New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies

Te Hautaka Mātai Mātauranga o Aotearoa

Volume 39 Number 1 2004

ISSN 0028-8276

Embracing Māori Giftedness: The Dynamics of Power, Culture and Visibility

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ABSTRACT: This article presents the findings of a recent case study undertaken in one non-traditional state school in Manukau City, Aotearoa-New Zealand. The study suggests that increasing the visibility of Māori giftedness within mainstream environments is not simply a matter of incorporating a "Māori dimension" into existing constructs of giftedness and/or existing classroom/school practice. Rather, it is about critically unpacking and collaboratively redefining the very essence of the system itself. This article examines some of the ways one school has reconstructed relationships of power and control within its home-school-community dynamic to create a culturally relevant educational experience for Māori, within which Māori giftedness is authentically embraced.

KEYWORDS: Māori education; gifted

INTRODUCTION

National research findings (Bevan-Brown, 1993; Cathcart & Pou, 1992; Moltzen, 1998/1999; Reid, 1990, 1992), and Education Review Office (1998) and Ministry of Education (2000) material, indicate that gifted Māori learners are highly underrepresented in programmes for gifted learners. A dominant contention within the literature is that Māori underrepresentation in gifted programmes can be largely attributed to culturally inappropriate practices in mainstream schools with regard to identification, programming, and evaluation (see, e.g., Bevan-Brown, 1993, 2000, 2004; Cathcart & Pou, 1992; Moltzen, 1998/1999; Niwa, 1998/1999; Reid, 1992).

A strong critique emanating from the literature concerns the fact that, despite the promotion of a broader, more inclusive concept of giftedness within mainstream educational policy and practice in Aotearoa, the gifted construct remains fundamentally Eurocentric in orientation. Māori perspectives, with regard to defining giftedness and

identifying and catering for gifted Māori learners, have been largely excluded (Bevan-Brown, 1993, 2004; Cathcart & Pou, 1992; Niwa, 1998/1999; Reid, 1990, 1992). The contention amongst these writers/researchers is that, in order to effectively redress the invisibility of gifted Māori students within mainstream educational contexts, a culturally relevant construct of giftedness and educational practice for Māori must be embraced. Bevan-Brown's research (1993) has provided a foundation of understanding in this area, both in conceptualizing a Māori view of giftedness and in defining culturally appropriate contexts for nurturing gifted Māori students.

The original intention of the present research was to examine the ways in which a culturally relevant construct of giftedness and educational practice for Māori, such as that described in the literature (e.g., Bevan-Brown, 1993; Cathcart & Pou, 1992) could be embraced within mainstream school practice—to enable Māori gifts/special abilities to be developed and acknowledged, and gifted Māori students to be recognized and catered for more readily and appropriately. However, in response to the themes emerging from the initial participant conversations, the direction of the research shifted from a primary focus on culturally relevant constructs of giftedness and practice to an examination of the broader issues of power and control within mainstream education, and their relationship to Māori achievement and actualization.

This approach envisages that increasing the visibility of Māori giftedness within mainstream environments is not about adding a Māori dimension to existing constructs and practices, but about significantly changing the very essence of the system itself in ways that are reflective of the principles of partnership, determination, and power-sharing expressed in the Treaty of Waitangi. Indeed, this research contends that the invisibility and marginalization of Māori giftedness within mainstream educational contexts may be a phenomenon particular to the dynamics of traditional mainstream education—an issue which derives from, and is located firmly within, the Eurocentric discourse of traditional mainstream schooling. As such, the research examines whether for Māori to determine and reach their individual and collective potential (gifted or otherwise) fundamental power shifts in traditional mainstream educational contexts need to occur (Bishop & Glynn, 1999; Durie, 2001; Milne, 2001).

This article examines how one mainstream school has sought to implement the Treaty in policy and practice in an effort to reconstruct relationships of power and control within its home-school-community dynamic, and in so doing create a culturally relevant educational context for Māori students, their whānau, and community.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE AND METHODOLOGY

This narrative case study was undertaken within the broad paradigm of qualitative research. However, it was also informed by a Kaupapa Māori research framework (Bishop, 2000; Kana & Tamatea, 2004; G. H. Smith, 1997; L. T. Smith, 1999) in an attempt to address Māori cultural aspirations for power and control where the institutional context can be transformed in order to support a culturally responsive approach to curricula and pedagogy.

A Kaupapa Māori Research Framework

Kaupapa Māori as a research framework is based on the premise that research involving Māori knowledge and people needs to be conducted in ways that fit Māori cultural preferences, practices and aspirations. While the tendency in traditional Western research has been to initiate and conduct research within frameworks established by the concerns and interests of the *researcher*, Kaupapa Māori research is oriented toward benefiting all the research participants and their collectively-determined agendas. Through a restructuring of the traditional research relationship and interaction patterns, Kaupapa Māori, as a methodological framework, promotes participant determination/agency/voice, and offers an authentic means of addressing issues of power and control from within the domain of the participant/s (Bishop, 2000; Bishop & Glynn, 1999; Durie, 1998, 2001; Irwin, 1992; Jahnke & Taiapa, 1999; Kana & Tamatea, 2004; G. H. Smith, 1997; L. T. Smith, 1999).

The metaphor of whakawhanaungatanga (establishing relationships in a Māori context), proposed by Bishop (2000) and Kana and Tamatea (2004), is fundamental to Kaupapa Māori research as a means of addressing the issues of initiation, benefits, representation, legitimation, and accountability, inherent in research agenda and methodology. The following three key implications of whakawhanaungatanga as a research strategy were used to frame this research:

1. Researchers understand themselves to be involved somatically in the research process; that is, physically, ethically, morally, and spiritually, and not just as researchers concerned with methodology. This approach includes the concepts of kānohi ki te kānohi and kānohi kitea, interpreted by Kana and Tamatea (2004) as "face-to-face" and "the-seen-face" respectively. In this context, the person's physical presence provides the capacity to enhance relationships and encourages openness and honesty in the telling and retelling of the stories. As such, Kana and Tamatea suggest, knowledge is shared in a traditionally Māori way via the oral medium, where the five senses are mixed with emotion: He kitenga a kānohi, he hokinga whakaaro, "when you see the face, recollections occur".

2. Developing and maintaining authentic relationships involves the establishment of a whānau tautoko (Bishop & Glynn, 1992) through a process of spiral discourse. Kana and Tamatea (2004) state this simply as being an accepted member of the whānau.

3. Participatory research practices/participant-driven research (Bishop, 1996), and researcher commitment, are fundamental to the research process.

Sampling

Purposeful methods of sampling were employed to select both the school and the participants to be the focus of the study. Selection as the participant school was dependent on the fulfilment of three key criteria: First, that it was a mainstream/state school; second, that it comprised a high percentage (at least 30%) of Māori students; and third, that the school had a policy of providing some form of alternative pedagogy for Māori students. Three schools met the criteria and expressed an interest. A random selection process was employed to determine the participant school.

Description of the school

Clover Park Middle School, in Otara, Manukau City, was the site for this research.[1] The school has 390 students, of whom 36% are Māori and the remaining 64% predominantly Pasifika. The school caters for students from Years 7 - 10, and is organized into four clusters, each of which operates within a particular cultural/ethnic framework: Māori, Samoan, Tongan, and Cook Islands (predominantly). Each cluster is multilevelled, multi-aged, and vertically grouped, with students electing on enrolment which cluster they wish to join. The Māori cluster, Te Whānau o Tupuranga, was the specific focus for this research.

Throughout the school the curriculum is integrated and holistic with significant emphasis placed upon adult-student interaction, and collaborative and co-operative learning. The school is committed to the Treaty of Waitangi in philosophy and practice, and whanaungatanga as a metaphor underpins administration, assessment, pedagogy, curriculum development and implementation. The school's philosophy and pedagogy is purposefully embedded within a discourse of cultural validation in order to foster and enhance students' self-confidence, self-esteem, and identity, and in so doing create greater opportunities for students' success: culturally, socially, emotionally, and cognitively.

Participants

Each of the participants involved in the study was associated with the teaching/learning of the Māori students in Tupuranga in some way: the Principal, the Māori Director of Curriculum (Deputy Principal), ngā kaiako tokotoru o Te Whānau o Tupuranga (three teachers), members of the school-community whānau, parents/extended whānau, and the Board of Trustees' Chairperson.

Gathering the Research Stories

In order to minimize issues of researcher dominance within indigenous research contexts, rather than the interview being used primarily as a research tool by the researcher to gather data for subsequent processing, interviews require reframing as collaborative conversations, which position the researcher within co-joint reflections and constructions about experiences (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Kana & Tamatea, 2004; Tripp, 1983). Lather (1991) has suggested that a sequence or series of semi-structured, in-depth interviews (conversations) has the potential to maximize reciprocity through negotiation

and construction of meaning, which at minimum "entails recycling description, emerging analysis and conclusions" (p. 61).

A Kaupapa Māori research framework encourages a process of spiral discourse, whereby sequential, semi-structured, in-depth "interviews as conversations" are conducted in a dialogic, reflexive manner in order to facilitate an ongoing and authentic collaborative analysis and construction of meaning about the experiences of the research participants (Bishop & Glynn, 1999; Irwin, 1992; Jahnke & Taiapa, 1999; L. T. Smith, 1999).

The gathering of the participant stories in this research therefore involved a series of semi-structured/unstructured conversations (individual/collective) undertaken over a period of three months with a range of participants, together with an examination of relevant documents. A schedule of focus points generated by the researcher was shared with the participants prior to the initial conversations. However, while these points were offered as a possible conversation guide, they were in no way intended nor allowed to direct, manipulate or limit the conversations. Indeed, as the construct of spiral discourse dictates, a collaborative conversational process was developed wherein the researcher and participants shared their views, understandings, and experiences, and co-constructed foci, meanings and explanations.

Co-constructing Meaning

Many researchers would argue that a Kaupapa Māori research framework rejects the assumption that qualitative research, by relying on induction rather than deduction, will necessarily address issues of imposition, participation, and power-sharing. An approach that leaves the categorization of themes and the subsequent construction of sense and meaning to the researcher does not address the impositional tendencies inherent in research analysis. Indeed, critique is lodged at the fact that the inductive development of themes may well come from the author's ideas alone, and that data may be selected or manipulated to fit the preconceptions of the author and/or to construct theories (Bishop & Glynn, 1999; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Te Hennepe, 1993; Tripp, 1983; L. T. Smith, 1999).

Accordingly, this research adopted a collaborative coding approach. The transcribed recordings and documentary notes were collaboratively analyzed/coded for key themes by the researcher and participants via a number of informal/semi-structured hui. This approach to coding is seen by Bishop and Glynn (1999) as enabling the co-joint creation of further meaning; an attempt to co-construct mutual understandings, explanations, and analyses by means of negotiating and sharing thoughts and reflections. It is a means of ensuring that participant agency and voice is authentically represented in the final research product.

PERSPECTIVES EMERGING FROM THE RESEARCH

The discussion focuses initially on sharing some of the ways Clover Park Middle School has sought to address power differentials within its context to create a more culturally relevant educational construct for its Māori students and community. It then articulates how a Māori construct of giftedness and identification and provision for Māori giftedness naturally dovetail within this redefined sociocultural context.

A Framework for Redefining Power Differentials within Education Contexts

Numerous Māori and non-Māori academics and educators (e.g., Bishop, 1996, 2000, 2003; Bishop & Glynn, 1999; Durie, 2001; Kana & Tamatea, 2004; Macfarlane, 2000, 2001; May, 2001; Milne, 2001, 2002; G. H. Smith, 1997; L. T. Smith, 1999) contend that through the reassertion of Māori cultural aspirations, preferences and practices, herein termed *Kaupapa Māori theory and practice* (after G. H. Smith, 1997; L. T. Smith 1999), structural issues of power and control can be addressed in mainstream classrooms in ways that will eventually benefit not only Māori students but indeed all students (Bishop, 2000; Macfarlane, 2004). Kaupapa Māori theory and practice challenges the current power relationships of dominance and subordination within the mainstream educational context, and calls for changes that enable Māori learners to participate in educational experiences on their own terms. Kaupapa Māori counters some of the hegemonic beliefs and practices in the education of Māori, by placing Māori language and knowledge at the curriculum centre rather than on the periphery (Bishop & Glynn, 1999; Durie, 2001; Macfarlane, 2000, 2001; G. H. Smith, 1997; L. T. Smith 1999).

Clover Park Middle School is a *mainstream* state school committed to this purpose. The school's Principal, Ann Milne, asserts that recognizing Māori as tangata whenua and implementing the Treaty in action, thought and deed, is not just the responsibility of Māori in Kōhanga Reo or Kura Kaupapa, but rather the responsibility of all Māori and Pākehā as Treaty partners in Aotearoa-New Zealand (Milne, 2002). Indeed, both Milne and the Māori Director of Learning at Clover Park contend that while Kura Kaupapa Māori are excellent alternative education pathways for Māori children, the fact that these kura operate outside the mainstream education system means they do not create challenge or change within mainstream practice. From their perspective, this is a significant issue for Māori advancement because the majority of Māori children are schooled within the mainstream.

Cultural Subjectivity and Relevant Pedagogy

Kaupapa Māori advocates contend that in order to promote Māori self-determination and reduce imposition, learning relationships need to be created in such a way that Māori learners' socially and culturally generated sense-making processes are used and developed as a springboard for successful participation in classroom interactions. Learning relationships must promote Māori learners' knowledge as acceptable and

legitimate, and new knowledge/understandings must be reached through collaborative construction between students and teachers. From a Kaupapa Māori perspective then, the facilitation of self-determination for Māori students is likely to occur in sociocultural contexts where *culture counts*; where what Māori students know, who they are, and how they know what they know, underpins and characterizes the very dynamics of the classroom (Bishop & Glynn, 1999, 2001; Macfarlane, 2000, 2001).

A significant and recurring theme voiced throughout the participant conversations in this research concerned the fundamental importance of educational practice embracing and reinforcing the cultural subjectivities of students. This view stands in direct contrast to traditional mainstream positions where knowledge/learning is both dictated by, and delivered from, a predominantly Eurocentric perspective, and where children, particularly those from non-European backgrounds, are essentially required to leave who they are at the school gate. Within the particular sociocultural construct of Clover Park School, and more specifically, Tupuranga (the Māori cluster), to be Māori is normal, and Māori culture (knowledge, values, language, beliefs, practices, and so forth) forms the foundation of school/classroom discourse and dynamics:

> Here there is no need for Māori to stop being Māori at the gate. Being Māori, and bringing Māori knowledge and all that stuff from home is so normal ... it's not about adding Māori things, it's just the way we are, it's just how we do it. (Māori Director of Learning)

Importantly however, the diversity of being Māori is also acknowledged and embraced. Students are not seen as homogenously Māori; rather there is an appreciation of the multifaceted and multigenerative nature of Māori identity which has emerged as a result of the diverse realities within which these Māori children live (for example, tribal/non-tribal, moderate/limited income, culturally secure/insecure, nuclear family/extended whānau).

To this end, the Clover Park participants collectively expressed the relevance of a pedagogy that is holistic, flexible and complex, one that enables Māori students to present and work within their multiplicities and complexities; one that acknowledges both their individual and collective diversities. This approach is reinforced by Bishop (2000, 2003) and Bishop and Glynn (1999, 2001) who emphasize the importance of creating learning contexts where Māori learners can safely bring what they know and who they are into the learning relationship. Such pedagogy is reflective of the principle of ako, where all those involved in the learning-teaching process are viewed as co-participants who each have meaningful experiences, valid concerns and legitimate questions (see also Durie, 2001; Hemara, 2000; G. H. Smith, 1997).

In line with the school's philosophy of working with students' cultural and social subjectivities, Clover Park is committed to the development of the curriculum integration model proposed by Beane (1997). Curriculum integration is defined as a curriculum design concerned with enhancing possibilities for personal and social integration by organizing the curriculum (free of subject boundaries) around personal and social issues,

which have been collaboratively identified by educators and students. As Beane suggests, this kind of curriculum is significantly different from the abstract, fragmented, and compartmentalized learning traditionally offered to students. Curriculum integration promotes a meaningful context for knowledge, responds to students' curiosity about the self, and provides authentic and purposeful activity. Moreover, as Fraser (1999) acknowledges, curriculum integration as a pedagogical framework ensures that a student's culture is validated and drawn upon.

Whānau: Embracing Cultural Relevance and Determination

The Clover Park participants regarded the construct of whānau as a critical factor associated with the socioemotional, cultural and cognitive well-being of Māori students, and as such, a fundamental cornerstone of culturally relevant pedagogy. Indeed, the attributes of whānau, which Metge (1990) has suggested can be summed up in the words aroha (love in the broadest sense), awhi (helpfulness), manaaki (hospitality), and tiaki (guidance), constitute the foundations around which policy, practice and pedagogy at Clover Park are constructed. Whānau is clearly reflected in the way the teachers, the Principal and Māori Director of Learning view themselves as inextricably and naturally connected to the students and the community:

> We know our students inside out and they know us inside out and that's neat, so they know everything about me, how I function and what my expectations are, and how I work as a teacher ... and I know their families really well. As a Māori teacher I am 24/7. (Māori Director of Learning)

Recent changes to the nature of Māori whānau and community involvement within the school have been instigated in an effort to shift the traditional school-dominated home/school dynamic towards a more co-operative whānau-based relationship between home, school and community, premised upon principles of determination and power-sharing (Milne, 2001, 2002). In this way Clover Park is characteristic of community-based education, a form of social action within a community framework that extends beyond schools as institutions (Daigle, 1997, cited in Corson, 1998). Moreover, however, these changes affirm Māori as tangata whenua and acknowledge Māori rights for autonomy within the school with regard to decisions about administration, curriculum, pedagogy, and the identification and meeting of educational aspirations for Māori.

The Manifestation of Māori Giftedness: Issues of Power and Cultural Relevance

This research strikes a critical liaison between constructs of power, cultural relevance, and the manifestation of Māori giftedness within mainstream education contexts. The findings suggest that the nature of the power dynamics within the education context fundamentally defines the authenticity of the cultural response therein, and this then determines not only the visibility of Māori giftedness within the education context but also the range and types of gifts/abilities possible, the avenues available for

acknowledging or identifying Māori giftedness, and the ways in which Māori giftedness can appropriately be nurtured.

Embracing Māori Giftedness

Gifts from a Māori perspective are inextricably linked to whānau, to whakapapa, to the collective essence of being Māori (Bevan-Brown, 1993, 2004). A clear distinction was made by the participants in this research between those gifts/abilities that might be referred to as traditional Pākehā gifts and those that specifically related to Māoritanga, or being Māori. It was the participants' collective view that true giftedness in a Māori sense related to those qualities grounded in the cultural cornerstones of Māoritanga, in particular, manaakitanga (kindness, hospitality, respect), aroha-ki-te-tangata (love for others), whanaungatanga (familiness), wairua (spirituality), and awhinatanga (helping, assisting, guiding):

> It is one thing to identify students gifted in the "traditional Pākehā school sense" who happen to be Māori, but identification of "authentic Māori giftedness" is another thing ... Māori and Pākehā concepts of giftedness are poles apart. (Māori Director of Learning)

Contrary to popular belief, the principles of whanaungatanga and kotahitanga, which underpin Māoridom, do not stand for sameness or a one-size-fits-all approach. Rather, they provide a collaborative, co-operative and holistic ethos of collectivity within which the gifts/special abilities of Māori are acknowledged, nurtured, and celebrated. In this way, while individual Māori students may well stand out for their particular gifts/special abilities, the manifestation of these gifts is attributed to the individual's whānau, rather than to the individual alone. Indeed for Māori, acknowledging one's whakapapa is a fundamental responsibility associated with the possession of gifts/special abilities (Bevan-Brown, 1993, 2004).

Thus, while a specific student at Clover Park might be respected and celebrated for the particular skills/qualities she or he demonstrates, there is always recognition and appreciation that these gifts derive from and belong to the wider whānau, because it is within the whānau that these gifts have been created and nurtured:

> Giftedness is not seen as just fantastic individual achievement ... but rather as an achievement or quality brought about by the contributions and support of many others. The philosophy is that if you're good at something lots of people have helped you get there, and it's not about being "show offy" so that your candle burns brighter by blowing someone else's out. (Māori Director of Learning)

However, although it was acknowledged by the participants that whakapapa certainly predisposed Māori students to certain gifts/special abilities, it was unanimously agreed that whether, and to what extent, students manifested them was determined by the nature

of the education environment and its capacity to nurture and encourage Māori esteem, achievement, and actualization. The unanimous belief amongst the participants was that without sufficient provision of culturally meaningful contexts and content in traditional mainstream schools Māori students' potential was significantly limited, not only in terms of their capacity to manifest Māori gifts but also in relation to their development and demonstration of more Westernized concepts of giftedness.

The manifestation of the concepts of whakaiti (modesty) and whakahīhī (arrogance) within a particular education context provide valuable insights into the critical link between power, culture and the visibility of Māori giftedness. Evidence gained in this research suggests that the particular dynamics of power-sharing and cultural relevance within an education context dictates how the concepts of whakaiti and whakahīhī will manifest within Māori learners and their whānau. The nature of this manifestation is significant in that it determines not only the likelihood of giftedness being expressed but also the avenues for identifying and nurturing Māori giftedness within that context.

This research supports the findings of Bevan-Brown (1993) which suggested that Māori parents' apparent whakaiti and reluctance to acknowledge their children's talents/gifts for fear of appearing whakahīhī or boastful, is behaviour primarily associated with *outsider contexts*—contexts perceived by Māori to be culturally unsafe or unresponsive. It also supports Bevan-Brown's contention that within a culturally appropriate whānau context Māori parents are generally comfortable acknowledging and encouraging their children's talents/gifts.

Indeed, while "traditional" mainstream education contexts were viewed by participants in this research as clearly belonging to the outsider category, Clover Park was seen by both parents and staff alike as whānau, as a context inextricably connected with its Māori students and community. Within this authentic whānau context Māori parents could safely acknowledge and encourage their children's gifts or abilities without the fear of being considered whakahīhī, and without the fear that their children might be singled out and embarrassed, and/or placed in inappropriate programmes.

Similarly, Clover Park participants viewed Māori peers as playing a significant role in the recognition and acknowledgement (albeit informal) of other students' gifts/abilities. In line with Bevan-Brown's (1993) findings, evidence from this research clearly refutes earlier contentions by Reid (1992) that peer nomination as a formal identification strategy is culturally inappropriate for Māori. Indeed, it was widely agreed amongst the participants that the special abilities of individual students or groups of students were readily acknowledged, nurtured and celebrated by peers. This comfortableness and openness, however, was directly attributed to the students' strong sense of cultural esteem and security within the whānau context. The participants were of the view that peer acknowledgement (informal or otherwise) would not be likely in contexts (such as most mainstream schools) where recognition or demonstration of talents/gifts may result in students being embarrassed and/or separated from the group.

Whānau: A Culturally Relevant Framework for Nurturing Māori Giftedness

Nurturing Māori students' gifts/special abilities was believed by Clover Park participants to be appropriately embraced within the authentic home-school-community whānau dynamic. Underpinned by notions of power-sharing and determination, and encapsulating the fundamental qualities of aroha, awhi, manaaki, and tiaki, whānau in this sense, was regarded by the participants as a critical cornerstone of culturally relevant provision for Māori giftedness: "There is no separateness in policy or practice ... We don't withdraw students into separate classes or programmes. We always work as whānau, within whānau, and needs are catered for within this context" (Principal).

Within this authentic whānau construct, pedagogy is underpinned by the fundamental principle of ako—a respect for the reciprocal and integrated nature of teaching and learning roles—and by the fundamental structures of tuakana-teina (older sibling-younger sibling) and tupuna-mokopuna (grandparent-grandchild), which characterise the kaiako-akonga (student-teacher) relationship. The nurturance and extension of gifts/abilities via a mentoring process therefore is an in-built and integral component of the whānau construct: "The tuakana-teina and tupuna-mokopuna relationships are fundamental to whānau. [They] are manifest in both formal and informal tutoring/mentoring and learning support arrangements as well as in expectations for role modelling and social interactions" (Principal).

Within the whānau context, responding to the individual learning needs of Māori students is regarded as an integral component of effective practice; however, the critical and culturally significant factor here is that this individualized focus always occurs within, and with constant reference to, the collective ethos of whānau. The essence of this individual-collective dichotomy is captured in the words of one of the kaiako: "Independence in a Māori person is a lot different to a Pākehā. Māori may do things independently but we never do things as an individual" (Kaiako o Te Whānau o Tupuranga).

It is within this home-school-community whānau dynamic that each student is enabled to focus on appropriately challenging learning experiences whilst still operating within a framework of collectivity, which is premised upon supporting and enhancing one another's learning: "We all have talents and we all have weaknesses, and for us, it's about helping each other to make sure that those talents and weaknesses are recognised and then supported or extended. We work as whānau" (Kaiako o Te Whānau o Tupuranga).

Thus, while it may be true that whakaiti (modesty/humbleness) is a trait highly regarded within Māoridom, and strong sanctions exist against arrogance and boasting (whakahīhī), this research suggests that within a culturally relevant educational framework such as Clover Park Māori gifts/special abilities can be readily acknowledged, developed, and enjoyed both by Māori individuals themselves as well as whānau:

> In the long times past, our Māori students didn't want to be tall poppies and would deliberately dumb down their ability and all of that stuff, but now we have a [culturally] safe whānau environment for them to express their ability in, and they can feel comfortable about being fantastic at the things that they

> are fantastic at. For Māori, it's about acknowledging that you're good at something in a respectful way. It's about humility [whakaiti] and enabling students to have opportunities to demonstrate and indicate their qualities/abilities in culturally respectful ways ... Whakahīhī is about arrogance and that isn't appropriate, but whakaiti doesn't mean that you have to feel stink about everything either, you can be humble about being the best at something, that's fantastic. (Māori Director of Learning)

Indeed the findings of this research suggest that Māori giftedness is naturally expressed and inherently embraced within the intersecting and interrelated constructs of whānau and culturally relevant pedagogy, and the fundamental principles of power-sharing and determination underpinning these.

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research constituted a small-scale case study based on a series of collaborative conversations; it did not, however, involve the observation of planning documentation or classroom programmes, nor incorporate any conversations with Māori students themselves. The implications and recommendations presented within this research therefore need to be considered in this light. Further studies are needed to develop and elaborate upon the findings; in particular, research is required to illustrate and articulate the translation of these metaphors and principles in practice.

The fundamental implication to emanate from this research is that the under-representation of Māori in mainstream education programmes for gifted students may not be an issue that can be addressed or resolved within the traditional structure of the mainstream school context. Indeed, as this research highlights, the invisibility and marginalization of Māori giftedness may be a phenomenon more applicable to the mainstream educational context—an issue which derives from, and is located firmly within, the Eurocentric discourse of traditional mainstream schooling.

Inclusive notions of giftedness, and educational practice, that stem from the existing Eurocentric construct of mainstream education, and which do not therefore significantly challenge the status quo, will do little to increase the visibility of Māori giftedness within these contexts. Increasing the visibility of Māori giftedness within mainstream environments is not about adding a Māori dimension to existing constructs and practices, it is about significantly changing the very essence of the system itself.

In order to realise Māori achievement and actualization, both individually and collectively, fundamental shifts are required to break down the power imbalances and subordination inherent within the mainstream context for Māori. As Bishop (1996, 2000, 2003) and Bishop and Glynn (1999, 2001) assert, relationships, pedagogies, and systems within the mainstream must be premised upon power-sharing as opposed to power-imposing assumptions. New images and their constituent metaphors must inform and reframe the development of educational principles, policies, and pedagogies, and must

emerge from, and validate, the culturally lived realities of Māori students, and the communities from which they draw.

In accordance with the principles of partnership, determination, and power-sharing expressed in the Treaty of Waitangi, mainstream education in Aotearoa-New Zealand must be unpacked and co-constructed within an *authentic bicultural discourse*—a discourse valid for, and validating of, the culturally lived realities of both Māori and Pākehā. It is within this redefined and reconstructed pedagogical context that Māori giftedness may be embraced authentically.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors would like to acknowledge and thank Ann Milne, Keri Ihamaera-Milne, ngā kaiako tokotoru o Te Whānau o Tupuranga, and the Clover Park Middle School whānau whose voices are the essence of this article.

NOTE

1. Clover Park Middle School and the whānau and staff named in this article specifically chose not to use pseudonyms in the original research and continue to prefer that their names are used.

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Manuscript received: January 5, 2004
Revision received: August 16, 2004
Accepted: September 3, 2004