

Listening to culture

Maori principles and practices applied to support classroom management

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Throughout the last three decades, concern has been frequently expressed about the lower achievement and higher drop-out rates of Maori students, compared with their non-Maori counterparts. Maori over-representation in referral for special education provision has also long been a talking point in education. But on the other hand, little has been said about the under-representation of a real presence of Maori cultural principles and practices in mainstream classrooms and schools.

Many reports on educational achievement (Penetito, 1996; Te Puni Kokiri, 1998; Te Puni Kokiri, 1999) have made it clear that it is Maori children who are experiencing greater difficulties at school. Too many Maori students become alienated within mainstream schooling, and are often excluded from it. Several educationalists (Ramsay et al., 1993) concede that schools can no longer “go it alone”, and the call for community partnerships has become more insistent.

There is a need to establish where educational processes are succeeding for these young people, and to examine the social and cultural contexts of their life experiences. Behaviour is often defined and understood within a cultural and community context. Yet many Maori students live in cultural and community contexts that are quite different from those of the school and the mainstream community. A range of studies (Pierce, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Macfarlane, 1995; Clark, Smith and Pomare, 1996; Glynn et al., 1997; Bishop and Glynn, 1999; Rubie, Moore and Townsend, 1999) outline how such contexts are important for understanding and supporting students experiencing difficulties at school.

The Hikairo Rationale

The Hikairo Rationale (Macfarlane, 1997) is an approach to behaviour management which encapsulates an amalgam of contemporary theory and traditional Maori discipline. It now forms an integral part of the Master of Special Education course at Waikato. It acknowledges how many of the behaviour theories, such as those mentioned above, advance the notion that the weaving of education and democracy (Goodlad, 1997) has the potential to add to the adroitness of a behaviour programme.

The distinctive factor present in the Hikairo Rationale is the deliberate, systematic effort to bring cultural aspects into the educative-democratic approach. It is named to reflect the way in which peaceful resolution was reached following the Ngapuhi and Te Arawa encounters on Mokoia Island in 1823. According to Stafford (1967), the Ngati-Rangiwewehi Chief, Hikairo, spoke and acted with such mana and influence that the illustrious chief Hongi Hika declared that calmness and powerfulness were not incompatible notions. On this occasion, Hikairo’s assertive dialogue, fundamental assurances, and simple sincerity brought about a change of attitude and behaviour.

Most students need orderly environments, and function better in them. Each of the seven letters of H-I-K-A-I-R-O begins a step for strategising toward a more orderly and pleasant classroom environment. The Hikairo approach is appropriate for working with both Maori and non-Maori students and teachers, even though its guiding values and metaphors come from within a Maori worldview.

The traditional Maori value of “aroha” has a

very real place in the model. Aroha does not imply a “soft” approach. In the context of discipline, aroha connotes cooperation, understanding, reciprocity and warmth. The Hikairo programme has these qualities in abundance, and is simultaneously assertive.

Step 1: Huakina Mai (Opening Doorways)

From the outset, it is crucial that the teacher gets to know the students and that the students get to know the teacher’s expectations. For those students who display high levels of disruptive behaviour, the opening of doorways must occur in the very early stages. Part of the Huakina Mai process involves establishing rules. Rules are expectations of how whanau members are expected to behave towards each other. Rules are put in place to protect the rights of the whole group. From the outset, the teacher is encouraged to enter into a contract of “fairness” with the students. This can be expressed in its simplest form by the teacher saying, “I promise you that as long as you are at this school, I will always be fair to you. Always. All I want in return is for you to be fair to me. Do we have an understanding?”

This approach draws on two of the key principles for changing behaviour, namely “model what you want” and “get in early” (Glynn et al., 1997). A clear understanding of the protocol of the whanau aspect of the classroom should be discussed with each student in the very early stages, and then revisited from time to time, as the need arises. Pastoral time before classes start in the morning is a crucial dimension of Huakina Mai. During this time, the teacher can allow the students to share their most recent experiences, and gauge students’

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“attitude” or emotional state. McNamara and Moreton (1995) contend that emotional and behavioural difficulties are to do with children who are hurting, but don’t know what to do with the pain. The Huakina Mai approach encourages teachers to learn the skills of connecting to the student’s feelings and dealing with them in a constructive manner.

Step 2: *Ihi* (Assertiveness)

Assertive communication, properly employed, is one effective strategy for responding to a student’s aggressive behaviour. Assertiveness refers to behaviour which enables people to act in their own best interests, to stand up for themselves without undue anxiety, to express honest feelings comfortably, or to exercise personal rights without denying the rights of others (Alberti and Emmons, 1986). For many years, Lee and Marlene Canter have been refining their Assertive Discipline (AD) system. Charles (1999) contends that they popularised the concepts of teacher and student rights to a calm and safe environment. Earlier they focused on teachers being strong leaders in the classroom. Recently they have emphasised the building of trusting and helpful relationships between teachers and students.

In the Maori world, *kaumatua* (elders) and *kaikorero* (orators) provide powerful models of assertiveness. On the *marae*, these orators excel in terms of self-expression, honesty, directness, and openness. They excel also in delivering precisely the right messages rendered in precisely the right style for effective communication with specific people in specific contexts. Assertive

communication is an essential part of Maori protocol. According to Marsden (1975), *ihi* is a personal quality present in all human beings, but more developed in some than in others.

Tate (1990) links the concept of *ihi* to the concept of *mana*. The assertive quality of *ihi* can be a manifestation of a person’s *mana*, so that *mana* is not simply a charisma, but also a force that can bring about change. *Mana* can move people. Teachers whose behaviour reflects the quality of *ihi*, as well as those of *aroha* and *manaaki*, are more likely to succeed in establishing effective relationships with students and in managing behaviour in the classroom. The *Hikairo* approach, through the concepts of *ihi* and *mana*, requires teachers to recognise the emotions in others in order to respond to the needs and wants of others.

Step 3: *Kotahitanga* (Unity)

James Ritchie (1992) describes *kotahitanga* as a Maori political process where consensus is achieved through discussion. By this process, people are brought together, so that all personal differences and opinions are aired. Even if all opinions cannot be incorporated in the final decision, they are all given due respect, because of the *mana* of the persons who hold those opinions. In the context of behaviour management, *kotahitanga* refers to the process by which students, teachers and *whanau* members together negotiate behaviour rules and behaviour management strategies. Macfarlane (2000) elaborates on the concept of *hui* (listening to culture) and includes actual case descriptions.

Step 4: *Awhinatia* (The Helping Process – Interventions)

Within the *Hikairo* Rationale, it is possible to generate strategies that attempt to change behaviour through altering both the antecedents and the consequences of behaviour. Examples of antecedent behaviour management strategies include the use of subtle cues, which can be negotiated individually or collectively between students and teacher. One example might involve a gentle tap on the right shoulder by the teacher. This action might be enough to settle a situation in which inappropriate behaviour is in danger of escalating. If need be, a teacher could add a verbal cue or instruction, such as “*kia tupato*” (be careful), or “*whakatikanga tou waka*” (steady your canoe). Alternatively, the teacher might hold the *manaia* (pendant) below the chin, while making eye contact with a student who is off task. This is a silent yet effective signal for the student to stay on task.

An example of management of behaviour through altering its consequences is the teacher’s

provision of specific feedback that may enhance Maori students’ awareness of their cultural identity and improve their self-esteem. The way Maori students feel about themselves affects their ability to engage in social interaction with their teachers and their peers. It does not matter if the teacher is non-Maori. What does matter is the provision of feedback that is culturally responsive (Ladson-Billings, 1995). At Awhina High School (Macfarlane, 1995 – see below), the colloquial expression for “all right” was “*tumeke*”. As one boy declared when he had mastered the art of the *taiaha*, “*Tumeke, bro!*” Macfarlane (1997) provides further discussion of intervention strategies employing Maori metaphors and icons.

Step 5: *I Runga i te Manaaki* (Pastoral Care)

Tate (1990) interprets serious disruptive behaviour in terms of violations of *tapu*. Within this cultural framework, such serious behaviours need to be addressed through Maori concepts such as *tika*, *pono*, and *aroha*, all essential elements of a caring and healing process. *Tika* relates to fairness, *pono* to integrity, and *aroha* to inclusion. Students experiencing severe behavioural and learning difficulties may exhibit little behaviour that is consistent with these qualities, as such behaviour may have been suppressed or undermined by experiences of trauma and failure. This behaviour needs to be modelled and reinforced by adults and other students interacting within the cultural values and practices of a *whanau*. For example, culturally respectful ways of greeting *kaumatua* are best learned within *whanau* contexts in which *koro* (older man) and *kuia* (older woman) perform their traditional roles, and other *whanau* members model ways of behaving which reinforce these roles.

Step 6: *Raranga* (The Weaving Process)

The Individualised Education Plan (IEP) is the principal method of identifying educational needs and planning for students with special learning needs. The IEP meeting is likely to attract a number of different people who are able to contribute to the development of the plan, including teachers and other professionals, and, much more rarely, *whanau* members. For some Maori people the mere title of the process, Individual Education Plan, is intimidating and unwelcoming. Many Maori have retained their culturally preferred ways of meeting and planning, which are expressed most vividly in the *hui*. *Hui* is a general term for any kind of meeting which is conducted according to Maori customs and protocol (Salmond, 1976). *Hui* are held on a *marae* or in other contexts where Maori protocol can prevail.

The *Hikairo* Rationale encourages diverse and

multiple participation at the hui. Whanau work on the principle of inclusion, whereby siblings, uncles and aunts, and grandparents play a role in whanau discussions. Involvement of the whanau aids the process of reaching truly collaborative decisions after maximum consideration of a variety of positions (Fraser, Moltzen and Ryba, 1995).

It is essential that non-Maori professionals learn to take part within the protocol of the hui, as adherence to whanau-preferred protocol has a direct bearing on the level of effectiveness of the meeting. In addition, it is important to inject some humour into the discussions. Hui need not be sombre affairs. Indeed, they can become celebrations to mark the new directions in an individual's learning and behaviour.

Step 7: Oranga (A Vision of Well-being)

Within a whanau context, aggressive behaviour is destructive of the well-being of the individuals concerned; it is also destructive of the well-being of the whanau itself. Glasser (1975) is in tune with Maori psychology when he states that a person gains in strength and well-being by progressing along four pathways of success: giving and receiving love; achieving a sense of worth in one's own eyes and in the eyes of others; having fun; and becoming self-disciplined. Barriers to progress along any of these pathways are threats to the well-being of the individual. These barriers take their toll when they result in the individual making irrational choices and can manifest as behavioural difficulties.

Although lacking an explicit spiritual dimension, Glasser's (1975) concept of four pathways relates well to Durie's (1994) concept of the Whare Tapa Wha (four walls of a house), in terms of showing how the well-being of the individual is deeply embedded in the well-being of the group. Oranga in the individual depends on oranga in the whanau, and vice versa. Well-being, strength and achievement emanate from and belong with not just the individual, but the whole whanau:

Ehara toku toa i te toa takitahi
Engari toku toa i te toa takitini
My strength comes not from myself alone
But from the strength of all the people.

Modelling culturally responsive pedagogy in a special school

The Hikairo Rationale is presented here as an example of culturally responsive pedagogy. It grew out of observations by Macfarlane (1995) during a study at Awhina High School in Rotorua, a special school for students with profound behavioural and emotional difficulties.

This school was identified as modelling good practice in the management of behaviours of disaffected adolescents. A number of key factors contributed to the success of the programme at the school. These factors were later developed into the Hikairo Rationale (Macfarlane, 1997). One such factor was Awhina's valuing of inclusion, despite its "special school" status.

The research participants included 19 currently enrolled students, 41 former students, and 33 significant adults. Maori students excluded from mainstream settings accounted for 90 per cent of enrolments over the ten-year life of the school (an important comment on who is referring whom!). All enrolled students were asked to respond to a questionnaire about personal esteem, interpersonal relationships, school programmes, and comparisons of the Awhina context with their former schools. All the former students who could be located were also asked to respond to a similar questionnaire.

Adult participants were selected on the basis of significant interactions with the students and the programmes. These included former teachers and support staff, private education providers, social workers, health workers, transition coordinators, polytechnic course coordinators, secondary school guidance counsellors and parents of former students.

The research focused on progress by students over periods ranging from six weeks (for current students) to four years (for former students). Several case descriptions were undertaken to exemplify the changes that had taken place in the young person's life, and to show how change may have been attributed to the school programmes. The cases endeavoured to illustrate the part that whanaungatanga (relationship building) and manaakitanga (the ethic of caring) played in the learning process, and whether the concept of collective responsibility was a significant factor in the programme.

The effectiveness of the programme was considered, with particular emphasis on the values of learning, and the building of relationships. Because of the consistently large number of Maori enrolments, there was a presumption that a reasonable degree of learning activities and routines within the programme would be identified as Maori, and would therefore support and validate Maori values, a plea Spoonley (1988) made for the state education system. The results verified that claim.

The school programme

The morning programme had an academic focus. The day always began with a hui (assembly) and the daily programme was

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outlined in detail. The hui set the scene. Communication Studies was the first period before the interval, followed by mathematics and modular studies (social sciences or natural sciences). Students worked in small groups or individually, and were comfortable with the routines. Staff were active throughout. A karakia (prayer) recited by all preceded a shared lunch.

After the lunch break came a 15-20 minute period of individual reading. Students then changed into sports gear for an hour of physical activity, encouraging teamwork and fitness. Other options during this time were cultural activities such as mau-rakau, kapahaka, and waiata. A brief hui brought the school day to a close.

This balanced programme acknowledged the formal curriculum, which included the social, cultural, emotional and academic needs of the students. The programme showed evidence of both pastoral care and the attainment of functional academic skills. Rutter et al. (1979) reported that teachers who concentrated on the lesson topic, sometimes made the class work silently, and started and finished their lessons on time, enjoyed better behaviour from their students than teachers who did not. These authors suggested that children tended to make better progress, both behaviourally and academically, when an appropriate emphasis was placed on academic matters.

The timetable at Awhina High School provided for such a balance. The instructional planning by staff encompassed diagnosis, learning prescriptions, and evaluations for each student or group of students. Knowledge of each student's abilities, interests, skill development

and learning styles was essential to the diagnosis (Macfarlane et al., 2000). Student groupings for learning ranged from individuals and small groups to the whole school, depending on the learning situation or the kaupapa.

The hidden curriculum

The hidden curriculum, on the other hand, was manifested in more subtle ways. Preedy (1989) has claimed that, although not part of the formal intention of schooling, the hidden curriculum

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has the most powerful and lasting impact on most children. Since children spend so much of their time in school, the ethos or climate of the school is important. Eisner (1994) argues that what schools do *not* teach may be as important as what they *do* teach. Many of these qualities are not prescribed or mandated. Teachers, students, and friends of the school make up the human elements of the school’s ecosystem. This ecosystem is what Goodlad (1997, p.110) calls the “human connection”, and Graham Smith (1995, p.32) refers to as “the notion of whanau as a core feature of Kaupapa Maori theory”. Each of these propositions encapsulates the condition where all those closely connected to the school come together to create a special “wairua” or feeling in a simple yet powerful way.

Awhina High School’s environment was conducive to the hidden curriculum impacting on at-risk youth. Teachers and staff had to be role models *par excellence*. Their appearance, mannerisms, tone of voice, sincerity, gentleness and firmness were the qualities employed to help instill in the students respect for moral values, and tolerance and appreciation for themselves and others.

In addition, the school’s design and construction reflected genuine bicultural perspectives. A tukutuku (ornamental lattice work) panel featured on one wall. This design featured a marae as the heart of the community. It was woven by students during a three-day marae experience in 1992. A small plaque dedicated the tukutuku work to the memory of a kuia (elderly Maori woman) who had played a leading role in the Maori cultural activities of the school. There were also strategically placed instructional stations, a library corner and a multi-purpose work area. Student’s work was displayed in various ways.

Awhina High School adopted the practice of a three-day marae visit as part of the Term One calendar. While attendance was not compulsory, the record showed that there were no refusers. The marae experience focused on the values of aroha (acceptance), manaakitanga (caring), and kotahitanga (unity). The rationale was to transport those values into the student’s lives when they returned to school and home.

Again, the 1995 study provided evidence that the marae experience was significant in getting students to “think about” the expectations on individuals to behave responsibly, across contexts. Goodlad (1997) contends that schools can become good places to be without radically disturbing the educative and humanistic mix. Table 1 shows a small sample of responses by former students who appear to be challenging

TABLE 1: Former Students’ Comments on Staff and Programmes

<i>Your thoughts about staff at Awhina High School.</i>	<i>Your thoughts about staff at the base school.</i>	<i>Your thoughts about the programmes at Awhina High School.</i>
Easy to get along with, fun. Very interactive with students – interactive, friendly, open, kind and helpful.	Couldn’t talk to them. Too pushy. Just worried about doing their job.	They were very exciting and educational. The programmes were also sporting and physically helpful.
The staff at Awhina were very kind, helpful and big-hearted. They helped me a lot.	The staff at my other school were everything that I couldn’t stand. They made me turn off school.	Programmes at Awhina helped me to get my self-esteem and confidence back. I felt that the programmes were at a level where everybody could understand and weren’t confused.
Good Sir! One thing about Awhina is that we were never treated like children. Teachers could be hard, but fair.	Some of them were good but found that others were a bit harsh sometimes.	TUMEKE BRO!!
They were choice and they never made me feel unwelcome. I really enjoyed their company.	They were alright but not as good as the Awhina teachers.	Really choice, really exciting and really fun to do.
I reckon they were and still are cool. They are kind, understanding and intelligent people.	They don’t take time to listen to any of the students. At least at Awhina they had time for all students.	I reckon they were quite cool – it helped me a lot. Thank you.
The staff at Awhina High School were always there to talk to. They made us work hard but it was clear what we had to do. They were and still are friendly and caring.	From what I can remember the teachers were too worried about how we looked coming into class. I never learned much from the teaching that took place at the school.	Really top programmes. They helped me a lot. I got to know myself and others. I’ve learned things that I’ve never known. I think every school should have programmes like this. With this programme more teenagers would stay at school, they would find it more interesting.

school practitioners and administrators to strive to cultivate a caring, vibrant, learning environment – that is, a balanced environment similar to the one proposed by Goodlad.

A study of Alternative Education Centres commissioned by the Ministry of Maori Development (Clark, Smith and Pomare, 1996) revealed some “uneven” aspects of the Maori component of alternative programmes, in that the needs differed widely across different environments. The schools they studied espoused very clearly expressed philosophies about their programmes; these tended to be based on improving the behaviour of an individual student, and making students more responsible for their own actions. However, in some instances the researchers found that although the *taha Maori* (Maori aspects) emphases came through the curriculum, they were not embedded in the culture of the classroom itself. The majority of these schools did not appear to accord *Maoritanga* a high priority in practice.

Awhina High School was a notable exception. The programmes were staffed by qualified Maori and non-Maori who had an interest in and knowledge of behavioural principles and adolescent development, as well as Maori ecologies. This expertise, coupled with the regular input from other agencies competent in Maori and bicultural infrastructure, enhanced the school’s ability to put cultural values and *tikanga* (customs) into practice.

Benefits of this approach

The study by Macfarlane (1995) showed that a number of additional benefits accrued to the school. The programmes reduced attendance problems, led to improved student-teacher relationships, provided a proactive framework for the delivery of education to disaffected students, and improved the school’s standing in the community. The programmes also changed students’ perceptions of authority. This change was facilitated through contact with people who exercised authority rationally, and who valued what others said or did. Since the Awhina programme was built on basic values of caring for and helping one another, staff members had to be fully committed to the caring process. The students’ responses to the questionnaire showed their appreciation for the caring processes that they had been part of (see Table 1).

The students’ responses also showed that educational experiences at Awhina High School helped to rekindle young people’s interest in education and gave them the opportunity to complete their compulsory schooling, either by returning to the mainstream or remaining at Awhina High School. That educational context

helped many of them to move toward their aspirations, to raise their self-esteem, and to steer clear of troublesome situations. Essentially, the programme had the ability to turn around the “whakama” (despair, humility) experience (Metge, 1985; Ritchie, 1963).

Students with behaviour difficulties have diverse needs, and effective teaching strategies in the alternative or regular environment are imperative. Fraser (cited in Fraser, Moltzen and Ryba, 1995) contends that the effective teacher is both caring and firm, genuine and assertive, empathetic and honest. The programmes at Awhina High School drew upon the theories of learning and teaching of Glasser (1975; 1986) (control theory), Balson (1993) (theory of belonging), and Collis and Dalton (1990) (responsibility theory), among others.

While Awhina High School was oriented toward promoting the value of respect, this was not a reference to any specific ideology. Rather, there was one basic value – the value of being a human being. The programme design reflected the position of Felsenstein (1987), in that the educational experiences demonstrated to each student the school’s valuing of him or her, while it also created opportunities for success. Adults were willing to listen to young people in order to help untangle some of their confusion. There was evidence of collective responsibility, and respect for Maori concepts and values, within a pedagogically and culturally inclusive environment.

Conclusion

Initiating classroom management programmes that attempt to move us forward and build on learning from earlier experiences is clearly not an easy task. Class size, pressure of work and cultural difference may intensify the problem. Three strategies seem to be practical at present.

- 1. School change strategies toward culturally inclusive pedagogy** (Bishop and Glynn, 1999). These may generate more knowledge about conceptions of self and others (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Change attempts are likely to show the dichotomy between facilitation and inhibition in cultural matters, and may subsequently lead to a better understanding of what Peterson and Ishii-Jordan (1994, p.4) call “cultural relativism”. In this context, professional practitioners seek to understand the nuances and features of cultures different to their own, so that effectiveness is enhanced, and not impaired.
- 2. Using existing approaches and modifying these.** These approaches include Hei Awhina Matua, *Tatari-Tautoko-Tauawhi*, *Eliminat-*

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ing Violence, Cool Schools, *Kia Kaha*, *Tu Tangata*, the *Hikairo Rationale*, and others.

- 3. Using the teacher (human) resources available to schools.** Most Resource Teachers Learning and Behaviour (RTLBs) are in the process of completing a university qualification which includes shaping the teaching context to arouse consciousness of Maori epistemology, and the notion that Maori knowledge has an integrity of its own (Durie, 1997; Macfarlane, 2000).

Many indigenous peoples throughout the world have sustained their unique worldviews and associated knowledge systems for hundreds of years. These cultures have exhibited remarkable durability in the face of major social upheavals taking place as a result of transformative forces beyond their control. Kawagley and Barnhardt (1997) contend that many of the core values, beliefs and practices associated with these worldviews have survived and are being recognised as having an adaptive integrity that is valid for today’s generation as it was for generations past. The depth of indigenous knowledge, including Maori knowledge (which is rooted in the long inhabitation of *Hawaiki* and *Aotearoa*), can benefit all peoples, as the search goes on for a more satisfying and sustainable way to live in societies and schools of diverse cultures and ethnicities.

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