

Waikato Journal of Education 11(2):2005

# HAUORA AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION IN NEW ZEALAND: PERSPECTIVES OF MĀORI AND PASIFIKA STUDENTS

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**ABSTRACT** Discussion surrounding the concept of Hauora (Durie, 1994) in the document *Health and Physical Education in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 1999) has been controversial. Some writers have praised or justified its inclusion (Culpan, 1996/1997; Tasker, 1996/1997; Tinning, MacDonald, Wright & Hickey, 2001), while others accuse the writers of tokenism and misappropriation of indigenous knowledge (Hokowhitu, 2004; Salter, 2000). While existing at a political level, these debates have generally ignored student responses to and interactions with Hauora. Thus, this article intervenes in the existing debate and makes the case for the inclusion of student perspectives. My claims are made on the basis of a study into the perspectives of Māori and Pasifika students of physical education in New Zealand. The experiences of these students are related to the theory of hybridity (Besley, 2002; Bhabha, 1994), which suggests that young people actively negotiate and make critical decisions about what they think is relevant to them. I argue that the debate surrounding the concept of Hauora needs to include students' perspectives and consideration of the agency of young people in interactions with curriculum concepts.

## **KEYWORDS**

Physical education, Hauora, Student voice, Hybridity, Curriculum policy

## **INTRODUCTION**

In 1999 the Ministry of Education published the document *Health and Physical Education in the New Zealand Curriculum* (HPENZC) (Ministry of Education, 1999). A lynchpin concept of this curriculum is Durie's (1994) Te Whare Tapa Wha model of Hauora. However, the inclusion of this model in the curriculum sparked controversy, with debate centering around the place of Māori concepts in mainstream curriculum policies. The curriculum writers justified the inclusion of Hauora on the grounds of its bicultural philosophy (Culpan, 1996/1997; Tasker, 1996/1997) and in this they received support (Tinning, MacDonald, Wright & Hickey, 2001); critics, on the other hand, accused them of misappropriating indigenous knowledge (Hokowhitu, 2004; Salter, 2000). While existing at a political level, these debates have generally ignored student responses to and interactions with Hauora. Thus, this article intervenes in the existing debate and makes the case for the inclusion of student perspectives.

## THE CURRICULUM IN POLITICAL CONTEXT

Although acknowledging that all forms of curricula are important in understanding education, this article focuses on Jackson's (1992) notions of 'intended curriculum' and 'received curriculum'. Jackson (1992) defines these as the formal written documents that the school intends to deliver, and the learning that students take away from their experiences, respectively. In the context of this article, the intended curriculum is *Health and Physical Education in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 1999), while the received curriculum refers to the ideas that students take from their engagement with curriculum-based programmes.

Critical scholars acknowledge that curricula, as state sponsored documents, serve the interests of the status quo (Giroux, 1990; Kanpol & McLaren, 1995; Roberts, 2003). They reinforce ideologies, strengthening the place of dominant cultures, and often marginalise certain groups. HPENZC is no exception. Indeed, the authors admit that the politics of the day, including new-right and neo-liberal philosophies of education, strongly influenced the development of the curriculum (Culpan, 1996/1997; Tasker, 1996/1997). Giroux (1990) states that political influences are apparent in many countries and that, as a result, Western governments organise curricula around "cultural imperatives of a selected version of what is called...civilization" (p. 3). These imperatives tend to privilege and advantage dominant groups and largely ignore the perspectives of other groups. In New Zealand, Adams et al. (2000) argue that Māori students are "struggling" to find educational institutions that recognise "their culture, language, values and knowledge" (p. 180). For Adams et al. (2000) the problem largely rests with the struggle for curriculum control. Donn and Schick (1995) go even further by arguing that because New Zealand school curricula have traditionally excluded Māori ways of knowing, Māori students have been disenfranchised by institutionalised racism. In this context, Hokowhitu (2004) views the inclusion of Hauora in HPENZC as an insulting tokenistic gesture. In his words:

Ironically, while Tasker (1996) [one of the curriculum writers] describes the curriculum document as being underpinned by the Freirian concept of empowerment, I would argue that the document has more relevance to the Freirian concepts of 'false generosity' and 'cultural invasion'. (p. 78)

Bearing this wider political debate in mind, I next explain the position of Hauora in HPENZC and canvas the specific debate about the inclusion of this concept in the document.

## DURIE'S MODEL OF HAUORA: REPRESENTATION AND DEBATE

*Health and Physical Education in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 1999) follows a structural model consisting of a set of underlying philosophical concepts, key areas of learning and a set of achievement objectives which specify the learning at each level. Of particular interest here are the

underlying concepts: Hauora, Attitudes and Values, Socio-ecological Perspective and Health Promotion. Durie's (1994) Te Whare Tapa Wha model frames Hauora in HPENZC. The model, depicted as a four-sided house, includes walls made up of Taha Tinana (physical wellbeing), Taha Hinengaro (mental and emotional wellbeing), Taha Whānau (social wellbeing) and Taha Wairua (spiritual wellbeing). The curriculum statement explains Hauora as "a Māori philosophy of health unique to New Zealand" (p. 31) and links it with 'wellbeing'. Ironically, the very straightforward nature of the model fuelled criticism, with opponents arguing that such a simplistic representation of Hauora opened the concept to misinterpretation. Critics also challenged the appropriateness of including a Māori concept within a Pakeha curriculum. I briefly consider each of these positions.

According to Kohere (2003), Hauora does not simply translate as wellbeing. Rather, it is much more, amounting to "the driving force for the unfolding of the potential of individuals to act in this world for and with others" (p. 23). Salter (2000) also found the representation of Hauora in HPENZC simplistic and he feared that many teachers would not learn the depth of meaning in the concept as it pertains to Māori. Ross (2001) agreed with this perspective and lamented the barren representation of Hauora in the curriculum, and the failure of the writers to evoke the depth of understanding inherent in the concept. According to Salter (2000), at best the misrepresentation will result in a general lack of understanding and miscommunication; at worst, it represents a misappropriation of Māori knowledge, adding further injustice to a long history of colonisation.

In discussing curriculum and pedagogy, Bishop and Glynn (1999) state that "an holistic approach...is fundamental" to student-centred learning (p. 176). Justifying Hauora as a philosophical foundation of the health and physical education curriculum, Culpan (1996/97), one of the authors, explained that its inclusion took place in consultation with Māori, and that it assisted the authors to move away from a purely medicalised and scientised form of physical education and to embrace more diverse conceptualisations (see also Tasker, 1996/1997). Hokowhitu (2004), however, insists that the level of consultation with Māori was inadequate. He also states that "Māori were of the opinion that Hauora was not the most appropriate concept upon which to base a health and physical education curriculum" (2004, p. 78).

Linking the curriculum and Hauora to the wider political debate, Hokowhitu (2004) also criticised the writers' treatment of the Whare Tapa Wha model, describing as remiss the exclusion of 'whenua' (land) in the representation of the model. He speculated that this was a deliberate political decision consistent with wider governmental sensitivity over ongoing Māori land grievances, and a further denial of the integral nature of land to Māori. Salter (2000) dismissed the inclusion of Hauora in HPENZC, stating that it was misappropriation of cultural knowledge. Salter (2000) also highlighted the problematic use of Māori concepts in Pākehā curricula, pointing out that these documents do not generally embrace or acknowledge different views of knowledge, teaching and learning.

Conspicuously absent from this debate, however, are student voices regarding the inclusion of Hauora in HPENZC. Although some writers have alluded to the importance of student-centred approaches to teaching and learning related to this

curriculum document (Robertson, 2004; Tasker, 1996/1997), there is no reference to student perspectives about this model or how students may apply it to their lives. Yet the inclusion of students' perspectives may add to this debate; at the very least it may allow scholars and teachers insight into how learners *receive* this guiding concept in the curriculum.

### **AN ARGUMENT FOR CONSIDERATION OF STUDENT PERSPECTIVES**

As noted above, the curriculum writers discuss Hauora purely as a philosophy (Culpan, 1996/1997). Others examine it from a political perspective (Hokowhitu, 2004; Kohere, 2003; Salter, 2000). Aronowitz and Giroux (1993), however, argue that focusing only on the oppressive forms of cultural reproduction in education is too simplistic because it acknowledges only the oppressive nature of society (structure), without giving voice to the people (students) who receive these influences (agency). Furthermore, they continue, if we accept that all power resides in the society or school (or curriculum), then we ignore those "moments of self creation, mediation and resistance [and] miss the opportunity to determine whether there is substantial difference between the existence of various structural and ideological modes of domination and their actual unfolding and effects" (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1993, p. 67). Jones (1991), in her study of Pasifika students, found that many students succeeded at school despite exclusive and exclusionary cultural norms. In seeking the perspectives of students, Jones (1991) focused on the agency that young people bring to their learning and allowed Pasifika youth to have a voice about their educational experiences. Her work is a powerful reminder that it is students' experiences, thoughts, reflections and actions that should sit at the heart of education. Instead of focusing solely on the political debates surrounding Hauora, educationalists need to find ways to include the ideas of young people. The concept of hybridity offers a useful tool for recognising agency and analysing students' interaction with curricula concepts and learning.

The concept of hybridity is used by scholars in a range of divergent ways, often to describe a postmodern approach to culture and identity (Bhabha, 1994; Hutnyk, 2005; Young, 1995). Hybridity theory suggests that identity is fluid and changing and that people actively construct their identities in relation to context and experience. Bhabha (1994) suggests that cultural identity exists in the spaces between different aspects of our lives. He uses the analogy of a house, where cultural identity exists in the stairwell, a moving and transitional place. Hybrid identities, therefore, are unstable and uncertain, rather than concrete and definite. The hybrid identity is also active and critical, making intentional (Young, 1995) decisions about what to accept and reject. Young people, in response to the myriad of diverse and conflicting influences they experience, construct their hybrid identities actively (Besley, 2002). They, therefore, engage with, and adapt to, different messages in ways which make sense to them. According to Besley (2002):

The notion of hybridisation as it applies to kids in the post-modern era refers to their negotiation of the local and the global and the intrusion, imposition and inter-connectedness of these

special and cultural locations. Kids assemble their identities in the global market place on the basis of what their local culture predisposes them to make. (p. 10)

In referring to hybridisation, Besley (2002) is signaling that, rather than being an endpoint, this is a critical and dynamic process, fluid and evolutionary in its application (Hutnyk, 2005). While accepting the influence of local cultural conditions, hybridisation suggests that students also construct and apply their curriculum learning actively and critically. Recognition of hybridisation focuses attention on the perspectives and agency of students in relation to curricula, while acknowledging the constraints of curriculum documents.

The current debate around Hauora assigns the central and determining place to curriculum policy. In contradistinction, hybridity emphasises the agency of young people in their interactions with curriculum concepts. Thus, in recognising student agency, this article challenges an underlying assumption in both sides of the recent debate surrounding Hauora in physical education; that all power lies with curriculum policy.

Of course, consideration of student perspectives does not absolve governments of responsibility for the inequities confronting Māori in education; nor does it lead to the conclusion that incorporating indigenous models into Pākehā curricula will eradicate Māori and Pasifika underachievement in New Zealand education. Bishop and Glynn (1999) blame what they call “epistemological racism” (p. 12), suggesting that forms of knowledge inherently valued in the education system disadvantage minority groups. They view this as the reason for the failure of cultural diversity in New Zealand and suggest that the patterns of hegemony constructed in the past cannot be used to try to solve the problems they created; new approaches are, therefore, needed. Smith (1999) points out that many indigenous people live with poor educational opportunities, and urges educators to adopt “a critical conscience” to “ensur[e] that their activities connect in humanising ways with indigenous communities” (p. 149). Similarly, interactions in the classroom, suggests MacFarlane (2004), are far more important to providing students with meaningful learning than producing policy documents.

## **STUDENTS' VOICES**

So, what do year 12 physical education students say about Hauora? The following sections report the findings of a study into students' perceptions, understandings of, and ideas about, Hauora. The author conducted the study in August and September 2004 at Blue Sky College,<sup>1</sup> a multi-cultural, decile 1 (low socio-economic) school in South Auckland. The school's ethnic composition was Samoan 40%, Māori 21%, Cook Island 20%, Tongan 10%, Niuean 3%, Indian 2%, Asian 2% and other ethnicities 2%. The study employed a qualitative approach in order to give the research participants the opportunity to be heard (Bishop & Glynn, 1999). It involved discussions with seven students from Māori, Samoan, Niuean, Cook Island, Tahitian and Tongan backgrounds in order to gain insight into their reactions to curriculum concepts and experiences in physical education

programmes. The participants were all volunteers from a year 12 physical education class that I had taught the previous year.

The study began with a focus group interview to allow the students to discuss and recall their learning experiences without having to answer every question individually, which may have caused discomfort in the initial stage (Eder & Fingerson, 2002). Individual interviews followed the group session to enable students to talk about their own ideas and feelings which may not have been shared as openly with the larger group (Neuman, 1997). Individual interviews also allowed the students to discuss the unique perspectives they each brought from their own cultural, family and individual backgrounds. Although guided by an interview schedule, the interviews took the form of conversations between the two of us. Throughout the process I remained acutely aware of culturally appropriate practices. Two students from Māori backgrounds requested to have their interview together. Themes emerged as I analysed the students' responses. Of course, such themes are never inherent in the data. Rather, as Ely, Vinz, Downing and Anul (1997) remind us, they emanate from the researcher and her interpretations. However, although the themes are ostensibly my own interpretation of the conversations, I also discussed them with other colleagues and the students to ensure that I had honoured the latter's intended meanings. Finally, I do not claim that the themes or ideas recorded here are representative of other students of physical education or other students from Māori and Pasifika backgrounds. Nonetheless, I believe that these viewpoints provide insight into how some students perceive concepts in physical education and how students receive and actively engage with curricula concepts.

Although neither my interview schedule nor conversation framework directly addressed the concept of Hauora, all the students introduced it in response to questions about areas of significant learning in physical education. It should be noted that teaching programmes in physical education at Blue Sky introduced the students to Hauora and applied it specifically to leadership, outdoor education and sports studies. Students engaged with Hauora at a variety of levels and this is consistent with the concept of hybridity. Indeed, the metaphor of 'weaving' is useful here in describing how the students organised the different 'strands' that influenced their lives. The metaphor of weaving also reinforces the point made above that the students asserted some control in their lives (i.e., the strands they wove), and that their lives included a wide range of values, attitudes and experiences gained from home, school, cultural experiences, peers and church settings.

The students responded to the concept of Hauora in a variety of ways; some embraced and applied the concept to aspects of their lives, others rejected it, while others recognised it as consistent with prior learning. I have organised these responses into three themes. In the remainder of this section I discuss these themes and how the students conceptualised Hauora in respect to one or other of these positions. The first theme, 'interaction with others', deals with the significance of Hauora in relation to the curriculum objective "develop understandings, skills, and attitudes that enhance interactions and relationships with other people" (Ministry of Education, 1999, p. 9). The second theme, 'no connection', discusses the rejection

of the concept of Hauora and suggests that it may not be relevant for all students. The third theme, 'recognition', explores the notion that Hauora may help students who are already familiar with an holistic perspective and a Māori world view to confirm their identity.

### **INTERACTION WITH OTHERS**

The lives of young people today are challenging and complex. For students from diverse cultural backgrounds there are often many cultural and interpersonal boundaries requiring negotiation (Giroux, 1992; Nakhid, 2003; Tiatia, 1998). HPENZC contains objectives related to the development of a range of interpersonal and decision-making skills, which may assist young people to navigate these challenging landscapes. This first theme describes how some of the students in this study recognised the role of Hauora in their development of skills related to these objectives.

Lisa<sup>2</sup>, a 17-year-old student from a Cook Island and Samoan background, outlined an issue in her life concerning cultural boundaries. She discussed the tensions she felt when negotiating traditional cultural influences at home and at school. At school, teachers encouraged Lisa to question things around her but at home she was deemed disrespectful if she questioned her grandmother:

I'm used to challenging and asking questions all the time at school...and then when I go home and if I try to question things my Grandmother might see that as disrespectful...I'm trying to learn things but she doesn't realise it. So...it's kinda hard, so I have to try to find ways to work around how to figure out what she really wants me to do without questioning her.

Lisa said that the concept of Hauora had helped her to negotiate the relationship with her grandmother and improve communication:

Like I said, with the Hauora, I like think a lot more now, so when I'm trying to do something to negotiate with my grandmother I think before I say something, otherwise it might come out the wrong way. So I'm like thinking, how can I say something to her without it coming out like disrespectful and harsh and everything?

She commented that Hauora had also helped her to think more about the feelings of others:

I try to be more cautious of the things I say around people because, say like religious values and things...I used to just say anything that came out of my mouth and I didn't really think about other people, so when I found out about Hauora, I started to hold back before I would say anything 'cause I was scared I would hurt their feelings or offend them just by what I was saying. So I think a lot more before I say something.

Engaging with the feelings of others and reflecting on how to improve relationships resonates with the learning objectives in the physical education

curriculum. Similarly, Fualaau, an 18-year-old Samoan and Niuean student, stated that learning about Hauora had helped her to make decisions and to think about her actions:

Hauora, that's helped out a lot 'cause...like if I was in a fight I thought it would only affect [me]...I didn't know it would affect my family and like school and friends. I didn't know it affected that. I thought it only affected myself. [Hauora] helped out ...knowing about all these aspects. It gets you thinking before you get into a situation like that, and you think 'what about if my family get involved', what it's going to do to you, yeah.

Tyah, an 18 year old Cook Island and Tahitian student, also discussed Hauora in relation to interacting with others, and especially with regard to trust:

I've learnt a lot from the different meanings of Hauora. During this year, and especially in PE, I've learnt like who my friends are, um, and the way I interact with others, and who I can trust and not trust and those that I can respect and that they can respect me and that I, I know people more than they know themselves and yeah.

Many writers have discussed the complexity of young peoples' lives and the myriad of values and influences they have to negotiate. With respect to students from diverse cultural backgrounds, the literature identifies many challenges in negotiating cultural boundaries (Giroux, 1992, 1996; Tiatia, 1998). HPENZC also recognises the interpersonal issues facing young people and presents learning related to this as a specific aim. The evidence presented here suggests that this aim has been met under the banner of Hauora: when talking about negotiating with her grandmother, Lisa expresses empathy for others; Fualaau now reflects on how her actions might affect her family and friends; and Tyah has a better understanding of trust and respect. The curriculum claims that students should "develop the knowledge and interpersonal skills to enable them to interact sensitively with other people" (Ministry of Education, 1999, p. 10). It is especially noteworthy that these students linked these skills, and their application outside of school, to the concept of Hauora. For these students, Hauora has helped them to engage with and navigate the difficult interpersonal and cultural terrains they inhabit, both within and beyond the school setting.

## **NO CONNECTION**

Two students did not connect with the concept of Hauora. This also aligns with the theory of hybridity which suggests that students actively and critically choose which aspects of schooling and curriculum to accept and which to reject. Sione, a 19-year-old Tongan student, mentioned Hauora during his interview but apparently did not fully grasp its meaning.

I think it was to understand yourself and others' wellbeing. What I remember is I didn't really like the word Hauora; I think it was



because I was more confused on what it meant and what we were supposed to write about. I know, I remember doing the work but I don't think I understood it. I did it for the sake of it I think yeah.

Adrian, a 17-year-old Cook Island student, said he understood what Hauora meant and that he could see how different aspects of life affected Hauora: "You don't really think about it [Hauora] but it just happens. Like everything that happens affects your Hauora...because it focuses on everything about one person, what influences them physically mentally, emotionally and socially." However, he also commented that he didn't really think about Hauora outside of school but "in class yeah... just in class".

Sione and Adrian remembered the concept of Hauora as a key part of learning in physical education but admitted that either they didn't really understand it or that they didn't think about the concept outside of the school setting. In this way, they made a conscious decision that the concept was not relevant to their lives. This may indicate that the teacher had failed to present the concept adequately or that the teacher lacked a depth of understanding to convey it effectively to students, as some writers have argued (Kohere, 2003; Salter, 2000). However, in acknowledging that Hauora was something "you don't really think about...but it just happens", Adrian indicated that he understood the tenets of the concept but had chosen not to apply it to his life.

## **RECOGNITION**

Two students in this study, both from Māori backgrounds, identified with the concept of Hauora. Mihi, an 18-year-old student of Ngapuhi and Te Arawa descent, and Jenny, a 17-year-old student of Ngapuhi descent, were interviewed together. Although the comment relayed here is from Mihi, Jenny agreed and the quote that follows reflects the conversation that involved both students. Mihi stated that: "It's true [Hauora] ... I think we use it every day ... when we wake up, how we think of the day, what we feel like and what we do." In stating that the concept of Hauora was 'true' and related to everything she did every day, Mihi clearly linked the concept to her own world-view. However, it is likely that Mihi and Jenny were already familiar with Hauora before they encountered it in physical education classes. Nakhid (2003) discusses the importance of students being able to identify cultural aspects of themselves in their schools in order for them to feel like they belong and to learn. For Mihi and Jenny the concept of Hauora may have been an important factor in their learning in physical education because they recognised that the subject acknowledged part of their own thinking and world-view. This is significant because these students were able to take the concept, as it was interpreted by the teacher and presented to them in class, and relate it to their own internal understandings, thereby affirming their own cultural perspectives. In actively accepting the concept presented into their current world-view, these students acknowledge the relevance of Hauora to their lives.

All of the students acknowledged the place of Hauora in their learning in physical education. Bearing in mind that the presentation of the model of Hauora is perhaps limited by the interpretation of one teacher, the students acknowledged that

their learning relating to the Whare Tapa Wha model (Durie, 1994) has been significant for them in a range of ways. The inclusion of Hauora into HPENZC has been controversial, as discussed, and these students have variously embraced and used the concept, rejected it, or recognised it as a part of their own world view. This is consistent with the concept of hybridity (Besley, 2002) and shows the students asserted their agency in ways that current debates surrounding the concept have ignored. The students have formed their own meanings and engaged with the concept in ways that suit them. In so doing they are beginning to take control of how they apply their learning in physical education to their lives.

## CONCLUSION

Since its publication, *Health and Physical Education in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 1999) has attracted considerable debate around the inclusion of the Māori concept of Hauora. Conducted mainly at a political/ideological level, the debate has focused on the potential for the misappropriation of cultural knowledge in the service of the dominant culture. While scholars should not abandon this debate, the fact remains that it tends to ignore the agency of students in their interactions with curriculum concepts and the perspectives they bring to their learning in physical education. This, of course, is the advantage of using hybridity as an analytical tool. Hybridity recognises the active process of negotiation that students bring to their learning and is useful in understanding how students receive curriculum concepts, such as Hauora. Future debate surrounding the concept of Hauora needs to take into account the perspectives of students and recognise their agency in actively engaging with the experiences and concepts they encounter in physical education classes. Moreover, curriculum researchers must be wary of over-emphasising structural and politicised forms of oppression, such as curriculum documents, which deny the agency that young people bring to their learning.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to Toni Bruce, Douglas Booth, Lisette Burrows, Stephen May and Clive Pope for helpful advice and feedback on this manuscript.

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<sup>1</sup> The school name has been changed.

<sup>2</sup> Students' names have been changed.

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