

# What do Māori educators want Pākehā outreach teachers to know when working with tamariki Māori on the autism spectrum with high, complex needs?



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## ABSTRACT

This research paper asks what Māori educators want Pākehā outreach teachers to know when working with tamariki Māori on the autism spectrum with high, complex needs. A review of the literature noted a shortage of specialists who can speak te reo Māori and practice in a culturally responsive way. Three Māori educators participated in semi-structured interviews as part of this qualitative research, addressing what Pākehā outreach teachers need to know to be culturally responsive to Māori. The following themes emerged: Māori environments are relationally inclusive and involve whānau; outreach teachers should respect te reo and tikanga; and outreach teachers should practice with humility as part of a team. These themes emerge within the context of a chronic shortage of Māori specialists. Most of the specialists working with tamariki Māori are non-Māori. In order to meet their needs Pākehā outreach teachers need to be able to work with tamariki Māori and their whānau in a culturally responsive way. Understanding cultural hegemony and its impact on education is an area in need of further discussion if outreach teachers are to understand the concept of humility and its importance for Māori.

## KEYWORDS

Māori education, autism, specialist teaching, ongoing resourcing scheme

## Review of existing literature

There is limited research addressing the educational experiences and outcomes of tamariki Māori on the autism spectrum. There is more research on special education and disability in general in Aotearoa New Zealand. However, Berryman (2015) says this research “is strangely silent on the issue of culture and its impact on inclusion” (p. 67). Despite ongoing legislation and government policies, Māori children with special education needs are still not receiving quality education and teaching that acknowledges their cultural backgrounds and allows them to thrive as Māori (Berryman et al.,

2015; Bevan-Brown, 2006a; Fortune, 2013). Bevan-Brown (2006a) and Berryman (2015) agree special education settings may be silent on the issue of culture due to the prevalence of the medical model which focuses on deficits. Within special education contexts the medical model dominates and the values and expertise of parents and whānau can be marginalised or ignored (Berryman et al., 2015; Bevan-Brown, 2002). A literature review was carried out to examine the effectiveness of special education provisions for tamariki Māori on the autism spectrum with ongoing resourcing scheme (ORS) funding and high, complex needs.

### ***Māori and the specialist education system***

Many Māori researchers and practitioners agree kaupapa Māori has a lot to teach mainstream educators about inclusion (Berryman et al., 2015; Bevan-Brown, 2006a). Berryman et al. (2015) describe how *whanaungatanga*, a 'deliberate process' which builds 'familial-like relationships with others', can inform mainstream teachers and educators and transform mainstream contexts. In Aotearoa New Zealand, education policy and research point to the importance of building relationships when working with tamariki Māori (Berryman et al., 2015; Bevan-Brown, 2006a; Bishop et al., 2012; A. Macfarlane et al., 2007; S. Macfarlane, 2009). The emphasis on relationship forms the basis of what Berryman et al. (2015) call a "culturally responsive and relational framework" (p. 39). This framework draws from indigenous worldviews, the disability community and the work of Paulo Freire (Berryman et al., 2015; Freire, 1996). The individualistic nature of Pākehā systems of power is critiqued as the authors call for a stance which moves beyond "traditional notions of the professional expert working with objectivity", pioneering a new way of working together through relationships of interdependence (Berryman et al., 2015, pp. 39–40).

The literature highlights a lack of cultural expertise on the part of specialists, including a shortage of specialists and teachers who can speak te reo Māori and limited expertise among specialists to become effective bicultural partners and practitioners (Bevan-Brown, 2006a; Bourke et al., 2002). The research highlighted inequities in access to specialist resources for kaupapa Māori schools. Parents and whānau of tamariki Māori on the autism spectrum with high complex needs want the support their child receives to be culturally responsive and of high quality, meeting the physical, sensory, learning, and social needs of their tamariki (Bevan-Brown, 2006b; Tupou et al., 2021; Wastney et al., 2007).

Māori have a common 'experience' and 'cause' shared by indigenous communities around the world. The confiscation of land, undermining of language and tradition, poverty, incarceration, and poor education outcomes are experiences commonly shared by indigenous peoples (A. Macfarlane & Macfarlane, 2019, p. 3). Māori researchers, educators and academics are critical of Pākehā cultural hegemony which dominates the specialist education system in Aotearoa New Zealand and marginalises Māori worldviews and experiences (Berryman et al., 2015; Fortune, 2013; G. Smith, 2003). Tamariki Māori on the autism spectrum with ORS funding, in kura kaupapa and bilingual classrooms, are not accessing support because of these injustices.

### ***ORS funding and the role of specialist outreach teachers***

ORS funding provides support for children with high to very high special education needs (Fortune, 2013; Ministry of Education, 2019), often referred to as high, complex needs. ORS funded students receive additional funding which is paid to the school. The funding includes an allocation for teacher aide support, which is moderated annually. All children with ORS funding must have two Individual Education Plan (IEP) meetings per year (Ministry of Education, 2019). There is limited research on educational outcomes for Māori with special education needs, even less so for tamariki Māori with high and very high complex needs (Bevan-Brown et al., 2015). According to Wilkie (2000), Māori are over-represented in ORS applications and under-represented in the number of children who receive ORS funding. However, data from the Ministry of Education, as of July 2019, shows the ethnic composition of students receiving ORS was similar to the makeup of the general schooling population (Education Counts, 2019). These figures do not include failed ORS applications so it is not possible to ascertain whether higher rates of whānau Māori apply for ORS than non-Māori.

ORS funded children receive additional teaching time, 0.1 for high needs or 0.2 for very high needs (Ministry of Education, 2019). This additional teaching time can be sourced internally, or schools can utilise an outreach teacher from the Specialist Teacher Outreach Service (Ministry of Education, 2020). Outreach teachers are employed by a specialist provider school and contracted to the local school to cover the 0.1 or 0.2 additional teaching hours. The specialist teacher works with ORS students during class time in English medium and kaupapa Māori school settings. ORS outreach teachers often work closely with teacher aides; however, the outreach teacher is only in the classroom 2.5 (0.1) or 5 hours (0.2) per week. Reilly (2016) identifies a lack of research into the efficacy and training of teacher aides who can be working one-on-one with tamariki with the most complex needs. Teacher aides are typically the least qualified to deliver modified educational instruction but are often with the child the most.

### ***Why the special education system is failing tamariki Māori***

Despite government policy, initiatives, and directives, why are Māori learners with special educational needs inadequately provided for? Research has shown several reasons for this. Bevan-Brown (2006a) makes three points based on her previous research in 2002 and the findings of a three-year evaluation of special education policy in Aotearoa New Zealand (Bourke et al., 2002):

- Many people who work with Māori learners with special needs do not recognise the important influence culture has nor do they see the need for culturally appropriate services, procedures, programmes and resources;
- Funding is insufficient;
- There is a shortage of special education professionals and teachers with the Māori language and cultural expertise required to provide culturally appropriate services to Māori learners with special needs (Bevan-Brown, 2006a, pp. 222-223). This shortage is ongoing (Ministry of Education, 2012).

Inequities exist between different types of schools. Bilingual, full immersion, kura kaupapa Māori, and ruma rumaki (immersion units within English medium schools) are often unable to access

specialist support in te reo Māori (Bevan-Brown, 2006a; Fortune, 2013; Ministry of Education, 2012). These schools are reluctant to engage with specialist services because they may not be delivered in te reo or in a culturally responsive way (Bevan-Brown, 2006a). The literature points to a lack of training, expertise and will power among specialists to become speakers of te reo (May et al., 2004) and active bicultural partners. Alongside the issue of a lack of cultural competence among Pākehā and non-Māori specialists there is a critical shortage of Māori specialists working in the special education field (Bevan-Brown, 2006a; Bourke et al., 2002; Fortune, 2013). These inequities are highlighted in an article demonstrating schools were not able to deliver education that was both culturally responsive and able to meet the educational needs of kāpō (blind) tamariki Māori (Higgins et al., 2013).

### ***Whānau Māori and special education supports***

According to Bevan-Brown (2006b), Māori parents of children with special education needs want support that meets the cultural needs of their tamariki but they also want the support to be of high quality. In partnership with other Māori mothers of children on the autism spectrum, Wastney et al. (2007) compiled a list of questions to assess whether a school was able to care for and respond to their children's needs in a culturally responsive way. This included the question "Are the teachers, teacher aides, specialists and therapists who work within this school environment knowledgeable or sensitive to Māori cultural needs/tikanga?" (p. 19). Other questions related to how the school staff related to the wider Māori community, whether whānau members are all welcome at IEPs, and the cultural experience and training of staff who will be working directly with the child (Wastney et al., 2007). Interestingly, the first questions in the questionnaire relate specifically to physical safety considerations for the child with emphasis on meeting the communication and sensory needs of the child. Whether school staff have experience and expertise in autism is also prioritised. This highlights the earlier point that parents want culturally responsive support, but they want support to be of very high quality, meeting the autism specific needs of the child alongside cultural ones (Bevan-Brown, 2006b).

Findings from the review of the literature demonstrate limited access to specialist support in te reo which affects tamariki Māori, whānau and their teachers. Additional specialist support is also unlikely to be delivered in a way that meets the cultural needs and aspirations of whānau. Despite a lack of evidence of a Māori view of disability and autism, parents and whānau want specialist support that meets the physical, sensory, and learning needs of their tamariki (Tupou et al., 2021).

Whanaungatanga is emphasised throughout the literature, highlighting the need for specialists to work in partnership with students, whānau and others within the whole school community (Bishop et al., 2014; A. Macfarlane et al., 2007).

## **Methodology**

When researching alongside Māori communities, an ongoing relationship and investment in the community being researched is necessary (Mead, 2006). L. Smith (2013) sets forward a framework for decolonising research which has self-determination as a central agenda. The decolonisation of

research requires Māori to be carrying out research within their own communities. Kaupapa Māori research is by Māori for Māori (Rangahau, n.d.; L. Smith, 2013). My research as a Pākehā outreach teacher can be identified as Māori centred. I approached the research as a teina and learner (Glynn, 2015).

Qualitative data was gathered from facilitated discussions as part of a semi structured interview (Menter et al., 2013). The interviews were planned to take place kanohi ki te kanohi (face to face). L. Smith (2013) identifies the importance of the face being seen within Māori forms of research. The interview questions focused on the stories and experiences of the interview participants, to elicit their opinions as Māori educators who have worked with Pākehā outreach teachers through a Specialist Teacher Outreach Service. Each interview was audio recorded and transcribed. Transcripts were emailed to individual participants for approval or amendment. These transcripts formed the data used for analysis.

Through thematic analysis, responses were read, re-read, coded, and categorised the data to identify common themes (Braun & Clark, 2006). Thematic analysis is a 'flexible' approach which works well with semi-structured interviews as it can "potentially provide a rich and detailed, yet complex, account of data" (Braun & Clark, 2006, p. 78). Some of the interview questions were deductive, prepared questions based on earlier research (Menter et al., 2013). Themes were tested in the interviews based on whether participants found them to be valid topics for discussion. Many became codes and later themes; others were eliminated as they were not considered as key themes by participants.

### ***Participants***

Three Māori educators agreed to participate in this research inquiry, sharing their knowledge and experience of working alongside a Pākehā specialist outreach teacher. The participants had extensive experience working in kaupapa Māori education at an advisory, leadership and classroom level. The participants, one of whom asked to be identified, included:

- Arthur Savage: Kaitakawaenga (Māori advisor), Ministry of Education.  
*Arthur is a highly experienced educator and Māori cultural advisor; he currently holds a position as kaitakawaenga and Māori liaison with the Ministry of Education. He has extensive experience across early childhood, primary, secondary, and adult education settings and serves on multiple Māori boards in governance and advisory roles.*
- Ariana (pseudonym): Deputy principal of a school which offers English medium and Māori immersion classes. Ariana is a classroom teacher in a ruma rumaki.
- Ria (pseudonym): Provisionally registered classroom teacher, ORS additional teacher and classroom release teacher. Ria is a mother of two tamariki on the autism spectrum.

## Findings

The following findings illustrate what three Māori educators from Māori immersion school settings want Pākeha outreach teachers to know when working with tamariki Māori. They highlighted the importance of including whānau and discussed why te reo Māori and tikanga matter in Māori education. An overarching theme that emerged from the interviews was the importance of working with humility as part of a team.

### ***Māori environments are inclusive, involving whānau***

Ariana talked about the environment being the “biggest thing for tamariki” on the autism spectrum with high, complex needs. She described the cultural environment created in the immersion unit, saying the tamaiti is included even if specialist supports are not yet in place.

*Yeah for me the biggest thing was the environment. ... We start our day together with karakia and we sing. We do shared kai and we eat together regularly and you know the whole tuakana/teina concept is huge for us. (Ariana)*

Ria agreed the environment is paramount, however in her experience the individual teacher and the culture established by that teacher influences how truly inclusive the environment is.

*I really think it comes back to the individual teacher who's running the waka. Even though you might be in a bi-lingual unit depending on what teachers' class you are in really depends on how included you are or how it all works. Whether it's more Māori by mouth rather than Māori by action. (Ria)*

The importance of working with whānau emerged from discussions about the inclusiveness of Māori environments. Within Māori environments whānau are included and viewed as important members of the team. Ariana and Ria encouraged face to face meetings with whānau right from the beginning in order to build trust.

*As an outreach teacher you're given a child and you've got their paperwork, when you're reading over the stuff I'd be cheeky enough to go straight to the whānau. I think it's really important because it's a bit like when you are getting called on to the mārae and you can hear that karanga and it just kind of smooths it all out, makes it all whakanoa. (Ariana)*

All three participants highlighted the importance of working with whānau when planning for the child. Ariana described this planning for a Māori child as ‘a bigger plan’. Arthur referenced Te Pikinga ki Runga (S. Macfarlane, 2009), how to plan “in a holistic way incorporating the whānau, tinana, wairua, mauri, hinengaro ... we recognise what is missing for our tamaiti and their whānau” (Arthur).

Ria, Ariana and Arthur all agreed that Māori whānau will want to be included in what is happening for their child in the classroom.

*So, that consistency with ringing home and saying, look this is what we're thinking of trying, what are you doing at home? I felt a lot more confident being Māori to contact that Māori whānau and actually bring them in to be a lot more involved in what's happening everyday at kura. (Ria)*

*I know there's many, many whānau out there that will have their two cents' worth and you get to know the child even more! I feel the more you know the child, the easier the job for that outreach person. (Ariana)*

### **Knowledge of te reo and tikanga**

Two of the participants believed knowledge of te reo was necessary for a Pākehā outreach teacher to be able to work effectively in a Māori immersion environment. Arthur described te reo as “the waka of engagement” and said Pākehā outreach teachers who do not know te reo would be at a disadvantage. Ria believed it is possible for a specialist teacher who cannot speak te reo to work in a bi-lingual classroom, many of the teacher aides in her bi-lingual unit are not able to kōrero Māori. However, she stated it was impossible for an outreach teacher to work in a kura kaupapa (full immersion setting) without being fluent in te reo.

Ariana did not think it was necessary for an outreach teacher to be able to speak te reo, however she did have minimum expectations.

*Nowadays as a classroom teacher there's things I'd expect, even from specialists, things like being able to pronounce a child's name correctly. (Ariana)*

Arthur talked about how an outreach teacher needs bi-lingual experience “moving into the Māori world in terms of te reo and tikanga ... for an outreach teacher you've got to have that experience and have a knowledge of the Māori ways of living” (Arthur).

When discussing the role of the specialist teacher, Ariana and Ria emphasised the importance of the outreach teacher making resources in te reo for tamariki and their whānau. As an ORS teacher Ria makes visual schedules in te reo for home and the classroom. Ariana talked about the frustration she feels when an outreach teacher does not bring in resources.

*They come in and I'm still forever making visuals ... Inaianei [now, next] you know those kinds of resources. I'm talking about the ones we would use in both schools [English medium and Kaupapa Māori], that would be a huge help. (Ariana)*

Ariana said, as the reo speaking teacher, she would often have to design and make visuals due to the outreach teachers' lack of knowledge. She highlighted the relief she feels “When that outreach person comes in and she pulls resources out of the bag and it's in Māori. That's a huge thing” (Ariana).

When asked about the importance of an outreach teacher's understanding of tikanga Ariana said they should view kura kaupapa like visiting another country.

*But if I was in another country with another language and I was the outreach teacher going in. First, I'd make contact, which is the whanaungatanga way. I'd ask, is there anything I need to know? or how do I pronounce this word? Simple as that. (Ariana)*

Ria said it is important not to offend the kaiako and members of the classroom because once you have offended someone it can be hard to come back from that.

*Part of me thinks it is not always the place for the people of that unit to have to teach that person what's expected, if you see all the shoes at the door, no! You need to take your shoes off. (Ria)*

In contrast to Ria, Ariana recognised it could be intimidating for a specialist to come into a Māori environment, she reminded me that it would help if the specialist had made prior contact with the classroom teacher. Arthur pointed out that "A lot of non-Māori have the tikanga (that's for sure) and the relationships – which is a big part of getting cooperation" (Arthur).

### **Humility, being part of the team**

All three participants talked about the importance of humility. Arthur described this humility as being aware the outreach teacher is not the "font of all knowledge because there is a cultural one". The outreach teacher "would need to be okay with their knowledge being rejected or adapted". The most important thing is "being welcomed back again" (Arthur). Arthur described his experience of working with a colleague who got the idea he "knew and understood it all". Arguing, even if this person was well grounded in their knowledge, "if the right hand does not know what the left hand is doing" (Arthur) and if the person is not working as part of the whānau and kura team they will not be successful in their endeavours.

Ria was very strong on the importance of humility for developing trust and good relationships.

*You know, you might be great at that but what if I don't like you? I know that sounds really bad but just being an expert is not enough. I can just speak from my whānau's point of view, often somebody who comes in to be a tino mōhio, comes in as a know it all, they're the person that's shunned. In our culture it's about whakaiti which is to be humble and if you come in claiming to know everything or having all the resources well you're rude and no one wants to listen to you because who wants to listen to someone who knows everything. (Ria)*

Ariana recognised the challenges faced by Pākehā outreach teachers as they entered a kaupapa Māori environment. She emphasised again the role of the classroom teacher in helping to smooth out the process for the outreach teacher to help ease their anxiety and help them feel more comfortable. She acknowledged some outreach teachers handle it better than others. "I've seen some come in to talk with this child, kind of shutting us down because they've got the skills" (Ariana).

Ria argued that the reason humility is so important is so the whānau and team can trust the outreach teacher. "I think that's the most important thing for me, to make that relationship, especially if

you're a non-Māori. To come in with that humility ... so I can get to know you and trust you" (Ria). Sometimes the Pākehā outreach teacher can be shut off in the beginning because of the way they have come into the classroom, claiming to have all the knowledge. If they come in with humility asking what do you want or need and what the child needs, then there will come a point in the relationship where teachers and teacher aides will want to know what the outreach teacher thinks, "and that's when you [outreach teacher] can jump in with everything that you know" (Ria).

Each participant agreed specialist outreach teachers should be supporting kaiako and teacher aides in the class. As a school leader Ariana challenged classroom kaiako to accept the help that is available.

*A child on the spectrum who needs extra help ... we've been trying to handle it for a long time, it's hard and we haven't got those skills, they're not there yet. We can either be real kākī mārō [stubborn as] and just handle it or be able to get others with the skills to come in ... I don't know, is it fear or something of kaiako about specialists coming in? What I try and get across is oi, it's not about us, it's about the tamaiti and we can do with the help of the specialists to help the child thrive. (Ariana)*

Ria recounted examples of seeing a teacher aide disempowered by the actions of an outreach teacher.

*Sometimes, I've seen it, it's difficult for them to have a stranger come in and then do something to that child they don't agree with or they don't understand. ... I know last year, one of our teacher aides (when the outside teacher came in) would just leave because she couldn't handle the way she was working... She just couldn't be there or else it would just make her really angry. (Ria)*

### **Shortage of Māori specialists**

Arthur, Ariana and Ria all agreed there is a shortage of specialists who are Māori. Arthur described how Māori specialists are thin on the ground and said the only way to make sure tamariki Māori and their whānau have the support they need is to work together. Arthur identified this as a problem but he also believed Pākehā can have affinity with Māori whānau too. Ariana described a scenario in which she made known her frustration about the small number of Māori speech therapists. "And the response was, no! Can you go to Otago?". Ariana said she "stopped poking that bear" because she did not want to move cities to study speech and language therapy. She did not insist outreach teachers working in the ruma rumaki know te reo "because at the end of the day the number of specialists who can speak te reo are not there and the school would just be shooting themselves in the foot" (Ariana).

Ria responded to the shortage of Māori specialists from her experience as a mother as well as an ORS teacher.

*And it's really difficult when you have especially Māori units or kaupapa Māori units when all the experts coming in are not from your culture. It kind of makes you feel a little*

*bit like 'oh, so we don't know anything'. ... Not saying they don't have that knowledge but sometimes it can be really hard when everybody telling you what to do is a Pākehā female. (Ria)*

Ria talked about all the specialists who had come through her home to support her whānau, none of them were Māori, all were Pākehā women.

## Discussion

The shortage of specialists highlighted in the literature review (Bevan-Brown, 2006a; Bourke et al., 2002; Fortune, 2013) was discussed by all three interview participants. Ria's reflections on this chronic shortage highlights the problem from a personal and professional point of view. Her words "everybody is a Pākehā female" powerfully demonstrate how a shortage of Māori specialists can reinforce negative messages that Māori teachers do not have the skills to meet the needs of tamariki on the autism spectrum with high, complex needs.

In Aotearoa New Zealand, education policy and research points to the importance of building relationships when working with tamariki Māori (Berryman et al., 2015; Bevan-Brown, 2006a; A. Macfarlane et al., 2007). All three participants highlighted the importance of working as part of the team supporting the tamaiti. To work effectively and to be "welcomed back again" (Arthur) the Pākehā outreach teacher must be willing to understand there are different forms of knowledge which should be respected and valued. Cultural knowledge, knowledge of te reo and tikanga Māori, and the knowledge that for Māori educators the whānau is key to understanding the identity, strengths and needs of the child (Bevan-Brown et al., 2015; A. Macfarlane & Macfarlane, 2019). Pākehā outreach teachers should form relationships with whānau from the beginning if they hope to genuinely support tamariki to flourish in kura kaupapa, bi-lingual and ruma rumaki school settings.

Tamariki Māori on the autism spectrum with high, complex needs in English medium schools could tentatively be included in this discussion. In general, the literature does not differentiate between the aspirations of tamariki and whānau in kaupapa Māori or English medium school settings. The aspirations and expectations of the school-based team may differ in English medium schools; this is an area in need of further discussion.

The humility required of a Pākehā outreach teacher was not explored in depth in the literature. However, the need for humility resonates strongly with the work of Berryman et al. (2015) who emphasise the power of "love, humility, compassion and empathy" (p. 41) enabling specialists to move towards the 'other', reframing the power imbalances present in special education services and settings. When a Pākehā outreach teacher is aware of the power imbalance present whenever a Māori whānau engages with specialist services they are more likely to engage with humility in order to make connections and build relationships (Berryman et al., 2015; G. Smith, 2003). All three interviewees discussed how humility should be demonstrated by outreach teachers working with Māori kaiako. Ria discussed this humility in reference to working with teacher aides. What this humility looks like in practice is an area in need of further research and discussion.

## Conclusion

The Māori environment is an inclusive environment. Within kaupapa Māori school settings, to be Māori is the norm, te reo me ngā tikanga cannot be marginalised, in these settings they are validated, legitimate and seen as good (G. Smith, 2003). The environment established within bilingual, full immersion and ruma rumaki classrooms embraces the cultural identity of the child and their whānau enabling the tamaiti to thrive as Māori. Within this environment the Pākehā and non-Māori outreach teacher must be willing to work as part of the team supporting the tamaiti. The team includes the child, whānau, kaiako, teacher aides, kaitakawaenga and specialists. The three interviewees agreed, to work effectively, the outreach teacher must enter the child's environment at home and at school with humility. Knowledge of te reo and tikanga is important, however the most powerful theme which emerged from this research is the need for the outreach teacher to be humble and willing to work as part of a team.

### **Limitations**

This research took place in the context of kaupapa Māori school settings, drawing on the experiences of three Māori educators who work in full immersion and bi-lingual classrooms. Despite the limitations of this narrow scope of research some of the findings may be relevant for tamariki Māori, their whānau and teachers in English medium school settings. Pākehā outreach teachers may find this research helpful for understanding the importance of working with whānau within a Māori cultural worldview. This may or may not be a priority for classroom teachers in English medium schools. Working with humility and collaboratively as part of a team will be necessary when working with tamariki Māori in every setting. These findings could resonate with outreach teachers as they work across a range of schools as part of their itinerant role.

Future research should elicit the opinions and experiences of teacher aides/learning assistants. Teacher aides spend a significant amount of time with tamariki who have ORS funding (Reilly, 2016). The experiences of teacher aides working with specialist outreach teachers was highlighted as an area in need of future research by one of the interviewees. There is a general lack of research into the role, experiences and training of teacher aides who work with tamariki on the autism spectrum with high, complex needs (Reilly, 2016).

### **Recommendations**

The practice of humility in the work of specialist outreach teachers is an area in need of further discussion. Pākehā and non-Māori outreach teachers have early childhood, primary or secondary teacher training however some may not have had exposure to Māori worldviews and environments beyond their initial teacher training. A minimum level of training and/or expertise should be expected of Pākehā outreach teachers working in kaupapa Māori school settings. The interviewees believe outreach teachers should consider visiting kura kaupapa Māori settings like visiting another country. The language and culture within a kaupapa Māori school must be respected by outreach teachers. The Pākehā specialist outreach teacher is invited to critically engage with cultural hegemony through respectful partnership with the whānau, kaiako and the child's support team (Berryman et al., 2015; G. Smith, 2003).

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Cat Noakes-Duncan is a passionate practitioner, teacher, communicator, community developer and researcher. Cat is currently engaged in doctoral research through Canterbury University, investigating barriers and enablers to early autism referral. This research focuses on the experiences of parents and their children, assessing possible attitudinal bias amongst early referrers. Cat believes it is essential that research is influenced and guided by the lived experiences of those most affected.

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