

Tangata Whenua in Distance Education: An Emerging Model for isolated Māori Secondary Students in the Correspondence School

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INTRODUCTION The philosophy and the practice of distance education offer to individual learners flexibility and personal autonomy within the western academic tradition. These assumptions of learner autonomy and independence have influenced the design of learning materials, their delivery and their structured interactions into a framework which is appropriate to majority colonising populations rather than to indigenous minorities in countries such as Canada and New Zealand. The framework depends on quiet and private study spaces, telephone and other technological access, and the concept of individual acquisition of knowledge in a market-oriented economy. A current challenge to distance education institutions is to find a mode of delivery, other than traditional home study, which meets the identified preference of minority groups to work in a collaborative mode.

The Alberta (Canada) experience for minority groups is one of providing a local classroom and a community-based tutor who assists with interpretation and explanation of course context, establishes a pacing schedule for groups of students, and provides extra tuition outside school hours. Personalising the delivery of home study packages, through emphasising a localised interactive dialogue, is reported to have reduced student dropout and absenteeism and to have produced more articulate and vocal students (Goulet and Spronk, 1988).

In New Zealand there is similar recognition that the needs of Māori learners are different to those

of non-Māori and that the current educational disadvantage of the Māori minority in a predominantly western educational tradition needs to be rectified. This applies to conventional and to distance education, in both of which the previous government policies of assimilation into mainstream education have resulted in low education performance for the Māori minority. It is now recognised that targeted intervention through affirmative action is an important factor in changing Māori education performance and subsequent participation of Māori in the workplace.

The creation of the Ministry of Māori Development (Te Puni Kokiri) is recognition by the State that valid and creative Māori traditions can generate initiatives to ensure and strengthen a people's identity and economic survival. The Māori people want interaction between themselves and the Government, which will benefit people collectively and will have people as the most important element. The Ministry of Māori Development has parallels with the Ministry of Northern Development in Ontario, in that it seeks to recognise and identify educational needs through consultation and innovative local initiatives, and to support these with state money designated for programme development.

In order to redesign delivery methods into a form appropriate and acceptable to the minority groups, the appropriate initial step is consultation with local communities. In New Zealand, as in Ontario and Alberta (Roberts, Croft and Derks, 1988; Goulet and Spronk, 1988)

a suitable model involves the appointment of a local tutor/supervisor, and the arrangement of suitable accommodation in the community which then enables students to meet and work as a group. The emerging challenge, however, is to examine and adapt the format, content and delivery of course packages which were designed for individual rather than classroom delivery (Goulet and Spronk, 1988). Content is culture bound: revision needs therefore to recognise and value the culture and knowledge of both the indigenous minorities and the predominant non-indigenous groups.

Course development can be a joint process between teachers and the leaders of indigenous political and administrative service groups, local and national. The consultative framework is one which first facilitates local delivery and then asks teachers to examine the assumptions behind subject disciplines and distance education pedagogy. One such assumption is individualised as opposed to a collaborative learning style. A challenge currently facing the Correspondence School is progression from the use of instructional design based on generally accepted pedagogical principles of distance education and of individual delivery, on which courses and teacher-learner interactivity have been so far based, to design materials through interaction between course developers and groups of indigenous students and their community, in order to incorporate minority curriculum for local community delivery.

If education is viewed by the Government as a means of shaping a productive and integrated society in New Zealand, then the Government will wish to increase access to education, by encouraging consultation and subsequent adaptation to suit a range of learners and learning styles. The Correspondence School has begun this consultation, and this paper concludes with description and discussion of two learning centres recently established out of such consultation to cater for isolated Māori secondary students within their communities.

NGĀ IWI MĀORI AND NEW ZEALAND EDUCATION Māori are approximately 13 percent of the total New

Zealand population. A high proportion of Māori population is in the younger age groups, the median age for Māori being 20.5 years compared to non-Māori median age of 31.3 years (1991). In 1994, Māori constituted 12 percent the national secondary school population, but constituted a significant 28 percent of the Correspondence School's fulltime secondary students; 22.5 percent of these Māori students were enrolled for reasons of geographical isolation whereas the comparative figure for non-Māori students was 16.6 percent.

Māori are the tangata whenua, the original people of the land. The New Zealand Māori population has been characterised by rural - urban migration since the early 1960s, but a significant proportion has either remained on ancestral family lands or, in the 1980s and 1990s, has returned to the land. The typical rural settlement is a small village based round a marae and a meeting house.

Retention on and return to the land have been paralleled, in both rural and urban settings, by a resurgence in the use of Te Reo, the Māori language, their valued taonga (treasure). Ngā Kohanga Reo, (language nests), developed in the 1980s, recognised the need to preserve the Māori language. Native speakers of Māori, mostly elderly people, especially women, are used to immerse children under five in the language. Some of these young Māori speakers were then catered for in Māori medium primary schools (Kura Kaupapa) and the earliest of them have, in the 1990s, reached secondary schools. Some of the more isolated of these adolescents are now enrolled in the secondary section of the Correspondence School.

National educational characteristics and student performance for Māori students show a dismal picture, but not quite as gloomy as that for the Correspondence School's Māori students. The school's track record for isolated rural Māori students to this point is not impressive. Generally this student group has been characterised by non-start, slow and low work returns, lack of educational achievement, early school leaving, and non-participation in school events. Educational problems have included

limited subject choices, low reading and comprehension levels, and limited success in national qualifications. Māori students typically left the school for unemployment rather than for employment or further training. Students 'at risk' in education are those who for a number of reasons are unable to make the most of what the education system has to offer (O'Rourke, 1994). The Māori students at the Correspondence School can be described as being at risk.

THE TREATY OF WAITANGI Current national education policy development seeks to promote the Government goal of an inclusive society. A dimension unique to New Zealand is recognition of the partnership agreement of the Treaty of Waitangi of 1840, between a representative of the British Crown and representatives of the chiefs of the iwi or tribes of the tangata whenua, the Māori acknowledged as the first people of the land. There has been therefore since 1989 increased implementation in all sectors of education of programmes in the Māori language and in a Māori environment - ngā kohanga reo, the language nests of the early childhood sector; kura kaupapa Māori schools with a Māori purpose and ethos; and wānanga houses of learning at the tertiary level. Managers of all mainstream institutions are required to consult with the Māori community, and in the case of schools, must develop policies and practices that reflect New Zealand's cultural diversity and the unique place of the Māori culture (Section 63, Education Act 1989.)

In developing its Charter in 1990 the Correspondence School's Board of Trustees, in consultation with its parent community, completed a range of guideline statements, some common to the total enrolment, and others specific to Māori students. These are summarised in Figure 1.

These charter goals and objectives were translated into specific objectives for the Board of Trustees' Strategic Plan. They were to:

- set up Te Hautanga-a-Rohe (advisory iwi group) to help to identify educational needs

among Māori people; support Māori students in their Correspondence School studies and in the recognition of their Māori identity; identify iwi resources which could be used to help Correspondence School Māori student.

- survey Māori students and the provision of courses, resources, teaching and support for them.
- meet with Te Hautanga-a-Rohe and establish the most effective ways in which the group could assist the Board and the Correspondence School's Māori community.
- endeavour to obtain the special funding allocations for Māori that were provided to other schools, but from which the Correspondence School was excluded.
- promote marae-based Secondary Learning Centres which would service the needs of secondary students, particularly at Form 5, 6 and 7 levels.

Once this phase has been completed, the Board of Trustees plans to increase its support for Māori students by identifying Māori students through the enrolment form, and providing area/district support. In addition, there is a recognised need to tap for support into established local patterns and social conventions and ensure there is, support for Māori students by Māori, and that networks were set up with the support of Te Hautanga-a-rohe, for example, a one-to-one buddy system for full-time students, teleconferencing through a subject and form teacher support system, and visiting by regional representatives with a Te Hautanga-a-Rohe member.

Other options that have been developed include attaching Māori teachers to catchment areas and school groups with many Māori students, and arranging for Māori staff to visit Māori fulltime students at home in liaising with regional representative.

These specific objectives and plans reflect the vision statement of the Strategic Plan which

Goal	Objective
1 Curriculum	To enhance children's learning.
2 Local curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To maximise the learning advantages of distance education for each student. To enhance learning by providing support for students and their parents / caregivers / whānau / supervisors. To assist students to acquire skills, knowledge and experiences that will help them make the transition into schools and into life beyond school. To provide quality courses, resources, teaching and support to individual students so that they progress and achieve good standards.
3 Community partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To enhance learning by establishing a partnership with the school's community and to be responsive to its educational needs and wishes.
4 Equity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To enhance learning by ensuring that the curriculum is ... non racist and that any disadvantages experienced at the school by students, parents or staff members because of ... ethnic ... background is acknowledged and addressed. To enhance learning by ensuring that the school's policies and practices seek to achieve equitable outcomes for students ... irrespective of their ... ethnic ... back-ground.
5 Treaty of Waitangi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To fulfil the intent of the Treaty of Waitangi by valuing and reflecting New Zealand's dual cultural heritage. Every year prepare policies which will ... make equitable provisions in the curriculum for the instructional needs of Māori children ... recognise Māori values in the provision of resources and facilities within the school.

Figure 1. Charter of the board of Trustees of the Correspondence School

affirms that the Correspondence School is a place where people come first; the unique position of Māori in New Zealand society is recognised and supported; the pluralist and multicultural nature of our society is acknowledged and respected; staff are valued and treated in a fair and equitable way; and where everyone works to achieve this vision.

The school's priorities include one for Māori development, with the objective of providing leadership in Māori education by honouring obligations under the Treaty of Waitangi. This is to be achieved through 'continued progressive implementation of Te Reo (Language) and Tikanga Māori (cultural traditions) resources,

culturally appropriate course development and teaching programmes at all levels,' and 'continued development and delivery in partnership with Māori communities of appropriate learning initiatives' (Strategic Plan, Board of Trustees, 1993).

In the *Action Plan* these priorities are expanded to include priorities and responsibilities in a 1994 -1998 timeframe (Figure 2).

The Board, in both its Charter and the priorities of its Strategic Plan, undertook modification and delivery of curriculum resources in a way which would recognise the cultural needs of Māori students.

Action Plan – Priority Māori	1994	94-96	94-98	Responsible
Provide leadership in partnership initiatives to enhance Māori education, e.g. Secondary Learning Centres	*	*	*	Director, Principals, Head of Department Māori
Analyse whether Correspondence School Māori expenditure is appropriate and sufficient.	*	*	*	Director, Executive Manager Operations
Seek Māori advice and involvement through <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Te Hautanga-a-Rohe and the Māori Department • Māori participation in decision making bodies • national Māori organisations 	*	*	*	Board Chairperson, Director, Principals, Head of Department Māori
Develop Māori primary school resources	*	*	*	Primary Principal, Manager Resource Planning and Development, Head of Department Māori
Update Māori curriculum and resources booklet.	*	*	*	Manager Resource Planning and Development, Head of Department Māori

Figure 2. Board of Trustees' action plan

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ACTION PLAN Implementation of the expression of intent in the Charter and the Board of Trustees Strategic Plan requires a concerted effort from school staff. In June 1994 a discussion group was initiated. In order to obtain a cross-school view, membership included the Principals for the Early Childhood, Primary and Secondary Schools, the Head of Department and Senior Teacher from the Māori teaching department, the Heads of Special Education and Student Support, and the school's statistician.

Initial discussion focused on what the group knew or did not know about Māori students and appropriate research questions were then developed. The school's computerised database was used to provide information on characteristics of 1993 Māori students such as age group, reasons for enrolment, length of

enrolment, gender, courses taken, work returns, examination results, geographical location and post-school destinations.

Enrolment data for the fulltime secondary school showed that 28 percent of its students, were Māori. Māori students were disproportionately represented in dysfunctional enrolment categories (close to 50 percent of the total Māori students were enrolled by the Children and Young Persons' Service, or for reasons of pregnancy, school suspension or on psychological grounds); 22.5 percent of Māori students were enrolled as geographically remote students who were concentrated in the rural districts of Gisborne, Rotorua, Waikato, Taranaki/Wanganui, Hawkes Bay, and North Auckland.

National education statistics for Māori secondary students were echoed by Correspondence School

Māori students. The majority of Māori students enrolled in years 1-3 of their secondary education remained for less than a year and returned little or no work during their enrolment. A small minority left the school for tertiary education and training, and a quarter were withdrawn for no work return or for loss of contact. Generally awards in New Zealand Qualifications Authority qualifications were not impressive and few students entered. Māori girls chose subjects at fifth and sixth form which limited their educational performance and future choices.

Some target areas emerged from this information:

1. *Getting started:* A significant proportion of Māori students (one fifth) did not start work after their enrolment.
2. *Subject choice:* Māori girls reflected the national trend in choosing Form 5 subjects which gave a reduced subject choice in Form 6, thus restricting their opportunities for further study and employment.
3. *Study persistence:* students leave school early, are enrolled for less than six months and have a nil or low work achievement while enrolled.
4. *Qualifications at withdrawal:* four out of five Correspondence School Māori students leave school with no qualification.
5. *Transition to tertiary education training:* very few Māori students leave school to enter employment or further training and education.
6. *Location:* the highest concentrations of rural Māori students are in Gisborne, Rotorua, Waikato, Taranaki, Wanganui, Hawkes Bay, and the Far North.
7. *Placement in specialised secondary groups:* the school's Tinakori group works with students who at enrolment are identified as low or under achievers; 50 percent of 1994 Tinakori students are Māori.

The discussion group then developed its tentative action plan:

1 Courses And Resources

- Ensure that courses are suitable for Māori students (i.e. are relevant, accessible, etc.)

Action Investigate course return data
Research successful courses.
Consider alternative methods of course delivery

- Encourage a planned and systematic approach to including a Māori perspective in all courses.

Action Develop a school-wide plan.
Develop a process for Sections and Departments for consultation with the Māori Department.

- Review the teaching of Te Reo throughout the school.

Action Prepare a discussion paper for Te Hautanga-a-Rohe.
Review current provision at Primary and Early Childhood level.

2 Student Support

- Develop policies that encourage Māori students to achieve success in their learning.

Action Conduct research to identify factors that promote success. Liaise with Māori communities and Te Hautanga-a-Rohe.

- Extend the Learning Centre model in rural communities.

Action Explore means of providing funding to support this.

- Continue to develop partnership with trusts and other providers in urban centres.

Action Develop a policy statement.

- Improve procedures to encourage an earlier start and increased work returns from Māori students.

Action Review induction, placement and support procedures for Māori

students. Review course guidance and pathway information given to Māori students.

- Increase parents' awareness in the importance of supporting their child with their education.

3 Regional Support

- Promote improved home – school liaison and regional support to assist Māori parent supervisors.

Action Consult Māori parents, Te Hautanga a-Rohe, the Māori department on the establishment of regional networks for Māori parents.

- Develop appropriate support materials.

4 Research

- Provide resources to enable research to be carried out into identifying factors associated with the educational performance of Māori students.

Action Develop a research brief.

5 Māori Staff

- Recruit more Māori teachers at all levels.

Action Review policies for appointment and Equal Employment Opportunities.

6 Bicultural Perspective In The Correspondence School

- Establish principles and guidelines for incorporating bicultural perspectives within the school.

Action Provide staff training on Treaty obligations.
Professional Development Plan for 1995.

7 Further Education/Career Aspirations

- Encourage career aspirations and planning for continuing education and training.

Action Review Transition provision and the availability of scholarships for Māori students.

This action plan, together with background material and questions, was then presented for discussion at a joint meeting of the study group, the Board of Trustees and Te Hautanga-a-Rohe. Discussion and planning are ongoing.

THE FIRST TRIAL PROJECT: SECONDARY LEARNING CENTRES

Evolving research, comment, consultation and policy development have been paralleled by action on two projects. The first, the development of two Secondary Learning Centres described below, has similarities to the Alberta experience in that a local classroom and a community based tutor supervisor are provided. Similar effects to the Alberta experience are noted in the evaluation reports, notably greater participation and success in curricular and extra-curricular areas.

The centres have been set up in two isolated rural communities for Māori secondary students. The aim was to test a new model for student support at secondary level (period of trial August 1993 -August 1994). Two objectives were specified, namely, to improve the educational performance of the rural Māori students involved, and to trial a different method of providing student support at secondary level. The centres were established at Matahiwi (Whanganui River Valley) and Ruatāhuna.

It has been accepted practice in both communities for students to leave their community and board when starting their secondary education. However it was common for boarding arrangements to break down with the result that students returned home and enrolled with the Correspondence School. Suspension, pregnancy, lack of financial resources have also been some of the reasons for enrolling with the Correspondence School, but homesickness was probably the major factor. Figure 3 sets out the structure of the centres. Te Puni Kokiri and the Correspondence School shared the cost of two supervisor salaries, while a small grant towards operating costs was provided by Te Puni Kokiri.

With respect to evaluation, the partners involved in the project established a baseline, against which the success of the initiative could be measured, by producing entry reports. The Correspondence School report measured the success of students enrolled with the Correspondence School prior to the establishment of the centres. A final report evaluated how well the centres met the objectives of the trial.

The project was a response to the expressed desire of Māori parents to do something tangible to help their children. They wanted help to set up a learning environment which was both supportive and included a Māori Kaupapa. The Board of Trustees agreed to the request and a partner for the trial project was found in Te Puni Kokiri (Ministry of Māori Development). A joint decision was made to extend the trial project, Matahiwi, by offering a Learning Centre to the Tuhoe people in the isolated community of Ruatāhuna. The offer was accepted.

The involvement of the Correspondence School in such a project enabled the students to access comprehensive curriculum and teaching programmes. The school also provided quality teaching input and both student and staff support.

In each case, a partnership between the parents, Te Puni Kokiri and the Correspondence School provided a number of opportunities and advantages in meeting the needs of the students. These include opportunities to provide students enrolled with the Correspondence School with culturally appropriate supervision beneficial in terms of the students' educational progress; to strengthen links between parents, students and the whanau; for students to access learning in an environment under the guidance of family, whanau and elders as well as Correspondence School staff; for students to work at their own level and pace in each course; for students to experience success with their studies and the sense of achievement derived from this will

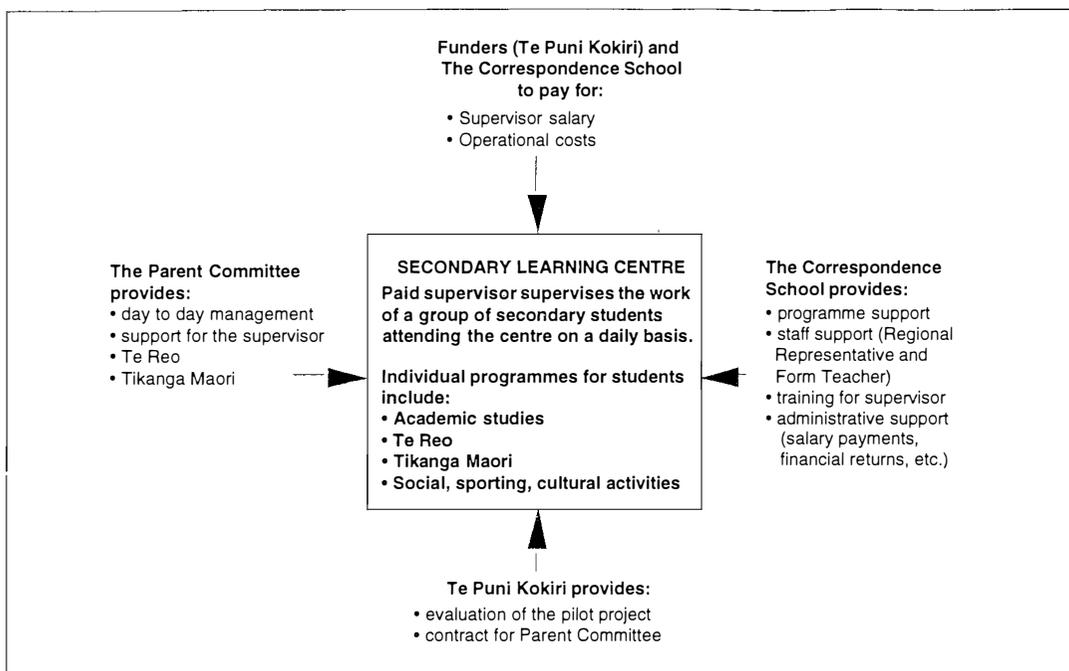


Figure 3. Structure of a secondary learning centre

develop positive student attitudes and work habits; for students to learn in a supportive environment which will help them to take responsibility for their own learning, to develop self discipline and to learn independent study skills; for Māori staff from the Correspondence School and members of the Correspondence School Te Hautanga-a-Rohe to liaise with and support both staff and students in the secondary learning centre; and provide a comprehensive programme that includes cultural, sporting and group learning activities.

Getting started

There were initial concerns about numbers likely to attend the centres, but by the time the centres opened, there were sufficient students for each to operate. As the term drew to a close in 1993, it was apparent that numbers likely to attend the centres in 1994 would rise considerably, and this has proved to be the case. Ruatāhuna had 26 attending and Matahiwi had nine in 1994. This rapid growth indicates the support the two communities have given to the centres, and as such is a measure of success. On the other hand the numbers attending have put a severe strain on accommodation, resources and time available for individual supervision.

Entry reports

The data collected for the Correspondence School entry report clearly illustrated the problems faced by Māori secondary students living in isolated communities. The entry report showed that most students worked on a reduced course; did not return work regularly, did not participate in Correspondence School activities, and dropped out early. It should also be stated that many of these students also had problems in conventional schooling.

Final evaluation

The information collected for the final evaluation report provided a clear indication that the Secondary Learning Centre model works. The centre has given rural Māori secondary students working through distance education the support they need to be successful in their studies. The outcomes were a higher standard of work, regular return of work from students, improvement in test grades, work

return from students who have previously shown little interest in schooling, individual responses, student questioning, asking for help, students initiating phone calls to their Wellington-based form teachers, additional subjects added to courses, enhanced self-esteem and confidence – a more positive attitude from the student, participation in transition activities, gaining transition certificates, attending at Link transition courses, and beneficial behavioural outcomes for students as well as educational benefits when studying on courses at their level.

Analysis of the information collected indicates that there are difficulties in providing for large numbers of students at a centre. The supervisor of a centre is not a trained teacher. The role of the supervisor is not the same as that of a teacher. Student courses and the associated teaching is supplied by Correspondence School staff. The task of the supervisor is to provide a good learning environment, ensure that the students complete the work sent by the Correspondence School, provide one to one attention where a student has a problem, give praise and help when required, keep the teachers in Wellington informed on progress and report any problem and provide opportunities for a range of extra-curricular activities. The more students at a centre, the more demanding the task of supervision becomes. This is especially so when the group attending includes students with special learning needs.

Prior to the establishment of the learning centres, students from the Whanganui River Valley and Ruatāhuna did not participate in school activities. This changed and students attended the following events:

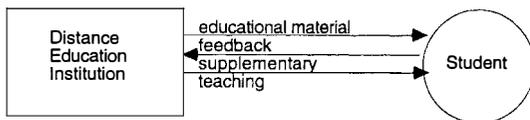
- *School days, weekends and camps* – Organised by regional representatives in co-operation with parents, and with support from school staff. The organised events give opportunities for social interactions and group learning experiences.
- *Transition education* – Organised by four transition teachers who serve geographic areas in New Zealand and organise transition

and work experience courses in various centres. They also place students on Link courses at Polytechnics in their areas or with the Open Polytechnic of New Zealand, or with local course providers while the student continues at the Correspondence School.

- *Parents' Conference* – A week-long, annual event held in Wellington with programmes provided for students and parents.

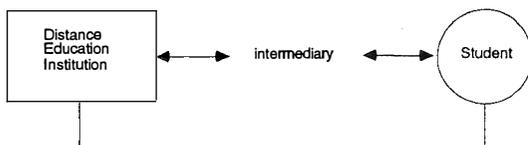
LEARNING CENTRES: A THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE Tate (1992) provides a useful analysis for locating learning centres within a general theory of distance education. The secondary learning centre does not fit his first model (Model A) which involves *isolated students learning independently*, using educational materials provided by an institution, with varying degrees of feedback from the student, and supplementary teaching by teachers at the institution.

Model A



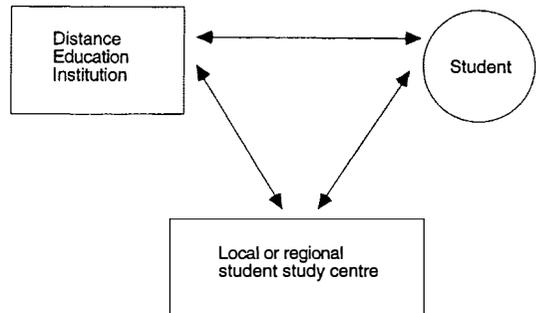
Nor does it fully fit the model (Model B) which introduces an intermediary or teacher supervisor as a necessary element for successful distance education with young children, or people who are illiterate or unschooled. In this model the supervisor, organises the students, materials and environment; reads, shows or plays resources such as print materials, tapes, radio, TV and tells students what to do; tutors; assesses student progress, and judges when to move on; and provides feedback to students. The supervisor may need to be trained in such things as the basics of mathematics learning or teaching reading. In the Correspondence School this model is found at Early Childhood and Primary level.

Model B



A third model (Model C) introduces the idea of a *partial intermediary, who provides organisation, encouragement and supplementary teaching*, based in student centres where students work with resources and in groups, and get some counselling and support. Students gain support from each other through working together in groups.

Model C



This delivery model is appropriate to the secondary learning centres. However, the context in which the centres operate adds another dimension to the model.

Model C on its own allows for a blending of what are usually seen as opposites in the delivery of education.



The setting in which the centres operate allows for a unique mix of two quite different educational strands:



The centres have the potential to allow two contrasting views to blend and coexist:



The most important aspect of this initiative is its potential to develop into something unique in Māori education. The people of Matahiwi have spoken of the possibility of establishing a Whare Wananga based on the success of this trial project. The Ruatāhuna Learning Centre is a means for the disadvantaged to access education so (the Centre) should not be confined to correspondence studies but embrace outpost tertiary level courses, and adult education and rural education assistance programmes (Te Puni Kokiri, Report)

THE SECOND TRIAL PROJECT - CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Tikanga is defined as a process that governs appropriate conduct and dictates correct situational behaviour. Consultation by management of the Correspondence School has enabled the incorporation of Tikanga into school procedures such as powhiri and karakia and into development of school policies. Such policies now provide for the use of Māori advisers in course development and editing.

There is recognition of a consultant role for Māori staff throughout the school on Māori issues and they are included in a range of committees dealing with school policy and implementation issues.

The extended family relationship given expression in the formation of Secondary Learning Centres has now been complemented by the establishment of a Board of Trustees advisory iwi group, Te Hautanga-a-rohe.

It has been accepted that there is a progression possible from the current use of instructional design based on individual delivery to one which attempts to incorporate an inclusive or diverse minority curriculum, through interaction between an indigenous people and course developers of the Western tradition that has predominated.

CONCLUSION This paper has demonstrated that the distance education delivery practice

which offers the learner personal autonomy in the Western academic tradition can be modified for delivery to tangata whenua, the people of the land. The expansion of formal and non-formal curriculum, and increased and improving student involvement in the secondary learning centres at Matahiwi and Ruatāhuna, are initial evidence of the potential of a successful collaborative delivery model.

The challenge to examine and adapt the format, content and delivery of course packages to recognise both majority and minority culture, has been met initially through the school's adoption of Māori protocols.

The Board of Trustees in partnership with the iwi advisory group, Te Hautanga-a-rohe and through practice and discussion, is demonstrating a willingness to develop further the partnership between Māori and non-Māori.

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