

Teacher' Professional Development with Maori Language and Process

Successes and Challenges

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Key Words

- Professional Development
- Māori
- Competency
- Te Reo Māori
- Tikanga Māori
- Indigenous

Biographies

- Dr Craig Rofe is a senior lecturer in the Te Kura Māori School, Faculty of Education at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. His research and teaching interests include Maturanga Māori (Māori knowledge), cultural responsiveness & competency, Maori epistemology and also science education.
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Abstract

This paper focuses on the cultural competency of science teachers and how they utilise their students' indigenous knowledge. Teachers from a New Zealand secondary school were asked questions about their proficiency with elements of Māori culture. Professional development (PD) workshops were carried out for teachers to improve their Te Reo Māori (Māori language) and Tikanga Māori (Māori process) proficiency. Pre and post-workshop questions were delivered and on average, non-science teachers displayed low aptitude and little improvement after having had PD. We argue that the overall competency of indigenous knowledge is low and improvements of the teachers within the project could be another illustration of the impact of positive relationships, between the facilitator and participants. We suggest that personal relationships are as important in adult learning in this context as they are in New Zealand schools. The findings are in agreement with previous findings for the 'Te Kotahitanga' research.

Teachers' Professional Development with Māori Language and Process - Successes and Challenges

Culture Matters

Internationally, educators are becoming aware that culture may affect students' academic achievement (Alton-Lee, 2003; Averill, 2012; Colbert, 2012; Tyler et al., 2008). Culture encompasses both visible and invisible elements, the former represented by signs, images and icons that are easy to recognise, and the latter including values, morals, ways of communicating, making decisions, and problem solving processes (e.g., world views and knowledge producing processes) to help its members in meaning and sense-making (Bishop et al., 2007).

The notion that teaching that makes a difference to learners from diverse cultures requires effective teacher-student relationships is emphasised in New Zealand and

international literature (Averill, 2012; Bishop et al., 2003; Eccles, 2004; Gay, 2010). Eccles argues that teacher-student relationships are key to a classroom environment that is conducive to learning for all students and asserts that it helps to ‘facilitate academic motivation, school engagement, academic success, self-esteem and socio-emotional well-being’ (p. 129).

Even though there is broad agreement about the importance of student-teacher relationships and empirical evidence to support it, there is also an opposing view. In the context of New Zealand schools and Māori students’ learning, Kidman et al. (2011) argue that culturally responsive practices result in the introduction of ‘tokenistic activities designed to ‘celebrate’ ethnic diversity (national costume days or ethnic food fairs, for example) ... whilst in other cases complex knowledge-power relations have been reduced to a primary focus on the cultural interactions between the teacher and the taught’ (p. 204). Our view is that an activity, however small, is only tokenistic when the motivation of the activity is perfunctory. A teacher, believing that his or her small step towards cultural responsiveness is part of an ongoing change that will provide deep understanding in the future, cannot be included within a tokenistic label.

Perso (2012) draws attention to Australia’s population becoming more and more multicultural and that there is now a diversity of languages, races, cultures, and values. There has been an ongoing focus on ‘closing the gap’ between the academic achievement of non-indigenous and indigenous Australian children. Perso argues that efforts to improve academic achievement of the diverse population of students has led to small successes where short-term gains have been led by individuals and groups but have not been sustained over a longer term.

National professional standards in Australia have turned their attention to the issue of diversity. The first standard, *The Knowledge of Students and How they Learn*, focuses on the cultural, linguistic, religious and socio-economic diversity of students. Science students’ learning and engagement have been strongly connected to effective teaching practices that support students’ cultural capital and identity. When science pedagogy and curriculum are integrated with aboriginal culture, students’ participation in school science is increased. Because of its unique indigenous identity, Australia’s science teachers have an opportunity to integrate cross-cultural science teaching into the classroom (Santoro, 2013). He argues that there is a need for Australian teachers to be responsive to the needs of the diverse learners in their classrooms.

Similarly, the 2014 New Zealand Teachers Council's third graduating standard focuses on how contextual factors influence teaching and learning and elaborates the following points where teachers must:

- a. have an understanding of the complex influences that personal, social, and cultural factors may have on teachers and learners.
- b. have knowledge of Tikanga and Te Reo Māori to work effectively within the bicultural contexts of Aotearoa New Zealand.
- c. have an understanding of education within the bicultural, multicultural, social, political, economic and historical contexts of Aotearoa New Zealand.

The sixth standard requires teachers to develop positive relationships with learners and the members of learning communities:

- a. recognising how differing values and beliefs may impact on learners and their learning.
- b. having the knowledge and dispositions to work effectively with colleagues, parents/caregivers, families/whānau and communities.
- c. building effective relationships with their learners.
- d. promoting a learning culture which engages diverse learners effectively.
- e. demonstrating respect for Te Reo Māori me ngā Tikanga-a-iwi (tribal way of doing things) in their practice.

To gain and retain registration teachers have to demonstrate that they meet these standards.

Culturally responsive teaching is a pedagogical approach that reflects, validates, and promotes a student's culture and language and as such recognises and rejects racialised deficit thinking. It is about seeing the culture of a student as an asset for learning and not a problem that needs fixing (Hayes et al., 2009). Cultural competency is closely related to cultural responsiveness. In the teaching context, cultural competence is about affirming and validating the culture of each learner. It is underpinned by the philosophical belief that teachers and learners are culturally located individuals and bring their culture to the classroom. The New Zealand Teachers' Council (2014) argues that culturally competent teachers understand how they can use the learners' culture(s) as building blocks for teaching and learning and are able

to build relationships with the learners. Perso (2012), in his literature review of cultural responsive and school education, clarifies:

“Cultural responsiveness’ is the delivered *outcome* of the cultural competence (capacity) of an individual or an organization; Cultural responsiveness is the response planned for and delivered that derives from having cultural competence. To be more specific, **Cultural Responsiveness is enacted Cultural Competence**’ (p. 22) (Emphasis in original)

Fitzgerald (2000) describes culturally competent people as individuals able to identify and challenge their own assumptions, values and beliefs. They are able to empathise and see the world through the eyes of another or at least recognise that others may have a different cultural lens to view the world. Hollinsworth (2013), a social scientist, asserts ‘working effectively across racial and cultural differences demands critical reflection on one's own position and the complex interactions between different aspects of identity ... it requires the need to examine our own values and behaviours’ (p. 1048).

There have been calls for teachers to reflect on their beliefs about Māori students’ learning and their expectations of them. With Māori students lagging behind in educational achievement (Hook 2006), ways of turning things around for these students is a government focus and is in the forefront of educational debate. Most educational organisations in New Zealand are committed to increasing engagement in, and enhancing the achievement of Māori students. The school where the reported research took place has strong leadership to ensure a bicultural space where both teachers and students can express their 'taha Māori' (Māori side) and 'taha pākehā' (non-Māori side). What might appear as a surface change with a Māori school name is accompanied by rich and deep processes within the school with both culturally relevant curriculum development and staff professional development (PD), which includes Te Reo Māori and Tikanga.

Te Reo Māori is a vehicle to carry and express Māori culture. According to Ratima and May (2011), ‘The Māori Renaissance effectively elevated the social status of Te Reo me ōna Tikanga (Māori language and culture)’ (p. 14). Sir James Henare asserted that Māori language is the life force of Māori mana ‘Ko Te Reo te mauri o te mana Māori’ (Waitangi Tribunal, 1986, p. 6.1.21). The preservation of the language is critical and efforts have been made nationally to surround us with the language. Hodson (1993) argues that language is a cultural artefact and that we use it in many ways – to remember, reason, evaluate and communicate. Language is socio-culturally constructed and has to be learnt. McKinley

(2005), in making a case for promoting Te Reo, posed a question: ‘what do we lose when a language is gone?’ and then added, ‘the answer is everything. We lose diversity – one less view of the world for every language lost. The essence of language is not only linguistic it is also the very existence of people. Hence it becomes an issue of identity for without it ‘difference’ will become manifested in the physical attributes of a person’ (p. 234).

When working with adults it is difficult to know why they find it difficult to learn Te Reo Māori. It could be that as we grow older it becomes difficult to learn a second language; it is easier between the ages of 2 and puberty and the teachers in this study are mostly older teachers (White & Genesee, 1996). Ratima and May (2011) contend that both individual and socio-cultural factors influence how we learn a language. Individual factors include aptitude, age, attitudes, and motivation. Social and cultural factors include instruction, identity formation such as agency, and anxiety. The broader research into second language acquisition is beyond the scope of this paper (for detailed review see Ratima & May, 2011). Gardner (1968) researched second language learning and motivation and found that attitude and motivation can overcome most other barriers, and that the learner’s attitude towards the target group affects their motivation to learn their language.

With the importance of relationships with Māori students, national standards, responsive teaching practices and their relationship to Māori language and culture highlighted previously, PD was undertaken (details in methodology). This PD was carried out to gather baseline data and to evaluate the impact of participation in PD offered by the participating school to all its teachers. In a retrospective research focus, the data gathered provided an insight to the following research questions.

Research question

1. What is participating teachers’ current knowledge of Te Reo and Tikanga Māori?
2. In what ways does participating in professional development extend teachers’ knowledge of Te Reo Māori me Tikanga Māori?

Methodology

Two PD workshops were carried out over a twelve month period with around 80 teachers at a large Year 1 – Year 13 school. In this mixed method research, the population surveys included teachers from the early childhood, primary, and secondary sectors.

Quantitative data were collected through a questionnaire pre and post-workshop. Qualitative narratives were also collected. Ethical practice of confidentiality was ensured through the data collection and analysis process. The questions were organised in a different order but the pre and post-questionnaires were seeking the same information. The questionnaire comprised of five questions probing knowledge of Te Reo Māori and five questions investigating Tikanga Māori.

In addition, a sub-group of this population comprising secondary science teachers (n= 14) enabled a comparison group. Pre and post-questionnaire data were analysed using SPSS software utilising box plot graphical presentation. Research conditions were identical to the population and the sub-groups. In addition to the pre and post-questionnaires, data were collected from participants who also attended a noho marae (village sleepover). This event included teachers taking on roles of welcoming other visitors to the marae (village) through powhiri (welcoming ceremony) and general marae protocol being taught. ‘Kaikaranga’ (caller), ‘kaiwhaikorero’ (speaker), kaiwaiatatautoko (supporting singers), ‘kaia’ (lead singer) were some of the roles taught to non-Māori teachers.

Results

Comparative analysis of the pre and post-questionnaires of the non-science teacher group showed that no participant provided an accurate response to all ten questions (Figure 1). However, in the pre workshop survey the upper quartile scored just under 60% and the lower quartile below 30%.

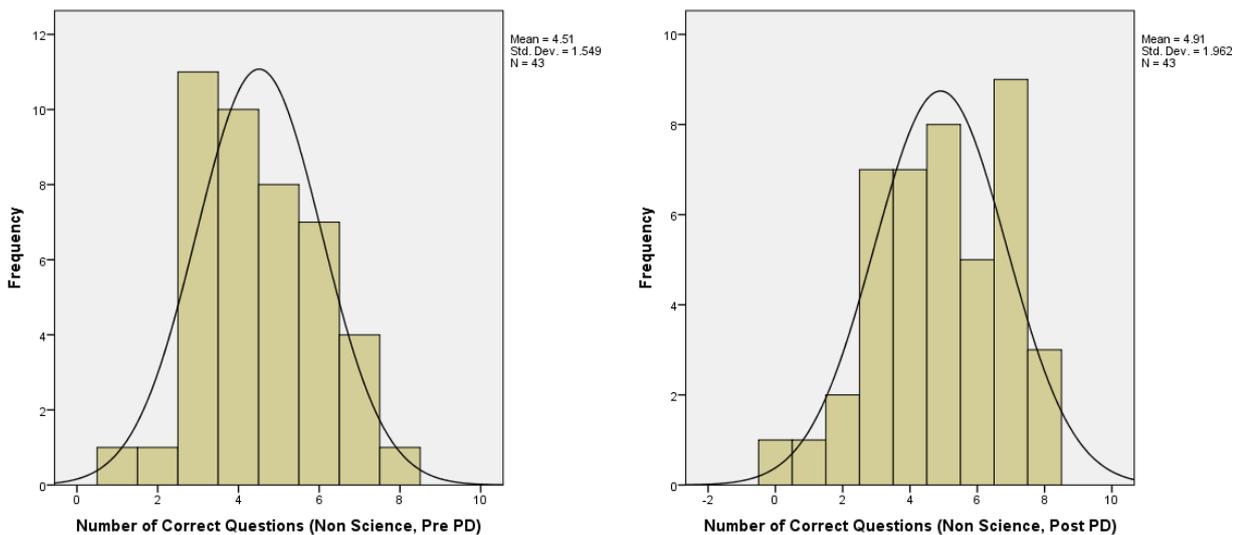


Figure 1 shows the distribution of responses (n=43), with mean 4.5 and SD = 1.5. The post-workshop distribution reveals a similar picture (n=43), mean 4.9 and SD 2.0.

The standard deviation (SD) was relatively small but allowed for a comparison to be made. However, a stem plot enhanced the differences in the comparison (see Figure 2 below). It is noteworthy that there has been modest improvement in teacher knowledge after participating in the PD. In addition, the quartile ranges have not moved significantly. Another curious finding was that the maximum score remained unchanged while the minimum became lower in the second survey.

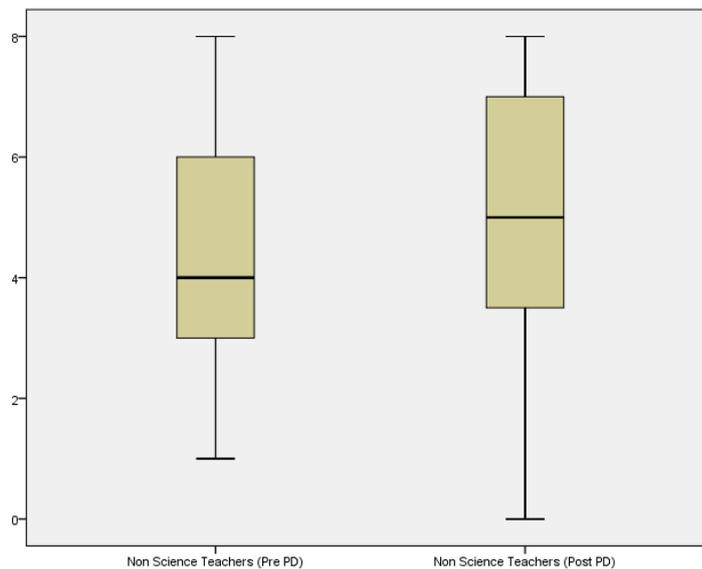


Figure 2 A stem plot of the same data as Figure 1 shows the small post gain of median 4.0 to 5.0.

The results of the science teachers’ survey are presented in Figure 3 and show that there is a noticeable shift in the mean scores (3.9 to 6.0) of initial and final responses. Similarly, in the science group the accuracy of measurement is displayed with small SDs of 2.2 and 1.9.

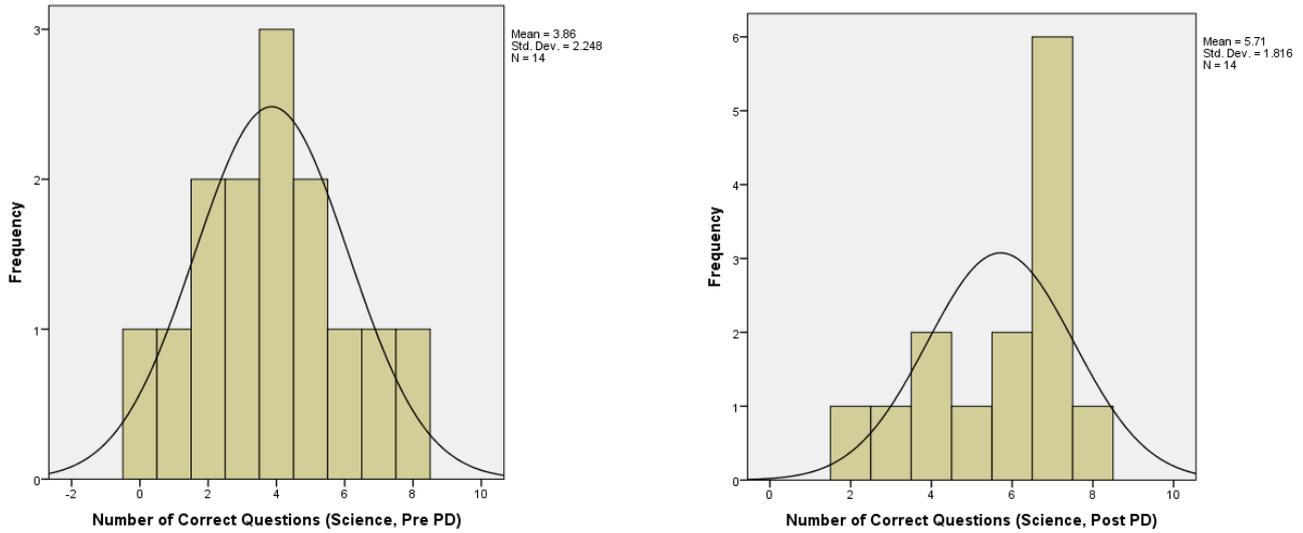


Figure 3 shows the distribution of responses (n=14), with mean 3.9 and SD = 2.2. The post workshop distribution reveals an increase in average scores with (n=14), mean 5.7 and SD 1.8.

The stem plot in Figure 4 uncovers the differences at a micro-level. The lower quartile has significantly increased in range but the quartile is resituated at a higher value. The median increase from 4.0 to 7.0 is significant under identical research conditions to the previous group.

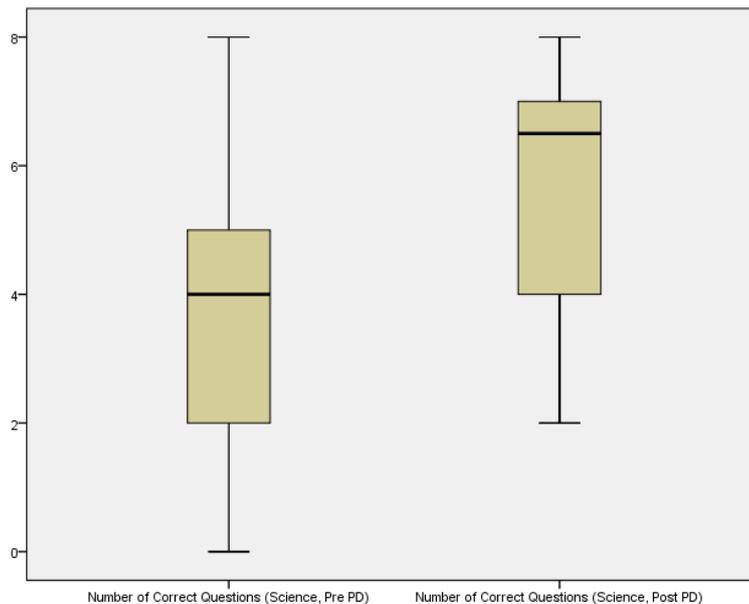


Figure 4. A significant increase of median scores (4.0 to 7.0) is observed after PD.

In respect of the differences between the Te Reo Māori and Tikanga aspects of the study it was found that there was little improvement for non-science teachers and an equally weighted improvement for the science teachers. In addition to the responses from the questions, science teachers also commented with reasons for not supplying an answer. A few examples of comments were:

‘I am really sorry that I could not remember the name of your iwi (tribe) [facilitator]...’

‘Please don’t be sad that I cannot remember this...’

‘I really wanted to get all the answers right [facilitator] ... just couldn’t remember...’

The comments demonstrated a personal relationship with the facilitator. It is important to note that no such narratives were present in the other teacher groups.

Interview evidence of the noho marae attendees reported that the marae was rewarding and that they had got a lot out of the experience in terms of learning and spiritual connection:

‘It was really different being on the other side this time. ... I felt connected to the people who had passed on...’

‘I had a real spiritual connection to the powhiri [welcome ceremony] this time ... being responsible for the karanga was really emotional ... it was deeper and richer.’

Reports concluded that because the PD was authentic, the Te Reo Māori and Tikanga content was more readily learnt as it was ‘more meaningful’. A ‘deeper and richer’ experience was felt from attendees compared to the PD delivered at school.

Discussion

Research over the last decade has demonstrated that use of Māori language, Māori curriculum content and Māori knowledge and improved teaching and learning relationships positively enhance Māori student achievement (Savage et al., 2011). Savage et al., in describing the impact of Te Kotahitanga project, presented evidence that students appreciated their teachers learning Māori vocabulary and phrases and embracing things Māori. They said that it was ‘very cool’ how their teachers tried to learn and use Te Reo in their classes (p. 192). We argue that with this overwhelming evidence that supports Māori achievement when

their teachers value them, teachers ought to have or at least be developing basic competencies in Te Reo Māori me Tikanga Māori. This research reveals that although the school was committed and provided PD support for these specific aspects of teacher learning, the results are disappointing. The overall baseline data for all teachers in the study was 4.51 and little improvement was made after PD. So what could be the possible barriers to learning for teachers undergoing PD? One possible reason may be the teachers' motivation behind participating in the workshops. The *Graduating Teacher Standards* require portfolio evidence of learning Te Reo Māori me Tikanga-a-iwi for continued teacher registration. However, the evidence required does not ask for evidence of learning, for example being *present* at the workshops may be sufficient to demonstrate teachers' development. The '*Graduating Teacher Standards*' focus on *development* raises the question of whether this focus alone leads to basic proficiency in Te Reo Māori me Tikanga-a-iwi. Ratima and May (2011) state that attitude and motivation are significant factors in language learning and perhaps participating teachers lacked motivation to learn these aspects. If indeed there is a lack of motivation, is this absence connected to a lack of value placed on Te Reo Māori and Tikanga itself? If so, the concern is that this lack of value might not only include language and Tikanga but Māori culture itself as a whole. In contrast to this idea, the difficulties in teachers' learning may also be that the age of the participating teachers is a factor as second language acquisition is easier between the ages of 2 and puberty (White & Genesee, 1996).

Although this sample size is relatively small, there is a positive shift in science teachers' knowledge of Te Reo Māori and Tikanga Māori. This group of teachers had an identical format to that of the non-science teachers and were demographically similar but had one point of difference – the facilitator was a member of the science group and therefore had an existing relationship that may have influenced teacher learning (Averill, 2012; Bishop et al., 2003). The facilitator was part of the *lived reality* (Merriam, 1998) of the science group and therefore teachers were often exposed to the values of the facilitator. For example, Te Reo Māori was frequently used in the everyday working environment of the science department such as meetings and discussions. Tikanga practices such as karakia (prayer) and waiata (song) were also the responsibility of the facilitator within the science group. These tangible aspects, observed by co-workers on a daily basis, combined with the intangible knowledge of the facilitator's relationship with his marae, hapu (sub tribe) and iwi, could have demonstrated that their values were centred in a Māori world. In contrast, the non-science teachers may not have had a similar working relationship with a Māori colleague.

The assessment phase of the science teachers demonstrated a theme where teachers were aware of their lack of knowledge and were concerned about how this may influence their relationship with the facilitator. Their narratives exhibited the importance of the student/teacher relationship within the context of Te Reo Māori me Tikanga but may also have implications for any teacher/student relationship in other learning contexts. Perhaps as all other teachers did not have the same relationship with the facilitator, they did not feel the need to make comments similar to those made by the science teachers.

Although the feedback from marae participants was not conclusive, there was a feeling that providing an authentic context for Māori language and process using a marae was a good ‘vehicle’ to give learners a better way of learning. Hook (2007) acknowledges the use of authentic contexts saying ‘development of culturally appropriate educational programs promoted and delivered within the marae environment.’ is an essential element for Māori culture and Māori education (p. 1).

The spiritual connection that many attendees demonstrated in their discussions is also important in creating an authentic Māori context for learning. Indeed, Fraser (2004) highlights the inseparable nature of the intangible quality to Māori values:

‘An understanding of Māori values and the centrality of spirituality is particularly important to relate to Māori children and their families they need to appreciate that the spiritual dimension is considered an inextricable aspect of identity and culture.’ (p. 93)

Also, the holistic nature of Māori ontology (Henry & Pene, 2001) requires the mind, body and soul to be viewed as one. Additionally, ‘True knowing’, from a Māori worldview, has sometimes been described as ‘knowing of the mind, body and soul’ (Hindle, 2010, p. 1). Therefore, any teaching and learning of Māori language and process must also incorporate spiritual aspects to be authentic. It is contended that workshops that are disconnected from authentic contexts such as pōwhiri(welcome ceremony), waiata and tangihanga (funerals) etc, offer only small progress with the endeavour of ‘true knowing’.

Conclusion and Limitations

Overall, it would appear that participation in a couple of standalone workshops may satisfy the requirements for teacher registration but a longer term gradual exposure to the language and culture are more likely to build relationships and achieve the desired outcomes.

We acknowledge that even though the number of participants is reasonable, this is only one school and therefore the findings cannot be generalised to other schools. However,



this study is helpful in putting forward the need for a longer term strategy if the intent of schools is for their teachers to develop Te Reo Māori, and the results are incongruent with Bishops et al.'s (2007) findings that relationships are the key to achieving these goals.

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Appendix A

Survey question:

1. Within a Māori whānau, your first cousin's son is what relation to you? [Process aspect exploring different relationships within Māori family]
2. Phonetically spell the place' names; Otaki, Whanganui-ā-Tara, Raetihi. [Exploring Te Reo Māori pronunciation]
3. What is more appropriate when greeting someone, a kiss or hongi? [Exploring the Māori process of greeting people]

4. Whanganui or Wanganui? [Question around tribal specific language]
5. Who should lead the waiata (song) after a whaikōrero (speech) at a powhiri? [Looking at Māori process]
6. What are one of the local iwi [tribe] around the [local] area?
7. What are the iwi that [the facilitator] is affiliated with? [Exploring process of recalling information from Pepeha (Māori introduction)]
8. Name three Māori phrases of praise that could be used with students.
9. Name two Māori phrases that could be used to greet students

Who is the person who starts the pōwhiri process?