**An introduction to Maori literacies: why you need to know about Māori literacy.**

*Māori literacy is a critical issue for all New Zealanders.*

*By 2051 the Māori population will almost double in size to close to one million people, 22 percent of the New Zealand population. By 2051, 33 percent of all children in New Zealand will be Māori1. So not only is the Māori population growing, it is also a young population – the opposite of the ageing Pakeha population.*

The Government is aware that because of the ageing of the general population it will be critical to ensure that the Māori population is healthy, well-educated and employed. The taxes contributed by Māori will ensure that some level of health services will be able to be provided to the growing number of elderly people who will need assistance from the state as their retirement income runs out.

In the introduction to his book Māori Pedagogies, Wharehuia Hemara wrote the following:

*During the last decade the New Zealand Government and its education, health and welfare sectors have increasingly focused their attention on gaps between Māori and non-Māori, and Māori failure within the education sector and society generally. This has created a sense of despair and sometimes panic among Māori and Pākehā educationists and social commentators. However, it has also taken a long time for those who work within the system to appreciate that the way in which education services are delivered may have ‘failure’ written into their outcomes.(Hemara, W, 2000. p. 3)*

The reasons behind the poor levels of New Zealand literacy in New Zealand are the same reasons Māori feature negatively in all other New Zealand statistics – health, employment, housing, incarceration, education and wealth. These reasons are critical aspects of our colonial history in New Zealand and we need to know and understand these perspectives as part of the big picture about adult literacy in New Zealand.

1 Source: (Durie, Mason, 2003) Nga Kahui Pou – Launching Maori futures. Huia Publishers: Wellington, Aotearoa New Zealand.

Māori have their own history, culture and civilization. This stretches back centuries before the arrival of Pākehā settlers. Māori culture is based on a number of critical values and aspects. One of these is Te Reo Māori. Pre-colonisation, Māori culture was an oral one. There was no written form of the language but there were permanent forms of literacy – whakakairo (carvings), tukutuku, raranga (weaving) and moko (tattoos) all told stories which were important to the relevant hapū (sub-tribe) and iwi (tribe). Iwi customs and whakapapa were passed down orally from generation to generation. This involved considerable feats of memory as people memorised whakapapa, karakia, waiata, haka, poi and the myriad of other details of a complex way of life.

Iwi had elaborate systems of education. Children were specially chosen to be recipients of specific bodies of knowledge. Tohunga held wānanga, or schools of learning, to pass on knowledge when the time was appropriate.

Māori had developed complex systems for interacting with their respective environments. They knew when it was time to plant and harvest, they knew when they were able to gather certain types of foods, and they knew how to preserve food for winter. All this knowledge was transmitted orally and committed to memory without reference to a written language.

**Key aspects of Māori life changed with the arrival of Pākehā**

Early Pākehā arrivals were explorers, sailors, missionaries and traders, interested in resources such as timber, whales and seals. Missionaries came to bring the word of God to the native people and to protect them from the worst aspects of “civilization”.

In the early 1800s, Māori were enthusiastic adaptors of written literacy following the development of a ‘written’ Māori language. A number of Māori travelled to England and Australia and saw first hand a totally different way of life. Māori were keen to learn this new ‘language’, so they could participate in written communication for a variety of purposes – education and recording of key processes. Some tohunga realised the need to preserve intricate whakapapa and used the written Māori language and access to Māori owned printing presses to achieve this purpose.

The key aspect to these initiatives was that Māori were determining how new technologies (written language and printing presses) would be used for their own purposes.

In 1840 Māori, as tangata whenua, signed the Treaty of Waitangi with the Crown. Under the Treaty, Māori were guaranteed certain privileges in relation to their taonga. The Crown and Māori had very different understanding of what the privileges meant, and this different understanding formed the basis of disputes, wars and arguments that continue to this day.

After the Treaty was signed, the demand for land for settlers could not be met without large amounts of Māori land being sold. However, most Māori refused to sell their land and multiple ownership made it difficult for settlers to acquire land which was available for purchase. Prior to the signing of the Treaty some iwi had developed a number of enterprises based on agriculture and horticulture leading to lucrative trade with Australia ensuring a sound economic base. When iwi refused to provide land for settlers, the land was eventually taken from them through confiscations and as part of the Land Wars. This resulted in significantly reduced economic conditions for those iwi but much more importantly, the loss of mana which was tied inextricably to the whenua which was lost. The Treaty settlements’ process attempts to partly redress wrongs that occurred during that time.

At the same time as the Land Wars the Government instituted the Native Schools system. The purpose of Native Schools was to assimilate Māori into Pākehā culture. Pupils from the Native Schools would provide the labourers and domestic servants required by the increasing number of settlers. The Native School curriculum was different from that for the other Pākehā schools, reflecting the belief of the day that Māori could not cope with higher academic learning. Schooling was not compulsory and the Native Schools were not resourced in the same way as Pākehā schools. Māori had no say in the curriculum or how it was taught. No aspects of Māori culture were permitted as part of the curriculum in Native Schools. Children were banned from speaking Te Reo Māori, and physically punished if they broke this rule. This practice continued right up until Native Schools were disestablished.

Historically, Māori child-rearing and learning processes were very different from the Pākehā processes introduced as part of the Native Schools system. Tamariki (children) were rarely physically punished. Missionaries and settlers noticed how children were indulged and petted by their whānau. Certainly, tamariki were not being brought up in accordance with the adages of the time “a child should be seen and not heard” and “spare the rod, spoil the child”.

The Native Schools had a profound effect on how generations of Māori viewed education. The way the schools operated undermined Māori culture and the use of Te Reo Māori in particular. The impact of this was that many Māori did not value Pākehā education, and generation after generation were not encouraged to succeed in mainstream education.

The fact that Māori feature prominently in all negative statistics is neither an accident nor coincidence. This experience is matched internationally by every other indigenous people who have been colonised and alienated from their land and culture. For all these reasons, any definition of literacy and literacy work in New Zealand needs to take into account Māori pedagogies, concepts and frameworks. This is especially important in terms of identifying what literacy means for Māori. The impact of low literacy levels of Māori and how these literacy levels can be improved is a critical issue for the Government and all people involved in education in New Zealand.

Recently, Governments have realised that there is something to be gained by letting Māori develop initiatives for Māori, delivered by Māori using kaupapa Māori. For Māori, this is an expression of tino rangatiratanga. For Government, the negative statistics were so overwhelming that it seemed there was nothing to lose.

Education initiatives such as kōhanga reo, kura kaupapa and wānanga were established (many without any initial Government support or funding). As these initiatives became successful, Government has provided resourcing. There have been similar developments in health, housing and justice areas that have all been developed and delivered in accordance with kaupapa Māori.

Increasingly, educationalists are appreciating that Māori concepts such as ako, tuakana-teina, whakapapa, whānau and whanaungatanga have a very real place in mainstream education. There is an understanding that these concepts and Māori pedagogies are identical to best practice principles of holistic approaches to education.

There is still a lot of work to be done to address Māori literacy, which will need to be addressed in significant ways before Māori literacy statistics can be turned around. Issues include:

• not enough fluent Te Reo teachers for kura and kāhanga

• not enough resources in Te Reo Māori for teaching core subjects such as maths, science, history and others

• limited access to Māori initiatives because inadequate resourcing restricts growth and quality

• general understanding that addressing Treaty issues will benefit all New Zealanders

• poverty and poor health.

As individuals involved in adult education today, we need to be aware of history and the impact it has had and continues to have, on Māori. Then, if we work with Māori learners we can work with them and their whanau to provide a learning environment that meets their needs and assists them to achieve their goals. Wharehuia Hemara sums it up well:

*When the Western European education system was introduced to Māori in the early 19th century, its proponents believed that they were imparting a ‘divine gift’ to benighted natives who required systemic adjustments to themselves, their culture and their communities. It was implied that mechanisms for entrenching Pakeha domination were mechanisms for freeing their souls and minds.*

*Perhaps not surprisingly, Māori engagement with the system was varied and often contentious. While Māori were more than willing to adopt some aspects of an imported system, they were unwilling to change their ways of being or world views. Continued over page…*

*Over the next two centuries, Māori knowledge and knowledge gathering were gradually undermined. Underlining this diminution of many, if not all, aspects of Māori culture and resource loss was Māori failure.*

*The current focus on gaps between Māori and non-Māori performance is perceived in the context of what the dominant community deems is, and is not, important. Perhaps focusing on gaps between Māori aspirations and achievements would be more appropriate. (Hemara, 2000, p. 80)*

**Māori frameworks**

Earlier in this course we reviewed frameworks for conceptualising literacy. Māori use frameworks, pedagogies and concepts in similar ways. These Māori frameworks, pedagogies, and concepts have increasingly been incorporated into mainstream institutions. Educators realise that these Māori frameworks, pedagogies and concepts promote values that are consistent with what is required for the general population, as well as Māori. One example is Hauora or well-being. Hauora is used in Māori health settings and has been incorporated into teaching for health professionals. The concept of well-being encompasses the physical, mental and emotional, social, and spiritual dimensions of health. Each of these four dimensions of Hauora influences and supports the others. This concept is recognised by the World Health Organisation.

**Hauora**

Hauora is a Māori philosophy of health unique to New Zealand. It comprises taha tinana, taha hinengaro, taha whānau, and taha wairua.

**Taha tinana – Physical well-being**

The physical body, its growth, development, ability to move, and ways of caring for it.

**Taha hinengaro – Mental and emotional well-being**

Coherent thinking processes, acknowledging and expressing thoughts and feelings and responding constructively.

**Taha whānau – Social well-being**

Family relationships, friendships, and other interpersonal relationships; feelings of belonging, compassion, and caring; and social support.

**Taha wairua – Spiritual well-being**

The values and beliefs that determine the way people live, the search for meaning and purpose in life, and personal identity and self-awareness. (For some individuals and communities, spiritual well-being is linked to a particular religion; for others, it is not.)

**Māori frameworks**

Dr Mason Durie’s whare tapawhā model1 compares Hauora to the four walls of a whare. Each wall represents a different dimension: taha wairua (the spiritual side); taha hinengaro (thoughts and feelings); taha tinana (the physical side); and taha whānau (family). All four dimensions are necessary for strength and symmetry.

Another example of how Māori pedagogies have been incorporated into mainstream initiatives is Te Whāriki, the early childhood education curriculum used by all Government funded preschool education facilities in New Zealand.

1 (Adapted from Mason Durie’s Whaiora: Māori Health Development. Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1994, page 70). Source: http://www.tki.org.nz/r/health/curriculum/statement/ page31\_e.php, accessed 26-10-2006

**Māori frameworks**

Wharehuia Hemara has described this in his book *Māori Pedagogies: Te Whāriki / early childhood curriculum:*

Te Whāriki is a set of guidelines for early childhood education. They have been included because they serve as examples of how ancient traditions have been integrated into a modern educational context. While they are compatible with the New Zealand Curriculum Framework, they also account for Māori perspectives and requirements and include guides for pedagogical practices. The following aspirations are an integral part of the guidelines:

To grow up as competent and confident learners and communicators, healthy in mind, body, and spirit, secure in their sense of belonging and in the knowledge that they make a valued contribution to society…(Te Whāriki, 1993)

Te Whāriki/Early Childhood Curriculum has four fundamental principles (ngā mātāpono):

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| 1 | Whakamana: Te Whāriki empowers the mokopuna to learn  |
|  | and grow.  |
| 2 | Kotahitanga: Te Whāriki reflects the holistic way mokopuna learn  |
|  | and grow.  |
| 3 | Whānau Tangata: The wider world of the whānau, the hapū, the iwi,  |
|  | the kōhanga reo whānau and the community is an integral part of  |
|  | Te Whāriki.  |
| 4 | Ngā Hononga: Mokopuna learn through responsive and reciprocal  |
|  | relationships with people, places, and things.  |

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Te Whāriki also has five strands: 1 Mana Atua (wellbeing) 2 Mana Whenua (belonging) 3 Mana Tangata (contribution) 4 Mana Reo (communication) 5 Mana Aotūroa (exploration)

The strands arise from the principles. Each embodies an area of learning and development that is woven into the daily programme of the early childhood setting and has its own associated goals for learning (Te Whāriki, 1993)” (Hemara, W, 2000, p. 67).

**The Strands**

*Mana Atua*

*Mana Atua is considered a powerful gift for individuals who conform to particular metaphysical principles and carry out appropriate sacred rituals.*

*…… Hoki mai, e hine, ki te ao ao marama! Whakatu taua ki aku manu e. …….Return O maiden to the world of light Let us pause and pay tribute to my noble ones. (Ngata & Jones, Ngā Mōteatea, Part Three, Waiata Oriori, He Oriori mō Wharau-rangi, nā Te Rangi-Takoru, Ngāti Apa, pp. 376-379)*

*Mana Whenua*

*Mana Whenua signifies jurisdiction over land and land-based resources. Having jurisdiction creates mana and can also be associated with the intrinsic power land has to produce those things that sustain life and contribute to wellbeing and security (Barlow, n.d.). The following whakatauākī refers to the possession or dominion over a particular piece of land from which a community inherit its mana.*

*Ka wera hoki i te ahi e mana ana anō While the fire burns The mana is effective (Mead & Grove, 1996, p.65) Continued over page…*

*Mana Tangata*

*Mana Tangata is the power an individual gains*

*through their abilities,*

*efforts and taking advantage of all opportunities:*

*…..Ka whakawhenua ngā*

*Hiringa, e tama!*

*Haramai, e mau tō ringa ki te*

*kete tuari,*

*Ki te kete tuatea, ki te kete*

*aronui…..*

*…… On this earth is implanted*

*all knowledge, O son!*

*Come, grasp in your hand the*

*kit of sacred knowledge,*

*the kit of ancestral knowledge*

*the kit of life’s knowledge …. (Ngata & Jones, Ngā Mōteatea, Part Three, Waiata Oriori, He Oriori mō Tuteremoana, nā Tu-Hoto-Ariki, pp.2-9)*

*Mana Reo*

*Mana Reo signifies the power of language and communication. The following whakatauākī states that without language (especially the Māori language), prestige, land ownership and culture will cease to exist.*

*Toi te kupu, toi te mana,*

*Toi te whenua*

*Hold on to the word, the mana,*

*The land*

(Mead & Grove, 1996)

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| --- | --- |
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|  | Te Whāriki.  |
| 4 | Ngā Hononga: Mokopuna learn through responsive and reciprocal  |
|  | relationships with people, places, and things.  |

*Mana Aotūroa*

*Mana Aotūroa is translated as ‘light of day’ or ‘this world’ (Williams, 1992). It often refers to metaphysical or intellectual journeys of self-discovery:*

*……Ko ‘Wahine-ata ‘ koe, e moe*

*i te moenga*

*Kei pikipiki koe i te paepae tapu,*

*i te kaha no Tu. Kauaka ia nei*

*tupu whakatane*

*E taea e koe te peehi nga hau Kia aropiri mai….. ….Thou art now ‘Maid of the Dawn’ now dream on your couch Do not step across the sacred beam [leading] To the trail of Tu. Never aspire to be as men are, And thou wilt abate the stormy wind to a gentle breeze…. (Ngata & Jones, Ngā Mōteatea, Part Two, Waiata Oriori, Waikato, Ngāti Haua, Whanganui, pp. 130-133)” (Hemara, W, 2000, pp. 77-79)*

**Māori initiatives**

Kaupapa Māori initiatives have also taken place in adult literacy. Bronwyn Yates has documented the processes that were taken by the Adult Reading and Learning Assistance Federation (ARLA) at the start of its journey to become a Treaty based organisation in her article in the book The Fourth Sector – Adult and Community Education in Aotearoa/New Zealand (1996). In 2006 Literacy Aotearoa is the result of that journey – a treaty based organisation that exemplifies the principles of partnership documented in the Treaty of Waitangi.

Te Whare Ako, the workplace literacy programme established by Workbase at Norske Skog Tasman mill in 1994 also operated using the whare tapawhā model. You can read more about Te Whare Ako in the Workbase document. 1 Over the years, a number of Māori private training establishments have offered literacy programmes for Māori and others according to kaupapa Māori. An example is Te Wānanga o Aotearoa. This organisation significantly raised the national statistics of New Zealanders (and Māori) with no previous qualifications, completing tertiary education. The fact that the statistics could increase so significantly in such a short period was regarded as an international phenomenon, especially since none of the increase in statistics was forced or imposed in any way.

1 Source: Te Whare Ako Case Study. Available online: Retrieved 12 February, 2007 from: http//www.workbase.org.nz/Article.aspx?ID=134#TWA

**NOTE:**

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