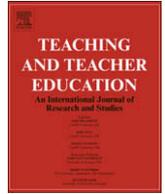




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Te Kotahitanga: Addressing educational disparities facing Māori students in New Zealand

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ABSTRACT

The major challenges facing education in New Zealand today are the continuing social, economic and political disparities within our nation, primarily between the descendants of the European colonisers and the Indigenous Māori people. These disparities are also reflected in educational outcomes. In this paper, an Indigenous Māori Peoples' solution to the problems of educational disparities is detailed. Te Kotahitanga is a research and professional development project that seeks to improve the educational achievement of Māori students in mainstream secondary schools. Students 'voices' were used to inform the development of the project in a variety of ways: firstly to identify various discursive positions related to Māori student learning; secondly, to develop professional development activities, and thirdly, to create an Effective Teaching Profile. The paper concludes by identifying how implementing the Effective Teaching Profile addresses educational disparities.

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This then is the great humanistic and historical task of the oppressed: to liberate themselves and their oppressors as well. The oppressors, who oppress, exploit and rape by virtue of their power, cannot find in this power the strength to liberate either the oppressed or themselves. Only power that springs from the weakness of the oppressed will be sufficiently strong to free both.

Paolo Freire: *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1972, p. 21)

1. Introduction: the current educational context

The major challenges facing education in New Zealand today are the continuing social, economic and political disparities within our nation, primarily between the descendants of the European colonisers (Pakeha) and the Indigenous Māori people. Māori have higher levels of unemployment, are more likely to be employed in low paying employment, have much higher levels of incarceration, illness and poverty than do the rest of the population and are

generally under-represented in the positive social and economic indicators of the society. These disparities are also reflected at all levels of the education system.¹

In comparison to majority culture students (in New Zealand these students are primarily of European descent): the overall academic achievement levels of Māori students is low; their rate of suspension from school is three times higher; they are over-represented in special education programmes for behavioral issues; enrol in pre-school programs in lower proportions than other groups; tend to be over-represented in low stream education classes; are more likely than other students to be found in vocational curriculum streams; leave school earlier with less formal qualifications and enrol in tertiary education

¹ A similar pattern is to be found in the United States where Villegas and Lucas (2002) identify, "[h]istorically, members of economically poor and minority groups have not succeeded in schools at rates comparable to those of their white, middle-class, standard English-speaking peers." (p. xi). In Europe, the migrations of people from previous colonies with their different age structures, and birth rates has created a similar pattern of diversity and disparity among the school-age population where now sizable groups of ethnic and religious minorities are evident in most towns and cities.

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in lower proportions² (Hood, 2007; Ministry of Education, 2006).

Despite the choice provided by Māori medium education in New Zealand, and decades of educational reforms and policies such as Multiculturalism and Biculturalism that have sought to address these educational disparities, for the large proportion of Māori students (over 90%; Ministry of Education, 2002) who attend mainstream schools, there has been little if any shift in these disparities since they were first statistically identified over 40 years ago (Hunn, 1960).

What precludes significant advancement being made in addressing these educational disparities is that current educational policies and practices were developed and continue to be developed within a framework of neo/colonialism and as a result continue to serve the interests of a mono-cultural elite. In Scheurich and Young's (1997) terms, current policies and practices in mainstream contexts are based upon and are created within a context of epistemological racism, that is, racism that is embedded in the very fundamental cornerstone principles of the dominant culture. In this sense, our current range of policies and practices:

arrive out of the social history and culture of the dominant race,... these epistemologies logically reflect and reinforce that social history and the controlling position of that racial group (while excluding the epistemologies of other races/cultures), and that this has negative results for people of color in general. (p. 13)

So, rather than continuing to look to the majority culture for solutions, as Freire (1972) identified above, perhaps the answers to Māori educational achievement and disparities actually lie elsewhere, in the sense-making and knowledge-generating processes of the culture the system marginalises. To date, the imposition of a model of change from outside of the experiences, understandings and aspirations of the community group has failed to acknowledge *mātauranga Māori* (Māori ways of knowing) (G. Smith, 1997) and in Irwin's (1992) terms "has left it marginalized and in a precarious state" (p. 10). Further, as has been identified in G. Smith (2002), and Bishop (2005), locating solutions within Māori cultural ways of knowing does actually offer workable solutions to what have long been seen as seemingly immutable problems.

With this problem in mind, we now turn to how educators might address this situation, within essentially non-structurally modified secondary schools. This analysis is based on a case study of an educational reform project undertaken in New Zealand.

2. Using student voice to develop an educational reform

In this paper, an Indigenous Peoples' solution to the problems of educational disparities is detailed. *Te Kotahitanga: Improving the Educational Achievement of Māori students in Mainstream Schools* (Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh, & Teddy, 2007; Bishop, Berryman, Tiakiwai, & Richardson, 2003), is a kaupapa Māori (Bishop, 2005; L. Smith, 1999) research/professional development project that aims to improve the educational achievement of Māori students through operationalizing Māori people's cultural aspirations for self-determination within non-dominating relations of interdependence through developing classroom relations and interactions and in-school institutions for this purpose.

² 6.9% of Māori boys and 11.5% of Māori girls achieve university entrance compared to 28.9% and 39% for their non-Māori counterparts; approx 50% of Māori students leave school without any qualifications (compared to 21%); 8% of Māori boys and 13% of Māori girls left school in 2005 with a level 3 qualification compared to 28 and 49% of their non-Māori counterparts; their retention rate to age 17 is 60% of non-Māori their rate of suspension from school is three to five times higher depending on gender; and they leave school earlier with less formal qualifications (41% Māori boys, 39% Māori girls cf. 18% and 11% respectively left school before age 16) (All data is for 2005). (Hood, 2007).

The project commenced in 2001, seeking to address the self-determination of Māori secondary school students by talking with them (and other participants in their education: families, principals and teachers) about their experiences of what is involved in limiting and/or improving Māori students' educational achievement. The first activity undertaken was a sequence of in-depth, semi-structured interviews as conversations with 70 Māori students about their classroom experiences and the meanings they made of these experiences. This approach was chosen so as to minimize the imposition of the researchers own sense-making and theorizing on the experiences and explanations of the interview participants (Bishop, 1996; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Heshusius, 1994). This process of collaborative storying was undertaken with engaged and non-engaged Māori students (as defined by their schools) in five non-structurally modified mainstream, English-medium, secondary schools. These stories were also complemented by the gathering of stories of experience and meaning from their *whānau* (families) (50), their principals (5), and their teachers (80, 23% of the staff in the 5 schools). From this activity a series of narratives of experience were developed (Bishop & Berryman, 2006).

Commencing a project by talking with students is not usual, but it can be very useful. From a detailed analysis of the literature, Cook-Sather (2002) identified that such authorising of students' experiences and understandings can directly improve educational practice in that when teachers listen to and learn from students, they can begin to see the world from the perspective of those students. This in turn can help teachers make what they teach more accessible to students. These actions can also contribute to the conceptualisation of teaching, learning, and the ways we study as being more collaborative processes. Further, students can feel empowered when they are taken seriously and attended to as knowledgeable participants in learning conversations, and they can be motivated to participate constructively in their education. In addition, she further identified that authorising students' perspectives is a major way of addressing power imbalances in classrooms in order for students' voices to have legitimacy in the learning setting. In short, as Cook-Sather (2002) states "authorising student perspectives is essential because of the various ways that it can improve educational practice, re-inform existing conversations about educational reform, and point to the discussions and reform effects yet to be undertaken" (p. 3).

2.1. The uses of the narratives

The narratives of experience were used in the project in three main ways. First they were used to identify a variety of discursive positions pertaining to Māori student achievement and the potential impact of these positions on Māori student learning. The analysis of these narratives³ showed that while the most common discursive positions taken by Māori students, their families and

³ A critical reading of the narratives identified that there were three main discourses within which the participant groups positioned themselves when identifying and explaining both positive and negative influences on Māori students' educational achievement. There was the discourse of the child and their home, which included those influences that were to be found outside of the school and the classroom. There was the discourse of structure and systems or those influences outside of the classroom, but pertaining to the school itself and or the wider education system. Thirdly there was the discourse of relationships and classroom interaction patterns, which included all those influences that were identified as being within the classroom. These narratives were analysed by coding the frequency of unit ideas that illustrated each discourse (see Bishop et al., 2003, 2007). The coding was undertaken by a small number of the research team who were both familiar with the process of collaborative storying and who had developed a common agreement as to what constituted idea units, themes, sub-themes and more importantly how participants positioned themselves in relation to the various discourses.

their school principals was that which placed classroom caring and learning relationships at the centre of educational achievement, among teachers, the most pervasive explanation for the under achievement of Māori students was that they are the victims of pathological lifestyles that hinder their chances of benefiting from schooling. Our subsequent analysis of detailed classroom observations over three time periods (Bishop et al., 2007, 2003) demonstrated that the dominance of this deficit theorizing by teachers was matched by the predominance of pathologizing classroom practices such as transmission teaching, remedial programs and behavior modification programs. Such programs perpetuate teachers already low expectations of Māori students ability and continue their blaming of someone or something else outside of their area of influence. As a result they feel that they have very little responsibility for student's educational outcomes or agency. The main consequence of such deficit theorising for the quality of teachers' relationships with Māori students and for classroom interactions is that teachers tend to have fatalistic attitudes in the face of relational and systemic imponderables (see Gay, 2000; Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1997; Nieto, 2000; Shields, Bishop, & Mazawi, 2005; Sleeter, 2005; Wagstaff & Fusarelli, 1995). This in turn creates a downward spiralling, self-fulfilling prophecy of Māori student under achievement and failure.

Second, the narratives were used in the professional development part of the project to provide teachers with a vicarious means of understanding how students experienced schooling in ways that they might not otherwise have access to. This experience provided teachers with a means of critically reflecting upon their own discursive positioning and the impact this might have upon their own students' learning. In effect then, the project was based on the notion that when teachers are able to engage in critical reflection about the images they have of marginalized students and the resultant relationships they have with these students, they are more likely to be able to engage in power-sharing practices. This means that teachers who espouse and enact power-sharing theories of practice will better enable previously marginalized students to more successfully participate and engage in educational systems on their own culturally constituted terms. Of course, such theories of practice need to be supported through the provision of professional learning opportunities wherein teachers are able to create culturally appropriate and responsive contexts for learning in their classrooms in a manner where Māori students are able to interact with teachers and others in ways that legitimizes who they are and how they make sense of the world (Gay, 2000; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). It is our position that positive, inclusive relationships and interactions will lead to improved student engagement in learning. Numerous studies (Applebee, 1996; Bruner, 1996; Fisher et al., 1981, Widdowson, Dixon, & Moore, 1996), identify that improving student engagement is a necessary condition for improving educational achievement. Further, improved student on-task engagement has been identified as a moderate to good predictor of long-term student achievement (Fisher et al., 1981; Gage & Berliner, 1992; Widdowson et al., 1996; Ysseldyke & Christenson, 1998)

Third, the narratives of experience of the Māori students resonated not only with the conversations with their families, their principals, and some of their teachers, but also with the research of others (G. Smith, 1997; Hawk & Hill, 2000), our own research into effective teaching in Māori medium settings (Bishop, Berryman, & Richardson, 2001), our theoretical position of kaupapa Māori research (Bishop, 2005; L. Smith, 1999), and an examination of appropriate Māori cultural metaphors (Bishop et al., 2007). From this compilation, we suggested that educators need to create learning contexts within their classrooms; where

power is shared between self-determining individuals within non-dominating relations of interdependence; where culture counts; where learning is interactive, dialogic and spirals; where participants are connected to one another through the establishment of a common vision for what constitutes excellence in educational outcomes. This pattern is covered by what Gay (2000) and Villegas and Lucas (2002) identify in their concept of culturally responsive teaching, and Sidorkin (2002) and Cummins (1995) in their concept of a pedagogy of relations. The merging of these concepts is a useful means of describing the pattern identified from this set of Māori cultural metaphors as a Culturally Responsive Pedagogy of Relations, the practical representation of which we termed the Effective Teaching Profile (ETP), (see Fig. 1), (Bishop et al., 2007, 2003). Fundamental to the ETP is teachers' understanding the need to explicitly reject deficit theorising as a means of explaining Māori students' educational achievement levels, and their taking an agentic position in their theorizing about their practice; that is, practitioners expressing their professional commitment and responsibility to bringing about change in Māori students' educational achievement by accepting professional responsibility for the learning of their students. These two central understandings are then manifested in these teachers' classrooms where the teachers demonstrate on a daily basis that they care for the students as Māori; they have high expectations of the learning for students; they are able to manage their classrooms so as to promote learning; they are able to engage in a range of discursive learning interactions with students or facilitate students to engage with others in these ways; they know a range of strategies that can facilitate learning interactions; they promote, monitor and reflect upon student learning outcomes that in turn lead to changes in teachers' practice that will bring about improvements in Māori student achievement, and teachers share this knowledge with their students.

3. The outcomes of the project

The third phase of the research and professional development program was implemented in 12 schools with 422 teachers in 2004 and 2005 over a full range of curriculum subjects. The professional development intervention consisted of five separate components: an initial induction workshop, a series of structured classroom observations and feedback sessions, a series of collaborative, problem-solving sessions based on evidence of student outcomes, and specific shadow-coaching sessions (Bishop et al., 2007).

Alongside the professional development a number of research activities were conducted to identify what happened when the Effective Teaching Profile (ETP) was implemented in classrooms in public secondary schools. Because of the complex nature of this exercise, we used a triangulation mixed methods approach (Creswell, 2005) to gather and analyse qualitative and quantitative data from a range of instruments and measures. As a result we have multiple indicators (Kim & Sunderman, 2005) that form the basis of our investigation.

From the *student interviews*⁴ we learned that, when Māori students have good relationships with their teachers, they are able to thrive at school.

I used to wag a lot of classes and stuff like that, but [now] I found that you come to school, and be your self but learn at the same time too, and like I have achieved heaps, like I got my first merit in maths and my first excellence in cooking and I achieved a merit in science.

⁴ Italics are used in the text to indicate the research method used.

Effective teachers of Māori students create a culturally appropriate and responsive context for learning in their classroom.

In doing so they demonstrate the following understandings:

- a) they positively and vehemently reject deficit theorising as a means of explaining Māori students' educational achievement levels (and professional development projects need to ensure that this happens); and
- b) teachers know and understand how to bring about change in Māori students' educational achievement and are professionally committed to doing so (and professional development projects need to ensure that this happens);

In the following observable ways:

- 1) Manaakitanga: They care for the students as culturally-located human beings above all else. (*Mana refers to authority and ākiaki the task of urging some one to act. It refers to the task of building and nurturing a supportive and loving environment.*)
- 2) Mana motuhake: They care for the performance of their students. (*In modern times mana has taken on various meanings such as legitimation and authority and can also relate to an individual's or a group's ability to participate at the local and global level. Mana motuhake involves the development of personal or group identity and independence.*)
- 3) Whakapiringatanga: They are able to create a secure, well-managed learning environment by incorporating routine pedagogical knowledge with pedagogical imagination. (*Whakapiringatanga is a process wherein specific individual roles and responsibilities are required to achieve individual and group outcomes.*)
- 4) Wānanga: They are able to engage in effective teaching interactions with Māori students as Māori. (*As well as being known as Māori centres of learning wānanga as a learning forum involves a rich and dynamic sharing of knowledge. With this exchange of views ideas are given life and spirit through dialogue, debate and careful consideration in order to reshape and accommodate new knowledge.*)
- 5) Ako: They can use a range of strategies that promote effective teaching interactions and relationships with their learners. (*Ako means to learn as well as to teach. It refers both to the acquisition of knowledge and to the processing and imparting of knowledge. More importantly ako is a teaching-learning practice that involves teachers and students learning in an interactive dialogic relationship.*)
- 6) Kotahitanga: They promote, monitor and reflect on outcomes that in turn lead to improvements in educational achievement for Māori students. (*Kotahitanga is a collaborative response towards a commonly held vision, goal or other such purpose or outcome.*)

Fig. 1. Te Kotahitanga effective teaching profile. (Bishop et al., 2003).

I have achieved heaps since I've been in this class. I came from third form in a really low class but from my exams at the end of the year moved up into this class, her class and then I went into this class so I've been through heaps but at the end of the day I'm glad I got put in this class.

You do want to learn in her class.

She does make it a learning kind of environment though.

Especially at exam time.

It's funny too.

Yeah, yeah we laugh heaps. (School 6: Group 1, 2004)

Like in [another] class none of us get along with the teacher and none of us seem to be passing our tests. (School 7: Group 1, 2005)

You can tell he respects us, because when it comes to learning big time he's always there, if we don't understand something he doesn't talk to us like little babies, he talks to us like young adults. And you can rely on him, he's there. Like some teachers are distant to you but he's always there.

I suppose if you wanted to talk to someone you could talk to Mr H. (School 1: Group 2, 2004)

and interactions were captured by the use of the observation tool. The teachers' interviews indicated that effective⁵ Te Kotahitanga teachers have undergone a philosophical shift in the way they think about teaching and learning.

Well I went into this programme not knowing whether I was doing the right thing. But once I enrolled myself in it and went through the three day training session and had the opportunity of applying the philosophies of the programme this year, I think this is the best thing I have done for myself. Before we went into it we only knew very little about it. We were told what it was about and we were given the narratives book to read, but when I read that I was actually a bit depressed about the things some students had written and I never in my so many years of teaching experience had ever read something like this. Some of those things sort of... I mean I put myself in the students' perspective and it was really, really quite a different experience for me as a teacher to see that "is this what the student's feel?" And so I went with all these apprehensions in my mind, but two years later I tell myself this is the best thing I have

⁵ Effectiveness of teachers was determined by a triangulation process where students, project facilitators and principals were asked to identify those teachers who were most effectively implementing the Effective Teaching Profile in their classrooms.

ever done in terms of my professional development. It's just changed my whole outlook as a teacher and my relationship with my students. (Teacher 8)

I am a very experienced teacher, but I probably was very much of the thought that why are they not brought up better at home, you know? And I have really had to take a look at myself and think perhaps this is my attitude in the classroom and that I have to change that in the classroom. I actually didn't go into this willingly. I mean I am not anti-Māori at all. But I thought, what about Pākehā? (Teacher 5)

And the whole issue of deficit theorising, I can see I didn't know much about it before I came into teaching. Then when I began, I realised how it could be so easy to fall into that pattern, especially if you are tired and you have got a lot on, instead of finding the good things and emphasising them, it can be so easy to fall and look at the bad side. And it has made teaching for me and looking at the ideals of Te Kotahitanga, it has just made it a lot more I suppose magnetic. (Teacher 10)

I think the first step is just recognising that culture counts. That again as a group, on average Māori kids don't achieve at school. And it is basically saying that, yes, there are the factors explaining why. One critical factor is that we as practitioners have the influence over what goes on in the classroom. Recognising that culture counts and look at the ways of making a classroom a welcoming place for Māori kids to bring their own culture into the classroom, to engage them in tasks and activities which they are going to enjoy. (Teacher 12)

Anti-deficit thinking, agentic positioning, and the six elements of the ETP are the essential threads in this new approach to teaching. It is an approach that rests in the first instance upon a commitment by teachers to build caring and learning relationships and interactions with Māori students; in the second, for teachers to strongly believe Māori students can improve their achievement; and thirdly, their students are able to take responsibility for their learning and performance.

According to the analysis of the *Teacher Participation Survey*, Te Kotahitanga teachers reported that their understanding of and appreciation for the purpose of the project, that is, to improve Māori student achievement, and the support they receive within their schools is directly related to improving Māori students' outcomes. Analysis of data from *feedback sessions and co-construction meetings* revealed teachers are experiencing challenges along with affirmations of their emerging positionings and practices as they participate in the new institutions developed to support the implementation of the ETP in their classrooms. In addition, within these new institutions, they are being encouraged to further engage in discourses that have a focus on raising Māori students' achievement, reject or respond to deficit theorizing and are agentic. Perhaps most importantly, we are seeing *improvements in numeracy for Māori students* with teachers who have repositioned themselves discursively and *literacy gains* for all Māori students. Analysis of the stanine/percentile distribution demonstrates the greatest gains being in the lowest achieving groups.

In addition to the research into achievement undertaken by project staff, the New Zealand Qualifications Authority's statisticians demonstrated that in 2006, when the first large cohort of Te Kotahitanga students reached Year 11, the increase in the number of Māori (16.4 percentage point gains (ppg)) and Pacific Island (15.4ppg) students gaining National Certificate of Educational Attainment (NCEA), level 1 (the first level of standardized external qualifications in New Zealand) from the first 12 Te Kotahitanga schools was greater than the increase for Māori students (8.9ppg) and Pacific Islands (Pasifika) students (6.1ppg) from non-Te Kotahitanga schools (comparing 2006 results with 2005 results and

weighting for decile) (Timperley, Wilson, Barrar, & Fung, 2007). This finding indicates that teachers implementing the Effective Teaching Profile may benefit other previously marginalized students, (those whose parents are recent migrants from the Pacific Islands), as well as Māori.

On the basis that Te Kotahitanga is focused on raising the achievement of Māori students through changing teacher practice, we have adopted Elmore's (2002) model for demonstrating improvement by measuring increases in teacher practice and student performance over time. This model demonstrates improvement by measuring the quality of teacher practice and student performance on the vertical axis and time on the horizontal axis. Improvement then is shown by movement in a consistent north-easterly direction (see Fig. 2).

Data for Fig. 2 are taken from the Observation Tool, (teacher-student interactions; teacher ETP implementation rating; teacher-student relationships; group interactions; cognitive level of the lessons; Māori student engagement, and Māori student work completion); Assessment Tool for Teaching and Learning (asTTle) for numeracy; and Essential Skills Assessment (ESA) for literacy. The results for the Observation Tool and ESA were recalculated as percentages for this illustration so there was a common unit of measurement, and are shown on the left, asTTle scores are shown on the right. The positive trends indicated by these eight sets of quantitative results in relationship to each other, supported by the results of all the qualitative data analysed, clearly indicate that there is a relationship between Māori student performance and how well Te Kotahitanga teachers implement the elements of the ETP in the project teachers' classrooms.

Fig. 2 demonstrates through multiple indicators (Guskey & Sparks, 1996) that while Te Kotahitanga teachers have improved in their use of the ETP in their classrooms, their Māori students have improved in numeracy and literacy achievement, and in external, cross-curricular examinations as well. While other variables may help account for positive gains in Māori students' achievement, this model demonstrates that Te Kotahitanga teachers, across multiple schools, have built their knowledge, skills, and capacities in their classrooms through the implementation of the ETP. Simultaneously their Māori students have experienced continuous improvement in numeracy and literacy performance in this third phase of the project.

4. Summary

4.1. Anti-deficit thinking

Challenging deficit theorizing and promoting agentic positioning by teachers is fundamental to this project, and we can see evidence of such thinking in the voices of the teachers we interviewed in 2005, from the *Teacher Participation Survey* completed by 236 teachers and from the taped feedback sessions and co-construction meetings.

It has helped me to develop much better learning relationships with the kids as a result, which has got to be a huge and tremendous positive. Not just from their point of view but certainly from mine as a teacher. It has made my life a lot easier you know long-term, medium to long-term it should make my life a lot easier and gave me a better understanding of what I need to do and where I need to go and where my students need to be. (Teacher No 8).

Last year I found a lot of students difficult and I found myself dishing out detentions and punishments left, right and centre. And this year I have found that through a process of negotiation with students, laying down criteria to start with, expectations, being more open with students and even talking to the students, making

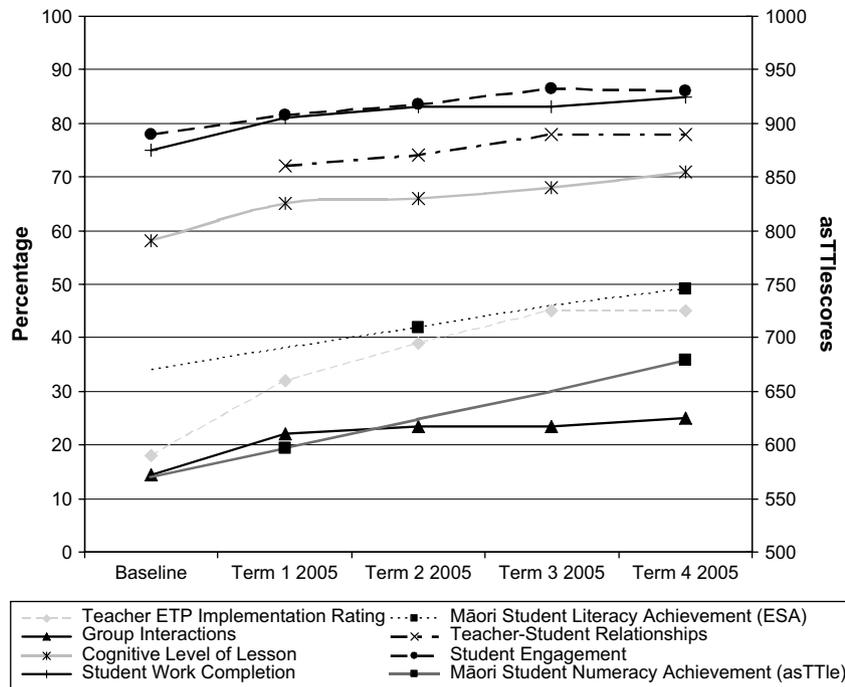


Fig. 2. Improvement in teacher practice and student performance during phase 3 of Te Kotahitanga (Bishop et al., 2007).

sure you welcome them as they come in and making sure you say goodbye. You know the odd question slipped in, “how is it going? What did you do over the holidays? Did you have a good weekend?” you know things like that. It has made my relationship with them infinitely more positive with them, and a lot better as the year has gone on. (Teacher No 9).

It is important to reflect upon your positioning and go in with your eyes open. And say, why am I doing this? First, realizing “Hey, I can be an agent of change. I can control the things that I can control.” Second, knowing “Hey, Rome wasn’t built in a day, and this project takes time.” Finally, enjoy the process, and be open to the process. (Teacher No 15).

These data indicate that teachers believed that they have a high level of understanding about the negative effects of deficit thinking about Māori students and are applying that knowledge in their teaching practice. They also believed they have a high level of understanding of the importance of relating to Māori students from an agentic position and in ensuring that their teaching practices reflect an agentic attitude towards these target students.

The analysis of student interviews provided us with a lens to teachers’ thinking and understandings. As Bruner (1996) and Elbaz (1983, 1988) explain, teaching occurs, progress is decided and practices are modified on the basis of such thinking; that is, deficit thinking limits student progress, agentic thinking promotes student learning. Māori students see this in the actions of their teachers, how they relate to and interact with them in their classroom, often more clearly than teachers do. It is very clear from this evidence that by taking an agentic position, teachers are given the power to reject deficit thinking and its associated pathologizing practices. On the other hand, it further allows them to use the power of their own agency to see, in association with this discursive positioning, wonderful changes in Māori students’ behavior, participation, engagement, and achievement in their classroom.

As we identified (Bishop et al., 2003), the majority of teachers we spoke to at that time were positioned in discourses that limited their agency and efficacy, therefore the project needed to promote

discursive repositioning as its first priority. This approach is supported by Mazarno, Zaffron, Zraik, Robbins, and Yoon (2005), who have identified that most educational innovations do not address the “existing framework of perceptions and beliefs, or paradigm, as part of the change process – an ontological approach” (p. 162), but rather, assume “that innovation is assimilated into existing beliefs and perceptions” (p. 162). They go on to suggest that reforms that are more likely to succeed are those that are fundamentally ontological in nature, providing participants with an “experience of their paradigms as constructed realities, and an experience of consciousness other than the ‘I’ embedded in their paradigms” (p. 162).

4.2. The importance of relationships

Just as the Māori students, their whānau (families), principals, and some of their teachers had stated in 2001 (Bishop & Berryman, 2006), Māori students in effective teachers classrooms in 2004 and 2005 spoke at length about the importance of whakawhānaungatanga and whānaungatanga; that is, the process of establishing relationships and the quality of the relationships that are established (Bishop et al., 2007). Indeed, they focused very heavily on these qualities in their interviews. Similarly, the teachers who positioned themselves within the relational discourse in 2001 and, again those teachers interviewed in 2005, emphasised the importance of relationships at all levels of the project; within the classroom, between facilitators and themselves, and also between themselves and their management, parents and community members.

Sidorkin (2002) suggests that these people have something very valuable to offer to mainstream education because, to his understanding, relations ontologically precede all else in education. Hattie (2003), using reading test results prepared as norms for the asTTle formative assessment programme, identified that achievement differences between Māori and Pākehā remained constant regardless of whether the students attended a high or low decile

school. Hattie (2003) concluded from this information that it is not socio-economic differences that have the greatest impact upon Māori student achievement. Instead, he suggests that “the evidence is pointing more to the relationships between teachers and Māori students as the major issue – it is a matter of cultural relationships not socio-economic resources – as these differences occur at ALL levels of socio-economic status” (p. 7).

Similarly Alton-Lee (2003), citing the 2000 PISA study, showed that New Zealand literacy achievement differs more markedly within schools than between schools, which is not what we would expect if the socio-economic argument were to hold. Her analysis also indicates that the quality of classroom relations and interactions within schools has more to do with the creation of educational disparities than the decile ranking of the schools.

This finding means that, while we cannot ignore the impact of structural impediments, such as socially constructed impoverishment, we cannot allow this analysis to disempower teachers from action. Hattie (2003) and Alton-Lee (2003) are clear that it is teachers who have the potential and ability to change the educational outcomes of Māori students. So to do Phillips, McNaughton, and MacDonald (2001), who, in a study that indicated how Māori and Pasifika new entrant students' reading scores could be improved by addressing teachers' expectations of their learning, found that “low rates of progress in literacy are neither inevitable nor unchangeable in low decile schools. Educators working in these environments can help bring children up to speed – to expected levels of achievement” (p. 10).

Or as Ryan (1976) suggested 30 years ago:

We are dealing, it would seem, not so much with culturally deprived children as with culturally deprived schools. And the task to be accomplished is not to revise, and amend, and repair deficient children, but to alter and transform the atmosphere and operations of the schools to which we commit these children. Only by changing the nature of the educational experience can we change the product. To continue to define the difficulty as inherent in the raw material, the children – is plainly to blame the victim and to acquiesce in the continuation of educational inequality (pp. 61–2).

Therefore, in Ryan's terms, the professional development cycle of Te Kotahitanga, the observations and feedback sessions, the co-construction meetings and the shadow-coaching are all designed to change the nature of the “educational experience.”

4.3. Teacher–student interactions

A number of changes have been observed taking place in teacher–student interactions as a result of the professional development programme.

4.3.1. Quantitative changes

A number of changes occur when teachers are assisted to undertake a change from traditional, transmission type classrooms to more interactive, discursive classrooms. One of the first changes to be evident is quantitative, that is, the increase in the number and range of teacher–student interactions as the shift from a traditional classroom takes place. These changes identify how teachers move from a concentration on instruction (for product learning) monitoring, and behavioral feedback, to a wider range of interactions. These interactions include some instruction (a mixture of process and transmission), the monitoring of processes and uptake, the recognition of appropriate student behavior and in addition, the teachers increasingly acknowledge students' prior learning and respond to student-initiated interactions by giving academic feedback and

feed-forward. They also co-construct the content and process of learning with students as co-learners. Further, as teachers move towards a more discursive classroom, they spend less time interacting with the whole class and more time with individuals and/or groups.

4.3.2. Qualitative changes

Qualitative changes also take place with this shift from traditional to discursive classrooms and when the nature of classroom relations and interactions changes. For example, instruction often changes from being transmission of product/content focused to more process orientated. Instruction in a discursive classroom might consist of how to conduct a cooperative learning activity or it might be a focused mini-lecture to provide some specific student-identified need. Monitoring also changes from testing for compliance, content reception or understanding of instructions to monitoring of learning processes, which again can be subdivided into monitoring of facilitated learning experiences or the monitoring that occurs during co-construction sessions. In addition in the traditional classroom, feedback is provided on behavior as much as it is provided on academic initiatives, and both forms of feedback are limited. In addition, when the classes are at their most traditional, teachers will often provide behavioral feedback, “good boy, good girl” to an inquiry or an answer from a student that should receive an academic response. As the classes become more discursive, academic feedback increases markedly and behavioral feedback diminishes.

4.4. The dominant pattern of teacher–student interactions

The similarity between the baseline classroom interaction patterns of the first and second cohort from the 12 schools and the fact that these patterns were observed in both Phases 1 and 2 of Te Kotahitanga (Bishop et al., 2003; Bishop, Berryman, Powell, & Teddy, 2005) would tend to confirm our suggestion that the dominant pattern of teacher–student interactions in secondary schools is traditional, where the teacher is an active transmitter of pre-determined knowledge and the students are the receivers. One implication of this finding is that without intervention, this pattern is likely to remain dominant with its consequent impact upon the achievement of Māori students because this is precisely the pattern that Māori students identified in the original narratives as causing problems for their learning. Frustration among the students with this approach often resulted in resistance, which manifests itself in poor behavior, with consequent behavioral intervention strategies being employed by teachers. This, in turn leads to more disruption and destroys the potential for learning relationships to develop. These types of classroom create few opportunities for teachers to support students' learning by providing positive feedback and feed-forward based on informal and formal formative assessment activities. The main aim remains one of “getting through the syllabus” and controlling students' resistant behavior, rather than engaging in positive learning relationships with them. Such interaction patterns also maintain control over what constitutes appropriate and “official” knowledge and ways of learning in the classroom in the hands of the teacher. This has the effect of denying Māori students opportunities to bring their own prior cultural knowledge to the classroom “conversation”. This pattern also supports and maintains the dominant deficit discourse. Any problems that Māori students have with learning, or any resistance they offer (such as poor behavior or absenteeism), is seen as a manifestation of their poor attitudes and/or low parental aspirations rather than a manifestation of inappropriate learning relationships.

5. Conclusion

Operationalising a Culturally Responsive Pedagogy of Relations involves implementing the Effective Teaching Profile (ETP). Such a profile creates a learning context that is responsive to the culture of the child and means that learners can bring who they are to the classroom in complete safety and where their knowledge is acceptable and legitimate.

Such a context for learning stands in contrast to the traditional classroom where the culture of the teacher is given central focus and has the power to define what constitutes appropriate and acceptable knowledge, approaches to learning, understandings and sense-making processes. This model suggests that when the learner's own culture is central to their learning activities, they are able to make meaning of new information and ideas by building on their own prior cultural experiences and understandings. The visible culture of the child need not necessarily be present but may well become present as a result of their co-constructing learning experience with their teachers. Such collaborative efforts address the potential imposition of the teacher displaying cultural iconography of their own choice. Such contexts for learning also allows learners to critically reflect on their own learning, how they might learn better and more effectively and ensures greater balance in the power relationships of learning by modelling this approach in class. In effect therefore, raising expectations of their own learning and how they might enhance and achieve these expectations engages students actively and holistically and in real-life (or as close to) problem-sharing and questioning and uses these questions as catalysts for ongoing study. This engagement can be monitored as an indicator of potential long-term achievement. This shift from traditional classrooms is important because traditional classroom interaction patterns do not allow teachers to create learning contexts where the culture of the child can be present but rather assumes cultural homogeneity (Villegas & Lucas, 2002), which in reality is cultural hegemony (Gay, 2000). Discursive classrooms have the potential to respond to Māori students and their parents desires to "be Māori"; desires that were made very clear in their narratives of experience (Bishop & Berryman, 2006).

And I think that she was interested in the culture as well. Yeah, and its genuine interest not just an act. (School 10: Group 1, 2004)

She treats us all the same.

Just the way she talks.

She's not racist.

She's really positive towards Māori students.

But she treats us all the same. (School 3: Group 3, 2005)

And she doesn't expect us to be someone else, she lets us be us. (School 8: Group 3, 2005)

However it must be stressed that fundamental to the development of discursive classrooms that include Māori students is the understanding that the deficit theorising by teachers must be challenged. Deficit theorising will not be addressed unless there are more effective partnerships between Māori students and their teachers within the classrooms of mainstream schools and, in turn, between teachers and those parenting Māori students. Once these aspects are addressed, the culture of the child can be brought to the learning context with all the power that has been hidden for so long.

The metaphors that Te Kotahitanga draws upon are holistic and flexible and able to be understood within the cultural contexts of the lives of the young people of diverse backgrounds who attend modern schools today. Teaching and learning strategies which flow from these metaphors are flexible and allow the diverse voices of young people primacy and promote dialogue, communication and

learning with others. In such a pedagogy, the participants in the learning interactions become involved in the process of collaboration, in the process of mutual story-telling and re-storying, so that a relationship can emerge in which both stories are heard or indeed is a process where a new story is created by all the participants. Such a pedagogy addresses Māori people's concerns about current pedagogic practices being fundamentally mono-cultural and epistemologically racist. This new pedagogy recognises that all people who are involved in the learning and teaching process are participants who have meaningful experiences, valid concerns, and legitimate questions.

This model constitutes the classroom as a place where young people's sense-making processes are incorporated and enhanced, where as the existing knowledge's of young people are often seen as 'acceptable' and 'official', in such a way that their stories provide the learning base from where they can branch out into new fields of knowledge through structured interactions with significant others. In this process the teacher interacts with students in such a way (storying and re-storying) that new knowledge is co-created. Such a classroom will generate totally different interaction patterns and educational outcomes from a classroom where knowledge is seen as something that the teacher makes sense of and then passes onto students and will be conducted within and through a pedagogy of relations, wherein self-determining individuals interact with one another within non-dominating relations of interdependence.

Te Kotahitanga began in 2001 in a small way, and now at the beginning of 2009, as we move into our sixth year with our original 12 secondary schools, is beginning to show significant improvements in Māori student engagement with learning and achievement. Such an approach, of course, is not without its detractors, coming as it does from a once dominated culture. Nevertheless, one of the main messages and challenges here for mainstream educators is, as Freire (1972) identified above, that the answers to Māori educational achievement and disparities do not lie in the mainstream, for given the experiences of the last 150 years, mainstream practices and theories have kept Māori in a subordinate position, while at the same time creating a discourse that pathologized and marginalized Māori peoples' lived experiences.

The counter-narrative that is kaupapa Māori demonstrates that the means of addressing the seemingly immutable educational disparities that plague Māori students in mainstream schools actually lies elsewhere than in mainstream education. The answers lie in the sense-making and knowledge-generating processes of the culture the dominant system has sought to marginalize for so long. The power of counter-narratives such as kaupapa Māori, which has grown out of Māori resistance to the dominance of majority culture aspirations on our lives (Bishop, 1996; G. Smith, 1997; L. Smith, 1999), is such that alternative pedagogies that are both appropriate and responsive, can be developed out of the cultural sense-making processes of people previously marginalized by the dominance of colonial and neo-colonial education relations of power. Such pedagogies can create learning contexts for previously pathologized and marginalized students in ways that allow them to participate in education on their terms, to be themselves and to achieve as Māori as well as being, in Durie's (2001) words, "citizens of the world."

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