practices, as defined by the adult Māori learners, that include being positive, approachable, committed to students, and encouraging collaborative and cooperative work. Whakawhanaungatanga was also an integral aspect of the lecturers' practices, as they provided activities that encouraged interaction and the establishment of positive working relationships between the Māori staff and Māori students. Staff encouraged a whānau atmosphere and students called them whaea (mother or aunty) and matua (father or uncle).

Various studies also articulate 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/tutor prior to any formal instruction taking place. The prior relationship better facilitates successful learning outcomes.

Benseman et al. (2005a) is one of the few prior empirical studies that is also based on the observation of practice in tertiary foundation learning contexts. The authors observed 15 literacy, language and numeracy tutors working in New Zealand tertiary institutions. In the study, they identify issues to do with:

- tutor 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 (committed, positive, supportive tutors, tutors talked more than learners, questioning was important, limited discussion and debate)
- forms of provision (one-to-one and group teaching both effective) and the teaching of literacy, language and numeracy skills (e.g. a small range of teaching methods, deliberate teaching of reading)
- writing, spelling and numeracy teaching linked to diagnosed learning needs (speaking and listening skills also seen as an important means of building social and personal skills).

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

- 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.

As will be shown, the findings from the three research projects are congruent with previous research. However, they also extend the existing knowledge base in important ways.

1.3 The three projects

Mā te huruhuru, ka rere te manu: How can language and literacy be optimised for Māori learner success?

Hera White, Tania Oxenham, Marion Tahana, Kim Williams and, Kimi Matthews, Waikato Institute of Technology (Wintec)

This project explores the perspectives of current learners, potential learners and their tutors, some of whom were involved in an introductory course at Wintec, and some at private training establishments (PTEs). The project examines adult Māori students who were considering, or are undertaking, tertiary education at introductory, foundation or certificate level. The principal focus is on how language and literacy can be optimised for Māori learner success in these programmes.

A kaupapa Māori methodology was used for this research. The participants included tutors from PTEs, current students enrolled at Wintec, and a group of potential future students and their tutors.

Te pakeke hei ākongā: Māori adult learners

Colleen McMurchy-Pilkington, Faculty of Education, University of Auckland

The purpose of this project is to capture the perspectives of learners, tutors and providers in foundation learning programmes, with a particular focus on how literacy, language and numeracy can be optimised for adult Māori learners.

A kaupapa Māori methodology was used for this research. The participants were drawn from PTEs, iwi-based/wānanga programmes, and 'traditional' tertiary providers (universities and polytechnics). Participants included students, tutors and CEOs from the various institutions.

Te piko o te māhuri, tērā te tupu o te rākau : Language and literacy in marae-based programmes

Susan Mlcek, Ngareta Timutimu, Carl Mika, Monte Aranga, Nikora Taipeti, Te Rurehe Rangihau, Te Makarini Temara, Yvonne Shepherd and Haturini McGarvey, Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiārangi

This research project examines the effectiveness of marae-based learning for adult Māori learners, as part of the Wānanga's wider approach to foundation learning. This overall aim also includes the preparation of adult Māori learners for further successful tertiary study.

The project examines two marae-based programmes at Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiārangi in depth, employing a qualitative case study methodology. The aim is to explore the efficacy and validity of these marae-based programmes in providing foundational learning opportunities for adult Māori learners.

2 COMMON FINDINGS ACROSS THE RESEARCH PROJECTS

2.1 Significance of prior experiences of Māori in education settings

The positive experiences of participants in all three projects contrast markedly with their previous experiences of education, including foundation programmes disconnected from Māori contexts.

In comparing those past experiences to current Māori-based learning contexts, the former were generally seen by the participants as part of a world dominated by the classroom and a formality that was both overwhelming and overbearing.

Participants in all three projects recalled a range of negative experiences from their years in compulsory schooling. These included educational failure, racism, being excluded, moving from Māori schooling (kohanga reo and/or kura) to Pākehā schooling, dropping out, expulsion and low attendance. Many felt that their teachers did not care, failed to support them, and assumed they did not want to learn. These experiences resulted in low feelings of self-worth, negative attitudes towards formal education, resistance to authority and 'Pākehā ways' of educating, fear of failure, and feelings of being 'dumb' and being unable to learn.

We were not allowed to look at the person next to us. We were not allowed to question... We had to wait until we were spoken to. That's for my primary years and we were speaking Māori at home but not at school. (Student, White et al., 2009, p. 68)

Yes, typical Māori would get aggro as soon as he hears a Pākehā do a little snigger... I was just lost just like what these fellas were saying. Being in a different environment, it just put me off. I didn't want to go to school. That's when I got to high school, I only went there for a year and a couple of months and I dropped out...and I worked from then on... (Student, White et al., 2009, p. 43)

I reckon the Pākehā tutors really push their Pākehā students... Yes, and they don't want to focus on the Māoris... I reckon, to them, they just think a waste of time because they're going to see how long they last. That is what I used to think at school. See how long they'll last here. (Student, White et al., 2009, pp. 43-44)

These tertiary programmes in which they are involved thus represent for many of these second-chance adult Māori learners their first unqualified experience of educational achievement/success and give them the confidence to continue with further study.

2.2 Social and economic background of students

The background of each report highlights the often significant social and economic barriers that students face. Many students undertaking programmes lacked support and have children to care for. Some are homeless.

Several learners acknowledged the stresses of trying to afford petrol to travel to the foundation learning site:

Cos petrol costs, half the time I'm on empty, I'm thinking am I going to make it the next day? (Student, McMurchy-Pilkington, 2009, p. 28)

Some courses had fees but even if their course was free, for many continuing on to further training, the cost was seen as a barrier:

No [I wouldn't feel confident enough to go to polytech] you're just looking at a big student loan. (Student, McMurchy-Pilkington, 2009, p. 29)

2.3 Diversity of adult students

The importance of acknowledging that Māori adult students are not a homogeneous group, but rather bring complex and diverse experiences, is a key finding of all three reports.

2.4 Support for students

Māori students do, however, often have much in common, including negative educational experiences such as those listed above.

Tutors in tertiary settings have to work hard to support students and help undo the damage of previous learning experiences; all three projects show that courses based in Māori tikanga and pedagogies are most successful in this regard.

I found that in a Pākehā environment [it] is hard... I noticed that they just must be so used to this sort of structure, this sort of way and everything they rattled off and the Pākehās could click on to it instantly, but I found for me listening to it, it just sounded lost. That information was just being said, but it was not going anywhere. For me it just didn't make sense, but I think they just get so used to saying it, blurting it out like that, that it has no meaning behind it and I just think that whenever you've got a Pākehā/Māori sort of class and they're used to teaching just Pākehā, just consider not everybody thinks Pākehā... I don't quite know how to explain it. (Student, White et al., 2009, p. 73)

Several aspects of teaching, programmes and the learning environment are central to the success of learners. This includes a holistic approach to teaching and learning.

2.5 Holistic approach to learning

The holistic approach adopted in several programmes reinforces the interconnections between participants and their wider whānau. Although student needs and prior learning are central, the outcome of learning is never seen as being just for the individual student, but for other people around them, including their tupuna (ancestors) and kaumātua (elders).

I feel advantaged. Yes, I do. Most for my parents, who are my precedent, my parents that showed me their heritage, their lives, and because I'm going to look into my own, and find my own bones, you might say. (Student, White et al., 2009, p. 63)

2.6 Māori pedagogies and tikanga

A key feature of all three programmes is the centrality of Māori pedagogies and protocols (kawa), particularly the importance of working together as a group. Successful courses are infused with explicit tikanga and Māori pedagogies, such as whakawhanaungatanga and tuakana/teina.

Whakawhanaungatanga

Whanaungatanga is often described as that which centralises the whānau and its significance in influencing the activity of its members. Within it, space is provided for cultural imperatives such as karakia, tikanga, manaaki tangata, kanohi ki te kanohi, and whakawhitiwhiti kōrero, when and if they are required.

Important to students' sense of well-being as learners is the sense of belonging and of being valued. Cormack (1997, p. 165) states that “the aim [in the classroom] is to create an esprit de corps...to get the class to function as a whole...in Māori terms as a waka (canoe) or iwi unit”. Cormack's aim is seen as a key strength of the programmes examined, especially for groups of students who have whānau/whakapapa connections, or where cohesiveness has already been established.

Tuakana/teina

Royal Tangaere (1997, p. 50) explains that “the concept of tuakana/teina is derived from two principles: whanaungatanga and ako”. Another way of looking at this is “where the notion of learning/teaching” is shared, and where the tutor is also learning in the programme” (Te Puni Kōkiri 2001, p. 66).

Tuakana/teina relationships characterise all the programmes examined in the three pieces of research.

Kawa

Māori values and protocols such as those listed below are also highly valued by students and tutors and seen as central to the success of programmes:

- Te noho ā marae – marae kinship.
- Te hononga ā-iwi – shared iwi links.
- Te noho hei whānau – deliberate act of teamwork.
- Te noho rūmaki – protocols and customs.
- Kanohi ki te kanohi – face to face (implies frankness).
- Te manaakitanga – fostering relationships.
- Te tuwheratanga – openness.
- Te whakapono – trust.

2.7 Deliberate acts of teaching

Where deliberate acts of teaching and learning plus tracking of language acquisition take place in a supportive and safe learning environment, gains result. Adult Māori learners highly valued learning te reo Māori within the safe learning environment of the marae. The context and support that this setting provided saw participants in one programme move “from an average self-rating of 2/10 to 6/10 in spoken language proficiency after just one year on their programmes” (Mlcek et al., p. 32)

2.8 Role of the tutor

Consistent with Māori pedagogies and a holistic approach, relationships between students and between students and tutors greatly influence learning and development. Tutors in all the programmes sought to build trust and confidence between tutor and student, tutor and whānau, tutor and tutor, student and student to create successful outcomes for all. The tutors identified the need to focus on building self-esteem, self-confidence and success in students because of their often negative prior learning experiences.

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... (Student, McMurchy-Pilkington, 2009, p. 16)

Quality teaching was seen by students and tutors as a complex mixture of elements, including:

- giving responsibility back to students during courses
- having high expectations
- balancing practical and theoretical course elements
- clear processes, assessments and expectations
- feedback
- using a mixture of teaching approaches, including kinaesthetic, visual and oral
- experiential and group learning processes
- tutors showing belief in the students
- tutors being caring, patient, approachable, passionate, firm, humorous and committed
- having a good balance between challenge and support (in teaching and learning)
- interpersonal teaching moments during and out of class
- students' personal learning challenges being explicitly recognised and respected, and specific tuition occurring that addresses these needs
- individual support, where specific teaching strategies such as tutor-student dialogue assist their understanding and comfort to participate in lessons
- a culturally safe learning/teaching context where factors such as trust, personal identity and self-confidence are equally as important as the curriculum
- students' prior knowledge/skills, interests and future aspirations being taken into account in curriculum design
- having culturally inherent processes and structures in place.

These elements are best achieved when student to tutor ratios are smaller and tutors are provided with enough time, resources and professional support to carry out these roles.

2.9 Learning environment

Students appreciate an environment that recognises their physical, spiritual and emotional needs.

This includes being able to live as Māori in their learning, active support and ‘hands-on’ academic learning, a focus on group and individual learning, and a success-oriented focus.

The learning environment needs to be based on trust, a sense of belonging and safety.

It is about our intrinsic right to speak our language, practise our tikanga. Therefore we should be allowed to do whatever is necessary to achieve this. (Student, Mlcek et al., p. 23)

2.10 Support for tutors and quality teaching

The quality of delivery and knowledge base of the tutors is also seen as a defining factor for the success of all programmes and for developing confidence in the participants.

“...it’s like [the learners] don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care. (PTE Manager, McMurchy-Pilkington, 2009, p. 12)

Overall, there is concern that there are too few knowledgeable, qualified tutors available for these programmes. Foundation learning and bridging programmes tend to be low status, with pay rates and support not reflecting the demanding and skilled nature of the work. Tutors are generally overworked and resources are stretched.

In general, there is also insufficient time allocation for professional development. Workshops for Māori tutors in such programmes, wanting to support their practice in teaching from a Māori pedagogical framework, and/or teaching te reo Māori me ōna tikanga, are virtually non-existent. There is a high risk of burnout for many tutors.

3 UNIQUE FINDINGS

The above findings are common across all three projects. In addition, the Te Awanuiārangi study (Mlcek et al., 2009), which focuses on unique marae-based programmes, found that the marae context was especially significant for Māori learners:

If we look at the marae environment, it is about connecting yourself with your whenua [land] and your awa [river], and not just looking at whakapapa, but looking around at the environment and committing to it. Look at the marae and compare it to the whare Pākehā [Pākehā school/house]... In the wharenuī [sleeping house] on the marae, it is all about the kōrero...the listening and values. (Mlcek et al., 2009, p. 21)

3.1 Reinforcing Māori identity

The marae is not merely the venue for the provision but the place where those with the wairua and knowledge are already engaged. Marae-based learning contexts reinforce/affirm the adult learners' identity as Māori and reflect a Māori wairua for many of the participants: it works to 'embody identity' as well as to 'reaffirm who we are'.

As one student observed, going to a marae-based programme is where "the wairua is different...when you are in the wharenuī (sleeping house/meeting house), they are giving back your mana...giving back your kōrero" (p. 22). This was seen as particularly important for many learners, as "the foundation to build a strong base, of identity, and of learning in a safe environment" (p. 23).

3.2 The importance of te reo Māori

Adult Māori learners also highly value learning te reo Māori within the safe learning environment of the marae. The context and support that this setting provides saw those students in the degree programme improving their spoken te reo significantly. There was general agreement among the students on these programmes that the only way to "pursue te reo" was through doing the programme of learning on the marae.

The marae is the ultimate learning place for Māori. There has been a breakthrough with marae-based education, as marae equals identity.

It has been overlooked that the marae has knowledge resources...haven't tapped into this yet. Marae breeds success. Other institutions don't have enough practice. (Mlcek et al., 2009, p. 22)

The majority of participants viewed te reo Māori as the primary vehicle for tikanga, and having the latter was important in helping the participants conduct themselves properly and confidently on the marae.

This accords with wider research in language acquisition that highlights that foundation and language learning are best acquired in responsive social contexts.

3.3 Marae as a key access point for learning

Marae-based learning provides adult Māori learners with an accessible, safe and culturally congruent learning context. From a practical point of view, participants acknowledged the usefulness of having marae-based learning provided by the wānanga within their rohe (geographical area).

The weekly cluster groups were another favourable talking point, as were the noho marae, which saw groups of students coming together for whole weekends of study. The intensity of, and commitment to, these sessions was clearly significant; students and tutors worked together, came together for karakia, waiata and pepeha, often participated together in a hīkoi that related to the particular rohe of the marae, and ate and slept together.

There was also an appreciation of the importance of one's home marae in and to the teaching and learning process. The community of people and the elders belonging to each marae participated in the teaching and learning programme with the wānanga lecturers.

...our people can feed and care for thousands of manuhiri [visitors]...not being formally educated...can whaikōrero [speak formally] for up to an hour. Marae have always been a learning institution mai ra ano...we, that is Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiārangi, hasn't tapped in yet. For years our people had been told or thought that they were dumb, not good enough. Marae-based learning equals success...is successful. (Mlcek et al., 2009, p. 22)

GLOSSARY

Te reo Māori

ako
ākonga
awa
hangaia te mātāpuna o te mōhio
hīkoi
iwi
kanohi ki te kanohi
karakia
kaupapa Māori
kawa
Kohanga Reo
kōrero
kura
Kura Kaupapa Māori
kupu
mai ra anō
mana
manaaki tangata
manaakitanga
marae
matua
mā te huruhuru ka rere te manu
Pākehā
pakeke
pepeha
rohe
reo
te hononga ā-iwi
te noho ā marae
te noho hei whānau
te noho rūmaki
te manaakitanga
te piko o te māhuri: tērā te tupu o te rākau
te pakeke hei ākongā
te reo Māori me ona tikanga
te tuwheratanga
te whakapono
tikanga
tuakana/teina
waiata

Definitions and nuances of te reo Māori

teaching and learning
student
river
create the precious gift of knowledge
to walk; to make a tour of an area
people; tribe
face to face (implies frankness)
sacred chants; prayers
Māori philosophy
protocols for formal social engagement
Māori language pre-school
speech; speaking
school
Māori language primary school
living word
from ancient times
authority, esteem
embrace and care for people
to look after and support people
community and ceremonial meeting place
father; uncle
with feathers a bird can fly
non-indigenous New Zealander, generally referring to those of European descent
adults
short proverb
geographical region associated with an iwi
language
shared iwi links
marae kinship
deliberate act of teamwork
protocols and customs
fostering relationships
the way in which the young sapling is nurtured (bent), determines how the tree will grow
adult students
Māori language and its associated customs
openness
trust
culture
relationship whereby an older sibling guides and instructs a younger sibling
songs

wairua	<i>inner sense of well-being or spirituality</i>
waka	<i>canoe</i>
wānanga	<i>Māori institution of higher learning</i>
whaea	<i>mother or aunt</i>
whakapapa	<i>genealogy</i>
whakawhanaungatanga	<i>making or renewing relationships</i>
whānau	<i>family kinship</i>
whanaungatanga	<i>relationship</i>
wharenuī	<i>sleeping house</i>
whenua	<i>land</i>
whakawhiti kōrero	<i>open discussion</i>

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