Chapter 5

Diversity and educational disparities:
the role of teacher education

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The most pressing problem facing education today is the persistent pattern of educational disparity which disproportionately affects indigenous peoples, populations of colour, those with lower socio-economic status, and new migrants. This disparity is exacerbated by a continuing lack of diversity among the teaching force, which tends to engage in pedagogic practices more appropriate to monocultural populations. This chapter suggests solutions drawn from "Te Kotahitanga: Improving the Educational Achievement of Māori students in Mainstream Schools", a government-funded professional development and research project underway in 50 secondary schools in New Zealand. Six main challenges identified include: (i) *the hegemony of the status quo,* (ii) *the primacy of teachers' positioning,* (iii) *the need for evidence,* (iv) *the role of power in knowledge construction,* (v) *the disconnect between pre-service and in-service education, and* (vi) *the fundamental importance of research in the areas of teaching and teacher education.*

> ### *From the OECD online consultation: importance of connecting with community*
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> **Practitioners overwhelmingly reported that they did not receive preparation or tools to help include parents or community members in their work. But this type of outreach can help improve student achievement and allow practitioners to better understand their students' diversity.**

Introduction: diversity and educational disparities[1]

Educators are increasingly identifying the most pressing problem facing education today as the interaction between the ever more diverse student population and the associated persistence of educational disparities affecting indigenous peoples and populations of colour, poverty, various abilities and new migrants. This problem is exacerbated by the continuing lack of diversity among the teaching force who demonstrate discursive positionings and pedagogic practices more appropriate to monocultural populations.

For example, Villegas and Lucas (2002) indicate that the United States is becoming more racially, ethnically and linguistically diverse than ever due to higher birth rates among minority groups, the differing age structures (fertility *versus* death rates) of minority *versus* the majority white population, and net immigration of non-white peoples. In Europe, the migrations of people from previous colonies and other sending countries with their different age structures and birth rates has also created a similar pattern of diversity among the school-age population where now sizable groups of ethnic and religious minorities are evident in most towns and cities.

This increasing diversity is coupled with persistent and increasing educational disparities, primarily between those from dominant cultural groups and those of marginalised and minoritised[2] children. As Villegas and Lucas (2002, p. xi) pointed out, in the United States, "[h]istorically, members of economically poor and minority groups have not succeeded in schools at rates comparable to those of their white, middle-class, standard English-speaking peers". The same could be said of many other countries where there are significant and growing multicultural populations (OECD, 2002).

However, while the student population is becoming increasingly diverse, and disparities in student achievement persist or in many cases are increasing, the teaching population is remaining homogeneous, or in the case of the United States, according to Villegas (1998), is becoming more homogeneous as the proportional representation of minorities drops. Problems thus arise due to teachers' limited range of cultural experiences and understandings as well as their possible unawareness of the "funds of knowledge" that children of different backgrounds can call upon in classrooms. They also may not understand the cultural cues that people use to indicate their willingness to enter into the dialogue that is fundamental to the conversation of learning such as eye contact or standing in the presence of older people (Clay, 1985; Cazden, 1990; Grumet, 1995). In addition, the lack of role models and advocates for students of colour in schools is also of considerable concern.

Together these factors exacerbate the problems presented by a largely monocultural workforce who draw upon deficit discourses to explain educational disparities while trying to address the needs of a multicultural/ multi-ethnic student population from education models developed more to suit children of the majority cultures. As Sleeter (2005, p. 2) suggests, "[i]t is true that low expectations for students of colour and students from poverty communities, buttressed by taken-for-granted acceptance of the deficit ideology, has been a rampant and persistent problem for a long time … therefore, empowering teachers without addressing the deficit ideology may well aggravate the problem".

With this problem in mind, this chapter looks at how educators might address this situation. *Te Kotahitanga: Improving the Educational Achievement of Māori students in Mainstream Schools* (Bishop *et al.,* 2003), is a Kaupapa Māori[3] research and professional development project that aims to improve the educational achievement of Māori students in mainstream classrooms. While this analysis is based on a case study of an intervention study undertaken in New Zealand, it is suggested that the messages drawn are applicable beyond the shores of this country.

The current educational context

The major challenge facing education in New Zealand today is that the *status quo* is one of ongoing social, economic and political disparities, primarily between the descendents of the British colonisers (*Pakeha*) and the indigenous Māori people. The Māori have higher levels of unemployment, are more likely to be employed in low paying jobs, have much higher levels of incarceration, illness and poverty than do the rest of the population and are generally under-represented in positive social and economic indicators

(Education Counts, n.d.). These disparities are also reflected at all levels of the education system.

In comparison to majority culture students (in New Zealand, these students are primarily of European descent), the overall academic achievement levels of Māori students is low; their rate of suspension from school is three times higher; they are over-represented in special education programmes; they enrol in pre-school programmes in lower proportions than other groups; they tend to be over-represented in low stream education classes; they are more likely than other students to be found in vocational curriculum streams; and they leave school earlier with fewer formal qualifications and enrol in tertiary education in lower proportions.

Despite the choice provided by Māori medium education in New Zealand, and decades of educational reforms and policies such as those promoting "multiculturalism" and "biculturalism" that have sought to address these problems, for the 90% of Māori students (Ministry of Education, 2001) who attend mainstream schools, there has been little if any shift in these disparities since they were first statistically identified over forty years ago (New Zealand Department of Māori Affairs, 1962).

Six challenges for practice and practitioners

This problematic situation raises a number of challenges for teachers and teacher educators both in New Zealand and overseas.

Challenge number 1: the status quo is one where ongoing educational disparities are ethnically based

The major challenge that faces educators today is the continuing disparities of outcomes within the education system. In New Zealand, this is seen where Māori children and those of other minoritised groups are consistently over-represented in negative education indicators and under-represented in the positive as detailed above. In terms of qualifications, Māori students in mainstream schools are not achieving at the same levels as other students, and this situation has remained constant for some time. For example, in 1993, 4% of Maori gained an A or a B Bursary and 33% of Maori left school without qualifications. Yet, some 10 years later, in 2002, 4% of Maori gained an A or a B Bursary and 35% of Maori left school without qualifications. In effect, despite the implementation of large scale numeracy and literacy projects little changed over that decade.

Similarly, in 1998, 74.1% of candidates gained university entrance, of whom 6.1% were Māori (1 247). In 2002, 87.2% of candidates gained university entrance, of whom 6.3% were Māori (1 511). That is, despite an absolute

increase in numbers, there was a relative decline in the proportion of Maori students gaining university entrance. Exacerbating this situation was the decrease in retention rates for Māori students: from 1994 to 2003, school retention rates for Māori boys to age 16 fell by 12.4% and those for Māori girls by 7.1%. For the same period, retention rates for non Māori boys fell by 0.7%, whereas, the rate for non Māori girls increased by 1.4%. In addition to these statistics of disparity over time, statistics also show that Māori children are referred to specialist services for behavioural problems at far greater rates then other students, and comprise 47% of those suspended from school while only making up 21% of the national school population (this figure is far higher in some regions) (Ministry of Education, 2004). Despite many attempts to address these disparities, these patterns have remained relatively unchanged throughout the current decade.

The ongoing nature of these problems suggests two major implications. *(1)* The *status quo* in New Zealand education has ethnically-based educational disparities, and despite many protests to the contrary, this has been case for over 40 years. This pattern is also found among non-European migrant children in New Zealand. *(2)* Despite the best intentions of educators from schools, colleges of education and policy agencies, New Zealand does not currently seem to have a means of systematically addressing these disparities.

How are teacher educators going to assist and educate student teachers to be able to produce equitable outcomes for children of different ethnic, racial, cultural, class and language groups when they become practicing teachers faced with these long-term and seemingly immutable disparities? The first thing they need to do, I maintain, is to examine their own discursive positioning and those of their students and the impact that this might be having on student achievement. Discursive positioning refers to how teachers construe the complex historical phenomena experienced by Māori youth and where they stand as educators in the situation. In other words, which sets of ideas and actions, *i.e.* discourses, do educators draw upon to explain their experiences.

Challenge number 2: teacher positioning

All educators hold a variety of discursive positions on the challenge posed by minoritised students. Bishop *et al.* (2003) found that teachers tend to draw upon three major discourses when explaining their experiences with the education of Māori students: *(i)* the child and their home, *(ii)* school structures, and *(iii)* relationships. The first two tend to locate the problem outside of the classroom and often blame the child and/or the child's home or the school systems and structures for the seemingly immutable nature of the ongoing disparities. The outcome of teachers' theorising from within these discourses is that change is seen to be beyond the power of the teacher to act

or to produce an effect, that is, to have agency (freedom to act). In contrast, the discursive position of relationships tends to promote the agency of the teacher in that it acknowledges that ongoing power imbalances within class-rooms create educational disparities and power imbalances that can be altered through changes in pedagogy. Such a position is agentic, as in being one of a change agent, and thus enables teachers to examine how they themselves might participate in the systematic marginalisation of Māori students in their own classrooms through their discursive positioning.

To Māori theorists (Bishop, 1996; Smith, 1997), it is clear that unless teachers openly address how dominance manifests itself in the lives of Māori students (and their *whānau*[4]), how the dominant culture maintains control over the various aspects of education, and the part they themselves might play in unwittingly perpetuating this pattern of domination, they will not understand how they and the way they relate to and interact with Māori students may affect learning. An appreciation of relational dynamics without an analysis of power balances can result in professional development that promotes ways of "relating to" and "connecting with" students of other cultures that do not actu-ally require teachers to understand, internalise and work towards changing the power imbalances of which they are a part. In particular, teachers need an opportunity to challenge those power imbalances that are manifested as cul-tural deficit theorising in the classroom, which, in turn, support the retention of traditional classroom interaction patterns that perpetuate marginalisation.

To this end, Valencia and others (1997), traced the origins of deficit think-ing, including various manifestations such as intelligence testing, constructs of "at-riskness" and "blaming the victim" (see also McLaren, 2003). More recently, Shields, Bishop and Mazawi (2005) have detailed how educators and policy makers continue to pathologise the experiences of children through the examination of American Navajo, Israeli Bedouin, and New Zealand Māori children's schooling. In general, they detailed the common practice of attrib-uting school failure to individuals because of their affiliation with a minori-tised group within society by a process termed pathologising. According to Shields, Bishop and Mazawi (2005, p. 120) this is a process in which perceived structural-functional, cultural or epistemological deviation from an assumed normal state is ascribed to another group as a product of power relationships, whereby the less powerful group is deemed to be abnormal in some way.

Pathologising represents a challenge for educational reformers, teacher educators and teachers alike in that, as Bruner (1996) identified, it is not just a matter of intervening in part of the system. There is need to challenge whole discourses and move beyond current ways of thinking. The end goal would be to create alternative discourses that offer educators an opportunity to act as change agents.

In *Te Kotahitanga*, we have identified that when teachers draw upon deficit positions, they blame others for educational disparities, they exhibit feelings of helplessness, and they reject their personal and professional responsibilities and agency. In contrast, when teachers actively reject blaming explanations, they accept personal and professional responsibility for their part in the learning relationships. This entails that they believe that they are powerful change agents, they know how and what to do in their classrooms to bring about such change, and they report being reinvigorated as teachers. The majority of teachers still position themselves within these outmoded deficit discourses, thus limiting their agency and, hence, their students' achievement. This is problematic for education, in general, and needs to be addressed by schools and teacher educators specifically.

Identifying discursive positioning involves teacher education students, staff and teachers engaging in ongoing reflection of the impact of these positions on student learning. Therefore, critical questions such as "how do we provide our students/teachers with these opportunities for reflection?" are important. This reflection needs to involve those outside of the current reference groups because consultation within a closed set of people tends to reinforce the range of discourses used rather than challenge them. Widening the range of discourses open to student teachers is vital, as is increasing the numbers of student teachers from minority populations.

Ryan (1999) identifies a number of strategies by which this could be achieved. These include: challenging racist discourses; critically analysing mass media as well as contemporary and historical curriculum resources; fostering cultural identities and community relations; and valuing different languages, knowledge, and alternative discourses. One effective means of employing this latter strategy has been used in Te Kotahitanga (Bishop *et al.,* 2003), whereby narratives of the experiences (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990) of a number of Māori students have been used at the commencement of a professional development programme with teachers and school leaders. This is done to challenge the audience to reflect upon their own positionings *vis-à-vis* the lived realities of these students and to examine the discourses within which they and the students position themselves.

The major finding of this aspect of *Te Kotahitanga* reveals that education professionals who do not challenge their positions or assumptions about the experiences of minoritised students are actually disempowering themselves from achieving their goals for their students' academic achievement. Teacher educators, teachers and student teachers need to be supported and to encourage one another to accept an active role as agents of change and the responsibility for their actions that such a position entails. In order to bring about change in student outcomes, teacher educators should create contexts for learning which emphasise a culture of agency rather than reinforcing the unwitting

perpetuation of blame. Once this has been achieved, teachers can then learn how to develop and change their practice through the use of a wide range of evidence, and to take responsibility for any required changes. For example, student teachers will be able to learn how to set and measure appropriate achievement goals for minoritised students and know what to do with the information if and when they get it. This latter expectation, of course, raises the issue of how are pre-service and in-service teachers going to undertake this activity?

Challenge number 3: the call for evidence

Among educators there is an increasing demand that teachers understand how to engage in critical reflection on student learning that is evidence-based rather than assumption-based. That is, there is an expectation that evidence will inform educators' problem-solving in a manner that enables them to change their practice in response to student learning.

The implications of this position for teacher educators is that they need to ascertain if they and their students are able to use data to identify how minoritised students' participation and learning is improving; data such as students' experiences of being minoritised, student participation, absentee-ism, suspensions, on-task engagement and student achievement. Such data is then able to be used in a formative manner so that appropriate changes can be made to teachers' practice in response to students' schooling experiences and progress with respect to learning.

In their recent research on developing and sustaining a programme to improve the teaching of reading to five and six-year-olds, Timperley, Philips and Wiseman (2003) found that when achievement information (ranging from teachers classroom tests to national standardised, norm-referenced tests) was used by classroom teachers to inform their teaching practice, they were able to constantly monitor the effectiveness of their practice. When necessary, teachers were then able to adjust their teaching methods to ensure that the learning needs of the child were being addressed. In this way, by using both formative (which is crucial) and summative assessment to guide the single objective – improving Māori children's achievement – teachers received timely and regular information on the effect of their efforts. "Successful actions are reinforcing and likely to be repeated … practices that are new and unfamiliar will be accepted and retained when they are perceived as increasing one's competence and effectiveness" (Timperley, *et. al.* (2003), p. 130).

In such an approach, one pedagogic style cannot be preferred over another because achievement in its widest sense is the sole criterion for the determination of teaching method. In Timperley *et al.*'s study, the data were used to prompt change in teaching practice where it was found that a particular teaching method was not working for a specific child. It therefore became possible

for "the main measure of the effectiveness of professional development [to be] the extent to which it results in improved student learning and achievement" (Timperley, *et. al.* (2003), p. 131).

Standardised tests were used in this case and can provide schools with data that are critical to sustaining and maximising the benefit of the practice, albeit where there is a degree of match between what is being taught and what is being tested. The tests potentially measure children's collective progress and thus the efficacy of pedagogy, the knowledge and skill gaps to which teachers must attend, and the areas of strength exhibited by children. By way of caution, however, Goldberg and Morrison (2002, p. 73) warn that these potential benefits do "not come automatically" and that "harmful effects of the tests can offset them, if these are not managed appropriately". They advocate that teachers be supported through professional development to understand the statistical concepts necessary to interpret test results, to be able to interpret results within the context of other data, and to work in an environment in which such results are taken seriously. They argue that the judicious use of standardised testing is more likely to occur when there is a strong professional community examining data with a good mix of curiosity and scepticism.

Therefore, it is suggested that such activities are best not undertaken in isolation. Timperley *et al.* (2003) also found that schools which were making a difference to children's achievement held regular meetings to focus on teaching strategies for children whose progress was not at the expected rate. These meetings were held with a sense of urgency and were supported by senior teachers working with other teachers in their classrooms to assist in developing new strategies for these children. School-wide commitment to the urgency and centrality of structured and focused meetings of the professional learning community was also found to be essential.

The Timperley *et al.* (2003) study identified that when teachers were organised into groups and worked together as a professional learning community, with regular meetings within which they considered the evidence of student progress and achievement so as to inform their collective progress, they were able to update their professional knowledge and skills within the context of an organised, school-wide system for improving teaching practices. In addition, teachers' efforts, individually and collectively, "are focused on improving student learning and achievement and making the school as a whole become a high-performing organisation" (Timperley *et al.* (2003), p. 132).

Therefore, teacher educators need to be creating contexts for learning in which their students are able to participate in professional learning communities focusing on problem-solving conversations. Through this approach, student teachers will learn and practice how to set, measure and re-set achievement goals for minoritised students. Furthermore, they will learn what to do with the information they obtain.

Challenge number 4: realisations about learning

There is an increasing realisation that learning involves constructing knowledge individually and socially rather than receiving it from others. There is also an increasing realisation that knowledge is situational and not gender or culture-free. It is always created and promoted for a specific defined purpose. Often these purposes (either explicitly or inadvertently) promote the language, culture and values of those in power.

Teachers retain power and control over what knowledge is legitimate in their classrooms by constructing what Australian educationalist Robert Young (1991, p. 78) terms the traditional classroom as a learning context for children. Young states:

> The [traditional] method [classroom] is one in which teachers objec-
> tify learners and reify knowledge, drawing on a body of objectifying
> knowledge and pedagogy constructed by the behavioural sciences for
> the former, and empiricist and related understandings of knowledge
> for the latter.

To Young (1991), in the traditional classroom teachers see their function "as to 'cover' the set curriculum, to achieve sufficient 'control' to make students do this, and to ensure that students achieve a sufficient level of 'mastery' of the set curriculum as revealed by evaluation" (p. 79). The learning context these teachers create aims to promote these outcomes. In these classrooms teachers are "active" and do most of the "official" talk (classroom language). Technical mastery of this language and the language of the curriculum (which is generally one and the same) are pre-requisites for pupil participation with the official "knowledge" of the classroom.

The learning context that is created in traditional classrooms is such that there is a distinct power difference between teacher and learner which, as Smith (1997, p. 178) suggests, may be reinforced ideologically and spatially. Ideologically, the teacher is seen as the "font of all knowledge"; the students (in Locke's terms) as the "*tabula rasa*" – the empty slate; where the teacher is the objective arbiter and transmitter of knowledge. Knowledge, however, is selected by the teacher, guided by curriculum documents and possibly texts that are created from within and by the dominant discourse. In colonial and neo-colonial contexts, it is knowledge often from outside the experiences and interests of the very people one is purporting to educate. Far from being neutral, these documents actively reproduce the cultural and social hegemony of the dominant groups at the expense of marginalised groups. The spatial manifestation of difference can be seen in "the furniture arrangements within the classroom, in the organisation of staff meetings, and by holding assemblies with teachers sitting on the stage and so forth" (Smith, 1997, p. 179). Children who are unable or who do not want to participate in this

pattern are marginalised and fail. Teachers will then explain the children's lack of participation in terms of pupil inabilities, disabilities, dysfunctions or deficiencies, rather than considering that it may well be the very structure of the classroom that mitigates against the creation of a relationship that will promote satisfactory participation by students.

In contrast, in what Young (1991) terms a "discursive classroom", new images and their constituent metaphors are present to inform and guide the development of educational principles and pedagogies in order to help create power-sharing relationships and classroom interaction patterns within which young Māori and other minoritised peoples can successfully participate and engage in learning.

Discursive classrooms that are created by teachers who are working within Kaupapa Māori reform projects, such as *Te Kotahitanga*, suggest new approaches to interpersonal and group interactions that have the potential to improve Aotearoa/New Zealand educational experiences for many children of diverse cultural backgrounds. *Te Kotahitanga* practices suggest that where the images and the metaphors used to express these images are holistic, inter-actional and focus on power-sharing relationships, the resultant classroom practices and educational experiences for children of other than the dominant group will be entirely different.

New metaphors are needed in teaching and teacher education that are holistic, flexible and determined by or understood within cultural contexts to which young people of diverse backgrounds can relate. Teaching and learning strategies that flow from these metaphors should be flexible and allow the diverse voices of young people to be heard. In such a pedagogy, the participants in the learning interaction become involved in the collaboration process, in mutual story-telling and re-storying (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990), so that a relationship can emerge in which *both* stories are heard, or indeed a process in which a new story is created by all the participants. Such pedagogy addresses Māori people's concerns that current traditional pedagogic practices being fundamentally monocultural and epistemologically racist. This new pedagogy recognises that all people involved in the learning and teaching processes are participants with meaningful experiences, valid concerns and legitimate questions.

For teaching and teacher education, this implies an increasing realisation that teachers can construct contexts wherein students are able to bring their cultural experiences to the learning conversation, even when these experiences and ways of making sense of the world are unfamiliar to the teacher. At the same time, teacher educators need to create learning contexts in which their student teachers can experience such relationships and interactions.

Challenge number 5: relationship between pre-service and in-service education

There is an increasing demand from various sectors of the profession for increased relevance between pre-service education and in-service education, professional development, teaching practice and research. This is further exacerbated by international research strongly suggesting that there is little if any linkage between pre-service teacher education and in-service practice and the perceived hierarchies within the education sector (Cochran-Smith and Zeichner, 2005).

From the experiences of *Te Kotahitanga*, there is an added problem as teacher educators, teacher support staff, school teachers, and educational researchers tend to suggest that what they are doing is sufficient, necessary and adequate, in contrast to the functioning of those people in every other sector. In other words, what is happening in their patch is fine; it is all those other people who are not doing a good enough job. Similar findings have been demonstrated by Prochnow and Kearney (2002) in a study they conducted regarding the effect of suspensions on student learning. They found that all groups involved with the students tended to blame others for the problems the students faced and were less likely to implicate themselves in the problem identification process.

To make matters worse, these notions are supported by the peer review process that teacher educators have devised to review their programmes. These reviews do not usually include their client groups; or, if they do, it is in a prescribed manner that limits the type of critique that could be useful in reforming teacher education programmes for their graduates to be able to address the learning needs of minoritised peoples.

People from different sectors expressed other issues in teacher education. These include increasing concern regarding the frailty of the "silo" model in which pre-service teachers are taught subjects separately rather than in a holistic fashion, and the continued criticism of tertiary teacher education providers by their graduates, their profession, the public and the media, or at least in media that are not part of the formal review process. A means of addressing these criticisms is urgently needed.

However, this type of criticism is not always welcome. One example of the problematic response to criticism is found in a survey of teacher preparedness that was conducted by the Education Review Office (ERO) (2004). The report, which was critical of the preparedness of beginning secondary and primary teachers, was met with criticism by teacher educators and researchers alike regarding the process whereby this finding was attained, rather than the finding itself, or at least the problems that the survey indicated could be present. This reaction did not re-energise the debate but rather

killed the conversation, despite many teachers and schools voicing concern about the preparedness of their beginning teachers. Yet, recent observations of 360 teachers in *Te Kotahitanga*, 60% of whom had been to teacher education institutions in the past five years, showed that while they wanted to teach in ways they had learnt while at their college of education, they were in fact teaching in a very traditional manner in their first year of teaching.

When surveyed, they stated that they were keen to implement a wide and effective range of interaction types. This would mean actively engaging their students in the lessons, capitalising on the prior knowledge of students, using group learning processes, providing academic feedback, involving students in planning lessons, demonstrating their high expectations, stimulating critical questioning, recognising the culture of students, etc. However, detailed, measured observations of their classrooms showed that 86% of their interactions were of a traditional nature where they were engaging in the transmission of pre-determined knowledge, monitoring to see if this knowledge had been passed on and giving behavioural feedback in order to control the class. Only 14% of their classroom interactions allowed them an opportunity to create learning relationships to which they initially aspired. In short, despite their aspirations to the contrary, the dominant classroom interaction remained active teacher and passive students. This might signal the pervasiveness of transmission education, the schools could be blamed for their insistence on transmitting a pre-set curriculum. However, this may also indicate the lack of student teacher preparedness and the reliance upon the school for practical training, in which case teacher educators could take notice of the survey and *Te Kotahitanga* results as a warning that their graduates may be facing problems implementing interactive approaches in the classroom. In other words, these findings might signal the need for pre-service teachers to integrate the theory and practice of teaching and learning (using evidence of behaviour as teachers and student achievement for formative purposes) in a systematic manner so that they can practice what they learn.

Pre-service teachers could receive objective analysis of and feedback on their classroom interactions in an ongoing manner upon which they could critically reflect in a collaborative, problem-solving setting. This means that pre-service teachers will need to learn to use evidence of student participation and achievement to inform their practice (to change classroom interaction patterns for instance), and the relationship between teacher education institutions and schools will need to change dramatically.

Challenge number 6: the challenge of research

The Performance Based Research Fund (PBRF) report (Alcorn *et al.,* 2005) states that 75% of staff involved in teaching degree-level courses in education are not involved in research. Furthermore, teacher education is

the area with the lowest quality of research and the lowest assessed research performance in education. Therefore, if change is necessary to address disparities, and research is the most common way of informing and promoting change through the systematic production of evidence to inform our practice, and if teacher educators are not involved in research, what mechanisms are they using to inform their practice? This may mean that despite their avowed aspirations to address what Fullan (2005) terms the moral dimension of education, that is, the reduction of disparities, teacher educators may not have a means of addressing the *status quo* that is maintaining the disparities they say they want to reduce.

Conclusion

This chapter has suggested that reducing the seemingly immutable educational disparities in the education system in Aotearoa/New Zealand is possible, and the answer lies in a critical examination of the discourses within which teachers position themselves. Commonly, discourses that promote deficit notions that pathologise the lived experiences of Māori students, together with the schooling systems, limit the agency of teachers to make the difference for their students to which they ironically aspire; whereas, positioning within change-agent discourses allows teachers to take responsibility for their student's learning and reflect upon evidence thereof so as to revise their teaching approaches and enjoy teaching.

When teachers are (re)positioned within relational discourses, and promote what Sidorkin (2002) calls a "Pedagogy of Relations", teachers are able to address power imbalances in their classrooms, within their schools and between various sectors of education which are currently critical of one another. In addition, research becomes part of teachers' everyday lives and proves its usefulness in both formative and summative manners. Powerful accountability will arise in the midst of complex situations and discourses formed around the nexus of relationships.

Above all, in terms of student achievement, this chapter suggests that the classroom should be a place where young people's sense-making processes (culture with a small "c") are incorporated and enhanced, where the existing knowledges of young people are seen as "acceptable", in such a way that their stories provide the learning base from whence they can branch out into new fields of knowledge. In this process, the teacher interacts with students in such a way that new knowledge is co-created. Such a classroom will generate different patterns of interaction, and educational outcomes from those generated by a classroom where knowledge is seen as simply something of which the teacher makes sense and then passes onto students.
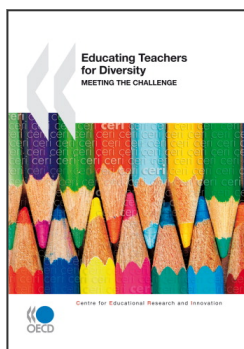
Notes

1. This chapter was adapted from a keynote address, "Messages from Te Kotahitanga for Teacher Education", presented at the P.R.I.D.E. Workshop held at the National University of Samoa, Apia, Samoa, 28 November to 2 December, 2005.

2. "Minoritised" is a term used in Shields, Bishop and Mazawi, (2005) to refer to a people who have been ascribed characteristics of a minority. To be minoritised, one does not need to be in the numerical minority, only to be treated as if one's position and perspective is of less worth, to be silenced or to be marginalised.

3. Kaupapa Māori is a discourse of proactive theory and practice that emerged from within the wider revitalisation of Māori communities that developed in New Zealand following the rapid Māori urbanisation in the 1950s and 1960s. This movement grew further in the 1970s, and by the late 1980s it had developed as a political consciousness among Māori people that promoted the revitalisation of Māori cultural aspirations, preferences and practices as a philosophical and productive educational stance and resistance to the hegemony of the dominant discourse.

4. Extended family.

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