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**MĀ NGĀ HURUHURU KA RERE TE MANU:
Understanding leadership for critical educational
reform in Aotearoa New Zealand**

A thesis
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of the requirements for the degree

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For Noah and Camryn

Abstract

The research project presented in this thesis explores the leadership journeys of four first-time principals engaging in Kia Eke Panuku, a professional development initiative in English-medium secondary schools in Aotearoa New Zealand. It seeks to understand the role these first-time principals play in insitutionalising to depth, educational reform to enable Māori students to pursue their potential as Māori under the Ka Hikitia imperative. This thesis investigates the type of leadership required to achieve educational reform for Māori learners in Aotearoa, embedded in the inherent promise of the Treaty of Waitangi.

This thesis contends these principals contribute to educational reform by bringing criticality to their leadership and embracing an ongoing and iterative process of conscientisation and resistance, leading to transformative praxis. These principals recognised their role as educators leading pedagogical change in their schools, as well as leading others within their sphere of influence to ultimately change the fabric of society in Aotearoa. They both learned and led alongside each other, displaying an openness to embracing multiple worldviews with a deeply held moral imperative to eradicate oppression of Māori students. Such a stance actively creates bicultural spaces within schools, where both Treaty partners can benefit from the principles of the Treaty promises.

Acknowledgements

Many hearts, heads and hands have nurtured this journey from beginning to end.

To my four principals – from the bottom of my heart, thank you for contributing your voices to this research. I am in awe of your passion, resilience and heartfelt devotion to seeing your students shine. Thank you for making such an amazing difference for our kids.

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Introduction

Mā ngā huruhuru ka rere te manu.

It is the feathers that enable the bird to fly.

The essence of this thesis is encapsulated within the above *whakatauākī* (proverb of known origin). Credited to Ngāti Kahungunu¹ chief, Tamaterangi, it speaks to concepts of uniqueness and unity. The proverb recognises both the unique individual function of each feather and the importance of how they are layered and interconnect in order to enable the bird to take flight. In the writing that follows, this metaphor is related to leaders and learners within English-medium secondary schools in Aotearoa New Zealand. This thesis seeks to understand more deeply the role of first-time principals in achieving educational reform for Māori² students. As such, this *whakatauākī* provides an extended metaphor upon which to build a picture of what it takes for our educational leaders to take flight, which in turn enables their teachers and learners to embark on their own successful journey of flight.

Just as multiple *huru* (feathers) on the *manu* (bird) enable them to manoeuvre effortlessly in flight, leaders and learners who embrace their adaptive expertise can together achieve success. The metaphor of the feathers adorning the bird can also be thought of as uniquely identifying the bird as belonging to a wider group - in this case, first-time principals working within English-medium secondary settings enabling Māori students to enjoy and achieve education success as Māori (Ministry of Education, 2008a).

Feathers are woven into the threads of a *korowai* (traditional Māori cloak) to create a *kahu huruhuru* (cloak ornamented with feathers), whose first and main thread is known as *te aho tapu*, or the sacred thread (Pendergrast, 1987). The *whenu* (lengthwise threads) of the *korowai* descend from *te aho tapu*, through which subsequent *aho* (weft threads) weave to create the *kākahu* (complete garment). When exploring the metaphor of the *kahu huruhuru* in relation to educational leadership, the cloak can represent the protection of leaders and learners against the challenges inherent in English-medium education.

¹ Tribal group of the southern North Island of Aotearoa, east of the ranges from Nūhaka and Wairoa to southern Wairarapa.

² 'Māori' can be translated as 'normal' or 'usual'. It came to be known as a collective noun for 'indigenous people of New Zealand', used by *Pākehā* (New Zealander of European descent) to distinguish between people of Māori descent and the colonisers.

Throughout all stages of weaving a kākahu, great respect is shown for the planting, harvesting and preparation of the *harakeke* (flax plant). As Pendergrast (1987) explains, “the spiritual essence, or mauri, contained in all living things and natural objects is acknowledged, protected and retained through all processes and into the completed kākahu” (p. 13). Furthermore, in Māori society, the *mana* (spiritual power) of the female craftswoman, who is recognised as the “sacred element in maintaining lines of descent” (Pendergrast, 1987, p. 5), and the *mana* of her *tupuna* (ancestors) are “vested in the garment during manufacture” (p. 13). The *mana* of the kākahu is subsequently enhanced from those who wear it, being “imbued with a spiritual significance and life force of its own” and maintaining “a mystical link with the past” (Pendergrast, 1987, p. 14). Similarly, the four principals within this research contribute their various *huru*, or leadership qualities, to the process of weaving the kākahu, which could be likened to achieving educational reform for Māori learners that remains a steadfast *taonga* (treasure) for future generations.

It has been said that Aotearoa is a world leader when it comes to ensuring a focus on its indigenous youth achieving and enjoying educational success (Auditor-General, 2016). For Aotearoa, this focus is on Māori students and their educators. For decades, educationalists and researchers committed to achieving educational reform in Aotearoa have highlighted the inequities and disparities that exist for Māori learners in New Zealand’s education system (Alton-Lee, 2015; Bishop & Berryman, 2006; Bishop & Glynn, 1999a; Bishop, Berryman, & Wearmouth, 2014; Bishop, O’Sullivan, & Berryman, 2010; Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh, & Teddy, 2007, 2009). It is widely acknowledged that effective school leadership is key to achieving deep and sustainable educational reform (Alton-Lee, 2015; Fullan, 2003; Robinson, Hohepa, & Lloyd, 2009).

If we as a nation are committed to addressing the aspirations of Māori communities by ensuring Māori students pursue their potential in the education system, we need leaders in our schools who understand the type of leadership that leads to educational reform. By developing a deeper understanding of such leadership, our communities may become better equipped to mentor, inspire and promote those amongst us who will lead the much needed reform. This research explored the journey of four first-time principals engaging in *Kia Eke Panuku*, a professional development (PD) initiative in English-medium secondary schools. *Kia Eke Panuku* centred on engaging in contexts for learning to enact the principles of culturally responsive and relational pedagogy and leadership. It is hoped that this research

might inform the employment and professional learning processes for principals to ensure they develop and enact the skills and dispositions necessary for Māori students to achieve the educational success that they deserve.

As with any long-term educationalist, I have worked for, with and alongside many leaders. These leaders demonstrated multiple facets of leadership resulting in variable impacts on student outcomes. There was a time I felt I was prepared to embark on my own journey towards becoming a principal of a secondary school in Aotearoa. The question that I asked myself at that time is one that remains with me - what are the qualities a first-time principal needs in order to be effective in achieving educational reform for Māori students in Aotearoa?

Originally from Sydney, Australia, I moved to Aotearoa in 2004 and met my first Māori students. I was encouraged to 'get on' with students but I did not understand at that time the reasons why I needed to think more carefully about interactions with Māori students in my classroom. In 2006, I moved to a catholic all-boys school as a head of learning and then a member of the senior leadership team. We were engaged with a programme called *He Kākano* (a seed), which had an explicit focus on developing culturally responsive leadership practice. It was my first foray into the *kaupapa* (shared vision) and began the journey towards ultimately shaping who I would become as an educational leader.

I began my first deputy principalship in 2012 at a decile 1, rural and isolated North Island secondary school, where 89% of our students were Māori. Engaging in thinking, planning and enacting educational reform was a daily endeavour. At that time, we were part of Phase 5 *Te Kotahitanga* (unity of purpose), an iterative PD and research project aimed at improving the educational achievement of indigenous Māori students in English-medium secondary schools (Bishop et al., 2007). Building on the success of *Te Kotahitanga*, our college then became part of *Kia Eke Panuku*, a professional learning context aimed at giving life to the Ministry of Education's Māori education strategy, *Ka Hikitia* (to raise or step up) (Ministry of Education, 2008a, 2013).

I moved from my deputy principalship late in 2014 to become a *kaitoro* (facilitator of professional learning and development) within *Kia Eke Panuku*. As *kaitoro*, we understood our role to be that of an explorer or discoverer, facilitating learning alongside leaders and teachers in schools, to seek out new and innovative ways for schools to support Māori

students to pursue their potential (Kia Eke Panuku, n.d.1). As a context for learning, Kia Eke Panuku “captures the essence of a journey towards success that is dynamic and continuous, building from one’s current location to where one aspires to be in the future. It speaks to individual and collective shared commitment to achieve excellence” (Kia Eke Panuku, 2015, p. 1). As at June 2016, Kia Eke Panuku was working in 93 secondary schools across Aotearoa, supporting over 7,000 teachers and leaders to realise the potential of over 27,000 Māori students (Kia Eke Panuku, 2016).

As leaders engaged with Kia Eke Panuku as a context for learning, they were asked to consider their “critical role in disrupting and changing the status quo in Māori underachievement” (Kia Eke Panuku, 2015, p. 39). Throughout my journey as a kaitoro within Kia Eke Panuku, I have had the opportunity to work alongside a number of leaders undertaking their first principalship. Working alongside the leadership journey of these first-time principals prompted a number of research questions:

- What do first-time principals in Kia Eke Panuku secondary schools understand about the guiding principles of Ka Hikitia?
- How do first-time principals in Kia Eke Panuku secondary schools support Māori students to pursue their potential as Māori?
- What do first-time principals in Kia Eke Panuku secondary schools understand about the type of leadership required for educational reform in Aotearoa?

As I embarked on this research and the writing of this thesis, I recognised the long journey in front of me. I became aware of the huge amount of knowledge I needed to learn about the process of research and the unique content of each chapter. To help focus my thinking and learning, I delved into *whakataukī* (Māori proverb) to help develop a deeper connection to the writing process and to ensure I honoured the voices of the four principals participating in my research. Prior to writing each chapter, I drew inspiration from a favourite book – *Mauri Ora: Wisdom from the Māori world* (Alsop & Kupenga, 2016). The *whakataukī* presented in their book are divided amongst six ‘virtues’: *mātauranga* (wisdom); *māia* (courage); *atawhai* (compassion); *ngākau tapatahi* (integrity); *whakahautanga* (self-mastery); and *whakapono* (belief). I offer a different *whakataukī* at the beginning of each chapter as the words of wisdom that helped to centre my thinking and theorising and to ground my writing endeavours.

The thesis is organised into six chapters. This Introduction offers the context for, and my personal interest in, this research along with the rationale and justification for why this research is important. Chapter One outlines literature from Aotearoa and internationally in order to construct the theoretical basis for the research. Chapter Two outlines the methodology, method, process of data collation and analysis, along with ethical considerations for the research. Chapter Three presents the findings of the research. Chapter Four discusses the findings with reference to the literature and research questions. Chapter Five concludes the thesis and summarises the findings, as well as outlining both limitations of the research and recommendations for future study.

Chapter One - Literature Review

Ko te pae tawhiti, whāia kia tata; ko te pae tata, whakamaua kia tīna.

Seek out distant horizons and cherish those you attain.

Introduction

The above whakataukī is located within the virtue of whakapono (Alsop & Kupenga, 2016, p. 144). It speaks to my sincere desire to understand the literature pertaining to this research and of my aspiration to do a worthy job of reviewing, finding meaning and making connections within and across the literature.

This research explores the role that first-time principals play in achieving deep educational reform in English-medium secondary schools in Aotearoa. This literature review focuses on some of the most recent national and international research regarding school leadership and educational reform. It begins by outlining the current context for the educational experiences of Māori students, along with the policy context in which those experiences lie. Kaupapa Māori theory (Smith, 1992) is explored, along with socio-cultural views of teaching and learning (Bruner, 1996; Vygotsky, 1978). Traditional Māori models of learning are considered, leading to a presentation of transformative leadership theories (Shields, 2010, 2013) alongside the moral imperative of school leadership (Fullan, 2003). Critical theory (Freire, 1972; Smith, 1997) is presented, along with the notion of critical pedagogy (Wink, 2011).

School leadership in Aotearoa is then explored through the lens of The Ministry of Education's School Leadership and Student Outcomes Best Evidence Synthesis (Leadership BES) (Robinson et al., 2009). The vision of Ka Hikitia (Ministry of Education, 2008a, 2013) and the critical success factors for educational reform (Alton-Lee, 2015) are presented. The literature review continues with an outline of Kia Eke Panuku as a context for learning to achieve educational reform in secondary schools. Culturally responsive and relational pedagogy and leadership is presented (Kia Eke Panuku, n.d.2), moving towards the concept of critical leadership for educational reform (Berryman, Egan & Ford, 2016). The literature review concludes by presenting models of leadership within both English-medium (Ministry of Education, 2008b) and Māori medium (Ministry of Education, 2010) frameworks,

alongside the current professional learning and development (PLD) landscape for first-time principals in Aotearoa.

The current context for the educational experiences of Māori students

Whilst New Zealand’s compulsory education system benefits many of its students, Māori students are continuously over-represented in statistics of underachievement (Udahemuka, 2016). It is widely acknowledged that educational outcomes for Māori students have historically been far lower than for their non-Māori peers (Auditor-General, 2012, 2016). New Zealand spends the fourth-largest amount of money on education, as a proportion of gross domestic product, among Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries (Auditor-General, 2016). Despite this monetary investment, Māori students remain marginalised within compulsory state schooling.

New Zealand’s National Certificates of Educational Achievement (NCEA) are national qualifications for senior secondary students and can be attained at Levels One, Two and Three. The Ministry of Education acknowledges that NCEA Level Two is the minimum qualification needed to provide access to further work, training and education, leading to increased chances at a better quality of life (Ministry of Education, 2017, para. 1).

In English-medium secondary schools, the number of overall students achieving NCEA Level Two has been steadily increasing (Education Counts, 2016a, para. 4), as seen in Figure 1. In 2011, 74% of 18 year olds attained Level Two, growing to 84.6% by 2016.

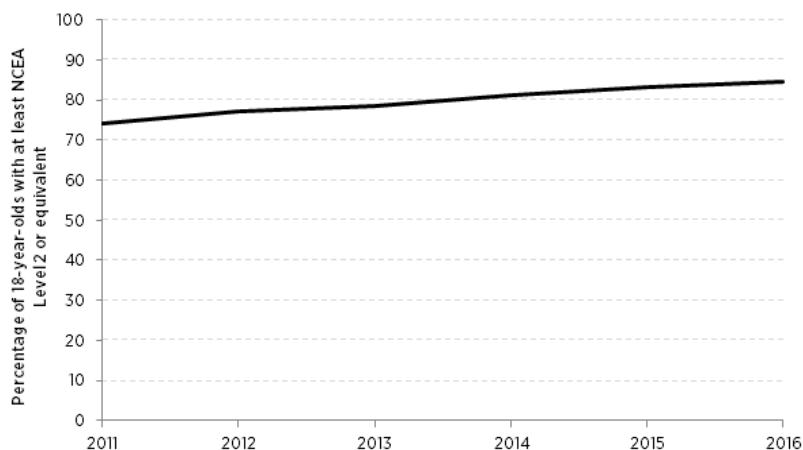


Figure 1 Percentage of 18-year-olds with at least NCEA Level Two or equivalent (2011-2016) (Education Counts, 2016a)

The rate at which Māori students attained Level Two as an 18 year old (as seen in Figure 2) has also increased from 58% in 2011 to 74% in 2016 (Education Counts, 2016a, para. 5). However, these figures demonstrate that although all students are improving, the achievement disparity between Māori and their non-Māori peers remains.

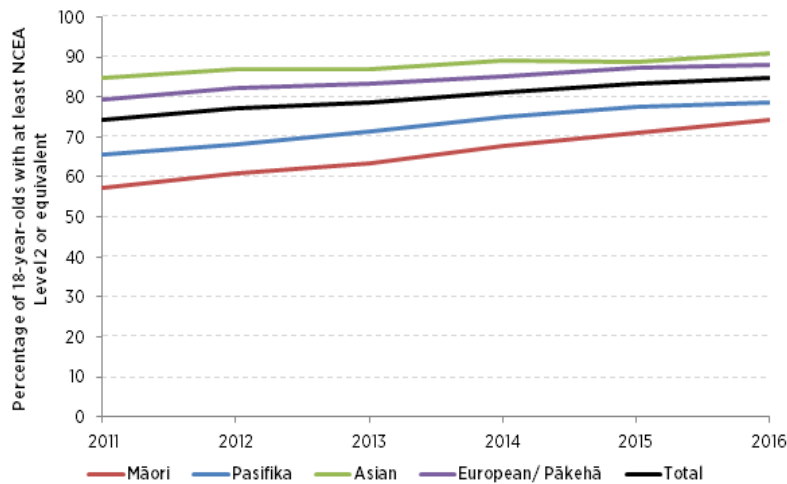


Figure 2 Percentage of 18-year-olds with at least NCEA Level Two or equivalent, by total response ethnic group (2011-2016) (Education Counts, 2016a)

In terms of retention rates, measured by the number of students staying at school until the age of 17, Figure 3 paints a similar yet bleaker picture to that of NCEA Level Two attainment. Despite showing the largest improvement in retention (a 8.3% increase since 2009), by 2016 the lowest proportion of students remaining at school until the age of 17 - just 70.9% - were Māori (Education Counts, 2016b, para. 5).

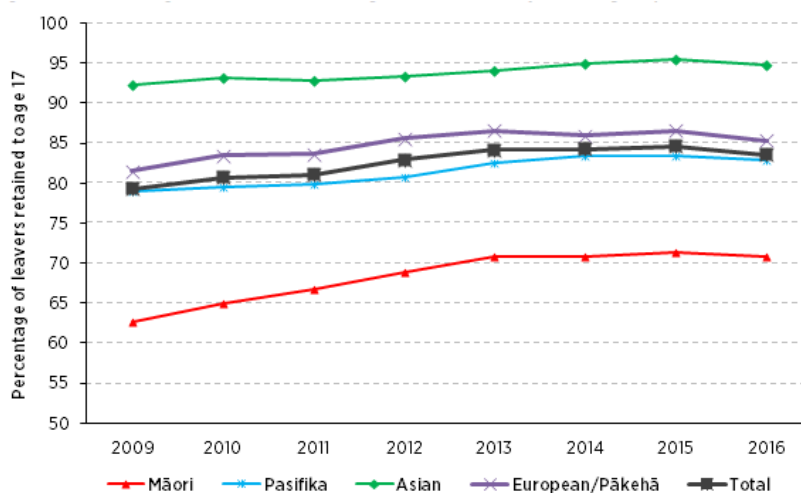


Figure 3 Percentage of school leavers aged 17 or older by ethnic group (2009 to 2016) (Education Counts, 2016b)

These statistics illustrate the significant disparities experienced by Māori students across successive years and point to the urgent and ongoing need to pay close and careful attention to the inequity that exists for the indigenous students of Aotearoa. The ways in which New Zealand schools work towards improving Māori student outcomes matters not only to individual students, but for the education sector as a whole and, in turn, to the state of the nation (Udahemuka, 2016).

The policy context for the education of Māori

The launch of *Ka Hikitia – Managing for Success 2008-2012* (Ministry of Education, 2008a) set the Ministry of Education’s direction for improving how the education system performed for Māori students. The strategy was refreshed in the form of *Ka Hikitia – Accelerating Success 2013-2017* (Ministry of Education, 2013), which focused on accelerating outcomes for Māori students so that they might enjoy and achieve education success as Māori. *Ka Hikitia* (Ministry of Education, 2013) presented educationalists in Aotearoa with an education reform strategy that finally acknowledged some of the truths about the educational experiences provided to Māori students:

Too many Māori students are left behind and disengage from education before gaining the skills, knowledge and qualifications needed to reach their full potential. The negative impact of this on students, their whānau [extended family], wider communities and New Zealand is significant. (Ministry of Education, 2013, p. 4)

Ka Hikitia (Ministry of Education, 2008a, 2013) provides the mandate and imperative for educationalists to ensure Māori students realise their potential and enjoy and achieve education success as Māori. Sir Mason Durie first presented the Māori potential approach in his opening address at the *Hui Taumata Mātauranga*, a national Māori education summit held in Taupō in March 2001. His vision for realising Māori potential has three interdependent elements – “to live as Māori, to actively participate as citizens of the world, and to enjoy good health and a high standard of living” (Durie, 2001, p. 11).

Durie (2001) refers to certain principles of education that are essential for Māori - namely best outcomes, integrated action and indigeneity. His vision for successful education for Māori lies in striving towards “excellent outcomes” with “zero tolerance of educational failure” (Durie, 2001, p. 6), noting that the teaching of *te reo Māori* (the Māori language) and

tikanga (customary Māori values and practices) within schools is vital for excellent outcomes. Durie (2001) believes that when the values and beliefs of Māori as *tangata whenua* (indigenous people of the land) in Aotearoa are upheld along with the intent of *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* (the Treaty of Waitangi), a true partnership between the Crown and Māori would be enabled, “upon which indigenous rights will continue to be realised” (p 8). Durie’s (2001) visionary address points directly to successful education being a crucial element for the advancement of Māori.

If Māori are to truly live as Māori, Durie (2001) points to the fundamental connection that “being Māori is a Māori reality” (p. 4) and that our education system has a responsibility to help realise this goal. Truly living as Māori embodies notions of enabling students to enjoy full and active participation in *te ao Māori* (the Māori world) as well as the rest of society. To actively participate as citizens of the world, Durie (2001) refers to the need for education to “open doors” (p. 4) for global opportunities and experiences. Durie’s third concurrent goal focuses on Māori well-being and recognises that if “educational achievement correlates directly with employment, income levels, standards of health and quality of life” (Durie, 2001, p. 5) then our education system must ensure it allows for the best possible outcomes for Māori students.

Furthermore, Durie (2015) contends that when Māori are seen from a perspective of potential and strength, they are able to experience enhanced well-being, or *mauri ora*. He describes *mauri ora* as when one is ‘flourishing’ spiritually, culturally and emotionally. Furthermore, *mauri ora* is demonstrated through one’s positive thoughts and energy when participating in events and activities, as well as enjoying sustainable and rewarding relationships (Durie, 2015). For those who have experienced cultural and/or spiritual alienation, negative relationships or emotions, isolation or chronic pain, Durie (2015) contends that this leads to the state of *mauri noho*, where the individual is ‘languishing’. Durie (2015) states that those working in education have the agency to provide contexts for learning that can awaken the *mauri*, or *mauri oho*, by building positive relationships, highlighting potential and nurturing strengths and uniqueness.

Durie’s words are in direct contrast to the history of education in post-colonial Aotearoa, where policies of assimilation and integration failed to embrace his vision of “treating students with respect, establishing good relationships between school and home, [and]

acknowledging the dignity and uniqueness of all learners” (Durie, 2001, p. 5). In relation to New Zealand’s education system, research has demonstrated that principals can have a deep and significant effect on the well-being of students and, in turn, student achievement (Robinson et al., 2009). It follows that principals are ultimately responsible for giving life to the vision presented by Sir Mason Durie.

Kaupapa Māori theory

Emerging from a proactive movement of resistance to the hegemony of colonisation, kaupapa Māori theory and practice worked to revitalise Māori language, culture and aspirations for Māori self-determination. At its heart, kaupapa Māori is an indigenous paradigm, based within Māori epistemologies of culturally preferred pedagogies and methodologies, providing a framework from which to critique the dominant discourses that marginalise and oppress Māori (Pihama, 1993). Furthermore, kaupapa Māori theory intrinsically analyses societal inequalities and power structures by aligning with critical theory to expose underlying assumptions that conceal power and maintain inequalities. Pihama (2005) concurs with the “transformative power” (p. 192) of kaupapa Māori to resist the dominance of colonisation. For Pihama (2005), kaupapa Māori is organic, evolving and “extremely old - ancient, in fact” (p. 192). Whilst she asserts that kaupapa Māori is not ‘new’, Pihama states what is relatively new is the academic terminology of kaupapa Māori research and theory. This “organically Māori” (Pihama, 2005, p. 202) approach addresses the relationship between power and knowledge by challenging previously dominant Western paradigms.

Kaupapa Māori as a movement

The essence of kaupapa Māori embraces a Māori worldview and uses Māori metaphor to illuminate a journey of transformation. Charles Royal (2012) dubs Graham Smith ‘the chief architect’ of kaupapa Māori theory. According to Smith (1992), kaupapa Māori takes for granted the legitimacy and validity of the beliefs and practices of Māori, the Māori language and the cultural, intellectual, political and social legitimacy of Māori people. An imperative for the kaupapa Māori movement was the revival and survival of te reo and tikanga Māori.

Kaupapa Māori laid the foundations of the Māori renaissance of the late 1970s and early 1980s, highlighting the transformative potential of kaupapa Māori as a ‘theory of change’ (Smith, 1992). After the vibrant beginnings of kaupapa Māori, Smith (2012) states that the

ideas and practice of kaupapa Māori need to grow and expand to embrace modern contexts. Smith (2012) calls for ‘renewal’ and active resistance against the dangers of the ‘domestication’ of kaupapa Māori. Smith (2012) believes “if kaupapa Māori is seen primarily as an assertion or reinvigoration of cultural ideas, the domestication of kaupapa Māori is inevitable” and “the radical potential of kaupapa Māori is diminished” (p. 14). To enable this renewal to take place, Smith (2012) asserts that we need to revisit the theoretical, political and transformative roots of kaupapa Māori to transform outcomes for Māori in all aspects of life in Aotearoa.

Contemporary Māori resistance arose from a consciousness-raising about the “the control of knowledge... and the debilitating effects of hegemony... existing in a social context of unequal power relations” (Smith, 1992, p. 2). Durie (2012) believes the resistance movement was two-fold: it related to Māori development, with a ‘let’s get on and move ahead’ approach, along with a political and ideological critique of colonisation. By embracing a Māori worldview, ‘change’ occurred for Māori in areas such as the revitalisation of te reo Māori, research ethics, health, education and Māori jurisprudence (Durie, 2012).

Revitalisation and transformation occurred for Māori as a result of openly addressing the relationship between power and knowledge. In particular, kaupapa Māori challenged previously dominant “Western ideas of what constituted valid knowledge” (Berryman, SooHoo & Nevin, 2013, p. 9). Kaupapa Māori theory compels us to consider counter-narratives to sense-making and the generation of knowledge that lie within the very culture that has been marginalised (Bishop et al., 2009). By asking critical questions about the nature of knowledge, how and by whom knowledge is produced and for whose benefit, this critical analysis supported Māori to begin to deconstruct hegemonic discourses which previously “disempowered Māori from controlling their own knowledge” (Smith, 1992, p. 2).

In Aotearoa there is an historical legacy of dominant Western epistemologies, or ways of knowing, that form the basis of the beliefs and values of the coloniser and that have become the norm. However, as Scheurich and Young (1997) state, “all people do not ‘know’ in the same way” (p. 7), and for Māori as tangata whenua, ways of knowing are deeply embedded in te ao Māori. For educators and leaders in Aotearoa, realising that “no epistemology is context-free” (Scheurich & Young, 1997, p. 8) is a crucial consideration when creating contexts for learning that value all ontologies, or what we believe to be right and true and

representative of our very acts of being and becoming. By promoting multilogicality, leaders legitimise and value the epistemologies of every one of their students.

Kaupapa Māori as an educational intervention

Pihama, Cram and Walker (2002) support the ability of kaupapa Māori to address the desire ‘to be Māori’, especially in education. Building on the theorising of Freire (1972) and Smith (2003), which will be discussed later in this chapter, Pihama et al. (2002) suggest that kaupapa Māori “has become an influential, coherent philosophy and practice for... advancing Māori cultural and educational outcomes in education” (p. 33). The transformative nature of kaupapa Māori theory is evidenced through the development of full-immersion, Māori medium educational initiatives: *Te Kōhanga Reo* (early childhood), *Kura Kaupapa Māori* (primary and secondary) and *Wānanga* (tertiary). From the success of these initiatives, Smith (1992) highlighted six ‘crucial change elements’, constructed within a narrative grounded in te reo Māori. The metaphors are intrinsically linked to traditional Māori understandings of knowledge and learning and present compelling implications for educators of Māori students in mainstream schooling.

Each of Smith’s (1992) crucial change elements reflects the essence of successful and transformative kaupapa Māori approaches in educational settings. Firstly, there is the concept of *tino rangatiratanga* (relative autonomy), which embraces the self-determination of Māori to regain control over their lives and well-being. The concept of *taonga tuku iho* (cultural aspirations) acknowledges that being Māori is normal, legitimate and valid. The concept of *ako Māori* (culturally preferred pedagogy) ensures that reciprocity is at the heart of the interactions so that teachers are learners, and learners are teachers. The role of *whānau* (extended family) and Māori communities is fundamental to the success of individuals and the collective. The concept of *kia piki ake i ngā raruraru o te kainga* (mediation of socio-economic and home difficulties) acknowledges that those within the community are able to help mediate any circumstances that may cause a barrier to success. The concept of *kaupapa* (collective vision) compels educators to actively seek, listen to and embrace the aspirations of Māori to co-construct a collective vision about what constitutes excellence. By using te reo Māori to ground our understanding of the ‘counter logic’ of kaupapa Māori, Smith (1992) further highlights the ‘radical potential’ of kaupapa Māori within an educational setting to enable Māori to achieve success, as Māori.

Socio-cultural views of teaching and learning

Many researchers have contributed to modern understandings of how humans learn, such as Jean Piaget (1896-1980) and Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934). Piaget (1969) concluded “learners construct knowledge by interacting with their environment and what is in it” (as cited in Wearmouth, 2009, p. 10). Vygotsky (1962) added the dimension of the importance of language and relationships in learning, concluding “it is through interacting with others, especially a more able other, that learning mainly occurs and is developed” (as cited in Wearmouth, 2009, p. 10). Furthermore, Vygotsky’s (1978) ‘zone of proximal development’ is described as the “distance between the actual development... and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (p. 86). These views of learning take a socio-cultural perspective, where the cultural and social contexts of learning combine in a necessary and fundamental way to construct new knowledge.

Cultural toolkit

When we consider the work of Jerome Bruner (1915-2016), culture is the ‘toolkit’ that enables learners to make sense of their world and to create new knowledge in a spiralling curriculum (Bruner, 1996). Culturalist models state that mind and culture are inseparable, indeed as “culture shapes the mind... it provides us with the toolkit by which we construct not only our words but our very conceptions of our selves and our powers” (Bruner, 1996, p. x). The heart of Bruner’s (1996) culturalist model of mind sees learning and thinking as “situated in a cultural setting and always dependent upon the utilization of cultural resources” (p. 4), where “education is not an island, but part of the continent of culture” (p. 11). Bruner (1996) expresses that a theory of education can’t exist without deep considerations of culture and in fact lies in the space between, where the natures of mind and culture overlap and where it is possible to explore “the interaction between the powers of individual minds and the means by which the culture aids or thwarts their realization” (p. 13).

Like the premise that no epistemology is context-free (Scheurich & Young, 1997), the tenets that guide Bruner’s (1996) culturalist approach to education hold “intersubjectivity - how humans come to know ‘each other’s minds’” (p. 12) as a fundamental premise, noting that “nothing is ‘culture free’” (p. 14). Bruner (1996) describes how meaning or sense-making is relative to an individual and their culture. He refers to Vygotsky’s (1978) zone of proximal

development as a way to move beyond mere native endowment, in that “if pedagogy is to empower human beings to go beyond their “native” predispositions, it must transmit the “toolkit” the culture has developed for doing so” (Bruner, 1996, p. 17). It is from this cultural toolkit that we construct our ontologies and shape meaning and we do so via mutual and reciprocal teaching and learning.

Bruner (1996) links learning within a cultural setting to educational settings, where culturally located individuals work collectively to share group progress, and talents and opportunities lead to life outcomes. Bruner (1996) recognises that “education does not stand alone, and it cannot be designed as if it did” (p. 28), claiming that schools, teachers and leaders undertake “culture’s serious business” (p. 30). Teachers and leaders have their own ontologies and epistemologies that may well differ from that of their students, and they must be willing and able to address these. Furthermore, Bruner (1996) believes that education is crucial to the forming of ‘self’; self-hood derives from agency, and then we evaluate our experiences which builds self-esteem. Bruner (1996) states that self-esteem “combines our sense of what we believe ourselves to be (or even hope to be) capable of and what we fear is beyond us” (p. 37). Bruner (1996) believes the telling and making of stories shapes our worlds and that it is only through narrative “that one can construct an identity and find a place in one’s culture” (p. 42).

Furthermore, Rogoff (2003) states “humans develop through their changing participation in the sociocultural activities of their communities, which also change” (p. 368). Educational leaders who learn alongside their communities as participants in shared endeavours build on the cultural practices of those who have come before them (Rogoff, 2003). In this way, they open themselves to the epistemologies of others and become better equipped to develop the skills necessary to lead others within their zone of proximal development.

Traditional Māori models of learning

Within traditional Māori models of learning, knowledge was and is viewed as a precious collection of taonga “to be cherished, added to and passed on” (Metge, 2015, p. 262) amongst whānau, *hapū* (sub-tribe) and *iwi* (tribe). Furthermore, “knowledge had mana and conferred mana on to its holders. It was to be aspired to, actively sought and attained only with effort” (Metge, 2015, p. 262). Knowledge was considered as belonging to the collective rather than the individual, and its purpose was in service to the group, as opposed to individual ambition

(Metge, 2015). Educational pursuits involved using all of the senses and recognised the importance of emotion, as well as intellect, which is captured in te reo Māori by the word *hinengaro* - the combination of thinking and feeling (Metge, 2015). For Māori, education “goes hand in hand with the full development of all the senses” - ideas of connectedness and wholeness are fundamental and “the ultimate aim of knowing is understanding... [And] the attainment of wisdom” (Metge, 1983, p. 13).

The poutama

When applying this concept of knowledge to educational leadership, the journey towards understanding and wisdom can be likened to the symbolic pattern of the *poutama*, a *tukutuku* (lattice weaving design) with a stepped pattern (see Figure 4).



Figure 4 Tukutuku panel featuring poutama (Blipfoto, 2015)

Tangaere (1997) states “Māori human development is embodied in ‘te ira tangata’ (the life principle of people). It is the essence of Māori knowledge... the knowledge of ‘how’ and ‘why’ for the universe and explains the place of people within this universe” (p. 47). The quest for knowledge, learning and development can be likened to the layered steps of the poutama and represent the many challenges that we face whilst learning (Tangaere, 1997). According to one Māori tradition, the steps represent the stairway the god *Tāne* climbed to reach *Te Toi-o-ngārangī* - the highest of the twelve heavens, where he received the three *kete* (baskets) of knowledge:

- *Te kete-tuatea* (basket of light or present knowledge),
- *Te kete-tuauri* (basket of darkness or knowledge of things unknown), and

- *Te kete-aronui* (basket of pursuit or the knowledge humans currently seek). (Taonui, 2006, p. 2)

Tangaere's personal response to the symbolic meaning in the poutama mirrors a holistic approach to learning: "it is through continuous practice and continuously working towards becoming more competent, in... my intellectual... physical, emotional, social, spiritual and cultural dimensions, that I can hope to ascend those steps" (Tangaere, 1997, p. 47).

Another traditional way of linking teaching and learning to the poutama is described by Wilkie (2010) in her doctoral thesis, 'Te Taumata – Te Timata. The Pinnacle – The First Step':

Poutama teaches us that the mana of a learner is equal to all other learners, ahead of them and behind them, on the learning pathway. Poutama teaches us that knowledge is gained in steps, and implies the perseverance needed to progress upwards. Poutama reminds us that knowledge is built layer upon layer, and for Māori the foundations of this knowledge begin with our tīpuna [ancestors] and before them eternally, with Papatūānuku, the land. (p. 262)

Wilkie's research was informed by personal correspondence with two since-passed *kaumātua* (Māori elders). Ngāti Kahungunu kaumātua, Tuahine Northover, explained his understanding of the five steps of the learning poutama: "Kua Tīmata, the first step; Kua Mārama, enlightened; Kua Kaha, confident; Kua Mōhio, knowledgeable; Ko Te Taumata, the pinnacle" (Northover, 2007, as cited in Wilkie, 2010, p. 36). Upon reaching Te Taumata, learning naturally continues, becoming the first step of the very next level - an ongoing pursuit - whereby in te ao Māori learning is not about success or failure, but rather about ascending the steps (Wilkie, 2010).

In personal correspondence between Wilkie and Ngāti Porou³ kaumātua Dick Grace, a further explanation of the mana of learners at various points on the journey was explained:

[In] tikanga Māori every individual is unique and they have their own time in which to know. A Māori perspective on this difference is the equality of mana, that applies to poutama; if a person is on level one of knowing in a certain area and another is on [a higher level] that person has no greater mana than the one on level one, their mana is equal, they both have that special power which is the same. (Grace, 2007, as cited in Wilkie, 2010, p. 216)

In this sense, the development of one depends on the development of others and the sharing of the precious taonga of knowledge embodies a collective responsibility. Within this model,

³ Tribal group of East Coast Aotearoa north of Gisborne to Tihirau.

as an integral part of traditional Māori society, “an older or more expert tuakana... helps and guides a younger or less expert teina. In a learning environment that recognises the value of ako [reciprocal learning and teaching], the tuakana-teina roles may be reversed at any time” (Ministry of Education, n.d.). If we are to truly understand what learning means in a traditional Māori context, it is necessary to realise that “traditional Māori learning rested on the principle that every person is a learner from the time they are born (if not before) to the time they die” (Pere, 1982, p. 54). Furthermore, Pere (1982) expresses that within a whānau, teachers and learners worked alongside each other as “learning was based on practical experiences, observation and discovery, enhanced and interpreted by highly motivated people who inspired and gained respect” (p. 54).

It is clear that if educational leaders in Aotearoa are to work towards achieving reform for their Māori students, then a key may lie in incorporating traditional Māori models of learning into the pedagogy and PD of teachers in order to best utilise ‘what we know works’ for Māori students.

Transformative leadership

According to Shields (2010), transformative leadership is concerned with notions of “promise, liberation, hope, empowerment, activism, risk, social justice, courage, and revolution” (Shields, 2010, p. 559). Beginning with questions around democracy and justice, Shields (2010) defines transformative leadership as critiquing “inequitable practices” and offering “the promise not only of greater individual achievement but of a better life lived in common with others” (p. 559). Shields (2013) acknowledges that we live in a VUCA world - volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous - particularly for those who are marginalised. Building upon the work of Caron (2009), Shields highlights that if we are to achieve deep and equitable educational reform, transformative leaders will require a new set of VUCA skills: “vision, understanding, clarity and agility” (as cited in Shields, 2013, p. 121).

Transformative leadership combines “traits, processes, and goals” and “takes an explicitly moral stand in favour of inclusion, social justice, and both private and public good” (Shields, 2013, p. 120). To achieve educational reform, leaders must eliminate “color-blind racism”, reject deficit theorising and ensure the curriculum is “inclusive of the lived experiences of all students” (Shields, 2013, p. 120-1). Transformative leaders deconstruct and reconstruct

knowledge frameworks and focus on “equity, inclusion, and optimism for all children” (Shields, 2013, p. 121).

Shields (2013) outlines eight tenets that are fundamental to transformative leadership theory:

- The mandate to effect deep and equitable change,
- The need to deconstruct and reconstruct knowledge frameworks that perpetuate inequity and injustice,
- A focus on emancipation, democracy, equity, and justice,
- The need to address the inequitable distribution of power,
- An emphasis on both private and public (individual and collective) good,
- An emphasis on interdependence, interconnectedness, and global awareness,
- The necessity of balancing critique with promise, and
- The call to exhibit moral courage. (p. 21)

According to Shields (2013), transformative leaders who demonstrate these characteristics are indeed ‘rare’ - they recognise, challenge and overturn inequities, gaps and barriers and engage in their daily tasks with conviction. Furthermore:

The need is urgent, the task is daunting, but the rewards are enormous. If we can enlarge the cadre of transformative leaders, then the mantra “all children can learn” will be transformed from words on a page to the lived reality of every child in every school. We owe our communities, our nation, and our world no less. (Shields, 2013, p. 127)

Engaging in transformative leadership as a first-time principal requires an immediate commitment to the disruption of the status quo of “dominant traditions, assumptions, and beliefs, and the need for extensive dialogue to build clarity and understanding about more liberatory and more optimistic ways forward” (Shields, 2013, p. 118). By embracing a moral imperative for the practices of their school to become more equitable and inclusive, leaders can engage in bringing about educational reform. As Shields (2013) states:

It is unlikely that real change will occur unless transformative educational leaders engage courageously with structures, cultures, pedagogies, and policies that inhibit equity and deny all children equal opportunities for success. Moral courage... enables leaders not only to critique inequity but also to move forward, ensuring the promise of a better future for all. (p. 102)

Leadership and the moral imperative

The moral purpose of school leadership centres on ensuring each and every student achieves their potential, where *what* they learn enables them to participate as successful global citizens. In order to implement the reforms necessary for sustained improvement in student achievement, school leaders need to deeply consider the moral imperative that goes hand in

hand with the responsibility of being a principal. Fullan (2003) outlines a number of criteria for leadership with a moral purpose:

That all students and teachers benefit in terms of identified desirable goals, that the gap between high and low performers becomes less as the bar for all is raised, that ever-deeper educational goals are pursued, and that the culture of the school becomes so transformed that continuous improvement relative to the previous three components becomes built in. (p. 31)

Fullan (2003) describes a moral imperative driven from the principal as involving “deep cultural change that mobilises the passion and commitment of teachers, parents, and others to improve the learning of all students, including closing the achievement gap” (p. 41). Fullan (2003) describes how this results in a transformation of the culture of a school and a community, with the persistent goal of continuous improvement.

Critical theory

Critical theory highlights that when we critically examine issues of privilege and power, we can work to disrupt and challenge traditional assumptions towards equity and justice for all through a process of *conscientisation*, *resistance* and *transformative praxis* (Freire, 1972; Smith, 2003). For Māori, the struggle for autonomy over their cultural well-being was an essential component of the conscientisation, resistance and transformative praxis of kaupapa Māori (Smith, 1997). School leaders in Aotearoa who engage in conscientisation openly highlight, and become aware of, the part they play in maintaining and contributing to the status quo of inequity for their Māori learners. By asking critical questions such as, ‘So what am I going to do differently, now that I have a better understanding of how power and privilege are playing out?’ educationalists may begin to engage in resistance. Transformative praxis can then begin to occur when leaders engage in new practices that focus on a more equitable social reality for their Māori learners.

Widely recognised as one of the most influential philosophers in the development of critical pedagogical thinking and practice in education, Paulo Freire (1921-1997) challenges educators to deeply consider the nature of teaching and learning. Freire (2005) posits that the real vocation of teaching is to be human and develop the courage to love. Freire (2005) states:

It is impossible to teach without a forged, invented, and well-thought-out capacity to love.... We must dare, in the full sense of the word, to speak of love without the fear of being called ridiculous.... We must dare in order to say... that we study, we learn, we teach, we know with our

entire body. We do all of these things with feeling, with emotion, with wishes, with fear, with doubts, with passion, and also with critical reasoning. However, we never study, learn, teach or know with the last only. We must dare so as never to dichotomize cognition and emotion. (p. 5)

It is from this humanising perspective of teaching and learning that Freire (2005) speaks about acts of love and the restoration of our humanity. When we see our students as our subjects, rather than objects, we humanise our pedagogical practice and redefine the practice of teaching and learning and our relationship with knowledge (Allman, 2009). Freire (2005) speaks to the need for teachers to embrace ‘armed love’, demonstrated by “the fighting love of those convinced of the right and the duty to fight, to denounce, and to announce” (p. 74). It is within this process of naming and critical reflection, that the term critical pedagogy is best understood.

Critical pedagogy

According to Wink (2011), enacting critical pedagogy can be understood as the intersection between learning and teaching, where learners and teachers embrace Freire’s (1972) notion of ‘problem posing’ - naming, critically reflecting and acting. In line with Freire’s notion of the importance of love, Wink (2011) states that engaging in critical pedagogy requires a caring heart, a critical lens, courage, patience and time. When we engage these human characteristics within our teaching, learning and leadership practice, we are ready to “think, rethink and unthink” (Wink, 2011, p. iv). Wink (2011) believes:

Critical pedagogy is teaching and learning that transforms us and our world for the better.... Critical pedagogy is learning, relearning and unlearning.... Teaching is learning.... Unlearning means that we unpack and begin to learn and relearn again: the great cycle of pedagogy. (p. 12)

Wink (2011) states that the bottom line for critical pedagogy needs to embrace Freire and Macedo’s (1987) inseparable and cyclical notion of ‘naming’: “reading the world always precedes reading the word, and reading the word implies continually reading the world” (p. 35). This concept of critical literacy embraces a movement that is dynamic, which is full of life, force and inspiration while at the same time challenging, critical and insistent (Allman, 2009). When we engage in critical pedagogy, we not only immerse ourselves in the waters of words and teaching, but we learn by teaching and teach by learning (Wink, 2011). Furthermore, Tuhiwai Smith (2012) likens Freire’s notion of ‘naming the world’ to “claiming the world and claiming those ways of viewing the world that count as legitimate” (p. 84) and in turn, naming realities that may only be evident in the use of indigenous languages.

Conscientisation, resistance and transformative praxis

The reciprocity of teaching and learning, therefore, is about engaging with people and forming a clearer picture of what we know in relation to others, or in other words, *conscientisation*. When we become conscientised, we talk with others about our lived experiences and we generate a new understanding, which in turn compels us to define a new path. Wink (2011) describes conscientisation as “coming to know that I know” (p. 57). Once we know *that* we know, we cannot unknow and we develop a new critical consciousness about the position of power and privilege in our societies. As Wink (2011) states, when we “understand how and why knowledge and power are constructed by whom and for whom” (p. 71) we know, see and read the word and the world. When we marry conscientisation with critical reflection on what to do differently, we begin to engage in *resistance*.

By asking questions such as, ‘What do we need to stop doing? Start doing? Continue doing?’, we are openly seeking to disrupt the status quo of power imbalances. This critical reflection empowers educationalists to consider the part they might play in reshaping practices within their sphere of influence - how they might enact change. For those educators who locate themselves as members of the dominant culture, a necessary aspect of resistance is a willingness to “re-locate themselves as listeners and learners” (Berryman, Nevin, SooHoo & Ford, 2015b, pp. 307-8). Within this notion of relocation, however, educators need to learn from members of the less dominant culture, for “it is the less powerful and less privileged who best understand how to transform the relationship” (Berryman et al., 2016, p. 3). Once we as educators have decided what we need to do to disrupt the status quo, we become empowered to engage in *transformative praxis*.

The counter-hegemonic nature of transformative praxis encourages us to reconstruct power relationships in order to give the voiceless a voice and the powerless (Freire, 1992; Wink, 2011). The notion of praxis can be understood as the marriage of theory and practice - where the *why* (theory) informs the *how* (practice). Transformative praxis occurs when we intentionally engage in acts on behalf of those who are marginalised and vulnerable in order to ensure they thrive in their use of language to “paint a picture of one’s reality, one’s experiences, one’s world” (Wink, 2011, p. 85). Wink (2011) describes the transformative classroom as follows:

The spirit of inquiry leads the search for meaning. Students need to have classrooms in which they are safe to take risks. In this pedagogical model, teachers shift from control of knowledge to creation of processes whereby students take ownership of their learning and take risks to understand and apply their knowledge. Students and teachers come to realize that their actions can make a difference. (p. 147)

In order to achieve transformative classrooms, Wink (2011) poses the following challenge to all educators: “until each of us owns our own power (negotiates our own identity), we cannot be a part of empowerment (negotiating identities with students)” (p. 197). When we apply this idea of empowerment to educational leaders, it becomes clear that transformative leaders will inevitably be involved in change. Sergiovanni (2005) states that within leadership, change and learning go hand in hand, furthermore:

Both are easier to do if we better understand the mindscapes we bring to our practice, examine them in light of what we want to do, and change them. Change begins with us - with our heart, head, and hands that drive our leadership practice. (p. 122)

Towards critical leadership

So we come full circle; back to the human qualities that underpin critical educational leadership. It is within the very act of engaging in transformative praxis that educators participate in an authentic union of reflection and action, “conceived as self-creating and self-generating free human activity” (Darder, Baltodano & Torres, 2009, p. 13). Nieto (2006) asks the question, ‘What does it mean to teach and lead students with heart, courage and conviction?’ Building on widely acknowledged skills of effective leadership, such as communication, organisation and subject matter skills, Nieto (2006) believes that critical leaders also need “a sense of mission; solidarity with, and empathy for, their students; the courage to challenge mainstream knowledge and conventional wisdom; improvisation; and a passion for social justice” (p. 457). When transformative praxis is driven by critical theory, leaders understand that the process of conscientisation is ongoing.

Another aspect of critical pedagogy that is crucial for a full and deep understanding of its application to educational leadership is what Wink (2011) describes as ‘the slippery surface of ambiguity’. Wink (2011) frames this notion of ambiguity as a necessary space for teachers and leaders to not only feel themselves, but also encourage their learners to feel:

We must welcome ambiguity; we must relish ambiguity; we must frolic and play in ambiguity because then we know we are moving along the learning curve.... For me, these contradictions have become the whispering of the juxtaposition. In my educational space, when I bump into a contradiction, I try to imagine the juxtaposition that sits quietly on my shoulder and whispers in my ear to listen and learn. The shimmering differences are what we feel as we continue to walk

down our unique learning path; they cause the dissonance we feel when we are at the crossroads of contradiction. In this enlightened - and often uncomfortable - educational space, relearning and unlearning begin. (p. 5)

Transformative leaders who embrace the critical aspect of leadership, underpinned by a relentless moral imperative, understand that the process of leading learning about conscientisation, resistance and transformative praxis with their teachers can lead to discomfort and ambiguity. However, they recognise that what works for their students also works with their teachers and they agentically lead within their sphere of influence.

Applied critical leadership

Building upon the work of critical pedagogy, Santamaria and Santamaria (2012) have coined the term *applied critical leadership* to refer to a theoretical framework of leadership. Applied critical leadership centres on promoting social justice and educational equity, where the professional practice of leadership stems from one's own culture and experiences (Santamaria, Webber & Santamaria, 2015). In particular, applied critical leadership focuses on the ways in which leaders from "historically marginalized cultural, racial, ethnic, or linguistic backgrounds are able to use positive aspects of their identity to guide their leadership practice through their ability to identify with, represent the voices of, and act for disenfranchised student populations" (Santamaria et al., 2015, pp. 107-8).

In the applied critical leadership model, leaders begin with questions such as, "How does my identity interrupt or enhance my ability to see other perspectives and therefore provide effective leadership?" (Santamaria & Santamaria, 2012, p. 6). By asking the question, 'How can my unique experiences inform my practice?', critical leaders engage in their own cycle of conscientisation, resistance and transformative praxis as they actively choose a "new paradigm: change" (Santamaria & Santamaria, 2012, p. 141).

School leadership in Aotearoa

According to the Leadership BES (Robinson et al., 2009), "school leaders can indeed make a difference to student achievement and well-being" (p. 35). The 'big message' from the Leadership BES is that "the closer educational leaders get to the core business of teaching and learning, the more likely they are to have a positive impact on students" (Robinson et al., 2009, p. 47). The Leadership BES (Robinson et al., 2009) demonstrates the impact of effective leadership on improving outcomes for students "could be increased by more closely

integrating leadership theories and practice with the evidence concerning effective teaching and learning” (p. 47). By exploring how leaders within Kia Eke Panuku embrace theories of leadership in a culturally responsive and relational context for learning, it may be possible to build a clearer picture of the particular leadership knowledge, skills and dispositions required to ensure equitable outcomes for Māori learners.

The Leadership BES (Robinson et al., 2009) used two meta-analyses of leadership research to determine dimensions of leadership that impact upon student outcomes. A total of eight leadership dimensions were derived:

- Establishing goals and expectations,
- Resourcing strategically,
- Planning, coordinating and evaluating teaching and the curriculum,
- Promoting and participating in teacher learning and development,
- Ensuring an orderly and supportive environment,
- Creating educationally powerful connections,
- Engaging in constructive problem talk, and
- Selecting, developing, and using smart tools. (p. 39)

The Leadership BES (Robinson et al., 2009) concluded that the effect size of ‘promoting and participating in teacher learning and development’, or pedagogical leadership, is twice that of any other leadership dimension. This led to their primary conclusion - “the more leaders focus their influence, their learning, and their relationships with teachers on the core business of teaching and learning, the greater their influence on student outcomes” (Robinson et al., 2009, p. 40). Through their participation in pedagogical PLD such as Kia Eke Panuku, school leaders can ensure that the conditions necessary for “transformative and continuous school improvement” are focused on implementing the vision of Ka Hikitia at multiple levels (Kia Eke Panuku, 2015, p. 41).

Ka Hikitia and the seven critical factors for success

Ka Hikitia: Accelerating Success 2013-2017 (Ministry of Education, 2013) is the New Zealand government’s strategy aimed at ensuring Māori students enjoy and achieve education success as Māori. Ka Hikitia embraces a Māori worldview and aims to guide the actions of educationalists to make significant differences for Māori students - by stepping up, lifting up or lengthening our strides. The guiding principles represent considerations of a Māori potential approach that enables ako and respects language, identity and culture within

productive partnerships that honour the intent of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. In order to realise the vision of Ka Hikitia, every school in Aotearoa is pledged with a mandate of participation, partnership and protection grounded in Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

As an iterative research and development programme focused on supporting schools to improve educational outcomes for Māori learners, Phase 5 Te Kotahitanga was informed by earlier phases. Phase 5 focused on the critical nature of culturally responsive and relational pedagogy and incorporated “new knowledge around leadership, school-whānau connections, implementation, scaling up, autonomy, accountability, momentum and sustainability” (Alton-Lee, 2015, p. 7). When evaluating the effectiveness of Te Kotahitanga in addressing the aspirations of Ka Hikitia, Alton-Lee (2015) used a Best Evidence Synthesis perspective to identify seven critical factors for success as levers for educational reform:

- Indigenous educational expertise driving culturally responsive provision for Māori,
- *Whakawhanaungatanga* (establishing and maintaining relationships) driving the ‘how’ of improvement,
- Effective teaching: developing culturally responsive pedagogy,
- Effective PD: building school-based expertise,
- Transformative educational leadership: institutionalising deep change,
- Educationally powerful connections based on a cultural pedagogy of relations, and
- Collaborative research and development cycles driving accelerated improvement to scale. (p. 36)

Alton-Lee (2015) recognised that “it is only through deep-seated cultural and pedagogical change that a teacher, leader, institution or system can enable substantive change for Māori” (p. 8). To institutionalise deep educational change, the development of leadership on multiple levels is of critical importance and needs to start with “an ambitious vision for transformative change... underpinned by culturally responsive, organisational, relational and pedagogical change” (Alton-Lee, 2015, p. 35).

Kia Eke Panuku and the levers for educational reform

Embracing both critical theory (Freire, 1972) and kaupapa Māori theory (Smith, 1997), Kia Eke Panuku employed an *Ako: Critical Cycle of Learning (unlearning, relearning)* as a vehicle for participants to engage in conscientisation, resistance and transformative praxis (Kia Eke Panuku, n.d.2). The *Ako: Critical Cycle of Learning* “informs our own critical understandings of pedagogy (conscientisation), helps us to decide what needs to change

(resistance), and leads to accelerated improvements for our Māori students (transformative praxis)” (Kia Eke Panuku, n.d.2, p. 3).

Building on the success of previous PLD programs in secondary schools aimed at addressing disparities for Māori students, Kia Eke Panuku aimed to give life to Ka Hikitia. It brought together key learnings from previous programs - Te Kotahitanga, He Kākano, the Starpath Project for Tertiary Participation and Success and the Secondary Literacy and Numeracy Projects. Drawing on the expertise of three institutions across Aotearoa - the University of Waikato, the University of Auckland and Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiārangi - the kaupapa of Kia Eke Panuku addressed the aspirations of Māori communities by supporting Māori students to pursue their potential (Kia Eke Panuku, n.d.1). Kia Eke Panuku focused on accelerated school reform and recognised five interrelated dimensions as levers for this acceleration: leadership; evidence-based inquiry; culturally responsive and relational pedagogy; educationally powerful connections with Māori; and literacy, te reo Māori and numeracy (Kia Eke Panuku, n.d.1). In order to lead the Kia Eke Panuku reform, it was recognised that school leaders played a “critical role in disrupting and changing the status quo for Māori under-achievement” (Kia Eke Panuku, n.d.3, p. 3).

It is clear from the literature that the actions of educational leaders can have major impacts on the outcomes of their students. By participating in Kia Eke Panuku, school leaders began to understand the implications for social change and accepted their role in driving the moral imperative for equity within their school (Kia Eke Panuku, n.d.3). To achieve accelerated educational reform in Aotearoa, it is clear that developing and fostering critical transformative leadership in first-time principals is a vital factor for success.

Culturally responsive and relational pedagogy

Kia Eke Panuku aimed to provide educationalists with opportunities to engage in culturally responsive and relational pedagogy (see Figure 5):

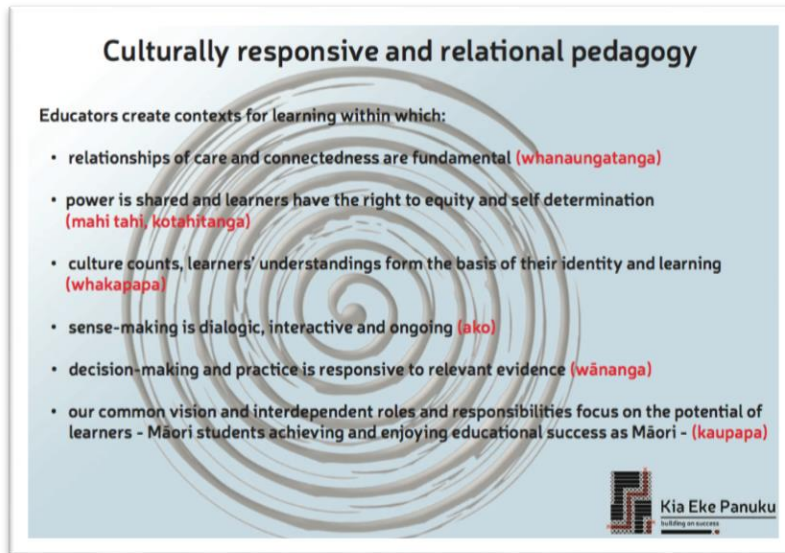


Figure 5 Culturally responsive and relational pedagogy (Kia Eke Panuku, n.d.2)

From personal experience, a culturally responsive and relational energy can be felt the moment you walk into a classroom or professional learning space. Siope (2013) calls it, a “you-can-just-tell’ buzz” that is “almost palpable” (p. 44), where what you see, hear and feel reflect a culturally responsive and relational learning environment.

Within these spaces, relationships of care and connectedness are fundamental to all interactions and demonstrate high expectations for success and the co-construction of new knowledge. Learners work in collaborative environments with self-determined pathways. Rather than dominate the space as experts, teachers participate in ongoing critical reflection over the existence of power relationships to ensure sense-making processes are shared. Te reo Māori is incorporated into the very fabric of the space. Learners bring who they are to their learning and what they already know is highly valued. Learners are stretched and challenged to move to the next step with specific academic feedforward being heard from teachers and learners. A common vision for excellence in learning is co-constructed; therefore learner voice is highly regarded, as are the aspirations of whānau and Māori communities.

Culturally responsive and relational leadership

Within Kia Eke Panuku, culturally responsive and relational leadership was considered a crucial lever for change for those seeking to accelerate outcomes for Māori students. By

seeking answers to questions such as, ‘How can we as leaders disrupt the status quo for our Māori learners?’, leaders became more focused on the social changes required. Kia Eke Panuku school leaders were pledged with the moral imperative to bring about equity for their Māori learners. In order to disrupt the status quo, culturally responsive and relational leaders engaged in a critical cycle of reflection that involved:

- Profiling - understanding and analysing their school’s current position,
- Planning for Coherency - aligning and focusing actions to disrupt the status quo,
- Evidence to Accelerate - gathering data in an iterative manner to monitor the effectiveness of the reform, and
- Reflect, Review and Act - re-imagining and embedding more equitable opportunities for Māori to excel. (Kia Eke Panuku, n.d.3, p. 5)

Akin to the notions of transformative leadership (Shields, 2010, 2013) and critical theory (Freire, 1972; Smith, 2003), culturally responsive and relational leaders engage in conscientisation, resistance and transformative praxis:

Conscientisation begins by understanding where we may be inappropriately using power and privilege over others. Leaders in Kia Eke Panuku accept they have a moral responsibility to resist social injustices and challenge inequities within their own sphere of influence. Leaders who can ‘walk this talk and talk this walk’ are demonstrating transformative praxis. (Kia Eke Panuku, n.d.3, p. 4)

In this way, many leaders within Kia Eke Panuku engaged in the deliberate acts necessary to institutionalise deep and sustainable educational reform. They prioritised the co-construction of ways of being, working and knowing and embraced pluralistic worldviews (Berryman et al., 2013).

Critical leadership for educational reform

When we consider critical theory (Freire, 1972; Smith, 2003) alongside leadership dispositions that lead to educational reform based on the principles of kaupapa Māori, we can begin to understand the importance of engaging in *critical leadership* driven by a moral imperative. Schools and their Māori communities who seek to disrupt the status quo of marginalisation and disenfranchisement of Māori learners within the school may engage in power-sharing relationships as Treaty partners. In the spirit of partnership, schools and Māori communities have the agency to collectively address the educational disparities through a process of critical thinking to unpack issues of power and privilege. When educational communities engage in critical leadership, they flip the discourse from thinking

in terms of deficit, marginalisation, oppression and hegemony, to one that embraces a concept of leadership that is shared, bi-cultural, equitable and potential-focused.

To engage in critical leadership, those who traditionally hold the power “critically examine their own participation and privilege, then seek power-sharing relationships rather than perpetuate the more traditional impositional stance that continue to promote disparities” (Berryman, 2013, p. 9). From this participatory stance, educational reform occurs for Māori learners when relationships and interactions between staff, students, schools and communities are reimagined and reformed (Cummins, 1986). According to Thin-Rabb (2017), “transformative leaders broker dialogic relationships that surface organic conversations based on evidence” (p. 24), critically analysing this evidence together to reimagine and reform.

When educational communities reimagine their commitment to using positions of power and privilege for the benefit of all, they contribute to changing the fabric of society (Berryman, Eley, Ford & Egan, 2015a). In order to achieve systemic cultural change in mainstream educational settings in Aotearoa, a theory of effective leadership needs to embrace critical and kaupapa Māori theories (Berryman et al., 2016), resulting in critical leadership for educational reform.

Building upon these theories, Berryman et al. (2015a) contend two further elements are required - the *will* and the *skill*. Educational leaders demonstrate the *will* when they deliberately engage with the mandate expressed in Ka Hikitia of Māori succeeding as Māori (Ministry of Education, 2008a, 2013). By engaging in PLD grounded in research, school leaders can develop the *skills* required to put into practice what we know works for Māori learners, “underpinned by a relentless moral imperative” (Berryman et al., 2015a, p. 65). Furthermore, Berryman et al. (2016) add a third and vital element for sustainable, systematic change:

Wide-spread ownership of the personal and the public responsibility to use power, privilege and position within schools to promote social justice and enlightenment for the benefit, not only of individuals and the organization, but of society as a whole. (p. 532)

When these leaders combine their will, skills and their ability to promote ownership of the responsibilities towards reframing the lived reality of their Māori learners in a courageous and urgent manner, educational reform becomes achievable (Berryman et al., 2016; Walter, 2014). A question arises at this point - if we know what’s required for leaders to achieve

educational reform, to what extent is that research and theory informing the PLD aimed at supporting first-time and more experienced principals in Aotearoa?

Principals in Aotearoa

As at April 2016, there were 319 principals employed in secondary schools (Ministry of Education Information Officer, personal communication, November 18, 2016). Thirty three percent of these were female and 67% were male. Ten percent of all principals were Māori. Sixty percent of the total number of secondary principals were 50 years of age and over, with only six percent of principals being 44 years or younger.

As at April 2016, 17 of the 319 secondary school principals, or five percent, were classified as first-time principals (Ministry of Education Information Officer, personal communication, November 18, 2016). Of these first-time principals, 30% were female, 70% were male and 12% were Māori. Thirty percent of first-time principals were aged 44 years or younger.

A new opportunity for principals to extend their skills and capabilities has recently come in the form of the lead principal role for Kāhui Ako/Communities of Learning. The role has been established as part of the new political environment of centrally funded PLD being devolved to schools, kura and Kāhui Ako by the Ministry of Education. The lead principal is responsible for “building productive collaboration” to “develop and meet its shared ākonga/student achievement challenges” (Ministry of Education, 2016a, p. 6). Kāhui Ako lead principals are expected to model highly effective practice within their own school, whilst planning, coordinating and facilitating work across the Kāhui Ako as a whole. Lead principals are selected and appointed by a number of different parties from across the educational sector - Boards of Trustees, independent advisors and a national panel.

Kiwi Leadership for Principals - English-medium educational leadership

Following in the footsteps of the Leadership BES, the Ministry of Education collaborated with the school sector to develop a position paper, *Kiwi Leadership for Principals* (KLP) (Ministry of Education, 2008b). KLP describes a model of leadership unique to the teaching and learning contexts of Aotearoa. It recognises the major distinction between Aotearoa and other OECD countries, whereby our schools are self-managing, and therefore present unique challenges, opportunities, responsibilities and obligations for principals (Ministry of

Education, 2008b). KLP outlines the knowledge, skills and dispositions required of principals to lead their schools into the future. According to KLP, “effective educational leadership builds the pedagogical, administrative and cultural conditions necessary for successful learning and teaching” in order to “motivate and develop capabilities of others” (Ministry of Education, 2008b, p. 7). The model of educational leadership outlined within KLP is shown in Figure 6.



Figure 6 A model of educational leadership (Ministry of Education, 2008b)

Within each school context, KLP states that effective principals demonstrate four qualities - *manaakitanga* (leading with moral purpose), *pono* (having self-belief), *ako* (being a learner) and *awhinatanga* (guiding and supporting). It states that effective educational leaders are actively involved in problem-solving and leading change and work across four areas of interconnected practice: “culture (‘what we value around here’); partnerships and networks (creating positive links to support learning); pedagogy (knowledge about teaching and learning); and, systems (‘how things work around here’)” (Ministry of Education, 2008b, pp. 19-20). These areas of practice form the basis of the professional standards for principals, which are fundamental to the Secondary Principals’ Collective Agreement and form part of a principal’s performance agreement and criteria for registration (Ministry of Education, 2016b).

With educational leadership clearly at the centre of the model, the KLP claims effective educational leaders lead learning to:

- Improve outcomes for all students, with a particular focus on Māori and Pasifika,
- Create the conditions for effective teaching and learning,
- Develop and maintain schools as learning organisations,
- Make connections and build networks within and beyond their schools, and
- Develop others as leaders. (Ministry of Education, 2008b, p. 12)

Whilst KLP (Ministry of Education, 2008b) uses Māori metaphor to highlight the key qualities of effective principals, it stops at embracing ‘kiwi leadership’ as a bicultural partnership. It espouses the importance of ‘moral purpose’, however there is no direct link made to effective educational leaders being driven by a moral imperative to disrupt the status quo of Māori students underachievement. KLP highlights the importance of effective principals having a strong sense of self-belief, however it fails to recognise the importance of having the courage to address the inequities experienced by Māori learners. It encourages principals to engage in ongoing professional learning, but it offers no further imperative to develop critical, evidence-based capabilities. Whilst KLP highlights the need for principals to be a supportive guide within their school community, it falls short of claiming the importance of embracing the notion of love (Freire, 2005) or *aroha* (deep affection) for students, teachers and the communities in which they are located.

Tū Rangatira - Māori medium educational leadership

Two years after KLP, the Ministry of Education published *Tū Rangatira: Māori Medium Educational Leadership* (Ministry of Education, 2010). Karen Sewell, the Secretary for Education at the time, states in the foreword:

The Ministry and the Māori medium sector are committed to working with whānau to deliver an education system that focuses on raising the achievement of Māori learners. Tū Rangatira challenges tumuaki [principals] and senior leaders in Māori medium education to be visionary and inspirational so that Māori are able to enjoy education success as Māori.... It supports the realisation that Māori potential resides within Māori learners themselves. (Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 5)

In stark contrast to KLP, Tū Rangatira “breaks new ground in the field of educational leadership to promote cultural regeneration, kaupapa Māori philosophies, aspirations and valued learner outcomes” (Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 9). When considering the type of leadership required for educational reform in Aotearoa, knowing that the overwhelming

majority of Māori learners are in English-medium settings, it is important to acknowledge that the principles of Tū Rangatira may have much to offer leaders in English-medium contexts.

Tū Rangatira presents guidelines for three key aspects of leadership, drawn from the metaphor of the korowai. Fundamentally, the focus is on Māori learner success, or *ngā mokopuna*, and is represented by te aho tapu, which weaves the whenu and aho threads of the korowai together. As the whenu descends, Tū Rangatira outlines seven key roles of leadership: “*He Kaitiaki* (guardian); *He Kaiwhakarite* (manager); *He Kanohi Matara* (visionary); *He Kaiako* (teacher and learner); *He Kaimahi* (worker); *He Kaikōtuitui* (networker); and *He Kaiarataki* (advocate)” (Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 12).

As the oho weaves through the whenu, Tū Rangatira outlines key areas for leadership:

- *Mana Mokopuna* (placing the learner at the heart),
- *Mana Wairua* (spiritual and holistic well-being),
- *Mana Tangata* (recognising that relationships are critical to effective practice),
- *Mana Reo* (the preservation of te reo Māori),
- *Mana Tikanga* (Māori customs and protocols),
- *Mana Mātauranga Māori* (Māori discourses and knowledge), and
- *Mana-Ā-Kura* (the uniqueness of each kura). (Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 12)

The focus for Māori medium education has always been realisation of potential and requires teachers and leaders to create “vibrant learning environments that have the ability to unleash that potential and the success of learners as Māori and as citizens of the world” (Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 40). If we are to meet that challenge in English-medium settings, and give life to Ka Hikitia, then the question remains - are these understandings being incorporated into PLD for first-time principals?

The First-time Principals’ Programme

The First-time Principals’ Programme in Aotearoa ran from 2002 until 2016 and involved over 2,400 first-time principals across primary, intermediate and secondary sectors. According to a co-director of the programme, the First-time Principals’ Programme was “responsive to educational change... where mentoring was a key part... as it was about matching people in a relationship” (C. Donald, personal communication, December 12, 2016). The principals also participated in online learning focused on reading, discussion and reflection forums, as well as attending a number of residential. The online component

“promoted greater depth of reflection, inquiry and engagement amongst the first-time principals” (C. Donald, personal communication, December 12, 2016). The programme usually lasted for the first two years of a principalship.

The curriculum of the First-time Principals’ Programme focused on leadership capabilities and dimensions. The leadership capabilities were: applying relevant knowledge; solving complex problems; and building relational trust. The leadership dimensions were: establishing goals and expectations; resourcing strategically; ensuring quality teaching; leading teacher learning and development; ensuring an orderly and safe environment, and; creating educationally powerful connections. It is within this final dimension that the participants were encouraged to engage with Ka Hikitia. Each of the four principals in my Masters research completed this programme.

Summary

The role that first-time principals play in achieving educational reform is worthy of academic study as it has the potential to contribute to disrupting the status quo of Māori student underachievement. As referenced in the literature, reform is necessary and urgent if Māori learners are to enjoy and achieve education success as Māori.

This literature review has provided evidence of how critical transformative leadership has the potential to change the fabric of our schools and our society. The purpose of this research was to explore the leadership journeys of four first-time principals and unpack how these principals engage in practices that supported Māori students to pursue their potential in the hope of informing others who seek to do the same.

Chapter Two - Methodology and Methods

Waiho i te toipoto, kaua i te toiroa.

Let us keep close together, not far apart.

Introduction

The above whakataukī is located within the virtue of atawhai (Alsop & Kupenga, 2016, p. 75). It relates to my commitment to undertake research that builds caring relationships of trust and respect between the four principals and myself as a non-Māori researcher.

This research is firmly grounded in the framework of culturally responsive methodologies, which brings together both kaupapa Māori and critical theories (Berryman et al., 2013). It is imperative for me as a researcher that the methodologies chosen align closely to the educational communities within which I am working - leaders in English-medium secondary schools and the Māori students they serve. This research focuses on understanding how the practices of leaders bring about educational reform, thereby addressing the aspirations of Māori communities for their *tamariki* (children) and *mokopuna* (grandchildren). As such, within the *kōrero* (conversation) about the type of leadership required to bring about this reform, I aim to keep Māori students at the heart of every conversation.

As a more recent immigrant to Aotearoa, I am a *tauiwi* researcher. As such, I have a responsibility under the Treaty of Waitangi to contribute to making a difference for Māori students. I have an obligation as a Treaty partner to support Māori research (Bishop, 1997a). I need to understand the methodologies that incorporate Māori worldviews in order to “respect and support the revitalisation of Māori language, knowledge and culture by seeking to support and affirm the *mana motuhake* [independence, authority] of individuals and communities” (Woller, 2016, p. 55). Undertaking research that explores how these principals demonstrate critical leadership for educational reform will require me to work ‘for and with’ Māori, and not ‘on and about’ Māori (Macfarlane, 2013). It is for this reason that this research will also adhere to methodologies that underpin kaupapa Māori research to ensure that as a non-Māori researcher, I ‘do no harm’ and that Māori perspectives and approaches are privileged and honoured (Macfarlane, 2013).

Methodology

Kaupapa Māori theory and research

According to Tuhiwai Smith (2005), kaupapa Māori research can be defined as a “transformative project that is active in pursuit of social and institutional change, that makes space for indigenous knowledge, and that has a critical view of power relations and inequality” (p. 89). Therefore, it is appropriate for a research project concerned with exploring educational reform for Māori students to embrace Māori knowledge and aspirations, in honour of our Treaty partnership.

The evolution of kaupapa Māori provided “a space for thinking and researching differently” (Smith, 2012, p. 10) in direct response to the harmful research methodologies of the coloniser. A positional shift occurred for Māori - from seeing themselves as “passive victims of all research” to “activists engaging in a counterhegemonic struggle over research” (Tuhiwai Smith, 2005, p. 87). Today, research is no longer a tool only for the coloniser, rather a “potential tool for self-determination and development” (Tuhiwai Smith, 2005, p. 87).

Durie (2012) encourages kaupapa Māori researchers to draw more from the paradigm of *mātauranga Māori*, which is “an always evolving underlying body of knowledge that can guide practice and understanding” (p. 23). Durie (2012) states that the challenge lies in realising that “the values might be derived from long ago, but knowledge changes” and we need to “adapt to new solutions all the time” (p. 23). Durie (2012) suggests that embracing *mātauranga Māori* alongside kaupapa Māori will enable Māori “to live as citizens of the world” (p. 28). Furthermore, Royal (2012) states that considerations of both paradigms are vitally important to enable the creation of “strategies of empowerment” (p. 36) for Māori.

By going back beyond colonial Western research paradigms and frameworks, researchers can engage in the processes necessary to decolonise the research - “the challenge always is to demystify, to decolonize” (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012, p. 17). Furthermore, we engage in decolonising when we centre our concerns and worldviews and then come to know and understand theory and research from a Māori perspective (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012). Privileging Māori knowledge over Western knowledge enables me as a tauīwi researcher to become

aware that my worldview is not a universal truth and by prioritising a Māori worldview, I have a culturally safe way to begin to respectfully address the concerns of Māori.

Guidelines within kaupapa Māori research

This research will embrace widely acknowledged and practised guidelines for kaupapa Māori research. According to Cram (2001), attempting to retrieve space for Māori is hardly a new initiative, as it provides guidelines for explaining to non-Māori “what we have always been about” (p. 40). Cram (2001) expands upon the work of Tuhiwai Smith (2000) to present seven guidelines for the processes of kaupapa Māori research. The first guideline is *aroha ki te tangata* (a respect for people), which is essential for redefining the space between research participants. Fundamental to this redefinition is engagement in the process of *whakawhanaungatanga*, which is enabled by the guideline of *he kanohi kitea* (the seen face; becoming known through ongoing engagements). In order to develop relationships of trust, the guideline of *titiro, whakarongo... kōrero* (look, listen... speak) encourages researchers to listen and learn from a position of humility. The guideline of *manaaki ki te tangata* (collaboration and reciprocity) acknowledges that knowledge flows in both directions and new knowledge is co-created.

Cram’s (2001) next three guidelines highlight the importance of the cultural safety of research participants. The guideline of *kia tupato* can be literally translated as ‘be cautious’, however it speaks to the importance of maintaining relationships where power is shared and researchers are aware of their ‘insider/outsider’ status. Building on this notion of treading gently, is *kaua e takahia te mana o te tangata*, which urges researchers to not trample over the mana of people. The final guideline, *kaua e mahaki* urges researchers to not flaunt their knowledge, rather to ensure they share knowledge for the benefit of the entire community. This research embraced these guidelines and sought to engage in a “set of very human activities that reproduce particular social relations of power” (Tuhiwai Smith, 2005, p. 88) to enhance the interests of Māori.

The transformative power of kaupapa Māori enables researchers to engage in practices that are counter-hegemonic and to play an active role in decolonisation (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012; Pihama, 2005). When working for and with Māori, the aim of the research is to resist hierarchical structures of power (Berryman et al., 2013). As Tuhiwai Smith (2012) contends, the struggle for decolonisation can begin with ‘critical consciousness’, an “awakening from

the slumber of hegemony, and the realization that action has to occur” (p. 201). This research aimed to humanise and value Māori epistemologies so that the principals and I could draw upon these ways of knowing to unleash the creative spirit, enable an alternative vision and “fuel the dreams of alternative possibilities” (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012).

Critical theoretical research

Critical theoretical research actively advances the “project of decolonization” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 10). By focusing on indigenous principles and knowledge, guided by the emancipatory nature of critical theory, outcomes of research can be seen through a moral and humanising lens (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). In this way, critical theoretical research has the potential to demonstrate a commitment to the moral praxis of “self-determination, empowerment, healing, [and] love” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 11).

Tuhiwai Smith (2000) urges researchers, both indigenous and non-indigenous alike, to consider the following questions:

- What research do we want to carry out?
- Whom is that research for?
- What difference will it make?
- Who will carry out this research?
- How do we want the research to be done?
- How will we know it is a worthwhile piece of research?
- Who will own the research?
- Who will benefit? (p. 239)

Thinking deeply about these questions prior to undertaking this research has enabled me to adopt a counter-hegemonic approach, “where power relationships are reconstructed to make central the voices and experiences of those who have historically existed at the margins of public institutions” (Darder et al., 2009, p. 12). As a researcher, I have an obligation to fundamentally understand my own identity, which will enable me to “respectfully honor and support the Other” (Berryman et al., 2013, p. 27) as I participate alongside the principals in collaborative sense-making. In order to know and understand the Other, I need to challenge my assumptions and let my practice be informed by theory as I construct theories to inform my practice (Wink, 2011). Above all, I must form and maintain relationships with the principals that empower me to “listen, learn, reflect and act” (Wink, 2011, p. 21) as I engage in a cycle of learning, unlearning and relearning (Wink, 2011).

Finding my space within the research as tauwi

As a non-Māori researcher working for and with Māori, it has been crucial for me to explore and more deeply understand where and how I fit into the spaces between Māori and non-Māori. As tauwi, I already exist in what Webber (2009) calls ‘the borderlands’, which are “physically present whenever two or more cultures edge each other, where different peoples occupy the same territory and the space between them shrinks into intimacy” (p. 6). Webber (2009) sees potential within this space for discomfort, however, she suggests that once immersed, it reveals “the notion that you can never again see yourself as of only one coherent community or identity” (p. 6).

Woller (2013) refers to ‘setting the nets of research between two fishing grounds’, enabling researcher and participants to build and co-construct knowledge existing in the space between Māori and non-Māori. Within this space, researchers acknowledge and draw from both “the creative potential of mātauranga Māori and the knowledge that will assist researchers to safely cast their nets in the waters between both world views” (Woller, 2013, p. 291). As Smith (1992) states, kaupapa Māori research “advocates excellence within Māori culture as well as Pākehā culture. It is not an either/or choice” (p. 13). Within this space, research does not reject or exclude non-Māori culture as long as it still questions, challenges and critiques hegemony (Pihama et al., 2002).

Grounded in the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi of *whakapapa* (protection), *mihi whakatau* (participation) and *whanaungatanga* (partnership), Macfarlane (2013) offers another compelling and thought provoking *wero* (challenge) for those who wish to engage in effective research for and with Māori: “if whakapapa is protected through mihi whakatau, then we are able to participate with others, and they with us, in ways that are consolidated through whanaungatanga and in partnership” (p. 144). The *wero* comes in the form of realising that “it is necessary to acquiesce (to align) and to coalesce (to unify) via kaupapa Māori” (Macfarlane, 2013, p. 146). As I connect to the notions of alignment and unification, I have become more comfortable within truly bicultural research.

As a tauwi researcher, I relate closely to Tuhiwai Smith’s (2011) description of kaupapa Māori theory and research as being fluid: “It was what it was, it is what it is and it will be what it will be” (p. 10). As Dei (2011) suggests, research that embraces the legitimacy of indigenous knowledge requires researchers to rethink the spaces in which we work: “we not

only have to decolonize existing spaces but create new non-hierarchical spaces of knowing” (p. 3). In order to address the imbalances that exist in educational settings for Māori learners, my role as a researcher needs to contribute to new spaces that contest power and address the challenges of inequity via a critical approach (Dei, 2011).

Culturally responsive methodologies

According to Berryman et al. (2013), culturally responsive methodologies allow knowledge to be “co-created by the researcher and participants” (p. 3). This co-creation is achieved via reciprocity, dialogue and relationship-building, where “grounded practice leads to theory building” (Berryman et al., 2013, p. 7). Culturally responsive methodologies require researchers to engage in an “intensely introspective process”, whereby the process of unlearning and relearning what we previously knew about research enables “new liberating and humanizing alternatives” (Berryman et al., 2013, p. 16). Berryman et al. (2013) refer to this as the *responsive dialogic space* where new knowledge is co-created between researchers and participants (see Figure 7). Bringing their own identities, prior knowledge, cultural experiences and connections to the encounter, dialogic rituals of active and quiescent listening and learning result in new knowledge (Berryman et al., 2013). It is within the responsive dialogic space that I find a culturally safe space as tauiwi to undertake my research from a truly bicultural perspective.



Figure 7 The responsive dialogic space (Berryman et al., 2013, p. 22)

The double spiral, based on the *koru* (loop) design from the silver fern native to Aotearoa, represents a symmetrical pattern of change and the merge and flow of researcher and participant. At once passive and active, the outer spirals demonstrate the identity and

positioning of the researcher and participant. As the relationship between the researcher and participant deepens, via the process of active and quiescent listening and learning, the spirals come nearer (Berryman et al., 2013).

Whilst they maintain their original integrity, the researcher and participant interact in dynamic collaboration (Berryman et al., 2013). Within the swirling centre (see Figure 8) lies both the beginning and end of the research, as well as a commitment to the shared responsibility of the relationship continuing long past the time of the research. Berryman et al. (2013) refer to this as “the dynamic process and ever-changing definition of context within responsive dialogue” (p. 395).

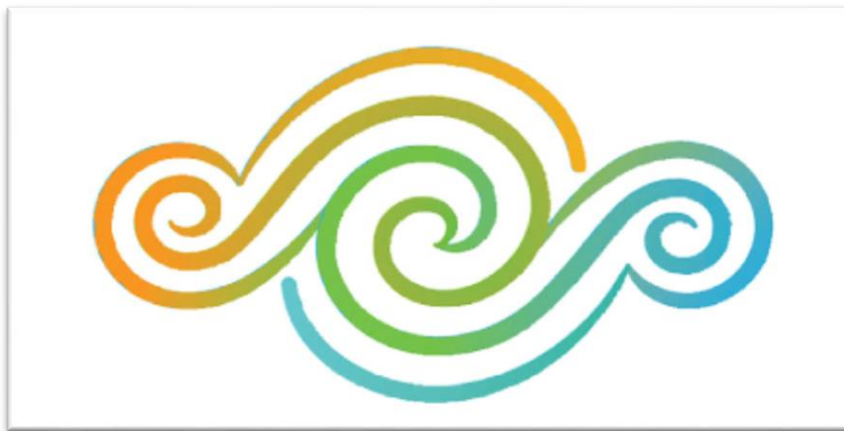


Figure 8 Research within the responsive dialogic space (Berryman et al., 2013, p. 395)

This research project will model culturally responsive methodologies in order to ensure that knowledge is not assumed by the researcher, but is co-created with the participants. It has been a deliberate choice to engage in methodologies that challenge the paradigms of traditional research that in the past have dehumanised and devalued research participants (Berryman et al., 2013). As the researcher, it will be imperative that I deeply understand the discourses within which I am located so that I honour the experiences and cultural understandings of the principals I engage with (Berryman et al., 2013). As I come to know the Other, I will aim to work with, not on, the participants to develop relationships focused on reciprocal, interdependent understandings of how leadership contributes to educational reform.

Insider / outsider

Within this research, I am both an insider and an outsider. As Tuhiwai Smith (1999) states, “insider researchers have to have ways of thinking critically about their processes, their relationships and the quality and richness of their data and analysis. So too do outsiders” (p. 137). Furthermore, Tuhiwai Smith (1999) suggests that both insider and outsider researchers need to be respectful, ethical, critical and reflexive. She highlights the need for insider researchers to be humble and recognise their membership within the community, albeit with differing roles and responsibilities.

Speaking from both an insider and outsider perspective, Eleteby (2013) poses the following questions when considering her desire to engage in balanced, mutually respectful research methodologies:

- How would I be able to respectfully and deeply enter into the world of the participants without being thoroughly self-conscious, self-aware, and self-reflective?
- How could I genuinely understand another unless I am fully aware of my subjectivity and how it colours my own interpretations? (p. 324)

These questions have shaped my approach to this research, in that I am aware of being both an insider and an outsider. I am an insider: in my role as kaitoro within Kia Eke Panuku schools; I work closely within my home region and the educational community therein; I have personal relationships with the participants; and I have worked alongside them as a teacher, leader and/or kaitoro in their secondary schools. I am also an outsider: I am not a principal; I am tauiwi, hoping to contribute to the field of educational reform for Māori students; and I bring my Australian upbringing and my experiences and worldviews from living in Aotearoa to this research. As outsiders, Burr (2015) suggests that we must deeply engage in critical reflection to unpack how we view and understand the world and those within it.

Furthermore, as Metge (1998) stresses, “before we venture to analyse the practices and motives of others, we must review our own” (p. 47). Becoming aware of my insider/outsider perspectives within the research enables me to focus on working alongside the participants with humility, which in turn increases my level of accountability to the research whānau. I have been fortunate that throughout this research I have had cultural advisors and mentors who have supported me as I work to ensure the cultural safety of every participant.

Methods

Qualitative research

We know the world through the stories that are told about it... Collective stories can form the basis of a social movement. Telling the stories of marginalized people can help create a public space requiring others to hear what they don't want to hear. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013a, p. 44)

Qualitative research is essentially about the use of words between individuals and groups to explore and understand meaning (Creswell, 2009). Qualitative research locates the observer in the natural world, where they interpret and make sense of “phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013b, p. 3). In this sense, when I ask open-ended questions of my research participants, I am essentially receiving a *koha* - a gift of their personal experiences - and I engage in the socially constructed nature of reality (Bishop & Glynn, 1999b). I build intimate, reciprocal relationships with my participants and I consistently seek to understand how their experience has been created and ascribed meaning (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013b).

In this thesis, I sought the perspectives of the principals in order to ‘know the world’ via their personal leadership stories. Naturally, this resulted in the gathering of multiple perspectives and realities, aligned to each participant’s specific, socially constructed setting. The qualitative data gathered within this research represents both an individual and collective understanding of the type of leadership required to achieve educational reform for Māori students in Aotearoa.

Grounded theory

As a method of qualitative inquiry, grounded theory provides a strategy whereby the ‘back and forth’ nature of analysis and data collection reciprocally informs and shapes the other as part of an iterative process (Charmaz, 2013). Grounded theoretical strategies encourage the researcher to continually ask analytical questions at each step within the data gathering process, thereby raising the abstract level of the analysis and intensifying its power (Charmaz, 2013). In this way, theory emerges from the stories told by the participants in an interactive, abductive manner.

This thesis focused on gathering data in the form of individual, semi-structured interviews and engaging in a thematic analysis of the emergent ideas related to the research questions

contained within the individual stories. A collaborative story was then created from patterns emerging from the collective voices of the first-time principals, ensuring that “meaning resides not in people or in texts, but between them” (Ellingson, 2013, p. 421).

Collaborative storying

Collaborative storying refers to the construction and development of a mutual understanding, achieved through voices engaging in spiralling discourse (Bishop, 1997b). Through the iterative process of acknowledging and deepening my understanding as both an insider and an outsider within this research, I have continually reflected on my place within and alongside the collective, actively blurring the boundaries between my personal and professional self in order to learn and grow (Glynn, 2013).

Another way of understanding this notion of a collective is described by Glynn (2013) as a ‘whānau-of-interest’. As a tauīwi researcher, I am committed to working within a whānau-of-interest and, as Glynn (2013) suggests, “seek inclusion on the basis of being prepared to work within the Māori-constituted practices and cultural understandings” (p. 47). My experiences as a researcher are therefore intertwined with the experiences of the participants so that we become “intimately linked” (Berryman et al., 2013, p. 12). As a whānau, we engage in whānau-like relationships with obligations and responsibilities towards upholding the well-being of each other, and work together to achieve change and reform for the Māori students we care deeply for.

To mitigate the danger of “merely listening, recording, and presenting” (Berryman, et al., 2013, p. 13) the stories of the principals, I have attempted to engage in a shared narrative inquiry space. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) describe this space as ‘walking in the midst of the stories’, whereby “we see ourselves as in the middle of a nested set of stories - ours and theirs” (p. 63). In this sense, we engage in a ‘three-dimensional narrative inquiry space’, concerned with temporality (past, present and future), the personal and the social (interaction), and the place (situation) of the research (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 50).

Furthermore, as a researcher committed to achieving educational reform for Māori students, I have connected to the notion of urgency for social change to address inequities, as described by Chase (2013): “the urgency of speaking, the urgency of being heard, the urgency of collective stories, and the urgency of public dialogue” (p. 68). In order to engage in truly

collaborative storying, there must be a balance between an urgent desire to influence an audience and what it means to truly listen in a humble manner. As Heshusius (1994) contends, this state of listening with humility will help me to “let go of all preoccupation with self and move into a state of complete attention” (p. 17). Heshusius (1994) describes the state of complete attention as enabling researchers to ‘merge’, to engage in ‘inactive activity’ and to experience ‘acts of dwelling’. This will be a new and challenging space for me as a novice researcher and I will be relying on the support of more expert others as I learn how to engage in this manner with the principals.

The principals

The four principals participating in this research are all located within the same Ministry of Education region. Three of the principals are male - two are Māori and one Pākehā. The fourth principal is female and Māori. They range between 40 and 55 years of age. To maintain anonymity, each participant was offered the opportunity to choose a pseudonym for the research project. Three participants chose their own pseudonyms whilst the fourth gave me permission to choose one for them. As the research unfolded, it became clear that ensuring anonymity might be difficult, as the principals may well be recognised from the unique contexts in which they have been described. The principals agreed that this did not pose a problem for them and were happy with the collaborative stories presented.

Timoti

Timoti is Māori - Ngāti Mahanga (Waikato) - and also has Polish and English ancestry. His first language is English but he is fluent in te reo Māori, which he learned as an adult. He is married with two children and loves spending time with them and especially watching them play sport. His passions include fishing, diving, movies and travelling and he stays fit by participating in triathlons and *waka ama* (traditional Māori outrigger canoes). An avid musician, Timoti has a passion for playing the drums, guitar and singing.

After he trained as a secondary teacher, Timoti decided to start a team-building company that branched into communication and management skills training. He ran this company for ten years before improving his te reo Māori skills in preparation for entrance into secondary teaching. His first position was teaching Science to students in years nine, ten and eleven at a Kura Kaupapa Māori. A couple of years later, Timoti became head of the te reo Māori

department at a large boys' school. He worked there for six years with additional responsibilities as a dean, hostel master and rugby coach, before transitioning to an all-boys special character college as their deputy principal for three years.

Timoti began his first principalship at a decile three co-educational English-medium secondary school in September 2015, where 55% of the students identified as Māori, and where he remains as principal today.

Taine

Taine is Māori, of Ngāti Kahungunu and Te Arawa (Rotorua - Matata) whakapapa. He is currently engaging in tertiary study to further improve his te reo Māori skills. Taine has a son in year thirteen living at home, two children at university, four grown up children from his first marriage and two mokopuna living in Australia. In his spare time, Taine enjoys hunting, fishing and diving and spending time at his whānau bach (small seaside holiday house). He and his wife spend time following their children's sports and travelling to Australia to see their daughters and grandchildren. He believes that their travels across Europe have helped to put New Zealand's short history into perspective.

Taine's employment history began in the freezing works, after which he trained as a primary school teacher in the early 1980s. After teaching for a couple of years, Taine decided to enter the police force. He rose through the ranks to become a Sergeant, staying with the force for fifteen years. He then ran a small charter fishing business before responding to a call for qualified teachers to return to the profession. Taine enrolled at university, completed the refresher qualification and returned to teaching, this time in a year seven to thirteen secondary school. He was hired whilst he was completing his final practicum and went on to become their deputy principal, staying at the school for twelve years.

Taine began his first principalship at a decile three all-boys special character college in September 2013, where 100% of the boys identified as Māori, and where he remains as principal today.

Keita

Keita is Māori, of Ngāpuhi (Northland) and Te Rarawa (Hokianga) whakapapa. She is fluent in a northern dialect of te reo Māori, first learned from her grandmother, with whom she was

fortunate to spend much of her childhood. Studying te reo Māori was not an option available to Keita during her schooling. As a young adult she began to relearn te reo Māori and now considers herself a lifelong learner. Keita's partner is also a teacher and they have four young children. He is fluent in an east coast dialect and they both speak their reo at home. Their children attend school within *reo rua* (bilingual) education contexts.

Most of Keita's spare time is spent with her whānau exploring local bush and beaches. She enjoys keeping fit by going to the gym and as a regular participant in school and community CACTUS (Combined Adolescent Challenge Training Unit Support) team challenges which culminate in a 33 km run with tractor tyres, poles and jerry cans. Other passions involve participating in and contributing to community and sector development such as local District Health Board promotions, well-being forums, multi-agency response teams, as well as local business, enterprise and Ministry of Education cross sector forums, both locally and nationally. Keita's employment history began as a youth tutor in the health sector for a year. She worked in four Auckland secondary schools as a teacher and middle leader before moving to Northland where she spent almost six years as the deputy principal of an area school.

Keita began her first principalship at a decile one, year seven to thirteen co-educational English-medium secondary school in 2010, where 83% of students identified as Māori, and where she remains as principal today.

Garrick

Garrick is fifth generation New Zealand Pākehā, with a mixture of French, German, Dutch, Scottish, Irish, and English ancestry. Garrick completed a Bachelor of Arts degree before embarking on a five-year overseas experience, working in a range of jobs and experiencing a wealth of cultural interactions with people from Europe, the Middle East, Asia and South America. During this time Garrick spent twelve months working underground in the gold mines of Kalgoorlie, Western Australia, as well as three months in the Arabian desert with Bedouins. Garrick met his British wife in Israel whilst they were co-workers on a building site and they now have two children. He enjoys a host of outdoor activities including surfing, boating, fishing and competing in surfboat regattas.

On returning to Aotearoa, Garrick trained as a secondary school teacher. Garrick learned te reo Māori language skills through Te Wānanga O Aotearoa and he also completed postgraduate study around educational leadership and business administration. His first teaching position was as a Social Studies and Geography teacher at a rural co-educational secondary school where he became head of department and dean. He then became the deputy principal of a year seven to thirteen college, where he worked for five years.

Garrick began his first principalship at a decile two co-educational year seven to thirteen English-medium secondary school in 2009, where 64% of students identified as Māori and where he remains as principal today.

Leading up to the research

Since 2004, I have worked alongside each of the principals engaging in my research, either as a secondary teacher, middle leader, deputy principal and/or kaitoro in our educational region of Aotearoa. As such, we have forged solid working relationships built on mutual trust and respect enabling us to continue our open and frank discussion, sharing of knowledge and collaborative sense-making.

I contacted the four principals directly to explain the nature of the research, including the estimated time they may need to commit, and invited each of them to participate. Our first point of contact was, where possible, *kanohi ki te kanohi* (face to face) or by email. To assist them in making their decision, I provided them with a formal letter of introduction, an information sheet about the project and a consent form for their perusal. These documents outlined the following:

- The rationale for the research and the questions being asked,
- Choices about how the information would be gathered and how and where interviews might take place,
- Choices about how the recorded interviews were to be used and stored,
- My undertaking to make every effort to maintain anonymity for all participants,
- The option to withdraw from the research, and
- My contact details and those of my supervisor.

The interviews and analysis

According to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2005), the interview process “enables participants... to discuss their interpretations of the world in which they live, and to express how they regard situations from their own point of view” (p. 349). The social reality in which the interviewee exists is privileged, as they are the only person who truly understands their own social reality (Burns, 2000). When interviews use open-ended questioning, the transcript produced then takes the form of a conversation (Burns, 2000). The participants in this research were offered a question guide in order to enable the conversation to focus on the topic. According to Burns (2000), “this permits greater flexibility... and permits a more valid response from the informant’s perception of reality.... It is the making public of private interpretations of reality” (p. 424).

The principals were invited to participate in an individual, semi-structured interview (Burns, 2000), taking approximately one hour. As the researcher, I remained flexible if the participants wished to engage in an interview for a longer or shorter period of time. Interview dates, times and venues were co-constructed and took place over a six-week period. Participants were asked three open-ended questions, however, the participants were free to respond in their own way and to take the conversation to the places they determined necessary.

Participants were asked to consider the following questions as first-time principals in Kia Eke Panuku schools:

- What do you understand about the guiding principles of Ka Hikitia?
- How have you supported Māori students to pursue their potential as Māori in your school?
- What do you understand about the type of leadership required for educational reform in Aotearoa?

Once each interview was complete, I transcribed our kōrero and then invited participants to verify and annotate their transcripts. The principals were given the opportunity to add any further thoughts in person, via google docs, email, phone or videoconference. Where appropriate, participants were invited to participate in a follow-up conversation in order to revisit ideas raised in the first interview and clarify our shared understanding. In this way,

new knowledge was co-constructed with the participants and not simply assumed by the researcher. It was my intention to collaboratively engage in sense-making around the common themes from the participants' responses, via opportunities for clarification (Bishop, 1997b). By engaging in collaborative storytelling, it was hoped that the research embraced the reciprocity of co-construction of meaning between researcher and participant (Lather, 1991).

Once the annotated transcription process was complete, a process of multiple readings and re-readings occurred. This enabled me to begin to make meaning of the individual stories, whilst providing the platform for consideration of the emergent themes across and between the stories.

Ethical considerations

All ethical considerations required by the University of Waikato ethics committee were followed during this research. Prior to giving informed consent, each principal was aware that his or her information, recordings, transcripts and personal details would only be shared between my supervisor and myself. The four principals gave informed consent to participate in the research. Once the interviews were completed, I had a conversation with each of them to ensure they were still happy for me to continue with the data analysis. While every effort was made to ensure confidentiality, it was understood and accepted by all involved that this could not be guaranteed.

It was my sincere intention to 'do no harm' to participants, however, as this research focused on personal stories, participants may have disclosed sensitive information during the course of the interview. When this occurred, participants had the choice for this to be either included or deleted from the recording and transcript. If at any point during the research participants had any concerns about me as a researcher, they were invited to contact my supervisor to discuss the matter confidentially. Participants were assured that at any point, they had the right to withdraw from the research with no disadvantage to themselves, their school, their communities or our professional or personal relationships.

I believe that my role as a kaitoro was complementary to my role as a researcher. However, as a kaitoro working as part of an external Ministry of Education contract, I worked across a number of schools and interacted with many teachers and leaders on a regular basis. For this reason, it was important to ensure that the recordings and transcripts remained confidential

and only shared between my supervisor, the individual participant and myself. I also assured the principals that their participation was completely voluntary. Whether they wished to participate or not, I ensured participants understood that it would not affect my work with them as kaitoro, or in any other way.

Summary

In this chapter I have discussed the relevance of embracing culturally responsive methodologies within the research in order to privilege the co-creation of knowledge. By also making connections to both kaupapa Māori and critical research, I have provided the theoretical underpinnings of the research design and processes. By prioritising the acts of listening and learning as the foundation for the interviews, I was able to maintain and hopefully enhance the mana of the four principals. The following chapter presents the key findings from the individual stories and provides the platform for the collaborative story to emerge.

Chapter Three - Findings

Ko te kai a ngā rangatira he kōrero.

The food of chiefs is dialogue.

Introduction

The above whakataukī is located within the virtue of mātauranga (Alsop & Kupenga, 2016, p. 41). After each of the principals willingly shared their journeys, I became acutely aware of the expertise and proficiency of the four principals as *rangatira* (chief; one held in high esteem). I hoped to honour their voices and the experiences they shared with me.

This research has focused on exploring the leadership journeys of four first-time principals. The principals were asked to consider and respond to a number of research questions:

- What do you understand about the guiding principles of Ka Hikitia?
- How have you supported Māori students to pursue their potential as Māori in your school?
- What do you understand about the type of leadership required for educational reform in Aotearoa?

In order to more deeply understand the collaborative story that emerged from the principals, I have presented each story individually and in order of the length of time they have spent in their first-time principalship. This chapter presents the research findings in relation to the above questions.

Gathering the principal voices

Each of the principals interviewed have had extensive experience within the education system of Aotearoa. They have all been teachers, middle leaders, senior leaders and now first-time principals. Each of the principals were involved in Phase 5 of Te Kotahitanga, either as a deputy principal or principal and at the time of the research, they were leading the Kia Eke Panuku initiative in their schools. Principals were interviewed separately through the asking of open-ended questions. Throughout our kōrero, other questions emerged from

both the principals and myself and these were accepted and included in our conversations. I will now present in order, the individual stories of Timoti, Taine, Keita and Garrick.

Timoti

Our kōrero began with the telling of a story about Timoti's recent presentation at the New Zealand Post Primary Teachers' Association / Te Wehengarua conference:

I was talking about my leadership and that it's important that leadership is relational. If research shows us that culturally responsive and relational pedagogies work for Māori kids and not surprisingly for all kids, then it also works with staff. If I want to encourage them to be doing that in their classrooms, then I have to be modelling that with them in my relationships and the way I operate with them.

Timoti drew a clear distinction between leaders who acted like 'superheroes' and leaders who remained learners themselves, using evidence to inform their decisions:

It's not about personalities. I know there have been some principals who have gone in and through sheer force of their personalities and will have turned the school around, but when they leave things don't go so well because it was all reliant on that person, which is a disempowerment model. It disempowers everyone around the principal if the principal's the superhero. It's not sustainable. For leadership to be effective in educational reform, it has to be a collaborative and shared approach as opposed to the traditional autocrat. A leader has to be a learner. For learning institutes to be truly learning institutions, everybody's got to be learning in the institution. Leadership that's going to make a difference in Aotearoa needs to be about processes and systems that we can put in place that use evidence to inform what we need to look at and what we need to do.

The concept of leaders as learners was extended to include his staff as he discussed how they actively engaged in kōrero to unpack the importance of ako:

We ran an activity with the teachers - 'How do we know this place is a learning institute?' and someone jokingly said, 'There's a sign at the gate that says school'. And then they generated ideas about the students and the results they were getting and what advances they were making. And then somebody said, 'Because we do

professional learning. It's not just the students who are learners, it's we as teachers who are learners' [and] as a leader, I'm a learner. Ako, that's everything. All of those challenging situations that I have, whether it's with kids or teachers or community, it's always a potential opportunity for me to learn.

Throughout our kōrero, Timoti talked about creating safe contexts for learning where his staff felt empowered to take risks (Wink, 2011). He recognised the importance of being willing to make mistakes in order to further his own learning journey:

At the Wehengarua conference I stood up and I was telling a joke and I got mixed up and so I segued cleverly into the importance of making mistakes and how I'd screwed up and that it's really important for me as a leader to be OK with making mistakes and model making mistakes, because if people are not comfortable with that, if they're too scared, then change won't occur. I think a key part is being willing to try things, be experimental.

Timoti referred to a discussion paper (Education Council, 2015) about the types of conditions required to build the capabilities of leaders within Kāhui Ako. He went on to talk about the importance of *mahi tahi*, the work we do as one:

The type of leaders we need now - leaders who are tolerant of ambiguity and confident in dealing with uncertainty. We're clear about the vision, but we don't necessarily know how we're going to get there. We're going to work together, try stuff, take feedback based on the evidence and make changes as appropriate. The kind of leaders who are going to make the changes we need in our educational institutions need to be comfortable with that way of operating. It's impossible for any one person to have all the answers - it's much more important that we focus on ourselves as learners and promote that we're all on the journey together.

The Leadership BES (Robinson et. al, 2009) states “trust is critical in contexts where the success of one person’s efforts is dependent on the contribution of others” (p. 183). Timoti pinpointed the impact of this research on his leadership approach:

Building relational trust is critical; actually caring about people, having high regard and valuing what they have to bring, even people who peeve me off, you know?

They've got value for me, so it's important that I respect them. Competence is important in relational trust - I have to be able to do my job and follow through; otherwise people lose respect very quickly.

During our kōrero, we discussed the challenges around dealing with members of staff who were not quite meeting the requirements for registration and how leaders could enhance and support the potential of both teachers and students:

The principal who does nothing risks undermining respect from staff. But the principal who does the appropriate thing, to try and support somebody who is not doing the best they can because it's impacting on student learning, ultimately will gain trust.

Timoti recognised that effective relationships are built on respect, trust and honesty and he referred to his reliance on mentors and colleagues to assist him as he learns:

I've got some really strong connections with other principals in the area and I've fostered a position that we're all working together for the benefit of the kids. It's not about, 'I'm trying to build my roll at the expense of your roll'. I have good relationships with all of the local principals. I go out of my way to build those. On the first day of term I went to the pōwhiri [formal cultural ritual of encounter] for a principal colleague who had been appointed to the role of Director of Education for the region. I spoke on behalf of us educators and acknowledged him as my tuakana. It was an honour for me to support him, but it was also important for me to foster our strong relationship in his new role. Educationally powerful connections are important.

At the time of our kōrero, Timoti had almost completed the first year of his principalship. He listed five key people whom he considered mentors, one of which was a formal mentor through the First-time Principals' Programme:

I really value the relationship that I have with people like them because it's based on honesty and integrity and they're really supportive. I know that I can ask them for support and I'll get it. I'm lucky in that regard. I'm quick to jump on the phone when I've got a query, or send an email. Some people talk about being lonely at the top. I

think that's a choice. It doesn't have to be - it's only lonely at the top if you isolate yourself and don't reach out. I'm very conscious of building strong relationships with key stakeholders so it makes my job easier.

By embracing reciprocity of teaching and learning, Timoti gained a clearer picture of what he knew in relation to others, as he engaged in conscientisation (Freire, 1972). Timoti articulated some of the challenges he had faced:

The word courage is important. I've dealt with some difficult situations in the short time that I've been principal. There are situations where I've been dealing with staff members who maybe had done some things that had been questionable. You've got to have courage to front it and do the right thing. And doing the right thing is fronting it, but I feel confident and comfortable doing that because once again I get in touch with the School Trustees Association and get advice from the HR [Human Resources] consultant and so far because I've followed a process, people have been responsive to that.

Whilst engaging in challenging situations, Timoti further developed his capacity to 'name' (Freire & Macedo, 1987) and unpack notions of power and privilege:

When people are emotional, they'll say things that reflect their reality but it doesn't necessarily reflect my reality or other people's realities. And so by engaging with them and talking about it, I get to understand that reality and it gives me an opportunity to challenge a little bit too, in a gentle kind of way.

As we discussed the guiding principles of Ka Hikitia, Timoti made links to the Treaty of Waitangi and the importance of the preservation of te reo Māori within English-medium schooling:

The Treaty is our founding document and I'm conscious that if my son's doing te reo [Māori] at school, he's getting four hours out of 25 in te reo and the other 21 are in English. Where's the equity in that? I would love for the Minister to have the courage to say, 'Righto, we're going to make te reo compulsory'. Some people will get their backs up and not do it because they're forced to, but there will be a whole lot of Pākehā people who are behind that and think, 'Absolutely'. My feeling is that

more and more Pākehā people are becoming comfortable with what it actually might mean to address some of the inequities. And that's great.

Timoti talked about one way he had actively asserted the value of te ao Māori and supported staff in their journey towards becoming bicultural:

I am conscious that many teachers will give themselves a low rating on how they're doing with biculturalism and the Treaty. I got a Pākehā guy to come in and do a session, 'What does it mean to be Pākehā and meeting our Treaty obligations?' [It was] so powerful to have an informed and eloquent Pākehā person share his perspective in a mana enhancing way. A number of staff commented about how useful they found this session. There's a real willingness among many Pākehā to examine the issues and explore what they can do to be a part of the redress of injustice. It's about partnership and not just equal opportunity but equitable outcomes.

When considering the guiding principle of Māori potential within Ka Hikitia, Timoti's thoughts aligned with Durie's (2001) vision for excellent outcomes for Māori:

Māori potential approach - for me that's, 'The cup's half full' and 'What's possible?' 'What do we need to do with these kids, not just to get their NCEA but to actually set them up for a decent life?' Teaching kids how to run their own businesses has real potential because education is a key to unlocking the world. What are the skills [and] understandings you need? How do you create your own job?' I think about those things in terms of Māori potential.

Ka Hikitia (Ministry of Education, 2013) urges schools to deeply consider how they recognise and validate Māori identity, language and culture as “an asset and a foundation of knowledge on which to build and celebrate learning and success” (p. 17). Timoti offered an example of how they'd provided a culturally authentic learning context for their Māori students to learn as Māori, whilst recognising the importance of simultaneously growing a culture within the school that valued these contexts as something more than 'soft' options:

Identity, language and culture count absolutely. In order for us to make education relevant, that's the key. Dr Jan Robertson spoke at the Education Council hui

[meeting] for Community of Learning leadership down in Wellington and she talked about how the education system privileges colonial knowledge. For a Pākehā person to be saying that to a predominantly Pākehā audience is very powerful. We've got some kids who are struggling with NCEA at the moment and we're putting a programme together where they can prepare and serve kai on the marae [traditional Māori meeting grounds], which is something they do, they know. It's an authentic skill they have, so why don't we acknowledge it? Some would say, 'Oh yeah, well they're just soft credits, because it's not science or maths'. No, no, you've got to have people who can run the marae. You've got to have people who can jump in the kitchen and know how it works - it's acknowledging that those things are important to us.

When addressing the question of how he'd supported Māori students to pursue their potential as Māori, Timoti focused on the importance of valuing te reo Māori:

One of the things that I've done is given one of our Māori teachers an HOD [head of department] role and a management unit to improve the outcomes for the te reo department and she's working with an advisor. I really want to push te reo as a strong option academically at school. I make sure that I speak te reo - every formal occasion I'll start with some te reo. At assembly we start and finish with karakia [prayer or blessing] and a hymn as well. They're things that are visible and mean that Māori kids go, 'Yep, that's me, that's who I am, and I'm being acknowledged'. I'm also conscious of speaking Māori with our teachers who can speak Māori. It keeps our language alive and it's also good for other staff members to hear us speaking Māori - to remind them of its specialness and that it is a living language.

A tuakana-teina mentoring programme for students, where student voice was used to make informed decisions as a collective, was another initiative Timoti spoke about:

We've just started a programme this term called 'Hāpai' - to raise or lift those students who are struggling, whether they are Māori or Pākehā, but a significant number of them are Māori. I've asked for volunteers from Year 11, 12 and 13 who are doing well, and they're going to be working with the kids who are struggling. My hope is that it will make a difference and get those kids who are struggling over the

line. It's important to have those relationships with the kids and a really strong focus on student voice when we're considering what's working and what's not.

Timoti recognised the importance of embedding pedagogical change within the school, whilst also encouraging his staff to engage in further learning about tikanga and te reo Māori:

We're involved in Kia Eke Panuku so the push for culturally responsive and relational pedagogy and focusing on Māori achievement is important. Our data is disaggregated by ethnicity and staff are asked to report on Māori achievement. There are staff that are doing the Te Wānanga o Aotearoa programme about tikanga. I'm supportive of those kinds of things.

Fostering student leadership was another way their school encouraged Māori students to pursue their potential:

Our Head Boy and Head Girl are Māori. That's not why I chose them, but they happened to be the best candidates. Our Head Girl likes kapa haka and te reo and she is doing level 3 Biology and wants to become a teacher, which I'm encouraging her to do. I've said to her, 'Make sure you do some science in your degree because you're much more valuable if you've got a science as well as te reo and Māori Performing Arts. It will be much easier for you to get a job and you'll be able to be a great role model for other Māori kids'.

As a closing thought, Timoti highlighted what's most important to him as a leader:

It's important for me to have good relationships with the kids. I'll try to get out on the gate and be around at lunchtimes, or break times talking to kids. I've had a couple of kids say to me, 'You're a different principal, I've never had a principal come and talk to me'. Yesterday in our professional learning session somebody was talking about the importance of connectedness. I agreed and reflected to the staff that when I come into their classrooms, it's not about checking up on the staff and students, it's what I do to stay connected. I get to physically nudge up against kids, put my arm around them, shake their hand, give them a fist pump or high five and that's really grounding for me. When I'm feeling stressed with the pressures of leadership, connecting with

our ākongā helps me centre and come back to what's important - the students and their success.

Throughout our kōrero, Timoti articulated the importance of building effective relationships with students, staff and his educational community. He actively prioritised the promise contained within the Treaty of Waitangi as our founding document - a bicultural partnership where all parties benefit. He focused on the importance of te reo Māori and valuing tikanga throughout the school as a vehicle to assist his staff - in particular his Pākehā staff - to develop a deeper connection to their role in helping Māori students realise their potential as Māori.

Taine

Our kōrero began with Taine sharing how his thoughts about leadership were based on his experiences prior to becoming a principal. As a young boy playing representative sport he learned about teamwork and getting on with others - being a team player. Taine did not complete his seventh form, describing himself as a “bit disengaged by that stage”. His experiences in the freezing works and the police force contributed to where Taine finds himself today:

That was really cool, because that helped me get on with people I'd never mixed with in my life before. You know, because my parents were both teachers and I'd sort of been in the A class [top academic class] so I hadn't rubbed shoulders with [other Māori people] except for my own relations, so that was really cool to get that sort of background. The police gave me a lot of the leadership things, but it was through experience, it wasn't through theorising or anything like that, it was just, 'This is what you do'.

When Taine became a deputy principal and head of middle school (responsible for students in years seven to nine, or 12 to 14 years of age), he engaged in a local initiative and began to theorise about leadership:

We had a cluster of schools looking at raising literacy and numeracy. I was the lead facilitator because the principal passed it down to me. That was the start of my theory side of education. It was purely around teacher practice. It wasn't all the

other things that needed to be in place. So consequently there were some minor successes and some ground made in some areas but in other areas it fell over because there wasn't that leadership focus, sustainability, growth to make sure that it carried on. A lot of the things that we started in those days are still part of [the school] today and they fitted in very well when we joined Te Kotahitanga.

Becoming involved in Te Kotahitanga as a Phase 5 school gave Taine a further opportunity to participate in and lead PLD:

Te Kotahitanga came along and I was the lead facilitator. Those original hui we had were fantastic, bringing a group of people together who were looking at what needed to be done to help Māori achievement and having Russell Bishop, Mere Berryman and Robbie. I call it indoctrinating us. It was all fantastic and having the texts [Culture Speaks] along with it.

Taine described the connections to his learning in Te Kotahitanga building on attributes he'd developed in previous roles:

It was easy to fit into [the Te Kotahitanga] mould, because of where I'd been before and so a lot of the attributes they were calling upon were attributes that I was sort of doing to a certain extent. I changed my behaviour quite a bit as well. I became a lot more empathetic because as a DP, if something happened it needed to be sorted out and there was more than one side of the story. While I was in the police, I was one of the people that didn't just get all gung ho [over zealous] and go and arrest people. I'd talk to people, which was a little bit different. Because that was just my personality, but it helped me have good relationships with people, even when I'd arrested them. So at that time [for our school] there was a bit of, 'What are we doing?' and then [our new principal] started.

The new principal Taine referred to was Garrick, one of the other participants in this research. Together, they recognised the need to do things differently as a result of their involvement in Te Kotahitanga:

I was part of the facilitation team for introducing [restorative practices] into the school. That helped build on the learning that I'd had about change management

with Te Kotahitanga. [It's about] sustainability, always being learners, not just doing it by ourselves. Including whānau, staff and student voice became a big part of what drove us, making sure that things carried on.

Taine believed his prior learning and experiences were fundamental to the Board of Trustees' decision to employ him as their principal in his current school:

I threw my hat in the ring and then I pulled it out and then a few months later the commissioner of the school at the time gave me a call and said that they wanted to interview me down in Wellington. They talked me into taking the job. I said what I'd been doing over the last ten or so years, what I'd been involved in with education. They went away and talked about it and said, 'You can have the job'. And it was all because of [the cluster of schools initiative], Te Kotahitanga, restorative practice, which were the things that they were looking for. It was about making sure the gains the commissioner had started were carried on with integrity and [weren't] diminished.

Taine talked about the importance of relying on the expertise of those around him to strengthen collaborative leadership:

I fall short in some areas - I don't speak te reo fluently. It's good to have people that can help out in that area, making sure that those bases are covered. That's just part of what they do, part of making [our school] work. The relationships I have with them make it easier for them to say, 'We'll do that and you'll do that'. That division of expertise is the deciding point about who does what, as opposed to, 'He's the boss, he needs to be doing that', or 'He needs to be out the front'. Joint responsibility, very much a distributed leadership style.

Building cultural relationships based on mutual trust and respect have enabled Taine to advance the kaupapa of the school's vision:

I've developed over the years an ability to not jump in and micro-manage things. If I ask somebody to do something I'll let them do it. I might say, 'You'll just need to be aware of this, this and this' and then I'll let them go ahead. I find that people respond better that way and they go ahead and do it. And it may not be exactly what

you were expecting to happen, but if you get a good result, or the same result then that's all good. If it doesn't quite measure up, then you can have a quiet conversation, 'How could we do better next time?' And I find that works really, really well. People take the initiative a lot more. At a senior leadership team meeting I say, 'We've got this thing coming up, who's going to put their hand up for it?' and people just do it. They'll say, 'I'll organise that' and I'll let them go ahead and do it. If you don't give it to them in the first instance, then they'll sit back and not put themselves forward. So I share the load quite a lot.

By his own admission, Taine's school had journeyed over rocky roads in the past, with multiple principals and external issues threatening to close the school. At the time of our kōrero, Taine had been principal for almost three years - the steadiest principal since 1988:

I think [the school] appreciates the consistency. I'm a very consistent person. I think I'm pretty fair about how I deal with things and outwardly, I'm quite calm in situations. I mightn't be inwardly, but I give off a calmness. Well, this is what people tell me and so they trust that I'm there to do the right job.

Before Taine's arrival, the school adopted an initiative called 'Big Picture', originally from the United States and now throughout the world, where individual learning programmes are personalised and based around the pursuit of student interests, with assessments occurring in front of authentic audiences, including whānau. Taine outlined how it worked:

Our version of it is 'Tōku Moemoeā' [my dream]. And it's about the boys following their vocational pathway. At year nine they don't necessarily know what that is, so it's about encouraging them to do projects around things they like doing, or they're interested in, and then developing on that further. By the time they get to year eleven, they've got an idea about, 'Hey, I like doing this'. It might be art, it might be graphic design, or whatever. We're encouraging them to make their own pathway. We have a very flexible timetable. For Māori boys, they just like working on things and sometimes the individual learning plans, they'll do it in pairs or in threes. It also encourages the teachers to actually sit down and conference with the kids.

Taine acknowledged there was still work to be done to achieve their overall aims:

There's some tension between NCEA and inquiry learning in its purest form. I would love to be able to just follow an inquiry learning pathway right through to year thirteen, investigating things, going outside the box and not having to comply with NCEA or just do their work so that they can pass standards. I've got a gut feeling, and I know the theorists say if they are totally inquiry learning they will still learn the achievement objectives that others learn, but they will have learnt them through a much stronger format of learning. I've already signalled to the Board of Trustees that's where I'd like to look at going.

Becoming the principal of a special character school influenced Taine's leadership approach and he talked about the importance of building a positive culture in the school while also being seen within his Māori community:

It made me open my eyes actually for what differences were out there. As a Māori boarding school, there's quite a lot of discipline already - they go to chapel every morning, they stand up to do a hymn and everyone sings. And it's just taken for granted. It's a tuakana-teina process, where the seniors have been brought up with it so they're belting it out, the juniors see that and think, 'That's a cool thing to do'. They don't get embarrassed by it [because] there's that whole culture that's passed on through the ranks. Being in a leadership role I have to mix with a lot of different people and that's all it is. I just have to be seen at places and talk to people. I have to be seen on the marae and talk to the kaumātua. I have to be seen at events and talk to the parents. And that's the same as any school, but in particular for me the marae is really important - the elders are always supportive. But they do expect a bit of payback [reciprocity] just in acknowledging them and talking to them. That's a responsibility that comes with leadership.

Taine talked about the importance of building powerful connections with their wider educational community:

We've only got a small staff, so when we have a change management team, it's the whole staff, they do everything. You have to have a lot of passion for the school because it can be very draining of your time. There's not enough people to be managers of all the sports teams, so they do that. There's a lot of driving during the week. We have boys going to Trades Academy at [the local Institute of Technology].

Because we are small, and the boys are encouraged to take whatever they want to take, we have relationships with everybody, whoever wants to have a relationship with us, but also having that strong relationship with the local marae, with local kaumātua is really positive.

At the end of our kōrero, Taine reiterated how his view of leadership was based on a combination of practical experience and theoretical knowledge:

So as far as the theory goes, I don't go back to it very often. I live it. Being a Sergeant in the police was good, [learning] how to manage staff. I'm quite a practical person, I'm not a big ideas person, that's not me at all. If there's a job to be done I'll get on and find the best way to get it done, [the] cycle of continual improvement, that's really important.

Taine articulated the contribution his prior knowledge and experiences have had on his leadership style. He stressed the importance of building relationships with kaumātua on the marae in order to remain connected to te ao Māori. Taine promoted the benefits of collaborative leadership where they worked as an educational whānau to support their students to thrive in their inquiry-learning model.

Keita

Our kōrero took place in a meeting room adjoining Keita's senior leadership office. Keita and her team made a deliberate decision to share an open office space when their administration block was refurbished a few years ago. Her desk is alongside those of her senior leadership team and as Keita expressed:

Even when you're not meeting as a team, you're kind of absorbing everything through osmosis, it's kind of just happening and you're picking up on things, learning from each other constantly.

During the kōrero, we heard singing coming from next door and Keita explained community members were recording their music for a collaborative project. We talked about how the school had become a hub of learning for the wider community and Keita expressed the importance of brokering relationships across the community, ensuring the school was always available for community use.

Keita's leadership has been recognised with a Sir Peter Blake Leadership Award. When asked direct questions about her leadership journey, Keita's responses demonstrated *māhaki* (humility) - she listened deeply, gave others credit and sought to add value to the research questions. To encourage Keita to offer examples of her unique leadership practice within the school, I referred to the whakataukī - *Kaore te kūmara e kōrero mō tōna ake reka* (The sweet potato does not talk of its sweetness). Keita then expressed her ideas about transformative leadership:

I think transformative leadership is effective in the sense that it does seek social justice and equity and I think it's really important to bring about change for our rangatahi Māori but also focusing on the common good as well as individual accountability. If we're going to bring about equity in opportunity and outcomes for Māori then those principles need to be the basis of that and also having agency and a strong moral purpose to bring that about. To keep going, whatever challenge arises, as they do.

At the time of the interview, Keita was in the sixth year of her first-time principalship and she reflected on her journey to date:

I think it's more challenging for me now. When I first started there was a sense of urgency in the sense that here in the kura we were failing our Māori students. And we, I mean our leaders and teachers, had a low expectation for our learners and there was a real culture of failure and deficit thinking and theorising within the kura. There certainly was a really low expectation, so being able to raise the bar has certainly transformed everything we do. A lot of success has happened but we still have a long way to go and six years in we've had a range of different challenges, yes.

From the Leadership BES we know that leaders who remain deeply connected to the teaching and learning within their school have a positive impact on student success (Robinson et al., 2009). At the start of her principalship, Keita's school had just begun their journey as a Phase 5 Te Kotahitanga school. Part of embedding culturally responsive and relational pedagogies across the school began with an inquiry process:

One of the things we did was really look, inquire into our school [using] - the good old AREA [attendance, retention, engagement and achievement] data - and looked at

our current situation. We used an action research process and worked as a staff to co-construct our next steps. It was a good opportunity to be able to look at the challenges ahead, to ensure success for our Māori [students] as Māori and to co-construct that shared vision, shared goals; an action plan of what we needed to do to move forward. I think one of the key areas that worked here is that we co-constructed some guidelines around how we teach and learn at the kura. Certainly that was built off the Effective Teaching Profile and our learning through Te Kotahitanga, but it's helped us ensure consistent practice - we've got a consistent set of guidelines that we've all bought into and then negotiated. But also it's sustainable, because Te Kotahitanga didn't continue and Kia Eke Panuku is also not continuing. It's meant that we've been able to sustain those key elements and carry on.

As they embedded their shared vision for the future, Keita recognised a small number of staff were still resistant to change:

I think a number of people have jumped off the waka⁴, or who've had to exit for whatever reason, for different reasons. And within a small group of the teaching staff there certainly is that dissonance and resistance, however the majority are on the waka. We've got the critical mass - the support staff, students and whānau, from the evidence we have, are clearly engaged - and it feels like we're in that zone of proximal development. We just need to step up a little bit, not with the critical mass, but certainly there's still a bit more resistance that we need to work with to really spread right across the kura.

I asked Keita how she engaged with staff who might be resistant to the kind of reform they wanted for their Māori students:

[We] try to engage with a moral purpose around what it is we're trying to achieve. It's really difficult if there's a mismatch in terms of, perhaps, not being here for those kinds of reasons. I still believe it's like with our learners in the class - always keep finding a different way to engage and re-engage everyone - providing support, and also moving into the next stage if we need to as well for the kids at the end of the day.

⁴ A waka is a traditional Māori canoe used for voyages. Waka can also be considered a metaphor for symbolising a shared vision or voyage, as in the whakataukī: *He waka eke noa* - a vehicle upon which everyone may embark.

I think that's probably what part of this is about, that we've had to go there for a number of staff and so there's probably a bit of mistrust and fear that we need to work with and work alongside. It's that potential focus, rather than trying to target and remedy deficit, to bring everyone on board so that we can all be on the waka and achieve better outcomes and more success for our rangatahi.

Building collaborative relationships across multiple levels with staff, community, whānau and students was highly valued by Keita:

Making those connections, collaborating, I think that's really important as opposed to a top down approach. It's building leadership in others as well, distributed leadership. I think Te Kotahitanga really helped with that in terms of co-constructing and creating different levels across middle and senior leadership.

Keita expanded on the notion of creating authentic learning contexts for their Māori learners:

Staff meetings are focused around review and inquiry. That's been really helpful having that process in place because the staff have been able to discover for themselves what the issues are and what is best practice and then coming up with that plan together really brings [about] ownership. As opposed to me, top down, saying, 'This is what needs to happen' - that process would have been a lot slower, less buy-in.

When asked how she'd supported Māori students to succeed as Māori, Keita talked about the vision of Ka Hikitia and the work of Sir Mason Durie:

To live as Māori - that's really important for our students, just to be able to see themselves within the kura, within the curriculum, to be validated, to feel valued and to be able to bring in who they are as part of the learning as well. That's really helped with engagement and has informed a lot of the curriculum review around the kura. To make sure we've got meaningful, relevant learning that's happening as well. Yes, and just responding to student voice and whānau voice. We've got quite a bit of whānau voice around curriculum as well which has been really useful.

Fostering healthy and balanced student well-being was of fundamental importance for Keita. Sadly, during her tenure as a first-time principal, Keita had to deal with multiple crises of

youth suicide. These tragic losses hit her community hard, however the events strengthened their resolve to do everything they possibly could to avoid these tragedies occurring in the future. In a recent report by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), New Zealand was found to have the highest rate of adolescent suicide (15.6 per 100,000 of youth aged 15-19) across 37 OECD and European Union countries (UNICEF, 2017, p. 22). Like many communities across Aotearoa, Keita and her educational whānau now have a renewed and more deliberate focus on empowering rangatahi Māori to experience mauri ora:

I think student well-being is still really, really on top [the priority] and obviously we want our young people to achieve their potential and to have the highest aspirations and to make sure that we're putting everything in place that they can pathway straight on to that. And thinking more about how we can contribute around student well-being so that they are better equipped to do that, be more resilient and to have that confidence, building protective factors such as strengthening identity, hope and optimism for the future - that's really on top at the moment.

A number of years ago, Keita's school began learning conferences with whānau to strengthen how students, teachers and leaders communicate success with whānau. She articulated the importance of ako:

I'm seeing that happening a lot more with parents being able to share and having that two-way process, creating those partnerships. And with students, it's variable across the school, but there's more of that. Teachers as learners, learners as teachers, students as teachers. So that's really encouraging and probably just the change in the culture of the school; you come in and you can feel that whānau atmosphere. I think that's been really important. Establishing our school values - manaakitanga [kindness and support], whanaungatanga [familial relationships] - those core values have been really important for our rangatahi to be able to live as who they are, to be who they are in the kura.

When discussing the notion of developing productive partnerships that honour the intent of the Treaty of Waitangi, Keita expressed the following:

I guess that lays out our relationships within the kura and our obligations in terms of ensuring success. Partnerships between the Ministry, the kura whānau. Ngāti

Kahungunu released an educational strategy a few years back so we've adopted the Ngāti Kahungunu strategic plan. It will be interesting to see as we move forward what we can do further because we're open and willing and able.

The school created the Kōkiri Tau Leadership Change Team to drive and lead important initiatives across the school. Keita recognised the importance of key appointments and acknowledged the potential leadership of others:

We have a wonderful beginning teacher that we've appointed; he's one of our change team. We've got a vision for te reo Māori to be compulsory throughout - it's in [years] seven and eight but we want to run it through. It's about staffing and now that we have him and his leadership we'll be able to realise that vision. He has a lot to bring to the table. I think just providing opportunities where people across the kura can lead in areas that they are passionate about where they're able to build on their strengths in a context where it's safe, evidence-informed, co-constructed. So we all bring our shared leadership to the table. I'm facilitating the process, participating as a learner in that process.

I asked Keita about what she's most proud of in terms of supporting Māori students to pursue their potential as Māori, as well as her challenges and greatest learnings:

That's another big question. I think building a culture of success has been really important because I talked about the cloud of low expectation. [We] consistently reinforce potential and how we know their potential is limitless. Encouraging them and providing everything we can so that they can achieve their aspirations and dreams and to aim high - there is no limit. And I think whether it's in assembly celebrating success, and building on that, constantly pushing the envelope, or conversations out in the playground, academic counselling conversations from mentors, or just making sure that we're being authentic, we're walking that talk all the time. Because that disbelief can creep back in there - just got to keep encouraging and pushing all the time, whānau support, community perception, it even sort of creeps in from people from the Ministry.

Wink (2011) describes the notion of ambiguity as a necessary and often uncomfortable space for educationalists to feel, and encourage others to also feel, in order to engage in relearning

and unlearning. Keita recalled the pride she felt when one of her colleagues played a critical part in reshaping the practices of another within her sphere of influence:

We were doing some non-violent communication PD and those kind of thoughts and perceptions creep on in there. One of the facilitators was talking about some method to de-escalate, and was saying, 'Well in your school it must happen all the time'. You know, those kind of assumptions happen all the time, so I think it's having those conversations, and [my colleague] said, 'You know, I just heard you saying... do you realise that you are deficit theorising about our community?' 'Actually, no, I don't understand what you mean'. So I think it's always maintaining that, whether it's with a dairy owner, a student, a teacher or external facilitator, and having those conversations all the time. Whether you're exhausted or not you've just got to keep going, carry on with the kaupapa.

In order for her Māori students to enjoy and experience care and respect in a whānau-like environment, Keita recognised the importance of 'speaking up' and dwelling in the sometimes-necessary space of dissonance and discomfort:

And it's unpopular to speak up but I think it's really important. Part of the leadership style as well, to have those conversations. Those tensions just seem to be there and I think it's part of transformative leadership. And it mightn't be comfortable, but it's important. So I think in some ways, that dissonance is probably a really good indicator that change is happening and maybe harmony isn't always there but some good from discomfort can happen, to some degree. Obviously we still want to keep our manaakitanga and whānau environment, but having those conversations are part of ensuring that we do have that, we're ensuring that space is here for our rangatahi. Pushing the envelope.

As a first-time principal who is young, Māori and female, Keita is part of a very small group of principals in Aotearoa (less than 1% across the country). She had been thinking about her leadership from this perspective and talked about how her unique experiences inform her leadership practice:

There appears to be a different response with me being a female leader in the school - kind of an expectation of me, with particularly some of the male staff, to carry on with

that sort of mothering, keeping them safe - that unconditional love that you want to have and that a male might hope to have with their mother. [In] the tough times, having those difficult conversations, there may be a sense at the time that I am not fulfilling their needs within that female leadership role. It's really interesting. So is there a difference between male and female leadership if we're following the same kind of leadership style, within a similar context? Just different expectations I suppose. And it could be in part because manaakitanga is something that's important to me in terms of making those connections, being part of a whānau. But so is mana motuhake [high expectations].

As a closing thought, Keita talked about the upcoming rebuild of their school and the opportunities she felt it would bring for their community:

It's about being a part of that community. 'How can we contribute as a kura?' as opposed to saying we're just about education - that kind of holistic view. 'What can we do within the kura?' but also, 'How can we contribute to the greater good in terms of broader social change for the future?' That big picture is on top. [I'm] really keen to hear what our student voice, our whānau voice is around our new learning environments. Looking around, culture isn't visible, and so it would be wonderful to have that culturally responsive physical environment that you can just see and feel as you're walking around the kura and where our whānau feel even more comfortable to just come in, anytime. I'd really love to see our vision, those leadership and teaching practices, really well embedded right across. That they are consistent and so we can achieve more for and with our rangatahi.

It was clear throughout our kōrero that Keita's leadership was truly student-centred. Ensuring rangatahi Māori well-being was a daily commitment and she actively modelled this with her staff and wider educational community. Keita articulated the importance of mana motuhake alongside manaakitanga, where relationships of care and respect also embraced high expectations. Her commitment to fostering leadership skills in others was evident throughout, as was her humility about her own achievements as a leader.

Garrick

We began our kōrero with a discussion around the meaning of ‘first-time principal’. Garrick articulated his thoughts about lifelong learning:

I would still consider myself a first-time principal. I think I always will. You have to relearn stuff and you have to remind yourself about stuff. People are different, and there's new challenges and so every time it's new kids, new issues in society. I think if you don't think like that you can become a bit too arrogant and you don't see what's going on. I think there's a real danger when people get into leadership and they start really enjoying that sense of importance it becomes about them and not about the kaupapa.

At the time of the interview, Garrick was completing his eighth year as a principal and he talked about the complex and multiple layers of leadership within schools:

When I think about Māori learners, about society in general, there's different areas of leadership which combine - there's no one type of leadership that's required. You have to change your leadership model or mode, depending on where you are and what you're doing at the time.

Just after he began his principalship, Garrick's school became involved in Phase 5 Te Kotahitanga and he was introduced to the concept of *tuakana-teina leadership* by one of the Research and Development team at the University of Waikato. Garrick linked the concept of *tuakana-teina leadership* to culturally responsive leadership:

I really like that as a concept because as a leader you are a learner, you are the teina. And at times you're the tuakana. It's about developing other people. The best thing is when people go off and they get leadership roles elsewhere. It means you're doing your job in some ways. In the back of my mind I'm always thinking, 'If I'm not here, will it continue or can it continue?' [It's about] acknowledging other people are coming to the table with all these skills and knowledge and backgrounds that support the team in going where you want to go. It then leads into culturally responsive leadership - it's about having everybody on the waka and then you're much more powerful as a group. When things are going well, you ensure other people take the

limelight. And when the crap is hitting the fan, you make sure you are there, and to me that's also tuakana-teina.

To enable his educational community to work together as a whānau, Garrick outlined the importance of authentic collaboration:

It took me about three years to get to the point where I was happy with my name being out there because I felt that I didn't deserve that, I didn't feel it was about me. Now I grudgingly do that because I go, 'Well, if I'm getting glory, then everybody else is feeling that as well'. That's the ideal because then it's collective decision making. But you've still got to be strong enough to make decisions as well. If you've got an organisation that's built on those sorts of leadership models it's probably a healthier organisation. Then there's trust as well - they're able to critique what's happening and they feel ownership of what's going on.

Garrick described how he focused on building relational trust to tackle challenges in the early stages of his principalship:

The first year was by far the easiest because I had no ownership over anything. And so I was able to look at things with a fresh pair of eyes and I didn't race into doing things. I was able to build relationships and not feel a sense of anxiety if things weren't going well because I hadn't seen it operate before. The second year was about starting to get people on board and rebuild the strategic plan and to get some sense of direction, to put out the evidence that we'd gathered to show where we needed to go. There were some very obvious issues - Māori achievement was poor and the gap was massive.

With genuine sadness, Garrick recalled recognising visible hegemonic practices within the school which were contributing to Māori students and teachers remaining invisible:

If you were Māori and you weren't in the bilingual unit you weren't allowed to participate as a Māori in the school. There weren't many students in the bilingual unit, so there were way more Māori outside it and so if you were a Māori teacher, if you weren't teaching in the bilingual unit or te reo, you weren't considered Māori. There were all those sorts of issues and we went through a lot of change around that.

And then luckily enough we were able to get into Te Kotahitanga, which was really good. It was timely.

From the outset, Garrick could see that the school was a very caring school, however he observed potential for building more powerful, trusting relationships:

The ground was very fertile in the school. They'd done a lot of work around restorative practice. It was fertile, but it was soft - there was a real softness about the place. There was a hidden culture of mistrust and of too many initiatives and the relationships - people thought they had good relationships but they were very soft relationships and they were sometimes fearful relationships, like, 'Let's not challenge because we'll get it back in our faces'.

Through their engagement in Te Kotahitanga, leaders and teachers at Garrick's school were able to access the learning and support they needed to bring about and embed real change:

Within Te Kotahitanga we were able to get some support and tools to make a huge difference and so that started the journey. It took at least three years before I got a sense of some real change happening. And then I thought, 'Gee, it's going to take a bit more to embed this'. It took five years to six; 'OK, things have really changed - systems have changed, cultures [have] changed and things are embedded'. Initially I said principals need to leave after five years and now seven years is probably about right, but they don't necessarily need to leave. It's about the time a principal or a school needs to have quite a significant transformative change. Three years is not enough, it's just rubbish. It's not sustainable. You need seven years.

Garrick developed his own sense of agency as a first-time principal and stood alongside his staff and community in their journey:

Achievement has really improved; we have a lot of agency around what goes on within our own school community. The challenge now is external to the school community. Initially you start seeing your own experiences in your school and seeing the inequities and the deficit views people hold. And you start reflecting on your experiences within schools and go, 'Gee, that's terrible'. Then you start working through and changing all those things and your eyes start opening up to the inequities

in society. That's a challenge, when you live in a society that really doesn't actually see the issues. That's when you really need to start thinking about transformative leadership because you're transforming the fabric of your school. The whole way through is transformative leadership, change leadership - once your eyes are opened up to the inequities, transformative leadership sits in the background the whole time. You jump into it depending on the group or conversation with whomever you are with. It gives you the courage to challenge those things. Then you can't actually leave it at work either, it's bigger than that.

When considering the guiding principles of Ka Hikitia, Garrick referred to the link between the policy document and initiatives for school reform:

To be fair I don't really refer to Ka Hikitia much since it came out but I know that Te Kotahitanga and Kia Eke Panuku have and they are the drivers for Ka Hikitia. When working with the principles of Te Kotahitanga and Kia Eke Panuku, I know I'm working for the principles of Ka Hikitia and so I don't really need to refer back to it as much. It's about Māori achieving success as Māori, and it's about honouring the Treaty; partnerships; Māori potential. There's a lot of ways people interpret Ka Hikitia and a lot of it could be quite superficial.

Believing leaders and teachers need to live the guiding principles of Ka Hikitia twenty-four seven, Garrick also understood the balance between a belief in potential and the need for patience:

It's [about] believing. A lot of people will talk it and you've really got to unpack that, it takes a long time and you've got to be patient with people. There's still one or two people in our school who still don't believe in that potential. They're intelligent people. They can shift in some of their practice. But they're the ones when the stress comes on, their practice regresses really fast and their relationships regress really fast. They're still the ones deans are dealing with [over] relationship breakdowns. I'm a believer that everybody has the potential to change. I'm also one that goes some people, especially teachers and the odd student, [if] they're having too big an impact, a negative impact, then as a leader your patience has to run out because they're harming people.

Garrick referred to a quote from Paulo Freire to help illustrate the type of critical questioning used within his school to address challenges: “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). Due to their involvement with Te Kotahitanga and Kia Eke Panuku, he expressed his belief that their school was in a positive position to achieve educational reform:

Staff are in a pretty good place and we’ve got mechanisms to challenge them. That Paulo Freire quote, where you can’t sit on the sideline, we keep putting that out there and that’s been a challenge. That’s been a wakeup call for me too. My friends, they don’t even engage with me about things now, because they know that I’ll question them about it - I go to them, ‘What makes you say that?’

The importance of asking critical questions of wider society was a way of being for Garrick, and he strengthened this skill in the beginning stages of his first-time principalship. He became well known for asking a particular critical question - ‘Where’s the evidence for that statement?’ - of himself, his staff and their wider educational community. When reminded about this, he replied:

I see I need to go back to that because once you’ve been immersed in a place you probably assume you know things. You possibly stop asking those questions. Whereas it was much easier in the first four years, five years maybe. I think that’s the challenge for principals because you might become the Geiger counter for how people have conversations. You’ve got to hold on to those [questions] because I can’t remember the last time I said that. I’m probably getting it thrown back at me quite a few times now though, which is a good thing.

When asked how he’d supported Māori students to pursue their potential as Māori within their schools, Garrick humbly expressed the following:

How have I supported Māori students? [The list] is a mile long. I have to break it into sequential things. It’s about a change in culture. And when I say culture I don’t just mean culture from a language, ethnicity, religious, behaviour-type thing. I mean a culture of the whole fabric of the school - relationships, pedagogy, structure, buildings, community, everything. And so I suppose it’s got to be strategic to begin with, it’s got to be evidence-driven [and] in your strategic plan. When I first got here,

raising Māori achievement wasn't in there. There were nice fluffy things about recognising Māori culture, but raising Māori achievement, or Māori having the opportunity to succeed as Māori, wasn't there.

Prior to his principalship, Garrick credited earlier experiences as a deputy principal at a decile one school, along with academic readings from the University of Waikato, for helping him to develop an awareness of the importance of addressing inequities for Māori learners:

I'd already read a bit about Russell Bishop and his work and Mere [Berryman's] work. I identified it before I even got here. I looked at the data and saw where Māori achievement was and where others were. And I think the school knew that the gap was there but really didn't know what to do about it, so made excuses.

Pointing out a nationwide phenomenon, Garrick joked wryly about his effectiveness as a first-time principal:

Pākehā enrolments have gone down - we were 40% when I first started. So it just means white flight⁵, really. There were five hundred kids when I got there. Evidence of an effective principal, that's terrible! Nationwide, decile one and two schools got smaller and browner, everywhere, which is a sad indictment of New Zealand really.

When asked about the types of targets they set and their most ambitious targets, Garrick replied:

Māori achievement being at the national average. That was quite aspirational. Setting aspirational targets, which really challenge people's thinking. Which then facilitates discussion and opens people up to, 'So why do you set such an unrealistic target?' 'Why is it unrealistic?' And then it's, 'OK, so what can we do about it?' We brought targets in, which we didn't have before. Then you bring in department targets and then you track data.

As part of Te Kotahitanga and Kia Eke Panuku, schools were encouraged to undertake cross-curricular co-construction meetings, or evidence to accelerate hui, where teachers and leaders asked critical questions of their evidence to paint a picture of the status quo for Māori student

⁵ White flight is a phenomenon where Pākehā families remove their children from low decile schools and place them in high decile schools, thereby influencing the ethnic makeup of a school.

achievement. Garrick credited these hui as a powerful tool for shifting leader and teacher practice:

And so once you track [your evidence], you start having heads of learning co-construction meetings, you've got student names on the table and all of a sudden you're looking at shared data across subject areas. We start with this person there and they go, 'Well, they're really underachieving here and this one, underachievement'. And then Maths goes, 'Underachievement, and their attendance is terrible, and they're just disengaged'. And then people go, 'No, actually they're my top achiever'. And then Performing Arts will go, 'They're in my top achieving group too'. And all of a sudden, it's peers challenging their peers as to, 'Why is that?'

As teachers and leaders went about the process of unpacking the assumptions they may have held about students, they were able to disrupt the status quo of Māori student underachievement. Importantly, these conversations were also held with whānau:

And then the original conversation is, 'Māori are kinesthetic. It's because they love sport, and because they love playing guitar', so you have to go through that process with people. Even families, Māori families, will say that - that's the narrative they've been led to believe - when they say, 'It's so good because my son can do trades' and we'll go, 'That's good, but he doesn't have to'.

Garrick pinpointed the importance of linking theory to practice in order to promote equity and social justice:

I've been useless in the last few years with readings and things like that. Whereas in my first three years - I always felt quite inadequate anyway, academically inadequate - I would always be going, 'I've got to back this up with research evidence because such and such over there, and such and such over there are going to constantly challenge it. So I'd have all these articles and readings in case they say, 'Oh, but'. It's pretty important for leaders to be very well read. That's where Te Kotahitanga was good - we'd be given these great readings, you'd break them down and then you could go back and feel confident at a staff meeting to be able to utilise them. That's your praxis.

Quoting Hattie's (2012, 2015) visible learning research to support his beliefs, Garrick expressed the fundamental importance of engaging staff in PLD:

It's the focus on staff to make change because really they are the critical piece. 'Where are we at? How have I supported Māori students?' You've got to get the staff because they are the critical factor. You know, Hattie's research. When you finally get staff hearing that multiple times [and] you've got to be a dripping tap, then they start believing they have some agency. Get rid of their deficit theorising, give them agency, give them feedback through observation tools and then keep them engaged.

Garrick recognised that to bring about sustainable change, he needed to maintain high expectations of himself and his staff:

And I think that's where I was starting to slide last year, that level of engagement. It's probably my own level of engagement actually which is probably worse. I notice when my level of engagement goes, maybe I think the staff do too. It's a bit of a challenge. It's probably my own thinking though. There's got to be a level of challenge all the time. Everybody has to have some level of stress. And if you can create that level of positive stress or challenge, then their level of work engagement is going to be higher. The Kia Eke Panuku observation [tool], although we've only been doing it for this year, is way better for where we are at now. I think that's the best thing. My whole facilitation group now want to do observations, which is cool. For many of them who are really good practitioners, they need to do that now because they are needing some challenge.

As a leader brokering dialogic, power-sharing relationships, Garrick believes their challenges now centre on building more educationally powerful relationships with whānau:

And then obviously whānau, that's our biggest one really. We know that if we can bring strong, powerful whānau connections and engagement we're going to accelerate it further. There's no one answer. There is an answer for every individual, that's the problem. I think schools in the past have tried to do something that is going to work for everybody because it's efficient, but if you come back to it, it's about the individual relationship. If it's about personalised learning for the kids then it's about personalised engagement for those individuals.

By outlining their approach to self-review, Garrick articulated how they'd reshaped their practices to support Māori students to pursue their potential:

Other ways I've been supporting Māori students is constantly reviewing, because if you haven't got a good review process, you're not going to review. We've got these templates to guide review so there's consistency around it. We have a senior leadership review meeting every week now. We've got about five reviews on the go. One has been going for the whole year and we haven't quite nailed what we want to find out. Other ones we've managed to get through and finish and pack away until another time.

The process of self-review helped to eliminate the potential risk of remaining in a constant state of self-reflection:

The danger though is you constantly sit in this place, that you're never there. And you get frustrated and so you've got to put points of time where you go, 'Actually, what have we done, with who, and how have we engaged them?' Because then you get into, 'We've only got 50 families engaged', rather than going, 'Actually we didn't have any before'.

Garrick offered a specific example about reviewing a newly established programme designed to increase the engagement of teachers and students alike, where the spirit of inquiry was led by the systematic search for meaning (Wink, 2011):

We're reviewing our Friday programme and we've got this template, 'What are we reviewing?' Friday programme. 'Why are we reviewing it?' Because it's a new programme and we need to make sure that it's doing its business. 'Where does it fit within the strategic plan?' Providing multiple responsive learning opportunities. 'Who do we need to consult with? What sort of information do we need?' Staff, we need to brainstorm with staff members. Students. We need to get the student voice. Community. Board. We do a data collection action plan - 'Who's doing it and when are we going to get it?' Once the data is collected we bring it to our review. And then, 'How do we need to share it?'

He continued by describing the sense-making process across the various review teams:

'What sense do we make out of this information?' Part of the collection of the data is the sense-making. Whoever's collected the data can go, 'Well, this is what I saw'. And then we go, 'OK, what are we going to decide to do?' And then we have a reaction plan and then an evaluation. 'So where did we get to? Is the curriculum meeting the needs of the kids and the community?' It's about being responsive in everything you do. In our strategic plan our goals are 'responsive opportunities' - that means nothing's fixed and so if you've got a culture that realises that, then people know there's certainty but also they know that if they've got good ideas, things can change.

By listing his priorities as a first-time principal, Garrick summarised his vision for achieving transformative change:

Staff. Getting rid of deficit theorising. Promoting agency. Ongoing, challenging PD. Supported as well, because without Te Kotahitanga, or without Kia Eke Panuku, we wouldn't have the tools to do it.

Throughout our kōrero, Garrick was able to articulate the steps along their school's collective journey towards embedding culturally responsive and relational practices. He demonstrated a clear understanding of the need to embrace the moral imperative of supporting Māori students to realise their potential and was able to map out their milestones by reflecting on the important moments he shared with his educational community.

Summary

This chapter has presented the research findings of four first-time principals as they discussed their leadership journeys in English-medium secondary schools in Aotearoa. Each story was presented individually and in order of the length of time spent in their first principalship. Laying the individual stories alongside each other has provided the context for the emergent collaborative story to highlight both the commonalities and differences between how the practice of leaders can bring about educational reform and support Māori students to pursue their potential.

The next chapter will discuss these findings in relation to the research questions and the implications for both Māori and non-Māori students and their whānau, teachers, leaders and members of the wider educational communities of Aotearoa.

Chapter Four - Discussion

Tēnā te ngaru whati, tēnā te ngaru puku.

There is a wave that breaks, there is a wave that swells.

Introduction

The above whakataukī is located within the virtue of whakapono (Alsop & Kupenga, 2016, p. 137). I held the message of striving for deep understanding close to my heart within my discussion chapter. Engaging in a collaborative journey of ‘coming to know’ alongside the four principals was my goal.

This research sought to more deeply understand the type of leadership required to institutionalise deep educational reform from the perspective of four first-time principals in Kia Eke Panuku secondary schools. This chapter discusses the findings in relation to the research questions:

- What do first-time principals understand about the guiding principles of Ka Hikitia?
- How do first-time principals support Māori students to pursue their potential as Māori?
- What do first-time principals understand about the type of leadership required for educational reform in Aotearoa?

In response to my research questions, I will discuss what I’ve learned from the principals about their understanding of the guiding principles of Ka Hikitia. I will highlight the commonalities and differences between their practices as I explore how they have supported Māori students to pursue their potential as Māori. This will lead to a discussion about the type of leadership required for critical education reform for Māori students. The chapter will conclude with a discussion about the implications for students, their whānau, and other secondary school leaders - both Māori and non-Māori alike.

The guiding principles of Ka Hikitia

As discussed earlier, Ka Hikitia (Ministry of Education, 2013) is underpinned by the intent of the Treaty of Waitangi and speaks to the rights, duties, obligations and responsibilities of

educators to ensure that Māori students achieve success as Māori. We know that for many iwi, the original intent at the signing of the Treaty between Māori and the Crown was understood within the concept of *mana ōrite*, where the mana of each partner was equal (Berryman, Lawrence & Lamont, in press). However, it must be said that for Māori, this partnership has been far from equal as the more dominant partner has defined the parameters (Berryman et al., in press). As a mandated government strategy, Ka Hikitia pledges educators to ‘step up’ and meet their obligations for all students to achieve, but in particular their Māori students. I will now address each of the guiding principles from Ka Hikitia and discuss the understandings shared in my kōrero with the principals.

The Treaty of Waitangi

Each of the principals articulated their understanding of, and commitment to, the Treaty of Waitangi as our founding document. They recognised their responsibilities to *protect* Māori language, identity and culture and to ensure Māori learners *participate* in the benefits of education as equal *partners* in decision-making about learning pathways. They made connections to ensuring equitable outcomes, and supporting their teachers to be part of the redress of inequities as they promoted an education that resisted the notion of privileging colonial knowledge.

Māori potential approach

The principals highlighted their belief in the limitless potential of their Māori students stemming from a deeply felt moral imperative. They spoke about their collective professional responsibility towards focusing on promoting mauri ora for their students, staff and whānau. It is important to note that having a focus on the potential of Māori learners goes against the pervasive discourse in society whereby those who traditionally hold the power and privilege perpetuate disparities via their impositional stance and deficit paradigms (Berryman, 2013; New Zealand School Trustees Association & Office of the Children’s Commissioner, 2018). Instead, these principals deliberately engaged in and created power-sharing relationships as they collectively addressed issues of power and privilege with a focus on potential.

Ako - a two-way learning and teaching process

As explained earlier, ako embodies notions of reciprocity - teachers as learners and learners as teachers. I remember the first time a colleague of mine who is Māori helped me understand the concept of ako more deeply, with one simple statement: “In te reo Māori, we don’t have separate words for teach and learn - it’s just ako” (see Figure 9).

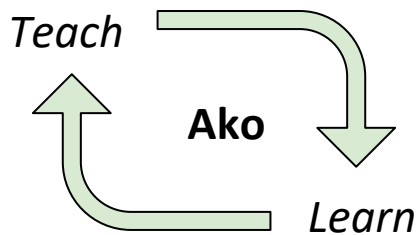


Figure 9 Ako - to teach and to learn

The symbiotic nature of ako aligns closely to Wink’s (2011) notion of learning, unlearning and relearning as an ongoing cycle, as well as the concept of tuakana-teina, where teachers and learners work alongside each other to progress their skills and knowledge. The principals did not consider themselves experts; rather, they specifically talked about being active learners, participants and facilitators within the co-construction of new knowledge. That being said, the principals recognised that as the leader of their school, they were ultimately responsible for making evidence-based decisions to benefit their students and communities.

They modelled the concept of ako contained within culturally responsive and relational pedagogy (Kia Eke Panuku, n.d.2), by ensuring that sense-making was:

- Dialogic - rejecting a more traditional ‘top down’ or ‘superman persona’ approach,
- Interactive - a process of collaboration between teachers, students, whānau and the community, and
- Ongoing - engaging in a critical cycle of reflection to enable their participation in the Ako: Critical Cycle of Learning (conscientisation, resistance and transformative praxis).

Identity, language and culture count

Leaders who acknowledge the part they play in education to ensure their students can participate as global citizens recognise students need to feel safe and secure within their identity, language and culture. Embracing the moral imperative of ensuring equity, excellence and belonging for their students enables leaders to reform their schools as they actively reject traditional educational environments pertaining to English-medium settings, where Māori students continue to be marginalised and oppressed by dominant European policies and practices. In their reformed or re-forming spaces, improved outcomes for Māori students remained at the heart of every decision for these principals.

As they prioritised Māori knowledge through academic engagement with te reo Māori, these principals also ensured Māori values underpinned their practice. It was important that students could see themselves and locate themselves more clearly and positively within the curriculum and the culture of their schools. Rather than struggling to ‘fit in’, students could feel a sense of belonging. Students were encouraged to bring themselves into the learning and their cultural toolkits were highly valued, enabling them to live and learn ‘as Māori’. Privileging of indigenous knowledge within the curriculum and contexts for learning was a deliberate act; valuing the prior experiences of students was fundamental to ensuring identity, language and culture *counted*.

These principals deeply understood the implications of inheriting an educational model from the dominant colonising culture. They engaged in asking critical questions of themselves and others to unpack: Who controls knowledge? What is the nature of knowledge? How is knowledge produced, by whom and for whose benefit? (Berryman et al., 2013). In this way they were able to explore the relationship between power and knowledge and demonstrate the courage needed to challenge conventional paradigms. This critical questioning was a crucial step towards engaging in conscientisation and resistance; it opened up opportunities for others in their schools to deconstruct and reconstruct the frameworks of knowledge that underpinned their curriculum in order to focus their actions on achieving equity.

Productive partnerships

Ka Hikitia (Ministry of Education, 2013) states that productive partnerships between schools and communities are two-way relationships based on mutual understanding, respect and

shared aspirations. These principals placed great value on seeking and listening to student and whānau voice and recognised students and whānau were inextricably interconnected; to each other, but also between and across multiple whānau groups within the schools, including their connections with teachers and leaders. They looked to their communities for ways to overcome barriers and they engaged as many stakeholders as necessary to ensure improved outcomes for students. They created opportunities for whānau to be heard and involved in a self-determining manner. This enabled Māori communities to choose their level of engagement with the schools, within a responsive dialogic space (Berryman et al., 2013) and created space for the aspirations of Māori communities to become more visible in the school's decision-making and strategic planning. As such, these principals demonstrated their understanding that productive partnerships are measured not only by academic success but also physical, emotional and spiritual well-being, or mauri ora.

Summary

Whether they were discussed from an explicit or implicit perspective, each of these principals demonstrated a high level of understanding of Ka Hikitia. The Ministry of Education labelled Ka Hikitia as a 'strategy' to guide the actions of schools, however there was no evidence of Ka Hikitia being used by the principals as a 'strategy' within itself. Instead, these principals connected more to their day-to-day practice by relying on the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi, and trusting that Ka Hikitia was driven by the PLD they were engaged with. The tools and resources developed via their professional learning were used to explore new ways of being and doing to ensure Māori students were able to enjoy and achieve education success as Māori. They demonstrated their willingness to live the principles daily - personally and professionally. They simply acknowledged the value of the guiding principles as an affirmation of their inherent beliefs and values and their responsibilities and obligations as leaders engaging in educational reform for Māori learners in Aotearoa.

What sets their leadership apart?

Each of the principals had unique qualities that helped determine their individual leadership approach. As we know, only 10% of all principals in English-medium secondary schools identified as Māori, already placing Timoti, Taine and Keita in a statistical minority. Furthermore, they were young compared to other principals in Aotearoa, the majority of

whom are 50 years of age or over. Keita and Timoti were bilingual, furthering their te reo Māori skills as young adults, whilst Taine and Garrick were becoming bilingual - Taine as Māori and Garrick as Pākehā. Engaging in ongoing learning clearly underpinned their leadership efforts; either at the postgraduate level or by humbly receiving support from more expert others within their communities.

Importantly, all four remain as principals of their schools to this day. Both Keita and Garrick demonstrated their commitment to achieving sustainable reform for social justice and equity within their schools and acknowledged the length of time required to embed change. They also demonstrated their ongoing commitment to listening to their communities in order to remain responsive to the needs of their students and whānau. Timoti and Taine demonstrated their long-term commitment to achieving the goals of their respective schools, despite their more recent appointments.

One obvious difference between the principals was the time spent in their first principalship. At the time of writing this discussion, Timoti was nearing the completion of his second year, Taine his fourth, Keita her seventh and Garrick his ninth. Not surprisingly, these differences in tenure enabled Garrick and Keita to reflect more deeply on the extent of their journey of reform, as they were able to look back and reflect upon their successes and challenges, particularly within their early years as a principal. Timoti and Taine were able to clearly articulate both the current and long-term focus for achieving their goals, which is no doubt a trait of the establishing principal.

Three out of the four principals are currently engaged as lead principals within their Kāhui Ako. It is noteworthy that these principals have not only put themselves forward for these challenging new roles, but have also been successful in their appointments. This highlights their courage, along with the trust and esteem felt about them as leaders within their wider educational-leadership communities.

Male and female leadership from a Māori perspective

As stated in the Findings chapter, Keita represents less than 1% of the population of secondary principals across Aotearoa - being female, Māori and young. Keita talked about her unique experiences of female leadership, and openly asked the question, 'Is there a difference between male and female leadership if we're following the same kind of

leadership style, within a similar context?’ Keita noticed that some of her male staff expected her to display a kind of unconditional love, like that of a mother to her child, and when critical conversations needed to occur, Keita sensed she was not meeting their expectations. The dichotomy for Keita was balancing her commitment to *manaakitanga* - care and concern - whilst maintaining *mana motuhake* - high professional standards.

Berryman and Tait (2017) state, “from a Māori perspective male and female leadership is complementary, inter-related, and flexible” (p. 149). When we consider Keita’s ponderings about the differences between male and female leadership, framing this within critical leadership may help to explain the variation in her experiences with some male staff. Critical leadership seeks to re-address the ongoing marginalisation facing Māori students. As leaders develop “powerful agency in helping to reimagine, re-lead, and reform education in order to reverse a long-standing trend of inequitable outcomes”, then like Keita, they demonstrate “the courage required to challenge tradition and step into new leadership spaces in order to achieve critical tasks” (Berryman & Tait, 2017, p. 163).

Similarly, yet from a male perspective, Garrick demonstrated courage and agency as he took the steps necessary to close the bilingual unit in his school. Led by trusted members of the Māori community, Garrick was guided through a process of gathering evidence from students, teachers and whānau. Furthermore, by relying on the use of evidence to inform this difficult decision, along with his commitment to being guided by more expert others in the process, Garrick was empowered to demonstrate the courage needed to act upon his professional responsibility and contributed to reforming their school for the benefit of Māori and non-Māori students.

Supporting Māori students to pursue their potential

In the next section, I will highlight six interdependent elements that have emerged from the collaborative story, demonstrating how these principals worked in collective ways with others to support Māori students to pursue their potential as Māori:

- The personal qualities of the principals,
- Leader as learner,
- Actively seeking and promoting collegial support,
- Commitment to ongoing cycles of PLD,

- Strengthening bicultural and bilingual skills and knowledge, and
- Leading others within the zone of proximal development.

The personal qualities of the principals

The principals shared personal qualities that contributed to the success of their leadership. They were driven by a moral purpose to ensure equity and social justice for their Māori learners. They were courageous in their leadership, willing to challenge, ask critical questions and live their values in order to disrupt the status quo within their schools and wider communities, whilst at the same time demonstrating care and patience (Wink, 2011). They were agentic and worked tirelessly to promote their vision of success for all, having zero tolerance for practices that might inhibit success. They were dedicated and committed to co-constructing a shared vision of educational excellence and worked at multiple levels to achieve this vision – with staff, Boards of Trustees, students and whānau. The principals demonstrated caring hearts and valued the connections and relationships within their schools, even when they needed to have critical conversations. In this way, they enacted manaakitanga, built relational trust and modelled relationships of care and respect. They led with aroha, patience and conviction and understood the benefits of, and the connections between, leading with their heart, head and hands (Sergiovanni, 2005).

Leader as learner

Each of the principals highlighted the importance of maintaining the disposition of a learner as they actively prioritised and sought to learn in spaces that reflected an awareness of their own zones of proximal development. Timoti clearly understood that in the early stages of his principalship he was learning the roles and responsibilities inherent to leadership and was comfortable in the role of teina as he sought advice from tuakana. As an active learner, he looked to more expert others such as the academics working within initiatives like Kia Eke Panuku and more experienced principal colleagues and educational leaders, to provide him with tools, resources and advice to promote effective leadership. He was buoyed by academic readings, educational research and participation in *wānanga* (a meeting of people to discuss, deliberate, consider and learn) where like-minded others engaged and learned through ako.

Taine devoted time and energy to furthering his te reo Māori skills and stressed the importance of being able to draw upon the skills of others to support his leadership. He recognised he had a part to play in fostering sustainability and growth and demonstrated his commitment to collaborative leadership. Taine was comfortable relying on others to share the load of leadership tasks, which enabled him to demonstrate and develop relational trust with his staff. Taine's educational whānau operated in a similar way to whānau on the marae, where they collaborated and worked together to ensure events and daily life ran smoothly. They had a collective responsibility, yet they distributed power, roles and responsibilities appropriately to achieve their goals. Taine demonstrated qualities of distributed leadership; as an educational whānau they were "collectively and collaboratively constructing meaning and knowledge within and across groups", providing opportunities to "reveal and mediate perceptions, values, beliefs, information and assumptions" (Berryman, Egan & Ford, 2014, p. 10). This helped lay the foundation for change, where the collective was focused on learning together about the evolving kaupapa, strengthened by the part played by individuals, within interdependent, power-shared relationships.

Keita's choice to reject the more traditional 'top down' approach to leadership was a deliberate act from the beginning of her principalship. She was able to articulate the importance of leadership that embraced mana ōrite. Leading her team in a transparent manner, Keita actively participated as a facilitator and learner alongside her colleagues within a spirit of inquiry and considered herself an ongoing learner of te reo Māori. Keita articulated her commitment to collaborative, sustainable leadership by fostering the skills of others to lead in areas they were passionate about. Keita stressed the importance of ako, where learning interactions occurred naturally in the shared leadership office, staffroom and classrooms, as well as with whānau and the wider community. Keita actively sought and listened to student and whānau voice as they worked together to transform their school. She constantly sought ways to engage and re-engage with staff to enable them to become more effective teachers and promote greater buy-in to the process of transformative change.

As Pākehā, Garrick was aware of his location as a member of the dominant culture in Aotearoa, yet demonstrated willingness to relocate himself as a listener and learner (Berryman et al., 2015b). Garrick recognised the importance of remaining open to learning, as each year brought new students, whānau and unique challenges. He pinpointed the importance of remaining fresh, motivated and engaged in order to model the importance of

this disposition to his staff. By relocating himself as a listener and learner from the outset and being keenly aware of the power and privilege he held as a Pākehā principal, Garrick developed the will, the skills and the moral purpose to facilitate the journey towards educational reform for their Māori learners.

Actively seeking and promoting collegial support

Despite the variation in the length of time as a principal, these leaders recognised the benefits of working with each other as colleagues, thereby promoting a collective vision of excellence for the students of their region. They not only promoted this with each other, but also actively encouraged other educational leaders to join them in upholding their collective vision. They were drawn to like-minded others and this enabled them to attract and employ staff who would contribute to and embrace the collective vision. As Garrick highlighted, when staff left his school to take up further leadership roles elsewhere, this confirmed that he was ‘doing his job’, supporting others to follow in his footsteps.

Throughout our kōrero, Timoti gave many examples of how he modelled relational and collaborative leadership. He focused on building relational trust with his colleagues, staff and community and valued the contributions others made towards attaining the school’s goals. He went out of his way to foster educationally powerful connections with his community, whānau, staff and other principal colleagues.

Keita’s commitment to making sound appointments that supported the achievement of their goals was a quality seen in each of the principals. Their fundamental belief in the benefits of power-sharing relationships at multiple layers supported staff to follow their passions and develop creative opportunities that enabled every member of their school to grow their leadership skills. As I’ve worked within these schools and alongside these leaders, it has become clear to me the immense value they place in their friendships, enabling them to support their respective leadership journeys.

Commitment to ongoing cycles of PLD

As discussed, at the time of the research, each of the principals were engaged in the culturally responsive and relational learning contexts of Kia Eke Panuku, and had been previous participants in Phase 5 Te Kotahitanga. Through their involvement in these initiatives, each

of the principals participated in iterative cycles of continuous improvement. They demonstrated their commitment to:

- Meeting their obligations as mandated in Ka Hikitia to ensure Māori students enjoy and achieve education success as Māori,
- The transformative power of critical cycles of inquiry and review, using evidence to inform co-constructed next steps,
- Engaging personally and leading others in a journey of conscientisation, resistance and transformative praxis,
- Promoting the kaupapa of culturally responsive and relational contexts for learning, and
- Building educationally powerful connections with their whānau and communities.

As participants in school reform initiatives focused on Māori achievement, the principals developed skills to assist them in reimagining and reforming their schools and bring about improvements for their Māori learners. They understood that by enacting pedagogical change in their classrooms and leadership practices, whereby contexts for learning were based on sound research into what works, they could ensure that their strategic planning was responsive to their evidence. Timoti believed in the process of relying on accurate and detailed evidence to inform collective decisions. He nurtured safe contexts for learning where staff felt empowered to make a difference for their students and embraced the challenge of participating in activities that were specifically designed to disrupt the status quo. As a result, Timoti became more tolerant of ambiguity and more confident in dealing with uncertainty.

Taine began his principalship with clear guidelines from those who had been working in the school prior to his appointment. A function of his employment was clearly articulated by the commissioner and trustees – maintain the work of the college in terms of Tōku Moemoeā and continue to build a positive school culture, so that students can thrive in every aspect of their education. Taine demonstrated his commitment to achieving the vision of Tōku Moemoeā as a collaborative, inquiry-based journey led by the students' language, cultural identity and aspirations. As Taine achieved the transactional tasks of maintaining a smooth-running school, he became more able to develop a common purpose that focused on achieving the

goals laid down by members of their educational community from a more culturally responsive, relational and transformative perspective.

As a result of their involvement with Te Kotahitanga, embedding culturally responsive and relational pedagogy within their classrooms and across their leadership roles became a priority for these principals. Garrick developed the agency and courage to disrupt the status quo of Māori student underachievement and used evidence to inform every step of becoming a culturally responsive and relational school. Garrick walked alongside his teachers in their journeys of conscientisation and discursive repositioning as they embedded both cultural and pedagogical changes that in turn supported Māori students to pursue their potential.

Throughout my involvement in reform initiatives within these schools, I have spent time observing and having critical learning conversations with their teachers as they work towards embedding culturally responsive and relational contexts for learning. Alongside their PD around the elements of the pedagogy, I have witnessed teachers drawing upon the big ideas of the pedagogy and making connections to their day-to-day practice as they use evidence, engage in observations, reflect upon their practice and participate in co-construction hui with other teachers and leaders (Alton-Lee, 2015). Through these endeavours, teachers developed their capacity to provide more opportunities for their Māori learners to see their language, identity and culture as a valued and fundamental ingredient to successful learning.

Strengthening bicultural and bilingual skills and knowledge

Each of these principals led schools where the majority or in fact all of their students were Māori. Their schools are within the often-used Ministry of Education category of ‘decile one to three’. These decile allocations automatically place them within spaces where Māori students have traditionally been the most marginalised and where disproportionate numbers of Māori learners face the highest degree of disparity. In order to disrupt this status quo, each of the principals demonstrated a commitment to the importance of their schools becoming bilingual and bicultural – where te reo Māori, te ao Māori and tikanga Māori were embedded within the very fabric of their schools. Importantly, the journey of strengthening bicultural and bilingual skills and knowledge began with ‘self’ - each of the principals actively participated as individuals, thereby modelling what they wanted for themselves and for others. It was important to support their staff in becoming bicultural as they considered unique and creative ways to support Māori students to pursue their potential.

These principals seized every opportunity to speak te reo Māori, whether they were fluent or becoming fluent. Māori customs and protocols such as pōwhiri, karakia and *waiata* (song) were fundamental to their practice across all aspects of their schools. Furthermore, their school values were grounded in te reo Māori and embedded across the culture of their schools - manaakitanga, whanaungatanga, mana motuhake, aroha, *tika* (fairness and justice), *pono* (sincerity) and *rangatiratanga* (leadership).

Keita, Timoti and Taine articulated the importance of key appointments of teachers and middle leaders with strong skills in te reo Māori. These deliberate acts highlighted the importance of te reo Māori as a strong and vibrant academic option, with a deliberate focus on improving opportunities to access and enjoy quality provision of te reo Māori classes. Whilst these appointments could be seen within a more traditional response, whereby the best way to improve outcomes for Māori students was to employ more Māori teachers, these principals recognised the promise inherent within the Treaty of Waitangi - full and mutually beneficial participation for both Māori and non-Māori. In this sense, these principals demonstrated an understanding that both Māori and non-Māori students in their schools would benefit from access to quality learning through te reo Māori.

Timoti's fundamental belief in the Treaty of Waitangi, as well as the critical importance of the preservation of te reo Māori, te ao Māori and tikanga Māori within our education system, enabled him to build a solid foundation for ensuring Māori students achieved and enjoyed education success as Māori. Through his commitment to modelling a Māori response to secondary schooling, where *te reo Māori me ōna tikanga* (the relationship between Māori language and cultural practices) were the foundations of learning, Timoti made the ground fertile for moving beyond the necessary transactional leadership activities towards more critical leadership activities.

When Garrick began his principalship, the sole domain for the provision of education through te reo Māori lay within the bilingual unit. His decision to close the bilingual unit was grounded in a collaboratively-determined review of evidence that highlighted negative educational outcomes for Māori students, both inside and out of the unit. Garrick and his community wanted to see the whole school benefit from participating in quality te reo Māori learning, which was inclusive of all students - Māori and non-Māori. Through their involvement in Te Kotahitanga, they explored and promoted an alternative to the bilingual

unit and supported actions focused more on promoting belonging and academic excellence for students throughout the whole school. Te Kotahitanga provided tools and resources such as the Effective Teaching Profile, a classroom observation tool and support to develop skills in shadow-coaching with colleagues. These tools enabled Garrick's school to prioritise their focus on providing teachers with opportunities to learn about and practice a culturally responsive and relational pedagogy. As the shift in power relations between teachers and students occurred (Alton-Lee, 2015), students throughout Garrick's school - Māori and non-Māori alike - were able to enjoy teaching and learning where their identity, language and culture was valued and legitimated across all their subjects. In this way, effective cultural relationships and responsive pedagogy were embedded within the metaphor of mana ōrite (Berryman et al., in press).

These principals understood the benefits of being able to draw upon two world-views to bring balance, equity and to celebrate biculturalism within their schools. However, it is important to note that as Māori, Keita, Taine and Timoti participated in their own schooling during a period plagued by the policies inherited from assimilation and integration practices (Auditor-General, 2012). They were forced to participate in a curriculum dominated by Western knowledge which, as already discussed, resulted in the entrenched oppression of Māori learners still experienced to this day. Furthermore, it is imperative to acknowledge the less-discussed effect of assimilation and integration policies on Pākehā students and their families. By having their own race normalised, privileged and validated through policy, Pākehā have missed out on the opportunity to participate in the bicultural promise where pluralistic ways of knowing are legitimate and valid. This could well be understood as the basis for the inherent racism Māori experience to this day.

Keita was immersed in te ao Māori and te reo Māori growing up. As she progressed through schooling, academic study of te reo Māori was not offered as a valued or legitimate study option. Her experience was like that of so many rangatahi Māori in English-medium schools who became marginalised by the belittlement of their language, culture and identity. As a result, Keita was driven by a deep moral purpose to see rangatahi Māori aim high and be supported to achieve their dreams. She demonstrated persistence and a relentless focus on disrupting the status quo of underachievement for Māori learners. This stemmed from a fundamental belief in Māori potential and manifested in her professional responsibility

towards realising the vision inherent within their school motto - ‘student success is the *only* option’.

As Taine discussed, he became disengaged with schooling and did not complete his final year, despite being in the ‘A’ class at his secondary school and his parents being teachers. Keita pinpointed the lack of academic pathways through which to continue learning in te reo Māori. Assimilation policies actively discouraged the use of te reo Māori and the diminished use of indigenous language led to growing educational disparities between Māori and Pākehā (Auditor-General, 2012). At this time, Māori learners were forced to participate in te ao Pākehā (Bishop & Glynn, 1999a). If indeed they were successful, as Keita, Taine and Timoti obviously were, it was *despite* being Māori, and certainly not necessarily *as Māori*. On the other hand, as Pākehā, Garrick made the deliberate choice to *become* bicultural and work towards becoming bilingual because he believed in the richness of the bicultural promise contained within the Treaty of Waitangi. From this perspective, he actively engaged in decolonising the education he had received as a student and in turn became better equipped to decolonise the education of the students in front of him as a teacher and leader.

The personal traits of being bicultural and bilingual are of the utmost importance for Māori students to see modelled and lived by their leaders to foster their sense of belonging. It is also vitally important for Pākehā, because when Māori become visible within the curriculum and culture of the school, they also become visible to Pākehā and other non-Māori students and families. Furthermore, when Māori and non-Māori teachers engage in their own ‘becoming bicultural and bilingual’ journeys, they normalise this practice and model this for their students, providing a powerful example of change within their schools and across society in Aotearoa.

Leading others within the zone of proximal development

It is clear from the findings that time spent within their first-time principalship may well have a connection to the depth of transformative praxis for these principals (Freire, 1972). As discussed earlier, traditional Māori models of learning emphasise that knowledge is a taonga to be cherished and is attained in steps, like that of the poutama (Metge, 2015; Wilkie, 2010). Furthermore, traditional Māori methods of learning and teaching, such as ako and tuakana-teina, help us understand how we can successfully ascend the steps on our journey towards the pinnacle, Ko Te Taumata (Wilkie, 2010). No matter which step of the journey, tuakana

and teina enjoy the same mana and dedicate themselves to the reciprocity of learning by teaching and teaching by learning (Pere, 1982; Wink, 2011). When considering the stepped ascending pattern of the poutama as symbolising the learning journey, as well as the interdependent relationships between learners along the steps, many examples of this practice can be found within the principals' kōrero, making it possible to discuss how they led others within the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978).

Timoti's positioning as both a leader and a learner in the early stages of his role enabled him to understand more deeply his own zone of proximal development. Timoti was able to articulate how he engaged in authentic tuakana-teina relationships, where his role varied according to the situation. His fluency in te reo Māori and deep connections to tikanga Māori enabled him to take the role of tuakana in formal situations. As a first-time principal who held pastoral, sporting, and curriculum leadership roles in the past, Timoti developed a kete of skills and knowledge he was able to draw upon to support his staff in developing their own leadership capabilities. He was keenly aware that the quest for knowledge and skills was a collaborative effort and that new knowledge belonged to the collective, not the individual, and therefore should be shared.

Taine placed great importance on the Māori concept of he kanohi kitea and having a physical presence in order to build and nurture educationally powerful connections within their close-knit Māori community. He recognised his obligations to their marae, kaumātua and community and spending time in these spaces enabled him to meet these responsibilities. In this way, he actively engaged in leading others by modelling the importance of gaining advice and support from more expert others.

Demonstrated by relearning her reo as a young adult, Keita developed the skills necessary to walk the talk and literally talk the walk. Keita demonstrated commitment to enacting critical pedagogy - immersing herself in the waters of words, learning by teaching and teaching others by learning (Wink, 2011). This demonstrated her ability to learn, unlearn and relearn, even during times of crisis, helping new practices to emerge and inform collective decisions. Furthermore, Keita's kōrero focused on leading alongside others as they unpacked issues of power and privilege to bring about transformative outcomes for Māori students.

Garrick's involvement in Te Kotahitanga became a critical turning point for his school as they engaged in learning about the theory of what works for Māori learners. As they

developed a deeper understanding of the tools and resources provided through Te Kotahitanga, Garrick led and learned alongside others to put that theory into practice. The facilitation team and senior leaders in the school shifted their practice and became leaders of learning as opposed to managers. Whilst Garrick was fully immersed in the learning of Te Kotahitanga, he ensured each of his staff had the same opportunities. As the school made sense of the evidence around their practices and outcomes, this contributed to deprivatising the whole school's practice and as their collective 'eyes were opened' to the inequities in wider society, this prompted collegial conversations about building more educationally powerful connections and disrupting the negative status quo. Garrick demonstrated how effective outcomes can be achieved when leaders look within and across their communities to inform the responses.

The type of leadership required for critical educational reform

Critical leadership centres on the moral imperative to examine issues of power and privilege in order to disrupt and challenge traditional responses and move towards equity and justice for all (Berryman, 2013). This becomes a journey of conscientisation, resistance and transformative praxis (Freire, 1972; Smith, 2003). For educational leaders in Aotearoa, embracing the tenets of critical leadership equips principals with the dispositions, moral purpose and skills of inquiry that lead to deep educational reform for social justice and equity. The first-time principals at the heart of this research, through the process of sharing their leadership journeys, have helped illuminate their understandings about achieving critical educational reform as they work towards giving power to the powerless and voice to the voiceless (Freire, 1992; Wink, 2011).

The Ako: Critical Cycle of Learning (unlearning, relearning)

As discussed earlier, within the professional learning contexts of Kia Eke Panuku each of these principals engaged alongside their staff in the Ako: Critical Cycle of Learning (unlearning, relearning). This cycle of inquiry, underpinned by kaupapa Māori and critical theories, provided the vehicle for the principals and their teachers to engage in conscientisation, resistance and transformative praxis. They prioritised the *critical* nature of the culturally responsive and relational pedagogy by asking, 'How can we disrupt the status quo and accelerate outcomes for our Māori learners?' This type of critical questioning was an ongoing process, cyclical in nature, and allowed learners to spiral in and out of the

process, as well as allowing new learners to enter the conversation. As they engaged in conscientisation and resistance, they did so over multiple occasions and for multiple reasons.

Conscientisation

By understanding the implications of their current practices for Māori learners, these principals engaged in the process of conscientisation. They asked critical questions like, ‘What part am I playing in maintaining or contributing to the status quo of inequity for Māori learners?’, which enabled them to name and challenge inequities for their Māori students.

Timoti demonstrated his growing courage when ‘fronting it and doing the right thing’ became a necessary interaction with staff - he engaged in naming, critically reflecting and acting (Freire, 1972). Embracing the reciprocity of the tuakana-teina roles, Timoti was able to engage in dialogue and form a clearer picture of what he knew in relation to others (Wink, 2011).

Taine’s journey of conscientisation was articulated through recognising the opportunities he had to develop the internal capabilities of his staff so they might lead teaching and learning in a collaborative manner. At the same time, he was building a personal commitment to te reo Māori and his role as an active participant in his Māori community on the marae.

Keita demonstrated commitment to using evidence in an ongoing manner to paint the picture of the current reality for their Māori learners and the process was always collaborative in nature. Keita was unafraid to name the barriers that her Māori students were facing and was courageous in naming and challenging inequity. Keita recognised that in order to engage and motivate staff, she needed to model manaakitanga and mana motuhake and that this process required collective buy-in and was necessary to maintain momentum. Keita’s unlearning and relearning came about as a result of her responses to challenges within the school and community.

Garrick’s commitment to an ongoing cycle of critical reflection through the school’s review processes enabled them to collectively engage with evidence to inform his own leadership practice and facilitate the cycle with others. As their evidence helped them recognise the current lived reality for their Māori learners, they were also becoming aware of the inequities within society and therefore able to critique the balance of power on a wider scale.

Each of the principals demonstrated their willingness to engage in dialogue and therefore build powerful teaching and learning relationships with students, their whānau and teachers, actively seeking the voices of their educational communities to inform their practice. These processes contributed to a developing sense of agency in overcoming the obstacles and disrupting previously embedded practices that had been marginalising their Māori learners.

Resistance

These principals began to engage in resistance as they made decisions about what needed to change. They asked critical questions such as, ‘Now we have a better understanding of our current practices, what do we need to stop doing, start doing or do differently to ensure our practices benefit Māori learners?’

Timoti demonstrated building relational trust and educationally powerful connections as an important starting point in his principalship. He recognised his role in supporting his staff and community to focus on potential and promoted opportunities for critical learning conversations to occur amongst his staff, thereby strengthening their understanding of the current position of Māori students within their departments. By privileging Māori knowledge within the curriculum and fostering opportunities for teachers to strengthen their bicultural skills, Timoti began to encourage more responsive dialogic spaces for listening and speaking (Berryman et al., 2013), which led to creative initiatives aimed at supporting Māori students to achieve their potential.

From the outset, Taine was pledged to nurture the pre-existing vision of his college and it was a wero he was happy to accept. He articulated the importance of working with staff to build a stable platform for consistent practice across the school. As they worked together to build ownership of the vision, Taine prioritised working within a culturally responsive and relational framework, based on his prior experiences of what works for Māori learners. At the time of this research, Taine and his staff were still determining *how* they might strengthen their current focus on inquiry learning so that Tōku Moemoeā could run throughout the school and be informed by unpacking the implications this might have on traditional NCEA frameworks for measuring success.

Keita’s awareness of her own and others’ zones of proximal development ensured sound evidence-based inquiry practices. These were used to highlight what was working and

therefore what should be sustained, along with what wasn't working and therefore needed to be re-imagined. She recognised that if elements of their learning within programmes such as Te Kotahitanga and Kia Eke Panuku were to be sustainable within the school, they needed to be embedded within the very fabric of teaching and learning. The critical question Keita asked of herself and her staff was, 'How are we building a culture of success?' In this way, Keita and her staff participated in deliberate acts to ensure the school curriculum and practices reflected Māori student language, identity and culture and that their decisions were driven by the aspirations of students and whānau.

Garrick's overall priority was to 'be responsive', evidenced by the collaboratively determined focus of their strategic plan. Garrick believed it took seven years to embed sustainable change within the culture of their school and he was committed to engaging in ongoing review to ensure they were constantly improving their practice. An important critical question was: 'How is the curriculum meeting the needs of our students and our community?' This demonstrated their commitment to ensuring their actions and reflections remained authentic and student-focused. Another important critical question was, 'How can we promote equity within and beyond our school to improve the fabric of society?' Garrick took the time necessary to ensure these critical questions underpinned their daily practice.

These principals, whilst at different points in their journeys, engaged in collaborative decisions about what needed to be sustained and what needed to change. Engaging in resistance was a natural process for Keita and Garrick, and was an embedded practice within the culture of their schools. As Timoti and Taine continued their process of conscientisation and asked questions of themselves and their evidence that were critical in nature, they were building expertise in theory-based practices to help facilitate a critical cycle of learning with others.

Transformative praxis leading to critical leadership

Transformative praxis occurs when leaders engage in new practices that focus on a more equitable social reality for Māori learners. As these principals implemented theory-based practices leading to accelerated outcomes for their Māori students, they were able to reshape the practices of their schools within their sphere of influence and enact change (Kia Eke Panuku, n.d.3).

An essential component of transformative leadership is a commitment to promoting social justice, for the benefit of the individual and society as a whole and stems from a moral purpose to bring about change (Shields, 2010, 2013). Furthermore, we know that transformative leaders need the will and the skills to enact change, along with the ability to use their positions of power and privilege to reframe the lived reality for their Māori learners (Berryman et al., 2015a). It was clear from Timoti's kōrero that he demonstrated the will to enact change. He was also learning new skills around critical inquiry and nurturing trust and respect in his relationships with staff and therefore laying the foundations for future transformative practice.

Taine's college was established over 160 years ago and whilst they've had their challenges in the past, his consistency as their principal had contributed to their ability to embark upon a journey towards transformative change. It could be said that Taine's approach in the beginning was transactional (Shields, 2010) – task focused, accepting of the traditional hierarchical power and focused on meeting externally imposed activities – but with a view to becoming more transformational in nature. Within transformational leadership activities, principals move towards improving the current culture of the school as they focus on “developing internal capacity and engendering personal commitment to optimise school improvement” (Berryman et al., 2014, p. 15). Whilst the school had undergone significant changes and developments throughout its long history, the college remained steadfast in their mission to educate young men through the dual principles of Māoritanga and Christianity. Elements of Taine's leadership approach may well have been predetermined in order to fit with the traditional core values of the school. However, with the external tuakana support of colleagues such as those within Kia Eke Panuku, Taine helped pave the way for deep and equitable change to occur. This pathway not only honoured the traditions of the past, but also prepared their students to flourish in every aspect of their special character education and be successful in te ao Māori and on the global stage.

Keita's kōrero focused on the importance of ensuring social justice and equity for her students, staff, whānau and wider educational community. Keita recognised effective leadership for educational reform was a journey and that with each success came new challenges. By living the dual values of manaakitanga and mana motuhake, Keita led by example and contributed to building positive perceptions of her school within their community. She skilfully balanced the duality of building a nurturing and caring learning

environment where people and ideas were valued, whilst upholding collegial practices that were innovative, visionary and focused on demonstrating excellence.

As the longest serving first-time principal in this research, Garrick had the most past experiences upon which to reflect and theorise his practice as he developed a deep-seated commitment to social justice and equity. He articulated the sequential nature of their transformative journey and demonstrated the critical approach to his leadership, as he:

- Worked with staff to shift the discourse away from deficit theorising,
- Promoted teacher agency by resourcing appropriately,
- Participated alongside teachers in ongoing, challenging PLD,
- Engaged in critical inquiry, using evidence to inform the next steps, and
- Reflected and reviewed progress against their responsive strategic goals.

In this way, Garrick demonstrated how he assisted bringing about a dramatic change in the culture of the fabric of the school for the benefit of Māori and non-Māori students, their whānau, teachers and the wider educational community.

What are the implications for Māori students, non-Māori students and their whānau?

When leaders enact critical leadership from a bicultural perspective, they are better equipped to address the aspirations of Māori students and their whānau. As their actions help to close the gap of underachievement, they also raise the bar for Māori to achieve their potential. Critical bicultural leaders assert that ‘being and thinking Māori’ is advantageous and promote a new discourse where Māori ways of knowing are privileged and valued. This leads to ensuring Māori succeed as Māori and as citizens of the world. Māori students and whānau benefit from a quality education, where the priorities are ensuring positive self-esteem and pride in their identity, language and culture - a far cry from the traditional Western approach to education for indigenous students.

When critical leaders re-legitimate Māori ontologies and epistemologies in this way, the potential for both Treaty partners becomes more visible. A powerful message is sent to non-Māori students and their families when they witness their schools decolonising the curriculum, structures and practices so Māori can stand proud as Māori. When Māori

students feel a sense of belonging because they can see and locate themselves within the school, both Treaty partners can enjoy the benefits of educational success in a bicultural relationship.

What are the implications for other secondary school leaders?

This research has highlighted some key messages that other school leaders in English-medium secondary schools might consider or re-consider if they seek to promote equity, excellence and belonging for all students. Leadership for critical educational reform entails an approach that is shared, bicultural, equitable and potential-focused. The principals within this research all spoke about their leadership role as a journey. When this journey was taken alongside others, the ownership of the focus, discourses, relationships, goals, actions, outcomes, benefits and challenges became shared. The collective had responsibilities to the individual and vice versa.

The bonds that tied these four principals together showed that like-minded colleagues are drawn to each other as they engage in power-sharing relationships that are mutually beneficial, despite the uniqueness of their contexts. Their concept of effective leadership included engaging as learners alongside each other, whether that was as tuakana or teina. These principals actively rejected the more traditional stance of leadership that would continue to promote disparities (Berryman, 2013). Their relationships were embedded within the concept of mana ōrite and they participated in a partnership in the true sense of the word, where the parameters were defined by all of the participants (Berryman et al., in press).

Summary

This chapter has discussed the findings in relation to the research questions and presented what I have learned about the leadership demonstrated by these principals and the connections to achieving critical educational reform in Aotearoa. These principals demonstrated critical leadership from a bicultural perspective focused on ensuring both Treaty partners benefitted from the opportunities offered by education and actively rejected the marginalisation of Māori learners. When leadership stems from a belief in achieving equity and excellence for all students, as mandated in Ka Hikitia, schools are far better equipped to measure success from multiple perspectives. Equity lies in broadening our definition of success to embrace mauri ora, demonstrated when students engage in

meaningful relationships, enjoy a sense of belonging, gain strength in their emotional and spiritual well-being and approach learning with positivity and energy (Berryman et al., in press). Focusing on the potential of Māori learners enables leaders to shift the discourse from marginalisation, oppression and deficit thinking to a discourse where Māori students realise their potential, as Māori, and as global citizens.

Chapter Five - Conclusion

Introduction

I began this research whilst working as a kaitoro within Kia Eke Panuku. As I worked alongside leaders in English-medium secondary schools, I asked the question, ‘What are the qualities a principal needs in order to achieve educational reform for Māori learners?’ What began as an exploration of skills and dispositions necessary to support Māori students to achieve their potential became a journey of discovery that ultimately led me to deeply consider my personal response to the bicultural promise within the Treaty of Waitangi. This has been a koha from the principals that I have humbly and gratefully received. As I have engaged with the leadership stories of the first-time principals I have come to understand that when principals enact critical leadership from a bicultural perspective they develop the agency to make a difference for their Māori and non-Māori students.

This chapter now returns to the whakatauākī outlined in my introduction. I then outline the limitations of the research, offer suggestions for further research and present recommendations for other parts of the education sector, both within and beyond Aotearoa.

Mā ngā huruhuru ka rere te manu

This whakatauākī has been a touchstone throughout my research and can be translated as, ‘It is the feathers that enable the bird to fly’. I wish to acknowledge and thank the voices that have contributed to my theorising around this whakatauākī, helping me to develop a deeper connection to the pearls of wisdom contained within it. As a way of working within the Kia Eke Panuku kaitoro role, we would always begin professional learning sessions with whakawhanaungatanga, often supported by a whakataukī or whakatauākī to help frame the time of sharing. I have offered the above whakatauākī many times with teachers and leaders, and therefore have listened to many people involved with education connecting the words to their practices and worldviews. The whakatauākī was also offered when kaitoro from across the country came together for one of our Kia Eke Panuku team hui. These opportunities to listen and learn, especially from those who share their gifts of Māori cultural knowledge,

have helped me to distil potent connections to the words. At once simple yet complex, these connections have helped me make sense of my own worldview and that of others.

I am drawn to the positivity of the whakatauākī, of what's possible once the feathers have adorned the bird and enabled flight. A nestling bird is protected and nurtured until they are ready to leave the nest as a fledgling. I see myself as teina, a beginning researcher, and I am supported by tuakana to assist my theorising and writing process. I see the principals in this research as providing care and protection to each other, their staff and their communities. Taking flight is a collective effort and it is a powerful metaphor for a journey of 'coming to know'. At the heart of this metaphor are the dual concepts of uniqueness and unity - feathers have unique individual functions but they also layer and interconnect in order to enable the bird to take flight. Just like feathers on the bird, these four principals are unique - in their individual contexts and leadership beliefs - and united - in their relentless focus on promoting equity, excellence and belonging for their Māori learners.

As this research comes to a close, my relationship with the four principals continues and from a te ao Māori perspective I have learned that I have a responsibility as a researcher to nurture these ongoing relationships. In order to lift above the findings of the research and to honour the voices of the principals, I have deliberately engaged in 'acts of dwelling' in order to *be*, to *know* and move towards a deeper level of kinship between the known and the knower (Heshusius, 1994). Taking a bird's eye view of the collaborative stories has enabled me to explore what it takes for our educational leaders to fly and how they in turn enable their teachers, learners and educational communities to embark on, manoeuvre within, and sustain their own successful flight journeys.

Key learnings

The collaborative story that has emerged from the four first-time principals has unearthed three key findings that contribute to understanding the type of leadership required for critical educational reform in Aotearoa under the Ka Hikitia imperative.

Critical leadership

We know that when leadership approaches embrace critical and kaupapa Māori theories, underpinned by a relentless moral imperative for Māori to realise their potential, educational

reform for Māori learners can occur (Berryman et al., 2016). Furthermore, transformative leadership, with its underlying promise of achieving social justice and both private and public good, whilst necessary, may not be enough on its own. These principals demonstrated a deep understanding of the need to bring criticality to their leadership that embraced an ongoing and iterative process of conscientisation and resistance, leading to transformative praxis. In this way, the principals were committed to bringing about accelerated outcomes for their Māori learners. Furthermore, they actively created bicultural spaces, where both Treaty partners could benefit from the principles of the Treaty promises.

Leading others within the zone of proximal development

These principals recognised they had a role in leading pedagogical change alongside the teachers in their schools as they focused intently on embedding culturally responsive and relational teaching and learning. They also recognised their role as educators in the broader sense, where they could lead others within their sphere of influence to contribute to changing the fabric of society in Aotearoa. Through their participation in Te Kotahitanga and Kia Eke Panuku, these principals were better equipped to build upon their prior knowledge and experiences to enact change from the outset of their principalships. Whilst they were all at different places in their first-time principalships, these principals demonstrated a way of being that reflected a deep engagement with, and commitment to, ongoing PLD that has the potential to change our schools and society. They understood that if we are to enjoy a truly bicultural Aotearoa, where relationships are embedded within the metaphor of mana ōrite, then we have an obligation to lead others in their own journeys of conscientisation and resistance. They recognised that when we focus on supporting teachers to embrace a truly bicultural curriculum with *all* of their students, then we can support Māori students to feel that they belong in schools and wider society.

Openness to embracing multiple worldviews

These principals demonstrated agency to understand multiple worldviews, which likely stems from their deeply held moral imperative to eradicate oppression of Māori students within the New Zealand education system. Within their cultural toolkits were ways of being and knowing that highly valued the ontologies and epistemologies of their Māori students. They were all active learners of te reo Māori and tikanga Māori and demonstrated a commitment to the ongoing process of strengthening their bilingual and bicultural skills and knowledge.

This commitment extended benefits to others within their sphere of influence - students, teachers, whānau and communities, Māori and non-Māori alike - as they focused on promoting mauri ora for all. Their openness to embracing multiple worldviews has been an essential trait for these leaders to contribute to and achieve critical educational reform in Aotearoa. Embracing ontological and epistemological pluralism enabled these principals to promote equity, excellence and belonging for all students.

Limitations and suggestions for future research

The limitations of this research lie within the small number of first-time principals coming from the English-medium secondary sector and working in decile one to three schools. Having a larger sample that was inclusive of first-time principals throughout primary, intermediate and secondary schools and Māori-medium kura and across deciles would extend the findings of the research. Another possible area for future research would be a comparative study of first-time and experienced principals involved in ongoing cycles of PLD and those who are not. Undertaking a longitudinal study with those embarking on their first-time principalship might also have the potential to inform the PLD provided for new principals.

How might these key learnings potentially influence the education sector, both within and beyond Aotearoa?

With the current educational environment focusing on strengthening learning communities, the key findings from this research may have implications for leaders in other parts of the education sector. The newly established leadership roles in Kāhui Ako have begun to be enacted, therefore the opportunity to appoint leaders within our Kāhui Ako who demonstrate the qualities of critical bicultural leadership becomes vitally important for achieving educational reform towards equity. If leaders of Kāhui Ako are even considering embracing the moral imperative for changing the very fabric of their communities, then the need to engage in ongoing PLD that helps them maintain the will and develop the skills of critical leadership becomes essential (Berryman et al., 2016). Furthermore, those people responsible for appointing these leaders may well benefit from considerations of the extent to which the applicants have demonstrated, or have the potential to demonstrate, critical leadership.

Similarly, and of a more enduring nature than the current PLD environment, there may well be implications for those who employ our principals. In Aotearoa, it is predominantly Boards of Trustees who make the decision when employing a new principal. Boards of Trustees could be offered more opportunities to engage in learning about what it takes to achieve educational reform for Māori learners. Furthermore, if these leadership skills were visible in the applicants, Boards of Trustees may well have a huge role to play in improving the nature of English-medium schooling in Aotearoa.

Other implications for the educational sector may lie in considerations around the PLD funded through Ministry of Education contracts for aspiring and first-time principals. An opportunity might lie in further iterative research and development into the extent to which this PLD is of a critical nature. If we are to achieve accelerated outcomes for our Māori learners, then it is imperative that we support aspiring and first-time principals to develop both their personal and professional capabilities to name, critically reflect and act.

For educators outside of Aotearoa, the implications of this research may lie in considerations of the extent to which leaders are open to multiple worldviews and, where applicable, to prioritise those of the indigenous students and communities they serve. All educators need to critically reflect on their practice to explore whether the education they are delivering to their indigenous students perpetuates oppression, or comes from a more liberatory stance.

Summary

Recently, I had the privilege of witnessing one of these principals lead with humility and courage in a highly contested space. I experienced first hand the vulnerability of leaders who believe in the Treaty and live it on a daily basis. These four principals go against the usual discourse; they stand strong in Ka Hikitia and the Treaty of Waitangi and they lead like few others are leading. They will continue to work and lead together, garnering strength from each other. Like huruhuru on the manu, they maintain their uniqueness, but together they fly as leaders and create contexts within their schools that enable members of their educational communities to fly.

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