

Kura Reo Programme Evaluation Report

Prepared for

Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori

Wellington

Prepared by

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Disclaimer

All due care has been taken to report participants' conversations accurately.

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1. Executive Summary

The Kura Reo programme was established to provide a series of total immersion Māori language learning opportunities for medium to advanced learners of the Māori language. The Kura Reo are currently funded by Mā Te Reo, a fund administered by Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori, the Māori Language Commission. The major focus of the Kura Reo is on excellence in the Māori language through the provision of a total immersion Māori language learning programme held annually in four sites throughout Aotearoa/ New Zealand.

The Kura Reo have two main objectives; namely, that as a result of their attendance at Kura Reo, participants will be able to:

- use Māori confidently, effectively and appropriately in common social contexts, and
- negotiate the subtleties of the Māori language such as the use of allusion and idiom.

1.1. Purpose of the Evaluation

The purpose of the present evaluation was twofold:

- a formative evaluation to provide an understanding of the theoretical and contextual development of the Kura Reo programme and its relevance for Māori language regeneration, and
- a summative evaluation to assess the extent to which the Kura Reo programme is helping participants to achieve increased capacity in Māori language proficiency.

A set of evaluation objectives was developed to assist in providing focus to the evaluation (see below, 'Evaluation Findings').

1.2. Methodology

Data collection was in the main qualitative, comprising: document and literature review, key informant interviews, focus groups, and programme participation and observation.

The key data sources used in the evaluation, in addition to the document review, were: the Programme Director; the Kāhui Kaiako (tutors); Kaiwhakahaere (Programme Co-ordinators); programme participants; staff from Mā Te Reo secretariat and other Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori staff.

1.3. Evaluation Findings

The findings are presented below in conjunction with the evaluation objectives.

- Evaluation Objective 1: Describe and document the underlying philosophy, processes and expectations of the Kura Reo programme.

The Kura Reo programme is based on a theory of change that the provision of an immersion educational environment contributes to the learning and practising of language skills which, in turn, leads to strengthened language skills. By providing a Māori language immersion environment and using high quality teachers of the language to deliver the content, the aim is to enhance and strengthen the conversational language of Kura Reo participants.

- Evaluation Objective 2: Explore where the Kura Reo programme sits within the wider social, cultural and political environment for the regeneration of the Māori language.

The overarching objective of the Mā Te Reo Fund is, '...to support whānau, hapū, iwi and Māori organisations to develop community-originated Māori language projects, programmes and activities that contribute to Māori language revitalisation'. The Kura Reo programme contributes to the Mā Te Reo objective by increasing the proficiency levels of Māori with Māori language skills. The Kura Reo programme sits alongside a number of other Māori language learning opportunities within the wider social, cultural and political environment for the regeneration of the Māori language. However, its uniqueness is its focus on excellence in the Māori language within a total immersion five day programme that utilises a pool of exponents of the Māori language and covers a range of subjects.

- Evaluation Objective 3: Describe the implementation of the Kura Reo programme over a 12-month time span, including but not limited to rationale for location, Kaiako, and programme content.

The four Kura Reo providers are currently funded by Mā Te Reo, subject to approval of their application each annual funding round. Each provider has designated Kaiwhakahaere/ Co-ordinators who are crucial to the successful implementation of the Kura Reo. The Kaiwhakahaere are responsible for the overall administration of the Kura Reo and are in constant contact with the Programme Director and the Kāhui Kaiako to arrange the Kura Reo content to be taught. All the Kaiwhakahaere have an in-depth knowledge of the programme, having attended Kura Reo for a number of years as participants. They also have the co-ordination and administrative skills necessary to organise and host a Kura Reo.

Kaiako have been selected by the Programme Director because of their high proficiency levels in the Māori language. Kaiako are individually contracted by the Kaiwhakahaere of each Kura Reo to deliver a set of lessons as agreed to between the Programme Director and the Kaiwhakahaere. The eight classes of each Kura Reo cover a range of Māori language topics.

The Kura Reo are held in the following regions and places:

- Te Tairāwhiti (Gisborne)
- Te Waipounamu (Christchurch)
- Te Arawa (Rotorua)
- Waimārama (Hawkes Bay)

These sites were chosen because the provider for each site had in the past run successful Kura Reo and was willing to commit over a long term period to hosting the programme. In 2007 all Kura Reo were based at the local Polytechnic in each area.

- Evaluation Objective 4: Describe how the four providers are meeting their contractual requirements from the Mā Te Reo Fund. What areas require improvement?

In the past five years, each Kura Reo has received funding up to \$65,000 (benchmarked at \$55,000 over the last three years) for the running of each Kura Reo. Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori enters into a contract with the providers for the provision of a Kura Reo. Overall, the outputs delivered are the Kura Reo programme outline, workbook, participant

registrations, evaluation forms and a final monitoring report. Generally all four providers have met their contractual requirements. Areas for improvement include refinement of registration forms to ensure accurate collection of demographic data, further development of the evaluation component of the programme and further work on evaluating long-term outcomes from the programme.

- Evaluation Objective 5: Describe the participants that are accessing the programme, including their identified needs and intended use of the programme.

Kura Reo participants come from all walks of life with most having a medium to a high level of Māori language fluency. The majority of these students are between 20 to 60 years of age. Accurate demographic data on students have not been collected and maintained in one central source, thus limiting what is known about students.

The largest proportion of Kura Reo students come from the education sector. Comments from this group were that the Kura Reo is considered the 'best professional development opportunity there is' for advancing competency in the Māori language. Other sectors represented among students include broadcasting and government agencies.

A number of other factors differentiate the types of students who attend the Kura Reo, including those that want to reconnect with 'being Māori'; those who attend for professional and personal development; and those fulfilling tribal responsibilities.

- Evaluation Objective 6: Explore stakeholder perceptions of the programme; namely: Kaiako, Kaiwhakahaere, Tauira, and Mā Te Reo secretariat.

The perceptions stakeholders had of the Kura Reo were similar - namely that the role of the Kura Reo was to: enhance, increase and strengthen Māori language fluency and skills (eg writing, translation, comprehension); enhance knowledge of different forms of ritual such as whaikōrero (oration), karanga (call) and whakataukāi (proverb); help build the capacity and capability of speakers within participants' home areas; and to maintain their passion and commitment to and for the language, including a sense of obligation and zeal to ensure that this treasure (ie the language) is protected from extinction.

- Evaluation Objective 7: Identify participant outcomes and compare these to expected outcomes detailed in the developed programme logic.

Outcomes from the Kura Reo included an ability to hold a conversation in the Māori language over a sustained period; raised cultural awareness; increased capacity and capability in whānau hapū and iwi to develop Māori language resources; improved grammatical and written skills of the Māori language; improved understanding of tikanga Māori; and the ability to speak Māori within a Māori paradigm (whakaaro Māori).

The present evaluation identified language fluency gains for all Kura Reo participants. Gains in terms of fluency were most notable for those who entered the Kura Reo programme with minimal language ability and have gained an increased fluency and confidence in their use of the Māori language. On the other hand, the gains for more accomplished speakers of the language who attend Kura Reo are an increased accuracy and quality of Māori language use alongside an ability to negotiate the subtleties of the language. For both groups regular attendance at the Kura Reo coupled with some ongoing engagement in language activities outside of the Kura Reo contributed to their increased fluency and retention of the Māori language.

- Evaluation Objective 8: Identify strengths and weaknesses of the programme.

The strengths of the Kura Reo include strong programme leadership; exposure to high quality Māori language; committed and passionate people involved in the delivery and support of the programme; funding from Mā Te Reo; the total immersion learning environment; and participants with a desire and commitment to hold fast to their language.

The weaknesses of the programme include a need for: multi-agency funding of the programme; succession planning in relation to Kaiako and Kaiwhakahaere; more marketing and promotion; ways of measuring longer term outcomes; and some programme specific issues to be addressed, as outlined in the section on areas for improvement.

- Evaluation Objective 9: Identify any improvements to the programme to further assist the achievement of the programme's objectives.

The main areas identified for improvement were: funding and resourcing of the programme; succession planning in relation to Kaiako and Kaiwhakahaere; marketing and promoting the Kura Reo. Specific programme issues identified were co-ordination and support; programme content; reviewing Kaiako/ teaching styles; and development of post programme evaluation and reporting.

- Evaluation Objective 10: Assess the impact of the Kura Reo programme in the wider context of increasing fluency and retention of the Māori language.

By increasing the fluency of Māori language speakers the Kura Reo programme is contributing to Māori language regeneration within whānau, hapū and iwi. Participants from the Kura are learning from, as well as contributing to, their 'local' Māori language environments by, for example, speaking more Māori within the home, taking on speaking responsibilities for their marae, and acquiring tribal dialectical knowledge as well as tikanga.

The Kura Reo programme is also having an impact in that some regional, iwi based groups are now accessing funding from Mā Te Reo to run their own Kura Reo ā-Iwi (tribally based Kura Reo programmes) based on the Kura Reo programme model.

- Evaluation Objective 11: Measuring longer-term outcomes.

Ways of measuring longer-term outcomes are proposed. While these are largely based on participant reflections and feedback, the important role of Kaiako as key informants in this process is acknowledged. In addition, it is suggested that the Kura Reo could develop an 'employer' questionnaire survey that participants ask their employer/ organisation to complete, as well as a 'survey' that participants themselves could take into their community. Over time the collection of outcome information will provide information about the pace of change – for individuals and their communities – and the influence that the Kura Reo are having on Māori language regeneration in this country. Finally, it is suggested that the Kura Reo/ Kaiwhakahaere co-ordinate their efforts in this area.

1.4. Conclusion

The Kura Reo programme has been successfully implemented as planned in the four sites. The objectives of the programme are being achieved, and the needs of the participants are largely being met. The Kura Reo total immersion model of delivery works, is constantly monitored by the Programme Director, Kaiako and Kaiwhakahaere, and has been replicated by the Kura Reo ā-lwi initiative. There is documented evidence and positive feedback that the programme has contributed to participants' increased use of and strengthened proficiency in Māori language.

Sustainability is identified as the biggest challenge that lies ahead. How long can the programme continue to provide this level of high quality Māori language teaching for students who are hungry for the Māori language and/ or the unique learning environment that the Kura Reo provides? The calibre of the Kaiako is a significant contributor to the success of the programme. With the majority over the age of 60, succession planning is essential to ensure sustainability.

Greater consideration must be given by Crown agencies to contribute direct funding towards the Kura Reo programme - particularly agencies such as the Ministry of Education and Tertiary Education Commission, given the importance and relevance school and tertiary institution management and staff are giving to attending Kura Reo for professional development. Officials should acknowledge the benefits the Kura Reo has provided, and can continue to provide for their Māori staff development. A multi-agency funding strategy should be considered, including a review of the current level of funding and budgeting for the programme, and identifying potential funding streams to support all the identified areas for development.