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ARTICLE

A Mātauranga Māori Perspective of Literacy for Adult Learners

Jane Furness[1] · Mohi Rua[1] · Bridgette Masters-Awatere[1] · Gemma Piercy-Cameron[2] · Bill Cochrane[2] · Sharyn Heaton[3]

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Abstract

Globally, literacy can be conceived of in different ways. Two perspectives that have influenced adult literacy policy internationally are the economic functionalist and the sociocultural. In Aotearoa New Zealand, Māori educators have repeatedly advanced a mātauranga Māori perspective of literacy. This perspective has parallels with the embodied, practice-based multiliteracies and sociomateriality of the sociocultural perspective but less so with the dominant functionalist perspective. To address how Māori views have been side-lined in adult literacy policy development, we seek to clarify this view and foreground Māori-led policy recommendations that date back to the creation of the New Zealand Adult Literacy Strategy in 2001. We also highlight the relevance of this perspective by sharing the success and effectiveness of Māori-led adult literacy programmes. In doing so, we demonstrate the need for a biliteracy approach to adult literacy policy to reflect our bicultural nation and ensure Māori aspirations for literacy are met.

Keywords Adult literacy · Biliteracy · Mātauranga Māori · Policy

Introduction

Any discussion of adult literacy is challenging because the term ‘literacy’ has many meanings in everyday conversation, in the academy and institutions, government policies and across cultures. Even more problematic is the frequent use of the term without explicit definition, leaving assumptions about its meaning to fill the gap.

✉ Jane Furness
jane.furness@waikato.ac.nz

[1] Māori and Psychology Research Unit, Division of Arts, Law, Psychology and Social Sciences, School of Psychology, University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand

[2] School of Social Sciences, University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand

[3] Faculty of Education, University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand

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Most often, reading and writing of alphabetic text, and often in English, frames definitions of literacy, but this is not its only meaning.

Broadly speaking, meanings of literacy vary in the extent to which they focus on technical or relational aspects of being a literate person and whether literacy is thought to be a singular or 'many-meaninged' thing (Scribner & Cole, 1981). Following multiliteracies and sociomaterial scholars such as Kress (2000), Hamilton (2016) and Pahl (2014), the authors hold the view that being literate means having the ability to make sense of the world and to communicate meaningfully through drawing on practices and materials that have social or cultural relevance and meaning within the context of relationships. Given the many different social, cultural, and material worlds people inhabit, it follows that what is meant by literacy is not the same for everyone or in every context. Consequently, it is a policy and practice challenge to conceptualise literacy in a relevant and applicable way to different contexts.

In Aotearoa New Zealand, adult literacy policy seems stretched between a desire for *in*clusivity of Māori and non-Māori perspectives and the simplicity of *ex*clusivity whereby a mainly one-size-fits-all non-Māori, 'Western' conceptualisation dominates. The one-size-fits-all approach in adult literacy policy has not satisfied Māori aspirations to maintain our unique cultural heritage and to ensure flourishing Māori futures, thereby continuing the social, cultural, and economic injustices that have occurred since colonial settlement 180 years ago. This article invokes this issue, foregrounding solutions that Māori scholars and educators have laid out since the Ministry of Education's (MoE) *Adult Literacy Strategy* (ALS) launch in 2001.

This article aims to draw attention to the aspirations for literacy policy and practice described in Māori-led responses to the ALS and subsequent policy statements and embodied in the practices of some tertiary organisations. The view of literacy evident in these responses is one that emphasises literacy in both English and te reo Māori (the Māori language) and forms of literacy beyond alphabetic text, thereby incorporating a view of literacy as embodied practices focused on reading the world culturally, spatially, and socially. Such a view of literacy is imbued with te ao Māori (the Māori world) and, at the same time, embraces the heterogeneity of Māori cultural connectedness, beliefs, and practices. We argue that current adult literacy policy does not enable a Māori perspective of literacy to flourish. We hope policymakers will look afresh at the Māori-led policy responses and build a transformative adult literacy policy, as befits our bicultural nation, in its next iteration.

We briefly outline the adult literacy context over the last 23 years before describing the functional and sociocultural perspectives that have shaped adult literacy policy in Aotearoa. Viewing the contributions and limitations of these perspectives through a critical literacy lens presents a means to note the relevance of multiliteracies and (the newer) sociomaterial theories of literacy. Both are built on sociocultural understandings of literacy that seldom feature in literacy discourse in Aotearoa. Our presentation of a Māori cultural perspective of literacy, highlighting concepts and approaches drawn from te ao Māori and mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge) is reflected in our review of seven Māori-led reports as examples of guidance for developing literacy policy. We conclude the article by summarising the case for a multiliteracies approach to adult literacy in Aotearoa already articulated by Māori scholars and educators, bringing a Māori-led form of biliteracy from the margins

into the centre. Throughout this article, therefore, we look back in time to highlight the existing knowledge that can take us forward to Māori satisfaction with adult literacy policy.

The Māori-led form of biliteracy we are referring to comes from the Māori Adult Literacy Working Party (2001), which we introduce later in this article. The Working Party defined a literate Māori today as one who is biliterate in two senses: (1) they can read and write in both Māori and English and can use these abilities competently, and (2) they "know who they are as Māori and are able to access further development" and they "understand … the colonisers' practices in order to transform them" (Māori Adult Literacy Working Party, 2001, p. 30).

Current Adult Literacy Policy Context

Current adult literacy policy in Aotearoa emerged after the 1996 International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS), which showed that, on this measure, over 1 million New Zealanders were unlikely to 'function in the knowledge economy' (Walker et al., 1997). The Government's response to these results was first expressed in the Adult Literacy Strategy (Ministry of Education, 2001) and led to the development of specific infrastructure for the adult literacy sector still largely in place. While proportionately outcomes for Māori adults on this measure have improved, the number of Māori adults experiencing low literacy levels remains much the same and continues to be disproportionate for Māori adults compared to the whole population (MoE and Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment [MBIE], 2016). People with low levels of literacy are often at greater risk of unemployment and poverty, poor physical and mental wellbeing and decreased social attachment (Cochrane et al., 2020), which in turn may impact on quality of life.

The ALS defined literacy as a complex web of reading, writing, speaking, listening, problem-solving, creative thinking and numeracy skills (Ministry of Education, 2001, p. 4). This is a relatively broad definition with the potential to accommodate different interpretations. For example, it focuses on listening, speaking, reading, and writing and does not define the text at the centre; thus, a range of text forms could be included. Both the ALS and subsequent policy statements have included an emphasis on lifting literacy levels for the purposes of social inclusion as well as economic benefits (Tertiary Education Commission [TEC], 2015). However, the functionalist emphasis on literacy skills for employment and economic productivity has dominated policy documents and strengthened over time (Furness & Hunter, 2017).

While the ALS and subsequent policy statements have targeted Māori adult learners alongside Pacific peoples and youth, the emphasis on being culturally responsive has not always been made clear and has not consistently influenced practice. For example, halfway through the period we are examining, Furness (2012) argued that only lip service was being paid to the need to recognise and incorporate Māori culture and values in policy and practice. As discussed later in this article, attempts have been made at both the policy and practice levels to address this gap. Of note was the presentation of *Haea Te Pū Ata: A National Strategy for Māori Adult Literacy and Numeracy: 2016–2020 (and beyond)* (Hutchings & Ikin, 2016). The

Literacy and Numeracy Implementation Strategy 2015–2019 (TEC, 2015) acknowledged the importance of the Haea Te Pū Ata framework but stressed that responses to the framework could only be implemented as resources allowed. This example typifies the lack of Government commitment to full and uncompromising inclusion of a Māori perspective in adult literacy policy which this article expounds.

A Functional View of Literacy

All literacy activities serve some type of function. For example, literacy helps adults support their children's schooling, access healthcare, play sports, or do paid work (UNESCO, 2004). Indeed, the lifelong learning perspective, which has featured in adult literacy discourse in Aotearoa, articulates the value of literacy in people's everyday social lives (Cochrane et al., 2020). In this article, we use the term functional to refer to literacy which focuses on acquiring literacy skills for economic purposes—to serve an economic function.

This functional view usually goes together with a view of literacy as a particular set of cognitive and technical skills in individuals (Gee, 2008; Street, 1984). These skills are treated as autonomous, apolitical and transferable and are often taught in isolation from the contexts in which learners reside. Nevertheless, it is assumed that all citizens will benefit from these skills, and social mobilisation is expected as a result (Graff & Duffy, 2008).

Interest in literacy's broader purposes, while present, has tended to coalesce around a neoliberal desire for people to be independent of the State as much as possible and economically productive (Rawiri, 2016). This functional perspective is critiqued strongly within critical literacy studies locally and internationally (Furness & Hunter, 2017; Yasukawa & Black, 2016).

One critique of this functional approach to adult literacy policy is that it promulgates a deficit view of people deemed to lack the requisite skills for economic participation and blames them for their situation (Yasukawa & Black, 2016). Such a stance discounts the complex lives of many adults who carry out multiple roles within their families and communities, often while dealing with insecurity in housing, work, income, and food (Rua et al., 2019). Those disproportionately experiencing such challenges are often Māori. However, literacy policymakers are often non-Māori who have minimal insight into the literacy aspirations of Māori adults and others for whom engagement with literacy presents just one of many difficulties in their lives.

This focus influences the pedagogy educators use. For example, activities are often teacher-directed and school-like and exhibit hierarchical teacher-learner relationships. The limitations imposed by the narrowed pedagogical options are compounded by the personal experiences of learners who have often had traumatic experiences of education prior to adulthood (Benseman & Tobias, 2003). This experience, alongside wide-ranging and often survival-oriented challenges in their daily lives, means that gaining skills for work may not be their first or only priority. As a result, there is often a mismatch between literacy education that adults value and

what is available in terms of content, pedagogy, accessibility, and outcomes (Hutchings et al., 2013; Potter et al., 2011).

Critical literacy studies, which include sociocultural approaches, challenge the narrow, individualistic skills focus of much current literacy policy. Sociocultural emphasis on social practices, along with the notions of multiliteracies and sociomateriality, which we discuss next, extends the conceptualisation of literacy beyond skills in reading and writing alphabetic text for economic purposes. These different understandings of literacy allow for broader views on learning and knowledge, as exemplified in the mātauranga Māori perspective described later.

Literacy as Sociocultural and Material Practices Involving Multiple Modes

Sociocultural perspectives examine the enactment and impact of power, empowerment, agency, and identity in literacy settings whereby text, specifically the texts' identities, are sites of struggle for power (Perry, 2012). A sociocultural lens questions how knowledge is constructed and used, critiques the authority of a writer to tell other's stories, considers how power relationships are established and whether a text includes or excludes particular readers or perspectives, and examines ways in which texts can position a reader (Blake, 2016; Hamilton, 2016; Yasukawa & Black, 2016). For example, when applied in Aotearoa, a sociocultural perspective highlights the primacy of literacy policy on reading and writing English language-based text, marginalising literacies based on te ao Māori and other languages.

Whilst acknowledging the importance of skills acquisition in becoming a literate person, sociocultural approaches focus more on the role of social practices that surround the use of skills. The social practices approach suggests that reading and writing involve more than simply coding and decoding text. Instead, it is a complex set of processes whereby literacy activities occur within social spaces that give meaning to the skills in use (Brandt & Clinton, 2002; Lynch & Prins, 2022; Papen, 2005; Whitten, 2018). In this understanding, literacy is acquired through dialogic communication and apprenticeship into literate discourse communities (Perry, 2012). This approach also highlights how literacy practices are shaped by ideological perspectives or world views in that people's ways of being in the world incorporate a usually taken for granted and tacit set of theories about what counts as a 'normal' person and the 'right' ways to think, feel or behave (Gee, 2008). Therefore, ideas about being a literate person are never neutral and are frequently contested. In Aotearoa, contestation around 'normal' and 'literate' reflect the legacy of colonisation.

A sociocultural perspective also emphasises how culture is present when people engage with one another around texts and construct meaning via social interactions. Indeed, cultural literacy studies demonstrate that reading, writing, and other forms of communication cannot be separated from the cultural knowledge that shapes how people comprehend their world (Hirsch, 1983). For example, the meaning of many words familiar to New Zealanders, such as 'bach' and 'jandals', are specific to New Zealand culture and may not be understood outside of Aotearoa. Therefore, engagement with texts involves "particular ways of behaving, interacting, valuing, thinking,

believing, speaking and often reading and writing that are accepted as instantiations of particular identities by specific groups" (Gee, 2008, p. 3).

A sociocultural approach includes the concept of multiliteracies, which challenges the predominance of language, particularly in printed and written forms, as the only, or the most important, mode of representation (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Kress, 2000). 'Multiliteracies' refers to the many modes of representation drawn on in communication and meaning making, thus extending beyond alphabetic text. These modes include movement, gestures, music, art, media, and spatial patterns. Further, literacy may be multimodal, such as when computers simultaneously emanate written text, signs, images and sound (Kress, 2000; Papen, 2005). Multiliteracies occur daily including in work, school, home, sport, social media and leisure activities.

Sociomateriality is a more recent extension of the sociocultural approach to literacy (Hamilton, 2016; Pahl, 2014), drawing direct attention to how literacy is facilitated by tools or technologies such as pencils, paper, keyboards, and the body (Miller, 2016, p. 35). This perspective highlights the agency of all things and how literacies emerge in contexts as the social and material aspects intermingle and are entangled within a whole system (Fenwick, 2010). Miller (2016) notes that the materials of literacy "are themselves socially constructed, weighted with assumptions about texts and the tools necessary to produce them" (p. 35). Sociomateriality's potential to support a broader view of literacy has not yet been fully adopted in Aotearoa.

This article views literacy as including skills for economic purposes but as primarily social, cultural, and material practices. We believe that many literacies are important to people in their lives, including different languages and modes of representation. This inclusive view of literacy contrasts sharply with the relatively narrow skills-for-economic-purposes view that predominates in adult literacy policy in Aotearoa and which constrains the inclusion of a Māori perspective of literacy.

Mātauranga Māori (Māori Epistemology) Offers a Cultural Understanding of Literacy

In addition to developing a broader understanding of literacy within Aotearoa, we must also think of a Māori culturally distinctive understanding of literacy. Māori, as the indigenous peoples of Aotearoa, have a perspective on literacy grounded in their epistemology, creation narratives and ontological realities. This understanding recognises Māori ways of being and knowing informed by mātauranga Māori and includes cultural beliefs, practices, specificities, and objects (Marsden & Royal, 2003; Royal, 1998, 2012; Sadler, 2007). When British settlers arrived in the eighteenth century, Māori people did not relinquish their pre-contact forms of literacy (Jenkins, 2000); many added the English language and its accompanying textual practices to their world (Jones & Jenkins, 2008). Furthermore, when Western notions of literacy were introduced in Aotearoa in the early 1800s, Māori uptake of written and print literacy was very strong (Rawiri, 2016).

Mātauranga Māori—the basis on which a culturally distinctive understanding of literacy might be derived—is part of a collective consciousness and body of knowledge developed to understand, comprehend, and explain a Māori experience of the world. A significant component of mātauranga Māori is the notion of whakapapa or genealogy, which can be defined as the process of layering one thing upon another (Mahuika, 2019, p. 1). As such, whakapapa provides what Mahuika (2019) calls the 'skeletal structure of Māori epistemology' and maps out the interconnectedness of humankind within life's natural order. Located within Māori creation narratives, whakapapa is viewed as a lineal process where the beginning of life can be genealogically traced back to the primal couple of Papatūānuku (Earth Mother) and Ranginui (Sky Father) as well as their children such as Tāne Mahuta (God of the Forest), Tangaroa (God of the Sea) and Tāwhirimātea (God of the Winds) from which all life as we know it today, both animate and inanimate, is derived (Matamua, 2018; Sadler, 2014; Royal, 1998; Smith, 2000; Te Awekotuku, 1991; Te Awekotuku et al., 2007). As a result of this creation narrative, whakapapa is important to how the Māori world often comprehend and interpret the world around them, contributing to their culture-specific notions of the interconnected self, intra- and inter-group relations, and sense of wellbeing (Durie et al., 2012; Rua et al., 2017). Here, we make two critical points. Firstly, although the Māori world has some shared understanding of creation narratives, it is a heterogeneous population made up of distinctive tribal groupings. As such, there are tribal variations in Māori creation narratives and mātauranga (knowledge). However, all Māori recognise Papatūānuku and Ranginui as the primary deities from which all life emanates. Secondly, historical and ongoing colonialism within Aotearoa has meant that today, many Māori are either partially or significantly disconnected from their whakapapa and mātauranga. With colonialism in mind, we must consider the diversity and complexity of the contemporary Māori diaspora when theorising Māori approaches to literacy.

Whakapapa, as a Māori cultural notion, is also the basis for Māori social structures into units of whānau (immediate and extended family), hapū (sub-tribal groups made up of connected whānau), iwi (collection of hapū) and waka (tribal affiliations to voyaging canoes such as Mataatua, Te Arawa and Tainui, which arrived in Aotearoa from the Pacific Islands around 800 years ago. With whakapapa as an important notion, the Māori world tends to shun individualism in the Cartesian sense, where individuals are decontextualised from other people and the natural environment, but rather, Māori favour an interconnected and cosmological view, understanding and comprehension of their world (Robertson & Masters-Awatere, 2007; Rua et al., 2017). Such holistic notions of the self are critical in understanding a Māori cultural notion of literacy.

It is also vital to acknowledge how the Māori worldview was and continues to be rendered inferior because of its perceived lack of value to those with a colonising agenda who settled in Aotearoa. Indeed, despite the early consumption of Western literacy by Māori people, colonial education policies have historically and systematically stripped Māori people of their language and practices with the aim of assimilating Māori people into Pākehā (European) culture and, by doing so, marginalising mātauranga Māori (Bishop & Glynn, 1999; Henry & Pene, 2001; Pihama et al., 2002; Smith, 1997; Smith, 1999; Walker et al., 2006; Wilson et al., 2021).

Māori Responses to Adult Literacy Policy Since 2001

The key goals of the Adult Literacy Strategy (ALS) were to increase the amount and quality of adult literacy education to enable adults to achieve the level of literacy necessary to participate fully in all aspects of life, including work, family and community (MoE, 2001). When the ALS was launched in 2001, Te Puni Kōkiri—the Government's principal policy advisor on Māori wellbeing and development—was concerned with its failure to embody a Māori perspective of literacy. With this concern in mind, Te Puni Kōkiri established the Māori Adult Literacy Working Party (MALWP), whose role was to advise Ministers on effective policy interventions, programmes and models of best practice to meet the goals of the ALS for Māori adults; to consider the appropriateness of developing a specific Māori adult literacy strategy; and to identify and explore any other issues specific to improving the literacy outcomes of adult Māori (Māori Adult Literacy Working Party, 2001). This work resulted in *Te Kawai Ora: Reading the world, reading the word, being the world*, which outlined that, for Māori, literacy needed to be a form of biliteracy and seen as a lifelong journey of building the capacity to "'read' and shape Māori and other worlds" (Māori Adult Literacy Working Party, 2001, p. 30). The MALWP sought control over authentic Māori solutions based on mātauranga Māori located within whānau, hapū and iwi and pointed to 40 years of successful Māori-led approaches in the education system such as Kōhanga Reo (Māori language nest), Kura Kaupapa Māori (total immersion primary and secondary schooling) and Whare Wānanga (tertiary education). These Māori-based educational institutions are informed by mātauranga Māori and Māori realities (ontology). A recommendation from the MALWP (2001) to re-conceptualise and rewrite the ALS within a Te Tiriti o Waitangi-based concept of biliteracy was not realised. However, policy development from a Māori perspective continued, resulting two years later in the *Māori Tertiary Education Framework* (MTEF) (Māori Tertiary Reference Group, 2003). This report supported Māori advancement initiatives within the Tertiary Education Strategy.

The MTEF has four tiers revealing priority areas for Māori success in education (Māori Tertiary Reference Group, 2003). The top tier recognises that te ao Māori consider Māori needs, aspirations and identity as paramount. The second tier focuses on visions for Māori advancement: (1) to live as Māori, (2) to actively participate as citizens of the world, and (3) to enjoy a high standard of living. The third tier provides guiding principles to meet the expectations of Māori for quality tertiary education: Ngā Kawenga (responsibilities), Tino Rangatiratanga (authority/self-determination), Toi te Mana (influence/empowerment), Mana Tiriti/Ahu Kāwanatanga (contribution/ partnership) and Whakanui (respect/inclusiveness). The final tier focuses on seven priority areas to strengthen the position of Māori within the tertiary sector: the role of tertiary education in the advancement of Māori whānau, hapū, iwi development; Māori leadership; Māori as sustainable wealth creators; kaupapa Māori provision; inclusive learning environments; lifelong learning pathways; and Māori-centred knowledge creation. Beyond the values and aspirations expressed in the MTEF, the report is important because it

clearly states that relationships between Māori people and the education sector must focus on the needs of Māori people and not the Government. The role is to support the vision of the MTEF whilst providing resourcing to enact and sustain the recommended practices.

A later example of push-back against mainstream adult literacy policy is evident in Te Wānanga o Aotearoa's response to the *Literacy, Language and Numeracy Action Plan (LLNAP) 2008–2012* (TEC, 2008). The LLNAP aimed to raise the literacy and numeracy (L + N) skills of the general workforce to enhance national productivity. According to Edwards (2010), however, the LLNAP presented a Eurocentric and functional view of literacy with an assimilationist position that located Māori adults as labour units needing particular kinds of upskilling. Acknowledging the value to Māori adults and whānau of raising workplace L + N, Edwards (2010) noted that Te Wānanga o Aotearoa included functional literacy in its four-layered literacy model but as one part of a much broader, holistic notion of literacy that reflects te ao Māori. Accordingly, mauri (life-force, essence) sits at the heart of the Wānanga o Aotearoa approach. Multiple literacies and (w)holism constitute the second layer. Functional literacy is incorporated in this layer, along with two other 'pillars' of literacy: cultural literacy and critical literacy. The third layer comprises cultural, social, economic and intellectual domains in which adults engage and learn for the express purposes of positive transformation supporting the mauri. The fourth (outer) layer embodies the upholding of kaitiaki responsibilities as tangata whenua of Aotearoa, referred to as 'Aotearoa identity' (Edwards, 2010). Supporting the approach of Te Wānanga o Aotearoa, Edwards (2010) recommended that literacy policy be informed by mātauranga Māori and include diverse solutions, noting that when cultural, critical and functional literacy are (w)holistically synchronic, then we can begin to envision ethno-transformation and change (p. 35).

The approach to literacy taken by Te Wānanga o Raukawa was also steeped in te ao Māori and challenged by the TEC for not adhering to a functional approach. As had their counterpart, Te Wānanga o Raukawa decried the TEC's policies as Eurocentric and failing to account for a te ao Māori view. The TEC then established *He Taunga Waka* to consider how culturally appropriate literacy workshops for adult Māori and Pasifika learners could be delivered (Literacy Aotearoa, 2015) before commissioning the New Zealand Council for Educational Research to develop a new strategy document to advance Māori notions of literacy: *Haea Te Pū Ata: A National Strategy for Māori Adult Literacy and Numeracy: 2016–2020 (and beyond)* (Hutchings & Ikin, 2016).

The Haea Te Pu Ata strategy describes literacy as including biliteracy in te reo Māori and English and literacy practices that express and value a Māori worldview and where learning contributes to Māori wellbeing (p. 9), a similar description to that provided by the MALWP in 2001. Principles which underpin the Haea te Pū Ata strategy include collaboration with and between Māori learners, whānau, marae, iwi and Māori communities in the provision of L + N services across a range of sectors (kōkiritanga); working in ways consistent with tikanga Māori and in the best interests of whānau, hapū and iwi (kaupapa Māori); and decision-making on design and implementation of strategies resting with whānau, communities, regions and iwi based on what is best for their communities (tino rangatiratanga). Lastly, improved

outcomes are sought for Māori learners and their whānau, prioritising increased participation, skill development and learning achievement, and contribution to whānau wellbeing (whai hua) (Hutchings & Ikin, 2016). Although the TEC took some encouraging steps such as supporting Whanau Ora and community organisations to increase the reach of TEC-funded L+N programmes into marae and homes (Furness et al., 2021; TEC, 2015), Haea te Pū Ata (Hutchings & Ikin, 2016) was subsumed under the policy document operational at the time—the Literacy and Numeracy Implementation Strategy 2015–2019—thereby constraining the benefits it might have had for Māori learners.

These examples showcase repeated efforts made by Māori scholars and educators to incorporate Māori perspectives of literacy into adult literacy policy. These efforts have included designing approaches that do not exclude a functional view of literacy in its broad sense of all literacy activities serving a purpose but rather locate it within a much broader and culturally meaningful notion of literacy where cultural and critical literacy is emphasised. This broader view of literacy, which draws on te ao Māori and matauranga Māori and brings together Māori values, beliefs and practices, centres whakapapa—the connectedness of all things—as how the world is understood and interpreted. How such a perspective can be embodied in adult literacy policy and practice has been explicated many times as our examples show.

Māori-Led Literacy and Numeracy Practices

A study undertaken in 2009 entitled *Te piko o te māhuri, tērā te tupu o te rākau: Language and literacy in marae-based programmes* (Mlcek et al., 2009) explored the utility and potential of marae-based education programmes to provide effective foundation learning opportunities for Māori learners. The research goals were to highlight the potential of marae-based education to provide, develop and improve learning opportunities for Māori. The research sought to build evidence of how marae-based delivery occurs through holistic learning that might enhance learner retention and success in tertiary programmes. The researchers were also interested in how the juxtaposition of Māori and non-Māori ideologies makes a pedagogical impact on the development of L+N for Māori learners. The study focused on two programmes delivered mainly through te reo Māori by Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiārangi: the Bachelor of Mātauranga Māori and Te Pou Hono, a bridging to tertiary programme course.

The findings highlighted the value learners found in participating in learning on marae and that this led to achieving both immediate success and longer-term learning engagement. Several aspects of the marae environment were significant in supporting foundation learning, such as being in a place where they are surrounded by tīpuna (ancestors); coming together in a supportive group from the same area; and the inclusion of community places and people as an enactment of whole whānau and community learning. The marae-based learning system was seen as supporting learning through the continual reflection on tikanga (practices) and kawa (protocols) of the different areas the learners came from. The marae-based approach generated a deeper learning experience motivated by a desire to learn for the good of ‘our

children' and engendering and promoting knowledge acquisition that enables learners to continue in a degree programme. Language development in te reo Māori was also promoted, including writing and critical thinking (Mlcek et al., 2009).

In 2013, Literacy Aotearoa (2013) conducted a research project involving Māori learners engaged in three whānau-based programmes and one Modern Apprentice pilot programme on literacy, language, and numeracy (LLN) and the strategies used to engage Māori learners and their whānau. The programmes reviewed worked with learners to critically analyse their negative learning experiences to avoid repeating them. The research also assessed the Māori cultural competence of LLN providers and the embedding of LLN within a cultural context and te ao Māori.

A key finding was that programmes developed using mātauranga Māori, te reo Māori me ōna tikanga (Māori worldview, language and customs) were able to better connect with whānau compared to mainstream-based literacy programmes, through culturally appropriate teaching pedagogies and engagement practices such as tuakana/teina (older whānau members mentoring younger whānau members), whānaungatanga (relational practices of engagement) and manaakitanga (caring relationships that lead to wellbeing). The findings highlighted the importance of relational connectedness between LLN providers and learners as a pathway toward tino rangatiratanga for individuals and whānau. The findings demonstrated that when LLN programme providers establish a culturally appropriate setting, the learners developed their reading, comprehension and writing skills, increasing their confidence to engage in a range of everyday tasks such as helping their children with their homework. They were able to develop better relationships with whānau members, acquire positive learning habits and develop strategies for managing daily life. Their confidence and communication skills increased, and they gained a sense of identity through their engagement with te reo Māori (Literacy Aotearoa, 2013).

The effectiveness of the whānau LLN programmes can be attributed to how they were culturally tailored to learners' needs and contextualised so that they were relevant to the learner and their whānau. A range of programme tools, such as using te reo Māori, co-constructing learner goals and pathways and engaging positively with others were valued by learners. The learners valued their improved use of te reo Māori and English and the whānau-orientated learning activities that increased whānaungatanga (relational practices). The poupou (tutors) valued the learner-centred model grounded in Māori aspirations and were clear that future LLN programme delivery needs to be grounded in te ao Māori, mātauranga Māori, and te reo me ōna tikanga (Literacy Aotearoa, 2013).

Research by Rawiri focused on the literacies of her Whanganui people, considered adult literacy policy in the light of the survival of Māori as a people and reflected upon Te Wānanga o Raukawa navigating the TEC's requirements for literacy in tertiary education (Rawiri, 2016). Her research showed that recollections of literacy by her people focused on marginalisation and assimilation, which continue to this day. The kaumātua (elderly leaders of the community) interviewed reflected upon literacy with memories of deceit, desecration, humiliation, and trauma and equated literacy with institutional racism, the promotion of individualism over collectivism, and lack of relevance to iwi aspirations. These experiences resulted in intergenerational resistance to literacy programmes and education generally. Rawiri

compared the negative experiences recorded in her research to the Wānanga o Raukawa approach to literacy that incorporates Māori values alongside reading and writing. These values focus on recovering and regenerating ancestral language, culture, and knowledge systems; affirming ancestral genealogies (whakapapa); nourishing ancestral homelands (ūkaipōtanga); expressing belonging and interconnectedness (whānaungatanga); demonstrating custodianship (kaitiakitanga); practising generosity, humility, and respectfulness (manaakitanga); paying deep respect to the spiritual realm for spiritual wellbeing (wairuatanga); striving for excellence for individual and collective wellbeing (pūkengatanga); working towards a common purpose for collective wellbeing (kōtahitanga); and behaving in ways that are self-determining (rangatiratanga) (Rawiri, 2016). In contrast to the experiences described by kaumatua, Te Wānanga o Raukawa's learners were valued for who they are.

The TEC attempted to restrict Te Wānanga o Raukawa from running programmes with these values due to the funding rigidities attached to adult literacy policy. Taking a case to the Waitangi Tribunal (WAI 2698), Raukawa resisted TEC demands and have continued offering programmes relevant to whānau aspirations grounded in tikanga. The research across these three locations are reflections in practice of the Māori-led policy responses we presented earlier. This research illustrates how Māori-led forms of adult literacy development address the damage inflicted by colonising practices in mainstream education and enrich community and whānau lives.

Discussion

Sociocultural theories have helped move adult literacy policy and practice in Aotearoa beyond a primary emphasis on skills for economic purposes. The importance of meaningful contexts and appropriate pedagogy for literacy learning and the idea that literacy embodies social, cultural, and relational dimensions as well as technical ones is recognised. However, the valuing of Māori perspectives of literacy is not yet evident. Thus, we argue that sociocultural approaches have broadened our notions of literacy to some extent, but policy has still failed to respond adequately to Māori worldviews and aspirations for literacy.

Māori perspectives of literacy centre on Māori ontological realities, worldviews and methodologies and, therefore, differ significantly from Western perspectives that underpin the Government's focus. The interconnectedness of all things is paramount in te ao Māori; thus, the relational dimensions of literacy are of utmost importance for flourishing as human beings. Definitions of literacy that emphasise skills use over social, cultural, and relational meaning are likely to appear bereft to Māori adult learners. Further, while Western literacies are also embraced as essential for participation in Aotearoa and the world (Derby, 2021), Māori scholars and educators argue that literacy policies must also reflect upon the broader effects of colonialism, cultural dispossession, and Māori disengagement with the education system (Rawiri, 2016). To redress historical traumas and render literacy programmes more relevant, policies and programmes must reflect Māori notions of literacy and promote literacy as a tool for tino rangatiratanga. As we have noted, such an approach is possible in Kōhanga Reo, Kura Kaupapa Māori, Wharekura and Whare Wānanga.

As Literacy Aotearoa (2013), Mleck et al. (2009), Rawiri (2016), and Te Maro et al. (2019) have shown, programmes that are of value to Māori adults require content and pedagogical practices that are relevant and meaningful for the diverse aspirations of Māori whānau, hapū and iwi. While this may challenge policymakers and non-Māori educators, all the research required to adjust L + N programmes is available per the reports covered in this article. Such articulations of a Māori perspective can guide policymakers to consider settings where Māori adults are, embody Māori cultural practices and protocols, challenge Eurocentric approaches, uphold intergenerational aspirations, centre Māori principles and values, recognise and value literacies beyond alphabetic text (multiliteracies), prioritise biliteracy and be adequately resourced.

Māori scholars and educators have clarified their expectations regarding adult literacy policy and practice so policymakers cannot claim ignorance. Many policy-related and research-based examples set out what is desired and what is effective. These examples are underpinned by authoritative analyses of pre-contact forms of literacy and a 40-year history of Māori-led approaches in education from early childhood to tertiary levels, all of which embody te ao Māori and mātauranga Māori. Despite this body of work, the literacy field in Aotearoa has yet to embrace a Māori perspective in adult literacy policy.

Concluding Comments

Adult literacy policy based on a narrowly focused definition of literacy has dominated literacy programmes for adults in Aotearoa. Such programmes have failed to address inequities in the Māori literacy rates, and we contend that a Māori definition of literacy is of paramount importance in this regard. Māori literacies must also account for the role of colonialism that has resulted in a deep distrust of Government-funded initiatives. This distrust has ensured Māori-led efforts to redefine relevant and appropriate literacy for Māori, as exemplified in this article. As a result, and drawing upon a Te Tiriti o Waitangi partnership model, it is imperative that the Government not only recognise this Māori perspective but engage with Māori in utmost good faith to support and resource adult literacy policies and practices that are led, developed, and delivered by Māori for Māori toward tino rangatiratanga.

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