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An evaluation of Kaupapa Maori art curriculum for tangata whaiora, Gisborne

Cherie Te Rore

Te Puna Hauora O Te Raki Paewhenua
cherieterore@xtra.co.nz

Maori centred approaches to therapeutic interventions are developed in the first instance, in response to needs and aspirations that participants present. The development of an art curriculum, based upon reflection throughout the programme of the collective whanau of facilitators and students, has enabled an 'action research' element to the work. The purpose of this curriculum is to challenge perceptions of isolation, and renegotiate the pathway to growth within our community (Fredericks, 2009). The process utilises a Maori-centred approach that is familiar to participants, but relatively new in the context of mainstream adult mental health service provision. Work undertaken in the series of 'art projects', has facilitated a process that acknowledges whanau as the fundamental model for assessment, delivery and evaluation. Whanau as a model has supported cohesion of ideas and strengthened connection within the group of facilitators and learners. The reciprocity of whanaungatanga provides a basis to support the fundamental praxis of adult learning theory, that participants are best empowered when the learning context includes their realities (Mezirow, 1990).

Introduction

Maori centred curricula are developed in response to needs and aspirations that tangata whaiora present. The interventions gain credence when critiqued in view of existing literature that supports development of modes of provision of mental health services, responsive to objectives expressed by Maori (Durie, 1997, 2004; Cherrington, 2002; Cunningham & Durie, 2005; Kingi & Durie, 1997). An art programme designed to provide opportunity for education, healing and growth is presented as a case study, including assessment and evaluation methodologies that reflect kaupapa Maori philosophy and practice. The study presents a Maori - centred model based upon the author's experience of working in similar contexts within two sectors – that is, service provision for mostly Maori in mainstream education and health institutions. In the latter setting – a mental health activities centre – adult learning theory and indigenous art therapy provide the vehicle to facilitate a Kaupapa Maori approach to support tangata whaiora towards greater wellbeing and recovery.

The intention of the art curriculum is to lift morale and confidence of adult participants, by directly engaging with and within our community. The ultimate goal is that participants go forward beyond our organisation, with tools that will help them recognise a place in the world. There is a spatial perception of difference, and of being outside of the community (Fredericks, 2009). This is interesting when I consider that the Tairāwhiti region has the highest Maori population per capita – approximately 50% - and that our participants (85% are Maori) come from within this rohe. My summation is that the experience of the 'institution' of mental illness must impact an isolation that overshadows the person's life, superseding

connectedness of whakapapa and whanau. This programme seeks to dispel those perceived barriers to connection and belonging within our wider community, and to utilise the strength of whanaungatanga as a pathway of education and healing.

The activities centre provides an intermediary function for tangata whaiora that are referred for support towards recovery and re-integration into society. Located centrally in the Gisborne business district, the services are nestled between primary and secondary care facilities. Team members present an inter-sectoral service, providing educative programmes based on goals expressed by tangata whaiora. Housing and vocational services located in the centre, provide inter-agency support to find and maintain adequate housing, training and employment.

The imperative to support tangata whaiora towards recovery and greater community connectedness is the impetus for evolution of an art curriculum that incorporates adult learning theory and Kaupapa Maori ideology and practice. The programme seeks to address perceived internal barriers to recovery including self-stigma and isolation.

The experience of cultural alienation of tangata whaiora, presents a most compelling incentive to find joyful ways to reconnect with whakapapa, and inclusive experiences of whanau and belonging. Deinstitutionalisation that commenced in the 1970s, has affected an alienating experience for many tangata whaiora. Limited resources to support the re-integration of tangata whaiora often had the impact of greater isolation. Families were ill-equipped to cope with the needs of whanaunga that were set adrift into the community (Durie, 1997). A Toi Maori curriculum can impact a re-connection of whanaungatanga and whakapapa. Dialectic engagement facilitates a process for inclusive whanau programme evaluation (Ministry of Health, 2008).

Development of an art curriculum to re-negotiate 'place' within our wider community is intended to give participants greater confidence in belonging. In turn, it is envisaged that our participants will have better access to services that our community has to offer, including education and work. Opportunities for study and work exist – however tangata whaiora are reticent to step forward as the notion of difference remains. The challenge is to nurture feelings of acceptance within the group, and bring this collective strength to bear to affect change of perceptions within and as part of the wider community (Fredericks, 2009).

Evaluation of the therapeutic and transformative efficacy of the art curriculum is formative; incorporation of opportunities for further growth based on collaborative reflection is ongoing. This 'new' approach to service provision has impacted a discourse within the whanau of facilitators and participants that acknowledges the core of awareness of tangata whaiora. Their experiences of illness and recovery within mental health environs provide valuable wisdom for the direction of our work. The potential to provide leadership and insight of mental health concerns and realities for our wider whanau and society is considered, as our voices are encouraged in on-going exchange.

Whanau in health and education contexts

The construct of whanau has potential to contribute greatly to the success of adult education programmes for tangata whaiora. Whanau and the reciprocity of whanaungatanga provide a basis to support that fundamental praxis of adult learning theory, that is that participants are best empowered when the learning context includes their interpretations of reality (Mezirow, 1990). In this manner, whanau as a model facilitates a process for learning that realises the

role that adult participants may have in developing a more relevant mode of programme delivery and evaluation. This approach reflects emancipatory ideals of Kaupapa Maori methodology and adult education.

Whanau, “based on ancestral, historical, traditional, contemporary and spiritual ties” (Paki, 2007, p. 4) provides opportunities for programme facilitators to participate alongside learners in a collaborative process of learning enquiry. This approach makes way for a dialectic exchange to reflect upon strengths and dilemmas and to glean insights from participants to develop problem – solving strategies and initiatives to build upon gains. Collaborative programme development has the potential to deliver all participants – the whanau whanui of coordinators, facilitators and tangata whaiora - from a prescriptive approach to health and education services, towards a more flexible one, responding in recognition of the value of collective experiences contributing to knowledge and further programme development.

The development of an art curriculum based upon participants’ aspirations expressed at the outset, and upon observations and reflection throughout the programme has enabled an ‘action research’ element to the work. The project is ‘live’, and evaluation that utilises reflective discourse to determine project development is ongoing. The overall objective of the art curriculum, is to facilitate a process for empowering, reflective, transformative, student – centred learning (Mezirow, 1990). The curriculum has allowed for real projects to be developed and undertaken with and on behalf of the wider community, and for whanau to engage directly with other groups in society. Through the construct of whanau and supportive exchanges of korero in the practice of whanaungatanga, reciprocity of sharing has been engaged (Paki, 2007). All participants contribute to the growing knowledge within the group, and to the direction of project development. Participants utilise collective experience as a way to create new understandings (Shor, 1992) and transcend beyond notions of self-stigma and whakamaa that manifest as whakamaa, and reticence to challenge the status quo of isolation from aspects of wider society (Metge, 1997).

Maori aspirations for change centre upon the quest for greater recognition of the legitimacy of whanau as a construct to base transformative praxis upon, for wider society. Fitzsimons and Smith (2000) advocate *transformative action* utilising whanau as a construct “to include the politicisation of structural, socio-economic conditions, as well as cultural ones” (p. 38). The location of difference is recognised as the basis of Western epistemology that sees social groups as “categorically opposed” (Fitzsimons & Smith, 2000, p. 32). Whanau is proffered as a social construct – informed by many diverse forces - to base a (re)formulation of identity upon, and (re)formation of the philosophy of education in New Zealand.

Whanaungatanga endures as theory and model, in the quest to overcome disparities that exist in educational and health governance environs. Whanau Ora policy implementation denotes a radical shift, and signals a modality to be adopted at all levels of decision-making for health and social improvements for Maori. Kaupapa Maori solutions being enabled within and across sectors, indicates a realisation of the possibility of gains in both health and education for Maori (Cunningham & Durie, 2005, p. 231). Ironically, mental health service provision remains “out of touch” with Maori aspirations – “there is a high level of conceptual isolation” (Durie, 1997, p.6). I feel privileged to work for change within the adult mental health setting – where change is least likely to be in step with the needs of Maori society.

Indigenous art therapy methodology

Whanau approach to service provision includes a methodology for assessment and evaluation of design, delivery mode and intervention efficacy (Durie, 2004). An art curriculum based upon aspects of tikanga Maori, offers the ideal opportunity to develop interventions for the tangata whaiora referred to an activities centre. The methodology is Kaupapa Maori, reflecting Maori ways of knowing and living (Ministry of Health, 2006; Durie, 2004).

Toi Maori – art based upon customary practice of Maori – offers an immediately recognisable medium for exploration of cultural identity. For Maori seeking re-engagement with known or unknown identity through whakapapa, Toi Maori provides a non-threatening environment to experience a connection to knowledge and practices handed down from our tipuna. Tohunga Mahi Toi have negotiated to ensure the practices of safety - tapu and noa - are achievable within contemporary educational settings (Tamati – Quennell, 1993). Toi Maori becomes a waka to bring disenfranchised Maori closer to ‘home’ - towards greater inclusion in the communities of whanau, Te Ao Maori and wider society (Ministry of Health, 2006).

Indigenous interventions advocate the development of social capital as an important aspect of mental health promotion, “including (raising) community participation and the social cohesion which this subsequently creates” (Dyer & Hunter, 2009, p. 147). Acknowledged as contributing beyond the intrinsic value of art-making itself, indigenous art therapy presents as an inquiry to address factors impacting upon education and health, including poverty and culture. Path-ways to bridge the gaps of disadvantage are offered where “medicalised, compartmentalised, service-oriented approaches” have failed to acknowledge the impact of social deprivation (Dyer & Hunter, 2009, p.149). An action – based research framework is utilised in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, to evaluate the efficacy of mental health interventions. Reflection is shared by participants, families and the wider community to determine outcomes of greater social inclusion, lessening of self – stigma and discrimination, and increased mental health and wellbeing. On-going evaluation serves to value the process as much as outcomes. Programme development is informed by indigenous protocol, engaged throughout (Dyer & Hunter, 2009).



Photograph 1: Whanau harvesting raupo, Gisborne 2011

Methodologies of assessment and evaluation require responsiveness to the values and customs of the community and society for whom the intervention is generated. Psychological assessment has affected the “most oppressive in their tendencies toward assimilation and social control” (Hocoy, 2002, p. 142). The DSM-IV assessment utilises an outline for cultural formulation to enlist explanation for illness and disorder based upon cultural assumptions (American Psychiatric Association, 1994). The DSM-IV framework does not adequately identify those factors that underpin responses to social dilemmas that have impacted distress and consequent dis-ease upon indigenous peoples. Indigenous measurements of efficacy include feedback from participants, their families and caregivers, and the wider community. The dialectic “indigenous” exchange that identifies historical disparities impacted upon communities is included in the critique (Hocoy, 2002, p. 143).

Case study – a kaupapa maori intervention

My employment as Vocational Support Worker, since April 2011, included weekly art lessons for the day programme. Art has been incorporated into my Vocational Support role as an a-vocational activity to encourage critical thought and inquiry, and to lend to an holistic and balanced approach to providing support and guidance. A therapeutic art intervention process was developed, to facilitate re-engagement with aspects of tikanga Maori, and directly with our local environment and communities.

The main objective of the art programme to nurture increased confidence to communicate and engage as part of the wider community continues throughout art curriculum development. The curriculum is made up of a series of ‘projects’. Each project is intended as a tool that may provide measurable outcomes, both in tangible objectives reached and in evaluation of the efficacy of the intervention. Participant responses to the tasks of each project is sought throughout, in an endeavour to provide the most relevant programme possible, and to identify further issues and opportunities that present as the work continues.

A planting project was designed for a focus group referred for Vocational Support - Maori males aged 17 to 30 years. The project aimed to bring the group into the community and natural environment, to inspire growth and recovery. Developed in conjunction with the Department of Conservation, the project provided the opportunity to incorporate a practical experience of taonga tuku iho passed down in whakapapa. Harakeke plants were gifted from Te Poho o Rawiri Marae just south of Te Tapuwae o Rongokako, for the purpose of replanting at the Marine Reserve. The transplanting process illustrated the links between the two sites, and of the whakapapa that connected project participants to the rohe. This project utilised the construct of whakapapa to enact on-going activity, and reflects grounding in and of Maori values or tikanga Māori. As whanau participants maintain the plants, a “place of reciprocity...within an interconnecting system” is thus nurtured (Paki, 2007, p. 4).

Planting programme participants responded to the tasks with enthusiasm, and accepted roles of responsibility. One of the young men led karakia each day. This development is significant: in the wider whanau group setting the young man’s proficiency in Te Reo Maori is not realised. In the smaller group, he was able to assume the role that is largely reserved for the pakeke. Arrangements to pick up the focus group participants each morning, at times were thwarted due to the transport needs of the wider group. At these times, participants made their own way into the centre to attend the planting tasks. Further voluntary work, to plant native trees alongside Te Whero Whero Lagoon, provided opportunity for participants to gain confidence engaging alongside other community groups. The planting programme

supported participants' job applications and subsequent employment. Thus, vocational objectives were met.



Photograph 2: Planting at Te Tapuwae o Rongokako, 2011

The planting project at Te Tapuwae o Rongokako became the inspiration for a ten – week programme. Initiated as an exploration of kowhaiwhai (curvilinear) and tukutuku (geometric) design based upon observations of work by a local artist, the objective of the art project was to promote consistency and confidence in developing ideas and skills towards completion of a longer term project. The separate planting and art programmes ran alongside each other, and initially the content of the art programme did not have direct connection to the planting programme. As work began at commencement of the separate programmes, tangata whaiora perceptions and responses affected a dramatic shift in the project design and delivery and subsequent art outcomes.

Initially, the ethos of personal journey towards recovery was intended as the kaupapa for our art project. Responses from participants were marginal, and art exploration stalled. Whanau were not keen to look at themselves as subjects; the inspiration to focus on individual 'uniqueness' simply was not there. The works of a locally-based artist, John Hovell, were viewed for inspiration. A book had just been released of his prolific work, and an exhibition of his paintings was viewed (Skinner, 2010). This approach too had limited impact. Some students imitated his use of motif and colour. However, none were inspired to develop original work. Participants seemed distracted from the task; they appeared uncomfortable with the notion of gazing at their individual selves, and not inspired to consider new ideas or recollect memories of their journeys.

An observation of artworks produced earlier in the year by tangata whaiora in response to purakau, revealed a sense of uninhibited expression and creativity. For an exercise set in the Te Reo Maori class, tangata whaiora had produced artworks to depict the journey of Paoa in his waka Horouta, as he came to Tairāwhiti. Tangata whaiora whanau made prolific use of Maori motif including koru, kowhaingutukaka, and tukutuku patterns. The tutor recounted that the use of design motif was generated of the participants' own recognition and recollection, and not influenced by his input. The designs were innovative, and there seemed a sense of joy and freedom in the use of forms.

The merge of the kaupapa of the planting project at Te Tapuwae o Rongokako as inspiration for the art programme, was almost accidental. Asked to relieve as tutor of the Te Reo class, the author chose the concept of rahui – restriction – as theme for the session. Discussion about the restriction of rahui placed on the marine reserve prompted an anecdotal story from one of the whanau. She recounted a conversation had with her flatmate, about tales of the koura at the reserve growing to huge proportions since the rahui was enlisted ten years ago. They envisaged six – foot long koura leaving the reserve each night under cloak of darkness. The story was fun, and at the next art class one of the participants began depicting a large koura walking into Gisborne from the reserve. As we focussed upon the whakapapa of Te Tapuwae o Rongokako, ideas and designs began to emerge. Participants began paintings based on the bird, plant and sea life of the reserve. Motifs were easily developed and kowhaiwhai patterns then emerged; by the end of the term six kowhaiwhai panels were completed for exhibition.

Maori values from purakau are passed down in whakapapa; this methodology provides the precedents for the particular customs we have today (Walker, 1978). In mental health settings purakau have been utilised to engender tangata whaiora perceptions of inclusion and belonging (Cherrington, 2002). Reinvigoration to make art was inspired once the notion of self-exploration was abandoned in favour of the kaupapa of the reserve. As the purakau of Paoa and his waka had invigorated imaginations and art making responses previously, so too had the emergence of our own ‘legend’ of giant koura. The lense had shifted from focus upon individual selves to the collective recognition of ‘ourselves’ in whakapapa. This had the impact to whakamahana the art exploration experience, and creative flow was restored.



Photograph 3: Whanau at Te Huanga o Turanga mural, 2012

Recognition of the value of collective whanau response to art exploration – that utilises Maori values and methodologies - has influenced further art project development. Two mural art projects were subsequently developed, with the view to foster a sense of empowerment in contribution to the community. The first mural project was located in the central business district of Gisborne. The project kaupapa was developed as a follow on from studies about sustainability of the resources in our region. The theme of reciprocity – to act as kaitiaki in nurturing sustainability - is reflected in its name, Te Huanga o Turanganui a Kiwa (The Abundance of Our Region). The kaupapa includes reference to ourselves as part of the wider community of caretakers for our region.

Responses of interest and enthusiasm from the community – including tooting horns, and people stopping to ask about the work - affected dissipation of whakamaa. The public shared immediate and constant support throughout and had the impact of helping participants let go of self-stigmatising notions. The whanau contributed work that encompassed Maori kaupapa, design and motif, and the wider community reciprocated appreciation. When approached by the Gisborne Herald for an article, the whanau were keen to talk about the work and be photographed. This response indicated a readiness to become involved in “the wider social environment” (Kingi & Durie, 1997, p. 43).

A further opportunity to support increased community participation presented the opportunity for collaborative design and completion of work. The whanau were invited to paint a mural in the low-stimulus environment of the mental health ward. Initial workshops sought to bring forward narratives about whanau experiences of the unit. The whanau identified their aspirations for the design; to make the space more inviting and to share feelings of wellness with others. Participants drew symbols to represent aspects of their lives that engendered good feelings. The natural environment was expressed in individual motif, and this commonality contributed to the overall mural theme. The completed collaborative design has contributed warmth and cheer to uplift the mauri of the unit.

Several of the sixteen participants had experienced time spent in the isolation unit whilst admitted to the mental health ward. One participant talked about times spent there, and how at these times she forgot the significance for her of connection to her maunga. In identifying those elements of their lives that generated positive feelings, participants were keen to impart this kaupapa to others. The whanau collective chose the theme of the natural environment for the mural, to convey a coherent notion of spirit uplifted, with others who may encounter the unit. This work enabled participants to bring something positive into the isolation wing, thus empowering a renegotiation of the space for themselves, and perhaps a less traumatic experience for others.

As part of local celebrations of Mental Health Awareness Week, whanau were approached to consent to inclusion of the mural as part of a feature article in the Gisborne Herald. Hospital management were reticent to have the work featured in such a public manner, for concern that others who had spent time there might feel whakamaa about their experience of the isolation unit, upon reading the article. The group were keen to have their work viewed by the wider community, and shared their thoughts about the project. Subsequently, management perspectives changed. Narratives provided for inclusion in the article, included: “...being together as a team and sharing thoughts and emotions...(allows) expression through our own recovery solutions. Publicly expressing our art give(s) a positive energy and the knowledge that you are accepted...”, and “I think that our mural at Ward 11 should be publicised...all in giving to our community” (personal written communications, October 2012).

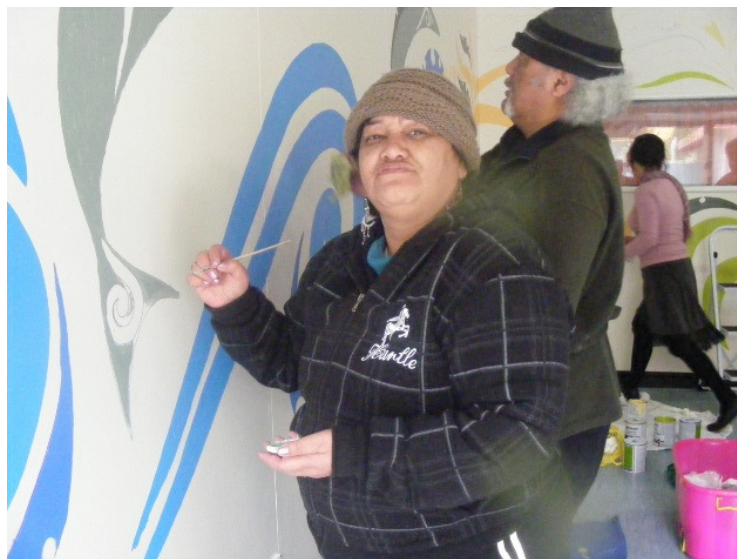
Conclusion

Since inception of the art curriculum, the imperative has been to maintain a sense of joy in learning and interaction. Enthusiasm is encouraged as participants recognise a (re)negotiation of their own place in society. There had developed amongst members of the project a sense of ownership as participants engaged in the process of evaluation and reflection. Whanau members seemed to have transcended notions of difference and isolation from the community, to take roles validating their inclusion through purpose and contribution. The ongoing imperative is to build upon the sophisticated relationships of interdependence within the group, and the community, and thereby maximise opportunities for growth and recovery.

Kaupapa Maori initiatives have been developed in response to participants' interests and aspirations. Funding is approved for cost-effective proposals that don't appear to be Kaupapa Maori, although are acknowledged as appropriate and efficacious. The interdependency of whanau relationships developed amongst participants, facilitators and community provides the essential basis of the work. Time will bring recognition of this work as a modality for education, healing and recovery. Future developments of the collective capacity of the whanau to impact change necessitate efforts to support an environment where tangata whaiora contribution is recognised as key.

Acknowledgment

Whanau members have provided the author permission to discuss the project in this paper, and to reproduce images taken throughout. He mihi aroha ki a tatou te whanau



Photograph 5: Whanau at Te Whare Awhiora Ward 11, 2012

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Glossary

Harakeke	Phornium Tenax (a plant)
He mihi aroha ki a tatou te whanau	A greeting of love for (us) all the family
Horouta	The name of a canoe
Maori	A native person of Aotearoa (New Zealand)
Mauri	The life force
Maunga	Mountain
Noa	A state of not being sacred
Karakia	Prayer
Kaupapa	Purpose
Kaupapa Maori	Made by Maori and reflecting Maori values
Kowhaingutukaka	A pattern derived of the Parrot's Beak flower
Kowhaiwhai	A set of patterns derived of the Kowhai tree
Pakeha	A New Zealander of European descent
Pakeke	An older person
Paoa	An ancestor of the Horouta canoe
Purakau	A story from whakapapa (genealogical) tradition
Pouawa	The name of a river on the East Coast
Raupo	A plant (similar to Bullrush)
Rahui	A state of prohibition

Rohe	Area or region
Tairāwhiti	The East Coast region of the North Island of Aotearoa (New Zealand)
Tāngata whenua	The native people of the land
Tāngata whaiora	A person who suffers from mental health issues
Taonga tuku iho	Treasures handed down from our ancestors
Tapu	A state of being sacred
Te Ao Māori	The Māori World
Te Huanga o Turanga a Kiwa	The Abundance of the East Coast region (mural)
Te Poho o Rawiri Marae	A famous marae in Gisborne
Te Reo Māori	The Māori Language
Te Whero Whero Lagoon	The name of a lagoon on the East Coast
Tukutuku	A style of weaving, used in meeting houses
Te Tapuwāe o Rongokako	The Giant Footstep of Rongokako – name of a marine reserve on the East Coast
Te Whare Awhiora	The Mental Health ward at Gisborne Hospital
Tikanga	Protocol or set of practices
Tikanga Māori	Set of practices pertaining to Māori values
Toi Māori	Māori art practices
Waka	Canoe
Whakamaa	Shyness, humiliation
Whakamahana	To warm
Whakawhānaungatanga	To create familial connection or familiness
Whanau	Family
Whanaunga	Relative
Whanaungatanga	Familiness
Whanau Ora	Family Wellbeing,
Whanau Whaiora	Familiness in mental health settings
Whanau whanui	The wider / extended family