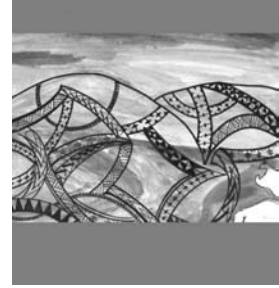


# A Māori Pedagogy: Weaving The Strands Together



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## ABSTRACT

Literature on Māori pedagogy up until now has been disparate, some dealing with methodological issues, some with learning theory, some with environment and so forth. This article seeks to build one comprehensive picture of Māori pedagogy by weaving the myriad disparate themes in the literature into one unifying model. It is based on an EdD study researching Māori teacher educators' perceptions of pedagogy.

## Research paper

**Keywords:** *Ako, kaupapa Māori, Māori pedagogy, relational ontology*

## INTRODUCTION

This article sets out to describe a Māori pedagogy. It is based on a review of the existing literature, enhanced and extended by interviews conducted as part of an EdD research project. The interviewees were Māori and taught in a Māori tertiary institution – Te Wānanga o Aotearoa. They were all teacher educators working in sub-degree and degree pre-service programmes for early childhood, primary and tertiary teaching. Eight educators were interviewed: six were interviewed in pairs, two individually. Two interviews were held with each individual or group. This structure was utilised in order to develop what Bishop (1996) describes as a “spiral discourse” whereby there can be ongoing and collaborative analysis and interpretation of meanings. The research had both Massey University Human Ethics Approval and approval from Te Wānanga o Aotearoa Kāhui Rangahau. Perhaps, surprisingly, there is a reasonable body of literature on Māori pedagogy, most generated within the last twenty years. The material is quite disparate in nature however - some dealing with methodological issues (Bishop, 2000; Metge, 1984); some dealing with theoretical issues (Royal-Tangaere, 1997); some with the learning environment (Cormack, 1997), and some with wider societal factors (Bishop & Glynn, 1999; Pere, 1991; Pihama, Smith, Taki, & Lee, 2004).

This article seeks to weave these multiple strands into one coherent whole through the development of a model that also illuminates the relationships between the various strands.

## DEFINING PEDAGOGY

Watkins and Mortimore (1999), in a review of the literature, posit three elements to their description of pedagogy. These elements are:

- The teacher.
- The learning situation or context.
- Theories about learning and learning about learning.

They point out that theirs is just a beginning description and must be developed.

Following the work of MacNeill, Cavanagh and Silcox (2005), the wider socio-political context within which the pedagogical enterprise takes place can also be added for a more holistic definition of pedagogy. Critical theorists such as Freire (1996) highlight the importance of curriculum, both hidden and overt, and how these are generated as essential to any definition of pedagogy. Teacher behaviours and characteristics are also commonly discussed in pedagogical contexts (Hattie, 2003; Nuthall, 2002) while it also needs to be specified that pedagogical settings are not confined just to the school (Hemara, 2000; Pere, 1991).

Pedagogy might therefore be defined as encompassing a variety of teaching and learning methods and other teacher behaviours and characteristics grounded in theories of student learning and influenced by internal and external socio-political contexts. This definition has been depicted in the following model.

While the definition illustrated in Figure 1 is essentially a generic one, universal concepts are more applicable when referenced to the local context. In a metaphor drawing on Māori cosmology, Papatuanuku (Earth Mother, the world) becomes the socio-political and cultural context, and pedagogy becomes a subset within this world,

that is one of the forests of Tāne, (a departmental god and one of the sons of Papatuanuku). The learning theories are the ground of the forest and the other four aspects of pedagogy are trees within it. This metaphor is rich enough to show the complex links and relationships between the various pedagogical elements. Pedagogy is fundamentally grounded within its parent culture and affected by it in various ways – analogous to climate, geography, geology and so forth. At micro-level, the trees within the forest are fundamentally affected by the ground in which they grow (i.e. the learning theories that are the current dominant discourse) and the micro-climate of that area as well as by each other. This model depicts pedagogy as one large, ever-changing ecosystem.

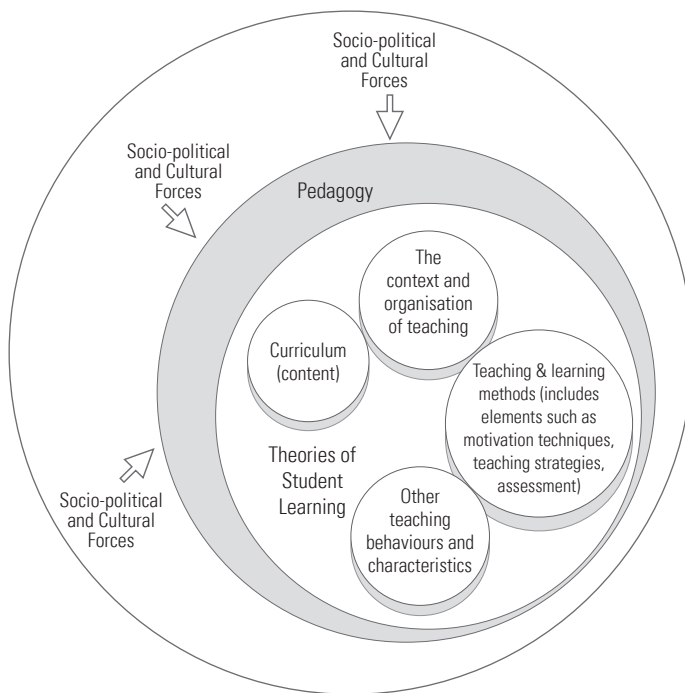


Figure 1. Universal model of pedagogy.

The following discussion takes each of the strands depicted in the model and describes them in more detail with reference to the literature and the discussions with the teacher educators from Te Wānanga o Aotearoa. It also illuminates the relationships between those strands.

### STRAND ONE: SOCIO-POLITICAL AND CULTURAL FORCES – PAPATUANUKU

The literature paints a picture of a society which has a well-articulated set of concepts, customs, practices, institutions and values, all of which can inform curriculum content (what is to be taught) as well as methodology (how it is to be taught). Some of the most commonly articulated of these concepts, customs, practices, institutions

and values are tapu (sacred), noa (profane), mana (power, prestige), tika (right), pono (true) and aroha (love, compassion) (Bishop, 2000; Durie 2003; Pere 1991; Roberts & Wills, 1998; Royal, 2003; Waikarepuru, 2004).

Other aspects of culture that are important include tribal knowledge and history, Māori arts, Māori-specific subject knowledge and the Māori language (Easton, Anderson, Averill & Smith, 2005; Hemara, 2000; Metge, 1984; Penetito, 2004; Royal, 2003; Webster & Tangaere, 1992).

Whānau (family, extended family), whakapapa (genealogical links), and whenua (land) are cultural concepts which appear axial to Māori culture (Fitzsimons & Smith, 2000; Roberts & Wills, 1998). All three are closely linked with identity and the first two with both the essentially collective orientation of Māori thinking and practice, and a way of thinking about the world as continuous, dynamic and evolving (Roberts & Wills, 1998). Māori cosmologies indicate complex realities which are unable to be apprehended by the five senses but, nevertheless, impact strongly on the sensory world (Royal, 2003). Knowledge is precious, specialised and some of it is not necessarily universally available (Smith, 1992; Stokes, 1992). The truthfulness of a statement is ascertained using the criteria of reasonableness, precedent, experience (Roberts & Wills 1998) and spiral discussion (Metge & Waititi, 2001).

Māori society and culture cannot be described as though it were unchanged from first landfall until now. Māori are very aware of the presence of non-Māori in Aotearoa/ New Zealand and characterise this presence as having had, and continuing to have, many negative outcomes for Māori (Walker, 1996). With this in mind, words such as “emancipatory”, “transformative” and “decolonising” are used to describe examples of best practice in modern Māori educational institutions (Pihama, Smith, Taki & Lee, 2004). These institutions also promote the agency of the individual in overcoming social and domestic barriers to advancement (Stucki et al., 2006). Such thinking has a profound effect on pedagogical practices and beliefs.

### STRAND TWO: THEORIES OF STUDENT LEARNING – THE GROUND OF THE PEDAGOGICAL FOREST

The teacher educators were asked questions to probe their theories of student learning. The majority indicated a socio-constructivist orientation with its emphasis on new learning occurring

through the interaction of teacher, learner and the learner's peers. They articulated this orientation most clearly in the importance they placed on high-quality relationships between themselves and their students. This is opposed to behaviourist, humanist or developmental learning theories which focus more on the learner in isolation (Biddulph & Carr, 1999).

In seeking an explanation for this learning theory preference, a relationship can be discerned within the model between theories of learning and socio-political and cultural characteristics such as the importance of whānau, whakapapa and whenua which would also appear to have similar implications for teaching and learning as a socio-constructivist approach. The contention of this thesis is that the importance research participants placed on socio-constructivism and high-quality relationships is more fundamental than simply support of a current educational discourse, but rather, is consistent with the epistemology and ontology of a Māori world-view. It is maintained that the emphasis participants placed on relationships within their teaching reflects a relational Māori ontology which reaches beyond learning theories and is fundamental to who they are socially, politically, spiritually and culturally.

### **STRAND THREE: TEACHING AND LEARNING METHODS - A TREE IN THE FOREST OF TĀNE**

#### **Relationships**

The most important theme which weaves together the myriad methodological discussions described in the literature and amongst research participants is relationships. This can be described as a focus on the quality of the relationship between teacher and learner. Bishop and Glynn (1999) urge the educator to use "whānau" or family as a metaphor for relations in the classroom, and Ka'ai (1990) describes the relationships between kohanga workers and children as ones of "aroha" and "whanaungatanga" (family relationships). Certainly, if it is valid to extrapolate pedagogical principles from the informal socialisation of children as Hemara (2000) and others have done, then modelling a pedagogy on the family must be fundamental since socialisation in pre-European times was, in the main, conducted within the immediate and extended family.

Perhaps a logical extension of this is the emphasis in the literature on any form of group work:

- Mixed ability grouping (Metge, 1984).
- Single ability grouping (Bishop et al., 2003).
- Discursive teaching (Gorinski & Abernethy, 2003).
- Interactive teaching (Ritchie, 2003).

- Co-construction through problem solving (Bishop et al., 2003; Ritchie, 2003).
- Collaboration (Zepke & Leach, 2002).
- Cooperation (Bishop et al., 2003; Rubie et al., 2004).
- "Groups compete, individuals cooperate" (Cormack, 1997, p. 163).

#### **Holism**

The concept of holism also weaves a number of themes within the literature together. These include Durie's (1994) Whare Tapa Wha (the square building) model of well being; curriculum integration (Bishop, 2000) and the use of methodologies and techniques which engage the whole learner (Hemara, 2000; Metge 1984).

Interviews with the teacher educators from Te Wānanga o Aotearoa both supported and extended discussions in the literature. Some spoke specifically of the Whare Tapa Wha model and described how they taught it in class. They also reported using it as a model for how they treated the students as adults and how they thought of their class. The notion of koakoā (joy, humour) discussed by research participants is another expression of this holistic view of the student because its use attempts to engage the whole student, not just their cognition. The myriad methodologies described by participants and discussed further below, cover cognitive, emotional and social aspects of the person as well as various learning styles. Participants commented on visual and hands-on activities, music, waiata (song) and stopping, looking and listening. Activities and beliefs which can only be described as spiritual in nature featured far more prominently in research-participant discussions than in the literature, most particularly the practice of beginning and ending each day with karakia (prayer).

To borrow from the Whare Tapa Wha Model (Durie, 1994) which argues that all aspects of a human being need to be taken into account within the concept of 'well-being', not just their physical health, so holism within the Māori pedagogy described by the literature and the research participants might be illustrated in the following way:

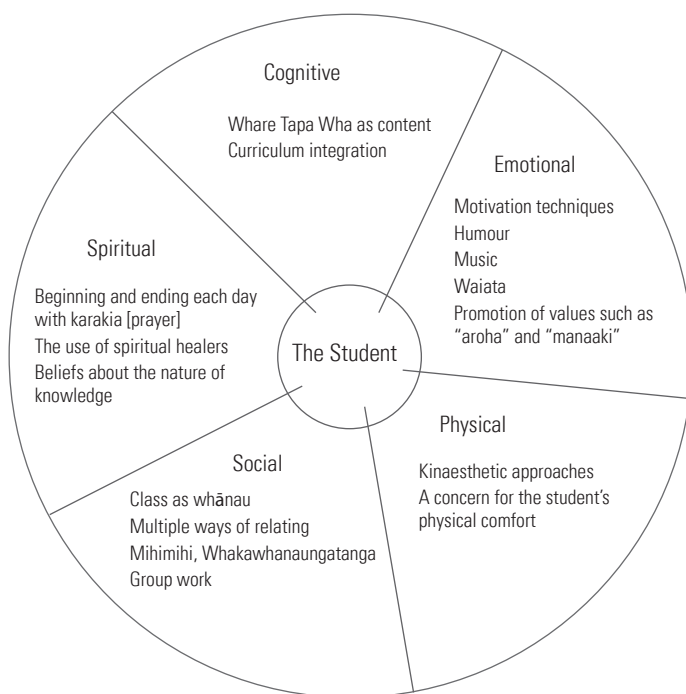


Figure 2. An holistic methodology.

### Reflection

Reflection is another umbrella concept. Pere (1991) situates the learner at the centre of the teaching and learning activity. Bishop (2000) expands on how this might be made a reality by emphasising the importance of the learner being in control of the learning process or the construction of meaning. Bishop urges teachers to interact with students in such a way that new knowledge is co-created. He references Lauritzen and Jaeger (1997), who state that one of their main beliefs about curriculum is that it "should be designed to embrace diversity of all kinds and should use the richness of each learner's prior knowledge and experience to the maximum benefit of the community of learners" (p. 27). According to Zepke and Leach (2002), reflection is the process which allows this to happen. They say "reflection enables [the learner] to learn from their experience and prior knowledge. In this process the teacher is no longer the 'body of knowledge'. She becomes one of the many resources for the learner to tap in to" (p. 18).

Reflection is also fundamental to two major methodologies described in the literature – narration or storytelling (Bishop, 2000; Royal, 2003) and an activities-based or modelling approach (Hemara, 2000; Hohepa, 1992). The importance of reflection is evidenced by the importance some writers attach to clear and effective feedback and assessment (Bishop et al., 2003; Rubie et al., 2004). Another aspect of placing the learner at the centre of the teaching/

learning process is the emphasis in the literature on catering for the different ways people supposedly learn (Bishop et al., 2003; Ritchie, 2003).

### Pragmatism

However, it is important to note a strong sense of pragmatism in the literature. There is very much a sense in which methodologies are chosen for their appropriateness given the context and the subject matter even though they may at first seem to fall outside methodologies generated within the above categories. In this area are approaches such as rote learning (Hemara, 2000; Metge, 1984); learning at night and in the early morning (Hemara, 2000); exclusive enrolment practices (Hemara, 2000; Royal, 2003) and the use of anger as a motivation technique (Hemara, 2000). Also included here are the descriptions of the use of internationally utilised second language learning techniques such as those described by Hohepa (1992), Martin, McMurchy-Pilkington & Martin (2004), and others.

### STRAND FOUR: CURRICULUM CONTENT – ANOTHER TREE IN THE FOREST OF TĀNE

Many definitions of curriculum (McGee, 2001) emphasise curriculum as a didactic tool which, when properly developed and organised, enhances teaching and learning. Such definitions mask the fact that curriculum is fundamentally about cultural reproduction. Thaman (1993) on the other hand defines curriculum as:

Selection from the culture of a society, of aspects which are regarded as so valuable that their survival is not left to chance but is entrusted to teachers for expert transmission to the young (p. 249).

At a macro-level a more important question than the "what" of curriculum content is the "who". Whomever has control over curriculum development has a massive impact on what culture is reproduced. After a period of almost no control over curriculum content in the education of their children, there has been increasing Māori control over curriculum content particularly in Māori medium environments since the 1990s (Stucki, 2010). This has brought about significant progress in re-establishing Māori curricula in all sectors of education. There are ongoing issues, however, such as:

- The continued heavy influence of mainstream priorities (Smith, 1992).
- Definitions and delineations such as 'Māori science' and what this includes (Smith, 1992).

- What traditional knowledge to include and what to leave out as being no longer of significance (Smith, 1992) and the related issue of the development of new knowledge being still only in its infancy.
- Ongoing issues of quality in the tertiary sector around pathways, staircasing and culturally-appropriate quality assurance (Kingsbury, 2006).
- The danger of misappropriation of Māori cultural and intellectual capital brought about by processes of commodification (Smith, 1997).

### **STRAND FIVE: OTHER TEACHER BEHAVIOURS AND CHARACTERISTICS – ANOTHER TREE IN THE FOREST OF TĀNE**

There are a number of lists within the literature of the characteristics of a good teacher, for example: Howe (1993); Nuthall (2002), and the Interim Framework of Professional Standards for Teachers (in New Zealand Educational Institute, 2007). All are systematically developed and comprehensive. Of these, however, only Howe's (1993) list was based on work with Māori. In their influential study, Bishop, Berryman, Tiakiwai & Richardson (2003) have outlined six dimensions of the effective teacher in their Te Kotahitanga Effective Teaching Profile. The dimensions were developed mainly from interviews with Māori students as to the characteristics of effective teachers, supporting this with material from interviews with parents, principals and teachers, and then synthesising it with the results of similar studies.

The six dimensions are:

1. Manaakitanga: They care for the students as culturally-located human beings above all else.
2. Mana motuhake: They care for the performance of their students.
3. Ngā tūrango [sic] takitahi me ngā mana whakahaere: They are able to create a secure, well-managed learning environment.
4. Wānanga: They are able to engage in effective teaching interactions with Māori students as Māori.
5. Ako: They can use strategies that promote effective teaching interactions and relationships with their learners.
6. Kotahitanga: They promote, monitor and reflect on outcomes that in turn lead to improvements in educational achievement for Māori students (Bishop et al., 2003, p. 108).

In addition to the above, teacher educators in the research interviews identified additional behaviours and characteristics around cultural adaptability and the development of personal agency in students. To encompass these elements in the research, a sub-category under Mana Motuhake called "whakamana" was introduced. It is argued that these are not merely miscellaneous add-ons but are fundamental characteristics and behaviours exhibited by the teacher-educators in responding to the social reality in which their students find themselves. Aspects included within this seventh category include:

- Developing personal agency.
- Being able to adapt to life in situations where Māori is not the dominant culture but still finding "spaces" in which to be Māori.
- Developing a balanced approach to the experience of Māori marginalisation and racism in general i.e. not being either too passive or too aggressive.

### **STRAND SIX: THE CONTEXT AND ORGANISATION OF LEARNING – THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT – ANOTHER TREE IN THE FOREST OF TĀNE**

When asked about the learning environment research participants' main focus was the physical environment and the need to cater for the physical comfort of learners. However, there was also considerable discussion of other aspects that contributed to a good environment. These included:

- The way the kaiako (teacher) comes across emotionally (Bishop et al., 2003).
- The social milieu (Durie, 1994).
- Cultural environment (Cormack, 1997)
- Intellectual environment (Bishop et al., 2003).
- Spiritual environment (Pere, 1991).

While none of these aspects of a good environment are unique to Māori, some of the expressions of them are. Concurring with the literature, it was important to the participants that the environment reflected Māori culture, not just in material ways such as with Māori-themed visual displays and Māori music but that it was also "safe" in other domains as explained by research participant D:

I notice the question here on tikanga (custom) and to me tikanga is about tika (rightness, correctness) aye, doing what's right and proper given the context that something has happened in. And so I think that tikanga is always important and therefore making sure that people are safe. You know people can't learn if they don't feel safe ...



(Interviewer) And ... mihimihi is an important part of that?

Oh it is.

### WEAVING THE STRANDS TOGETHER

The above discussions can be summarised by “filling in” the universal model of pedagogy illustrated in Figure 1. As can be seen in Figure 3, few of the elements or the strands within them, particularly within the pedagogy circle, are unique to Māori. Taken as a whole, however, it is obvious that a unique mechanism of cultural and social reproduction exists which is much more than the sum of its parts.

### CONCLUSION

Given the Māori pedagogy described in this article and illustrated above, a set of questions has been developed to help the educator to reflect on their own practice and identify areas that might be modified in order to facilitate learning for their Māori students. If there is a higher congruency between home culture and school culture then learning is likely to be more powerful for Māori students (Bishop. 2000). It is hoped that the following questions will provide a tool for increasing home-school congruency and incorporating aspects of Tane’s forest.

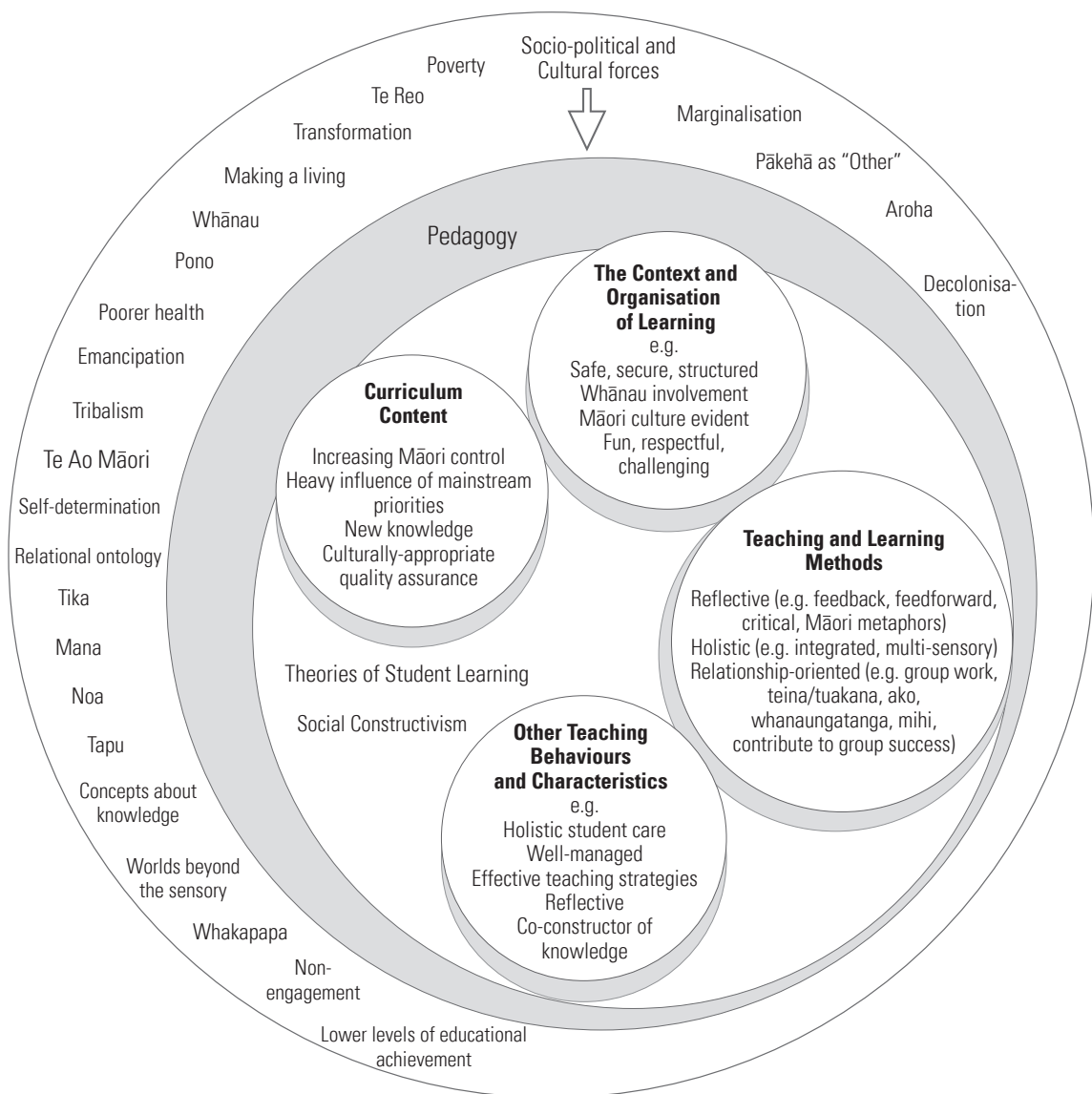


Figure 3. Applied universal model of pedagogy.

## Te Ao Māori

How well do I know and engage with Māori culture?

In what spaces am I and the Māori students I teach able to be Māori?

How well do I understand the history of colonisation and its effects on Māori?

How do I realise my commitment to student welfare?

How do I conscientise and decolonise?

What are my values as a teacher?

## Teaching and Learning Methods

How important for me is the development and maintenance of strong respectful relationships with students?

How does this inform my practice?

Am I informed about the lives of my students beyond the institution?

Do I relate to them in ways other than merely as a teacher?

Do I have well-articulated, mutually respectful forms of conflict resolution?

In what ways is my teaching “student centred”?

What personal systems do I have in place which enable me to change my practice according to student feedback?

What reflective tools do I use in my teaching?

How important is an holistic approach to me?

Do I try to utilise multiple approaches that cater for different learners’ needs?

How do I engage with the non-academic aspects of my students’ lives – the physical, emotional, social and spiritual aspects?

Do I utilise the strength of the group to effect individual achievement?

Do I view the students in a collective as well as an individual sense?

Do I utilise groups and in what ways?

Do I utilise a tuakana/teina approach?

## Theories of Student Learning

Can I articulate my own theories of learning?

## Other Teacher Characteristics and Behaviours

How do I define and practise the following: manaaki; building mana motuhake; managing ngā tūranga takitahi and mana whakahaere; ako; kotahitanga; whakamana?

## The Context and Organisation of Learning – Learning Environments

How do I manage the following aspects of my

educative environment and to what extent is it Māori in character: physical; emotional; social; cultural; intellectual and spiritual?

## Curriculum

What Māori knowledge do I consciously include in my teaching?

What is my commitment to finding out more?

What is my commitment to Māori language revitalisation?

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## AUTHOR'S PROFILE

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He Pākehā tēnei e tuhi atu nei. Heoi anō, ko Ngāti Hine o Hine-ā-maru i te Tai Tokerau te ūkaipō taku reo Māori.

I have worked mainly in Māori immersion primary education for the past 18 years as teacher and principal in South Auckland, te Tai Tokerau and Waikato. I spent three years at Te Wānanga o Aotearoa, a Māori tertiary institution where I was a senior manager in the area of pre-service teacher education. I recently completed a doctorate through Massey University in the area of Māori pedagogy. This article is a synopsis of that thesis.

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