

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### WHAKAWHITI KŌRERO - CONVERSATIONAL INTERVIEWS

#### INTRODUCTION

Whakawhiti kōrero or conversational interviews took place with parents and kaiako of ten kura kaupapa Māori new entrants. This chapter reports information gathered in those interviews in three parts. The first part focuses on interviews that took place with Study One parents, the second part on the interviews that took place with Study Two parents. The third part considers information from kura observations and kaiako interviews.

Writing this chapter involved making a decision about whether it should be primarily a descriptive presentation of information provided during the interviews, or should it veer to a more analytic and generalised discussion of key themes arising out of them.

What I did not want to do was to hide individual whānau, and individuals within whānau, behind a kind of generalised re-presentation of commonalties and differences reflected in the interviews. For this reason I also decided to report the parent interviews as two separate sets, rather than to collapse them into one amorphous group. This has resulted in comprehensive descriptions rather than a detailed analysis of what was actually said. This chapter may appear rather absent of theory as a result. I want to argue that this should not be considered a problem, for at least two reasons. One reason is that 'theory' is located in the information parents deigned to report. In this chapter it was their experiences, beliefs and theories that I wanted to be presented for consideration at the first instance. The second is that the chapter itself is located within a wider context of my attempts at theorising.

What parents and kaiako chose to say is described in relation to sets of identified focus areas, and in consideration of what is known about parents and language regeneration, and about whānau involved in kaupapa Māori education.

## WHĀNAU INTERVIEWS

Ten whānau with new entrant children starting at a particular kura kaupapa Māori during 1995 and 1996 took part in the studies. These whānau responded to an invitation to take part in a project aimed at supporting the development of whānau Māori language and reading (see Appendix 1).

Adult members of the whānau participated in Whakawhiti kōrero or conversational interviews (see Appendix 3). Two sets of conversational interviews were conducted: five in 1995, at the beginning of Study One; five in 1996, at the beginning of Study Two. The interview explored three key focus areas described in Chapter Seven. In total 14 adults (13 parents and one grandparent) participated in the interviews. Six interviews involved the target child's mother (including two single parents), three involved mother-father pairs, and one involved a mother and her mother.

The conversational interviews took place wherever and whenever it was most comfortable and convenient for the whānau. Three interviews took place at the kura; one during school hours, one after school hours, and one during a weekend live-in for students preparing for the annual Secondary Schools Polynesian Festival. Three took place in my home, one was carried out in my office at the university, and three in whānau homes. The target children and siblings were present for eight of the ten interviews. Interviews lasted between one and a half to two hours, subject to breaks for childcare and eating.

It is acknowledged that information presented in this and the following chapter is drawn from a small group of parents from one kura, and arguably may not reflect the experiences and attitudes of parents of children in other kura and Maori medium school settings across the country. However these parents can be expected, along with others who send their children to kaupapa Māori education, to support the continuation and growth of te reo Māori as a 'living language'. They want their children to learn through Māori at school, whatever their own Māori language background. Sets of information being presented here are taken as indicators of patterns that can be expected in Māori language development and use in their homes. Information reflects that literacy practices vary greatly across homes of these children, not only in the degree to which they occur,

but also to the extent that they are perceived and used in the home as a source or support for te reo Māori.

Bronfenbrenner (1986) terms research-related descriptions that use variables such as socio-economic levels and educational levels as reflecting a “social address” approach. He argues that these ‘letter-boxlike’ social address descriptions provide little information regarding processes and activities within families, the environments they inhabit or indeed of whom families consist. Identifying a classification number or group for a whānau based on the paid employment of the adult that happens to make the most money does not provide much of a picture of the employment and educational patterns within a whānau. Little information would be gleaned about relationships between parents’ own educational and employment-related experiences and decisions to have one’s children educated in through Māori. One parent’s part-time employment may reflect a very different education and training, compared with another parent’s full-time employment. Who works may either reflect or contradict beliefs and practices of a whānau, depending on the economic realities facing them.

The social address model is problematic at another level. Variables such as socio-economic status of Māori individuals and families do not necessarily reflect the social status accorded them in Māori society. That is, a degree of mis-match exists between the ways social status may be ascribed in Māori society based on whakapapa, personal and cultural attributes, and the ways it may be in non-Māori society, based on employment and education (Durie, 1985; Ruawai-Hamilton, 1994). Rather than attempting to slot whānau into socio-economic levels based on the employment of the major money earner, or the educational qualifications of parents, employment and educational profiles for whānau, albeit brief, are presented.

## STUDY ONE

### *Whānau living arrangements*

Whānau involved in Study One lived in one parent, two parent, extended family and shared household arrangements. Numbers of children ranged between one to five. Three whānau lived in a nuclear arrangement (mother, father and children), one as an extended whānau (mother, her father, her brother and her child or children; an older child lived in two households), and one in a shared house comprising of two single parents and their respective child. The five target children were positioned in their whānau as follows: the oldest sibling of two; second youngest of five; youngest of three; youngest of two; and an only child (who had contact with half-siblings).

### *Parents' employment and education*

Two of the mothers and the three fathers who were living with the target children were in paid employment at the time of the study. The fathers had work histories of more than 5 years and their respective areas covered motor mechanics, the printing trade and the armed forces. Three mothers were not in any paid employment. One was a full time caregiver of an infant, although she regularly worked voluntarily in her children's kōhanga and kura. Before the arrival of her youngest child she had been enrolled in a full-time Māori language course at a private training establishment. The remaining two mothers (a single parent and a partnered parent) were attending undergraduate university courses.

One of the mothers of a nuclear whānau was employed in full-time teaching at the beginning of the study and subsequently in relieving positions. She had gained a teaching diploma since her children had begun attending kōhanga reo and was part way through an undergraduate degree, although not attending university during the period of this project.

Out of the five adults (all mothers) who took part in Study One conversational interviews, only one parent of a single parent whānau had gained tertiary qualifications before having her child. At the time of the study she was a secondary school teacher. Three of the other mothers had commenced tertiary education after their children had begun attending kōhanga reo or kura kaupapa Māori. None of the fathers had been involved in study at a tertiary institution. The relationship between whānau entering educational initiatives of

kōhanga and kura and the subsequent educational development of parents, particularly mothers, has been noted elsewhere (Ulrich Cloher & Hohepa 1996; L. Mead, 1996; Ruawai-Hamilton, 1994; L. Smith, 1986b).

### **Focus one: te reo Māori**

#### ***Parents' fluency in te reo Māori***

There was a wide range in the fluency levels in te reo Māori reported by the parents. Out of the nine parents for whom information was gathered, only one (who did not live in the same household as his new-entrant child) was identified as a native or near-native Māori speaker. Five had their fluency described as very low to minimal, just becoming able to understand and produce short phrases and sentences. The remaining three were described as second language learners approaching fluent levels, although it was said that this very much depended on the physical and social context, as well as on psychological and subjective aspects.

*"It's not something where you're at this level, its an organic thing, it depends on your mood and a lot of different things."*

Parents were learning or had learned te reo Māori in a range of ways. Six of the nine parents began learning Māori when their children were first enrolled in kōhanga reo. These parents in particular identified their children as significant sources of Māori language learning. Other major learning contexts parents identified were Te Ataarangi courses, Māori immersion courses such as wānanga rumaki reo, and university Māori language undergraduate courses.

Te Ataarangi had played a significant role in three parents' Māori language learning. Two mothers had attended Ataarangi full-time courses in the past. One of these mothers had attended a three-week Māori language course at technical institute and then worked in a kōhanga for a few months. She found that she could not contribute more than a few sentences, so went to a full-time Ataarangi course for a year. One father had attended Ataarangi classes and was enrolled in local Māori language night classes at the time of the interview.

One of the mothers who had attended a Te Ataarangi course, was subsequently accepted into a kura kaupapa Māori teacher education course. During the three year training course she became very aware that her *“structure and grammar was not always right”*. She was motivated to use old manuscripts written in Māori as a learning tool, especially in terms of *“the metaphysical side of te reo Māori and tikanga”*. She described her husband as *“having a bit of a block where learning Māori is concerned”*. However, he had become involved in waka racing, where Māori language was regularly used and this provided an effective language learning context. Two whānau reported visiting Māori speaking relatives every few weeks when they had only one or two children. This was discontinued for practical and economic reasons as their respective whānau grew in size.

One mother described her learning of te reo Māori as a gradual, life-time process beginning at young adult-hood, that was influenced by political and whānau forces. She had first begun learning Māori in undergraduate courses at university but had found that she was not developing into a particularly fluent conversational partner. The desire to learn te reo Māori influenced decisions related to relocating to another area of the country and to changing employment. After working in a highly skilled area in which Māori language and tikanga featured very little, if at all, she moved back to her iwi kāinga and found her *“Māori blossomed quite quickly, according to other people and to my own perception”*. Developing political and cultural convictions had also motivated this movement. Her partner at the time was a native speaker and their child spoke Māori from infancy. When she returned to Auckland to study, child-care was provided by a family member who was also a native speaker. This arrangement meant that her child continued to have a regular Māori language communicative partner. The mother commented that initially the family member did not include her in Māori language interactions, though over time the situation began to change.

In one whānau, parents described themselves at the time of the study as having almost no control of te reo Māori,

Mother: *“but the seed is there!”*

Before the study the mother had been enrolled in a Te Ataarangi night class, but the tutor fell ill, and the course was cancelled. During the study she was enrolled in a Māori society paper at university, that was helping her to understand the political, historical and social aspects of te reo Māori and was concentrating on increasing her fluency (She has since enrolled in a rumaki reo teacher education course). The father has continued learning from his son and wife. The whānau is also supported by the mother's mother, who speaks Māori fluently, and father who attended te reo Māori classes for three years in the early eighties.

### *Use of te reo Māori in the home*

While all parents reported that Māori was used in the home every day, there was wide variation in the patterns and quantity of Māori spoken. Homes with native speakers, or fluent speakers obviously had the potential resources to support higher levels of Māori. However, even where there were native speakers living in the household, individuals in the home experienced differential amounts of Māori language interaction.

There were differences in terms of who the speakers of Māori were. In one whānau it was mainly the older children who spoke Māori, using it all the time to the youngest child who was described as only speaking Māori at the time of the study, and when playing 'make-believe' games. The mother said she tried to use what Māori she knew, and tended to produce a mixture of both languages, with her older child correcting her "*pigeon Māori*". The father usually used Māori with the children in the form of directions or instructions.

In another home the mother described using Māori for up to half of her interactions with the children. She said that her husband occasionally tried to speak Māori at home, but the children tended to make fun of his efforts. The children spoke some Māori but were increasingly using more English.

One of the children was living in a home where four members, two adults and two children, were all Māori language speakers to some degree. However, it was estimated that Māori was spoken for only about quarter of the time in the home. In reflecting on the relative low levels of Māori, an explanation proposed during the interview was that all

household members were in Māori speaking environments during their working or school day, home was the major English language context.

In the whānau that included a grandfather who was a native speaker of Māori, the level of Māori used depended very much on who was speaking and to whom. The grandfather was reported as speaking Māori all the time to the children, the children as equally using Māori and English in conversations with their mother, but speaking almost exclusively in Māori to their grandfather. The uncle spoke, and was spoken to, in little if any Māori.

In the home where both parents described their control of Māori as negligible, very little Māori was said to be spoken at home, but was described as increasing all the time. The parents had asked their son to speak Māori at home but he did not do this very much. The mother posted vocabulary lists, phrases and signs around the house to help her and her husband to use Māori as much as they could.

### **Focus two: educational choices and aspirations**

There were varying and intersecting sets of conditions that provided the initial impetus for whānau to put children into Māori-medium educational contexts of kōhanga reo and kura kaupapa Māori. These conditions encompassed the social, political and historical experiences of Māori as a people and the very real danger of Māori language loss. Parents articulated personal commitments ranging from the desire to ensure te reo me ōna tikanga re-emerged in their whānau through their children's generation, to much broader agenda relating to Māori 'self determination' and tino rangatiratanga.

Mother: *"So that they can kōrero Māori. Very important to us at home, my father [living with child and mother] is a native speaker, a lot of push coming from him. It's about being Māori people in Aotearoa and preserving our language, and where we are in society"*.

As indicated above, among factors most often identified as playing a critical role in parents' decisions to school their children in kōhanga and kura were their own parents' fluency in Māori language. Another often-identified factor was the parents' own educational experiences. One parent said that her own schooling experiences had resulted



in a dislike for what she described as the state system, and this dislike figured greatly in decisions made about the children's schooling. The eldest daughter's initial language development in Māori had provided a lot of motivation for her and her husband to try and learn the language. She had lived with the mother's Māori-speaking foster parents while a baby. The mother's foster father had been very supportive of their decision to bring up the children as Māori speakers. The father's mother, who had been a native speaker, was also identified as a key influence.

Two mothers had made the decision that their children would be Māori speakers before they were born. One, because she believed that if her generation of parents didn't make a commitment to teaching children in Māori, the language would die out. There were also pragmatic reasons; whānau still living in the iwi kāinga were in the process of rebuilding the local marae. In her view, there was little point in carrying out these kinds of activities if the hapū did not have speakers of te reo Māori to take on the roles and responsibilities of a marae. She also saw it as very much a political statement, in that Māori have the right to be Māori, whatever context they found themselves in. It was not considered to be a matter of preparing children for a Māori world and a non-Māori world, as in her words *"every context [her children might find themselves in] is a Māori context"*. Ensuring Māori children speak Māori was seen as giving them, rather than the best of two worlds, the best of their world.

The other mother, in deciding to speak Māori to her child, had drawn on her experiences of growing up in a bicultural household where her father was a native speaker, and of studying Māori as a second language without gaining much fluency as a speaker of the language. As a young adult unable to speak Māori, she had found it hard to understand why her parents had never taught te reo Māori to her and her siblings. The intellectual challenge of learning through Māori was also a motivating factor for her and her son to learn Māori. She felt challenged by hearing subjects like Maths and Science could be taught through the medium of Māori.

The desire for a sense of belonging to 'whānau', that had been part of their kōhanga reo experience was highlighted by two sets of parents. They also identified a need to continually and actively protect and strengthen the kura as a whānau, reflected in

statements such as *“schools shouldn’t be separate from the whānau, they should be interacting.”*

Not all parents however, were initially motivated by cultural, political or personal agenda. One mother described how initially enrolling her child at a kōhanga reo had been a matter of convenience and had simply thought of it as an extended form of day-care. She came to understand more about the language regeneration agenda that Te Kōhanga Reo as a movement was part of, *“...people were saying it was for the retention of the language”*. Before her eldest child turned five she participated in lobbying a local school to set up a bilingual unit for children from kōhanga. Experiences of attending the school meetings and negotiating with school personnel brought about the realisation that her and her husband’s choices for their children’s education had greater significance than language regeneration.

*“These people [from the local school] are on another earth kind of thing, you know they’re not going to flow, they’re not progressing how they should be. So the alternative was to come to this kura”.*

Parents were asked about long-term goals and aspirations that they had for their children. In general, the educational choices they were making related to aspirations around identity and employment. Parents focused on what their children might do in the future, as competent speakers of reo Māori in terms of their own personal identity, esteem and their awareness of the society in which they are located.

*“My long-term hopes are that they develop a good level of reo. It will be useful to them in later life because all contexts are Māori contexts.”*

*“Children will have perspectives on both sides [Māori and non-Māori]. Māori will probably be dominant, but they are always going to have the outside influence that’s going to make them think about things differently.”*

*“That they can hold their own. To learn the reo and everything. Walk with their heads held high. That they will be comfortable knowing Māori and the tikanga and everything*

*else. They will go their own path in what they want to do with their reo and everything else. Whether it will be an advantage or disadvantage depends on what they want to be."*

Parents thought that their children would make their decisions about their future, and the place of te reo Māori in that future, although they all hoped that their children would continue developing and using te reo Māori.

*I don't have any [goals] for them. They have free choice to decide what they would like to do. But I'd like them to use their reo, I hope that when they finish school they will still feel that they can, that the community will support them to use te reo and that they won't lose it.*

One mother did express concerns for some of the older children coming through kura and felt that they faced a whole different set of challenges through their education, compared with the kinds of challenges that Māori children had faced when she and other parents were at school. These related to being at the forefront of an educational development that was under-resourced across all spheres, including a lack of human resources and models for te reo Māori. At this point she did not see herself fixed on education through the medium of Māori for her son's entire schooling. She was starting to see that fluency in te reo Māori and being educated through the medium of te reo Māori as not necessarily the same thing. She also thought that what a person chooses to do with themselves, in this instance linguistically, is up to them. She did not see it as her role to dictate to her son *"that he should speak Māori everyday of his life forever"*, although she did hope that he would continue to have access to both languages. This parent said that she had read about bilingualism before her son was born and just after. She had thought very deeply about the relationship between fluency in a language and cognitive ability, and the dangers of semi-lingualism.

### **Focus three: reading knowledge and practices**

During the interviews, parents outlined what they knew and what they would like to know about reading. How they saw their role in their children's reading development and their knowledge about school practices related to reading were discussed. An integral focus of

the conversations was reading activities that took place in their homes. All parents said there were things that they would like to know about reading. This ranged from concrete information about reading in their child's classroom through to information about reading development in general.

Some parents wanted to know more about their children's progress, the stage or level their child had reached and how they could help them learn to read and write. For example, one mother wanted to know what stage her daughter was at, what level should she be at, and whether she was actually learning to read, as she appeared to be "*memorising books, should she be reading by memory?*" Languages that her child would be learning to read in class was an issue for another parent. At the time of the interview she was unsure whether her child would be learning to read in Māori only at kura, or in English and Māori. She also wanted to know what sorts of things would help her son develop understandings and meanings for Māori words he would be meeting in reading that he might not know. Parents were also interested in finding out more about the philosophical and theoretical bases of the programme and the aims and objectives of the reading programme. Some parents also wanted to learn more about reading generally. They expressed interest in finding out about, for example, the '*stages of learning*' in reading and 'normal' sequencing of reading and writing development.

### ***Parents' views of their role in reading development***

Parents did not view their current role as one of teaching. They described varying roles they saw they had in their child's reading development in terms of supporting their learning and reinforcing and extending what was happening in kura. The degree to which they thought they could help their children was influenced by their general knowledge about the processes of reading development, and by their individual levels of fluency in te reo Māori. For instance, one parent said that ideally she would like to help teach her child but was not sure how to do go about doing this. Another mother thought her level of Māori was not adequate enough to help her child. She said her role was to worry, while her husband who was more fluent had the task of actively supporting their children with their schoolwork and with reading in Māori. She viewed activities that her new entrant child brought home from kura as providing her opportunities to learn with her child, rather than to support or teach. Another mother described her role as one of encouraging her child to

read and to enjoy reading, and to provide opportunities for her to be involved in reading in their home.

One mother did not see her role as one directly related to areas of learning such as reading. She saw her role as to try and broaden her children and open them up to whatever experiences they might have in the world, rather than to “*concentrate on what happened within their classroom walls*”, or to focus on the academic side of their learning and development.

### ***Parents’ knowledge about reading in kura***

Parents were asked to describe what they knew of the reading programme in their new-entrant’s classroom. All reported knowing very little about the programme. However three parents did describe aspects of the programme (outlined below). Two said they had spent time in the classroom and observed reading activities involving letter-sound relationships and picture-letter identification, one described how she thought part of the programme was teaching her daughter to recognise letter-sound relationships.

*“Oh, its kind of that word reading, when I think of reading I think of reading books and that eh, but the stage where she’s at she’s just like, recognising letters or word sounds.”*

*“Well I, I think that they probably, do they get one word [and] a picture, picture, and you know trying to associate the word with the picture? That’s sort of starting off basic reading. Because with the alphabet thing they’ve got like, the letter and a picture to associate with the letter so that they could put those two together.”*

Parents were also asked whether they had ever talked about reading with their new entrant child’s kaiako. None of the parents had yet done so, although one parent reported discussing her older son’s reading progress with his kaiako the year before.

Parents expressed the desire to know what was happening in their children’s classroom and to support the classroom programme in concrete ways. Having clear, up-to-date and specific information on what was happening in their child’s classroom was seen as important if the home was to support learning, and in turn support te reo Māori, in their home.

*"I don't know much about children's reading at kura, but things that happen could influence understanding and especially use of Māori [in the home]. For example, the [current classroom] theme of transport. I'd look at ways to support learning around the kaupapa if I knew what these were."*

### ***Home reading practices and activities***

Reading was identified as an activity that occurred to some extent in all homes of Study One whānau. In one whānau the oldest child (8years) had received a set of 'He Purapura' books, produced by Learning Media Limited, from an uncle. She read these and English storybooks regularly, and occasionally read to the younger children. The mother said that she rarely read herself. Her husband was described as reading a little bit more than she did, once or twice a week and mainly Māori books for his night school class homework.

The mother of another whānau said that she loved reading, did a lot of personal reading in both Māori and English, but tended to do this when the children were asleep. The father mainly read English newspapers and magazines, usually in the children's presence. The new entrant was seen as liking to read books, that is, to tell a story from the pictures in a book, which she did in English or in Māori. The mother read both English and Māori books to all three children together two or three times a week. She said that she would talk about te reo Māori books mainly in Māori, but used English if she felt that she could talk about aspects of the book more clearly, or better explain a concept. She also talked about English books in Māori a lot of the time, but again would use the language in which she could talk about concepts or ideas more clearly. The oldest child (8 years) would often read some of a book, even if the book was in English "*which is quite hilarious*". She said that there was a lot of talking about the book when she read with the children.

In another whānau the mother reported she read now and then with her son. He usually chose a few books, often a mixture of English and Māori texts. The mother said she had not been able to find many books in Māori, but had recently bought a few titles. There were a few Māori books in their home, e.g. 'Te Whakawhiti i te Rori', from the He Purapura series. She also had children's books, like the 'Guardian of the Bridge' which were in English with some Māori words. Just prior to the interview her son had found some Māori books at their local community library, before then she had not considered it as a source of Māori texts. The process of the interview itself in focusing this mother's

attention on te reo Māori home literacy practices was directly commented on. Goodridge (1995) noted similar, possibly less explicitly stated, focusing occurring in families after speaking with parents about their preschoolers' writing.

*"So now that you've talked to me and you've brought it to my awareness, and we've got a week off, next week off, I'll probably make an effort to either go to the library or maybe find something else. But he's starting to read, like I've got those little you know those little Spot, 'Te tatau o Spot, mai te tahi ki tekau'."*

This mother also did a lot of personal and teaching-related reading, often while her son was present. She pointed to a high use of dictionaries to support her learning of te reo Māori.

*"I've got the Ngata one too. And every time I go, I looked up something this morning, I was sort of wondering if there was a word for revise as such. I mean they use titiro whakamuri, which is what I always use, But you open it and you actually can get side-tracked because its got such interesting, much richer range."*

Another mother reported that her new entrant daughter was read to, by herself or along with her older sister, nearly every day. All of the new entrant's books were Māori texts. There were also children's English storybooks in the house. Mother did not read in English to her new entrant, but used the pictures to tell the story through Māori. However, she did not read a lot of Māori texts personally. The children's grandfather read Māori texts nearly every day in the home while their uncle regularly read in English.

In another home the father was described as the main person who read with the new entrant nearly every night when he was home on leave, sometimes including the younger sister. The mother said she had regularly read Māori 'myths' written in English to the new entrant before he started kura. Some Māori language picture books with labels or very simple sentences had been bought just before the interview took place, which the mother brought along to the interview. Referring to one of the books, she described reading of these books as involving a lot of talk about the pictures, mainly in English.

*“... picture book reading so that like for the Māori ones it helps to identify what I’m actually reading so [son] can pick out, like I said before, he can pick out... like ‘titiro mai’, ‘he aha’. And he asks a lot of questions about the pictures. I try to incorporate the Māori word on the page with the picture, and then we talk about what she’s doing and that. And then we can say titiro, oh yeah they’re looking under the rock. What’s that under there? That sort of thing.”*

Both parents were described as ‘regular readers’ of English books and texts. The mother was enrolled in undergraduate papers and children had many opportunities to observe her reading. She described how her children would sit with her at the kitchen table while she was studying and *“pretend they’re doing what I’m doing”*.

### ***Kura reading activities at home***

In relation to reading activities in the home, parents were asked about reading activities their child brought home from kura. Parents’ responses ranged from saying that no activities were being sent home with their child, to reporting that activities involving letter and letter cluster recognition such as the Māori alphabet with pictures and single words, came home regularly. Parents who reported activities coming home, described instructions being sent with the activities regarding how to carry out the activities and the length of time to spend on them. Parents commented that initially the activities were alright but were somewhat repetitive. Two said that they would like work given more regularly and all said that they would like reading activities to include text, such as books, material relating to a kaupapa or theme children were currently learning about, or children’s writing.

One parent commented that she thought it would only be helpful to send things home that her son could read or was very familiar with. She thought that she *“wouldn’t be doing her son any favours”* by reading books to him that he did not understand, as she would not know what they meant either. She also thought that her son did not enjoy listening to her read Māori storybooks to him because she did not read very fluently, *“I’m obviously not saying the sentences how they’re supposed to sound.”*



## STUDY TWO

### *Whānau living arrangements*

Five mothers, three fathers and one grandmother participated in Study Two interviews. Four of the whānau consisted of male and female parents and their children living as a nuclear family. The remaining whānau consisted of a single mother and her child living in extended family settings. During phase one she and her child shifted from the house they were living in with her parents, to a flat shared with her sister, her sister's partner and their two pre-school children.

### *Parents' employment and education*

At the time of this study, parents of three whānau were in paid employment. Parents of two whānau worked in related areas; one couple in the educational sector, as a tutor on an employment training course and as a school secretary; the other in the health sector, in Māori health programme development and counselling. In the third whānau, the mother was at home with a young infant while the father was employed as a Māori student support worker in a secondary school. Both parents of the remaining nuclear whānau were attending a Training Opportunities Programme (TOPS) course. The mother of the single parent whānau was employed as a kaiawhina in a kōhanga reo for the initial phase of the study, and was not in paid employment for the remainder.

Five of the nine parents had attended a tertiary institution at some time. Two had done so prior to the birth of their children, one father had attended university and one mother had completed a teaching diploma. Three parents, two mothers and one father, had begun tertiary education after their respective children had begun kōhanga reo. Both mothers had completed some papers towards a degree course but neither was enrolled in courses during the time in which this study was carried out, while the father was expecting to complete an undergraduate degree within the year.

## **Focus one: te reo Māori**

### ***Parents' fluency in te reo***

Again there were differences in the levels of Māori language fluency described by those interviewed. Fluency levels ranged from native (the grandmother who took part in the interviews was the only native speaker directly involved in any of the interviews) through to being able to understand "*simple conversations*" in Māori.

Two fathers considered themselves relatively fluent across some contexts in which Māori was spoken. They described themselves as being capable of carrying out conversations in Māori and in using Māori in more formal ways, in whaikōrero for instance.

One of these fathers had attended a full-time Te Ataarangi course for two years. He had been motivated through "*being embarrassed*" at his lack of fluency as a Māori, and through his and his wife's decision to enrol their children in kōhanga. He had also found himself in work-related situations where he had to use what little Māori he spoke at the time. His wife, who described her fluency as very low, believed she understood much more than she could produce. When spoken to in Māori she often thought that she could reply back in Māori, but often felt too "*whakamā to respond*", and used English instead. She said that at the time of the interview she had been thinking about other ways to increase her confidence. She felt that a lot of her knowledge in te reo Māori had been gained through belonging to a kapa haka group.

The other father had committed himself to learn Māori at the end of the nineteen-eighties, and had done so through attending night school classes and regularly participating in wider whānau and hapū contexts where Māori language was a central feature. His wife, who described herself as not very fluent, had been attending night classes for a couple of years and was able to converse in very simple Māori. She identified her children's homework and church meetings in Māori, held at least once a week, as the key learning situations that were helping to raise her level of Māori language.

One mother spent her young childhood in a Māori speaking community, but was not fluent as an adult. She had also taken university Māori language courses, though she had found the academic focus problematic in that emphasis was placed on linguistic aspects

of the language rather than communication through the language. She had found attending whānau and iwi wānanga and other Māori hui very helpful for developing her Māori language competencies. Her husband traced his initial Māori language learning to participating in kapa haka at school. After leaving school, he continued learning Māori language formally while attending university for three years. He said he had been highly motivated at the beginning, but found it difficult to keep increasing his knowledge. At the time of the study he identified his work as providing opportunities and impetus to improve his level of te reo Māori. He was often called on to take part in work activities in which he had to use Māori, such as taking the role of kaikōrero. He also reported reading Māori weekly, listening to tapes in te reo Māori and learning and re-learning waiata. The couple said that they had been considering enrolling in a Te Ataarangi course together.

The remaining couple described their respective levels of te reo Māori as not very fluent. At the time of the interview both had recently begun a full-time Te Ataarangi course. They had made the decision to attend the course when they first enrolled their children in kōhanga reo and kura kaupapa Māori. The mother began attending Te Ataarangi so that she could support her children's education but by the time of the study wanted to become a more fluent speaker for her own sake. The father said he had wanted to go to be able to support his children's Māori language, and to progress his own understanding and fluency. Prior to starting Te Ataarangi, the mother did not speak Māori. The father had a low level of fluency gained through attending various Māori night classes during the previous two years, one at a local high school, the other in a private home.

The single parent mother began to learn Māori when working voluntarily in the kōhanga reo her son had attended before starting kura. She later spent a year attending a technical institute course that included te reo Māori classes before returning to work at the same kōhanga reo. She thought that she was continuing to learn te reo Māori mainly from working in kōhanga. Other avenues of language learning included television programmes that were in Māori, such as the daily news programme 'Te Karere', a weekly current affairs programme 'Marae', and a Te Ataarangi night class. She had considered enrolling in a full-time Te Ataarangi course before the opportunity to work at the kōhanga reo came up.

### *Use of te reo Māori in the home*

As with the first group of parents, it was reported that Māori was used daily in the homes. Again there was a wide range in the amount and in the patterns of Māori spoken. Estimates of the amount of time Māori was used in the home for language interactions ranged from a quarter to just over a half. Some homes operated largely as a bilingual context, in which both languages, English and Māori, were used somewhat interchangeably. For example, the target child in one whānau was described as speaking bilingually at home, switching from one language to the other. In others, particular conversational partners influenced which language would be used. For example, another target child was described as differentiating her language, using very little Māori when speaking with her mother, and predominantly Māori when speaking with her sister or father.

In one home Māori was described as being used about half the time by all whānau members except the mother. Karakia in te reo Māori was a regular, practically daily activity in this home. This whānau said that they did not spend a great deal of time at home as both parents worked, and children would often be with Māori speaking grandparents after school. The children regularly attended kapa haka practices at least once a week with their parents, where it was estimated that over half of the language used (sung, chanted and spoken) was te reo Māori.

Similarly, in another whānau the father and children were generally the main speakers of Māori. Religious worship was an activity that provided all whānau members including the mother opportunities to use te reo Māori. The whānau regularly hosted church meetings in their home, which were conducted entirely in Māori.

In another home, the lounge provided a physical context for Māori language, as a “*te reo only space*” where all members of the whānau were expected to use Māori. Television and radio programmes in Māori were watched by the family two or three times a week.

The parents of another whānau said that they both would “*kōrero what we know, i ngā wā katoa*”. This resulted in Māori being used about half the time in the house, but mainly for simpler, more routine language exchanges. In-depth discussions around a topic were

more likely to be carried out in English, although Māori words were often interspersed. The target child was viewed as speaking in Māori about half the time.

Māori was estimated to be spoken half of the time in the home shared by a target child, his mother and extended whānau including a native Māori speaking grandmother, although the child was considered to be speaking Māori about quarter of the time. Māori language television programmes were watched nearly every day, usually in the child's presence.

### **Focus two: educational choices and aspirations**

As a group, parents viewed their choice of kura for their children as the natural progression from, and as critical in order to carry on what had been started in, kōhanga reo. Besides the desire for continuity in a particular form of education, there was one other key reason identified as common across the group. Parents did not want their children's schooling experiences to mirror their own. All parents expressed a desire for their children to avoid the educational experiences they had undergone at school as a motivation for enrolling their children in a kura. For some, this desire related to 'breaking the chain' so to speak at one problematic 'link', that of negative school outcomes. It also related to rejoining the chain at another, that relating to the lack of te reo me ōna tikanga.

Parents described how they wanted their children to have different experiences from their own, particularly in terms of opportunities to be Māori, to learn to speak Māori, to learn through Māori and to develop a strong Māori knowledge base. While the kura their children were attending was essentially a state school, in that it was funded through and governed by legislation through the Ministry of Education, parents' belief that it was not possible to achieve these goals "*in the state system*" influenced their decisions to choose kura as the most appropriate schooling option for their children.

For parents of one whānau who had not become part of kōhanga reo and kura kaupapa Māori until making educational decisions for their two youngest children, the desire to break the chain was not only in relation to their experiences. It also extended to the schooling experiences their older children were having. The father voiced his hope that

the youngest children at least have opportunities to experience a different kind of formal education from himself.

*"I'd like for my children to have a better chance and try something different. I wanted a whānau environment for their education, out in the state system we had to fend for ourselves."*

Their two oldest children were now attending an English medium secondary school. They had decided to carry their youngest two children's education on through kura kaupapa Māori;

*"Because we felt we went away from our reo with our older children, we neglected to give them more knowledge on the Māori side. Its a second chance for us to expose our two younger children".*

Parents also saw kura as enabling their children to 'succeed' academically in arguably more traditional senses of the word. Parents saw success in terms of pursuing further education after secondary school years and gaining meaningful employment, through to being able to live comfortably in and have a depth of knowledge about two worlds - Māori and non-Māori.

For example the mother in the whānau just mentioned viewed her decision to send the youngest children to kōhanga reo as influenced by what happened to her as she grew up,

*"I didn't do well in the state system, I always felt I missed out on something."*

Another mother also saw the potential of kura to provide opportunities that she never had as the major reason for wanting her children in kura. At the time of the study she described herself as unable to speak Māori. She wanted her children 'to succeed educationally', which for her included becoming knowledgeable in Māori. She noted that many great Māori successes were scholars in Māori and English. She thought it was possible for her children to learn "the best of both worlds" through kura.

*"The whānau"* was the main reason identified by another couple, motivating their decision to send their child to kura. It was part of a wider decision they had made for their whole whānau to become fluent in Māori. They believed that with a firm base in te reo Māori, their children would do a lot better than they had, especially in relation to further education and employment.

Two parents saw their decision to send children to kōhanga then kura being important not only for the children, for themselves as individuals and as parents, and for their whānau as a whole, but also for Māori society as a whole. 'Mainstream' schooling was not considered desirable because it did not provide a direct involvement in things Māori. They believed that the development of kura and kōhanga was of great importance to Māori as a form of schooling for Māori children that was located in *'te ao Māori'*. They were also highly motivated by the lack of speakers of te reo Māori and the negative implications of language loss for Māori as a people.

Te reo Māori was also identified by another parent as the key concern underlying her choice of schooling for her son. She described her immediate whānau, her parents and sisters, as all wanting to ensure that the present generation and future generations of children would be fluent in Māori, especially compared with her own generation. She believed that the continued existence of te reo was critical to the survival of Māori as a race in the future. However while as a whānau there was a philosophical and practical commitment to te reo Māori, three members worked in kōhanga reo and another taught Māori at a tertiary institution, there was not unanimous agreement that kura kaupapa Māori was the best option for her child. The mother described how one whānau member disagreed with his going there as opposed to a local English medium school, believing that it could harm his educationally.

A father who identified te reo Māori as the key reason for sending his children to kura noted that kura did not always support regional dialects well. He said native speakers from his own home area did not always realise how much his children were learning because his children were not always able to understand or use local terms, and saw a need for kura whānau to become familiar with their own iwi dialects. He was also

concerned that children were speaking “*a different reo*”. He identified a number of possible reasons for this.

*“Often teachers and us parents are second language speakers. As young Māori we are often learning differently from the way Māori were educated into Māori knowledge and language. Reo is being replaced with reo out of books.”*

He was also concerned with how he saw tikanga Māori was changing- “*young whānau are moving the values and norms laid down.*” He believed that this also reflected a pressing need for younger generations to learn the kawa of their own hapū and iwi.

The kinds of goals and aspirations for their children articulated by the parents overlapped with the kinds of reasons given for sending their children to kura. That their children achieve academic success, that they live comfortably in ‘two worlds’ and that they gain meaningful employment were three most repeated goals.

One couple stated their goals were for their children to have pride in being Māori, to be comfortable in both worlds, but to have a Māori worldview first. They wanted them to be equipped with knowledge that would enable them to make their own decisions.

Parents generally thought that in kura their children would develop knowledge and expertise for which there was a growing need in Aotearoa. For example, one father believed that there would be a range of opportunities for people with skills and knowledge children in kura were learning. Goals for his children included them seeking employment in areas that would require them to use te reo Māori and tikanga Māori.

Parents also made more general statements about their long-term aspirations for their child. They did not all have concrete goals or aspirations for what their children might do in the future. One couple was concerned that their child be “*confident and proud*”, “*to have self confidence and to be strong in his identity, what he becomes is up to him.*” In their view, in order for that to happen, their child needed a strong grasp of “*te reo me nga tikanga*”.



### **Focus three: reading knowledge and practices**

While there were similarities between Study One parents' responses and those of Study Two parents related to reading knowledge and practices, as a group they focused more on practical aspects of reading directly related to their respective child than did Study One parents. An aspect discussed across all interviews related to what was happening in the classroom in relation to reading, and how they might best support this in the home. Two sets of parents wanted to know more about their child's reading progress,

*"his level of understanding and reading".*

*"what level she started at and where she should be at".*

Parents did not express any interest in finding out more about the reading process in general, however all parents expressed a desire to know how to best support what was happening at kura in the home. One couple said that they had discussed with the kaiako what they could do to help. At the time of the interview they thought there was more that they could do if they were given still more guidance.

One mother felt that the information she needed would change as her new entrant became a more proficient reader. She thought that a good way of disseminating information to parents would be providing simple information and ideas regularly throughout the year, at least once each term.

Another parent reported that her lack of knowledge about the day to day classroom programme was something that had been concerning her. She described feeling somewhat out of touch with what her child was learning in reading as well as in other areas at kura. Her child had previously attended the kōhanga where she was working at the time of the conversational interviews. She believed that by knowing more about what was happening in her son's classroom that she would know better how to support his learning at home.

### ***Parents' views of their roles in reading development***

Study Two parents also viewed their roles as primarily supportive of learning and teaching that was occurring in the kura. Only one mother stated that parents had the ability to take a teaching role and wanted more information about how this would be best achieved.

Another mother thought as parents, they were important as a “*tautoko*” or a support ‘system’ and that what they were able to do was “*to be there when we can*”. Her husband thought they could help in direct ways

*“by asking him questions, to see what he’s reading. Is he taking it in? To get him to take an active interest”.*

Information about what to do in relation to what was occurring in the kura programme was a prominent theme in this group’s views of their role in reading development. As described above, information about what was happening in the classroom was viewed as just as significant to their ability to support their children, as advice on practical ways that they could help their child. One mother, for example, thought that she needed “*to get in touch with what he’s doing at kura so I know what to do*” to help her son as he was learning to read.

Parents described the practical ways they saw parents could support their child’s literacy related learning,

*“helping by making sure their child understands what they are reading”*

*“Showing them how to use all parts of a book, the pictures and words, going front to back”.*

*“I sit and read with her, I encourage her, I make sure that homework is done, and reinforce it, sometimes by thinking up an exciting, good activity that goes with it. Also reading at home with the children is important.”*

The mother above described how she would take an activity sent home from kura and think of things to do that might help reinforce and extend her daughter's learning. For example, when a sheet with words that started with a particular letter had been sent home, she and her daughter found magazine pictures of things starting with that letter and cut them out to paste into a scrapbook.

### ***Knowledge about reading in kura***

The perception of three sets of parents was that they knew little about what was happening in the classroom reading programme. Parents of two whānau thought that at the time of the interview the classroom reading programme was focusing on children learning to recognise and identify letters of the Māori alphabet. This was essentially because the activities that came home involved letter recognition and word lists starting with a particular letter.

### ***Home reading practices and activities***

Reading was also described as a regularly occurring activity in all of the homes of Study Two whānau. As was reported for Study One whānau, who was actively involved in reading activities, the patterns of reading within the home, the language of the texts read, varied from whānau to whānau. None of the descriptions of reading activities and practices occurring within the home included letter and word recognition.

In one whānau the mother read English books and magazines, two or three times a week. The father read material for courses he was enrolled in part-time each week, and read Māori texts at least once a month. On most of the nights that they were home, the mother read storybooks to children, on average once or twice a week. One to three books in either Māori or English were chosen by any or all of the four children and usually read to them as a group. There were a number of Learning Media Limited 'He Purapura' titles in the home. The second-youngest child, a couple of years older than the target child, brought home a book from kura once or twice a week, which he read with the mother.

In another whānau both parents read biblical material several times a week, the father in both English and Māori. The mother read religious material in English, as well as English books borrowed from the local library. The whānau had a few books from the 'He Purapura' series, as well as some commercial publications. Children's books, mainly

English, were borrowed from the local council library. Māori books were read with the children, about once a week, English books two to three times a week, usually by the mother.

In another whānau both parents read Māori texts once or twice a month. The older children read regularly, the 8-year-old read Māori and English books two to three times a week, the 13-year-old son read mainly English books two to three times a week. The parents hardly ever read books with their children.

Both parents of one whānau read Māori books every night in preparation for their Te Ataarangi course, usually after their youngest children had gone to bed. They both did a little personal reading once or twice a week, although less often at the time of the study. The mother read English magazines and books, the father English novels and publications such as the 'Mana' magazine that ran some articles in te reo Māori. On most school nights their two high school-aged children were reading English books, mainly school texts. The target child was hardly ever read with, either in English or Māori.

In the remaining home the mother and grandfather read English books and magazines while the grandmother read Māori newspapers and magazines. There were a few Māori children's storybooks. In the past the mother had brought home books from kōhanga reo in to read to her son. They sometimes borrowed Māori language children's books from the library.

The grandfather read English books to the target child two or three nights a week. The mother or grandmother read Māori books with him when they were available, ranging from nearly every night, through once a week, to not at all, depending on supply.

### ***Kura reading activities at home***

Though these children were in the same class, parents reported a range in the regularity of reading activities being sent home. Parents of two whānau said activities had come home three or four times a week since their child had started kura, while the remaining three said they had initially come home but had stopped or were irregular. All parents described the activities as involving letter and sound identification.

In relation to the kinds of activities coming home, one parent described feeling lucky that she *'had a teaching background and was able to make them more meaningful'*. She thought that most of the activities sent home tended to be isolated activities that lacked meaning. She was worried that some parents might not know how to teach from the activities, even though there were some directions provided. Other parents said that they found the activities useful because they were able to see what their children were learning

Parents of all the target children said that they would like books to be sent home from kura regularly, at least weekly if not two or three times a week. One parent said that she wouldn't mind reading them to her child if he was not able to read them himself, but would also like some sent home that were easy enough for him to read. Parents commented on how they found it hard to get access to a range of Māori language books for children, and that where reading was a regular practice, the same ones tended to be read over and over.

## TE KURA

During the two years in which Study One and Study Two were carried out, two kaiako taught the new entrant classes attended by the ten target children. Both women had completed a three-year Kura Kaupapa Māori teacher education diploma course and had partially completed university based Bachelor of Education degrees.

The kaiako teaching the new entrant class of the five target children while Study One was carried out was beginning her third year of teaching school aged children in a kura kaupapa Māori. All her teaching experience had been with new entrant children. She had worked in a kōhanga reo for nearly five years before enrolling in a diploma of teaching course.

The new entrant kaiako involved in Study Two was in her first full-time year of teaching. She had gone to train as a teacher within a few years of finishing secondary school. During 1995 she had been part-time and relief teaching in various kura kaupapa Māori.

In 1995 and 1996 the kura was attended by approximately 100 primary school aged children and up to 40 secondary school aged children. In both years there was one class of new entrant children. At that time the practice of the kura, familiar to local kōhanga reo, was that all new children entered as a group at the beginning of the term in which they turned five, rather than enrolling individually throughout the year. At the beginning of the 1995 school year there were twenty children in the classroom. Ten of the children had started kura during the final term of 1994, ten were entering primary schooling for the first time.

At the beginning of term one in 1996 there were eighteen children in the new entrant classroom. Over half of the children were starting school for the first time, seven had begun at the beginning of the third term in the previous year. All children had attended one of five kōhanga reo in the local districts for at least one year before enrolling at kura. Most of the children had come from the three kōhanga reo closest to the kura. All the children knew at least one other child at the kura, many had older siblings there.

### ***Kura observations***

Observations were carried out in the new entrant classrooms across four weeks during February and March of 1995 and again in February and March of 1996. Running records and audiotape recordings were taken of reading activities across each of the four weeks on randomly selected days. During these times the respective classroom kaiako was interviewed. In total, six observations were made during 1995 and four in 1996, from the start of the school day until lunchtime. Observations were also made of at least two afternoons during each year, of which written records in the form of diary notes were made.

Similar reading related activities took place in classrooms of both kaiako. These ranged from very specific letter-sound recognition activities involving the whole class, to individual, personal activities around Māori text in the classroom, including books that were available in the classroom environment, initiated by individual or small groups of children. For instance, on completion of a set classroom learning activity a child or small group of children would sometimes share books between themselves or ask a kaiako or parent to read with them.

Across both years, each morning the whole class participated in activities around the Māori Alphabet. Children were asked individually and in groups to identify letters and phonemes and the sounds that went with these. Writing activities took place after these activities, in which children practised printing a letter of the alphabet and words that began with the letter. While observations were not formally made in the classroom throughout the year, informal observations indicated that these activities continued, with the addition of individual and group bookreading activities with children who had already spent one or two terms in the classroom.

Kaiako read Māori books to the whole class that related to topics or themes being studied in the classroom programme, for instance during Putaiao or science study, or when there was free time before morning or lunch interval. During the month in which observations were taken, the teacher also read books with individual or small groups of children who had started kura in the previous year.

As a parent member of the kura whānau in which the studies were carried out, I was very much a participant-observer in kura related activities such as hui, sports, kura trips, fund-raising as well as in classroom activities. Diary observations were made about aspects of parent and whānau participation in these kinds of kura activities in general. While these sets of observations are not specifically reported in this thesis, they have been drawn on to provide context, comparison and contrast to information contained in the conversational interviews.

The kura had a policy of actively encouraging parents to come into the classrooms and to be involved in school-related activities. For the duration of the studies, parents and caregivers were observed in the kura and in the new entrants classroom, though often watching classroom activities rather than participating. Generally, parent participation in classroom programmes was not organised in any formal way, although in three of the four terms of 1996 a few parents arranged to listen to older children reading.

Other ways that parents participated in the kura at large was through fund-raising activities, such as selling food and drinks in kura break times. There was also high parent and wider whānau participation outside of kura hours, at weekly indoor basketball and

weekend netball fixtures, during weekend live-in practices for the secondary school performing arts festival and so on. The kura had mixed teams of five to eight year-olds and girls' teams of nine year olds and upwards competing in the local districts netball competition, as well as young mixed teams and older single sex teams in the local indoor basketball competition for schools. There were also many kura parents and whānau and older students who were members of three kapa haka groups based at the marae to which the kura is attached. Just over half of the whānau involved in the studies participated in at least one of these.

Many of the ways in which parents did or did not participate reflected the degree to which they used te reo Māori. For example, parents who participated in direct ways in the classrooms tended to be those who showed more confidence in speaking Māori both within the kura and in other kura whānau contexts such as hui or school sports fixtures. Some of the parents who put a great deal of energy into fund-raising, coaching and supporting school sports activities used little Māori language in these settings.

These kinds of activities arguably provided relatively non-threatening contexts in a linguistic sense for active and meaningful parent participation. Of interest is that some of the parents who were heavily involved in such activities later went into Māori language courses such as Te Ataarangi. It can be argued that settings calling for high levels of participation but making low Māori language demands, may provide a relatively supportive context in which parents with little fluency in Māori can, in their own time, choose to become Māori language speakers.

## **KAIAKO INTERVIEWS**

The new entrant class kaiako in both studies also took part in Whakawhiti kōrero (see Appendix 4), focusing on three areas described in Chapter Seven. Interviews took approximately one to one and a half hours. The three key focus areas for parent and whānau interviews were applied in the following ways. Firstly the focus on te reo was in terms of how kaiako viewed the relationship between Māori language, the development of reading in Māori and the role of children's whānau in children's reading development.



Secondly, the focus on educational choices and aspirations translated across to the expectations kaiako had of the new entrant children they were teaching for the first time, and the goals they had for teaching and learning of reading in their classroom. Thirdly, the focus on reading knowledge and practices was examined in terms of theories and beliefs kaiako articulated regarding reading and its development.

### **Focus one: te reo Māori**

#### ***Te reo Māori and reading development***

Kaiako described viewing the relationship between te reo Māori and reading as one in which the development of reading helped support and facilitate children's Māori language development. One kaiako described the initial emphasis in her class as being on accelerating Māori language learning, in which reading instruction played a part. Kaiako described using word study activities, such as having words and pictures around the room for children to match up, as a way to build their word identification skills as well as their vocabulary.

In relation to the types of reading activities occurring, reading and writing routines using the Māori alphabet were described as helping the children to recognise and identify the letters and letter combinations that made up Māori language. Reading was also viewed as being "*woven into everything*" and that it was occurring across all parts of the day. In particular reading books and stories to the children was described as occurring more in relation to curriculum areas other than reading instruction, often as a way to expose children to vocabulary around a topic or theme being studied.

There were two reasons stated for the relatively low use of books in the formal reading programme at the time of the study. Firstly it related to the teacher's theory on how reading develops, the stages and sequences of reading development. One kaiako stated that learning to recognise letters and phonemes started the children "*on the way to being independent readers*". It was presumed that once this became established then children could quickly start reading books, which was seen as highly desired because in a school setting "*a big part of learning is just reading*". The other reason related to the kinds of resources available that were appropriate for the children. Aspects of print resources for Māori medium education settings explored in Chapter Four were highlighted by kaiako.

*"I don't put them on easy readers straight away, I just want them to be really self-assured when they're looking at lettering and that. I find the easy readers are often too small a print."*

### ***Role of whānau***

Kaiako were asked how they saw the role of parents and whānau in relation to Māori language and to reading. *"I think it's [parents' role] a learning role, they should be learning, they should be helping."*

Both kaiako were happy for parents to come in and participate in any of their class activities, including reading. They thought that parents should be a major part of the kura programme, both in the kura and in the home.

One kaiako observed *"I remember our kaupapa when we started. We all were into whānau learning"*. For her the roles of the parents included making time for the activities sent home. *"My expectation is really angled at the whānau, that they give their kids, that, [time] its no more than ten minutes work."* The expectation was that parents would take helping, teaching and learning roles with their children. This was echoed by the other kaiako who described getting good responses from parents in terms of activities being completed and returned to kura.

Kaiako were asked if they thought parents might have any difficulty with reading activities that might come home, and why or why not. Both kaiako thought that parents might have difficulty if they had little grasp of te reo Māori.

*"Backgrounds of families, like if they haven't got the knowledge of how the kupu sound. Cos everyone knows what English sounds like. But if they don't know what the Māori words sound like it might be harder for the kids when the children try and read. They're not sure if they've got it right and neither are the parents."*

Also identified were problems that could potentially occur if parents had little understanding or knowledge about how Māori as a written language was being presented to the children in the classroom. For example kaiako thought that it might be confusing

to children if parents tried to work with letter-sound activities using English pronunciations for the name of letters.

*“Some parents find it very hard. Simply because you know if its haka and they [children] spell haka, h aa, k aa, parents might spell it aitch, ay, kay, ay”.*

However this potential difficulty was seen to be offset to some extent by parental aspirations for their children to be Māori speakers.

*“I think our biggest trouble is we haven’t got whānau based language. You know, Māori language, that’s our biggest problem, but the attitudes are there.”*

It was pointed out that parents who could not speak Māori were able to support their children’s reading development in other significant ways.

*“Parents with no reo, I think parents with no reo don’t read Māori books anyway. But they read [with their children]. I mean they read English books. And the skills are still the same. So you know I cry because they haven’t got Māori in the home, but then again I’m lucky, at least those parents are reading English books and the same skills, they can be transferred...What I’d prefer if they can’t get Māori in the home, then I would prefer that their parents still do the reading.”*

Another positive aspect of parents reading in English with children was that it helped to accommodate the unsatisfactorily low levels of children’s books available in te reo Māori.

*“What you see here [in the class] and what you’ve got at home, I mean that’s the state of it. That’s the situation at the moment.”*

To help address issues related to parental lack of knowledge about classroom programmes, as well as low levels of Māori language, kaiako said that they encouraged parents of new children to come and observe and listen in to the activities at kura.

*".. I think that this is the time that parents can grow, develop, especially new entrants [parents] can grow in the language with their kids. And yes its hard for our parents because they haven't got the language at home. I also have an open door policy, they can ask me what they can do [to learn]... "I've got good parents, that really are straight up front. They haven't got the reo and are quite happy to come in [the classroom]."*

*"Quite a few parents have been coming in and listening to what, I encourage them to come in and listen and they have been."*

Kaiako discussions did reflect a concern for sharing of knowledge between whānau and kura and they described opportunities for parents to access information. Kaiako expressed strong preferences for 'kanohi ki kanohi', for parents and whānau to learn about teaching programmes and activities through observing them in the context of the classroom.

#### ***Kura to home reading practices***

Kaiako were invited to talk about their practices of sending reading activities home with their new entrant children. Children did not take material home until they were assessed to have a degree of literacy knowledge attainment and deciphering skills. What was initially sent home involved recognition of the letter pairs for the phonetic sounds that make up Māori words. While it was stated that the intention was to send books home with some of the children, this was not observed to occur regularly. More commonly, a plastic pack containing photocopied word study sheets or a small notebook with activities around Māori language phonemes went home. Activities that related to books children were currently reading were also sent home.

*"I'll do the reader with them, but their worksheet will be activities taken from it rather than they take the reader home."*

The reasons given for this included lack of books and printed material at the appropriate levels, experiences of books not being returned and that the books were not being read at home by the children.

Kaiako expressed some ambivalence about sending books home with the children. Two major reasons were outlined for this view. One related to the range in levels of parents' fluency in Māori. Some concern appeared to be expressed that there was less focus on learning and development of other members of children's whānau, and this had implications for classroom programmes.

*"Parents' levels of te reo Māori are a major part of [decisions around sending reading activities home]. I remember our kaupapa when we started [the kura]. We all were into whānau learning."*

Another related to the quality, as well as the quantity, of books that were available at new entrant's level *"I don't like them, ... I'm not saying the reo is wrong, but I think they're not advanced enough"*.

Other reasons were proposed for why sending activities home with children was not always a positive thing. One related to the kaiako perceptions of how some parents thought about the role of teachers and schools. *"There's lots of reasons why parents might think homework's not good. They think that teachers should be doing the teaching during school time."*

Another related to what parents thought their child should or should not do with books, for example that children should not be reading from memory. One kaiako also expressed having encountered problems in the past with the ways some parents interpreted how activities were to be carried out, *"I've had issues in the past where parents have worked with their kids for hours. I mean that's ridiculous! It should still be fun"*.

### **Focus two: kaiako expectations and goals**

Kaiako were asked to comment on what they expected of children when they came into the new entrant classroom. They were asked what kinds of knowledge and expertise they expected children to arrive at kura with. They were also asked to identify what they saw as important for the children's reading development in the kura.

The kaiako in Study One saw kura kaupapa Māori as a school type, and herself as a new entrant teacher teaching within a kura, as fortunate in that all kura new entrant students have had some pre-school educational experiences in kōhanga reo.

As mothers of children currently enrolled in a kōhanga, both kaiako shared practical knowledge of kōhanga reo. As mentioned above, one kaiako had worked in a kōhanga for a number of years before undertaking teacher training. While it is not known how typical it is generally for people to move from early child education into primary or secondary teaching, many kaiako working in kura kaupapa Māori settings are intimately familiar with, or have worked in kōhanga reo. The knowledge and experiences these two kaiako have of particular kōhanga reo played a significant part in the expectations they held about new entrant children's prior knowledge. The most important thing for the kaiako was that the children had a really good base in te reo Māori.

*"Very good reo, you know, really good reo. I think after four years at kōhanga reo, they should have developed a really good language base."*

It could be argued that coupled with this expectation, was the competing expectation that it would not always be met, particularly given the emphasis placed on developing children's language during their first months of schooling. Both kaiako expressed concerns that some of the children seemed to have low levels of fluency in Māori when they first arrived. One kaiako described how she had initially expected that all her class would be proficient in te reo Māori. Differences were observed across the children in terms of home language backgrounds.

*"A bit of a shock the different levels of Māori. You could see the ones that kōrero Māori at home. I knew the parents, that they didn't have much reo. You take for granted that all the kura kaupapa Māori parents know Māori. Now I know that some don't."*

*"You could see some [children's Māori language competencies] come from kōhanga, some came from home too. Some kids have more background with [Māori language] than others."*

One of the kaiako commented that some children appeared to have rather a narrow range of Māori, they appeared to speak and understand routine language of their respective kōhanga very well, but did not always appear to clearly comprehend what was being talked about in kura.

The Study One kaiako said that she was sometimes particularly worried about the apparent lack of Māori fluency of some children in her new entrant class. When this occurred, she would contact the kōhanga reo that the children were said to have attended. Sometimes she would find that although children might have been enrolled in a kōhanga reo, it did not automatically follow that they had attended regularly, or for any extended period of time. In a few instances arrangements were made to have children placed back into the nearest kōhanga to the kura.

Kaiako also had expectations about other kinds of knowledge and expertise the children would bring into the kura. These ranged from specific kinds of knowledge, such as children being able to recognise and name numbers, colours and some letters of the Māori alphabet, to more generic kinds of expertise, such as being able to use scissors, crayons and pencils effectively. They also expected children to have developed some general concepts about print and attitudes towards reading.

*"I would expect them to be able to pick up a book and at least go to the beginning of the book, and be able to recognise, they mightn't know the words but at least know you start on the left and go to the right."*

*"I would like kids to think its fun to read, enjoyment. Good if they're getting read to at home, that its really enjoyable, so that they want to read, they want to do it for themselves."*

One kaiako noted that not all children were arriving with these kinds of knowledge. She had followed up with contributing kōhanga *"I actually ring up kōhanga and say, okay, these are some skills that maybe you need to look at"*.

## **Goals**

Kaiako were asked about the goals they had for teaching and learning of reading in their classroom. The kaiako identified three major goals in terms of reading in their classrooms: that the children learn to read, that learning to read be enjoyable; and that the children's te reo Māori language development be supported and facilitated through reading.

During her interview, one kaiako stated that she did not approach reading as a specific subject or curriculum area with her new entrants' class. This kaiako viewed reading as very much *"part and parcel of their whole work, their writing, their oral skills, its not a separate identity on its own"*. She stated that *"in terms of reading it also develops the language, they go hand in hand, you can't take them away [from each other]"*. She thought that children's Māori oral language development influenced the time and effort it took children to learn to read. *"In terms of reading, if their oracy [in Māori] isn't good, then their reading [in Māori] is going to be really low."* She said that for the first one or two months a child was at school, the classroom programme concentrated on developing te reo Māori. Reading activities in the classroom were one of the ways through which this was achieved.

One kaiako held long-term goals for the children relating to the kinds of study habits that she believed they would need as they went through their schooling.

*"My role as a teacher is to see that they get a really good start. And that I instil into them the desire to learn... So my role is to give them good literacy skills, good comprehension skills, good vocab, and all those things, and to appreciate [learning]"*.

## **Focus three: theories and beliefs about reading**

It is argued that teachers' theories are developed in practice, and form the basis for the goals they set and the way they organise instruction (Goodridge, 1995; 238). Teachers do not adhere to a unilateral theory of teaching, or even a theory per curriculum area. Correspondingly, one might adhere to a set of ideas about learning in general, and at the same time have another set of ideas about what it means to learn to carry out a particular activity, such as learning how to read. The beliefs teachers hold reflect their beliefs and



assumptions about the learner (Olson & Bruner, 1996; 11), about what is being taught and what needs to be taught. Teachers' theories are also shaped and modified by their interactions with children and by the ways in which they perceive abilities and characteristics of individual children (Cazden, 1988a).

A teacher may hold multiple theories related to an area of teaching, such as reading, any one or more of which may be guiding their teaching goals and practices at a given time. Teachers' stated theories and beliefs may be shaped or contained by those currently presented in educational literature, ministerial curriculum documents, and may or may not coincide with their personal theories and beliefs (Olson & Bruner, 1996). In Chapter Six I discussed how the relationships between motives, goals and activity or action are not straightforward. Similarly, while goals, beliefs and theories are inextricably linked, they do not logically follow one from the other, and are not necessarily directly reflected in all the goals a teacher might articulate, or the practices a teacher may carry out. Nor are relationships closed or exclusive. Theories, goals and practices are open to external influences of context, of resourcing, of wider social, political and cultural goals of a teacher, or groups a teacher may belong to, or identify with. These influences were evident in the descriptions and statements given by kaiako during their interviews.

The overarching theoretical perspective about learning and teaching that was reflected in kaiako statements can be described as it being perceived as a holistic enterprise, rather than being made up two discrete activities - learning and teaching. There was also a sense of 'curriculum' being seen as a whole rather than as consisting of separate curriculum areas. Teacher beliefs and theories also encapsulate the philosophy underlying Kura Kaupapa Māori as an educational, political and cultural movement - Te Aho Matua (Nepe, 1991). Kura Kaupapa Māori emerged directly out of the Kohanga Reo movement. Underlying both movements are Māori preferred or understood conceptualisations of the reciprocal nature of learning and teaching involved in a wholistic world view where there is coherence and connectedness across all life forms, organic and spiritual (e.g. Nepe, 1991; Pere, 1994).

On the other hand there is a theoretical perspective reflected in teachers' responses related to the sequencing of learning and development, for example the development of oral language expertise before written language expertise.

There are also beliefs related to bilingual and second language development being expressed. That is, the teachers' perceptions and understandings of the language contexts their bilingually developing students inhabit out of the classroom; of the overriding goal of a kura kaupapa Māori classroom, of a kura kaupapa Māori school; and of the relationship or partnership existing between home and school.

A 'bottom up' approach to reading was reflected in teachers' beliefs and theories about how children learn to read, and how children are taught to read in Māori. It can be argued that this partly stems from the regular, phonemic nature of print Māori. Kaiako believed children needed regular, systematic exposure to the individual phonemes that make up written Māori. They believed that the whole class routines that took place each morning contributed to this.

Kaiako believed that ambient print around the classroom, captions displayed with pictures and children's drawings, signs for activity corners, such as the block corner, the reading corner, charts of Māori phonemes, all provided opportunities for children to learn and practise reading, and to reinforce word, letter and sound identification skills. They also believed children needed to have regular 'whole language' experiences of Māori print. Both reported that they read books to their classes daily.

Kaiako were invited to talk about their beliefs and theories around sending books home with their students. The kaiako in Study One believed that te reo Māori reading activities should go home because it was an avenue for providing recognition to the commitment made by parents to kura and to helping to ensure that te reo Māori is present in the home.

Sending reading activities home with new entrants was also motivated by the belief that it was advantageous that children start "*getting into the habit*" of doing some academic work at home regularly early on in their schooling career. However, during the formal

observation periods very little evidence of reading activities involving meaningful text going home was seen.

Teachers' beliefs around sending reading activities home with their new entrant children were mediated by a number of existing conditions, or conditions perceived by kaiako to be existing. Factors kaiako identified as influencing their decisions about the kinds of activities sent home included parent expectations, parent levels of te reo and the quality of available early readers.

## SUMMARY

This chapter describes interviews with adult whānau members of ten kura new entrant children and their two kaiako. Themes of interest to this thesis in relation to the regeneration of te reo Māori, and reading as a context of support for Māori language use within whānau homes, were explored. Practices, beliefs and theories related to home-school interrelationships, the perceived role of parents and whānau, and implications of differential Māori language facility were described.

Here and elsewhere, 'whānau' is identified as a concept that is multi-faceted. The facet that comes particularly into focus in the interviews is around notions of kaupapa, joint focuses and shared goals and aspirations. 'Whānau' is reflected for example in reasons given for choosing kura as a schooling option. It is reflected in the way commitment to kōhanga reo and kura kaupapa Māori is realised and expressed in different ways by members of kura and kōhanga whānau (G. Smith, 1997). Parents and kaiako have developed and carry theories about what the relationship between kura and homes should be, as a whānau.

Parents' stated reasons for sending their children to kōhanga and kura reflect processes in operation like those illustrated by Graham Smith's (1997; 66) model of the 'consentisation-resistance-praxis' cycle. For example, some parents described politically motivated reasons for their children being in kura, others initially participated

in kōhanga for practical reasons, such as access to child-care, or for cultural, or educationally oriented reasons, later coming to develop a political perspective.

There were differing perspectives on the nature of te reo Māori me ōna tikanga articulated by parents. One parent viewed these as ideally continuous and unchanging, others saw them as more dynamic and continually evolving. Such differences in perception arguably may in turn influence what parents expect from kaiako and from teaching programmes and processes. They were also related to the parents' identification of different critical contexts of learning. For example, the parent who was concerned about shifts he saw occurring in language and beliefs and practices believed it was imperative for parents and children to access tribally located language and knowledge. In comparison, a number of parents expressed more concern about their children accessing whatever forms of knowledge they might desire or need to realise their own goals and aspirations. However, the majority saw, or hoped that Māori language and knowledge would remain a fundamental part of their children's future.

While children in Māori medium schooling may experience relatively restricted 'informal, everyday' contexts for using Māori as the means of communication, parents who are trying to learn te reo Māori as a second language often face even greater restrictions. Parents described going to great lengths to learn to speak Māori that included leaving secure well-paid employment, relocating whānau, and entering into long-term programmes of study. At least three types of motivation have been proposed for language learning and use; economic advancement, social prestige and cultural gratification (e.g. Baker, 1996; Fishman, 1991; Paulston, 1994). Parents described overlapping motivations, from reinforcing a sense of belonging and cultural identification through to associated practical advantages seen to be gained from being able to speak Māori, such as the development of enhanced employment prospects.

There was a range of perceptions held by parents about their ability as Māori language speakers and learners. They also described differing reactions of other whānau members, including children, to them as language learners and speakers. While some reported that native speaking whānau members interacted in Māori with their children, the parents generally did not describe themselves as being perceived as Māori language

communicative partners by these same whānau members. Some descriptions reflected that in essence they were considered and interacted with as non-Māori speakers. Ramifications for parents' access to Māori language experiences and language learning were evident in relation to parental experiences of variously being viewed as a competent speaker, as a developing speaker, or as a non-speaker of Maori. Sometimes overlaying these were parents' subjective memories of their formal schooling experiences, as being relatively 'unsuccessful learners'. These factors could impact positively or negatively on parents' Māori language learning and use. For instance, one was described as lacking confidence in using Maori in the home as a consequence of his children's negative reactions, but more confident in contexts involving other language learning adults. Another described herself as having a 'mental block' with regards to learning, using little Māori with her children, and seldom if ever reading with them. In comparison, two mothers who described experiencing positive reactions and evaluations of their Māori language learning had later sought employment and training in areas requiring regular use of te reo Māori.

Teachers also carried theories related to parents as speakers of Māori. In relation to perceptions of children's language competencies, kaiako expressed concerns that children's learning and development might be compromised by homes where Māori language use was not a regular feature. At the same time, they acknowledged that other parental characteristics and home practices might mediate relative low levels of Māori of parents or homes. These ranged from commitment and a desire to be involved directly in the school programme through to home literacy practices involving bookreading in English.

Impressions of personal theories on reading development were revealed in parents' discussions about what they thought the kura reading programme did or should do. There was a sense of understanding reading development as a stage-wise process. For instance, four parents describing reading development used the term 'basics'. Another parent described learning to read before learning to write as a developmental sequence. Parents expressed the desire to know what was happening in their children's classroom as a means to support the classroom programme in concrete ways. Clear, up-to-date and specific information about what was happening in their child's classroom was identified

as a key factor influencing the ability of the home to support children's learning. This desire for information parallels that of parents whose children are in English medium or conventional classrooms (McNaughton, Parr, Timperley, & Robinson, 1992).

It was possible for me to respond in a number of ways to parents' requests for information related to reading. These included encouraging them to talk with kura staff, passing on insider-information I had as a parent myself, and providing information as a formal part of the studies. In effect all three of these responses were used. As a mother of a child who was in the new entrant class during Study One (who incidentally was not one of the target children) and two older children who had been at the kura for over two and five years respectively, I had parent-related knowledge and experiences that I could share. For instance I could provide historical information and insights around the introduction of English reading instruction, something of concern to a number of the parents, which I did.

Prior to interviews with parents and caregivers, one had already been undertaken with the respective new entrant kaiako. Kaiako expressed positive views towards parent participation in their classrooms and towards parents seeking information about classroom programmes. Both kaiako reflected a preference for parents to get information about their children's classroom programmes in-situ so to speak, by directly observing and participating. The kaiako for the first study did have a hui for parents of children starting in 1995 where amongst other things she talked about the kinds of activities that would be sent home with the children. In both instances, kaiako also provided simple written instructions on how to carry out activities and the length of time to spend on them, which accompanied activities being sent home. When parents asked me for information that related to the classroom reading programme and about how they might support it at home, I suggested that they approach kaiako directly. In the second study, whānau were provided with a booklet that outlined the benefits of reading with children in various ways for their reading and language development.

Since the studies, groups of parents and kaiako have been working together to identify, describe and explain their beliefs and understandings about curriculum areas including reading, and about teaching and learning. The year following final data collection I was approached to help as a parent in the introduction and delivery of a reading programme

developed by Poutama Pounamu Research Centre (Glynn, Berryman, Atvars, Harawira, Walker, & Kaiwai, 1997). The introduction indicates to some extent, shifts that have occurred within this particular kura. This was a programme I had brought to the attention of staff a number of years before, however at that time it was greeted with some reservation, particularly in terms of it being perceived as having developed outside the ambit of kura kaupapa Māori.

The theories reflected in parents talk overlap with those attributed to other groups of parents (e.g. McNaughton, Parr, Timperley, & Robinson, 1992). The majority of parents reflected a theory of parents' roles in children's academic learning as one of support and reinforcement. However, located in the descriptions of what they did with their children were descriptions of 'teaching'. Indeed, one mother provided examples of some very creative lesson planning around activities sent home from kura.

The kaiako and whānau respectively, held beliefs and understandings about language and literacy learning in relation to the children under their care, and often about themselves as bilingually developing adults. At the time these studies were carried out it was evident that understandings were not always congruent across or even within individuals.

What emerged from kaiako descriptions, and observations of reading activities sent home, was that there was not always a clear match between their beliefs and the classroom and home-kura practices that they outlined. While both kaiako described an emphasis on Māori language development and a belief in the need for parents to learn and use as much Māori as possible, they also described home activities that tended to focus on letter sound relationships and letter and word recognition, rather than the production and use of meaningful language. Most activities were presented in worksheet form, sometimes pasted into a scrapbook. The space between 'theory' and 'praxis' appeared to be mediated by, amongst other things, the desire to ensure that demands placed on parents by school-initiated activities would not be onerous.

Parents' descriptions of home literacy practices revealed great variation across the ten whānau. Reports of their own literacy practices ranged from self-descriptions as irregular or essentially non-readers, to descriptions of how print literacy was used to support

second language learning, from posting Māori vocabulary lists and signs around the home, the use of dictionaries to find vocabulary items, through to personal directed study of Māori manuscripts. Of particular interest were the differences in bookreading behaviours with children. Reading with children in Māori can be affected by at least two parent characteristics, level of fluency in Māori and levels of literacy expertise and practices. The relationship between parents' self-evaluated fluency, parents' educational backgrounds and reported literacy behaviours, and whānau reading practices involving children, was complex. There was not a consistent relationship between fluency in te reo Māori and practices around reading evident from parent interviews. For example, parents who identified themselves as having medium to high levels of fluency described Māori bookreading activity occurring regularly through to never in their homes. Parents who described their competencies in Māori as minimal reported similar ranges in bookreading practice in the home.

Similarly, the two parents who were more fluent and 'educated' in terms of academic qualifications gained and who reported regularly occurring personal literacy practice, represented both ends of the continuum. One belonged to whānau in which children were regularly read with in English and Māori, the other to a whānau in which very little bookreading with children occurred.

Parents expressed concern about accessing Māori texts for their children. One also expressed concern about accessing text with levels of difficulty that she saw as appropriate, in terms of her lack of Māori language fluency. Data collected on bookreading practices during Study One provided clear indications that access is a significant influence on whānau bookreading practices. The data also reinforced the impression gained from the interviews that reading of Māori books as a practice varied greatly across the homes of these whānau. Their effectiveness in providing a context for intergenerational Māori language use also varied significantly.

Following data collection in Study One, and Study Two, reported in the next chapter, I passed on information about publishers, bookstores and local libraries that I had found to be sources of written Māori material for children. In the case of Study Two, children kept books that they wanted from the sets provided.