The Next Stage of Māori Art Education

Piki Diamond

Abstract: As a participant in the recent Manu Ao Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga symposium series on the topic of leadership, I learned a great deal about several fundamental aspects of the concept of leadership. This paper builds on that experience and relates selected concepts to the development of art education for Māori and to consider the survival of Māori art and the concepts and values that are embedded in the art practices. Māori art educators continue to be innovative and this has allowed aspects of Māori knowledge to be infused into Aotearoa New Zealand's mainstream art education. However, it is timely to review the intention and practices of Māori art educators and leaders. Such a review should inform the next generation of Māori art educators and help to establish a stronger collaboration between Māori and mainstream art education and therefore mutually empower all parties.

Keywords: leadership; Māori art education

In his address at the leadership symposium Professor Charles Royal advocated that aroha brings "wholeness into our world of duality and separateness" (Royal, 2010). Aroha provides freedom by allowing each person and thing to have control over his or her own destiny. In a Māori context this enables people to practice rangatiratanga over his or her self. This freedom is obtained and replenished through the compassion and forgiveness, in experiences of aroha for people, possibilities and circumstances. Royal contextualised this essence and knowing of aroha in a Māori worldview as he identifies that aroha and freedom derived from the love shared between Ranginui (Sky Father) and Papatūānuku (Earth Mother).

Within academic leadership the term aroha is either rarely voiced or acknowledged, but as Royal highlighted, "it is seen in the small acts of kindnesses and here is where leadership can be valued". "Iti nei, iti nei" Royal translates as the "small steps of quality done consistently" and it is in appreciating these small steps and realising that as progress moves at its chosen pace, leadership becomes synchronised to its rhythm driving it continuously forward. Royal (1996) identifies that creative potential and the research of such possibilities to be mutually beneficial and it requires practice and leadership to be underpinned by aroha and not aimed at fulfilling one's self-importance (Royal, 1996).

In taking part in the leadership wānanga series, I have assimilated many new perspectives and, naturally it seems, have related them to my area of involvement in Māori art education. This paper will now explore these perspectives in the light of the wānanga engagement and refer to some specific features of the development of Māori art education.

The small steps of progress taken by the forefathers of contemporary Māori art education have allowed for a cohort of contemporary Māori art educators to develop. The integration of mātauranga Māori into mainstream art curricula in Aotearoa began in the mid 1940s when Gordon Tovey was the Superintendent of the Art and Crafts Department for the New Zealand Government (Skinner, 2005). As noted by Smith (2001), "Tovey's intentions were to integrate Māori and Pākehā within a unified culture which respected its dual origins" (p. 14). However, in scrutinising these intentions, Smith concluded that "[al]though he obviously respected Māori art, his interest was not in maintaining it but using it to 'reform' art in school" (p. 93). Such an intention was not conducive to upholding and transmitting Māori knowledge. However, the Māori art advisors employed by Tovey became the forebearers of

both Māori modern art and art education. Such people included Arnold Wilson, Paratene Matchitt, Fred Graham and Katerina Mataira.

Robert Jahnke joins these artists who have forged practices that allow a more conducive partnership between Māori and Western art education. They have not only challenged mainstream art education to acknowledge and embed Māori art and artists into the curriculum, they also challenged Māori communities and their people in the new forms and materials which were appearing in Māori art. They confronted the wider community with the question what is Māori art? Such a question never brings one conclusive answer; instead it allows a discourse to begin, opinions to develop and journeys to take course.

In terms of leadership, Jahnke developed the Bachelor and Masters degrees in Māori Visual Arts; Adsett developed Toihoukura at Tairawhiti Polytechnic, and when he moved to Te Wānanga o Aotearoa the reins were passed to Derek Lardelli. In the 1970s and 1980s Arnold Wilson, along with fellow Māori artists, implemented Te Mauri Pakeaka project, developing cross-cultural workshops for art educators and their students (Greenwood, 1999). Wilson is a kaumatua at Awataha Marae, and was a consultant for the Certificate of Art and Design Intermediate from Auckland University of Technology.

In reflecting upon the contributions of these educators, it seems that they walk on the same path as their pre-colonial forefathers and leaders (ngā tohunga whakairo o te āo Tāwhito) These ancestors developed new designs and forms as new technologies were introduced into their societies (Teaero, 2002). Our contemporary Māori art leaders did the same and they continue to encourage development so as to engage the next generation and to allow Māori heritage, stories and tikanga to survive and to be celebrated (Jahnke, 2006, 2009; Poland, 1999; Skinner 2005).

The whare whakairo (carved house) is a taonga that also depicts whakapapa. Traditionally the ancestors represented within the whare whakairo were those of the hapū or iwi, and often leaders and significant figures that influenced the history of the hapū or iwi. If a whare whakairo were to be designed to reflect Māori art education what would it look like? Who would be selected? What would the pou (carved poles), tukutuku (lattice panels) and kōwhaiwhai (painted scroll design) look like? Would these traditional formats still be used? What stories would they tell? What attributes would they highlight? Would the artworks show the art educators love, passion and resilience in obtaining their visions? Would the artworks highlight their strategic thinking, to be embedded in system where they had captured audiences to influence and nurture their successors? Would it show their intellect as they obtain positions where they can influence curriculum designs and policies? Would it illustrate their creativity and willingness to allow students to develop their own interpretations of what constitutes Māori art?

Work by Professor Wally Penetito on Māori education and the contribution of kaupapa Māori to mainstream education brings further enlightenment to this current evolution in art education (Penetito, 2010a, 2010b). Penetito lays out the evolution of education in Aotearoa by defining the purposes of education in three formulae. These formulae help locate and describe the present state of arts education. His first purpose outlines the assimilation of Māori into mainstream education which he describes as “one-plus-one equals three, winner takes all” (Penetito, 2010b). In this case he holds that mainstream institutions give little or no voice to Māori in forming their education, and that Māori knowledge that was transferred represented token acknowledgements of facts and activities to satisfy the dilemma of how to make mainstream education more ‘culturally responsive’ without disturbing the dominant equilibrium. His second purpose is stated as “one-plus-one equals two, mirror image” (Penetito, 2010b), this overviews the current education system. He points out that although kaupapa Māori educational institutes have allowed Māori a choice between mainstream schools and kaupapa Māori schools, the latter is still funded by the Crown, represented by the

New Zealand Government and therefore compromises have had to be made. In the final purpose, stated as “one-plus-one equals three” (Penetito, 2010b), each remains intact but is influenced by a third. In this purpose Penetito (2010b) proposes the future for an education system that is built on partnerships of equal stakeholdings and where some other influence enables the synthesising of kaupapa Māori and mainstream education.

In reference to art education and Māori there is an opportunity to engage and connect the next generation of students to their inherent culture especially as Māori students become dislocated from their tribal lands and affiliations to continue into higher education and become engulfed in new technologies and urbanisation. As a Māori art educator, I witness students in their art-making who know what interests them but become confused by Euro-centric terminology and model artists that are so dislocated from their reality that their relevance remains obscure to Māori students. These same students show no interest in traditional Māori art forms of whakairo (carving), rāranga (weaving), kōwhaiwhai or tā moko (tattoo) and these students come from both kaupapa Māori and mainstream education. Therefore, art educators need to collaborate within the mainstream education system so that future Māori art students learn to embrace and be empowered by both Māori and Western worldviews and experiences.

By adopting Penetito’s (2010b) third purpose of education, non-Māori can also experience and develop an understanding of Māori and their worldview. From my experience with non-Māori students, they appreciate that their worlds are broadened in learning about Māori knowledge and values. The collaboration between Māori and Western education philosophies and the over-arching concept of aroha should be empowering and lead to a unique kind of freedom.

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Piki Diamond (Ngāti Tūwharetoa, Ngāpuhi) has recently completed a Master of Arts degree in Māori development at Auckland University of Technology. She works in the office of the Assistant Vice Chancellor Māori and Pasifika at Massey University (Albany campus) in Auckland.

E-mail: p.r.diamond@massey.ac.nz