

# He Waka Tino Whakarawea: A Model for Evaluating the Cultural Appropriateness and Effectiveness of Programmes and Services for Māori Learners both with and without Special Needs

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## ABSTRACT

This article introduces a waka tino whakarawea model for evaluating programmes and services for Māori learners. It is based on a set of underlying principles identified in the author's PhD study (Bevan-Brown, 2002). Explanations are provided for eight principles: kaupapa Māori; importance, relevance and beneficence; participation; empowerment, tino rangatiratanga and Māori control; accountability; high quality; appropriate personnel and equality and accessibility. Challenges to implementing these principles are outlined and suggestions for overcoming the challenges are shared. A framework containing the principles and 22 associated questions is included, as is a procedure for evaluating, improving or developing programmes and services for Māori learners both with and without special needs. Finally, the waka tino whakarawea metaphor of a well-equipped canoe is explained.

## Practice paper

**Keywords:** *Cultural appropriateness, Māori, programme, service evaluation*

## INTRODUCTION

How can Māori learners with special needs have their needs met in a culturally-appropriate, effective way? This question was at the heart of my PhD study conducted a number of years ago (Bevan-Brown, 2002). To find the answer I conducted a survey of 78 people from 56 special education, disability and Māori organisations, completed 25 follow-up interviews; ran focus group consultation meetings with 50 people from six different kōhanga reo early childhood education services using the medium of Māori language; interviewed 38 parents and whānau (extended family) members and four Māori learners with special needs; carried out a six year case study of one learner; conducted an extensive literature review of relevant Aotearoa/New Zealand and international literature; developed a cultural self-review process and products, and trialled them in 11 educational establishments. The *Cultural Self-Review* was

subsequently published (Bevan-Brown, 2003) and has been used successfully in a number of schools and early childhood education services throughout Aotearoa/New Zealand.

Since publishing the *Cultural Self-Review* (Bevan-Brown, 2003), I have been asked repeatedly whether the products and process can be used to assess and improve the cultural effectiveness of specific programmes or services. The answer to this query is 'yes': adaptations can be made for this use and, in fact this has been done (see, for example, McGee & Lawrence, 2008). However, if time is limited, the waka tino whakarawea model outlined below may be more useful and fit-for-purpose. This model also sits comfortably with the principles and strategies outlined in the recently released Tātaiako package (New Zealand Teachers' Council, 2011; New Zealand Teachers' Council & the Ministry of Education, 2011).

## THE WAKA TINO WHAKARAWEA MODEL

An analysis of the data gathered in all phases of the study revealed a set of principles underlying culturally-appropriate, effective provision for Māori learners with special needs in particular and Māori learners in general. In the following section, principles and challenges to implementing them are briefly explained and some research-generated suggestions for meeting these challenges are offered. Word constraints limit the number of suggestions able to be included. For more ideas refer Bevan-Brown (2002). The eight principles discussed in this paper are:

- Kaupapa Māori
- Importance, relevance and beneficence
- Participation
- Empowerment, tino rangatiratanga (self-determination) and Māori control
- Accountability
- High quality
- Appropriate personnel
- Equality and accessibility.

## **Kaupapa Māori**

### *Principle*

Programmes and services represent a Māori worldview by incorporating Māori concepts, knowledge, skills, attitudes, processes, reo (language), practices, customs, values and beliefs. Ratima, Durie, Allan, Morrison, Gillies, and Waldon (1995) highlight the importance of the kaupapa Māori principle: "There is an added onus on providers of services to Māori, that not only shall clients be equipped to participate in mainstream New Zealand society, but they should have the opportunity to participate in Māori society, to belong to Māori institutions, and importantly, remain Māori. The costs of disability are high; they should not include cultural alienation" (p. 48).

### *Challenges and suggestions*

Despite substantial evidence supporting the inclusion of cultural content (Alton-Lee, 2003; Bevan-Brown, 2002; Rogers-Adkinson, Ochoa & Delgado, 2003), research also reveals that the kaupapa Māori principle is often not evident in practice (Bevan-Brown, 2002; Massey, 2002; Wylie, 2000). Major stumbling blocks to its implementation can include: ignorance or denial of the importance of cultural content; a lack of culturally-relevant assessment measures and resources and; a shortage of people with the professional and cultural expertise required to provide culturally-effective services and to develop supporting resources. To address these barriers, research participants recommended: proactive measures to encourage and enable more Māori to enter teaching and special needs-related professions; a compulsory, substantial cultural component in professionals' pre-service training; readily accessible, Māori-relevant in-service courses; development of joint hāpu (subtribe)/iwi (tribe)/Māori and mainstream/Pākehā programmes and services and; the provision of positive inter-cultural experiences especially those that highlighted Māori role models.

## **Importance, relevance and beneficence**

### *Principle*

Programmes and services focus on matters of importance, concern and benefit to Māori. Provisions are relevant and address needs and aspirations identified by parents, whānau, the Māori community and the learners themselves.

### *Challenges and suggestions*

While the principles of importance, relevance and beneficence cannot be disputed, two areas of potential conflict arise when putting them into

practice. The first involves general disagreements about what is considered important, relevant and beneficial. An example from the study was the placement of three students in segregated classes, a situation considered by teachers as advantageous but by parents and whānau as limiting.

The second area of potential conflict relates to the influence of cultural factors on the perception and management of special needs. Concepts such as "disability", "deviance" and "giftedness" are culturally defined. For example, what is considered "deviant" in one culture may be accepted as "normal" in another. Incompatible cultural concepts, expectations, beliefs, procedures, values, norms and practices can result in disagreements about what is important, relevant and beneficial.

Suggestions for addressing cultural incompatibilities include identifying specific areas where parents' and professionals' beliefs are convergent, divergent and in conflict, and then exploring ways convergent areas can be expanded, divergent areas respected, and areas of conflict dealt with. A second approach involves identifying and validating the differences, frames of reference and shared goals of all concerned, negotiating practices and beliefs and exploring ways to "fuse horizons" to achieve mutually agreeable solutions (Danseco, 1997). Strategies that facilitate positive home-school relationships can also contribute to identifying matters of importance, concern and benefit to Māori learners, their parents and whānau.

## **Participation**

### *Principle*

This principle involves the consultative, collaborative participation of parents, whānau, the Māori community and the learners themselves in all stages of the programme or service. It is acknowledged, however, that the degree of participation possible will vary according to the availability, preference, age and ability of those involved and the nature and circumstance of the provision. Consequently, participation will be to the extent Māori choose and feel comfortable with.

The principle of participation has a dual focus. It not only consists of Māori involvement in the programmes and services offered but also includes professional involvement in the Māori community. By interacting with learners, parents and whānau outside of the school/centre context and by becoming involved in the activities of the Māori community, professionals can gain an understanding and appreciation of Māori perspectives and increase their knowledge of

factors that influence the lives of the learners and families with whom they work.

### *Challenges and suggestions*

A range of circumstances can work against successful participation. Principal amongst these are negative experiences, unwelcoming attitudes and a lack of time, opportunity, confidence and commitment on the part of either service receivers or service providers. Strategies participants suggested to encourage and facilitate participation include: providing transport and child-minding to enable parents to access services and attend meetings; giving parents a choice of time and meeting venue and allowing them to invite support people; using jargon-free language and user-friendly means to communicate with parents and whānau; instigating a home-school notebook system; establishing a welcoming open door policy and; providing home-based services, family education sessions and social functions where food is provided and children's progress celebrated.

### **Empowerment, tino rangatiratanga and Māori control**

#### *Principle*

Programmes and services can result in the empowerment of Māori at multiple levels. They provide learners, parents and whānau with the skills, knowledge, means, opportunity and authority to act for themselves and to make their own decisions. Inherent in this is the provision of real choices about which decisions can be made. The Māori community is also empowered in their involvement either as participants in programmes and services; as partners in service provision; or enabled to offer their own hāpu/iwi-based or pan-Māori programmes and services. They contribute to decision-making that affects Māori at organisational, regional and national levels and have the power and resources needed to determine their own future.

#### *Challenges and suggestions*

Findings of the study revealed that, generally, educational establishments and organisations decided how, where, when and to what extent parents and whānau could be involved or "used." Parental and whānau choice was often limited to deciding whether or not to participate. Barriers to empowerment, tino rangatiratanga and Māori control that were identified included: negative and prejudicial attitudes; personal insecurities and fear of "losing control"; organisational, discipline and personal power plays; funding restrictions; lack of awareness of practices that reflect unequal power relationships; lack of knowledge about power sharing techniques; shortage of people

with the expertise necessary to provide hāpu/iwi or pan-Māori services and reluctance to take on the responsibilities concomitant with personal empowerment or Māori control.

Empowerment requires those who presently hold power to provide space for Māori to participate, opportunities to make their own decisions and resources to implement these decisions. It involves shared understandings, mutual respect and the valuing of diversity. Previously mentioned strategies to overcome detrimental attitudes and increase the number of people with both cultural and professional expertise will contribute to overcoming barriers to empowerment. However, by themselves such measures are not enough to achieve significant empowerment, tino rangatiratanga and Māori control. Widespread, far-reaching changes at a societal level are needed to address power imbalance and the relationship of dominance and subordination that has resulted from colonisation (Bishop & Glynn, 1999). Raising awareness of the extent to which political, judicial, economic, educational, health and social institutions are presently controlled by and reflect white, middle-class, non-disabled values and practices is an immense task. Multicultural education provides a good starting point by involving all students in critically examining issues relating to the cause, impact and maintenance of unequal power relationships, prejudice, racism, social injustice, inequality and poverty (Banks & McGee-Banks, 2010). This critical reflection can then be followed by student, school and community involvement in addressing the issues identified.

### **Accountability**

#### *Principle*

Professionals are accountable to learners, parents, whānau and Māori community for the cultural and general effectiveness of the programmes and services they provide.

#### *Challenges and suggestions*

Despite the importance of accountability, some parents and whānau in the study expressed concern that teachers, principals and special educators did not appear to be answerable for their actions. Stories were told of queries and complaints being ignored or "fobbed off". A classic example is where a mother's concern about her son's reading progress was dismissed with the comment that she had nothing to worry about because her son "was actually above average for a Māori child" (Bevan-Brown, 2002, p.268). Research participants advocated for the introduction of transparent, on-going accountability checks and measures which, ideally, would involve stakeholders' input into

their design, development, implementation and monitoring. Such measures should include clearly defined strategies for improvement, consequences, and be regularly reviewed. The *Cultural Self-Review* (Bevan-Brown, 2003) was perceived as a useful accountability tool especially when it was conducted by the Māori community and school/centre in partnership. It was also recommended as an accountability tool which the Education Review Office (ERO) could use.

### **High quality**

#### *Principle*

Programmes and services ought to be of high quality. As well as being culturally-appropriate, they should be evidence-based; include accurate and on-going assessment; be well planned and co-ordinated; employ effective teaching strategies; be pitched at the correct ability level; utilise quality equipment and resources; be positively focused; build on students' strengths; provide for all areas of development; involve efficient administration and co-ordination of services. In fact, incorporate all the components that have been identified as 'best practice' in the field.

An important message consistently given by participants in the study was that there was no point in programmes and services being culturally-appropriate if they did not work! Parents and whānau in particular were concerned about the quality of the special education their children received. They listed a multitude of process, content and organisational requirements for effective programmes and services, including: appropriate, purposeful, timely assessment; ongoing programme evaluation; comprehensive, accurately focused, regular and sufficient interventions and generous funding and resourcing. Evidence-based practices recommended for Pākehā learners with special needs were considered equally important for Māori learners. However, in addition to this, provisions for Māori learners must also be culturally-appropriate.

#### *Challenges and suggestions*

The challenges to providing high quality programmes and services are mainly related to the shortage of suitably qualified, competent professionals, the dearth of relevant resources and to a general lack of funding. The majority of recommendations, for increasing teacher competence, were directed at the development of cultural expertise, suggestions for which have been mentioned previously. Participants also provided many suggestions for increasing teacher competence in general, for improving the quality of services and for increasing funding.

These included calls to: increase collaboration and sharing of knowledge amongst professionals; decrease "red tape" so more money is spent on services rather than administration; reduce class size; establish advisory groups of parents and professionals with special education expertise and experience; get best teacher-pupil match by strategic class placement; pool Special Education Grant (SEG) money to generate sufficient funding for a shared full time teacher or teacher-aide and to buy resources and equipment that could be shared and tap into additional funding sources, such as local businesses and Māori Trust Boards.

### **Appropriate personnel**

#### *Principle*

Service providers have the personal, professional and cultural expertise required. They are valuing and supportive of Māori culture and the learners, parents and whānau with whom they work.

Research participants were specific about the skills they believed professionals should possess: Professionals should be well-trained, confident and competent in their particular profession. Additionally, they should possess the skills needed to interact effectively and sensitively with a wide range of people; have a commitment to their job; be responsible, and have a positive, caring attitude towards learners with special needs, their parents and whānau. The cultural expertise specified by participants included: an understanding of the linguistic, cultural and spiritual background of Māori; a respect for and knowledge of cultural values, concepts, beliefs and practices and the implications these have for the identification and servicing of learners with special needs; cross-cultural competence; a commitment to the Treaty of Waitangi, and an understanding of the negative effects of colonisation. Those working with learners in Māori-medium situations should have a knowledge of total immersion and bilingual systems and philosophies and an understanding of the educational and developmental implications of bilingualism.

#### *Challenges and suggestions*

Employing appropriate personnel is not an easy task. Previously reported challenges such as the shortage of people having both cultural and professional expertise and the lack of funding to hire them present major barriers. Two additional challenges identified in the organisation survey were the lack of culturally-appropriate, relevant training for staff in both mainstream and Māori services and high stress levels leading to "burnout" amongst Māori workers in the special needs area.

High quality, compulsory, bicultural pre-service training and readily available Māori-focused in-service education should improve cultural and professional competence. A further suggestion was the introduction of guaranteed Māori placements in courses where there is an acute shortage of Māori workers. Other strategies used by organisations in the study include; proactive recruitment; financial assistance and training incentives to attract Māori workers, and professional development, support and mentoring to increase the cultural and professional expertise of the existing workforce.

### **Equality and accessibility**

#### *Principle*

Programmes and services should be readily accessible to Māori learners, their parents and whānau. They have the same rights and privileges as other learners and experience equitable access, use and outcomes.

Article Three of the Treaty of Waitangi promises Māori the “rights and privileges of British subjects”. This constitutes a guarantee of legal equality between Māori and other New Zealanders. The Government acknowledges that implicit in legal equality is the assurance of actual enjoyment of social benefits. “Where serious and persistent imbalances exist between groups, in their actual enjoyment of social benefits such as health, education and housing, the Government will consider particular measures to assist in redressing the balance” (Department of Justice, 1989, p. 13).

The implication of this Treaty provision is that professionals may need to take proactive measures to ensure their Māori students are able to take full advantage of the programmes and services they offer. A point that was emphasised by participants within the study was that culturally-appropriate, effective services are only of benefit if they can be accessed by Māori learners with special needs, their parents and whānau. Affordable cost, convenient time and location, friendly personnel, barrier-free safe environments, and readily available and understandable advertising information are all important accessibility factors that must consequently be taken into consideration.

#### *Challenges and suggestions*

An analysis of research data revealed that a wide range of factors were contributing to the inequities identified. Principal amongst these were: the shortage of culturally-appropriate services, programmes and resources and of special educational professionals with te reo Māori;

attitudes and practices detrimental to Māori; the rural location of many Māori families; the cost involved in accessing many services, especially associated medical provisions; cultural behaviours such as whakamā (embarrassment), and the shortage of information about special education and medical services and entitlements. Strategies employed to overcome these challenges include: fundraising, time payment and family concessions used to defray education costs; Resource Teachers: Learning and Behaviour (RTLb) making home visits; vision and hearing assessors conducting tests at kōhanga reo; asthma information provided at mall stalls, sports meetings and facilities, Māori health days and culture competitions; resources to assist with reading and te reo made available for home use, and increased advertising of services and entitlements especially at venues and in publications popular with Māori.

### **USING THE WAKA TINO WHAKARAWEA MODEL**

Appendix A contains the principles of the waka tino whakarawea model with associated questions. These questions provide guidance for evaluating, improving or developing programmes and services for Māori learners both with and without special needs. While useful for initial reflection, people are encouraged to develop further questions that reflect the associated principle and facilitate a more fine-grained evaluation. It is also recommended that people record their responses to the guiding questions and develop a plan of action to build on strengths and address any weaknesses identified.

The waka tino whakarawea model is intended to be used flexibly. For example, IHC could use the principles and guiding questions to examine all their existing services for Māori learners with special needs; to focus on their provisions in a particular geographic area, or to guide the development of a new programme for Māori residents in community homes or respite care facilities.

### **WHY A WAKA TINO WHAKARAWEA?**

In conclusion, the choice of a waka tino whakarawea should be explained. Bishop and Glynn (1999) maintain that teachers develop principles and practices that reflect the imagery and metaphors they hold. The metaphor of waka tino whakarawea as a well-equipped canoe is illustrated in Figure 1. In the past, special education in Aotearoa/New Zealand has been dominated by the medical model. Similarly, Māori education has been governed by a deficit

mentality. Thankfully, these paradigms are changing. To support this change and facilitate progress for Māori learners both with and without special needs, programmes and services are likened to a waka tino whakarawea - a well-equipped canoe on which they travel at one stage of their life's journey. The kaunoti (hull) represents the requirements of importance, relevance and beneficence. The hoe (paddles) represent high-quality, integrated provisions and appropriate, accountable personnel. These are the components that enable the waka to travel smoothly and surely. If any component is missing, the waka will travel in circles, making only limited progress. If all components are missing, the waka may not progress at all or, being at the mercy of the current, may founder on the rocks. Traditionally, even small waka had rā (sails) (Best, 1976). These assisted the rowers and hastened progress. In this analogy the participation of parents, whānau and the Māori community provide the rā. The more empowered they are, the greater the rate of progress made. The kaupapa Māori requirement can be likened to the harakeke (flax) lashings that bind the various parts of the waka together. As these lashings provide strength and cohesiveness to the waka, Māori input

achieves the same task for programmes and services offered to Māori learners. The tatā (bailer) represents equality. If water enters, the bailer is used to enable the waka to remain balanced and afloat. Finally, the path to the waka represents accessibility. If this is blocked, the Māori learner will be forced to make the journey on foot. Progress by this means will be much slower and more laborious. Professionals are challenged to ensure that their programmes and services will provide Māori learners with a fleet, successful and enjoyable ride!

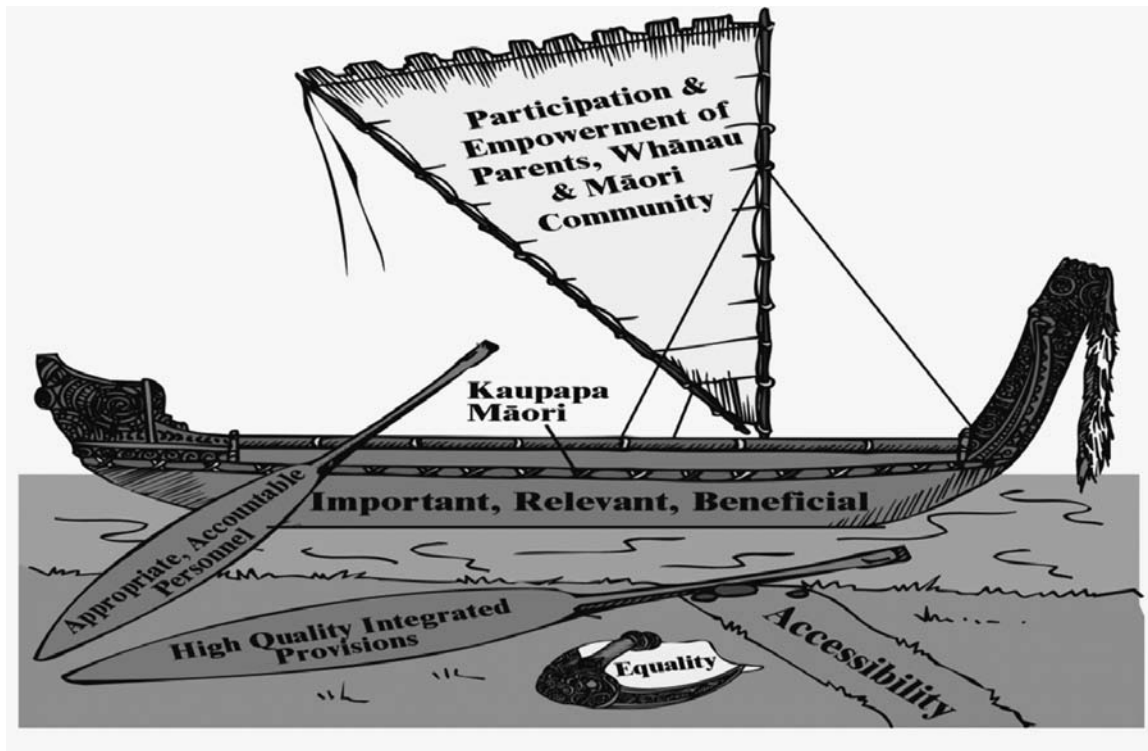


Figure 1. He waka tino whakarawea: A well-equipped canoe.

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## APPENDIX A

### The Waka Tino Whakaraweā Model for Evaluating, Improving or Developing Programmes and Services for Māori Learners

Principle	Guiding Questions
<p><b>Kaupapa Māori</b> Programmes and services represent a Māori worldview by incorporating Māori concepts, knowledge, skills, attitudes, processes, reo, practices, customs, values and beliefs.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What Māori content is present?</li> <li>2. What Māori values and processes are evident?</li> <li>3. What opportunities are there for staff to increase their cultural competence?</li> </ol>
<p><b>Importance, Relevance and Beneficence</b> Programmes and services focus on matters of importance, concern and benefit to Māori. Provisions are relevant and address needs and aspirations identified by parents, whānau, the Māori community and the learners themselves.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. How are matters of importance, concern and benefit to Māori identified and provided for?</li> <li>5. How are cultural incompatibilities identified and addressed?</li> <li>6. Are conflict resolution procedures fair, transparent, widely advertised and culturally-appropriate?</li> </ol>
<p><b>Participation</b> Learners, their parents, whānau, and the Māori community are welcome and involved in programmes and services. Similarly, professionals are welcome and involved in the lives of their students and the Māori community.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. Is there Māori involvement in all stages of the programme or service and at all levels?</li> <li>8. How are barriers to Māori participation identified and addressed?</li> <li>9. How are professionals involved in the lives of learners and the Māori community?</li> </ol>
<p><b>Empowerment, Tino Rangatiranga and Māori Control</b> Programmes and services result in the empowerment of Māori at multiple levels. They provide learners, parents, whānau, and the Māori community with the skills, knowledge, means, opportunity and authority to act for themselves and to make their own decisions.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10. In what ways and at what levels are Māori involved in decisions that relate to them?</li> <li>11. How are Māori learners, parents, whānau and community members enskilled and given authority to act for themselves?</li> <li>12. Are issues of power imbalance, prejudice, racism, social injustice, inequality and poverty identified, discussed and addressed?</li> </ol>
<p><b>Accountability</b> Professionals are accountable to learners, parents, whānau and the Māori community for the cultural and general effectiveness of the programmes and services they provide.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>13. How are professionals accountable for the cultural and general effectiveness of their programmes and services?</li> <li>14. What input do Māori have in accountability procedures and measures?</li> </ol>
<p><b>High Quality</b> Programmes and services are of a high quality. As well as being culturally-appropriate, they incorporate components identified as “best practice” in the field.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>15. What evidence base is there to the programmes and services offered?</li> <li>16. How are the quality and effectiveness of programmes and services evaluated?</li> <li>17. Are the resources and equipment used of a high quality?</li> </ol>
<p><b>Appropriate Personnel</b> Service providers have the personal, professional and cultural expertise required. They are valuing and supportive of Māori culture and the learners, parents and whānau with whom they work.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>18. What measures are used to attract staff with appropriate personal, professional and cultural expertise and supportive, valuing attitudes?</li> <li>19. How is the appropriateness of staff gauged and what strategies are used to address any weaknesses identified?</li> </ol>
<p><b>Equality and Accessibility</b> Programmes and services are readily accessible to Māori learners, their parents and whānau. They have the same rights and privileges as other learners and experience equitable access, use and outcomes.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>20. How are equity of access, use and outcomes measured?</li> <li>21. If inequalities are identified, what strategies are used to address them?</li> <li>22. Is Māori content accorded equal value and status as other curriculum content and is it equally accessible?</li> </ol>



Response to Questions	Plan of Action