

## MĀORI HUMAN DEVELOPMENT LEARNING THEORY

### Arapera Royal Tangaere

*Te Arawa, Ngāti Raukawa, Kāi Tahu*

*Ko tēnei pepa e tiro ana ki ngā āhuatanga ako o te tangata. E whai tonu ana ngā kaupapa whakaaro ki tōna ake wheako.*

For te iwi Māori the theory of Māori Human Development Learning has been passed on by kaumātua to the following generations. It is present in songs and stories and mentioned in many karakia. It is the Māori way of perceiving the world and the universe and it is embodied in the intricate interrelationships between people and the universe. These relationships (āhuatanga Māori) are based on the traditions, values and customs (tikanga Māori) of te iwi Māori, and te reo Māori is the vehicle which enables the transmission of these traditions and enables an individual to socialise successfully within the Māori context.

The necessity to socialise in a particular manner within a Māori context drives the use of the appropriate language and the entire interaction is based on the customs, value and traditions. This is known in Te Kōhanga Reo and Kura Kaupapa Māori as 'Te Aho Matua', the philosophical body of knowledge which bonds us to our ancestors, the land, the universe, and Io Matua Kore (God).

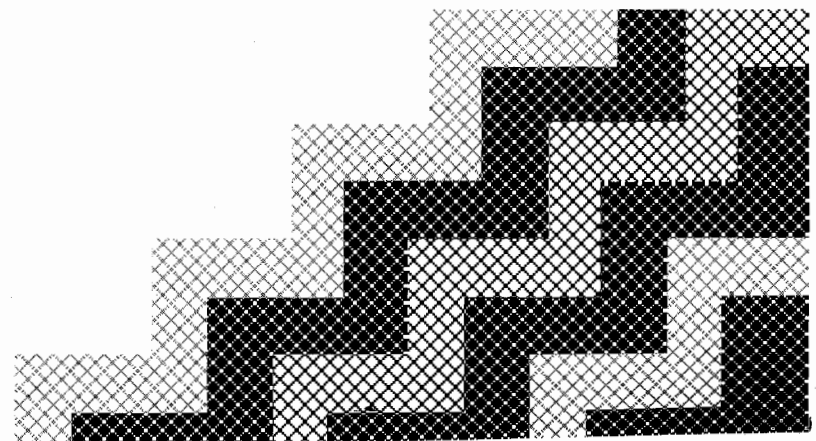
The poutama, a lattice weaving design of steps, is one of the visual models of Māori Human Development. Tuakana/teina, a description of one of the Māori methods of teaching and learning, is also described. Tuakana/teina is one model of interaction which occurs within the whānau, hapū, iwi system. It enables development to occur along and up the steps of the poutama. This learning and development cannot be separated from the influences of tikanga Māori and the Māori context.

### THE POUTAMA AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Māori human development is embodied in 'te ira tangata' (the life principle of people). It is the essence of Māori knowledge. It contains the knowledge of 'how' and 'why' for the universe and explains the place of people within this universe. According to one oral tradition this knowledge was made available to te iwi Māori through Tāne-nui-ā-Rangi, who ascended to the twelfth 'realm' to gain the three baskets of knowledge. The climb through the twelve realms is told through many karakia (incantations). Sir Apirana Ngata in *Ngā Mōteatea* (1959), his collection of Māori waiata (songs), reminds Māori people of that quest for knowledge. The poutama, a lattice weaving design, symbolises the stairways to those realms.

When I look at the tukutuku (lattice weaving) of the poutama it clarifies for me what learning and development is for Māori. There are many messages held in that one image or concept. The layered design of steps ascending upwards (see Figure 1) tells me of Tāne's climb to gain knowledge and the challenges he faced during his journey. It reminds me of the many challenges that I face in my learning and development, and that by finding answers for these challenges I am able to grow. It tells me that it is through continuous practice and continuously working towards becoming more competent, in not only my intellectual pursuits, but also in my physical, emotional, social, spiritual and cultural dimensions, that I can hope to ascend those steps.

FIGURE 1



Within te ira tangata a Māori person holds many facets or dimensions as part of his or her personality, each as important as the other and viewed holistically. Although the dimensions can be identified as separate entities, they all work together as a whole (Pere 1994). The layered steps represent the many dimensions which make up one's personality. They tell me that it is important to ensure a balanced development for each.

In *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education 1993), four of those dimensions are named. They are:

- tinana (physical development);
- hinengaro (intellectual/cognitive development);
- whatumanawa (the development which portrays the emotions); and
- wairua (spiritual development).

The poutama tells me that learning is a process which involves a period of time for the task or activity to be understood. This is represented by the plateaus in the poutama. During this period the process of titiro, whakarongo, kōrero (repeating, practising, sorting, analysing, experimenting and reviewing) is carried out until the task or activity is understood. Once this is accomplished, the learner ascends, like Tāne, to the next step. The poutama depicts the importance of the whānau assisting one another in that learning.

Therefore the poutama can be interpreted from a physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual perspective as well as reminding te iwi Māori of the specialness of knowledge. It reminds us of the responsibility we have when imparting that knowledge. It is a taonga, a gift to us through Tāne-nui-ā-Rangi.

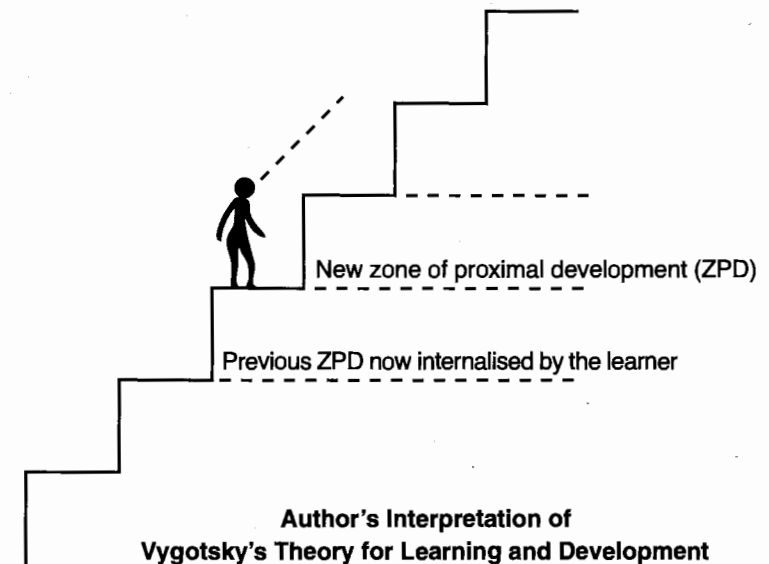
### ZONE OF PROXIMAL DEVELOPMENT

A Russian psychologist, Lev Vygotsky (1978), has proposed a similar theory for learning and development. He argues that language initially arises as a means of communication between the child and people in the child's environment. This interaction, which is meaningful to both, is governed by the situation or context. The acquisition or learning of language gives rise to a variety of internal developmental processes that are able to operate when the child is interacting with people in a given situation. Once these processes are 'internalised' or understood, they

become a part of the child's 'independent development achievement'. Vygotsky called this hypothesis the 'zone of proximal development' (ZPD). Once the child internalises the task or activity, the zone of proximal development ascends to the next step, thus identifying the child's potential for future development (see Figure 2).

The zone of proximal development is the area of development between what the child can do alone and what it is capable of achieving with assistance. Once that higher point is reached, the child no longer requires assistance to carry out that activity. However, the zone of proximal development now moves to another point for which assistance is again needed. Consequently as the child learns and internalises the activity from those experiences, its zone of proximal development moves as a beacon for further development.

FIGURE 2



Internalising a concept or action means the child automatically interacts in a particular way without consciously thinking about that concept or action. This can be likened to an experienced motorist driving a car. Such a driver coordinates the clutch, gear lever and steering wheel without too much thought, as well as listening to the car radio. One

would say that this person had internalised the necessary functions of driving.

Similarly, when a novice is being taught the poi, assistance is required to master its basic patterns of movement. Gradually the assistance can be withdrawn as the student becomes more practised and competent. The teacher gauges when to introduce new and more complex poi movements. Eventually, after much practice and repetition of the poi patterns, the novice becomes more adept – perhaps even one day an expert in the poi.

#### THE TUAKANA/TEINA CONCEPT OF LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

The concept of tuakana/teina is derived from two principles: whanaungatanga and ako (learn, teach). Tuakana/teina is an important dynamic of whanaungatanga drawn from the importance of people, particularly within the whānau, hapū, and iwi. Pere (1994) states that whanaungatanga:

... deals with the practices that bond and strengthen the kinship ties of a whānau. The commitment of 'aroha' is vital to whanaungatanga and the survival of what the group sees as important. Loyalty, obligation, commitment, an inbuilt support system made the whānau a strong stable unit, within the hapū, and consequently the tribe (p.26).

The concept of tuakana/teina also operates through the dual nature of ako. The word ako means to learn as well as to teach. In the Māori world it is an acceptable practice for the learner to shift roles and become the teacher, and for the teacher to become the learner.

Tuakana means older sibling (brother to a boy or sister to a girl), and teina a younger sibling (brother to a boy or sister to a girl). Therefore the idea of the learner taking on the responsibility of being the teacher or tuakana to her or his teina is acceptable and in fact encouraged from an early age. This is the essence of love and care for one another in the whānau. It reinforces the principles of whanaungatanga.

It is not unusual to observe tuakana/teina being practised in Te Kōhanga Reo; in fact older children are often asked to care for a young child who has just begun attending Kōhanga Reo. I remember an

interesting story that Nani<sup>1</sup> told me about my youngest daughter, Arapera, who because she was one of the older children in the kōhanga, was asked to care for a new two-year-old girl. Nani mentioned how that young child followed Arapera everywhere and even collected Arapera's clothes and shoes from the playground for her. The bond between the two was one of protection, care, and education from Arapera to her new teina, and one of adoration from the two-year-old child for Arapera. Even now Arapera still returns to the kōhanga to see her many teina and waits eagerly for them to begin Kura Kaupapa Māori.

The responsibility of the tuakana is to assist the teina in their learning and development. By acting as a support, the tuakana facilitates the process of learning. Both Hohepa (1990) and Ka'ai (1990) observed this process taking place, and I certainly observed my eldest daughter Rangi in the role of tuakana with her younger sister. In fact Rangi was also given consent to take a teaching role with me as her learner.

It is important to realise that tuakana/teina was traditionally not the only Māori method of teaching and learning. There was the special relationship between the elders and their mokopuna and the more formal instruction of the whare wānanga (institution or course of higher learning). It was also normal practice for children to accompany adults or elders and learn through practical experience, as it was for adults to participate and learn through discussions held on the marae or through serving an apprenticeship with an expert (Makereti 1938).

#### SCAFFOLDING AS A CONCEPT OF LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

A concept similar to tuakana/teina exists in western thought. Scaffolding is a support system which is referred to by many developmental psychologists when discussing learning and development. Smith (1992) states that this concept was developed 'from Vygotsky's ideas to explain the graduated assistance provided by the teacher' (p.197). Bruner (1983), in *Child's Talk: Learning to Use Language*, discusses the concept of a 'language acquisition support system' (LASS) as a form of scaffolding. He states that the scaffolding functions to enable learners to solve a problem that they would otherwise be unable to solve by themselves. The child draws upon information and skills already acquired to enable the solution

of the problem within the scaffolding. With the assistance of a more expert person, who gives the child clues, the child eventually masters it. Each piece of the acquired skill and/or information, whether it is gathered from the child's own perception or gained from the expert, interrelates and moves the child another step in building more skills, finally becoming expert at that problem.

The scaffolding that occurs between the child and the person with more skills allows the child to test and evaluate the situation more rapidly, and an instructional relationship develops. This relationship can be formal or informal. Once the child has learnt the skills to cope with the task then the support from the person can be gradually withdrawn. The child has learnt strategies from this mastery, which enable the newly acquired skills to be retained until they are ingrained in the memory and become 'automatic'. These newly acquired skills and strategies enable the child to participate more and more in his or her own learning, therefore becoming an independent learner.

The LASS is driven by a pattern of meaningful interactions between a person, or persons, and a child, where initially each have particular roles that can become reversible (that is tuakana/teina). This is the concept of 'reciprocal' influence. These interactions have another very significant characteristic: they take place in (and help to define) particular activities. In their repetition and development they can be seen as habitual patterns or formats. These formats become so familiar that they are an integral part of the interactional process and become 'routinised'. Bruner's (1983) description of these routines defines their nature: 'They have a script-like quality that involves not only action, but a place for communication that constitutes, directs, and completes that action' (p.121).

The special interactional situation between the adult and the child during communication and language acquisition is such that the adult restricts the task to what he or she believes the child can cope with. Once the child shows signs of handling this, the adult then raises the level of difficulty or 'raises the ante' (Snow 1977) and the level of demands on the child.

The aim of scaffolding, or monitoring the language acquisition process, is not just to fine-tune the language itself, but also to ensure that the child has acquired functional language skills:

One special property of formats involving an infant and an adult ... is that they are asymmetrical with respect to the knowledge of the partners – one 'knows what's up', the other does not know or knows less. In so far as the adult is willing 'to hand over' his knowledge, he can serve in the format as model, scaffold, and monitor until the child achieves requisite mastery (Bruner 1983, p.133).

According to Greenfield (1984), the learner's role in the task to be learnt is simplified while the task is held constant. The amount of scaffolding required decreases in accordance with the learner's acquisition of the skill, until it can be carried out independently of the teacher.

Young children's speech is often simple, repetitive, exaggerated, and frequently accompanied by non-verbal gestures (Snow 1977). It has been found that forms of scaffolding are evident during the acquisition of language in these young children, through the support shown by the caregivers to their language development. For example, Ninio and Bruner (1978) describe how the early forms of 'dialogue' are mostly 'thing orientated' and involve the use of a concrete object which serves as the topic of the exchange. Once the child has learnt to label the objects, the instructor will try to ensure that the child is also able to label action words. In this way, early speech interactions form a language system.

Because the caregiver is familiar with the young child's sounds and habits and their relationship is usually consistent, with regular activities being a normal part of their daily life, then the ability to guess what the child is thinking is also crucial to developing vocabulary (Wood, Bruner and Ross 1976).

Leontiev (1979) states that when an interaction between a child acquiring language and an adult occurs, the adult will ensure that that child understands the meaning of the discourse by adopting strategies that accommodate the level of language understanding of the child (Wells 1986). The adult will use verbal and non-verbal actions to convey the message and interpret any cues, verbal or non-verbal, from the child (Snow 1977).

Peters and Boggs (1986), in *Language Socialization Across Cultures*, propose three hypotheses about the processes of language learning, the

evolving nature of learners' language acquisition systems and the motivation behind that language development, which show that the motivation behind language development is the need to socialise.

### LANGUAGE SOCIALISATION

Elinor Ochs (1986), an American who has studied the language development of Samoan children, states in *Language Socialization Across Cultures* that the child, when using language within a particular cultural setting, learns to socialise. The socialisation of the child – that is, the ability of the child to act appropriately within the cultural context – gives rise to the child understanding or internalising the values of that culture (Vygotsky 1978).

Just as there are rules for acquiring and using language, so too are there rules for the acquisition of cultural values. A good example is the rules associated with tapu (sacredness). The young child learns the many facets of tapu depending upon the context, the social interaction within that context, and the language used. These rules often occur in the shape of routines or recognised patterns of behaviour within those culturally structured activities. The activities provide culturally specific forms of teaching.

Another example is the kawa, the ritual or protocol when visitors are being welcomed on to the marae. Although there may be slight variations depending upon the tribal area, the welcome still has recognised patterns of interaction which require the appropriate behaviour. Of critical significance here is that the language, both verbal and non-verbal, is the mechanism which drives this interaction.

In relating the significance of this to the young child's language acquisition within the Kōhanga Reo, it becomes obvious that the child through learning the Māori language must also be learning to socialise through using the language. It is inevitable then that the Kōhanga Reo child will acquire social and cultural values alongside the acquisition of the Māori language, for the kaupapa present in Kōhanga Reo and the practices found there are all a part of tikanga Māori.

The mihimihi, or greeting, is an excellent example of an activity that has a clear format and pattern of behaviour which is derived from an important social and cultural interaction for Māori people, the

whaikōrero (formal speech). I observed several examples of mihimihi both in Te Kōhanga Reo and in the family home. Hohepa (1990) and Ka'ai (1990) found in their separate studies of children in Kōhanga Reo that the mihimihi occurred every morning, and involved the entire Kōhanga Reo, with a kaiako or kaumātua beginning the activity with a karakia or prayer. The children then took turns greeting the rest of the whānau and their greeting was always followed by a waiata (song) or haka (dance).

Language was the tool that drove this interaction. Within mihimihi was a rich presence of routines such as turn-taking, prompting, and repeating, which not only supported the child's acquisition of the Māori language but also the acquisition of Māori values.

Elinor Ochs (1986) also says that the children's correct interpretation of language, both verbal and non-verbal, gives rise to their interpretation of their social situation, and that this enables them to gain knowledge of their place and role in the family and then within society. The routines established are important for the child who can be repeatedly exposed to ways of acquiring language, social skills, and the very essence of the culture – its values.

Therefore, in general terms, language is a vehicle for social interaction – the two interact to develop socialisation, and the continuing development of socialisation is, in turn, dependent on language use (Ochs 1986). The acquisition of language develops from a support system consisting of a variety of formats, such as cues or prompts, turn-taking, and repetition. Bruner (1983) refers to this as the language acquisition support system (LASS). The acquisition of language gives rise to the acquisition of socialisation skills and therefore cultural values and practices. The pedagogy of language acquisition has embedded in it the support system necessary for the acquisition of culture. I have named this a cultural acquisition support system (CASS), along the same lines as Bruner's LASS.

### TE AO MĀORI AS LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

In the Māori world one's personality does not develop in isolation. The family setting is not the only environment within which learning takes place. The child is immersed in the context of cultural values. Like



language development these cultural values are also acquired through meaningful interactions. In the Māori world these cultural values are the essence of tikanga Māori. Some of these values are expressed in *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education 1993). Reedy (1994) translates them as follows:

- mana atua (personal well being);
- mana tangata (development of self-esteem through contributing);
- mana whenua (development of sovereignty and a sense of belonging);
- mana reo (development of communication);
- mana te ao tūroa (development of all aspects of this world and the universe).

The English meanings for these Māori terms were expanded by Reedy (1994) in her keynote address to a teacher refresher course in which she stated that according to Māori there is a divine spirit, and that every child has a 'spark of godliness' within (mana atua). Through the development of self-esteem and confidence, the child is able to love and care for the whānau, hapū and iwi (mana tangata). Alongside this, the child's roots are identified with the land and so the child develops a sense of belonging. With these developing together, the child is then able to explore, discover, assess, and then understand the surrounding world. There is a Māori expression for this concept: 'Ki te whai ao, ki te ao mārama'.

According to Pere (1994), the Māori child develops in positive ways when surrounded by aroha. In the Māori world view, the child belongs to the universe, te aorangi, which is perfect (Pere 1991). People or anything within the universe only become less than perfect when affected by negative forces. Any decision in some way, either directly or indirectly, affects the child. Therefore the child must always be surrounded by aroha, to reach the outer realms of the universe (the link to the poutama): 'Education in this context knows no boundaries' (Pere 1991, p.5).

#### THE ECOLOGY OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Bronfenbrenner (1986) states that external influences affect the capacity of the family to promote the health and development of the child. He investigated the impact that the environment has on the development of the child, taking into consideration the internal family processes affecting

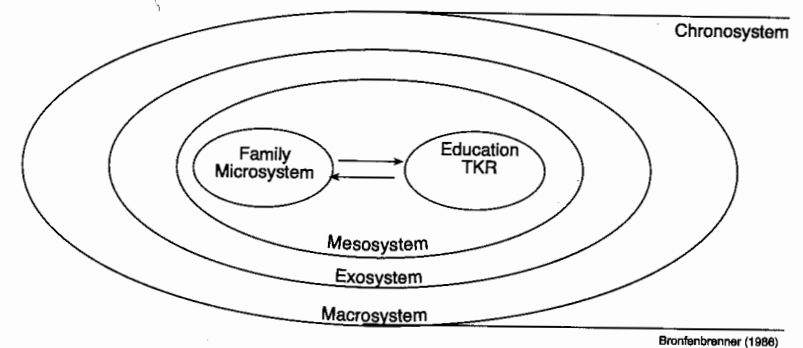
that child. He looked at different environmental systems which would have an external effect on the family and described these systems as the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem.

The microsystem, the smallest unit, comprises the child's immediate environment – either the family setting or the educational setting. Factors affecting the child in one of those settings will impinge on that child's wellbeing in the other. Bronfenbrenner recognises the importance these two settings have on the development of the child and places the microsystem(s) within the mesosystem.

The mesosystem is affected by an external environment (exosystem) such as the social lifestyles and the work status (informal) of the parents, and such influences as the media or politics (formal). All these subsystems are enveloped by the macrosystem, which represents the cultural setting. This macrosystem then moves through time, creating the chronosystem, whereby a child or adult undergoes a transition or change in life situation, such as attending Kōhanga Reo or kura for the first time, marriage, or death in the family. 'Such transitions occur throughout the life span and often serve as a direct impetus for developmental change' (Bronfenbrenner 1986, p.724).

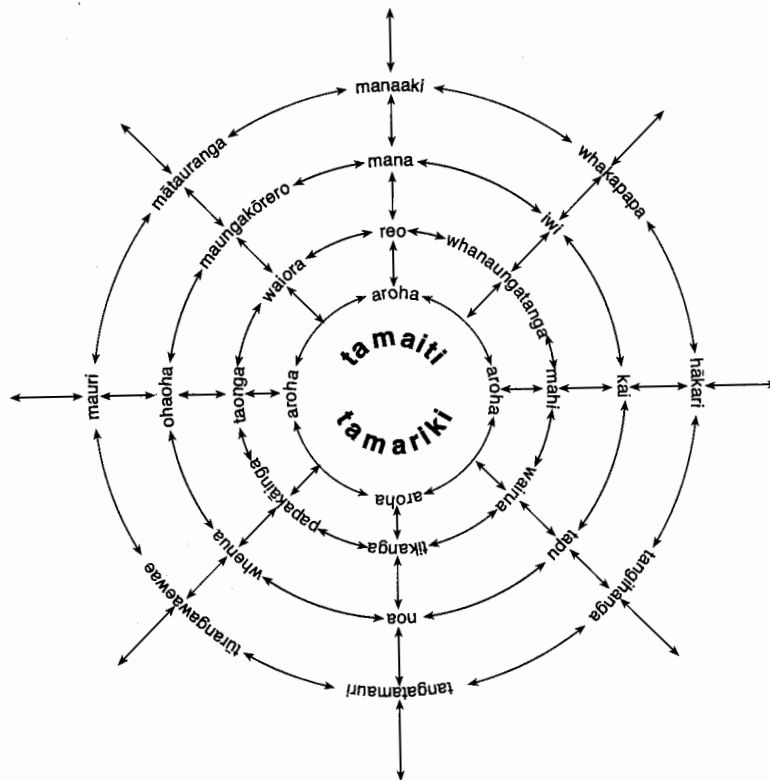
These ideas are shown in diagrammatic form in Figure 3.

FIGURE 3



Rose Pere's diagram (see Figure 4) shows the child in the Kōhanga Reo surrounded by love, and the decisions made within either the kōhanga (microsystem) or the whānau impinge directly on the child. Similarly, decisions made by external organisations or government, which affect the family or kōhanga, have an indirect effect on the child.

FIGURE 4



What this means is that Kōhanga Reo needs to provide learning experiences that enable the young child to develop all dimensions of personality within the premise of Māori knowledge. These learning experiences – such as mihimihi, karakia, hīmene (hymns), waiata, poi and haka, culturally specific activities, as well as game-playing – impart Māori knowledge through the use of the Māori language, and enable the child to internalise not just the language but also the Māori culture. In doing so, the internalisation process depicts the way the child will interact in relation to the spiritual world, to people, to the land, and to the environment. Te reo Māori is the key to this knowledge.

#### Note

- 1 Nani, pronounced Nanny, the kaiako (supervisor) at the Kōhanga Reo attended by Rangi and Arapera.

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