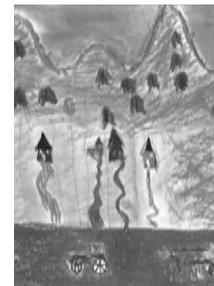


Becoming Educultural: Te whakawhitinga o ngā mātauranga

Interfacing the knowledge traditions

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ABSTRACT

In every profession, there comes a time when it is important to stop and evaluate the progress that has been made and to determine the changes that will be necessary to engage in new times and to meet new demands. The profession of tertiary education is no exception. In a period of rapid change many solutions are offered about what it takes to sustain effort in order to achieve success. Some of these solutions – for the acquisition of quality in education – insist on precision, rigour, consistency, and replicability. This paper purports that such qualities are of high value, yet appear incomplete if certain sociocultural elements are not taken into account. It is argued that we might better unravel our perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs about education, when we draw from the historical and social contexts that have affected our worldview. These historical and social contexts might well be the tools that help to shape the values of learning, referred to in this paper as *becoming educultural*.

Position Paper

Keywords

Culture, ecological perspective, education, Māori culture, tertiary education.

INTRODUCTION

Next to families, schools and tertiary organisations are primary institutions charged with socialising young people, and not-so-young people, to become active participants in, as well as contributors to, contemporary societies. Tertiary educational environments are arenas where people extend the meanings of a society's social and academic domains. This implies that tertiary organisations have a social, as well as an academic function. These, it would appear, could be broken down into the disciplines of education that include history, philosophy, sociology and psychology. While culture might not be seen as a discipline in its own right, it can claim a real presence, a place, in each of the disciplines of education. A fundamental pathway to success, therefore, is to encourage citizens of New Zealand, and indeed the world, to become 'educultural'. The term educultural refers to a foundation for learning that includes building upon students' cultural and experiential strengths to help them acquire new skills and knowledge.

Becoming educultural is to seek a pathway of knowledge and understanding – *te huarahi rapa ai i te mōhiotanga me te mātauranga*. According to Māori tradition the essence of knowledge is embodied in "te ira tangata" or the life principle of the people. It contains the knowledge to "the how and why" of the universe and explains the role and place of the people in it. This knowledge was made available through Tāne-nui-a-Rangi who ascended to the uppermost of the twelfth heavens to gain the three kete, or baskets of knowledge. Implicit in the ascent of Tāne-nui-a-Rangi for the three kete, is that higher learning is essential for the development of strong understanding that will enhance knowledge, skills and attitudes amongst individuals, whānau, hapū, iwi, and te ao whānui. The inclusion of te ao whānui in this ecological framework is significant.

We are in a time of great change in the cultures of the world. The degree and frequencies of intercultural contact continues to grow and accelerate. Our daily thoughts more and more come to involve interactions with people situated at distant locations throughout the world. If we were to link back to the past and recount some of the deeds of tipuna, we will see that all iwi can put forward excellent role models from the past for those of us who are engaged in the pursuit of new knowledge in the present. The contention that I wish to make in this instance is that educultural sustenance can be derived from a combination of the following qualities: boldness, curiosity, balance, scholarship and vision. Let me deal with each of these qualities in turn and to associate each with an icon from my tribe, Te Arawa. These leaders from the past (who will be mentioned in chronological order) made an outstanding contribution to the society of their era, and their feats can continue to guide the pathways to success in contemporary times.

BOLDNESS

The achievement of new and higher qualifications may require boldness and a strong will. Remember, the renowned commander of the Te Arawa canoe, Tamatekapua, had strength of character, strength of personality, and a tendency to take risks - which won him the admiration of his people.

CURIOSITY

The great Ihenga, because of his extensive travels and explorations, must have had an enquiring mind as well as an impressive physical stature. Like an adroit scholar he probed and exploited, he drew conclusions and made associations. Ihenga had an exploratory orientation.

BALANCE

Balance was the hallmark of the illustrious Ngāti Rangiwewehi leader, Hikairo. His was a balance of assertiveness and warmth, so aptly displayed when a dispute was settled between two mighty tribes on Mokoia Island as far back as 1823. As scholars, we often have to take an assertive approach to our studies and this has often demanded long hours, short weekends, and considerable sacrifice. But like Hikairo, we have to retain a warmth, a *manaaki*, as it is this characteristic that provides sustenance for the inner person, and *ihi* and *manaaki* are central to *whānau* and *whanaungatanga*. Hikairo was a balanced individual.

SCHOLARSHIP

The aristocratic Makereti, Maggie Papakura, finished writing her book shortly before her death in 1930. It was presented for a degree at Oxford University and was eventually published posthumously in 1938, being the first comprehensive ethnographic account of Māori life by a Māori scholar. A contemporary of internationally renowned theorists Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky, Makereti recorded the knowledge passed on to her in her youth. It was a massive task, as everything had to be checked with her old people in New Zealand, a sign also of a true researcher and scholar. That Makereti possessed a raw, innate sense of scholarship, there is no doubt.

VISION

The trait, or characteristic referred to as “vision”, I associate with Kepa Eahu, who died at his home in Ohinemutu on 10 February 1970 at the age of 84. Best remembered for his power of oratory, his presentations in Māori and English were always stately and ornamented. Another local identity, Sir Howard Morrison, often recounts an excerpt from one of Kepa Eahu’s *kōrero* – ‘*Whaia ko te mātauranga, hai whītiki ki te iwi, kia toa ai*’. This statement attested Kepa Eahu as a visionary in that he saw knowledge as an invaluable entity, worthy of pursuing. Knowledge, Kepa Eahu contended, was the orchestrating factor that could bind the tribe and give it strength and direction.

THE INTERFACE OF THE KNOWLEDGE TRADITIONS

In today’s world, we are at the interface of the knowledge traditions, what I refer to here as *te whakawhitinga o ngā mātauranga*. Education is often described as an introduction to worthwhile learning. If we take cognisance of the title of this paper, becoming educultural – interfacing the knowledge traditions, then education is more than an introduction to worthwhile learning; it is the key to worthwhile learning in a globalised world.

It is important that educators be aware of the value of research because of its function and impact on education and society. By learning about research we can be positioned to critique published material and we will be more prepared to undertake well-designed learning assignments that can generate evidence about a range of issues and conditions. Qualitative and quantitative research methodologies are the two major research traditions and both have importance in their respective fields. Another significant research methodology is that of kaupapa Māori research.

Kaupapa Māori research is an approach that validates indigenous ways of knowing and being. Linda Smith (1999) asserts that to hold alternative histories is to hold alternative knowledges.

Leading literature about research refers to sources of knowledge as being experience, expert opinion, and reason (Johnson & Christensen, 2000). Kaupapa Māori research, while recognising these sources, would propose that it is important to measure Māori phenomena in its own terms. This is likely to involve a value system incorporating criteria such as *whanaungatanga*, *manaakitanga*, *kotahitanga*, *rangiratanga*, and *wairuatanga*. Kana and Tamatea (2004) propound a framework for kaupapa Māori research as one that encapsulates the following dimensions: *whenua*, *whakapapa*, *whanaungatanga*, *kanohi-ki-te-kanohi*, *kanohi kitea*, and *ahi kaa*. There appears to be merit in a contention for holding fast to such traditional values while simultaneously appreciating the tools of the modern era. This dualistic approach, it is argued, is more effective than either one on its own.

In the globalised world, it is certain that most of the contents in the Internet will focus on western knowledge, ideas, and culture. However, if too little is done to promote the learning of indigenous knowledge or of Māori epistemology, our future generations will definitely have a lesser understanding of where we are in the world, and the root of their culture will be jeopardised. This is where educational enterprises such as universities and tertiary colleges have a pivotal role to play. They should and they must recognise that a balanced integration between global knowledge and indigenous knowledge is imperative. The institutes in which many of us work and study more often than not have the word college, or university, or *wānanga*, or technology, in their respective titles. That cannot be mere coincidence. When I think of *wānanga* I think of the compelling traditions of the great canoes, indeed of *mātā waka*. When I think of technology or university, I think of the awesome shifting of global paradigms. All of this suggests that modern science and technology must go hand in hand with indigenous knowledge in order for sustainable development, international understanding, and intercultural communication to occur.

Having stated that position, I am reminded of the respective philosophies, and similar philosophies I might add, of Kepa Eahu and one of Māoridom’s most noted leaders, Sir Apirana Ngata. Both of these icons of the knowledge society argued for a humanism based on ancient values, but versed in contemporary idiom (see Szasz, in Henare, 1999). Both argued that the pursuit of knowledge would open the way for congruent intercultural communication. Both saw knowledge as the tool for people understanding people – as the pathway to progress. The root of the word “science” is the Latin “*scientia*”, which means “knowledge”, and this refers to any systematically or carefully done actions carried out to answer questions or meet other needs of a research domain (e.g., describing things, exploring, experimenting, explaining). All the time, we have to be open to new ideas and theories that show promise.

Each of us may approach our scholastic endeavours differently, and we may often describe, explain, and interpret things in different, but perhaps complementary, ways. Overall, we can say that research is a never-ending process that includes rational thinking, the reliance on empirical observation, constant critique, creativity, and discovery.

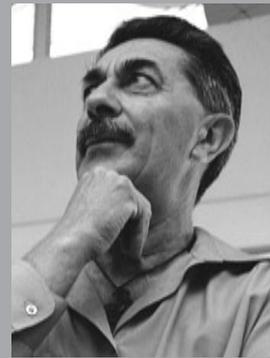
CONCLUSION

Today, tertiary institutions and their respective populations will reap the rewards of their labour by the seeds that they sow. This requires taking a serious view of the notion of perseverance, aptly summed up in the following whakatauki, *He moana pukepuke, e ekengia e te waka – A choppy sea can be navigated*. It is not uncommon for those engaged in tertiary education to have experienced, metaphorically, the choppy seas and current changes of Tangaroa, and the wind changes and paradigm shifts of Tawhirimatea. This is the cut and thrust and the to and fro of academic rigour. There are also times of calmness – *e marino ana e* – wherein the realm of Rongo-mā-Tāne, prevails. These are moments to savour, moments to relish as the design of scientific exploration takes on deeper meaning. Regardless of whether the encounters are upon stormy seas or tranquil waters, the journey, in some shape or form, will continue. As we move forward we can draw sustenance from Tamatekapua's boldness, Ihenga's curiosity, Hikairo's balance, Makereti's scholarship, and Kepa Ehau's vision. The collective wisdom of these great tipuna is the quintessence of "educultural" potential, and their legacy may be our inspiration. These are the qualities that can be taken on board to offer scholastic fortitude in the pathways to success. Being at the interface of the knowledge traditions – *te whakawhitinga o ngā mātauranga* – has the potential to become a truly educultural experience.

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AUTHOR PROFILE

Dr Angus Macfarlane is of the Te Arawa tribe. The thrust of his research is concerned with the exploration of culturally responsive pedagogies. In 2003 he was the inaugural Senior Research Fellow for NZCER. In 2004 he was a recipient of Te Kohu Kairangi, presented at the National Māori Academic Excellence Awards. He holds advisory positions on the government's steering committee for Special Education and on the National Coordination Contract for Gifted Education.

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GLOSSARY OF MĀORI WORDS

Ahi kaa	Reference to those who keep the home fires burning
Hapū	Subtribe
Hikairo	Renowned ancestor; articulate and democratic
Ihenga	Renowned ancestor; great explorer
Ihi	Assertiveness
Iwi	Tribe
Kanohi kitea	The seen (visible) face
Kanohi-ki-te-kanohi	Face-to-face
Kaupapa Māori	Māori philosophy
Kepa Ehau	Renowned ancestor; superb orator
Kotahitanga	Unity, consensus
Makereti	Renowned ancestor; noted for scholastic aptitude
Manaaki	Hospitality
Mokoia	Island; historical landmark
Ngāti Rangiwewehi	A sub-tribe of Te Arawa
Rangatiratanga	Leadership; effectiveness, autonomy
Rongo-mā-Tāne	God of peace
Sir Apirana Ngata	Great leader of the Ngāti Porou tribe
Tamatekapua	Renowned ancestor; commander of the Te Arawa canoe
Tāne-nui-a-Rangi	Iconic figure within Māori mythology
Tangaroa	God of the sea
Tawhirimatea	God of winds and rains
Te Arawa	Tribe descended from canoe of the same name
Tīpuna	Ancestor
Wairuatanga	Spirituality
Wānanga	Place of advanced learning
Whānau	Extended family
Whanaungatanga	Relationship
Whenua	Land