

A Pedagogical Continuum: Driving Culturally Responsive School Reform for Māori Secondary Students

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Abstract

The racialised legacies of colonisation in many parts of the globe, have resulted in intergenerational disparities for disproportionate numbers of Indigenous learners and their families. Global responses for indigenous and other minoritised learners have seen the use of culturally responsive pedagogies and theory-based school reform initiatives to better understand the ‘core’ changes that are required. In this paper, we bring theory-based, secondary-school reform and culturally responsive pedagogies together in pursuit of equity, excellence and belonging as Māori, for these marginalised learners in Aotearoa New Zealand.

We discuss the collaborative building of a pedagogical continuum by teachers. This continuum introduces teachers to the theoretical underpinnings of cultural relationships and responsive pedagogy. Evidence gathered using classroom walkthrough observations is then compared to the continuum in order to understand what is happening with teaching and learning across the school. Surveys used with teachers, students and whānau groups provide further evidence of how they experience classroom pedagogy. Taken together, this evidence is then used to establish more equitable and iterative learning pathways going forward.

Keywords: indigenous students, school reform, culturally responsive pedagogy

1. Introduction

We position this paper within the ongoing disparities faced by Indigenous peoples globally and in Aotearoa New Zealand¹ in particular. We contend that the assimilation practices embedded within the colonial education responses must be better understood, disrupted, and reformed. We then consider the historical and international significance of theory-based reform and culturally responsive pedagogy as more effective responses to the disparities experienced by Māori and other marginalised learners across the globe.

This paper focuses on evidence using the Rongohia te Hau tools (Berryman, 2013) which were developed towards the end of *Te Kotahitanga* (Unity of Purpose). *Te Kotahitanga* was a secondary school, theory-based reform initiative that aimed to change the core of education for Māori learners (Bishop & Berryman, 2006; Bishop et al., 2014), and, in Phase 5, its final iteration, it was able to do just that (Alton-Lee, 2015). However, this paper focuses on *Kia Eke Panuku: Building on Success*², a resource and time constrained reform initiative that was to follow. We present quantitative perception-evidence from Rongohia te Hau surveys triangulated across students, teachers, and whānau. We discuss evidence from these tools to understand how cultural relationships and responsive pedagogies were being implemented across these schools. How this was playing out for learners and their families, has forced us to confront what happens when competing demands distract reform facilitators and educators from the evidence and theories that underpinned the reform (Egan, 2022).

Within the constraints of resourcing and implementation, we conclude that rather than a suite of tools that is implemented by an external group and done to teachers; this process must begin with the co-construction of a collaborative continuum of teaching and learning that creates deeper understandings of the theories and practices underpinning the reform. We are learning that these understandings can and must extend across the school and its community if they are to become ‘core’ to the reform.

1.1 Disparities Faced by Indigenous Peoples

Education across the world continues to underserve specific groups of clearly identifiable students (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, OECD, 2013), as evidenced by achievement disparities that

continue to be well documented in schools in Aotearoa (Bishop et al., 2014; Chapple et al., 1997). Schooling has had an unfortunate way of creating and perpetuating “images of children in ways that are destructive, in ways that predispose some children to be successful, confident and engaged, and others to become lower achieving, timid or aggressive, reluctant and disengaged” (Shields et al., 2005, p. 1). Descriptions of high quality and low equity education systems, driven by deficit-oriented views of particular groups, are familiar to educators across the world (Berryman et al., 2015; Sleeter, 2011). Indigenous students comprise one such marginalised group (McKinley & Smith, 2019).

1.2 Aotearoa Context

In Aotearoa today, the difference in lifestyles and life chances between the average indigenous Māori and non-Māori is long-standing (Chapple et al., 1997). European colonisation, in Aotearoa, as elsewhere, is deeply implicated in representing Indigenous peoples “as a pathologized Other” (Shields et al. 2005, p. 2). This, even though the indigenous tribal groups or *iwi* in Aotearoa have long been politically savvy. For example, in 1831 a group of Northern tribal leaders sought an alliance and protection from King William IV. In 1835 this was granted and formalised with the signing of He Whakaputanga - the Declaration of Independence. However, in 1840 the Crown developed the Treaty of Waitangi and this document, in the English language, was signed by the colonisers. *Iwi* leaders signed Te Tiriti o Waitangi, a very different document in the indigenous language (Mutu, 2004; 2018). Article 1 of Te Tiriti o Waitangi is *kāwanatanga*, Māori understood that the Crown would govern Aotearoa. However, under Article 2, *tinō rangatiratanga*, Māori *hapū* (subtribe) and *iwi* would have control over their resources, people and communities. Furthermore, under Article 3, *ōritetanga*, Māori would have equal rights as citizens of Aotearoa.

None-the-less the English language version of the Treaty was privileged and implemented, and Māori potential to be politically powerful remains largely unfulfilled due to the master - servant relationship that was promoted under this Treaty (Jackson, 2021; Mutu, 2018). This cultural positioning was normalised by the settlers; matters relating to culture and race that were established by the coming together of indigenous and settler peoples under the Doctrine of Discovery were silenced (Jackson, 2019; Ngata, 2019), difficult histories involving illegal land acquisition were soon replaced by the normalisation of cultural bias, blindness to difference and historical amnesia (MacDonald, 2022). Accordingly, like many other colonised countries (Mills, 2022) the ongoing subordination of indigenous peoples by European colonists in Aotearoa saw Māori continue to be undermined, disadvantaged and marginalised (Bishop & Glynn, 1999). The systematic subordination of Māori by the coloniser ensued (Consedine & Consedine, 2012), helped along by the systems set up by the Crown (Jackson, 2019; 2021; Mutu, 2018).

The status of Māori within the colonial education system in Aotearoa for example, reflects a continuous cycle of recurring deficit themes in attitudes, expectations, and beliefs (Penetito, 2010). Māori have in turn been civilised, discriminated against, segregated, assimilated, and had their traditions and culture fore-grounded by a system that was built on “mythtakes” or “deliberately concocted falsehoods to justify a process that is actually unjustifiable” (Jackson, 2019, p. 102). It is therefore not surprising that the differences between rich and poor, health and life expectancy, crime rates and educational achievement are not only drawn along economic lines, but racial ones as well.

Since the foundation of these colonial states, the poorest members of society are often the ‘colonised’ Indigenous populations (Mills, 2022). Māori, for example, remain disproportionately represented within the bottom quartile of society in academic achievement and employment prospects (Ministry of Education, 2016; 2022); they do not remain in schooling as long as other students nor are they achieving as highly (Office of the Auditor-General, 2013, 2015, 2016a, 2016b). Despite many initiatives to raise Māori student achievement, English-medium schooling continues to return lower engagement and achievement rates for Māori than for non-Māori students (Udahemuka, 2016). For example, statistics published by the Ministry of Education (MoE) indicated that in 2021:

- 24% of Māori students left school without a National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) Level 1 or above compared to 10.6 percent of European New Zealand students.
- 62.9% of Māori students left school with NCEA Level 2 or above compared to 81.1% of European students (MoE, 2022).

International measures confirm this picture of differential achievement. The outcomes of the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) comparisons across the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries continue to show New Zealand’s education system as one that, in terms of education outcomes, achieves high levels of achievement for many students but not for all (OECD, 2019). As

reported in the 2018 PISA survey, for example, overall New Zealand achievement was above the OECD average in reading, mathematics and science, but the achievement of Māori students was both below the New Zealand average and the OECD average (May et al., 2019). Therefore, the question of what can be done to promote improved educational opportunities and experiences for Māori students remains a major and long-standing question for educators interested in promoting the future life chances of every young person.

1.3 Theory-based Reform

As long noted by Elmore (1996), “innovations that require large scale changes in the core of educational practice seldom penetrate more than a small fraction of US schools and seldom last for very long when they do” (p. 1). Furthermore, he contended that changing the core of education meant changing “how teachers understand the nature of knowledge and the student’s role in learning, and how these ideas about knowledge and learning are manifested in teaching and classwork” (p. 1). Changing the core also included change to the:

structural arrangements of schools, such as the physical layout of classrooms, student grouping practices, teacher responsibilities for groups of students, and relations among teachers in their work with students, as well as processes for assessing student learning and communicating it to students, teachers, parents, administrators, and other interested parties (Elmore, 1996, p. 1).

This aligns with the seminal work of Freire (1970) and Fullan (1993, 2007) who are both concerned with the expert, top-down reform models that reject involvement and ownership from those on the ground. McLaughlin and Mitra (2001) also suggest that reforming school settings often requires “significant teacher learning and contextualization if they are to change teaching and learning in significant and sustained ways” (p. 302). Reforms such as this, that are often externally generated, require a theory-based set of clear principles that allow for “co-invention and flexible implementation in practice” (p. 302).

1.4 Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

Culturally responsive pedagogy has been defined differently over time and by a number of authors (Bishop et al., 2014; Castagno & Brayboy, 2008; Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Sleeter, 2011). Gay (2010), for example, highlights the importance of teaching to and through the strengths of students and adopting approaches that are responsive to them as products of their diverse cultures. To do this, she recognises that cultural differences must be seen as assets to be valued. Gay (2010) suggests, “using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make encounters more relevant to and effective for them” (p. 31), and, in so doing, being able to build “bridges of meaningfulness between home and school experiences as well as between academic abstractions and lived sociocultural realities” (p. 31).

Sleeter (2011) suggests that more recently, culturally responsive approaches to teaching have been widely replaced by standardised curricula and pedagogy, entrenched in a neoliberal political shift that is impelling business models of school reform. She also argues that the over-simplification of the theorising underpinning culturally responsive pedagogy has given an illusion of being able to make change without actually having done so, thus potentially, it may be seen as ineffective or dismissed entirely. Sleeter contends that the research base connecting culturally responsive pedagogy with student learning must be strengthened. However, if this is to be achieved, the elite, largely white fear of losing national and global power must be anticipated and addressed.

1.5 Kia Eke Panuku

An example of a theory-based reform initiative in Aotearoa that might well have represented aspects of Sleeter’s (2011) concerns about culturally responsive pedagogy became known as Kia Eke Panuku: Building on Success. As would be expected, a number of constraints were required by the fundholders. This reform would be undertaken by a consortium of separate institutions, best positioned to bring together the learnings from government and locally funded research and development (R&D). These learnings would have come from previous initiatives shown to have made a positive impact on Māori students’ schooling and achievement experiences. Therefore, the professional learning and development (PLD) model was required to:

- build in-school leader and teacher capability to embed culturally responsive pedagogy for Māori learners in classrooms;
- promote culturally-informed and inclusive leadership, school governance and school-wide practices; and
- foster the kind of positive engagement with local Māori communities that had been identified as crucial in previous research and development projects (Alton-Lee et al., 2009) in order that schools should benefit from their own communities’ funds of cultural knowledge (Moll et al., 1992).

Another underpinning aim was for secondary schools to give life to the then current Ka Hikitia (lift up) policy by addressing the aspirations of Māori communities and supporting Māori students to pursue their potential as Māori (Berryman & Eley, 2017). The evidence-based inquiry approach was designed to focus on what the schools' leadership, teachers, and in turn, what Māori students and their whānau (family and extended families) did in response to the strengths and/or challenges from the range of contexts and settings in which they each engaged. Despite the complexity of these requirements, the consortium of three was expected to reform a third of secondary schools in Aotearoa, within three years and with less than a third of the budget provided to other similar, previous initiatives.

1.5.1 Implementation

To facilitate this process, the country was divided into three broad regions. Each of the three institutions was delegated responsibility for one region and worked with their own team, under an overall academic director, to maintain a level of cohesion. For example, regular meetings were held across the three institutions to promote overall agreement of the reform requirements and to identify the processes and evidence that would enable monitoring and reporting.

The PLD was differentiated and adapted to the school's own evidence; it built capacity and expertise within the schools; and invested in solutions from iwi and other local groups. This approach required that positive relationships needed to be developed between the consortium team and each school, within the schools, across schools, with whānau, hapū and iwi and with relevant MoE personnel so that all could maintain a clear focus on the aspirations of the reform initiative.

Within each Kia Eke Panuku school, a strategic change leadership team was selected to lead its own professional learning and development (PLD) work. Kia Eke Panuku facilitators were trained by the external consortium to support and work with strategic change leadership teams. The existing in-school policies, processes, curriculum, and structures, were analysed against five interrelated elements, previously identified as important in promoting Māori students' engagement and achievement:

1. Leadership
2. Evidence-based inquiry
3. Contexts for learning that are responsive to students' cultural backgrounds and foster positive relationships, teacher to student, and student to peers
4. Educationally powerful connections amongst schools, whānau, hapū, iwi and Māori organisations
5. Literacy, numeracy and *te reo* (Māori language) across the curriculum.

Building on understandings of culturally responsive pedagogy from Te Kotahitanga, the pedagogical response began with rejecting deficit theorising about Māori. Rather teachers were supported to foster positive cultural relationships with learners as foundational to responsive contexts for learning where:

- high learning expectations and relationships of connectedness to Māori students were fundamental;
- learners and their families had agency and the right to equity and self-determination through the sharing of power;
- prior cultural knowledge and learning experiences of these learners formed the basis of new learning and identity as learners;
- sense-making was dialogic, interactive and ongoing between students and teachers and between teachers and teachers;
- decision-making and classroom practices were informed by relevant evidence; and there were;
- common understandings about the focus on student potential through shared roles, contributions and responsibilities. (Adapted from Bishop et al., 2014)

If this reform was to be theory-based, a means to deeply understand this pedagogy and the processes for the reform were core. Following an auditing process in each school, facilitators provided support with a variety of purpose-built tools so that school teams could develop, then activate action plans to meet their identified goals. These included the Rongohia te Hau tools that, ultimately, were intended to facilitate the development and embedding of cultural relationships for responsive pedagogy in classrooms.

1.5.2 Rongohia te Hau

The Rongohia te Hau processes begin with the co-construction of a continuum of teaching and learning. This

process is followed using tools that were designed for gathering different sets of evidence in relation to teachers' implementation of cultural relationships and responsive pedagogy in their classrooms and across the school. The tools include complimentary surveys for students, teachers and whānau as well as timed observations of classroom walk-throughs. During Kia Eke Panuku, an electronic analysis was undertaken of these surveys and data were provided back to individual schools to identify and support the programme of professional learning and to support the implementation of their strategic planning.

2. Method

This paper presents a retrospective analysis of the overall survey and walkthrough observation evidence, gathered by members of the Poutama Pounamu team in the 25 participating Kia Eke Panuku secondary schools in the Southern region. Evidence is taken from the three years of the reform, over two separate points; baseline and final. Some schools with only one data point were removed from this sample. Surveys used a five-point Likert scale over eleven items with space for an open, related comment at the end. A thematic analysis using a grounded theory approach was used to analyse the qualitative evidence from the open comments.

In this paper, quantitative survey evidence is presented as mean ratings on radar graphs and qualitative comments are presented as a series of direct quotes in a collaborative story. The walkthrough data uses raw scores which have been graphed.

This overall retrospective analysis was undertaken by a group that included original facilitators of this process.

3. Results and Findings

In Quantitative evidence from surveys are triangulated across the three groups of respondents: students, teachers and whānau. Surveys were separated into relational items (as shown in Figures 1 and 2) and pedagogical items (as shown in Figures 3 and 4). These figures are followed by a selection of related quotes. Finally, quantitative evidence from classroom walk-through observations are presented.

The five relational items asked questions regarding positive identity, opportunities for engaging, care, being known, and mutual respect. For each item, the mean scores of each group, as shown in the key below, are plotted against the 1 to 5 Likert scale. Figure 1 shows that at baseline, perceptions of cultural relationships were similar across each of the survey groups. Figure 2 however, shows that in the final cycle, teachers believed they were showing more care for students than was being experienced by students and their whānau, who also perceived that there was less mutual respect shown.

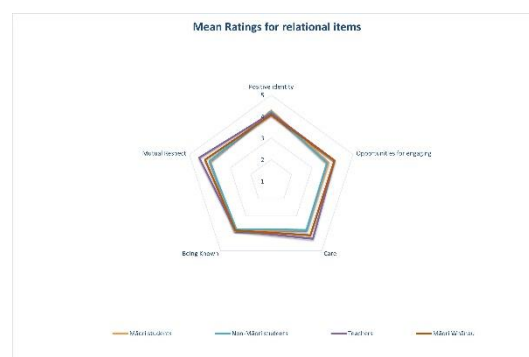


Figure 1. Baseline survey evidence for relational items comparing responses from all participants

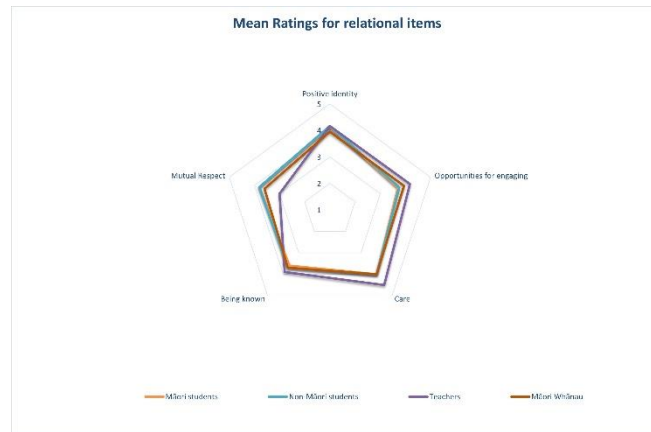


Figure 2. Final survey evidence for relational items comparing responses from all participants

The six pedagogical items, as shown in Figures 3 and 4, asked questions relating to being listened to, having high expectations, being supported to learn, learning being fun, opportunities to collaborate and provision of feedback/feed forward. As above, the mean scores of each group are plotted against these items.

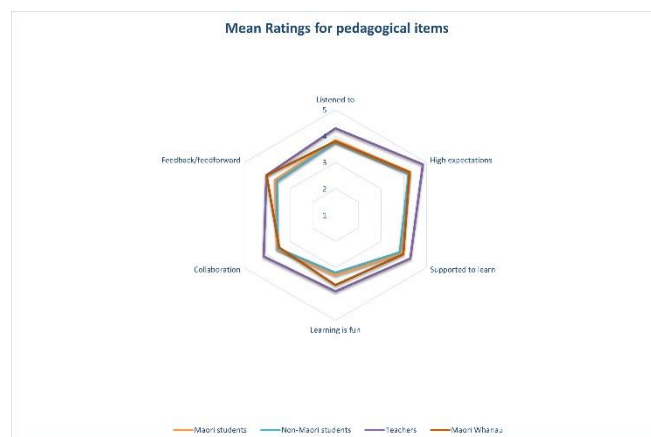


Figure 3. Baseline survey evidence for pedagogical items comparing responses from all participants

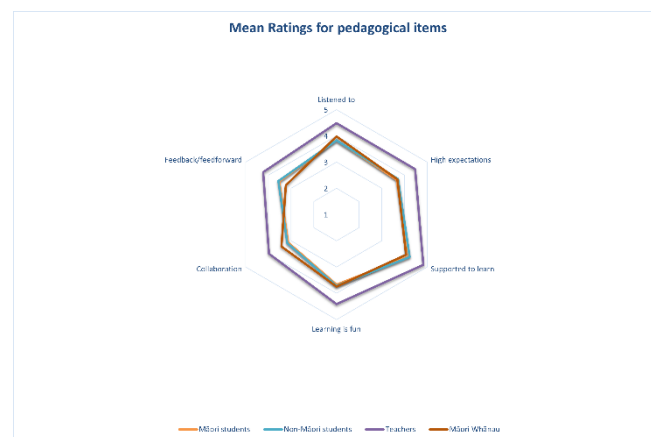


Figure 4. Final survey evidence for pedagogical items comparing responses from all participants

Figure 3 shows that at baseline, experiences of pedagogy were similarly perceived by students and whānau, with teachers' perceptions of their practice rated slightly higher. Of note is the evidence in Figure 4, which shows that at the final data point there is a more pronounced difference between what teachers were saying and all other groups. Māori students, non-Māori students and Māori whānau all believed that they, or their children, experienced less on each of the pedagogical items than teachers believed they were providing. This mismatch speaks to the notions of intentionality and "over-assimilation" (Timperley, 2011), whereby teachers believed they were implementing new practices and providing more than students and whānau thought they were receiving. The qualitative data reinforces this sentiment. One in-school facilitator commented:

"Language, culture, and identity are growing and improving concepts at our school. More and more staff are wanting to alter, and many already are altering their pedagogy to ways that work best for Māori."

Teachers associated Māori learners feeling secure in their cultural identity with systems linked to opportunities and *tikanga* (Māori cultural practices) in the school:

"They [Māori] are given lots of opportunities to lead, to express who they are and to feel proud of who they are."

"Māori students are well-represented in this school and find strong Māori tikanga in school life, including *pōwhiri* [formal Māori rituals of encounter] and ongoing use of Māori language and concepts in school values."

Many teachers, like this one below, also referred to the efforts of their school to create cultural relationships for responsive pedagogy:

"Māori student achievement is a main priority at the College. Teachers and students are dedicated to ensuring Māori students can achieve through learning they find engaging and relevant."

However, Māori students suggested that these experiences were inconsistent. One stated:

"Some of the teachers here think that we learn by them [teachers] yelling at us and not actually talking to us and helping us to achieve. Only some of them are fun and talk to us as if we are equal, others talk down to us because they are higher up. Students need a bit more respect."

Likewise, another student explained:

"Some teachers aren't very helpful at this school and only three or four teachers that I've had throughout my years have worried about my education and are willing to help me achieve my goals."

Students also felt that teachers did not listen to them when it came to discussing how they learn:

"One problem I see is that teachers refuse to listen to our ideas about how we learn, and some go to the length of ignoring those, like myself, who speak out against the current system."

Overall, Figures 1 to 4 show that both Māori and non-Māori students experienced positive relational interactions more frequently than positive engagement in learning. Interestingly, as stated, perception evidence from their teachers revealed no such difference. This discrepancy in perception about classroom pedagogy, was further reinforced by the walkthrough evidence (See Figure 5). Figure 5 shows the 681 classroom observations at baseline plotted against this 5-point continuum and compared with the 729 classrooms in the final cycle within the three years of potential reform.

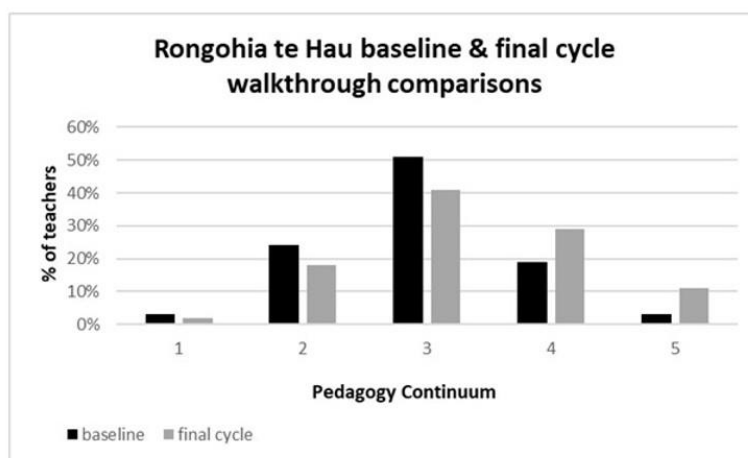


Figure 5. Rongohia te Hau baseline and final cycle walkthrough comparisons

The continuum of teaching and learning against which the classroom walkthrough observations are compared and allocated was co-constructed by facilitators and educators in the school prior to their undertaking of the walkthroughs. It has three broad themes to do with the learning experiences of students. This includes students experiencing: very basic learning support (1 on the continuum); learning where cultural relationships for responsive pedagogy are still needing to develop (2 and 3 on the continuum); and learning where cultural relationships for responsive pedagogy are being fully integrated (4 and 5).

Whilst the shift in pedagogy, from baseline to final, is recognised in the number of classrooms that have shifted from basic to developing (2 and 3), and some to fully integrating (4 and 5), it is still clear that the largest group of classrooms across these settings are those where cultural relationships for responsive pedagogy is still developing. In this space teachers need to make more deliberate and effective connections between the cultural relationships they develop with students and a pedagogy that is more responsive to their learners' prior knowledge and experiences. While a closer look at the numbers behind Figure 5 show that the shift in pedagogical practice is not statistically significant (P value is greater than 0.05), when you look at the triangulated evidence, across all of the 25 schools, the emerging story begins to be quite compelling.

The main themes that arose from the qualitative data for example, speak of negative stereotypes, racism, white privilege and the power to redefine or assimilate learners' identities. These themes suggest that an exigent response was needed. One whānau member shared that:

“They [students] have to be white to be right - teachers don't listen - they think they know what it means to be Māori - they tell me about Māori success - a pretty quick look at the school's results tells you this is all rhetoric - they still have a punitive discipline system of meanness detentions - there is nothing more demotivating for students than this archaic system that makes teachers feel good and kids feel like criminals.”

Negative stereotypes about Māori that have emerged from a colonial education system that has systematically redefined what it means to be Māori were clear within the voices of teachers. One teacher, blind to the experiences of Māori students in terms of their language, culture and identity being deliberately expunged through historical, colonial educational policies of assimilation stated:

“A lot of Māori students at this school are disconnected from their roots and therefore their values are not Māori based but a mix of Modern European/gang/low socio economic/and disconnected cultural values.”

Another teacher supported this:

“Some [Māori students] seem determined to live up to the non-achieving stereotype and are just not interested in attempting to better themselves or their current situation in life through education.”

This stereotype of low expectation and lack of interest in education was further reinforced by another teacher:

“The Māori students will also only do the minimum required and not extend themselves. Lots of them have huge potential but it fails to come through because of this attitude.”

Teacher blindness to the plight of their Māori learners perpetuated an epistemology of silence that enabled white privilege to be maintained. In contrast, whānau comments showed that they understood the importance of cultural relationships between their children and their teachers, with one parent sharing their frustration around the lack of cultural understanding, or racism being shown by their child's school:

"I find some teachers to be racist about my child missing class to attend Māori events. This is unacceptable. My child should feel supported with their cultural needs being met."

Another parent commented:

"As Māori parents we have concerns about the lack of value being placed on te reo and mātauranga [Māori language and knowledge] for our Māori children within the school."

Likewise, the importance of cultural identity and relationships were raised by Māori students. One student shared that:

"I feel like for me being a Māori student I have to try harder because of the bad reputation most of the Māori kids have at my school."

Similarly, another student said:

"There is quite often a barrier between the teachers and students, and you can't be yourself without being judged."

Unlike their teachers Māori students were not blind to the unfairness of constantly being negatively judged by their teachers and peers; by teachers who seemingly wanted to have a positive relationship with them but this relationship did not carry over into helping them to learn. They were frustrated by their lack of agency and this played out in two different ways. Some Māori students, because they wanted the qualifications only schooling could provide them with, put up with mediocrity in terms of the teaching they received and looked for other opportunities to learn. A student who would fit in this group said:

"It's alright I suppose, it gets boring at times, but we get opportunities."

Another from this group stated:

"I have had a mixed experience at school. To be honest I don't particularly like school but I like to learn and school does that so I do enjoy that bit."

These students recognised that these opportunities depended on their teachers. One said:

"Some teachers care about my learning, some teachers don't, some teachers respect students, some teachers don't, some teachers also see being a teacher as a way to be better than students and treat them like they are less than them...that's just the way it is."

Another explained it as:

"...College has been alright, it's supported me with my sports and fitness but the education side is a bit rough. Some teachers know how to work with students and others teachers just tell us what to do instead of teaching. They lose the point of teaching. Some just tell and others explain and show. I guess that's just how it goes."

The voices of these Māori students might be described as Brown Tolerance. They acknowledge that their experiences at school are not always beneficial to their learning, but they are resigned to the fact that things are unlikely to change for the better. Therefore, they must compromise and 'play the game'. For all intents and purposes, they have tolerated the status quo in order to achieve educational success, albeit at the forfeit of their culture.

Other Māori students who were not prepared to put up with the differential treatment they were receiving, became disengaged. They stopped attending classes or let people know of their frustrations and were soon stood down or removed from school. These students commented:

"I hate it at school. It's boring and I feel I don't learn anything."

"...some teachers make school really boring and depressing. I don't go to those classes often."

"School is boring most of the time... I don't really do my work because I'm that bored."

The survey comments also showed that whānau were able to identify barriers to their children's learning. They identified that when pedagogy failed to meet their children's potential, boredom and disengagement ensued:

"She is bored and teachers see this [being bored] as delinquent."

“My child finds some of the work too easy and loses interest.”

Whānau also identified that some teachers were unwilling to change what they were already doing:

“Some of the older teachers who are nearing retirement are not willing to make any changes to the way they teach and only teach the students that are high achievers in the class and tend to forget about the students who struggle.”

“At times she [her daughter] has felt that some of her teachers do not know how she works best and have not engaged with her properly or have taken her questioning as a sign she is testing them rather than she is seeking clarity in the tasks.”

“Our son is shy about being Māori. He knows that being Māori isn't the done thing at school. It happens on the side but isn't integrated into the school ethos. Many teachers do not understand how Māori students learn and they are not willing to change their practice to suit Māori learners. Most teach in a very traditional way - they do not empower the students to lead their own learning.”

Whilst showing clear insight into the learning barriers faced by their children, whānau also offered suggestions as to what might better support their engagement and success at school:

“There have been attempts recently to address Māori students' needs however, my observations are: Māori students still feel isolated within the school system, acknowledgment of their cultural identity is undervalued, assumptions and deficit thinking still occurs... my view is if it's not supported and led from the top our students will continue to struggle.”

“The degree of engagement and motivation my child has for each subject area depends on the relationship they have with the teacher. She is excelling in subjects where the relationship with the teacher is positive, encouraging and caring.”

“In order for my child to learn, all teachers must ensure they engage with our whānau. This simply means home contact should occur regularly by all subject teachers, not just at reporting time. This may help them engage in a meaningful manner.”

Importantly, over the three years of Kia Eke Panuku, the participating schools had begun to recognise their need to engage with whānau in order to seek their advice around their children's experience of schooling. The number of whānau members sampled in the Rongohia te Hau baseline surveys across the 25 schools was 182. This is approximately a 5% sample. While this had increased to 527 in the second round of surveys this is still not a strong sample size.

4. Discussion

In considering this analysis of one region within a national sample, we acknowledge that the country-wide cohort of 93 secondary-schools showed that some school leaders believed their engagement with whānau had been disappointing. We also know that the extent to which the qualitative survey responses from each group were thematically analysed and used, is also unclear. Instead, the overall quantitative survey and walkthrough evidence were more commonly used to work with individual schools.

However, the findings from this sample show that Rongohia te Hau provided a set of tools and processes to deepen understanding of how pedagogy was experienced by teachers, learners and whānau across schools in this region. Developing a coherent picture across a continuum of teaching and learning began by building from observers' pedagogical knowledge to co-construct descriptors of cultural relationships and responsive pedagogy. This continuum was then used to undertake and moderate walk-through observations of teaching and learning. Evidence from the walkthrough observations were then largely confirmed by the quantitative and qualitative evidence from learners, whānau and teachers' surveys.

The active development of each continuum of teaching and learning holds important learnings for those who are creating it. Furthermore, the construction of this continuum of cultural relationships and responsive pedagogy, can potentially establish core theoretical understandings for developing more equitable and iterative learning pathways going forward. However, if the voices of learners and whānau, found in the survey responses were not used to understand this continuum against the triangulated evidence, then sadly, these voices were effectively marginalised and silenced. Opportunities for learners and whānau to contribute ideas about possible next steps for the school validates the educationally powerful relationship between whānau, community and the school and also extends understanding about cultural relationships and responsive pedagogy.

While individual school evidence was used at the time to customise a responsive pedagogical intervention in each school, what became clear when this regional sample of schools were finally analysed, were the negative

stereotypes and racialised teaching and learning being experienced by Māori learners and their whānau. What might have been a lone voice within an individual school response and easily ignored, became a compelling argument when all of these data were added together.

We infer that the conversations to construct the continuum of teaching and learning provide an important mechanism to deeply understand the relationships required if responsive pedagogy is to ensue. However, these conversations must be more formative and spread amongst a wider group than the observers alone. Taken together, the Rongohia te Hau tools and processes provide a mechanism for Sleeter's (2011) need to strengthen teachers' theorising about culturally responsive pedagogy and connect these understandings with student learning.

5. Conclusion

Critical educators are interested in the purpose of schooling and how schooling, and their spaces of agency, function for all learners and their families; especially those who, for whatever reason, appear on the fringes. Critical school leaders want to understand how their school can become a more empathetic community, one that engages through education towards contributing to a more socially just society. With a focus on equity and upholding our shared obligations to each other we can move from a system determined by an inequitable distribution of power to one that nurtures humanity for a shared interdependent future.

If we are to purposefully disrupt the intergenerational disparities that the education system has perpetuated for Māori, then all learners and families, their educational professionals and the state must hear these voices so that all may begin to understand the historical legacy of colonisation. Understanding the current school context, including a clear view of pedagogical practice, its underpinning theorising and connections to learner outcomes, affords critical educators an effective launching point. This is essential if the huge investment in schooling serves to purposefully disrupt rather than perpetuate the status quo. We need to know just how well schooling is working for all who are invested in it. This includes the school's leaders, their teachers and other staff members, their learners and their whānau.

Engaging with the discourses that emerge from institutional and systemic racism provide schools and their communities with opportunities to critically examine the systems and structures that maintain and perpetuate this status quo. Working with Rongohia te Hau means that schools will have evidence to understand their role in promoting equity and inclusion for our shared humanity.

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Notes

Note 1. *Aotearoa* and New Zealand are both recognised as names for this country. Henceforth, in this paper, we will use *Aotearoa*.

Note 2. While *Kia Eke Panuku: Building on Success* was funded by the Ministry of Education in *Aotearoa*, and involved a collaboration across three national institutions, the positioning of the paper and the evidence presented emerged from the University of Waikato, the authors, and the schools with whom we worked. No wider connections should be inferred.

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