

# **Mā mua ka kite a muri, mā muri ka ora a mua**

## **“Equity” in kura mana Māori motuhake**

**He tirohanga tuhinga |  
An overview of the literature**

**Kiri Fortune, Keita Durie,  
and Georgia Palmer**

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# He whakarāpopototanga |

## Executive summary

***Mana mai, mana atu  
Mauri mai, mauri atu  
Tapu mai, tapu atu  
Tiaki mai, tiaki atu<sup>1</sup>***

The Ministry of Education, hereafter “the Ministry”, provides funding to kura and schools with the intent to reduce the impacts that social-economic factors have on student achievement. At present, the process for funding allocation is called the Equity Index (EQI).

Equity is a Western concept used within education and other sectors that targets resourcing, with the intention of ensuring differences in students’ outcomes are unrelated to their background or to economic and social circumstances over which students have no control. Within this construction of equity, seeking to identify or measure certain forms of inequity becomes a means for determining resource distribution to plug a perceived gap created by inequity, but without necessarily identifying and addressing the root causes of the inequities. This construction of equity is a form of distributive belief that has particular socioeconomic and historical roots. It provides one way to think about distributive justice and resource allocation, but the assumptions underpinning this construct cannot be taken for granted.

This literature review explores the notion of “equity” through a kaupapa Māori lens. It was apparent from the literature that any interpretation of equity must acknowledge the historical and ongoing injustices faced by Māori and seek to address and redress these imbalances by ensuring that Māori have equal opportunities, access to resources, and decision-making power. Literature strongly indicated that more appropriate terminology for equity through a kaupapa Māori lens would be mana motuhaketanga and tino rangatiratanga.

The core essence of inequity for Māori is the loss of one’s access to language and cultural practices. To understand current inequity challenges for whānau in kura mana motuhake<sup>2</sup> and how these might be addressed, it is critical to recognise the ways in which colonisation and state education systems have contributed to inequities for Māori educational success as Māori. Māori-led movements to revitalise the language and create by Māori, with and for Māori education since the 1980s have been a key action to overcome these inequities.

Educational approaches in kura mana motuhake have been effective at nurturing learning environments and achieving commendable outcomes for ākonga Māori. Within kura mana motuhake, mana motuhake Māori is nurtured through practices that create conditions for ākonga success as Māori. Some of these conditions are mana atua, mana whenua, mana reo, whanaungatanga, ako. High engagement of whānau, hapū, and iwi is also a fundamental characteristic of kura mana motuhake.

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<sup>1</sup> Tauparapara composed in 2020 by Ruia Aperahama. <https://deepsouthchallenge.co.nz/ko-te-kawa-o-te-ora/>

<sup>2</sup> In this report, we use the term “kura mana motuhake” to include kura kaupapa Māori te aho matua, and kura ā-iwi.

To provide ākonga with the learning environment needed to thrive as Māori, and for te reo Māori to flourish, there are high expectations for reo fluency, for kaiako and whānau. At the same time, whānau who want to access kura mana motuhake can also experience impediments and challenges connected to systemic and historical inequities, including intergenerational language loss, limited access to kura mana motuhake, limited access to learning resources in te reo Māori, and inadequate property and buildings due to funding inequity.

The literature indicates that, for kura mana motuhake, the way forward to achieving equity is through equitable resourcing that allows full exercise of tino rangatiratanga, for Māori to lead and govern kaupapa Māori education<sup>3</sup>. This represents a different conception of equity as distributive justice than what is captured in the Ministry’s current EQI approach.

The Crown needs to consider that dis-economies of scale are required to provide a common starting point for kura mana motuhake. Equitable funding and resourcing of kaupapa Māori education must be both relative to need, and sufficiently more, for te reo Māori to be sustained and grown if the Crown is to discharge its duty of active protection towards te reo and kaupapa Māori education (Te Matakahuki, 2022, p. 4).

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3 Kaupapa Māori education includes kura kaupapa Māori te aho matua, kura ā-iwi, kōhanga reo, wānanga (Te Matakahuki, 2022)

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# 1. He kupu whakataki | Introduction

***Ko te mokopuna he taonga tino whakahirahira  
ahakoa ōna tau, tōna whakapapa, tōna ira tangata me ōna pūmanawatanga.<sup>4</sup>***

Many tamariki and rangatahi across Aotearoa face challenges in achieving academic success because of their socioeconomic backgrounds, lacking the essential support needed to flourish and fulfil their full potential. Kura and schools had previously received equity funding through the decile system. A review of this system has seen the transition to the Equity Index (EQI), which was implemented from January 2023 (Ministry of Education, 2024).

Equity is a Western concept used in many sectors, and within education aims to create a level playing field for all tamariki by supporting those who need it most (OECD, 2022). Furthermore, equity does not mean that all students obtain equal education outcomes, but rather that differences in students' outcomes should be unrelated to their background or to economic and social circumstances over which students have no control (OECD, 2022). Within this construction of equity, seeking to identify or measure certain forms of inequity becomes a means for determining resource distribution to plug a perceived gap created by inequity, but without necessarily identifying and addressing the root causes of the inequities. One international analysis of data from more than 160 countries (Goudarzi et al., 2022) suggests that neoliberal systems have been instrumental in promoting these dominant equity-based distributive beliefs but that these should not be taken for granted. The authors comment that “prescriptive beliefs concerning resource allocation are ideological formations embedded in socioeconomic and historical contexts” (p. 1), arguing that “equity beliefs and distributive justice ... should be understood with respect to the socioeconomic context and the ideological hegemony of the era within which they are studied” (p. 27).

Equity as a simplistic construct has little relevance to a kaupapa Māori view and approach of education. However, matters of distributive justice are highly relevant to understanding the kaupapa Māori education movement and its complex and uneasy relationship with the state. While giving evidence at the Waitangi Tribunal Te Kura Kaupapa Māori Urgent Inquiry (Wai 1718), Graeme Hingangaroa Smith commented that the term “equity” is neoliberal and fails to adequately deal with who might specifically need some attention within the education system (Waitangi Tribunal, 2023a).

For the purposes of this review, “equity” must be defined within a kaupapa Māori framework that emphasises fundamental values and ingrained approaches prevalent within the literature on kura mana motuhake. The review addresses questions of equity and distributive justice within a broader understanding of the history of the kura mana motuhake movement. In doing so, the review identifies and unpacks the concept of mana motuhake and tino rangatiranga as a fundamental aspect of “equity” through a kaupapa Māori lens.

The Ministry commissioned Te Wāhanga, the Māori research unit of the New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER) to conduct an overview of the literature on “equity” in kura mana Māori motuhake (hereafter, “kura mana motuhake”). In this report, we use the term “kura mana motuhake”

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<sup>4</sup> <https://tewhariki.tki.org.nz/mi/te-matai-tamaiti/>

to include kura kaupapa Māori te aho matua, and kura ā-iwi. The specific characteristics of these kura will be outlined below.

This review aims to inform the Ministry by contributing to the overall evaluation of the EQI funding system with a particular focus on kura mana motuhake. The literature overview is structured around two broad research questions:

1. What does “equity” mean in the context of kura mana motuhake?
2. How is mana Māori motuhake nurtured within these kura?

During the process of developing this literature review it became apparent that the scope of the second pātai had to be restructured. Initially, the focus was to review what practices support equity in kura mana motuhake. As identified above, this review is provided through a kaupapa Māori lens, so the pātai was reviewed to ensure that mana motuhake is the key focus.

## Hei hōkaitanga me te minenga | Scope and audience

This literature review will summarise the recent national literature in both English and te reo Māori to provide insight into the two research questions outlined above. The review provides background for progressing the EQI evaluation in collaboration with key stakeholders: Ngā kura ā-iwi, Te Rūnanga nui o ngā Kura Kaupapa Māori o Aotearoa, and Te Akatea.

## Te huarahi rangahau | Methodology

The NZCER library used relevant search terms to seek out literature that relates to the review questions identified above. A search for literature using terms such as equity, equality, kura kaupapa Māori, te aho matua, kura mana motuhake, ngā kura ā-iwi, mana motuhake, tino rangatiranga, aromatawai, te marautanga, kura mana motuhake practices and outcomes; impact, achievement, identity, belonging, attendance, barriers, enablers, targeted responses, programmes, and pedagogies provided the basis of literature for this review. Reference lists from retrieved literature were also examined to lead to other relevant sources. Specific reports accessed from the Ministry and the Education Review Office were also utilised. Literature was also provided from Te Rūnanga nui o ngā Kura Kaupapa Māori to assist with this review.

## Ngā ngoikoretanga | Limitations

This review is intended to provide a small contribution of what we know about “equity” in kura mana motuhake but is an incomplete picture that requires additional direct input, critique, and further direction from key stakeholders and leaders of kura mana motuhake.

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## 2. He aha tēnei mea te mana Māori motuhake? | Equity from a Māori perspective

*He taonga te mokopuna, kia whāngaia, kia tipu, kia rea.*<sup>5</sup>

To fully appreciate equity from a Māori perspective, it is necessary to understand the position of the tamaiti in te ao Māori. In Māori tradition, Hineteiwaiwa was an atua associated with pregnancy and childbirth. The original ancestors were Papatūānuku and Ranginui and all living things were related by whakapapa. Hapū māmā would traditionally give birth in specially built whare and the act of labour and childbirth was steeped in tikanga including karakia, taonga pūoro, and oriori which told whakapapa and pūrākau to the unborn pēpe.

Whenua holds a key role in birth practices for Māori and corresponds to a value system that sees human experience interrelated with the natural world (Le Grice, 2014). Whenua also is the term used for the placenta and the key role that the placenta has in nurturing the pēpe to the point of birth, like that of the land and the vital role it plays for its people for sustenance, connection, and life. It is a traditional practice for the whenua and pito to be buried together. The tikanga of te whakahokia o te whenua ki te whenua pertains to the importance of whenua in its linkage of te tangata with their tīpuna and atua (Mead, 2003). The impacts of Māori not having access to their land created challenges regarding the burying of the whenua and this tikanga has evolved where, in some cases, a whenua is planted in a large pot plant that can be moved around if there is no fixed abode or link to the parents' papakāinga.

The role of whānau in the upbringing of pēpe was fundamental. Whānau extended beyond parents, siblings, and immediate family to whānau membership extending to whakapapa relationships and non-kin people who may be aligned to the whānau through shared experience (Le Grice, 2014). Whānau provided an extended support network for both parents and were very much part of the day-to-day activities of raising tamariki. In many cases, the eldest tamaiti was raised predominantly by their grandparents (Durie, 1985). As stated in the whakataukī: “ko ngā tamariki ngā rangatira mō āpōpō”, our tamariki are our future leaders. This reflects the vital role that tamariki have in determining the future for te iwi Māori as a whole. Te reo me ōna tikanga Māori are key cornerstones regarding what a culture holds as most fundamental to its survival. The ability to practise one's birthright by having access to the mother language was a right removed from Māori through the processes of colonisation through the education system (Egan, 2022). Thus, these deliberate acts of colonisation through education exacerbated the intergenerational trauma resulting from the alienation of tino rangatiratanga and resources (Durie, 1999; Smith, 2000).

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<sup>5</sup> <https://tewhariki.tahurangi.education.govt.nz/introduction/5637165888.p>

## Te kimi whakamāramatanga | Defining the term “equity”

As identified above, any interpretation of equity through a Māori lens must recognise the historical and ongoing injustices faced by Māori and seek to address and redress these imbalances by ensuring that Māori have equal opportunities, access to resources, and decision-making power. As stated by Reid, “inequity is a symptom of oppression. Equity is not the endgame. If we achieve it, that might be a symptom that there are no longer systems in place that reproduce inequity. But the endgame is sovereignty” (Milne, 2021, para. 6).

To provide an authentic Māori perspective, the term “equity” can best be aligned to the key Māori concepts and values of “tino rangatiratanga” and “mana motuhake”. Both terms encapsulate and promote the inherent right of Māori to self-determination, self-governance, and control over their own resources, land, and culture. It involves acknowledging and respecting the unique values, traditions, and knowledge of Māori and working towards a more just and inclusive society that upholds Māori rights and aspirations. Self-determination is an Indigenous response to contestations of power between states and Indigenous peoples in the postcolonial pluralist democracy (O’Sullivan, 2001).

Kura mana motuhake originated through the practice of tino rangatiratanga. To understand the origins of kura mana motuhake in Aotearoa, it is necessary to provide some background to contextualise the political, social, and historical background from which kōhanga reo, kura kaupapa Māori te aho matua, kura ā-iwi, and wharekura were established.

## Te Tiriti o Waitangi

In 1835, He Whakaputanga o te Rangatiratanga o Nu Tīreni was signed by 35 rangatira at Waitangi. This Declaration was produced in two versions—English, created by James Busby, and te reo Māori—and comprised four clauses. Rangatira who signed the reo Māori version were continuing a tradition of safeguarding their people in the face of rapid change. Busby, however, saw the Declaration as a step towards making New Zealand a British possession (Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 2022). He Whakaputanga o te Rangatiratanga o Nu Tīreni is a declaration that rangatiratanga resides with the hapū and will never be given to anyone else. Furthermore, sovereignty of New Zealand remains with Māori and has never been and never will be relinquished (Mutu, 2010).

Signed on 6 February 1840, Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Te Tiriti) was the constitutional beginning of the partnership relationship between Māori and the Crown. Te Tiriti was signed with the belief that Māori sovereignty over whenua and taonga (property, goods, possessions) would remain intact for future generations.

According to the reo Māori text of Article 2, the word “rangatiratanga” was defined as a moral promise to uphold the authority that tribes had always had over their lands and taonga. Furthermore, the focus on equity was ingrained in Article 3 with the promise from the Queen: instilling “ngā tikanga katoa rite tahi ki āna mea ki ngā tāngata o Ingarani”.

Tino rangatiratanga was declared by rangatira in He Whakaputanga and guaranteed to Māori by the British Crown under article 2 of Te Tiriti. In practical terms, tino rangatiranga means that Māori exercise control over their land, resources, and aspirations, including education, language, and future career and employment pathways. Hitchcock (2018) stated that tino rangatiratanga is a practice: living according to our tikanga, and striving wherever possible to ensure that the homes, land, and resources guaranteed under Te Tiriti are protected for the use and enjoyment of future generations.

The term “tino rangatiratanga” has grown to become a movement. It can be defined as meaning self-determination, sovereignty, independence, autonomy. There is not one English definition to fully encapsulate the true meaning as it is strongly rooted within a te ao Māori worldview. As stated by Te One and Clifford (2021), tino rangatiratanga has a close association with the challenges that emerged from the loss of Māori control through the process of colonisation and has been used as a framework from which Māori have continued to challenge governments for the recognition of individual and collective self-determination.

A moral imperative exists to better support and engage with Māori under Te Tiriti. This extends to an education system that enables Māori students to succeed “as Māori” (Bolton, 2017). Furthermore, Māori students are best served when schools recognise that they are an extension of their whānau, hapū, and iwi, and when these groups are enabled as partners in the education of their tamariki (Riwai-Couch, 2015).

## Te ngarohanga o te reo | Language loss

Language is central to all cultures throughout the world as it defines and differentiates one culture from another. It is language that makes no two indigenous groups the same. Language is identity; it affirms an ethnic culture’s position within the world. If a language dies, so too does the culture (Fishman, 1991). This is why language is so important for Indigenous cultures to retain a strong position in the world. All members of a culture have the right to gain access to their native language regardless of abilities, age, and gender. The right to use one’s own language is an internationally recognised human right and is embedded in a range of human rights treaties and declarations (Human Rights Commission, 2008).

Throughout Aotearoa, the Māori struggle for survival amidst the devastating impacts of colonisation on our communities has involved acts of resistance and relentless efforts to preserve indigenous knowledge, language, and culture for future generations (Waitangi Tribunal, 2012). Māori continue to face inequities across many areas of society, from underachievement in the education system, high levels of unemployment, over-representation within the justice system, and poor health outcomes, to name a few. The core essence of inequity for Māori is the loss of one’s access to language and cultural practices. Our tīpuna have emphasised the importance of language for the survival of one’s culture through whakataukī and whakatauākī such as:

*Ka ngaro te reo, ka ngaro hoki te iwi*

*Toi te kupu, toi te mana, toi te whenua.<sup>6</sup>*

*Ko tōku reo tōku ohoho, ko tōku reo tōku māpihi maurea.<sup>7</sup>*

The survival of one’s culture relies on the widespread use of the language across all areas of society. Research shows that tamariki learning of their Indigenous languages and Indigenous culture, based on Indigenous knowledge and taught through Indigenous pedagogies, supports and fosters a strong sense of Indigenous identity, which contributes to tamariki success as learners in school (Rameka & Stagg Peterson, 2021). Furthermore, te reo Māori is intrinsically linked to the cultural environment and Māori ways of viewing the world and is a source of power and a vehicle for expressing identity (Barlow, 1991).

An additional critical component is the relationship between language and knowledge. Māori

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<sup>6</sup> Whakatauākī from Tinirau of Wanganui is a plea to hold fast to our culture.

<sup>7</sup> Whakatauākī from Sir Timoti Kāretu.

knowledge is inextricably bound to Māori language. One is the means to the other. An implication of this relationship is that the kaupapa Māori knowledge base distinctive to Māori society is reproduced through Māori society’s means of educating each successive generation in te reo Māori (Nepe, 1991).

## Te whakarauora reo | Language revitalisation

Despite a history of educational policy failure for Māori, the 1980s saw a radical change occur in respect of Māori education and schooling. This revitalisation was the result of a number of significant events such as the civil rights movement that began in 1954, the 1975 land march to Parliament led by Whina Cooper in protest of the continuing loss of Māori land, the 1981 Springbok tour that created division stemming from the policy of apartheid reinforced by South Africa and the impact this had on Māori in Aotearoa (Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 2020). This change did not come out of the education and schooling system that was essentially designed to reproduce and perpetuate the status quo of Pākehā dominance. The educational and schooling revolution that occurred in New Zealand in the 1980s developed out of Māori communities who were so concerned with the loss of Māori language, knowledge, and culture that they set up their own learning institutions at preschool, elementary school, secondary school, and tertiary levels (Smith, 2000).

Māori protest and affirmative action ignited a Māori-led movement where Māori educating Māori through and with Māori worldviews and methods was determined a valid and desired form of education. This was as a direct response from Māori who were committed to the survival of the Māori language. Māori took it into their own hands through demonstrating tino rangatiranga and mana motuhake as they created their own pathway forward for the betterment of ngā uri whakatipu. This was when the Māori language revival movement was born, instigated with the initial preschool movement in response to Dr Richard Benton reporting in 1971 that te reo Māori was in “the last throes of language ‘death’” (Smith, 2003, para. 5; see also Benton, 1997, and Benton, 2024). Māori then responded through a mobilised approach with radical action which instigated kaupapa Māori education (Smith, 2000). Kura kaupapa Māori te aho matua started outside of the state system and was initiated by Māori and are now funded by the state (Fortune, 2016).



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### 3. Mana Māori motuhake i roto i te mātauranga | History of the Māori language revival movement

#### *Tākiri tū te kotahitanga Tākiri tū te mana motuhake.*

In the 1970s and 1980s, during the Māori language revival movement, the notions of mana motuhake and tino rangatiratanga played a crucial role in restoring the status of te reo me ōna tikanga Māori, which had been endangered due to decades of oppression, assimilation, and colonisation. The significance of te petihana reo Māori, or the Māori language petition, saw a call for the recognition and revitalisation of te reo Māori presented by representatives of Ngā Tamatoa, Victoria University's Te Reo Māori Society, and the New Zealand Māori Students Association in the form of a petition with over 30,000 signatures (New Zealand Parliament, 2022). Kaupapa Māori education grew out of the growing political consciousness and dissatisfaction with the positioning of Māori in a deficit educational paradigm (Rameka & Stagg Peterson, 2021). The Māori language revival movement evolved due to the incredible effort, commitment, and sacrifice of many kaumātua, community leaders, whānau, kura, kaiako, and ākonga. This movement includes te kōhanga reo, kura kaupapa Māori te aho matua, kura ā-iwi, and wānanga. This movement was established by those who:

- had little faith in the negative status quo generated by the system
- mobilized a movement by the people, for the people
- established innovative Māori-medium initiatives and the government and its systems and structures had to catch up
- exemplified community leadership
- believed Māori language and culture can positively mould a person and grow a person's self-efficacy, self-determination, and family/community transformation. (Ohia, 2019, p. 1)

The growth of kōhanga reo and other kaupapa Māori education initiatives has required the development of new infrastructure, training programmes for staff, and the development of resources from the ground up (King, 2001). There is an ongoing shortage of teaching resources in Māori as well as a lack of qualified teachers who can teach in Māori (May & Hill, 2005). This challenge is ongoing and continues to place immense pressure on kōhanga reo and their effectiveness across all rohe of Aotearoa with very little priority or acknowledgement provided through government policy and funding. The Kōhanga Reo Waitangi Tribunal claim (Waitangi Tribunal, 2012) followed from the recognition in 1986 that the Māori language is a taonga, leading to the enactment of the Māori Language Act the following year. Twenty-five years later, the Waitangi Tribunal (2012) highlighted a concerning pattern of declining enrolment in kōhanga reo, which coincided with closures of these centres.

In 1985, the shortage of educational opportunities for tamariki transitioning from kōhanga reo prompted the establishment of kura kaupapa Māori te aho matua, a Māori-led initiative aimed at

offering a full immersive reo Māori education pathway as an alternative option (Nepe, 1991). The first kura kaupapa Māori te aho matua, Hoani Waititi, operated initially with no government funding. By 1992, there were 13 state-funded kura kaupapa Māori te aho matua operating (Ministry of Education, 2007). The first state-funded wharekura opened in 1993 with Years 9 and 10 ākonga at Hoani Waititi Marae in Oratia, West Auckland. Since that time, growth of the wharekura sector has largely been achieved in legislation by the redesignation of kura from Years 1–8 primary schools to Years 1–15 composite schools. More recently, in 2009 there were 73 kura kaupapa Māori te aho matua and kura teina (a school awaiting kura kaupapa Māori te aho matua status). During the 1990s, the largest increase in kura kaupapa Māori te aho matua and kura teina took place (Ministry of Education, 2007). This increase stabilised during the mid-2000s. In 2021, there were 72 kura kaupapa Māori te aho matua throughout Aotearoa (Ministry of Education, 2023). Ministry data indicates that 7,423 students are enrolled in kura affiliated with Te Rūnanga nui o ngā Kura Kaupapa Māori o Aotearoa, and 5,595 students are enrolled in kura affiliated with ngā kura ā-iwi.

## Kura kaupapa Māori te aho matua

Te Rūnanga nui o ngā Kura Kaupapa Māori o Aotearoa was established in 1993. Its purpose was to act as kaitiaki for kura kaupapa Māori, representing the whānau of such kura across Aotearoa (Te Rūnanga nui o ngā Kura Kaupapa Māori o Aotearoa, 1997). Within kura kaupapa Māori, te aho matua is the guiding philosophy that provides the framework for each kura to develop policies and procedures for the day-to-day running of the school. The document lays down the principles by which kura kaupapa Māori te aho matua identify themselves as a unified group committed to a unique schooling system, which they regard as being vital to the education of their tamariki (Mataira, 1997).

Explained in depth by the New Zealand Government (2008), te aho matua focuses on six distinct components, each with its own emphasis and which contribute to creating an effective learning and teaching environment: te ira tangata (the nature of people), te reo (language), ngā iwi (social agencies), te ao (the world), āhuatanga ako (curriculum implications), and te tino uaratanga (graduate profile).

Te aho matua is an inclusive philosophy, as “all” tamariki are the focus under this kaupapa Māori framework. Within te aho matua, the individual need of each tamaiti is paramount in combination with the roles that the whānau, iwi, and hapū play in the overall education of that tamaiti. All areas of te aho matua focus on nurturing the individual uniqueness of the tamaiti as supported by the whakataukī, which is intrinsic to te aho matua: “He kākano i ruia mai i Rangīātea. E kore ia e ngaro.” The tamaiti is a seed dispersed from Rangīātea. This seed will never be lost. This whakataukī implies a strong physical orientation for life, like that of our ancestors who faced the unknown on the high seas in search of a new home (Fortune, 2016).

## Ngā kura ā-iwi o Aotearoa

Kaupapa Māori education has seen significant growth and adaptation, particularly through the establishment of special/designated character schools like kura ā-iwi. Ngā kura ā-iwi o Aotearoa, formed in 2007, acts as a collective voice and support network for iwi or tribal kura that choose to affiliate. Beginning with a core group of kura in 2007, their shared mission was to nurture the identity and aspirations of their iwi, hapū, whānau, and communities. Presently, 48 kura voluntary affiliate, offering educational pathways spanning kura tuatahi (Years 1–6), kura tuarua (Years 9–15), and wharekura (Years 1–15) (Ngā Kura ā-Iwi o Aotearoa, 2024).

Guided by the whakataukī, “mō tātou, mā tātou, e ai ki a tātou”<sup>8</sup> (for us, by us, our way), kura ā-iwi assert their distinctive purpose. Additionally, their kaupapa statement emphasises the growing independent, self-determined ākonga for the benefit of their whānau and iwi. When iwi develop educational strategies for their uri whakaheke (descendants), their focus extends beyond academic achievement to encompass cultural, economic, and personal wellbeing. The vision of ngā kura ā-iwi is rooted in ensuring all uri achieve mana motuhake and have the skills, knowledge, and wellbeing to shape positive futures (Ngā Taiātea Wharekura, 2022). This purpose extends beyond the individual ākonga to encompass the holistic hauora and wellbeing of whānau and communities across generations.

Central to the ethos of ngā kura ā-iwi is their alignment with ngā mātāpono, or guiding principles. These principles, including mana motuhake, kōtahitanga, and tukuihotanga, shape teaching and practice within these kura. Mana motuhake means the power of iwi and kura communities to decide what is best for themselves, their mokopuna, and whānau. Kōtahitanga is about coming together and learning from each other, which helps to support the dreams and mana motuhake of each kura and iwi. Tukuihotanga is expressed through te reo and tikanga Māori, which are the special strengths of ngā kura ā-iwi. They define who we are as iwi, as Māori, and are at the core of ngā kura ā-iwi (Ngā Kura ā-Iwi o Aotearoa, 2024).

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8 <https://www.kuraaiwi.nz/>

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## 4. **Mā te mārāma, ka mātau** | Understanding the realities

***Uhia mai ko ngā wai o te maunga tītōhea.  
Ngā wai e kore mimiti ahakoa tukitukitia i te poaka.  
Mau tonu tana Māori mana motuhake!***

As stated previously, the inception of the kaupapa Māori movement stemmed from the recognition of the education system's failure to adequately cater to the needs of ākonga Māori. In this section, we delve into various challenges and barriers experienced by stakeholders such as whānau, hapū, iwi, and kaiako. These challenges include:

- ngā wero whai urunga ki ngā kura | limited access
- te whakahaere ā whānau | whānau engagement expectations
- te haepapa whakapakari reo | gaining te reo Māori fluency
- ngā rauemi whakaora reo | lack of learning and teaching resources
- ngā whare me ngā rawa | property and buildings.

Each of these areas will be examined to shed light on the complexities and inequities within the education landscape for kura mana motuhake.

### **Ngā wero whai urunga ki ngā kura** | Limited access to kura mana motuhake

An article by Stacey and Scotty Morrison expressed the challenges of raising tamariki with te reo Māori (Morrison & Morrison, 2017). They highlight the limited access to kura mana motuhake as additional challenges within the schooling system in terms of finding kura that provided reo Māori immersion education. They explained that it is not always straightforward to enrol tamariki in the nearest school, as it might not provide te reo Māori. Furthermore, kura mana motuhake are not available in all regions of Aotearoa New Zealand, meaning some whānau must make the decision to either relocate from their tūrangawaewae or be forced into experiencing broken kaupapa Māori / Māori-medium education pathways; for example, having access to a kōhanga but not a kura, or a kura but not a wharekura (Te Pae Roa, 2022).

Limited access to kura mana motuhake remains as an equity issue for many whānau. For example, whānau who can access kura mana motuhake may experience travel distance and costs. Whānau who are unable to access kura mana motuhake may feel isolated or less able to access connection to their language and culture.

## Te whakahaere ā whānau | High expectations in terms of whānau engagement

In the context of kura mana motuhake, the connection between whānau and the community is deeply intertwined (Berryman, 2014). Many kura mana motuhake operate under a “whānau-led” approach, where the involvement of whānau is pivotal in decision-making processes and the implementation of policies and procedures (McKinley, 2000). This involvement spans across attending various types of hui, including hui ā-whānau, hui ā-kura, executive hui, evaluation hui, and curriculum hui, believing their engagement positively influences the education of their tamaiti.

Some kura mana motuhake expect whānau to lead in terms of “governance, management, and delivery functions” (McKinley, 2000, p. 48). Other expectations for whānau to support include relieving, bus driving, and advocating for the kura (McKinley, 2000). Furthermore, Morrison and Morrison (2017) explain that the expectations placed on whānau are substantial, encompassing participation in cultural endeavours like kapa haka, noho marae, and fundraisers.

The high degree of whānau engagement illustrates a duality for kura mana motuhake—while whānau engagement is clearly highly valuable and beneficial, it may also impact on whānau with regard to time commitments and finances. The same expectations may not be experienced within English-medium education.

## Te haepapa whakapakari reo | High expectations in terms of reo fluency

Many kōhanga reo and kura mana motuhake recognise the importance of fostering reo Māori within the home to support the child’s learning. Some encourage whole whānau involvement, drawing upon the ideas encapsulated in the whakatauhākī by Sir Tīmoti Kāretu, “ko te kāinga te mauri o te reo”<sup>9</sup>, which underscores the home as the cornerstone of language vitality. However, there are challenges, as articulated by Morrison & Morrison (2017), regarding expectations around the level of reo Māori spoken at home, particularly for second-language learners who hope their tamariki will acquire the language fluency they themselves lack. McKinley (2000) highlighted that within kura whānau, there was an expectation for mātua to learn te reo Māori to support their child’s language development and participate effectively in bilingual or reo Māori focused kura activities.

Furthermore, as expressed in the Te Pae Roa (2022) report, some whānau hesitate to pursue a kura mana motuhake pathway due to concerns about their own proficiency in te reo Māori and cultural connectedness within their whānau. Compounding these challenges is the nationwide shortage of kaiako, particularly pronounced in kura kaupapa Māori te aho matua where kaiako must not only possess teaching qualifications but also fluency in te reo Māori and the ability to deliver all subjects at the highest level in te reo (Paewai, 2023b). This discrepancy underscores an equity issue, as the same expectations for qualification and language proficiency are not applied to kaiako in English-medium schools.

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9 <https://www.nzbooklovers.co.nz/post/maori-at-home-by-scotty-and-stacey-morrison>

## **Ngā rauemi whakarauora reo | Lack of learning resources in te reo Māori**

Māori language resources for tamariki are still not readily available as English books, games, TV shows, and digital apps (Morrison & Morrison, 2017). Tumuaki and kaiako frequently develop customised teaching materials tailored to their needs, while numerous kura mana motuhake await funding for infrastructure upgrades or stabilisation of their premises.

There is a general shortage of resources and teachers across kura mana motuhake, impacting their ability to effectively engage with government agencies. Despite these resource challenges, kaupapa Māori education has managed to maintain nurturing learning environments and achieve commendable outcomes for ākonga Māori.

## **Ngā whare me ngā rawa | Property and buildings**

Kura mana motuhake have a long history of struggle regarding gaining access to suitable property and buildings (Te Rūnanga nui o ngā Kura Kaupapa Māori o Aotearoa, 1997). In many cases, the conditions have been exceptionally poor—half a gym, lack of maintenance, and an inequity of investment in kura mana motuhake in comparison to the significant investment in English-medium schools. Historical underfunding of kura mana motuhake has left some establishments in desperate need of repair, maintenance, and upgrading. Before new builds take place, it is imperative to invest in the establishments we currently have (Te Pae Roa, 2022).

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## 5. Te whakatīnana i te mana Māori motuhake | How is mana Māori motuhake nurtured in kura mana motuhake?

*E kore au e mate.  
Ka mate ko te mate.  
Ka ora taku toa.  
Tīhei mauri ora.*<sup>10</sup>

Equity in kura mana motuhake is about creating an educational environment that recognises and values Māori culture, language, and aspirations, while providing equal opportunities for ākonga Māori to succeed academically and develop a strong sense of identity and belonging (Tākao et al., 2010). Campbell and Stewart (2009) express that kōhanga reo, kura kaupapa Māori te aho matua, and whare wānanga demonstrate the capacity, creativity, and influence of Māori communities to independently navigate decisions that enhance their own wellbeing, as well as contribute positively to the broader society of Aotearoa New Zealand. Furthermore, Te Wehi Wright (Dewes, 2022) asserts that kura kaupapa Māori te aho matua should be prioritised as the primary educational pathway for ākonga Māori, as it offers an environment solely focused on the child's development and the exploration of their boundless capabilities. Kura kaupapa Māori te aho matua represents a lifestyle that exemplifies the finest aspects of Māori culture and identity.

### **Mā Māori, mō Māori** | “By Māori, with, and for Māori”

The notion of “by Māori, with, and for Māori” highlights the inherent inequity within the education system, which was originally designed to perpetuate disparity by assimilating and suppressing te reo Māori, mātauranga, and tino rangatiratanga, rather than promoting equity for Māori. However, in response to this historical imbalance, Māori communities have consistently resisted, seeking to carve their own pathways toward educational empowerment. Central to this resistance is the concept of kaupapa Māori education, which serves as a cornerstone for reclaiming agency and shaping Māori futures (Durie, 2003). Movements such as te kōhanga reo, kura kaupapa Māori te aho matua, kura ā-iwi, and wānanga have emerged as Indigenous-led solutions, crafted by Māori, with, and for Māori, signalling a deliberate shift towards tino rangatiratanga within the realm of education (Tocker, 2015).

At its core, kaupapa Māori education advocates for Māori success to be defined and achieved on Māori terms. This perspective challenges the prevailing narrative that measures success solely through a Western lens and instead emphasises the importance of cultural relevance and authenticity in educational outcomes (Warren & Warren, 2019). By prioritising Māori ways of knowing, being, and doing, kaupapa Māori education aims to cultivate a sense of pride and identity among ākonga Māori, fostering a transformative approach to learning and growing (Durie, 2003; Ministry of Education, 2007).

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<sup>10</sup> The words of Ngāruahine rangatira, Titokowaru. “E kore au e mate, Ka mate ko te mate, Ka mate ko te mate, Ka ora taku toa”. <https://www.ngaruahine.iwi.nz/>

Key to the transformative potential of kaupapa Māori education is the elevation of te reo Māori, tikanga, mātauranga, and tuakiritanga within educational settings. These elements are central to the pedagogical framework, guiding teaching and learning practices (Bishop & Glynn, 2000). By embracing these cultural components into the educational journey, kaupapa Māori education not only revitalises te reo Māori and tikanga, but also nurtures a strong sense of cultural identity and belonging among ākonga Māori.

In essence, kaupapa Māori education represents a holistic and inclusive approach to learning, one that acknowledges and celebrates the unique cultural heritage and perspectives of Māori communities. By centring Māori voices, values, and aspirations, this educational framework holds the promise of not only addressing historical inequities but also paving the way towards a more equitable and empowering future for ākonga Māori (Warren & Warren, 2019).

## **Te Kura Huanui—Five common conditions for success**

A report by the Education Review Office (2021), *Te Kura Huanui*, confirmed that ākonga Māori excel in kura kaupapa Māori te aho matua and ngā kura ā-iwi education settings. The report explained the primary reason was because of the focus on the tamaiti being immersed in their culture. The report stated, “ultimately ... Kura Kaupapa Māori [Te Aho Matua] and Ngā Kura ā-Iwi provide models of excellence for Māori education and offer exemplars for supporting Māori learners to enjoy and achieve education success as Māori” (Education Review Office, 2021, p. 12).

The significance of te ao Māori, or the Māori worldview, is fundamental and remains central to the effectiveness of kura mana motuhake. Across kura mana motuhake, there is a consistent emphasis on and prioritisation of te ao Māori, te reo Māori, tikanga Māori, and mātauranga Māori. Despite the varying philosophies between te aho matua (the philosophy of kura kaupapa Māori) and te ara toa (pathways for success within the ngā kura ā-iwi framework), both frameworks aim to support ākonga in realising their potential as descendants of Ranginui and Papatūānuku (Education Review Office, 2021).

Māori educational success as Māori involves nurturing emotional, physical, spiritual, and intellectual wellbeing as integral components (Durie, 2001). This holistic approach to education is exemplified within kura mana motuhake. *Te Kura Huanui* identifies common conditions for success across kura mana motuhake education settings. Some of the conditions are:

- Mana Māori motuhake: Being Māori—mana atua, mana whenua, mana reo
- Whanaungatanga: Relationships and connectedness
- Ako: Teaching and learning.

Delving into these conditions, the literature explains how they nurture both mana Māori motuhake (Māori self-determination) and equity within kura mana motuhake.

### **Mana Māori motuhake: Being Māori—mana atua, mana whenua, mana reo**

This condition underpins cultural dimensions of being Māori and living as Māori. Mana Māori Motuhake embodies the connections to ancestral relationships, encompassing relationships with Mana Atua, Mana Whenua, Mana Reo, and the authentic assertion of Māori identity (Education Review Office, 2021).

Both kura kaupapa Māori te aho matua and kura ā-iwi operate on philosophies that are founded in “being Māori” and tikanga Māori (Education Review Office, 2021; New Zealand Government, 2008).



### **Ka tū ko te mana Māori kei runga | Being Māori: Māori success as Māori**

A term influenced by Professor Mason Durie's (2003) "Māori success as Māori" framework proposes three goals for Māori educational advancement:

- to live as Māori
- to actively participate as citizens of the world
- to enjoy good health and a high standard of living

"As Māori" means having the opportunity to engage with te ao Māori, which encompasses language, culture, marae, customs, and resources, is crucial. If, after around 12 years of formal education, a young Māori individual finds themselves unable to participate effectively within te ao Māori, their education would be deemed incomplete, regardless of other knowledge acquired (Averill et al., 2014; Durie, 2003).

Durie's (2003) Māori success as Māori framework, aimed at advancing Māori education, is perceived as an integration of Western academic achievement and the preservation of cultural identity into a unified notion of Māori academic success. It enables Māori to navigate seamlessly between two cultural spheres, preserving their Māori identity while actively engaging in a global context.

Kura mana motuhake is a transformative learning environment for Māori where there is collective responsibility for "Māori success as Māori". They aim to revitalise te reo Māori me ngā tikanga Māori, which in turn will transform ākonga and thereby their whānau, hapū, and iwi (Education Review Office, 2021).

### **Mana atua: Knowledge of whakapapa and relationship to tikanga Māori and Māori knowledge**

Mana atua encompasses the acquisition of knowledge concerning Māori beliefs and values that evoke sentiments of tranquillity and wellbeing. It asserts that ākonga have ancestral connections to Ranginui and Papatūānuku, thereby recognising the essence and potential within ākonga (Education Review Office, 2021; Mead, 2003; Rameka, 2018).

Mikaere (2017) explains that the concept of whakapapa encompasses the origins, positioning, and future trajectories of all entities. While in Western understanding whakapapa is often limited to genealogy, focusing on past human relationships of biological descent, Māori understand whakapapa in a much broader sense. Whakapapa encompasses future generations and their connections to the wider cosmos. This understanding of whakapapa not only provides a body of knowledge but also serves as a framework for understanding the universe, forming the cornerstone of Māori ways of existence, knowledge, and action. Burgess and Moko-Painting (2020) explain that knowing our whakapapa enables us to discern our role in the world, guiding us in maintaining harmonious relationships with all aspects of existence across generations. Mahuika (2019) states, "for Māori, whakapapa has always been considered the explanatory framework for the world and everything in it" (p. 10).

Within kura kaupapa Māori te aho matua, mana atua is honoured through te ira tangata (the human essence), which emphasises the holistic development of the tamaiti:

- ākonga cultivate physical, spiritual, and emotional wellbeing, alongside an understanding of their individuality, knowledge, and respect for themselves and others.

- enthusiastic learning takes place in an environment rooted in traditional Māori values, beliefs, and concepts.
- ākonga value their identity, demonstrate self-assurance, and exhibit positive self-esteem.
- they possess confidence across physical, spiritual, and emotional dimensions.
- ākonga embrace and respect gender diversity.
- they demonstrate care, consideration, and co-operation.
- responsibility for their own learning is acknowledged and embraced by ākonga. (New Zealand Government, 2008)

Ngā kura ā-iwi express mana atua through philosophies tailored for uri (descendants):

- Uri whai tukuihotanga: Descendants are champions of cultural identity.
- Uri whai mātauranga: Descendants are seekers of knowledge.
- Uri whai oranga: Descendants are healthy and well.

Ultimately, kura mana motuhake provides an environment where ākonga are aware of their roles and responsibilities within their whānau, on the marae, and within their hapū, iwi, and community (Education Review Office, 2021).

### **Mana reo: Immersion in te reo Māori me ōna tikanga**

This condition refers to the process in kaupapa Māori education where ākonga immerse themselves in te reo Māori and tikanga Māori, developing skills and mātauranga that are entrenched in Māori values (Education Review Office, 2021). Within kura mana motuhake, te reo Māori is central to all activities, with a strong emphasis on it being a living language (Ohia, 2019). Ideally, te reo Māori is spoken not only at kura but also at home, with the belief that success does not rely on proficiency in te reo Pākehā. There is a collective commitment and dedication from various stakeholders such as te kōhanga reo, kura mana motuhake, kaiako, staff, whānau, hapū, and iwi to revitalise and preserve te reo Māori and tikanga Māori.

One of the key aspects of equity in kura mana motuhake is the emphasis on the revitalisation and promotion of te reo Māori. The entire curriculum is delivered in te reo Māori, ensuring that ākonga Māori have the opportunity to learn and engage in their Indigenous language and culture (Nepe, 1991; Ohia, 2019).

According to a Te Puni Kōkiri report in (1993), studies have shown that kura kaupapa Māori te aho matua provide cognitive benefits, particularly for bilingual speakers. These benefits include:

- improved ability to form concepts and think creatively (Cummins, 1984)
- enhanced capacity to recognise ambiguity
- greater mental adaptability and the ability to use more advanced analytical methods when dealing with language tasks
- a broader and more diverse range of life experiences to monolingual speakers, as they belong to two cultures and interact in two different systems. The necessity to switch between languages is viewed as beneficial for fostering flexible thinking.

## **Mana Whenua: Tūrangawaewae, ancestral connection and values, relationship to environment, and sense of belonging**

Within a Māori perspective, having a strong connection to and identification with the land is crucial (Burgess & Moko-Painting, 2020). This connection involves caring for the natural environment and respecting the ancestral ties to the land. Mana Whenua emphasises a sense of belonging and duty towards both the land and its people.

The *Te Kura Huanui* report (Education Review Office, 2021) demonstrated that within kura mana motuhake there is a focus on recognising and expressing the diversity of iwi, ancestral heritage, and the roles of tāngata whenua and manuhiri, tāngata tiriti, or tauiwi. The report highlighted that ākonga become familiar with their ancestral ties, values, and beliefs, which fosters a deep sense of belonging, environmental consciousness, responsibility, and care. Being connected to whānau, hapū, iwi, and marae is essential within kura mana motuhake. By nurturing the connection to ancestral land, ākonga are provided with a sense of belonging, safety, and a unique place in the world as Māori. This connection strengthens their individual bonds with their tūpuna, marae, whenua, and natural elements like mountains, rivers, and waterways that sustain them. Their ancestral land is where their identity is nurtured, lived, and celebrated.

Jones (2020) expressed her experiences with a kura kaupapa Māori te aho matua and how the kura naturally incorporate sustainable practices. She also described that caring for the natural world is a key principle of te ao Māori. Jones' (2020) findings describe the notion that numerous kura incorporate similar ideas of caring for the whenua, known as manaaki whenua, and sustainable practices despite receiving minimal financial support.

## **Whanaungatanga: Relationships and connections**

A strong foundation built upon whanaungatanga and whakapapa ensures that ākonga feel secure and deeply connected at kura, home, and within the broader community. Whakapapa and whanaungatanga form the basis of all relationships among the kura, whānau, kaiako, and ākonga, with whānau, hapū, iwi, and marae playing significant roles in fostering this sense of connection (Burgess & Moko-Painting, 2020; Education Review Office, 2021).

As discussed in the previous section, kura mana motuhake actively encourages whānau involvement in the education of their tamariki. Whānau are seen as essential partners in the learning journey, and their input and participation are valued and sought after. This collaborative approach ensures that the educational experience is tailored to meet the needs and aspirations of the ākonga and their whānau (McKinley, 2000; Nepe, 1991).

An article by Te Kuru o Te Marama Dewes (2022) acknowledged that kura kaupapa Māori te aho matua adopt a “communal approach” to education, akin to the idea of a village collectively raising a tamaiti. However, for certain ākonga, it was more like the “village raising the village”. The interviewee of the article, Te Wehi Wright, expressed, “home was like school and school was like home”, highlighting that there was a seamless integration between the two, fostering a strong sense of whānau and kaupapa.

Kura mana motuhake places a strong emphasis on fostering a sense of cultural identity and pride among ākonga and their whānau. The curriculum integrates Māori history, tikanga, values, and practices, allowing ākonga to connect with their cultural heritage and develop a positive sense of self. According to Duckworth et al. (2021), having a strong Māori identity is essential for the success of ākonga Māori. They emphasise that experiencing mana Māori motuhake involves cultivating a sense of cultural confidence and being able to engage deeply with Māori culture.

## Te whai pānga ki ngā hapū me ngā iwi | The role of local hapū and iwi in kura mana motuhake

Hapū and iwi have an essential role in supporting whānau involvement and upholding mana Māori motuhake within kura mana motuhake. Durie (2006) highlights three recognisable types of contribution made from hapū and iwi:

- the development of educational and whānau development plans
- the establishment of wānanga where there is whānau encouragement to participate in learning programmes.
- the promotion of reconnecting whānau into te ao Māori.

As explained by Durie (2006), iwi involvement includes providing advice to kura, contributing to planning, and supporting learning opportunities that work towards iwi, hapū, and whānau goals and ensures the best interests of tamariki and their whānau.

Whanaungatanga, as described in *Te Kai a Te Rangatira: Leadership from the Māori World* (Tapiata et al., 2020), pertains to the interconnectedness among all beings and mirrors a te ao Māori emphasis on collective unity. Pere and Nicholson (1997) characterise whanaungatanga as a core Māori principle that fosters strong interpersonal connections. Additionally, Metge (1976) suggests that whanaungatanga expands beyond biological ties to encompass those who form relationships through shared experiences.

## Ako: Teaching and learning

This condition emphasises the importance of kaiako, kaimahi, and whānau in facilitating the success of ākonga. As outlined in the *Te Kura Huanui* report (Education Review Office, 2021), successful teaching and learning involve diverse approaches, including contextual and experiential learning, as well as tailoring the curriculum to local contexts.

“Aroha ki te tamaiti” (Education Review Office, 2021, p. 27) underpins all teaching and learning where kaiako and kaimahi cultivate strong bonds with ākonga, fostering whanaungatanga to establish a sense of belonging and a safe, supportive learning environment. Through these relationships, strengths and areas for growth are identified. Close connections are emphasised in kura mana motuhake, recognising the significance of nurturing ākonga within a dedicated community. This approach underscores the belief that education is enriched through the collaborative efforts of individuals alongside kaiako and kaimahi (Hiha, 2013).

Ohia (2019) highlights that kura mana motuhake prioritise the success of ākonga and places emphasis on addressing their emotional, physical, spiritual, and intellectual wellbeing comprehensively. It is this holistic approach to teaching and learning that is consistently demonstrated and upheld throughout kura mana motuhake. There is a strong dedication and belief that each ākonga is a taonga, deserving of nurturing and encouragement of their individuality. This is accomplished by tending to the needs of the whole tamaiti, ensuring that every mokopuna is regarded as successful and supported throughout their educational journey.

## Te huarahi ako mō te whānau | The role of whānau in teaching and learning

Whānau involvement in guiding kura mana motuhake education, as well as teaching and learning, is fundamental for ensuring high-quality education. The *Te Kura Huanui* report (Education Review Office, 2021) found that kura mana motuhake highly value whānau members for their contributions to both teaching and learning and curriculum development. Whānau members are esteemed as

knowledgeable experts who actively engage in the teaching and learning process. Additionally, hapū and iwi contribute to the curriculum with their expertise in specific areas, such as iwi-based customs and ancestral stories. Kaumātua, kuia, and koroua play crucial roles in passing down language and knowledge from one generation to another. They serve as important role models for ākonga, embodying spiritual strength, fluency in iwi dialects, and repositories of traditional wisdom. The involvement of kaumātua provides valuable and enriching learning experiences for all involved (Smith, 1995, 2000).

According to Durie (2006), the future of success of Māori will depend greatly on their connections with others. These connections include relationships between Māori and the Crown, between iwi and the Crown, within whānau, between whānau and kura, and with society as a whole. Whānau relationships are especially important because they carry messages about the past, present, and future. Whānau connects us to our history while also helping us deal with the present and prepare for what's to come. Moreover, Durie (2006) explains that, through various connections, whānau serve as pathways to education, employment, society, and the potential success of Māori people.

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## 6. Hei whai rongōā | The search for a solution

### *Titiro whakamuri, kōkiri whakamua*

The kura mana motuhake pathway offers numerous benefits for ākonga and their whānau. The measure of success is not a foreign concept to Māori, but rather something that has its place in te ao Māori (Martin, 2012). Māori measures of success are often overlooked due to the dominant Western view but are just as valid and important as those deemed as such from a mainstream perspective. As outlined by Martin (2012), success for Māori is not solely gauged by academic achievements. Rather, considerable emphasis is placed on cultural elements specific to kura mana motuhake, including proficiency in te ao Māori, tikanga Māori, whakapapa, hitori, and te reo Māori. Despite the proven track record in terms of better outcomes for young people who attend kura mana motuhake (Education Review Office, 2021) inequity remains in funding, infrastructure, workforce, and resources, as discussed in previous sections.

### WAI 1718

In October 2021, Te Rūnanga nui o ngā Kura Kaupapa Māori filed an urgent claim, WAI 1718, with the Waitangi Tribunal, urging the Government to provide equitable funding for te aho matua and establish an independent Māori education authority. Dr Cathy Dewes (Paewai, 2023a), a lead claimant, emphasised the importance of recognising the excellence of the kura kaupapa Māori te aho matua model and its manifold benefits for the Māori community, “Me mārama pai Te Tāhuhu, te Karauna ki te ātaahua o tēnei kaupapa te kura kaupapa Māori Aho Matua, me tōna pai me te nui ō ngā hua ka puta kia tātou te iwi Māori” (para. 7). Cathy Dewes elaborated on the challenges encountered by Te Rūnanga nui o ngā Kura Kaupapa Māori, attributing them to lack of understanding and subsequent support from the Ministry.

Over the past 35 years, the Ministry has sought to assimilate kura kaupapa Māori into a mainstream educational framework. As noted by co-chairperson of Te Rūnanga nui o ngā Kura Kaupapa Māori, Rāwiri Wright, “ehara i a rātou te mana ki te tohutohu mai ki te ao Māori me pēnei, me pēnā, me pērā mō te āhuetanga o ngā kaupapa e whakaako atu ki ngā tamariki, kua roa rātou e ngana ana te pērā” (Paewai, 2023a, para. 10).

The claim represents over 60 kura kaupapa Māori te aho matua and 6,500 ākonga nationwide. The basis of the claim to the Waitangi Tribunal is that the Crown, and particularly the Ministry, has failed to provide an education system that upholds Māori identity, culture, and language. The claim argues that the Crown has breached its obligation to protect these “taonga” as guaranteed in Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Consequently, tamariki Māori have been denied an education that nurtures their Māori wellbeing—physically, intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually. A central theme of the claim is the Ministry’s neglect of kura kaupapa Māori, reflected in inadequate support, inequitable funding, and a governance model that lacks meaningful whānau involvement (Te Nahu, 2023).

During the hearings, equity emerged as a significant topic, with scrutiny directed at the Ministry’s understanding and application of the concept within the education system. Meade (Waitangi Tribunal,

2023b) emphasised that the Ministry views equity as the absence of disparities between ākonga based on socioeconomic status, a perspective endorsed by the OECD. However, Te Rūnanga nui o ngā Kura Kaupapa Māori shared a different definition of equity with the Ministry, emphasising the need for resources to kura kaupapa Māori to be proportionate to the relative requirement of te reo Māori for its sustenance and growth. This recognition underscores the intimate connection between the philosophy of kura kaupapa Māori te aho matua and the revitalisation of te reo Māori.

Equity of Kura Kaupapa Māori resourcing needs to be considered in light of relative need—in this case the need of te reo Māori to remain viable, let alone to thrive. This is to be contrasted with funding for teaching in English, since the English language is not at risk of extinction. Hence equitable KKM resourcing needs to be not just more than the resourcing for teaching in English, it needs to be sufficiently more that te reo Māori can be sustained and grown if the Crown is to discharge its duty of active protection towards the language. (Waitangi Tribunal, 2023b, p. 38)

Throughout the hearings, concerns were raised about the disparities faced by kura kaupapa Māori, encompassing resource allocation, infrastructure, workforce, and the prioritisation of te reo Māori revitalisation. Meade (Waitangi Tribunal, 2023b) highlighted the disproportionate risk of te reo Māori extinction compared to the English language and argued for greater governance and resourcing for kura kaupapa Māori te aho matua and Māori-medium education, even if socioeconomic disadvantages were absent among their ākonga.

Te Rūnanga nui o ngā Kura Kaupapa Māori advocated for a “by Māori, with, and for Māori” approach, advocating for an autonomous Māori education authority and a parallel kaupapa Māori pathway.

## Te Pae Roa

In February 2022, the (then) Associate Minister of Education (Māori Education), Kelvin Davis, ruled out the idea of an independent authority and instead initiated a review of the Māori-medium and kaupapa Māori education system titled Te Pae Roa. The consultation for Te Pae Roa was undertaken during April 2022. A key aim of this initiative was to restructure the Māori-medium and kaupapa Māori pathways, aiming for a 30% increase in the number of tamariki Māori participating in and/or transitioning into kaupapa Māori education pathways by 2040 (Perry, 2022).

Te Matakāhuki, representing Te Kōhanga Reo, Ngā Kura ā Iwi o Aotearoa, Te Rūnanga nui o ngā Kura Kaupapa Māori, and Te Tauīhu o ngā Wānanga, opposed the Government’s proposal, advocating for solutions created “by, Māori, with, and for Māori”. Puna reo and rūmaki reo were not part by Te Matakāhuki. The concern for Te Matakāhuki was that kaupapa Māori education would be absorbed into the state-stream Māori-medium pathway. Raniera Proctor, the chair of Te Matakāhuki, expressed,

In part our kaupapa was born from families establishing Māori education institutes as a response to the lack of confidence in that system. We will not accept the homogenising of our kaupapa Māori institutes by treating both the Māori medium within mainstream education and Te Matakāhuki pathways unilaterally. (Perry, 2022, para. 10)

Alternatively, Te Matakāhuki proposed the establishment of a parallel Māori education pathway to be collectively led by them (Worthington, 2022). Furthermore, Te Matakāhuki (2022) stated that the Te Pae Roa proposal would not address the current inequities across the kaupapa Māori pathway and would likely create further inequity.

Te Matakāhuki also lodged two other individual Waitangi Tribunal claims—Te Kōhanga Reo Wai 2336 and Te Wānanga o Raukawa Wai 2698. These claims highlighted the government’s ongoing efforts

to assimilate kaupapa Māori education settings into the state stream, contrary to the protection principle in Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

According to Hohepa Campbell, CEO of Te Rūnanga nui o ngā Kura Kaupapa Māori,

We would like to remind the Crown that the Tomorrows’ Schools Taskforce recommended that an autonomous governance body be established to support Kaupapa Māori education pathways of Kōhanga Reo, Kura Ā-lwi, Kura Aho Matua and Whare Wānanga Māori. Te Rūnanga nui supports this recommendation.” (Perry, 2022, para. 6)

Te Pae Roa (2022) also indicated,

the education system was not built to provide Māori with equity. Its founding purpose was to do the opposite. Māori will never receive equity from the education system—because its foundations will not allow it to. (Te Pae Roa, 2022, paras 64 and 65).

Furthermore, Te Pae Roa (2022) emphasised,

there was strong support for Māori exercising their ‘tino rangatiratanga’ and ‘mana motuhake’ over kaupapa Māori/Māori-medium education—meaning that Māori should determine the current and future direction of Māori-medium education and kaupapa Māori education. (Te Pae Roa, 2022, para. 24).

Establishing an independent authority was seen as a way to exercise mana motuhake and tino rangatiratanga, giving Māori full autonomy to provide kaupapa Māori education independently. This move was aimed at preventing the system from hindering Māori aspirations (Te Pae Roa, 2022).

As stated by Rawiri Wright, the tumuaki of Te Rūnanga nui o ngā Kura Kaupapa Māori,

The Government has prevented the natural growth in the development of Kōhanga Reo, of Kura Kaupapa Māori, of Kura ā-lwi, and it’s time to put our hands in or to allow that sector to flourish. (Kowhai, 2023, para. 12)

Te Pae Roa (2022) believed that “Māori are in the best position to lead and govern kaupapa Māori education ... they are the experts and should not be held accountable to a system that does not recognise that” (para. 74).



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## 7. He kupu whakakapi | Conclusion

### *Toitū te mana Toitū te rangatiratanga Toitū te Tiriti.<sup>11</sup>*

This review offers insights into the perspectives and experiences of kura mana motuhake as they navigate a system that does not align with their core values and goals for their uri whakaheke. The literature supports that the concept of equity is incongruent with Māori perspectives. Additionally, conventional notions of equity, such as those reflected in metrics like the EQI, overlook the social and historical factors contributing to or perpetuating educational disparities for Māori.

Instead, terminologies like tino rangatiranga and mana motuhake better encapsulate Māori values and approaches. The Crown must recognise that accommodating the unique needs of kura mana motuhake requires dis-economies of scale to establish a common starting point for kura mana motuhake.

Equitable funding and resourcing of kaupapa Māori education must be both relative to need, and sufficiently more, for te reo Māori to be sustained and grown if the Crown is to discharge its duty of active protection towards te reo and kaupapa Māori education. (Te Matakahuki, 2022, p. 4)

Kura mana motuhake in essence are an example of true, lived practice of tino rangatiratanga. Specific aspects of these practices have been identified to provide the reader with a more in-depth understanding of how mana Māori motuhake is nurtured within kura mana motuhake and beyond.

These education settings were established in response to the systemic inequities by Māori within the education system, aiming to ensure tamariki Māori would thrive and become the new leaders of the future with strongly embedded Māori knowledge and values. Kura mana motuhake were established independently “by Māori, with, and for Māori”, and they have argued for tino rangatiranga over the successful model they have developed; WAI 1718 is indicative of this. As stated by Smith (Waitangi Tribunal, 2023a), what counts as tino rangatiratanga is greater autonomy, mana motuhake, and more meaningful control over the key determinants made that impact on our tamariki, a statement supported by a kura mana motuhake parent in the following concluding quote:

Kia pai noa ake te ao o āku tamariki i tēnei te ao i nōhia e mātou, koirā te hiahia nui kia tipu tonu kia whanake tonu te kaupapa, ka mutu kia whai wāhi ā tātou tamariki Māori katoa huri huri te motu ki tēnei kaupapa. Koirā te hiahia nui. (Paewai, 2023b, para. 22)

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<sup>11</sup> <https://toitutetiriti.co.nz/>

## He kupu taka | Glossary

Ākonga	Learner
Ākonga Māori	Māori learner
Hapū	Pregnant
Hui	Gathering, meeting
Hui ā-kura	School meeting
Hui ā-whānau	Whānau meeting
Iwi	Tribe
Kaiako	Teacher
Kaitiaki	Custodian, guardian
Kapahaka	Haka group
Karakia	To recite ritual chants
Kaumātua	Elders, leaders
Kaupapa Māori	Māori approach, Māori topic, Māori customary practice, Māori institution
Kōhanga	Nest
Koroua	Male elder, grandfather
Kōtahitanga	Unity
Kura	School
Kura ā-Iwi	A school that operates according to the aims, purposes, and objectives of its character that are set out in its strategic plan
Kura Mana Motuhake	Māori school, Māori educational setting
Kura Teina	A school awaiting Kura Kaupapa Māori status
Māmā	Mother
Mana Motuhake	Separate identity, autonomy, self-governance, self-determination, independence, sovereignty, authority
Marae	Courtyard—the open area in front of the wharehau
Mātāpono	Principle
Mātua	Parents
Ngā uri whakatipu	Future generations
Noho marae	Overnight marae stay

<b>Oriori</b>	Lullaby
<b>Pākehā</b>	English, European
<b>Papakāinga</b>	Communal Māori land
<b>Papatūānuku</b>	Earth mother
<b>Pātai</b>	Question
<b>Pēpe</b>	Baby
<b>Pito</b>	Section of umbilical cord nearest the baby's body
<b>Pūrākau</b>	Story
<b>Rangatira</b>	To be of high rank, a chief
<b>Ranginui</b>	Sky father
<b>Tamaiti</b>	Child
<b>Tamariki</b>	Children
<b>Taonga</b>	Treasure
<b>Taonga puoro</b>	Musical instrument
<b>Te ao Māori</b>	The Māori world
<b>Te iwi Māori</b>	Māori people
<b>Te reo Māori</b>	The Māori language
<b>Te reo me ōna tikanga Māori</b>	The Māori language and Māori customs
<b>Te Tiriti o Waitangi</b>	The Treaty of Waitangi
<b>Tikanga</b>	Customary practice
<b>Tino rangatiratanga</b>	Self-determination, sovereignty, autonomy, self-government, domination, control, power
<b>Tīpuna</b>	Ancestors
<b>Tukuihotanga</b>	Succession, passing on
<b>Tūrangawaewae</b>	Place where one has the right to stand, place where one has rights of residence and belonging through kinship and whakapapa
<b>Wānanga</b>	Tertiary institution
<b>Whakapapa</b>	Genealogy, history
<b>Whakataukī</b>	Proverb or significant saying
<b>Whānau</b>	Family
<b>Whare</b>	House
<b>Wharekura</b>	Māori secondary school
<b>Whenua</b>	Land, placenta

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