Project Papatuanuku (Hauraki Land Project)

Hauraki Plains College (TLIF 1-209)

For the Ministry of Education
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Summary

The 35 Year 12 students in this project, one third of whom were Māori, were enrolled in a Level 2 Agriculture course and it was intended that these students achieve NCEA Level 2 as well as a Vocational Pathway Primary Industries Award. Five teachers from Primary Industry, Māori Cultural Studies and Science Learning areas inquired and gained insight into their own ways of thinking and practice as they collaborated with learners, in a community partnership with iwi and other land based experts on a future-oriented, authentic problem.

Iwi (Pare Hauraki land owners) explored with teachers and students and diverse experts within the community how previously peat mined land (Pouarua Landcorp Block) might be made into a productive unit which reflects culturally appropriate practices.

Inquiry Team

- Project leader: Sarah Koch.
- The other members of the project team were: Ngaire Harris, Ken Robertson, Logan Taylor, Normie Anderson and Rob Webster. The team worked with the Pare Hauraki Iwi Collective.
- External advisor: Dr Jane Gilbert (Auckland institute of Technology)

Background

Project Papatuanuku was the result of an invitation from the Hauraki Iwi Collective who had been granted a large area of agricultural land close to Hauraki Plains College under a Treaty settlement. A 40 hectare block of this land, managed currently by Landcorp, had been previously peat-mined and was now largely unproductive waste land.

This project drew largely on research by the New Zealand Council for Educational Research (2012) on future-oriented learning and teaching that identified a number of key themes. These themes included a commitment to personalising learning; educating for working with diversity of cultures, expertise and ideas; a curriculum that uses knowledge to develop learner capacity; the rethinking of learners’ and teachers’ roles; a culture of continuous learning for teachers and leaders and the forging of new partnerships and relationships with the wider community (Bolstad, Gilbert et al, 2012).
The inquiry

Project Papatuanuku endeavoured to set up the kind of space where teachers and learners could explore this approach in a real world, problem solving context in which there is no known solution. This approach of using a so-called “wicked problem” as a generative framework for future-oriented learning and teaching to occur and for the enabling of dimensions of these themes to emerge is proposed as a way forward in a more recent publication by Hipkins et al (2014) Key Competencies for the Future.

The project explored what happened in this space. What were the challenges when schools endeavoured to work in partnership with iwi, scientists, farmers and researchers? How would a diversity of ideas and expertise and cultural norms work in this space? What challenges were there for teachers working in this space? Was there a re-thinking of teacher and learner roles and were there shifts in teachers’ thinking about the kinds of teaching practices that would build the learning capacity of students and collaborate in a community context? Would this experience influence students’ sense of agency, engagement and their aspirations for their own futures? Would they see new possibilities in terms of their own vocational pathways? What were the implications for curriculum design at local level?

It was intended that student, teacher and iwi views would be used to evaluate the impact of the project on student agency, changes in teacher practices and the challenges of forming community partnerships.

Key findings

- Real world contexts were more unpredictable than the inquiry team had envisaged.
  - The work was late getting off the ground because of initial delays
  - It proved difficult to get the different community experts together in one room to work together on the puzzle of practice
  - Providing transport for the students to the site was an issue.
  - The complexity of finding solutions to using the peat-mine soil had been underestimated.

- The community experts were not able to provide solutions to the unique challenges of the site, and the teachers and students resorted to using trial and error approaches.

- Teachers had to adapt to a different role-from knowing their subjects they
had to move to a different position where they were learning alongside their students, not knowing what the outcomes would be.

- Students were often at a loss to know how to go about researching possibilities and how to go about managing the project, commenting they felt out of their depth. The team acknowledged that in the future, they would be more intentional about teaching these capabilities.
- Because of changes in key personnel, the intended data collection did not occur so the academic impact on students was not measured. However all of the 35 students on the project achieved NCEA Level 2 and 15 achieved a Primary Industries endorsement.
- Common feedback was that the students really enjoyed the real life hands on experience the project provided. Many acknowledged a sense of pride from growing native trees from seedlings and seeing them planted out on the land. "It is part of our legacy we leave to the school," commented one student.
- There were many lessons learnt that led to a significant shift in the learning and structures and curriculum design across the school.
  - Five collaborative hubs have been created to provide more authentic and integrated learning experiences for year 9 and 10 students.
  - Courses have been developed across all disciplines around authentic projects with NCEA standards mapped onto the learning experiences.

**Key implications (in terms of the goals of TLIF)**

- Relationships and connections are fundamental within this kind of project. There needed to be on-going meetings with key participants throughout the project.
- Recognition that partnership with iwi is an on-going and evolving commitment.
Reference List


For further information

If you would like to learn more about this project please contact the project leader at principal@haurakiplains.school.nz
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