



Motivated to Learn

I want to keep the Māori language alive [because] New Zealand is where we can speak it.

Secondary student, English-medium composite school, 2018.

When someone is intrinsically motivated, they put effort into something because they want to, because it is meaningful and satisfying in a deeply personal way. When someone is extrinsically motivated, they put effort into something because there is a promise of a reward at the end of it.

Research into the teaching and learning of te reo Māori in English-medium schools in 2018¹ revealed that students were both intrinsically and extrinsically motivated to learn te reo Māori. Learning experiences that were fun, yet challenging, involved opportunities to use the language with others as well as to learn about Māori culture and traditions were the main reasons students enjoyed learning te reo Māori. Importantly, students, particularly secondary students, felt that being able to speak te reo Māori was an advantage in terms of future employment. All of these considerations ticked the boxes for students and contributed to them being motivated to learn te reo Māori.

A particularly significant factor that contributed to students' motivation to learn, was the value placed on Māori language by others, both in the school and in the community. In schools where leaders actively promoted te reo Māori and cultural practices and supported teachers in their efforts to use the language, students were more likely to talk about learning the language in a positive way. Other people who equally influenced students' attitudes and their motivation to learn Māori language included:

- teachers who were active in their learning of the language and found ways to implement the Māori language they did know in their classes
- parents who were active in supporting the school's efforts to increase its exposure to te reo Māori and tikanga Māori
- Māori whānau who were active in working with the school and, at times, challenged the school in its efforts to meet the aspirations they had for their tamariki.

¹Haemata Ltd (2019). *WHAKANUIA TE REO KIA ORA: Evaluation of te reo Māori in English-medium compulsory education*. Unpublished report prepared for Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori.

[Te reo Māori] is an intrinsic need for my son, that's a part of his make-up, his whakapapa I guess, and also, as an adult, knowing the sense of loss that you carry, the feeling of being bereft and not complete without knowledge of your language and your culture, that is the taumaha we [adults] carry.

Parent, Whānau Group, English-medium composite school, 2018

By way of contrast, the research also captured the student voice where the learning of te reo Māori was not enjoyable because it lacked relevance and was not sufficiently challenging for them. It was also apparent that not all parents were supportive of their child learning te reo Māori. This type of attitude was usually demotivating and gave rise to the child having a less positive attitude toward the learning of the language. However, there were also instances where secondary students took drastically different stances from their parents. While respecting their parents' views they had a determination to keep learning te reo Māori for the social and cultural benefits that they were reaping.

The collective value placed on the learning of te reo Māori by all students, leaders, kaiako, parents and whānau, lent itself to the creation of a level of politicisation, particularly for the students. Students in the study placed value on having competency in te reo Māori because this could lead to increased employment opportunities. They believed they have a responsibility to keep the language alive for the next generation. They also believed everyone in Aotearoa has an obligation to learn te reo Māori because it is unique to Aotearoa New Zealand, and a visible and powerful marker of identity. Attitude matters!

Kāore e tika kia haere ko te rae anake.²

It is not proper for one to go alone.

² Mead, H. M. & Grove, N., (2001). *Ngā Pepeha a ngā Tīpuna*. Wellington: Victoria University Press (p. 175).

'Kia ita!'

Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori
MAORI LANGUAGE COMMISSION



Haemata Ltd

Reflect

How valued is te reo Māori within the school and the community?

What are the opportunities in the school to capitalise on positive student attitudes towards te reo Māori?