# Decolonising Professional Learning:

## Weaving a Whānau of Interest

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**by**

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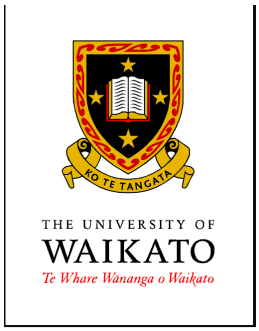


**2020**

For Koro, nana, and my son

# ABSTRACT

Raranga (weaving) has been described as an act of decolonisation and resistance. In my experience, learning to weave was more than an act of learning the tikanga (rituals) and methods with which to weave flax and tukutuku (lattice work); it was learning about learning and learning about living, life and all the things that make us who we are. As I experienced and began to understand Māori metaphors such as whanaungatanga, kaupapa, ako and manaakitanga I found that learning the art of weaving shaped me as I shaped the weaving. This thesis ideates a metaphor of weaving to describe a model of cultural and structural school reform that emerged from a school's teaching and learning collaborations over time. It calls for the weaving of a new, decolonised model of education.

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To Cairo. I love you and I'm proud of you. I hope that you might read this thesis and perhaps understand why I worked so much for so long.

To Stan, Nikki and Cindy. Thanks for always being there to theorise, cajole and encourage me, even on the darkest days. You are gold.

*Once there was a kuia who made mats and baskets. In the corner of her kitchen lived a spider who made webs.*
*One day the spider called out to the kuia,*
*"Hey old woman,*
*My weaving is better than yours".*
*(The Kuia and the Spider, Grace, P. 1981).*

# CONTENTS

# List of Figures and Tables

# CHAPTER ONE- INTRODUCTION

*The kuia called back to the spider, 'Spider, your weaving is koretake, it's only good for catching flies'.*
*'Yours is only good for sitting on,' called the spider.*
*And they argued and argued (Grace, 1981).*

In this excerpt from the story of The Kuia and the Spider, the central characters are arguing about whose weaving is best. They aren't really listening to one another. When I was growing up I often felt out of place, not listened to and not good enough. I experienced external arguing within my family and internal arguing in my heart and mind due to my ongoing feelings of being different to the dominant culture and expectations at that time, especially evident in my experiences of schooling. I have also felt this way as a teacher and school leader. Through special relationships with kaumātua I learned about life and living. I feel connected to the story of the Kuia and the Spider because of the relationships between the grandmothers and their grandchildren and because of the experiences of weaving. I begin each chapter with an excerpt from this story and connect it to my research.

## Introductory statement

In this section, I outline the metaphors I use throughout this thesis. I make connections between these metaphors and pedagogy. I then outline my research questions and justify why this research is important. Finally, I describe the overall structure of the thesis.

### Metaphors

Raranga (weaving) has been described as an act of decolonisation and resistance (Puketapu- Hetet, 1989). In my experience, learning to weave was more than an act of learning the tikanga (rituals) and methods with which to weave flax and tukutuku (lattice work); it was learning about learning and learning about living, life and all the things that make us who we are. Through the experiencing and understanding of Māori metaphors such as whanaungatanga (family-like relationships), kaupapa (shared vision/purpose), ako (Māori pedagogy) and manaakitanga (caring hospitality) the act of

weaving shaped me as I was taught to shape the weaving. This thesis contends that Māori metaphors can enlighten and decolonise pedagogical structures and cultural relationships, changing the positioning in a school towards a state of critical consciousness and critical action; thus positioning educators as agentic learners and improving outcomes for Māori students, and indeed all students. The metaphor of the weaving together of pedagogical changes and the decolonisation of school structures are key to overall school reform.

## Connections to pedagogy

This thesis uses the act of weaving to explore the interconnectedness of warp threads (longitudinal strands) and weft strands (drawn through strands) made up of pedagogical structures and cultural relationships based on engaging with Māori metaphors and the people of the school, working with them, learning alongside and from them. When beginning a piece of weaving, such as a rourou (basket) two single strands are intercrossed. Drawing from my understandings from Te Ao Māori (Māori worldview) I liken this to a pedagogical stance based in aroha. I have learned that aroha (love) can be understood as made up of two words: the aro (small space) and the ha (breath of life). Therefore, to engage in a pedagogy of aroha means one must engage in dialogue closely and in proximity with the other. When creating a piece of weaving the whenu (strands) are pushed as closely together as possible as the weaving is worked on. This pushing together happens throughout the creation of the piece. I relate this to dialogic pedagogy, which is a key aspect towards school reform. People in schools must continue to connect work together as they learn, unlearn and relearn (Wink, 2011) in order to realise a new, decolonised model of education based on equity and excellence for all.

## Experiences as a weaver

When beginning a piece of weaving I have been taught to use clothes-pegs to hold the weaving in place, until such a time that the piece itself has the strength that it may hold itself together. The weaver moves these pegs, as they may need to be in different places at different times. When creating a piece of weaving there is no *right way up.* The weaver turns the weaving and moves the pegs as it takes shape. The weaving can be turned, reversed and flipped over as it is developed. It can be

deconstructed and reconstructed, however this becomes more difficult the longer it is left. The harakeke hardens and dries. This in itself is a metaphor for the years of inequity and dishonourable partnerships in education. In the past these policies, and the system itself have often constrained the very acts of participatory action for Māori.

This thesis considers how the school structures such as leadership, time, evidence and curriculum can act as those pegs, holding things together as they begin, moving in response to the people of the school as strands of capability and adaptive expertise strengthen until the pegs can be moved to strengthen new pieces of weaving. This thesis considers this metaphor, through the voices and narratives of teachers engaged in our professional learning community, the voices of students through their achievement and progress data, the voices of whānau and the theories of others in the research and educational community.

## Research questions

The overarching research questions that this thesis seeks to understand and answer are:

- What were the experiences of teachers in this professional learning community?
- What are the implications for other teachers in a similar professional learning community?
- What was the influence of these experiences on student achievement whilst maintaining their own cultural experiences and identity?
- What did whānau think about the benefits of the school reform for their children?

In order to develop these understandings the following sub-questions were posed during the research procedure as open-ended questions:

- What have been your experiences of professional learning at Invercargill Middle School from February 2012- December 2017?
- What would you recommend to other people wishing to engage in professional learning and why?

- In terms of your professional learning what do you believe have been the benefits to your students and why?

# Justification

## "Banking" models of professional learning

In justifying this research I considered the problems that can emerge when teaching and learning were seen solely as the passively received transmission of reified knowledge, or as described by Freire (1972), the banking model of education. In this model, education is viewed as the transference of information from the teacher to the learner, a model that can become an "exercise in dominance" (p 53). Other models of teaching and learning involve a *more expert other* working with the learner in the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978) and learning occurring in socio-cultural contexts. However, teacher professional learning in New Zealand has continued to be overly dependent upon the first model, often with external professional developers as the expert charged with transmitting knowledge that further maintains the power of this pedagogical status quo. This seems to be especially true the older the learner becomes. This model continues to construct the teacher as the dominant voice in the classroom with individualised authority and responsibility for teaching and learning. This model has failed to make a lasting difference for large groups of students, especially those who are Māori (Education Review Office, 2016). The historical agenda of colonisation through assimilation is reflected in the ongoing disparity in achievement and educational success between Māori and Pākehā students in Aotearoa/New Zealand[1].

## Culturally responsive teaching

Culturally responsive teaching has been defined by Gay (2010) as teaching based on and through personal and cultural strengths. Culturally responsive teachers positively reject deficit theorising, taking an agentic view and accepting the moral responsibility to make a difference. Focusing on what they can do to bring about changes in educational outcomes for their students is evidenced in classrooms where

[1] Aotearoa/New Zealand will be referred to as Aotearoa in the following text.

teachers demonstrate that they care for their students through identity confirming interactions, have high expectations, are organised and prepared, are reflective of the impact of both learning and relational interactions and are able to access a range of approaches to teaching and learning that increases achievement and engagement of their Māori students (Bishop & Berryman, 2006). Strong links to culturally responsive pedagogy have been made through indigenous models.

### Indigenous Leadership

Alton-Lee (2016), in describing indigenous leadership, highlights the importance of building upon "Māori aspirations, preferences and practices for educational reform"(p. 36). This model views culture as a resource that can be deliberately used to draw upon Māori knowledge to accelerate progress for Māori students, while also benefiting non-Māori with new ways of being and new learning. This model is central to how ako is understood as bringing reciprocal responsibility to both teach and learn from each other.

### Decolonisation of professional learning

Although there is much written about successful professional learning and development (PLD)[2] for teachers (Timperley, Wilson, Barrar & Fung, 2007), there is little information about what this means within mainstream school professional learning communities as seen through a decolonising lens. As a Deputy Principal, teacher and curriculum leader in an urban state primary school I have been responsible for engaging with teachers in professional learning. This thesis explores a framework for the development of a professional learning community based on the weaving together of cultural shifts and structural shifts. It draws from learning about, through and from Māori metaphors.

## Overarching aim

This thesis aims to contribute to the decolonisation and reformation of professional learning communities in schools. Accordingly, this research seeks to:

[2] Professional learning and development will be referred to as PLD throughout this thesis.

- understand what this andragogy looks like when it is most effective and operating within Māori metaphors;
- show explicit instances of effective andragogy ;
- understand how Māori metaphors have influenced teacher professional learning and practice; and in turn
- enact the vision of Māori students, in fact *all students,* enjoying educational success now and for the future with their cultural identities strong and secure.

In so doing, this can help others to understand more about teachers giving life to the aspirations of these students, their whānau and those of Ka Hikitia (Ministry of Education, 2013), addressing the fundamental issue of inequitable educational outcomes in Aotearoa.

## Overall structure of this thesis

Working within the conventions of academic writing, this thesis is arranged into an introduction and six chapters. The aims of this thesis and the framing questions were outlined in this introduction. Chapter Two uses both national and international literature to contextualise this kaupapa (purpose/vision). Chapter Three outlines my methodology, methods, data collection and analysis process, alongside the ethical considerations I adhered to. Chapter Four describes my positionality within this research. The findings of the work are presented in Chapter Five. In Chapter Six the findings are contextualised in relation to the research questions and sub-questions. In Chapter Seven the research findings are summarised and it concludes with some of the wider implications for others concerned with education.

# CHAPTER TWO- LITERATURE REVIEW

*At last the spider said to the kuia,*
*'I'll tell you what,*
*We'll have a weaving competition'.*
*'Yes,' said the kuia.*
*"And when our grandchildren come on Saturday they'll tell us whose weaving is best.'*
*So the spider and the kuia stopped arguing and got to work.*
*(Grace, 1981)*

In this part of the narrative the Kuia and the Spider decide to have a competition to decide whose weaving is best. They stop arguing and get to work.

At the beginning of the period of school reform the resistance to more decolonised ways of working did result in some arguing and push-back from the other adults in the school. However, like the kuia and the spider in Grace's story, the arguing was not helpful and we did knuckle down and get to work. We worked towards becoming critically cognisant of the ongoing disparity and historical agenda of colonisation in the achievement and educational success between Māori and Pākehā students in Aotearoa, thus making sense of the cultural and structural reforms required to make a difference in our school community.

## Introduction

> Formal education can make a difference not just for individuals, but also for social cohesion, economic growth and adaptation. Or, education can influence student learning and attitudes in ways that are counterproductive to valued goals. Unintended negative effects can result [when schools try to collaborate with families], despite agreed goals and the best of intentions of all involved. (Alton-Lee, 2017, p.2).

This quote, as stated by Alton-Lee (2017), provides a lens through which to consider what we are doing in our PLD spaces that also embodies the pedagogy we are aspiring to provide in our classrooms. Then, we can consider how institutions and systems such as PLD can influence and provide (or not provide) teachers with the agency to reflect on their own practice and make changes in order to truly transform our current education system. The system that Bishop (1997) identified as currently operating in breach of the Treaty of Waitangi.

This chapter begins by considering Mātauranga Māori and teaching and learning in Te Ao Maōri. It then discusses the impact of Colonisation, the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi and the subsequent educational policies and the impact these have had on the people and continue to have. It outlines the use of education policy to assimilate and predetermine the futures of generations of Māori, as second-class citizens, believed to be less capable of academic study and better suited to manual labour. Finally, it considers the effect of this colonised education system on the practice of teachers through their professional development and appraisal processes.

## Te Ao Māori

From Te Ao Māori, or the Māori world, emerges the epistemological (knowledge sources and justification) and ontological (ways of being), view of the world as Māori. The Māori world view is defined by Our Land and Water Toitū te Whenua (n.d.) as the view that acknowledges the interconnectedness and interrelationship of all things: living and non-living; the past and the future; spiritual and mundane.

## Mātauranga Māori

Within Te Ao Māori there is a great spiritual significance in the acquisition, understanding and sharing of knowledge. This significance began with the story of knowledge acquisition and of the journey, understood by some tribes as being about Tānemahuta, in bringing knowledge away from the darkness into the newly formed world of light. Tānemahuta is one of the children of Ranginui, the Sky Father, and Papatūānuku, the Earth Mother. After being instrumental in the separation of his parents and the bringing of light into the world, Tānemahuta journeyed through the twelve heavens to retrieve the knowledge that would guide human existence on earth. While his role as atua (guardian spirit) would have enabled him to do this, in some tellings of this story, a demi-god Tāwhaki gathered the knowledge. Whatever the case, knowledge, in the form of three kete mātauranga (baskets of knowledge), was located in the treasure house of Rangiātea in the twelfth heaven. Many adversities were faced on the journey to collect these kete, each containing a particular set of knowledge: the first, Kete

Tuaatea contained the knowledge of spiritual realities peace, goodness, and love; the second, Kete Tuauri, contained the knowledge and understandings, that lie beneath our sense of lived experiences and institutions of daily life and the metaphysical world, such as prayers, incantations, and ritual, and the third, Kete Aronui, contained the knowledge of how we experience and understand the natural and physical world through things such as war, agriculture, woodwork, stonework and earthworks. Along with these three kete, a red stone and a white stone were also collected. These colours are often used to symbolise tapu (sacred) knowledge and practices passed on to specifically selected recipients, and noa (unrestricted, worldly or mundane) knowledge and practices. These two stones were used for the representation of knowledge. They were used to safeguard what was selected from the kete and to ensure that the knowledge was used wisely and not just for individualised use or benefit, but for the benefit of all (Bacon, 1995; Marsden, 2003, cited Knoef, 2019; Spiller, 2011).

Versions of this story are increasingly celebrated during Matariki (Māori New Year) each year in June. This story calls for people to take the journey towards mindful acquisition, sharing and application of knowledge for the greater good. Knowledge is not something that is owned by an individual, but being a holder of knowledge brings with it a responsibility to maintain the knowledge and share it.

Mātauranga Māori and the ways in which knowledge was understood, valued and passed on has been described by Durie (2019) and by Berryman (2008) as encompassing centrifugal thinking. He describes this as an holistic view that is interested in making relational connections to all participants, and coming through a lens based in indigenous epistemology and indigenous funds of knowledge (Berryman, 2008). Durie (1999) contends that:

> Central to the domain of interconnectedness, and often the point of both tauparapara [incantation that identifies a speaker's connections] and karakia, [prayer] is the link between people and the wider world. Interconnectedness also has other dimensions: connections over time, connections between tribes and peoples, connections which link secular and spiritual, temporal and ethereal. Always the energy flow is outwards, a type of centrifugal force away from micro dimensions (an individual, a single issue) to macro levels (groups, broad encounters). Far from trying to find the smallest common denominator, the message of the tauparapara is to search for the numerator under which

> commonalities can be harmonised. Marae listeners are inclined to run out of patience when the energy flow leads in a centripetal direction to the repetition of specific details which have diminishing relevance to the wider group and fail to connect with broader concerns (p.359).

Centripetal direction seems more invested in knowledge that can be reified as the one truth, posing in this case, an almost oppositional difference coming from Te Ao Māori and a Western worldview. Therefore, understanding Māori metaphors from a Māori worldview appears to be an important position from which to understand the authenticity of knowledge inter-relationships.

## Māori Metaphors

Within Te Ao Māori metaphors are considered powerful tools. They are a bridge between experience and understanding, words and senses. They contain layers of meaning and can create vivid images and emotional responses (Dell, 2016). Māori metaphors are layered throughout all aspects of Te Ao Māori, including whaikōrero (oratory), waiata (songs), karakia, tauparapara and whakataukī/whakatauākī (proverbs/wise sayings). These metaphors are often, but not always, connected to nature.

A number of related Māori metaphors, that are increasingly important if education is going to be seen as relational, will be unpacked next.

### Whanaungatanga

Whanaungatanga is often described as the building of relationships, through dialogic practices and within a shared vision or common goal. Whakawhanaungatanga is the process of establishing links, making connections and relating to people in culturally responsive ways. Berryman, Lawrence and Lamont (2017) contend that it is only through relationships that we come to know what is in each other's heads, hearts and inner selves, the *intra-personal*. Within our theoretical understanding, learning as sense-making on both the intra-personal (within the person) and the inter-personal (between people) plane is understood as situated not solely in the mind of the learner but located also within the social and cultural environment that contextualises the learner (Littleton & Mercer, 2013; Vygotsky, 1978). Entering into an ako relationship,

with someone that we may perceive as *other,* takes respect and courage, especially when we might be the teacher. It involves listening beyond the words and responding to the person in front of us rather than responding to our assumptions of who they might or should be.

Within the metaphor of whānau the concept of knowledge is regarded as belonging to the whole group or whānau, rather than being private or belonging to the individual for the ultimate benefit of the total group and able to be shared for all to gain not essentially a credential for capital gain. Within the metaphor of whanaungatanga sits further metaphors. The concept of āu (myself, me, I) sits within the word whānau. Āu is a possessive particle/determiner which indicates the possessor has control of the relationship or is dominant, active or superior to what is possessed. This denotes the responsibility back to self to enact in ways that benefit all. (Bishop, Ladwig and Berryman, 2014 ) A further aspect of whānau is whānautanga.

## Whānautanga

Whānautanga, as described by Berryman (2019, personal communication; Cranstoun, 2018) means to treat others as you would your own family; that all actions and interactions come from a place of aroha and potential, exactly what we would want for our own whānau. It places a focus on a sense of belonging for all students, whānau and staff. In order to act in ways that embody whānautanga it requires a rejection of what Powell and Menendian (2017) term as othering. They define othering as a:

> ...set of dynamics, processes, and structures that engender marginality and persistent inequality across any of the full range of human differences based on group identities...virtually every global, national, and regional conflict is wrapped within or organized around one or more dimension of group-based difference... Othering undergirds territorial disputes, sectarian violence, military conflict, the spread of disease, hunger and food insecurity, and even climate change (p.1).

Metge (1990, as cited in Bishop, Ladwig & Berryman, 2014) explains that to use the metaphor of whānau, means to identify a series of rights and responsibilities, commitments, obligations, and supports that are fundamental to the group. These are bound by the tikanga of the whānau*;* warm interpersonal interactions, shared responsibility, solidarity, co-operation towards success as a group and shared

responsibility for property, knowledge, items and issues. Acting in a manner of whānautanga means that the whānau is the space in which communication is located, outcomes are shared, knowledge and understandings are co-constructed and activities take place effectively. Within the roles and relationships of whānau, hapū and iwi, sits the metaphor of mana.

## Mana

Mana is often described in English translation as prestige. However the word mana contains layers of meaning. Mana can be described as a core Māori value and concept that has different manifestations in a range of relationships. Used in this sense, mana refers not just to the authority and prestige implicit in a leadership role, but to the way leaders treat those with whom they have relationships. As a concept applied to leaders, the goal of leadership is to enhance the mana of those in their care. Acknowledging the individuals in their care implies that leaders are also acknowledging the whānau that they come from. In the case of Māori students, this includes the hapū and iwi from whom those individuals come. In so doing, leaders enhance their own mana (Bishop, 2013).

In a broader context of a school and its community, mana is shared, distributed and acknowledged. Berryman, Lawerence and Lamont (2018) state that mana; "For Māori, this means that success enables them to walk confidently and with mana in the two worlds of Aotearoa New Zealand"(p.8).

As this senior Māori student explained:

> For me it's being able to walk in both worlds—te ao Pākehā me te ao Māori (the Pākehā world and the Māori world); being able to balance them both; being able to implement them into your life; being able to recall the wisdom and tikanga (cultural customs and practices) of our tūpuna (ancestors) who we should never forget. They made us. They are us, and we are them.
>
> (Poutama Pounamu, p.n.d.).

Mana sits within the metaphor of manaaki as defined below, thus, in order to embed the principle of manaaki in the way that leaders, teachers and their schools interact within their communities it is fundamental to understand mana and mana ōrite.

## Mana ōrite

The metaphor of mana ōrite can be understood through the above explanations of mana- as prestige, responsibility, power and authority; and ōrite- as the same, alike, equal. Therefore the metaphor of mana ōrite can be considered as equitable power relationships. Berryman, Lawrence and Lamont (2018) have this to say:

> Cultural relationships benefit from our engagement with the metaphor mana ōrite. School leaders and teachers have an essential part to play in understanding and either perpetuating or disrupting traditional power relationships within the concept of partnership. Mana ōrite provides a different yet powerful position from which to seek solutions for relational engagement (p.4).

Therefore, when considering Maōri metaphors contextualised through a lens of educational leadership it is important to consider the actions and interactions in terms of power sharing.

## Rangatiratanga

The metaphor of rangatiratanga is often used when discussing the Treaty of Waitangi, and translated as chieftianship (Orange, 2000). The word rangatira itself is used to denote a chief, and someone of great mana. However, as with many kupu Māori (Māori words) the word itself contains layers of meaning- ranga (to weave) and tira (people); therefore a rangatira is somebody who weaves people together. The addition of -tanga (as a normalising suffix) refers to concepts such as sovereignity, self determination, autonomy (Barlow, 1991). This metaphor provides a Kaupapa Māori lens to leadership.

## Raranga harakeke

The act of weaving is described by Puketapu-Hetet (1989) as full of symbolism and hidden meanings, embodied with the spiritual values and beliefs of the Maori people. She goes on to say that raranga harakeke (the weaving of flax) is the method of weaving that has best survived colonisation. The symbolism and metaphors are contained in the many patterns, both ancient and modern, used in the many forms of weaving, and in the fibres themselves. Raranga is also a powerful symbol that evokes

tribal memories of the tīpuna and the skills and knowledge that were passed down. Mona (2019) describes raranga as "A living art and a living symbol that has survived with us, our language and culture, and that moves with us beyond the temporary setbacks of the colonial era" (p.1). Raranga is method used to create kete (woven basket) depicted in Fig. 1, which itself has uses in everyday life, but also as a symbol of ancient knowledge and wisdom. The connections to which will be described in a subsequent paragraph. Rhimona (2019) considers the use of kete, carried by many Maori men and women in lieu of purses, handbags and briefcases, as a symbol of decolonisation and liberation from the "shackles of European culture which has tried for two hundred years to submerge, and at times to obliterate, all traces of Maori culture" (p.1). Another form of weaving is tukutuku.

**Figure 1: Kete**

Source: (Ali Brown, 2008)

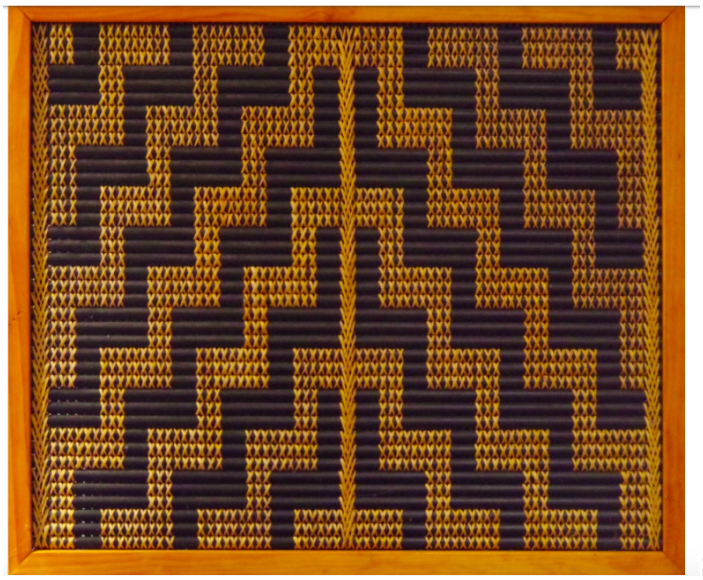
## Tukutuku

The art of tukutuku is described as traditional latticework that adorns the walls of meeting houses (Te Kanawa, 2014). These panels are traditionally woven using pīngao (native beach plant) and kiekie (native epiphyte from the bush) and the stems of ferns, toetoe (native grass), and sometimes rimu or totara slats were also incorporated. Dying of the flax and kiekie was carried out by placing the already scraped material into

paru (swamp mud), after the fibres had been boiled with bark from the Hinau tree. It was left in the mud for a specified period of time. These materials were only gathered at certain times of the year and often came from other places that required travel in order to find and harvest them.

The patterns contain layers of metaphorical meaning. One such pattern is the poutama (ongoing stairway of knowledge). This step like pattern has connections to Tānemahuta and the three kete of knowledge. It has been said that at one time the only pattern used in tukutuku was the poutama (Department of Māori Studies,1986). The patterns themselves are created by the tying of a specific knot. This knot is said to have originated from a man named Tawhaki who had a son called Wahieroa, and Wahieroa had a son called Rata. Wahieroa was killed by Matuku. His death was avenged by his son Rata, who did this by snaring Matuku with a noose; the knot of which was his own invention. This knot has now become the basic tie in all tukutuku work (Department of Māori Studies, 1986). Tukutuku contain layers of meaning, much like all Māori metaphor, such as manaakitanga.

**Figure 2: Poutama Tukutuku**



Source: (Blipfoto, 2015)

## Manaakitanga

Manaakitanga (generosity, caring and sharing; a responsibility to uplift and uphold mana) can become embedded in the way that leaders, teachers and their schools interact within their communities. In a school where manaakitanga is a key value, leaders and teachers care for their students as culturally located human beings above all

else. This extends and encompasses actions and interactions with and between teachers, students, parents, wider whānau, Boards of Trustees and agencies that support and work within the school act as a metaphoric whānau.

## Whānau-of-interest

Within the metaphor of whānau Māori cultural values and practices are an essential part of the day-to-day whānau practices. A metaphoric use of this concept of extended family, suggested by Bishop (1995, as cited Berryman, 2008), states that within a kaupapa Māori framework, groups can develop relationships and patterns of organisation similar to those that exist within a traditional Māori whānau and establish themselves as whānau-of-interest. The whānau-of-interest operates at all times according to Māori tikanga (protocol) using collaborative decision-making and participatory processes (Bishop, 1995; Bishop, & Glynn, 1999; Berryman, 2008) that affirm the cultural identity and validate the culturally appropriate protocols and processes followed by its members. Using the imagery, metaphors and theorising from a Māori cultural context facilitates the engagement and commitment of Māori kaumātua, professionals, and family members. Such culturally affirming practices provide opportunities for the promotion of well-being and belonging for students and whānau. A Maōri metaphor regarding well-being is mauri ora.

## Mauri ora

The term Mauri is often translated as life-force. It has been said that every living thing on the physical and spiritual planes has mauri; but conversely not everyone may have mana. Durie (2019) describes Mauri as being in different states at various times. Mauri ora, mauri noho and mauri oho oho (as defined more fully below) are examples of these states of being.

Durie (2016) describes how identity, language and culture are essential for student's well-being and a sense of belonging in schools. He uses the term mauri to describe vitality, integrity, uniqueness and energy that exists within every person, ora refers to one's holistic wellbeing. From this we understand Mauri ora, or wellbeing, as "demonstrated by a spirit that is enlightened, a mind that is alert and inquiring, a body that is fit-for-purpose and free of pain, and with relationships that are nurturing and mutually beneficial" (p.n.d.). Durie (2015; 2016) describes situations where

relationships are disempowering and humiliating, as leaving the individual's mauri in a weakened state, one that is constrained by a loss of hope and an apprehensive mind – a state he describes as mauri noho. Research, such as Berryman and Eley (2017), tells us that a Māori student's sense of well-being and belonging is influenced by whether they are seen for their strengths, uniqueness and potential, or conversely, for perceived challenges and deficits. This sense of well-being and belonging and potential focus is in fact the kaupapa on which educational success should be built.

## Kaupapa

The term kaupapa is often used in the manner of a topic, purpose or focus (in English translation). Bishop, et al., (2014) describe kaupapa as promoting a common vision that is focussed on the potential of all learners to thrive in the education system without compromising who they are. They state that enacting this principle includes (but is not limited to): creating a context for all students to pursue what inspires them and determine their own success; centring the student within the learning in ways that respond to the student's interests, questions and inspiration; valuing and legitimating culture and identity through the curriculum; promoting learning as an enjoyable and stimulating experience for students.

In describing Kaupapa Māori as an approach Linda Smith (1992) states that Kaupapa Māori is founded in a Māori worldview, that seeks positive outcomes for the collectives of whānau, hapū and iwi (family, sub-tribal and tribal groupings) and for Māori more generally. It is an approach that views the holistic makeup of Māori, both as individuals and as collective members of community, in working towards advancing the well-being of the collective. A significant aspect of the approach that is particular to Kaupapa Māori is that it asserts Māori language and cultural values as integral to its practice (G. Smith, 1992; L. Smith, 1992).

## Kaupapa Māori

The recognition of the rights of Māori as indigenous or first peoples (Sissons, 2005, cited Berryman, Lawrence and Lamont, 2018) is fundamental to the very existence of Kaupapa Māori in which Māori views of the world and Māori cultural practices (tikanga Māori) are crucial to the survival of Māori indigenous identity. With rights to self determination consistently diminished by majority culture interests, the

need to voice and action Treaty rights is an integral element of Kaupapa Māori. The revitalisation and maintenance of traditional Maōri knowledge, principles and practices is at the heart of Kaupapa Māori. One such principle is ako.

## Ako

Berryman and Eley (2017) describe Ako as a Māori term found in both akonga (learner) and kaiwhakaako (teacher) inferring the cultural responsibility and reciprocity of learners (and teacher) involved in shared, conjoint construction of new understandings, skills and knowledge. In pre-colonial Aotearoa, ako was determined and dependent on Māori cultural concepts. Rather than standing in isolation, ako was interwoven and interconnected with Māori epistemologies, knowledge, values and worldly constructs, and as such, to articulate ako in its fullest sense requires understanding a vast array of other traditional Māori concepts (Bol Jun Lee, 2004; Pere 1991). In Te Ao Māori society, ako was the integral process through which the creation and articulation of Māori knowledge was conceptualised and shared.

Like ako, responsive pedagogy emerges from within a relational dialogic space. To engage in dialogue, teachers must respect diversity and understand the potential for learning and growth through the exploration of those differences (Freire, 1972). Again like ako, dialogue within responsive pedagogy requires relationships in which risk taking is encouraged, where there is no shame in being a *not knower* and where it is understood that everyone brings with them knowledge, ways of knowing and experiences of value to share. Understood in this way, dialogue is foundational to responsive pedagogy; it is not simply a teaching technique or strategy (Berryman, et al., 2017). Bishop, Berryman and Wearmouth (2014) identify that ako involves promoting reciprocal responsibilities to engage with each other through ongoing, interactive sense making and that this includes (but is not limited to): valuing and legitimating multiple views of knowledge and ways of knowing; engaging students in the planning and evaluation of their own learning; teachers positioning themselves as learners alongside other learners; empowering students to understand and transform their current realities and utilising a full spectrum of interactions and strategies appropriate for the students in front of them.

## The Fabric of Te Ao Maōri Society

> "It is evident that Māori had a complex and efficient education system prior to the arrival of the Pākehā colonisers" (Jenkins, 1988, as cited in Ngaamo, 2018 p.34).

Pere (1991) states that, "Traditional Māori learning rested on the principal that every person is a learner from the time they are born (if not before) to the time they die"(p.54). Nepe (1991) concurs, describing people as being in a constant state of learning and therefore a constant state of teaching, because the individual and the collective roopu (group) benefit through the sharing of knowledge. This knowledge was highly valued; it was seen as vital sustenance for and representative of the mana of a whānau, hapū (sub-tribe) and iwi (tribe). This collective view of the benefit of knowledge meant that in traditional Māori society education was inclusive, co-operative, reciprocal and expected. Metge (1984) describes ako as seamlessly embedded in the life of the community. Young people were included in all formal and informal contexts, and opportunities to learn were plentiful- through formal institutions such as whaikōrero (formal speeches), waiata and informally through whiriwhiri kōrero (discussions) in a range of contexts.

Within Te Ao Māori knowledge was understood as beneficial to the collective. Metge (1986) refers to the all-encompassing nature of ako as education through engagement, modelling and exposure, embedded in the ongoing life of the community and conducted through a variety of teaching and learning relationships. Everyone had a significant role to play; kaumātua-kuia (elders); mātua-whaea (parents); tuakana-teina (elder and younger siblings); and tīpuna mātua/tīpuna whaea and mokopuna (grandparents and grandchildren). This relationship was significant and fundamental. The children were often taught, guided and nurtured by their tīpuna/kaumātua whilst their mātua were tending to the needs of daily living. The kaumātua observed children as they grew, watching for their strengths and gifts, which led to decisions regarding the child's education (Ngaamo, 2018). The interconnectedness of these relationships are key to understanding the way in which ako operated. This included not only providing the conditions for the teaching and learning of knowledge, skills and abilities of the physical and spiritual realms, but also the frameworks of whakapapa; usually translated into English as genealogy. However, whakapapa is more than genealogical connections for it provides explanations and connections to the origins of all things. Whakapapa

underpins relationships with the natural world and spiritual world, through the connections with Papatūānuku, Ranginui and the many other atua and kaitiaki (guardians) of the Māori world (Bol Jun Lee, 2004). Respect for, and acknowledgement of this metaphysical dimension requires the understanding of ako through the sanctity of karakia and tikanga. These ceremonial disciplines were vital in the effective teaching and learning in fields such as carving, weaving and the cultivation of crops.

In summary, ako was not only a part of the traditional Māori way of life, it was integral to the creation, articulation and conceptualisation of Māori epistemology. It was grounded in the cultural practices, language, context of the roopu, and an integral aspect of the relationships. Colonisation and the introduction of mandatory formal schooling brought with it the systematical undermining of Māori knowledge and ways of being, which impacted Māori epistemology in many ways.

## Colonisation

The arrival of Captain Cook to our shores 250 years ago set in place the purposeful acts of the redistribution and maintenance of power in Aotearoa, based on a different worldview. The Doctrine of Discovery (also known as the Doctrine of Christian Discovery) is described by Ngata (2019) as an international legal concept that was founded from a number of Catholic laws (called 'papal bulls') issued by the Vatican in the 15th and 16th centuries. It gave the monarchies of Britain and Europe the right to conquer and claim lands, and to convert or kill the native inhabitants of those lands. The laws which emerged from this Doctrine have never been revoked since they were adopted in the 15th century. They perpetuated an ingrained acceptance of European superiority over all who are non-white and non-Christian, accompanied by a sense of supreme European entitlement to all non-white, non-Christian lands and resources. The following centuries saw these European empires claiming lands across the globe, establishing colonies, and carrying this out through deliberate and determined acts of colonisation of indigenous populations, through the metaphor of superiority and assimilation. The Doctrine of Discovery located and directed indigenous wealth to Europe from every inhabited continent on the planet (Ngata, 2019). It was through this sense of superiority and entitlement that the formal schooling system began in Aotearoa.

## Mission Schools

New Zealand's earliest schools were mission schools, which operated under the aim of *civilising* and *christianising* Māori. The medium for instruction in these schools was Te Reo Māori (the Māori language); historians have noted that Māori were keen to learn reading and writing, quickly adapting this for their own means, while the missionaries knew that to spread the beliefs in the bible to the indigenous people it would need to be translated and taught through that language (Bishop and Berryman, 2006). Historically, schooling was viewed enthusiastically by Māori as a way to access European knowledge in order to enrich the traditional way of life (Bol Jun Lee, 2004). Whānau, hapū and iwi aspired to incorporate the technologies, skills and knowledge of the settlers into daily life as a means to benefit the Maōri people. At this time Māori did not see themselves as one people but as members of different iwi and hapū within Aotearoa. The term Māori, which means normal or ordinary, was used to differentiate Māori from the colonial settlers. Berryman (2008) considers this collectivisation and renaming of iwi groups as one of the first acts of colonisation. Linda Smith (1992) describes the whole process of colonisation as "a stripping away of mana [Māori]"(p.51). The Treaty of Waitangi was promised as a means to create a partnership between iwi and the crown, however, it has proven to be another act of colonisation.

## Treaty of Waitangi

Our current education system emerged from such acts of colonisation which began to be further formalised through law with the signing of The Treaty of Waitangi 1840. The Treaty of Waitangi promised a relationship intended to be akin to a partnership (Orange, 2000). However, the different interpretations of the Treaty, coupled with the assimilation agenda of the British Crown resulted in coercive rather than collaborative or interdependent power relations (Cummings, 2001). There were two versions of The Treaty - one in English, written by two Crown representatives, which was translated into Māori by two other Pāhekā men. The translation differed greatly from the English version, both in wording and interpretation. This is particularly clear in the difference between the words Sovereignty/Tino Rangatiratanga and Government/Kawanatanga; and the "collective and individual guaranteed exclusive, undisturbed possession of land, forestries and fisheries" versus "unqualified exercise of

chieftainship". Despite only 39 rangatira signing the English version, it became the official version. The Treaty was carefully marketed by the Crown to appeal to Māori as an operational partnership (Orange, 2000) and as protection from current and future settlers, who were operating under a "fundamental belief in the inherent inferiority of the Māori people" (Bishop, 2005, p.57). The Treaty has not been honoured and at the time of writing many settlements are still under negotiation. The dishonouring of the Treaty and the differing interpretations of its promises have had huge ramifications for New Zealand's education system and all other systems within which Māori are now having to live.

## Early schooling

Following the signing of the Treaty the colonial government was established and legislation began regarding education. In 1843, The Colonial Office decreed that all Māori were under the Queen's rule, signatories or not. Following this, The Native Trusts Ordinance was established to focus on the "welfare and protection of Maori, offering a solution of education and assimilation" (Tauma, 2015, p.16). In 1847, government funding was provided for mission schools, on the proviso that instruction was in English. Education was seen as the means for social control and establishment of British rule. The subsequent Native Schools Act 1858, included policies geared towards assimilation through the rejection of Maori knowledge and values, and the establishment of a separatist education system which was justified by "pathologizing Māori people's abilities to cope with, in this instance, a modern schooling system'"(Bishop, 2005 p.63). The 1877 Education Act required all parents of students aged 7-13 to ensure their children attended school. By the turn of the century in 1903, a nationwide policy was imposed to prohibit children from speaking Te Reo Māori in school and parents raised their children speaking English to avoid their children being punished. The Controller and Auditor General's report (2015) describes the resulting intergenerational trauma as the following generations recall being strapped and punished for speaking Te Reo at school. Further to the colonising agenda, Māori students often had their names changed in response to the teacher's inability or refusal to pronounce them correctly. The restricted curriculum offered Māori very few opportunities for higher education and limited employment opportunities apart from manual and domestic duties. Native schools did not offer the required subjects for

matriculation, with the exception of Te Aute College, however a government inquiry in 1928 forced the school to return to its previous curriculum.

## Fabric of Society

The differing interpretations of the Treaty and subsequent government policy and pathology have continued to reinforce and grow an imbalance of power between Māori and nonMāori which is visible through health, wealth and many of our ministries and other public institutions. The fabric of New Zealand society has become one where Pākehā are often perceived as having privilege and access to the skills, qualities and benefits from all that society has to offer, whereas Māori do not (Bishop & Glynn, 1999). Bourdieu (1979) described coercive power relationships such as this as cultural capital or *people like us.* Families from the dominant culture enter schooling from a position of privilege where breaks in their cultural continuity are not exposed because they have cultural captial. However, other cultures are inherently marginalised or communicated as different, out of date and/or inferior. Powell and Menendian (2017) use the term *othering*, which they define as a "set of dynamics, processes, and structures that engender marginality and persistent inequality across any of the full range of human differences based on group identities" (p.1).

The implications of *othering,* marginalisation and cultural dominance remain clearly evident across our systems to this day and many would argue that these disparities begin with the failure of the education system to work effectively for Māori and other children of colour (Berryman & Eley, 2019).

## High quality, low equity

Descriptions of high quality and low equity education systems, driven by deficit-oriented approaches, are familiar and argued about by educators and researchers across the world (Bishop & Berryman, 2006; Sleeter, 2011). Ladson-Billings (2008) likens the reduction of the achievement gap to achieving a balanced budget without addressing the bills of the past. Data from the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA), the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), all highlight an achievement gap between Māori students and their non-Māori counterparts. This longstanding gap is indicative of the deeper issue of *education debt* that Ladson-Billings (2006) defines as

"long-standing inequities and educational disenfranchisement"(p.3), based on the historical, socio-political, economic and moral inequities, which have never been repaid.

## Education Debt

Māori students' and whānau narratives throughout this century have indicated the ongoing impact of pathologising practices and deficit discourses in New Zealand (Bishop & Berryman, 2006; Shields, Bishop & Mazawi, 2005). Education debt is also evident in the consistent achievement disparities between Māori and non-Māori students, that are present at five years of age on school entry and that often continue to widen throughout schooling (Controller and Auditor-General, 2015). This achievement gap is widely focused on through the media, within schools and at a political level. Teacher professional development focuses on the reduction of the gap, and school reporting is mandated to include analysis of variance based on gaps in achievement. However, the evidence is clear, this gap continues in New Zealand to be entrenched through the education system provided by the state, with very few enduring examples of there being any closure in the gap.

## Cultural capital, curriculum and policy

This imbalance of cultural capital began with formal education in Aotearoa, it was further entrenched with the assimilation policies and has been perpetuated through what was being taught and by whom. Bishop (2005) discussed the "depiction of Maori as simple, primitive savages" (p.67) in literature used in schools. These discourses are further absorbed by society, including by many Māori themselves. Freire (1972) describes colonisation as being defined and imposed by someone else, until you too believe in that definition, although you may be confronted daily with evidence to the contrary.

The Pākehā social systems by which Māori have been disproportionately served - the health, justice, welfare and education systems - have also provided researchers and policy makers with a point of entry into Māori society. However, given the deficiencies that are perpetuated on Māori, this has resulted in crisis-based research directed at solving Māori problems and finding the causes of Māori failure (Smith, 1992). The statistical evidence of the disparities produced in the Hunn Report of 1960 continued this theme - that Maori were disadvantaged due to their own outdated, inadequate

traditions and lifestyle, rather than the imbalance of power wielded by the coloniser. As a result of the socio-political effects of these themes, Māori families have often been excluded from the decision making processes in education due to this perception of cultural deficiency - being seen as less able to provide the conditions for the development of their child's intellectual capability. The ongoing deficit discourses held by teachers have been highlighted in research such as Te Kotahitanga. (Bishop, Berryman, & Wearmouth, 2014). These discourses have impacted on language, identity and culture.

## Culture

There are many understandings and definitions for the word culture. Constructivist theories describe culture as superorganic; that institutions and communities both create and are created by culture (Bruner, 1996). Quest Rapuara (1992) ideates that culture is:

> ...what holds a community together, giving a common framework of meaning. It includes how people communicate with each other, how we make decisions, how we structure our families and who we think are important. It expresses our values towards land and time and our attitudes towards work and play, good and evil, reward and punishment.
>
> Culture is preserved in language, symbols and customs and celebrated in art, music, drama, literature, religion and social gatherings. It constitutes the collective heritage, which will be handed down to future generations" (p.7).

Colonisation impacted Māori through the stripping away of culture, language and identity in many ways, with the undermining of traditional Māori models of learning as one such mechanism. The intergenerational trauma of the prohibition of the use of Te Reo Māori in schools continues to be evident to this day (Ngaamo, 2018).

## Impacts on language

Dr Rangimarie Pere (1991) writes about language as the life line and sustenance of a culture akin to the whakataukī:

"Te kai a te Rangatira, he kōrero" (language is the food of chiefs).

The prohibition of Te Reo Māori in schools, often enforced by corporal punishment, resulted in far-reaching effects on the Māori language, with the number of

students speaking Te Reo reducing by 70% in the period of 1930-1960 (Bishop, 2005 p.63). Lyle, (2008) tells us that "one of the barriers to the implementation of dialogic teaching is the dominance of the teacher's voice at the expense of students' own meaning making voices" (p.227). It is from this place of enforced cultural deprivation through colonisation, and on the basis of a transmission model of teaching and learning, that our current education system grew.

## Pedagogical responses

Pedagogy refers to the method and practice of teaching. The following are some pedagogical responses that have informed methods and practices in our education system.

### Constructivism

> The concept of ako describes a teaching and learning relationship, where the educator is also learning from the student and where educators' practices are informed by the latest research and are both deliberate and reflective. Ako is grounded in the principle of reciprocity and also recognises that the learner and whānau cannot be separated (MoE, 2008, p 20).

This quote from the Ministry of Education connects ako to the constructivist model of learning, which describes learning as an active process, whereby learners construct ideas and concepts within a basis of past and current knowledge, mediated through language and culture (Bruner, 1990, cited by Lyle, 2008, p 223). The learner selects and transforms information and ideas and makes decisions based on their available cognitive structure and the "historical, social and cultural context" (Vygotsky, 1978, cited Lyle, 2008, p 222). Constructivists view knowledge as actively built, rather than passively received which is the view of behaviorists, who see teaching as the transmission of pre-packaged knowledge (Lyle, 2008).

The sociology of our education system in Aotearoa New Zealand has rested largely within the transmission or *banking* model of education, whereby students of the dominant Pākehā culture are described by some as *more favourably disposed*' to academic success (Nash, 2003) due to a range of factors such as teacher expectations, cultural capital, exposure and academic self concept. These factors are then confirmed and reinforced by teachers within the system, which then reproduces the inequitable

results. This is termed *reproduction theory* by Bourdieu (1974, 1991, 1998 as cited in Nash, 2003, p. 179). It is important to note that these discourses have emerged alongside discourses of Māori being kinesthetic learners more suited to sports and manual labour than academic study. These discourses have been and continue to be perpetuated.

The constructivist theory recommends that teachers provide opportunities for the discovery of principles and ideas through active dialogue with and between students and reject the model of Initiation-Response-Feedback (IRF) (Lyle, 2008). Constructivist theory recommends that curriculum material should be delivered in a spiral manner, in order to build on previous learning. It also indicates that educators should consider the students' knowledge as a resource for learning, which is often referred to as scaffolding.

## Scaffolding

Bruner's (1976, cited Lea, 2014) theory of scaffolding prescribes that learning occurs more readily in the presence of a more knowledgeable other and that learning is socially acquired. This theory includes a basis of a gradual release of responsibility - as the learner develops confidence and expertise the scaffolding reduces and is eventually removed. In short, the constructivist model indicates that "knowledge is constructed based on social interactions and experiences" (Davidson, 2010, p 249). Scaffolding is strongly connected to Māori metaphors such as poutama (ongoing stairway of knowledge) and tuakana teina ( learning with a more expert other) (Royal, 2007) . These Te Ao Māori teaching and learning approaches are firmly based in the social context of the whānau.

## Sociocultural approach

A related view to constructivist theory is found within the sociocultural approach. This theory indicates that students enter school with a variety of cultural discourses - ways of talking, listening, interacting, beliefs, values and feeling - and that these may differ from the dominant discourses within the school which if not recognised, valued and utilised respectfully, can lead to achievement difficulties and disengagement (Baker, 2011). This model describes culture as the currency which can help or hinder one's success based on power relationships, that is culture and power matter. Bishop and Glynn (1999) identified a "culturally responsive pedagogy of

relations" as a model where the classroom is a place where young people's cultures are incorporated and enhanced.

## Culturally Responsive Pedagogy of Relations

Building on the previous point, culturally responsive pedagogy of relations supports learners by building upon and maintaining their own cultural discourses and theoretical practices while simultaneously offering access to the dominant culture, thus resulting in more successful outcomes (Bishop & Berryman, 2006).

Bishop, et al., (2014) describe Māori models of learning as operating within the relational contexts of whanaungatanga through effective communication and the construction of common understandings. There is a collective responsibility to show manaaki, tiaki (nurture and guidance), awhi and aroha to each member of the group, whilst maintaining a focus on the kaupapa. This approach avoids singling out individuals and responsibility for achievement is collective. Power is shared in a non-dominant manner through equitable rather than coercive relationships. Learning is interactive and interpersonal through dialogic practice and participants are connected and committed to the wellbeing of one another (Bishop & Berryman, 2006).

## Dialogic practice

Dialogic practice stands in opposition to the passive receipt and transmission of reified knowledge, described by Freire (1972) as the *banking* model of education. In this model, education is viewed as the transference of information that can become an "exercise in dominance "(p 53). Dialogic practice on the other hand, places a focus on learning as a communal activity, a sharing of culture (Vygotsky, 1978, cited in Lyle, 2008, p 222). It places dialogue at the center of teaching and learning. Teachers and students have equitable power and listen to multiple points of view. One of the commonly recognised examples of dialogic pedagogy is the Socratic method from ancient Greece. Freire (1970) introduced these ideas to educational theory, however within Te Ao Māori dialogic pedagogy is also evident. The culturally responsive pedagogy of relations model encapsulates this and was exemplified by the compelling evidence of improved outcomes for Māori students in Te Kotahitanga schools (Alton-Lee, 2016; Timperly, et al., 2007).

## Cultural relationships for responsive pedagogical interventions

Robinson, Hohepa and Lloyd, (2009) discuss the importance of the home school relationships, describing such interventions using *smart tools* and productive partnerships as capable of having "high positive effect on student outcomes" (p.144-145), with the largest overall effect size reported of 1.81. Related research tells us that interventions such as Responsive Written Feedback (Berryman & Ford, 2014) and Tatari, Tautoko, Tauawhi (Glynn, et al, 1996) can result in the accelerated achievement of Māori students when teachers utilise culturally responsive and relational pedagogies across the Ako: Critical Contexts for change. This model suggests the dimensions for accelerated and transformative reform are: culturally responsive and relational pedagogy; deliberate professional acts towards adaptive expertise-including policies and curriculum; home school and community partnerships and connectedness; and Māori students achieving mauri ora and belonging in the school system by achieving educational outcomes without having to compromise their cultural identity (Berryman & Eley, 2017;2019).These contexts do not occur in isolation, they are attended to across the underpinning reform levers of: transformative leadership, evidence-based inquiry, cultural relationships for responsive pedagogy, educationally powerful connections with home communities and literacy, Te Reo Māori and numeracy across the curriculum. addressing the educational inequities with agency and action; deconstructing the teacher's dominance and individualised responsibility. Bishop, et al (2014) identified that cultural relationships involve:

Whānau type relationships that demonstrate we care for our learners and have high expectations for their learning. Enacting this principle includes, but is not limited to:

- nurturing mind, body and spirit for the all-round development of students,
- seeking mana ōrite type relationships with whānau for the wellbeing of students,
- building relationships that support students' mana and well-being,
- respecting each student's physical and spiritual uniqueness,
- encouraging students to explore new challenges and take risks in learning,

- recognising the potential in everyone.

Whilst these models of learning have indeed influenced research and practice in our education system in Aotearoa, the observed patterns of inequitable success and achievement as well as models of professional development and learning for teachers favoured by government policy, continue to indicate an expert model in which the behaviourist, transmission model of pre-packaged and pre-determined knowledge dominates. This model continues to perpetuate the dominant Colonial, epistemological superiority that began before the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi, and continues largely unabated to this day, despite the number of structural responses charged with disrupting it.

## Structural responses

Since the Picot report first provided statistical evidence of the disparity a number of structural interventions have been attempted, of note has been the reform known as Tomorrow's Schools.

### Tomorrow's Schools

The Labour government commissioned the Picot report in 1988 (Wikipedia, 2019) in response to growing pressure for policies that addressed the promises of the Treaty. The resulting changes to the Education Act in 1989 (Wikipedia, 2019) introduced education policy that allowed for greater community involvement in the running of the school with the creation of Boards of Trustees and individual school charters. These initiatives represented a partnership between schools and their communities, which would seem to adhere more closely to the Treaty principles. However, these reforms also promoted context for competition and individualism with schools competing with each other for students. Furthermore, the decile funding received by schools based on neighbourhood socio-economic status (Duff, 2015) became a proxy for school quality. The MoE data shows that generally the school rolls in richer neighbourhoods reflect an increase in Pākehā students and a decrease in Māori student numbers (Duff, 2015) with low decile schools having more Māori and Pacific students. Greater numbers of students from high decile schools achieve University

Entrance with increased employment opportunities resulting in increased wealth and health thus perpetuating the coercive socio-political power.

A recent review of the Tomorrow's Schools Policy (1989) by an independent taskforce deployed by the Minister of Education (2018) refers to the importance of a focus on a stronger weaving together of schools and describes the need for a call to action. It identified that the process of recruiting, preparing, and supporting new teachers as they begin their careers "lacks any obvious national strategy" and states that structures to provide professional support to teachers through their careers including advice and PLD are "fragmented and limited'"(Tomorrows Schools Independent Taskforce, 2018, p.17-18). It calls for the provision of proven national PLD programmes and local advisory services including established mechanisms for principals to access effective leadership focused PLD. The recommendations in this report signal that it is time for a long-overdue transformation of both the culture and structures of our education system. A current attempt to change the culture of our education system is through the use of Māori metaphors.

## Appropriation and use of Māori metaphors

Unfortunately Māori terms, such as manaakitanga*,* are often appropriated in education circles and understood superficially rather than authentically understood. For instance, manaakitanga is described by the Ministry of Education (2011) as *caring hospitalit*y and as showing "integrity, sincerity and respect towards Māori beliefs, language and culture" (p.4). Furthermore, in 2014, the MoE summarised ako as:

> ...multi-faceted, it can transform lives, it can build and strengthen communities, it supports insight as a way of knowing, and it flows most naturally when learning is purposeful" suggesting also that "the practice of ako in the classroom is as much about the detail of learning to read, write, and do maths, as it is about transforming and inspiring generations of Māori to enjoy life as Māori ( p. 15).

In education, Māori knowledge and literature must provide depth to these Maōri metaphors if true understandings and effectiveness are to be achieved. Bishop and Berryman (2006) for example, by listening to the educational experiences and voices of Māori secondary school students in New Zealand and working alongside Māori kaumātua, developed an effective teaching profile that went on to form the basis of the

internationally recognised school reform initiative Te Kotahitanga. This effective teaching profile described manaakitanga as *teachers that care for their students as culturally located human beings above all else*. This profile described teachers that showed relationships of both high expectations of their learners and respect and care for them and their culture. Although an imbalance of power was identified as a failure in many other culturally responsive approaches (May & Sleeter, 2010) and lack of criticality by others (Milne, 2017), independent researchers from Victoria University summarised that "…across schools and across subjects Te Kotahitanga has communicated effectively to teachers that relationships in the classroom are important" (Meyer, et al., 2010, p. 5). This evaluation report also concluded that professional development such as this changed teachers' beliefs, their expectations and understanding of Māori students, and that students could articulate the ways in which teachers learned to value their identity and establish positive, power-sharing partnerships. In order to decolonise pedagogical structures and deconstruct the dominant, colonial metaphors and discourses, which in turn disrupted the status quo of Māori disparity, a shift, in both the pedagogy and structures of the schooling system, is required. Policy is often aimed at doing this.

## Ka Hikitia

In 2008 the New Zealand government created the Māori Strategy, Ka Hikitia- Managing For Success strategy, followed by the Ka Hikitia- Accelerating Success 2013-2017 with the aim to "rapidly change how education performs so that all Māori students gain the skills, qualifications and knowledge they need to succeed and to be proud in knowing who they are as Māori" (MoE, 2013, p. 6).

This strategy aimed to make significant changes to improve Māori student achievement in *the next five years and beyond* through the underpinning values of quality teaching and learning and strengthened engagement of students and whānau. The MoE (2013) described the desired outcome of Ka Hikitia as being to help Māori students grow into: "confident, successful, culturally intelligent, bilingual adults who will make a positive contribution to New Zealand society (evidenced by) Māori students achieving at least on a par with the total population" (p. 6-8).

Aspects of the strategy reflect the principles, pathways and goals set out by Durie (2003) who stated that: "it is unacceptable for Maori students to leave kōhanga,

primary school, or high school without achieving the best possible outcome"(p. 202). However, setting the benchmark as achieving on par with Pākehā may not be an adequately aspirational goal for Māori.

Ka Hikitia identifies important principles and events such as: Ako, the Treaty of Waitangi, a Māori potential approach, the importance of identity, language and culture and productive partnerships. It lists Māori language education as its first focus area; however, not all Māori students have access to high quality Te Reo Māori education. Notably, while Te Reo Māori was made the first official language of New Zealand in 1987, it is still not legislated as a compulsory component within curriculum programmes. Current media debate suggests that compulsory Te Reo Māori remains a contentious issue (Hurley, 2017).

Although emphasising the importance of collaboration and Māori potential are common themes throughout Ka Hikitia, it is important to note that there was little done to prepare schools and educators to disrupt the pervasive deficit discourses about Māori or to understand and implement Ka Hikitia. Schools were encouraged to focus on Maori students as priority learners, however, there was no real resourcing available to support how this should happen (Berryman, Eley, Ford & Egan, 2017). For example, while Ka Hikitia refers to the Treaty throughout, it does not refer to honouring its promises or in fact provide any recommendations as to the ways in which schools should reflect an honourable partnership. As Pihama (2017) stated:"Treaties are not made to be settled, Treaties are made to be honoured" (p.3).

A Ka Hikitia supporting document is referenced that provides areas from which to gather measurable gains for the strategy, stating that success can be evidenced by: "Māori learner progress and achievement (including proficiency in Te Reo Māori), Māori learner attendance, retention and engagement, Māori learners and whānau well informed and making good choices about education pathways" (Education.govt.nz, 2012, p. 1).

Like Te Kotahitanga, Ka Hikitia as a policy, aimed to address the inequities for Māori students within New Zealand schools. However, to achieve this requires system-wide reform.

## System-wide reform

A moral debt can be defined as righting the wrongs of the past by doing the right thing because it's the right thing to do. Māori remain disproportionately represented in the bottom quartile of academic achievement and employment prospects and over-represented in the upper quartile of unemployment, ill-health and crime statistics. It is time for educators to develop the will and skills to make a difference for Māori students (Berryman, et al., 2016). The Controller and Auditor General's report (2015) identified much room for improvement in the way the schooling system responds to Māori students and whānau and provides a context for tamariki to be Māori.

The fact the students start school with educational differences and social differences is a given. However, according to Clark (2015):

> …when the differences are distributed across children according to their social class, gender, ethnicity, or more recently by family income, such that some groups of children do well (Pākehā) and other groups of children do poorly (Māori) then differences become inequalities (p.1).

This inequality began with the pathologising of Māori through the power structures and institutions with New Zealand and has been handed down over centuries and is over all sectors of society. As long as these pathologising discourses exist, this moral debt will continue to grow.

## Pathologising discourses

Research, tells us that, in spite of twenty years of focus on literacy and numeracy across New Zealand schools, the disparity and inequity represented in the statistics remains the same (Secretary General of the O.E.C.D., 2015). An analysis of the achievement challenges on the MoE website found that, while 99% of these challenges target Māori boys' writing, only 18% mention Māori learning *as Māori,* which is the vision of Ka Hikitia (MoE, 2008; 2013) and less than a third consider culturally responsive pedagogy (Milne, 2018).

Instead these challenges reflect an attempt at *fixing up* or remediating the pathologising discourses around Māori being less adept at academic success. Politicians and the media often refer to a long tail of student underachievement (Partridge, 2018). Ladson-Billings (2006) states that by focusing on the gap, we as a society are placing

the onus on the students and whānau, and that shortening this tail will not address the debt owed.

This is evident in the PISA reports and MoE school leaver data. Māori remain as the lowest achieving group in both NCEA Level 1 and Level 2. A report on the PISA 2000 data clearly shows that the average achievement for Pākehā students is consistently above the OECD mean, while for Māori it is consistently below. In fact, the PISA 2000 reading proficiency scores showed that 24% of Māori students had a combined score of, *at or below* Level 1, which according to Sturrock (2004) meant they were "competent in only the simplest tasks and may not be acquiring the necessary skills and knowledge to benefit fully from educational opportunities at school and in later life" (p.6). Clark (2015) describes the 2012 PISA results as a depressing picture - down in international rankings in all areas and still one of the highest differences in scores between our highest and lowest achievers.

These patterns of achievement have been reflected in the findings of other projects, such as the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS). The MoE (2011) summarised that the percentages of students who reached the PIRLS benchmarks highlighted the differences in achievement between ethnicities - the Pākehā mean reading achievement score was 558, whereas the Māori mean was 488. Fullan (2011) states that:

> It is not the presence of standards and assessment that is the problem, but the attitude that underpins them, and their dominance. What is required to build new skills and generate deeper motivation. Focusing on standards and assessments does not highlight the instructional improvements that are the core driver: it is the learning-instruction-assessment nexus that is central to driving student achievement (p.3).

While such statistics are often used to perpetuate the perceived pathology of Māori students, they should in fact push educators and policy makers to take a critical look at the ways in which teachers and school leaders can respond more effectively by asking questions of themselves and of each other. Such questions must challenge and deepen thinking, in order to make the invisible become visible; questions about things like power, control, equity and privilege. For example, one of the questions that is central to engaging with critical theory is: *Whose interests are being served by the current arrangements that we have?*, which is fundamentally a question about power.

Our PLD should be driven by such questions, posed as a result of our most relevant evidence.

## Models of professional learning for teachers

Our models of PLD must also be scrutinised, as these experiences lay the groundwork for our educator theorising and practices in classrooms. It is argued that neither a political mandate for change nor a set of learned strategies by school personnel will truly bring about a changed reality for Māori students (Berryman, et al, 2017). Rather the reform must be led by transformative leaders who are driven by both the moral imperative to change and a keen sense of urgency to see this happen in our schools (Quantz, Rogers, Dantley & Shields, 1991; Shields, 2010) for Māori students and their home communities .

According to a report prepared by OECD (2002, as cited Bishop, et al, 2014), it is pedagogy and learning practices that are the key educational policy levers . Thus, in terms of improvement and reform, teacher effectiveness stands out as a fairly easily alterable factor within the school system and, when seeking to change the learning culture in schools and promote teaching practices that lead to reduced educational disparities, the classroom is the most useful site for the provision of PLD opportunities for teachers (Hattie, 2009, as cited in Bishop, et al. 2014). However, such PLD should be *critical,* that is it should be about power relations. Such questions ask us to consider what we are doing to our students, our tamariki mokopuna, under the guise of education. If we are cognisant of the fact that the historical context of our education system in Aotearoa is founded in assimilation and colonisation then we too, as educators, must consider our own experiences and how these influence our beliefs, actions and interactions. Or, are we merely perpetuating the inevitable nature of this system? Our current and historical educational achievement data and the ongoing voices of students and whānau would suggest that we are (Bishop, et al., 2014; Office of the Children's Commissioner, 2018). Cummings (2001), asked this really critical question "Are we preparing students to accept the societal status quo (and in many cases, their own inferior status therein) or are we preparing them to participate actively and critically… (in society)?" (p.18).

## Critical Theory

Berryman and Ford (2014) suggest that:

> [F]rom the perspective of critical theory this requires those who have traditionally maintained power to both critically examine their own participation and privilege, then seek power-sharing relationships rather than perpetuate the more traditional impositional stance that continues to promote disparities. (p. 9).

When examining practices, educators can and should critically examine the power relationships and participatory nature of the groups within which they are working. This can be termed critical consciousness.

## Critical Consciousness and Discursive Repositioning

The reciprocity of teaching and learning is about engaging with people and forming a clearer picture of what we know in relation to others, which is termed by Wink (2011) as conscientisation, or developing critical consciousness, 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 society and how and why such knowledge and power are constructed. When we weave conscientisation with critical reflection about what to do differently, we begin to engage in resistance. This means asking questions such as: 'What do we need to stop doing? What should we start doing? What will we continue doing and why and who for?' Through such questions we are openly seeking to disrupt the status quo of power inequities. Such critical reflection provides educationalists with opportunities to consider the part they might play in unravelling and redesigning practices in order to enact change. For those educators who connect as members of the dominant culture this process can be confronting and require discursive repositioning towards listening and learning from those in the less dominant culture (Berryman et al., 2017). Once educators have decided what needs to be done to disrupt the status quo, they then become empowered to engage in transformative praxis (Anderson, 2018). Jemal (2017) states that "merely reflecting on realities without intervention will not lead to transformation"(p.2), describing a theory of *Transformative Potential* which comprises two dimensions: Transformative Consciousness and Transformative Action. The major

difference between Transformative Potential and Critical Consciousness is that the two dimensions of TP each have three levels. For Transformative Consciousness, the hierarchical levels to becoming conscious are denial and blame before becoming critical. For Transformative Action, the tiered levels of action are destructive and avoidant before becoming critical. Therefore, for Transformative Potential, critical consciousness and critical action at the third levels of each dimension and produce the most transformative potential. "There is no such thing as a neutral educational process" (Jemal, 2017, p.2). Education either functions to perpetuate the status quo or becomes a practice of freedom and emancipation (Freire, 2000). One way to enact Transformative Potential is through the use of Māori metaphors, the metaphors of the marginalised group. Māori metaphors can be used as a means to disrupt and transfer our consciousness so that it may become critical.

## Whānau-of-interest

Bishop (1996) and Berryman (2008) suggest that by acting within a Kaupapa Maōri framework, groups and organisations can establish ways of engaging, acting and interacting as a whānau-of-interest. Metaphorically, this whānau-of-interest connects to the collaborative and participatory, power sharing and interdependent decision making processes of a traditional Maōri extended family. The whānau-of-interest model also provides interesting connections to Wegner's seminal (1998) community of practice model.

## Community of practice

The Community of Practice model focuses on the collective knowledge, relationships, skills and understandings of the community, and this is the foundation upon which new knowledge is co-constructed (Wegner, 1998). Theories of self-determination and the construction of meaning, as situated within collective knowledge and experiences, are found within both the Community of Practice and whānau-of-interes*t* models. They provide frameworks for considering our responsibilities to respond more effectively to the challenging issues of disparity and inequities in research and education. Education policy has appeared to attempt to address these inequities, but made little impact as the policies have been implemented without an underpinning

coherent national strategy. Another model from education that has similarities are Professional Learning Communities.

## Professional Learning Communities

Timperley, Wilson, Barrar and Fung (2007) describe effective Professional Learning Communities as made up of teachers who support each other to consider how to effect increases in student achievement based on evidence. They use this evidence to challenge existing assumptions and discourses as well as to evaluate the impact of interventions and changes that have resulted from professional development. They suggest five critical, connected variables that must be considered when building effective Professional Learning Communities in schools. These communities, they suggest, must engage in dialogic practice through which teachers examine research, reflect on practice, develop shared language, enhance professional knowledge and challenge assumptions. This enables teachers to: work together and share expertise to critically reflect on practices and to build shared skills and knowledge; maintain shared, ongoing focus on student learning, achievement and rates of progress; use this evidence as a basis for discussion and decision making around pedagogy; learn from each other through mentoring, structured observations and sharing of classroom data, and; share co-constructed values and expectations about teaching and learning.

The Teaching Council New Zealand, a governing body for teachers in New Zealand, refers often to the Professional Learning Community within both the Code of Conduct and the Registered Teacher's Criteria.

## Professional Standards for teachers

The Teaching Council New Zealand (2018) states that the Treaty of Waitangi requires the injustices caused by colonisation to be addressed and for all New Zealanders to engage in creating a positive future that honours its principles. Its recommendations for teacher professional learning state that teachers should: "Use inquiry, collaborative problem solving and professional learning to improve professional capability to impact on the learning and achievement of all learners" and "design learning that is informed by national policies and priorities" (p. 18-20).

As an example, the Tātaiako Cultural Competencies for Teachers of Māori Learners (Ministry of Education, 2011) states that an effective educational leader:

"provides and supports ongoing professional learning and development for staff that strengthens the school/ECE service's ability to raise Māori learner achievement'" (p.14).

These statements are reflected in the proposed changes to the National Priorities for PLD, which at the time of writing included priorities of: building cultural capability so that all ākonga are secure in their identity; relevant and engaging local curriculum design that is truly responsive to the needs and priorities of ākonga, whānau and the community, and; using information to support learning by growing aromatawai (assessment), inquiry and assessment capabilities and use of information to support student strengths (Education Services, 2019).

## Sustained, systemic reform through professional learning and development

These policies and statements are indeed levers for change. However, for sustained systemic reform, a further factor is required. That is widespread 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 organisation, but of society as a whole (Quantz, Rogers & Dantley, 1991; Shields, 2010; Berryman, et al, 2017).

Research tells us that Professional Learning Communities or Communities of Practice in schools, engaged in ako relationships can do just that. For example Berryman, et al., (2014) describe professional learning communities as those engaged in: collaborating across and within groups to construct meaning and knowledge; taking opportunities to reveal and mediate perceptions, values, beliefs, information and assumptions. This is indicative of reflexive theory, described by Bourdieu (1979) as internally thinking about our own biases in order to be free of them. Tolle (1997) refers to this as ego, and describes the ways in which identifying one's sense of self can then allow for and support true reflection and transformative action. These theories support teachers and leaders to deconstruct and reconstruct knowledge frameworks that perpetuate inequity and injustice. In a meta-analysis of sustainable and scalable school-wide reform, Coburn (2003, as cited in Berryman, et al., 2014) identified four main components: pedagogy, sustainability (institutionalisation), spread and ownership. Bishop, et al., (2010) further developed this list of components, and in doing so

proposed the GPILSEO tool for education reform, which was developed and utilised from Phases 3 and 4 of Te Kotahitanga. The GPILSEO model suggests that before the reform has been initiated a number of principles need to be considered, and this begins with identifying the: "shared values, rights, responsibilities and supports fundamental to the collective'"(Bishop, 2013, p 189).

This relates also to what Fullan (2011, p. 1) describes as the effective drivers for whole system reform as being those that: cause whole system improvements; are measurable in practice and results; and for which a case can be made that strategy X produces result Y.

A coherent, critical organisation must be responsive to its evidence (both qualitative and quantitative) of Māori students' participation and achievement and their community's high aspirations for the future potential of their children and young people. The actions, systems, structures and practices of the institution must also be addressed through five levers for change, as described in Kia Eke Panuku, another school reform for leaders and teachers of Māori students, by Berryman, et al.,(2016) as :

1. Transformative leadership
2. Evidence-based inquiry
3. Culturally responsive and relational pedagogy
4. Educationally powerful connections with home communities
5. Literacy, *te reo Māori* (the language of Māori) and numeracy across the curriculum (p.103).

In order to ensure that the organisation and its educators have the will and the skill to help facilitate this process (Berryman, et al., 2016) boundaries surrounding and between these contexts must be permeable so that participants are open to knowledge creation through critical reflection and sharing of new knowledge, resources and practices. The Ako: Critical Contexts for Change theory of change model incorporates cultural relationships for responsive pedagogy; adaptive expertise driving deliberate professional acts and home, school and community collaboration as a means to share knowledge and learn across such boundaries (Berryman & Eley, 2017).

# Leadership Approaches

Berryman, et al., (2014) identify four leadership approaches, stating that:

> In considering different theories of leadership, the notion that an individual leader might work largely from one model or style has led to descriptions of leadership practice according to type. It is more useful to think of leadership from different perspectives as the reality of practice in different contexts is more complex and cannot be reduced or limited to one type (p.10) Four models of leadership are described below.

## Distributed leadership

In describing distributed leadership, Spillane (2006, cited Berryman, et al., 2014, p.11) wrote: "The notion that leadership is a collective and dynamic undertaking, grounded in shared activity rather than positions or roles, is central to distributed leadership". This perspective on leadership is focused both with process (how leadership occurs and is shared within and across organisations both vertically and laterally) and with capacity building (how leadership is enhanced and developed). Distributed leadership arises from the actions and interactions of individuals engaged with each other in problem solving and/or developmental work. It promotes a relational influence - the ability to influence the practices of others in ways that bring about major changes. Another leadership approach is transactional leadership.

## Transactional leadership

Transactional leadership is based on the viewpoints that people are motivated by reward and punishment and that social systems work best with a clear chain of hierarchy/command. Transactional leaders create structures and institutions that clarify what is required of their subordinates, using goals, expectations and standardised practices. Transactional leadership practice works within the existing systems and culture to attain goals and maintain or improve the status quo. Berryman, et al., (2014) liken coaches of sports teams as providing an example of transactional leadership. These coaches motivate their team members by promoting the reward of winning the game. Shields (2010) describes transactional leadership as involving a reciprocal

transaction such as jobs for votes or overtime for increased pay. In an educational context, transactional leadership may be evidenced by focus on national standards/NCEA data, MoE compliance and attestation procedures. Another leadership approach is transformational leadership.

## Transformational leadership

Berryman, et al., (2014) suggest that the ability to engage with followers by being genuine, inspirational and influential is essential to transformational leadership. This leadership perspective is centred on the definition and commitment to a consistent vision, mission, and set of values. The qualities and role modelling of the leader are fundamental to enacting this leadership approach. It is not enough to expect or communicate a set of values, the leader must exemplify these in practice. Shields (2010) explains transformational leadership as grounded in organisationally effective practices and inspiration. This leadership practice is founded on establishing and maintaining relationships of trust, articulating a deliberate, driven and inspiring vision and purpose, encouraging innovation and creativity and nurturing a culture of teamwork and commitment in order to carry out that vision. Another layer to leadership is a transformative approach.

## Transformative leadership

Shields (2010; 2013) suggests that transformative leadership begins by understanding inappropriate uses of power and privilege and then seeking to challenge and change these situations. This perspective on leadership values and enacts the personal and collective responsibility to use power, privilege, and position in the context to promote social justice and enlightenment for the benefit, not only of individuals, but of society as a whole (Shields, 2010). This leadership practice requires attending to the needs and aspirations of the wider community in which the leader serves (Berryman, et al., 2014). This leadership approach includes an emphasis on both individual and collective good, a focus on emancipation, democracy, equity, and justice and the mandate to effect deep and equitable change. A leader working within a transformative leadership approach requires a call to exhibit moral courage in order to to address the inequitable distribution of power. In Aotearoa Murfitt (2019) extends this type of

leadership into the fields of decolonising and indigenous leadership in order to effect change for Maōri.

## Transformative praxis

Transformative praxis occurs when leaders engage in new practices that focus on a more equitable social reality for Māori learners (Anderson, 2018, p. 104).

Transformative praxis can intersect between transformative leadership and critical practice, such it involves a commitment to promoting social justice, for the benefit of the individual and society as a whole. It stems from a moral purpose to bring about change along with the knowledge and ability to enact change using their positions of power and privilege to reframe the lived reality for their Māori learners (Berryman & Eley, 2017).

In 2009, the MOE commissioned the Leadership BES (Robinson, Hohepa and Lloyd, 2009) which concentrates on leadership for improving student outcomes. Out of this arose the following eight dimensions:

1. Establishing goals and expectations;
2. Resourcing strategically;
3. Planning, coordinating, and evaluating teaching and the curriculum;
4. Promoting and participating in teacher learning and development;
5. Ensuring an orderly and supportive environment;
6. Create educationally powerful connections;
7. Engaging in constructive problem talk; and
8. Selecting, developing and using smart tools.

Thus, a strength of effective school leadership is their ability to make a difference and influence change through both organisational/structural factors and relational factors. Transformative leadership praxis in Aotearoa involves doing this within a lens of Kaupapa Māori .

Shields (2010; 2013) ideates that while these leadership perspectives are underpinned by some similar and some quite different principles, leaders will quite often move from one leadership type to another in an almost unconscious manner, in response to the people, tools, resources and situations they are faced with. However, transformative leadership requires a position of social justice and rejection of the status quo, which in Aotearoa New Zealand is represented by the inequitable statistics for

Maōri students (Anderson, 2018; Murfitt, 2019). By drawing from the metaphor of rangatira, as described above, transformative leadership brings together the metaphor of kaupapa, as described above, and the weaving together of people and groups towards fulfilment of that kaupapa.

## Conclusion

In this chapter I explored Te Ao Māori epistemology and ontology, Maōri metaphors and the history and impact of colonisation on teaching and learning in Aotearoa, including the ways in which this is reflected in the PLD space for teachers. I considered teaching and learning in Aotearoa in relation to theorised models of teaching and learning. I then discussed the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi and the subsequent educational policies and the impact these policies have had on the people, including the colonial metaphor of assimilation and the policies that have resulted in generations of Māori being prevented from academic study and becoming second-class citizens. Finally, I considered the potential effects of the policy and governmental recommendations and standards for teachers through the PLD, appraisal processes and leadership approaches. The cultural and structural transformation identified by the Education Review Taskforce challenges us to consider our practice. The important need for different ways of weaving together the strands of policy and practice in order to decolonise, deconstruct and transform our schools towards equity, excellence and belonging was captured by Lorde (1977) in her challenge that:

> "The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house" (p. 30).

# CHAPTER THREE- METHODOLOGY

*The kuia and the spider worked every day and every night until it was Saturday. On Saturday morning the kuia's grandchildren came.*
*And the spider's grandchildren came.*
*(Grace, 1981).*

In this part of the story the kuia and the spider are hard at work on their weaving. Sometimes when engaged in a piece of weaving it is hard to see the whole piece, similar to the saying *you can't see the forest for the trees.* When weaving a kete I was taught to weave each side laid out flat, with the joining of the sides as happening closer to the end. That meant that it didn't really look like the vision of a kete until close to the end. The period of school reform felt like that at times. There were many pieces, which came together in the end. This resonates with me as I consider the research methodologies in this chapter as separate, but interconnected pieces.

## Introduction

In this chapter I begin by explaining the methodologies that underpin this research. I then explore the research methods. I describe the research context by introducing the school and contextualising the participants within this place and space. I consider my position within the research, and finally, I outline the research procedure and ethical considerations.

## Methodology

Research methodology involves defining the specific theoretical foundation for the techniques and tools that were adopted in this research process to collect, assemble and evaluate data.

## Culturally responsive methodology

Culturally responsive methodologies are described by Berryman, SooHoo and Nevin (2013) as a research stance where: "establishing respectful relationships with

participants is central to both human dignity and the research" (p.1). Culturally responsive methodologies involve reciprocal relationships, where researchers pose questions but also consider their own positioning in order to inform and critically analyse their own research stance and theorising. This thesis utilises a research methodology that seeks to undertake research with teachers in participatory and emancipatory ways, in order to understand the participants' experiences of teaching and learning. Berryman, et al., (2013) define a culturally responsive methodology as being a non-dominating and participatory stance where establishing respectful relationships is central. This methodology frames the researcher's position as a co-learner with the participants in the co-construction of new knowledge, maintaining the integrity of the participants' culture and respecting and valuing their experiences. Culturally responsive methodology utilises the conjoint theoretical base of Kaupapa Māori and Critical theories.

## Kaupapa Māori Research Methodology

Linda Smith (1999) describes Kaupapa Māori research as empowering research that asserts the validity of Maōri knowledge, with control of the research process being carried out through a Māori worldview. Within Kaupapa Māori methodologies, research participants and the researcher, who usually are Maōri, collaborate in the research process in order to determine the methodologies, methods, research questions, problems and solutions that will be applied. When engaging in Kaupapa Māori research, researchers must consider the research critically in terms of decolonisation. Linda Smith (1992) considers research as "a small but important part of the colonisation process because it is concerned with defining knowledge" (p. 51).

Kaupapa Māori research must represent the desires, needs, concerns and aspirations of Māori, by Māori. It must be self-determining and employ critical theory in order to deconstruct and decolonise the research spaces. Therefore, Non-Māori researchers cannot carry out Kaupapa Māori research on their own, but can work in collaboration with Māori researchers if accepted and/or invited to do so (L. Smith, 1999; Bishop & Glynn, 1999). Bishop (1996) suggests that if research is carried out through such an approach, then Māori voice, Māori ideology, Māori concepts and Māori metaphors must be at the forefront.

## Critical Theories

Critical theory states 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 the development of critical consciousness (Freire, 1972; Smith, 2003; Anderson, 2018). Critical Theory moves beyond equality towards more equitable practices where researchers and educationalists are responsive to the needs and potential of individuals, in particular those who may be marginalised, oppressed or objectified.

As such, culturally responsive methodology is one where researchers must value and respect the epistemologies and ontologies of groups who may currently be marginalised or *othered* through colonisation or other forms of oppression. This requires researchers to develop a close reciprocal relationship with their participants rather than seek to objectify or remain distant.This research approach is based on a mana ōrite relationship between the researcher and participants. This relationship, as described by Berryman, et al., (2017), involves responsibilities of both the researcher and participants to maintain each other's mana, if it is to be understood as ōrite. This is more likely to occur when the researcher and participants have equitable roles in the research and when power is shared.

Research such as this can then be empowering and participatory for the research participants. It encourages reflexivity by providing participants with opportunities to think about their thinking. The findings are grounded in the theorising of the participants. Culturally responsive methodology was selected for this thesis in order to position the researcher and participants within a reciprocal purpose, that being, to explore the lived experiences of members of the school community and learn together from these lived experiences. Empowering research is a component of this methodology.

## Empowering Research

Empowering research is a form of research where participants are empowered to make decisions, find their agency and take action. This research approach aligns well with culturally responsive methodologies because it challenges traditional Westernised forms of research, where research was imposed and power and control were maintained by the researcher and focus was on his/her concerns, interests, desires and ideas. Bishop (1997) describes the imposition of Westernised research as prevalent throughout

Aotearoa's history. The resulting legislation, initiatives and policies were biased and promoted Pākehā funds of knowledge at the expense of Māori.

In contrast, empowering research allows for genuine voices to be heard and reflected upon, including their own knowledge and experiences. This type of reflection can be described within reflexive theory.

### Reflexive Theory

Bourdieu (1979) describes the importance of reflexivity, whereby researchers must at all times conduct their research whilst paying deliberate attention to their own positioning and power. This includes acknowledging his/her own internalised beliefs, structures, experiences and values and considering how these elements are likely to distort or bias their objectivity. This enables the researcher to be better able to purge their research of these biases and better able to act responsively to the participants, in ways that align with culturally responsive methodologies. Community-led research can be described as participatory action research.

### Participatory action research

Vitznum (2012) describes participatory action research as a community-led process, through which groups of people can determine the solutions to their own problems through the gathering of data from their peers, analysing it and taking informed action. This style of research builds the capacity and adaptive expertise of those involved. This connects to Freire's (1972) Pedagogy of the Oppressed, where he insists that the true knowledge and expertise already exists within the people, who do not need deposits of knowledge from those in power, nor do they need the dominant culture to convince them of their problems. Participatory Action Research also connects to the overarching culturally responsive methodology as it involves reciprocal relationships. I have also considered my own positioning within this research using autoethnography.

## Autoethnography

Autoethnography uses reflections of the researcher's own practices and experiences, and connects this autobiographical narrative to wider social meanings and understandings. Through this process a researcher uses their personal experiences to

describe, understand and critique their own beliefs, practices and experiences. Custer (2014) describes autoethnography as a "transformative research method because it changes time, requires vulnerability, fosters empathy, embodies creativity and innovation, eliminates boundaries, honours subjectivity, and provides therapeutic benefits" (p.11). This occurs when the researcher values the relationship with the participants. As a member of the Professional Learning Community within the school, I valued my relationships with the participants, and still do. The next section outlines the research methods.

## Research Methods

Research methods refer to the procedures used to undertake the research.

## Mixed Methods Research

Mixed methods research involves a combination of approaches, methods, concepts and language that are both quantitative and qualitative in nature. In order to be considered mixed methods, both qualitative and quantitative findings must be interwoven. This combination can strengthen the legitimacy and reliability of the research (Vanstone, 2008) if it involves open-ended approaches, whereby the strategies employed complement each other. Burke, Johnson and Onwegbuzie (2004, as cited in Vanstone, 2008) describe this as methodological pluralism, which provide less constraints on the researcher while also providing participants with choices.

### Quantitative Research

Quantitative research is based on obtaining precise, numerical data and is therefore often considered less time-consuming in the collation and analysis of data, than research of a qualitative nature. Quantitative research seeks to be fully replicable by producing data, often through statistical analysis, to acknowledge and/or minimise variables. Quantitative research is useful when obtaining data from large numbers of people. Research samples can be randomised or prescribed, depending on the purpose.These types of research projects often seek to test hypotheses and validate existing theories through the careful analysis of quantifiable evidence. The researcher interacts minimally, if at all, with the participants who are often seen as *subjects.*

(Vanstone, 2008). Māori have found this type of research *can* lead to the researcher theorising in ways that pathologise and subjugate their lived reality or destiny (Bishop, 1997).

Schools gather data of a quantitative nature from students for a range of purposes. Achievement data is one such example of quantatative data. Examples of quantitative student data gathered by schools to inform teaching and learning are regular test results and student surveys. Some types of data like literacy and numeracy testing results are shared with parents. Some types of data like the annual Analysis of Variance are mandatory requirements by the MoE. Qualitative research data is not as readily shared with parents, or accessed by the MoE.

## Qualitative Research

Qualitative research involves the study of the lived experiences of people in their normal settings. As such it allows the researcher to engage in ako relationships with the participants in order to interpret and make sense of the relationships, experiences and interactions (Berryman, et al., 2014). The researcher's role is to create opportunities for the voices of these participants and for the researcher and others to learn from and reflect on those experiences. This process generally involves observations, interviews, group focused conversations and narrative inquiry. Qualitative research is grounded in the cultural context in which the participants are located, and seeks to focus on the strengths and relationships within the ideologies and the cultural context, as opposed to just focussing on predetermined question sets. In the context of this research method, researchers must respond and carry out the research as it unfolds and collaborative understandings are developed (Berryman, 2008). This process aims to provide authentic contexts through which the participants are defining themselves, through their own prior knowledge and lived experiences. As such qualitative methods of gathering and analysing data fit well within culturally responsive methodologies.

## Qualitative data used in this research

This research used group-focused interviews as chat (Bishop, 1995). The semi structured process used in this research allowed the participants to respond to the questions and to each other, with their experiences and thoughts, including the ways in

which the professional learning community culture had shaped them and they had in turn shaped it. These methods are described in the next section.

## Research methods used

This section explains the method used in this research.

### Group focused interview as chat

This mixed methods approach applies group focus interviews as chat using open ended questions. Questions such as these allow the participants to respond in ways where they can be self determining and where they can direct the conversation in ways that are more relevant to them.

### Semi-structured interviews

The semi-structured interview began with an open ended question, which was provided to the participants in writing prior to the interview. The interview was recorded, transcribed, returned to participants for verification, then analysed.

### Document analysis

This research also includes a triangulated analysis of published and publically available, in-school materials as previously discussed. These included student achievement data, transcribed interviews with whānau and students, as well as ERO reports. Members of the school community were interviewed as part of the Prime Minister's Education Excellence Awards in 2016 and 2017 and by ERO in 2017. The transcripts from these interviews were used to provide evidence as to how these experiences and practices have impacted on, and been impacted by whānau and parents during the focus time period. These transcripts were part of the document analysis and comments from these contributed to the collaborative storying in the findings of this thesis.

### Grounded Theory

Grounded theory is an inductive form of research where the framework is determined by the systematic gathering and analysis of qualitative data, such as narratives in group-focused interviews, often in response to a series of questions.

Researchers would review the transcribed data and identify repeated ideas, concepts or elements which are then tagged and grouped. Strauss and Juliet (1994) describe the history and emergence of grounded theory, which is understood as grounded in the theorising of the participants. This theory informed my practice throughout the research and analysis process for this thesis, as a member and leader within the professional learning community context in which this thesis is grounded.

### Collaborative storying

The experiences of the participants in this research were transcribed and used to tell a collaborative story of their collective experience. Bishop, (1995) describes collaborative storying as an opportunity to critically reflect on the researcher's own participation within a research group, and the projects through interviews as chat and then from constructing joint narratives from the transcribed conversations about the experiences. In analysis, common themes were sought from across the participants' recorded experiences of participants. These data were used to explore the implications of teacher professional learning experiences on pedagogical structures and cultural relationships within the research setting, which was their school.

## Research setting: The school

The research was undertaken at Invercargill Middle School - Te Kura o te Puna Wai Ora.

### Cultural connections

I introduce the school using traditional Māori pepeha and mihimihi:

Ko Waipourewa te maunga
Ko Ōtepuni te awa
Ko Murihiku te rohe
Ko Te Kura o te Puna Wai Ora te kura
E tū atu nei mātou
Anei mātou. Nō tēnei kura, hei tauira.

The mihimihi begins by making formal, cultural connections to the important landmarks and people of the region, within which the school is located: the mountain,

*Waipourewa*; the waterway, *Ōtepuni;* and, the people, *Murihiku*. This mihimihi continues by introducing the school's Māori name, both a direct translation and a metaphorical connection to the potential of the school as a spring with waters of wellbeing. It concludes by calling attention to the people standing together within. *Here we are. In this school, learners.*

The *mana whenua* (locally affiliated tribes) are of Kāi Tahu, Kāti Māmoe and Waitaha descent. There are also many families in the region, affiliated to iwi from the North Island, in particular Ngāpuhi and Ngāti Porou. These families migrated south in the 1950s-1960s seeking employment in the farming, shearing and freezing works industries that at that time, were thriving.

## Demographic connections

Invercargill Middle School is a year 1-6, Decile 3 school, located in the middle of Invercargill, hence the name Middle School. Invercargill is the most southern city in the South Island of New Zealand. The school is on a small site and has a predesignated zone for student enrolments. The school is one of the oldest in Invercargill and has buildings that reflect this.

This research is bounded by three points in time: 2011, when I began my leadership at this school and within its community; 2015 when the school underwent ERO review, and late 2017- 2018, when the school won a Prime Minister's Award for Education Excellence. In order to achieve equity and excellence for all students, the Treaty of Waitangi principles of participation, protection and partnership were at the forefront of the review, design and implementation of the New Zealand curriculum. The Māori metaphors of whanaungatanga, ako and manaakitanga became embedded into all aspects of school life. I reflect on these points in line with my participants.

Contributing to the special nature of the school are the 22% of Māori students on the roll. Another aspect of the special nature of this school is provided by the local tertiary provider, The Southern Institute of Technology, that is located within the school's zone. This institute provides a lot of accommodation for families, meaning that the school roll includes a number of international learners whose parents are studying. A high number of these learners are English Language Learners, who are not funded as such. There are also a number of transient students who enrol in the school from around Aotearoa and may stay for a year or less before moving to another part of the country.

The international and transient numbers in the school have averaged 16-18% of the school roll since 2011. In 2017, it was up to 25-30%.

## Research participants

Within this research there were four participants. The participants in the group-focused interviews are all teachers with experience ranging from 5-20+ years and they teach across years 1-8. The teachers represented in this research include two of the original staff members in place before my arrival as a school leader, and one employed as a beginning teacher in 2013. Two of these teachers have children who attended the school, therefore bring the lens of parents to this research also. The ethnicity of the staff members does not replicate the cultural identities of the school and its community.

The principal is male and of Samoan heritage. Although he has significant experience in leadership, he self-identified his learning focus as curriculum development and design, structures and systems review and positioning. Therefore he became an active participant in the professional learning community.

Teacher C has 21 years teaching experience, across years 1-6. She identifies as Pākehā. This teacher was at the school before I undertook my role and has remained throughout the full professional learning cycle.

Teacher S has 30 years experience, across years 1-3. She identifies as Pākehā and is a Reading Recovery Teacher, ELL support teacher and SENCO. This teacher was also at the school before I undertook my role and has remained throughout the full professional learning cycle. She has had all three of her children attend the school, with her youngest child still attending.

Teacher T has six years experience, mainly in years 4-5, with a new role in year 1-2 at the time of writing. I was also her mentor teacher as she started her teaching career. Both her daughters attended the school, with her youngest daughter in my class for four years. She identifies as Pākehā, with her daughters identifying as dual heritage, both Pākehā and Māori with Kāi Tahu as their iwi.

There are two whānau voices reflected in the transcripts analysed for this study. The first whānau are from Gisborne and moved to Invercargill in 2016. Whaea V is of Ngāti Porou descent. She describes herself as an independent mother of two children. Her daughter attended the school from 2016-2017.

The second whānau are from Invercargill and had been a part of the school for many years, throughout the education of three daughters. Whaea N is of Kai Tahu descent. She also describes herself as an independent mother. Her three daughters attended the school from 2003-2017.

There are also informal whānau voices included in this research. These responses were unsolicited and noted during day-to-day school activities.

## Activities that informed this research

Prior to this research, the participants had been involved in a number of ongoing, in-school PLD activities. These activities contributed to individual and whole school improvement. Some of these changes, as they relate to my role as Deputy Principal, are described in Chapter Four alongside my personal positionality statement. However, given that this thesis takes a retrospective look at the teachers' experiences from this PLD and the ensuing implications for whānau and learners, it is important next, to describe what these activities were. Undoubtedly, teachers' reflections are strongly embedded in this PLD and so too are these research outcomes. The PLD activities were combinations of: observations with feedback chats, staff meetings with professional readings; and curriculum design, and data meetings.

### Observations and data meetings

Timetabled observations and data sharing meetings were an aspect aimed at reforming pedagogy within the school. Initially I modelled and was observed by every staff member following pre-negotiated protocols and procedures. The lesson observation form was co-constructed by reflecting on aspects of the teacher registration criteria, the Te Kotahitanga effective teaching profile (Bishop, et al. 2014), the school's values and from students' voices. The observation timetable that emerged, followed a set pattern and was planned each term in advance. Teachers were observed regularly, and they observed each other. Educators were both learners and teachers within this process. Teachers had opportunities to request observations in order to be in control of their own development, including using videoed lessons which were then viewed during the co-construction process. Teachers watched their own lessons (on video), reflecting on their use of questioning and types of conversations in the classrooms through structured self-reflection practices. Student voices were gathered during each

observation and used as a basis for reflection. Observation practices such as these built the impetus and agency for changes in their own practice and in the practice of others.

Data sharing meetings and moderation of assessment protocols were also timetabled three times each term. The data was gathered based on a co-constructed assessment timetable and the data was recorded on co-constructed student progress graphs. These graphs were stored in a shared folder and were always accessible to staff members. At the meetings, student progress and concerns were shared through critical dialogue that focussed teachers on their own agency and away from deficit theorising. A student summary form was used to scaffold this discussion. The reliability and validity of data collection and analysis was also moderated through the use of videotaped assessment procedures. Through this dialogue teachers and leaders planned the next learning steps and deliberate acts of teaching, for themselves and their students. The focus for future staff development and observations were also set.

I put these PLD activities in place throughout 2012 and these remained in place throughout the period of reform. The next section describes the research procedure.

## The Research procedure for this thesis

Reflecting on my role as a Deputy Principal in the school I saw an opportunity to engage with teachers around the effect of the PLD on pedagogical structures and culture based relationships.In this section I describe the research procedure and related activities undertaken in order to access participants and answer my research questions .

### Access to participants

In my role as a school leader and classroom teacher I worked closely with the members of my school professional learning community and Board of Trustees. I provided a letter and an information sheet to the school Principal and Board of Trustees to seek permission to work with staff and to undertake my thesis research in this school. Once this was granted I approached my teaching colleagues. It is within these close working relationships that I carried out the group focused conversation with colleagues. I also had continuous and legitimate access to student achievement and voice data as Deputy Principal. It is from this evidence, readily available in the public domain, that I analysed outcomes for students.

### Recruiting participants

I made email contact with the members of my Professional Learning Community and explained what my research was about and invited them to contribute. As this research was about a teacher PLD approach I aimed to recruit between four and five participants who had experienced the previous PLD. I supported this invitation with an email to the school principal to invite him to be a part of the research. If there were any questions I responded to these individually at the time.

Once four participants had indicated that they would like to be involved, I followed this with a personal email outlining the details of the research, an information sheet outlining the activities, and a consent form that participants were asked to sign. Participant teacher numbers mean I consulted with four out of eight teachers in the school.

## Research activities

The research participants were involved in three distinct activities.

### Interviews with participants

Participants were invited to take part in a group focus interviews as chat. These conversations were digitally recorded on a passcode protected device (an i-pad), and began with an open-ended question inviting each participant to share their story about their professional learning journey at their current school. The conversation was transferred to my password protected computer. The open ended questions were provided to participants prior to the interview. The subsequent conversation allowed me as the researcher to respond to the conversation naturally, in the direction that the participants wanted it to go. When there was a lull in the conversation I introduced the second or third open ended question in order to bring about a new conversation stream. This allowed the participants to direct the conversation together as a group and as individuals, responding naturally to one another.

The whānau voices were collected in semi-structured interviews as chat by the film crew tasked with providing video evidence to support and share the achievements of the professional learning community for both the Prime Minister's Education Excellence Awards 2016, 2017 and the Education Review Office Indicators 2016. As a

school leader and Deputy Principal I have legitimate access to these transcripts and the videos which are also in the public domain. Further whānau voices were reflected informally, in the day to day interactions of business-as-usual school life.

## Reflecting on the interviews

Once transcribing had been completed, each participant was sent a link to the transcript via Google Drive in order to review and amend material, according to it being a true and accurate recording of the conversation. Participants had the opportunity, via email, to request technical support in order to complete this, which was provided in the form of a tutorial as required.

## Reflecting on student data

A range of student achievement data was retrospectively analysed in conjunction with the participants' narrative voices in this research. These data were gathered before, during and after the period of reform. It was collected through the analysis of variance procedures, as stipulated by the Ministry of Education requirements. These data were gathered as per the school's achievement and progress data collection and collation procedures, which were a part of my role as a classroom teacher and deputy principal. These data allow me as the researcher to consider the emergent themes from the group focused interviews through the lens of their potential influence and impact on student progress and achievement. The data used in this thesis stems from three distinct points in time: 2011 before the period of PLD transformation; 2015 after the initial cycle of reviewing the PLD; and 2017/2018 after a further iteration of review and inquiry of the PLD. The data have been analysed through the lens of National Standards, which was the expectation of the government at the time. This means that student achievement was measured as *below standard, at the standard* or *above the standard.*

These data have been further analysed through the lens of gender, years at school and ethnicity in order to ensure that cohorts are clearly presented as both a part of the total, and disaggregated as distinct groups.

### Analysis of the interviews

In analysis common themes were sought from across the participants. Participants received a link, via google drive to this analysis to review and make any final comments or suggestions if they wished using the comments function.

Within the context of this thesis, grounded theory was applied through the use of colour coded analysis of the interview transcripts, which identified the themes for further exploration. These themes were used as headings under which I grouped the comments. The transcripts from whānau interviews were also colour coded and common themes were identified.

### Collaborative storying

Finally, the excerpts from the transcribed interviews were used to tell a collaborative story of their collective experience (Bishop, 1996) under each of the themes. Initially the teacher's stories and the whānau stories are told as separate strands in chapter five, then woven together in the discussion in chapter six. In the next section I will explore the ethical issues.

## Ethical Issues

All ethical procedures, as specified by the University of Waikato, were followed during this research. Written and verbal information were provided to all participants at the beginning of the research and in the group focused interviews. These contained statements about confidentiality. The transcripts and videos were only viewed by myself as the researcher and by the participants. Written consent was gained from each participant and they were provided with multiple opportunities to contribute throughout the process.

## Potential conflicts of interest

My role as Deputy Principal does not conflict with my role as a researcher as I do not have authority over the lived experiences of the participants or their decision to participate. The open-ended sub-questions ensured that the focus remained on the collection and understanding of our lived experiences as opposed to my judgement of them.

Within this thesis as a member and leader of the professional learning community of focus, I have used autoethnography and personal reflexivity to better understand my position within the research. It provides me with the opportunity to describe the changes that occurred in my practice and thinking through this research and the period of transformation. I have preceded my findings with a positionality statement in the next chapter.

As a woman of dual Pākehā and Māori descent, with a focus on exploring the influence of PLD on an educational professional learning community, and the achievement of Māori students (and all students), aspects of Kaupapa Māori research are present in this thesis. However, it is important to be cognisant of my role as the sole Māori participant inside the Professional Learning Community.

## Researcher perspectives: Insider/outsider

Linda Smith (1999) describes the decolonisation of research methodology through the idea of inside and outsider research. This theory reminds researchers to consider whose stories are being privileged and whose stories are being marginalised through research processes. As an insider in this professional learning community I am positioned to identify the potential of the people and provide space for their stories and experiences to be the focus, whilst providing a valuable reminder of the need to reflect on, and be critical of my own culture, values, assumptions and beliefs .

In the next chapter I consider my own positionality.

# CHAPTER FOUR: MY POSITIONALITY

*Once there was a kuia who made mats and baskets. In the corner of her kitchen lived a spider who made webs.*
*One day the spider called out to the kuia,*
*"Hey old woman,*
*My weaving is better than yours".*
*(Grace, 1981)*

In this section of the story the author has introduced the two main characters and connected them to their positionality in the whare (house) and in relation to one another. This is important because the spider is watching over the kuia from her vantage point in the corner of the kitchen ceiling. This is how I consider my tīpuna, watching over me. Koro and my Nan would definitely call out and let me know if they thought I wasn't on the right track! In this chapter I consider who I am and my position in relation to this research and the professional learning community.

## Who I am

Ko Hikurangi te maunga

Ko Waiapu te awa

Ko Horouta te waka

Ko Ngāti Porou me Whenua Moemoea me Ngāti Pākehā ōku iwi.

I am a daughter, mother, wife, friend, teacher, learner and leader. I am also a weaver.

I come from a fractured family with experiences of all of societies negative indices. I always felt lesser, not good enough or unsuccessful. I did not fit in and was very shy at school. I always watched other students and tried to understand what they said, what they did and what they wore, to try to copy and be accepted by them. I attended school in the 80s and 90s and I remember the students I idolised. They were successful at being Pākehā - looking *right*, sounding *right* and doing the *right* things. At high school I was told by teachers and school leaders that I would *amount to nothing*.

In my final year I looked at my world and decided that I wanted something different. I didn't know what I wanted, or how to get there but I decided that I would work hard and try to pass my school subjects. At that time I was working and living in a Housing New Zealand flat with my friend and her baby. We struggled financially and often burned leaflets to keep warm. I worked hard and studied that year. At the end of the year I passed my subjects, however, due to my previous underachievement the teachers and leaders at my school decided I must have cheated and would not accept my exam results as genuine. Following this I left school. I knew I had Māori *whakapapa* but did not know much about it. I decided to study *Te Reo me ōna tikanga* (The Māori language and protocols). Through this study I met two kaumātua who changed my life, and it is through their guidance and aroha (love) that I have learned to teach, learn and lead others.

## Learning from kaumātua

I experienced *whanaungatanga* myself as a young woman, when I left school and enrolled in a Te Reo me ōna Tikanga course at age seventeen. There I met Koro Riki Cherrington, our kaumātua described in Chapter One. For me, he became the father and grandfather I never had, and through that close whānautanga relationship I experienced manaaki, aroha, awhi and tiaki. I was able to see and feel a sense of potential, seeing myself through his eyes. During my first teaching role kuia Nan Barrett also blessed me with a whānautanga relationship. Her daughter and I had been school-friends, and during my early teaching years I taught many of Nan's mokopuna (grandchildren). It was Nan's whanaunga (relation) Whaea Wini Solomon who taught me to weave. After becoming a teacher myself, I also had many of her mokopuna in my class and Whaea Wini visited our class regularly. These people and our shared experiences and my new learning meant that I did not see myself, students and whānau as separate, or individuals. I was more inclined towards *centrifugal thinking* (Durie, 2019). To my understanding, this means that I understood that the wider relationships connected and wove us together. These special people accepted me for who I was, and shaped who I became. This sense of acceptance of both my Māori whakapapa and my own feelings of *not knowing enough* to claim this was the opposite to my experiences of schooling as a place to be ashamed of difference from the dominant culture and status quo. As a young teacher this meant that I deliberately sought to know students and their

whānau, to engage with them as integral parts of one another and to interact and act within the tikanga of the whānau in my own classroom, the playground, in the community and in their homes. I knew, for example, that student P loved to have his mahi (work) on his table in the morning so he could see what he had to do as soon as he arrived at school. I knew that student D felt more secure with his beanie on. I knew that student R loved to see what student V was doing so that he could learn through watching. I knew that student J could read but didn't want to do it in front of everyone. As I engaged with the whānau of my learners, I shared my noticings and listened to theirs. The relationships and conversations took as long as they took, and happened wherever they happened; they certainly did not look like the formal student teacher interviews that were more normal in this school. At that time, for me as a young teacher, this way of being and practices such as these, resulted in negative push-back, workplace bullying and ostracisation from my leaders and colleagues . This was my experience of *othering* as a pushing back against and belittlement of those who are different. However, I was not yet conscientised to my own responses. I could not articulate my reasoning or explain what I was doing and why. That came later. My evidence at that time was not unlike the evidence of The Kuia and The Spider (Grace, 1981), I made decisions based on what I understood of the happiness, safety and mauri ora of the tamariki mokopuna (children and grandchildren).

For me, pushing back against this colonial behaviour of *othering* began as a natural response and grew into a genuine act of critical consciousness. Weaving together and reflecting on my own life experiences and my learning, unlearning and relearning (Wink, 2011) as a learner, teacher and leader I deliberately rejected the societal individualism and engaged with people through a lens of *whanaungatanga.*

Through these kaumātua I understand manaakitanga to mean lifting the mana of others. In practice, this means acting and interacting in culturally authentic ways, in order to lead others to achieve their own self-determined authenticity. This can be through engaging in a tuakana-teina relationship, grounded in ako, where both parties experience growth from the interaction. Within this space I may be the tuakana or the teina. These roles I have learned, can shift and change. It can also mean that as a leader I create the spaces and support for others to engage in these relationships, which may be grounded in co-constructed systems and structures. An example of such systems and structures in the Professional Learning Community featured in this thesis can be located in our reciprocal classroom visits and student led conferences. As I led the development

of the systems and structures at Invercargill Middle School I did direct, tell and guide others and take on the tuakana role. However, over the period of reform the teachers, whānau and students began to lead. During the student led conferences for example; in the first instance I created prompts for the students and teachers and worked with my class to create instructional videos to support others. In subsequent years the students created the prompts and by 2017 they no longer needed prompts at all. As I headed into a leadership role those experiences, both negative and positive, shaped my leadership lens. I deliberately, consciously rejected the *othering* of the teachers in my community. I sought to know them, what worked for them, what challenged them, how far to stretch them, when and how; with the aim of never making them feel dehumanised, ostracised or bullied. I endeavoured to always be honest, which in turn meant being open to the honesty of others. These ideas became part of my development, my shared understandings, knowledge, values and tikanga as member and a learner and a leader as we experienced the reform together.

## Experiences of Reform

Within the period of reform described in this thesis I aimed to provide opportunities for the discovery of principles and ideas through active dialogue with and between participants and rejected the model favoured by monologic pedagogues (Lyle, 2008). Within the professional learning I worked to ensure learning was interactive and interpersonal through dialogic practice and that participants were connected and committed to one another. Bruner (1999) describes this as the interactional tenet whereby learning is co-constructed through interaction. This was to ensure that the practices of the professional learning community reflected the practices that would decolonise and transform teaching and learning in the classroom, addressing the ongoing disparities by critically examining practices and providing support and space for unlearning, learning and relearning.

## 2011: Our need for ongoing improvement

In 2011, the school was challenged financially, relationships amongst teachers, students and *whānau* were not good and student achievement clearly indicated that

teaching practice, assessments, policy and curriculum needed to be more seriously considered. The student achievement data for all learners achieving at or above the National Standard for reading, writing and maths showed :

- Reading 79%
- Writing 59%
- Math 80%

The disaggregated achievement data for Māori students showed:

- Reading 79%
- Writing 50%
- Math 79%

Of concern, was my belief that the reliability and validity of this data might well be compromised due to the potential lack of robust teacher moderation throughout the assessment procedures. Through my professional judgement as a leader and teacher these data were showing much higher levels of achievement than the evidence from students. In 2011, the school had been identified by the Education Review Office[3] (ERO), as in need of careful monitoring and support. This review, conducted shortly after the current principal was appointed, stated areas for significant improvement including:

- Most students need to make accelerated progress,
- Set targets to raise Māori student achievement in consultation with whānau progress,
- More cohesion between Charter, curriculum plan, class programmes
- Appropriate priority in Charter re raising student achievement
- Accountability and clarity of roles and responsibilities for leaders and trustees
- Consistent implementation, monitoring & review of plans & systems developed (including PMS [Performance Management Systems], review of school programmes and practices).

[3] ERO are the official agency whose role is to evaluate and report on the education and care of children and young people in all New Zealand education institutions.

- Effective assessment practices, OTJs [Overall Teacher Judgements], including re National Standards
- Moderation for consistency and reliability
- What constitutes high quality teaching.

Despite our classroom observations, our professional discussions and a thorough review of the curriculum and planning procedures in the intervening year, our evidence told us that our teaching, learning and assessment practices within the school:

- were not reflective
- were not truly collaborative or consistent
- [Indicated that] deficit theorising was abundant
- did not genuinely acknowledge the aspirations of Māori
- were not improving achievement levels over time
- were not intentionally seeking improvement.

In response, I developed some focus lines of inquiry in order to transform these practices by working on and within school structures and systems to reform the cultural relationships and pedagogy. In setting up for these inquiries, the questions I asked myself included:

- How can teachers develop practices that accelerate learners' progress, in particular Māori learners, so that they are able to achieve the aspirations of themselves and their whānau?
- What teacher knowledge needs to be built in order to improve learner, and in particular Māori learners' outcomes?
- How can teachers develop relationships grounded in the practices of a whānau, together as a team, in their classrooms and with the school community?
- What systems can be developed to support teacher, management and board reflection to improve practice and the experiences of students and their whānau?
- What concepts and values did teachers and leaders need to develop and embody in order to achieve learner, in particular Māori learners, outcomes?

- How could reform encourage a cultural shift of continuous improvement, equity, excellence and belonging?

# School reform through PLD

## Decolonisation and reformation of school culture

I understood that Pihama (2017) had described mainstream schools as places where for many there is a disjuncture between the culture of home and school, and as places where western/Eurocentric values, knowledge, culture and language are the central focus. Te Reo Māori and culture were seen as additions rather than core curriculum practices. I understood this meant decolonising and reforming the school culture. I began by making closer connections with the respected *kaumātua* Riki Cherrington (introduced previously), whose children had attended the school from the 1970s-1980s and who had been a Board of Trustees member. His local knowledge and locatedness to the area supported us to establish a sense of turangawaewae (location and connectedness to the land) within the school. My close personal whānau relationship with him provided the connection and impetus to continue to work in this way. Through whakapapa this kaumātua gave the school its Māori name, *Te Kura o te Puna Wai Ora.* He composed a school haka (group performance that issues forth a challenge), which begins with the line *Te Puna Wai Ora, e tu atu nei e* (stand up, stand strong and be proud) and this became the school motto. The gift of this new name and motto provided the focus for a series of artworks which now adorn the school and are constant visual representations that promote indigenous Māori culture as normal, valuable and important. The first of these is a series of murals, designed and painted by the students and staff, representing the school name literally and metaphorically.

These acts were met with enthusiasm from students and whānau, and through the resulting dialogue, whānau relationships began to form. Both formally and informally, whānau demonstrated interest and added their ideas, suggestions and experiences to this work. This involved supporting with the painting of murals, weaving of tukutuku (woven panels), gifting of taonga (treasured items) and the development of a school pepeha (greeting and locatedness).

## Reo Rua

Through the development of the school values and the collection of student and whānau voice throughout this time, I responded to the growing need to provide opportunities for further learning in te reo Māori. With the support of the principal and the Board of Trustees I surveyed the school community and responded to the whānau aspirations by establishing a Level 3 Immersion Reo Rua class at the school. The location of the class was deliberately at the heart of the school, and the decision was made that the class be named Room 4, in line with the other classrooms, therefore locating this class as connected and a part of the whole school culture.

I taught this class from 2012-2017 and it continues to operate as a whānau, open to students from years 1-6. The teaching and learning includes both te reo Māori and English and operates within an additive strategy to bi-literacy, whereby students add to their lexicon, or mental dictionary, words and phrases in both languages and utilise this learning interchangeably as they choose. Aspects of front loading and dialogic teaching practices (Lyle, 2008) support the development of te reo Māori. Within the classroom, the curriculum is delivered through a Māori worldview with cultural responsiveness (Bishop & Glynn, 1999), viewing the cultural knowledge of students, their prior knowledge and experiences as important in the construction of new knowledge (Bruner, 1999). In recognition of the first group of students to transition on to secondary school from this class, I supported my students and was in turn supported by their whānau to investigate tukutuku. Together we designed and created a series of panels that tell the story of the school values and motto within the patterns. These panels now adorn the school hall, and are the backdrop for all school activities that take place there, including weekly assemblies. The school kaumātua blessed these panels during an assembly, making this a special memory as it was the final school function he attended before his passing.

## Reforming the pedagogy

My pedagogical experiences are grounded in the belief that all aspects of teaching and learning should operate from an additive perspective. In terms of PLD, that means every team member brings value and innate worthiness just by being a part of the team, therefore PLD must add to their value rather than replace or subtract from it. At Invercargill Middle School I constructed the methodology for teacher PLD through a

kaupapa Māori lens. The PLD operated within the contexts of whanaungatanga, through relationships that respected and cared for each other, rather than being coercive or demanding of the other; power was shared and responsibilities were interdependent. Curriculum material was delivered in an iterative manner, in order to build on prior knowledge and experiences as resources for learning. Through these processes teachers began to understand that through dialogic practices they could position themselves alongside students, in order to transform the world, rather than transform the students themselves (Lawrence, 2014).

## Professional development

It is from this additive, kaupapa Māori foundation, within the contexts of whanaungatanga and through social co-construction, that I designed and implemented PLD towards the formation of a Professional Learning Community. It was from these cultural, relational contexts that I believed we would be able to reform our teaching, change deficit theorising towards critical consciousness and agency in learning, achievement and school culture.

We began with the co-construction of clear, consistent, responsive expectations and routines, such as the expectations and procedures for weekly teacher PLD whereby teachers were working together to understand themselves as āu, their own place within the whānau, the contextualisation of whanaungatanga in the classrooms, and working with, alongside and learning from whānau. The focus for each meeting was pre-planned on a shared document one term in advance. The selected development foci were based on teacher and student voices and evidence, gathered from observation feedback and co-constructed next steps. Initially I planned and delivered the meetings, however as teacher confidence grew and adaptive expertise developed in classrooms, the meetings began to follow a more distributed leadership model. The bringing in of external experts was kept to a minimum in order to provide opportunities for genuine growth in capability and adaptive expertise. Rather than *go to a course* about such-and-such we selected and read research, viewed videos and engaged in dialogue before seeking support of a more expert other, if required. We were selective and deliberate to ensure our PLD learning was iteratively building on the professional knowledge, pedagogical understanding and discursive repositioning required to enact the reforms that we sought.

Active participation was an expectation and scaffolding was provided to ensure this happened. The agenda was set a week in advance and followed an expected pattern which included purposeful professional reading and reflection. This ensured every team member came to the meeting from a position of agency and, through more equitable power relations, they took responsibility for adding to their own learning and the learning of others. Throughout the professional development, acts of dialogism, which "assumes knowledge is something people do together rather than an individual possession" (Lyle, 2008, p.225) were enacted. Culturally responsive practices were another key aspect, as we paid careful attention to the discussions, to student achievement data and observed outcomes in order to provide readings and contexts that would meet teachers' future learning and development needs.

## Reciprocal classroom visits and student led conferences

Institutions such as these have been key towards system and structural reform at Invercargill Middle School. I introduced reciprocal classroom visits in 2012, in response to the observed importance of whakawhanaungatanga (acts of strengthening relationships) and greater coherency across the school and community. At that time teachers were doing the best that they could, but very much in isolation from each other and from whānau. Addressing the understanding that students and their whānau move through the school, it became an important focus that consistency in expectations and experiences was provided. An example of this can be found as explained by SooHoo (2006), who describes school as a place where student's rights to a cohesive social and learning environment can be enhanced or compromised. Reciprocal visits required teachers to select a partner with whom to work, acting as co-inquirers into practice and pedagogy. Partnerships worked together to plan a timeline for reciprocal classroom observations each term. The dates for these were recorded on a shared timetable. An observation form was co-constructed and curriculum foci identified as a collective. Teachers engaged in the observations with one another and met to discuss their findings. These were then discussed at subsequent staff or team meetings. Over time, teachers reported more confidence in being observed and observing each other, and were able to freely share ideas and celebrate each other's success, while also working together to agenticaly address concerns. The nature of these visits provided teachers with a lens

through which to reflect upon their own practice and the experiences of students across the school.

Student led conferences were also introduced in 2012. However, the focus was on students sharing their learning through educationally powerful connections with their whānau. This was in opposition to a *show and tell* type approach. As a leader I co-constructed prompt cards with students, using language and images that they felt would support them in teaching and learning with their whānau. We designed a series of stations and devised a tuakana-teina method to practice and develop confidence. Students were nervous, but excited. As a class we made an instructional video to support other classes and teachers with designing and practising the process. These student led conferences celebrated students' success and progress. Teacher input was kept to a minimum. Teachers were present, but remained *backstage,* there to provide support if students ask. The evidence was clear; we had close to 100% of our students and whānau attending these conferences annually.

## Educationally powerful connections

The success of these conferences opposes the rhetoric often heard in education about *whānau reluctance to engage with schools,* and supports the evidence of the impact of educationally powerful connections. The implications behind this term are centred around the nature of mana ōrite partnerships and school leaders ensuring that teaching and learning interventions are designed to simultaneously support parents and/or community members to support students' learning at school and at home and provide teachers with professional learning - alongside, with and from parents, whānau and community members. Maximising the relationships between schools and families means that families have the right to determine how they participate. Schools can do this by providing physical and metaphorical spaces where whānau and schools can work together for the benefit of the students.

These conferences open the space for students to make learning visible through their own eyes, and to see themselves as their own teachers, with and alongside their whānau. This is representative of research, such as that by Hattie (2009), who investigated the most powerful influences on student learning. He concluded that teachers who promoted such situations, where students could explore their own

potential as teachers through their own eyes, were indeed signposts for teaching excellence.

## Conclusion

In summary, in this chapter I have described and explored my prior positioning, theorising and experiences as the person who was a part of the cultural and structural shifts within the school reform. I have used autoethnography and personal reflexivity to better understand my position within this PLD work. That means that within the research of this thesis, I am positioned as an insider, however the open-ended sub-questions ensured that the focus remained on the collection and understanding of teachers lived experiences as opposed to my judgement of them. Grounded theory and collaborative storying allowed for the embodiment of mana ōrite partnerships between myself as the researcher and the participants as co-inquirers into the practices of our professional learning community, whereby we were able to teach and learn through the research process with and from each other. The experiences of teachers within this PLD and the outworkings on whānau and students are in the next chapter using, in the main, teachers' own voices.

# CHAPTER FIVE- FINDINGS

*Whose weaving is best? Asked the kuia.*
*But the kuia's grandchildren did not answer.*
*They sat on the mat and sang songs.*
*They lay on the mats and talked.*
*They took kits to the garden and got kumara.*
*(Grace, 1981).*

The question posed by the Kuia and the Spider, in the excerpt above, was about whose weaving was the best. After completing their respective pieces, the Kuia and the Spider researched, in response to their question, through the collective experiences and stories of their grandchildren; the participants. The grandchildren chose not to answer the question; rather they enjoyed and used the weaving to enrich their lives. This captures my reflection on my own praxis; as I listened to the experiences of the teachers and whānau in order to consider the kaupapa and ensure the potential of our learners was being effectively addressed.

## Introduction

In this chapter the voices of the teacher participants are woven together with the voices of whānau and student achievement data. This chapter considers their collective experiences during the period of PLD school reform. It presents the experiences that enriched the lives of the teachers and in turn improved students' achievement and feelings of success and, as a result, whānau engaged more regularly. These experiences are presented as a collaborative story, sequentially in line with the four research questions. In some cases, teacher experiences are supported with evidence from document analysis.

## Group focused interview

The group focused interview began with welcoming the participants and engaging in whanaungatanga, giving each participant the opportunity to share their

thoughts and feelings for the day. Participants were provided with the information sheet which included the overarching research questions.

## Research Question One

### What were the experiences of teachers in the Professional Learning Community?

In answer to research question one teachers talked about their previous experiences of school culture and PLD structures as a model of hierarchical power relationships, moving towards a Professional Learning Community.

## Cultural Shifts

### Building on prior knowledge and experiences

Through the storying of their current PLD experiences the group described their Professional Learning Community as follows; building on prior knowledge and experiences, manaakitanga, ako, whanaungatanga, shared power and leadership.

Teachers described the importance of the organisational factors such as the co-constructed timetable, the prior reading they were provided with and the importance of valuing and making connections to their prior knowledge:

*Teacher S : It's been very organised and I felt the approach when we read something beforehand and then thought about it and then had a chance to go back and to reflect was a good one.*

This is indicative of a cultural shift in power. Members of the Professional Learning Community knew what each session was about and had opportunities to engage in sense making prior to and during each session. This influenced the shift in power, with meaning and knowledge being co-constructed through the dialogue during the sessions, rather than residing in the leaders'/experts' heads.

*Teacher S: It's just when you've had a chance to prepare it's ok, I know what's coming I might not know everything that's coming but at least I know that I'm on this page not the wrong book.*

*Principal : Yeah it spirals.*

*Teacher C : When you look back you can see that spiral, like the poutama, can't you?*

*Principal : It builds on what you've already got rather than buying in a programme.*

The spiral of learning describes the cultural shift from transmission pedagogy towards ako through shared, conjoint construction of new understandings, skills and knowledge. This connects with the Māori metaphor of poutama. The participants described feelings of on-going, developing learning.

*Teacher C: Everything we do builds on each other so we might not know where it is going [but each] staff meeting built onto the next which takes you to the next step. And everything we do builds on each other so we might not [always] know where it's going [before the] staff meeting [but each one is] built onto the next which takes you to the next step.*

The participants reflected their growing understanding and enactment of Māori metaphors through the ongoing learning from kaumātua. This required a further shift in power, as participants trusted the learning, although it was outside of their world-views and at times challenged their values.

## Relational Trust

Teachers described the cultural shift in trust. The building of trust required the priortisation of time.

*Teacher S: There's a fair amount of trust in that group and there have been things that have happened such as the time that it finishes so you know when it's going to finish so you can actually participate rather than worry about clock watching.*

Being present within the dialogue and with the people required the priortisation of time in order to develop relationships of trust. Teachers connected this to classroom practice.

*Teacher S: Yes it's actually really big [the time allowance] because it means to me that I know that I'm going to work this hard for this amount of time. Kids need to know this so why wouldn't we [value this as adults]?*

Time allowance to focus on the kaupapa, the people and the relationships meant that the students understood we were focused on them and our relationships with them.

*Teacher C : But we also know before we come what we are going to do because we have an agenda. We don't just turn up and not know what we're going to be doing this week. We all have something to bring. We've done reading before the meeting; we have an idea before the meeting what it's going to be about so you don't come and feel like you can't speak as well. And that contributes to that safe space.*

Through a whanaungatanga lens, time allowance is about allowing for essential relational activities such as time to connect with the people and the kaupapa; as opposed to time for generated activities that hold little relevance. These relational connections were always seen as valuable and important.

## Connections

The group also made connections to responsivity, to the foci and work undertaken in the professional learning sessions. Teachers described previous experiences of PLD and compared these with current experiences, reflecting on the sense of belonging and connections created.

*Teacher C: In the past one or two people have gone to [a] course and they might find one or two things from that course that they bring back but they don't necessarily share that. The model that we use here means that someone might learn something but they share it with everyone and they share that knowledge. So you don't feel like you're not good enough or not important enough. We all get the knowledge. I can't count the number of times I've walked out of staff meeting and thought I can go and change some thing,s I can refresh how I do things. It means it's [the PLD] directly what we need rather than what one person thinks a whole group of teachers need and it's based on each of us in what has been observed that we need.*

The participants valued opportunities to construct knowledge and learn together as a whānau with shared and equitable power. Dialogic feedback/feedforward was an important part of the construction of shared knowledge and sense making.

## Feedback/feedforward

When considering feedback/feedforward teachers said:

*Teacher C: All the feedback that we give our students is learning based. We don't do: good job or well done. And it's the same for us and our appraisals in our observations. We get feedback and feedforward and we know what we would like to work on and what we need to work on in order to improve and that's not so scary for us now that we don't know.*

Teachers said that feedback/feedforward supported them with their responsive praxis. Teachers viewed themselves as learners as well as teachers. They described the resulting sense of agency.

*Teacher T: If we had to pick up a programme we wouldn't be being responsive. Because we can be responsive to our children's needs we can actually help them to grow. I think I've learnt how to be responsive to my children's needs and I'm still learning a lot. It's ongoing learning and I think we've learnt that we're always going to be learning It doesn't matter if you've been teaching for five years ,10 years [or] 40 years. We all learn to never stop growing or to assume that what has worked in the past is going to work again. We're going to go out and find the research. We've learnt to find help.*

*Teacher S: We have learnt to be agentic.*

Participants made connections between the pedagogical structures that made a difference in their classrooms, and those that were taking place in the professional learning community. They identified alignment and coherence between these spaces.

## Discursive repositioning and leadership

The group began to make connections to their own leadership of learning through teaching as inquiry and the ways in which this connected to the context of the professional learning community. The theme of discursive repositioning also emerged through the conversation. As they described their inquiries, teachers continued to consider the extent to which the Professional Learning Community allowed teachers to be both a learner, leader and a teacher through the metaphor of ako. In terms of developing leadership, teachers said:

*Teacher T: The inquiry process is definitely helping with as well giving ownership on researching and developing what is really happening in your classroom. My inquiry is completely different to everyone else's to best suit my classroom but we*

*can sit and work on them collaboratively together because of the structure and routines.*

Within the professional learning community these teachers believed:

*If I need help I'll ask and if people want to come and see me I'll give advice or whatever I can do. The benefits for me are that it puts me in the same seat as what my students are feeling. It positions me as a learner alongside and with my students and colleagues. Before I came here, if I walked into a classroom and I didn't feel like I knew everything about a topic, in terms of the students knowing more than me I would have felt inadequate. But these are eight and nine year olds and it doesn't even matter to me anymore I know that I'm a learner here that's ok.*

Teachers described the ways in which being able to learn from students and parents supported the shifts in power and increased whānau engagement.

*Teacher C : I feel like that's one of the biggest benefits as I feel like I don't have to know everything. I can learn from them, I can learn from parents, I can learn from other staff members. And if I can learn then my kids can learn. And if I don't know I have strategies and support to find out.*

The act of learning with, alongside and from students, whānau and kaumātua also impacted the discursive repositioning. Teachers were no longer considering the student achievement gap, the shift in focus was to a pedagogical gap. Teachers worked to be responsive to the students' cultural toolkit in terms of their own practice and structure.

*Teacher T: And it's not the kids that need to change, it's our practice and that is ok.*

*Teacher C: And it's ok that they all come with different things because we can adapt. They don't have to fit in our little box.*

One of the ways in which the changes in pedagogy were described was through a shared and co-constructed inquiry. Pere (1991) describes language as the lifeline and sustenance of a culture. It is from this viewpoint that a shared and co-constructed inquiry into oral language practices established shared *talk moves* that critically challenged the nature of power relationships in classrooms and transformed teaching and learning practices from monologic and monocultural to dialogic and responsive. The practices were shared, using video, and critically analysed within the professional learning practices. Working with and alongside teachers to identify and describe the similarities, differences and resulting impact of these practices formulated the inquiry.

The inquiry format was co-constructed as a team. Each team member had the opportunity to be self-determining in their specific inquiry goals, however the fortnightly iterative reflection, evidence collation and analysis took place collectively. The regular recording of student voice and deliberate, focused listening to students meant that this inquiry was firmly based on their authentic aspirations. The subsequent reflexive practice resulted in teachers working towards unlearning and relearning practices that continued to shift the power relationships within classrooms. Teachers spoke of the transformative nature of this process saying: *I can't imagine teaching any other way now.*

These comments are evident of repositioning; from the teacher enacting monologic pedagogy to dialogic pedagogy, engaged in ako relationships with their students and each other. Now the structural shifts are considered.

## Structural Shifts

### Prior Experiences

When discussing prior experiences Teacher C began by describing her experiences of PLD prior to 2012 when she felt the ideas were imposed and lacked relevancy to her classroom practice:

> *I feel like we started at a point below zero in fact because of all the experiences we've had that hadn't been good. There was a lot of building up that had to be done before we could feel safe to voice an opinion or to have a different opinion from somebody who was in the management team or in a different classroom. We were used to being done to we weren't used to being a part of.*

This teacher was describing the impact of the colonial hierarchical power structures and transmission model of teaching and learning that existed in the school prior to the reform. This was added to by Teacher S who described the feeling of *low-trust* between themselves and external experts. This was replaced with situations where she felt safe:

> *I was going to say I really appreciated the predictability so I can prepare and don't feel like someone's trying to catch me out and I'm sure the people in the past were trying to catch me out [not knowing something] I did feel like that.*

This teacher was talking about feeling as if each PLD session was a test of her ability to provide a correct response- to give the answer in the expert's head. This is a key effect of the banking model of learning.

Teacher C continued, describing previous experiences which had important implications for lack of sustainability or failure to reform:

> *In the past we spent a lot of money buying programmes and then throwing it out after a year and buying another programme and moving on for a while and it's never been ours. We've never owned it and built it to meet our needs; we've just picked up someone else's work and tried to make it work in our school and it's never been sustained, that's my feeling.*

Teachers spoke of the imposition of randomised new structures or programmes that were expected to fix up or deliver outcomes for students without any changes in school culture and pedagogical understanding. This was added to by the Principal who described feelings of inadequacy in previous PLD experiences, during his teaching role, with external experts:

> *In other schools I've been in [as a teacher] you get the feeling that you're broken and that you need to be fixed to do this because you're no good at something or you know, I messed up. Another person is coming in and telling you how to do things because you don't know, you're inefficient and then you get given it by this other person so you get that sort of feeling and you get the load, you know they want you to do this sheet in that sheet in this tool and it's extra on top of what you're already doing so it's very onerous; you don't get a lot out of it; that it's one sided.*

In this instance the principal was indicating that as a school leader he was not expected to participate in the PLD, largely absolving responsibility to the outside expert. Teachers spoke of feeling loaded upon by the previous PLD which was delivered in a transmission manner by outside experts with little knowledge of the participants' prior knowledge and experiences, therefore, little cultural connection. The power sat with the expert and the teachers felt judged and unsafe in this model which was driven by allocation of time and financial resources via the principal applying to the MoE through the use of outside experts.

## Time Allowance

The group discussed the timetable and time allowances, describing the importance of allowing for and making time to do what needs to be done, as opposed to focusing on timed activities, provided safety and structure, but also space for learning. This was an important structural change in response to the changed culture of becoming a Professional Learning Community.

*Teacher T: We've got lots of opportunities so if something takes us longer than we expect then we get that extra time and it's really worthwhile and we're not rushed through.*

Teachers compared their prior experiences of PLD through a transmission model and the experiences through the PLD reform as a Professional Learning Community.

*Teacher C: It's a safe place to say I don't understand because we don't take that as a judgement. We all feel safe to say if we don't understand. Where as if you're being talked at you might be the only person sitting, clock watching, thinking don't ask me a question because I don't know. It singles you out but because we all sit around together you never feel like you are on your own.*

Teachers were not only describing the importance of allowing time, but also the ways in which this impacted, and was impacted by the culture and relationships. Within this was the shift to leaders and teachers learning together- everyone was involved. The shift in allowance of time to respond to the learning needs meant that the members felt safe to share ideas and ask questions. The collective responsibility to learn with and from each other meant that PLD sessions were focused, but not driven by timed activities.

## Coherence with curriculum

Teachers described the importance of coherence between classroom practice and the PLD culture and structures:

*Teacher C: The coherence of how everything fits together like you would have your observation but they always seem to be staff meetings that fit your needs from your observation-* [recorded laughter]*- How does that happen?*

The laughter indicates that the teachers understood that the learning taking place in the PLD sessions was responsive to the next steps they had identified from their lesson observations and feedback/feedforward sessions. Teachers commented that the

learning during the PLD sessions was grounded in their collective practice development and theorising.

*Teacher T: There's always a take away there's always something I can use to improve my practice.*

Although collaboration and fun were important, teachers appreciated the sound research behind all of the new things we were learning about:

*Teacher C: I love it that everything that I do in the classroom has some sort of research attached to it or things behind it. Nothing's willy-nilly for want of a better word. I can try things out and experiment but they're not just pulled out of thin air. There's research behind it, discussion co-construction and reflection, I'm able to be responsive to my classroom of children which are completely different to the classroom next to me.*

Teachers talked about being responsive, but not random, in the decisions they were making in their classrooms. They were deliberately using evidence and thinking critically to improve their practice and outcomes for students.

## Evidence

In discussing the use of evidence to reflect on practice, which in turn provided agency to transform practice, teachers said the following about the collection and analysis of evidence, student achievement and progress and the New Zealand Curriculum:

*Teacher C : We had a purpose for it. We weren't asking why we had to make these groups or if we were going to be judged as a teacher because we had seven students below [curriculum] level 1 and how to move forward rather than feeling like terrible teachers. We also made the graphs and [identified the expected levels of progress and achievement] the levels together.*

The sharing with colleagues around practices and interventions that were impacting on student progress was highlighted in the conversation.

*Teacher S : The revisiting of data in target plans has been number one in terms of impacting on my students. Doing those together and sharing with what other people were doing in other people's has been really important.*

In terms of sense making, Teacher T said:

*Teacher T: Collaborative is the most important thing to me.*

Participants highlighted the value of understanding and developing the structures around the collection and analysis of data; as well as the graphs used in analysis as being co-constructed within the professional learning community. They then talked about the connections between the use of evidence, to their sense of agency and collaborative approaches:

*Teacher C: We feel more purposeful when we're teaching now everything is done very purposefully in our classroom. It's hard to even remember where we were before.*

This is evident of the shift towards critical consciousness. Teachers reflected on the deliberate acts of teaching and learning, their collective professional knowledge and the impact of student achievement and feelings of success. When reflecting on her own growth in practice and knowledge Teacher T said:

*Teacher T: The changes in my teaching practice over a year here is pretty significant.*

Teacher C connected this to critical consciousness and questioning doing what we have always done and the evidence of lower achievement for groups of students, particularly Māori male students.

*Teacher C: It's ok to question the status quo as to why am I doing that? Is it because I've already done that but why?*

Through the iterative use of evidence-based dialogue the participants have become critically conscious of their practice, its impact and their own agency within that, indicative of praxis; that is, that they had begun to reflect both on theory and practice.

## Research Question Two

### What are the implications for other teachers in a similar Professional Learning Community?

In response to research question two teachers and leaders talked about the implications for other professional learning communities.

## Cultural Shifts- Implications for others

### Shifts in power relationships

Imposition of a new structure in education does little to improve outcomes for students and whānau. This is evident in structural changes such as Tomorrow's Schools (1989) and the imposition of National Standards. Cultural shifts, with structures that adapt to the changing culture are much more powerful. The participants described the changed power relationships as a result of the cultural shifts. Teachers described the feelings of self-determinination and the ways in which the distributed leadership model within the PLD connected anadragogy to pedagogy, thus informing changes in classroom practice. The relationships between the members of the Professional Learning Community in terms of *knowing* each other, supported the permeation of boundaries between experiences in the PLD space and classroom practice.

*Teacher C: The choice there, so you choose your subject, your week, your partner. The choices are always there. In fact, right now I'm making some connections to the pedagogy we've been talking about in the classroom about the sharing of power and students having choices. I feel like I really pay attention to what's happening, how we are learning in the staff room and take that back to the classroom and sometimes it's so subtle that it takes me a while but as I reflect on it 'm able to use that in my teaching and learning in my classroom. I sit back and I reflect and I think I know you as a person so I know that everything that you do is deliberate so therefore I know that every act that we are engaging and would be deliberate and I don't know if that's just because we know you as a person and professionally as well so I think that's always in the back of my mind.*

Through sharing participants were able to describe their experiences in the current Professional Learning Community, contextualising these within other PLD experiences. They made connections between the implications of the cultural shifts; the importance of whānau-like relationships, kaupapa, ako, manaakitanga and shared power with the implications of structural shifts.

## Structural shifts - Implications for others

Teachers described what was most important to them. They did not separate the structural and cultural shifts. These shifts were interwoven and critically connected. The

structures changed as the culture changed; which in turn reflected the changes in practice and pedagogy. When discussing cultural relationships for responsive pedagogy teachers made connections between theory and practice. Teachers said:

*Teacher C: Actually the most important thing was our shift in ourselves as learners and that's really all the principles. Professional knowledge is important particularly in the early days but the shift is actually how we do what we do. Our pedagogy has been the most important. Putting words to things in and understanding why.*

Teachers described praxis; the weaving together of theory and practice, and connected their experiences of engaging diagoloically with others as having implications both personally and professionally.

*Teacher S: I would like to say that I've appreciated the whole approach. I decided that I could engage in it within my own space and I'm feeling safe and I have appreciated being able to work in this way.*

*Teacher T: It makes me quite apprehensive about moving on to another school, and I would ask them about the professional development approach before deciding to go.*

The teachers explained that the experiences of the Professional Learning Community acting as a whānau shaped the participants themselves, as they shaped it.

*Principal: The whole approach is a collective taonga. It's in my heart and I've learnt as a person and a human out of it.*

In these comments the participants reflect the notion of placing themselves as *āu* within a *whānau* enacting *whanaungatanga*. They felt connected and committed to one another, and felt a responsibility to uphold the kaupapa of mauri ora for *all*.

*Teacher C: Everything we do here is ours it belongs to us all and we own it. It's responsive to our school ,our students and our families.*

Participants felt a sense of responsibility, leadership and ownership to the kaupapa and to each other.

## Distributed leadership, adaptive expertise and capacity

Teachers discussed the ways in which the organisational structure and the pedagogical and andragogical aspects of the PLD had also influenced their leadership. This is reflective of the findings of Berryman, et al., (2017) where a principal describes

the interwoven impact of transformative leadership and transformative classroom practice:

*To manage a change like this you actually need both elements; you need the structural element, which is the way the school conceives its goals and its priorities and its priorities and its leadership and how it does things, but you also need what happens inside the classrooms (p. 63).*

Teachers described the collective opportunity to take responsibility and ownership for providing professional learning for others, and in turn the culture of the school's pedagogy and the school's culture itself began to change.

*Teacher C: At this school you've got plenty of time to be prepared and to get support if you need support with it as well. So I can go to you and say I'm not sure which direction to take this and you will give me pointers but it's still mine I can still run with that but it means that I go feeling prepared. The shift in power sits with the participants as they developed their leadership and designed learning for others.*

The importance of manaakitanga through shared, co-constructed timetabling and the importance of engaging in whanaungatanga relationships through Māori models of participation and decision making was identified.

*Teacher T: I think that the timetable sends a message to all the staff that the person running it has put in their time and energy and so they are able to reciprocate this by actively participating. It provides productivity. And without those structures we would be setting off on a shaky ground that's how I feel.*

The cultural and structural shifts evidenced here are the whānau relationships based on manaakitanga, ako and the structural shift of a shared co-constructed timetable. These have been woven together to shift power relations.

*Teacher C: Also, it provides direction for the school and that everything that we do is for a purpose and a reason And it's moving towards our shared vision growing us towards it. It also provides coverage. We know that we're not just going to do a whole bunch of random things. It's definitely not about filling time or ticking boxes. This is evident of the shared kaupapa and collective whānau responsibility to work towards that kaupapa.*

*Teacher T: Within the last couple of years there's been a real shift in power with people taking meetings and taking them in pairs. I really like the pairs. It gives*

*you a chance to delve. You learn a lot by doing the preparation for a staff meeting.*

The importance of structural reforms that support the pedagogical reforms are clear; power had indeed become more shared and collective ownership occurred. Shifts in student achievement data and reports from the Education Review Office (ERO) allow the consideration and triangulation of the effectiveness and impact of these experiences on deliberate professional acts of teaching and learning.

## Research Question Three

### What was the influence of these experiences on student achievement whilst maintaining their own cultural experiences and identity?

The ERO findings and student outcomes are used to answer research question three. This section considers the influence of these PLD experiences on student achievement and feelings of success whilst maintaining their own cultural experiences and identity.

### ERO Findings

By 2015, ERO had begun to see the beneficial influences of this work. In their report, ERO noted that:

*Leaders share very strong beliefs about what effective teaching and learning looks like. Teachers work well together and are improvement focused. They have detailed guidelines as to what effective teaching should look like in this school. New teachers are very well supported.*

ERO (2016) observed well-embedded systems and practices to build and support the quality of teaching. These included:

*detailed planning and purposeful resourcing for classroom learning, intentional professional learning and discussions, peer observations of teaching practice and helpful feedback, teachers reflecting on their practice, a rigorous appraisal process (p. 4).*

In light of the ERO 2011 report, excerpts of which were included in chapter four, these comments are indicative of the school's PLD reform beginning to effect positive reform for teachers.

### Quantitative student outcomes

A range of student achievement data was retrospectively analysed in conjunction with the narrative voices in this research. These data were gathered before, during and after the period of school PLD reform. It was collected through the analysis of variance procedures, as stipulated by the Ministry of Education requirements. These data were gathered as per the school's achievement and progress data collection and collation procedures, as part of my role as a classroom teacher and deputy principal.

The data used in this thesis stems from three distinct points in time; 2011 before the school PLD reform; 2015 after the initial cycle of reform (see Table 1); and 2018 after a further iteration of review and inquiry (see Table 2). The data were analysed through the lens of National Standards, which was the clear expectation of the government at the time. This means that student achievement was measured as *below standard, at the standard* and *above the standard.*

These data have been disaggregated by gender and ethnicity in order to ensure that cohorts are clearly represented as both a part of the total, and as distinct groups. This data allows me as the researcher to consider the emergent themes from the group focused interviews through the lens of the impact on student progress and achievement.

## Shifts in student achievement

Overall achievement, as shown in Table 1 below, a comparison between the 2011 and 2015 National Standards data in reading, showed that indeed, as a result of the schoolwide reforms, improvements in core areas of the curriculum had been achieved both for all students, and for Māori students, as can be seen in the column alongside.

**Table 1: 2011 and 2015 National Standards comparison data**

| | All students at or above the expected National standards | | Māori at or above the expected National standards | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 2011 | 2015 | 2011 | 2015 |
| Reading | 79% | 86% | 79% | 84% |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Writing | 58% | 82% | 50% | 89% |
| Math | 80% | 85% | 79% | 89% |

Table 1 shows an improvement in all students and Māori students achieving at or above the expected National standards in all learning areas, especially writing. This success required a closer analysis of these data. This was undertaken to understand how, in our school, National Standards may have aligned with the Ka Hikitia aspirations of *as Māori.*

## Simultaneous success trajectories

Berryman & Eley (2017) describe the Ako: critical contexts for school reform model. These contexts for school reform are drawn from reconceptualising of related literature, research and programmes of work by experienced educational researchers working within schooling contexts and with Māori communities. This model highlights the importance of simultaneous success trajectories, these success trajectories are understood as: a student's achievement when measured by success in national qualifications simultaneously compared alongside the Ka Hikitia policy context goal of succeeding without compromising the learner's language, culture and identity.

I have used the idea of these simultaneous success trajectories to undertake a finer grained analysis across the student cohorts, room-by-room to see if there were any notable differences. This analysis showed that achievement for Māori students was significantly higher in the Reo Rua class, established in 2013. A comparison of students across the classrooms by age revealed that for reading, similar aged students in the rest of the school progressed on average, 9.8 stages over the three-year period, while students in the Reo Rua class progressed on average, 14.33 stages. This was further evidenced in writing where similar aged students in the rest of the school progressed on average, 2.1 stages over the three-year period, while students in the Reo Rua class progressed on average, 7.5 stages. This accelerated progress provides evidence of the important impact of Māori pedagogies and cultural content knowledge including te reo Māori on students in this class, where they were simultaneously enjoying academic success alongside their cultural identities also being explicitly affirmed and strengthened.

## Sustainability

In 2018 overall achievement data provided further evidence of the sustainability of the cultural shift from the PLD in terms of its ongoing impact on student achievement. Keeping in mind the nature of the changing school community, the evidence is further representative of sustainability. Table 2 shows the comparison across the three data points for all students and for Māori students.

**Table 2: Comparison across three data points**

| | All students at or above the expected National standards | | | Māori at or above the expected National standards | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 2011 | 2015 | 2018 | 2011 | 2015 | 2018 |
| Reading | 79% | 86% | 82% | 79% | 84% | 83% |
| Writing | 58% | 82% | 84% | 50% | 89% | 84% |
| Maths | 80% | 85% | 87% | 79% | 89% | 89% |

These data show that by 2018 Māori students were achieving the same or better results than all students combined. This analysis is further disaggregated in the next two tables. In Table 3 the focus is on all girls, then Māori girls.

**Table 3: 2018 achievement data disaggregated by gender (females) and ethnicity (Maōri)**

| | Female students at or above the expected National standards | | | Female Māori at or above the expected National standards | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 2011 | 2015 | 2018 | 2011 | 2015 | 2018 |
| Reading | 79% | 86% | 81% | 79% | 84% | 95% |
| Writing | 58% | 82% | 86% | 50% | 89% | 87% |
| Maths | 80% | 85% | 87% | 79% | 89% | 87% |

In Table 4 the focus is on all boys, then Māori boys.

**Table 4: 2018 achievement data disaggregated by gender (males) and ethnicity (Māori)**

| | Male students at or above the expected National standards | | | Male Māori at or above the expected National standards | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 2011 | 2015 | 2018 | 2011 | 2015 | 2018 |
| Reading | 79% | 86% | 83% | 79% | 84% | 100% |
| Writing | 58% | 82% | 81% | 50% | 89% | 95% |
| Maths | 80% | 85% | 87% | 79% | 89% | 95% |

The initial shift in progress and achievement over the first three year time period provides evidence of the impact of the development of a Professional Learning Community acting as a whānau, learning from whānau and kaumātua, and engaged in ako and manaakitanga relationships based around a kaupapa of success for *all*. The cultural and structural shifts meant that the professional learning community did not accept that Māori students not reaching their full potential was *normal,* unlike Milne (2019) who warns:

> *Our Māori children have no reason to trust we know what we are doing, when we prove with our outcomes each year that we clearly don't and, worse still, when we tolerate this as "normal." (p.1)*

Sitting behind the shifts indicated by the data are improved assessment practices, based on moderation and shared responsibility for the progress of all students. The 2018 data provides evidence of not only the sustainability over time, but the increased confidence in the rigor of these achievement and success figures. For Māori male students, the above data shows the impact of a Professional Learning Community focused simultaneously on deliberate professional acts, home and school connections and cultural relationships for responsive pedagogy (Berryman & Eley, 2017).

In order to gather the final piece of evidence I made connections with whānau to answer question 4.

## Research Question Four: Whānau Perspective

### What did whānau think about the benefits of the professional learning process for their children?

In this section whānau perspectives are used to explore research question four. The whānau voices provide evidence of the impact of the ako relationships also being experienced by the students and their whānau.

Whaea V recalled how the school had helped her and her daughter move into the community:

> *So [my daughter] and I moved from Gisborne to Invercargill so I could further my education. Understanding that when you come from Gisborne, culturally being very aware of who you are, in terms of Māori. I didn't want her to lose that, so coming to Invercargill Middle School and her transitioning into the bilingual class was huge because she was bringing an essence of who she is. You know, ko wai au? who am I? Where do I come from? Who do I belong to? And who my people are? So she bought that with her. All her tīpuna were behind her. So she was confident in knowing that she wouldn't lose that, and that was really important to us as a whānau that she knows who she is. And where she stands.*

Whaea V was considering what the school was preparing her daughter for, and to become. She was thinking about her aspirations for her daughter and whether the school would support her to realise those. Robyn Kahukiwa's (1974) painting *The Choice* depicts a young Māori woman holding a white mask, sitting on a chess board. The painting depicts the choice the artist may have felt; whether to *play the game* of colonised education.This parent was describing her desire for a different choice, a decolonised choice, for her daughter than perhaps the choices she had or didn't have in her own educational experiences. Whaea V described it this way:

> *...this school embraces it [our Māoritanga] and they really encourage them to know who they are. So in terms of their learning they always know where they're at. They'll always know, on the focus of education, from now to their next and they are role modeled and they're taught with passion and with aroha, ako, manaakitanga and how to get there, it's a joint effort, that roopu, that sense of community, that Whaea Katie nurtures in them.*

She described her daughter's development thus:

*[My daughter's] learning journey here at Middle School has been really important in term of her gaining confidence around the areas that she was weak in, the areas that weren't strong. And what she's been able to do with that learning, is built on her prior knowledge of what she bought from her other prior school and from there, she's been taught, she's scaffolded her learning, and what I see is that, that's all been consolidated to get her to where she needs to be. And also her sense of urgency to want to keep climbing and not be left behind has in a sense that, oh I can see my friends moving up, I want to be like that too. So they're all pushing each other up that poutama and for me that's what whakawhanaungatanga is all about.*

Whaea V reflected on the notion that as we travel up the poutama we never travel alone.

*Whaea V: No it's an individual, as a part of a collective, and that for me is what that class represents. They are individuals but they are also a part of a roopu moving forward in their learning.*

This parent was also describing the *āu* in *whānau*, and the *whānau* in *whanaunga*, and the *whanaunga* in *whanaungatanga.* These comments demonstrate that not only did she see her daughter as recognised and responded to in terms of who she is, where she comes from and her aspirations, but that she was also part of the whānau of the classroom working together to achieve a shared vision of success. Speaking about the ways in which the students supported each other is evidence of the ways in which the culture of success was shaped by the class as a whānau and it in turn this culture of success shaped them. These experiences of Whaea N represent the perspective of the school reform. In thinking about how a child's culture, language, and identity is pretty critical for how they feel about themselves, and how they feel about themselves is a great predictor of how they're going to achieve academically Whaea N suggested:

*Whaea N: Well that's hugely important for me but you've limited it to the school and it actually extends outside of the school [into the community and at home] so for us it's extended into the home and that's really important so we don't have tea now without karakia and that's something that has come from [my daughter] being in the classroom, so the whanaungatanga has extended out beyond just the school environment which is exactly what it's supposed to do, it's even extended to my work environment, where the class came down and performed for the staff*

*members at work and you know, its extended to the fact that, at school they had a can drive, so everyone at work got behind that and donated cans, so it's more than just the school it actually creates a social change on a bigger platform.*

Again, these comments reflect the shift in power from the hierarchical colonised power structures to the professional learning community in which teachers and leaders were learning from kaumātua and each other to the whānau culture of shared power where whānau engagement was based on ako. Teachers and leaders were learning with, from and alongside whānau; both inside the confines of the school and outside in the community.

The whānau spoke of the potential based cultural shift, opposed to the deficit theorising they had experienced previously.

*Whaea N: She [first mum] and I are independent parents, so there are no discourses or anything like that, like you can't do it because you're an independent parent, you know, so I just wanted to make that quite clear. We're not rich families, we're not you know, the traditional family but we can still parent and work with the school really well to be able to get our kids to where they need to be, and for them to be able to succeed in life.*

Whaea N described the partnership between home and school and how critical she felt it was that she knew that her daughter understood and could articulate what she's learning.

*Whaea N: It's critical because I want my daughter to succeed so I have to invest in my daughter's education and she's invested in her education and the schools invested in her education, so you've got that holistic investment into my daughter, so that's why it works here, it's a community of learners, it's not just a special child, or two special children, there's special children right throughout this environment. Every child here is special and every teacher celebrates that and gets to the child on an individual level as well as the community of learners, and their families as well, so they're open to parents. You know we've got a parents group, we've got a board of trustees, um that you know, know the teachers, so they're invested. Everyone is invested in the education of these children. Whaea N's comments here reflect the sense of shared power and kaupapa between all stakeholders.*

Whaea N talked about how the experiences of her older daughter differed from those of her other children.

*Whaea N: My oldest child is 23 and she is amazing and she's just graduated from university in early childhood education but she came through this school as well, and this school was very different back then than it is now. I also have a 13 year old that's come through this school, so she was sort of in the middle of the changes. So we had one that came through it when it wasn't that great, and we didn't have a very good reputation and our ERO reports were yearly or bi-yearly to get checked and it didn't work for her. So over time the[teaching of Maōri] culture has really increased, it's been mainly due to the really changed culture of this school.*

The comments from these whānau capture the reform through both pedagogical structures and a culture based on relationships. Many other whānau also informally responded to the changes in the school that they had been experiencing.

## Unsolicited whānau responses

Informally, whānau spoke of the positive changes in the school culture and the increased feelings of success for their children during the period of transformation. One such parent arrived one morning saying that she wanted to see why her son, then six years old, was wanting to leave for school at seven a.m. as he knew his teacher was there and wanted to do his reading with her. Other whānau spoke of the increased sense of achievement and success they could see in their children and the ways in which the children would share their learning at home, often teaching their siblings. Enrolments increased as the wider community heard of the changes in pedagogy and practice. The Reo Rua class in particular drew whānau from the wider community, indicating that parents were seeking a more authentic Te Ao Māori education for their children. One of the strongest indications of the whānau response to the transformation were the parents of all of the Year Five students in the Reo Rua class requesting that their children remain as part of the whānau class for the entire time they were at the school, from years one to six. Originally it was planned to transition students to a designated Year Six class for their final year in order to strengthen relationships between the entire Year Six group before the transition to high school - which occurs at Year Seven in Invercargill schools. In response to whānau requests the class was inclusive of all year levels. Another strong indicator of whānau feelings was the enrolment of siblings, with

whānau requesting the siblings attend the school and be on the waiting list for the Reo Rua class at school entry. These informal indicators provide further evidence of the strength of educationally powerful connections through cultural relationships and collaboration based on mutual respect.

## Poutama Matauranga

Cultural relationships and responsive practices have been applied to all aspects of school life. Contexts where power is shared and learners have the right to equity and self-determination are evidence of this. Teachers have spread these practices further through the active sharing of student achievement information with students and with whānau. Lessons began with students discussing their achievement levels, learning goals and next learning steps. Students had opportunities to question, request learning conferences and seek feedback. Through this process every student knew, understood and could articulate their current achievement levels, learning goals and next steps. The Māori metaphor of poutama mātauranga was commonly discussed as students talked about moving up the poutama. This was also understood by their parents. For example, when interviewed by ERO in 2016, Whaea V commented that there was:

> *A sense of urgency to want to keep climbing and not be left behind. They are all pushing each other up that poutama and for me that's what whakawhanaungatanga is about (Education Review Office, 2016).*

The cultural and structural reforms that took place as a result of the Professional Learning Community acting as a whānau had created contexts where teachers value students' cultural locatedness and their cultural knowledge and they now view these as resources for the basis for all learning. Thereby, allowing students to bring their culturally authentic selves into the classroom, and the close connection between the home and school was understood as essential and expected. When being interviewed by ERO (2016) a teacher reflected:

> *In order to connect and create whanaungatanga with the home, the first way is through the children, so if the child is going home and talking to them about their learning, the parent knows that their child is being valued (Education Review Office, 2016).*

## Conclusion

In this chapter I have answered the research questions by exploring the Professional Learning Community through the experiences of teachers and whānau, through student achievement data, and through ERO reports. The findings indicate a cultural shift which was enlightened by Māori metaphors, interwoven responsively with structural shifts. These shifts together began to weave a decolonised model of education whereby power and leadership were shared.

# CHAPTER SIX- DISCUSSION

*"You see, my weaving is better than yours," said the kuia. "If my grandchildren went to sleep in your weaving they would fall and hurt themselves".*
*"No, no, my weaving is better than yours," said the spider. "If my grandchildren slept on your weaving someone would tread on them and squash them"*
*(Grace, 1981).*

In this section of the story the kuia and the spider refuse to see each other's point of view. They are not really listening to each other or considering each other's prior knowledge and experiences in order to understand and work together. Each is driven by their own experiences which are aimed at the success and flourishing of their own, rather than each other's or *all* of the children. Within our Professional Learning Community we worked with whānau, and became a whānau, focused on the success and mauri ora for *all* our children.

## Introduction

This chapter discusses the research findings in relation to the literature reviewed in Chapter Two and provides theorising in response to these findings. Firstly the cultural shifts are described. Secondly the structural shifts are explored. The findings are then presented visually in the diagram Raranga Mauri Ora seen in Figure 3 followed by descriptions of individual components. In this discussion, I consider our strengthening praxis and the implications for others who may be working in similar situations.

## Cultural Shifts- the whenu

Culture can be described as superorganic - that is culture is both created by and creates us (Bruner, 1996). Culture is what holds a community together, giving a common framework of meaning; including how people communicate with each other, make decisions, structure our families and who we think are important. It expresses our values (Quest Rapuara, 1992). The understanding and enactment of Maōri metaphors and structural shifts at Invercargill Middle School, helped decolonise our practice and created a cultural shift. We came to know each other better and formed stronger relationships to the kaupapa and with each other. Thus, whanaungatanga became a foundational metaphor of this cultural shift.

## Whanaungatanga

Whanaungatanga is often described as the building of relationships, through dialogic practices and within a shared vision or common goal. This is the underpinning metaphor of the school reform. Whakawhanaungatanga is the process of establishing links, making connections and relating to people in culturally responsive ways. The teachers and whānau spoke of the value and understanding of whanaungatanga in the school:

*The biggest thing would be togetherness, whanaungatanga, being consistent in what we are doing now...it had to build it up and heal it up a little bit and begin to bring in the changes in mind, the vision.*

Whānau affirmed:

*So that's why it works here, it's a community of learners, it's not just a special child, or two special children, there's special children right throughout this environment.*

The literature supports this, describing whanaungatanga in a metaphoric sense as reaching beyond actual whakapapa relationships to include relationships to people who are not related, but through shared experiences, feel as though they are whānau (Mead, 2003; Bishop, et al., 2013). Within these types of relationships one may receive support from the collective, there is also a responsibility to contribute support to others in return. In my experience, the whanaungatanga relationships were the most important aspect of the reform. While relationships alone are not enough, without the genuine relationships based on connections and reciprocal responsibility to one another the shared experiences would not have been as rich. The development of these relationships and ongoing deepening of connections led to critical consciousness and discursive repositioning. Learning from kaumātua, participants began to deeply and meaningfully understand the following related words, each of which strengthens understandings about both the relationships and one's responsibilities to themselves, each other and the kaupapa.

## Āu- Whānau- Whanaunga

The concept of āu involved leaders and teachers positioning themselves in a space whereby they could identify their own beliefs, theoretical underpinnings and ultimately their world-view in order to consider and reconsider their actions,

interactions and practices. Placing the āu into whānau refers to the responsibilities the individual now has in their relationships as school leaders and teachers to each other, non-teaching staff, students, whānau and community. The next level of relationships involves teachers and leaders considering their place within the broader context of the school community, including those inextricably connected to the school, but who live outside the in-school communities. They include parents, grandparents, relations and caregivers. For teachers the āu within whānau emcompasses the whānau within their own classroom, alongside the whānau of the professional learning community. This conscious consideration of themselves and their place within these whānau provided teachers with the opportunity to resist *othering* and weave connections with each other, students and whānau within the school and from the community.

Whānau explained:

> *Every child here is special and every teacher celebrates that and gets to the child on an individual level as well as the community of learners, and their families as well, so they're open to parents. Everyone is invested in the education of these children.*

Such a collaborative investment can be understood as the kaupapa.

## Kaupapa

We understood our kaupapa as promoting a common vision that is focussed on the potential of all learners to thrive in the education system without compromising who they are. This principle includes (but is not limited to): creating a context for all students to pursue what inspires them and determine their own success; centring the student within the learning in ways that respond to the student's interests, questions and inspiration; valuing and legitimating culture and identity through the curriculum; promoting learning as an enjoyable and stimulating experience for students. The kaupapa in this cultural reform also refers to mauri ora for *all* students. However, mauri ora also resulted for teachers and whānau.

Teachers described the way that collaborative actions towards the kaupapa was changing the school culture:

> *Talking about deficit thinking, I don't think that's present here, I think that we have to always acknowledge, you know we can keep a strengths focus but we have to acknowledge where a student might be struggling and where we can get them*

*to or need to try and get them to keep trying for more. I think that's a real a clear message here, is that we can always do better.*

Whānau had this to say:

*You know, ko wai au? who am I? Where do I come from? Who do I belong to? And who my people are? So she bought that with her. All her tīpuna were behind her. So she was confident in knowing that she wouldn't lose that, and that was really important to us as a whānau that she knows who she is. And where she stands...we're not rich families, we're not you know, the traditional family but we can still parent and work with the school really well to be able to get our kids to where they need to be, and for them to be able to succeed in life.*

Through the metaphor of kaupapa, power relations were addressed as definitions of aspirational success were explored through the metaphor of manaakitanga.

## Manaakitanga

Manaakitanga, as previously discussed, includes the word mana and the word aki, the urging of someone towards a place where they have mana or are maintaining their mana. This metaphor encompasses the consideration of power and of equity in power relationships, through the idea of notion of mana ōrite. The whānau and teachers of Invercargill Middle School spoke of manaakitanga in different ways.

Whānau said:

*When I think about the New Zealand Curriculum and it talks about being active, that's what they want as to grow our children into becoming active learners in the 21st century, so what they're nurturing is not just in terms of education, but who they are at the core essence, core wairua (spirit), it comes back to who you are, nurturing those values for me as a parent is important because that is what's going to get our children through. It's because it's nurtured.*

Teachers described it this way:

*Also strong leadership from the students [in] manaakitanga they know that it means mana, coming from your heart, and empowerment and aki means to take action, they know that, they'll tell you that. So when they show manaakitanga you show others to take action within their own power and their own wants and needs and that's a big part of it that spreads out.*

The voices in the findings evidenced here indicate that teachers considered their own positioning, developing critical consciousness and were influenced by, and influenced others through manaakitanga relationships, which in turn enabled the enactment of ako.

## Ako

Understanding ako as continuous and conducted through a variety of teaching and learning relationships provides a metaphor to further understand learning relationships as reciprocal within the whānau-of-interest. The teachers spoke of everyone having a significant role to play; school leaders, experienced teachers, beginning teachers, whānau, BOT members and students. These interconnected learning relationships were reciprocal, significant and fundamental.

Teachers said:

> *It is building capability that you are valuable, that you have something to offer and something to contribute to the rest of the school. It's building the knowledge of Te Ao Māori as something that is valuable and is enriching and is additive to you and your learning, regardless of who you are and where you come from. It's not subtractive, it's additive and it's seen as adding onto the richness of what you already have, that's a big part of it.*

The importance of beginning with people's prior knowledge and experiences is often described anecdotally by educators as *bringing what's in your kete.* The teachers spoke of the importance of recognition of their prior knowledge and the value placed on ensuring every member of the team felt prepared and able to bring their ideas:

> *It's not just that we have valuable opinions, it's that we are a part of it and we are learning and growing as well...We are a team, we are a community and we all are expected to take part, and we expect that whatever we bring to that meeting is going to be able to be... into a safe place, and people will support us.*

Through the sharing of prior knowledge and experiences the PLD in the school wove a sense of belonging with teaching and learning opportunities. Strong, healthy communities encourage interactions between participants that are based on mutual respect and therefore enable individuals to trust their peers enough to expose a lack of knowledge and skills and open themselves up to new learning. Our experiences were similar to a study designed to test the relationship between the power of human and

social capital. This study reported that teachers who had both high capability and had stronger ties with their colleagues had the biggest gains in student achievement, also finding that teachers with less developed skills performed as well as teachers of average skills if they have strong professional relationships and connections in their school (Fullan, 2011). Māori metaphors such as whanaungatanga, kaupapa, manaakitanga and ako, when they are understood beyond rhetoric, can provide a lens through which to contextualise such relationships. Forming and maintaining these relationships involves responsive structural shifts.

## Structural shifts- the pegs

The understanding and enactment of structural shifts at Invercargill Middle School were responsive to the cultural shifts. The teacher voices and document analysis provide evidence of the weaving together of the structural changes with the cultural changes. Leadership was an important aspect of these shifts.

### Leadership

The most powerful leadership dimension has been identified as leaders who promote and participate in teacher learning and development (Robinson, et al., 2009). Thus, a strength of effective school leadership is their ability to make a difference and influence change through both cultural and structural shifts, actively participating in PLD learning alongside and with teachers. Transformative leadership praxis in Aotearoa involves doing this within a lens of Kaupapa Māori. The colonised education system and fabric of society is based on individualism and meritocracy; the societal metaphor of a *level playing field* and *hard work building success.* Pihama (2017) describes the history of schooling in Aotearoa as one that represents a system that was established as a tool of colonisation and as a mechanism of assimilation. Authentic educational leadership critically examines and actively dismantles the structures that maintain and promote a monocultural agenda.

Authenticity can be defined as being true to yourself, your values, beliefs, and experiences. Therefore, authentic educational leadership encapsulates the conscious expression of the aspirations and values that the school community stands for. It is responsive to these changing values and aspirations. It defines a standard of quality or

excellence that strengthens behaviour and decision making, and focuses on what the students and whānau we serve really care about. Authentic leadership requires repositioning and conscientisation from a space of ego, which Eckhart Tolle (n.d.) describes as the things that make up one's sense of self as what your mind tells you about yourself, the storyline of you. Critical leadership involves the understanding of the leader's own positioning in order to critically reflect on the ways in which they can address inequality and social justice. Teachers described it this way:

*The model that we use here, someone might learn something but they share it with everyone and they share that knowledge. And you don't feel like you're not good enough or not important enough. We all get the knowledge [and we share it so that] we all get that knowledge. And it's directly what we need rather than what one person thinks a whole group of teachers need and it's based on each of us in what has been observed that we need.*

Teachers described the whanau-of-interest through the co-construction of knowledge and sense making, resulting in transformative praxis:

*We feel more purposeful when we're teaching now everything is done very purposefully in our classroom It's hard to even remember where we were before....The changes in my teaching practice over a year here [have been] pretty significant...It's ok to question the status quo as to why am I doing that is it because I've already done that but why.*

Participants described both critical consciousness and critical action through developing their leadership and in turn, enacting ako:

*Within the last couple of years there's been a real shift in power with people taking meetings and taking them in pairs. I really like the pairs. It gives you a chance to delve [into an aspect of practice with a colleague]. You learn a lot by doing the preparation for a staff meeting.*

The importance of structural reforms that support the pedagogical reforms were clear; power was indeed shared and collective ownership occurred; the criticality and kaupapa remained at the center through manaakitanga as the members of the professional learning community took on leadership roles:

*The choice is also there, so you choose your subject, your week, your partner. The choices are always there. In fact, right now I'm making some connections to the pedagogy we've been talking about in the classroom about the sharing of power and students having choices.*

One of the factors that embedded this shift in leadership was the prioritisation and re-allocation of time.

## Time

Learners are more likely to be engaged and successful if learning experiences are not rushed and cumulative (Robinson, 2011). The evidence in the findings in this thesis suggest that this is true also for teachers' professional learning. The flexibility of time ensured the coherence and weaving together of cultural and structural changes in ways that were coherent and embedded.

Teachers spoke of the time allocation in this way:

> *We've got lots of opportunities so if something takes us longer than we expect then we get that extra time and it's really worthwhile and we're not rushed through. We also know before we come [to the session] what we are going to do. We have an agenda. We don't just turn up and not know what we're going to be doing this week. We all have something to bring. We've done reading before the meeting and had an idea before the meeting what it's going to be about so you don't come and feel like you can't speak as well. And that contributes to that safe space.*

Teachers in this collaborative story described a sense of safety created by the allocation of time to focus on the kaupapa and do what needed to be done. This time allocation provided space for supporting the structures that are requirements in our education system, such as teaching as inquiry and appraisal, through the cultural shifts which took place through the enactment of Māori metaphors. These metaphors informed the shifts in curriculum and pedagogy.

## Curriculum

Organisational practices can be viewed as boundaries, through which understandings and procedures are brokered. Teachers spoke about the organisational factors that impacted their experiences and practices in planning and delivering the curriculum responsively to the needs, prior knowledge and experiences of their learners:

> *We work across the whole school, we work together, and we work together for everything. Staff meetings, syndicate meetings, classroom planning, everything is done together. But we can individualise that for our classroom, as we want to and as it fits for our students.*

Teachers made connections to the pedagogical principles, such as high expectations and critically reflected on their practice:

*Every child has the right to learn here, no matter where they come from. No matter who they are and because we have our accelerated learning progress that we do here, it structures everything, for every child, learning for every single child. Every child has that right to move in their education.*

Participants connected this with the use of evidence.

## Evidence

Authentic, genuine partnerships are established and maintained via actions and interactions. Our thoughts, beliefs and values colour these acts of communication. At Invercargill Middle School the use of evidence to underpin communication around achievement was a structural shift that not only transformed pedagogy but also transformed relationships:

*We have regular conversations with the teachers and it's all about the data. That's [what] moves our professional conversations. Someone might have something that they can use, that has worked really well with the child last year or just worked in general. And we take them on board, try new things in the classroom and see what happens, then reassess, then keep going.*

The structural shift in the iterative use of evidence to discursively reposition teachers as learners and share power with students and whānau meant that everyone felt a sense of agency:

*We have educationally powerful relationships, so how we do our PLD in our school is quite different. We decided that we needed to become the experts in our own learning because of our unique situation, but it means that the classroom teachers are trying out different strategies with different things that are happening, different techniques that are in research. Rather than coming from a PLD perspective, or an external provider coming in and telling the teachers how things should happen. And because of that, it becomes educationally powerful, and we work on that becoming, whether it's in the classroom or in our community, working with their parents or with the runaka (local tribal board) or whoever it is that we're working with, we're looking at whatever is going to be educationally powerful because we know how important education is.*

This was shared and discussed with whānau, which in turn increased engagement:

> *I see passion and commitment to their learning. I see that she [the teacher] takes absolute responsibility for their learning. And how she does that is that yes, she has expectations, but these tamariki know what they are learning, that's why they're achieving at the rate that they are, because of the communication, that clear communication is so important and that they matter. These tamariki matter to her as a teacher and she wants to see them succeed and this is how she does it. Through routine, through structure, and yes there is fun too. You can't have learning without fun that would suck. And as a parent, that's what I want for my daughter. I would like to see her enjoying her learning. I know that she can go out into the world and do that with her teacher, with anybody and that's what I love that Katie has nurtured within her. To be articulate, to take risks, and it's ok if you're wrong because we learn from our mistakes, that's the best way to improve, you pick yourself up and you think, right what can I do different. And that's a safe place for a child to learn it, to learn those lessons, teachable moments, right there.*

Literature also offers the notion of teachers who support each other to consider how to effect increases in student achievement based on evidence. They use this evidence to challenge existing assumptions and discourses as well as to evaluate the impact of interventions and changes that have resulted from professional development.

Teachers said:

> *We had a purpose for it. We weren't asking why we had to make these groups or if we were going to be judged as a teacher. The revisiting of data in target plans has been number one in terms of impacting on my students. Doing those together and sharing with other people has been really important.*

The idea that it is not the presence of standards and assessment that is the problem, but the underpinning and dominant belief structures within their use (Fullan, 2011) connects with the notion of the pegs holding the flax fibres in place but needing to be responsive to the weaver and the artifact being woven. The use of evidence changed in response to the cultural shifts, rather than in order to dominate them. We began to ask ourselves *Are we measuring what we value, or valuing what we measure?*

The cultural relationships were clear. Teachers spoke of being known by the leaders and the leaders knowing them. Whānau also spoke of this sense of being known:

*This school embraces it and they really encourage them to know who they are. So in terms of their learning they always know where they're at. They'll always know, the focus of education, from now to their next and they are role modeled and they're taught with passion and with aroha, ako, manaakitanga and how to get there, it's a joint effort, that roopu, that sense of community, they're all pushing each other up that poutama and for me that's what whakawhanaungatanga is all about.*

These stories return to whanaungatanga, which is where we started this chapter. The metaphor of rangatira indicates that the work of a leader is in fact the weaving together of people encapsulated by the act of whakawhanaungatanga evident within these stories. These cultural and structural shifts are woven together in the following model, *Raranga Mauri Ora.*

## Raranga Mauri Ora

Raranga mauri ora describes the weaving together of cultural and structural shifts for the well-being of our students. Jemal (2017) describes the theoretical framework of *Transformative Potential.* Informed by Feire (2000), this framework suggests that the process of transformation requires both objectifying and acting. The teachers and whānau voices indicate evidence of both of these dimensions; through the weaving together of cultural shifts and structural shifts, objectifying through critical consciousness leading to more critical actions we had reformed the school and in turn, our learners were achieving more highly and enjoying school more. Weaving together, in particular, the Māori metaphors of *whanaungatanga, ako* and *manaakitanga* helped us to contribute to our central and shared *kaupapa* of mauri ora for *all,* and in turn, school-wide cultural reform for this shared kaupapa began to emerge and strengthen. This saw our Professional Learning Community begin to operate in ways where knowledge from Te Ao Māori began to be valued more highly and we began to engage more, as a metaphoric whānau within a whānau-of-interest.

Given that the principal and other leaders in the school were also engaging within this whānau-of-interest, structural changes were also able to be managed. Firstly, we deconstructed the previous hierarchical model inherited from the colonial power structures that had perpetuated the status quo of success for some students and failure

for others. As the cultural whāriki strengthened the school reform began to bring about system change that was decolonising. At the same time power relationships became more interdependent as opposed to hierarchical.

## Unpacking the model - Raranga Mauri Ora

This model is titled Raranga Mauri Ora. It was through the weaving together of these Māori metaphors that the cultural shifts and structural shifts began to work together and the vision of students learning and living in the state of mauri ora was realised.

The main themes emerging from the findings are: cultural shifts resulting in critical consciousness and praxis, supported by responsive structural shifts. When I consider these things together it reminds me of an emerging piece of weaving, as in Fig. 3. The shifts in cultural relationships which emerged from the teacher and whānau voices are represented by the whenu or strands of flax starting to interconnect and strengthen. It is by understanding and enacting these metaphors that power relations were addressed, deconstructed and decolonised. The pegs represent the structural shifts, which are often the responsibility of the school leaders.

As a weaver, I know that the pegs are moved as the weaving takes shape and begins to strengthen. They may need to be in different places at different times. These pegs are a metaphor for structural changes which are responsive to the needs of the school and its community, but also maintain a close connection to the cultural changes taking place. When weaving there is no *right way up.* The weaving can be turned, reversed and flipped over as it is developed, just like school culture and structures can be adapted as they are developed. This model of weaving remains unfinished, as we acknowledge the past and the future, much like the Maōri metaphor of whakapapa.

**Figure 3: Raranga Mauri Ora**


## Whenu

The first whenu in the model is whanaungatanga. Whanaungatanga saw shifts in power and relationships from hierarchical, colonised relationships based on transmission models of teaching to a Professional Learning Community. Through discursive repositioning actively engaging with whānau, and learning from kaumātua our Professional Learning Community began acting as a whānau, learning with, from and alongside whānau inside and outside the school community. In these contexts

power was shared and leadership was distributed seeing a powerful shift in culture and pedagogy.

The second whenu is kaupapa, the connection as a whānau to the shared kaupapa of mauri ora for *all.* This whenu meant a shift towards critical consciousness and questioning of practices that were the previous status quo. These two whenu are horizontal, the wafts, to represent the strong foundational nature of these metaphors, through which the following whenu, the wefts, are woven.

Manaakitanga encompasses mana, mana ōrite and the nature of power relationships. As we shifted our culture from one which was hierarchical in nature, where the people in the school responded to those in power and the imposed decisions they made, to a shared power structure where the culture and pedagogy responded to decisions collectively and in response to each other. As feelings of belonging, safety and success increased, whānau engaged readily, as their mana was uplifted and enhanced through dialogic and relational practices and connections.

Ako was woven through all aspects of school life. Every opportunity was taken to learn with, from and alongside one another. These whenu are woven together to represent the cultural shifts in our school. The weaving remains deliberately unfinished. There is always space for new whenu to be interwoven as praxis reveals a need for new metaphors to enhance and enrich our work. The pegs represent the structural shifts.

## Pegs

The first peg is leadership. Leadership connects to the cultural shifts as it is influential in leading within a culture of manaakitanga, mana and mana ōrite. In this model leadership sits as having the power to understand and dismantle colonisation. School leadership developed and the power structure changed the PLD from the colonial hierarchical structure to working as a Professional Learning Community then acting as a whānau and all the leaders were also learners within the PLD. In this diagram it may appear that the pegs are acting as contraints, holding the whenu in place. It is important to understand that when weaving harakeke the weaver moves the pegs as required and at some point removes them altogether. Rather than the Māori metaphors working within the imposed colonial structures of leadership, time, evidence and curriculum, the pegs represent that, within a decolonising model, these structures would be able to shift more flexibly in response to the collaborative enactment of the cultural

shifts. Thus, leadership is conceptualised as a peg which must move and be responsive to the teachers, whānau, students and community.

The second peg is time. The teachers spoke often about the allowance of time rather than timed activities. Acting as a whānau-of-interest, the time allowance could be more responsive to the kaupapa and what needed to be achieved. Allowing time was important, but of equal importance was not being constrained by time.

The next peg is evidence. The use of evidence to collectively inform discursive repositioning towards teachers as agentic learners was also evident in the findings. Achievement data is often used by agencies such as the MoE and the media to perpetuate the pathologising of Māori as less capable of academic achievement. However in this model, the use of evidence was not seen as an impositional external structure; rather it was seen as a supporter of cultural shift. Evidence helped teachers to understand all of the shifts that were occurring and what else they needed to do.

The final peg is curriculum. The New Zealand Curriculum focuses on the content knowledge of what to teach, with little focus on the underpinning pedagogy. This pedagogy often termed rhetorically as *the front end of the curriculum.* The structural shifts at Invercargill Middle School applied the idea of learning about the curriculum through the cultural shifts in pedagogy; resulting in critical consciousness and adaptive expertise. Teachers were able to learn with, from and alongside students and whānau and lead this learning with one another, through a whānau-of-interest model of professional learning that began to weave together cultural and structural shifts.

## Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed the emerging themes from the interviews as chat with teachers and whānau. These themes were cultural shifts through the understanding and enactment of Māori metaphors; and the structural shifts which supported the embedding of these cultural changes. These pieces can impact change in small chunks on their own and some teachers will achieve successful outcomes for their students in spite of the culture of the school, but a total culture change is not possible without a cohesive woven approach with all members involved. These themes operated through dialogic and relational pedagogy where power was shared through mana ōrite relationships, which in turn supported transformation on both cultural and structural

levels in order to improve outcomes for students and engagement with whānau. I have considered the structural shifts as the pegs holding together a new piece of weaving. Pegs can be removed when no longer needed, or repositioned as the weaving takes shape. When weaving there is no *top or bottom,* the weaving can be turned, reversed and flipped over as it is developed. This provides a metaphor for transformative praxis, decolonisation and the deconstruction of hierarchical power structures. In the next chapter I draw from these metaphors to summarise my learning and understandings and consider the implications for others.

# CHAPTER SEVEN- CONCLUSION

*The next morning they all woke up, and the spider called out to the kuia, "Hey, you, old woman, my grandchildren are better than yours".*
*"Hoha," yelled the kuia. "Your grandchildren are HOHA. My grandchildren are much better than yours".*
*And they argued and argued and argued for the rest of their lives.*
*(Grace, 1981).*

In this part of the story the kuia and the spider continued to argue; for the rest of their lives in fact. They did not engage in dialogue in order to discover and learn from each other's knowledge, experience and world view nor did they develop relationships of mana ōrite. Critical consciousness and discursive repositioning was not achieved. The grandchildren in the story also did not interact with the other creature's grandchildren in relational or dialogic ways. They withdrew from the argument and accepted the status quo of separation based on difference. It is interesting to consider a new ending to the story whereby the kuia and the spider came together and wove a new piece of weaving using their combined skills and abilities. The ability of the weaver to turn, reverse and flip the weaving over as it is developed in more transformative ways. What if the kuia and the spider deconstructed their own pieces of weaving and re-wove them together as a new collaborative and inter-dependent model? This thesis represents a professional learning community doing just that - acting as a whānau-of-interest to de-construct then co-construct a model of structural and cultural school reform, weaving a decolonised model of education.

## Introduction

At various points in time governments and ministries have made changes to the structure of our education system with the aim of addressing inequity and improving outcomes for Maōri students, but without success (Bishop, 2019). While various reports address the need for a focus on positive, whānau-like relationships these are not within themselves enough to reduce ongoing educational disparities, thereby promoting equity, honouring the Treaty of Waitangi and addressing the impact of colonisation. This thesis

undertook a retrospective analysis of the impact of the professional learning and development that took place in the school where I was Deputy Principal. It reflects not only the transformative praxis of decolonisation through a cultural shift enlightened by Māori metaphors, and structural shifts by addressing requirements of time and space, repositioning the ways in which these structures were used and applied. It was the deliberate and coherent weaving together of both cultural and structural shifts that were transformative. It has been suggested that it is time for cultural and structural transformation in our education system (MoE, 2018), however, as we found, changing the structure of the education system will not, on its own, be enough to create the conditions for cultural equity and excellence.

This thesis explored a framework and outcomes for the redevelopment of a decolonised Professional Learning Community - into a whānau-of-interest, where cultural and structural shifts were woven together for sustainable change. This framework rests on indigenous leadership, from a perspective inspired by Freire (1972) that insists that true knowledge and expertise already exist within the people as the mana whenua, rather than with a superior tutor or outside expert from an educational background.

This chapter draws conclusions from the literature, evidence and reflection of my own praxis, and connecting to the model suggested in the previous chapter. It considers the implications for others and the limitations of this research. Finally, it concludes with a summary statement.

## Key changes

The following tables encapsulate the changes across structures, culture and outcomes for learners at the three points in time evidenced in this thesis. The first point in time is 2011, when myself and the principal first arrived at the school. We found the structure, culture and outcomes for learners as represented in Table 5.

**Table 5: Pre-2012 Hierarchical, colonised leadership structures**

| Structure | Culture | Outcomes for Learners |
|---|---|---|
| ● Leader largely absolving responsibility for engaging with: | ● Deficit theorising<br>● Transmission teaching | ● Poor achievement especially for Māori students |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| • teaching,<br>• learning and achievement,<br>• students and whānau,<br>• PLD.<br>• Staff meetings reinforced the current school structures.<br>• Identifying the barriers to learning reinforced a deficit view of Māori<br>• PLD by external experts using a transmission model of andragogy. | • Classrooms as privatised spaces<br>• Pākehā culture dominated<br>• Māori culture was not visible | • School not affirming culture of all learners<br>• Community not engaging with school or learning |
| Impositional, top-down power relations | | |

Table Five presents the dominant, colonised leadership structures that were perpetuated from the top and in turn influenced the school structure, culture and outcomes for learners. Teaching and learning at the time was probably more random than determined by sound theory and research, and as such it remained privitased. The outcomes for learners showed the disparity evidenced in the 2011 E.R.O report, this disparity was especially so for Māori learners. This aligns with the ongoing evidence of inequitable achievement results for Māori learners (Secretary of the O.E.C.D, 2015 ). At this point in time teachers were acting largely on their own and for themselves. The needs and wants of the adults were at the forefront. Leadership was fractured, based on directives and transactions which could swing from one theoretical underpinning to another. As a result, teachers felt unsafe. Deficit theorising was pervasive across all spaces in the school. Whānau were not genuinely engaged and had little to no communication about their children's progress and learning. The school lacked a coherent vision and curriculum planning was not in place. The PLD model was transmission delivery via external experts and attestation via the MoE. There was a Student Achievement Facilitator (S.A.F) in place; experts employed by the MoE and sent into schools where achievement was of concern. It was reported that there was a culture of staff bullying and many staff members felt disempowered and afraid to voice opinions, ask questions or share concerns.

Connecting this point in time to the metaphor of weaving the rau (leaves) of the harakeke were not healthy enough to be harvested and woven. The growth was sporadic and some leaves were damaged.

**Figure 4: Damaged harakeke plant**

Source: Landcare Research, n.d.

Like the structural shifts in the school, leadership, time, evidence and curriculum, what was needed was a shared purpose of improving the health of the plant in order to bring the pieces together. This meant that the structures around the plant needed to change to let the sunlight in. The culture around how the plant was treated had to change, which opened up the way for cultural shifts through Maōri metaphors, supported in an ako relationship with a more expert other, our kaumātua. Some of these emerging changes from the school structure to the school culture and outcomes for learners are presented in Table 6 below.

**Table 6: 2015 - Professional learning community in place**

| Structure | Culture | Outcomes for Learners |
|---|---|---|
| • Some distributed leadership<br>• Leaders involved in PLD<br>• Teachers and whānau meeting regularly | • Evidence informing teaching and learning<br>• Shared teaching practices<br>• Co-constructed curriculum<br>• Kaumātua leadership | • Parents began to engage regularly<br>• 85-90% of students achieving at or above expectations<br>• School culture beginning to reflect |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| • Time set aside for connected PLD and whanaungatanga | | Te Ao Maōri |
| Power relations beginning to be more participatory | | |

In Table Six, changes are evident across the three domains. The Professional Learning Community was in place and the school principal actively participated in PLD along with all other school leaders. This aligns with one of the big findings of the Leadership BES that identified when the school principal promoted and/or participated in effective teacher professional learning, this had twice the impact on student outcomes across a school than any other leadership activity (Robinson, et al. 2009). The engagement of teachers and leaders with evidenced-based, co-constructed PLD and the resulting changes in curriculum promoted increased positive outcomes for students. Time was prioritised and committed to what needed to be done in order to make those changes. Kaumātua leadership had been in place for several years and the resulting cultural shifts had impacted positively on whānau engagement and improved community relationships. Teachers were beginning to take collective responsibility for the mauri ora of *all* students, which informed a shared sense of commitment to a kaupapa.

The school was working as a Professional Learning Community through whanaungatanga relationships, focused on rejecting deficit theorising and developing agency and adaptive expertise through critical consciousness and discursive repositioning. The participants had been learning from kaumātua for several years, and also were beginning to understand and enact the reciprocal nature of Māori models of learning, responding to the responsibility to give as well as receive. The student achievement and engagement had improved and the school was now on a three yearly E.R.O cycle of review, no longer requiring a S.A.F. The change from a Professional Learning Community to a whānau-of-interest is captured in Table 7.

**Table 7: 2018 - Whānau-of-interest**

| Structure | Culture | Outcomes for Learners |
|---|---|---|

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| • Whānau-of-interest<br>• Coherence across values, expectations and curriculum<br>• Shared and distributed leadership involving teachers, students and whānau | • Dialogic pedagogy<br>• Cultural relationships evident<br>• Reflexive leadership and teaching praxis<br>• Evidence informing teaching and learning- shared decision making based on evidence with students and whānau<br>• Shared, co-constructed school vision | • Students designing and leading learning;<br>• Sustainable achievement- 95-100% of learners at or above the expectation, especially Maōri learners<br>• Whānau engaged in ako with teachers, leaders and students |
|  | | Shared power relations across the school community |

In Table Seven, by 2018, the shifts in power relations were clear. Teachers, whānau and students were contributing to leading and designing the learning. The school leaders were a part of the PLD and were supporting the weaving together of cultural change and structural shifts making decisions grounded in dialogue with all stakeholders; as well as professional knowledge, kaupapa and mandated requirements. More expert others were engaged within ako relationships based firmly on the shared and co-constructed school vision. Self determination was evident in the relationships across and between all stakeholders.

## Mauri ora: Strength and vulnerability connections

In the story of the Kuia and the Spider the grandchildren used the woven mats for sleeping on. It could be argued that sleep is one's most vulnerable state, whilst the act of using a kete, as opposed to a backpack, bag or purse is in itself an act of decolonisation and resistance, as, it comes from a place of cultural strength because the wearer is deliberately rejecting the dominant, colonised status quo of the backpack, bag or purse by carrying and valuing the kete as a symbol of Te Ao Māori. In this woven model of school reform the weaving could be a whariki (mat) or a kete. That connects to the school vision, which by 2018, stated:

*At Invercargill Middle School, our students are experiencing Mauri Ora- mental, spiritual and physical wellbeing. They are enjoying success and progress and achievement, learning for now and the future with the capability to set goals and achieve them. They know how to learn and can learn by themselves and with others. Our students treat others with kindness and can form and maintain friendships. They can confidently enjoy and participate in the experiences life has to offer.*

This vision was co-constructed through the voices of whānau and students and is very much in the center of the cultural relationships and pedagogical structures at Invercargill Middle School.

This thesis contends that school visions are not developed to be merely words, school visions are developed to be fulfilled, upheld and brought into fruition. At any point in time people in the school community may be in a place of vulnerability or strength. In order to fulfill the school vision, the culture and structure of the school must be able to transform, change and adapt in order to be responsive to the people and community. Sometimes a whariki may be required, sometimes a kete is needed. The most important thing is to keep returning to and bringing the whenu together by engaging in dialogue with one another, and moving those pegs as the weaving needs to adapt and change its shape.

## Limitations of this research

This research is grounded in one school, in a particular location, over a period of 5-6 years. The findings are based on the cohort of students, the teachers and the whānau at that time. The school community is not representative of other schools and therefore these unique circumstances limit this research and its findings.

Further research in a range of schools with diverse communities would provide a stronger foundation on which to base the findings of the impact of a professional learning community as a whānau-of-interest .

## Implications for others

E kore au e ngaro, he kakano i ruia mai ahau i Rāngiatea

(I will never be lost, for I am a seed born of Rāngiatea- the treasure house from which Tānemahuta collected the kete of knowledge)

This whakatauki signifies the potential within each and everyone. We are in a time of change- educational structural change and systemic change. The findings of this study suggest that in order to truly address the ongoing educational disparity in Aotearoa we must weave together cultural change with responsive structural change. We can learn from Te Ao Māori models of teaching and learning, which can enlighten and decolonise our thinking. In this school this was achieved through our discursive repositioning and through critical consciousness. As learners we worked alongside our school whānau, community and mana whenua to actively express the Treaty of Waitangi as mana ōrite partners in education in ways that promoted benefits for Māori and *all* students.

This thesis proposes a model for transformative action based on the weaving together of cultural and structural shifts, represented in the woven model with whenu and pegs. These pegs are a metaphor for structural changes, which are responsive to the needs of the school and its community, but also maintain a close connection to the cultural changes taking place. The cultural shifts are represented by the woven strands, through the developing understanding of the interconnectedness of Māori metaphors with people from the school community. This framework provided the shifts in pedagogy, relationships and structures in our school for sustainable school reform; where teachers discursively repositioned themselves as ongoing learners, developed critical consciousness; thus, collectively responsible for the learning of each other and of all students in the school.

## Raranga

The story of The Kuia and The Spider provides a metaphor for the decolonisation of leadership and the resulting lived experiences explored through this study. This is a Māori story, written by a Māori woman, illustrated by a Māori woman and told through a Māori world view. The tamariki mokopuna are at the center of the context, and their experiences provide the lens through which The Kuia and The Spider measure their own success, for it is the well-being of the tamariki mokopuna that will be our future.

The act of weaving in itself is an act of decolonisation and reviltatisation as it embodies the spiritual and epistemological values of Māori (Puketapu-Hetet, 1989). I have used the metaphor of weaving as a common thread throughout this thesis to symbolise the bringing together of the whenu of cultural relationships. The school systems and leadership structures as pegs were responsive to the cultural shifts, decolonising the PLD space in the school. This in turn had positive effects on all aspects of teaching, learning, achievement and belonging. Thus, the vision of students learning and living in the state of mauri ora was realised, much like the children in The Kuia and the Spider, whose sense of strength of cultural identity is captured in the excerpt below as they used the weaving in various ways.

*Whose weaving is best? Asked the kuia.*
*But the kuia's grandchildren did not answer.*
*They sat on the mat and sang songs.*
*They lay on the mats and talked.*
*They took kits to the garden and got kumara.*
*They took kits to the beach and got pipis.*
*They took kits to the shop and got coffee.*
*The found kits with their names on them and held on to them tightly.*
*(Grace, 1981).*

However, this story also issues a challenge. Both the kuia and the spider held on tightly to their own world view without coming to a place of critical consciousness. They did not learn from one another, but continued to live separately and maintain the status quo of power relationships in the whare (house). What we found within our reform from hierarchical, colonised leadership structures to a professional learning community to a whānau-of-interest was the resulting change in power relations meant that as a school, feelings of success and belonging for Maōri students, and indeed *all* students was not only realised but *sustainable*. This required both a transformation in pedagogical structures and cultural relationships. The relationships were at the center of the reform, and the structures changed in response. When creating a piece of weaving the weaver can turn the weaving and move the pegs as it takes shape. The weaving itself can be turned, reversed and flipped over as it is developed. It can be deconstructed and reconstructed, however this becomes more difficult the longer it is left. The harakeke hardens and dries. This in itself is a metaphor for the years of colonisation in education that have resulted in inequity and dishonourable partnerships that have failed Māori.

The challenge is clear. Will we remain separate, holding tightly to our own world view and maintaining the status quo? Or will we come down from the ceiling and

sit together at the kitchen table to talk and truly listen and learn, weaving together a new, decolonised education system based on mauri ora for *all?*

*Ki a koe Koro, mihi aroha ki a koe mō tōu whanaungatanga, manaakitanga, ako me tōu tino aroha ki a au. Ānei he tohu, ā, i tono koe ki a au ki te mahi i tenei mahi. Kua mutu au inaianei. He koha tenei mahi taumaha ki a koe. Tēnā koutou katoa.*

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