

Kapahaka: Building Cultural Capital in Aotearoa

By

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Ē tipu ē rea

Mō ngā rā o tōu ao

Kō tō ringa ki te rākau a te pākeha

Hei ara mō tō tīnana

Kō tō ngākau kī ngā taonga ā ō tīpuna

Hei tikitiki mō tō māhunga

Kō tō wairua ki te atua

Nāna nei ngā mea katoa

Grow up and thrive for the days destined to you.

Your hands to the tools of the pākeha

To provide physical sustenance.

Your heart to the treasures of your Maori ancestors

As a diadem for your brow

Your soul to god, to whom all things belong.

Sir Apirana Ngata (1874 – 1950)

Abstract

This paper examines the place of Ngā Mahi ā Rēhia (traditional Maori song and dance) within a Māori Performing Arts Degree and considers the impact of achievement based assessment methodology on the students' work. It asks what learning Ngā Mahi ā Rēhia in a classroom does for the students' sense of knowing 'what it means to be good' at Kapahaka¹. It considers the difference between the ways in which Kapahaka competitions are examined versus the examination of individuals within a classroom group. Finally it suggests how Ngā Mahi ā Rēhia contributes to New Zealand's cultural capital.¹

Introduction

According to history, Māori people had no written language. Māori history was passed from generation to generation for over a thousand years of occupation of Aotearoa through oratory and still continues in this way today. Maori historical happenings were also recorded through carvings and the many woven patterns that are displayed in Whāre Nui (meeting houses). In the past, there were many houses erected within communities. Each housed an important factor pertaining to the way of life. Māori lived a communal existence for many reasons, including whānaukatanga – the strengthening of relationships with one and other. One house in particular was called 'Te Whāre Tapere – the Entertainment House'. It was here that Ngā Mahi ā Rēhia was embraced through song and dance.

¹ kapahaka = group or team of people who perform ngā mahi ā rēhia (traditional māori song and dance)

Ngā Mahi ā Rēhia is one of the subjects studied by students undertaking a Bachelor of Māori Performing Arts at New Zealand's Te Wānanga O Aotearoa (TWOA). The students take classes in all three years of the degree. The reason for this is to give tauira a firm grounding in traditional Ngā Mahi ā Rēhia forms of Māori Performing Arts that they can adapt to mainstream disciplines like drama, music and contemporary dance in a modern day setting.

The School of Performing Arts (TWOA) offers a paper in Mahi Kapahaka in the second year of its degree course: Te Tohu Maruata, the Bachelor of Maori Performing Arts. The degree is offered in Rotorua and Māngere, Auckland.

The purpose is to develop tauira performance ability to reflect a progression in each of the skill areas. In summary, the diploma, (second year paper) content ranges across whakaraka items, (games and pastimes of the Maori) the medium of performance workshops, research, observation of cultural performances, performance of Ngā Mahi ā Rēhia (traditional Māori song and dance) in brackets to an audience, participation in pōwhiri (welcoming ceremonies) and karakia (prayer).

The tauira (students) are firstly required to demonstrate competent understanding of whakaraka (games and pastimes of the Maori) tī rākau, (traditional movements with medium length sticks) tītī tōrea, (traditional movement with short stick) mahi whai, (string games) and hand games. They must explain the background and purpose of each category of whakaraka—hand games such as: hei tama tū tama, whakaropiropi ai, toropiko, hipitoitoi, mahi whai, and stick games – tī-rākau and tītītōrea.

Secondly the Tauira are required to display appropriate level of skills of whakaraka. by performing the various categories of mōteatea and waiata ā ringa demonstrating an adequate level of appropriate skills (e.g., co-ordination of movement, posture and stance, clear enunciation, phrasing and pronunciation) with in a 15 minute bracket. They are also expected to show an awareness of iwi (tribal) variations and make a contribution to the cohesiveness of the group.

Defining the Task – Knowing What's Expected

Tauira firstly come to understand the requirements of the tasks involved through group discussion with the Kaiako (tutor). On-going encouragement for questions to be asked is always called for by the Kaiako so that these requirements are easily adhered to. Tauira document these discussions. In order that a certain standard may be achieved, Tauira view video exemplars of work by award winning national kapahaka groups and discuss expectations surrounding the performance of each item. Through observation, the benchmark is then created in the 'minds-eye' of the Tauira.

The 'word learning' required for each item requires a major focus on the part of the Tauira. The first half hour of every class is dedicated to this activity during the first part of the Semester. The second half of class time is dedicated to the practical component. Here, the Tauira (students) have time to create 'the look' of the item for their summative assessment through various formation activities.

Actions, if required, are taught directly by the Kaiako especially for waiata ā ringa (action song). Several tīrākau and tītōrea actions (stick games) are taught to the tauira while the final selection of figures is left up to the group to decide. This is an opportunity for the tauira to be creative with regard to suitable actions being implemented to compliment the song. Most importantly, the Kaiako makes sure that tikanga māori (Māori Cultural values) is adhered to for each item.

The written assignment requires Tauira to research the required. The due date is emphasised by the Kaiako at each class. Tauira are given a clear indication by the Kaiako of where to look for information pertaining to the topic in books, videos, websites and more importantly, through informal interviews conducted with people who are well versed with the kaupapa (topic). It is the Tauira's responsibility to complete this aspect of the work as part of their self-directed learning. At the time of presentation of this written work, Tauira also supply an oral explanation of the research project to the Kaiako. This encourages each Tauira to come to 'know' the item well and to become confident in the public speaking arena. This is very important aspect of Ngā Mahi ā Rēhia. The selection of who is responsible for delivering the verbal explanation is discussed and decided on by the Tauira himself or herself.

Choice of Performance Material

The Kaiako makes the selection of items. This way, the various themes within the paper can be properly addressed. A clear explanation is given by the Kaiako to explain each category or theme to the Tauira. There are some 13 – 15 different categories of mōteatea (ancient chant). For example, these are the requirements for the mōteatea in the degree paper:

Mōteatea

This is the general heading given to the ancient chant form. Kaiako select an item from among the following categories on which to focus: pātere, waiata tangi, Pōkeka, oriori, waiata aroha, or apakura

Category Selection

Oriori is an old time chant usually composed for children of high rank. Within this category of item, the genealogical chart (or family tree) is usually recited pertaining to the child who is still in the mother's womb. The tempo is equivalent to that of a lullaby.

Item Selection

Po Po This mōteatea is an example of these ancient chants² composed by Enoka Te Pakaru from Te Aitanga ā Māhaki.

Intellectual Property

Acknowledging the ownership and origins of the various components is of paramount importance. This is done through the verbal and written explanation of each item, whereby the Tauira are required to respond to the questions outlined below. The questions that each Tauira are required to ask themselves are:

²Nga Moteatea, Vol. 2, Page 125

What is the name of the item?
Who composed this?
Where is the composer from?
What is the category / theme of this item?
Why was this item composed?

Understanding The Role of the Classroom Kaiako Versus Competition Tutor

The difference in the role of the Kaiako in the classroom and that of a Kaiako in a competitive kapahaka situation is firstly related to expectations surrounding the number of hours involved in the learning process. What works best in learning hours for competitive kapahaka is a noho marae situation where competitors physically 'staying' for a night or two on a marae. The learning, which takes place during these noho marae, is very concentrated. Interestingly enough, the attendance and punctuality is usually excellent compared with regular timetabled classes.

Tauira may not be absent without a valid reason such as attendance at a tangihanga (funeral within the whānau) or notification of a contagious disease. Those who choose to be 'absent without leave' are reminded by the Kaiako that they may not be able to be part of the final team for assessment purposes. In this way of learning, there can only be one focus – to be the best that you can be!

The Kaiako's role in the classroom with Tauria may appear to be more relaxed but in reality is likely to be more challenging. One way to create the same focus as exists in the competitive kapahaka environment is to deliver the programme in blocks of time. The disciplines as with competitive kapahaka remain the same – loyalty, values, commitment, respect and most of all, attitude. One approach to achieving these values with the Tauria in the classroom is to openly discuss what Vicki Wehi terms, 'The Three A's'. These are:

1. Attendance – attend for 80% of the time
2. Achievement – complete written and practical components by the due date
3. Attitude – give 100% of time and effort in class hours

Each Tauria is made aware that the only way one can 'Achieve with Excellence', is to look at these fundamental disciplines. The competitiveness never stops whether it is in the classroom or training for a competitive event. As far as Vicki Wehi is concerned, competitiveness enables one to achieve high quality standards.

Knowing 'What it Means To Be Good at Kapahaka'

Part of knowing what 'it means to be good' in a classroom context derives from students knowing that they must measure up to criteria – in this case standards based assessment criteria. Assessment is based on the Learning Outcomes related to a stated task. For example:

Perform essential skills of whakaraka: Perform 1 item from each of the following categories: hand games, tī-rākau, tītītōrea.

There are three Learning Outcomes for this paper. Each outcome is assessed individually. This grade related achievement based assessment system means that the

students have to gain an 'Achieved' result in all Learning Outcomes in order to gain an overall result of either 'Achieved', 'Merit' or 'Excellence' for the entire paper.

Classroom tutors play the most crucial part in assessing Ngā Mahi ā Rēhia. In the Tāmaki Makau Rau (Auckland) region, the tutors have a high reputation outside of the tertiary system for their performance, judging and tutoring of Ngā Mahi ā Rēhia at regional, national and international levels. Accordingly, in order to be seen to 'be the best' Maori Performing Arts School in Aotearoa, the most notable performing artists from within the field are invited into the classroom to co-assess Tauira at the point of delivery of the live performance of the work.

These are the requirements that each assessor mainly looks for in a 'good' kapahaka performance:

- Appropriate enunciation, diction and pitch.
- Recitation of words from memory.
- Consistent and sustained takahi (lifting the right foot clearly off the ground) throughout the item.
- Consistent and sustained wiri (the quivering of the hands) throughout the item from start to finish.
- Appropriate head movements to the theme of the item performed.
- Appropriate facial expressions to the theme of the item performed.
- Ihi, (trepidation, wonder) wehi (to stand in awe of) and wana (feeling of accomplishment, influential)
- Hand and eye coordination.
- Manipulation of tī rākau (medium length sticks).

People with a strong reputation in the field therefore make the best assessors. Decisions on final grades of course rest with the Kaiako who has responsibility to match the assessors comment with the grade related criteria and the original description of the task. With this system there is little room left for accusations of bias against a Tauira on the part of the Kaiako!

The Use of Video Recording

Every lesson is (ideally) videoed so that the progress each Tauira makes is clearly tracked from beginning to end. The essence of a Tauira's growth in kapahaka is captured on tape. This part of the learning process is usually not seen by any other person except the Kaiako. Comments from the Kaiako, therefore on growth development may be taken into account at the time of assessment, especially if the Tauira is physically impaired on the day of performance through injury or illness.

Video coverage cannot, however, capture the spirit of the 'live' performance. The display of personality is always an added bonus to a 'live' performance and sometimes this is not captured on camera.

Kapahaka Competition – the Hunter-Gatherer of Cultural Capital

Kapahaka competitions require a commitment to the very highest standards of performance in Aotearoa. There are several occasions where these events occur. In the past there have been regional competitions in New Zealand celebrating regional uniqueness in Ngā Mahi ā Rēhia. One of the longest standing regional competitions,

which began in 1950, is the Tamararo Competition, which is annually held in Gisborne. The number of teams, which represent this region at a national level ultimately depends on the number of teams which enter the competition.

The very first national kapahaka competition began in 1972 and this drew approximately 13 – 15 teams to Rotorua. The competition was then known as the New Zealand Polynesian Festival and not only embraced Ngā Mahi ā Rēhia, but also the Pacific Islands Performing Arts arena. The people from Rotorua hosted this competition again in 1973 and this was the last time the Pacific Islands groups entered. In the early 1980's, the name of this festival changed to the Aotearoa Traditional Maori Performing Arts Society. Today the national competition is known as Te Matatini.

The festival has grown from the 13 – 15 teams who entered in 1972 to 37 teams competing for the national title in 2005. The winners of these festivals are awarded not only the aggregate trophy (whereby they are recognised as the number one team throughout the nation) but also the honour of representing New Zealand as Ambassadors at some of the most prestigious festivals throughout the world. For example, the winners of the festival in the year 1988 went to the South Pacific Festival of Arts held in Townsville, Australia (every island from the Pacific was represented there) and then went on to represent New Zealand at the World Olympics, which were held in Korea. Here they performed before an audience of at least 15,000 people at the opening ceremony.

Te Matatini Kapahaka Competition Winners 1972 - 2005

YEAR HELD	REGION HELD	WINNERS
1972	Rotorua	Waihirere – Gisborne
1973	Rotorua	Mawai Hākona – Wellington
1975	Whāngarei	Te Roopu Manutaki – Auckland
1977	Gisborne	Te Kotahitanga – Christchurch
1979	Wellington	Waihirere – Gisborne
1981	Auckland	Taniwharau - Waikato
1983	Hastings	Ngāti Rangiwehi – Rotorua
1986	Christchurch	Te Waka Huia – Auckland
1988	Whāngarei	Waihirere – Gisborne
1990	Waitangi	Te Roopu Manutaki – Auckland
1992	Ngāruawāhia	Te Waka Huia – Auckland
1994	Hāwera	Te Waka Huia – Auckland
1996	Rotorua	Ngāti Rangiwehi – Rotorua
1998	Wellington	Waihirere – Gisborne
2000	Ngāruawāhia	Te Matarae i ō Rehu – Rotorua

2002	Auckland	Waihīrere – Gisborne
2005	Palmerston North	Te Whānau a Apanui – Te Kaha

Two groups in particular, Waihīrere and Te Waka Huia, have between them have won this prestigious festival, eight times! Almost half as many times since this festival began.

YEAR HELD	WINNERS	LEADERS
1972	Waihīrere	Dr Ngāpo And Pīmia Wehi
1979	Waihīrere	Dr Ngāpo And Pīmia Wehi
1988	Waihīrere	Tangiwai And George Ria
1998	Waihīrere	Tangiwai And George Ria
2002	Waihīrere	Tangiwai And George Ria
1986	Te Waka Huia	Dr Ngāpo And Pīmia Wehi
1992	Te Waka Huia	Dr Ngāpo And Pīmia Wehi
1994	Te Waka Huia	Dr Ngāpo And Pīmia Wehi

As a result of winning the National Festival eight times these groups represented New Zealand internationally at major cultural events. This must surely mean that the standard of performance can only be considered to be ‘world class’.

Ngā Mahi a Rēhia; Building Cultural Capital in Aotearoa

Regional and national competitions directly support the maintenance of Ngā Mahi ā Rēhia within performing arts programmes by providing benchmarks of traditional song and dance. For the people who take part these events are at one and the same time a display of cultural wealth in a physical and metaphysical sense and a process gathering new inheritances and social resources.

The captivating part of these competitions is the retention of, first of all, Te Reo (Maori language) and a way of life. The dedication of notable leaders in this field enhances one’s life through the development of art forms of Ngā Mahi ā Rēhia. It is more than an art form it is in fact, a way of life – a journey, a way of portraying historical happenings and of facing the many issues today that affect our people. Ngā Mahi ā Rēhia is a way of acknowledging our ancestors and what issues they faced in their day and age. It is a way of identifying who we are through song and dance, in short of maintaining the mauri (life force) of the individual and society.

Co author of this article, senior Kapahaka tutor on the Manukau Campus and founding member of Te Waka Huia, Vicki Wehi, believes that Ngā Mahi ā Rēhia is a vehicle for the development of self-esteem and confidence. An upbringing in Ngā Mahi ā Rēhia by her parents, made her able to achieve ‘whatever she wanted’. The challenges in life have been many - and so too have the blessings. She believes that her experiences through Ngā Mahi ā Rēhia have led her to a better way of life and

understanding so that she can proudly stand with both feet firmly planted and know the direction that she is heading.

Vicki believes that setting the example for students may challenge them, but *being* the example is more effective. Ngā Mahi ā Rēhia can be seen, therefore, as a way for students to reach ultimate goals and feel good about themselves while at the same time learning to stand tall in a public arena. It is, in short, a good way of building Cultural Capitalⁱⁱ.

What the Video Shows

The accompanying video clip is of a group of selected female students from the Bachelor of Maori Performing Arts programme in Rotorua and Manukau. They perform a short and long poi item accompanied by male musicians who play the Cook Island Ukelele, guitar and kouauau (flute-traditionally made from dog bone).

The song, Murirangaranga, which was composed by TWOA tutor, Kimoro Taiepa, tells a traditional Rotorua story of Hinemoa who swam across Lake Rotorua to be with her lover, Tutanekai on Mokoia Island. Kaiako Vicki Wehi who arranged the itemⁱⁱⁱ holds the item in high regard because of its simplicity and beauty. Note the teamwork involved; an important aspect of Ngā Mahi ā Rēhia.

The sequence was filmed in 2005 for Maori Television's, Korero Mai programme by Cinco Cine Productions Ltd.^{iv} The filming took place in the Manukau Campus courtyard of Te Wananga O Aotearoa. A sculpture by TWOA tutor, Richard Cooper, forms a stunning backdrop to the poi. It depicts a Maori ancestor, Uenuku, and forms a tribute to the Tainui tribe, the original owners of the land on which the campus stands.

Not all of the students in the group were of Maori descent. Vicki selected them, purely on the basis of their attitude, attendance and achievement with regards to their work ethic in the Bachelor of Maori Performing Arts, rather than their ethnicity.

Conclusion

The resurgence of Ngā Mahi ā Rēhia activities today throughout Aotearoa, New Zealand is at a national all time high and is very apparent in the Kōhanga Reo (language nest), Kura Kaupapa Māori (Māori language Primary School), Te Wharekura (Māori language Secondary School) and Te Wananga (Tertiary institution) level. Ngā Mahi ā Rēhia is also in demand in mainstream schools throughout the nation. In each region, there are many competitive events that happen throughout the year and here you will see Māori turn out by the hundreds - if not by the thousands! It's a way of life...

Te Wānanga o Aotearoa is unique because it offers a Certificate of Māori Performing Arts and the Bachelor of Maori Performing Arts Degree. What does this mean for Maori?

From Vicki Wehi's point of view it means that her people can still continue to follow their passions and desires within Ngā Mahi ā Rēhia and receive a qualification that will enable them to teach and do so many other things, within so many different domains. This is without taking into consideration the global circuit that they have

experienced most of our lives. Ngā Mahia ā Rēhia is a driving force for the people to become whatever they want to become as long as the tīkanga (protocols) are followed closely. Ngā Mahi ā Rēhia is seen as a solid foundation for both the Certificate in Māori Performing Arts and the Bachelor of Maori Performing Arts. If the student achieves excellence results in Ngā Mahi ā Rēhia, then the chances are that they will achieve 'excellence' in all of the other disciplines contained within the TWOA programmes.

For Maori people the process of education is lifelong and rich with opportunities to increase the sum total of knowledge through experience. Every encounter, every reinterpretation of a story through song, dance and haka enriches the lives of the whole whanau as well as than the individual. In short these events and journeys are not merely recreations or enactments, they are culturally rich events, they are life itself, cultural capital in the making.

References:

Pounamu Performing Arts (www.maoriperformingarts.co.nz)

Cultural Capital (www.williambowles.info/mimo/refs/teceleef.htm)

ⁱ “The term **cultural capital** is used because, like money, our **cultural inheritance** can be translated into **social resources** (things like wealth, power and status) and the cultural capital we accumulate from birth can be "spent" in the education system as we try to achieve things that are considered to be culturally important (mainly educational qualifications for the majority of children - but status can also be considered here when we think about the way the rich can educate their children privately at high status schools such as Eton and so forth).”<http://www.williambowles.info/mimo/refs/teceleef.htm> (Retrieved 23 02 06)

ⁱⁱ ibid

ⁱⁱⁱ This item is one of 18 songs arranged by Vicki Wehi for inclusion in the Maori Language programme, Korero Mai on Maori Television in 2005- 2006.

^{iv} Auckland based Cinco Cine Productions Ltd producer, Viv Wigby-Ngatai, kindly gave permission for the use of the Korero Mai excerpt.