

Kapa Haka counts: Improving participation levels of Māori students in mainstream secondary schools

Paul Whitinui

Abstract: Kapa haka (Māori dance group) is a culturally responsive learning activity that provides opportunities for Māori students to engage in their language, culture and traditional practices (Hindle, 2002; Kaiwai, 2001). Research focusing on the educational benefits associated with Māori students participating in kapa haka in mainstream secondary schooling contexts is particularly scarce but there is growing evidence to suggest that the Māori students participating in kapa haka is having a direct and positive effect on their participation levels at school (Rubie, 1999; Whitinui, 2007). In 2002, kapa haka was formally recognised as an ‘academic’ subject by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA). This helped to raise the importance of Māori students participating in kapa haka enabling students to earn credits towards a National Certificate in Educational Achievement (NCEA) (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2002). Despite this development however, Māori students continue to be the group most likely not to fully participate in their education or achieve NCEA Level 2 (Ministry of Education, 2006). Based on various aspects of my doctoral research completed in 2007, this paper aims to present the educational benefits associated with Māori students participating in kapa haka and the implications for improving the participation levels of Māori students in these contexts.

Keywords: dance; kapa haka; Māori education; secondary school curriculum

The state of Māori education in mainstream secondary schools

In 1990, the New Zealand Education Review Office (ERO) was established to ‘bridge the gaps’ of those students underachieving at school. In 1999, the National Administrative Guidelines (NAGs) and National Educational Guidelines (NEGs) were implemented to improve the quality of education for all students and to overcome the risks associated with students not achieving their potential in education (Ministry of Education, 2000c). As leaders, the Board of Trustees’ primary function is to ensure the educational guidelines are being implemented satisfactorily. A key criticism of Board of Trustees, however, is that the governance of a school should not solely be in the hands of a select few, but rather, as a mirror reflection working collectively for the benefit of the community and its students.

In 1998, a report entitled *Assessing the Children’s Curriculum Achievement* stated that Māori parents would prefer to see their children physically performing what teachers say they have achieved and in a variety of ‘real-life’ situations (Education Review Office, 1998). Māori parents also believed they would feel more confident in what schools and teachers provide for their children if they are able to have more say in how their children are being assessed, and as a result, what they would expect to see as a likely outcome. A major challenge for schools and teachers is that a number of Māori parents have expressed that they are often unaware of what their children are actually learning, or indeed, how and why they are being assessed. Given that there still exists a greater proportion of Māori students working below the lower 20th percentile, in literacy and numeracy perhaps suggests that there continues to be a disconnect between learning and assessment when working with Māori students (Hattie, 2003).

Although, a number of other factors have contributed significantly to this problem in terms of various stigmas attached to ‘winner’ and ‘loser’ schools, socio-economic disparities, poor teacher-home-student relationships, intergenerational educational failure or schools inadequately resourced to cater for low-level achievers (Education Review Office, 1995, 1996; Ministry of Education, 1998), the on-going lack of Māori parent involvement in the education of their children is significantly adding to the problem. Attempting to ‘bridge gaps’ for Māori students is not only about modifying or providing alternative type activities for students to come up to speed with other students, it also requires a major mind-shift towards understanding how culture (i.e., Māori ways of knowing, doing and being) connects with their unique abilities, talents, needs and aspirations.

Currently, a third of all Māori students are enrolled in mainstream secondary schools (18.8% of the total domestic students population) in Aotearoa/New Zealand (Ministry of Education, 2006). In addition, the Ngā Haeata Mātauranga: Annual Report of Māori Education (2006) commented that although the school attainment rates between Māori and non-Māori have narrowed in year 12, Māori students remain the group most likely to disengage from the education system before the age of 16. Given that the learning experiences, potential and aspirations of Māori students are significantly diverse, there has been increasing interest from both researchers and educators to explore what motivates Māori students to engage more consistently in their learning (Bevan-Brown, 2003; Bishop, Berryman, & Richardson, 2003). The introduction of total immersion schools (Te Kohanga Reo, Rumaki, Kura Kaupapa) in the early 1980s significantly raised the status of Te Reo Māori which in the 1990s were extended to include Whare kura and Wānanga. Today, there appears to be greater belief, optimism and hope that Māori are able to realise their learning potential as Māori (Ministry of Education, 2008). Underpinning this belief of what ought to be of benefit for Māori students in their education is the notion that implementing culturally responsive practices, pedagogies and principles will help all New Zealanders to appreciate our identity, our potential, our uniqueness more comprehensively.

When talking about re-claiming indigenous knowledge as Māori it may be pertinent to ask, what can Māori students learn in mainstream schools that enable them be more effective members of their iwi, hapū, whānau and local communities? At the *2004 National Hui Taumata Mātauranga IV: Māori Education Summit* held in Taupo, Mason Durie’s keynote address, entitled *Māori Achievement: Anticipating the Learning Environment* highlighted that the best way to address the concerns affecting rangatahi (young Māori people) in education was to begin thinking about the future in the context of self-determining ways for Māori to have greater control of their educational destinies. By canvassing the perceptions of rangatahi about their current experiences in education, alongside a number of young adult, kaumatua and kuia, a number of key themes emerged. Of the several themes explored, five were given particular emphasis:

- relationships for learning
- enthusiasm for learning
- balanced outcomes for learning
- preparing for the future
- being Māori

A number of scenarios as key insights were subsequently elaborated on to anticipate what the learning landscape may well look like for Māori in 2020. A key conclusion drawn was that the inclusion of Māori concepts, processes and values within the education sector has increased the access of Māori learners to te ao Māori, early childhood education, tertiary education and various policy making arenas (Durie, 2004). Perhaps the only barrier to increasing Māori participation in

education is Māori themselves, in that, education for Māori has come a long way over the past two decades, and continues to improve.

Making a 'bigger' difference for Māori students

There is currently an increasing respectability afforded to adopting culturally responsive teaching approaches working with Māori students in mainstream secondary schools (Bishop & Tiakiwai, 2003; Glynn, Atvars, & O'Brien, 1999; Harker, 1979; Hastings, 1988; Macfarlane, 2004; Marshall, 2000). Various research articles, books and reports have often concluded that teachers make the most significant difference in how Māori students engage in their learning. This has signalled a need for teachers to be up-skilled and to lead ways for Māori students to achieve success (Bishop & Tiakiwai, 2003; Timperley, Fung, Wilson, & Barrar, 2006; Tuata, Bradnam, Hynds, Higgens, & Broughton, 2004). However, there are some strong ethical concerns that by intensifying how teachers teach Māori students in mainstream schools may distance Māori students further from learning more about their language, culture and traditions (Glynn, 1996).

Indeed, the importance of building safe and caring schools for Māori students should not be about students having to merely cope, but rather Māori students need to feel genuinely 'happier' about attending school and that they can achieve success and peace equally with other students (Cavanagh, 2004). In my doctoral study, Māori students who participated in kapa haka across four mainstream secondary schools also felt a lot happier about attending school and wanting to learn. Success for Māori students, as a result, was more consistent when learning environments provided opportunities to nurture their identity, self-worth, confidence and pride in being Māori (Whitinui, 2007). The emphasis on what constitutes culturally responsive teaching, although relatively well-researched, needs to also consider the importance of culturally responsive learning environments where Māori are engaged, learning and achieving (Nuthall, 2005). A more comprehensive review of where Māori students are actively choosing to spend their time, effort and energy whilst at school may well contribute to widening our understanding about what they are actively seeking in their education, and why.

Addressing levels of Māori student underachievement in mainstream secondary schools is a continual work-in-progress. Nevertheless, there is a growing expectation among various Māori communities that schools and teachers need to readily identify not only what is important for Māori students to learn, but also what Māori students consider achievable during their time at school (Durie, 2003, 2004). Furthermore, in an attempt to schools and teachers to address these concerns, developing meaningful and purposeful curriculum that includes students' prior knowledge, experiences, values, beliefs and practices are considered vital to protecting their identity. This may well suggest that schools and teachers need to move past the notion of 'stigmatising' or 'marginalising' culture, and towards creating learning environments that significantly 'celebrate' culture in the context of what it means to be Māori and successful (Ministry of Education, 2008). Although there are a number of ways for mainstream schools and teachers to evaluate their own level of cultural 'responsiveness' working with special learners, including Māori students (Bevan-Brown, 2003; Ministry of Education, 2000a), a significant gap exists in ways for secondary schools and teachers to achieve a standard of cultural responsiveness. In this regard, cultural responsiveness remains open to individual interpretation and/or misunderstandings of what culture stands for and for whom.

Although, teachers play a pivotal role in engaging Māori students to make the most of their opportunities to succeed in their learning, it should not come at the expense of Māori students becoming less involved in their language, culture and traditional practices. Mead (2003) explains

that,

The child is heir to several spiritual attributes, which are fundamental to the spiritual, psychological (mental/emotional), and social well-being of the individual. These attributes include personal tapu, mana, mauri, wairua and hau. They all relate to the importance of life, and to the relation of ira tangata, to the cosmos and the world of Gods, ira tangata (p. 60).

This view does not necessarily imply that schools and teachers need to consider defining what a Māori child is or isn't, on the contrary, it should be seen as an opportunity to celebrate the innate potential a Māori child brings to the learning environment and to work with Māori communities to enhance further the potential Māori students bring to the learning environment. To consider Māori students as 'cultural human beings' rather than empty vessels that need topping up with skills and information is to perhaps ask what does culture mean? How do we make culture a part of what is necessary for culturally-connected learners, like Māori, to be consistently engaging in their schooling and education on a daily basis?

Making 'culture count' in education for Māori students

A number of educational reports have indicated the need for schools and teachers to become more acutely aware of how culture engages Māori students to learn in the classroom (Bishop & Tiakiwai, 2003; Education Review Office, 2003; Glynn et al., 1999; Macfarlane, 2004; Ministry of Education, 2004). In 2001, a pilot study called 'Te Kauhua' was conducted to survey and interview 18 schools (11 primary and 7 secondary) about what Māori students perceived as making the most significant difference to their education (Tuata, Bradnam, Hynds, Higgens, & Broughton, 2004). Based on the findings that teachers make the most significant difference to how Māori students engage in the classroom, professional development programmes for teachers were initiated using government funding. In the same year, the 'Te Kotahitanga Project' was established to work alongside teachers working with Yr. 9 and Yr. 10 Māori students (Bishop et al., 2003; Bishop & Tiakiwai, 2003). Currently in its fourth phase, the project services 33 mainstream secondary schools and supports 400 teachers and more than 10 000 students and continues to grow. Perhaps more importantly, it is the only current intervention working for Māori students at the 'grass-roots' level in mainstream secondary schools. Contrary to one particular education review reporting that "culture on its own will have little effect on Māori student levels of academic achievement" (Education Review Office, 2003, p. 3) various indigenous as well as non-indigenous educators continue to embrace the potential of including culture in teaching, learning and the curriculum (Alaska Native Knowledge Network, 1998, 1999; Durie, 2004; Gay, 2000; Kawagley, 2001; Macfarlane, 2000, 2004; Pere, 1994).

The release this year of *Ka Hikitia—Managing for Success: The Māori Education Strategy 2008-2012* stated as an overarching goal was that it is imperative to find ways to keep Māori students engaged in education, training or workplace learning till the age of 18 (Ministry of Education, 2008). A key aim within the strategy is that all schools and teachers need to take greater responsibility for learning approaches that not only enhances their overall well-being and identity as Māori, but also engages Māori students more effectively with their own whānau, iwi, hapū, Marae and communities (Ministry of Education, 2008). The key to realising Māori potential in education is based on the principal of 'ako' (reciprocal teaching relationships) which includes, 'culture counts'- knowing where students come from and building on what students know; and 'productive partnerships'- Māori students, whānau, iwi and educators working together to produce better outcomes (Ministry of Education, 2008). Four critical areas were identified as

being fundamental to ensuring Māori students can make the most of their opportunities to be successful. These include a focus on the foundation years (early childhood education and the first years in school), young people engaged in their learning (particularly in Yr. 9 and 10), Māori language education (setting and resourcing priorities in Māori Language Education) and ensuring organisational success (the Ministry of Education's commitment to implementing the goals and actions inherent within the strategy). It is apparent however, that schools, teachers and Māori need to work together and not in isolation.

G. H. Smith (1992) suggested that the following intervention guide what schools and teachers provide as valid curriculum and pedagogy working with Māori students:

1. **Tino rangatiratanga** (principle of relative autonomy). The principle relates to autonomy and self-determination in students' decision-making about content, participation and the construction of meaning from learning contexts.
2. **Taonga tuku iho** (principle of reciprocal learning). This principle assumes that to be Māori is to be 'normal'.
3. **Ako** (principle of reciprocal teaching). The Māori word 'ako' means both teaching and learning. An integrated process that makes extensive (though not exclusive) use of tuakana-teina (older/more experienced-younger/less experienced) relationships, and implies connectedness and reciprocity between students and the teacher.
4. **Kia piki aku ngā raruraru o te kainga** (principle of mediation). This principle refers to the way students' participation in school connects with families and reflects the cultural practices in the wider community.
5. **Whānau** (principle of relationships in groups). The word 'whānau' literally means family in its broad sense, though used metaphorically in reference groups or collectives of people working toward a common goal.
6. **Kaupapa** (principle of collective vision, shared philosophy). This principle relates to the Māori agenda in educational processes that articulates and connects with Māori aspirations, politically, socially, economically and spiritually.

In addition, Schwartz (1992) argued that,

... a truly bicultural education would embody educational pedagogy and practice that not only represents both Māori and non-Māori, but also plays a significant role in the construction and dissemination of knowledge (cited in Salter, 2000a, p. 50).

Te reo kori (the language of movement), included as an example in the *1999 Health and Physical Education Curriculum* document, uses the poi (ball on a string), rākau (wooden stick), and whai (string game) as a way for students to experience and develop their basic hand-eye-body movement skills (Leaf, 2004; Salter, 2000). Salter (2000) highlights how a university researcher working with a small number of primary schools was able to negotiate ways to implement te reo kori using Smith's (1992) intervention guide. The key this person discovered was to match these cultural concepts of teaching and learning alongside the implications of students participating in te reo kori. This involved the teacher employing co-operative learning principles, acknowledging the students' unique learning styles, and encouraging greater student participation in decision-

making.

Some of the literary barriers encountered in teaching te reo kōri were overcome by constructing problem-solving groups where students were encouraged to share and create ways to use the Māori language through movement. Teachers during the process were asked to continually reflect, acknowledge and respond sensitively to students' needs, particularly in regard to gender, ethnicity, ability and social interaction. The ability for students and teachers to share and experience te reo kōri was also based on applying effective teaching pedagogy that showed a genuine concern for the background of students and their preferred learning styles (Salter, 2000). Although culturally-responsive pedagogies are often considered as a 'practical' means of achieving greater levels of teacher 'buy-in' to becoming bicultural it also suggests, that teachers may well consider culturally-responsive pedagogical approaches as an effective way of supporting the physical, social, mental/emotional and spiritual well-being of all students. Te reo kōri, through the use of effective co-operative teaching approaches appeared to help all students embrace learning more about Māori language and culture in a less threatening manner. Although, including such culturally-responsive learning activities are often dependant upon teacher confidence and acceptance, developing such approaches requires communication, co-operation and collaboration with Māori. Kapa haka, as an example of a culturally responsive learning activity, was formally recognised as an academic subject in 2002.

Kapa Haka as a culturally-responsive learning environment

Student interest in kapa haka in mainstream secondary schools has grown, not only as a powerful and dynamic learning experience unique to being Māori, but also as a contemporary performing art that allows students to express themselves creatively (Education Review Office, 2002, 2003). To consider that kapa haka should become more or less a part of what mainstream schools provide for Māori students is perhaps asking the wrong question. Rather, it may be more pertinent to ask, what is it about kapa haka that engages Māori students to participate more consistently, and how through kapa haka do Māori students perceive they are achieving?

Māori people, both past and present, have been determined to preserve the integrity of various Māori art forms specific to their identity as Māori. Although, Māori art exists at many different levels, the aim is to ensure that Māori cultural traditions, values and practices become more visible to host of different communities both here and abroad has been a positive development in sharing our uniqueness as Māori (Mead, 1997). For example, waiata (songs that encapsulate all time, space and levels of spiritual essence), Māori dances (e.g., a war dance form called haka), as well as depictions in the form of waka (canoe-travel), tā moko (Māori tattoo or skin designs), whakairo (intricate Māori carvings), kōwhaiwhai (painted wooden panels), rāranga (weaving-flax) and tukutuku work (reed woven panels) are common forms of Māori art that can be creatively and dynamically expressed appropriately through the art of performing kapa haka (Hindle, 2002; Karetu, 1993; Mead, 1997; Sharples, 1985).

The educational importance of kapa haka is that Māori students have a valid learning approach to experiencing their language and culture through the art of moving and performing (Hindle, 2002; Van Rooyen, 2002). The Ngā Toi curriculum document, for example, incorporates three major disciplines; ngā mahi a te rēhia (dance and drama), toi pūoro (music) and toi ataata (the visual arts) and is a culturally responsive and appropriate way of engaging Māori children to learn more about their language, culture and traditions (Ministry of Education, 2000b). In addition, Māori students participating in kapa haka also have the opportunity to achieve academic credits towards a formal qualification (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2002).

Kapa haka as a contemporary and at times, very competitive learning performance, usually has six major sections,

- whakaeke (entrance),
- waiata tawhito (traditional song chant),
- waiata-ā-ringa (action song),
- waiata-poi (dance performed with a tiny ball on the end of a string),
- haka (Māori war dance) and the
- whakawaatea (exit).

Each section is judged according to established criteria and also in the context of the whole performance. Marks are allocated to the various groups based on their on-stage presence, proficiency of te reo Māori and group cohesiveness.

In 1985, Peter Sharples presented a keynote address where he spoke in-depth about the advantages of Māori dance and performance as being a critical life force for many Māori people (Sharples, 1985). The use of waiata, mōteatea, poi, haka, taiaha (long club) and choreographed body movements are features within Māori dance and performance that celebrates being Māori (Sharples, 1985). Furthermore, in his doctoral dissertation, Royal (1998) considered the philosophy of 'Te Āo Marama' (a world view helping Māori life to shine so that generations may rise) and Te Whare Tapere (the house of amusement) as a model for learning and growing as Māori today. This model he suggests, is not only a way to retrace our steps back to the world of Māori, it also empowers Māori to look more specifically at one's own 'tribal' history and to seek that which is uniquely Māori (Royal, 1998). From this perspective, and often through the narrative of stories, dance and song, Royal concluded that kapa haka establishes stronger links with today's Māori knowledge, culture, language, and traditions. In this regard, Māori performing arts not only enables Māori to engage with their past, it also provides a forum to show-case levels of Māori excellence and to perform what Māori know, feel, think and believe.

The provision of kapa haka, as Māori performing art form in mainstream secondary schools, is a culturally-responsive approach consistently used in Te Kōhanga Reo (early childhood Māori immersion schools), Whānau Rumaki (total-immersion Māori language classes in mainstream schools), Kura Kaupapa (primary-level equivalent Māori schools age 5-12 years) and Whare Kura (secondary Māori schools age 13-17 years) environments today. In 2002, The New Zealand Qualifications Authority approved kapa haka as valid way for students to achieve credits towards a formal qualification (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2002). Furthermore, Māori students performing at the 2002 National Kapa Haka Festival held in Christchurch, Māori students were able to gain credits towards a number of national qualifications, including the National Certificate in Māori Performing Arts, the National Certificate in Māori (Te Waharoa) and the National Certificate in Educational Achievement (NCEA). The assessment process included a moderator who was employed to help support the judges to assess a student's on-stage performance in haka (war dance), whakaraka (action stances), waiata-ā-ringa, and haka wahine (woman war dance). In this regard, kapa haka provides the 'academic' scope and rigor to be included as an academic subject and not merely as an add-on or extra co-curricular activity (Hindle, 2002; New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2002).

Kapa haka has provided many Māori students with opportunities to learn, engage and experience their language and cultural meanings more quickly. It has also improved their confidence and motivation to want to be more involved in a wider range of learning activities, including reading and writing (Rubie, 1999). Rubie's thesis investigation (1999), found that not only was there

a marked improvement in the overall perception of their school life, Māori students were also achieving better results in a number of age-appropriate standardized tests. Her study concluded that Māori student participation in kapa haka can improve levels of student achievement in other areas of the curriculum.

The challenge of enhancing learning environments for Māori in mainstream schooling may be best summarised by Patrick Lynch, the Chief Education Officer (2002) who argued that,

There is a lot of truth in the growing international mantra that generic skills are fundamental for successful working lives...More often than not, what is left out of the list are the fundamental values that reflect the civic, ethical and philosophical orientation of individuals. One can be a knowledgeable worker, but if the knowledge does not operate within positive values frameworks, one simply has an individual who can be dangerous, with pragmatism being put ahead of ethical and spiritual considerations...

He continues by stating that,

...We cannot any longer hide behind the 1877 Education Act's secular clause and not actively recognise the fundamental spiritual dimension of young people. The Māori renaissance with its up front commitment to the wairua concept has led the way for a number of schools to overtly recognise this spiritual dimension. Young people are thirsting for dialogue about life's great questions: who am I, why am I here, where am I going? But they often do not get the opportunity to do so...we owe them to address those issues, rather than give them only a diet of skill and knowledge development (p. 1).

The nature of the performing arts may also help provide a vantage point for mainstream schools and teachers to better connect with Māori language, culture, identity and spirituality as it reflects their distinct learning abilities. However, incorporating the talents, strengths and aspirations of Māori children beyond the scope of what schools currently provide academically is a challenge given the nature of what many mainstream schools are intent on adopting (Chunn, 2001). Comparably, Mike Chunn, (2001), the Director of New Zealand's Operations for APRA (Australian Performing Rights Association) after interviewing 250 secondary schools students all from the same school, commented,

Somewhere between the ages of 7 and 17 something goes dreadfully wrong. The culture of creativity, as opposed to culture of innovation, dies...it all starts with children. It's the only way...only when young people's creativity is nurtured at all levels of the school will creativity become an equal partner in the knowledge economy (p. 3).

Moreover, the search for self, uniqueness and success may actually evolve from an inner struggle to acquire 'sites of meaning' which the self, through human experiences, consistently looks to enhance, satisfy and learn from (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002; Kretchmar, 2000). Exploring kapa haka as a culturally-responsive learning environment is therefore important in determining the connection between culture and learning and to consider its educational benefit in relation to improving how Māori students participate in their education.

The educational benefits associated with Kapa Haka

In 2004, I had the opportunity to interview 20 Māori kapa haka students as well as 27 teachers from across four mainstream Central North Island secondary schools. A host of responses about the educational benefits associated with Māori students participating in kapa haka were shared. In

many ways, kapa haka is regarded not only as educationally beneficial for Māori students in mainstream secondary schools, it also highlights some possible ways schools and teachers can engage Māori students in the learning environment more successfully. The key findings to emerge from the students' perspective were that kapa haka:

- reaffirms who they are (essence and identity) as Māori and therefore provides a collective purpose to want to learn;
- develops a sense of learning success by performing what they know through the art of movement;
- enhances and enriches the learning experience- singing, dancing and performing actions simultaneously were considered a very dynamic, powerful and creative way of learning;
- constructs learning responsibilities that are shared (i.e., experience of whole-group or team learning) reducing individual learning anxiety, stress and isolation;
- elicits positive emotions including joy, fun and an overall sense of happiness about attending school and in some ways increases their desire to succeed at school;
- improves individual confidence, self-esteem/self-worth and commitment to participate in the learning environment.

The key findings to emerge from the teachers' perspective were that kapa haka:

- improves individual confidence, self-esteem and their understanding of a Māori identity;
- helps teachers to identify some of the specific learning talents, strengths and aspirations Māori students possess and in which may well be extended on in the classroom;
- enhances Māori students' sense of pride in their culture, school and relationships with others;
- improves levels of attendance, engagement and a stronger desire for Māori students to want to succeed in their education;
- supports Māori students to use and strengthen various cognitive processes including memory, problem-solving and imaging as well as their ability to think more conceptually;
- supports Māori students to make healthier decisions/choices and enables them to contribute more positively to life at school and within the community.

When considering the implications for ways to improve Māori student participation levels in these settings, it is important that mainstream secondary schools and teachers consider:

- exploring more the connotative/symbolic (i.e., how the personal relates to the cultural in addition to what may well appear explicit) meanings that support what Māori students are expected to know and understand within the learning experience or environment (**culturally responsive, holistic and integrated learning approaches**);
- applying a culture of innovative, dynamic and alternative teaching and learning

- approaches/methods (e.g., the ability to move students in and through out the whole learning experience) by allowing Māori students more opportunities to move, create and share in the learning environment (**movement pedagogy**);
- applying culturally '*responsive*' learning environments that include opportunities for Māori students to teach, practice and perform what they know and in which can also be credited academically (**performance pedagogy**);
 - increasing opportunities for Māori students to become completely lost in learning experiences or environments that validate and represent their culture, language, ways of knowing, doing and being (**culturally inclusive, student-centred and driven curriculum**);
 - creating learning opportunities that enables the whole class to work together as a group or team to achieve learning success socially, culturally, emotionally, spiritually as well as academically (**collective learning roles and responsibilities towards achieving success**);
 - timetabling kapa haka as an academic subject (**bicultural accountability that aligns education for Māori students as being culturally inclusive, unique and distinctive**).

The implications suggest that mainstream secondary schools and teachers can continue to improve Māori student levels of participation in these contexts. For further progress, being able to adopt and implement culturally-responsive learning approaches requires that mainstream secondary schools and teachers in many cases need to modify their own dispositions to ethnicity, culture and difference. Being able to conceptualise these implications in a culturally appropriate and inclusive manner requires a comprehensive review of the social, cultural, emotional and spiritual dimensions that Māori students today bring to the learning environment.

Conclusion

This paper has argued that culture plays a significant part in increasing levels of participation for Māori students in mainstream secondary schools. However, a key underlying issue remains, in that, there continues to be a relative shortfall of research around what constitutes culturally-responsive learning approaches and how schools accommodate for learning environments that are culturally stimulating, meaningful and relevant for Māori students. Achieving cultural competency can only be established if schools and teachers are willing to engage first in being culturally-responsive and secondly, valuing learners as 'cultural human beings' who seek learning experiences that connect who they are to the real world they live within (Cross, Bazron, Dennis, & Issacs, 1989; Meyer, 2005). Although the curriculum provides a number of culturally responsive learning opportunities (such as te reo kori/te āo kori, te reo Māori, ngā toi and Māori performing arts) for Māori students to connect with, the continual focus on the 'culture of teaching' more so than the 'culture of learning' has tended to be problematic in addressing what counts as valid learning for Māori students (Loper, 2006; Ministry of Education, 2008). In this regard, wider discussion about the role of culture in education and learning is urgently required (Ministry of Education, 2008).

Although many mainstream secondary schools and teachers have over the past two decades expressed greater empathy towards understanding the benefit of culture, this does not necessarily mean that culture, or indeed culturally-responsive learning environments will be become more

prominent in schools. Today, addressing cultural diversity in schools is often considered in the context of reducing inequalities and meeting the needs of all students. This is somewhat problematic in the sense that the provision of mainstream schooling and education for Māori has tended to support more the dominant values of society further marginalising Māori ways of knowing, doing and being (Smith, 1997). In this regard, the ability of schools and teachers to transfer the learning that occurs in kapa haka back into the classroom requires strategies that are inclusive of Māori students' language, culture and identity. This paper has highlighted that kapa haka provides a culturally-responsive learning environment where students appear to participate, learn and achieve more consistently as Māori. Adopting these strategies, however, will not only depend on schools and teachers understanding how their own values, beliefs and attitudes impact on the lives of Māori students they teach, but also on how they evaluate the purpose of education for Māori students in their own unique communities. Kapa haka, as one specific culturally responsive learning activity, continues to provide opportunities for schools and teachers to enhance the learning potential and environment of culturally-connected learners who are Māori. This task is worth pursuing.

References

- Alaska Native Knowledge Network. (1998). *Alaska standards for culturally responsive schools*. Fairbanks, Alaska: University of Alaska.
- Alaska Native Knowledge Network. (1999). *Guidelines for preparing culturally responsive teachers for Alaska's schools*. Fairbanks, Alaska: University of Alaska.
- Bevan-Brown, J. (2003). *The cultural self-review: Providing culturally effective inclusive, education for Māori learners*. Wellington, New Zealand: NZCER.
- Bishop, R. A., Berryman, M., & Richardson, C. (2003). *Te Kōtahitanga: The experiences of year 9 and 10 Māori students in mainstream classes*. Wellington, New Zealand: Ministry of Education.
- Bishop, R. A., & Tiakiwai, S. (2003). *Improving educational achievement of Māori students in mainstream classrooms*. Paper presented at the Hui Taumata Mātauranga, Turangi/Taupo.
- Cavanagh, T. (2004). *Schooling for peace creating a culture of care in an elementary school*. Colorado, U.S.A: Colorado State University.
- Chunn, M. (2001). Elevating creativity. *On Arts: Nga Koreoro Toi*, 3.
- Cross, T. L., Bazron, B. J., Dennis, K. W., & Issacs, M. R. (1989). *Towards a culturally competent system of care* (Vol. 1). Washington DC: National Technical Assistance Centre for Children's Mental Health: Georgetown University Child Development Centre.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2002). Do students care about learning? *Educational Leadership*, 60(1), 12-17.
- Durie, M. H. (2003). *Māori educational advancement at the interface between Te Ao Māori and Te Ao Whānui*. Paper presented at the Hui Taumata Mātauranga, Turangi/Taupo.

Durie, M. H. (2004). *Māori achievement: Anticipating the learning environment*. Paper presented at the Hui Taumata Mātauranga IV: Increasing the success for rangatahi in education insight, reflection and learning, Turangi/Taupo.

Education Review Office. (1995). *Barriers to Learning*. Wellington: Education Review Office.

Education Review Office. (1996). *Addressing barriers to learning* (6). Wellington: Ministry of Education.

Education Review Office. (1998). *Assessing children's curriculum achievement*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.

Education Review Office. (2002). *Māori Students: Schools making a difference*. Wellington: Education Review Office.

Education Review Office. (2003). *Māori students in mainstream schools*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.

Gay, G. (2000). *Culturally responsive teaching: theory, research and practice*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Glynn, T. (1996). Bilingual gains for tutors and tutees in a Māori reading programme, *He paepae kōrero: Research perspectives in Māori education* (pp. 35-58). Wellington, New Zealand: New Zealand Council for Educational Research.

Glynn, T., Atvars, K., & O'Brien, K. (1999). *Culturally appropriate strategies for assisting Māori students experiencing learning and behavioural difficulties*. Wellington, New Zealand: Poutama Pounamu/Arataki School Team Research.

Harker, R. K. (1979). *Research on the education of Māori children*. Paper presented at the Research in Education in New Zealand: A Balance Sheet. Wellington, New Zealand: Victoria University of Wellington.

Hastings, W. K. (1988). *The right to an education in Māori: The case from international law*. Wellington, New Zealand: Victoria University Press.

Hattie, J. (2003). *New Zealand education snapshot: With specific reference to the Yrs. 1-13 years*. Paper presented at the Knowledge Wave 2003 Leadership Forum, Auckland University, New Zealand.

Hindle, R. (2002). *The Māori Arts in Education*. Paper presented at the UNESCO Regional meeting of experts on art education in the Pacific, Nadi, Fiji.

Kaiwai, H. (2001). *Māori music: The Kapa Haka phenomenon*. Retrieved 15th October, 2004, from the World Wide Web: <http://www.arts.auckland.ac.nz/ant/234/Kapa%20Haka.htm>.

Karetu, T. (1993). *Haka: The dance of noble people*. Auckland, New Zealand: Reed Publishers.

Kawagley, A. O. (2001). Spirit, knowledge and vision from First Nations' sages. *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, 25(2), 199-206.

- Kretchmar, R. S. (2000). Movement subcultures: Sites for meaning. *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation and Dance*, 71(5), 19-25.
- Leaf, G. J. (2004). *Te ahuatanga o ngā mahi-a-rehia o enei ra: the state of contemporary Māori sports and recreation*. Unpublished Master's thesis (MA), Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiārangi, Whakatane, New Zealand.
- Loper, L. (2006). Closing the education gap. *New Zealand Education Gazette*, 11(40), 7.
- Lynch, P. J. (2002). There is something not right about what we are doing in education. *Good Teacher- Soapbox*. Auckland, New Zealand, 1.
- Macfarlane, A. H. (2000). The value of Māori ecologies in the study of human development, *Human development in Aotearoa: a journey through life* (2nd ed., pp. 46-51). Auckland, New Zealand: McGraw-Hill.
- Macfarlane, A. H. (2004). *Kia hiwa ra! Listen to culture-Māori students' plea to educators*. Wellington, New Zealand: New Zealand Council for Educational Research.
- Marshall, J. D. (2000). Technology, education and indigenous peoples: The case of Māori. *Educational Philosophy & Theory*, 32(1), 119-131.
- Mead, H. M. (1997). *Ngā Toi Māori: Māori art on the world scene*. Wellington: Ahua Design & Illustrations Ltd.
- Meyer, M. A. (2005). *Remembering our future: Higher education quality assurance and indigenous epistemology*. WINHEC. Retrieved February 14, 2006, from the World Wide Web: <http://www.win-hec.org/docs/pdfs/Journal/Manulani%20Meyer.pdf>.
- Ministry of Education. (1998). *Improving achievement: Case studies of secondary school systems to support students at risk*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.
- Ministry of Education. (2000a). *Better relationships for better learning: Guidelines for boards of trustees and schools on engaging with Māori parents, whānau and communities*. Wellington, New Zealand: Learning Media.
- Ministry of Education. (2000b). *Ngā toi i roto i te mātauranga o Aotearoa*. Wellington: Learning Media.
- Ministry of Education. (2000c). *A review of the roles and responsibilities of the Education Review Office*. Wellington, New Zealand: Ministry of Education.
- Ministry of Education. (2004). *Hui taumata mātauranga report back*. Wellington, New Zealand: Ministry of Education.
- Ministry of Education. (2006). *Ngā haeata mātauranga: annual report on Māori education*. Wellington, New Zealand: Ministry of Education.
- Ministry of Education. (2008). *Ka hikitia-managing for success: Māori educational strategy 2008-2012*. Wellington, New Zealand: Ministry of Education.

- New Zealand Qualifications Authority. (2002). Assessments at the national Kapa Haka festival. *QA News*, 43, 10-11.
- Nuthall, G. (2005). The cultural myths and realities of classroom teaching and learning: a personal journey. *Teachers College Record*, 107(5), 895-934.
- Pere, R. (1994). *Ako: concepts of learning Māori tradition*. Wellington, N.Z.: National Library.
- Royal, C. (1998). *Te whare tapere: towards a model for Māori performance art*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. The University of Wellington, New Zealand.
- Rubie, C. (1999). *The effect of a Māori culture group experience on children's self-esteem, locus of control and academic performance*. Unpublished Master's Thesis (MEd). University of Auckland, New Zealand.
- Salter, G. (2000). Culturally responsive pedagogy and the renaissance of a Māori dimension in physical education: te reo kori as cultural taonga. *Journal of physical education New Zealand*, 33(2), 42-63.
- Sharples, P. R. (1985). *Māori dance forms and their role in contemporary Māori society*. Paper presented at the Dance and Child International Conference, Auckland Teachers' College, New Zealand.
- Smith, G. H. (1997). *The development of Kaupapa Māori theory and praxis*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. The University of Auckland, New Zealand.
- Smith, V. (2003). *Colonising the stage: the socio-cultural impact of colonisation on kapa haka*. Unpublished Master's thesis (MA), University of Auckland, New Zealand.
- Timperley, H., Fung, I., Wilson, A., & Barrar, H. (2006). Professional learning and development: a best evidence synthesis of impact on student outcomes. *American Educational Research Association*. San Francisco, California.
- Tuata, M., Bradnam, L., Hynds, A., Higgins, J., & Broughton, R. (2004). *Evaluation of the Te Kauhua Māori mainstream pilot project: report to the Ministry of Education*. Wellington, New Zealand: Ministry of Education.
- Van Rooyen, K. (2002). Kapa haka critics misinformed. *The Education Weekly*, 2.
- Whitinui, P. (2007). *The indigenous factor: exploring kapa haka as a culturally responsive learning environment in mainstream secondary schools*. University of Auckland, Unpublished doctoral dissertation, the University of Auckland, New Zealand.

Author Notes

Dr. Paul Whitinui (Ngāpuhi and Ngāti Kuri) is a lecturer in the Department of Sport and Leisure Studies at the University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand.

E-mail: whitinui@waikato.ac.nz.