

The Creative Potential of Mātauranga Māori

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1. What is Mātauranga Māori?

An Orientating Statement

‘Mātauranga Māori’ is a modern term for a body of knowledge that was brought to these islands by Polynesian ancestors of present-day Māori. Here this body of knowledge grew according to life in Aotearoa and Te Wai Pounamu. Despite an initial period of change and growth, the arrival of European populations in the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries brought major impacts to the life of this knowledge, endangering it many and substantial ways.

All, however, was not lost as new knowledge was created through the encounter with the European and through the experience of the creation of the new nation called New Zealand. Important fragments and portions – notably the Māori language - remain today. These fragments and portions are catalysing a new creative period in Māori history and culture and in the life of the New Zealand nation.

2. What kinds/applications of knowledge can be found in mātauranga Māori?

Kinds/Applications of Mātauranga Māori

- **Ngā Whare** – traditional institutions
- **Ngā Mātau** – applications and expressions of knowledge
- **Āronga** – worldview, perspectives on phenomenon

Ngā Whare/Institutions

- Whare Rūnanga – decision making
- Whare Wānanga – teaching/learning
- Whare Pora - weaving
- Whare Tapere – performing arts, games
- Whare-tū-taua – military school
- Whare Kōhanga – childbirth, midwifery

Ngā Mātau/Applications

- Te Hī-ika – fishing
- Te Ngaki Māra – gardening
- Te Tahere Manu – birding
- Te Hanga Whare – building
- Te Whakaora Tūroro – healing
- Te Whakaako Tangata – teaching/learning
- Te Hohou Rongo – dispute resolution

Ngā Mātau/Applications

- Taonga Pūoro – musical instruments
- Tā moko – tattooing
- Whakairo – carving
- Haka – dancing
- Rongoā – medicinal plants
- Kawa, whakahaere – processes
- Whaikōrero, karanga

Some Newer Fields/Applications

- Kaitiakitanga
- Te Reo Māori
- Āronga
- Hauora

Sources of Mātauranga Māori Today

- Oral Sources – e.g. kaumātua
- Written texts – public and private collections
- Material Culture – taonga in museums
- Hui – gatherings of various kinds
- Visiting significant places – maunga, pā etc
- Internet sources

Current State

- Fragmented
- Disorganised
- Some parts better organised than others
- Reorganisation and the redefinition of mātauranga Māori is already taking place

3. The Creative Potential of Mātauranga Māori

What needs to be done realise the creative potential of Mātauranga Māori?

- Organisation of existing sources in ways that are favourable to knowledge creation
- Realignment of existing education programmes in ways in which mātauranga Māori itself is organised
- Liberating mātauranga Māori from the politics of ethnicity

What needs to be done?

- Creating the new tohunga, the new tohungatanga
- Creating appropriate quality standards
- Shoring up resources of pre-existing knowledge

4. What really beats at the heart of mātauranga Māori?

The Heart

- Indigenuity
- A mana inspired worldview
- A relational worldview

Some Particular Features

- Memory
- Oral Ability
- A holistic encounter with the real world
 - Valuing spirit, mind and physical,
 - Valuing epiphanies, intuitions as much as rationality
- A Heritage inspired knowledge system
- Place of elders
- Place of community

5. The Difference between tohu and tohu: A Perspective on Qualification

A Mana inspired view of education

- Tohu – to endue
- An adjective used to describe the arrival of mana in an individual
- Tohunga – a vessel of mana, an individual so endued
- Evidence of mana – their ‘authority’, their talents, skills

Tohu

- ‘An outward sign of inward grace’
(sacrament, Augustine)
- ‘An outward sign of inward mana
- Graduation ceremonies as rites of
passage