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“Stories are knowledge, and knowledge is literature”: Viewing and re-viewing sites/cites of mātauranga Māori as an alternative to traditional Western literature reviews

I went home. I took a walk along the beach that curves around Te Matau o Maui in Kahungunu, towards what Pākehā call Cape Kidnappers. It was a lovely sea-breezed walk but I call it a literature review because where the cliffs tumble down to the foreshore (remember the foreshore?) there are actually stories in the land. ***Stories are knowledge, and knowledge is literature.***

Moana Jackson (2011, p. 71, emphasis added)

The word mātauranga means knowledge, wisdom, and understanding, and may also be used as a noun to describe a knowledgeable person (Moorfield, 2011). Mātauranga Māori can be understood as the body of knowledge originating from Māori ancestors, including the Māori world view, perspectives, creativity and cultural practices (Moorfield, 2011). Literature usually refers to knowledge found in books, articles and documents. The traditional Western literature review requires a student or scholar to survey knowledge around understandings

of a particular topic and to identify gaps that might potentially need to be filled with new research

Though there are a growing number of Māori writers who are contributing to an archive of Māori knowledge, mātauranga Māori is not generally found in books, but instead, is located in the Māori world in *atua*, *tangata*, *whenua*, *maunga*, *awa*, *tūpuna/tīpuna*, *whānau*, *hapū*, *iwi*, *hapori*, *wairua*, *hinengaro*, *mauri*, *taonga*, *marae*, *whare*, and in all other Māori cultural concepts and spaces. As Moana Jackson (2011) has said: “...there are actually stories in the land. Stories are knowledge, and knowledge is literature” (p. 71).

In my practice as a lecturer of in the Master of Applied Indigenous Knowledge programme at Te Wānanga o Aotearoa, I have been grappling with how to teach the mechanics of literature reviews to my students in a more indigenous way. I have explained to students that for me a literature review is a *whakapapa* of ideas where each theory or concept becomes a layer that tells a story about a particular topic and identifies who said what and when, and what further investigation might be required. Timu-Parata (2010) relates the weaving of *harakeke* into *whāriki* through the process of *raranga* to the writing of a literature review in that “[u]ndertaking a literature review is a way of weaving together different strands of knowledge” (p. 50). Using metaphors like these helps students to understand what a literature review is and how it works. What these metaphors do not address, however, is how we might use non-literature-based sites of mātauranga Māori as sources of information with which to inform *rangahau* or research. Even the very name of a “literature review” restricts what may be reviewed to books, articles and other such documents.

The term “resource” review has also been coined by others which may allow for more flexibility. However, I will use an alternative term, “knowledge review” instead of “literature review” throughout the remainder of this paper. Here, I define a knowledge review as a review of various sources of mātauranga Māori.

Moana Jackson’s (2011) words demonstrate that our libraries, archives, museums and repositories of mātauranga Māori are located all around us. To access this mātauranga we must seek out the kōrero, we must seek out our stories, and in doing so, we discover what Shane Edwards (2009) identifies as (k)new knowledge - that is knowledge that we may think is new but may very well be knowledge that we knew all along. Meyer (2013) states that Edward’s (k)new knowledge idea “...summarizes both the feeling/fact of the idea of ancient/new” (Meyer, 2013, p. 100).

To echo Moana Jackson’s (2011) sentiments our “literature” is in the land and sea; it is embedded in our Māori world. Here we find the stories, which Jackson says are knowledge. Once we have accessed these stories, we can then re-view them, we can compare and contrast these stories with one another to develop (k)new knowledge. Gathering and re-viewing mātauranga Māori into a knowledge review-type document might be viewed by some, especially in mainstream institutions, as highly problematic, even illegitimate. However, presenting knowledge in (k)new, innovative and indigenous ways, operates against the hegemonic approaches of the academy. As indigenous people, we do not seek to be legitimised by Western institutions. We have our own systems, our own rigour, our own standards - governed by whānau, hapū, iwi and hāpori. We are our harshest source of critique.

References

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