



LEADERSHIP STRATEGY: SYNTHESIS OF VIEWS FROM THE MĀORI LEADERSHIP FORUM

31 JULY 2017

HE KANOHI RANGATIRA

The Māori Leadership forum was held on the 23rd June 2017. A representative group of Māori educators from all levels of the education profession were invited to participate with the collaborative development of the Education Council's Leadership Strategy. Prior to this gathering, the Agencies Symposium, Academic Forum and Professional Forum had contributed to the design of a coherent leadership strategy for registered teachers throughout the system.

The aim of the Māori Leadership forum was to elicit participants' views toward a future vision of Māori leadership and leadership, in general, across the profession. The perspectives and key themes raised at this forum have been considered in relation to the research papers and the insights drawn from discussions in the fora previously mentioned.

Leadership to what end? What is the purpose? What is missing? There is brilliant rhetoric out there but let's move beyond the rhetoric and set new directions, challenges and opportunities.

HE KANOHI WHAKAMURI

Attendees shared their insights and prospects followed by a challenge to reaffirm the intent of Tū Rangatira (2010). They applauded this leadership strategy and its focus on key leadership roles and practices that support the delivery of high-quality educational outcomes for Māori learners.

While Tū Rangatira (2010) was guided by the wisdom of pakeke and shaped by the experiences and considerations of educators working in Māori medium, participants at the Māori leadership forum were adamant this model of educational leadership is relevant across the entire profession. Forum participants based this assertion on their professional experiences in different education contexts ranging from kohanga reo, kura kaupapa Māori, kura ā iwi and wānanga to early childhood centres, compulsory schooling, boarding schools and tertiary providers.

Tū Rangatira was a mission of love, as we sat with kuia and kaumatua explaining what it means to be Māori, to understand and respect tribal dialects and differences, to be inclusive of the whole community and to upskill everyone who teaches Māori learners.

At the heart of these comments was a sense of hope, with perhaps a tinge of demand, for the entirety of the education profession to be collectively responsible for providing a strength of leadership that enables Māori to learn, achieve and succeed as Māori.

Participants advocated for the Education Council's leadership strategy to recognise the leadership role of community in support of education outcomes that make sense to learners and their whānau.

They reasoned that leadership roles of whānau, hapū, iwi and their communities are integral to the leadership network available on the education landscape.

The forum echoed with issues and challenges raised at past conferences and related gatherings.¹ The persistent calls for an authentic view and response to Māori progress and outcomes in education, and the search for openings to build and strengthen educational leadership capabilities amongst whānau, hapū, iwi and the wider community were recalled. References were made to Māori education leaders' functioning in a range of contexts and circumstances where one size does not fit all. At the heart of these comments was a sense of hope, with perhaps a tinge of demand, for the entirety of the education profession to be collectively responsible for providing a strength of leadership that enables Māori to learn, achieve and succeed as Māori.

These remarks leaned toward a leadership approach that is broader and inclusive, beyond the positional roles and contributions of boards of trustees, principals, senior and middle leaders. Participants advocated for the Education Council's leadership strategy to recognise the leadership role of community in support of education outcomes that make sense to learners and their whānau.

In this respect, the forum pointed to the Māori leadership strategy, Tū Rangatira, with particular reference to the recognition and affirmation of community leadership in education. Schools and other education places are therefore better understood to be sites of shared responsibility for leadership in education and vibrant contributors to the sense-making and practice of community.

Effective leadership practice acknowledges there are many participants, learners, whānau, iwi, educators, Māori communities, and government working together to maximise success for Māori. (Tū Rangatira, 2010, page 7)

The forum called for relief from the unreasonable expectations of 'Māori teachers' to fix the 'Māori problem.' Participants agreed that all levels and sectors of the education profession should co-design strategy and resolve to responsibly practice and share leadership that makes sense for different contexts and circumstances. They reasoned that leadership roles of whānau, hapū, iwi and their communities are integral to the leadership network available on the education landscape. With this in mind, participants were concerned about the disconnectedness within and without the profession. They also wondered if the profession's moral purpose needed to be refreshed.

Resistance to change wrapped in claims about not understanding maybe code for avoiding unpalatable implications.

In addition to these considerations, participants discussed the knowledge, skills and qualities that all educators should demonstrate when functioning effectively in different contexts and circumstances, when responding to the aspirations and goals of learners and their whānau, and when drawing on different ways of knowing, doing and being.

Tū Rangatira – its principles and values were shared with aspiring principals because they are relevant and easy to understand. This is definitely useful for all leaders in education.

¹ For example, Hui Taumata Matauranga 2001.

Forum participants believed that Tū Rangatira (2010) should influence the development of the Education Council's leadership strategy. They advocated for a system wide implementation of this leadership strategy, its principles and values, supported with a robust evaluation of its application. In other words, the development of the Council's leadership strategy offers potential to strengthen leadership pathways in education that reflect and respond to the aspirations and goals of diverse Māori communities with Māori and/or English medium. The importance of stress testing the responsiveness of Tū Rangatira in practice with communities, whānau and learners was also emphasised. Further to this, the forum promoted the value of collecting stories and exemplars that describe Tū Rangatira in practice.

The forum supported the Council's endeavours to focus on enabling leadership at all levels of the system. However, they believed the Council's leadership strategy must offer future educators a compelling moral purpose to uphold and advance. In this regard, the entire profession needs to be involved with the development and execution of strategy.

A strategy by itself will not be enough! If it is to make sense and connect with whānau aspirations then it needs to offer the smells, sounds and sights of community. Would this alter the DNA – building blocks of the profession?

HE KANOHI WHAKAMUA

There was unequivocal support for the development of a leadership strategy that aims to better serve all learners, their whānau and their communities.² There was no interest in strategy that, without rhyme or reason, steers leadership and responsibility for the underserved, many of whom are Māori learners, toward educators who self-identify as Māori. Participants envisioned a sharper and wider focus on a leadership approach that inspires the profession to stand up and enable Māori learners and their whānau to learn, achieve and succeed as Māori.³

The forum agreed that the Education Council must ensure leadership strategy is supported with sustainable implementation. Participants raised the opportunity to review the direction and underlying principles that will inform the foundation of a leadership strategy. A practice guide that offers clear purpose and direction is sought after. Whatever may come of this, participants were mindful that all sectors and levels of the education profession may grapple with reframing a leadership strategy that localises purpose and outcome with communities over and above educators and the profession. Nonetheless, the forum suggested that Tū Rangatira principles and values should be embedded into the accountability mechanisms, regulatory levers and formal expectations in support of the overall leadership strategy.

How might this strategy mesh kaupapa Māori into the DNA of the education system? This shift needs to include everyone not just Māori educators.

Participants envisioned a sharper and wider focus on a leadership approach that inspires the profession to stand up and enable Māori learners and their whānau to learn, achieve and succeed as Māori.

² See Hohepa, M (2013), Educational Leadership and Indigeneity Doing Things the Same, Differently in American Journal of Education: Educational leadership has been identified as a key factor in raising achievement, particularly among Indigenous and other minoritized students, page 628.

³ To learn, achieve and succeed as Māori recognises learners and their whānau have affiliations and connections to more than one hapū and iwi. This sense of identity, language and culture is captured in the concept of rau kotahi.

Participants also mentioned the development of leadership strategy with core cultural competencies that make sense to community and whānau.

Developing a leadership strategy that is inclusive and collaborative, yet attentive to people, place and purpose, and equally alert to context and circumstance raises unknowns.⁴ This is illustrated, in part, with the obvious tension between the development of an overall framework that guides leadership thinking and practice on the one hand, and the demand for an approach that embraces and functions effectively in different contexts and circumstances. From their vantage point, participants were clear that both must be in the line of sight.⁵

The forum described Tū Rangatira as the strategic response to the aforementioned issues, challenges and opportunities. They referred to leadership competencies⁶ that are relevant in diverse education contexts, where one size does not fit all, with learner at the centre, cloaked by supportive leadership and respectful attention to needs, aspirations and goals. Participants also mentioned the development of leadership strategy with core cultural competencies that make sense to community and whānau.

Even though forum participants endorsed Tū Rangatira with personal stories about application they were unsure about the level of uptake amongst kaupapa Māori contexts or elsewhere. They were otherwise aware that Tū Rangatira had been promoted successfully amongst principals and emerging leaders involved with English medium schools. After further discussion, participants resolved that information regarding the uptake and use of Tū Rangatira would be more compelling with a robust evidence base.

These insights highlighted the uncertainty, complexity and rapid change that present and future generations of educators must learn to thrive within. In the New Zealand context, the status and influence of the Treaty of Waitangi and biculturalism have regularly challenged present-day thinking and sensitivities. If history is a good teacher then defining, interpreting and applying these boundary settings is better understood to be an evolving process with continuous improvement. The forum concluded that these challenges must be shared beyond the profession with communities and whānau.

With guidance from community leaders, Tū Rangatira (2010) identified and confirmed key leadership roles (function) and areas of focus (purpose). With a complementary viewpoint, Durie (2015) predicted that future leaders will have expanded roles necessitating changes to current expectations including clear obligations to communities, as well as schools.⁷

Biculturalism is a journey not a readily defined destination. The Education Council and the profession should probably realise its early days and there is a ways to go.

⁴ See Gilbert (2015), *Leading in collaborative, complex education systems*, page 11 and Durie (2015), *Education leadership for tomorrow*, page 29.

⁵ Gilbert (2015) stated that leading in complex situations involves developing the "collective intelligence" of the system as a whole, and then allowing it to function. What is most needed is the ability to "notice" the emergence of new patterns. Context is everything: strategies that "work" in one situation won't perform similarly in another situation with different starting conditions and different interactions. Mandated, one-size-fits-all solutions will not "work" in complex situations.

⁶ Tū Rangatira (2010)

⁷ Durie (2015) stated that Educational leaders in the future will be distinguished by styles of leadership that embrace loyalty to learners, active participation in whānau and family development, a readiness to establish alliances for learning, and the creation of new learning opportunities that will support community aspirations.

Making progress with these considerations will require new and different capacities within system, as well as new ways of thinking about system.⁸ The academic forum advocated for the vision to acknowledge the Treaty of Waitangi as a platform of the strategy. Furthermore, they sought a leadership strategy that is deeply woven and constructed around biculturalism. Although the Māori leadership forum differed from the other fora, they nonetheless arrived at a similarly conclusion to the academic forum. However, this forum advocated for broader and deeper deliberations within and beyond the profession as an important next step. Key areas for attention included strategy, policy and system responsiveness to people at place with purpose.

While initially cautious and searching for clarity about intent for whose benefit, participants were forthcoming with a supportive but guarded approach at this time. This is not surprising given the historical record of similar initiatives with equally good intentions. With one eye on tomorrow and the other on today, the Māori leadership forum encourages the Education Council to raise the level of involvement, contribution and influence of Māori education leaders in the development of strategy. In support of this proposal, the forum agreed that the Council may wish to increase the presence of Māori from across the breadth and depth of the education landscape with future engagements. This approach should reveal the critical success factors and decisions to ensure collective impact.

How do we encourage a power shift and avert a power imbalance with notions and practices of biculturalism and Te Tiriti o Waitangi? How do we move this conversation on so that we share responsibility? Trying to force things to happen does not encourage participation or change.



⁸ See Gilbert (2015), Leading in collaborative, complex education systems, page 8.