

HE REO KA TIPU I NGĀ KURA

GROWING TE REO MĀORI IN ENGLISH-MEDIUM SCHOOLS

SUMMARY REPORT

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Research findings

He reo ka tipu i ngā kura—Growing te reo Māori in English-medium schools is a research project led by Te Wāhanga, Rangahau Mātauranga o Aotearoa—New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER). Our aim is to support English-medium primary schools in taking strategic approaches to growing te reo Māori.

In recognition that both Māori and non-Māori have roles in revitalising te reo Māori in schools, and to bring the perspectives of both groups to this work, this project was co-led by Māori and non-Māori kairangahau. The dual leadership model also embodies NZCER's commitment to honouring Te Tiriti o Waitangi. This research prioritises the reo Māori aspirations of Māori as those who have the most at stake in revitalising te reo Māori.

The overarching research question that the project addresses is: **How can English-medium schools develop a strategic approach to Māori language teaching and learning?** The project's sub-research questions are:

1. Why should English-medium primary schools take a strategic approach to teaching and learning te reo Māori?
2. What are key issues for English-medium primary schools to consider when developing a strategic approach to Māori language teaching and learning?
3. What practices create a positive impact on Māori language teaching and learning in English-medium primary schools?

We have produced two reports: a literature review (Bright et al., 2021), and a findings report (Bright & Smail, 2022). Our findings report examines the efforts of 20 Māori and 20 non-Māori pou reo to grow te reo Māori in 10 English-medium primary schools. Pou reo are individuals or groups who actively support te reo Māori teaching and learning in a school. In the context of this study, pou reo included kaiako, teachers, kaiāwhina, tumuaki, principals, and whānau members. The research has a particular focus on how their efforts have benefited tamariki and whānau Māori.

Key reasons why English-medium primary schools should develop strategic approaches to teaching and learning te reo Māori

The majority of tamariki Māori in Years 1–8 attend English-medium primary schools, where they make up, on average, around 25% of the roll (Ministry of Education, 2020a). English-medium schools are schools where English is the main but not necessarily the only language of instruction (Ministry of Education, 2009).

These schools have a vital role to play when it comes to supporting the revitalisation of te reo Māori (Ministry of Education, 2013, 2020c). However, most tamariki who attend English-medium primary schools spend very little time learning te reo Māori and only a small proportion have access to Māori-medium education (Ministry of Education, 2020b).

KEY REASON 1: Having the opportunity to learn te reo Māori at school is a linguistic right for tamariki Māori.

KEY REASON 2: Te reo Māori is part of our national identity and is important for all New Zealanders.

KEY REASON 3: Primary schools are expected to provide instruction in tikanga and te reo Māori.

Our literature review (Bright et al., 2021) identified three key reasons why English-medium primary schools should actively and strategically support te reo Māori through their approaches to teaching and learning.

Key issues for English-medium primary schools to consider when developing a strategic approach to Māori language teaching and learning

Our findings report (Bright & Smaill, 2022) explores the influence of identity on how Māori and non-Māori pou reo position themselves in their schools, and what motivates them to teach and learn te reo Māori.

Identity and positioning of Māori and non-Māori pou reo

We found that identity influences how pou reo position themselves in relation to teaching and learning te reo Māori, and that pou reo who were clear in their positioning appeared to be more settled and confident in their roles. Most pou reo Māori had clearly positioned themselves in relation to te reo Māori, while many non-Māori were still tentatively working through their positioning. Schools can support pou reo to confidently take on their roles by creating space for pou reo to have conversations about their personal values, priorities, responsibilities, and challenges in relation to te reo Māori and their expectations and boundaries as pou reo.

Motivations for pou reo to teach and learn te reo Māori at school

Our research found that pou reo were motivated to provide reo Māori learning opportunities to:

- help all tamariki feel secure in their identity

- help all tamariki see te reo Māori as part of their identity
- help tamariki understand and speak te reo Māori, either as their heritage language, or as an official language of Aotearoa.

Both Māori and non-Māori pou reo believed that schools had an important role to play supporting the revitalisation of te reo Māori, and aspired for schools to become domains where te reo Māori is expected, valued, and prioritised.

Some non-Māori pou reo were motivated to actively support the provision of reo Māori teaching and learning opportunities as honourable treaty partners, or tangata Tiriti, or because they understood that doing so was required by the New Zealand Curriculum.

Two of the main challenges for both Māori and non-Māori pou reo were getting to a point where they felt comfortable and confident in their roles as pou reo, and responding to the racism they encountered towards Māori and te reo Māori.

To help pou reo overcome these challenges, we have designed a set of reflective questions to support them to have critical conversations about issues and kaupapa that are important to consider when strategically planning to grow te reo Māori in schools.

Having conversations about your role in growing te reo Māori in schools can be challenging. To be effective, these conversations require honesty and openness about identity and positioning. There are many benefits of having such conversations. These conversations can help you to:

- be clear about your priorities, and how this affects your work as a pou reo
- set clear boundaries and realistic expectations for yourself and others
- take responsibility for your own learning
- ask others for support when you need it.

They can also help others to better understand who you are, and why you choose to be a pou reo.

You can find the *Reflective questions to support critical conversations: A tool for pou reo schools* at <https://www.nzcer.org.nz/research/publications/he-reo-ka-tipu-i-nga-kura-reflective-questions>

Practices that create a positive impact on Māori language teaching and learning in English-medium primary schools

We identified four types of good practice. These practices were creating a positive impact on Māori language teaching and learning in schools.

Good practice 1: Strategically planning how to grow te reo Māori in schools

Strategically planning to grow te reo Māori in schools involves:

- having a clear vision for reo Māori growth that is shared with staff and the community
- including whānau aspirations for te reo Māori in reo Māori plans
- obtaining buy-in and support for reo Māori plans and programmes from whānau and the school community
- seeking support from other pou reo when needed.

Good practice 2: Involving whānau and communities in Māori language planning and programmes

Involving whānau and communities in Māori language planning and programmes can be done through:

- ensuring whānau aspirations are included in reo Māori planning
- welcoming whānau into schools as pou reo
- supporting tamariki and whānau to learn te reo Māori together at home
- developing reciprocal relationships that benefit the school and the community.

Good practice 3: Raising the profile and status of te reo Māori

Raising the profile and status of te reo Māori involves pou reo:

- leading the way forward and taking others along with them
- supporting others who are actively working to grow te reo Māori
- advocating to increase the visibility of te reo Māori at school
- encouraging positive attitudes towards te reo Māori in children, so they share their positivity and learning with those at home
- being prepared to have critical conversations to challenge racist assumptions and ideas.

Good practice 4: Providing reo Māori teaching and learning

Providing reo Māori teaching and learning for tamariki through bilingual classes can:

- provide tamariki with opportunities to learn in permanent reo Māori domains
- support whānau aspirations for their tamariki to learn te reo Māori
- raise the profile and status of te reo Māori amongst whānau and schools
- model reo Māori teaching and learning practices that can be adopted in other areas of the school.

Providing reo Māori teaching and learning for tamariki through activities such as karakia and kapa haka can:

- assist with raising the profile and status of te reo Māori amongst whānau and school communities
- encourage whānau to become involved with their children's reo Māori learning
- help tamariki and whānau become more comfortable and confident with reo and tikanga Māori.

Providing reo Māori teaching and learning to increase teachers' reo Māori proficiency and confidence can be achieved through schools:

- offering formal and informal reo Māori professional learning opportunities
- encouraging/supporting pou reo to seek out and attend external reo Māori courses
- growing their own reo Māori workforce from within the community
- arranging extra reo Māori teaching support in classrooms.

References

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