



University of Otago College of Education Te Kura Akau Taitoka

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Verification

Check



The work presented in this assignment is substantially my own:

- I did the reading and planning
- I wrote the whole assignment
- I have acknowledged the use of other people's work
- I have proof read my writing and believe it to be of a standard befitting a New Zealand teacher
- I have used 'spell check', 'grammar check' and/or a dictionary
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Date 3rd June 2011

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By

MANA

The traditional concept of **mana** is defined through many elements. In terms of an individual person mana can be inherited, bestowed, earned, or depleted. The Maori dictionary defines mana as, “prestige, authority, control, power, influence, status, spiritual power, charisma - *mana* is a supernatural force in a person, place or object” (Moorfield, 2003). Barlow (1991) refers to mana in modern terms as the power of the gods, ancestors, land, and the individual. Mana is a spiritual entity, and simply put it, “is,” it exists. Traditionally mana does not necessarily have a beginning point, but a person can be born with a particular level of mana already (inherited). This mana can be built on (increased), and in turn it can be lost (depleted). Mana is a spiritually guided process.

It is vital that mana is present in the classroom. Although it is not a tangible entity, mana is felt significantly throughout the school and inside the classroom. Mana controls the mood of the classroom, and it affects the social and the achievement outcomes from the learning environment. It also affects how a school is viewed within the community. If teachers do not possess strong mana within themselves they may lack the motivation to effectively engage in the teaching and learning processes. If students lack mana in the sense of self-worth then they may lack the drive and the desire to learn. When students and teachers do not recognise or place mana (in the form of respect) upon one another, they lack the ability to properly understand and relate to each other. This can lead to adverse effects on the teacher student relationship, and on the school and learning environment.

The mana concept must be incorporated in to the classroom. It is able to be expressed through teachers, students, visitors, and the wider community. The mana concept is included in the classroom and wider school settings by incorporating the concepts of whanaungatanga, manaakitanga, ako, mihi, and pōwhiri.

To ensure effective classroom practice it is important for both students and teachers to bestow reciprocal mana upon one another. This is done through the giving and the acquiring of mutual respect for one another.

To practically instigate these processes teachers can carry out a Pōwhiri. Pōwhiri is a concept traditionally used to welcome and host visitors on to a marae (Barlow, 1991). Rolberts, & Matenga-Kohu, (2003), define pōwhiri as being an encounter between two groups of people, the hosts and visitors. In their definition Rolberts et al., (2003) also discuss modification and standardisation of the pōwhiri in order to meet the demands of the modern world.

Within both a school wide and classroom practice, pōwhiri is a means of properly welcoming students and clearing away barriers to learning. During Pōwhiri the teacher or the school principal, would assume the traditional role of the host, and the students would assume the identity of the visitors. Within the school wide and the classroom settings, the Pōwhiri should be used to establish rules and boundaries for the learning environment.

Through the mihi, which is defined by Moorfield, (2003) as to greet, the teacher is able to begin to forge an identity with the students. The students are able to respond by sharing aspects of themselves with the teacher. For everyone this can create a sense of pride and belonging. Respect is given to cultures and identities when personal, whānau, and geographical details are included during the mihi. This process incorporates the whanaungatanga concept. Pere (1982) describes whanaungatanga as practices that bond and strengthen ties of a whānau.

Teaching strategies incorporating a mihi within the classroom setting could begin with the teacher sharing his or her mihi, and then having students follow this up by being paired up with fellow students and sharing their mihi with one another. This could be followed by sharing as a whole class. Through their involvement in this activity, children are

exploring and communicating ideas about relationships with one another. Within a classroom and a school setting this means the students are getting to know one another, and beginning to establish links, and embark on the formation of unity as a whānau of learners.

Incorporation of Manaakitanga, the ethic of caring and sharing, throughout teacher, classroom, and school wide practice, continues to build on mana. Rolberts et al., (2003) discuss the manaakitanga concept as fundamental to increasing and extending mana. When schools and teachers provide a safe working environment for students, and when teachers are supportive, considerate, and demonstrate an interest in the students, and their culture, they are including the manaakitanga concept with their pedagogy.

Classroom and school wide practices of manaakitanga will build mana for teachers, students, and the school. Mana will be shown through teacher to student respect, and through community feelings toward the school. Pere (1982), talks about mana being given to entire tribes through reputation for excelling in a particular area. This should be no different when related to community perceptions and attitudes towards a school. If students are respected, and inspired and encouraged to achieve, then the school itself carries mana.

It is important to recognise that mana can be decreased if manaakitanga is not incorporated within the educational environment as without an ethic of caring and sharing it becomes very difficult to build mana.

Teachers can demonstrate an interest in their students and their culture through the concept of Ako. Ministry of Education (2009) refers to Ako as students and teachers learning from one another. The Ako concept strengthens the relationship, and effectively the mana between the student and the teacher because both parties are actively engaging with one another, and empowering each other through the imparting and the acquiring of knowledge. According to Pere (1994) the sharing of both the students and the teachers cultural ideals and identities means feelings of self-worth are strengthened, therefore personal mana is also

increased. “This is not just about people simply getting along socially; it is about building productive relationships, between teacher and students, where everyone is empowered to learn with and from each other” (Ministry of Education, 2009, p. 28).

In conclusion, Mana, although not a tangible entity, possesses fundamental power in education. Without mana there are large barriers to education, as there is little or no empowerment to impart or obtain knowledge. Mana must be present within educational facilities, within teachers, and within students. Mana is not a fixed asset, it can increase or decrease, depending on forces acting on or within it. It must be established and it must be maintained and nourished. Mana embodies respect, pride, prestige, values, power, confidence, and self-esteem. We meaningfully feature mana in a mainstream classroom and in the wider school setting first by understanding its foundations, then by incorporating concepts such as manaakitanga, whanaugatanga, ako, and mihi. Through these concepts we foster inclusive practice, belonging, whānau, being an attentive listener, being supportive and considerate, reciprocal learning, and creating relationships. Community educators and learners feel engaged, connected, and considered.

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