

THE STRATEGIC WEAVE

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*Hutia te rito o te harakeke
Kei hea te komako e ko*

If the centre shoot of the flax is pulled out
(and the flax dies)
Where will the bellbird sing

– Joan Metge, Victoria University of Wellington

Introduction

This epigraph defines the space covered by this paper. It is not about the flax it's about the bellbird. However, without the flax where will the bellbird sing, feed and rest? Asset Management is not about the tasks, it's about the outcomes, the use of the assets, the benefits enjoyed by the stakeholders - the bellbirds. Without doing the asset management tasks those bellbirds won't sing.

The elegance of the analogy is the link with the growth process of the flax plant, which supplies flax fibres with which to weave. A weaving analogy illustrates how strategic principles, and values in particular, should be woven through the decisions made in managing your assets.

Context

In 2010 the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) sponsored the development of a Capital Asset Management (CAM) framework for the New Zealand tertiary education sector. It conducted independent audits of the Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics (ITP) in 2010 and of the three *Wānanga* in 2011. Using a refined approach, it audited all tertiary education institutions in 2012. SPM Assets was one of the companies commissioned to conduct the 2010, 2011, and 2012 audits against this standard to "draw a line in the sand".

A key finding from the audits was that the three *Wānanga* stood out against other ITPs in terms of their approach, quality of linkages, and plans particularly in the area of strategic outcomes and organisational commitment. The statistics tell us something, even allowing for the nature of qualitative assessment and sample bias due to the small number of *Wānanga* compared to other tertiary institutes. Understanding the difference in approach to asset management was the key to teasing out the learnings presented here.

This paper examines how the New Zealand *Wānanga* subsector has adopted and embraced the core principle of effective asset management through a more traditional approach driven by the need to ensure the safe custodianship of their assets – *kaitiakitanga*. It specifically looks at the way *Te Wānanga o Raukawa* has their strategic intent imbedded and woven through all aspects of asset management.

Te Wānanga o Raukawa

As part of the audit, analysis of the linkages from strategy through to performance measures was required. To enable proper context *Te Wānanga o Raukawa* deemed it essential that an understanding of the history of the *Wānanga* and introduction to *kaupapa* occur prior to discussing the strategic objectives.

Te Wānanga o Raukawa is a Māori tertiary education provider based in Ōtaki.

In 1975, the *Raukawa Marae* Trustees in the lower North Island of *Aotearoa*, a body representing the confederation of *Te Ātiawa ki Whakarongotai*, *Ngāti Raukawa ki te Tonga* and *Ngāti Toa Rangatira*, (the ART Confederation), began a tribal planning experiment entitled *Whakatupuranga Rua Mano*, or Generation 2000. The purpose of this experiment was to prepare the Confederation for the 21st century.

In 1981 *Te Wānanga o Raukawa* was established to put into practical effect the ideas and principles articulated in *Whakatupuranga Rua Mano*. *Te Wānanga o Raukawa* began with a modest roll of two students. Today, the *Wānanga* boasts a roll of over 2,000 students and an extensive academic programme offering diploma to graduate and post graduate courses.

The core purpose of *Te Wānanga o Raukawa* is constantly guided and informed by the following four principles outlined in *Whakatupuranga Rua Mano*:

1. *Te Reo* is a *Taonga*. (The language is a treasure).
2. People are our wealth.
3. The *marae* is our principal home.
4. Strive for self-determination.

Kaupapa

Kaupapa are elements of the *Māori* world view on which the nation is founded and can be defined in English as values. The *kaupapa* are consistent with the *Māori* world view as noted by a number of *Māori* scholars and writers, and *Te Wānanga o Raukawa* vision statement.

Ten *kaupapa* were developed as the basis for what the stakeholders expected their *Wānanga* to achieve. *Te Wānanga* sees these as the drivers in their activities and operations. Collectively they are the foundation for *Te Wānanga o Raukawa* in expressing itself as a *Māori* institution.

The following *kaupapa* are accepted individually and collectively as the defining values. These draw on *Te Wānanga o Raukawa* own understanding from the body of knowledge, *mātauranga Māori* and the teachings of the *Wānanga*.

1. *Whakapapa*
2. *Te Reo*
3. *Manaakitanga*
4. *Rangatiratanga*
5. *Whanaungatanga*
6. *Kotahitanga*
7. *Wairuatanga*
8. *Ūkaipōtanga*
9. *Pūkengatanga*
10. *Kaitiakitanga*

Tikanga

Like many conceptual definitions, each of these ten *kaupapa* can be expressed in many ways. The alternative expressions are part of what is known as *tikanga*. *Te Wānanga o Raukawa* consider that *tikanga* grow from within *kaupapa*, just like a tree grows from the earth. All *tikanga* purporting to be *Māori* can find their bases in *kaupapa*.

Te Wānanga o Raukawa talk about '*tikanga*' as meaning 'anything normal or usual'. Accordingly, *tikanga Māori* is what is normal or usual to *Māori*. This is one of several uses of this word.

From the *Wānanga* perspective, the *tikanga* (policies, practices and organisational arrangements, to express the *kaupapa*) become the pathways along which educational outcomes for *Māori* may be achieved. Students are assisted to see the world through *Māori* eyes and encouraged to behave accordingly.

An unmistakable parallel exists between the concept of *tikanga* and asset management. If *tikanga* are the practices expressing *kaupapa*, they are tactical, while the *kaupapa* themselves are strategic. In terms of asset management the tactics used day-to-day under the guise of "asset management" are analogous to, and indeed are sometimes equivalent to, *tikanga* as they are designed to achieve the strategic goals.

During the audit of *Te Wānanga o Raukawa*, the auditor witnessed three separate occasions where the *kaupapa* were innately consulted during casual conversations. These instances include board

members discussing projects, the facilities manager discussing maintenance priorities and a student describing the inspiration for his carving. These were a clear demonstration of *tikanga*, and more to the point are a clear demonstration of *tikanga Māori*. This more than any documentation showed that plans, work and tasks were being informed by strategic intent.

The job of an auditor is to see documented linkages, and against the TEC CAM standard to verify these from strategic objectives through levels of service to the measures, targets and performance. *Te Wānanga o Raukawa* articulate the alignment of levels of service via a *kaupapa/tikanga* matrix in their Investment Plan (*Hei Whakamaunga Atu 2013-2015*).

Strategic Alignment

But how does this organisation have these strategic intents distilled so completely through the organisation?

Organisations that apply successful, (and unsuccessful) corporate values, and visions are not only well referenced but are often replicated, ensuring many thousands of employees are familiar with values concepts. Any good psychologist understands that unless the corporate values align with your personal values they are unlikely to be lived. Similarly employees subjected to corporate values behave as if they understand the same thing.

The values of respect of people and the environment, leadership, family, sense of purpose, accountability, and caring for others while poorly translated here and failing to do justice to the meaning of *Kotahitanga* or *Kaitiakitanga*, are distinctly human values, and more particularly, values of importance to the ethos of *Māori*.

For an institute dedicated to the culture of *Māori*, it is not coincidental that these *kaupapa* align. In fact it has taken decades of thought, and no doubt mistakes, to get to this point. The reason they distil so directly into the organisation is they are well aligned with the purpose and the people within the organisation. An alignment based on needs not things.

Analogies

To many *Pākehā*, weaving brings forth images of flax baskets or wool spinning. But 200 years ago weaving of linen and wool was the staple of the European clothing market and a mainstay of domestic and international trade.

Before weaving occurs the material must be prepared; removal of the outer epidermis, hung to dry, dyed or coloured. For Asset Management preparation occurs also. For example data is prepared; removal of the superfluous, tested, trended and converted to information. Preparation occurs in the writing of AMPs, improvement plans, and budgets.

If the flax plant is considered analogous to the process of Asset Management, the fibres can be likened to the individual tasks we undertake in asset management: data collection, optimised decision making, writing AMPs, maintaining registers, and balancing budgets with outcomes.

The development of strategic objectives may seem like a movable feast at times, but values are not. The choice of words used by *Te Wānanga o Raukawa*, deliberately or not, sets the *kaupapa* as the foundation. Continuing an engineered building analogy we can see the strategic objectives as structure, studs, beams, trusses. The Levels of Service then become the walls and the ceiling. After all, if the service of a building is to give shelter, seemingly only the walls and roof perform this function. The levels of service are the visible service like walls but they cannot function in isolation.

A builder describes the work as building homes, not nailing bits of wood together. Yet asset managers describe the work in precisely those weaker terms. Describing the work in terms of things, wood, rather than needs, homes. Asset managers think they manage assets, rather than supply spaces for learning, living, entertainment, and so on. The *Māori* world view described here does not fall into that trap.

Achieving Harmony

Te Wānanga o Raukawa has practices in optimised decision making, level of service linkage, measuring performance and meeting prescribed requirements that link back to the *kaupapa*. The method of alignment is distinctly an outcome of the *Māori* world view, and the processes of weaving the strategic through all aspects of asset management is a clear example of good practice in the asset management sector.

As an added benefit, if *tikanga* is the placing into practice of that which is correct, it can be seen to be multiple in its concept. *Tikanga* can express the *kaupapa* in complementary ways. They are not mutually exclusive, and this feature of the *kaupapa* and *tikanga* relationship is singularly important. Whereas *kaupapa* may appear to stand in opposition often, when other combinations of *tikanga* are explored, compatibility is achievable. Compromise is not necessary as the outcome includes collaboration where the long term gains outweigh short term loss.

Thus the means of expressing values can be multiple, overlapping and not mutually exclusive. Indeed the *kaupapa/tikanga* relationship is a natural source of innovation – doing things differently and better. Critically important in this relationship is the anchor to values that has stood the test of time for *Māori*, through preservation, development and enhancement. Innovative behaviour resides in the search; the search will always be for the appropriate choice of *tikanga*.

As a final outcome, from the *Māori* world view perspective, maintaining the *kaupapa* to achieve strategic objectives in turn enhances and improves the *kaupapa*. There is a self-perpetuating cycle here. The *kaupapa* drive strategic objectives, and fulfilling these strategic objectives enhances *kaupapa*. The question of how does the organisation have the values so ingrained is partially resolved in this outcome. There is no choice anymore. As long as the links from values to strategic objectives are honoured, as long as the woven garment is cared for, as long as the building is maintained, the foundation *kaupapa* will ensure success.

Conclusion

The parallel between the concept of *tikanga* and asset management through the analogies used, illustrate the approach of *Te Wānanga o Raukawa*, in contrast to the tradition approach of asset management. *Te Wānanga o Raukawa* certainly did not start out to achieve a TEC based CAM compliant approach but if you superimpose a portion of the *Māori* world view on the asset management requirements, a leading example of asset management results.

Acknowledgments, References

An understanding of weaving was aided by entries in *Te Ara* - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand and in particular the work of Tamarapa and Wallace.

Awhina Tamarapa and Patricia Wallace. '*Māori* clothing and adornment – *kākahu Māori*', *Te Ara* - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, updated 27-Aug-13

URL: <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/maori-clothing-and-adornment-kakahu-maori>

Support documents supplied by *Te Wānanga o Raukawa* and available at <http://www.wananga.com> include:

- *Te Wānanga o Raukawa: Guiding Kaupapa of Te Wānanga o Raukawa*
- *Te Wānanga o Raukawa: Investment Plan (Hei Whakamaunga Atu 2013-2015)*
- Part One, *Te Wānanga o Raukawa, The Theory (And Understanding) Of Wānanga*