

Tikanga a Rangahau : Nga Mahi Hahu Practices of Research

M Hohepa and S McNaughton

Research Unit for Maori Education, Education Department
University of Auckland

Developmental and educational psychologists addressing bicultural issues face a number of research challenges. Research traditions have produced normative positions which are ethnocentric, have contributed to the construction of views of deficiency of Maori and have mandated a unit of analysis centred on the individual. Awareness of, and effective alternatives to these traditions are dependent on research practices in which accountability, responsibility and direction are addressed in Maori terms.

Introduction

In the past, Developmental Psychology often has treated culture in ways that have created discriminatory research practices and have produced impoverished theory. The constructivist tradition, exemplified by Piaget's genetic epistemology, attributed a resource role to culture. Children are seen as constructing logico-mathematical knowledge from resource full environments. Cultures differ in the availability of appropriate resources leading to judgements of rich and poor resourcing (Laboratory of Comparative Human Cognition, 1983). A second tradition employs statistical methodologies that treat culture as a source of variance. Cultures may differ in ways, for example, of rearing children. Comparisons are made between averages of groups employing standard psychological instruments - the standard having been obtained from research and theory derived from one sociocultural group (Ogbu 1990; Valsiner 1988).

Underlying these ways of treating culture are fundamental assumptions about the nature of development and the nature of appropriate research. Theoretical assumptions include that all children go through the same sequence and this sequence with its end states are universally applicable. Methodological assumptions include a view of the appropriate unit of analysis being the individual (or a collection of averaged individuals); and the homogeneity of cultural samples.

We see a number of problems with these treatments and their assumptions. They produce a normative problem; a belief in an appropriate singular sequence for developmental phenomena with an appropriate developmental context. For example, a belief that there is a right way to read books to preschoolers associated with the developmental properties of emergent literacy and the development of literacy in general (McNaughton 1991). This constructs a notion of any difference as deficient. Groups who do not provide similar resources, who do not view development in the same way create deficient developmental contexts.

Researchers also tend to uncritically confuse ethnocentricity with a notion of objectivity by using "reliable" and "valid" psychological instruments which conceptually and empirically are based on one sociocultural group and its context. Associated with these problems are others to do with the cultural ethics of research. Responsibility for, ownership of, and the outcomes of the research process tend to be vested in the researcher with little benefit accruing to the researched.

Nga Mahi Hahu

Our research position starts from the assumption that development is a social and cultural construction. One would expect to find different ways of viewing and constructing development in differ-

ent cultures. Culture is central to development and developmental phenomena can only be understood within cultural frameworks including values, pedagogies and ideologies. The ethics of research include a responsibility to groups with whom we work. With Maori this responsibility, which also involves reciprocal obligations to the groups, is an imperative on cultural grounds. Our research has attempted to find ways of rooting development in cultural and bicultural frameworks. This enterprise poses daunting challenges methodologically and conceptually. Two examples are noted in brief here to illustrate the challenges:

- * **Are there Maori perspectives?**
- * **What is the developmental significance of preferred Maori pedagogies?**

The legitimacy of this research position is dependent on identifying particular Maori patterns of development. It is often argued that there is little empirical evidence for distinct Maori patterns of development. So Maori children as well as others are still assessed on standards or norms that are not based on descriptions or data relevant to them and not surprisingly usually found to be deficient. The reasons for these deficits have in the past often been identified as being intrinsic to the groups and the resources that their cultural environment provides. Of course, more research is needed, but this is not solely an empirical issue. In order to construct developmental sequences and explanations researchers have to have cultural knowledge and expertise. Only then might we know what to look for and how to look for it. If we look at Maori descriptions and explanations about learning and development and contrast these with traditional western psychological explanations of development it is possible for Maori to reinterpret many of the blanket evaluations and assessments of our children and ourselves.

As previously noted developmental theory has tended to explain human development in terms of

universal stages humans may reach, focusing on the individual as the unit of analysis. In contrast to this a Maori view of development would encompass self always in relation to others; peers, whanau, hapu, iwi as well as their physical and spiritual environment. It would focus on the developing individual as part of a social group, and the reciprocity of obligations and commitments the individual has to others of the group. Tuki Nepe (1991) describes the concepts of *Ko au, ko taua, ko tatau*, as bringing the individual back into this cooperative framework of understanding. The concept of "I" or "myself" is inextricably tied to the inclusive concept of "us". Understanding such concepts provides a framework to describe development from a Maori perspective. They are reflected in general Maori beliefs, for example, about conception and death. "He kakano i ruia mai i Rangiatea, e kore e ngaro". At birth the whenua (placenta) is returned to the whenua (Papatuanuku), death is seen as a cyclical transition of life back to Te Rerenga Wairua then back to its origins accompanied by our tupuna. Even in death the individual is still very much part of the social group, and has roles and obligations to the living, the still to be born and the dying.

We are arguing that Maori perspectives and theoretical frameworks, and research from Maori perspectives are legitimate and valid, just as much as the largely imported developmental theories and research. For example, the developmental importance of secure attachment through focused parenting early in life for later independence in social and emotional development is central to theory taught in introductory developmental courses (see e.g. Hetherington and Parke 1986). The importance of developing and fostering attachments in Maori terms continues and can be seen as increasing during childhood. Partly, this is because Maori caregiving practices often involve multiple caregiving or shared parenting across different contexts. This involves a particular distinct view of the child. Psychological texts reflect a view of the child as belonging to individual parents who have a relatively exclusive individual relationship with their baby. Many Maori have experienced shared parenting. For Maori this is not a problem.

To some researchers these children have been perceived as unloved, moved between several homes, disturbed and disadvantaged. It was often (though we would agree not always) a misinterpretation typically made by the researchers who have used assumptions and beliefs from a dominant cultural group. Similarly, the practice of introducing children to independence from parents relatively quickly within these contexts has been seen in a negative light (Max 1990). Maori infants are often introduced to peer group relationships, roles and responsibilities early by Western standards.

The guiding concept of tuakana teina provides an explanation. This relational concept of roles and responsibilities of older relatives and younger relatives to each other is embodied in the older or more able looking after the younger or less able. This socialisation of tuakana-teina relationships is illustrated in observations carried out by Tania Ka'ai in three Te Kohanga Reo (Ka'ai 1990).

In the following extract a four year old child (T) was observed talking with an adult (K) about the responsibilities of an older child to the younger children. The child (T) then carried out caregiving activities with a younger child.

- T. He aha ta matou mahi inaianei? *What is our work now?*
- K. I muri o te kai, ka haere nga pepi ki te moe. Pirangi koe ki te awhina i ahau? *After eating, the babies are going to sleep. Do you want to help me?*
- T. He aha? Awhina he aha? *What? Help with what?*
- K. Awhina ki nga pepi. Me whakareri nga mea katoa i roto i te ruma takaro, ruma mahi hoki? *Look after the babies. Get all the things in the playroom ready, the work room also?*
- T. Okay then. What about K.....and T.....?
- K. Ae. Raua hoki. *Yes. Them two as well.*
- T. We're big people now eh? We have to look after our babies too eh? I can change the kope (*nappy*). I do on R.....
- K. Ae. Engari, kao, waihotia i te wa nei. *Yes. But, no, leave that for now.* (Pause)

K. Mauria atu a A..... ki te wharepaku. Maumaha kia horoi ana ringaringa. *Take A.... to the toilet. Remember to wash her hands.*

T. Ae. Haere mai A..... Me mimi koe? Haere mai. *Yes. Come here A..... Do you need a mimi? Come.*

Often Maori children form their own social groups from an early age and dependency on adults is not highlighted. Siblings, peers and age mates play a complementary role to adults in the socialisation of children. From a Maori viewpoint this sort of peer socialisation can be seen to pattern an appropriate sense of community in Maori children. They are learning about human relationships and human conflict in a way which emphasises other relationships as well as parent-child relationships valued in the standard framework adopted by researchers and child rearing experts. In further studies, older siblings have been observed being responsible for younger siblings in Te Kohanga Reo (Hohepa 1990).

In the following extract the kohanga reo was getting ready for lunch. An adult staff member (Wh) was supervising the children who were going to the toilet and washing. An older sister (S) from Kura who regularly came over with other Kura children before school and during breaks helped her younger sister (R).

- S. Haere ki te wharepaku inaianei. Kia tere, R....., kia tere. *Go to the toilet now. Hurry up, R....., hurry up.*
- R. (inaudible)
- Wh. (to R...) Kia tere. E tatari ana a T..... Ka taea? (to S) Kahore i taea, tana tatau. Kei muri pea. Aaa, kua tuitui. *Hurry up. T.... is waiting. Can (you) manage? (She) isn't able to, her braces. Behind perhaps. Oh, its sewed on.*
- S.Ae. Haere mai R..... (helps R take off jersey so she can remove braces and go to the toilet) Kua mutu?.....Kua mutu? *Yes. Come here R..... Have you finished?....Have you finished?*
- R. Kua mutu. (S starts putting R's jersey back on R) Kao, kei te wera. (S takes R to table) *Finished. No, its hot.*

Our research into pedagogy and language acquisition in Te Kohanga Reo shows incidental and direct teaching of group cooperation and responsibilities through language experiences (Hohepa, Smith, Smith & McNaughton 1992). In that research we have used transcripts to argue that language expresses and reflects social and cultural knowledge and understandings.

works are available which provide tools for conceiving culture in development and for researching learning and development. These include recent formulations of sociohistorical psychology in terms of co-constructionist models (Valsiner 1988). However, the fundamental challenge is to research from a base of cultural expertise which supports the validation of cultural purposes as well as the process of our research practices.

Te Whero

The research process can be seen as socially and culturally constructed too. Theoretical frame-

REFERENCES

- Hetherington, E. M. & Parke, R. D. (1986) Child Psychology: A contemporary viewpoint. (3rd edition). New York: McGraw Hill.
- Hohepa, M. K. (1990) Te Kohanga Reo hei tikanga ako i te reo Maori: Te Kohanga Reo as a context for language learning. MA Thesis, University of Auckland.
- Hohepa, M., Smith, G., Smith, L., and McNaughton, S. (1992) Te Kohanga Reo hei tikanga ako i te reo Maori. Educational Psychology, Vol 12, Nos 3 and 4, pp. 333-346.
- Ka'ai, T. (1990) Te hiringa taketake: Mai i te Kohanga Reo ki te kura. MA Thesis, University of Auckland.
- Laboratory of Comparative Human Cognition (1983) Culture and cognitive development. In P. M. Mussen (Ed) Handbook of Child Psychology. 4th Edition: Vol. 1. History, theory and methods. New York: Wiley, 294-356.
- Max, L. (1990) Children: Endangered species? Penguin Books: Auckland.
- McNaughton, S. (1991) Emergent literacies, psychologies of development, and equity. Research Unit for Maori Education, Monograph 2. Education Department, University of Auckland.
- Nepe, T. M. (1991) E hao nei e tenei reanga: Te toi huarewa tipuna. Kaupapa Maori: An educational intervention. MA Thesis, University of Auckland.
- Ogbu, J. U. (1990) Cultural mode, identity, and literacy. In J. W. Stigler, R. A. Shweder & G. Herdt (Eds) Cultural Psychology: Essays on comparative human development. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Valsiner, J. (Ed.), (1988) Child development within culturally structured environments. Vol II. Norwood, N.J. Ablex, 131-143.