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Abstract: How do we strike a balance for our students between knowing what, knowing how, knowing why and knowing whether to? This is one of the tensions that exists when we debate the importance of foundational learning/ studies on developing students capacity and capability, as well as its inclusion in our formal university programs. There are competing dialogues about the privileging of "oracy and/ or "reading and "writing as the most useful means of communicating in an intercultural WÄ±nanga setting, and they both have traditions in ideological discourse. Or do they?In this Paper, government rhetoric concerning strategic emphasis needed by tertiary institutes to improve and stabilise literacy, language and numeracy capacity in students, is used as a background to explore aspects of the practice of oracy and literacy. The isolation of one before the other, or the dominance of one over the other serves as minimalist terrain that overshadows the importance of multiple ways of communicating to demonstrate literate capabilities.

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**Title:** It’s never just about ‘literacy’ and ‘oracy’: Different ways of communicating is the key to ‘making meaning’

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**Key words:** whole-ness literacy; embodiment of knowing; epistemology; ontology, critical literacy

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**Introduction**

At the apex of the Māori Tertiary Education Framework¹ is Te Ao Māori (the Māori world – Māori identity) – “This symbolises the aspirations of Māori learners as they work to achieve their educational potential”². Two of the priority areas that inform this Framework relate to the ideas of ‘lifelong learning pathways’ and ‘learning environments’. These are two important factors that provide links to the motivation of our students in a Wānanga setting, as they traverse the sometimes ‘foreign’ learning terrain of tertiary education. Because the Wānanga context articulates as an extension of the community-as-whanau, community-as-hapū, and community-as-iwi reality, Māori learners are nurtured and mentored in a familiar learning environment that impacts ultimately their ability to engage in lifelong learning.

From the above Framework, there are five other priority areas set down as considerations for Māori educational advancement, including Māori-centred knowledge-creation, Māori as wealth creators, Kaupapa Māori provision, Advancement of whānau/ hapū/iwi, and Māori leadership, and these appear to be well-placed to highlight particular goals that are relevant to Māori: “… enabling Māori to live as Māori, facilitating participation as citizens of the world, contributing towards good health and a high standard of living. While education by itself will not achieve those goals, it is able to make a highly significant contribution to each of them” (Durie, cited in Ministry of Education, 2004: 25). The priorities and goals align to the direction of the Statement of Tertiary Priorities 2005-2007 in strengthening Māori development and directing Māori participation in tertiary studies to achieve positive

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² Ibid, page 17.
outcomes for learners. However, the ultimate benefits go not just to the Māori student, but to the whānau, hapū, iwi, and New Zealand communities as a whole.

The trajectory coming from the above information is that within a government-driven collaboration discourse, it appears that Māori values that are manifested through a series of significant encounters, for example ‘on the marae’, are added implicitly to government ministry documents to reflect an endeavour of cooperation, conciliation, and revitalisation. At the same time, there is also an air of determination about such documents targeting the achievement of economic aspirations, for example

\textit{Strong partnerships between Māori communities and tertiary education organizations will be critical in contributing to the achievement of economic aspirations. Areas for tertiary education to contribute to skill development are likely to include governance, management and skills at all levels that enable Māori to capitalize on development opportunities. Education and training for the trades, technical skills and professions at all levels will remain a high priority for Māori} (Ministry of Education, 2004: 25).

Implicit in the above, is the demand on literacy, language and numeracy skills that will be required to not only “raise the foundation competencies of all New Zealanders”, and therefore all Māori, but also to facilitate “a different approach [is needed] to ways of relating and thinking” (Ibid: 29). In the context of the Māori learner, the ‘legitimation of knowledge’ is being neatly and strategically massaged through government ideology contributing to social and knowledge production. This could be the result of a continuing engagement with the “politics of biculturalism” (Durie, 2001: 166) or as a genuine ‘add-on’ of Māori values and custom (Thomas, 1993) to government discourse.

This Paper proceeds to discuss ‘the place of foundational learning’ to enhance the capacity and capabilities of Māori learners, as well as its link to ‘the idea of legitimate knowledge for effective communication purposes’, and with a gaze to how culture distinguishes and legitimizes distinctions of practice and engagement, or as Bourdieu states (1992: 167),

\textit{The dominant culture produces this ideological effect by concealing the function of division beneath the function of communication: the culture which unifies (the medium of communication) is also the culture which separates (the instrument of distinction) and which legitimates distinctions by forcing all other cultures (designated as sub-cultures) to define themselves by their distance from the dominant culture.}

\textbf{The place of foundational learning}

Succeeding hegemonic curricula cycles in New Zealand have failed to dissipate the notion of Māori learners moving through education on the back of a deficit model of labelling that begins in primary school. The following insights have been drawn from the Te Kōtahitanga research project (Bishop et al 2003: 5, accessed [online] 14.08.06, \texttt{http://www.minedu.govt.nz/web/downloadable/dl8771\_v1/te-kotahitanga.pdf}):

\begin{quote}
Despite the provision of alternative Māori medium education settings in New Zealand, over ninety percent (Ministry of Education, 2001a, 2002) of Māori students in the 12 - 15 age group attend mainstream English-medium schools. In comparison to majority culture students (in New Zealand these students are primarily of European descent), the overall academic achievement levels of these Māori students is low, their rate of suspension from school is three times that of non-Māori and they tend to leave school with less formal qualifications than
\end{quote}
do their non-Māori peers, (38% compared to 19% respectively) (Ministry of Education, 2001b).

There has been little movement in these disparities since they were first identified statistically over forty years ago (Hunn, 1960). However evidence has emerged over the past two years that:

"there have been some positive contributions to improving Māori achievement. These include the development of New Zealand based evidence that the relationship between learning success and socio-economic background is not immutable and that learning improvement can be effected in a relatively short time" (Ministry of Education, 2001)

Part of wealth creation for Māori is the development of human capital because as Durie (2001: 205) surmises, “The Māori resource that is least developed is not land, nor maritime reserves, nor forests, but people”. By the time learners reach the tertiary environment at the Wānanga, a special sort of ‘intervention’ is required that will equip them with the capacity to engage in both Māori and mainstream ‘encounters’. The place of foundational learning opportunities for Māori learners has the potential to provide ‘deliberate acts of teaching’ (Ministry of Education, 2005: 3) for the purpose of integrating literacy and language development in programmes. No one mode of thinking; speaking, reading, listening or writing, is privileged, but instead each one is seen as part of a woven panel of cloth whereby warp and weft are supported and strengthened.

To engage in deliberate acts of teaching foundational learning to students in a Wānanga setting, we are involved in introducing, developing and improving literacy, language and numeracy education, as well as building foundational knowledge to enhance the contribution students can make to the ‘wealth’ in whanau encounters. This education is manifested through foundational learning workshops that focus on student and lecturer learning support. At first these may appear to favour mainstream aspirations only, for example: how to interpret an assignment question or topic, or for an examination purpose; how to write an assignment; how to plan an oral presentation; how to write for meaning using different genres, and how to read for understanding and critical analysis. These topics do not hold the same significance as the traditional and philosophical kaupapa (principle or issue) that inform a Māori worldview of knowledge, for example, rangatiratanga (‘a person of good character’), manaakitanga (‘elevating the personal qualities of others’), whanaungatanga (‘relationship building’), wairuatanga (‘the spiritual wellbeing of the individual’), pūkengatanga (‘the expression of skill, or the achievement of a standard of knowledge’), and kaitiakitanga (‘care, duty and responsibility for the survival of the knowledge of the Māori world’) (Collier, 2002). However, in a bicultural setting such as the Wānanga, they are real learning issues for students who want to achieve not just in an academic environment, but in order to “become resource people for hapū and their own whānau” (Durie, 2001: 204).

What is foundational learning? Part of the strategy to address the foundational learning skills of our students, comes from addressing the priorities and strategies for all tertiary institutions as outlined in the Statement of Tertiary Education Priorities 2005-2007 (Ministry of Education, 2005a. Accessed [online] 14.08.06 http://www.minedu.govt.nz/index.cfm?layout=document&documentid=10296&data=1 and http://www.tec.govt.nz/about_tec/strategy/step/step.html). But another part of the strategy relates to the idea that “it is the nature of the human condition that each person is, at the same time, an individual and yet, part of a greater whole, a family, a community, a society and so on. The whole and the part cannot exist without the other. The inherent nature of this whole/part relationship ensures we both, naturally exist in, and seek community; and our
cultures naturally evolve in *community*” (Collister, 2005: 156). To extend the analogy of weaving as a process and not just perhaps as a finished piece of cloth, or cloak, foundational learning could be seen to be an *integrating learning strand* that needs to be ‘woven’ together with *contextual learning strands*3, in order to be deemed effective knowledge(s).

Keeping the above information in mind also, an understanding of the importance of foundational learning/ studies at our Wānanga, is captured in the following summary:

- **Foundational Learning**: *Literacy, numeracy and language learning*. In practice this is the application of a complex web of reading, writing, speaking, listening, critical thinking, problem-solving, numeracy skills, and communication technology so that people can achieve their own goals in meaningful social, cultural and/or vocational contexts. The priority of raising the literacy, numeracy and language (foundation) skills of New Zealanders aligns with the main strategies and discrete objectives of the Government’s *Tertiary Education Strategy and Statement of Priorities for Tertiary Education* [TES 2002-07, Strategy Three: Raise foundation skills so that all people can participate in our knowledge society, and STEP 2002-07, Priority 2.4: Improving language, literacy and numeracy across the adult population].

- **Foundational Skills**: These are skills that allow people to participate fully in society (the NZ Government refers to *knowledge society*), in terms of what is required for *work, recreation, community engagement* and *study*.

- **Foundational Studies**: Develops students’ abilities to:
  - Acquire
  - Organize
  - Interpret
  - Analyze data.

  It utilises a variety of:
  - Analytical techniques
  - Values
  - Understanding

  It strives to further students’
  - Communicative competence
  - Communication ability
  - Effective aural and oral engagement
  - Writing capabilities
  - Access to technological data.

Essentially, the nature of foundational studies reflects meta theories or conceptual frameworks of *how to do things*, that is, *knowing what, knowing how, knowing why* and *knowing whether to*. The preferred framework that balances *cognitive learning* (*the head* – knowledge, thinking and content), *affective learning* (*the heart* – feelings and attitude), and *psycho-motor learning* (*the hands* - technical/ operational skills), is not unlike the Māori philosophy of how meaning, and knowledge – epistemology - are constructed, through privileging holistically the effects of environment on, and *with*, individuals.

In considering the way that foundational learning opportunities are devised for our learners in order to maintain the links between mind, body, soul and environment, there are a considerable number of aspects of teaching and learning that are subsumed under *pedagogy*.

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Following the above summary, foundational skills and foundational learning are developed through foundational studies that are also imbued in the practice of providing access and equity to learning opportunities. In another vein they could be seen as an integral part of a social justice framework whereby people have access, rights, equity and participation. Participation in such learning opportunities provides engagement for students, through stand-alone programmes, or through integration in other programmes in the Wānanga, or as an adjunct to/within those programmes. They are designed to give support to students and lecturers through the practice of manaakitanga (support and generosity) and wairua (spiritual wellbeing of the individual) which are interconnected, and however determined, cannot be “readily unbundled” (Durie, 2005: 236) from the learning context – from ‘the whole-ness’ of literacy.

**Legitimate knowledge for effective communication purposes**

Looking back over the specific communication techniques and skills that are required in a variety of contexts, for Māori learners to engage with their current situations, the list can be built further. We need to prepare students for situations in which they may have to respond in a decisive leadership role, become information disseminators by keeping abreast of changes in law, hapū politics and policies for resource allocation, addressing changes in attitudes towards young people and women, becoming involved in advocacy for whānau, hapū and iwi.
References


