

## **Māori Gifted and Talented Education: a review of the literature**

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**Abstract:** This paper reviews the literature relating to Māori and gifted education, surveying the relevant research to date. It highlights many of the major themes and issues in the field debated over the past twenty five years, particularly those central to addressing the needs of gifted and talented Māori students in the present. In summary, the paper considers some of the ongoing problems and gaps in the literature, with a view to providing further avenues to productive scholarship in the future of Māori gifted and talented education.

**Keywords:** Gifted and talented, Māori education

### **Introduction**

It is a common contention in the literature that the needs of New Zealand's gifted and talented students, for the most part, have been neglected by our education system (Moltzen, 2004). Working under the false belief that such gifted students are at an advantage anyway, the egalitarian discourses of our society have prevented us from affording these students the support they need to develop appropriately. If the New Zealand education system's failure to provide adequately for gifted and talented students, in general, inhibits these students from reaching their full potential, how much greater are the barriers that Māori gifted and talented students face in their progress in this area?

Much of the literature on Māori education discusses the persistent and disproportionately high underachievement experienced by Māori students. Very little is said about those Māori students who are not underachieving. The research indicates that in gifted and talented education, much like in other areas of education, Māori students are significantly under-represented in comparison with their non-Māori peers. This paper strives to make a contribution to improving educational outcomes for Māori by reviewing the literature in the area of Māori gifted and talented education. The project further seeks to identify potential gaps in the research, with a view to identifying areas or studies pivotal in developing alternative structures or processes for the education, and development, of gifted and talented Māori students. Central to the review is an examination of several long standing issues and themes in the field of Māori gifted and talented education. These include: more appropriate definitions of what educators view as 'giftedness', and particularly the inclusion of Māori concepts of giftedness; how best to identify Māori students who are gifted and talented; how gifted and talented education programmes can be developed and implemented in ways that are culturally sensitive and supportive for these students; and the further development of theoretical frameworks and pedagogies in this area.

The body of literature specifically addressing issues in Māori gifted and talented education is relatively small. Although interest in Māori gifted and talented education continues to grow, much of the research has been informed by gifted and talented studies that address a broader 'New Zealand' situation, rather than Māori specifically. International literature in the area of gifted and talented education also features prominently in the development of research here in Aotearoa/New Zealand. These have been considered in reference to the New Zealand literature in this review. It is also important to note that despite the relative scarcity of specific literature, the existing range of work focused on the 'New Zealand' body of literature is still extremely relevant to the consideration of issues that arise in the education of gifted Māori students. Indeed, Māori gifted education, as a growing body of literature, draws on a wide variety of interdisciplinary texts, and literary canons, that have worked to inform past and present research in the area. These include educational literature

related to Māori education in general, such as Rose Pere's *Ako* (1982), and Russell Bishop's work with Collaborative Research Stories (2002). Complimentary to these studies are a range of other influential texts that have commented on Māori identity, Māori pedagogical approaches, understandings of tikanga, and teaching theories (see Barlow, 1994; Hemara, 2000; Smith, 1999; Tangaere, 1996). Consequently, many of the academic works relating explicitly to Māori education, while not written to address specific issues in gifted education, have the ability to enlighten our understanding and approaches.

## Review of Literature

The first articles relating specifically to Māori gifted and talented education were published in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Bevan-Brown, 1994). In New Zealand it is perhaps no coincidence that this followed on from a time considered to be a renaissance period for Māori, a time when issues dealing with the marginalised position of Māori within New Zealand society had been in part forced out into the open. In addition it highlights, in comparison to other areas in Māori education and literature, the relative state of infancy where Māori gifted and talented education still in many respects resides.

The first formal research done in the area of Māori gifted and talented education was conducted by Jill Bevan-Brown in 1993. Prior to this there were several articles written on the subject, however, these were written from a predominantly Pākehā, or non-Māori, perspective. The most prolific of these writers was Neil Reid (1989, 1990, 1991, 1992), who discussed the predominant monocultural nature of our education system, and specifically the negative influence that this had on the identification and provision of programmes for gifted students who are Māori. Reid also called attention to the fact that the over-emphasis that schools place on test results in the identification of giftedness placed Māori students at a disadvantage, a finding which has been supported by much of the consequent literature (Bevan-Brown, 1994, 1999, 2000a, 2000b; Cathcart & Pou, 1992; Doidge, 1990; MacKenzie, 2001; Milne, 1993; Rawlinson, 1999). Reid is perhaps most noted for his contention that Māori children are discouraged by their cultural background from standing out, and that those who show any special gifts or talents are "criticised, ridiculed and alienated by their peers until they conform" (1992, p.55). Cathcart & Pou (1992) and later MacKenzie (2001) agreed with Reid's assertion and, for these reasons, advocated that parental, peer and self nominations were ineffective as a method of identifying Māori gifted learners:

The Māori culture focuses on group cohesiveness and a Māori child would not nominate another for 'special attention' through a gifted programme, as they would see it as inappropriate to do so – status is not drawn from standing out in the crowd but from being a part of it. (MacKenzie, 2001, p.3)

Some few years later, research conducted by both Bevan-Brown (1993, 1994, 1999, 2000a, 2000b, 2004) and Jenkins (2002) refuted these assumptions, with Bevan-Brown contending most adamantly that these opinions had come from a misunderstanding of the concepts of whakahīhī and whakaiti, and were simply not true:

This myth should be confined to the grave, the more it is used the more it becomes the "truth". The view has been largely promulgated by Pākehā academics and Pākehā teachers, and educators act accordingly. I have a fear that future researchers may trace a relationship between this and the tall poppy syndrome thereby placing the blame on Māori for this kiwi disease. (Arapere cited in Bevan-Brown, 1994, p.9)

Throughout their research, both Bevan-Brown and Jenkins (2002) found a wide variety of examples that emphasised how Māori students have been supported and encouraged in their giftedness, but noted that in order for peer nominations to be a successful option, students needed to be immersed in an environment that is culturally supportive and nurturing with teachers they both knew and trusted. Writing on the topic of gifted and talented Māori and Polynesian students, Max Galu (1998) also

found that traditionally in these families, elders, grandparents and various members of the extended whānau would all have an important part to play in identifying and supporting gifted children. “It would appear the key to any peer nomination work with Māori and Polynesians is preparation and groundwork to gain the respect and trust of the child” (Galu, 1998, p.40).

To some extent, Galu, Bevan-Brown, and Jenkins studies reflected aspects of Greer Doidge’s findings in “Māori children, Māori studies: a special giftedness” (1990), where she discussed the use of ‘Māori studies’ as a context for using Māori culture to extend and develop gifted students. Greer’s short article highlighted the importance of a culturally supportive environment, and the development of the student’s self-esteem for encouraging high achievement in Māori children, a point that has been repeated many times throughout the literature (e.g. Bevan-Brown, 1993, 1994, 1999, 2000a, 2000b, 2004; Jenkins, 2002; Jenkins, Macfarlane & Moltzen, 2004; Macfarlane & Moltzen, 2005). Doidge stated that one of the articles primary intentions was to address concepts of cultural and spiritual giftedness as opposed to academic giftedness, raising an important distinction between the limited conventional use of the term and conceptions of giftedness from a Māori world view, a central issue to the area of Māori gifted and talented education:

...giftedness in a Māori child would ideally be seen in his/her capacity or potential to lead the people in all the things they value most; aroha, a kindness to others; manaaki, an embracing of all things regardless of creed or race; whaikōrero, speechmaking (and therefore the ability to lead all others in matters of importance); and mana, a presence amongst his/her peers. (Doidge, 1990, p.36)

Some of the reverberating concepts in Doidge’s work, which were most likely taken from other contemporary Māori educational texts and studies, included the use of tuakana/teina peer tutoring in classrooms, putting able students in positions of responsibility, and the importance of effective teacher/student and home/school relationships. Because Doidge either failed or refused to cite her source materials, her thoughts remain difficult to trace, or locate in the overall historiographical landscape of the literature in Māori gifted and talented education. However, despite its somewhat mystifying absence of references Doidge’s short manuscript contributed to a range of subsequent studies, which at varying points both affirmed and rejected many of the issues, themes, and concepts examined in the article.

Certainly, the most pivotal work in the area of Māori gifted and talented education has been undertaken by Jill Bevan-Brown, whose Masterate study “Special Abilities: a Māori perspective” (1993) was the first major work in Māori gifted and talented education. Subsequent articles published in 1994, 1999, and a chapter in Moltzen and McAlpine’s “*Gifted and talented New Zealand perspectives*” (2004), both summarised, and expanded slightly, on her earlier thesis, which asserted that:

Because any given culture’s concept of special abilities is influenced by all its beliefs, needs, values, concepts and attitudes, we cannot assume that Māori and Pākehā concepts will be the same nor that what we do to recognise and cater for gifted and talented Pākehā children will be appropriate for their Māori counterparts. (Bevan-Brown, 1994, p.5)

Of most significance was a focus on investigating both traditional and contemporary Māori conceptions of special abilities. The work further attempted to gauge Māori opinion about how best to identify and cater for Māori students with special abilities. To achieve this Bevan-Brown conducted an extensive analysis on a wide range of sources collected and examined over a period of five years. These findings were supplemented by a series of informal exploratory interviews with thirty-three participants from a variety of educational and socio-economic backgrounds, representing a range of different hapū and iwi, including kaumātua and professional educators.

Bevan-Brown's study found that Māori concepts of giftedness from the past and present were closely aligned, and that these similarities could inform current approaches to the education of gifted and talented Māori students. For example, Bevan-Brown found that a Māori conception of giftedness "is not bound by social class, economic status, lineage or gender" (2004, p.174). Both Bevan-Brown's documentary analysis and research interviews revealed a wide range of people who were considered to have special abilities. There was an even gender mix, and it was felt that even though whakapapa may influence the development of specific gifts, or talents, through exposure, or opportunity, the ultimate determinant of the individual's success should be focused on ability. She contended that this has relevance at an educational level as it highlights the need to evaluate all students equally, irrelevant of a student's socio-economic status, lineage, gender and ethnic background.

Other commentators have suggested that socio-economic status is a largely contributing factor to the under-representation of some students in gifted and talented education programmes. In his Study of 66 education providers in the Bay of Plenty, Otago, and Southland regions, David Keen (2001), found that children of beneficiaries and unskilled labourers were significantly under-represented. It is perhaps no coincidence that his findings also showed "a disproportionate number of Māori [fell] within these occupational categories" (p.9). Rata (2004) also endorsed this line of thinking, and claimed that poverty was, and still is, primarily responsible for the educational and social disparity that exists in New Zealand, not ethnicity as is often claimed. In response, Bevan-Brown (2002) among a range of other commentators stressed that not only is it impossible to distinguish between the latent effects of ethnicity and social class, but it is a redundant exercise as both factors need to be considered to effectively meet the needs of poor Māori students who are gifted.

Throughout the literature, Māori concepts of giftedness were constantly discussed. In her thesis, Bevan-Brown (1993) asserted that gifts or abilities are exhibited in both individual and group contexts, and that such gifts were, and are today, expected to be used to benefit others. This, she noted, stemmed from the traditional belief that gifts and talents were given from the Gods, and were to be used for the benefit of all, rather than for personal gain. Inherent in this is the concept of *utu* or reciprocity. With special abilities also came responsibility, for both the proper maintenance of the gift and the equitable sharing of its benefits. The notion of responsibility comes through particularly strong in this quotation from one of the research participants.

One thing I really detested when I was at school, was that it was definitely viewed as a win-lose situation. The losers were just left behind and that is too bad. I'm not really into competition. Gifted Māori children need to be taught that part of the responsibility that comes with being more confident than others is that you'll share that to help other to get those skills. I don't see being a gifted Māori as the same as being a gifted Pākehā. Usually from what I can tell, if you're a gifted Pākehā you just go for it, get all the goodies you can and too bad about Rangi Smith next door. I'd hate to see Pākehā encourage our children into being the same. They definitely need to know... you've got a special ability and because of that, some of the responsibility is that you share that. (Bevan-Brown, 1993, p.123)

Ten years on from this study, Bevan-Brown further notes that in this way a Māori conception "of special abilities is holistic in nature and inextricably intertwined with other Māori concepts" (Bevan-Brown, 2004, p.178). Writing in the late 1990s, Niwa (1998/1999) also addressed concepts of Māori giftedness, highlighting the contrast between mainstream perceptions of giftedness and the "holistic view of giftedness in Māori culture, where inter-personal relationships and aspects of spirituality are highly prized and emphasised" (p.3). Indeed, this appears to be the constant view posited by writers throughout the literature, with Sapon-Shevin (1996) noting in the mid 1990s that giftedness can be viewed as a social construct, and that in order to be able to accurately identify and effectively provide for Māori gifted and talented children, their teachers will need to understand and value Māori culture.

In a more recent article, Macfarlane and Moltzen (2005) have discussed Bevan-Brown's belief that Māori gifted and talented students must be "encouraged to develop their knowledge of, and pride in,

their own culture” (p.7). They argue that a culturally safe and supportive environment provides a context in which these students are “more likely to feel confident about expressing their special abilities”, and that Māori students should both see and feel their culture reflected and valued throughout their school programme (p.7). To facilitate this approach, commentators throughout the literature have advocated the need for more specific pre-service training, and continued in-service professional development, to provide teachers with both a better understanding of the cultural background of their gifted Māori students, and a better ability to identify and provide for them to meet this end (see Bevan-Brown, 1993, 1994, 1996, 2002; Cathcart, 1994; Galu, 1998; McKenzie, 2001; Milne, 1993; Niwa, 1998/99; Reid, 1990; RymarczykHyde, 2001). Indeed, both Bevan-Brown (1999, 2000a) and Reid (1992) proposed that this should be taken a step further, and that teachers should also study their own culture, in order to recognise its influence on their teaching and practice. Reid, in particular, advocated that teachers:

Undertake a rigorous and searching self-evaluation of attitudes and beliefs that might be obstructing or distorting the view in the search for minority culture talent [and to] make a determined effort to see cultural differences, not as disadvantages or as limitations, but as positives (p.57).

Such study and training, Reid stressed, would enable better recognition of the broad range of talents and abilities that are encompassed in a Māori conception of giftedness. Although most commentators addressed the place, and role, of the teacher in Māori gifted education, the emphasis remained focused on how educators (and parents) might better recognise gifted students. The most influential contributor to this discussion (as mentioned above) was Bevan-Brown, whose list of various abilities, talents, qualities and areas of expertise worked to show clearly the depth and breadth of qualities and abilities that could be termed as gifts or talents in a Māori conception of giftedness. The list is reproduced here to emphasise the heterogeneous ways in which ‘special abilities’ can be interpreted from a Māori world view:

- Service to Māoridom (at national, tribal and whānau levels)
- Māori knowledge; for example, whakapapa, whaikōrero, waiata, healing, tikanga, tribal history, carving, weaving and other traditional arts and crafts
- Spirituality
- Language ability, communication and negotiation skills
- Musical, literary and artistic ability, and aesthetic appreciation
- Leadership and visionary ability, initiator/pioneering spirit, missionary zeal, ‘people skills’, teaching ability
- Mana
- Sporting prowess, and military/fighting ability (in past)
- Intelligence, ‘thinkers and doers’, ‘good all rounders with holistic understanding’, good memory, academic ability, scientific analysis, love of learning, and Pākehā knowledge
- Pride in Māori/tribal identity, and ‘whānau(ness)’
- Outstanding knowledge and appreciation of nature
- Cooking ability
- ‘outstanding personal qualities and high moral values’ which included a raft of specifically mentioned qualities, such as patience; aroha; honesty; integrity; open-mindedness; manaakitanga; humility; bravery; serenity; reliability; selflessness; and sensitivity to, and respect for, others. Particular gifted individuals were described as having moral courage, strength of character and a good sense of humour, being energetic, well-organised, determined, motivated, responsible, and hardworking.

(Bevan-Brown, 2004, p.176)

There are clear similarities to be found between the broad and inclusive Māori conception of giftedness and other mainstream multi-categorical approaches (for example: Taylor’s multi-talent totem pole, 1978, 1986; Gagnés differentiated talent model, 1992 and Gardner’s multiple intelligences,

1993). Indeed, even the current definitions used by the Ministry of Education (2002) take a broad and inclusive approach identifying gifted and talented students as those that “have certain learning characteristics that give them the potential to achieve outstanding performance” (p.2). According to the ministry, these characteristics can manifest themselves in a “wide range of special abilities, including strengths, interests, and qualities in their general intellect, academics, culture, creativity, leadership, physical abilities, and visual and performing arts” (Ministry of Education, 2004a, p.9). Despite this attempt at inclusion, the Ministry’s definition still fails to address two subtle, yet important differences between multi-categorical approaches and a Māori conception of giftedness highlighted in Bevan-Brown’s (1993) earlier work. She suggests that while it is acknowledged that multi-categorical approaches mention cultural talents and abilities in general, they remain vague in comparison to the more specific list focused primarily on Māori gifted and talented students. Secondly, she argues that while many of the same abilities and qualities are listed under the various definitions, the ways in which those qualities and abilities are interpreted can vary considerably from culture to culture. Indeed, the interpretation of leadership is an example to which Bevan-Brown frequently refers. She identifies the various styles of leadership Māori are familiar with “the ‘up-front’ brand of leadership, similar to that recognised in the Pākehā world, and also a quieter leadership-by-example genre” (2004, p.177). A third “behind the scenes” style is also discussed and supported by quotations from her earlier research:

Daisy Māhaki was a student at college and I remember the qualities that she had, where she was a background worker who was always lifting people up. She was a non-descript child to some, she didn’t stand out in a crowd in any particular way but was always working in the background, making sure, propping everybody up and I always remember...that girl’s got leadership qualities. We have high hopes for her when she comes back. (Bevan-Brown, 1993, p.75)

Most significantly, Bevan-Brown asserts that it is insufficient for educators to adopt a multi-categorical approach. Without adequate consideration for cultural perspectives, she argues, this construction of giftedness continues to reflect the dominant mainstream culture:

Where perceptions of, and approaches to, giftedness are essentially Eurocentric, aspects of ability valued by Māori may be unrecognised and the expression, identification and nurturance of the gifts of many Māori students will be overlooked and undervalued. (MacFarlane & Moltzen, 2005, p.7).

Writing more recently, Heather Jenkins (2002) has asserted that despite a move towards a broader and more inclusive concept of giftedness, mainstream educational policy and practice continues to manifest an essentially Eurocentric conception of giftedness. In her research project Jenkins built upon Bevan-Brown’s (1993) findings in an attempt to examine how a mainstream school might be able to implement and embrace a culturally relevant construction of giftedness and educational practice for Māori. Jenkins findings also highlight “the broader issues of power and control within mainstream education, and their relationship to Māori achievement and actualisation” (Jenkins, 2004, p.56). Like Bevan-Brown, and others before her, Jenkins points out that simply adding on a ‘Māori dimension’ is insufficient to create a culturally relevant education experience for gifted Māori students, and is unlikely to increase the visibility of Māori giftedness in mainstream schools. Her study looks at the specific example of Clover Park Middle School, as a school which is striving to reconstruct relationships of power and control, and is creating a positive and constructive educational environment for its students, Māori and non-Māori, gifted or not, their whānau and the community.

As well as drawing heavily on the literature relating to Māori and gifted education, Jenkins work is somewhat different from the others in that it specifically uses a Kaupapa Māori research framework, which she draws from the works of Russell Bishop & Ted Glynn (2000), Graham Smith (1997) and Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999). This body of literature contends that the reassertion of Māori cultural aspirations and practices can provide the means to address issues of power and control within the classroom in ways that will benefit both Māori and non-Māori students (e.g., Bishop, 2002; Bishop &

Glynn, 1999, 2000; Durie, 1998; Macfarlane, 2000, 2001; Milne, 2002; G.H. Smith, 1997; L. Smith, 1999). Indeed, as Jenkins, Moltzen & Macfarlane (2004) note, Kaupapa Māori theory challenges the traditional relationships of dominance and subordination that operate in a mainstream classroom and strives to empower Māori learners to participate on their own terms, having both Māori language and knowledge validated and sustained (p.60):

Learning relationships must promote Māori learners' knowledge as acceptable and legitimate, and new knowledge/understandings must be reached through collaborative construction between students and teachers. From a Kaupapa Māori perspective then, the facilitation of self-determination for Māori students is likely to occur in sociocultural contexts where *culture counts*; where what Māori students know, who they are, and how they know what they know, underpins and characterises the very dynamics of the classroom (Jenkins, Moltzen & Macfarlane 2004, p.61).

In this light, kaupapa Māori approaches are evident in much of Bevan-Browns work, and to some extent in some of the recommendations and writing of other commentators, particularly in regard to future development. It should be noted, that although some of the writing appears to align with kaupapa Māori theories and methods, many of them were not conscious attempts to incorporate such an approach, and therefore cannot be thought of as Kaupapa Māori based studies. However, this is not true of Jenkins work, whose findings at Clover Park Middle School embody many of the recommendations made in the literature. At the time of the study, the school had 390 students, organised into four clusters, with each cluster operating within a particular cultural framework: Māori, Samoan, Tongan, and Cook Island. 36 % of the students are Māori and the remaining 64% are predominantly Pasifika. Each cluster was multileveled, multi-aged, and vertically grouped. Students and their families selected which cluster they joined on enrolment:

The Māori and Samoan areas are very different and we do things very differently, but still under the same school system. Instead of asking our children to change who they are at school, we've said we need to change the way that we think and ensure that the things we do fit our children. (Kaiako in Jenkins, 2002, p.44).

Within this sociocultural construct, Jenkins stressed that students were able to feel 'normal' in that their "culture (knowledge, values, language, beliefs, practices, and so forth) [formed] the foundation of school/classroom discourse and dynamics" (Jenkins, Moltzen & Macfarlane 2004, p.61). Participants in Jenkins research also emphasised the importance of this culturally meaningful learning environment, suggesting that without adequate provision of relevant contexts, and content, "Māori students potential was significantly limited, not only in terms of their capacity to manifest Māori gifts but also in relation to their development and demonstration of more Westernised concepts of giftedness" (Jenkins, Moltzen & Macfarlane 2004, p.64).

A standout feature of Clover Park Middle School, within Jenkins research, was its use of a whānau framework, both to develop effective home-school-community relationships, and reciprocal learning relationships within the class. Underpinning this framework, Jenkins noted, were traditional concepts of aroha (love), awhi (helpfulness), manaaki (hospitality), and tiaki (guidance). These concepts, she argued, could be seen in the provisions put in place by the school:

Whānau(ngatanga) is also about support, and this is a very high need in our wider Clover Park whānau. We have eliminated school fees, provide basic stationary, and school lunches for students who need them, we run a breakfast club in the winter months, and operate a homework centre two afternoons a week. Our school budget has an account called 'manaakitanga', to enable us to fulfil cultural obligations such as the provision of food for visitors, koha for a wide range of reasons, and support for individual students. (Principal, in Jenkins, 2002, p.49)

From a parent's perspective, Jenkins asserted, there was an understanding that the school and teachers cared about the students and were trying to help them succeed. Further to this, she stated, that within

the class there was a feeling of respect for each other as class mates: “There is no separateness in policy or practice... We don’t withdraw students into separate classes or programmes. We always work as whānau, within whānau, and needs are catered for within this context” (Principal, Clover Park Middle School, in Jenkins, 2004, p.65). As the cluster was multileveled, and multi-aged, students could be grouped according to their relative needs, thus the whānau context provided authentic and natural ways for gifted students to be challenged and developed within the whānau group. This was stressed by one of the participants, who noted that “you can have a Form 1 child working on any sort of level of academic work right up to 4<sup>th</sup> form level because the whole group thing is so flexible, its just not an issue” (Māori Director of Learning, in Jenkins, 2002, p.60). In a more recent article, Bevan-Brown (2000b) found that similar practices were being used in Kura Kaupapa to meet the needs of gifted Māori students within the regular classroom programme. Mixed age classes, differentiated curriculum, and the use of tohunga, or mentors, especially when they can be drawn from within the whānau or local community, are all means used to meet the needs of these students within the whānau group.

Some concerns have been raised within the literature about programmes involving enrichment or acceleration that isolate gifted Māori children from their peers, deeming such programmes as culturally inappropriate (Bevan-Brown, 1993, 1994, 1996, 2000a, 2002, 2004; MacKenzie, 2001; Niwa, 1998/99; Reid, 1990). Niwa (1998/99) stressed that such programmes require Māori students to move out of their peer group and share their personal gifts and talents with a group of strangers, people who “they have no aroha-ki-te-tangata ties with” (p.5). Reid (1990) also warned that such isolation puts Māori gifted students at risk of negative attention from their peers. While Bevan-Brown (1993) rejected Reids' claims of negative peer pressure, she cautioned against moving gifted Māori students into accelerate classes and enrichment groups citing a number of unsuccessful instances. However, it is important to note that in each of these cases, the gifted Māori student was the only Māori in the group and the programme included no culturally relevant content for that student. In relation to this, Galu’s (1998) study suggested this may not be the case for all gifted Māori students. His research found that while many students felt the classroom programme did not meet their cultural needs, most of them felt they had benefited academically from their time in the unit and enjoyed it. Students in Galu’s study also reported that they did not experience any negative peer pressure as a result of being a part of the programme.

This focus on comfort, safety, and self confidence was another key feature returned to in Jenkins later study, where cultural self-esteem was once more examined as a significant approach adopted at Clover Park Middle School. This emphasis, Jenkins noted, was reflected in high teacher expectations of the students: “We expect every one of our students to succeed... every single one of them will do the best they can” (Kaiako, in Jenkins, 2002, p.55). The importance of high teacher expectations was a common theme discussed by many commentators throughout the literature, where it had been suggested that many able Māori students were not identified as gifted because of low teacher expectations. Cathcart and Pou (1992) found that some teachers did not expect to find giftedness amongst their Māori students. Cathcart (2005) quotes one teacher as saying “gifted kids? You won’t find any of those kids in here. All our little faces are brown” (p.136). Bevan-Brown (2004) also discussed the insidious effect of low teacher expectations on Māori gifted learners, noting that:

It was believed that many teachers did not expect Māori children to have special abilities and this created a double disadvantage. Not only were potentially gifted Māori children not being recognised and extended by their teachers but also the “Pygmalion effect” meant that these children were not extending themselves. They performed down to expectation. (p.186)

This ‘Pygmalion effect’ has been well documented internationally and confirms that teachers underlying expectations affect not only their behaviour towards the students, but the students own levels of self-esteem and performance (see Cooper & Good, 1983; Persell, 1997; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968). Unfortunately, negative teacher expectations and attitudes towards gifted Māori



learners continue to reflect the outdated and inaccurate mode of 'deficit thinking' in Aotearoa, and much to the disadvantage of Māori students.

## Summary

Although gifted and talented education in Aotearoa continues to develop as a field of study, a specific focus on Māori within this broader body of work remains, still, in its infancy. Despite extensive work in the area, much of Bevan-Brown's scholarship draws on her original thesis in 1993, which appears to repeat interviews and thinking of a period now more than a decade beyond today's context. Indeed, many of the themes and issues introduced in earlier writings remain unresolved in current scholarship. These include debates surrounding the definitions of not only Māori identities, but Māori giftedness, and are specific dilemmas inextricably interconnected with ongoing debates in other disciplines that include Māori as a 'category' or topic of study and analysis. In this sense, the literature shows that necessary advancements in this area of Māori gifted and talented education must be considered in wider relation to identity studies across the academic landscape. However, it also posits a challenge to scholars in the field to contribute to that debate, rather than be led by theories and research from outside of their own contexts.

This review has identified several gaps in the research that must be addressed in order to engage the 'strengths and aspirations of Māori' in developing alternative structures and processes for the education and development of gifted and talented Māori students. While Bevan-Brown's research has been most useful in providing a foundation for understanding giftedness from a Māori perspective, she emphasises that Māori are a diverse people, and to impose an oversimplified conceptualisation of Māoriness as the predominant paradigm would be inappropriate and unrealistic. Instead she notes that:

The suggestions made for identifying and providing for gifted and talented Māori students will not apply to all Māori learners with special abilities. However, they are considered appropriate for many gifted Māori learners who identify themselves as Māori and adhere to their Māoritanga. (2004, p.172).

Clearly, more research is necessary to clarify variations of a Māori conception of giftedness. Potential iwi or hapū divergences, gender considerations as well as differences of opinion and experience for gifted Māori who do not strongly adhere to their Māoritanga. To this extent, research within the area of Māori gifted and talented education expands on already existing issues within Māori scholarship, such as appropriate pedagogical approaches, not just for Māori in general, but for gifted and talented Māori students of varying iwi/hapū affiliations, and within further intersections of gender, sexuality, and age.

Although, much of the literature has focused on definitions of Māori giftedness, in more recent case studies, there has also been an emphasis on potentially effective programmes and structures relevant to the advancement of Māori gifted and talented education. The Jenkins (2002) study of Clover Park highlights this direction of research, and advocates the Clover Park model as an effective demonstration of how mainstream schools can balance out issues of power and control, and particularly the subordination of marginalised cultures such as Māori. Interestingly, Māori far from being under-represented in the Clover Park example, feature as one of the more dominant demographics. In a similar vein, Bevan-Brown's (2000b) reference to full immersion schools also takes as its example an educational institution where Māori students and needs are central to the underlying philosophies in the school. This raises questions about the dialectic between Māori giftedness and revitalisation, or in other words, the underlying rationale and philosophies that inform the construction of pedagogies, the appropriate educational structures for gifted Māori students, and the overarching aims of revitalisation. Subsequently, scholars in the field of Māori gifted and talented education should consider not simply the necessity to meet Māori needs in today's reality, but to revitalise them for those who have been raised in a world where their Māoritanga has been suppressed

by a dominant colonial hegemony. One further question they might consider in this sense is: how have traditional notions of giftedness changed over time, and how can Māori or iwi notions of giftedness be revitalised as viable and cross-cultural frameworks in a broader New Zealand context? This question was introduced in Bevan-Brown's (1993) study, and it still demands attention before it can be better understood and applied by educators in the field.

The literature is characterised by a multitude of reasons why Māori are under-represented in gifted and talented programmes. These include limited conceptions of giftedness, inappropriate identification policies and practices, low teacher expectations and negative deficit based stereotypes of Māori students. While information on Māori education in general abounds, the literature on this more specific area is somewhat limited. Perhaps the more significant message in the literature states the obvious: that there is still immense need for further development, so that future researchers may work towards innovative and alternative structures or processes for the education and progression of gifted Māori learners.

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