The Information seeking behaviours of Māori secondary school students

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Massey University, Manawatū Campus, New Zealand.

Spencer Charles Lilley

2010
Abstract

Current knowledge of the information seeking behaviour of Māori secondary school students is extremely limited.

The objective of this study was to determine how Māori students access and use information to make sense of the two worlds they live in. The research results demonstrated that they have a distinct preference for seeking information from other people, rather than print and electronic sources. A key part of the information behaviour involved exchanging and sharing information within and between social networks. Fisher’s information grounds theory was used to investigate and interpret the information networking behaviour.

The study was conducted using a mixed methodology and determined that the students participated in social networks in three different zones, at school, in social and virtual settings, and cultural situations. Each of these zones has sub-areas where information sharing and exchange transactions take place. At school the sub-areas are in formal and casual situations, and in the hostel zone. The social zones include shopping malls, foodcourts, ‘downtown’ destinations, cafes, parties, church and virtual environments. The cultural zones were identified as marae and whānau dwellings.

The research results revealed that Māori students encounter a wide range of barriers in the process of seeking information, including not always being able to access the information they want due to its ‘unavailability’, or their perception that the information is incorrect. Access to information technology and the internet remain significant barriers for students to overcome. The study revealed that the types of
barriers encountered by students varied according to the cultural context they were seeking the information in. It was found that individuals that have strong sense of their Māori cultural identity have an inner confidence that leads to them experiencing fewer information barriers when seeking information in the two cultural worlds they are part of.

The study concludes by presenting a model that is created from the research data and is based on three tikanga Māori principles: the principle of kaupapa whakakaha (strength), the principle of kaupapa tuakiri (identity) and the principle of kaupapa atawhai (humanity). The principle of kaupapa whakakaha includes the values of rangatiratanga (self-determination), whakamana (status), pono (trust), wairuatanga (spirituality) and whakamowai (humility). The principle of kaupapa tuakiri includes the values of whakapapa (legitimacy), iwitanga (tribal pride), te reo (language), whanaungātanga (relationships) and kotahitanga (unity). The principle of kaupapa atawhai includes tau-utuutu (reciprocity), awhina (assistance), rehia (enjoyment) and tautoko (support).

This model demonstrates that indigenous (in this case Māori) values are important factors in the successful sharing and exchange of information between Māori secondary school students. The result of this research is the discovery that Māori students who form social networks use these values as a basis for identifying the desired behaviours within their group and when interacting with other groups. Although there are fifteen values, it is not necessary for all of them to be present every time, as the gathering point and those who are there will determine which are relevant to that particular situation. The presence of the selected values within a group will determine whether it is a ‘safe’ environment for those present to exchange and share information,
Acknowledgements

Although my name appears as the author of this thesis, it should be noted that its completion would not have been possible without the support of many others. I would like to thank my supervisors, Professor Arohia Durie and Associate-Professor Huia Tomlins-Jahnke, who supported me when I needed support and challenged me when I needed them to. I am also indebted to Professor Taiarahia Black for his assistance with the use of te reo Māori throughout this thesis.

Special mention must also be made of Professor Karen E. Fisher, who developed the information grounds theory that this thesis draws on and who gave her time so freely to me when I was in Seattle in October 2008.

I would also like to acknowledge my friends and colleagues at Massey University Library, particularly Jane Brooker who gave me support, encouragement and interesting conversations over coffee.

To my family Penny, Jake, Harry and Edward thanks for being so understanding; sorry my PhD journey turned out to be an endurance event. Thanks Ron for the ‘loan’ of the laptop.

Finally, thanks to the Principals, staff and especially the students of the four schools that took part in the research project. There is a whakatauki that I would like to recommend to the students.

Whaia e koe ki te iti kahurangi; ki te tuohu koe, me maunga teitei
Seek the treasure you value most dearly: if you bow your head, let it be to a lofty mountain.
## Table of Contents

Abstract i  
Acknowledgements iii  
List of tables and diagrams viii  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prologue</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter One</strong>&lt;br&gt;Ki te ao wheiao, ki te ao marama&lt;br&gt;From darkness into the world of light</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creation</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The origins of knowledge</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From whence they came: origins, myth &amp; archaeology</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental &amp; astronomical information indicators</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The information of language</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artistic information indicators</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assimilation, integration &amp; urbanisation</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tohunga Suppression Act 1907</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urbanisation</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The digital age</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter Two</strong>&lt;br&gt;The contemporary information world</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creation</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The origins of knowledge</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From whence they came: origins, myth and archaeology</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental and astronomical information indicators</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The information of language</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artistic information indicators</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assimilation, integration and urbanisation</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The digital age</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter Three</strong>&lt;br&gt;Information seeking and Māori: a literature review</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information seeking literature</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Māori networks</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The cultural interface</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The library profession</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information barriers</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital divide factors</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter Four</strong>&lt;br&gt;Methodology</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research questions</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodological process</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology of this research project</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Quantitative and qualitative research methods  94
Qualitative research methods  95
School selection  97
Consent process  99
The questionnaire  101
Focus groups  103
The Questionnaire structure  107
The focus group sessions  111
The focus group questions  113
Human ethics issues  115
Obtaining consent  117
Confidentiality  118

Chapter Five
Information world at school  121
The school day  122
School as an information ground  123
Identifying the information grounds  124
The zones  125
The formal zones  128
The casual zone  141
The Boarding Zone  150

Chapter Six
Social information grounds  164
Identifying the social information grounds  166
Shopping malls  167
Downtown  168
Food courts  169
Sporting events  169
Parties  170
Church  170
Cafes  171
Information topics  173
Virtual information worlds  194
Cell phones  195
Email  198
Web 2.0 tools  198
Telephones  200
Gender issues  206
Exchanges between different social groups  206
Sub-social group issues  207

Chapter Seven
Cultural information grounds  211
Te Marae: one location many sites  213
Identifying the marae information grounds  214
Key informants  232
Whanau  232
Parental guidance  234
Siblings  235
Whanau assistance  235
Information transmission  236
Identity indicators  237
The influence of cultural identity on information seeking  242
List of tables & diagrams

Diagram No.1 School Information Grounds – zones 125
Diagram No.2: School Formal Information Grounds – zones 126
Diagram No.3: School Casual Information Grounds-zones 127
Diagram No.4: School Boarding Information Grounds – zones 127
Diagram No.5: Social Information Grounds – zones 166
Table No.1: Social Information Grounds Discussion Topics 173
Table No. 2 : Students knowledge of their whakapapa 239
Table No. 3 : Te reo Māori ability of students 240
Table No. 4 : Spoken te reo Māori ability 240
Table No. 5: Comprehension of te reo Māori by students 240
Table No. 6: Frequency of visits to marae by students 241
Table No. 7: Number of iwi affiliations of students 242
Table No. 8: Information barriers encountered 253
Diagram No. 6: Māori information barriers 262
Table No. 9: Māori information seeking values based model 278