



Shaping of andragogy for an immigrant teacher-educator in Aotearoa

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*“Chole jae kuashai-tobu jani prithibir vire
harabo na tare ami-she je achee amar e banglar tire”
-Das (1934, as cited in Das, 2022)*

*A quote from a poem in Bangla by the author Jibonananda Das
(The theme stands for someone's connection to the birth-land to be
paramount even when the world gets filled with crowds and mists)*

Teaching is a complex process. The shaping of the process varies in individuals. One example of such is explained here which would demonstrate that beliefs and practice revolve around each other within the local and individual contexts.

Andragogy, originating from the Greek word “aner” which means man, “agein” which means leading and “agoogus” which means leader (Loeng, 2018). This is similar to the word pedagogy which comes from Greek “pais” which means boy, and “agogus” being the leader (Shah & Campus, 2021). We, as a civilization, have moved away from those patriarchal denominations. We refer to pedagogy and andragogy as teaching methods for children and adults. Andragogy is often explored from the viewpoint of adult learners. Knowle's principles of andragogy are explained in terms of the motivation and interest of the learners. These principles discuss how important it is to value learners' prior experiences and to share the rationale behind the learning. While the framework and the idea behind andragogy being different from pedagogy have been criticised (Loeng, 2018), the complexities of teaching adults have been established over time (Knowles, Holton & Swanson, 2014). Adult learners are expected to engage in the course content with the experiences they bring with them due to the many roles they have played in their lives, such as being a student, a daughter, a parent (or even a grandparent), a partner and an income-earner of the family (Tipton & Wideman, 2021).

The following example narrates an early childhood teacher educator's journey of understanding and applying practices of adult teaching in Aotearoa New Zealand. I (the author) analyse and describe the factors that contribute to the philosophy and practices that characterise my understanding of teaching adults. I have been teaching in the tertiary sector for 19 years. Eighteen of those years are within New Zealand. I originally come from Bangladesh. Growing up in a country where families are big in size with a strong connection with extended

family members has shaped me as a person who is comfortable around people. Migrating to Aotearoa in adulthood has challenged this comfort caused by the new environment, but mostly because of being surrounded by a foreign language. Nevertheless, I continued with my teaching career here. The passion for teaching had already been established in me from my 3 years of teaching experience in Bangladesh. At the beginning years of teaching, I was surprised to see the care the children showed me to ensure the new teacher settled in well. At a later stage, I noticed the same pattern of care in my adult learners. The reciprocal care continued in Aotearoa where I find the learners take care of me, and try to support the foreign-looking, accented, lesser-tech-savvy kaiako [teacher]. I relate to my teaching through a metaphor from Bangladesh, called Nakshikatha. It is a hand-made quilt that is sewed in tiny locks using multi-coloured threads. To me, every session I have with my learners is one of those tiny locks of the Nakshikatha that I am stitching. The current teaching context where I am stitching this is a polytechnic. The programme I work for as a senior lecturer is the Bachelor of Teaching (Early Childhood Education). Therefore, my role is to contribute to the process of educating early childhood teachers in Aotearoa New Zealand. The ākonga [students] I work with are adults (usually ranging from 18 to 30). The practices of an immigrant teacher educator within this organisational background are discussed in terms of my personal beliefs and locally contextualised growth. As a teaching professional in Aotearoa, I have used some commonly used Māori kupu [words]. The rationale behind using these kupu is to share my usual day-to-day practices of Māori kupu for the professional commitment I must uphold in line with the Te Tiriti o Waitangi articles. To examine my philosophy of teaching, I used the teaching standards set by the Teaching Council (*Our Code Our Standards*, 2017) as a reflective framework. The purpose of discussing the philosophy statements is to form an understanding of what andragogy looks like for me.

REFLECTIVE ANDRAGOGICAL STATEMENTS

Critical reflection about one's own self is important to understand and value others. Mezirow (1990) discusses how as teachers we breathe in a belief system to breathe out the work that we do with others. Reflective practice is an essential part of teaching, even when you are an experienced educator (Afrin & Bishop, 2023).

A reflection on my andragogical practice made me realise that the lens I apply to my teaching is supported by a sociocultural lens. The lens may be aligned with the discipline (early childhood education) and the curriculum document Te Whāriki (Ministry of Education, 2017) but could not be so prevalent in everything I do if it were not for my upbringing in a collective society. A big part of an individual's identity is formed by the nature of childhood, family and school experiences. The reason that I emphasise the collective nature of measurements is due to the upbringing in a wider family environment. Therefore, I formulate my andragogical philosophy statement as:

Teaching is a profession that comes with the responsibility to celebrate each learner's agency. The classroom is a space where many I's work together and mature as 'we' with curiosity and care

for each other. What happens in a teaching space today has an impact on what happens outside in the village tomorrow.

Becoming a contributor to society is the expectation from adult and tertiary education, regardless of the discipline. I remind my ākongā to be a contributor to the education system as a kaiako [teacher] who cares with resilience, and who cares for social justice for each child:

To see teaching as instrumental to bring changes is the authority that I understand, and to work towards social justice is the responsibility that I appreciate.

I always find opportunities to remind my ākongā to utilise equity over equality. I explain to them that children with additional needs have the same needs as any other child has. I remind them that the ‘additional’ is for them to adapt to be that special kaiako who cares with resilience. I advocate for this because of the injustice that I experienced for a child with special needs from their micro-environment. In a way, having observed this child and his experiences made my andragogical philosophy and practices stronger. Life-Experiences often can create the opportunity to shape the purpose of one’s own professional life.

GROWING WITH THE PROFESSIONAL CONTEXT

Keeping myself updated with the central initiatives for teaching and learning was crucial for me to thrive in a foreign environment with comparatively lesser skill in the language. From 2007 to 2024, I familiarised myself with publications such as *Kei tua o te pae* (Ministry of Education, 2000), Education Regulations 2008, Vulnerable Children’s Act 2014, a new version of *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 2017), *He māpuna te tamaiti* (Ministry of Education, 2019), *Tātaiako* (Ministry of Education, 2011), *Tapasā* (Tapasā, 2018), and *Our Code Our Standards* (Education Council, 2017). By the time *Our Code Our Standards* was released, I could easily relate to all six standards with my developed identity as a teacher educator in Aotearoa New Zealand. I have chosen the analysis of these standards to present my andragogical lens.

<i>Professional standards of teaching in Aotearoa</i>	<i>How it translates to an immigrant teacher-educator’s mahi</i>
Te Tiriti o Waitangi partnership	A privilege to connect to self
Professional learning	An investigation to understand diversity
Professional relationships	A listening ear to the quieter world
Learning-focused culture	An opportunity to value ākongā
Design for learning	A non-hegemonic search
Teaching	A reflection on social outcomes

Standard one: Te Tiriti o te Waitangi partnership

A privilege to connect

My first exposure to Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Orange, 2013) was studying a course at Massey University. It was a completely unknown chapter for me as an immigrant student. With time, studying, researching and meeting people knowledgeable in this area, I gradually grew my passion for using te reo and follow Māori tikanga [customs, protocol] where appropriate. I see myself as a committed kaiako who feels legal, professional, ethical and moral obligations to uphold Te Tiriti. I proudly and confidently say my pepeha whenever an opportunity arises. Through the reading of *Ako* (Pere, 1994), I realised how important it is for Māori to know their whakapapa. That allowed me to acknowledge the identity I bring from a faraway country.

Valuing the people and places that have influenced me throughout my early life and career is a huge recognition and te ao Māori [worldview] opens up the door for us, the immigrants, to exclaim those connections with pride. I see the incorporation of te reo Māori [language] not only as a responsibility but also as a privileged opportunity.

Standard Two: Professional learning

An Investigation to understanding diversity

In tertiary education, professional learning is often explored and expressed though the research an individual undertakes to practice scholarship of teaching. A look back into my own research initiatives allowed me to see that most of those are aligned with the urge to understand the diverse world that I work with. I invested myself to conceptualise components of culture and cultural sustainability (Afrin, 2017, 2019, 2023). With the lived experience of another quieter world (a world of a tamaiti [child] with severe Autism), I am now exploring my learning and growth in understanding neurodiversity (Afrin et al., 2023). I remind my ākonga and colleagues of the inclusive discourse whenever I have an opportunity to advocate for diversity. I still do not see myself in a strong advocacy role, but more in the process of being there through enduring.

Standard three: Professional relationships

A listening ear to the quieter world

A study on disabled immigrants shows that they face education and employment barriers due to their disability status, citizenship and immigration status, race, ethnicity, and language (Gonzalez & Echave, 2023). I have experienced the same barriers to some extent, except for the disability factor. As an immigrant student myself, I often found the break-times to be more emotionally challenging than the teaching time. A feeling of isolation complicated by efforts to understand the humour and media discussion made break times difficult for me. I am aware of this aspects of people's emotional engagement. I make a subtle effort to connect with those who present difficulty in engaging not with the contents, but with the social context of the classroom.

Standard four: Learning focused culture

An opportunity to value ākongā

A learner-focused approach is essential to thrive in education, and as tertiary lecturers, we need to find ways to do so. An example of this would be a class in September 2023, when I reminded ākongā of Tongan Language Week to be celebrated and asked them if any of them would like to teach the class anything about Tonga. A brave ākongā stood up and contributed to the class. I feel proud when I see that the ākongā contribute courageously to each other's learning. Contribution in the form of community languages is empowering, as only the speakers of the other language have this power to share with the class. Therefore,

I advocate for individuals to bring in and use the gifts they inherit. I show passion for learning and practising community languages so that it sparks an interest in them too.

This advocacy and guided participation are supported by Rogoff's thoughts on the cultural construction of knowledge (Rogoff, 2003). The alignment with this theoretical perspective is inspired by the personal experience of being an immigrant in Aotearoa New Zealand and having another language (Bangla) as the first language. Any opportunity to speak in my language makes me feel valued and rested, in this busy, unknown life and living. I assume learners who are in the same boat as I feel the same way. This is why using the taonga that ākongā bring became a special part of my teaching.

Standard five: Design for learning

A non-hegemonic search

The planning of contents to be delivered and styles to be applied already have a point of difference as I value my cultural capital. The more I have informal kōrero [conversation] with a diverse range of learners, the more I am enriched with ideas and strategies that do not come from the hegemonic worldview normalised in the discipline of education. However, I must confess the resources used in my courses are still heavily influenced by the dominance of Western theoretical perspectives, except for the amazing source of wisdom that comes from the Māori and Pasifika scholarship. I realise and appreciate that an interesting and different worldview is currently explored and honoured by academics more and more in the form of indigenous grounding (Wyld, 2007).

Standard six: Teaching

A reflection on social outcomes

The giving nature of the discipline of early childhood education has inspired me to expand course delivery beyond the classroom in tertiary settings:

I like to establish the fact that whatever we do together is not only for us, the kaiako and the ākongā, but also for the society and for humanity.

Sustainable development is referred to as making the community habitable as it emerges and empowering individuals with critical reflection is one of the ways to achieve this (Vare & Scott, 2007). Moving from one end of the world to another made me realise the value of building relations with the communities you know and currently work with. I aspire to build an empathetic society that impacts the overall existence of humanity:

I encourage my students to be life-long learners, to believe in themselves, and to be proud of who they are today, and who they become in their professional journey.

Every teacher contributes to the lifeforce of the universe in their own way by creating an inclusive environment in the early childhood settings of Aotearoa New Zealand.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, I would like to refer to the previously mentioned artefact from Bangladesh, called *Nokshikatha* (a word in Bangla, which means designer quilts). These quilts are made of cloth pieces stitched together with multi-coloured threads, through patterns, designs, and outlines. In this article, I tried to use some threads that I have received from my upbringing, experiences, and reflections, and some from the local, institutional, and professional values to create a quilt that represents my teaching philosophy in the space of andragogy. This stitched quilt says who I am as a lecturer. 'I teach who I am' is a popular quote from Parker Palmer (1998) that inspired me to stitch this *Nokshikatha*. I did it for myself. Sharing it with the readers is with the hope of encouraging them to analyse their professional understandings. I believe that looking back into our practice allows us to connect better with the locally constructed curriculum that we all are part of with the influence of our own lived experiences.

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