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Youth development: Māui styles

Kia tipu te rito o te pā harakeke; Tikanga and āhuatanga as a basis for a positive Māori youth development approach

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Abstract

The Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa has been seen as an innovative approach to youth development. The E tipu e rea – Rangatahi Development Package was particularly useful for organisations implementing the strategy with Māori youth. There have been successful Māori youth development initiatives, though these have been ad hoc. Nonetheless, the realities and experiences of Māori youth are still not being fully addressed in national policy. This has implications for the support and resourcing of Māori youth development initiatives.

Māori youth are members of a range of groups including whānau, hapū, iwi and Māori communities in te ao Māori as well as the wider youth population and New Zealand society. The histories, experiences and viewpoints of each distinct group contribute to diversity in the Māori youth population which presents challenges for Māori youth development. Māori development goals do not adequately focus on Māori youth and youth development theory does not fully consider culture. The challenge is to successfully integrate Māori culture and youth culture in a relevant and meaningful manner so that Māori youth can positively contribute to Māori development and wider New Zealand society.

This study examines pūrākau (narratives) about Māui (Polynesian ancestor) as a template for the analysis of Māori youth development. Interviews were undertaken with a group of Māori youth from the Manawatū region. The research showed tikanga and āhuatanga were relevant to the contemporary daily lives of the participants. The study found that positive development and the realisation of potential for Māori youth was affected by individual and environmental influences. This thesis concludes by making recommendations for policy, practice and further research. Finally, it offers a culturally appropriate theoretical approach for positive Māori youth development.
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