Motivation and Engagement: Māori and Pasific learners

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CONTEXT

Motivation and engagement in the classroom are essential to help learner's achievement their potential. Teachers play a key role in creating interest, energy and drive in learners and motivating them to engage with the material (Martin, 2006). Māori and Pacific learners face challenges in classrooms, which are only recently being recognised, and we need to provide culturally safe spaces for them. In diverse classrooms, teachers' relationships with learners (Tātaiako) is vital to support learners' engagement.

PURPOSE OR GOAL

The purpose of this research is to reflect on four academics' attempts to create culturally safe classrooms. It will assess what worked, and what did not, in terms of classroom context and creative learning activities to motivate and engage learners.

APPROACH

This research based on the approaches we have considered in improving Motivation and Engagement of students (Both Māori and Pacific) by implementing teaching and learning instructions such as student-centred learning (flipped classroom), critical thinking, student engagement and motivational inquiry-based learning while working in groups. Bloom's critical thinking are the main foundations of our Learning and Teaching approaches. We have considered group assignments and group project based tasks to access or justify our approaches.

ACTUAL OR ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES

We anticipate that implementing more student-centred, critical thinking, inquiry-based learning approaches while working in groups will improve motivation and engagement of learners. All approaches we have considered for our learners in the classroom will create more confident, skilled and motivated learners, including amongst Māori and Pacific. We are interested to see if there are additional benefits to Maori and Pacific learners, above the general cohort, from these approaches.

CONCLUSIONS

During this research, we have noticed that by implementing all these approaches, make a lot of difference in engagement of learners in the classroom and increase their motivation. We have noticed critical thinking is an essential skill in the cognitive development and motivation of students and student-centred approach in teaching help a lot to engage more by having good communication with each other. In future, we as a teacher can support New Zealand Māori Language in our sessions in our greetings and opening and closing of sessions.

KEYWORDS

Māori Pasifika, Motivation, Engagement, Diversity

INTRODUCTION

Engagement in classroom activities is the highest contributor to enhance learning for all students including Māori and Pasifika learners. Ferguson et al. (2008) focused on to get maximum influence on Pasifika learners' to achieve their academic outcomes like- effective teaching, productive learning, assessments and culture count. We believe effective group work strategies maintain identity, equity, responsiveness, achievement, accountability and integrity of different cultures in the learning environment. The aim of this research is to identify activities and approaches that can be used to increase the success rates, motivation and engagements of Māori and Pasifika learners.

It is really a rewarding experience for us as teachers and facilitators to have different cultures and a wide variety of age groups under one roof, which shows diversity within our learning environments. To achieve our goal of increasing motivation and engagement of Māori and Pasifika learners', we as teachers must have tasks that are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-oriented. In the classroom, we have international students with different levels of knowledge and work experiences, Māori and Pasifika of different ethnicities and levels of knowledge. As reflective practitioners of teaching, it is always important to be aware of the previous knowledge and experiences that students bring to the learning environment (learners' profile). Reflection on learner's knowledge profile is very important. This is the base of the Bloom Taxonomy pyramid. Bloom's taxonomy is a grouping method used to describe and differentiate different levels of intellectual, knowledge, and understanding. By applying Bloom's taxonomy (Williams, 2017), we are now can better recognize how students understand, engage with, and are motivated by activities in the classroom. With help of Bloom's Taxonomy, we are able to identify more about our students knowledge level and their way of applying, analysing their skills to simplify the given
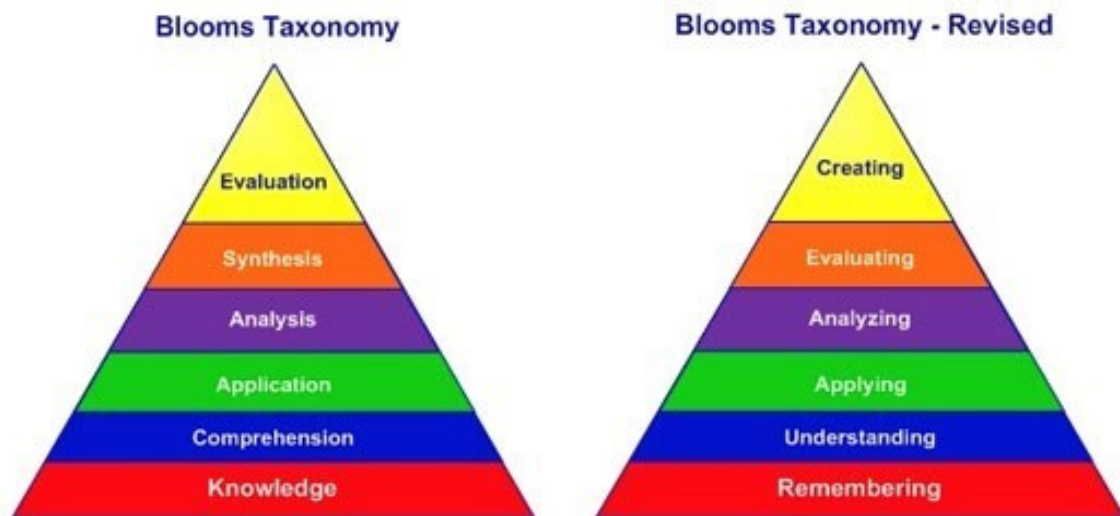

Figure 1: Bloom Taxonomy (Source: Berger, 2018)

task. Implementation of all levels of Bloom's Taxonomy in our assessments or class activities is a very good way to develop student's skills. Knowing students' background makes it easier to design class activities that would help in their learnings and engagement.

Before we apply our approach in creating group activities, we need to build a positive relationship with our learners (Brookfield, 2006). There are many ways to build respectful relationships

(Whakawhanaungatanga) with our learners. To begin with, we gave individual tasks to learners and noticed that during these individual activities, there was no communication between learners. We tried group activities in an attempt to build relationship between learners and teachers. Being a part of a group meant they helped each other and began to form Tuakana/Teina partnerships. This is very good example of giving Māori and Pasifika students a platform to build relationship and, we always take care while making group we keep different age group, different culture and different level of maturity learners to finish the task. That is how they get more involved in the given task, respect and understand each other. It is important to develop a good relationship and cultural awareness between Māori and Pasifika students to motivate and engage those (Zepke & Leach, 2010).

> *"We believe in the power of face-to face interactions between young people from all over the globe. Bringing students together to share food, culture, experiences, education and sport builds bonds that last a lifetime and bridges gaps between nations."*
> *- Lynda Sullivan, Director of International Students, Rangitoto College*

The concept of ako describes a teaching and learning relationship, where the educator is also learning from the student and where educators' practices are informed by the latest research and are both deliberate and reflective (Thompson et al, 2009).

APPLY

In this paper, we discuss how we will build on our current practice to respond to the diversity and needs of our learners to establish and maintain positive learning relationships and what we will do to support the bi-cultural context of Aotearoa New Zealand to get more engagement and motivation of learners (Stephens, 2016). We implement key interactive strategies in classroom like group activities, field trips, quizzes and doing Karakia and Waita together to get more engagement and motivation of Māori and Pasifika learners. After all, over reflection on learner's profile and employability skills we tried to create a complete flipped classroom to get more studentcentered learning. To maintain healthy and positive relationship among learners and teachers we would like to keep on following Ako and Manaakitanga strategies to get more and more student's engagements and motivational learning (Martin, 2006). Learners are embedding the knowledge and skills elements of their domain and learning to concentrate, persevere with challenges. In addition, learners learn how to present information in a way other will understand and how to listen actively and provide feedback to others.

This kind of learning approaches are so rich and valuable for their motivation and engagement and will be helpful for them as they prepare for industry. We will provide special attention and resources to students, particularly to those who need it most like face-to-face coaching. New challenges always motivate teaching. According to us organizing field trips as a group of learners to relevant industries and get few ongoing industrial projects for learners is very helpful in learner's engagement and motivation. This is part of global influence and we always consider the best practices in teaching, what people believe education should look like – i.e. an increasing move towards teachers facilitating and working alongside their learners rather than standing at the front of the classroom and lecturing their students. We would like to share one very good example of Māori and Pasifika students worked as a group for Matariki Waka (bank side of Waikato River project) Hamilton. In this group project, we all worked on Māori culture based project called Matariki Waka. We went outside the XXXX to complete this project on bank of river. We found very fruitful output from this group work. All our Māori and Pasifika learners worked very well on

this project to achieve their goals. They divided the task nicely and worked on that together to finish on time and we reported to main coordinator of Matariki Waka project on end. Applying this kind of approach is also helpful to get more engagement and motivation from learners with real world applications.

REFLECT

TEOs (Kahikitia, 2013) also getting way to work out for Māori learners in tertiary education. TEOs are supporting Māori learners to achieve educations (by engaging Māori learners to grow and share information) using resources, Whānau, Māori groups and iwi to attain best results for economy and society. In addition, they are inspiring actual teaching and learning practices, such as providing academic and pastoral care that is traditionally suitable, inspiring and supporting social interaction and unity between student partners and providing culturally safe learning surroundings (Kahikitia, 2013). This is in line with the Ministry of Education's focus on encouraging culturally approachable education to help all Māori learners. The importance of Māori and Pasifika to the New Zealand economy (Hui Taumata, 2005) to improve nationwide wealth and worldwide impact makes it more critical to motivate and engage both Māori and Pasifika learners.

Learners need to be persistent and comfortable in their environment. Therefore, it is very necessary to establish trust and effective relationship with their students to workout with them under one roof (Brookfield, 2006). New Zealand is a multicultural country: We must all respect others' culture and work as a team. To start class with an icebreaker, we perform Karakia before we start our class. One student asked in class why we do this. We explained very nicely to all students the reason for Karakia, but at the same time, we also asked them to bring their own activity that we could do before our classes to make ourselves comfortable, relaxed, and ready to start on learning with more engagement. From that day, we found all students enjoying all activities in class and, they bring their ideas as well.

We have many Māori and Pasifika learners in our classes. We always try to give assignments based on making pairs of learners one with good knowledge and one with moderate knowledge. We found this kind of approach being very helpful for our learners to help each other. It also respond to the diversity in the class to establish and maintain positive learning relationships. In addition, doing work in groups also helps to increase success rates of learners. We noticed that the success rate is improved compare to last year. Now, all learners are very comfortable with the learning environment and their classmates and that is how they are more motivated and engaged. In addition, we noticed giving tasks based on group work is more effective compared to giving tasks on an individual basis.

There are still improvements for us to make. For example, inviting mentors into the classroom, sharing food (kai) and inviting learners' family (whānau) to be part of the learning environment. We are going to implement these approaches in our classroom in future to check on more motivation and engagement of Māori and Pasifika learners.

DISCUSSION

Māori and Pasifika learners feel comfortable when they are allowed to bring Tikanga (their own ideas) into classroom. Doing Karakia every morning together makes Māori learners more confident and engaged. We found having tasks in groups and following student-centred strategies of learning provides a greater level of comfort for students to share their experiences. We observed that one learner who is very shy in class and keep asking his parents to come along

with him to discuss about his assessments. We had few very good discussions with his parents and tried to involve him more in-group activities. As a result, he improved now and we noticed he is not bringing his parents along with him. This is also, a good example of learners' engagement. He is now more open to ask us anything and feel more confident working with other learners. Both Māori and Pasifika learners look more motivated and engaged and they follow all class rules given by us during the session. Learners are confident to ask any questions and have time-to time discussions in classroom that shows they feel comfortable with us, as we are open to learning about procedures from students with different ethnic backgrounds.

We design our procedures by taking consideration of ethics, beliefs and culture. Creating such an environment in the classroom develops more student engagement and success in their goals. Cultural awareness and respect focus on group tasks, the preservation of whanaungatanga in the classroom are methods to improve student's engagement and motivation. Waiata and Karakia also play an important role in classroom to bring students together. Learners are very happy to complete their tasks by their-self and in groups (Mahitahi) once they are given with clear instructions for the task and introduction. It has been seen many times in our class that they are getting more involved in class when they are given assignments and projects that they do in pairs or groups; they enjoy this kind of learning more using their critical thinking skills. Therefore, we always implement Ako theory of teaching and learning (Tomoana, 2012). We always respect our learners' ideas too.

CONCLUSION

As a conclusion, using good teaching practices (teaching and learning approaches) and being reflective experts, it is easier to get learners' engagements and motivation. We conclude that learners' are getting more involved in class when they are given assignments and projects that they do in pairs or groups instead of doing tasks individually; they enjoy more group tasks using their critical thinking skills and sharing their ideas within groups. Working together in groups and doing projects in groups is a good example of kotahitanga- the ethic of unity. Practicing Te-Tiritit strategies and manaakitanga- ethic of caring creating healthy and comfortable learning and working environment in regular classes we found good impact on learners to make strong bonds between learners and better understanding.

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GLOSSARY:

Whakawhanaungatanga:	*Building Relationship*
Tuakana:	*Elders (Experienced People/Seniors)*
Teina:	*Younger (juniors)*
Karakia:	*Religion*
Waiata:	*Traditional songs*
Manaakitanga:	*Welcome **Whanau:***
Family	
Tikanga:	*Protocols set of rules*
TEO:	*Tertiary Education Organisation*
Ako	*Both Teach and Learn*
Kai	*Food*
Mahi Tahi	*Working together*
Iwi	*People*

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