

SABBATICAL LEAVE REPORT TERM 3, 2007

BY D.G. RANDELL

I wish to begin by thanking all the relevant authorities for granting me this sabbatical. It was greatly appreciated as it was the first ever extended break in 19 years of being a Principal.

The time afforded me the opportunity to acquire new and relevant information relating to my role, the time to reflect on my practice and the opportunity to enjoy some holiday time with my wife.

My time in England was spent participating in the World Gifted and Talented Conference at Warwick University. One of my aims over the last seven years has been to secure a well resourced and well informed programme for the gifted and talented students operating to 'best practice pedagogy'. These students are not gifted / talented 'only on Friday afternoon' – all staff must fully understand and practice all relevant techniques because they will never get it right unless they understand. I have supported my staff to go to past New Zealand and World Gifted and Talented conferences and this year chose to become involved myself. With my support, staff from Otumoetai College presented two papers and it was important for them that I was present and I greatly appreciated the fact that I was able to be there. Thank you.

The papers generated significant interest and the range of other papers I attended were very informative. I include the papers as an attachment to this report and as you will read they are the story of the development of the Gifted and Talented programme at Otumoetai College. There is still room for growth and my staff and I are now planning to grow 'putting Maori perspectives of giftedness into practice' and look to the next World Gifted and Talented conference in Canada in 2009 when we plan to take 2 Maori students from the class to speak the student voice of progressing our journey. The future of Aotearoa / New Zealand depends on how well this nation advances Maori giftedness.

Another interesting aspect of the conference was the establishment of a Scholarship funded from an auction of items donated by conference participants. Otumoetai College supplied a Maori carving and the item raised the largest donation to the Scholarship.

On leaving England and after one night in Paris, I travelled to Germany where in Hanover and Berlin I spent time investigating the German education system and in particular reviewing the process of how the German education system approaches 'time out' for students who chose to spend six months or a year in the education system of another country – in particular New Zealand.

I was particularly interested in the functioning of an 'education' system with a federation. The German education is based on State sovereignty. Every State (*Länder*) acts autonomously regarding administration of the education system. The *Länder* work together in the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the *Länder*. The Conference of Ministers was established by an agreement among the *Länder* and deals with cultural and educational issues of supraregional significance with a view to reaching a joint position and attending to matters of common interest.

An agreement between the *Länder* guarantees a uniform fundamental structure of the school system in Germany. Among other things, the agreement covers the beginning and duration of full-time compulsory education, the dates for the start and end of the school year, the duration of school holidays, the designation and organisation of the various types of educational institutions, the basic guarantee that pupils can transfer from one school type to another if certain preconditions are fulfilled, the beginning of foreign language courses and the sequence in which languages are learned, the recognition of leaving certificates and teaching qualifications, and the description of the marking system used for school reports and teacher training examinations.

The majority of the German counties (Bundesländer) are going to reduce the lengths of upper secondary schooling at *Gymnasiums* from 13 to 12 total schooling years. (Other counties had introduced a total of 12 schooling years in 1990 already.)

The change in the education system will be completed by 2010/2011. At the moment (meaning as of school year 2007/2008 which starts in August/September 07), students from grade 9 (aged 15) downwards are now studying in the new system.

14 out of 16 States have introduced central exams to finish upper secondary education at *Gymnasiums* (A-level - similar to NCEA). This means that each school within one State has exactly the same exams on the same day.

The last years of upper secondary education (*Gymnasiums*) covers school years 11-13 (and soon only 11-12) and are usually subdivided into a two-year qualification phase. Students can choose basic and intensified courses. Basic courses (usually two to three teaching hours a week) are designed to ensure that all pupils acquire a broad general education; intensified courses (five to six teaching hours a week) are designed to offer additional, intensified knowledge and serve as an in-depth introduction to academic study.

Within certain requirements for individual subjects or subject groups, pupils have considerable opportunity to make an individual decision concerning what topics to concentrate on. Related school subjects are grouped together into three main areas:

- language, literature and arts;
- social sciences;
- mathematics, natural sciences and technology.

Each of these three subject areas must be represented in the school record of each pupil up until the end of the upper secondary level of the *Gymnasium* and in the final examination. This pattern, I noted from reading, is increasingly happening around the world and New Zealand now seriously needs to review its senior secondary curriculum and the regulations that govern such. Religious education and sport are usually added to the compulsory subjects. German, a foreign language and mathematics must always be taken throughout the qualification period, and the results achieved must be taken into account in the school leaving certificate. To a limited extent, these three subject areas can be replaced by courses with related contents.

In school years 11-13 (11-12) performance is assessed using a points system, which in turn corresponds to the conventional six-mark scale.

Mark 1 corresponds to 15/14/13 points, depending on the trend of marks (1+, 1, 1-).

Mark 2 corresponds to 12/11/10 points, depending on the trend of marks.

Mark 3 corresponds to 9/8/7 points, depending on the trend of marks.

Mark 4 corresponds to 6/5/4 points, depending on the trend of marks.

Mark 5 corresponds to 3/2/1 points, depending on the trend of marks.

Mark 6 corresponds to 0 points.

(It is interesting to note that New Zealand's NCEA would correspond to Mark 1 → Mark 4)

The upper level of the *Gymnasium* ends with the Abitur examination. Candidates are examined in at least four subjects, namely the two intensified ones and another in which they take written and, in some cases, oral examinations, as well as a fourth subject which is examined only orally. The employment of staff for the oral examination is intensive.

In regard to students travelling to New Zealand for a 6 month or year long study one effect of the change to the structure of German education system will most likely be that the time of going abroad during secondary studies will shift. German students who want to study abroad for 6 or more months will probably choose to leave during grade 9 and 10 instead of grade 11 which has been the current norm. Grade 11 and 12 will be crucial years in terms of preparation for the graduation in the new system. Students will also probably choose to stay for 6 months rather than for 12 which used to be very common for German students. The time to spend abroad would likely be from July/August to December/January. In the past most Germans (up to 30) have attended Otumoetai College for one year.

Each ministry of education of the German counties has put legislations in place to continue enabling school time abroad. Some ministries of education have confirmed to support a full year abroad in grade 9 or 10 enabling the student to continue schooling in his/her running grade after returning. Some ministries of education also enable students to go abroad for 6 months during grade 11 and continue in the same grade after returning. However, a few ministries of education clearly said that if a student visits a school abroad during grade 10 he/she MUST repeat the class after returning to his home school in Germany. The fact that students might need to repeat the year is not favoured by the majority of German students. This is why I believe that most students will probably cut down their time abroad from 12 to 9 or 6 months.

The general demand of going abroad is not likely to drop though. School time abroad is still seen as very advantageous - not only by parents, but also by teachers. Teachers are very supportive and encourage students to go abroad.

Students who are planning to go abroad should definitely talk to the principal of their home school beforehand to see what is required. Requirements are, for example, that the student should try to study the same topics at the same level in compulsory subjects that are taught at his/her home school while he/she is away. The ministries of education usually give recommendations and let the principals decide themselves, whether a student can continue the grade or whether they have to repeat the year after returning home. The decision will be made considering the student's past marks and the recommendations of the county specific ministry of education.

The advantage of New Zealand lies within the flexibility of its education system. NZ schools are best to promote options for 1, 2 or 3 terms that suit the German requirements of compulsory subjects. The strategy in the German market, I promote NZ as a unique and outstanding destination for secondary education and as a high quality education destination (i.e. in regards to PISA). They also highlight the benefit of the Code of Practice which is a unique feature for education options abroad.

Some German students, however, will probably decide to go abroad AFTER graduating from secondary school and use the time abroad as a gap year. This is a growing trend also at Otumoetai College.

It will be interesting to see the development and the possible effects of the changes in the German schooling system. A certain effect of the change will be the double outtake of students in 2011 when students within the old system (13 years) finish simultaneously with students of the new system. Germany is still trying to plan how to cope with the so-called "student mountain" which will hit their universities in 2011.

After my wife and I left Germany we traveled to southern Europe where we greatly enjoyed holidaying in Italy and Switzerland.

Again I extend my grateful thanks for the sabbatical and the opportunity it afforded me.

DG Randell
Principal

**THE BEST FIT:
LEADING A GIFTED AND TALENTED PROGRAMME
AT SECONDARY LEVEL.**

Presenter: **Mary Irvine**
H.o.D. Centre of Learning Excellence
Otumoetai College
P.O. Box 8033
Cherrywood
Tauranga 3110
New Zealand
mirvine@otc.school.nz
Phone 00647 576 2316 ext 766
Fax 00647 576 8903

Author(s): from Otumoetai College, Tauranga, New Zealand -
Bruce R. Farthing Deputy Principal,
responsible for Learning, Curriculum and
Assessment
Mary I. Irvine HOD Centre of Learning Excellence
.6 Gifted and Talented Adviser, University of
Waikato
Gavin R. J. Morgan i/c Advanced Learner Programme

**THE BEST FIT:
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LEVEL.**

ABSTRACT

This paper describes the development of a sustainable programme for gifted and talented students in a large co-educational, New Zealand state secondary school. The programme has been underpinned by intensive, school-wide professional development and facilitated by School Support Services advisers. It draws from a large talent pool that recognises multi-category areas of giftedness, is informed by sound theory and is constantly evolving. Specific policies have been written to ensure theory becomes good practice and learning supersedes all other school functions. Creative timetabling allows for the best fit for all students including our gifted and talented students.

THE BEST FIT: LEADING A GIFTED AND TALENTED PROGRAMME IN A LARGE STATE SECONDARY SCHOOL.

Otumoetai College is a state-funded, co-educational secondary school in Tauranga with a current roll of 1889 students. The philosophical ethos of the college up until the late 1990s was one primarily concerned with the implementation of learning programmes in mixed ability groupings intended to raise the performance of low achieving students. While new national assessment initiatives dominated teacher time, pedagogy had all but disappeared from teacher discussions. However, with the millennium rapidly approaching, some staff became increasingly vocal in expressing their concern about whether the college was fulfilling its responsibility in fostering learning opportunities for all students. What was needed was a major overhaul of the way learning was viewed in the college; an overhaul that would give teachers permission to explore how students learn and one that would allow for sustainable change with integrity in all classrooms. The consequent provision of professional development that created opportunities for staff to engage in teacher talk about learning, rather than assessment, has ensured the establishment of enriched learning environments for all students while galvanising the commitment of an increasing number of staff in providing tailored programmes that cater for the learning needs of the gifted and talented students within our community of learners.

Over the previous decade the college had placed a significant focus upon behaviour management and the learning needs of low achieving students. In 1999 the Learning Support Centre took the initiative and dropped Support from its title highlighting a broadening understanding of its role which would now include providing for gifted and talented students while also sharpening the college's educational vision. From the outset it was determined that if the college was serious in its commitment to catering for the learning needs of its gifted and talented students then change needed to be implemented within all classrooms. There was no sustainability in merely assembling gifted and talented students and allowing them to be "gifted only on Friday afternoons" nor was there any future in merely providing teachers with ready-made lessons that accommodated gifted learners. Instead what was needed was a commitment to a professional development programme that promoted teacher understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of gifted education while also creating opportunities for teachers to develop their own programmes based upon international research. Within this environment members of the newly named Learning Centre and staff representatives undertook an extensive exploration of the available literature in the field of gifted and talented education resulting in several participants attending in 2001 the Teaching and Learning Symposium hosted by Hamilton Boys' High School and the National Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) conference in Auckland. A significant paradigm shift by a small number of staff provided the momentum to drive forward. Their vision was fully supported by senior management to the extent that the following year a staff member was awarded a scholarship to Colorado to study the work of George Betts and the Autonomous Learner Model. In light of these professional development opportunities it became evident that there existed the need for high ability classes to be introduced and subsequently in

2002 following initial teacher training, enrichment classes were introduced representing 15-20% of the total talent pool (Renzulli, 1985) at both Year 9 and 10 across the subject areas of English, Mathematics, Science, Social Sciences, Music and Technology.

The Ministry of Education's 2003 rejection of the college's application to undertake a five-year professional development programme for teachers in order to ensure the sustainability of gifted and talented programmes became an important catalyst in strengthening the college's commitment to its own professional development programme. The decision of management was to proceed independently. This determination resulted in the establishment of both a gifted and talented focus group and a literacy focus group to oversee development in these identified critical areas. Additional developments throughout 2003-4 included the establishment of a Learning Register that identifies the learning needs of a wide range of students including gifted and talented students and those "twice exceptional" (Betts, 1985 p.33.) There was also the development of cross curricular focus groups that targeted boys' achievement and Maori achievement. Furthermore, the development of the school-wide commitment to improving task design enabled 24 staff to attend GATE workshops facilitated by School Support Services, thereby ensuring ongoing training opportunities for teachers of enrichment classes. This practice continues today with all teachers of enrichment classes being required to undertake full training in this area while also accessing further support from the Learning Centre. This cross-curricular approach, while continuing to develop the staff talent pool, has also proved instrumental in promoting collegiality and teacher talk about learning. Continuing to develop the staff talent pool has been the philosophy behind producing the model that has driven the college's subsequent professional development programme, most notably in 2006 with the establishment of cross curricular focus groups that explored the nature of the post modern learner and the need for a differentiated approach to teacher planning and classroom practice.

At the heart of Otumoetai College's commitment to its educational vision of meeting the learning needs of all students is its refusal to compromise. In any large state funded secondary school there exist a number of constraints that must be recognised and addressed but these cannot be permitted to prevent pedagogical discussions from occurring or from implementing practices grounded in recent research. At this time there were many external pressures such as the new national curriculum and assessment regime along with various Ministry initiatives. The college chose to buy in to those initiatives that focused on learning. Gifted and Talented education and Literacy were selected. Despite the large roll with its accompanying timetable demands and initial staff conservatism, the approach to learning continued as a school-wide drive for BETTER LEARNING FOR ALL (School Goal 2004/2005) that incorporates task design and differentiation within the language of learning.

Despite the doubters and detractors college management working with the Learning Centre drove forward its own professional development programme for all teachers of enrichment classes in English, Mathematics, Social Sciences, Science, Music, Technology and Elite Sports in addition to the

GATE workshops and frequent visits from School Support Services. This afforded these teachers the opportunity to learn for themselves and in so doing strengthened individual commitment to the concept of a learning continuum and differentiated task design. It also ensured that over the two year time period those supporting the new school philosophy presented an informed and united voice. The taxonomies of Bloom (1956), Kaplan (1986), and Williams' Cognitive-Affective Interaction Model (1996) were introduced in conjunction with explorations of Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences (1983) with the intention of providing our gifted and talented learners higher order thinking opportunities within an environment that encourages choice, fosters risk taking, provides challenge and develops opportunities for creativity. Teacher understandings of acceleration, underachievement and perfectionism, along with the specific emotional needs of high achievers were also addressed in order to maintain an holistic approach towards meeting the needs of our gifted and talented learners.

The role of School Support Services has been pivotal to the evolution and sustainability of the programme. Through off-site courses and on-site provision the Adviser – Gifted became the vehicle for increasing teacher understandings, for guidance in policy writing and for reviewing classroom practices. For two years the Adviser provided on-site, in-depth professional development for all teachers of enrichment classes. In addition, the Adviser worked closely with each department providing either whole-day or half-day subject specific PD. It is clear that the input of the Adviser has been critical to the establishment of gifted and talented education within Otumoetai College and that this input has led to the embedding of staff understandings that ensure the integrity of the programme and its sustainability for future years.

The timetable philosophy of providing the best structure for learning drove the construction of a new internal framework. The cry that it was all “too hard” was never accepted. The new framework allows all Year 9 students to sample every subject in the required curriculum areas. There is no established hierarchy of subjects, and subjects share as even a division of time as possible. In Year 10 the new timetable structure recognises the provision of optional six month courses, by keeping as many subject options open for as long as possible while at the same time allowing for an element of choice. The division of time between subjects remains as even as possible. Year 9 and 10 groups of 400-450 students are divided into three clusters of 130-150 students based on an even spread of ability. Each cluster then moves through the Year 9 and 10 programme as a single entity and is divided by each Faculty Leader according to individual test scores, aptitudes and recommendations in each subject. The four or five form classes in each cluster are for administrative purposes only. Such an approach gives ownership to each Faculty with the flexibility of allowing for a student to be changed in one subject but remain in other classes. The responsibility is given to each faculty to divide the cluster into either one enrichment class and three mixed ability groups or into four ranked ability or mixed ability groups. Consultation with the Learning Centre is essential for careful placement. Enrichment classes are instructed to the curriculum level that corresponds to their ability. In 2005, and again in 2006, Year Ten Mathematics includes one accelerated enrichment class that completes the level 6 Mathematics curriculum in order to advance to curriculum level 7 in Year 11 being assessed to level 2 of the National Qualification Framework (NQF). In Year 10 there is no assessment to the NQF external achievement standards with the intention of encouraging creative teaching that is not bound by an external assessment regime.

The writing of the school’s GATE policy (ratified late 2003) was the result of 11 drafts. The length of time taken in fine-tuning this document is indicative of the paradigm shifts both in understanding of the specific needs of gifted and talented learners as well as the acquisition of new knowledge by Board members, parent representatives and an increasing number of staff. The GATE policy recognises the Ministry of Education’s (2000) definition of gifted and talented and adopts both a broad and inclusive understanding of giftedness in developing its programmes throughout the school. The document is underpinned by the theories of Renzulli and Reis (1985) and

Betts (1985). Renzulli and Reis' (1985) concept of gifted learners draws from a talent pool that recognises the "interaction between three basic clusters of human traits: above average ability, a high level of task commitment and a high level of creativity" (Ministry of Education: Gifted and Talented Learners p.14). Betts' (1985) Autonomous Learner Model aims at giving students "the content, process and product know-how that enables them to take responsibility for developing, implementing and evaluating their own learning" (Ministry of Education: Gifted and Talented Learners, p.51). The goal of this model is "to facilitate and develop the total learner." (Betts and Kercher, 1999, p. 34)

Formalising a gifted and talented policy exposed a need for learning-centred leadership and became the catalyst for moving on and writing further policies that specifically relate to learning. Policy writing served to inform and involve the Board in the ethos of the new pedagogy and enshrine the vision for all concerned. A literacy policy was written to focus staff on raising literacy standards and also cementing the language of learning across the school. A policy relating to Otumoetai College students' access to Correspondence School Programmes and outside providers ensured availability of subjects not taught at the College. It also ensured the provision of an extra subject as well as providing a pathway to a subject at a level higher than the other subjects being studied when the timetable could not accommodate. An Individual Programme Policy was written to ensure that no blocks were put in the way of any student's individual programme. Often this may mean a gap of one subject on a student's timetable to enable time spent in the Learning Centre for consolidation of subject material with skilled support staff. Understanding of the learning process continued to grow as the policies were written and ultimately the writing of a Learning Policy encapsulated the place of learning within Otumoetai College. The GATE, Literacy, Correspondence School and Individual Programme policies became appendices to the Learning Policy which recognized the college's conceptualised learning framework, its learning continuum and its commitment to the implementation of best pedagogical practice in classrooms. The policy commits to professional development and gives special emphasis to the development of profound learning, to meaning, authenticity, creativity and interdependence. It seeks to ground staff actions in sound pedagogy and to ensure that meaningful learning remains super-ordinate to curriculum assessment and behavioural management.

Identification of students for the gifted and talented programme began as a data-gathering process and as understanding increased, the process has expanded into a multi-faceted approach. McAlpine (1996, p. 63) describes identification as a mediation between "the responsive environment approach and the formal data gathering approach." While Otumoetai College is secure in the integrity of data that is gathered on each cohort, it recognises that there is ongoing work to be done in regard to establishing a responsive environment that relies on a team approach to identification and is "unobtrusive and naturally embedded into sound everyday learning and teaching." (McAlpine, 1996, p. 67). Extensive information from contributing schools is placed alongside Centre for Educational Measurement (CEM) data and enables

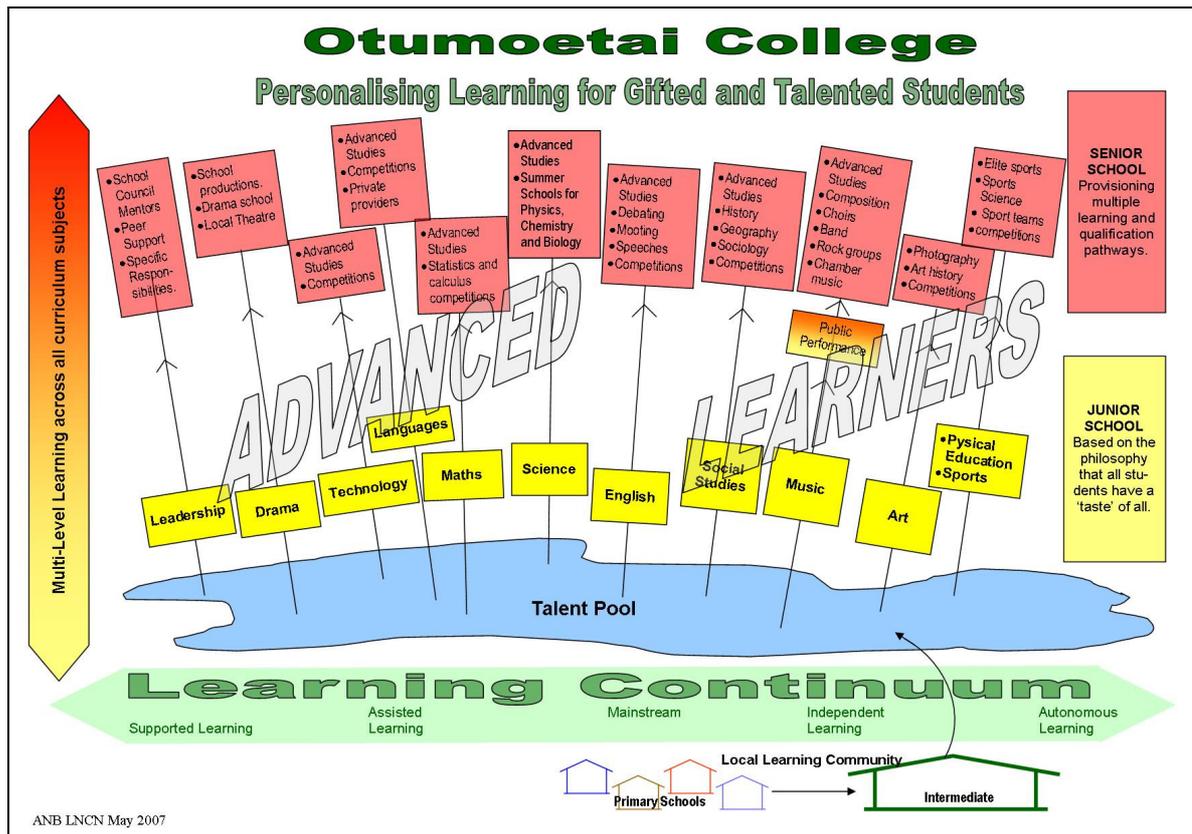
Deans and Faculty Leaders to rank students according to cognitive ability. Consultation with contributing schools forms an integral part of this process as does the request for parent input. Early in the school year Progress and Achievement Testing confirms class placement. While initial testing regimes provide baseline data for each student it is acknowledged that key factors of parent, student and teacher input need to play a greater part in the process in order to find “the best fit” for students with high abilities. As McAlpine (1996, p.67) points out “unobtrusive identification based on challenging learning” along with “open communication between parents, caregivers, students, teachers ...” and “a team approach” encourage a climate of awareness that is “constantly on the alert for the emergence of special abilities.”

Individual faculties in liaison with information provided by the Learning Centre are responsible for identifying students that demonstrate the potential of task commitment, above average ability and creativity (Renzulli and Reis, 1985) and placing them in specific subject classes that practise both curriculum compaction and differentiation within a higher cognitive framework. At Years 9 and 10 identified students are placed in enrichment classes across each of the subject areas of English, Mathematics, Science, Social Science, Music and Technology. The label of enrichment, which was first used in the school in 2002, is now viewed as somewhat misleading as enrichment is often interpreted as meaning “just more work, sometimes more of the same work.” (Clark, 1988, p.202) The title enrichment was a consensus decision and reflected staff understandings at that time. It did however serve to encapsulate the desire for broad cognitive development rather than subject acceleration at the expense of understanding. Townsend (2000) explains that ‘acceleration refers to instruction which matches the readiness and needs of the gifted child most closely with the curriculum’ (p. 290). Accordingly acceleration is implemented in the college in a number of its many guises throughout the school including subject-specific acceleration, selected New Zealand Qualification Authority (NZQA) acceleration, curriculum compacting, differentiation and individualised curriculum. Staff now understand enrichment to be the right of every student, and interpret it as broad based educational experiences that are not necessarily at a more rapid pace or at a higher level. This understanding led staff to consider a change in terminology to better describe the programme. In 2007 three Year 9 classes will be called Advanced Learners 1, 2 and 3.

Southern and Jones (1991) document the fact that a variety of acceleration options generate increased learner efficiency and effectiveness as students learn better in an environment that recognises their ability. By placing students in an accelerated environment, it is reasoned that they will benefit from the interaction with peers who share like-minded intellectual interests. Townsend’s (2000) summary of the advantages of acceleration reveal similar intellectual benefits of increased academic motivation, a greater variety of school goals, a decrease in behavioural problems and notably, an escape from boredom and intellectual frustration.

Evidence of these acceleration options within the enrichment band are seen in all faculty areas. The philosophy in English enrichment classes focuses on

broadening students' analytical skills through challenging texts and the self-selection of literature. Recognising that effective curriculum delivery requires more than advanced content alone to cater for the learning needs of gifted students, the department has invested considerable time in the development of assignments that promote greater choice and encourage creativity including 'Hooked on Books' at Year 9 which incorporates Bloom's Taxonomy and Gardner's Multiple Intelligences and 'Novel Thinking' at Year 10, a thematic unit based upon Williams' Cognitive-Affective Interaction Model that encourages students to explore the relationship held between literature and its role in society. The introduction of these differentiated models provides students with the opportunity to engage in higher-order thinking while allowing students to take ownership in the selection of product outcomes. Two examples of facilitated research tasks in Year 9 Social Studies are based around the theme of Chocolate where students have the choice of analyzing the geography, economics, sociology or history behind this resource, and the geography of the Lord of the Rings where students create their own tour through Middle Earth in order to destroy the ring. Students are required to analyse landscapes in order to problem solve and overcome various challenges encountered along the way. In the Technology Faculty gifted students are selected for their potential to evaluate solutions to client based problems before choosing the direction of their own project outcomes. Te Reo allows for advanced language studies to National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) internal standards. Year 9 enrichment Music classes are comprised of students with previous musical expertise in theory and performance. Because of this, emphasis is placed on solo and group performance, composition and skill building in both aural and score reading. Students are required to pick up a second/third instrument to develop their melodic, harmonic and rhythmic understanding and are encouraged to take part in various college musical groups. The pathway to Year 10 Music allows some students to be assessed in solo performance and/or composition to NCEA internal standards. In the Mathematics Faculty, the Year 9 and 10 enrichment course aims to broaden the learning experiences of students through participation in a variety of problem solving tasks that reflect areas of individual interest. Student understanding is further enhanced through the writing of detailed instructions for complex co-ordinate pictures of their choice as well as through the narration of video they have compiled to demonstrate geometric concepts. Acceleration is an option for those who display giftedness in the field of Mathematics.



While each department continues to accommodate the learning needs of all students including gifted and talented through quality task design, there is now genuine concern that the needs of our most able students are not being met. In 2005 the Advanced Learners' Group was established in recognition of the additional cognitive and affective needs of our most academically gifted students. Following the Autonomous Learner Model (ALM) developed by Betts (1992) students are introduced to the five dimensions required for the development of the autonomous learner: orientation, individual development, enrichment activities, seminars and participation in an in-depth study investigation. The programme provides an opportunity for like-minded students to meet regularly and engage in activities that demand higher order thinking skills while fostering an appreciation of the important roles that persistence, determination and task commitment play in the pursuit of successful and independent life-long learners. While the 2005 pilot was limited to only 24 Year 9 and 10 students, the 2006 programme included 40 students who continue to research areas of passion and foster links with the community. In addition to developing the critical, creative and caring thinking skills first introduced in 2005, the 2006 programme allowed for individual mentoring and the continuation of exploration into avenues of passion along with interaction with like-minded peers both at school and in the community. 2007 sees the implementation of the Advanced Learners' Programme in three Year 9 classes where approach, pace, content and environment will differ significantly from that of other Year 9 classes.

While something akin to a pedagogical revolution has begun in the college there remains a great deal to do to ensure that the cognitive and affective needs of each of our gifted and talented students are fully met. In recognising the importance of differentiated programming that enables all learners to engage in high-order thinking exercises, individual faculties have become increasingly committed to their gifted and talented learners. As Barbara Clark (1988) reminds us “All kids deserve to learn something new every day, including the gifted.” (p. 202) With this in mind, management has increased its commitment to the college’s gifted community by allowing for the provision of additional staff hours in the Learning Centre in 2007 to oversee the implementation of individual programmes which personalise learning for all identified gifted students. Otumoetai College recognises that it has a professional responsibility to provide each and every one of its students including its gifted and talented with learning programmes that “best fit” both their cognitive and affective needs. Staff understanding of effective pedagogy remains the only assured way to guarantee this desired outcome.

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MAPPING THE JOURNEY:

Putting Māori perspectives of giftedness into practice.

Presenter: **Gavin R.J. Morgan**
I/C Advanced Learner Programme
Otumoetai College
P.O. Box 8033
Cherrywood
Tauranga 3110
New Zealand
mirvine@otc.school.nz
Phone 00647 576 2316 ext 766
Fax 00647 576 8903

Author(s): from Otumoetai College, Tauranga, New Zealand -
Bruce R. Farthing Deputy Principal,
responsible for Learning,
Curriculum and Assessment
Mary I. Irvine HOD Centre of Learning
Excellence
.6 Gifted and Talented Adviser,
University of Waikato
Gavin R.J. Morgan i/c Advanced Learner Programme

**MAPPING THE JOURNEY:
Putting Māori perspectives of giftedness into practice.**

ABSTRACT

Mapping the Journey: Putting Māori perspectives of giftedness in practice:

This paper outlines the policies and provisions for gifted and talented Māori students being introduced at Otumoetai College, a large state funded New Zealand secondary school. By listening to student voices and recognising Māori epistemologies in the college's understanding of giftedness, this paper highlights how the College is becoming better equipped to cater for the needs of its gifted Māori students and to deliver a more effective and culturally appropriate pedagogy. It explores the theory surrounding a Māori concept of giftedness and the implementation of provisions and practices within the college that reflect Māori perspectives.

Bruce R Farthing Deputy Principal

Mary Irvine .. H.o.D. Centre of Learning Excellence

Gavin R. J. Morgan TIC Advanced Learner Classes

Aotearoa/ New Zealand comprised two islands in the south west Pacific whose Polynesian migrants became the Māori. The Māori in origin are Pacific islanders and comprised the first wave of migration to the last uninhabited portion of the earth's surface between 900 and 1200AD. In isolation and in just over 500 years the Māori established a unique culture. Aotearoa was a Māori world, a world that provided for the needs of its inhabitants. The Māori culture was an oral culture which handed down its knowledge and its traditions by song and story from one generation to another. Survival of this culture depended upon co-operation and an ability to embrace change; how else had these Polynesians been able to become so distinctly different to their Polynesian forebears. Nevertheless of equal importance were their traditions which recognised greatness in a diverse range of cultural expressions from moko, carving, fighting and hunting to weaving, song, dance and oratory. There were strongly held belief systems and values and the more Māori worked in the interests of others the higher the esteem in which they were held in their community. The society had its own particular structure, leadership came from either belonging to the chiefly caste through inheritance or by demonstrating particular skill as for example a warrior, orator or shaman. Greatness could transcend fixed levels of society. In an oral society with nothing fixed in text, change was always possible. Māori society was firstly divided into iwi or large tribal groupings. These iwi had adapted individually to their environments and showed difference in food patterns, traditions and dialect. Iwi were further broken into hapu or sub tribes, and most Māori lived their day to day lives within small whanau extended family groupings. Māori children were thus children of the whanau and not exclusively those of their biological parents. It was only for specific purposes such as war or hunting the giant moa of the South Island that Māori worked in larger co-operative groups than the whanau.

This Māori world was irrevocably changed in the late eighteenth century as Europeans made their way to Aotearoa/New Zealand motivated by the personal and national agendas of the age. The European group that came to work most in the interests of Māori were the missionaries who reflected the humanitarian motives of a small but influential number of the British elite. These people had initiated the abolition of slavery in Britain and in New Zealand their humanitarian concerns were manifest in the intent of the Treaty of Waitangi, the document that facilitated the mass settling of Aotearoa/New Zealand by the British. Written in English before being translated, over night, into Māori by the Anglican missionaries, the Treaty was translated in such a way that Māori signed without full realisation of the consequences. While Māori believed that they had ceded merely administrative control (Kawanatanga) to the colonial government, while yet retaining their powers of chiefly authority as one of their chiefs saw it "the shadow of the land passed to the Queen while the substance remained with the chiefs." These powers of chiefly authority were guaranteed by Article Two of the Treaty and extended over Māori treasures or taonga. Prime amongst the treasures of any culture is language, knowledge and the transmission of knowledge. In Article Three Māori were granted equal status with British citizens which implies equitable access to the educational resources of the state.

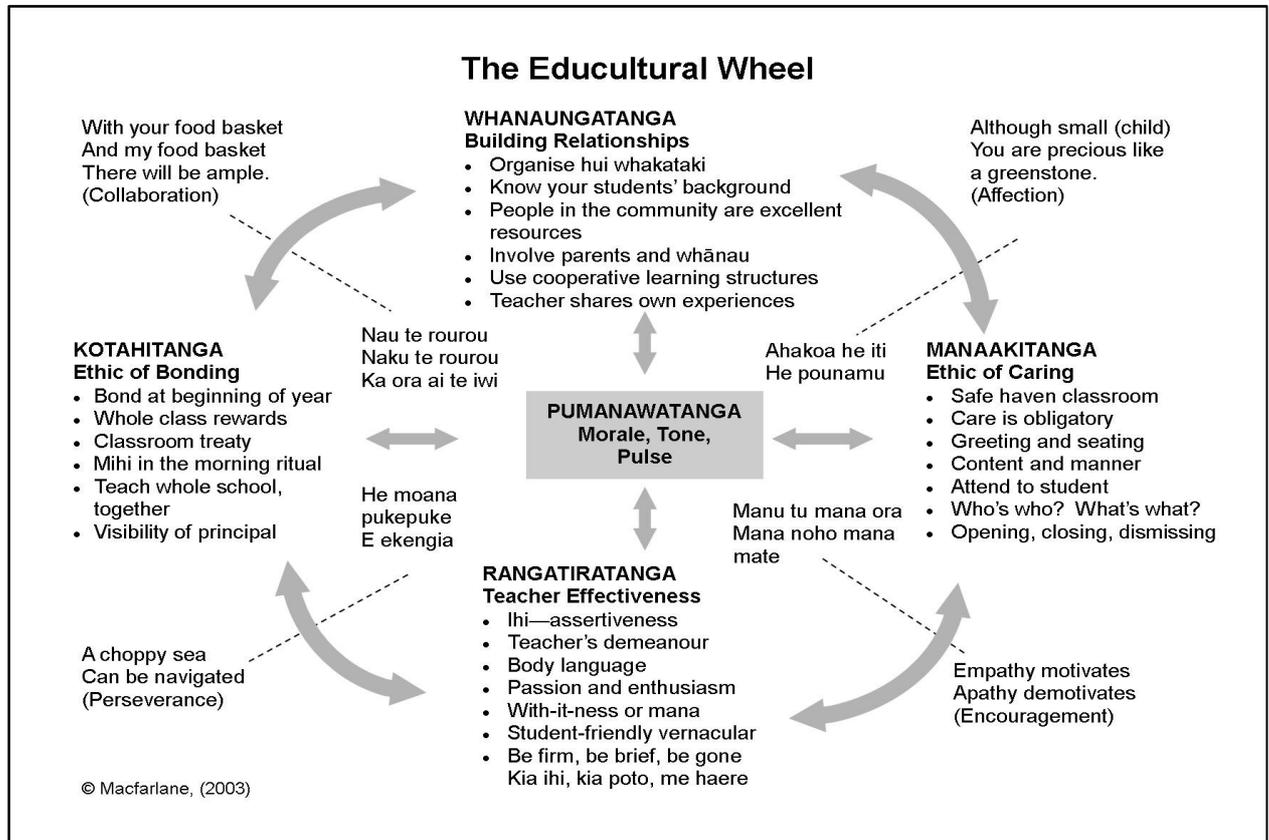
The Māori culture that developed in isolation was an oral culture which established for itself its own knowledge base, its own traditions, its own belief system and values and a unique societal structure.

Transcending all aspects of this culture were collaborative processes that were ultimately to ensure the culture's success and continuance. Traditions were passed on by word of mouth. Decisions were made by a process of consensus. Within this unique culture there was an acceptance of giftedness across all dimensions of the culture. The ability to be a persuasive orator, the ability to be a great hunter, or the ability to be a skilled weaver of tukutuku panels recording the genealogy of the whanau, indeed, the ability to do great works on behalf of the group was what came to be seen as gifted within this culture. In an often harsh environment the wellbeing of the group came before that of the individual. This culture worked for the Māori and comprised in its context a worldview. This was a worldview in stark contrast of that of the Europeans.

By 1858 the number of Pakeha/European living in Aotearoa/New Zealand came to equal that of Māori and move very rapidly ahead until by 1892 there were only 42000 surviving Māori in the nation. Indeed, by the dawning of the twentieth century in accordance with the accepted dictates of Darwinism, that the Māori would become extinct. Consequently, the dominant Pakeha/European worldviews, beliefs, customs and attitudes came to prevail in the New Zealand education system. This power imbalance has seen practices stemming from a European worldview retain power over issues of initiation, representation, legitimation and accountability within New Zealand schools. Pakeha/European constructs of success are based upon individual ownership, individual success and abilities, and this is demonstrated in the nation's schools. The same degree of credit is not extended in Pakeha/European culture to group success or spiritual involvement. In contrast, Niwa (1998/1999) describes a great difference to the now ignored Māori worldview of a holistic giftedness in Māori culture "where inter-personal relationships and aspects of spirituality are highly prized and emphasised" (p. 3). Jill Bevan-Brown's research has made one further point that has been instrumental in shaping New Zealand's educational vision for the better catering of gifted Māori students. She highlights that Māori like any other ethnic group are a diverse people and consequently, it is impossible to speak of an all encompassing Māori construct of giftedness; it simply does not exist. Instead she offers eight components which constitute a concept that reflects the values, beliefs and attitudes that have traditionally been upheld and respected in the Māori world. The Pakeha/European worldview had consumed the Māori worldview which was given no credence and recognition of Māori giftedness fell into a void. It was not until the last 25 years of the twentieth century that this was recognised and that action was taken to redress the imbalance. At this point in the history of Aotearoa/New Zealand some Maori function as Pakeha within the dominant Pakeha/ European constructs, some Maori comfortably bridge both worlds and many Maori remain comfortable within the Maori world. Therefore culturally appropriate pedagogy must be infused into in the context of the Maori worldview in order to reach all Maori.

Given the collaborative societal order and spiritual understandings that have shaped Māori society in the past, it should come as no surprise that it is this same worldview that leads to twenty first century understandings of Māori giftedness. While Bevan-Brown (2004) rejects the notion of an all inclusive definition of Māori giftedness she presents several concepts of giftedness that have been widely

accepted. Giftedness is not bound by social class, economic status, lineage or gender and is widely distributed in Maori society. Giftedness may be recognised in an individual or group context and based on “qualities” and “abilities”. These qualities are consistent with those admired in the fabric of traditional Māori society and intertwined with other Māori concepts including whanaungatanga (the building of relationships), aroha and bravery.



McFarlane’s (2003) Educultural Wheel presents an excellent visual summary of the Māori concepts that are being used in the formation of whanua based classrooms at Otumoetai College. By employing the principles of whanaungatanga (relationship building), manaakitanga (ethic of caring), rangatiratanga (teacher effectiveness), kotahitanga (ethic of bonding) a stronger pumanawatanga (morale, tone or pace) is developing between teacher and students. Returning to Bevan-Brown’s concepts, we see again the reoccurrence of the expectation that special abilities and gifts will be shared for mutual benefit and that mana tangata is gained by those in the areas encompassing traditional knowledge and service. Empowered by this knowledge it is essential that gifted Māori students are presented with the learning opportunities and structures that enable their gifts to be recognised, valued and celebrated. It is essential that learning takes place within a context that values Māori knowledge including that it is centred in culturally authentic contexts which value collaborative opportunities and outcomes, whanau (family) involvement, allows for students to learn together as a whanau where age is irrelevant, while providing opportunities to explore concepts from the Māori world and recognise the impact of whakapapa, manaakitanga (caring for others), wairuatanga (spirituality), whanaungatanga (familiness), aroha-ki-te-tangata (love for others) and kaitiatanga on their life.

Otumoetai College is a state-funded, co-educational secondary school in Tauranga, a city of 110 000 people located on the east coast of New Zealand's North Island. The college has a current roll of 1889 students including 299 students between the Years 9 and 13 who identify themselves as being Māori. The ethos of Otumoetai College up until the late 1990s was one primarily concerned with the implementation of learning programmes in mixed ability groupings intended to raise the performance of low achieving students. Since then, the college's increased commitment to learning has seen the formation of a number of strategies designed to better cater for the cognitive and affective needs of our gifted and talented learners including the formation of advanced learner classes within the junior school, a greater commitment to professional development for those staff teaching advanced learner classes and the formation of focus groups focussing on promoting a greater awareness of effective strategies for promoting literacy, boys' achievement, gifted and talented and Māori achievement within the school. The establishment of the school's gifted and talented policy in 2003 represented a commitment to ensuring that classroom practice was grounded in theory. Underpinned by the theories of Renzulli and Reis (1985) and Betts (1985) the school recognises the Ministry of Education's (2000) definition of gifted and talented and adopts both a broad and inclusive understanding of giftedness. While the school's gifted and talented policy is shaped by a broad and inclusive understanding of giftedness, as is typical of many New Zealand schools, what it means to be gifted is one that is largely, if not exclusively, defined in Eurocentric terms. Māori under-representation within New Zealand education and particularly within gifted programmes can largely be attributed to culturally inappropriate pedagogical approaches with regard to identification, programming and assessment. (Bevan-Brown, 1993; Hurtubise, 1991). Otumoetai College is committed to redressing the traditional power imbalances held between Pakeha and Māori epistemologies. Fraser (1997) recognises four critical factors that work against the inclusion of students from non-dominant cultures in gifted programmes: access, accommodation, assessment and attitudes. Otumoetai College has undertaken a programme of intensive professional development to ensure that informed decisions about Māori epistemology shape pedagogy. Inherent within this development is the awareness of the need for community involvement in shaping our understanding of Māori giftedness.

Recognising the under-representation of Māori students within the advanced learner classes the College attempted to redress this cultural imbalance by actively placing a cluster group of Māori students in each of the Advanced Learner Classes at Year 9 in 2007 in much the same way that boys had been actively promoted into what were becoming heavily girl dominated English Advanced Learner classes the year before. Not surprisingly this decision was met with staff perceptions of reverse racism. The lack of provision for Māori in New Zealand classrooms is not uncommon. This is largely due to attitudes associated with cultural stereotyping and a lack of understanding on the Pakeha's behalf of the Māori concepts of giftedness. Despite an attempt to incorporate widely accepted beliefs about the teaching of Māori including the need to involve students in groups and the co-construction of content, student option choices and timetabling constraints meant that the intended clustering of Māori students in the Advanced Learner Classes were in some cases reduced to the presence of two Māori students. This isolation clearly did not provide the Māori students concerned with peer support, nor does it allow

them to be self-effacing. Classroom programmes need to provide opportunities for Māori students to display their cultural skills and talents. This under-representation of Māori in gifted and talented classes in mainstream education is consistent with national research (Bevan-Brown, 1993, Cathcart & Pou, 1992) and can be largely attributed to inappropriate practices with regard to identification, programming and evaluation.

The placement of Māori students in the Advanced Learner Classes was motivated by a growing recognition within the staff of the need to develop a more culturally relevant pedagogy for raising Māori achievement. Clearly what was needed was a resolution to recognising Māori giftedness that meant more than filling quotas. This raised staff awareness is reflected in the initiatives that have been introduced this year to raise teacher understandings of Māori needs and of course those gifts celebrated within the Māori community. One of the three College goals for 2007 is “to ensure that Māori achievement is raised through individual mentoring, recognition and classroom relationships, content, process, product and pace.” To this end, staff have engaged in extensive professional development instruction and debate, been introduced to the principles of culturally responsive pedagogy embedded in the Te Kotahitanga programme and become more active in ensuring that the relationships and programme provisions reflect the power sharing embedded within Māori culture and a Māori worldview. Otumoetai College recognises the important role that the community plays in the development of any Gifted and Talented understanding. In developing Otumoetai College’s understandings of Māori giftedness the school has strengthened communication ties between the community and the school by negotiating understandings with the Whanau Support Group, a highly active body within the College’s short history to ensure that the Māori community’s voice is reflected in the College’s decision making processes. The Board of Trustees has its own whanau representative and its own local kaumatua representative and also the College has facilitated the resourcing for the building of a whare wananga (traditional meeting house), a whare kai (a traditional separate place for eating) and a whanau meeting room and classroom. This clearly shows the commitment of governance and management to provision a sense of belonging and commitment to future progress.

Keen (2001 cited in Macfarlane, 2004) reported that Māori and Polynesian students relative to roll numbers, are identified as gifted and talented at about half the rate for New Zealand Europeans and Asians and at lower rates, also, relative to other ethnic groups. He hypothesised that numbers could be equally accounted for in terms of socioeconomic status. Bevan-Brown acknowledges that this is certainly a contributing factor but emphasises the role classroom teachers play in creating further barriers for Māori and particularly gifted Māori learners. Negative and stereotypical attitudes of teachers in conjunction with narrow concepts of understandings of Māori constructs of giftedness means few gifted Māori students are referred. Otumoetai College acknowledges the over-reliance on written testing fails to accommodate for the cultural differences that constitute giftedness. Low teacher expectations and low self-esteem often lead to the lack of identification or recognition of Māori children with special abilities, and are key factors influencing Māori underachievement. In fact, Davis and Rimm (1994) refer to low self-esteem as the primary characteristic of underachievement.

The renaissance of Māoridom through the last years of the twentieth century into the beginnings of the 21st century has seen a greater acceptance of the need for pedagogy to be shaped by the traditional associations of Māori including a greater attention to culture and relationships. The existence of the Treaty of Waitangi has enshrined in Aotearoa/New Zealand's twenty first century's education system pedagogy and enactment which sits within the Māori worldview. The establishment of whanau based learning approaches at Otumoteai College ensures that lesson planning and preparation reflect the values, assumptions and beliefs of Māori students. In developing Māori gifts and talents, a great deal of energy must be given to the support of the pupil's self-esteem, sense of personal value and specific cultural expression (Hurtubise, 1991). This allows for students to see their worldview reflected in the curriculum and presents the foundation for strengthening teacher and student relationships. Initial classroom changes have included a greater commitment to co-operative learning, reciprocal teaching, the involvement of students in the co-construction of learning and the negotiation of lesson objectives and direction. Infusing cultural concepts is likely to have a positive effect on students learning and teachers teaching because cultural referents are employed. Acknowledging these cultural referents and employing a culturally relevant pedagogy signals to Māori students that their culture matters

The Māori Enrichment class for 2008 will present Year 10 students the opportunity will seek to redress many of the pedagogical approaches that have actively prevented their gifts being celebrated by the Otumoetai College learning community. Multiple assessment measures and procedures sensitive to cultural values and practices in consultation with peers, family and community members will form the prime methods of identification. The class is to be an environment where the Māori worldview is not only acknowledged but celebrated as critical in creating programmes where content and context of learning is culturally relevant and that teaching approaches are culturally appropriate for Māori learners. The advent of this class recognises that Māori students who are recognised as being gifted and talented will not be separated from the peer group. This supports the Māori worldview of talents being shared for the collective benefit of the group. Identification includes a combination of peer and whanau, and teacher nomination. As Cathcart & Pou (1992) outline teachers should be on the lookout for the Māori child who: is the rangatira (leader, chief) in a group situation; has a good knowledge of, and interest in, Māoritanga and traditional arts and skills; has a sense of justice and fair play; can speak te reo Māori; accepts responsibility for classmates; and has skills in group interaction. The forging and continuance of a close-relationships within the Māori community in conjunction with a greater awareness of the interrelated concepts of pedagogy, culture and relationships will create an environment where giftedness is no longer a monocultural construct at Otumoetai College.

Today's pedagogy as researched and enacted to advance Māori giftedness fits securely into the Māori worldview as developed during the 500 years of isolation. Operating to the characteristics of collaborative, trusted values that are felt by Māori people is the only way forward. Demographers predict that by the middle of the century there will be a million people of Māori descent in Aotearoa/New Zealand. In a country with a separate Māori electoral role, there will be a voice which

although ignored in the past will be loud in the future and ensure that the Māori worldview plays a paramount role in New Zealand's future. The future direction of the nation depends on how well the New Zealand Educational system deals to the issue of Māori giftedness.

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