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**CHANGING HEARTS AND MINDS:
INVESTIGATING TRANSFORMATIVE
PRAXIS FROM PARTICIPATING IN THE
POUTAMA POUNAMU BLENDED LEARNING**

A thesis
submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree
of

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by

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For my Grandads:

Kiwi 'Don' Webb whose right to participate in te ao Māori was taken from him. I understand, now, what this did to your mauri and I am doing everything I can to ensure my little whānau get that opportunity back.

And my Grandad Graeme Hall who actively and respectfully engaged in te ao Māori as an ally. You embodied biculturalism and mana ōrite and were very well loved in your community because of this.

I am so proud to be of you both and I felt you with me throughout my entire journey writing this thesis which I would like to dedicate to you.

Abstract

The Poutama Pounamu Blended Learning offers a unique bicultural opportunity to critically examine ourselves within the fabric of our society. This metaphoric fabric includes an inequitable education system which was shaped by, and designed to support, an oppressive colonial agenda. Within this education system, which has methodically assimilated and underserved its indigenous Māori children, holding a mirror up to ourselves as teachers to examine our own beliefs, values and practices is absolutely critical but very rarely done. The Blended Learning's carefully considered underpinnings of Critical and Kaupapa Māori theories provide the tools to raise consciousness. A conscientised educator can recognise, understand and deconstruct prejudice, bias and racism when it reveals itself. This process is achieved by resisting systems and practices that perpetuate the marginalisation of Māori in favour of power-balancing transformative praxis which works to value language, culture and identity as assets in education.

This thesis describes the enduring implications of participating in the Poutama Pounamu Blended Learning by focussing on a number of educators in English-Medium state schools - the very context where our Māori children struggle the most to fit in and prove their potential. These educators suggest that this is an indigenised, evidence based, transformative education reform programme which has changed their lives and the lives of many others who have participated within this project. It has empowered and liberated Māori, Pākehā and Tauīwi participants alike by modelling the nurturing and liberating cultural relationships for responsive pedagogy that all students in Aotearoa should be experiencing. This is a pedagogy which can open hearts and minds and nurture a mauri ora pathway to educational freedom and success.

Mihi

Ko Taranaki te maunga

Ko Urenui me Waitara nga awa

Ko Tokomaru te waka

Ko Ngāti Mutunga me Ngāti Maru nga iwi

Ko Toroa Te Ika Wairangi tōku tīpuna

Ko Finn, Cleo, Sam raua ko Tessa ōku tamariki

No Tokoroa ahau

Ahakoā kahore i noho mātou ki roto i te kōpū o te ao Māori, kei reira anō tōku tātai whakapapa.

Heoi, nōku anō te whiwhi.

Ko Carma Maisy ahau.

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Chapter One - Introduction

Introduction

This study is titled *Changing Hearts and Minds: Investigating transformative Praxis from Participating in the Poutama Pounamu Blended Learning*. The objective of this research is to understand and share the experiences, learnings and enduring praxis of multiple former participants of Poutama Pounamu's Blended Learning programme. This innovative movement for social justice and education reform promotes agentic responses to the challenge of achieving equity, excellence and belonging for all students. This study provides a qualitative examination of the experiences of veteran educators. It attempts to identify the praxis that has endured across time within five English-medium contexts in Aotearoa (New Zealand).

Three broad questions guided this research:

- 1. What were your key critical learnings during your experience as a kaiwhakaako (educators who participate in the programme then share their learnings with a group of their peers) within the Poutama Pounamu Blended Learning?*
- 2. What were the implications of participating in curriculum and pedagogy grounded in te ao Māori - a traditional pre-colonial Māori world view?*
- 3. What long term impact have these experiences had on your own praxis and the praxis of others?*

The stories that are shared and the theories that emerge are intended to provide authentic examples of the enduring impact Poutama Pounamu Blended Learning has had on these former kaiwhakaako. Insights into the programme's ability to effectively promote agentic responses to educational inequities, especially, and critically, for Māori students in English-medium education settings in Aotearoa.

Research Design

Deliberate acts of resistance are required to counter the unjust reality faced by many Māori students in their journey through the English-medium education system. This includes taking a considered stance about how and why academic research is conducted (Berryman et al., 2013; Bishop, 1999; L. Smith, 1997). This study was carefully designed to resist perpetuating the mistakes of past research endeavours. It aimed to bring together the worldviews of multicultural participants in a respectful and dignified way.

Culturally responsive research is the conceptual companion to the culturally responsive pedagogy promoted in Poutama Pounamu Blended Learning (Berryman et al., 2013). This research framework, therefore, became the logical choice in ensuring the integrity and validity of this project. Culturally

responsive research methodology provides a framework which encourages dialogic encounters based on intimate, mutually respectful relationships (Berryman et al., 2013). This mirrored the existing connections I had with my fellow research participants and allowed the exploration of the transformative potential of these relationships in a research context. This research paradigm required belief in the absolute value of each participant's identity, culture and lived experiences - this included understanding and acknowledging the subjectivities, positionalities and ideologies I brought to the study as the researcher (Berryman et al., 2013). Interviews as Conversations was a method which provided a responsive, dialogic space for sense making, one where I could be and learn alongside the participants (Berryman et al., 2013). Grounded Theory provided an organic means of amplifying the voices of the educators who generously shared their collaborative stories, while Found Poems punctuated the project with powerful raw verbatim. Finally, the method of Collaborative Storying provided a powerful means of presenting the outcome of the coming together of peoples, cultures and worldviews in the co-creation of new knowledge.

The thesis is presented in six chapters. Chapter One introduces the research project. Chapter Two is a literature review which summarises research relating to the state of our education system and the historic contexts which lead to the reality of intergenerational disparities for Māori. Acts of resistance, including Poutama Pounamu's Blended Learning are also reviewed. In Chapter Three the methodology is introduced and explained and the research methods are defined. Findings from the research are presented through collaborative storying and found poems in Chapter Four. The meaning, importance and relevance of the results are presented in the discussion in Chapter Five before a final summary of the research is presented in the conclusion in Chapter Six.

Chapter Two - Literature Review

Only by facing the facts of history and accepting what they reveal about colonisation can we know true reconciliation with Māori. Truth is a necessary prerequisite for the healing of broken relationships wherever we find them... until Pākehā bridge the knowledge gap about the Treaty of Waitangi and come to terms with the facts surrounding it, neither Māori nor Pākehā can fully heal their relationship with each other. (O'Regan, 2001. as cited in Consedine & Consedine, 2001. para. 1).

Introduction

Understanding the fabric of our society is critical to living in a socially just way which respects and upholds the *mana* (power, prestige and moral authority) of those we share these lands and lives with. In our colonised nation, mutual respect and shared mana can only be genuinely realised when we understand and acknowledge the truth and implications of our individual and collective pasts. Sister Pauline O'Regan, CBE, accepted personal responsibility for growing her own understanding of the intentions and implications of colonisation in Aotearoa, despite the uncomfortable fact that the people she shares her lineage with, and the church she was devoted to, were perpetrators in the oppression of the indigenous peoples of this land - *tangata whenua*, now collectively known as Māori. And like the Catholic church, our education system similarly played a significant role in the oppression of Māori. In the name of progress and civilisation, a people's language, culture and identity were methodically eroded away as they were assimilated into the imported European colonial ways of knowing and being. These uncomfortable truths are important to understand, and critically so for those engaged in education, for each professional choice we make serves to either uphold or resist a status quo built on a colonial past which privileged one group through the destruction of another.

This literature review aims to elucidate the historic events which shaped our education system to its current inequitable state that sees Māori routinely underserved. It brings together data and findings which highlight the disparities in experience and outcomes between Māori and non-Māori students in our contemporary mainstream education settings. The contrasting experiences and outcomes of students who participate in self-determining settings which uphold the principles and practices of the kaupapa Māori movement will also be considered. Literature pertaining to our shared history is then discussed, beginning with an investigation of the pre-existing traditional Māori system of education, followed by an analysis of the policies and practices imposed by the Crown during the colonisation of Aotearoa. Major acts of resistance to inequity in our education system will then be explored. Close attention will be paid to the research and theorising of Poutama Pounamu, and in particular their Blended Learning Professional Learning and Development (PLD) programme which aims to decolonise and indigenise the hearts and minds of its participants to realise their shared *kaupapa* (vision) of "equity, excellence and belonging, building strong foundations for the future" (Poutama Pounamu, n.d. para. 27).

Current education climate in Aotearoa

Disparities within our English-medium education system

The outcome divide between Māori and non-Māori students in Aotearoa's education system is well established (Auditor-General, 2016; Bishop et al., 2009; Chzhen et al., 2018; Else, 1997). Disparities in education between these groups were first statistically recorded by acting head of the Māori Affairs Department Sir Jack Hunn (1961). Hunn's government commissioned *Report on Department of Māori Affairs*, commonly referred to as *The Hunn Report*, identified that "Māori educational achievements (but not their capacity) are below par" (1961, p. 98). This unjust reality was reconfirmed 55 years later by the Auditor General who, at the conclusion of an independent five-year audit of education for Māori, reported that "too many Māori children leave school without the education they deserve" (Auditor-General, 2016. p. 6). While disparities between Māori and non-Māori students were first officially reported in the 1960s, research has demonstrated that our education system has, by design, served to disproportionately oppress Māori children and young people by undermining and removing their culture, beliefs and epistemologies since the establishment of Mission Schools in 1814 (Walker, 2016). While discourses around the roots of this inequity have shifted with time - from deficit theories of Māori ineptitude to an evidence-based criticality of educational policies, systems and practises themselves - the outcomes have remained largely the same: Māori students in English-Medium contexts are marginalised, underserved and are not achieving to their full potential (Bishop, et al., 2009; Else, 1997; Office of the Auditor General, 2016; Waitangi Tribunal, 1999). In 2020 The Education Review Office (ERO) acknowledged the inherent and chronic nature of this inequity, stating, "generally, Māori learners have not done well in our system" (p. 8).

Success is socially constructed – a concept which is defined and measured in accordance with the cultural norms and values of the powerholders in a community (Hirsch, 2019; Mahaki & Mahaki, 2007). In English-medium education, success has traditionally been defined and measured quantitatively against Western, European standards of high academic attainment and, historically, Christian values and behaviours (A. Durie, 1998). Inevitably, this model of success, constructed through an entirely foreign lens, was incongruous to indigenous Māori students of Aotearoa on whom it was imposed (Walker, 2016). And, since the inception of compulsory English-medium schooling in Aotearoa, quantitative data measuring this construct of success has demonstrated inequitable outcomes for Māori who appear to have always done less well than their peers (Bishop, et al., 2009; Else, 1997). Qualitative data, which considers the whole child and their experiences, has emerged more prominently in recent years. Cleland (2017) explains, "qualitative research allows you to ask questions that cannot be easily put into numbers to understand human experience" (p. 6). This participatory exercise in voice-sharing is extremely important in a colonised nation where indigenous stories have been deliberately untold and mis-told by the coloniser (Jackson, 2019a). By examining qualitative data alongside quantitative

measures, a more complete and accurate picture can be built of the lived experiences of Māori students in English-medium education. ERO supports the validity of holistic data, asserting, “there are two key aspects to education outcomes – wellbeing and achievement. They are linked and can reinforce each other” (2021, p. 4). Both wellbeing and achievement are prioritised in the government’s refreshed Māori education strategy *Ka Hikitia Ka Hāpaitia* (Ministry of Education, 2021). Five holistic outcome domains, comprising both qualitative and quantitative measures, and inspired by Māori metaphors have been established based on research, evidence and robust consultation with Māori (Ministry of Education, 2021). An analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data from English-medium settings follows.

In 2018, 89% (176,565) of Māori school-aged children and young people were enrolled in English-medium education in Aotearoa (Ministry of Education, 2019). Inequitable academic outcomes become evident early in the primary years of these students. In 2016, Māori students in Year 4 were, on average, working half a curriculum level behind their New Zealand European peers in Reading, Writing and Mathematics – an achievement gap which statistically widens with time at school (Ministry of Education, 2017). As reported by Statistics New Zealand, academic outcomes are improving for Māori students in English-medium education but this progress is slow and results remain below the national average (Statistics New Zealand, 2020). This perpetual disparity is clearly highlighted in the data from the *Ngā Haeata o Aotearoa: Ka Hikitia 2019 Report*. Here, the rates of Māori students leaving school with National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) Level 2 and above have increased 20% since 2009 – on par with the progress rate for non-Māori students, however, in 2018 only 65% of Māori students attained Level 2 NCEA compared with 79% of their non-Māori peers (Ministry of Education, 2019). This indicates a disproportionate number of young Māori unprepared for the knowledge economy they are entering – one built around and requiring the intellectual capital, competencies and skills which higher levels of education provide (Pont, 2001). Employment rates in our knowledge economy mimic the disparities in our education system, with The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment summarising that “Māori have generally poorer labour market outcomes compared to the rest of New Zealanders” (2021, para. 7).

This achievement gap is the norm in English-medium education settings in Aotearoa and is evident from primary school through to higher education: 2018 saw just 34% of Māori students leave English-medium education with NCEA Level 3 compared with 54% of their non-Māori peers (Ministry of Education, 2019). The number of Māori learners enrolled in Bachelors, Graduate Certificates or Diplomas - 26% - was also disproportionate with the 40% of non-Māori enrollees (Ministry of Education, 2019). The disparity becomes more pronounced with higher levels in education – in 2018 Honours, Masters and Doctorate degrees were undertaken by 7% of Māori learners with twice the rate of enrolments by non-Māori learners (Ministry of Education, 2019).

As well as lower rates and levels of academic attainment, Māori children and young people are proportionally over represented in statistics which indicate disengagement, social difficulties and a lack of belonging in English-medium education contexts (Education Counts, 2020). Data from the 2019 Term 2 Attendance Survey shows that the rate of regular school attendance for Māori students has declined steadily from 58% in 2011 to 44% in 2019 (Ministry of Education, 2019). Māori students and their *whānau* (family) are more likely to seek an early leaving exemption – a formal requirement under the Education Act for 15-year-old students who wish to leave school before their sixteenth birthday (Ministry of Education, 2021). In 2018, early leaving exemptions were granted at a rate of 11.2 for every 1,000 learners compared with a rate of 24.5 for Māori learners (Ministry of Education, 2019). Māori children and young people are also stood down, suspended, excluded and expelled at a higher rate than any other ethnic group. Education Counts (2020) explains, “stand downs, suspensions, exclusions and expulsions are measures of a school’s reaction to challenging behaviour” (p. 1). And while Māori suspension, exclusion and expulsion rates have steadily decreased since 2009, the rate that Māori students are stood down from school has been increasing since 2015 (Education Counts, 2020). A range of qualitative data from the 2018 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) indicates that 15-year-old Māori students, more than their non-Māori peers, lack a sense of safety, support and belonging in their English-Medium contexts. Findings revealed that only 63% of Māori respondents reported feeling like they belong at school, almost one third of Māori respondents (28%) felt their teacher did not understand them and approximately one quarter (24%) of Māori respondents did not agree with feeling safe at school (May et al., 2019). Voice gifted by Māori youth in the *Education Matters to Me* (2017) study supports these sentiments of disconnection and isolation at school. These young people said:

‘Racism exists – we feel little and bad’ (p. 18)

‘If they can’t understand me how can I understand them?’ (p. 21)

‘I sense stereotypes in my teacher’s eyes and gestures and how they act towards me makes me feel like leaving.’ (p. 18)

The contrasting climate of the Kaupapa Māori education system

The existence of inequity in English-Medium education is confirmed and amplified when exploring the contrasting experiences and outcomes for students of the Kaupapa Māori education movement. The delivery of the New Zealand Curriculum in te reo Māori more than 51% of the time can be officially referred to as Māori-medium education – an experience available in many mainstream schools across Aotearoa. However, the Ministry of Education (2014) recognised key theoretical, philosophical and cultural foundations, which together work to “deliver exceptional results for Māori” (p.3). These foundations were specifically identified at Kaupapa Māori settings where:

- Māori identity, language and culture is highly valued and celebrated;
- the curriculum is delivered in and through the Māori language, and;
- Māori identity, language and culture is embedded in the governance, leadership, teaching and learning and physical environment of the school. (Ministry of Education, 2014. pp. 3 – 4)

While Kaupapa Māori education is not a homogeneous experience - each setting is uniquely shaped by *iwi* (extended kinship group: tribe), *hapū* (kinship group: sub-tribe) and *rōpū* (group) affiliations and aspirations (Rau et al., 2019) - an ubiquitous offering is education “based in traditional Māori knowledge and pedagogy” (Tocker, 2007. p. 67). Sir Mason Durie (2003) contends that this assertion of self-determination enables Māori to live as Māori. These indigenous educational institutions deliver both *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa*, the national curriculum for students in Māori-Medium settings and place-based, localised curriculums (Ministry of Education, 2021; Parata, 2015). Success is socially constructed within Māori epistemologies, and guiding core philosophies, such as those offered in *Te Aho Matua* or from an *iwi* perspective, that enable the holistic and simultaneous learning, development and growth of children and young people, their *whānau* (family) and communities in many of the schools (ERO, 2014). An analysis of data from settings which operate under the philosophical underpinnings of the Kaupapa Māori movement show a very different trend for Māori.

Academic outcomes for children and young people in Kaupapa Māori education settings resist national trends of disparity and inequity (ERO, 2021b; Ministry of Education, 2014; Rau, et al., 2019). Students of these particular contexts are statistically more likely to remain at school until they are 17 years or older (Ministry of Education, 2019). In 2018, 80% of learners in these Māori-medium settings attained NCEA level 2 or above, a rate on par with their non-Māori peers (79%) (Ministry of Education, 2019). Contrasts in academic outcomes between education settings are evident in the *Ngā Haeata o Aotearoa: Ka Hikitia 2019 Report* which illustrates the accelerated progress of Māori students in Māori-medium education who, in 2018, achieved NCEA Level 3 or University Entrance at a higher rate than all learners. According to the 2021 Education Review Office’s *Te Kura Huanui* report, Kaupapa Māori education contexts have provided the conditions for Māori children and young people to excel holistically. Findings from this project highlight the clear “ability of Māori-medium education to continually produce confident, successful graduates who are strengthened by their whakapapa, te reo Māori me ngā tikanga Māori” (ERO, 2021. p. 6).

While the Education Review Office use the generalised term ‘Māori Medium Education’, holistic success and achievement is specific to *Te Kōhanga Reo*, *Ngā Kura a iwi* and *Kura Kaupapa Māori* settings. Graduates of these settings from across Aotearoa shared their voice in *Te Kura Huanui*. Participants commonly aligned their success with a strong sense of belonging, inclusion and connectedness – *whānau*-type relationships which successive research has found frequently alludes their Māori peers in English-medium settings (Bishop & Berryman, 2013; Office of the Children’s

Commissioner, 2018; May et al., 2019). Students and graduates of Kaupapa Māori settings interviewed for Te Kura Huanui (Ministry of Education, 2021b) anonymously shared:

“We felt aroha. We felt, heard and saw manaaki. We saw, felt and heard whanaungatanga. We could touch it. Those are valuable treasures as you make your way in the world” (p. 8).

“It is a kura whānau, that’s the best description. Everything we did was as a whānau. We would never push anyone to the side, we would move as one. We would learn together – waiata, lessons, work on the marae. It was being one, we had strong bonds” (p. 14).

These experiences contrast greatly with those shared by Māori students of English-Medium settings in the PISA (2019) study. Evidently, Kaupapa Māori settings generally provide safe, culturally responsive environments which enable students to realise their potential. Concerns expressed historically by Sir Jack Hunn and contemporarily by the Auditor General of Māori being underserved in our English-Medium education system are extraneous for the majority of students in Kaupapa Māori contexts.

The Enduring Impact of an Inequitable Education System

The principles of the Treaty of Waitangi have been mandated in our education system through the requirements of governing documents and legislation including The New Zealand Curriculum, Our Code Our Standards and The Education Act, 1989. However, academic, social, cultural and wellbeing outcomes reveal an inequitable English-medium system where partnership, protection and participation were never as readily available or accessible to Māori students and their whānau. The Ministry of Education confirm this stance, stating:

What is clear from data over many years is that the education system has consistently failed whānau, hapū, and iwi for many generations, and this has led to low expectations by all of education system performance for Māori and of Māori achievement. (as cited in The Office of the Auditor-General, 2012. p. 15)

This reality directly contrasts with Bolton’s (2017) definition of an equitable education system as “one where all students, regardless of their ethnicity, socioeconomic status or abilities, can succeed” (p. v).

The inability of our state funded education system to deliver equitable outcomes and enact the principles of The Treaty of Waitangi has enduring detrimental effects on the students it has underserved. As the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2008) asserts, “Education plays a key role in determining how you spend your adult life – a higher level of education means higher earnings, better health, and a longer life” (p. 1). Labour market statistics in Aotearoa mimic the gaps and disparities in our education system with Māori disproportionately represented in unemployment rates, youth Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) rates and in low skilled and unskilled

employment rates (Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, 2021). Māori are further disproportionately represented in material hardship and incarceration rates and in negative health statistics including the highest suicide rate of any ethnic group in Aotearoa (Chief Coroner, 2020; Ministry of Health, 2019; Policy, Strategy and Research Group, 2007; Stats NZ, 2021).

Critical educationalists believe in the emancipatory potential of education – Freire reconceptualised education as the practice of freedom; an opportunity to escape oppression (Giroux, 2010). But, as it stands, our state funded education system continues to marginalise rather than emancipate many of its Māori students – 3,285 young Māori left school without a formal NCEA qualification in 2020, in what has been described by Executive Director of the New Zealand Māori Council, Matthew Tukaki, as a breach of Te Tiriti o Waitangi (New Zealand Māori Council, 2020). Tukaki is referring to the changes that have been brought about with the introduction of the 2020 Education and Training Act. Under this new education act, one of the primary objectives for Boards of Trustees is to give effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi, the Māori language version of the Treaty of Waitangi by:

- working to ensure their plans, policies and local curriculum reflect local tikanga Māori, mātauranga Māori and te ao Māori
- taking all reasonable steps to make instruction available in tikanga Māori and te reo Māori and
- achieving equitable outcomes for Māori students. (Ministry of Education, 2021. n.d.)

These system reforms are a significant law change that require Boards of Trustees to respond in critically conscious ways that are cognisant of the historic context of our education system. In order to give effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi, Boards necessarily must enact this documents te ao Māori principles of *kāwangatanga*, (authority, governorship) *tino rangatiratanga* (self-determination) and *oritetanga* (equality, equal opportunity). Thoughtful and deliberate resourcing and critical support is required for the successful implementation of such significant system reforms. An understanding of the historic context of our education system is an excellent starting point in raising awareness and critical consciousness.

Historic Context of our Education System

Traditional Māori Education

If we are to give effect to Te Tiriti it is important to acknowledge and explore the sophisticated, well established educational traditions of Māori which pre-date European contact and often contrast with taken for granted Western ways of being and knowing. Jones et al. (1995) describe a system which “consisted of a powerful knowledge base, a complex oral tradition and a dynamic ability to respond to new challenges and changing needs” (p. 34). At the heart of traditional Māori education is mātauranga Māori (Melbourne, 2009). This translates directly to English as “Māori knowledge” (Moorfield, 2021.

para. 1) but, as with many Māori words and phrases, mātauranga Māori encompasses a richer and much broader concept (Hikuroa, 2017). Mātauranga Māori is defined by *The Royal Society Te Apārangi* (2017) as “an indigenous body of knowledge that arises from a worldview based upon kinship relationships between people and the natural world” (para. 3). According to Walker (2016) the intergenerational process of sharing mātauranga ensured a “sustainable design for living” (p. 19) which was adapted and refined in response to the unique conditions and environment of Aotearoa. Dynamic in nature, Sir Mason Durie (2017) asserts that “mātauranga Māori is an always evolving, underlying body of knowledge” (p. 15) which can guide understanding, *kawa* (practices) and *tikanga* (principles). Calman (2012) suggests that in this strong oral culture, educative tools included the ritualised and highly refined methods of “*waiata* (songs), *whakataukī* (proverbs), *kōrero tawhito* (history), *pūrākau* (stories) and *whakapapa* (genealogy)” (para. 4). Learning took place collaboratively and cooperatively and knowledge was imparted unselfishly (Calman, 2012; Melbourne, 2009).

In Māori society, each important aspect of life had an associated system of knowledge transfer and skill acquisition, as well as rituals to mark each step in the learning process (Calman, 2012). Melbourne (2009) aligns traditional Māori education with the contemporary European concept of lifelong learning. This is inspired and supported by Tai Tin’s translation of the ancient concept of *whare* to mean “longevity of vision” (Tin, 2007. as cited in Melbourne, 2009. p. 12). ‘Whare’ preceded the various skill sets being mastered, for example *whare-pora* (weaving), *whare-mata* (bird snaring and fishing) and *whare-tātai* (astronomy) (Calman, 2012). ‘Whare’, in the instance of education, does not necessarily signify its occurrence in a house or physical space, but indicates a dedication to the learning and acquisition of life-long skills (Melbourne, 2009). A sacred educational edifice which did exist was *whare-wānanga* (place of higher learning) (Calman, 2012). Within the walls of these formal institutions of education, students, selected on their chiefly lineage and high academic scholarship, were taught their “own genealogy of knowledge” (Walker, 2016. p. 21) from revered, and highly learned *tōhunga* (chosen expert, priest, healer) (Hiroa, 1926). Ethnographer Elsdon Best (1959) observed that the objective of *whare wānanga* was to preserve mātauranga Māori and transfer sacred knowledge, void “of any alteration, omission, interpolation or deterioration” (p. 6). Rituals of learning ensured the holistic development and nurturing of a student’s mind, body, spirit and soul (Melbourne, 2009). Many students of *whare wānanga* would go on to achieve the sacred role of *Tōhunga*.

Colonisation – the systemic and divinely endorsed dehumanisation of Māori

According to Miller and Ruru (2008), the process of colonisation is informed by deeply destructive falsehoods, “created and justified by religious, racial and ethnocentric ideas of European and Christian superiority over the other cultures, religions, and races of the world” (p. 1). Fifteenth Century Vatican papal bulls including *Dum Diversas* (1452), *Romanus Pontifex* (1455) and *Inter Caetera* (1493) were the basis of the *Doctrine of Christian Discovery* (Miller, 2019). This legal concept gave Christian

European explorers the statutory, political and spiritual right to seize and claim the lands of non-Christian peoples, converting or killing its inhabitants in the process (Takitimu, 2019). Translated from Latin by Gardiner (1917), The Bull Romanus Pontifex (1455) granted Christian explorers the right to:

Invade, search out, capture, vanquish, and subdue all Saracens and pagans whatsoever, and other enemies of Christ wheresoever placed, and the kingdoms, dukedoms, principalities, dominions, possessions, and all movable and immovable goods whatsoever held and possessed by them and to reduce their persons to perpetual slavery, and to apply and appropriate to himself and his successors the kingdoms, dukedoms, counties, principalities, dominions, possessions, and goods, and to convert them to his and their use and profit. (p. 23)

These papal bulls, personally promulgated by Popes Nicholas V and Alexander VI, effectively empowered European explorers with the legally-endorsed tools of dehumanisation, subjugation and exploitation (Walker, 2016). The colonisation of Aotearoa and its indigenous Māori inhabitants was justified under the decree of the Doctrine of Christian Discovery which Jackson (2012) refers to as:

A piece of genocidal legal magic that could, with the waving of a flag or the reciting of a proclamation, assert that the land allegedly being discovered henceforth belonged to someone else, and that the people of that land were necessarily subordinate to the colonisers. (p. 1)

Under the instruction of the British Admiralty, explorer Captain James Cook enacted the *Doctrine of Discovery* to flag, name and claim Mercury Bay in 1769 followed by Queen Charlotte's Sound in 1770 (Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 2021). Undertones of dominance and superiority are notable in Cook's (1770) journal entry in which he recounts the staggering simplicity of 'claiming' parts of Aotearoa:

After I had thus prepared the way for setting up the post, we took it up to the highest part of the Island, and after fixing it fast in the ground, hoisted thereon the Union flag, and I dignified this Inlet with the name of Queen Charlotte's Sound, and took formal possession of it and the Adjacent lands in the Name and for the use of his Majesty. (as cited in Wharton, 1893. p. 189)

Mutu (2019) asserts that "colonisation dispossessed Māori of 95 percent of their lands and resources, usurped Māori power and authority and left them in a state of poverty, deprivation and marginalisation while procuring considerable wealth, prosperity and privilege for British settlers" (p. 1). The connection between colonisation and modern-day systemic racism, bias and oppression in Aotearoa's education system has been well documented by academics and historians (Beecroft, 2018; Bishop, 2003; Pihama, 2019; Walker, 2016) and is evident in Māori educational policy developments since 1816 (Auditor-General, 2012). Moana Jackson (2012) laments a colonisation of Māori minds - the process of re-

educating Māori, by devaluing, undermining and delegitimising everything it meant to be Māori, to privilege Pākehā systems and beliefs.

Historic Policy Context – “The civilisation of the race and the quietening of the country” (Carleton, 1862).

The title of this section, which explores the government’s historic use of education as a tool to establish power and control over Māori, shares School Inspector Hugh Carleton’s desired outcome of the education system he was employed to regulate (Waitangi Tribunal, 1999). Walker (2016) asserts that the government was relentless in their effort to civilise and quieten Māori, reinforcing control through the establishment of laws and policies designed to maintain a structural relationship of Pākehā domination and Māori subordination. These discriminatory practices extended to the education system which, by this time, was designed to manipulate, suppress and decimate Māori language, culture and identity (Pihama, 2019).

With the 1847 introduction of the *Education Ordinance Act*, Governor Grey used his position of power to authorise what Consedine and Consedine (2001) describe as his part in “an unrelenting attack on the foundations of Māori society” (p. 96). The mandates of “religious education, industrial training, and the instruction in the English language” (*Education Ordinance Act*, 1847. p. 292) were designed to assimilate Māori to European ways and maintain an unjust social order (Walker, 2016). Grey cited the demoralising influence of their villages as justification to displace young Māori from their whānau and land in order to be educated in the culturally and linguistically foreign environments of mission schools (Consedine & Consedine, 2001; Walker, 2016). The 1867 Native Schools Act required Māori to provide land for the government on which to build schools (Auditor-General, 2012). Within these institutions manual education was transmitted in the English language by predominantly untrained Pākehā teachers (Auditor-General, 2012; Ministry of Education, n.d.). The social construction of the English language as the normal, acceptable vehicle for education was successfully established and, from 1903, many Māori students were physically punished for speaking their native language at school (Auditor-General, 2012). The practice of controlling and restricting Māori access to academic opportunities stemmed from both deficit theories of the intellectual capacity of indigenous peoples and a desire to maintain an unequal structural relationship of power (Jackson, 2012; Rocha, 2012; Simon, 1999; Walker, 2016). Low expectations and aspirations for Māori students directly aligned with and reinforced the racist philosophies of the Doctrine of Discovery. The systemic nature of this racism and oppression is evident in historic education policies, reports and comments from those who held positions of great power and influence:

I do not advocate for the Natives under present circumstances a refined education or high mental culture...they are better calculated by nature to get their living by manual than by mental labour. – Henry Taylor, School Inspector, 1862 (as cited in Waitangi Tribunal, 1999).

The work of teaching the Māoris to speak, write and understand English is in importance second only to that of making them acquainted with European Customs and ways of thinking and so fitting them for becoming orderly and law-abiding citizens. – James Pope, Director of Native Schools., 1888 (as cited in Jenkins & Matthews, 1998).

Māori education should train boys to be good farmers and girls to be good farmers' wives. – T.B Strong, Director of Education, 1931 (as cited in Auditor-General, 2012).

Under the fair and just leadership of John Thornton, native school Te Aute College went against the policy of the time, allowing a group of Māori students to matriculate thereby producing elite academic scholars including Sir Te Rangihiroa (Peter) Buck, K.C.M.G., D.S.O., M.D., ChB., DSc., M.A. and Sir Apirana Ngata, Kt., M.A., LLB., D.LIT., M.P. Despite these achievements, or perhaps because of them, the college was put “under pressure to abandon the academic curriculum and teach agriculture instead” (Auditor-General, 2012. p. 16). The racism and oppression faced by Māori students in our education system has been enduring and inescapable.

As well as the obvious markers of assimilation – new clothing, language and environments - belief and values systems were also successfully imposed on Māori students at the absolute expense of their own language, culture and identity (Consedine & Consedine, 2001; Waitangi Tribunal, 1999). British and Christian standards and norms superseded Māori Mātauranga (knowledge, wisdom, understanding) and Tikanga (correct procedure, customs) and the promotion of this way of being and knowing was accompanied by “a perceived need to quash the ‘oppositional’ set of ideals, to ridicule and even legally prohibit their use, and in so doing diminish the people and their culture as a whole” (Penetito, 2002. p. 90). A factory model of schooling, “impersonal, efficient and standardised” (Eley & Berryman, 2020. p. 97) which promoted and upheld British and European “values, ideals and standards” (Penetito, 2002. p. 90) was also successfully transferred to Aotearoa. Sleeter (2015) asserts that this factory model, designed to produce a uniform standard of suitable participants of the industrial revolution, involved core practices and structures still used today, including “grouping students by age, distributing them into ‘egg crate’ buildings, standardising curriculum, measuring student learning for purpose of comparison, and standardising teacher work” (p. 97). This model of education was the antithesis of the collective, collaborative and responsive indigenous model of teaching and learning in which Māori had been successfully engaged in prior to colonisation (Walker, 2016). The imposed factory model of education proved to be inequitable for Māori, requiring uniformity and conformity of its participants - systemic flaws which have particularly impacted and disadvantaged indigenous and minority

populations (Pihama & Lee-Morgan, 2019; Sleeter, 2015). The structures and practices of the factory model of education have endured in Aotearoa for more than a century and a half. Students of our contemporary education system continue to be similarly compelled to participate in convenient and tidy, age-based cohorts who, regardless of their own prior knowledge and experiences, are generally expected to prove their mastery of a standardised curriculum at the same rate taught through the same, predominantly Eurocentric methods and pedagogies (Eley & Berryman, 2020).

Acts of Resistance

Critical Theory

Critical theory is a philosophical stance which encourages questioning of “the seeming obviousness, naturalness, immediacy, and simplicity of the world around us” (Nowlan, 2001. as cited in Bethel, 2006. p. 2). These theoretical considerations are crucial in colonised lands, such as Aotearoa, where racism and inequity and the derived privilege are systemic in nature. Critical theory emphasises the importance of questioning and challenging how the status quo enacts and perpetuates relationships of power (Bethel, 2006). In Aotearoa the status quo equates to generations of Māori being underserved, oppressed and marginalised in our education system (Auditor-General, 2012). It equates to generations of Māori children leaving school without the qualifications, opportunities and future prospects they deserve (Beecroft, 2018). It equates to an education system that fails to uphold and give effect to the principles of our nation’s founding document - Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Tukaki, 2020). Critical theory provides a philosophical framework to resist this status quo, “to pursue social justice, address inequality, and work to produce a fairer, more inclusive and equitable society” (Ministry of Education, n.d. para. 2).

Berryman et al. (2017) assert, “critical theories challenge the inequity and social injustice created and maintained by the location of authority and power in the hands of a privileged few” (p. 5). This assertion is supported by The Ministry of Education (2017) who further explain, “certain groups in society – because of their gender, ethnicity, ability, economic and social circumstances – have better access to opportunities that lead to success than others, and that this is unfair” (para. 3). Years of educational data from Aotearoa’s state schools demonstrate that Pākehā students have been the main beneficiaries of an education system that reflects their cultural standards and norms whilst it simultaneously under-serves its indigenous participants (Auditor-General, 2012; Beecroft, 2018). Critical theories resist deficit thinking and the blaming of the oppressed, focussing rather on the location and use of power, and our personal choice and role in upholding the status quo. Giroux (1999) argues that critical theory has transformative potential and “should play a significant role in changing the world” (p. 1). By learning about and understanding the destructive impact of past education policy and attitudes, we are empowered to more wisely build the future. Critical theory can offer the framework and processes to support these changes (Freire, 2017).

Perhaps the most well-known critical theorist, Paulo Freire, argued its emancipatory potential for both the oppressor and the oppressed in his significant literary contribution *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. When educators are aware of power imbalances and the roots of oppression in society, they are able to resist perpetuating injustice, instead promoting and privileging liberating pedagogies of hope. Freire (2017) asserts:

Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity or it becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world. (p. 34)

According to Dr Arohia Durie (1998) this liberation from oppression can only occur, “once formal education is conceived of as an empowering rather than a subordinating process” (p. 297). Educators necessarily must be cognisant of the power and influence they have in shaping the fabric of our society in order to realise Freire’s vision.

Kaupapa Māori – a Theory of Transformation for Education

Distinguished Professor Graham Hingangaroa Smith was amongst the first to formally theorise on Kaupapa Māori – a political movement that he recognised as discernible in the actions of many previous Māori leaders including Te Kooti Rikirangi, Sir Aparana Ngata and Te Puea Herangi (G. Smith, 2015). The academic formalisation of Kaupapa Māori as a strategy for educational transformation came through Smith’s 1997 Doctoral research, in which he gathered the voices of whānau who chose to educate their children within the counter-hegemonic institutions of Kōhanga reo and Kura Kaupapa Māori (G. Smith, 2003; 2015). G. Smith (1997) identified six elements of Kaupapa Māori education which were integral to this revolutionary movement of the 1980s. These elements were also commonly identified as experiences and outcomes absent in the participant’s own schooling - suppressed and disregarded through the process of colonisation (G. Smith, 2020). Smith argued the merit and necessity of criticality in Kaupapa Māori theory, asserting that practitioners require these tools “to unpack taken for granted systems” (2020) and to “assist their transformation” (2003). Smith’s deliberate use of the word and concept ‘theory’ was a critical endeavour, designed to challenge an academy who favoured and upheld European knowledge over mātauranga Māori (Pihama, 2015). This example of praxis – the iterative coming together of theory and action - is indicative of the politically and socially transformative potential of Kaupapa Māori Theory which is alive and pertinent today, legitimised and given power through ongoing contributions of various Māori Scholars (Rangahau, n.d.; G. Smith, 2015; 2020). The overt dismissal of the validity of mātauranga Māori by influential and powerful academics continues in Aotearoa today (Clements et al., 2021) supporting Freire’s assertion that “the interests of the oppressors lie in changing the consciousness of the oppressed, not the situation which oppresses them” (Freire,

2017. p. 47). Kaupapa Māori Theory acts to negate this outcome by providing Māori with an indigenous theory of transformation and self-determination through the “recognition and validity of their own cultural frame of reference” (G. Smith, 2015. p. 55). Smith’s six important Kaupapa Māori elements providing a theory of transformation, follow:

Tino Rangatiratanga - The Principle of Self-determination - this principle relates to restoring autonomy and the right of Māori to be self-determining and independent (Rangahau, n.d.). Tino rangatiratanga allows Māori to “make choices and decisions that reflect their cultural, political, economic and social preferences” (G. Smith, 2003. p. 8).

Taonga Tuku Iho - The Principle of Cultural Aspiration - this principle requires recognition of the validity and centrality of Te Reo, Tikanga and Mātauranga Māori in kura, ensuring the protection and reflection of Māori language, culture and identity in education (Rangahau, n.d.). Taonga Tuku Iho acts as a “counter narrative of the colonising structure of schooling in the day” (G. Smith, 2020).

Ako Māori - The Principle of Culturally Preferred Pedagogy – Māori ways of being and knowing are upheld through this pedagogical principle, which ensures the learning environment is no longer a culturally foreign space for students (G. Smith, 1997). Ako Māori “acknowledges teaching and learning practices that are inherent and unique to Māori” (Rangahau, n.d. para. 5).

Kia piki ake i ngā raruraru o te kainga - The Principle of Socio-Economic Mediation Graham Smith (1997) describes Kia piki ake i ngā raruraru o te kainga as an aspiration to resist the status quo of Māori social deprivation. This principle encourages Māori communities to use their collective social capital to “alleviate negative pressures and disadvantages” (Rangahau, n.d. para. 6; G. Smith, 2020). It also promotes the positive economic advantages and success that Māori-led initiatives are bringing to their communities, and asserts that Kaupapa Māori initiatives must necessarily create beneficial outcomes for Māori (G. Smith, 1997).

Whānau - The Principle of Extended Family Structure “Whānau sits at the core of Kaupapa Māori” (Rangahau, n.d. para 7). This principle acknowledges the centrality and importance of relationships in Māori society and culture, including its criticality in the process of teaching and learning. G. Smith (1997) recognised that the extended structure of whānau created collective responsibility and support for learners, while the cultural practice of whanaungatanga creates nurturing environments of safety and belonging where children and young people can thrive (Berryman, et al., 2018).

Kaupapa - The Principle of Collective Philosophy – this principle is about understanding, enacting and upholding the collective visions and aspirations of Kaupapa Māori (G. Smith, 1997). It is the execution of the well-known whakataukī ‘he waka eke noa’ – we are all in this together.

Kaupapa Māori education provided children and whānau the first opportunity since colonisation to engage in education anchored in these traditional, cultural principles and practices, including its delivery in Te Reo Māori, the native Māori language.

Ka Hikitia

Ka Hikitia was an innovative Māori Education strategy originally released by the government as *Ka Hikitia - Managing for Success 2008 - 2012*. Ka Hikitia means “to step up, lift up, or lengthen one’s stride” (Ministry of Education, 2008, p. 11). The name given to this strategy reflects its unique design and vision – critically focussed on raising the quality and performance of the education system while resisting the traditional deficit formula of previous policies which framed Māori as the problem to be fixed (Berryman et al., 2016; Ministry of Education, 2008). Ka Hikitia was designed in consultation with Māori, has a Māori potential focus and acknowledged the necessary role of culture, language and identity in Māori educational advancement (M. Durie, 2003; Ministry of Education, 2008). The strategic intent of *Ka Hikitia - Managing for Success*, of “Māori enjoying education success as Māori” (Ministry of Education, 2008, p. 11) reflects the aspirations shared at *Hui Taumata Mātauranga* and in particular the theorising of leading Māori academic Sir Mason Durie (M. Durie, 2003). In launching Ka Hikitia, the then Minister of Education stated, “The key messages of Ka Hikitia are: Māori learners have potential, they are culturally advantaged, they are inherently capable. They need to be successful and they have the right to do so as Māori” (Carter, 2008, para. 4).

Unfortunately, the introduction and implementation of this ground-breaking education strategy was poor, with the Auditor-General (2013) finding:

The Ministry of Education (the Ministry) introduced Ka Hikitia slowly and unsteadily. Confused communication about who was intended to deliver Ka Hikitia, unclear roles and responsibilities in the Ministry, poor planning, poor programme and project management, and ineffective communication with schools have meant that action to put Ka Hikitia into effect was not given the intended priority. As a result, the Ministry's introduction of Ka Hikitia has not been as effective as it could have been. There were hopes that Ka Hikitia would lead to the sort of transformational change that education experts, and particularly Māori education experts, have been awaiting for decades. Although there has been progress, this transformation has not yet happened. (p. 7)

By comparing the lived experiences of Māori students in mainstream state funded education settings in both 2001 and 2015, Berryman and Eley (2017b) concluded that “the system is yet to fully step up as intended by Ka Hikitia” (p. 94). Māori-led professional development *Kia Eke Panuku* was conceptualised to support English-Medium schools to address and give life to the Ka Hikitia education strategy (Berryman et al., 2015). Poutama Pounamu continues this work today.

Ka Hikitia is currently in its third iteration – *Ka Hikitia - Ka Hāpaitia* which has been refreshed as part of the Ministry of Education’s Work Programme (Ministry of Education, 2021b). This refreshed strategy has five outcome domains which The Ministry of Education explain “reflect key messages that we have heard from whānau, hapū, iwi, Māori over an extended period of time and our evidence base about what works for Māori learners and their whānau” (para. 7). The outcome domains are:

Te Whānau: Education provision responds to learners within the context of their whānau

Te Tangata: Māori are free from racism, discrimination and stigma in education

Te Kanorautanga: Māori are diverse and need to be understood in the context of their diverse aspirations and lived experiences

Te Tuakiritanga: Identity, language and culture matter for Māori learners

Te Rangatiratanga: Māori exercise their authority and agency in education. (Ministry of Education, 2021b, para. 6).

Ka Hikitia Ka Hāpaitia, together with the updated Education and Training Act and National Education Learning Priorities (NELP), provide the policy imperative to fulfil our moral obligations to address inequity and improve experiences and outcomes for Māori students in English Medium settings.

Poutama Pounamu

Whakapapa and Kaupapa

Poutama Pounamu has existed in various manifestations since 1995, all the while striving to consider how to “contribute more effectively towards ending the disparities faced by earlier generations of Māori children” (Berryman, 2008, p. ii). Established as a collaboration between Māori elders and practitioners, alongside a single Pākehā ally and colleague, this group shared common concerns over the inequities Māori were experiencing in our education system and sought to resist these lived realities. Poutama Pounamu currently operate under the shared kaupapa of “Equity, excellence and belonging, building strong foundations for the future” (Poutama Pounamu, n.d. para. 25). Through more than 25 years of research, groundwork and iterative learning, the Poutama Pounamu team have developed effective contexts for transformative change and continue to work to decolonise and indigenise education systems and practices (Corlett, 2020; Poutama Pounamu, n.d.). Foundational member and current director of Poutama Pounamu, Professor Mere Berryman, leads and learns alongside the team in its continuation of the work of educational research and reform programmes Te Kotahitanga and Kia Eke Panuku, both of which Berryman co-developed. Currently, Poutama Pounamu work with at least 116 Early Childhood

Centres, 184 Primary Schools, 13 intermediates, and 63 Secondary Schools across 30 Kāhui Ako nationwide.

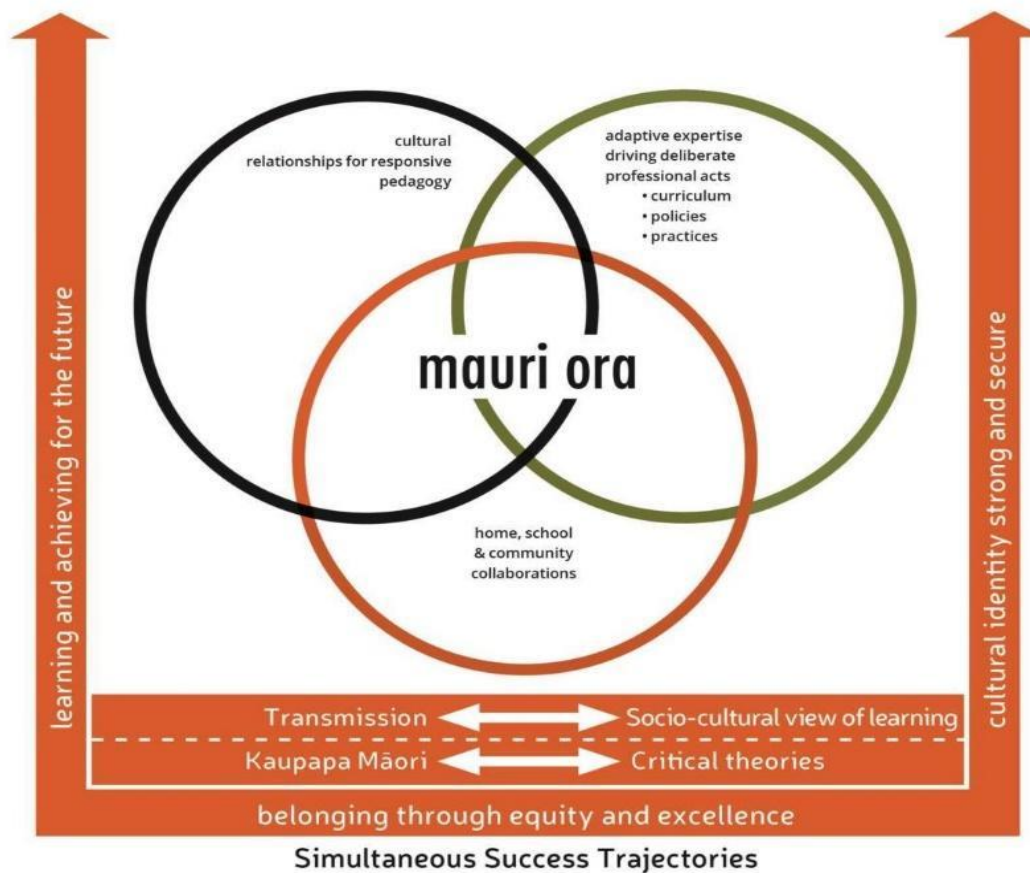
Ako: Critical Contexts for Change

Ako: Critical Contexts for Change is a theory for educational reform shaped in its conceptualisation by evidence and information from five previous educational reform programmes (Berryman & Eley, 2017a). This theoretical framework was formed within Kia Eke Panuku by a team of experienced educational researchers, some of whom had worked in the previous programmes and all with a deep understanding of research and education within te ao Māori (Berryman & Eley, 2017a). This framework is critically “amplified by the voices of Māori students, their whānau and education professionals” (Poutama Pounamu, n.d. para. 15). The current iteration of Ako: Critical Contexts for Change used by Poutama Pounamu has been shaped over time in response to the dynamic socio-political context of education, informed by developing knowledge and understandings of how to accelerate the achievement of equity, excellence and belonging for those underserved by our education system (Berryman & Eley, 2017a).

This framework, as shown in Figure 1 below, identifies three critical contexts for change: “Cultural relationships for responsive pedagogy; Adaptive expertise driving deliberate professional acts and home, school and community collaborations” (Berryman & Eley, 2017a. p. 102). It is essential for the belonging and wellbeing of our students that these contexts are considered within the educational aspirations voiced by Māori youth – conceptualised as the Simultaneous Success Trajectories of “learning and achieving for the future and cultural identity strong and secure” (Bishop & Berryman, 2006; Berryman & Eley, 2017a).

The prioritisation of a dual focus of academic success alongside a strong and secure cultural identity aligns with Sir Mason Durie’s (2016) Mauri Ora metaphor, an indigenous formula for flourishing holistic wellbeing which is upheld through the policy context of the Ka Hikitia Māori Education strategy (Ministry of Education, 2008).

Figure 1 *Ako Critical Contexts for Change*



Ako: Critical Contexts for Change. Used with permission from Poutama Pounamu. (Poutama Pounamu. n.d).

While shifts can occur by focussing on any of these contexts in isolation, Berryman and Eley (2017a) found that “accelerated achievement for marginalised students occurs when school leaders and teachers deliberately attend to all three contexts at the same time” (p. 102).

Blended Learning

Through their Blended Learning programme, Poutama Pounamu provides an opportunity for educators to engage in a synthesis of the theoretical frameworks, pedagogies and experiences that have proven educationally transformative (Berryman et al., 2015; Berryman & Eley, 2017a). This carefully considered, evidence-based learning opportunity “creates the space to support consciousness raising” (Poutama Pounamu, n.d, para. 8), the process where “non-agentic positioning is surfaced and replaced with agency, as people resist current practices and thinking, enacting new ways of being to lead to transformative actions” (Thin-Rabb, 2017, p. 5). Blended Learning is critically designed to transform thinking and behaviours in order to transform outcomes through the decolonisation and indigenisation

of individuals, their practices and, ultimately, the contexts and systems in which we operate (Poutama Pounamu, n.d.). Participants, referred to as *kaiwhakaako*, are supported to develop an awareness and understanding of their own theorising, role, and subsequent agency, in contributing to a climate of change required by our education system (Ford, 2018). Opportunities to analyse data and evidence, learn and unlearn dialogically alongside others, reflect and respond to new ideas, understandings and feedback, and to share this journey with colleagues, *whānau* and friends are provided through the holistic and bicultural pedagogies and experiences of online learning, regional *wānanga* and self-determined *ākonga* (learner) groups and *hui*.

Poutama Pounamu uphold and legitimise *te ao Māori* and *kaupapa Māori* theory through three Blended Learning *noho marae wānanga*. The online component of Blended Learning provides rigorous academic scaffolding as *kaiwhakaako* respond to the vast and varied resources and evidence available and receive critical feedback and feedforward from the team of Poutama Pounamu academics. *Ākonga hui*, with a self – selected group of colleagues, provide “determined, ongoing opportunities to share this learning with others” (Poutama Pounamu, n.d., para. 9). This cascading model of professional learning and development is designed to initiate and facilitate consciousness raising in *ākonga* group members and embraces the Māori principle of *whakaiti* – humble leadership from within which enables others in their journey (Roche, 2019). Poutama Pounamu Blended Learning programme has hosted at least 387 individuals who are in turn working alongside over 2,000 *ākonga* to collectively improve outcomes and achieve “Equity, excellence and belonging, building strong foundations for the future” (Poutama Pounamu, n.d., para. 27).

Theoretical Underpinning

Poutama Pounamu Blended Learning has a clear and cohesive theoretical underpinning which shapes the content and delivery of this unique professional development opportunity (Poutama Pounamu, 2017). Critical theory, *Kaupapa Māori* theory and social constructionism come together in deliberate ways to create a deeply personal opportunity to reflect and learn, as well as providing the tools and support to practically affect positive change with an outlook of hope. Through an iterative and responsive approach to research and learning, the team have contributed and redefined valuable theoretical knowledge in the area of educational reform including the *Ako: Critical Contexts for Change* with its *Simultaneous Success Trajectories* (Berryman & Eley, 2017a). The implementation and implication of these theoretical frameworks within Poutama Pounamu’s Blended Learning work will be explored in this section.

Critical Theory: Poutama Pounamu embrace critical theory as a framework to pursue and realise their vision of equity, excellence and belonging. The assertion that education is a political process in which one cannot be neutral (Freire, 2017; Giroux, 2019; Ministry of Education, n.d.) – the premise that “if

you're not indigenising a space, you're colonising it" (Nepia, 2020) - is espoused and addressed through the promotion of iterative cycles of critical consciousness. This deeply personal process, ring-fenced by facts of our colonial history and evidence of its ongoing implications, requires kaiwhakaako to understand the power structures in our society, and "especially how they move around and through" us (Corlett, 2020. p. 44). Promoting change and educational reform through the use of critical theory is based on an understanding that "conviction cannot be packaged and sold; it is reached, rather, by means of a totality of reflection and action" (Freire, 2017. p. 25). With a developing critical consciousness, kaiwhakaako can begin, then, to "challenge the inequity and social injustice created and maintained by the location of authority and power in the hands of a privileged few" (Berryman, et. al., 2017. p. 5). Critical theory prompts kaiwhakaako to meaningfully address and respond to the professional standards, responsibilities and values of the Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand, the principles and values of the New Zealand Curriculum, and the kaupapa of the government's Māori education strategy Kahikitia Ka Hāpaitia (Education Council New Zealand, 2017; Ministry of Education, 2017; Ministry of Education, 2020). This framework further promotes critical personal reflection and praxis towards enacting the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi for a fairer and more equitable education system in which Māori can be Māori.

Kaupapa Māori Theory: The critical lens through which Poutama Pounamu is delivered actively supports the political agenda of Kaupapa Māori theory by promoting "the revitalisation of Māori cultural aspirations, preferences and practices as a philosophical and productive educational stance and resistance to the hegemony of the dominant discourse" (Bishop, 1996. p.11).

Social Constructionism: Poutama Pounamu share the belief that many of the structures and practices common in our schools are socially constructed. That is, they are "products of human definition and interpretation shaped by cultural and historical contexts" (Kang, 2012. p. 12). This important understanding assists in the activation of Critical and Kaupapa Māori theories – kaiwhakaako are encouraged to consider their agency in disrupting taken for granted assumptions that have often remained unchallenged (Berryman, 2008; Corlett, 2020; Glynn & Bevan-Brown, 2007). Social Constructionism "affirms men and women as beings in the process of becoming – as unfinished, uncompleted beings in, and with, a likewise unfinished reality" (Freire, 2017. p. 57). Poutama Pounamu provide experiences and tools to support kaiwhakaako to agentically deconstruct and reconstruct individual and systemic practices and structures, and to assist others in these same processes.

Chapter Three - Methodology

Introduction

Methodology is defined in the *SAGE Dictionary of Qualitative Inquiry* as “a theory of how inquiry should proceed” (Schwandt, 2007. p. 195). It refers to the processes and means used to answer research questions and gain knowledge (Cresswell, 2012). Traditionally, Western methodologies gave outsiders the “power to research and define” the lives of people (Berryman et al., 2013. p. 1). This hegemonic approach routinely disempowered and minoritised the researched groups, including Māori, who were consequently unintentionally misinterpreted or deliberately othered in the name of the academy (Berryman, et al., 2013; Jackson, 2019a; L. Smith, 1997). Linda Smith (1997) asserts the potential of alternative methodologies to disrupt traditional, colonial concepts of knowledge and rebalance structural power relationships between the researcher and the researched. The use of a humanising, participatory research framework was critical to ensure the integrity of this study which examines the participants’ ability to resist the status quo of inequitable education outcomes in Aotearoa.

This chapter presents and rationalises the methodology that guided my research towards more socially responsible outcomes (Berryman et al., 2013). It states the objective of the study, lists the research questions I explored and explains and justifies my overall research design. Culturally responsive research methodologies are discussed, including how the underpinnings of kaupapa Māori and critical theories influenced and shaped this emerging framework. My positioning within this study is clarified before I introduce the participants. A personal positionality statement provides insight into my background and the life events that influenced this research project and design. The methods used to collect, analyse and present data are outlined and their synergetic relationship with the methodology are explained (Schwandt, 2007). The research procedure is detailed and ethical considerations are explored.

Culturally Responsive Research Methodologies

Culturally responsive methodologies offer a socially responsible alternative to traditional Western research frameworks. They “challenge all forms of traditional research paradigms that devalue or dehumanise research participants” (Berryman et al., 2013. p. 1) and are designed to resist further marginalising those “on the suffering side of history” (Lather, 2001, as cited in L. Smith, 2001). This emancipatory paradigm pulls on and weaves together the vast similarities in aspiration and potential of critical and kaupapa Māori theories, as illuminated by Berryman, SooHoo and Nevin (2013):

Both theoretical traditions value human dignity and strive for voice, both honor the necessity of relationships and dialogue, both desire multicultural revitalization, both cultivate the social and political consciousness necessary for reform, both resist hierarchical power structures, both

strive for epistemological pluralism, and both vision power over one's own destiny, especially from those on the margins. (p. 15).

Culturally responsive methodologies require the redefining of traditional research stances, theories and practices. Berryman et al. conceptualised this paradigm to address and promote three research dimensions; “principles of cultural and epistemological pluralism, the deconstruction of Western colonial traditions of research and the primacy of relationships within a culturally responsive dialogic encounter” (2013, p. 15). In this chapter I explore these research dimensions and describe my own journey through the distinct phases of this research framework

Cultural Pluralism

Cultural pluralism is defined by Kwan (2018) as “the societal condition in which minority groups within a society can maintain their distinctive cultural identities, values, and practices” (p. 323). This emancipatory principle disrupts the Western hegemony engendered through the Doctrine of Discovery and colonisation and is one of the main premises of the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001). Culturally responsive researchers view culture as an asset which enriches research outcomes through a process of “relevant and significant sense making” (Berryman et al., 2013, p. 5). The dimension of cultural pluralism allows researchers and participants the freedom to bring the totality of themselves to the table. Cultural pluralism actualises the liberatory intent of critical and kaupapa Māori theories. This dimension of culturally responsive research acknowledges participants as experts in their own knowledge, and necessarily repositions researchers as learners and fellow participants (Berryman et al., 2013). Cultural pluralism upholds the legitimacy, centrality and value of all cultures, breaking down power imbalances that were imposed through the process of colonisation. Significantly, within the colonised, bicultural context of Aotearoa, cultural pluralism honours *Taonga Tuku Iho* - the principle of cultural aspiration within Kaupapa Māori theory which asserts the legitimacy of Te Reo, Tikanga and Mātauranga Māori (G. Smith, 1990).

Epistemological Pluralism

Epistemological pluralism is a similarly humanising principle which promotes and legitimises the value of diversity. Epistemology is described by Miller and Brewer (2003) as being “concerned with the nature of knowledge and justification, how we know what we know” (p. 94). Culturally responsive research methodologies call for epistemological pluralism and multi-logicality, supporting Dei's (2011) stance that “no one body of knowledge can have superiority over another” (p. 3). The process of privileging a singular body of knowledge at the absolute expense of another is referred to as epistemic racism, a condition which “disregards certain people's capacity to produce or learn knowledge, denying their full humanity” (Swan, 2008, p. 8). Epistemic racism was a central tool in the process of colonisation. Linda Smith (2021) describes this as “the reach of imperialism into our heads” (p. 62) a reach which

systematically attacked and undermined, in an attempt to entirely decimate, Māori knowledge and ways of knowing (Jackson, 2019a; Smith, 2021; Walker 2003). The systematic omission of Māori voice and knowledge in academia has been referred to by Walker (2003) as an example of structural violence.

Epistemological pluralism resists traditional research paradigms that perpetuate epistemic racism (Berryman et al., 2013; L. Smith, 2001). Culturally responsive researchers theorise that upholding a single body of knowledge as absolute not only marginalises minoritised groups, but it drastically limits the knowledge and ways of knowing that we are exposed to and can benefit from (Berryman et al., 2013; Smith, 1997; UNESCO, 2001). In order to address the dimension of epistemological pluralism in culturally responsive research, Berryman, SooHoo and Nevin (2013) assert that researchers must be “clear about their own epistemology and ability to see beyond their own limited understanding of knowledge production” (p. 3). The goal of epistemological pluralism is to open our minds to, understand and accept multiple ways of knowing and producing knowledge. This allows the humanising act of repositioning epistemologies outside our own as worthwhile and valid (Swan, 2018). Epistemological pluralism is another example of the practical enactment of the aspirations of biculturalism, equality and freedom espoused in Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Waitangi Tribunal, 1999).

Deconstruction of Western Colonial Traditions of Research

Western colonial traditions of research were socially constructed as the norm in Aotearoa through the process of colonisation (Bishop, 1999). These hegemonic practices maintain and promote power imbalances which have devastatingly failed Māori and indigenous peoples worldwide for centuries (Jackson, 2019a). Berryman, et al., assert, “Traditional Western research frameworks have given little regard to participants’ rights to initiate, contribute, critique, or evaluate research” (2013, p. 1). The inescapable weight of being redefined and, consequently, ‘othered’ through impositional research methodologies is communicated clearly and compellingly by Māori scholars and researchers. When exploring their voice and experiences it becomes evident that Western colonial traditions of research have caused intergenerational disempowerment, trauma and pain (Berryman, et al., 2013; Jackson, 2019a; Mahukia, 2008; L. Smith, 2021). Below I share the voices of Māori whose lived experiences justify the critical need to deconstruct Western colonial traditions of research - a process made possible in academia through the liberating potential of critical theory and the carefully considered use of culturally responsive research methodologies.

Linda Smith (2021) shares a horrifying insight into research conducted on Māori *tūpuna* (ancestors) under Western colonial paradigms:

Just knowing that someone measured our faculties by filling the skulls of our ancestors with millet seeds and compared the amount of millet seed to the capacity for mental thought offends our sense of who and what we are. (p. 1)

Mahukia (2008) causally links Western colonial traditions of research with the marginalisation of its Māori participants:

Māori, like other indigenous peoples, have had first hand experiences of such disempowerment through researchers who have taken Māori knowledge and claimed it as their own, presuming to set themselves up as authorities on our culture yet discussing our lives and experiences in ways that are alien to our understanding. (p. 2)

Bishop (1999) supports this theorising, asserting:

Researchers in Aotearoa/New Zealand have developed a tradition of research that has perpetuated colonial values, thereby undervaluing and belittling Māori knowledge and learning practices and processes in order to enhance those of the colonisers and adherents of neo-colonial paradigms. (p. 1)

Culturally responsive methodologies provide opportunities for liberating research. As Berryman, SooHoo and Nevin (2013) assert “The cloth from which this conceptual framework is born is the resistance to research conventions where the researcher unilaterally dominates and exerts power over the participants” (p. 4).

The application of Critical Theories is necessary in the process of deconstructing hegemonic power systems such as Western colonial research traditions. Berryman, SooHoo and Nevin (2013) explain that this is because: “culturally responsive methodology is an intensely introspective process that requires researchers to challenge what they have previously learned and to invent or reconstitute new liberating and humanizing alternatives” (p. 16). Questions designed to prompt reflectivity and reflexivity in deconstructing Western colonial traditions of research include:

How will constructed understandings contribute to your continued work/relationship?

How has the work benefitted and how will it continue to benefit the group you are working with?

How do you know this? (Berryman et al., 2013, p. 23).

Primacy of Relationships Within a Culturally Responsive Dialogic Encounter

Relationships are at the heart of culturally responsive research methodologies, and this very stance, in itself, is an act of resistance to oppressive, subjectifying research traditions and outcomes. Proponents of culturally responsive methodologies give relationships primacy of place in their research based on the humanising and liberating lessons from critical and kaupapa Māori theories (Berryman et al., 2013). Relationships are conceptualised within culturally responsive research to necessarily be intimate

(Clandinin & Connelly, 1994), connected (Bishop, 2005) and mutually beneficial (Berryman et al., 2013). This requires a subjectivity, attachment and vulnerability of the researcher at odds with the clinical relational interactions expected within traditional Western research paradigms (Berryman et al., 2013). Reconstructing a more socially just understanding of our role and responsibility as researchers requires the critical repositioning of ourselves as epistemologically and culturally equal, fellow participants within our research. The rich and metaphoric Māori relational metaphor of mana ōrite can contribute to our understanding of how to establish these relationships (Berryman et al., 2013b). Methods which allow for culturally responsive dialogic encounters provide the tools to create the neutral third space required to mutually and respectfully work and evolve together (Heshusius, 1994. p. 18).

Mana Ōrite - Mana is defined in Te Aka Māori Dictionary (2022) as encapsulating “prestige, authority, control, power, influence, status, spiritual power, charisma” (para. 3). Wilson et al., (2021) explain that everybody is born with mana, and this “can be enhanced or diminished by how others act” (p. 3548). Te reo Māori verbs pertaining to mana allude to the affectability of this phenomenon, with Sir Mason Durie (2006) describing *whakamana* as “the capacity to empower” and *manaakitanga* as “the capacity to care” (p. 5). Ōrite is defined as “to be like, alike, similar, identical, even and equal” (Te Aka Māori Dictionary, 2022. para. 1). Berryman et al., (2018) use mana ōrite as a metaphor for interdependent relationships which “brings responsibilities to both groups to maintain the mana of the other, and understand the mana of both as ōrite” (p. 4). Seeking to work in a participatory mana ōrite way is a step towards restoring balance to the historically inequitable researcher-researched relationship. Berryman et al., (2013) insist “the socially responsible researcher must extend rights and respect to research participants in order to not replicate hierarchical colonisation” (p. 6). In practice, the metaphor of mana ōrite manifests as co-constructed and fluid research where both groups collaborate to determine the “problems, participants, and methodologies upon which to finally determine the solutions” (Berryman et al., 2013. p. 12).

Culturally Responsive Dialogic Encounters - Dialogic encounters are promoted as an appropriate method within culturally responsive research, supporting the theorising of Freire (1998) who argued that dialogical action has the capacity to “confront culture and structures that are oppressive and invasive, where people impose their will over the people” (p. 180). Within a research context, dialogic encounters begin with listening respectfully before being responsive with those you seek to engage with (Berryman, 2008). To aesthetically represent these connections and encounters, Berryman (2008) posed metaphoric meeting spaces, inspired by the Māori koru design. Later, in Berryman et al., (2013), the design below was used to represent the researcher in orange and the participant in blue; the beginning double spirals represent the “identities, prior knowledge, cultural experiences and connections that each brings with them to an encounter” (Berryman et al., 2013. p. 21). Where they merge is the responsive, dialogic space where new knowledge is able to be co-created.

Figure 2 *The Responsive Dialogic Space*



From Berryman, et al., 2013. p. 22.

A commitment to *mana ōrite* becomes apparent when value is placed on research relationships (Berryman et al., 2013b). Placing primacy on relationships requires the reconceptualisation of the researcher's role from that of the dominant expert to that of a respectful learner and co-inquirer (Berryman, 2008; Berryman et al., 2013; Bishop, 1995). Working in this way demonstrates a commitment towards honouring and enacting the principles of *Te Tiriti o Waitangi*.

Methods

This research uses both individual and group-focussed interviews as conversation to gather experiential data. Grounded theory is used to analyse this data, and identify emerging themes. Findings are presented using both collaborative storytelling and found poems. An explanation of these methods follows.

Data Collection

Interviews as Conversations using open-ended questions

Interviews as conversations, also referred to as conversational interviews, are defined in the SAGE Encyclopaedia of Qualitative Research Methods (2008) as “an approach used by research interviewers to generate verbal data through talking about specified topics with research participants in an informal and conversational way” (p.127). This participatory method of gathering data requires input from both the researcher and the research participant, shifting the researcher's role from that of the expert to that of a co-inquirer (Burgess, 1984). The quality of data gathered through interviews as conversations is heavily dependent upon the relationship between the participant and the researcher (Bishop, 1997). This is because, in line with the social conventions outside of research contexts, a baseline of trust and mutual

respect allows for a greater depth of sharing and understanding within a conversation (Given, 2008). As Patton (1990) identifies, everyday conversation can lack direction and clarity, therefore, he suggests, within a research context ‘conversation’ can best be seen as a metaphor for the deep, detailed unstructured or semi structured interview which “probes beneath the surface, soliciting detail and providing a holistic understanding of the interviewee's point of view” (p. 108). The dimensions of culturally responsive research can work to guide the researcher to ensure they are operationalising the participatory, non-hierarchical and subjective “enhanced research relationships” (Bishop, 1997. p. 32) that allow for successful interviews as conversations (Bishop, 1997).

Interviews as conversations are fluid in nature as the researcher reacts authentically to the natural direction of the conversation as determined by the participant (Given, 2008). Open-ended questions can be posed within this method to allow for a better understanding of the “views, beliefs and assumptions of those being interviewed” (Buckley, 2020. p. 31) pertaining to a particular area of research. Interviews as conversations worked within this project as they formalised and validated the mutually respectful, discursive relationships and dynamics that the research participants and I had previously established and benefited from (Kecskemeti, 2011).

Data Analysis

Grounded Theory

Noble and Mitchell (2016) describe grounded theory as a research method “concerned with the generation of theory, which is ‘grounded’ in data that has been systematically collected and analysed” (p. 34). Grounded theory can be grouped into three distinct designs: constructivist (Charmaz, 2006), emergent (Glaser, 1992), and systematic (Green et al., 2007; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This research project made use of constructivist grounded theory which acknowledges the integral role the researcher plays as they bring their prior experiences, perspectives and subjectivities to the study and therefore to the developing theories (Charmaz, 2006).

The choice to use grounded theory was influenced by a number of factors. The most cogent was the need to honour and amplify the voice shared by the participants of my study. While previous iterations of Poutama Pounamu, including Te Kotahitanga and Kia Eke Panuku are well researched, the experiences of those who have completed Poutama Pounamu Blended Learning are yet to be formally evaluated. Constructivist grounded theory enabled me to “search for and conceptualise the hidden social and collective patterns and constructions” (Noble & Mitchell, 2016. p. 35) unique to my participants without the pressure or requirement to mould their experiences and voice to fit a certain, potentially irrelevant or oppressive theoretical paradigm (Pohe, 2012). Green et al. (2007) assert that grounded theory can “aid social scientists and educators in understanding unique, diversity-related problems of the twenty-first century” (p. 473). By grounding the emerging theories in the diverse voices of my

participants, valid patterns and constructions relating to the enduring praxis of participating in the Poutama Pounamu Blended Learning could be discovered and conceptualised.

Data Presentation

Collaborative Storying

Collaborative storying, or collaborative storytelling, is a research method that acts as a means to “address indigenous people’s desire for self-determination in educational research” (Bishop, 1999. p. 28). The method and rationale are summarised by Bishop as follows:

Collaborative storying is a research approach which facilitates communicating, interpreting and giving meaning to people's lived experiences. Collaborative stories allow research participants to select, recollect and reflect on stories within their own cultural context and language, rather than those chosen by the researcher. Collaborative storytelling means that the stories of the research participants (and this includes the researcher) merge to create a collaborative text, a mutually constructed story created out of the lived experiences of the research participants (p. 4).

This method was primarily selected to complement the participatory, power sharing method of gathering data using interviews as conversations. Together, these methods place relationships at the centre of the research with the resulting collaborative story serving to honour and amplify the shared voice and experiences of all participants, including the researcher.

Found Poems

“Found poetry is a tool used in qualitative research where, generally speaking, words are extracted from narrative transcripts based on interviews with research subjects” (Sjollema et al., 2012). This approach offers an additional opportunity to share participant voice - this time free of researcher subjectivity - as verbatim text is woven together to emphasise the perspectives, views, beliefs and experiences of the participants (Bhattacharya, 2007). Found poems are an aesthetic interpretation and representation of data and an example of the deconstruction of the “exclusive, linear text representations” (Berryman et al., 2013. p. 16) expected within Western colonial traditions of research. Found poems are used in this study to strategically amplify the voices and emphasise the experiences of the participants. Their use was inspired by Raewyn Ngaamo’s (2019) moving ethnographic research in which found poems provided irrefutable evidence of the devastation and trauma endured by the whānau of participants whose cultural identities were systematically deconstructed through their participation in our education system. Found poems were selected as an appropriate vehicle to highlight how deeply affecting and enduring the Poutama Pounamu Blended Learning experiences have been.

Research Procedure

Educators who had completed the Poutama Pounamu blended learning, and with whom I had previously established a working relationship, were identified as potential participants for this study. Participants were initially contacted via email to gauge interest in receiving information about my research. Those who were interested were emailed participant information and consent forms. This information outlined the study, detailed the requirements of the participants which included their time for an interview and to check over the transcript of the interview. The information form gave the contact details of myself and my supervisor and potential participants were encouraged to make contact with any questions they had before signing the consent form and returning this electronically via email. Each of the five educators who were initially contacted wanted to find out more and subsequently agreed to participate in the research.

Once consent was received, participants were contacted via email to establish a suitable time and place for an interview - interviews took place in a setting of the participant's choice. While the intention was to conduct all interviews face-to-face, the national COVID-19 government response meant that parts of the country were in lock-down and therefore two of the four interviews were conducted electronically via Zoom. Two participants had a close working relationship and chose to complete their conversational interviews simultaneously in a group setting while the remaining three participants were interviewed one-on-one.

Each interview was sound recorded using the 'Voice Recorder' phone application. Once we had greeted one another the Voice Recorder application was started with participants' agreement. The participants were informed that draft transcripts of their interview would be emailed to them, and that they would have the opportunity to adjust these before they were used as data.

Each interview commenced with whakawhanaungatanga - the participants and I reconnected and discussed our work, study, family lives and any other commonalities we shared. I began the interview by thanking them for their time and support before opening with a karakia. The first of a series of open-ended questions was asked of each participant and the interviews as conversations commenced. Each interview progressed organically, guided by the participant's responses and the direction of the conversation, however all of the open ended question prompts I had prepared were covered in each interview. Each individual interview lasted for approximately 70 minutes, with the group interview being 91 minutes in duration. At the conclusion of the interview the participants were thanked for their time and the Voice Recorder application was stopped. I advised the participants to expect their draft transcripts to be returned via email within a week's time.

The audio recordings were transcribed into a Google Document and were returned to each participant via email to check for accuracy and validity. Participants were informed that they were welcomed to amend their own text. Any annotations and alterations made by the participants were clearly visible, being recorded in a colour other than the original black text. Once approved by the participants, and returned via email the verified transcripts were printed ready for analysis.

The data was analysed using grounded theory. This process involved reading through each transcript and coding key aspects in the data using highlighters. The highlighted data was then grouped and thematically categorised which generated five emerging themes. Analytical memos were recorded to explain my thought patterns in relation to the analysis. The final theories were developed following a thorough analysis of both the annotated memos and the coded, categorised data.

Findings were presented in a collaborative story. This process involved logically and cohesively weaving together my own experiences and voice with the participants' voices into a story that told our experiences of Blended Learning and beyond. This story comprised five sections - one for each theme that emerged. These were presented under each of the research questions that they addressed.

Finally, found poems were created using only the words taken directly from the participant's transcripts. These did not follow any particular poetic structure, but were rather created using the words as a guide to the composition of each poem.

Insider/ Outsider

I am a peer of the participants similarly practising as a teacher in an English-Medium state setting. I am also their peer as a fellow past participant of the Poutama Pounamu blended learning. Further, we share the common journey as University of Waikato Master of Education and EDUCA-500 students and graduates. In all of these roles I am an insider. I am also an insider in the collaborative story as it is my voice that brings all of our voices together. In doing so I am mindful of my critical role as a culturally responsive researcher.

Participants

The educators who were invited to participate in this research were selected based on the relational principle of *whanaungatanga* (relationship, kinship, sense of family connection). These were people who I had learned alongside at noho marae for Blended Learning, through Masters papers at the University of Waikato and in our roles with our local Kāhui Ako. The decision to work alongside people with whom I had an existing connection with was influenced by the primacy of relationships in effective culturally responsive research (Berryman, et al., 2013). The cultural background of the participants, including myself, is diverse, as are the roles we carry out and locations in which we live and work.

Commonalities include our vast experience as teaching practitioners in the English-medium school system and our previous participation as Kaiwhakaako in the Blended Learning offered by Poutama Pounamu. An introduction of each participant follows. Pseudonyms have been given to respect and ensure confidentiality.

Sadie - Sadie is a *tauiwi* (non-indigenous New Zealander) woman who is a mother, a wife, a Masters of Education student and a teacher. She came to Aotearoa New Zealand from her homeland of Canada more than twenty years ago. Sadie works at an English-Medium state secondary school for girls. She has been a classroom teacher for more than 25 years and holds a senior management position at her school.

Pia - Pia has Māori and Pākehā heritage with strong links to Ngāti Porou. She is a bilingual woman who was raised in both Te Ao Māori and the Pākehā world. Pia is a mother, a wife, a Masters of Education student and a teacher. She works at the English-Medium state secondary school for girls which she attended as a young woman. Pia has been teaching at this school for more than 10 years.

George - George is a tauwiwi man who hails from a small and beautiful island off the coast of Scotland. He is learning te reo Māori in order to support the self-determination efforts of mana whenua. George is a father, a husband, a Masters of Education student and a teacher. He works at an English-Medium state secondary school for boys. George has taught around the world, and has been in Aotearoa's education system for more than 25 years.

Rīhari - Rīhari grew up predominantly participating in the Pākehā world. More recently, Rīhari acknowledges his Māori whakapapa and Ngāti Kahungunu heritage as special and influential and he has worked to strengthen his connections with Te Ao Māori as an adult. Rīhari is a father, a husband, a researcher and a teacher. Working at a co-educational English-Medium state secondary school, he carries out the additional role of an Across School teacher with his Kāhui Ako. Rīhari has worked in this setting since qualifying more than ten years ago.

Hine - Hine is a Māori woman with strong and proud connections to Ngāti Ranginui and Tauranga Moana. Hine was raised in Te Ao Māori, spending much of her time growing up at her home marae. She is a mother, a wife, a researcher, a Masters student and a teacher. Hine is a bilingual woman who has taught in both English and te reo Māori mediums. Currently working in an English-medium state primary setting, Hine carries out a specialist role in her school working to improve outcomes for Māori students, she is also an Across School Teacher with her Kāhui Ako. Hine has been teaching for more than 34 years, with 18 of those in her current setting.

Positionality Statement

My whakapapa is English, Irish and Māori. I am learning more about the Māori world which my grandfather was removed from and we are slowly reconnecting with our Ngāti Maru and Ngāti Mutunga (Taranaki) whānau and iwi. I grew up in Tokoroa and still live in the South Waikato region. I have been a teacher in English-medium education in Aotearoa for the last 12 years and currently work with a class of Year 4 - 5 students. Most importantly, I am a mum to four amazing children. An unknown benefit of Blended Learning and my ongoing research and study has been the strengthening of my connection with te ao Māori. I am deeply motivated to ensure my children are strong, secure and successful within their own bicultural identity and this work is absolutely supporting this aspiration.

Ethical Considerations

This research completes the thesis component of my Master of Education Degree. Ethical approval was granted by the University of Waikato Human Research Ethics Committee. This research concerns the ability of English-Medium teaching professionals to best serve indigenous Māori students who statistically have poorer academic and wellbeing outcomes than non-Māori students. Therefore, while improving outcomes for Māori students was essentially the wider goal of this project this would be more achievable from teachers theorising their practice.

I have completed both undergraduate and Masters level research methods papers through Massey University and The University of Waikato. I have completed the Masters level research methods paper EDUCA500 Culturally Responsive Methodologies Incorporating Kaupapa Māori and Critical Theories. The learning from these university papers and the wider Poutama Pounamu professional development have given me tools and competencies to approach this research project in a safe and participatory manner.

Chapter Four - Findings

Introduction

In this chapter I present the findings from my research. Each of my research questions are addressed through the five overarching themes that emerged. My findings are presented through the process of collaborative storytelling and found poems in which the voices of the participants are woven together.

Question One: What were your key critical learnings during your experience as a kaiwhakaako within the Poutama Pounamu Blended Learning?

Participants identified a variety of key critical learnings from engaging with the Poutama Pounamu Blended Learning. These critical learnings centred around two main themes. The first was around the concept and process of conscientisation. This leads on to the second theme of their developing awareness and understandings of the historic power relations and how these lead to the current status quo of disparities for Māori in our education system.

Conscientisation

An undefined problem

On day one of the first Poutama Pounamu Blended Learning wānanga the new intake of kaiwhakaako were invited to share their reasons for being there, including what we hoped we would get out of the year of professional development ahead of us. I recall, now with discomfort, my pathologising of our Māori students who ‘were failing to do as well as their non-Māori peers’. I was concerned about the difference in attendance and disciplinary rates and noted that this was the case at each of the three schools I had worked at and was certainly the same at the schools I attended myself growing up. I shared that what I hoped I would get from Blended Learning were ideas about how to ‘help Māori students achieve’.

George similarly felt things were ‘wrong’ in his context, but, like me, he was unable to define the problem:

I have been unsettled for a large part of my life because of my own experiences within and outside education - I have just been seeing stuff which is not right. And not really understanding what the problem is. I felt things were wrong and I had ideas as to what that was about but I didn’t really know.

Hine, too, came into Blended Learning with a sense of unease, however, she was able to articulate its source. She described feeling disappointed in herself for her tendency to be a ‘fence sitter’ during her career in education:

I knew when to let Māori into the classroom. I knew how to exist in the other world, too, by pushing [my] Māori to the side.

For Pia, the task at hand was clearer, but the way forward was not:

I was feeling, before we got involved with Poutama Pounamu Blended Learning, a little bit like a hamster on a treadmill. I was almost at the point where it felt like the task was too big.

Before engaging with Poutama Pounamu Blended Learning we understood there was an issue of inequity in schools and wider society. Through various official and unofficial mediums, I had been fed the deficit theories about why inequity existed. I had not, before that point, critically considered how this inequity came to be, or who was responsible for its existence and maintenance. I simply, with good intentions, believed it was my job to fix inequity by offering more of the same support - ‘remediation’ - to my Māori students until their outcomes improved.

Historic Evidence - Colonisation and the Doctrine of Discovery

The Doctrine of Discovery was introduced on day one of the first Poutama Pounamu Blended Learning wānanga as a piece of historic law which enabled and justified the violent process of colonisation that followed. This piece of evidence was both confounding and provoking - I started to question the legitimacy of our present-day education, legal and political systems. As my critical consciousness was rising, my previously taken for granted understandings of what I deemed right and good were in doubt. For me, this was exactly when my process of conscientisation began.

Pia’s experience of learning about the Doctrine of Discovery was similarly stirring and has had an enduring impact:

Learning about the Doctrine of Discovery was the most pivotal shift in my understanding of our own history and that really changed the way I view all the information that I see.

Hine’s process of conscientisation was also initiated when she started to learn about the Doctrine of Discovery and the power of colonisation. The reason she had adapted strategic ‘fence sitting’ behaviours became clearer as she realised:

Colonisation has impacted probably everything. Language, culture and identity. I think having lived my life, that was just the way life was for us [Māori] and we accepted it. But I learned [from the Blended Learning], actually, that I don’t want to sit and I don’t have to accept that way anymore.

Participants also reported a sense of outrage from ākonga members as they learned about the contents of the Doctrine of Discovery. Sadie’s ākonga group members felt a sense of disbelief that they had not

known about the Doctrine and the impetus behind the process of colonisation, while some of Pia's ākongā members felt an overwhelming urge to take action - to address and right the wrongs of the past. Pia shares:

What I gained through Blended Learning was how powerful that conscientisation was in people.
If you can do that with people they'll continue to do the work themselves.

Sadie also recognised the strong sense of agency and determination that the process of conscientisation had instilled in her ākongā group:

Before it felt like you had to pull people along but I didn't need to convince them, they got it!
And then suddenly they're on their own waka!

Current Evidence - The Social Statistics

Alongside the historic facts about how and why Aotearoa was colonised, Kaiwhakaako were presented with both quantitative and qualitative educational and social statistics and data pertaining to the inequity experienced by Māori. And, as discussed in the Literature Review, this evidence devastatingly indicated a crisis for the indigenous peoples of this land. This evidence 'ring fenced' our upcoming conversations with facts, and helped George to finally define and understand the root of the problems that had caused him to feel a sense of discomfort for much of his career:

The social statistics are a very powerful thing. Without them it would be difficult to see the problem in its fullness. There is inequity right in front of us, which is the result of colonisation. And what we hear is deficit theorising and pathologising and you know it's not right but you don't have anything to put back against it.

The Deeply personal, introspective process of Conscientisation

Through the process of conscientisation I have learned things about myself that I never would have believed were true. In these intensely introspective processes of reflection a metaphorical mirror is held up revealing the heavily conditioned layers of values, beliefs, biases and even racism, which make me, me. I grew to understand how some of these parts of me had supported the perpetuation of an inequitable society created through the insidious and far reaching process of colonisation. I developed an awareness of how my belief and values systems would impact others around me, particularly, and regretfully, the students and whānau I work with. Participants in this research were similarly moved at a personal level by what their process of conscientisation revealed about their own lives. George describes a certain sense of clarity that came through the uncomfortable process of identifying the root causes of oppression in society and his role in maintaining this status quo:

I didn't know what I was resisting - it wasn't clear. Racism wasn't obvious at the time to me, I didn't understand the construct of it. I didn't understand my own prejudice and racism, my own internal unconscious bias. It helped me address all of that in terms of what the structure of our society is and what colonisation has done to people.

Sadie began to explore the factors that contributed to her becoming the person in the professional that she was in today:

It's about your upbringing, your life, what's shaped your thinking so far. You start rethinking all of that. The assumptions you made growing up and what they were based on. Why you didn't question them earlier?

Hine became cognisant of the wider repercussions of surrendering her 'culture at the gate'. Not only was this a source of incongruence for herself, she says 'it also impacted on what my students got'.

Identity

Each participant found that their own identity became the focus of an informal personal inquiry as we learned the importance and place of language, culture and identity in a well and thriving person, school and society. I began a poignant journey of identifying and connecting with my whakapapa 89 years after my Grandad was given away for being born to a Māori father. Pia's awareness and understanding of her own family's role in the Kaupapa Māori uprising developed as she realised that her attendance at Kōhanga Reo may have been an act of resistance from her Father as he attempted to reclaim the education he was unfairly denied. Rīhari's understanding of teaching was 'completely challenged' upon recognising that culture and people cannot be separated, and therefore culture and learning are indivisible in nature. Sadie continues to theorise on representation and her place as a Pākehā leader, alongside an all-Pākehā leadership team in her predominantly Māori setting:

I'm really comfortable that at some point I could step aside. Because I don't think it's my job to do some of this stuff. It all comes back to that Treaty of Waitangi stuff – partnerships and mana ōrite and where do I fit? I know it's somewhere but I don't need to be at the front.

Privilege and Dominance in our Society

Understanding that there are a dominant set of systems in Aotearoa which were imported from Europe and which privilege those most like them was a revelation for non-Māori research participants. In order to help raise consciousness and promote critical thinking, Poutama Pounamu offers kaiwhakaako a wide range of bicultural evidence, artefacts and prompts to consider. The historic policy documents which comprise a large portion of Module One learning materials clearly show how our education system was methodically shaped into the hierarchical, top-down model that exists today in order to privilege Pākehā and oppress Māori. Other, more aesthetic forms of evidence, such as Robyn Kahukiwa's painting, *The*

Choice are also offered to prompt reflection and dialogue. Kahukiwa's image immediately struck George, and evidently provided him with an insight into the internal conflict which Hine had struggled with each day of her professional life. George explained:

The first module, which looked at Māori having to wear a mask, was a fantastic analogy. That was very powerful for me. I could suddenly see that Māori had to step from one world and become a different person to be successful. That put a spotlight on the privilege of some compared to the struggle of others.

This learning prompted Rīhari to think more critically about systems, practices, curriculum and assessment that he had previously taken for granted as valid and reliable:

This particular learning has made it a lot clearer to me. It starts to expose where things come from. I teach NCEA level 1 and 2 and when you start to look at the curriculum and the standardised achievement measures - they give you perfect examples of what an Achieved, a Merit and an Excellence would look like. A lot of these exemplars and a lot of the content very much followed a traditional, mainstream schooling, Western way of knowledge and thinking. You start to become critical of who is writing the assessment, and who are these national moderators? Who are they? Where are they from and what knowledge do they value?

For Sadie, the implications of privileging Western, colonial ways of knowing and being were becoming clearer. She has since struggled with the fact that the principle of partnership and the practices associated with honouring the Treaty of Waitangi have rarely been enacted in her setting. Sadie started noticing that the rich, holistic metaphors of Te Ao Māori which are espoused as values within her school context were westernised and watered down as they apparently did not fit within the social constructions of what is deemed educationally and institutionally appropriate. It became clearer that Western, colonial constructs and power were dominating and undermining the indigenous ways that are natural and valid to the majority of students within her setting. Sadie shared the following example:

We have 'whanaungatanga' as one of our school values and that's been loosely interpreted as making connections with people and feeling connected. But the whānau bit has been lost. If we are going to have whanaungatanga as our school value, what does that actually mean for us? Because it means something more than just teaching and learning and marking and assessing and we wouldn't be just writing things off if we were truly living and breathing whanaungatanga as a school.

Realising the Socially Constructed Nature of Reality

Conscientisation can be a very confronting experience. Throughout my journey as a kaiwhakaako, and beyond, I have found myself reeling with feelings of shame and regret. But part of the cycle of critical

consciousness is identifying and understanding the root causes of oppression in order to problem solve ways to agentically address these issues. All of this is made possible when one understands the socially constructed nature of reality. The theory that the beliefs, systems and values that are privileged as unchallengeable ways of being are in fact socially constructed through colonisation and can therefore be deconstructed through conscientisation.

George spent much of our time together speaking on the topic of conscientisation and social constructs. He was particularly moved by the simplicity and hope in this concept, sharing the following thoughts:

What I learned was that the current situation that people find themselves in doesn't have to be. We are all able to make transformative change and it comes through critical consciousness. You have to go through a journey to understand your own position within the fabric of New Zealand Society so that you can deconstruct that.

Kaupapa Māori Theory

Kaupapa Māori theory, which underpins and informs the work of Poutama Pounamu, is explicitly taught through Blended Learning. I had previously associated the term Kaupapa Māori only with the schools where the curriculum is delivered in Te Reo Māori. Raising my awareness of the principles, aspirations and achievements of this movement has been very humbling. I was ashamed to be learning this information, which is absolutely fundamental to function as a good citizen of New Zealand, so far down the track. How I had managed to avoid learning about and appreciating the Kaupapa Māori movement became part of the spiralling inquiry I was in as my critical consciousness continued to rise.

Hine found the learnings around Kaupapa Māori theory empowering and affirming. The principle of Taonga Tuku Iho, the centralising and legitimising of te reo, tikanga and mātauranga Māori resonated particularly deeply with her:

One of the things we learned is that Māori ways of knowing and being are equally important as the colonial ways. But for Māori they are actually more important because they are what tell you who you are, and they give you your culture and identity.

For Pia, who had always achieved well academically, finding a place for Kaupapa Māori theory provided an interesting challenge. She used the term 'acultural', meaning without or regardless of culture, to describe the process of teaching and learning in the past. She has since been contemplating her cultural connection to her journey as a teacher and a learner.

George was compelled to actively support the self-determination efforts of tangata whenua by learning to speak te reo Māori. He does so in order to avoid 'dominating space linguistically.' George shared that he had previously been motivated to learn te reo in order to have a second language in his repertoire.

But this motivation has shifted in response to a developing understanding of critical and Kaupapa Māori theories:

It's about allowing Māori to be Māori and the fact that I don't speak te reo is not their problem, it is my problem. And I need to sort that out. If someone wants to speak to me in te reo they should be able to speak to me in te reo.

Hine summarised the fundamental place of critical theories in understanding and addressing the oppression and damaged caused by colonisation:

Just to know that, actually, no one can move forward without conscientisation. We will sit and maintain where we are unless we have that. It's that real ability to think critically about what is happening. Realise it, understand it and do something differently to move forward.

Found Poem - And I Realise

This poem consists exclusively of the words found in my research transcripts. It is a collage of the voices in this research, woven together to emphasise and amplify participants' experiences and learnings within the theme of conscientisation.

And I Realise

I looked at myself

And at the water in which I swim

And I realise

It just sits under the surface,

It's always been sitting underneath

It is the structure, it's what we live in, the fabric of our society.

We are all a part of it

we've all been tricked

and the status quo remains.

And I realise

It doesn't have to be.

It is a made reality.

I don't have to sit

and I don't have to accept.

I don't have to become a different person to be successful.

And I realise

I have a part

I can do something about it

I have got power.

I understand that now.

Before I accepted it and now I do not.

And I realise

This is our reality

and this is how we can do something about it.

Historic Power Relations and the Status Quo

Top-down, Hierarchical Models

With constant exposure to new resources, dialogic ākonga hui and regular personal reflections and feedforward, the Blended Learning team were supporting a rapid shift in our awareness of historic power relations in education. A more critical, less accepting stance had replaced our previous passive neutrality which gave power to the status quo. Like the other participants, I grew to understand that colonisation is responsible for the introduction of most social constructions commonplace in the mainstream education system today. These constructs identified by the research participants were generally maintained by privilege-induced apathy, a lack of conscientisation, or a combination of both. They included unfulfilled obligations under Te Tiriti o Waitangi within the top-down, hierarchical models of success, assessment and even appearance.

Honouring Te Tiriti o Waitangi

Exposure to Blended Learning has encouraged Sadie to reflect on the authenticity of past attempts to share power with whānau:

The principles of the Treaty of Waitangi are at the heart of everything – well, are supposed to be – at the heart of everything we do at our school. That's what we say. But what does that look like? I think that whole thinking around partnerships and mana ōrite – that re-framed how I think about partnerships because up until then it was like we make good connections with whānau. Educationally powerful connections. That's what I thought partnerships were. I sort of

put them in the same boat – I know there’s a bit of overlap there but for me it was like us reaching out and connecting, networking, almost, but only to serve our purpose.

Participants came to realise that initiatives for Māori, by Māori such as Ka Hikitia - Ka Hāpaitia were routinely undervalued and neglected. Pia, Sadie and I had to hunt our school copies down which were eventually retrieved from the back of resource rooms, my school’s pristine document demonstrably untouched. Sadie’s copy eventually made it to the staffroom wall but she laments the time it took to get to that point:

We have gone for such a long time with them just gathering dust on shelves because the dominant culture had too strong of an agenda to pay attention to such things as Ka Hikitia.

This was an issue common across all of our settings. George articulated the systemic nature of our failure to make Te Tiriti o Waitangi a living, breathing document:

This is not done by individuals, this is down to an institutional problem. That institution, that structure and hierarchy within some schools is what will stop equity being realised.

Success

Participants became critical of the concept and measures of success in our education system. Rīhari recalled the demoralising experience of having an innovative bicultural unit of work, thoughtfully and explicitly steeped in Mātauranga Māori, as required in the New Zealand Curriculum, returned and declined as a valid measure of success. This challenged the learning and unlearning he had done through his exposure to critical and Kaupapa Māori theories, deepening his understanding that the power to define success was being maintained by those at a higher level who failed to understand Māori rights to self-determination under Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

George’s understanding of success shifted from relying on narrow subject-based quantifiers to using more holistic context-based measures such as learning dispositions and overall *hauora* (health, wellbeing):

In the past we used to measure success in maths purely as achievement. For example, the 10/10 and who gets their hand up first. And that is so privileged and so weighted in one direction. In my own practice, and for the people I have had influence with, this has changed to [measuring success based on] the environment in which we sit.

Sadie came to recognise that in her setting, success was defined differently for Māori - more simplistically and less singularly ambitious than the success expected of non-Māori students. The rhetoric that ‘there is more than one way to measure success’ revealed itself as a euphemism for some

teachers' lower, less academic expectations held for their Māori students. This was familiar rhetoric that I had been exposed to in casual staff room conversations and even in official meetings since beginning my teaching career; the deficit theorising that 'even getting to school is an achievement for Māori'. Many of us had witnessed teachers using their power to obstruct opportunities for progress and success. As an example, failing to send reading books home because 'they're not interested in reading anyway'. This offloading of professional responsibility by defining success for Māori as the bare minimum of arriving at school, undermines the enactment of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, instead supporting and reinforcing the low expectations of School Inspector Henry Taylor as quoted in the literature review.

Assessment

The presence of a hierarchical power structure within assessment practices was expressed as a growing frustration for Rīhari. He became more aware of the privileging of silent, individually written examinations over the more collaborative, cooperative and dialogic methods more commonly practised in pedagogies outside of Western, colonial cultures. Rīhari shared:

You learn a lot about where assessment comes from and who has written the assessments and influenced them. Has there been any input from a Kaupapa Māori or mātauranga Māori perspective? You realise this falls short of meeting your expectations but then you are still bound as a teacher to follow the [nationally set] way. In NCEA you can't challenge lots of those aspects – those national level things.

Pia's Blended Learning experience helped her to bring an informed critical and kaupapa Māori lens to her new role as a panellist re-writing the NCEA Core Mathematics and Statistics assessments. This panel was tasked with updating assessment to include mana ōrite me te mātauranga Māori. She shares:

Without the learning from Poutama Pounamu I would have been in a very hard place because I wouldn't have had that time and opportunity to look at historic shifts and reasons why things happened and my own understanding of it.

While on this panel, Pia recognised the limitations of working within a hierarchical power structure. As the only Māori person on the panel, Pia was defaulted to for the answers on all things Māori, but ultimately felt her contributions were part of a box ticking exercise:

They're assessing my contribution. I am being told 'I'm not sure. I'm going to have to ask the Māori representative whether or not... but we can't put it in right now we're just going to have to do something else' and I'm like, 'so you're telling me to do this. I do it. And then you need an ok-er? Put them in this room! If you can't make this decision, perhaps you need to put someone in here that can. Or, don't ask me to do that mahi!'

Appearance

Pia and Sadie shared dialogue about the power dynamics they had noticed underpinning the construction of school uniform and dress standards. In their shared setting, students were leading a strategic review and were looking to add mana motuhake as a school value. Teachers had expressed concerns around endorsing the value of mana motuhake - defined in Te Aka Māori Dictionary as “mana through self-determination and control over one's own destiny” (2020). An excerpt from our discussion around this follows:

Sadie: A big concern around mana motuhake is, if we endorse it, then students will be thinking they can wear anything for their uniform because they are self-determining and ‘do we want that?’ ‘How will we be able to tell students to wear a uniform?’ This country is very attached to having a uniform associated with an organisation. Teachers have such a strong attachment to it and I don’t even know if they could tell you why. It’s just so entrenched in thinking that I don’t think they have even questioned it

Pia: They would ask YOU why YOU are questioning it! Why should they NOT have a uniform?

Staff, too, had to adhere to narrowly constructed standards of dress. Pia shared a story which highlighted the mono-cultural lens and values that these standards upheld. An aspiring teacher interviewed extremely well for a job but, upon leaving the room, panellists discussed how hiring her was obviously not an option due to the inappropriate nature of her appearance - she wore a singlet and had a nose ring; the latter being symbolic of femininity, elegance and prestige in many cultures, but a perceived barrier to effectively delivering the curriculum in Pia’s setting.

Leadership and the Status Quo

Participants learned that leadership teams can present one of the toughest barriers against their efforts to resist and deconstruct the status quo. George shared numerous examples of having his efforts to share the Poutama Pounamu kaupapa resisted by leadership. This, he says, in spite of the fact that many of his teaching peers, particularly those in his ākonga group, were on board and wanted to implement socially just changes. George felt marginalised as the result of challenging this status quo:

Because of the hierarchical structure it’s not being allowed [the kaupapa and changes]. And people like myself have been pushed absolutely to the side and silenced. And that’s what happened all the time to colonised peoples and anybody on the margins of society. It’s [been] an amazing learning for me and for all of us.

George theorised that his setting - a very westernised, historic school which proudly upholds colonial traditions - was inherently problematic. But Rihari and I, teachers in coeducational state schools who practise within the same bicultural community, felt similarly constrained by the lack of engagement

from leadership. Rīhari grew to understand that the power to bring about transformative change within a hierarchical power structure lay firmly with leadership:

Leadership seems like the true agents for change - the people of the school who impact the real change, really fast.

Hine, too, recognised that leadership dictated the rate at which change and progress is made. She commented:

We had a new principal and I think if we had our original principal things would have moved a lot faster.

Rīhari recognised that only having classroom teachers involved in Blended Learning and ākonga hui was creating a great ‘disconnect’ within the school:

Although we had a really good uptake by classroom teachers, there was only one of our Deputy Principals who attended and supported some of our hui but once he left [the school] there was never any engagement or involvement from any other members of senior leadership. This created quite a disconnect between the theory that we were discussing and the reality of our own context.

Rīhari theorised that leadership involvement would model the adaptive expertise required to initiate change - a deliberate act which has proven to dramatically enhance educational outcomes for students as demonstrated in the Leadership Best Evidence Synthesis (2009).

A critical experience for George was witnessing the progress they had made being swiftly derailed by leadership. Eighteen months into his journey as a kaiwhakaako his school had a change in principal. He shares:

The new leader didn’t want to be part of any of the learning, he didn’t have any understanding of it whatsoever and just took it out. In our first conversation he said he had no time for Kāhui Ako, universities or cultural responsiveness. Now middle leaders here have had outdated readings given to them from Harvard Business School. Within New Zealand’s state education, I find that peculiar that that is a model for the education system in which we live. This is not down to individuals, this is down to an institutional problem. That institution, that structure and hierarchy within some schools is what will stop equity being realised. That is what will resist that equity. I feel like it’s just not a good environment for anybody to live, but then that’s colonisation, isn’t it?

Reactions to identifying and challenging the Status Quo

George revealed the critical experience of being vilified for his part in challenging the status quo in a context where it was actively endorsed:

I was belittled, silenced and marginalised. I have had some things said to me which I am amazed about - that people could do that.

George's ostracism was not an isolated incident. Many of the participants reported feeling radicalised by those around them for resisting the status quo. Pia shared that in her setting there were heated debates about how Captain Cook's 250th landing anniversary was to be commemorated in their area:

You're presented with one kind of narrative, which is 'why is everyone against Cook? You guys just need to calm down'. And we were able to be part of the other narrative that actually investigated the truth of what happened in that time.

The participants encountered reactions of defensiveness and fragility when privilege was named and challenged. I was personally called a racist for suggesting we share with our students a Mana Whenua perspective on a historic site we were planning to take our classes to. George shares:

I found myself starting to be challenged extremely personally on this, I was called a 'zealot' and 'white noise' on several occasions. We put a reading out to staff on white fragility and I was attacked in the staffroom about it and the person who attacked me, when we tried to unpack it, hadn't even read it. And it was interesting because the attack was exactly what it was talking about within the reading. It was fuelled by the defensiveness of the dominant culture, holding on to privilege.

George describes this part of his journey as a kaiwhakaako as 'very difficult'. This was a similarly shaking experience in my learning journey that I could empathise with.

Found Poem - The Tragedy

This found poem is intended to amplify the voices of my participants on the theme of historic power relations and the status quo.

The Tragedy

The environment in which we sat

so privileged,

so weighted in one direction.

The hierarchy,

the tradition,

the institution,

the experts.

It falls short.

Challenge it and you are silenced.

Challenge it and you are side-lined

by the affronted, the assaulted, the defensive, the fragile.

Privilege.

Measure it and move on.

You can't challenge it.

You are still bound to follow the way.

Take it or leave it.

It is the environment in which we sit.

That's the tragedy.

Question Two: What were the implications of participating in curriculum and pedagogy grounded in te ao Māori - a traditional pre-colonial Māori world view?

Participants theorised about their experience of engaging in curriculum and pedagogy grounded in te ao Māori and gave examples of how this impacted them both personally and professionally. Within this theme I have also included the importance of the underpinnings of critical and Kaupapa Māori theories which were cited as essential to the successful engagement with Blended Learning. Experiences for Māori participants were notably different to those of the Pākehā and Tauīwi participants. For Māori, this was often an affirming return to the natural customs and traditions that had shaped them. For non-Māori a way of knowing and being had been reconstructed, representing new curriculum and pedagogical possibilities. To acknowledge the diverse experiences of learning within te ao Māori, this emerging theme is called 'Returning to a Reconstructed Curriculum and Pedagogy'. Alongside this sits the theme of 'Resistance', where the participant's personal pushback against oppressive systems and practices is explored.

Returning to a Reconstructed Curriculum and Pedagogy

The Importance of the Theory

In a recent online kōrero series, Graeme Hingangaroa Smith, who academically formalised Kaupapa Māori as a theory for change, asserted the importance of critically when looking to identify and address social injustice:

If you don't have a critical outlook you can't understand, accurately, what is going wrong. And unless you understand accurately what is going wrong and how it's going wrong, you cannot come up with accurate answers. (Smith, 2020)

As a collective, we agreed that the Blended Learning's underpinnings of critical and Kaupapa Māori theories had provided frameworks to gain clarity about what was going wrong - an inequitable education system which routinely underserved a group of its learners as it simultaneously privileged another. We also now had a better understanding of the historic acts that systematically shaped this reality. Our ability to appreciate and prioritise teachings from te ao Māori as equally valuable and legitimate were advanced through our exposure to Kaupapa Māori theory.

Rīhari valued the methodical structure of the Blended Learning programme and the support to organise similarly well-structured and intentional ākonga hui:

I think the structure of the Blended Learning course was really logical – you start by looking at the fabric of society and then you do some reflection into your own beliefs, then look at a school context and then wider society, then back to school.

Investigating ‘the fabric of society’ involved significant research and learning about the state of our nation and what led to this inequitable reality. This factual evidence base created the foundations for kaiwhakaako to start to understand ‘the why’ - why things are the way they are and why we need to change. Rīhari shared:

Often in schools you’ve got this impetus to just pick up something and run with it. But we don’t often peel back the layers about why we are doing what we are doing. That’s what the Blended Learning course was really good at – getting into the ‘why’ questions.

Pia attributed critical theory with developing her agency to question and critique power relations and the status quo:

Critical theory really made me start to question, ‘Who’s got the power here? Whose voice is this? Who says so?’ Whereas I wouldn’t have done that before, really. I may have known but I wouldn’t have done it. I wouldn’t have put two and two together to confront it and to change.

Hine was inspired by the Blended Learning facilitator’s deliberate and effective use of critical language:

One of the things I loved about all of the facilitators and their delivery of the Blended Learning is their language. One word makes all the difference, and if you just tweak a word it makes quite a difference to the message. So, trying to be a bit more deliberate in the language I use because in doing so you get less backs up.

Pia was deeply affected on a personal level by what she learned about the Kaupapa Māori movement:

I never knew that kaupapa Māori had a theory associated with the whole uprising. It was an act of resistance and I didn’t know that. And so, I was part of that, with a Pākehā mother and a Māori dad who didn’t know how to kōrero Māori, who had been kicked out of school at 14 because he was “too dumb”. I didn’t think that. I just believed that my dad was too dumb. He probably did too. “But he was much better off working”. You know, all of these stories that you hear. Now that you know, you go, ‘Fuck! That is fucked up! That is fucked up!’ It is very powerful. Very powerful.

A depth of understanding around Kaupapa Māori theory created a novel sense of harmony for Hine who was able to begin decompartmentalising her personal and professional culture and identity:

I am now more relaxed about including kaupapa Māori or mātauranga Māori into the programmes that I am taking. It’s given me the confidence to bring all of that to the floor and to not continue to be the fence sitter.

Te Ao Māori Metaphors

Following are the shared implications of participating in curriculum and pedagogy grounded in te ao Māori. I have used the te ao Māori metaphors that frame the principles of Cultural Relationships for Responsive Pedagogies (Berryman et al., 2018) to organise these findings. I have done this because the reconstructed curriculum and pedagogy that we experienced was not delivered by chance. Rather, it was the result of more than twenty years of iterative research and learning by the Te Kotahitanga, Kia Eke Panuku and Poutama Pounamu leadership and teams.

Whanaungatanga

The te ao Māori metaphor of whanaungatanga was manifested in the caring and supportive relationships that were forged with our Blended Learning facilitators and amongst kaiwhakaako. During my time as a kaiwhakaako I personally felt deeply connected and valued by the Poutama Pounamu team, as a whānau member would. These strong relationships have since endured. George shares:

I absolutely loved it because I felt safe. All the time. I felt cared about. I reflected and wrote about it and I got feedback which never ever made me feel anything but listened to and respected as a human being and a learner. And it encouraged me to keep going.

This helped George to develop huge respect for, and trust in, te ao and Mātauranga Māori and gave him confidence in pursuing his next te reo goal:

I am looking forward to the immersion part because that will put me right outside my comfort zone but I know, and again it comes back to te ao Māori, I know that I will feel safe, nurtured and looked after within that space. Which is not something I could say about some of my other previous learning experiences which are westernised.

Rīhari noticed the positive implications of enacting the relational metaphor of whanaungatanga within his ākonga group:

They [a teacher] were probably there to defend their view of teaching and learning but then, because of the way that the ākonga hui was set up, we provided that space for whanaungatanga, for dialogue to happen, to hear everyone's opinion. I think, maybe, for that teacher, it was a really different way of unpacking learning and so possibly it was a place where they felt valued to share what they were thinking.

Hine, thrived as the familiar practice and benefits of whanaungatanga filtered into her context:

Being a collective, supportive group in my profession was pretty amazing. I get that supportive, collective group all the time when I go home to the marae, so that wasn't new. But to have it in

my professional life was new and amazing. The delivery, that collegial support – those things helped with the encouragement to get out there and do this stuff. You knew there were other people doing the same thing as you. You weren't alone, there was that support. There is also the after-support. I don't think any of us would have gone away feeling that 'if I get something wrong I can't go back to anybody in the blended learning team' I think we know, always, that they're there to support us. We can go back to them; it doesn't even matter how many years down the track.

“Expecting the highest in terms of your combined endeavours” (Berryman et al., 2018. p. 8) was an element of the whanaungatanga metaphor that we experienced as kaiwhakaako. I didn't believe I was capable enough, or ready for a Masters Degree but enrolled with the supportive encouragement of the Poutama Pounamu team - I was motivated to strive to meet the high expectations they had of me. Both Sadie and Pia reported feeling similarly hesitant about embarking on a Masters journey before their Blended Learning experience. Pia shared:

I did think at some point I might have time, when the kids are older to do it but Mere was really encouraging and almost expected it, and that turned into making me expect it too – why later? Why not now? And so, I'm in a really kind of passionate place where I think 'what comes after masters? Where do I go after that?' For me it's impacted me completely. It's changed my whole life trajectory.

Whakapapa

Critical theory afforded us with some very powerful personal lessons in understanding the te ao Māori metaphor of whakapapa which encompasses “working to know the student and their whānau...being prepared to reciprocate by working to understand your own cultural identity, values and assumptions” (Berryman et al., 2018. p. 8). I could see, for the first time, my position of privilege and what this meant for the students I worked with; the intergenerational impact of historic trauma also became clear. I began recognising and valuing the students' identities and prior knowledge and experiences for the assets they were, completely transforming the culture in my class.

George's conscientisation to his own personal positioning developed, too:

I realised the construct that I brought into my classroom – probably still do to an extent – was highly colonised because that's the construct of our whole society – my teacher training, my own schooling, my experiences, my life – has been that construct of dominance.

Hine felt she finally had permission to let the cultures of her school permeate and shape her context:

The Blended Learning has helped me to feel comfortable to make culture visible in the school and to understand that it is actually essential to make culture visible in the school.

Kaupapa

Blended Learning encouraged effective cultural relationships by creating many opportunities for the te ao Māori metaphor of kaupapa to be practised. This metaphor ensures that teachers are working towards an outcome or kaupapa that is informed by the wishes and aspirations of both the student and their whānau through ongoing dialogue and face-to-face meetings (Berryman et al., 2018). Within the Blended Learning context these ongoing meetings to discuss these kaupapa involved facilitators, kaiwhakaako and ākonga group members.

Heading into my first ākonga hui I felt dramatically underprepared - I was still holding onto the construct of needing to be an 'expert' in order to facilitate professional learning. But the dialogic nature of the ākonga hui, focused on a set kaupapa and ring-fenced with evidence, provided the most incredible opportunity for open and honest conversations where power was balanced and mana was able to be ōrite. Every member of the group contributed which was a rare occurrence in a meeting situation in our school context.

Rīhari also noticed an authenticity in the contributions from within the intimate ākonga hui format:

It provided a space for a number of teachers to ask questions that they were never comfortable asking in whole staff professional learning. It opened up a lot of dialogue that they had always wanted to ask and learn about, particularly around the experiences of Māori students in schooling.

While George personally flourished learning alongside his ākonga group:

I did find that when I would reflect on what I had learned and the conversations I had had with the ākonga - they were very powerful for me personally.

Sadie acknowledged the power of traditional wānanga at noho marae in promoting kaupapa within both formal and informal conversations:

What I really love about it is the opportunities for conversations that happen outside the formal stuff, because that's where a lot of the unpacking of thinking happens. It's in those evenings and those other times – when you're wandering over to the whare kai for lunch – and you're having those little conversations and that's where you actually process a lot of the learning.

For Pia, the experience of honing in on kaupapa within wānanga was not new:

Wānanga have always been, well for Māori, a kind of main source of learning on top of normal practice and so that immersion and being in a different setting forces you to just zone into that learning and soak it up and be impacted. That is the word I would use to describe what a wānanga does for me. In my learning, it impacts me in a way that shifts the way I think.

Even when scheduled noho marae became online wānanga due to the COVID pandemic, the metaphor of kaupapa helped our momentum to continue and, in fact, created fantastic opportunities for whanaungatanga with kaiwhakaako from around the country. Sadie shares:

I thought it would be awkward but even then, I guess because we're all on the same kaupapa and all in the same frame of mind, I guess we're open to making connections pretty quickly. Just getting straight into the conversations. It's the conversations really.

Wānanga

The te ao Māori metaphor of wānanga was helpful in operating strategically, and with grace when tackling contentious social issues such as privilege, racism and bias. The process of conscientisation brings with it many emotional responses, the most pronounced for me initially was anger. What I came to understand, with the support of the Blended Learning facilitators, was that everyone was at a different point in their journey in their understanding and critical consciousness. Every individual is culturally located and brings to the table their own background experiences. Wānanga helped me to understand this and tailor and scaffold ākonga hui appropriately, in relation to the “cultural toolkit” (Bruner, 1996) of those I was working alongside.

Rīhari found the metaphor of wānanga helpful in his role as an Across School Teacher with the Kāhui Ako:

It set me up really well to be able to support leaders that I have worked with in a way that they need to be supported – in a critical way that I seem to be able to find a bit of balance with quite a few leaders with support and challenge - because it has to be done in a strategic way.

Hine was also able to make progress in promoting Poutama Pounamu's kaupapa with wānanga informing her strategic interactions with colleagues:

I'm able to do it in a way that is not really negative. So if you can design the question the right way then it becomes a question rather than something to become defensive over. More thought provoking.

Ako

Experiencing the responsive te ao Māori metaphor of ako, “taking reciprocal responsibility to learn from and teach each other” (Berryman et al., 2018. p. 8) had significant personal and professional implications. This particular metaphor was responsible for a significant shift in my self-efficacy and view of myself as a learner. Having my ideas and experiences wanted and valued by the Poutama Pounamu team of accomplished academics was unexpected and uplifting. The other participants were similarly affected through their experiences of the metaphor of ako.

Hine’s teaching practice was impacted by her own experience of ako in Blended Learning:

They practise what they preach. The whole notion of not being the expert at the front telling you what to do, but rather being a facilitator of your learning, being responsive to your needs at the time, that was amazing because that whole pedagogy and presentation made it easier to take back to the classroom and the ākonga group. And to not be that person who is always doing the telling. Not to continually have my kids trying to learn what was in the teacher’s head. That was huge.

George recognised the parallels between his experience in Blended Learning and how he was conditioned to believe how teaching and learning really took place:

I remember getting told at Teachers’ College, ‘remember, you’re the chief monkey in here. Don’t smile until Christmas!’ And I have realised that all of that is completely wrong. It was quite hard to let that go in the past before starting this journey. You thought you DID need to be in control all the time. But, in fact, you don’t and once you relinquish that – not to say you don’t have wānanga there, you’ve still got to have a kaupapa within what you’re doing. You’re a responsible adult who will nurture these children along – it has to be reciprocal because we’re talking about people with people, human beings with human beings. Be that an adult with a child, be that a school principal with the teacher. We have to let that construct go so that we can be better human beings and basically have a better life.

Mahi Ngātahi

The te ao Māori metaphor of mahi ngātahi is well encapsulated in the whakataukī *He waka eke noa - we are all in this together*. Mahi Ngātahi promotes “working together as one, collaborating to achieve common outcomes” (Berryman et al., 2018. p. 8) and had implications for the way in which participants practised and related to others. Hine describes her very strong resolve to contribute towards achieving the Poutama Pounamu kaupapa of realising equity excellence and belonging in education:

I don't see that anyone could do the Blended Learning programme and come out and be the same person, let alone the same teacher they were. It becomes a way of life, you start thinking and practising differently.

Rīhari actively sought opportunities to continue working on this kaupapa after his time as a kaiwhakaako came to an end:

Getting into our Teaching and Learning Fund research, which specifically looked at Māori students at year 10 and what we could do to engage with Mana Whenua to look at improving outcomes for Māori students at the junior level. That didn't happen in isolation, the Blended Learning, all of the conversations at the hui that we had, the personal reflections – all of that put us in the position to have the confidence to lead some research in our own school.

George recognised the power of the collective of his ākonga group:

The ākonga group became very powerful and we started to bring that into the wider staff. We started to lead professional learning with massive support from Poutama Pounamu and Rāwini Ngaamo in particular supporting that.

Hine started to work differently, more critically and productively with those who were on the waka and committed to the kaupapa:

As a result of Blended Learning my conversations with that Deputy Principal are far different than they are with the rest of the leadership team. That particular DP is understanding of those things, so has realised, in fact, has said 'just when we thought we were doing it right we've got a long way to go'.

Found Poem - It felt like Coming Home

This found poem is dedicated to Pia and Hine. You helped me to understand that the new-to-me Blended Learning curriculum and pedagogy, that stirred me so deeply, was informed by precious, intrinsic and long-threatened elements of your world - te ao Māori. Your words inspired this poem.

It Felt Like Coming Home

The marae - a safe space, relaxed and comfortable.

A way of life. My way of life.

It felt like coming home.

The deliberate acts were a much needed change;

nurture, care, love, understanding, high expectations

and the encouragement to carry on.

It felt like coming home

to a supportive, collective whānau, deeply connected,

on the same waka.

A hui takes place, a wānanga.

Questioning, reflecting, learning, talking.

Peeling back the layers,

the fabric of our society revealed.

Making meaning, Growing.

It felt like coming home

to where everyone matters and everyone's opinion counts.

Where we are valued as human beings.

It impacts me completely and

Suddenly I was visible again.

My potential, my confidence, my place.

I am valued.

I can make a difference,

a powerful change,

a better way of life.

It felt like coming home.

Resistance

Resistance was identified as perhaps the most perceptible implication of engaging with Poutama Pounamu Blended Learning. Participants shared what compelled them to resist the status quo and identified specific acts of resistance.

Hine shared her understanding of resistance as:

Not taking the status quo for granted and not continuing to perpetuate what's been happening.

George generously shared much insight into his own understanding and experience of resistance. He theorised:

I always took strength from the fact that we have to do this because the situation we have found ourselves in is not right. And if we don't use our agency then what the hell is the point? You can't not! This is not going to be an easy journey because what we are doing is challenging the fact that people's lives are not easy. I couldn't be any more privileged and I don't mind shouldering some of that.

Following are examples of specific acts of resistance shared by the participants.

Addressing Historic Facts

Participants felt an increased sense of personal responsibility to acknowledge critical elements of our shared history. George commented:

The parallels between what I have experienced personally [marginalisation and ostracism] and what Māori experience, their lived reality. When this happens to an entire people it's so tragic. It's so sad. We all have the responsibility to address it.

Sadie opened up the curriculum to teach her students about the Doctrine of Discovery. At that point in time (2020) there was no mandate to begin to understand and be able to address Aotearoa New Zealand histories, so this was an agentic act of resisting the status quo. She shared:

I introduced the students to the Doctrine of Discovery. It was easy to do in Health because we are supposed to look at the determinants of health issues and unpack critical issues. We talk about social justice so it fits. We looked at power dynamics and how they contribute to health issues and equity.

Pia supported Sadie's decision to share this information with her students:

It's the evidence! THIS is what happened! It happened!

Sadie also shared that her ākonga group had started to act agentially by promoting an alternative narrative to Captain Cook ‘discovering’ Aotearoa. They actively resisted joining in celebrating Tuia 250 due to their developed understanding of these historic facts.

Within my setting I started to actively seek Mana Whenua perspectives and gave the students in my class the respect they deserved by offering a balanced view about what we were learning, particularly when addressing local issues.

George spoke about the significance in even the smallest amounts of progress when addressing historic facts about the past:

The challenging thing is some people don’t like this. But I have had that before and some of those people came around because of the unarguable reality. As long as you’re able to bring that reality, they may resist it but it plants a seed.

Sharing Power

Sharing power in relationships with students, whānau and iwi were acts of resisting top-down hierarchical models of power and a direct implication of participating in Blended Learning. Hine was able to use adaptive expertise to redefine her role in the classroom from that of the ‘expert’ to one of a facilitator, learning alongside her students:

We don’t want to fall into the trap of forgetting that as a teacher you are still ultimately responsible for the learning, so you can’t back away from your responsibility there and you can’t just have good relationships with the kids, you can have good relationships and no learning and that’s not what you want to do! You want to have good relationships and great learning.

Hine’s ākonga member who held a leadership role similarly resisted the status quo by seeking to share power:

The Deputy Principal understands that we have been indigenising but haven’t been decolonising so has pushed for our kaumatua to be part of our strategic planning.

The balance of power between George and the whānau of his students became the subject of a personal inquiry:

That’s going to be the big step for me and a few others around me, professionally, that we will start to look at – connecting more authentically with the whānau of the boys who are most vulnerable. And bringing them into our conversations and allowing us to explore how we can all get the best outcomes so that’s definitely going to be a future focus.

Indigenising Practices

Participants have been harnessing the power of the tikanga and the te ao Māori metaphors modelled in Blended Learning. George recognised that the relational metaphor of whanaungatanga was lacking in his classes and resisted this status quo in favour of more relational practices and indigenous norms in his space:

In the past, people at other ends of the room would never know each other from one day to the next. I felt that my class had a good understanding of each other and they knew each other. The first time I did the randomising, which was after the class had been together for four or five months, one of the kids said, ‘Who’s Lee?!’ and I went, ‘Oh no! You don’t even know who that is!’. And that really brought it home to me that we have created this very clinical, cold environment and that is where I have been working away from.

The indigenised *Classroom Observation Tool*, designed by the Poutama Pounamu team to improve Cultural Relationships for Responsive Pedagogy was implemented in our schools. This replaced the traditional hierarchical model of having a superior ‘expert’ in to observe through a biased, uncritical lens. Rīhari believes this tool can help to bring about genuine, transformative change. He shares:

There is so much changing within teaching and learning at the moment. You probably don’t need to say that you are doing it all, you really just need to understand what you need to look at – changing some small things, the things you are doing well that can be kept rather than learning all the words that you need to say to promote lots of things that you’re not actually doing. Again, this comes back to Cultural Relationships for Responsive Pedagogy – the importance of the observation tool and having those conversations. You need someone to unpack what the reality of that teaching and learning episode was, what the students thought about it and what I thought about the evidence as a teacher. That’s where the critical learning happens.

Questioning and Persisting

Questioning was revealed as a common act of resistance from participants. This was my starting point in challenging the status quo and was at odds with my previous conditioned understanding of what respecting my place within a professional hierarchy looked like.

Sadie noticed that her ākonga group began asking big questions after their first hui which explored agency and introduced the Doctrine of Discovery.

My group was like, ‘Well why aren’t we doing something? Why are we just sitting here talking about this? It’s all well and good to know about the Doctrine of Discovery but how does that change the way we practise?’

And Sadie, too, noticed her own strengthened sense of agency to question the status quo:

I will often ask questions on the leadership team. I will bring that [critical] perspective to our thinking about everything. And not just try once and leave it, I go away and think, ‘No. I’m going to come back to this’, and I will have a conversation the next day.

Hine agentically responded to a newly implemented system which she recognised would disadvantage indigenous students. This, in turn, brought about diversity and biculturalism within pedagogy and curriculum in her school:

I’m pushing back a little bit against the systems at school now, which I would NEVER have done. I would have just accepted them and gone with the flow. But now, asking the questions of myself and others. ‘Well, where’s the equity in that? Where’s the ability to be culturally responsive to that? Where’s the adaptive expertise in that?’

Gaining Influence - The Cascading Effect

Blended Learning works on a cascading model of professional development designed to initiate and facilitate consciousness raising in those we work alongside. Participants found this to be an effective method of professional teaching and learning. Participants in my ākonga group have continued to work towards more equitable outcomes for Māori students and have been early adapters with all subsequent initiatives relating to this kaupapa as we continue working alongside Poutama Pounamu as our Kāhui Ako professional development facilitators.

George stressed the importance of gaining influence with others in order to make the shifts required for transformative change:

The current reality has been made, and therefore it can be unmade. But it won’t be unmade unless we ourselves make those inner changes and use our agency to try to bring others on board with that as well.

Rīhari’s Blended Learning experience afforded him with opportunities to positively influence leaders within his Kāhui Ako community:

The Blended Learning has allowed me to have conversations that have influenced and supported school leaders. You leave feeling that you have made a positive impact on their journey.

Found Poem - We Are Shaking

We Are Shaking looks at imminent change and explores the underlying optimism behind our acts of resistance.

We Are Shaking

Challenging the fact that people's lives are not easy,

Through talking and listening.

With evidence and courage.

The journey won't be easy.

But the situation we find ourselves in is not easy.

The status quo of privilege and oppression.

But then there is a dissonance...

inner changes, agency.

I love that stir - with a stir is resistance.

This is a time in history where we are shaking,

Deconstruction is happening in front of our eyes!

It's happening.

We are agents of change.

We start to question, to persist, to push back.

No longer accepting and going with the flow, the status quo.

I will not take it for granted!

I will not continue to perpetuate it!

I am

an agent for change.

Question Three: What long term impact have these experiences had on your own praxis and the praxis of others?

Transformative Praxis

Praxis is described by Freire as “reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it” (1970, p. 36). Transformative praxis results from the alignment and merger of theory and practice and mobilises Freire’s premise of education as a practice of freedom. The enduring impact of engaging in Poutama Pounamu Blended Learning was evident through the transformative praxis identified by participants. Details of significant personal and professional development and transformation that spanned across home, school and community contexts follows.

Finding Our Voices

Participants reported an improved sense of self awareness, self-efficacy and confidence following their completion of Poutama Pounamu Blended Learning. Alongside this sat a new set of knowledge and skills which enabled the participants to confidently express their ideas and add their voice to often uncontested spaces in education.

I have worked hard to implement the advice of my Poutama Pounamu mentor to maintain hope and optimism in this work by focussing on potential. Using the principles of Cultural Relationships for Responsive Pedagogy as a guide I am able to relate much more effectively with my colleagues. Always mindful of the kaupapa I am supporting and spreading; the conversations I initiate are now more critical and intentional, ring fenced with evidence, guided by the humanising principle of mana ōrite.

Hine’s voice and direction have become stronger and clearer:

The blended learning has definitely helped me with my own sense of security, my own confidence to be able to go in there and do things and start working on making change. I know I have a responsibility to bring those things [advocacy for Māori] to the floor to help educate the leadership team and to help the students feel more comfortable in their space.

Knowledge and pedagogy gained through Blended Learning empowered Sadie to persist in supporting the kaupapa:

I have more words to express and I’ve got the why and the evidence to back what I’m saying. I’m able to articulate that better than I have been previously. In previous arguments when people are sitting around saying, ‘You know there’s more than one way to measure success’ I would just think, ‘Oh my god, that doesn’t sit right’, but I wouldn’t know how to counter that. So, I’d just kind of shut up, you know? But now I can. I have more to say.

George similarly felt that his capacity to challenge the status quo had improved:

Now I feel like I have the capability to critically question that [status quo]. And that's amazing. It's liberating because we were stuck before.

Furthermore, this developed confidence and enhanced skill set created a strong foundation to academically formalise our praxis. We felt able to make the most of the innovative and supportive Masters Degree pathway that Poutama Pounamu offers through their Blended Learning programme. This opportunity was taken up by all four participants who hadn't previously returned to higher education since completing their teaching qualification. Each of these educators are currently undertaking research which will contribute valuable knowledge to the Poutama Pounamu kaupapa of realising equity, excellence and belonging for all students.

Critical Inquiry

Transformative praxis was common amongst all participants; their ability to look inward; to act critically within their teaching inquiries by prioritising those who have been less well served in our contexts and system. Participants have shifted their focus from pathologising students as the targets that need adjusting, to critically targeting our own theorising and practices.

Sadie, in her leadership role, undertook a critical inquiry into the purpose of the portfolios that dictate where the focus for teaching and learning lies within her setting:

I suggested that we have a portfolio around Māori student achievement and we've had some robust conversations about what that means, why would we have that. I have had to re-think what my purpose is and what the purpose of that portfolio is. Their thinking is, it's about measuring achievement, that would be the portfolio around the output. But, actually, what I'm thinking is around the input. For example, I was thinking about our staff handbook and about the kuia [whose photographs are] in our whare. And the staff don't know about them – the kids all learn about them but the staff don't know about our Kuia and I was thinking, 'Why aren't they the first things that we do with induction of our staff?' It needs to be in our staff handbook. They need to know about the whenua that the school is built on. That's the kind of thing that I am thinking about. Through that lens, all the time. What can WE try differently?

Hine was inspired to critically inquire into the outcomes she was measuring and working towards:

I look at the Critical Contexts for Change and think about mauri as being the centre and the core. What happens to get us there is the driver now. I am not driven by the data but more driven by the children. Even though I know that we are trying to get to the data, to the achievement, the process of getting there is equally important.

The Mauri of the students also became a focus for George who had critically inquired into equity within his specialist subject. His praxis is evident through significant pedagogical shifts:

It's completely changed because it's about creating good learners above all else. People who are happy and who can allow their strengths into the room instead of feeling like they are stepping into some sort of strange structure or hierarchy. So now for myself and for others, not everybody but for others, mathematics is group focussed with rich, open-ended tasks which allow students' strengths to be brought into the problem. Then we explicitly talk about 'what is it to be a good mathematician?'. And it's that whole collaborative thing where everybody has discussions, it's getting things wrong and bringing various bits of maths into a very rich problem while feeling safe. It is reasonably engineered in the background in terms of the learning that we're doing – it's not just wide open but it allows and requires everybody to contribute into that.

Adaptive Expertise

Deliberate professional acts to realise more equitable outcomes were further examples of praxis. Participants shared examples of system, pedagogy and curriculum adaptations made as the direct result of their participation in Blended Learning.

Rīhari noted the transformative impact his first observation using the Poutama Pounamu Critical Observation Tool had on his praxis:

From that point on, which would have been my third or fourth year of teaching, I started to rethink the way I was teaching. Everything from then on was about the principles of the pedagogy and the pedagogical interactions; what does co-construction actually mean? How can you co-construct entire bodies of work? I started experimenting with those principles as soon as I was exposed to what they were.

George adapted his practice, informed by te ao Māori metaphors and Cultural Relationships for Responsive Pedagogy:

I, and some others, have shifted our focus to dispositions within our classroom and a whānau-type environment. The content is a vehicle for that now. What we are now is a group of people, all together in the classroom. We go on a journey together. What people want, people's kaupapa within that room - their strengths and weaknesses have become a place of nurture.

George's praxis also included influencing a significant system adaptation in his setting:

We moved well away from any kind of ‘ability’, I hate that word, but ‘ability setting’. And we are now fully mixed-ability. We have managed to get to the stage where people understand the damage that streaming has done to the point where it has now ended for my subject. It has been a long journey and it is a direct result of the work we have done which started with Poutama Pounamu.

One of Hine’s examples of praxis showed her adaptive expertise in indigenising learning resources:

The platform we’ve been doing professional development through has not demonstrated anything to show us that culture counts. We are rewriting our books to include it, to make sure that culture counts. Which is quite big. We are making the material more relative and relevant to our kids. I have been pushing back! The conversations have changed!

Shifting Power Dynamics

Deconstructing the idea of the teacher as expert and in control drove the praxis of sharing power and enjoying relationships based on the te ao Māori metaphor of mana ōrite. Choosing to vulnerably position myself as a learner alongside my students has proven extremely beneficial to our shared classroom culture. I have never enjoyed teaching as much as I do and my student and whānau voice, triangulated with quantitative data, demonstrates that the sense of belonging and happiness in class is beneficial to learning and a warmly welcomed change.

Hine has similarly embraced the relational metaphor of mana ōrite:

One of the biggest things in terms of my praxis is trying to share the power of the learning situation with the children. So not being totally in control of everything that’s happening but allowing the children to see that they are valued and their thinking and ideas are valued as well.

Rīhari, too, has explored and shifted power dynamics in his practice:

I have no issues relinquishing control which students seem to respond really well to, particularly 16, 17, 18-year olds who are young adults. They respond really well to you walking alongside them rather than me being the one in front of the class all the time. And they love leading learning and teaching.

Agentic Responses to Policies

Participants reported the praxis of agentially responding to policy and documents such as Ka Hikitia Ka Hāpaitia, the Aotearoa New Zealand Histories Curriculum and ensuring there is equal status for Mātauranga Māori in NCEA. Our ability to understand, value and confidently support these policies

was the direct result of ourselves being nurtured through te ao Māori metaphors, and exposed to critical and kaupapa Māori theories in Blended Learning.

I was privileged to be asked to support my leadership team to write our Aotearoa New Zealand Histories Curriculum implementation plan. This was given to me in draft form and I was able to make many suggestions which took the implementation plan from a directive to a more critical document which made space for acknowledging and sharing prior knowledge, learning and dialogue. Essentially, I was replicating the pedagogy I benefited from in Blended Learning. And while the contents of this curriculum can be challenging, Aotearoa New Zealand Histories has been implemented as safely and critically as possible in our setting.

Hine's awareness of and ability to respond agentially to policy and documents, and support others to do the same, has also developed:

There have been so many policies out there that classroom teachers have not seen and are not aware of. It's about making them all aware of those things now. And to help them to understand, 'hey, here's the policy, this is what it says. This is what it means for us. How are we going to make this policy statement come alive for our school'? Rather than, 'oh god, here's another thing from the ministry, let's shelf it!'. And, through Blended Learning, I have become so much more aware of how many policies there are out there for Māori.

Hine found her foundations of knowledge, built through Blended Learning, also helped her to respond agentially to the Aotearoa New Zealand Histories curriculum document:

Our school looked at the histories draft document and I led that. I was able to answer people's questions with a better depth of understanding about what has happened and the things we continue to perpetuate, the things that need change.

The directive to value and include mātauranga Māori was welcomed by Pia who had already witnessed the benefits of this praxis:

Mātauranga Māori has really shifted the way I'm interpreting my teaching, my learning, my assessments, my conduct, the way I speak to the students. It's fascinating.

Pia was also actively championed Ka Hikitia - Ka Hāpaitia:

When Ka Hāpaitia came out, it was empowering because it used language that we were using that we were learning. It was strong and it was aggressive and it was to the point and there was no mincing. And If you were racist it called you racist. And no one has seen something like that. I have never read policy written in such black and white and assaulting language. It's not

a bad word, it's clear. It's calling it out for what it is. With the learnings I'd had [through Blended Learning] I immediately supported it.

Praxis

What we have and are continuing to learn through our participation with others in the Blended Learning is deeply influenced by Cultural Relationships for Responsive Pedagogy and the te ao Māori metaphors that we were nurtured through.

Hine's praxis involved embedding rather than appropriating mātauranga Māori:

I have learned more about what being culturally responsive is. It's not just about the tokenistic things or adding a little bit of Māori here and a little bit of Māori there but, actually, what do these kids want for themselves? What do they want to learn and how do they want to learn it?

Hine's praxis also included establishing more genuine home-school collaborations based on the metaphor of mana ōrite:

With whānau I am questioning things like, 'Are you happy with your contributions to the school?' and, 'What sorts of contributions are they?' and as a result of that some whānau are thinking, 'We do make contributions to the school but we are only contributing when we are asked to come in for a parent interview, for a whanaungatanga type of day'. So, we have talked around that sort of thing, 'How can you be involved more with what's happening within the school systems? What part can you play in being part of the decision making in the school too, not just come when we ask you to come?' Our leadership team is becoming more receptive to that type of thing too in terms of 'What do we ask whānau to come to school for? How do we change that so that they are actually part of the decision making?'.

Normalising the relational metaphor of whanaungatanga made a significant difference to George and his students:

Making us all care about each other in that room and to look after each other's learning is the priority. That has been my praxis. What really struck me was how much nicer my job was. It was not nearly as stressful because everybody in that room wanted a caring environment and as soon as I allowed that to happen it became a nice place to be.

Rīhari's practise was completely transformed:

If you are following Cultural Relationships for Responsive Pedagogy it impacts on every decision you make as a teacher.

The Wider Reach of Blended Learning

Praxis did not happen in isolation for the participants. There were wider, often unexpected, implications of our participation in Poutama Pounamu Blended Learning. Because I was so deeply affected by what I had been learning I felt it important to share aspects with my own family. I started having conversations with my children about power, history and the reality of the status quo. I give honest answers when they ask about social dynamics they notice; racism, poverty, politics - things I would have apathetically brushed over in the past. I also bring attention to inequity, where developmentally appropriate, and talk about the roots of this suffering. We, as a family, make an effort to correctly pronounce te reo. I tell my children, 'you are Māori and that is special'. We read and talk about the tupuna we know about. We have started our journey of connecting with our iwi and our whenua. We have learned our pepeha and can share this with pride and certainty.

Hine and George's families were similarly impacted by their participation in Blended Learning. George shares:

I am finding that my learning has definitely impacted on people around me. Some of my friends and my family. My wife she's also in te reo Māori courses as well. She hears me rabbiting on about this all the time and she has been part of this learning as well. She has developed an interest – at no time have I tried to impose it.

Hine commented:

Let's start with home. Lots of robust conversations around indigenising and decolonising and actually lots of discussion around the Doctrine of Discovery. That has become a big *kōrero* (conversation) in our household and the impact of that on the education system. Even with my own children I am talking about things like, 'don't sit on the fence' 'be who you are' 'be proud of that' so those sorts of conversations have been great.

Hine also shared a significant act of praxis in another institute directly resulting from her participation in Blended Learning:

Our board member is also on the board of a tertiary institution in our city. Significant changes have happened there as well. One of the things that they did last year was they conferred bilingually in Māori and English for the first time and that's the result of that person being exposed to Blended Learning.

Found Poem - Mauri Ora

Many concrete examples of praxis are included in this found poem which recognises our diversion to the reconstructed holistic mauri ora pathway.

Mauri Ora

Mauri is the core now

And what gets us there?

Getting out of our own heads

Looking through a different lens

Allowing strengths into the room

And collaborating.

We make classrooms that feel safe, warm, happy -

A place of nurture.

We co-construct and go on a journey together

And make sure that culture counts.

We learn about the whenua the school is built on

And share this with our kids.

We remember that this is the only place that Māori have

So, we preserve the language and culture.

We consider what Māori want for their kids

And continue that at school for them.

We ask what the kids want for themselves.

What do they want to learn and how do they want to learn it?

We open up learning

And create opportunities for diversity.

We get their mātauranga, their understanding and we sense make together.

We talk about privilege and power

And we drive the policies that support Māori.

We care about our kids like they are our own

And look after each other's learning journey.

We enjoy our jobs and we don't back down.

Because that is the driver now -

Mauri.

Chapter Five - Discussion

Introduction

Poutama Pounamu Blended Learning provided an opportunity for educators to safely investigate the reality of an often untold or mistold shared history. A carefully designed context, informed by more than two decades of iterative research, was created for the raising of critical consciousness. This allowed kaiwhakaako to reflect on their role in the status quo of our inequitable education system, before considering ways of resisting the perpetuation of this reality. My findings highlight the importance of looking back in order to make informed, agentic and socially just choices in moving forward. They show the transformative potential, on minds and hearts, of learning through indigenous epistemologies outside the socially constructed Western ‘norm’. This chapter discusses the social construction of knowledge in English medium schooling and the tools and information that can support its deconstruction. I examine learning through the culture of te ao Māori and the implications of finding, within new cultural relationships, a more responsive pedagogy. Finally, the challenges and realities of reforming education are discussed.

Understanding the Social Construction of Knowledge

Colonisation and the Doctrine of Discovery

“The process through which facts, knowledge and truth are discovered, made known, reaffirmed, and altered by the members of a society is called the social construction of reality” (Newman, 2010. p. 26). In Aotearoa, the members of society who were most influential in socially constructing today's reality were the well experienced colonising Crown who formulaically established a dehumanising structural relationship of oppressor and oppressed (Walker, 2016). As indigenous peoples, Māori fell to the bottom of a pseudo-scientific racialised hierarchy and were automatically rendered powerless and subordinate to their colonisers (Rocha, 2012). They became the subjects of oppressive ethnography and research, with “deliberately contrived falsehood about their being” (Jackson, 2017. para. 47) socially constructed as truth. Conscientisation reveals that colonisation is responsible for many of the social constructs that form the fabric of our society, including the hierarchical and inequitable systems, beliefs and practices commonplace in our education system today (Auditor-General, 2016; Bishop et al., 2009). Moewaka and McCreanor (2019) assert, “Colonisation has deeply harmed Maori communities, seriously and consistently undermining their vitality, aspirations and potentials” (p. 19).

The opportunity to safely and vulnerably explore historic facts pertaining to our shared past was a new and critical experience for the participants of this study. The Doctrine of Discovery was identified as a key piece of historic evidence that gave rise to conscientisation. It was found that learning about this Pope-endorsed authority, one Jackson (2012) refers to as “a piece of genocidal legal magic” (p. 1),

entirely disrupted previous understandings of our shared history. Clear, causal connections could now be made between the Doctrine's underpinning principles of racial and religious supremacy and power and the socially constructed status quo of inequity and marginalisation in our education system. This learning developed our understanding that the outcomes of colonisation cannot be excused based on the social and political climate in which they historically began - racism is racism in any age and what has happened to Māori is inherently immoral and inexcusable (O'Regan, 2001). We therefore no longer can ignore or excuse the Crown-initiated systematic "domination, subjugation and domestication" (Walker, 2016. p. 19) of Māori through education. We could corroborate The Waitangi Tribunal's assertion that, "the seeds of Māori underachievement in the modern education system were sown by some of the past education policies" (1999, p. 10). With clear evidence of intergenerational inequity and trauma in both the education system and in wider society, we could now reject and resist the common rhetoric that colonisation advanced Māori (Moewaka Barnes & McCreanor, 2019; Walker, 2016).

Critical Theory

The historic context of our education system reveals that marginalisation and inequity were outcomes socially constructed for Māori by the power-broking colonial force (Walker, 2016). This orchestrated systemic oppression was informed by deficit theories of the racial, cultural and religious inferiority of indigenous peoples (Consedine & Consedine, 2001). Theories which were formalised and endorsed by the most pious and powerful leaders of the Catholic church (Takitimu, 2019). It is necessary to acknowledge these historic facts as they also provide us with information required to understand and deliberately disrupt this reality in order to resist its future perpetuation. Critical theory provides a powerful tool to "challenge the inequity and social injustice created and maintained by the location of authority and power in the hands of a privileged few" (Berryman et al., 2016. p. 5).

Critical theory proved to be an effective tool in raising consciousness and opening the hearts and the minds of participants in this study. We became aware of our own power and openly reflected on how this had been used, and misused, in the past. We were able to critically inquire into the terms of our relationships with students and whānau and reflect on how these often perpetuated an inequitable status quo. We had been given the tools and impetus to critically examine our practise, assessing what socially constructed 'norms' these upheld. Critical theory developed our understanding that, while we are not personally responsible for the past, we do have a moral obligation to learn about our shared history in order to fully understand and deconstruct it. It was found that our own education, including our teacher training, lacked this content, let alone the opportunity to explore it critically. This was a shared concern expressed by participants as we grew to understand that this information and these experiences constitute the critical groundwork required to reconstruct a more equitable shared future.

Kaupapa Māori Theory

Colonisation socially constructed a reality for Māori of “marginalisation, cultural inferiority and immobilising oppression” (Mahuika, 2008. p. 1). This heavy burden is often referred to as the “colonial gaze” (Levesque, 2020). Māori students in our English-medium education system continue to be subjected to this oppressive metaphoric gaze which privileges Western knowledge and epistemologies by design. Kaupapa Māori theory actively works to deflect this gaze by deconstructing damaging mythtakes (Jackson, 2017) and replacing these with hopes of resistance, liberation and the possibilities for transformation (Mahuika, 2008). Berryman et al. (2016) promote the transformative potential of Kaupapa Māori Theory to challenge and resist, “prevailing Western/Colonial ideas of what constitutes valid and authentic knowledge” (p. 6).

Kaupapa Māori theory was found to support participants in different ways. For Tauīwi and Pākehā participants, Kaupapa Māori Theory modelled and activated epistemological and cultural pluralism. We gained a new perspective, a lens where we could finally recognise privilege and its consequential marginalisation of the oppressed - our indigenous Māori students. Kaupapa Māori theory encouraged us into a place of vulnerability and partnership with Māori, a new cultural relationship that had not been expected or required of us in the past. Within this new dynamic of shared power; the enactment of the relational principle of *ōritetanga* envisioned in Te Tiriti, we were finally able to bring effect to the New Zealand Curriculum principles of *Cultural Diversity, Inclusion* and *High Expectations*. We recognised our own personal biases and prejudices and understood how these were socially constructed and perpetuated the status quo of Māori powerlessness and inequity. With this learning we were liberated to agentically reconstruct and lean into a more inclusive and equitable status quo in our classrooms.

Kaupapa Māori theory encouraged a process of deconstruction for Māori participants who were able to reconcile their previously compartmentalised professional and personal selves. Kaupapa Māori theory taught these wāhine Māori that self-determination and the revitalisation of mātauranga Māori was their fundamental right. They realised that their language, culture and identity were not only legitimate but were assets in their professions (Berryman et al., 2016; G. Smith, 1997). These participants reported feeling liberated to ‘unmask’, and ‘get off the fence’, their “cultural identity strong and secure” (Poutama Pounamu, n.d.) for the first time in their professional careers. It was found that these acts of self-determination, of legitimating and honouring their Māori culture and identity, have not only improved their teaching practice but have also enabled the establishment of positive and empowering Cultural Relationships with their Māori students. These participants provide a living, breathing example of the transformative potential of travelling on the Simultaneous Success Trajectories of the Ako: Critical Contexts for Change model - the Mauri Ora pathway developed by Poutama Pounamu (Berryman, 2017).

Learning Through Cultural Relationships for Responsive Pedagogy

Cultural Relationships and Mana Ōrite

Freire (2017) contends that educators must not “come to teach or to transmit or to give anything, but rather to learn, with the people, about the people’s world” (p. 180). The Poutama Pounamu team have designed and mobilised Cultural Relationships for Responsive Pedagogy, underpinned by the relational metaphor of mana ōrite, to support and realise this vision. Cultural Relationships are practised through Blended Learning within deliberately developed contexts where culture counts, where power is shared, where learning is interactive and dialogic and where connectedness is fundamental to relations (Bishop & Berryman, 2006). These principles require facilitators and kaiwhakaako to relate with “humility, humanity and empathy” while resisting “superiority and self-interest” (Berryman et al., 2013, p. 17). Working and relating in this way enacts the metaphor of mana ōrite and models the disruption of “traditional power relationships within the concept of partnership” (Berryman et al., 2018, p. 6). The resulting interdependent cultural relationships forged through Blended Learning were found to be a critical catalyst for raising consciousness, shifting thinking and transforming practice. Interestingly, relationships amongst kaiwhakaako in this research, which were forged through Blended Learning and the implementation of its kaupapa, have endured and developed into strong and supportive communities of practice who continue to benefit from Cultural Relationships formed on their own and their collective Mauri Ora pathways (Berryman et al., 2018).

It was found that participants did not anticipate the dialogic and participatory nature of Blended Learning; we expected traditional formulaic directives and were surprised to learn that our knowledge and experience would contribute to co-constructed solutions. The warm, relational dynamics we experienced were found to be unprecedented within a professional learning context and rare within our individual settings. The consistent care and support provided by our facilitators in person during wānanga and through our online learning platform was an unexpected and deeply influential feature of Blended Learning. Participants reported feeling safe, valued, empowered and humanised within the context of these cultural relationships. Learning through these contexts inspired participants to work on rebalancing power to create similarly warm and mutually beneficial relationships with their students, whānau and colleagues. This, then, created the conditions for the metaphoric third space to sense-make and co-construct new knowledge to be recreated in our individual contexts (Berryman, 2008). More enjoyable, meaningful and responsive teaching and learning connections were reported as a direct outcome of experiencing and implementing Cultural Relationships embedded in a pedagogy that was more respectful of what we each brought with us in our cultural toolkits as assets to construct new meanings (Bishop et al., 2009).

Finding Solutions in Te Ao Māori

Bishop (1997) asserts, “there has developed in Aotearoa/New Zealand an epistemology of knowledge generation and definition based on a world view imported into Aotearoa/New Zealand from Europe” (p. 28). As discussed in the literature review, this privileged outcome was deliberately constructed through historic education policy and practises in support of the processes of colonisation. The Government has determined the curriculum and what knowledge could be made available to Māori as Mead (2003) explains, “suppression of tikanga Māori and mātauranga Māori was thought to be necessary in order to speed the process of assimilation to Western ways” (as cited in Knoef, 2019. p. 9). Poutama Pounamu seeks to actively resist this reality through praxis which honours te ao Māori and promotes cultural and epistemological pluralism. An example discussed by participants was noho marae which provided authentic opportunities to engage with the epistemologies and practices of te ao Māori alongside Mana Whenua on their traditional lands and marae (Berryman, 2008). These experiences actively legitimise and give strength to “Māori values, aspirations, and preferred ways of thinking and acting” (Berryman, et al., 2017. p. 6). During our wānanga, the validity and transformative potential of te ao and mātauranga Māori were modelled through the deliberate and authentic application of traditional epistemologies, pedagogies and practices. The indigenous metaphors which inform Cultural Relationships for Responsive Pedagogy provided ongoing exposure to the potential and solutions within te ao Māori even after our noho marae concluded.

Although we didn’t understand it at the time, the moving mihi whakatau that welcomed us on to Waikari Marae for our first wānanga symbolised a deliberate shift away from the prosaic and impersonal Western practices we had come to privilege as the status quo of professionalism and formality. This moment - genuine, heartfelt and stirring - set the tone for the entirety of our time with Poutama Pounamu - from our entry into a new cultural relationship to the pedagogy that was reinforced throughout the duration of the Blended Learning processes through the virtual feedback. At our second wānanga at Huria marae we were privileged to spend time with the refined kaumatua, Tamati Tata. He animatedly shared local *pūrākau* (Myth, ancient legend, story) including the stories behind the carvings in his wharenuī. Looking around at the mesmerised and completely captivated audience of kaiwhakaako I realised, sadly, that I had neglected to look to te ao Māori for solutions in my ongoing teaching inquiries.

It was found that Tauīwi and Pākehā participants were extremely moved by the holistic offerings of te ao Māori. This was at odds with the compartmentalised world of te ao Pākehā where elements of spirituality, intimacy and vulnerability are generally kept separate from professional undertakings. The tikanga, kawa and te ao Māori metaphors that framed our intensive learning experiences proved nurturing, supportive and dynamic; humanising conditions required to raise consciousness and make internal changes. Māori participants reported finding strength and courage within these familiar dynamics. Learning through te ao Māori helped these participants to revise *The Choice* that Robyn

Kahukiwa alluded to in her poignant image; this time they made the determined and deliberate resolution to remove the mask and to uphold their identity, rights and interests in their professional roles. The findings clearly demonstrate that participants now support and affirm the Ministry of Education's assertion that Kaupapa Māori has a role to play across all stages of education.

The Challenge of Reforming Education

Boundaries of agency

While we found, through conscientisation, the moral imperative to address and disrupt inequity, agentially implementing the Ministry of Education policy imperatives to enact Te Tiriti and improve outcomes for Māori students was not a simple or straightforward task. Participants identified and discussed the boundaries of agency which prevented change at the pace and level we expected or hoped for. While these boundaries presented new challenges for participants, resistance to change is an expected phenomenon, even when the changes proposed are morally and ethically right and good. Baldwin (2008) asserts:

Those of you who deal with the minds and hearts of young people ... must understand that in the attempt to correct so many generations of bad faith and cruelty, when it is operating not only in the classroom but in society, you will meet the most fantastic, the most brutal, and the most determined resistance. There is no point in pretending that this won't happen. (p. 18)

Participants experienced particular boundaries in the *Adaptive Expertise Driving Deliberate Professional Acts* and *Home, School and Community Collaborations* contexts for change identified by Poutama Pounamu. Within each of these contexts we recognised social constructs which were impeding progress and ensuring the preservation of the status quo.

Participants celebrated successful agentic acts of resistance and transformative praxis within the context of *Cultural Relationships for Responsive Pedagogy*. We recognised the strong influence we had over the teaching and learning practices in our classes and were able to adapt these to rebalance power, creating new caring and responsive cultural relationships with our students. Agentially implementing and championing the curriculum and policy imperatives that are designed to improve equity was more challenging. Many inclusions of principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and biculturalism in our school's strategic and implementation plans were found to be tokenistic; espoused but often misunderstood and rarely enacted. During the process of collecting data for this research, *Rongohia te Hau*, the indigenised tool that gives schools a personalised picture of their pedagogy, was removed from two of the participants' school implementation plans. The same reason was cited by the respective leadership teams - that they just couldn't see the benefits for their staff. *Rongohia te Hau* presents an authentic opportunity to consult and collaborate with teachers, students and whānau, the latter a requirement stipulated in The

Education and Training Act (2020). These schools were declining an indigenous, evidence-based tool based on the beliefs of their predominantly Pākehā staff that the evidence from whānau and learners did not add value. In these situations the participants necessarily had to return to Western social constructs of hierarchical, top down systems of appraisal and inquiry that completely fail to address inequitable outcomes for Māori students.

Within the *Home, School and Community Collaborations* context for change, participants described a limited ability to genuinely honour and enact the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi within the top-down, hierarchical systems and structures they practised. The power that necessarily must be shared with whānau to enact the relational principle of *ōritetanga* envisioned in Te Tiriti did not feel readily available for classroom teachers to share. It was found that the relational metaphors of *whanaungatanga* and *manaakitanga* that we ourselves had benefited from were at odds with the social constructs of the status quo in our settings; a business-like structural power relationship of expert/consumer. And despite our best efforts to act agentially within this context, without cultural and epistemological pluralism being understood and practised by those responsible for the writing of strategic and implementation plans, the dominant, Western ways of being will continue to prevail.

Leadership

The essential finding from the *School Leadership and Student Outcomes: Identifying What Works and Why Best Evidence Synthesis* (BES) was that, “when school leaders promote and/or participate in effective teacher professional learning this has twice the impact on student outcomes across a school than any other leadership activity” (Ministry of Education, 2009. para 2). The School Leadership BES further highlighted that in high performing schools, leaders initiated and participated in professional learning providing their teachers with a valuable source of advice on pedagogical matters (Robinson et al., 2009). Stoop (2009) supports this assertion, stating, “one of the most important determinants of schools’ effectiveness in managing teaching and learning is the extent to which school leaders know that their investment in professional learning and development is necessary to change teacher practice and improve student outcomes” (as cited in Robinson et al., 2009. p. 26). Alarming, this synthesis of research also found that New Zealand principals spend less time participating in and promoting professional learning than many of their international peers (Ministry of Education, 2009. para 2). Evidence from this thesis supports the School Leadership BES findings. With the support of more emancipatory leadership teams, three participants were able to make steady school-wide progress in their efforts to decolonise and indigenise learning spaces. For the remaining three participants, the power to lead changes within school wide reform was actively maintained by leadership and therefore, continued to remain outside of their agency. In spite of this barrier, the minds and spaces of these educators continued to be decolonised and indigenised, allowing for the activation of a pedagogy of humanity within the boundaries of their agency.

Participants who successfully contributed to implementing school wide changes that addressed inequity either held leadership positions or had key players from the leadership team in their ākonga group. The conscientisation of these leaders led to acts of resistance across the three critical contexts for change identified by Poutama Pounamu. These outcomes support the assertion of Robinson, et al. (2009) that, “Leaders who are actively involved in professional learning have a deeper appreciation of the conditions required to achieve and sustain improvements in student learning” (p. 42). Without leadership’s active participation in and promotion of the Blended Learning kaupapa, the remaining participants came to recognise that changes beyond the classroom practices of their ākonga group were unlikely. These participants found that leadership teams were protective of the top-down hierarchical power structures socially constructed through colonisation. It was theorised that these structures supported leadership’s unilateral power and ability to exclusively control their context. These participants stressed that without the leadership team understanding the urgent need to implement strategies that address inequity, the status quo of undeserving indigenous students will remain. Sadly, as highlighted in the literature review, these poor academic outcomes will reliably transfer to negative social outcomes.

Allies

Participants gained a new understanding of how beneficial and transformative relationships could be through experiencing teaching and learning connections informed by te ao Māori metaphors (Berryman et al., 2018). As discussed, participants felt supported, nurtured and humanised within these relationships; conditions which promoted vulnerability, reflection, consciousness raising and change. Our Blended Learning wānanga provided an opportunity to be alongside others who were vulnerably investigating the fabric of our society while immersed in the metaphor of mahi ngātahi. In this unique context participants resolved that they would no longer contribute to the perpetuation of the status quo of inequity. This was just no longer an option. Instead participants felt an urgent and compelling need to take action. As Baldwin (2008) asserts, “this is the only hope that society has. This is the only way societies change” (p. 17). We grew to understand that resisting the perpetuation of the status quo meant going against the grain of what was common practice in our school contexts, and that this would require audacity. Upon returning to our schools, however, participants reported often feeling isolated in their thinking and understanding about the current climate in education. The reality of resisting the status quo without the safety and support of cultural relationships became daunting and difficult.

Participants with colleagues who had also engaged in Blended Learning felt supported in their pursuits of social justice and education reform. These participants worked together on coordinating and facilitating ākonga hui and relied on each other as allies and critical friends. They also fondly recalled experiences of fun and closeness within their new cultural relationships developed through experiencing the wānanga, online learning and ākonga hui together. Because the Blended Learning uses a cascading model for spreading professional development, Ākonga group numbers were doubled in these schools,

meaning the chances of alliance and progress were significantly increased. Overall, it was found that completing blended learning with a peer had both personal and professional benefits. In contrast, those who completed Blended Learning without a peer from their school found it harder to initially find similar thinking colleagues to confide in. They were more isolated in their experiences which were generally more challenging. For these participants, the Blended Learning facilitators played a key role in encouraging and maintaining morale and momentum. Kaiwhakaako in separate schools, and in one case on separate islands, also become critical support people in this work. Participants found solace in remotely sharing tribulations with one another, comforted by the fact that while they were facing the reality of push back and huge challenges, they were on the right side of understanding and deconstructing inequity in order to reconstruct a more socially just education system and experience.

Chapter Six - Conclusion

Decolonisation is ignorantly misinterpreted as an anti-white, anti-Pākehā movement (Shain et al., 2021). Defensive reactions to this liberatory kaupapa support the famous hypothesis that ‘when you’re accustomed to privilege equality feels like oppression’. The truth is, colonisation has “wrought an unrelenting and continuous process of historical trauma upon tangata whenua that is reflected in disparities between Māori and settler peoples in most important areas of contemporary life” (Moewaka Barnes & McCreanor, 2019). Decolonisation makes way for a life where Māori can live and thrive as Māori in their homeland. This process works to create an education system that serves its indigenous students well. Decolonisation involves the deconstruction of a status quo socially constructed to privilege and reflect the cultural standards and norms of our predominantly Pākehā population (Auditor-General, 2012; Beecroft, 2018). Not only does decolonising and indigenising the education system address the moral imperative to do better, it is also a process that is absolutely necessary in order to meet our professional obligations under the latest 2020 Education and Training Act, The National Education and Learning Priorities (NELPs) and Māori Education strategy Ka Hikitia-Ka Hāpaitia. Furthermore, the successful implementation of the Aotearoa New Zealand Histories Curriculum and the ability to give equal status to mātauranga Māori in the updated NCEA relies upon decolonised hearts and minds. As O’Regan (2001) asserts, “legislation for justice is one thing, forming a spirit of justice in our hearts is quite another” (para. 2).

Poutama Pounamu Blended Learning provides the safe and nurturing context required to understand and deconstruct colonisation. Using critical and kaupapa Māori theories, educators are supported through the deeply introspective process of conscientisation, described by Glass (2001) as “intentional, reflective, meaningful activity situated within dynamic historical and cultural contexts” (p.16). Kaiwhakaako become critically cognisant of the fabric of our society; of the Crown directed, teacher perpetuated policies, processes and power imbalances that shaped our status quo. With a raised consciousness, the insidious effect of colonisation, described poignantly by Jackson (2019), becomes clear:

The slow overwhelming of what people should think and see as real has not been forced directly at the point of a gun, although that was often the catalyst which first instilled the fear of not conforming to what the colonizers wanted. Rather it has occurred surreptitiously, like a cloud that moves across the sun and takes your shadow without you knowing. And like the sun it has remained a constant reality in indigenous lives. (p.109)

The cumulative impact of Poutama Pounamu Blended Learning’s theoretical underpinnings, cultural relationships and opportunities for dialogical sense making creates the impetus and moral imperative to disrupt the status quo. Social constructivism tells us that reality is unfinished, incomplete and malleable

(Freire, 2017). This theoretical lens provides a hopeful outlook for reforming the education system and improving outcomes for Māori students through the simple notion that, just as structures and institutions have been constructed, so too can they be deconstructed, and reconstructed - but better (Berryman et al., 2013; Shields, 2010; Wink, 2005), a hope similarly shared by proponents of the Kaupapa Māori movement, including Moana Jackson (2019):

Every reality, and every understanding of reality, is created by humans and can be deconstructed by humans as well. No reality is immutable or beyond change and the centuries of indigenous resistance have always brought change in what seemed unchangeable situations. That history is part of our reality. (p. 109)

Deconstructing the status quo of inequitable experiences and outcomes requires a shift in discourse from pathologising Māori as *underachieving* to critically examining our chronic *underservice* of Māori students in our education system (Shields et al., 2005). It requires those in positions of power, such as teachers, school leaders and board members, to use their privilege to resist and deconstruct oppressive traditions in favour of humanising, mutually beneficial and culturally responsive alternatives (Berryman, et al., 2013). Within the hierarchical power structures of the school workforce, leadership's engagement in professional learning and the modelling of transformative praxis is critically important in reforming education (Robinson et al., 2009). However, as Buckley (2020) asserts, "leadership required to make these changes, is leadership that is prepared to relinquish power (pp. 82 - 83).

As found in this research, the indigenous and critical curriculum, pedagogy and leadership of Poutama Pounamu Blended Learning has so much to contribute towards a more equitable education system. The benefits for students are clear, as Alton-Lee (2017) asserts, "Indigenous leadership and expertise in New Zealand has brought about extraordinarily accelerated, transformative and sustained change for Māori succeeding as Māori in New Zealand mainstream secondary schools with positive flow on effects for all students" (p. 6). But it is not only the students who benefit from the work of Poutama Pounamu. The deliberate ways of being with each other, informed by the epistemologies of te ao Māori and the principles of Cultural Relationships for Responsive Pedagogy, were revealed as instrumental in raising consciousness and resisting the status quo. Resulting praxis involved kaiwhakaako striving for more humanising, holistic and high determinants of success for both their students and themselves: the Mauri Ora Pathway. Hine shared:

Blended Learning has given me the confidence to value being Māori and put it out there. If I hadn't done the Blended Learning I think this would have been in my heart and it would have stayed there. The blended learning has just grown me so much.

Reforming education as required by the 2020 Education and Training Act is a challenge but this is what we are now expected to do. In sharing the kaupapa for this thesis I have personally yielded mixed responses from celebration through to disgust. Paolo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* has taken up a special space on my shelf and in my heart during this time. Freire's theorising helps me to understand the paradigm in which we are operating. I remind myself that, "washing one's hands of the conflict between the powerful and the powerless means to side with the powerful, not to be neutral" (Freire, 1985. p. 122). Also inspiring and affirming is Sir Mason Durie's piece of optimistic advice, as shared to me by one of the Blended Learning facilitators after a particularly emotional online reflection. Following some critical questioning to prompt problem solving she shared, '*When we focus on the deficit we miss the potential*'. This statement grounds me. It reminds me of all that the kaupapa Māori champions have endured and achieved. It prompts me to remember that within this status quo of cultural dominance my grandfather's abandonment ultimately led to my privileged upbringing. I remember that this, then, makes me an ally in this journey - that I don't get to own the suffering and trauma of my Māori students, whānau and friends who have, alongside their tūpuna, been oppressed for over two centuries. Using my privilege to drive transformative change is what is necessary and where my energy needs to be channelled. The experiences I have had through engaging in Poutama Pounamu Blended Learning have gifted me with the knowledge, tools, support and determination to contribute toward a fairer education system, where the mauri of our students drives decisions and where equity, excellence and belonging is enjoyed by all.

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