

Project History

Phase I

In 2001 and 2002, the first phase of the Te Kotahitanga research project was undertaken by the Maori Education Research Institute at the School of Education, University of Waikato and the Ministry of Education's Poutama Pounamu Research and Development Centre in Tauranga. The project sought to investigate how a better understanding of Maori student experiences in the classroom and analyses of these experiences. It also sought to identify those underlying teacher and school behaviours and attitudes that make a difference to Maori students' achievement.

Phase II: Te Kauhua (sub-contract)

The next phase of the study continued in three different schools, two high schools and one intermediate school, in the North Island. Selected teachers from these schools underwent professional development at a workshop held at the Endowed College at Hopuhopu in 2002. They were given insights into the results of the Te Kotahitanga study and offered ways of implementing the Effective Teaching Profile that had been developed in the earlier study. After the professional development workshop the teachers were observed in-class and provided with follow-up sessions on the new learning (as practiced in class).

Phase IIa

Phase IIa continues the research/professional development initiative in one secondary school and one intermediate school which both took part in Phase II of Te Kotahitanga.

Phase III: Whanaungatanga

The third phase of the project, Whanaungatanga, again seeks to improve Maori students' academic achievement. This project will utilise the best lessons learned from phases I and II and implement them in 12 more New Zealand schools. This phase involves nearly 400 teachers and more than 10000 students.

Phase IV: Current Phase

The overall aim of this project has been to investigate how to improve the educational achievement of Maori students in mainstream secondary school classrooms. From the theoretical position of Kaupapa Maori research, and an examination of appropriate Maori cultural metaphors, we suggested that this will be accomplished when educators create learning contexts within their classroom; 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. We termed this pedagogy a Culturally Responsive Pedagogy of Relations.

To examine what this pedagogy might look like in practice, in 2001 the research team developed an Effective Teaching Profile (ETP), the design guided and shaped by experiences of Maori students, their whanau, principals and teachers. Fundamental to the ETP is teachers understanding the need to explicitly reject deficit theorising as a means of explaining Maori students' educational achievement levels, and their taking an agentic position in their theorising about their practice. That is, practitioners expressing their professional commitment and responsibility to bringing about change in Maori

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 culturally located individuals; 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 learning outcomes that in turn lead to improvements in Maori student achievement and they share this knowledge with the students.

A research programme was conducted to measure the impact of the professional development intervention. We began this research by asking what happens when the Effective Teaching Profile (ETP) is implemented in mainstream secondary classrooms. 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