

Te Reo Tuatahi

Te Reo Language Assistants in mainstream schools.

The right to language is a vital human right, because it goes to the very heart of a persons identity and culture. It is vital for the realisation of peoples cultural, civil, political and social and economic rights. (NZ National Commission for Unesco, 2009)

[Te Reo Mauriora - Report on the Review of the Māori Language Strategy and Sector \[PDF, 1.7M\]](#)

Background to the New Maori Language Strategy

In 2003, the Government's Maori Language Strategy set out a 25 year vision for the future of the Maori language. That vision was the by 2028, the Maori language will be widely spoken by Maori. In particular, the Maori language will be in common use with Maori whanau, homes and communities.

Now 11 years on and despite funding of up to \$225 million per year; two national censuses have confirmed that the speakers of Maori have declined.

Introduction

The new Maori Language Strategy aims to focus the Maori Language revitalisation effort on whanau speaking Te Reo in the home. We agree with this vision which is spoilt only by the knowledge that at this time the majority of Maori parents and grandparents don't have the ability or indeed the motivation to speak Maori well enough to carry it out. And since fewer than 10% of Maori students attend Kohanga and Kura Kaupapa there is little likelihood that the majority of children will have the ability to take the lead.

The vision is a long term strategy because the first step is to get the parents speaking Te Reo. As the Ministry of Education's own review of the effectiveness of one to two years tertiary Maori language courses shows, within two years most of the reo was lost. This is because the brain's capacity to learn new languages is greatest from birth to three years. At about three, the many billions of neurons dedicated to learning new languages begin to die off. By 8 years, the language learning facility has all but shut down.

Then there is the question of the cost of being able to create a generation of confident speakers.

The amount of funding to bring Te Reo into even 50% of Maori homes as the main language of communication is far greater than the \$55 million that would have to be redirected from the annual Te Mangai Paho spend on TV and radio. The other \$170 million that is spent in Education would also need to be targeted to the kaupapa.

The question then becomes this : how do you grow a generation of fluent speakers of Te Reo given the difficulty adults have mastering a second language and given the cost of tertiary level instruction and support.

While technology can help, the fact is that there are literally hundreds of thousands of apps competing for the smartphone users attention. Without expensive support, learners can easily give up.

We propose that while it is a long term vision, that the way to achieve a generation of confident adult speakers who can speak te reo at home, is to begin at preschool and primary with a cost effective programme that is able to get around the fact that there are not enough trained Maori language teachers to go around.

Te Reo Tuatahi

We suggest that an affordable long term solution to creating a generation of confident speakers of Te Reo is Te Reo Tuatahi, Te Reo Maori Assistants.

Te Reo Tuatahi can contribute to two of the four result areas proposed for the new Maori Language Strategy :

- a) Te Ako I te Reo: increasing the number of whanau Maori (and other New Zealanders) who can speak Maori.
- b) Te Mana o te reo: Increasing the status of the Maori language among whanau Maori and other New Zealanders globally

The strategy has three principles to guide the overall approach based on key themes identified in the recent reviews. The first two principles focus on the capacity of Iwi, Hapu and whanau Maori to establish and implement the four result areas. And we support this focus.

The third principle and the one that would support our kaupapa is Mahi Totika: supporting effective, efficient and coordinated government that increases access to Maori language programmes and services for whanau Maori (and other New Zealanders). In keeping with our overall focus on better public services, it is important to ensure that Maori language programmes and services are effective, efficient and coordinated, and readily accessible.

Te Reo Tuatahi addresses the fact that 90% plus of Maori tamariki attend mainstream schools and go through their entire school career without being provided the exposure or the opportunity to access 'good quality te reo' and 'tikanga Maori'.

The model that underpins Te Reo Tuatahi was developed by the government of China as a way of **opening** up commercial trade opportunities by assisting general populations of trade partners to develop a familiarity and comfort with the Mandarin language and with Chinese culture. The programme is funded by the Office of the Chinese Language Council International (Hanban) and is run by the Confucius Institute in Auckland (CI). The Mandarin Language Assistants are young graduates from China. They each teach 30 minutes to one hour a week to classes in clusters of schools. The travel and living costs are met by the China Ministry of Education. Schools are meant to pay \$75 a week (of \$200 a week) for accommodation, but last year the Hanban provided full funding.

Every school (especially in an urban setting) is part of a 'cluster' group of schools, generally comprised of 5 – 8 schools. One (or two) mandarin language assistants work within each cluster, going into a different school each day on a rotational basis.

Throughout the course of the day the language assistant delivers a 30 minute lesson in mandarin to each class in the school, or to as many classes as possible. This means most children (if not every

child) in that school gets 30 minutes instruction each week in basic mandarin words, greetings and sentence formation.

Last year the Ministry of Education funded 29 schools and the Hanban Institute funded 26. Students, in between 280 and 414 schools, received structured lessons in Mandarin weekly that go far beyond the very basic lessons most schools are providing in Te reo Maori.

Te Reo Tuatahi's advantage over other methods is that it is comparatively cheap. It can be implemented immediately. It builds skills in Te Reo Maori in both children and classroom teachers. It prepares all children to be at the same level of language competency when they begin secondary school. It provides the familiarity and skill with Maori language and culture that will lead more students to tick the Te Reo Maori box as their language option.

Fix the Toilets or fund a Maori Language Teacher

In primary and intermediate schools Maori language is lumped in together with the operational budget along with power, water repairs and maintenance etc. It is not even tagged so therefore it is entirely up to the school to budget for Maori language. Principals must decide whether how much of their budget to spend on Maori language as opposed to spending it on library books, resources, It depends on the 'priority' the school gives Te Reo Maori. This comes down to their ability to deliver it. Which is why Maori language is delivered in such an adhoc and reactive way. Some schools commit more resources to Te Reo Maori than others. So what the old Maori Language strategy lacked was consistency across schools.

Only two things are audited in the operational funding. They are Kiwi Sport and ICT, neither of which are subject (learning) areas. They are ways of supporting learning rather than learning areas.

It is all very well for the Ministry of Education to sit back and say that it is up to the schools. But we believe Maori language funding has been deliberately put into the operational grant so that it has to fight against all the other urgent priorities that schools face.

The education policy expresses the need for the language to be an integral part of the education system for Maori. However, having to decide whether to buy library books, upgrade computers or pay for Maori Language has not helped get decent Maori language programmes in schools.

Lumping Te Reo in with all operational needs, as the Ministry does, is to demean our language.

Te Reo Tuatahi Launched

Earlier this month, we launched Te Reo Tuatahi into seventeen North Shore schools. All the primary schools involved in our initiative have sat on level 1 of the curriculum document for teaching in mainstream English medium classes (Te Ara Taki) for years. In fact no school can remember when it was ever any different. In other words they continue to regurgitate the same words and phrases – colours, days of the week, greetings etc hence that is why there is growing interest in our model. They want to offer more, better and different to their students and see our model as access for them being able to provide that.

At Takapuna Normal Intermediate School where we are rolling out our model some teachers observed that Year 7's straight from Primary schools had no idea what 'e tu' meant or 'e noho'. A

sad indictment of what is being allowed to continue in our schools and in marked contrast to what the so-called commitment is in Tau Mai – Te Reo.

There is no formal review for how and what we teach in Maori as there is for other subjects such as English. The MoE goes to extreme lengths to outline their commitment to Maori language in Education policies, however their practice falls short.

Tau Mai Te Reo – The Maori Language in Education Strategy 2013 – 2017:

This vision for Tau Mai Te Reo is 'Kia tau te reo – supporting Maori Language in education: delivering strong, coordinated effort and investment. Tau Mai Te Reo is vital in ensuring the Maori language is valued, appropriately considered, and prioritised in education.

The report Te Reo Mauriora – Report on the Review of the Maori Language Strategy and Sector,¹ the need for 'a critical mass needs to be learning te reo...', and also notes that 'we need to get te reo into our homes...'. What better way to get it in to our homes than by engaging all children in 'te reo' in our schools where they are captive for large parts of the day.

Meeting the School Charter

With over 90 percent of Maori children attending mainstream schools, the proposed model focuses on these tamariki. Te Reo Tuatahi estimates that the Te Reo Language Assistants model has the potential to meet 70 percent of the recommendations in the TE Reo Mauriora report

In addition to the Ministry of Education's stated objectives, every school has a school charter with reference to providing instruction in 'Te Reo Maori'. There is a trend that most school charters include a statement similar to the following:

Any requests for instruction in Te Reo Maori will be considered at the time of the request and the Board of Trustees will look into all options and available resourcing including current staff competency in Te Reo.

The charters usually go on to say something along the lines of:

Where resources are subsequently found to be unavailable at the school, the parents will be given the names of all local schools (for example a Kura Kaupapa or the Bi-lingual unit) that provide such instruction. Where the parents express an interest in attending a school within our local cluster a personal introduction to the principal of that school will be arranged.

By contrast, there is significantly more support and funding for the teaching of Mandarin in New Zealand schools. Our Ministry of Education spends about \$80,000 per year on the Mandarin Language Strategy.

It is an agreed arrangement between the New Zealand and Chinese Education Ministries which allows up to 150 mandarin language assistants to work temporarily in New Zealand. It is explained away by the Ministry as being part of the NZ-China Free Trade Agreement which leads one to ask where are the Ministry's obligations to the resourcing the Maori language under the Tiriti of Waitangi.

¹ April 2011. [Te Reo Mauriora - Report on the Review of the Māori Language Strategy and Sector \[PDF, 1.7M\]](#)

Support for Korean, French and other languages

Besides Mandarin language assistants schools can also apply to have a Korean, French, Spanish or German language assistant through the “foreign language” funding stream. Towards the end of last year TPDL (Teacher Professional Development Languages) were seeking applications to fund 80 teachers to be trained in ‘teaching’ foreign languages. The foreign languages include Chinese, French, German, Japanese, Spanish, Cook Islands Maori, Samoan, Tongan Niuean and Tokelauan but because Maori is an ‘official language’ **funding for Maori does not apply.**

This training would go a long way in supporting our Te Reo Language Assistants to improve their pedagogy. But, because Maori is recognised as an ‘official’ language of New Zealand it does not meet the same criteria or even given the same status. It would even seem that being an ‘official language’ of New Zealand when it comes to funding is a disadvantage if anything. There is NO comparable funding source for Te Reo Maori at all that we have been able to find.

What this does highlight though is the fact that these ‘foreign’ governments are prepared to ‘invest’ in their languages to ensure their survival and continued use. Why is it that our own government will not make the same commitment and investment in the Maori Language?

Tau Mai Te Reo – The Maori Language in Education Strategy 2013 – 2017:

Revival of the Maori language is the responsibility of Maori and the Crown. Maori language can not be secured by Maori efforts alone, nor Crown efforts alone. It depends on the ability of both sides to cooperate, participate and contribute.

Preschool Te Reo Tuatahi

We realise that languages are best acquired from birth to three years old and that Te Reo Tuatahi needs to be introduced into the 4,000 preschools across our country. However, because we have few resources and are voluntary, we decided to prioritise primary and intermediate schools firstly because the Principals are totally committed to getting Te Reo Tuatahi into their schools and secondly because most preschools are privately owned and need a dedicated team to approach them.

About Us

Te Reo Tuatahi is a voluntary group of community supporters and Principals based on the North Shore who have been advocating for a ‘te reo language assistant’ programme to be established in our mainstream schools. We have been fighting with the Ministry of Education to get our programme funded. At a recent hui, over 30 North Shore Principals supported Te Reo Tuatahi. We have begun with 17 schools and will extend out to cover the rest when we have the time. This has been a full time job (unpaid) for two of us, Raewyn Harrison and Jo Shelford.

As of February 2014 Te Reo Tuatahi has implemented this programme in 20 schools.

- Beach Haven Primary
- Birkenhead Primary
- Campbells Bay Primary
- Stanmore Bay Primary
- Chelsea Bay Primary
- Hauraki Bay Primary

- Devonport Primary
- Forrest Hill Primary
- Mairangi Bay
- Manuka Primary
- Marlborough Primary
- Northcote Intermediate
- St Marys Primary
- St Josephs Primary
- St Leos Primary
- Sunnybrae Primary
- Target Rd Primary
- Takapuna Normal Intermediate
- Vauxhall Road Primary
- Windy Ridge Primary

The Financial and Resource commitment Schools are making.

The schools are paying for the Te Reo Language Assistants (TRLA) out of their operational funding budget. The TRLA is classed as a 'contractor' to the school so will invoice the school individually for payment. What this means as a 'contractor' though is that the TRLA's will have no income during the school holidays. This is something that will put the programme at risk as many of the assistants may find that they cannot sustain having no money coming in during the holidays. The schools also provide all the other resources that may be required i.e. printing etc.

Overcoming the Challenges of the Past

In past years there have been two main challenges to having te reo taught in our mainstream schools. The first was the lack of resources. Now we have so many resources to choose from - books, CDs, DVDs and a range of online inter-active programmes, including resources offered by the Ministry of Education. All of these are now available to help us to learn how to speak te reo, write in te reo and sing in te reo.

The second challenge and by far the most significant with this model was the fact that there were not enough 'qualified' teachers to go into our mainstream schools who could speak and teach te reo. ***Putting Te Reo Language Assistants competent in te reo, with a developed programme, in front of the class to work alongside the 'qualified class teacher' addresses this problem.***

The 'qualified class teacher' stays in the classroom the whole time to manage class behaviour while the te reo language assistant delivers the lesson in te reo. Both the children and the teachers are learning te reo. This builds capacity for the school creating a win-win-win situation.

We have been inundated with applications from fluent speakers of Te Reo. There are so many out there who would love the opportunity to work in an area where they have a unique ability. Every one of our successful assistants is passionate about the survival of Te Reo Maori.

Six people were interviewed for these positions at the end of last year for the roll-out of our 'te reo language assistant' model and all were successful. All are fluent in te reo and are culturally competent and nearly all of them have a good grounding in kapa haka – an extra skill base to offer schools. Already we have been approached by others as interest in this kaupapa spreads. We have provided PD (Professional Development) training for our six te reo language assistants through

UNITEC and the Ministry of Education to help up-skill and train them for being in a classroom setting and lesson delivery. Police vetting is carried out as a matter of course and has been applied to all our successful applicants.

Conclusion

The introduction of the Mandarin Language Assistants model four years ago in many of our mainstream urban primary and intermediate schools has proved to be extremely successful. Some schools are now in their third or fourth year of the programme and have students who are confident speakers of Mandarin.

The Mandarin Language Strategy is supported by the Chinese government by way of several hundred millions of equivalent dollars in research each year to find the best ways of helping foreign students learn Mandarin. They also fund with several hundred million dollars a year a dedicated institution dedicated to creating digital learning resources.

The Maori Language Strategy is a poor relation in comparison. However, we have been able to benefit from the Mandarin Language Strategy research and from their commitment to their language as a way of breaking down trade barriers.

Te Reo Tuatahi has been modified and successfully adapted to a Te Reo Language Assistants model. The early responses from our schools are great. We are confident that we will eventually enjoy equal success.

We recommend that you consider Te Reo Tuatahi as one of the main programmes that goes into all preschool, primary and secondary schools.

Moving ahead, towards new levels of achievement, new technologies, new alliances and new economies, will require more than simply a message of good hope or good intention. It will be necessary to read the signs of changes and to know how changes can be managed and manipulated do deliver the best results for the most people. Taking charge of the future rather than charging into the future.

Professor Sir Mason Durie, Auditor Generals Report on Maori Education 2013

Raewyn Harrison
Community Co ordinator
Te Reo Tuatahi

Jo Shelford
Community Co ordinator
Te Reo Tuatahi