

Reflective piece

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MĀ TE MĀTAURANGA MĀORI, KA HĀRO TE MANU, KA MANUKURA:
A JOURNEY OF INDIGENOUS RECLAMATION AND CELEBRATION
IN TERTIARY EDUCATION

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MĀ TE MĀTAURANGA MĀORI, KA HĀRO TE MANU, KA MANUKURA: A JOURNEY OF INDIGENOUS RECLAMATION AND CELEBRATION IN TERTIARY EDUCATION

Kay-Lee Jones and Raheera Cowie

INTRODUCTION

Mā te huruhuru, ka rere te manu, is a well-known Māori proverb meaning “Adorned with feathers, the bird is able to fly.” As Indigenous educators, we know our pre-service teachers come to us already adorned with beautiful feathers, grown out of whānau (family) and cultural knowledge and passed down through the generations. We as teacher educators are merely adding another layer of feathers to support their flight towards high-quality, culturally empowering teaching of future generations. Co-author of this article Raheera Cowie has elevated this whakataukī (proverb) as follows: Mā te mātauranga Māori, ka hāro te manu, ka manukura, meaning “Through acquiring Māori knowledge, the bird will soar (in its own unique beauty), readying itself to lead others.”

This year has seen the establishment of a new Mātauranga Māori teaching qualification at the University of Canterbury. The establishment of a Mātauranga Māori Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programme in Te Waipounamu (the South Island of New Zealand), founded on Indigenous Māori knowledges, kaupapa Māori perspectives (Māori approaches), and Māori language, supports culturally imbued teaching and normalisation of place-based education.

Nurturing our ITE pre-service teachers through prioritising Indigenous Māori knowledge is long overdue in our takiwā (area). It brings forth the questions: what might teaching excellence look like, sound like, and feel like when privileging mātauranga Māori? And how can these insights gained from mātauranga Māori enhance ITE and tertiary education more widely?

This reflective piece aims to address the questions above whilst delving into the marginalisation of Māori knowledge systems in tertiary education. The text specifically explores our Mātauranga Māori ITE endorsement, a programme designed to grow the pool of quality Māori teachers and Māori-speaking teachers in the region. The authors of this piece are both teachers in the programme and have provided insight into course design. Their roles as teachers within the programme, however, inherently introduce limitations. Consequently, this work represents an opinion piece grounded in their perceptions and observations, rendering it evaluative in nature.

In 2020, the lead author, Kay-Lee Jones, was a recipient of an Ako Aotearoa Teaching Excellence Award in the Kaupapa Māori category. The Ako Aotearoa Tertiary Teaching Kaupapa Māori Excellence Awards criteria (Ratima et al., 2022) are used in this reflective piece as a framework to unpack the attributes of the Mātauranga Māori ITE programme. The criteria for the Kaupapa Māori Excellence award were also foundational to *Ngā Hau e Whā o Tāwhirimātea: Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning for the Tertiary Sector* (Ratima et al., 2022), a practical guide to culturally empowering practice in the tertiary sector.

Mātauranga Māori, the knowledge system of the Indigenous people of Aotearoa New Zealand, embodies a profound interconnectedness to the land, its people (past and present), and the creation of all things. Grounded

in oral tradition and thorough observation and interaction with the natural environment, mātauranga Māori encompasses a rich fabric of wisdom that can support the way we live and learn today. Here, we explore the necessity of place-based learning in ITE, and how Indigenous knowledge(s) in a traditional and contemporary sense can enhance tertiary learning. By embracing place-based education and affirming te reo Māori me ōna tikanga (Māori language and protocols), we highlight the perceptiveness of our ancestors and cultivate a more inclusive and sustainable future, one that honours the articles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

MĀTAURANGA MĀORI

Mātauranga Māori is a contemporary term; the knowledge that sits under the umbrella of mātauranga Māori is both historical and modern (Mead, 2017; Royal, 2009). Mātauranga Māori is a deep consciousness, pertaining to connections between us as humans and te aotūroa (the natural world). “Indigenous knowledge of, and connection to land and marine environments, which is transmitted intergenerationally, offers deep temporal and spatial insights” (McAllister et al., 2020, p. 2). The interconnectedness extends to animals, insects, and birds as well as to spiritual realms and atua Māori (Māori deities). Hutchings (cited in Rauika Māngai, 2020, p. 14) states that “the survival and expansion of mātauranga Māori will be determined by our ability as Māori, whānau, hapū and iwi to contribute to its continuing development as a living, vibrant and dynamic knowledge system that shapes our lives.”

The transfer of endemic traditional knowledge occurred through oral means, both formal and informal. This was in the form of pūrākau (narratives), waiata (song) and chants as well as non-oral forms including tukutuku (woven lattice) panels, carvings, and other artforms (Lee-Morgan, 2009). Worldview and cultural codes are also part of mātauranga Māori (Lee-Morgan, 2009). Oral transmission of knowledge is evident in many Indigenous cultures across the globe.

Place-based learning is normalised in Kura Kaupapa Māori (Māori immersion schooling) in Aotearoa New Zealand. Māori traditional practices and te ao Māori (Māori world) values are also embedded in these Māori immersion settings (Tocker, 2012). Central to mātauranga Māori is the concept of whakapapa (ancestry), and intergenerational knowledge transfer. Place-based, experiential learning experiences are also foundational to Hawaiian culture-based schools, and these have proven positive impacts on holistic learner wellbeing (Alencastre, 2015). Manning (2016) asserts the importance of educators not merely being ‘passive observers’ in regard to place-based education, but rather strongly familiarising themselves with local whānau and iwi narratives, and creatively integrating these into teaching and learning experiences.

In Aotearoa New Zealand, our colonial history included assimilationist parliamentary Acts that worked to eradicate Māori ways of being and knowing in education and society (Jones, 2022). Western forms of schooling have been central to the demise of Māori language and culture, and the marginalisation of accompanying knowledge systems (Simon, 1998; Simon & Smith, 2001). Indigenous communities globally experienced colonial schooling systems purposely imposed on Indigenous peoples in their own lands (Pihama & Lee-Morgan, 2019). Our current education system was founded on racist policies (Hetaraka, 2022; Jones, 2022).

At the heart of mātauranga Māori lies te reo Māori, the Māori language, which serves as a vessel for preserving and transmitting knowledge. Royal (2019) explains that mātauranga Māori, including te reo Māori, is in a state of rejuvenation; although many aspects of Indigenous knowledge were lost, and mere fragments remain today, those that do remain are in a new and innovative period.

“Kaitiakitanga is mātauranga Māori, which is taonga tuku iho [ancestral knowledge passed down through generations], replete with mana [authority; prestige] and rangatiratanga [chiefly autonomy; right to exercise authority] and distinct from any other body of knowledge” (Beverland, 2022, p. 213). Kaitiakitanga is often these days connected to themes of sustainability, and land and resource care and protection, although its roots are

deeper and integrate themes of guardianship and nurture. An Indigenous Māori understanding of kaitiakitanga has hapū and iwi (subtribal and tribal) affiliations, and a non-Māori version of kaitiakitanga may be understood quite differently (Beverland, 2022).

OUR MĀTAURANGA MĀORI ITE PROGRAMME

Kaitiakitanga is not an obligation which we choose to adopt or to ignore; it is an inherited commitment that links mana atua, mana tangata and mana whenua, the spiritual realm with the human world and both of those with the earth and all that is on it. (Selby et al., 2010, p. 11)

As stated in the previous section, kaitiakitanga is mātauranga Māori. In the paragraph above from Selby and colleagues, mana atua, mana tangata, and mana whenua describe the deep-set connection between the physical and metaphysical realms. The notions of mana atua, mana tangata, and mana whenua are also present in Aotearoa New Zealand's bicultural early childhood curriculum, Te Whāriki (Ministry of Education, 2017). In this curriculum, mana atua refers to wellbeing, mana whenua relates to belonging, and mana tangata is contribution. The additional strands in this early childhood curriculum are mana reo (communication) and mana aotūroa (exploration). In the development and design phase of our programme, we engaged with kaiako (teachers), tumuaki (principals), kaiārahi (leaders), kaumātua (elders), and representatives from iwi and the community. Although our programme was always envisaged to be a dual-sector ITE degree, where graduates could teach in either early childhood or primary settings, it was the bicultural foundation of Te Whāriki (2017) that greatly influenced the programme design and structure. In fact, a Māori immersion primary school kaiako involved in the consultation phase explained that the bicultural, bilingual nature of Te Whāriki (2017) is good for all teaching and learning sectors, and should be the founding curriculum for our tohu (qualification). Ultimately, four ITE courses within our Mātauranga Māori teaching degree were named Mana Whenua, Mana Tangata, Mana Atua, and Mana Reo. There were other, additional courses. We will concentrate on the courses Mana Whenua and Mana Atua in sharing some reflections pertaining to the unique intricacies of our programme. First, however, an introduction to our programme will follow.

We are based in Te Waipounamu, the South Island of New Zealand, and our students come with a multitude of connections to our wider community of kura (schools), marae (a place where formal gatherings and discussions occur), and hapū (subtribes). Many of our students have been engaged with Kotahi Mano Kāika (KMK), the Kāi Tahu (South Island tribe) strategy for language revitalisation. KMK provides resources and wānanga (learning sessions) that many of our students have participated in. Some of our students have grown up in te reo Māori speaking homes, with some now teaching Te Ahu o te Reo which is designed to improve te reo Māori teacher competency across the education sector. The students are walking the talk of tuākana-tēina, in which the older and more capable teach the younger and less capable and vice versa, by teaching the teachers and senior staff of local schools in the community Māori language. It is not uncommon to see the men from the pre-service teacher cohort called on to speak on the paepae (orators' bench) for our local marae.

Reclamation and acquisition of te reo Māori is integral to our approach as we seek support students' success. Being responsive to student needs means also providing te reo Māori lessons that are appropriate for tēina, at the beginning of their language journey, and tuākana lessons for those that are able to operate in a rumaki (immersive) setting. Local pūrākau, whakatauki, and history are highlighted. As staff, kaupapa (initiatives) such as kura reo (total immersion language seminars for beginner to advanced speakers of te reo Māori), help to develop our own language proficiency. Kura Reo Kāi Tahu and Kura Reo Te Wai Pounamu (immersion classes for advanced te reo Māori learners/speakers) also help us to connect with the wider Māori language speaking community. As teacher educators, and almost all second language learners ourselves, we need to make ongoing improvements in our own language competency to keep pace with the graduates of kura kaupapa Māori and other language learning environments who come to us as students.

In the South Island of New Zealand, there is a dire need to increase the number of Māori-speaking teachers and teachers who have whakapapa Māori (Māori ancestry). The teacher shortage extends to English-medium education and across the whole of Aotearoa New Zealand (Dunn, 2024). Across the country, 12 percent of teachers have Māori ancestry, and a mere four percent have ancestry from the Pacific (Ministry of Education, 2024). Our cohort is different: we have one student of Greek ancestry, one of Tongan-Māori ancestry, four Samoan students, and the remainder of our cohort of 24 are Māori. Our demographic is unique, and in every way we aim to celebrate their uniqueness and empower them through cultural identity and whakapapa.

Mana Atua, underpinned by cultural empowerment, is taught every year of our three-year programme. Themes of holistic well-being are interwoven through Mana Atua, founded on the dimensions of Durie's (1984) *Te Whare Tapa Whā*. Mana Atua Tipuranga Tamaiti is the full name of the course, and it explores pēpi (baby) and tamaiti (child) development through a kaupapa Māori lens. Atua Māori (Māori deities) and tūpuna (ancestors) of students in our class are linked to students' own pūmanawa (talents and attributes) to emphasise a sense of belonging and whanaungatanga (relationships).

Mana Whenua explores knowledge systems that stem from the taiao (environment), connected to the whenua (land) and wai (waterways). Mahinga kai (traditional food gathering and cultivation) practices, māra kai (gardening), Maramataka (the Māori lunar calendar), Indigenous food sources, and tikanga Māori are researched, explored, and enacted in this paper. Through our Mana Whenua course, pre-service teachers are engaged in place-based learning, following the trails of our tūpuna, as well as learning the cultural narratives that connect us to the land and waterways. The traditional knowledge(s) of our tūpuna give guidance towards a sustainable future for our tamariki and mokopuna (children and grandchildren). Both the Mana Atua and Mana Whenua courses are taught bilingually, with the aim of full-immersion delivery and assessment.

AKO AOTEAROA KAUPAPA MĀORI TEACHING EXCELLENCE CRITERIA

Ako Aotearoa are a body who support the tertiary sector towards improved learner success through professional learning and development. They developed criteria to measure tertiary teaching excellence within a kaupapa Māori paradigm (Ratima et al., 2022). Due to our country's bicultural origins, and Te Tiriti o Waitangi being foundational to Aotearoa New Zealand's education system, we believe these criteria are appropriate for all tertiary teachers and teaching environments. The criteria are included in *Ngā Hau e Whā o Tāwhirimātea: Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning for the Tertiary Sector* (Ratima et al., 2022). They are based on traditional Māori pedagogies (Hemara, 2000) and also contemporary ways of teaching and learning founded on Māori values and principles.

1. Ako – Teaching and Learning. Teaching and learning are based on reciprocity. Teacher-to-student relationships are strong, and learners' prior knowledge is welcome in the learning environment.
2. Wānangatanga – Knowledge. Teaching includes and promotes Māori- and/or iwi-centred knowledge, perspectives, and worldviews, including mātauranga Māori.
3. Ngā Uara – Values. Whakamanatanga and whakarangatiranga are means to empower learners/learning and communities, teaching by creating a student-centred environment.
4. Whanaungatanga – Relationships. Teaching develops and maintains strong relationships with learners, colleagues, whānau, hapū, iwi, and community.
5. Manatanga – Leadership. Leadership in teaching is expressed through contribution to te ao Māori, to New Zealand society or to the international Indigenous-knowledge context.
6. Mātaki | Taunaki – Evaluation of Excellence in Teaching and Learning. Teaching incorporates a cycle of reflective practice drawing on peer review, awareness of evidence-based best practice, self-reflection, student feedback, formal internal and external systems of evaluation, and institutional review, to develop and improve on practice (Ratima et al., 2022, p. 13).

These criteria are used as a framework to consider what teaching excellence might look like, sound like, and feel like when Mātauranga Māori is privileged, and how these insights might enhance ITE and tertiary education more widely. Our reflections on the criteria follow below.

NGĀ WHAKAARO HOU | REFLECTIONS

Ako – Teaching and learning are based on reciprocity, and Wānangatanga – Knowledge. Teaching includes and promotes Māori- and/or iwi-centred knowledge

The Mana Whenua course delivery ensures we walk the paths of our tūpuna and take time to breathe in the taiao. Pūrākau are a powerful way to deepen student awareness of mātauranga Māori, and, through pūrākau, the whakapapa of native birds and indigenous plants can be explored. It is our role as teacher educators to connect this ancestral knowledge to current curriculum documents. The physical activity of climbing mountains and walking tracks in the Waitaha (Canterbury) region pushed our taura (students) out of their comfort zones. This was a good experience for our pre-service teachers; we ask our tamariki to step out of their comfort zones regularly and take risks. As our pre-service teachers became more familiar with place-based stories, histories, and genealogies of flora and fauna, they too were expected to lead the learning, and teach their peers. Utu, or the notion of reciprocity and balance, is prevalent within te ao Māori, and is also enacted and encouraged in teaching and learning environments across the sector.

Ngā Uara – Values. Whakamanatanga and whakarangatiranga (empowering learners and communities)

Kāi Huru Manu (Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu, 2023) is a Ngāi Tahu Indigenous online cultural mapping atlas. It is a resource that provides traditional names and histories associated with place names across the Kāi Tahu region, which lies dominantly in the South Island of New Zealand. This is an invaluable resource for educators, learners, and everyone. Its collection is a window into the huge work of the local people to prioritise intergenerational iwi-specific knowledge. As lecturers, we endeavour to embed these kōrero (conversations/discussions) into our courses and to attend iwi-specific wānanga to continue to develop our own mātauranga. We as a teaching team are continually trying to grow, develop, and build our own knowledge and create culturally empowering and localised content that our pre-service teachers can connect to, and adapt to teach their ākonga (learners). Through sharing histories of place and people, we are empowering local iwi and hapū narratives and keeping these alive. Our students consider ways in which to create contemporary learning experiences, integrating different subject areas, from traditional stories that have relevance today. Due to our programme being situated in Te Waipounamu, and being the only Mātauranga Māori teaching programme in the South Island, many of our students have ancestral links to Kāi Tahu. Therefore, the histories we embed in the programme empower our own pre-service teachers, as they can culturally locate themselves in our space.

Whanaungatanga – Relationships, and Manatanga – Leadership

Teaching and learning in and through waiata and haka (Māori posture dance) promote Māori language revitalisation and holistic wellbeing. “Kapa haka (Māori performing arts) ... can be an ultimate healing pathway ... And it's the ultimate way to re-indigenise our lives” (Tamihere-Waititi, cited in Leatinu'u, 2023). Kapa haka is an area where students have demonstrated teaching excellence, through tutoring kura (school) performances, writing waiata and, in the case of many students, successfully performing in regional senior kapa haka competitions. Three students helped their teams qualify for the national competition and hope to represent Waitaha (Canterbury) in 2025. Learning and practising waiata form the foundation of whanaungatanga (relationship building) in our wānanga (learning sessions) and on noho marae (marae stay experiences). It is important that we are familiar with the Kāi Tahu anthems, waiata Hamoa (Samoan waiata), and other well-known, go-to iwi songs, to have a

repertoire of waiata for formal occasions. Students know they can pick up the guitar and sing their hearts out in our lessons, which can enhance the learning and contribute to the well-being of students and staff. This was evident at a recent tangihanga (funeral) that our staff and students attended, where they performed a kapa haka bracket.

In an English medium (predominantly English speaking), mainstream setting, one might wonder, how is this teaching excellence or leadership? Students took the time to attend the tangihanga of their own accord in the term break. They organised koha (a gift of money or other gift); they organised a set of appropriate waiata to acknowledge the whānau pani (family of the deceased), and more than one of the male students used formal te reo Māori oratory to acknowledge and uplift the grieving family. Waiata were sung in a way that showed aroha (love, empathy) and manaaki (respect and care). We believe the group's understanding of tikanga Māori, through their own knowledge and through their immersion in te ao Māori through the ITE programme, enhanced their leadership in this space. We believe the enactment of waiata and kapa haka will enhance their ability to become excellent teachers for their future ākonga, through their growth in confidence and knowledge within te ao Māori. Kapa haka provides a space to be culturally confident, and to celebrate being Māori. It is a culturally connected activity that supports academic success (Leatinu'u, 2023; Whitinui, 2008).

Mātaki | Taunaki – Evaluation of excellence in teaching and learning

All but one of our current Mātauranga Māori cohort work as kaiāwhina, in a teaching assistant role, or kaiārahi i te reo, leading te reo Māori me ōna tikanga in classrooms, or are LATs (teaching staff who have a Limited Authority to Teach). This is a unique and beneficial feature of our programme. Most ākonga came into the programme while in their current teaching or teaching support roles, and some have become LATs or kaiāwhina during the course of their degree. This speaks to the fact that these kaiako are extremely sought after: having strong proficiency in te reo Māori me ōna tikanga is a highly valued skill in education. According to some anecdotal associate teacher and mentor teacher feedback, the expertise, confidence, and skill with which some of these kaiako whakangungu (teacher trainees) enter our programme surpass those of other teachers. They are already confident in their role, and their teacher presence is somewhat instilled from the outset. In terms of reflective and evaluative practice, our kaiako whakangungu are able to learn collaboratively through wānanga (traditional forum for discussion and learning) for one full day per week, and in a noho marae experience twice per year. They can potentially take the learning from the wānanga straight into the early learning centre or classroom. This is a cyclical process where pre-service teachers can learn, reflect, trial, evaluate; learn, reflect, trial, and evaluate. Reflection is ongoing, and happens repeatedly.

The lead author has taught in the tertiary sector for around 15 years, and has taught more widely across sectors from early 2000. She is of Māori ancestry, and has whakapapa from Ngāti Porou, Te Aitanga a Māhaki, and Te Whānau a Kai. She writes:

I have seen an increased acceptance from our pre-service teachers over the years to learn te reo Māori. There has been an attitude shift, from something 'we have to do' to a genuine interest and even passion. What has taken longer is understanding the history of our whenua, the inequities that sit at the heart of our education system, and how colonial systems and prejudice filter through to today. Mātauranga Māori derives here; it is a treasure, to be celebrated and to be elevated. Unfortunately, this is not yet the case in all tertiary settings. Mātauranga Māori is not an extra add-on, or after-thought; it needs to be foundational. Te reo Māori me ōna tikanga is mātauranga Māori, and mātauranga Māori is found in kupu (words), phrases, environmental terms, whakataukī, and narratives; te reo Māori can teach us about our natural environment and how to look after it and connect to it better. Mātauranga Māori is not popping a karakia at the beginning of a lesson, and/or adding a whakataukī at the top of a newsletter. Those things are misleading window dressing. Mātauranga Māori is not adding the odd Māori word into a text,

or singing the odd waiata and thinking that is enough. It involves every dimension of Te Whare Tapa Whā (Durie, 1984), with te taha wairua (a sense of spiritual connection and belonging) understood and prioritised. Mātauranga Māori in the tertiary sector, particularly in English-medium institutions, is ongoing traditional learning, and navigation. It takes everyone valuing this knowledge system, and putting this knowledge at the forefront.

NGĀ ĀHEITANGA | OPPORTUNITIES

Many tertiary institutions in Aotearoa New Zealand embed Māori values or concepts into vision statements or graduate profiles, and this notion extends to the compulsory education sector. How well all staff understand and live Māori values and concepts is unknown. How committed all teaching staff are to the explicit teaching and enactment of these in every facet of every programme is also unknown. Whanaungatanga is linked to 'relationships,' which is correct, but it means far more than that. Whanaungatanga is creating an atmosphere that can be likened to that of a whānau (family); one built upon shared responsibility and shared commitment. It involves notions of 'belonging' and 'connectedness' that go beyond the four walls of the classroom. Whanaungatanga is the safe space you create, that feels like being 'home.' This is what we endeavour to create in our Mātauranga Māori ITE programme, particularly in an institution where, we know, Māori and Pacific students have not always felt safe or connected. Whanaungatanga is closely connected to whakapapa, and how this is embodied in educational settings across our tertiary sector deserves further investigation. "Whakapapa can and should also be used as a verb as well as a noun so that it allows Māori to engage with connecting to environmental change as part of a 'bigger' family connection that connects people to the environment e.g., coastal people with the ocean" (Heke, 2014. p. 5).

It may and will take genuine authenticity, effort, openness, and humility for non-Māori to fully immerse themselves in environments that are founded on Māori values and understand them from the heart. It is different for Māori, and it is different again for Māori who are reclaiming ancestral knowledge(s), and who have elements of disconnection in their own whakapapa or identity. Mātauranga Māori is a vehicle towards Indigenous reconnection, reclamation, and re-indigenisation. Mead (2012) stresses the importance of privileging Māori knowledge systems in academic and societal discourse, challenging Western paradigms.

CONCLUSION

To conclude this piece, we return to the questions that were asked earlier. What does teaching excellence look like, sound like, and feel like when privileging Māori knowledge(s)? How can these insights enhance ITE and tertiary teaching more widely? Teaching excellence looks like the rejuvenation of traditional knowledge systems, and normalising these in a contemporary context. Teaching excellence sounds like joyous voices, chanting and reclaiming histories and traditional practices that possess moral codes that are important in today's society. Teaching excellence feels like ihi (essential force, excitement) and wehi (awe); it is wana (thrilling). When we embed the concepts ako (reciprocal teaching and learning) and wānangatanga (Māori and/or iwi-centred knowledge transfer) into our teaching environments, a culturally centred learning space will emerge, and the goal of Māori achieving as Māori may be realised. If we empower learners and their communities through cultural identity and place-based knowledges, progression and development may transpire differently, or more authentically. Whanaungatanga and creating authentic relationships and connections with the learner within the context of their whānau are key to engagement. What does 'teaching excellence' look like? It is learner engagement and learner enjoyment.

Mātauranga Māori, when taught with authenticity, humility, and ongoing investigation, can open a whole new world: te ao mārama (the world of light), which can be engaging and enjoyable. Te ao mārama signifies an enlightened approach; mātauranga Māori can offer such an enlightened approach to teaching and learning. Here,

we leave the last word to Sir Hirini Moko Mead: “What exactly was it that Māori students entering classrooms possessed that took so long for the education system to recognise? The answer was ‘mātauranga Māori’, which is Māori knowledge complete with its values and attitudes” (Mead, 2022).

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