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**Implementing mātauranga Māori into the classroom – New Zealand
English-medium secondary school teachers' perceptions of preparedness.**

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Abstract

The integration of mātauranga Māori within the New Zealand Curriculum represents a significant shift in Aotearoa New Zealand's educational landscape. However, the historical marginalisation of Māori knowledge within the State education system has left teachers inadequately prepared to effectively incorporate mātauranga Māori into their practice. This thesis, employing Grounded Theory and kaupapa Māori methodology, explores secondary school teachers' perceptions of their preparedness to integrate mātauranga Māori and te reo Māori into the State curriculum whilst, examining the factors that influence their preparedness. This research includes the perspectives of iwi as the experts and custodians of mātauranga Māori, shedding light on their expectations, aspirations, and concerns regarding the inclusion of Māori epistemologies across the curriculum.

The findings indicate that many teachers feel ill-equipped to incorporate Māori worldviews due to personal educational limitations, insufficient exposure to Māori perspectives, and systemic barriers within the wider education system. These challenges highlight the need for policy and systemic change, including enhanced professional development, institutional support, and culturally competent leadership. Iwi partnership throughout the change process is identified as crucial in ensuring the authenticity and integrity of mātauranga Māori within educational contexts. This thesis emphasises the necessity for teachers to engage in antiracist and decolonial practices, to confront cultural biases, systemic racism, pathologizing practices, and the failure of State educational institutions to enact Te Tiriti.

Ultimately, the successful implementation of mātauranga Māori in the curriculum demands a collaborative approach, involving teachers, school leaders, iwi, and State and educational professional bodies. This research advocates for comprehensive teacher training, robust institutional support, and clear and active implementation of the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and the National Education and Learning Priorities (NELPS) within school policy. This study contributes to the gap in research around teachers' preparedness to engage with Māori knowledge, providing insights into the systemic barriers hindering meaningful teacher preparation and implementation. The broader implications suggest that the integration of mātauranga Māori should not be viewed as a one-off policy change, but rather as an ongoing process of decolonisation and cultural revitalisation that occurs in partnership with iwi/hapū.

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Whakapapa is the foundation of Te Ao Māori; it underpins not only Māori epistemologies but also Māori social structures and values. As such, when considering my own educational history and experiences, I found it impossible to separate them from the educational experiences of my whānau. Like whakapapa, Māori education starts long before Māori officially enter the system. It begins with the world created by the education system—the values it perpetuates and those it favours. It starts with the system that failed or excluded my tīpuna. It also begins with the resilience and determination of Māori whānau to hold tight to and transmit iwi and hapū knowledge outside the State education system.

My Nan left Whanganui Technical College at thirteen. Taranaki was a difficult place to be Māori in her era. Iwi and hapū felt the sting of land confiscation, death, and displacement. Iwi fought for the scraps of their ancestral land. Koko descended from a line of tohunga; he was raised by his aunties, uncles, and grandparents across the motu. He was educated at Rangiahua Native School alongside his cousins, and his education ended when he finished primary school. Despite te reo Māori being my koroua's first language, te reo Pākehā was the language passed down to their nine children. Koko and Nanny spent their time moving the family around their ancestral lands, finding work in forestry, the meat works, the hospital laundry room, and other manual labour industries for which the State education system had prepared Māori.

As a child, my father read to me and told me stories of our tīpuna—of Māui, Hātū Pātū, Tutanekai and Hinemoa, and the seven whales of Wairoa—stories I didn't learn in school. I grew up in a house filled with books on the history of Māori people, told by others—Binney, Belich, Salmond, and King. These historians were lauded and received awards for telling Māori stories. As I attended hui and marae around the country with my father, I listened and understood that history and stories are never singular narratives. They are living, breathing entities, given life by the speaker, the audience, and the occasion. A story can be told and retold from a hundred perspectives and still hold truth. Stories hold mana; they

are gifts for others. But the immovable words in history books taught me differently. Their words rarely changed, and like the versions of history told by previous white historians, they informed Pākehā views of Māori. I learned in the Pākehā world and in the Pākehā education system that there was usually one story, one right answer, one way of doing, and one way of seeing. I learned facts. I learned that some things are more believable and valued when certain people deliver the information.

The knowledge I have about Māori values, tikanga, kawa, whakapapa, and the pūrākau of my iwi and hapū has been gathered and pieced together from whānau, marae, and being in Māori spaces with Māori individuals. It is through the aroha and determination of those who have come before me—my father, my aunties, uncles, whanaunga, Māori academics, and experts—that I have learned about being Māori, being a descendant of Kahungunu, Rauru, Ruapani, Raukawa, and Ruanui. It is within Māori communities that I have learned about Te Ao Māori. It is within whānau, iwi, and hapū that language and mātauranga have been lovingly preserved, reclaimed, and nurtured.

My teaching career has seen me take on many roles: English teacher, Social Studies teacher, Classical Studies teacher, and Te Reo teacher. I've been an Assistant HOD, TIC Aotearoa Histories, and Kahui Ako WIST, with a focus on culturally responsive practice. These roles have required me to provide guidance on Te Reo, tikanga, and mātauranga Māori for other teachers and staff. Often, this advice or guidance has led me into conflict with individuals. I often struggle with my role in this system. I see a system that says it wants Māori to succeed as Māori but does not allow for that; it does not know how to change. I see a system that repeatedly does things to Māori, does things for Māori, rather than doing things in partnership with Māori. At times, it is hard not to feel angry at the system.

Ngāi Tamaterangi, has a whakatauākī passed down from our ancestor Tamaterangi. Unsuitably attired, Tamaterangi would not deliver the tohi that would allow his tāua to set off for battle. Instead, Tamaterangi uttered: “He ao te rangi ka uhia, huruhuru te manu ka rere ai” (As clouds adorn the sky, so do feathers enable a bird to fly). Realising his predicament, his younger brother gave him his cloak so he could perform his role. Once suitably clothed, he rose and began the tohi, and the tāua could depart. This pūrākau demonstrates an awareness of tikanga, kawa, and how to solve issues that arise. It shows an understanding of language, mana, and the role of individuals within a collective society. It shows the role of whānau, hapū, and iwi in providing each other with the tools, support, and knowledge needed to navigate the world.

I would like to thank those who have given me the tools, support, and knowledge needed to navigate the completion of this thesis. To my wonderful, patient, and supportive supervisors Peti and Huia—ngā mihi nūnui ki a kōrua. Peti, you have given me so much of your time, support, and knowledge, and it

has been greatly appreciated. You have helped me navigate systems, academic norms, and balancing life, work, and family alongside study. Thank you for your understanding, motivation, and guidance. Mum and Dad, thank you for instilling in me the importance of education both within and beyond the classroom. You always encouraged curiosity and provided many opportunities to learn and understand beyond the school gates. Dad, while at times I drifted away from wanting to learn about mātauranga Māori, te reo, and our whakapapa, you have always been there when I have returned to share, help, and encourage. Thank you both.

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To Steve, thank you for putting up with my nocturnal hours, meetings, endless papers piles, and books scattered around the house, and my absences. I appreciate your support.

To my babies, I'm so proud of you both. I know it doesn't mean much to you now, but I hope you will be the beneficiaries of a system that does better for Māori. I promise I'll spend less time doing my 'work' now.

To my tīpuna, thank you.

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Glossary

Māori Term	Definition
Ahi kā	Title to land held by a group through occupation over a long period of time. Whakapapa provides links to ancestors who lived on the land.
Ako	Māori pedagogy positioning individuals as both teacher and learner
Ākongā	Student or pupil
Hangarau	Technology
Kaiako	Teacher
Kura	School
Kura kaupapa	Māori medium primary school operating under Māori customs. Instruction is predominantly in te reo Māori.
Mana	Influence, prestige, status and authority. Tied to whakapapa.
Manaakitanga	Hospitality, support and kindness
Mauri	Life force or essence
Pikitia	Picture
Pūrākau	Story
Pūtaiao	Science
Rangatahi	Youth, young person
Rangatiratanga	Chieftainship, sovereignty, self determination
Raranga	To weave, weaving
Rohe	Region, area, district
Tangata Tiriti	People of Te Tiriti. Legitimacy to reside in New Zealand through Te Tiriti.
Tangata Whenua	People of the land. People belonging to the land
Taonga	Treasure, thing of value.
Tauira	Student, pupil
Tāua	War party
Te ao Māori	The Māori world, the natural world.
Te taiao	The natural world, the environment
Tikanga	Customs, rules, correct or right way to do something.
Tohi	Incantation
Tūmuaki	Principal
Wahine	Woman, female
Whakapapa	Genealogy or ancestry, family tree
Whānau	Family group

List of Acronyms

Abbreviation	Definition
ASSEN	Aotearoa Social Studies Educators' Network
BEANZ	Biology Educators of Aotearoa New Zealand
ERO	Education Review Office
HOD	Head of Department
ITE	Initial Teacher Education
LAL	Learning Area Lead
MOE	Ministry of Education
NELP	National Education Learning Priorities
NZATE	New Zealand Association for the Teaching of English
NZC	New Zealand curriculum
PLD	Professional learning and development
PPTA	Post Primary Teachers' Association
OTT	Overseas Trained Teachers.
TIC	Teacher in charge
TOD	Teacher's only day

Positioning

Indigenous research encourages researchers to reflect on their own positioning and frameworks to understand the way in which their experiences and worldview may shape their interpretation of data. As such, I must acknowledge my position as an insider/outsider. As a Māori secondary school teacher, I occupy the roles of State agent and tangata whenua. I uphold the State's agenda through my teaching practice and at the same time am critical of the State's historic and ongoing treatment of Māori.

I have benefitted from the State education system I was educated within, and I have also felt the loss and frustration of the marginalisation of mātauranga Māori. My position affords me insight into the daily mechanics of the front-line education system and the ways in which it upholds inequity and supremacy. It also allows me to be sympathetic to the teachers who must navigate the conflicting demands and needs of the system daily.

I acknowledge that I have mana whenua links to the rohe, however, I am not from the dominant iwi in the rohe, and I am not active in local iwi politics. Therefore, I must acknowledge that as a Māori researcher my voice does not represent mana whenua.

Introduction

The State education system has played a significant and strategic role in the marginalisation of te reo and mātauranga Māori, and the assimilation and homogenisation of tangata Māori. At the same time, the education system's assimilative policies have limited the ability of tangata Tiriti to engage with and learn from mātauranga Māori. Over the last two decades, public momentum for the meaningful inclusion of mātauranga Māori, te reo, and Māori perspectives in the State curriculum has increased. This momentum has influenced the ongoing curriculum refresh and has led to the inclusion of mātauranga Māori across the New Zealand Curriculum.

Due to the assimilative nature of the State education system, English-medium secondary teachers and their knowledge of and experience with mātauranga Māori remains relatively underexplored in terms of policy and research. With over 73% of the secondary profession identifying as Pākehā (Ministry of Education, 2022) it is important for the implementation of curriculum policy to understand the knowledge and preparedness of secondary teachers to deliver mātauranga Māori to secondary students. This research has identified a gap in current educational literature concerning secondary teacher te reo and mātauranga Māori competency. To address this gap, the aim of this study is to provide insight into the perceptions of State, English-medium, secondary school teachers regarding their preparedness to incorporate mātauranga Māori into their curriculum areas, as proposed in the Ministry of Education's curriculum refresh. Furthermore, this research seeks to understand some of the factors influencing this preparedness.

This thesis provides insight into the influences that have shaped secondary teachers' preparedness to incorporate Māori epistemologies into their teaching practices. It also examines how experts in mātauranga Māori (iwi/hapū) have been involved in upskilling teachers, as well as the implications of teacher preparedness for effectively incorporating mātauranga Māori into the State curriculum. This research has identified that it is important to understand the factors influencing preparedness levels to create systemic and institutional policies and practices that contribute to the development and progress of teacher preparedness and the effective implementation of the curriculum changes.

The outcomes of this research are intended to provide valuable insights to the Ministry of Education, teacher training providers, boards of trustees, and school leaders regarding the preparedness of teachers to integrate mātauranga Māori into the curriculum. Additionally, the research will provide recommendations for the Ministry of Education to ensure that secondary

teachers are equipped to competently deliver the refreshed New Zealand curriculum, thereby honouring the State's Te Tiriti obligations within the education system.

Methodology

Research has a contentious history with Indigenous peoples and their knowledge. Smith has argued that research may be one of the “dirtiest words in the Indigenous world’s vocabulary (Smith, 2022, p.1). Western academics often present Western research and science as neutral, unbiased, and apolitical, while Indigenous academics and communities counter this claim, asserting that inquiry is inherently political and value-laden, shaped by the world we experience (Wilson, 2008, p.33). Henry and Foley contend that “the methodology and consequent methods adopted for a given study reflect a researcher’s values and beliefs about truth, reality, and existence, and the knowledge that can or should be gleaned (Henry & Foley, 2018, p.213). Gibson (1986) argues that researchers who fail to consider paradigmatic positioning operate under the influence of unexamined assumptions, since all interpretations are shaped by historical and cultural contexts.

Thus, what researchers choose to study, their methodologies, ethical guidelines, and interpretation of data are all influenced by their underlying paradigms. In research, the researcher functions as a “lens through which data are gathered and interpreted” (Khan, 2014, p.8). Indigenous scholars and communities argue that “neutrality and objectivity do not exist in research, since all research is conducted and observed through human epistemological lenses” (Absolon & Willett, 2005, p.97), and that this presumed neutrality has contributed to the ongoing “political, cultural, and social marginalisation of Indigenous communities” (Walter & Andersen, 2013, p.85).

Researchers in Aotearoa must consider how minority groups, who operate from different ontological and axiological positions than the Western ‘norm,’ have been—and continue to be—impacted by Western research practices. Moreover, research aimed at understanding the interpretation, creation, and transmission of knowledge must recognise the interaction between an individual’s experiences, values, and the knowledge itself. As such, methodologies must be chosen that acknowledge the impact of personal positioning on a subject’s ontologies, axiology, and epistemologies.

For this research, I felt it was important to acknowledge the inherent mana of all participants. Therefore, methodologies that promoted practices such as aroha, manaakitanga, whakapono,

utu, and ensured participants' contributions and knowledge were treated in ways that preserved the integrity and mana of the individual and collective — were prioritised. Additionally, ethical research acknowledges that the stories shared between researcher and participant demand a level of accountability and as such methodologies were chosen that align with the view that researchers are accountable to those they engage in research. Given that the participants were drawn from the researcher's teaching community and iwi connections, maintaining positive and ongoing relationships with those involved in the researched was considered crucial.

Such considerations and understandings have shaped the methodologies employed in this research.

Philosophy

This research study is underpinned by a constructivist research philosophy. Constructivism emerged in “response to the perceived inadequacies of positivism to meet the needs of social scientists” (Collis & Hussey, 2014, p.44). Social scientists, such as Thomas Schwandt, argue that “what we take to be objective knowledge and truth is the result of perspective. Knowledge and truth are created, not discovered, by the mind” (Schwandt, 1998, p.236). Further criticisms of Western positivist research have been voiced by Indigenous peoples, who argue that “research has not been neutral in its objectification of the other” (Smith, 2022, p.44). Positivism views knowledge and ‘truth’ as objective “facts...essentially there for the study,” existing “independently of us as observers” (Gergen, 1991, p.91). Smith (2022, p.62) argues that such a view ignores the “positional superiority of Western knowledge,” which informs and shapes many Western researchers' epistemological frameworks and, consequently, their interpretations of reality.

In contrast, this research, through its constructivist philosophy, acknowledges the subjective nature of reality, experience, and knowledge. It seeks to theorise how the educational, social, and cultural experiences of secondary teachers shape their preparedness to deliver aspects of the curriculum refresh. The role of secondary teachers in state education primarily involves the dissemination of knowledge and skills. Schwandt argues that “knowledge is one of the many coordinated activities of individuals and, as such, is subject to the same processes that characterise any human interaction e.g., communication, negotiation, conflict, rhetoric” (1998, p.240). This study will explore how social, professional, educational and cultural experiences

may shape teachers' epistemological frameworks and how this may affect their delivery of mātauranga Māori within the refreshed curriculum.

Acknowledging that “social processes facilitate the learning and sustenance of knowledge and are lived and expressed in cultural contexts” (Macfarlane, 2015), this research engages with iwi and/or hapū to consider the cultural contexts from which mātauranga Māori arises. A constructivist philosophy leads to theory construction around the intersections of iwi and hapū aspirations and the concerns they may have regarding teachers' levels of preparedness to teach Māori epistemologies. It also explores concerns teachers may have about their own preparedness to deliver mātauranga Māori.

Schwandt (1998, p.236) argues that “constructivism is concerned with the world of experience as it is lived, felt, and undergone by social actors,” based on a relatively small sample size (Collis & Hussey, 2014, p.50). A constructivist philosophy was chosen for this research, as it aims for “theory building rather than empirical testing of a theory” (Khan, 2014, p.224). In line with this philosophy, the research adopts a qualitative and inductive approach. Constructivist, inductive approaches “aim for theory construction, not for population representativeness” (Khan, 2014, p.227).

This philosophy is particularly appropriate for studying secondary school teachers' preparedness to incorporate mātauranga Māori into the New Zealand curriculum, as it engages with the subjective views of individuals about their “reality of the world” (Khan, 2014, p.225). This research is exploratory in nature, aiming to construct theory based on depth rather than breadth, to produce rich, subjective findings (Collis & Hussey, 2014, p.44). An inductive analytical approach allows for meanings to “emerge from data to identify patterns which inform the construction of theory” (Punch, 1998, p.163).

The aim of this research is to explore the realities of teachers implementing mātauranga Māori within their curriculum areas. Therefore, constructivism, alongside qualitative, inductive research methods, provides the most appropriate framework for achieving the research objectives. This study seeks to provide a cross-sectional snapshot of two groups—iwi and English-medium secondary teachers—and their realities as they navigate the curriculum refresh. The constructivist philosophy, with its emphasis on subjective knowledge, aligns well with Indigenous research methodologies that acknowledge that truth is contextually bound (Chilisa, 2012).

For this reason, Kaupapa Māori has also been chosen as a methodology. It is deemed specifically appropriate for engaging iwi and hapū, in recognition of the cultural context in which these groups collectively experience and navigate the world, as well as the tikanga that guides them. Grounded theory and Kaupapa Māori can be viewed as complementary methodologies, both driven by the importance of relationality, and focused on the subjective experiences of participants. These dual methodologies provide flexibility to integrate aspects of each methodology into interactions with participants. Furthermore, kaupapa Māori methodology offers a framework for theorising and interpreting findings about teachers' preparedness to implement mātauranga Māori, situated within a Māori paradigm.

Kaupapa Māori

This research aims to understand how prepared teaching professionals, who are primarily engaged in the dissemination of Western epistemologies within a Western education system, are to incorporate mātauranga Māori into their practice. To validate and acknowledge mātauranga Māori as central to the phenomenon being researched, Kaupapa Māori will guide both the methodology and ethical frameworks of this study. The application of Kaupapa Māori recognises the position of Māori as the tangata whenua of Aotearoa and affirms the rights guaranteed to them by Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Hudson and Russell (2008, p.62) posit that Māori rights within research stem from tino rangatiratanga, which asserts that Māori must participate in guiding research, defining its ethical boundaries, and shaping data interpretation from within Māori cultural understandings. As Rowe, Baldry, and Earles note, "Western approaches fail to sufficiently give voice to the perspectives and subjectivities of Indigenous peoples" (2015, p.297).

This research engages iwi/hapū within its methodology to understand the concerns, aspirations, and challenges they face in response to the incorporation of their epistemologies within State, English-medium secondary schools. Kaupapa Māori acknowledges that mātauranga Māori is "specific to place and rooted in history" (Given, 2008, p.4) and whakapapa. Māori epistemologies are created and transmitted through extended family structures (iwi and hapū), making iwi and hapū the experts in mātauranga Māori.

The New Zealand education system has historically played a central role in the marginalisation and destabilisation of mātauranga Māori. Kaupapa Māori research seeks to counter this marginalisation by privileging Māori experiences and voices, and by promoting social justice

through the normalisation and application of Te Reo and mātauranga as frameworks for both data analysis and ethical practice (Hetaraka, 2019). This prioritisation of Māori ways of being, doing, and understanding becomes even more essential when the research explores the intersection of Māori taonga (mātauranga) with dominant Western systems. The pathologizing of Māori culture in research has long been a concern for Māori, and Kaupapa Māori methodology seeks to address deficit thinking by providing Māori perspectives in research, encouraging researcher positionality, and fostering accountability to the communities being researched.

A social justice stance within this research demands the inclusion of iwi and hapū voices regarding the State-driven curriculum refresh and aims to provide findings and recommendations within Māori epistemological frameworks. Kaupapa Māori has been chosen as the methodology for its explicit social justice purposes, its commitment to dialogue, community, self-determination, and cultural autonomy (Denzin et al., 2008, pp.2-3). This approach benefits teaching communities who may otherwise lack a voice in the policies they are tasked with implementing. Furthermore, Kaupapa Māori encourages researchers to seek social justice by applying Te Tiriti principles not only within methodology and analysis but also in the recommendations made by the research. Wilson et al. (2021, p.383) claim that “Māori methodologies enable culturally acceptable exploration and discovery to produce beneficial and transformational knowledge that can make a positive difference in outcomes for Māori.”

Just as research methodologies are informed by a researcher’s paradigms, so too are ethical codes of conduct. Kaupapa Māori encourages researchers to understand that “ethics are socially and culturally specific to the values of the people involved in research” (Quinn, 2022, p.2). Therefore, ethical behaviours are defined within the cultural beliefs and practices of the community. Kaupapa Māori provides its own ethical frameworks for researchers to apply, grounded in tikanga, which underpins all interactions and beliefs within Māori society. To behave ethically, researchers must act in ways that are ‘tika.’ Kaupapa Māori also promotes dialogic, ongoing relationships between iwi/hapū and the researcher, ensuring that researchers can be guided by the communities they engage with on matters of ethicality. Such partnerships and the application of tikanga-based ethical principles recognise the rangatiratanga of iwi and hapū, as well as the mana of tangata Tiriti.

Kaupapa Māori acknowledges the rangatiratanga of iwi and hapū, and therefore understands that iwi and hapū hold and practice differing axiologies and epistemologies. As such, the

tikanga and processes surrounding interviews/hui were informed by the iwi being engaged. The methodologies may differ between iwi and the way in which hui are conducted may vary depending on iwi tikanga and preferences. Methodologies and the terms of the research relationship were constructed at the commencement of the research. Time was built into the research timeline to ensure that discussions and implementation of tikanga could take place.

Grounded Theory

Glaser and Strauss first articulated grounded theory in 1967 as a methodology for generating theories from data to explain social phenomena. Charmaz's constructivist grounded theory, developed at a later date, acknowledges that "data do not provide a window on reality" (Charmaz, 2000, p.542). Rather, the 'discovered' reality emerges from the interactive process and is shaped by its temporal, cultural, and structural contexts (Charmaz, 2000, p.542). This methodology reverses the deductive approach of moving from theory to data and back to theory, by applying an inductive method.

Charon (2009) argues that culture is socially constructed, and it is the shared perspectives and meanings within a culture that define individuals' realities, interpretations, and actions. A constructivist grounded theory approach is particularly beneficial for indigenous or marginalised groups, who have often been misrepresented, misunderstood, or viewed through deficit lenses within Western research. Western research tends to draw largely from Western epistemological and ontological frameworks, often failing to acknowledge cultural differences in reality and perspective. Wilson et al. argue that "continued reliance on dominant cultural understandings of Indigenous peoples and their realities perpetuates inequities and structural power imbalances that adversely affect them" (Wilson et al. 2021, p.4). Therefore, methodologies need to find ways to represent Māori realities more accurately. Charmaz (2014, p.336) claims that grounded theory provides a methodology that can bridge "the cultural gaps and chasms between the cultures of methodological origination and application."

This research applies both grounded theory and Kaupapa Māori methodology to ensure that the research process honours the mana of all participants, while also providing a structured process for analysis and theoretical explanation of how iwi/hapū and secondary school teachers are engaging with and navigating the inclusion of mātauranga Māori within the curriculum. Furthermore, constructivist grounded theory allows the researcher to explore and acknowledge the educational, political, and social phenomena that shape secondary teachers'

epistemological, ontological, and axiological foundations, which in turn influences their pedagogy and content knowledge.

The grounded theory approach in this research enables the researcher to draw from the epistemological bases of both teachers and iwi (Western epistemologies and Māori epistemologies) to produce theory that reflects the differing realities of the groups navigating the curriculum refresh. The integration of Western and Kaupapa Māori methodologies reflects the central phenomena of this study—the intersection of two epistemologies (curriculum refresh) within the New Zealand education system.

Data - Qualitative Data

Creswell states “qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem” (Creswell, 1998, p. 15). Qualitative research allows flexibility in the data collection process and can include a variety of empirical materials—such as case studies, personal experiences, introspection, life stories, interviews, observations, historical texts, and visual texts—that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals’ lives (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, pp. 1–32). Therefore, qualitative research was deemed the most appropriate methodology for exploring secondary teachers' experiences of the implementation of the refreshed curriculum.

Creswell (2003) also suggests that qualitative research is often exploratory in nature, generating information about unknown aspects of a phenomenon. As such, qualitative research was seen as the natural methodology for exploring the inclusion of mātauranga Māori within the curriculum refresh. Grounded theory and Kaupapa Māori were considered suitable philosophical frameworks to underpin this qualitative research, as they allow participants to speak in-depth about their experiences and concerns. Both frameworks produce valuable data that centres on participants' understandings. Grounded theory and Kaupapa Māori acknowledge that culture and knowledge are socially constructed through shared experiences. Qualitative methodologies aim to draw out these understandings and realities from research participants, thereby enabling the researcher to explore rich, layered data about complex phenomena.

Moreover, qualitative research, Kaupapa Māori, and grounded theory all emphasise the importance of relationality and context. These methodologies prompt the researcher to explore the relationships between the participant and the community, the participant and the researcher,

and the researcher and the data. In doing so, they examine how these relationships influence the communication of meaning, the transmission of knowledge, and the interpretation of data.

Sampling and Recruitment

Constructivist research allows for the deliberate selection of research participants (Collis & Hussey, 2014, p. 131), with “sampling aimed toward theory construction, not population representativeness” (Khan, 2014, p. 227). As such, the researcher employed purposive sampling to select participants from within the English-medium, secondary, teaching community in Wellington. The sample population consisted of permanent and fixed-term secondary teachers in part- or full-time roles within State, English-medium schools across the greater Wellington region. Day relievers were excluded from the sampling criteria, as they are not actively involved in lesson planning or design and may not always have subject-specific knowledge of the classes they are covering. Participants were recruited through the researcher’s local teaching networks, with a written research summary and consent form distributed through these connections.

Palinkas et al. (2015) explain that purposive sampling, often used in qualitative research, involves the researcher exercising judgment to engage specific participants who can provide “information-rich samples for in-depth study” (Shaheen et al., 2016). Participants expressed interest in the research after an open invitation was sent out within the researcher’s local secondary teaching community. As a result, the data provides a regional snapshot of teacher preparedness. The researcher used maximum variability purposive sampling to select participants from those who expressed interest. This sampling method was considered appropriate because it allowed for the intentional selection of participants with diverse characteristics to capture variability within the population. Since the teaching population is diverse, maximum variation sampling aimed to “capture uniqueness within the sample while also identifying common patterns that emerge from variation within the population” (Shaheen et al., 2019). Participants were provided with an information sheet explaining the research. The teacher participants received a different information sheet ([Appendix 1 - Teacher participant](#)) than the iwi participants ([Appendix 2 - Iwi participant](#)). The forms contained the relevant information regarding participation, ethics and included the relevant cultural processes to align with the participant. Participants were also provided with a written consent form ([Appendix 3 – participant consent](#)).

The open recruitment process has the potential to influence the data, as teachers who feel strongly unprepared or strongly prepared may be more likely to volunteer to participate. These participants might want to have their concerns heard or acknowledged, or to discuss an area of passion or importance to them. However, this data is valuable as it can shed light on why some individuals feel unprepared, while also offering possible solutions from those who feel more prepared.

The sampling of eight teachers provided a cross-section of the teaching population in the greater Wellington region to generate theory on the preparedness of the teaching profession. Maximum variation purposive sampling focuses on a smaller sample population but still allows for a range of variability to be represented. As such, eight was deemed to be a sufficient participant sample to provide an indicative snapshot of teacher preparedness levels at a specific point in time within the greater Wellington teaching population. The sampling aimed to include teachers at different stages of their careers (Figure 1) to explore whether length of service impacts teachers' preparedness to implement mātauranga Māori.

The participants were all in their first 20 years of teaching. This may have the potential to influence the results as educational, political and social changes can impact groups' understanding of and engagement with social issues and groups. The group may have been influenced by the Māori social and political movements of the 80's and 90's. Furthermore, teachers trained after the 2000's are more likely to have experienced more inclusion of mātauranga Māori and Te Reo in their teacher training.

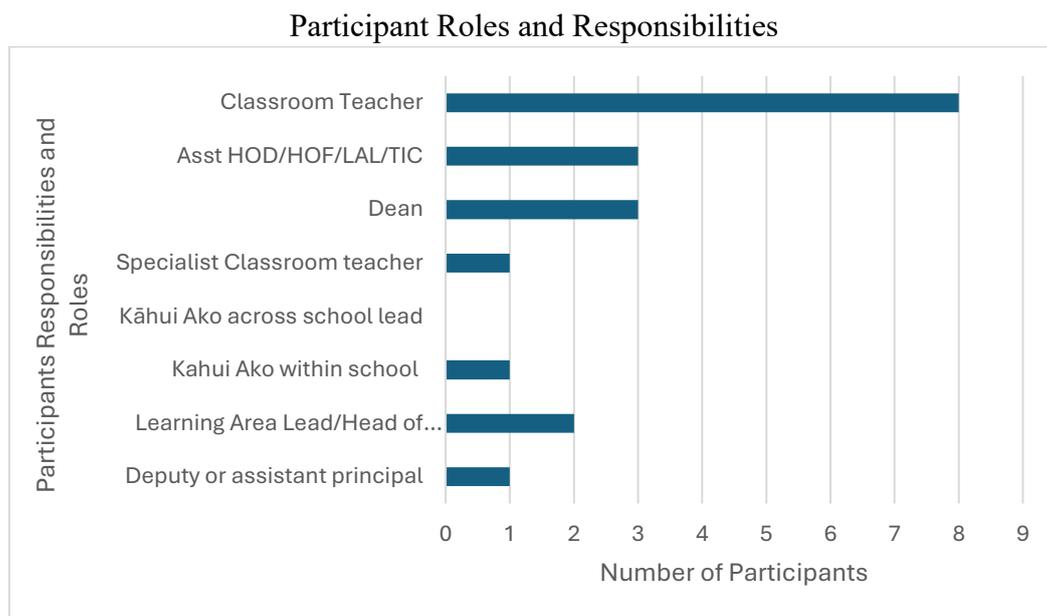
Figure 1

Length of Participants' Teaching Service.



The sampling allowed for variability in the positions held by participants (Figure 2). While not exhaustive of all the positions teachers can hold within schools, it provides valuable insight into how preparedness levels may vary across different roles within a school as different positions provide different access to resources, time and relationships. Participants' roles and responsibilities may also impact on others' preparedness levels if the participant holds a position with the ability to influence or guide school or department PLD.

Figure 2

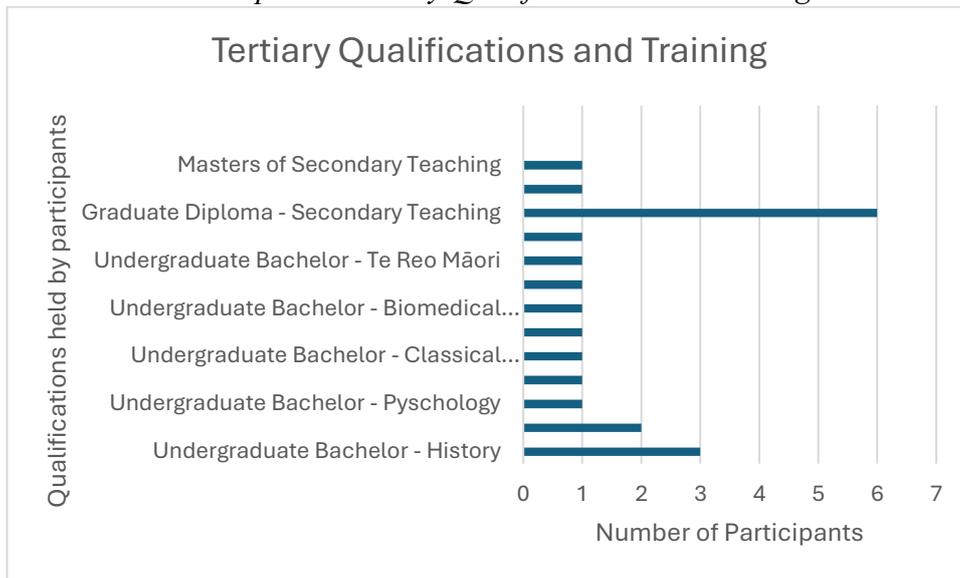


A teacher's training and qualifications have the potential to impact and shape teacher preparedness. The participants in this study hold a variety of tertiary qualifications. This data was essential for understanding whether teacher qualifications contribute to teacher preparedness to implement mātauranga Māori in their respective learning areas.

Participants' tertiary training history and qualifications provided varied exposure to mātauranga Māori. Therefore, understanding the tertiary qualifications participants held provided insight into participants' exposure to mātauranga Māori, Māori pedagogies and revealed their areas of expertise. Many participants majored in dual subject specialities. All tertiary qualifications were earned at universities organised around western academic traditions and western views. Six out of the 8 teachers hold a post graduate teaching diploma (Figure 3). One holds a Masters in secondary teaching and one teacher is currently teaching under the Ako Matatupu TeachNZ programme.

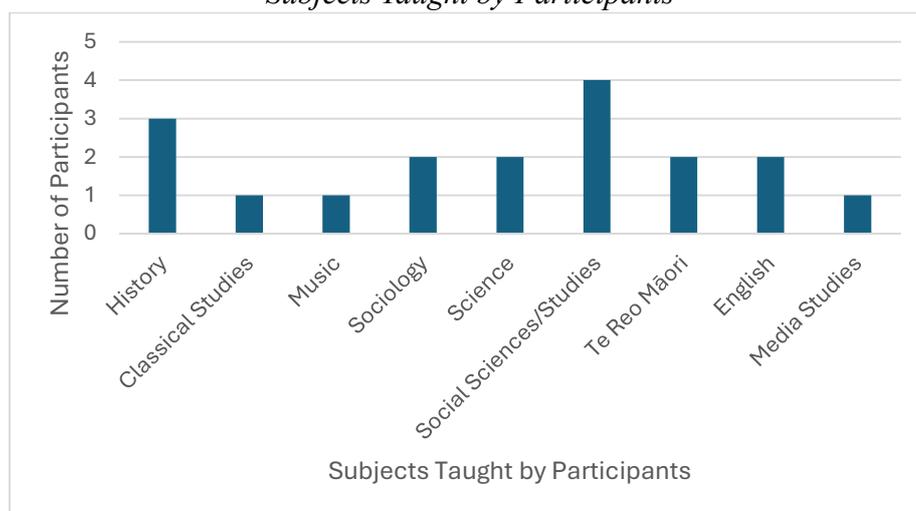
Figure 3

Participants' Tertiary Qualifications and Training



Secondary training and teaching demands subject expertise knowledge and teaching. Different curriculum areas will require different ways of engaging and using mātauranga Māori. Some curriculum areas may currently engage with or incorporate mātauranga Māori and Te Reo (e.g. Social Sciences and Te Reo) to a higher degree than other curriculum areas (Mathematics and Science) and therefore may find the mandated inclusion of mātauranga Māori within the curriculum, requires less PLD. It was important to identify the subject areas participants taught within or across. It is important to note that some of the curriculum learning areas are not represented within the study (Figure 4). Some learning areas were more difficult to engage participants in the research. Consideration should be given to why participants from these subject areas may not have wanted to be involved with this research. The subjects represented within the research cover multiple learning areas including: the Social Sciences, Languages, Science, the Arts and English. Health and Physical Education, Technology and Maths are not represented within the study.

Figure 4
Subjects Taught by Participants



Eight participants were deemed a manageable number for a novice researcher within the research period. While this number of participants does not allow for a comprehensive representation of all variables within the teaching workforce, it can provide indicative theory about teacher preparedness within the Wellington region, which may be extrapolated to the wider profession. Further research will need to be conducted with a larger sample to determine whether the indicative theories are representative of the wider teaching profession.

The iwi participant was selected based on pre-established whakapapa relationships between mana whenua in the research rohe and I. To acknowledge the rangatiratanga and collective nature of iwi, contact was made with iwi and hapū governance organisations to ask if they would like to contribute their voice, experience, and guidance to the research. Iwi are the original caretakers of, and experts in, mātauranga Māori. As such, their perspectives and concerns about the curriculum review, and the preparation of teachers to incorporate mātauranga Māori into their practice, may provide important insights that must be considered when analysing the data from teaching participants. Engaging with iwi through established governance structures was considered the tika (correct) way of involving iwi groups, as it allowed iwi to identify and nominate experts with the collective mandate to speak for the iwi.

By engaging on iwi I held whakapapa connections to, the research was able to honour Māori views that “relationships are the foundation of any research project” (George, 2018, p. 7). Additionally, pre-established genealogical links enabled the researcher to maintain relationships with participants after the research project. The decision to engage with preexisting whakapapa relationships was based on the belief that whanaungatanga plays a significant role in knowledge construction and transmission. Wilson et al. (2022, p. 383) argue

that within iwi and hapū, “limitations are applied to the access to information, restricting it to only those deemed appropriate.” Therefore, these existing iwi relationships were crucial for accessing iwi/hapū knowledge and applying Kaupapa Māori methodology. Engaging iwi I had whakapapa connections to, ensured that I had a foundational understanding of iwi/hapū tikanga, which was essential for behaving ethically within the community. Iwi were offered a consent form ([Appendix 3](#)) and an information sheet ([Appendix 2](#)).

Engaging iwi was challenging due to the demands placed on iwi by social and political events at the time of the research. As a result, I was unable to engage with iwi to the extent initially envisioned, and this has led to a limited iwi data being collected.

Data Collection - Interviews.

Semi-structured interviews were selected as the data collection method for this research because they provide a “unique opportunity to uncover rich and complex information from an individual” (Cavana et al., 2001, p. 138). Interviews align with the Kaupapa Māori preferred method of knowledge preservation, reproduction, and transmission – oral language (Quinn, 2022, p. 3), while also aligning with the preferred methods of constructivist grounded theory. Furthermore, interviews allowed the researcher to identify differences and similarities between the experiences of participants within the study through the transcription and analysis of large amounts of qualitative data.

Interviews provide data in the form of “words and non-verbal communication” collected through the observation and interaction between the researcher and the participant (Denscombe, 2014, p. 308). Denscombe further states that “interviewing is the most appropriate research method for exploring complex and subtle phenomena like opinions, feelings, and experiences—complex issues that call for a detailed understanding of how things work, or privileged information based on someone's experience or position” (2014, p. 215).

Interviews acknowledge the subjectivity of experience and reality, which is required by constructivist philosophy, Grounded Theory, and Kaupapa Māori methodologies. As such, semi-structured interviews were chosen as the data collection method for this study to meet the research objectives and provide richly, detailed data.

The purpose of the interviews was to gain insight into English-medium, secondary teachers’ lived experiences and preparedness to implement mātauranga Māori within the refreshed New Zealand curriculum. Through detailed discussion and reflection on teachers’ lived experiences,

professional development opportunities, educational experiences, relationships, and cultural backgrounds, the researcher was able to gather insights into the potential positioning of the secondary teaching profession to implement the curriculum refresh, and the possible skills and experiences that may influence teachers' perceptions of preparedness.

Teachers were provided with an interview schedule ahead of the interview ([Appendix 4 – Teacher interview schedule](#)). Iwi were also provided with an interview schedule before the hui ([Appendix 5 – Iwi hui schedule](#)) that differed from that of the teacher participants. There were differences in the interview schedules of iwi and teacher participants to ensure that the different level of competency with and relationships to mātauranga Māori was explored within the interviews. Furthermore, it was important the questions addressed the different obligations and relationships to mātauranga Māori created by Te Tiriti for State agents (teachers) and iwi. Through detailed discussion and reflection on teachers' lived experiences, professional development opportunities, educational experiences, relationships, and cultural backgrounds, the researcher was able to gather insights into the potential positioning of the secondary teaching profession to implement the curriculum refresh, and the possible skills and experiences that may influence teachers' perceptions of preparedness. Iwi responses provided further clarification around the role of Te Tiriti, whānau, hapū, and iwi in preparing secondary teachers to incorporate mātauranga Māori into the curriculum. Finally, iwi discussion provided the researcher with considerations iwi (the experts on mātauranga Māori) may have about teacher engagement and implementation of mātauranga Māori.

Data Analysis

The data collected from both the teacher and iwi interviews was analysed through an inductive thematic analysis. Codes were generated and refined, and themes and theories were developed from these codes in alignment with constructivist grounded theory methods.

Boyatzis (1998, p. 4) states that an inductive thematic analysis involves generating themes based on raw data. As such, an inductive analysis approach was deemed appropriate for identifying theory-based research findings. Thematic analysis allows for the complexity of meaning to be captured within a data set. The research used open coding to compare the experiences, perspectives, and reflections of the participants in order to identify codes. Gibbs describes codes as small data items that “exemplify the same theoretical or descriptive idea” (Gibbs, 2012, p. 2).

The data collected for this research was analysed using an open coding approach. Open coding requires the researcher to approach the data without preconceptions, and this approach is promoted by advocates of grounded theory such as Glaser, Strauss, Corbin, and Charmaz. Therefore, an open coding approach was seen as appropriate for research driven by grounded theory and Kaupapa Māori methodology. While all advocates acknowledge that it is impossible to approach data without any preconceived ideas, they argue that applying analysis and interpretation based on pre-existing theory should be avoided. Instead, theory should be drawn from and grounded in the data itself (Gibbs, 2012, p. 9).

The analysis process followed Strauss and Corbin's (1990) three-stage analysis process. Data were organised into phrases, words, and lines of analytical and descriptive code through open coding. Next, axial coding was applied to refine, develop, and interconnect the codes, relating them to one another to form themes. Finally, selective coding was applied to the axial codes to integrate them into theory/themes that told the story of the data within each theme. Boyatzis states that "themes are patterns of explicit ideas drawn from the data or from implicit interpretations of the data." (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 4). These themes were contrasted, compared, and written up as findings to propose theories regarding teacher preparedness to implement mātauranga Māori within the curriculum refresh.

The iwi data was analysed using the same three-stage analysis process. Codes and themes that reflected iwi perspectives and concerns were used to further analyse the data from the teacher interviews, to determine whether Māori concerns regarding teacher preparedness align with the themes emerging from the teacher data.

Credibility - Reliability

Collis and Hussey state that reliability is the "accuracy and precision of the measurement and the absence of differences in the results if the research were repeated" (Collis and Hussey, 2014, p. 52). Reliability can be challenging in constructivist research due to the level of subjectivity inherent in qualitative research methods (Collis & Hussey, 2014, pp. 46–47). As such, different researchers may gather different data and draw different conclusions from the same data because of their experiences, culture, values, and positionality.

To counteract potential negative impacts on the reliability of the results, I identified my positionality and experiences at the beginning of the research process. Walter and Andersen argue that "positioning yourself and explaining your lived experiences is important in

Indigenous methodologies to show your relationship to the data (epistemologies), the ‘subjects,’ and society as a whole” (Walter and Anderson, 2013, p. 96). Identifying one's experiences and positionality acknowledges not only the subjectivity of the research participants but also the subjectivity of the researcher as an instrument through which meaning is constructed.

Situating oneself in the research process forces the researcher to remain conscious of their role in the study and the biases they must consider and work to minimise. I worked to avoid confirmation bias and produce reliable results by engaging with and analysing all data equally. Furthermore, iwi discussions provided an expert lens through which to measure teacher preparedness, as did the achievement objectives of the refreshed curriculum. I continued to revisit these conversations and documents to reaffirm iwi, and state aims and requirements as the measurements of preparedness for teachers. Additionally, discussions with my research supervisors further contributed to minimising researcher bias within the study.

Validity

Validity, like reliability, is a process for assessing the quality of the research design and methods. Research findings are judged to be valid if they accurately measure the phenomenon they claim to measure (Collis & Hussey, 2014, p. 53).

The data collection methods, analysis, and the data collected were chosen based on the appropriateness of the methodologies and philosophies to meet the purpose of the research. As such, it is highly likely that this research is both accurate and appropriate.

Furthermore, a high level of consideration was given to this research's ethical responsibilities to tangata whenua and institutional ethical guidelines. Therefore, the validity of this research is underpinned by a high level of reflexivity and responsibility, both to the communities within which this research was conducted and to the institution to which the researcher is academically accountable.

Limitations

This study was influenced by several notable limitations:

1. **Sample Size:** The small sample size limits the ability to fully represent the diverse experiences of those within the secondary teaching profession, as well as iwi and hapū across the country. Given the diversity of the teaching profession, this study cannot capture the full range of experiences. Additionally, the scope of the research meant that not all curriculum learning areas could be included, and thus subject variability is not accounted for (see Figure 3). The study's regional focus, relying on face-to-face interviews, further restricts the findings to a specific geographic area. A larger and more diverse sample from various regions, iwi, and teaching groups would be needed to provide a more national and comprehensive view.
2. **Māori Epistemologies and Social Structures:** Māori knowledge systems and social structures are collective in nature. As such, the perspectives of individuals within an iwi or hapū cannot fully capture the diversity of experiences and views within the broader community. While the study draws on individuals selected through iwi/hapū trust or board structures, it is important to recognise that these representatives convey a collective perspective, rather than the full range of views within the iwi or hapū. Furthermore, the selection of participants is influenced by my whakapapa connections, with iwi from the local region being prioritised to honour ahi kā, whakapapa, and mana whenua within Kaupapa Māori research. This focus, while culturally significant, means that the experiences of iwi and hapū outside the study's region may not be fully represented.
3. **Researcher as a Tool:** My inexperience as a researcher may have influenced the data collection process. Inexperienced interview techniques could limit the depth of exploration of certain concepts, and the researcher's own cultural background and biases might have influenced data analysis. To mitigate this, participants were given the opportunity to review and amend their transcripts ([Appendix 6 – Transcript release form](#)), ensuring that the data accurately reflected their views. Additionally, the guidance of research supervisors helped identify and address potential biases in the analysis.
4. **Time Constraints:** Time limitations impacted the data collection, analysis, and the ability to track the progression of teacher preparedness as the curriculum refresh unfolds. Further time dedicated to this research would enable a more comprehensive

and longitudinal study of how teacher preparedness evolves over time in relation to the implementation of mātauranga Māori in the curriculum.

5. Literature Gap: Given the recent inclusion of mātauranga Māori in the State curriculum, there is a significant gap in literature regarding the preparedness of teachers to deliver this knowledge. As such, I had to rely on older studies for supporting evidence. I hope this research will contribute valuable insights to the gap in literature on secondary teacher competency in engaging with and transmitting mātauranga Māori within English-medium secondary schools.
6. Perceptions vs. Actual Preparedness: Many teacher participants are non-Māori and may lack experience with mātauranga Māori. Consequently, their perceptions of their own preparedness might not accurately reflect their true levels of competence. Without established metrics within the profession to assess understanding of mātauranga Māori, teachers may struggle to gauge how much they know and how much they still need to learn. Furthermore, existing State-driven metrics may not fully capture the depth of mātauranga Māori as defined by iwi and hapū, potentially distorting the assessment of teachers' preparedness.
7. Transcription Limitations: Accurate transcription is critical to capturing the depth of interview data. Given my inexperience, there may be limitations in the richness and detail of the transcriptions. To mitigate potential inaccuracies, participants were asked to verify the accuracy of their transcripts.

Ethical Considerations

This research was approved by the Massey University Ethics Review Committee (Application: OM2 23/42) prior to the recruitment or contact of potential participants. Ethical principles were central to the planning and design of the study. These principles were grounded in Massey University's human ethics guidelines and were further informed by a Kaupapa Māori framework, which incorporates key values from mātauranga Māori.

Consent

To uphold ethical research practices, precautionary measures were taken at all stages of the research process—before, during, and after the interviews. All participants were provided with

clear information about the purpose, aims, and methodology of the study. Each participant was made aware that participation was voluntary, and all components of the research were optional. An information sheet ([Appendix 1](#)) and consent form ([Appendix 3](#)) were given to participants, who were encouraged to ask questions and seek clarification. Voluntary informed consent was obtained from all participants before the commencement of interviews, and participants were informed that they could withdraw from the research.

After transcription, the interview transcripts were returned to participants for review, allowing them to ensure that their experiences and the interpretation of their data accurately reflected their views. This process provided an opportunity for further dialogue regarding consent and the accuracy of the data. This practice aligns with the Kaupapa Māori view that research is an ongoing dialogue and a relational process, and that “consent is contingent” (Quinn, 2022, p. 3).

In accordance with Māori ethical practices, iwi authorities, rather than individual community members, were approached for consent. This reflects the collective nature of Māori society and the importance of whānau relationships. The terms of engagement for the research within the iwi were defined by the iwi itself, guided by the ethical principles of their tūkanga.

Harm

There is a low chance of reputational harm to the teachers who agree to be involved in this study. Situational information may offer clues as to the identity or location of the participant. To mitigate this specific situational information was removed and replaced with collective nouns that reduce the ability to identify participants. Furthermore, to maintain confidentiality, minimal information has been stated alongside participant quotes (participant number, and/or subject). Such steps were taken to avoid harm to participants and schools as a lack of preparedness could be perceived negatively by the public or Māori communities. Ensuring the anonymity of participants and the educational institution they teach at was important to ensure participants' professional reputations are protected.

Any research into systemic or state institutions' historical and ongoing treatment of Māori (their taonga, values, beliefs, knowledge, and practices) has the potential to cause harm for Māori. Māori are frequently subjected to social, cultural, and spiritual harm when elements of Te Ao Māori make their way into the mainstream, therefore it is hard to conduct research about the State's interaction with Māori without Māori being exposed to harm. However, this research

has tried to remedy the extent of harm by giving Māori voice within the research and allowing Kaupapa Māori methodologies to dictate the processes and ethical standards within the research. By seeking rangatiratanga and focusing on what iwi want from the curriculum changes and whether/how mainstream education can achieve this. This research can offer a sense of rangatiratanga for iwi. Hopefully, this sense of rangatiratanga, the ability to consent or decline involvement in this research and the Kaupapa Māori methodology will ensure harm is mitigated or reduced.

Confidentiality and Data Security

To maintain the privacy and confidentiality of participants, no identifying names were included in the report. Instead, participants were assigned numerical identifiers to ensure anonymity. Throughout the research, a focus on the protection of data, such as transcripts, was emphasised. All specific descriptors that could potentially identify educational institutions, participants, students, or prominent community members were removed. This approach reflects a strong commitment to safeguarding participant privacy and ensuring confidentiality throughout the study. Confidentiality within research has historically allowed researchers to silence indigenous voices and lay claim to indigenous knowledge as newly discovered knowledge. Consequently, western researchers and academics are positioned as the ‘experts’ on indigenous knowledge (Lomawaima, 2000, p.5) effectively displacing Māori lived experience with the authoritative voice of the expert (Bishop, 2011, p.3). As such iwi and iwi participants were asked to define their own position on confidentiality. In line with kaupapa Māori methodology, this practice allowed iwi to assert their own autonomy over their positioning, aspirations, experiences and knowledge conveyed within research allowing iwi to lay claim to their data.

Relationships

As a researcher with deep professional ties within the Wellington teaching community, there may be potential conflicts arising from personal relationships with teachers and colleagues. Having taught in the region throughout my entire career, I have developed both friendships and collaborative work relationships with many of the educators in the area. This context could create a perceived obligation for teachers with whom I have an existing relationship to participate in the research. This, in turn, could influence the data, as participants may feel the need to provide answers that align with expectations, or may not feel comfortable presenting a

true reflection of their experiences or perspectives. Therefore, care was taken to acknowledge and mitigate any potential biases or influence stemming from these pre-existing relationships.

Justice, Beneficence, and Te Tiriti

Given the nature of this research and its focus on mātauranga Māori, it is vital to ensure that Māori voices are central in the research process, in alignment with Te Tiriti o Waitangi principles of protection, partnership, and participation. Māori knowledge (mātauranga Māori) is a taonga (treasure) that must be protected, as guaranteed by Te Tiriti. This protection must be defined by Māori, acknowledging that only through active partnerships and the inclusion of Māori perspectives can the research address how mātauranga Māori is integrated into State curricula.

Justice and beneficence are fundamental ethical principles that guide this research. Education has historically been used as a State tool to suppress the transmission of mātauranga Māori. There is a clear need to ensure that its reintroduction into the curriculum is done thoughtfully and with care. The integration of mātauranga Māori must be managed in a way that respects and preserves the mana (prestige) of Māori knowledge, the Māori students who may encounter their culture in a formal classroom setting for the first time, and the wider Māori communities from which this knowledge originates.

Therefore, this research is motivated by the desire to equip the teaching profession with the knowledge and skills needed to engage with mātauranga Māori in a manner that is both safe and respectful. The goal is to generate key findings that will contribute to a deeper understanding of the factors influencing teachers' preparedness to include mātauranga Māori in their teaching practices, their comprehension of Māori epistemologies, and the evolving relationship between iwi (Māori tribes) and the teaching profession. This research ultimately aims to foster a more culturally responsive and inclusive educational environment for all students.

The Ethics of Inclusion

Ethics in research cannot be divorced from the historical, social, and political contexts in which it occurs, particularly when examining the interactions between the State and marginalised or minority communities. This research is no exception, as it recognises the significant influence of historical events and policies on the shaping of the educational landscape in New Zealand. One of the most crucial ethical considerations in this study is the power dynamic between the

dominant Pākehā (European-descended) majority and the Māori community, whose perspectives have historically been marginalised.

Colonisation has led to the dominance of Pākehā voices across many sectors of society, including the education system, where Pākehā teachers make up the majority. As a result, data from Pākehā participants, especially in the context of a study on Māori culture and epistemology, risks being disproportionately represented in the discourse. This imbalance raises critical questions about whose voices are heard and valued in educational research, especially when exploring topics related to Māori lived experience and knowledge systems.

While the Pākehā perspectives are crucial to understanding the broader societal context, it must not overshadow or diminish the significance of Māori voices, particularly in research focused on mātauranga Māori. The dominant Pākehā voice, while possibly well-intentioned, may lack the depth of understanding or lived experience that Māori participants can bring to the table. In this way, there is an ethical concern about the potential for Pākehā voices to unintentionally "speak over" or dilute the Māori perspective, especially in discussions where Māori epistemologies—rooted in a deep, historical, and cultural connection to the land, people, and ancestors—are concerned.

The ethics of inclusion, therefore, requires the researcher to critically examine how different voices and perspectives are weighted in the research process. It raises the question: should the voices of those who practice and live by a particular epistemology—such as Māori teachers, iwi leaders, and other Māori community members—carry more weight than the voices of those who are external to or unfamiliar with that epistemology? This question is essential, as it brings into focus the issue of epistemological power, where the dominant group often sets the terms of what is considered valid or legitimate knowledge.

This research acknowledges the complexity of this issue and recognises that mātauranga Māori exists as a continuum of knowledge. Minority voices, particularly those of Māori participants, are not only valuable but essential to understanding the full scope of the issue. The frequency with which certain ideas or perspectives are mentioned by Māori participants does not automatically determine their significance. In fact, the less frequent but deeply insightful contributions of Māori voices may offer crucial perspectives that are hidden or overshadowed by the dominant majority. These "less frequent" contributions can challenge and enrich our understanding, providing key insights that help to preserve and protect the mana of mātauranga Māori.

Thus, this research commits to an ethical approach that elevates Māori voices within the discourse, ensuring that their knowledge and experiences are not just included but are prioritised in shaping the understanding of how mātauranga Māori is being integrated into the curriculum. It calls for an active, conscious effort to create space for those who hold and practice Māori epistemologies, in order to counterbalance the historically dominant perspectives of Pākehā and to create a more equitable and inclusive research process.

Literature Review

Teachers are the frontline of formal knowledge transmission in the state education system. Therefore, there is an expectation that they have the competence, capability, and confidence to participate effectively in the transmission of knowledge. Within secondary schools, teachers shape curriculum content and delivery, student exposure to information and ideas, students' sense of belonging, and their ability to experience success both in the secondary system and the wider world. Curricula are interpreted through the experiences, education, knowledge frameworks, and values of teachers. Consequently, curriculum policy will only be as effective as the agents and institutions through which it is interpreted. The curriculum review and refresh began in 2019, and the current iteration demands the inclusion of mātauranga Māori across all learning areas and levels of the New Zealand Curriculum. The data collected from this study aims to explore how prepared teachers feel to incorporate mātauranga Māori into their practice. The research methods were designed to gather data from teachers regarding their perspectives by exploring their views on their preparation, skills, and knowledge to incorporate mātauranga Māori into the refreshed curriculum. Eighty-two percent of the English-medium, secondary teaching community are non-Māori, educated in Western institutions as subject experts in Western disciplines. Secondary teachers will need a solid understanding of mātauranga Māori to meaningfully and safely implement the curriculum refresh within their subject areas. However, as mātauranga Māori has historically been omitted from the New Zealand Curriculum (NZC) and from Initial Teacher Education (ITE) requirements, there is a gap in research concerning teacher competency and preparedness to engage with and deliver these epistemologies. Consequently, this research aims to contribute data to address this gap. This study also aims to provide insight into the influences, demands, and experiences shaping secondary teachers' preparedness to incorporate mātauranga Māori into their programs of teaching and learning, and the impact this may have on the implementation of the refreshed curriculum and mātauranga Māori.

Mātauranga Māori

Mātauranga Māori is a relatively recent term coined to describe the interaction between Western knowledge and what Tina Ngata refers to as mātauranga-a-hapū at a national level (Tuturu, 2023). Within these hapū-based cultural systems of knowledge is everything that is important in the lives of Māori people (H. M. Mead, 2022). Pre-colonisation, mātauranga-ahapū operated as closed systems of knowledge. The knowledge originated within the familial units of iwi and

hapū, and these localised, family-based epistemologies acted as “cohesive binding agents that maintained the community” (Tau, 2001, p. 64). Mātauranga a hapū were living epistemologies, they were negotiated, transmitted, learned and practiced within the daily life of the hapū. Mātauranga Maori were relative and relational knowledge systems which sought to create knowledge and order by whakapapa (Tau, 2001). Knowledge reaffirmed individuals’ connection to others, the natural world, and the atua and these connections, or whakapapa, provide a potent form of accountability for individual whānau members and for the whānau collective (Kruger et al. 2004) not only in terms of knowledge transmission, but individual and collective behaviour and the way hapū interacted with te taiao. As such mātauranga a hapū was not transmitted simply for the sake of knowledge transmission, the knowledge carried with it spiritual and social obligations. Knowledge can be viewed as a social contract by Māori, the transmission of knowledge can bring with it responsibilities, codes of behaviour and relationships. Therefore, conversations between educators and iwi/hapū may be required to establish safeguards and codes of behaviour for the transmission of mātauranga a hapū. Mātauranga a hapū was enacted in daily life because the essence of indigenous knowledge is that it is alive in indigenous people’s culture. Different from western knowledge it is neither in archives, nor in laboratories (Mauriel, 1999, p.63). Therefore, mātauranga-a-hapū is tied to the identity of iwi and hapū and, must be treated with great care during implementation into the curriculum. Mātauranga-a-hapū would be the most accurate term for the localised epistemologies secondary schools are asked to engage with by the refreshed curriculum. However, as the research participants are drawn from the rohe of multiple iwi and hapū, the term mātauranga Māori was deemed appropriate to represent the multiple iwi and hapū epistemologies that are being engaged with by the participants’ schools. Furthermore, the term mātauranga Māori acknowledges the continued interaction of western knowledge and systems with mātauranga-a-hapū in State policy.

Refreshing the Curriculum

The issues of curriculum content, structure, and purpose have been a ‘site of political and educational struggle between Māori and the state for over 100 years’ (Trinick & Heaton, 2020, p. 1). Educating a nation is a political and social act, and curriculum documents are political negotiations of national aspirations. Sheehan posits that ‘school curricula are not designed in a vacuum. They tend to reflect wider societal concerns’ (2012, p. 210). For colonial nations such as Aotearoa New Zealand, these concerns often centre on and empower the perpetuation of homogeneous Western norms (Stewart, 2020) and the subjugation of knowledge frameworks

that challenge imperial dominance (Walker, 2016). According to Ka'ai Mahuta (2011), New Zealand's curriculum is a colonial tool used to aid in the 'reproduction of the dominant worldview' (Turner-Adams & Rubie-Davies, 2023, p. 455) through the selection and validation of knowledge within the state curriculum (Bernstein, 1971).

The curriculum aimed to "civilise" and segregate the indigenous population by "decoupling Māori from their culture" (ACORD, 1986, p. 1) and realigning their alliances (Simon, 1994) to view New Zealand nationhood and citizenship as beneficial and right (Trinick & Heaton, 2020). Early schooling in New Zealand was about nation-building, justifying the settlers' occupation, and cementing their role as citizens of this land. The education system and its curriculum worked to create the myths and collective identity essential to a European, Christian nation by asserting the uniqueness and superiority of the European experience (Goody, 2007). Alongside state legislation such as the Tohunga Suppression Act (1907), state policy proved effective in disrupting the transmission and practice of mātauranga-a-hapū. The deliberate and overt marginalisation of mātauranga Māori in favour of a Western knowledge base allowed the state to "subjugate indigenous spiritual belief and knowledge systems and dismantle first peoples' societies, culture, social cohesion, and families" (Human Rights Commission, 2022, p. 71). The control Pākehā held over the curriculum "created a two-tier system of education that affirmed Pākehā dominance and Māori subordination" (Walker, 2016, p. 26).

Furthermore, the hierarchies, systems, curriculum, and professional requirements of teachers reflect "historical, political, cultural, social, religious, and economic factors" within society (Mutch, 2001, p. 75). The delivery of the state's curriculum by teachers, as agents of Western academia, creates further homogeneity through the replication of worldviews, epistemological frameworks, resource selection, language, and skill preferences (Francis, 2008). Aotearoa's curriculum and teaching profession play a significant and explicit role in the marginalisation of mātauranga-a-hapū (G. Smith, 2000) and the dominance of Western knowledge, resulting in a population whose knowledge base is firmly rooted in Western academic traditions and "bereft of methodologies to engage with other knowledge systems" (L. Smith, 2022, p. 74). Mahuika et al. (2011, p. 185) argue that "Pākehā culture has long been the norm in the New Zealand education system", and the dominance of Pākehā culture has nurtured an unawareness (Hetaraka, 2020; Te Huia, 2016) which is reproduced through education systems, pedagogical choices, and teaching practices (Torepe, 2018).

The Labour government announced a refresh of both the New Zealand Curriculum (NZC) and Te Marautanga o Aotearoa¹ to ensure the documents remained “fit for purpose” and that essential learning wasn’t “left to chance” (Ministry of Education, 2023). Curricula are tools for preparing populations for change and are therefore adapted to reflect societal priorities and concerns. A combination of health, economic, and geopolitical volatility, combined with growing social and environmental pressures, is shaping demand for new occupations and skills (World Economic Forum, 2023). Such social and political changes have seen societal shifts regarding “what knowledge is valued” (Chamberlain et al., 2021, pp. 6-13), and this shift sees mātauranga Māori acknowledged in policy as a potentially valid knowledge framework (Mercury & Wood, 2022). The 2019 review aimed to “give effect to Te Tiriti through a shift from acknowledgement to authentic understanding and valuing of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and its principles” (Ministry of Education, 2023, p. 11). The curriculum aims to achieve this by placing mātauranga Māori at the heart of learning areas (Ministry of Education, 2023). The refreshed curriculum provides detailed and direct guidance on the inclusion of mātauranga Māori, thus reflecting a much more concerted effort to enact Te Tiriti principles in policy (Ministry of Education, 2023). The curriculum refresh provides not only an opportunity for the state to address its Te Tiriti obligations through the specific inclusion of mātauranga Māori and te reo within the teaching and learning programs and assessments of every secondary learning area, but also to serve the needs of ākonga Māori by enabling identities and cultural backgrounds to be “legitimated, included, and expressed within the learning contexts in which they are situated” (Ministry of Education, 2023, p. 11). The implementation process will determine whether mātauranga Māori is valued and, therefore, whether Te Tiriti is honoured.

Policy Promises and the Reality of Implementation

The refreshed curriculum promises much to Māori and has the potential to be transformative for the worldview of tangata Tiriti. However, the curriculum must be interpreted and implemented by educational institutions and individual teachers. Bardach states that “frameworks and policy ideas that sound great in theory often fail under conditions of actual implementation. The implementation process has a life of its own” (Bardach, 2012, p. 42). Through their interpretation of the curriculum, teachers will influence the extent to which learners experience mātauranga Māori (Chamberlain et al., 2021). This may be problematic, as

¹ National curriculum document for Kura Māori and Kura Kaupapa Māori.

research suggests teachers have not experienced enough of te ao Māori to accurately transmit Māori understandings, language, and knowledge systems (Turner-Adams & Rubie-Davies, 2023; Stevens, 2019). The refreshed curriculum is a flexible document that leaves much room for interpretation and application. Consequently, “teachers’ strengths and areas of confidence and, conversely, weakness and uncertainty” will play a large role in determining “what our learners do and do not experience” (Chamberlain et al., 2021, p. 24). Therefore, because many teachers have only limited knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of mātauranga Māori (Honey, 2014), their implementation of mātauranga Māori in the curriculum is unlikely to be reflective of Māori language and culture (Taani, 2023). Rather, mātauranga Māori will likely be distorted through teachers’ “own cultural understandings and beliefs” (Mikaere, 2011, p. 243). This is problematic, as research from Bishop and Berryman (2006) reveals that some teachers were perceived to pathologize Māori, leaning into deficient theories and biases. Poutama Pounamu’s *Te Hurihanganui* (2020) argues that “biases and institutional racism plague our education system” because the system validates problematic pathologizing views of Māori, so they are viewed as “natural” or “normal.” The education system has perpetuated “Western notions of superior cultural and social norms” (Johnston, 2001, p. 2), and teachers are, by and large, products of this system.

Sheehan (2021, p. 211) claims that, ‘at the point of implementation, teachers do not operate as autonomous entities’ when it comes to curriculum making. The institution and governance within which a secondary teacher works will shape and impact the preparedness and capacity of the teacher to implement the curriculum refresh (Turner-Adams & Rubie-Davies, 2023). The non-teaching school community (leadership and boards of trustees) will influence the extent to which mātauranga Māori is embedded in programs of teaching and learning, as leadership plays an important role in accelerating or hindering social change (Ferrier-Kerr et al., 2015) through resource allocation, school policy, and structural decisions (Berryman et al., 2014). Questions must be asked as to whether the curriculum refresh will achieve the desired Te Tiriti outcomes when the monocultural system through which mātauranga Māori will be interpreted remains antagonistic toward other frameworks of knowledge (L. Smith, 2022). Mercury and Wood suggest that there is a “high risk that intended education policies can fail or be poorly implemented unless we understand the complex factors that shape policy implementation in schools” (Mercury and Wood, 2022, p. 25).

Research on Teacher Perceptions of Preparedness to Incorporate Mātauranga Māori

The teaching profession is dominated by 73% (52,680) Pākehā teachers (Teacher Numbers | Education Counts, 2022), who have largely been educated within the monocultural system they now teach in. Kaplan and Owings argue that “what a teacher brings to the classroom—both in terms of teaching quality and the application of their knowledge—has a significant impact on student learning and achievement” (Kaplan and Owings, 2002, p. 22-41). Consequently, it is crucial that the teaching profession is prepared and knowledgeable about mātauranga Māori to implement the refreshed curriculum. However, there is limited educational research on the preparedness and competency levels of English-medium, secondary teachers to incorporate mātauranga Māori across the secondary curriculum. This research aims to address this gap.

The promotion of Western knowledge within the “monocultural and monolingual” State education system (Bishop & Glynn, 2003, p. 222), coupled with the historic lack of professional obligations for teachers to include mātauranga Māori within the curriculum (Chamberlain et al., 2021) may explain this research gap. Excluding te reo teachers, teachers currently in kura auraki have not been mandated to hold specific levels of knowledge or qualifications in mātauranga Māori or te reo Māori. Accordingly, with no clear demand to incorporate mātauranga Māori, there has been no definitive benchmark for measuring secondary teachers' proficiency in te reo Māori or mātauranga Māori (Taani, 2023, p. 28; Tito, 2008).

Over the past 30 years, much educational policy has been developed to address the failings of the State, English-medium, education system in delivering for Māori students. Documents such as *Tataiako* (2008), *Ka Hikitia: Ka Hapaitia* (2024), and *Kia Eke Panuku* (2013-2016) have prioritised teachers' ability to relate to and effectively teach Māori students, making it a key area for educational practice and research. Findings from studies by Bishop and Glynn (1999), Bishop and Berryman (2006), and Macfarlane (2010) reveal that teachers' success and preparedness to teach Māori students hinge on their knowledge and learning experiences, their willingness to improve their capabilities, and their attitudes towards Māori students. Much of this research draws connections between language, culture, identity, and educational outcomes (Taani, 2023). Therefore, research into teachers' ability to effectively teach Māori students provides valuable insights into current levels of preparedness and competency.

Research by the Education Review Office (2020b) highlights a fundamental challenge to the implementation of the curriculum refresh and the inclusion of mātauranga Māori within kura auraki. A key issue is the small pool of teachers with expertise in mātauranga Māori and fluency

in te reo. Research into graduating teachers' perceptions of preparedness paints a similar picture to their certified colleagues: they do not feel adequately prepared to include te reo and mātauranga Māori in their classrooms (Moon, 2023; Education Review Office, 2024; Barr & Seales, 2018). Kane and Fontaine (2008) found that graduating teachers did not perceive themselves as prepared to address Māori educational needs, nor did they feel confident in their ability to communicate in te reo Māori. Furthermore, they reported low confidence in their understanding of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and its implications for teaching. This lack of confidence raises concerns about teachers' ability to not only translate knowledge of Te Tiriti into practice but also to meet professional teaching codes of practice (Shand, 2007). Honey warns that this could lead to Te Tiriti being seen as "an isolated topic" (2014, pp. 118-120) rather than an integral part of teaching philosophy, with deficit theories and cultural superiority remaining unchallenged and perpetuated within the education system.

Western knowledge has long been valued and accepted as the mainstream or norm in education (Mahuika et al., 2011). This dominance has created an unconscious bias among many teachers regarding the need for, and value of, te reo and mātauranga Māori (Chamberlain et al., 2021; Barr & Seales, 2018). The failure of successive governments to elevate te reo and mātauranga Māori to the same level as Western knowledge, or to specify professional competence requirements for mātauranga Māori, has contributed to a workforce that may not have the expertise necessary to implement curriculum change in a meaningful and effective way (Stewart, 2020). This lack of expertise limits the range of learning experiences teachers can offer, their confidence in incorporating te reo and mātauranga Māori, and their ability to assess student progress (Education Review Office, 2020). Such limitations should raise concerns for educational governance and the impact that teachers' current knowledge levels may have on students' understanding of te ao Māori. Additionally, this gap in knowledge raises questions about the State's adherence to the principles of protection under Te Tiriti, given the potential for harm resulting from the "colonisation of local knowledge systems by Eurocentric thought" (Macfarlane et al., 2020, p. 193).

Research indicates that teachers feel less confident in incorporating te reo and mātauranga Māori than they do tikanga Māori (Education Review Office, 2020). This may be because "tikanga allows teachers to draw upon their own values" (Taani, 2023, p. 19). This interpretation and meaning-making process may present a significant danger for Māori epistemologies. Mātauranga Māori taught outside of Māori contexts, epistemologies, and

communities creates a further challenge for teachers when translating concepts into English, as these concepts exist within non-Western knowledge frameworks (Vaeau & Trundle, 2020). *Te Ao Māori* encompasses ways of thinking, doing, and being that are intrinsic and difficult to describe or define for non-Māori (Keown, Parker & Tiakiwai, 2005). Such translations may lead to oversimplified or inaccurate definitions of values and concepts that do not fully reflect the “reality of the community from which they originate” (Stuart, 2003, p. 51). Accurate translation requires both breadth and depth of knowledge.

Research (New Zealand Post Primary Teachers’ Association, 2017; Honey, 2014; Moon, 2023) shows that teachers' awareness of their own competence led to feelings of inadequacy and a lack of confidence. Some reported feeling "challenged by the Māori language level and knowledge held by some students in their classroom" (Taani, 2023, p. 22). These feelings highlight the hierarchical relationships inherent in many teachers' pedagogical practices. This may reflect a lack of understanding or use of Māori pedagogical approaches, such as *Ako*, and the “overwhelming dominance of Western pedagogical theories in teacher education and professional development” (Hynds et al., 2011, p. 341). It may also indicate a reluctance to position themselves as learners within the classroom (Taani, 2023). Eurocentrism is embedded in every aspect of the education system, and the teaching of *mātauranga Māori* and the honouring of Te Tiriti cannot occur in isolation from systemic reflection and change (Poutama Pounamu, 2020).

Many graduate teachers who felt prepared upon entering the profession often came to the realisation that they were not adequately prepared to address Māori cultural needs or include Māori epistemologies in their classrooms (Education Review Office, 2024). This realisation had a “negative impact on their confidence” as teachers (Honey, 2014, p. 80). These realisations demonstrate that teacher perceptions of preparedness can be shaped by ‘epistemologies of ignorance’—teachers often ‘do not know what they do not know’ until they are exposed to new learning that becomes relevant in context. This view is supported by research from Anthony et al. (2008), who found that graduate teachers wanted more knowledge of "Māori things" once they entered the profession (Kenrick, 2010). Further research by the Education Review Office reveals that 82% of Māori new teachers felt prepared to give effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi, compared to 56% of non-Māori new teachers (Education Review Office, 2024, p. 5). Te Tiriti holds greater importance for Māori than for Tangata Tiriti (nonMāori), who “often view it as irrelevant” (Gibson et al., 2020, pp. 97-100) and engage with it in a perfunctory manner.

Individual experiences and worldviews influence the way people engage with and prioritise initial teacher education (ITE) content. Research suggests that teachers with little engagement with mātauranga Māori may view its inclusion in the curriculum as irrelevant (Moon, 2023) and may neglect its implementation in their practice. This has significant implications for the curriculum refresh, its goals of honouring Te Tiriti, and improving Māori educational outcomes, while also raising questions about the appropriateness of current ITE programs to meet the changing demands of the profession and the refreshed curriculum.

Lastly, with the current teacher shortage and government emigration policies (RNZ News, 2024) targeting overseas-trained teachers (OTTs) to address the shortage, it is crucial to understand the preparedness of OTTs to implement the new curriculum. Research by the Education Review Office states that half of all OTTs felt they understood Te Tiriti o Waitangi and tikanga Māori and their implications for teaching practice (Education Review Office, 2020a, p. 16). However, principals were less certain of OTTs' understanding: only 33% believed OTTs understood tikanga, and 28% thought they understood Te Tiriti and its implications for teaching. Furthermore, some OTTs expressed frustration when corrected or advised on cultural norms. OTTs may require extensive professional development to ensure they understand how to effectively implement Te Tiriti in their practice.

Defining Preparedness

A key concept within this research is the notion of preparedness. What does it mean to be prepared for teaching in New Zealand classrooms? What current measures exist within the teaching profession to help secondary teachers define their preparedness to incorporate mātauranga Māori into secondary curriculum areas? Defining preparedness is a complex task. Constructivist theorists, such as Bruner (1996), argue that experiences, cultural upbringing, class, and gender shape an individual's understanding of what is "real" in terms of meaning. Consequently, teachers' perceived levels of preparedness will be based on their own interpretation and experiences of what it means to be prepared. Therefore, the concept of preparedness must be unpacked to understand how teachers interpret preparedness and how this may influence the secondary teaching sector's implementation of the refreshed curriculum. Preparedness implies a process of preparation. To be prepared is defined as "bringing into suitable condition for some future action or purpose; to be/make ready in advance" (Oxford English Dictionary). In Aotearoa New Zealand, initial teacher education (ITE) programs

provide teachers with the learning and qualifications necessary to teach. ITE plays a pivotal role in ensuring the teaching workforce is well-prepared to meet the needs of diverse learners, their whānau/families, and communities (Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand, 2022). The Teaching Council states that ITE programs must provide theoretical knowledge of pedagogy, the curriculum, assessment, learning, and educational policy while also ensuring preservice teachers gain sufficient practical experience and “understand their professional commitments to Te Tiriti o Waitangi” (The Teaching Council, 2022, p. 7). However, much literature suggests that preservice teachers are not sufficiently prepared by these programs to teach, nor are they prepared to teach ākonga Māori or incorporate mātauranga Māori (Education Review Office, 2024; Taani, 2023; Education Review Office, 2020; Honey, 2014).

In New Zealand, teaching training, qualifications, proficiency, and fitness for the profession are determined and monitored by the Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand, *Matatū Aotearoa*. The Council provides the *Code of Professional Responsibility and Standards for the Teaching Profession* (Ngā Paerewa), which offers a framework for measuring and guiding teacher preparedness. However, the Teaching Council’s codes and standards provide no specific level of skill for teachers to be considered qualified or competent in relation to mātauranga Māori and te reo Māori (Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand, 2022; Taani, 2023). This lack of expectation has shaped how the profession has historically engaged with Māori knowledge.

The work of academic Linda Darling-Hammond offers models of teacher preparedness, emphasising the need for teachers to be “knowledgeable about their subject area, able to translate theory and knowledge into practice, and able to create safe and inclusive learning environments” for their students (Darling-Hammond & Baratz-Snowden, 2005, pp. 112–121). One could argue that while these skills are essential for teachers, these models do not account for the inclusion of indigenous epistemologies within a curriculum historically dominated by Western knowledge (Fitzgerald & Knipe, 2019). Darling-Hammond’s criteria fail to address cultural and pedagogical dominance and the legacy of assimilative curricula and pedagogy. Therefore, Western models of teacher preparedness may fall short in providing the culturally responsive, reflective, and aware teachers needed to navigate dual knowledge systems within the curriculum.

The Profession's Measures of Preparedness

To enter the secondary teaching profession in Aotearoa New Zealand, teachers must have completed an undergraduate degree in an approved learning area subject, followed by a graduate diploma in secondary teaching or a Master of Teaching and Learning. Most of these courses are firmly based in Western academic traditions and mātauranga Māori is neither “defined nor taught as a discipline” within Western academic frameworks (Tau, 1999, p. 66). As such, there is little pre-service training provided to educate teachers about Māori knowledge systems.

After initial training, teachers must demonstrate that they meet the requirements of the Graduating Teacher Standards and then serve two years as a beginning teacher before gaining full certification (Stephenson & Rio, 2023). Ongoing certification requires teachers to demonstrate their commitment and adherence to the codes of the profession, as outlined in *The Code of Professional Responsibility and Standards for the Teaching Profession* (2017) and the connected certification process. These codes and standards set collective expectations for the profession, guiding teachers in their professional development and practice. These codes are intended as a learning tool to assist teachers in engaging in professional learning conversations about their practice (The Teaching Council, 2017). Consequently, these codes play an important role in professional development, teaching certification, and determining who is suitable to teach the nation’s youth.

These standards have a significant impact on judgments of preparedness and competency within the secondary sector. However, there is little research regarding how effective the standards are in ensuring teachers progress their understanding of mātauranga Māori and te reo Māori, nor do they set a base standard of competency in these areas.

The codes and standards demand that “teachers demonstrate a commitment to providing highquality and effective teaching and a commitment to tangata whenuatanga and Te Tiriti o Waitangi partnership in the learning environment” (Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand, 2017, p. 10). Aitken et al. critique these standards, noting that “they are often expressed in a passive, non-applied manner” (Aitken et al., 2013, p. 9). This aspirational positioning means that the behaviours deemed sufficient to meet the standard are interpreted by the senior leader or mentor responsible for signing off certification within a school. This leads to a highly variable degree of mātauranga Māori competency across the profession.

Of the 483 individuals in secondary school tūmuaki (principal) roles, less than 18% of these leaders are Māori (Ministry of Education, 2020a). There is a gap in the literature exploring secondary principals' and senior leaders' knowledge of mātauranga Māori. Consequently, it is difficult to determine what level of competence and qualifications school leaders possess to assess and certify the cultural competence and preparedness of their staff. However, Alansari et al. found that 50% of secondary principals surveyed, were only able to speak simple words or phrases in te reo Māori, and 21% were able to say only a few basic words (Alansari et al., 2023, p. 46).

Te reo Māori is only one aspect of mātauranga Māori, but as Tau argues, a grasp of mātauranga is dependent on a solid understanding of te reo Māori (Tau, 1999). These findings suggest that those responsible for assessing the competency and preparedness of the teaching profession may not be competent or confident in their own knowledge of mātauranga Māori. Furthermore, the low levels of te reo proficiency among secondary leaders may reflect a broader view within secondary leadership about the value of te reo and mātauranga Māori in kura auraki (English-medium, State schools) and a general lack of cultural competency within senior leadership.

Cultural Measures of Preparedness

As previously discussed, the lack of expertise and specific measures within state policy and professional codes creates ambiguity, which can lead to inaction and ineffectiveness. The State and its institutions must partner with iwi and hapū when engaging with mātauranga Māori to ensure they are guided by those who hold the knowledge (Ministry of Education, 2023). Iwi and hapū are the stewards of Māori cultural knowledge in Aotearoa New Zealand, and they possess the competency and understanding to provide specific, culturally grounded measures of preparedness for the teaching profession. Therefore, they should be actively involved in curriculum design.

However, research from the New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER) principal's perspectives survey indicates a gap in this area. The survey found that 48% of participants reported that their local curriculum had been developed with input from local hapū and/or iwi. Furthermore, only 52% of the schools involved in the survey had participated in professional development (PD) delivered by iwi and/or hapū (Alansari et al., 2023).

Kawa and tikanga provide the primary interface for accessing repositories of cultural knowledge and experience (Hudson & Group, 2010). Therefore, measures of teacher

preparedness must arise from within the cultural frameworks of the community from which the knowledge originates. A focus on localised curricula highlights the need for secondary schools and their teachers to establish ongoing relationships with iwi and hapū (Ministry of Education, 2023). Māori are the most qualified to speak for their iwi and hapū, and as such, iwi and hapū may have regionally distinct measures of preparedness for teachers engaging with their knowledge systems (Wilson, 2017).

This research does not attempt to speak for iwi or hapū, as their aspirations and strategic goals are deeply connected to their own cultural and educational priorities. Iwi strategic plans reflect aspirations for Māori education and the revitalisation of mātauranga Māori (Te Rūnanga o Toa Rangatira, 2022; Ngāti Kahungunu Iwi Incorporated, 2022). Often, iwi strategic plans are linked to rangatiratanga, and as such, their ambitions may lie outside the domain of State education institutions or, where relevant, be enacted in partnership with State schools. Further research is needed to explore how state secondary schools are engaging with iwi educational strategic plans, and how these relationships are contributing to more culturally responsive teacher preparedness.

[Moving Beyond Western Epistemologies in Partnership with Iwi](#)

Like many Indigenous peoples, Māori are attempting to retrieve and reconstruct their marginalised knowledge systems in ways that are relevant to their contemporary realities.

Absolon and Willet argue that Indigenous peoples are in the post-colonisation process of “pulling themselves together,” meaning Indigenous epistemologies are dynamic, adaptable, and fluid (Absolon and Willet 2005, pp. 15–17). This constant evolution, driven by the reclamation of ancestral knowledge and its interaction with a Western society, presents challenges for static State documents like the New Zealand Curriculum, as well as for those who aim to teach mātauranga Māori.

The ability of Indigenous knowledge systems to remain responsive to the communities from which they originate is crucial for the accurate representation of those communities. For teaching content to actively reflect the community, the teaching profession must engage in ongoing discussions with iwi and hapū (Chamberlain et al., 2021). Mauriel argues that mātauranga Māori is inseparable from the people; it cannot be removed from the community without fragmenting the knowledge itself. The “knowledge speaks of and through the people” and as such, iwi and hapū must play an integral role in its transmission (Mauriel, 1999, p. 63).

Teachers play a critical role in shaping the understanding of future New Zealanders and their interactions with mātauranga Māori. Consequently, they must cultivate significant, ongoing relationships with iwi (Research New Zealand, 2019) to avoid perpetuating incomplete, outdated, deficit, or colonial views of Māori, which have “historically been embedded within New Zealand’s education system” (New Zealand Human Rights Commission, 2022, p. 78).

Teachers cannot rely solely on written texts to understand Māori thought (Tau, 2001). Many historical written sources reflect imperial and colonial views of Māori that do not accurately represent Māori realities (L. T. Smith, 2021). Nor will they equip students with the understanding necessary to engage meaningfully with Māori communities today (Tau, 2001).

Understanding the History of Education in New Zealand

There is much literature exploring the colonial education system’s fundamental role in “dismantling and deliberately isolating Māori from their tribal knowledge” and language (New Zealand Human Rights Commission, 2022, p. 71). By extension, tangata Tiriti (non-Māori) have also been denied opportunities to engage with mātauranga Māori within the State education system, thereby missing out on an alternate knowledge framework that could serve as a critical tool. Hetaraka argues that the “education system has nurtured an unawareness through its unwavering reliance” on Pākehā culture (Hetaraka, 2020, p. 324). This monoculturalism and the naturalisation of Western knowledge may lead to an “inability to critically reflect” on the education system, resulting in an unconscious acceptance of the beliefs, norms, and attitudes inherent in it (Chamberlain et al., 2021, p. 25).

Bernstein suggests that curriculum documents define “what counts as valid knowledge,” and these definitions reveal much about the ‘distribution of power and the principles of social control’ (1971, p. 85). From the outset, the New Zealand education system and its curricula aimed to reify Christian, Western norms by disseminating skills, knowledge, and values “rooted in Western academic traditions” (Smith, 2021, p. 74). There is little doubt that Aotearoa’s curriculum has played, and continues to play, a significant and explicit role in the marginalisation of mātauranga Māori, thus resulting in a population whose knowledge base lies firmly within Western academic traditions. Through policy, legislation, and educational practice, the New Zealand education system has caused “large-scale language and cultural loss” (Hook, 2007, p. 2). This same system will now attempt to reintegrate a knowledge system it once sought to exterminate.

Teachers must be sensitive to the role they play as intermediaries between State educational institutions and mātauranga Māori. The incorporation of mātauranga Māori into the curriculum could elicit emotional responses from Māori students and communities, who have “long been denied access to their ancestral epistemologies” by the same State system that is now integrating aspects of these knowledge systems (Te Huia, 2022, p. 100). Furthermore, Pākehā students, “who have grown accustomed to the assumption of European cultural superiority, may resent the assertion of Māori identity” and tikanga (Mikaere, 2011, p. 15).

Academics and educators who have attempted to incorporate mātauranga Māori into State education contexts argue that, at a bare minimum, teachers need to “create a learning environment in which Māori students feel safe” (Mikaere, 2011, p. 15). Teachers will need to decolonise their practice and their educational spaces to ensure that they are creating a safe environment for both mātauranga Māori and Māori students, as the education system itself is not inherently safe (Dunlop, 2021).

Research by Hynds et al. 2011.; Poutama Pounamu. 2020.; Fitzgerald and Knipe 2019.; and Bishop, Berryman, Tiakiwai & Richardson. 2003, argues that it is imperative for teachers engaging with mātauranga Māori to understand the deliberate and systematic attempts by the state to “decouple Māori from their culture” (ACORD, 1986, p. 1) and impose Eurocentric cultural values and education on Māori to advance colonisation (Hetaraka, 2022). Teachers must understand that it is not by accident that the New Zealand education system is monocultural. Culture, “education, and power are inextricably linked” (Hook, 2007, p. 2), and curriculum documents have historically functioned as powerful political tools to maintain social and political dominance. In New Zealand, the structures and institutions of the State were used to “exclude Māori and promote the superiority of the European experience” (Human Rights Commission, 2022, p. 21). Many deficit theories and non-evidence-based myths about Māori have their “roots in these early interactions between the State and Māori” (Hetaraka, 2022, p. 321).

Such myths, like the claim that Māori are kinaesthetic learners, can be traced to settler beliefs that Māori were better suited to domestic and physical labour and, therefore, should only receive an education that prepared them for these roles as a labouring underclass — a British “brown proletariat” (Walker, 2016, p. 23). Such myths and deficit positions need to be critically examined if teachers are to do justice to mātauranga Māori. Teacher’s risk perpetuating colonial beliefs in the supremacy of Western knowledge if they fail to reflect on the role colonisation

and State education have played in constructing norms and “legitimising what counts as valid knowledge” (Smith, 2021, p. 74).

Hetaraka (2022, p. 321) argues that educational professionals who can critique and deconstruct myths about Māori within the educational system — and within their own beliefs — may be “better positioned to advance bicultural and Te Tiriti-aligned educational policy”. This stance is supported by research from the Office of the Children’s Commissioner and the New Zealand School Trustees Association (2018); Bishop, Berryman, Tiakiwai & Richardson (2003); and Prasad (2000). Their research reveals that teachers who can critique educational positioning and identify racial bias are more likely to engage effectively with Māori students, their culture, and ultimately achieve better educational outcomes for them.

Te Tiriti, Iwi, and Professional Development

Any interaction between mātauranga Māori and the State cannot be separated from discussions of Te Tiriti and the obligations it promotes when the two partners engage. Teachers' ability to meet their Te Tiriti obligations as individual state agents can be difficult if the school, they work at does not attempt to meet its own Te Tiriti obligations. A commitment to the principles of Te Tiriti is required of teachers within the teaching codes and standards, and of school management within the National Education and Guidance Statements (Ministry of Education, 2023a). As such, teachers and their employers must adhere to the State’s Te Tiriti obligations of protection, participation, and partnership. This becomes increasingly important when educational institutions are engaging with mātauranga Māori.

The Fauna, Flora, and Intellectual Property Rights Claim (WAI 262) and the Wānanga Capital Establishment Grants Claim (WAI 718) both concluded that mātauranga is a taonga, and as such, invokes the Treaty principle of active protection. Thus, under Article Two, the State and state agents, such as teachers, should treat Māori knowledge as a taonga (Gibson et al., 2020), signalling that the State’s main role regarding mātauranga should be “one of protection” (Mead et al., 2022, p. 6).

English-medium education remains a force of assimilation and homogenisation, and the promises of Te Tiriti are “yet to be fully realised” (Averill & McRae, 2019, p. 161). Despite the presence of Te Tiriti in policy, the demands on educational institutions and their agents to meet Te Tiriti obligations have been “vague and inconsistent” (Wilson, 2017, p. 27). Research shows that some teachers lack an understanding of Te Tiriti and Māori epistemologies, and as such,

lack awareness of how to safeguard mātauranga Māori and honour Te Tiriti. With the mandated inclusion of mātauranga Māori in the State curriculum, the risk of mātauranga Māori being “damaged or exploited is increased” (Mikaere, 2011, p. 30). Teachers must become familiar with iwi and hapū tikanga and kawa, and work to incorporate these into their classroom practice when engaging with mātauranga Māori (Hudson & Group, 2010; Hudson & Russell, 2009). A school’s governance and leadership decisions will impact teachers’ ability to include mātauranga Māori and engage in professional development to build competency (Ferrier-Kerr et al., 2015).

A school’s partnerships with iwi will provide teachers with greater ongoing access to experts in mātauranga Māori. School leadership can help build the preparedness of teachers to implement curriculum changes by engaging iwi and hapū in curriculum planning, professional development, and school governance (Tito, 2008). Furthermore, schools are more likely to ensure that teachers can implement mātauranga Māori safely when iwi and hapū are involved in the design of teaching and learning programs (Poutama Pounamu, 2020), as iwi can define the “ethical frameworks and guidelines” within which their knowledge can be engaged (Hudson & Russell, 2009, p. 65). School management plays a crucial role in the preparedness of teachers by ensuring that “resources, relationships, and time for upskilling are available” through their management decisions (Ferrier-Kerr et al., 2015, pp. 125–127).

Findings

This research sought to answer three fundamental questions:

- What are English-medium secondary school teachers' perceptions of their preparedness to incorporate mātauranga Māori within the curriculum?
- What factors are influencing English-medium secondary school teachers' perceptions of preparedness to incorporate mātauranga Māori within their curriculum areas?
- How might English-medium secondary school teachers' perceptions of preparedness influence the implementation of mātauranga Māori within their practice?

Navigating Mātauranga Māori

The ability to navigate and implement the curriculum refresh requires teachers to have a firm understanding of mātauranga Māori in order to interpret and disseminate the knowledge framework correctly and safely. Understanding and navigating a framework of knowledge requires individuals to identify the values, structures, worldviews, and relationships that form the basis of the framework.

To disseminate a knowledge framework, individuals must have a sufficient understanding of and ability to navigate that framework. Therefore, a participant's understanding of mātauranga Māori — including its origins, key values, beliefs, and relationships — will shape their engagement with the epistemology and their preparedness to transmit it to others.

Participants defined mātauranga in differing ways. These definitions informed their understanding of mātauranga Māori, what it encompasses, and the way they engaged with the epistemology as educators. According to participants, mātauranga Māori is:

Table 1

Participants' Definitions of Mātauranga Māori Arising From Interview Data

Participants' definitions of Mātauranga Māori	Frequency of mention
Wholistic knowledge	1
A living epistemology or knowledge system	1
Values	1
Framework for the gathering and transmission of knowledge	1
Māori way of engaging with people/places/things	2
Teachers/the profession need more understanding around what mātauranga Māori is	2
Defines how to be, and navigate the world as Māori/the Māori way	3
Mātauranga Māori is passed down from tīpuna/taonga tuku iho	4
Te ao Māori	4
Māori worldview	5
Mātauranga Māori is about knowing and being Māori	6

Some participants stated that mātauranga Māori needs to be clarified and understood in more depth. Participant 4 explained that the lack of consensus around mātauranga Māori has implications for teachers' understanding and ability to engage with and teach mātauranga Māori:

"There are still a lot of misconceptions around it, and some people think that it's not related at all. But it definitely is. So yeah, just making sure people are on the same page, or at least a similar page, with their understanding of mātauranga Māori." —

Participant 4

Participants were aware of the importance of understanding mātauranga Māori in order to be able to teach it. They also acknowledged that mātauranga Māori is a taonga passed down within iwi and hapū.

Teacher Preparedness

Responses to the interview questions were analysed, and 78 data units related to teachers' perceptions of preparedness were identified within the interview data. These statements addressed perceived personal preparedness, learning area or department preparedness, and/or

the perceived preparedness of the profession as a whole. Some of these data units highlighted specific influences or perceived issues affecting perceptions of preparedness.

Table 2

Teacher Perceptions of Preparedness Arising From Interview Data

Perceptions of preparedness	Frequency of mention	Number of participants
	(n=78)	(n=8)
Prepared within a subject area	1	1
Prepared to deliver general (non-iwi specific) kawa/tikanga	1	1
Prepared to deliver mātauranga Māori within a specific unit	1	1
Prepared to deliver basic mātauranga Māori elements	1	1
Prepared to deliver mātauranga Māori within a specific subject	1	1
Inconsistently prepared – topic, course, subject, level dependant	1	1
Not prepared to align curriculum statements, with NZQA assessment tasks and mātauranga Māori	1	1
Unprepared to incorporate mātauranga Māori into senior curriculum	1	1
Lack of preparation to reflect on Eurocentric knowledge dominance	1	1
Lack of direction/skill of senior management in guiding teachers	1	1
Lack of respect for mātauranga Māori as an epistemology	1	1
Lack of preparedness of non-Māori to deliver Māori epistemologies	1	1
Prepared to teach local pūrakau	2	2
More prepared than peers, yet still unprepared	2	2
Knowledge/resources not filtering to teaching staff from senior leaders	2	2
Lack of clarity around mātauranga Māori and Māori concepts	2	2
Lack of understanding of tikanga (knowledge/implementation)	2	2
Insufficient preparation time for teacher research/planning	2	2
Feel somewhat prepared to deliver the junior curriculum	3	3
Beginning to feel more confident and prepared	4	4
Lacking a depth of knowledge of mātauranga Māori	4	4
Lack of subject relevant/specific mātauranga Māori	4	4
Lack of preparation may be a barrier to implementation	4	4

Insufficient knowledge of mātauranga Māori	5	5
Lack of support from Ministry to prepare teachers	5	5
Lack of confidence in preparation and knowledge	7	5
Insufficient PD leading to lack of preparedness	8	8
General lack of preparedness and confidence	9	8

Perceptions of Preparedness

A description and explanation of participants' perceptions of preparedness, emerging from the data, follows. The data identified both perceptions of preparedness and areas requiring development. It revealed the influences shaping participants' perceptions of preparedness and the perceived impacts or outcomes of these perceptions on the implementation of curriculum statements. Participants stated that their level of preparedness to implement mātauranga Māori into the New Zealand Curriculum (NZC) varied in response to different aspects of mātauranga Māori, its interaction with the NZC, secondary teaching requirements, and professional development.

Feeling Prepared?

All participants stated they lacked preparedness and confidence in incorporating mātauranga Māori into their teaching practice. Sixty-two percent (62%) of participants claimed they had insufficient knowledge of mātauranga Māori to deliver it confidently to students. Participants expressed a lack of preparedness in different elements of mātauranga Māori (tikanga, te reo, raranga, mātauranga, pūtaiao, hangarau, etc.), with perceived levels of unpreparedness varying in degree amongst the participants.

Participant 6, for example, demonstrated a learning area-specific lack of preparedness, noting:

"In music, I don't feel particularly confident." — Participant 6

However, Participant 7 expressed a general lack of confidence in delivering mātauranga Māori to their classes:

"I am not confident at all." — Participant 7

Fifty percent (50%) of participants claimed that the mātauranga Māori they held was not subject-relevant or specific enough or, they believed their understanding was not at an appropriate level to align with secondary curriculum statements. Participant 2 stated that when it came to upskilling and professional development as a secondary teacher, the specific, curriculum aligned PD was not as readily available:

"There's more in the primary space. But the levels aren't quite right, you know. So, that's been a little bit more of a challenge." — Participant 2

Participants did not explicitly state the framework they were using to determine their perceptions of preparedness. Preparedness was largely determined by personal metrics such as: confidence in delivering mātauranga Māori (100% of participants lacked confidence in themselves or the profession to incorporate mātauranga Māori), a lack of understanding of mātauranga Māori (62.5% expressed insufficient knowledge of mātauranga Māori), and a lack of depth in understanding of mātauranga Māori (50%). These were stated as key metrics for their preparedness judgments. However, no participants quantified the level of understanding required to determine their preparedness, nor the desired level of understanding.

Two participants (one Māori, the other who had undertaken immersion study at a wānanga) offered specific indicators of preparedness. These metrics involved the impact of the profession's understanding of mātauranga Māori on Māori epistemologies and ontologies, as well as the impact on Māori learners and communities. Participant 5 expressed concern that mātauranga Māori would be negatively impacted by an ill-prepared teaching profession, stating:

"It's just like false knowledge going around. And then I feel like the knowledge, like dissipates. Is that a word? Like slowly disappears aye. Because it's just wrapped up in all these random people's ideas of it. Then no one actually knows why it's done. Why it's important. How you're meant to do something properly." — Participant 5 –
Kaiako Māori

The concern for, and desire to protect, ngā tāonga Māori was echoed by, NKII Senior iwi partnership advisor who stated:

"The iwi cares about developing and protecting ngā tāonga tuku iho." — Senior iwi partnership advisor – Ngāti Kahungunu Iwi Incorporated

Participants acknowledged that they lacked depth of knowledge in elements such as tikanga, te reo, mātauranga Māori, and subject-specific or curriculum-appropriate mātauranga. This lack of knowledge was seen as directly affecting their perceptions of preparedness and confidence in incorporating mātauranga Māori within the curriculum. Furthermore, some teachers expressed concerns about their colleagues' preparedness to implement mātauranga Māori into NZC learning areas. Teachers with whakapapa Māori expressed specific concerns about the

profession's preparedness to engage with and deliver mātauranga Māori. Participant 5 voiced the following concern:

"Pākehā people will be teaching it, and they have no idea what they are talking about."
— Participant 5 – Kaiako Māori

Areas of Preparedness

While most participants stated they were unprepared to teach mātauranga Māori as a holistic epistemology, they revealed that there were aspects of iwi and/or hapū epistemologies they felt more prepared and confident to incorporate into their practice. Participants' perceptions of preparedness were shaped by factors such as the subject, unit focus, assessment requirements, and curriculum level. Some participants expressed preparedness to deliver general tikanga (non-iwi specific), specific unit content, specific subject content, and basic mātauranga elements.

Furthermore, 37.5% of participants expressed greater levels of preparedness to teach mātauranga Māori at the lower secondary levels (Level 4 and 5) of the curriculum than at the senior levels (Level 6, 7, 8). Participants argued that, without the demands of assessment specifications, mātauranga Māori was easier to incorporate into the classroom. Participant 6 stated:

"You know, it's way easier when you are not teaching to the requirements of an assessment to be able to integrate. Integrate really awesome things." — Participant 6 – Kaiako Māori

Fifty percent (50%) of participants expressed preparedness to incorporate local pūrākau within their teaching. Pūrākau were aspects of mātauranga Māori that participants used as a springboard for engaging students with mātauranga Māori in their units. Participant 8 explained:

"We are able to learn the story. Learn the pūrākau, and use the pikitia, and take the te Reo and then apply it." — Participant 8

Navigating Dual Knowledge Systems

Fifty percent (50%) of participants noted that the inclusion of mātauranga Māori in the refreshed curriculum document, alongside new assessment standards and evolving curriculum statements, has highlighted a lack of preparation among teachers. Participants stated they were

negotiating these evolving curriculum statements, new assessment specifications, and an unfamiliar knowledge system while continuing to fulfil their daily duties. Participant 2 noted:

"I would say in terms of the senior school, I think with so much that is unknown at the moment and some of that strange coupling in terms of the tasks and the standards to the actual statements of the curriculum around mātauranga Māori... I'd say we feel much less prepared." — Participant 2

Whilst familiarising themselves with the refreshed curriculum, participants stated they were also attempting to navigate new assessment standards without a complete senior curriculum and trying to understand and deliver an unfamiliar epistemology. Participant 8 indicated that navigating a new knowledge system posed challenges for the preparedness of some teachers within the profession:

"I've only been teaching for like 14 years. But, you know, you've got some teachers that have been out there for like 30-40 years, and they've only known Western science. Then you have to say, ok, well this is a knowledge system, it's valued, and it has equal mana. I mean, I could take that. I could go, yep, cool. But I think there are a lot of people out there that can't because they're so ingrained." — Participant 8

The requirement for teachers to understand aspects of mātauranga Māori in order to interpret and deliver the curriculum and assessment standards enhanced feelings of unpreparedness. This was specifically of concern for the three Head of Department/Learning Area Leads/Teacher in Charge (HOD/LAL/TIC) participants who had to lead the curriculum changes. Participant 8 stated:

"But so then, my responsibility in terms of middle leadership, is then thinking about ok 'what does this look like?'. In terms of if I am saying to the team, you know we are going to implement these things, I have to, I've sort of seen it as it's my responsibility to then make it as easy as possible to be like right what are some tools we have here?" — Participant 8

For the participants in this study, the negotiation of multiple changes across various aspects of education policy is impacting their ability to be effectively prepared. The inclusion of mātauranga Māori terminology within unit requirements and assessment specifications raised specific concerns due to the potential impact the lack of understanding may have on student

achievement in assessments. Participants were concerned that the te reo is being incorporated incorrectly and that teachers do not understand the terminology:

The writers had used te reo that I think that hadn't fit, that was my understanding. So, they had used in the context of umm microbes they'd talked about in 'te taiao'. And we were like, but what does that actually mean? Have you just incorporated the term 'taiao' in there or like... And there was something else, one that kept coming up, what was it? Oh yeah 'mauri' and that's like 'life force or energy' and like it was like I don't just think you can just kind of whack a word in, in terms of science. – Participant 8.

Te Tiriti

Te Tiriti plays a crucial role in informing the teaching profession's standards and the National Education and Learning Priorities (NELP) of state secondary educational institutions. Yet fifty percent (50%) of participants were unable to identify the three principles of Te Tiriti that inform the rationale for the curriculum refresh and form the basis for much educational and professional documentation. Participant 3 explained:

"I always remember the three Ps. Like, I remember it's the three Ps, and then I forget one of the Ps." — Participant 3

Some participants also raised the issue that, while they could state the principles of Te Tiriti, translating those principles into action within a secondary school context was something they felt unprepared for. Participant 3 questioned:

"I am wondering now if there's an assumption. Yeah, is there like an assumption that we will know what it means and know how we are going to be able to show it?" — Participant 3

According to participants, the translation of Te Tiriti principles into practice is an area where both schools and teachers may not be fully prepared. Teachers are required to embed Te Tiriti in their practice, as defined by The Standards/Ngā Paerewa, which outline the "essential professional knowledge in practice and professional relationships and values required for effective teaching" (Education Council of Aotearoa New Zealand, 2017, p. 16). At the institutional level, the Te Tiriti policy of a school is guided by The Education & Training Act, 2020, which enables the Statement of National Education and Learning Priorities (NELP).

Iwi participants were more focused on Te Tiriti and its inherent obligations. The NKII Senior iwi partnership advisor participant stated:

"The relationship needs to be reciprocal. Schools, school leaders, and kaiako are state institutions, therefore all schools and all conversations with iwi should be Te Tiriticentric. This is a partnership—what are schools bringing to the table?" — Senior iwi partnership advisor – NKII

For iwi, Te Tiriti provides an ongoing foundation for the idea of nationhood. Māori expect state institutions to honour Te Tiriti and meet their obligations, as set out in policy documentation.

Participant Positioning – The Refreshed Curriculum

A curriculum is a highly political and cultural document that defines what we want our future society to understand. Participants recognised the value in the curriculum refresh, with 75% of participants expressing support for the changes. Participant 4 stated:

"I feel like there is so much potential. There is so much good, good stuff that can come out of the changes." — Participant 4

However, Participant 5 (kaiako Māori) expressed concerns about the curriculum refresh itself and the potential impact of these changes on mātauranga Māori. The participant questioned whether the current refresh could effectively align with the Treaty principles, arguing:

"I don't think you can build it into a system that has already been made. Because right now, we are trying to be like, here is an English curriculum, but let's sprinkle some Māori on top." — Participant 5 – Kaiako Māori

While most participants were largely supportive of the changing curriculum, some noted that not all teachers were on board with the refresh and the inclusion of mātauranga Māori. This division—between those who support or reject the new curriculum—has implications not only for teachers' motivation to prepare themselves but also for their likelihood to implement the changes. Participant 4 observed:

"I think just the interactions with my department have been really interesting, because some people are very, very negative about it, and there are some people who are so, so good." — Participant 4

Factors Shaping Preparedness

Participants acknowledged that their perceptions of preparedness are influenced by a range of practices, systems, values, and experiences. These factors either contribute to or impede their preparedness to incorporate mātauranga Māori into their teaching. Data arising from the interviews revealed both catalysts and barriers that participants identified as shaping their current level of preparedness. Some participants also highlighted factors that they felt were impacting the preparedness of their colleagues, their secondary institution, or the teaching profession. The factors identified are summarised in the following table, which indicates the number of participants who perceived each factor as impacting their preparedness.

Table 3

Factors Influencing Participants' Preparedness.

Factor	Number of participants (n=8)
Lack of understanding of Māori episteme	2
Gaps in alignment between NCEA standards, curriculum statements and mātauranga Māori	3
School culture/structure	3
Insufficient or inconsistent PD ²	5
Lack of resources	5
Lack of guidance and clarity from MOE ³	5
The change process (timing, rollout, focus)	6
Iwi/whānau relationships	7
Time	7
Kaiako Māori	7
School leadership	7
Lack of knowledge of mātauranga Māori	8

Missing Knowledge

The composition of the participants largely reflects the general makeup of the teaching profession. Seven of the eight participants are tangata Tiriti. Six of these participants attended English-medium schooling, which had minimal focus on and prioritisation of mātauranga Māori. One participant was educated overseas. The final participant, a kaiako Māori, attended

² Professional development

³ Ministry of Education

a kura kaupapa that prioritised mātauranga Māori and te Reo. Participants stated that the English-medium schooling they experienced dedicated little time to mātauranga Māori.

Participant 4 described their experience in secondary school:

“I don’t even think they acknowledged anything Māori, really, when I was there. So, a lot of my knowledge in anything Māori—pūrakau or waiata—has come from primary school. And even then, it was very much just little bits here and there.” - Participant 4.

All tangata Tiriti participants expressed similar exposure to and experience with mātauranga Māori within an education system that prioritises Western disciplines. They claimed that the system did not provide opportunities for them to build a solid understanding of or interact with mātauranga Māori.

Participant 5 noted that the lack of requirements for registered teachers to hold specific qualifications in mātauranga Māori or te Reo (excluding te Reo teachers) means that teachers are not required to specialise in mātauranga Māori to gain teacher qualification or registration. As such, participants who are delivering mātauranga Māori may not have the expertise to do so, yet the expectation to teach it still exists.

“Yeah, it’s kind of weird, aye? Cause it’s like, with any other subject, they wouldn’t let you pick something up and just run with it, right?” - Participant 5 – Kaiako Māori.

It is of interest to note Participant 5’s interpretation of the Ministry of Education’s treatment of mātauranga Māori as a non-academic subject that does not require depth of study, qualification, or experience to teach. The implications of this positioning should be considered in terms of how future generations will view mātauranga Māori and the mana with which it is treated by the State, as well as by staff and students.

The data reveals that participants lack understanding or knowledge of foundational aspects of mātauranga Māori, including te Reo, tikanga, values, relationships, and processes. Seven of the participants expressed a lack of knowledge in one or more of these areas. Participant 1 acknowledged that teachers do not know what they do not know in relation to mātauranga Māori, and therefore their judgments of preparedness are often not a true reflection of their actual positioning or understanding. This sentiment was echoed by Participant 5. All participants (excluding Participant 5 – Kaiako Māori) stated that their experiences had not

prepared or provided them with the knowledge to confidently implement mātauranga Māori into the curriculum.

Professional Learning and Development

Professional learning and development (PLD) is an essential component of teacher growth and skill development. While PLD provides a critical opportunity for schools to prepare their teaching staff, participants in this study claimed that PLD was often ineffective in developing their skills and understanding. Participants reported that poorly planned PLD left them feeling frustrated:

“When the PD isn’t actually that helpful, then it’s like I’m already so time-poor, and now I’m sitting here not really doing anything.” - Participant 4.

Focused PLD that works toward clear goals and progressions was important for the participants who wanted to build on and develop their knowledge. Essential to building participant preparedness was the need for ongoing and consistent PLD. Participants stated that PLD which solidified their learning was crucial.

“Something that is continual. I don’t think you can do a one-hour morning PD on mātauranga Māori and be like, ‘Yep, we are all prepared’” - Participant 1.

The frequency of PLD was deemed to be important, but so too was the content of the professional learning. General knowledge of mātauranga Māori was viewed as essential by participants, but subject-specific learning and practical application were also seen as critical.

One participant stated that the Ministry of Education’s PLD was ineffective because:

"It is much more of a repeat of those sort of broad ideas and understanding, rather than practical application. And as the new standards or the new curriculum come in, we really need to start working on the practicalities of the day-to-day, week-to-week, and everything else." - Participant 2.

Participant 5 (kaiako Māori) expressed frustration with the PLD they had experienced, noting that the sessions lacked differentiation. As a result, they had to sit through week after week of learning they had already covered as a child. Differentiation was identified as an important consideration in the implementation of PLD. Teachers are at different points in their understanding of mātauranga Māori, and as such, various PLD options must be provided to ensure that all levels of knowledge and experience can benefit from learning opportunities.

Short on Time

Participants acknowledged that time was a significant factor in their ability to be prepared. The Ministry of Education faced criticism for the lack of timeliness in the release of resources for Teacher Only Days (TOD). The last-minute release of materials impacted Heads of Department (HODs), Learning Area Leaders (LALs), and Teachers in Charge (TICs), who were unable to present the information effectively to their departments. The front-loading of TODs at the beginning of the change process meant that the continuous changes to the curriculum documents had not been discussed in depth, as all appointed TODs were used up before the curriculum was finalised. The Ministry's poor time management of the change process has created difficulties for participants in engaging with the curriculum materials, leading to a lack of preparedness. Participant 8 noted:

"There is time provided. The Ministry has provided those MOE days. But those MOE days, and I thought about it... let's say there have been about eight MOE days before this year, but when you have changed so many things along the way, the only valid MOE day was last November." - Participant 8.

A lack of time to engage with changing documentation and to upskill, impacted the preparedness of 87.5% of participants. Participants found that the lack of time impacted their ability to engage with multiple aspects of the curriculum change, and as a result, they did not have time to adequately prepare themselves.

Table 4:

Table Showing the Aspects Impacted by a Lack of Time.

Participant number	Professional Development	Translating policy to actionable Teaching & Learning	Resource location and creation
Participant 1	✓		
Participant 2	✓	✓	✓
Participant 3	✓		
Participant 4	✓		
Participant 5			
Participant 6	✓		✓
Participant 7	✓		
Participant 8	✓	✓	✓

Participants' Ability to Engage with Professional Development

Participants' ability to engage with professional development (PD) was heavily impacted by a lack of time. Many participants also noted that much PD around te reo and mātauranga Māori was expected to occur outside of work hours, which was particularly difficult for those with families and children.

"By and large, teachers want to do this stuff. They want to upskill. They want to be able to engage and do better for their students. But it is all expected to happen outside hours. I'm lucky I've got no kids. I've got no real obligations outside work. And you know, I can do that stuff most of the time." - Participant 5.

Those in middle management roles felt that a lack of time was likely to impact their preparedness and ability to effectively guide their departments through the curriculum refresh.

The lack of preparedness among middle managers has significant implications for the preparedness of entire departments, which rely on middle management to lead both school- and State initiatives. Participant 6 stated:

"Time is what is needed... I think, as with so many things in the last few years, the education sector has just lumped more and more on, in particular, middle leaders." - Participant 6.

Time is an invaluable element in participants' ability to upskill and prepare for curriculum changes. All participants deemed time essential for engaging in professional development and developing the skills necessary to implement the curriculum changes. A lack of time emerged as a major barrier to participants' preparedness to engage with aspects of mātauranga Māori and/or the documentation guiding the curriculum refresh.

The Experts – Māori

Mātauranga Māori arises from and is transmitted by whānau, hapū, and iwi. Iwi are the experts in mātauranga Māori, and the refreshed curriculum states that schools should be working with Māori in implementing the change process. Five participants emphasised the importance of iwi relationships in their upskilling and preparation. Participants whose schools had strong affiliations with their local iwi or hapū more often expressed the value of these relationships for developing teacher capacity and preparedness. Participant 2 noted:

"The link from the ideas to the practical in the class is, I think, easier to navigate with the right support, which we've got from mana whenua." - Participant 2.

Participants stated that iwi and hapū were able to help them navigate gaps in educational documentation and support teachers in understanding how to implement curriculum statements and ideas into practice. Iwi and hapū were particularly effective in navigating the dual epistemologies within the New Zealand Curriculum (NZC) in ways that participants could not. Fifty percent of participants viewed iwi and hapū as the best source of both localised and general mātauranga Māori, claiming that iwi and hapū could assist in providing both the general and localised mātauranga Māori demanded by the curriculum.

"It's really hard to get that local element. In my experience, the best way to learn mātauranga Māori is from people of that iwi." - Participant 1.

Participants noted that iwi interactions with schools generally occurred at senior and middle management levels. Iwi were often upskilling leaders with the expectation that this knowledge would be disseminated to staff through these leaders. Three participants expressed concern over the effectiveness of this model, claiming the knowledge was not trickling down to teachers as intended. Six participants claimed their school was largely engaging with iwi as external professional development providers. Two participants noted their school's relationship with iwi included iwi involvement in governance, property, pastoral care, and staff recruitment. One participant indicated that iwi were involved in curriculum, unit, and/or lesson planning, review, or guidance. However, they stated this only occurred in a single learning area. Participant 1's comment reflects the general level of iwi involvement in unit review across all the participants' schools:

"We haven't really planned a unit and then gone to mana whenua or the whānau Māori to be like: 'Hey, what do you think about this? Or do you have any input or anything like that?'" - Participant 1.

The demands placed upon iwi by the curriculum refresh are creating a barrier for participants wishing to upskill and prepare themselves. Seventy-five percent of participants were aware that the demands being placed on iwi by schools for professional development were substantial, with some iwi being asked to engage with dozens of schools within their rohe. Participants were also aware that iwi, hapū, and whānau had their own lives and jobs, which made them

hesitant to approach iwi for help. This lack of time, resourcing and manpower was echoed by the iwi participant from Ngāti Kahungunu Iwi Incorporated who stated:

‘Members do not have the time or the funds to be engaging with every school in rohe.’
- Senior iwi partnership advisor – Ngāti Kahungunu Iwi Incorporated

It is worth noting that iwi are largely acting as information providers rather than as partners in navigating the delivery of mātauranga Māori within Western academic disciplines. The lack of iwi partnership in some schools was highlighted by participants, who noted that their schools were:

"By and large, it is a Pākehā space." - Participant 6.

Another participant remarked:

"I feel like every school is probably like this though. They are just not very good Treaty partners." - Participant 5 – Kaiako Māori.

A lack of Te Tiriti partnership and Māori involvement has significant implications for participants' ability to prepare for the curriculum changes. Especially as the iwi participant stated:

“Ngāti Kahungunu will work with schools that are open to change. The relationship requires schools to do work. The relationship needs to be reciprocal. Schools, school leaders and kaiako are State agents therefore all schools and all conversations with iwi should be Te Tiriti centric. This is a partnership, what are schools bringing to the table” - Senior iwi partnership advisor – Ngāti Kahungunu Iwi Incorporated

Iwi and hapū partnership and participation provides greater opportunities for schools to engage and upskill through ongoing relationships and dialogue (Fitzgerald & Knipe, 2019, p. 101). While participants acknowledge the value of iwi and hapū in preparing teachers to deliver mātauranga Māori, the data reveals that very few of the participants' schools had established meaningful relationships with mana whenua in their rohe.

Table 5:**Status of Participants' Schools' Relationships With iwi.**

Participant	Relationship status	Data
Participant 1	No significant relationship	I would say they've got a connection. But I wouldn't say they've got a relationship. A relationship can be, well, is meant to go both ways.
Participant 2	Solid, ongoing relationship	There is an ongoing connection with another local iwi as well as our, like quite firm relationship, with mana whenua.
Participant 3	Developing relationship	More so since our new principal started. He's been really good at kind of nurturing that a bit more. He's like, we need to really focus on this more, and get the local iwi in more often and let them have more input into what we are doing at the school.
Participant 4	No significant relationship	I feel like we are trying. I feel like our school in the best way possible tries, but like often burns bridges. But we have some like better links to mana whenua than the past two years.
Participant 5	No significant relationship	I don't think they have one. They go to these courses that are run by people from the local iwi, and they think that that's all they need.
Participant 6	Solid, ongoing relationship	It's stronger than a lot of places. I think it has become quite like a strong relationship, quite quickly. Umm partly because I think the mana whenua can see what our intent is, what our actual drive is.
Participant 7	Unsure of relationship status	I am aware there is a connection with local mana whenua, but I couldn't expand on that information.
Participant 8	No significant relationship	We haven't really established the relationship. If you don't have an established relationship, how do you expect to suddenly just engage?

Participants whose schools did not have an established relationship with iwi expressed more frequent and/or more definitive statements regarding a lack of preparation.

Māori academics and educators with expertise in Western disciplines were helpful contacts for preparing six of the participants. These academics were able to explore the interface between Western disciplines and mātauranga Māori in depth, at appropriate levels for the senior

curriculum. They often provided professional development through subject associations or universities, offering subject-specific mātauranga Māori and te reo.

Despite whānau Māori being the smaller units of iwi and hapū, and therefore the carriers of mātauranga Māori, it should be noted that almost all participants stated that whānau played a minimal role in upskilling, informing, or preparing teachers for the implementation of mātauranga Māori.

Kaiako Māori – An Invaluable Resource

Sixty-two percent of participants discussed the invaluable role that kaiako Māori played in upskilling and preparing them for the implementation of mātauranga Māori within the New Zealand Curriculum (NZC). Kaiako Māori possess the dual epistemological understanding necessary to navigate the intersection of mātauranga Māori and Western knowledge. Furthermore, they have knowledge of school systems and the curriculum. They are accessible and have established relationships with participants, making them a valuable resource for preparing teachers. Participant 2 stated:

"I've learned so much more from kaiako Māori and kaiako reo Māori than I ever have from senior management or even the people they are bringing in sometimes." -

Participant 1.

For kaiako Māori, this position often comes at a personal cost. Participant 5 (kaiako Māori) stated that requests for upskilling or knowledge from their colleagues create demands on their time and expertise.

"I've had people come up to me and ask me to look at their whole curriculum to make sure they are using mātauranga Māori correctly." - Participant 5 – Kaiako Māori.

Participant 5 noted that such requests can create a sense of obligation for kaiako Māori, and they may call on their whakapapa connections to address their colleagues' preparatory needs. There was also an acknowledgment that not knowing the answer to a colleague's request can create a sense of shame for kaiako reo. Participant 5 observed that the inclusion of mātauranga Māori in the curriculum was not for Māori:

"It's about upskilling Pākehā people. What have they even done for Māori?" - Participant 5 – Kaiako Māori.

Such statements suggest that kaiako Māori may see little potential for personal growth within the ambitions of the refreshed curriculum.

The Ministry of Education and the Curriculum Change Process

Seventy-five percent of participants noted that the curriculum change process was impacting their preparedness levels. The multiple policy and assessment changes occurring concurrently created difficulties for teachers, who had to engage with, understand, and implement several new professional documents within their practice. Participants suggested that these multiple demands had implications for what teachers chose to focus on first in order to prepare themselves:

"Maybe think about all the changes happening at once and lighten the load a bit.

Focus on one thing at a time. The new NCEA changes kind of have taken over a little bit to be honest." - Participant 3.

The curriculum refresh and the release of assessment standards before the finalisation of the curriculum was a concern for participants. Many noted that the documentation was not aligning, which created problems for teachers trying to reconcile teaching and learning, the inclusion of mātauranga Māori, and assessment changes without the appropriate supporting documentation for their pedagogy.

"This refresh, umm, there's no documentation sitting behind the refresh. And so, you are changing the thing that you are assessing. The assessment has changed, but the curriculum hasn't. Or it's really vague, and so it's really blind." - Participant 8.

Fifty percent of participants viewed the release of assessment standards before the curriculum was completed as problematic for both their ability to prepare and upskill, and their ability to implement the changes due to the conflicting expectations of the documentation. Participant 2 argued:

"The assessments seem to be adrift from the curriculum. And so, the practicalities of some of those, and how they fit with those principles of mātauranga Māori and the English curriculum refresh, are not matching. And it's not just the English standards. And so, I think that leaves a gap. That leaves a gap, I think, for people to essentially ignore." - Participant 2

Participants' ability to prepare is impacted by a lack of cohesiveness between educational policy, assessment documentation and a lack of support and guidance for implementation. According to participants, gaps in policy lead to uncertainty in the skill and achievement objectives the profession is guiding students toward, making it difficult for teachers to identify the knowledge and skills they need to prepare for. This issue is compounded by the change process, which requires the management of and engagement with multiple policy and assessment documents.

For the iwi participant, government assessment frameworks were not viewed as a priority:

“NCEA is a Pākehā measure of success. We know NCEA exists, we know it is a measure for te ao hurihuri⁴ but it does not work toward iwi goals. We believe NCEA resides equally alongside iwi cultural measures” - Senior iwi partnership advisor – Ngāti Kahungunu Iwi Incorporated

Iwi priorities lie with iwi goals and as such there is a conflict between how the State aims to incorporate, use and measure mātauranga Māori, and how iwi want young people to engage with mātauranga Māori. The integration of mātauranga Māori within the State curriculum and assessment frameworks creates conflicts between iwi ambitions and sovereignty and the

desire of the State to produce citizens whose knowledge and skills are measurable and qualifiable on a world stage.

Ministry Guidance

Two-thirds of the participants identified the lack of guidance, documentation, and resourcing provided by the Ministry of Education as impeding their preparedness. The lack of alignment between the assessments, curriculum statements, and a general lack of confidence regarding mātauranga Māori, meant that participants were seeking detailed guidance and frameworks to inform their practice and professional development. Participants were requesting specific examples of the curriculum in practice to prepare themselves for implementation:

⁴ The changing world - a term used to refer to the modern post colonial world.

"People always talk about how things are really great in theory, but then how do we apply it? And of course, the answer is, well, everyone is going to apply it in different ways. We're not going to tell you how to do it. But I think a lot of, umm, I think people would like to see real-world examples of this in contexts that are similar to theirs, that they can then apply." - Participant 6.

Exemplars were also viewed as important due to the varying demands and conditions of teaching and learning across New Zealand schools. Participants viewed detailed examples as crucial in shaping their own understanding. They were looking for more guidance and leadership from the Ministry in the implementation of this policy change:

"But, yeah, the Ministry has provided very little support. And I think they think that we've got these learning outcomes, and we've got these tasks. But where are the learning slides? Where are the resources? Where are the examples? How can you implement mātauranga Māori in a high-achieving science class at a girls' school? Or something like that. How can you actually do that? Yeah, and in really detailed ways as well." - Participant 8.

School Leadership

Eighty-seven percent of participants viewed school leaders as key players in the preparation of staff to implement mātauranga Māori into the curriculum. The organisation and implementation of professional development (PD) by school leadership was seen as particularly important for teacher preparation. Senior and middle leaders were viewed as crucial in the interpretation of curriculum statements, mātauranga concepts, and assessment tasks. Furthermore, with multiple policy changes occurring concurrently, leadership was seen as essential for clarifying, focusing, and driving teacher preparation for the change. The three participants in positions of leadership acknowledged the expectations their roles entailed:

"You have to lead from the front, and so my confidence shapes how my department feels." - Participant 2.

Participants acknowledged that having the right leadership to implement this change impacts the preparedness of the department. Departments and/or schools with Māori leaders driving the changes reported more positive comments about their preparedness and the support and resourcing their leadership provided than those with non-Māori leaders. Māori leaders brought knowledge, experience, and perspective that staff benefitted from. One participant discussed

the impact a change in their department's leadership from a wahine Māori leader to a nonMāori leader had on staff preparedness levels:

"We've had a bit of a drop-off in that particular department. He totally supports the kaupapa and wants it to go further. He's admitted himself that he is not, he can't be the person to drive that. So that can be a bit of a challenge." - Participant 6.

Senior and middle management were similarly viewed as essential in driving and maintaining the relationship between schools and iwi. Teachers viewed the relationship with iwi as helpful to their preparedness and expressed frustration when leadership was not actively developing relationships with iwi. Determining who was responsible for developing and maintaining iwi relationships was a concern for a few participants, who felt their school was not making significant progress in these relationships:

"It's like, well, why are those resources and partnerships not there? And how do we create those partnerships? And then, whose responsibility is that?" - Participant 8.

The responsibility of senior leadership for implementing and managing relationships with iwi was also discussed by the iwi participant. Senior leaders and the Board of Trustees (BOT) are responsible for ensuring a school is meeting its Te Tiriti obligations. This includes managing relationships with iwi.

"If teachers do not have a relationship with iwi/hapū/whānau, that is a leadership issue. Leaders need to be developing iwi/hapū/whānau relationships and providing spaces for enacting and developing these relationships" - Senior iwi partnership advisor – Ngāti Kahungunu Iwi Incorporated

Senior leadership defines the culture of the school, interprets the curriculum, and drives professional development. They play a significant role in the preparedness levels of teaching staff. It is interesting to note that none of the participants discussed frameworks or strategic documents put in place by leadership or school governance to define desired levels of preparedness for staff.

The Implications of Ill-Preparedness

Participants acknowledged that their preparedness to incorporate mātauranga Māori has significant implications for their ability to deliver the refreshed curriculum. Teacher

preparedness also impacts tangata Māori and mātauranga Māori more broadly. The following section analyses interview data to understand the implications of teacher ill-preparedness.

Lack of Implementation

A lack of preparedness would likely lead to a lack of implementation, according to 62.5% of participants. These participants acknowledged that if they were unprepared or unsure, they would revert to content and practices they felt confident in. Participants stated that implementation was directly connected to their confidence and preparedness levels. If they felt at risk of delivering mātauranga Māori poorly, they would likely avoid implementing it in their practice altogether. Participant 1 expressed this sentiment, stating:

"I think it could be my lack of preparedness. In some ways, it could definitely be a barrier to either implementing it well or even implementing it at all. Like, cause, I don't want, I don't want to butcher it. In my mind, that's worse." - Participant 1.

This viewpoint was echoed by other participants who argued that, during busy periods or times of uncertainty, implementation would likely cease altogether.

Impact on Mātauranga Māori

Educators are in a powerful position to define mātauranga Māori for the next generation of New Zealanders. This responsibility raises concerns for some participants, who view the profession's general lack of preparedness as potentially harmful to mātauranga Māori. Teachers have the ability to shape young New Zealanders' perceptions and understandings of mātauranga Māori. This raises the possibility that inaccurate or misinterpreted information may be passed on. Participant 1 expressed this concern:

"You're just doing a huge disservice to te Ao Māori, and you know as teachers, that can really shape views and opinions as well. I mean, you could literally just be out there spreading false narratives, false information." - Participant 1.

Teachers will inevitably become the national face and voice of mātauranga Māori, with the teaching community tasked with defining mātauranga concepts within the context of Western disciplines, potentially disconnected from the communities from which the knowledge originates. Participant 2 acknowledges this potential, stating that leadership may redefine aspects of Māori culture in isolation from the culture itself:

"What does, you know, manaakitanga actually mean in this context of a physical, you know, education sort of space?" - Participant 2.

As a result, mātauranga Māori will likely be interpreted and taught through Western frameworks and lenses of knowledge, which could lead to the recolonisation of mātauranga Māori. A well-prepared and knowledgeable teaching profession will be better positioned to deliver concepts and knowledge that reflect Māori understandings. In contrast, an ill-prepared teaching force is more likely to pass on cultural inaccuracies.

"If knowledge is being shared, I don't know if it's being shared correctly. Or, you know, it kind of becomes like tainted with their view on things if they're then going to share that with their school community." - Participant 1.

Interestingly, the more knowledge and experience participants had with mātauranga Māori, the greater their concern about the potential impact of the curriculum refresh on mātauranga Māori. The kaiako Māori participant expressed the highest levels of concern about the impact that unprepared teachers may have on Māori culture. This may be due to the awareness Māori participants have of navigating dual worldviews whilst simultaneously navigating an education system that is largely unwelcoming to other epistemologies. Other participants, however, did not explore the implications of teacher ill-preparedness on mātauranga Māori itself.

Damage to Relationships

Alongside the potential damage to mātauranga Māori, an ill-prepared teaching workforce will have significant implications for the relationships between the education system and Māori communities. The kaiako Māori participant argued that the dissemination of incorrect knowledge could damage relationships between schools, teachers, Māori students, and their whānau. Participant 5 expressed this concern:

"There are going to be whānau Māori, who are the hard-out ones, who come in and say: 'Well, why did your social studies teacher say this?' They said it because they've been told to say it." - Participant 5.

As mātauranga Māori is viewed as a taonga tuku iho, the consequences of sharing incorrect information are significant. This could alienate and anger Māori students, whānau, and iwi.

Māori students may find it particularly confronting for non-Māori teachers—who have little to no connection with the communities from which mātauranga Māori arises—to be teaching Māori content. Participant 5 reflected on how they, as a Māori learner, would have responded:

"I wouldn't listen to my teachers if they tried to teach me about tikanga when they've been to, like, two pōwhiri, you know? I'd say, 'Fuck off, I'm out of here.' Yeah. So, I think it could be harmful for those kids, which is most kids, most Māori kids." - Participant 5 – Kaiako Māori.

Interestingly, no other participants discussed how teacher preparedness might impact Māori students in the classroom. Moreover, none of the participants explored the potential impact of racism—either direct or indirect—within the classroom, or how institutional racism might affect Māori students. The lack of awareness of teachers in regard to racism or cultural sensitivity could compound the challenges for Māori students in an already challenging educational system.

Discussion

Professional Obligations

The curriculum refresh is, in part, driven by the need to uphold commitments to Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Ministry of Education, 2023b), and as such, it requires teachers— as agents of the State—to meet the obligations inherent in education policy. The Education and Training Act 2021, the National Education and Learning Priorities (NELPs), and Ngā Paerewa | The Standards demand the enactment of practices that honour Te Tiriti, ensuring the active protection of taonga Māori (Education and Training Act 2020, s.9; Ministry of Education, 2023b, p.5). Despite Te Tiriti being enshrined in the teaching profession's registration and certification processes, over half of the participants in this study could not articulate the principles of Te Tiriti.

The ability of teachers to meet these professional obligations requires translating the principles of Te Tiriti into practice. Given the participants' lack of clarity about Te Tiriti, and research by Alansari et al. (2023), the Education Review Office (2024), and Taani (2023) indicating that teachers are often not confident in teaching Māori or implementing Te Tiriti, one must question how effective initial teacher education (ITE) programs, professional learning and development

(PLD) programs, and the teacher registration and certification process are in preparing teachers to engage with Māori epistemologies and meet Te Tiriti obligations.

Data arising from this research suggests that teachers require further education on Te Tiriti and Māori worldviews, as they lack the understanding to enact Te Tiriti-centred practices (Wilson, 2017). This position is supported by Tito's (2008) research, which argued that teachers often fail to meet their obligations to incorporate te reo me ngā tikanga Māori into their practice. Moreover, as raised by the Māori participant, many school leaders do not possess the cultural competence to effectively lead these changes. This is further supported by studies suggesting that senior leaders responsible for signing off teacher certification may not have the cultural experience necessary to determine whether others are engaging in culturally responsive practices (Alansari et al., 2023).

Thus, the vision of the curriculum policy to raise the status of mātauranga Māori within the State education system may fail to reach its full potential due to the lack of clear expectations placed upon teaching professionals, as well as a lack of alignment and actionable strategies provided by education policy and frameworks. Professional regulations and frameworks do not provide sufficient assurance that teachers are being adequately prepared to be effective Te Tiriti partners.

Participants viewed PLD as essential in progressing teachers' knowledge of mātauranga Māori. However, participants pointed out that PLD is often ineffective, irrelevant or inconsistent, leading to a lack of preparedness and a lack of actionable strategies to prepare teachers to implement the curriculum. It is imperative that schools have robust PLD programs and certification processes in place to ensure that teachers are being adequately prepared to advance toward cultural competency and Te Tiriti compliance. As the iwi participant stated, mātauranga Māori is a taonga, therefore any introduction of this knowledge must occur within systems that ensure its protection, safety, and mana. This research raises a critical question: do State, English-medium schools have the necessary knowledge, frameworks, processes, and accountability mechanisms to protect mātauranga Māori and support teachers whose lack of preparedness may bring them into conflict with Māori whānau and communities?

Missing Partnerships

The data emerging from participant interviews revealed that teacher preparedness is not developed in isolation; it is shaped by policy, systems, and the educational institution in which

a teacher works. The culture and Te Tiriti positioning of a school can either promote or impede teacher preparedness (Ministry of Education, 2023b). Participants spoke of the significant impact school leadership and a school's relationship with mana whenua had on their preparedness. When school leadership, policy, and systems were not committed to Te Tiriti partnership, participants reported losing access to valuable resources and relationships that could enhance their preparedness and Te Tiriti competency (Taani, 2023).

The iwi participant and broader iwi education plans indicate that iwi are more likely to engage with schools that are committed to Te Tiriti partnership and iwi aspirations (Ngāti Kahungunu Iwi Incorporated, 2022; Taani, 2023). As reflected in the data, schools that are committed to recognising iwi aspirations and achieving equity for tamariki Māori are more likely to establish partnerships that benefit teacher development and preparedness. In contrast, participants whose schools lacked significant relationships with iwi expressed frustration at this lack of relationship, viewing the absence of these connections as a barrier to collaboration with whānau, hapū, and iwi. This lack of partnership also hindered their ability to prepare themselves for incorporating mātauranga Māori into the curriculum as participants stated they lost access to the source and experts of mātauranga Māori (Ministry of Education, 2023b).

Further compounding this challenge, participants expressed confusion about who within the school system should be responsible for managing relationships between iwi and educational institutions. This frustration highlights the need for schools to develop clear, fully articulated policies around iwi engagement and Te Tiriti compliance. These policies should outline what these partnerships should look like and provide guidelines for staff wishing to engage with iwi in culturally appropriate ways.

Over three-quarters of the participants in this research reported that their schools had not sufficiently developed partnerships with iwi. These missing relationships speak directly to the lack of preparedness within some schools to give effect to Te Tiriti. Consequently, this lack of partnership limited teacher access to experts who could develop their understanding and knowledge of mātauranga Māori. Moreover, this gap may also reflect the deep-seated hegemonic power dynamics within the education system and its institutions.

The curriculum refresh demands that schools give effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi by ensuring their plans, policies, and local curricula reflect local tikanga Māori, mātauranga Māori, and te ao Māori (Ministry of Education, 2023b, p.8). Schools that do not partner with iwi to navigate the inclusion of tikanga and mātauranga-a-iwi in the curriculum risk failing to prepare their

teachers adequately to meet curriculum expectations and uphold the profession's Te Tiriti obligations. This is evident in the responses of participants, with Participant 5 succinctly summarising their school's position: "They are just not very good Treaty partners."

The historic and ongoing failure to establish meaningful partnerships with tangata whenua means that schools also risk failing to actively protect mātauranga Māori which is a priority expressed by the iwi participant. To prepare teachers adequately, schools must become better Te Tiriti partners, by developing relationships with those who understand and uphold tikanga.

Hotere-Barnes et al. assert that 'institutional decision-making has a direct impact' on how well Teo and mātauranga Māori are supported and enhanced within a school (Hotere-Barnes et al., 2014, p.14). A school's approach to Te Tiriti partnership will significantly influence how prepared its workforce is to implement mātauranga Māori within the curriculum, and, therefore, the quality of knowledge teachers can disseminate. Participants also proposed that the implementation of curriculum policy itself is likely to be dependent on teacher confidence and knowledge. The two participants whose schools had established partnerships with mana whenua expressed greater confidence in implementing the refreshed curriculum than participants whose schools' lacked partnerships.

Consequently, it is essential for schools to proactively establish partnerships with iwi, so that iwi can guide the incorporation of local tikanga practices and potentially play a role in developing and certifying teacher cultural competency (Fitzgerald & Knipe, 2019). Such partnerships are crucial for ensuring that teachers are adequately supported in their professional development and prepared to engage meaningfully with mātauranga Māori. School leadership must be proactive in developing and leading policy and strategic plans for developing partnerships with iwi and hapū.

Monocultural Education

Teaching is a practice that draws on the accumulated knowledge, skills, and experiences of educators. Teachers bring varied knowledge bases and skills to the profession (Darling-Hammond & Baratz-Snowden, 2005). Most participants in this research identified their knowledge bases as being firmly rooted in Western frameworks of knowledge. Participants spoke of their largely monocultural educational experiences, reflecting a lack of exposure to Te Reo Māori and mātauranga Māori throughout their education. Historically, Māori language and culture have been largely invisible in the New Zealand Curriculum, classrooms, and teacher

preparation programs (Fitzgerald & Knipe, 2019). This monocultural framework has left many teachers with a limited understanding of Māori language, knowledge systems, values, and customs (Turner-Adams & Rubie-Davies, 2023). They also hold an incomplete or fragmented understanding of the depth and breadth of mātauranga Māori (Stewart, 2020).

This lack of cultural competence is expressed in the low levels of confidence and preparedness in navigating mātauranga Māori that were evident in the interviews. This has important implications for the curriculum refresh, particularly regarding the knowledge teachers can draw upon to enact the curriculum. The absence of clear frameworks or definitive professional expectations around mātauranga Māori further compounds this issue. As Participant 1 observed, “you do not know what you do not know” about mātauranga Māori, and because there are no widely accepted frameworks or indicators to measure teacher knowledge in this area, many teachers lack a concrete sense of their preparedness. Furthermore, the absence of iwi partnerships in many of the participants’ schools perpetuates this lack of clarity. Iwi hold the measures to determine preparedness and cultural safety, yet they are not given space to inform or guide school policy, planning or PLD.

Teachers constantly draw on their theoretical frameworks and knowledge bases in their daily practice (Couch et al., 2022). While some are conscious of their theoretical frameworks, others remain unaware of how these frameworks operate in practice (Mahuika et al., 2011; Hetaraka, 2020; Te Huia, 2016). Sheehan posits that many teachers “view knowledge through Western conceptual frameworks” that have been shaped by their social and educational histories (Sheehan, 2021, p.211). However, many teachers are unaware of these lenses because Pākehā culture has been normalised as the standard educational culture. Additionally, many tangata Tiriti have minimal engagement with Te Ao Māori, which leads to a lack of awareness about how the dominance of one knowledge system—Western knowledge—can marginalise or silence other systems, such as mātauranga Māori (Hetaraka, 2022).

This unacknowledged dominance has profound implications for how teachers engage with mātauranga Māori and ultimately impacts their ability to deliver an inclusive, culturally responsive curriculum. Teachers’ limited understanding of Māori epistemologies and cultural practices leaves them ill-equipped to fully embrace the curriculum refresh’s goals of recognising and incorporating Māori worldviews. Moreover, the absence of clear frameworks to measure preparedness or cultural competency further exacerbates the challenge, creating a

gap between teachers perceived and actual readiness to implement the curriculum changes effectively.

Fears for Mātauranga Māori

For many Māori, living between two worlds—one rooted in Māori traditions and the other in the dominant Western worldview—is a normal part of life. In contrast, many non-Māori only need to exist within the dominant culture, one in which they see themselves reflected throughout society (Moon, 2023). Hetaraka (2020) argues that this dominance has fostered an unawareness and a “lack of understanding of Māori histories and contemporary realities” (Stewart, 2021, p.4). It is within this space of “not knowing” that harm can occur. In this study, participants’ lack of consideration of the potential risks of ill preparedness on mātauranga Māori offers valuable insight into teacher preparedness levels. This lack of consideration may reflect an unawareness of Māori experiences within colonial systems, as well as the ways in which minority knowledge frameworks interact with dominant Western knowledge structures.

Two participants, however, expressed specific concern about the potential risks an ill-prepared teaching profession could pose to mātauranga Māori. One of these participants held whakapapa Māori, both taught te reo Māori and regularly navigated te ao Māori. This proximity and understanding led to a stronger sense of accountability for the protection and accurate interpretation of mātauranga Māori, which was not shared by other participants. The concern was also voiced by the iwi participant, who emphasised that iwi are concerned about the protection of their taonga tuku iho. This aligns with the views of Māori academics like Mikaere, who argues that teaching mātauranga Māori to non-Māori students without the proper contextual understanding may risk the knowledge being exploited or misinterpreted (Mikaere, 2011).

The participants’ lack of awareness can be traced to both a lack of understanding and experience with mātauranga Māori, as well as a disconnection from the Māori communities (iwi and hapū) from which this knowledge originates. The absence of strong iwi partnerships in many of the schools represented in this study further supports this view. There is significant concern that, as the responsibility for the interpretation and dissemination of mātauranga Māori shifts to a largely non-Māori workforce, the risk of colonial misinterpretations increases. Macfarlane et al. (2020) suggest that when those without deep expertise in mātauranga Māori are tasked with

interpreting and delivering it, there is potential for the knowledge to become further colonised and misrepresented.

Furthermore, as L. T. Smith (2021) warns, Māori may become outsiders to their own culture, as misinterpretations, lack of understanding, pathologizing beliefs, and a disconnection from iwi contribute to inaccurate representations of cultural practices and values (Absolon & Willett, 2005). This dynamic could perpetuate colonial narratives and further marginalise Māori knowledge systems. West et al. (2020, p.76) note that such misinterpretations are not only harmful but also “continue the cycle of colonial domination” over Māori epistemologies.

To mitigate these risks, it is crucial that schools establish strong partnerships with iwi to develop professional learning programmes and create tikanga frameworks to guide teachers in their interactions with mātauranga Māori. The silence from participants regarding the impact of colonial education systems on mātauranga Māori suggests that they may lack the perspectives and understanding necessary to ensure active protection (Te Tiriti o Waitangi – Article 2) is truly enacted. Schools' relationships with iwi and hapū are essential not only for protecting mātauranga Māori but also for creating a sense of accountability in the education system—an accountability that acknowledges the historical and ongoing harm done to Māori and their knowledge systems by the education system.

Racism in the System

Colonial racism and white supremacy have been central to Māori experiences of schooling in Aotearoa New Zealand (The Human Rights Commission, 2022). This deep-seated trauma, coupled with both interpersonal and institutional racism, was a major concern for the Māori participants in this study. The Whakatika report (C. W. Smith et al., 2021), which highlights Māori experiences of racism in education, reveals that schools are often sites where racism is pervasive. This finding is supported by research from Torepe (2018) and Hancock (2023), both of whom document the experiences of Māori teachers in English-medium schools. Their work shows that Māori staff often face racism from both colleagues and students. Their research also found Māori staff are frequently required to justify the inclusion of their knowledge within the curriculum.

Māori participants in this study may have been more attuned to the racial dynamics of the education system than their non-Māori counterparts, likely due to their personal awareness of the Eurocentric nature of English-medium schooling. The inherent biases and attitudes of the system, which validate the beliefs and philosophies of the dominant culture, may go unnoticed

by non-Māori teachers, who are not as directly affected by them (Poutama Pounamu, 2020). However, as mātauranga Māori becomes more integrated into the curriculum, non-Māori teachers will inevitably be exposed to the pathologizing mindsets and forms of racism that Māori staff and students regularly encounter within the system.

For mātauranga Māori to be safely and effectively taught, teachers will need to develop the capacity to address racism, white supremacy, and the emotional responses—such as guilt, trauma, and anger—that may arise in the classroom (Love, 2020, p.75). Teachers must learn how to create safe, inclusive spaces for Māori students, as well as for the knowledge systems they bring with them. The iwi participant stressed the importance of self-reflection, urging teachers to critically examine their own perspectives and beliefs when engaging with Māori epistemologies and hapū and iwi

Māori academic Ocean Mercier further argues that to create a safe space for mātauranga Māori and other Indigenous knowledge systems, it is essential to decolonise the education system first (Dunlop, 2021). This call to decolonise the curriculum and pedagogy speaks to the need for a fundamental shift in the way the education system views and engages with Māori knowledge, history, people, and culture. Schools must provide teachers with the tools to learn and implement decolonising and anti-racist methodologies, so that they can confront and address racism within their classrooms.

Finally, there is a pressing need for further research into the capacity of tangata Tiriti teachers to address racism within New Zealand schools. Understanding how these teachers can engage with and dismantle racism in the classroom is critical to ensuring that mātauranga Māori can be delivered authentically and safely. Without this capacity, Māori students and mātauranga Māori will continue to face barriers in the classroom, potentially exacerbating the trauma and inequities that exist within the education system.

Initial Teacher Education (ITE)

The colonial education system in Aotearoa has played a pivotal role in dismantling Māori culture and promoting Western knowledge systems (The Human Rights Commission, 2022). Teacher education programs have historically been no exception to this, “predominantly promoting tikanga Pākehā” (Fitzgerald & Knipe, 2019, p.99). As a result, teacher education has largely prepared educators to perpetuate Western knowledge frameworks while marginalising mātauranga Māori and this is reflected by participants’ lack of preparedness to incorporate

mātauranga into their practice and the minimisation of mātauranga Māori within teacher education programs.

The Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand (2022) asserts that Initial Teacher Education (ITE) requirements are crucial in shaping a future-focused teaching workforce. While the integration of te reo and mātauranga Māori is mandated within the refreshed curriculum, ITE programs still fall short of preparing preservice teachers with the requisite competency in these areas. Despite the call for the incorporation of mātauranga Māori across the New Zealand curriculum and NZQA assessments, the Teaching Council has not established definitive frameworks or expectations regarding competency in mātauranga Māori for teacher education (Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand, 2022). This omission is particularly concerning as it signals that mātauranga Māori remains peripheral, positioned as optional rather than mandatory for ITE programs.

As a result, there is a significant risk that preservice teachers may not be adequately prepared to meet the demands of a curriculum that requires the inclusion of Māori knowledge, language, and culture. This failure to establish clear expectations for mātauranga Māori reinforces the dominance of Western knowledge systems and perpetuates the notion that Māori knowledge is secondary or supplementary to the business of 'real academia'. Such an approach undermines the validity and status of mātauranga Māori as a knowledge system in its own right and perpetuates the ongoing marginalisation of Māori epistemologies in education. Most participants were not exposed to sufficient mātauranga Māori in their own primary, secondary and tertiary education to build confidence in their ability to teach mātauranga Māori. Nor did participants' ITE prepare them to deliver mātauranga Māori within their curriculum area. As such, ITE programs that do not centre mātauranga Māori, risk failing to prepare teachers for the realities of the curriculum, whilst continuing to produce teachers who do not have the confidence and/or knowledge to integrate mātauranga Māori. More broadly, ITE programs that fail to include mātauranga Māori education within their program will produce teachers who may be unable to meet their professional obligations to Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Professional Learning and Development (PLD)

Donnelly (2008) argues that access to quality professional development (PLD) is essential for educators to stay current and effectively address the diverse needs of their students. Participants in this study stated that the quality and consistency of PLD was impacting their ability to

prepare for the implementation of the curriculum. Many participants raised concerns about the sporadic nature of professional development opportunities impacting their ongoing professional development. Furthermore, the generalised rather than tailored nature of PLD failed to address the skills and knowledge teachers needed at the level they needed.

The lack of sustained and subject-specific PLD was a common frustration among participants, who expressed that one-off workshops were insufficient for deepening their knowledge and refining their teaching practices. As Participant 8 noted, they required a more sustained and progressive approach to professional development—one that builds on prior learning and allows for ongoing reflection and application of new skills. This aligns with Darling-Hammond's (2017) argument that effective professional development requires sufficient time for teachers to engage with, practice, implement, and reflect on new strategies in order to make lasting changes in their teaching practice.

Te Kotahitanga project (Bishop et al., 2007) found that structured, formalised professional development has a positive impact on teachers' professional growth, particularly when it is designed to be long-term and cumulative. In this study, participants echoed the need for such structured professional learning, with many expressing frustrations at the lack of ongoing, focused PD opportunities related to mātauranga Māori. The importance of leadership in progressing and supporting teacher preparedness was reiterated by both the iwi and teacher participants.

The nature of professional development is also shaped by school leadership. Participants from schools with a strong, systemic focus on mātauranga Māori and Te Tiriti o Waitangi were more likely to feel prepared to implement these concepts in their teaching. In these cases, professional development was supported by meaningful relationships with mana whenua, aligned with the school's strategic plans, and guided by long-term professional growth goals. Both Participant 2 and Participant 4 described how school leaders played a pivotal role in driving the professional development of staff, ensuring that the implementation of mātauranga Māori was embedded across all systems of the school.

Research by Cowie et al. supports the view that school leaders who act as "systems thinkers" play a key role in creating the conditions for effective professional learning (Cowie et al., 2011). Systems-thinking leaders help establish structures that enable teachers to grow professionally, ensuring that the development of knowledge and skills is continuous and supported. As such, it is not enough for schools to offer ad hoc professional learning opportunities; instead, they

must create a schoolwide, strategic approach to PLD that signals leadership commitment and provides teachers with clear pathways to develop their competence over time.

Moreover, the involvement of iwi in PLD programs is crucial. Schools that foster partnerships with iwi and work collaboratively to design culturally relevant PD programs are more likely to equip their teachers with the knowledge and skills necessary to teach mātauranga Māori authentically. When schools work closely with mana whenua to develop PD opportunities, they not only enhance the cultural competence of their staff but also support the recognition and legitimisation of mātauranga Māori as an integral part of the curriculum.

The Ministry of Education and the Curriculum Roll-Out

Participants in this study expressed that their ability to prepare for the inclusion of mātauranga Māori within the refreshed curriculum was significantly impacted by the Ministry of Education's approach to implementing the policy. One of the primary concerns raised by participants was the Ministry's failure to release supporting documentation in a timely manner. These delays left little time for teachers to engage with and interpret the materials before dedicated professional learning days (TODs). As one participant (Participant 8) described:

“I think the Ministry released the stuff for the MOE day on the Friday, or it might have even been the Saturday before, and so they gave us, what, me as the leader, 2 days to read through this, work out what we should take.” - Participant 8.

For teachers in leadership roles, this delay was especially problematic, as it hindered their ability to effectively prepare themselves and to lead their colleagues through the new resources. Research by Cowie et al. supports this concern, highlighting that adequate time is essential during the initial phase of curriculum implementation for teachers to properly encounter, investigate, and unpack new materials (Cowie et al., 2011). Without this crucial preparation time, participants struggled to provide meaningful leadership or guidance on how to incorporate mātauranga Māori effectively into their teaching.

In addition to the late release of documentation, participants expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of comprehensive resources to support the curriculum rollout. Participant 8 further emphasised this issue:

“The Ministry has provided very little support. And I think they think that, but we’ve got these learning outcomes, and we’ve got these tasks. But where is the...where are the learning slides, where are the resources? Where are the examples?” - Participant 8.

Many participants noted that the absence of subject-specific resources left them scrambling to find expert materials that would enable them to translate mātauranga Māori and curriculum expectations into practical teaching strategies. Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) have argued that specific, contextualised curriculum content is crucial for teacher learning within their classroom settings. Effective preparation requires more than just high-level policy documents; it demands detailed, subject-specific materials that help teachers implement new curriculum requirements in ways that are both practical and pedagogically sound.

However, the curriculum rollout has been characterised by a lack of intermediate support that could help bridge the gap between policy intent and classroom practice. The OECD argues that a well-resourced, intermediary layer of support is essential for schools to effectively implement curriculum changes, develop detailed curriculum guides, create assessments, and foster the dissemination of best practices (OECD, 2024). Without these supports, teachers are left to navigate the curriculum changes largely on their own, leading to increased workload and frustration. As a result, the implementation of the refreshed curriculum has not been as effective as it could be, with many teachers feeling overwhelmed by the scope of the changes and the lack of timely resources.

The scale of the curriculum refresh has also added to the complexity of teacher preparedness. Participants reported that the sweeping changes across both curriculum policy and assessment specifications—coupled with the inclusion of mātauranga Māori—made it particularly difficult to navigate the new requirements while managing ongoing teaching responsibilities. Many teachers argued that the changes should not have been implemented all at once, as this compounded the challenges of understanding and applying new content in the context of existing teaching loads. The release of NCEA assessment standards before the curriculum content was fully fleshed out raised concerns among teachers, as they felt they were left to fill in the gaps between incomplete curriculum documentation and the corresponding assessment standards.

The OECD report echoes these concerns, finding that there was widespread agreement among stakeholders that the sequencing of curriculum reforms was problematic. By prioritising changes to assessment and teacher education before the curriculum itself was fully developed,

the Ministry inadvertently made the implementation process more challenging for schools, principals, and teachers (OECD, 2024). Cowie et al. (2011) suggest that a more coherent and aligned approach between curriculum, teaching, and assessment is critical for effective implementation. Reducing confusion and clarifying the alignment between these elements could ease teachers' transition to new curriculum requirements, allowing them to focus more on local curriculum design and resourcing.

Another significant barrier to effective curriculum implementation was the limited time available for teachers to engage with the changes. Many participants described themselves as “time poor” (Participant 4), highlighting how the front-loading of TODs — without sufficient follow-up or ongoing support— hindered their ability to adequately prepare for the changes. As curriculum policy and assessment changes continued to evolve after most of the TODs had taken place, many teachers found themselves scrambling to keep up. Teachers with family commitments, in particular, struggled to balance the demands of PLD outside of school hours alongside their regular teaching responsibilities, further compounding the strain of the curriculum rollout.

The successful implementation of any education policy depends on adequate time and resources for teachers to fully engage with it. Policy initiatives that lack these foundational supports are more likely to falter. While participants expressed general support for the aims of the refreshed curriculum, many felt that the Ministry's approach to its implementation had been disorganised, poorly resourced, and poorly sequenced. Without the necessary supports, teachers were left to work harder than expected to meet the demands of the new curriculum while also ensuring their students received quality instruction.

Recommendations

Teachers:

1. Self-Reflection and Bias Awareness

Teachers must engage in ongoing self-reflection to critically assess their own positionality, acknowledging any inherent biases that may influence their practice. Teachers should actively seek out opportunities to challenge their own perspectives, striving for deeper cultural competency and an understanding of how systemic biases may impact their teaching.

Schools:

1. Commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi and Iwi Partnerships

Schools must uphold their obligations to Te Tiriti o Waitangi by fostering meaningful partnerships with mana whenua. This includes collaborating with iwi and hapū to ensure the protection and accurate dissemination of taonga such as te reo Māori, mātauranga Māori, and the rights of mokopuna Māori. Schools must work in partnership with iwi to guide the integration of mātauranga Māori into the curriculum in ways that are culturally appropriate and respectful.

2. Creating Culturally Responsive Frameworks and Policies

Schools should develop culturally responsive frameworks and policies in partnership with iwi that ensure mātauranga Māori is taught authentically and accurately. These frameworks should outline specific pedagogical practices grounded in tikanga Māori and provide guidelines for staff on how to integrate Māori perspectives into their teaching across all subject areas.

3. Decolonial and Antiracist Professional Development

Schools should provide ongoing professional learning and development (PLD) opportunities that centre decolonial and antiracist methodologies. This will empower teachers to identify and challenge the impacts of colonialism and racism in the classroom and curriculum, as well as support the inclusion of Māori knowledge systems in an equitable and respectful manner.

Ministry of Education:

1. Provide Adequate Time for Curriculum Engagement

The Ministry of Education must allocate sufficient time for teachers to engage with curriculum documentation and plan for its implementation effectively.

2. Timely Release of Documentation

The Ministry must ensure that curriculum documentation, resources, and updates are released in a timely manner to support schools in their preparation for the curriculum roll-out.

3. Critique the Curriculum Change Process

The Ministry should engage in a critical review of the curriculum change process to assess its impact on teachers, students, and schools. This critique should aim to identify gaps or challenges in the curriculum's implementation, particularly regarding the integration of mātauranga Māori, and work towards improving the overall system for future curriculum reforms.

4. Strengthen School Partnerships with Iwi and Hapū

The Ministry should create definitive measures to assess and monitor school partnerships with iwi and hapū. These partnerships are essential for ensuring that schools can accurately and meaningfully teach mātauranga Māori.

5. Increase Funding for PLD Courses by Iwi and Hapū

The Ministry should allocate additional funding to iwi and hapū to support the development and delivery of PLD courses. These courses should focus on Māori knowledge systems, language, and culture. Thus, providing teachers with the tools and support necessary for incorporating mātauranga Māori effectively in their classrooms.

Initial Teacher Educators (ITEs):

1. Integrate Mātauranga Māori into Teacher Education Programs

Initial Teacher Education (ITE) providers must incorporate mātauranga Māori into their courses, ensuring that preservice teachers are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to teach Māori perspectives confidently and accurately. ITE programs should weave mātauranga Māori throughout the curriculum, rather than treating it as a stand-alone topic, to ensure that all future teachers are prepared to engage with Māori knowledge systems meaningfully.

The Teaching Council of Aotearoa:

- 1. Formalise Mātauranga Māori and Te Reo Competencies for ITE Programs** The Teaching Council of Aotearoa must formalise and define mātauranga Māori and te reo Māori competencies as mandatory requirements for ITE programs. This should include establishing clear guidelines and benchmarks for ITE providers to assess and support preservice teachers in their cultural competency, ensuring that they are prepared to engage with Māori students and mātauranga Māori in their future classrooms.
- 2. Create Clear Teacher Registration Frameworks for Cultural Competency** The Teaching Council should develop more definitive frameworks for teacher registration that explicitly assess and certify cultural competency in mātauranga Māori. This framework should include practical benchmarks for teachers to demonstrate their understanding and ability to incorporate Māori knowledge into their teaching practice.
- 3. Incorporate Iwi Partnerships in Teacher Cultural Competency Assessment** The Teaching Council should explore partnerships with iwi across New Zealand to sign off on the cultural competency of teachers. Iwi representatives can provide invaluable expertise and oversight to ensure that teachers are prepared to uphold the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and teach mātauranga Māori in culturally appropriate and accurate ways.

Conclusion

The integration of mātauranga Māori into the New Zealand Curriculum represents a significant and transformative moment in the country's education system. This shift comes after a long history of marginalising Māori knowledge. The successful incorporation of mātauranga Māori into teaching practice is essential for meeting the aspirations of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and ensuring culturally responsive education for all students. However, the research reveals a substantial gap in teacher preparedness to implement mātauranga Māori within English-medium, secondary schools, where many teachers feel ill-equipped to address the curriculum refresh.

Teachers' perceptions of their readiness to teach mātauranga Māori are influenced by a complex interplay of factors, including their personal educational backgrounds, lack of exposure to Māori worldviews, and the broader institutional structures in which they work. While there is a genuine willingness among many educators to embrace this challenge, significant barriers remain, including inadequate professional development, limited resources, and insufficient support from school leadership and systems. The successful implementation of the curriculum, therefore, depends not only on individual teacher effort but on systemic changes to teacher education, professional learning, and school leadership.

Key to overcoming these challenges is the involvement of iwi, who are the custodians of mātauranga Māori, in curriculum development and delivery. Their expertise is vital for ensuring that Māori knowledge is taught with authenticity and respect, in alignment with tikanga Māori. Schools must also commit to fostering antiracist and decolonial practice. It is important schools create space for teachers to critically reflect on their own biases and assumptions, so Māori students can see their culture and language valued and respected.

For the integration of mātauranga Māori to be meaningful, it requires a fundamental shift in how teachers engage with cultural diversity and knowledge systems. Teachers must move beyond a surface-level incorporation of Māori content, and instead, embrace a deeper commitment to decolonial education that challenges existing power dynamics, stereotypes, and inequities. This shift must be supported by ongoing professional development, institutional commitment, and alignment with the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and the National Education and Learning Priorities (NELPs).

Ultimately, the integration of mātauranga Māori into the curriculum is not just a policy shift—it is an opportunity to create an education system that is more inclusive, equitable, and aligned with Aotearoa New Zealand's diverse cultural landscape. Ensuring that teachers are adequately prepared to deliver mātauranga Māori in a meaningful way requires a collaborative effort across the entire education sector, involving educators, school leaders, the Ministry of Education, and iwi. Only through collective action can mātauranga Māori be safeguarded within the State educational system and the promise of the refreshed curriculum be fully realised.

Information Sheet for Teacher Participants

IMPLEMENTING MĀTAURANGA MĀORI INTO THE CLASSROOM: NZ ENGLISH-MEDIUM SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF PREPAREDNESS.

Tēnā koe,

My name is Maiea Ruawai-Hamilton, and I am studying toward a Master of Education degree at Massey University. The final component of my degree involves a research thesis entitled *Implementing mātauranga Māori into the classroom: New Zealand English-medium secondary school teachers' perceptions of preparedness.*

My supervisors for this research project are:

Dr Peti Kenrick

Senior Tutor

Massey University: Te Pūtahi-a-Toi

Email: P*****@Massey.ac.nz

Phone: +64 *****

Professor Huia Jahnke

Professor of Māori & Indigenous Education

Massey University: Te Pūtahi-a-Toi, Manawatū Campus

Email: H*****@Massey.ac.nz

Phone: +64 *****

I am seeking your support and participation to carry out this research study. I am interested in examining *the perceptions of teachers in English-medium, secondary schools regarding their preparedness to implement Mātauranga Māori into the curriculum* as required by the Ministry of Education's Curriculum Refresh. To honour the State's Treaty obligations, the refreshed curriculum explicitly demands the incorporation of mātauranga Māori within each curriculum area. I am keen to hear about teachers' perceptions of preparedness to incorporate mātauranga Māori into their curriculum area. I am also keen to hear about the professional development, experiences and relationships informing these perceptions of preparedness.

I am asking for the assistance of teachers currently employed in a part time or full time (fixed term or permanent) teaching role in State English-medium secondary schools to participate. The methodology of this research involves conducting interviews. Should you consent to participate, you will be asked where you would like the interview to take place, time, and date. Interviews will be audio recorded, and a transcript will be generated from the audio recording. Participants will be able to read, edit and clarify their transcripts. I estimate that interviews will take no longer than an hour. The reading and editing of transcripts will entail further participant time.

How the information you contribute will be used

Fulfilment of Masters Degree

I will be using the information collected from this study in the production of a thesis as partial fulfilment of Massey University's requirements for the degree of Master of Education. The information collected from interview participants will be analysed and contribute to the overall study.

Publication

This thesis publication will potentially sit as a resource available to future researchers in terms of providing information about the topic under focus. Parts may also be used to produce reports, journal publications and seminars given on the research topic. Any agreement regarding confidentiality and anonymity will remain effective for such uses.

Data use and storage

At all times the raw data will be confined to me (the researcher) and my supervisors. All data gathered will be coded to ensure the confidentiality of participants. Audio tapings of interviews will, at all times, be secured, along with consent forms. Transcripts of interviews will be offered back to participants for editing, confirmation, and consent. These transcripts will be stored in a secure location with limited access. Participant confidentiality is of primary concern for the researcher. At the completion of the Master's thesis, participants will be sent a summary of the research findings.

Your Rights in the Research

- The researcher will maintain total confidentiality and anonymity from participants being identified.
- Participation is voluntary, therefore the right to decline to participate at any stage of the interview or give response to any of the questions is assured.
- Participants may choose at any time prior to the submission of the report to withdraw from the research.
- Questions about the study may be asked by participants at any time during participation.
- Participants may choose whether or not to have their interview audio recorded. The researcher alone will transcribe all recordings. Participants will be given a copy of this transcript to check, edit and correct.
- Participants may have the audio recorder turned off at any time.
- The researcher will take notes throughout the interview.
- Participants may choose to have the data they have contributed destroyed or returned to them at the completion of the five-year period for which the University is obliged to keep records.
- Participants have the right to know that all data pertaining to the research will be kept securely stored to ensure that participants' identities are protected.
- Participants will be sent a summary of the draft research findings for comment.
- A copy of the research will be accessible through Massey University upon completion.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet and consider my request. If you decide to take part in this research or you have further questions, please contact me via email at ***** and I will provide you with a consent form. You may keep the information sheets for further reference.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Ohu Matatika 2, Application OM2 23/42. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact

Information Sheet for Iwi/Hapū Participants

IMPLEMENTING MĀTAURANGA MĀORI INTO THE CLASSROOM: NZ ENGLISH-MEDIUM SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF PREPAREDNESS.

Ko Titirangi te maunga

Ko Waiau te awa

Ko Takitimu te waka

Ko Ngāti Kahungunu ki Wairoa te iwi. Ko Ngāti Ruapani ko Ngāti Raukawa, ko Ngā Rauru ko Ngāti Ruanui hoki

Ko Ngai Tamaterangi te hapu Ko Rangiahua te marae

Tēnā koe,

My name is Maiea Ruawai-Hamilton, and I am studying toward a Master of Education degree at Massey University. The final component of my degree involves a research thesis entitled *Implementing mātauranga Māori into the classroom: New Zealand English-medium secondary school teachers' perceptions of preparedness.*

My supervisors for this research project are:

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Email: H*****@Massey.ac.nz

Phone: +64 *****

I am seeking your support and participation to carry out this research study. I am interested in examining *the expectations and experiences of iwi/hapū in regard to the incorporation of Mātauranga Māori into the State English-medium curriculum* as required by the Ministry of Education's Curriculum Refresh. To honour the State's Treaty obligations, the refreshed curriculum explicitly demands the incorporation of mātauranga-a-iwi within every curriculum area. I am keen to hear about iwi and hapū educational aspirations, concerns and experiences around the incorporation of iwi/hapū epistemologies into English-medium state schools.

I am asking for the assistance of iwi and hapū. The methodology of this research involves conducting interviews/hui. Should you consent to participate, you will be asked where you would like the interview to take place, time, and date and whether you would like to conduct the interview kanohi ki te kanohi or online. Interviews will be audio recorded, and a transcript will be generated from the audio recording. Participants will be able to read, edit and clarify their transcripts.

How the information you contribute will be used

Fulfilment of Master's Degree

I will be using the information collected from this study in the production of a thesis as partial fulfilment of Massey University's requirements for the degree of Master of Education. The information collected from interview participants will be analysed and contribute to the overall study.

Publication

This thesis publication will potentially sit as a resource available to future researchers in terms of providing information about the topic under focus. Parts may also be used to produce reports, journal publications and seminars given on the research topic. Any agreement regarding confidentiality and anonymity will remain effective for such uses.

Data use and storage

At all times the raw data will be confined to the me (the researcher) and my supervisors. All data gathered will be coded to ensure the confidentiality of participants. Audio tapings of interviews will, at all times, be secured, along with consent forms. Transcripts of interviews will be offered back to participants for editing, confirmation, and consent. These transcripts will be stored in a secure location with limited access. Participant confidentiality is of primary concern for the researcher. At the completion of the Master's thesis, participants will be sent a summary of the research findings.

Your Rights in the Research

- The researcher will maintain total confidentiality and anonymity from participants being identified.
- Participation is voluntary, therefore the right to decline to participate at any stage of the interview or give response to any of the questions is assured.
- Participants may choose at any time prior to the completion of data gathering to withdraw from the research.
- Questions about the study may be asked by participants at any time during participation.
- Participants may choose whether or not to have their interview audio recorded. The researcher alone will transcribe all recordings. Participants will be given a copy of this transcript to check, edit and correct.
- Participants may have the audio recorder turned off at any time.
- The researcher will take notes throughout the interview.
- Participants may choose to have the data they have contributed destroyed or returned to them at the completion of the five-year period for which the University is obliged to keep records.
- Participants have the right to know that all data pertaining to the research will be kept securely stored to ensure that participants' identities are protected.
- Participants will be sent a summary of the draft research findings for comment.
- A copy of the research will be accessible through Massey University upon completion.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet and consider my request. If you decide to take part in this research or you have further questions, please contact me via email at ***** and I will provide you with a consent form. You may keep the information sheets for further reference.

Participant Consent Form

IMPLEMENTING MĀTAURANGA MĀORI INTO THE CLASSROOM: NZ ENGLISH-MEDIUM SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF PREPAREDNESS.

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time prior to the submission of the report and to decline to answer any particular questions.

I agree to provide information to the researcher on the understanding that my name will not be used. (The information will be used only for this research and publications arising from this research project).

I understand that I have the right to have the data I contribute destroyed or returned to me at the completion of the five-year period for which the University is obliged to store this information.

I understand that I can request correction of the information I contribute prior to completion of the research and before the final copy is drawn up.

I understand that I may request a summary of the draft research findings and offer comment and that I may have access to the results of the research which will be accessible through Massey University upon completion.

I **agree** / **do not agree** to the interview being audio recorded.

I understand that I have the right to ask for the audiotape to be turned off at any time during the interview.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Ohu Matatika 2, Application OM2 23/42. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Associate Professor Fiona Te Momo, Chair, Massey University Ethics Ohu Matatika 2, email: *****

Signature: _____

Interview Schedule for Teachers

Question 1:

Could you briefly give details on your teaching background and training. (years of service, roles, curriculum areas, expertise, personal experiences)

Question 2:

Could you provide a definition of mātauranga Māori

Question 3:

- (i) What is your understanding of the principles of Te Tiriti?
- (ii) Has your school provided training to help teaching staff understand Te Tiriti? If so, have you participated in this training?

Question 4:

Has your school provided professional development opportunities for teaching staff to develop their understanding or skills in Te Reo and mātauranga Māori?

- (i) What professional development have you found helpful for building your preparedness to incorporate Te Reo and mātauranga Māori into your curriculum area?
- (ii) What PD would improve your preparedness to incorporate Te Reo and mātauranga Māori into your curriculum area?

Question 5:

Could you describe your levels of preparedness regarding the incorporation of mātauranga Māori and Te Reo within your curriculum area?

- (i) How prepared do you feel to incorporate general mātauranga Māori concepts into your curriculum area?
- (ii) How prepared do you feel to incorporate subject specific mātauranga Māori concepts into your curriculum area?
- (iii) What knowledge or experiences are influencing your feelings of preparedness?

Question 6:

Could you explain how the professional development provided by the Ministry of Education, has influenced your preparedness for incorporating Te Reo and mātauranga Māori into your curriculum area?

Question 7:

What challenges or issues have arisen for you in terms of developing your understanding of Te Reo and mātauranga Māori?

Question 8:

- (i) Does your school have a relationship with mana whenua and the Māori community in your school's area?
- (ii) How has the Māori community/mana whenua shaped your preparedness to implement the curriculum changes?

Question 9:

How prepared do you feel to explain how the tikanga of mana whenua might interact with subjects/issues/topics or elements within your curriculum area?

Question 10:

How do you think your feelings of preparedness will impact your implementation of mātauranga Māori within your curriculum area?

Question 11:

Do you have any further comments about the curriculum refresh and the implementation of Te Reo and mātauranga Māori within your curriculum area?

Interview Schedule for Iwi/Hapū

Question One:

Could you please provide your definition of mātauranga Māori?

Question Two:

What kaupapa Māori concepts do you believe are important for all New Zealanders to understand?

Question Three:

How do you believe the incorporation of mātauranga Māori into the New Zealand Curriculum (Kura auraki) meets the State's Te Tiriti obligations?

Question Four:

What are the educational aspirations of your iwi/hapū?

Question Five:

What role do you believe whānau Māori could play in kura auraki to assist the implementation of the refreshed curriculum?

Question Six:

What do you (iwi/hapū) hope the inclusion of Te Reo and mātauranga Māori across all curriculum areas of the New Zealand Curriculum (English medium) achieves?

Question Seven:

How do you believe the incorporation of mātauranga Māori into the New Zealand Curriculum will meet your iwi/hapū aspirations?

Question Eight:

What cultural safeguards do they see as important when teachers are dealing with Māori epistemologies (whakapapa, cultural concepts etc)? Is there knowledge you would not like to see kura auraki teaching?

Question Nine:

What concerns do you (iwi/hapū) have with the incorporation of mātauranga Māori within the New Zealand curriculum (English medium)?

Question Ten:

How much engagement have you (iwi/hapū) had from schools in your rohe looking to implement Te Reo and mātauranga Māori into the curriculum? How have kura engaged you?

Question Eleven:

Are there any further issues/ideas you would like to discuss?

Authority For The Release Of Transcripts

IMPLEMENTING MĀTAURANGA MĀORI INTO THE CLASSROOM: NZ ENGLISH-MEDIUM SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF PREPAREDNESS.

I confirm that I have had the opportunity to read and amend the transcript of the interview(s) conducted with me.

I agree that the edited transcript and extracts from this may be used in reports and publications arising from the research.

Signature:

Date:

Full Name - printed

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