Achieving Quality and Equity for Māori Secondary School Students in New Zealand

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Achievement disparities, between specific groups of students, continue to be consistently documented within schooling across the globe. For many, quality and equity have not been achieved as education continues to underserve specific groups of clearly identifiable students. For New Zealand’s Indigenous Māori students this is neither a recent phenomenon nor is it confined to education.

This paper focuses on the results of a secondary school reform programme known as Te Kotahitanga (Unity of Purpose). This reform is undertaken using an iterative research and development model aimed at school-wide intervention. Data is presented from 2010 to 2013 when these schools were in their fourth year of an accelerated programme implementation. A mixed-method approach is used to understand the extent to which schools have successfully included and thus enabled higher rates of Māori students so that they are enjoying and achieving education success as Māori.

Changes in pedagogy have resulted in national qualification results for Māori students showing year-on-year improvements, with a number of individual schools clearly showing that the achievement gap between Indigenous Māori students and their non-Māori peers can be closed. This research has important implications for other countries grappling with this same problem of quality and equity for all.