

# Beyond Legitimation: A Tribal Response to Māori Education in Aotearoa New Zealand

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This article describes an intervention strategy, initiated under the New Zealand Government's tribal partnership scheme, which promotes a culture-based/place-based approach to education in mainstream schools and early childhood centres in one tribal region. Through place-based education children are immersed in local heritage, including language and culture, landscapes, opportunities and experiences. The strategy is a tribal response to the overwhelming evidence of Māori underachievement in education in the tribal catchment. A case study is presented of a place-based/culture-based initiative called the Ngāti Kahungunu Cultural Standards Project (NKCSF). It is argued that the development of cultural standards offers an opportunity by which teachers and others within the education sector can develop and incorporate practice that reflects, promotes and values the student's culture. The core assumption underpinning the project is that cultural knowledge contributes to Māori student success in education.

■ **Keywords:** Maori education, indigenous education, tribal development, place-based education, community engagement, tribal research

Much of the impetus for tribal (iwi) involvement in education in Aotearoa New Zealand is premised on the fact that after 150 years the education system continues to undermine Māori achievement and has not yet managed to find adequate solutions. This is despite the increasing level of government Vote Education funds that have been expended over time and the plethora of reports on the subject that languish in the government archive (Penetito, 2010). Sustained outcomes of Māori under-achievement have led to a growing demand by tribes to be involved in decisions regarding how the provision of services to Māori, including education, is accountable to whānau/hapū and iwi. The demand by tribes to be involved in decisions affecting Māori in education (Thomson, 2001; Tomlins Jahnke, 2002; Whanganui Authority, 2005) is recognised in Ka Hikitia, the New Zealand government's Māori education strategy, which emphasises the idea that 'partnerships with iwi are essential to improving the educational achievement of Māori children' (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 25). This article describes one intervention strategy initiated by Ngāti Kahungunu under the iwi partnership scheme that promotes a culture-based/place-based approach to education. Geographically, Ngāti Kahungunu has the second largest tribal region in the country, from the Wharerata ranges in the Wairoa District extending to Cape Palliser

in South Wairarapa. The coastal boundaries are Paritu in the North to Turakirae in the South.

The intervention strategy adopted by Ngāti Kahungunu is a tribal response to the overwhelming evidence of Māori underachievement in education in the tribal catchment, and an underlying conviction that Māori people know what is good for Māori and so want to be part of the solutions. Renowned scholar and visionary John Rangihau once said:

*It is about time we were allowed to think for ourselves and to say things for our reasons and not the reasons set down by Pākehā experts. The Māori is content to stand right where he is, retain his culture and retain his identity, and be himself, not a foreigner, in his own country. (Rangihau, 1975, p. 174)*

Identity politics as it relates to indigeneity is a strong driver behind iwi aspirations, and for good reason. Evidence from the longitudinal study of Māori households Te Hoe Nuku Roa (Durie et al., 1995) suggests there is a

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strong link between an identity as Māori and positive outcomes in health and education, which serves to support tribal aspirational efforts. However as Mi'kmaq scholar Marie Battiste has found in studies in Canada, it is the hegemony of western cultural paradigms that stifles indigenous identities in schools (Battiste, 2002).

I argue there are at least four assumptions upon which tribal aspirations for Māori education advancement are premised. First, *mātauranga Māori* — Māori knowledge, language and culture — is not only important to a Māori identity, but is a valued and legitimate knowledge set alongside Western knowledge for inclusion in the New Zealand education system. Access to *mātauranga Māori* as part of the school curriculum offers all children and their families the benefits that accrue from understanding what it means to be Māori and/or a New Zealander in the fullest sense.

Second, is a conviction that *whānau* (family), *hapū* (subtribe) and *iwi* (tribe) input into what counts as education for their children is important for advancing tribal aspirations (NKII, 2004). Since 1840, state provision of education for Māori has been successively based on policies of amalgamation, assimilation and integration of Māori into Pākehā society (Barrington, 1974; Hunn, 1961; Simon, 1990). This agenda, together with past legislative action, has played a significant role in disadvantaging Māori within the state's education system, leading to their underrepresentation in the statistics by which educational success is usually measured (Penetito, 2010; Simon, 1990; Simon, 1993). Until the end of the 20th century the state decided what counts as education for Māori children, based on mainstream imperatives with limited input by Māori on important issues related to measures and accountability, and decisions on policy and service delivery.

Third, is a recognition that most Māori children in the compulsory sector are located in mainstream schools where Māori knowledge is not valued as integral to the school habitus and therefore is not embedded in the curriculum. It is the dominant Pākehā culture whose cultural capital is enshrined in the schools and which operates to reward and fail students in accordance with the cultural capital they display. The disjunction between the home experience of Māori children and what they experience in school has meant that over time schools have been alienating spaces for a good majority of Māori children (Bishop & Berryman, 2006; Penetito, 2010).

Tribal response to Māori education, including issues of underachievement, is manifest in the development of tribal education plans. Tribal education plans tend to focus on Māori medium education — *te kohanga reo* (early childhood), *te kura kaupapa Māori* (primary), *wharekura* (secondary) and *whare wānanga* (tertiary) — as a Māori-initiated alternative system to mainstream, and the way forward for *whānau* in terms of successful education outcomes (Hohepa & Jenkins, 2004; Thomson, 2001; Whanganui Authority, 2005). Much of the success

of Māori medium schooling is due in part to the embedded cultural capital based on Māori knowledge, language, customs and history (Penetito, 2010). These are taken for granted norms against which, for example, Māori student success in world knowledge in science, mathematics and literacy are measured (Dominion Post, 2010; Ministry of Education, 2010; Selby, 2010). However, the Māori medium sector is seriously under-resourced at every level, and access for Māori families who choose this option, remains a challenge (Penetito, 2010).

Iwi education plans are a tribal expression of aspirations underpinned by these kinds of assumptions. The plans differ from tribe to tribe, but overall they are a blueprint of expectations, goals, aims, strategies and ambitions for tribal development and iwi futures. Some iwi have developed education plans as part of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Ministry of Education, under the Ministry's iwi partnership strategy, which was first launched in 1998. Other tribes, such as Ngāti Kahungunu, have simply undertaken joint ventures but outside of an MoU relationship, preferring instead to view the Treaty of Waitangi as providing the mandate for Crown/iwi partnerships.

Tribes view education as one component of iwi development across a number of key areas that include Māori language, with an emphasis on tribal dialects; cultural revitalisation and the restoration of tribal knowledge and sites of cultural significance; service provision such as in health, welfare, justice and social services; and economic advancement in commercial fisheries, land-based industries and overseas capital investments. Invariably, tribes consider as central to their aspirations the Māori language, culture and local history, the lands and environment, and important values and expressions of these within the culture. Significantly, they want to see these aspects manifest in the curriculum and *modus operandi* of state-funded schools where the majority of Māori children are located. Common across iwi education plans is the importance placed on knowledge and history of the physical and cultural environment of the local area (Jackson & Ruru, 1999; Penetito, 2010; Thomson, 2001; Whanganui Authority, 2005).

The notion of place-based education in the broadest sense aims to immerse children in local heritage, including language and culture, landscapes, opportunities and experiences. Drawing on Dewey's notion of place-based education, Lewthwaite contends the role of schooling is to provide a nurturing environment that reflects the culture of the community while promoting the participation of all stakeholders, including the staff, students and their families. According to Lewthwaite, pedagogy is grounded in place and

*[In] actualities rather than abstractions. It emerges from the particular characteristics of place. It draws from the unique characteristics and strengths of the community . . . it*

*promotes the use of community resource people and is inherently experiential drawing upon the opportunities provided by the local context and its people. (Lewthwaite, 2007, p. 5)*

Place-based education also encompasses the notion of 'pedagogy of place', or what First Nations educators Sandra Styres and Celia Haig Brown have come to refer to as 'pedagogy of the land' and 'land as first teacher' (Styres & Haig Brown, 2010).

I argue that in the context of Aotearoa New Zealand, place-based education focuses curricular attention on the cultural heritage of place and the contribution that iwi have made to that heritage as tangata whenua, first peoples of the land, who have accumulated extensive knowledge of that area over hundreds of generations of occupation. As the Alaska Native Knowledge Network suggests:

*Shifting the focus in the curriculum from teaching/learning about [this authors emphasis] cultural heritage as another subject to teaching/learning through the local culture as a foundation for all education, it is intended that all forms of knowledge, ways of knowing and world views be recognized as equally valid, adaptable and complementary to one another in mutually beneficial ways. (Alaska Native Knowledge Network, 1998, n.p.)*

From an indigenous perspective, place-based education is culturally based and in Aotearoa New Zealand it is therefore a step towards providing a context for Māori/hapū/iwi expression and all that it means and encompasses. Within the Māori medium education sector such as kura kaupapa Māori, the focus on place-based/culture-based education (including as a basis for tribal identity) is taken for granted and embedded in institutional structures and the curriculum (New Zealand Government, 2008). However, in the mainstream system, indigenous-centred, place-based education as outlined here is not so commonplace.

One example of a place-based/culture-based initiative is the Ngāti Kahungunu Cultural Standards Project (NKCS). The Project is aimed at raising the education achievement of Māori children located in the tribal region by assisting in the development of standards by which teachers and others within the education sector can develop and incorporate practice that reflects, promotes and values the student's culture. The core assumption underpinning the project is that cultural knowledge contributes to Māori student success in education. Informed by the Alaskan Cultural Standards model (Alaska Native Knowledge Network, 1998) the NKCS Project is a joint venture between the tribal governing body Ngāti Kahungunu Iwi Incorporated (NKII), and the Ministry of Education. An important feature of the project is that it is led by a research team largely comprised of Ngāti Kahungunu educators and tribal experts.

## Tribal Research Team

The construction of methodologies appropriate and relevant to Māori is dependent on the researcher understanding a tribal worldview as it relates to knowledge, including the values that are associated with knowledge production and transmission (Tomlins-Jahnke, 2005; G. Smith, 2000; L. Smith, 1999). The Project design has been the primary responsibility of the Project team. There are at least four important strengths a tribally based research team brings to the Project. Whakapapa or genealogical connections to Ngāti Kahungunu is important in terms of the methodology applied to a tribal initiative for tribal purposes in a tribal context. Membership of groups or committees derived from tribal affiliates is an important strategy aimed at lending credence to government sponsored projects among tribal constituents. In the broader context, tribal affiliation is a 'value added' component in the formation of expert committees simply because it is more likely to guarantee an individual's obligation to tribal aspirations (Tomlins Jahnke, 2005).

A second important strength is the combined breadth of experience held by the Project team across a broad range of sectors of education. This includes teaching experience in the Māori medium sector (te kohanga reo, kura kaupapa Māori, and Wharekura), in early childhood centres and kindergartens, in primary and secondary schools and in the tertiary sector — polytechnic, wananga and universities. Confidence among tribal constituents is strengthened if they are satisfied that the Project team consists of members who are experienced at the 'chalk-face' as educators. Some of the team have also worked for special education, as advisors in the advisory services and as managers in varying sectors of the Ministry of Education. As Freire asserts, challenging the system, as the NKCS project aims to do, requires knowledge of the system (Freire, 1994, p. 53). And it is the combined working knowledge of the education system held by members of the Project team that has helped to drive the direction of the research, to access relevant information, and to negotiate the terms and conditions of the contract with the Ministry of Education in line with tribal imperatives (NKII, 2004; NKII, 2009a).

An advisory council of Elders was established by the iwi to offer advice to the research team and to provide oversight of the cultural integrity of the project including the research methods. Responsibility for the ethicality of the method by the Elders has been necessary for the project generally but particularly where consultation is marae based which has involved engagement with local hapū. The Elders provide an important mediating mechanism between hapū leaders, team members and the state represented by the Ministry of Education. All of the Elders are retired educators who are well known in Ngāti Kahungunu and throughout Māoridom, and who continue to be involved in whānau, hapū and iwi affairs. One elder, an oc-

togenarian, has worked for over 65 years in education and until very recently was still employed by the Ministry to review kura kaupapa Māori across the country. The combined weight of over 300 years of experience (there are four octogenarians) the Elders bring to the project cannot be underestimated, particularly in the negotiations with the state and with tribal members, many of whom are sceptical of perceived government initiatives. Through their membership on the advisory council, the Elders have contributed to the success and acceptance of the project, not least of which has been their active involvement in the development of the project.

Hohepa and Jenkins have identified as a significant challenge facing partnerships between the State (Ministry of Education) and iwi, the degree of cynicism and mistrust within communities, and of government initiatives in education based on their own negative experiences of schooling (Hohepa & Jenkins, 2004). The Ministry members of the Project team have links to Ngāti Kahungunu, are experienced in iwi engagement, and have consistently provided an important bridge between the Ministry and tribal governance. Besides representing the interests of the State, a vital role has been to ensure that the aspirations of iwi are accounted for in the contracts, and to advocate on behalf of the iwi with other colleagues in the Ministry. However, overall, much of the success and acceptance of the project by tribal constituents is due in large part to the wise counsel and guidance provided by the Elders.

A third important factor is that members of the Project team are actively involved with whānau, hapū or iwi affairs in some way. Again, confidence is strengthened if tribal members are satisfied that the Project team is grounded in the hapū/iwi world and not isolated from the realities of what it means to be Māori/whānau within the education system. This does not preclude outside expertise, Māori or non-Māori, from being co-opted onto such teams at the discretion of the tribe to suit local purposes. Underpinning the importance of active involvement in tribal affairs are principles of *kanohi ki te kanohi* — of a face seen; the principle of reciprocity — of giving back to ‘the people’ in concrete ways; and the principles of obligation and responsibility to family and the community. These are among core values in Māori society and therefore apply to research methodologies in tribal contexts if the research is to be taken seriously and supported.

Finally, all members of the Project team speak Māori although in varying degrees of fluency, from the native-speaking elders to the younger, second-language speakers. This has been useful when engaging with local hapū where Māori language is the preferred medium of communication. Some of the team are also tertiary trained researchers who have used their skills, expertise and experience in assisting with the research design, including writing the literature reviews and milestone reports, undertaking data collection and the analysis of findings. These four factors about the research team have combined to provide a strong

basis for advancing this project because it has proved to be complex work and to involve traversing the vagaries of both iwi/hapū politics and mainstream education politics.

## The Intervention Strategy

So what is the Ngāti Kahungunu cultural standards project (NKCSP) and what are its aims? Broadly speaking, the aim of the NKCSP is to assist early childhood centres and primary schools work with their whānau and hapū to develop relevant cultural standards for the education of children in their centres/schools. The basic assumption is a conviction that knowing the language and culture of Ngāti Kahungunu is essential for the cultural and educational wellbeing of Ngāti Kahungunu children, and Māori children generally, while also offering positive benefits for non-Māori children as well. Over 25 years of data and information collected through consultation meetings have highlighted, among others, the importance of including Ngāti Kahungunu history, culture and language as an integral part of the school curriculum (Jackson & Ruru, 1999; Tomlins Jahnke, 2002; Tomlins Jahnke, 2005).

The aim of including these aspects within the curriculum is to affirm the Māori child's identity as Māori or Ngāti Kahungunu; to increase all children's knowledge of Ngāti Kahungunu history; to ensure the school/centre integrates the curriculum of Ngāti Kahungunu for the benefit of all students, their whānau and communities; and to encourage stronger relationships and participation of Māori families in the education of their children as a basis for positive outcomes in Māori student education achievement. It is an important premise that parent engagement in the education of their children combined with positive parenting proffers the best start for any child (Herbert, 1996), including the Māori child. It is recognised, however, that there remain challenges in breaking barriers to parent/whānau participation. Such barriers include Māori parent mistrust (Hohepa & Jenkins, 2004) and deficit theorising and practice among teachers in mainstream schools (Tuuta, Bradnam, Hynds, Higgins, & Broughton, 2004). These are among reasons why the cultural standards are being developed in selected early childhood centres and primary schools in collaboration with whānau, hapū and iwi knowledge holders and the education sector.

There are two concerns about the project that were raised at various times, including during the consultation phase of the project (NKII, 2008; Tomoana, 2005). The first concerns the decision by Ngāti Kahungunu to focus on mainstream centres and schools, thereby excluding *te kohanga reo* and *kura kaupapa Māori*. One reason for the decision was based on Ministry of Education evidence that showed over 93% of Māori children in Ngāti Kahungunu were located in mainstream schools (Tomlins Jahnke, 2002; Tomoana, 2005). Historically, it has been shown that Māori children in mainstream schools underachieve and therefore continue to be most at risk in

terms of attaining successful education outcomes (Hohepa & Jenkins, 2004; Penetito, 2010). A further reason for not including the Māori language immersion sector is based on the assumption that the language, culture and history of Ngāti Kahungunu are embedded in the curriculum, culture and *modus operandi* of all *kohanga reo*, *kura kaupapa Māori* and *wharekura* located in the tribal region.

The other concern raised was around the question of ‘Why standards?’ The notion of ‘standards’ is problematic because the term has quite negative connotations among Māori people and therefore does not sit comfortably with many whom we consulted (NKII, 2008). Such attitudes are not unexpected because, like all colonised indigenous societies, Māori have long experienced the practice of state-implemented standards based on the values and culture of the dominant group that are applied universally, often with detrimental results (Battiste, 2002; Kawagley, 1995). Over a century of sustained Māori under-achievement in education has had a damaging effect on Māori development, as all the negative social indices for Māori in health, education and justice attest (TPK, 1998).

Within Māori tradition, the value attached to cultural standards is one that is associated with quality and excellence based on *kaupapa Māori*- or Māori-centred imperatives. Such standards are still applied as contemporary measures and as benchmarks for excellence in the performing arts, oratory, art practice and literature to name a few (Jahnke & Tomlins Jahnke, 2003; Tomlins Jahnke, 2007). For most Māori tribes, the benchmark for cultural standards in education is the perceived efficacy of *te kohanga reo*, *kura kaupapa Māori*, *wharekura* and *whare wānanga* on the lives and wellbeing of Māori children and their *whānau*. It is a benchmark that is recognised by other indigenous groups as a successful model for implementation in their countries of origin (Lewthwaite, 2007). Although fewer than 10% of all Māori children receive education within the Māori language immersion and bilingual sector, research shows the sector has positive effects on the performance of Māori pupils (Murray, 2005), including success at engaging parents at school (Education Review Office, 2002). Suspensions and expulsions appear not to occur at all. Results of a national survey comparing 1,000 Year 8 students in Māori immersion settings with those Māori students in English language settings suggest children in immersion are doing as well as children in mainstream English language settings (Crooks & Flockton, 2002). Recent NCEA results demonstrate the performance of *wharekura* graduates are as high as graduates from mainstream Decile 10 schools (Dominion Post, 2010; Selby, 2010). The challenge for many mainstream centres and schools is to account for indigenous ways of thinking, learning and doing if education is to be relevant and worthwhile and if Māori children are to enjoy successful education outcomes.

## Key Strategies

There are four key strategies that underpin the Ngāti Kahungunu cultural standards project. One strategy involves consultation with *whānau*, *hapū* and *iwi*. This is where the principles of *whakapapa* (genealogical links) and *kanohi kitea* (face-to-face engagement) have been important in terms of team members gaining access across tribal governance structures. The constitutional model adopted by the tribe’s governing body includes an artificial construct called ‘*taiwhenua*’ which was set up by Kahungunu elders in the mid-1980s. This model is a double-tiered tribal structure of governing council and six *taiwhenua* (subtribe/tribal districts) that operate as independent legal entities (Tomlins Jahnke, 2005). Developing cultural standards in these districts occurs as a result of the consultation process with the knowledge holders in the selection of relevant cultural content. Some standards may be generic across Ngāti Kahungunu or they will be specific to a subtribe. In some areas the cultural standards will encompass the perspectives of other tribes, such as the Rangitane people of Dannevirke and in parts of the Wairarapa. The key objectives of the project are underpinned by a *kaupapa iwi* (tribal-centred) and *kaupapa hapū* (subtribally centred) approach. Professional development needs of teachers in primary and early childhood centres in Ngāti Kahungunu emerged as a significant issue following recent activities of the Project; thus professional training and development for educators in order to incorporate language and culture as part of the curriculum is also an important strategy (NKII, 2010; NKII, 2011).

## Objectives of the Project

There are four objectives that have contributed to the overall development of the NKCS. These objectives include engaging with various stakeholder groups; the identification of best practice models and exemplars; the exploration of relevant cultural content; and the development of *Te Topuni Tauwhainga* — the Ngāti Kahungunu cultural standards framework (NKII, 2010). These objectives are in turn linked to the broader policies and strategies that constitute the vision of Kahungunu. Thus there is an attempt to integrate the project with the wider tribal development strategies where there are obvious synergies. For example, there are links between the Cultural Standards Project and the Māori language strategy, which includes the government-sponsored Māori Language in Homes program; the education strategy out of which the Cultural Standards Project has emerged; the research strategy whereby the Cultural Standards Project incorporates action research; and the promotion of an identity as Kahungunu or Māori through the tribe’s communications strategy. Linkages have also been made with state policies (such as *Ka Hikitia The Maori Education Strategy* and *Te Whāriki the Early Childhood Curriculum*) in order to

leverage government directions to suit tribal aspirations (NKII, 2009b).

### An Evidence-Based Education Plan

The reason for the direction taken by Ngāti Kahungunu in terms of the NKCSPP is based on evidence. The NKCSPP is a tribal response to research on the status of Māori education in Ngāti Kahungunu carried out in 2002 and 2004. The demographics showed a young population with one third of all Ngāti Kahungunu people under 14 years of age, and one third of these children under the age of 4 years. An encouraging factor was the high participation levels of Māori in the early childhood sector, with most Māori children more likely to attend te kohanga reo. The highest Early Childhood Education (ECE) participation rates were in the Wairarapa, which correlates with the Early Childhood Promotion and Participation (ECP) program that was operating in the region. The ECP program involved targeting all Māori families with young children living in the Wairarapa in an effort to encourage greater participation. Overall, however, the highest participation rates, which were also found to be above the national average, were in the northern town of Wairoa with a large Māori population (Tomlins Jahnke, 2002).

Although one third of all children in the Ngāti Kahungunu region are Māori, most of them are located in mainstream schools. Data on the status of their achievement levels in primary schools was not easily accessible; however, information from the secondary schooling sector was obtained from the Ministry of Education (Tomlins Jahnke, 2002; Tomoana, 2005). For the first time, the results of an analysis of this information provided the iwi with clear evidence of the state of secondary schooling for Māori students across Ngāti Kahungunu, and the identity of those schools in the region where Māori students were most at risk. In an account of these results, Tomlins-Jahnke (2007) stated:

*When compared with national trends, Māori education at the secondary school level was characterised by low participation rates and high suspension and truancy rates. Of all Māori students aged 16–18 years an estimated 62.4% (the median across Ngāti Kahungunu) had left school, essentially reducing their access to national qualifications, entry to tertiary education and assured employment opportunities. The report concluded that high attrition rates indicate a crisis in Māori secondary schooling in Ngāti Kahungunu (Tomlins-Jahnke, 2003). These 2003 findings mirror the much publicised research report released recently which showed 53% of Māori boys left without the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) in 2005, compared with 20% of non-Māori boys. The statistics were described as depressing and represented a future ‘time-bomb’ of problems (Maxim Institute, 2006). The combined weight of generations of evidence from the state education sector about Māori achievement levels, support the contention that Māori education is in crisis. (Tomlins Jahnke, 2007, n.p.)*

While Māori participation in early childhood education was found to be high and above the national average, the exact opposite was the case at the level of mainstream secondary schooling. Somewhere in between serious disparities in Māori participation and achievement levels were occurring.

### A Tribally Based Intervention

The Ngāti Kahungunu Education Status Reports (Tomlins Jahnke, 2002; Tomoana, 2005) provided much needed evidence, concrete direction and a clear basis for the development of the tribes Education Plan where the focus is on a proactive approach to successful gains in education for Māori. The cultural standards project is an intervention strategy, aimed at assisting the education sector engage with Māori children and their whānau, thereby strengthening centres/schools and community participation and relationships. The processes of strengthening centre/school community participation are based on a set of guiding principles that emerged from a review of the literature (Laben, 2009) and from an analysis of documents held in the tribal archive (NKII, 2009c). The principles include whānau in governance (boards of trustees); whānau developing centre/school curriculum (infused with Ngāti Kahungunu history, language and culture); informed whānau of the education system (such as National Education Guidelines and National Administration Guidelines for schools, knowing their rights as parents/caregivers); and supporting centres and schools in strengthening community relationships.

The notion of cultural standards as an intervention strategy is similar to the Native Alaskan model. Internationally, the work of the Assembly of Native Educators of Alaska is an exemplary model for the development of cultural standards and guidelines. The Alaska model took 10 years to develop, resulting in a holistic vision of education that offers schools and communities guidelines to examine how they are providing for the educational and cultural wellbeing of the students in their care (Alaska Native Knowledge Network, 1998). The model advocates cultural responsiveness and responsibility of educators to account for the education needs and aspirations of the indigenous peoples of Alaska which resonates with the aspirations of Ngāti Kahungunu.

### Cultural Review Survey

An important step in the project was the cultural review survey carried out in all ECE centres and schools in Ngāti Kahungunu aimed at providing baseline data about which the literature is limited (Laben, 2009; NKII, 2009a). The tribe was interested in seeking information on the extent to which Māori perspectives, including the Treaty of Waitangi, are taken into account in the centre and school milieu, such as teaching practice, school curriculum,

professional development, and levels of engagement with Māori families. The results indicated a certain 'learned helplessness' of schools and centres and perceived reliance on Māori people and their communities for assistance. For example, the findings showed that the majority of schools (90%) measure the impact of professional development on the teaching and learning of Māori language. There was no indication that other knowledge sets were considered for professional development such as place-based content associated with local Māori history and culture.

At least half the schools (60%) planned staff development to support Māori achievement and less than half of the schools staff (40%) had undertaken Treaty of Waitangi (TOW) training. Such training provides teachers with the opportunity to learn, among other things, about the history of the Treaty of Waitangi, the relevance of the Treaty in the modern context, the implications for education provision, responsibilities as teachers in terms of honouring the principles of the Treaty and what this means in practice. Treaty training was considered an important measure or indicator of a centre or schools commitment to Māori education.

In the area of governance the Māori community were represented on half of the schools Boards of Trustees (BOT). However, the survey showed that most BOT members had not received TOW training, and most had little knowledge of how to engage with Māori communities. Schools identified professional development as a high priority need, in particular assistance with developing relationships with Māori families, support to develop local curriculum content, support to incorporate and teach local content and support to link with local marae, hapū and elders. Schools want relationships with local iwi in order to provide support, advice and guidance on Māori issues and development initiatives, whānau engagement and building relationships, professional development for language, culture and history, and in the development of resources to support teaching of language culture and history. In short, schools and centres require support at almost every level of engagement with Māori children and their families, in the development of a culturally based/place-based curriculum including relevant curriculum resources.

### **Te Topuni Tauwhainga: A Framework for Developing Cultural Standards**

The benchmarks for cultural standards identified by Ngāti Kahungunu are culturally competent teachers, pedagogically competent teachers, access and transmission of selected tribal knowledge and active usage of distinctive tribal language dialects. To assist centres, schools and their communities to develop their own place-based cultural standards, a framework was developed — Te Tōpuni Tauwhainga, which was adapted from the Ngāti Kahungunu Māori language strategy. The term is derived from an oriori or lullaby composed in the 18th century by a

local chief of Ngāti Kahungunu, Nohomaiterangi, for his children. The topuni tauwhainga was the name of a prized dog skin cloak. Consultations with representatives from the ECE centres, schools, and the wider education sector affirmed the relevance, suitability and usefulness of the framework. It was considered to be useful as a self-assessment and planning tool at all levels of education practice, from BOT and management to individual classroom teacher practice (NKII, 2009c).

The framework contains five strands, with short-, medium- and long-term goals for each of the two sectors: early childhood centres and primary schools. The Māori terms used for each strand — whakaoho, whakamana, whakaako, whakamahi and whakawhanaungatanga — are interacting principles to guide the development of the cultural standards. The descriptors for each principle align to short-, medium- and long-term goals. As a principle, whakaoho (to awaken) refers to the importance of maintaining a critical awareness of the education system as it relates to Māori. Thus, in the short term, early childhood centres and schools would work to develop a critical awareness of issues impacting on Māori children and their achievement levels. Increased awareness and knowledge would, in the medium term, lead to trialling strategies to improve teacher practice, the environment and outcomes for Māori children. The long-term goal would be evidence that indicates improvements in teacher practice and Māori student academic, social and cultural outcomes (NKII, 2009c). The principle of whakamana (to enhance) alludes to the uniqueness of whānau/hapū/iwi knowledge that is central to a tribal identity. This is important in terms of relevant pedagogy and practice, and the transmission of cultural knowledge in the classroom. In the short term, schools and centres acknowledge Ngāti Kahungunu cultural knowledge, whānau expectations and aspirations for their children. In the medium term, relevant aspects of tribal cultural knowledge would be trialled so that in the long term Ngāti Kahungunu cultural knowledge is embedded in teacher and school/centre practice. The principle of whakaako (to learn) is, in the short and medium term, the process of exploring new (or known) tribal knowledge that emerges from engagement between the centres and schools, the whānau and wider community; and in the long term, the subsequent design and development of selected Ngāti Kahungunu knowledge for inclusion within the curriculum. The principle of whakamahi (to be industrious) underpins the entire work involved in schools and centres trialling, implementing and integrating new strategies and initiatives based on Te Topuni Tauwhainga framework. The principle of whakawhanaungatanga refers to the relationships and collaborations that underpin all the other strands. The long-term objective is for schools and centres to have built strong productive partnerships for learning with Māori parents, whānau and community, aimed at improving Māori student outcomes based on shared visions and expectations.

## Implications for Initial Teacher Education

While the NKCSPP is primarily focused on centres and schools within its catchment, evidence from the cultural review and engagement processes and activities with teachers in implementing the framework (NKII, 2011) suggests there are implications for teacher education, and teacher training in particular. Some teachers reported feelings of anxiety and lack of confidence in engaging with Māori learners and their communities (NKII, 2011). The question is whether at the level of Initial Teacher Education (ITE) provision, graduate teachers are adequately prepared to teach in New Zealand classrooms generally, and to engage with Māori children and their whānau in particular. In terms of the latter, evidence from the Ngāti Kahungunu cultural review suggests that teachers are not prepared adequately (NKII, 2010). Kenrick's study of beginning teachers' perception of their preparedness to teach Māori children supports the findings of the NKCSPP cultural review (Kenrick, 2011). In order to advance the preparedness of beginning teachers to be more effective, Kenrick recommends teacher educators need to

*Review their selection process to close the cultural and experiential gap that may exist between potential teachers and the Māori students whom they will teach; engage in professional development to develop their own knowledge, skill and understanding of matauranga Māori; ensure that they model culturally responsive, inclusive and appropriate environments, pedagogy and curriculum in their practice; and that ITE providers emphasise the place of knowledge about subject matter and curriculum as it applies to teaching Māori children in all papers. (2011, pp. 160–161)*

There is little evidence regarding ITE student satisfaction with preparation for teaching Māori children. Some anecdotal evidence suggests that students do not believe they are satisfactorily prepared to engage effectively with Māori students and their whānau. However, if an ITE program were to produce culturally responsive graduates for mainstream, what would that program look like? Would such a program adequately prepare graduates for engaging competently with Māori learners?

Māori perspectives in ITE and teacher education programs across university-based programs fall into four major approaches to Māori education, which may be described as Māori centred, integrated, additive and monocultural. A Māori-centred approach to ITE is characterised by programs such as Māori medium-focused, and/or multiple numbers of core Māori-centred, papers that are compulsory rather than optional within mainstream programs. Te Aho Tātairangi at Massey University falls within the parameters of this approach because it is a Māori medium program based on Māori knowledge, language and culture underpinned by Māori philosophy and ethical perspectives in the preparation of teachers for Māori medium schools (Tomlins Jahnke & Warren, 2010). An integrated approach offers a Māori dimension within the

ITE program, with course offerings that are either compulsory or optional. In some cases, Māori-centred perspectives are taught as a combination of both core papers and modules, but either way such an approach has implications for staff capacity. Invariably, workload issues arise because both Māori centred and integrated approaches are more often than not dependant on Māori staff with limited capacity and resources (Tomlins Jahnke & Warren, 2010). The additive approach is dependent on modules within a course or a limited number of stand-alone courses that are optional and therefore dependant on student choice. Māori courses in this category often have low enrolments and are therefore vulnerable to institutional policies of reducing paper offerings based on student numbers. The Eurocentric approach is generally tokenistic where a Māori dimension is simply incorporated in a program as an isolated lecture in line with a prescribed curriculum. However, whatever the approach to preparing teacher graduates for mainstream classrooms in Aotearoa New Zealand, questions remain that are beyond the scope of this article, but nevertheless are important considerations for ITE providers. What would teacher competencies for Māori learners look like? How would such competencies be aligned with graduating teacher standards? In light of the experiences of Ngāti Kahungunu and the increased focus by tribes on raising Māori student achievements, is there a role for tribes in ITE?

## Conclusion

The development of cultural standards for ECE centres and primary schools in Ngāti Kahungunu depends on a collaborative relationship between these institutions and their communities both Māori and non-Māori alike. The issues raised have implications for teacher education and for providers of initial teacher education. The response by Ngāti Kahungunu and other tribes generally to the underachievement of Māori children in education has been to insist on a proactive approach to the educative process and to be actively involved in decisions affecting Māori children. It is a process that offers a democratic framework for incorporating localised aspects of Māori language, culture and history as integral to the school habitus. Ultimately, the aspirations of Māori in the past, present and future are best expressed in the aphorism of Sir Mason Durie, which is 'to live as Māori, to be healthy and to live as global citizens of the world'.

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