Kaupapa Māori Early Years Provision and Whānau Wellbeing: A Retrospective Survey at a Taranaki-Based Centre

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Kaupapa Māori early years provision (KM-EYP) is recognised as a cornerstone of community efforts to revitalise Māori language and culture. Surprisingly, little is known about how KM-EYP influences the lives of whānau who have engaged. Parents/grandparents (N=91) of tamariki who had attended a Taranaki-based centre (between 1994 and 2017) completed a survey designed to measure 20 aspects of whānau lives, which collectively align with an ao Māori view of wellbeing. Most participants agreed that their children's learning, Māori identity and cultural capacity had been strengthened, as had their own capabilities. Comparisons between the year after exiting the Centre and the time of the survey (2019/2020) demonstrated sustained or increasing benefits, with the exception of relationships with other Centre whānau and the reo Māori capacity of tamariki. Our findings contribute to what is known about how whānau can benefit from engagement in KM-EYP.

Keywords: *Indigenous psychology, Kaupapa Māori early years provision, Wellbeing, Survey, Education, Whānau*

INTRODUCTION

E tatari atu ana kia aroaro mahana, ka taka mai te āhuru, kōia.
The warmth of spring is eagerly awaited, a joyful time of new growth and industry.

This section of an old Taranaki cultivation chant is a fitting way to begin this article. The lines evoke thoughts of the seasonal change that is heralded by the call of the kawekaweā (the long-tailed cuckoo) which alerts the community it is time to become active again to capitalise on the warmth and supportive environment that spring provides for planting and the nurturing of tender new shoots. The chant is also a metaphor for the growth and development that can occur for tamariki and their whānau in the warm and supportive environment of Kaupapa Māori early years provision (KM-EYP) in centres such as Te Kōpae Piripono, a Taranaki-based example and the site of this research. The name of the overall study, Tangi te Kawekaweā, derives from the chant, which continues to provide inspiration today as it did for our ancestors (see the Glossary for the whole chant).

Background and current context

Throughout Aotearoa, the Māori struggle for survival amidst the devastating impacts of colonisation on our communities has involved acts of resistance and relentless efforts to preserve Indigenous knowledge, language and culture for future generations (Waitangi Tribunal, 2013). Despite those efforts, 138 years after the

signing of the Treaty of Waitangi, which made this country a colony of Britain, a report by Richard Benton (1979) highlighted that the Māori language was endangered. Tribal leaders rallied, and their endeavours to stop the further loss of language and culture intensified. It was agreed that the greatest potential lay in focusing on young children and nurturing them with their parents and whānau in environments rich in language and culture, surrounded by elders. In those settings, it was hoped, a new generation might emerge conversant in the Māori language and secure in their cultural identity. From those deliberations emerged the first centres of KM-EYP, known as kōhanga reo, with the first centre opening in Wainuiomata in 1982 (Waitangi Tribunal, 2013). Throughout the 40 years that followed, KM-EYP has been central to Māori community efforts to re-establish their language, culture and whānau wellbeing (Education Review Office, 2017; Ritchie & Skerrett, 2014).

Whānau wellbeing must be viewed in the historical context of 200 years of this country's colonisation (Ritchie & Rau; 2009; Ritchie & Skerrett, 2014; Tamati et al., 2008), which has caused immense harm to Māori communities, the effects of which are perpetuated in the cultural alienation and social deprivation experienced by whānau in many communities (Houkamau, Stronge & Sibley, 2017; Pihama et al., 2014; Ritchie & Skerrett, 2014; Tamati et al., 2008). The impact has been catastrophic for tamariki Māori, many of whom exist in poverty (Dale, 2017; Statistics NZ, 2022). All Māori are impacted by the historical trauma of past events (Pihama

et al., 2014). Many are re-traumatised daily by the emotional and practical reminders of having been alienated from things inherently important to them: land, language, culture, and connection. That emotional burden underscored by the experience of racism and social discrimination, which are the perpetuation of colonisation, dissuades many whānau from taking advantage of opportunities such as KM-EYP to enhance aspects of their and their family's Māori identity (Te Huia, 2015).

KM-EYP is an inclusive term we coined to describe early learning and whānau development initiatives located philosophically and politically within an ao Māori worldview. While kōhanga reo are licensed and governed by Te Kōhanga Reo National Trust, since the early 1990s, other centres for KM-EYP have operated independently under the designation of early childhood education centre (Education Act 1989) and each with its own governance structure. The contribution of KM-EYP to the revitalisation of Māori language and the improved educational success of tamariki has been extensively acknowledged (for example, Education Review Office, 2017; Hond, 2013; Hond-Flavell et al., 2021; Ministry of Education, 2020; Ratima et al., 2012). However, there is an ongoing need for rigorous research into the short- and long-term benefits of KM-EYP for both tamariki and whānau.

Whānau development is central to KM-EYP, targeting tamariki at the beginning of their education journey and the parents and whānau who accompany them into centres. In the immersive Māori early learning and whānau development environment of KM-EYP, the indigeneity of tamariki and whānau is cherished and nurtured. Through engagement in KM-EYP, those with limited exposure to te ao Māori have the opportunity to experience Māori language and culture in the real world as contributing members of a centre's whānau collective. In the warm, supportive environment of KM-EYP, whānau members of all ages can be Māori and grow in their Māoritanga, acquiring the language and cultural understandings necessary to experience te ao Māori more fully. This cultural strengthening provided by KM-EYP lays a foundation for tamariki and whānau to reach their potential in the Māori and wider worlds, with their Māori identity intact (Cram, 2014; Pihama & Penehira, 2005; Stewart & Tocker, 2021).

It is well recognised that high quality early years provision can help ensure an optimal start to life, with benefits over the lifecourse (e.g., Almond & Curry, 2010; Campbell et al., 2014; Heckman et al., 2013; Paul, 2011; Richter et al., 2017). High-quality early years provision is particularly effective in facilitating the learning and development of disadvantaged children and improving the wellbeing of their families (Munford, Sanders, Maden, & Maden, 2007). There is, however, a dearth of evidence on how these benefits manifest and accrue for Indigenous children and their families. Te Kura Mai i Tawhiti is a collaborative multidisciplinary research

programme with the aim of contributing to building that evidence base by investigating the effectiveness and long-term benefits of Te Kōpae Piripono (as an example of KM-EYP and referred to as the Centre from here) (Ratima et al., 2019; Tamati et al., 2021). The Tangi te Kawekaweā study is a component of the wider Kura Mai i Tawhiti research programme and focused on whānau outcomes of KM-EYP.

The first phase of Tangi te Kawekaweā qualitatively explored issues associated with whānau engagement in KM-EYP (Hond-Flavell et al., 2021), specifically the facilitators of (what motivates entry and supports involvement) and barriers to engagement. The second phase of the study involved an online survey. Part one of the survey study confirmed the earlier findings and provided further insights into the facilitators of engagement in KM-EYP and the considerable barriers that whānau encounter (see Hond-Flavell et al., 2022). Part two of the survey study, which is the subject of this article, measured aspects of whānau lives after they had exited the Centre. The study explored the potential benefits and long-term wellbeing outcomes for whānau of involvement in KM-EYP using a mixed methods quantitative and qualitative approach.

The earlier qualitative stage of the Tangi te Kawekaweā study found that the whānau participants entered KM-EYP anticipating that they, their tamariki and whānau would: become proficient in Māori language and culture; develop a secure Māori identity; strengthen connection to community; and gain foundational skills to continue to be successful in life as Māori (Hond-Flavell et al., 2021). Participants reported satisfaction that their expectations of KM-EYP for their whānau had been met, suggesting that their participation in the Centre had contributed to those positive outcomes. The responses of parents and whānau enabled the identification of key aspects of whānau wellbeing in the context of KM-EYP.

The Whare Tapa Whā model of Māori health and wellbeing (Durie, 1985) depicts a meeting house that is stable (healthy), providing its four walls (four health dimensions: spiritual, physical, emotional and whānau) are strong and in balance. The model is a metaphor for an ao Māori view of wellbeing, which is the primary goal for all who enter the whare Māori of KM-EYP (Tamati et al., 2008). As per the schema of the Whare Tapa Whā, individuals who are healthy and well as Māori will be secure in their cultural identity, knowledge and capacity, and in their connection to well-functioning whānau and community (Cram, Smith & Johnstone, 2003; Durie, 1985, 1997; Durie et al., 2010; Kukutai et al., 2017; McLachlan, Waitoki, Harris & Jones, 2021). Wellbeing for Māori is a relational, collective sense of wellbeing (Cram, 2014; Dobbs & Eruera, 2014; Durie, 1994; Kara et al., 2011; Kukutai et al., 2017). Furthermore, individuals disconnected from culture may be considered well by Western standards of health and wellbeing, but not healthy 'as Māori' from an ao Māori perspective (Durie, 1994).

Table 1. Characteristics of adult participants whose tamariki/mokopuna attended the Kaupapa Māori early years programme (N=91 who exited in 2017 or earlier to allow comparisons over time)

Characteristic	Subgroup	n	Percentage
Age of whānau member at entry	<40 years of age	67	73.6
	≥40 years of age	24	26.4
Gender of whānau member	Female	58	63.7
	Male	33	36.3
Experience of Māori schooling as a child	Some	26	28.6
Any experience of Māori schooling, comprising: - Kaupapa Māori early years provision (KM-EYP) - Kura kaupapa Māori, wharekura, or similar Māori unit - Māori boarding school	None	65	71.4
Year of whānau member's departure from the Centre	1996 - 2007	45	49.5
	2008 - 2017	46	50.5
Current age of whānau member	<50 years of age	48	52.7
	≥50 years of age	43	47.3

The Whānau Ora Taskforce (Durie et al., 2010) identified six major whānau goals that, when achieved together, can "enable whānau to realise their full potential and give effect to their collective aspirations". Whānau who have achieved these goals may be said to have achieved whānau wellbeing (whānau ora): whānau self-management; healthy whānau lifestyles; full whānau participation in society; confident whānau participation in te ao Māori; economic security and successful involvement in wealth creation; and, whānau cohesion. Given the historical context of whānau, described above, it is unlikely that all will achieve those goals without some form of intervention.

Further research can show whether KM-EYP can help whānau springboard towards the goals identified by the Whānau Ora Taskforce (Durie et al., 2010). What is known is that in KM-EYP, whānau can satisfy their yearning for their language and culture and find a home-like Māori space with others who share similar values and aspirations. There, parents and whānau find support through the relationships that form with significant members of the whānau-collective; the social activity and engagements of the group; the example of kaitiaki and others; and the whānau development programme of experiences and workshops/wānanga (Hond-Flavell et al., 2022; Kara et al., 2011; Moeke-Pickering, 1996; Tamati et al., 2008; Tamati et al., 2021).

Rogoff's (1995) sociocultural model of development posits that the active participation of new members in the cultural activities of a community, with the support and guidance of others, enables them to transform from novice to expert as they appropriate new knowledge, values and skills, which they can then apply to other activities or areas of their lives. The combination of exposures and experiences within the whānau-collectives of KM-EYP can help whānau develop critical awareness and make new sense of the world and the circumstances of their lives (Hond-Flavell et al., 2021; Tamati et al., 2008). In that environment, they can come to understand the power and potential of their role and contribution to their whānau, the Māori community and the wider world (Hond-Flavell et al., 2021; Rua, Hodgetts & Stolte, 2017; Kara et al., 2011; Moeke-Pickering, 1996; Tamati et al., 2021). Sustained whānau engagement with Māori language, culture and community is described by Fox, Neha and Jose (2018) as cultural embeddedness - consistent engagement with the core features of Māori culture - which they suggest provides cultural protection and support for the development of secure Māori identity and improved Māori wellbeing.

Drawing on existing literature, the aim of this stage of the survey phase of the Tangi te Kawekaweā study was to test the following hypotheses: 1) whānau engagement in KM-EYP has had a positive influence on whānau lives that increases further after exiting the provision, 2) there are differences in these aspects of whānau lives by demographic characteristics (participant age-at-entry to the Centre, their gender, Māori-schooling-experience, the era of exit, and current age; as defined in Table 1). In addition, qualitative data, in the form of participant comments added to the questionnaire, are identified that support the quantitative findings.

METHOD
Participants
Participants in the survey study were whānau members of Te Kōpae Piripono who had parental or other caregiver roles for at least one enrolled child since the Centre started operating in 1994. Of a potential cohort of 231 eligible whānau members, four were deceased, and 79 could not be located, leaving 148 traceable. Of those 148 whānau members, 131 started the survey. One hundred and twenty-one completed surveys - a response rate of 82%.

We asked participants to rate each item at (i) one year after exiting Centre and (ii) the time they completed the survey in order to test the continued influence of engagement in KM-EYP on the lives of whānau. The sample therefore only involves those participants who

had been involved in the Centre but departed prior to 2018 (N=91). This group of participants ensured that at least two years had passed between exiting the Centre and the time of the survey to enable a comparison of responses for the two time-points. Of this subsample of 91 participants, 36.3% (n=33) were male, and 63.7% (58) were female (see Table 1, which lists all demographics). The mean age was 50.02 years.

Materials

A structured questionnaire was developed based on a comprehensive review of literature and the findings of the previous qualitative phase. The questionnaire was primarily delivered via the Qualtrics platform to facilitate self-administration online.

The survey was optimised to support participants' recall accuracy by incorporating relevant dates, names and milestones into the questionnaire. The inclusion of key information specific to each participant aided recall of whānau circumstances and personal details, feelings and behaviours one year following the departure of the whānau from the Centre. The following is an example of the use of time markers and milestones to assist participant recall: *"It was the year that...the second big earthquake (6.3) happened in Christchurch killing 184 people; the All Blacks won the Rugby World Cup; Tairāwhiti hosted Te Matatini in Gisborne; Prince William and Kate Middleton were married; and, Osama bin Laden was killed".* The socio-demographic section of the survey (described below) also helped focus participant attention on the period following the departure of their last child who attended the Centre.

The measures were piloted with n=10 whānau members, and minor modifications were made based on their feedback. Next, each eligible whānau member was approached by phone, social media, or email as appropriate to inform them of the study and invite their participation. The online survey was emailed to participants and included further information on the study and how to access the questionnaire via the Qualtrics platform. Informed consent obtained online before the questionnaire was started. Those who did not respond or complete the entire survey were sent three reminder emails at one week, then two-week intervals, each including a new link to their individualised questionnaire. Paper copies were completed by two whānau members who did not have the technology to do so electronically. The surveys were posted for completion unaided to maintain equivalent self-report conditions.

Questionnaire structure

Whānau-life questionnaire: The section of the questionnaire that produced the data for this article was designed to demonstrate how engagement in KM-EYP might have continued to influence participants' lives after leaving the Centre. The 20-item whānau-life questionnaire was developed to measure elements of participants' lives that align with whānau wellbeing outcomes, in the context of KM-EYP and a Māori worldview. Participants' responses were recorded for two time-points: the remembered time-point 1 (one year following the exit of the last child of the whānau from the Centre) and then time-point 2 (the time of the survey, between December 2019 and February 2020). The items

are listed in Table 2, phrased for the remembered time-point 1 and tenses were adjusted as necessary for the present. Participants recorded their endorsement of each item using a 5-point Likert scale (agree strongly = 5 to disagree strongly = 1).

Language use at home: A further question asked participants what percentage Māori is spoken in their homes day-to-day. Free-text space at the end of the survey provided the opportunity for participants to provide further information on the questions or make additional comments. This article includes comments by the 91 whānau participants and any other participants where those comments are pertinent to the issues raised.

Design and procedure

The survey phase of the Tangi te Kawekaweā study was retrospective in design and involved whānau who had attended one centre of KM-EYP during the previous 25 years. The survey was designed to enable a comparison between participants' recalled and current wellbeing. This was achieved using survey questions about the year following exit from the Centre and at the time of the survey. The year after exit from the Centre was an attempt to standardise reporting time across participants. The analysis of socio-demographic data to allow within-group comparisons. Ethical approval for the overall study was obtained from the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee (16/003).

Data analysis

Whānau-life questionnaire - The frequencies of the 20 items were calculated for the two time-points (one year after exiting the Centre and the time of the survey) and organised in tabular form from most agree to least agree for the remembered time-point 1, the year after exit (see Table 2). The frequency of each item at time-point 2 (time of the survey) then appears to the right of the corresponding item. For analysis, *agree-strongly* and *agree* were combined into one agree category; *disagree-strongly* and *disagree* (and *neither-disagree-nor-agree, don't know, NA*, and *missed* items) into one disagree category, given the primary focus was on agreement. McNemar's test of change was applied to identify significant differences in frequencies over time (see Table 2). Where pertinent, comments added by participants have been quoted to supplement the quantitative findings using a mixed-methods approach driven by the quantitative data (Creswell & Clark, 2018).

To test for differences in the tailored set of questions across the five participant characteristics (participant age-at-entry to the Centre, their gender, Māori-schooling-experience, the era of exit, and current age; see Table 1), chi-square tests of association or Fisher's exact probability were calculated. Fisher's exact probability was used for comparisons where a cell had less than five cases; the two-tailed probabilities were used as none of the hypotheses were directional. Significant demographic differences are reported in the text of the results section. A Bonferroni correction for multiple testing was applied - the liberal value of p= 0.1 was divided by the number of tests within each domain (49 within each domain of participant characteristics) to calculate the adjusted p-value (0.002). The Bonferroni adjustment reduces the risk

of type I error (falsely identifying a significant finding from the repetition of similar tests).

Language use at home - Independent t-tests were run to test for any significant demographic differences in the results of the question about the proportion of time day to day that languages were spoken in participants' homes. The Bonferroni adjustment was also applied to these tests.

RESULTS
Whānau-life questionnaire

Responses to the twenty-item whānau-life questionnaire at the remembered time-point (one year after exiting the Centre) and time-point 2 (the time they completed the survey) are listed in Table 2, along with tests of change over time. For the remembered time-point, one year after exiting the Centre, more than 80% of whānau participants endorsed the following four top-ranked items: that their child was set on a positive educational pathway; their child's Māori identity was strong; the whānau member could support the child's learning; and that he/she was confident in their parenting ability. The following comments from two parents help explain the high ranking of these items:

> *"[My child] left Te Kōpae Piripono proud to be Māori, confident and ready for the world" (mother of former pupil).*

> *"[Te Kōpae Piripono] philosophies and strategies have had a huge, positive impact on my parenting. I feel really confident about my parenting skills and grateful for the knowledge I have gained and am still continuing to develop from wānanga and general involvement at Kōpae" (father of current pupil).*

For the first three of these items, there was little change in agreement at the time of the survey (time-point 2). However, for the fourth item ("E14: I felt confident in my parenting ability"), a significant difference was detected, with an additional 12% of participants (93.4%) agreeing that the statement applied.

The following two top-ranked items, "E16: I had supportive relationships with other Kōpae whānau", and "E2: [first child's name] could express their thoughts in te reo Māori", achieved around 80% endorsement at the remembered time-point, dropping significantly by about 20% each at time-point 2. These are the only items for which there was a significant reduction in agreement over time.

Between 75-80% endorsement was achieved overall for the next four ranked items, which related to participants' life satisfaction, application of learnings from the Centre, communication style, and positive influence on whānau and friends. As one mother explained: *"I am thankful for the opportunity to be involved with Te Kōpae Piripono; this has contributed to my journey and success in life as a parent, wife and with my chosen vocation" (mother of a former pupil).* Three of the four items (life satisfaction, communication style and positive influence) recorded significant increases of approximately 10% at the second time-point, while the fourth item about application of learnings from the Centre (E17) did not change significantly.

The following three items were endorsed by approximately 70% of participants at the remembered time-point (one year after leaving the Centre), and these concerned their whānau/family's engagement in the Māori community (E8) and with te reo Māori, and their confidence that future generations of their whānau would speak te reo Māori (E5). The percentages for these items did not change significantly at the time of the survey.

Just below 70% of participants agreed with the next three items for the remembered time-point, and these showed significant positive change at the time of the survey. These items were: "E9: We had become close as a whānau" (20% increase), "E1: I could express my thoughts in te reo Māori" (12% increase). One participant commented on her reo Māori journey: *"As a second-language learner, my own reo development continues - Te Kōpae provided a very safe and gentle path alongside tamariki to help practise and grow" (mother of former pupil).* The third item was, "E19: I felt better able to cope with life's challenges" (11% increase), to which one mother added the following comment: *"E kore e mutu te ngana kia pai ake tōku ao me te oranga o tōku whānau. Me piki i ngā heke, me piki hoki i ngā piki (I will never cease my efforts to improve my life and the wellbeing of my whānau. We must rise from the lows, and rise further from the highs)" (mother of former pupil, translation added).*

The next two items reached around 65% agreement at the remembered time-point, relating to participants' activity in the Māori community and inclination to speak te reo Māori in the community. Endorsement did not change significantly at the time of the survey.

Significant changes were identified for the two lowest-ranked items at the remembered time-point. The first, "E10: I was capable of taking on roles and responsibilities in our wider whānau and the Māori community", was initially agreed with by 61.5% of participants, and at time-point 2, agreement had increased to 81.3%. The next and final item, "E11: I was able to take a lead with tikanga such as waiata, karakia, whaikōrero, karanga," increased from 49.5% at the remembered time-point, to 65.9% at time-point 2. One father who has gone on to iwi leadership roles, commented: *"The staff expressed manaakitanga in a way that we wanted to be around to embrace, to learn and to continue" (father of former pupil).*

Language use at home

On the proportions of languages generally used by participants' whānau in their homes (totalling 100%), at the time of the survey, the average percentages for the sample were: Māori, 30.2% of the time; English, 69.7% of the time; and other languages, 0.1% of the time (one person reported they spoke a third language). In reference to this question, one participant explained the challenge of maintaining te reo Māori use in their home: *"It is a conscious decision that I have to make to switch my thinking/language back to te reo - hence my honest response to 50/50 te reo in home. Once we are back 'on track', it is very natural for us all to kōrero i te reo" (mother of former pupil).*

Table 2. Recalled change over time in wellbeing of whānau whose tamariki/mokopuna attended the Kaupapa Māori early years programme

Wellbeing comparisons
N=91: Graduated from centre 1994-2017
Time point 1: Year after exit from Centre
Time point 2: Current (time of survey)

Q	Wellbeing comparison	Overall rank	One year after exiting Centre: agree %	One year after exiting Centre: % disagree, other, na/neither/dk/missed	Time of survey: agree %	Time of survey: % disagree, other, na/neither/dk/missed	Statistical test of change (McNemar test): Year after exit	Current (time of survey): Not agree	Current (time of survey): Agree	p = value
Q13	My child was set on a positive educational pathway.	1	85.7 (n=78)	14.3 (n=13)	84.6 (n=77)	15.4 (n=14)	Not agree	n=9, 69.2	n=4, 30.8	p = 1.0
							Agree	n=5, 6.4	n=73, 93.6	
Q3	[first child]'s Māori identity was strong.	2	83.5 (n=76)	16.5 (n=15)	81.3 (n=74)	18.7 (n=17)	Not agree	n=11, 73.3	n=4, 26.7	p = .754
							Agree	n=6, 7.9	n=70, 92.1	
Q12	I had become better at supporting my child's learning.	3	82.4 (n=75)	17.6 (n=16)	87.9 (n=80)	12.1 (n=11)	Not agree	n=5, 31.3	n=11, 68.8	p = .332
							Agree	n=6, 8.0	n=69, 92.0	
Q14	I felt confident in my parenting ability.	4	81.3 (n=74)	18.7 (n=17)	93.4 (n=85)	6.6 (n=6)	Not agree	n=3, 17.6	n=14, 82.4	p = .013
							Agree	n=3, 4.1	n=71, 95.9	
Q16	I had supportive relationships with other Kōpae whānau.	5	80.2 (n=73)	19.8 (n=18)	57.1 (n=52)	42.9 (n=39)	Not agree	n=14, 77.8	n=4, 22.2	p = <.001
							Agree	n=25, 34.2	n=48, 65.8	
Q2	[first child] could express their thoughts in te reo Māori.	6	79.1 (n=72)	20.9 (n=19)	59.3 (n=54)	40.7 (n=37)	Not agree	n=17, 89.5	n=2, 10.5	p = <.001
							Agree	n=20, 27.8	n=52, 72.2	
Q20	I was generally satisfied with my life.	7	79.1 (n=72)	20.9 (n=19)	90.1 (n=82)	9.9 (n=9)	Not agree	n=7, 36.8	n=12, 63.2	p = .013
							Agree	n=2, 2.8	n=70, 97.2	
Q17	I practiced things that I learned at Te Kōpae Piripono.	8	76.9 (n=70)	23.1 (n=21)	69.2 (n=63)	30.8 (n=28)	Not agree	n=16, 76.2	n=5, 23.8	p = .143
							Agree	n=12, 17.1	n=58, 82.9	
Q18	I was able to communicate positively.	9	76.9 (n=70)	23.1 (n=21)	90.1 (n=82)	9.9 (n=9)	Not agree	n=5, 23.8	n=16, 76.2	p = .012
							Agree	n=4, 5.7	n=66, 94.3	
Q15	I was a positive influence on my whānau and friends.	10	74.7 (n=68)	25.3 (n=23)	87.9 (n=80)	12.1 (n=11)	Not agree	n=7, 30.4	n=16, 69.6	p = .012
							Agree	n=4, 5.9	n=64, 94.1	
Q8	My whānau was active in the Māori community (for example, on marae, in hapū and iwi).	11	71.4 (n=65)	28.6 (n=26)	74.7 (n=68)	25.3 (n=23)	Not agree	n=15, 57.7	n=11, 42.3	p = .648
							Agree	n=8, 12.3	n=57, 87.7	
Q4	We spoke te reo Māori at home.	12	70.3 (n=64)	29.7 (n=27)	60.4 (n=55)	39.6 (n=36)	Not agree	n=18, 66.7	n=9, 33.3	p = .122
							Agree	n=18, 28.1	n=46, 71.9	

Table 2 (cont'd). Recalled change over time in wellbeing of whānau whose tamariki/mokopuna attended the Kaupapa Māori early years programme

Wellbeing comparisons N=91: Graduated from centre 1994-2017 Time point 1: Year after exit from Centre Time point 2: Current (time of survey)	Overall	One year after exiting Centre		Time of survey		Statistical test of change (McNemar test)			p = value
		agree %	disagree, other, na/neithe %	agree %	disagree, other, na/neithe %		Year after exit	Current (time of survey)	
Q5 I felt confident that future generations of my whānau would be able to speak Māori.	13	70.3 (n=64)	29.7 (n=27)	70.3 (n=64)	29.7 (n=27)	Not agree	n=21, 77.8	n=6, 22.2	p = 1.0
						Agree	n=6, 9.4	n=58, 90.6	
Q9 We had become close as a whānau.	14	69.2 (n=63)	30.8 (n=28)	89.0 (n=81)	11.0 (n=10)	Not agree	n=5, 17.9	n=23, 82.1	p = <.001
						Agree	n=5, 7.9	n=58, 92.1	
Q1 I could express my thoughts in te reo Māori.	15	68.1 (n=62)	31.9 (n=29)	80.2 (n=73)	19.8 (n=18)	Not agree	n=15, 51.7	n=14, 48.3	p = .013
						Agree	n=3, 4.8	n=59, 95.2	
Q19 I felt better able to cope with life's challenges.	16	68.1 (n=62)	28.6 (n=29)	89.0 (n=81)	11.0 (n=10)	Not agree	n=7, 24.1	n=22, 75.9	p = <.001
						Agree	n=3, 4.8	n=59, 95.2	
Q7 I was active in the Māori community (for example, on marae, in hapū and iwi).	17	65.9 (n=60)	34.1 (n=31)	67.0 (n=61)	33.0 (n=30)	Not agree	n=22, 71.0	n=9, 29.0	p = 1.0
						Agree	n=8, 13.3	n=52, 86.7	
Q6 I readily spoke Māori whenever and wherever I was in the community.	18	64.8 (n=59)	35.2 (n=32)	63.7 (n=58)	36.3 (n=33)	Not agree	n=24, 75.0	n=8, 25.0	p = 1.0
						Agree	n=9, 15.3	n=50, 84.7	
Q10 I was capable of taking on roles and responsibilities in our wider whānau and in the Māori community.	19	61.5 (n=56)	38.5 (n=35)	81.3 (n=74)	18.7 (n=17)	Not agree	n=14, 40.0	n=21, 60.0	p = <.001
						Agree	n=3, 5.4	n=53, 94.6	
Q11 I was able to take a lead with tikanga such as waiata, karakia, whaikōrero, karanga.	20	49.5 (n=45)	50.5 (n=46)	65.9 (n=60)	34.1 (n=31)	Not agree	n=27, 58.7	n=19, 41.3	p = .003
						Agree	n=4, 8.9	n=41, 91.1	

Differences by participant characteristics

Participant age at entry - At time-point 2, the time of the survey, significantly more of the younger participants (<40 years on entry of their first child to the Centre) agreed with C12: "I am confident that I can continue to support my child's learning" ($\chi^2 = 5.114$, p = .024).

Current age of participant - More participants in the younger "Current" age group (<50 years at the time of the survey) endorsed the following item at time-point 2 (as they completed the survey): C12: "I am confident that I can continue to support my child's learning" (Fisher's exact p = .003). Also, for the time of the survey (time-point 2), more of those in the older age group (≥50 years) endorsed C1: "I can express my thoughts in te reo Māori" (Fisher's exact p = .020).

Gender - Significantly more men than women agreed that at the remembered time-point, one year after exiting the Centre, E9: "We had become close as a whānau" ($\chi^2 = 5.929$, p = .015).

Māori schooling - More of the participants who had undergone education through a form of Māori schooling (see Table 1) agreed with E1: "I could express my thoughts in te reo Māori" (Fisher's exact p = .012) at the remembered time-point, and then with C1: "I can express my thoughts in te reo Māori" (Fisher's exact p = .018) for time-point 2, the current time.

Era of exit from the Centre - Significantly more of those who exited the Centre between 2008 and 2017 (the latter era of exit) endorsed two items for the year following exit (remembered time-point): E18: "I was able to communicate positively" ($\chi^2 = 5.275$, p = .022), and E6: "I readily spoke Māori whenever and wherever I was in the community" ($\chi^2 = 5.165$, p = .023); and one item at the time of the survey (time-point 2): C4: "We speak te reo Māori at home" ($\chi^2 = 12.356$, p <.001). As one participant commented: *"Ngā tino mihi ki Te Kōpae Piripono, kua tino tautoko i te whānau [ingoa] kia tutuki ō mātou wawata [mō te] reo Māori (We heartily thank Te Kōpae Piripono for the significant support that enabled the whānau [name] to achieve our dreams and aspirations for te reo Māori)"* (mother of a former pupil, translation added).

DISCUSSION

There is a paucity of research investigating how engagement in KM-EYP has influenced the lives of tamariki and their whānau over time. This study engaged with former parents and grandparents of one KM-EYP centre to examine aspects of whānau lives that collectively align with ao Māori concepts of wellbeing. The findings provide evidence for a range of reported benefits that may be associated with exposure to KM-EYP. In the year following departure from the Centre, most participants felt that their children's learning, secure Māori identity and cultural capacity were strengthened through their involvement. Participants were also confident of their own capabilities as parents/grandparents and of the closeness and community engagement of their whānau. At the time the survey was administered, the levels of endorsement for 18 of the 20 items of the measure were sustained or significantly elevated.

Māori-medium education pipeline

One of the two items that decreased significantly over time was the reo Māori capacity of participants' tamariki, many of whom did not go on to be enrolled in Māori-medium schooling. Access to high-quality Māori-medium schooling options and accurate information about those options are key barriers to the retention of tamariki in the Māori-medium pipeline (Hill, 2016; Ratima et al., 2012). The occurrence reflects long-term inadequacies in government policy and planning and a failure to address the societal pressures that may underly decisions not to pursue the Māori-medium education pathway post-KM-EYP. Participants have commented that their tamariki will revert to reo Māori, as able, when together or in contexts where Māori is spoken. However, an adequately resourced government strategy is necessary to address the factors that impede access and retention in kaupapa Māori/Māori-medium education. With higher levels of enrolment in KM-EYP and sustained engagement through the Māori-medium pipeline, more tamariki will be able to enjoy and sustain a robust relationship with their heritage language and culture.

KM-EYP is a critical entry point to the Māori-medium pipeline. The survey focused on the lives of whānau who had successfully entered and engaged in the Centre. Further research ought to focus on the whānau of the 80% of Aotearoa's Māori preschoolers who are not currently enrolled in KM-EYP (Hond-Flavell et al., 2021; Ministry of Education, 2022a), and the 46% of tamariki Māori aged 0 to 4 who were not attending any form of early years provision in 2021 (Ministry of Education, 2022b). It is likely then that these tamariki and their whānau have missed out on the benefits of sustained engagement in early years provision and the transformational potential of KM-EYP entry point to Māori-medium education.

Transformative potential of KM-EYP

Parents and whānau can arrive at centres for KM-EYP feeling whakamā because they cannot speak their mother tongue or are uncomfortable in an immersive Māori or educational setting (Hond-Flavell et al., 2021; Tamati et al., 2008). They may feel embarrassed about aspects of their circumstances or feel anxious as non-speakers about whether they can enrol their tamariki. These emotions may be expressed through internalised and externalised behaviours that can belie the underpinning emotions and historical roots (Pihama et al., 2014). Others of the whānau-collective can empathise with the feelings of new whānau through personal experience and will therefore know how to support them. The research undertaken in this centre for KM-EYP (Hond-Flavell et al., 2021; Hond-Flavell et al., 2022; Tamati et al., 2008; Tamati et al., 2021) indicates that participation in the whānau-collective, the tamariki learning programme, and the whānau development programme, can support a change in whānau disposition. Through exposure to KM-EYP, initial feelings of uncertainty and fear can transform into certainty that KM-EYP is the right choice for their tamariki and whānau; a sense of calm in the supportive kaupapa Māori environment; and confidence that their whānau will be all right.

The findings of this study add to knowledge about how programmes such as KM-EYP can moderate the impacts of colonisation on whānau and communities, providing opportunities to develop a critical awareness of the historical context to help whānau make sense of the present and envision pathways forward to improve their lives. The processes of colonisation have severely damaged the Māori community; the resultant social structures continue to marginalise whānau in the present (Pihama et al., 2014; Ritchie & Skerrett, 2014; Tamati et al., 2008). In the safety and security of KM-EYP, parents and whānau can join efforts to reclaim their language and culture, and replace introduced ideas that have not served them well with indigenous knowledge, beliefs and values.

The findings show that parents and grandparents were confident that their tamariki and whānau were doing well culturally and socially and would continue to do so. They were optimistic about their capacity to support those outcomes, and this optimism was sustained over time. A high level of life satisfaction in the year after leaving the Centre increased further at the time of the survey. Participants also felt confident that they could cope with life's challenges and continue to be a positive influence in the lives of their tamariki, whānau and friends, and this confidence too increased over time. These findings suggest that participants' confidence in their capacity to achieve their goals enables them to feel optimistic about their lives and futures.

Te reo me ngā tikanga Māori

At the time of the survey, participants reported speaking Māori in their homes almost one-third of the time, and on a whānau-life question, 60% reported their whānau spoke Māori at home. Most of these whānau participants were second language learners of Māori and had entered KM-EYP with varying levels of exposure to Māori language and culture (Hond-Flavell et al., 2022). Higher levels of Māori were spoken and the tikanga of the Centre were practiced more in the homes of those whānau who had more recently attended the Centre (2008 to 2017); there was also a decrease in the use of te reo Māori by graduate tamariki over time (as described earlier). However, there was a high level of confidence overall that the reo Māori gains would be sustained and the language secured for future generations. That tamariki emerge from KM-EYP speaking te reo Māori, perhaps with Māori as their first language, is further testament to the passion and commitment of whānau to revitalising the Māori language and culture for their younger generations. It also speaks to the effectiveness of KM-EYP in supporting that development.

Almost 70% of participants reported they could express their thoughts in te reo Māori after leaving KM-EYP, including in the home setting, with Māori being spoken in the home an average of 30% of the time across whānau. Qualitative comments support the efforts of parents and whānau to speak at home. There were higher levels of agreement among those who were younger at the time of the survey (<50 years) and those who attended some form of Māori schooling (refer to Table 1), and therefore were likely to have had greater exposure previously to Māori language and culture. The overall percentage increased to 80% at the time of the

survey, suggesting that on departing the Centre, the building blocks had been set in place for ongoing cultural strengthening through reo Māori acquisition. Whānau spend an average of 4.5 years per tamaiti in the immersive reo Māori and kaupapa Māori environment of KM-EYP. Sustained engagement in a programme that actively encourages the use of reo Māori in the home contributes to the increased capacity and confidence of parents and whānau to express their thoughts in Māori and participate as members of a speaker community. As stated earlier, through this engagement, parents become critically aware of their circumstances and the importance of reo Māori to the long-term wellbeing of their whānau. These factors, in combination, form the foundation for increased reo use in the home after engaging in this programme. For context, on the nationally-representative Te Kupenga 2018 survey (Statistics NZ, 2020), just 17.9% of the national Māori population reported being "able to speak Māori in day-to-day conversation" fairly well, well or very well.

Participants reported that they and their whānau continued to be active in the Māori community after departing KM-EYP. The cultural confidence and understanding required to undertake traditional roles and assume leadership within their whānau and community would likely have been supported by their experiences in KM-EYP. These findings speak to the cultural contribution whānau members of this centre for KM-EYP have made to the local community and suggest how important Māori cultural concepts, values, and practices continued to be for them over time. Findings indicate that the support, guidance, and opportunity available to parents and whānau in KM-EYP, delivered through the multi-faceted offerings of centres, help individuals grow as Māori and together become stronger as whānau Māori - an important predictor of intergenerational health and wellbeing for Māori (McLachlan et al., 2021). In addition to the cultural strengthening that occurs for whānau within the staunchly Māori immersive environment of KM-EYP, the following are specific examples of the ways the Centre supports whānau:

- Whānau development is both the philosophical approach and a structured programme of wānanga, learning and experiential opportunities for parents, tamariki and whānau (Tamati et al., 2008).
- Te Ara Poutama is a structured process that guides social interactions and dispute resolution for whānau members of all ages; it encourages positive and respectful communication (Tamati et al., 2008; Tamati et al., 2021).
- Te Ara Manaaki Whānau is a framework and system that facilitates kaitiaki meetings with whānau and monitors progress on agreed goals for tamariki and whānau (Hond-Flavell et al., 2017).
- The tuākana/teina and buddy-whānau support system provides support, role modelling and reinforcement of cultural practices for new whānau as they transition into the Centre.

These offerings may be of particular value to those tamariki and whānau who require the most support and stand to benefit most from the culturally reinforcing intervention.

Whānau ora

The whānau orientation of KM-EYP has broad appeal for prospective whānau (Hond-Flavell et al., 2021). Participation in the dynamism of the whānau-collective and whānau development programmes of KM-EYP has potential benefits for whānau relationships at home and in the community. Participants reported that their whānau had become close through involvement in KM-EYP, which increased significantly over time. This was more commonly reported among men than women, which is an interesting finding given that communities for KM-EYP like Te Kōpae Piripono encourage and normalise fathers' engagement. Even so, broader societal factors often prevent fathers from spending time with their tamariki and participating in their learning to the extent they would like (Ratima et al., 2012). The finding highlights the value of including male and female perspectives in order to maximise insight and the importance of father engagement in whānau-centred initiatives.

Supportive relationships with others in the Centre were important to participants, suggesting that deep connections between member whānau are valued, contributing to whānau engagement and, therefore, to the outcomes of that engagement. However, one of the two questionnaire items that decreased significantly over time was participants' supportive relationships with other Centre whānau. Such a decrease might be expected the longer whānau have been out of the Centre. Whānau participants of previous stages of the study reported enduring relationships with other individuals and whānau from the Centre (Hond-Flavell et al., 2021). The relationships between Centre whānau declined over time as daily contact reduced, which should encourage centres to think of additional ways to support the ongoing connection between former whānau and keep the communities of KM-EYP intact over time.

The strength of participant agreement on the capacity of tamariki and their whānau to effect shared outcomes for the benefit of all, is suggestive of a collective sense of efficacy. Bandura (2000) defined collective efficacy as a group's shared belief in their ability to influence their future and, through collective action, navigate any impediments and opportunities to achieve the desired end. The study findings demonstrate the importance of KM-EYP's whole-whānau approach and whānau development programming in fostering relevant skills and shared understandings about kaupapa/purpose, building social connection and providing relevant support within a Māori community. It is in this context that individuals can experience the rich rewards of belonging to whānau, to a Māori whānau-collective, and begin to feel and act as a member of that whānau (termed whānauranga at Te Kōpae Piripono; Ratima et al., 2019, Tamati et al., 2021). In the context of KM-EYP, whānau efficacy can develop from the interactive, coordinative, and synergistic actions (Bandura, 2000) of the whānau-collective and each constituent whānau, which is suggestive of whānau wellbeing and whānau ora in action.

Strengths and limitations

This study has a range of strengths and limitations. Several research team members are foundation members of the centre for KM-EYP where the research was conducted. Our understanding of context, including the wider Taranaki context and the trusting relationships with participants are a strength of the study. This background assisted in contacting potential participants, many of whom have an ongoing relationship with the Centre and the local Māori community in Taranaki. At the same time, these strong connections to whānau and the centre mean there is potential for assumptions during the analysis and interpretation of participants' contributions. However, the lead researcher had oversight from a collaborative team versed in kaupapa Māori methods and survey methods, some of whom were not members of the KM-EYP and contributed an outsider perspective throughout the development of the survey and during the analysis and write-up of findings.

There is the possibility that whānau who could not be contacted are less likely to have experienced the same benefit from engagement in KM-EYP as those who could be traced. However, with over 25-years of operation, it was inevitable that some of the Centre's former whānau would not be contactable. Despite that, the response rate was good for an online survey (Evans & Mathur, 2005) and had adequate diversity amongst the participants to analyse demographic differences. Computer literacy and unreliable internet access were issues for some participants and are recognised limitations of online survey research (Evans & Mathur, 2005). However, technical support was available to participants and a paper version of the survey was made available to a small number on request, which enabled participation. The non-experimental methodology applied in this study cannot provide evidence of causation. Moreover, the survey method was retrospective, introducing some recognised limitations related to participant recall (Caspi et al., 1996). For example, participants may have forgotten whānau circumstances or may have very focused memories of particular circumstances that affect recall accuracy. However, our innovative design involved tailored memory cues for the year following their child's departure from the KM-EYP centre, and the insertion of their child's name within instructions to provide clarity throughout the questionnaire. The use of memory cues in this way is consistent with best practice in retrospective survey research (Caspi et al., 1996). Notwithstanding, and given the retrospective nature of this study, these findings should be considered preliminary until confirmed by future research, ideally research using a prospective design.

Another limitation to bear in mind is that the findings may not generalise to other forms of early years provision, as these are likely to differ philosophically and contextually from the site of the research, Te Kōpae Piripono. In particular, mainstream early childhood education does not typically involve the same level of whānau-centred provision (Education Review Office, 2017; Ritchie & Skerrett, 2014) and may differ in the impact on whānau Māori and other families. Future research is needed to compare the benefits of different forms of early years provision for whānau Māori to expand on the novel findings of this study from one centre.

Conclusion

The findings of this final phase of the Tangi te Kawekaweā study add to what was known about the social and cultural strengthening that can occur for whānau who engage with KM-EYP (Education Review Office, 2017; May & Hill, 2008; Pihama & Penehira, 2005; Ritchie & Skerrett, 2014). Our findings suggest that such engagement can help to strengthen key features of whānau lives associated with positive wellbeing for Māori. The study provides novel retrospective evidence of high levels of whānau involvement in the lives of tamariki, with Māori language, culture and community, and other expressions of whānau efficacy in their daily lives. Further, findings indicate that these outcomes were sustained over time. The two aspects of whānau life that declined over time (supportive relationships with other Centre whānau and the reo Māori capacity of tamariki) may be understood in the context of barriers whānau face to continuing on the Māori-medium pathway after KM-EYP. These, and the several demographic differences that were identified (participant age at entry; current age of participant; gender; Māori schooling; era of exit from the Centre), warrant further investigation and are potential avenues for future enquiry.

Overall, the findings highlight the critical role and influence that KM-EYP has had and continues to have in Māori communities throughout Aotearoa. Longitudinal research is now needed to build on what has been learned in this study. It is hoped the growing evidence base for the important benefits of KM-EYP will encourage whānau to access the model and help centres for KM-EYP as they strive to strengthen and extend their programmes. It should also prompt other providers to reflect on aspects of their delivery to Māori, and persuade government legislators to promote the kaupapa Māori model of early years provision as one of the best investments that can be made to improve the lives of tamariki and their whānau, and the country as a whole.

Māori Glossary

ao Māori	Māori world
Aotearoa	Māori name for New Zealand
hapū	sub-tribal kinship group
iwi	tribe, people
kaitiaki	Te Kōpae Piripono term for teacher/caregiver
karakia	incantation, ritual chant, prayer
karanga	formal/ceremonial call by women
kōhanga reo	variety of KM-EYP governed by Te Kōhanga Reo National Trust (language nest)
Kōpae	shortened from Te Kōpae Piripono (literal translation is nest)
kura kaupapa Māori	primary school operating within a Māori worldview
manaakitanga	caring, kindness, respect, generosity
Māori	indigenous peoples of Aotearoa/New Zealand
Māoritanga	Māoriness, Māori practices and beliefs
marae	traditional complex of buildings and spaces where people gather and rituals of encounter take place
reo	language
reo Māori	Māori language
tamaiti	child
tamariki	children
Tangi te Kawekaweā	study title deriving from a Taranaki cultivation chant
	Tangi te kawekaweā – waiho kia tangi ana!
	Tangi te wharauroa – waiho kia tangi ana!
	E tatari atu ana kia aroaro mahana,
	Ka taka mai te āhuru! Koia!
	The long-tailed cuckoo sings – let it sing!
	The shining cuckoo sings – let it sing!
	The warmth of spring is eagerly awaited, a joyful time of new growth and industry. Let the digging begin!
Taranaki	a tribal nation and region of Aotearoa
te ao Māori	the Māori world
Te Kōpae Piripono	Taranaki-based centre for KM-EYP
tikanga	culture; conventions; protocols grounded in traditional values
waiata	songs, singing, music
Waitangi Tribunal	tribunal investigating breaches of the Treaty of Waitangi
wānanga	forum for sharing knowledge/learning
whakamā	embarrassment, shame
whaikōrero	formal speech making
whānau	family; group of people bound by genealogy or shared interest; the extended family structure principle
whānauranga	a Te Kōpae Piripono word for feeling and acting as a member of a whānau/community
whānau ora	whānau health and wellbeing

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