

WHERE ARE THE GAPS?

A 2009 investigation to determine what research has focused on Māori Adult Foundation-level learners in Aotearoa New Zealand.

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by

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WHANGANUI

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This survey¹ was conducted between March and June 2009 and indicated that there were gaps in definition, knowledge, understanding and praxis in the Adult Foundation Education field but that the gaps are narrowing. There were also gaps around the same items in Adult Foundation Māori Education. Some gaps are being filled as research is being conducted around these topics, but the process is slow, dependent on funding and researcher suitability and availability. It could be beneficial to Māori Adult Foundation Learners and Educators if more was known and understood across the sector. This will mean conducting further research to fill the gaps in knowledge and understanding around how Māori adult learning outcomes in the field of LLN can be improved.

I note that:

- Research into Adult Education, Indigenous Education and Foundation Education has grown internationally and nationally since the 1970s.
- Employers and educators have increasingly recognized a need for LLN.
- Research in these areas is increasing as needs have been recognized as existing, and identified, particularly in the years since 2000.
- There is still a paucity of research in Adult Foundation Education in Aotearoa New Zealand, conducted mostly by a few practitioners, and is mostly non-indigenous.
- Little research has been conducted into the needs of Māori Adult Foundation and pre-foundation learners, but is being identified as necessary by researchers and sector practitioners. The research data is increasing, especially since 2000.
- Iwi are taking control of their own learning, with particular regard to ancestral literacies, and in Whanganui, have established – with Whanganui UCOL – a programme to develop iwi knowledge in a way that this can be delivered through the community.
- Across the sector, the understanding of Foundation Education and Skills appears to differ slightly. There is general consensus amongst Government organisations that Foundation Learning in Aotearoa New Zealand can encompass literacy, language, numeracy and critical thinking in English, Māori and NZ Sign.
- Most LLN programmes do not differentiate between Māori and other learners.
- Ancestral literacies are not often included in LLN programmes but Māori researchers and practitioners have highlighted that they need to be.
- Literacy Aotearoa takes an holistic approach, which assists learners to access, their own particular worlds. The Literacy Aotearoa charter (2003) “emphasizes (the importance and value of learners achieving) critical and functional literacy within social and cultural systems” (McDonald & Jones 2007).
- Little research has been conducted in Aotearoa New Zealand into programmes that work best for Adult Māori LLN learners.
- Looking at models used by other centres operating under the Literacy Aotearoa umbrella could lead to the addition of useful models and information that could contribute to improved learner outcomes.
- It could be useful to investigate the outcomes for Māori Adult Foundation learners engaged in PTE and other provider learning.
- Need for development of specific programmes for Māori Adult Foundation learners.
- Taking an indigenous approach to learning and delivery might assist in developing satisfying outcomes for Māori learners. This would mean combining ancestral and settler literacies and sourcing LLN skills from wherever they are available. Outcomes are likely to need to be culturally, spiritually, environmentally and economically satisfying for those involved.

¹ Benseman (2003) and Benseman, Sutton & Lander (2006) summarized material available in Aotearoa New Zealand to 2003. This report draws on that and more recent material. Research relating specifically to Maori adult learners has been indicated.

It is useful to note that Benseman (2003) identified a number of gaps. Filling some of these has begun. My comments on Benseman's conclusions are noted in *italics* below.

- Large-scale stud(ies) of everyday practice including “how New Zealand adult literacy programmes operate in detail” (ibid). I note that this has been answered in part by the FRST study in Whanganui but could be extended locally and nationally.
- Developing a benchmark study to enable future development “in areas such as tutor training and provision management”. This has been started in Christchurch.
- Systematic data collection and analysis of adult literacy – the need is ongoing.
- Attention to the “extensive adult literacy literature” available internationally – has begun in Aotearoa New Zealand.
- High quality rigorous focused research – this is still required.
- Research on numeracy, oracy and writing – this is still required.
- “There is undoubtedly much to be documented about Māori perspectives on literacy, the distinctiveness of Māori forms of provision and the role of Te reo within them” (ibid). As far as I can determine, this is a major project yet to be undertaken.

WHERE ARE THE GAPS?

“Foundation level learning requires a separate piece of research”

Whanganui UCOL (draft 2009:2)

“Our ancestral values are about respect for life, respect for all those things around us. It’s not only about learning or hearing the korero of our old people, but about living it.”

Colin Richards, pāhake of Marangai Pah, Ngati Rangi,
Whanganui iwi nui tonu 2003, cited in Rawiri 2005b:2

“A common defining factor for successful adult foundation learning programmes is that they that have specific literacy, numeracy and language outcomes that address foundation learners’ needs in a way which is both planned and purposeful.”

Final Report on the Trial Of the Proposed Foundation Learning Quality
Assurance Requirements, NZQA, 2006

“For indigenous communities, literacy is about complex social, political and cultural impacts; exclusion and inclusion; resistance and participation; marginalization and revitalization.”

Āneta Hinemihi Rawiri
Whanganui Iwi and adult literacy:
Ngā Whiringa Muka 2006:2

“The Qualifications Authority has clarified...foundation learning as literacy, numeracy and language learning; it provides learners with a platform for progress and is often integrated with other important vocational and personal learning. Foundation learning can be in English, Te Reo Māori and sign language.”

FLQA final report 2006

“Ancestral literacies are firmly based in ancestral values, understandings and ways of learning. They are holistic in approach...”

Āneta Hinemihi Rawiri
Whanganui Iwi and adult literacy:
Ngā Whiringa Muka 2005b:20

INTRODUCTION

My brief has been to assist The Whanganui Learning Centre and Tupoho Whanau Trust determine what the gaps are in research related to “improving participation, retention and progression of Māori learners in the Whanganui region.” The contractors asked me to highlight two items:

- i) The range of understandings of and definitions of Foundation Learning
- ii) Gaps in provision; and to
- iii) Prepare a summary of the research material available that relates particularly to Māori Adult Foundation Learning.

The two parties (training providers) deliver a range of programmes and are together exploring their options to improve Learning outcomes for Māori in the region.

This report assists in beginning a process that the parties hope will enable them to progress. It will firstly describe where information has been derived, secondly discuss definitions related to ‘foundation learning, with some comment about what might be regarded as ‘pre-foundation learning’; thirdly discuss relevant discoverable, available material, and, lastly, provide some conclusions. As much of the material has been covered in four publications, I do not propose to provide summaries for all of the material.

Note 1: The Foundation Learning sector is regarded as challenging, with few tutors trained specifically to deliver adult literacy (Benseman, J; Sutton, A; Lander, J, 2005). Programmes of at least 100 hours are deemed necessary to ensure literacy gains, alongside an increase in learner-directed learning, and an increased range of teaching methods. In 2003, there were approximately 303,000 learners likely to have a Foundation Learning component in their tertiary education. Of these, approximately 161,000 participated in provision that had literacy, numeracy and language as a primary focus (Sutton, A., Lander, J., Benseman, J., 2005). However, by 2005, research indicated that some of this education might not deliberately address literacy, numeracy and language needs (Benseman, J., Lander, J., & Sutton, A., 2005).

Note 2: The Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey (2006) found that approximately 1.1 million New Zealanders (43 percent of adults aged 16 to 65) had literacy skills below those needed to participate fully in a knowledge society and 51% of adults had numeracy skills lower than those needed to meet the complex demands of everyday life and work...The Plan also recognised the need to raise literacy and numeracy skills of those near work, such as students in tertiary study and people who will soon be entering or returning to the workforce, such as parents (cited as a footnote in Department of Labour (2008)).

Note 3: “The TEC ...look(s) for evidence in tertiary education organisations’ plans that they are working with Māori to ensure that tertiary research creates knowledge and develops mātauranga Māori that meets and supports the achievement of Māori development aspirations, and the appropriate use of Māori resource bases to benefit Māori and New Zealand” (Tertiary Education Policy Group MoE 2008).

INFORMATION SOURCES

The material for this survey has come from several sources. Initially, material was supplied by The Whanganui Learning Centre² and the Tupoho Whanau Trust. Using web and library keyword searches³, further material was drawn from Workbase⁴, Massey and Auckland University Libraries, the New Zealand Council for Economic Research, Ministry of Education, New Zealand Qualifications Authority and various other public websites.

² See Harrison, G (2008) in Benseman, & Sutton, A. (eds) (2008) pp. 63 – 74 for background information.

³ Key search words included terms such as Adult, Foundation, Maori, New Zealand, Mātauranga, Education, Whanganui and wānanga. Key authors were also searched including John Benseman, Aneta Hinemihi Rawiri, and Linda Tuhiwai Smith. Organisation titles included Tupoho Whanau Trust, Whanganui Learning Centre and others as the searches disclosed further information.

⁴ The New Zealand Centre for Workforce Literacy Development

While research internationally into Adult Literacy has grown since the late 1970s, searches indicate that there remains a paucity of literature available that is Aotearoa New Zealand specific. As McDonald and Jones (2007) stated in their Whanganui research that “(a)lthough there is a growing literature base on adult learning and development, in relative terms, there have been limited research undertakings on adult literacy” (ibid:2). This is changing, but remains slow, as a search of the New Zealand Literacy Portal (2009) indicates. There, 222 papers related to literacy research are available, the majority conducted in Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom⁵

There is less material specifically related to the needs of New Zealand Māori Adult learners, and more particularly, to Aotearoa New Zealand Māori Adult learners at foundation and pre-foundation level, the latter both terms I will discuss later. Another gap relates to information about effective programmes involving indigenous adult learners, again especially in Aotearoa New Zealand. In the past three years, some progress has been made, as noted by Benseman and Sutton (2006), who said of the ‘cross-agency Learning for Living Project’⁶ that “(a) programme of research, development and evaluation is in progress to ensure that teaching, the organisation of provision and policy-making in foundation learning are informed by the evidence of what works (and) a nationwide professional development project for tutors is underway that includes a focus on embedding assessment processes into teaching and learning (ibid:1)”

In terms of Māori-specific education, research has been conducted into the effectiveness of kohanga and kura, literacy programmes involving family, and the impact of immersion and bicultural education upon Māori teenagers. As noted above, there appears to be minimal material available that relates specifically to the needs of, and programmes tailored specifically to, adult Māori learners at foundation and pre-foundation level⁷, although there are now nationally certificated training courses for adult literacy tutors and a range of resources available⁸. National findings show that Māori have higher participation rates in tertiary education than non-Māori, with Māori women having the highest rates of all groups. Most of this occurs in wānanga and PTEs, and is mostly at pre-degree level, with more Māori women than men completing (Te Puawai Akonga Māori 2007). As Benseman and Sutton (2008) observed, “(p)articipation patterns vary from context to context and by location. Workplace learners are predominantly male and community-based learners tend to be female.” For the purposes of the WLC/Tupoho project, this area could be researched to provide a clear understanding of how to improve programmes, delivery and the most suitable locations.

As already noted, Adult Education, its importance and its differences from Child/Youth education, began to be recognized more clearly during the 1970s. Research into Adult Education began to emerge internationally. In Aotearoa New Zealand, nation-specific research into Adult Education, foundation learning specifically, and tangata whenua needs particularly, is sparse. Some pre-2003 research was conducted by Dr John Benseman and Auckland-based colleagues. Dr Benseman continues to engage in researching Adult Learning. In association with Alison Sutton, Dr Benseman later summarized New Zealand-focused research into Adult Literacy Education from 2003 – 2007. Much of the published material noted there relates specifically to Whanganui and research involving, among others, the Whanganui Learning Centre. The learner focus was on adults of any ethnicity, rather than being specific about ethnicities, and signals another gap which would benefit from research.

Valuable material, pertinent to Māori and to Whanganui iwi, is contained in iwi researcher Āneta Hinemihi Rawiri’s, documentation (2005a, 2005b, 2006) and focuses on Māori Adult Literacy and needs. The available articles make useful comment about Māori adult literacy and learning. There are many lacuna calling for further research, specifically into the most effective means of improving outcomes for Māori Adult learners, especially at foundation level, and the programmes that will provide these to enable Māori learners to progress in an environment/s meaningful to them. They also provide insights into models of collaboration, which may be of value to the two organisations concerned. Rawiri (2005b) refers to several

⁵ This material can be accessed through <http://www.nzliteracyportal.org.nz>

⁶ *Learning for Living* – “ a cross-agency project involving the Ministry of Education, the Tertiary Education Commission, the New Zealand Qualifications Authority, the Ministry of Social Development, as well as the Department of Labour and Career Services. Under each of three broad strands of focus – engaged learners, effective teaching and quality providers – a number of initiatives have been developed which together are intended to provide a solid and sustainable infrastructure for future growth in adult literacy provision” (Benseman & Sutton 2006:10).

⁷ This material can be accessed through <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/>

⁸ This information can be accessed through <http://www.nzliteracyportal.org.nz>

articles of potential use including the Australian National Training Authority 1996 project, Djama and VET: exploring partnerships and practices in the delivery of Vocational Education and Training in rural and remote Aboriginal Communities. Darwin: Northern Territory Press, which “explores the difficulties and successes in delivering vocational and training programmes within remote Aboriginal communities. The studies found that courses were more successful when developed in partnership between providers, funding agencies and local communities” (cited in Rawiri 2003:30).⁹ This suggests that although partners might have different cultural backgrounds, they can work together to provide positive learner outcomes, when they recognize their own and other perspectives.

The research into Adult Literacy suggests that the New Zealand situation parallels findings made in Ireland, where similar philosophical approaches have been adopted. The processes and practices being encouraged appear to be part of an international movement to focus on the importance of improving adult literacy not only in literacy, language and numeracy, but also in critical thinking.

Before I reflect further on the gaps, I note that similar gaps may occur in other nations in terms of research into Adult Literacy in indigenous cultures, but that there is available material useful to this project – as in Native American and Aboriginal Australian research, some of which is noted in Rawiri’s (2005b) publication. As source material, it could be useful as the project proceeds.

⁹ See <http://www.cdu.edu.au/cdupress/books/djama-and-vet.htm> for the research report 1998 for the report on this project.

BACKGROUND

For the purposes of this stage of the project, the region is 'The Whanganui Region'. The area includes Wanganui, South Taranaki, Ruapehu and Rangitikei districts with its diversity of provincial urban centres, small towns, villages, rural hinterland and communities in the lower reaches of the Whanganui River.

Research in Whanganui in recent decades around a variety of topics relating to perceived needs has generally been conducted from a Western-centric perspective¹⁰, using what Rawiri (2006) terms a 'deficit' approach. She argued that such an approach was not necessarily useful in indigenous terms, as it tended to ignore indigenous perspectives.

In Western terms, the surveys have signaled major development needs in education as well as other areas. During the early to mid-2000s, analyses demonstrated a need for collaborative action, but do not appear to have initiated significant changes in practice.

A needs analysis by Harrison and McKinnon (2007) highlighted aspects of demography, industry and skills issues, and problems related to the Whanganui situation. By this type of assessment, Whanganui remains socio-economically and educationally poorer than nationally with more of single parents and Māori than the national average and a growing population of young Māori. At 25%, the Māori population in the region is higher than the national average of 15%. In the next ten years, even though the working age population was predicted to drop by 5%, and the 15 – 39-year-old age group would diminish overall, Māori in this age group were expected to increase by 7%, meaning that 70% of Māori would be under 39 years old. It therefore seems pertinent to find solutions to assisting Māori to improve their learning outcomes. Adding emphasis is the survey's finding that the region's school-leavers achieved at a lower educational level than nationally and that fewer engage in tertiary education. The survey noted that barriers to accessing higher education included technological constraints, specifically, limited broadband access and cell phone coverage.

Problems related to employment were also highlighted. Some of these, it has been suggested anecdotally, relate to adult Māori foundation learners, but in general, to adults and young people who dropped out of school. Such residents often lacked skills employers required including:

- Pre-employment/personal skills
- Foundation/numeracy, literacy, business skills
- Job/industry specific skills
- Technical skills
- Career development skills
- Trades skills
- Lack of life and work ethic skills

While the survey identified gaps in tertiary education and training, mostly those related to industry-specific skills or education beyond foundation level. Those even remotely relevant to learners at the level being discussed might include:

- Lack of industry training courses for girls and women
- Lack of encouragement for females into trades
- Lack of tertiary education/training responsive to local Māori needs
- Lack of focus on needs of school leavers who might not intend to engage in tertiary study.
- Lack of marketing and promotion to school leavers about the importance of higher levels of education and training.

Industry consultation identified, among others, needs for basic literacy and numeracy skills. Similar gaps, demographic risks and opportunities are also identified in the TEC 2008 Regional Statement for Tertiary Education – Manawatu/Whanganui and Wairarapa.

That statement highlighted ten priority areas, which contributors regarded as needing to be addressed in the region. Most are relevant within the WLC/Tupoho project context, but specifically:

¹⁰ An approach taught in Western culture.

- Working with iwi to address their training and education needs
- Investigating capacity within Adult and Community Education to conduct a needs analysis within underrepresented populations.
- Innovative, sustainable education and training facilitation methods
- Increased provision of literacy, numeracy and language training, to fit the work environment
- Development of career services suitable for school students and workforce

In July 2008, a report prepared for Te Puna Mātauranga o Whanganui (Whanganui Iwi Education Authority) and Whanganui UCOL, Karen Johnston concluded that Whanganui iwi students would benefit from more support to help them complete their studies, perhaps through development of community study centres, provision of childcare, mobile buses travelling to communities to provide support and a meeting place, flexible class times, community-based programmes, and a mentoring scheme (pg. 6).

In September, 2008, the Ministry of Education's Tertiary Education Policy Group noted that significant policy reforms had occurred in the tertiary education system since 2000. These have meant changes to funding adult learning and education, with an "investment-led approach" being adopted and aligned more closely to Government and community stakeholder priorities. Emphasis is now placed strongly on the "quality and relevance of provision as well as access" (pg 2). The Government's 2008 budget doubled the funding for the LLN sector over the next four years, alongside a five year LLN Action Plan, which emphasizes "improving workforce literacy and numeracy and embedding literacy and numeracy learning in all low level tertiary education study" (*ibid*).

While these areas have been identified, and funding promised, it takes time to research, design and implement programmes. Progress is being made, but it will take time. Nor is it always clear as to what the sector regards as adult foundation learning and skills. I discuss some of these issues next.

FOUNDATION LEARNING AND SKILLS

Perhaps because of the needs identified, Foundation Learning skills are regarded as important in Aotearoa New Zealand's tertiary education sector. But what are they, and how is Foundation Learning defined, in Aotearoa New Zealand? The term is frequently used in Adult Education, but this does not mean understandings are identical throughout the sector. This could mean that the needs of some students are either not met or not funded or both.

Benseman, Sutton & Lander (2006) asserted that "(t)he definition of foundation learning is not yet fixed even within government." At that stage, the tertiary education strategy referred to foundation learning as "a bundle of skills such as literacy (in English and Te Reo Māori), numeracy, technological literacy, communications skills, team work, 'learning to learn' and self-confidence skills" (Ministry of Education 2002:36 cited in Benseman, Sutton & Lander 2006).

They stated that other skills and attitudes often included in the foundation learning concept included openness to diversity, challenge, and change; learning skills and an enthusiasm for ongoing learning. They concluded that, regardless of the variation in interpretations of foundation learning for adults, that within the LNL bundle are the specific components of adult literacy, numeracy, Esol and Te Reo Māori.

Overall, there appears to be agreement that Foundation Learning is aimed at "improving learners literacy, numeracy and language skills, and can be in any or all of New Zealand's official languages, English, Māori and NZ Sign" (<http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/for-providers/foundation/index.html> 2007, downloaded 12.05.09) This appears to have followed agreement in 2005 between the Ministry of Education and NZQA. Those parties defined foundation learning as

'The application of a complex web of reading, writing, speaking, listening, critical thinking, problem solving, numeracy skills and communication technology so that people can achieve their own goals in meaningful social, cultural, vocational and/or learning contexts' (and)...is often in the context of other learning.'

They further asserted that "(f)oundation learning programmes are those with an identifiable focus on literacy, numeracy and language."

The Qualifications Authority has clarified its adoption of the Learning for Living definition of foundation learning as literacy, numeracy and language learning; it provides learners with a platform for progress and is often integrated with other important vocational and personal learning. Foundation learning can be in English, Te Reo Māori and sign language (NZQA 2007).

It seems that, by 2009, there is general acceptance within the sector (government departments, delivery groups, educational institutions, and so on) that, in Aotearoa New Zealand, people with Foundation Learning needs are those who are not literate in English language, numeracy and critical thinking.

Confusion about Foundation Learning might also have arisen because of the examples sometimes given of Foundation Learning programmes, where different titles are used to demonstrate a programme's specific purpose. While each programme type focuses on Foundation Learning, as defined above, the programmes themselves may be titled as follows:

- *Introductory, 'bridging' vocational programmes* (for example horticulture, computing or trades), with specific literacy, numeracy and language learning integrated into the context of other learning
- *Holistic programmes* that develop learners' confidence, work readiness or study skills, which include deliberately planned literacy, numeracy and language learning
- *Focused or 'stand-alone' literacy, numeracy and language programmes*
- *Programmes that target migrant and refugee communities' resettlement needs and have specific ESOL learning.*

In addition, the Foundation Learning sector is diverse (NZQA 2006). It covers programmes offered by private training establishments (PTEs), government training establishments (GTEs), wānanga, institutes of technology and polytechnics, adult and community education (ACE) providers and some universities. This range may also contribute to the lack of clarity around the meaning of Foundation Education.

Like Benseman, I have a general sense that a common defining factor for successful Adult Foundation Learning programmes is that they have specific literacy, numeracy and language outcomes that address foundation learners' needs in a way which is both planned and purposeful (Benseman, Sutton and Lander 2005). Benseman et al warn that it can be difficult and unproductive to "isolate the components of learning within LNL because learners may gain other, unlisted, skills along the way, skills such as gaining confidence in their social interactions, oral skills and so on. Equally, such growth can be hard to quantify and difficult to measure." They also highlight that "ESOL language provision does not necessarily mean a literacy issue". Including ESOL adds an area that can cloud the whole LNL issue and definition of Foundation Learning Skills.

Another aspect that may reduce clarity of understanding about Foundation Learning definitions could be that the definition of literacy can vary according to interpretation and purpose, as noted by McDonald and Jones (2007). Their research into the impact of having a clinical social worker available to WLC clients provides an extensive literature review into Adult Literacy Learning and definitions. They noted that the charter of the WLC's umbrella organization, Literacy Aotearoa, "emphasizes critical and functional literacy within social and cultural systems with the potential for an improved society" (ibid:4). The charter states that "literacy (is) listening, speaking, reading, writing, numeracy and critical thinking, interwoven with knowledge of social and cultural practices."

This latter fits with arguments that knowledge of Ancestral Literacies is important in improving learning for Māori, as it affirms the importance of knowledge of 'social and cultural practices. It might not incorporate spiritual and environmental knowledge, but one could argue that that is implied, or adjusted according to learner needs. This could be another area for research. Further, (citing Derbyshire, O'Riordan and Phillips (2005:3), McDonald and Jones noted that in Ireland, the definition for adult literacy is similar. The Irish definition expands literacy to mean "using everyday technology to communicate and handle information...with personal, social and economic dimensions" (2007:5)

McDonald and Jones agreed that "...good practice in adult literacy work starts with the needs and interests of individuals. It is concerned with personal development and building confidence as well as technical skills." They shared the idea that "practitioners must meaningfully assist adults in learning to read, not only the word but their world" (Sissel, P. 1996 pg 97, cited in McDonald & Jones 2007:5).

While there has been a lack of clarity around the definition of Foundation Learning, it appeared that by 2009, there was an overall acceptance in the Adult Education sector that Foundation Learning includes literacy, language and numeracy understanding, critical thinking and the ability to engage socially, culturally and technologically in English, and to a lesser extent in those same aspects in Te Reo Māori and NZ Sign.

Although I have not discussed pre-foundation skills, such skills, I suggest, would include the McDonald and Jones statements, above, where "...good practice in adult literacy work starts with the needs and interests of individuals. It is concerned with personal development and building confidence as well as technical skills." These aspects might include those items which employers identified in Economic Solutions analysis (2007), noted earlier, specifically pre-employment and personal skills. They include such things as being able to engage in the workforce in socially and culturally accepted ways, such as being able to arrive regularly at work on time, with a fresh, clean personal presentation, an ability to focus on a task, take instruction and so on.

This supports Olsson and Comrie's findings (2005), where a leading Wanganui employers' representative identified three major areas of need, the most immediate being basic foundation/life skills. He said, "(We need) kids coming through that understand that they need to get up in the morning, they need to be at work on time, they need to be there for 10 hours or 12 hours and they are not going to run the place in the first year."

ADULT LITERACY RESEARCH IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

As noted earlier, internationally, the research into Adult Education and indigenous education has increased since the 1970s, of which some is Aotearoa New Zealand-based. Four publications proved useful in providing an overview of available nationally-focused research material, two directed by Dr John Benseman, relating to Adult Education generally, one, by Āneta Hinemihi Rawiri, to Māori Adult Education, and one a website covering a range of material.

Dr Benseman's first publication (2003) and his work with Alison Sutton (2007), and the web site, engage with Westerners, Pacific and indigenous New Zealanders, Rawiri's with Māori education research and Whanganui iwi. As Dr Benseman's material covers Adult Education in general and Ms Rawiri's is specifically indigenous, I will refer first to Dr Benseman's (and others) material, then the web site, and lastly to Ms Rawiri's. I adopted this order in the hope that doing so would provide a brief overview of the material available about Adult Foundation education and then some insights about the needs of tangata whenua and Whanganui iwi. Ms Rawiri's material is particularly valuable in view of growing recognition of the need for indigenous people to learn in a manner suited to their world-views.

Dr Benseman's 2003 literature review of New Zealand Adult Literacy research covered studies containing original New Zealand-based research. The 54 studies included ranged from readily accessible publications, to those either no longer available, or which had received limited circulation. Summaries are contained in the document.

Benseman & Sutton (2007) in *Foundation Learning Evaluation and Research in New Zealand since 1970* provided "an overview of research and evaluation information drawn from all recent New Zealand adult literacy, language and numeracy (LLN) initiatives). They identified gaps and suggested solutions. The gaps included lack of employer awareness of the need for LLN, the need to develop employer knowledge of where to access LLN, to increase the availability of work place literacy provision, for quality assurance programmes, research into learner outcomes, the LLN tutor workforce, learner characteristics, and the economic value of LLN programmes. They made 25 recommendations to address these gaps.

The New Zealand Literacy Portal contains 64 items related to Adult Literacy research in New Zealand. Of these, 26 resulted from the Wanganui Adult Literacy and Employment Project, with dates ranging from 2005 – 2007. The most recent document on the site is dated 2008. Titled "Who, what, how and why? Profiles, practices, pedagogies, and self-perceptions of adult literacy practitioners", it was designed to fill a knowledge gap about 'real practitioners', and follows from Benseman's observation that there was limited research available about those who tutored adult learners. It did not target tutor ethnicity but usefully noted that of the 57 participants 2% described themselves as Māori, and 2% as Māori/Pakeha. Nor did they survey Te Reo tutors, or tutors involved informally in Māori Adult Education.

Some research has been conducted which engaged with Māori adult foundation learners and their needs. The COMET programmes operating in Manukau City involved adults and children from the Māori and Pasifika communities, and were family-focused so that children and adults interacted with one another (Benseman 2002). Whanganui-based research has probably included Māori adult learners, but these were not always distinguished from other adult learners. This could be researched, with useful quantitative and qualitative information being gathered. It could include the numbers of learners who identify as Māori, their views of programmes, delivery and outcomes, amongst others, as well as the providers' perspectives on these items.

ADULT MĀORI FOUNDATION LEARNERS

Moving now to material closer to home, I refer to indigenous and Māori-specific material. Te Kaupapa Ahurea Taumata: The Strategy of Cultural Standards (2005), published by Te Puna Mātauranga o Whanganui/Whanganui Iwi Education Authority, provides valuable background. In 1991, the Whanganui River Māori Trust Board produced an education plan for Whanganui Māori benefit. Approved in 1992, the plan was revised and endorsed in 2000, followed by the establishment of Te Puna Mātauranga o Whanganui to advance the plan, known as Nga Kai o te Puku Tupuna – Whanganui Iwi Education Plan. Drawing on work of Alaskan nations, the group determined how the plan might progress and developed a set of Kaupapa Ahurea Taumata (cultural standards), representing “tribal expectations in education” for all involved. In 2004, supported by the Ministry of Education, Te Puna Mātauranga o Whanganui/Whanganui Iwi Education Authority developed “a strategy for integrating these Kaupapa Ahurea Taumata into school and teaching practices”, as a means of benefitting Māori in every way.

The material I focus on next is likely the most extensive summary of pertinent indigenous research, and has a strong regional Māori focus. Nga Whiringa Muka: Adult Literacy and Employment; Whanganui Iwi Research Project; Literature Review and Annotated Bibliography was researched by Āneta Hinemihi Rawiri (2005b). It was prepared as part of the iwi study referred to above, in conjunction with a wider collaborative community study of adult literacy and employment study of Whanganui City and Districts communities. Rawiri’s research presents a literature review related to indigenous peoples, adult literacy and employment, and an annotated bibliography pertaining to Māori, indigenous and First Nations people and adult literacy, “literature written in English, mostly by indigenous people” (*ibid*:7). Like much other available material, this is a slim volume, which, in itself, speaks for the paucity of research on the topic.

Rawiri prepared the material as the first stage of a three-year research project aimed at studying “the relationship between adult literacy and employment for uri, whanau and hapu of Whanganui iwi.” Rawiri noted that indigenous people recognized the importance of English language skills in today’s world but that little attention had been paid to indigenous people’s particular issues in adult literacy (2005b:2). Of particular importance, she argued, was to challenge the ‘deficit’ approach used in conventional research to explain low English language literacy levels (*ibid*) and conduct further investigation. She outlined indigenous ‘ways of knowing’, of ‘being in the world’ and knowing ‘who we are’, and argued that it was important when studying “adult literacy and employment within indigenous communities” to closely examine “research theory, praxis and methodology’. The reasons for this were because indigenous and non-indigenous researchers and peoples were likely to approach life differently, hold different world-views and therefore would, potentially, conduct research from their own particular perspectives. These might or might not accord with the indigenous perspectives, but mostly failed to “understand or analyse indigenous needs and aspirations” (*ibid*: 11).

The iwi study had four aims, being to:

- ✓ Establish the adult literacy needs of Whanganui uri, both employed and unemployed
- ✓ Identify the social, attitudinal and economic barriers to adult literacy, numeracy and analytical thinking skills of Whanganui uri, both employed and unemployed
- ✓ Evaluate how effectively adult literacy programmes secure employment outcomes for Whanganui uri
- ✓ Examine adult literacy learning processes and their relationships to employment for uri, whanau and hapu of Whanganui iwi.

Raiwiri stated that the Whanganui Iwi tribal approach to education valued highly “ancestral understandings, knowledge and skills” as well as “a healthy regard for international knowledge streams and understandings” (*ibid*). She highlighted an important difference between non-indigenous and indigenous peoples’ approaches to adult literacy. While non-indigenous people viewed literacy as fundamental to ensuring economic stability, she stated, indigenous peoples viewed it more holistically while recognizing its value in economic terms.

Drawing on Penetito, (in Irwin *et al.* 2001) she asserted, “Literacy is the means with which to express, understand, provide for, and make sense of, one’s self and the ‘whole’ richness of one’s self in its widest cultural, spiritual, intellectual and physical sense...ancestral literacies add meaning to physical landscapes changing them into cultural, spiritual, and historical landscapes that help...communities make sense of themselves and their wider-selves...their wider-world and their past, present and future (Rawiri 2005b). In the past, indigenous peoples had been separated from their heritage, and revitalizing “their ancestral literacies” was interwoven with restoring well-being (*ibid*: 6).

She noted that “(f)or Whanganui iwi, their ancestral ‘River literacies’ bind the people to The River, and The River to the people – to the extent that the people and The River become inseparable.” Knowing The River enables iwi to know who they are, and understand their relationships locally, nationally and internationally. Severing such literacies adversely impacts on indigenous people, with shame and ambivalence following on (Jackson 1992 and Memmi, 1991: 6, cited in Rawiri 2005b)). Restoring the well-being of river people means ‘revitalising’ the ancestral literacies (*ibid*), and combining them with “English language literacy tools” to support a range of aspirations.

Guidelines to follow when researching indigenous communities included:

- ✓ Elders mentoring and guiding the project;
- ✓ Centralizing rather than marginalizing indigenous cultural and spiritual ways of knowing and understandings;
- ✓ Celebrating and affirming indigenous cultural and spiritual ways of knowing and understanding;
- ✓ Respect such ways of knowing and understandings as not being known to all;
- ✓ Emphasising connection and reconnection;
- ✓ Simplifying and demystifying research theory, praxis and method, (especially language) combined with open, generous sharing (of information, knowledge and discoveries).

In discussing adult (English language) literacy needs, barriers and learning processes – and the role of ‘biliteracy’ for indigenous communities, Rawiri draws on material from researchers including Te Runanga o Te Awa Tupua (2000), Margie Kahukura Hohepa (2001), Martin Nakata (2000), Irwin *et al* (2001), Huhana Mete (1996), Bronwyn Yates (1996), and Eileen Antone *et al* (2003). I highlight the points she drew out. The material surveyed urged:

- Avoiding assimilation (abandoning indigenous understandings and knowledge) but to focus on acculturation (adapting incoming knowledge for one’s own use);
- Giving primacy to indigenous perspectives – using a holistic approach;
- Focusing on ‘biliterate approaches’ and learning ‘in’ their own cultural paradigm enhances (indigenous) Māori participation and achievement;
- Altering the ‘monocultural notion’ of literacy from being about ‘English written and spoken’
- Removing the need to “justify a kaupapa Māori approach’ i.e. recognize such an approach as valid
- Accepting and funding such a focus rather than denying funding because it “is deemed to be racist, separatist or of little benefit to the overall population”(Rawiri 2005b:13).

Te Puna Mātauranga o Whanganui's manager, Esther Tinirau, provided an update on how Nga Kai o te Puku Tupuna – Whanganui Iwi Education Plan had been advanced. Programmes had been developed and delivered, with the first students graduating on 30 May 2009. She noted that prior to the programmes' development, the authority had surveyed selected schools with a focus on cultural standards. The schools involved concurred that overall the project was valuable, but that implementation and delivery could be a problem. This was likely due to two factors, one being that if it was not made explicit in Government policy, it was unlikely to be taken up by schools, the other being that it could be difficult to determine who held and would be best to deliver cultural knowledge. Further discussion saw the authority review its philosophy of what knowledge iwi wanted delivered, and how to best transmit that knowledge. Rapidly determining that iwi needed to control the process, the authority chose to 'grow their own'. Supported by Whanganui UCOL, the authority supported the development of a one-year immersion programme, Nga Muka o Te Reo o Whanganui, by Te Reo o Whanganui Charitable Trust. Content, delivery and venues are determined by Te Reo o Whanganui. Learners on the programme must be competent in Te Reo and either from a Whanganui tribe or working in the Whanganui community. The first intake graduated at on 30 May 2009 and can now go on to contribute the knowledge gained within their chosen fields. The second intake was being enrolled in early June 2009.

This approach highlights the value of action once a problem has been identified. Much of the existing material appears to identify needs with little follow-up funding to assist the development of programmes and practices to fill the gaps. As Benseman (2003) commented, it is important to conduct research in the New Zealand situation that "recognizes the specific social and cultural contexts that are unique to this part of the world." It has been done elsewhere and similar processes can be used in Aotearoa New Zealand, as the Nga Kai o te Puku Tupuna project attests.

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