

Chapter 3

Akoranga whakareī: Learning about inclusion from four kura rumaki

Mere Berryman

Waihoa ko ōku whengu,
Mauria mai ko ōku painga.

*Heed not my weaknesses,
Nurture my strengths.*

Introduction

In 2004 the New Zealand Ministry of Education proposed two research projects to understand how learning, social and cultural outcomes were being promoted for tamariki and rangatahi Māori with special educational needs in both kura auraki (English-medium schools) and kura rumaki (Māori-medium schools). They also wanted to understand how this played out for other whānau members. At the time, a description of the services being promoted for Māori with special education needs acknowledged the philosophy that “tamariki and rangatahi with special needs and their whānau learn effectively through the provision of culturally competent services, which will ensure mana and tikanga are

upheld” (Ministry of Education, 2003, p. 56).

This chapter will briefly describe how this research was undertaken in kura rumaki and then discuss the findings that emerged. Perhaps not surprisingly, it will show that the staff from the kura who participated in this study, as with all of their students and whānau, had a very holistic and inclusive view of educating all tamariki and rangatahi, especially those with identified special education needs. The conclusion will consider some of the implications of these findings for others and propose that these research outcomes maintain relevance in 2014, a decade later.

Background

When this research was undertaken in 2004, about 14 percent of school-aged Māori students accessed some form of Māori-medium education, either total Māori immersion or bilingual.¹ Fifty-five percent of these students were in Level 1 immersion programmes. The remaining 45 percent were in Level 3 to 4 bilingual programmes (Ministry of Education, 2005). In 2014 these figures have largely been maintained.

The demand from whānau for access to learning in Māori-medium education is expected to continue, reflecting the increasing population of young Māori students, the desire among Māori to be bilingual, and the increased participation of iwi and Māori organisations in setting priorities for education and delivering education services.

The research

Purpose of the research

The Akoranga Whakarei (Enhancing Effective Practices) research that was contracted by the Ministry of Education aimed to develop understanding of the learning, social and cultural contexts considered important and effective for students with identified special education needs in a number of Māori-language immersion sites. The aim was to develop a clearer picture of how to enhance capability in special education from the perspectives of the students themselves, their parents,

1 Full Māori immersion education is defined as Level 1 and reflects learning programmes where between 81 and 100 percent of the learning programme is taught through the medium of the Māori language. Bilingual education includes different levels of Māori immersion, from Level 2 (51–80 percent), to Level 3 (31–50 percent) and Level 4 (12–30 percent). Education settings such as these are more often associated with a growing number of bilingual units within mainstream schools.

caregivers and other whānau members, their kaiako and their tumuaki. In so doing, it was hoped that more effective pathways could be developed for other schools and their Māori communities.

Methodology and methods

This research was undertaken using kaupapa Māori theory and methodology. An essential underpinning of this approach is access to and use of knowledge that stems from a world view that is Māori (Durie, 2012). A kaupapa Māori approach also opens up avenues for critiquing Western approaches by looking at the effects of colonisation, power and social inequalities, and by questioning Western ideas about whose 'knowledge' counts and how this is understood and applied in practice (Smith, 2012). The kaupapa Māori methodology that underpins this type of research allows for the Māori communities, within which the research is situated, to contribute to the research agenda in order to legitimate its procedures and to grow from and with them (Bishop, 2005). Most importantly, the cultural principles, metaphors and practices applied to guide these processes enable the knowledge gained to empower, protect and embrace all that it means to be Māori.

The Poutama Pounamu research whānau

A group of Māori from a number of different iwi, a range of generations and with many different interests and aspirations came together with a Pākehā researcher to combine their skills and expertise in pursuit of the common vision of achieving Māori potential through Māori language and cultural revitalisation. Led by kaumātua from Tauranga Moana, and guided by Māori cultural principles and practices, this group became known as Poutama Pounamu (Berryman, 2008). Constituted as a metaphorical whānau-of-interest (Bishop, 1996), it was this group that undertook this particular research, using the following three main research methods:

1. the close reading, synthesis and review of related literature in terms of its specific applicability to kaupapa Māori, language and cultural contexts, as well as special education
2. field work in four kura rumaki to gather the stories of experience from the people who teach and learn in these spaces
3. collaborative analysis through noho marae with Māori who have

recognised expertise about education and inclusion, together with the participants themselves.

Although these methods may be viewed as quite Western, the ways in which the research procedures were enacted ensured that kaupapa Māori principles were maintained throughout. All ethical requirements were adhered to.

Research procedure

Kura were largely identified by extending invitations where connections already existed. Members of the research whānau then spent some time formally making or renewing connections and developing relationships with the participants in those kura that had agreed to participate. Henceforth staff and community members from these kura will be referred to as kura whānau. The establishment of formal connections involved members of the kura whānau determining, as the host, the forms of mihimihi, whakawhanaungatanga and, in some cases, karakia they would begin these relationships with. After the research whānau had responded to all cultural rituals of encounter, they explained the research project in detail and responded to any research-focused questions. Members of the research whānau then spent at least two consecutive days in each kura with those identified by the kura whānau as their kaikōrero or spokespeople. These sessions involved separate groups of: students identified as having special education needs; members of their family; their teachers; their teacher aides; and the principal, who was also interviewed. In one kura this also involved kaumātua. Kura whānau identified these opportunities as kōrero whakawhitiwhiti: the type of learning conversations at which people are comfortable to exchange and build on the ideas of others and where all can contribute to and through the emergence of spiralling discourses, in which new learning is constructed. Bishop (1996) refers to this type of interview as participatory, in-depth, semi-structured and face-to-face interviews as conversation.

Researchers listened to and audio-taped these kōrero, made careful notes, examined other evidence that was identified as important (such as policies related to special education needs and inclusion), and observed teaching and learning activities using stimulated recall interviews (Bishop, Berryman, & Richardson, 2001). By talking directly

with key participants after classroom observations, researchers were facilitating reflections on the relationships and interactions they had observed, what was believed to be most effective for including students, the people who participated, and the outcomes of these processes. This helped to identify the specific elements that kaikōrero in each kura believed contributed to effective inclusion, thus developing a detailed and rich picture of the attitudes, feelings and beliefs of the kaikōrero themselves. In some cases, follow-up interviews further clarified their stories.

Interview transcriptions were returned to the people for their verification and further annotation. The research whānau then edited the verified and annotated transcripts into collaborative stories, each representing the stories they had heard through the kōrero whakawhitiwhiti. In these stories the names of students and whānau members were changed to respect confidentiality, but the names of the specific kura and some staff members remained unchanged by choice.

From these 17 collaborative stories, each containing the metaphors, concepts and social realities of the separate kaikōrero groups, researchers sought to identify answers to the set research questions around what the groups of people themselves believed enhanced effective educational practices in their schools. Supporting evidence from each kura was also analysed and compared with what the national and international literature were saying. Researchers considered the findings from a Western world view and then sought to find out how these findings might be relevant to or best understood from a Māori world view.

The collaborative stories were further drafted into individual case studies for each of the four kura before being presented to an advisory group of Māori and special education needs educators to analyse collectively at a 1-day hui. Shortly thereafter they were shared with members from each of the participating kura whānau at an overnight noho marae. The Ministry of Education managers responsible for this project also attended and contributed at this meeting. By again using the processes of kōrero whakawhitiwhiti, working through the emerging themes with a group of experts and also the participants themselves, the research whānau were able to ensure the messages had greater legitimacy and clarity for all involved.

Overview of the kura

Site one was a decile² 2, kura kaupapa Māori in the central North Island with 38 students who came from a community of 20 families. Site two was a decile 1 wharekura in Auckland with 34 students who came from a community of 26 families. Site three was a decile 2 kura reorua (bilingual school) in the Bay of Plenty with 216 students who came from a community of over 150 families. Site four was a decile 1 kura kaupapa Māori in the Eastern Bay of Plenty with 84 students who came from a community of 40 families.

Results: Narratives of experience

Part of a narrative from one of the kura is presented below to exemplify what the practices looked like when there were challenges; for example, challenges with a student's behaviour. This was a common problem that appeared across the kura, but it was often more frequent when new students were transitioning into the kura from other schools, often with the kura seen as their last hope. The principal begins by stating what she believes is important:

... making mistakes is not an issue, it's waiho oku whenu, mauria mai oku painga—heed not my weaknesses, but heed to my strengths, and together we will learn. Yeah we've made plenty of mistakes. Hell who doesn't? (Principal)

Communication with whānau was understood as essential if a collaborative, potential-focused solution was to emerge.

We talk to parents about that when we have raruraru [problems]. It's not focussed on the negativity of the issue. The kōrero is focused on what can we do together to help as a whānau to move forward, and we're going through that one right now with a couple of issues and so we're meeting with parents. It's a big people thing, so we're going to be meeting with parents next week and we're going out to the various people in our community, and saying, 'Hey we all got to be on this waka [canoe], or else we're not going to do it together', so we do a lot of talk with our whānau. (Principal)

2 In New Zealand, schools are categorised by decile. Deciles are determined by a range of socio-economic factors, with 10 being the most socioeconomically advantaged decile and 1 the lowest.

This type of response was verified by a mother who had enrolled her son in this kura. She talked about the difference this type of response had made for her and for her son. She explained that her son had been going through a whole host of behavioural issues and that she had been looking for a new place to enrol him.

When both my son and I came in touch with this kura I decided to try and work it out for him. He was working with SES [Specialist Education Services] prior to that, special education, that sort of thing. He had behavioural problems quite bad, dysfunctional, and he just had a whole list of problems that he was going through at the time. (Māmā)

She recalls the differences that were immediately evident.

From the time that he started here, it's been a hard journey it hasn't been all good, but just to now, his wairua, his spirit, his self-esteem, his confidence and his learning has just lifted. He got stood down for fighting at the last school, and the other boy that was in the fight never got stood down, but my boy got stood down. I didn't think that was fair or that he was dealt with fairly. The kids knew that he was different and he felt he was different, so whenever he got upset or angry, his SES teacher would just jump in and make arrangements for him or movements for him that tended to his needs. He knew that and he would use that to his advantage. I felt he could never just settle in, whereas here, he was given the opportunity to settle in. (Māmā)

She then discusses the changes that the new kura had been able to bring about for her son.

He believes in himself, he is more confident, he's more responsible and the actions that he takes now, he realises the outcomes can be detrimental to him and to those around him. I believe that this school has encouraged him to, maybe not as far as the system goes with his academic side yet, but more with his spiritual side, and this one on one, which does really nurture him. And I'll say that for all of them. He had one teacher working with him when he started at this school, he just fell in love with her, so there was a connection with him straight away. (Māmā)

She reflected on how this school had responded to her son.

Ooh he never had this at any other kura that he's been enrolled in. This is how I feel personally in this town. He's been to three other mainstream schools and then here. I just believe they gave him love, they gave him a side that the other schools were too set in their mainstream systems ways to see that there were reasons why this boy was doing what he was doing, and they were willing to dig that bit harder to find the good in him. I believe that they dealt to a side that my boy hasn't felt since we lived up North, and we came from a small place up North, and the teaching up there is done on a one to one. He pretty well much found it here, you know, they took him and realised that he was quarrelsome and they pretty much took him on as being part of their own, not just as a child they were going to isolate him from the rest of the school. (Māmā)

She also recalls what it had been like at some of the other schools.

It just felt like a job interview going into a mainstream kura. It didn't feel real, it felt like he was just a number. There was no personal touch, yeah just put in the paper work and filed away. They didn't do that here. They went the extra mile to make sure that his needs were dealt to in every way that they possibly could address and that was a big difference. Very informal, very much tikanga Māori, yeah, the comparison between us and mainstream. The interest and the love that they give out is just part of their kaupapa.

You don't get that in the mainstream, you just don't. They can be just as loving and kind, and I'm not radical, I'm just saying it for what it is, but at the end of the day I felt that you were just part of the system, you were just a number and you were filed away like anything else. This is why a lot of our Māori people get upset, because my partner is a Mob member. This is why he wanted to go down and kill the principal in those other schools, yeah do a spinout. But in here, it's completely different. Here they feel you before they see you, you are part of them, and that makes a big difference for your child. You know that your child's wairua is going to be dealt to on a daily basis, and that's what he needs to grow, yeah, and that's him.

What they have done for him here at school hasn't just affected him at school, but he's brought that behaviour home. They just love and care for him and listen to him. Gee if you'd seen him two years ago, you wouldn't have thought he was the same kid. Honestly, he never lasted at school until lunch time without getting into a fight or without giving a couple of kids a hiding, or without getting into some sort of trouble or putting a hole in the wall. He's just not the same child at all, at all. If somebody had said this to me a year and half ago, I would have thought I had faith, but I don't know whether you could work miracles that fast with him. But he was just adamant that this is the way that I am, handle it or get out of my face, this is how I'm going to be.

They've dealt to him in a way that—you can't put it down on a piece of paper in a mainstream school and file it away, because it's not something that can be done just like that, they've just turned him right around. I mean, but my son has just floated through it all. Because it's completely different here, they feel you before they see you, you are part of them and that makes a big difference for your child. You know that your child's wairua is going to be dealt to on a daily basis and that's what he needs to grow. The love and spiritual healing that they've given to him. You can't put that down on a piece of paper. It's been an awesome, enriching loving and fulfilling journey that will give him tools for the rest of his life I suppose. (Māmā)

The son adds his thoughts to these experiences and explains why he thinks the changes have come about.

Student: They understand me and they just understand me better than all the other schools ... all the teachers listen to what you have to say. Yeah. Māori helped me.

Researcher: So you're not naughty anymore?

Student: Nah, I just changed when I came here in the last year.

Researcher: Oh yeah, why?

Student: Big change! Because of the teachers, they listen. The other school they just used to ring up my mum and just send me home, because I hit people but they didn't listen to my reasons why I hit them, but not here.

Findings

A shared understanding of the outcomes from this research saw support for an existing model and the emergence of a new model. Durie's (1985) Whare Tapa Whā model was supported by stories across the kura validating the importance of each dimension.

Te taha wairua

Parents spoke of the spiritual dimension as contributing to the holistic stability and development of their children. While the spiritual dimension relates to the spiritual inner presence of a person, they also identified within this element attributes such as heightened self-esteem and confidence. They conceded that while the spiritual dimension came in many forms, all of these forms had positive effects on the attitude and confidence of tamariki (*tama*, child/children, of the *ariki*, gods) to attend and engage. For example, the mother from the story above talked about the sense of love and support these teachers shared with and for her son and how this had promoted inclusiveness and a sense of belonging for him. This parent had witnessed the ability of this kura to engage at different levels with her child, thus developing in him a sense of value towards his own spirituality. This parent understood that until her son's wairua was intact, his learning would continue to be jeopardised.

All kura were building strong relationships among their students and whānau, recognising the importance of acknowledgement and encouragement to one's personal development. Encouragement was carried through to the homes, thus ensuring whānau were involved as well. Establishing grounds for personal growth and spirituality also came with leadership roles and responsibilities, such as when the older students within the kura were expected to be good role models and act as tuakana for the younger students. Parents were assured that their child's strengths and qualities were being supported and reinforced, and in turn their sense of spiritual wellbeing.

Te taha whānau

The whānau or social dimension within these kura could be seen in the strong relationships that were established, some of which were strengthened through whakapapa, others by parents who had attended the same kura as the students themselves. Some even saw their children's

attendance at the school as fulfilling a family tradition. An extension of this relationship was the links that had been forged in the previous century by their hapū and iwi ancestors, leaving the responsibilities, as mana whenua or guardians of the land, over the school for future generations. Parents were quick to identify the genealogical ties to both the kura and the land upon which these were located.

Whanaungatanga was identified as the driving force behind establishing effective sustainable relationships among the kura, the students and their whānau. Lines of communication were kept open and clear so that whānau members were always consulted and their contributions always respected. Whānau endorsed efforts to involve them with the education of their children over everyday things as well as important issues and at times of trauma. The ability of kura to engage openly and honestly with whānau when circumstances and events become challenging was of great importance, along with taking affirmative action towards finding effective, culturally appropriate solutions to problems that arose.

Te taha hinengaro

By focusing on the strengths of every pupil, rather than on weaknesses, each kura was able to fully stimulate and connect to their students' intellectual wellbeing. Whānau held the intellectual and mental wellbeing of their children in the highest regard. They spoke about how the curriculum and the pedagogical practices that were currently being used by the teachers in each kura were grounded in the culture of their children, thus building on their children's prior knowledge and experiences. All emphasised the importance of the Māori language and associated traditions as foundational, even in the kura that were required to teach the curriculum through both the Māori and English languages. Teachers provided cultural contexts for learning that had a positive effect on the students' willingness to learn and resulted in parents understanding that their children felt valued.

Te taha tinana

Parents associated physical wellbeing directly with how their child felt and how they behaved within the school grounds and in the wider community. Parents spoke honestly and frankly about their children. They explained that their children's behaviour affected how they were

perceived by others. Most family members interviewed talked about how when their children experienced problems with their learning, they had been able to work with the school to improve their child's learning. A grandfather who had taken custody of his two mokopuna when their own parents found this too challenging, talked frankly about how working with this kura had been for him and for his mokopuna. While some of his ideas may have implied a harsh parenting style, many of his contributions were perceptive and deep. He believed that behaviour should not just be extrinsically rewarded, and that some jobs were done as part of fulfilling one's basic requirements for food and shelter. He spoke of being called in to school to deal with the physical confrontations when his mokopuna got into arguments and fights with other students. Together, he and the kura had found their own way of maintaining the physical and intellectual dimensions, and the wairua, of all students.

Te Mataora: An emerging model

The emerging model was named Te Mataora, which literally means the living face. Te Mataora was the name of the first Māori human to receive the moko. This full facial adornment traditionally marked the time when an individual had attained the utmost in personal identity and integrity and was seen by others to have reached, or be reaching, their potential. Thus in naming it Te Mataora it was understood that this model would provide an interactive way of instilling the tamariki with cultural identity and integrity through experiences unique to a Māori world view, which would then equip them to participate more effectively in education and within the global community.

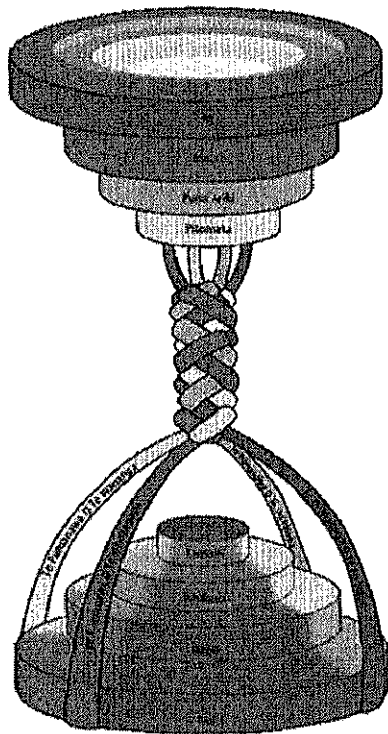


Figure 3.1. Te Mataora

These components are now described using some of the particular theorising and metaphors that emerged at the noho marae with kura whānau as the discussions went on long into the night.

The lower view

From the lower view, the tamaiti, supported by his or her whānau, hapū and iwi, is central to this model (see Figure 3.1). *Tamaiti* is the Māori word for child. Composed from two words (tama and iti), *tama* stands for Tama-Nui-Te-Ra, the Sun, while *iti* means small. Given that the Sun is positioned at the centre of the solar system, the child can also be seen as occupying this position (Pere, 1982), thereby, from a Māori perspective, demonstrating the central importance of the child.

All aspects of the development of the tamaiti—the cultural, spiritual, intellectual, emotional and social needs—are strongly influenced by the tamaiti's whānau. In these kura, whānau were understood to be not only their parents, caregivers and extended families but also their teachers and other kura members. Similarly, whānau were understood

to be influenced by their relationships and interactions with their hapū, and the hapū in turn were influenced by their relationships and interactions with their iwi.

The upper view

Directly above these four elements, and joined to the base by four interconnected strands, is another set of four elements: pitomata, puna ariki, mauri and Io (see Figure 3.1). Milroy (2004) explains pitomata as relating to the face of the unborn child, for it is at this stage of life, before birth, that our potential is hidden and untapped. Next, puna ariki are the springs used by the gods for cleansing and purification. Spiritually and metaphorically, puna ariki are available still when tested or faced with challenges. Mauri is the life force sourced from and placed by Io within all living and non-living things. Thus, mauri is the energy that binds a person's spirit to their mind and body, allowing all things to flourish within the confines of their own being. The uppermost element is Io, representative of ngā atua (the gods), both the origin and originator of all things.

Shirres (2000) contends that the world of the gods is not separated from the world of humanity, while Marsden (1977) suggests “a two-world system in which the material proceeds from the spiritual, and the spiritual (which is the higher order) interpenetrates the material physical world of Te Ao Mārama” (p. 160). Within this world, all things possess a mauri or life essence, and because the physical state is complemented by a spiritual state, any distinctions between inanimate and animate objects are blurred (Durie, 2001). Just as the guardians of old had a role to protect and care for their own domains, human beings are now a part of this interacting network of inter-related elements that must be maintained in balance for future generations (Durie, 2001).

Ngā pūmanawa: Connecting the two

Within this context, the emphasis and priorities in education were activated by four pūmanawa that provide essential life-links from the past to the present, from the spiritual world to the world of people. These pūmanawa provide the ongoing inextricable links for each tamaiti—from their spirituality, through their many different whānau/educators, to the development of their learning pathway and thus to their potential for achievement. These pūmanawa are:

- te pūmanawa o te ao Māori (the Māori world)
- te pūmanawa o te whakapapa (genealogy and other connections)
- te pūmanawa o te wānanga (teaching and learning)
- te pūmanawa o te ao Pākehā (the Pākehā world).

All things within a Māori world view (te pūmanawa o te ao Māori) are understood to have spiritual origins and direct connections to Io, from whence all things were created and have since been developed.

Whakapapa (te pūmanawa o te whakapapa) represents the genealogical descent of Māori from the divine sources of creation. Whakapapa establishes whānau and personal identity, status and connectedness. It also provides permission to access certain ancestral knowledge and to participate fully in cultural activities.

Wānanga (te pūmanawa o te wānanga), according to its most traditional definition, represents all knowledge and the means of preserving, building upon and sharing knowledge. The Pākehā world (te pūmanawa o te ao Pākehā) is the world view outside te ao Māori and is often referred to as Western society in the widest sense.

It was the interconnection of the spiritual world with the world of people via these four pūmanawa, and their integration in theory and in practice by the whānau in each kura, that resulted in the effective educational practices and outcomes for all concerned, but especially for each tamaiti and their whānau.

Discussion

It was clear that across the four kura a number of essential understandings from within a Māori world view, and embedded in te reo Māori and the metaphors and understandings of Māori, had emerged (Berryman, Glynn, Togo, & McDonald, 2004). Many parents talked about the challenges they had faced with their children at other schools, and how their children's standing in education had been given a new lease of life in these kura. Students with special education needs were perceived as being able to be supported, not only by the kura but also by their whānau and wider communities. These students were perceived as able to be included. At each kura, all members took collective, whānau-like responsibility for initiating collaborative actions to support all students. Education and special education were viewed in a holistic

manner that was grounded upon Māori beliefs and principles. When it was deemed necessary, these practices also incorporated a Western, Pākehā perspective. These practices were found to be inclusive of all students in the kura, no matter what the circumstances were, as well as students who were yet to arrive from kōhanga reo or from mainstream primary schools. Inclusive practices also included providing ongoing support for students after they had left the kura to attend wharekura or any other secondary schools.

The students themselves, their whānau and their educators all brought their own expertise, both in defining the problem and also in developing solutions. Problems therefore generated collaborative, culturally appropriate and interdependent responses. Although people from these kura faced many different challenges, their collective approach to problem solving led to more innovative and effective outcomes.

Implications for working with Māori

There are four important trends internationally in the context of special education.

1. Schools are having to respond to challenges from students of increasing diversity.
2. Inclusive education practices are requiring an increasing proportion of these students to be educated in regular education settings.
3. There is a major shift in locating the causes of (and therefore the responses to) students' learning and behavioural difficulties away from the students themselves, their families and their communities, and towards the day-to-day relationships and interactions they experience in the learning contexts in which they find themselves.
4. However, while inclusive education approaches avoid characterising and labelling students on the basis of deficits and difficulties, governments and school systems still make funding and support available under these types of criteria. The rhetoric leans towards inclusion, but the resourcing remains tied to labelled categories.

In addition, the research literature on special education is strangely silent on the issue of culture and its impact on inclusion. Māori traditionally have a culture that is based on inclusion, and a collective

approach to learning and teaching that values the contribution of all. In this way collective responsibility can be taken for meeting intellectual, physical and spiritual needs and the need to be connected and included within whānau. This research strongly suggests that many Māori communities already have effective solutions for assessing and meeting the needs of their own children, and that they also have the capacity to find new solutions as required. Within a model of relational care and connectedness, power sharing and collaboration in these kura were largely able to determine who would participate and how.

This research suggests that these practices for Māori are more likely to result in the goals Durie (2001, 2004) defined for success in education for Māori: all Māori students are able to live as Māori, to participate actively as citizens of the world, and to have good levels of health and a high standard of living. By listening to these communities rather than telling, we may all stand to benefit more.

Study questions

1. How might understandings from a Māori world view both support yet also confuse some educators? What advice would you give? What questions would you pose?
2. These kura, their whānau members and communities were seen as inextricably inter-related. What have you learnt from this theorising? What do you still want to know?
3. Why do you think one of the implications of this chapter is to listen to these communities rather than tell? What might lie behind this?

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