



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga

Effective practice for e-learning

Designing for diversity

Nāu i whatu te kākahu, he taniko tāku
You wove the cloak, I made the border

How do we design for Māori and Pacific¹ learners?

In recent years there has been an increasing focus on the growing participation of Māori and Pacific learners in tertiary education. As a result of this focus there has also been more detailed analysis of success rates, and more attention paid to how we can address the specific needs of these culturally diverse learners.

On the whole, this attention has focused on those learners studying face to face. While organisations have spent a great deal of time and resources exploring the online environment and implementing e-learning programmes, cultural diversity in e-learning has often been overlooked.

However, there has been a growing recognition of discrete pedagogies associated with the range of Māori and Pacific world views. The research that has explored the issues faced by Māori and Pacific learners identifies a need to incorporate these Māori and Pacific values, beliefs, practices, and knowledge in course design.

Although New Zealand research into the relationship between cultural diversity and e-learning is limited, it shows that we must balance the need to acknowledge and cater for diversity by applying sound generic pedagogical strategies that are effective for all learners.

1. Recognising diversity

What does the research say?

Māori

(Note: It is difficult to express all that the research says about Māori pedagogy. Te reo Māori communicates concepts that cannot be expressed easily in the English language, and when these pedagogical concepts are moved into a western context and translated into English they may lose critical elements of meaning.)

Ako is a traditional Māori pedagogical concept that encompasses both teaching and learning as parts of the same process. It includes creating, conceptualising, transmitting, articulating, and understanding Māori knowledge. This pedagogy is closely tied to kaupapa Māori (principles), which can be transferred to a range of educational contexts.

The nature of tikanga Māori (processes) and mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge) means that no single approach, philosophy, or rule can be applied to an individual's learning. Educators must take a holistic approach to Māori pedagogy – weaving elements of tikanga Māori in appropriate ways for learning to occur. The success of Te Kōhanga Reo has proved kaupapa Māori to be an effective and coherent philosophy for Māori education. For example, it is felt that understanding te reo is critical for understanding traditional Māori pedagogies. Māori knowledge has been formed, shaped, constructed, and transmitted through an oral tradition. Being familiar with kaupapa Māori is therefore essential for educators if they are to understand contemporary Māori educational philosophies.

¹ The term 'Pacific', rather than 'Pasifika', has been used throughout this bulletin. A preference for 'Pacific' was expressed by members of the fono held in 2006 for the project 'Critical Success Factors for Effective Use of e-Learning by Pacific Learners'.

New Zealand research confirms that a Māori learner's cultural background may influence how they learn. Understanding cultural context, therefore, and applying this knowledge to course design, contributes to the best possible support for learners.

The research also indicates that an increase in the effective use of technology will lead to an increase in Māori learners' ability to participate and be successful in tertiary education.

Pacific

Pacific learners are not a homogeneous group. They come from many countries and cultures, and have different needs. While educators need to incorporate Pacific values, practices, beliefs and knowledge into the formal education system, they must also be aware that cultural beliefs are not necessarily transferable. The beliefs of their culture may not be relevant when they address the beliefs of another culture.

Many of the key criteria for Pacific learners' success are the same as for all learners. They include learners:

- having an appropriate level of computer and information literacy
- having access to well-designed and appropriate courses
- engaging in content and activities that are relevant and contextualised
- being well prepared for online learning.

What does this mean in practice?

- Design professional development programmes that help educators to understand kaupapa Māori and Pacific approaches, and show how they can use technology to include these approaches as choices for their learners.
- Design, develop and present course materials that motivate learners to learn, and inspire them to complete their study.
- Acknowledge the interface between diverse cultures, and how this interface can be used to improve learning opportunities for all learners.
- Design courses to incorporate appropriate technologies – either fully online or in blended environments.
- Use aural, visual, and multimedia content, and incorporate te reo and Pacific languages wherever possible.

2. Responding to diversity

What does the research say?

Māori

Māori pedagogy presents many possibilities for those who are committed to bringing about positive change for Māori in education.

Many Māori recognise that e-learning presents creative and flexible possibilities for kaupapa Māori approaches. The differences between western pedagogy and Māori pedagogy are more important than the challenges posed by technology, but many organisations have yet to recognise and work with these differences.

While e-learning provides the advantage of flexibility, Māori learners do not want flexibility at the cost of interaction with others – particularly educators and fellow learners. The literature on effective pedagogy and learning emphasises the importance of such interaction, and has resulted in more attention being paid to the type of interaction that is most beneficial to all learners.

Pacific

Although Pacific learners come from a range of cultures, some researchers feel there is a 'Pacific pedagogy'. This pedagogy can be interpreted as an integration of teaching and learning methods that are informed by and validate Pacific values, worldviews, knowledge, and experience.

Teaching practices that are particularly effective for Pacific learners include:

- peer teaching and learning, and group work
- experiential teaching (using learners' own experience)
- features, structures, and teaching modes that are familiar to learners
- strategies that engage both the mind (cognitive intelligence) and the heart (emotional intelligence).

While many of the issues faced by Pacific learners are the same as those faced by the general learner population, educators need to provide:

- access to, and information about, using computers and the internet
- access to learning centres and other resources
- opportunities for peer learning and teaching, and face-to-face academic support
- guidance in an information technology environment.

For their part, Pacific learners need to bring with them:

- self-confidence and motivation
- a good command of English.

What does this mean in practice?

Māori

- Encourage educators who work with Māori learners to undertake professional development that focuses on Māori pedagogy, kaupapa and tikanga.
- Encourage educators to explore the conceptual differences between Māori and western pedagogies, and to use the best and most appropriate strategies with their learners.
- Plan course interaction that covers the spectrum of face-to-face and online communication, social and task-oriented activities, and pastoral and academic support.
- Draw on tikanga and kaupapa Māori for a range of approaches and philosophies to apply to teaching.

Putting the 'e' in Wānanga

Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiārangi has campuses, study sites and marae-based programmes throughout the North Island. It promotes the growth of Māori language and culture by providing tertiary opportunities for Māori at all levels – their practice of tikanga and āhuatanga Māori helps to staircase students into higher qualifications.

Early on, the organisation preferred face-to-face teaching and learning, which was consistent with Māori cultural and educational values and philosophies. Community education programmes were developed and became the foundation for many marae courses. Each marae determined which courses would be delivered, based on the knowledge and skills of their own whānau. The interest generated from those courses encouraged whānau to take up further educational opportunities at the wānanga.

In recent years, the potential of e-learning has been recognised as providing flexible study options for students on campus, in their homes, and in their workplaces. More recently, a Director of E-learning was appointed to lead developments at programme, operational and strategic levels.

Current e-learning strategies include supporting a maturing infrastructure, investing in research, and establishing the eWānanga Centre. Online support is now provided to most programmes. This support ranges from the basic communication tools used in marae-based programmes, to the multifunctional applications used to teach in some undergraduate and graduate degrees.

The goal of the eWānanga Centre is to include e-learning in all wānanga programmes. The Centre encourages the use of appropriate Māori pedagogies for designing courses, teaching, and learning online. It also supports the e-learning staff development programme.

Understanding the needs, potential, and limitations of its Māori communities that are served by educational strategies is fundamental to successful e-learning provision at Awanuiārangi. Above all, e-learning is not an alternative to face-to-face learning – it supplements and supports the continuing emphasis on community, marae, and campus learning and teaching.

For further details about this case study, go to <http://ako.aotearoa.ac.nz/takingthelead>

Pacific

- Place particular emphasis on providing access to learning support centres and pastoral care – perhaps from Pacific units within the organisation.
- Provide bridging programmes – these might include time-management skills; tuition for writing, communication, and English language; study strategies; and technical skills.
- Where necessary and possible, arrange for support services or educators to visit learners at home to clarify any barriers to learning, gain the support of family members and peers, and clarify expectations.
- Provide clear instructions and well-scaffolded activities.
- Provide clear information about, and orientation to, online learning, library, and support services.
- Encourage participatory and learner-centred teaching methods, including free and open discussion.
- Build an affirming environment (start with a social face-to-face or online activity) so that learners feel comfortable with their educators and each other.
- Use experiential teaching strategies that use and validate learners' experience, and illustrate discussions with real-life experiences.
- Incorporate Pacific models, symbols, metaphors, and visual aids into course materials.
- Use stories to illustrate abstract concepts.

This bulletin is based on the following research reports:

Pihama, L., Smith, K., Taki, M., & Lee, J. (2004). *A literature review on kaupapa Māori and Māori education pedagogy*.

Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics of New Zealand. (nd). *Critical success factors for effective use of e-learning with Māori learners*.

Koloto, A., Kaotanga, A., & Tatila, L. (2006). *Critical success factors for effective use of e-learning by Pacific learners*.

New Zealand Council for Educational Research. (2004). *Critical success factors and effective pedagogy for e-learning in tertiary education*. Background paper for ITP New Zealand.

The following websites have resources for educators who are designing for diversity.

LDnet is New Zealand's support network for learning designers.

<http://akoatearoa.ac.nz/communities/ldnet>

Nga Kiwai Kete is a set of resources and tools to support blended online and face-to-face approaches to e-learning professional development. It has a particular focus on supporting organisations with significant proportions of Māori and Pacific learners.

<http://www.nkk.org.nz/home.php>

Emat also focuses on the professional development needs of educators working with Pacific learners.

<http://elearning.itpnz.ac.nz/emat/index.html>

Toi Whakaoranga is a course for educators working with Māori learners. It includes a video resource with definitions of kaupapa Māori that are relevant to education, and has links to other resources.

http://elearning.itpnz.ac.nz/ToiWhakaoranga/course_resources.htm