

## TARANAKITANGA

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AIRANA NGAREWA

One of the unique problems I found myself navigating as a first-year teacher was how to authentically honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi in the classroom while at the same time balancing the localization of what I was delivering with the need to acknowledge and address mass diaspora in Te Ao Māori. This meant I had to work towards creating a learning environment that was specifically localized and generally culturally reinvigorating, especially for taurira Māori who had been displaced from their tribal lands and so displaced from their tribal identity, language and culture.

In practice, this has meant integrating Te Reo Māori, Mātauranga Māori, Kaupapa Māori, and Taranakitanga into the philosophy, framing, and content of the learning my learners engaged with. To cite an example of what this looked like in practice, in one lesson my taurira and I unpacked Kaupapa Māori that has an important place in the classroom. It was at its core about indigenizing our approach to education and coming to understand the special status of Te Ao Māori in Aotearoa New Zealand. But it did not stop there. It quickly evolved into an opportunity to bring to light some of the most basic philosophical assumptions we and the institutions of education had made about what learning is, what kinds of learning are most important and how it should take place. This began with a wānanga we had about the concept of Māiatanga.

This we came to understand as the recognition that a learner is not a static being but something that is always growing, changing, and adapting and so to properly respect a learner as a learner we had to recognize them as a thing that occupies two positions at all times: what they are and what they can be, will be or may be tomorrow. It is not difficult to see how the kōrero moved into adjacent spaces such as those which led into this discussion.

A natural question arises here, beyond the wānanga itself, how did the kōrero affect the classroom? To answer this question let's further analyze our wānanga about Māiatanga.

Our understanding of Māiatanga acted not as a rule (an instruction to do or not to do such a thing) but rather as a philosophy that we continued to explore and we used to guide and inform our behaviour within the classroom, ensuring all that we did aligned with our interpretation of the spirit of this philosophy. It was about being open-minded because our interests, passions and aspirations are not fixed. It was about having a growth mindset and so being ready to tackle that which has been difficult for us in the past because within these sorts of challenges is the unique capacity for growth and learning. It was about being humble and recognizing the uncertainty inherent in the future.

Circling back to Te Tiriti, this provided the unique opportunity for taurira Māori to tie in their

identity, language, and culture in a way that was authentic and individuated and so avoided the homogenization of Te Ao Māori whereby their Māoritanga would be reduced from a complex web of shared understanding, unique iwi identity and individual experience to over-simplified categories of what is and is not Māori.

In social justice terms, this was about equity. It was about removing, subverting, and navigating the barriers to entry and excellence so often entrenched in secondary school learning. This meant starting from a position where taura Māori were granted the opportunity to engage in and connect with the learning regardless of their learning history while at the same time granted regular opportunities to tie in their prior knowledge and lived experience into activities of learning. As a Kaiako, it also allowed me the capacity to draw on local purakau and kōrero tuku iho as a means of demonstrating how one might discover and utilize the whakaaro of their culture and use it as a tool to inform or guide their learning. This particular approach had been inspired by my kura, Spotswood College, who have adopted the rising of Puanga (what the majority of Māori in Taranaki use in the place of Matariki as the new year star) as a time for reflection personally, as is the tikanga generally, and systemically, as a time to review all that we do as a kura.

In my pedagogical practice, this approach to equity centred mostly around identifying and developing means of solving problems at both a local and global level. For some taura this was about learning karakia that they could share with their peers and whanau and so introduce more reo me te tikanga Māori into their lives and community. For others, it was about organizing massive cultural events where Te Ao Māori would be on display alongside many other indigenous cultures and so bring to light the value and power of indigenous peoples all over the world. One does not need to think too hard to grasp just how this approach was able to empower taura Māori to take control of their learning, navigate traditional obstacles that prevented them from engaging and granted regular opportunities to tie in their prior knowledge and lived experience.

At the end of my first year in the classroom, I cannot be sure that I have solved the problem of authentically balancing the need for localization for taura Māori with the need of addressing diaspora in Te Ao Māori. But I am confident that it is through this general approach, empowering my taura through wānanga and the use of local pūrakau and kōrero tuku iho, that I will come to discover what this balance can look like.

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## About the Author



Airana Ngarewa

Born and raised in Pātea, Airana Ngarewa (Ngāti Ruanui) is a teacher at Spotswood College. He is studying a Master of Teaching and Education Leadership with The Mindlab and Ako Mātātupu: Teachfirst NZ. His writing has appeared in The Spinoff, Newsroom, Headland, Mayhem Literary Journal, Turbine, Takehē Magazine, Huia Short Stories, Mātātuhi Taranaki, and elsewhere. His research tends to centre on the philosophy of education and how different beliefs and values shape how learning is viewed and takes place in different communities. You can contact Airana via email: [angarewa@gmail.com](mailto:angarewa@gmail.com)