



Rongohia te Hau – A PLATFORM FOR CHANGE

Rongohia te Hau involves a set of tools that give a picture of pedagogy across a school or Early Childhood centre. It asks, 'how is teaching being done and how is learning experienced across our school or centre?' and 'what do students and/or whānau think of this?'

Rongohia te Hau builds from a process of shared understandings about teaching and learning practices across a school or centre to take a snapshot - a slice in time - that is a representative sample of what the pedagogy could look like on any given day.

Kāhui Ako or other collective teaching and learning communities can also use Rongohia te Hau to ask these same questions across a wider community. An adapted version of Rongohia te Hau has also been developed and trialled with Early Childhood teachers and whānau.

The evidence that is gathered indicates how schools and centres can develop their pedagogy to make more of a difference for their Māori students. This then requires a different, ongoing programme of support to accelerate the development of cultural relationships for responsive pedagogy.

Surveys

The first part of the Rongohia te Hau process uses online surveys for teachers, whānau and students in schools, or teachers and whānau in centres. Data from surveys are presented back to schools and centres in a format that they can use to further understand other pieces of school evidence.

The surveys tell us what Māori students, non-Māori students, and teachers are saying about their teaching and learning experiences. We recommend that Rongohia te Hau surveys are not used with students below Year 4, however, surveys provide whānau perspectives of their child's learning experiences.

The data is graphed so that schools have a pictorial representation of how teachers, students, and whānau perceive these teaching and learning experiences.

Outcome data from surveys

Many of the surveys gathered initially seem to suggest that there are good relationships between students and teachers. However, it appears that students do not experience the same level of student-centred dialogic pedagogy as many of their teachers believe they are providing. For example, there can be a big difference between what teachers perceive as their ability to teach interactively and the experience that students report through their surveys.

In the beginning, data from the surveys taken in schools usually show us that students' experiences from the surveys are more consistent with the walkthrough observations. In Early Childhood centres, whānau surveys more often mirror what is seen through the walkthrough observations.

Classroom walkthroughs: The professional development

Observers receive professional development in preparation for the classroom walkthrough observations.

They are asked to develop a picture of cultural relationships for responsive pedagogy based on their prior knowledge and experience. We ask, 'if this pedagogy were embedded in the classroom, what would we see, what would we hear, how would it feel?' Then, 'what are our shared understandings?'

At times, there might be a real sense of 'well, just tell us, just give us the matrix and we'll get on with it.' Having a set matrix is not the outcome, rather we seek a co-constructed continuum that is responsive and personalised to the setting and jointly understood by all. We also expect this will change from one use of Rongohia te Hau to the next, as ideas about pedagogy strengthen through this process and change.

We ask observers to think about the most effective teacher they have ever had; what made them effective? Why do you remember them?

If we know and understand - because we have experienced really effective pedagogy - then how does that play out in our own practice? What parts of the practice are effective, and what parts are not? - so that I know and understand it, not because I've read about it in a book, but I've actually experienced it.

The exercise of developing the continuum, 'what would this pedagogy look like, sound like and feel like if it was happening in a classroom?' really clarifies what **cultural relationships for responsive pedagogy** looks like.

By the end of the preparation time, teachers should have a good picture in their heads. By coming together and discussing it in depth, they can build a very rich picture of the pedagogy. That can be a real 'aha' moment and that's what we're aiming to achieve. There's a bit of solid ground for teachers to stand on which they've created for themselves. So, the exercise itself should demonstrate the pedagogy in action and people come to understand that too.

Making connections

We've found that in unpacking those conversations there's not one group of teachers, not one senior leadership team who couldn't actually identify what **culturally relationships for responsive pedagogy** might look like in their own context.

Developing a pedagogy continuum

The pedagogy continuum starts with people's prior knowledge and experience. Often this begins with the whole staff, it is then fine-tuned and implemented by the observation team and shared back with staff after the process is completed.

Because the process co-constructs and teases out the pedagogy continuum, observers have a shared understanding of what it is they are looking for. The continuum clearly articulates what cultural relationships for responsive pedagogy looks like, and sounds like, in practice - for example, 'what is it going to look like in terms of student engagement? What is it going to look like in terms of the context, the environment? What is it going to look like in terms of feedback and feedforward that the students and teacher will be engaging in?'

That specificity allows people to see themselves on the continuum. In co-constructing and reflecting on the basic to embedded range, that's when people can begin to make connections to their own practice.

Time for reflection

Observers have time to think about their co-constructed continuum overnight or over one or two days.

While time to make connections as classroom practitioners is important, too much time before undertaking the observations can be counterproductive. Revisiting the continuum before observations is important because their thinking may have changed and needs to coalesce once more.

Recording observations

The beauty of the Rongohia te Hau observation tool is that you're not making any judgments, you're not thinking, 'that's an example of that, oh yes, tick that.' All you're doing is writing down what you can hear or see. It's like a video camera, and you're just taking a short film of what you see for ten minutes.

When you finish the observation, you come back and start deconstructing what you've seen. You literally read your observed evidence by starting at the top [beginning of your observation] and finishing at the bottom [end of your observation], and that should give the people with you a good sense of what you saw, what you heard and what it felt like being in that setting.

From these shared learning conversations, we can then consider the observation across the co-constructed continuum, from basic through to embedded.

Using evidence to accelerate the learning

When the summary evidence from the walkthrough observations is put alongside the analysis of the survey question responses, and the sets of comments, there are always important 'noticings', specific to the evidence collected in that time. These discussions can ensure a response that is more tailored to the evidence and the learning going forward.

When looking at this analysis, gaps between perceptions of different groups are clearly identified. Where there is a gap there is a question – but what is the best question to ask? Putting assumptions aside and considering what this collective evidence might mean can surface creative ideas about future steps.

This can be particularly powerful if the whole staff, or community, is brought back in to think about the evidence; the graphed survey responses and comments for example. I have even seen this shared with students to ask what they think will close a gap between their own perceptions and that of their teachers.

While having a chance to make sense of the data together - rather than being told about the outcomes and decisions for the future - is important, paying attention to the wider sense-making is essential.

Bringing it all together

Bringing together the voices of students, teachers, and whānau, through the surveys, and the evidence collected from observations in classrooms and centres provides a triangulated lens into the pedagogy from that setting. What we are seeing in classrooms or centres helps us to understand if teachers have the same perspective as students or whānau, and if not why not? This analysis forms the basis for forward planning.

Rongohia te Hau can be used by a small group within a school or centre to gain a picture of where their pedagogy is, or it can involve a wider community. Sharing the evidence and key foci of the forward planning with whānau and students, as well as teachers, can bring the whole school community together and provide an opportunity for some further thinking about how changes might play out and why.

Rongohia te Hau is a great example of how the Ako: critical contexts for change interconnect and come to life for the benefit of Māori learners and all learners.