An EOTC model for marae-based multi-curricula education

Westlake Boys High School (TLIF 1-130)

For the Ministry of Education
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Summary

The purpose of this research project was to examine the possibilities, practicalities and implications of developing and implementing a multi-curricular education outside the classroom (EOTC) model for secondary schools, in partnership with tangata whenua. Central to this purpose was enhancing the engagement in learning of priority group students. The project was founded on a partnership between Westlake Boys’ High School (WBHS) and Te Uri o Hau (TUOH), mana whenua of the Northern Kaipara rohe. The project sought to professionally develop a predominantly Pākehā cohort of teaching staff through immersion in te ao Māori and TUOH tikanga and mātauranga; to identify opportunities for multi-curricula, partnered teaching and learning at TUOH; and to pilot these experiences with a selection of priority group students.

You don’t feel like you’ve learnt a lot on the trip until you go back to school and realise how much you’ve have learnt and the gap between those who did and didn’t go.

[Student]

The inquiry sought to explore opportunities for urban secondary schools to implement national education strategies through partnership building with Māori and to pilot innovative, marae-based multi-curricula learning. As an exploratory study, this project also identified key areas for further skill and curriculum development required to strengthen marae-based multi-curricula learning. It also identified barriers to these initiatives and possible future directions for related research.

There was an early need to reorient the project due to other participating schools dropping out. When this occurred, the focus shifted from analysing achievement data to understand the impact of the changed curriculum design on a wide cohort of learners, to understanding the process of engagement, exploring the concepts and possibilities of multi-curricula EOTC, and providing a foundation for future innovations in this area.
Inquiry Team

The inquiry team was:

- Sarah Belcher, Senior Dean, HOD Outdoor Education, WBHS
- Sean McWilliams, HOD Senior Science, WBHS
- Dr Tim Holden, HOD Biology, WBHS
- Natasha Leighton, HOD History, WBHS

External Advisors

Dr Giles Dodson, College of Humanities and Social Sciences, Massey University

Collaborators

Te Uri O Hau partners:

- Mikaera Miru, Otamatea and Waiotea marae, kaiarahi
- Craig Revell, Waihoua marae, kaitiaki
- Zane Phillips, Otamatea marae, kaitiaki
- Aleesha Bennett, Waikaretu marae, kaitiaki

The inquiry

The rationale for this project stems from the school’s engagement with the challenges posed by central strands of national education policy and strategy, particularly those policies that demand schools embed an understanding and realisation of the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi within their operations and culture. These statements include the National Education Goals, National Administration Guidelines and Ka Hikitia. The project sought to explore the possibilities of engaging these challenges through partnerships with regional hapū. Specifically, the project considered the practicalities and implications of pursuing multi-curricula EOTC at a rural marae.

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1 Ka Hikitia principles (the Treaty of Waitangi, Māori potential and achievement, reciprocal learning, culture and identity, community-school partnerships) are embedded within this project.
The project began by providing WBHS teaching staff with the opportunity to explore tikanga and mātauranga Māori through immersive professional development. It then engaged Year 10 and Year 12 learners in immersive marae-based learning experiences designed and delivered by TUOH kaitiaki, in partnership with WBHS teachers. The inquiry then sought to establish the impact of these experiences on the participating students, with a focus on student engagement in learning. Lastly, using primarily qualitative methods, the inquiry examined its impact on both its teacher and learner participants regarding their knowledge and understanding of, and comfort with, te ao Māori.

On this basis, areas for further inquiry were identified, related to the development of multi-curricula achievement standards, further professional development at WBHS and TUOH, and the development of funding and operational models to continue the work.

**Goals of the inquiry**

The inquiry sought to answer four questions:

1. Is it practicable for New Zealand secondary school students to participate in multi-curricula learning opportunities at tūpuna marae in the Kaipara Harbour region?
2. Is it practicable to integrate secondary school multi-curricula EOTC activities at tūpuna marae in the Kaipara Harbour region?
3. How will the concept of a marae-based education centre improve the learning outcomes of those students who visit, specifically the learning outcomes of Māori?
4. To what extent will the knowledge and understanding of tikanga Māori culture be enhanced for the students and staff who participate in a marae visit?

**Initiatives trialled in the inquiry**

The inquiry involved the following steps:

- initial contact and relationship building with Te Uri o Hau kaiarahi and kaitiaki,
- a staff-only noho marae at Ngā Tai Whakarongorua (November 2015) to identify potential secondary education curriculum opportunities at tūpuna marae and possible cross-curricula links,
two student-centred noho marae:
  o Year 12 ESOL (May 2016) — to allow English language learners to engage with te ao Māori and explore traditional Māori values towards food, including monitoring the health of the estuary, food gathering and bush hikoi,
  o Year 10 Māori Studies (September 2016) — to give the students in the Māori studies programme an authentic experience of tikanga through staying on a marae with iwi kaitiaki and learning more about what this entails, and

Te Uri o Hau kaiarahi/kaitiaki school visit and student engagement wānanga.

Assessment

The project team surveyed students before and after their visits to the marae to gauge its impact on the intended learning outcomes. They wanted to find out about their pre-existing perceptions and ideas about te ao Māori and Māoritanga, and how these were affected by their experience on the marae. School staff accompanying these trips provided written responses to their marae experience and how it affected their classroom practice and general engagement with Māoritanga.

A sample of Year 10 Māori studies students was interviewed about their experience on the marae trip and what they had learned.

The project surveyed other schools who had made similar visits to understand their objectives and learning intentions and of the impact of the programme delivered by TUOH.

Key findings

The inquiry has demonstrated the value of marae-based multi-curricula learning and has documented the rich experiential personal and professional development that occurred.

Staff development

Participating staff all reported significant personal and professional development through their experiences at TUOH. While teacher professional development often addresses issues of bi-culturalism, tikanga and te reo Māori, the teachers were overwhelmingly enthusiastic about this opportunity to immerse themselves in a rich and authentic experience of te ao Māori.
Teachers who began with low levels of awareness or experience of tikanga Māori were particularly positively impacted by these experiences.

Multi-curriculum opportunities

The teachers identified numerous areas for multi-curricula learning while supporting students to attain existing achievement standards. Geography, biology, science, English, food technology, education for sustainability, outdoor education, physical education, English for Speakers of Other Languages, and Māori studies were all identified as curriculum areas where a clear opportunity for learning through marae-centred EOTC lies.

Teachers also identified opportunities for multi-curricula delivery and achievement, particularly focused on priority group learners.

Student engagement

Each of the participating cohorts evidenced high levels of engagement.

The Year 12 ESOL class reported deeper awareness, knowledge and understanding of tikanga Māori. With their focus on tikanga kai (food culture), they were able to explore Māori food practices and how tikanga kai connects with kaitiakitanga (the sustainable management of natural resources, including food). This engagement was reinforced through participation in the TUOH Ngā Waihotanga Iho Estuary Monitoring Wānanga², using NIWA-designed monitoring tools. Their teacher identified the immersive experience of tangata kaitiaki, marae, kai and the environment as powerful learning experiences in their own right, and as experiences on which NCEA achievement standards could be based.

The impact on learner engagement was also evident within the Year 10 Māori Studies class. Not all the class participated, producing a natural control group, against which to assess learner engagement and development. Learners reported significant shifts in attitudes and understandings as a result of their experience. Significant improvements in knowledge and awareness were evidenced through the pre- and post-trip surveys. Furthermore, the Māori studies Head of Department (HOD) observed higher levels of engagement and a more cohesive sense of whānau among those learners.

² Ngā Waihotanga Iho - The Estuary Monitoring Toolkit, developed by the National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research (NIWA)
who participated. Conversely, those who did not attend felt they had missed a valuable learning opportunity.

The HOD Māori reported all learning objectives for the experience were met and emphasised the value of authentic experiences that bring to life class-based curriculum, underpinned by collaborative delivery and learning contexts. These included the pōwhiri process, karakia, marae and communal living, hīkoi ngahere (bush walking), rongoā Māori (natural/spiritual medicines) and taonga pūoro (musical instruments) experiences. The HOD Māori is planning further engagement with TUOH as an integral part of his Māori studies curriculum.

The strongly formed relationships with TUOH kaitiaki underpinned this impact. These relationships, between WBHS staff and people with knowledge and expertise in tikanga, have been powerful for all involved. A subsequent TUOH school visit in which TUOH kaitiaki visited classes and experienced the busy, urban secondary school setting reinforced these relationships.

There is some evidence to suggest that participating students saw improved achievement through the TUOH experience. However, substantiating this would require further research and modified methodology.

TUOH kaiarahi and kaitiaki reflections

TUOH participants reported that engagement between WBHS staff and with learners had deepened their knowledge about how best to work with teachers and students.

TUOH sees much mutual benefit to be gained from long term partnership with urban schools. Like staff, TUOH reports that this project resulted in the establishment of strong relationships that endure beyond the noho marae, relationships that are necessary for achieving their aspirations and goals for education development within their rohe. Both TUOH and WBHS recognise that such relationships are also required if the nation is to realise its strategic goals for education and if the school is to achieve its goals for achievement and community engagement.
Key implications

The implications that flow from this inquiry are numerous and summarised below.

Professional development

The inquiry demonstrates the value of authentic, immersive professional development for teaching staff, particularly those who are unfamiliar with te ao Māori. When underpinned by strong supportive relationships with tangata whenua partners and integrated into comprehensive, structured staff development processes, these forms of professional development will improve schools’ capacity to achieve the outcomes demanded by national education policy statements and by the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi.

It is also clear that for hapū and iwi who are developing their capacity to offer educational experiences, partnerships with urban schools can help develop knowledge, skills, and networks that will help them achieve their aspirations.

Curriculum and achievement

The inquiry explored the concept of multi-curricula learning at TUOH marae, in partnership with TUOH kaitiaki. Teaching staff identified multiple opportunities for integrating work towards existing achievement standards into the educational experiences offered by TUOH. TUOH emphasises tikanga me ōna mātauranga Māori, particularly about environmental sustainability, or kaitiakitanga. The immersive, integrated learning context of the marae and wider rohe offer extensive opportunities for rich learning across the curriculum. As English medium schools seek to be more responsive to the needs and aspirations of priority learners and their communities, these are avenues they should explore.

Partnership

The partnership has been central to this inquiry. Partnership with Māori is a Treaty of Waitangi obligation and is central to national strategies intended to support priority learners. This has been borne out by this inquiry. Successful design and delivery of professional development, innovative curriculum and mutually beneficial engagement must be underpinned by a long-term
commitment to partnership with hapū and iwi. As this inquiry showed, establishing strong relationships as the basis for effective partnership takes time, effort and investment. This must be recognised in all policies and strategies regarding the formation of partnerships between schools and mana whenua. An instrumental or transactional approach must be set aside, in favour of mutually beneficial long-term relations.

**Challenges**

There are multiple challenges posed by this approach to innovation in education, but none which are insurmountable or should prevent schools from embarking on processes similar to those described above.

First, the establishment and development of relationships are fundamental. The investment of time, energy and resources in forging strong relationships can produce high-quality returns over the long term. Short-term and transactional approaches should be avoided. Where schools are uncertain as to how to pursue engagement and relationships with tangata whenua, they should invest in developing this knowledge.

Second, the logistics and practicalities of substantial EOTC components within the school curriculum can produce complications for participating students and staff. However, where innovations are identified as valuable, school systems, requirements and processes can be flexibly designed to permit active participation. Partnership-based, multi-curricula learning requires a shift in educational thinking, and therefore a commitment of support from school management and administration.

Third, the investment required for long-term, authentic engagement between schools and mana whenua can be considerable at all stages of engagement, and especially where an urban school must travel to regional marae. Schools are being encouraged to innovate and to build strong, productive relationships with the community, especially Māori. This inquiry points to the value, but also the financial cost of these activities.
Future research

This inquiry was focused on exploring the concept and possibilities within multi-curricular learning and student engagement through partnership and marae-centred learning. The actual design of novel achievement standards or new curriculum learning opportunities was outside the scope of the project. How to approach this challenge, employing authentic partnership methods, is a key area for further inquiry. The inquiry might include professional development among partners, novel or integrated achievement standards, integrated project design and the co-production of assessment and achievement measures. Its methodologies should be underpinned by partnership and co-production approaches and supported by the development of a model of school operation and administration that accommodates these kinds of innovations.

Reference List


**For further information**

If you would like to learn more about this project, please contact the project leader Sarah Belcher *sbelcher@westlake.school.nz*
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