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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.

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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,

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> 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

Prologue 1

Introduction 7

Chapter One
Ki te ao wheiao, ki te ao marama
From darkness into the world of light **11**
Creation 11
The origins of knowledge 14
From whence they came: origins, myth & archaeology 17
Environmental & astronomical information indicators 20
The information of language 23
Artistic information indicators 26
Assimilation, integration & urbanisation 33
Tohunga Suppression Act 1907 35
Urbanisation 36
The digital age 38

Chapter Two
The contemporary information world **42**
Creation 43
The origins of knowledge 44
From whence they came: origins, myth and archaeology 45
Environmental and astronomical information indicators 48
The information of language 50
Artistic information indicators 52
Assimilation, integration and urbanisation 54
The digital age 57

Chapter Three
Information seeking and Māori: a literature review **65**
Information seeking literature 65
Maori networks 72
The cultural interface 76
The library profession 77
Information barriers 81
Digital divide factors 84

Chapter Four
Methodology **89**
Research questions 89
Methodological process 91
Methodology of this research project 93

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

Chapter Eight
Information barriers **250**
Information barriers and libraries 250
Questionnaire results 252
Focus group results 254
Interpersonal information seeking 254
Information technology 256
Using libraries 258
Reasons for not using libraries 259
Maori information seeking barriers 261
The relevance of Maori identity 264
Significant barriers 266
Gatekeepers and information carriers 268
Areas for future research on Maori information barriers 269

Chapter Nine
A values based Maori information exchange model **272**
The role of values 272
The role of tikanga Maori 276
Kaupapa principles 277
Kaupapa Whakakaha 278
Kaupapa tuakiri 283
Kaupapa atawhai 287
Model characteristics 292
Strong ties, weak ties 294

Chapter Ten
Conclusions **298**
Making sense of the world and the information resources used to do this 298
The cultural context 299
The role of Māori identity 300
Information barriers 301
Areas for future research 302
Contribution to knowledge 304

Bibliography **306**

Appendices **321**

Survey questionnaire 322

Focus group questions 332

Glossary of Maori words 333

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**