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Final Report

Developing the student/community interface: Action research practicum with communities in an Indigenous Development context.

Project Team:
Principal Investigator - Dr Lynette Carter,
Te Tumu, School of Maori, Pacific and Indigenous Development

Research Assistant: Huia Pocklington

Overview

The principal aim of this curriculum development project was to develop a participatory action-research-based practicum to be utilised in a proposed full-time course to be taught out of Te Tumu as part of the Major in Indigenous Development (BA, BHons) programme. The practicum pilot carried out in 2014 took students out of a passive learning environment (the classroom) into engagement with a Iwi and Community groups based in Karitane: Kati Huirapa Runaka ki Puketeraki; Rivercare Estuary Group; and the Hawkesbury Lagoon Restoration project. The pilot project allowed the students to learn and apply knowledge though participatory action-research techniques; and be immersed in a situation where theory and practice coincide, bringing the University and Community together to accomplish work of lasting value. As Maori/Indigenous development is based on tribal organisations' needs and aspirations, the students worked within projects under Kati Huirapa guidance. The participatory action-based research practicum provided a safe environment for students in which to practice relevant generic skills and attributes acquired through class-room activities. The practicum engagement allowed theory and practice to coincide, which brought the students, University and the Iwi/Community together. This curriculum development research carried out through this project has provided opportunities for teaching methods that provide more grounded students – with enhanced learning and work/life skills.

Methodology

The guiding principles of Maori/Indigenous development focus on the community and/or tribal organisations' needs and aspirations. As such the governance and management of development projects are informed by cultural values, knowledge and practices. The theory of critical analysis that underpins Kaupapa Maori research philosophy, and Indigenous research will be evident in a practicum situation – recognition of a problem, intervention, development, leading to transformative positive change (Friere, P., Smith, G.H., Kovach, M.).

The curriculum development project meets several of the objectives of the University's Teaching and Learning Plan. Specifically, Objective 1 (Mastery of Knowledge) specifies that students should develop the ability to practice the appropriate methods and practical techniques associates with the subject being studied. Objective 6 (ethical and social awareness) asks that students be able to evaluate and debate the ethical, social and community implications of the knowledge skills and attitudes they have acquired and the practicum will highlight how these can be applied in relevant situations. Part of the course will involve the study of development ethics and values and how these are relevant within development planning and processes (Goulet, D., Sen, A.,). As the course is focussed on Maori and other indigenous peoples it has an international indigenous focus (Objective 7) and provides opportunity for student engagement with development in the United

States (Native American), Pacific (Fiji) and Australia (Aborigine groups). The students will gain an understanding and recognition of common and contrasting elements in Maori and other international Indigenous development situations that will provide them with development models that can help inform their research and problem solving. And finally, the participatory action based research practicum will meet Objective 8: to develop student skills, attributes and knowledge which enhances their employment prospects and their capacity to make a positive contribution to society within their chosen employment field.

To ensure that students gain a thorough understanding of how Maori/Indigenous communities and organisations operate, and from which knowledge and values framework; they need to move beyond passive learning environments and become engaged within the communities/organisations involved. The Practicum places students within a community-driven development project that addresses the needs and aspirations of the community. This will allow them to develop action research skills critical analysis, conceptualisation, evaluation, planning, problem identification and problem solving, creativity and communication. Future practicum projects will be selected by the communities/organisations to ensure it is relevant, current and of value to them and could be for example, an Iwi-only project; or one where Iwi are engaged in a governance and management relationships with other groups within the community.

Methods

To achieve the objectives for the research a Research Assistant was employed to conduct a web-based review into a range of practicum programmes already operating both nationally and internationally. Projects reviewed were the First Nations House of Learning, University of British Colombia, Canada; research the Atelier-style practicum at Massey University, Palmerston North; and investigate how other indigenous studies departments are incorporating community engagement within their courses. For example in Australia at Western Australia, Perth; University of South Pacific; and the Indigenous Development Programme at Durham University, England. Several of the International programmes were found to be too complex and resource-intensive to be effective for the proposed course at Otago. However, they provided useful ideas that could be adapted to a smaller, less resource-intensive practicum that could fit best with the local Iwi and Community groups (refer to Project interim report).

Following the review the Research Assistant and myself aimed to visit two nationally-located project team leaders: Victoria University and Massey University, Auckland. We were able to attend the Victoria University meeting in Wellington, but unfortunately we were unable to confirm meetings during our trip to Auckland. The Massey course is taught over summer school and our visit was timed during first and second semesters – consequently the team leaders were not always available. We relied on the information contained on the website and compared this to the information obtained from the International internships and field-work activities. From the Massey site we were able to pin-point areas that would be useful. The Massey summer school programme is heavily economic-based and although the structure of the project work was useful, it did not have the indigenous focus we were wanting. Some of the aspects, which were similar to that of the Victoria University course were added to the proposal for our practicum course.

Dr Ocean Mercier leads the Victoria University course –Cultural mapping. It is a concentrated one-day field trip that allows students to engage with specific cultural sites around the Wellington region. The field trip is not a practicum in the sense of the one proposed for the Te Tumu course. However, several aspects of the Victoria course were useful: pre-field-trip research and archival research of the chosen sites; the scope of the research; the value of the sites historically and currently to Iwi; the governance and management plans and strategies for the chosen sites.

Following the research I implemented a model relevant to the Otago regiot for the S2 2014 MAOR310 (Special Topic) students. The students participated in three collaborative development projects between Kati Huirapa Rūnaka ki Puketeraki and Karitane/Waikouaiti community groups.
Drawing on the Victoria University model, the students were asked to conduct archival research for one of the three projects: The East Otago Taiapure; the Rivercare Estuary projects; the Hawkesbury Lagoon Restoration. The assignment was designed to provide a historical overview of the site; the pre-European value and use for Kati Huirapa; the immediate post-contact challenges and changes; the on-going changes to governance, management and use up to the Ngai Tahu Treaty settlement Act, 1998; the post-treaty settlement challenges for Iwi-community collaboration in implementing positive changes to the environment surrounding and within the sites. The students were to use an indigenous knowledge framework for their projects that expressed the quadruple bottom line for development – cultural, social, economic and environmental. The aim of the project was to provide students with a solid background into the challenges and changes to the environment surrounding and within the chosen project.

Prior to the practicum itself, the three, project team leaders were invited to the class to talk about the programmes and the community-Iwi engagement and collaborations. This allowed the students to meet with the project leaders and discuss the projects. They also discussed the aims of the University course: to translate theory and class-room learning into an applied situation. The students explained what they would be applying theory to practice and observing how this translated into real-world situations (or not). This gave the Team Leaders a good idea of the purpose for the practicum and also how they could best work with the students for them to achieve this. During the evaluation process, all the students stated that the visit and discussion with team leaders should have happened early on in the course. They would have had a better grasp on the projects and therefore be more focussed on the archival research work. The final practicum model took heed of this request and the lecture schedule now has the team leaders coming during the second week of class; prior to the Hocken Archives visit.

The Research Assistant was responsible for overseeing the practical aspects of the three-day practicum. In conjunction with the Lecturer, the Research Assistant liaised with the project team leaders, and the Office Manager for Te Tumu who helped organise the transport, food and other resources needed. She also attended the practicum to ensure continuity with the project, and the relationship established between her and the project teams leaders.

The three-day practicum was timed to coincide with, and took advantage of, the Iwi/Community Volunteer Week programme. These days are set aside each year so that members of the community can work on the projects and therefore gain a better understanding of the history, use and future sustainability of the ecology and environment of their coastline, Waikouaiti River, and Hawkesbury Lagoon. The students were housed at Kati Huirapa marae. The accommodation is free in exchange for the work the students carried out on the Kati Huirapa East Otago Taiapure programme. The students spent one full day on each of the three projects: East Otago Taiapure; Hawkesbury Lagoon; Rivercare Estuary Group. In exchange for the work carried out the community groups provided morning and afternoon teas and lunch. The students organised dinner and breakfast each day at the marae. The students were asked to keep a daily diary to record their observations. We also had a group discussion each night following dinner in which students evaluated the day and how they had observed the class-room learning being implemented – for example projects driven by Kati Huirapa kaitiakitanga values; how long-standing relationships between Kati Huirapa and the wider Community shaped the structure and work plans for each project; reflective practice; the community acceptance and practice of Kati Huirapa knowledge in shaping restoration strategies. The work also allowed them to see the changes and impacts from occupation and resource use that they had already written about in the archival assignments. Other evening activities included weaving classes conducted by Kati Huirapa weavers, film evening with the community, and engaging with the community members over dinner. During the afternoon of one day the students relaxed with waka ama and stand-up-paddle board in the estuary and also gathered kai moana (shellfish) to add to dinner. Students' commented that this was an added bonus for all their hard work and of course demonstrated the positive impact the Iwi/Community projects were having on the relationship with the river, estuary and environment – clean water for recreation and abundant shellfish.

The practicum was fully evaluated and the results were useful for designing the final practicum component of the full-time course. (Evaluations are available on request). The comments and thoughts of the students were taken into account (such as the comments re the timing of the Team Leader visit to class).

The practicum is a valuable way of allowing students to move beyond passive learning environments and become engaged within the Iwi/Communities and organisations involved in development. It places students within an Iwi/ Community-driven development project that addresses the needs and aspirations of the Iwi/ and community. The practicum allowed them to develop action research skills critical analysis, conceptualisation, evaluation, planning, problem identification and problem solving, creativity and communication. It also allowed them to observe and take part in projects that are underpinned by the Kati Huirapa values, knowledge and ethics and how these shape and integrate across all aspects of the three projects – Kati Huirapa-tanga (ways of knowing and doing). The community involvement and acceptance of Kati Huirapa-tanga was an important part of the theoretical methodology that the students used to frame their research assignments and practice.

I have included two work-place diaries of participating students that outline the way the practicum worked and the outcomes. The work-place diaries are one of the graded assignments in the course. I have also included a supporting letter from the

Team Leader for Rivercare Estuary Group; the River care News Letter, and a piece from the Kati Huirapa e-panui about the visit.

The final practicum model has been included in the full-time paper INDV301 to be taught as a core 300-level paper in *He Kura Matanui/ Indigenous Development*, programme, Te Tumu (second semester 2016).

Outcomes

1. A full-time course with a practicum component has been developed and will be taught in second semester 2016 onwards. The practicum component allows students to transfer class-room learning into a practical situation, thus developing skills in action research, critical analysis, conceptualisation, evaluation, planning, problem identification and problem solving, creativity and communication.
2. A seminar as part of the Te Tumu seminar series (date and time TBC).
3. A refereed Journal article will be developed during RSL later in 2015.

East Otago Taiapure work: measuring the increase in species using the 'Meter-Squared' method developed between Ngai Tahu and Otago Marine Science Department.