Sustaining and Spreading Education Reform: including marginalised students

Mere Berryman, Margaret Egan and Therese Ford 2014
Me kimihia te ara totika hei oranga mo to ao.
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In November 2013, Te Kotahitanga was recognised internationally with the conferring of an award from the World Innovation Summit for Education

New Zealand Government
The Leadership Influence

The role that school leaders take on, in disrupting and changing the status quo of Māori underachievement, is crucial. In order to do this, leaders need to understand that:

- schools have traditionally had a role in reproducing the fabric of this society,
- leaders are part of the power base, and
- under the Treaty of Waitangi and within their own sphere of influence, school leaders have the power and the mandate through Ka Hikitia to make more of a difference for marginalised students, especially Māori students.

How leadership is undertaken and evolves in schools can accelerate or hinder the social change required to address these disparities.

Leadership perspectives for consideration

In considering different theories of leadership, the notion that an individual leader might work largely from one model or style has led to descriptions of leadership practice according to type.

It is more useful to think of leadership from different perspectives as the reality of practice in different contexts is more complex and cannot be reduced or limited to one type.

In this section we identify four different perspectives on leadership and consider their relevance in addressing and eliminating the current achievement disparities in schools.

It is important to go back to the “Leadership” literature to get a better understanding of the following perspectives and how they might be relevant for school leaders in disrupting and changing the status quo of Māori underachievement.


**Distributed leadership**

The notion that leadership is a collective and dynamic undertaking, grounded in shared activity rather than positions or roles, is central to distributed leadership.

This perspective on leadership is concerned both with process (how leadership occurs and is shared within and across organisations both vertically and laterally) and with capacity building (how leadership is enhanced and developed).

A distributed perspective urges us to view leadership as a lateral form of agency (Harris, 2005).

Distributed leadership emerges from the actions and interactions of individuals engaged with each other in problem solving and/or developmental work. It promotes a relational influence - the ability to influence the practices of others in ways that bring about major changes (Spillane, 2006).

Collectively and collaboratively constructing meaning and knowledge within and across groups in particular contexts provides opportunities to reveal and mediate perceptions, values, beliefs, information and assumptions.

There is increasing evidence to suggest that more widely distributed patterns of leadership equate with greater potential for organisational change and development.

Whānau groups working together on the marae provide an example of distributed leadership.

Each individual has their own part to play in terms of responsibility, decision making and collaborative action to support the evolving kaupapa (common agenda).

Each individual is recognised and trusted for the contribution that they will make to the collective.

All roles are interrelated so that the organic and dynamic undertaking is successful, the whānau is supported and the mana of the kaupapa in terms of the contribution made by the marae is upheld.

Given the cultural connections that can easily be applied in the case of distributed leadership, this is a model that is often held up as one that might most usefully be applied, when working in Māori cultural contexts.
While we would agree with this position, we also want to consider three other leadership perspectives when seeking to bring about schoolwide reform in order to serve students more equitably.

These leadership perspectives are transactional, transformational and transformative.

### Transactional leadership

Foundation ideas that support transactional leadership include the views that people are motivated by reward and punishment and that social systems work best with a clear chain of command.

A leader working from the transactional standpoint creates structures and institutions that clarify what is required of their subordinates, using goals, expectations and standardised practices.

Such leaders are extrinsic motivators who work to gain compliance from their followers, often giving constructive feedback to keep them on task.

Using *management by exception* is common – if something is working then it does not need attention (*if it ain’t broke don’t fix it*). For subordinates, exceeding expectations earns praise and reward, while performance below the expectation requires corrective action of some sort.

Achieving increased efficiency of operations and raising productivity or performance is the main focus of transactional leadership – following the rules rather than making changes to the structure or culture of the organisation.

Transactional leadership practice works within the existing systems and culture to attain goals and maintain the status quo.

Coaches of sports teams provide an example of transactional leadership. These coaches motivate their squad members by promoting the reward of winning the game. They instil such a high level of commitment that their teams are willing to risk pain and injury to obtain the results that the coach is asking for.

### Transformational leadership

The ability to engage with followers by being genuine, inspirational and influential is essential to transformational leadership. This leadership perspective is centred on the promotion of a consistent vision, mission, and set of values. The qualities and role modelling of the leader are fundamental.
This leadership practice is concerned with establishing and maintaining relationships of trust, articulating an unswerving and inspiring vision and purpose, encouraging innovation and creativity and nurturing a culture of teamwork and commitment in order to carry out that vision.

Because such a leader engenders high levels of optimism and energy, and offers followers an inspiring mission and vision, as well as fostering a collective identity, these ‘devotees’ are prepared to work harder than originally expected.

Followers are encouraged to work beyond their comfort zones, come up with new ways to challenge the status quo and to change the organisation to support individuals and the organisation as a whole being increasingly successful.

Bill Gates’ leadership as co-founder and CEO of Microsoft Corporation could be described as transformational.

Articulating a clear vision, sustaining high energy levels across the organisation for enacting this vision, upholding excellence in performance standards, nurturing innovative approaches and supporting the morale of well-motivated employees characterises Bill Gates’s leadership practice.

**Transformative leadership**

Transformative leadership begins by understanding inappropriate uses of power and privilege and then seeking to challenge and change these situations through their own practices.

This perspective on leadership takes seriously the personal and the public responsibility to use power, privilege, and position in the context to promote social justice and enlightenment for the benefit, not only of individuals, but of society as a whole (Shields, 2010). Such leadership practice requires attending to the needs and aspirations of the wider community in which one serves.

As a result of a deeper understanding of the differing power relations within which we all live, transformative leadership then seeks to engage with change. Eight key principles of transformative leadership include:

- the mandate to effect deep and equitable change
- the need to deconstruct and reconstruct knowledge frameworks that perpetuate inequity and injustice
- a focus on emancipation, democracy, equity, and justice
• the need to address the inequitable distribution of power
• an emphasis on both individual and collective good
• an emphasis on interdependence, interconnectedness, and global awareness
• the necessity of balancing critique with promise
• the call to exhibit moral courage.

Madiba (Nelson Mandela) exemplifies transformative leadership.

All eight tenets are easily recognisable in his life’s work, from his early days working as a lawyer, participation in and leadership of the ANC, the twenty seven years imprisonment, and in his role as leader of the Government for National Unity (the first elected president in fully representative democratic elections in South Africa).

As president, Madiba set an example of reconciliation and a vision of emancipation, democracy, equity and justice for his countrymen – a free South Africa – and then let them know he expected them to live up to it.

“For all people who have found themselves in the position of being in jail and trying to transform society, forgiveness is natural because you have no time to be retaliative.”
Transformative, Transactional and Transformational

Shields (2010) suggests that while these three leadership perspectives are underpinned by some similar and some quite different principles, leaders will quite often move from one leadership type to another in an almost unconscious manner.

In order to be more determined about our practice and thus accelerate the impact of our actions we have deconstructed these leadership perspectives according to some contextual features for leaders to consider against some examples of their own leadership practices.

Resource 2. Leadership perspectives

Activity

In the following table (Table 1) consider the contexts of: focus, discourses, relationships, goal, actions, outcomes, benefits and challenges

1. How do these examples compare with your understandings of your own practice? Can you think of some examples when this happened?

2. What do you think of Shields’ contention that leaders will often move from one leadership type to another? Why do you think this?

3. What would you hope to take from this activity?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transformative</th>
<th>Transactional</th>
<th>Transformational</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Understanding how our in-school praxis has implications for all students at a societal level</td>
<td>Focus</td>
<td>Meeting the externally imposed policies or tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral and social responsibility to address existing disparities within education to address wider societal inequities – ‘greater public good’.</td>
<td>Discourses</td>
<td>Acceptance of hierarchical power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critique location of power and activate agency in order to disrupt the status quo and reconstruct social/cultural frames of reference that eliminate inequity</td>
<td></td>
<td>The priority is managing external expectations alongside internal pressures while getting the job done and keeping the school running</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-dominating, culturally responsive, interdependent and enduring</td>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>Hierarchical, congenial and task focussed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence-based and socially constructed to overcome identified barriers</td>
<td>Goal</td>
<td>Determined by the leader(s) and the available resource</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planned and collaboratively determined set of actions that</td>
<td>Actions</td>
<td>Ensure compliance by</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• are inextricably linked to the goal</td>
<td></td>
<td>• simplifying ideas and issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• are informed by what works</td>
<td></td>
<td>• systematising actions at all levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• involve everyone</td>
<td></td>
<td>• monitoring performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>are regularly reviewed and used to inform the next iteration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflect/facilitate educational and social transformation</td>
<td>Outcomes</td>
<td>Task completion – boxes are ticked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple perspectives and relevant evidence are used to determine progress Build and foster a sense of community at and across many levels</td>
<td></td>
<td>School leaders use some evidence to define the parameters of improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Benefits and Challenges</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Multiple individual beneficiaries – wide range of people (students, staff, whānau and community) benefit from being involved</td>
<td></td>
<td>Primary beneficiaries are leaders – their agenda is met</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Collective/societal transformation towards a socially just and equitable society</td>
<td></td>
<td>Simplicity ensures efficiency – tidy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Requires perseverance and courage</td>
<td></td>
<td>Narrow focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Complex and time consuming</td>
<td></td>
<td>Reinterpretation/ simplification risks losing the original intent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Challenge and uncertainty characterise this space</td>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers and students may not benefit from the compliance focus</td>
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Re-imagining policy implementation from a transformative perspective

One of the challenges schools face is engaging with and implementing Ka Hikitia: An accelerated response.

Transactional and transformational responses to Ka Hikitia

Consider what your own leadership response to this strategy has been, given that the key guiding principles of Ka Hikitia can be captured in the following set of inter-related points:

1. Treaty of Waitangi - ensuring Māori students enjoy and achieve education success as Māori is a shared responsibility
2. Māori potential approach – high expectations for Māori students to achieve
3. Ako – a reciprocal, two-way teaching and learning approach
4. Identity, language and culture count – Māori students benefit from seeing their experiences and knowledge reflected in teaching and learning
5. Productive partnerships with key stakeholders – ongoing exchange of knowledge and information and the involvement of parents and whānau.
Resource 3. Possible responses

Outlined in table 2 below are two possible ways schools might respond – each arising from a different leadership perspective.

1. Thinking about transformative leadership, including the eight key principles for transformative leadership identified earlier, identify what the implementation of Ka Hikitia could be like when approached from a transformative perspective.

2. What might the focus, discourses and initial actions around a transformational approach to using the Registered Teacher Criteria and Tātaiako look, sound and feel like in a school?

3. What differences would be needed for your identified approach to be transformative?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Transactional</th>
<th>Transformational</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Compliance with the MoE generated strategy</td>
<td>Improving the learning experiences and outcomes for our Māori students through engaging with the Ka Hikitia strategy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Possible discourses:
- We need to implement Ka Hikitia because the Ministry of Education has articulated clear expectations in this regard.
- There are links between Ka Hikitia and the National Education Priorities, National Administration Guidelines for schools (NAGs) and the requirements that the Ministry has for school charters.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial actions</th>
<th>Transactional</th>
<th>Transformational</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>P and SLT identify a goal, that fits in the 5 Year Strategic Plan, along with strategies and actions including reporting responsibilities</td>
<td>Allocate a teacher only day for all staff to engage together with Ka Hikitia. Time is allocated to whole staff activities and then faculties to identify how we might implement this strategy. Identify an overarching goal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assign the responsibility for Māori student achievement (NCEA and literacy /numeracy Years 9 and 10) to one of SLT who then reports to P, SLT and BOT on progress</td>
<td>Call a whānau hui at school to collect ideas to contribute to a graduate profile – what is success as Māori?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Call a whānau hui at school to consult/communicate about the plan</td>
<td>Examine the current evidence of Māori engagement and achievement in learning at different levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Monitor achievement of NCEA and Year 9 and 10 literacy and numeracy achievement</td>
<td>- school-wide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- curriculum faculty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- pastoral</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>and from this determine a set of targets, action plans, progress measures and review points across each of these areas of the school</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reprinted with permission from Alton-Lee (2012)
Links to Ka Hikitia

In the 2009 update of the Ka Hikitia – Managing Success strategy document, the Minister of Education, Anne Tolley, acknowledged the need for extensive change in positioning, expectations and practices across the education sector in order to improve the achievement of priority learners, with Māori learners the largest priority group.

Adrienne Alton-Lee (2012) developed thinking around system-wide use of evidence to improve education and serve the public good.

Using the Best Evidence Synthesis and an inquiry approach Alton-Lee (2012, 2014) suggests ten principles or requirements to guide such system-wide advancement (see table 3 on following page).

“Ka Hikitia: Accelerating success” provides the overall vision for a coherent approach to improving policy and practice in education, focussing on our most underserved group – Māori learners.

Importantly, we have learned from each of the phases of Te Kotahitanga that when we do this Māori learners improve and so do all other students.

We have learned from history that when we focus on all students, disparities for Māori are maintained.

The moral imperative and focus of transformative school leaders drives the positive use of individual and collective power and influence to achieve collaborative and participatory school-wide reform leading to social justice and equity – the public good.
**Resource 4**

**TABLE 3. USING EVIDENCE TO IMPROVE EDUCATION AND SERVICE THE PUBLIC GOOD**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource 4</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>TABLE 3. USING EVIDENCE TO IMPROVE EDUCATION AND SERVICE THE PUBLIC GOOD</strong></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>TABLE 3: Using evidence to improve education and service the public good</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Effective system-wide educational improvement efforts serve the public good and economic growth, providing returns that can exceed costs</th>
<th>Use evidence to strategically resource improvement in education.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Improvement efforts require an unwavering focus on valued outcomes for diverse (all) learners, with a targeted focus on accelerated improvement for those underserved by schooling or disadvantaged</td>
<td>Focus on improvement in valued outcomes for diverse (all) learners and accelerated improvement for those underserved by schooling or disadvantaged. Establish goals and expectations for improvement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. A collaborative inquiry and knowledge-building approach ensures local responsiveness and enables ongoing improvement across a system</td>
<td>Use collaborative inquiry and knowledge-building across policy and practice to guide action in ongoing cycles of improvement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Trustworthy bodies of research evidence about what does and does not work, what makes a bigger difference, why, and how can be a resource to inform improvement efforts. Such evidence matters for working smarter for improvement.</td>
<td>Use trustworthy evidence for improvement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Improved pedagogy for diverse (all) learners is the big change lever</td>
<td>Ensure knowledge of effective pedagogy drives improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. There is much evidence of policies and practices that deliver no benefit or do harm in education. The public good requires a shift to alternative policies and practices that work.</td>
<td>Do no harm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Relational trust, stakeholder ownership, and capacity-building are critical to success</td>
<td>Foster constructive problem talk, build relational trust, and ensure effective supports for improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Success requires coherent action across four areas of influence: pedagogy, activating educationally powerful connections, professional learning, and leadership of the conditions for improvement</td>
<td>Leverage all four major areas of influence for accelerated improvement: pedagogy, educationally powerful connections, professional learning, and leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Ongoing improvement of pedagogy relies on aligned action across policy, research, professional education, leadership, and community stakeholders</td>
<td>In times of fiscal crisis, give priority to leveraging the evidence of what makes a bigger difference.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Expertise matters. Collaboratively high-impact research and development can leverage and grow knowledge, disciplined innovation, and adaptive expertise. Ongoing R&amp;D is a driver for capacity-building and the development of smart tools to accelerate improvement to scale.</td>
<td>Invest in collaborative R&amp;D expertise as a driver for accelerated systemic improvement in areas of need. Develop adaptive expertise and smart tools. Scale up effective implementation of high-impact pedagogies across the system.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Learnings from across the Te Kotahitanga phases

A case studies analysis, undertaken in 2009 and 2010 of Phase 3 schools in their sixth and/or seventh year of the project, used the GPILESEO model as an analytical tool to investigate the degree to which schools were supporting the pedagogic intervention.

This analysis showed that there were marked differences in the degree to which the schools had actually implemented the model and how they were maintaining the implementation of the project.

Phase 3 schools were seen as falling within one of four categories:

1. high implementers and high maintainers of the project (four schools);
2. previously high implementers but currently low maintainers (three schools);
3. previously partial implementers, but currently poised to implement fully (four schools);
4. low implementers and low maintainers (one school).

Schools in category one, were those that had managed to embed the reform dimensions into their systems, policies and processes to the extent that the Te Kotahitanga principles and practices were being maintained and institutionalised as business as usual.

Although many struggled to fund the facilitators’ positions within their schools once project funding ceased and were convinced that the role of the facilitator needed to be permanent, there was strong evidence that the underlying theories and principles of the reform had been taken on as new institutions by leaders in these schools.

Especially important were leaders’ understandings about the relationships between the quality of teachers’ theorising and practice with Māori students’ engagement and achievement outcomes.

One principal explained that the professional code of practice that Elmore (2004) had identified as being missing from education was provided for them by Te Kotahitanga.

The principles and practices of Te Kotahitanga had provided his school with a framework against which the appropriateness of other potential initiatives could be evaluated in terms of an underlying philosophy and values, and a central core into which these initiatives could be woven.
The consequence is that the whole school’s efforts towards achieving the goal of raising the educational achievement of Māori students, as well as their peers, could be channelled in a carefully planned, coherent and respectful manner with everyone’s involvement.

Schools that fitted into the second category were those who had initially implemented the central dimensions of Te Kotahitanga (annual induction workshop, observations, feedback, co-construction and shadow-coaching) and who had taken responsibility for changing teacher practice in their schools to include all or most of their staff.

However, without ongoing funding, schools in the second category had allowed parts of the professional development cycle to be deprioritised.

While current staff were exhibiting very clearly their commitment and abilities to maintain the implementation of the Effective Teaching Profile, (Meyer et al, 2010), with the lack of institutionalisation of the central elements of the professional development cycle, there were limited opportunities for the induction of new staff through the process of observations and feedback.

Further, the co-construction meetings and associated shadow-coaching, were not being maintained as regular institutions within these school.

Two of these schools, that fully understood the connection between changes in teachers’ practices and improved Māori student outcomes, were investigating a means of reintroducing these institutions to their schools.

Schools in the third category were those that for some reason or other, experienced considerable implementation and maintenance problems.

These included changes in principal leadership and hence in strategic direction, strong resistance from middle managers, problems with funding, problems with rapid turnover of facilitators, competition between bilingual units and mainstream classes, sporadic implementation of the project and competition for resources from other projects.

These problems meant that the implementation of the Effective Teaching Profile through the professional development cycle was never consistently implemented and/or spread to most or all of the staff in these schools.

While there were pockets of excellence at both individual teacher and subject department levels, in all cases the new leadership in these schools were keen and were seeking a means to reinstate the central institutions of Te Kotahitanga.
By funding facilitators from their own funds they were expecting to see appropriate school-wide improvements.

The one school in the fourth category had found problems with the implementation of Te Kotahitanga and had sought alternative approaches to improving Māori student achievement.

There is clear evidence from a range of sources including Meyer et al., (2010) that schools in Phase 4 finished in very similar circumstances.

This consistent finding over two phases left us with much to consider. We had observed that when the principal was actively leading the reform from a point of a deep understanding of the practices, the tasks were more likely to be distributed, widely shared and deeply understood, with the result that Māori students were more likely to be engaged and achieving.

Importantly we also saw that when facilitation team members held on to the Te Kotahitanga institutions, others saw this as something they themselves did not need to take responsibility for.

Taken together we learned in Phase 5 that although we needed designated facilitators to disrupt the status quo, the sooner these tasks were distributed to include all others from senior leadership, then through the middle leaders, the more likely the reform would take hold.

After three years, evidence from the classrooms of the teachers and school leaders in Phase 5 of Te Kotahitanga showed that all of the following elements were developing in the project schools—some faster than others. In terms of this GPILSEO model, teachers are:

- focusing on improving Māori student achievement
- using the new culturally responsive pedagogy of relations to implement the Effective Teaching Profile (including developing understanding of anti-deficit theorising and agentic positioning)
- changing the institutional structures in their classrooms and schools
- distributing leadership through the development of power-sharing relationships
- spreading the reform to include all students at a classroom level and all others in the school and out into the Māori community
- formally and informally monitoring and evaluating Māori students’ (and others’) progress to further inform the changing practices
above all, taking ownership of the aims and objectives of the project and seeing disparity for their Māori students begin to close.

When we reflect on our experiences of working with Phase 5 we believe that some of these schools exemplified Wenger’s (1998) concept of a community of practice.

While communities of practice will be discussed in greater detail in the next section at this point it is useful to explain that communities of practice comprise of a community of practitioners; a domain of knowledge and a body of shared practices (Wearmouth & Berryman, 2009).

Within a healthy community of practice it is important that we have a means to effectively gather evidence of the shared practices of community members and the impact of these practices on the shared body of knowledge.

One of the ways that we sought to both understand and further accelerate these reform practices has been to provide school leadership at all levels with tools to hold the mirror up to their own practices.

These tools have helped provide the context for having respectful yet critical conversations aimed at helping to understand both what has been achieved and what is yet to be achieved.
Sustaining Educational Reform

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