

Activating whānau (extended family) processes within a community and school literacy partnership

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Abstract

The paper describes the positive outcomes of a home and school literacy partnership in one mainstream primary school where the principal and the large majority of students, teachers, and *whānau* belong to one Māori *hapū* (sub-tribe), Ngāti Whakaue. Participating students were identified by teachers as experiencing difficulties with reading and writing. They were assigned randomly to one of two conditions: (1) participating in their school's regular reading programme (school group) or (2) participating *also* in the home tutored reading and writing programme (home and school group).

Students in the home and school group improved their reading and writing outcomes over and above the outcomes achieved by students participating only in the regular school programme. There were two key reasons for the success of this partnership. The first was parents and *whānau* members successful implementation of both a Māori language reading tutoring programme, *Tatari, Tautoko Tauawhi*, and the two components of the writing programme, *Tuhi Atu Tui Mai* and *Whakaputa Whakaaro*. The second was the professional educational and cultural expertise of the home and school liaison worker, Hiro. Because of her language and cultural expertise and her *mana* (acknowledged authority and standing), Hiro was able to engage Māori parents and *whānau* actively in the home and school project. The co-constructed narrative between Hiro and Mere (the second author) provided a salient context for understanding the power of culturally preferred pedagogy in establishing effective home and school partnerships.

Introduction

While children are learning at school, they are participating in at least two major socialisation settings, home and school. McNaughton and Glynn (1998) consider that a variety of different theoretical positions can be used to talk about the nature of the relationships between home and school. These include a behaviour analysis perspective (Wheldall & Glynn, 1989), a family resource and cultural capital

approach (Nash, 1993), a developmental systems model (Tangaere, 1997), a socio-historical perspective (McNaughton, 1995), and a *kaupapa* Māori position (Smith, 1995). Socio-cultural theories of human development (Bruner, 1966; Bronfenbrenner, 1979; McNaughton, 2002; Vygotsky, 1978) also highlight the importance of the relationships between home and school for improving children's learning. Socio-cultural theories stem from the central idea that children's intellectual development and social development are tightly interwoven. Hence, students' learning and behaviour at school can be understood as an outcome of the 'interplay' between the values, beliefs and preferred behaviours they have learned at home and in their cultural communities, and the values beliefs and behaviours learned from their interactions with teachers and peers at school. Learning and behaviour at home and at school can therefore be mutually inclusive and supporting for some students or mutually exclusive and conflicting for others. There is strong general agreement across these various positions that family and school relationships are vital to children's literacy achievement at school (Glynn, Berryman & Glynn, 2000; McNaughton, 2002).

McNaughton & Glynn (1998) contend that collaboration, in the context of a home and school partnership, should ideally involve the sharing of expertise between educators and student caregivers. Further, this expertise requires shared understandings of the goals and processes that result in shared actions, which lead to reciprocal understandings and mutual benefits. Collaborative sharing of expertise between home and schools offers an effective means of addressing the issue of imbalance of power that can arise when teachers from a powerful majority language and culture impose their beliefs and understandings and their world view on students and families from a less powerful language and culture (Bishop & Glynn, 1999).

Within such collaborative home and school partnerships, Māori students should benefit from teachers employing in their classrooms a culturally linked pedagogy that promotes the inclusion and engagement not only of students and peers but also of *whānau* and community members. Writers such as Ladson-Billings, (1995) and Scheurich and Young, (1997) contend that schools need to adopt pedagogies that are congruent with the pedagogical practices of minority cultures if they are to enhance the achievement of students from those cultures. In New Zealand, collaboration between school and community is being encouraged also by the reforms recommended by the Literacy Experts Group (1999) and the recent changes to the National Education Guidelines and the National Administration Guidelines (Ministry of Education, 1999).

In the context of literacy learning in particular, Smith, (1989) cited in Quintero and Huerta-Maeras, (1990), affirms the need to re-think the significance of the social context in which literacy is best learned and the methods of instruction used. He writes that "individuals become literate not from the formal instruction they receive, but from what they read and write about and who they read and write with" (p. 353). Quintero and Huerta-Maeras were able to successfully enhance the development of literacy and biliteracy skills of a group of parents and children. Parents were empowered to utilise and connect the specific newly acquired literacy activities to their own lives in order to improve their children's literacy development.

This paper examines the effectiveness of a collaborative home and school partnership in providing a responsive, social tutoring context (Glynn, 1985) in which students

could improve their literacy skills. Māori parents and *whānau* learned to implement reading and writing tutoring programmes. The reading-tutoring programme was *Tatari Tautoko Tauawhi* (Harawira, Glynn & Durning, 1993; Glynn et al., 1996). *Tatari Tautoko Tauawhi* is an interactive tutoring programme for older readers experiencing difficulties in learning to read in Māori. It was developed in collaboration with Māori elders and Māori teachers from Ngāti Ranginui and Ngāi Te Rangi *iwi* from the English language reading-tutoring programme known as Pause Prompt Praise (Glynn, McNaughton, Robinson, & Quinn, 1979; Glynn, 1995; Glynn & McNaughton, 1985; 2002). Pause Prompt Praise tutoring involves first *pausing* when a reader makes an error (to allow opportunity for reader self-correction without tutor help). Where the error is not self-corrected, tutors offer different types of *prompt* to assist the reader with the meaning of the work or with the letter or sounds in the word *when* the error indicates the reader has already understood the meaning of the word. Tutors also employ specific *praise* to reinforce readers' use of independent strategies such as self corrections and corrections following tutor prompts.

The writing-tutoring programme comprised two separate procedures, *Tuhi-atu Tuhi-mai* (responsive written feedback) (Glynn, Jerram & Tuck, 1986; Jerram, Glynn, & Tuck, 1988), and *Whakaputa Whakaaro* (structured brainstorming) (Glynn, Berryman, O'Brien & Bishop, 2000). The *Tuhi-atu Tuhi-mai* procedure provides emergent writers with written responses to their writing from an interested audience rather than from a corrective evaluator. These written responses let the writers know that their writing has had a real impact on a reader, by arousing the reader's interest and attention. Components of responsive, written feedback are personalisation, identification with the story characters, identification with the theme, anticipation of the development of the theme, sharing of an experience, empathy with the writer, "conversing" with the writer and expressing enjoyment of the writer's content. The *Whakaputa Whakaaro* (structured brainstorming) procedure employed a structured brainstorm procedure based on writing "think sheets" developed by Whitehead (1993). Regular and focused brainstorms of interesting words were an important fortnightly component of the writing programme.

Method

Background

The researchers met with community groups, local *iwi* (tribal) representatives, school principals, members from Boards of Trustees and other school representatives. A general discussion about reading at school and at home identified that parents in the community were an under-valued and under-used resource in the schools' endeavour to improve students' literacy. The researchers spoke about possible home and school partnerships that could provide worthwhile solutions, and the community groups present indicated a willingness to provide support and resources. This information was taken to a meeting of the local School Principals' Association where the chairperson encouraged schools to participate. At a third meeting, Principals, community people and researchers set the final parameters of the project. One of the important contributions made by schools was the selection of their home-school liaison worker, although salary was funded by the research project. While the project involved nine schools, all serving communities of similar low socio-economic status and having a similar student ethnic mix, as the project developed it became clear that one school had a particularly high visibility of Māori cultural values and practices and Māori language use. Data from this school are reported in the present paper.

The Principal of this school regularly sought advice and guidance from his *kaumatua* (elders), both in the community and on the school Board of Trustees. He did not see it as his role to require them to respond to his requests and directives. This school also ran its home and school parent tutor training through a series of *hui* (meetings conducted according to Māori protocol rather than according to European meeting procedures). Researchers noted that parents and *whānau* members in this school operated in a far more collaborative and interconnected manner than their counterparts in other schools. They shared a high level of understanding and experience of Māori preferred ways of communicating and working.

Hiro, the home-school liaison teacher appointed to this school, was a *kuia* (woman of very high standing). Although she is a member of a different tribe from that of the Principal and most of the staff and parents, she had spent 33 years raising her own family and working in Rotorua, where she is widely respected for her extensive experience in both English and Māori medium education. The research team established a close working relationship with Hiro, based on mutual trust and respect.

Research design

Students were assigned randomly to one of two conditions: (1) participating in their school's regular reading programme (school group) or (2) participating also in the home tutored reading and writing programme (home and school group). In the home and school group, parents implemented the procedures in either English or Māori, according to whether their children were attending English or Māori medium classes at school. Multiple outcome measures of both reading and writing were taken across both groups of students, pre-programme and post-programme. In addition, a collaborative narrative was constructed between Hiro and the second author (Mere) in order to identify key cultural concepts, actions and understandings that help contextualise the positive results achieved, as well as the increasingly collaborative partnership and ownership of the programme that developed between community and school.

Participants

Participants were five students aged between seven and nine years in Māori medium classes at Rotorua primary school who were experiencing reading and writing difficulties. Parents or *whānau* members agreed to allow them to participate. Two of these students were randomly assigned to the school's regular reading programme (school only group) while the other three were randomly assigned to the group which participated also in the home tutoring programme (home and school group).

Parents were invited to join in the project in their own right. They attended two two-hour training and practice sessions before they implemented the procedures with their children. One session trained parents in the reading tutoring procedures. The second session trained parents in the two writing support procedures. During the first fortnight of programme implementation, parents supplied a taped reading tutoring session to the researchers. Analysis of the reader-tutor interactions enabled the home-school liaison worker to provide specific and individual feedback to tutors on their use of the procedures. The analysis also provided treatment integrity data.

Training

Each of the training sessions allowed parents and *whānau* members to see the reading and writing procedures modelled by the research team and then to practise these

through role-plays. Training also explained briefly how the procedures related to the objectives in the New Zealand language curriculum documents.

(a) *Reading programme*: Fuller details of implementing the *Tatari Tautoko Tauawhi* and Pause Prompt Praise procedures are provided elsewhere (Berryman, Bidois, Furlong, Atvars, & Glynn, 1995; Glynn, 1995; Glynn & McNaughton, 2002; Harawira et al., 1993). Briefly, however, parent tutors were trained first to preview and review with their child the story being read. They were also trained to *tatari* (delay) when a child made a reading error, to allow space for the child to have a chance to realise they had made an error, and perhaps, to correct themselves. Tutors were then trained use three different types of reading prompt in cases where their child did not self-correct the error. The use of each type of prompt is dependent upon the type of error made. The first prompt, 'pānui tonu / whakahokia' (read on/ read again), is used when readers come to a word that they do not know and cannot read meaningfully without assistance. This requires the tutor to prompt the reader to search for meaning within the text. Tutors ask readers to read on to complete the sentence, or if the word is near the end of the sentence to go back and start again. The second prompt, 'kia marama ai' (to understand the meaning), is used when the word read is a substitute word that does not make sense in the context of the sentence or story. This requires the tutor to prompt the reader to think about what is happening in the text and to think of a more meaningful word. The third prompt, 'kia ata titiro ai' (look carefully at the word), is utilised when the word read makes sense but is not the actual word used in the story (meaningful word substitute). This requires the tutor to prompt the reader to use any letter-sound information *provided by the word*.

(b) *Writing programme*: The research team trained parents and liaison workers in the two different writing procedures:

(1) *Tuhi Atu Tuhi Mai* (responsive written feedback). The first procedure, responsive written feedback encouraged parents to write regular brief and personalised responses to their child's writing. The strategy was to respond in writing to the messages conveyed within the piece of writing and not to focus upon structure, error correction or evaluative comments. Parents were shown how to respond to what they were able to understand of the message in their child's story rather than simply responding to errors.

(2) *Whakaputa Whakaaro* (structured brainstorming). In structured brainstorming parents talked with their child about a particular experience that connected with a writing topic set at school. They used a "brainstorming sheet", to help their children generate a list of words related to the topic, and then to group these words into sub-topics or themes, and supply a label or heading for each (Berryman et al, 2001). Parents returned the completed brainstorm record sheets to school where each labelled group of words served as scaffolding around which the beginning writer in Māori could construct a sentence, or a more advanced writer, a paragraph, when writing their stories in the classroom.

Measures of reading behaviour

Baseline and intervention data on students' reading were gathered from the audio taped three-minute oral reading samples. Oral cloze and recall questions were also

used to assess students' oral comprehension of the stories they had read. A native Māori speaker independently analysed a sample of the three-minute audiotapes of reading tutoring sessions to check on inter-scorer agreement.

Specific reading measures taken were:

Book level. This was the highest level of text in the *Ngā Kete Kōrero* framework (Berryman, Rau & Glynn, 2001) a child could achieve to criterion accuracy (90%) and comprehension (40%).

Comprehension. This was the percentage of oral cloze items (requiring the reader to predict the exact word or an acceptable substitute word when a word was left out of a sentence) plus oral recall items answered correctly. It was important to attempt some measure of comprehension in this study because of a growing concern among Māori-medium teachers that since Māori is a language that is highly regular phonetically, students may easily obtain oral reading accuracy scores that are well in advance of their level of comprehension. This is particularly the case for the many Māori children who are second language learners and who lack access to a strong Māori oral language base to assist their comprehension of written texts.

Reading rate There were two measures of reading rate: *correct rate* (the number of words read correctly per minute), and *incorrect rate* (the number of incorrect words per minute), while *reading accuracy* was measured as the percentage of words read correctly.

Measures of writing behaviour

Writing assessments were taken from independent samples of writing produced without the support of responsive written feedback and structured brainstorming. While students were free to write on any topic they wished, researchers provided six A3 size photographs and ten prompt words per photograph to help motivate students to write. The images in each photograph were representative of the lives of these students.

Up to ten minutes were allowed for students to choose their topic and for a brief informal discussion. However, this did not involve any form of written planning. Next, students were instructed to begin their ten minutes of writing, using pencil. At the end of ten minutes pencils were collected and exchanged for pens. A further five minutes was allowed for proof reading. During the writing and proof reading times students were free to use resources from around the room to assist them with their writing, but asking other students for words was discouraged. These independent writing samples were assessed by raters who were uninformed of the writers' names and group status (home and school, or school only). Writing was assessed in terms of rate, accuracy and quality, the specific writing measures being:

- *writing rate*: the number of words written in ten minutes;
- *writing accuracy*: the percentage of words written that were spelled correctly;
- *writing quality (adventurous words)*: the number of words produced that were beyond the current spelling levels the writer was currently working at;
- *writing quality (audience impact)*: a holistic rating (on a 1-7 scale) of the extent to which raters, acting as a "responsive audience", enjoyed the story.

Collaborative narrative with the home-school liaison worker

Narrative enquiry is a methodology that recognises that people and their communities are essential participants in the research process (Bishop, 1996). Their lived experience and their own ways of knowing and sharing knowledge bring validity to the research process (Te Hennepe, 1993; Cole, 1998). Narrative inquiry maintains and respects the integrity of storytellers and the knowledge and culture they represent. It allows researcher and researched to co-construct narratives of the research process. Hence it offers an approach that demonstrates how the research process and outcomes may be understood through the agency of key research participants, rather than through the agency of the researchers alone. In this study, the researcher (second author) and the home-school liaison worker co-constructed narrative of their experience of the home and school project in this school. They utilised a series of semi-structured interviews, which were recorded and transcribed. The transcripts then served as the basis for further inquiry through reflective discussion and collaborative validation (Bishop, 1996).

Results

Reading Gains

Table 1 presents pre-programme and post-programme data on the four reading measures for the home and school and the school only groups. These measures were taken during pre and post-programme assessments that were independent of the continuous reading measures taken from the audiotapes throughout the tutoring programme.

Table 1 shows that students in the home and school group increased their mean level of books read to criterion by four reading levels (from level 6 to level 10) over the 12 weeks from pre-programme to post-programme. Even though at post-programme they were reading Māori texts of far greater difficulty and complexity, they were able to answer 50% of the comprehension questions correctly (compared with 68% of questions on their less demanding pre-programme level 6 text). In contrast, students in the school only group increased their mean book level read to criterion by only two levels (from level 6 to level 8) while their comprehension score remained unchanged (at 35%) on the level 8 texts.

Table 1 also shows that pre-programme both groups had low incorrect reading rates, and that both groups decreased these from pre-programme to post-programme (from 6 to 3 words per minute for the home and school group, and from 4 to 2 words per minute for the school only group). However, there was a marked difference between the two groups in terms of changes in correct reading rate. Students in the home and school group decreased their correct reading rate from 41 to 33 words per minute, while in contrast, students in the school only group increased their correct reading rate from 36 to 63 words per minute.

Table 1: Reading Data

	Pre-Programme	Post-Programme
Book Level		
Home and school	6	10
School only	6	8
Comprehension (%)		
Home and school	68	50
School only	35	35
Correct Rate		
Home and School	41	33
School only	36	63
Incorrect Rate		
Home and school	6	3
School only	4	2

Writing Gains

Table 2 presents pre-programme and post-programme data on the four writing measures for the home and school and the school only groups. These measures were taken during pre- and post-programme assessments that were made from writing samples that were independent of the writing completed by students at home and at school as part of the tutoring programme.

Table 2 shows that students in both groups had similar writing rates at the pre-programme stage, 46 and 43 words attempted. However, the home and school group increased their writing rate over the 12 weeks between pre-programme and post-programme from 46 to 66 words per 10-minute sample. In contrast, students in the school only group decreased their writing rate from 43 to 34 words over the same period.

Table 2 also shows that students in the home and school group had a slightly higher writing rate at baseline (63%) than students in the school only group (56%). However, students in the home and school group increased their writing accuracy over the 12-week period from 63% to 76%, while students in the school only group slightly decreased their writing accuracy from 56% to 47%.

On the first measure of writing quality, students in the home and school group increased the number of adventurous words included in their writing samples from 2.0 to 7.0 over the 12-week programme period, whereas students in the school only group decreased their number of adventurous words written from 3.0 to 2.0. On the second measure of writing quality, the holistic rating of audience impact, students in the home and school group increased their rating from 3.0 to 4.0, while students in the school only group increased their holistic rating from 2.0 to 3.0.

Table 2: Writing Data

	Pre-Programme	Post-Programme
Rate (words attempted)		
Home and school	46	66
School only	43	34
Accuracy (% words correct)		
Home and school	63	76
School only	56	47
Quality (adventurous words)		
Home and School	2	7
School only	3	2
Quality (audience impact)		
Home and school	3	4
School only	2	3

Discussion

Overall, the reading data suggest that by the end of the 12-week home tutoring programme, students in the home and school group were reading Māori language texts that were considerably more difficult than those being read by students in the school group. They were reading these texts with more comprehension, but at a slower rate than students in the school only group. It appears that the interactive home tutoring programme, *Tatari Tautoko Tauawhi*, with its focus on supporting students to search for text meaning, has contributed to their improved reading and understanding of Māori language, over and above that of students receiving the school programme alone. This is consistent with findings from an earlier peer tutoring study in a bilingual classroom in which *tuakana* (older and more skilled students) tutored *teina* (younger and less skilled students) using *Tatari Tautoko Tauawhi* (Glynn et al., 1996). That study reported gains in reading comprehension on both Māori and English texts for both *tuakana* and *teina* students.

Similarly, the writing data show that by the end of the 12-week programme incorporating responsive written feedback and structured brainstorming activities, students in the home and school group were producing writing samples that were longer, more accurate, contained more adventurous words, and received higher ratings of audience impact than those of students in the school only group. It appears that in the present study parents' and *whānau* members' implementation of these two support strategies had a positive impact on the fluency, accuracy and quality of students' writing in Māori. These findings are consistent with those of a previous study employing responsive written feedback for students learning to write in Māori (Glynn, Berryman, O'Brien & Bishop, 2000).

Considered together, the reading and writing data from the three home and school group students and the two school only group students illustrate the potential of parents to improve the reading and writing of their children at school through implementing focussed and interactive strategies such as *Tatari Tautoko Tauawhi*, *Tuhi Atu Tuhi Mai* and *Whakaputa Whakaaro*. The data also support the effectiveness

of these specific strategies when introduced for second language learners in a Māori language revitalisation context.

It is important to try to understand some of the cultural beliefs, values and practices that lay behind the clear positive outcomes achieved by these Māori parents and *whānau* for their own children. The remainder of this paper draws on information from the collaborative narrative between the researchers and Hiro, the home-school liaison worker. It identifies key cultural concepts, actions and understandings between Hiro and parents, teachers and students that embodied a culturally focussed pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995). These concepts help explain not only the positive reading and writing outcomes achieved but also the increasingly collaborative partnership between community and school. The following narrative illustrates some of these cultural concepts, actions and understandings which can be grouped around one central theme of awakening and activating traditional whānau processes (Smith, 1995).

Whakamana whānau (Activating whānau processes)

Merging personal and professional boundaries and commitments

The first and most essential element identified was that Hiro not only understood, but also affirmed, the cultural background of her students and their families. She strengthened their *wairua* (spiritual well being and self-esteem). She affirmed them in the home, at school and in the community, by employing interpersonal processes that were characteristically Māori. While she was too *whakamā* (humble and self-conscious) to speak directly about her own knowledge and expertise of the people, their language and *tikanga* (culture), she continuingly drew on this knowledge and expertise to improve the learning outcomes for all *whānau* members.

Hiro: ... I was a sort of liaison officer. I would sort of keep in touch with the parents concerned and with their children and with you. But besides keeping touch with the parents, I also had to encourage them to come forward because a lot of our Māori parents are a bit shy and that was a problem with a lot of them. They were keen enough in their own way but they were just shy, took a while to come to the meetings, but when they did come they were fine. It's just *patipati* (encouragement), I call it. You know, give them a little *awhi* (support) and rub on the back and just have a quiet little *kōrero* (talk) to them and most of the time they open up.

Awakening collective identity and collective responsibility

The children and *whānau* Hiro worked with became part of her life, and she part of theirs. This was not just a relationship that held for the research project and research meetings. It went beyond that. Parents no longer identified themselves as individuals. Values of individual achievement, and competition between individuals that are dominant in the majority culture, were gradually replaced by values of collective achievement and collective responsibility for the wellbeing of all members of the research project. Participants were developing relationships and patterns of organization similar to those applying within a traditional Māori *whānau*. They had begun to operate in ways that called for Māori people to identify and act collectively. Through their participation in the project, along with Hiro *whānau* were affirming their cultural identity and validating the cultural understandings that came from experiencing the world of literacy from within a Māori worldview.

Mere: So, was this just advice about the reading and writing?

Hiro: No, whatever they asked.

Mere: Why do you think they came to you?

Hiro: As I said I think they trusted me. You build up that rapport with them by what you do and how you do it. You don't just necessarily give directions. I'm just used to doing things hands on, showing by example. I'm not a lecture type person. So perhaps they saw what I was doing and that I was happy with what I was doing, and that made them happy too. We'd have a cup of tea or coffee. Down here or in the staff room they were at home. They didn't feel uncomfortable. They felt safe.

Well they sort of formed their own whānau and helped each other too. That didn't matter that they weren't brother and sister and that word *whanaungatanga* (interconnectedness based on personal relationship) came out very strongly with that group of parents, with their 'network' going. We also had to share cassette recorders, and so one of them would finish with it, and go round the corner and pass it on the next one down the street. And so they did the rounds and the school supplied the recorders. I didn't have to go and pick them up from each one. They would just pass them on to the next one. And I got them all back at the end of the programme. So that was excellent. And they helped each other in that way. Well even with the responsive writing. That's another way that *whanaungatanga* came out because as we said last time, they got sick of waiting for the teacher and they took control. I mean I started [by just] listening, but the busier I became, they decided that they would take control and they did.

Mere: So there was an element of trust with you. What about with each other?

Hiro: Yes I think so. There was that there too. It came and was developed through that *whanaungatanga*, because they were helping each other, there were no hidden agendas. They were all on the same wavelength and I think the trust developed out of that.

Mere: What is *whanaungatanga* for you?

Hiro: It's being part of a family. Not necessarily blood ties. Having that family feeling working together is part of a *whānau*. And might all be from totally different areas but when you get together you all work towards the *whānau* goal, helping each other. Doesn't necessarily have to be brother, sister, mother, father.

Mere: One of the things that amazed me was that they were actually just as interested in everybody else's child as they were in their own.

Hiro: I think it was to give them something to compare with maybe. I could be wrong but just to see how their child was doing while there was another person's child to compare with. Not so much against, as with.

Mere: Right. Because I got the impression that they wanted the benefits to come to all of the children. As you say, they did form their own *whānau*. So they wanted all of the children who were part of the *whānau* to benefit.

Hiro: Yes.

- Mere:** That strong *whānau* network that had developed, I haven't seen it in any of the other places. How do you think you got it?
- Hiro:** That's the way our school is. Well we've got about 90% [Māori students and *whānau*]. And that's the way our school is run. It's run like a big whānau whether you are in mainstream [English medium] or immersion [Māori medium]. Everything is whānau.

Hiro had taken a personal interest and got to know very closely each of the families with whom she worked. Not only did she share in their work and successes, but she also shared in their pain and their grief.

- Hiro:** Well there was one grandfather, who was having problems with his ex, and that child got hi-jacked by the ex and that grandfather had worked so hard. Yep and that was sad when he came to tell me that his grandson had been taken away by his grandmother, his ex. And then there was one, a parent that had all the time in the world, but he was too busy playing spacey games to listen to his own child read. And there was one mother who felt that she was not that good at Māori. But she persevered, borrowed dictionaries and everything. This made them work.
- Then there was another one. Mum wasn't in the home but dad was working with the child. That was the difficult one cause he [the child] was taught in bi-lingual, taught to read in English first, and then he came to immersion. So that was a big step for him, he needed a fair bit of help for a start. And the father just needed help in sort of calming down, not losing it. But dad turned out really good. He went on to train as a teacher.

Initiating collective action and problem solving

In establishing this home and school partnership, it was essential that these parents and *whānau* members exercised some control over the context and direction of their learning. Balance of power, shared control and reciprocity between learning and teaching roles, are seen as elements of responsive, social contexts that promote independent learning (Glynn, 1985; 1995).

In this project, it was clear that Hiro and the school were embodying these concepts in their pedagogical practice. They believed *whānau* not only could but also should become involved in the formal education of their children. With Hiro's help it was not long before these parents who had up until then been the learners, reciprocated the teacher role. This could have been a potential source of conflict between home and school, but because of Hiro's professional experience and *mana* (authority and standing within the culture) the *mana* of the parents as well as the teacher were maintained. There was mutual respect and appreciation. Both groups were able to work alongside and learn from each other. The central collective focus was as much on promoting the wellbeing of the whole group (teachers and parents) as it was on improving literacy outcomes for students. Participating in a *whānau* structure carries important responsibilities as well as benefits.

Hiro: I like seeing people who are not in the education sector, parents and other *whānau* members, latching on to things in education and seeing the benefits.

Mere: Do you think those parents latched on?

Hiro: I think so. The majority of them I would say. The hardest part was getting them into that routine of working with the teacher. Mind you, it was hard getting the teacher into the routine too!

When it came to the responsive writing and brainstorming, well it ended up the parents decided they'd do it at home. They took it away from the teacher because they got sick of waiting for him and I can understand that, being a parent and a grandparent myself. But I can also understand the teacher who was only new to our school so he was still getting to know his children and still settling in. Some [teachers] don't take long you know some only take five minutes but some take longer and I think that may have been where the difficulty was.

Mere: You had a really strong group of parents.

Hiro: Oh yes very strong. They knew what they wanted and they demanded it and if it wasn't forthcoming well that's what they did. They took it away. And they operated it themselves but they hounded me, to, you know, keep them up with it.

Mere: Did you feel like you were piggy in the middle?

Hiro: No, because the teacher was fine about it and so were they. They were quite happy. As long as there was someone there to do it, it didn't have to be the teacher. And it just kept going. I just felt that the teacher would need to sort of get himself faster into a routine. Yes, some take a bit longer than others.

This example of collaborative problem solving provided an opportunity for the co-operative and active learning roles of the teacher and *whānau* to be interchanged, while keeping intact the *mana* of teacher and parents.

Strengthen the whānau, strengthen student achievement

A key to parents' support of the project was Hiro's commitment as a *whānau* member to meeting their needs for cultural safety and comfort, rather than simply ensuring their compliance with the project requirements. Given the many competing demands made on parents' time and energy, she ensured that resources were always ready for them, that there was always time and space to meet where they felt comfortable and safe, (and where there was always something to eat and drink). When asked why she thought none of her parents had dropped out Hiro replied:

Hiro: Perhaps because we had our regular meetings. Sometimes I'd set a time for meetings on a Wednesday afternoon and it usually tied in just before they came to collect their children. I didn't want to hold a meeting in the morning so that they'll come from wherever they were, have the meeting, and then go home. I fitted the meeting in after lunch before three o'clock so that they could stay and pick up their children and they didn't mind doing that because it wasn't inconveniencing them and sometimes it would be just one or two. Might be the whole lot. But if some were having problems then I would have a meeting with just one person at a time. I didn't [always] have them all together

at once. I had, say, this mother up here who's still in the office helping. I'd, say, have her stay for half an hour. The first half hour 1:30 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. and then I'll have someone else from 2:00 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. or whatever or might even be shorter time and I gave them that time as their own.

Mere: Right. So, you actually had the group meeting, and I attended some of those, but you also had some individual meetings.

Hiro: Yes, cause I felt well if they were shy about some of the things they were doing and weren't too confident, well on a one to one they would open up and they wouldn't be embarrassed in front of other people.

Hiro saw it as crucial that both children and *whānau* on the project should learn not only the specific tutoring skills, but also important independent living skills. She referred to one mother in particular who because of her experience in the project began a concerted effort to learn the Māori language, and went on to become a valued assistant in the school. This mother grew not only in self-confidence but also in self-efficacy.

Mere: The mother you are talking about was actually one of the mums that I thought was shy. She's certainly not shy now!

Hiro: Oh heck no. She runs that office [the school office] up there when the office ladies are away.

Mere: She really became...

Hiro: ...confident, her self-esteem is up there [indicating with hand]. That's what I like to see, confident in her own ability. Once she got her confidence she was in charge of getting the books and doling them out. Because she grew in confidence, she is still busy in the school. We've got a brand new photocopier, this is how good she is, and it's one of those with a memory and you punch it in. Well she's the chief operator. Besides the office lady, she is the only one who knows how to operate it. She came here voluntarily and now there are some things she gets paid for. If one of the office ladies is away, she steps in, and then she gets paid. She has just grown in confidence in her capability. It's all been hidden in there and it's just coming out.

The project provided an authentic context for learning for the *whānau*, and for Hiro herself. *Whānau* members succeeded in helping their children improve their reading and writing at school. Meanwhile Hiro herself was fully engaged with the researchers in developing new assessment and intervention strategies for improving literacy throughout the *whānau*. While Hiro made the most of the professional development opportunities arising within the project, she did so in order to better equip herself to help other *whānau* members.

Hiro: Well I had heard a little bit about it [the Rotorua Home and School Project]. I was getting excited too and that's why I pushed John [the school principal] to ask if we could go first in the first group because it sounded exciting. Anything to help our children and our parents help their children. It's always a value. We needed the *Tatari Tautoko Tauawhi*. And we needed to up-skill our parents in that procedure as well so that they [parents] could support our kids and our teachers.

There wasn't much [professional development available] in assessment for our children in Māori medium. I've always felt we're still playing catch up. I'd actually like to take the senior staff on that *whakaputa whakaaro*, [structured brainstorming], *tuhi atu tuhi mai*, [responsive writing] one day at a *hui* - just take them through that. Because that's excellent for them.

Since this project was completed, students and *whānau* participated in making two videotapes, which present the experience of the *whānau* and the school in the whole research process. The first video (Berryman, Glynn, & Glynn, 2001a) depicts the various cultural qualities of the home and school partnership in this school, as conveyed through the stories and voices of students, parents, grandparents, teachers, principal and other school staff. The second video (Berryman, Glynn, & Glynn, 2001b) provides a detailed close up of parents learning to use the tutoring procedures with children from their community. Both videos validate and affirm Māori culturally preferred ways of speaking, acting, and theorising about their children's learning to read at home and at school.

Conclusion

There are two fundamental lessons to be learned from our experience on this project. The first is the clear effectiveness of culturally focussed pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995). All three literacy strategies were implemented successfully by parents and *whānau* members to improve their children's reading and writing in Māori. These learning strategies embody concepts and actions that take on particular significance within a Māori worldview. One such concept is *ako* (Pere, 1982) denoting a reciprocity of roles and balance of power in the interactions between learner and teacher. A second concept is *tuakana-teina* denoting a particular caring relationship and commitment that carries responsibilities for an older or more skilled person to nurture and teach the younger or less-skilled person. This is seen in the way in which Hiro speaks about her relationship with parents and *whānau* members in the school. A third concept is that of *mana*, as embodied in the action of *whakamana tangata*. This principle underlies the importance of respecting and upholding the integrity, the dignity, the personal autonomy of all people. Maintaining *mana* is especially critical in any interaction between teachers and learners, or between teachers and parents. Any teaching interactions, negotiations or decision-making processes which result in loss of *mana* for any party will damage the wellbeing of all involved. This is also seen in the way in which Hiro speaks respectfully about parents and teachers, and her complete avoidance of judgement or criticism of any of their contributions

The second lesson we learned from this project is the specific pedagogical power that emerges from activating *whānau* structures. A culturally-focussed approach to pedagogy which strives to embody concepts and principles such as these is likely to improve the learning and wellbeing of Māori students experiencing difficulties in mainstream education. In this project, both the specific literacy support strategies themselves, as well as the cultural contexts in which they were deployed, effectively addressed the traditional power imbalance between community and school, and between the roles of parent and teacher. Graham Smith is right in wanting to awaken *whānau* in order to intervene and revitalise language and culture (Smith, 1995). Within the context of home and school literacy partnerships, it is abundantly clear that "culture counts" (Bishop & Glynn, 1999).

1. The research reported in this paper was part of the *Rotorua Home and School Literacy Project*, (Glynn, Berryman & Glynn, 2000), funded by the Rotorua Energy Charitable Trust and the New Zealand Ministry of Education.
2. This paper is based on an oral presentation given at the *Addressing Difficulties in Literacy Conference*, Faculty of Education and Language Studies, Centre of Curriculum and Teaching Studies, The Open University, Milton Keynes, U.K., September 2002.

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