Engaging ākonga Māori in effective online learning

Kōtuitui Online Teachers Network

Whakapapa

Ko Whakataha te Māunga

Ko Waitangi te Awa

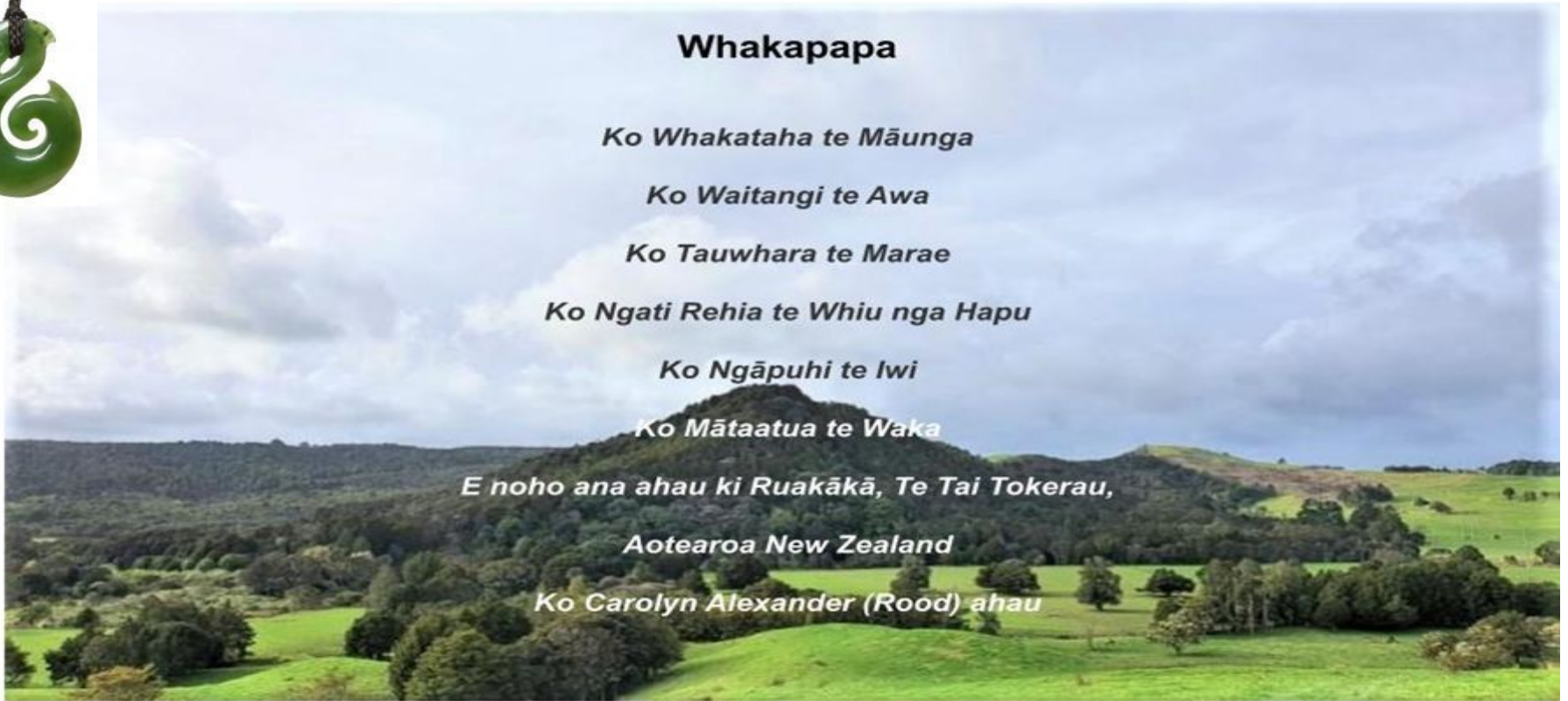Ko Tauwhara te Marae

Ko Ngati Rehia te Whiu nga Hapu

Ko Ngāpuhi te Iwi

Ko Mātaatua te Waka

E noho ana ahau ki Ruakākā, Te Tai Tokerau,

Aotearoa New Zealand

Ko Carolyn Alexander (Rood) ahau

What and Who?

This study applied **Kaupapa Māori methodologies** to explore virtual learning communities with the aim to **establish effective pedagogies** to engage and support ākonga Māori when learning online through the Online Learning Community (OLC).

This study utilised **qualitative research methods** through a **case study** to explore current pedagogies adopted by **eTeachers**, **eDeans** and **eStudents** from one region of Aotearoa New Zealand who were involved in virtual learning.

How?

Data was gathered from **semi-structured interviews** involving **eight schools** and **19 participants** who were interviewed through **two phases**:

Phase One: individual interviews with leaders and teachers; referred to as Tumuaki and Kaiako

Phase Two: focus group and individual interviews with learners; referred to as ākonga Māori. Their korero was recorded, transcribed, and thematically analysed.

When?

The study was undertaken during a time when the world was experiencing a pandemic and for many kura in Aotearoa New Zealand, their students learnt from home for over 100 days straight during the lockdown periods and during 2022, kura were required to adopt a more **hybrid approach** with a mixture of Kaiako and ākonga isolating at home but where kura were still open.
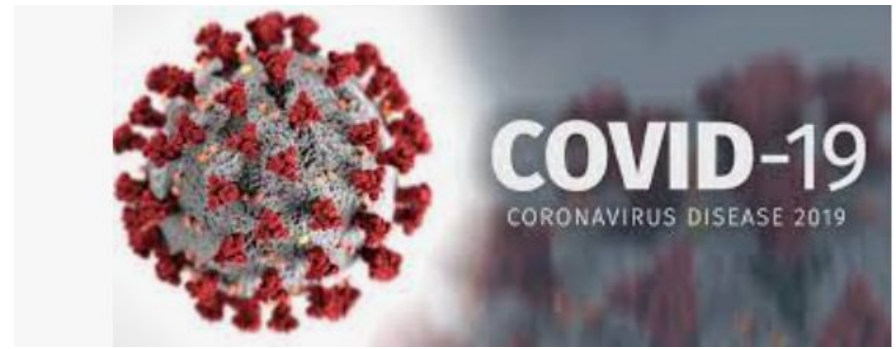
In addressing these changing and challenging times in education, the research has attempted to capture stories of the experiences of Tumuaki, Kaiako, ākonga Māori and kura as they have needed to adjust to the requirements of **emergency remote teaching** and **learning**.

Themes?

Using a **Kaupapa Māori lens**, **three** overarching themes emerged:

Whanaungatanga (building positive relationships)

Kotahitanga (working together respectfully)

Manaakitanga (caring, mutual trust, respect, and concern).

Questions?

Main Question:

What effective pedagogies work well to engage and support ākonga Māori in an online environment?

Sub Questions:

Does online education provide equitable educational opportunities for ākonga Māori from rural New Zealand schools?

How ready were schools for emergency remote learning?

EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES

- Relationships
- Professional Development
- Knowing Your Student
- Meeting Kanohi ki te Kanohi
- Use of Te Reo
- Use of Communication Tools
- Culturally Responsive
- Te Wa

What was interesting is that many of the **effective strategies** discussed involved having the **right factors** in place for them also as Kaiako to become effective online teachers rather than just applying effective strategies when teaching.

Relationships

Kaiako communicated that a key strategy to use to engage ākonga in their classes was based around the **building** of **positive relationships early** in the year and then **maintaining** those **relationships** during the year.

"... One Kaiako [School A] stressed that the relationship building needed to go further than just between teachers and students, but needed to extend between students and students, eTeachers and eDeans and to also include building relationships with whanau"

Professional Development

The research findings have supported inconsistencies still existed in professional development for online teaching and learning, however Kaiako identified that the Kōtuitui Online Teachers Network has gone a long way to address the problem.

"... Tumuaki [School B] explained how the cluster was now involved with the network which provides consistent professional development to eTeachers and eDeans which more recently has seen Kōtuitui extended to any schools requiring assistance with emergency remote teaching"

Knowing Your Student

Tumuaki [School F] shared the need to know your student and added that Kaiako need to ask the following to truly appreciate and value the learner, saying:

> *"... What else does the teacher bring to extend the existing knowledge of the ākonga and you have to ask yourself "How can I really help this child"? - what's my taonga that I can give to this child. You must find out about the students and then you can find out what you can add to them"*

Meeting Kanohi ki te Kanohi

Several eTeachers and eDeans discussed the importance of having the time to think about the effective strategies to engage ākonga Māori but unfortunately not having the time to develop and design them with two Kaiako [School D and G], describing the effectiveness of eHui's held in the beginning of her online journey,

"… that the Māori learners really benefited from meeting their online Te Reo Māori teachers who had often travelled from the far north to the far south, and it gave ākonga Māori a sense of belonging, that they were part of something really big, something really exciting and they got to spend the day with their teacher and their fellow students."
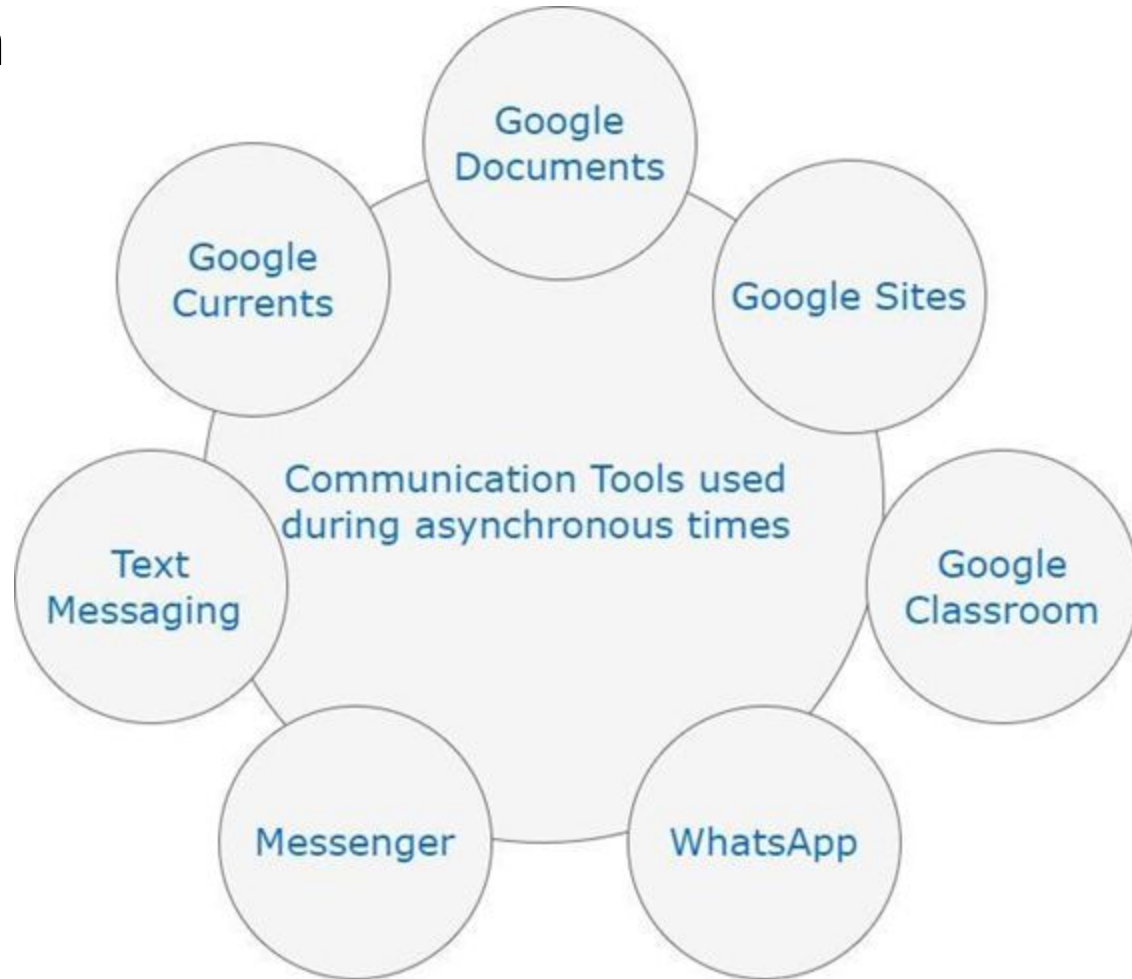
Use of Te Reo

A further strategy identified by Kaiako was to use Te Reo in class, not just because they are told to by their kura or because of an MOE initiative, but to normalise the use in the classroom. It was noted by Kaiako [School A] the importance of knowing who the learners were in front of them and knowing who their ākonga Māori students were. It was felt important however to not just assume that as ākonga Māori that they were able to speak te reo. Kaiako [School G] shared,

> *"My Reo is limited, so I can't speak fluently to them (ākonga Māori), but I do try to incorporate greetings and any other general words that I know into my teaching, but more specifically I try to find out where their interests lie. I would find the context that they have knowledge in, i.e., kapa haka, waka ama, and apply that to the standards or learning to those contexts."*

Communication Tools

Communication tools were an effective way to engage with their students, and Kaiako felt it was important to involve ākonga in the decision as to what tools should be used, especially during their asynchronous times.

Google Documents

Google Sites

Google Currents

Communication Tools used during asynchronous times

Google Classroom

Text Messaging

Messenger

WhatsApp

Culturally Responsive

Being culturally responsive required teachers to show empathy and understanding with One Kaiako [School F] who came from a kura who had a high number of ākonga Māori presented a Te Ao Māori view of what worked well for her ākonga.

"... What our students like, is if a teacher can articulate through the online screen empathy and understanding. Understanding their context without being patronising, without being condescending, because at the end of the day, whilst we are a decile 1 school, the teacher must see a person first and foremost, not where they come from." and

"... Kaiako must acknowledge the learner for the person they are, rather than for the stereotypes that are said about my people. Teachers need to recognise that ākonga Māori can bring some knowledge too, some Mataranga[1] with them, but as a teacher you must work out how to get that knowledge out of them".

Association with Matariki

Kaiako [School F] drew on the connection Māori have with Matariki[1] which is the New Year as they believe they are connected to the whenua[2], that children go through a huge slump in May and June, which fits in line with winter and in the end month, whenua is shutting down and it is going into the hibernation mode sharing her own experience saying,

> *"... I felt like that as a teenager, I believed in Matariki time as it is a new year, and it has a physical change on your mind, and it becomes clear and that is the time when you set goals. I see that in our children so what I do as a teacher is to say, 'that's okay', it is quite normal for you to feel quite heavy at the moment, feeling everything is on top of you."*

Te Wa - Allowing Time

Kaiako [School F] also discussed in depth the importance of te wa and how 'tona wa' literally means 'in his or her time'.

In the context of education, she discussed how time is a big deal; that you have to get things done on certain dates and if you do not, then there are consequences. She said one of these consequences could be that our ākonga Māori could fail, but that for Māori and for her as an educator the challenge is to find a way to mitigate that situation, so the students do not get themselves anxious explaining,

> *"One of the things that I find ākonga Māori really like is what I refer to as 'drifting assessment'. You say an assessment is due on 5th April, but you keep it open for another nine days. This is a very mature way to deal with assessment deadlines and dates. Ākonga Māori have a real thing about time, around Gregorian time and around people's understanding of time.*
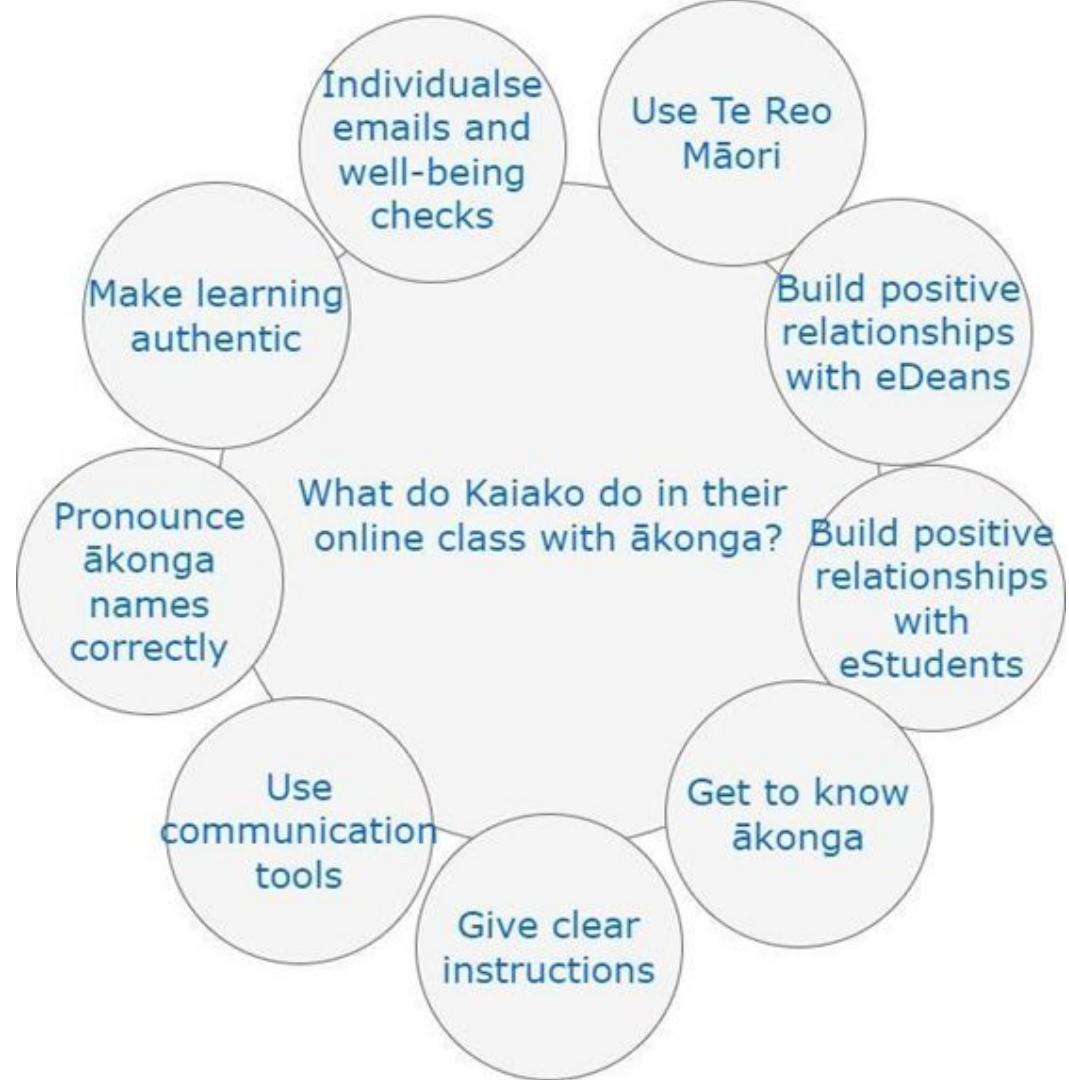
Te Wa - Allowing Time

She discussed how for ākonga Māori, they want things given to them straight away, but they also want the teacher to break down the big assessments and break it down into smaller blocks, citing things happen in their lives that prevent them from getting the assessment on the first due date saying,

> *"... As we know as adults, something always happens 'tomorrow" and then things happen that prevent tomorrow coming, so it is important to be mindful of that with ākonga Māori too. They [ākonga Māori] do not know how to burn the midnight oil so what I say to students around wa is that I don't expect them to know this in February, but during the year I would expect them to change."*

What do Kaiako do?

When asked for examples of specific routine activities that they undertook in their online classes with ākonga Māori, Kaiako provided the following suggestions, many of which align to the effective strategies shown in the diagram.

Individualse emails and well-being checks

Use Te Reo Māori

Make learning authentic

Build positive relationships with eDeans

What do Kaiako do in their online class with ākonga?

Build positive relationships with eStudents

Pronounce ākonga names correctly

Use communication tools

Get to know ākonga

Give clear instructions

Whanaungatanga - Building and Maintaining Relationships

Whanaungatanga is also about knowing people and ākonga discussed how they felt their eTeachers built their relationships with the following comments:

"... John always tries to get to know us, he checks up on our weekends as we see him twice a week. He doesn't just ask us what we did, but he remembers what we told him we did last week and talks about that, he shows he cares and wants to get to know us, he also tells us about his own weekends." - Ākonga [School D]

Whanaungatanga - Student Voice

"... I think it is important to build relationships, but I also think that teachers need to ask us what our aims are for the year so that we can have shared expectations." - Ākonga [School A]

"... My teacher at the beginning of the year went over what we had previously studied, what we know, what we don't know, and she went over the assessments and asked if there was anything we didn't know." - Ākonga [School C]

"... I personally found the relationship with my online teacher far healthier than my relationship with most face-to-face teachers, on the basis that there are so many barriers in the educational world. One of the reasons was that we had the ability to just text your teacher if you needed something which was quite different to your face-to-face class" - Ākonga [School H]

Manaakitanga - Caring and Respect

Manaakitanga refers to showing hospitality and developing an ethic of care for others. It also refers to a nurturing school culture that values caring and respect and provides the foundation for success for all students. The same ethic of care and respect applies to teachers and whānau. Ākonga shared how they felt their online Kaiako genuinely cared for them and were happy to provide extra tutorials when they needed them. They discussed how their Kaiako used several communication tools to keep in touch with them and encouraged them to keep in regular contact with them and shared how their Kaiako had taken the time out to visit them in person.

> *"... John just says email him if we need an extra call to go over stuff, separately so that if we are having problems talking or asking in front of the class then we can talk with him one on one"*

Findings?

The major findings from the study indicate that teaching and learning online is complex and relies heavily on **building positive relationships** amongst all participants involved in teaching and learning online.

The importance of **developing** and then **maintaining** these **relationships** to engage ākonga has been well researched in the traditional educational setting but it is important to revisit the knowledge and lessons gained through that research to address the need to support future ākonga Māori when learning in a changing educational landscape.

Findings?

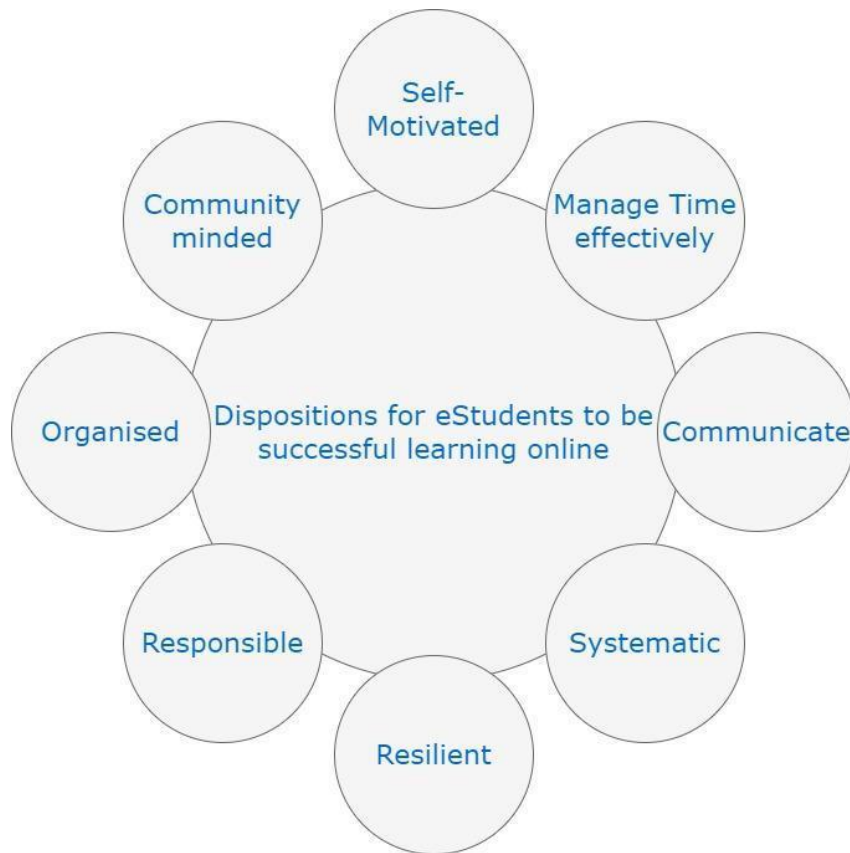The study also highlighted that **with the right factors** in place, online education provides **equitable educational opportunities** for **ākonga Māori** with many schools feeling that they were more prepared to adopt emergency remote learning as a direct result of their previous involvement with FarNet and the Online Learning Community.

Effective Pedagogies to engage and support ākonga Māori in OL

- Be culturally aware — Tikanga
- Show patients — Āta-noho
- Be a learner — Ako
- Seek student voice — Wānanga
- Encourage collaboration — Kotahitanga
- Building and maintaining positive relationships — Whanaungatanga
- Communicate clearly — Āta-korero
- Be a good observer — Āta-whakarongo
- Use humour — Huataki
- Use local and authentic curriculum — Ihi
- Be flexible and helpful — Āwhinatanga
- Set high expectations — Mana Motuhake
- Be aware of learning environment — Huataki
- Be culturally aware — Rangatiratanga
- Recognise cultural capital — Rangatiratanga
- Show empathy and understanding — Manaakitanga
- Creating the right culture — Ngā whakapiringatanga
- Vary teaching pedagogies — Ata
- Be supportive — Ira manaaki
- Knowing your student — Manaakitanga
- Show genuine interest and caring — Manaakitanga

Dispositions of an eStudent

When **ākonga** were asked what dispositions were required for them to be successful in their online classes, they provided an extensive list of what made them successful which were grouped under the eight themes as shown here

Self-Motivated

Community minded

Manage Time effectively

Organised

Dispositions for eStudents to be successful learning online

Communicate

Responsible

Systematic

Resilient

Dispositions of an eTeacher

Dispositions of eTeacher	Kaupapa[129]	Relevant narrative
Building positive relationships	**Whanaungatanga**	"Relationships with these students were paramount to engage them in their learning
Set high expectations	**Whanaungatanga**	"My teacher asked me what my goals were at the beginning of the year, and I felt they helped me achieve them"

Be Social	**Whanaungatanga**	"I always start my lessons off with humour and spend time finding out what they have been doing, then we start covering the content"
Awareness of learning environment	**Whanaungatanga**	"Create a safety in learning environment"
Being a good observer and listener	**Whanaungatanga**	"Don't ask directly - our Māori students tend to back off the coming forward with feedback, they have a shyness which is sometimes mistaken as arrogance"
Cultural awareness	**Whanaungatanga**	"Sometimes they were required for duties at their marae - frustrating for teachers who didn't understand this"

Empathy and understanding	**Manaakitanga**	"Understanding their context without being patronising"
Knowing your student	**Manaakitanga**	"Acknowledge students as a person rather than for the stereotypes that are often said about my people"
Supportive of students	**Manaakitanga**	"The role of eDean is to support our learners which requires being like their mother at times and checking that they fully understand"
Patient	**Manaakitanga**	"I have to be prepared to offer one-on-one tutorials" "Being in the job for the right reasons"

Caring	**Manaakitanga**	"Worry about the actual learning as well as the wellbeing of the student"
Showing genuine interest and caring for the performance of students	**Manaakitanga**	"You need to show that you really care about the learners"
Encourage student feedback and discussions	**Manaakitanga**	"When Māori students give you good feedback - then it is straight to the point, and they will tell you why"
Culturally aware	**Manaakitanga**	"There was a little bit of tension between these two iwis, not a major conflict but you could detect and sometimes hear it"

Be a learner	**Manaakitanga**	"Flying a plane and adding the wings in the air"
Collaborate	**Kotahitanga**	"I plan activities where the students can work together on shared tasks" "The eTeachers and eDeans need to work together for the benefit of the learners"
Flexible and Helpful	**Kotahitanga**	"Māori students really like "drifting assessments" which is a very mature way to deal with assessment deadlines and dates"
Recognise Cultural Capital	**Kotahitanga**	"Students bring some knowledge, some Mataranga with them, but as a teacher you have to work out how to get it out of them"

Finally …

Vary Teaching pedagogies	**Kotahitanga**	"Teachers are still teaching to the whole instead of differentiation"
Use authentic and local curriculum	**Kotahitanga**	"Use local curriculum which they may already know about and set activities to scaffold their learning"

Kaupapa Māori Principles

As a researcher undertaking research which involves working with Māori, it is imperative to ensure that the research is **'culturally safe'** to all participants (Tuhiwai-Smith, 2012). Being an emerging researcher of Māori descent, I was fortunate to whakapapa back to the area where the research was being undertaken; however, I was not confident with applying a Kaupapa Māori methodology that the research was based on. Therefore, adopting the Kaupapa Māori principles provided by Pipi et al. (2004) helped to organise hui korero and reflections.

During the research journey I continually referred to these to ensure that my practices were 'tika' and culturally responsive. These principles also guide the researcher on their responsibilities once the research is concluded to ensure that the knowledge is shared with whanau, iwi and the community involved in the journey.

Kaupapa Māori Principles

Aroha ki te tangata allows people to define their own space and to meet on their own terms.

Kanohi ki te kanohi or He kanohi kitea expresses the importance of meeting with people face-to-face.

Titiro, whakarongo … korero symbolises the process whereby the researcher's role is one of watching, listening, learning, and waiting until it is appropriate to speak.

Manaaki ki te tangata reinforces the view that research must be a collaborative and reciprocal process and acknowledges that learning and expertise exist in both parties.

Kaupapa Māori Principles

Kia tupato reminds the researcher to be politically astute, culturally safe and reflexive about their insider/outsider status and to acknowledge there are some kawa and tikanga that need to be observed for the research to be accepted and for participants to be willing to engage.

Kaua e takahia te mana o te tangata requires the researcher to sound out ideas with people, disseminating research findings, and about community feedback that keeps people informed about the research process and findings.

Kia Ngakau Māhaki reminds the researcher to be humble in your approach.

Final Thoughts

Whilst this research commenced before the world was thrown into a pandemic and was conducted during several lockdowns, school closures and mandates; the one certain thing moving forward is that there is no certainty of the future of education.

As the new norm of **hybrid learning** further develops in our schools and communities, schools need to be abreast with the need to prepare for shifts in pedagogical practice in hybrid learning (Wenmoth, 2022) and to address equitable opportunities for ākonga Māori.

This new direction needs to be schools' "**A Plan**" as appropriately described by one ākonga.

Mauruuru koe mo te whai wa ki te whakarongo ki taku whakaaturanga

Thank you for listening to my presentation

(I am happy to share the full thesis)

Carolyn Alexander (Rood)

021 474 889

carolyn@ridersrest.co.nz