



‘You Model What You Want To See From Them’

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ABSTRACT

There are many reasons to incorporate Māori content into university courses. This article suggests a number of scholarly strategies designed to assist primarily non-Māori academics to enhance their effectiveness as teachers of Māori content and students in a university setting. Not an exhaustive list, these approaches were collected through interviews with five non-Māori lecturers at Victoria University of Wellington who have found constructive and successful ways to include Māori content. They have created learning environments in which they and their students feel culturally safe and supported, and have integrated a range of Māori content that is relevant to their particular subject or course. The strategies are reported to have been effective in a university context and may be transferable to other educational contexts.

INTRODUCTION

As the only full time Māori academic developer currently working in a New Zealand university I am often called on to work with academic staff who want to incorporate more Māori content or retain more Māori students in their courses but do not know how to do it. I also work closely with many Māori colleagues in various parts of the university and know how regularly they are called upon by others in the institution to give guest lectures and provide cultural advice and translations. While these colleagues are generally supportive of the notion of increasing the Māori component in the university curriculum, it can come at a cost to their own students, workloads, research outputs and energy levels.

While interest in incorporating Māori content into university courses is often personally motivated, there are other compelling reasons to support it. Most, if not all, tertiary institutions in New Zealand have some kind of governance statement that includes a distinct set of Māori-related obligations and goals. In addition, the New Zealand Tertiary Education Strategy 2010–2015 calls for tertiary providers to ‘improve progression to, and achievement at, higher levels for Māori students’ (Office of the Minister for Tertiary Education, 2010, p.12). The appropriate inclusion of Māori content can contribute to a dynamic and diverse learning environment that reflects the unique position of universities in Aotearoa New Zealand.

This article suggests a number of strategies designed to assist primarily non-Māori academics to enhance their effectiveness as teachers of Māori content and students in a university setting. They were collected through interviews with five non-Māori lecturers at Victoria University of Wellington. They have created

learning environments in which they and their students feel safe and supported, and incorporated a range of Māori content that is relevant to their particular subject or course. The strategies have been developed by experienced academics who have found them to be effective.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Support for concepts like teaching for diversity, encouraging minority students, and using culturally responsive teaching practices is well articulated in the existing research literature (e.g., Airini *et al.*, 2007; Bevan-Brown, 2005; Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh & Teddy, 2009; Cummins, 2001; Gay, 2000; Ramsden, 2003; Zepke & Leach, 2005). However, after listening to non-Māori colleagues talk about their experiences in lecture theatres and tutorials it became apparent that it is challenging to move from understanding and supporting these *ideals*, to being confident in one's ability to implement them in *practice*. McDonald (2008) suggests that when such practice requires teachers to step outside their cultural comfort zones, it can be intimidating.

Recent research has also reported a link between culturally responsive teaching practice and Māori student achievement (Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh & Teddy, 2007; Earle, 2008; Hawk, Cowley, Hill, & Sutherland, 2001; Klinger & Wache, 2009; Martin & Dowson, 2009; May, 2009; McMurchy-Pilkington, 2009; Rugutt & Chemosit, 2009; White, Oxenham, Tahana, Williams & Matthews, 2009). It is also thought that the retention of Māori students can be affected by how comfortable and supported they feel, as Māori, in the tertiary education context. New Zealand-based research has suggested that student retention is improved when teachers become involved with their students' learning communities (Zepke & Leach, 2005, p.6), and that the retention and academic success of 'minority students' is positively impacted when the 'content, teaching methods and assessment ... reflect the diversity of people enrolled in the course' (Zepke & Leach, 2005, p.10). A link has also been found between students with a strong sense of Māori cultural identity and students who achieve academic success (Bishop *et al.*, 2007; Gavala & Flett, 2005; May, 2009; McMurchy-Pilkington, 2009).

When it comes to teaching Māori content and students, some of the literature is premised on the assumption that Māori academic staff are the most suitable people to teach Māori content and Māori students (Gallhofer, Haslam, Nam Kim & Mariu, 1999; Gorinski & Abernethy, 2007; D. Smith, 1991). If that really were the case it would be problematic because, unfortunately, there are too few Māori academics. Alongside research about engagement with Māori students and content, it is also important to consider the wider context of what it means to be a university lecturer. This is important because in order for teaching staff to want to try any of the strategies suggested here, they need to have confidence that they are also meeting accepted scholarly expectations and standards (e.g. Glassick, Huber & Maeroff, 1997).

Having established that it is not possible to simply wait for more Māori academics to be appointed, and having identified in Glassick, Huber and Maeroff's work (1997) the types of scholarly activity that successful academics are expected to be engaged in (see below), it then becomes a matter of how to marry the two. In essence the question is, for those non-Māori academics who do want to engage with Māori content and students, how should they do it, and what are some effective, practical and scholarly teaching strategies and approaches available to them?

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Inspired by these questions, a small research project was set up to learn from non-Māori academics who were thought to be successfully incorporating Māori content into their courses, with a view to making their practices and ideas available to others. This seemingly simple premise did have a number of challenges however, not least of which was, how do you find out which lecturers are incorporating Māori content into their courses and how do you know if they are doing it well? Finding out required a number of actions including: reviewing course descriptions to see if they gave an indication of Māori content; speaking to academic colleagues in subject areas likely to incorporate Māori content, such as in the Humanities, Social Sciences, Education, Commerce and Law; and, also asking Māori academic colleagues by whom they had been approached in the past, were they involved in co-teaching with anyone, and who, in their experience, would make a suitable candidate for an interview for this project.

This initial canvassing produced a set of names of possible interviewees, but it did not guarantee that the people who had been identified were actually modelling approaches that supported Māori students and Māori content. Thus the approach adopted with this project was to assume that the best judges of successful integration of Māori content were the Māori students in those courses. *Ngai Taura*, the Māori Students Association at Victoria University of Wellington, was approached and individuals on their Executive Committee agreed to canvas their members and gather feedback about teaching staff who their members thought demonstrated positive Māori content teaching practices. This process reduced the pool of potential interviewees to just eight, who spanned four of the seven university faculties.

Each of the identified possible interviewees was then contacted by email and by telephone to explain the project and request an interview. Unfortunately, as the project had run into the summer period, a number of the potential interviewees were on leave and were unavailable for a meeting, which reduced the total number of interviewees to five. Prior to arranging the interviews, ethics approval had been granted for a set of semi-structured interview questions that asked the academics about their teaching practices in relation to their Māori course content. These questions were used to interview five lecturers over a one-month period. Each interview took approximately one hour and transcripts of the interviews were then produced for analysis. The interview transcripts were reviewed using the NVivo qualitative analysis tool. Particular attention was given to those strategies that appeared to align with what is regarded as rigorous scholarly practice, as outlined by Glassick, Huber and Maeroff (1997).

Another challenge with this project revolved around the term 'Māori content' as it can mean different things to different people. Rather than defining the term in advance, it was used as the focus of the first interview question and interviewees were asked to explain what they thought qualified as 'Māori content'. The interviewees, not surprisingly, described it in a wide range of ways, to the extent that it could mean anything to do with Māori people, history, practices, perspectives, language, and current issues. Most interviewees also thought the term included information about the Treaty of Waitangi and the acknowledgement of Māori as one of the two Treaty partners. As a result, this project took the view that the term 'Māori content' should be interpreted quite broadly, and additionally, it should be read in this article as such.

PROJECT FINDINGS

During the transcript analysis process, the strategies and ideas identified from the five interviews were aligned with each of Glassick, Huber and Maeroff's (1997) scholarly standards: clear goals, adequate preparation, appropriate methods, effective presentation, significant results, and reflective critique. The findings for each of these standards are set out below.

Clear goals

Glassick, Huber and Maeroff (1997) made the setting of clear goals the first of their scholarly standards. When it came to incorporating Māori content into their courses, the interviewees also shared their ideas about their teaching goals, learning objectives, motivation and content selection processes. As one interviewee explained, 'For me it's to do with positioning the fact that I'm teaching in Aotearoa, and living in Aotearoa ... You're not living anywhere else in the world; this is where you're based'. They felt a certain degree of obligation to incorporate Māori content, or as one interviewee described it, 'Whatever content I teach I'm thinking about it in terms of, I guess, a Māori perspective on it'; however, they were careful 'not to project it to the students as an onerous obligation'.

Some of the interviewees talked about setting learning objectives that acknowledged and built on their students' existing knowledge and experience with Māori content or people. One talked about drawing on the *whakatauki* (Māori proverb) '*Nāu te rourou, nāku te rourou, ka ora ai te iwi*' (with your food basket and my food basket, the people will be nourished) because, as she put it, 'I think that we all do bring our experience and understanding'. This notion of goal setting that builds on the students' existing knowledge was reinforced in a recent Ako Aotearoa publication, *Hei Tauira*, which suggested working with students to co-construct course goals as a demonstration of 'rangatiratanga' (autonomy) (Greenwood & Te Aika, 2009, p.3).

Some of the interviewees also talked about devising, where possible specific learning objectives that relate to the Māori course content, and then testing the students' attainment of the objectives with relevant assessment. Otherwise, as one interviewee noted, unless they are 'tied to learning outcomes' you have no reliable way to evaluate student progress in that area. They also shared the view that if Māori content is formally assessed in a course, it signals to the students that it is not just a 'token gesture' and encourages them to value the content too.

Adequate preparation

Just as Glassick, Huber and Maeroff (1997) emphasised the need for scholars to be adequately prepared, the interviewees also noted the importance of preparation in the delivery of Māori content. The fear of making a mistake was well known amongst the interviewees and all talked about acknowledging the concern and then doing something about it. As one said, 'Perhaps the most important way to prepare yourself is to recognise and admit to yourself the things you *don't* know. State your position honestly. Don't try to give a 'Māori' point of view if you are not Māori'.

As part of their preparation, the interviewees shared how they often talked with Māori colleagues or other Māori experts in their communities. One interviewee described how she and a colleague would 'meet at the marae for half a day and we'd look at an area of professional development in terms of teaching and in terms of understanding Māori process'. They were quick to add, however,

the importance of first building up a strong and trusting working relationship with these advisors and recommended finding ways to reciprocate.

The interviewees also talked about feeling more confident after they had undertaken formal or informal training, such as a Māori language course, spending time on marae or within Māori communities, or receiving mentoring from Māori colleagues or associates. This idea is also supported in *Hei Tauira* which noted that Pākehā staff who undertake training in Māori language and cultural practices are 'valued particularly for their commitment to Māori perspectives and their willingness to continue to learn' (Greenwood & Te Aika, 2009, p.7).

In addition, the interviewees stressed the need to do independent research on the Māori content being introduced, rather than simply relying on others. One lecturer talked about having 'a few sources that I read and re-read' and another admitted that she is 'always on the lookout for new resources, whether it's through the National Library or sometimes you just hear about on the radio'. While noting that the requirement to conduct additional research does take extra time and effort, one interviewee noted that by making it part of her normal practice it had become so integral to the way she taught that she no longer faced the panic of thinking, 'Oh my God! I've got to find some Māori content!'. In fact, for some of the lecturers, incorporating Māori content had become so integral to their practice that they had developed it into research and teaching specialisations.

Appropriate methods

While many interviewees admitted to having had reservations about their possible lack of cultural credibility around the Māori content in their courses, they all spoke of not allowing that to let them 'opt out' of including Māori content. They shared many strategies for incorporating the content appropriately. For example, one lecturer acknowledged this from the start of each course by saying, 'I position myself as a Pākehā within this country and I always start with my *whakapapa* [genealogy] and my *pepeha* [personal introduction] and I model doing that in te reo Māori and not necessarily doing it very well, in terms of pronunciation, but I am doing it, and I unpack why that is. I don't just do it and leave it like that'. Another interviewee shared that:

I also don't pretend to have a Māori viewpoint, so I don't pretend to be an insider, but I try very hard to present and show understanding of, and thus respect for, the Māori viewpoint ... even when it isn't my own.

Other interviewees talked about co-teaching with Māori colleagues, and shared how 'it was really good when we had Māori/ Pākehā teams teaching the Treaty ... because I think it really enabled Pākehā students to get that they could see Pākehā people not being threatened and defensive about it, and they could make some connections'. Some interviewees talked of inviting Māori guest lecturers into their courses, but warned that many of their Māori academic colleagues are regularly called on, from all parts of the university, for this kind of teaching and noted the significant drain on their time and energy, with potentially negative effects on their own research and teaching programmes. They recommended thinking about how to reciprocate to Māori colleagues and advised developing a collegial relationship with that person first – rather than just 'cold calling' them and expecting them to be of assistance.

Another suggestion made by the interviewees about how to incorporate Māori content was to proactively select Māori examples for use in teaching. For example, one lecturer chose to take students to a marae for a field trip, when there were many other suitable sites, as a way to encourage the students to think

about knowledge and the retrieval of information in a more open way. Other lecturers chose to expose their students to Māori historical events, people, and scenarios or used Māori data in activities that ordinarily might not have included Māori content.

A common approach amongst the interviewees was the use of comparative analysis for teaching and assessment. For some of the lecturers, it was a way to get the students to reflect on their own experiences and also look at the same topic from Māori perspectives. For others, it meant inviting their students to challenge dominant viewpoints and practices, such as the lecturer who wanted her students to understand 'that [they] can't write about a Māori topic and not consult Māori writers. That there's a problem with only citing Pākehā sources'.

Another simple way that the interviewees looked to incorporate Māori content into their courses, was through the use of common Māori language terms and concepts. They felt that their geographic location in New Zealand provided ample justification for greeting students at the start of each class in te reo Māori (the Māori language). A casual *kia ora* or more formal *tēnā koutou* took a couple of seconds to say but as the interviewees' confidence and skill grew they introduced other words and phrases, such as farewells like *ka kite* ('see you again') and enquiries of well-being like *kei te pēhea koutou?* ('how are you all?'), or chose to use Māori alternatives for common English terms, like discussing the *kaupapa* of their course, instead of calling them themes, or describing the development of their disciplines as a disciplinary *whakapapa*.

Some of the interviewees talked about actively modelling *tikanga Māori* (Māori customary practices) in their courses, such as the concept of *manaakitanga* (hospitality). For example, students were asked to perform hosting duties for guest lecturers, which led:

... some students [to] give gifts, some students didn't give gifts but were so warm and friendly. Some people made sure their guest had a glass of water or a drink, a bottle of water or something. Others forgot that part but picked up something else.

Other suggestions of *tikanga* that could be modelled or advocated for in courses included such things as sharing *kai* (food), not sitting on tables, having *mihimihi* (introductions) at the start of the course, and ending the course with a *poroporoaki* (an opportunity for students to say goodbye and give thanks).

A three-stage approach was adopted by some of the interviewees for introducing Māori content into a course where it was possible (or even likely) to meet resistance from students (and peers). The first stage involved introducing a central concept or issue from a global perspective, the second stage was to consider the bicultural dimensions of that same issue and the third stage focused on kaupapa Māori perspectives on the topic (L. Smith, 1999). The lecturers found that, generally speaking, this graduated approach was acceptable to most students and, in their experience, when they delivered a kaupapa Māori-based lecture after the earlier two their students were less resistant and more likely to engage with the material.

One other useful point that an interviewee made was the reminder to leave some extra 'space' in lecture plans, particularly if the Māori content might be challenging or complicated for the students to engage with. Rather than seeing this as a problem, the interviewee saw it as an opportunity for learning, and a time to 'look at the strengths of what your teaching is about, the strengths of the students, [and] the strengths of the course itself'.

Effective presentation

Just as other research has found that the demeanour and enthusiasm of the lecturer affected the way students engaged with a course (Patrick, Hisley, & Kempler, 2000; Ramsden, 2003), the interviewees in this project all spoke about the importance of how the Māori content is delivered. One interviewee noted, 'I think I convey to the students that fascination, and they can easily see my commitment to it – I've devoted my academic life to it. So they accept what I say because they perceive that I care'. The interviewees also talked about modelling curiosity about Māori content, with one saying, 'For me, it's about "Wow!", about curiosity, about learning, about the wonders of discovery, so that's what I try and project to them', and another suggested that 'I think a lot of the success of what I do is due to my communication of my attitude'.

All of the interviewees talked about ways to create a positive classroom environment, with some suggesting using questions to generate discussion that draws out Māori perspectives or knowledge, using body language (like eye contact and nodding) to encourage student engagement, and using anecdotes to bring in real life Māori examples. Some interviewees suggested that if *you* value the Māori content, the students will too. As one put it, 'To me it's about the relationship you've got with your students ... If they have respect for you, if they can see that you're passionate about it'.

Other interviewees talked of using a range of resources and tools to engage their students in the Māori content, such as videos, storytelling, and images as well as debates, discussions, field trips, and oral recordings. They also emphasised the importance of consistently incorporating Māori content throughout a course, suggesting that it is better received by students and incorporated more effectively if it is not in one isolated section.

Significant results

While Glassick, Huber and Maeroff (1997) highlighted the significance of the results as a key measure of scholarly behaviour, the interviewees found that evaluating the 'results' of teaching Māori content was tricky. In courses where the content was embedded in learning objective and then assessed, results were easier to measure but, in the case of courses where the Māori content was more integrated, some lecturers disputed whether grades or marks were the best measure of impact. Instead, those lecturers talked about the atmosphere in the classroom, the ability and attitudes of the students when they engaged in class discussions or submitted written work, and the change in attitude that they noticed in the students between the start and the end of the course.

Reflective critique

Finally, the interviewees were all asked about their own reflective practices around critiquing their teaching performances, and their responses aligned with Glassick, Huber and Maeroff's (1997) fifth scholarly standard, reflective critique. Many of them talked about writing ideas and comments alongside their lecture notes as they taught, noting how the class reacted to the content, recording any 'curly' questions they were asked, or identifying issues they would like to address another time. They also talked about meeting with colleagues to talk over formal student feedback and using that data to plan for future course offerings. Some of the interviewees had developed close enough relationships with Māori colleagues to be able to invite their specific critique of the materials that they had used and the lectures they had delivered. Others lamented not having that opportunity but welcomed the prospect. As one interviewee said, 'I think it'd be good to have some discussion around whether we're doing things in the best possible way'.

CONCLUSION

One of the major limitations of this project is that it is based on only five interviewees; however, the project set out to identify effective ways to incorporate Māori content into university courses and the small set of interviewees were still able to provide examples that may well be transferable to other educational contexts. There is, however, no one way to teach Māori content in a mainstream university course. Each of the interviewees in this project had developed their own style. A key theme from every interview was a commitment to keep trying to incorporate Māori content into courses in ways that are appropriate, relevant, inclusive, and ultimately, successful. All of the people who informed this project were conscious of the privileged positions they hold as university lecturers and of the influence they have on the students whom they teach. Leaving the last word to one of the interviewees, there was no question of whether or not to incorporate Māori content because, in her view, 'You model what you want to see from them'.

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