# Te Mātaiaho: Exploring the Experiences of a Group of New Zealand Teachers Who Engaged with Complex Curriculum Reform

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# Abstract

This study adopted an interpretivist theoretical framework to examine the experiences of nine "early-adopter" teachers in New Zealand who engaged with a complex curriculum reform. While much existing research emphasises teachers' perceptions, attitudes, or analyses of policy, this study aimed to capture their experiences in their own words, revealing the intricate challenges involved in implementing the refreshed curriculum. Findings indicated that the demands of educational reform were frequently underestimated, with teachers feeling unsupported, exploited, and overwhelmed despite their advocacy for the changes.

The research highlighted the multiple layers of complexity in realising the curriculum's vision, emphasising that the integration of mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge) in partnership with tangata whenua (the Indigenous people of New Zealand) involved considerable shifts in educators' mindsets, knowledge, and practices. Addressing social inequities necessitated not only curriculum revisions but broader transformations within the education system and society. The study highlighted the importance of recognising the time and effort required to build meaningful relationships and support the incorporation of Indigenous knowledge within established school systems.

Furthermore, the research illustrated the need for greater awareness of teachers' roles and the challenges they face during curriculum changes. It called for a reevaluation of how New Zealand policymakers approach educational reform to avoid overburdening teachers with societal changes and frequent shifts in focus. Ultimately, the study emphasised the necessity of a collaborative, sustainable approach to education reform that values teachers' insights and fosters supportive structures, paving the way for a more effective educational landscape that benefits both educators and students.

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# Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

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teachers so we can maintain the energy needed to do the most important part of our job: teaching with energy and passion.

# Chapter 1: Introduction

## 1.1 Introducing the Context

In 2023, a refreshed version of the *New Zealand Curriculum* (NZC) was first published for feedback, with the intention for all schools to have implemented this new curriculum by 2026. A major feature of this curriculum refresh included a new framework for the NZC called *Te Mātaiaho,* henceforth referred to as the Refresh or the Refreshed curriculum. While curriculum changes are an expected feature in education, the Refreshed curriculum was part of a series of ongoing shifts that continually expanded its goals and increased demands on teachers. For this refreshment, the NZC underwent a significant overhaul, fundamentally redefining its purpose and direction, thereby presenting a particularly complex challenge for teachers in New Zealand.

The core changes to the curriculum were a response to extensive consultation across New Zealand, reflecting feedback that the current education system was not meeting the needs of all learners. As a result, changes to the NZC aimed to reduce inequality and promote fairness for all learners, especially those who had been historically underserved by the education system. The Ministry of Education (MOE), in the guiding documents, described the refreshed curriculum as a 'call to action' for New Zealand educators, reminding teachers to "hold themselves accountable…to those ākonga who have historically been left behind or situated on the margins" (MOE, 2023a, p.8). Central to addressing persistent historical inequities particularly for Māori learners, this curriculum placed Te Tiriti o Waitangi (the Treaty of Waitangi), New Zealand's founding document signed in 1840, at the heart of its guiding vision for the first time. The guiding documents specified the vision and aspirations of the Refreshed curriculum derived from the preambles and articles of Te Tiriti (MOE, 2023a). This marked a significant milestone as Te Tiriti o Waitangi assumed a central role in the NZC framework.

The updated curriculum was positioned as a "catalyst for equity" (MOE, 2023a, p.13), emphasising accountability of teachers to Te Tiriti o Waitangi and prioritising marginalised ākonga (students). This included upholding mutual obligations to protect taonga (treasure) such as te reo (language of Māori people), tikanga Māori (Māori law, customary law, attitudes and principles), and mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge), with a focus on promoting mātauranga Māori and te reo Māori in the updated policy (MOE, 2023). For many educators, this was a new experience. In pioneering changes, mātauranga Māori was acknowledged and granted equal status alongside other bodies of knowledge.

To "bring alive the vision of the refreshed curriculum" (MOE, 2023a, p.38) and elevate mātauranga Māori, a new curriculum approach was outlined. Educators were guided to build their school-specific curriculum from national curricula, integrating local perspectives, mātauranga Māori, contextual elements, and partnerships. The guiding documents specified:

> Schools [should] authentically partner with tangata whenua [the Indigenous people of New Zealand] locally in the design and review of the school curriculum in ways that are sustainable

> for tangata whenua. The local knowledge, experiences, worldviews, and perspectives of tangata whenua are prioritised and embedded within the content and delivery of the learning areas in ways that tangata whenua recognise and support. Mātauranga Māori, te reo Māori, me ngā tikanga feature throughout the school curriculum. (MOE, 2023a, p.38)

While the revision of the NZC offered an opportunity to address long-standing inequities for specific groups of learners, the changes required from educators were multifaceted. This reform demanded educators forge new partnerships, integrate and interpret new knowledge, while concurrently redesigning a school curriculum. While the NZC has continued to expand the scope of the curriculum, this reform introduced significant complexity due to the new knowledge and partnerships required of teachers. The directive of the Refreshed Curriculum extended beyond teaching specialist content or developing learners' values and competencies to include revitalising knowledge systems and addressing long-standing historical inequities, signifying a broader responsibility beyond the classroom. The demand on teachers was substantial.

### 1.2 Purpose of the Research

The successful implementation of curriculum reforms in education hinges significantly on teachers, who play a pivotal role in translating new curriculum guidelines into effective classroom practices (O'Toole, 2000). Research has consistently highlighted the challenges teachers face during periods of curriculum change, yet there has been limited research in New Zealand exploring teachers' firsthand experiences with these changes. In a profession where new teacher retention is low and burnout levels are high, amidst a constantly evolving education direction, it is crucial to understand teachers' experiences with another reform, particularly considering the magnitude of these changes. Amidst multiple simultaneous curriculum changes and the added strain of COVID-19 on the profession in recent years, the expectations placed on teachers due to the refreshed curriculum have been huge.

This research project examined the experiences of nine educators from four secondary schools who were early adopters of the refreshed curriculum. Through their experiences, this research aimed to delve into what teachers encounter when engaging with a complex curriculum reform, providing insights into the intricacies of curriculum change and highlighting the demands placed on teachers. While many stakeholders, including teachers, advocate for additional time and resources, the reality is far more intricate than mere resource allocation.

### 1.3 History of Changes to the *New Zealand Curriculum*

Part of exploring the experiences of teachers implementing these curriculum changes is understanding New Zealand's own history of periodically changing the curriculum framework. New Zealand's first national curriculum framework was developed in the 1990s. It was designed as an outcome-based curriculum replacing the preexisting syllabus and broad content of education from previous years. Criticism of the education system had been steadily growing "with cries from within society… that questioned the outcomes of schooling and the worth and work of professionals" (Shearer, 2015, p. 12).

In response, the delivery of an outcomes-focused curriculum: ‘a curriculum that sets out what we want students to know and to be able to do” (MOE, 2015, p. 4). The national curriculum framework divided learning into seven essential areas and focused on levels of learning with aims and achievement outcomes against which students could be assessed. These initiatives were aimed at providing a standardised way of tracking student achievement and “the curriculum levels, with their aims and achievement outcomes, were intended to provide a criterion-referenced framework that could be used for that purpose” (Smaill & Darr, 2020,p.3). Essential skills such as communication and numeracy were defined, and values such as honesty and reliability were included in the curriculum.

In the 2000s, the curriculum document was reviewed, leading to the release of a revised NZC statement in 2007. This update aimed to adapt to the “pace of social change” (MOE, 2015, p.4). The opening foreword noted that our population had become “more diverse, technologies more advanced, and workplace demands more complex, and our education system needed to respond to these challenges and others of our time” (MOE, 2015, p.4). The NZC (2007) was a response to this perceived challenge and there was a clear shift of focus in this curriculum from content knowledge and skills to fostering ‘lifelong learners’. Teachers were encouraged to develop learners’ values and attitudes to prepare them for active participation in society. The revised NZC (2007) emphasised values and key competencies to achieve this goal, with values to be “encouraged, modelled, and explored” and a recommendation to involve communities in shaping school values rooted in local contexts. This highlighted an increasing focus on involving the community in curriculum development.

In addition to values, the NZC (2007) update introduced key competencies like “managing self” and “relating to others” to nurture learners as effective contributors to society, expanding the educational scope beyond traditional classroom learning. These competencies, described as more complex than skills, integrated knowledge, attitudes, and values to encourage practical application. The NZC (2007) highlighted that competencies evolve over time through interactions with people, places, ideas, and objects, underscoring the importance of challenging and supporting students in diverse and challenging environments (MOE, 2015, p.12).

Simultaneously, the 2007 revised curriculum broadened in other areas. Teaching for diversity became a key focus, introducing languages as an eighth essential learning area to actively engage students in New Zealand’s multicultural society and the global community. Previously lacking specific material direction in curriculum design or pedagogy, the revised curriculum introduced resources and guidelines for quality teaching and learning. It emphasised using principles that guide all curriculum design decisions, and included sections on pedagogy and curriculum materials to help teachers meet the needs of diverse learners.

The refreshed *Te Mātaiaho* curriculum framework of 2023 emerged in response to curriculum projects during the 2020s, which highlighted that the existing system was not adequately serving all learners.

To review the entire education system, including the curriculum framework, the government at the time engaged in extensive consultation with New Zealanders through a series of education conversations known as Kōrero Mātauranga.

This initiative encouraged broad participation in the discussions, particularly aiming to include groups whose voices had traditionally been underrepresented in conversations about the future of education, such as children, young people, Māori, Pacific peoples, parents, and individuals with learning support needs (MOE, 2024b). The Kōrero Mātauranga consultation gathered over 43,000 responses on a range of topics. The prevailing view among respondents was that the then-current education system did not sufficiently address the needs of all learners.

Simultaneously, according to reports from the MOE in 2022, despite a decade of reiterated strategy under *Ka Hikitia: Managing for Success*, the Māori education strategy (MOE, 2024a), there was little improvement in reducing educational inequities for Māori learners. These findings collectively prompted a new commitment from the government to address equity in education, particularly focusing on the shortcomings in serving Māori and Pacific learners within the current system.

The newly established commitment materialised in the form of the 2023 refreshed curriculum, titled *Te Mātaiaho*, marking a shift towards a *progression*-focused bicultural *approach* (Chamberlain et al., 2021). This represented a significant reshaping of the bicultural aspect of the NZC. While New Zealand's initial national framework from the 1990s briefly acknowledged biculturalism, and the second iteration in 2007 broadened its scope to encompass diversity and emphasised the expectation for teachers to incorporate Te Tiriti o Waitangi into their curriculum design, the Refreshed curriculum aimed to cultivate the next generation of Te Tiriti partners by moving beyond merely "honouring" Te Tiriti, to actively implementing its principles. For the first time, the NZC had taken its direction from Te Tiriti o Waitangi and its principles, particularly its provision for the active protection of taonga, including te reo Māori, tikanga Māori, and mātauranga Māori, and for fair and equitable educational processes and outcomes for Māori and for all ākonga (MOE, 2023a, p.8).

The Refreshed curriculum aimed to address classroom inequalities by safeguarding language and knowledge. The 2023 revision broadened the role of curriculum in New Zealand which expanded expectations for educators. They were seen as change agents responsible for repairing historical inequities in society. Educators needed to embrace new knowledge frameworks, form genuine partnerships with Indigenous and community members, and develop innovative curriculum approaches without relying on past strategies. This latest curriculum iteration posed significant complexity and demanded more from educators compared to previous versions of the New Zealand Curriculum.

### 1.4 Rationale

This thesis investigates the experiences of nine teachers who actively engaged with the Refreshed curriculum. These early adopters of the curriculum changes, known for their reflective practice and

early adoption of this educational reform, offer a unique perspective on the complexities inherent in curriculum change. By exploring their experiences, this study aims to challenge conventional understandings of how teachers navigate and contribute to the process of curriculum reform. Teachers are often expected to drive change, relying on time and resources as essential support for implementation. However, this thesis shows that the reality is more nuanced than this assumption suggests.

### 1.5 Research Question

This research is guided by the following overarching research question:

- What are the experiences of a group of New Zealand teachers who are engaged with complex curriculum reform?

# Chapter 2: Background Context

## 2.1 Introduction

Exploring the experiences of New Zealand teachers requires an understanding of the significant changes introduced by the 2023 refreshed curriculum framework. As highlighted in the introduction, this framework was described as a "catalyst for change" (MOE, 2023a, p.8), representing a major overhaul that was intended to address long-standing historical issues by placing Te Tiriti o Waitangi at the core of its guiding vision. The Treaty of Waitangi was a treaty of cession and protection signed by representatives of the British Crown and chiefs of over 500 iwi (tribes) and hapū (subtribes) (Bromell, 2008, as cited in Lourie, 2015, p. 132). Since its signing, the translations and interpretations of the Treaty have been subject to considerable debate, research, and division. For the first time, the curriculum framework emphasised a bicultural approach, transforming teachers' responsibilities from merely "acknowledging" Te Tiriti o Waitangi to actively "giving effect" to its principles—a shift that had been evolving gradually through New Zealand's curriculum reforms.

Placing Te Tiriti o Waitangi at the centre of a revised curriculum framework entailed a complex array of changes for teachers and schools. Beyond the usual challenges of updating assessment frameworks and conceptual foundations, teachers faced the additional task of integrating mātauranga Māori into their curricula. This required building relationships with tangata whenua to gain the necessary knowledge. This chapter explores the conceptual foundations of the curriculum reform to provide a sense of the scale of the task that lay before the early-adopter participants in this study.

## 2.2 The Emergence of the Refreshed *New Zealand Curriculum*

The NZC framework has progressively expanded its scope since its introduction in the 1990s, as detailed in the introduction. The NZC has evolved through various iterations to encompass future-oriented learning, values, and competencies considered vital for New Zealand society (MOE, 2015). Notably, the 2007 version marked a significant shift by emphasising teaching for diversity, reflecting a strong commitment to addressing a broader range of educational needs and societal expectations.

In 2017, the Labour government, under the leadership of Minister of Education Chris Hipkins, launched a major overhaul of the New Zealand education system. This 3-year initiative involved the previously mentioned Kōrero Mātauranga consultations. The extensive consultation emphasised the importance of a learner-centred education system, the importance of equity and valuing all learners, and of a holistic approach to learning, which is more connected to the community, and which integrates Māori and Pacific values into the curriculum (MOE, 2023c). Findings showed a broad consensus on the value of well-being, equality, and inclusion, though these were not consistently realised for all learners. Māori participants highlighted the importance of embedding Te Tiriti o Waitangi in all policies and asserted that mātauranga Māori should not be the sole responsibility of iwi (tribes) (MOE, 2023c). The overall

message was a strong call to redesign the education system to better enhance inclusion and equity for all learners.

During the additional 3 years of Labour's tenure, the focus transitioned from the broad review and consultation phase of the Education Work Programme to tackling the identified barriers through sector-wide initiatives. This included revising directives for school boards, which are Crown entities responsible for school governance in New Zealand. The Education and Training Act 2020 required school boards to update their objectives to ensure governance aligned with Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

At the same time, the introduction of the Aotearoa New Zealand Histories Curriculum (ANZHC) marked a pivotal change by mandating that New Zealand history be taught in all schools. This shift signalled a commitment to embedding Māori history as the core historical narrative of New Zealand. The prime minister emphasised the significance of this curriculum, pointing out that teaching national history is a global standard and that New Zealand was aligning with this practice (Gerritsen, 2024). Previously, the inclusion of New Zealand's history in education was not compulsory so any New Zealand history was dependent on a teacher or schools' interest. The inclusion of Aotearoa New Zealand histories in schools was seen as being necessary to help fulfil Te Tiriti o Waitangi obligations and the changes as important, overdue, and of benefit to learners and to Aotearoa New Zealand (New Zealand Council for Educational Research, 2021). The ANZHC sought to ensure that all students gain an understanding of how historical events have influenced contemporary New Zealand. The curriculum centred on four main themes: Māori history as the foundational history, colonisation, the use of power, and the connections between people (Gerritsen, 2024).

Following the widely publicised Kōrero Mātauranga consultation, the announcement of the National Education and Learning Priorities (NELP) 2020 became a key focus. The NELP outlined five main objectives designed to strengthen Aotearoa's education system in response to the findings of the consultation.

1. Learner at the centre
2. Barrier-free access to education
3. Quality teaching and learning
4. Future of learning
5. World-class inclusive education system

With a renewed commitment to advancing educational equity, Minister of Education Hipkins introduced major action plans that built on the NELP, including targeted measures to support Māori and Pasifika learners. A key focus of these plans was to "refresh" the curriculum. The changes to the curriculum drew on insights from previous initiatives like the Ka Hikitia action plan, the Māori education strategy (MOE, 2024a), along with feedback from the Kōrero consultation. A major feature of the curriculum reform was the introduction of a new framework for the NZC, known as *Te Mātaiaho*.

The refreshed curriculum centred Te Tiriti o Waitangi and its principles, marking a significant shift from previous curricula. It aimed to actively embed Te Tiriti at the heart of educational practices rather than treating it peripherally. This approach emphasised mātauranga Māori and te reo Māori to address persistent educational inequities for Māori and enhance learning outcomes for all ākonga. Reflecting on contemporary issues, including the revitalisation of Māori culture, language and knowledge systems, the curriculum strove to integrate New Zealand's dual heritage into educational practices, fostering a more inclusive and representative environment (MOE, 2023b).

These changes to the Refreshed curriculum framework were major and introduced significant complexity for teachers. Amidst a multitude of other changes, this reform presented a dual challenge: they were required to integrate a new knowledge system—mātauranga Māori—into the curriculum while also establishing relationships with tangata whenua. This multifaceted undertaking added considerable depth to the already demanding process of educational reform, requiring that teachers simultaneously acquire new knowledge and foster meaningful connections.

### 2.3 From biculturalism to Treaty-based relationships

Placing Te tiriti o Waitangi at the centre of the Refreshed curriculum framework was a new development in educational policy. Prior to the Refreshed curriculum a bicultural relationship between Māori and the Crown had been acknowledged in education policy and curriculum documents. The NZC (2007) for example 'acknowledges the bicultural foundations of New Zealand" (MOE, 2007) but the Refresh signalled a shift from previous bicultural models of the past to more aspirational Treaty-based partnerships relationships.

Lourie (2015) traces the evolution of biculturalism in education, using a bicultural continuum developed by Fleras and Spoonley (1999) to identify four different forms of biculturalism that can be found in education policy: soft, moderate, inclusive, and strong forms. In the early stages of biculturalism, whilst it was in its 'soft' form, the aim was to celebrate Māoritanga (Māori culture), while 'moderate' biculturalism aimed to improve race relations by promoting traditional Māori culture (Lourie, 2015, p. 134). In contrast, later strong forms of biculturalism, advocated by Māori academics like Ranginui Walker (1986), called for a power-sharing model and the development of independent Māori institutions, such as kura Kaupapa Māori—an independent education system within the state-funded sector (Lourie, 2015).

Lourie (2015) notes that 'inclusive' biculturalism, which aims to materialize partnership practices between the state and iwi groups, has predominantly shaped the policy landscape. However, because of the different forms of biculturalism that have appeared in educational policy over time, and the lack of consensus about the term means, the term "biculturalism" has remained unclear in its application, leading to confusion among teachers and school leaders attempting to operationalise it despite teachers'

familiarity with the concept through teacher education and the Practising Teacher Criteria for New Zealand teaching registration ( Lourie, 2015). The most recent version of biculturalism promoted by the Refreshed curriculum required educators to build authentic relationship with Māori as a way of addressing educational inequalities.

This introduced a significant layer of complexity to the reform. According to Lourie (2017) Treaty-based relationships have been approached in varied and inconsistent ways throughout New Zealand's educational history. Consequently, the principles for creating a respectful partnership that truly honours Te Tiriti o Waitangi may not have been fully understood by teachers. For educators-particularly those with limited knowledge of New Zealand's history of varying experiences of bicultural initiatives-the expectation that they forge meaningful relationships with tangata whenua in accordance with Te Tiriti o Waitangi was a substantial task.

The Refreshed curriculum aimed to actively embed Treaty-based relationships into educational practices. One of the key expectations of the Refresh was that teachers would learning through local relationships with tangata whenua and the community (MOE, 2023a). This involved using the national curriculum as a framework to develop a school curriculum with a local lens, integrating mātauranga Māori, te reo Māori, and tikanga Māori, and incorporating local knowledge, experiences, and perspectives.

Teachers were also required to draw on local stories, people, issues, and resources to make the curriculum more relevant and engaging for students, ensuring it reflected and responded to the local context. The curriculum's demand for genuine partnerships with tangata whenua, especially for those with limited knowledge of New Zealand's history or past bicultural initiatives in education, presents an enormous challenge. The complexity and magnitude of this task is highlighted in the quote below from the New Zealand Human Rights Committee.

*A Treaty-based partnership, based on Te Tiriti o Waitangi, means following key principles to ensure that all parties foster fair and effective collaborations between Māori and the Crown. These include partnership, which promotes shared decision making; participation, ensuring Māori are involved in decisions; and protection, safeguarding Māori rights and culture. Equity addresses historical inequalities, redress involves correcting past wrongs, and mutual benefit ensures both parties gain from the partnership. Respecting Māori authority acknowledges Māori governance, while transparency and accountability require openness about decisions. Reciprocity emphasises mutual obligations and honouring commitments. These principles collectively guide the creation and maintenance of equitable and respectful relationships in line with Te Tiriti o Waitangi* (Tikanga Tātaki, n.d.).

**2.4 Mātauranga Māori**

A key aspect of the curriculum changes was its provision for the active protection of taonga, including te reo Māori, tikanga Māori, and mātauranga Māori (MOE, 2023a), by embedding mātauranga Māori throughout the framing of the curriculum, the learning areas in *Te Mātaiaho*, and the learning experiences of ākonga (MOE, 2023a). By giving prominence to mātauranga Māori and te reo Māori [the refreshed curriculum] aimed to transform the educational inequities for Māori (MOE, 2023a).

In his research exploring the knowledge of New Zealand, Hikuroa (2017) defined mātauranga Māori as:

> The term most commonly used to describe Māori knowledge (Mead 2003), incorporating 'the body of knowledge originating from Māori ancestors, including Māori world view and perspectives, Māori creativity and cultural practices' (Māori Dictionary 2003), the knowledge, comprehension, or understanding of everything visible and invisible existing in the universe, including present-day, historic, local and traditional knowledge; systems of knowledge transfer and storage; and Māori goals, aspirations and issues (Landcare Research 1996) and "the unique Māori way of viewing the world, encompassing both traditional knowledge and culture" (Waitangi Tribunal, 2011, p.5).

Mātauranga Māori encompasses not just content but represents the worldview through which Māori perceive reality—defining what is regarded as actual, probable, possible, or impossible (Marsden, 2003, as cited in Hikuroa, 2017). It includes not only the notion of knowing but also how mātauranga Māori is understood and transmitted, including how Māori explain, comprehend, and develop their understanding of phenomena and reality (Waitangi Tribunal, 2011, as cited in Hikuroa, 2017). Thus, mātauranga Māori can be described as Māori epistemology, or, in the simplest terms, a theory of knowledge.

Mātauranga Māori, a term used since the 1970s and found in 19th-century Māori manuscripts, represents the Indigenous knowledge developed by peoples who navigated and settled the Pacific Islands, eventually arriving in Aotearoa. This knowledge system evolved over thousands of years, influenced by the environment and experiences of its people. Mātauranga Māori encompasses the pursuit and application of knowledge about te taiao (the natural world) and includes theories, practices, and protocols for understanding and interacting with the world, including classification systems (Smith et al., 2016).

After arriving in Aotearoa and Te Wai Pounamu (South Island of New Zealand) many centuries ago, Māori developed various methods for codifying knowledge, primarily through oral delivery (Hikuroa, 2017). Pūrākau, as an example, are traditional Māori narratives that embody philosophical thought, epistemological constructs, cultural codes, and worldviews (Lee, 2009, as cited in Hikuroa, 2017). These narratives are integral to mātauranga Māori, serving as deliberate constructs to encapsulate and convey complex concepts in accessible forms (Hikuroa, 2017). Other narrative forms include moteatea (chants and poems), whai kōrero (oratory), maramataka (calendar), waiata (songs), pepeha (quotations),

whakataukī/whakatauāki (proverbs), whakapapa (genealogies), and pūrākau, each with its distinct categories, styles, and complex patterns (Lee, 2009, as cited in Hikuroa, 2017).

### 2.5 Conclusion

The complexity of the 2023 refreshed curriculum framework stemmed largely from its requirement for teachers to integrate mātauranga Māori and establish meaningful partnerships with tangata whenua. While the change to the framework represented a significant overhaul by placing Te Tiriti o Waitangi at its core and emphasising a bicultural approach, the real challenge lay in the depth of this integration. Teachers faced the dual task of embedding Māori perspectives into their curricula and building genuine relationships with Māori communities. This dual focus added substantial layers of complexity to the reform, making it a notably challenging and multifaceted change. Recognising these significant demands helps us better understand the experiences of early adopters of this curriculum reform.

# Chapter 3: Literature Review

## 3.1 Introduction

This chapter begins by summarising the key themes from a large body of previous research looking at teachers' experiences of curriculum reform. I then review the literature relevant to the specific context of my study beginning with teachers' experiences of integrating Indigenous knowledge into the curriculum. Following this I examine the limited research available about teachers' experiences with bicultural initiatives in New Zealand. The Refreshed curriculum expected teachers to engage directly with mātauranga Māori, even though they have been operating within a bicultural education context for some time. The small number of existing studies that are available suggest that there are significant gaps in knowledge about how teachers have been engaging with various bicultural initiatives. The chapter concludes by identifying the specific research gap that this study aims to address.

## 3.2 Teachers' Experiences Engaging with Curriculum Reform

### *3.2.1 Understanding the Purpose of Curriculum Change*

Research on teachers' experiences with curriculum changes has frequently highlighted that confusion and frustration emerge when teachers lack a clear understanding of the intentions and underlying concepts of the proposed reforms. Studies have demonstrated that when teachers are not clear on the overarching principles of curriculum changes or are unconvinced of their benefits, they tend to persist with their existing teaching methods and curricula (Altinyelken, 2010; Ekawati, 2016; Koopman, 2013; Park, 2008). A recurring theme in the literature is that teachers often struggle, disengage, or resist changes when the rationale and purpose of the reforms are not clearly communicated or when the communication itself is overly complex.

Research across various contexts—including New Zealand, Africa, Korea, and Indonesia—has consistently found that complex language and concepts contribute significantly to confusion among teachers. Studies have identified issues such as convoluted curriculum language, intricate new frameworks, and an overwhelming volume of new concepts that teachers are expected to manage (Ekawati, 2016; Jones et al., 2004; Maphalala, 2006). Teachers who fail to understand either the broad objectives or the specific details of curriculum reforms are less likely to engage with them effectively. This lack of understanding often results in a continuation of traditional teaching practices and, consequently, in resentment and opposition towards the new curriculum, which impedes its successful implementation (Ekawati, 2013; Koopman, 2013). Education change researchers, including Schneider and Ingram (2006), agreed that successful engagement with curriculum reform hinges on educators having a comprehensive understanding of the policy and its expectations. This insight is crucial for supporting teachers as they navigate and engage with curriculum changes, highlighting the broader implications for teachers' experiences during an educational reform.

### *3.2.2 Teacher Capacity*

Fullan (1993) highlighted a critical challenge faced by educators: "We are facing a huge dilemma. On the one hand, schools are expected to engage in continuous renewal, and change expectations are constantly swirling around them. On the other hand, the way teachers are trained, the way schools are organized, the way the educational hierarchy operates, and the way political decision makers treat educators' results in a system that is more likely to retain the status" (Fullan, 1993, p.3). Their observation is echoed in studies of teachers' experiences with complex curriculum reforms, which have consistently revealed that educators often feel that they require substantial support to enhance their capacity for implementing changes effectively.

Teachers frequently reported feeling inadequately prepared to manage curriculum changes, citing a significant gap in necessary knowledge (Ekawati, 2016; Jones et al., 2004; Maphalala, 2006). They emphasised the need not only to understand new content but also to acquire practical insights into how to integrate this knowledge into their teaching practices. This knowledge gap often results in difficulties applying new ideas in the classroom, leading to discomfort with their perceived competence and a tendency to revert to familiar teaching methods rather than adopting new approaches (Jones et al., 2004; Molapo & Pillay, 2018). To address these challenges, teachers commonly identified additional training and improved resources as crucial for meeting their support needs during periods of curriculum change.

### *3.2.3 The Need for More Time, Training and Resources*

Research on teachers' experiences with curriculum reform has consistently highlighted the necessity of additional time, training, and resources for the effective implementation of proposed changes. Lambert et al. (2014) highlighted that having time to experiment with new curricula, reflect on pedagogy, and evaluate their teaching methods is a crucial element for teachers to engage with curriculum reforms. This finding aligns with other studies indicating that insufficient time to reconsider their teaching approaches often leads teachers to reject new methods and revert to previous practices (Koopman, 2013).

Although teachers acknowledged that having adequate time to understand and adapt to changes enhances their confidence and effectiveness, a recurring issue in the literature is the impact of insufficient resources on their ability to engage with the proposed changes. Molapo and Pillay (2018) reported that teachers in South Africa felt that a lack of resources and inadequate training significantly impeded their engagement with major educational reforms. Similar concerns have been noted in other studies, where inadequate resources were identified as a substantial challenge when teaching new topics (Ekawati, 2016; Jones et al., 2004; Maphalala, 2006).

Additionally, the literature has frequently highlighted the problem of insufficient ongoing support. Teachers often described support as a one-time event rather than continuous assistance, which they found inadequate for effectively navigating curriculum changes. Training sessions that merely outline

the policy without providing practical implementation strategies have been criticised, as are cascade models where a single teacher is trained and expected to disseminate the knowledge to others. Such approaches have been deemed ineffective in addressing the practical needs of teachers (Koopman, 2013; Lambert et al., 2014; Molapo & Pillay, 2018).

### *3.2.4 Tension Because of Systematic Pressures*

Studies examining teachers' experiences with curriculum reform frequently revealed that systemic pressures can be misaligned with the goals of proposed changes, leading to significant frustration among educators. Honig (2006) observed that systemic factors and daily challenges within the education system significantly impact the implementation of curriculum reforms, thereby affecting teachers' experiences and effectiveness.

Research has indicated that various systemic factors—such as assessment practices, management decisions, existing school structures, and qualifications—are perceived as major barriers to effective curriculum change, particularly in secondary schools. These factors often conflict with the reform goals, causing frustration among teachers. Maphalala (2006) highlighted that "flawed assumptions" by policy writers about school organisation contribute to these challenges, a perspective supported by other scholars in the field. A recurrent issue identified in the research is the lack of awareness regarding organisational constraints within schools, such as timetable limitations and physical arrangements, which impede the realisation of curriculum aspirations.

Furthermore, teachers frequently reported that assessment constraints and pressure to achieve favourable exam results affect their engagement with curriculum reforms. The focus on achieving high assessment results, driven by both internal and external pressures, leads to an exam-oriented approach and a heightened sense of accountability for these outcomes (Ekawati, 2016; Koopman, 2013). This focus often exacerbates difficulties in transitioning to new curriculum methods, especially when schools prioritise exam results over innovative teaching practices.

On a broader level, Levin (2012) and Fullan and Hargreaves (1992/2013) emphasised that successful curriculum reform requires a concerted and sustained effort from all components of the education system. This highlights a critical implication for teachers: their ability to engage effectively with curriculum reform is often constrained by the broader, and sometimes rigid, educational system in which they operate.

### *3.2.5 Teachers' Beliefs and Values*

Research into teachers' experiences with curriculum changes has highlighted the significant influence of their personal values and beliefs during the reform process. For over a decade, studies in teacher education have consistently demonstrated that teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning have a profound impact on their classroom practices (Bryan & Atwater, 2002). This connection has been further illustrated by Honig (2006) who cited Cobb et al. (2003), along with Coburn (2001a) and

McLaughlin and Talbert (2001), who argued that teachers operate within professional communities that shape their beliefs, perspectives, and interpretations of policy messages. These influences are not trivial; they extend to both the development of educational policy and its implementation. As Honig (2006) asserted, "the starting beliefs, knowledge and other orientations towards policy demands, and the places or contexts hep shape what people can and will do"(p. 3). This highlights the critical need to understand how teachers' beliefs interact with the broader educational policies they are tasked with enacting.

Building on this understanding, Duffee and Aikenhead's (1992) research emphasised that teachers' values and experiences significantly affect their decision making as they engage with curriculum changes. They argued that a teacher's past experiences, current teaching context, and personal beliefs collectively shape a vision of effective teaching, which in turn influences classroom practice (p. 494). Shizha (2008) agreed that teachers' beliefs and lack of knowledge about a discipline of knowledge determine teachers' pedagogic practices in the classroom. This perspective highlights that teachers are not mere implementers of change; rather, they process and filter change through their individual experiences and values.

Similarly, Priestley et al. (2013)'s resonated with previous research, highlighting the importance of language, discourse, values, and beliefs in shaping ways teachers engage with curriculum reform. According to Biesta and Tedder (2007), it is a combination of factors during curriculum reform will affect teachers' decisions and the way they engage with curriculum changes. They argue that "the achievement of agency will always result from the interplay of individual efforts, available resources, and contextual and structural factors" (p. 137). Priestley et al. (2013) argued that agency is not an inherent capacity of individuals; rather, it emerges through engagement with specific contextual conditions. They emphasised that the decisions teachers make and their engagement with a reform should be understood as actions—something that individuals do rather than possess. The research suggested that teachers' engagement and choices are influenced by a multitude of factors that require careful planning and comprehension.

Fullan and Hargreaves (1992/2013) further elaborated on the complexities of curriculum change by noting that approaches to supporting teachers during a reform often treat all teachers as homogeneous or stereotype them as either innovators or resistors (p. 5). They suggested that age, career stage, life experiences, and gender—all integral aspects of a teacher's identity—impact their interest in and response to innovation (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992/2013). This is echoed Krupp (1989, as cited in Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992/2013), who pointed out that many professional development approaches overlook the valuable contributions of veteran teachers and fail to consider the diverse life circumstances that shape individual educators. The literature highlights the way in which teachers' engage in the change process requires a nuanced approach that acknowledges the interplay of individual beliefs, contextual factors, and past experiences.

### *3.2.6 Curriculum Reform and Burnout*

Some researchers have contended that the relationship between teacher burnout and curricular reform remains underexplored and inadequately addressed. (Boles et al., 2000; Kokkinos, 2006; Pines & Keinan, 2005, as cited in Ransford et al., 2009, p. 512).While teacher burnout is not explicitly addressed in the curriculum reform literature, significant teacher experiences of burden, frustration, and confusion are frequently highlighted. The presence of these negative emotions suggests a connection between burnout and curriculum reform.

Role overload occurs when the demands of a role surpass the time and resources available to an individual (Richards et al., 2018). Over recent decades, as teachers' roles have evolved and expanded, evidence suggests an increase in stress and burnout rates among educators (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009, as cited in Ransford et al., 2009, p. 514).

For example, Aeria et al. (2018), in an exploratory study on burnout among Malaysian teachers during a major curriculum reform, referred to the findings of Steinhardt et al. (2011)- whose research with teacher burnout highlighted the link between work stress and overall workload. Research found that role stress also arises from discrepancies between individuals' perceptions of their roles and how these roles are perceived by key stakeholders in their workplace (Conley & You, 2009, as cited in Richards et al., 2018). This finding aligns with research from a large-scale curriculum reform project in Finland, which indicated that school reforms often lead to increased workload and demand new competencies, contributing to heightened stress (Germeten, 2011; Graczewski et al., 2007; Lainas, 2010; Lasky, 2005; Valli & Buese, 2007; Van Veen & Sleegers, 2006, as cited in Tikkanen et al., 2020). This stress manifests in negative emotions such as anger, anxiety, tension, frustration, and depression (Elo et al., 2003; Friedman, 2000; Kyriacou, 2001, as cited in Tikkanen et al., 2020). These studies recommended that ensuring the well-being of those involved in reform is crucial for sustainable change (James & McCormick, 2009, as cited in Tikkanen et al., 2020).

Given the frequent expressions of frustration and overwhelm among teachers during curriculum reforms—arising from perceived inadequacies in their capacity to implement changes, systemic obstacles within their schools, and insufficient support—it is evident that these experiences align with literature linking burnout to curriculum reform. The tension between teachers' perceptions of their roles and the expectations placed upon them during these reforms contributes significantly to their sense of burnout.

## 3.3 Teachers' Experiences Integrating Indigenous Knowledge: Challenges and Insights

### *3.3.1 The Complexity of Knowledge*

The global movement to decolonise knowledge by embedding Indigenous perspectives into school and university curricula is well-documented (Agrawal, 1995; Dei, 2008; Heber, 2008, as cited in Hart et al., 2012, p. 6). An analysis of the literature on teachers' experiences with integrating Indigenous

knowledge reveals that this process is fraught with complexity. Teachers encounter numerous challenges and require both content knowledge and contextual understanding to effectively incorporate Indigenous perspectives into their curricula.

The literature consistently highlighted that when teachers possess only a limited or superficial understanding of Indigenous knowledge, the resulting curriculum changes are often tokenistic (Hart et al., 2012; Moichela, 2017; Shizha, 2008). This concern is widely reported across various studies. Integrating Indigenous knowledge meaningfully into the curriculum necessitates more than just superficial changes; it requires educators to adopt a genuine and respectful attitude toward Indigenous perspectives and to make a commitment to go beyond superficial understandings.

Scholars such as Odora Hoppers (2002) and Breidlid (2013) engaged in robust debates about the dominance of Western epistemologies in education, advocating for the legitimate academic inclusion of Indigenous knowledge (as cited in da Silva et al., 2023, p. 2). These debates highlight the necessity for educators to value and respect Indigenous knowledge genuinely. For effective integration, educators must be open to alternative worldviews and willing to challenge prevailing colonial frameworks. The current literature concurred that embedding Indigenous perspectives into curricula presents a significant epistemological challenge, requiring a profound shift in both attitude and practice among educators.

### 3.4 The Impact of Insufficient Knowledge

Shulman and Shulman (2004) highlighted the profound complexities inherent in the teaching profession, characterising it as one of the most intricate, challenging, and demanding fields. Shulman and Shulman contended that effective teaching extends beyond the mere transmission of knowledge; it necessitates substantial reflection and adaptability, ensuring that students acquire knowledge applicable throughout their lives. This perspective highlights that teaching involves more than delivering textbook content; it requires employing diverse pedagogical methods and a thorough understanding of the material being taught.

However, research into the integration of Indigenous knowledge into curricula has frequently revealed that teachers often feel they lack the necessary content or contextual knowledge to implement these perspectives effectively. Studies examining teachers' experiences with incorporating Indigenous knowledge have found that educators frequently possess only a limited or superficial understanding of the material. (Baynes, 2015; da Silva et. al, 2023; Moichela, 2007; Shizha, 2008 ).

For effective and confident integration of Indigenous knowledge, educators need not only substantive content knowledge but also a profound understanding of appropriate pedagogical approaches and the relevant contextual factors (Shizha, 2008). For instance, South Africa's 2004 initiative to introduce Indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) into the basic education curriculum aimed to transform the education system and address imbalances imposed by apartheid's segregationist policies. During apartheid, IKS were marginalised and disparaged (Moichela, 2017). In an effort to promote social

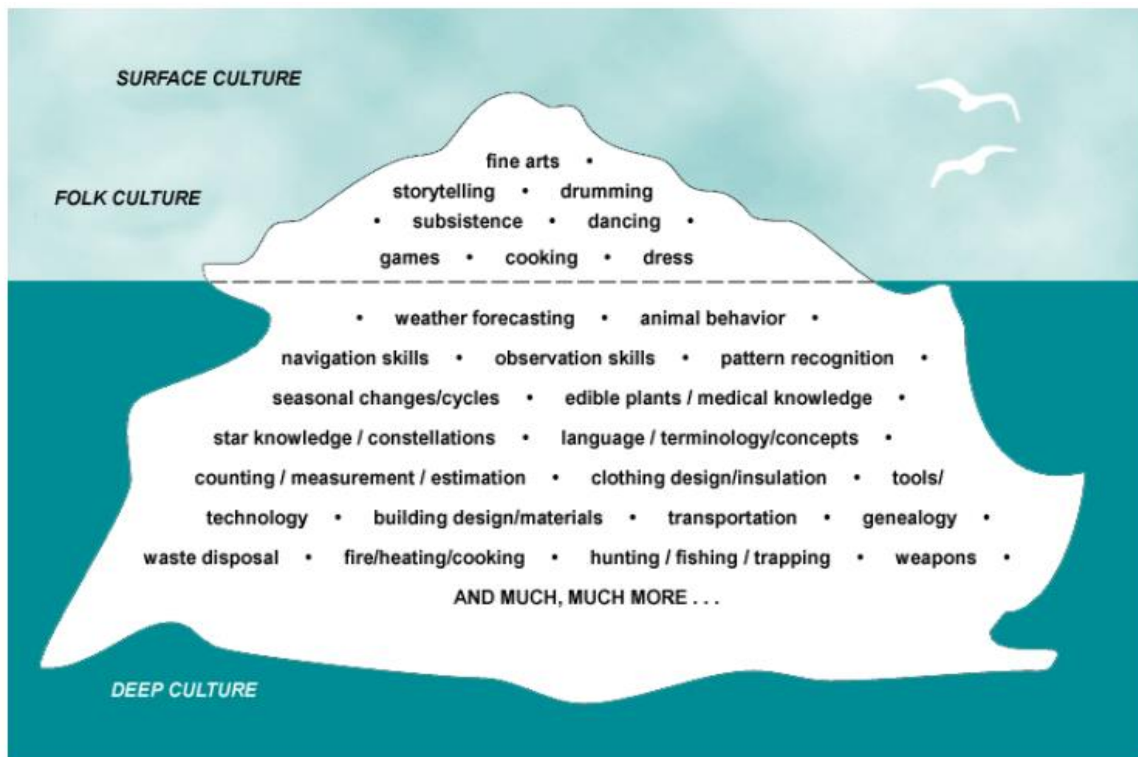
justice and rectify these inequities, South African teachers were mandated to incorporate IKS into the science curriculum. Research on the challenges faced by South African educators in transitioning from a colonial curriculum to an integrated model indicated that a lack of deep understanding often led to confusion and to superficial integration of IKS into the education system (Moichela, 2017).

Research on the integration of IKS in South Africa has revealed not only the challenges faced by educators as they engage with work with Indigenous knowledge but also a broader issue: the undervaluation of Indigenous knowledge. Moichela (2017) observed that South African teachers are often constrained by a narrow conception of knowledge defined by Western paradigms, which impedes their ability to fully appreciate and integrate knowledge systems outside Western science. The study recommended that a fundamental paradigm shift is necessary for the integration of IKS to be truly transformative. Teachers, who both lacked the requisite knowledge to implement these changes and failed to appreciate the value of Indigenous knowledge, encountered significant obstacles in engaging with the curriculum reform.

These challenges are mirrored in the experiences of teachers in Alaska, who similarly struggled with integrating Indigenous knowledge into a culturally responsive curriculum. In Alaska, educators expressed difficulties as they worked with Indigenous knowledge due to their limited understanding of the knowledge they were expected to incorporate. This led to a superficial application of such knowledge in the curriculum (Moichela, 2017). Drabek (2012, as cited in Moichela, 2017) utilised an iceberg analogy to illustrate this issue, as demonstrated by the Lower Kuskokwim School District's model of the Alaskan curriculum (see Figure 1). This analogy underscores that much of the profound cultural knowledge remains submerged, beneath the surface level of the curriculum (Moichela, 2017).

**Figure 1**

*The Alaskan Curriculum: A Culturally Responsive Curriculum*




From: *Integration of Indigenous Knowledge Systems in the Curriculum for Basic Education: Possible Experiences of Canada* (p. 117) by K. Z. Moichela, 2017. (https://uir.unisa.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10500/25096/thesis_moichela_kz.pdf).

Moichela (2017) further elaborated that individuals outside a particular culture often recognise only the superficial elements of Indigenous knowledge. Consequently, when teachers lack an in-depth understanding of Indigenous cultures, they struggle with their integration and as a result their knowledge tends to be superficial, addressing only the visible aspects and neglecting deeper cultural insights (Moichela, 2017).

In South Africa, the incorporation of Indigenous knowledge frequently focuses on surface-level elements such as local games, cultural dances, drumming, and initiation ceremonies like stick fighting. Similarly, in Alaska, the integration of Indigenous knowledge is confined to folklore, fine arts, drumming, cooking, games, and dancing. In New Zealand, this superficial approach might manifest as Māori songs, haka (Māori ceremonial war dance), food customs, and traditional games. A study in Peru highlighted analogous issues, revealing significant contradictions between inclusive educational policies and actual practice (Shizha, 2008), where the integration of Indigenous knowledge, language, and community participation often remained symbolic.

These findings regarding the teachers' experiences illustrate the challenges teachers face when attempting to integrate Indigenous knowledge without a profound understanding, often resulting in superficial or tokenistic changes. Moichela (2017) concluded that "deep culture should not be left to chance or to the teachers' various interpretations of the implementation of the IKS integrated

curriculum" (p. 118). In contrast, Canada has made notable strides in developing a culturally responsive curriculum that seeks to move beyond mere surface-level integration. Canada's approach involves the substantive inclusion of Indigenous perspectives and addresses the limitations of past assimilationist policies. By involving elders in curriculum development, Canada acknowledges that teachers alone may not possess the depth of Indigenous knowledge required. Elders are seen as crucial contributors to the creation of culturally relevant science curricula, reflecting a genuine commitment to integrating Indigenous perspectives (Aikenhead, 2006; ANKN, 2004a; Inuit Subject Advisory Committee, 1996; Kawagley et al., 1998; McKinley, 1996; Riggs, 2005; Swayze, 2007; Sutherland & Tays, 2004, as cited in Moichela, 2017).

### 3.5 The Value of Knowledge

Research consistently highlighted that teachers face significant challenges not only because of their lack of Indigenous knowledge but also because this knowledge is often undervalued compared to Western knowledge systems. This undervaluation contributes to a reluctance among educators to integrate Indigenous knowledge and pedagogical approaches into their teaching practices. Such attitudes are frequently shaped by systemic and institutional expectations that favour Western paradigms (Shizha, 2008). For instance, Moichela (2017) observed in South Africa that teachers' experiences show they struggle to recognise Indigenous knowledge as equally valid compared to Western science. This struggle reflects a broader issue where Indigenous knowledge is often marginalised and perceived through a Western-centric lens, which positions Western knowledge as superior (Moichela, 2017).

Similarly, Shizha (2008) found in Zimbabwe that teachers educated within a Western scientific framework often dismiss Indigenous knowledge as mere "unprovable myths" or "misconceptions (p. 1220)." This viewpoint leads to an approach that undermines the value of traditional practices, such as using tree fibre for dental health, which may be perceived as untested or inferior. Shizha argued that this dominance of Western science fosters cognitive imperialism, which devalues alternative ways of understanding and contributes to a cultural conflict regarding the validity of Indigenous knowledge.

In Australia, a study of preservice teachers in Queensland revealed similar challenges. Teachers faced difficulties overcoming colonial views that had historically marginalised Indigenous knowledge. Hart et al. (2012) found that Western education often treats Indigenous peoples as subjects of study rather than as sources of valuable knowledge. This perspective diminishes the perceived worth of Indigenous knowledge and limits its integration into curricula. Additionally, Hart et al. highlighted how teachers' beliefs about Indigenous knowledge are shaped by historical and systemic biases, which affect their ability to effectively incorporate Indigenous perspectives. Reilly (2011) noted that while Māori studies and mātauranga Māori are recognised and valued within Indigenous contexts in New Zealand, their inclusion as core subjects for all students often becomes contentious. This is consistent with Derrick (2021, as cited in da Silva et al., 2023, p. 283) whose findings emphasised that teachers' worldviews,

shaped by their cultural backgrounds, significantly influence how diverse knowledge systems are engaged with and incorporated into curricula.

These findings emphasise that the challenges associated with integrating Indigenous knowledge into curricula extend beyond merely incorporating new content and involve profound epistemological and cultural issues. Teachers' experiences reveal the difficulties they encounter when working with Indigenous knowledge, which, according to the literature, are frequently attributed to the dominance of a Western paradigm that shapes their understanding and valuation of Indigenous perspectives. This issue highlights the need for systemic changes to support more meaningful integration of Indigenous knowledge and to address the epistemological challenges inherent in reconciling different knowledge systems.

### 3.6 The Complexity of Acquiring Indigenous Knowledge

Research into teachers' experiences with integrating Indigenous knowledge into educational curricula has revealed several significant challenges. A central issue is the difficulty teachers face in accessing Indigenous knowledge, which is often oral and protected within specific local contexts (Moichela, 2007; Shizha, 2008). Forming effective partnerships with community members who hold this knowledge is also fraught with challenges. However, evidence consistently highlights the importance of establishing meaningful partnerships for the effective incorporation of Indigenous knowledge into curricula, as well as supporting teachers as they work with this knowledge. Such partnerships significantly enhance teachers' ability and effectiveness in integrating Indigenous perspectives into their teaching practices. Studies conducted in South Africa, including Moichela (2017), have highlighted that teachers encountered substantial difficulties during curriculum reforms aimed at integrating Indigenous knowledge. Teachers struggled with accessing and utilising relevant materials and content due to their lack of expertise in this area (Moichela, 2017). Specific challenges included obtaining timely information and navigating the complex, culturally guarded nature of Indigenous knowledge. Moichela's research also revealed a historical reluctance to share tribal information, which exacerbated these difficulties. This complexity is further compounded by the fact that Indigenous knowledge is typically transmitted orally and within localised contexts, unlike the more documented nature of Western knowledge.

In Mozambique, similar challenges were observed in establishing intercultural dialogue between traditional community leaders and schools (da Silva et al., 2023). Teachers struggled to bridge the gap between school-based learning and traditional knowledge systems, often encountering resistance from traditional leaders who argued that essential practices for transmitting ancestral values could not be adequately taught using conventional educational methods. This situation highlighted a fundamental difference in worldviews between schools and traditional knowledge systems (da Silva et al., 2023).

Furthermore, research in Zimbabwe and Australia has identified obstacles arising from teachers' beliefs about the role of community leaders and their contributions to curriculum development. In Zimbabwe, while many teachers expressed interest in learning from elders, they were hesitant to include these leaders in teaching due to concerns about their lack of formal teaching training. This points to an underlying inequity regarding the perceived validity of different types of knowledge (Shizha, 2008). In Australia, preservice teachers' experiences with integrating Indigenous knowledge into curricula revealed a need for a significant shift in educational practices. The current education system tends to favour Western knowledge systems and often focuses on "learning about" Indigenous peoples rather than "learning from" them. This dynamic forces Indigenous knowledge to compete for legitimacy and is further complicated by non-Indigenous educators' concerns about racial and cultural authenticity (Hart et al., 2012).

In South Africa, additional research focused on science teachers' experiences integrating both Indigenous and Western knowledge through collaboration with traditional leaders and community members. This study echoed findings from Australia, indicating that the challenge lies not in the knowledge itself but in understanding how it is generated, used, and transmitted (Hart et al., 2012). Integrating Indigenous knowledge requires more than merely adding it to an existing curriculum; it necessitates a fundamental rethinking of the education system's structure and environment (da Silva et al., 2023). As Seehawer (2018) noted, integrating African Indigenous knowledge into a Western curriculum often involves reconciling fundamentally different educational frameworks (as cited in da Silva et al., 2023, p. 106).

Overall, the literature has highlighted the multifaceted challenges teachers face in integrating Indigenous knowledge into curricula. These challenges stem not only from the nature and historical context of Indigenous knowledge but also from teachers' perceptions of its validity and the role of community sources. Addressing these broader challenges is essential for successfully incorporating Indigenous knowledge into a predominantly Western education system.

### 3.7 A Range of Emotions for Teachers

Research has consistently emphasised the emotional challenges educators face when integrating Indigenous knowledge into curricula. Studies from South Africa (e.g., Moichela, 2017), Canada (e.g., Schwab & Sutherland, 2001), and Australia (e.g., Hart et al., 2012) revealed that teachers frequently experience anxiety, hesitation, and diminished confidence throughout this process. Teachers commonly report feeling stressed, confused, and overwhelmed by the demands of incorporating Indigenous perspectives, exacerbated by concerns about making errors, insufficient knowledge, and time constraints. In South Africa, educators have expressed significant stress and confusion regarding the accurate delivery of Indigenous knowledge, contributing to perceptions of resistance to curriculum changes. This resistance is often attributed to the lack of clear guidance on effective implementation

(Moichela, 2017). Similarly, studies of Australian teachers' experiences with Aboriginal Indigenous knowledge highlighted notable tension. Observations from the Indigenous Student Support Centre at a Queensland university indicated that preservice teachers experienced significant anxiety during practicums that emphasised integrating Indigenous knowledge into their curricula. This anxiety primarily stemmed from their insufficient understanding of how to incorporate Indigenous perspectives effectively (Hart et al., 2012). The "framework" discussed in Nakata's 2011 article, "Pathways for Indigenous Education in the Australian Curriculum Framework," highlighted significant challenges related to the Australian curriculum initiative, especially in integrating Aboriginal content. Research cited in Nakata's article indicated that many educators regret their inadequate knowledge of Aboriginal Australia (Harrison & Greenfield, 2011, as cited in Nakata, 2011, p. 74). Michie (2002, as cited in Nakata, 2011) similarly acknowledged a widespread lack of understanding regarding Indigenous science and pointed to inadequate resources and limited access to professional development as key issues. Consequently, teachers often hesitate to incorporate Indigenous content due to their perceived lack of expertise necessary for authentic teaching (Quince, 2012, as cited in Nakata, 2011, p. 82). This observation is supported by Australian research, where Quince (2012) and Yunkaporta and McGinty (2009) documented that a perceived lack of knowledge about Aboriginal culture and resulting diminished confidence are significant barriers to including Indigenous perspectives in the curriculum (as cited in Nakata, 2011). Yunkaporta and McGinty (2009, as cited in Nakata, 2011, p. 63) further reported that non-Indigenous teachers sometimes avoid engaging with Indigenous perspectives due to discomfort and fear of infringing upon cultural boundaries, whether real or perceived. This lack of cultural knowledge and associated fear of causing offense have historically acted as major obstacles for many educators, despite their commitment to including Indigenous knowledge and achieving social justice through education (Baynes, 2015).

### 3.8 Teachers' Experiences of Bicultural Initiatives in New Zealand Education

An extensive search of the literature reveals a significant gap in research specifically addressing teachers' experiences with bicultural initiatives in New Zealand. While existing studies on bicultural initiatives and curricula often focused on teachers' understanding, attitudes or perceptions toward curriculum changes, or the implementation of such initiatives, there is a notable scarcity of research examining teachers' personal experiences and narratives during curriculum reform, especially with complex changes. The limited studies that have explored teachers' experiences provided valuable insights into the intricacies of this process, consistently highlighting the tension and concerns teachers face when engaging with bicultural initiatives.

Legge's (2013) study offered a detailed exploration of her experiences as an educator preparing undergraduate physical education students within the context of Indigenous Māori culture in New Zealand. Her research uncovered the challenges and unintended tensions that arise, even among well-meaning educators, due to a lack of awareness and differing worldviews. Legge's immersion in kaupapa

Māori significantly challenged her perspectives but also enhanced her cultural competency. She aimed to help her students interpret and teach the health and physical education curriculum in a culturally meaningful way. However, she found that many physical education teacher-education students, both Māori and non-Māori, entered university with minimal understanding of Māori culture, identity, and the impact of colonisation (Legge, 2013). Legge emphasised the necessity of experiential learning to achieve "conscientization" (Freire, 1970, as cited in Legge, 2013, p. 356), where a Māori worldview is recognised as valid. Her study highlighted the difficulties of navigating cultural differences, with instances of unintentional offense arising from a lack of awareness of Māori cultural norms (Legge, 2013). She noted the negative impact of these challenges, reflecting, "Māori values are often quite radically different to Pākehā" (p. 360), and described her struggle with cultural differences, feeling stifled and attributing blame to others. Legge (2013) concluded that Pākehā educators must understand the power dynamics of cultural differences and explore the sense of loss associated with accepting them.

Kendall's (2019) examination of teachers' experiences with bicultural responsive pedagogy in New Zealand secondary schools aligned with previous studies and international research on the challenges of integrating Indigenous knowledge. Kendall's study highlighted the complex challenges educators face, noting that many teachers struggled to move beyond superficial changes and felt their efforts were often tokenistic, failing to genuinely reflect Māori perspectives (Kendall, 2019). Kendall emphasised the significance of teachers' personal values, beliefs, and behaviours, advocating for an awareness of these factors and a critical examination of the cultural capital they bring into the classroom (Bishop et al., 2007, as cited in Kendall, 2019, p. 68). Teachers were found to disconnect their practices from their understanding of Māori culture, with some describing their efforts as tokenistic, such as using Māori language commands, displaying Māori-themed decorations, and singing waiata (songs) (Kendall, 2019). This observation aligns with Lourie (2016) and Sleeter (2011, as cited in Kendall, 2019, p. 26), who argued that focusing solely on visible actions can render the practice trivial and superficial. Additionally, teachers reported a lack of expertise in developing bicultural responsive practices and identified a need for more professional learning opportunities, citing time constraints as a significant barrier (Kendall, 2019).

### 3.9 Summary

This chapter contextualised teachers' experiences during curriculum reform by summarising literature on general curriculum changes and educators' experiences. Key findings revealed that teachers sought a comprehensive understanding of reforms, including terminology, concepts, and rationale, and required substantial support to engage effectively. This support involved adequate time for deepening understanding, applying new strategies, and refining teaching practices. Teachers expressed a need for additional training and resources and were more likely to engage with changes that aligned with their personal beliefs and values.

However, research also highlighted factors contributing to frustration and a sense of burden among teachers. Systemic complexities hindered their engagement, leading to stress and overwhelm, which contributed to burnout—particularly for those who felt inadequately supported during reform processes.

The chapter examined research on integrating Indigenous knowledge into a school curriculum, a central focus of New Zealand's current curriculum reform, revealing challenges due to insufficient content knowledge and contextual understanding. This often resulted in superficial inclusion of Indigenous perspectives, leading to feelings of stress and confusion among teachers. However, these research findings came from international contexts. There does not appear to be any New Zealand based research that has explored the integration of indigenous knowledge into the curriculum.

Finally, it noted the limited research on teachers' experiences with bicultural initiatives in New Zealand, and that research is primarily focused on teachers' attitudes toward Indigenous knowledge rather than their direct experiences with bicultural curriculum reform.

### 3.10 Aim of the Study

This study aims to address the gap in existing research by focusing on teachers' experiences in navigating the challenges of implementing a bicultural curriculum across the secondary education sector in New Zealand. It investigates the firsthand experiences of nine teachers who were early adopters of this educational shift, offering a unique perspective on the complexities of this unique curriculum change. By exploring these experiences, the study seeks to challenge conventional understandings of how teachers navigate and contribute to the process of a complex curriculum reform. This study is guided by the following research question:

> What are the experiences of a group of New Zealand teachers who are engaged with a complex curriculum reform?

# Chapter 4: Methodology

## 4.1 Research Methodology

### *4.1.1 Theoretical Framework*

This research employed an interpretivist theoretical perspective to guide its methodological approach. Interpretivism is grounded in an ontology that views reality as socially constructed and inherently subjective. Interpretivists argue that in studying the social world it is essential to draw upon our human capacity to understand fellow human beings "from the inside"—through empathy, shared experience and culture (Hammersley & Campbell, 2012, p. 25). Within this perspective, it is assumed that multiple realities exist, shaped by personal meanings and interactions, and that individuals interpret their experiences through the lens of their cultural and social contexts. Interpretivists argue that we cannot understand why people do what they do, or why particular institutions exist and operate in characteristic ways, without grasping how people interpret and make sense of their world and act on their interpretations (Hammersley & Campbell, 2012, p. 25). Correspondingly, the epistemology of interpretivism assumes that "knowledge is acquired through understanding these subjective experiences [that] focus on describing, understanding, and interpreting the diverse realities and interpretations of a single phenomenon" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 12). An interpretivist perspective aims to uncover deeper layers of understanding and meaning in experiences (Hammersley & Campbell, 2012, p. 27).

Researchers using an interpretivist paradigm aim to gain a deep understanding of the subjective experiences and meanings that individuals assign to their social worlds. It is an essential requirement not just for explaining but also for *describing* people's behaviour and the social institutions in which it is located and which it helps sustain (Hammersley & Campbell, 2012, p. 27). This paradigm is well suited for this study, as it allows for a nuanced description of the layered experiences and meanings that teachers attribute to the curriculum change process. Rather than focusing solely on what they created or designed because of the proposed curriculum changes, this study sought to understand what it means to be an educator engaging with a complex curriculum reform. The intention was to interview a group of teachers known for their innovative engagement and early adoption of the proposed changes to the NZC, exploring the deeper complexities and constructions of meaning in these educators' experiences with a complex reform.

While the participants shared their actions and the challenges they encountered, an interpretivist approach enabled a deeper exploration that acknowledged how their contexts, personal experiences, and societal values influenced their interpretations and responses to the curriculum changes and their experiences with them. Interpretivists acknowledge that meanings are diverse and multifaceted, prompting researchers to consider a range of perspectives formed through historical and cultural contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Through the interpretivist lens, we gain insights into the complexities

teachers experience during reform, fostering a deeper understanding of how they navigate their roles within the educational context.

### *4.1.2 Research Design*

This research study was a qualitative investigation that involved gathering interview data. Nine participants were interviewed from four secondary schools in different geographical locations across New Zealand.

### *4.1.3 Participant Recruitment*

This study aimed to understand the experiences of teachers as they engaged with a complex curriculum reform. By focusing on their perspectives, the research sought to provide insights and challenge thinking about what is required from teaching during a time of curriculum change. To achieve this, the study sought out reflective and articulate educators in New Zealand who were already engaged with the current changes in designing a school curriculum with a local focus.

**4.2.3.1 Identifying the Schools and the Participants.** To keep the study feasible within the time constraints, several boundaries were set. The research focused on four secondary schools, with two to three participants from each, chosen based on practical considerations of time and data collection. The criteria for selecting schools and participants were designed to ensure rich, relevant data:

1. Schools must be state secondary schools in Aotearoa New Zealand, serving Year 9–13 students.
2. The schools selected should have diverse learning philosophies and student populations.
3. The schools must be early adopters of the Refreshed curriculum, indicating they have been integrating the national curriculum into their school curricula for over a year.

Sampling schools with varying learning philosophies and student demographics ensured a maximum variation strategy, which aims to identify key patterns and core dimensions across diverse contexts (Patton, 2015, p. 283). By including schools with different approaches to curriculum and learning, the study sought to provide a holistic view of teachers' experiences and perceptions, capturing commonalities in their engagement with the curriculum process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Purposeful sampling was employed to select participants who were actively involved in designing and implementing the curriculum, rather than those only conceptualising it (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 96). This approach aimed to offer deeper insights into the curriculum change process by focusing on educators who were actively working on the Refreshed curriculum development.

Participants were invited based on the following criteria:

- Teachers: Those working in secondary schools with an interest in curriculum innovation.
- Engagement: Teachers who were already involved with the Refreshed curriculum development process, demonstrating a willingness and engagement with the curriculum changes.

- Multiple interviews: At least two teachers from each school were selected to ensure a broader understanding of experiences and perspectives. Interviewing more than one teacher allowed for comparison and provided a richer, more detailed thematic analysis of their experiences (Newby, 2014, p. 57).

To identify schools and teachers who are seen as pioneering curriculum development, I consulted informally with Professor Graeme Aitken, a key figure involved in developing the local curriculum concept for the MOE. Prof Aitken provided recommendations for schools and teachers actively engaged in this work. Additionally, I used my personal networks to identify potential participants. It's important to note that the selected schools and teachers do not constitute a representative sample. Participation in the study was voluntary, both at the school level and for individual teachers.

## 4.3 Data Collection

After obtaining ethics approval, I reached out to the principals of four schools engaged with implementing the Refreshed curriculum and the curriculum change process. I sent them an email (see Appendix A) outlining the research aims and including the permission to access sheet (see Appendix B). In the email, I requested that the principals recommend two to three teachers from their school who met the participant criteria.

Once the principals provided their recommendations, I sent introductory emails to the identified teachers, outlining the research aims and inviting them to participate. The email asked interested teachers to confirm their willingness to participate by replying directly. Upon receiving their confirmation, I forwarded them the full information sheet (see Appendix C) and consent form (see Appendix D), and we arranged a mutually convenient time for the interviews. The information sheet detailed the time commitment required and the type of information they would be asked to provide.

The participants included eight women and one male teacher. They held a variety of roles in their schools: four were Middle or Senior leaders, and five were teachers. They represented five different learning areas.

### *4.3.1 Interviews*

I used semistructured interviews for data collection in this study because they allow for the exploration of feelings, thoughts, and intentions, which cannot be directly observed (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 25). I conducted interviews with nine teachers in total, as one participant withdrew due to time constraints at the end of the school year. Each interview lasted up to an hour and was either held at the participant's educational setting or via Google Meet if an in-person meeting was not feasible.

Before the interviews, participants received a list of the open-ended prompts that might be used. (Kramp, 2003; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Participants were also given the participant information sheet (Appendix C), which outlined the types of experiences I was interested in exploring. The interviews

aimed to be open-ended, seeking descriptive data and focusing on their experiences of working with the Refreshed curriculum, which facilitated in-depth exploration during the conversations (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 114).

Interviews were conducted using a semistructured approach, guided by a list of questions and issues to explore (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 110). This method focused on understanding the participants' experiences, key ideas, values, philosophies, and processes involved in the curriculum change.

The interviews were recorded using the free Otter.ai app, which transcribes audio into a Google Doc. The transcripts were proofread and checked for accuracy. Participants were then sent their transcripts for review. Any areas where the recording missed details or used ambiguous terminology, such as specific school contexts or te reo, were highlighted for participant review. Participants were asked to correct these inaccuracies and return their consent forms after reviewing their transcripts. This process ensured accuracy in accordance with the ethics approval.

Participants were also offered the option of a follow-up meeting to clarify or elaborate on their responses. None of the participants chose to schedule a follow-up meeting, but they were informed that they could email additional information if needed. One teacher later sent supporting curriculum documents to supplement the information shared in their interview.

### 4.4 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was chosen as the method for analysing the interview data to identify and describe patterns across the collected interviews. Once participants confirmed the accuracy of their transcripts and no further additions were needed, all data were compiled for analysis.

The initial step involved coding the data to identify key units of information, such as specific vocabulary used by participants to describe their experiences with the curriculum-change process and the integration of the national curriculum into a school curriculum with a local focus (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 203).

Following coding, the analysis involved interpreting key themes emerging from the data (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). This phase involved noting connections between participants' conversations and the language used to identify patterns and regularities. The goal was to sort and categorise the findings, establishing recurring themes across the data for a comprehensive understanding of the curriculum change process (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 203).

The next stage in analysing the data involved transitioning from open coding to analytical coding. According to Savin-Baden and Major (2013), this involves constructing categories that reflect recurring patterns across the data. I systematically classified the data into themes and categories, examining connections between them to explore how the meaning constructed by participants related to different categories and how these categories might be interrelated. This phase of analysis enables the

development of theoretical insights. By reducing, refining, and linking categories, the analysis progresses toward constructing a model or theory that explains the data (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 220).

The findings and discussion chapters will present these themes and categories under specific headings, supported by direct quotations from the data. This approach aims to accurately represent participants' perceptions and experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2012). The study not only seeks to understand the curriculum-change process from teachers' perspectives but also aims to identify the support they need during this transition.

### 4.5 Ethical Matters

This research study adhered to strict ethical guidelines throughout its execution. An application for ethics approval (EA1; see Appendix F) was submitted to the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee under the working title *Exploring Early-Adopter Teachers' Experiences as They Develop Localized Curriculum (24/249)*, which was approved on September 26, 2023, for a period of 3 years (see Appendix G). These documents are found in the Appendices.

Confidentiality was ensured by assigning pseudonyms to both participating teachers and schools, as well as permitting participants to decline to answer any questions during the interviews. To enhance privacy, I made sure that participants were neither friends nor family members, and I excluded a school where I am currently employed from the study.

# Chapter 5: Findings

This chapter presents the findings of the research, which aims to explore the experiences of a group of teachers implementing a complex curriculum change. The research data were collected through interviews with nine teachers from four secondary schools across three locations in New Zealand. The participants included eight females and one male teacher, with diverse roles within their schools: four were middle or senior leaders, and five were teachers representing five different learning areas. The findings are organised under headings that emerged as key themes from the teachers' experiences. The first group of themes relate to the participants' world view, their perceptions of their role as teachers and their values. The second group of themes reflect participants' experiences as they worked to implement the Refreshed curriculum.

## 5.1 Purpose of Education

A common theme among participants was their belief that the purpose of education is to cultivate a better future and to develop citizens who can contribute to that vision. Several participants expressed a shared belief that education plays a crucial role in fostering student growth. They emphasised that education could provide the knowledge and opportunities necessary for students to care about the future of society. One educator stated: "*I think the national curriculum only matters if we create a space where we can be connected to…a space where [students] care enough about the future*" (Rachel). Sophia explained how she saw her role as a teacher to create this space: "*as teachers we're in the waka as paddlers in front of the next generation of paddlers and we want them to pick up the hoe [paddle] and continue on*." For Kaia, her purpose was because, "*you do it for the betterment and the growth of all our tamariki and mokopuna [children and grandchildren]*."

Teachers often elaborated on the aspects of education they believed significantly contributed to student growth. A common concern expressed was that these areas were frequently overlooked in secondary education. Sophia believed that education should focus on preparing students for future challenges and issues. She was primarily concerned about "*what's facing the next generation in the future*?" She stated: "*sustainability issues are going to be really huge—climate change.…it is our collective responsibility to look after Papatūānuku because she looks after us. And I think it's missing in schools like this*." Participants often indicated a disconnect between what was being delivered as curriculum and how they perceived the purpose of education.

Several participants highlighted relationships and connections as key features that are often missing in secondary schools. They commonly reflected on the need for a wider, more holistic perspective of education that goes beyond their own subject area. As a new head of department, Madeline expressed the disconnect she felt between what was being taught and how she saw the role of education:

> *We were very much just preparing kids to sit the external exam which was just very content-driven exercise and we didn't like it…Now we put our kids first…that's when we get the beautiful connections with them. And can really actually make a change for the kids*.

Kaia was equally concerned about a lack of connection between learning and the purpose of education. She stated:

> *Secondary schools aren't very good at [aligning our subjects]...so it becomes very compartmentalised. With primary it was more whānau [family] based and we talked more about relationships as well. It's not just a Māori thing, they know what works for all kids*.

Camila agreed that connection to a community was important: "*the ethos within the department would be that all students in our class should know about the local area that they're in. It helps ground them; that they should know their place in this community*." These participants expressed that learning does not exist within a single subject or classroom and a common belief that education requires a wider connection to whānau and community to fulfil its role in society. Often, participants would discuss changes which led to conversations about what they felt were needed in the school system to promote a better connection to other areas in the school, whānau and community.

**5.2 Shared Commitment to Equity**

A common theme among participants was a shared commitment to equity. Several expressed frustration that the education system, originally designed for all students to succeed, is inadvertently perpetuating inequality for some. Most teachers expressed the sentiment that Māori learners are particularly disadvantaged in New Zealand's education system. Several participants recounted moments when they had a realisation about the lack of equity they observed. Amanda recalled a moment, early in her career, as she took over from another teacher: "*At the beginning there was a young Māori girl in that class, and I was told 'don't worry about [trying to teach her].' She was illiterate…and I was kind of outraged from a natural justice point of view*." Similarly, new to education as an adult following a career change, Melanie remembered:

> *I went in with a different lens. If you walked into the top stream class. 99% White with one or two Māori girls…maybe one Pasifika girl…because I was new to education and new to science I [thought], what is this? There is an equity issue going on here*.

Camila, identifying as a non-Māori educator, noted how her awareness of equity evolved as a teacher compared to her experiences as a student. She reflected:

> *I think something that I've learned over my time…is how much the education system is a European system and how much my experience is from someone from a European Pākehā family. It is designed for me, and how much I have benefited from it without even realising it. [There are] so many students in front of me who have been disadvantaged and there needs [to be] changes to the education system to do them justice.*

Additionally, two participants highlighted reasons they perceived that awareness of equity issues within the education system was not prevalent across the education sector. Sophia stated:

> *I think you can often skip over that when you are part of the dominant majority. You don't question it. But if you're given an opportunity to experience something different, then you can almost look with a different lens. We don't question the way we do things. If we're in dominant*

> *majority, like the majority of educators are (when I did [my own] research [I found] they looked like me; middle aged White women], and if we've never walked in a different space, or we've never looked through a different lens, that it's hard to connect.*

Kaia's commitment to equity stemmed from her concerns about the tendency to blame disadvantaged students: "*[Teachers who have never been disadvantaged] have no idea what it's like or what's missing because they just think the system's for everybody and [they think] why aren't you achieving in the system*?"

### 5.3 Advocates for Change

A common belief amongst the participants was the need to act as advocates for change. As the previous findings suggested, participants perceived that there are aspects of the education system that are flawed, and often interviewees' responses expressed an appreciation for educators who question and challenge the current model. Camila described the change that had begun at her school: "*people have started to question what we [teachers] were doing and started to question the status quo…the senior leaders are advocates for change*." Similarly, Jane described the support she felt to support others in her school advocating for change: "*I want to help them drive the mahi [work]…to be part of the movement [and] the change*." Additionally, the responses from several participants suggest that these teachers value experimenting and adapting to new curriculum approaches. They spoke positively about attempting or trialling new teaching methods, despite the challenges involved. Madeline stated:

> *You are thinking about learning and experiences in a…different way, just putting a really different lens on it. Teachers get a little bit stuck in a rut and [we think] this is easy. This kind of works for most of them. So we'll keep doing it. But I love that the change is thinking that it's not okay. It's not okay to put one lens on it and say, well the majority are doing okay, because…we need everyone, everyone needs to be doing okay.*

Sophia reiterated: "*[is it] we've never done it before, so I'm not going to do it. Or could it be that we've never [done it] before, so I should try*?" Rachel, while sharing her own experiences of the new curriculum development that occurred in her school, stated: "*It surprises me that not every other school is doing it*?"

Concurrent with a willingness to challenge the status quo, several participants expressed a desire to continue adapting and improving as teachers. These findings suggest that participants shared a similar mindset regarding the flexibility of curriculum and their role in this process. Participants frequently highlighted the necessity to adjust their teaching and learning approaches in response to perceived gaps within the system. The concept of being courageous as educators was expressed by two participants. Madeline reflected that: "*In my early years I would never have been brave enough to have even considered that there was anything wrong with anything that we were doing*" and Melanie believed that "*[educators] just need to be a bit braver*."

Additionally, participants described an ongoing culture of learning in their schools. This suggests a shared belief among these participants that adopting new methods of curriculum delivery and engaging

in continuous improvement are essential to address and rectify gaps within the system. There was a common expectation that teachers should function as both learners and educators, remaining responsive by adapting to the needs of their students. Melanie, in a school that had reimagined a junior curriculum, reflected that:

> *We don't always get it right…sometimes we make mistakes…there's got to be this culture of innovations, [and] you've got to be prepared to make mistakes and learn from it so being reflective is really important because you're learning all the time. You're improving all the time.*

Similarly, Patrick described the collective mindset at his school: "*The attitude is that we're up for it. We'll try something and review it. If you're not up to scratch, then we'll change it and it's not personal and we just keep on reviewing and changing*." Sophia focused on the benefits she perceived for teachers:

> *Most of the time with teachers—sometimes they have forgotten how to be learners themselves. When we reawaken that part in them…that is where the magic happens. I feel like when teachers become learners again, it does awaken something in them.*

**5.4 Feelings of Responsibility**

An awareness of the responsibility and care required to implement the refreshed curriculum changes was a common theme among participants. Several participants expressed concerns about ensuring the accurate implementation of new knowledge. There was also a shared perception of supporting knowledge that they felt was lacking within education, alongside a broader awareness of wider societal implications. Madeline reflected on her role as an educator and her realisation of gaps in her own knowledge:

> *It was actually a moment to step back and actually to learn about the language and the culture and the damage that was done…learning more about the land and the land wars and a lot of stuff that we even as New Zealanders didn't really have a good understanding of because we missed…all of Aotearoa New Zealand history…quite a shock to realise you have quite a large hole in your education.*

Additionally, Rachel described the benefits of broadening perspectives at a wider societal level: "*You actually want to open these minds to other cultures and other points of view and if you aren't on board with it, you're not actually helping your students prepare for the future*."

Patrick, Amanda, and Camila voiced concerns about implementing these curriculum changes, indicating their awareness of the significant responsibility associated with this reform. As a senior leader, Amanda stated: "*We've taken the responsibility to start with mātauranga Māori first really seriously*"; Camila stated: "*We don't want to step on any toes and we want to make sure we're presenting local history accurately.*" Patrick summed up a common attitude felt amongst these participants:

> This change is genuine…the worry is getting it wrong because it's really important to us. Let's be honest…language and mātauranga Māori was taken away from people and [educators] are reintroducing it and we've [got to] get it right…there's a big responsibility and there is the fear…just not [of] getting it wrong [but] it's got to be right because we're now responsible for something that was taken away.

## 5.5 Complexities of the Refresh

A common theme among participants was their concern about the challenges and complexities involved in understanding and utilising mātauranga Māori, local Indigenous knowledge. Now it is required as the core foundation for curriculum design, several participants expressed apprehension, previously noted in the findings, about the possibility of inaccurately using this knowledge. This concern was often described as fear.

Sophia reflected on the origins and hesitancy of teachers she works with. She expressed concern about how past experiences could influence non-Māori educators when asked to acquire new knowledge, and how these factors might impact progress.

> *I wonder for our lot of our teachers…they're so frightened of isolated experiences or incidents, where maybe they've been in the wrong…maybe they've felt not good enough and done something that's born out of ignorance, like just walking straight into a marae[meeting grounds]. And then from that experience, they shut down.*

Sophia considered, later in her interview, the conditions required for teachers who have this fear: "*I think the starting space has to feel safe for a lot of our non-Māori educators who can be frightened*." Similarly, Patrick expressed that he believed the newness of the knowledge was causing concern among his department members. He emphasised that his teachers lacked the necessary knowledge themselves to implement curriculum changes.

> *The biggest fear is not the change itself…They are experts in biology and geophysics, but they're not the experts in what they're doing now. And although some have lived here…there was one of my staff who was educated in the local area but had never done any mātauranga Māori in her schools at all. It was all new for her.*

Additionally, challenges with acquiring mātauranga Māori were a common theme among participants. They expressed concerns about the magnitude of this task for teachers, both in terms of understanding and acquiring the necessary knowledge. Kaia reflected on the complexities of being tasked with understanding mātauranga Māori:

> *It's a whole thing to even navigate mātauranga Māori because of lots of people…it's hard to articulate a culture because everything you're talking about is knowledge and a knowledge system. It's like saying to people, you need to learn about knowledge; knowledge of what? It's everything. It's knowledge of all these different facets within te ao Māori [Māori worldview] and then within mātauranga Māori. There is a framework, a governance framework, which people don't understand. It's like saying, we need to learn about knowledge.*

Similarly, Sophia expressed concern about the shift in perspective required to acquire mātauranga Māori. Her comments indicate that a change in how educators understand and perceive local knowledge is necessary. Sophia described the intricacies and layers involved when working with mātauranga Māori:

> *There is a concept in mātauranga, if you don't go and find it, it comes to you when you are ready. Firstly, the feeling…as opposed to teaching content…it's creating a personal connection to mātauranga Māori…I think that's really important for our non-Māori educators, because they can get quite (and I am saying this from what I've witnessed and what I've been told),*

> *frightened to make a mistake. And if they're in that space, they're not actually thinking about how it feels to be in the mātauranga.*

She later added: "*It is hard to connect to te ao Māori if you've never had the experience and so creating that experience is the best way to engage in mātauranga*."

### 5.6 Challenges of Building Partnerships

A common theme among participants was their awareness of the time required to build meaningful relationships with tangata whenua and the wider community. Several understood the necessity of these relationships to gather the expertise required for making curriculum changes, but they also expressed concerns about the considerable time investment needed to establish authentic connections. They emphasised the importance of relationships built on trust and reciprocity, which they perceived as requiring significant time. Madeline highlighted the gap her colleagues had in their own knowledge and viewed the time needed to build relationships as a challenge:

> *One of the absolute challenges is that we don't have…particularly in science… the expertise. We really are specialists in our little part of a huge topic and so it is about finding people that can help us. We've spent a long time trying to make as many connections as we can. Another really time consuming thing.*

Similarly, Melanie, Camila and Rachel were concerned about ensuring the relationships were built on trust. Melanie stated: "*It takes time to build relationships with local people and for them to trust us. We can't expect them to give without giving back as well*" and Camila: "*We are in the early stages of forming partnerships with some of the different mana whenua [the indigenous people (Māori) who have historic and territorial rights over the land]and to make truly meaningful relationships…that's going to take time and a few years*." Rachel reflected: "*It's not a fast process. It takes time to develop*."

Additionally, a common theme among participants was the complexities of establishing partnerships. Several expressed the challenges they encountered in understanding mātauranga Māori. There was a shared awareness of how the nature of mātauranga Māori, as local Indigenous knowledge, contributes to the complexity of acquiring this knowledge. Patrick summed up the overall challenge:

> *The biggest challenge has been finding…like in science if you want to find something out in chemistry then you look it up but if you want to find something out with mātauranga Māori, you are hitting all sorts of issues. It's so complex. Finding somebody who is going to give you your own answer isn't going to happen and it shouldn't be because that's the richness of mātauranga Māori.*

Camila was aware of the complexities that occurred within mana whenua as they supported teachers with this knowledge:

> *There is still so much more to learn. There was one of the iwi yesterday and they were saying as well that there are gaps in the history and they are wanting to relearn that too. It's a huge process.*

Kaia reiterated the intricacies of attaining mātauranga Māori and the importance of understanding this process: "*Otherwise you are doing a disservice to the culture and the mana of a culture*." She stated:

*It's so complex with so many complexities. Not all mātauranga is accessible to everybody. So even in te ao Maori I'm not allowed all mātauranga either, they'll be certain mātauranga and it's only good for certain people for specific reasons. To protect the integrity and the mana of it because it comes with obligations, responsibilities or consequences. It might be given wrong.*

She was concerned about the consequences of gathering knowledge without a wider awareness of these complexities:

*It's dangerous because you can get the wrong people that have given that power of the mandate by the school, not by the right people, to carry out mātauranga or the mahi for the mātauranga…Who are they to say that they are the right Māori to lead Māori and Māori things? That's the issue that you have there. They may be good at this or that or administration but they're not an expert in the field of mātauranga.*

### 5.7 Lack of Support

The majority of participants expressed a common frustration with the lack of support to implement the refreshed curriculum. This frustration stemmed from uncertainties about future curriculum changes in the sector, a lack of clear direction, and confusion about how to effectively translate the refresh into practice. Patrick used a metaphor to describe his frustration regarding changes to the curriculum: "*We're a political football. Let's be honest. We are a political football, and we get kicked from one side to the other*." Similarly, Melanie described the effort she had to make to interpret the meaning of the new reform in order to support other department members in navigating a new direction: "*You're trying to work out what's going on because it keeps changing*."

Several participants agreed that a lack of support from the MOE had affected their ability to implement the proposed changes. As a new head of department, Madeline described how the lack of clarity impacted her ability to effectively lead her colleagues:

*The last 5 years have been really hard. I think a lot of that stems from the unknown, there has been so much unknown. We are ultimately [in] a space where because we don't get a lot of timely information from the ministry, and people you would be expecting to be leading the change, we have to make some big calls ourselves.*

Madeline was additionally concerned about the impact that a lack of directives might have on her learners: "*I don't think we can sit around waiting for the ministry to make decisions. Ultimately it's about the kids in front of us at that moment and if we keep waiting, we're not going to make any difference*." Similarly, Patrick expressed frustration with the lack of concrete guidance to support the proposed changes as a head of department. His concern indicates that the lack of support stemmed from the fact that this was a new direction for all levels of the sector. Patrick stated: "*We get so little from above. The training has not been good on this, but I think they're probably struggling with the training to be honest…we've not done this before*."

Several participants expressed concern about the lack of guidance on how to implement the changes at the classroom level. This indicates a gap in support for the practical application of designing curriculum with mātauranga Māori as the primary focus. Camila was concerned about how to authentically incorporate new knowledge into her teaching and learning: "*It's still a question of, how do I do that*

*effectively? In terms of content anyway, maybe not pedagogy, but how do I meaningfully incorporate this*?" Similarly, Madeline asked: "*How do I seamlessly put this programme together? Best utilising the resources. I think it's time consuming, amazingly time consuming*."

### 5.8 Exploitation

Concern about the resourcing of curriculum changes was a recurring theme among participants. There was a widespread awareness that these changes required support within schools, and several participants expressed concern for their Māori colleagues. They perceived that their colleagues were often tasked with providing guidance on mātauranga Māori. They conveyed apprehension that in addition to their regular workload, being the sole resource for this in a school was challenging. Kaia described the collective attitude of the participants: "*When you look at everything that the ministry wants for mātauranga Māori, that needs a lot of resourcing*." As a Māori educator herself, Kaia had taken on the additional responsibility of supporting her colleagues with the necessary knowledge. However, she questioned why the MOE had not allocated resources for this purpose. She stated: "*Why does the ministry not provide the resources to assist you to be able to do what you need to do? Whatever those resources might look like, you know*." This led to a conversation where Kaia reflected on teachers who step in to fill gaps in expertise, supporting colleagues and benefiting learners, especially when there is a lack of resources allocated for making necessary changes. "*The ministry exploits teachers because it's a selfless profession. Everything we do is acts of service and it's about growth and development, and it's a profession, like nursing and that is [when] it's about the care of [people]*."

Additionally, several participants observed that a lack of resourcing about how to understand and use mātauranga Māori had led to an overload for their colleagues. Melanie expressed concern for her Māori colleague: "*it is like…anything Māori…go to her. So that's actually really challenging for her because when we started changing, she wasn't even at the centre of the changes*." Patrick similarly reflected about the pressure on individuals tasked with training teachers: "*There is a biologist who is Māori. She does training for Māori science teachers or science teachers in mātauranga Māori, but she's just so busy*." Rachel had previously expressed concern about a similar overwhelm occurring in her school, and with relief shared that, "*more Māori staff were being employed because before there was only one Māori teacher doing [all of the work] in the department*."

Kaia, in her role as one of the few Māori resources in her school, described what it felt to have these expectations placed on her:

> *I still taught my normal load and did all my normal outputs and then I had to take on all the extra stuff. No time, no money, nothing. And then I was drowning and then just feeling like, what am I doing here?*

Her frustrations suggest a broader implication regarding the awareness needed about Māori ways of working for implementing this type of change, aiming to prevent a sense of exploitation among Māori in supporting future changes:

*The politicians use our good nature against us, so I supposed that's me [needing to talk] about value. We operate in koha [gift or donation]. We do the mahi and whatever you see, if you think it's worth this much, it's your job to say what you value or the worth. It's not for me to tell you. [We] just want to feel valued…it's quite isolating for Māori teachers because when you're working by yourself…we are whānau and community-based people. We like to work together.*

### 5.9 Summary

From the gathered data, the key findings suggest that these educators collectively believe that the purpose of education is to improve society. There is a shared commitment to equity, driven by a recurring experience that leads them to believe the current education system does not promote equality. These educators see themselves as advocates for change, believing teachers can and should work towards creating an equitable education system.

They engaged with the current curriculum changes because they viewed them as a means to address these inequities, although they also expressed a sense of burden and responsibility in doing so. Despite their eagerness to embrace these changes, a common theme emerged regarding the demanding complexities of the curriculum reform. These complexities included understanding and implementing a new knowledge system, difficulties in establishing and nurturing trusted partnerships, and challenges in fostering a unified mindset across the sector.

Educators frequently expressed feeling unsupported during the implementation of these changes, citing inadequate support from the MOE and politicians. There was also a recurring sentiment of exploitation voiced by both Māori and non-Māori teachers alike.

# Chapter 6: Discussion

This study sought to examine the experiences of a group of New Zealand teachers as they navigated a particularly complex curriculum reform. This curriculum reform, for the first time, placed Te Tiriti o Waitangi centrally within the New Zealand curriculum framework, with a clear vision to reduce inequality and promote fairness for all learners. Schools were tasked with developing their own local curricula, using the national curriculum as a base and partnering with tangata whenua to incorporate local knowledge.

The participants in this study are highly committed to the ideals of social justice and equity. They believe in the power of education to produce social change, and they want to be part of this change. They were all early adopters of the ideas in the refresh. When I started this study, I believed that by researching the experiences of this group of teachers, I would be able to offer examples of new and innovative practice that might assist other schools and teachers on their own implementation journey. Instead, the findings from this study indicate that the task assigned to New Zealand teachers was exceedingly complex and difficult. The realities of implementing the refreshed curriculum may have been significantly underestimated by policymakers and curriculum writers. The 2023 curriculum changes represented more than a simple refresh of ideas—they constituted a fundamental rewrite of the knowledge, skills, and mindsets that teachers were expected to adopt. This research draws attention to the complex challenges of the curriculum refresh, which, as this study shows, has significantly increased the demands on schools and teachers. Requiring teachers to develop the school curriculum, as well as being the pedagogical experts who "deliver" it, is a relatively recent development in the New Zealand context. The 2007 curriculum document, widely known as NZC, did not prescribe what was to be taught, but rather was "outcomes-oriented" (Lourie & McPhail, 2021). The refresh added another layer to this by requiring schools to develop a "local" curricula, which were to reflect and be tailored to the needs of their local community.

While any curriculum reform is likely to be complex, the findings of this study highlight two particularly complex challenges: the type of new knowledge required by teachers, and the expectation for schools to develop partnerships with their local communities. This chapter begins with a discussion of these two areas of complexity, drawing attention to the various experiences of the participants in this study and the relevance of those experiences to broader discussions about curriculum reform in New Zealand. Then, following this, the chapter teases out the implications of this discussion, first for teachers and then for those involved in policy and planning. In the final section of the chapter, the implications of this study for research are considered.

## 6.1 The Complexities of the Curriculum Refresh

### *6.1.1 The New Knowledge Required by Teachers*

One of the main findings of this study is that early-adopter teachers were very concerned about the magnitude of a task that involved integrating a new knowledge system of which they knew they had very little understanding or experience. The requirement to incorporate mātauranga Māori into the curriculum presents a number of challenges. If they are to do this, teachers need to think differently about the nature of knowledge itself, and to reflect on and significantly rethink some of their ideas about what it means to be a teacher. They also need to be able to reach out to their local community to access knowledge they do not hold themselves.

### *6.1.2 Thinking Differently About the Nature of Knowledge*

Mātauranga Māori represents a Māori epistemology or theory of knowledge, reflecting a unique way of viewing the world that encompasses both traditional knowledge and culture (Waitangi Tribunal, 2011 as cited in Hikuroa, 2017). Engaging with mātauranga Māori involves more than just acquiring missing content knowledge. It requires a sophisticated understanding of the nature of knowledge itself—not merely as universally applicable "facts" but as something derived from and connected to diverse worldviews, allowing for multiple valid forms of knowledge. A key finding from this study is that the participants were adaptable and flexible in how they viewed knowledge. Many of them, particularly those identifying as non-Māori, saw themselves as embarking on a journey to deepen their understanding. They recognised that their own education, which had largely prioritised British history, left them with significant gaps in their grasp of New Zealand's history, and this awareness helped them appreciate the objectives of the refreshed curriculum. These findings reveal valuable insights into the mindset and attitude of the early adopters regarding this experience and the importance they placed on this new knowledge. Research about teachers' experiences of working with Indigenous knowledge emphasises that engaging with such knowledge requires valuing it and being open to considering other worldviews alongside one's own (Hart et al. 2012; Moichela, 2017; Shizha, 2008). The early adopters' willingness to learn about mātauranga Māori, an alternative knowledge system, suggests they have an adaptable and flexible attitude toward the nature of knowledge itself.

### *6.1.3 What It Means to Be a Teacher*

As well as the need to be open and flexible about the nature of knowledge itself, the findings suggest that any attempt to genuinely integrate mātauranga Māori into the curriculum requires a fundamental shift in the mindset of teachers, a change in what is likely to be a core part of their identity. Secondary school teachers are often trained to think of themselves as "subject experts." In this study, teachers reported that they had to transition from being experts to becoming learners in real time, adapting their practices for the students before them. Traditionally, secondary school teachers are trained in subject-specific areas and work in department silos where subjects are taught in isolation. The curriculum

refresh challenged teachers to go beyond their specialised expertise and become learners of new knowledge, often with little prior experience, relying primarily on self-directed exploration.

In addition to having to rethink part of their teacher identity in terms of being an "expert," the teachers in this study found they needed to consider the dominant knowledge systems present in New Zealand schools and actively engage in the ongoing debate about whose knowledge was being valued. The findings show that the early adopter teachers found they needed to be aware of their position within the dominant majority and how that influenced the knowledge they taught. A core intention of the refreshed curriculum was to establish a bicultural framework that placed equal importance on the traditional Western knowledge, which is currently being taught in schools, and mātauranga Māori. This requires more than just an open mindset; it requires a completely new set of understandings. New Zealand has implemented a variety of bicultural initiatives over time that represent different models of biculturalism (Lourie, 2015). Placing mātauranga Māori on an equal footing with the knowledge that has traditionally been taught in schools requires thinking about power sharing very differently. As described in Chapter 2, the NZC (MOE, 2007) asked teachers to *acknowledge* the Treaty of Waitangi; however, the refreshed curriculum asked teachers to *share* their power as experts with others. The participants in this study understood that the curriculum reform necessitated these significant shifts in their own positioning. They were not threatened when their status as knowledge experts was challenged, and they realised that incorporating mātauranga Māori into the curriculum did not necessitate them becoming experts in mātauranga Māori. Instead, the participants in this study created space for the people who did possess this knowledge. They aimed to foster collaboration rather than competition between knowledge systems. The participants in this study were willing to do this because they believed there were benefits in designing a curriculum that incorporates multiple perspectives and knowledges. However, the findings suggest that, even for this very willing group, the challenge was significant.

#### *6.1.4 Accessing Mātauranga Māori*

The findings show that the participants in this study willingly embraced their roles as learners, leaning into these experiences to begin their own journeys of understanding another worldview present in New Zealand. The emphasis on local knowledge in the refresh required them to actively seek out expertise within their own local areas so they could enrich their students' learning. For some, this meant developing new relationships with tangata whenua. The findings of this study highlight some of the challenges associated with approaching local experts and asking them to share their knowledge. Unsurprisingly, the actual time it takes to do this is considerable, adding further stress and burden on schools and teachers who are already time poor. Finding local experts can be very difficult. Some of the early adopters noted the local requirement was especially challenging for those schools in areas where iwi are in the process of having to relearn their own stories. Another possibility that may not have been considered is that several schools and teachers in the same region might be approaching the same few local experts. The potential burden on local partners as a consequence of the requirement to

develop relationships with tangata whenua may not have been considered by policy makers and curriculum writers.

There also seems to have been an assumption in the framing of the curriculum refresh that tangata whenua will be willing to share their knowledge freely with non-Māori, but this may not be the case. Research literature has indicated that Indigenous people are likely to find it difficult to trust that their knowledge will not be adapted to “fit” a Western paradigm, and this can lead to hesitance in granting access to that knowledge (Moichela, 2017). In the New Zealand context, prominent Māori scholars Sir Hirini Moko Mead and Dr Charles Royal have emphasised the historical devaluation of mātauranga Māori as a legitimate form of knowledge (as cited in Smith et al., 2016, p. 132). Scepticism and fear persist within Indigenous communities because of previous negative experiences when seeking recognition for their knowledge, and this may continue to be the case in New Zealand as well. The early adopters in this study understood that not all mātauranga Māori was readily accessible and emphasised the importance of having the right person overseeing the protection of this knowledge to maintain its integrity and ensure the safety of those engaging with it.

The mindset with which teachers approach mātauranga Māori is crucial (Smith et al., 2016, p. 132). Rather than striving to become experts in this area, the teachers in this study created space for those who are knowledgeable and acknowledged the historical fears of misrepresentation and potential lack of benefits for Māori communities in sharing their knowledge. The findings of this study suggest that integrating Indigenous knowledge into the curriculum necessitates a shift in educators’ perceptions of knowledge and the sources they value, fostering trust, and addressing historical injustices. Without recognising the need to reframe their expert roles and accepting that they cannot be experts in mātauranga Māori, teachers risk causing more harm than good in their efforts to incorporate mātauranga Māori into the curriculum.

The research literature highlighted the potential consequences and risks for those who lack awareness or understanding of the contextual knowledge held by elders essential for building a local curriculum. Engaging with surface-level cultural knowledge—such as games and songs—rather than the deep contextual knowledge that elders and recognised experts possess can result in oversimplification, tokenism, or superficial applications of Indigenous knowledge in the curriculum (Moichela, 2017).

The refreshed curriculum mandated that teachers incorporate another knowledge system into the curriculum, but the findings of this study suggest the importance of having the right mindset and attitude towards embracing this worldview may have been vastly underestimated. To genuinely adopt this perspective, educators need to cultivate a learner’s mindset. They need to remain open to listening, to acknowledge their uncertainties, and to actively engage in the learning process themselves. While the teachers in this study concentrated on creating experiences and opportunities to incorporate the knowledge of others rather than seeking to be expert in it themselves, this may not come easily to all

teachers, many of whom will see part of their teacher identity as requiring them to be expert, and/or be unwilling to share their expert stature with others.

### 6.2 The Skills Needed to Establish Partnerships

Another key finding of this study was that these teachers recognised the importance of building meaningful and trusted partnerships with mana whenua in order implement the proposed changes. One of the challenges in doing this is knowing how to engage with the right people in order to respect and uphold the integrity of the Indigenous knowledge the teachers aimed to incorporate into their curriculum. The other challenge is the time and skill needed to build trusting relationships.

The literature discussed earlier in this research emphasised the significance of recognising and valuing the expertise of community-based knowledge keepers, and this was also acknowledged by the early adopters. Kaia noted the importance of ensuring that a person thought to be expert in mātauranga Māori by a school or teacher is genuinely acknowledged by Māori in that field. While someone may be an expert in other areas within a school context, the authority on mātauranga Māori or tikanga must be determined by the appropriate Māori representatives, as failing to do so risks undermining the culture and the integrity of the knowledge.

Acknowledging the historical undervaluation and fear of misrepresentation associated with Indigenous knowledge, the early adopters accepted that building trust and fostering reciprocal relationships with tangata whenua was essential to successfully implement these curriculum changes. The experiences of the early adopters reveal their commitment to establishing authentic and trusted partnerships, prioritising professional development time, resources, and sabbatical leave to engage with local iwi. Their goal was to understand what the iwi sought from the school, laying the groundwork for trusting, reciprocal relationships. Similar to practices in Canada, where elders are recognised as vital contributors to local curricula, the experiences of these early adopters highlight the importance of taking the necessary time to foster relationships with local iwi as a crucial aspect of implementing curriculum changes.

### 6.3 The Implications of the Complexity of the Curriculum Refresh

#### *6.3.1 Shared values*

One of the main findings of this study is that these early-adopter teachers are strongly dedicated to promoting equity in education for every student. In their interviews, many shared personal stories of observing inequalities in the education system, especially concerning Māori learners or their own experiences as Māori students. These teachers perceived the education system as failing to meet the needs of all learners, seeing this as a fundamental flaw. They believe that, as educators, they have a role to play in making the system more equitable for every student, reflecting a social justice orientation. This orientation views education as "pivotal in responding to and challenging social injustices, and creating conditions for tolerance, equality, and participation that will lead to a more secure, peaceful,

and cohesive society" (Connell, 1993, p. 14). As a result of their orientation, this group of early adopters exhibited a strong commitment to and support for the curriculum changes.

However, it would be overly simplistic to assume that all teachers in New Zealand share similar experiences or social orientations as these early adopters. Not all educators possess the same beliefs, values, or backgrounds, making it misguided for policy writers and curriculum developers to assume universal engagement with reforms based solely on changes in policy. In the context of a complex curriculum overhaul, research has indicated that many educators are more likely to engage with reforms that resonate with their personal values and views on education's purpose.

This consideration raises significant questions about achieving cohesion within the sector regarding educational objectives. As the purpose of the curriculum is an ongoing societal debate, frequent changes in government policy—often occurring every 3 years—exacerbate the issue. Teachers selectively adopt aspects of reforms that resonate with their values (Duffee & Aikenhead, 1992; Honing, 2006: Shizha, 2005), leaving other elements unaddressed and resulting in disengagement from changes they do not understand or support. Consequently, this leads to disparities within classrooms and schools, contributing to a widening divide across the education sector. Such fragmentation moves us further away from establishing an equitable education system for all students.

#### *6.3.2 The Frequency of Change*

At the time of this writing, the recently refreshed curriculum has been rescinded. With a change in government, there is now a renewed emphasis on literacy and numeracy within the New Zealand education sector. This shift has reignited debates among educators regarding the fundamental purpose of education. A cyclical pattern emerges in which those whose values align with the rationale for proposed changes are more likely to engage with and implement these reforms. As the curriculum continues to evolve and reforms persist, a widening divide becomes apparent within the sector concerning educational objectives. Participants may perceive these reforms as part of an ever-changing political landscape, leading teachers—like the early adopters—to engage with those reforms that resonate with their personal experiences and convictions, knowing that future reforms may alter the direction of curriculum yet again.

If these dynamics are overlooked, it is unlikely that changes will be adopted uniformly across the sector, resulting in a divide between teachers who align with different reforms and fostering a sense of disillusionment among educators—especially those early adopters whose vision for education was closely aligned with the now-abandoned curriculum reform. Informal discussions conducted at the end of the interviews revealed that these teachers often expressed their commitment to the changes they were already implementing, believing they were doing what was right—a sentiment echoed throughout the findings of this study.

While this research focused on the early adopters of these curriculum changes, further investigation involving a cross-section of New Zealand teachers engaging with a complex reform could provide valuable insights into their diverse experiences with such curriculum reforms. Such research could illuminate how factors like personal values influence the adoption and implementation of changes, ultimately leading to more effective strategies for promoting educational equity across the sector.

#### *6.3.3 More Than Just Knowledge*

A shared belief among the early-adopter participants in this study was that the education system is flawed, and that it is their responsibility to leverage this system to create a better future for children. They saw the refreshed curriculum as a call to action, empowering teachers to act as catalysts for change.

The findings indicate that while the early adopters raised concerns about authentic integration of mātauranga Māori, they believed that restoring what was taken from Māori—specifically their Indigenous knowledge through the history of colonisation in New Zealand's education system—is crucial. They felt that reintroducing this knowledge would help to mend some of the historical damage, broaden students' understanding of other cultures, and move closer to achieving a fair and equitable education system. Although they were clear that they did not have the knowledge themselves, nor did they have the historical background to understand the true extent of the damage of what has been taken away from Maori, the early adopters supported the need to make space in their curriculum for a perspective which incorporated and valued mātauranga Māori.

The refreshed curriculum proposed to integrate mātauranga Māori alongside Western perspectives, aiming to ensure that all students have access to the same material (Boyles et al., 2009). This aligns with distributive notions of equal educational opportunity (Adler, 1982; Finn, 1993; Hirsch et al., 1988, as cited in Boyles et al., 2009). Distributive notions of justice are rooted in egalitarian ideals, advocating for equal shares for each individual (Boyles et al., 2009, p. 38). However, challenges arise when this distributive approach treats knowledge as something to be deposited into students, a process criticised by social justice theorist Paulo Freire, who termed it the "banking method" (Boyles et al., 2009, p. 38). While this approach is well-intentioned, achieving meaningful change requires more than merely distributing knowledge equitably through the integration of new knowledge systems. The assertion that introducing Indigenous knowledge and requiring schools to centre their curriculum design around mātauranga Māori can raise Māori achievement, repair historical damage from colonisation, and promote equity in the education system overlooks the complexity of the social justice initiative that the refreshed curriculum aimed to achieve. This simplification poses significant challenges for New Zealand teachers as they navigate the multifaceted realities of implementing such profound changes.

Social justice approaches are far more complex than simply revising a curriculum vision and integrating new knowledge systems. Achieving social equity necessitates a thorough examination of whether

genuine educational opportunities exist for all students from the outset, along with an awareness of the broader societal discourses that hinder social equality (Young, 1990, as cited in Connell, 1993, p. 26). Howe (1997, as cited in Boyles et al., 2009) argued that even if schools were de-segregated and resources were equally distributed, true equality would remain elusive because it fails to address the wider societal attitudes. He pointed out that the oppression present in schools—manifested through racism, classism, sexism, and other forms—persists even when resources are allocated equally. As Howe asserted, "oppression continues to flourish" regardless of equal resource distribution (as cited in Boyles et al., 2009, p. 39).

Additionally, the literature on teachers' experiences with Indigenous knowledge emphasised that effectively integrating Indigenous perspectives into curricula requires a specific attitude from educators. As early adopters of the reform who aligned with its objectives and championed the inclusion of Indigenous knowledge, this study's participants recognised their unique role in curriculum development, setting themselves apart from other teachers in the sector and even within their own schools. This suggests that they felt they were engaging in a manner distinct from their colleagues in the broader educational sector.

They often questioned why other schools were not implementing similar changes and reflected on the challenges they faced, particularly the tension from colleagues who were not yet on board with the reform. Teachers in leadership positions frequently noted the time it took to help their colleagues to understand the necessity of these changes. While these early adopters viewed themselves as courageous and committed to the initiative, they also felt different from the broader educational landscape. They expressed frustration that many other teachers were not willing to embrace the challenge or question the status quo in the same way they were.

While the refreshed curriculum aimed to provide equal access to knowledge to address the inequity faced by Māori learners, it overlooked the diverse discourses and belief systems among teachers, as well as the broader societal attitudes that influence the educational landscape. Education leaders may assert their commitment to social justice by ensuring equal access to education within a meritocratic framework, but racism and other forms of oppression can persist despite these claims (Boyles et al., 2009, p. 39).

Treating all teachers as if they share the same beliefs and experiences, without considering how their personal backgrounds shape their perspectives or the varying societal discourses they encounter, misrepresents the complexities within the sector. The assumption that simply changing policy to include Indigenous knowledge will address these underlying issues in the education system—and the societal context in which it operates—is overly simplistic. Such changes to a social system require a more nuanced understanding of the realities and challenges, attitudes and beliefs involved.

For this group of early-adopter teachers who believe that change is possible and view the education system as a means to foster a better and more equitable future, the challenges they face will likely lead to a growing sense of disillusionment. Despite their efforts to develop curricula in alignment with the refreshed curriculum and their commitment to social justice initiatives, meaningful changes to equity in society are likely to remain limited. Without broader actions to promote a democratic education that genuinely facilitates social change—rather than merely providing equal access to resources or integrating knowledge—progress will be constrained.

#### *6.3.4 A Recognition From Policy Makers About What Is Being Asked*

A significant finding of this research study is the feelings of exploitation and burden experienced by early adopters, particularly concerning their Māori colleagues, who were unexpectedly tasked with the role of experts in "*all things Māori*," as noted by one participant. The prescription to integrate mātauranga Māori and establish relationships with tangata whenua, which also required contextual knowledge, often placed the burden on Māori educators in schools, making them the primary resource for answers. Non-Māori teachers regarded this expectation as a significant burden on their Māori peers, acknowledging their own lack of understanding of both the contextual processes and the relevant knowledge. As a result, they frequently sought guidance from their Māori colleagues. Additionally, participants who identified as Māori conveyed feelings of exploitation, as the implementation of curriculum changes positioned them as the presumed experts within their schools. This expectation compelled them to support changes they deemed important for their identity while simultaneously bearing the responsibility of safeguarding the integrity of the knowledge that teachers sought to integrate.

The interviews clearly revealed the Māori teachers' frustration over their perceived lack of value and worth. These teachers articulated a tension stemming from their identity as Māori: the belief that others should recognise and reward their contributions without them having to advocate for their own worth. Compounding this was a frustration with lack of recognition, resources, and additional rewards—such as adequate pay or time—for their expertise within the educational environment. Māori educators reported feeling exploited, under supported, undervalued and under resourced when taking on roles designed to promote a knowledge system that they believe is undervalued in society. In line with Paulo Freire's principles of social justice—that is, that solutions to the challenges faced by oppressed groups should derive from their own experiences and knowledge rather than the perspectives of their oppressors (Bishop, 2011, p. ix)—these narratives highlight the importance of acknowledging that meaningful solutions must originate from within the marginalised community.

While there are well-intentioned efforts to prioritise the establishment of relationships with tangata whenua in the context of curriculum changes, the lack of understanding regarding what constitutes a successful partnership for both parties, as well as the value that should be recognised and placed on

Māori contributions, is, at best, irresponsible and potentially damaging to the relationships between schools and their local iwi. Without a clear comprehension of what a successful partnership entails or how to appropriately follow processes for the protection of Indigenous knowledge, we risk placing Māori in a position where they are forced to advocate for their knowledge to be included, while at the same time working to protect it.

If a bicultural curriculum requires partnerships with tangata whenua to effectively integrate local knowledge into the new school design, it is vital to examine how the experiences and knowledge of tangata whenua have been adequately resourced or modelled for educators. Addressing the needs of marginalised Māori communities necessitates conducting research in a manner that respects and incorporates their worldviews and understandings (Bishop, 2011, p. ix). Furthermore, exploring the experiences of Māori educators or tangata whenua during periods of curriculum reform may yield valuable insights into how respectful and collaborative relationships that benefit all parties can be established.

The experiences of early adopters provide important insights into the demands associated with the curriculum refresh, which was presented as a minor update but, in reality, constituted a comprehensive rewrite of both the expectations and roles of teachers. Educators were required to acquire entirely new skills, to adopt different approaches, and to integrate knowledge that differs significantly from traditional practices. Most teachers do not possess these essential skills and cannot reasonably be expected to develop them without extensive re-education and ongoing professional development.

#### *6.3.5 What Happens to Curriculum Change When There Is a Lack of Realistic Support*

A significant finding of this study is that early adopters reported feeling unsupported and exploited, despite their strong commitment to the curriculum changes. They indicated that, while they endorsed the reforms, they nevertheless encountered considerable challenges that they thought were due to insufficient support, guidance, and resources necessary for effective implementation. This group of educators observed that, although changes had been initiated, the decision-making process was slow and provided little direction for authentic integration into classroom practices.

Despite their willingness to embrace change, these teachers often felt compelled to make independent decisions as they designed and developed curriculum in real time for their students. They expressed a burden of responsibility, comparing their experiences to those in the nursing profession, and articulated a sense of being taken advantage of. Driven by a commitment to the growth, care, and development of their students, educators felt pressured to translate important policies into classroom practices, even in the absence of adequate resources and timely decision making.

As discussed in the literature review, this situation can lead to disillusionment and burnout. The stress resulting from role overload, role ambiguity, and role conflict (Hindin, 2007, as cited in Richards, 2018) during curriculum reforms significantly contributes to rising burnout rates among teachers. The

experiences of early adopters illustrate the immense workload teachers face during such reforms. These educators developed new skills, forged new partnerships, and adopted new methods of working within an unfamiliar knowledge system, all while designing a new curriculum amidst a host of concurrent reforms and continuing to teach their students.

In the current context of critically low teacher-retention rates, where adjustments are being made to visa requirements to allow overseas teachers to fill vacancies—alongside provisions for limited access to teach for unqualified educators—understanding the experiences of these early adopters is vital for comprehending the burdens faced by teachers during curriculum reforms. It is essential to systematically consider the magnitude of the work required from teachers during such transitions. While the intentions of policymakers and curriculum developers may be well meaning, this research study highlights the substantial demands placed on teachers throughout the reform process.

### 6.4 Where to Next?

While regular education reforms are expected in the sector, the underlying goals of changing a curriculum framework and introducing new policy initiatives are often misunderstood. The assumption that simply altering the curriculum would lead to the social change envisioned by these early adopters, as well as policymakers and curriculum developers, was misguided. While curriculum changes are a vital piece of the puzzle, addressing social inequities requires broader alterations to the existing systems and structures that dominate both the education system and wider society. The refreshed curriculum anticipated that teachers would use the national curriculum to create a school curriculum with a local lens, incorporating mātauranga Māori in partnership with tangata whenua. However, the complexity of this task was immense, and valuable lessons can be learned from the experiences of early adopters regarding the bicultural perspective in teaching and the development of partnerships with tangata whenua.

If New Zealand truly wants to move toward a genuinely bicultural education system that values partnerships with tangata whenua, an awareness of the complexities involved in this process is vital. As this research indicates, building such a system takes time. Biculturalism has a long and varied history in New Zealand, and teachers often do not share a common understanding of its meaning. In a profession where educators are expected to integrate mātauranga Māori, there can be tension for some Māori individuals who are concerned about the colonisation of their Indigenous knowledge. Teachers must consider expertise and knowledge carefully; as learners and gatherers of perspectives, they can create space for diverse worldviews without claiming ownership of that knowledge. This involves respecting the time needed to build meaningful and authentic relationships with tangata whenua.

Additionally, there also needs to be an understanding that teachers who lack experience with mātauranga Māori must take steps to protect themselves and ensure they know how to uphold the integrity of this knowledge. To do so, they require contextual knowledge about mātauranga Māori,

which should be integrated at all levels within a school. We should consider how leadership roles that are properly resourced might look in schools, particularly in terms of identifying individuals within communities who could fulfil these roles. This development should be informed by tangata whenua, ensuring that the knowledge is authentically represented and supported. By fostering strong partnerships with local Māori communities, schools can create an environment where educators feel equipped to engage with mātauranga Māori meaningfully and respectfully, enhancing the educational experience for all students.

The refreshed curriculum significantly underestimated the importance of teachers understanding how to cultivate successful, authentic, and reciprocal relationships with tangata whenua. The answers and solutions must come from Māori; tangata whenua should lead the way. If New Zealand aims to develop a curriculum that incorporates Indigenous knowledge, we need groups willing to explore Treaty partnerships and provide examples, evidence, and processes to guide our learning. Acknowledgment of the necessity for these partnerships to be established prior to curriculum design is essential, as building relationships will require time.

Moreover, while this study concentrated on the early adopters of this specific reform, teaching is fundamentally a profession dedicated to student development and often aligned with social justice values. This commitment leads teachers to engage deeply with reforms that resonate with their own experiences, beliefs, and values, as they strive to turn policy into meaningful action for the benefit of their students. Regardless of whether they are fully aware of their broader beliefs about social change, educators understand the significant impact of their roles and the responsibilities they carry, particularly in the secondary sector, where they can teach over 100 students every day. This sense of responsibility is not lost on teachers; it often goes beyond the choice of whom they serve, becoming an intrinsic part of their daily work as they engage with their students in large numbers—real people, in real time.

Policymakers, however, need to acknowledge the realities and diverse perspectives within the teaching profession, as well as develop a clear understanding of what reforms truly demand from teachers, as demonstrated by the experiences of these early adopters. Underestimating teachers as a uniform entity—treating them as if they can instantly translate policy into immediate action—grossly minimises the effort required during a curriculum change.

This research highlights the experiences of educators amidst a significant reform, which coincided with major shifts in the New Zealand assessment and qualification system, new methods for teaching literacy and numeracy, the introduction of corequisites, the rollout of a vocational pathways curriculum, and the development of a new New Zealand Histories curriculum, all while navigating changes in resource-allocation platforms. Each of these initiatives brought its own set of complexities and pressures for educators. Reforms do not happen in isolation, and teaching does not come to a halt; changes unfold in real time. Despite participants  strong advocacy for the curriculum changes and their efforts to enact the

vision laid out by curriculum developers, this research reveals the consequences of the expectations placed upon them, leaving them feeling unsupported, exploited, and overwhelmed.

When we consider how the experiences of these early adopters with one reform illustrate the magnitude of the demands placed on them, and recognise that they are also managing multiple changes, particularly as a new government pivots again, we must reflect on the impact this has on the teaching profession. While such changes may be well intentioned as a vision from the top, there needs to be a greater awareness of the effort required to turn these visions into action on the front lines. Frequent, significant changes not only lead to teacher burnout and waste valuable resources, but they also create divisions within the sector, resulting in surface-level adjustments that make students the guinea pigs of policy shifts. New Zealand must examine the implications of political changes for the reforms experienced by teachers. How can we halt the rapid, often abrupt changes that occur with each new government, especially when there's pressure to implement reforms quickly before the next potential shift in leadership? We need to slow down. We need to recognise the work involved so that we can do less but do it better. By focusing our efforts and being mindful of the complexities inherent in educational reforms, we can create a more sustainable approach that truly benefits teachers and students alike.

New Zealand should explore what an educational consensus might look like within a bipartisan education council that stops treating education—and therefore teachers—as a political football, similar to the Finnish model. In Finland, politicians have fostered a consensus across all political parties regarding the vision for a world-leading education system. Since the 1960s, despite changes in government, the commitment to this educational strategy has remained consistent. "We decided together, as a nation, that education is to build a nation—that it goes beyond politics and political power. It's a common theme and understanding… committed to providing good, publicly financed education for every child" (Sahlberg, 2014, p.3). A long-term education strategy developed in consultation with teachers, supported by all political parties regardless of shifts in power, could allow educators to spend less time grappling with the demands of constant reforms and more time focusing on the core reason they entered the profession: their students. This approach might also contribute to retaining more teachers in New Zealand's education system.

### 6.5 The Implications of This Study for Research

This study fills an important gap in the existing literature by examining the experiences of teachers navigating the challenges of implementing a bicultural curriculum in New Zealand's secondary education sector. While much of the prior research on curriculum reform has focused on teachers' perceptions, attitudes, or strategies regarding curriculum changes, this study engaged with nine early-adopter teachers to offer a more detailed account of their lived experiences during this educational reform.

By exploring these experiences, the research aims to challenge traditional views of teachers as mere agents of change, revealing the complexities and realities they confront. Despite the good intentions of policymakers and curriculum developers, the findings highlight the substantial demands placed on teachers as they adapt to reform, exposing the emotional and professional toll this takes. This exploration sheds light on the significant workload and challenges educators face, contributing to a broader understanding of a profession that often feels undervalued and susceptible to burnout. Ultimately, this study seeks to enhance the conversation around educational reform by amplifying the voices and experiences of teachers.

The curriculum refresh in its current form has recently been rescinded. Future research related to the curriculum reform this study focused on could involve revisiting these early adopters to explore their response to the rescinding of the refresh and their current teaching practices. The research could investigate whether these educators have maintained their engagement with the changes in the refresh that resonated with their values or if they have redirected their focus to more urgent reforms imposed on them by a change in government. Additionally, it would be valuable to examine how their participation in curriculum affects their teacher identity, their motivation and their core beliefs about the role of education. Another research direction could involve exploring the effects of frequent changes of focus imposed on teachers on their willingness to remain in the profession. Moreover, future studies could investigate how schools are coping with the rapid pace of change that has become typical in New Zealand's educational landscape. Gaining insights into the strategies schools employ to manage this demanding environment could be beneficial for both educators and policymakers.

# Chapter 7: Conclusion

This study adopted an interpretivist theoretical framework to examine the experiences of a group of New Zealand teachers involved in a complex curriculum reform. It focused on the firsthand experiences of nine early-adopter teachers who actively engaged with a newly refreshed curriculum. These educators, recognised for their reflective and innovative practices, provided valuable insights into how teachers navigated and contributed to curriculum changes. By exploring their experiences, the research highlights the mindset, new knowledge, and partnerships necessary for this reform, emphasising the substantial work required to implement a new curriculum framework.

While much existing research emphasised teachers' perceptions, attitudes, or analyses of policy, this study aimed to capture their experiences in their own words, providing a deeper understanding of the complexities involved. Although teachers often call for more time and resources, this research reveals that educational reform is far more intricate, with the demands of changing policy and the expectations on teachers underestimated. The experiences of these early adopters illustrate that, despite their strong advocacy for the proposed changes, they often felt unsupported, exploited, and overwhelmed by the associated challenges. The insights shared by these teachers encourages a reevaluation of how New Zealand policymakers and curriculum developers approach education reform. This research highlights the need to rethink strategies to prevent continuously burdening teachers with the weight of societal change and frequent shifts in focus, ensuring they do not experience burnout in the process.

This research emphasises the numerous layers of complexity involved in realising the vision and intentions behind the curriculum changes. It reveals that the challenges of implementing such reforms are far more intricate than simply modifying a policy. The research clearly indicates that while the refreshed curriculum aimed to promote a local approach integrating mātauranga Māori in partnership with tangata whenua, it significantly underestimated the complexities involved. The experiences of early adopters highlight the considerable work required from educators to engage with the curriculum, necessitating shifts in their mindsets, knowledge, partnerships, and practices. Addressing social inequities demands not only curriculum revisions but also broader transformations within the education system and society at large. To foster a bicultural education system that values partnerships with tangata whenua, this research emphasises the importance of recognising the time and effort needed to build meaningful relationships and understanding.

The study also highlights the complexities involved in incorporating Indigenous knowledge into an established school system. While the changes are well intentioned, it is evident that significant measures are required to prevent tokenism or potential harm to relationships with tangata whenua and mātauranga Māori. Teachers lacking experience with mātauranga Māori need to take protective steps and acquire contextual knowledge, which should be integrated at all levels within schools. Properly resourced

leadership roles, informed by tangata whenua, are essential for ensuring that Indigenous knowledge is authentically represented and supported. Strong partnerships with local Māori communities enable educators to engage with mātauranga Māori in a respectful and meaningful manner, enriching the educational experience for all students. However, the research clearly emphasises the necessity of acknowledging the time involved in these crucial aspects.

Additionally, the research illustrates the need for greater awareness of teachers' roles and the profession as they engage with changes. A lack of understanding of teachers as individuals, as well as the work involved during curriculum changes and the consequent impact on them, is evident, even among the early adopters who supported the reform. This study demonstrates that educators' experiences are shaped by their diverse backgrounds, beliefs, and values, influencing how they interpret and respond to curriculum changes. Teachers, especially in the secondary sector, face the significant responsibility of impacting numerous students daily, highlighting the necessity for policymakers to recognise the realities within the teaching profession. Positioning teachers as a uniform group capable of instantly translating policy into practice overlooks the substantial effort required during curriculum reforms.

Considering these findings, it is imperative to reflect on the cumulative impact of frequent and significant changes on the teaching profession. While the experiences of these teachers highlight the considerable work involved in curriculum reform, the refreshed curriculum and their engagement with it represent just one initiative examined in this study, given its complexity. Nonetheless, this reform existed within a broader context of simultaneous changes, each requiring real-time adaptation from teachers and contributing to a substantial workload. New Zealand needs to consider the implications of political shifts on educational reforms and strive to slow the pace of change. A more sustainable approach to education is essential—one that acknowledges the complexities involved and fosters an environment conducive to effective teaching and learning. An approach like this would focus on the overall impact of changes, rather than the implementation of numerous directives from various sources without considering how these changes affect the workload and well-being of the teachers undertaking this critical work.

Considering the potential for a bipartisan educational consensus, akin to the Finnish model, offers a promising avenue for future reforms. In Finland, a long-standing commitment to a shared vision for education moves beyond political cycles, ensuring that educators can focus on their primary mission: supporting their students. A consistent, long-term strategy, developed in consultation with teachers and supported across political lines, could alleviate the burdens associated with constant reforms and enhance teacher retention.

This research emphasises the need for a collaborative, thoughtful approach to curriculum reform in New Zealand, one that values the insights and experiences of teachers. By fostering meaningful partnerships

and creating supportive structures, we can work towards an educational landscape that benefits both educators and students alike.

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# Appendices

**Appendix A: Email to Identified Participants**

To _____ (insert name of participant),

My name is Lisa Gordon and I am currently working towards completing a Master of Philosophy at AUT in 2023.

The focus of my research project are the curriculum changes proposed in the NZ Refresh for 2026. I want to explore the experiences of educators as they develop a school curriculum with a local lens.

I am sending you this email because you have been identified as an early adopter of this work and I would like to invite you to be a participant in this research. Your role will be to share

your experiences, via an informal interview with myself, as you have embarked on this pioneering work.

My hope, with this research project, is to explore what is really happening for educators as they do what is proposed in the refresh. The intention of gathering your experience(s) is to understand what challenges teachers may face as they start to develop a local curriculum and to create a platform for other teachers to build from, while possibly identifying areas that need further support.

If you are willing to volunteer, then please reply to this email explaining that you are volunteering as a participant for my research project. If you could please let me know by _______ (insert date for reply deadline).

Once you have replied, I will send you a copy of the Information Sheet and Consent Form for this research project. We can then find a time that is convenient for us both, in a setting of your choice for a meeting.

Thank you for your time.

Warm regards,

Lisa Gordon.

**Appendix B: Permission to Access Form**

## Permission for researchers to access organisation school staff.

*Project title:* Exploring early-adopter teachers experiences as they develop a school curriculum, with a local lens.

*Project Supervisor:* Jane Gilbert.

*Researcher:* Lisa Gordon.

○ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 09/08/2023.

○ I give permission for the researcher to undertake research within

__________________________________

○ I give permission for the researcher to access the staff of

________________________

Principal's CEO's signature:

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Principal's CEO's name:

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Principal's CEO's Contact Details (if appropriate):

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Date:

***Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 4th of September, 2023. AUTEC Reference number 23/249.***

*Note: The head of the organisation should retain a copy of this form.*

**Appendix C: Participant Information Sheet**

**Participant Information Sheet**

**Date Information Sheet Produced:**

09/ 08/ 2023

**Project Title**

Exploring early-adopter teachers experiences as they develop a school curriculum, with a local lens.

**An Invitation**

My name is Lisa Gordon and I am currently working towards completing a Master of Philosophy at AUT. The focus of my research is exploring the experiences of educators as they develop a local curriculum for their schools, as proposed for the NZ Refresh in 2026.

This research project aims to capture the stories of early adopters as they embark on this pioneering work. As an educator who has been identified as already on this journey, I would like to invite you to be a participant in this research. Your role will be to share your stories, via an informal interview with myself, about your experiences as you have pursued these curriculum changes.

**What is the purpose of this research?**

This purpose of this research project is to explore the experiences of early-adopter educators as they develop a school curriculum with a local lens. The NZRefresh is still in draft consultation but a few educators are beginning this work now.

This research seeks to explore experiences of teachers whilst they do this work, so we can better understand what is being asked of educators from this refreshed curriculum. These collective stories will act as a platform for other teachers to build on as they start this curriculum work, whilst possibly identifying areas of support and development required in the next few years.

**How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?**

You have been invited to participate in this research project because you are a teacher working in a school with a track record in curriculum innovation, and because you have personally identified as an 'early adopter' of the localising curriculum concept that is

part of the upcoming 'Refresh'. We are interested in your thoughts and experiences in this context. The project will collect the thoughts and experiences of twelve teachers from four secondary schools in Aotearoa.

**How do I agree to participate in this research?**

Your participation in this research is voluntary (it is your choice) and whether or not you choose to participate will neither advantage nor disadvantage you. You will have an opportunity to read this information sheet over two weeks and reply to the email should you be willing to participate in this study. You can withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose to withdraw from the study, then you will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to you removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of your data may not be possible. You will be emailed a consent form to read over before we meet and I will be available, via email, should you have any questions. The consent form will be completed before we begin our interview. I will bring a hard copy to sign at the meeting.

**What will happen in this research?**

As a participant you will be invited to have a one-hour informal interview with myself to talk about your experiences as a pioneer implementor of the localised curriculum concept in your school. This will be at a setting of your choice at a mutually convenient time. I will provide the interview prompts to you before our meeting.

You will be offered an opportunity to make a follow up meeting with me should you have further information to discuss or if there are details you might need to clarify from our interview.

When the research is completed, I will write a short summary of the conclusions for you and your school. You will be invited to attend a workshop so I can share and test the findings of the research (and their possible implications) with all research participants.

**What are the discomforts and risks?**

There is unlikely to be any discomfort or embarrassment during your participation of the research project. The risk as a participant is minimal.

**How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?**

During the interview you can choose how to respond to any of the prompts, including not responding. You can terminate your participation in the project at any time. Once the meeting has taken place you will be offered the opportunity to check the accuracy of the transcripts of our interview.

While all possible effort will be made to ensure that your identity will be kept confidential, due to the smaller number of participants in this study and their common interests, it will be difficult to guarantee absolute confidentiality.

**What are the benefits?**

The potential benefits of this research will be gaining a deeper understanding of the complexities involved in the proposed curriculum changes within the NZRefresh. As this is a new approach to designing curriculum there is likely to be new knowledges, practices and partnerships that are required of teachers. The benefit of exploring your experiences, as an early adopter of the curriculum refresh. is that other educators can use this a platform to learn and build from. From this research findings we can identify the targeted support that teachers may need as they begin this work learning from the challenges and experiences of those exploring the changes already.

This will also provide participants an opportunity to connect – and network- with other educators engaged in similar work.

As I researcher, this will allow me to develop knowledge and expertise involved in major curriculum change as well as learning how to carry out my research project to achieve my Masters Qualification.

**How will my privacy be protected?**

There is limited confidentiality offered for participants during this research project given the smaller size and nature of the pool of potential contributors. However, participating teachers and secondary schools will be written using pseudonyms during the findings of this research.

All data, including consent forms, will be kept in a locked location and will be destroyed after six years.

**What are the costs of participating in this research?**

The time commitment for participating in this research is a one-hour meeting. I will then offer a voluntary one hour follow up meeting in case you feel there are areas you wish to expand on or clarify.

Research participants who attend the follow up 'workshop', to provide feedback on the results and findings, should note that this workshop would take an additional one-hour time commitment.

**What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?**

I will have sent you an invitation email inviting you to be a participant in this research project and you will have replied to confirm your voluntary participation to my email. This information sheet is to outline the details of the research project. If you have any

questions before we meet you are welcome to email me at any stage. Likewise, I can clarify any questions you have at the start of our meeting.

**Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?**

When the research is completed, I will write a short summary of my findings to send to you and your school. In addition, I will invite you to 'workshop' the findings with the other research participants as a way of providing feedback on the results and my analysis process as a researcher.

**What do I do if I have concerns about this research?**

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor,

Jane Gilbert: Jane.Gilbert@aut.ac.nz

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTEC, ethics@aut.ac.nz , (+649) 921 9999 ext 6038.

**Whom do I contact for further information about this research?**

Please keep this Information Sheet and a copy of the Consent Form for your future reference. You are also able to contact the research team as follows:

**Researcher Contact Details:**

Lisa Gordon: lgordon@kaipara.school.nz

**Project Supervisor Contact Details:**

Jane Gilbert: Jane.Gilbert@aut.ac.nz

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 4th of September, 2023, AUTEC Reference number 23/249.

**Appendix D: Participant Consent Form**

## Consent Form

| | |
|---|---|
| *Project title:* | Exploring early-adopter teachers experiences as they develop a school curriculum, with a local lens. |
| *Project Supervisor:* | Jane Gilbert. |
| *Researcher:* | Lisa Gordon. |

○ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 09. 08. 2023

○ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.

○ I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that they will also be audio-taped and transcribed.

○ I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (my choice) and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without being disadvantaged in any way.

○ I understand that, while all possible effort will be made to ensure that my identity will be kept confidential, due to the smaller number of participants in this study and their common interests, it will be difficult to guarantee absolute confidentiality.

○ I understand that if I withdraw from the study then I will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to me removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of my data may not be possible.

○ I agree to take part in this research.

○ I wish to receive a summary of the research findings (please tick one): Yes○ No○

Participant's signature: ...........................................................................................................

Participant's name: ...........................................................................................................

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

.........................................................................................................

.........................................................................................................

.........................................................................................................

.........................................................................................................

Date:

***Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 4th of September, 2023. AUTEC Reference number 23/249.***

*Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this for*

## Appendix E: Interview Prompts

| Interview Questions | Follow up prompts to question if required |
|---|---|
| Briefly **tell me about your education journey** to this point today. | |
| Are there particular experiences or **A** particular moment from that journey that you think influences the work you are doing, in this context, now? | Moments might be clarified as experiences with people or places.<br><br>If not in the interviewees answer –<br>What was changed/ developed for you as an educator based on what you have said. |

**My Research Project is focusing on the upcoming NZ Refresh but particularly about how early adopters are adapting the National Curriculum into curriculum for their own school, with a local lens.**

| Interview Questions | Possible follow up questions/prompts if required |
|---|---|
| **When you think about what this looks like, how do you imagine this looking in your school/ context**? | Ie. What does it look like?<br>When you imagine this, at this school, what do you imagine it looks like/ is? |
| What do you imagine it looks like for learning/ learners? | |
| | |
| **Tell me about** developing a curriculum with a local lens at this school? | Make sure focus comes back to how they making it specific for their context. |
| Why did you start where you did? | |
| What changes are happening/emerging because of this work? | Elaborate on: What do you think teachers are changing in their classroom practice? Expand on feelings during this time. |
| | |
| What do you think **YOU** bring to this work at your school? | Possibly tease out/ elaborate on feelings associated with any experiences in these following questions. |
| What have you enjoyed/ has gone well? | |

| | |
|---|---|
| Tell me about the challenges. | |
| What has surprised you? What did you not expect? | |
| **Can you tell me about a moment** when you felt like you were most out of your comfort zone? | |

| Interview Questions | Possible follow up questions/ prompts if required |
|---|---|
| Why do you think/believe you became/ are an early adopter of these changes? | |
| **Has there been a moment or experience** for you that created an ah ha moment? | Ie. Has there been a moment or experience you think has been pivotal for you? |
| If you were asked to explain if you think that this work has been a catalyst for change at your school, what might you say? | Explain or expand that this may include changes for the interviewee, other educators, school systems, learning, knowledge etc<br>Expand on how teachers are feelings towards these changes if they interviewee says yes. |
| What have you had to learn during this journey? | Expand on how this learning has made them feel. |
| Where has the most significant learning come from? | |
| They say once you know, do better. What are you doing better now because of knowledge you have gained on this journey? | |

## Appendix F: Ethics Application

**Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC)**

*For AUTEC Secretariat Use only*

____________/____________

# EA1

## APPLICATION FOR ETHICS APPROVAL BY AUTEC

***Please print this application single sided in greyscale and do not staple. Once this application has been completed and signed, please read the notes at the end of the form for information about submission of the application for review.***

## NOTES ABOUT COMPLETION

- Ethics review is a community review of the ethical aspects of a research proposal. Responses should use clear everyday language with appropriate definitions being provided should the use of technical or academic jargon be necessary.
- The AUTEC Secretariat and your AUTEC Faculty Representative are able to provide you with assistance and guidance with the completion of this application which may help expedite the granting of ethics approval.
- The information in this application needs to be clearly stated and to contain sufficient details to enable AUTEC to make an informed decision about the ethical quality of the research. Responses that do not provide sufficient information may delay approval because further information will be sought. Overly long responses may also delay approval when unnecessary information hinders clarity.
- AUTEC reserves the right not to consider applications that are incomplete or inadequate. Please do not alter the formatting or numbering of the form in any way or remove any of the help text.
- Comprehensive information about ethics approval and what may be required is available online at http://aut.ac.nz/researchethics
- The information provided in this application will be used for the purposes of granting ethics approval. It may also be provided to the Graduate Research School, the Research and Innovation Office, or the University's insurers for purposes relating to AUT's interests.
- The Form is focussed around AUTEC's ethical principles, which are in accordance with the *Guidelines for the approval of ethics committees* in New Zealand.

***To respond to a question, please place your cursor in the space following the question and its notes and begin typing.***

## A. *Project Information*

### A.1. What is the title of the research?

Exploring early-adopter teachers' experiences as they develop localized curriculum.

### A.2. Is this application for research that is being undertaken in stages? ☐ Yes ☒ No

*If the answer is 'Yes' please answer A.2.1 and the following sections, otherwise please answer A.3 and continue from there.*

### A.2.1. Does this application cover all the stages of the research? ☒ Yes ☐ No

*If the answer is 'No' please provide details here of which stages are being covered by this application, otherwise please answer A.3 and continue from there.*

### A.3. Who is the applicant?

Jane Gilbert.

### A.4. Further information about the applicant.

### A.4.1. In which faculty, directorate, or research centre is the applicant located?

School of Education, Faculty of Culture and Society

### A.4.2. What are the applicant's qualifications?

PhD, MA, DipTESL, DipTchg.

**A.4.3. What is the applicant's email address?**

***An email address at which the applicant can be contacted is essential.***

Jane.Gilbert@aut.ac.nz

**A.4.4. At which telephone numbers can the applicant be contacted during the day?**

0274776401

## A.5. Research Instruments

**A.5.1. Which of the following does the research use:**

***☐ a written or electronic questionnaire or survey ☐ focus groups ☒ interviews***
***☐ observation ☐ participant observation ☐ ethnography ☐ photographs***
***☐ videos ☐ other visual recordings ☐ a creative, artistic, or design process***
***☐ performance tests***
***☐ some other research instrument (please specify)***

***Please attach to this application form all the relevant research protocols. These may include: Indicative questions (for interviews or focus groups); a copy of the finalised questionnaire or survey in the format that it will be presented to participants (for a written or electronic questionnaire or survey); a protocol indicating how the data will be recorded (e.g. audiotape, videotape, note-taking) for focus groups or interviews (Note: when focus groups are being recorded, you will need to make sure there is provision for explicit consent on the Consent Form and attach to this Application Form examples of indicative questions or the full focus group schedule. Please note that there are specific confidentiality issues associated with focus groups that need to be addressed); a copy of the observation protocol that will be used (for observations); full information about the use of visual recordings of any sort, including appropriate protocols and consent processes; protocols for any creative, artistic, or design process; a copy of the protocols for the instruments and the instruments that will be used to record results if you will use some other research instrument.***

**A.5.2. Who will be transcribing or recording the data?**

Primary researcher: Lisa Gordon.

## A.6. Please provide a brief plain English summary of the research (300 words maximum).

This research project will explore the experiences of 'early-adopter' teachers as they develop a 'localised' curriculum for their students. Schools will be required to develop localised curriculum when the current national curriculum 'refresh' process is fully implemented in 2026, but some teachers are beginning this work now. Some challenges are expected, as this work is new for teachers. This research aims to explore the lived experiences of twelve early-adopter teachers in four secondary schools as they engage with this work. Data will be collected via interviews with these teachers. The interviews will be transcribed and analysed using a narrative-based approach.

## A.7. Additional Research Information

**A.7.1. Is this research an intervention study?** **☐ Yes ☒ No**

***An Intervention Study is defined in NEAC's National Ethical Standards for Health and Disability Research and Quality Improvement. as "A study in which an investigator controls and studies an intervention(s) provided to participants for the purpose of adding to knowledge of the health effects of that intervention(s). The term 'intervention study' is often used interchangeably with 'experimental study'. Many intervention studies are clinical trials." (p.247)***

**A.7.2. Is this Health and Disability Research?** **☐ Yes ☒ No**

***Broadly speaking, health and disability research should:***

- ***aim to answer a question or solve a problem and therefore generate new knowledge to prevent, identify and treat illness and disease***
- ***have the ultimate purpose of maintaining and improving people's health – in the sense of a state of physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing, rather than simply the absence of disease or infirmity***
- ***support disabled people to be included, participate more, exercise choice and control, and be more independent***
- ***address health and disability disparities***
- ***contribute to whānau ora.***

***This description is necessarily broad; we acknowledge that people's health is influenced by a much wider range of social factors than their health care. (NEAC's National Ethical Standards for Health and Disability Research and Quality Improvement. p.28)***

**A.7.3. Does this research involve people in their capacity as consumers of health or disability support services, or in their capacity as relatives or caregivers of consumers of health or**

disability support services, or as volunteers in clinical trials (including, for the avoidance of doubt, bioequivalence and bioavailability studies)? ☐ Yes ☒ No

## B. *The Ethical Principle of Research Adequacy*

***AUTEC recognises that different research paradigms may inform the conception and design of projects. It adopts the following minimal criteria of adequacy: the project must have clear research goals; its design must make it possible to meet those goals; and the project should not be trivial but should potentially contribute to the advancement of knowledge to an extent that warrants any cost or risk to participants.***

### B.1. Is the applicant the person doing most of the research (the primary researcher)? ☐ Yes ☒ No

***If the answer is 'No' please answer B.1.1 and the following sections, otherwise please answer B.2 and continue from there.***

#### B.1.1. What is the name of the primary researcher if it is someone other than the applicant?

Lisa Gordon.

#### B.1.2. What are the primary researcher's completed qualifications?

BA, (Major English/ Minor Art History), Otago University, Otago, New Zealand, 1998 – 2000.

BTchg (Major: Secondary Teaching), Otago University, Otago, New Zealand, 1999 - 2000.

#### B.1.3. What is the primary researcher's email address?

lgordon@kaipara.school.nz

lisajgordon97@gmail.com

#### B.1.4. At which telephone numbers can the primary researcher be contacted during the day?

0212014584

### B.2. Is the primary researcher

***☐ an AUT staff member*** ***☒ an AUT student***

***If the primary researcher is an AUT staff member, please answer B.2.1 and the following sections, otherwise please answer B.3 and continue from there.***

#### B.2.1. In which faculty, directorate, or research centre is the primary researcher employed?

***If the response to this section is the same as that already given to section A.4.1 above, please skip this section and go to section B.2.2.***

N.A.

#### B.2.2. In which school or department is the primary researcher employed?

N.A.

### B.3. When the primary researcher is a student:

#### B.3.1. What is their Student ID Number?

22178629

#### B.3.2. In which faculty are they enrolled?

Culture and Society

#### B.3.3. In which school, department, or Research Centre are they enrolled?

Education

### B.4. What is the primary researcher's experience or expertise in this area of research?

Lisa Gordon is a student at AUT completing a Master of Philosophy, and so is an emerging researcher. She has 20 years' experience as a secondary school teacher, including many years as a specialist curriculum advisor.

### B.5. Who is in charge of data collection?

Primary researcher; Lisa Gordon.

## B.6. Who will interact with the participants?

Primary researcher; Lisa Gordon.

## B.7. Is this research being undertaken as part of a qualification?

☒ Yes ☐ No

*If the answer is 'Yes' please answer B.7.1 and the following sections, otherwise please answer B.8 and continue from there.*

### B.7.1. What is the name of the qualification?

Master of Philosophy

### B.7.2. In which institution will the qualification be undertaken?

AUT – Auckland University of Technology

## B.8. Details of Other Researchers or Investigators

### B.8.1. Will any other people be involved as researchers, co- investigators, or supervisors?

☐ Yes ☒ No

*If the answer is 'Yes' please answer B.8.1.1 and the following sections, otherwise please answer B.8.2 and continue from there.*

#### B.8.1.1 What are the names of any other people involved as researchers, investigators, or supervisors?

N.A.

#### B.8.1.2 Where do they work?

#### B.8.1.3 What will their roles be in the research?

#### B.8.1.4 What are their completed qualifications?

### B.8.2. Will any research organisation or other organisation be involved in the research?

☐ Yes ☒ No

*If the answer is 'Yes' please answer B.8.2.1 and the following sections, otherwise please answer B.9 and continue from there.*

#### B.8.2.1 What are the names of the organisations?

#### B.8.2.2 Where are they located?

#### B.8.2.3 What will their roles be in the research?

## B.9. Why are you doing this research and what is its aim and background?

***Please provide the key outcomes or research questions and an academic rationale with sufficient information, including relevant references, to place the project in perspective and to allow the project's significance to be assessed.***

A series of recent policy documents (Ministry of Education, 2022a; 2022b) sets out the New Zealand's government process for 'refreshing' the current national curriculum for schools. By 2026, all schools will be expected to have a "well designed" curriculum with a "clear 'line of sight' to the contribution of mana whenua". "Local people, local environment, local knowledge, local events, and local issues" will need to be "visible throughout the curriculum". All learning programmes will need to be designed in "responsive partnerships with whanau and community", to "draw on the richness of local knowledge, stories and histories", and to "sustain culture, identity and language" (Ministry of Education, 2022, p.12).

This 'refresh' process is a policy response to decades of concern about how our national education system can better reflect, respond to, and serve the needs of Māori learners. It is also a response to the call, in the 2018 national public consultation on education's future (Kōrero Mātauranga) for a more "culturally responsive, individualised, localised, relevant and flexible curriculum".

Because this approach to curriculum development is very different from current/past practice, it is likely to present significant challenges for teachers and school leaders. New knowledges, new partnerships, new ways of working, new skills, and new ideas about the nature and purpose of curriculum will be required. The work will be highly complex, with multiple interacting elements to be considered. Highly developed

relationship/collaborative skills will be required, and the cognitive load for teachers and school leaders will be significant (Aitken, 2019, p. 6).

This new approach is currently in the draft/consultation stage: however, a few 'early adopter' schools and teachers are starting the process of developing 'localised' curriculum now. This research project aims to capture the experiences of these early adopter teachers as they embark on this pioneering work. This information is important for understanding the extent of what is being asked of teachers and school leaders in these reforms, and it may help to clarify the kinds of support teachers and schools will require to successfully implement these initiatives (Young & Lewis, 2015, p.7).

## B.10. What are the potential benefits of this research to the participants, the researcher, and the wider community?

The potential benefits for the participants are as follows:

1. They will have time to process and reflect on their work as early adopters in this field.
2. They will have opportunities to connect—and network—with other educators engaged in similar work.
3. They will have opportunities to inform the development of appropriate supports for other teachers as they prepare to implement these reforms.

The researcher will benefit by:

1. Developing a deep understanding of the complexities involved in major curriculum change that requires teachers to acquire significant new knowledge and skills.
2. Developing knowledge and expertise that will (later) allow her to support other teachers as they begin to develop a localised curriculum for their schools.
3. Learning how to carry out a research project and achieving a Masters qualification.

The benefits for the wider community are:

1. The research findings should help the Ministry of Education develop more targeted support for schools and teachers as they work to implement the localised curriculum aspect of the national curriculum 'refresh'.
2. The research findings should contribute to our knowledge of implementing major curriculum change, and how best to support teachers in this process. It should also add to our knowledge of the localised curriculum concept.

## B.11. What are the theoretical frameworks or methodological approaches being used?

This research aims to gather data on the experiences of teachers who are 'early adopters' of the localised curriculum approach. Via informal interviews, the researcher will collect teachers' stories of their experiences. The research approach is narrative inquiry (Turner & Bruner, 1986; Kramp, 2004; Clandinin, 2006, Connelly & Clandinin, 2016; Hee Kim, 2016), and the research paradigm is interpretivist, in that its aim is to uncover the meanings the teachers give to the experiences they recount in their stories (Crotty, 1998; Merriam & Tisdell 2016). Stories will be the basic unit of analysis. The aim is not to explore what teachers and leaders are 'doing', in terms of information or process, but rather to investigate the feelings, values, ideas and beliefs that inform and influence the participant teachers in their localised curriculum work (Hee Kim, 2016) and to uncover the (possibly invisible) wider discourses that contextualise this work.

## B.12. How will data be gathered and processed?

***Please provide your data collection protocols, describing step by step how you will be interacting with participants when collecting data.***

The researcher will meet each participant individually to listen to and record their experiences first-hand. These conversations will take place at the participants' schools, or, where necessary, via Google Meet or Zoom. Before the meeting, participants will have been given a list of the open-ended prompts the researcher will use. Examples of these prompts include: 'Think about some times you experienced...'; 'Tell me about a time you were aware of...'; or simply 'Tell me about a time when...' (Kramp, 2004; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Participants will have received the project Information Sheet before the meeting. This sheet outlines the kinds of experiences the researcher is interested in.

The researcher will record the face-to-face conversations using Otter.ai (a free-to-use transcribing app for researchers). Where the meetings take place on-line, the conversation will be recorded and transcribed using the automated transcript facility available on Google Meet or Zoom Meetings. Written or oral consent forms will be provided, depending on whether the conversation takes place in person or via video conference. Each meeting will be approximately an hour long, but each participant will be offered a follow-up meeting time if

they would like to clarify or elaborate on any of the stories they offered in the conversations. In addition, participants will later be invited to 'workshop' the collective stories the researcher will construct as part of the analysis process. This process is designed to be an accuracy check for the researcher.

### B.13. How will the data be analysed?

***Please provide the statistical (for quantitative research) or methodological (for qualitative or other research) justification for analysing the data in this way.***

The data for this research project will be analysed using a two-stage narrative analysis process. Participants' transcribed stories will be read and re-read by the researcher to identify common themes (Polkinghorne, 1995). Then the researcher will use these themes to carry out a 'storied analysis', (Kramp, 2004): that is, they will construct one or more collective narratives from the themes and 'workshop' these narratives with focus groups of participants, to 'member check' their authenticity.

### B.14. Has any peer review taken place?

**☒ Yes ☐ No**

***If your answer is 'Yes', please specify and provide evidence e.g. a letter of confirmation.***

***☐ AUT Competitive Grant ☐ External Competitive Research Grant***
***☐ PGR1 ☒ PGR2 ☐ PGR9 ☐ Independent Peer Review****

***Optional exemplars for evidencing peer review are available from the Ministry of Health (HDEC) website (http://ethics.health.govt.nz/) or from the Forms section of the Research Ethics website (http://aut.ac.nz/researchethics)***

## C. General Project Details

### C.1. Likely Research Output

#### C.1.1. What are the likely outputs of this research?

***☒ a thesis ☐ a dissertation ☐ a research paper ☐ a journal article***
***☐ a book ☒ conference paper ☐ a documentary ☐ an exhibition***
***☐ a film ☐ some other artwork ☐ other academic publications or presentations***
***☐ Some other output, please specify***

### C.2. Research Location and Duration

#### C.2.1. In which countries and cities/localities will the data collection occur?

Auckland, New Zealand.

#### C.2.1.1 Exactly where will any face to face data collection occur?

Face to face data collection will take place in appropriate spaces at the participants' place of employment (i.e. four NZ secondary schools).

#### C.2.2. In which countries and cities/localities will the data analysis occur?

Auckland, New Zealand.

#### C.2.3. When is the data collection scheduled to commence?

Late September, 2023.

### C.3. Research Participants

#### C.3.1. Who are the participants?

NZ secondary school teachers from schools that have been identified as early adopters or pioneers of the shift to localised curriculum development.

#### C.3.2. How many participants are being recruited for this research?

***If you are unsure, please provide an indicative range.***

Twelve

## C.3.3. What criteria will be used to choose who to invite as participants?

Participants will be teachers working in secondary schools with a 'track record' and interest in curriculum innovation. The researcher will invite teachers from these schools who are 'early adopters' of the localised curriculum concept: that is, teachers who are already doing localised curriculum development work. Teachers who are likely to be interested in participating in this project will be identified using the researcher's personal networks in Auckland schools. They will not be a representative sample.

### C.3.3.1 How will you select participants from those recruited if more people than you need for the study agree to participate?

The researcher will email twelve teachers who have been identified via the above process. Teachers' email addresses are routinely publicly available via their school's website. The email will outline the research and its aims, and ask these teachers if they would like to participate. It will ask them, if they are interested, to reply via email to confirm this. The researcher will then send these people the full information sheet and consent form, and begin the process of setting up a mutually convenient time to meet. The information sheet sets out the time commitment that would be required and the kind of information they would be asked to provide.

## C.3.4. Will any people be excluded from participating in the study?

☐ Yes ☒ No

***Exclusion criteria apply only to potential participants who meet the inclusion criteria. An exclusion criterion is any characteristic that ought to disqualify any potential participant from recruitment into the study. Consider exclusion criteria when there are heightened risks due to power differences in the relationship, recent injury, or other characteristics that might place potential participants at unreasonable risk of harms.***

***If the answer to this question is 'Yes' please answer C.3.4.1 and the following sections, otherwise please answer C.3.5 and continue from there.***

### C.3.4.1 What criteria will be used to exclude people from the study?

N.A.

### C.3.4.2 Why is this exclusion necessary for this study?

## C.3.5. Recruitment of participants.

### C.3.5.1 How will the initial contact with potential participants occur?

Direct email. See C.3.3.1 above.

### C.3.5.2 How will the contact details of potential participants be collected and by whom?

See C.3.3.1 above. Teachers' email addresses are publicly available on their school's website.

### C.3.5.3 How will potential participants be invited to participate?

See C.3.3.1 above.

### C.3.5.4 How much time will potential participants have to consider the invitation?

They will be given a week to reply to the email.

### C.3.5.5 How will potential participants respond to the invitation?

They will be asked to email the researcher directly if they are interested in participating, to confirm their interest.

### C.3.5.6 How will potential participants give consent?

They will complete the Consent Form after they have replied to accept the researcher's invitation to participate in this study.

### C.3.5.7 How and when will the inclusion criteria and exclusion criteria given in sections C.3.2 and C.3.3 be applied?

N.A.

### C.3.5.8 Will there be any follow up invitations for potential participants?

A week or so after their conversation with the researcher, participants will be emailed to ask if they would like a follow up meeting. This would be to allow them to elaborate on or clarify any aspects of the stories they offered in the earlier conversation. This additional meeting will only take place if the participant specifically requests it: it is expected that most won't want/need it, and it is not an essential part of the research design. Participants will also be advised that they can email the researcher directly

later if they have any further information they would like to add. A time limit will be given for this though, as once data analysis is under way, it will be difficult to include new information.

## D. *Partnership, Participation and Protection*

### D.1. How does the design and practice of this research implement the principle of Partnership in the interaction between the researcher and other participants?

***How are the researcher and the participants working together? How will your research design and practice encourage a mutual respect and benefit and participant autonomy and ownership? How will you ensure that participants and researchers will act honourably and with good faith towards each other? Are the outcomes designed to benefit the participants and/or their social or cultural group? How will the information and knowledge provided by the participants be acknowledged?***

The narrative inquiry design of this research allows for reciprocal respect between researcher and participants. The researcher is a member of the same community as the participants, with common aims and objectives. When the research is completed, she will write a short summary of the findings for the participant teachers and schools. She also intends to workshop the findings (and their possible implications) with the participants, to both test her analysis, and to share the findings. Participants will be acknowledged (anonymously) in all outputs from this research.

### D.2. How does the design and practice of this research implement the principle of Participation in the interaction between the researcher and other participants?

***What is the actual role of participants in your research project? Will participants be asked to inform or influence the nature of the research, its aims, or its methodology? Will participants be involved in conducting the research or is their principal involvement one of sharing information or data? Do participants have a formal role as stakeholders e.g. as the funders and/or beneficiaries of the research? What role will participants have in the research outputs (e.g. will they be asked to approve transcripts or drafts)?***

Participants will be invited to have an one hour long conversation with the researcher to talk about their experiences as pioneer implementers of the localised curriculum concept in their schools. They will later be asked to check the accuracy of the transcripts of their conversations. They will not be asked to inform or influence any aspect of the design or conduct of the research. While they share common interests with the researcher (and may benefit indirectly from the research), they do not have a formal stakeholder role.

### D.3. How does the design and practice of this research implement the principle of Protection in the interaction between the researcher and other participants?

***How are the researcher and the participants protecting each other? How will you actively protect participants from deceit, harm and coercion through the design and practice of your research? How will the privacy of participants and researchers be protected? How will any power imbalances inherent in the relationships between the participants and researchers be managed? How will any cultural or other diversity be respected?***

The identities of teachers and schools participating in this research will be kept confidential to the researcher through the use of pseudonyms. There is no deceit involved in the design, participation is entirely voluntary, and participants harm is highly unlikely. Researcher-participant boundaries will be carefully managed by the researcher.

## E. *Social and Cultural Sensitivity (including the obligations of the Treaty of Waitangi)*

### E.1. What familiarity does the researcher have with the social and cultural context of the participants?

The researcher is very familiar with the social and cultural context as she is a secondary school teacher herself, and has been for 21 years. The data is being gathered in a secondary school context from secondary school teachers, and the research topic is one of common interest and concern to both the researcher and the participants.

### E.2. What consultation has occurred?

***Research procedures should be appropriate to the participants. Researchers have a responsibility to inform themselves of, and take the steps necessary to respect the values, practices, and beliefs of the cultures and social groups of all participants. This usually requires consultation or discussion with appropriate people or groups to ensure that the language and research approaches being used are relevant and effective. Consultation should begin as early as possible when designing the project and should continue throughout its duration.***

***All researchers are encouraged to make themselves familiar with Te Ara Tika: Guidelines for Maori Research Ethics: A framework for researchers and ethics committee members which is able to be accessed through the Research Ethics website. Researchers may also find Te Kaahui Maangai a directory of Iwi and Maaori organisations to be helpful. This may be accessed***

***via the Te Puni Kookiri website (http://www.tkm.govt.nz/). As well as these documents, the Health Research Council has published Pacific Health Research Guidelines, and Guidelines on research involving children. (see http://www.hrc.govt.nz). There are also guidelines by various organisations about researching with other populations that researchers will find helpful.***

The researcher has informally consulted with some of the people who have been involved in developing the local curriculum concept for the Ministry of Education and who are able to recommend schools and teachers who are pioneering this work, specifically Dr Graeme Aitken.

**E.2.1. With whom has the consultation occurred?**

***Please provide written evidence that the consultation has occurred.***

**E.2.2. How has this consultation affected the design and practice of this research?**

## E.3. Does this research target Māori participants?

☐ Yes ☒ No

***All researchers are encouraged to make themselves familiar with Te Ara Tika: Guidelines for Maori Research Ethics: A framework for researchers and ethics committee members***

***If your answer is 'No', please go to section E.4 and continue from there. If you answered 'Yes', please answer the next question.***

**E.3.1. Which iwi or hapu are involved?**

## E.4. Does this research target participants of particular cultures or social groups?

☐ Yes ☒ No

***AUTEC defines the phrase 'specific cultures or social groups' broadly. In section 2.5 of Applying for Ethics Approval: Guidelines and Procedures it uses the examples of Chinese mothers and paraplegics. This is to identify their distinctiveness, the first as a cultural group, the second as a social group. Other examples of cultural groups may be Korean students, Samoan husbands, Cook Islanders etc., while other examples of social groups may be nurse aides, accountants, rugby players, rough sleepers (homeless people who sleep in public places) etc. Please refer to Section 2.5 of AUTEC's Applying for Ethics Approval: Guidelines and Procedures (accessible in the Ethics Knowledge Base online via http://www.aut.ac.nz/about/ethics) and to the relevant Frequently Asked Questions section in the Ethics Knowledge Base.***

***If your answer is 'No', please go to section E.5 and continue from there. If you answered 'Yes', please answer the next question.***

**E.4.1. Which cultures or social groups are involved?**

## E.5. Does this research focus on an area of research that involves Treaty obligations?

☐ Yes ☒ No

***All researchers are encouraged to make themselves familiar with Te Ara Tika: Guidelines for Maori Research Ethics: A framework for researchers and ethics committee members.***

***If your answer is 'No', please go to section E.6 and continue from there. If you answered 'Yes', please answer the next question.***

**E.5.1. Which treaty obligations are involved?**

## E.6. Will the findings of this study be of particular interest to specific cultures or social groups?

☒ Yes ☐ No

***If the answer is 'Yes' please answer E.6.1 and the following sections, otherwise please answer F.1 and continue from there.***

**E.6.1. To which iwi, hapū, culture or social groups will the findings be of interest?**

Secondary school teachers, education policy-makers, and teacher professional development providers.

**E.6.2. How will the findings be made available to these groups?**

When the research is completed, the researcher will write a short summary of the findings to send to the participant teachers and schools. She also intends to workshop the implications of the findings with these teachers and other interested parties once the research is completed. She may write a short article for a teachers' professional journal and/or the Education Gazette.

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# F. *Respect for the Vulnerability of Some Participants*

***"Vulnerable persons are those who are relatively (or absolutely) incapable of protecting their own interests. More formally, they may have insufficient power, intelligence, education, resources, strength, or other needed attributes to protect their own interests. Individuals whose willingness to volunteer in a research study may be unduly influenced by the expectation, whether justified or not, of benefits associated with participation, or of a retaliatory response from senior members of a hierarchy in case of refusal to participate may also be considered vulnerable." (Standards and Operational Guidance for Ethics Review of Health-Related Research with Human Participants, World Health Organisation).***

### F.1. Will your research involve any of the following groups of participants?

☐ Yes ☒ No

*If your research involves any of these groups of participants, please clearly indicate which ones and then answer F.2 and the following section, otherwise please answer G.1 and continue from there.*

***☐ people unable to give informed consent? ☐ your (or your supervisor's) own students?***
***☐ preschool children? ☐ children aged between five and sixteen years?***
***☐ legal minors aged between sixteen and twenty years?***
***☐ People lacking the mental capacity for consent?***
***☐ people in a dependent situation (e.g. people with a disability, or residents of a hospital, nursing home or prison or patients highly dependent on medical care)?***
***☐ people who are vulnerable for some other reason (e.g. the elderly, persons who have suffered abuse, persons who are not competent in English, new immigrants)? – please specify***

### F.2. How is respect for the vulnerability of these participants reflected in the design and practice of your research?

N.A.

### F.3. What consultation has occurred to ensure that this will be effective?

*Please provide evidence of the consultation that has occurred.*

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## G. *Informed and Voluntary Consent*

### G.1. How will information about the project be given to potential participants?

*A copy of all information that will be given to prospective participants is to be attached to this Application Form. If written information is to be provided to participants, you are advised to use the Information Sheet exemplar. The language in which the information is provided is to be appropriate to the potential participants and translations need to be provided when necessary.*

Once participants have confirmed their interest in participating in the research project, the project Information Sheet and Consent Form will be emailed to them, to ensure they have time to read these and have any questions they may have answered. They will be asked to complete and sign the Consent Form before the interview begins.

### G.2. How will the consent of participants be obtained and evidenced?

*AUTEC requires consent to be obtained and usually evidenced in writing. A copy of the Consent Form which will be used is to be attached to this application. If this will not be the case, please provide a justification for the alternative approach and details of the alternative consent process. Please note that consent must be obtained from any participant aged 16 years or older. Participants under 16 years of age are unable to give consent, which needs to be given by their parent or legal guardian. AUTEC requires that participants under the age of 16 assent to their participation. When the nature of the research requires it, AUTEC may also require that consent be sought from parents or legal guardians for participants aged between 16 and twenty years. For further information please refer to AUTEC's Applying for Ethics Approval: Guidelines and Procedures.*

The Information Sheet and Consent Form will be in hard copy for participants to sign in person before the beginning of the interview. They will have had this information in electronic form to read and clarify questions before they meet for their interview.

### G.3. Will any of the participants have difficulty giving informed consent on their own behalf?

☐ Yes ☒ No

*Please consider physical condition, cognitive status, age, language, legal status, or other barriers.*

*If the answer is 'Yes' please answer G.3.1 and the following sections, otherwise please answer G.4 and continue from there.*

#### G.3.1. If participants are not competent to give fully informed consent, who will consent on their behalf?

*Researchers are advised that the circumstances in which consent is legally able to be given by a person on behalf of another are very constrained. Generally speaking, only parents or legal guardians may give consent on behalf of a legal minor and only a person with an enduring power of attorney may give consent on behalf of an adult who lacks capacity.*

N.A.

#### G.3.2. How will these participants be asked to provide assent to participation?

*Whenever consent by another person is possible and legally acceptable, it is still necessary to take the wishes of the participant into account, taking into consideration any limitations they may have in understanding or communicating them.*

### G.4. Is there a need for translation or interpreting?

☐ Yes ☒ No

***If your answer is 'Yes', please provide copies of any translations with this application and any Confidentiality Agreement required for translators or interpreters.***

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## H. *Respect for Rights of Privacy and Confidentiality*

### H.1. How will the researchers respect the privacy and confidentiality of participants?

***Please note that anonymity and confidentiality are different. For AUTEC's purposes, 'Anonymity' means that the researcher is unable to identify who the participant is in any given case. If the participants will be anonymous, please state how, otherwise, if the researcher will know who the participants are, please describe how the participants' privacy issues and the confidentiality of their information will be managed.***

The confidentiality of the participants in this research project will be protected by using pseudonyms for all teacher and school names in the thesis and/or any publications that may arise from this research.

### H.2. Will any participants be identifiable in the research outputs or findings?

☐ Yes ☒ No

***If your answer is 'Yes", please answer H.2.1, otherwise please answer H.3***

#### H.2.1. What level of confidentiality is able to be offered to participants and how will this be managed?

***If the research involves small or distinctive groups of participants or procedures such as interviews conducted at the worksite, or focus groups with peers, researchers should identify the level of participant confidentiality that can be offered in the Information Sheet. If participants or groups will be identified, please state why this is appropriate, how this will happen, and how the participants will give consent.***

The identities of all participants will be kept confidential to the researcher through the use of pseudonyms.

### H.3. What information on the participants will be obtained from third parties?

***This includes use of third parties, such as employers or professional organisations, in recruitment.***

N.A

### H.4. How will potential participants' contact details be obtained for the purposes of recruitment?

Email addresses of participants will be obtained from school websites.

### H.5. What identifiable information on the participants will be given to third parties?

None

### H.6. Who will have access to the data during the data collection and analysis stages?

The primary researcher and (possibly) her thesis supervisor.

### H.7. Who will have access to the data after the findings have been produced?

The primary researcher.

### H.8. Are there any plans for the future use of the data beyond those already described?

☐ Yes ☒ No

***The applicant's attention is drawn to the requirements of the Privacy Act 1993 (see Appendix I of AUTEC's Applying for Ethics Approval: Guidelines and Procedures). Information may only be used for the purpose for which it was collected so if there are plans for the future use of the data, then this needs to be explained in the Information Sheets for participants. If you have answered 'Yes' to this question, please answer section H.8.1.1 and continue from there. If you answered 'No' to this question, please go to section H.9 and proceed from there.***

#### H.8.1.1 If data will be stored in a database, who will have access to that information, how will it be used, for what will it be used, and how have participants consented to this?

N.A.

#### H.8.1.2 Will any contact details be stored for future use and if so, who will have access to them, how will they be used, for what will they be used, and how have participants consented to this?

N.A.

## H.9. Where will the data be stored once the analysis is complete?

***Please provide the exact storage location. AUTEC normally requires that the data be stored securely on AUT premises in a location separate from the consent forms. Electronic data should be downloaded to an external storage device (e.g. an external hard drive, a memory stick etc.) and securely stored. If you are proposing an alternative arrangement, please explain why.***

The data will be stored securely on a portable hard drive.

### H.9.1. For how long will the data be stored after completion of analysis?

***AUTEC normally requires that the data be stored securely for a minimum of six years, or ten years for health data. If you are proposing an alternative arrangement, please explain why.***

Six years.

### H.9.2. How will the data be destroyed?

***If the data will not be destroyed, please explain why, identify how it will be safely maintained, and provide appropriate informed consent protocols.***

The data will be destroyed by deleting the files from the portable hard drive after 6 years.

## H.10. Who will have access to the Consent Forms?

Lisa Gordon (researcher) and Jane Gilbert (supervisor)

## H.11. Where will the completed Consent Forms be stored?

***Please provide the exact storage location. AUTEC normally requires that the Consent Forms be stored securely on AUT premises in a location separate from the data. If you are proposing an alternative arrangement, please explain why.***

The Consent Forms will be stored in a locked filing cabinet provided for this purpose in the School of Education's offices (on Level 1, AR Building at AUT North Campus).

### H.11.1. For how long will the completed Consent Forms be stored?

***AUTEC normally requires that the Consent Forms be stored securely for a minimum of six years, or ten years in the case of research involving health data. If you are proposing an alternative arrangement, please explain why.***

The Consent forms will be stored for six years.

### H.11.2. How will the Consent Forms be destroyed?

***If the Consent Forms will not be destroyed, please explain why.***

The Consent forms will be shredded after six years.

## H.12. Does your research involve the collection of personally identifiable and sensitive data?

☐ Yes ☒ No

***Sensitive data can be used to identify an individual, object or location and has a risk of discrimination, harm or unwanted attention. Sensitive data potentially poses a substantial threat to those who are or who have been involved in it, especially if it is shared inappropriately, or if it falls into the wrong hands. If you have answered 'Yes' please identify what data is being collected and how it is sensitive and provide a Data Safety Management Protocol (see the Forms section of the Research Ethics website for a guide to drafting one). If the answer is 'No', please answer H.13 and continue from there.***

## H.13. Does your project involve the use of previously collected information or biological samples for which there was no explicit consent for this research?

☐ Yes ☒ No

***If the answer is 'Yes' please answer H.13.1 and the following sections, otherwise please answer H.14 and continue from there.***

### H.13.1. What previously collected data will be involved?

### H.13.2. Who collected the data originally?

#### H.13.2.1 Why was the information originally collected?

#### H.13.2.2 For what purposes was consent originally given when the information was collected?

### H.13.3. How will the data be accessed?

**H.14. Does your research involve the collection of information about organisational practices?** ☐ Yes ☒ No

*AUTEC applies a broad definition to the term 'organisations'. It could include for example, businesses, hospitals or clinics, schools, or sports clubs and teams If the answer is 'Yes' please answer H.14.1, otherwise please answer I.1 and continue from there.*

**H.14.1. How will the authorisation to access the organisation or its staff for research purposes be obtained?**

N.A.

**H.14.2. Could disclosure of this information potentially disadvantage the oganisation or the participants?** ☐ Yes ☐ No

*If your answer is 'Yes", please answer H.14.2.1, otherwise please answer H.14.3*

**H.14.2.1 How will the risks associated with potential disadvantages be managed?**

**H.14.3. Will the participants or anyone else in the oganisation be identified in this information?** ☐ Yes ☐ No

*If your answer is 'Yes", please answer H.14.3.1, otherwise please answer I.1 and continue from there.*

**H.14.3.1 How will the potential risks involved be managed?**

*If the research involves procedures such as interviews conducted at the worksite, or focus groups with peers, researchers should identify the level of participant confidentiality that can be offered in the Information Sheet.*

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# I. *Minimisation of risk*

## I.1. Risks to Participants

*Please consider the possibility of moral, physical, psychological or emotional risks to participants, including issues of confidentiality and privacy, from the perspective of the participants, and not only from the perspective of someone familiar with the subject matter and research practices involved. Please clearly state what is likely to be an issue, how probable it is, and how this will be minimised or mitigated (e.g. participants do not need to answer a question that they find embarrassing, or they may terminate an interview, or there may be a qualified counsellor present in the interview, or the findings will be reported in a way that ensures that participants cannot be individually identified, etc.) Possible risks and their mitigation should be fully described in the Information Sheets for participants.*

**I.1.1. How much time will participants be required to give to the project?**

One hour for their interview. They will also be offered a voluntary follow-up interview of an hour should they require it.

**I.1.2. What level of discomfort or embarrassment may participants be likely to experience?**

Discomfort or embarrassment is very unlikely.

**I.1.3. In what ways might participants be at risk in this research?**

If the protocols outlined above are followed, the risks to participants are minimal. Their identities and those of their schools will be protected; they can choose how they respond to any of the prompts (including not responding); and they can terminate their participation in the project at any time.

**I.1.4. In what ways are the participants likely to experience risk or discomfort as a result of cultural, employment, financial or similar pressures?**

N.A

**I.1.5. Will your project involve processes that are potentially disadvantageous to a person or group, such as the collection of information, images etc. which may expose that person/group to discrimination, criticism, or loss of privacy?** ☐ Yes ☒ No

*If your answer is 'Yes', please detail how these risks will be managed and how participants will be informed about them.*

**I.1.6. Will your research involve collection of information about illegal behaviour(s) which could place the participants at current or future risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to their financial standing, employability, professional or personal relationships?** ☐ Yes ☒ No

*If your answer is 'Yes', please detail how these risks will be managed and how participants will be informed about them.*

**I.1.7. If the participants are likely to experience any significant discomfort, embarrassment, incapacity, or psychological disturbance, please state what consideration you have given to the provision of counselling or post-interview support, at no cost to the participants, should it be required.**

*Adult research participants in Auckland are able to utilise counselling support from the AUT Counselling Team, otherwise you may have to consider local providers for participants who are located nationwide, or in some particular geographical area or who are children. You may discuss the potential for participant psychological impact or harm with the Head of AUT Counselling, if you require. Please check the relevant Frequently Asked Question on the research ethics website as well and ensure the appropriate wording in included in the Information Sheet when counselling opportunities need to be offered.*

N.A.

**I.1.8. Will any use of human remains, tissue or body fluids which does not require submission to a Health and Disability Ethics Committee occur in the research?** ☐ Yes ☒ No

*e.g. finger pricks, urine samples, etc. (please refer to section 13 of AUTEC's Applying for Ethics Approval: Guidelines and Procedures). If your answer is yes, please provide full details of all arrangements, including details of agreements for treatment, how participants will be able to request return of their samples in accordance with right 7 (9) of the Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights, etc.*

**I.1.9. Will this research involve potentially hazardous substances?** ☐ Yes ☒ No

*e.g. radioactive material, biological substances (please refer to section 15 of AUTEC's Applying for Ethics Approval: Guidelines and Procedures and the Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act 1996).*

*If the answer is 'Yes', please provide full details, including hazardous substance management plan.*

## I.2. Risks to Researchers

*If this project will involve interviewing participants in private dwellings, undertaking research in unfamiliar cultural contexts either in New Zealand or overseas, doing research in a place to which a travel warning applies, or going into similarly vulnerable situations, then a Researcher Safety protocol should be designed and appended to this application. This should identify simple and effective processes for keeping someone informed of the researcher's whereabouts and provide for appropriate levels of assistance. A guide to drafting one is provided in the forms section of the Research Ethics website.*

**I.2.1. Are the researchers likely to be at risk?** ☐ Yes ☒ No

*If the answer is 'Yes' please answer I.2.1.1 and then continue, otherwise please answer I.3 and continue from there.*

**I.2.1.1 In what ways might the researchers be at risk and how will this be managed?**

N.A.

## I.3. Risks to AUT

**I.3.1. Is AUT or its reputation likely to be at risk because of this research?** ☐ Yes ☒ No

*If the answer is 'Yes' please answer I.3.1.1 and then continue, otherwise please answer I.3.2 and continue from there.*

**I.3.1.1 In what ways might AUT be at risk in this research?**

*Please identify how and detail the processes that will be put in place to minimise any harm.*

N.A.

**I.3.2. Are AUT staff and/or students likely to encounter physical hazards during this project?** ☐ Yes ☒ No

*If yes, please provide a hazard management protocol identifying how harm from these hazards will be eliminated or minimised.*

## J. *Truthfulness and limitation of deception*

### J.1. How will feedback on or a summary of the research findings be disseminated to participants (individuals or groups)?

*It is normally courteous to provide participants with a one or two page summary of the findings of the research. Please ensure that this information is included in the Information Sheet.*

A one-page summary of the findings will be sent to all participants when the research has been completed.

### J.2. Does your research include any deception of the participants, such as non-disclosure of aims or use of control groups, concealment, or covert observations?

☐ Yes ☒ No

*Deception of participants in research may involve deception, concealment or covert observation. Deception of participants conflicts with the principle of informed consent, but in some areas of research it may sometimes be justified to withhold information about the purposes and procedures of the research. Researchers must make clear the precise nature and extent of any deception and why it is thought necessary. Emphasis on the need for consent does not mean that covert research can never be approved. Any departure from the standard of properly informed consent must be acceptable when measured against possible benefit to the participants and the importance of the knowledge to be gained as a result of the project or teaching session. This must be addressed in all applications. Please refer to Section 2.4 of AUTEC's Applying for Ethics Approval: Guidelines and Procedures when considering this question.*

*If the answer is 'Yes' please answer J.2.1 and the following sections, otherwise please answer J.3 and continue from there.*

#### J.2.1. Is deception involved?

#### J.2.2. Why is this deception necessary?

#### J.2.3. How will disclosure and informed consent be managed?

### J.3. Will this research involve use of a control group?

☐ Yes ☒ No

*If the answer is 'Yes' please answer J.3.1 and the following sections, otherwise please answer K.1 and continue from there.*

#### J.3.1. How will the Control Group be managed?

#### J.3.2. What percentage of participants will be involved in the control group?

#### J.3.3. What information about the use of a control group will be given to the participants and when?

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## K. *Avoidance of Conflict of Interest*

*Researchers have a responsibility to ensure that any conflict between their responsibilities as a researcher and other duties or responsibilities they have towards participants or others is adequately managed. For example, academic staff members who propose to involve their students as participants in research need to ensure that no conflict arises between their roles as teacher and researcher, particularly in view of the dependent relationship between student and teacher, and of the need to preserve integrity in assessment processes. Likewise researchers have a responsibility to ensure that any conflict of interest between participants is adequately managed for example, managers participating in the same research as their staff.*

### K.1. What conflicts of interest are likely to arise as a consequence of the researchers' professional, social, financial, or cultural relationships?

None. The primary researcher does not work with any of the teachers who will be invited to participate.

### K.2. What possibly coercive influences or power imbalances are there in the professional, social, financial, or cultural relationships between the researchers and the participants or between participants (e.g. dependent relationships such as teacher/student; parent/child; employer/employee; pastor/congregation etc.)?

Because the primary researcher does not work in any of the schools (or with any of the teachers) who will be invited to participate, she has no direct professional relationships with any potential participants. She also has no social, financial, or other kinds of relationships with any of them.

**K.3. How will these conflicts of interest, coercive influences or power imbalances be managed through the research's design and practice and how will any adverse effects that may arise from them be mitigated?**

N.A

**K.4. Does your project involve payments or other financial inducements (including koha, reasonable contribution towards travel expenses or time, or entry into a modest prize draw) to participants?** ☐ Yes ☒ No

*If the answer is 'Yes' please answer K.4.1 and the following sections, otherwise please answer K.5 and continue from there.*

**K.4.1. What form will the payment, inducement, or koha take?**

N.A.

**K.4.2. Of what value will any payment, gift or koha be?**

**K.4.3. Will potential participants be informed about any payment, gift or koha as part of the recruitment process, and if so, why and how?**

**K.5. Have any applications for financial support for this project been (or will be) made to a source external to AUT?** ☐ Yes ☒ No

*If the answer is 'Yes' please answer K.5.1 and the following sections, otherwise please answer K.6 and continue from there.*

**K.5.1. What financial support for this project is being provided (or will be provided) by a source external to AUT?**

**K.5.2. Who is the external funder?**

**K.5.3. What is the amount of financial support involved?**

**K.5.4. How is/are the funder/s involved in the design and management of the research?**

**K.6. Have any applications been (or will be) submitted to an AUT Faculty Research Grants Committee or other AUT funding entity?** ☐ Yes ☒ No

*If the answer is 'Yes' please answer K.6.1 and the following sections, otherwise please answer K.7 and continue from there.*

**K.6.1. What financial support for this project is being provided (or will be provided) by an AUT Faculty Research Grants Committee or other AUT funding entity?**

**K.6.2. What is the amount of financial support involved?**

**K.6.3. How is/are the funder/s involved in the design and management of the research?**

**K.7. Is funding already available, or is it awaiting decision?**

**K.8. Do the applicant or the researchers, investigators or research organisations mentioned in Part B of this application have any financial interests in the outcome of this project?** ☐ Yes ☒ No

*If the response is 'Yes', please provide full details about the financial interests and how any conflicts of interest are being managed, otherwise, please respond to section K.9 and continue from there.*

**K.9. Are the participants expected to pay in any way for any services associated with this research?** ☐ Yes ☒ No

*If the response is 'Yes', please provide full details about the charges and describe how any benefits will balance the burdens involved as well as how any conflicts of interest are being managed. Otherwise please respond to section L.1 and continue from there.*

## L. Respect for Property

*Researchers must ensure that processes do not violate or infringe legal or culturally determined property rights. These may include factors such as land and goods, works of art and craft, spiritual treasures and information.*

**L.1. Will this research impact upon property owned by someone other than the researcher?** ☐ Yes ☒ No

*If the answer is 'Yes' please answer L.1.1 and the following sections, otherwise please answer L.2 and continue from there.*

**L.1.1. How will this be managed?**

**L.2. How do contexts to which copyright or Intellectual Property apply (e.g. research instruments, social media, virtual worlds etc.) affect this research and how will this be managed?**

*Particular attention should be paid to the legal and ethical dimensions of intellectual property. Care must be taken to acknowledge and reference the ideas of all contributors and others and to obtain any necessary permissions to use the intellectual property of others. Teachers and researchers are referred to AUT's Intellectual Property Policy for further guidance.*

## M. References

*Please include any references relating to your responses in this application in the standard format used in your discipline.*


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Young, T., & Lewis, W. D. (2015). Educational Policy Implementation Revisited, 29(1), 3-17. Sage.

## N. Checklist

**Please ensure all applicable sections of this form have been completed and all appropriate documentation is attached as incomplete applications will not be considered by AUTEC.**

| | |
|---|---|
| *Have you discussed this application with your AUTEC Faculty Representative, the Executive Secretary, or the Ethics Coordinator?* | ☐ Yes ☒ No |
| *Is this application related to an earlier ethics application? If yes, please provide the application number of the earlier application.* | ☐ Yes ☒ No |
| *Are you seeking ethics approval from another ethics committee for this research? If yes, please identify the other committee.* | ☐ Yes ☒ No |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *Section A* | *Project information provided* | ☒ |
| *Section B* | *Research Adequacy information provided* | ☒ |
| *Section C* | *Project details provided* | ☒ |
| *Section D* | *Three Principles information provided* | ☒ |
| *Section E* | *Social and Cultural Sensitivity information provided* | ☒ |
| *Section F* | *Vulnerability information provided* | ☒ |
| *Section G* | *Consent information provided* | ☒ |
| *Section H* | *Privacy information provided* | ☒ |
| *Section I* | *Risk information provided* | ☒ |
| *Section J* | *Truthfulness information provided* | ☒ |
| *Section K* | *Conflict of Interest information provided* | ☒ |
| *Section L* | *Respect for Property information provided* | ☒ |
| *Section M* | *References provided* | ☒ |
| *Section N* | *Checklists completed* | ☒ |
| *Section O.1 and 2* | *Applicant and student declarations signed and dated* | ☒ |
| *Section O.3* | *Authorising signature provided* | ☒ |

*Spelling and Grammar Check (please note that a high standard of spelling and grammar is required in documents that are issued with AUTEC approval)*

*Attached Documents (where applicable)*

| | |
|---|---|
| *Participant Information Sheet(s)* | ☒ |
| *Consent Form(s)* | ☒ |
| *Questionnaire(s)* | ☐ |
| *Indicative Questions for Interviews or Focus Groups* | ☐ |
| *Observation Protocols* | ☐ |
| *Recording Protocols for Tests* | ☐ |
| *Advertisement(s)* | ☐ |
| *Researcher Safety Protocol* | ☐ |
| *Hazardous Substance Management Plan* | ☐ |
| *Any Confidentiality Agreement(s)* | ☐ |
| *Any translations that are needed* | ☐ |
| *Other Documentation – Email invitation to potential participants* | ☒ |

# O. Declarations

## O.1. Declaration by Applicant

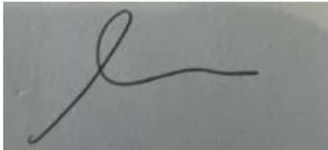
- *The information in this application is complete and accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief. I take full responsibility for it.*
- *In conducting this study, I agree to abide by all applicable laws and regulations, and established ethical standards contained in AUTEC's Applying for Ethics Approval: Guidelines and Procedures, the Auckland University of Technology Code of Conduct for Research,. and internationally recognised codes of ethics.*
- *I accept responsibility for ensuring that management approval for access for this research from any institution or organisation at which it will be conducted will be obtained. When the research is undertaken outside New Zealand, I agree to ensure that all ethical, legal, and locality obligations or requirements for those jurisdictions are met.*
- *I will continue to comply with AUTEC's Applying for Ethics Approval: Guidelines and Procedures, including its requirements for the submission of annual progress reports, amendments to the research protocols before they are used, and completion reports.*
- *I understand that brief details of this application may be made publicly available and may also be provided to the Graduate Research School, the Research and Innovation Office, or the University's insurers for purposes relating to AUT's interests.*

8/08/2023

*Signature* *Date*

## O.2. Declaration by Student Researcher

- *The information in this application is complete and accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief.*
- *In conducting this study, I agree to abide by all applicable laws and regulations, and established ethical standards contained in AUTEC's Applying for Ethics Approval: Guidelines and Procedures, the Auckland University of Technology Code of Conduct for Research,. and internationally recognised codes of ethics.*
- *I will continue to comply with AUTEC's Applying for Ethics Approval: Guidelines and Procedures, including its requirements for the submission of annual progress reports, amendments to the research protocols before they are used, and completion reports.*
- *I understand that brief details of this application may be made publicly available and may also be provided to the Graduate Research School, the Research and Innovation Office, or the University's insurers for purposes relating to AUT's interests.*



9/ 08/2023

*Signature* *Date*

## O.3. Authorisation by Head of Faculty/School/Programme/Centre

- *The information in this application is complete and accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief.*
- *In authorising this study, I declare that the applicant is adequately qualified to undertake or supervise this research and that to the best of my knowledge and belief adequate resources are available for this research and all appropriate local research governance issues have been addressed.*
- *I declare that the applicant will ensure that management approval for access for this research from any institution or organisation at which it will be conducted will be obtained. When the research is undertaken outside New Zealand, I declare that the applicant will ensure that all ethical, legal, and locality obligations or requirements for those jurisdictions are met.*
- *I understand that brief details of this application may be made publicly available and may also be provided to the Graduate Research School, the Research and Innovation Office, or the University's insurers for purposes relating to AUT's interests.*

9/8/2023

*Signature* *Date*

**Notes for submitting the completed application for review by AUTEC**

- Please ensure that you are using the current version of this form before submitting your application.
- Please ensure that all questions on the form have been answered and that no part of the form has been deleted.
- Please provide either:
  - one printed, single sided, A4, and signed copy of the application and all related documents. This may be delivered or posted to the AUTEC Secretariat, room WU406, fourth floor, WU Building, City Campus. The internal mail code is

D-88. The courier address is 46 Wakefield Street, Auckland 1010. Alternatively, the application may be provided to the Research Ethics Advisor in person at one of the Drop In sessions at any of the four campuses (http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics/resources/workshops-and-drop-inns). OR

- A single .pdf file containing the application and all related documents emailed to ethics@aut.ac.nz. The application and documents must be scanned into a single .pdf file with the EA form at the beginning and the other documents in the order stated in the form. The application must have all the required signatures.

- Applications should be submitted once they have been finalised. For a particular meeting it needs to have been received in the AUTEC Secretariat by 4 pm on the relevant agenda closing day [AUTEC's meeting dates are listed in the website at http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics]. As many applications are reviewed under delegated authority, applicants are encouraged to submit their applications once they are ready rather than waiting for the closing date.
- If sending applications by internal mail, please post them at least two days earlier to allow for any delay that may occur.
- Late applications will be placed on the agenda for the following meeting.

**MINIMAL RISK CHECKLIST**

Your application may be eligible for delegated review if it poses no more than minimal risk of harm to participants. To assist AUTEC's Secretariat to screen the application for assignment to the correct review pathway, please complete the following checklist:

Does the research involve any of the following?

**ANONYMOUS SURVEY ASSESSMENT**

| | | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | The collection of anonymous and non-sensitive survey/questionnaire data only.<br><br>*(If YES is checked, the application may receive an expedited review if the data is from adults and poses no foreseeable risks to participants OR where any foreseeable risk is no more than inconvenience – no further questions on this checklist need be answered.)* | ☐ | ☒ |

**MINIMAL RISK ASSESSMENT**[1]

| | | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2 | Participants who are unable to give informed consent (including children under 16 years old), or who are particularly vulnerable or in a dependent situation, (e.g. people with learning difficulties, over-researched groups, people in care facilities, or patients highly dependent on medical care)? | ☐ | ☒ |
| 3 | A reasonable expectation of causing participants physical pain beyond mild discomfort, or that experienced by the participants on an every-day basis, or any emotional discomfort, embarrassment, or psychological or spiritual harm, (e.g. asking participants to recall upsetting events)? | ☐ | ☒ |
| 4 | Research processes which may elicit information about any participant's involvement in illegal activities, or activities that represent a risk to themselves or others, (e.g. drug use or professional misconduct)? | ☐ | ☒ |
| 5 | Collection of any human tissue, blood or other samples, or invasive or intrusive physical examination or testing? | ☐ | ☒ |
| 6 | The administration of any drugs, medicines, supplements, placebo or non-food substances? | ☐ | ☒ |
| 7 | An intervention of any form of exercise, or other physical regime that is different to the participants' normal activities (e.g. dietary, sleep)? | ☐ | ☒ |
| 8 | Participants who are being asked to give information of a personal nature about their colleagues, employers, teachers, or coaches (or any other person who is in a power relationship with them), and where the identity of participants or their organisation may be inferred? | ☐ | ☒ |
| 9 | Any situation which may put the researcher at risk of harm? (E.g. gathering data in private homes)? | ☐ | ☒ |
| 10 | The use of previously collected biological samples or identifiable personal information for which there was no explicit consent for this research? | ☐ | ☒ |
| 11 | Any matters of commercially sensitive information? | ☐ | ☒ |
| 12 | Any financial interest in the outcome of the research by any member(s) of the research team? | ☐ | ☒ |
| 13 | People who are not giving consent to be part of the study, or the use of any deception, concealment or covert observations in non-public places, including social media? | ☐ | ☒ |
| 14 | Participants who are in a dependent or unequal relationship with any member(s) of the research team (e.g. where the researcher is a lecturer/ teacher/ health care provider/ coach/ employer/ manager/ or relative etc.) of any of the participants? | ☐ | ☒ |

[1] If "No" is checked to all items 2-14, the application's status as Minimal Risk will be checked by the Secretariat, and may be forwarded to expedited review. Applications with more than Minimal Risk (any one "yes" to questions 2-14 above), and applications where the checklist is not completed will appear on AUTEC's next agenda.

## Appendix G: Ethics Approval

# Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC)

26 September 2023

Jane Gilbert

Faculty of Culture and Society

Dear Jane

Re Ethics Application: 23/249 Exploring early-adopter teachers' experiences as they develop localized curriculum.

Thank you for your responses to AUTEC's conditions.

Your ethics application has been approved for three years until 26 September 2026.

**Non-Standard Conditions of Approval**

1. Include in the Information Sheet the length of time to consider the invitation.

2. Please send through the updated Consent Form for the file.

Non-standard conditions do not need to be submitted to or reviewed by AUTEC unless requested but must be completed before commencing your study.

**Standard Conditions of Approval**

1. The research is to be undertaken in accordance with the Auckland University of Technology Code of Conduct for Research and as approved by AUTEC.

2. All public facing documents must have the AUTEC approval number and be of a high standard of spelling and grammar. Dates on the Information Sheet(s) and Consent Form(s) must be consistent.

3. Any amendments to the project must be approved by AUTEC prior to being implemented.

4. A progress report is due annually on the anniversary of the approval date.

5. A final report is due at the expiration of the approval period, or, upon completion of project.

6. Any serious or adverse events must be reported to AUTEC, this includes unforeseen issues that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project.

7. AUTEC grants ethical approval only. You are responsible for obtaining management permission for access from any institution or organisation at which your research is being conducted and you need to meet all ethical, legal, public health, and locality obligations or requirements for the jurisdictions in which the research is being undertaken.

The application number and title need to be referenced on all correspondence related to this project.

All forms are available online http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/researchethics

For any enquiries, please contact ethics@aut.ac.nz

Auckland University of Technology, D-88, Private Bag 92006, Auckland 1142, New Zealand.
T: +64 9 921 9999 ext. 8316: E: ethics@aut.ac.nz: www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics

(This is a computer-generated letter for which no signature is required)

The AUTEC Secretariat

**Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee**

Cc: lgordon@kaipara.school.nz