

# Mehemea ka moemoeā tātou, ka taea e tātou

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Teachers, educators and leaders have privileged roles in responding to the educational aspirations of our Māori learners, whānau, hapū, iwi and communities. This article considers the responsibilities of this group, the amount of work they take on as individuals, and the need to work collectively and with a shared vision to achieve the aspirations of our people.

I began writing this think piece on a long-haul flight from Auckland to Vancouver on my way to my first American Educational Research Association (AERA) Conference. We boarded the plane at 1 pm and I immediately began working until my computer battery gave out at 8 o'clock that evening. Tempted as I was to watch a movie and enjoy the in-flight complementary beverages, it was the first stretch of interrupted time I've had to think and write since I began this new job as Head of School, Te Puna Wānanga (School of Māori Education) in the Faculty of Education at The University of Auckland. Unsurprisingly, this job is incredibly busy and demanding. Having been invited to write about my new job, I want to reflect on three key events that have occurred during the first two months of my work as a way to think more deeply about my new role and, more broadly, our role as Māori teachers, educators and leaders.

The first event occurred in March this year, when Emeritus Professor Ranginui Walker was named a Distinguished Alumnus of The University of Auckland. As part of the celebrations organised by the Faculty of Education, Ranginui delivered an address entitled "My journey from a primer teacher to professor at the

University of Auckland" (Walker, 2012). His personal story was purposefully set within a broader narrative about the colonisation of Aotearoa, in particular, the role of schools to assimilate and "civilise" Māori. While Ranginui had spent his preschool years growing up with his whānau in the secluded valley of Rāhui (Whakatōhea), by secondary school he was described by others as "Rangi the Pākehā". Highly critical of the limits of the schooling he received, he explained "Schooling trained me to become a brown Pākehā" (Walker, 2012). While there have been a myriad of policies and practices introduced to improve Māori education since the 1930s, I think that a monocultural business-as-usual approach in many mainstream schools and institutions means Māori students are still at risk today. The enduring desire of Māori education to value and provide access to our language, culture and knowledge, so that our people are able to, as articulated Durie (2001), "live as Māori", remains. The revitalisation and reclamation of te reo, tikanga and mātauranga Māori to ensure our cultural survival continues to be at the forefront of educational activities and achievement

initiatives for Te Puna Wānanga, and for Māori educators across educational institutions.

Ranginui's journey as an educator also drew attention to the potentially powerful act of the Māori pedagogue; the possibilities inherent in Māori teachers' work to change curriculums, challenge dominant hegemonic ideologies, and act as "the critic and conscience of society" (Walker, 2012). Māori teachers, as Ranginui points out, are at the frontline of cultural politics, because of our simultaneous responsibilities to a Pākehā-dominated education system, and to Māori whānau, hapū, iwi and communities. Our work is never only intellectual or cultural, but political. It cannot be divorced from the broader struggle to assert the legitimacy of kaupapa Māori, mātauranga Māori, tino rangatiratanga and the redistribution of resources. Māori pedagogues require a political clarity that understands the non-neutrality of schooling and educational institutions, as well as the nexus of culture, knowledge and power. Moreover, if Māori pedagogues are to be effective they need the ability to challenge normative policies and practices that deny Māori equitable educational outcomes. An intellectual critique, Ranginui's experience shows, is not enough. It must be accompanied by a commitment to speak out, to write back, to strategise and initiate change. The influence of the effective Māori teacher extends beyond the individual in the environs of the classroom or the educational campus. It seeks to impact the hearts and minds of learners and contribute to the wellbeing of the whānau, hapū, iwi and communities. While Ranginui's accomplishments are exceptional, his educational journey is not unlike many of our past and present Māori educators—leaders who have been courageous enough to open up new spaces, new pathways and new possibilities. Māori leadership positions in universities, such as mine, are a testament to the power of Māori political perseverance and astuteness.

The second event I want to reflect on was the Tuia te Ako Māori Tertiary Educators' Hui held on 29–30 March at Pipitea Marae in Wellington. I had attended the inaugural Tuia te Ako hui in 2010 and was invigorated by the opportunity to engage with other Māori educators working across a range of tertiary institutions throughout the country. The themes of this year's hui were kaitiakitanga, manaakitanga, te reo Māori and whakamana. Keynote speakers, including Dr Te Huirangi Waikerepuru, spoke about the spiritual and philosophical essence of knowledge. Te Huirangi emphasised, "Ko te wairua me te kupu kōrero hei kawē i te māramatanga ki ngā tauira" (2012). Other speakers, too, talked about our roles and responsibilities as Māori educators to be cultural

guardians, to care for and support the whole person (not just the intellectual) and the whānau, and to actively work towards the empowerment of Māori. The hui was stimulating and encouraging, and reiterated the breadth of the work we are expected to perform as Māori.

The cultural dimensions of the role of Māori educators came into sharper focus as the start of my job unfortunately coincided with the third iteration of the Performance-Based Research Fund (PBRF) Census.<sup>1</sup> While I was at the Tuia te Ako hui, I was also immersed in the preparation and review of the Evidence Portfolios of each academic staff member in Te Puna Wānanga for PBRF. Under the PBRF model, performance is primarily measured by the quality and quantity of one's research outputs, in particular individual research publications. Accordingly, each person is awarded a score A, B or C (the research active categories) or R (a category used for those deemed to be research inactive). Whereas the "publish or perish" dictum that guided Ranginui Walkers' academic journey referred to ensuring a Māori voice and perspective in the public arena (such as his regular column for the *Listener* begun in 1972) or politically perish, PBRF gives this dictum new meaning. As Māori we understand that PBRF (like most other educational measurements, including performance pay for teachers or league tables for schools) is a narrow normative measure of our academic work. Our responsibilities to our learners, whānau and communities means that much of what we do falls outside the official categories of Research Outputs, Peer Esteem and Contribution to Research Environment. Only acknowledging one's outputs fails to recognise one's input—a multilayered, complex, energy consuming and often highly skilled endeavour in Māori education. Māori input might include:

- encouraging Māori students and assisting their course enrolment
- participating in pōwhiri
- supporting Māori language initiatives
- attending hui to progress Māori educational programmes
- translating documents into Māori or English
- advancing Treaty of Waitangi matters
- advising other people's research teams to ensure Māori participants will be safe
- creating new models, initiatives, policies and movements that are responsive to the needs of our learners and communities.

Furthermore, this sort of input does not follow a straight line to a tidy output. One's impact may not be felt until many years later and still not be measured in a PBRF output. While we participate in PBRF because our

faculties, schools, programmes and courses in many tertiary institutions rely on the funding it generates, we do so with a cautious compliance knowing that the PBRF will only ever partially acknowledge the kinds of professional work we perform as Māori. As an academic leader, it is incumbent on me to be supportive, strategic and tactical to meet the requirements of PBRF while leading the vanguard to protect and sustain what we do that matters to Māori learners, whānau and communities.

The final event that has been a significant and reflective moment was my attendance at AERA. This year AERA was held in Vancouver, Canada and began with a preconference gathering for those associated with the Indigenous Peoples of the Pacific, and Indigenous Peoples of the Americas Special Interest Groups of AERA. The theme of this gathering was entitled “Hands Back, Hands Forward: Sharing Indigenous Intellectual Traditions” and took place at the First Nations Longhouse on the traditional and unceded territory of the Musqueam First Nation at the University of British Columbia. The teaching of “hands back, hands forward” by Musqueam elder, Dr Vincent Stogan, reminds us that knowledge is not only to be shared, but dependent on our ancestors who have passed it to us, and our grandchildren to whom we will pass it on. Our responsibility in this circle of teaching and learning, is only a part that does not exist without those who have been before and those who will come after us. It would be culturally remiss not pay tribute to all those Māori teachers, educators and leaders, such as Ranginui Walker and Te Huirangi Waikerepuru, who have paved new pathways into previously inaccessible areas.

The most moving experience of being in the wake of a Māori educator was at the AERA Opening Plenary Session delivered by Professor Linda Tuhiwai Smith. AERA is the most prominent and prestigious international educational conference in the world. With 12 divisions and 160 Special Interest Groups, the annual conference is attended by thousands of people each year. Speaking to a packed ballroom of academics, her presentation, “The Knowing Circle of Indigenous Education: It Is Not Enough Just to Know”, was a historic moment in acknowledging of the critical work of Māori and indigenous elders, teachers, educators and academics to create new spaces, in particular the intellectual and academic space in the field of indigenous education and research. Linda not only spoke about indigenous issues so others know, but for many of us attempting to follow in her footsteps, she modelled a hopefulness so that we also feel what it means to know, and how that knowing is connected to being Māori. The work still to be done is enormous, because, as Linda

points out, we want to do it all in order for us to learn, teach, research and live as Māori.

To return to the start of this think piece, I begin and end with an emphasis on the amount of the work to do. Unless we take responsibility in the privileged roles we hold to respond to the educational aspirations of our Māori learners, whānau, hapū, iwi and communities, we will make little contribution in sustaining the circle of knowledge that often revolves around our language, culture, whenua, taonga and the wellbeing of our whānau, hapū and iwi. There is, however, a limit on the amount of work each individual can do. During my time in Vancouver we were the fortunate recipients of many indigenous stories, one retold by Dr Joanne Archibald (2102) from the Stó:lō Nation in southwestern British Columbia, about Lady Louse in her Longhouse. There were several teachings in this story. One that resonated with me was that in Lady Louses’ conscientious efforts to be responsible for everything, she got lost in the amount of work to be done, and in effect became irresponsible to her family and community self (she could not even fulfil her immediate task). Like the tongi (proverb) of Te Puea Herangi, “Mehemea, ka moemoea ahau, ko ahau anake. Mehemea, ka moemoea tātou, ka taea e tātou” (If I dream, I dream alone. If we all dream together, we can succeed) —Lady Louse also reminds me (in whatever role we have) that we need to work collectively and with a shared vision to achieve the aspirations of our people. It was timely that, after hearing the story from Dr Joanne Archibald, my computer’s hard drive died at the AERA conference (an event in itself I could write about). Least to say (and as a way to conclude), I did not do any work on my return flight from Vancouver. Instead I relaxed (I watched movies) and focused on revitalising the heart, mind and body in preparation for the “work” ahead of me at home.

## References

- Archibald, J. (2012, April). *Hands back, hands forward: Transforming indigenous education*. AERA distinguished lecture at 2012 AERA Annual Meeting, Vancouver, British Columbia.
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- Walker, R. (2012, March). “My journey from a primer teacher to professor at The University of Auckland”. Distinguished alumnus presentation at the Faculty of Education, The University of Auckland.

## Note

- 1 PBRF is considered one of the most important audit activities in a university because it audits the excellence of research and determines levels of funding to the institution. Each academic staff member generates an individual PBRF score that is collectivised by the university for the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC).

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## Finding Māori education theses

The New Zealand Educational Thesis Database Te Putunga Kōrero Mātauranga o Aotearoa is an invaluable resource for researchers. Funded by the Ministry of Education through the Iterative Best Evidence Synthesis (BES), this database lists more than 10,000 doctoral, masters and diploma theses on education topics. It contains a wealth of Māori education theses.

The database is:

- accessible
- well indexed
- easy to use.

You can browse and combine the powerful indexing categories using the advanced search features. You can search using broad descriptors such as bilingual education, Māori medium schools or kaupapa Māori theory. Or you can get much more specific, such as research relating to particular iwi.

This is an important resource that is continuing to grow as we identify and add more theses.

The database is available on the NZCER website at: [www.nzcer.org.nz/edtheses](http://www.nzcer.org.nz/edtheses)

