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A large, stylized yellow ribbon graphic with a black outline, winding across the purple background. The ribbon starts on the left, curves down, then up, then down again, ending on the right. It is partially overlaid by a white and black striped graphic that resembles a staircase or a series of arches.

WAIKATO JOURNAL OF EDUCATION TE HAUTAKA MĀTAURANGA O WAIKATO

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Volume 17, Issue 2, 2012

Introduction

Margie Kahukura Hōhepa and Richard Hill 3

Special Section: Māori Education

Culturally located assessment in early childhood education
Lesley Rameka 7

Restoring honour: Māori students and a Māori teacher reflect
Renée Gilgen 23

Lessons from children in Māori medium for teachers: Encouraging greater efficiency when learning to multiply
Ngārewa Hāwera and Meryl Taylor 37

Te Reo Tātai: Te Rēhita Motuhake o te Ako (Specialised Language Register of Learning and Teaching: Mathematics)
Tony Trinick and Hemi Dale 51

Ngā Whanaketanga: Minimising contradictions and maximising opportunities for teacher learning
Margie Kahukura Hohepa and Cath R. Rau 67

General Section

Responsive socio-cultural contexts: Supporting five year olds to become literate in a second language
Mere Berryman, Paul Woller and Riria McDonald 79



Introduction

Margie Kahukura Hōhepa and Richard Hill

Faculty of Education
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E ngā iwi, e ngā mana, e ngā reo, e ngā kaipānui o ngā tuhinga e whai nei, tēnā rawa atu koutou katoa. E ngā kaiako katoa, tēnā hoki koutou. Tae ki te tōnga o te rā ko koutou hei mahi nui tonu ki ngā taha o ngā ākongā kia tūtuki noa ngā wawata. Ko te tumanako kia ū, kia mau, kia kaha tonu koutou. E kore e mutu ngā mihi.

This issue of the *Waikato Journal of Education* contains a special section on Māori education with a particular focus on Māori teachers. It is probably not surprising that the articles focus on areas relating to assessment, cultural responsiveness, pāngarau (mathematics), and national standards. At present these are either key priorities of government policy directions in education or “high interest” areas across our national education system. The section also includes a first for the journal—an article written in te reo Māori. We acknowledge and thank Dr Koro Ngāpō for his valuable support and assistance with te reo Māori editing—e te rangatira, ka mihi.

In the latter years of the twentieth century a number of writings, some arguably seminal, emerged describing experiences of Māori teachers (see for example, Marks, 1984; McNaughton, 1991; Ministry of Education, 1999; Mitchell & Mitchell, 1993). These works indicated that Māori teachers’ cultural identity and Māori cultural activities were often fundamental to their professional practice and experiences. While it can be said that Māori teachers generally viewed their Māori cultural identity in a positive light, Mitchell and Mitchell identified the kinds of “difficulties many Māori teachers faced in being Māori in an otherwise non-Māori school environment” (p. iii), while Marks likened working as a te reo Māori teacher to being invited to be a mourner at the tangihanga (funeral) of your culture and your language.

Today there is a strong corpus of international literature that examines effective teaching of students from diverse social and cultural backgrounds (Gay, 2010). In Aotearoa New Zealand the study of teacher practice also contributes to efforts to improve educational experiences and outcomes for diverse students (Alton-Lee, 2003; Hattie, 2009). This growing body of research literature also provides important messages about teaching students who are Māori (see also Bishop & Berryman, 2006; Whitinui, 2011). While the social and cultural backgrounds of Māori students are often pivotal to examinations of teacher effectiveness, the focus tends to be on generic teacher characteristics and teaching practices that might make a difference to Māori



student learning. There is relatively less literature that examines developments and issues pertaining to teachers who are Māori.

There are, however, a few researchers who are considering the experiences of Māori teachers as Māori. A recent doctoral study has investigated how five successful Māori secondary teachers were able to bring a quality to their practice that is not captured well, if at all, in standard approaches to identifying quality teaching. The thesis examines how these teachers source their work deeply in who they are as Māori (Lee, 2008). It is hoped that the five articles in this special section will also help to provide more insights into the professional lives and experiences of Māori teachers.

The five articles present information relevant not only to Māori teachers, but also to all teachers and to others working across a range of contexts in Aotearoa-New Zealand's education system. These contexts include Māori medium early childhood settings, as well as Kura Kaupapa Māori, Māori medium and English medium classrooms in the primary school sector. The articles unpack some of the ways that Māori teachers have made, or might make, headway in their respective educational contexts to improve teaching and learning for mainly Māori learners.

Lesley Rameka's article focuses on how Kaupapa Māori principles can be successfully used as a transformative process for assessment in the early childhood sector. Using a case study research approach, Rameka explains the key tenets of Kaupapa Māori assessment before providing evidence on how Māori staff at three Māori medium early childhood centres translate Kaupapa Māori into meaningful assessment practices. The underlying finding Rameka reaches is that using Kaupapa Māori principles locates Māori ways of knowing at the centre, which then provides a path towards meaningfully assessing Māori students.

While the majority of teachers in Māori medium settings are Māori, there are numerically more Māori teachers in the English medium teaching workforce. Renee Gilgen's article provides an insight into the work of a Māori teacher in an English medium primary school. Renee examines critically the assumption that Māori students would relate to her more easily as a Māori teacher. Drawing on findings from a study of Māori student reflections, she then discusses how the introduction of Māori practices of hui into regular classroom life provided a context for power sharing and helped to improve classroom relationships and learning.

Ngārewa Hawera and Marilyn Taylor's article focuses on mathematics and provides insight into the strategies that Māori-English bilingual students use when solving multiplication tasks. The article underlines the need for Māori medium teachers to develop overt teaching practices that promote the development of efficient strategies and appropriate number knowledge. Their project, in which Year 7–8 students in four Māori medium immersion schools were interviewed, found that the students were able to engage and use several strategies to solve the task. However, they needed help to make stronger connections between the mathematical thinking required for the task and the language to solve it.

Staying with the subject of mathematics in Māori medium education, Tony Trinick and Hemi Dale's article focuses on the important area within Māori medium education of teachers' learning and teaching of specialist vocabulary in mathematics education. In Māori medium contexts, where teachers are often second language learners of Māori learning and teaching, mathematics registers can be challenging. Using Kaupapa Māori research principles, Trinick and Dale interviewed teachers in two schools to find out

what processes and strategies they used to learn and teach mathematics-related vocabulary. This article, which is written in te reo Māori, reinforces that not only do teachers need to be confident in their pedagogical knowledge, they should also have high levels of Māori language proficiency to be effective mathematics teachers in Māori medium education.

The following article builds on the theme of teacher pedagogical knowledge. Margie Hōhepa and Cath Rau focus on the development of “Ngā Whanaketanga”, the equivalent of the National standards for Māori medium contexts that are implementing the curriculum document “Te Marautanga o Aotearoa”. The authors discuss the development of the Whanaketanga and how the developers addressed key challenges along the way. Drawing on findings from a project carried out on information gathering and revision work on the Whanaketanga, they examine how its development, while challenging, also provided rich opportunities for Māori medium teacher professional learning and development.

The remaining article in this issue also picks up on the theme of teaching in Māori immersion contexts. Mere Berryman, Paul Woller and Riria McDonald discuss a Māori language resource, TATA, designed to increase phonological awareness of young second language learners of Māori. The article reports on findings from a study of its use in a Māori immersion new entrant classroom, which showed that the resource helped to improve students phonological knowledge, along with their confidence and ability in speaking te reo Māori.

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