

CoachED UPDATE

SEPTEMBER 2022

Enhancing the quality of conversations in education communities

TIME TO READ: 4MINS

STRENGTHENING COACHING THROUGH AN UNDERSTANDING OF CULTURAL CAPABILITY

This paper is the result of a collaborative writing process by our partners at Growth Coaching New Zealand in association with The Education Group - Dr Nicky Knight, Roween Higgie, Jan Hill, Dr Kay Hawk and Julie Shumacher.

Ehara taku toa i te toa takitahi, engari he toa takitini.

I come not with my own strengths but bring with me the gifts, talents and strengths of my family, tribe and ancestors.

This whakatauki¹ reflects on success being not the work of an individual, but the work of many. As well as the contributions from our Education Group team, we acknowledge the support and lessons we have learned from and with our colleagues and students in the schools, kura and whanau with which we work.

Our Context

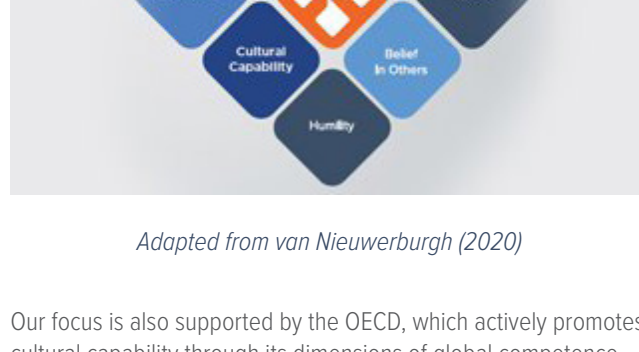
We know learners of all ages can flourish in a culturally responsive environment. This article describes our uniquely Aotearoa New Zealand journey of discovery for our team at The Education Group to enrich coaching conversations through an understanding of cultural capability. We want to acknowledge that this is work in progress and we still have a lot to learn and understand. We have each had our own journeys to get to this point. We have needed to be open, curious, patient, and respectful of things we haven't fully understood. Other people will find their own paths.

In recent times, the New Zealand Ministry of Education has put considerable focus on providers of professional learning and development to schools being culturally capable. New Zealand is an ethnically, culturally and linguistically diverse country, however there is, first and foremost, a strong focus on biculturalism, acknowledging Māori as tangata whenua - our people of the land. Our context is also framed by Te Tiriti o Waitangi, a founding document signed in 1840 that has helped the treaty partners - tangata whenua (Māori) and the Crown - understand their obligations and rights as equal partners. This partnership hasn't always been an easy one and for decades Te Tiriti o Waitangi was not honoured.

There are Māori concepts/values/uara that, we believe, reflect the essence of being culturally capable in a coaching conversation which include:

- Ako: Sense-making is dialogic, interactive and engaging
- Whakapapa: Culture counts- learners' understandings form the basis of their identity and learning
- Whanaungatanga: Belonging-relationships of care and connectedness are fundamental. Building relationships first is the key to being successful. "People self-actualise in relationships." Spiller et al, (2015, p. 87)
- Wānanga: A 'safe place' to have conversations based on problem solving and innovation
- Manaakitanga: The process of showing respect, generosity and care for others, also acknowledgment and practice of tikanga and kawa
- Hūmārietanga: Humility- Kāore te kumara e kōrero ana mo tōna ake reka - the kūmara doesn't speak of its own sweetness. This is an encouragement to be modest and show humility. It speaks of the contributions/mana of others.
- Pono: Integrity

Two years ago, we sought permission from Christian van Nieuwerburgh to change one of the components of a coaching way of being from 'interculturally sensitive' to 'cultural capability' as shown in the diagram below. We know there are many similarities between the two concepts, however, we hope this article helps explain why we wanted to make this change for us in Aotearoa New Zealand and how an understanding of cultural capability adds considerable depth and value to any coaching conversation.



Adapted from van Nieuwerburgh (2020)

Our focus is also supported by the OECD, which actively promotes cultural capability through its dimensions of global competence. "Global Competence is a multi-dimensional construct that requires a combination of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values successfully applied to global issues or intercultural situations. Global issues refer to those that affect all people and have deep implications for current and future generations. Intercultural situations refer to face-to-face, virtual or mediated encounters with people who are perceived to be from a different cultural background" (OECD, 2018, p. 1)

Figure 1. The dimensions of global competence



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