Te Toi Huarewa: Effective Teaching and Learning in Total Immersion Mäori Language Educational Settings

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This article reports on a research project that sought to identify effective teaching and learning strategies, effective teaching and learning materials, and how teachers assess and monitor the effectiveness of their teaching of reading and writing programs for years 1-5 students in total immersion Maori language (i.e., through the medium of the Mäori-language, Mäori-medium environments). The research findings identified that teacher efficacy was founded in personal attributes and pedagogical skills that enabled them to create a culturally appropriate and responsive context for learning that promoted literacy skills in their students. During the project consideration was given to approaches fundamental to Kaupapa Mäori research in that the issue of initiation of the research, who would benefit from the research, ownership of knowledge and intellectual property rights, representation, cultural legitimation, and accountability were addressed.

Introduction

Mäori-medium education is a recent phenomenon in New Zealand. Apart from one Mäori-medium tertiary institution, it was not until 1982 that the first Mäori-medium preschool (*kohanga reo*) was established. This important development was soon followed by the creation of primary Mäori-medium schools, and more recently secondary Mäori-medium schooling.

These schools were developed as both a resistance to the dominant culture's disregard for the language and cultural aspirations of Mäori people, and also to maintain and revitalize the Mäori language as an expression of the *tino Rangatiratanga* (self-determination) of the Mäori people to establish an education system focused on the centrality of Mäori culture.

The establishment of what amounts to a parallel education system, taught through the medium of Mäori language and based on Mäori cultural aspirations, preferences, and practices, is no simple task. This is especially so when one considers the complexity of an education system

A glossary of Maori words and expressions appears at the end of this article.

and the disregard shown by mainstream education institutions for Māori people's aspirations for language and cultural revitalization. Further, it is not simply a matter of translating existing English-medium teaching strategies, materials, preservice and inservice education processes into te reo Māori, because language as the medium of the culture does not stand on its own. Therefore, Māori-medium education needs to be developed on its own terms, not on terms determined by the English-medium sector. In other words, if components of the education system are to be seen as legitimate, then it is crucial that all components be designed for and be legitimate in the eyes of those who initiated the establishment and development of the system. It is, therefore, no surprise that numerous problems have yet to be addressed and that much development is needed. Problems that face the Māori-medium sector and examples of effective solutions to these problems need to be identified if there is to be real and consistent progress in Māori-medium education as a whole. This project sets out to address this challenge.

The Project

This article reports on a recently completed research project that sought to observe and collaboratively reflect on the teaching and learning strategies used in literacy programs by a range of year 1 to year 5 Māori-medium classroom teachers who were identified as effective. In so doing, the research group would be able to co-construct with these people a picture of how effective teachers operate in a Māori-language literacy-learning context and produce a picture of effective teaching and learning images, principles, and practices in Maori-medium settings.

Second, the project sought to identify the teaching and learning materials considered by these teachers to be most effective, and how these materials were used for improving and monitoring the reading and writing in te reo Māori of their students.

Identifying the Effective Teachers

In order to identify the teachers and their sites of effective practice, the first step in this project involved a process of triangulation. Three groups of key informants were identified, and together they were asked to identify and/or confirm the effectiveness of the teacher, and accordingly the teachers' suitability for placement in this study. The key informants were knowledgeable about what constituted sound teaching strategies and were also experienced with available and relevant teaching materials. Once an effective teacher was identified by one source, the research whānau sought to complete the triangulation process by seeking the advice of others who fitted the key informant criteria and who were also able to comment on the teacher in question. Sites targeted for the research were those where three key informants had confirmed that the teacher ran an effective literacy

program and was working in a Mäori-medium program with year 1 to year 5 students (5-9-year-olds).

Research: Methodology and Method

During this research project, consideration was given to approaches fundamental to Kaupapa Mäori research (Smith, 1997) in that the issue of initiation of the research, who would benefit from the research representation, ownership of knowledge and intellectual property rights, cultural legitimation, and accountability were addressed. The research group that undertook the project was constituted as a Kaupapa Mäori "whänau of interest" research group (Bishop, 1998a, 1998b). One example of how whänau processes in action affect the position of the researcher is the way different individuals take on differing positioning in the collective. These positionings fulfill various functions oriented toward the collaborative concerns, interests, and benefits of the whänau as a group rather than toward the benefit of any one member. Using this approach, the leader of the research whänau will not necessarily be the researcher. *Kaumatua* (respected elders) as a Mäori-defined and apportioned position will be the leaders. However, this leadership is not in the sense of making all the decisions, but rather in the sense of being a guide to culturally appropriate procedures for decision-making (like reaching consensus) and as a listener to all the voices of the whänau. By developing research in such existing culturally constituted practices, concerns about voice and agency can be addressed. Thus the activities of the researchers while undertaking this project addressed the issues of initiation, benefits, representation, legitimation, and accountability from within Mäori cultural frames of reference. For a more detailed discussion of this approach to research, see Bishop (1998a, 1998b), Tillman (1998), and López (1998).

To identify what effective teachers do in their classrooms and why they teach in a particular way, the researchers, now constituted as a research whanau, used a strategy that had been developed to operationalize Kaupapa Mäori concerns regarding the tino Rangatirantanga of the research participants over issues of representation and legitimization to be paramount, that is, they should be able to speak for themselves. This strategy consisted of interviews and directed observations followed by facilitated teachers' reflections on what had been observed by using stimulated recall interviews (SRI). These were to follow the observation sessions and focused on specific observed incidents. Teachers were encouraged to reflect on what had been observed and to bring their own sense-making processes to the discussions in order to co-construct a rich descriptive picture of their classroom practices. In other words, they were encouraged to reflect on and explain why they did what they did. The SRI proved to be a valuable tool. For example, after an observation on the beginning of a lesson, a teacher might be asked, "I noticed you began your lesson by ... Tell me why you began this way; I noticed you organized your class ...

Why did you choose this arrangement?" As a number of researchers were to gather this information, it was important that fieldwork at each targeted site be carried out consistently. This meant that the structure of the contact time with the teacher and the nature of some of the questions and SRI prompts needed to be determined in advance. Consequently, the core research team collaborated to provide the fieldworkers and the advisory group with an observation-and-interview instrument to be used for gathering information at each of the sites.

The Instrument and its implementation

A data-gathering instrument that consisted of six sections was used. The first section was used to gather background information about the school in which the teacher operated. The second section involved five separate tasks. Activity 1 required teachers to sort a selection of literacy resources into three categories and explain their selection. Activity 2 asked for information about teachers' planning; and Activity 3 called for the researcher to take photographs of the classroom environment. Activity 4 asked the researcher to look for evidence of available technological aids, and Activity 5 asked teachers about their personal philosophy and strategies.

The third section of the instrument, Part B (Observation and Stimulated Recall Interview Schedule), consisted of a framework and prompts for four observations and stimulated recall interviews. Observations included lesson beginning, classroom organization, teacher-student interactions, matching learning program to students, and teaching strategies employed.

The fourth section, Part C (General Observations), involved three tasks and again consisted of a framework and prompts for observations and stimulated recall interviews. Researchers were asked to observe evidence of teachers establishing differential levels of learning in the classroom and classroom routines. They were also asked to look for evidence of how learning and behavior were monitored.

The fifth section, Part D (Summary Interview), invited the teacher to discuss how others were involved in their program and further probed how students' progress was monitored and what literacy strategies and materials were considered by the teacher to be most effective. Finally, it asked how other teachers in the school taught and interacted with each other in the areas of student learning and reading and writing programs.

The final section, Part E (Other Tasks for Researchers), asked the researcher to discuss with the teacher his or her perceptions of the role of the learner, the relationship of Maori oral traditions to classroom literacy programs, and the processes involved in reading. Finally, researchers were asked to collect samples of students' work. The fieldwork was conducted over two days.

The data were, therefore, gathered through in-class observations and both semistructured and stimulated recall interviews (SRI). Throughout these interviews the teacher and the researcher collaborated to provide a

narrative based on their responses to the questions on both the interview and the observation sheets.

Overall Findings

The most significant overall finding of this study is that although Māori-medium education is in its infancy and subsequent knowledge about the most effective resources and strategies to be implemented in this setting are still being developed, some Māori-medium teachers have effective teaching and learning strategies for improving the reading and writing strategies of their students. These teachers are making good use of the growing number of resources available and are increasing their own and other teachers' understanding of and expertise in the range of strategies that are available to them. These teachers could well help others improve their practice.

They were readily identified by their peers and were found in a range of settings (*kura kaupapa*, Māori-medium primary schools), mainstream schools with Māori immersion or bilingual classes), and from north to south, east to west of the country. It is also important to note that although this study chose 13 teachers for its sample, this was because of sampling criteria. Others could well have been included in the category of effective teachers.

The teachers' preservice training or education had taken place in a variety of settings and covered a range of years. Before teaching in Māori medium, some had taught for at least a short time in mainstream settings.

The common factors that are indicative of an effective teacher in Māori-medium settings and how these factors raise student's literacy achievement levels

At the beginning of the study when the effective teachers were being identified by the key informants, the concept of effective teachers was collaboratively defined as *teachers who were working in a professional manner to make a positive difference for Māori children and their families. Effective teachers also understand what they are doing and can explain why they are doing it. Further, they had competence and ability in te reo Māori and in cultural practices.*

In effect, the key informants identified that teachers who were effective in improving the learning of students in reading and writing were also effective in all areas of the curriculum. Their effectiveness developed because these teachers had personal attributes and pedagogical skills that created an appropriate context for learning. We took this lead in our research and sought to identify specifically what constituted the personal qualities and professional skills of effective teachers that created in effect a *culturally appropriate context for learning*. In this wider framework we also identified the strategies they used for promoting literacy skills.

It is clear from the results of this study that these teachers exhibit what is involved in meeting the criteria established by the key informants. These

effective teachers know what to do in their classrooms and can explain their reasons and understandings of their actions. Further, their theorizing of their practice was most often informed by Mäori cultural epistemologies and world views. They also maintained and gave clear details of specific literacy and numeracy strategies and material. They demonstrated also that literacy and numeracy learning does not happen in isolation. Specific learning characteristics are, therefore, related here in understandings of the wider contexts of learning that are created by these teachers. Definitions by international educators have been used to support the definitions provided by the key informants, and these also further define the effective teaching and learning strategies observed in this specific project.

Personal qualities and attributes. Fraser and Spiller (McGee & Fraser, 2001) suggest that effective teachers have "a blend of personal and pedagogical skills" (p. 68). They identify that the personally effective teachers "treat their students with respect, are compassionate and confidential, have a sense of humour, act in a just and fair manner and are friendly but firm" (p. 68).

The teachers in the study exemplify these characteristics. However, for them these personal skills are *culturally located*. For example, these teachers *treat their students with respect* and also emphasize that this respect must be reciprocal toward their peers, *whänau* (extended family), adults, *kaumatua* (elders), and visitors. *Confidentiality and compassion* are expressed in Mäori ways in terms of *awhiawhi*. Mäori humor is valued and ever-present. Teachers emphasize the importance of *fairness and justice* both in their own personal attitudes and behaviors and by the fact that they support a separate Mäori-medium education system that they see as more effectively delivering justice and fairness to Mäori people at last. The teachers are *friendly but firm* in a Mäori understanding of intergenerational relationships where *tuakana* (older), *tamariki* (children), *rangatahi* (youth), *pakeke* (adult), and *kaumatua* have distinct roles and responsibilities that deserve respect as of right. Respect was also accorded to the children and their whänau by the teacher's constant reference through the process of *whanaungatanga* (establishing relationships) to the children's *whakapapa* (genealogical) links. This is a fundamental and important practice in the Mäori world.

Effective pedagogical characteristics. The core pedagogical qualities that Fraser and Spiller's (McGee & Fraser, 2001) literature survey identified are also to be found among the teachers in this study. Fraser and Spiller identify that effective teachers have

a depth of knowledge about their subject(s) area,
are passionate about what they teach and have a strong desire to share this knowledge,
have a philosophy of teaching and have clear teaching goals,
have a commitment to developing students' understanding and growth,
use non-confrontational behaviour management strategies,

show a genuine interest in students as individuals including the providing of high quality feedback,
continually reflect upon their own teaching and
provide both comfort and challenge including high expectations. (p. 68)

Depth of knowledge

The teachers we observed and spoke to clearly demonstrate the depth of their professional and cultural knowledge. These teachers are well versed in knowing what is involved in being a teacher and constantly seek to improve this knowledge through professional development. In particular, these effective teachers in Māori-medium education were driven to improve their competence in traditional Māori cultural practices, and they were also driven to improve their competence in te reo Māori. Some said that they were not as competent as they would like to be and were aware of the effects that limitations in language competence has on students' learning. That is, they were aware that it was essential for teachers to be competent in te reo Māori in order to expand the language of their students. All the teachers spoke of the challenges of keeping up with the creation of new words and the concepts found in each of the new curriculum documents. These teachers went out of their way to respond in a range of effective ways to this challenge.

Passionate about what they do

The teachers are a passionate, committed, dedicated group of people. Despite all the stresses of working in an underresourced system in its infancy with its heavy workload, limitations of their training, and wide-ranging classroom issues, these teachers are passionate about the benefits of working in this system. They see the benefits for their own developing cultural identities, for the cultural identities of their students, and above all they are passionate about the reo and their culture and how it is through their efforts that whānau, hapu, and iwi will be revitalized in Aotearoa.

These teachers are passionate to the extent of it being almost a calling to enhance and support children for the future as a means of breaking the cycle of failure and to protect a heritage. This can be seen in how they often speak of children as *taonga*, that is, treasures to be nurtured and protected for the survival of the culture.

Have a philosophy of teaching and clear teaching goals

The particular research approach that was used, especially following the classroom observation sessions, was designed to reveal if these teachers had a philosophy of teaching and clear teaching goals. The stimulated recall interviews used by the research team ensured that the teachers were able to determine what sense was made of the observed actions. As a result of being afforded a space in which to reflect on their actions, teachers clearly demonstrated that they were well able to explain their classroom actions. They were able to explain their own specific educational understandings, illustrate both their long- and short-term goals for their teach-

ing, and furthermore explained their actions by using Māori ways of knowing to make sense of their practice.

Have a commitment to developing students' understandings and growth
These teachers demonstrated a firm commitment to the students. They worked assiduously toward creating contexts for learning where children could bring who they were to the classroom. By interacting with the new experiences, students could grow in their own understandings.

Use nonconfrontational behavior management
These teachers preferred to use quiet, nonconfrontational behavior management strategies, preferring to acknowledge students positively who complied with instructions rather than chastise those who did not.

Show a genuine interest in students including provision of high quality feedback
These teachers have a genuine and caring interest for their students, one indicating this by explaining the importance of the wairua of the children's names. The teachers used positive feedback and praise to reinforce what the children had done or were doing, acknowledging that praise needs to be frequent and sincere. Extrinsic rewards were used often and were found to provide motivation. There were few examples of negative behavioral feedback. The teachers preferred to wait for correct appropriate behaviors and reinforce them. There was, however, little evidence of any formative feedback, which suggests an area for future professional development.

Continually reflect upon their own teaching
These teachers have been involved in professional development offered by a wide range of providers, despite their fairly heavy workload in their school and juggling numerous school, whānau, and wider community commitments outside the school. Teachers' participation demonstrated a high degree of intrinsic motivation to succeed and learn as much as they could.

One way that professional development was achieved was through a close network of critical friends. Interaction with critical friends provided these effective teachers with an opportunity to reflect on their own classroom observations and practices and to learn from each other. As a result, the research challenges the assertion made by Education Review Office (1999) that a professional community where pedagogical issues are debated and shared has not yet developed. We would suggest rather that, like other successful Māori initiatives, active debate is happening at the grassroots, that is, in the classrooms and among teachers.

There was no evidence that the teachers saw teaching as a job for personal gain, but there were many examples of teachers working at building positive relationships with the students and their whānau. Despite the problems they faced in Māori-medium settings, these teachers through close personal ties with other educators both in and out of their

schools remained positive and forward-looking. A major feature of the process of developing relationships is that the teachers were interested in listening to others involved in the education process. This includes listening to the children and their parents or whänau.

The teachers have high expectations while offering comfort and challenges
The teachers have high expectations. First, they expect the children to adhere to routines, for example, time, use of equipment, asking for help, using a task board, and so on. They also expect that their students will succeed and are aware of the numerous problems such as reputation, limited resources, heavy workload, wide range of language among the children, problems with curriculum documents, and a high turnover of staff among others that face them in this endeavor.

In addition, we identified that these teachers also
- Have excellent classroom management;
- Recognize the prior learning and experiences of children as the starting place for learning;
- Relate material used to the child's world view;
- Monitor student progress to identify future learning needs and directions;
- Match strategies and materials to individual and group abilities;
- Emphasize oral language as the base for literacy development;
- Integrate learning subjects;
- Encourage self-evaluation;
- Focus on the importance of ako;
- Maintain close links to the whänau;
- Create culturally appropriate and culturally responsive contexts for learning.

Excellent class management
The classrooms we visited were orderly, attractive, and had a working atmosphere. Teaching materials were clearly and attractively displayed. Routines were heavily emphasized. Mäori cultural practices were central to the start of the day and ongoing activities. All the teachers used a variety of methods to focus children on the next task. Indeed, often excellent classroom management meant that transitions from one activity to the next were smooth and seamless.

Kaiawhina and visiting kaumatua, students, and parents have an integral part to play in the classrooms of these effective teachers. Routines are well established so that the teacher can work with one group while the other groups continue to be engaged with their work. New children are quickly acculturated into the routines. The teachers also maximized students' learning through their flexible responses to the "teachable moments."

Prior learning experiences and knowledges

The teachers were careful to identify the prior knowledge of the children rather than expect them to be at a certain level. This recognition of *stage* rather than *age* is essential in underresourced second-language learning settings. Teachers used available and self-developed diagnostic tools to identify oral language levels and work from there toward the development of reading and writing skills. Emphasis was placed on reading and writing as sense-making processes.

Materials need to be related to child's world view and experiences

Crucial to the recognition of the importance of prior learning is that teachers actively sought and developed materials that closely related to the child's Māori world view. These actions clearly demonstrated their understanding that cultural legitimacy was paramount.

Teachers were consistent in their concern about texts that are translated from English without due consideration of Māori epistemologies. Texts such as these lack cultural legitimacy. Texts that represent Māori people and other New Zealanders in everyday events and activities seem to be most acceptable, that is, texts that relate to students' lives.

Monitoring of student progress/ Use of formative assessment

These effective teachers consistently asserted and demonstrated that the purpose of monitoring students' progress was to inform their own teaching in order that student learning should progress. This purpose takes the assessment task beyond merely reporting problem outcomes and interventions. Rather, formative assessments were used such as *Pukete Panui Haere* (running records) in relation to *Nga Kete Korero* Framework and 10 x 5 writing samples. These measures were gathered over time in order to match student behavior to teaching strategies and resources and are thus about student progress. Those teachers who had successfully participated in professional development in the use of formative assessment techniques were competent to implement these procedures. No one mentioned learning these strategies in their preservice training. In some cases Kaiawhina helped teachers to assess students' progress and identify where to go next. It is interesting that assessment of progress was both reported to parents (summative use) and included in planning for teaching (formative use). This is possible only because of the high degree of whānau involvement in the school and the trusting relationships that have been built between teachers, students, and their whānau.

Importance of matching strategies and materials to individuals or group abilities

Small ability groupings or one-on-one teaching were the most common practices. This was helped by having small classes (15 to 20). These small ability groups were continually monitored by the teacher. One-on-one teaching often involved the teacher, kaiawhina, other students, student teachers, or parents. The teachers gauged successful outcomes by infor-

mally assessing if the children were meaningfully engaged, were happily on task, and showed understanding.

The teachers responded to the challenge of catering to children who were at different stages of development and who had different learning styles. They also catered to infant bilinguals and elective bilinguals. This meant that they were all coping with a marked range of competences in te reo Mäori. The teachers were aware of the need to mix strategies in order to keep the children interested and focused. This included frequent changes of activity, pace, and movement. They also incorporated activities and resources into their programs that required students to use a range of senses and apply these in abstract and concrete situations.

These teachers all used a range of traditional and contemporary approaches. However, in these approaches culturally legitimate pedagogies such as peer tutoring (*tuakana-teina*), *waiata, whakatauki, tauparapara*, action songs, group learning, *karakia*, and *whakapapa* were consistently evident.

Emphasis on oral language
Most of the children are second-language learners, and there is a great range of language abilities when children arrive at school. In response the teachers attempt to develop an oral-rich environment. Oral language learning is fostered in many ways. Most of the strategies used focused on the prior or real-life experiences of the children through the use of drama, art, waiata, reading aloud, and movement. The resulting oral language then becomes the focus for reading and writing lessons.

In 1997 the Ministry of Education asserted that by age 9 children should be reading and writing with success. In 1999 the Literacy Experts Group defined *success* as "successful writing means expressing in print much of what they are expected to express when speaking " (Ministry of Education, 1999, p. 3). It was not possible to ascertain from this study if this was the case or indeed the most appropriate goal for 9-year-olds in Mäori-medium education. To compare the view of the Literacy Experts Group regarding literacy achievement would require a more selective study of 9-year-olds or, more appropriately, students who had spent four years in Mäori-medium education. Students are entering Mäori-medium classes at different ages and with wide-ranging Mäori language experiences. Time in immersion rather than age has been identified by Berryman et al. (2001) as a critical factor. The focus of this present study in that it sought effective teaching strategies was too broad to allow other specific outcomes to emerge. Nevertheless, the concerns expressed by these teachers indicate that there is a complex picture that needs further and immediate in-depth exploration if these Mäori-medium students are to benefit.

A further study could well be commissioned and conducted with similar effective teachers to look at students who have been in Mäori-medium education for four or more years. Such a study could concentrate on identifying the achievement levels reached by Mäori children in read-

ing and writing. This would allow researchers to identify how these goals are achieved in a Mäori-medium setting and how these achievement levels compare over a range of Mäori-medium settings and contexts.

Age Versus Stage

The issue of age versus stage is addressed by some schools, which attempt to limit entry to most Mäori-medium classrooms to children who come from a Mäori-medium preschool. However, students may be accepted where it can be shown that the child has support in the Mäori language at home. Whatever the case, the wide range of variability in language levels was continually discussed by these teachers as a challenge. The study found that effective teachers organize their strategies and literacy programs to cater to the wide range of Mäori language skills by grouping and teaching children according to their competence in te reo. The focus in these junior classrooms was described by one teacher as being an "oral-language-saturated environment." This was one method employed by these effective teachers that clearly recognized that most of the children in these classes were second-language learners whose oral language experiences in Mäori varied widely. These teachers used as much oral language as possible in order to build an oral language base from which to extend the children's vocabulary and understandings. This took place before moving to a more print-saturated environment.

However, despite the children beginning in an oral-language-saturated environment, there were no indications that starting writing should be delayed. Rather, these teachers tended to tailor the strategies they used to the oral language of the students. They tended to have writing lessons based on the Mäori alphabet together with students' lived experiences. For example, a trip to the new adventure playground in one school provided language enrichment and writing lessons for quite some time. At one site the teacher was emphatic that the children should begin writing creatively on their first day at school. The result might be a page of squiggles, but because this teacher understood that writing was first based on student's oral language and that their students' squiggles were an appropriate developmental response rather than their phonological awareness, this was acceptable. This teacher expected the new-entrant children in the class to write creatively using their own squiggles to represent their oral story. Code-switching from English to Mäori was allowed and was not an issue. In many instances it was used as a means of introducing the equivalent but unknown Mäori vocabulary when it was deemed appropriate to meet the learning needs of a particular child. In another instance the teacher used mime and body language to extract unknown words and structures from the students in order to create their own meaning and their own words. Ladson-Billings (1995) referred to this as "pulling knowledge out" (p. 479). This helped students to go from their known to their unknown and use

their own cognitive processes and problem-solving strategies. It promoted future independence rather than dependence.

A future study could be developed to focus specifically on further identification of the range of ability in te reo of children entering Mäori-medium at 5 and specific strategies that would best cater to the wide range of language levels in classrooms and the second-language experiences of the students.

Integrate Curriculum

A holistic approach was used to plan for the seven essential learning areas. This resulted in the development of integrated oral, reading, and writing units being planned around a central theme. Often these effective teachers shared the planning of thematic integrated curriculum units with other teachers in the syndicate or school. This approach ensured that students' learning did not happen in isolation and that activities did not have to be deliberately curtailed to allow for another curriculum area to occur. This approach is pedagogically sound and worked also to support students and other teachers.

Writing Activities

Writing was integrated and was part of all activities. Children were encouraged to write freely from day one in order to encourage creativity and thinking. Because talking was an important precursor to the writing task, these teachers supported their children to write what they had already talked about. In other words, the writing and reading task was strongly supported by the oral language experiences of the children.

Encouraging Self-Evaluation

Researchers noted strong evidence of students being encouraged to be part of their own evaluation, to determine what was to be evaluated, and what satisfactory progress looked like for themselves.

Importance of Ako: To Teach, to Learn

It was emphasized that classroom was a learning community where the role of the learner and the teacher were exchanged and where mutual benefits resulted; where students could be teachers and teachers could be students. This notion of reciprocal learning is termed *Ako* in Mäori. By using this culturally defined process of Ako these teachers set themselves apart from the positioning of some teachers in mainstream settings who continue to use the expert model (transmission model) in their teaching practice (Herbert & Ausubel, 1969).

Fostered a High Degree of Academic Engagement

The children in the classrooms of these teachers exhibited a high degree of academic engagement. Often even when the teacher was out of the room the students were engaged on task. Although percentages of academic

engagement were not measured, it was evident to the observers that student engagement was a major feature of these classrooms. Students were able to work both independently and in groups when the teacher was engaged with others elsewhere. Research studies indicate that student engagement is a necessary condition for academic success.

Close Links to Whānau

These teachers demonstrated that they understood the importance of sound whānau and school relationships for the development and advancement of children's learning in school. Whānau were involved with all the teachers in a variety of ways, all of which would fall under the banner of effective home and school collaboration. The approaches ranged from sending books home for shared reading and consolidation, to whānau participating in school-related tasks both as supporters on trips or resource collaboration or being present in classrooms. Some teachers went further to explain how the whānau participated as a body in school matters.

Above all the teachers demonstrated that the whānau and teacher were acting within a whānau or collaborative partnership relationship. The degree of participation varied from case to case, but regardless the collaboration entailed shared expertise between the teachers and the whānau. Fundamental to this sharing is the understanding of the reciprocity of aspirations, expectations, goals, processes, and actions of teaching and learning. Hence whānau and teachers through negotiated agreements are able to learn from and complement one another.

Collaboration between whānau and teachers in these cases has extended to whānau being involved in specific reading tutoring activities so as to enhance student expertise at home and in some cases in the classroom, as is shown in the Glynn et al. study (2000). Because these teachers work in a whānau relationship, they are able to share their strategies for giving knowledge about children's literacy and language skills with the family caregivers. The caregivers in return are able to share the range of language experiences children have had prior to school. Together this information is able to be used to greater effect during school participation. These teachers demonstrate the range of skills necessary to recognize, accept, and build on the diverse skills and experiences that children bring to their classrooms (Bishop, Berryman, & Richardson, 2000). Furthermore, they realize the importance of whānau relationships if they are to access accurate information about students' home experiences in order to enhance student learning in the classroom.

The Teachers Create Culturally Appropriate and Culturally Responsive Contexts for Learning

It is necessary to define what we mean by culture at this point, because in the settings being described culture is central. The definition provided by

Quest Rapara (1992) is useful as it identifies two main aspects to culture: the visible and the invisible.

Culture is what holds a community together, giving a common framework of meaning. It includes how people communicate with each other, how we make decisions, how we structure our families and who we think are important. It expresses our values towards land and time and our attitudes towards work and play, good and evil, reward and punishment.

Culture is preserved in language, symbols and customs and celebrated in art, music, drama, literature, religion and social gatherings. It constitutes the collective heritage, which will be handed down to future generations. (p. 7)

As this definition suggests, visible cultural icons and invisible meaning and sense-making aspects of culture are to be found in the classrooms in this study. By this we mean that the teachers in this study provided a visible, culturally rich environment for the children's learning. Where resources were few, they made them (along with whänau and colleagues). They invited older members of cultural groups into the classroom to reinforce relationships, authority, and accountability patterns; they surrounded the children with an oral-rich environment; and *tikanga* (cultural patterns) were continually used to create a sociocultural context for learning.

This picture is in fact that described by the key informants. They identified that the effective teachers create what we term a *culturally appropriate context for learning.*

However, a major finding of this study is that these teachers go further than this in that they also create a context that responds to the culture the children bring to the classroom. By this we mean that teaching and learning relationships and interactions are such that the children are able to bring who they are and how they make sense and meaning of the world to the learning interactions. Thus they are able to interact with teaching strategies and materials such that new learning occurs, identities are affirmed, on-task engagement is increased, and achievement is ongoing and spiralling. This we term a *culturally responsive context for learning.* In effect the teachers speak of creating a culturally appropriate and responsive context for learning where Mäori children are able to be healthy, happy, well-educated Mäori people who are fully conversant with their own language and culture in all its aspects (visible and invisible), and above all secure in their own identities.

Summary

These effective teachers create culturally appropriate and responsive contexts for learning by creating caring relationships, for their students and their whänau, by encouraging students to care for and respect one another, and by allowing the principles of whänau to guide their practices.

These teachers create structured, positive, and cooperative environments; have excellent classroom management and routines; use noncon-

frontational behavior management; maintain mutually responsive relationships with whānau; and have the support of parents with literacy tasks at home and at school.

These teachers recognize and build on the prior learning and experiences of their students so as to promote the tino Rangatiratanga of the children. They match learning strategies and materials to children's prior knowledge and experiences. They match strategies and materials to their children's abilities.

They use feedback to reinforce behavior and academic achievement positively. They encourage students to self-evaluate, and they use formative assessment to indicate the direction of their future teaching practice.

Most important, they use power-sharing practices like ako in their classrooms while promoting whānau contact with school in ways that make the child's education a collaborative partnership between the teacher and the whānau.

All these factors result in high levels of on-task academic engagement, a fundamental prerequisite for academic success.

Note

The address for the Te Toi Huarewa Report:
http://www.minedu.govt.nz/web/document/document_page.cfm?id=7101&p=1063.6504

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Glossary of Mäori words

Ako	literally to learn, teach. The reciprocity of a person being both a learner and a teacher according to the teaching/learning context.
Aotearoa	New Zealand
awhiawhi	to support, help.
hapu	clan, subtribe
iwi	tribe
kaiako	teacher
kaiawhina	helper.
karakia	prayer.
kaumätua	A respected elder.
kohanga reo	Language nest. (Preschool that is taught through the medium of Mäori language).
kuia	Older woman.
kura kaupapa	Mäori-medium primary school (Year 1-8)
Nga Kete Korero	A framework for teachers in Mäori-medium settings to level Mäori reading texts into increasing levels of difficulty
pakeke	adult.
Pukete Panui Haere	Running records. The name for a methodology used to evaluate student progress in reading in Mäori immersion settings.
rangatahi	youth.
Rapuara	career search
tamariki	children.
taonga	treasure
tauparapara	chant to start a speech
te reo	language.
tikanga	cultural pattern, custom, obligations and conditions.
tino Rangatiratanga	self-determination.
tuakana-teina	literally means older (tuakana), younger (teina). In this paper it is used to describe a relationship where one party (tuakana) in a particular situation is more knowledgeable than the other (teina).
waiata	song, chant.
wairua	spirit, spirituality.
whakapapa	genealogy, cultural identity, family tree.
whakatauki	proverb.
whänau	literally means the extended family. In this context it is used to describe people working cooperatively and collaboratively for a particular purpose.
whanaungatanga	establishing relationships

Te Toi Huarewa

The name derives from the story of a legendary Māori *tupuna* (ancestor), Tawhaki, and his journey through the heavens to get the three baskets of knowledge. Further information about this story can be obtained from Māori Manuscripts (1850). The original was in Māori and was translated by Hohepa Paraone in 1859. The manuscript can be found in the Auckland (New Zealand) Public Library, Grey Collection.