

# Identifying and Providing for Gifted and Talented Māori Students

Jill Bevan-Brown

Massey University

## Abstract

This article provides information and strategies to help teachers identify and provide for gifted Māori students in a culturally appropriate and effective way. Gifted education is viewed through five cultural lenses. In respect to Māori the following questions are posed and answered: In what areas is giftedness recognized? How is each area of giftedness perceived and demonstrated? What priority is given to each area of giftedness? What are culturally appropriate and effective ways of identifying gifted students? How can gifted students be provided for in a culturally appropriate way? A checklist of indicators of giftedness in Māori cultural abilities and qualities is included as are practical suggestions for incorporating Māori-relevant content in various curriculum areas.

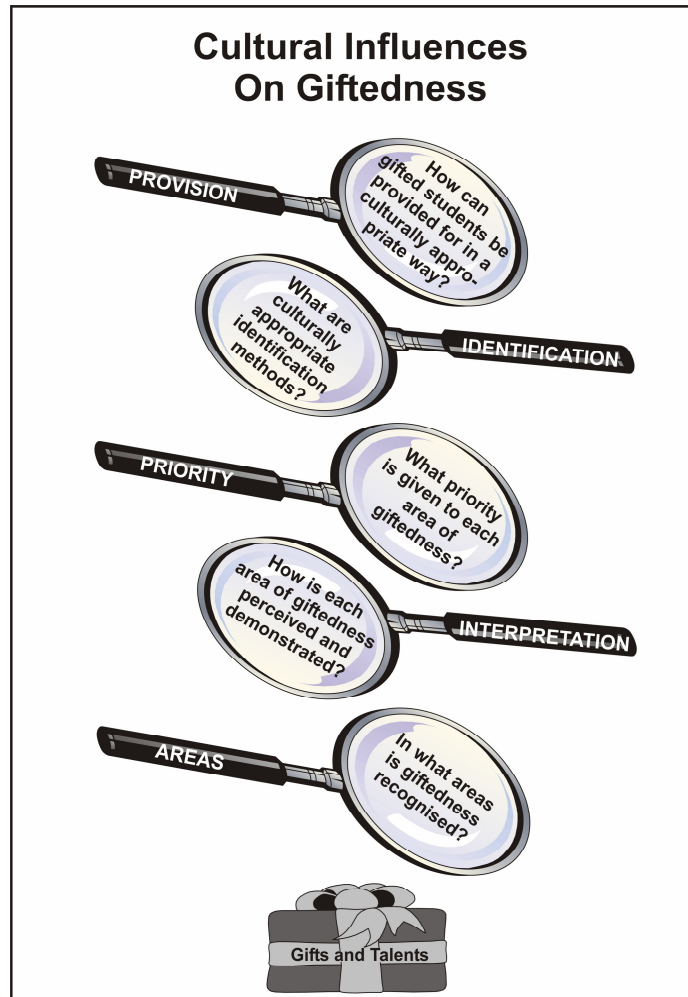
## Introduction

One of the Government's core principles of gifted education in Aotearoa/New Zealand is that, "Māori perspectives and values must be embodied in all aspects of definition, identification and provision for gifted and talented learners." (Ministry of Education, 2002, p. 3). However, research (Riley, Bevan-Brown, Bicknell, Carroll-Lind & Kearney, 2004) indicates that this principle is not being put into practice in many schools. I do not think this is because teachers are opposed to embodying Māori perspectives and values in gifted education. Rather, it is because they are unsure of how this can be done. This article provides information and strategies to help overcome this problem.

Any discussion of culture and giftedness should, necessarily, begin with a warning against cultural stereotyping. People with the same cultural background differ from one another across the entire spectrum of human traits and characteristics including the degree to which they identify with and adhere to cultural beliefs, values and practices. Māori are no exception. While schools should provide a culturally responsive environment for students from all cultures, the nature and extent of cultural input into provisions for gifted Māori students is something that must be decided upon in consultation with parents, whānau and the students themselves. It is also a decision that should be revisited regularly. As people's life experiences and circumstances change, so often do their beliefs, values and goals. Therefore consultation with parents, whānau and students should be on-going.

## Concepts and Definitions

The first step in recognising and providing for gifted and talented children is for teachers to develop a mutually agreed upon understanding of what giftedness is. If gifted Māori students are to be accurately identified and provided for, teachers must have a clear understanding of the influence of culture when they formulate their school definition. This cultural influence is multifaceted. It involves interpreting the concept of giftedness through a series of "cultural lenses." This is illustrated in the diagram on the next page.



If teachers start from the assumption that giftedness is being outstanding in comparison to one's peers in some valued area, an initial question to ask is:

(1) In what areas is giftedness recognised?

This question was addressed for Māori in research by Bevan-Brown (1993). The answer revealed that for Māori giftedness is a broad, wide-ranging concept. Many areas are valued. These include spiritual, cognitive, affective, aesthetic, artistic, musical, psychomotor, social, intuitive, creative, leadership and cultural abilities and qualities.

The second cultural lens involves the interpretation of various areas of giftedness. Here the question to ask is:

(2) How is each area of giftedness perceived and demonstrated?

For example, creativity, spirituality and social giftedness may be interpreted in different ways in different cultures. Similarly, what constitutes leadership in one cultural group might be quite different in another. This latter example was illustrated in Bevan-Brown's (1993) research. While Māori participants identified "up-front leadership" and "leadership by example" as leadership styles recognised in Māori society, a third style of "behind-the-scenes leadership" was also identified. This involves providing emotional support, guidance and inspiration in a quiet, unassuming way. Such behaviour is not generally associated with leadership in Pākehā culture and hence would probably not be catered for in gifted programmes based on the Pākehā concept of leadership. However, for Māori students all three types of leadership style would need to be recognized and provided for.

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A third lens involves cultural preferences. An appropriate question would be:

(3) What priority is given to each area of giftedness?

Although people from different cultural groups may identify the same areas of giftedness, it is highly likely that differing priorities are placed on these areas. For example, while a multicategorical concept of giftedness is espoused in Aotearoa/New Zealand schools, some areas are provided for better than others. It can be argued, for instance, that majority cultural values result in intellectual and physical categories being given the highest priority. In Bevan-Brown's (1993) research, affective qualities were most frequently mentioned by Māori participants. These included personal qualities and high moral values such as *āwhinatanga* (helping and serving others), *māia* (courage and bravery), *manaakitanga* (hospitality), *wairuatanga* (spirituality), *aroha* (love for, caring and sensitivity to others) and *pukumahi* (industriousness and determination). This has been misinterpreted as meaning other categories of giftedness are less important. This is not so. All areas are of importance, however, affective qualities were emphasised.

## Identification

Once a school definition of giftedness is agreed upon, a fourth cultural lens comes into play. The question teachers should ask is:

(4) What are culturally appropriate and effective ways of identifying gifted students? Identification tools and strategies that are appropriate and effective for one cultural group may be completely inappropriate and ineffective for another. Consequently, when identifying gifted and talented students, teachers need to consider whether the approaches they use and the strategies they choose will result in accurately identifying students from all cultural groups in their class.

## Approaches to Identification

### 1. The Culturally Responsive Environment Approach

The Ministry of Education (2000) describes two broad approaches to identification. The first is the responsive environment approach where giftedness is encouraged to "surface" in a stimulating, challenging classroom. Inclusion of a cultural dimension is a vital aspect of this approach. For gifted Māori students a culturally responsive environment is one where their culture is valued, affirmed and developed. In such an environment self-esteem is enhanced, learning is facilitated and Māori students are more likely to resist negative peer pressure against achieving and to develop their gifted potential (Bevan-Brown, 1993). The ingredients of a culturally responsive environment include:

- teachers who value and support cultural diversity in general and Māori culture in particular;
- programmes that incorporate cultural knowledge, skills, practices, experiences, customs, traditions, values, beliefs, attitudes, behaviours and dispositions; and
- teaching and assessment that utilises culturally preferred ways of learning.

The effectiveness of a culturally responsive environment in enabling giftedness to "surface" amongst Māori and Polynesian students is supported in articles and research by Bevan-Brown (1993, 2002, 2004), Doidge (1990), Mahuika (2007), Milne (1993), Jenkins (2002) Macfarlane and Moltzen (2005) and Rawlinson (1995).

## 2. The Data-Gathering Approach.<sup>1</sup>

The second method of identification described by the Ministry of Education (2000) is a formal, data-gathering approach which utilizes a wide range of identification instruments and strategies such as observations, checklists, rating scales, standardized tests, portfolio assessment, parent nomination, peer nomination and so forth.

### (A) OBSERVATIONS

Participants in Bevan-Brown's research (1993) identified observation as the principal method of identifying gifted Māori children. However, the qualification was added that this observation needed to be carried out within a culturally responsive environment by teachers who have a sound knowledge of Māori culture and Māori perspectives of giftedness. In addition it was recommended that teachers need to take rate of progress into account, look beyond the classroom and school and beyond any misbehaviour.

But what exactly will teachers be looking for in their observations? Identifying gifted children whose behaviour, performance or products are far in advance of other children their age is a relatively simple task. However, recognising **potential** giftedness is much more difficult! Children will vary in the extent to which they have had opportunities and encouragement to develop and display their gifts and talents. To further complicate the issue, as previously stated, culture has an influence on how giftedness is manifest. Therefore, those who are doing the identifying must be aware of cultural differences in this respect and be vigilant in their search for potential giftedness. If they are not, it is possible that many gifted Māori students will be overlooked.

#### *Checklists and Rating Scales - Behaviours and Characteristics*

To help accurately identify gifted students from diverse cultural groups teachers often use checklists and rating scales to focus their observations. These usually contain collections of characteristics/indicators and behaviours. Both overseas and in Aotearoa/New Zealand, researchers and educators have compiled lists specifically focusing on characteristics/indicators of children from ethnic minority groups. While appreciating the concern and commitment that has led to the development of these checklists, I am not a great supporter of them for a number of reasons. Firstly, they often lump quite diverse cultural groups together, secondly, they tend to encourage cultural stereotyping and thirdly, they can be quite limiting as they usually focus on a narrow range of characteristics/indicators. However, these criticisms are lessened if culture-specific lists are used to raise cultural awareness and are considered "in conjunction with" not "instead of" other more comprehensive lists.

Because definitions of giftedness are so broad the Ministry of Education (2000) suggests that each school "develop a set of characteristics that reflects its own definition of, and approach to, the concept of giftedness and talent" (p. 17). This can be done either by developing relevant lists of characteristics/indicators from scratch or by adapting published lists to reflect the unique circumstances of the school. It is suggested that the cultural lenses described above be used in this exercise. For example, if McAlpine and Reid's *Teacher Observation Scales for Identifying Children with Special Abilities* (1996) are to be used to identify gifted Māori students a number of steps should be followed:

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<sup>1</sup> Given the word limitations of this article, only a brief comment is provided for each of these identification strategies. However, for a more in depth consideration including a review of research findings and literature discussion of these strategies, readers are referred to Riley et al. (2004)

## STEP ONE

Teachers need to determine whether these scales cover all the areas of giftedness recognised by Māori and, if not, to decide what other areas need to be included? Areas missing or not extensively developed in McAlpine and Reid's scales are spiritual, emotional, aesthetic, artistic, musical, psychomotor, intuitive and cultural abilities and qualities, therefore lists of Māori-relevant characteristics in these areas would need to be compiled. Teachers can draw on their own knowledge in these areas, consult with their school community especially Māori parents and whānau and refer to relevant literature to help them develop appropriate lists. A literature research will reveal many lists of characteristics which can be adapted to the Aotearoa/New Zealand context in general and for Māori children in particular. These lists include a number in the spiritual and emotional domain<sup>2</sup>.

In respect to Maori-specific cultural abilities and qualities, some characteristics/indicators to consider are presented in Table 1. This checklist evolved over three years in consultation with many kaumatua, parents, whānau and teachers of gifted Maori learners in mainstream, bilingual and total immersion situations.<sup>3</sup>

Communicates in te reo Māori clearly, fluently and flexibly using a variety of advanced language structures and figures of speech;
Can compose, deliver and respond to a karanga, karakia, mihimihi or whaikōrero appropriate to the occasion and audience;
Has a broad knowledge of Māori, iwi and hapū history and tikanga;
Has in depth knowledge of a particular iwi or hapū including their history, tikanga, dialect and whakatauaki;
Has a broad knowledge of Māori mythology and can interpret myth messages in a contemporary context;
Demonstrates advanced practical and creative ability in some form of Māori art or craft eg. carving, weaving
Demonstrates advanced performing and creative ability in some form of Māori music eg. composes contemporary waiata and haka, has an extensive repertoire of traditional waiata;
Displays advanced ability in Māori games, pastimes and practices eg. taiaha expertise;
Has a keen interest in and wide knowledge of whānau, hapū and iwi whakapapa;
Has a deep appreciation of traditional Māori values such as manaakitanga and whanaungatanga and embodies these in word and action;
Has advanced spiritual understanding, perception, appreciation and ability (wairuatanga) and knowledge of traditional and contemporary karakia;
Has in depth knowledge of traditional healing principles and practices;
Possesses a strong sense of Māori identity and incorporates cultural content and allusion in many fields of endeavour;
Has a high level of respect for and affinity with kaumatua;
Possesses and is accorded a high degree of mana from peers;
Has a well developed sense of altruism and is selfless in service to others.

**Table 1. Indicators of Giftedness in Māori Cultural Abilities and Qualities<sup>4</sup>**

Developing a checklist that is user-friendly and brief enough to be manageable but comprehensive enough to cover important areas has proved a major challenge and has delayed publication. A major difficulty has been devising indicators that can be used in all educational situations. For example, a student who is "top of the class" in his weekly mainstream te reo classes may only be mediocre in comparison to a similarly aged student at a kura kaupapa Maori.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Piechowski (2003) and Sisk and Torrance (2001) for lists of characteristics and behaviours and for ideas on how to nurture children who are emotionally and spiritually gifted.

<sup>3</sup> Because of the large number of people involved and the nature of some consultation (ie discussion in and after presentations) I cannot personally acknowledge all those who have contributed to this checklist. However, I thank them all for their valuable input – "Ehara taku toa I te toa takitahi engari he toa takitini."

<sup>4</sup> Learners can be gifted in one or more areas.

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When identifying specific cultural skills and abilities teachers must be cognizant of the opportunities the learners have been exposed to and open to the possibility of “potential” giftedness in various areas. Where exposure to particular cultural skills has been limited, teachers are advised to look carefully at students’ rate of progress and level of interest and understanding. Again referring to te reo, the ability to confidently deliver a rote learned mihi regardless of its appropriateness to the audience and the occasion is not an indicator of giftedness in the Maori language! The checklist above provides a good starting point but should be used with the previous issues and cautions in mind by people who have the level of expertise needed to judge the quality of the particular ability or quality under consideration.

## STEP TWO

This step involves examining the lists provided in the Teacher Observation Scales (and those subsequently compiled in step one) to determine whether the characteristics they contain include Māori perspectives of each area. For example, are the three different styles of Māori leadership explained previously, reflected in the list of Social Leadership Characteristics? If not, additional characteristic/s may need to be added. For example, I would suggest adding: *“provides emotional support, guidance and inspiration to peers in a quiet, unassuming manner.”*

Once these two steps are complete and lists of culturally appropriate characteristics to inform and guide identification have been compiled, the next step involves using an appropriate cultural lens in their application.

## STEP THREE

When identifying gifted students, teachers must ask themselves whether they are interpreting the characteristics listed from the diverse cultural perspectives of the children in their class. For example, returning to the *Teacher Observation Scales for Identifying Children with Special Abilities* (McAlpine & Reid, 1996) the list of Creative Thinking Characteristics includes *“Has a keen sense of humour and sees humour in the unusual.”* Humour is influenced by a person’s cultural beliefs and understandings and what may seem funny in one culture may not even raise a smile in another. This creates a problem for non-Māori teachers who may not be able to recognise “Māori humour” when it is demonstrated. However, observing the reactions of Māori pupils to each other’s comments and behaviour may provide a good indication.

### *(B) PRODUCTS, PROCESSES AND PERFORMANCES*

The quality of stories and poems students write, art work they produce, sporting and musical performances they are involved in and so forth are all indicators of potential and demonstrated gifts and talents. When evaluating these, teachers need to keep their awareness of varying cultural perspectives to the fore. For example, ngā mōteatea (traditional Māori poetry) are rich in cultural and historical allusions which can be extremely subtle and are heavily reliant on the readers’ cultural knowledge. A gifted Māori student may employ this technique in their writing, art or music but their creativity and cleverness is easily missed by people who do not have the background knowledge to detect and appreciate these allusions.

Similarly, products and performances need to be evaluated holistically. Participants in Bevan-Brown’s (1993) research noted that as well as assessing the final product, teachers need to pay attention to the vision, understanding, motivation and purpose behind what is produced and to the process involved. This requires teachers to discuss students’ work with them. This process will also be helpful for teachers who have limited cultural knowledge as it may result in the previously mentioned subtle allusions being revealed to them. However, this discussion must happen within the context of a culturally responsive and supportive environment as it is unlikely

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that students will confide in teachers they do not trust or share cultural knowledge when they know it is not valued.

Portfolios are becoming an increasingly popular means of identifying gifted students. As long as the “best performance” samples collected are assessed through an appropriate cultural lens, portfolios are a promising means of identifying gifted Māori students. An added strength of portfolios is that they enable teachers to assess students’ achievement over time. This could be particularly appropriate for those Māori students who begin school with no preschool experience. As a participant in Bevan-Brown’s research (1993) explained:

Māori children are not standing out because we are so far behind the starting mark .... The rate of progress on a particular project may be really excellent but if they started from behind in the first place, they won’t stand out. You need to look at the rate of progress not just where they are now. (pp. 98-99)

### *(C) NOMINATIONS*

#### Teacher nomination

The majority of teachers in our schools are white, middle-class, mono-cultural and many have only limited knowledge of Māori culture especially as it relates to giftedness. This is why many writers have reported that teacher nomination is an ineffective method of identifying gifted Māori students (Bevan-Brown, 1993, 1994, 2000, 2002, 2004; Cathcart, 1994; Cathcart & Pou, 1992; Doidge, 1990; Galu, 1998; Milne, 1993; Moltzen, 1998/99; Niwa, 199/99; Reid, 1989, 1992; and Rymarczyk Hyde, 2001).

In addition to this, Bevan-Brown (2000, 2002), Cathcart and Pou (1992) and Macfarlane and Moltzen (2005) have found that many teachers have low expectations of Māori students which further reduces their chances of identification. However, if teachers raise their expectations, become better informed about Māori culture especially as it relates to giftedness, have a school definition that is developed using the cultural lens described previously and are guided by specially developed lists of culturally appropriate characteristics and behaviours, then teacher nomination can be a successful identification strategy.

#### Parent nomination

Parents know their children better than anyone else and so potentially they are a valuable identification source. A complicating factor for identifying gifted Māori students is the concept of *whakahihī* (boasting). If a note is sent home informing parents that a certain extension group is being established in the school and asking them to nominate their child if they consider him/her gifted in this area, it is probable that many Māori parents will not respond. This is not because they do not recognise their child’s talents nor wish them to be nurtured but rather because they do not wish to appear *whakahihī*. However, parent nomination can work if parents know the teacher asking for nominations really well and have established a trusting relationship with him/her. In such a circumstance they will have confidence that nominating their child will not be construed as boasting but accepted as a genuine sharing of information between friends.

Additionally, it is recommended that teachers collect information from parents in a more appropriate fashion than asking for direct nominations of giftedness. For example, information about children’s strengths and interests could be included amongst the data collected at enrolment time or teachers could learn about children’s out-of-school involvements and “passions” through informal discussions with parents at school functions. Another approach could be to send home a child profile sheet for parents to fill out. The focus of this sheet would be

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on providing information to help teachers better provide for their students. An opportunity for face-to-face discussion of the information could be made available at parents' request.

#### Whānau and Māori community/group nomination

Given the importance of whānaungatanga, nomination of gifted Māori children should be extended to whānau members and the Māori community. Nannies, koro, aunts, uncles, cousins, kōhanga reo whānau, cultural group tutors and so forth are all potential sources of invaluable information about Māori children. It is likely that whānau members will have helpful information about children's strengths, talents and precocious development while community members (for example, kōhanga reo kaiako, Resource Teachers of Māori, kapahaka group tutors etc) may be able to assist teachers identify cultural abilities and qualities listed in Table 1. This would be particularly helpful where teachers have insufficient cultural and reo knowledge to enable them to accurately evaluate their students' ability level in these areas.

This information can be sought in a variety of ways but the approach adopted will be most effective if it is part of a pre-existing relationship with the people involved. For example, if a pōwhiri is given to kōhanga reo graduates starting school, teachers can discuss the new entrant's abilities and qualities with kōhanga reo whānau who attend this pōwhiri. Similarly, children can be discussed with whānau members who are invited to school functions as a matter of course and perhaps the child profile sheet mentioned previously could be addressed to both parents and whānau. The opportunities for gathering this information are numerous.

#### Peer nomination

Controversy exists over the effectiveness of this identification strategy, although it is worth noting that criticisms of its effectiveness are opinion-based (McKenzie, 2001; Reid, 1992) while support for it is research-based (Bevan-Brown, 1993; Jenkins, 2002). Both Bevan-Brown and Jenkins reported Māori students' willingness to recognise and acknowledge their gifted peers. However, a proviso needs to be added that peer nomination was seen to be effective in circumstances where students had a trusting relationship with their teachers and felt their culture was valued. It is unlikely that peer nomination will be an effective strategy in a culturally unresponsive environment.

Similar to parent, whānau and community nomination, there are many possible ways relevant information can be gained from peers. In her study Jenkins (2002) found that Māori students had no problem directly nominating children whom they thought had strengths in an area the teacher was enquiring about. Less direct approaches involve the use of sociograms and careful teacher observation of students' interactions with each other. Sociograms could take the form of a carefully prepared list of questions which all class members are required to answer (see Cathcart, 1994, p. 261 for a good example) or teachers may simply ask students to write a paragraph about the person they would most like to be stranded on a desert island with and why. In respect to observing students' interactions teachers should look for the children who are selected first for sports teams, chosen for academic help, nominated for positions of responsibility, sought out for emotional support and so forth.

#### Self nomination

Similar to peer and parent nomination, self nomination can be an effective strategy if it is used sensitively in the context of a culturally responsive, nurturing environment. In gaining information teachers need to use methods in which students do not feel as if they are being boastful but rather that they are sharing their strengths, interests, future aspirations, concerns, challenges, preferred learning activities, etc. with someone who is genuinely interested in them and their opinions.



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#### (D) TESTS

There is considerable criticism in the literature of the use of standardized achievement and intelligence tests to identify gifted and talented Māori students (Bevan-Brown, 1993, 1994; Cathcart, 1994; Galu, 1998; McAlpine, 2004; Milne, 1993; Niwa, 1998/99; Reid, 1989, 1992). This criticism centres mainly around issues of majority cultural bias of test norms and content. Therefore teachers are advised to take note of high standardized test scores but to interpret average and low scores with a degree of caution.

Well designed teacher-made tests that incorporate cultural perspectives and include some open-ended and divergent thinking items (MoE, 2000) are likely to be helpful in identifying gifted Māori students. In addition, overseas researchers have identified non verbal tests such as Raven's Progressive Matrices as being an effective means of identifying gifted and talented children from ethnic minorities (Castellano & Diaz, 2002; Mills & Tissot, 1995; Saccuzo et al. cited in Ford, Harris III, Tyson & Trotman, 2002). The reported strength of nonverbal tests is that they are not reliant on language, therefore children from different cultures are tested on a level playing field. However, a counter argument is that while the content of such tests may be culture fair, the actual test experience may disadvantage those children who are unfamiliar or uncomfortable with paper and pen testing procedures. A further argument is that culture provides a blueprint for how people operate. It determines the way we think, feel and behave. Given this, a test that is "culture free" by its very nature ignores important aspects of people's humanity. Nevertheless, despite debate as to the worth and effectiveness of nonverbal tests there is sufficient favourable overseas support to warrant an investigation of their use with Māori children. Time will tell whether or not they are an effective means of identification.

Finally, a "cultural test" was mentioned in Bevan-Brown's (1993) research. In traditional times *tohunga* (experts) often required youngsters to prove themselves before they were entrusted with valued knowledge and skills. This involved giving the person snippets of information to see what they would do with it. If their consequent actions showed they had the interest, ability, motivation and respect deemed necessary, then they were tutored and nurtured in the area concerned. Participants in Bevan-Brown's research suggested that a similar approach could be used to identify gifted Māori children today. Certainly a culturally responsive classroom would provide an ideal environment in which students could be given particular opportunities and responsibilities to "test" their gifted potential.

## Provision

The last cultural lens involves a consideration of content, teaching and assessment methods and learning environments. The question to ask is:

(5) How can gifted students be provided for in a culturally appropriate way?

Word limit constraints prevent a lengthy discussion of culturally appropriate provisions, however a few Māori-relevant examples relating to content and processes will illustrate the point.

Content needs to be considered at two different levels. Firstly, there is the curriculum-wide inclusion of Māori content which contributes to creating the all-important culturally responsive environment where gifted Māori students feel comfortable enough to reveal and develop their particular strengths whatever these may be. The inclusion of Māori content in general also provides the environment where children who are culturally gifted can have their abilities and qualities recognised and developed. As Milne (1993) asks: *how will children who are gifted in manaakitanga ever be identified if their schooling does not provide opportunities for them to demonstrate this quality?*

At a second level, teachers need to consider how students who are gifted in cultural abilities and qualities can be extended in these areas and how Māori content can be included in provisions to

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develop Māori students who have gifts and talents in other areas. Bevan-Brown's (1993) research showed that for many Māori, giftedness was a holistic concept that was intertwined with other Māori attitudes, beliefs, needs, values, customs and concepts and that encouraging and extending children in their Māoritanga went hand-in-hand with the development of their giftedness.

Publications such as *The cultural self-review. Providing culturally effective, inclusive education for Māori learners* (Bevan-Brown, 2003) contain specific suggestions for how schools and early childhood centres can become more culturally responsive. Additionally various curriculum documents, subject specific resources, Māori publications, the TKI website, Curriculum Advisors, Advisors in Gifted Education and Resource Teachers: Māori can provide a wealth of ideas about what Māori-relevant content can be included across the curriculum and in programmes specifically designed to extend Māori children who are gifted in cultural and other areas. It should be noted that providing for the former group of students involves a great deal more than having a kapahaka group or including a smattering of te reo Māori in various activities. Students who are gifted in these areas need to be challenged and extended just as gifted mathematicians or writers are provided with extension activities. The following two scenarios provide examples of how this was done in a kura kaupapa Māori and a mainstream school respectively:

What we did with Mere was we put her in charge of a production. Heta [a teacher] kept an eye on her but essentially she created the whole show – wrote the script and waiata, made up the actions, taught them to other kids, organised the practices. It was massive. The show was performed for the whānau and they were blown away (Bevan-Brown, 2000, p.1).

A group of students in the senior school who were advanced in te reo Māori met with a teacher once a week for six weeks. In that time they examined a variety of popular children's books to discover how they were written. They then spent a morning in a local kōhanga reo and talked with the tamariki to discover what topics were of greatest interest to them. Next each student wrote and illustrated their own children's book. This was shared with their school mates first, then read to the children at kōhanga reo and presented to them for their library. The kaiako reported that these books were literally worn out they were so popular!

Other "real life" examples of extension activities for students who are culturally gifted include: enrolment of a primary school pupil in the Correspondence School's secondary school Māori language programme; participation of a college student in te Wananga o Raukawa's Design and Art course; participation in Korimako and Manu Korero speech competitions; and kura kaupapa Māori students providing on-line te reo Māori lessons to students at a mainstream school.

Similarly, including Māori-relevant content amongst the extension activities of Māori children gifted in other areas is limited only by the imagination and knowledge of their teachers. In:

- *Science*: gifted students can investigate the chemical properties of Māori food and rongoā (medicine); research traditional planting and fishing practices; and analyse Māori cosmological beliefs;
- *Literacy*: Māori authors can be studied; the exploits of Maui analysed; and whakataukī (proverbs) researched and explained in contemporary contexts;
- *History and Social Studies*: kaumātua can be interviewed; a documentary on local Māori history filmed; and similarities and differences between Māori and another indigenous people researched;
- *Maths*: a survey of Māori language usage can be conducted and mathematical projections made about the future of te reo; the geometric patterns in Māori string games investigated; and comparisons made between ine (traditional Māori forms of measurement) and established western measures;
- *Physical Education*: new taiaha sequences can be developed; hipitoitoi, hei tama tu tama and ana parepare (Māori hand games) challenges held; and waka ama experience provided;

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- *Music*: contemporary pātere (action chants) can be composed; a score written for putorino and koauau (mouth and nose flutes); and raps containing Māori themes composed and performed;
- *Art and Craft*: a range of clothing incorporating Māori motifs can be created; traditional manu tukutuku (kites) researched and constructed; and a new marae complex designed and a model built.

While all gifted Māori students should be nurtured and developed, particular attention should be paid to the priority areas mentioned earlier ie personal qualities in the affective domain. Ironically, these are areas teachers often put in the “too hard basket” as it is much easier to provide for children who are intellectually, physically and musically gifted than for those who are emotionally and spiritually gifted. Within the general teaching programme there are many strategies and activities that provide opportunities for affective gifts to emerge and be developed. These include peer tutoring, tuakana-teina grouping, co-operative learning, peer mediation, hosting visitors to the school and organising pōwhiri (welcomes) and poroporoaki (farewells). In addition to this, children who are gifted in affective areas need extra opportunities to clarify and develop their personal values, to investigate issues of social justice and to extend their spiritual and altruistic abilities.

Dalton (1989) suggests a range of strategies for extending abilities in the affective domain. These include activities at different levels of Krathwohl’s Affective Taxonomy; moral dilemmas which stimulate cognitive development and high levels of moral reasoning; values clarification activities; role plays, sociodramas, games and simulations which can be used to help children explore social issues, develop decision-making, deal with human relationship problems, develop spiritual sensitivity and to more effectively manage their thoughts, feelings and behaviour. Many books exist which contain a plethora of such activities. These can be used “as is,” adapted, or teachers can develop their own activities focusing on particular Māori-relevant issues. For example, children could discuss the following dilemma:

Hone’s father, grandfather and great grandfather have all been whaikōrero experts and have represented their hapū at many important Māori functions. Hone is expected to continue this family tradition but he is extremely shy, hates talking in public and struggles with the Māori language. What should Hone do?

Joan Dalton (1989, p.63) also suggests that gifted students study people who have made significant contributions to society and abstract concepts (such as prejudice, peace and power) which would allow them to critically examine social, ethical and moral issues and develop understanding of their own and other people’s values. In respect to the former, gifted Māori children could study historic or contemporary Māori heroes such as Te Whiti, Sir Apirana Ngata and Kiri te Kanawa. Participants in Bevan-Brown’s (1993) research concur and add that these heroes and role models can be even more influential if children choose people they can “whakapapa into.”

In addition, the investigation of international and national current events especially those of particular significance to Māori (e.g., the Māori seats in Parliament debate or Treaty of Waitangi claims) provide opportunities to reflect on and clarify personal values and debate issues of global and national importance. For those children wishing to make a stand on the issues investigated, a useful book is “*The kids guide to social action. How to solve the social problems you choose - and turn creative thinking into positive action*” by Barbara Lewis. While this is an American book it covers social action skills and tools that are equally relevant in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

Studying fiction books can also provide powerful opportunities for affective development. For gifted Māori children there are many books, short stories and films by Māori authors that make excellent subjects for literary and affective analysis. The writing of Patricia Grace and Witi Ihimaera is particularly recommended, for example, *The Whale Rider* is ideal for examining Māori tikanga and values, wairuatanga, and gender and generation conflicts.

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Similarly, journal writing and creative writing can be effective tools for developing reflective thinking and nurturing emotional and spiritual intelligence. An excellent example is provided by Deborah Fraser (2002) in her work with gifted and mixed ability children. After exploring metaphorical expressions taken from literature, the children chose a particular human emotion or quality to write about as if it were a real person. This activity provided gifted children with the opportunity to reveal mature moral awareness and spiritual sensitivity, to develop personal insights and to deepen emotional and spiritual understandings.

There is also a variety of pre-existing programmes that can be used to extend children who are emotionally and spiritually gifted, for example, extension activities from the Virtues Project<sup>5</sup> and the Philosophy for Children Programme<sup>6</sup> with its emphasis on “caring thinking” within a “community of inquiry.” Likewise, programmes and activities that have been developed from and utilise Gardner’s (1983) multiple intelligences hold promise for Māori children who are gifted in affective areas. For example, the DISCOVER Curriculum Model contains activities in Gardner’s eight intelligences including interpersonal and intrapersonal challenges. Research has shown this model to be particularly successful with Navajo children (Maker et al., 1996; Maker, Rogers & Nielson, 1997). Given the many similarities in cultural values between Navajo and Māori, it is hypothesised that this model could also prove beneficial to Māori students in general and gifted Māori children in particular.

Although not specifically focused on developing affective abilities, other curriculum models, programmes and strategies that have been found to be effective with gifted Māori and other Polynesian children are Renzulli’s Enrichment Triad (Galun, 1998, Rawlinson, 1999), Beane’s Curriculum Integration Model (Jenkins, 2002) and a combination of strategies from Renzulli’s Enrichment Triad, Treffinger’s Model for Increasing Self Direction, Betts Autonomous Learner Model and Felhusen’s Three Stage Enrichment Model (Rawlinson, 2004). These models promote the principles of scaffolding and increased inner autonomy and support a holistic, integrated approach to gifted education – all factors considered important for gifted Māori students (Bevan-Brown, 1993; Rawlinson, 2004).

Bevan-Brown’s (1993) research revealed that an integral part of a Māori concept of giftedness is the requirement to use one’s gifts and talents in the service of others. Therefore programmes and activities for gifted Māori children should incorporate this service component in some form. This could be as simple as gifted musicians performing at a rest home or as elaborate as involvement in the Community Problem Solving Programme.<sup>7</sup> This programme involves a team of students who work together throughout the year to identify a real life problem or concern in their community and then devise and implement a plan to address the problem or concern. They are supported by an adult coach throughout the process and submit a final report of their work for possible inclusion in the national Community Problem Solving finals. National winners are eligible to represent Aotearoa/New Zealand in International finals held annually in the USA.

A related concept is Service-Learning which is rapidly growing in popularity throughout the world. In the United States, for example, the National Center for Educational Statistics reported that 13 million students were involved in Service-Learning in the 2000-2001 academic year. Basically Service-Learning involves an approach to teaching and learning that integrates academic study and community service in order to enrich learning, teach civic responsibility and benefit communities, for example, students collecting rubbish from a local streambed, analyzing what is found, investigating possible sources and sharing suggestions for reducing pollution with

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<sup>5</sup> For information on the project and recommended resources see [www.virtuestrust.org.nz](http://www.virtuestrust.org.nz)

<sup>6</sup> For information on this programme and recommended resources see the N.Z. Philosophy for Children Association’s website at <http://www.p4c.org.nz>

<sup>7</sup> For more information and resources see [www.fpsnz.co.nz](http://www.fpsnz.co.nz)

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the local community. Many ideas for Service-Learning projects can be found in books such as *“The kids guide to service projects: Over 500 service ideas for young people”* by Barbara Lewis and Pamela Espeland and by entering “Service-Learning” in a Google search. However, ideally students’ service projects will arise from a need they have identified themselves in their own community. Projects with a Māori focus would be particularly relevant for gifted Māori students. These could include projects such as the restoration of depleted kaimoana sites; the development and marketing of Maori language resources; or the research and archiving of whakapapa or hapū history.

Similar to other gifted and talented children, gifted Māori students should be provided with a variety of educational activities which utilise a range of teaching and learning strategies and environments. Opportunities for individual research and group learning projects that involve both mixed ability and like ability groups are all recommended. However, a warning must be sounded against enrichment and acceleration programmes that isolate gifted Māori children from their peers. Bevan-Brown’s (1993) research participants told stories of gifted Māori children who failed, misbehaved or opted out of gifted programmes in which they felt personally and culturally isolated.

Ideally, programmes for gifted Māori students should be holistic in nature. A child’s gifts and talents, whatever they may be, should not be developed in isolation. For example, a child who is intellectually gifted must also be nurtured in the affective domain, in fact traditionally Māori do not separate these two spheres of development: a person’s ‘hinengaro’ is the source of both their thoughts and their emotions.

A further component of holistic programming is the involvement of parents, whānau and members of the Māori community. It is important that they be given opportunities to participate in various ways. Suggestions offered by Bevan-Brown’s (1993) participants include involvement in: identification via parent/whānau/community nomination; programmes as resource people, advisers, volunteers, coaches, audiences, mentors and role models; and evaluation of student’s work and gifted programmes. Parental, whānau and community involvement is well supported in the literature as is the use of mentors with gifted Māori students. This strategy was used to nurture gifted individuals in traditional Māori society and is seen as equally relevant and effective today.

## Conclusion

This paper contains a range of ideas about how gifted Māori students can be identified and provided for in a culturally appropriate way. However, it presents only the tip of the iceberg – there are many effective strategies and relevant resources that can be utilised to identify and provide for these students. The challenge is for teachers to be motivated and committed enough to locate and utilise them. For those that make the effort, the rewards are great for all concerned.

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