



## **Dr Liz McKinley: Māori educational research priorities**

I think we need more research about Māori immersion teaching, about the kura. There's been a bit of focus on the success of kura in language revitalisation, but of course kura are more than that. We need to look at the wider curriculum on offer, particularly at wharekura. I'd like to see some work on the academic success of Māori students from kura who want to go to university and pursue pathways other than Māori language or the arts. What about students who want to pursue engineering or science? What are the implications for kura students of a curriculum that may be too narrow for the pathways they want to pursue and what can we do about it? Are there possibilities for kura to form relationships with other schools in order to broaden the curriculum?

I have a particular interest in science – what can kura do to develop science for their students? There is a professional development strand that needs to be worked on, but it has to be underpinned by research. There are some existing programmes that need to be evaluated. My sense is that things have stagnated a bit in terms of what the kura are aspiring to do, and it would be great to see some research that opened up new possibilities.

Transition periods are of interest. At Starpath, we find that the period of transitioning to a university is very problematic for Māori and Pasifika students, and there is a failure to complete in many circumstances. I think we have some solid research that tells what happens when these students get to tertiary education. We know there are a huge range of reasons, including preparation for tertiary education, money, or the pressures of external expectations. The area wide open for good research is working with a wide range of tertiary institutions on well-research-based initiatives to improve retention and success.

I think teacher education is another area that needs researching. We have little (if any) research on compulsory Māori education coursework in teacher education programmes and their impact on students' attitudes and beliefs in teacher education, and what transfers to classroom practice. Are these courses actually achieving a sound basis for the graduating standards or teacher knowledge in classrooms? What is possible in one year or three years? Are there alternative courses to produce better teachers of Māori students in our classrooms? How do you improve teacher efficacy for Māori and Pasifika students?

Another area of interest is teachers of Māori language in English medium-classrooms, and how they use the resources that are available. There are plenty of high-quality resources being produced. I think we need research on whether they are being used effectively. Are they effective? Do we have teachers using them effectively? If so, what can we learn to inform practice?

I think we need more analysis of Māori students' academic success overall. We are being told that many more Māori and Pasifika students are achieving NCEA Level 1 but I think we need to get down to the detail of what those achievements are telling us. I would like to see some really good quantitative work which could identify successful teachers and schools. Unfortunately we don't have enough Māori researchers with strong quantitative skills, and some of the work that has been done has been sloppy or superficial. In general I think we've gone too much the other way, towards work that is overly descriptive, overly qualitative. We need to swing back to strengthening quantitative skills, and building that capacity, but without compromising on critique and theory that provides the questions for quantitative work.

Many Māori students think they have to descriptively repeat the recent history of Māori education. If we are to do historical work it needs to provide new insights into current structures, policies, and practices. While we have some excellent research in the field, unfortunately there is too much that is not of the highest quality.

In my opinion, as a community we have produced too much research that is inward looking, which I can only explain as a reaction to a fear of being "recolonised" through citing overseas theorists and researchers. We need to be careful because inward-looking research can lead to insularity which is not good for growth, insight, and change.

*This paper was downloaded from [www.tlri.org.nz](http://www.tlri.org.nz)*