

HŪTIA TE PUNGA

Eruera Tarena, Joe Kuntz, & Porsha London

The Aotearoa New Zealand education system is currently failing many Māori students.¹ Many Māori leave both secondary and tertiary education without qualifications, knowledge or experience, all of which correlate with reduced income, opportunities and increased social and economic harm.² Unlocking the potential of taura Māori through education systems that are culturally responsive and affirming of their identities enhances Māori achievement and increases positioning, influence and contribution to the labour market and to the Aotearoa New Zealand economy.

Hūtia te Punga is a two-year applied research project using a collaborative framework within three different education contexts in the vocational pathways space, including Otago Polytechnic. Funded in conjunction with Ako Aotearoa, Hūtia te Punga aims to build on the established practice of supporting educators to be culturally responsive practitioners with targeted Cultural Responsiveness Professional Learning and Development (CR PLD). The practice specifically focuses on shifting beliefs and practices regarding culture, while at the same time supporting institutions to adjust policies, practices, systems and mind-sets to align with contemporary approaches to culturally responsive pedagogy and student learning.

Hūtia te Punga takes an innovative approach, facilitating Māori learners to share their knowledge and experience of te ao Māori, to inform culturally responsive teaching and learning strategies, and to co-construct (with educators, industry trainers, and area specialists) responsive pedagogy that embraces, respects, and advances te ao Māori. This approach closes the loop by infusing culturally responsive practices into the education experiences of taura Māori. Tokona Te Raki, a Ngāi Tahu-led education initiative, coordinated the project as part of its portfolio of projects aimed at realising Māori potential within the Ngāi Tahu takiwā.

This research focuses specifically on the interim research findings from year-one of CR PLD implementation in Otago Polytechnic's tourism and travel programmes.

KAUPAPA MĀORI DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This kaupapa Māori case study approach draws upon mixed methods in order to assess the perspectives of participants.³ Data collection included focus groups and interviews with students and staff, professional learning and development, and institutional feedback via meetings and surveys. Interviews and focus groups were held face-to-face and via telephone and Zoom.

A kaupapa Māori theoretical and methodological paradigm underpins the grounded theory inductive methods. The participants, through interviews and focus groups, contributed to designing culturally responsive professional learning and development intervention frameworks.

The research questions established the overarching strategic direction of the evaluative feedback. Questions were developed to allow for the interview, focus group and qualitative survey questions to be open-ended. The questions aligned with Macfarlane's Educultural Wheel.⁴ The components, whanaungatanga (relationship building), manaakitanga (an ethic of caring), rangatiratanga (teacher effectiveness), kotahitanga (bonding), and pūmanawatanga (classroom morale and teacher attitude), are interrelated and key to building effective teaching and learning environments for taura Māori which centre on strong, positive relationships.

Protocols were approved by the Otago Polytechnic Human Research Ethics Committee and Māori Research Consultation process. In all instances, confidentiality was assured, along with the full rights of participants and consent to the research. The project team draws from S L Macfarlane's insight, "For Māori, the concepts of *tika* and *pono* are possibly the most succinct and accurate words to use when defining the term 'ethical'." Following Ngata⁶, S L Macfarlane points out that *tika* is about doing the right things, while *pono* is about doing things the right way. From a kaupapa Māori perspective, the processes of devising, constructing, and implementing the project must ensure the guardianship of Māori social and cultural values.⁷ Interview data has been anonymised and, at all times, the protection of the identity of the participants has been paramount.

Data was gathered concurrently throughout 2018. Baseline data was gathered at the commencement of the project and consisted of one-to-one interviews with students, kaiako, management, and leaders. Data from further surveys following each iteration of CR PLD, focus groups with students at the completion of their year of study, management surveys, and insights from meetings have been compiled to date. Data has been designed to be formative in developing the project intention of building co-design participatory methods and principles into the developmental learning process. Drawing from the kaupapa Māori design methodology has allowed us to take a creative developmental approach⁸ to evaluation, and to ensure the integrity of the project remains within the context that it is designed to serve.

RESEARCH BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Māori in Te Waipounamu are projected to become a more significant proportion of the general population over the next 20 years.⁹ It stands to reason that tertiary providers will see an increase in the proportion of Māori enrolments. Educational institutions are refocusing improvements of the educational pathways for Māori learners to prepare for this future. The initiation phase of Hūtia te Punga evaluated how to advance organisations' specific goals for prioritising Māori learner achievement, and educational and career pathways.

INITIATION PHASE FINDINGS

Otago Polytechnic leadership expressed being proud of their strong accountability and partnership model with the local rūnanga. They highlighted a vision for the future, describing a shift towards experiential learning approaches that they see aligning with Māori values. A leader noted that, "The best way to support Māori students in an organisation like this [is] to have an organisation that respects those students' response to their reality."

Staff recognise their success in integrating the Māori Strategic Framework, but understand there is a long way to go to reach true bicultural partnership, as noted below:

I think we have done well in certain areas, but I think we still have more things to do. We need stronger connection with our marae – how do we connect more with the marae and how do we bring our whole community to the marae or the marae to us? One of the things I like is [that] we always have Māori pre-graduation which is pretty amazing.

The organisation recognises that it needs to raise consciousness around te ao Māori and the lived experience of what is to be Māori. A Māori staff member made the following point:

We know our people have been ill-served in education since colonisation essentially [...] It's our collective responsibility to ensure that you know we do every little bit we can to change that because it's inherent in our institutions. Ultimately for me it's about our learners and their communities.

From all levels, there is a drive to include more te reo Māori in curriculum and in the teaching and learning environments within Otago Polytechnic. There was unanimity among tutors regarding their intentions and willingness to upskill their practices, especially in relation to culturally responsive pedagogy. Leadership and teaching staff discussed their intentions to attract more Māori learners. A member of the leadership team noted, "I think we need to walk the talk and I think generally as an institution we do it pretty well".

Leadership staff have a clear view of their transformation framework. The vision of staff extends to ensuring a positive community view of the organisation and a holistic student experience with experiential learning at its core. An organisational leader commented on the vision for the student experience:

They walk through the front door and it's their place. They know it, they feel it, they smell it. Not just the tangible things we see around us, but actually the way that people engage with us – how you greet them when they come through the door speaks volumes for how they're received, but also how they perceive the institution. It's everyone: from our cleaning staff to our front-of-desk to our instructors, teachers, our CE [Chief Executive].

Motivation for partnering in Hūtia te Punga stemmed, in part, from the leadership team's ongoing development of a Māori Strategic Plan – in response to the Māori Strategic Framework – that dovetails with each College/School and Service Area and, in part, from the organisation's commitment to Māori student success. This includes attracting greater numbers of Māori to tertiary study, while building capability to support tairua Māori to achieve **as** Māori.

With respect to the New Zealand Diploma and Certificate in Travel and Tourism qualifications, recent years have seen few Māori enrolments at Otago Polytechnic. In 2017, enrolments (n = 3) and successful course completion rates for tairua Māori studying on Travel and Tourism diploma and certificate pathways were low, at 33 percent and 50 percent, respectively. Change came in 2018, with successful course completion rates for tairua Māori at 80 percent, with enrolments slightly increased (n=4). Currently, Māori are better represented in the overall course enrolments in 2019. The proportion of Māori learners enrolled in the Tourism certificate and diploma courses at Otago Polytechnic continues to increase (n =5), to about 19 percent.¹⁰

Additionally, programme tutors identified areas of concern for students with regard to time management and late assignment submissions. Though common for students to face challenges navigating the work-life-study trichotomy, the programme leaders leveraged the opportunity to develop culturally responsive teaching and learning to provide better support outcomes for Māori, and for all learners.

In 2018, tairua Māori, as part of the initiation phase of the project, identified that te reo Māori and the connection to the Māori community within their current programme of study were quite limited. Students described the need for more Māori local stories, especially as they are learning about tourism. Māori knowledge and te ao Māori values are occasionally included in course content and in other aspects of the student experience. Nevertheless, students

still perceive that tutors value Māori cultural identities; they feel safe to be Māori and would like more opportunities to engage culturally, for example, to lead karakia or mihihihi at the start of a meeting or hui. CR PLD, at this point of the project, focuses on five key areas: beliefs, values and behaviours; Aotearoa history; culturally responsive practice; strategies for change; and, understanding place-based pedagogy.

CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

The co-constructed CR PLD was developed in consultation with findings from key members of staff: from consultations at the initiation phase that included leadership and teaching staff and learners at different levels of study; the professional experience of Tokona Te Raki facilitators; and the literature concerning cultural responsiveness in Aotearoa New Zealand teaching and learning environment, with particular focus on teachers knowing their professional and personal selves.¹¹ Bevan-Brown et al.¹² argues, that it is important to understand the ways Pākehā cultural values, attitudes, beliefs and assumptions continue to disadvantage Māori students. They argue for practitioners having a broad view of the factors that impact how learners and teachers locate their own and others' personal and cultural identities, while focusing on keeping relationships central in the teaching and learning context.¹³

Based on the co-constructed interviews and staff feedback, along with the evidence from the literature, the CR PLD sessions were developed around five themes: Cultural Identity, Values and Beliefs, Deficit Theorising, Treaty of Waitangi, and Pronunciation of te reo Māori and Māori students' names (See Figure 1. below).

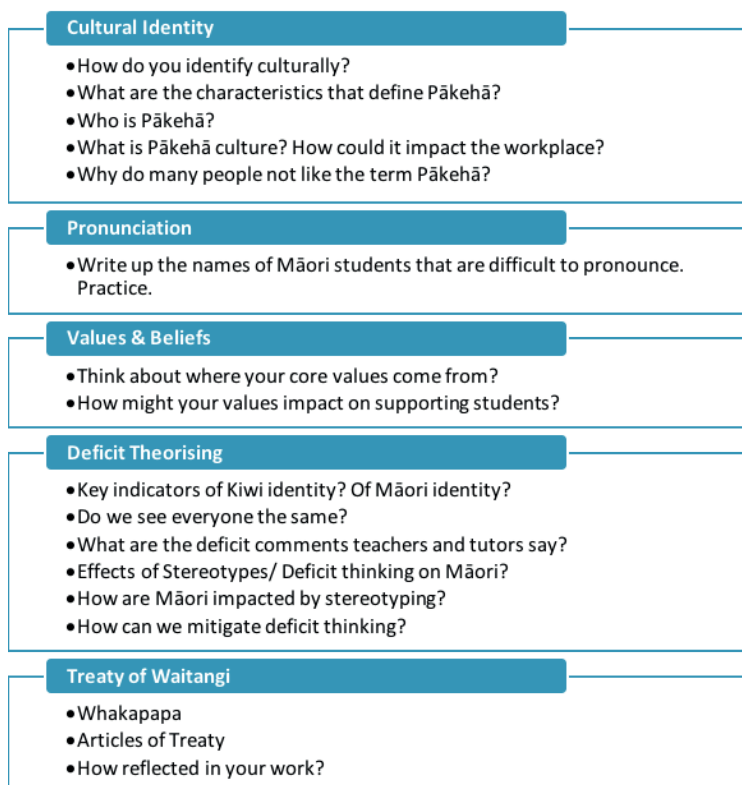


Figure 1. CR PLD Workshop Themes

DEVELOPMENTAL EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

The developmental evaluation that sits alongside this Ako Aotearoa co-funded partnership model has been designed to support the iterative nature of this project by identifying and articulating the levers of change throughout the duration of the project. Using a developmental approach creates the space for the research team to identify opportunities and insights, and to recognise and support CR PLD at pivotal junctures in the change process. Specific measures identified by the project team include: outcomes in the areas of the organisation including Teaching Delivery, Student Success/Experience, and connection to the vocational pathways in Industry (See Figure 2. below). These are the focal points of success, wherein the identification of the project's impacts is sought.

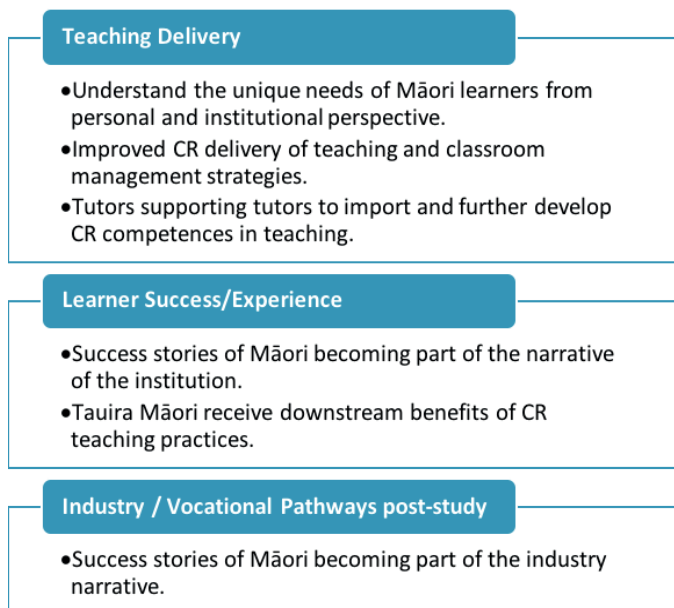


Figure 2. Focal points of success

The focus at the midpoint of the two year project is to understand, from the perspective of the students, experiences of culturally responsive practices in the teaching and learning context, larger institutional cultural changes notwithstanding. The evaluation framework seeks to articulate the impact of CR PLD and the unique needs of Māori learners for an institutional and professional audience, while maintaining the authenticity of the reported taurira Māori perspectives.

SUMMARY OF INTERIM INSIGHTS

The interim round of data collection commenced at the end of 2018, with the intention of ascertaining what was working well and what needed further improvement. These findings have informed the PLD design for 2019 and will continue to inform the development of CR PLD resources in 2019-2020. Part of the PLD process invites feedback on each session and asks participants to identify focus areas for future sessions. The most common feedback was for more support around learning and using te reo Māori.

In response to feedback from tutors and taira Māori, CR PLD evolved to include support for tutors to recognise cultural differences in how teaching and learning is experienced by taira Māori; to grow cultural knowledge; to begin to address implicit bias and deficit theorising; to learn new practices; and to use multiple sources of information, such as observations, discussions, and feedback from students and whānau, in order to identify who can help them to understand and close cultural gaps.

Taira Māori attending Otago Polytechnic's Travel and Tourism certificate or diploma courses were interviewed at the beginning of the year and then again at the close of 2018. The aim was to better understand how taira Māori perceived their courses and if they noticed changes that correlated with the professional learning and development that their tutors had received.

For the most part, taira Māori enjoyed the teaching and learning environment because of the comparatively low tutor to student ratio compared to other study experiences. Taira Māori had enjoyed their courses, were hoping to pass, but were unsure about 2019, with many of them hoping to 'find work'. They noted positive relationships with their tutors and observed that tutors were introducing more te reo Māori into their classes and more classroom Māori iconography. Tutors "tried to bring in te reo quite a bit - we support them and they greet us in the morning". Taira Māori described in positive terms, the learning environment, the student support, the relationships with their tutors and the community atmosphere that a smaller campus offers. Taira Māori noted feeling as though their tutors were receptive and responsive to their comments, they had ample opportunity to give feedback, and noted that their kaiako were "approachable" and "you can go to them with any problems".

Furthermore, they recognised the differences between the tutors' teaching styles, noting those who were more authoritative and those who left them to "do your own thing". Nevertheless, taira Māori identified that relationships have "changed over the year", shifting from a weaker relational pedagogy to an increasingly stronger one as the year progressed. Taira Māori described relationships between their peers as being warm and comfortable, their group building strong bonds through studying together. They also noted that the study support was "helpful". In contrast, though not necessarily contrarily, tutors noted that taira Māori do not consistently use study supports.

Taira Māori suggested improvements to their programme. For example, they suggested evenly distributing the theoretical and the practical aspects of their course across the duration of their study. Diploma students noted that the first half of the year was spent doing field trips, whereas the second half of the year was spent in class. Additionally, taira Māori commented that they felt 'continuously' assessed and preferred to have options for assessment types. They voiced that, "[We] don't like how we are assessed every two weeks" and that, from their perspective, the organisation, "could do assessment differently, not all reports - it could be orally".

As a cohort, they expressed wanting more links to vocational pathways after graduation. Few had mahi lined up following their study, others were even less sure of their plans. They noted some available employment resources at Otago Polytechnic (for example, a 'job board' and word of mouth). For the most part, taira Māori weren't in the process of transitioning to work. Taira Māori recognised that tutors are on a learning journey. They agreed that the observed changes represent good progress which is beneficial to their study.

Tutors were surveyed about the status of the organisation and the ongoing CR PLD support that is part of this project. The quantitative results suffer from low response rates, so are indicative only, as summarised here. The results were not in agreement, indicating that tutors have different experiences of the teaching and learning environment. For example, when prompted about the extent that tikanga Māori is woven into the organisation, respondents indicated at either end of the Likert-type scale. When kaiako were prompted about PLD that is 'most needed' and PLD that is 'most effective', tutors pointed to skills with te reo Māori and with cultural responsiveness. They also suggested that the organisation should prioritise staff attending cultural events, CR PLD, and making it easier to ask for help and support.

AN EVOLVING ROLE FOR CR PLD

Dedicated CR PLD sessions that cover core beliefs, the history of Aotearoa New Zealand, the importance of normalising te ao Māori, the connections to wider networks for continued help and support are examples of what is currently being covered as part of the Hūtia te Punga project. Highlighted in this study is the pivotal role of CR PLD: it reinforces and embeds the organisation's Māori Strategic Framework and provides a model for taira Māori success in the delivery of education and training. As identified in the project to date, CR PLD supports tutors to use a 'cultural lens' when making interim assessments of Māori learners' progress, identifying barriers to success, and developing interventions on a case-by-case basis to increase the likelihood of success. For example, discussions with Māori learners, wherein they can disclose information without risking their mana, are not only part of providing a culturally responsive and safe teaching and learning environment, but are also likely to result in positive outcomes for Māori learners. It also improves the understanding of staff with regard to the institution's obligations under the Treaty of Waitangi to ensure that taira Māori are succeeding *and* that they are able to do so *as* Māori.

CONCLUSION

The education system in Aotearoa New Zealand identifies the importance of alignment between policy and practice¹. However, this system has historically grown out of middle-class Pākehā values and many professionals working as educators come from these backgrounds². Hence, many educational professionals are guided by values that are very different from those of learners in their teaching and learning spaces. So, even though there are advances in inclusive policies¹⁶ and taira Māori achievement is highly valued and actively supported from an institutional perspective, value-differences inherent in teaching and environments remain. To avoid that taira Māori are disproportionately burdened with navigating those differences on their own, often to the detriment of their own Māori identities, educators must actively seek to understand and coordinate their own values with those taira Māori whom they are supporting on their learning pathway.

Several highlights from the project are worth noting in closing. Taira Māori started the year positively, enjoy both the learning environment and their tutors. They observed their tutors introducing more te reo Māori into the classroom and they attempted to include more mātauranga Māori into their study. They enjoyed learning at Otago Polytechnic because of the smaller class sizes, one-to-one support and positive relationships with peers. Changes in teaching delivery were highlighted by taira Māori. The lack of certainty about work or further study at the completion of their study year is an area for future focus.

The research continues to demonstrate that strong relationships with taira Māori lead to better outcomes for students. Furthermore, as the student voice is increasingly more central to driving the sector, taira Māori recommendations are concerned more with driving systems-level changes, rather than operational changes. They expressed their desire for fewer assessments, more access to transitional supports and work experience, and greater emphasis on study support as both opportunities for learning and for networking.

With regard to teaching and front-facing staff, connecting CR PLD content to tangible outcomes, both in the short and in the long term, supports staff to refine their culturally responsive pedagogies, while enhancing and deepening their capacities to understand, empathise and support taira Māori. Tutors and staff have significant influence on student achievement vis-à-vis learners feeling connected to the teaching and learning environment.^{17,18,19} With this in mind, research points to the importance of embedding professional development across an organisation to ensure strong, consistent cultural responsiveness towards learning and the teaching of taira Māori to continue to lift achievement rates.²⁰

Dr Joe Kuntz is a researcher, undertaking theoretical and applied areas, including kaupapa Māori projects in early childhood, compulsory and tertiary education sectors. He received his PhD in Philosophy from the University of Edinburgh.

Dr Porsha London is a researcher at Tokona te Raki a social innovation arm of Ngāi Tahu. Her research includes the role of professional learning in building cultural competency in compulsory and tertiary education sectors. She received her PhD in Education from the University of Canterbury.

Dr Eruera Tarena is the Executive Director at Tokona te Raki, undertaking research and leadership in the role of social innovation, systems change and design thinking within a te ao Māori paradigm. He received his PhD in business from the University of Canterbury.

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