

Sabbatical Report

Bilingual Education and Whānau Involvement

Key Inquiry Questions

- *What is the place of bilingual education in New Zealand schools?*
- *How can te reo Māori and tikanga be effectively nurtured throughout the school?*
- *How can whānau be encouraged to become more actively involved in supporting their tamariki in bilingual education?*

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Acknowledgements

A sabbatical provides a unique opportunity to reflect on teaching and learning and leadership with a clear head, what a special privilege!

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I acknowledge the wisdom, the ideas, and the advice of the tamariki, whānau, tumuakis, kaiakos and educational experts I have visited and talked with. Your willingness to share and your passion for nurturing te reo and tikanga is to be admired.

When reading and reflecting on nurturing te reo and tikanga there are several key documents, reports and online resources that are extremely informative. The reference list at the end of this report details many readings and resources that were influential in the writing of this report.

Purpose

Through this sabbatical my intention is to conduct a meaningful and purposeful inquiry into bilingual education as it relates to the success and development of the growth of, and confidence in, te reo maori and tikanga at Bluestone School.

The sabbatical provides a rich opportunity to reflect on best practice and look deeper into the plethora of online resources now available to support te reo and tikanga so that this can be shared with others.

Background and Rationale

In 2015 a decision was made at Bluestone School to create a classroom the following year that offered a bilingual approach. Students in all rooms were already incorporating te reo in class programmes with students and staff being supported to grow their confidence through having a learning assistant who was fluent in te reo

and tikanga visiting all rooms each week. We also had a teacher who was keen to teach through a bilingual approach and was supported by the Board to do full time te reo and tikanga study in 2015.

With strong support from the Board of Trustees and principal and after consultation with whanau the classroom was established at the beginning of 2016 with 23 year 4-6 students opting in. The great majority of these students remained in this room for 2016-2018.

Each year the amount of te reo and tikanga incorporated into the teaching and learning increased. In 2017 the Ministry of Education verified the programme and in 2018 the Education Gazette ran an article (10) about the initiative.

Methodology

This sabbatical involved a literature search, completion of certificate in Tikanga Māori Level 3 with Te Wānanga o Aotearoa, visits to schools running bilingual options, and discussions with tamariki, whānau, and kaiako.

Findings

Past to present

Tōku reo, tōku ohoho

Tōku reo, tōku māpihi maurea

Tōku reo, tōku whakakai marihi

My language, my inspiration

My language, my special gift

My language, my precious gift

It is useful to understand some historical information. The Education Ordinance Act (1847) declared schools should solely use the English language for instruction.

Between the 1930's and 1960's, the number of Māori who could speak Māori had dropped from 96.6% to only 26% and a generation grew up not knowing how to speak Māori. This led to fears that Māori would become a 'dead' language unless serious efforts were made to revive the language and encourage more people to speak Māori again. (C)

From the late 1970s and the 1980s was an important time for Māori. Minority groups around the world were becoming increasingly less tolerant of their marginalised positions and the concomitant of their language. Groups of Māori academics started to challenge non-Māori laws leading to the Waitangi Tribunal ruling that the Māori language is a taonga and therefore had the right of protection. This resulted in the Māori language being made an official language in 1987.

Kohanga reo (pre school language nests) emerged in 1982 and kura kaupapa (Māori immersion primary schools) in 1985, followed by a growth of partial and total immersion programmes and more recently, wharekura (secondary schools) and wānanga (tertiary education providers) (C)

Currently all Māori bilingual programmes are state-funded open to all New Zealand students. They are divided into five levels according to the quantity of target language instruction. Level 1 81-100%, Level 2 above 50%, Level 3 31-50%, Level 4a 12-30%, Level 4b the learner is learning Māori language as a separate subject for at

least 3 hours per week, and Level 5 the learner is learning Māori language as a separate subject for less than 3 hours per week.

Since 2013 Level 1-2 programmes are referred to as Māori-medium and Levels 3-5 are referred to as Māori language in English-medium programmes. It is expected that programmes with over 50% Māori language instruction will lead to high levels of Māori language fluency (bilingual proficiency) and those below 50% act more as a cultural immersion programme. (C)

Making te reo compulsory is a debate being voiced. Some politicians and policy makers are suggesting te reo be made a compulsory subject in our schools. In 2017 the Green Party of Aotearoa New Zealand announced its support for the compulsory teaching of te reo Māori. Overseas experience would indicate compulsion in schools has a consistent record of failure when it comes to reviving indigenous languages. (7) The Labour Party has promised to integrate te reo Māori into every early childhood centre, primary and intermediate school by 2025. The New Zealand Primary Principals' Federation is backing this move. For integration to be achieved there will need to be considerable funding and efforts to see all teachers appropriately trained and supported.

Bilingual education

Research shows students need to stay in the bilingual programme for at least six years to know enough to be able to cope well academically. This means that at a primary school level, a student needs to be in Māori-medium education for at least six, and preferably eight years, and they need to be “taught Māori” as well as being “taught in” Māori. (4)

Māori language is important because of its association with New Zealand national identity. (1) Our government reinforces why this is a focus area:

Education is a key vehicle to revitalise and sustain the Māori language and is critical in enabling the Crown to meet its Treaty obligations to strengthen and protect the Māori language. Te reo Māori is a cornerstone of Māori culture and identity.

Learning in and through Māori language is an important way for Māori students to participate in Te Ao Māori, and it supports students to connect with their identity as Māori. This is a strong foundation for well-being and achievement. Providing all students access to Māori language in education is a key ingredient of the education system. High quality provision, leadership, teaching and learning, supported by effective governance is necessary for success in this focus area. (E)

Language is married with culture, you naturally understand an entire people by learning that language.

Ko te reo te waka e kawē ana i ngā tikanga Māori. Language is the vehicle of the Māori culture. Learning a language is not just about fluency and accuracy. Languages are also vehicles of culture. Languages mirror the way of life of the people who speak them. Learning a language involves coming to understand the values and culture of a people. Te reo Māori is rooted in Māori culture. Second-language learners of te reo Māori need to become aware of its associated cultural attitudes, values, and behaviours. (D)

Bilingual education is most effective when families, the school and the wider community see it as good for students to learn a second language and to become fluent in two languages, able to read and write in two languages – bilingual as well as biliterate. Research highlights that becoming biliterate is the key to academic success. (4)

Working Together including Whānau engagement

Nā tō rourou, nā taku rourouka ora ai te iwi.

With your food basket and my food basket the people will thrive. While working in isolation might result in survival, working together can take people beyond survival and onto prosperity.

When schools and their Māori communities (whānau, hapu, iwi) combine the skills and knowledge that are located within both settings, there is greater potential to accelerate the learning of Māori students so they can enjoy and achieve success ‘as Māori’ (B)

As Tom Alesana, Kaiako at Nelson Central articulates, te reo can’t be left for just Māori people to champion, we’ve got to share it with everyone.

For bilingual education to be effective, the whole school, led by the principal, needs to believe in, and promote, the value of being able to speak and write fluently in both Māori and English. To be successful, bilingual programmes also need strong support from whānau and the community. Even if parents and whānau do not know much Māori themselves, they can still encourage their children to speak and read to them in Māori at home, wherever possible. This will help everyone at home to learn more Māori(4)

The Ministry of Education publication [*Te Mana Kōrero*](#) urges schools to build and sustain strong links with whānau in order to support student achievement. In *Te Mana Kōrero* (2007), pages 9–13, there is empirical evidence of the benefits of having productive school-whānau partnerships. Benefits include feelings of well-being, improved classroom behaviour, and gains in achievement. In effective school-whānau partnerships, both sides are accountable to the other. They each take responsibility for their part in the partnership. This requires open and clear communication between both parties. When this happens, the teaching and learning methods you are using in your classroom will be familiar to, and will be supported by, whānau. (D)

Engaging with whānau isn’t something you can achieve overnight. Develop an action plan of incremental steps to work on with whānau members. A plan could include the following parts and, where possible, be developed with whānau:

- a vision of what you want to achieve
- a focus area for development
- an action-based goal around the focus area
- an outline of the steps needed to reach the goal
- your criteria for success.

Some practical ways of engaging whānau include:

- establishing a whānau support group to nurture te reo Māori in your school
- organising community evenings to celebrate the achievement of your students in learning te reo Māori
- communicating regularly with whānau through pānui (newsletters), email, and telephone calls
- hosting regular meetings, perhaps facilitated by a local kaumātua and kuia, to discuss ways that whānau can support te reo Māori teaching and learning
- teachers taking part in some marae-based learning to become familiar with te reo Māori and its associated tikanga
- encouraging whānau to participate in your planning process, including planning the school curriculum.

Base your te reo Māori programme on the needs of your students as determined by their whānau in consultation with you.

It is important for all parents and caregivers of the students in your class to feel part of the reo Māori programme you are offering. Regular contact with them and with your local Māori community will only strengthen the effectiveness of te reo Māori teaching and learning in your classroom. Consultation not only leads to more effective programmes but will also contribute to a good relationship between your school and your community. (D)

Relationships are the key to a successful school and a key motivator for students. For whānau to feel welcome in the classroom they need to feel welcome at anytime, have an authentic role to play in the programme, and be allowed to have spiritual involvement. The importance of sharing, consultation, collaboration and participation should not be underestimated. It may be too much to expect teachers to achieve full bicultural competence, however it is not unreasonable to expect them to strive for this. (3)

Productive partnerships among education professionals, iwi, whānau and communities are critical to achieving high quality outcomes for students of Māori language in education. Whānau are the main constituents of iwi in a social context; they have the single greatest influence on students' achievement. Education professionals, including teachers and leaders, have the greatest influence in an education setting. (E)

To gain greater insight study of tikanga through the likes of Te Wānanga o Aotearoa gives a deeper appreciation of the significance and importance of te reo to Māori and indeed to all of New Zealand.

Throughout 2018 STAnews monthly publications (5), with the permission of the Poutama Pounamu team (B), highlight a series of articles that recommend how schools can effectively connect with whānau. Included is the warning for schools to consider what parents want in the engagement and not what schools simply think they need. If we want to maximise the relationship that schools have with families, then families have to be part of determining that relationship. For too long in

education, we as educators, have tried to define how communities will participate with us. (5)

ERO (6) provides some insights and practical suggestions for nurturing effective community engagement. Highlighted is the value in acknowledging the skills and knowledge that whānau will bring to the engagement, and the importance of schools truly listening to whānau and their aspirations for their tamariki.

Developing collaborative home-school relationships with Māori whānau and Māori communities has the potential to significantly improve the learning outcomes of Māori students so it is important each school reflects on this. A useful rubric has been created (8) that helps with this process.

Ted Glynn warns (9) if schools genuinely allow whānau to be self determining, they need to be open to the possibility that Māori communities might not necessarily accept what the school is offering. If the offer of an initiative is not taken up by a whānau or the wider Māori community, it is important that the school remains committed to working together to find a solution or course of action that is mutually acceptable.

Implications and Conclusions

Ko te reo te mauri o te mana Māori
Maori language is the life essence of Maori identity
Sir James Hēnare

Schools and government have a responsibility to protect, maintain and expand the educational provision of Māori medium education.

Principals and leaders in education have a moral responsibility to further develop tikanga and te reo at all levels of the school and must lead by example.

There are significant issues in safeguarding the Māori language in a context where English is the dominant language and minority languages have low status. With Census figures showing the most fluent speakers of Māori are over 65 (Statistics New Zealand 2014), there is real urgency to ensure younger generations have similar fluency levels, becoming bilingual and biliterate. For this to be successful there must be a joint regeneration effort both in schools and in homes.

It is urgent and vital that the Māori-bilingual sector maintains a pool of highly fluent Māori speaking teaching staff. Teacher training needs to urgently provide greater numbers of qualified teachers who are highly fluent Māori speakers and knowledgeable about bilingual teaching pedagogies. At the same time all schools must commit to continuing to raise their standards. Schools need to have a strong and urgent focus on nurturing te reo and tikanga. Ensuring professional support and development for teachers will allow them to build their personal Māori language competencies. This requires school vision, teacher commitment, board support, government backing, and public recognition of the value and benefit of this growth.

Mehemea ka moemoeā ahau,
ko ahau anake.
Mehemea ka moeoeā tātou,
ka taea e tātou.

If I dream, I dream alone.
If we all dream together,
we can succeed.
Nā Te Puea Hērangi

Best results at Bluestone could be achieved if tamariki entered bilingual education at five but with no secondary bilingual option being available locally the tamariki would be best served by re-entering mainstreamed rooms for year 7-8 so they were well prepared for mainstreamed English based classrooms at High School. It remains of concern that without a secondary bilingual learning option for tamariki to go on to that the tamariki will be well on the way to being bilingual and biliterate yet end up losing the language if not used beyond primary on a daily basis.

If te reo is to be learned at an advanced level by tamariki then we need to have their parents and whānau make a commitment to learn and use it at home so that it is not merely a language that is used at school.

There would be benefit if there was more than one bilingual teacher and classroom in the school. Professional isolation has been an issue when Bluestone has just one bilingual room.

We recognise that actually all tamariki in all classes should have more te reo and tikanga incorporated into their learning. To that end we will continue to support our staff to complete further professional development in te reo and tikanga, and we will be lifting expectations of incorporating this in to everyday teaching and learning in all classes.

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