

Identity and Whakapapa

A curriculum
for the gifted
Maori child

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Abstract: The importance of identifying and nurturing the gifts and talents of all tamariki in Aotearoa is widely accepted in education circles. The continued under-representation of Maori students in Gifted and Talented programmes indicates the need to ensure our understandings about the way children learn, and the corresponding curriculum content, reflect Maori conceptions, values and practices.

Research shows that cultural practice, tribal structures and whakapapa are all significant in the development of Maori identity (Durie, 2002; Murchie, 1984; Broughton, 1993; Moeke-Pickering, 1996). Where Maori children are encouraged to use their own whanau/hapu/tribe as a starting point for better understanding what giftedness means for both their cultural and educational lives, they will feel empowered to embrace the gifts they possess and use them to progress educationally, culturally and spiritually. This paper presents a story from a classroom teacher of Ngati Whatua descent regarding his teaching philosophy for Ngati Whatua tamariki. I then suggest a curriculum centred on Ngati Whakauue whakapapa as a model for potential programmes for gifted and talented learners within the Rotorua area.



Ko wai au?

Why is it important I start with this?

Who I am today, is determined by those who have come before me. I am a product of my history and whakapapa.

One cannot be separated from the other. My personal, ethnic and professional identities stem from my whakapapa.

It strengthens me.

It empowers me.



➤ **Ki te taha o toku papa.**

- Te Arawa te iwi
- Ngati Whakaaue te hapu
- Ngongotaha te maunga
- Maketu te moana
- Tunohopu te marae
- Tamatekapua te tangata

➤ No Ohinemutu me Rotorua aku Turangawaewae

Ki te taha o toku mama.

Ngapuhi te iwi
Ngati Hau te hapu
Parahaki te maunga
Ngunguru te moana
Pehiaweri te marae
Kahukuri te tangata

No Whangarei taku turangawaewae

Ko Mia taku tamaiti

Ko Melinda Webber ahau

Maori Gifted and Talented

- Given that any culture's concept of giftedness is influenced by its beliefs, values, concepts and attitudes, and Maori, like any other culture are a diverse group of people, a single definition is unrealistic and only further marginalises gifted Maori children.
- According to Bevan-Brown (1993) Maori concepts of giftedness are often non-academic, focus on humanistic qualities and reflect Maori customs, values and beliefs.
- Niwa (1998,1999) describes a “holistic view of giftedness in Maori culture, where interpersonal relationships and aspects of spirituality are highly prized and emphasized” (p 3).



Manaakitanga

- This can be perceived as being ‘outstandingly hospitable or generous’ (Bevan-Brown, 1992; MacFarlane, 2004) or “caring for and helping others” (Rymarczyk Hyde, 2001).
- The concept of ‘manaakitanga’ supports McKenzie’s (2002) findings that “Maori view giftedness as being owned by an entire group, for the benefit of all”(p 1).
- Within Maoridom, great emphasis and value is placed on working co-operatively with others (Cathcart and Pou, 1992), achievement is whanau-based (Milne, 1993) and aspects of spirituality and inter-personal relationships are highly prized (Niwa, 1998,1999)
- This stems from the traditional belief that advanced ability was a gift from the gods, not for the individual’s sake, but for the benefit of the whole tribe. Research indicates that the obligation to serve others still exists (Bevan-Brown, 1993, 2004).

Mana tangata

- ‘*Mana*’ can be defined as prestige, status or power. The concept of ‘*mana tangata*’ is especially relevant to the Maori view of giftedness because it refers to an endowment of honour for in-depth knowledge of Maori tradition and outstanding service to others.
- When individuals know the qualities or knowledge valued by their culture, they are more likely to strive toward acquiring and demonstrating them.
- Cathcart and Pou (1992) encapsulate this concept well in the statement “People are most likely to display high levels of ability in skills highly valued by their culture”(p 15).



What matters for these Maori G&T learners?

- Gifted Maori students must be encouraged to value their culture and see it as a meaningful and relevant part of their academic learning.
- Bevan-Brown (1996, 2004) has found that those children whose Maoritanga has been tapped into and developed, appeared to “bloom”.
- Rymarczyk Hyde (2001) explains how this then increases their self-esteem and confidence, resulting in them being more likely to develop their potential.



What does other literature tell us?

- **Children's learning is maximised when educational experiences:**
- Incorporate cultural content
- Reflect cultural values, attitudes and practices
- Utilise culturally preferred ways of learning
- Include culturally appropriate support.
- Affirm cultural identity

- Including cultural input in a child's educational programme achieves the multiple goals of facilitating learning, raising self esteem, and fostering emotional and social well-being.

(Bevan-Brown, 2003)

- Teachers should create a context for learning that responds to the culture the children bring to the classroom. Children should be able to bring who they are and how they make sense and meaning of the world to the learning interactions.

(Te Toi Huarewa, 2001)



An effective teacher positively rejects deficit theorising about Maori students.



- In visible ways, teachers create settings that are culturally appropriate for Maori students learning.

“If the teacher demonstrates cultural knowledge it has an effect on the children. They see the teacher as an individual who respects them and knows where they are coming from. The children see those teachers who have made an attempt to try and get on the same thought patterns, wavelength as them”.

(Parent, School 1)

(Te Kotahitanga, 2001)

And finally...

- A teacher should have an environment where Maori language, knowledge, culture and values are normal, valid and legitimate, and indeed are a valid guide for classroom interactions. This implies that we need to create contexts where to be Maori is to be normal and where Maori cultural identities are valued, valid and legitimate - in other words, contexts where Maori children can be themselves.

(Bishop and Glynn, 2002)

- In a rapidly changing world where global communities will undermine ethnic and cultural identity, future generations of Māori should at least have the opportunity to be grounded in te ao Māori and have a sense of turangawaewae. It is highly likely that Maori students [in the future] will *want* to be Maori. They will expect to be able to enter te ao Maori with ease, converse in te reo Maori, use Maori imagery and idiom, and employ Maori reference points in the learning process.

(Durie, 2006)

The importance of strong ethnic identity

– Identity is what you can say you are according to what they say you can be.

(Johnston cited Kitzenger, 1989 p82)

- Identity, whether it is individual or collective, can be examined from a variety of different perspectives. Harris, Blue and Griffith (1995) describe identity as a sense of uniqueness and difference from others, “It is knowing who one is, and who one is not” (p 1). Although this quote refers to personal identity, it is also applicable to the identity held by a collective, knowing who one’s group is and who is not of ones group

- Identity is a socially constructed phenomenon related to the societal context in which individuals live. It is also very much a personal process. Erikson (1980) “understood that one’s identity is something that is both self-created and bestowed upon the individual by the culture” (p 13)
- The concept of identity can also be explained as a persons sense of belonging , of knowing and understanding your individuality and place in the world. (O’Regan, 2001)
- Weeks (1990) notes that ‘Identity is about belonging, about what you have in common with some people and what differentiates you from others. At its most basic, it gives you a sense of personal location, the stable core to your individuality. But it is also about your social relationships, your complex involvement with others’ (p. 88).

Thus, our classrooms are the perfect place in which to foster strong personal identity. For Gifted Maori children, as indigenous children, this means a focus on their distinctive ethnic identity.

- For Maori in Aotearoa, collective and individual identity formation has historically been shaped by a multiplicity of factors arising from ever-changing cultural and socio-political factors.
- The term 'Maori' itself attracts debate today because it is often used as a homogenising term for all tribal groups and therefore obscures the distinguishing characteristics of each tribe.
- We were, and are, a tribal people. We have traditionally described ourselves according to our tribal membership, rather than our national membership.
- This is what should be happening again now. It is an important point for classroom teachers to consider.
- Rather than Maori history, Ngati Porou history.
- Rather than Maoritanga, Te Arawatanga.

Why?

- Rangihau (1975) comments that each tribe has its own way of doing things. Each tribe has its own history and it's not a history that can be shared among others. He states that we can only talk about our Tuhoetanga, Arawatanga, or Waikatotanga. Not our Maoritanga. According to Rangihau (1975) we lose everything by losing our own tribal identities, histories and traditions.

The importance of Whakapapa

In both situational (contextual) and primordial (fixed) views of Maori identity, whakapapa is generally agreed to be the key characteristic.

Karetu describes whakapapa as the glue that connects individuals to a certain place or marae, locating them within the broader network of kin relations. This in turn creates a sense of turangawaewae or belonging.

Whakapapa is not simply about having “Maori blood” but knowing about that descent and having a meaningful relationship to it.

It is believed in Maoridom that a meaningful understanding of ones place in the present can only be understood by reflection and knowledge of one’s past (Ihimaera, 1993; Reid, 1986). Hence, knowledge of whakapapa is a crucial element in developing *manatanga*.

Understanding and knowing one's whakapapa is crucial in terms of Maori cultural identity. Shane Edwards argues that without knowledge of their culture and cultural identity Maori may not lead full and meaningful lives. Arguably, the first claim to being Maori is through whakapapa. Through whakapapa an individual or group cultural identity is affirmed.



“... In the Maori world you have to know your tribal history and your whakapapa, otherwise you're nothing! You can't say anything, you can't do anything, you can't move in the right way and you're nobody. Only when you know your whakapapa can the mana of your ancestors shine on you.... If you gather these treasures of history and bring them together in one place, you can see the seeds from which you have sprung, and you will stand tall wherever you may travel.

(Stirling, E. 1980, p.82)



Gifted Maori children are more likely to thrive in a culturally responsive environment that 'localises' curriculum. That is, ensures the learning experiences are as closely linked to the Maori child's whanau/hapu/iwi whakapapa, traditions and stories as possible.

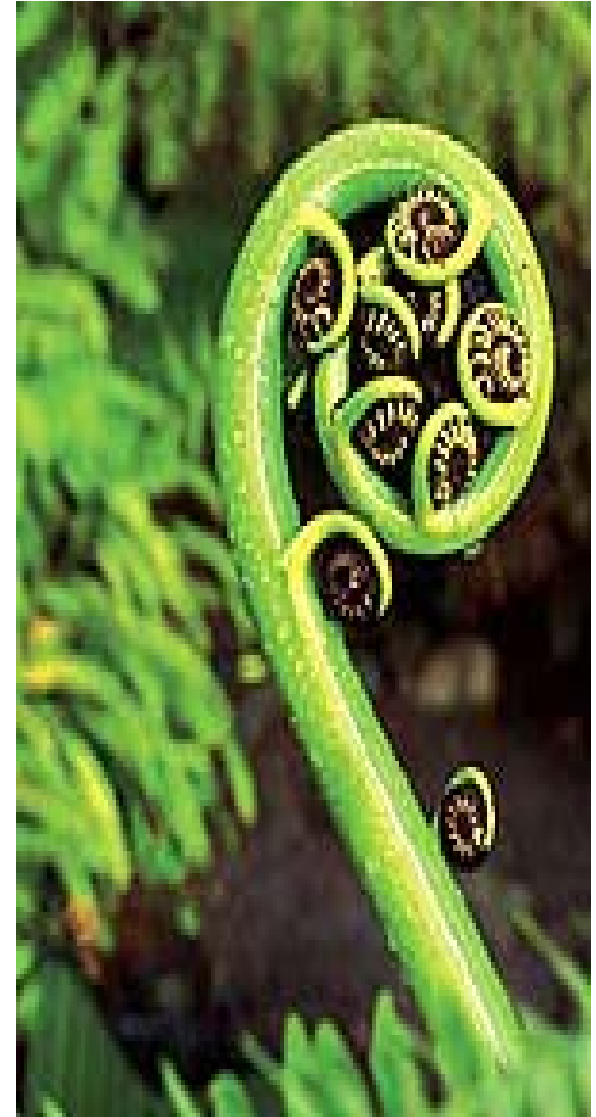
The background of the slide is a light red color with a subtle, repeating pattern of Maori koru (unfurling fern fronds) in a slightly darker shade of red. The pattern is intricate and traditional, filling the entire frame.

A teacher's story

Matt, Ngati Whatua o Orakei

Key ideas from Matt's story

- ✓ The potential of **all** children
- ✓ Cultural relevance
- ✓ Cultural processes
- ✓ Localised curriculum
- ✓ Strong ethnic identities
- ✓ Increased self-esteem
- ✓ Academic achievement



- **Where should G&T programmes start for gifted Maori students?**

Localised curriculum + celebration of 'exceptional' tupuna

- **Why?**

increased knowledge of ethnic identity and pride in tribal history.

Gifted Arawa Tupuna

What were they gifted with and how did they use it to benefit others?

- **Tama te Kapua**, son of Hou-mai-tawhiti was the chief navigator of the Te Arawa canoe on its journey from Hawaiiki. He was gifted with the knowledge of navigation - the science of plotting and following a course from one place to another and of determining the position of a moving waka. His gift allowed his people to find new lands and avoid inter-tribal warfare.
- **Ihenga** was the man who discovered Rotorua. Ihenga was out hunting for delicacies for his pregnant wife, when one of his dogs disappeared chasing a kiwi. The dog returned some time later with his coat wet and 'threw up' a meal of half digested fish. Ihenga realised he was near water, so he searched until he came across Lake Rotoiti and later, Lake Rotorua. His curiosity, perseverance and strong orientation skills allowed him to find food and water for his people, and a new rohe in which to settle.

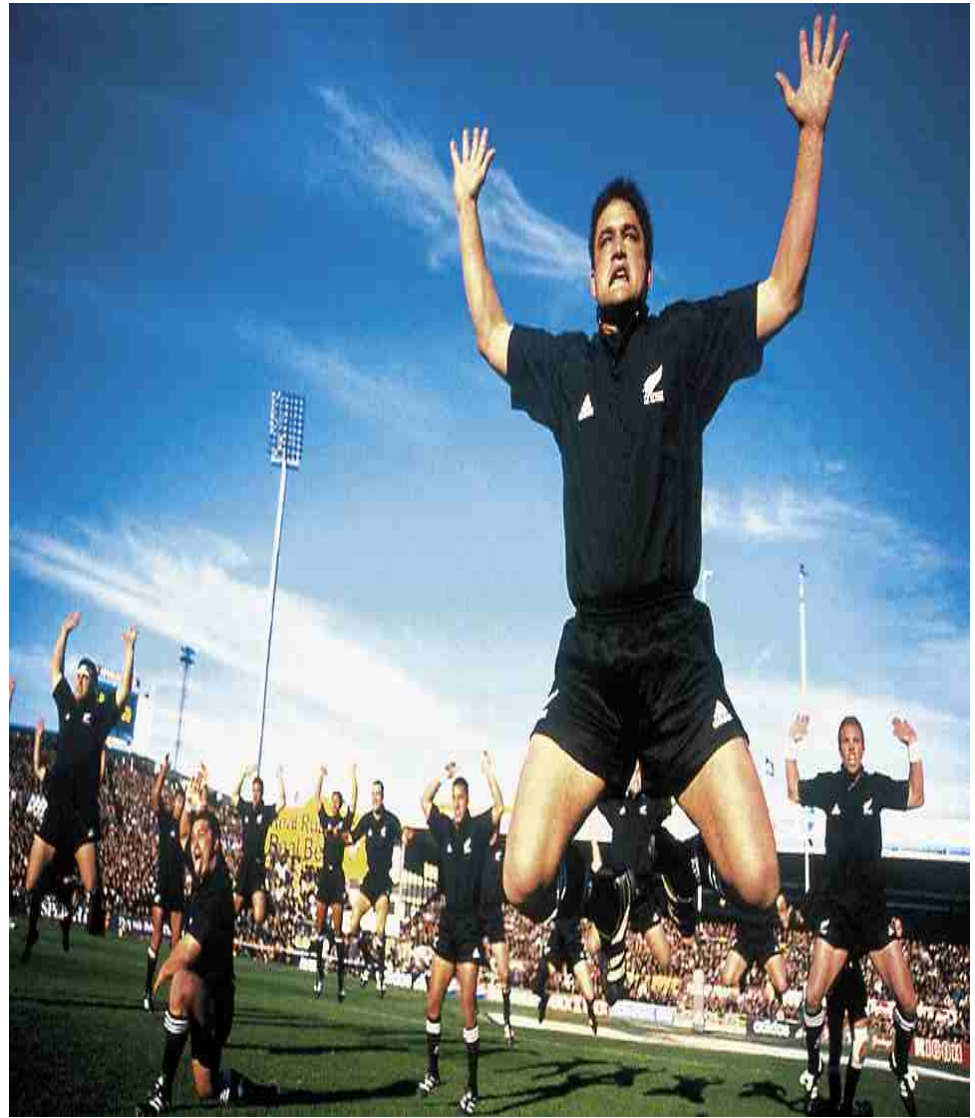
- The people of Te Arawa are the guardians of the thermal region of New Zealand. This right came from the early exploration of **Ngatoroirangi** - the famous Tohunga (spiritual leader) of the Arawa canoe. The spouting hot geysers, the mud pools and the volcanic fire are all the result of Ngatoroirangi and his actions. He was gifted with a strong sense of manaakitanga and stamina. He was able to overcome a near-death experience to rescue his slave and others in his hunting party.
- **Kurungaituku** was a famous woman huntress. She lived in forest regions on the southern boundaries of Rotorua. She met her death in the bubbling cauldrons of Whakarewarewa. In her cave on jutting Puhaturua (the lofty 'rock'), Kurungaituku kept many tame animals and beautiful birds as pets. She was gifted with the speed of the fastest athlete, and her winged arms enabled her to skim across the mountains and valleys of her domain. She guarded well the whenua of her tribe keeping an eye out for enemies. She was loyal and fierce.

- Since the 1890s the profession of guiding at Whakarewarewa has been almost exclusively in female hands. Some of the guides became international personalities, notable for their colourful characters and knowledge. Their names are legendary: **Sophia Hinerangi, Maggie Papakura and her sister Bella Papakura, and Rangitiarua Dinnan (Guide Rangi)** are remembered for their humour and charm, their command of both the Maori and English languages and knowledge of their culture. The essence of manaakitanga is still a legacy of our ancestors, as a true host offering the hospitality of ourselves, our heritage and our people.
- **Ana Hato** was known as the 'Maori Diva', Ana Hato was born in Rotorua and educated at Whakarewarewa Primary School. She toured Australia in 1925 as a member of Guide Eileen's concert party, singing her way to wide acclaim. Performing with her cousin Dean Waretini, Ana made 14 recordings of traditional and contemporary Maori music. The beautiful sounds of Hine e Hine and Pokare Kare became well known in many homes. She is a good example of the strength Te Arawa have in music, entertainment and manaakitanga. Her gifts allowed future musically gifted Maori to emerge.

- **Cliff Curtis** is an international film star. Cliff Curtis was born in Rotorua in 1968 and attended Western Heights High School. He worked for four years as a builder and glazier before breaking into the world of television and film. Cliff appeared in *The Piano* in 1992, followed by *Desperate Remedies*, a performance that won him a 1994 Best Supporting Actor in Film award in 1994. He is gifted in drama and brings the Maori culture to the world stage.
- **Dorothy Huhana Mihinui (Guide Bubbles)** - Bubbles became an apprentice guide in the Whakarewarewa thermal area in 1936 and was licensed in 1938. She recalls that senior guides would walk slowly behind learners correcting behaviours. "Make sure you treat people how you'd like to be treated", and "Don't talk down to people", were rules instilled by mentors such as Bella Papakura. These are values still held and passed down by Te Arawa families.
- **Emily Rangitaira Schuster** - Emily was recognised as a cultural expert whose skills were sought world-wide and in 1969 was appointed as Women's Cultural Supervisor at the New Zealand Maori Arts and Crafts Institute (now Te Puia). Her distinguished reputation is evidenced by the numbers of international gatherings she was invited to attend as an honored guest. In 1983 Emily was awarded a Q.S.M. and given official recognition as an official cultural ambassador for the institute. Her mana and prestige allowed Maori arts and crafts to be valued in domains other than Maori.

Other leaders

- Wayne Shelford
- Howard Morrison
- Temuera Morrison
- Te-Kuru-O-te-Marama
Waaka
- Sir Charles Moihi Bennett
- Right Reverend Te
Whakahuihui
Vercoe - Bishop of
Aotearoa



In conclusion...

- **At the heart of an effective education for the gifted Maori learner is the provision of a culturally responsive localised curriculum. This includes content that values, affirms and develops the learners whakapapa, and identity. Montgomery (2001) states that in such an environment the learner's self-esteem will be enhanced because they are given "positive feelings about their worth as individuals and as productive members in their classrooms"(p. 6).**
- **This would also support the development of strong ethnic identity and subsequently the improved self-concept with regard to being *Maori and Gifted*. This presentation promotes a curriculum that focuses on the development of the child's ethnic identity/s through exploration of their Whakapapa (genealogy).**