Applying Design Thinking principles to develop meaningful engagements with ākonga Māori

Students as partners, Workshop

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Abstract:

How often do we grasp an opportunity to reflect on the way we do our mahi? When we are under pressure to get work completed we often revert to the rinse and repeat model. We therefore don’t have time to reinvent or recreate our offer, so how do we know our offer still fits our market? The answer is Design Thinking.

When we hear the words ‘Design Thinking’ there is an assumption we are talking or referring to the arts, creative design or marketing. Sina Mossayeb, Global System Design Lead at IDEO sums up design thinking as “a culture of innovation [that] embraces ambiguity, experimentation, and has some tolerance of failure.” Design Thinking is a state of mind referred to as ‘Vuja De’ (Sutton, 2005). Vuja de happens when you enter a situation you’ve been in a thousand times before, but with the sense of being there for the first time. With this in mind, we need to forget what we have known and press the reset button and listen with fresh minds, ears and voices.

The first principle of Design Thinking in an Aotearoa New Zealand context is: He aha o te mea nui o te ao? He tāngata, he tāngata, he tāngata. For many years, we had made all the decisions about what our ākonga needed and wanted, but was it? What evidence did we have to support this? We had a strategy but were we held accountable to it? Did our ākonga know it existed? With all of this in mind, Te Ratonga Ākonga Māori decided to open our annual team planning hui to include ākonga for the very first time. The invitation was open to all ākonga involved in our Tuākana-Tāina programme, Te Akatoki Māori Students Association executive members, and postgraduates. Ākonga were encouraged to be active participants to share their experiences, their needs and wants, and their desires to support them be successful in their educational pathways.

Mā te kōrero ka mōhio, mā te mōhio ka mārama, mā te mārama ka mātau, mā te mātau ka ora ai tātou. Through discussion comes awareness, through awareness comes understanding, through understanding comes wisdom, and through wisdom comes wellbeing for all.

Jamie Hape is the Māori Student Development Team Leader at the University of Canterbury and has been working in the team for the past six years.

Biography:
Jamie Hape is the Māori Student Development Team Leader at the University of Canterbury and has been working in the team for the past six years but working in tertiary education for the past 12 years in various roles.