

# The Task of an Educator is Supporting “Communities of Learners” as Transformative Practice<sup>1</sup>

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The notion of transformation offers an opportunity for critical reflection about what it is that we as teachers do in our practices within institutions that either liberates or inhibits the power of the learner. The notion of transformation immediately brings to mind one of the most influential educationalists of our time, Paulo Freire, the Brazilian educator whose theories of transformation continue to inspire, and who said

*How difficult is the task of an educator. No matter where this kind of educator works...the great adventure—is how to make education something which, in being serious, rigorous, methodical, and having a process, also creates happiness and joy. (Paulo Freire Center Finland)*

A process of education that brings happiness contrasts with the reality of many who have experienced or continue to experience the “banking” system of education that Freire describes. This is a concept of education in which the scope of action allowed by the teacher as the depositor of knowledge, to the students extends only to their receiving, memorizing, repeating, filing, and storing the deposits (Freire, 1996). This philosophy of education associated with theories of cultural deprivation was what I was exposed to as a teacher trainee in the early 1970s. The cultural deficit view was popular among social commentators during the 1960s and 1970s. Cultural deprivation was considered the major reason for indigenous and minority student failure such that compensatory education would make up for poor housing, poor parenting, and family dysfunction. Jim Cummins’s “cultural discontinuity theory” identified the disconnect between home and school as the root cause of minority school failure. He concluded that when administrators used culturally biased tests to determine what these students lacked, the students were disadvantaged (Cummins, 1986; Reyhner, 1998, p. 90).

To prove the point, the teachers college program I experienced in New Zealand included a field trip to the “culturally deprived” area of South Auckland called Otara. The sole purpose of the field trip was to have students survey firsthand, albeit from the “safety” of an education department bus, what a “culturally deprived area” actually looked like. There were a few Maori students but most were middle-class Pakeha from the Hawkes Bay / Tairāwhiti area of New Zealand. Most students from this area of the country were sent to train as teachers at a residential college in rural South Auckland some 500 kilometers away.

At the time of the field trip to Otara, early in the first year of study, very few students had yet ventured outside the college environs. The bus slowly traversed the streets of Otara and circled the Otara shopping center while the lecturer, acting as tour guide, offered a running commentary of facts and figures about the place and the people. We learnt there were high numbers of Maori and Pacific immigrants from rural villages, and that this was the home of the notorious gang—the Pacific Panthers. We were told there were high crime rates, poor educational achievement rates, poor parenting, and children who lacked experiences, who spoke poor English, who lived poor lives, and who had very low Performance Achievement Test (PAT) scores.

What the commentary lacked of course was, among many others, the lived reality of the people we were gazing at from behind the bus-framed windows, and the historical facts of a town constructed by the state as an experiment in social engineering through the implementation of a policy of pepper-potting brown folk among white folk. And there was no mention of the indentured labor pool Pacific Islanders were brought specifically to New Zealand to fill. Little did I know that three years later I would return to Otara to

embark on my teaching career, armed with a teachers college certificate and a flawed philosophy based on a deficit view that considered Maori and Pacific children in particular as empty receptacles which the teacher as the educator was to fill. This is the classic “banking” method of education Freire described as the “pedagogy of the oppressed.”

In Otago my transformation as a teacher happened fairly rapidly because it was very clear in reality that the children and their communities led rich and authentic lives. The tools of my trade, including the instructional content of a Euro-centric curriculum, severely limited them, and in the process served to inhibit their fundamental right to an education. It is precisely such limitations, evident in all sectors of education and entrenched in state systems, that contributed in 1984 to the rapid establishment by Maori of *te kohanga reo* and *kura kaupapa* Maori from outside the state: A potent symbol of Maori resistance to a dehumanizing order. *Te Kohanga Reo* was a quiet revolution that quickly spread globally to transform the indigenous world. First peoples of the land set about establishing language nests and systems of education centered on indigenous epistemology, values, customs, and languages, thereby reinvigorating a commitment to self-determination. Change, however, is never straightforward.

The extraordinary outcome of the United States presidential elections in 2008 put to rest any doubts about the power of transformation, the power of change. Cornel West described this moment in history as a “symbolic gravity difficult to measure” as American voters in droves opted for change. Barack Obama is the first black man to assume the most powerful political office in the world, but as a highly educated individual he has much in common with his predecessors. His pathway through tertiary education has been along those same elite Ivy League institutional byways that have produced former presidents and their spouses. Obama is a graduate of Columbia University and Harvard Law School. His wife Michelle graduated from Princeton and Harvard. Bush Jr. is a graduate of Yale, and so too is Hillary Clinton, while Bill Clinton is an Oxford graduate.

The tides of change resulting from the 2008 elections have seen New Zealand embrace a level of conservatism that signals a number of likely changes to the provision of tertiary education. Internationally, universities are in a state of change as they face the pressures from a number of fronts; the globalization of universities in terms of the increased flow of international students, international competition for academic staff, research alliances, and international rankings. Furthermore there are the changing expectations and demands of governments, the business sector, families, and students; the fiscal pressures from government budgets and policy changes; and the effects of information and communication technology.<sup>2</sup> The relationship between education and larger issues of the economy and politics make it abundantly clear that a good education is directly tied to economic needs (Apple, 1996).

These global forces and their impact at the local level have significant implications for Maori, and indeed, for society as a whole, as tertiary institutions position themselves as part of a global network of education providers within which indigenous peoples as *tangata whenua*, or first nations, seek to participate on their own terms. This not only includes reaping the economic and social benefits that accrue from participating in higher education; but also influencing structural change within institutions at the micro & macro levels (e.g., curriculum, pedagogy, and policy) so that indigenous forms of capital (e.g., indigenous values, knowledge, cultural traditions, and languages) (Pidgeon, 2008) are not superficially framed in politically correct rhetoric or token gestures, but are embodied and projected by the institution as standard practice and procedure.

Indigenous scholars have consistently challenged institutions to be more responsive to indigenous students and their communities (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991; Pidgeon, 2006, 2008). In providing guidance on how institutions could support indigenous education in North America, Kirkness and Barnhardt suggest a set of interconnecting principles of respect, relevance, reciprocity, and responsibility. They advocate institutions support indigenous education by demonstrating respect of indigenous cultural integrity and by ensuring the programs and structures are relevant to indig-

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enous perspectives and experiences; that reciprocal relationships are formed through positive partnerships between the institution and indigenous communities; and that the institution has a responsibility to ensure active participation of indigenous people at all levels of the institution (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991).

For the most part Maori have tended to initiate varying levels of participation within the tertiary sector as a response to a perceived apathy on the part of the institutions. Information about the academic learning experience of Maori students in the tertiary sector is limited. A recent study found that comfort in the university, adequate social support, and self belief were significant factors impacting Maori students' decisions to either stay at university until the end of their course or leave early (Zepke, Leach, & Prebble, 2005). Until the middle of the last century, Maori education received no special attention other than from the Maori Education Foundation (MEF) and some tribal scholarship boards that provided funds for Maori participation in post-primary education and tertiary study.

The MEF was established on the recommendation of the Hunn Report on Maori Affairs in 1960, which revealed that, compared with the European population, the proportion of Maori apprentices and university students was significantly lower. It was interesting that in 1959 the Parry Committee on New Zealand universities made no mention of Maori education in their report. In 1962, the Currie Commission on Education singled out Maori as one of four groups with so called "special needs." The Commission advocated a greater part for Maori in higher education, and a greater contribution by Maori to positions requiring professional and semi-professional qualifications and skills.

Almost a half century later, this proposition still holds currency and is identified by the Tertiary Education Strategy, which advocated for a greater say by Maori in education provision, and for the tertiary sector to be more responsive to Maori needs and aspirations (MOE, 2001). Maori under-representation at all levels remains, but in a tertiary sector transformed by the proliferation of Maori initiatives evident in kaupapa Maori, or Maori-centered teaching and learning programs, research centers, and workforce development schemes, and by the significant impact of

whare wananga on the tertiary landscape.

This has seen Maori participation in higher education increased exponentially, so much so that Maori have moved to having the highest participation rate of any ethnic group in New Zealand. However, information shows that participation is highest at the sub-degree level, where the fees students pay are at the same level of fees as students enrolled in degree courses, thereby incurring a long-term burden of debt. The growth in participation rates at higher levels of tertiary education is still lower than those of non-Maori, including retention, and completion rates. The growth in the number of Maori in industry training and Modern Apprenticeships has increased although Maori are more likely to be training at lower levels than non-Maori. While there have been significant gains in the sector, nevertheless participation, retention, and completion for Maori in higher education remains a concern. And this concern is poised to be even more challenging for tertiary institutions as government policy emphasizes recruitment of school leavers over adult learners, a capped entry environment, and increased entry requirements based on high school NCEA<sup>3</sup> results. Maori are more likely to be second-chance adult learners and less likely to hold the new entry requirements. How institutions respond to Maori needs and aspirations is a key factor to increasing Maori tertiary success.

It is some time since I worked as the first learning advisor for Maori students at Massey University and profound changes have occurred in the intervening years. The Maori Learning Advisor role was established at Massey in 1991 as an intervention strategy aimed at addressing the low retention rates of Maori students. This was an important initiative because it signaled a shift in institutional practice around the provision of support services to Maori that mirrored what was happening in other institutions around the country (Grant, Reilly, Roberts, & Waitiri, 1991).

Appointing a designated Maori position helped to demonstrate the institution's support of a Maori initiative, and represented a concrete response to Treaty of Waitangi obligations as outlined in the institution's goals. Resource priorities were apportioned to fund the program from the general pool, thereby recognizing

the importance of Maori participation and retention in terms of the institution's overall aims and the importance of a strategic approach directed at increasing the number of Maori graduates. This was a shift from the usual trend of seeking funds from Maori sources in order to fund Maori priorities. Such thinking, if it is a consistent approach by institutions to policy for Maori, is problematic because it serves to strengthen barriers to Maori participation and access to higher education by assuming fiscal priorities and resources based on mainstream imperatives.

A salient point raised by indigenous educators representing the major colonized countries of the world at the American Education Research Association Conference in Chicago in 2007 is an observation that indigenous programs within western institutions are the first to be severely contained, downsized, or disestablished against claims such programs are fiscally liable or substandard, thereby enabling resources to be redistributed to mainstream programs. In the current tertiary funding environment, Maori centered programs tend to be small and therefore vulnerable.

The Maori learning advisory position I held was located in the Department of Maori studies, responsible to the head of the department and therefore independent of the university learning support advisory team. The institution demonstrated a move away from the common practice of integrating Maori specific positions within the wider organization. Housing the learning advisor within Maori studies was a strategy that not only avoided isolating a singular position away from Maori networks, but enabled a high level of autonomy and flexibility to work within Maori centered frameworks in response to Maori student priorities. Such priorities are not always in tandem with those of the wider student body. Sometimes it requires a form of engagement based on cultural imperatives and taken-for-granted assumptions that contribute to Maori success but which are often a source of misunderstanding. This is often the case when the position is located outside of Maori control where programs are likely to be compromised if not managed with insight and understanding.

On another level, situating the advisor and learning support program within an appropriate

community of practice, fosters explicit relations (e.g., whanau, hapu, iwi) and social practices (e.g., te reo me ona tikanga) that "...gives structures and meaning to what we do" (Wenger, 1998, p. 47) and serves to focus attention on learning as a collective, community based process. In fact a singular advisor even in this context is not without limitations so that in more recent years a move to a team of advisors has become the accepted way. The concept of "communities of practice" is therefore useful for thinking about relevant approaches to supporting successful participation of Maori in higher education.

What constitutes success for indigenous students depends on what we mean by success. The government measure of tertiary success is based on degree completions while students and their communities employ quite different criteria for success. First Nations scholar Michelle Pidgeon argues that success in higher education should include measures that look beyond graduation rates, educational attainment, or the financial status one gains from a university education to include the successful negotiation of mainstream higher education while maintaining one's cultural integrity (Pidgeon, 2008). For some, gaining skill sets that contribute to tribal aspirations irrespective of having completed a higher education qualification, is seen as success, particularly when put to immediate use for the "good of the people."

According to Etienne Wenger, communities of practice are formed by people who engage in a process of collective learning in a shared domain of human endeavour. They are groups of people who share a concern for something they do and they learn how to do it better as they regularly interact. Over time they develop a shared repertoire of resources—e.g., experiences, stories, tools, equipment, and strategies that take time and sustained interaction to develop. Collective learning results in practices that reflect the way in which participants constantly engage in the pursuit of clearly defined enterprises such as the pursuit of a certificate, a diploma or a degree; the development of a teaching program; or contributing to workforce development. Interacting with each other and building relationships enables them to learn from each other. Furthermore, sharing the same conditions, experiences, interactions,

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and engagement builds an identity defined by a shared domain of interest (Wenger, 1998, p. 45). The concept of communities of practice is not new nor is it unfamiliar. But it is useful when thinking about how support services for students might be provided.

In Ngati Kahungunu the whare wananga at Papawai near Greytown in the Wairarapa was a community of practice formed in the 1860s by Nepia Pohuhu, Paratene Te Okawhare, and Moihi Te Matorohanga, who were highly literate men and close kin. Their aim in establishing the wananga was a response to the call by local hapu to record for posterity the ancient traditions of Ngati Kahungunu ki Wairarapa from the dictation of tohunga. The idea of writing down the ancient traditions was a radical one at a time when sacred knowledge had been a completely oral transaction and writing was a new technology. Te Matorohanga wrote a great number of manuscripts which are currently held in the Alexander Turnbull Library and are the source of constant study and analysis by scholars of Maori traditions (Thornton, 2004).

Another example of a community of practice formed for a specific purpose was the Te Aute College Students Association. The Association was established in the late 19th century by the Principal John Thornton, together with Archdeacon Samuel Williams, a group of professional lawyers and accountants, and the Bishop of Waiapu. As mentors their role was to facilitate the gathering of past and present students of the college to implement plans for the reformation of Maori society led by past pupil Sir Apirana Ngata (Walker, 2001, p. 74).

From the time of his appointment as principal in 1878, Thornton laid the platform for establishing an effective and transformative community of practice by upgrading the Te Aute College curriculum with an emphasis on excellence in academic scholarship in line with the English grammar school system. Thornton believed Maori students should be prepared for matriculation and go on to university to train for the professions in law, medicine, and the clergy (R. Walker, 2001). His views were completely out of step with the colonial mindset of educators and policy makers of the day (Simon, Jenkins, & Mathews, 1994). His past pupils and influential leaders of the association included Sir

Apirana Ngata who trained as a lawyer, graduating from Canterbury with a BA, MA, and LLB; Sir Maui Pomare who studied medicine; and Sir Peter Buck who became an internationally renowned anthropologist.

The identities as communities of practice of both the Whare Wananga o Papawai, and the Te Aute Students Association were defined by a shared domain of interest aimed at recording ancient tribal history and traditions and ameliorating the decline in the health, social, and economic well-being of Maori people; each participant's committed membership that in this case lasted their entire lives; and a shared long-term vision in regards to concrete outcomes. They held a shared competence not only in their tribal culture and traditions but in their respective professions in lore, law, medicine, and the social sciences. What defined them and their members as a community of practice was their negotiation of meaning, of mutual engagement and participation in pursuing together the knowledge and understanding required to document oral histories for posterity, and to lead to better health and economic outcomes for Maori. Their practices were self determined, transformational, tribally oriented development programs in oral history, public health, education, economics, and agriculture. While Buck spent many years overseas, his engagement in shared practice continued through regular exchanges of letters with Ngata and others (Sorenson, 1986).

Programs that significantly contribute to Maori participation within the tertiary sector are communities of practice defined by a shared domain. Generally they are innovative programs that are initiated and provided by Maori, focused on Maori development goals, and situated in an appropriate environment. There are many such programs across all of our institutions. But I want to focus on exemplars I am familiar with, in order to examine some of the characteristics of these programs and the principles that underpin them in terms of successful outcomes for Maori students in the tertiary sector.

Te Rau Puawai is a workforce development program established a decade ago to assist Maori who have an interest in, or are working in, the mental health field. The brainchild of Professor Mason Durie and the late Dr. Ephra Garrett, Te Rau Puawai is unique be-

cause it offers various support resources which enable students to successfully complete and gain relevant mental health-related qualifications from undergraduate to doctoral levels. There are at least three principles of engagement that underpin Te Rau Puawai in terms of fostering Maori success within the tertiary sector

The principle of *whakatua*, or coordinated practice, underpins what is the strength of this program, which is an infrastructure that allows a coordinated approach to student support in the provision of tertiary study that locates the student at the center of a learning community. The key components of Te Rau Puawai are its academic and peer mentors, the financial resources in the form of bursaries funded by the Ministry of Health, a fulltime coordinator, and an administrator. When combined, these components provide an effective wraparound-based approach to Maori support services. This approach integrates the student as part of a cohort into a collaborative process, based on individual needs-driven planning and services (Walker & Bruns, 2006) within a collective orientation.

This is not a one-size-fits-all approach because the students' goals and aspirations are at the center of the delivery. They are involved in defining and customizing their learning program in social work, nursing, rehabilitation, psychology, and Maori studies. The activities that constitute the process are standard practices that include academic and peer mentoring, monitoring student progress, on-campus hui, a peer mentoring call center, study groups, regional visits to meet and support distance students, a website, and database. The regional visits to each student and on-campus hui, while they might be considered "labor intensive" and therefore expensive, are nevertheless core components based on the assumption that *kanohi ki te kanohi*, or face-to-face, is inherent in the provision of an effective Maori centered student support service.

The principle of *kotahitanga*, or unity of purpose, underpins a level of engagement where students, staff, and mentors act as resources to each other, exchanging information and making sense of situations and new ideas, and in the process they build relationships that enable them to learn from each other. As Wenger makes clear, "the learner contributes by being a member of a community and bringing to bear

their history of participation in its practice" (Wenger, 1998, p. 55). The peer tutors are themselves senior members of Te Rau Puawai, who now have a history of participating in the practices that embody Te Rau Puawai as a community of learners. As last year's newcomer, they help the new student and see all they have learned because they are now in a position to help someone (Wenger, 1998).

The principle of *mana Maori*, or Maori centered engagement backs up studies that have found cultural values, customs, and traditions to be essential elements in the provision of services to Maori (Tomlins Jahnke, 2005), and student support services are no exception. Thus, until recently, an added value was the location of Te Rau Puawai in Maori studies<sup>4</sup> where cultural values are manifest in the school's modality of activity and relationships. The students and the program were in an environment where culture counts and where Maori aspirations are more likely to advance without compromising the values and practices that are fundamental to "being Maori."

Te Rau Puawai is primarily a Maori centered student support service that focuses on workforce development in mental health, where success is measured not only in terms of retention, participation, and completion rates, but also by the contribution of students to hapu or iwi development. Some of the principles that underpin the success factors of Te Rau Puawai as an integrated support service are also present in programs focused on single academic disciplines.

Toimairangi at Te Wananga o Aotearoa in Hastings, Toihoukura at Tairarawhiti Polytechnic and Toi Oho ki Apiti at Massey University have, over time, developed communities of practice defined by a shared interest in and commitment to Maori visual arts and culture. As distinct communities of practice they share common characteristics which contribute to student success based on a number of assumptions.

These programs are the initiative of innovative Maori artist/educators who developed them to cater to Maori students and to contribute to the advancement of contemporary Maori art. As inspirational teachers, their ability to remain innovative in terms of pedagogy and program design is due in part to the degree of autonomy they enjoy within the bounds of institutional

structures, policies, and regulations. Being under Maori direction and control has enabled a distinctly Maori approach to the provision of Maori visual art practice to emerge based on the principle of mana Maori. In contrast with other fine arts programs, priorities are given to papers that have as the core focus Maori art history, language, and culture, rather than art history and culture rooted in Europe. This is not to say that Maori visual art programs do not reference western artists or art history; of course they do. It is that Maori, and to an ever increasing degree the Pacific, is prioritized in order to ensure relevant practice and maximum engagement of students.

Such priorities are associated with a second assumption that underpins these programs: that Maori student achievement is more likely to occur when students see themselves reflected in the curriculum and the environment. According to Ngati Kahungunu artist Sandy Adsett, the architect of Toihoukura and Toimairangi, for Maori people generally, and Maori students in particular, to appreciate art they have to see themselves in the art<sup>5</sup>. On these terms, student/staff engagement includes an approach to Maori ways of knowing that has seen the emergence of a distinct pedagogy based on the principle of kaupapa Maori incorporating wananga, hui, moteatea, and karakia on the one hand and whakakitenga, or public exhibitions, at local, national, and international levels on the other. The imperatives associated with such pedagogy require an enabling environment upheld by such principles as manaakitanga and whakawhanaungatanga. In other words, as a community of learners what is shared (manaakitanga) and what brings the students and lecturers together (whakawhanaungatanga) is a level of participation characterized by mutual recognition and enabling engagement. Staff generally hold high expectations of students to achieve a high quality and standard of excellence, which in turn challenges staff to ensure their own art practice remains current and up for public scrutiny.

This attitude is manifest, for example, in the expectation that students will exhibit their works in public venues alongside senior Maori and indigenous artists, including their lecturers and mentors. In terms

of quality and excellence, there is an expectation that the integrity of expression and form are resolved in the students' art work to be exhibited because they are putting themselves on the line publicly. The incentive for students to achieve success is thus a temporal process in a real situation and, with their mentors, "... a matter of sustaining enough mutual engagement in pursuing an enterprise together to share some significant learning" (Wenger, 1998, p. 86). Ultimately there is a level of inclusion in what matters that Wenger maintains "...is a requirement for being engaged in a community's practice just as engagement defines belonging" (Wenger, 1998, p. 74). An investment of practice in participation to this level is also a source of continuity in terms of succession planning and growing of new staff, new generations of teachers and artists. All the programs I have mentioned so far are staffed with former students, supporting Wenger's view that "... the history of the practice remains embodied in the generational relations that structure the community. The past, the present and the future live together..." (Wenger, 1998, p. 90).

This leads to a third assumption: that there is connectivity between Maori programs within institutions and the aspirations of whanau, hapu, and iwi expressed in tribal development strategies. Whanau, hapu, and the wider community are important for promoting excellence and determining what counts as measures of success beyond those of participation, retention, and completions. Thus the importance of the wider whanau/hapu Maori community is actively promoted and practiced through student/staff involvement in local collaborations.

Student involvement in the refurbishment of local marae or responding to commissioned requests for public artworks is incorporated as an integral part of the program, with corresponding assessments that account for both individual and group effort. This approach is underscored by the principle of utu, or reciprocity, of "giving back" to whanau/hapu in terms of their responsibility to the wider community. Toihoukura and Toimairangi in particular are deeply linked to local whanau, hapu, and iwi.

The strength of an education initiative that is grounded in the community is in not isolating the ideas

and thoughts about education from tribal realities and aspirations. Tribes tend to place their education strategies within a broad tribal development framework, a holistic and integrated method to planning that avoids the fragmented sectorial approach favored by governments and mirrored in the organization of tertiary institutions according to academic disciplines. One North Island tribe has aligned the development of their education plan alongside their Treaty of Waitangi claims process<sup>66</sup>. In other tribal areas, strong linkages have been maintained between tribal councils and the tertiary sector evident in education strategies that correspond with tribal aspirations and manifest in programs. Some tribes have sought joint ventures with institutions; such is the case of Ngai Tahu who established Te Tapuae o Rehua as a “collaborative vehicle” to explore ways to increase access, participation, and achievement in tertiary education for Maori.

The concept of communities of practice is a useful way of thinking about how factors such as teaching programs, pedagogy, teaching staff, cultural contexts, environment, institutional operational systems, policies, processes, and support mechanisms interrelate in terms of their combined effects on student achievement. Inspirational teachers promote an engaged pedagogy and have high student expectations linked to both traditional and reflective assessment methods that offer diverse measures of success. Poor quality and ineffective teaching where classes are boring and meaningless and the teachers are disconnected from their students makes the job of supporting student learning all the more difficult and sometimes near impossible.

As South American educator Laura Rendon has observed,

*the negative elements of an educational system that effectively slaughters our sense of wonder and dismisses our culture, heritage and language also kills even our student's motivation to participate in education...and has educators struggling with reducing high attrition rates and keeping more students enrolled until they complete their education. (Rendon, 2009, p. 4)*

Innovative programs contain audacious, creative ideas that engage students, and are inclusive of a Maori centered curriculum because for Maori, culture counts.

To be truly effective as far as Maori are concerned, student support services should be coordinated in terms of infrastructure; provide wraparound services; have an integrated Maori centered focus underpinned by such values as whakatuia, kanohi kitea, kotahitanga, and mana Maori; and be connected to the wider community including hapu and iwi organizations. As a framework it is more likely that the provision of student support is relevant and connected to them as communities of learners.

In conclusion I am reminded of a well-known poem composed by an Apache child in Arizona that speaks of the lack of relevance mainstream education has for many indigenous children and their communities.

*Have you ever hurt about baskets?*

*I have, seeing my grandmother weaving for a long time.*

*Have you ever hurt about work?*

*I have, because my father works too hard and he tells how he works.*

*Have you ever hurt about cattle?*

*I have, because my grandfather has been working on the cattle for a long time.*

*Have you ever hurt about school?*

*I have, because I learned a lot of words from school,*

*And they are not my words. (Cazden, 1988, p. 23)*

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## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> This paper is based on a keynote address given by the author at the Association of Tertiary Learning Advisors of Aotearoa New Zealand (ATLANZ) Conference at Whitireia Polytechnic on the 9<sup>th</sup> November 2008.
- <sup>2</sup> See Report to the Tertiary Education Commission. New Zealand Universities of the Future (2007).
- <sup>3</sup> National Certificate in Education Achievement is the national qualification gained by school leavers.
- <sup>4</sup> Recently Te Rau Puawai was relocated to a central location on campus
- <sup>5</sup> Personal Communication.
- <sup>6</sup> Walley Penetito, Nga Pae O Te Maramatanga International Writing Retreat, Solway Lodge, 7–13<sup>th</sup> June 2006.