GEPRISP
( Goal, Experiences of Māori students, teacher’s discursive Positioning, Relationships, Interactions, Strategies, and Planning )

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Me mahi tahi tātou mo te oranga o te katoa.
We must all work as one for the well-being of all.

Overview

This module outlines the core elements of Te Kotahitanga as they are encapsulated in the acronym GEPRISP. Each element is defined and examined in detail. The links between GEPRISP and practice are outlined in terms of classroom practice and the implementation of the professional development programme. The synergistic nature of GEPRISP is examined, and specific examples are provided of how the GEPRISP model guides all levels of Te Kotahitanga.

In November 2013, Te Kotahitanga was recognised internationally with the conferring of an award from the World Innovation Summit for Education.

New Zealand Government
Positioning

What it is

Positioning in terms of Te Kotahitanga refers to one’s relation to discursive positioning in Māori students’ educational achievement. Te Kotahitanga seeks to support teachers to theorise from within discourses of agency (agentic positioning) rather than from within discourses of deficiency (deficit theorising).

What informs it

The analysis of the narratives of Māori students and those of their parents, teachers, and principals in Phase 1 revealed a clear picture of conflicts in theorising or conflicts in explaining the lived educational experiences of Māori students.

The discursive viewpoint of the majority of teachers in Te Kotahitanga Phase 1 suggested that the major influence on Māori students’ educational achievement was the children themselves and/or their family/whānau circumstances with systemic/structural issues placed second. Many teachers felt powerless (non-agentic) to make positive changes in their classrooms until these major influences were resolved. This position was characterised by discourses of deficiency. The Māori students, those parenting these students, and their principals (and some of their teachers) saw that the most important influence on Māori students’ educational achievement was the quality of the in-class, face-to-face relationships and interactions between teachers and Māori students.

Solutions that seek to fix up perceived deficiencies in others emerge from a functional limitation paradigm (deficit theorising). An ecological paradigm looks for solutions at the interface between teachers and learners. The key is in teachers taking personal and professional responsibility to seek solutions from within positions of agency (agentic positioning), rather than abrogating responsibility to change.

Watch a video on Positioning
What it looks like in practice

The challenge to teachers’ discursive positioning in regards to Māori students’ educational experience forms the essential element of the first day of the Hui Whakarewa. Te Kotahitanga has shown that the key to improving Māori students’ achievement is professional development that places teachers in non-confrontational situations where, by means of authentic yet vicarious experiences, they can critically reflect on their own theorising and the impact that deficit theorising has upon Māori students’ educational achievement.

This professional development requires teachers to be supported to change their theorising from discourses of deficits to discourses of agency and then to re-position themselves within these alternative discourses, both in practice and in theory.

The development of a school-wide means for teachers to reflect collaboratively on their changing practices, in the light of a range of student participation and achievement evidence, supports, reinforces, and sustains this agentic positioning.

Exercise 2: Recognising Deficit Theorising

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Part 1: Sort the following statements into agentic and non-agentic discourses and paste them under the appropriate heading on the accompanying recording sheet. Explain why you have placed them where you have.

"I've tried everything I know. His attitude is really unco-operative. How do you others find him in class?"

"I'm really worried about John. He very rarely contributes and often opts out. Can anyone give me any suggestions?"

"It would be a good start if he came to school with the gear he needs. He's never prepared for lessons. He's got no support from home! I'm sick of it!"

"The trouble is he's got an attitude. His big brother was the same – insolent and aggressive."

"I just can't seem to get to know him. He's often surly and unresponsive. Anyone know anything about his interests that might be a starting point for me?"

"He can't stay focused for more than a few minutes at a time. No discipline from home, I'd say."

"He's plain lazy – that's his problem."

"Tama really struggles to get anything down on paper. I thought I could use a doughnut to help with written work preparation. What do you think?"
Exercise 3: Responding to Deficit Theorising

The following are authentic deficit responses collected from facilitators in Te Kakaako Phase 3. How could you give feedback in a way that is respectful of all but does not dodge or ignore the pathologising that is occurring.

"He can’t keep up. He doesn’t have the skills. What do they do at primary school? Kids shouldn’t be coming to secondary school illiterate and without basic maths skills."

"Oh, her … knaf … her sister was a pain."

"I know we’re not supposed to deficit theorise, but John’s attendance is really awful and it doesn’t seem to matter what I do. I’ve heard that there are just not the right role models at home."

"We just don’t care about school."

"Oh, I love Māori students, but they come from such difficult backgrounds."

"You know the biggest problem is the scheme. We have to study such irrelevant stuff. It doesn’t mean anything to them."

"Year 10s have a real attitude problem. I don’t think we’re going to get far until we make some changes to the way we organise the form rooms."

"It doesn’t matter what I do, I can’t get through to her. I think she’s given up."

Reflection

In your reflection journal, record your responses to the following questions:

- What has this activity contributed to my theorising about Te Kakaako?
- What implications does this have for my practice?
- What will I do differently?
- What will our team do differently?