

Applying the Ka Awatea model to Māori students' experiences at university

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WHERE THE WORLD IS GOING
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- Māori learners in New Zealand, and the ‘priority learners’ label
- *Ka Awatea* model
- Our research
- A selection of findings
- Implications

Māori as 'priority learners'

- Priority learners are groups of students who have been identified as historically not experiencing success in the New Zealand schooling system
 - Many Māori and Pacific learners
 - Learners from low socio-economic backgrounds
 - Learners with special education needs

PRIORITY



Māori are overrepresented in cohorts of students who struggle in particular areas of educational achievement, but ...

- Could labelling all Māori as priority learners contribute to a **deficit view** of Māori and erase those Māori who succeed in education?
- Does this label implicitly **problematise** Māori learners?
- Does it anticipate **struggle and then failure** rather than success?
- What impact does the label have on **teacher expectations** and Māori notions of **self-efficacy**?
- **Where are the stories of successful Māori learners?**

Ka Awatea model: Past research

- Macfarlane et al. (2014) sought to move away from deficit theorising about Māori education and focus on Māori secondary school students experiencing success
- N=283 high achieving Māori students + their whānau, teachers, school/community leaders (Rotorua)
- Questionnaires, individual interviews, conversational interactions, and focus groups
- Key question: ***What factors contribute to Māori learners experiencing success at secondary school?***

Macfarlane et al. (2014) identified five key ‘mana constructs’:

- Mana Motuhake (sense of identity)
- Mana Tū (sense of resilience)
- Mana Ūkaipō (sense of place)
- Mana Tangatarua (sense of two worlds)
- Mana Whānau (sense of family)

Our work: To what extent do the elements of the Ka Awatea model support Māori undergraduate university students' educational success?

- Sub-slice of wider study on undergraduate student experiences
- In-depth interviews:
 - Wellbeing, resilience, and tertiary achievements
 - Factors that influenced their outcomes
- Analyzed data from four Māori undergraduate students (two BTchg, two BSW) using *Ka Awatea* model

A Selection of Findings

Mana whānau (sense of family)

- All four Māori participants highlighted the importance of whānau support for their university studies
 - Conversely, participants were negatively impacted if there were “issues” in their whānau
- Friends and classmates also played an important role in providing support for students in their tertiary studies

Mana tū: Sense of resilience

- All Māori participants showed resilience despite COVID-19 challenges
- Resilience when faced with challenges related to mental or physical health and transitioning into university
- Participants' strategies for resilience:
 - Reflecting on past success
 - Having a long term picture
 - Maintaining a positive mindset
 - Good planning

A Selection of Findings

Mana ūkaipō (sense of place)

- Māori participants noted the need to have:
 - Secure housing whilst completing their tertiary studies
 - A safe and inviting place to study
 - Places of “self care” (“going up the mountain”, kayaking, counselling)

A Selection of Findings

Mana motuhake (sense of identity)

- Māori participants showed an awareness of their own strengths and weaknesses regarding their university studies
- Studying at university helped participants to discover and develop their identities

A Selection of Findings

Mana tangatarua (sense of walking in two worlds)

- Sense of walking in two worlds evident through:
 - Having whānau in two different geographical locations
 - Maintaining professional and personal
 - Balancing both a “*Westernised*” approach alongside a “*Kaupapa Māori*” focus
- “*Juggling*” work and study commitments was challenging for all four Māori participants

- ***The Ka Awatea constructs do seem relevant/transferable to Māori students' experiences in undergraduate education, based on these four case studies***
- Understanding key factors that contribute to (or negatively impact on) Māori student success can:
 - Promote the development of better policy that supports Māori students to achieve educational success;
 - Aid in targeting resources to support success;
 - Encourage a move away from deficit insinuation that the challenges some Māori face in education are based on ethnicity; and
 - Promote better understanding of contextual factors and the myriad of things that contribute to the outcomes we experience.

Watch This Space ...

- Derby, M. & McChesney, K. *Ka Awatea: A strength-based exploration of Māori student success at university* (forthcoming, 2023)

References

Macfarlane, A., Webber, M., McRae, H., & Cookson-Cox, C. (2014). *Ka Awatea: An iwi case study of Māori students' success* (Report prepared for Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga). Christchurch, New Zealand: Te Rū Rangahau Māori Research Laboratory.