Māori Education: Some Suggestions from the Research Literature — A Discussion Paper

This discussion paper was originally prepared as background information for Hui Taumata Mātauranga, held in Turangi/Taupo in February 2001. The paper presents:

- research-based information on positive education initiatives focused on Māori; and
- outlines some ‘action-oriented’ approaches and practices, identified from the research, that seem to be associated with improved educational outcomes for many Māori students.

The paper concludes by highlighting some of the strong messages which emerged from the research material on Māori education covered for this review and signals areas where more information would be valuable.

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1 The paper was prepared by the Research Division of the Ministry of Education.

The present focus is ‘How can all students gain positively from their education, including those who experience social and economic difficulties?’

Most of the research we have covered for this paper falls into the category of qualitative rather than quantitative research. (Primarily, this is because the majority of the research which reports positive initiatives in Māori education is qualitative in nature.) But qualitative information, used appropriately, provides powerful insights into issues under consideration. Also, when used alongside quantitative data, a much fuller picture is achieved than would otherwise be the case.

In order to synthesise the important findings about positive initiatives in Māori education, this paper outlines some of the most common themes emerging from the research findings. Although this can suggest an emphasis on ‘solutions for all’, this is not the intention, given the diversity among Māori in Aotearoa–New Zealand.

Taking into account the ‘points to note’ listed above, we believe that the cross-section of research material covered for this paper provides some valuable insights into Māori education. The studies we reviewed cover a considerable range of aims, approaches, settings, circumstances, and cultural perspectives.

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3 Research evidence shows that while there is often a strong link — this is known as a ‘positive correlation’ — between level of socio-economic advantage or disadvantage and educational outcomes, this does not mean that one thing necessarily causes the other.

4 Qualitative research often involves relatively small sample sizes and data which are collected through observations, interviews or discussion groups. It allows for in-depth investigation of issues, including detail about behaviours, attitudes and motivation. Such research reports, for example, on how positive changes have occurred in the confidence and self-esteem of specified groups of Māori students and their parents and whānau as a result of inclusive school programmes. Quantitative research tends to involve structured research instruments (e.g., questionnaires), involve quite large sample sizes, and yield statistical data (e.g., percentages) which are relatively ‘objective’ in nature. Research of this sort would include assessing the performance of large numbers of students on set items in mathematics and science, for example, and carrying out analyses of data to establish trends in results for different groups of students.

5 Some of the studies were carried out by Māori researchers, some by non-Māori, while still others were carried out by bicultural or multicultural teams of researchers.
INTRODUCTION

There is evidence in the literature that increasing numbers of Māori students are doing very well in education. What is more often reported in the media and elsewhere, though, is that, in terms of participation in education and levels of achievement, Māori tend to do less well than non-Māori. For example, education statistics show that Māori on average leave school earlier than non-Māori and do not perform as well in national examinations. The ‘gaps’ between Māori and non-Māori on these measures are well documented.

But we know that statistical measures alone do not provide sufficient insight into the many and varying complexities which impact on educational outcomes; nor do they provide adequate representation of the many positive initiatives in Māori education which occur in different schools and communities.

The purpose of this paper is to go beyond the statistics on Māori achievement and participation in education and attempt to summarise what we know from various research studies about the complex factors that impact on education outcomes. In particular we have tried to learn from positive initiatives in Māori education which occur in different schools and communities.

Setting the Scene

When we looked at the research literature, we found that some findings are very consistent. For example, there are many studies which show that the expectations that teachers, parents (especially mothers) and the students themselves have of what students can achieve do have an effect on student achievement. In other cases there are no straightforward answers — where some researchers argue that peers (a student’s classmates, group of friends, etc) are critical in determining how a student performs at school, others argue that peer influence has little impact on student achievement.

What is clear is that education for any group of people is a complex matter.

An important issue raised by the research relates to what Māori want from education and how educators and policy-makers can work with whānau and the wider community to produce what is required. More specifically, this issue raises such questions as:

- What support do whānau need in order to encourage and assist their tamariki and mokopuna to take part in education and to stay on and do well?
- What will encourage students and their peers to do well in school?
- What can be done to increase the range of resources and strategies available to whānau in order to help them support their tamariki and mokopuna in whichever setting they are educated?

Another important issue relates to the supply of Māori education, both in terms of the provision of education by a range of different agencies and organisations and in terms of how education organisations from early childhood through to the tertiary level can become more responsive to Māori. Consideration of this issue raises questions like the following:

- What do we know about how the education system disadvantages Māori?
- What changes are needed to ensure that education fits better with the needs of Māori?
- How do teachers’ expectations impact on their students and how can expectations be changed?

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6 The paper ‘Māori in Education: Some Statistics’, prepared for Hui Taumata Matauranga participants by the Ministry of Education’s Data Management and Analysis Division, provides a more detailed insight into this information; as does the in-depth literature review entitled Māori Participation and Performance in Education completed in 1997 by Simon Chapple, Richard Jefferies and Rita Walker.
• If some teachers and students have racist attitudes, how can we change that?
• How can we make sure that Māori students are assessed in ways that are appropriate to them in all early childhood settings, schools and kura?
• Is getting whānau involved more in education likely to make a difference?

In order to impose some ‘order’ on our discussion of factors that may impact positively on education outcomes, we have organised and discussed the research findings under the following three broad headings:
• Participation in Education;
• Quality of Education; and
• Whānau and Community Input in Education.

Throughout each section, ‘action-oriented’ suggestions from the research appear; as well, a small number of research studies are described in more detail than usual, as they serve as useful illustrations of some of the themes discussed more generally throughout the paper.

The paper contains ‘action-oriented’ suggestions from the research literature.

PARTICIPATION IN EDUCATION

Participation in education means children and young people having adequate access to early childhood education, attending school regularly during the compulsory schooling years, staying on at school into the senior secondary school years, and having the opportunity to go on to tertiary studies.

But participation in education also means engagement in education, for example, children experiencing their early childhood centre as a good place to be so that it becomes a source of rich experiences and establishes a sound base for future learning; students finding school an interesting, relevant, challenging and worthwhile place to be so that they want to stay on and do well; and older students perceiving and experiencing education beyond school as a real asset.

Participation in Early Childhood Education

One of the findings that comes through very strongly in a range of research studies is the very positive impact for children of being in a quality early childhood setting. While parents may prefer different options for their children, the value of children being in a setting which can provide positive early learning experiences is undeniable.

In many cases this type of quality is provided by ‘formal’ early childhood education, which can take place in kōhanga reo, kindergartens, playcentres, childcare centres and other types of services. In the early 1980s, compared to non-Māori children, relatively few Māori children participated in some kind of early childhood education, but by 1991 — nine years after kōhanga reo began — that had changed. The latest available data (1999) show that of all children in Aotearoa–New Zealand who are enrolled in early childhood centres, 19 percent are Māori.7 In addition, latest data show that over a third (36%) of Māori students enrolled in early childhood education attend kōhanga reo.

Participation during the Compulsory School Years

Although participation in education between the ages of six and 16 years is compulsory, issues such as truancy, absenteeism, and transience (not staying in one place very long) all represent significant interruptions to schooling, with well-documented research evidence showing the adverse effects on educational outcomes.

Truancy, absenteeism and transience significantly interrupt schooling.

7 Because of certain technical difficulties, it is difficult to estimate the proportion of all Māori children under five who are enrolled in early childhood education. But as a point of reference, the 19 percent of all children in Aotearoa–New Zealand enrolled in early childhood education who are Māori is only slightly lower than the 22 percent of all five-year-olds attending school who are Māori. (From data supplied by the Data Analysis and Management Division of the Ministry of Education.)
While working in some decile 1 schools, researchers in one study talked to teachers about students for whom just getting to school and staying there was a struggle. For these students, showing up for class on time, doing homework on a regular basis and working through each class was a major accomplishment. There can be any number of reasons why these students find actually participating fully in school life difficult. But there are teachers who believe that these students' efforts to overcome the difficulties they have represent an achievement that deserves full recognition in itself and should be recorded in a way that will be useful for the student. Finding ways to at least get students to school and stay there is one of the first hurdles on the way to full participation and engagement in learning.

As one teacher in the study said:
“Kids don’t get School Certificate for turning around their attitudes and behaviour but they should get something that counts for them.”

Other studies have indicated that some schools have brought about considerable reductions in truancy by:
- analysing attendance patterns to discover underlying causes of truancy;  
- discussing the issue with students, parents and whānau, and community agencies; and then
- developing appropriate teaching and learning programmes to meet the needs of students.

The need for open and honest communication between school and home is stressed, as without it, some research shows that time and energy is wasted by schools blaming parents for not ensuring that their children attend school and parents blaming schools for not reaching students or not caring about whether they attend or not.

Some findings also emphasise the importance of talking with the students themselves, to get their perspective of why they stay away from school and what they think would improve matters.

Further research findings indicate that it is important for schools with significant numbers of transient students to develop effective approaches for dealing with these students, many of whom may have specific learning needs if they have had frequent interruptions to their schooling.

In terms of what action may be suggested, the literature has described how some primary schools have developed programmes for new students that include activities to help them become interested and quickly involved in what their classmates are doing. And other schools are reported to foster easy settling in for new students by promoting the school as one family, with an emphasis on aroha, tautoko, and whānaungatanga concepts to support this.

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8 In order to assist in the allocation of funding to schools, an index has been developed to rank schools, by decile (division of schools into ten ‘groups’), according to the relative socio-economic advantage or disadvantage of the communities that each school’s students come from. A decile 1 rating is allocated to schools considered to have lowest levels of socio-economic advantage and decile 10 to schools considered to be most advantaged. Along with other variables, the socio-economic index takes into consideration the proportion of Māori and Pacific students on a school’s roll.

9 Teachers in the study reported that some students were having to assume what are often major responsibilities for their families. One such teacher acknowledged the maturity and ‘real-life skills’ that these young people have: “We have many fine young people who are great citizens. We need to define a formula for developing and acknowledging that citizenship.”

10 There are two ‘types’ of truancy: ‘supported truancy’ whereby students are absent from school with parental knowledge or consent, to look after other children or do seasonal work, for example, and ‘unsupported truancy’, where a student is absent from school without parental knowledge.
Participation in Schooling at the Post-Compulsory Level

Up to the time a student reaches the age of 16, attendance at school in Aotearoa–New Zealand is compulsory, although exemptions are possible in a number of predetermined circumstances. After that, attendance at school officially becomes a matter of choice.

Although staying on into the senior secondary school does not preclude all possibility of taking up further (tertiary level) education, staying on greatly facilitates entry into education and training beyond school and allows a greater range of choice.

A student’s decision about whether or not to stay at school or whether or not to enrol in some form of further education can be influenced by a variety of factors. Research shows that some of these influences are particularly powerful. Factors likely to severely limit choices are:

- strong negative peer pressure (see the discussion regarding peer pressure in the shaded box below);
- the need to earn money to contribute to family finances; and/or
- a lack of adequate participation, achievement and qualifications before turning 16.

Research has, however, also identified factors which can increase the likelihood that a young person will continue their education or training.

Students’ future choices are enhanced by staying on in education.

Students who have supportive teachers and good experiences at school are more likely to stay on at school.

Peer Pressure

“I remember when I was in my School Certificate year and I was at home with my cousins and they asked me what was it I wanted to do. I said that I would like to try and get School C. It was a standing joke because they said, ‘But you’re Māori, Māoris don’t get School C, you don’t have any brains.’ That was the mentality that was coming through. That was the mentality of a lot of my peers.”

A recurring theme in a number of studies is that of peer pressure. Depending on the individual student and on a student’s peer group, it can be powerful, positive and motivating, or an equally powerful but negative and destructive force.

While some Māori students who do well have found their peers supportive of their achievements, others have reportedly been discouraged, or even at times prevented, from achieving by their friends. For some, achieving at school has meant ‘paying the price’ of not being part of a Māori group of friends. In order to achieve, some Māori students have had to deal with difficult peer situations by actively removing themselves, in some cases even to another school, and finding other friends.

Māori students who belong to Māori groups at school (either in the classroom or socially) can be particularly susceptible to peer pressure not to succeed academically. It seems to take a strong-minded person, active family support, and sometimes support from the school, to withstand such negative pressure.

Māori students who lack family support are particularly vulnerable to peer pressure. Intermediate school students (especially girls) appear to fare worst, although peer pressure continues through into secondary school as well, where boys seem to be most influenced by negative peer pressure.

Māori parents who have taken part in research studies also recall experiences of pressure not to do well at school, saying that they felt that “Individuals who showed ambitions were pulled down to the level of the group.”

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Such factors may be ones that are inherent in the education system itself or they may be particular characteristics of important people in the students' lives. For example, whānau members who are supportive of a student wishing to take up further education, or peers who value doing well, are likely to have a positive influence on a student.

As well, policies and programmes that proactively encourage Māori students to participate, positive school experiences, and good teachers who are responsive to Māori students can all make a difference to whether or not a student chooses to continue their education in or beyond school.

**Why Māori Students Stay on into Senior Secondary School**

While much research has focused on why Māori, on the whole, leave school earlier than their non-Māori counterparts, a study, published in 1994, asked Māori students in senior secondary schools around Aotearoa–New Zealand to say in their own words how they felt about school, why they had stayed on, and how other Māori students could be encouraged to do the same. The focus of this study was on positive influences.

Most of the students in this study (who were mostly aged 17 and 18) appeared to have:

- received a lot of encouragement from their parents;
- talked to their parents about things that happened at school;
- talked to their parents about their homework; and
- been actively encouraged by their parents to stay at school.

Typically, this encouragement was based on the parents' belief that good qualifications would result in a better chance of finding employment. Interestingly, this high level of parental support existed despite, or perhaps because of, their (the parents') own lack of formal qualifications.

'Peer pressure' often arises in the research literature as a negative influence on student participation and achievement. However, Māori students in this study, who stayed at school, were somewhat more likely to experience positive peer pressure or 'pressure' to stay at school, than negative peer pressure. The students' peer groups valued staying at school to get further qualifications — they thought it was 'stupid' to leave.

The research concluded that the students who stayed in school appeared to be involved in groups of friends for whom staying on at school was the norm.

Pressure to leave school seemed to come largely from friends who had already left school. These friends could not see the value of education, and promoted increased independence and access to more money as reasons to leave.

Although Māori are reported to encounter many negative experiences at school (discussed elsewhere in this paper), this study asked students who stayed on at school about any positive school experiences they had had, based on the assumption that such experiences would contribute to their staying on at school. What emerged was that most of the students who stayed at school were relatively positive about their schools and education itself.

Positive experiences most commonly mentioned included sport, academic achievement, opportunities to learn tikanga Māori and te reo Māori, friendships and social interaction.

Asked directly for their reasons for staying on at school, most students cited the need to gain qualifications, in order to either gain access to further educational opportunities or for employment. They were well aware of the difficulties of finding employment without qualifications.
Some practical suggestions for encouraging Māori students to stay on at school

Senior secondary (post-compulsory) school students in one of the studies reviewed for this paper recommended:

- providing some kind of student allowance, or other financial support;
- taking steps to improve teacher attitudes towards, and expectations of, Māori students;
- improving teaching to make learning more interesting, fun and alive;
- providing good, realistic information for students on the benefits of staying at school (and stressing that although the real world can be hard work, goals can be achieved);
- emphasising Māori role models;
- placing a much greater emphasis on tikanga Māori and on fostering a Māori environment;
- providing (more) opportunities to learn te reo Māori; and
- asking the students themselves what they want.

Participation in Tertiary Education

It appears that barriers to participation in tertiary education often occur well before students reach the age of 16. Absenteeism during the earlier years, difficult home environments, itinerant lifestyles, heavy home responsibilities, and low teacher and parental expectations have all been found to adversely affect the extent to which Māori participate in tertiary education. Also, there are quite a few young Māori who, although they do relatively well at school, do not achieve the marks required for them to do the particular tertiary programmes they had been hoping to enrol in.

However, rates of participation in tertiary education among Māori are increasing. Some of the factors contributing to this are that increasing numbers of Māori students are doing well in school, student participation rates at the senior secondary school level are increasing, and that for some students the opportunity to study at wānanga and other alternative tertiary study and training institutes is now available. Also, in some instances, initiatives designed to assist with the transition from school to university have been put in place.

One study, for example, refers to a bridging course run by a university, which helps students cope with the transition from school to university. The study suggested that similar courses could be set up in other tertiary-level places of learning (or perhaps in schools).

Other studies suggest that schools need to ensure that students receive adequate guidance early on about the subjects they should choose to enable them to go on to further study — for example, if they decide not to continue with mathematics at school, this could preclude various options for study and work beyond school. Further research suggests that students need more help to set and achieve the goals which are prerequisites for further study.

As well, there is evidence that the cost of tertiary study is a continuing barrier to participation for some students, and, as such, is an issue that needs to be addressed.

Some Concluding Comments about Participation in Education

At the beginning of this section we indicated that students simply being at school is not enough. As well as participating in a physical sense, research clearly indicates that students must actively engage in learning in order to benefit. Students need to be motivated, feel enthusiastic, and feel a sense of hope or optimism in order to see a point to even being in school. There is evidence that a growing number of Māori students are doing...
very well in education. For example, a large national and international study that looked at New Zealand and other students’ achievement in mathematics and science showed that Māori boys who stay on at school do really well. And a further study revealed that Māori students who stayed on until the seventh form were just as likely to go on to university as non-Māori students.

The next section, which discusses the quality of education, provides insight into some of the factors which may impact on whether Māori students engage in the teaching and learning opportunities that they encounter.

**Characteristics of high achieving Māori students**

A small study in 1988, involving 40 Māori students who had gained high scores in both School Certificate mathematics and science, reported that successful Māori students were not so very different from other successful students. They were described as students who:

- had an innate ability,
- worked hard;
- were competitive; and
- were often perfectionists.

They also often had ‘good’ teachers, who had helped them to achieve success, and, in all cases, had parents who were very supportive.

A common trait among the students was the ability to withstand pressure from their peers.

Another study, involving a series of interviews with young Māori who had achieved outstanding success in the fields of science, mathematics, and technology also found that most of the young people interviewed had had to overcome the negative expectations and attitudes of teachers and other students, including school friends.

But of particular note is that most recalled individual teachers who had had ‘a profound effect’ on their success by helping them develop a passion for science and mathematics and to work hard to achieve their goals. These teachers reportedly also frequently enlisted parent support for their students.

**Quality of Education**

**Quality education** is that which realises Māori students’ potential to achieve. Achieving quality is almost certainly a complementary process of developing a range of initiatives and programmes for students that lead to success, providing information to education professionals, parents, whānau and others on ‘what works’, and providing support to put what works into action.

There is a wealth of research which documents good principles of teaching and learning which can validly be applied across all groups of people. However, there are, as well, traditional concepts, values and protocols, which shape the beliefs, behaviour and decisions of Māori. The emergence and growth of kaupapa Māori and Māori immersion education reflect the wider push by many Māori to reclaim those values and knowledge in order to preserve a Māori identity.

Factors which can impact on quality education for Māori include: teacher supply, teacher quality, school leadership, particular approaches and styles in teaching and learning, having a choice of education provider, the expectations that early childhood centres, schools and teachers have of their Māori students, school/institutional culture or environment, having a balanced, culturally inclusive curriculum, and the particular characteristics of programmes that are provided for students. Available research findings relating to some of these factors are discussed in this broad section.
Teacher Expectations and Outcomes for Students

From an interview with a highly successful Māori scientist:

“I don’t think I was exceptionally bright; it’s just that I put a bit more effort in than everyone else. There were a lot of gifted children that came from Te Tii but they never really had the push. I’m pretty certain that they would have gone further than I have if they were given the same opportunities or given the same amount of support. …[One of my teachers, also a close family friend] … was a big believer in saying to the parents, ‘You need to support your kids, we need to get them through the education system.’ When I was younger he identified me as one of the ones that should be pushed to go further. He and my parents pushed me the whole way through. He used to say, ‘You need to do extra homework.’ … he used to place me next to the bright kids. I didn’t want to be with the bright kids, all my friends tended to be the ones that never really worried about school. … Unfortunately at that stage I thought he was just picking on me, I thought, ‘Why doesn’t he pick on someone else?! … In hindsight, if he hadn’t done that, I probably would not have gotten as far as I have through the education system.”

Earlier in this paper we identified that the expectations that others have of students — especially those held by teachers, parents, whānau, and peers — can impact on the expectations that students have of themselves and on their educational outcomes.

Teachers having low expectations of Māori students is a consistent theme in the research literature. Another closely related theme is that Māori students who become alienated from school report having had negative experiences with teachers. Some research findings which demonstrate these themes follow.

- A study in the 1980s found that teachers viewed Māori and Pacific students (at ages 9–10) more negatively than Pākehā students. The researchers observed that teachers interacted differently with students of whom they had low expectations than they did with students of whom they had high expectations. This was especially evident in the types of questions they asked students and the extent to which they used criticism.

- Researchers in another study looked at teacher expectations in a number of low decile schools in Aotearoa–New Zealand. They found that both within schools and between schools what is expected of the students is perceived differently by different teachers. Although there was no one view on what expectations should be, a number of teachers described their colleagues’ expectations of Māori students as ‘too low’.

- From a student perspective, Māori students in the study whose teachers had low expectations of them said they felt resentful and hurt when teachers’ attitudes and frustrations resulted in patronising and derogatory comments.

- Other findings revealed that some teachers were unsure how to go about establishing realistic expectations for every student. Researchers reported that this was often the case in schools which not only had students from a variety of cultural backgrounds but also students with language difficulties, and students who regularly gained low scores in assessment studies.

- A further study reported that Māori students who had not gone on to tertiary education reported negative experiences with teachers at school.

Some teachers need support in establishing appropriate expectations and goals for students.

Participants who had not gone on to tertiary education reported negative experiences with teachers at school.

instance, participants in the study who had not gone on to any form of tertiary education reported negative experiences with teachers at school and felt that their teachers had had only low expectations of them.

What the findings outlined above suggest is that some teachers need support in establishing appropriate — neither too high nor too low — expectations for and of students, and that teachers and students would benefit from a constructive exchange of feedback. Comments from study participants which illustrate this possibility follow, the first comment made by a teacher and the second and third by students.

“We need to lift expectations — the kids’ expectations of the staff and the staff’s expectations of the kids. Too many of us say ‘Oh well – you don’t know our kids’.”

“We need to change the attitudes of some of the teachers. They let their expectations drop. We’re not good at goal setting, we simply accept our position at the bottom of the heap. What we need [is help to] set realistic targets.”

“Teachers must push achievement with the students. They aren’t good at showing that. What we get are the negative attitudes when they get frustrated.”

The literature reveals that some schools, while recognising the real day-to-day difficulties in some students’ home environments, nevertheless have high expectations for and of these students. Rather than use home circumstances as an excuse for expecting little of students, the schools accept their responsibility to effect positive change in student achievement and work hard to deliver a high quality education that takes into account the specific learning needs of their students. Such schools are contrasted with those that appear to consider that students having difficult backgrounds means that they will never succeed at school. They reportedly do not therefore set high standards for student achievement and behaviour, thus helping perpetuate a cycle of disadvantage and lack of hope for the future. The result is that these students are doubly disadvantaged — by the problem factors in their home environment and by the failure of schools to establish positive expectations and develop high quality programmes that address their learning needs.

The Recruitment of Māori Teachers

The research suggests a clear need for more Māori teachers with appropriate skills and qualifications. An important reason for having more Māori teachers is that they are strong advocates of and role models for Māori students. Students in more than one study stated that they found Māori teachers to be good role models for them.

Recruiting staff who reflect the ethnic mix of students within a school was an important consideration for principals of schools in the Me Mahi Tahi Tātou (‘Promoting Positive Race Relations in New Zealand Schools’) study. Yet concern was expressed by teachers and school administrators at the national shortage of teachers from non-Pākehā backgrounds and of the difficulties encountered in recruiting teachers from different backgrounds, in particular, Māori teachers.

Within schools, Māori teachers are reported to often have particularly heavy workloads placed on them as they assume other roles in addition to their teaching duties, such as liaising with the community, counselling students, and acting as a resource person to other teachers within the school.

One study, for example, reported that where schools in their study had ‘identified a commitment to Māori as
tangata whenua and the need to recognise the “special position” of Māori, the onus for doing so tended to fall within the province of Māori teachers. Almost always, Māori teachers were expected to deal with all things Māori. This put extra pressure upon these teachers who constantly found themselves “on-call”.

With a range of other employment opportunities available to young Māori graduates, the research literature indicates that it is imperative that the extra work undertaken by these teachers is acknowledged and appreciated if Māori are to be attracted into teaching and remain in the Aotearoa–New Zealand teaching profession.

**Some suggestions from the research for recruiting and retaining Māori teachers**

Results of a survey of Māori who were leaving teaching indicated it is important that Māori teachers:

- have their effort and their extra workload recognised in some way;
- are recognised and supported by principals for their role in school life;
- are supported both culturally and emotionally by other teachers in the school;
- have higher levels of support for Māori language and culture programmes;
- have recognition through promotion;
- are included in the shaping of policy within the school;
- have their culture recognised in the way that the school is run.

A 1997 study, which sought views about education from a large group of Māori secondary school students, as well as from a group of tertiary students, and a group of young Māori who had never been involved in post compulsory education or training, found that support for kaupapa Māori and Māori immersion education was overwhelming.

The vast majority of the tertiary students in the study also said they would prefer to attend wānanga. In practice, their desire to do so was restricted by limited access or limited types of programmes available at wānanga.

Many participants in the study criticised the education system for failing to recognise the differing needs of Māori and failing to provide courses and programmes which served those needs. By contrast, they saw kaupapa Māori and Māori immersion education as vital for improving the position of Māori in education and for providing Māori the opportunity to decide what is important in education.

A case study which documented the experiences of a family whose children attended first kōhanga reo and then kura kaupapa Māori concluded that:

“As parents we know that what our children have learnt from kōhanga reo and kura kaupapa Māori is precious to us. As a Māori family isolated from our extended whānau, or marae, and particularly our kaumatua, we received much of that Māori support...”
“As parents we know that what our children have learnt from kōhanga reo and kura kaupapa Māori is precious.”

Positive Role Models

Māori teachers in schools are indicated in the research as an important source of positive role models for Māori students. An emphasis on positive role models to improve educational outcomes for Māori is also an important element of Alan Duff’s Books in Homes programme. The programme has called upon sports celebrities, television personalities, actors, Māori leaders and authors to encourage students to read and to emphasise the importance of reading. In an evaluation of the Books in Homes programme undertaken in 1997, most participating principals, teachers, and students were enthusiastic about the use of good role models from the wider community and felt that it was an effective way to reinforce the message about reading. They spoke very highly of those selected to visit their schools.

Another study also suggested that one way for schools to promote cultural diversity and academic possibilities for students is to publicise the success of former Māori students who have achieved well in tertiary institutions and other fields.

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14 See page 27 for a description of this study.
‘What Happens to Māori Girls at School?’
This 1994 study investigated school-based factors affecting the achievement of Māori girls in three types of primary school programmes: immersion, bilingual and mainstream. Although the study does not specifically discuss learning outcomes for students, some of the findings (presented below) relate to several of the themes discussed throughout this paper.

Ethnic composition of staff and boards of trustees
Compared to mainstream schools, it was found that there was a much higher level of Māori representation in schools with immersion programmes, and also, although to a lesser degree, in schools with bilingual programmes, suggesting that these schools created an environment supportive of and conducive to Māori participation. Having parents and whānau participate meant that Māori girls in these schools had much greater exposure to Māori decision-makers, role models and caregivers throughout the school day than their ‘mainstream’ counterparts.

Māori teachers, of whom there is a shortage nationwide, appeared to be particularly drawn to schools with immersion and bilingual programmes. The researchers noted that: ‘[Māori teachers] working alone in schools hostile or unsupportive of kaupapa Māori is not a preferred Māori option, [which] should come as no surprise to anyone.’

Effective resourcing of kaupapa Māori can be a positive key to school and community development.

The Māori girls in this study who were in schools with immersion and bilingual programmes were also exposed to particularly good role model opportunities, due to the unusually high levels of seniority amongst women staff.

Leadership and authority opportunities for students
Observations revealed that increased opportunities for leadership and authority were enjoyed by children in the kaupapa Māori-based programmes, including specific opportunities for girls. There was also some evidence of traditional male/female leadership roles being reproduced, for example, boys in haka and whaikorero, girls in karanga and waiata. The researchers recommended that the reproduction of Māori cultural practices in all kaupapa Māori-based programmes should be carefully monitored, so that such processes operate at levels of full and critical awareness.

School environment
Most schools in the study saw equity for Māori children as ensuring that the school incorporated aspects of Māoritanga into their programmes. This ranged along the spectrum of total support for immersion programmes to setting up a kapa haka group, and treating all children as equal, regardless of ethnicity.

The playgrounds and classroom environments out of reach of adults’ vision can be hazardous places for children. Verbal and physical aggression, particularly from boys to girls, was found to be of real concern in some schools.

Māori girls’ interactions with teachers in different programmes
Māori girls in immersion programmes were found to be more confident than their peers in ‘mainstream’ programmes, in the way that they interacted with their teachers and in terms of their ability to capture their teachers’ attention.

The role of whānau in the education of Māori girls
One of the key features about schools in the study with a bilingual or immersion unit was that whānau had a direct impact on their children’s education. Whānau were reported to play a critical role in the establishment, implementation and maintenance of the units. It was therefore considered that the best case scenario for future developments in the area of bilingual and immersion programmes within the mainstream rests with whānau increasingly recognising and exercising their power. To this end, the researchers encouraged whānau to:

- ‘be bold, and recognise and exercise your choice;
- find out what programmes schools are offering and speak out about the education options you want for your children;

Continued...
What Happens to Māori Girls at School continued ...

• recognise that as a group of parents you have the power to change things as a whānau, as a group unit;
• use your collective power to negotiate change so that you may access the type of education you want for your children;
• seek support from organisations such as Resource Teachers of Māori, the School Trustees Association, and Māori Advisors; and
• explore iwi, marae-based and community organisations who can assist you in shaping and realising your educational aims.

Schools’ role in the education of Māori girls

The study found that schools in the study were at different stages and levels of Kaupapa Māori development. The researchers considered that ‘it is vital that linking processes can be established so that Māori whānau and parents can affirm the kaupapa by sharing their experiences, strategies and techniques’, and enhance the education of their children. The researchers recommended that:

• ‘schools actively promote whānau involvement in the development of classroom programmes in order to develop positive school–community interfaces;
• schools affirm, resource, and nurture interaction processes with their communities;
• boards of trustees and principals recognise that appointment of Māori staff is a key factor in the development of bilingual and immersion programmes;
• boards of trustees and principals work proactively to recruit Māori staff into professional positions with the necessary resources to get the job done; and
• Māori women be appointed at or promoted to more senior positions to take leadership roles.’

The researchers also indicated that in order to further enhance Māori girls’ education, schools need to monitor:

• ‘the nature and frequency of classroom interactions by boys and girls;
• levels of access by girls to space and equipment;
• levels of violence and aggression both inside the classroom and in the playground; and
• levels of children’s awareness of pastoral care policies in the school.’

School Environment

The research literature indicates that in order for students to learn well, amongst other things, schools and other places of learning need to:

• provide a safe physical and emotional environment for students;
• have in place clear policies and strategies to deal with violence and bullying, racism, sexual abuse and harassment, and such matters as broken and faulty equipment and furniture;
• provide a culturally appropriate environment for the students, whānau and communities they are there to serve;
• have quality support available in order to respond to the pastoral needs of students; and
• provide an attractive, warm, comfortable place to be.

Teachers, students, and other participants interviewed as part of the Me Mahi Tahi Tātou research felt that schools need to value the language and culture of their students, celebrating differences as well as similarities. They also felt that acknowledging and appreciating Māori culture (even at a very simple level, for example, by having Māori signage around the school, and by displaying Māori art work) was a positive way to support the self-esteem of Māori students, particularly those...
in mainstream classes. One of the *Me Mahi Tahi Tātou* participants stated the challenge this way:

“All affirmation of the cultures from which students come challenges the assumption of the superiority and authority of a particular way of seeing the world. It affirms the minority culture student’s place in the school.”

This is a challenge that has also emerged from a great deal of other research, both in Aotearoa–New Zealand and internationally.

**Countering Discrimination and Racism**

There is no doubt that Māori children face a certain amount of discrimination in schools, mainly in the form of teacher or school discrimination and racism from other students. Available research evidence has shown that school and teacher expectations of and for Māori students are often not as high as they are for non-Māori, that some students report experiences of being placed in lower-streamed classes simply because they are Māori, and that, although it may not be deliberate, teachers ignore or overlook Māori students.

There is also evidence of racism exhibited by other students, for example, racist jokes were reported to be very common. Young Māori interviewed for one study felt that the divisions between Māori and Pākehā had been widened by Treaty of Waitangi issues, with some Pākehā students — and their parents — reported to be resentful if they perceived any positive discrimination or special initiatives for Māori.

The study *Me Mahi Tahi Tātou* found that the attitudes and practices of teachers in schools invariably have an effect on the achievement and self-esteem of students. The researchers suggested that teachers need to reflect on their own racial attitudes if they are to adequately meet the needs of students and provide a supportive learning environment for them.

The study also reported that schools had undertaken a range of measures to improve learning environments for Māori students. These schools:

- ensured that school staff earned the respect of students and provided positive role models for them;
- ensured that interview procedures for new staff followed appropriate cultural protocols;
- promoted open channels of communication with all cultural groups in the school community;
- obtained community input for the development of school policies on such issues as the Treaty of Waitangi, equity, behaviour, and conflict resolution;
- provided a supportive and welcoming environment which encouraged parental and whānau participation in the school;
- organised support systems for students, such as student buddy programmes, peer tutoring, and group work in class;
- integrated tikanga Māori into the school structure;
- actively supported kapa haka groups; and
- ensured that there was awareness of issues related to Māori throughout the school.

A representative of one of the schools in the study commented:

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- ensured that there was awareness of issues related to Māori throughout the school.

A representative of one of the schools in the study commented:

“Creating and supporting opportunities for communication to occur within and across cultural groups is like creating a safety net for the school. Ensuring that there are channels for communication in place can serve as a resource when cultural misunderstanding occurs.”
Countering Bullying

An evaluation of a programme which aimed to eliminate violence in schools first looked at the types of anti-bullying programmes that had been put in place in schools. The researchers reported that previous interventions for bullying had tended to focus on the individual or individuals involved in the violent interactions and had achieved limited success.

The evaluation results of their more recent programme however suggested that schools need to take a preventative approach to bullying — ensuring that it does not happen at all. It was recommended that schools introduce school-wide initiatives designed to promote a positive school climate. Such a climate would be characterised by a spirit of cooperation, consistent, fair, discipline, celebrations for doing well (at all levels), friendliness, and an overall atmosphere of optimism and positive thinking.

Suggestions from the research literature for improving conditions for student learning by eliminating bullying (and other damaging behaviours)

Strategies to prevent bullying (and/or other negative behaviours) should:

- be initiated by the board of trustees and/or the principal of the school;
- be checked and regularly reviewed by a committee appointed for the purpose;
- be based on a clear awareness of the extent and nature of the problem;
- be accompanied by a clear, written policy;
- emphasise changing basic attitudes towards unfair, aggressive behaviour;
- teach people to promptly report incidents of victimisation;
- involve the whole community;
- put strict limits on bullying behaviour, and in order to do this, encourage the use of strong and consistent, but not violent, discipline when required.

Opportunities to Learn Te Reo and Tikanga Māori

“There’s strength in believing and feeling strong about yourself as Māori. I believe if Māori people can come to grips with their heritage and culture and can be comfortable with who they are as Māori and be proud of it, then the strength and confidence will flow — holding you strong, not only amongst your own but also amongst others.”

“[Introducing] the kapa haka [and tikanga Māori] has meant a massive and positive change among Māori students [at this school] — and with its success has come more involvement from Māori whānau. … If you balance the kapa haka [etc] with your schooling, you’ll be a whole person. If you go one way more than the other, you’re going to lose out overall. [But] the emphasis on culture has been deliberate. The next step is working on academic success. People need to realise that before we get more academic results we need to build self-esteem and pride. The culture group has achieved pride in the school. We want to develop that and move it into the classroom. Our aim is to show the students what they’re capable of doing. To use their potential.”

The quotes given above describe a conclusion arrived at in much of the research literature that we reviewed: that, for many Māori students, opportunity to learn te reo and tikanga Māori is integral to building self-esteem, feeling a sense of belonging, and engaging in education.


16 From ‘Now we feel we’re somebody’, Mana, No. 18, October/November, 1997.
Curriculum Issues

The National Education Monitoring Project (NEMP) provides system-wide information on student achievement and looks at different aspects of the curriculum each year. It runs in four-yearly cycles and, in 1999, the project assessed student performance in science, art, and on graphs, tables and maps. Some of the tasks which had been used in 1995 were included again in order to monitor performance over time. A positive finding in the latest NEMP results was that for Māori, the ‘performance gaps’ had closed considerably in all areas for 8- to 9-year-old (Year 4) students. While the same trend did not show up this time for 12- and 13-year-old (Year 8) students, it is hoped that the results for the Year 4 students may be an early indication that improvement at all levels is starting to take place.

There is a wealth of evidence to show that a fundamental element of quality education is the opportunity to develop sound literacy skills (in English or te reo Māori, or both). Equally important is the need for a curriculum which is both balanced and relevant, and provides room for activities such as kapa haka, which can be integral to students feeling a sense of place or belonging at school.

An important issue is how education should go about responding to the needs of learners from non-Western indigenous and minority groups.

The research literature indicates that educators need to tackle this issue by asking the four major questions briefly discussed as follows.

- **What should be taught?**

  Some education research findings suggest that if Māori children understand the principles that are integral to Māori practices and traditional knowledge, they will take greater pride in Māori culture and increase their motivation and achievement in various curriculum areas [e.g., literature, science, technology, the arts]. This approach has been supported over recent years by an increase in Māori-centred curriculum materials, including, for example, Māori contexts such as ‘the Waikato river’.

  However, it is also suggested that a possible danger of presenting only traditional aspects of indigenous cultures is that the diversity among any given culture may be overlooked. The result could be that the knowledge which is presented may be seen by some as inferior to modern knowledge and approaches.

- **How should a subject be taught?**

  International research has tended to link cultural characteristics to learning styles and both of these to achievement levels. While some cultural sensitivity is likely to be important, simplistic assumptions about cultural learning styles can overlook the fact that cultures change and that group characteristics may not apply to all individuals within a particular culture.

- **How should learning be assessed?**

  There is a paucity of information in this area, although some international research suggests that testing requires culturally appropriate stimulus materials and that translated tests should be avoided.

- **What cultural clashes occur when children confront the current culture of a subject and of education?**

  The notion of a cultural clash between home and school has led to calls for ‘culturally appropriate’ teaching, but like the question about appropriate assessment, the research so far appears to provide little firm evidence of solutions to this problem.

  However, using science as an illustration, research suggests that in their teaching of the curriculum, educators should assist students by:
  - creating support systems (such as mentors/advisers);
- using local contexts and cultural knowledge (such as hāngi, the marae, navigational expertise, and legends about natural events);
- using culturally-appropriate teaching strategies (such as cooperative learning);
- using language teaching methods in science;
- exploring other cultures’ systems of knowledge about the natural world (including beliefs, methods, criteria for validity, and systems of rationality); and
- bridging the gaps between children’s world views and that of western science.

In addition, a New Zealand study on mathematics education suggests that, for Māori children, there should be less formality and competition in the mathematics classroom. Group work and discussion tend to be less frequent in mathematics classrooms, and there is often a greater emphasis on competition (e.g., when students’ performance on mathematics tasks is timed) than in the case in reading and writing classes, for example. A supportive mathematics classroom, according to the study findings, is one where teaching practices do not make students feel stupid or whakama, is no more formal or competitive than classes for other subjects, and there is an emphasis on group work, which has been found to increase students’ confidence levels and contribute positively to their learning.

Also recommended by the researcher was the use of culturally appropriate examples, resources and traditions, presented in their proper context. It was emphasised that it is not enough to change Pākehā names to Māori names and leave the basic task unaltered. It was further suggested that it may be useful for English-speaking teachers of Māori students to receive assistance in accessing the rich material used in kura kaupapa Māori.

Finally, it was advocated that mathematics must not be represented as ‘Pākehā knowledge’, to which elements of ‘Māori’ have been attached, but as ‘Māori knowledge’.

Factors in Effective Teaching and Learning

In order for effective teaching and learning to occur, the research literature suggests that, provided adequate support systems are in place, schools and kura should:

- ensure that the highest quality teaching is available to all students, regardless of medium of instruction;
- have a culture of high expectations of all students;
- ensure that the whole school sees itself as a community of learners;
- ensure that there is a close partnership between home and school; and
- recognise and affirm the cultural identity of all students in the school.

It is also indicated in the literature that teachers need to use a wide range of teaching strategies — including cooperative learning, problem-solving, peer teaching, student-generated questions, increasing ‘wait time’ for students to answer, and a variety of other ways of being more culturally sensitive — to address the individual needs of the students within their classes. As well, it is indicated that there is an urgent need for more kaupapa Māori language curricular resources for use in kura kaupapa Māori and Māori-medium schools in particular.

Some Concluding Comments about the Factors that Contribute to Quality Education

This section has briefly outlined some of the factors that, on the basis of the research reviewed for this paper, appear to contribute to a quality education. Such factors range from the presence of strong role models in schools...
for Māori students, to a need for curriculum content and approaches to teaching and learning which are culturally appropriate and relevant. As well, an important basis of a quality education was identified as a ‘positive overall school climate’.

Such a climate is characterised by open, honest communication, a policy of including and involving everyone connected with the school, an emphasis on establishing high, but realistic, goals for all students and on striving to meet those goals, tikanga Māori and te reo Māori being integral to the philosophy and direction of the school, and an environment which is physically and emotionally safe.

The previous section discussed aspects of student participation in education while the next section discusses whānau and community involvement in students’ education. A ‘bridge’ between the present section and the previous and following sections is perhaps the point made in a number of studies about the importance of a ‘student voice’. Asking students what they want from education, and why, and actively involving them in decision-making processes about their education can add a valuable dimension to partnerships between schools, whānau, communities, and others in discussing and establishing ways forward in education. One team of researchers stated that:

“…there is very little attempt to take children’s views into account in the health and education systems. … People other than children and students appear to be making decisions about what is in the best interest of children and students.”

These researchers then went on to discuss [see box opposite] how students’ contributions added considerably to a project — Hei Awhina Matua — established in response to concerns about behavioural and learning difficulties experienced by Māori primary school students. And a spokesperson for one school involved in Tū Tangata, an initiative designed to bring the Māori community into the school to work alongside students having difficulties at school, reported that:

“…Students contributed to writing behavioural checklists and assisted in prioritising behaviours and settings of greatest concern. They wrote and acted in ten skits which portrayed those behaviours and the home, school and community settings in which they occurred. They assisted in producing and directing the skits which present parents and teachers with constructive ways of responding to student behaviour. Some students joined with the research team to present a progress report to the bicultural Ministry of Education advisory committee, and travelled to Dunedin to help edit the draft video. They supplied written comments following the presentation of the video back to parents and community members, and suggested ways of introducing the project to other schools.”

A Student Voice

Hei Awhina Matua is a collaborative research project which grew out of community concern about the behavioural and learning difficulties experienced by Māori primary and intermediate school students at home, at school, and in the community. Students, teachers, and parents worked with a bicultural research team to help students experiencing behaviour and learning difficulties.

The researchers stated that ‘While the research team had planned extensive consultation with students, … the students themselves sought and provided valuable input into the project at various stages.’

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18 From ‘Our hands on their shoulders’, NZ Education Review, October 25, 1996.

19 From Glynn et al (1997); see footnote 17 for full referencing details.
Some defining characteristics of positive or ‘quality’ education programmes identified from the research

Quality programmes:
- take the student’s home background into account (e.g., nature of the child’s language and home experiences, amount of te reo spoken in the home, cultural identification);
- are culturally appropriate (e.g., include Māori content, incorporate Māori values, protocols and practices, and use appropriate teaching methods and practices);
- incorporate parental involvement (e.g., in the consultation process regarding the programmes to be provided);
- include support for parents/whānau so that they can better understand and support their child’s learning needs (support is especially important for parents who do not have confidence or have not had the opportunity to develop the knowledge or skills for dealing with schools and the systems of teaching and learning);
- require support from parents/whānau for students in order to encourage improved motivation and progress in learning;
- have Māori teachers and teacher aides;
- have teachers with cultural and te reo knowledge;
- provide opportunities for students to learn te reo;
- provide extra help in reading and language;
- provide a balanced curriculum;
- incorporate effective monitoring, assessment and reporting of student achievement;
- include effective monitoring and management of principal and teacher performance.

WHĀNAU AND COMMUNITY INPUT IN EDUCATION

This section discusses research findings regarding the importance of parental, whānau, and community input into children’s education. It also discusses the importance of schools and other education institutions ensuring that support systems are in place to enable parents, whānau, and communities to provide that support.

Valuing Education

On the whole, New Zealand research evidence shows that Māori do not put a lower value on education than non-Māori. Surveys of young Māori at secondary school have shown that they want the same amount of education as other students. For example, among Māori students at a number of low decile schools who were asked what they hoped to achieve in the future, few were unable to give an answer, had no expectations, or said they wanted to go on the dole. Most of the students mentioned that they hoped to achieve one or more of: passing School Certificate, gaining a qualification, getting a job, going to university, making money, joining a top sports team, or getting on a course.

However, although students who took part in another study mostly felt that their parents were aware of the benefits of education, they also pointed out that other factors often impacted on the level of support that parents provided in relation to education. For example, some thought their parents could not see past the immediate financial difficulties that were best served by the young people going to work instead of carrying on with their education. Others felt, too, that parents did not always feel confident about their ability to provide academic support for their children and were not at ease about contact with schools, or were simply happy for their children to pursue whatever made them happy.
Links between Home and School, School and Community

Home and School

Teachers, other school staff, Māori parents and students who were interviewed for one study agreed unanimously that family support is essential if children are to achieve to their highest potential. But research findings also suggest that:

- mismatches between home and school practices with respect to learning; and
- differences in perceptions about what the appropriate roles are for parents and teachers can, like the factors referred to above under ‘Valuing Education’, lessen the effectiveness of home–school relationships for supporting children’s education.

That there can be difficulties in home–school relationships is borne out by a study carried out in a number of low decile New Zealand secondary schools. It was clear to most staff in these schools — including office staff, pastoral care staff and teaching staff — that some parents do not clearly understand how secondary school systems operate. Another study, involving interviews with parents in ten city schools, showed that 40 percent of Māori parents interviewed reported making two or more visits to their children’s primary schools during the previous term. However, when asked how often they visited their children’s secondary schools, only five percent of Māori parents reported that they had visited two or more times during the previous term. This suggests, perhaps, that parents feel less confident about interacting with secondary schools.

A further study which looked at bicultural and multicultural issues in New Zealand schools found that:

“Getting parents involved in school activities is a priority, although it can also be a challenge, particularly if parents are not successful readers and writers themselves, their experiences at schools have been mostly negative, or their home language is different from the language of instruction for their children.”

Some research indicates that Māori parents, like other parents, want schools to consult the wider parent community [not just board of trustees members] when making decisions about education. But other research findings also show that there is sometimes confusion over what is the parents’ role and what is the school’s role, and uncertainty among parents about how professional and management decisions in the school are made. Some students, too, reported, that their parents expected the school to fulfil all school-related and educational roles and functions. This was found to bring about a situation of conflicting expectations and the potential for school and parents to judge each other negatively. A student commented:

“Our parents think schoolwork should be done at school and it’s up to the teachers to make sure that we do it. Home is for family and not for study. That works when we are at primary school but it doesn’t work at secondary school.”

Some research says that a key to overcoming such barriers is the sharing of information. As well as sending materials home to help students with needed strategies to succeed in school, teachers need to value students’ backgrounds and encourage them to bring their experiences into the school. In addition, because connecting home and school is a shared responsibility, parents must have adequate, ongoing access to information about school practices and expectations in order to enable them to support their children’s learning as they advance through school.
In terms of striking a good balance for students, a secondary school teacher in one study observed:

“Students who achieve have parents who accept the need to balance school, other activities and the family.”

School and Community

As well as the importance of strong school–whānau links, it is increasingly apparent that communities need to be involved to some extent in the everyday activities of schools and that the composition of a board of trustees needs to reflect the ethnic diversity of the school community. The research evidence emphasises that school policies should therefore be developed in conjunction with the school community. In one study, teachers commented that it was also important for school staff to take an active part in community activities, in order to maintain good relationships between schools, whānau and their communities.

In an evaluation of the first phase of an initiative to strengthen education in schools in Mangere and Otara (SEMO), the researchers, like those who conducted the studies referred to above, concluded that effective communication between all involved in the education of children is vital. The researchers stated:

Parents and a School Working Together to Establish a Bilingual Classroom

In a study of how a mainstream school went about establishing a bilingual classroom, a vital issue was to understand what parents wanted. The school needed to increase parent involvement, which, initially, it found to be a considerable challenge. But some positive steps were made when the school was able to attract a few parents who then, through personal contact, encouraged other parents to become actively involved in the school community. When these parents were interviewed about their experiences of the school, they made such comments as:

“The school has a homey feeling, teachers are welcoming, like they had open arms for everybody, and we were part of a family.”

“The school is our extended family, and the staffroom is our parents’ meeting place.”

These parents also explained their desires and expectations for bilingual classes. They wanted their children to be able to understand their grandparents and retain the family wisdom of their elders. They wished that their children would be taught by both Pākehā and Māori teachers. They made an undertaking to support their child’s learning in Māori, learn Māori themselves, and gain the best of both worlds.

All teachers, students and parents were encouraged to take responsibility for the success of the whole school. The mainstream staff had to learn what the Māori parents wanted and staff and parents had to debate many issues until they reached a joint belief that learning from a Māori language and cultural perspective would bring social, educational, and world success for their students. Both staff and parents also had to understand that there are limits to what any school can do in a child’s life-long learning. Therefore, they also discussed learning support provided in the community and wider environment. Community pot-luck suppers, involvement of elders, and visits to other marae were planned to extend student learning.

One of the parents who participated in the study commented:

“I belong to a support group made up of parents, language assistants, and teachers. We voice our opinions and try to help each other. We feel, all one, ... all equal.”

Another participating parent stated:

“Our children are the binding agents that hold us all together. In this school I feel that all the children are mine. I have a feeling for them, aroha.”
“If the SEMO initiative is to succeed where others have failed before it, it must encourage dialogue about the difficult as well as the more comfortable issues, so that solutions are built with knowledge of all relevant issues. … Considerable progress has been made in bringing people together so that confidence has grown between the school and the Ministry of Education, between neighbouring schools and in the SEMO initiative itself. If these new relationships are to become mutually educational partnerships, serving the educational needs of many more children, the initiatives need to continue to promote sustained, open and respectful conversations about how shared goals can be achieved in a framework of mutual accountability.”

Under the Tū Tangata initiative, adults from a school’s community work alongside students who experience difficulties with their work or who have behavioural problems. A secondary school, which was the first to participate in the initiative, reported that since taking part:

- students had become more involved in academic tasks;
- there was a more positive student culture throughout the school;
- fewer students stayed away from school;
- there was a steadily developing partnership between the school and the community, including more parents coming into the school;
- education opportunities had been provided for parents, and
- workloads for teachers (particularly Māori teachers) had reduced.

**Support for Parents and Whānau**

A home and school literacy project undertaken in nine Rotorua primary schools to improve the reading and writing skills of students was based on developing effective collaboration between schools and their communities. Schools developed a working partnership with students’ parents or whānau by meeting with them regularly and demonstrating reading and writing strategies to support their children’s learning. The schools also provided support for parents and whānau as they implemented these strategies.

For home and school collaboration to be effective, schools need to take into consideration the ethnic mix of their school communities and adapt their methods of communication accordingly.

Parents and whānau are also more likely to want to come to a school if there is a visible commitment to including them in school activities. Māori educational initiatives such as kōhanga reo and kura kaupapa Māori

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<th>Some strategies drawn from the literature for supporting whānau and establishing strong, positive links between home and school include:</th>
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<tr>
<td>• schools employing a Māori liaison person to act as a bridge between home, school, and community, in order to improve home–school–community communication and cooperation;</td>
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<tr>
<td>• schools taking an active role in supporting whānau in their efforts to obtain further skills — for example, by providing computer skills classes and showing parents how to hear their children’s reading at home (some schools have also invited parents to complete their own educational studies at after school homework classes that were initially provided for their children); and</td>
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<tr>
<td>• schools ensuring that they provide culturally appropriate, jargon-free information for parents, and create a school environment that values Māori culture and welcomes parents and whānau.</td>
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THE RESEARCH BULLETIN No. 12, June 2001

MĀORI EDUCATION: SOME SUGGESTIONS FROM THE RESEARCH LITERATURE—A DISCUSSION PAPER

25

Tatari Tautoko Tauawhi ~ Pause Prompt Praise ~ is designed for use in a one-to-one oral reading context so that students experiencing difficulties in reading can receive more opportunities to self-correct errors and to practice problem-solving strategies. Assisting readers to learn these strategies requires tutors to:

• pause before responding to children’s errors;
• prompt children to utilise both contextual and letter-sound information (rather than telling them the correct word); and
• praise children’s use of independent strategies such as self-correction and prompted correction.

In one study, the Pause, Prompt, Praise programme was implemented to train 14 Māori women as reading tutors. On completion of training, their task was to tutor Māori students from two schools who had been identified as requiring additional support in reading.

As well as covering more ‘technical’ aspects of the reading process and using the Pause, Prompt, Praise techniques, the training sessions for tutors covered the importance of language and language experiences, and emphasised that children will read if they:

• ‘want to learn to read;
• see others getting pleasure from reading;
• have someone they trust to help them;
• have books that are exciting and interesting to them, and at their level of instruction; and
• have opportunities to read.’

The training sessions also emphasised the ‘importance of listening to the child, of showing warm interest and understanding, [and] of showing a total acceptance of a child’s personality.’

In the two schools in the study, liaison teachers who had positions of responsibility for reading were identified. The role of the liaison teachers included ensuring that the tutors were welcomed in the school. They also helped organise individual tutoring times so that they did not compete with other important curriculum activities and fitted in with the tutors’ personal timetables. As well, it was the liaison teachers’ responsibility to communicate with parents about the programme, arrange at least one meeting between parents and tutors, and assist with any problems that might arise.

Part of the study included feedback from tutors. The tutors said that they had decided to become a tutor because ‘they wanted to contribute in a positive way to children’s education’ and ‘gain some useful skills working with children’. In the tutors’ view, the students they worked with gained from the programme in that:

• their confidence and self-esteem increased;
• they learned to respond to praise;
• they gained confidence;
• they tried hard to become better readers;
• they experienced joy in success; and
• they built positive relationships with the tutors.

Tutors went on to say that they, too, had benefited by participating in the programme. They identified the benefits as:

• pleasure in observing the many changes in the children;
• getting to know the students and all about their families;
• gaining more understanding about what children are about;
• satisfaction in knowing you are doing something to help; and
• ‘a great learning curve for me as a Māori mother and kuia.’

Asked what they would say to others who expressed an interest in tutoring, the tutors in the study said they would emphasise that:

• it is interesting;
• it is a pleasure tutoring our children;
• it is necessary to have patience;
• the programme is easy to follow;
• it is a very rewarding experience; and
• it gives you the opportunity to give something to children, especially Māori children, who are experiencing reading difficulties.

In response to the question ‘What was the single most important thing you offered to any one student?’, the tutors replied:

© ‘confidence to believe in themselves and their reading abilities;

Continued ...
actively encourage participation and input by parents, and provide a learning environment in which positive relationships with whānau can be developed.

The research evidence suggests that when Māori parents do not have a great deal of knowledge in te reo and tikanga, partnerships between schools and their Māori communities are essential to enable both parents and students to increase their knowledge and ensure that parents receive support to help them better support their children.

**Whānau Supporting Student Learning**

Much has been written on the importance of developing strong partnerships between schools and students’ homes and of the important role that families play in providing learning opportunities for their children.

A stimulating and educationally supportive home background, although made easier by affluence, is not dependent on a high socio-economic status. One study found that it is not necessary for parents to have educational qualifications themselves in order to make a real difference in helping their children make the most of opportunities available in the education system.

Another New Zealand researcher found that some Māori parents who have not had a great deal of formal education themselves, have a high level of involvement in their children’s education both at home and at the school.

The ways in which the bonds between home and school can be developed and strengthened include incorporating school activities such as reading and writing into family activities, and incorporating home and community events into activities at school.

**Reading and the Role of Parents and Whānau**

Some research shows that Māori students at secondary school are not very keen on reading. Compared with non-Māori students they tend to watch more television and do less reading. And Māori boys have been found to be less keen on reading than Māori girls. Because reading is so important, finding ways to encourage Māori students to read more is vital.

It has been established that programmes like Books in Homes (see box on the next page) result in positive outcomes for students. But it is not just a matter of providing books for students to take home. There has to be active engagement in the process of learning by both students and parents, as well as back-up from
schools. Earlier in this paper, we discussed the importance of the home-school connection in relation to students’ education generally, but, in particular, students receiving support in reading at home has been found to be a key element in the development of reading literacy.

Homework and the Role of Parents/Whānau

A secondary school which participated in the *Me Mahi Tahi Tatou* study had established a whānau support group to work with Māori students to help raise their academic achievement. The group was established because Māori parents were concerned about their children’s educational outcomes. The whānau support group organised and coordinated homework study programmes, with individual tuition being provided in the evenings four times a week. Incentives such as McDonald’s vouchers or music cassettes and CDs were provided to encourage students to attend sessions, and to study. The group also provided assistance with the kapa haka group and with discipline issues as they arose within the school. Positive behaviour and achievement outcomes were reported.

The ‘Books in Homes’ Programme

The *Books in Homes* programme was developed by Alan Duff in 1992 after a visit to one school. At this school he found that many of the students, mainly Māori and Pacific, were not interested in reading and did not have books in their homes. Working on the premise that developing good reading skills is essential for educational achievement, he felt that students might become more interested in reading if they had books of their own. He instigated a public campaign to collect books for distribution at the school and from small beginnings the *Books in Homes* programme was developed. By October 1997, 135 schools, catering for high proportions of Māori and Pacific students and located in low-income areas, were taking part in the programme.

The results of two surveys, administered 12 months apart, to determine the impact of the *Books in Homes* programme on students’ reading, showed there had been a distinct improvement in the reading ability of students at the school, the 1997 evaluation found there had been further positive spin-offs for the school in the five years since the introduction of the programme. While other factors almost certainly had an impact on the outcomes, following the introduction of *Books in Homes*, levels of truancy and vandalism were reported to have reduced dramatically, and parents were said to be taking a greater interest in school activities, as evidenced by a significant increase in parents attending parent interviews.

Other results indicated that parents were enthusiastic about the programme, appreciated what was being done to encourage their children to read, were now reading more to their children at home, and were increasing the numbers of books available at home by buying more books through the Scholastic Book Club, operated via the school.

It was also noted that new entrants arriving in the school since the introduction of the programme appeared to have a greater awareness of book concepts, presumably as a result of increased exposure to books through their older brothers and sisters who attended the school, and the greater interest parents were taking in their children’s reading.
Some Concluding Comments about Whanau and Community Input in Education

The research findings discussed in this section reveal that the input provided by parents, whânau, and other members of the community is fundamental to the success of many initiatives in education. Such input has been found to result in a range of positive outcomes, not only for students but for schools and the parents, whânau, and communities themselves. But the research literature also suggests that considerable ground-work needs to be carried out in order to ensure that there are sufficient systems in place to bring about effective communication, discussion, and collaboration. Developing sufficient systems will inevitably involve not only early childhood centres and schools, whânau, and communities but also input from education administration and government.

Finally, the statement: 

‘…education doesn’t just happen in schools. Mäori need a broad strategy for community development to meet Mäori goals’

seems to be an appropriate summing up of the findings discussed in this section.

SUMMING UP

There is research-based evidence of a wide range of positive initiatives and developments in Mäori education. Many of these initiatives focus on making education relevant and culturally appropriate for Mäori students, and on raising the self-esteem and confidence of students. These factors have been highlighted as being critical in encouraging students both to attend school and to take an active part in learning.

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This statement was agreed to by Mäori educators and administrators at a hui (May, 2000) called by the Mäori Education Trust to discuss setting up a Mäori education authority.
A recurring message in the studies that we have reviewed for this paper is that strong partnerships between schools, students, parents, whānau, and communities are vital if the best possible learning outcomes for students are to be achieved.

A recurring message is the need for strong partnerships between schools, students, parents, whānau, and communities.

Strong partnerships seem to be dependent upon —

**Schools and teachers:**
- ensuring that Māori students feel a sense of belonging;
- setting high, but realistic goals for students;
- providing a relevant, interesting, balanced, and culturally appropriate curriculum;
- providing students with the necessary assistance to set and reach appropriate goals;
- ensuring that students know about and/or have access to successful role models;
- ensuring that parents and whānau are well informed about what is happening at school and why;
- ensuring that parents and whānau are clear about what their role should be in relation to their children’s education;
- ensuring that parents, whānau, and community members (especially those who did not have good experiences during their own education) feel welcome;
- ensuring that support for parents, whānau and community members, including the opportunity to gain new knowledge and skills, is readily available if required;

**Parents, whānau and communities:**
- demonstrating that they believe in the value of education by ...
  - actively supporting their children’s education (eg, by encouraging effort);
  - taking part in decision-making processes at their children’s early childhood centres, schools, and kura;

**Students:**
- having a say about what they want from education;
- students working collaboratively with teachers to establish and achieve appropriate goals;
- students understanding the implications of peer pressure; and

**All parties involved in education:**
- engaging in open discussion of difficult issues – for example, racism, and aspects of educational practices that have not been working well – in order to reach solutions.

Although not discussed explicitly in this paper, the research findings outlined above suggest that both schools (and other education institutions) and communities will need some level of support if they are to be able to establish and maintain the networks and systems necessary for strong, positive relationships with their partners in education.

**Concluding Statement**

The research findings presented in this paper have gone some way towards addressing some of the questions about Māori education outlined at the beginning of this paper. However, we recognise that there is undoubtedly a great deal of other research, especially kaupapa Māori research, that would have made a valuable contribution to this paper. In addition, in order to further the debate about Māori education, we are aware that it would be desirable to have more information about:
- what constitutes ‘quality education’, especially in terms of appropriate curriculum content and how this should be conveyed via processes of teaching and learning;
- classroom dynamics;
• appropriate assessment methods;
• the difficulties and triumphs in relation to kaupapa Māori education;
• the teaching and learning of te reo and tikanga Māori; and
• learning outcomes, especially in terms of what learning outcomes are most valued, how these outcomes should be measured, and how they link to different learning styles and approaches to teaching.

If you would like further information about any of the material included in this paper please feel welcome to contact us at:
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