The Te Kotahitanga Effective Teaching Profile: SET 2, 2009
Russell Bishop and Mere Berryman
Edited Extracts

Overview
- *Te Kotahitanga is a project that seeks to improve the educational achievement of Māori students in mainstream schools.*
- *The authors interviewed Māori students, their teachers and whānau, and from these interviews learnt about the characteristics of teachers who made a difference.*
- *The authors have drawn these characteristics together into the Effective Teaching Profile. (ETP)*

Key Points of the Effective Teaching Profile

1. Effective teachers :
    i.   Take a positive, non-deficit view of Māori students
    ii.   See themselves as capable of making a difference for Māori students

2. Relationships and interactions between teachers and students in the classroom are key to effective teaching of Māori students.

    These effective interactions rely on:
    i.   Manaakititanga: caring for students as Māori and acknowledging their mana
    ii.   Mana motuhake: having high expectations of the performance of their students
    iii. Nga whakapiringatanga: managing the classroom to promote learning
    iv.   Wananga: engaging in effective learning interactions with Māori students
    v.   Ako: using a range of dynamic, interactive teaching styles
    vi.   Kotahitanga: teachers and students reflecting together on student achievement in order to move forward collaboratively

---

How the Effective Teaching Profile was constructed
The ETP was constructed from reflecting upon the numerous conservations we had with the students, their whānau, their principals and their teachers when we were constructing the narratives of experience (Bishop & Berryman, 2006).   These narratives are at the heart of the project and are central to the professional development part of the Te Kotahitanga, which seeks to assist teachers to implement the ETP in their classrooms so as to improve Māori students' achievement.   The narratives are used to allow teachers to critically reflect upon and compare their own understandings about how Māori students see the world and experience schooling with how Māori students themselves experience schooling. This reflection is a necessary part of the consideration by teachers of the part they play in their students' learning.

The ability of students to articulate their experiences clearly and in detail formed the basis of this profile, as the students told us about the types of relationships and interactions between themselves and their teachers that hindered their educational achievement or promoted their advancement.

Structure of the Effective Teaching Profile

The ETP is made up of two parts.
1. *Part 1 identifies two major understandings that effective teachers of Māori students possess.*
2. *Part 2 identifies six ways these effective teachers relate and interact with Māori students on a daily basis.*

Part 1 of the Effective Teaching Profile: Two teacher understandings

Teacher Understanding 1: Deficit Thinking

…to put it simply, if we think of other people as having deficiencies, then our actions will tend to follow this thinking, and the relations we develop and the interactions we have with these people will tend to be negative and unproductive.   That is, despite our having the best intentions in the world, if the students with whom we are interacting as teachers are led to believe that we think they are deficient, they will respond to this negatively.

We were told time and time again by many of the interview participants that negative, deficit thinking on the part of teachers was fundamental to the development of negative relations and interactions between the students and their teachers, resulting in frustration and anger for all concerned.   The students, their whānau, the principals and the teachers gave us numerous examples of the negative aspects of such thinking, the resultant behaviours and the consequences for students and teachers.   Both groups spoke of how negative relations affected them. The teachers spoke of their frustration and anger about not being able to relate to and interact effectively with Māori students. The students spoke about negative relations being an assault of their very identity as Māori people.   They told us of their aspirations to participate in learning, and with what the school had to offer, but they spoke in terms of the negative relations and interactions being an all-out assault on who they were – on their very basic need to be accepted and acceptable – which precluded them from being able to participate in what the school had to offer.

Teacher Understanding 2: Agentic Thinking

As students respond negatively to perceptions that their teachers see them as only deficient, likewise we also learnt that positive classroom relationships and interactions were built upon positive, nondeficit thinking by teachers about students and their families that saw the students as having loads of experiences that were relevant to the classroom interactions.   This agentic thinking by teachers means that they see themselves as being able to solve problems that come their way and having recourse to skills and knowledge that can help all of their students, and that they believe all of their students can achieve, no matter what. We learnt that this positive, agentic thinking was fundamental to the creation of learning contexts in classrooms where young Māori people are able to be themselves as Māori: where Māori students' humour was acceptable, where students could care for and learn with each other, where being different was acceptable and where the power of Māori students' own self-determination was fundamental to classroom relations and interactions.

Indeed, it was the interdependence of self-determining participants in the classroom that created vibrant learning contexts, which were in turn characterised by quality learning relations and interactions.
The teachers who were already running effective classrooms along the lines described in the ETP told us about the importance of their not seeing Māori students in deficit terms and of their knowledge in themselves that they could make a difference for all of their students.   These teachers were very clear that their ability to teach and interact effectively with Māori students in their classrooms was closely tied to their having positive, non-judgemental relationships with Māori students; seeing Māori students as being self-determining, culturally located individuals; and seeing themselves as being an inextricable part of the learning conversations – not as the only speaker, but as one of the participants. The students were very clear that teachers who saw them as having deficiencies were not able to develop positive learning relationships with them, but that their teachers who saw them in positive terms were wonderful to be with and learn with.

Part 2 of the ETP: Effective Teachers Actions

We now turn to the 6 actions that effective teachers demonstrate on a daily basis in their classrooms. In this section we describe each of the actions as drawn from a detailed consideration of the narratives, and then describe how our kuia whakaruruhau explained these actions in terms of Māori understandings. We wish to acknowledge our kuia whakaruruhau, Rangiwhakaehu Walker, Mate Reweti and Kaa O'Brien for their insights into the cultural meanings that are fundamental to the ETP.

---

6 Effective Teacher Actions

1. Manaakititanga: caring for students as Māori and acknowledging their mana
2. Mana motuhake: having high expectations of the performance of their students
3. Nga whakapiringatanga: managing the classroom to promote learning
4. Wananga: engaging in effective learning interactions with Māori students
5. Ako: using a range of dynamic, interactive teaching styles
6. Kotahitanga: teachers and students reflecting together on student achievement in order to move forward collaboratively

---

1. Manaakitanga: caring for students as Māori

The students and their whānau members spoke in detail about the importance of teachers caring for the children as Māori. Indeed, they spoke about this as often as they spoke about their aspirations for the students to achieve as school. Many Māori leaders have echoed these aspirations and asked "What if we gain good achievement levels but we lose who we are as a people?" That is, what was clear from the stories was the aspirations of Māori people, old and young, for educational relationships and interactions that respected their aspirations for self-determination; for them to be able to be themselves, to be different, but to be part of the conservation that is learning, and to participate in the benefits that education has to offer.

The people we spoke to emphasised the importance of teachers demonstrating on a daily basis that they cared for Māori students as Māori, as being culturally located; that is, as having cultural understandings and experiences that are different from other people in the classroom. They emphasised that Māori people see, understand and interact with the world in different ways, and it is important that teachers are able to create learning relations and interactions where this is fundamental. Despite many teachers saying that they do care for Māori students, their actions that express this need to be in ways that Māori students can understand.

Our kuia whakaruruhau termed this phenomenon *manaakitanga*, where *mana* refers to authority and *aki*, the task or urging someone to act. This concept refers to the task of building and nurturing a supportive and loving environment by teachers for Māori and all students where students can be themselves.

2. Mana motuhake: caring for the performance of Māori students

The students spoke at length about the low expectations that many of their teachers had of them, and how their performance in class changed when their teachers signalled that they had high expectations for them. Time and again, the students emphasised that teachers get what they expect from Māori students. Teachers who did not appear to care for them, and who had low expectations of them, by and large received poor quality work from them. The students told us that teachers who expected and allowed them to work independently would see them become independent learners.

Our kuia explained that in modern times *mana* has taken on various meanings such as *legitimation* and *authority*, and can also relate to an individual's or a group's ability to participate at the local and global level. *Mana motuhake* involves the development of personal or group identity.

3. Nga whakapiringatanga: Creating a secure, well-managed learning environment

The students did not appreciate chaotic classrooms any more that did their teachers. They also knew when lessons were not prepared and when they were not at the centre of the teacher's attention, but more of an irritant to be coped with until a more acceptable and probably senior class came along. The effective teachers and the students spoke of the strong desire for and necessity of the boundaries, rules and organisation that are fundamental to effective learning. This includes teachers knowing their curriculum area and being able to use the curriculum flexibly so as to respond to the learning conversations being developed in the classroom.

Our kuia saw this action in terms of *nga whakapiringatanga*, which involves the careful organisation of the specific individual roles and responsibilities required in order to achieve individual and group outcomes.

This concept has at least two major implications for classroom management. The first is that teachers are able to create a secure, well-managed learning environment by incorporating routine pedagogical knowledge with pedagogical imagination. The second is that teachers need to be able to organise classrooms so that all the individuals involved are able to contribute to their own learning and to support the learning of others. *Nga whakapiringatanga* is about teachers taking professional responsibility for activating the engagement of all learners.

4. Wānanga: Engaging in effective learning interactions with Māori students

The students spoke time and time again about the problems that traditional approaches to teaching posed for the learning. They just could not cope with the teacher writing notes endlessly on the board or talking at them for long periods of time. They could not learn from this style of teaching, whereas when they were able to discuss things with their mates and interact with the teacher in smaller-than-classroom-sized settings, they felt much more able to learn.

They also wanted feedback on their attempts at learning, and indications as to where they could go with what they had attempted so far (feed-forward). Others spoke to us about the fact that they had good ideas (prior knowledge), and would like opportunities to share these with teachers and their peers in ways that would help them have a say in the direction of lessons and their learning. Our kuia identified that as *wānanga*. As well as being known as Māori centres of learning, wānanga can also be a learning forum that involves a rich and dynamic sharing of knowledge. With this exchange of views ideas are given life and spirit through dialogue, debate and careful consideration in order to reshape and accommodate new knowledge. This means that teachers are able to engage in effective teaching interactions with Māori students as Māori.

5. Ako: Using a range of teaching strategies

Many of the people we spoke to talked about the problems posed for students' learning by teachers using a limited range of strategies, especially those that precluded interaction and discussion. Our kuia spoke of the aspiration to change this as the desire to implement the Māori understanding of *ako,* which means to learn as well as to teach. It is both the acquisition of knowledge and the processing and imparting of knowledge.

More importantly, *ako* is a teaching-learning practice that involves teachers and students learning in interactive, dialogic relationships. With *ako*, teachers use strategies that promote effective teaching interactions and relationships with their learners; teachers can learn from students just as students learn from teachers. It is in contexts like these that *co-construction* of knowledge is likely to occur.

6. Kotahitanga: Using student progress to inform future teaching practices

Students spoke about their desire to know how well they were learning and their desire to be let in on the secret; that is, learning in such a way that they can monitor their own progress. Effective teachers spoke about how reflecting on student progress could allow them to work towards the constant improvement of their practice.

Our kuia understood this in terms of *kotahitanga*, which is a collaborative response towards a commonly held vision, goal or other purpose or outcome, meaning that teachers and students can separately and collaboratively promote, monitor and reflect on outcomes that in turn lead to improvements in educational achievement for Māori students.