Reducing Youth Disadvantage through Education for Enterprise: A Case Study of Nga Kakano School

Peter John Mellalieu\textsuperscript{1}, Nicolas Kearns\textsuperscript{2}, Arohanui Vause\textsuperscript{3} and Elizabeth Byers Coleman\textsuperscript{4}

\textit{In developed countries, the education divide between students with access and those without access to elite education providers has deepened. Students who have limited access to 'elite' education are at risk of joining a vicious circle of low educational outcomes, and behaviours that make escape from poverty difficult. This case study details the journey of a high school that embarked on a path to engage all of its students in 'Education for Enterprise' (E4E) as a curriculum foundation to help its students achieve educational outcomes that better position them for modern citizenship and promising career pathways. The strategic change implemented by the school was informed by strategic audit and idealised design, but ultimately was pursued in an enterprising and opportunistic fashion. A distinctive teaching and learning environment is emerging combining indigenous (Maori), Western, and contemporary pedagogies: Te kaupapa Nga Kakano.}

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1. Introduction

In developed countries, the education divide between students with access and those without access to elite education providers has deepened. Students who have limited access to 'elite' education are at risk of joining a vicious circle of low educational outcomes, inadequate and inappropriate training for the emerging workplace, and behaviours that make escape from poverty difficult (Boven, Harland and Grace 2011). This case study explores the lessons to be learned from a school that has embarked on a path to engage all of its students in 'Education for Enterprise' as a curriculum foundation to help its students aspire and achieve educational outcomes that better position them for modern citizenship, tertiary education, or other promising career pathways.

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\textsuperscript{1} Assoc. Prof. Peter John Mellalieu, Department of Management and Marketing, Unitec Institute of Technology, Auckland, New Zealand. Email: \texttt{pmellalieu@unitec.ac.nz}

\textsuperscript{2} Nicholas Kearns, Department of Management and Marketing, Unitec Institute of Technology, Auckland, New Zealand. Email: \texttt{nkearns@unitec.ac.nz}

\textsuperscript{3} Arohanui Vause, Ngā Kākano o te Kaihanga Kura, Auckland, New Zealand. Email: \texttt{aroha@ngakakano.school.nz}

\textsuperscript{4} Elizabeth Byers Coleman, Knowledge Specialist, University of Auckland. Email: \texttt{beth.coleman@auckland.ac.nz}
2. Background

Nga Kakano Christian Reo Rua Kura [Literally ‘Seeds of the creator bilingual school’] is a small, private school based in Auckland, New Zealand founded in 1997 by Te Rangi Allen and his wife, Veronica. Their vision for Nga Kakano was ignited by Te Rangi’s sadness at the high truancy and low success rate of Maori and Pacific Island students he saw in his then role as a 1st XV rugby coach at a secondary school in west Auckland. The school first operated as a childcare centre for 16 children, strongly whanau [family] oriented. A collaboration with Waikato University’s ‘Transition to kura [place of learning]’ programme highlighted key areas of success. By 1998 the school gained registration as a primary and intermediate school (ages 5 through 13). The school’s mission evolved to ‘develop, equip and empower students of tomorrow’, focused particularly on education tailored to improve Maori and Pacific Island students’ success rates in education (Vause 2011).

By 2011, Nga Kakano was operating from a basic light industrial building with a roll of 64 students from Year 1 through Year 13 (ages 5 through 17). Capital funding came primarily from New Zealand’s Ministry of Education (80 per cent), with the remainder from parents, donations, and foundation grants. However, less than 15 per cent of the school’s operating budget came from the Ministry of Education. The school survived on modest fees paid by parents, careful, innovative management, and modest salaries drawn by the principal and teachers.

In 2011, the school had ambitions to increase its roll to 250 students, establish itself in purpose-built buildings, and broaden its curriculum to include specialist programmes in Maori language, Maori culture, and business. The challenge was to acquire the financial and human resources needed to bring these ambitions to fruition in the face of several strategic issues detailed later.

In October 2011, a team of business entrepreneurship students from Unitec Institute of Technology (Unitec), under the leadership of Vause, presented an interactive workshop introducing pupils at Nga Kakano to the principles of business entrepreneurship, finance, and law. The highly interactive workshop engaged the school pupils to such an extent that the Principal (Te Rangi Allen), invited Mellalieu and his then student Vause to explore how business education could be introduced into Nga Kakano’s educational programme. The paper continues by providing a case example of how this particular initiative was interwoven to address Nga Kakano’s overall strategic development challenges. In particular, the case provides a snapshot of how several strategic issues challenging Nga Kakano in 2011 was partly resolved through several initiatives introduced through to early 2014.

3. The Methodology and Model

In 2011 a series of stakeholder meetings with students, staff, and family confirmed the identification of the several strategic issues that challenged the school, detailed later. The process, somewhat emergent, was informed by both traditional Maori protocol (several hui, that is, consensus-focused meetings), and strategic change processes including Strategic Audit (Mellalieu 1992) and Idealised Design (Ackoff 1978). Especially pertinent was the exemplary case of the redesign of the Academy of Vocal Arts, Philadelphia (AVA) (Pourdehnad and Hebb 2002; Magidson 2006; Ackoff, Magidson and Addison 2006).
Furthermore, the school’s constituency realised the need to develop a hybrid school curriculum, pedagogy, and learning environment that drew on traditional Maori pedagogical practices (kaupapa Maori) and the students’ educational needs for developing opportunities to thrive in the contemporary, 21st century world. This realisation was informed by a highly pertinent paper by Boven, Harland, and Grace (2011), an introduction to which is illustrated in Figure 1. Once the strategic issues were clarified and confirmed by the constituency, the school pursued a series of opportunistic and enterprising initiatives aimed at resolving the issues.

**Figure 1:** ‘Too many snakes, not enough ladders’ result in disengaged, incorrectly educated youth with poor employment prospects
(Boven, Harland, and Grace, 2011)

![Diagram of 'Too many snakes, not enough ladders'](image)

### 4. The findings

In October 2011, Mellalieu and Vause, in a preliminary assessment, identified the top five strategic issues facing Nga Kakano as:

**ISSUE 1:** Broadening the funding base for a school with ‘special character’;
**ISSUE 2:** Developing a suitable physical location to cater for expansion in the student roll;
**ISSUE 3:** Embedding Education for Enterprise (E4E) across the curriculum;
**ISSUE 4:** Acquiring specialist staff who can harmonise with the school’s special character;
**ISSUE 5:** Developing a portfolio of pedagogies and learning technologies appropriate for guiding students to future success in a post-modern, post-colonial world.
The following paragraphs express the issues exactly as they were characterised in 2011 as a basis for future strategic choice and development (Mellalieu and Vause 2011).

**ISSUE 1: Broadening the funding base for a school with ‘special character’.** The school runs a tight budget with a balance sheet that provides limited support for investments in quality improvements, development, and growth. The school is funded currently through a modest level of school fees charged to parents. As a private school, the school receives around 10 to 15 per cent of its costs from public education funds. However, the school has a ‘special character’ in terms of its focus on a ‘low-decile’ Maori/Pacificika demographic and Christian values. Given its superior educational achievements for its targeted demographic there are likely to be several opportunities to gain public sector, private sector, and philanthropic cash and non-cash contributions to support the school’s development. One important source is public sector funding from New Zealand’s Vote: Ministry of Education for Schools of Special Character (such as the existing practice for Catholic private schools). This source could provide substantial funding towards a new building, equipment, and staffing costs. The challenge is to prepare the documentation necessary to support applications to these additional sources of funding.

**ISSUE 2: Developing a suitable physical location to cater for expansion in the student roll.** The current location (2011) of the school is within a light industrial manufacturing/service building complex. The space available limits growth from the current roll of 60 students, although the construction of a mezzanine floor is feasible. However, space is available in nearby units for rental. The current space is a pragmatic, cost-effective solution for the school, but is inappropriate as a long-term ‘home’ for the school. The location is near to a park where outdoor recreational activities can be conducted. Also nearby is Henderson’s Lincoln Road business district that includes light industrial, service, retail, and medical facilities. The current financial situation of the school inhibits the jump to the next stage of growth.

**ISSUE 3: Embedding education for enterprise across the curriculum.** Education for Enterprise (E4E) offers students feasible, alternative pathways to a ‘good job’ (Clifton 2011) beyond traditional secondary school educational pathways focused on training for a technical trade or for professional/tertiary education. A three-hour pilot teaching module lead by business students of Unitec Institute of Technology achieved considerable engagement by many students in the Senior Class of the school. (The Senior Class is a mixed class combining students aged 13 through 17 years.) This positive engagement encouraged the Principal and School Administrator/Project Manager (Vause) to begin exploring how to embed education for business and enterprise (E4E) into the senior school curriculum. Consequently, the school became committed to learning and adapting lessons from E4E schemes such as Onehunga High Business School, the Young Enterprise Scheme (YES), and Students in Free Enterprise (SIFE). Coincidentally, a new national curriculum for business enterprise education is being rolled out through secondary schools in New Zealand. Several staff at Unitec Institute of Technology’s business school are willing and able to support the school’s adoption of E4E through its teaching and applied research programmes in E4E.

**ISSUE 4: Acquiring specialist staff who can harmonise with the school’s special character.** The school employs several general purpose educators and teaching assistants highly committed to the special character and values of the school. These
educators are committed teachers giving time and effort far beyond the normal call of duty. However, there is an urgent need to enhance the existing capacity for Maori language teaching and new areas such as Education for Enterprise (E4E). The challenge is to devise arrangements to employ full and part-time people who can contribute specialist teaching whilst also contributing to the development of the school’s special character.

**ISSUE 5: Developing a portfolio of pedagogies and learning technologies appropriate for guiding students to future success in a post-modern, post-colonial world.** The school currently utilises a paper-based self-teaching system based on a US curriculum system, Accelerated Christian Education (ACE). The system is cost effective, and simple to implement given the wide age range and capabilities of students in the Senior Class. Furthermore, the ACE curriculum enables students to gain qualifications necessary to enter university. However, resources for learning and teaching are becoming increasingly powerful, interactive, and engaging through the application of digital computing and communications technologies. Furthermore, the work-place increasingly requires its employees to be ‘digitally literate’ in terms of using information technologies to plan and coordinate activities with others. The performance:cost ratio of information technology is improving. However, leaping onto the ‘treadmill’ of technology-enhanced learning presents challenges for the school in terms of maintaining technology. What are the best technology adoption pathways for the emerging ‘cloud’-orientated post-Personal Computer world of digital technologies?

**4.1 Developments November 2011 through March 2012**

In early November 2011, the foregoing strategic issues were presented as part of a community meeting (*hui*) with stakeholders of the school. A video presenting brief highlights of the earlier October workshop with the Nga Kakano pupils demonstrated their engagement, and seemed particularly influential in gaining strong support from the parents to adopt an Education for Enterprise programme into the school’s curriculum. Kearns outlined alternative approaches to introducing E4E. Kearns in his earlier career as a secondary school teacher, had been a key driver in the development of the E4E curriculum for New Zealand’s secondary schools.

One alternative Kearns suggested was to use the long-established New Zealand Young Enterprise Scheme (YES) as a vehicle for providing a highly-experiential approach to delivering E4E. Over the next few weeks, this recommendation was adopted. By December Vause and several other Nga Kakano teachers had attended an induction programme for introducing YES. A distinctive feature of the implementation at Nga Kakano was that all Senior School students would take part (from age approximately 14 through 17). A second feature was that two half-days per week would be devoted to the students participating in the planning of their YES business enterprises.

Over the long New Zealand summer break (mid-December through late-January 2012), Nga Kakano opportunistically relocated to larger, more appropriate premises located directly adjacent to public sports grounds. Some groundwork for establishing the school’s YES teams had also begun, at the recommendation of Kearns, so that the pupils could spend their summer generating ideas for possible company businesses.

By March 2012, the Nga Kakano pupils had formed two loosely-coupled companies under the YES programme, Rangatahi Productions and Nga Puawaitanga. One business was
focused on providing a Maori cultural experience to new immigrants and tourists. The second business was purposed to write and record songs for performance by the first company.

In Mid-March a large meeting for about two dozen YES school companies based in West Auckland was held at the Henderson Trusts Stadium. This event was organised and facilitated by Auckland Tourism, Events and Economic Development (ATEED), a city-council organisation. At this event, a ‘speed coaching’ method was used whereby an assortment of business mentors and Unitec business teachers constructively critiqued each of the companies’ emerging business venture proposals. Rather pleasingly, the companies from Nga Kakano appeared amongst the more advanced school companies in that they had a presentable business plan, interviewed well, and were the only team to arrive with business cards.... A few days earlier the Nga Kakano companies had been primed about the crucial importance of networking as part of a guest workshop from one of the Unitec staff. The Nga Kakano companies completed the day with a sense of confidence that their progress and effort was both appropriate and recognised as worthy.

By the conclusion of 2012, Nga Kakano had launched successfully an Education for Enterprise programme into its curriculum. The new school premises was more attractive, spacious, and functional. The additional space enabled the school to split its students into three classes from its earlier two classes: Junior, Middle, and Senior School. A gift of end-of-life personal computers to the school provided for the possibility of addressing some aspects of introducing modern information technology for education.

Following the late November 2011 re-election of a National (conservative) government, education and skills development for New Zealand’s long-tail of ‘disadvantaged’ young people became rated a high priority for government policy. Furthermore, the adaption to New Zealand of the US Charter School public:private partnership model emerged as an new, alternative funding opportunity for Nga Kakano (Parata & Banks 2012; Anon, Partnership Schools). Nevertheless, Nga Kakano still needed to address the issue of broadening its funding base.

Beyond Kearns and Mellalieu, additional teaching staff at Unitec began to take note of the value of the Nga Kakano initiative and offered their support as mentors to the school, and the YES programme generally. Over the period May through June senior pupils from Nga Kakano visited and participated in ‘try it for a day’ classes in the Unitec business school with the prospect that they might consider advancing their studies of business in the tertiary education sector. Anticipating how the Nga Kakano approach might be up-scaled to other schools became a matter for development by Unitec’s Department of Management and Marketing.

In 2013, Nga Kakano continued the E4E initiatives introduced in 2012. Three YES teams participated in the regional competitions. Furthermore, the school developed and submitted its application for operation as a Partnership School, the New Zealand ‘brand-name’ for the US Charter School movement.

4.2 Nga Kakano in January 2014

Reflecting on the strategic issues identified in late 2011, the current situation for Nga Kakano is:
ISSUE 1: Broadening the funding base for a school with ‘special character. By mid 2011, Nga Kakano had been shortlisted for funding as one of a limited number of pilot schools for the government’s new Partnership Schools programme. This programme was informed by the increasing evidence of success by the United States Charter Schools movement (Anon 2012; M. D. S. 2013). Whilst Nga Kakano was unsuccessful in achieving Partnership Schools funding commencing for the 2014 academic year, the process of undergoing scrutiny for its application has developed deepening support from an extensive Maori community for the school to gain Partnership status from the current (2015) negotiation process. More recently, the school is being recognised by a small, but growing number of educationalists as having developed a unique, distinguished, and ultimately successful teaching and learning environment particularly helpful for advancing disadvantaged Maori and Pacifica children - that is, what is becoming termed ‘Te Kaupapa Nga Kakano’.

ISSUE 2: Developing a suitable physical location to cater for expansion in the student roll. The school has twice moved location since 2011 from its inappropriate light industrial factory warehouse location. Most recently, the school has taken occupancy of a modern, purpose-built, small-scale educational facility. Whilst the lease on the facility is heavily subsidised, the location provides ample scope for development and growth. Continued, long-term access to the facility may well be contingent on resolution of ISSUE 1. Fortunately, the school is making more obvious and productive use of the facility than its previous occupants.

ISSUE 3: Embedding Education for Enterprise (E4E) across the curriculum. Since 2012, Nga Kakano has begun adopting the New Zealand national standard E4E curriculum, initially through the vehicle of the Young Enterprise Scheme (YES). Uniquely in the New Zealand context, all senior students, from the age of 14 years, participate in YES, and the teams have been placed highly in local and regional competitions (Mellalieu and Vause 2012; Mellalieu and Vause 2012; Tischler 2012). Several parents have been inspired to establish their own small enterprise based around their specialist indigenous craft skills. E4E is viewed by the school and its community as one vital vehicle for developing students’ character and contemporary enterprise skills, and broadening students’ career horizons whilst also introducing new teaching pedagogies such as project-based learning (Markham 2011).

ISSUE 4: Acquiring specialist staff who can harmonise with the school’s special character. The school is developing an active induction and professional development programme for its staff which is crucial to maintaining and enhancing its unique kaupapa (indigenous teaching and learning approach. See Fitzsimons and Smith 2000; Peters 2002. Partnership arrangements with Maori language and information technology specialist educators enable the school to present a broad curriculum on a limited budget. The school has made an absolute commitment to employ only registered teachers in positions of teaching responsibility. The Board of Trustees for the school has been broadened and professionalised beyond its 2011 extended family to include external legal, financial, general business, environmental sustainability, and educational leadership expertise.

ISSUE 5: Developing a portfolio of pedagogies and learning technologies appropriate for guiding students to future success in a post-modern, post-colonial
world. In the simplest of terms, Nga Kakano has implemented a learning and teaching environment that weaves together the strengths of several pedagogical approaches: traditional Western in-class teacher-led; kaupapa Maori (approaches informed by indigenous Maori cultural practice such as the well-known haka warrior greeting, and kaitiakitanga [environmental guardianship]; contemporary project-based learning (Markham 2011); mail-based correspondence school using NZ and US curricula; strengths-based talent development (Liesveld and Miller 2005); and, increasingly, information and computing technology (ICT) enhanced learning. The result is emerging as a productive and distinctive Te Kaupapa Nga Kakano, a case exemplifying strongly the ambitions sought for Maori education by the NZ Ministry of Education’s Māori education strategy, Ka Hikitia [Literally: Stand up! Metaphorically: Accelerate Success!] (Anon, The Māori education strategy).

5. Summary and Conclusions

Graduates of the school are now enrolled in university studies in a diverse range of subjects beyond business. Younger students are now identifying much earlier in their school studies possible career and tertiary study options, and, therefore, what courses of study and achievement are required during their school years.

Nga Kakano school is growing steadily and surely towards its now intended optimal school roll of approximately 130 students. The school roll, likely to be achieved within 18 - 24 months, is aided strongly through extraordinarily well-connected extended family and indigenous community communication networks. Financial resourcing continues to be a challenge, which may also limit the school’s ability to provide specialist learning support at the most senior student levels - aged 16 and above. Translating the tacit nature of Te Kaupapa Nga Kakano ‘the Nga Kakano education enterprise model’ into an explicit nature suitable for comprehension or adoption by others is emerging as a requirement for state funding. Growth beyond the perceived optimal roll of 130 students will entail dividing, ‘cloning’, franchising, or re-seeding Te Kaupapa Nga Kakano into other geographic locations for which there is urgent and evident demand, both within and beyond New Zealand.

In conclusion, one delightful symbol of Nga Kakano’s success is the recent story of an anxious woman who wished to ensure a place on the school’s roll for her child - as yet to be born. The community is recognising the value of, and endorsing Nga Kakano’s achievements.

5.1 Discussion questions

1. Identify alternative initiatives that Nga Kakano could pursue over the period 2014 - 2016 that resolve each of the five strategic issues as they exist in 2014.
2. What other significant strategic issues are pertinent to the development of Nga Kakano? How would you resolve those issues?
3. What specific steps would you recommend for managing the growth of Nga Kakano beyond its optimal size and ‘cloning’ the Nga Kakano education enterprise model (Te Kaupapa Nga Kakano)?
4. In light of your answers to questions 1 - 3, what specific actions and priorities do you advocate to the Board of Trustees and management of Nga Kakano? How would you mitigate any risks you identify in your recommendations?
References


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