Strengthening curriculum, progress, and achievement in a system that learns

E whakakaha ana i te marautanga, te koke, me te ekenga taumata i te rangapū e ako ana
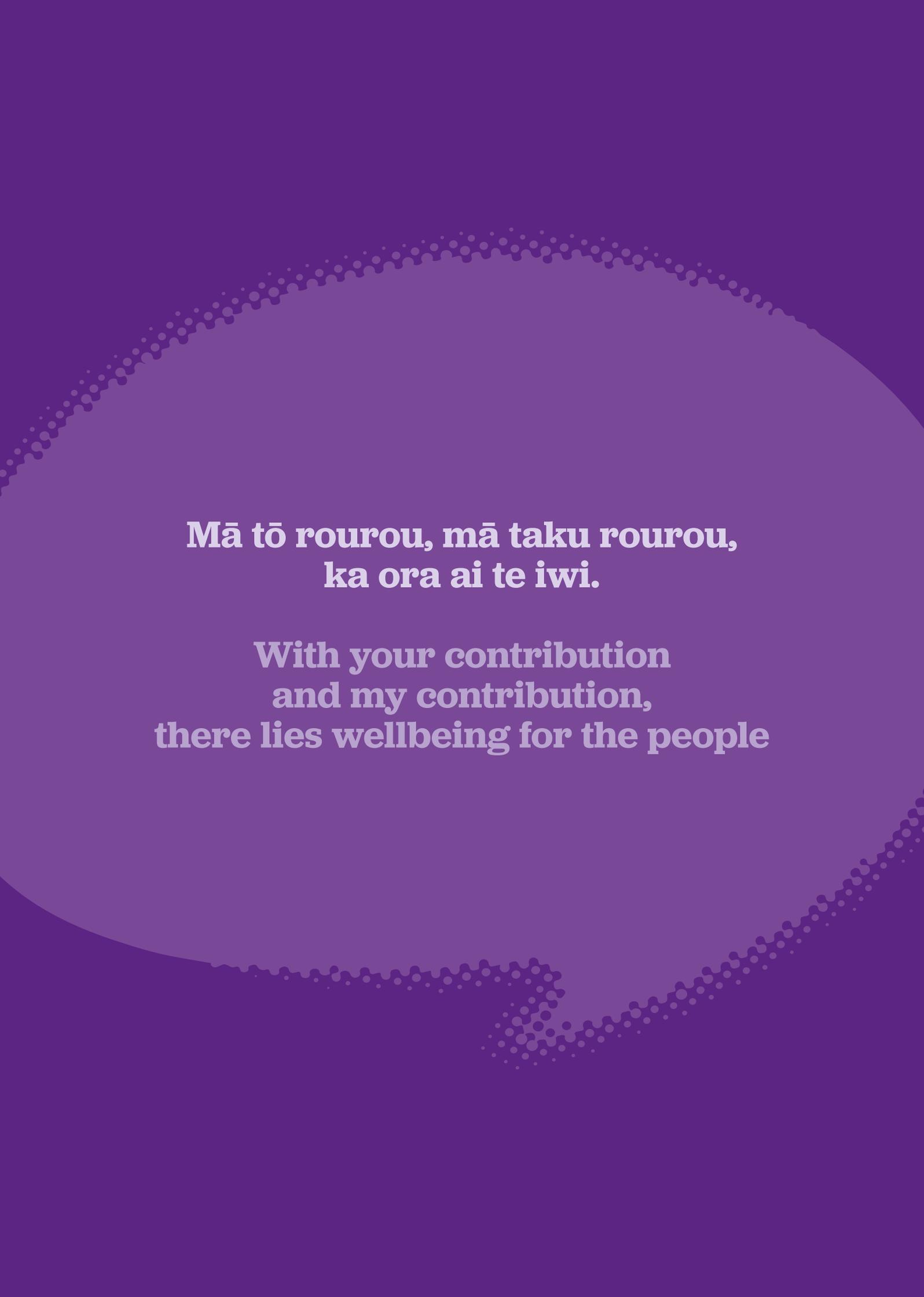
A report by the Curriculum, Progress, and Achievement Ministerial Advisory Group

Executive Summary

Submitted June 4, 2019.

Kōrero Mātauranga
Me kōrero tātou

**Mā tō rourou, mā taku rourou,
ka ora ai te iwi.**

With your contribution
and my contribution,
there lies wellbeing for the people

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Executive summary

Background

The Curriculum, Progress, and Achievement work programme was established in December 2017, following the removal of the compulsory use of National Standards and Ngā Whanaketanga Rumaki Māori. Its purpose was to strengthen the use of the National Curriculum in understanding and supporting all ākonga (students, learners), to progress and achieve, and enriching their opportunities to learn.

Our Ministerial Advisory Group (Advisory Group) was formed in May 2018 as part of this work programme. Our role was to provide advice on:

» how to strengthen the design and use of local curriculum so that all children and young people progress and achieve across the breadth and depth of the national curricula in years 1–10

» how a stronger focus on student progress across the curricula can be embedded, including change management, implementation and capability building

» how to meet information needs across the system in relation to year 1–10 student progress and achievement.

A Curriculum, Progress, and Achievement Reference Group (Reference Group) was also formed in May 2018 to provide an on-the-ground perspective into our work and the wider work programme.

Our approach

We worked with the Reference Group to have conversations about curriculum, progress, and achievement with people across the education system. The composition of both our Advisory Group (see Appendix 1) and the Reference Group (see Appendix 2) reflected the bicultural and inclusive intent of our work, and ensured diverse voices were heard. The Ministry's project team ensured the work was coordinated and connections with other related work programmes were maintained.

This report is the culmination of all of our efforts and engagement since we began this work in May 2018. It provides our final and full advice to the Minister.

Our overarching vision: A system that learns

Improving equity and excellence in an education system that serves and grows diverse learners is a 'wicked' problem; complex, important, and enduring. To address it, we need to create a 'system that learns' – a system where we commit to learning, inquiring, and problem solving together in new ways, standing in each other's shoes and trusting in each other's intent. A system that cares deeply about each of its children and young people, and puts them at its heart.

Consistent with our nation's commitment to equity, excellence, and the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, our Advisory Group has provided advice on both Maori-medium and English-medium learning pathways. Ideas and themes resonate between the pathways, but they are not the same and are not intended to be the same. In a system that learns, we believe this offers exciting possibilities for the future.

Focus areas

Māori-medium education focus areas

Māori-medium education settings share a vision with dual outcomes for language revitalisation and education success. In this report, 'Māori-medium education' refers to Years 0–13 kura and rūmaki where te reo Māori is used to teach the curriculum for 51% or more of the time. These settings are often referred to as Level 1 and 2 Māori immersion settings.

The Advisory Group has identified three focus areas for Māori-medium education. Building system leadership in these areas will strengthen curriculum, progress, and achievement in a system that learns. The three focus areas are 'equity', 'trust', and 'coherence'.

Equity

The pursuit of equity requires us to enable different ideas, ways of working, and priorities to emerge. To date, many decisions and initiatives in Māori-medium education have been driven by English-medium education and are at odds with the principles, philosophies, and priorities of Māori-medium education. Additional Government funding has tended to be directed towards outcomes that have been defined at the national level for the whole system, and not those that matter at a local level or to the Māori-medium education sector. As a result, Māori-medium education continues to be subject to inappropriate policies and actions. Some resources are directed into areas that the sector does not consider a priority.

To address these issues for Māori-medium education, we need:

» the national Māori-medium curriculum to describe teaching and learning in ways that reflect what kura whānau, hapū, and iwi deem to be important for their children and young people

» a broader definition of 'success' for Māori-medium settings and clarification of the skills, knowledge, and attributes that underpin that definition

» to grow the capability of the sector in knowing how to support and advance those aspirations, both nationally and locally

» resources to be directed to areas that are priorities for Māori-medium education.

By addressing these inequities, our system will be better able to learn how to support the success of all Māori as Māori, regardless of their pathway in the education system.

Trust

Many levels of distrust are apparent, most of which are borne out of a top-down approach that is inconsistent with the principles and values of Māori-medium education. Distrust results in whānau and kura working to avoid or minimise harm, rather than maximise potential.

For issues of trust to be addressed, we need:

» Māori-medium stakeholders to clarify a set of shared values and principles that will underpin curriculum, progress, and achievement processes

» those shared values and principles to be actioned with integrity through all Māori-medium education initiatives

» a strengths-based and transparent approach to assessment, monitoring, and reporting

» a model for information sharing that exemplifies the commitment to partnership.

Coherence

Māori-medium education is having many positive impacts, but the system has evolved in unexpected ways. This has led to a system with competing demands and priorities and which, at times, is disconnected and works against itself. We need an approach to curriculum, progress, and achievement that is coherent; supports sharing, learning and growth; and where the connections between the parts are strong.

For issues of coherence to be addressed, we need to:

» have direct sight from aspirations to outcomes

» ensure there is clear alignment between the agreed principles and the system of ako, aromatawai, and aromātai (teaching, learning, assessment, and monitoring)

» develop a set of processes that strengthen and clarify the connections between curriculum, progress, and achievement

» strengthen the connection between early learning and schooling from Years 0–13.

English-medium education focus areas

As our nation becomes more diverse, so do our schools. The current ethnic breakdown in English-medium schools is approximately 50% Pākehā students, 22% Māori, 12% Asian, 10% Pacific, and 3% other ethnicities. Importantly, English-medium education includes 90% of all ākonga Māori. While English is the primary medium of instruction in English-medium schools, many also offer te reo Māori learning options, and some offer opportunities for curriculum learning within te reo Māori for up to 50% of the time (immersion levels 3–5). A few English medium schools also offer Pacific bilingual education pathways, with at least 50% of instruction in a Pacific language. Many students are also learning some or all of the time in alternative education settings or in specialist schools and settings – for example, Deaf bilingual-bicultural medium schools.

Our Advisory Group has identified five focus areas for creating a system that learns in ways that strengthen curriculum, progress, and achievement in English-medium settings. These elements work together in a cohesive way towards achieving the goals of equity and excellence in an inclusive bicultural education system. The focus areas are: 'clarity', 'trust', 'information needs', 'collaborative networks', and 'capability'.

Clarity

Our National Curriculum for schooling – made up of The New Zealand Curriculum and Te Marautanga o Aotearoa – is now more than 10 years old. Rapid change in the social, economic, political, environmental, and educational context have changed our understandings about what is required to live satisfying lives and engage confidently with the world. Amendments to the curriculum to reflect these changes feel ad hoc and reactive. Having multiple places where curriculum priorities are described has created a sense of curriculum clutter and overload.

The National Curriculum provides an overall framework within which kaiako (teachers) and tumuaki (leaders) can make decisions about content and context. Through these decisions (using the National Curriculum), they design local curricula that reflect the needs, interests and priorities of their students, whānau and the community.

Flexibility for local responsiveness is necessary in a system that strives to be inclusive and value diversity. However, flexible curriculum frameworks require those implementing them to be clear about the learning outcomes that cannot be left to chance to avoid local decisions leading to inequitable learning opportunities.

We need more clarity about the National Curriculum, local curricula, and how they relate to one another. We also need to set up processes that give us clarity about how our National Curriculum will remain relevant over time.

Trust

Trust has been lacking in our system. Building trust between the Ministry of Education and schools is imperative. So is strengthening trust and learning-focused partnerships between ākonga-whānau-kaiako and kaiako-kaiako as ākonga transition from year to year and across education settings.

To enable us to work together to solve difficult issues and improve equity, we need to clarify roles and expectations, establish ongoing participatory processes, and build relational trust. We need to value the perspectives, knowledge, and experience of ākonga and whānau as much as those of kaiako and other professionals, so that our ākonga and whānau feel they belong in their schools and are real partners in learning.

Information needs

A system cannot learn without information. However, information should always be gathered with a clear purpose in mind and be kept to what is necessary and sufficient for that purpose. The information needs to be credible and appropriate access to it needs to be provided willingly, with the understanding that it will be used to improve ākonga learning and wellbeing.

We need high quality, efficient, and fit-for-purpose assessment tools and approaches that inform teaching and learning, and support reciprocal information-sharing. We need to design information flows, feedback loops, and ways of working that provide the information each of us needs to make critical decisions, and to do our jobs well. Ākonga, whānau, and schools should feel happy to share progress and achievement information, confident that it will be used safely and well, and that the benefits and insights will flow back to ākonga in tangible ways.

Collaborative networks

Too often, insights that could help us achieve equity and excellence are not spread across the system. And, while collaboration has always been a part of our system, we have tended to exclude some voices. We need to make the most of the expertise of people across the system by strengthening well-functioning collaborative networks in ways that improve curriculum, teaching, and learning and reduce inequity.

Capability

To achieve our aspirations, we need to strengthen capability in all parts of our system. We need to review and strengthen system leadership of curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment. We need to deliberately plan for how teaching and leadership capabilities are built and spread over time. And we need to recognise and invest in kaiako and tumuaki as learners, and in the diversity of career paths and expertise needed in our education system.

Recommendations

We have developed separate sets of recommendations for strengthening curriculum, progress, and achievement within the areas of focus identified for Maori-medium and English-medium pathways. We have also identified recommendations that apply to both. These are recorded with the English-medium recommendations and identified by the use of the waka image:
It is important to note that the design and implementation of these recommendations will differ between Māori-medium and English-medium pathways.

Māori-medium education recommendations

Equity

1.1 Review Te Marautanga o Aotearoa

Work in partnership with the Māori-medium sector to define a new curriculum framework policy for Māori-medium education that validates mātauranga Māori (body of knowledge that is derived from te ao Māori) and promotes a child-centred curriculum with a broader definition of success. This recommendation requires investment in teacher and leadership capability and the development of appropriate tools and processes. It also has implications for the review of paerewa paetae (the New Zealand Qualifications Standards), scheduled to begin in 2020.

Trust

2.1 Build a high trust partnership model of information sharing

Work in partnership with the Māori-medium sector to develop a model for information sharing that uses kaupapa Māori methodology, and involves the Māori-medium sector in defining, gathering, and analysing their own data. The focus will be on how well the system is working to support the aspirations of Māori-medium whānau.

Coherence

3.1 Establish a Centre of Excellence for Māori-medium Education

Convene a Māori-medium Education Working Group to scope the establishment of a Centre of Excellence for Māori-medium Education. The Centre of Excellence would build system knowledge and leadership, and support coherence across the Māori-medium system – particularly in relation to curriculum, progress, and achievement. It would ensure coherence for ākonga and whānau from early learning through to tertiary education, and for kaiako from Māori-medium initial teacher education through to in-service teacher education. It would also ensure indigenous knowledge about teaching and learning is shared and informs our approach to curriculum, progress, and achievement.

English-medium education recommendations

Clarity

4.1 Responsive National Curriculum

Design and communicate a clear, realistic process and timeframe for ongoing review of the National Curriculum to ensure it remains relevant, coherent, and fit for purpose.

4.2 Role and purpose of local curricula

Clarify the role and purpose of local curricula, including their relationship to The New Zealand Curriculum.

4.3 Curriculum progress maps

Develop curriculum progress maps that clarify critically important markers of progress, helping to inform decisions about teaching and learning and about where ākonga need further support.

Trust

5.1 Curriculum, Progress, and Achievement Sector Reference Group

Convene a Curriculum, Progress, and Achievement Sector Reference Group to co-construct the implementation of our recommendations, and to help design future responses to curriculum issues so that they positively impact on ākonga progress and achievement.

5.2 Education Data Protection and Use Policy

In partnership with Māori and in consultation with people across the education system, develop an Education Data Protection and Use Policy (EDPUP) that ensures data is collected and used in ways that benefit learning and ākonga.

5.3 Education Data Protection and Use Governance Group

In partnership with Māori and in consultation with people across the education system, establish an independent Education Data Protection and Use Governance Group to ensure adherence to the EDPUP.

Information needs

6.1 Rich records of learning

Design and trial rich records of learning that enable ākonga to capture, share, and celebrate their learning, progress, and achievement with others – including their parents and whānau.

6.2. Learning partnerships between ākonga, kaiako, and parents and whānau

Remove the regulatory requirement for reporting on the progress of individual ākonga in writing twice a year. Instead, require schools to partner with their communities to reach agreement on what ākonga progress and achievement information will be shared with parents and whānau, how, and when.

6.3 Assessment approaches and tools

Address gaps in currently available assessment tools by prototyping and trialling approaches and tools that illuminate progress in the learning outcomes identified in the curriculum progress maps.

6.4 Data analysis and support services for schools, kāhui ako, and other networks

Provide services to help schools, kāhui ako, and other networks analyse, interpret, and use assessment and aromatawai information in ways that further improve teaching and learning.

6.5 Information sharing systems and processes

Task the Education Data Protection and Use Governance Group with designing a process to allow stakeholders to access progress and achievement data for purposes that support system learning about curriculum, progress and achievement.

6.6 Making the most of the National Monitoring Study of Student Achievement

Expand the focus of the National Monitoring Study of Student Achievement (NMSSA) to capture a wider range of outcomes. Use its findings to inform national priorities for system improvement, and the construction of capability-building tools and resources that support networks, schools, and kaiako to inquire into their own practice.

Collaborative networks

7.1. Effective networks across the system

Strengthen networks by establishing an ongoing system level inquiry into how to more effectively make the most of expertise and capabilities across and between networks.

7.2. Supporting parents and whānau

Legislate minimum employee entitlements to recognise the importance of whānau involvement in their child's education. Consider whether resourcing sufficiently accounts for the time involved in building and maintaining learning partnerships with parents and whānau, both from their perspective and that of kaiako.

7.3 Develop resources to strengthen participatory processes

Develop resources that exemplify ako-enabling processes (such as talanoa, wānanga, and reciprocal storytelling) and culturally responsive learning partnerships, drawing upon the knowledge and expertise of those who are already doing this successfully.

Capability

8.1 System leadership of curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and aromatawai

Review and strengthen capability in curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and aromatawai within the Ministry of Education so that the Ministry has the expertise necessary to lead the incubation, curation, communication, and stewardship of evidence-based knowledge.

Establish an independent Advisory Group to report on the state of curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and aromatawai across the education system and identify opportunities for changes in system settings and policy to improve impacts on ākonga progress and achievement.

Appoint an independent Chief Advisor Māori (Kaitiaki Mātauranga Māori) to provide strategic and proactive advice to the Government on improving the system with regard to Māori achievement, addressing structures, policies, processes, and (in) actions.

8.2 High quality learning opportunities for kaiako and tumuaki

Deliberately plan for how teaching and leadership capabilities are built over time, recognising and investing in kaiako and tumuaki as learners, and in the diversity of career paths and expertise needed in a system that learns.

8.3 Resources that scaffold high quality and responsive teaching and leadership

Drawing on the He Kauwhata Reo (te reo Māori education portal) approach that is underway in Māori-medium education, replace Te Kete Ipurangi with a new portal that enables kaiako and tumuaki to quickly access, use, adapt, and contribute to the collation of quality teaching and learning resources.

Change and implementation

The vision of a system that learns cannot be imposed. Instead, we need to move carefully forward, working with integrity and a commitment to partnership, based on the principles of: Tangata Whenuatanga, Whanaungatanga, Manaakitanga, Wānanga, and Ako[1].

Those leading the change must model the change we seek. Despite our shared moral purpose, relationships of trust and respect cannot be presumed. They need to be generated through participatory processes that include the voices of everyone within our system in the ongoing learning, and invite them into the iterative design of the way forward. There needs to be a particular and deliberate focus on those who have traditionally been excluded from decision-making – in particular Māori learners and their whānau, the Māori-medium sector, Pacific learners and whānau, and people from the disability and learning support sector.

To achieve the depth of change we seek, to spread it across communities and sustain it over time, will take more than good intent. It will take commitment, time, and investment in deliberate and carefully planned participatory processes that build from the basis of sound evaluation year on year.

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1   Ministry of Education. (2011). *Tātaiako: Cultural Competencies for Teachers of Māori Learners.* Wellington: Education Council New Zealand.

Kōrero

Mātauranga

Me kōrero tātou