

Te Whakapūmautia te mana: Enhancing Mana Through Kaitiakitanga

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Intro / Project description

Wellbeing is fundamental to an individual's ability to function and live well (Cram, 2014). The premise of this kaupapa Māori project is that mana (prestige, status) is a fundamental element of wellbeing (Reedy, & Reedy, 2013). A second premise is that mana requires actioning, through kaitiakitanga (guardianship) (Marsden, 2003; Paul-Burke & Rameka, 2016)

Aims

The project explored ways that ECE affords mokopuna opportunities to recognise mana and understand ways to accrue and attain mana through being kaitiaki or guardians of themselves, others and their environment, thereby contributing to a collective sense of wellbeing. The project aimed to develop evidence-based understandings, with associated strategies and exemplars of teaching practice



Why is this research important?

Research questions

1. In what ways do/can mokopuna in ECE services enact mana and kaitiakitanga?
2. What does the enactment of mana and kaitiakitanga look like for mokopuna, and for kaiako in ECE?
3. What people, tools, artefacts, processes, and practices contribute to enhancing mana and kaitiakitanga for mokopuna?

Key findings

The enactment of kaitiakitanga and mana for mokopuna centred on being kind, caring, sustaining, protecting, nurturing, and standing up for and advocating for the people, places and things in their lives. For mokopuna, the enactments of kaitiakitanga and mana were also an expression of their understandings of the importance of adhering to the values, practices and cultural expectations or understandings, including concepts such as aroha, manaakitanga, and whanaungatanga.

For kaiako, recognising the enactment of mana and kaitiakitanga required acknowledgement of and adherence to values and customs associated with te āo Māori. For mokopuna this reinforced their sense of belonging, identity, respect, confidence, and oneness with their worlds. The enactment of mana and kaitiakitanga, intersected with the development of a sense of connectedness, belonging, identity and wellbeing, for both mokopuna and kaiako.

Important practices that contributed to the enhancement of mana and kaitiakitanga, were activities and events that deepened mokopuna recognition of, connectedness with, and sense of knowing te āo Māori. For mokopuna this reinforced their sense of belonging, identity, respect, confidence, and oneness with their worlds.

To enact mana and kaitiakitanga, mokopuna needed to acquire knowledge and understandings of their worlds, the cultural norms and expectations of their worlds, and the possible consequences

of their actions or inactions. This allowed mokopuna to stand strong in their beliefs, to express their concerns and perspectives, to take the lead when required, and to stand as rangatira for themselves, others and their worlds. It required that kaiako confidently share the relevant knowledges and understandings with mokopuna, thereby encouraging familiarity with the context, understandings of the associated expectations, and the ability to take on rangatira roles and responsibilities.

The range of tools and artefacts utilised by kaiako, mokopuna and whānau included: waiata, pepeha and storytelling; hunting and fishing activities; nurturing the māra, rongoā, and taiao; and connecting to maunga, awa, marae, and whenua. Kaiako explained the importance of bringing the practices, processes, tools, and artefacts utilised in the community into the ECE service, and in so doing, creating deeper connections and relationships with the world of the mokopuna.

Implications for practice

Te Rongo ā Tinana (Physical engagement in their worlds): For mokopuna, learning about kaitiakitanga and mana is experiential. Understandings about kaitiakitanga and mana are acquired and deepened over time, through participating in activities, being in the environment, observing, following instructions, taking part and engaging in activities and tasks and being exposed to a wide range of contexts, experiences, artefacts, cultural tools, processes, and practices.



Te Rongo ā Hinengaro (Intellectually develop knowledge and understandings of their worlds): For mokopuna to develop the required knowledge and understandings of their worlds, they must acquire the appropriate content knowledge and pedagogical expertise.

Te Rongo ā Ngākau (Emotionally connect to and build affinity with their worlds): Mokopuna must develop an affinity with and an emotional connectedness to their worlds. This includes developing a sense of belonging, and personal and collective identity through learning about their place in the world, their whakapapa, tribal history, and cultural ways of knowing, being and doing.

Te Rongo ā Wairua (Spiritually contribute to their worlds): Mokopuna must learn to contribute to their worlds in meaningful ways. To do this they must develop a sense of responsibility for their worlds. This requires that they have authentic opportunities to give, be generous, demonstrate caring and compassion.

Our partners: Te Puna Reo o Te Kōhao, Te Puna Reo o Pukehinahina, Te Kōhanga Reo o Mana Tamariki Turangi Kindergarten, Hazelmere Kindergarten, Secret Garden.

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