

9 Atoro'ia te peu 'ā to 'ui tūpuna

A culturally responsive pedagogy for Pasifika peoples

*Aue Te Ava, Sue Erica Smith, Christine
Rubie-Davies, and Airini*

Introduction

This chapter reports on the *pa metua* (elders') knowledge of Cook Islands core values that they considered important for inclusion in teaching culturally responsive pedagogy, and how these values are significant to wellbeing. Adopting Cook Islands core values in health and physical education (HPE) pedagogy can help develop more effective teaching in the classroom. This approach is built on the belief that core values are inherently positive when integrated into HPE pedagogy because student and teacher relationships and engagement improve.¹ In this study, the possibility of integrating cultural values into teacher training – for example, in-service, pre-service, and teacher professional development – was explored, with the aim of enhancing students' and teachers' engagement in schooling. The study examined the various adaptations that are needed to be made in current HPE pedagogy. Culturally responsive teaching is the optimal pedagogy to enhance students' learning of wellbeing, through understanding students' background and cultural identity. However, the question was how this could be initiated in the classroom.² In framing this research we asked, “What Cook Islands core values were needed to structure a culturally responsive pedagogy for HPE to promote wellbeing in Cook Islands culture?”

Methodology

Our qualitative study involved the analysis of stories of the *pa metua* (elders) that became the *Tivaevae* model (Figure 9.1), and a prospective guide for HPE educators. A total of 24 stories were collated from which six themes were derived regarding Cook Islands core values and how these core values would be significantly associated in the higher education and wellbeing of Cook Islanders/Pasifika communities. The key was to develop relationships with the participants and the community. The goal was for the *pa metua* to discuss ways to implement the values through culturally responsive pedagogy for physical education

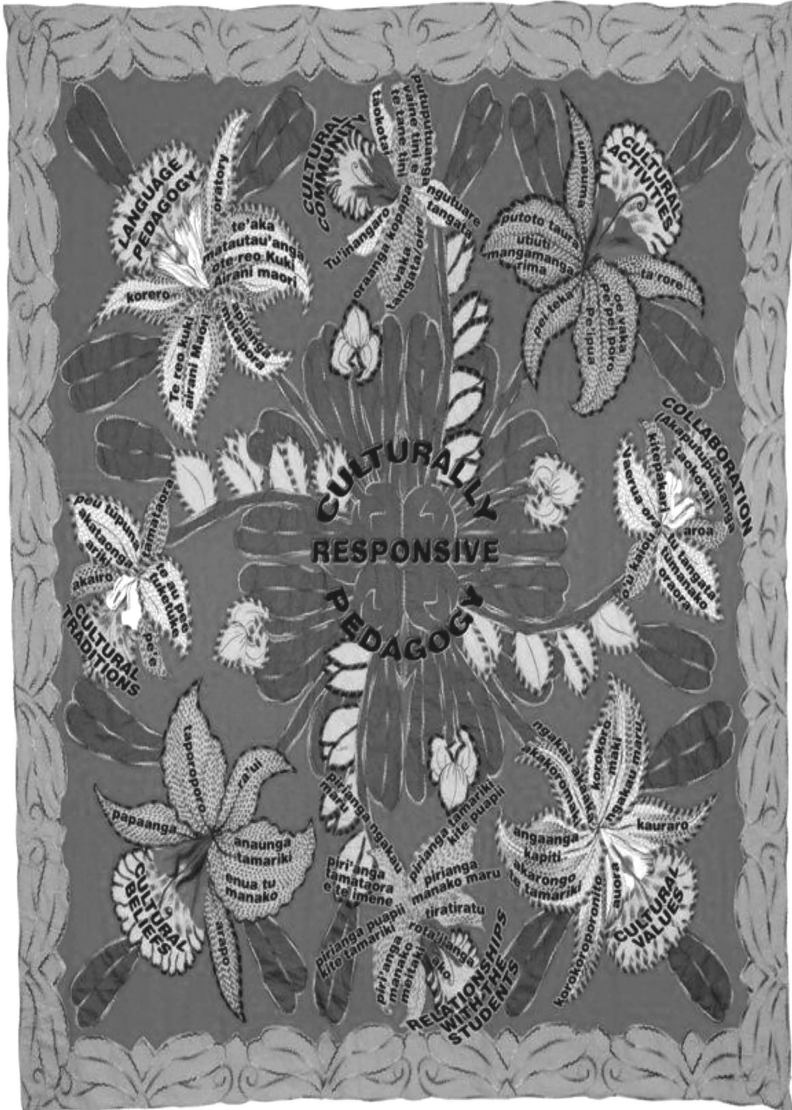


Figure 9.1 The first author of this chapter created a *Tivaevae* model as a conceptualised theoretical framework for a culturally responsive pedagogy in Cook Islands physical education³

in schools, and how these values contributed to the wellbeing of Cook Islands secondary school students' health and physical education activity and, critically, how this knowledge could be applied to enhance wellbeing in higher education and Pasifika communities.

Methods

Participants

Ten community elders, five government officials, and four school administrators linked to education in the Cook Islands participated in the study. These participants were identified as *pa metua*, that is, those who have standing and respect within the community. The school administrators were included because of their knowledge about the potential integration of core values into the teaching of HPE.

Interviews

Each interview with the volunteer participants took approximately one hour, and anonymity in presenting the data was assured. Common values were discussed with the interviewees, including *tu ngakau maru* (humility), *tu akangateitei* (respect), and *taokotai* (cooperation), on which the participants elaborated. The *pa metua* engaged in semi-structured interviews not confined to a set format, which allowed freedom to express views and directions that were important to the participants.⁴ The interviews were digitally recorded and were conducted in a comfortable place, at a time chosen by the participants. Cultural practices pertaining to reciprocity and respect were a significant part of the interview. Digital recordings were transcribed, with participants each receiving a copy of the transcribed data; this allowed them to identify any omissions and to alter any errors in transcription.

Data analysis

Following collection and transcription of the data, the interviews were analysed inductively through an initial process of “open coding”.^{4,5} Each page of the transcribed notes was coded. Notes written during the interview were categorised and the data labelled for theoretical concepts under single words or phrases, which were then compared.⁵ The core values that interviewees signalled as underpinning culturally responsive physical education in Cook Islands secondary schools were identified. Six values were consistently recognised by the *pa metua*, namely, *taueue* (participation), *angaanga taokotai* (cooperation), *akatano* (discipline), *angaanga oire kapiti* (community involvement), *te reo Maori Kuki Airani* (Cook Islands Māori language), and *auora* (physical and spiritual wellbeing).

Findings

Qualitative analysis

The *pa metua* in the study were asked to share their experiences of how they perceived the Cook Islands core values could be placed within HPE and how these linked to wellbeing.

Core value: *taueue* (participation)

In the course of the interview, Participant SA1 revealed how the value of *taueue* (participation) was considered important in learning. SA1 stated,

I couldn't speak for others . . . but participation from a Cook Islands perspective is about *taueue* (movement or participation), *akamaroiroi* (strength), and *akakoromaki* (patience). This is the kind of participation we should be encouraging in our students. I also perceive participation as a form of *irinakianga* (belief systems), *akaketaketa* (becoming strong), *ngakau aroa* (having a loving heart), *noa* (caring), *tu ako* (teaching and learning), *oparapara* (movement) *ngakau maru* (humility), *irinakianga* (faith or believing), and *putuputuanga okotai* (inclusive teaching) and that which involves a student's cultural background, special needs and disability in the learning process.

(ID[SA1])

Taueue (participation) had various meanings. According to Te Ava,³ *taueue* is important for HPE in Cook Islands culture when children participate in chores, cultural dancing, and playing with their friends. *Taueue* is found to be valuable for children at home as well as at school. CE6 highlighted *akakoromaki* (patience), which was one of the components of *taueue* (participation):

When I was growing up in the Cook Islands on the island of Mauke, *akakoromaki* (patience) helped me survive as a child growing up even though life was difficult. We survived by fishing in the ocean and growing crops for food. Once a week, the boat arrived from Rarotonga with supplies of corned beef and flour . . . my parents looked forward to these days when the boat came. *Akakoromaki* disciplined me. I had to make sacrifices to help my parents at a young age.

(IT[CE6])

These comments show that *akakoromaki* (patience) was a challenge and difficult to learn. Another value aligned to *taueue* is *akamaroiroi* (encouragement or strength). Participant GO5 said *akamaroiroi* helped her to stay focused on her participation in sport:

Akamaroiroi as I remember it when I was growing up, meant a lot to me. At home, my parents' *akamaroiroi* allowed me to have the strength to do well in sports and physical education. Now I am a mother with my own children. I continue to foster *akamaroiroi* in kids to *taueue* in their sports activities.

(ID[GO5])

Akamaroiroi could be useful to help encourage student motivation in physical education. SA2 shared how *taueue*, when linked to *ngakau toa* (strong heart), *akamaroiroi*, and *ako*, can play an important part in schooling, particularly in sports, physical education, and recreation:

Private schools value *taueue*. It also means *ngakau toa*. *Taueue* in physical education . . . I don't think there is a real issue with that when it comes to sporting events. On the local scene . . . we encourage our students to *taueue* in athletics as well. When it comes to those events our student's *akamaroiroi* and *ako* [teach] other students to have *ngakau toa* in their life.

(IG[SA2])

Ngakau toa (strong heart) is considered important for learning HPE and sports. SA4 explained that *ngakau toa* also motivated students to develop enthusiasm and excitement in participating in HPE. He stated,

The value of *ngakau toa* is important to teaching. I believe *ngakau toa* is essential to my well-being because it helps me to be strong and overcome my trials and challenges. My students at this school need to learn why *ngakau toa* is important to them.

(IA[SA4])

The participants believed that *ngakau toa* helped students to have the courage and faith to overcome the challenges they experienced each day. Furthermore, CE5 said *ngakau toa* also encouraged students to *ako*. *Ako* is another pillar of *taueue*:

Ako means teaching, listening and humility. I remember a time my teacher said, this was in the 1960s . . . my teacher told me that, if I didn't listen to her, my life would be miserable. From that day, I listened to her until I got married and began having children. My parents taught me the value of *ako* and I continued to teach my kids the value of *ako*. I want to tell you we need *ako* in our family life as well as in education.

(IT[CE5])

Taueue is a value that could help Cook Islands students to become motivated in PE. Furthermore, this could also help teachers to see this Cook Islands core value as a pathway to encouraging students to develop relationships and to involve them more fully in HPE.

Core value: angaanga taokotai (cooperation)

Angaanga taokotai is a value that could help students overcome their fears and failures and thereby take a positive outlook to teaching and learning. A *pa metua* said,

Angaanga taokotai would help students to develop their learning skills and to overcome their shyness.

(IC[CE8])

Nevertheless, SA3 pointed out that students develop skills from working as a team:

Students learn to support and work together as a team, at the same time they encourage each other to become engaged in various activities at school. They learn to get to know each other socially by interacting.

(IA[SA3])

Furthermore, GO2 stated,

The core values of the Ministry of Education are quality, accessibility and equity; these could be useful in physical education. The school has never implemented these values in physical education.

(IT[G02])

These values of quality, accessibility, and equity could be relevant in developing a culturally responsive pedagogy to support and encourage students to learn, and to respect their peers, by being connected with their families and community so that the students have a better understanding of others. Conversely, GO5 explained why *angaanga taokotai* was not supported in the schools and with her former employers. She said,

At the moment, we don't have people cooperating. That is why our [Physical Education] programme is not going to be successful. If only the Ministry of Education were cooperating with the schools maybe we could become a better school. In doing so, teachers and students would be more cooperative and confident in their physical education programmes. The second thing is that there is no status in the school for physical education. It is not considered a core subject, but an option and we don't have any trained teachers and they really focus on senior level, not Year 9 and 10, and of course if you don't focus on your Year 9 and Year 10 by the time they get to NCEA level one, learning becomes difficult. How could students learn to cooperate if the school is not cooperating together?

(ID[GO5])

This participant did not believe that *angaanga taokotai* was well supported by the Ministry of Education or the schools. This could be a problem in student learning and participation in the future and is already evident in the schools. However, CE8 described how other values related to the core value of *angaanga taokotai*. She said,

What people really need to know is that Cook Islanders always need special characteristics like *ngakau maru* (humility), *ngakau akaaka* (being down to earth), and *ngakau toa* if there is to be *angaanga taokotai*, even though it is difficult. What is the heart of the Cook Islands that we can all trust? In that way we are developing necessary skills to move our country together as one nation. My view is that there is no real heart for the people of the

Cook Islands. How can our kids have a good heart if there is no *angaanga taokotai*?

(IC[CE8])

The values of *ngakau maru* and *ngakau toa* in relation to *angaanga kapiti* could possibly encourage students to succeed in schooling regardless of their differences. Participant SA4 explained in a different manner which characteristics were important for *angaanga taokotai*:

[It] is not about who makes the most money or what title you hold, whether it is a Prime Minister or a politician. Perhaps [it] is working together regardless of ethnic backgrounds. Being able to get along, put up with each other, and strive to build a nation with oneness. Only when this is accomplished . . . would Cook Islanders once again become a nation with pride and integrity.

(IS[SA4])

Core value: akarongo te tamariki or akatano (discipline)

The value *akatano* plays a role in teaching students to use appropriate behaviours and show respect to their peers. Participant CE8 suggested why achieving discipline was difficult in the schools. She said,

No discipline and the children are left at home by themselves. Parents are working more hours . . . leaving their children at home unsupervised. This is why discipline is a big problem in the schools.

(IC[CE8])

According to the interviewee, *akatano* was one of the more difficult values to teach the students. Students who were not disciplined could have problematic issues in learning later on. Similarly, GO1 reported,

Discipline, I guess, is an important learning tool for teachers as well as for students. Today, student discipline is an issue in the schools in the Cook Islands. Students attending school have brought with them the behaviour, attitude, and problems from home into the classroom. These issues should be dealt with at home. Discipline is also to help students to stay focused, to participate, maintain, and sustain the value of becoming a better person. If students do not see the significance of discipline in learning, it will not make them a better learner in the classroom.

(IJ[GO1])

Hence, *akatano* can be seen as an important value in Cook Islands education. Similarly, CE2 stated how important discipline was in the family. He said,

Te tuanga ote peu kia apii ia ki roto ite oraanga mapu e pera katoa te angaanga vaerua kia manuia to ratou oraanga me ki ia ratou ite vaerua tapu. Ko teia

Children are the future leaders of the Cook Islands. What they learn in the community and at school can develop their leadership skills in the future. Yet, CE1 suggested that community projects play an important part in helping Cook Islanders not to give up their cultural values but to hold on to their cultural identity. He said,

The community is united; it helps younger people in their education such as in teaching the language, dances, culture, helping support children to learn, and not fragmenting nor pulling each other down.

(IJ[CE1])

He saw clearly that the community and school could both be successful if the younger ones were moulded through good education and if the education system recognised the value of both the school and the community. A proverb related to this point of view was put forward during an interview with CE9, who explained,

An Aitutaki proverb . . . *Te uu* (parrot fish) will go out, and they always go back to where their heart is and where they were brought up. That is, the man with a heart and of the people. I can sit back and say, “Where has all the value gone?” When you think about it, it [is a] way of saying how they were brought up.

(IT[CE9])

This proverb reflects the lifestyle of Cook Islands culture, both historically and now. Like indigenous cultures across the world, Cook Islanders are changing today, and the children are influenced by the *papaa* (Western) culture. The future of their culture lies in Cook Islanders maintaining their heritage, helping communities and schools to become more proactive, and motivating students to learn cultural traditions. For cultural responsiveness to become effective, the Cook Islands community needs to play an important part in helping teachers become culturally involved. And education communities at all levels need to be open to learn from the communities that they serve.

Core value: te reo Māori Kuki Airani
(Cook Islands Māori language)

The *pa metua* who identified the value *te reo Māori Kuki Airani* agreed that Māori language needed to be actively utilised in the schools. Consequently, GO4 would rather have *te reo Māori Kuki Airani* taught in every school in the Cook Islands but suggested it would be very difficult to start unless the government officials and teachers cooperated. He said,

Te akaruke nei tatou i to tatou reo. Tetai basileia kare o ratou peu ete reo kare tereira ite basileia. No reira kia inangaro ia tatou kia akakeu ia tereira. Kua irinaki raoki au e manga marama taku e aere nei au kua akakite mai te repoti ate UNESCO akataka mai i roto ite rima mataiti kia manuia e mete

matutu nei rai to tatou reo. [We are ignoring our Cook Islands language. If a nation doesn't value its own cultural language it is not a nation. We need to develop and encourage our Māori language teachers and parents to teach their own children about Cook Islands Māori language at home and also at school. I will be happy if, in five years' time, the reports of UNESCO show that our language is becoming strong.]

(IJ[G04])

With *te reo Māori Kuki Airani* being so important, GO5 confirmed that *te reo Māori Kuki Airani* should also be recognised in the physical education programme. He stated,

We have traditional games and sports in physical education that were played by our ancestors. *Te reo Māori Kuki Airani* is important for our children to learn, but this is not happening in physical education.

(ID[G05])

Traditional games and sports are a fabulous resource that can easily be incorporated into HPE school curricula and initial teacher education. Language is potentially more difficult. The revival of *te reo Māori Kuki Airani* in the schools has not been successful. CE4 indicated that in the next five to ten years, the Cook Islands language will no longer be the national language:

The reason for that is because Cook Islanders are being influenced by outside sources which are detrimental to the Cook Islands culture. *Te reo Māori Kuki Airani* is like a vessel being directed in the right place. If the vessel is not functioning well, the language will eventually die out, which we are seeing happening today.

(IM[CE4/])

Hence, *te reo Māori Kuki Airani* was considered important to the land and cultural heritage and to the way in which these were interconnected. Similarly, CE6 reaffirmed why the value *te reo Māori Kuki Airani* was important in the PE programme:

Apii ite tatau no atu e tatau papaa ana koe. Ka tatau Maori te puapii kia koe e ka akapera koe me tatau kite tangata, No reira te au apinga katoatoa ite apii i tera tuatau e reo Maori paurua. Ta tatou apii oki i teia ra te iti (limited) ua atu ara te reo Maori ite Kuki Airani tikai. Te matakua nei au ko te ngaro to tatou reo. Kua aere te peapa kite orometua kia puapii sabati ite akakite kia ratou e kia akamaroiroi ia ta tatou tamariki ite reo. Ko te Cook Islands tetai iti tangata e paruparu nei to ratou reo. Te reo kote katu mata tereira ote basileia koia oki ia Rarotonga nei ko te tango ote basileia ko tera taku tuatua i aere. [Learn to read in Māori and it does not matter if you read in English. When the teacher reads in Māori that is the way students should read to each

other. Our reading in Māori is limited and we need to encourage our kids and parents to read in Māori to their children at home and wherever. I am scared that we are going to lose our Māori language. The announcement has gone to the Ministers of each church to encourage Ministers to speak in Māori. We Cook Islanders are weak when it comes to the language. The language is the eye of our nation.]

(IR[CE6])

The elders confirmed that *te reo Māori Kuki Airani* was unique and particularly important to education, and in relation to this study about HPE. Education can be seen as a vehicle for ensuring the survival of *te reo Māori Kuki Airani*, the language of the Cook Islands. This is interconnected with *auora* (developing of the physical and the spiritual).

Core value: auora (developing of the physical and the spiritual)

From the perspectives of the *pa metua*, *auora* is important to Cook Islands life. *Au* means physical wellbeing, and *ora* means spiritual wellbeing. These two components play an important part in students' learning and participation in physical education. In a similar way, *Hauora* forms a core element of the New Zealand Health and Physical Education Curriculum,⁶ in which the core value of physical and spiritual wellbeing is, not surprisingly, also considered essential for teachers to teach in a culturally responsive manner.

Thus, CE6 explained how *auora* influenced the well-being of his life in the Cook Islands and how this could also be influential in contemporary society:

Life was fabulous. We were fit and healthy. We worked hard clearing our gardens, feeding the animals like pigs and chickens in the morning. Before we went to school we prayed. After school we worked hard in the plantation, fishing, weaving, arts and crafts and so forth. At night time we prayed. I felt this fabulous chicken skin running through my arms at that time. My parents told me that was a good sign. These were the best times of my life. Today, I hardly see those kinds of physical work in the home. I think our children need to understand our physical wellbeing and the kind of life we lived as a child. Today, my children have their own mind. They don't listen to stories and experience. No wonder they don't finish school on a high level.

(IR[CE6])

Auora was the focal point of learning to participate in various cultural practices. Understanding *auora* can help students to become self-reliant and to take responsibility for what was offered in the learning environment and to share the knowledge with others. Aligned with *auora* is *pitoenua* (connectivity or the umbilical cord). This is a representation of the meaning of spiritual and physical wellbeing. In physical education, the physical education teacher and students are attached, as with an umbilical cord, to enable constructive and meaningful learning and

be able to develop *auora* in the students. So, GO5 explained why *pitoenua* was important to the learning of culture:

The *pitoenua* represents our identity and cultural values. This is an element that we should be proud of because *pitoenua* is not about us, but it is about our culture, heritage and the ways we live our lifestyle.

(ID[G05])

Hence, *pitoenua* is about developing relationships between the students and the teacher. Understanding student identity and cultural background is essential.

Discussion

From elders and key stakeholders we learned the core values of *taueue* (participation), *angaanga taokotai* (cooperation), *akatano* (discipline), *angaanga oire kapiti* (community involvement), *te reo Maori Kuki Airani* (Cook Island Māori language), and *auora* (physical and spiritual wellbeing) central to Cook Islands culture.³ These values need to go beyond isolated school communities and be adopted systemically, including in higher education institutions. As education becomes increasingly globalised, culturally responsive pedagogy needs to be valued and implemented. The wellbeing of Cook Islands students, and more broadly Pacific Island communities, depends on these values.²

Staff and student wellbeing is at the core of physical education pedagogy.⁷ Kirk⁷ indicated that physical education is socially constructed, and knowledge content is produced and shared between the learners. The core values identified by the *pa metua* were associated with students' effective engagement in the learning process.⁶ The core values in this study underpin students' ability to absorb knowledge, think, solve problems, and develop good relationships with their teachers and peers.³

Overcoming students' and teachers' fears in learning about Cook Islands' culture was important to the *pa metua* because they believed that, by incorporating values they considered to be at the heart of their identity, value and benefit could be widespread and useful in developing education policy and curriculum, as well as teaching practices. Te Ava³ has argued that teachers will become more confident in their teaching and can revive some of the cultural knowledge and values that are waning in the Cook Islands. Samu⁸ suggested that in the classroom, core values can help students become more effective and cooperative in their learning and thus gain confidence in themselves and in interactions with their peers. It is important for these values to become components of a culturally responsive pedagogy in Cook Islands education.² However, Te Ava, Rubie-Davies, Airini, and Ovens⁹ argue that this requires a systemic response. The *pa metua*, community people, government agencies, policy developers, and education ministries need to come together interactively and collaboratively, to investigate how these values can be integrated into teaching and learning.

The influence of these values will help to stimulate an interest in students' learning and culture. They will cultivate a sense of identity within the students, the school and education community. Jonassen¹⁰ reminds us that cultural values are based on the principle of *arua* (love) that comes from the heart of the teacher to the students. This could help students gain trust in their peers and eventually achieve their educational goals. This and the other values highlighted here are of value to all teachers and students. Physical education is an ideal site, in both schools and higher education, to develop culturally responsive curricula to meet diverse students' needs.¹¹

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