

SUPPORTING SECONDARY PRESERVICE TEACHER IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT AS CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE AND SUSTAINING TEACHERS

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Abstract

In Aotearoa New Zealand, the continuing disparity in educational outcomes has resulted in a growing call for changes in teacher preparation to better support culturally diverse learners in ways that are responsive to the particular national and cultural context. This paper presents findings from practitioner inquiry into a teacher education program specifically designed to address this need within the national context of 'biculturalism', a treaty-based sociopolitical partnership between Māori and Pākēhā (non-Māori). Grounded in sociocultural theory, this inquiry examined how the iterative use of a specific 'cultural tool', a synthesizing framework of culturally responsive and sustaining pedagogy, within the program supported 16 secondary teacher candidates to develop their professional identity as culturally responsive and sustaining teachers. Although the tool is program-specific, the findings suggest more generally that use of locally developed cultural tools and frameworks can play a positive role in supporting preservice teachers' identity development.

Keywords: culturally responsive education; teacher preparation; secondary education; teacher identity; student teachers; social justice; equity

Introduction

Internationally, far too many youth from minority and marginalized communities continue to experience educational disparities. In Aotearoa New Zealand the gap between high and low achieving students is one of the largest in the OECD, and Māori, the Indigenous peoples of the land, are disproportionately represented in the bottom half of

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educational attainment (Ministry of Education 2017; OECD, 2016). The country also experiences one of the greatest proportions of disengaged 14–18 year-old students when compared to other OECD countries (Ministry of Education, 2017). Moreover, Māori youth are also disproportionately overrepresented in a range of negative educational outcomes, including referral to special education, placement in low stream classrooms, early abandonment of school, and higher expulsion and suspension rates (Education Counts, 2017; Ministry of Education, 2011).

This disparity of outcomes for Māori and other culturally and linguistically diverse learners remains a persistent challenge of practice for schools and teachers, resulting in growing calls for changes in teacher preparation are responsive to the need to ensure more equitable educational outcomes. As teacher educators working in this context, we present findings from our ongoing practitioner inquiry (Cochran-Smith & Donnell, 2006) into one initial teacher education program explicitly designed to prepare new teachers as culturally responsive and sustaining teachers committed to inclusiveness and equity. Drawing on sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978; Wenger, 2010), we examined the use of a particular “cultural tool”, a synthesizing framework of culturally responsive and sustaining pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995, Macfarlane, 2004, Paris, 2012), to understand how its use supported the professional identity development of 16 secondary preservice teachers.

We begin by providing the context for our work, first examining the need for teachers to engage in culturally responsive and sustaining pedagogy as a means of ameliorating disparity, before situating our preservice teacher education work within the national context of Aotearoa New Zealand. We then turn to the theoretical framework and methodology that underpin this study, before finally presenting our findings and discussion examining how the synthesizing framework supported secondary preservice teachers develop their professional identity as culturally responsive and sustaining teachers.

Reframing Teacher Education Toward Equity: Culturally Responsive and Sustaining Pedagogy

Educational disparities for minoritized youth result from the complex interplay of wider sociopolitical and policy issues, coupled with specific school-level factors. These factors include inequitable opportunities to learn, school and pedagogical practices that are ‘blind’ to their cultural and linguistic identity and funds of knowledge, and teachers who too often hold deficit views of their abilities and potential as learners (Alton-Lee, 2003; Bishop & Berryman, 2009; Sleeter, 2011). Such negative experiences often lead to student disengagement or school abandonment (Finn & Kasza, 2009; OECD, 2016), resulting in marginalized students leaving the schooling system with minimal educational attainment or qualifications.

Yet, young peoples’ own accounts of their schooling experience indicate their motivations for school attendance include having teachers help them address aspects of meaning and purpose in life (Tenti, 2012) by gaining knowledge and exploring ideas so as to grow as human beings (Levinson, 2012). Culturally responsive and sustaining pedagogical approaches can respond to these existential needs by engaging fully learners’ identities, languages, and cultures in ways that are meaningful and help them envision a positive future for themselves and their communities (e.g. Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh & Teddy, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Paris, 2012; Macfarlane, 2004). Moreover, such an approach explicitly embraces cultural pluralism and cultural equality as part of the democratic purpose of schooling (Paris, 2012).

Given the power that teachers have to shape the existential and educational experiences of their students, culturally responsive and sustaining teaching has been

posited as an essential component of reframing teacher preparation in pursuit of equity (Paris, 2012; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). In considering the desired outcomes for such a reframing, teacher educators look to scholarship that has identified the range of knowledge, skill, and dispositions teachers need to enable them to engage in effective culturally responsive and sustaining practices. A synthesis of this research highlights four key attributes of such teachers:

- They demonstrate a sense of agency and responsibility regarding their skills and abilities, and a commitment to the learning and development of each and every learner in their care (Alton-Lee, 2003; Bishop, et al., 2007);
- They have a strong sense of self-awareness, and engage in ongoing inquiry, critical thinking, and problem-solving that allows them to continually adapt their teaching practices to meet their students' individual needs (Bishop, et al. 2007; Ladson-Billings, 1995);
- They acknowledge the reciprocal nature of the teaching and learning relationship, where the educator is also learning from the student, and where educators' practices are informed by the latest research, and are both deliberate and reflective (Macfarlane, 2007); and
- They hold a deep understanding of the cultural repertoires of practice (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003), funds of knowledge and sociocultural contexts of students' lives (Bishop 2003; Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzales, 1992), that enable them to "support young people in sustaining the cultural and linguistic competence of their communities while simultaneously offering access to dominant cultural competence" (Paris, 2012, p. 95).

These attributes serve teacher educators as guideposts to desired outcomes when designing programs that prepare new teachers who are better able to engage in pedagogical practice that makes discernible differences in learning for their linguistically and culturally diverse students. To enable this learning to take place, Grant and Gibson (2011) have argued that teacher educators must help new teachers understand how culture impacts learning, help them develop cultural knowledge and connect it to their classroom practice and curriculum decisions, and challenge them to reject deficit views of their students, and their students' communities.

However, reframing teacher education for equity requires more than supporting preservice teachers in the acquisition of knowledge, interpersonal skills, and strategies. To ensure that the vision of culturally responsive and sustaining practice embraces cultural pluralism and cultural equality (Paris, 2012), issues of equity and social justice must be foregrounded. To this end, Dyches and Boyd (2017) argue that teacher educators need to engage preservice teachers in critically examining the social and institutional processes that perpetuate inequality by grappling with issues of privilege and oppression, and how these are manifested in the structures, processes, and cultures of schools, and the wider society. Their rationale for this type of critical engagement with social justice is that it highlights for preservice teachers that the work of teaching and schooling is not value neutral, but rather reflects a set of dominant political and ideological perspectives (p 478).

Moreover, an equity orientation to teacher education necessitates supporting preservice teachers in the complex and dynamic work of professional identity development aligned to this vision. A teacher's professional identity is a self-attributed

conceptualization of what it means to be a teacher (Korthagen, 2004). This includes the roles and responsibilities, and codes of practice (Wenger, 1998), such as the necessary values, skills, and knowledge. Enabling preservice teachers to adopt an equity stance, and develop their professional identity as culturally responsive and sustaining teachers, means supporting them through this process of negotiating their personal values and beliefs and those reflected in the program's professional commitment to equity and social justice. To do that, programs must make explicit the desired strategies, actions, and behaviors that reflect the enactment of culturally responsive and sustaining pedagogy, so as to guide and support preservice teachers toward these desired outcomes.

Teacher education programs can contribute to more equitable educational outcomes for traditionally marginalized youth by reframing their work toward explicitly preparing new teachers as culturally responsive and sustaining practitioners. This requires integrating an equity stance into all aspects of the learning journey for preservice teachers. To do this, teacher educators must make explicit their guiding philosophy and values that reflect this commitment to equity. To then support preservice teachers to develop their practice toward this envisioned outcome, programs must carefully plan and curate learning opportunities that enable the development of the aligned knowledge, skills and dispositions. However, there is no one way to design and implement such a program. In fact, defining what is 'good practice' for preservice teachers remains contested and problematic terrain. Many educationists argue that what is understood to constitute 'good practice' is defined locally, in the specific social, political and cultural contexts of teaching, learning, and education (Bishop & Glynn, 1999; Macfarlane, 2007; Williamson, Apendoe & Thomas, 2016). Therefore, close examination of contextually-situated teacher education programs can help illuminate the complex and nuanced ways that teacher educators construct 'good practice' with respect to culturally responsive and sustaining pedagogy.

Preparing Culturally Responsive and Sustaining Teachers for Aotearoa New Zealand: One Program's Approach

Concerned about the continuing disparity of educational outcomes for Māori learners, and other 'priority learners', the Ministry of Education sought a step change in the education system. This included a competitive application process for funded opportunities to establish "exemplary" teacher education programs at the postgraduate level to support a significant change in the design and initial teacher education and quality of opportunity to learn to practice by preservice teachers. The shift to postgraduate level qualifications was a new policy and practice context for Aotearoa New Zealand, and offered us a unique opportunity to innovate and design a new program; one focused explicitly on reframing our work more fully toward an equity orientation. Before turning to the description of the program, it is important to situate our teacher education practice, both in terms of how we frame our work within the unique treaty-based national context of Aotearoa New Zealand, and how sociocultural theories of learning and knowledge inform and guide our work as teacher educators.

Teacher education in Aotearoa New Zealand must take account of the sociocultural context of our bicultural nation. Drawing on the work of Dr Ranginui Walker (1996), S. Macfarlane (2012) has described the concept of biculturalism as: "understanding the values and norms of the other (Treaty) partner, being comfortable in either Māori or Pākehā culture, and ensuring that there is power sharing in decision making processes at all political and organizational levels" (p. 32). This construct of 'biculturalism' underpins our work in teacher education in two specific ways. First, it informs how we define and enact culturally responsive and sustaining practice by explicitly foregrounding Māori scholarship, knowledge, values, and epistemology in

tandem with other Western-oriented scholarship. Second, it means that Māori cultural knowledge serves as the basis for developing teacher education programs and defining expected outcomes for preservice teachers. This does not negate the diverse cultural backgrounds of other members of our community. Rather, working in this way reflects our responsibility to ensure Māori rights as Indigenous people to self-determination are upheld. In this way, our teacher education practice is itself grounded in a culturally responsive and sustaining pedagogy. It reflects a commitment to attending directly to the sociohistorical and contemporary contexts of Indigenous education (McCarty & Lee, 2014).

Preservice teachers in Aotearoa New Zealand must be prepared with this bicultural focus to better serve the needs of Māori and of other ‘priority learners’, as identified by the Ministry of Education. Priority learners include, Māori, Pasifika, speakers of languages other than English, students from lower socio-economic backgrounds, and those who experience particular learning needs (Educational Review Office, 2012, p. 4). Aligned to the bicultural focus, national professional standards also require that teacher education programs ensure graduates “have knowledge of tikanga and te reo Māori² to work effectively within the bicultural contexts of Aotearoa New Zealand” (Teaching Council New Zealand, 2016, p. 27).

In response to this unique sociohistorical context, we draw on sociocultural theories to inform our teacher education practice. Sociocultural perspectives suggest that how we conceive of knowledge, how we think and express our ideas, how we learn, our motivations, as well as our dispositions, values and sense of identity, are the result of ongoing social interactions of a group of people over time (Shepherd, 2000; Vygotsky, 1978). As A. Macfarlane (2015) summarizes, sociocultural theory as an interdisciplinary field “maintains that the social world (place, order, institution) and the cultural world (language, identity, values) have an impact on content and context that are prescribed or expressed in varying ways” (p. 20). In this way, sociocultural theory helps illuminate how different culture groups or communities give rise to distinct worldviews and cultural practices, and supports understanding of how these differ among groups (Rogoff, 2003). It is a theoretical framework that has been foundational to the “reformulation of education for Indigenous people” (Macfarlane, 2015, p. 27) in order to enhance educational policy and practices in ways that more authentically address Indigenous learners’ cultural and linguistic ways of knowing and being. Such perspectives support our efforts as teacher educators to ensure that Māori knowledge-systems and cultural practices fully inform program design and pedagogy in ways that ultimately contribute to transformation of the wider educational system in support of enhanced Māori educational outcomes.

Moreover, these perspectives on learning and culture inform our understandings of a teacher education program as a ‘community of practice’ (Lave & Wenger, 1991), and the profession of teaching as a ‘discourse community’ that “binds its members into a shared set of habits, attitudes and judgment about what matters” (Claxton, 2002, p. 22). From this perspective, we view learning to be a teacher as “coming to know how to participate in the discourse and practices of a particular community” and as an enculturation process “into the community’s ways of thinking and dispositions” (Putnam & Borko, 2000, p. 5).

Furthermore, drawing on the work of Wenger (2010) we position learning and identity development as inextricably linked. Wenger argues that learning is not simply about acquiring skills and knowledge. It is also about becoming a “certain person—a knower in a context where what it means to know is negotiated with respect to the regime

² Māori protocols and language.

of competence of a community” (p. 181). In this way, Wenger argues, the social world of the community serves as a “resource for constituting identity” (p. 181). As one works through the process of aligning personal experience with the socially defined competence of the group, one is developing an identity in relationship to this community. Moreover, within a community or cultural group there are a range of “meaning-making tools that mediate the communicative and reflective action” of the group and support their joint activity in coordinating group member’s actions (Wells & Claxton, 2002, p. 3).

Drawing together these perspectives, we argue that preservice teacher learning is a context-sensitive process of identity development toward a particular vision of ‘being a good teacher’ as constituted within the values and vision of teaching competency embodied by the program’s community of practice. The processes, content, pedagogies, ways of thinking and knowing, and values of the program serve as meaning-making tools that give shape to both the community’s enactment of competency, as well as give shape to one’s identity within the community.

The Masters of Teaching and Learning

The specific teacher education program highlighted in this article is the Masters of Teaching and Learning (MTchLn). It is a one-year, intensive professional preparation program that integrates research-informed professional knowledge, evidence-based inquiry and embedded practice-based experiences (Fickel, Abbiss, Brown & Astall, 2018). It foregrounds Māori cultural knowledge throughout a range of structures, processes, and curriculum features, including: 1) the co-construction of a community of practice and mentoring model in support of preservice teacher professional practice experiences in schools, 2) iterative engagement with a synthesizing framework, *Te Poutama*, 3) and framing of preservice teacher inquiry through constituent courses. The overarching goal of the program is: “To prepare teacher graduates who are critical pedagogues, action competent and culturally responsive, enabling them to be innovative, adaptable and resilient in supporting and enhancing the diverse learning strengths of each of their students.” This means preparing new teachers who have deep understanding of the sociocultural context of students’ lives and a strong sense of identity as culturally responsive and sustaining teachers.

Community of Practice. As noted, the program is a purposefully co-constructed community of practice where university mentors, teacher mentors and the preservice teachers’ engagement reflect the Māori principles of **Ako** (reciprocal teaching and learning) and **Kotahitanga** (working together). The community is intentionally cross-sector with a mixed cohort of primary and secondary preservice teachers who take all of their courses together, with the exception of two sector-based courses focused on curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment. The aim of the community of practice is to support the co-construction of new knowledge and practices in support of high-quality teaching for priority learners. There is an inherent commitment to reciprocity and reciprocal learning relationships that support the deepening of participatory processes. Being a member of the learning community means not just focusing on the development of one’s own knowledge and skills, but also having concern for, and facilitating the learning of, others. Within the community of practice there is a focus on the recognition and utilization of the range of knowledge, experience, expertise, and agency that individuals bring to the collective work.

The MTchLn takes a practice-focused orientation intended to develop adaptive expertise by shifting our focus to engaging preservice teachers more explicitly in grappling with issues of identity, agency, ‘normality’, complexity, relationships, responsibility, and how and where learning happens (Timperley, 2013, p. 9). This requires a close relationship between coursework and professional practice experiences

in schools that enables preservice teachers to actively and constructively engage in using the ‘materials of teaching’ within a community of practice. Having ongoing, workplace-embedded professional learning experiences in tandem with course-based teaching provides the preservice teachers with an array of practice-based experiences with a particular group of learners that contextualizes their course work and learning. The program is further constituted as a contemporary learning environment with a purposeful blend of face-to-face and digitally-enhanced online learning.

There is an explicit focus on working with schools with high populations of learners who are Māori, Pasifika, speakers of languages other than English, and those who experience particular learning needs (i.e. priority learners). Preservice teachers are generally placed in these settings in groups of 2-5, and experience two different contexts, each for a semester-long embedded practice placement. Each semester they spend one to two days a week for the first six weeks of the semester working in the setting with the mentor teacher, and attend courses at the university the other three days. During this phase, the focus is on using their practice-based experiences as the context for engaging with research and academic content. The preservice teachers then have to complete a practice intensive each semester working full-time with their mentor teachers, when they are expected to take leadership for the learning of their students.

During the first semester they have a five-week intensive where they engage in co-planning of curriculum and lessons with their mentor teacher, while also gradually taking more of the responsibility for leading the learning. They also have to take responsibility for developing a learning sequence (learning episodes or lessons) for students using the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework (Meyer, Rose & Gordon, 2014), and gather evidence of student learning. In the second semester the preservice teacher has a placement in a different school. Again, they commence their professional practice experience with a series of two-day visits towards the beginning of the academic semester in order to establish the foundations for building relationships with students and gain insights into the learning climate and environment. The semester then concludes with a six-week intensive in which they provide the primary leadership for the learning environment, including the development of a full unit-plan for learning, again utilizing the UDL framework.

During their practice placements, the preservice teachers receive support from their mentor teacher and a university mentor in a triadic relationship. In keeping with the cultivation of a community of practice, the conceptualization of mentoring within the program is cast as a collegial learning relationship, rather than as an expert, hierarchical relationship. In this way, mentoring is seen as a collegial engagement where reciprocal learning among the triad is the expected norm. The mentors support and guide the preservice teacher learning through coaching of practices, providing observations to inform the preservice teacher’s evidence-based self-reflection, and engaging in feedforward conversations that prompt preservice teachers critical self-reflection and focus on their development and growth. Moreover, the mentors regularly and iteratively engage preservice teachers in reflective discussions of practice linked to the program’s shared vision of ‘good teaching’ as represented in *Te Poutama: Ngā Pou Ako*.

Te Poutama: A Synthesizing Framework. A signature feature of the program is *Te Poutama: Ngā Pou Ako*, a synthesizing framework that represents our community of practice’s shared understanding of ‘good teaching’ with respect to culturally responsive and sustaining practice. As such, it provides a scaffold for preservice teachers’ learning and development. *Te Poutama* was co-constructed with our Iwi (tribal) partners and draws on the Māori visual metaphor of a poutama, which is often used to represent the process of learning, development or striving for greater knowledge, awareness, or accomplishment (Fickel et al., 2018). The program poutama is grounded in research on

culturally and sustaining responsive practice derived from both Western and Māori perspectives (e.g. Bishop & Berryman, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Paris, 2012; Macfarlane, 2004), as well as nationally relevant professional practice standards expected for new teachers. It is organized around the program's four core values:

- *Te Taumata Mātauranga* (Intellectual rigour and scholarship) – relates to disciplinary scholarship and engagement with research and the evidence-base for teaching and learning, having the ability to engage in teacher inquiry, to think critically and take the perspective of others;
- *Te Manukura o Te Ako* (Leadership of learning) – relates to having a sense of moral purpose for teaching, agency and willingness to take responsibility for students' learning, and skill in dealing with complexity;
- *Te Mana Taurite* (Commitment to inclusiveness and equity) – relates to viewing diversity as a strength rather than a problem to be managed, having sensitivity and compassion, and being tolerant, respectful and fair;
- *Te Mahi Ngātai* (Collaboration and partnership) – relates to having positive attitudes towards children, families and colleagues, being willing to seek out and support collaborative relationships with students, families, whānau, hapū, iwi, aiga, and community, as well as preservice teacher peers, university and school teachers and other education professionals.

Figure 1: Te Poutama: Ngā Pou Ako (Te Mana Taurite example)



As seen in the example relating to the core value of *Te Mana Taurite* (Commitment to inclusiveness and equity) in Figure 1, cultural dimensions with descriptors of practice for each value (in this example, wānanga, rangatiratanga, and tangata whenuatanga) are used to define preservice teachers' development and growth from Kia Mārama (developing understanding) through Kia Mōhio (knowing and applying) to Kia Mātau

(leading and engaging). The cultural dimensions of each value reflect key Māori concepts and are represented in te reo Māori (Māori language). The Kia Mātau descriptors are consistent with, and at the level of, the graduating teacher standards, and preservice teachers are expected to demonstrate sufficient evidence of teaching practice commensurate with this level of competence by the end of the program.

Teacher Inquiry. *Te Poutama* has been used as the unifying framework that underpins all course design and program implementation. It provides the touchstone for preservice teachers to guide their own learning and development through our embedded use of an explicit inquiry-learning model across all coursework and practice-based experiences. The framework calls preservice teachers to challenge their thinking and assumptions in relation to program values and constituent dimensions that support student learning and engagement. The values and dimensions of *Te Poutama* form the focus of preservice teacher inquiry during their practice-based experiences, to encourage their learning through engagement with “puzzles of practice” and invite them to examine their own and others’ frames of reference and assumptions relating to these puzzles (Blackman, Connelly & Henderson, 2004). Student learning is supported by having the preservice teachers focus on how their learners learn and the relational and pedagogical practices that support this learning, while preservice teacher professional learning is directed, through the framework, towards effective culturally responsive teacher attributes. Throughout the program, the preservice teachers develop their e-portfolios to evidence their learning and practice around the four core values and the corresponding cultural dimensions of *Te Poutama*.

The cultural dimensions of *Te Poutama* have been incorporated into the various documents used during their practice intensives, both in terms of providing formative insights and summative assessment. During their practice placements, preservice teachers receive feedforward insights from their mentor teacher and university mentor based on classroom observations. This focuses on the pedagogical practices explicitly described in *Te Poutama*. The preservice teachers also engage in self-reflection on their practice using the practice indicators of *Te Poutama* to set goals for their learning and development. Midway through the semester there is a progress check where the triad look together at the evidence of practice the preservice teacher has documented, and collectively identify current growth and development as reflected by one of the steps on *Te Poutama* for each of the four core values. This formative assessment point informs the preservice teacher’s goals for the next weeks of the placement. At the end of the semester, the mentors and preservice teacher meet again to review the documented evidence and render a summative assessment report of the student teacher’s development for each of the four core values. In the second semester, this summative assessment constitutes their final report of attainment of pedagogical practice aligned to the program goal of achieving the level of Kia Mātau (Leading and engaging) on each of the four core values of *Te Poutama*.

The final component in the preservice teachers’ e-portfolio is a written statement of their teaching philosophy that provides an anchor for their evidence of practice. In the portfolio they are to consider their philosophy as a statement outlining their guiding beliefs, values, and commitments as emergent teachers. In addition, they are asked to explicitly connect to evidence aligned with *Te Poutama* from their placement experiences to demonstrate their enactment of practices aligned to their philosophy.

As can be seen in this description of the MTchgLn program, *Ngā Pou Ako* provides a synthesizing framework that is used in a comprehensive, embedded and iterative manner to support preservice teacher progress towards becoming culturally responsive and sustaining teachers. Through the *Te Poutama* aligned inquiry process, the program supports preservice teachers generative engagement with theory and practice in ways

that are designed to foster their development of culturally responsive and sustaining pedagogy and commitments.

Methodology

The MTchLn program serves as a strategic site of research for our ongoing practitioner inquiry (Cochrane-Smith & Donnell, 2006) into our practices in initial teacher education. Practitioner research assists in focusing attention on how broad aspirations for teacher preparation might be given effect in the complex realities of practice. We have also drawn on Lather's (1986) idea of 'research as praxis'. From this perspective, praxis is understood as the process of using a theory or theoretical knowledge in a practical way, in our case our use of sociocultural theory to frame the examination of the use of *Te Poutama* as a particular cultural tool to inform preservice teacher identity development. Lather's concept of 'research as praxis' enables us to make explicit the interests and assumptions that underpin the research, while also recognizing that research is grounded in institutional and social arrangements, acknowledges and discloses the values base of research, and is overt about transformative agendas. As such, we acknowledge that the practitioner inquiry described in this article is institutionally and politically located and serves a transformative purpose.

Data Sources

In this article we have focused on the professional identity development of 16 secondary preservice teachers who were part of the cross-sector cohort of preservice teachers in the first year of implementation of the program in 2015. Our research was approved through the required institutional processes, and all data was collected in accordance with ethical principles of practitioner research, including informed consent. The primary sources of data were: 1) the final philosophy statement in the preservice teachers' e-portfolio, and 2) the summative assessment report from each of their two practice placements. The summative reports from their practice placements reflect the assessment of their development as co-constructed and mutually agreed by the preservice teacher, their mentor teacher, and their university mentor. For this study we have focused only on the practice-based data from one of the four core values of *Te Poutama*, Te Mana Taurite (Commitment to inclusiveness and equity). We had complete data for both semester summative assessment reports for only 14 of the 16 secondary preservice teachers in the cohort. One candidate was missing data for semester one, and a different candidate had missing data for semester two. These data have been removed from this part of the data set.

The summative e-portfolio completed at the end of the year required preservice teachers to have successfully completed their final practicum. As noted, this included their philosophy statement making explicit their guiding beliefs, values, and commitments, and showed specific examples of practice aligned to their philosophy. Therefore, we have interpreted these philosophy statements as reflections of their sense of their emergent professional identity as teachers, in particular their sense of identity as culturally responsive and sustaining pedagogues. This data set included a philosophy statement for each of the 16 preservice teachers.

Data Analysis

The data set for the summative final reports and the philosophy statements were initially analyzed separately. For the summative final reports, we used the three cultural dimensions of Te Mana Taurite (Commitment to inclusiveness and equity) as our analytic lens: **wānanga** (supporting learning through shared communication with ākongā, whānau, iwi and the community), **rangatiratanga** (developing and applying

understanding of practice that is culturally inclusive), and **tangata whenuatanga** (provides contexts for learning where the identity, language and culture of ākongā and their whānau are affirmed)³. We reviewed the two reports for each candidate to identify and summarize the summative assessment level attained for each preservice teacher on this core value. We also analyzed the reports to identify evidentiary statements provided by the mentors for each of the three dimensions. For these data, we then looked for common themes of evidence for each dimension across the cohort of preservice teachers that emerged from the mentor statements. Three themes emerged from these data. The end of year philosophy was then analyzed using an inductive process. We reviewed only the philosophy statements, and did not follow any links to evidence within the e-portfolio. Through inductive thematic analysis, four themes emerged, which reflected dimensions of the core value Te Mana Taurite, and an overarching that we have called 'equity stance.'

Developing a Sense of Identity as Culturally Responsive and Sustaining Teachers

Our program has a clear vision and aspiration to prepare new teachers who are action competent, critical pedagogues, and culturally responsive. To this end, we sought to enable them in developing a teacher identity aligned to this outcome through the iterative use of *Te Poutama* as a shared vision of culturally responsive and sustaining practice. The findings from this particular inquiry into our practice suggest that all of the secondary teacher candidates positioned themselves as culturally responsive and sustaining teachers, as reflected either within their enacted practice and/or their espoused philosophy. We turn first to their enacted practice as reflected in the summative final practice reports, before then examining their espoused philosophies.

Enacted Practice

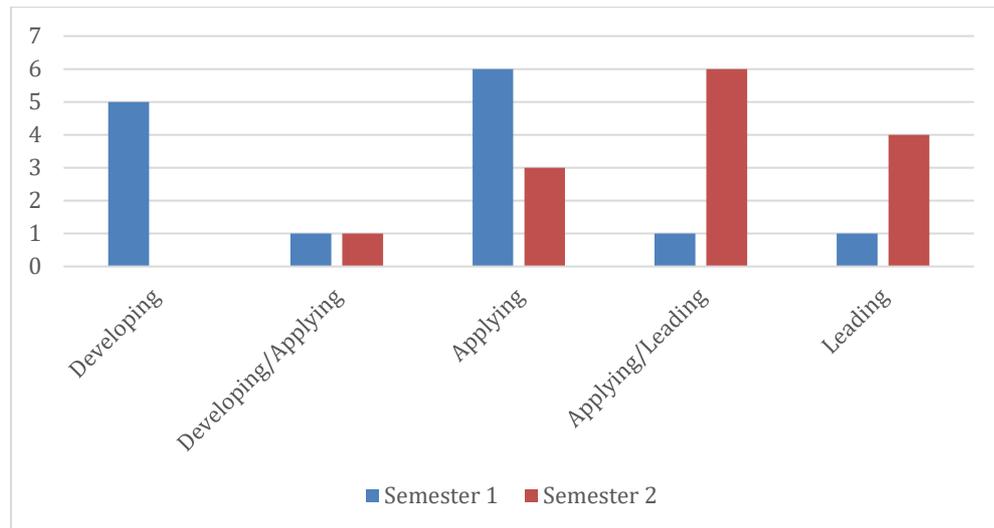
At the end of each semester, the preservice teacher was assessed on their demonstrated level of competency in relation to each of the three dimensions of the core value Te Mana Taurite (Commitment to inclusiveness and equity). A summative level of competency for the core value was determined for each semester via a consultative process among the preservice teacher, mentor teacher and university mentor. These were then recorded on the summative assessment report. The levels of competency correspond to the three levels of *Te Poutama*: Kia Mārama: **developing** understanding, Kia Mōhio: knowing and **applying**, and Kia Mātua: **leading** and engaging. Figure 2 presents a bar graph showing the number of preservice teachers who attained the specific competency levels of Te Poutama during each of the two semesters of the program. It is important to note that some of the preservice teachers were deemed to be demonstrating consistent performance at one level, while also showing emergent progress toward the next step of development on some indicative practices. Therefore, their competency level was recorded on the final report as being assessed between levels, and is shown on the below graph as such (e.g. developing/applying).

As seen in Figure 2, all preservice teachers showed growing competency for this core value across the two semesters. At the end of Semester 1, five preservice teachers reached the first level of developing understanding, and one showed emerging evidence of applying this understanding. At the level of developing understanding, preservice teachers were assessed as being able to consistently demonstrate they treat their ākongā holistically, based on an understanding of the importance of identity, language and culture, and were able to communicate in ways that made ākongā feel welcome. In

³ Ākongā is te reo Māori word for student and whānau means extended family.

Semester 1, an additional six preservice teachers were assessed as demonstrating the ability to apply those understandings to practice in consistent and sustained ways. Interestingly, one preservice teacher was assessed as already leading the learning within the classroom context. At the leading level, the preservice teacher showed the ability to analyze, theorize and respond to classroom situations using culturally inclusive pedagogy.

Figure 2: Preservice Teacher End of Semester Assessment of Competency on Te Poutama Core Value: Te Mana Taurite (Commitment to inclusiveness and equity)



In Semester 2, the preservice teachers began a practice placement in a different school, and at a different grade level. As the program is guided by sociocultural theory, we recognize that as the preservice teacher enters the new context they commence on a new phase of their learning journey. While they are not the novices they were at the beginning of their first placement, they do need to start again with building relationships with their mentor and students, as well as negotiating the curriculum and student characteristics at a different grade level. Though we do anticipate they will have a foundational repertoire they bring from their previous placement, we do not expect that they will begin this placement at the same competency level at which they completed their first placement. However, we do expect that they will be able to demonstrate a higher level at the end of the placement.

In keeping with this expectation, as shown in Figure 2, at the end of Semester 2 all but one of the 14 preservice teachers demonstrated they had attained the level of being able to at least consistently apply knowledge and skill in culturally responsive practice. Moreover, six of the preservice teachers demonstrated emerging leadership of learning in this core value, with a further four assessed as fully attaining the leadership competency level. In sum, over the year of the program the vast majority (10) of preservice teachers demonstrated development of the knowledge, skills and dispositions related to culturally responsive practice that enabled them to lead the learning of students resonant with a commitment to inclusiveness and equity.

The mentor teacher and university mentor also had the opportunity to write comments on the final report. The mentors' comments provided evidentiary support of the preservice teachers' observed practices. As comments were open-ended, they represent the aspects of practice that the mentor teacher and/or university mentor elected to highlight and note as evidence for the dimensions in support of the preservice teachers' self-assessment. As such they likely reflect the practices in which candidates most

consistently and competently engaged, yet may not reflect the full repertoire of various practices enacted during the course of a semester.

Analysis of these comments identified four themes that reflect the most common aspects identified across the candidates' practice. These themes are: 1) demonstrating inclusive and adaptive pedagogy; 2) engaging in reflective practice using feedback and student voice; 3) incorporating student prior knowledge; and 4) establishing respectful relationships with students. These themes align with the three dimensions that underpin the core value of Te Mana Taurite (Commitment to inclusiveness and equity):

- Wānanga –supports learning through shared communication with ākongā, whānau, iwi and communities;
- Rangatiratanga—develops and applies understanding of practice that is culturally inclusive; and
- Tangata Whenuatanga—provides contexts for learning where the identity, language and culture of ākongā and their whānau are affirmed.

While comments focused predominately on enacted practice, some mentors did at times address the constraints they perceived on the preservice teachers. These mainly related to local school context factors that inhibited the preservice teacher's ability to take up some possible practices due to organizational processes and structures. Most often cited was the limited ability for preservice teachers to pursue meaningful engagement with students' whānau (family) or the wider community.

Espoused Beliefs

Having examined the preservice teachers' summative assessment reports for each semester, we turned our inquiry to examining their final philosophy statements from their e-portfolio. Four key themes emerged from this analysis that aligned with the program's guiding dispositions and practices of culturally responsive practice reflected in the core value of Te Mana Taurite (Commitment to inclusiveness and equity). These key themes were: 1) a focus on building caring relationships with student; 2) affirming and engaging the identity, language and culture of student to support learning; 3) developing a culture of belonging in the classroom; and 4) taking a student-centered approach that foregrounded student voice, interests, prior experiences and knowledge. There was also an overarching theme in their philosophies that reflected an 'equity stance' that appeared to capture a holistic sense of their identity as a teacher that embodied these four practice-oriented themes.

Building Relationships with Students. Preservice teachers consistently wrote about the importance of building caring and respectful relationships with students, often using the Māori term **manaakitanga** to capture this value of care. They expressed this as being focused on the whole student, not just their academic needs. As one of the preservice teachers noted:

It is essential to care for ākongā and foster a culture of manaakitanga in the classroom. Manaakitanga contributes to the idea of a holistic schooling experience for ākongā, wherein their wellbeing is of paramount importance and their intellectual, physical, emotional and spiritual needs are provided for.

Unlike the more conventional Western view of education that focuses mainly on the cognitive development of students, a culturally responsive and sustaining approach seeks to take a holistic view that recognizes the entwined relationships of cognitive, affective, physical and spiritual dimensions of learners. This concern for the holistic view of students and their holistic wellbeing, is consistent with a Māori worldview of the integrated nature of one's being. Moreover, it aligns with the *Te Poutama* descriptor for leading learning in the dimension of Wānanga, which is to 'demonstrate flexibility in response to the affective, cognitive and physical needs of diverse ākongā to ensure wellbeing and cultural safety of all.'

Affirming Identity, Language and Culture. This holistic approach was also reflected in the theme of affirming and engaging the identity, language and culture of students to support learning. This included not only knowing their learners, it was about embracing their diversity and valuing their different knowledges. Preservice teachers wrote about needing to identify and build on their students' prior knowledge, as well as incorporate their histories and experiences. This perspective was captured by a preservice teacher who stated: "students need to have their own bodies of knowledge, experiences and culture acknowledged and embraced in order to maintain their engagement in schools." Many of them acknowledged this was "easy to say, hard to do," yet pointed to various ways they had sought to engage in these sorts of practices, demonstrating their commitment to the principle.

Another of the preservice teachers provided a vignette of his practice in his philosophy statement and described the effect he had seen it have on a student:

It's about incorporating their history into the class and building those positive relationships... So for example we had this class, and we had quite a few priority learners in this class, and in one lesson I introduced a pūrākau [legend] and in choosing this pūrākau I made sure this pūrākau was going to relate to them and that it related to the origins of Ngāi Tahu [local iwi/tribe], which is where one particular boy's iwi was, and just the turnaround in the engagement that we saw in this class was amazing. He was the kind of boy that would sit at the back and just talk the whole time and not really engage and then he was answering questions he was telling things from his perspective and how he felt.

This vignette of practice fully captures what leading learning looks like in the Tangata Whenuatanga dimension of Te Mana Taurite. This preservice teacher has demonstrated the integration of knowledge, skills, and dispositions through his enacted practice to 'engage local knowledge and history to support teaching and learning.' Moreover, he has done so in a manner that connects this to the capacity for leading learning that ensures the 'wellbeing and cultural safety' that reflects the dimension of Wānanga. Through this vignette selected to exemplify the alignment of his philosophy with his practice, this preservice teacher explicitly positions himself as an emerging professional committed to the MTchgLn program's vision of culturally responsive and sustaining practice.

Culture of Belonging. Affirming the identities, languages and cultures of students was more often than not directly linked in the preservice teachers' philosophy statements to creating a 'culture of belonging.' This construct of 'culture of belonging' was a commonly used discourse frame within the program, which served to capture the idea of creating an inclusive classroom environment. It is the discourse that captured the program's collective view of what 'good practice' meant when one was able to create a supportive, safe, and affirming classroom climate through one's leadership of learning.

This alignment to the program vision of Te Mana Taurite (Commitment to inclusiveness and equity) was expressed in a range of ways in the preservice teachers' philosophy statements. For example, one preservice teacher captured this idea of culture of belonging by explaining that it was important that "each student feels that they belong to their school, that they have equal access to resources and opportunities, and that their needs are being met." In this way her use of the term, and that of other preservice teachers', appeared to reflect their sense of the positive benefit that diversity offered to the learning environment. Moreover, this discourse reflected how they were taking a positive stance toward their students' diversity of language, culture, experience, and learning strengths and needs, as opposed to seeing such diversity as a challenge to work around, or as 'deficits' that students bring with them. This was made explicit in a preservice teacher's philosophy when she spoke about the importance of "understanding and appreciating diversity by viewing the positive that it is...the more diverse a school is, the more potential there is for a vibrant and rich culture of belonging, which is an enormous benefit for students." The consistent appropriation of program discourse among the cohort suggests the positive influence this program construct had on their philosophical perspectives, and how it enabled their development of culturally responsive and sustaining pedagogical practice.

Student-Centered Approach. Seeing student diversity as a strength is also reflected in the fourth key theme of taking a student-centered approach that foregrounded student voice, interests, prior experiences, and knowledge. The preservice teachers expressed their clear understanding that to ensure they could build the 'culture of belonging' to support the diversity of their learners, they had to know them well and be guided by their interests, prior experiences, and learning strengths and needs. Rather than taking a more traditional teacher-centered or knowledge-centered approach, they espoused in their philosophies a keen belief in the need to develop reciprocal learning relationships reflective of the student-centered approach embodied in the dimension of Wānanga. One of the preservice teachers affirmed this view, stating her commitment to 'creating a reciprocal learning relationship...so as to position myself as a learner too.' This captures the Māori concept of **Ako**, which inextricably entwines the acts of teaching and learning. In positioning herself as a learner, this emergent teacher is valuing the knowledge and insights her students bring with them to the classroom, and demonstrating her belief that classrooms should be a space of shared learning.

Preservice teachers also wrote about the need to adapt their teaching and learning programs in response to student learning needs and strengths. One preservice teacher described this as his belief in the need to "support the mana (sense of self) of students and empower them to reach their full potential." This reflects a disposition to hold high expectations that support the personal and community aspirations for achievement in and through education. While holding these beliefs and commitments, the preservice teachers were clear about the challenges of shifting to a student-centered approach in the secondary context. This was captured with honesty by one preservice teacher who shared his struggle from thinking he had to be "a master of content for students" to realizing this was distracting him from "focusing on the learning process for [his] students." After "delivering endless PowerPoints" early in the year he moved on and became "more focused on what the learner already knows, and what information they might be able to share with me and their class." He described how he had "started to focus more on student-centered learning and how I can act as a facilitator and help students access information, as opposed to giving it to them." This unflinchingly honest reflection highlighted his development toward a clearer understanding of teaching practice as being about fostering students' learning, rather than being concerned with a performative view of teaching. It shows the sort of conceptual shift required to direct one's knowledge and skill toward leading learning that is inclusive and equitable for all.

Equity Stance. A final key finding from the preservice teachers philosophy statements related to the emergence of a well-formulated ‘equity stance.’ This stance reflected their sense of having taken up the identity of a teacher who views student diversity as a strength that contributes to quality teaching and learning, underpinned with a commitment to ensuring each student’s success. In the philosophies, the majority of the preservice teacher made clear and explicit statements related to their aims of education that focused on democratic purposes, ensuring equity in opportunity and outcome, and supporting students and their families in their aspirations. This included six preservice teachers who explicitly framed themselves as advocates for social justice. They wrote about having a “sense of moral purpose” to enhance their students’ lives, and the need to question their assumptions and engage in “critical self-reflection on [one’s] own beliefs and actions.” This equity stance was thoughtfully captured by one of the preservice teachers who wrote:

We know that there’s a disparity in the educational system and the social system in general in NZ for Māori and Pasifika, and it’s not enough just to know that these issues exist. We have to take the next step. We have to do something about it. And we also have to encourage our ākongā too, because it is their responsibility as well.

A common theme in this equity stance construct was the acknowledgement of their power as teachers, and the need to acknowledge and reflect on this power. They saw this as a necessary practice for ensuring equity, to avoid using their power to demean or “trample on the mana” of their students, or otherwise limit their student’s aspirations. There was a clear sense for the majority that they had a positive view of their self-efficacy in working with culturally and linguistically diverse students, and for ensuring enhanced outcomes for Māori students in particular. More than half of the preservice teachers spoke explicitly of how they incorporated and used Māori values—including those drawn from *Te Poutama*—to guide their philosophy and pedagogical practice. In this way, their sense of teacher identity reflected a bicultural stance necessary for working positively and inclusively in secondary schools to enhance the development and learning experiences for Māori and other youth from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds in Aotearoa New Zealand.

How a Synthesizing Framework Supports Preservice Teacher Identity Development: Implications for Practice

In this facet of our practitioner research related to the program, we have focused on how the use of *Te Poutama* as a synthesizing framework might support secondary preservice teachers in developing their professional identity as culturally responsive and sustaining teachers with a sense of responsibility for all learners. We have done this through looking closely at one of the core values, Te Mana Taurite (Commitment to inclusiveness and equity). Working from a sociocultural theoretical perspective, we understand *Te Poutama* to be a cultural tool within our professional community. As such, in the joint activity of preparing new teachers, *Te Poutama* enabled us to coordinate our individual and collective actions in ways that support the construction of knowledge and understandings of, and commitments to, culturally responsive and sustaining practice among preservice teachers. It has in fact served as an important “meaning-making tool” that has served to “mediate the communicative and reflective action” of our community and support our joint activity (Wells & Claxton, 2002, p. 3). While we anticipated the importance of using such a cultural tool within our community, this inquiry into our

practice has highlighted the critical importance and its unique value as a means to bring coherence and shared vision to the program.

As a cultural tool, *Te Poutama* supported all members of the program's community of practice—preservice teachers, university mentors and mentor teachers—in consistently and explicitly focusing on the aspirational vision of 'good teaching' related to culturally responsive and sustaining practice to engender inclusion and equity. It served as a focal point and scaffold for preservice teachers learning through the on-going discussions and meaning making about pedagogical practices and actions within different contexts of the program, both within the courses and the embedded practice experiences. In this way, *Te Poutama* became an enculturating tool that served to unite the members of the community around an explicit set of "shared habits, attitudes and judgements about what matters" (Claxton, 2002, p. 22) as well as "ways of thinking and dispositions" (Putnam & Borko, 2000, p.5) necessary for becoming culturally responsive and sustaining teachers.

Te Poutama has clearly shaped the discourse among members of the community. We see and hear the language of Māori values, inclusion, equity and cultural responsiveness in the evidentiary comments in the practice reports, and in the preservice teachers' philosophies that connect directly to their actions in classrooms. For this reason, we argue its iterative use within the program as a shared cultural tool has supported teacher candidates' development of their "epistemic identity", that is their view of themselves as learners and knowers, their values and sense of 'what matters', and their sense of agency in generating and evaluating their knowledge and expertise (Claxton, 2002, p. 4). In both their enacted and espoused practices, the majority of the preservice teachers have demonstrated they have "a sense of their own agency as well as a sense of social responsibility toward and with others and the society as a whole" (Bell, 1997, p. 1) that reflects a commitment to social justice. It is one's sense of agency that supports the translation of knowledge of into practice, and thus enables one to act as an agent of change (Dyches & Boyd, 2017).

Moreover, we believe that having a cultural tool that clearly derives from Māori epistemology has been key in enabling their identify development as culturally responsive and sustaining teachers. While drawing from an Indigenous worldview is appropriate in our bicultural context, our work suggests that explicitly incorporating diverse cultural epistemological perspectives within the central cultural tools of a teacher education program may serve as a particularly powerful catalyst for challenging preservice teacher's tacit assumptions about diversity.

Nevertheless, while *Te Poutama* has been a necessary scaffold, it is not sufficient in and of itself to enable the development of a teacher identity aligned to culturally responsive and sustaining practice. Rather, it is the way it was used by the community members in iterative and embedded ways across all courses and practicum placements. As a ubiquitous cultural tool, the community of practice used it as a framework to engage in on-going dialogue and shared meaning-making that must accompany the learning process. Dyches and Boyd (2017) have argued that "social justice preparation must be incorporated throughout methods, content and pedagogy courses to understand how these domains operate together" (p. 486). Within the MTchLn program we have taken up such efforts to ensure cohesion through a range of other strategies. However, this inquiry has highlighted that in actuality this coherence was enabled through having *Te Poutama* as a centralizing cultural tool embedded across all facets of the program.

Conclusion

Globally, teacher education is being challenged to demonstrate that it makes a difference in preparing new teachers who can enable learning for all students, and support them and their communities in meeting their collective aspirations. Yet, what constitutes

quality teacher practice and preparation to meet this challenge remains a complex and often contested terrain, as the conceptualizations of teaching reflects the differing priorities, values, histories and traditions of nations. While our research is grounded in a particular program and community context, and the cultural tool, *Te Poutama*, is specific to the program, the broader principle transcends the local context. This study has demonstrated the promise that such synthesizing frameworks hold for enabling emergent teacher's identity development as culturally responsive and sustaining practitioners and their adoption of an equity stance aligned to social justice outcomes. By sharing this inquiry into teacher education practice in Aotearoa New Zealand, we seek to contribute insights into the situated nature of new teacher identity development, and illuminate how program context and practices contribute to new teachers developing understandings and commitments to equitable outcomes for all learners.

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