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UPHOLDING INDIGENOUS DIFFERENCE IN ARTS EDUCATION: NOHO MARAE WĀNANGA AS AKIN TO A "MANA OF ECONOMY" IN EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

In this paper we consider how recent taonga puoro noho marae wānanga, in the Far North district of Aotearoa New Zealand, have much to offer the growth and development of bicultural relational engagement in arts education. The ngā toi Māori authors highlight their aspirations, as leaders of recent hui wānanga initiatives in Te Hiku o Te Ika (the region of the "tail of the fish" at the top of the North Island). This includes aspirations to recognise noho marae wānanga as important self-determining spaces that support the evolution of indigenous paradigms and the growth of music education from a distinctly Māori ontological foundation. Together we advocate for what Moana Jackson calls an "ethic of restoration" and argue that when priority is given to the recognition and support of Māori led educational initiatives, such as noho marae wānanga, generative and mutually beneficial bicultural relationships are better enabled. The authors revisit Te Mauri Pakeaka, an arts education marae wānanga initiative which ran through the 1980s, and consider hui wānanga for their potential to support new forms of bicultural relational engagement in arts education in the future.

Keywords

Settler-indigenous relationality; indigenous Māori education; biculturalism; Te Mauri Pakeaka

As part of a broad vision to enable the growth and development of localised curriculum in mainstream education in Aotearoa New Zealand, The Ministry of Education is increasingly requiring schools and curriculum support organisations to reach out and engage with mana whenua (Ministry of Education, 2020). How mainstream arts educators orient themselves towards such engagement and meet the aspirations of ngā toi Māori leaders at the hapori/iwi and community level, is a pertinent question in this current context. In this paper we highlight the aspirations of the ngā toi Māori authors (Christian, Wiremu and Kelly) who have been involved in designing, leading and facilitating *taonga puoro* (traditional Māori music) noho marae wānanga in the Far North district of Aotearoa New Zealand. We consider collectively how these aspirations might meet the desires of non-indigenous mainstream arts educators aspiring to decolonise and indigenise curriculum. The noho marae wānanga is considered for its potential, as a kin-based entrepreneurial initiative, which supports creativity and innovation in Māori music pedagogy and praxis, and aspires to broaden the musical horizons for young Māori students. We suggest noho marae wānanga can be conceptualised as akin to a "mana of economy" in an educational context. Together, we advocate for what Moana Jackson calls an "ethic of restoration", which he defines as "restoring a kawa that allows for balanced relationships based on the need for iwi and hapū independence, upon which any meaningful interdependence must rest" (Jackson, 2020, p. 149). We argue that when priority is given to the recognition and support of Māori led educational initiatives, such as noho marae wānanga, generative and mutually beneficial bicultural relationships are better enabled.

Noho marae wānanga offer a context that centralises Māori expertise and knowledge and privileges Māori ways of being, thinking and doing (Kia Eke Panuku, 2013–2016; Moewaka-Barnes et al., 2019).

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During a series of recent taonga puoro noho marae wānanga in the Far North district, students have been immersed in a rich system of music learning with its own deep indigenous foundations. Interwoven elements include *taonga puoro* (traditional Māori instruments), *whakairo* (carving), *raranga* (weaving), *pūrākau* (storytelling) and *taonga tākaro* (traditional Māori games). From this foundation students are encouraged to play, improvise, create and innovate. The learning is led by *tohunga* (experts), who hold foundational knowledge of Māori systems, *tikanga* (customary values and procedures), *kawa* (marae protocol) and Māori pedagogy and praxis associated with *te ao puoro* (the world of Māori music). Amber Nicholson, Māori business and leadership scholar, describes wānanga as "the space that allows humans to interact with the energy of creative potential" (Nicholson, 2020, p.136). The noho marae wānanga harnesses such an energy with the tohunga and tutors encouraging the students to explore the possibilities of reworking traditional knowledge into new contemporary and relevant forms, generating and evolving new ways of being, thinking and doing *as Māori* in music education.

The marae offers a sacred space for learning where music is grounded in whakapapa to the *atua* (spiritual ancestral connections) and natural phenomena. Conversation with the *taiao* (environment) is central to the educational experience. Students are invited to tune into the sounds and vibrations of the *moana* (ocean), the *ngahere* (forest) and the *atua* (spiritual ancestors) of these domains: *Tāwhirimātea* (atua of the wind), *Tangaroa* (atua of the ocean) and *Tāne Mahuta* (atua of the forest). The learning is grounded in *mātauranga a iwi* (knowledge from relationships with people) and *mātauranga a whenua* (knowledge from the marae space and the outside environment). Further, the interconnectedness between environmental wellbeing and social, cultural and economic wellbeing is modelled and taught through the sharing of personal stories and the acknowledgement of *te tuakiri o te tangata* (the holistic self). *Ako* (reciprocal learning relationships between people and environment) and *manaakitanga* (care and generosity between students and teachers learning alongside each other) are also central elements of wānanga. The marae space anchors whakapapa at the heart of the learning experience and supports the development of new knowledge as a holistic, active and creative experience of coming to know. There is a commitment to learning through the being and the emergence of new ideas, as Nicholson (2020) says, "With no complete and final state, coming to know is a continual process of becoming" (p. 139). Hindle et al. (2016) and Royal (2003, 2005), both drawing on the writings of Reverend Māori Marsden, offer the paradigm of *Te Korekore* (the potential), *Te Po* (the becoming) and *Te Ao Marama* (the manifestation of being) as a way of framing learning as it unfolds in the moment in relation to whakapapa and the environment.

> The notion of allowing for relationships to unfold through the being shifts the emphasis from a linear approach based on predetermined expectations, for example, student achievement, to a holistic approach centred in the being (ontology) based on the notion of allowing relationship itself to unfold. (Hindle et al., 2016, p. 96)

The noho marae wānanga allows for such new relationships to unfold between students, tutors, whakapapa and the environment through experiences of *whakairo* (carving), *raranga* (weaving), *whakataukī* (proverbs and metaphors), *pūrākau* (storytelling) and *taonga tākaro* (traditional games and play). Play and improvisation are central to all these activities, and the creation of new knowledge is encouraged through active exploration and discovery (Royal, 2005, 2007, 2007). This noho marae learning space serves to create opportunities to experiment, connect with people and place and to discover new possibilities to help establish new significance of whakapapa and mātauranga Māori for the young Māori students who attend.

Many significant and positive links have been established between Māori leadership and progressivism at the hapori/iwi and community level and improved collective Māori community wellbeing (Kawharu & Tapsell, 2019; Moewaka-Barnes et al., 2019; Gregory et al., 2021; Houkamau et al., 2021). Kawharu and Tapsell (2019) shine a light on what they describe as a "mostly invisible kin community space" in entrepreneurial activities (p.7). Their investigation into the growth of Māori community entrepreneurship reveals an

> entrepreneurial spirit that still burns despite the ongoing impacts of colonisation: a spirit persistently emerging time and again from within the Māori kin community world. The stories themselves have their own mana and build on past lessons to bring something new to their communities. (Kawharu & Tapsell, 2019, p. 7)

Kawharu and Tapsell (2019) further highlight that entrepreneurial success is commonly seen as "a deliberately sought response to histories of loss or decline" (p. 13). The taonga puoro noho marae wānanga has been a means to explore new broad horizons for te ao puoro and future generations, while also deliberately responding to the many losses, within te ao puoro, endured through a history of colonisation.

> Innovations within kin communities are responses to historical circumstances, in particular those concerning loss: loss of land, loss of cultural ways, loss of community cohesion. Innovations originating out of such contexts generally share an aspiration of seeking ways to overcome colonial-imposed losses in search to regain social and economic balance, or wellbeing. (Kawharu & Tapsell, 2019, p. 18)

Māori kin-based community entrepreneurship can be defined as a continuous process of change, with "no objective, formulaic or standard set of procedures to follow", always seeking contemporary relevance with an eye to an improved and thriving future as Māori (Kawharu & Tapsell, 2019, p. 20). This description also captures the energy and dynamic nature of marae wānanga initiatives, where creativity and innovation at the hapori/iwi level are central to the learning. As Māori composer and researcher Te Ahukaramū Charles Royal notes: "Developing a culture that enables creativity, innovation and mātauranga Māori requires the development of iwi communities generally" (Royal, 2007, p. 8).

To ensure that the ongoing processes of colonisation do not continue to restrict Māori creativity, innovation and reimagined futures, it might be helpful to conceive of the noho marae wānanga as an initiative akin to a "mana of economy". While this is a term used in the field of Māori business and entrepreneurial activity, it offers a useful way of thinking about the noho marae wānanga space and what it can offer the growth of new knowledge in ngā toi Māori education. The noho marae wānanga, as an educational initiative, is an opportunity to explore aspirations for transformational change, to potentially (re)define a preferred Māori centric model of education. A "mana of economy" can be described as Māori led actions and behaviours aimed at protecting four inter-related, dynamic, whakapapa based and transformational dimensions of mana: *mana atua* (spiritual), *mana tupuna* (intergenerational; ancestors), *mana whenua* (land) and *mana tangata* (people) (Hēnare, 2014; Dell et al., 2018) Dell et al. (2018) highlight how all forms of mana are enhanced when Māori are enabled to work within their own contexts, such as marae. They also describe an economy of mana as characterised by continuous creation, adaptation and cultural innovation as well as flexibility, alliances and coalitions that develop as needed.

Royal (2007) stresses that we must recognise that the "inter-generational transfer of mātauranga has been interrupted" (p. 29) and that "much mātauranga Māori remains in a fragmentary and incomplete state, and hence much work needs to be done to return this body of knowledge to a confident and active position" (p. 34). Those designing and leading the taonga puoro noho marae wānanga are passionate about returning the field of ngā toi Māori and *te ao puoro* (traditional Māori music and arts) to a confident and active position as Royal describes. Royal (2007) notes that knowledge was historically linked to traditional activities in pā communities (ngā kawenga), human experiences and material culture including arts and design (ngā mahinga a te ringa). The marae-based wānanga offers a valuable context for sharing how different *whare* (houses) of distinct bodies of knowledge have evolved alongside distinct behaviours and tikanga, and experts with distinct methodologies and practices. The 1907 Tohunga Suppression Act was one mechanism used by colonial settlers that dispossessed Māori of much knowledge related to te ao puoro and wellbeing. Royal (2007) notes that Māori led innovation and creativity must be recognised as a crucial part of any decolonising efforts. Further, he stresses that

such innovation and creativity is something that doesn't replace but rather supplements the quest for social justice and cultural restoration; "a move to creativity will not take place without a proper 'negotiation' or relationship between social justice and cultural restoration" (Royal, 2007, p. 4). Such a negotiation requires new forms of bicultural relational engagement that uphold indigenous ontological difference. As Te Kawehau Hoskins suggests:

> Māori ontologies hear the unique tangi (sound, note, cry, song) of birds, love, tides, people and thunder as part of a vast network of kin relations. This ontology is expressed in the often recited tauparapara (opening statement of a speaker) … it announces an intention to speak as part of a kinship of speakers and voices to whom we listen and relate: The Tītī bird sings, the Kākā bird calls, and I too have something to say! Here perhaps is a way of thinking about the future of philosophy of education. A future that, as part of composing new sets of notes, experiments with others approaches to relationship; that is to listening and responding to the distinct tangi of others. (Tesar et al., 2022, p. 4)

This aspiration for the future, of relational work that listens and responds in ever evolving ways to the "distinct tangi" of Māori ontologies, invites us to consider how non-Māori arts educators engage with such an aspiration.

Working within the mainstream education context, which increasingly demands engagement with Māori and evidence from *tauiwi* (non-Māori) of culturally responsive practice, Māori can find themselves struggling to prioritise their own aspirations to meet the needs of Māori learners and to create and innovate within their own cultural frameworks ahead of Treaty partnership goals. Māori face a number of challenges in advising and supporting tauiwi educators who are increasingly seeking indigenous cultural mentors to guide culturally responsive practice. This includes meeting aspirations among tauiwi for relationship building, dialogue and seeking understanding through genuine cross-cultural collaboration; a benevolent desire to form a unity with indigenous people (Jones, 1999, 2001, 2007, 2012; Jones & Jenkins, 2008). Reflecting on an academic career working in settler-indigenous relational engagement, Jones (2020) considers the sense of loss, uncertainty and grief Pākehā can experience when Māori peers or colleagues share a desire or aspiration to work independently, to work in a self-determined way within their own cultural frameworks, rather than coming together to work out shared understandings in partnership as a priority. Decolonising scholars Tuck and Yang (2012) offer the concept of incommensurability, which can be defined as accepting different paradigms that do not completely come together. They advocate for non-indigenous people to recognise indigenous difference and support and enable self-determining spaces and the evolution of distinct indigenous paradigms. They argue that this requires consciously resisting "decolonising" actions that prioritise aspirations for indigenous closeness and actions that only work towards solidarity, as these simply serve to reaffirm a settler shaped future society. Applying the concepts of incommensurability and care for alterity here in Aotearoa's arts education context, educators must work to resist achieving a settler shaped future that "knows" and "understands" its indigenous population, where non-Māori are increasingly confident in articulating a learned indigenous perspective (see also Yukich & Hoskins, 2011; Yukich, 2021; Bell, 2014, 2017). This requires mainstream arts educators to be cognisant of enabling cultural evolution both within and across settler and indigenous difference.

Te Ahukaramu Royal (2017), in his Lilburn lecture on "Searching for Voice, Searching for Reo", talks about exploring and creating a unique *reo* (voice) in music to artistically express an intersection between Māori and Pākehā worldviews, histories and lived experiences. He advocates for "a third inter-cultural way" where things of value are created through mutually enhancing encounters between cultures and relationality grounded in *aroha* (love) and creativity.

> This is not merely about placing two things alongside one another but rather about honouring both, giving each their own space and their due, and creating a *third space* [emphasis added] where the two may come together in some kind of positive, and creative encounter and whole. (Royal, 2017).

This concept of third space was explored nearly four decades earlier by Janinka Greenwood and Arnold Manaaki Wilson during the Pakeaka project in the 1980s. This bicultural educational initiative saw a decade of marae wānanga arts-based projects run around the country. Writing about the Pakeaka project, Greenwood and Wilson (2006) describe a dynamic third space where Māori and Pākehā came together to create in marae contexts that provided a "sense of centre, outside the mainstream" offering participants the chance to see "what it would be like if they operated within the social organisations and the values systems of the [Māori] community" (p. 94). Greenwood (2015) continues to reflect on what the Pakeaka project offered as a model for bicultural relational engagement in creative arts education and describes a third space that was committed to emergence and the unfolding of new bicultural possibilities through prioritising the recognition and upholding of distinct indigenous cultural evolution. The marae wānanga space was well recognised at this time for bringing whakapapa, history, environment and people together in a dynamic relationship, integrating tangible and intangible cultural elements in support of the regeneration of cultural heritage. Arnold Wilson writes:

> The stories stay alive on the land because the community as a whole, continuously strokes the stories and tickles them into life with constant re-telling. The connections between people, land and stories are spun through generations of living on the land, reacting to its forces, telling the stories of the relationship. (Greenwood & Wilson, 2006, p. 96)

Ngā toi Māori specialist Rawiri Hindle advocates similarly for enabling a search for indigenous Māori voice through creativity, and presence of being through ngā toi Māori (Hindle, 2010). Hindle (2010) works with the metaphor of walking the shoreline to reflect the dynamic and always evolving space between old knowledge and the creation of new indigenous possibilities (see also Hindle et al., 2015; Hindle et al., 2016). Such aspirations from Māori artists and educators for ongoing creativity and innovation of mātauranga Māori continue to echo the concept of third space offered by the Pakeaka project of the 1980s. As Arnold Manaaki Wilson writes:

> The images [artworks] came out of stories anchored in the past and in the present experience of the people who live there … the stories in the murals were told in a language of signs that linked them simultaneously to the student artists and to the traditions of art in the community. (Greenwood & Wilson, 2006, p. 94)

Honouring the aspirations of Māori in a third space as defined here requires non-indigenous educators to consciously resist "decolonising" actions that prioritise adopting a learned indigenous perspective into existing mainstream pedagogy and praxis. It invites non-indigenous educators to value and pay attention to Māori led entrepreneurial innovation in arts education, such as ngā toi based noho marae wānanga. This is a crucial step towards what Moana Jackson calls "an ethic of restoration", where priority is given to the recognition and support of Māori and kin-based community independence, which in turn can better enable generative and mutually beneficial bicultural relationships.

> The use of this term [an ethic of restoration] would seek to replace colonisation not merely deconstructing or culturally sensitising the attributes and power structures that it has established, but by restoring a kawa that allows for balanced relationships based on the need for iwi and hapu independence upon which any meaningful interdependence must rest. (Jackson, 2020, p. 149)

The growth and development of the noho marae wānanga model in arts education is a step towards restoring such a kawa through supporting and enabling Māori centralised community kin-based initiatives, which seek meaningful bicultural relationships through independence and the upholding of indigenous difference. The noho marae wānanga model recognises that creativity and innovation sit at the heart of distinct indigenous cultural evolution. Further, it supports a holistic approach to collective wellbeing and the creation of new knowledge. It is the aspiration of Māori arts education leadership in this space to see young Māori thrive and to feel confident contributing as Māori, both locally and globally, in new contemporarily relevant ways. In conceiving of ngā toi Māori leadership in noho marae wānanga initiatives as akin to a "mana of economy" within arts education, we can support and enable

Māori creativity, innovation and the reimagination of distinct Māori futures. Further, we can support and enable the dynamic growth of new knowledge in ngā toi Māori education. This offers a significantly different orientation towards bicultural relational engagement from one focused on drawing in learned indigenous perspectives into mainstream arts education contexts. As non-Māori educators invited to engage with such initiatives, we potentially step into a third space where we have a duty of care to recognise indigenous independence and respect for alterity. The noho marae wānanga invites us to be present and open "to what an engaged presence can teach, personally, intellectually and spiritually" (Hoskins & Jones, 2020) and to bring "an openness to being taught by experience, a tolerance for uncertainty, and an understanding of power" (Jones, 2012, p. 100). Further, we are invited to be willing to confront the limits of our understanding and see this as an opportunity (Metge, 2008). As Jones (2007) writes:

> It is in the irresolvable tension between such contradictory positions and arguments about our relationship where thought and practice get interesting, as well as difficult, and where new thinking and practice arise in education. (p. 14)

In upholding indigenous Māori difference and independence as a first priority, we potentially enable a third space to engage relationally in ongoing reciprocal relationships, bringing alive the space between in new and generative ways. As creative arts educators we have a lot to offer such a generative third space and the evolution of new forms of mutually beneficial relationships within mainstream arts education.

GLOSSARY OF MĀORI TERMS

Iwi Māori tribe; extended kinship group

Hapori/hapū Māori subtribe; wider family kinship group

Mana whenua Māori with customary rights and authority over their tribal territory/lands

Whakapapa Ancestral connection, including spiritual ancestral connection

Noho marae Live in marae stay

Wānanga To discuss/deliberate/meet; an educational event

Ngā toi Māori Māori arts

Taonga puoro Traditional Māori musical instruments

Te ao puoro The world of Māori music

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