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THE EFFECTIVENESS OF A MĀORI-FOCUSSED TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMME

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He whakataau

*Papaki kau ana ngā tai, o Te Taihauauru
Tangi rere ana ngā hau uru moana ki runga i Te One o Te Taharoa
Tau ana ngāwhare tuupuna o Auaukiterangi, Te Ohaki me Te Taharoa
Ki runga i Ngā marae o Maketu Kawhia, Te Koraha Taharoa me Aruka Taharoa
Huri taiawhio ko ngā uri o Ngāti Mahuta ki Te Hauauru.*

*Ko te Kaihanga e korowai whakakotahi nei i a tatou katoa
E whakahonore nei ahau i tooku arikinui a Te Atairangikahu
Pupu tonu ana te tangi hotuhotu moo rātou kua okioki ki tua o Paerau
Me apiti hono atu ratou kua okioki ki te anu matao, ki a ratou,
Me apiti hono tātou te hunga kiokio ki a tātou.*

Timatanga

Kaua e tere rawa ki te ngau i te ringa kei te whangai i a koe.

This paper describes a research project which attempted to assess the effectiveness of a three-year teacher education programme. The Whānau Rūmaki teacher education programme is a Māori immersion teacher education programme for the training of beginning teachers and it led at that time to the award of the Diploma of Teaching. This teacher education programme was evaluated by participating Māori teacher trainees at the Kura Toi Tangata, Whare Wananga o Waikato (School of Education of the University of Waikato). The study sought responses from the first cohort of students enrolled in the Whānau Rūmaki teacher education programme from 1990 - 1992.

The Whānau Rūmaki teacher education programme was initiated in 1990 by Te Kura Toi Tangata to prepare primary school teachers who would be sufficiently fluent in te reo Māori to be able to deliver the national curriculum in Māori. The target schools were bilingual units in bilingual schools, bilingual schools and Kura Kaupapa.

Māori Education and the Māori Language in the Past Two Decades

The data gathered in successive socio-linguistic surveys since the publication of Richard Benton's (1979) survey have painted an increasingly grim picture of what is happening in Māori society. Māori as a living language was shown to be in danger of extinction. Benton, for example estimated that only 15% of the a

population spoke te reo Māori with any degree of fluency. Jeffrey Waite (1992) estimated the number of fluent speakers of Māori at around 50,000, approximately 12% of the Māori population, and many were middle aged or older. A further survey conducted in 1995 by Te Taura Whiri (the Māori Language Commission, 1996) showed that the majority (59%) of the adult Māori population speak some Māori. However, of those who speak some Māori, only 8% were in the high fluency category with a further 8% identified in the medium and 43% in the low fluency category.

These surveys indicate a continuing decline in the number of fluent adult Māori speakers. To save the language and with it the unique culture of the Māori, policies and processes to revitalise its teaching and learning are urgently needed.

Since the late 1970s, teachers in training were encouraged to include courses in Māori studies in their study programmes. These were, however, largely cosmetic in nature and did not address the real problem confronting Māori communities. This was the lack of teachers able to teach in te reo Māori and to interpret the national curriculum in a culturally appropriate and understanding way. Bernard Spolsky (1987), an Israel-based scholar, pointed out to the Department of Education - itself on the verge of extinction - that to make up for the shortfall of linguistically able teachers, 100 such people had to be trained each year for 10 years.

Because of the lack of official action, it was left to Māori communities to take the initiatives which are noteworthy because of their "ripple" effect. The Ruatoki School bilingual experiment, Te Kohanga Reo movement and Te Kura Kaupapa Māori development are examples.

Hamilton Teachers College Whānau Kākano Rua Teacher Education Programme

By 1988 a group of staff at the Hamilton Teachers College had become increasingly concerned that the College was not meeting its obligations to the Māori-speaking children in the schools in our region. By this time graduates from Kohanga Reo were entering primary schools in large numbers in the greater Waikato region. The Hamilton Teachers College therefore offered a Whānau Kākano Rua option. Entry to this variant of the regular three-year teacher education course was restricted to students with some fluency in Māori.

The Whānau Kākano Rua teacher education programme package included six te reo Māori papers and four other papers which were taught through te reo Māori. However, the rest of the papers were taught in English. Students who opted to join this group were also able to spend one of their three teaching practicum in a bilingual unit in a bilingual school or in a bilingual school.

The Whānau Kākano Rua teacher education programme was useful and reasonably popular with its students and Māori communities but it was not adequate in preparing teachers to work in Kura Kaupapa Māori schools or total immersion Māori classrooms. Hamilton Teachers College (soon to become Te Kura Toi Tangata o Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato) accepted the challenge presented by the Kura Kaupapa Māori movement and introduced a new approach in 1990 called the Whānau Rūmaki as a means of preparing teachers to work in primary

schools where te reo Māori was the dominant language and medium of instruction.

Te Kura Toi Tangata o Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato Whānau Rūmaki Teacher Education Programme

This Whānau Rūmaki teacher education programme started in 1990 and the recruits for the programme came from a variety of backgrounds and through a number of recruiting options. Some entered through the normal recruitment channels that were available to all Te Kura Toi Tangata applicants and some through planned and vigorous recruitment programmes which focussed on selected rural areas. The selected rural recruitment programmes were followed up with interviews in those particular areas because many recruits were unable or unprepared to travel to Hamilton for an interview. There were many reasons why these individuals from these particular rural areas did not favour travelling to Hamilton for an interview. Many were older students and already had family and iwi commitments in their particular areas, many found the idea of an interview out of their own particular rural area rather daunting and possibly frightening, many were still frightened by the thought of learning in a large city institution and the interview in Hamilton would be the first time that many would venture out of their particular rural area. Also recruited into the programme were people who were already in schools as kaiarahi reo and kaiawhina.

This Whānau Rūmaki teacher education programme package included six te reo Māori papers along with curriculum papers taught through te reo Māori. (However, it was not always possible to find an appropriate kaiako to do the teaching in te reo Māori.) Students opted to join a single cohort group which encouraged the use of te reo Māori and included the offer of spending two or all three of their three teaching practicums in a total immersion Māori unit or a Kura Kaupapa Māori.

The main difference between the students of the earlier development of the Whānau Kakano Rua and their Whānau Rūmaki counterparts was that the Whānau Rūmaki recruits had to be fluent or have a reasonable level of fluency in te reo Māori on entry to the programme. They also had to have the ability to pass Māori language papers at stage 3 level.

Rationale, Research Design and Participants

Because the first graduates of the Whānau Rūmaki teacher education programme began teaching in 1993, it was thought that by 1995 it was timely to analyse their reactions to both their course of study and to their experiences as first year teachers. It was hoped that this process would provide useful information to us as organisers and lecturers within the programme for improving the structure and the form of delivery.

Other areas that were to be covered in the research were the levels of academic success the Whānau Rūmaki students enjoyed during their time in the University and the reasons why some were less successful than others. Of particular interest to us in the programme was a possible insight into the causes of withdrawal. Further, because the Whānau Rūmaki teacher education programme was of strong interest to Māori people and a positive development in Māori

education, it was appropriate that the project should be conducted by someone of Māori descent.

Of the 45 Whānau Rūmaki members contacted by mail, four did not respond (the researcher assumes that they got their correspondence but were not interested in participating) and the letters to three members were returned. These presumably came into the "gone, no address" category. That left 38 agreeing to participate. Information was gathered from all 38 participants and 10 participants were also selected to be interviewed in depth.

Positive Aspects Identified by Participants

There were many positive aspects of the course identified by the former members of the Whānau Rūmaki course in preparing them for their first year of teaching. The comments ranged from stating that the programme had enabled them as participants to gain appropriate teaching qualifications recognised throughout Aotearoa New Zealand; had exposed them to many important elements and had prepared them well for managing and organising children; had maintained an interesting and motivating learning environment; had delivered many of the curriculum areas through the medium of te reo Māori. As a result of participation in the course, students felt that they were able to engage effectively in short and long term planning; able to plan in an integrated manner across the curriculum and to take into account the needs of individual pupils; able to improve their own competency in te reo Māori (a point made by many of the fluent speakers), able to enjoy the pleasure of working with Māori children; able to benefit from working in a collective group (which encouraged working together, supporting one another and being rewarded together); able to increase their assessment and evaluation skills and knowledge.

Concerns Identified by Participants

The aspects of the Whānau Rūmaki teacher education programme that were of concern to some of the former Whānau Rūmaki course. Some felt there was a need to: spend more time with integrating common themes across the curriculum areas; develop information and knowledge of assessment; learn more about evaluation and diagnostic testing (a minority complaint); get further assistance in teaching in immersion Māori situations using Māori philosophy and Māori pedagogy; assist with improving of the lack of appropriate te reo Māori resources; seek more discussion and more opportunities of trialing the Curriculum Framework and the curriculum documents. (Curriculum Framework and curriculum documents first came out in 1993 and this particular comment was made by three Whānau Rūmaki members who started their first year of teaching in 1993.)

How the Programme May be Improved

The former course members gave us some clear guidelines for course development and improvement. Future Whānau Rūmaki programme should include papers on Māori philosophy and Māori pedagogy which in turn will validate Māori information and Māori knowledge and papers on Māori perspectives of assessment, evaluation and diagnostic testing. There is a need for more effort to ensure that all papers are delivered through the medium of Māori

for the duration of the three or four year programme. Special attention needs to be paid to Kura Kaupapa Māori policies and politics. Finally there may need to be an interchange of kaiako lecturing in the programme with kaiako in the field.

Conclusion

In contrast to many Māori graduates of mainstream programmes, all of the 38 former Whānau Rūmaki members surveyed continue to teach or work in educational institutions teaching mainly through the medium of te reo Māori. There is considerable evidence that all Whānau Rūmaki graduates are working and delivering competently because by and large the school communities are happy with their performance. This is vital because schools and communities need teachers and education workers who possess the skills and training offered in the Whānau Rūmaki programme. Further, we in the programme need to continue our dialogue with former students, schools and parents to continually improve the Whānau Rūmaki programme. Finally, the valuable contribution that all former 38 Whānau Rūmaki members are making to the education profession needs to be widely affirmed.

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