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Indigenous epistemology in a national curriculum framework?

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ABSTRACT In this article, a group of four indigenous Māori educators and one non-Māori educator comment on a proposed amendment to the New Zealand National Curriculum Framework to replace the current separate sets of skills, values and attitudes with five generic performance-based key competencies. The paper discusses important parallels between western/European sociocultural theorizing on human development and learning (on which the key competencies seemed to be based), and the values, beliefs and preferred practices that are embodied within an indigenous Māori cultural worldview (*Te Ao Māori*). A Māori worldview is characterized by an abiding concern for the quality of human relationships that need to be established and maintained if learning contexts are to be effective for Māori students, and for these relationships to balance individual learning and achievement against responsibilities for the well-being and achievement of the group. Within such a worldview, education is understood as holistic, collective, experiential and dependent upon a free exchanging of teaching and learning roles. The article describes five specific cultural constructs within this worldview that highlight Māori traditional understandings of human development and learning and teaching, and

aligns and compares these constructs with the five key competencies proposed. The article argues that the worldviews of Māori people in New Zealand provide an extensive and coherent framework for theorizing about human development and education, and are able to contribute strongly and positively to the development of a national school curriculum for the benefit all students. Implications for other contexts can also be drawn.

KEYWORDS curriculum competencies • Maori worldview • sociocultural understandings

INTRODUCTION

This article emerged from the discussions and deliberations of a group of New Zealand educators, four Māori and one non-Māori, (the Commentary Group). This group was commissioned by the New Zealand Ministry of Education to comment and report on a proposed amendment to the New Zealand Curriculum Framework (NZCF), operational since 1993.

The NZCF (Ministry of Education, 1993) sets out national directions and guidelines for schooling and provides for consistency in curriculum delivery throughout the country. It was designed to provide a framework for teaching and assessment that links learning experiences across the school curriculum in a coherent and balanced way. The NZCF takes a broad view of student outcomes from schooling, encompassing both academic and social outcomes. Student outcomes include developing a sense of who they are (values and attitudes as well as a strong sense of personal identity), what they know (knowledge), and what they can do (skills). The NZCF specifies seven essential learning areas that describe in broad terms the knowledge and understanding (skills, values and attitudes) that all students need to acquire.

The proposed amendment to the NZCF was to replace the existing essential learning areas with a single set of generic key competencies (Rutherford, 2004) based on the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Defining and Selecting Key Competencies project (DeSeCo) work on what competencies people need for successful life and for a well-functioning society. In 2004 and 2005, extensive collaborative consultation was carried out, including discussions with the Commentary Group.

A core document available to the Commentary Group was a paper prepared for the Ministry of Education by Brewerton (2004). Drawing from some of the international research on competencies and key competencies, and from several New Zealand commentaries, Brewerton offers the following definition:

Competencies are conceptualized as the capabilities needed to undertake a task or meet a demand. Competencies include skills, knowledge, attitudes and values needed to meet the demands of a learning task. Competencies are performance-based and manifested in the actions of an individual in a particular context. *Key competencies* are defined as those competencies needed by everyone across a variety of different life contexts to meet important learning demands and challenges. (2004: 3)

Rutherford (2004) emphasized that the five key competencies proposed for the NZCF (see below) are all interlinked and develop throughout the life span. On the one hand, these competencies must be presented with sufficient clarity and focus for teachers and curriculum developers to understand what needs to be taught. On the other hand, they must not be presented in such minute detail that they promote a checklist approach that can trivialize learning and teaching and promote a technicist approach to education (Goodlad, 1997). The five competencies proposed are as follows:

- *Thinking* is about all kinds of thinking in all kinds of contexts. It includes creative, critical and logical thinking, and the ability to think about thinking – as well as self-awareness, reflection and judgment.
- *Making meaning* (since 2006 referred to as *using language, symbols, and text*) is about discovering meaning in ideas – represented as they may be in any of their countless forms. It is about interpreting cues and clues; about getting below the surface, about wanting to get to the bottom of things.
- *Relating to others* is about knowledge, skills, values and attitudes needed for living, working and playing with others. It includes the ability and inclination to take a variety of roles in group situations – for example, leadership, conflict resolution and negotiation – and demonstrating consideration for others.
- *Managing self* is about making good decisions for oneself whilst recognizing that we are part of a wider, interdependent, social context. It is about the inner independence that comes from being given manageable amounts of responsibility and choice. *Managing self* includes the ability to make plans, set goals and estimate time needed for activities. It is also about developing strategies to overcome hurdles, and knowing when a change of course is needed.
- *Participating and contributing* involves gaining a panoramic view of what is possible. It is about seeing one's potential to be a member of multiple communities – for example, *whānau* (family), *iwi* (tribe) and friendship groups, or communities of artists, problem-solvers, sports people, or mathematicians. By participating, we gain the sense of achievement that comes from making a contribution to local and global communities.

In discussing the pedagogical implications of these five competencies for Māori education, the Commentary Group found itself making regular connections to broader sociocultural perspectives on learning and teaching (Bruner, 1996; Glynn et al., 2005; Gregory et al., 2004; Vygotsky, 1978). Such sociocultural approaches maximize opportunities for students at all levels to learn within the context of supportive and nurturing interactions with their teachers and peers in educational contexts.

The Commentary Group were cognizant of the important parallels between this type of pedagogical approach and the values, beliefs and preferred practices that represent and embody an indigenous Māori cultural worldview (*Te Ao Māori*). The parallel seemed especially interesting with respect to learning and teaching. In Māori educational settings, there is an abiding concern for the quality of human relationships that need to be established and maintained if learning contexts are to be effective for Māori students at all levels. These learning relationships need to embody a careful balance between task orientation and task completion on the one hand, and caring and support on the other. Learning relationships also need to balance individual achievement against responsibilities for the well-being and achievement of the group, and to allow for a free exchanging of teaching and learning roles.

As the Commentary Group's deliberations progressed, it became evident that a Māori worldview, with its associated knowledge bases, values, beliefs and preferred pedagogical practices, could inform and critique not only these five key competencies being considered, but could also enrich the development of the national curriculum itself.

This article first identifies some of the cultural constructs and concepts of a Māori worldview that have particular regard to understanding human development and education, and then aligns and compares these Māori cultural constructs and understandings with each of the five competencies identified by Rutherford (2004).

The Commentary Group were also keenly aware that as a result of continuing colonizing practices within the education system, New Zealand for many decades has marginalized and belittled the language (May, 2004), as well as the thinking and analytical skills of the Māori. Colonizing practices have ensured the central positioning in the NZCF of western/European critical and logical thinking and the place of these in making sense of the material world. According to Campbell (2004), consistent failure to understand indigenous cultures is often reflected in the absence of culturally appropriate forms of responsiveness. Traditional Māori society, and other indigenous societies, indeed value high-level thinking and analytical skills, exemplified in compellingly clear understandings of cosmology, geography and industry. For Māori and other indigenous groups these skills might be exemplified in quite different ways. For example, Māori practices of producing resources made from flax required

a precise knowledge of the physical properties of raw materials, their source, the details regarding *tikanga* (customary practices) surrounding the collection and processing, their sustainability – and so on. A second example shows that as a result of successive generations of purposeful voyaging across the oceans, an intensive knowledge of navigation was carefully acquired. Such knowledge was not just happened upon. It was acquired through active participation within culturally responsive and authentic learning contexts. As is the case with other indigenous groups, Māori did not just instantly and instinctively know about the qualities, properties and habits of birds, plants and other natural resources. Hughes (2000) maintains that indigenous groups had to work all this out systematically, and that their scientific endeavours were recorded and transmitted through song, symbol, story, dance and everyday practices.

However, it is clear that the scientific endeavours and knowledge of Māori and other indigenous people, as well as their ways of transmitting this knowledge are seldom evidenced in the curriculum and pedagogical practices imposed on them in their own countries by western/European educational systems. In New Zealand, the Treaty of Waitangi (1840), signed by 512 Māori chiefs and Lieutenant-Governor Hobson on behalf of the British Crown, promised Māori a power-sharing relationship based on the principles of partnership, protection and participation. These Treaty principles have particular force within the context of education, in terms of language and cultural maintenance, and in terms of curriculum and pedagogy. However, since 1840, Māori have experienced very little of what was promised. Bishop and Glynn (1999) note that:

... Māori and Pākehā relationships since the signing of the Treaty have not been a partnership of two peoples developing a nation but political, social, and economic domination by the Pākehā majority and marginalization of the Māori people through armed struggle, biased legislation and educational initiatives and policies that promoted Pākehā knowledge codes at the expense of Māori ... (1999: 14)

These problems continue to be seen in education; for example, in the central government's successive policies of assimilation, integration, multiculturalism and biculturalism ... (1999: 14).

The following sections of this article examine important constructs within *Te Ao Māori* (Māori worldview), to illustrate Māori theorizing on education in general, and its relevance for the proposed five key competencies in particular.

THEORIZING FROM WITHIN A MĀORI WORLDVIEW

The concepts of *whānau* (extended family) and *whakawhanaungatanga* (building family-like relationships) are central and critical because they underpin Māori understandings of human development and learning. They indicate both a sense of *belonging to* and a sense of *relating to others*, within a context of collective identity and responsibility. The *whānau* structure is a living entity, reaching across all contexts in Māoridom. In Māori medium learning settings in particular, the concept of *whānau* provides the school with a synergy, enabling students, teachers, family and community members to assume a degree of agency over education, to articulate their aspirations, and to develop their capabilities together. However, for Māori, this approach to education is more than just an imperative to work and talk together. Educators need to ask – ‘What do we do when we enter the school gate? How can we integrate these school values and practices with our home values and practices, in the midst of all the societal changes going on around us?’

Senge et al. (2001) and Macfarlane (2007) contend that effective ways of approaching these questions are emerging out of the collective experiences of people in a variety of different settings. Answers to these questions in New Zealand appear to lie in the experiences of Māori students, teachers and community members in Māori medium settings and in mainstream (English medium) settings. The experiences and struggles of Māori people in Māori medium settings such as *kōhanga reo* (pre-school), *kura kaupapa* Māori (primary schools), *whare kura* (secondary schools) and *wānanga* (tertiary education institutions) have seen these settings become influential sites for Māori language and cultural restoration, capable of informing curriculum and pedagogical practices for the benefit of Māori students, and of all students. More recently, the experiences and struggles of Māori students, teachers and community members in mainstream settings also have seen these settings become sites for challenging and improving the quality of teaching provided for Māori students.

While the western/European notion of education tends to focus on promoting those individual qualities that are needed to positively participate in a democracy (Goodlad, 1997), from an indigenous worldview such individual qualities need to be understood also in the context of their contribution to the survival of the group. Barnhardt and Kawagley (2005) offer an indigenous explanation that appears quite consistent with a Māori worldview:

While Western science and education tend to emphasise compartmentalized knowledge which is often de-contextualized and taught in the detached setting of a classroom or laboratory, indigenous people have traditionally acquired their knowledge through direct experience in the natural world. For them, the

particulars come to be understood in relation to the whole, and the 'laws' are continually tested in the context of everyday survival. Western thought also differs from indigenous thought in its notion of competency. In Western terms, competency is often assessed based on predetermined ideas of what a person should know, which is then measured indirectly through various forms of 'objective' tests. Such an approach does not address whether that person is actually capable of putting that knowledge into practice . . . [Competencies are] . . . tested in a real-world context. (2005: 10)

Students' experiences in school are themselves an authentic part of students' life experiences. School is not just a preparation for a life to be lived later. Learning is an active process involving ongoing self-reflection, skill development and adaptation, and engaged in by students and teachers alike, at both individual and systems levels. Students, teachers, parents and community need to be able to engage effectively in the life of the school, so that the whole community can benefit. This supports the position that active engagement and participation are particularly critical to Māori and other indigenous understandings of learning and teaching.

Metaphors of concentric circles are not uncommon in explanations of holistic approaches to human development from a western/European worldview, for example the micro, meso and macro systems as identified by Bronfenbrenner (1979). Māori society, both traditional and contemporary, can also be understood in terms of the concentric circles representing, for example, *whānau* (family), *hapū* (sub-tribe), *iwi* (tribe), and *waka* (ancestral canoe, one of the broadest social structures within Māori society).

In contrast to the western/European metaphors of human development and learning, a recent bicultural early childhood education document draws on a distinctive Māori metaphor of weaving together different strands (knowledge bases, beliefs, values, relationships and practices). In 1996, the New Zealand Prime Minister launched the final version of *Te Whāriki*, the New Zealand national early childhood curriculum for children aged from birth to five years (Ministry of Education, 1996). This is one of New Zealand's first genuinely bicultural curriculum documents, built upon the cultural values beliefs and practices of both Māori and Pakeha (New Zealanders of European origin). *Te Whāriki* is a clear example where theorizing in education from an indigenous worldview has had a tangible impact on the educational theory and practice of people from a dominant majority culture. The title and conceptual foundations of *Te Whāriki* was given by Māori educators Tamati and Tilly Reedy and translates as a floor covering woven from different knowledge bases, beliefs and values, and different learning strategies (curriculum and pedagogy) on which all have a place to stand. *Te Whāriki* comprises five strands that are intended to shape holistic learning outcomes for young children:

- Belonging – *Mana Whenua*
- Well-being – *Mana Atua*
- Exploration – *Mana Aotūroa*
- Communication – *Mana Reo*
- Contribution – *Mana Tangata*

Crucial to an understanding of *Te Whāriki* is the central importance of establishing and maintaining relationships among and between students, teachers and communities, summed up in the concept of *whakawhanaungatanga*. This concept is built up from the concept of *whanaungatanga* (relationships) and *whaka* (to cause or produce), and hence derives the meaning of forming or establishing relationships. In the *Te Whāriki* curriculum document itself, the point is made that ‘the whāriki concept recognises the diversity of early childhood education in New Zealand. Different programmes, philosophies, structures and environments will contribute to the distinctive patterns of the whāriki’ (Ministry of Education, 1996: 11). This framework according to Carr (2005), and Carr and Peters (2005) speaks of respect for the children’s identities as rich and valued treasures, and to the children themselves as competent and confident learners who are watched over, protected and supported. The *whāriki* concept encapsulates:

- those who have gone before – and godliness;
- other people in their lives – and relationships;
- the culture’s language – and signs and symbols; and
- place – the desire to explore the natural world.

The thinking behind *Te Whāriki* illustrates how, in addition to *whakawhanaungatanga* and active engagement and participation in learning and teaching, a sense of belonging and nurturing are also critical features of Māori theorizing about human development and learning.

A second and more detailed example (see Figure 1) of theorizing from within the framework of a Māori worldview is evident in the model of holistic human development and learning prepared by Grace (2005), entitled *He Māpuna te Tamaiti* (children are precious treasures).

Within *He Māpuna te Tamaiti* (see Figure 1), as within *Te Whāriki*, cornerstone cultural constructs establish the context for positive interactions between students and teachers, students and students, and *whānau* members and the school. Essential to this framework is the uniqueness of each person, in terms of their *mana* (potential power and prestige), their *mauri* (life essence), and their *wairua* (spirituality). These metaphysical constructs are said to have originated from ancient times and to have been passed down through *whakapapa* (genealogies). They are therefore classified as *tapu* (accessed only under careful restrictions) and must be treated with ultimate care and respect.

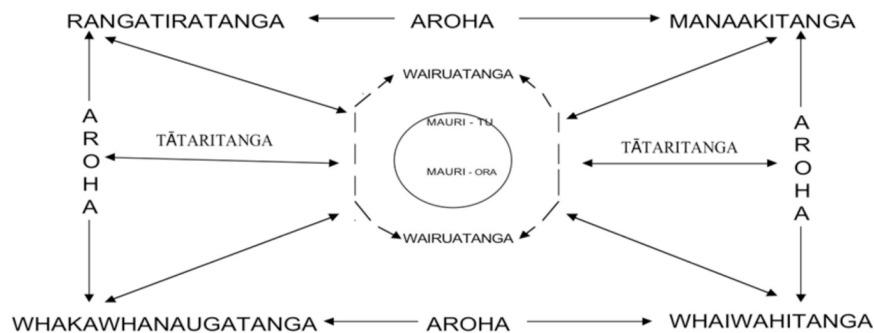


Figure 1 *He Māpuna te Tamaiti* (Grace, 2005; for translations, see text)

In the context of *He Māpuna te Tamaiti*, (see Figure 1) *aroha* (loving kindness and concern) is understood as the binding element, the force that unifies five constructs that connect with the five key competencies reported earlier, as identified by Rutherford, (2004). These are (1) *tātāritanga* (thinking and making meaning), (2) *manaakitanga* (nurturing care and respect), (3) *whakawhanaugātanga* (establishing relationships), (4) *rangatiratanga* (personal autonomy and leadership) and (5) *whaiwāhitanga* (engagement and participation). Figure 1 illustrates how these constructs are woven together into a workable framework of positive, empowering human interaction. *Aroha* refers to the manner of responding positively to the *hā* (essence) of people by accepting their individuality, together with their *whānau* connections, their strengths and their self worth.

In the Māori world, the combination of these five constructs generates a *wairua* (spiritual presence) that pervades the individual's space, creating an ethos that uplifts and motivates the individual. In this state of being, the individual's *mauri* (life force) is said to be in a positive state of awareness, hence the axiom *Mauri tū- mauri ora!* (Active engagement brings well-being).

Grace (2005) observes that within small schools, where students are grouped in mixed-age cohorts, *He Māpuna te Tamaiti* constructs are most likely to be observed. Māori traditional approaches to learning and teaching did not group students on the basis of narrow age bands. 'Year groups', which are standard practice in today's schools, accentuate comparisons and contrasts between high and low achievers, between winners and losers. Such groupings can also undermine Māori cultural relationships such as *tuakana-teina* (where older and more experienced siblings or relations have a responsibility for sharing their knowledge and skills with their younger or less-experienced siblings and relations). Larger class groups formed from narrow age bands can become sites for exclusion rather than inclusion, in that they seek to reduce greatly the level of diversity that is

found in cross-age groups. Narrowing the diversity in this way may result in teachers and students in some classes being less able or less willing to cope with students who do things differently.

HE TIKANGA WHAKAARO: KEY COMPETENCIES FROM WITHIN A MĀORI WORLDVIEW

The five key competencies proposed for the New Zealand National Curriculum (Rutherford, 2004) claim to offer an authoritative integrating and prioritizing set of functions to assist teachers in selecting from a multitude of specific classroom tasks, activities and pedagogical strategies. Rutherford describes these competencies as those that 'are needed by everyone across a variety of different life contexts to meet important learning demands and challenges' (2004: 3). It is important to explore whether similar integrating and prioritizing constructs are available within *Te Ao Māori*.

Five important cultural constructs, embodied in the work of Grace (2005), appear to address important learning demands and life challenges across a variety of life contexts for Māori. These are now aligned and discussed alongside the proposed key competencies in order to highlight similarities and differences, (see Table 1).

Tātaritanga (*thinking and making meaning*)

The construct *tātaritanga* (Grace, 2005) integrates all those processes within Māori medium learning settings (traditional and contemporary) through

Table 1 Comparison between key competencies (Ministry of Education, 2005) and *He Tikanga Whakaaro* (Grace, 2005)

Key competencies (Ministry of Education, 2005)	<i>He Tikanga Whakaaro</i> (Grace, 2005)
1 Thinking	1 Tātaritanga
2 Making meaning	
3 Relating to others	2 Manaakitanga
4 Managing self	3 Rangatiratanga
	4 Whanaungatanga
5 Participating and contributing	5 Whaiwāhitanga

which Māori students learn to think and make meaning of their own experiences within an environment that represents and respects both their individual and collective identities. Processes that are strongly valued and emphasized within Māori medium contexts include fulfilling one's individual responsibilities as well as fulfilling one's responsibility to support the goals and the well-being of the group. Table 1 illustrates that the meaning of *tātaritanga* incorporates the meaning of two different key competencies, *thinking* and *making meaning*. *Tātaritanga* is conceptualized as a combination of thinking, problem solving and commitment to supporting the group. The process may look considerably different in a Māori context from how it might look in a western European context. Consider the example of some Māori students who encountered the bureaucratic and unfair restrictions of access to educational resources and programmes in making the transition from primary education to secondary education. Their middle school had worked particularly hard to modify its management structures, curriculum and pedagogy to become highly responsive to their cultural worldview and their learning needs. These students were successful and confident learners (Milne, 2002). The students and their *whānau* wanted to remain at this middle school and access their secondary schooling from there. However, these students then experienced the frustration and powerlessness of being a small group trying to effect a minor change within a large monolithic and monocultural system of service delivery. As part of the learning associated with responding to this challenging situation, the students wrote and performed a *haka* (a dance of challenge and protest) that stated the problem assertively, and demanded a response from the system. This *haka* is included in CD-Rom 2, in the audiovisual materials within a graduate course in behaviour management in schools, offered both in the UK and in New Zealand (Wearmouth et al., 2004). The resulting *haka* combined both historical and contemporary language and knowledge, and was presented through a genre that is authentically Māori. Such an holistic learning outcome from the processes of *tātaritanga* may promote deeper learning because the experience of engaging with oral cultural tradition might serve also to open up opportunities for embracing written language in poetry, prose, drama and song, as well as electronic communication and integrated multimedia.

Manaakitanga (a context of caring relationships)

Several recent studies have shown that New Zealand schools differ widely in their effectiveness in carrying out educational and socializing functions for their Māori students (for example Clark et al., 1996; Reedy, 1992). Consequently, many Māori students experiencing difficulties at school may not be sufficiently engaged to access the social and academic skills needed to participate successfully in contemporary schooling. In all schools,

teachers have a core function of building and maintaining equitable working relationships with students as well as in facilitating student learning and achievement. This requires a high level of expertise in culturally responsive and inclusive teaching strategies (Moore et al., 1999; Wearmouth et al., 2005).

The directions taken by the *Hei Awhina Mātua* programme (Glynn et al., 1997) of the Poutama Pounamu Research Centre, the *Te Kōtahitanga* Ministry of Education project (Bishop et al., 2002), the Achievement in Multicultural High Schools (AIMHI) project coordinated by Hill and Hawk (2000), are further examples of how culturally relevant pedagogy and successful learning outcomes are closely linked. The common messages that emanate from these three projects demonstrate that relationships, connectedness, academic engagement, supportive environment, and acknowledgment and recognition of difference are key qualities that make teaching and learning more meaningful for Māori students and indeed for all students.

The first project, *Hei Awhina Mātua* (Supporting Parents) involved collaboration between students, teachers and parents and community members to address students' behavioural difficulties experienced at home, at school, and on the way to and from school (Glynn et al., 1997). Problematic contexts, specific problematic behaviours, and positive, desirable behaviours were identified through a series of bilingual behaviour check lists (Glynn, Berryman, Bidois et al., 2001). Researchers worked alongside students, teachers, parents and community members to devise effective ways of improving targeted behaviours in all three contexts. Intervention consisted of producing 11 video scenarios in which students and others acted out specific problematic behaviours in their appropriate contexts, and then acted out each scenario modelling an alternative (positive) response on the part of all participants. The video material formed part of a set of resources that were then introduced within a Māori *wānanga* context (a context where all three sets of participants engaged together at their local *marae* (traditional land with its own meeting house and supporting buildings), in a relaxed and fun context, to practise alternative (positive) ways of interacting and of responding to challenging behaviours. The programme produced positive behaviour outcomes in three different schools and their communities. Essential features of this programme were the degree of ownership and responsibility taken by the students involved, and the way in which the research *whānau* followed Māori customs and protocols throughout.

The second project, *Te Kōtahitanga* (Unity of Purpose) is a New Zealand Ministry of Education funded professional development programme, devised and implemented by Russell Bishop and colleagues (Bishop et al., 2001). The project draws on narratives of classroom and school experiences of Year 9 and Year 10 Māori students (mainly 13 and 14 year olds) to assist

their teachers to form more effective relationships with these students. Teachers achieve this by learning to shift from positionings that attribute under-achievement by Māori students either to deficits in those students as individuals, in their families, and in their communities, or to structural barriers within schools and within the education system. Teachers are assisted through careful observation and feedback on their classroom teaching to move to new positionings that attribute under-achievement to problematic interactions and relationships occurring within the learning activities and pedagogies employed in their own classrooms.

The third project, AIMHI, was a project that involved eight schools established by the Ministry of Education in New Zealand as a part of its schooling improvement policy. Criteria for school participation included being in the decile one category (lowest socioeconomic status of the community) and having a high proportion of Pacific Island students. The aims of the project were to increase the attendance of Pacific Island students and to raise the level of performance of the schools, teachers and students in the areas of curriculum development, school management and community relationships. As was the case in corresponding New Zealand studies (see Bishop et al., 2002; Macfarlane et al., 2005), a context of care – between teachers and students, and amongst students – was critical.

The AIMHI study showed conclusively that in a caring environment, students felt safe and were more likely to contribute, to take risks and to manifest interest and enjoyment in their learning activities. Student motivation and attitudes were enhanced on account of a number of factors, including team building and cohesion early in the school year, a high level of planning and enthusiastic teacher support. Teachers modelled the desired behaviours and regularly made time to teach relationship skills. These teachers also orchestrated their classroom activities in such a way as to ensure smooth transitions, good tempo, and busy-ness. Students in AIMHI schools also responded well to routines, and openly respected teachers who took a no-nonsense approach to classroom issues and expectations. Humour was also of significance, and importance.

Macfarlane (2004) also studied three educational sites where Māori students were successfully engaged with curriculum and pedagogies that were culturally responsive: (1) a traditional wānanga, (a live-in workshop course in Māori martial arts), offered for older students displaying challenging behaviours by Māori elders from their own community; (2) a mainstream secondary school classroom; and (3) a mainstream primary school Māori enrichment classroom (in which students learned a little elementary Māori language and a little of the stories and traditions of the area). Across all three sites, Macfarlane noted the central and critical role played by *whānau* in establishing and maintaining effective home, school and community partnerships. Educators at all three sites were clearly 'listening to culture' (Macfarlane, 2000). In addition, all sites evidenced the quality of

manaakitanga (a context of care) for enhancing the overall well-being of their students.

In a review of nine New Zealand studies, Macfarlane (2003) synthesized some key factors of culturally responsive teaching, offering guidance to teachers seeking to respond to the challenge of working effectively in culturally diverse classrooms. Macfarlane reports that these studies placed varying degrees of emphasis on the connection between the behaviour of the student and the quality of learning interactions and relationships needed for successful academic achievement. Schools, teachers and their approaches to teaching vary widely in terms of the quality of their interactions and therefore in student learning outcomes for Māori and for other ethnic minority students.

The notion of a context of care is further illustrated within a report by Cooper et al. (2004). This report, *Te Rerenga ā te Pīrere* (The flight of the fledgling) is a longitudinal study of 111 *kōhanga reo* (Māori language pre-schools) and *kura kaupapa* Māori (Māori language primary school) students. This project is one of the first in-depth research projects of students graduating from *kōhanga reo* and *kura kaupapa* Māori. It chronicles their educational and social environments, and their learning. This project tracks the development and progress of three cohorts of students and is unique in that it reports on areas identified by those involved in these movements as the important features and goals of *kōhanga reo* and *kura kaupapa* Māori. Some of these areas were, for example, Māori language development, knowledge of *tikanga* Māori (Māori culture), and *pāngarau* (mathematics). In this study, students, parents, *kaiako* (teachers), and *tumuaki* (principals) were interviewed and the students also completed a series of assessment tasks largely designed specifically for this project. Teaching Māori language and culture in a culturally safe environment, and the development of a strong sense of pride and identity were perceived to be the main philosophies of the schools in this project. These philosophies were also cited as the main reasons why parents chose this model of provision of education for their children. It was of central importance to parents that the education being provided was *whānau* oriented. It is crucial to note here that today, as in the past, *whānau* remains one of the compelling forces that support the development of effective curriculum and pedagogy for Māori (Smith, 1995).

Effective curriculum and pedagogy for Māori are likely to be found in culturally safe learning environments where both the teacher and students engage in a reciprocal relationship of respect and understanding for and about one another (Macfarlane et al., 2005). Teachers demonstrate the concept of care in the classroom through giving support and nurturing (Noddings, 2002), through having high expectations of their students and through creating a culturally responsive learning environment (Bateman, 2005; Gay, 2000; Macfarlane, 2004). Two ethnographic studies, one in a

school in the USA and one in a school in New Zealand, were carried out by Cavanagh (2003, 2005) and these studies also illustrate the importance of providing caring contexts for students. Both studies demonstrated that culturally safe classrooms encouraged strong family input, reciprocal learning between students and teachers, and employed culturally grounded pedagogies such as inter-changing the roles of teacher and learner, as embodied in the concept of *ako*. *Ako* is a root word, seen as part of the work *kaiako* (teacher) and also as part of the word *akonga* (learner). Culturally safe classrooms also involved scaffolded tutoring where more-skilled students took responsibility for teaching less-skilled students (the concept of *tuakana-teina*), and a constructivist approach to curriculum delivery.

Constructivist approaches involve collaboration between teachers and students and take a holistic perspective based on collective learning, shared responsibility and ownership of learning activities (Bishop et al., 2002), and on authentic, place-based learning (Penetito, 2004). In constructivist classrooms, deep learning takes place because teachers adopt a position that regards students as autonomous and responsible learners. Teachers in these classrooms also provide students with opportunities for doing things differently, respect their students' creativity, and co-construct with their students a learning environment where students are allowed to be who and what they are. In these classrooms, Māori students do not have to leave their language and culture at the school gate. Their identity as Māori is acknowledged and respected, through the *manaaki*, the caring relationships established and maintained by their teachers. Because of their *whānau* relationships with their students and communities, *manaakitanga*, for Māori teachers and students, requires much more than 'relating to others', as indicated by the simple alignment of the two concepts in Table 1.

Whakawhanaungatanga (*building and maintaining relationships*)

Smith (1995) interprets *whānau* as a powerful concept that has ensured the survival of the language and culture from traditional times, and continues to offer solutions to contemporary crises, such as the disproportionate under-achievement of Māori students within mainstream New Zealand education. Smith further elaborates the concept of *whānau* in terms of its particular relevance to our understanding of knowledge, pedagogy, discipline and curriculum, within the context of *Te Ao Māori*:

- 1 The *whānau* concept of knowledge:
 - is regarded as belonging to the whole group or *whānau*, rather than being private or belonging to the individual;
 - is for the ultimate benefit of the total group;
 - can be shared for all to gain;

- is not essentially a credential for capital gain.
- 2 The *whānau* concept of pedagogy:
 - comprises core values (whanaungatanga etc.) that are taken as ‘givens’;
 - incorporates *tuakana-teina* as part of pedagogical framework;
 - requires that those with knowledge assist those needing and wanting to learn;
 - mixes local wisdom with global knowledge – not simply a retreat to the past.
 - 3 The *whānau* concept of discipline:
 - positions the total school as constituting a single *whānau*;
 - regards all parents as ‘parents’ to all children in the *kura whānau*;
 - involves teachers being called *papa* (father), *matua* (father or uncle), *whaea* (mother or aunty), *kōka* (senior woman or aunty);
 - regards learning and behaviour difficulties as a shared responsibility;
 - emphasizes that needs for discipline are different;
 - emphasizes that types of discipline are different.
 - 4 The *whānau* concept of curriculum requires that:
 - the Māori community has some measure of influence over what counts; what is included in curriculum;
 - the curriculum is reorganized to connect with interests, backgrounds of Māori learners;
 - that to be Māori is taken as ‘normal’;
 - the Māori worldview is reflected and reproduced within the school.

Table 1 shows that while connected with the proposed key competency of ‘relating to others’, *whakawhanaungatanga* involves more than this, and is deeper than this. It is about learning within and through the contexts of everyday human interaction and learning to take responsibility for supporting and caring for others. It goes well beyond acknowledging biological connections, however important these may be. Joseph Macfarlane (2003) and Bevan-Brown (2003) identify culturally related factors that may enable partnerships to operate effectively within educational contexts. One factor that is paramount is *whakawhanaungatanga* (building and strengthening relationships) and this involves reflecting the group’s worldview, cultural norms, expectations, lifestyle, communication and interaction styles, differential gender roles, spiritual beliefs, historical and geographical origins, *tuakana-teina* status, amongst other things.

In a Māori learning environment, *whakawhanaungatanga* may operate quite differently from the process of establishing relationships within a western/European worldview, because interpersonal boundaries are likely to be more fluid, requiring people to accept a high level of responsibility for each other's well-being. From the point of view of teachers establishing relationships with their students, boundaries between their personal and professional lives are likely to be blurred. *Whakawhanaungatanga* may engage teachers in providing food and transport, for example, for students and their families, in both school and community contexts. Teachers in Māori learning contexts are expected to carry out both nurturing and instructional roles, and are held to account for performing both of these roles, whether they are in *kōhanga reo*, *kura kaupapa*, *whare kura* or tertiary educational settings.

Rangatiratanga (taking responsibility for, and control over, one's own learning)

This construct concerns the sense of inner agency that comes from being accorded the respect of others and by their giving us manageable amounts of responsibility and choice. Because of this fundamental connection between one's individual and collective identities, and indeed because one's individual identity is shaped and formed by one's group identity, the two constructs of *rangatiratanga* and *whanaungatanga* are linked together alongside the key competency 'managing self'. This highlights a major difference in values between western/European and Māori and other indigenous peoples' worldviews on human development and education. According to Page and Berkow (cited in Robinson and Howard-Hamilton, 2000), 'the self is, perhaps, an indispensable concept for explaining how persons organize perception, encounter the world of experience, and maintain a cohesive image of identity' (p. 83). In New Zealand, and in many other western societies, the self is largely constructed within the context of individualism, and individual achievement. Within such an ideology, competition and domination (winning) are key cultural values and orientations that have a powerful influence in shaping curriculum and pedagogy and in designing learning activities.

The strong emphasis that the western/European worldview places on the individual may run contrary to Māori preferred values and practices. Table 1 indicates that the key competency 'managing self' is aligned with not one, but two Māori constructs, *rangatiratanga*, and *whanaungatanga*. This signifies that, in a Māori worldview, qualities such as personal autonomy, independence, leadership, and prestige are all learned and exercised within a social context in which people share a powerful collective identity. Personal autonomy, strength and leadership are always exercised within the context of *whanaungatanga*, of nurturing and caring relationships. The self

is therefore conceptualized within the context of the collective or community, and not as a totally autonomous and separate entity. In her biography published in 1938 (see Penniman, 1986), Makereti maintained that in traditional Māori society one did not think of the self per se, or anything to do with individual gain. The Māori thought primarily of their people, and were absorbed in the *whānau* (family), just as the *whānau* were absorbed in the *hapū* (sub-tribe), and the *hapū* in the *iwi* (tribe).

In contemporary times, a descendant of Makereti, Mita Mohi, exemplifies this phenomenon in word and in deed. The *pepeha* (traditional saying), 'Ko au ko koe, ko koe ko au – I am you and you are me', is an utterance Mita makes to *rangatahi* (young people) before the commencement of his *Mau Taiaha wānanga* (martial arts training programme) on Mokoia Island. This establishes *whānau* (kinship) relationships and teacher–student relationships of the highest order. This *pepeha* is also the underpinning philosophy of the *wānanga* (training) programme so that its meaning becomes part of the consciousness of all participants in the *wānanga*.

A Māori worldview involves a focus on all individuals reaching their highest potential for expanding and deepening their own talents and skills, preparing them to reach their goals and to ultimately make a difference in some areas of scholarship and life. However, as noted earlier, this focus must also be accompanied by a focus on all individuals fulfilling their responsibilities to work for the well-being and order of the group, as well as benefitting from the support and achievement of the group. Part of achieving *rangatiratanga* (chiefly) status involves striving for individual excellence while at the same time providing and caring for the community, and receiving the respect of the community.

Tatum (2001) identifies three processes that encourage the advancement in young people and these are of considerable importance in this context.

- *Affirming identity*: This means encouraging students and staff members to recognize and value their different identities as groups as well as individuals. This can include celebrating ethnic anniversaries and the contributions of people of different backgrounds and, also, learning about the history and struggles of one's own people.

Teachers affirm the identities of indigenous students when they acknowledge the icons, images, practices and stories of these students, within their curriculum and pedagogy.

- *Building community*: This means finding and building upon what we all share – for example, high aspirations for our children, the need for safety and security, the need to feel as if we are unified while still respecting our differences. The visioning process itself is a good example of building community because in seeking a shared vision, often the goal of articulating these differences is to seek a consensus.

However, as noted by Glynn, Berryman, Walker et al. (2001), there can be a sharp difference between attempts by people from a majority culture to build community and attempts by people from an indigenous culture to build community. Majority culture attempts often begin by simply asserting: 'We are all one people', (often with a sub-text that 'We are all the same'), while indigenous people might begin by first acknowledging differences rather than same-ness. 'You are different, we are different, but we can work together.' Western culture attempts at community building can be frighteningly impositional, while indigenous minority culture attempts are often more respectful.

- *Cultivation of student leadership*: This means creating conditions that allow students to empower themselves. If we simply impose our agenda of positive interethnic relations on students, they will not come to see this as part of their own work. Changing the structures of school so that there are multiple ways for students to acquire leadership skills and multiple leadership roles for them to play encourages more diverse student leadership and teaches critical democratic values.

Teachers from majority cultures can contribute positively to the cultivation of leadership among indigenous students when they take an 'unknowing' rather than a 'knowing' position, and ask their indigenous students to take a share in the teaching role and to teach other students, and teachers, about things that come from within their indigenous worldview.

Respect for and by the individual who is successful at 'managing self' is largely dependent on his or her state of *oranga* (total well-being) – a state that is only made possible where the *mauri* (life force) of the person is vibrant, where *wairua* (spirit) flows freely – allowing for the manifestation of *mana* (personal authority and dignity). *Oranga* will be achieved when all sides of the *Whare Tapa Whā* (a square/four sided structure), *wairua* (spiritual dimension), *hinengaro* (intellectual and emotional dimension), *tinana* (physical dimension), and *whānau* (relationship dimension), are held in balance (Durie 1994). In a similar way, Pere's *Te Wheke* model (1991) expresses a holistic health and education model – for sustaining self – through the metaphor of the octopus. Four of the tentacles reflect the cornerstones of *Whare Tapa Whā*, while the other four give substance to the importance of *mana ake* (status), *mauri* (life force), *hā a koro mā a kui mā* (breath of life coming from the *tipuna* (ancestors) and *whatu manawa* (emotional life). *Waiora*, or complete well-being, is said to be found when each tentacle, or dimension of well-being, receives sufficient sustenance. *Te Wheke* acknowledges the link between the mind, spirit and *whānau* with the physical world in a way that is seamless.

Whaiwāhitanga (inclusion: participating and contributing)

Table 1 shows that the key competency ‘participating and contributing’ is aligned simply with the *Te Ao Māori* concept of *whaiwāhitanga*. According to Grace (2005), *whaiwāhitanga* is about attaining a sense of place within the general scheme of things; it is about belonging. Ryan and Stiller (1991) contend that when students experience a sense of belongingness in a school context, they are more likely to respect and adopt goals valued by the school. In contrast, a context that does not allow for the expression of a sense of belongingness will diminish motivation and lead to alienation and poor performance. Wehlage et al. (cited in Alderman, 1999: 173) identified four ‘social bonds’ that connected students to the school.

- *Attachment*: Students are socially bonded to the extent that they have social and emotional ties to adults and peers in the school. This attachment is reciprocal: ‘The school/teacher cares about me and I care about my actions.’ Students have a vested interest in meeting expectations of others and abiding by the norms of behaviour expected in the school.

In a Māori medium learning environment, as noted earlier, this attachment would be enhanced by *whakapapa* (genealogy) and *whanaungatanga* (relationships). Many students would be connected not by interest or friendship alone, but by kinship also.

- *Commitment*: Social bonds are formed by commitment – a conscious decision by students about what they have to do to achieve the school’s goals (e.g. working in classes where they have no real interest). If students do not have hope for the future, however, commitment is more unlikely.

This social bond is critical and brings into play the role of accountability and the artistry of the teacher (Macfarlane and Bateman, 2005).

- *Involvement*: Student involvement in school activities, both academic and non-academic, increases the likelihood of bonding. If students are not active participants in school, they are more often disengaged as evidenced by their passivity.

Again, this social bond is critical and is best explained through the *whakatauki*: *tama tū, tama ora; tama noho, tama mate* (the one who is industrious, thrives; the one who is idle, withers).

- *Belief*: Students’ belief that an education is important and their faith in the school to provide them with an education is asserted by Newmann (1992) to be the bedrock of membership.

The first three factors (attachment, commitment and involvement) are somewhat dependent on this last one. This is also about a reciprocal relationship, requiring that teachers also believe that students are competent to learn and achieve the goals of school.

Within the Māori culture, a person's home *marae* (traditional land with meeting house) is their rightful 'place to stand', because they have *whakapapa* (genealogical) connections to the traditional ancestors of that place. Having a place to stand gives them the right to attend, and to participate in all cultural events belonging to that place. The concept of *whaiwāhitanga* suggests that students should be able to experience a similar sense of belonging and ownership for their classrooms and schools, and that this sense will come through active engagement and participation in learning activities that have authentic meaning for them. Inclusive education would have authentic meaning for Māori in mainstream New Zealand schools if Māori students felt that they were able to engage and participate on the basis of who they are, as Māori people, living in their own country.

In the context of the *kōhanga reo* (Māori medium pre-schools) and the *kura kaupapa* Māori (Māori medium primary schools) reported on in the *Te Rerenga ā te Pīrere* project (Cooper et al., 2004), *whaiwāhitanga* embodies these four 'social bonds' in a culturally specific way. In most of the *kōhanga reo* and *kura kaupapa* Māori, particular cultural knowledge and values were emphasized. These included *karakia* (chants), *pepeha* (tribal sayings), *whakapapa* (genealogies), *waiata* (songs), *pakiwaitara* (local stories), *mihi* (greetings), *whanaungatanga* (relationships), and *manaakitanga* (a context of care). Values such as *tapu* (sacredness), and *mana* (authority) were not usually taught formally at these ages, but were shown through modelling and discussions at relevant times. While lack of resources and support confront such Māori language education settings more than their mainstream counterparts (Bishop et al., 2001) these lacks are often offset by gains in terms of cultural competence. Cooper and his colleagues reiterate that *kōhanga reo* and *kura kaupapa* Māori both emphasize an holistic approach to a child's learning, by nurturing all aspects of a child's growth and development (see also, Durie 1994). This is compatible with the principles incorporated in *Te Aho Matua* (Mataira, 1997), the overarching curriculum framework for Māori language education contexts, and its philosophy that emphasizes personal, tribal and environmental connectedness while at the same time preparing young people to continue learning and to take on the challenges of modern society.

CONCLUSION

The exercise of considering how the key competencies approach to summarizing and prioritizing the values attitudes and skills within the New Zealand Curriculum Framework would make sense from within a Māori worldview proved to be a fascinating journey for the Commentary Group. The group found that the worldviews of Māori people in New Zealand

provide an extensive and coherent framework for theorizing about human development and education in this country, and is able to contribute strongly and positively to the development of a national school curriculum for the benefit all students. The numerous cultural constructs encountered within the work of a number of different Māori educators cohere around central issues to do with cultural identity (collective and individual), establishing and maintaining relationships, holistic understandings of human development and learning, and the need for active engagement and participation in learning through having a sense of belonging and a place to stand.

The five cultural constructs chosen for discussion in this article were placed alongside the five proposed key competencies, and their meanings were explored. Rather than serving as translations or 'Māori perspectives' on majority culture constructs, these five constructs stand tall in their own right, as coming from within a Māori worldview. While there is evidence of some commonality in meaning between particular key competencies and particular Māori constructs, there is more evidence of where the Māori constructs did not 'match', because they were coming from quite different knowledge and value bases, and their meaning within a Māori worldview was both wider and deeper than the meaning within the majority European cultural worldview. However, these differences in meaning and understanding should not be seen as sites of conflict, but rather as opportunities for improving and enriching the quality of education of all New Zealanders, though improving the quality of education for Māori New Zealanders. The potential benefits of such an approach within New Zealand education are seen in the various research projects reported on throughout this article. However, these approaches are certainly not exclusive to education in New Zealand. Similar benefits are to be expected from drawing on the strengths of the knowledge and pedagogies of other indigenous peoples to improve education theory and practice in other nations.

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