

Three Pathways for a Tangata Whenua Framework

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Abstract: The target article by Professor Gary Hook (2007) gives fresh impetus to reintegrating Māori culture with education. Far-reaching proposals for Māori education are indicated, which can be visualized as a system emanating from marae, through wānanga which accommodate both secondary needs and tertiary aspirations and culminating in a research based university. In his paper, Hook makes a further contribution to the genealogy of Māori educational theory. As with any inspiring vision, practical steps follow, considerations and queries arise. Some of these are explored in this commentary.

Keywords: Acculturation, indigenous education, Māori education, Māori culture.

Introduction

Professor G. Raumati Hook (2007) identifies three ways in which Māori Education might become reintegrated with Māori culture. The first point that Māori culture must be reinforced and delivered through the marae environment, is worthy of closer exploration. The second notion of secondary schooling being continued in a Māori wānanga environment with provision of a seamless system within cultural contexts is carried on into the third notion of a Māori University.

Considerations given to a Māori system of educational provision by Professor Hook are within the realms of possibility because the vessel for this journey has been created and navigation of the waters has been taking place since the early 1980s. Navigating and charting are images to refer to journeys underway that make it possible to envisage a continuous system of Māori led and culturally referenced education as an alternative to the public mainstream system. If a system emanating from marae is a correct interpretation of Hook's proposal, then it would seem to follow that the term tangata whenua/Māori can be brought in, to signify a system of learning and teaching that arises from hapū consciousness, building on knowledge of mana whenua .

We can already see ways in which the complexities of a tribal system are engaged with through current wānanga with courses made available in various rohe. Practical considerations for extending marae and wānanga are not given in this commentary, as indeed they are not elaborated in Hook's paper. An important vision is set out, charting a further course for the waka of tangata whenua/Māori education.

There are many possible considerations that arise from Professor Hook's paper; this commentary is on the possibilities raised by his proposals, particularly in reference to knowledge frameworks that arise from tangata whenua epistemology. Reference to aroha and manaakitanga are extended to consideration of kaitiakitanga to be included in a knowledge system which has integrity with an indigenous world view and which resonates with a mind of the land.

Marae as a basis for a seamless system for Māori Education

The article is explicit about Māori institutional vulnerability to state policies applied universally without enabling mechanisms for Māori education, in recognition of the historical failure of the system to meet Māori educational aspirations. A brief history of the establishment of the current

wānanga and other tertiary providers, gives evidence of structural systems that would allow for further initiatives towards a 'seamless' system.

The article therefore inspires further consideration of a seamless system. In the current situation, many marae-based courses are provided through the various wānanga. This is different from locating Māori education with marae, which is an idea which seemed embedded in the article, along with developing wānanga for secondary education. Again, this is a major innovation beyond the current system, where there are a number of secondary schools (kura) which follow on from kohanga reo, and in some cases lead on into wānanga.

Marae-based education certainly accords with the thinking expressed in tangata whenua communities. Strategies for achieving such a model need far more detail as it would require a major reshaping of current school provision, except for kohanga reo and kura that are located in marae and hapū communities. Resourcing marae-based education would entail highly localized initiatives and signify a radical transformation of Māori provided education that resonates with the kohanga reo initiatives. It would involve leadership in local initiatives throughout the country: such a system would strengthen the strands of tradition in education and bring further dimensions to the revitalization of te reo Māori and mātauranga Māori being carried into the future.

In response to Hook's suggestions, questions to be addressed include how marae-based education can be activated in more rural and provincial settings where marae may not carry specific educational responsibilities and how may marae education be implemented in urban settings which are superimposed with metropolitan structures. However there is a partial answer in that the kohanga reo movement has shown that exponential innovation in education can be implemented. Here, the motivation to ensure the viability of te reo Māori has led to kura and wānanga institutions that were not on the landscape of imagination three or more decades ago.

The three ways ahead for improving Māori educational achievement, through marae, through secondary (and tertiary) wānanga, and through a Māori University as a seamless system, are outlined in response to three problems. These problems are: the loss of Māori culture, the failure of the mainstream to educate and prevent the disengagement of Māori youth, and the failure to facilitate the education of Māori to the highest levels of international scholarship and "reflecting those unique elements born from a Māori framework" (Hook, 2007, p. 2).

A Tangata Whenua/Māori Framework

Aroha and manaakitanga are key concepts of care identified by Hook to signify a Māori framework. In the section preceding discussion of a Māori framework, reference to Russell Bishop's work is largely interpreted as an analysis of power relations. This is an important critical dimension of Bishop's work, but there is also a larger dimension which elaborates the determinative quality of the relationship between teachers and students for successful outcomes in learning. Cultural responsiveness is to be understood to include care and sensitivity. In Hook's paper, credit is given to Ministry of Education initiatives towards greater cultural responsiveness for Māori in mainstream education; these are cited as originating from an Inuit system, yet Bishop's research has been influential with the Ministry, and is also understood as coming from a notion of care.

The relationship between teachers and students, which is identified as a key to successful education by Bishop corresponds with the qualities of aroha and manaakitanga. These compelling dimensions of a Māori educational framework suggest quite a degree of correspondence between Hook and Bishop, in terms of core values. Aroha and manaakitanga are unique cultural qualities;

attributes of nurture and care which flow from a relational world view in which all of life is interconnected, and which is expressed in commitment to the wellbeing of whānau and hapū. An important distinction is that Hook, is saying no mainstream education (in the section ‘Can Mainstream Institutions be Adapted to Māori Needs?’), whereas Bishop attends to the disengagement of Māori in mainstream education.

In addition to the sociological contributions to Māori research for education, which are carved with the work not only of Russell Bishop, but also Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Graham Smith, Kuni Jenkins and many others, there is research in other disciplines such as psychology. Here, the constitutive attributes of the tangata whenua/Māori ‘subject’, or the indigenous individual, are identified. Studies which such as that of Cath Love (1999) in this field add further dimensions to Māori pedagogy, and to ‘cultural reactivation’ of educational desire.

A theme in all the scholarship on Māori education includes analysis of western frameworks, such as competitive individualism embedded in mainstream curriculum, assessments and outcomes. The creativity of working with knowledge, curriculum and pedagogy that emanate from a tangata whenua world view gives impetus to the Māori education movement. A Māori framework is elaborated in Hook’s paper in the eloquent section on the power of aroha and manaakitanga, values of care which are in harmony with hospitality and which are palpably different from Pākehā education priorities, even though ideals of care and love may be present in many mainstream teacher practices.

Kaitiakitanga is a third distinguishing attribute of a tangata whenua/Māori cultural framework that could be added to aroha and manaakitanga. It expresses care for and relationship with land and the natural world that is widely articulated by tangata whenua with regard to environmental responsibilities, and which are often explained as emanating from the spiritual realm, with obligations to care for the land, which in turn ensures the wellbeing of the people. Hapū traditions of knowledge of land and waters, or mātauranga Māori, would presumably be integral to marae education. Kaitiakitanga is often referred to as ‘guardianship’ but a further understanding conveyed in marae contexts, as well as in Māori scholarship, is a consciousness which involves acquiring the mind of the land (Royal, 2006). Education which supports a capacity for attunement to the mind of the land has many further implications for education.

Where a philosophy of kaitiakitanga is followed through, one encounters the reciprocal relationship between the health of the land and the health of the people, and it is a small step to link health with education. The well known figures of disadvantage in Māori health are parallel to those of education. It follows that optimum health is a condition for participation in society and for taking up educational opportunities. All dimensions are interwoven. So initiatives for marae-based education, constituted on aroha, manaakitanga and kaitiakitanga is a system where culture, health, education are integrated with the environment and engage with responsibility for the viability of ecosystems.

The theme being suggested here, relates to integration of the environment into all spheres of knowledge – a quantum difference to the tradition of western knowledge where nature and culture are separated. It may be a reductionist statement, but the environmental crisis currently facing us can be traced to this and other separations.

Kaitiakitanga represents a knowledge framework which is imperative in the environmental crisis. The attention of everyone is being turned towards appreciation of earth’s life sustaining ecosystems, an appreciation which has called forth an initiative from within mainstream

education, known as Education for Sustainability. The current curriculum review indicates that mainstream education is responsive neither to sustainability in the curriculum, nor to the Treaty of Waitangi.

A great treasure of Māori knowledge is the wholistic world view which is carried through in every domain, including aroha, manaakitanga and kaitiakitanga. It is pressing to retain this framework which is unique to 'Ahuatanga Māori', and includes relational qualities in knowledge and in the educational process. Kaitiakitanga being included in a Māori paradigm is an imperative not only for reasons of cultural integrity and cultural revitalization, but also as a form of knowledge which is required more widely, by New Zealanders, and by the world at large if there is to be more progress towards sustainability.

Sustainability and international initiatives which reflect values in Māori Education

In an article on making the environment central to education, Carmichael (2007) refers to a 'Small School' – a new movement towards 'education on a human scale'. The founder, Satish Kumar, is linked to Schumacher, a College for ecological studies in Devon, England. The impetus has come from ecosystems philosophy and from climate change and making schools responsive to global warming through environmental consciousness, and promoting ways in which schools can optimize the use of natural energy.

The small inset in the article, on the Small School in Devon, identifies three curriculum areas: academic; arts, culture and humanities; ecology and environment, as well as including life's essential needs (food, clothing, housing). It is surprising that there is not a statement of integrating environmental consciousness throughout the curriculum, as is the goal of Education for Sustainability. It is easy to be inspired by international initiatives, yet here in Aotearoa, there are indigenous innovations that express the values being sought more widely. There are marae already working on sustainable energy alternatives, and traditional indigenous systems of knowledge are close at hand. A comprehensive philosophy of integrated knowledge is being kept alive on marae, in kohanga reo, kura and in wānanga – to identify some of the current Māori educational systems for imparting knowledge.

What kaitiakitanga has to offer is an understanding of a 'woven universe' (Royal, 2003), where human and environmental interests are integrated, and reach out into every sphere including academic and arts curricula, health policy and environmental policy and beyond into sustainable agriculture and economic frameworks.

The proposal for marae-based education with the distinctive character of Māori traditional knowledge engaged for the future, including the challenge of sustainability, is evocative of other examples such as the 'Small School' as well as having resonance with the movement educating for sustainability.

Marae, Wānanga and a National Māori University

Although the wider importance of local education is a tempting topic, the priority is to imagine cultural frameworks in education for Māori. In response to earlier questions for education in marae and wānanga, there are challenges of training teachers in hapū settings. A further challenge is ensuring environmental values are retained in knowledge and in institutional settings such as wānanga and the university. Developing consciousness that arises from the land to urban Māori students is likely to involve creative design in curriculum, such as the currently available 'hapū studies' programmes.

This commentary largely reflects a philosophical response to ‘A Future for Māori Education’, and takes the notion of a future beyond the immediate discussion in the paper. A seamless system for Māori education is indeed evoked, with the concept of an umbrella university providing support to wānanga, as well as pathways to a research institution. In Figure 2, where Hook (2007) has “Maori educational needs” as a prominent component of the model, it is suggested that ‘Māori aspirations’ could be included along with needs. What is not evident is how much discussion with the existing wānanga, lies behind this proposal, and what further iwi initiatives for wānanga, might arise.

Along with the intrinsic value of Māori education initiatives, a model which incorporates kaitiakitanga through the curriculum, will serve the future well and equip future generations to engage with earth responsively and responsibly. Localization is a mantra of ecological wisdom, and the concept of marae education, with continuity through wānanga, for secondary and tertiary education, including those that are currently working, gives the lead where the mainstream ‘west’ needs to follow.

Different voices calling for responsiveness to earth speak of the need for attunement with land and water, an attunement that often requires localized knowledge and observation which spans across generations. The orientation to earth that can be heard from near and far arises from different traditions, but it is suggested that both are listening to the imperatives of intergenerational responsibility.

Hook (2007), is not only expressing support for the existing Māori system, he is generating a vision for much larger systemic innovation ahead, a vision which is likely to assure tangata whenua/Māori engagement in education. With kaitiakitanga included in such a framework, one can see leadership for the wider capacity for education in harmony with earth systems. Learning which safeguards the integrity of indigenous values throughout, and that is crafted in tribal traditions of intimate knowledge of the land is sailing with the winds of ancestral wisdom for a future of environmental responsibility.

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