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TE HAUTAKA MĀTAURANGA O WAIKATO

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# SHARING, LISTENING, LEARNING AND DEVELOPING UNDERSTANDINGS OF KAUPAPA MĀORI RESEARCH BY ENGAGING WITH TWO MĀORI COMMUNITIES INVOLVED IN EDUCATION

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**ABSTRACT** *This paper is a culmination of common understandings that were elicited from two pieces of research: “The Impact of the BHP New Zealand Steel Mining on the Tangata Whenua and the Environment” and “The Impact of Māori Medium Education within a Mainstream Secondary School on the Lives of its Participants, in particular the Teachers, Caregivers and Students”. It was at the conclusion of each research project and as a consequence of informal conversations and discussions that this paper evolved. The paper discusses shared understandings in the context of Kaupapa Māori research methodology and key findings from the two research projects.*

## KEYWORDS

Kaupapa Māori research methodology, Mana whenua, Whakapapa, Whānaungatanga, Ahi kā, Kanohi ki te kanohi, Kanohi kitea

## INTRODUCTION

Ko Taupiri te maunga  
Ko Waikato te awa  
Ko Waikato te iwi  
Ko Potatau te tangata  
Ko Tainui te waka.

Taupiri is our mountain  
Waikato is our river  
Waikato is our tribe  
Potatau is our leader  
Tainui is our waka.

The evolution of our pepehā above (tribal saying) captures traditional ways of knowing. Within the realms of te reo Māori (Māori language), this knowledge and pedagogy have been preserved.

Both authors will connect to Ao Māori ki te Ao Rangahau (the world of the Māori to the discipline of research) in writing about two projects: “The Impact of the BHP New Zealand Steel Mining on the Tangata Whenua and the Environment” and “The Impact of Māori Medium Education in a Mainstream Secondary School on the Lives of its Participants, in particular the Teachers, Caregivers and Students”. The learning and research experiences of both authors have culminated in a number of understandings, six of which are elaborated on: mana whenua, whakapapa, Whānaungatanga, ahi kā, kanohi ki te kanohi and kanohi kitea.

Kaupapa Māori research methodology emphasises a collaborative approach to power sharing and, therefore, demands that ownership and benefits of such a project belong to the participants. This methodology addresses the locus of power within the research by referring to issues of initiation, benefits, representation, legitimisation and accountability.

Initiation allows the researcher to enter into relationships that incorporate the cultural aspirations of all the participants. As Bishop (1998) states, “This process is participatory as well as participant driven” (p. 204), wherein the researcher becomes the deliverer of the message not the creator. Initiation addresses the ownership of knowledge. Therefore, both the participants and researcher benefit from the research project.

The issue about who benefits is addressed by the creation of a support group, which Bishop (1998) refers to as a whānau. A whānau is “a location for communication, shared outcomes and for constructing shared understandings and meanings” (p. 105). Therefore, the narratives of the two research projects that we discuss in this article were about the participants’ active involvement in achieving a shared vision, rather than a research topic constructed by us as researchers. This relationship between participants and researchers was maintained through the use of shared understandings. These shared understandings are developed in a collaborative and mutually cooperative way. As a result, representation of the voices of all participants occurred.

Representation is viewed as a shared voice, where “the task of the whole whānau [is] to deliberate the issues and to own the problems, concerns and ideas ... where all work for the betterment of the [vision]” (Bishop, 1998, p. 207). The process of checking and supporting shared visions in Kaupapa Māori research is termed legitimisation. This aspect addresses the question of who says that this knowledge is true.

The Kaupapa Māori position regarding legitimisation is based on the notion that the world constitutes multiple differences and that there are different cultural systems that legitimately make sense of and interact meaningfully with the world. Kaupapa Māori research, based on a different world-view from that of the dominant discourse, makes this political statement while also acknowledging the need to recognise and address the ongoing effects of racism and colonialism in the wider society. (Bishop, 1998, p. 112)

This explanation is supported in Heshusius’ (1994) claim that “reality is no longer understood as truth to be interpreted but as mutually evolving” (p. 18). So in

Kaupapa Māori research, validation and legitimisation of reality and truth are continually and collectively unfolding and constantly being subjected to analysis and rigour through collective reflections. Once the collective reflections were completed, we moved on to the next aspect of Kaupapa Māori research methodology: accountability.

Bishop (1996) asks, “Who is the researcher accountable to? Who is to have accessibility to the research findings? Who has control over the distribution of knowledge?” (p. 22). Under Kaupapa Māori research, the researcher is accountable to the participants. The participants decide who has access to the research findings and also who has control over how the distribution of this knowledge is to happen.

These Kaupapa Māori research concepts of initiation, benefits, representation, legitimisation and accountability are all based on the researchers’ shared understandings. These shared understandings are *mana whenua* (the right through *whakapapa* to be guardians of the land), *whakapapa* (genealogy), *Whānaungatanga* (relationships), *ahi kā* (the well-lit fires of home), *kanohi ki te kanohi* (face-to-face) and *kanohi kitea* (the seen face). These shared understandings are “epistemologically based within the Māori cultural specificities, preferences and practices” (Irwin, 1992, cited in Bishop & Glynn, 1999, p. 63). These shared understandings create our system of ideas intended to explain our realities.

## SHARED UNDERSTANDINGS

Crucial to our story as Waikato descendants are our geographical tribal boundaries, designated by prominent features such as land and waterways. The significance of these boundaries is captured in one of our *pepehā* (tribal sayings):

Mōkau ki runga, Tāmaki ki raro  
Mangatoatoa ki waenganui  
Parewaikato, Parehauraki  
Te Kaokaoroa o Pātetere.

In accordance with Māori protocol, the geographical boundaries of the *pepehā* above are in relation to the way *Te Ika a Maui* (the North Island) is positioned. The head of the fish (*ki runga/above*) is the Wellington region; the tail of the fish (*ki raro/below*) is the Northland region. This is in direct contrast to the geographical interpretation of non-Māori. Therefore, the translation of the *pepehā* reads:

Mōkau above, Tāmaki below,  
Mangatoatoa in the centre,  
Parewaikato, Parehauraki  
The extended arms of Pātetere. (McKinnon, 1997, p. 19)

It is through *pepehā* that the researchers identified with *Papatūānuku* (mother earth). Both researchers were members of the respective *iwi* (tribes), *hapū* (sub tribe) and *whānau* (research family) involved with the research projects. It is with this affirmation of identity that the researchers reached these shared understandings.

The five concepts of Kaupapa Māori research, initiation, benefits, representation, legitimisation and accountability, have been written about in this

article in the context of these six shared understandings. The first of these understandings is mana whenua.

### **Mana Whenua**

Hokia ki ō maunga kia purea koe e ngā hau a Tāwhirimātea.  
Return to your mountains so you can be cleansed by the winds of  
Tāwhirimātea. (Te Tira Haere o te Whare Wānanga o Waikato, 1983,  
pp. 73-75)

Each researcher continually returned to the region in which both research projects were located. This action was seen as important. The frequent returning to the two respective regions was important as both research projects evolved and were nurtured and developed in the context of these two communities.

The wind, referred to in the whakataukī (proverbial saying), is used as a metaphor to represent the stories that the participants shared. The winds also symbolise the spiritual dimension of being cleansed, re-energised and re-connecting with the hau kāinga (home area).

Therefore, the representation, accountability and legitimisation are located through mana whenua (“having power associated with the possession of lands” (Barlow, 1991, p. 61)). Mana whenua encompasses the kaitiaki (guardians) of the whenua (land). Both research projects were whānau based and whānau driven. Both projects represented the home people. This meant that accountability rested with the respective whānau. Their stories in the context of mana whenua and their ancestral links and identity to the whenua were viewed as legitimate.

One project was based on the impact of the economic development of a natural resource on a Māori community. The other project was the implementation of a Māori medium education programme in a mainstream secondary school. The initiation of both research projects came from the respective whānau allowing the researchers access to their stories. As a result of sharing their narratives, whānau were able to outline the beneficial aspects of their experiences.

In regard to the first project, the conservative and traditional value that the local community placed on mana whenua was, and still is, practised. The kaitiaki role is actively practised by the whānau in terms of governing the quantity of raw material that is extracted. The employment and economic aspects are also benefits. For the second project, allowing the whānau the opportunity to choose between mainstream and Māori medium education programmes was an option never offered before. As a result, the children, who gained high recognition through their various successes, locally and regionally, became recognised. This pride also celebrated mana whenua.

The ancestral links with the land were captured by narratives on what feats and events tūpuna (ancestors) were involved in in the past. The names and meanings of place names and geographical features are continual testimony to the next understanding: whakapapa.



### **Whakapapa**

In terms of initiation, the acceptance by the participants of the whakapapa (genealogical ties) of each of the researchers was important. The whakapapa ties of the respective researchers to their particular participants allowed the researchers to gain access to the shared vision and to initiate their individual research projects. As advocated by Bishop and Glynn (1999) and MacFarlane (2004), whakapapa allows one to express one's identity.

A benefit for the participants from each of the research projects was the reaffirming of each participant's whakapapa. Each participant was able to identify with the land, spiritually, culturally and physically: spiritually by knowing whānau who are buried in the region; culturally by having been involved in hui (meetings) in the past; physically by spending time in the area before, during and after the respective research projects.

In both research projects, each of the participating groups had to come together at varying times. During those meeting times, members from the participants were able to help encourage collective sharing of whakapapa information, historical accounts, progressive narratives and collective decision-making. All of the participants worked towards the legitimisation of information and knowledge according to their particular perspectives. However, both participant groups were involved in debating and confirming or contradicting decisions made. As a result, a clearer and defined shared vision evolved. Therefore, both participating groups shared with the researchers their tikanga (customs). These tikanga were handed down by word of mouth and shared through wānanga (collective group meetings).

At all times, the researchers were accountable to the participants. Accountability involves open and transparent communication in sharing information related to the shared vision. Whānau, hapū and iwi have the mandate to make decisions. The continued interrelationships with whānau are crucial in accountability. Whānaungatanga, the practice of being whānau, is the way to allow this to happen.

### **Whānaungatanga**

The initiation of the respective research projects was due to the past involvement of the researchers in the shared visions. The researchers' tribal affiliations, kura (school), marae and community involvement allowed them access to the information from the respective whānau. The values of trust, loyalty, dedication, commitment and aroha (respect) were earned by the researchers and reciprocated to the researchers by the participants.

Both research projects were supported and sanctioned by these small communities. The first project was whānau driven from the outset to the present day. Whānau involvement has ensured active participation in decision-making and employment opportunities. Whānaungatanga was further affirmed by the whānau benefiting in terms of economic and employment opportunities for members of the hapū (sub tribe). This newly found initiative reignited the return of whānau to their homelands and the more active involvement in tribal and marae matters. The

revitalisation of te reo me ōna tikanga (language and customs) began a welcome return to the small community.

The benefits of the second research project were further reaffirmed by the educational ‘success’ of the first intake of students into the whānau programme. The success of whānau members being proud, of being supported, of being Māori in a mainstream secondary school was the foundation of positive results. Sporting, cultural and scholastic achievements, beyond what previous generations before them – for example, their parents – had achieved, were realised. The whānau programme was representative of all the whānau in the community, whānau who had fought for the establishment of Kōhanga Reo (early childhood Māori language nest) and Kura Kaupapa Māori (Māori immersion primary school) in their town, wanting a continuation of this type of learning in a secondary school situation.

The economic use of a natural resource and the revitalisation of te reo me ōna tikanga to the benefit of whānau, hapū and iwi have been common stories shared by many indigenous people throughout the world. Offering a different world view from that of the dominant discourse has meant that indigenous knowledge is becoming more widely validated and universally accepted within the circles of research. This aspect raises the issue of accountability. This is a cultural journey that all indigenous researchers inevitably walk. Accountability to the whānau, hapū and iwi definitely takes priority over the conventions that research protocols dictate. The next understanding, ahi kā, reaffirms this aspect.

### **Ahi Kā**

The significance of home areas is captured in this the fourth understanding, ahi kā. Ahi kā is translated to mean “the well-lit fires of the home area” (Walker, 1987, p. 43). Here, the implication is the ability to keep these fires of the home area lit, which meant that by continually returning to the home area the researchers were adding their contribution to the home fires. As a result, they were accepted and acknowledged for their contribution to the shared vision. So the initiation of the research project happened.

Implicit in the definition of ahi kā is the concept of representing the stories of the guardians of the home fires, the respective whānau. Ahi kā further alludes to Mahuika (Guardian of Fire) and signifies that a person with ahi kā status has the kaitiakitanga (guardianship) status of having, through whakapapa, the right to tell the stories and share the knowledge of that particular area.

The collective power and control of this knowledge is exemplified in both the researchers’ belief that the two sacred kohatu (stone pillars) at Maketū marae, Kāwhia – Puna whakatupu tangata and Hani a te wae wae i kimi atu – designate the length and present location of the Tainui canoe. It is this kind of knowledge, or way of knowing, that can be easily decontextualised and misinterpreted as farcical. This does marginalise and further undermine the knowledge of the tangata whenua (hosts). However, the story of Puna and Hani has endured the test of time. Their stories and meanings are just as valid today as they have been in the period since the final berthing of the Tainui waka. Hence the accountability and legitimisation of such knowledge is intact.

The benefits for the community associated with the mining company ranged from the creation and leadership of a management committee and economic gains to the employment of the tangata whenua and the professional development of many of the participants. The benefits for the Māori medium education programme were in the whānau offering a choice for their children's education between mainstream and Māori medium education. The benefit of choice was not available prior to the whānau programme commencing. The understanding of ahi kā ensures that these benefits keep the home fires lit.

As a result of ahi kā and the continual revisiting and sharing of stories, the research whānau will always remember the researchers' faces. Whenever either researcher has returned to the region, the kanohi ki te kanohi (the face-to-face contact) has been another important understanding. The continued returning to the region, the shared stories, the sustained relationships, the continued revisiting and retelling of the stories occur because of the presence of particular faces.

### **Kanohi Ki Te Kanohi**

Māori have a saying, "He kitenga kanohi, he hokinga whakaaro": "When a face is seen, after a period of absence, memories associated with that face return". This approach to research stimulates the participants' memory, which may not have happened if either one of the researchers had not been facilitating the project.

The kanohi ki te kanohi (face-to face contact) allowed the sharing of stories to occur. The physical closeness and presence of the researchers with whānau during the gathering of the stories helped initiate both research projects. The kanohi ki te kanohi understanding sanctioned specifically who the whānau members were in the research projects and to whom representation of the whānau research was to be designated; that is, the researchers. The whānau were safe in sharing their stories with the researchers and knew that the researchers would respectfully sanction the sharing of their stories with others.

The trust amongst the whānau and researchers ensured the integrity of the stories was paramount for both projects. Kanohi ki te kanohi mandated the type of accountability and legitimacy that is lifelong and never ending. Hence the long term benefits of always telling and refining the stories would always occur whenever the respective whānau met.

It is at this juncture, with the continued Whānaungatanga that will occur in the future, that the kanohi ki te kanohi will lead into the next understanding: kanohi kitea, the seen face.

### **Kanohi Kitea**

Kanohi kitea (the seen face) is the final, but by no means the least, important common understanding of our two research projects. This kanohi kitea understanding became a reality because of the time the two researchers spent within the community and with the participants before, during and after the research project.

Kanohi kitea signified that the two researchers, through doing the hard work with each of the communities, were further accepted by the participants. This

highlighted the Kaupapa Māori research concepts of accountability and representation for the respective research projects. The two researchers were able to allow the participants the opportunity and the freedom to tell and retell their stories to someone that the participants felt comfortable and safe with, someone with whom they could share their experiences, someone who was willing to listen to the stories and who would appreciate their perspectives (Bishop, 1996). This aspect of *kanohi kitea* highlights the Kaupapa Māori research principle of legitimisation.

The benefits for the community associated with the mining company allowed the management committee to implement strategic planning for educational and economic development. For the Māori medium education programme, the benefits of local proximity allowed this type of education to contribute to the *kanohi kitea* understanding, as people involved with the *whānau* programme were regularly seen to be associated with and supporting this programme.

As mentioned throughout this paper, both researchers had acquired these understandings from their particular research projects. The key findings of our specific research projects are a way of demonstrating the diverse nature of our two Māori communities and the very different educational contexts that the researchers were both privileged to be part of.

## **FINDINGS**

When examining the findings of the first research project on the impact of the BHP New Zealand Steel mining on the *tangata whenua* and the environment (Kana, 2003), the researcher discovered the relevance of Chomsky's (1979) adage: "Questions of language are basically questions of power" (p. 191). In this research, the obvious presence of the mining company and the almost exclusive use of the English language, along with the urbanised influence of the returning younger members of the *whānau*, had an impact on the lifestyle of the community. Many of the youth who had recently returned home had limited appreciation of *te reo me ōna tikanga*.

After being for a period of time on their *Turangawaewae* (ancestral lands), the same younger *whānau* members transformed their thinking and behaviour by reaffirming their *Whānaungatanga* and *whakapapa* with their home environment and *whānau*. This new focus in life has meant they are now fostering and improving their *reo me ōna tikanga*.

Another environmental impact on the *tangata whenua* was the damming of a main waterway and the construction of a new roadway. The dam affected the ecology, the natural water flow and the migration of fish species. The introduction of a new road has resulted in more people and more pollution. However, the economic spin offs are the supply of electricity and easier access to and from the community. As a consequence, an affordable and prosperous country lifestyle now exists.

On reflection, there were three passages that, for the researcher, captured important learnings from the second research project on the impact of Māori medium education in a mainstream secondary school on the lives of its participants, in particular the teachers, caregivers and students (Tamatea, 2001).

The establishment of the whānau programme in a mainstream secondary school offered members a false sense of security. Even though many positive and proactive initiatives were happening for Māori in this learning environment, the responsibility at governance level and, therefore, the future of the whānau programme rested with the Board of Trustees, in consultation with the Principal. The inability to ensure continuity and stability of the whānau programme has meant its demise.

Another important point was captured in the narrative of one of the research whānau members:

Ehara ko te tamaiti i roto i te pūnaha, ko te pūnaha i roto i te tamaiti  
..., translated to mean: It is not the child who should be in the system  
but the system within the child [that should be acknowledged].  
(Tamatea, 2001, p. 52)

Child centred learning is pivotal when facilitating learning. This practice seems to be marginalised in secondary schools as opposed to primary schools. Children come through primary school learning usually feeling positive and cared for. This praxis changes at most mainstream secondary schools, where curriculum and examinations take priority over the child.

Another important point was reflected in the following comment:

When a whānau parent asked a mainstream teacher how the whānau children fared in mainstream subjects, the response was: “Not as good as some, better than some, but as good as most.” The answer was great to hear ... the whānau unit were developing leaders, the pupils were better behaved and there was little or no truancy ...  
(Tamatea, 2001, p. 57)

Having the opportunity to facilitate and exercise learning through the medium of te reo Māori within a mainstream secondary school was a positive and proactive way of implementing these adages. This programme was also seen as the vehicle for the continuation of this type of learning experienced by students in early childhood (Kōhanga Reo) and primary school (Kura Kaupapa) Māori medium education.

The measure of success in terms of the participants' stories went beyond the classroom experiences and was instrumental in their life choices for themselves and now their children. The shortcomings of this and similar programmes exemplify the claim made by Chomsky (1979) and others (Bishop, 1999; Irwin, 1992; Smith, 1999) that language is about power. This Māori medium programme at this particular secondary school was not continued and was not available for the generations of students that followed.

So has Māori medium education had an impact on mainstream education or is the reverse true? In this particular instance, mainstream management decisions, based on Western paradigms, influenced the demise of a potentially progressive and exciting Māori medium education programme.

It is at this point that the researcher would have to support the whenua, whakapapa, Whānaungatanga, kanohi ki te kanohi, kanohi kitea and ahi kā

understandings experienced in the Kōhanga Reo, Kura Kaupapa and more recent Wharekura (Māori immersion education at secondary school) developments. When these programmes are at their best is when Māori who are familiar with these understandings are also in decision-making positions.

Māori are at a crossroads. We need to determine just how mainstream we want our reo and our tikanga to be. Alternative and different educational opportunities such as Kōhanga Reo and Kura Kaupapa are indications of a response to this question and to this adage: “Questions of language are basically questions of power” (Chomsky, 1979, p. 191).

## CONCLUSIONS

The researchers identify with their pepehā, and it is through these tribal sayings that the researchers claim Waikato affinity. These pepehā assisted in the first shared understanding between the two researchers, which is mana whenua.

Whakapapa played a pivotal part in our having access to the communities and the information that our participants were willing to share. Whakapapa signified the identity of each participant in the context of his or her ancestral connections and position within the respective communities. These stories involving mana whenua and whakapapa formed the uniqueness of the research projects.

In order for these two established understandings to evolve, interrelationships with others needed to happen. Both of the researchers had to be accepted into the two whānau. As part of this acceptance, it was incumbent on both researchers to physically return to the communities and undergo the study in that context. It would have been inappropriate, both ethically and culturally, not to do so. This understanding is known as Whānaungatanga.

It was this context of returning to their respective communities that helped the researchers keep the home fires burning and leads to the next understanding, ahi kā. As mentioned earlier, ahi kā signifies the lighting of fires and the presence of people being at home.

The Whānaungatanga link with whānau happens in many ways, two of which are outlined in this paper. The kanohi ki te kanohi and the kanohi kitea understandings are obviously intertwining. The continuous kanohi ki te kanohi meetings eventually evolve into the kanohi kitea understanding.

In the context of Kaupapa Māori research, kanohi ki te kanohi confirms the initiation of a research project. The kanohi kitea understanding is inclusive of who benefits from the research, to whom the project is accountable, who the research project represents and the legitimisation of the stories that were shared.

The two researchers have come to the conclusion that, in order to gain quality decision-making in the use of a natural resource or in the development of a Māori medium education programme, one needs to have a clear perspective on these six shared understandings when engaging in a relationship with Māori.

In summarising, we issue a challenge that is appropriately captured in the following whakaara or words of cautious encouragement. These words symbolise our uniqueness as descendants from the Tainui waka. These words also encapsulate and metaphorically represent our first journeys into the discipline of research.

Elaborating on only six of our many understandings, the two indigenous researchers were guided through these uncharted waters of academia to arrive at this point of their journey.

Toia Tainui, Tāpotu ki te moana,  
Mā wai e tō?  
Mā te whakatau.  
(Haul, Haul Tainui, down to the sea,  
Who shall haul her?  
Te whakatau.) (Te Hurinui-Jones, 1995, p. 43)

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