Akarakara akaouanga i te kite pakari o te kuki airani: Culturally responsive pedagogy

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Abstract

This paper explores the concept of culturally responsive pedagogy in Cook Islands secondary schools. A combination of culture, values, teaching and learning creates the basis for culturally responsive pedagogy. A definition of the concept of values in relation to pedagogy and a subsequent focus on the dimensions of culturally responsive pedagogy is provided. The metaphor of a Cook Islands *tivaevae* is proposed as a possible model for conceptualising a culturally responsive pedagogy. The concept of culturally responsive pedagogy is explored in relation to teaching in Cook Islands secondary schooling.

Keywords: culturally responsive pedagogy, values, Physical Education, Cook Islands, teaching and learning.

Introduction

Cultural values provide Cook Islands students an opportunity to engage in their culture by working together with the teachers and community to make education a lifelong learning experience. This paper investigates how cultural values could be employed in culturally responsive pedagogy, focusing on PE in Cook Islands secondary schools. Integral to this approach are indigenous values. Henry (1992, p.12) posits that:

Cultural values in the Cook Islands are an important part of education. Cook Islanders should not abandon their cultural value in favour of the western education. Since the natives are aware of their loss, they owe it to their children to gain what they did not. It does not mean that Cook Islanders should cling to the glories of the past. Cook Island people instead, should seek balance between cultural identity and pride. Every generation and every nation must look to new glories.

Henry proposed that Cook Islanders should return to values of the past not to stay there, but rather to meet the challenges of today and tomorrow. This paper seeks to contribute to that dynamic by exploring ways in which culturally responsive pedagogy could be used by teachers in Cook Islands secondary schools.

This paper draws on evidence from a multi-faceted research study into culturally responsive pedagogy (Te Ava, 2011). Broadly viewed, the research seeks to further

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understandings of indigenous education and the conversion of educational theory into practices that support positive futures for indigenous peoples. More narrowly, the research explores culturally responsive pedagogy in a specific context, that of the Cook Islands. This paper is particularly concerned with a conceptual investigation of Cook Islands culturally responsive pedagogy.

'Pedagogy'

The term pedagogy is a western concept, from Greek origins, that draws attention to the process of teaching. Although there is no Cook Islands term for 'pedagogy', there are forms of pedagogy in the Cook Islands PE curriculum. These might be described as the singular constructs of api'i (teaching and learning) and tu ako (to teach and listen). Such constructs are expressed in a range of contexts, including classroom practices and curriculum, and in wider society through cultural practices such as imene tuki (singing of hymns); raranga (weaving); rutu pau (playing drums); ura (dance); arts and crafts; and food gathering of different kinds of vegetables, fishing and hunting. These methods are important socially, culturally, historically and economically (Borofsky, 2000). Through these, children learn not only what is in official PE curriculum, but also what are the values underpinning Cook Islands society. Teaching and learning through culture becomes the site for students' learning about contemporary society with cultural awareness (Howard & Borofsky, 1989). The need to find a balance between western and Cook Islands understandings of pedagogy, national curriculum and culture remains of critical importance. Pedagogy presents itself as a powerful way of conceptualising a relationship between teaching and values in educational settings.

Pedagogy also includes a consideration of the intentionality of teaching. When a teacher, coach, or parent engages practically in particular knowledge transmissions, they have a pedagogical intent (Tinning, 2010). Framed in this way, pedagogy can be used to understand specific cultural practices in Cook Islands society. For example, Buck (1930) observed how Cook Islands chiefs taught young Cook Islanders fishing skills in Aitutaki. They originally trained their subjects to dive for fish until they ultimately mastered these skills. In this interaction process, the chiefs communicated values related to the structure of society, learning about fishing and the teaching of it, as well as respect for the marine environment, spiritual dimensions, and service in communities.

Intentionality means that students' outcomes may be expressed and assessed through value-based collective activities, such as teamwork, angaanga pakari (work hard) and tu akangateitei (respect) and achievements. Similarly, teachers may develop planning processes that integrate effective learning skills. This may include student leadership and abilities in planning curriculum-related activities. Thereby, in Cook Island terms, a collective ethic and practice within the society generates angaanga pakari in achieving specific objectives. Intentionality in such a context is about more than a single lesson and teaching approach. Intentional pedagogy from a Cook Islands perspective will link values and curriculum outcomes.

While the concept of pedagogy draws attention to the process of knowledge production and the intentionality of the teaching act, the importance of values is frequently overlooked. To not consider values is to risk marginalising indigenous knowledge and its continuation, and to limit children's learning to western practices and curriculum (Meyers, 2003). The question remains: how might we understand values in order to teach in culturally responsive ways?

Values

Cultural values shape indigenous peoples in their ways of knowing and being, and represent the elements of a society that are valued for creating and sustaining community (Merriam & Mohamad, 2000). It has been suggested that cultural values are foundational to teaching and learning in Cook Islands communities (Jonassen, 2003). Eight interconnected values in Cook Islands Maori culture have been identified in teaching: *kitepakari* (wisdom), '*irinaki* (faith), *akakoromaki* (patience), *ora* (life), *rota'i'anga* (unity), *akaaka* (humility), *noa* (freedom) and *aroa* (love) (Jonassen, 2003). Culturally responsive pedagogy will integrate such cultural values which are also enacted by the community.

Tinning (1997) has suggested that values in PE are important not only for traditional links but also for contemporary considerations about the lives and cultures of peoples living in diverse societies. This suggests an expanded understanding of PE, beyond that of physical activity and gaming, to one in which cultural traditions and multiculturalism like the Cook Islands within PE play an important role in helping students from various backgrounds to express their thinking to other students and to become culturally engaged in each other's learning practices (Nieto, 2004). How then might culturally responsive pedagogy be conceptualised in ways that attend to values, learning and contemporary life in the Cook Islands?

Culturally responsive pedagogy

What is 'culturally responsive pedagogy'?

Culturally responsive pedagogy is multidimensional in that it encompasses curriculum content, learning, context, classroom climate, student-teacher relationships, instructional techniques, and performance assessments (Gay, 2000). As such, while mindful of these dimensions, culturally responsive pedagogy is broadly defined as teaching in purposeful ways that integrate the values and culture in the community (Gay, 2000). In this sense, culturally responsive pedagogy is about the individual and the collective.

New Zealand education researchers have found that culturally responsive pedagogy is vital to learning by Pasifika school children. From a Pasifika perspective, it is important to establish an understanding of culturally appropriate pedagogies. This may require defining what pedagogy means in a learning institution (Coxon, Anae, Mara, Samu, & Finau, 2002). Some have argued that for pedagogy for Pasifika students to be correctly defined, it should reflect the cultural values of Pasifika peoples and be attuned to context (Samu, 2006; Mara 2006; Nabobo-Baba, 2006). There is a need to develop classroom instruction that is both culturally orientated and responsive to Pasifika students (Airini, McNaughton, Langley, & Sauni, 2007).

It remains however that investigations into culturally responsive pedagogy are yet to be undertaken in the Cook Islands. This paper seeks to address this gap to enable teachers to adjust their practices to improve education outcomes through attention to the cultural attributes of the student.

Tivaevae as a model for conceptualising culturally responsive pedagogy

The metaphor of a Cook Islands *tivaevae* is proposed as a possible model for conceptualising culturally responsive pedagogy. This model has been long advocated by Teremoana Hodges (2000) as a model for underpinning education. In this research, however, the application of the *tivaevae* metaphor locates culturally responsive pedagogy within the Cook Islands curriculum, with a particular regard for PE curriculum. It pays attention to the values that are important for incorporating into Cook Islands' pedagogy. The *tivaevae* model comprises five key values: *taokotai* (collaboration), *tu akangateitei* (respect), *uriuri kite* (reciprocity), *tu inangaro* (relationships), and *akairi kite* (shared vision). In this section, there is a description of how *tivaevae* is made along with the concepts of the *tivaevae*. The *tivaevae* model suggests a holistic approach to the Cook Islands Health and PE curriculum statement.

The *tivaevae* is a large canvas decorated with other pieces of cloth of different designs and patterns with the aim of making a picture or telling a story. The designs and colours are evocative of the Cook Islands environment – flowers, leaves, emblems, landscapes, ocean, and sky. The stitching is part of the canvas. It sits on top of the fabric pieces where each stitch can be seen, and provides a reminder of the women's hands crafting the *tivaevae*. Rongokea (2001) illustrated two methods of sewing a *tivaevae*: patchwork, or piecework and appliqué. Further, there are four different styles: *tivaevae taorei* (piecework/patchwork), *tivaevae manu* (appliqué), *tivaevae tataura* (appliqué and embroidery), and *tivaevae tuitui tataura* (embroidered squares of fabric joined together with either crocheting or lace borders).

Taokotai (collaboration) plays an important role in making the *tivaevae*, bringing together a shared passion and love for *tuitui* (sewing). Collaboration has an important practical dimension:

I don't think I can make a tivaevae by myself; it's much quicker when you work with a group because when women get together they come up with different interpretive realities. Our group has worked on a number of tivaevae together. Sometimes we've worked on it until four in the morning to try and get it right, and we've worked on a tivaevae taorei that took four years to complete.

(Mareta Matamu cited in Rongokea, 2001, p. 63)

Taokotai is important when learning within a community group. Not only is striving to achieve shared objectives important, but so too is patiently practising *tivaevae*-making. The sewing of the *tivaevae* involves both time and inspiration as the pattern fitting gradually evolves. The need to negotiate designs and space, and to be patient in this process, adds to personal learning and development.

Tu akangateitei (respect) is fundamental in the production of tivaevae. Hence Cook Islands women's patching expertise derives from experience, and mutual respect is revealed throughout the stages of the creation of the tivaevae. According to Rongokea (2001), the making of tivaevae suggests learning is a form of respecting the knowledge of others. In this sense, the tivaevae becomes a useful metaphor for explaining, structuring and acknowledging the culture. The ultimate process of designing a tivaevae is to blend traditional cultural values with an artistic piece of work.

According to Maua-Hodges (2003), reciprocal practice to which both the teacher and the learner contribute is vital. Likewise, the Cook Islands women develop reciprocity abilities (*uriuri kite*) that produce a *tivaevae*. They represent the shared ideas about discrete roles teachers, *pa metua* and students play in both assisted and supported learning environments. The concepts of *tivaevae* are intertwined with each rather than singly separated, therefore, learning experiences are viewed as similarly structured.

Tu inangaro (relationship) is valued in the making of tivaevae. This relationship initially starts in the family then grows out to the community. It is particularly depicted in tivaevae about history and genealogy (Maua-Hodges, 2003). A process of relationship-making occurs over a period of time; time that is spent on spiritual matters, observation, demonstration, listening, practising, analysing, experimenting and reviewing the task of producing a tivaevae. Practical scaffolding has a significant role in this learning process (Maua-Hodges, 2003). Once an adroitness in handling a tivaevae has been reached, tivaevae students share their arts with the community.

Akairi kite (shared vision) is highly respected among Cook Islands women making the tivaevae. When the women come together, they have a shared vision of how the tivaevae is going to turn out. Rongokea (2001) stated that shared vision of tivaevae is based on constructing knowledge incrementally, complementing personal growth and development. According to Rongokea, shared vision is culturally responsive because it represents the values of tu akangateitei (respect), tu akakoromaki (patience) and tu kauraro (humility).

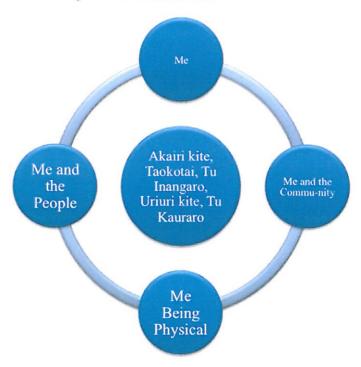
When knowledge is shared, whether right or wrong, it remains unamended. Appreciating each other in shared vision portrays gratitude which enables teacher and student to discuss the outcome of any knowledge gained. The *tivaevae* has a shared vision with sparks of godliness which every Cook Islander should be proud of – respected and cared for. The *tivaevae* is a validation of cultural knowledge that is respected in Cook Islands communities.

A tivaevae approach to Cook Islands curriculum

In 2004, the Health and PE curriculum (HPEC) adopted a holistic concept in classroom teaching which involves the social, spiritual, mental and emotional, and physical dimensions the society had on the environment it constantly affected. 'Oraanga e te tupuanga meitaki' aims to develop knowledge, skills, attitudes and motivation to make effective decisions that contribute to general well-being. In order to develop learning skills, students must know their physical wellbeing (Cook Islands Ministry of Education, 2004).

Four general aims provide direction for learning in health and PE and become strands for academic achievement: 'me', 'me being physical', 'me with other people'; and 'me in the community'. The tivaevae model is helpful for understanding practices associated with the Cook Islands curriculum of Health and PE (HPE) programme in secondary schools. The tivaevae model contextualises the aims of the HPE curriculum within Cook Islands values. As shown below (Figure 1), each aim, when interpreted through the model, becomes the nation, the people and the language history. As a metaphor, the completion of the shared task of the tivaevae can also be the shared responsibility for providing teaching and learning to enable all Cook Islands children to reach their potential.

Figure 1: A Tivaeve model of the Cook Islands PE aims



When making the *tivaevae*, collaboration is fundamental (Amira in Rongokea, 2001). One person may be sewing one part of the design, and others may provide cooked food to support workers. Subsequently, agreement about the design to be crafted and respected by those taking part (including leaders) reveals the shared project vision. Similarly, when a student is learning through HPE in the Cook Islands, the *tivaevae* model suggests education should be based on values of collaboration, respect, reciprocity, relationships and shared vision between teachers, students and community.

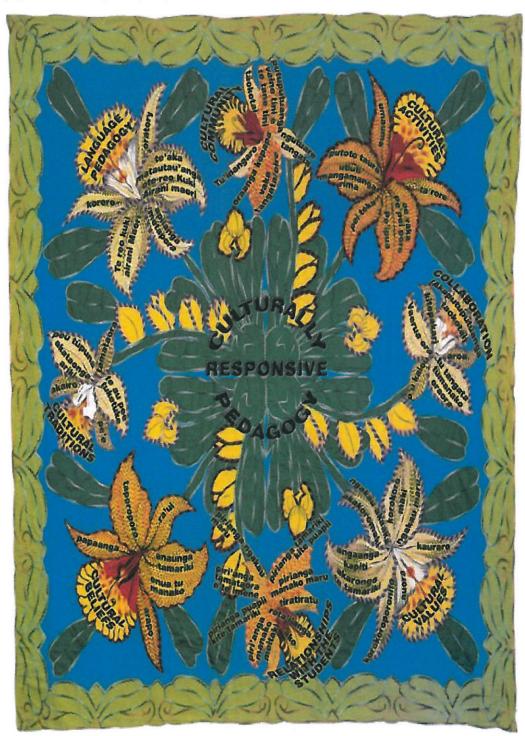
The challenge is to understand how the *tivaevae* model could be used in the context of education in the Cook Islands. The next section conceptualises its application to Cook Islands secondary PE.

A culturally responsive model for Cook Islands secondary schools pedagogy

The metaphor of the *tivaevae* has been suggested as a 'holistic' conceptualisation framework for teaching. It conveys an idea of cultural responsiveness and pedagogy in response to the question: What constitutes culturally responsive pedagogy for Cook Islands schooling and PE?

The tivaevae model is organised in various flowers with distinct designs and patterns, as illustrated in Figure 2. The flowers depict concepts of te reo Maori Kuki Airani (Cook Islands Maori language), peu ui tupuna (cultural traditions), peu inangaro (cultural beliefs), tu inangaro (relationships), peu puapinga (cultural values), akaputuputu taokotai (collaboration), peu angaanga (cultural activity), and peu oire tangata (cultural community).

Figure 2: Based on Rongokea's (2001) book, the author created a tivaevae model as a conceptualised theoretical framework for a culturally responsive pedagogy in Cook Islands physical education (Te Ava, 2011).



The concept of te reo Maori Kuki Airani suggests the following values: apiianga metaporo, korero, oratory, and te aka matautauanga o te reo Maori Kuki Airani. These values encourage success and that te reo Maori Kuki Airani maintains students' language as the essence of their cultural heritage. Kauraka (1983) indicated that, when protected, te reo Maori Kuki Airani generates Cook Islands students' ability to maintain their values in the classroom and in the community.

One flower pattern of the *tivaevae* represents the value of *peu ui tupuna*. This encompasses traditional practices that are influential to the lifestyle and cultural essence of the Cook Islands. It is therefore integral to culturally responsive pedagogy. For example, games such as *putoto taura* (tug-o-war) and *utiuti rima* (pulling interlocking fingers) are subject to cultural rites such as *peu taito* (legends and chants), *akataoanga ariki* (title investitures), *ura tamataora* (Cook Islands traditional dance), *pe'e* (chants), *pe'e tuketuke* (different kinds of chants) and *akairo* (signs) are all representations of the social, cultural, emotional and spiritual components which keep Cook Islands cultural practices alive. If teachers were to teach the *peu ui tupuna* in schools, they would provide opportunities to build a new horizon that would enable students to grow and to develop their thinking skills.

The flower pattern *peu inangaro* reflects the abstract idea of a culturally responsive pedagogy inclusive of Cook Islands lifestyle. *Peu inangaro* implies *ura* (traditional Cook Islands dancing), *imene* (singing), and playing traditional games and activities. Similarly, it involves *taporoporo* (preserving food and crops), *papaanga* (genealogy), *enua tumanako, arapo* (nights of the moon), *ra'ui* (customary sacred prohibitions), and *anau tamariki* (traditional way of giving birth). Literally, the *peu inangaro* teaches students a variety of practices that enable them to value their past and to make their future better. According to Tai'a (2003) *peu inangaro* is a motivational factor that helps students learn to acquire the skills necessary to improve their learning in school.

Tu ingangaro suggests trust and academic achievements. Teachers develop the value of tu ingangaro with students by using strategies such as pirianga ngakau maru (humility), pirianga tamataora e te imene (social interaction), pirianga puapii kite tamariki or akairi to ratou tu inangaro (relationships), pirianga manako meitaki (developing healthy habits), pirianga manako maru (learning with the heart), pirianga tu ingangaro te tamariki kite puapii (students' relationships with teachers), rota'i'anga (unity), tiratiratu (honesty), and tu ako (to listen or to teach). Developing the tu ingangaro is one of the many keys in Pasifika education where knowledge between teacher and student is gradually constructed (Samu, Mara, & Siteine, 2008).

Peu puapinga is another pattern that acknowledges values identified by the pa metua: tāueue (participation), angaanga taokotai (cooperation), akatano (discipline), akakoromaki (patience), ngakau akaaka (humility), kauraro (respect), angaanga oire kapiti (community involvement), te reo Maori Kuki Airani (Cook Islands Maori language), and auora (physical and spiritual wellbeing). Ama (2003) believed that Cook Islands peu puapinga are essential for the development of a healthy society and an enriching environment that prepares a challenging pathway for Cook Islands youth to achieve goals and objectives in schooling. These values are all reflected in the thoughts of the pa metua (Te Ava, 2011) as important to schooling and wider social practices.

The flower akaputuputuanga taokotai is representative of the value of learning from each other. It has been suggested that students' confidence increases as they work together with their teachers' talents through vaerua ora (spirit). Jonassen (2003) argued that akaputuputuanga taokotai is an element of tu tangata (personality and culture). According to him, tu tangata is kite pakari (wisdom) and aroa (love) and these are significant to the student learning environment. Therefore, having teachers as the main source of delivery encourages and inspires students to become versed in their peu oraanga (cultural identity). The involvement of parents and communities in this learning process also contributes to akaputuputuanga taokotai. Generations together have opportunities to mentor each other.

Peu angaanga values game-playing as a form of culturally repsonsive pedgaogy. These might include putoto taura (tug-o-war) and utiuti rima (pulling interlocking fingers). Peu angaanga also includes tamataora (performing arts), umauma (arm wrestling), oe vaka (canoe paddling), akarere manu (flying kites), opara'para vaevae (foot pushing/cycling), tataki toka (stones for lifting and throwing), ta'iri kaka (skipping), ura Kuki Airani (traditional dance), papa'oro'oro ngauru (surfing with a board), ko akari (coconut husking), piki tumunu (coconut tree climbing), pokopoko (traditional wrestling), pe'pei poro (ball tossing) pe'ipua (disc throwing or rolling for accuracy or for distance), ta rore (stilt walking) and pei teka or pei kakao (dart throwing) (Te Ava, 2001). Kautai et al. (1984) suggest that peu angaanga are exciting activities that encourage participation, particularly if used in a caring and responsive way.

Finally, peu oire tangata also provides key values associated with kauraro (respect), tu inangaro (reciprocity), ngutuare tangata or anau (family), vaka tangata oire (community experts), putuputuanga vaine tini e te tane tini (women and men's community projects), taokotai (cooperation), and kopu tangata (community workers). It is suggested that in schools where PE includes valuing peu oire tangata, they have the potential to be culturally responsive to students (Vai'imene, 2003).

Conclusion

The proposed *tivaevae* conceptualisation model seeks to support culturally responsive teaching practices in the Cook Islands. The intention is to enable the fulfilment of the curriculum statement through being attentive to the social and cultural needs of all students. This model is intended to assist teachers to approach the dual task of providing time and space for students to be socially and culturally engaged, while also ensuring learning activities enhance students' academic achievement. Just as the making of *tivaevae* is collaborative, so too does the educational endeavour in schools involve many people (PE teachers, principals, cultural experts, government officials from the Ministry of Education, community *pa metua*, language teachers, advisers, academics, policy makers, communities, parents and students). It is suggested that, in this way, the education becomes more than qualifications alone. Rather, the curriculum is how our children come to understand the value and essence of culture and being. Culturally responsive pedagogy, when viewed as values-based and context oriented, suggests our work in education supports the whole person (socially, culturally, emotionally and spiritually). In context, culturally responsive pedagogy is a culturally innovative,

creative and dynamic way of tapping into the learning potential of Cook Islands students in PE. This paper has sought to recast the familiar account of *tivaevae* in new ways. It remains, however, that more is needed to be known about how to enable teachers to make meaning of curriculum through culturally responsive pedagogy and how to use this understanding in Cook Islands secondary schools for the best education outcomes.

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