

## 2 Ngā Take Aromatawai me ngā Take Tātari i ngā Hua ka Puta – Issues Concerning the Assessments and their Interpretation



Our national monitoring assessments in 1999 were the first assessments conducted at national level in te reo Māori using tasks originally developed to be administered nationally in English. Since then, we have worked hard to improve the task development, sampling, translation, task administration and marking procedures for these assessments, but have not yet been satisfied with all components of the assessments. In the 2004 assessments, our major concern was that about 30 percent

of the sampled students were found to be not sufficiently skilled in te reo Māori to be assessed satisfactorily in that language, so that most of their assessment was conducted in English.

### Development and Selection of Tasks

About 10 percent of the assessment tasks used with the Māori immersion students were developed from ideas put forward at task development hui of Māori immersion teachers. These were tasks believed to be particularly appropriate for students learning in Māori immersion settings, but they were also used nationally in the assessments conducted in English.

The remaining tasks were proposed by other teachers participating in regional task development workshops, by NEMP staff members, or by members of the NEMP national advisory panels for science or visual arts. Initial ideas were developed and tried out by NEMP staff, and then subjected to careful scrutiny by the advisory panel for that curriculum area (each of which

included at least one Māori immersion educator). All tasks were then checked for their suitability for Māori students by those attending a combined meeting of the NEMP Māori Immersion Education Advisory Committee and the NEMP Māori Reference Group (the latter focuses on the interests of Māori students assessed in English).

The tasks resulting from these procedures have been accepted as relevant to all categories of students, including Māori immersion students. Nevertheless, given the imbalance in the sources of the tasks, the total collection of tasks somewhat favours students learning in English from the mainstream curriculum rather than students learning in Māori from the Māori curriculum. For future assessments, greater involvement of Māori immersion teachers in task development will continue to be given priority.

### Translation from English to Māori

For the 2004 assessments, full responsibility for the translations was given to He Kupenga Hao i te Reo Ltd.

Members of this trust have considerable recent curriculum knowledge of and experience in Māori immersion settings, and the new arrangements fitted with our belief that it would be desirable to increase the degree of Māori ownership of this part of NEMP. In addition to undertaking the translations, members of the trust made substantial contributions to the fine-tuning of tasks. After the initial translation work, all tasks were tried out in a Kura Kaupapa Māori, and further adjustments made if judged necessary. We are confident that these arrangements produced the best Māori language task instructions and resources yet achieved for our assessments.

### Student Sample and Task Administration

The original sample of schools and students for the 2004 Māori immersion education assessments reflected the national population of year 8 students with more than four years of Māori immersion education. Sixty percent of the 120 students were to be selected from immersion schools (predominantly Kura Kaupapa), while the other 40 percent were to be selected from immersion classes (80 to 100 percent of instruction in Māori) at mainstream schools. Unfortunately, two of the originally sampled 13 schools involving 20 of the 120 students withdrew for various reasons (see Appendix, p70). Because of the limited number of Māori immersion schools and their relatively small enrolments (an average of less than 10 year 8 students per school), one of these schools needed to be replaced from another region, raising some doubts about how nationally representative the final sample remained.

The initial expectation is that all Māori immersion students will be assessed in Māori. Teachers administering NEMP tasks are trained to offer students help with language so that language difficulties are less likely to undermine students' performances. For instance, limited reading or writing capabilities should not be allowed to prevent students from showing what they can do in music or technology. Since

the 2001 assessments, account has been taken of international research suggesting that at least five years of immersion in a language is required before performance on assessments in that language is not significantly undermined by language difficulties. Our intention was that only students who had had more than four and a half years in Māori immersion education would be included in the assessments. This should have allowed all assessments to be conducted predominantly or entirely in Māori.

Unfortunately, the teacher administrators found that students in three of the schools that were reported as having Level 1 immersion classes were not sufficiently proficient in te reo Māori to be assessed in that language. Most of their assessment was conducted in English but they remained in the sample because the sample was of students on Māori medium schools or classes. In previous years, some students needed to be partially or fully assessed in English.

Just four teachers administer the tasks in Māori immersion settings, which means that the results for these students are particularly likely to be affected by task administration approaches adopted by one or two individual teachers. Evidence obtained during the marking of the videotaped assessments suggested that all four Māori administrators in 2004 administered the tasks well, and the proportion of students completing the set tasks was high.

### Interpretation of Results

Readers should be cautious about interpreting the results as fully indicative of the achievements of year 8 Māori medium students in the subjects covered by the 2004 assessments. The area of greatest concern was the fact that tasks were administered in English for about 30 percent of the students, thus compromising the aim of the assessments. There must also be some concern about the representativeness of the sample of schools and students because two of the schools in the original sample withdrew. It is not possible to be confident that the replacement

students were closely comparable to those in the schools that withdrew.

While translation and task administration processes appeared to work well, fundamental language issues remained troublesome. Because there was an attempt to keep most of the tasks equivalent to English language versions, some of the Māori language used in some of the tasks was not colloquial language that the Māori medium students would be comfortable with, thus making it harder for them to perform really well on these tasks.

It should also be remembered that curriculum emphases are different in Māori immersion education and English language education. While all schools must address the essential learning areas and essential skills of the New Zealand curriculum, Māori immersion education places much greater emphasis on Māori language and culture. Resulting differences in emphasis and timing for other curriculum areas could have significantly influenced the results reported here.

A final point is that Māori immersion education is still in a comparatively early stage of development. Many immersion schools and classes have been established for only a few years. Teaching and learning resources in te reo Māori are scarce, as are teachers with suitable expertise. High levels of teacher, parent and student commitment help to compensate for these obstacles to successful learning, but further improvement should be able to be achieved as Māori immersion education grows and consolidates.

