

Tuia te here tangata: Making meaningful connections



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Overview

ERO's work is focused on equity and excellence for all children in education. This is reflected in ERO's purpose and whakataukī.

Equity and excellence	
Our purpose	Our whakataukī
Our evaluation insights are a catalyst for change so that every child achieves success as a lifelong learner.	Ko te Tamaiti te Pūtake o te Kaupapa The Child – the Heart of the Matter

ERO's focus is on the learner at the centre, learners and their whānau, and learners and the profession. This report considers:

- ❖ **Learner at the centre.**
Where they come from, how they learn, their interests and achievements.
Ruia te Taitea he pito matā.
- ❖ **Learners and their whānau.**
Involved, informed and contributing.
Mā te whakaaro nui e hanga te whare, mā te mātauranga e whakaū.
- ❖ **Learners and the profession.**
Influenced by kaupapa Māori
Mā te mātauranga, ka ū te maramatanga.

Research shows that children who are involved in high quality early childhood education benefit in many ways, and that these benefits also extend to their whānau and the wider community. Taking part in early childhood education builds a strong foundation for children's ongoing education, learning and development.

Ngā Puna Whakatupu are kaupapa Māori-based early childhood centres that share a common aspiration to nurture children on their path to becoming lifelong learners. Their charters define that for every mokopuna in a Puna Whakatupu, there is also a whānau who is engaged in education. This report is based on a review of five Puna Whakatupu where the majority of kaimahi, whānau and children are Māori.

They share similar kaupapa Māori philosophies that influence the way they work and the approach they take as they provide education and care for their children.

The purpose of this report

ERO was interested in finding out and sharing the ways these Puna Whakatupu and their whānau nurture children on their paths to lifelong learning.

ERO's 2012 report *Partnership with Whānau Māori in Early Childhood Services* identified that Māori have a growing expectation of an education system that promotes culturally responsive partnership with whānau. In this report ERO set out to report on how Puna Whakatupu successfully work with whānau to improve participation in, and quality of, early childhood education for Māori children and their whānau.

*Kaupapa Māori theory provides a platform from which Māori articulate their own reality, their own experience and their own personal truth. Inherent in this approach is an understanding that Māori have fundamentally different ways of seeing and thinking about the world and simply wish to be able to live in accordance with that specific and unique identity (p.4).
Mahuika (2008)*

In Term 3, 2014 ERO undertook a cluster review of five Puna Whakatupu as part of scheduled education reviews. During the course of these reviews, we identified a range of good practice that was investigated further.

The stories in this report reflect effective practice documented in ERO's 2015 report: *Infants and toddlers: competent and confident communicators and explorers*. In the *Infants and toddlers* report, relationships and interactions between teachers, children and their parents and whānau were strong, valued and prioritised. Culture and identity were respected and responded to through the curriculum and children were encouraged to explore and try new challenges. Like the puna stories in this report, embedded within their practice was the concept of whanaungatanga - the centrality of quality relationships and providing a whānau-like context that supports engagement and learning.

Working in partnership with whānau

ERO and Puna Whakatupu management then worked together to co-construct how we would work together, following good evaluation practice; influenced by agreed values and principles. As a result the reviews are based on whanaungatanga, as expressed by the following guiding principles:

- ❖ *ERO are manuhiri throughout the reviews.*
- ❖ *ERO respects and acknowledges the unique nature for each Puna Whakatupu.*
- ❖ *ERO will provide opportunity to all Puna Whakatupu staff and whānau to be heard.*
- ❖ *ERO will observe ngā ūara o Ngā Puna Whakatupu.*
- ❖ *ERO will collect information from hui, observations of learning and supporting documentation.*
- ❖ *ERO will provide feedback throughout the review.*
- ❖ *ERO's synthesis of findings will include personnel from Ngā Puna Whakatupu.*

The five Puna Whakatupu

Evidence was gathered, including interviews with whānau, kuia and kaumātua, during the reviews of the following Puna Whakatupu:

- | | |
|--|------------------------|
| ❖ Te Puna Whakatupu o Apakura Te Kākano | Te Awamutu |
| ❖ Te Puna Whakatupu o Te Rau Ōriwa | Tokoroa |
| ❖ Te Puna Whakatupu o Raroera Te Kākano | Hamilton |
| ❖ Te Puna Whakatupu o Ngā Kākano o Te Mānuka | Mangere South Auckland |
| ❖ Te Puna Whakatupu o Whare Āmai | Gisborne |

Introducing the Puna Whakatupu

Te Puna Whakatupu o Apakura Te Kākano



Ahakoā He Iti He Pounamu
The smallest things are the most precious

Te Puna Whakatupu o Apakura Te Kākano is situated in Te Awamutu at Te Puna Mātauranga. The name is derived from Apakura, a female ancestor who was the authority of the land. She is remembered as a caring, loving woman who cherished and raised many children other than her own. The word kākano symbolises the notion of children's development and growth. It is the role of the puna to promote children's wellbeing and development; to nurture and care for them so they grow to be strong and healthy.

Te Puna Whakatupu o Apakura Te Kākano aspires to uphold ngā hononga (relationships), prioritising tuakana-teina interactions through mixed age settings. This is important as it nurtures the independence and leadership qualities of both tuakana and teina.

Culture, language and identity are included in the curriculum. The learning environment is well resourced to provide children with choice and challenge. Kaimahi are passionate about holding fast to their 'Apakuratanga'.

Kaimahi provide an environment that responds to children's learning needs. Whānau value the education their children receive, and appreciate the strong supportive relationships between kaimahi, children and whānau. Whānau feel that the puna prepares their children well for kura. Children are happy, engaged learners.

Te Puna Whakatupu o Te Rau Ōriwa te Wānanga o Aotearoa

*Toi tū te kupu, toi tū te mana, toi tū te whenua
Hold fast to the language, to the prestige, to the land*

Te Puna Whakatupu o Te Rau Ōriwa is situated on the periphery of Tokoroa and provides early childhood care and education for whānau of Tokoroa. The Puna serves a strong Māori and Pacific Island community. The name Te Rau Ōriwa originates from the dove and the olive leaf which symbolise hope.

Whānau describe Te Puna Whakatupu as a whānau-based learning environment that is loving, caring, encouraging and helps foster a love of learning. Children's culture, language and identity are affirmed. Whānau acknowledge the genuine passion kaimahi bring to their work and the way that partnerships with whānau are encouraged. Children are able to initiate new challenges and goals, following their own interests. The puna upholds Tainui tikanga and kawa. Mātauranga Māori has a strong presence across the curriculum.

Whānau see that the educational needs of their children are being met and that they are going to school as confident learners. Feedback from the local school verifies this. Whānau are constantly updated about their children's progress, and their participation is encouraged. A whānau member stated:

"I am familiar with the place and the teachers... the centre has an enjoyable atmosphere and teachers are enthusiastic... my moko loves it here and as long as he's happy, then I'm happy."

Whānau contribute to their child's education by constantly communicating with the kaimahi. One whānau have four generations attending the puna. They say it's because the centre upholds whanaungatanga, they understand manaakitanga and the wairua is lovely.

It's their home away from home. Whānau value and acknowledge the place of culture, identity and language in their children's lives. Children learn from a foundation of trust, respect and care.



Te Puna Whakatupu o Raroera Te Puāwai



Nāku te rourou, nāu te rourou, ka ora ai te iwi
With contributions from everyone our children will thrive

Te Puna Whakatupu o Raroera Te Puāwai is situated in Hamilton. Te Puāwai means to blossom. It is a metaphor that has been applied to express the ways in which children learn and grow. The vision statement 'Kia rangatira te tū a ngā tamariki mokopuna' focuses on children's unique potential. Kaimahi uphold the kawa and tikanga of Tainui and the Kīngitanga. The majority of children are Māori. The philosophy of the Te Puna Whakatupu o Raroera Te Puāwai is for children to be nurtured as confident and passionate learners.

Te Puna Whakatupu o Raroera Te Puāwai provides a learning environment where children and their whānau establish meaningful relationships with kaimahi and management. Kaimahi are clear about their roles and responsibilities when working with and alongside children and whānau. These relationships support children as they learn and grow in confidence as learners.

“There is mātauranga Māori input and there is a clear message that ‘we’re Māori here, we can be proud of who we are. That’s what I want for my child.”

Children enjoy and focus on learning. Teaching and learning encompasses children’s interests and needs. There are many occasions where children are able to initiate and direct their own learning. Children show their individual leadership throughout the learning programme. Children’s successes are affirmed, and their confidence and mana is enhanced because of this.

Whānau appreciate the open communication between themselves and kaimahi. They feel comfortable and appreciate that their input is valued. Children with special needs are integrated successfully into the learning programme. Whānau are well informed and consulted about any changes that affect their children. Their input into aspects of the curriculum is highly valued. Kaimahi have open, trusting relationships with whānau.

“My child has special education needs and she has come a long way. I have been part of everything with regard to the IEP (individual education plan)”.

Te Puna Whakatupu o Ngā Kākano o te Mānuka



Whakapuputia mai ō mānuka, kia kore ai e whati
Cluster the branches of the mānuka so they will not break

Te Puna Whakatupu o Ngā Kākano o te Mānuka is situated in Mangere, Auckland. Kaimahi work together as a collaborative team and build close partnerships with whānau. Children from varying cultures are acknowledged and respected.

“Children are regarded as precious here at the centre.”

Learning and teaching is focused on children’s interests. Children have opportunities to lead their own learning. Kaimahi consider strategies to extend children’s thinking through meaningful conversations and open ended questions. Whānau affirm that children experience respectful, caring and loving relationships.

“My girl is both Chinese and Māori. I am from Maniapoto... It is so good that she learns about her whakapapa here.”

Whānau feel that their aspirations for their children are listened to and acted upon, generating strong links from the puna to the home and from the home to the puna. The promotion of kaupapa Māori values, such as whanaungatanga and aroha by kaimahi show they are passionate about their work with children.

Children experience a learning programme where their interests are the major focus. The learning environment and resources provide a wide range of opportunities for children to explore, be creative and solve problems. This lets children participate in learning that is self-directed and meaningful to them. Transitions between the baby and teina programme is based on their readiness to leave, and the process is gentle and calm. Babies have control over transitions. Children gain confidence in themselves as learners.

Te Puna Whakatupu o Whare Āmai



Happy children; learning children

***Ko te Pū
Te More, Te Weu
Te Aka, Te Rea
Ko Te Waonui, Te Kune
Te Whē, Te Kore, Te Pō
Kī ngā tāngata Māori
a Rangi rāua ko Papa
Ko tēnei te tīmatanga o te Ao,
Ko tēnei te tīmatanga o te Ao.***

Te Puna Whakatupu o Te Whare Āmai is situated in the heart of Gisborne, in Elgin. The majority of children have whakapapa connections to the five local iwi. Many of the children attend the local kura kaupapa Māori or schools with rūmaki units. A parent who has had three children attend the puna says:

“The centre prepares my children well for kura. It makes their transitions easier.”

The name Whare Āmai refers to the colours of the rainbow and the aura of children. It is a metaphor symbolising the uniqueness of each child and what they bring with them. The role of the Puna Whakatupu is to nurture and uphold the child’s mana and mauri. Kaimahi ensure children are nurtured and protected. A kaimahi says:

“Whānau articulate that children at the puna are well loved... this makes us happy that we are doing our job properly.”

There are three kōkā or senior ‘aunties’ who attend the puna regularly and complement the teaching team.

“Kōkā know our children really well... we value what they have to offer and know just how much our children love their kōkā.”

The learning environment at Te Puna Whakatupu o Te Whare Āmai highlights children’s achievement and success. What children and whānau bring with them is respected as their contribution, their koha, to others. Whānau appreciate that kaimahi genuinely care for their children, and for them. Valuing culture, language and identity through āhuatanga Māori, te reo Māori and tikanga Māori is critical to whānau who further state that “te reo Māori and tikanga Māori reflects the local iwi”. When asked how she felt about the prospect of the puna raising the level of te reo Māori in the programme, one mother said:

“Te reo Māori is such a spiritual language, why wouldn’t I be happy about that? My child would benefit from learning more te reo Māori.”

Whānau aspirations are that children enjoy education, are confident and able to stand as young leaders.

“By coming here my child is being prepared as a lifelong learner.”

Children are happy at the puna, where they are viewed as capable learners, with no boundaries to their learning.



What did ERO find across the Puna Whakatupu?

The five Puna Whakatupu share similar kaupapa Māori philosophies that influence the way they work with children and their whānau. In this section ERO shares the common approaches and practices found across the Puna Whakatupu.

Children are taonga tuku iho or treasures gifted to the physical world by ancestors... there are no boundaries to children's learning.

Learners at the centre – where they come from, how they learn, their interests and achievements.

Ruia te taitea, he pito matā

Children are most receptive to learning during their early childhood years. There are many elements that support children to become successful learners. In Puna Whakatupu the following elements strongly influence positive outcomes for tamariki:

- ❖ Tikanga Māori.
- ❖ Culture and identity.
- ❖ Meaningful and loving relationships that are both valued and valuable.
- ❖ Language learning strategies.
- ❖ Learning environments that promote exploration and provide challenge.
- ❖ Learning expectations and learner opportunities.

Children learn and use tikanga Māori throughout their day and in their interactions. Kaumātua are present and involved with children in daily learning. Their presence strengthens tikanga used, influences positive behaviour and acknowledges the value and importance of respecting elders. Children see their whānau interacting with kaimahi, and their familiarity and presence helps create a sense of security and connection for the children. Kaimahi sensitively model how to interact with a range of people based on tikanga Māori. Children develop the skills and knowledge to stand and recite their pepeha, lead karakia and iwi-specific tikanga and kawa. Children have a strong sense of their place.

Children follow what interests them, experience success and know who they are. Kaimahi affirm children's culture and identity. They know each child and acknowledge and value each child's whakapapa. They construct a range of meaningful activities and learning experiences that build on children's knowledge and interests. Kaimahi talk about the connections children have with others. Children are confident and happy.

Children establish meaningful relationships with other children. The tuakana teina relationship is strong among them. There is an integrated teaching and learning approach where babies and older children work and play together and are able to mix with those who share interests. Babies are shown aroha, manaaki, tiaki and awhi as they learn. Older children learn about sharing and caring with babies and how to negotiate with their peers.

These children are learning about and using whanaungatanga values. Children are caring and loving toward each other.

Children are exposed to good language learning strategies. They hear both te reo Māori and English being spoken. The well resourced environment and variety of learning opportunities stimulate children to talk about what they are doing. Kaimahi talk to children using open-ended questions that encourage children to think, respond and extend their oral language. Te reo Māori language learning is an opportunity for children to hear, understand and practice language function and experiment with new words. Children show they are creative and flexible in their thinking as they communicate with others.

Children explore, experiment and are challenged in their learning environment. There are opportunities for children to participate in individual and social play. A wide range of resources and equipment provide opportunities for exploration. They are engaged in learning and play for sustained periods of time. Babies enjoy a loving and caring learning environment that is responsive to their physical and emotional needs. Whānau, kaimahi and specialist services collaborate to ensure that children receive the full benefit of a programme that is tailored to meet their individual needs. Children are interested and enthusiastic learners.

Children initiate their own learning and take risks. Kaimahi have an expectation that children are capable of taking responsibility for their own learning. They become involved in children's learning when deliberate teaching is required, but children develop their own scripts for play and direct their own learning. They are confident in their choices. Babies move within and across the learning programmes when and as they are ready. This learning transition process is gentle and calm. Children actively take control of their learning.

Whānau actively engage in the learning of mokopuna

Learner and their whānau – involved, informed and contributing

Mā te whakaaro nui e hanga te whare

Mā te mātauranga e whakaū

Whānau are actively involved in their children's education. At Puna Whakatupu there are two groups of whānau: those who have whakapapa links to the iwi of that area and those who are drawn together because of a common kaupapa. Whānau believe that the atmosphere and wairua of the Puna Whakatupu provides them with a strong sense of belonging.

Children are successful when whānau make valued contributions to learning. Key factors that influence positive outcomes for children include:

- ❖ Whanaungatanga.
- ❖ Strong aspirations and expectations for children.
- ❖ Learning about their children's education.

Whānau value whanaungatanga and genuine, meaningful and reciprocal relationships. The learning environment reflects whanaungatanga as the foundation for all interactions. Whānau feel valued by staff and are keen and happy to offer their support to the kaimahi and the children's learning. Whānau know they are valued participants in the learning journey for their children's care and education.

"We were keen to find a whānau based learning environment that was loving and caring. We found it here at this Puna."

"My child loves being here – I love how they look after her... Our girl is very clever. She has the best social skills. These people have helped us to mould routines for her here and at home."

"Our kids have their favourite whaea... they really, really care for our children. I feel good about leaving her here... you know trust and respect is important to us as parents."

"The manaaki and awahi for our kids is just awesome."

Whānau in Ngā Puna have strong aspirations and high expectations for their children. Being Māori and preparing children for kura is important to them. Whānau believe that te ao Māori perspectives taught in the Puna supports children to understand who they are and where they come from. Whānau consider that if children are confident in themselves as people, they will be confident learners. Whānau are empowered to contribute to their children's learning.

"We moved here from Australia... It was important to find the right place for my child. His father is from Vanuatu. We wanted something with a strong cultural base. It's important that he learns other languages."

"Preparing him for a new environment (kura) is important. Skills and knowledge he learns here will support him when he changes environments. There is an encouragement and love for learning. We really want him to speak te reo Māori and have an understanding of the culture. That is what happens here."

"The children going to school from here are confident. They are good speakers and warm, loving children."

"Kia tipu pai i roto i ngā reo e rua me tōna taha Māori."

Whānau are focused on their children's education. A shared philosophy is that for every child involved, a whānau will be engaged. Ngā Puna Whakatupu have become places where whānau learn with, and alongside their children. Kaimahi ensure that whānau are informed of what has happened for their children at the end of each day. Whānau have access to children's profiles and have opportunities to provide feedback through conversations and whānau hui with kaimahi. Whānau are excited as they understand how their children learn.

“It has been a beautiful journey here. I see the kaiako and my child’s engagement with learning. It helped me, both of us, to understand about how and what our child is learning. My child was encouraged to take control of her own learning. Now that is a foreign idea because we expect that they will ‘teach’ our child. Once they explained what that meant it was really interesting. We’re being educated about our child.”

“We had a whānau hui... this was great. We shared information about our children and got some cool feedback about what our children are learning.”

“I feel confident as a parent. Kaimahi communicate well. They tell us what they want to do, what she (our child) loves and it just connects us with what we know already about her.”

“Koro talks to her and he is fascinated with her. Everything she comes home with is really good. We get emails about children’s progress. Open communication with staff. I have been asked to make comments on her profiles. I come in to help all the time. Over time we have been gently encouraged to be more involved which is so nice. We had parent interviews which was great.”

“Mary [pseudonym] has an IEP [individual education plan] putting things in place for her. I know a lot more about her condition now... the kaiako, GSE [group special education] worker and I put a plan together. This place helps parents like me to understand.”

“I notice my two-year-old girl does this thing before kai time at home... she shakes her hands and sways and calls. We think she’s doing karakia but that’s not how they do karakia at centre. She has been doing this thing for a while. I asked whaea. She told me that the centre follows Tainui protocol and what she was doing was a karanga to bring everyone to the table. I learnt so much from that simple question... I am learning alongside my daughter. How wonderful is that?”

Ako is a sharing of knowledge experience, time, space and energy with others (Edwards 2013)

Learner and the profession – influenced by kaupapa Māori

Mā te mātauranga, ka ū te māramatanga.

Managers and kaimahi in Puna Whakatupu are committed to providing a high-quality education for children. Mātauranga Māori is significant to curriculum development. The philosophy of Ngā Puna Whakatupu clearly identifies that prioritising mātauranga Māori is their key point of difference.

Mātauranga Māori communicates something fundamental about the Māori world, something distinctive and valuable. It encompasses both ancient and modern forms of knowing and enlightenment (ERO 2013).

Kaimahi as professionals are influenced by:

- ❖ Mātauranga Maori in the curriculum.
- ❖ Ako in practice.
- ❖ Leadership and learning.

Children and whānau enjoy a curriculum where te ao Māori perspectives strengthen their role as tangata whenua. Kaimahi design and implement a curriculum that fosters children's learning and growth. All kaimahi understand that the inclusion of mātauranga Māori in the curriculum acknowledges and protects te reo Māori, includes tikanga Māori and validates Māori knowledge. The use of te reo Māori and iwi dialect is valued across all regions. Most puna draw on the tikanga, kawa and local iwi knowledge to enhance the learning programme. Children and whānau know their roles and responsibilities as tangata whenua.



“She is learning what I can’t teach her. She is getting more benefits, understanding her culture, the values, knowing who she is. I know she will have similar values, respect for elders, she will know the marae, to sit, listen and hear karakia.”

“Te reo Māori... It’s who they are, it’s their heritage... it’s therapeutic, healing... it’s more soothing, like the spiritual component.”

Children and whānau experience learning in an environment where everyone's contribution is respected. Kaimahi apply the concept of ako through the sharing of knowledge, the created experiences and how they interact with others. Children, whānau and kaumātua benefit from intergenerational learning.

The presence of kuia enables whānau and children to learn about the 'old ways'. Children and whānau are involved in learning as both learners and teachers. Kaimahi support children as they develop working theories about the natural, social and physical world. Kaimahi have a caring and respectful approach when working with their children and talking with whānau.

"As kaimahi we embrace our own values and beliefs we were brought up in. We are receiving knowledge from koroua and kuia, knowledge that has been handed down and is being woven with whānau and tamariki."

"I have the chance to be involved... preparing all our children for a journey, a lifelong journey. Helping our kids to build new skills, show them how to be loved, they see different ways of knowing."

Children and whānau enjoy an environment where professional leaders strive to provide the best possible learning conditions for children and their whānau. Leadership is based on whanaungatanga, mātauranga Māori and ako. Leaders recognise that language, culture and identity are critical to Māori children succeeding as Māori. They value the relationships that are built within and beyond the learning community. Professional leaders influence learning, wellbeing and create a sense of belonging.

"My strategy was to build a relationship with the team, trust what they were doing and network with the community."

"I had to step back, watch, listen, look and focus on strengths that all kaimahi, whānau and children bring with them to the puna. We learn from one another."

"Kōtahitanga is an approach we take to our mahi... it's about collaboration, being able to challenge and find our way around challenges."

"It's all about providing a place where being Māori is normal, feeling safe is a given and listening is something we do naturally."

"We invest in our children's education... we need to make sure they receive the best possible opportunities. That's our commitment and our job."

Conclusion

Early learning success depends on children knowing where they come from, understanding how they learn, drawing on their interests and respecting their achievements. The cluster review of these immersion and kaupapa Māori early childhood centres highlights what contributes to early learning success. Where tikanga Māori, culture and identity, meaningful and loving relationships, language learning strategies, learning environments and learning expectations are strong, then children will:

- ❖ be confident and happy
- ❖ have a strong sense of their place
- ❖ learn enthusiastically
- ❖ be caring and loving toward others, and
- ❖ be creative and flexible in their thinking as they communicate.

Whānau who are involved, informed and contributing to their child's education positively influence the learning outcomes of their children. Where whanaungatanga is present and whānau have strong aspirations and expectations for their children, they are excited to be part of the learning journey, knowing that their contributions are valued.

Professionals influenced by kaupapa Māori contribute authentically to positive learning outcomes for Māori children. Three areas that promote successful learning for Māori children in early childhood education are mātauranga Maori, ako in practice and strong professional leadership. Professional leaders influence learning, well being and create a sense of belonging. Kaimahi have a caring and respectful approach when working with their children and talking with whānau. Children and whānau know their roles and responsibilities as tangata whenua.

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Appendix 1

Context Te Wānanga o Aotearoa

Te Wānanga o Aotearoa (TWOA) is the umbrella body for Ngā Puna Whakatupu. It is the one of the largest education providers in Aotearoa New Zealand. The philosophy of TWOA is based on kaupapa Māori values:

Te Aroha	Having regard for one another and those for whom we are responsible, and to whom we are accountable.
Te Whakapono	The basis of our beliefs and the confidence that what we are doing is right.
Ngā Ture	The knowledge that our actions are morally and ethically right and that we are acting in an honourable manner.
Kōtahitanga	Unity among iwi and other ethnicities – standing as one.

TWOA is recognised as a Wānanga under the Education Act 1989. The unique characteristics of TWOA, its philosophy and goals, influence the aspirations of the whānau, kaimahi and children of Ngā Puna Whakatupu.

A major goal of TWOA is to provide education that best fits the aspirations of this generation, enhancing the dreams of future generations and prepares for understanding the essence of past generations. Within this aspiration the notion of intergenerational learning is apparent. Whānau transformation through education is a fundamental principle that underpins all educational programmes in TWOA.

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