REMEMBERING THE DEEDS OF MĀUI

What messages are in the tuakana–teina pedagogy for tertiary educators?

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Abstract

With vocation level programmes of the tertiary sector in Aotearoa New Zealand entering a new era of strategic visioning, one of the aims for educators is to seek ways to improve the educational engagement and success of Māori learners. Revitalising Māori teaching and learning pedagogies, like the tuakana–teina pedagogy, has been touted as a positive strategy for educators to achieve such interactions with their Māori learners.

In doing so, we are prompted to remember the deeds of magical Māui, the teina of the Māui brothers of ancient Māori mythology. As the youngest brother, Māui had a tempestuous relationship with his older brothers, but he managed to negotiate and mediate certain positions so that they achieved wondrous tasks. Māui's exploits are reflected upon as a guide to new interpretations and applications of tuakana–teina relationships in foundation level programmes of adult education.

Four messages are discussed in this position paper; remembering the tuakana–teina pedagogy, creating "spaces" to talk about tuakana–teina, and exploring blended forms of the tuakana–teina pedagogy. The last message is cautionary urging educationalists to consider the end goals of the tuakana–teina interaction. By revisiting the kaupapa Māori (Māori principles of shared values, beliefs and philosophies) will enhance the educational achievement of adult Māori learners.

Keywords

Māori learners, tuakana–teina model, Māui, kaupapa Māori

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Introduction

Magical, mythical, marvellous Māui, hero of this land…
Māui … the youngest of five brothers, the teina
Māui … who fished up Te Ika-a-Māui, the North Island of Aotearoa New Zealand
Māui … who slowed the sun across its fiery celestial journey, the problem-solver,
the planner, the leader, the cajoler, the negotiator

The ancient narrative of Māui-tikitiki-a-Taranga
recalls the mistaken belief of Māui to be still-born
where with grief she wrapped him in her top-knot of hair
and cast him upon the ocean.

Found by his grandfather
challenged by his older brothers as an intruder
teased and taunted by his tuakana
questioned of his origin
Māui retained his space and right to be

Māui considered the aggressive and fiery, but short pathway of the sun
he planned and schemed to teach him to slow down for the benefit of all the people
he implored and negotiated the trust of his tuakana, leading them to act together
he bargained with the sun to convince him of their need
Māui achieved his goal!

Poem inspired by Hawaiian composer/singer Israel Kamakawiwo'ole (1959–1997)[1]

The deeds of Māui are not just the quaint stories written about in children's storybooks in Aotearoa New Zealand schools; they also have the potential to provide a creative and metaphorical point of reference for tertiary educators in vocational and foundation level programmes. For the policymakers in adult education, the Māui exploits contain philosophical messages which we can draw from in our visioning and strategic planning in education. Remembering Māui's positive deeds provides a platform to examine the tuakana–teina (senior–junior) model currently being discussed in the Aotearoa New Zealand tertiary education sector; this article adds to that critical reflection. Several discussions and perspectives will be reflected upon in this paper in order to bring new light on a teaching/learning pedagogy that draws from Te Ao Māori (the Māori world).

In providing background for this paper, two briefs are offered here to clarify its context. The first describes the tuakana–teina relationship from a traditional Māori position; this is message number one presented here. By remembering and re-articulating the traditional understandings of tuakana–teina, we are reciting Māui's genealogy. We are reminded of traditional messages gifted by our tipuna (ancestors); of the tikanga (associated practices of social position and responsibilities) that are still important to Māori people when talking of whakapapa (genealogical order), in one's whānau (family),

1 The first line of the poem is inspired by indigenous Hawaiian composer/singer Israel Kamakawiwo'ole (1959–1997). The song title was "Hawaiian 'Suppa man' (Superman)" written and first performed in 1993. I composed the rest of the poem.

hapū (clan), and iwi (tribe). The second brief overviews the vocational training landscape in Aotearoa New Zealand in which the tuakana–teina pedagogy is applied. The intersection of these two contexts is clarified here, and further explored. These explorations are described in this paper as the philosophical and applied "messages" for the tertiary education sector.

Continuing the metaphorical reference to Māui and his exploits, the second message of this paper is sign-posted as "creating spaces to talk about tuakana–teina". Just as Māui questioned his birthright, so we question the spaces that were created to explore the tuakana–teina pedagogy with vocational tutors. One particular professional development contract opened up such a space and is shared here.

Further reflection on Māui's actions to slow down the sun for the betterment of all people is continued. By alluding to the thinking and planning, the emerging scholarship surrounding blended forms of methodologies is acknowledged here. Message three of this article addresses "blended forms of the tuakana–teina pedagogy", and addresses some considerations for vocational tutors. Methodologies that are recognisable tuakana–teina in nature are defined here, offering thoughtful challenges to the academics and practitioners alike.

The final message is drawn from the allegorical reference running through this paper; an important proviso is signalled by "Māui … he kōrero whakatupato! / words of caution!". Alerting tertiary educators to consider carefully the intersection of blended practices from the Māori worldview, and the non-Māori worldview. The "kōrero whakamutunga" concludes the discussions in this paper.

Message 1: Remembering the tuakana–teina pedagogy

The tuakana–teina pedagogy has its underlying philosophy in traditional Māori society; based on whakapapa (genealogy) and mana (social prestige) of people. Oral traditions and cultural practices inform us that tuakana–teina interactions were determined solely by genealogical order of birth. Māui-tikitiki-a-Taranga was the last born, the youngest, the teina.

As Williams (1985) defines, a tuakana is "an older brother of a male, an older sister of a female and a cousin of the same sex in an older branch of the family" (p. 445), and a teina "as a younger brother of a male, a younger sister of a female and a cousin of the same sex in a younger branch of the family" (p. 410). This natural structuring, in effect, distinguished the paired relationships of "senior" and "junior" between people and things. The tuakana–teina relationship perpetuates itself through succeeding generations for any one particular lineage, as did the relationship for Māui-tikitiki-a-Taranga with his older brothers. Being a teina, however, freed him from the responsibilities and expectations of the elder brothers—the expectation to whaikōrero (speak formally on the marae), the expectation to provide food, the expectation to protect the hapū in times of danger. Māui-tikitiki-a-Taranga was free from these responsibilities and expectations; he was free to experiment, to think creatively, to be playful, to plan and plot, as he did when he schemed to slow down the sun's aggressive pathway.

In traditional Māori society, social position and mana of a person was determined by the degree of whakapapa and blood lines, and the tuakana–teina standing of a person (Buck, 1949; Mead, 2003). Simply, status was accorded to the tuakana before the teina, and it accounted for the structuring of reciprocal relationships between kin members of descent groups, tribal groups, and Māori and their environment (Salmond, 1991, p. 348). Interpersonal relationships and interactions between whānau, hapū and iwi were for the enhancement of the mana and well-being of the people, and never a direct act of self-adulation. Tuakana were expected to be knowledgeable of intricate genealogical connections between whānau, hapū and iwi, to have a high level of diplomacy

and negotiating skills, to have the interests of the collective at heart, to demonstrate patience and conciliatory abilities to arbitrate through the relationship complexities that may arise, and to lead the people by example.

Taking into consideration the two factors of whakapapa and mana, we can arrive at a definition for the tuakana–teina pedagogy that is useful in the vocational levels of tertiary education. To reiterate, "tuakana" in this context refers to the senior, more experienced person, and the "teina" refers to the junior, or less-experienced person. From the Māori worldview, the tuakana vocational tutor will always hold the mana of the selected vocational field; for example, as a trained and experienced electrician. Māori pedagogy can be utilised to exemplify the mana of the tuakana (tutor) with the teina (apprentice) in mutually beneficial ways that uplift the mana of both tuakana and teina, and of the training organisation.

Vocational training landscape in Aotearoa New Zealand

After two centuries of an education system modelled after an English model, the tertiary sector in this country is in the midst of a new strategic direction. Māori are a critical part of that vision, in the policy-making, the visioning, the pedagogy and the practice.

In 1996, the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS, 2001) first indicated low levels of Māori literacy and numeracy. A decade later the Adult Literacy and Life Skills (ALLS) survey entrenched this position even further for Māori. At a time when Māori were languishing in the lower levels of achievement for literacy and numeracy, fresh approaches were being sought to alleviate this position. Following government policy, the Tertiary Education Strategy (TES), introduced in 2009, meant a major change of direction in policy, pedagogy and practice in adult education. Amongst other visionary foci, it resulted in a determined commitment to … "develop the skills, competencies and knowledge needed for Māori to participate in the economy and in society" (Ministry of Education, 2009, p. 7).

There is an emerging dialogue of traditional Māori teaching and learning pedagogy enhancing policy and practice for tertiary educators. One such approach has come from within vocational training programmes of the tertiary sector itself, providing the opportunities for reflection by Māori educators to be creative and thoughtful. It has permitted the time and space to remember the lessons of our tipuna to recall ancient narratives, give them fresh meanings and interpretations, and adapt them for current situations to assist in positively transforming the educational achievements for Māori.

Reflecting on the deeds of mythical Māui is considered here to be an act of "decolonising the mind", of freeing the mind of the constraints of an educational history that has largely marginalised those same Māori learners from gaining successful educational achievement. In the same vein, it can also be an empowering philosophical tool to open the minds and hearts of all educators, who are keen to assist in developing new pedagogies that address this dilemma for Māori; to work together with non-Māori educators in defining and writing about the shape and form of these new pedagogies. In the words of Linda Smith (1999, p. 144), it is a process of "reviving, reframing, envisioning, re-creating, and re-sharing" with the wider (tertiary) community, in positive and empowering ways. Done in the spirit of aroha (love) and manaakitanga (consideration of others), it is presented here as a mana-enhancing exercise, whereby the power relations of all participants are enriched and enhanced. This paper is one such offering to that time and space of creative thought, and this constitutes message number one of this position.

Message 2: Creating "spaces" to talk about tuakana–teina

The ancient narrative of Māui-tikitiki-a-Taranga
recalls the mistaken belief of Māui to be still-born
where with grief she wrapped him in her top-knot of hair
and cast him upon the ocean.

Found by his Tangaroa – God of the sea
challenged by his older brothers as an intruder
teased and taunted by his tuakana
questioned of his origin
Māui retained his space and right to be. (Pomare, & Cowan, 1987)

Questioning the origin and source of ideas is similar in the way Māui's older brothers probed his birthright, and we give like attention to the tuakana–teina pedagogy. As mentioned earlier, Māori adults have been over-represented in the lower levels of English literacy and numeracy statistics. Part of the strategic vision of the Tertiary Education Strategy 2010–15 is to "enable Māori to enjoy education success as Māori" (Ministry of Education, 2009, p. 6). This has enabled vocational tutors to explore and adapt new–old pedagogies to enhance their classroom practice. The Māori tuakana–teina pedagogy has provided fresh energy in adult education, providing for more rewarding educational engagement between learner and tutor, and between learner and learner.

In 2009, the Tertiary Education Strategy 2010–2015 included the introduction of a series of professional development workshops. These provided a framework for tutors to find out the demands of a programme, and the demands on the learner to better inform the decisions for improved teaching practice, known as "The Learning Progressions"[2] in vocational programmes (like building, stone masonry, bar skills and hospitality). The workshops included carefully considered and reflective teaching–learning pedagogies that included the Māori worldview. By consciously and deliberately writing explicit and comprehensive messages about Māori teaching and learning methodologies, a "space" was created for dialogue to explore the possibilities for new adaptations to the tuakana–teina pedagogy. Inclusion of a DVD titled "Māori Pedagogy", which included the tuakana–teina model, gave further impetus to the developing dialogue.

In 2010, a tertiary partnership was entered into by a mainstream university and a whare wānanga (indigenous university) to facilitate a series of workshops (literacy, numeracy and Māori pedagogy). Facilitating and delivering workshops with vocational tutors, the collaborative partnership provided a further "space" to practise, to reflect, to critique, and to construct new ways of teaching and learning from a Māori worldview. The relationship was conducive to providing an environment where active and willing reflective practitioners, both Māori and non-Māori, were willing partners to engage with each other. By exploring fresh transformative practices that blended practices like the tuakana–teina pedagogy with other modes of learning, it added educational enhancement and access for adult Māori learners.

In creating "spaces" to talk about the tuakana–teina pedagogy we must also ask of each other the hard questions. Tuakana–teina is not just a description of engaging with people. By questioning, "How it is done? Who does it? Why? At what levels of the training organisation? Who benefits?", we reveal the true dynamics of the inter-personal relationships. Then, by discussion, by renegotiation, by challenging the underlying philosophies, can a true teaching–learning environment be re-created for

2 Learning Progressions (LPs) at the foundation level of the New Zealand Curriculum Framework (NZCF). The foundation level refers to levels 1–4 Unit Standards that compose the vocational-type qualifications. The Learning Progressions clarified the skills required for each of the seven strands of learning (literacy strands of reading, writing, listening and speaking, and the numeracy strands of number, shape and space, and statistics).

optimum learning for adult Māori learners, and for all learners. This then, is one of the explicit messages of the tuakana–teina pedagogy.

Message 3: Blended forms of the tuakana–teina pedagogy

In remembering and reviving the lessons from Māui's exploits, this discussion continues to draw out the symbolic reference to Māui's deeds reflected by his actions to slow down the sun for the betterment of all people. As imagined, Māui's relationships with his brothers were not always harmonious, and his older siblings were probably more often frustrated and angry at the antics of their youngest brother. He schemed and cajoled his older brothers to do his bidding. This form of negotiation and mediation can be applied to the education sector in focus. By metaphoric association, the emerging scholarship surrounding blended forms of methodologies that are recognisable tuakana–teina in nature are defined here. They offer thoughtful challenges to academics and practitioners alike.

Two current theoretical positions in the tertiary sector are described here, pedagogies which align themselves to the tuakana–teina model. They reflect the extent of creative thinking, just as Māui did, in their interpretation and application in educational settings. The first examines tuakana–teina in the context of relationships-based practices. The next discusses the power relationships between the tuakana and the teina. The last describes an applied model of tuakana–teina in terms of demonstrating a skill or technique. Reminiscent of traditional practices of tuakana–teina as described earlier, the "space" now becomes negotiated between the expert and novice.

Tuakana–teina relationships

Tuakana–teina relationships, in a tertiary educational context, can be viewed as being closely aligned to culturally safe practices that "enable Māori students to be whom and what they are" (MacFarlane, Glynn, Cavanagh, & Bateman, 2007). This practice resonates well with the Tertiary Education Strategy which helps to inform the professional development of, and practice of vocational tutors in the tertiary institutions. As well as promoting cultural practices, this framework is underpinned by whānau and whanaungatanga between tutor and learners, and between learners themselves. Seen as a key motivator for learning, it is described as "relationships-based" practices, a structure that encourages reciprocal interactions between the tutor and students and students with students, similar to tuakana–teina relationships.

Distinguishing between being a tuakana (senior) and teina (junior), one current perception adds that it also describes a tuakana as an "experienced person" in an intimate relationship with a teina who is the "in-experienced person" (Hook, Waaka, & Raumati, 2007). This paired relationship can be adapted to a group relationship as well, as in a vocational tutor with a number of apprentices. It is all well and good to articulate the above intentions, but what do they look like? What do they sound like? What do they feel like? Who should define the rules for engagement? Every tertiary organisation is responsible in creating time and spaces for its whānau—management, tutors and learners—to talk and communicate what these are for them, and for finding shared spaces and terms to work in.

In this context learners are encouraged to be role models of behaviour and expectations for their peers, to mentor younger and inexperienced learners in skills, and to assume leadership roles. More specifically, it includes welcoming the learner, developing an early personal rapport, helping them to feel successful about their learning to the end of their course, treating them fairly in an open and honest manner, giving them feedback, and making learning fun (MacFarlane et al., 2007). The possibilities for this relationship to be realised in the tertiary

sector is endless, so long as the relationship is defined willingly and openly by the people involved.

Power relationships between tuakana and teina

When Māui-tikitiki-a-Taranga decided on a plan to convince his tuakana to join him; he must have done some deep and thoughtful strategising to talk them around to working collaboratively. Four older brothers would not, immediately, be influenced to leave their responsibilities to entertain their impetuous, and sometimes irritating young brother. Māui would have had to expend time and energy to frame the benefits of their cooperative plan in a way that his tuakana would view the plan as being theirs. These were the actions of a charismatic person who knew how to enhance the mana of other people, all the while convincing them to do his bidding.

Managing relationships like the tuakana–teina one in a vocational setting is complex in itself. A key issue raised in the literature relates to the issue of power dynamics that play out between the tuakana (tutor) and the teina (student) in teaching adult learners in the tertiary setting (Grant, 2003). Defined in Māori cultural terms, the power relationships pertain to those things which "can be" controlled and owned and those things which are "too senior" or "too great in status" to be controlled or owned. (Muru-Lanning, 2009, p. 36). For example, when the tutor is of younger age than the learner, the relationship is altered because of the age difference, or the perception of tuakana–teina. By mediating this dynamic sensitively, a clear teaching–learning pathway could be made possible. At the same time, the mana of both tutor and learner needs to be maintained, concluding with a comfortable closure to the process.

What has become apparent is the complexity of a raft of power dynamics that contribute to potential relationships; some of these being age, gender, ethnicity, and culture (Pope, 2006). Add to this mix the dynamics of sexual orientation, religious preference, learning styles and biorhythms. Compounding this mix are the hidden roles that tutors find themselves in, not only as teachers, but as sexual-health advisors, counsellors in study skills, transporters, financial advisers, mediators, and team-builders. Their un-written job description can include reviewing and re-writing learning content, to life-coaching, to supervising other classes,[3] among many other such criteria. These roles can have both a positive and negative impact on the power relationships, adding multiple layers of relationship complexities that impact on the balance of power of tuakana–teina within any one relationship. Managing and navigating the complex dynamics within organisations, learner achievement can be accelerated by the quality of such relationships in the learning environment, and therein lies message number three of this article.

Message 4: He kōrero whakatupato! Words of caution!

The same sentiments applied to the Māori worldview of tuakana–teina are similar to the Pākehā worldview of mentoring models; both wanting the best for the individual being mentored. However, they are distinctive in their end goals (Hook et al., 2007). In the Māori worldview the purpose is to always uphold the mana of the people involved; whereas the Pākehā worldview generally enhances only the mana of one individual, or is realised as an "output", an "outcome" or "enhancement" to the professional curriculum vitae. But by noting these differences, and creating spaces to discuss them openly, the possibilities open up for honest dialogue, reflective teaching practice,

3 Such descriptors were shared from the experience of the author from facilitating "Learning Progressions" workshops in over 50 workshops nationwide in the tertiary sector since 2009.

and creative fusions of melded worldviews that benefit both tuakana (tutors) and teina (learners). With effort, time, and willingness, new adaptations of the tuakana–teina model in education are possible.

The last message inherent in this discussion urges the return to kaupapa Māori (Māori principles of shared values, beliefs and philosophies). Several commentaries (Hook et al., 2007; Ratima & Grant, 2007) acknowledge the cultural differences of these perspectives, and offer useful conceptual tools with which to think about tuakana–teina, and other mentoring processes for tertiary educators. They add a necessary critique for the tertiary sector in realising educational success for Māori (Bishop & Glynn, 1999; Pihama, Cram, & Walker, 2002; Robust, 2006; Smith, 1999). These further discussions, however, are not gleaned in this paper, and this article invites more dialogue amongst Māori tertiary educators.

Kōrero whakamutunga. Conclusion

The metaphoric reference to Māui and his exploits provides a platform to reflect on and adapt the cultural philosophies that guide our lives. This paper examined the messages inherent in the tuakana–teina pedagogy, sourced from the philosophies in Te Ao Māori, but relevant for vocational tutors and educators in the foundation level of the New Zealand tertiary sector.

The inevitable process of change and adaptation includes acts of reviving and recalling, as in the lessons of the ancient narrative of Māui-tikitiki-a-Taranga and his teina relationships with his older brothers. By reframing and reinterpreting teaching–learning principles from within Te Ao Māori, like tuakana–teina, sharing these in positive and empowering ways is possible. Melded with mentoring models from the Pākehā worldview, and done in the spirit of aroha and manaakitanga, more rewarding educational engagement for Māori learners in the tertiary is possible. That was one of Māui's legacies!

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