

Compulsory te reo Māori in Aotearoa New Zealand schools: A future-focused analysis

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While support for compulsory te reo Māori in schools in Aotearoa New Zealand is growing, there is a risk that any future policy could fail, or be only poorly implemented, unless we understand more deeply the factors which shape effective language policy implementation in schools. In this paper we employ a 'future policy analysis' to explore what it would take to effectively implement a compulsory te reo Māori policy in schools in the future. We report on interviews with twelve purposively selected stakeholders (including Māori, Pākehā, Chinese and Samoan teachers, principals and one Member of Parliament) to elicit from their experiences and reflections the key elements required to implement te reo Māori well in schools. Participants identified that prioritising and valuing te reo Māori was foundational and essential for any potential policy shift at both national and school level. In addition, participants elaborated on how teacher expertise, resourcing, time and leadership support through senior management was integral to successful adoption and implementation. The paper concludes by recommending urgent attention to a range of future-focused strategies that beginning right now could bring about transformational change in our schools and give te reo Māori the mana it deserves.

Keywords: policy, te reo Māori, future policy analysis, language, implementation

Ko te reo mauri o te Mana Māori. Ko te kupu te mauri o te reo Māori.
The language is the life force of the Mana Māori. The word is the life force of the language.

Tā Himi Hēnare

Introduction

Te reo Māori, tikanga and kawa are enshrined in Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Article 2 Rangatiratanga) and te reo Māori has been recognised as an official language of Aotearoa New Zealand since 1987 in the Māori Language Act. Yet, while te reo Māori is increasingly recognised as a vital part of sustaining Māori identity, culture and success, it still remains an optional aspect of the curriculum and learning experiences of New Zealand ākonga (students). In recent years, support for compulsory te reo Māori in schools in Aotearoa New Zealand has gained momentum. For example, it was raised as a potential future policy during the New Zealand elections in 2014 and 2017 (Albury, 2018) and again in 2020. In 2019, public statements supporting compulsory te reo Māori were made by Kelvin Davis (then Associate Minister of Education) and in 2022 by the Race Relations Commissioner, Meng Foon, and others on Te Rā o Waitangi (February 6th) (Mohi, 2022).

In addition, a suite of new national-level strategies, such as *Maihi Karauna*, which promote Māori language revitalisation have been introduced and an increasing number of te reo Māori courses are funded for early childhood and school teachers alongside the compulsory new Aotearoa Histories curriculum. These initiatives indicate growing support

at a political level (Bracewell-Worrall, 2019; Ministry of Education, 2019; Ta Taura Whiri [Māori Language Commission], 2022a), however, to date, te reo Māori has still not been made a compulsory feature of schools in Aotearoa New Zealand. This was confirmed on 5 July 2022 when Associate Minister of Education Kelvin Davis stated that while Aotearoa was on the path to te reo becoming compulsory in schools in the future, it would create a “backlash” if done so now (Walters, 2022).

In this paper we join many others by asserting the need to urgently develop educational policy that makes te reo Māori a compulsory part of all students’ schooling in Aotearoa New Zealand. However, we also recognise that unless we understand deeply the complex factors which shape effective policy implementation in schools, there is a high risk that intended education policies can fail or be poorly implemented (Ball, Maguire, & Braun, 2012; Barber, 2005; Fullan, 2001; Le Fevre, 2020; Timperley, 2007; Viennet & Pont, 2017; Wood, Thrupp, & Barker, 2021). With this in mind, in this paper we employ a ‘future policy analysis’ approach in order to be prepared for a future policy in compulsory te reo Māori, exploring what it might take to implement such a policy effectively in schools in the future. While the scope of fully developing this potentially complex policy is beyond this one paper, our intention is to provide an initial contribution through a small-scale study that nonetheless can inform future policy development and enhance further research.

Futures thinking has become an increasingly important part of policy-making (Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (NZ), 2021; Government Office for Science (UK), 2021). In New Zealand, a growing interest in ‘futures thinking’ is noted on the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet website (2021) which describes policy futures thinking as a way to provide “a range of techniques to help you think about the drivers of change that are shaping the future and explore the implications of these for making decisions today – not only about what to do but how and when to do it” [online]. It continues to say that futures thinking can be a pivotal part of policy-making:

Futures thinking is a discipline in its own right. It's used in strategy development and design and planning and to inform policy development. (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (NZ), 2021)

Our aim in this paper is to draw on research to identify ideas and strategies that might support the potential successful future implementation of compulsory te reo Māori in schools. The motivation for this research stems from the first author’s experience as a teacher of Māori descent who has worked to develop Te Ao Māori, particularly te reo Māori me ona tikanga Māori, in English-medium schools for 30 years. These experiences have led her to be a passionate advocate for the recognition of the mana of te reo in schools in Aotearoa New Zealand and inspired her to contribute to furthering this vision through her postgraduate research with the hope of ushering in a new era of revitalised reo Māori.

The paper begins with a literature review of previous research in this field. We then outline kaupapa Māori theoretical framing underpinning this research and the utilisation of ‘future thinking’ policy framing approaches. The methodology is outlined and describes the recruitment and interviewing of twelve key stakeholders in this field with experience and interest in te reo Māori language acquisition in schools. The paper concludes with a conceptual framing for future policy development, design and planning, *Te Whare ō Tātou Reo* (Figure 1), and some recommendations and reflections that could bring about

transformational policy change in our schools and give te reo Māori the mana it deserves in mainstream society.

Literature review

The literature review begins with a Te Ao Māori perspective to language using a traditional storytelling approach by the renowned te reo Māori expert Tā Tīmoti Kāretu, before considering the impact of colonisation on te reo Māori and prior research on language acquisition.

In order to explain the importance of Māori language, Kāretu (2008) refers to the traditional Māori tale of how Tāne Mahuta, the God of the Forest, had to ascend to the 'twelfth heaven' in order to attain the baskets of knowledge for humankind. Tāne had to navigate and negotiate many challenges to reach his goals and Kāretu points out that something worth having never comes easily (and this could be applied to the challenges of making te reo Māori compulsory in Aotearoa New Zealand schools). Tāne returned with three baskets of knowledge:

- *Te kete tuauri*: the basket of peace, love and all things good.
- *Te kete tuatea*: the basket of warfare, black magic, agriculture, tree or woodwork, stonework and earthworks.
- *Te kete aronui*: the basket of incantations, literature, philosophy and all forms of ritual employed by humanity.

Each of these kete are valued as Kāretu (2008) explains. *Te kete aronui* interested him the most because it contained ritual, literature and humanities. It is the kete of philosophy and intellectual pursuits and shows that the philosophers and poets of Te Ao Māori were equal to philosophers and poets elsewhere. Many works, such as *mōteatea* (chanted song-poetry), were not written but committed to memory by Māori. This did not make it an inferior form of literature despite opposition from university academics who purported otherwise. The key is that the memorised works were in te reo Māori and the language is what is to be valued (Higgins et al., 2015).

Kāretu (2008) decided that he required a 'fourth basket' – *te kete tuawha*, *te kete aroiti* (the small kete) – that would contain language, and attitudes to language as te reo Māori did not exist in the other three baskets. Kāretu argues that this kete was not an oversight by his tupuna (ancestors), but perhaps they were unable to envisage the trials and tribulations their descendants would have to endure to preserve the language in the future. Kāretu reinforces the contents of *Te kete aroiti* and the necessity to enact tolerance, compromise, mutual respect and acceptance of difference as the way forward if we are ensuring our Indigenous language remains strong and relevant. In Kāretu's opinion, we must fully commit our time and effort to the te reo Māori revitalisation cause at all levels. If there is no genuine commitment, then there is no survival.

A brief history of the decline and revitalisation of te reo Māori

Kāretu's (2008) tale helps us to explain the need to value te reo Māori me ona tikanga Māori. In order to understand how and why the Māori language diminished, we also need to examine the history of the colonisation of New Zealand and the history of Māori language policy in Aotearoa New Zealand. The Māori sense of self, beliefs, values and

practices were all threatened by the arrival of the Europeans (Albury, 2018; MacFarlane, 2015; Simon, 2000). Hingangaroa Smith (2000) writes about the deadly effects of colonial policies and practices that left Māori with a loss and change of culture alongside “systemic cultural denigration [that] undermined the validity and legitimacy of Māori knowledge and culture” (p. 59). The New Zealand Government from the 1800s, throughout the 1900s and well into the mid-twentieth century, passed legislation that furthered their agenda of cultural assimilation and language domination to the detriment of the Māori language (Ka'ai-Mahuta, 2011; MacFarlane, 2015; Simon, 2000; Tuhiwai-Smith, 1989).

As early as 1847, schools were run by missionaries for Māori children and missionaries learnt te reo Māori and taught in te reo Māori with high levels of success in literacy. However, the Native Schools Act in 1867 meant all Māori had to learn in English and te reo was banned. This policy was seen as a step towards the assimilation of Māori into European culture in keeping with views held by nineteenth-century Europeans at the time who perceived a hierarchy of the world's races ranging from inferior to superior, from savage to civilised. In particular, the British rated themselves as being at the pinnacle of civilization and saw it as their duty to civilise Māori (Simon, 2000). Only a few years later, the Education Act of 1877 was passed which promised universal education and made schooling compulsory. While this was seen as a policy made to address the gross educational inequalities that continued to exist and needed to be addressed as a national concern by providing equal access to schooling for all children, it also had the effect of hastening the loss of Māori language. The impact of this loss led to a dual crisis for Māori – of both educational underachievement and the loss of language, knowledge and culture which continues to contemporary times (Hingangaroa Smith, 2000). Māori people are confronted daily with being strangers in their own country with an ongoing struggle to protect and maintain Māori cultural definitions and a sense of authenticity.

Yet throughout much of this time, Māori activists sought to address the loss and revitalisation of te reo Māori language and culture. As early as the first part of the twentieth century, Apirana Ngata had advocated for Māori to maintain all aspects of Te Ao Māori to survive modernisation. He promoted te reo Māori in homes and communities, alongside the importance of English education. As far back as the 1950s, The Māori Women's Welfare League questioned government policy on te reo Māori education and Māori history in schools. They even advocated for Māori playcentres back then, too, with no success. The 1970s saw more Māori asserting their identity as Māori and activist university groups helped to establish a Māori Language Day in 1972, which then became a week in 1975.

Te reo Māori policy

The first Māori Kōhanga reo (Māori pre-school) opened in 1982 and since this time Māori have developed primary schools (Kura Kaupapa Māori), secondary schools (Whare Kura) and tertiary education (Whare Wānanga) (Hingangaroa Smith, 2000). The adoption of biculturalism under the fourth Labour Government in 1984 marked a clear shift from earlier monocultural policies (Lourie, 2016). Following this, the Waitangi Tribunal recognised that the Māori language was a taonga, under Article Two of the Treaty of Waitangi (Higgins et al., 2015; Ka'ai-Mahuta, 2011; Wai 11, 1986), and the Māori Language Act (1987) led to te reo Māori becoming an official language. These initiatives have developed proactive measures for the revitalisation of te reo Māori, but have also encountered significant resistance (Hingangaroa Smith, 2000). In 2016, legislation known as *Te Ture mō Te Reo Māori* was created as an active partnership for the revitalisation of

te reo Māori between the Crown, Iwi and Māori. The legislation acknowledged that iwi and Māori are the kaitiaki (guardians) of te reo Māori, while recognising that the Crown is committed to advancing the revitalisation of the Māori language by promoting strategic objectives in wider New Zealand society. The two parties are therefore required to work in active partnership to promote the knowledge and use of te reo Māori. In more recent times, *Maihi Karauna* was developed as the Crown Strategy for the revitalisation of te reo Māori as a future-focused system policy implemented by Crown agencies and coordinated by *Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori for 2019-2023*. It includes a direct statement about more children and young people learning te reo Māori and is supported by additional educational strategies including *Ka Hikitia-Ka Hāpaitia* and *Tau Mai te Reo* as the Māori Language in Education Strategy for all learners. The agenda for te reo Māori to be a compulsory language in Aotearoa New Zealand has become more pressing as the momentum towards this has been decades in the making, but as of yet, remains unfinished.

Previous research on teaching te reo in schools

Several previous studies have been conducted to explore processes of te reo Māori language implementation in schools. As many as twenty years ago, Reedy (2000) stated that revitalisation would occur if a sound language infrastructure was in place to support the goal. It needed to be the type of infrastructure that has similarly endorsed English use in New Zealand: For example, through television, radio, newspapers, magazines, journals, novels, picture books, poems, short stories, educational material, and reference materials like dictionaries translated in Māori. He suggested, for example, that language policy would be more successful with teachers and parents who were fluent in Māori, alongside the increased development of kapa haka, and the widespread use of Māori in predominantly Māori domains, communities, marae, homes and Māori churches as well as increased use in Māori-English environments, such as government departments, health services and schools (Reedy, 2000). Higgins et al. (2015) support this view, stating that the normalisation of te reo Māori will only occur if it is supported by the nation. Māori are unable to do it alone. Higgins and colleagues believe that while some revitalisation has occurred and the language is more alive in parts of our society than thirty years ago, normalisation will advance the cause further.

A recent research study by Barrett-Walker et al. (2020) compared language revitalisation between Wales and New Zealand and showed that while adult te reo Māori learning has grown and is getting stronger, school age education is way behind. Drawing on the Welsh experience, they argue that Government measures should include the provision of language-medium early childhood exposure, deliberate integration of the language into the primary and secondary school curriculum, development of the quantity and quality of teachers and specific investment in immersion education that provides a pathway for proficiency development. These factors have been crucial to successful language revitalisation in Wales. Further support factors have been the ready availability of tertiary-level and adult education, improved recognition and usage in Welsh institutional and public spheres and more exposure across all Welsh media platforms (Barrett-Walker et al., 2020). New Zealand is doing well in some aspects but could improve significantly in other areas. The study argues that if we have te reo Māori teachers who are predominantly Māori, we should avoid spreading them too thinly because there are such a limited number of them.

Several successful programmes for Māori Language are now available for schools. Higgins was part of a group of high-profile Māori Language experts who developed Kura Whakarauora for Māori-medium settings, whereby, her research showed that the revitalisation of te reo Māori for whānau Māori needed to be developed within Māori homes. They devised 'language planning' wānanga with te reo Māori proponents who facilitated with families to enhance and sustain their te reo Māori journey within their whānau in Māori-medium environments. Digital tools such as te reo Māori resources provided online by the National Monitoring Study of Student Achievement (NMSSA) have also enhanced opportunities for schools to integrate te reo. While the access to digital resources has increased, kaiako (teachers) must ensure that they are helpful and of good quality. An example of another simple, scalable te reo Māori programme, proposed by educational expert Paora Trim, proposes ākonga learn a new Māori word daily and a new sentence or phrase each week to build up to a sizeable vocabulary (Barback, 2017).

Theoretical framework and methodology

Kaupapa Māori

Kaupapa Māori research methodologies and principles underpinned the approach to this research study. Kaupapa Māori is a "theory and approach that encompasses Māori controlled and collective processes for generating knowledge and applying such knowledge in the delivery of Māori-driven services to communities in Aotearoa New Zealand" (Borell, et al., 2020, p. 197). Our intention in using this approach was to create a space to honour Māori knowledge and for participants, (mostly Māori) to feel tautoko (supported) and aroha (compassion and empathy). The most relevant principles of a Kaupapa Māori approach as outlined by Pihama (2021) that we adopted included the following:

Taonga Tuku Iho – The Principle of Cultural Aspiration: The centrality and legitimacy of Te reo Māori, Tikanga and Mātauranga Māori (Pihama, 2021). As a Kaupapa Māori paradigm, this principle honours the validity and relevance of Māori ways of knowing, doing and understanding the world and this allows spiritual and cultural awareness and other considerations to be taken into account. Our study intended to honour this principle by seeking to value and elevate the current state of te reo Māori in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Te Tiriti o Waitangi – The Principle of the Treaty of Waitangi: Te Tiriti o Waitangi (1840) is a crucial document that defines the relationship between Māori and the Crown in New Zealand. It affirms both the tangata whenua (indigenous 'people of the land') status of whanau (family group), hapū (kinship group) and iwi (tribe) in New Zealand and their citizenship rights. Te Tiriti o Waitangi, therefore, provides a basis through which Māori may critically analyse relationships, challenge the status quo, and affirm Māori rights and the underpinned value of te reo Māori and approach in this study.

Āta – The Principle of Growing Respectful Relationships: The principle of āta relates specifically to the building and nurturing of relationships and wellbeing when engaging with Māori. A relational approach was undertaken in the study to ensure that the mana of all the participants was protected and enhanced at all times during the interviews and that their opinions, views, and perspectives were highly valued.

Pihama (2021) also refers to the *Principle of Te reo Māori*, which is integral to Kaupapa Māori as the Māori worldview is embedded in the language. This was obviously crucial to this study. In addition, the *Principle of Tikanga Māori* which refers to customary practices, ethics, cultural behaviours, considerations and obligations, underpinned the study's approach to participants and mahi (work).

Future-focused policy analysis

The study took a strong interest in policy implementation, recognising that this is a complex and contested process that involves multiple and diverse stakeholders, scales and systems and can fail if not well targeted or implemented (Le Fevre, 2020; Timperley, 2007; Viennet & Pont, 2017). As this study was about a policy which had not yet been formed or implemented, it applied a future-focused policy approach that intended to be useful for strategic planning and policy development. Future-focused policy can be described as:

a creative and exploratory process that uses divergent thinking to seek many possible answers and acknowledge uncertainty. It's a different mind-set to analytical thinking, which uses convergent thinking to seek the right answer and reduce uncertainty.
(Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (NZ), 2021)

This involves a problem-solving approach to policy development that recognises that policies are dynamic and multi-level (Maggetti & Trein, 2019). As an approach, futures thinking involves identifying strategic priorities and exploring barriers to policy adoption and implementation (Government Office for Science (UK), 2021). It also recognises that policy solution and planning is complex and involves systemic thinking rather than linear thinking (Government Office for Science (UK), 2021). Finally, as it looks to the future, it also involves strategies for future thinking and problem-solving.

Methodology

The research method comprised of a semi-structured qualitative, narrative interview process with twelve stakeholders, a majority of whom were involved in the education sector. The participants included senior management (a primary and secondary principal), Māori and non-Māori teachers in primary and secondary schools currently teaching te reo me ona tikanga Māori in their respective schools, a non-Māori university teacher trainee majoring in te reo Māori, a former teacher and deputy principal now working for the New Zealand Qualifications Authority, a Pacific Island teacher returning to the Aotearoa New Zealand education workforce after teaching in Western Samoa, and a Member of Parliament (see Table 1). Participants had between one- and 40-years teaching experience (where applicable) and were purposively chosen due to their commitment to te reo me ona tikanga Māori. While they do not form a representative study, their perspectives draw from experience and provide incredibly valuable insights into the implementation te reo Māori in Aotearoa New Zealand English-medium schools. Interviews were conducted in a venue selected by the participants and lasted around 40 to 60 minutes. Participants were given an option to be named, or choose a pseudonym, and most chose to be named. Research analysis employed a thematic approach to coding (Braun & Clarke, 2013) and this was initially conducted by the first author and confirmed by the second. The research was approved by the Human Ethics Committee at Victoria University of Wellington Te Herenga Waka (Ethics Approval Number 29227).

Table 1

Participants

Participants	Gender	Ethnicity	School Type	Teaching Experience	Fluency of Te Reo Māori
Pākeke 1 Luana Carroll	Wāhine (female)	Māori	State primary	25 years	Learner
Pākeke 2 Gael Ashworth	Wāhine	Pākehā	State secondary	20 years	Learner
Pākeke 3 Keta Te Ahuru	Wāhine	Māori	State secondary	10 years	Fluent
Pākeke 4 Jack Adams	Tāne (male)	Māori	State secondary	8 years	Fluent
Pākeke 5 Nicola O'Halloran	Wāhine	Pākehā	State primary	20 years	Learner
Pākeke 6 Abby Robertson	Wāhine	Pākehā	State secondary	1 year	Intermediate / Fluent
Pākeke 7 Whetu Henry	Tāne	Māori	State secondary	9 years	Fluent
Pākeke 8 Robyn Thompson	Wāhine	Chinese	State secondary / Govt. agency	35 years	Learner
Pākeke 9 Louise Carter	Wāhine	Māori	State secondary	5 years	Learner
Pākeke 10 Deborah Tiatia	Wāhine	Pacific	Private & State	25 years	Learner
Pākeke 11 Jill Holmstead	Wāhine	Pākehā	State primary	40 years	Learner / Intermediate
Pākeke 12 Marama Davidson	Wāhine	Māori	Not applicable Member of Parliament	Not applicable	Learner

Key to Table 1: Shaded rows represent secondary schools which had already made te reo Māori compulsory at Year 9.

Findings

There were broadly four themes which emerged from the data and related to the research question *What would it take to implement compulsory te reo Māori in Aotearoa New Zealand schools well?* We begin by discussing the most common theme raised by all participants – the importance of valuing te reo Māori.

1. Valuing te reo Māori

The most discussed idea that emerged from participants was that te reo Māori itself needed to be valued if any future policy was to be a success. A tāne Māori, Jack Adams, described how he saw the status and value of te reo Māori being key to its introduction across schools and communities:

Mainstream and te reo Māori and looking at how it would be received and valued and how we measure that? Whether Aotearoa value it? For myself, the hope is revisiting that word, value. It needs to be valued by everyone, not just the government, and schools, but the families need to value it as well. Te aroha mo te reo Māori, na reira, maumau taima (Have compassion for the language, otherwise, it is a waste of time).

Others still questioned whether it truly was valued at the moment and added their support for the need to enhance this:

We need to keep pushing to stay on the kaupapa and respect each other's tirohanga (points of view), but also for me as Pākehā, helping to educate other Pākehā (Abby Robertson, wahine Pākehā).

Some of the interview participants expressed what they wanted to see happen and how this was a growing change movement. For example, one participant (Jill Holmstead, wāhine Pākehā) described the increased interest in Māori language and tikanga as a 'renaissance,' and that this moment needs to be made the most of: "I would support that. I see a renaissance and willingness to learn te reo Māori, and we have to seize the moment and get on board with that." Her ideas mirror Higgins et al.'s (2015) reflection that after more than 30 years, te reo Māori is alive in pockets across society. This is reinforced by Kāretu (2008) who stated that the younger generation of Māori speakers will pave the way forward. Some participants described this revitalisation as part of a generational shift that was more 'bicultural' and also was aligned with more of a focus on New Zealand history:

I think it needs to be hand-in-hand with learning about tikanga and hītori Māori. That is where Aotearoa is heading. The younger generation wants to be bi-cultural, and we want to be bi-lingual and honouring te reo Māori as an official language because it is an official language (Abby Robertson, wahine Pākehā).

Participants also mentioned the significance of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and how this provided a reason for valuing the language. This was illustrated in the following quote:

It is part of a Te Tiriti o Waitangi obligation. Because Māori is an official language of New Zealand, we are all obligated to learn and grow in our understanding (Gael Ashworth, wāhine Pākehā).

However, revitalisation does not mean normalisation and could equate to a deficit thinking model and be seen as of little value. Interestingly, one participant who had taught at a Kura Kaupapa Māori reflected upon coming from Māori-medium into English-medium: "It was strange to become the 'minority' in the system. Being the only Māori staff member out of 100 staff. Making it compulsory would be trying to normalise it for me" (Keta Te Ahuru, wāhine Māori). This experience illustrates that compulsion in some form could provide one way to create 'normalisation' of te reo Māori me ona tikanga Māori in our schools. However, normalising cannot be done by Māori alone and needs to be adopted by all Aotearoa New Zealand (Higgins et al., 2015).

Some teachers represented schools that had made Te Ao Māori programmes compulsory at year 9 in secondary schools and therefore had some experience in compulsory language introduction (as highlighted in Table 1). One participant reflected on how successful this had been:

We integrated te reo Māori for year 9. Students cycle through half a year of te reo Māori. There are such a variety of boys coming through recently. The parents say they are loving having Māori here because there was nothing at primary school. (Louise Carter, wāhine Māori).

One impact of this was it showed te reo was valued enough to be made compulsory, as Luana Carroll, a wāhine Māori, reflects: “Allowing Māori to reclaim our language back and challenge those who are coming into the teaching profession in Aotearoa New Zealand about why they are there. We need to be bold and show that we genuinely value te reo Māori.” Another participant agreed that making this compulsory had signalled a regeneration of language, culture and identity that was:

... decolonising and re-indigenising our people. Re-indigenising our whakaaro. Rekindle the aroha for our reo and our culture. That should be our aspiration, to bring our people back onto the waka for the restoration and re-indigenisation of our reo and our culture (Jack Adams, tāne Māori).

Most of the interview participants recognised that having some form of compulsion would take a genuine commitment from all parties involved:

The keys steps would first be the philosophy, the vision; it has to have a major focus. We are going to have to let some other things go so that we can focus on that. You can only have one or two priorities if you really want to follow it through. (Nicola O’Halloran, wāhine Pākehā)

2. National and school leadership

Proactive school leadership to drive policy reform is very important if an educational policy reform is to be successful (Ball, Maguire, & Braun, 2012; Fullan, 2001; Viennet & Pont, 2017). Participants – notably the MP and the principals – agreed that it would take significant leadership at the national and school level for a compulsory te reo Māori policy to be effective. It is evident that at national level, narratives around a compulsory te reo Māori policy are growing. Marama Davidson reflected that te reo Māori in schools had become an election issue in 2017 and 2020, contributing to its momentum within government. She described the role that political parties and Members of Parliament can play in getting policy ideas on to the agenda:

It was 2016 when we put that out, and it put te reo Māori right out on the forefront of the political agenda. Suddenly, the whole country was talking about te reo Māori in schools. It became an election issue both in 2017 and 2020. It was really at the forefront of political debate, that was incredible, and I am proud of the role that the Greens had to play in that. (Marama Davidson, wāhine Māori MP).

She stated that we still have a long way to go before this becomes policy, and the political leaders of our country must now speak up and draw a line in the sand.

Other participants agreed, noting the importance of the government backing the policy – both financially and politically – if it was to succeed:

The government must build capacity in our schools and make it attractive for them to want to be in education in the first place. (Robyn Thompson, wāhine Chinese)

Successful and sustained educational change can only be achieved by the collective action of all professionals involved (Fullan, 2001). Participants described how principals and school leaders must lead by example and genuinely value Te Ao Māori if any progress is to be made. As Luana Carroll (wāhine Māori) said, “If the leaders do not buy into the

kaupapa, then it is not going to happen; I need to see some really good leadership come from the Ministry too on this and value it.” While some initiatives have the backing of senior leadership teams, it is still a challenge to keep Te Ao Māori at the forefront of school curriculum agendas, as Whetu Henry described:

There is a two-week te reo Māori carousel programme for all year 9s, but there is no compulsion policy. I want it to be compulsory and would like to have the year 9s for longer. It would be awesome to carry on from what the students bring from their primary school experiences and expand on that with them. I have 39 in one class. I am still waiting for another Māori teacher.

3. Teacher expertise

A key feature in the literature on teaching te reo Māori is the need for a well-qualified teacher workforce to deliver this and for ongoing professional development of all staff. As Ngāpō (2013) argues, the quality of who is teaching, what is taught and how it is taught is essential to consider for everyone involved. The evidence gathered from research participants recognise this as a critical concern as well. As Louise Carter (wāhine, Maori) explains, “Kaiako. Really. That is a lot of teaching hours in a lot of schools and if you don’t have the people to teach it, the value’s going to be lost straight away. And I know that we are already struggling for high-quality reo Māori teachers.” Most participants acknowledged that we have a long way to go to obtain this goal, as this Pākehā principal outlines:

The issue we have had is finding the teachers to do the work. We have a desire to do it for some time, but it is only recently with the appointment of our two teachers, that we have had the capacity to offer it as a course. We have had real difficulty in getting staff who can stay and grow with us. (Gael Ashworth, wāhine Pākehā)

Teacher education is vital to this, as Jack (tāne Māori) makes clear: “It needs to start with the right people delivering it. The training of the kaiako is crucial. Me Māori tonu te kaiako. It has to be delivered by Māori.” Commenting on the inadequacy of te reo Māori training at the tertiary level, Ngāpō (2008) proposes that teacher trainees needed to participate in compulsory te reo Māori classes for the entirety of their degree. Currently, some New Zealand universities only offer te reo Māori learning for the first years. The commitment and resourcing of te reo Māori education for future educators by our tertiary institutions must also become a priority: if we want to ‘normalise’ te reo Māori in our schools we must have well qualified teachers.

4. Resources and time

For language policy to be successful, macro-language policies need to align with resourcing at the level of classroom micro-policies (Barr & Seals, 2019). Participants agreed that both human and financial resources were crucial to the success of a future compulsory te reo Māori policy. As Barr & Seals (2019) identified in their study of three Pākehā primary school teachers who attempted to incorporate te reo Māori into their classroom, while significant resourcing was needed, “the most crucial resource for te reo Māori use at all schools was time” (p. 443). Participants in this study recognised just how vital resourcing and time was:

I agree it should happen as long as there is support for the kaupapa. The fabric must be set for the kaiako to perform their role well. (Whetu Henry, tāne Māori)

The ability to create time for educators to learn te reo Māori starts with resourcing from the government, but as Marama Davidson says, “So the barriers are that we still haven’t quite seen the bravery and the courage to put the resources and the commitment into a plan yet.” While funding initiatives have increased in recent years, the government will only commit financial resourcing to specific Māori education initiatives from the Education Work Programme at this point in time (Ministry of Education, 2021).

Discussion

The study took a future-focused policy analysis which set out to anticipate unknown futures and what it might take to make policy now that was effective in the future. Futures thinking is an essential aspect of policy-making as it helps us to spot patterns of change and emerging trends, as well as use what we do already know to explore what we don’t know (Government Office of Science (2021)). Futures thinking does not eliminate the complexity of policy implementation – nor the uncertain and complex landscapes of education which reflect diverse histories, variable stakeholder capacities and beliefs and multiple scales of implementation (Le Fevre, 2020; Vinnert & Pont, 2017). In addition, it is worth remembering that whether we like it or not, education will always be implicitly or explicitly a political issue (Fan & Popkewitz, 2020). So, while we can control some aspects of ‘good’ policymaking, other political aspects can skew best practice and reduce effectiveness. Nonetheless, in this final section we review some implications for policy that can be proposed from this small study, recognising that further work in this area is needed to confirm and critique these findings.

First, possibly the easiest aspect of policy to address now and in the future is resourcing and funding. Viennet and Pont (2017) refer to such aspects as the *conducive context* which either supports or limits the roll out of an educational policy, and includes funding resources, timing, professional development. Our study confirmed the significance of sufficient funding, resourcing and time for effective policy implementation. Participants who were involved in education at all levels, particularly identified teacher recruitment, maintenance, expertise, professional development and training as crucial to its success. Financial backing is essential for all of these things to happen and those in national and school leadership need to fully organise or make time to support any te reo Māori initiatives. A good example of a current investment into a te reo Māori programme in schools is *Te Ahu o te Reo Māori*. This was trialled across four regions in 2020 and is now being implemented through clusters of teachers by a range of contracted Māori language organisations. This proposal was initially targeted at all teachers in all primary schools, but this was reduced to a selection of teachers from each school being asked to register their interest. Principals are required to support teachers to participate in the programme by providing time out of the classroom. While this pilot programme has potential, it has reduced its considerable impact by allowing an ‘opt in’ model. Opening up more opportunities for all teachers will greatly enhance the potential for this programme and others.

Some participants in the research had specific suggestions for the type of professional learning and development that could happen for teachers in Aotearoa New Zealand schools. For example, one participant suggested the idea of a twelve-month Te Ao Māori sabbatical, which could energise and invigorate teachers and allow them to

connect in Kahui Ako groups. Another teacher, Jill Holmstead, liked the idea of bringing back itinerant teachers or more resource teachers of te reo Māori to free up classroom teachers to undertake 6-10 weeks of continuous staff development. The educators also saw the importance of te reo Māori, tikanga Māori and hītori Māori being taught together. Those educators who already had compulsory te reo Māori programmes saw the benefits of combining all three aspects at the Year 9 level. However, questions remained about whether this had a long-term uptake of te reo Māori as it was often dropped by year 11. The Aotearoa Histories Curriculum has potential to support initiatives in te reo Māori and will be implemented from 2023.

A second area which is a key component of resourcing was teacher expertise. This need is across all sectors and includes teachers and teacher educators currently in our kura, as well as English-medium early childhood facilities, primary and secondary schools, and also those in initial teacher education. Researchers like Ngāpo (2008) would like to see all teacher trainees undergo a compulsory te reo Māori programme for the entirety of their training. However, there are significant shortfalls of fluent and trained language teachers at tertiary as well as in the school sector who are able to deliver this (Barr & Seals, 2019). Some participants felt that it should be Māori who are teaching te reo and the approach needs to benefit everyone. This will take some time, as reminded by Marama Davidson, and while we wait for compulsion to happen in some form, we must use the teaching resources we have at hand to implement ‘normalisation’ programmes into our schools and across wider Aotearoa New Zealand society (Higgins et al., 2015).

Third, leadership at the national and school level is essential for effective policy implementation (Ball, Macguire & Braun, 2012; Fullan, 2001; Viennet & Pont, 2017). A courageous commitment is required to make any transformational change. As the principals and school leaders in this study demonstrated, their role in creating a ‘culture of change’ (Fullan, 2001) and curating resources and policies that supported te reo Māori enhancement in schools was crucial. Those who had some experiences of implementing a compulsory policy (see Table 1), reflected positively on this, exhibiting an ‘activist’ disposition (Hingangaroa Smith, 2002) as they took a firm stance to ensure that te reo Māori was a priority focus within their communities.

Finally, their discussions highlighted that the most critical factor that will determine if te reo Māori will flourish in Aotearoa New Zealand schools is whether it is valued. Soberingly, this is the most difficult aspect of policy implementation to control (Fullan, 2001; Timperley, 2007). The evidence gathered from this study shows that the MP representative, the principals and the teachers collectively agreed that the valuing of te reo Māori was the paramount issue. The MP Marama Davidson in particular highlighted that the barriers to this type of policy at a national level are “all political.” The attitudes towards valuing te reo Māori from critical groups (such as the government, educators and the public) significantly influence whether or not we can achieve this goal. The study confirmed that *active stakeholder engagement* (beliefs, motivations, responses, and capacity) was also an essential part of shaping the attitudes and values of people who are targeted to implement the policy (Viennet & Pont, 2017).

Conclusion: The Past, the Future and the Way Forward

In order to achieve this vital goal of valuing reo Māori, there are some strategic steps we can take right now in order to effectively pave the way for a compulsory te reo Māori policy in schools in Aotearoa. While the goal of the normalisation of te reo Māori is essential across all workplaces and organisations (Higgins et al., 2015), we wish to

highlight the education sector and the language planning that needs to occur right now. First, a priority toward equipping teacher education programmes with time and resourcing to upskill teacher educators and in turn, all new graduates of teacher education programmes is needed. Ngāpō (2013) correctly identifies that teacher trainees should partake in compulsory te reo Māori classes for the entirety of their degree. But even before this can occur, teacher educators need to be supported to deliver Māori language programmes and Initial Teacher Education programmes also need to acquire in-depth knowledge of tikanga Māori as well as Aotearoa New Zealand histories – an opportunity presented by the New Zealand Curriculum Refresh.

In addition, our future policy analysis has drawn attention to several programmes currently operating in schools such as *Te Ahu o te reo Māori*, which is now in operation much more widely. While the te reo courses have been piloted successfully, they are still opt-in for teachers, other school staff, and are now being offered to school whānau. Momentum toward successful compulsory te reo Māori in schools requires such programmes to expand now and become more inclusive of all teachers. While this is likely to stretch the limited staff and resources already available to teach such programmes, the growing strength of teachers who have been part of these programmes could be part of the solution as they train others in their schools. The expansion of teacher education and teacher programmes will require leaders of early childhood centres, schools and academic institutions to step up and provide time and resources to enable the training of staff, if compulsory te reo Māori is to be embedded well in the future.

We recognise that the goal of getting individuals, communities and a nation to value te reo Māori is not simple to achieve and there may be ‘backlash’ (Walters, 2022). Nevertheless, in July 2022, a survey found that three out of five New Zealanders (61.9% of people aged 15 and over) supported the move for te reo Māori to become a core subject in primary schools at this point. In 2018, it was 56.5% and in 2016, 53.9% (Ruru, 2022). The change is already happening and involves a holistic valuing of te reo Māori me ona tikanga in Aotearoa. In concluding, we propose a visual image that symbolises the thriving of te reo Māori both now and into the future. Drawing from previous models developed within Aotearoa New Zealand (see for examples, Durie, 1994; Taonui, 2015; Te Taura Whiri, 2022b), we have attempted to show this in Figure 1, using the image of a whareniui, and called it Te Whare of Tātou Reo.

The significance of the valuing of te reo Māori which emerged in this study is not dissimilar to the Te Whare Tapa Whā model developed by health workers in 1982 and described by Dr Mason Durie (1994) which depicts health and wellbeing as a whareniui or meeting house with four walls. This unified model of health draws connections between the physical (taha tinana), the social (taha whānau), the emotional (taha hinengaro) and the spiritual (taha wairua) worlds. When all these things are in balance, we thrive. In the same way, valuing of language requires a unified approach that stretches beyond individuals and connects the social, political, cultural and spiritual realms.

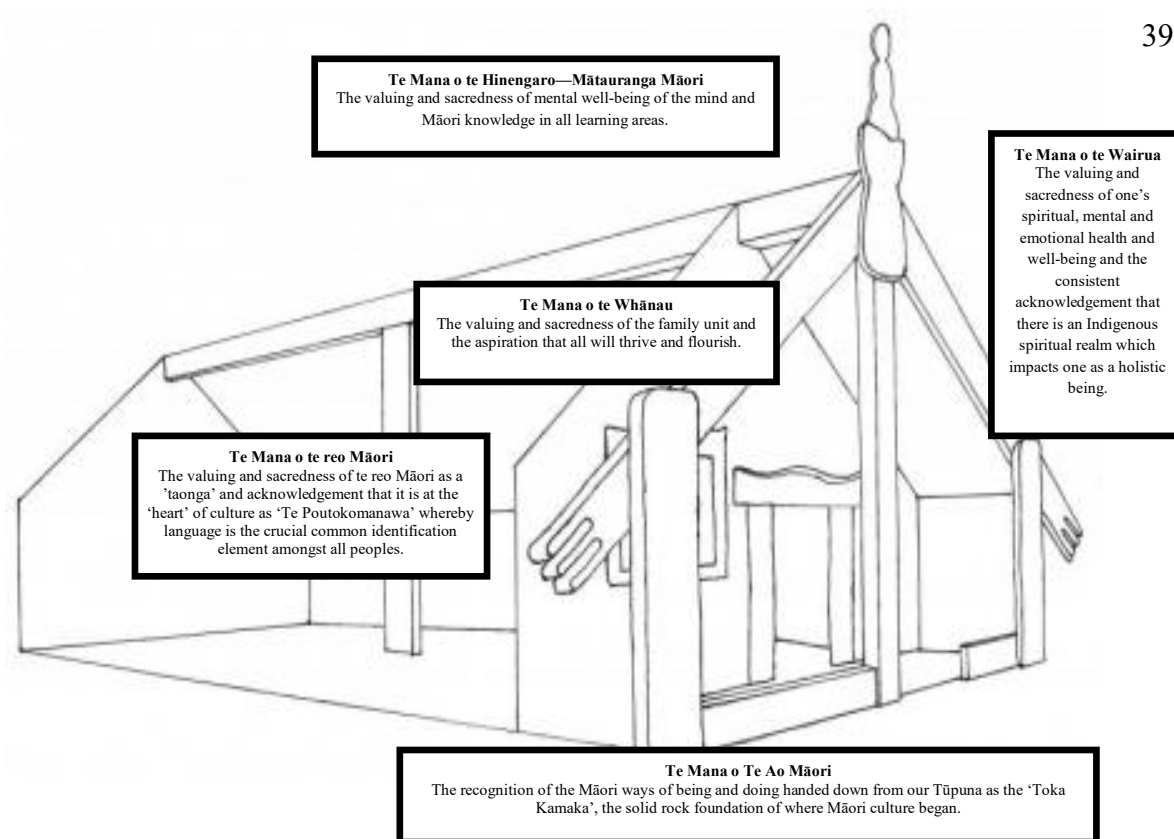


Figure 1. Te Whare o Tātou Reo

Source: Graphic from TKI Arts Online. Kupu derived from the research. Inspired from Te Whare Tapa Whā (Durie, 1984) and Whakapapa as a Whare (Taonui, 2015)

At the base of the wharenui is the whenua, *Te Mana o Te Ao Māori*, which is the solid foundation upon which the language can flourish as it recognises the importance of Māori ways and traditions. Upon this foundation sit four other pou which together show the pou required for Māori language to thrive in Aotearoa New Zealand schools:

- i. **Te Mana o te reo Māori:** The valuing and sacredness of te reo Māori as a 'taonga' and acknowledgement that it is at the 'heart' of culture as 'Te Poutokomanawa' whereby language is the crucial element common amongst all peoples.
- ii. **Te Mana o te Whānau:** The valuing and sacredness of the family unit and the aspiration that all will thrive and flourish in Te Ao Hurihuri (an ever-changing world).
- iii. **Te Mana o te Wairua:** The valuing and sacredness of one's spiritual, mental and emotional health and wellbeing and the consistent acknowledgement that there is an Indigenous spiritual realm which impacts one as a holistic being.
- iv. **Te Mana o te Hinengaro:** The valuing and sacredness of mental wellbeing of the mind, Māori intellect and knowledge in all learning areas.

Together these pou describe a deep valuing of te reo Māori me ona tikanga Māori that goes beyond one policy initiative and extends across several realms. As Kāretu (2013) reminds us, we must fully commit our time and effort to the te reo Māori revitalisation cause at all levels, beginning by valuing Te Ao Māori and te reo Māori within the whānau,

and extending this to the wellbeing of individuals and the knowledge of community and society. If there is no genuine commitment, then there is no survival.

Te Whare ō Tātou Reo highlights the complexity of future education policy implementation and the need for careful analysis of the problem, the current assets and issues and the potential solutions before developing policy in haste. Attempts to change the mindset and attitudes of those in government and the general public will take more time and perseverance. Making time to ensure such a policy is implemented well instead of rushing things through is essential and will significantly benefit all. From the scale of the government, to members of society, and within our education system, te reo Māori can be sustained if we treasure it.

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