

# Boosting outcomes for Māori learners in tertiary education: 2015 research findings

Photo credit: Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiārangī



## Introduction

**Ko te manu e kai ana i te miro, nōna te ngahere.**

**Ko te manu e kai ana i te mātauranga, nōna te ao.**

**The bird that partakes of the miro berry reigns in the forest.**

**The bird that partakes of the power of knowledge has access to the world.**

The Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) has commissioned research to help us build our evidence base about success for Māori learner achievement, connections and contributions. We contribute to building our knowledge and experience of what works for Māori learners.

This summary highlights findings from five research studies to assist education organisations to ensure that Māori learners succeed.

## Enabling Māori learner success in tertiary education

The TEC commissioned a review of good practice and success indicators, *Doing Better for Māori in Tertiary Settings* (2013) to inform and guide understanding of what tertiary investors, governors, managers, educators and support staff can do to boost outcomes for Māori learners. The review identified five components that are critical to creating learning environments that enable Māori to succeed in tertiary education, including:

- effective culturally responsive teaching practices
- culturally relevant and specific learning spaces and peer mentoring

- relevant programmes
- strategic relationships with iwi and industry
- tertiary education organisation leadership and management committed to Māori learner success.

The research provides a framework for identifying the indicators of success that contribute to stronger success outcomes for Māori learners, the tertiary system and communities.

## Making a difference to Māori learner success

Research on Māori-focused professional development *Professional Development Practices and Needs to Enhance Responsiveness to Māori and Pasifika Learners in Tertiary Settings* (Chauvel, 2014)<sup>ii</sup> shows it primarily aims to build foundational knowledge of Māori culture, and helps educators to better understand Māori protocols and contexts. Effective professional development also focuses on teaching educators how to engage Māori learners, and provides relevant and effective teaching tools and strategies. Professional development that aims to improve literacy and numeracy teaching practice is essential to improving outcomes for Māori learners and needs to be easily accessible.

The level at which a Tertiary Education Organisation (TEO) engages in Māori-focused professional development is influenced by the extent to which implementation is supported by organisational values, expectations, structures and processes. Organisational leadership that demonstrates the value and relevance of professional development is also important as strong leadership helps to reduce resistance.

Internal capability is important, as the research shows that Māori-focused professional development is usually delivered 'internally', with Māori staff playing a key role in developing and delivering professional development for the organisation, often with help from non-Māori staff and external Māori expertise.

## Strengthening literacy and numeracy skills for Māori students

Research on embedding literacy and numeracy *Evaluating the Progress of Embedded Literacy and Numeracy in Industry Training Organisations* (McDonald, et al, 2014)<sup>iii</sup> identifies that industry training provides learners with a more holistic experience in developing their literacy and numeracy skills. Embedded literacy and numeracy practices are not yet 'business as usual' across the sector and as such, practice varies greatly.

Some of the factors that have the greatest direct impact on improving learners' literacy and numeracy skills include: internal ITO capacity and capability; training delivered in the workplace; off-job training; and provision of high quality learning materials.

Positive outcomes of literacy and numeracy training include: learners being more positive and engaged in learning; improvements in vocational skills; and tasks being completed quicker.

Motivated, self-starters and those who have had some experience with tertiary education tended to engage well with *Pathways Awarua*. This is a TEC online literacy and numeracy development tool that Māori engage well with.

Authentic contexts (e.g. contexts reflecting specific Māori content) do not seem to be essential to encourage engagement. Access to computers outside the classroom influenced whether learners accessed *Pathways Awarua* in their own time.



## Helping young Māori learners to succeed in tertiary education

Research about NEETs (those not in education, employment or training) *The Youth Guarantee Fees-Free Scheme: A research study* (Gordon, et al.)<sup>iv</sup> found a number of tertiary education organisations base their pedagogies on kaupapa Māori. For example, they use te reo Māori and tikanga to provide an ‘indigenous community’ within which learning can occur. For these organisations, which offer a wide range of trades and non-trades courses, the frameworks and systems used to define learning are just as important as course content.

Having the support of a kaumatua, someone who is well-known and respected, can help with matters of tikanga. For example, a kaumatua can lead ceremonies around food and learning processes and extra-curricular activities, all of which are important to the success of these organisations.

Effective engagement with Māori learners and their whānau, for example through induction interviews, helps them to understand the standard expected when studying at a tertiary level. Having dedicated learning support staff supporting Māori learners to meet academic requirements, leads to improved learning outcomes for Youth Guarantee learners.

## Hei Toko i te Tukunga – Enhancing the delivery of *Ka Hikitia*

*Hei Toko i te Tukunga*<sup>iv</sup> is a TEC-funded project led by Ako Aotearoa that aims to embed the goals of Focus Area Four of *Ka Hikitia – Accelerating Success 2013-2017* through tertiary education to boost participation and achievement outcomes for Māori learners.

The aims of *Hei Toko* are to:

- embed Kaupapa Māori in all areas of project planning, delivery, monitoring and delivery
- develop and deliver a professional development programme that will assist participants and their institutions to sustainably enhance delivery of Focus Area Four of *Ka Hikitia*
- engage institutions that are committed to enhancing outcomes of Focus Area Four of *Ka Hikitia*
- embed formative evaluation into all areas of the project planning, delivery and monitoring
- provide a range of blended resources that will complement the professional development workshop.

“It also helps some Māori youth to develop and connect to a sense of identity.” Māori support staff

Adults with high proficiency in literacy and numeracy are much more likely, compared to those with lower skills, to report good health, to be employed, to have higher earnings...

OECD’s Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC)<sup>iii</sup>

## Ka Hikitia – Accelerating Success 2013–2017, Focus Area Four

**Goal 1:** Māori participate and achieve at all levels at least on a par with other students in tertiary education.

**Goal 2:** Māori attain the knowledge, skills and qualifications that enable them to participate and achieve at all levels of the workforce.

**Goal 3:** Grow research and development of mātauranga Māori across the tertiary sector.

**Goal 4:** Increase participation and completion in Māori language courses at higher levels, in particular to improve the quality of Māori language teaching and provision.

“Ka Hikitia says that quality provision, leadership, teaching and learning, supported by effective governance are the critical factors of success for Māori in tertiary education.”

The outcome of Focus Area Four, Ka Hikitia – Accelerating Success 2013–2017

This summary sheet is part of a series the TEC has published to contribute to the evidence on boosting outcomes for priority learners in tertiary education, including Māori, Pasifika, Youth Transitions and Adult Literacy and Numeracy.



**Tertiary Education Commission**  
**Te Amorangi Mātauranga Matua**

<sup>i</sup> Chauvel, F. & Rean, J. (2012). *Doing Better for Māori in Tertiary Settings*. The Tertiary Education Commission, Wellington

<sup>ii</sup> Chauvel, F. (2014). *Professional Development Practices and Needs to Enhance Responsiveness to Māori and Pasifika Learners in Tertiary Settings*. TEC, Wellington

<sup>iii</sup> McDonald, H., Alkema, A., & Benseman, J. (2014). *Evaluating the Progress of Embedded Literacy and Numeracy in Industry Training Organisations*. Wellington: Heathrose Research Limited

<sup>iv</sup> <https://ako.aotearoa.ac.nz/ako-aotearoa/ako-aotearoa/news/hei-toko-i-te-tukunga-%E2%80%93-enhancing-delivery-focus-area-four-ka-hikitia>

<sup>v</sup> Gordon, L., Sedgwick, C., Grey, S., & Marsden S. (2014). *The Youth Guarantee Fees Free Scheme: A research study*. Christchurch: Pūkeko Research Limited