

Chapter 6

Unleashing Potential – Legitimising Māori Talent Through Capable Māori



Kelli Te Maihāroa, Janine Kapa, and Eruera Tarena

Abstract Capable Māori is an educational innovation at Otago Polytechnic that uses a kaupapa Māori Independent Learning Pathway to recognise the skills, knowledge, experiences, and talent of hapū and iwi members who have extensive flax-roots leadership experience, but limited opportunity or time to engage in tertiary education. Te Hōkai Nui is a partnership between Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu and Capable Māori that has graduated four cohorts of ākonga Ngāi Tahu (84 in total) since 2014 and boasts a 89% success rate.

This chapter examines the critical success factors of Te Hōkai Nui to share its strengths, the lessons learned along the way, and the transformational benefits of this unique kaupapa Māori programme. Within this iwi-centric learning space, hapū and iwi members have had their vast expertise and experience legitimised, and over a 10-month period, obtained an often life-long dream of obtaining a tertiary qualification. Capable Māori, and Te Hōkai Nui in particular, is a highly successful kaupapa Māori model of excellence that has the potential to be scaled up across the vocational education network to accelerate equitable outcomes for ākonga Māori, their whānau, hapū and iwi; thereby unleashing collective potential.

Keywords Recognition of Current Competency (RCC) · Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) · Equitable outcomes for Māori · Kaupapa Māori models of excellence · Te Tiriti o Waitangi · Te Pae Tawhiti · Te Pūkenga · Vocational education

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Introduction

In accordance with Te Tiriti o Waitangi, Te Pūkenga is focused on ensuring services work well and respond with excellence to the needs of ākongā Māori and their whānau, and to the aspirations of iwi, hapū, and Māori communities throughout Aotearoa New Zealand (NZ) and Te Waipounamu (the South Island). This objective is driven from the legislative mandate, the Charter, regulatory guidance, and from the will of the governing Council. In Te Pae Tawhiti, Te Tiriti o Waitangi Excellence Framework, Te Pūkenga acknowledges that Māori want tino rangatiratanga – agency and authority – over the education of ākongā Māori. This means there needs to be a genuine partnership approach across the education system with leaders who believe in Māori and understand te ao Māori. Te Pūkenga is undertaking work with all subsidiaries to improve how this happens across the vocational education network.

As stated in the Te Pūkenga Charter, the new national organisation has a duty for upholding and delivering on the promises made in Te Tiriti o Waitangi. These include:

1. Ensuring that the governance, management and operations of Te Pūkenga give effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi;
2. Recognising that Māori are key actors (i.e., ‘partners’) in regional social, environmental, and economic development; and
3. Responding to the needs of and improving outcomes for Māori learners, whānau, hapū and iwi, and employers.

Te Pūkenga has priority outcomes which drives its business, one of which is that the organisation will have, *‘A relentless focus on equity and ensuring participation – we honour and uphold Te Tiriti o Waitangi in all that we do’*.

In November 2020 Te Pūkenga released Te Pae Tawhiti, Te Tiriti o Waitangi Framework (‘Te Pae Tawhiti’), to the vocational education network (Te Pūkenga, 2021). The intent was to provide internal guidance to Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics (ITPs) to achieve Te Tiriti Excellence – that is, to influence and guide planning, actions, and reporting, and to support a process of self-reflection and review. Kaitautoko were appointed in the Partnerships and Equity (PAE) team of Te Pūkenga to work alongside ITPs as they undertook their own self-reflection, resulting in the submission of 16 Te Pae Tawhiti self-reflective reports and action plans for 2021/2022 in January 2021. These reports were analysed during April/May 2021, with each ITP receiving feedback on their reports in June 2021 and a Te Pae Tawhiti overview report of insights from across the network being published in July 2021.

Te Pae Tawhiti

Te Pae Tawhiti acknowledges that it is not Māori learners or communities that need to change to fit the education system; rather, it is our responsibility as educators to ensure that our services lift and accelerate educational success for Māori (ibid, p. 5). The Charter of Te Pūkenga recognises that governance, management, and operations must give effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi, and that Māori are key partners in effecting this change. The education system needs to respond to and improve outcomes for Māori learners, whānau, hapū, iwi, and employers. As part of the wider educational eco-system, the vocational education system has a responsibility to accelerate Māori educational success by affirming Māori learner identity through improved access, increasing Māori participation, ensuring greater relevance in its provision, developing practices that are responsive to the needs of Māori, and ultimately, ensuring more equitable outcomes for Māori occur.

In accordance with Te Titiri, the Statement of National Education and Learning Priorities (NELP) and Tertiary Education Strategy (TES, 2020) outlines the Governments strategic direction and priorities for the education sector. One of the underpinning principles of Te Pūkenga is to create an education system that enables Māori to achieve tino rangatiratanga, enables the ability for Māori to have self-determination over education and to be empowered to find Māori-led solutions. The Māori Education Strategy, Ka Hikitia – Ka Hāpaitia (2020), highlights the need for ‘Māori to enjoy and achieve educational success as Māori’ expressed through five guiding principles: excellent outcomes, belonging, strengths-based approach, productive partnerships, and Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Fig. 6.1).

Otago Polytechnic

A recent research report from Tokona Te Raki, the Māori Futures Collective of Ngāi Tahu, and Business and Economic Research Ltd. (BERL) has shown that inequalities in education, employment, and income for Māori are costing the Aotearoa NZ economy \$2.6 billion a year (Tarena, 2019, in Victoria, 2019; BERL, Tokona te Raki, Waikato-Tainui, & The Southern Initiative, 2020). Dr. Eruera Tarena, Kaihautū of Tokona te Raki, leads an Indigenous social and economic innovation lab under the korowai of Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu based in Christchurch. Dr. Eruera Tarena (2019) stated that, “*We all aspire to a future where our people have options to choose their path towards their dream career, but we need to address the inequalities and barriers facing Māori to bring that future forward*” (Tarena, cited in Victoria, 2019).

In working to achieve these outcomes, Otago Polytechnic has developed a strategic direction which includes a priority ‘*to be a responsive Treaty partner in meeting the educational aspirations of Māori learners and mana whenua*’ (Te Rautaki Reo Māori ki Te Kura Matatini ki Otago, 2019–2020, p. 1). Key in guiding this



Fig. 6.1 Te Hōkai Nui 2019 Graduates: Kera Brown, Michelle Te Koeti & Charlaine McConachy. (Permission granted: Kera Baker, Michelle Te Koeti, Charlaine McConachy)

priority is the Polytechnic’s Rautaki Māori/Māori Strategic Framework (MSF, 2022), which includes a priority to ensure ‘*Māori learners participate and succeed as Māori, achieving at the same or a better rate as non-Māori*’ and for the institution to be a committed and agile organisation (Otago Polytechnic Te Kura Matatini ki Otago, Strategic Directions 2017–2021, p. 1: 3.4). The MSF 2022 outlines how Otago Polytechnic will achieve these goals, particularly the fourth priority, ‘*Kia Eke Panuku – High Quality and Culturally Relevant Programmes*’, which is where Capable Māori is positioned as a kaupapa Māori suite of programmes in Capable NZ, within the Polytechnic’s College of Work-based Learning.

Iwi-Centric Learning Space

Capable NZ, and in particular Capable Māori provides high quality, innovative, and culturally relevant programmes to learners who are largely work-based. As the Capable NZ website states: Capable NZ is a pathway to ‘*turn your work and life experience into a NZQA accredited qualification without returning to the traditional tertiary classroom*’. The overarching philosophy of Capable NZ acknowledges, values, and draws on the lived experiences learners bring with them through customised independent learning pathways or postgraduate professional practice programmes. Developed in 2010, Capable NZ has had over 2000 learners graduate through its suite of programmes. Capable NZ supports learners to identify the skills, strengths, and experiences they already possess in their kete (basket) and provides a pathway to advance people in their career with renewed confidence.

In accordance with Te Tiriti o Waitangi, Te Pūkenga is responsible for ensuring vocation educational services function well and respond with excellence to the needs of Māori learners, their whānau, and to the aspirations of iwi and Māori communities (op cit, p. 5). Capable Māori is a successful model of educational innovation that aims to deliver a top quality programme that meets iwi, hapū and hāpori Maori aspirations. Initially developed out of the Capable NZ model in 2014, and gifted the name ‘Capable Iwi’ from local papatipu rūnaka, Capable Iwi was designed as a kaupapa Māori alternative to the mainstream programmes offered through Capable NZ.

At that time, equity advocates Emeritus Professor Khyla Russell, the late Dr. Robin Day and Richard Kerr-Bell (Capable Iwi Strategic Leader), saw an opportunity to re-design a suite of Capable NZ programmes and situate them within a kaupapa Māori framework, to provide an opportunity for Māori to gain a qualification that reflected the accumulation of their skills, experience, and knowledge already gained in their workplace, their iwi or hapū or in a wider community setting. Capable Iwi was developed to realise a kaupapa Māori approach – ‘for Māori, by Māori, with Māori’ – with the explicit intent to offer a suite of quality programmes designed to be culturally responsive, imbued in te ao Māori, embedded in mātauranga Māori, and providing Māori learners with qualifications that are world class and had the ability to transform their lives.

Capitalising on the entrepreneurial direction of Otago Polytechnic, Capable Iwi partnered at that time with Te Tapuae o Rehua (now Tokona Te Raki) and Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu to reimagine what a customised degree programme could in fact look like if whānau were empowered to undertake an independent learning pathway. Richard Kerr-Bell and Dr. Catherine Savage (Chief Executive of Te Tapuae o Rehua at that time) then conceptualised the innovation that became Te Hōkai Nui, which provided an iwi-centric response to the key pātai: *what might it look like if whānau were acknowledged and accredited for their years of knowledge, skills, and experience gained outside of a formal learning environment, either through mahi or the marae, sporting arena or voluntary communities?*

The success of Te Hōkai Nui was highlighted in an article in Te Karaka, a Ngāi Tahu magazine (Victoria, 2019). Along with the evidence presented in this article, the data for this chapter is sourced from: i) unpublished Capable Māori learner data; ii) an unpublished learner survey of the third Te Hōkai Nui cohort in 2018, with a response rate of 46%; and iii) an interview with Dr. Eruera Tarena, by Kim Victoria (2019).

Vast Expertise and Experience Legitimised

In 2018, the Polytechnic's Deputy Chief Executive Māori Development/Kaitohutohu, Janine Kapa, re-set the kaupapa and renamed the programme Capable Māori, along with establishing its own vision and mission statements:

VISION: unleashing the power of Te Kāhui Whetū/Capable Māori as an innovative engine for positive social change within whānau, hapū, iwi and Māori.

MISSION: providing transformational education in, for and within whānau, hapū, iwi and Māori communities.

Capable Māori is specifically designed for Ngāi Māori who have an immense amount of knowledge, skills, and experience, and who live and breathe tikanga Māori, but who may not have the tohu to reflect this expertise. The opportunity to learn and study online from the comfort of ones' own home or workplace has made gaining a Bachelor's degree or postgraduate qualification accessible to Māori through Capable Māori, where ākongā can also be supported and mentored through a personalised programme that meets their expressed needs. To gain recognition of the vast expertise experienced whānau bring with them, Capable Māori uses an Assessment of Prior Learning tool to evaluate the skills and experiences that ākongā bring with them to the learning table.

The undergraduate degree is a 10-month programme involving a reflection of ones' early years of learning, two case studies, graduate profile skills mapping, the formation of a personalised model of practice, and which is completed with a kaupapa Māori assessment through an oral presentation of the learner's e-Portfolio. The postgraduate programmes also encompass a reflective autoethnographic component, reflecting on the learner's early years and how this has influenced ones' life to date, followed by a Learning Agreement which proposes the research to be undertaken, including Māori research consultation and ethics, and then undertaking the research to meet the graduate profile and complete the qualification. Through Capable Māori postgraduate ākongā can complete their Master of Professional Practice in 18 months and a Doctor of Professional Practice in 36 months.

The kaupapa Māori assessment tool takes into consideration and validates the years of community and/or service that whānau have undertaken as recognition of their leadership and expertise in these areas. Throughout the learning journey, ākongā are invited to draw on their knowledge and understanding of kaupapa Māori models, values, and beliefs, and develop an e-Portfolio that is reflective of where

Table 6.1 Capable Māori 10 month learner journey – copyright 2022 by Otago polytechnic

Phase	Recruitment (2 months)	Enrolment (1 month)	Initiation (up to 2 months)	Drafting (2–3 months)	Writing (3–6 months)	Assessment (8–10 months)
	Understanding the journey	Preparing the waka	Launching the waka	Building momentum	Gaining speed	Arrival
	Connecting 1:1 Group info Entry criteria Confirm place	CV + EoI Iwi scholarships Confirm dates	Wānanga Academic writing & tools Exemplars Early years	Wānanga Case studies Graduate profile	Wānanga Model of Practice Māori theories, models & tools	Kaupapa Māori Assessment e-Portfolio Māori pre-graduation ceremony

they have come from, the skills and experiences they have developed and bring with them, and the new learning gained through the programme (Table 6.1).

An Iwi Centric Learning Space

One of the clear advantages of learning alongside the support and encouragement of local iwi leaders is the opportunity to build a stronger relationship with iwi mentors and people who are champions of the wider educational kaupapa. Knowing that your iwi is providing cultural, and sometimes, financial support provides a platform to build a reciprocal relationship and in turn contribute to iwi priorities. It also opens the doors for individuals and their whānau to re-connect with their iwi if previously disconnected.

The Kaihautū for Capable Māori, Dr. Kelli Te Maihāroa, works closely with and for the iwi she connects with, to ensure that ākonga feel safe within their learning environment, that is not only conducive to Māori, but also iwi centric. This can be reflected in the ways in which te reo ā-iwi and tikanga ā-iwi is advocated for and honoured in the process, as well as encouragement for the use of iwi icons and imagery in the marketing material and other forms of communication. Ākonga are well supported by trained and qualified facilitators who have a knowledge of te reo me ōna tikanga Māori, as well as kaupapa Māori and tertiary education processes. Tertiary study can sometimes feel like a foreign environment to many people and being surrounded by the familiar faces of whānau and others whom they know can help. The opportunity to enter the Capable Māori learning journey with people who may have similar experiences, to connect through whānau-based values and hold a shared Māori worldview is both reassuring and culturally affirming.

Capable Māori is designed to provide a variety of engagement opportunities to support ākonga success, including a facilitation model, whānau learning spaces where smaller groups of ākonga work together with their facilitator and through wānanga, and where ākonga come together as a collective whānau for monthly hui.

Not only is there the opportunity to learn collectively, but ākonga can also opt in where appropriate, to take in collective presentations and assessments. On conclusion of the programme, Otago Polytechnic and iwi representatives celebrate the successful journey with ākonga and their whānau through the Otago Polytechnic Māori Pre- graduation ceremony, followed by the institution's graduation the following day.

Since 2014 when Otago Polytechnic partnered with Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu to establish Te Hōkai Nui, a Ngāi Tahu-centred undergraduate programme through Capable NZ, four cohorts have graduated. Through this successful partnership, 79 scholarships have been awarded, with the addition of seven Fees Free learners joining the 2020 cohort. The scholarship entry criteria included a minimum of 5–7 years of leadership experience in their field of work, experience in management roles and cultural engagement, exemplified by iwi development, hapū leadership, and involvement in community, sporting or other voluntary activities.

Highly Successful Iwi Partnership

Te Hōkai Nui as it stands today boasts a 89% success rate, with a possible fifth cohort in the immediate future. Out of a total of 86 ākonga, 75 learners have gained their degree through Te Hōkai Nui and the Capable Māori initiative (NB: three learners are yet to complete their studies; one still to be assessed and one deferred until 2022). Of the four Te Hōkai Nui cohorts since its inception in 2014, 49 out of 75 have graduated with Distinction, which enables them to undertake further post-graduate studies should they choose to do so. This success is additionally realised where over half of the graduates with Distinction, have expressed an interest in continuing their learning via the Master of Professional Practice programme offered by Capable NZ. Table 6.2 below highlights this impressive success rate to date.

Table 6.2 Te Hōkai Nui Cohorts & Capable Māori (2014–2021) – copyright 2022 by Otago polytechnic

Year	Ākonga (n=)	Pass rates	Success rate
2014	13	13 passes	13/13 passes
2015	20	14 Distinctions, 3 Merits, 2 Passes (1 DNC)	19/20 passes
2017	26	17 Distinctions, 3 Merits, 3 Passes (3 DNC)	23/26 passes
2020	27	18 Distinctions, 2 Merits, 3 yet to be assessed, 1 deferred, (4 DNC)	20/27 passes
Total	86	49 Distinctions, 8 Merits, 18 Passes, 3 yet to be assessed, 1 deferred, (8 DNC)	76/86 total passes (4 yet to be assessed)

Critical Factors of Success

Capable Māori has a specific focus on realising the needs and aspirations of iwi and their whānau, hapū and wider hāpori. This chapter will now turn towards the insights gained from feedback from Dr. Eruera Tarena (Victoria, 2019) and Te Hōkai Nui learner feedback (2018). Their discerning feedback reflects the importance of a supportive, culturally responsive learning environment, that contributes to ākonga Māori being able to live and learn as Māori, and which strengthens and affirms a strong sense of belonging and identity. These insights also offer a glimpse into the learner world, and the keys that helped them to unlock and realise their own potential.

(a) Rangatiratanga

Te Pūkenga recognises that the education system needs to change to fit Māori learners and communities, rather than the other way around. As previously highlighted by Dr. Eruera Tarena, there was, and continues to be a need for institutions to partner with iwi to develop iwi-based solution. Partnering with iwi provides the opportunity to contribute to wider outcomes for Māori learners. Ngāi Tahu supported an iwi-specific cohort studying towards a Bachelor of Applied Management or a Bachelor of Social Services and gifted this programme the name of Te Hōkai Nui, which means a success rate of 89%.

By having a distinctive iwi-centred approach, Māori values are embedded within both the delivery and assessment of these programmes, which grounds the kaupapa within the unique context of iwi-led development, as well as reo ā-iwi and tikanga ā-iwi. The programme is a transformational pathway for mature and experienced Ngāi Tahu whānau, professionals and community leaders, allowing them to gain formal recognition for skills that they have already acquired throughout the course of their career. Capable Māori offers a framework which provides the autonomy for Māori learners to utilise their experiences outside of formal education and draw from a collection of te ao Māori perspectives.

Dr. Eruera Tarena highlights the role of whakawhanaungatanga and the importance of shared collective visions:

For Māori, leadership is all about relationships, because you cannot tell anyone what to do. It's about bringing people together and creating space for people to work towards shared goals for the future (Tarena, in Victoria, 2019).

He further states that Māori culture and identity, is valued and validated as a recognised and different skill set from a traditional Western approach:

The Māori way is highly collaborative, and leaders within these organisations are highly skilled negotiators. The programme is finally recognising these leaders within our communities and giving them a pathway that brings mana to the work they have been doing for years (Tarena, *ibid*, 2019).

Capable Māori is also a strategic approach towards growing iwi specific leadership across the sector, nationwide and globally. Dr. Eruera Tarena emphasises the

importance and opportunity to create Māori leadership practises that reflect – in this instance – a Ngāi Tahu context. He draws on the example of other countries, such as how China and Japan operate within ways that replicate the Japanese or Chinese ways of being. Similarly, Māori organisational leadership should empower Māori to operate in a Māori way, which may not fit within a Western mould.

In a Māori context, 99 per cent of the time people aren't necessarily motivated by money – they are there for the kaupapa. So everything needs to be about a shared vision, and shared goals. Leaders need to be skilled at influencing and inspiring people because people have to want to be there (Tarena, *ibid*, 2019).

(b) Whānau leadership

Many Te Hōkai Nui learners share a similar story of being raised in a home where education may have been valued, but without explicit expectations of them attending higher education. Becoming the first person in a whānau to gain a degree can be a game changer and plant the seeds for others to follow. There is great mana and honour in being the first graduate from a hard-working whānau. Creating a legacy of success and setting high expectations for tamariki and mokopuna to follow can be seen as piloting a new and exciting future pathway.

As the eldest son and eldest grandson of a large family, I've always been put in areas of responsibility; so this was a fantastic journey to put some theory and understanding around my management style. I want to be able to lead by example (Parry Hunt, in Victoria, 2019).

Broadening and strengthening Māori participation in vocational education is beneficial to the long-term employment and career opportunities for Māori. As an iwi-centric initiative, Capable Māori aims to increase Māori participation in higher education and to help safeguard and future proof employment opportunities. Dr. Eruera Tarena (2019) reminds us of the lived experiences and realities for many of our whānau:

Like many of our grandparents, they had to be chiefs on the weekend, and then scrubbing toilets, working in a milk bar or on the wharves during the week; because they didn't have the opportunities to do anything else, through historical inequalities and lack of access to education. Cleaners, factory workers, and meat workers were the norm, and so what you have now is people with a huge skill set gained from the school of hard knocks who are representing iwi interests in many different ways – whether on Department of Conservation boards, rūnanga holding companies, or on the marae – but who don't get the recognition they deserve (Tarena, *ibid*, 2019).

Leading by example, often from the back of the marae or from the kitchen or home, is a natural Māori leadership style, especially for wāhine Māori. One mother saw her role as not only planting the seeds of success for her own son, but for the wider whānau, who may see themselves as practical hard workers with unrealised potential.

I want to be a mentor, not just for my son, but for all taurira, for all our whānau, who underestimate themselves. It hasn't always been sparkly, razzle-dazzle rainbows and sunshine for me, but I thought, 'Get in there and work myself to the bone, and just give it a go' (Kera Baker, in Victoria, 2019).

(c) Whanaungatanga

Although each Te Hōkai Nui learner had a different reason for enrolling in the programme, a common thread has been the desire to change things for the next generation and provide a pathway for whānau and mokopuna to follow. The Capable Māori programme is learner-centred, with high expectations that supports learners to plan and achieve the educational pathways that they aspire to. The cohort feedback (2018) identified that 100% of Te Hōkai Nui whānau felt a sense of whanaungatanga through this programme. Feedback from Māori learner voices identified how this programme was able to reflect a lifetime of leadership and accommodate busy whānau lives: *“It fitted in with my lifestyle and the need to make money. I have four children and a full-time job. It would be impossible for me to take 3-years off to go to Uni and if I could, I wouldn’t have.”* (anonymous Te Hōkai Nui learner feedback, 2018).

(d) Cultural legitimacy

The domains of language, culture and identity remain important ‘mauri-stones’ for Māori learners. Ākonga Māori thrive in a learning environment that is free from racism, discrimination, stereotypes, and stigma (Tokona Te Raki, 2021; Bishop & Merryman, 2006; Bishop & Glynn, 1999; Smith, 1997). The Capable Māori team is experienced in supporting, strengthening, and affirming Māori learner cultural identity. This is realised through a learning environment that upholds the mana of mātauranga Māori, and te reo me ōna tikanga Māori to strengthen culturally inclusive practices that reflect the lived experiences of ākonga. Karakia and whakatauki begin and complete each learning interaction, to ensure tikanga guides the learning and maintains a sense of balance and cultural safety through the learning process. Te reo Māori is encouraged to be incorporated into the ākonga portfolio and oral assessments is equally weighted alongside written requirements. As adult learners, a sense of ako is created through a reciprocal non-hierarchical learning-teaching relationship, which acknowledges the gifts both ākonga and kaiako bring with them to the learning environment. Cohort feedback (2018) identified that 100% of Te Hōkai Nui learners felt their Māori culture was recognised and valued through this programme.

(e) Aronui ki te ākonga/learning-centred

Adopting a holistic approach towards the learning environment through the delivery of a kaupapa Māori programme ensures the wellbeing and engagement of ākonga. The pivotal role of cultural diversity and responsiveness needs to be understood within the diverse realities and lived experiences of ākonga Māori. Capable Māori staff are experienced educators who are inclusive of and responsive to Māori learner needs and they possess the cultural competencies required to support diverse learning needs to achieve equitable outcomes. One learner thought that she did not have the acumen to attend university due to her dyslexia, which made school “really hard”. Instead, she honed her business management skills over 20 years, rising to a senior leadership role before taking over as Operations Manager of a local marae.

Through Capable Māori, her vast years of experience, knowledge, and expertise has now been realised and legitimised through the achievement of a degree. “*Now I can say I’ve got a Degree in Applied Business Management with a double major, and with distinction*” (personal communication with Michelle Te Koeti, 2019). This wahine is now an iwi cohort facilitator, nominated, backed, and supported by Ngāi Tahu to deliver ‘for Ngāi Tahu, by Ngāi Tahu, with Ngāi Tahu and upholding Ngāi Tahu tikanga’.

Capable Māori makes a difference in the lives of priority learners and addresses educational inequities by ensuring the learning programme is safe and welcoming throughout the learner pathway:

I really enjoyed the tutors’ support, the assessment panel and the whole experience. If this was done with other subjects, I know that I would succeed. This would change the statistics of Māori learning in this country and turn the negative results into positive statistics for Māori. I always thought I would not be capable of fulfilling tertiary education only to find through this process and tautoko that I can learn and succeed (anonymous Te Hōkai Nui learner feedback, 2018).

Unleashing Māori Potential Across the Vocational Educational Network

The Charter of Tē Pūkenga is clear in its duty to uphold Māori-Crown partnerships and give effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi. This will in part be achieved by engaging with iwi and hapū as Te Tiriti partners throughout all levels of the organisation and with regional leaders as the vocational education sector ‘recodes’ the system (Salmond, 2021) to ensure it is inclusive and equitable for Māori (Te Pūkenga Charter, 2020; Te Pae Tawhiti, (n.d.)). Capable Māori is a proven and successful example of what an iwi-partnered initiative and programme can achieve. The vision of Capable Māori is to unleash the power of this innovative engine for positive social change within whānau, hapū, iwi and hāpori Māori – the mission is to provide transformational education for and with whānau, hapū, iwi and Māori communities.

Capable Māori has the potential to be a national model of excellence, to show-case how kaupapa Māori approaches to tertiary education can be embedded through a genuine and authentic partnership model with iwi. The programme strives to uphold the strengths of Māori educational success and diminish barriers to learning through an engaging, innovative, cutting edge, culturally responsive online learning experience. Capable Māori qualifications are relevant and meaningful to Māori, with proven successful outcomes at the highest level. These programmes are also highly effective for iwi, with excellent cultural and educational outcomes that also contribute towards the realisation of whānau, hapū and iwi aspirations.

Capable Māori reflects tino rangatiratanga – the ability for Māori learners to have self-determination over their own educational pathways and to be empowered to find local solutions led by Māori, for Māori, and with Māori. This is what whānau

Māori want, as highlighted during wānanga held throughout Aotearoa NZ as part of the Kōrero Mātauranga | Education Conversations led by the Ministry of Education in 2018. Māori know what works for Māori and the resources and support required to develop and achieve their educational aspirations. Capable Māori presents the vocational educational sector with an opportunity to adopt a suite of programmes to equip Ngāi Māori with qualifications to empower iwi to continue to navigate their own local, national and global futures.

So what might this look like in reality? As thought leaders in this space, we have taken the opportunity to put forward a model that has multiple advantages for iwi, and that also enables the outcomes and goals of Te Pae Tawhiti, and firmly delivers on the duties of the Te Pūkenga Charter. As the vocational education sector prepares itself for its transition to Te Pūkenga from 1 January 2023, there is an opportunity to further strengthen and scale up Capable Māori as a transformative model to achieve educational equity for iwi, hapū, whānau and hāpori Māori. The programme already has a national reach, yet the full impact is still to be realised across the motu – Otago Polytechnic, with Te Pūkenga, is the platform to accelerate this.

The possibilities for Capable Māori are boundless. This programme would be well suited to be facilitated on marae and co-facilitated with hapū and iwi via wānanga, ensuring it reflects the hau kāinga and is co-designed in a way that reflects their realities. With the appropriate resourcing, marae could become a satellite hub to offer ongoing Capable Māori programmes, including postgraduate wānanga. The opportunity through Te Pūkenga as a national entity will enable Capable Māori to be supported by local Māori educators, who already have a relationship with iwi and hapū. These relationships will also help with localised engagement, promotion of and engagement with the Capable Māori programme, the opportunity to develop an iwi/hapū centric approach and contribute towards advancing Māori needs, visions and aspirations at whānau, hapū and iwi levels.

The challenge for the sector is to build a sustainable model that meets the growing needs of Māori to have their skills, expertise, and years of experience validated and legitimised through this programme. The Capable Māori model is adaptable and can be customised to suit the express needs of iwi and hapū. Being flexible in the locale of delivery, whether it is on the marae, kura, the workplace, on campus or fully online, the programme can be tailored to ensure it meets local needs and responds with excellent results for iwi and Ngāi Māori throughout Aotearoa NZ. As a proven model of excellence, Capable Māori – along with ākonga and iwi leaders – will be able to co-design what works for Māori and help inform, shape, and guide the workstreams of Te Pūkenga. As an intervention aimed to interrupt the status quo and advance Māori development, Capable Māori provides an opportunity to contribute to the strategic goals of iwi, through the qualification of tribal members.

There is also the opportunity to develop a nation-wide iwi alumnus for Capable Māori graduates, as an extension of whakawhanaungatanga, celebrating whānau, hapū, and iwi excellence and the broader opportunity to network and capitalise on their collective success. Further research is currently being undertaken to record, preserve, and build the evidence base of success within the suite of Capable Māori

programmes. We aim to maintain a strong ākonga-informed and Te Tiriti centered programme, committed to empowering whānau, hapū, iwi and hāpori Māori to realise their educational needs and aspirations.

Conclusion

Capable Māori is a transformational and innovative suite of programmes that draws on a kaupapa Māori approach to Independent Learning Pathways, validating and legitimising the values, knowledge, and skill sets experienced Māori leaders hold, but who have had limited access to participate in tertiary education. Capable Māori provides an opportunity for Māori to undertake study whilst remaining with their whānau, within their own rohe, and remaining in paid employment. The suite of online programmes offers the opportunity for ākonga to undertake their studies in a flexible, personalised, and culturally responsive learning environment, empowering Māori to harness their transferable skills which can then be applied within a multitude of settings, including their workplace and iwi organisations. It also provides a mechanism for systemic shift, to adapt higher educational pathways to make higher-level learning more accessible and responsive to the diversity of lived Māori experiences. Dr. Eruera Tarena (2021) states that Capable Māori:

... makes a huge contribution towards equity. There is really no way to address historical inequity for Māori as you cannot retrospectively correct historical injustices. What the programme does is provide a short-cut to addressing inequities which is what makes it significant and does so in a way that reflects the realities of busy professionals.

This chapter has highlighted the five key success factors of Te Hōkai Nui. Researching and reporting on the achievements of Te Hōkai Nui learners contributes towards building a national evidence base of kaupapa and mātauranga Māori transformational programmes. Te Hōkai Nui (2018) feedback reported 100% satisfaction in that their culture and heritage was valued and upheld through the programme. They also identified 100% satisfaction with the sense of connection achieved through whakawhanaungatanga. Another contributing indicator of Te Hōkai Nui learners' success was demonstrated through increased learner self-confidence, learner and whānau pride, higher paid career opportunities, and a tohu that represents the skills, knowledge and creativity that they inherently possess. The Capable Māori and Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu partnership through Te Hōkai Nui can boast 77 out of 86 graduates, an impressive 89% success rate of whānau transformation through the process of achieving a tertiary qualification.

Capable Māori has the potential to be scaled up across the vocational education network of Te Pūkenga as a model that achieves equitable outcomes for ākonga Māori, their whānau, hapū and iwi, thereby unleashing collective potential. Capable Māori is currently exploring partnership opportunities with iwi and hapū and doing likewise with Crown agencies who can support the realisation of Māori staff potential and building Māori leadership across the motu. This includes the opportunity to



Fig. 6.2 Te Hōkai Nui graduates at Māori Pre-graduation, December 2019. (Permission granted Otago Polytechnic 2020)

customise additional iwi specific programmes to meet their expressed needs and to develop a credentialled and upskilled workforce that recognises the untapped potential within Māori experiences, knowledge, and skills. Capable Māori is a nationwide movement to realise and unleash Māori capability and towards building a healthy, thriving, and prosperous nation.

Ko te pae tawhiti, whāia kia tata, ko te pae tata whakamaua kia tina.

Seek to bring distant horizons closer, to sustain and maintain those that have arrived (Fig. 6.2).

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Eruera Tarena PhD is the Executive Director for Tokona te Raki: Māori Futures Collective, an indigenous tribally-led (Ngāi Tahu) initiative to tackle inequality and racism at its roots. The vision is to create equity in education, employment, and income for all Māori in the Ngāi Tahu Takiwā by 2040. Drawing from our whānau (families), hapū (sub-tribes), communities, and partners Tokona Te Raki uses social innovation tools and processes to develop community-driven solutions that enable rangatahi to succeed and thrive with a key focus on creating transformational pathways for Māori to the jobs of the future.