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## **Learning Communities:**

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### **Contents**

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Editorial.....	1
Managing Ontological Tensions in Learning to be an Aboriginal Ranger: Inductions into a Strategic Cross-Cultural Knowledge Community .....	2
Margaret Ayre And Helen Verran	
<i>Kapa Haka</i> ‘Voices’: Exploring the Educational Benefits of a Culturally Responsive Learning Environment in Four New Zealand Mainstream Secondary Schools .....	19
Paul Whitinui	
Vocational Learning in the Frame of a Developing Identity.....	44
John Guenther	
The Impact of Pedagogical Relationality on Student Self-Identity .....	57
Blaine E. Hatt And Lynn Julien-Schultz	
About The Contributors .....	75

# EDITORIAL

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The papers in the issue of the Learning Communities Journal examine the challenges for the education system to engage a range of learners and diverse perspectives of knowledge, knowledge management and knowledge sharing. The authors analyse the social and cultural bases for constructing and examining theories and practices across diverse knowledge systems.

Margaret Ayre and Helen Verran discuss ranger work as the working of ontological domains and boundaries in ways that show alternative ways of interacting with the world and the practices involved in their work as Yolŋu rangers. They challenge educational and workforce development systems to recognise these realities, objects and practices, and the ways they are recorded to improve learning partnerships across knowledge systems.

Paul Whitinui provides an insight into the ‘creative learning potential of *kapa haka* to improve the current levels of Māori under-achievement.’ He notes that recognising the cultural underpinnings of learning pedagogy has positive impacts for Māori students and challenges teachers, schools and educational systems to examine the basis on which educational programmes are designed and implemented. He describes a starting point for learning partnerships to be established that include Māori learners, parents and their priorities in ways that are appreciated by teachers and the education system.

Guenther considers the role that identity plays in vocational learning and calls for training delivery that builds identity forming processes and supports individuals to make choices about their role in the social and cultural sphere of learners’ lives. Blaine E. Hatt and Lynn Julien-Schultz examine the transactional curriculum as a combination of resisting curricula including the hidden or null curriculum the curriculum of lived experience of each student and teacher, and discusses the role of the teacher in this process.

# MANAGING ONTOLOGICAL TENSIONS IN LEARNING TO BE AN ABORIGINAL RANGER: INDUCTIONS INTO A STRATEGIC CROSS-CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE COMMUNITY

Margaret Ayre and Helen Verran

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## **Abstract**

We tell stories of the knowledge work of a contemporary environmental Aboriginal land management organisation, the Dhimurru Land Management Aboriginal Corporation (Dhimurru), taking Yolŋu<sup>1</sup> Aboriginal knowledge seriously, understanding it in its own terms, and showing how Aboriginal knowledge can link up with contemporary land and sea management knowledge while simultaneously remaining separate. This paper asks how we might think about learning appropriate for groups of young Yolŋu Aboriginal men training to work as rangers on their traditional clan lands in North-East Arnhem Land<sup>2</sup> in the Northern Territory of Australia. These young men are committed to living and learning under the guidance of clan elders following the cognitive and moral dictates of traditional Yolŋu Aboriginal knowledge. Yet as trainee rangers they are equally committed to engaging with the cognitive and economic aspects of contemporary land and sea management. We argue that the learning of such groups should be characterised by accepting possibilities of non-coherence between these metaphysically incommensurable domains. Learning here is working tensions that are both ontic and epistemic. This recognition should be combined with explicit induction into the workings of a strategic

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1 'Yolŋu' is the word the Aboriginal people of North-East Arnhem Land use to describe themselves. It translates literally as 'people' in the languages of Yolŋu matha. Yolŋu matha may be translated as 'the tongue of the people' (Watson 1989; p. 64.). It is a generic term describing the mutually intelligible Yolŋu clan languages of North-east Arnhem Land. There are twenty-three Yolŋu clans living on Yolŋu lands and seas.

2 Yolŋu people own the area known as Arnhem Land (an area of approximately 85,000 km. sq. in the northeastern part of the Northern Territory in Australia) under the Aboriginal Land Rights Act (Northern Territory) 1976 (ALRA). The ALRA grants unalienable freehold title to Yolŋu traditional owners of land to the low water mark.

knowledge domain that, recognising the possibility of alternative methods, can connect enough with both scientific and Aboriginal knowledge.

## **Background**

Aboriginal environmental non-government organisations (NGOs) are an emergent general phenomenon in Australia and are recognised in the Australian Government's new 'Caring for Our Country' environmental management policy initiative as agencies for the achievement of policy 'targets' and delivery of 'on-ground results' (Commonwealth of Australia 2008a, p. 22). This initiative is an expression of both the environmental sustainability movement and Aboriginal social development in an era when the consequences of Native Title legislation enacted some ten years ago in Australia are still being explored and tested. In northern Australia where our stories are set, the emergence of Aboriginal environmental NGOs are further characterised by expressions of the ideology of post-productivism and nascent policies of payment for environmental services (Holmes 1996). They are also occurring in an era when a so-called Australian Natural Resources Management Knowledge System (Campbell 2006) is being aggressively articulated as part of the new system of environmental administration. This new administrative era of environmental management, characterised by contemporary forms of technical micro-management, is explicit about the difficulty involved in dealing with the difference of Aboriginal knowledge (Campbell 2006, p. 13). One response to this admitted difficulty is to attempt to explain away such difference.

Under the latest policy rubric, *Caring for our Country*, Indigenous knowledge (IK) is recognised as an important aspect of investing in environmental care and the initiative explicitly supports the employment of Aboriginal rangers in responding to 21<sup>st</sup> century challenges of environmental management (Commonwealth of Australia 2008b, p. 37). A further site of innovation in policy and practice is the Training Packages by which educational services are delivered to Aboriginal ranger groups. These express the post-curriculum era of vocational education in Australia, and are characterised by performative assessment criteria.

The stories of learning/teaching episodes through which we make our argument here come from the very beginning of the contemporary era of environmental policy. These are stories about the necessity of managing ontological non-coherence in the learning of Aboriginal ranger groups and taking seriously the claim that the young rangers engaged in 'ranger work' are being inducted into a sophisticated learning community. We claim that it is useful to look back to the beginnings of this era, which began in Australia with the Natural Heritage Trust in 1997<sup>3</sup>, when the starkness of the differences between traditional Aboriginal knowledge systems and

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<sup>3</sup> The Natural Heritage Trust (NHT) was set up by the Australian Government in 1997. This programme funded environmental conservation and land and sea management in Australia and was replaced by the Caring for Our Country initiative in 2008.

the scientific traditions that characterised modern land and management were clear. From 1997, a few newly emergent environmental Aboriginal organisations were increasingly contesting the hegemony of government-sponsored scientific land management. So that this was perhaps an era when difference was exaggerated – at this time neither side was prepared to explain away difference as they saw (correctly) that much was at stake. More than ten years later, when many Aboriginal environmental NGOs are an established part of the new NRM institutional landscape, while there is no retreat from resistance, in some senses the differences in knowledge traditions has been backgrounded.

## **Ontological Non-Coherence**

Whatever do we mean by ontological non-coherence? And how could articulating the ontological disjunctions between scientific and Aboriginal knowledge be beneficial in learning? In order for readers to make sense of these questions, and understand the argument of this paper we need to explain our use of the phrase ‘ontological non-coherence’.

Do we really need to use a phrase that few practitioners of environmental science, and readers of *Learning Communities* will be familiar with? Our answer is, yes, because knowing something about knowledge and its workings in a general sense is crucial if we are to reconcile science and other knowledge traditions enough for robust shared commitments to emerge. Environmental scientists, who find themselves dealing with practitioners of Aboriginal knowledge traditions, need insight into the nature of knowledge. And, equally, the need for Aboriginal Australian rangers to have some familiarity with philosophising in order to understand how to manage ontological difference in no less pressing.

The point of introducing the philosophical term, ontology, and its corollary epistemology, is that they are necessary for discussing the workings of knowledge traditions, including science. Using philosophical terms is helpful in recognising the characteristics of alternative metaphysical systems with their distinct realities. They allow us to work towards seeing where and how these realities might be connected and where and how they should be kept separate.

Here we offer definitions, although we recognise that pondering the meaning of a definition is only the beginning in becoming familiar with working terms. Ontology is a branch of metaphysics. It can be understood as a science which studies ‘being’ in general, involving such issues as the nature of existence and the categorical structure of reality. It answers the question, ‘What do we know?’ Clearly, as a science, ontology produces rather odd theories and engages rather different rules of evidence compared to say environmental science. Epistemology is a necessary corollary of ontology and answers the question, ‘How do we *know* we know?’ ‘Epistemic’ and ‘epistemological’ are adjectives derived from the Greek word *episteme* – knowledge. Epistemology makes claims

about working models of knowledge. It also articulates theories about knowledge and what is understood in particular circumstances by knowers as reasonable and worthy of belief.

It is fairly obvious then that having some sensitivity to questions of how we establish *what there is* (ontology) and *how we know about it* with at least some level of confidence (epistemology) are important and relevant to questions of how to train Aboriginal rangers in managing their clan lands in ways that are informed by both science and Aboriginal knowledge traditions. Using these (albeit still unfamiliar) terms, we now sum up what amount to incommensurable differences between science and Aboriginal knowledge traditions.

Science argues for belief in a physicalist landscape given as separate from knowers who know about it. While Aboriginal Australian knowledge practitioners insist on the rightness of belief in a reality ineluctably both natural and social. Science and Aboriginal Australian knowledge are radically different ontologies. The first has a landscape to be known, that is represented, through empirical observation. Whereas, the second knows people-places as one through assiduously enacting, that is performing, their patrimonial and matrimonial knowledge practices.<sup>4</sup> The epistemological commitments of science and Aboriginal knowledge traditions also differ. These are metaphysically incommensurable knowledge systems neither can be reduced to the other without trivialising and explaining away. BUT, as we will see later, this does not mean that the two systems of knowledge cannot validly and usefully be worked together. It does not imply that Aboriginal rangers will be forever locked in confusion. It does, however, imply that the incommensurability needs to be recognised and made explicit. AND that the possibilities of working a strategic knowledge domain that connects the two needs to be explicitly articulated.

## **Towards a Realistic Realism: A Domain Connecting and Separating Knowledge Practices**

In Section 2 of this paper, we suggested that the incommensurability between scientific and Aboriginal knowledge traditions needs to be recognised and made explicit in order to find ways of validly and usefully working the two traditions together. This recognition should be accompanied by a systematic induction into the possibilities of working a strategic knowledge domain that connects and separates. We now turn our attention to sketching out the general characteristics of this connecting knowledge domain.

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<sup>4</sup> Everything in the Yolŋu world – all people and places – is divided into two spheres or moieties: Yirritja and Dhuwa. Every Yolŋu person is either Yirritja or Dhuwa and in family relations, belongs to the same moiety as his/her father and to the different moiety as his/her mother and his/her husband and wife. The set of relationships (genealogical pattern) which connects up Yolŋu people, place and things in the world is gurrutu. Gurrutu is a set of names with a pattern organised by eight reciprocal name pairs which alternate across three generations of people in the mari-gutharra (grandparent-grandchild) cycle. Together the universal categories of Yirritja and Dhuwa and gurrutu locate Yolŋu people, places and things in relation to one another and provide the formal, ongoing basis for living in the world.

We need to start with ontology. The ontology of a working knowledge system is the set of entities that practitioners of that knowledge system are committed to existing. However, as most readers already recognise, most practitioners of knowledge systems do not generally assert existence of entities; they assume their existence and take them for granted. There are a great variety of ontological commitments, but in the Western philosophical tradition they can generally be sorted into three groups. We will use this conventional typology in describing how we understand the ontological commitments of the Yolŋu Aboriginal knowers we will be telling stories of in this paper.

Some systems of knowledge take it that reality has no existence independent of human knowers. Ontology here consists of known objects – which might be transcendent objects knowable through the mind, or linguistic objects knowable through language as an expression of the human mind, or as social conventions known through a collective mind. These can be said to be *idealist* in that they are committed to the existence of idealised entities in some form. On the other hand there are the *realists*, who grant reality full autonomy from the knower, and disregard any distinctions based around observability. Somewhere in the space between these two are those who manage in various ways to commitment to some form of both realism and idealism. Most knowledge practitioners – including most scientists and Aboriginal knowers would fall into this category. However, and this is where the incommensurability comes in: both the ideals and the reals known through science have no common elements with the ideals and reals known through Aboriginal knowledge.

The ideals and reals of science: The real entities (those that are mind independent) that most contemporary scientists are committed to are those familiar entities like space, time and matter. For many scientists the primary qualities or attributes of matter, like length and mass, are real in that they are found or given. So too the numerosity or thing-ness of things like oranges. For many knowers, numbers too fall into the category of the real, although here agreement can become more difficult. For many others, numbers, being the products of intellectual processes are ideals – perhaps the simplest sorts of ideals. Many scientists see entities like electrons as ideals – the outcomes of processes of a collective scientific mind – while others, admitting that electrons are unobservable, point out that their effects *are* however observable, and hence argue for electrons as reals. Our task here is not to adjudicate on these disagreements between scientists, nor to suggest that they somehow discredit science as a knowledge system. We merely want to point out that in science, reals with their real essences, are found or given. Ideals in contrast – the mind dependent entities that are in some form to be found in all sciences – are seen as processes or the outcome of processes of the individual or collective mind. Remembering a now forgotten eighteenth century contest between Linnaeus and Buffon can help us illustrate that.

Buffon had a long running dispute with Linnaeus over the validity of Linnaeus' multi-level

classification practices configured as a branching family tree; a schema that in the next century Darwin would find crucial in his articulation of the theory of evolution. Buffon argued that almost all of the categories of Linnaeus' system – kingdoms, orders, classes, and genera and the like – were convenient and comfortable fictions. They were *ideals* generated in the processes of knowing. For Buffon only species are *real* in the sense of being givens. Buffon claimed that species realness originates not in a given morphology as Linnaeus did, but in relations between individuals of the same and different species – specifically, the ability of individuals to reproduce with each other. This is the position that science accepts today. Of course this does not prevent science from telling itself that it has a Linnaean classification system and supplementing Linnaeus' categories with an ever growing list of phyla and sub-phyla and other categorical domains – ideal categories in the sense of originating in science's intellectual processes.

If we try to understand what Yolŋu Aboriginal people tell us about their knowledge in similar terms to those we have used to consider science's metaphysics, it immediately becomes obvious that things are the other way around in Yolŋu knowledge. For Yolŋu Aboriginal knowers ideal entities are givens. They came to exist and continue to exist as essences in the domain of the Dreaming<sup>5</sup> – the creative arena of Yolŋu spiritual ancestors. These are entities like places and their peoples, clans and their unique languages, but also all organisms and concepts. Yolŋu individuals are born with access to knowing the full complement of entities that constitute their clan knowledges. Here, in contrast to found ideals, reals, or those entities that exist independent of knowers, originate as process in the here-and-now – the secular domain of Yolŋu life. The processes that are real entities are expressions of the Dreaming's ideals in the here-and-now. Particular conditions that pertain in the here-and-now necessarily mediate the expression of the Dreaming's ideal entities. While both scientists and Aboriginal knowers profess commitment to both ideals and reals – in that they accept that entities that make up reality have origins that both depend on knowers and are independent of knowers – their ontological and epistemological commitments are incommensurable.

So, what then of the strategic form of knowledge that connects the two sets of commitments? The knowledge domain we are suggesting that Aboriginal rangers, and indeed all knowers who work across and between radically distinct knowledge traditions, can usefully be inducted into? In this next section we tell two stories of this knowledge domain.

## **The Institutional Location of the Learning Episodes**

We describe here the institutional location of two learning episodes as part of ranger training at Dhimurru. Then we will then go on to describe the two learning episodes as the practical,

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<sup>5</sup> Land and sea in Yolŋu life is enacted through the narratives which are the actions and bestowals of the Wangarr (Ancestral beings). The known world, for Yolŋu people, is performed and re-performed as a coherent set of connections or links between identified (named) people-places-things as set down by the Wangarr. Wangarr is often referred to as the Dreaming by non Aboriginal people.

translating knowledge domain emergent in Dhimurru's ranger training program. The alternative metaphysics of this knowledge domain is the working together of ontological and epistemological commitments that enable strategic connection of science and what is often called The Dreaming (what Yolŋu people know as *Wangaar*). Institutional setting is crucial in allowing for the emergence of the practical translating knowledge domain with its strategic knowledge practices which manage ontological tensions.

Living in North East Arnhem Land in Australia's Northern Territory, Yolŋu clans manage their clan lands according to Yolŋu tradition, often in partnership with scientifically oriented government and non-government organisations. They own their lands as a form of Freehold title under the *Aboriginal Land Rights (NT) Act 1976*. In 1990, members of Yolŋu clans instituted a contemporary form of Yolŋu land and sea management with the establishment of the Dhimurru Land Management Aboriginal Corporation (known as Dhimurru).

Dhimurru is one of the many organisations that carry out contemporary environmental management in Australia. In many ways it is a unique and different organisation; and in other ways it resembles other environmental NGOs doing land and sea management work.<sup>6</sup> Dhimurru has a commitment to the protection, conservation and management of Yolŋu estates. It pursues this mission by encouraging and assisting traditional land and sea management strategies in the context of contemporary environmental concerns. Dhimurru is controlled by a committee of representatives from the seventeen Yolŋu landowning clans who have estates and interests in the Dhimurru management area.

The clan-based structure of Dhimurru's governing board is an expression of the Yolŋu Aboriginal knowledge economy. In this knowledge economy, multiple, highly differentiated clan knowledges work together through periodically negotiated agreements which support subsequent processes of going on together in particular endeavours. These distinct clan knowledges were bequeathed as an essence of clan lands by the world-making spirit Ancestors of The Dreaming (the *Wangaar*). Dhimurru is thus invested in Yolŋu contemporary political life through knowledge arrangements between Yolŋu clans who contribute according to their relative interests in the management of this land and sea area.

In December 2000, the Yolŋu owners of lands and seas declared the 'Dhimurru Indigenous Protected Area (IPA)' – a reserved area under Australian Commonwealth Government legislation.<sup>7</sup> The Dhimurru IPA, the first declared in the Northern Territory, is managed by Dhimurru with assistance from the Australian Commonwealth Government's environmental protection and conservation agency, the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts.<sup>8</sup>

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6 See the Dhimurru homepage at <http://www.dhimurru.com.au>

7 See: Indigenous Protected Areas Programme, online at: <http://www.deh.ipa.gov.au>

8 As an IPA, the Dhimurru management area forms part of the Commonwealth Government's National Reserve System (NRS) of

Since November 2003 Dhimurru has had a formal agreement with the Parks and Wildlife Commission of the Northern Territory (PWCNT) under the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act* which establishes the cooperative working relationship between the two organisations. Prior to this, the PWCNT was in an informal working relationship with Dhimurru, and at the time of the episodes described below, had deployed two PWCNT Rangers to Dhimurru with the principal role of mentoring and training the Dhimurru Rangers.

We tell of two episodes in ranger training at Dhimurru involving members of Dhimurru and Yolŋu communities, Batchelor College (now Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education)<sup>9</sup>, the Garma Cultural Studies Institute<sup>10</sup> and the PWCNT. The first episode is part of a Dhimurru/PWCNT ranger training workshop at Daliwuy Bay (known as just Daliwuy to Yolŋu) on the Gove Peninsula in North-East Arnhem Land in 1996. The second episode is part of a Yolŋu environmental/cultural workshop called *worrk djama* ('burning the land') which was organised by Dhimurru and the Garma Cultural Studies Institute at the Yolŋu homeland<sup>11</sup> of Dhalinybuy in 1995.

### *Episode one - A ranger training workshop at Daliwuy Bay*

In this episode Margaret tells of her participation in the ranger training workshop at Daliwuy Bay:

The ranger training workshop at Daliwuy Bay ran over eleven days from the 20-29th May, 1996. It was organised by the PWCNT and Dhimurru and involved Dhimurru Rangers and PWCNT Rangers from various parts of the Northern Territory, as well as Parks and Wildlife botanists, park planners and wildlife research personnel who instructed participants in their relevant areas.

The activities of the training camp centred around the development of a walking trail linking major recreational destinations (managed by Dhimurru) along the East Arnhem Coast; the completion of a flora and fauna survey for each of the major plant communities along the trail; and, the development of a Recreational Plan for each of the three Dhimurru Recreation Areas<sup>12</sup> (PWCNT n.d, p. 3). Other workshop activities

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protected areas. The NRS draws on the categories of protected areas defined by the World Conservation Union (WCU) (formerly the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN)) and adopts the principles and standards for management set by this pre-eminent international agency. The declaration of the Dhimurru management area as an IPA is thus recognition that Dhimurru and Yolŋu landowners are managing land and sea to these same standards.

9 Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education (formerly Batchelor College) is an Indigenous tertiary institution providing higher education and vocational education and training for Indigenous people, many of whom live in remote communities on their traditional lands.

10 The Garma Cultural Studies Institute is an initiative of the Yothu Yindi Foundation (YYF) (see: <http://www.garma.telstra.com/education.htm>). The YYF is an incorporated Aboriginal Association established in 1990 by elders from five of the Yolŋu clans: the Gumatj, Rirratingu, Djapu, Galpu and Wangurri clans.

11 Homeland' is used to refer to the settlements established by Yolŋu people on their custodial clan estates.

12 The Dhimurru Recreation Areas on the Gove Peninsula are described on the Dhimurru website (see: <http://www.dhimurru.com.au/recareas.html>).

included a clean-up of marine debris at Wanuwuy (known as 'Cape Arnhem' in English) and teaching/learning sessions with students groups from the local Nhulunbuy and Yirrkala Schools.

The camp site which was the base for the workshop was located at Daliwuy Bay. This is Gumatj/Lamamirri (Yolŋu) clan land and Dhimurru's Senior Cultural Advisor is a custodian for this place. The camp was set up to the north of the boat ramp on a sandy, grassy site not far from the ocean.

The more formal parts of the training program were conducted under a large marquee adorned by both the PWCNT and Dhimurru flags – these included group discussions, report drafting, and the identification and manipulation of floral and faunal specimens. This was also the dining area for the camp. Nearby there was a cluster of smaller tents for sleeping with a fleet of four-wheel drive rangers' vehicles scattered amongst them. Some of the Toyota Landcruisers were adorned with the emblem of the PWCNT. Others had a Dhimurru emblem of the same dimension on their doors. The training camp had the air of something well organised and thoroughly planned.

I (Margaret) attended part of the training workshop: a two-day recreational site planning exercise. This exercise was designed to provide recommendations and a site plan to Dhimurru for each of the Dhimurru Recreation Areas of: Daliwuy Bay, Garanhan (Macassan Beach), Ngumuy (Turtle Beach), Baringura (Little Bondi Beach) and Yarrapay (Rocky Point). Workshop participants were each given a workbook with the course aims, course program, and templates of the various site assessment sheets we were required to complete as part of the planning exercise. The workbook also contained some information about the planning tools we were to use: the Recreational Opportunity Spectrum, known as ROS, was an important one of these. I was familiar with ROS from my training in forestry. It is widely used by land management planners in Australia and its principle aim is to provide a continuum of sustainable recreational activities for visitors based on management constraints, site characteristics and levels and type of visitation.

The participants at the Daliwuy Bay workshop spent two days applying the ROS planning principles to the Dhimurru Recreation Areas. They worked in small groups to discuss the status of each Recreation Area site, deliberated about existing features, and about recommendations for future use and management of each site. The Yolŋu Dhimurru Rangers participated in some of this group work. PWCNT Rangers from Watarrka (Kings Canyon), Simpson's Gap, Alice Springs Telegraph Station, Bullita, Litchfield,

Darwin and Nhulunbuy<sup>13</sup> made up the rest of the participants, along with Margaret and a land care worker from the Yolŋu organisation, Gamwarra Nuwal, at Yirrkala.

Fourteen of these PWCNT ranger training camps were held in 1995/1996. The ‘major objective’ of the camps is cited in the *Annual Report for the Year Ended 30 June 1996* (PWCNT 1996a). It relates to the consolidation of the PWCNT’s human resources, knowledge base and organisational structure as the following statement reveals:

The camps have also, of course, fulfilled their major objective of team building between disciplines and regions, as well as expanding our scientific knowledge. (PWCNT 1996a, p. 12)

The PWCNT Annual Report of 1996 also acknowledges the role the training camps played in providing a forum for the interaction of Aboriginal landowners and knowers and PWCNT staff. It states:

A highlight of the year, particularly in terms of consolidating relationships with Aboriginal groups has been our series of scientific training camps which have proved a huge success. (PWCNT 1996b, p. 129)

The PWCNT ranger training camps are a vital part of the Commission’s work which in its Parks Masterplan for the Northern Territory sees itself as holding Nature in Trust for a ‘future secured’. This document also recognises that: ‘Park Rangers are the Commission’s frontline ambassadors.’ (PWCNT 1996b, p. 129). The metaphor of ‘frontline’ is one which invokes a sense of a contingent; unified in defence of some territorial or political ideal. Here we want to suggest that this unnamed entity is Nature, or ‘the environment’ out-there, and that the ambassadorial role bestowed on rangers by society allows them to speak for, and even stand-in-for, this Nature. Rangers and society in this scheme are thus separate and distinct from Nature or ‘the environment’ as the universal object of management (Ayre 2002).

How do the training camps help to achieve and maintain this distinction between people (here, rangers) and society? In asking this we are suggesting that the boundaries which circumscribe the categories/entities of ‘society’ and ‘Nature’ are not given but rather made in the everyday, mundane practices of collective acting. Here we are drawing on the move within the social studies of science to recognise how objects are made or performed in practice (see Mol 1998, 2002; Law 2004). For example, the notion of ‘team building’ used by the PWCNT exemplifies the role of the camps in the formation of a collective of ranger knowers which has knowledge about the world located in particular times and places and people. It recognises these locations, as we can see from the official commentary on the camps, in a series of entities which organise the world

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<sup>13</sup> These are all places in the Northern Territory of Australia.

into the non-human, ‘regions’ and ‘disciplines’, and the human, which includes ‘scientists’ and ‘rangers’ and ‘Aboriginal’ knowers. As the Commission sees it, being a Ranger is thus the work of knowing and making/re-making these entities, as well as *ordering or managing* the interactions between them. The entity, ‘Nature’, is thus maintained as the non-human world out-there, or the ‘environment’, which is apprehended through the rigorous application of the practices of ecology and environmental planning the camps teach. These practices are the ideals (of-the-mind) that justify the ontology of technoscience.

Episode One is the work of producing knowledge about places in the world so that management decisions regarding visitor use can be made by Dhimurru. The Rangers are being trained in this knowledge production endeavour through the realist entities of workbooks and maps; and the idealist entities of theories (i.e. ROS) and ‘group work’ and concepts such as ‘land units’. Together this assemblage of entities from the discipline of environmental planning enables the rangers in this exercise to work up a comprehensive regional recreational plan. These sorts of plans are pivotal to the work of the PWCNT which form part of the plan of management for any land or sea area under its management jurisdiction.

The work of producing the regional recreation plan developed at the Daliwuy Bay training camp is the work of producing a particular presentation of ‘Nature’/‘the environment’ as an object of human activity, in this case recreation. The collective of rangers at the camp are being trained in making the boundary between themselves (and ‘us’) and the world-out-there as ‘recreation site’ or ‘Nature’/‘the environment’ through this planning exercise and the other activities of the camp. The recreational site planning exercise and the camp in general is therefore the work of making and re-making the institution-environment/‘Nature’ boundary. This is doing ranger work in the PWCNT. And through their participation in this camp the Yolŋu Rangers are being sensitised to and disciplined in this way of ‘managing and doing Nature’. It is world-making work.

*Episode two - Worrk djama as ranger training: A galtha rom workshop at Dhalinbuy, North-east Arnhem Land.*

So, what of doing work as a Yolŋu ranger? In Episode Two Margaret tells a short story of one way in which Dhimurru is going about exploring ways to develop a contemporary Yolŋu Ranger role:

Evening: Day One

The workshop participants were sitting in a group on the ground near the Dhalinbuy school building their faces lit by the nearby camp fires. The babble of talk was soon replaced by an expectant silence as we waited for the introductory session of the workshop to start.

Senior Yolŋu instructors each told of various aspects of *worrk djama* (the work of burning the land or ‘burning work’). Participants were welcomed to Dhalinybuy and to the workshop. A senior Gumatj leader and workshop facilitator explained the events of the workshop in English: tonight was for learning about the context and some history of *worrk*; tomorrow we would be doing the burning work at the place *Djurrpunbuy*, and the third day we would plan to do hunting. Other workshop activities would include journal writing and in the morning we would start making a collective map of the *worrk* event.

Following this introduction, one of the senior Yolŋu woman spoke to the group in her *Yolŋu matha*<sup>14</sup> language of Gumatj. I (Margaret) struggled to follow what she was saying but was able to pick out the familiar names of Yolŋu clans: *Dhalwangu*, *Warramiri*, *Ngaymil*, *Datiwuy*, *Gumatj*, *Wungurri*... I understood from my experience of working and learning with Yolŋu people that she was instructing our group on the particular Yolŋu clan affiliations to this homeland and the places we would encounter through this particular *worrk djama*. She then told us other lists of names. I heard the word *waanga* and then understood that these names referred to places in the land. I knew that *waanga* meant a place, or ‘home’. Animals, plants and people belong to certain *waanga*. I then listened for the animals and plants we would be hunting. She listed these, including: *nyiknyik* (small marsupial mice); *biya* (goanna); *minhala* (long-necked tortoise); *Djurrpun* (water chestnuts found in this place); *rakay* (edible bulbs)...

Morning: Day Two: ‘Map making’

There was muttered agreement amongst the Dhimurru Trainee Rangers students about drawing a map. It was, I gathered, an appropriate way of representing the *worrk djama*, the burning work, which was to be undertaken today – the assemblage of places, people and events. I remembered from looking at documents and texts from previous galtharom workshops produced at the Yirrkala Literature Production Centre that such ‘maps’ were often a product of the workshops.

A senior non-Aboriginal workshop facilitator wielded a large ‘Glue Stick’ (of adhesive) and cemented an ominous tableau of butchers’ paper from several separate sheets of paper. A group, including the students, assembled to take part in the map-making, and cleared a way for it to be shifted amongst them on the verandah of the school building at Dhalinybuy. The edges of the paper were secured by boxes of cereal from

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14 Yolŋu matha may be translated as ‘the tongue of the people’ (Watson 1989). It is a generic term describing the mutually intelligible Yolŋu clan languages of North-east Arnhem Land.

the nearby stock of food, marking pens were distributed and then raised tentatively, and the storyboard/ map-making began.

Initially there was much discussion about the depiction of the *worrk djama* – the orientation of the tableau was crucial to a proper representation. It was thus twirled 90 degrees, the boxes of ‘Weet Bix’ (breakfast cereal) repositioned accordingly, and one of the Dhimurru Yolŋu Trainee Rangers was directed by members of the group to start drawing. The other students sat close on the verandah – some people stood and pointed to make their contributions. The discussion was carried out in *Yolŋu matha* but I was able to follow from my limited grasp of language and the body language of participants that the debates about scale and location involved questions like: *Which side should the river be drawn on? And where is Djurrupunbuy? Dhalinybuy is here. The sea is on this side...etc.* And so the record of our collective experience of the *worrk djama* event was being created. This was a style of topographic representation – it included landscape features such as the river and its tributaries and the plains area where the burning would take place. Some Yolŋu place names were also drawn on the ‘map’. The students were prompted by the Yolŋu instructors during this exercise to recall the names told to them in the instruction session last night.

Day Three: Morning after the *worrk djama*: ‘More Map Making’

As one of the students marked lines and words on the ‘map’, other members of the group re-told their experiences of the events of the previous day. This revealed information such as: where each of the groups had travelled; what they had hunted along the way; where they had stopped to rest; and, the ignition points of the separate fires. These events were duly recorded on our ‘map’. A separate, expanded list of names was written out on a piece of white paper. These names were then cut out individually and positioned on the larger ‘map’ before being glued into place as the group reached consensus about their location. A couple of times a name was affixed wrongly to the ‘map’ and then had to be delicately peeled off it and re-positioned according to its ‘proper’ location. When one of the students tired of his job as scribe others took over the ‘map’ construction. Some people wandered away to continue recording their personal journals.

The *worrk djama* workshop at Dhalinybuy is an induction into the work of being a Yolŋu Ranger for the Batchelor College students and Trainee Yolŋu Rangers. The Trainee Yolŋu Rangers are learning at the workshop under the instruction of senior Dhimurru Ranger staff and Yolŋu community members. A senior Yolŋu facilitator comments on how the workshop is

an innovation in Yolŋu environmental management practice which produces knowing Yolŋu Rangers:

‘I’m happy with the workshop. Because they learned (Batchelor College students and others) and they were trained in things they don’t know and they will learn a proper understanding within our culture under that work, under that country here. It’s an important area and they picked this place and we remembered the past Yolŋu walking around this country. We showed them the traditional way. Before it was always done as part of making ceremony, but now are doing it different.’ (Yothu Yindi Cultural Studies Institute 1996, p. 10).

These naming and teaching and doing activities of the workshop which the senior Yolŋu facilitator identifies are constituted through the Yolŋu practices of *djalkiri* and *gurrutu*. *Gurrutu* is the exhaustive system of Yolŋu kin relations and *djalkiri* is the working of the world as *gurrutu*. Verran explains:

Djalkiri is the practices and justifications involved in working the world as *gurrutu* which hinge on the understanding that the world manifests itself as particular places linked in particular ways. Particular groups of people are linked in differential ways with specific sites. (Verran 2000, p. 305).

The practices of *djalkiri* are the re-doing of the work of the Yolŋu Ancestors (*Waangarr*) who created the land and sea in their journeys through naming and marking it with their activities. In bestowing names they created *waanga* and laid down the relations between them in their journeys (Verran 1989, p. 49). The *waanga* are a series of focal sites in the land connected to people and to each other in particular ways. These sites are constituted only in relation to other sites and the Yolŋu clan collectives with responsibility for their maintenance. In other words, a particular clan *waanga* is set within and constituted by its relations with other clan *waanga*. Episode Two is the working of clan *waanga*, in particular the working of ‘*Wangurri waanga*’ (*Wangurri* is the name of the clan on whose land Dhalinybuy is located) that was emergent in the practices of the *worrk* workshop.

As we understand it, *Wangurri waanga* was worked as a material-symbolic/human-non human entity. This is the work of making and re-making boundaries between the clan collectives and the places in the land to which they relate. In this way of working the world, the clan collective (people) and the land are in no way differentiated or separated from one another. We can see from Episode Two that working the clan collective/*waanga* boundary is knowing *gurrutu* and ‘knowing place’. Knowing *gurrutu* for the workshop participants is about knowing your position in relation to those in the collective. The Yolŋu knowledge authorities at the workshop gave

instruction on the relations between clans and their estates and particular *waanga*. Particular people with a particular relation to the land area to be burnt gave lists of names, thus asserting and re-making the land and clan as a co-constituting entity. This is also the practice of ‘knowing place’ – the telling and teaching of names of sites in the land. This was what the Dhimurru Trainee Rangers hesitantly capture in the map-making and telling described in Episode Two.

Thus we can see from Episode Two that *waanga* is worked through particular clan collectives and the making and re-making of the relations between these collectives and their *waanga*. The Dhimurru Trainee Rangers were being trained to work the human-non-human entity, *waanga*, at the *worrk djama* workshop. This is training which refuses the ‘Nature’-society/institution boundary which we identified as emergent in Episode One.

### **Reading These Juxtaposed Learning Episodes as Expressions of a Realistic Realism That Connects and Separates**

In this paper we have shown how doing ranger work is the working of ontological domains and boundaries in particular ways. In the PWCNT, through camps such as the one we have described at Daliwuy Bay, rangers are trained in how to work the boundary and tension between the institution as ‘society’ and the ‘the environment’/‘Nature’. This training has rangers, ‘society’ and the institution of the PWCNT separate and distinct from the universal object of management ‘the environment’/‘Nature’ (see Ayre 2002). In contrast to this, the *worrk djama* (‘burning the land’) workshop at Dhalinybuy is training Yolŋu Rangers to do *waanga* as the working of the boundaries and relations between clan collectives and land/sea. This training has *waanga* as a material-symbolic entity where clan and land are co-constituting and ontologically undifferentiated.

The Dhimurru Trainee Rangers are being inducted into the alternative ways of ‘doing the world’ and the practices that constitute the diverse entities of contemporary Yolŋu ranger work at Dhimurru. The strategic cross-cultural knowledge domain in which practices are both contingent and emergent comes to life in the negotiation of a curriculum for the Trainees that involves episodes with the PWCNT model of ‘training camps’ as well as the Yolŋu pedagogical innovation of *galtha rom* workshops. This knowledge domain is realist in that it is both inspired by and performative of realist technoscientific entities (such as ‘recreation areas’, ‘the environment’ or ‘nature’) and realist Yolŋu entities such as the instantiations of *djalkiri* (re-doing the creative acts of the *Wangaar* (ancestors)) and *gurrutu* (kinship connections, linking people and place). Both of the sets of entities that we point to in the ranger training episodes participate in Dhimurru’s agenda of managing Yolŋu estates. They exist inside Dhimurru’s practice in a creative tension where ontological non-coherence is sometimes celebrated (often in moments of great humour!) and sometimes eschewed. This approach enables both separation and connection of knowledge tradition. It is a strategic knowledge domain worked by a sophisticated learning community

unique to Dhimurru and its working rangers. However, such learning communities, different in their specificities, are to be found in many places where disparate knowledge traditions are strategically connected and separated.

We want to suggest here that an effective curriculum for trainee Aboriginal rangers will make the ontological contrasts between the two ways of ‘managing nature’/ ‘managing (Yolŋu) Aboriginal people-places’ explicit. By recognising that the objects of management (Ayre 2002), and indeed the realities of our worlds, are the outcomes of collective acting involving humans and non-humans symmetrically (Verran 2001, 2007) we can begin to see possibilities for doing technoscience and Aboriginal ways of knowing together in mutually beneficial and productive ways.

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# *KAPA HAKA* ‘VOICES’: EXPLORING THE EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS OF A CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT IN FOUR NEW ZEALAND MAINSTREAM SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Paul Whitinui

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## **Abstract**

*Kapa* (in rows) *haka* (dance) is considered a modern day performing art distinctive to what mainstream secondary schools (i.e., high schools Yrs 9-13) in Aotearoa New Zealand offer as way of fostering the social and cultural wellbeing of Māori students who attend. It is also considered a culturally responsive learning environment because it provides opportunities for Māori students to engage in learning more about their own language, culture and traditional ways of knowing and doing. With over 54 thousand Māori students (18%) attending mainstream secondary schools in Aotearoa New Zealand (Ministry of Education 2006), this paper, based on my doctoral research completed in 2007, explores the ‘voices’ of 20 Māori students and 27 secondary school teachers about the educational benefits associated with participating in *kapa haka* and the implications for improving educational outcomes for these students. The study concluded that the most effective way to improve levels of participation (i.e., interest, attendance, engagement, association and success) working with Māori secondary school students is to employ learning environments that are socially, culturally, emotionally and spiritually uplifting and in particular, to assign learning activities that are specifically linked to their unique identity as Māori. A number of key social and cultural considerations are included to assist mainstream secondary schools (i.e., public State-funded high schools) and teachers

to not only better evaluate their own levels of cultural responsiveness working with Māori students but to also improve their understanding of what constitutes effective ways of engaging indigenous and culturally-connected learners in these contexts.

### **Introduction: *Kapa haka* as an educational imperative**

There were over 50 thousand children who participated in *kapa haka* in Aotearoa New Zealand over the past 12 months (Te Matatini, personal communication, 2009). Whether at a local, regional, national or international level the visibility of Māori children participating in *kapa haka* has become synonymous with who we are as a nation and the significant contribution, Māori, as *tangata whenua* (indigenous people of Aotearoa New Zealand), make to supporting our unique identity as New Zealanders. The growing interest in *kapa haka* is due in part, to a growing interest by Māori students to pursue ‘alternative’ learning environments that coincide with how they prefer to learn. It also supports their efforts to gain academic credits towards a National Certificate in Educational Achievement (NCEA) at various levels within a secondary schooling environment. For Māori communities and in particular, the *whānau* (immediate family), having *kapa haka* available in schools not only supports notions of creating culturally safe, caring and engaging learning environments, it also reinforces the idea of schools providing opportunities for families to support their child’s learning (Macfarlane, Glynn, Cavanagh & Bateman 2007). *Kapa haka* continues to be supported from within the community and has a growing presence in the four secondary schools that took part in this study.

In 2002, the New Zealand Qualification Authority recognised *kapa haka* as an academic subject that schools could readily offer to all their students. For many Māori students, who have spent a considerable amount of time, effort and energy participating in *kapa haka*, the decision did not see *kapa haka* emerge in secondary schools as an ‘exclusive’ subject, nor did it change the schools’ or teachers’ perceptions about its educational value for the benefit of Māori students. However, the decision did mean that schools and teachers could include *kapa haka* as an effective learning medium to assist students to gain academic credits in Te Reo Māori, Māori Performing Arts, Ngā Toi Māori i roto i te Mātauranga (Hindle 2002), Health and Physical Education (i.e., *te ao kori*) and/or other arts-based subjects.

The consideration of *kapa haka* as an educational imperative for driving Māori student success (i.e., increased levels of participation, engagement, association, attendance, achievement and interest) in mainstream secondary schools is based on three key assertions. Firstly, schools and teachers are more likely to show a greater appreciation for Māori language, culture and traditions if *kapa haka* is included as an academic subject and not merely as a cultural ‘add-on’ (Whitinui 2007). Secondly, Māori students being able to participate in *kapa haka* at schools provides the place, time and space to connect with who they are in an environment that primarily delivers in English (mainstream).

And finally, Māori students' involvement in *kapa haka* engenders a greater sense of personal balance, joy, harmony, wellbeing and happiness about attending school. Secondary schools that are more committed to including *kapa haka*, or indeed, other culturally based activities, appear less likely to encounter the same sorts of learning and/or behavioural difficulties when working with Māori students (Ministry of Education 2000b). Despite an increasing concern for what works best for Māori students in secondary schools, there is less known about how the inclusion of culture actually improves the health and wellbeing of Māori students.

Research conducted by Moy, Scragg, McLean and Carr (2006) discovered that participants in a senior *kapa haka* group ranged between 4.3-7.1 METS (i.e., 3-6 METS indicating 'moderate' intensity and >6 METS indicating 'vigorous' intensity levels) (Moy, Scragg, McLean & Carr 2006). Prior to this study, explorations of the health benefits associated with *kapa haka* and in particular, how *kapa haka* improves the overall health and wellbeing of Māori children have been scarce. Although this paper did not relate specifically to Māori children's education *per se*, students' cultural wellbeing, confidence and self-worth were consistently mentioned and may well be considered as the 'antecedents' of improving educational outcomes for Māori students in mainstream secondary schools in Aotearoa New Zealand (Bishop 2008; Bishop & Berryman 2006; Bishop, Berryman & Richardson 2003; Bishop & Tiakiwai 2003). The need to engage schools and teachers in becoming culturally 'competent' requires significant reflection on how our own cultural values can often suppress, oppress and limit culturally-connected learners from reaching their educational potential (Cross, Bazron, Dennis & Issacs 1989; Macfarlane 2004; Whitinui 2007). More importantly this paper aims to speak of the 'creative' learning potential and 'educational' value associated with Māori students participating in *kapa haka*; and how *kapa haka* as a culturally responsive activity can contribute to improving student participation with their learning. In addition, the paper aims to provide a '(w) holistic' and 'universal' premise that Māori students through *kapa haka* are enacting their basic human 'right' as indigenous and culturally-connected learners to be educated using their own ways of knowing and doing.

### **The educative value of *kapa haka* for Māori students**

The inclusion of *kapa haka* in schools to enable Māori students to achieve academic credits, in either, Te Reo Māori, Māori Performing Arts, or NCEA more generally in mainstream secondary schools is to be applauded. Added to this is the potential for Māori students to attain a National Certificate in Māori (Te Waharoa) by achieving 40 credits at level 2 or above; 30 credits at either level 1 or 2 from the field of Māori, as well as 10 credits at level 1 across any field in the National Qualification framework, including the field of Māori. The choices Māori students have across the curriculum provide greater opportunities for schools to consider *kapa haka* in the context of student learning and achievement as opposed to considering it more as an extra-co-curricular activity (i.e., activities students usually participate within outside

of normal school hours). Presently, there are close to 600 unit standards within the field of Māori that schools can choose to include in their programmes. The focus of Te Reo and Māori Performing Arts as it relates to the framework of Te Waharoa is perhaps not well known and as a result, many teachers may not be fully aware of the implications of considering *kapa haka* as an academic subject or indeed the educative potential of *kapa haka* to enhance the learning outcomes of indigenous learners who are Māori.

In 2004, I had the privilege of interviewing 20 Māori *kapa haka* students as well as 27 teachers from across four mainstream secondary schools in the Central North Island of Aotearoa New Zealand about what they perceived as being the key educational benefits associated with participating in *kapa haka*. A key finding to emerge was that over two-thirds of all Māori students who participated in this study were unaware that participating in *kapa haka* could earn them academic credits towards Level 1 NCEA (Whitinui 2007). Perhaps more concerning was that certain Māori students were being told they could only earn credits if their *kapa haka* team qualified for the annual national secondary schools' *kapa haka* competition. It would appear that greater clarity, direction and guidance around what constitute ways for Māori students to earn academic credits through performing *kapa haka* is urgently required.

### **Including *kapa haka* as a culturally responsive curricula**

Culturally *kapa haka* engages Māori students through movement to share their cultural past and to bring into close focus a host of cultural memories, stories, narratives, life-histories, values, beliefs and ways of knowing and doing. Performing *waiata* (song), *mōteatea* (lament) and *haka* (war dance) creates an awakening in students as well as a merging of all the senses (i.e., hear, smell, sight, feel and taste) into a truly dynamic and powerful group performance. In many ways such culturally tactile forms of learning are elevated by the level of pride and respect individuals give to the importance of coming together to perform and to celebrate their unique heritage. Macfarlane (2004) in his book, '*Kia Hiwa Ra: Listen to Culture - Students' Plea to Educators*' highlighted the importance of teachers listening to, and observing culture in the classroom working with Māori students. In addition, a culturally responsive framework (i.e., the educultural wheel) was considered as a way to further enhance the understandings, values and concepts about what it takes to become a culturally competent teacher, in often, very culturally diverse classrooms. Similarly, research by Bishop and Berryman (2006) has highlighted the importance of listening to the 'voices' of Māori students in mainstream secondary schools by providing an in-depth analysis about the nature of student-teacher relationships to improve the educational outcomes for Māori students in mainstream secondary schools. Socially and culturally, the need for Māori students to identify who they are, as well as, the need to belong were considered critical factors in engaging Māori students in the classroom. The idea of teachers being involved in on-going professional development to improve their relationships

with Māori students has been the focus of a government led initiative called Te Kotahitanga for the past nine years (Bishop 2008; Bishop & Berryman 2006; Bishop et al. 2003). Moreover, the growing interest in *mātauranga* Māori (Māori ways of learning, knowing and doing) has to some degree re-orientated schools and teachers thinking about the importance of including culturally relevant and appropriate curriculum although, culturally internalised ways of knowing (*māramatanga*-wisdom, *mōhiotanga*-instinctiveness, *wānanga*-learning consciousness and *tohungātanga*- original thoughts and ideas) are not yet well understood in the context of what mainstream secondary schools or teachers consider as culturally ‘legitimate’ ways of engaging ‘inner’ forms of knowing (Royal 2009).

In my interviews with mainstream secondary school teachers, *kapa haka* was not necessarily considered as a preferred teaching or learning pedagogy that teachers felt confident to include in their respective subjects. This was due in part, to a lack of confidence around using Māori language, culture and concepts. In many ways, barriers to teaching culture in the classroom often had less to do with denying Māori students opportunities to pursue their own language and culture, but more to do with how teachers perceive ‘culture’ in ways to better engage Māori students in the classroom (Glynn, Atvars & O’Brien 1999). Due often to the performative nature of *kapa haka* it is perhaps not so surprising that teachers within the arts (dance, music, drama and visual arts), physical education and health, outdoor education, as well as the social sciences and technology were in this study better able to relate to how *kapa haka* engages Māori students to achieve. Alternatively, the more ‘resistant’ teachers were more inclined to argue that, ‘students need to come ready to learn, regardless of their culture or cultural backgrounds, as this teacher emphatically stated:

Māori students need to develop a strong work ethic and attitude to want to learn and achieve, as opposed to relying on their language and culture to be the preferred ‘lynch pins’ as to how they believe they can succeed at school (HoD Maths, School 1).

For these particular teachers accepting culture as a possible ‘strength’ more so than barriers to teaching Māori students was a concept that had not been fully explored. Furthermore, levels of cultural ‘blindness’ (Cross et al. 1989) continue to reinforce the more dominant schooling hegemonic discourse (Smith 1997), increasing levels of teacher ‘deficit’ theorising (Bishop 2008) and dismissing the learning integrity associated with culture to enhance Māori student levels of participation (Whitinui 2007). Perhaps the greatest challenge, however, was the consistent lack of teacher understanding about Māori students as culturally-connected learners and the inability of schools to fully implement the Treaty of Waitangi (New Zealand’s founding document signed between Māori and the Crown at Waitangi, in the Bay of Islands, on February 6<sup>th</sup> 1840) as valid and legitimate curriculum.

Bishop's and Glynn's (1999) book *Culture Counts: Changing Power Relations in Education* contends that:

*Article One* of the Treaty guarantees to Māori a share in power over decision making in education as well as recognises their status as *tangata whenua*.

*Article Two* of the Treaty guarantees to Māori the power to define and protect those treasures which are considered vital to sustaining their way of life.

*Article Three* of the Treaty guarantees Māori equality of opportunity and outcomes in education.

Furthermore, promoting cultural inclusiveness in our schools today should not be at the expense of denying Māori their *tinu rangatiratanga* (rights to self-determine) but instead should enhance or enrich the learning experience as being culturally appropriate, dynamic and inspiring (Bishop & Glynn 1999). In the early 1980s, and driven primarily by the desire of Māori parents and their communities to preserve te reo Māori (i.e., Māori language), the development of *Te Kōhanga Reo* (total immersion early childhood centres), *Te Kura Kaupapa Māori* (total immersion elementary schools), as well as *Te Whare Kura* (total immersion language high schools) were initiatives that not only revolutionised how schooling not proceeds for Māori students, but actually transformed the educational and learning landscape for the benefit of Māori. Although, considered relatively new forms of schooling, such initiatives have enabled Māori communities to seek greater control over their schooling aspirations by defining what schooling for Māori should look like, and why. As a result, there are now a number of secondary schools working on becoming culturally inclusive and developing bi-cultural educational frameworks (Macfarlane 2004; Macfarlane et al. 2007). Similarly, schools and teachers who are more receptive to engaging with culture as well as building better relationships with their Māori communities, *iwi* (extended family), *hapū* (a specific family sub-group), *whānau* (family) and *marae* (meeting house) are experiencing far greater levels of student participation (i.e., interest, engagement, interest, association, attendance and success) (Ministry of Education 2000a). Philosophically, 'culture', 'difference', 'identity' are very elusive terms that are often ambiguous, fluid and never fixed. For example, Fitzsimons and Smith (2000) contend that:

If notions such as 'difference', 'culture', and 'identity' each have no unity, there is no point in looking for essential meanings in them. Diverse cultures compete for control of the system of norms and it is not clear if law can be defined as an order that is impersonal, universal or legitimate in this context of cultural division or diversity (p. 33).

Taken a step further, Māori often face various ‘sites of struggle’ within education, where these sorts of cultural consideration have become impregnated within the dominant schooling culture (Fitzsimons & Smith 2000). The adverse effects are ‘littered’ throughout our educational past and have often impinged on Māori being able to control their educational destinies. Responding to the problems, challenges and issues facing many Māori students in mainstream education is fraught with difficulties. Often ‘top-down’ government-led approaches to addressing levels of on-going Māori underachievement have focused more on what is happening within school than what is also happening outside the school gates (Ministry of Education 2008). In many instances the absence of culturally inclusive practices and in particular, what is prescribed as valid ways of knowing more about how Māori students engage in their learning requires further clarity. In 2004, 20 Māori students from across four mainstream secondary schools took part in an interview process regarding the educational benefits associated with participating in *kapa haka*. Their responses highlighted quite emphatically that *kapa haka* not only increases the time students engage in their learning but it is for some students, the most culturally appropriate and preferred way of learning. The following section will now focus on the key responses associated with Māori students participating in *kapa haka* and in particular, the ‘educative’ value of *kapa haka*.

### **The ‘voices’ of Māori *kapa haka* students**

Over 80 percent of the students (n=17) interviewed considered *kapa haka* as an environment where they felt they were given more responsibility for their learning. In particular, at least two students from each group felt more responsible for their learning because everyone had a role to play. For example, it was not unusual for the more competent *kapa haka* students to help others to perform *poi*, *waiata* or *haka*. Conversely, when students were prompted to compare the learning that occurs in *kapa haka* with in-class learning, students immediately focused on whether or not particular teachers were kind, considerate and/or caring. As a way forward, students were particularly eager to comment on what teachers can do to improve their relationships working with Māori students and suggested that:

Maybe the teachers could get ideas from *kapa haka*, Pākehā teachers who do not get along with Māori students, go to *kapa haka* see how they get along and put that into the classroom because man...check out all the Māori kids who are hard out doing *kapa haka* and they go to class and it’s a completely different world (Pare, School 2);

Our *kapa haka* tutor, she was also our Māori teacher and she uses her teaching in *kapa haka* in our class, which is really good, because we know what she is about and she has fun (Ripeka, School 2);

I reckon you [the researcher] should try and find an interest that people have in *kapa haka* and then the teacher should find an interest in why they get more interested in *kapa haka* and then incorporate it into the class...like I was saying about group effort thing so the whole group is involved (Huhana, School 2);

They are quite good with us and our Māori culture...like when I was doing my *Manu Kōrero* [Māori speech-making competition] they gave me heaps of time to prepare my speech, and they are quite good cause they understand *Manu Kōrero*...(Hera, School 3).

In terms of student engagement, *kapa haka* increased their level of knowledge and understanding of *te reo* (Māori language), *tikanga* (correct way of doing something) Māori, *kawa* (processes and practices), *whanaungatanga* (building better relationships), *mahi tahi* (group work), *manaakitanga* (support for others) and *aroha* (love, care and concern for all). The emphasis on whether such cultural values can be successfully transferred into other subject areas really comes down to schools and teachers actively promoting learning experiences that are not only emotionally and culturally safe but also emotionally and culturally uplifting and which are likely to reflect the unique cultural backgrounds students bring to the classroom.

In the same vein students considered sport, physical education, outdoor education and the arts (music, dance, drama or visual arts) as curriculum areas that are more closely aligned to teaching and learning that occurs in *kapa haka*. At least two students from each group, however, suggested that perhaps teachers, in their attempts to create better social cohesiveness in the classroom, could achieve this by valuing more the students' 'voices' in what counts as effective learning in the classroom. However, a consistent challenge facing many Māori students in secondary schooling contexts is finding ways to balance their own personal and cultural needs alongside the teachers' expectations as these students contend:

For me, *kapa haka* is usually during periods and doesn't affect my PE [Physical Education] and stuff and we don't usually have it after school...although we do so sometimes (Kane School 4);

I believe if I can take the time to do stuff like English...and all the things I have to do, then surely I can take the time to do *kapa haka*...So if I can do something Pākehā, then surely I can do something Māori, I kind of do it in respect (Pare, School 2);

Maybe they should give like people who are doing *kapa haka* and their subjects, maybe they should teach them how to balance it all out...like Jazz and stuff, they don't do it full time, so if they can do it with different extra-curriculum activities why can't they do it with *kapa haka* and keep the balance (Ripeka, School 2).

On average students could be expected to spend anywhere between three to five hours a week practising *kapa haka*. However if there was an upcoming *kapa haka* competition, students could well be expected to spend up to 15 hours a week practising for a least a month, which included practices during lunchtime, after school, and/or on the weekends. Despite the varying frequency and intensity of these practices students appeared to be employing a host of different strategies for keeping up-to-date with their class work. The most common strategies included asking teachers for extra time to complete their work or having their work done prior to when the competition was being held. When asked about the relevance of *kapa haka* to achieving academically, at least half of the students were aware they could achieve academic credits for participating in *kapa haka*, yet despite the large percentage of Māori students (i.e., average > 45%) enrolled in at least three of the four secondary schools, not one of these schools offered *kapa haka* as an academic subject. Perhaps managing greater levels of student success may well include schools and teachers considering the competitive nature and value of Māori students performing *kapa haka*:

I don't think there's any use being in there, if you're not going to go away and win (Ripeka, School 2);

*Kapa haka* is straight up [it's all about competing] aye...if you don't know the words you're not standing, so that forces us to learn the words and the choreography... (Maata, School 3).

In contrast, however, at least two-thirds of all students stated that their primary reason for participating in *kapa haka* was because they enjoyed the cultural learning experience and that it provided an alternative outlet to in-class learning. As these two students commented:

I think *kapa haka* gives those ones who are not as strong in the academic side of school stuff...it gives them an idea to participate in something they enjoy and relates to who they are as Māori...(Wikitoria, School 3);

With *kapa haka* it's always something new...for one thing it's much more fun than school work or in being in the classroom all the time...(Hera, School 3).

A key finding to emerge was that *kapa haka* was not considered by students as a way to detract from what they do in other subjects. Rather, *kapa haka* was considered a vital link to respecting oneself as Māori that students believe warrants equal status and recognition in schools. Similarly, teachers' perceptions about the educative value of *kapa haka*, outlined below, provide other significant insights, reflections and possibilities about how secondary schools and teachers can manage more effectively the participation levels of Māori students in these settings.

## Teachers' responses to *kapa haka* in mainstream secondary schools

Despite over 80 percent of teachers recognising to some degree that *kapa haka* was now an 'academic' subject and more likely to contribute Māori student achievement, none of the secondary schools in this study offered *kapa haka* as an academic subject. Although Māori teachers were well aware that students could earn academic credits towards NCEA Te Reo Māori or Māori Performing Arts, there appeared to be a lack of clarity across different subject areas as to how Māori students actually earn these credits. From the teachers' perspective, Māori students committed to performing *kapa haka* not only became valued student leaders in their respective schools but also more focused on their educational endeavours. One teacher suggested that:

It is important for schools from day one to keep track of how well their Māori students are doing at school so that when they enter year 11, they have a learning profile to help students to make the right subject choices...I also track all of my senior kids to see what subjects they are in...are they in subjects they are going to achieve in, and I certainly feel that potentially Pākehā...if there were components within um...that's where I am kind of angling in from. You show me subjects that will get credits for kids, and at the end of the day they can hold their certificate and say, 'I've got Performing Arts', and I can do this and this, and I have got my Level 1 NCEA, and I'm like, big thumbs up good on you (Tonya HoD Arts, School 3).

Another teacher suggested that greater involvement in *kapa haka* could possibly prevent Māori students from choosing to drop out of school before the age of 16 years. His comment was based on the following assumption:

...that someone who's been in the Pākehā group is less likely to get into drugs, and less likely to be involved in temporary trouble with the law (Jim, HoD Music, School 1).

Derek (HoD Languages, School 1) emphasised that many Māori students participating in *kapa haka* immediately see a purpose in what they are doing, and as a result felt more included and eager to learn. Te Ara (HoD Māori/DP, School 3) had also observed that students in *kapa haka* were able to develop other important roles and responsibilities, which extended outside the school gates and into the community. For example, when various cultural celebrations or events were being held at the local *marae* (Māori meeting house), students from the school are expected to be active participants in making the *manuhiri* (visitors) feel welcomed and recognising that their key role is to work alongside the community to support the event and to uphold the *mana* (prestige) of the local people (*tangata whenua*). Teachers interviewed from this particular school were of the opinion that, Māori students should be able to transfer the skills or experiences learnt in *kapa haka* not only back into the classroom, but into the wider world once

they leave school. In this way, promoting the opportunity for students to strengthen school-community relationships as well as to engage students in considering their own contributions to society now and in the near future was considered a positive outcome.

A significant number (i.e., >75 percent) of teachers acknowledged that adopting different learning approaches is often necessary to harness and grow the learning potential of students who are often coming from very culturally diverse backgrounds. Furthermore, teachers agreed that understanding different learning approaches depends a lot on how well you know your students' learning needs, talents and backgrounds. For example, Whitu (HoD Māori, School 1) observed that one of his *kapa haka* students needed specialist help over and above what he believed he and the school could provide. Through the teacher making a number of enquiries the student was able to leave school two years early than anticipated to enrol in Māori Performing Arts programme. Although, a relatively rare situation, it does pose an interesting question regarding how prepared mainstream secondary schools are in being able to identify and accommodate for Māori students who possess specific skills, talents and gifts.

In School 1, the teachers of Māori language and English were convinced that one way of improving educational outcomes for Māori students was to amalgamate the two languages and to create a learning environment that not only enhances student movement and performance, but includes instructions bilingually. Notwithstanding 'good' teacher intentions, it was decided that the teaching of the Māori and English should remain in their respective departments. The compromise was that if Māori students were experiencing language difficulties both teachers were willing and prepared to work together to resolve such issues. Presently, both teachers continue to discuss ways to improve the use of Māori and English language in their school and to reduce the 'silo' nature of secondary schools by integrating various areas of the curriculum. In terms of *kapa haka*, the learning environment is usually bilingual and bicultural, in that, although students practice and perform *haka*, *waiata* and *mōteatea* in Māori, many of the instructions are given in English.

Similarly, Māori and food technology teachers in this study have worked together to provide students with the experience of preparing a *hāngi* (i.e., a traditional Māori cooking practice using hot stones to cook a meal under the ground). In the preparing of the *hāngi* both teachers asked students to observe and respect a number of social and cultural practices. This included asking students particular questions around its purpose, including the choosing and preparing of particular food, as well as the use of specific *karakia* (prayer) and *waiata* (specific songs used in preparing the food). The inclusion of the school's *kapa haka* group before, during and after the event provided all students with a unique opportunity to learn across the curriculum. Despite both teachers agreeing that teaching across the curriculum is a very effective way of integrating a wide range of skills, ideas, understandings and experiences in a shorter space of time, it was not considered common practice in this school.

Teachers expressed that there could be a number of benefits and advantages of integrating different aspects of *kapa haka* into their subjects or across the curriculum as experienced above. Tom (HoD Visual Arts/Dean, School 2) suggested that due to Māori students consistently underachieving in their school, there is a genuine need to draw on local Māori knowledge to develop learning approaches that best support the learning needs of Māori students. In addition, understanding more about how to engage students in whole class learning approaches may actually encourage subject teachers to consider becoming interdisciplinary practitioners and to explore other ways of engaging students to learn. However, despite these good intentions, it would appear that many of the teachers in this study were not convinced or willing to consider culture in the context of what all students need to know or understand. A major problem exists, in that, many teachers lack the confidence regarding the use of Māori language and culture in their subject areas and that within their teaching training programmes many had not been exposed to learning about culturally inclusive pedagogies. Conversely, Māori language teachers, already integrating *kapa haka* as a key focus in students learning of Te Reo Māori and/or Māori Performing Arts, generally found Māori students to be more engaged and respectful of others, including their peers and teachers. The possible implications of such findings suggest that the acceptance and inclusion of *kapa haka* across the curriculum requires greater cultural understanding about the importance of knowing who we are as New Zealanders in a society that has become increasingly diverse.

Teacher professional development and/or learning support for including cultural activities in their classroom varied. As mentioned earlier, teachers of the arts, languages, physical education, outdoor education, social sciences and technology areas were generally more receptive to mirroring teaching approaches that complemented the teaching of *kapa haka*. However, other teachers were less convinced about using movement or performative based learning approaches in their classrooms because many felt students needed to be able to work more independently in order to grasp specific concepts in subjects such as Mathematics and the Sciences. These teachers also believed that all students need to come to class ready to learn and be able to develop a strong work ethic, regardless of their cultural backgrounds. Certain teachers had also signalled some strong concerns about the level of time and commitment Māori students were giving to *kapa haka* and how it was adversely affecting students' ability to complete assessed work to a satisfactory standard.

Some teachers were particularly concerned about the lack of communication from certain teachers about when students were expected to be away from class, and for how long. For example, Tania (HoD Information Technology, School 2) expressed that during class time, it appeared that some Māori students were going to *kapa haka* because their friends went, and not because they genuinely valued *kapa haka*. In terms of social behaviour problems, Mike (HoD Maths, School 1) commented that the *kapa haka* students tended to be very arrogant and

boisterous when they returned to class and were not willing to settle to work on the various tasks set. Similarly, some students tended to act out in the classroom what they had been learning in *kapa haka*, causing in-class distractions, disruptions and preventing other students from learning or completing their work. At least two teachers from across all four secondary schools had, over time, become increasingly frustrated by Māori students being able to leave their class almost at will to attend *kapa haka* practices, returning either at the end of the class, or in some cases, not at all. These teachers also expressed disappointment in that they did not see the same time, effort and energy Māori students were giving to *kapa haka* back into other subject areas. Despite these experiences, however, the level of teacher resistance to cultural inclusive pedagogies continues to pose barriers to Māori student achievement as well as a growing cultural apathy by schools to change.

Hare (HoD Māori, School 4) during his time in the school commented that a key reason why students were not choosing to do Te Reo Māori is because the school offers it as an option and tends to place it in direct competition with other languages students can choose. The following teacher highlights the continual barriers to Māori students accessing their language in mainstream secondary schooling contexts:

For many many years in this school as a teacher, I have always asked, ‘Why isn’t Māori a compulsory subject?’ It’s our Native language...it’s never ever been recognised... so it starts in the school on that kaupapa as non-existence, and I believe that the school is very very bad...funny this school only needs Māori things, we [Māori] are there all the time, but they only need things when they need it, or when they need to look good, or when they need special people coming in, and they need a *kai*, or when they need a *pōwhiri*...they always fall back on *mātua*...and say, ‘Is it alright if you do this, this...’ and we always put a *kai* on for them and put a *pōwhiri* on for them...and then perform to them while they have their *kai*...so that there is a continuing saga that we have always tried to push and say, ‘Why isn’t Māori a compulsory subject?’...Now if you have a look at all our languages, French, German, Spanish and Japanese, those 3rd Form options classes are packed...I walk into a Spanish class and there is like 28 kids...and I go, ‘What are we not doing...why can we not get that clientele or that many students doing Māori?’ In our 3rd Form class we have about 12-15 students doing Māori...I just don’t know...I just don’t understand...(Hare, HoD Māori, School 4).

The following teacher recalled his experiences of working with Māori students and as an ex-Board of Trustee’s chairperson. He explained that the key part of his role was to ensure that aspects of ‘tokenism’ to Māori language and culture in the school were replaced by protocols, reflecting the partnership between Māori and non-Māori. His personal account illustrates the commitment required to develop and nurture such a bicultural partnership in schools today:

When I became a chairman nine years ago or something...Our initial meeting was to say why are you here? What do you want to see this school doing? I said the Treaty of Waitangi says, 'That the Māori people of New Zealand and the non-Māori people are partners and this school must reflect this partnership.' Māori involvement in this school is not going to be just tokenism. Everything in our protocols and the way we do things will reflect that we are half Māori (Jim, HoD Music, School 1).

In contrast, these two teachers expressed their concerns about having Māori language and culture in mainstream secondary schools:

No, it's like the Marae thing...I don't think it belongs at school. It can be refined at school, like English. We all speak English at home, but the English can be refined so that you can put it in an orderly fashion at school, but I don't think, it's like Māori, I don't think the kids in school should be taught Māori, they should be refining their Māori and then move into the Māori community. The best move that could ever be done, I don't know how to do it...one answer perhaps would be a renaissance of Māori parents, saying as a family we are going to learn Māori, to speak Māori again and here we go, and the results would be pushing in the same direction for a common goal and the effects would be dramatic (Fred, HoD Science, School 2);

Yeah...I don't like teaching in mainstream...and a lot of our kids that have come here, have come from Kura Kaupapa, have come here because of us...they know that we've got strong Māori backgrounds, and therefore we try and teach it...I'm totally against teaching Māori in a mainstream school...the faster I get out of here the better, really... (Hare, HoD Māori, School 4).

Similarly, the values of schools and teachers hold can often be at odds with what they understand about Māori language and culture and more importantly, who should take responsibility for this apparent lack of accountability. As these two teachers reported:

Not sure what you mean by Māori achievement as opposed to how it differs to Pākehā achievement. I tend to regard all kids, and I have had this discussion with another colleague who stated, 'that all kids are green'. That's the approach we have in that they are all (students) same colour and that we treat them in the same way. And if you don't treat them in the same way you get accused of racism. So to avoid criticism is to make sure they are treated in the same way, culture, etc...(Mike, HoD Maths, School 1);

Because ERO [Education Review Office] can come in and can take you to task because you haven't addressed certain things...but I think the school itself has to decide what

is the culture of the school...and that it is something in conversation with the Porirua principal and DP [Deputy Principal]...they have been very strong on establishing their school culture...and they have done things with the curriculum...and I was looking at their curriculum and there are certain things they have just left out...too bad...this is our school and this is what we want to do...so in terms of...they are largely...they've got a huge proportion of Pacific Island students...so their curriculum revolves around what is best for those students in particular...they have shown some courage...and I think often you need to have a leader who is not worried about criticism from the community on certain things and is able to do both...but is not scared of something that is not focused on because there is something else of higher priority...I mean our school is always focused on academic achievement...to me school culture is very important and I said it in a meeting the other day...at a management meeting...and I said, 'You come into our lobby what do you see...pictures of staff and past principals...is that what we are all about?' (Terri, AP/Curriculum, School 4).

Non-Māori teachers across all four secondary schools commented that Māori language and culture appear to be driven more by the Teacher in Charge of Māori than the staff as a whole. However, one Māori teacher spoke about how a principal is attempting to change the staff's perceptions about things Māori in the school:

Another good thing I see he's [the principal] not driving me to drive these things he's driving staff to drive it, which for me is a big shift. Just because it's Māori doesn't mean it belongs to HoD Māori, rather people should be coming and asking for advice on what I think for staff to drive it. For me that's the biggest mind shift (Whitu, HoD Māori, School 1).

However, another teacher concerned for how his school treats Māori students expressed that:

It interests me that they [Board of Trustees and Senior Management] particularly run around at ERO time worried that they don't have a Māori Board representative, and they get someone on there and it's almost like tokenism to me just because they have suddenly realized they haven't ticked the box or have been told that that the box hasn't been ticked. I mean Pākehā if you want to target, or you are targeting Pākehā, I would challenge Senior Management to actually cite policy and what they actively do to encourage it within the school and what PD or professional development there is to encourage it...I mean the old school, or reflecting on the days of old when an ex-principal was here and how marvellous the Pākehā was, and why isn't it like that now...(Tom, HoD Visual Arts/Dean Yr. 10, School 2).

Similarly, this teacher suggested that there is an inherent level of fear within her school that is adversely affecting how much Māori language and culture is included:

My speculation would be...or one of things that...and it's not from me, I'm only speaking from what people may be thinking. One...there is an inherent disregard or fear that, oh no we can't have this kind of thing taking over our schools, and I think the disregard one, is that it's not that important so why do I have to take that on board as well as everything else I have to do. If for example, teachers looked at ways of improving their relationships with students, any students, let alone Māori students, and if they were able to take on board the way that tutors can relate to their kids in a different way and have them respond in a different way...all I could think of really is that people really don't think that it is that important... (Te Ara, HoD Māori/DP, School 3).

Teachers understood that being '*culturally responsive*' is an important aspect of building better student-teacher relationships with Māori students in the classroom, however, over half the teachers also believed that Māori students need to come to class 'better prepared' to learn. In particular, these teachers referred to a number of Māori students continually coming to class with a poor attitude and work ethic to learn. More apparent is that teachers have an expectation that Māori students need to have certain skills prior to entering their class or otherwise they are already disadvantaged in their learning capabilities. Unfortunately, these set teacher beliefs and attitudes can create barriers to how teachers perceive their role in working with Māori students. And as a result, such teachers' focus more on what they believe Māori students need to do to achieve in their subject, as opposed to considering how accommodating for their social and cultural needs may actually enhance Māori students' ability to achieve. The following two teachers highlighted their own personal challenges working with Māori students:

Yeah...not a lot but yeah [preparation for teaching Māori students]...In my first year here we did quite a bit...and gathering different ideas for teaching Māori students and um...we watched videos and they advised us on ways to get through to Māori students etc., but I've actually found that...as I said before, a lot of it is the attitude coming from the home and also some Māori students here are really hands on and want to do things, but others aren't. And although they say this is the best way for Māori students it's a generalisation. Māori kids are just like any other kids, they all learn differently. I would just be wary of putting too much emphasis on one style for all Māori students. I think you will be doing a dis-service to a lot of our children when you put that sort of emphasis on learning (Tania, HoD Information Technology, School 2).

From the Ministry's point of view it's looking at standards, and it doesn't really list the whole purpose...it's the same as one of the other key directives which is improving

achievement for all students and then specifically Māori and Pacific Island students... they are looking at how many have passed literacy and numeracy at Level 1, 2 and... it's a very narrow perspective...and it's one that is general, when we are talking about Māori and Pacific Island students or any other groups of students that annoys me immensely...and also target goals are looked at by the Ministry purely so that they can be proved statistically.... so everything is quantitative, and the qualitative side is totally ignored.... I think...what I would like to see for the school...I feel that the teachers and the school need huge exposure to what is important for Māori students, and I believe there are lot of staff that are very good and a lot aren't...and I think just having been prepared to what works for some students, and...looking at other learning styles regardless...I mean honestly many times what is good practice for teaching Māori students is actually good practice for teaching most students (Terri, AP/Curriculum, School 4).

In contrast, Te Ara (DP/Māori, School 3) and Whitu (HoD Māori, School 1) found that separating their teaching practice from who they are as Māori was not possible:

We [husband included] have always had the culture and tikanga, we could do the Marae back to front, inside out, upside down type thing just because we were in the country, we came from the country so you had to go and do those kind of things, you learnt the back before you learnt the front, we learnt that way not the other way around, as kids you know tend to do now. And we had made a conscious decision my husband and I, when we had our first two children, our children would speak Māori because that's his job, he teaches Māori, he lectures, that's his kaupapa so we decided, even though I didn't speak a lot I always knew it, so along with my daughters I would get my Reo up to speed too (Te Ara DP/Māori, School 3);

To me I totally identify with the language [Māori language], with the things that are being transferred either consciously or unconsciously. I think that's one reason and my classroom is the same place...um...I try to unconsciously transfer to the kids that you talk correctly, you apply yourself in a certain way and that's the things that get transferred, I think it's passion, I'm passionate about it [Māori language and culture, teaching, as well as Pākehā] and students pick up on that vibe and can't help being sucked into it too and it helps, and they in my opinion are on the outskirts of their culture looking in...um...for a lot of them (Whitu, HoD, School 1).

Similarly, these Māori teachers felt very comfortable about including *tikanga* (knowing Māori protocol and processes), *manaakitanga* (care and respect), *aroha* (unconditional love), *wairuatanga* (spiritual connectedness), *whakawhānaungatanga* (getting to know the students),

*whānau* (inclusion of family), *hinengaro* (mental and emotional wellbeing), and *hauora* (health and wellbeing) despite the various schooling constraints placed on them to conform also to the wider schools needs and priorities. Fundamentally, over 75 percent of teachers in this study generally agreed that incorporating cultural activities and practices into their subject areas would ultimately improve educational outcomes for Māori students, although most felt ill-equipped to do so. Teachers across all four schools also commented that most professional development days focusing on improving Māori achievement were often a ‘hit or miss’ affair due to information over-load with inadequate follow-up. At least two out of four Māori language teachers in this study commented that *Kura Kaupapa Māori* (total immersion primary schooling) and *Whare Kura* (total immersion secondary schooling) schooling would probably provide a better educational service for Māori students because of their consistent use of Māori language and culture.

Teachers in this study often suggested that there now exists a wider range of career or educational opportunities for students who have participated in *kapa haka* including visual and performing arts, Māori performing arts, Māori teacher education (*Te Kōhanga Reo*, *Te Kura Kaupapa*, *Te Whare Kura*, *Te Wānanga*) programmes, Māori television, journalism, theatre, tourism and various community social services. Teachers had also observed that Māori students, who were very confident and enthusiastic about performing *kapa haka*, generally appeared happier about being at school and tended to do better academically. In this regard, schools and teachers need greater access and understanding about the potential cultural learning experiences, such as *kapa haka*, has for improving educational outcomes for Māori students in these settings. The following teachers’ responses identified the following educational benefits associated with Māori students participating in *kapa haka*:

1. Improves individual confidence, self-esteem and identity;
2. Improves the work ethic and attitude of some students;
3. Improves individual self-awareness, discipline, respect and commitment;
4. Identifies the specific learning talents and strengths of students who perform;
5. Performing *kapa haka* provides a visible means of viewing how students learn and achieve;
6. Improves individual students’ attendance levels;
7. Supports students to achieve academic credits (credits can be gained for NCEA Te Reo Māori and Māori Performing Arts);
8. Supports students to use and strengthen their memory processes by moving and performing, and why;

9. Provides the opportunity for Māori students to learn and achieve by performing what they know as a unified group and/or team;
10. Supports certain Māori students to make good choices, be responsible, participate and contribute positively to life at school and in their communities.

## **Final words**

The educational benefits associated with Māori students performing *kapa haka* are not intended to resolve all the problems or challenges facing Māori students and their learning nor did the study attempt to define *kapa haka* in ways that would better ‘fit’ Māori students into mainstream secondary schooling contexts. Alternatively, the study does provide greater cultural insight, awareness and understanding about the creative learning potential of *kapa haka* to improve the current levels of Māori under-achievement. Schools and teachers have often been encouraged to integrate community and cultural knowledge alongside the subjects they teach, however, and in many cases such cultural engagement has relied on teacher professional development opportunities that do not necessarily guarantee change. In many ways, getting schools and teachers to become ‘cultural workers’ relies a lot on working towards developing culturally responsive schools whereby schools are actively working as partners alongside their indigenous schooling community. Shaping school policy, curriculum, teaching and learning not only needs to meet the needs of all students, it also to meet the cultural needs of students who are indigenous. *Kapa haka* supports the idea that greater learning success can be achieved by building better community relationships with Māori as a collective. A step in the right direction is to perhaps look at ways of integrating culturally inclusive learning activities in the classroom and to involve the Māori community in various aspects of curriculum and assessment planning.

This paper has attempted to position *kapa haka* as an on-going learning relationship with the community and Māori and not simply a feel-good activity that schools feel obligated to clip-on to existing learning structures. In many ways *kapa haka* is a culturally preferred learning pedagogy that is inclusive of cultural practices specific to meeting the learning needs and aspirations of culturally-connected learners who are Māori. Both students and teachers agree that *kapa haka* provides a number of educational benefits for Māori students. And in particular, the experience of participating in *kapa haka* enhances the social, cultural, mental/emotional and spiritual wellbeing of what it means for Māori students to learn as culturally-connected human beings. Indeed, developing the success of Māori students in these settings continues to be a constant challenge, made even more challenging by schools positioning of *kapa haka* on the periphery of what is offered as ‘valid’ curriculum. More explicitly, secondary schools depend on teachers delivering a nationally-led curriculum that is often considered ‘age’ appropriate and suited to meeting the needs of all learners, regardless of students’ own cultural learning

preferences or indeed cultural backgrounds. Despite teachers generally agreeing that *kapa haka* provides a host of educational benefits for Māori students to achieve, many are uncertain about how to include movement and/or performance based learning activities within what they already teach, and even less certain about integrating culture within and across the existing curriculum. Furthermore, the idea of integrating curriculum that takes in to consideration cultural ways of knowing can only be achieved if mainstream secondary schools and teachers are consistently engaging in ways to develop cultural inclusive curriculum for the benefit of Māori students (Glynn et al. 1999; Macfarlane 2004; Macfarlane et al. 2007). Despite the many challenges facing mainstream secondary schools and teachers, there are strong indicators to suggest that the teachers involved in this study want to know more about how *kapa haka* actually benefits all students' learning. For example, outdoor education based programmes have provided many opportunities for all students to connect with the *whenua* (land) by adopting learning approaches that engage students to think, move, share and perform in the outdoors. In addition, physical education programmes in these setting have also been instrumental in implementing *Te Ao Kori* (the world of movement) activities that enable students to learn and engage with cultural activities, terminology and practices unique to the world of Māori (Salter 1999, 2000a, 2000b, 2002).

The general consensus is that *kapa haka* is somewhat different to the experiences Māori students have in a classroom, in that teacher(s), tutors, students/peers and family (*whānau*) members are often involved in supporting their learning as opposed to relying solely on the efforts of the in-class teacher. A '*whānau*' driven approach is not unique to Māori society and is often encouraged as an effective way of overcoming particular learning difficulties and challenges students may well face (Ministry of Education 2000a). In various educational reports, the barriers affecting Māori student achievement has often referred to the lack of *whānau* support and in particular, many Māori parents being simply unaware of what their children need to do to achieve success in these settings (Ministry of Education 2000a). In this regard, *kapa haka* provides the opportunity for mainstream secondary schools and teachers to actually work towards becoming cultural competent (c.f. Cross et al. 1989) as well as ensuring *whānau* are clearly visible in ways to negotiate and navigate successful learning for Māori students in these contexts.

The ability of the teachers or tutors instructing *kapa haka* to give immediate feedback to Māori students was seen as a definite advantage. The fact that teachers and/or tutors of *kapa haka* are able to see first-hand how students are performing specific skills means there are greater opportunities for teachers to interact and communicate with students more regularly. Alternatively, teachers may well consider providing learning situations where students' work is made more 'visible' and can be assessed using performance based measures involving the whole class. Currently, the arts (e.g. dance, music, art and visual and performing arts), sports (e.g. physical movement requiring co-ordination, balance, power, speed, aerobic fitness, agility, skill

and knowledge), te reo Māori (e.g. *kapa haka* is often used to improve students' level of Māori language and cultural understandings), outdoor education (e.g. connection and experiences with the greater outdoors) and physical education (e.g. te reo/ao kori- language of movement using Māori games, skills, activities, and language) are all subjects that engage Māori students to move and perform.

Māori teachers' perceptions about *kapa haka* differed somewhat to the views and understandings of non-Māori teachers. For example, Māori teachers considered that *kapa haka* was about developing the 'whole person' and in particular, promoting the importance of being Māori in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Māori teachers in this study also commented they do feel an added expectation as well as an innate responsibility to support Māori students. However, the development of teachers as 'cultural workers' is often interpreted from within the dominant schooling culture and driven by a national curriculum that is often at odds with the cultural aspirations of Māori students and their community. Such problems become even more apparent if there are limited Māori teachers working in mainstream secondary schools where there exists large numbers of Māori students enrolled.

Teacher resistance to integrating aspects of *kapa haka* appeared based more on the need to cater for the increasing cultural diversity of students and to allow students the flexibility to choose their own educational pathways without any one culture given more importance over another. As a result, the inclusion of Māori language and culture in mainstream secondary schools as a fundamental part of securing our identity as New Zealanders is not only challenging, it is also competing for time and space to be included. In the same vein, teachers have often experienced that although schools acknowledge the importance of Māori language and culture as an integral part of what all New Zealanders need to know and learn it is not compulsory, but rather an obligation. Finally, the greatest challenge facing many schools and teachers today is to consider how our own cultural values are likely to impact on the students we teach and what this actually means in relation to teaching students who are Māori. Perhaps observing where indigenous students are achieving, both culturally and academically may further help to inform schools and teachers of ways to improve on what they are currently doing for and with Māori students.

Although the majority of teachers in the study were genuinely interested in ways to improve educational outcomes for Māori students, *kapa haka* was considered problematic to some teachers who questioned, 'why being Māori should have anything to do with what they are required to learn in their subject(s)', or 'how having *kapa haka* or any other cultural learning activities could improve their performance academically'. As a result, these teachers appeared less concerned for the cultural wellbeing of Māori students and more concerned about how Māori students need to improve academically. The lack of reference to any form of '*culturally responsive*' teaching standards further highlights the challenges facing many Māori students in

these settings. Similarly, many of the difficulties and challenges facing teachers in this study appeared compounded by the growing cultural diversity of students, the changing nature of school curriculum and the ever-increasing emphasis on developing student based assessment. Over two thirds of non-Māori teachers in this study expressed that to focus only on the needs of Māori students in the class would in some way, be discriminating against the needs of other students and lead to privileging some students over others. The scope of the problem became more apparent when teachers began to ask questions about what is a 'Māori', and 'how do we determine who are the Māori students in our classroom' and more importantly, 'why would we as teachers be singling Māori students out as being different?' These sorts of questions indicate very clearly that there will continue to be barriers to teaching Māori students until recognition of Māori students as *tangata whenua* (indigenous people of this land) is prioritised and revered in all areas of schooling policy and the curriculum. No doubt certain teachers will continue to reject or resist how they accept and/or engage with cultural differences in their own classrooms further denying Māori students the opportunity to access their learning potential. However by teachers adapting their teaching styles to the cultural and class differences may offer some solution to this problem (Wood 1992) as long as teachers are willing to improve their practice.

Of course, there is a much greater need to delve into what underpins teachers' perceptions about culture, and more importantly to engage teachers in ways they can include culture in secondary schooling contexts. This may well require the provision of learning environments that are remarkably different to those that currently exist in our schools today. As it stands, *kapa haka* as an alternative learning environment provides for schools, teachers and students the opportunity to celebrate our unique identity and heritage as New Zealanders and to uphold the values underpinning the Treaty of Waitangi. From this position, it is important to understand that culture is not stagnant, nor does it reside only in *kapa haka*, it is a 'universal' concept based on engaging in a set of principles, traditions, values, and beliefs with/in a world that has always been global by nature.

*Kapa haka* has been reported as a dynamic '*culturally responsive*' learning experience that enhances a level of self-belief, confidence and self-worth in being Māori. Manu'lani Myer (2005) suggested that this form of cultural expression from an indigenous perspective is 'an opportunity to transform chaos into coherence, justice into healing, and individuation into interdependence'. Developing '*culturally responsive*' learning environments for '*culturally connected*' learners is a significant way of coming to know and remember our own futures as 'cultural human beings' (Meyer 2005) and not as individuals who need constant topping up with skills and information (Roberts 1996).

A key way of addressing the lack of understanding about Māori values, beliefs and principles is for mainstream secondary schools and teachers to implement cultural standards that take

into consideration the three key principles of the Treaty of Waitangi aforementioned (i.e., partnership, protection and participation). Establishing culturally preferred learning contexts should also be about working towards affirming the unique relationship that exists between Māori and Pākehā and valuing our own knowledge systems, traditions and approaches. The next step is for secondary schools in partnership with their Māori communities to work towards establishing culturally responsive standards that will enable teachers to manage or evaluate more consistently Māori student levels of learning success, both culturally as well as academically. As this paper has suggested, there is still much work to be done in re-orientating teachers' beliefs, values and attitudes towards what Māori students are actively seeking as culturally-connected learners whereby culture in education is valued just as much as the drive for academic levels of achievement. Indeed, Pākehā society provides a window where culture is celebrated and where the learning potential of Māori students can be fully realised beyond the 'status quo'.

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# VOCATIONAL LEARNING IN THE FRAME OF A DEVELOPING IDENTITY

John Guenther

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## **Introduction**

The purpose of this paper is to argue a case for the development of training programs that deliberately build in identity formation into program outcomes – rather than relying only on skills formation and or job readiness. The premise for the argument arises from the author’s observations of learning programs at a variety of levels over a number of years and as a direct consequence of his PhD findings. The paper first considers the literature relating to the outcomes of adult learning programs and then goes on to review the linkages between learning and identity. It revisits findings from the author’s PhD, which support the case for a fresh focus on identity formation.

## **Literature review**

### *Vocational learning defined*

While we could define vocational learning in fairly narrow terms around what is sometimes described as the Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector, I will use the term ‘vocational learning’ in this paper to encompass the wider sphere of adult learning that relates to learning that occurs in preparation for a vocation, in anticipation of a change in career, for re-entry into the workforce or as part of ongoing professional development. Stasz and Wright (2004) for example, writing within a UK context suggest the following definition:

Vocational learning can be defined as any activities and experiences that lead to understandings of and/or skills relevant to a range of (voluntary and paid) work environments.

In Australia, the *MCEETYA Framework for Vocational Education in Schools*, acknowledges that vocational learning should provide opportunity for students ‘to learn in workplace and

community settings' (DEEWR 2007: Key element 2: Enterprise and vocational learning), though most states interpret the framework more in terms of work or employment than community (ACACA 2008).

### *Successful outcomes of vocational learning*

A scan of the literature on outcomes of vocational learning or training reveals a high concentration of results around the relationship between training and employment. And this, given the foregoing discussions of definitions, is perhaps not surprising.

However, when the search goes deeper and considers what determines a *successful* outcome for various stakeholder groups a different picture emerges. For *individuals* success may be defined in terms of graduation, access to a job, satisfaction with what was learned, as well as other job related benefits – and indeed this is how the National Centre for Vocational Education Research measure student outcomes (NCVER 2007). For *industry* successful learning outcomes may be better described in terms of meeting the skills needs of businesses and enterprises a view reflected by various industry groups (e.g. Australian Industry Group and The Allen Consulting Group 2006; TAFE Directors Australia 2007) or it may be about increasing productivity and workforce participation (e.g. Mitchell & McKenna 2008). For *communities* a range of outcomes may reflect employment priorities but may also equally reflect social capital priorities relating to building trust, cooperative learning environments and enabling leadership (e.g. Balatti & Falk 2000; Falk & Smith 2003; Guenther et al. 2008). For *governments* as a major funder of training, the outcomes are likely to be related to their policy directions, for example transitioning people from welfare to work (Guenther, Falk & Arnott 2008) or ensuring that skills gaps are filled (e.g. Richardson & Teese 2006) to ensuring that young people move into an appropriate career (Curtis 2008). Success for *providers* may be as much as about service delivery, organisational efficiency and capacity as it is about outcomes for clients as employers and trainees (Maxwell et al. 2004).

What this brief overview shows is that successful outcomes are not just about employment and skills. While the role of identity formation is not included in the above overview I will return to it after a brief explanation of what is meant by the term 'identity'.

### *Identity*

Identity can be thought simply as an expression of 'who I am'. But what shapes this 'self' comes from within – psychologically – and from those around us – sociologically and anthropologically. Erikson in *Identity and the Life Cycle* (Erikson 1980) distinguishes between, 'ego identity', 'personal identity' and 'group identity'. These three classifications roughly align with the psychological, sociological anthropological views. In the case of 'group identity' for

example historical and cultural roots are embedded in an individual's identity. Writing in the 1950s, Erikson (1980, p. 20), illustrated the concept with an example from Sioux culture in which he notes that in such an identity, 'the prehistoric past is a powerful psychological reality'. He describes the 'ego identity' as a learned sense of self that is 'developing into a defined ego within a social reality' (p. 22). The 'personal identity' then is more about an individual's awareness of themselves and others' view of their individuality or 'selfsameness and continuity in time' (p. 22). While Erikson's work is formed on the basis of a psychoanalytic perspective others have considered identity more from a sociological or anthropological perspective. For example, sociologist Berger (1963, p. 119) suggests that 'the individual locates himself in society within systems of social control, and everyone of these contains an identity-generating apparatus'. Augoustinos and Walker (1995, p. 98) go as far as to say that 'the notion of personal identity is a fiction – all identity, all forms of self construal, must be social'. Caution also needs to be taken when trying to overlay understandings of social or individual identity as it is constructed by psychologists or sociologists on top of particular cultural groups where identity may be perceived quite differently. For example in Australia, the term 'Aboriginal identity' should be interpreted from an Aboriginal perspective, which may relate more to a sense of 'belonging to specific extended family groups' (Bourke 1998, p. 51) than to self or society. While acknowledging the contested nature of this field of study, there are of course several points of intersection among these perspectives. Elliott (2001), commenting on a sociological view of self-formation in relation to the impact of relationships with people, cultural norms and forms, states:

Particularly for sociologists interested in the dynamics of interpersonal interaction, the self can be thought of as a central mechanism through which the individual and the social world intersect (p. 24).

Of particular relevance to this paper is Erikson's understanding that identity of individuals changes over the life cycle from childhood, through adolescence into adulthood<sup>1</sup>. Further, the nature of one's emerging identity is affected by any number of intersecting contributing factors, which include the role of 'teachers, judges and psychiatrists' in shaping a young person's identity. Erikson (1980) goes on to conclude that if:

'a young person... is close to choosing a negative identity, that young person may well put his energy into becoming exactly what the careless and fearful community expects him to be – and make a total job of it' (p. 175).

His point is that any number of interventions in a young person's life can make a difference

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<sup>1</sup> I acknowledge that this view of identity is not universally accepted. For example, Indigenous peoples' identity may not be as fluid as this view, being more permanently aligned to kin and country than in what may be viewed as a social status or role.

to this emerging identity and that if professional service providers are not careful, those who are tempted toward deviant or socially non-conforming behaviours, may well draw on their experiences to reinforce these negative identities.

### *Vocational learning and identity*

The outcomes and outputs of education and learning are seldom described as ‘successful’ in terms of identity formation. That is, the products of training programs are more likely to be described in terms of what a person can *do* with their new skills and knowledge, as opposed to what they can *become*. The earlier discussion on ‘success’ in learning demonstrated that traditionally, successful learning has been related to outcomes such as employment, skills competence, academic achievement, satisfaction with training, work performance and completions. While these things are of some importance they largely ignore the influence learning has on personal and social identity. Clemans et al. (2003) identify a number of adult and community education outcomes, many of which are directly related to identity formation. They place these outcomes under the heading of ‘learning to be: growth in well-being and self-awareness’. They describe these in terms of self concept and community identity. Many of the outcomes related to self-concept are described as soft skills, generic, employability skills and more specifically in terms of self-esteem and self-confidence and sometimes in terms of basic literacy and numeracy (e.g. Brown et al. 2003; Curtin 2004; The Allen Consulting Group 2004).

However, much of the literature sees these employability skills in a fairly limited frame – one in which soft skills are a pre-requisite to the ‘real’ learning that occurs in formal education. Billet and Somerville (2004, p. 324) contend that identity, work and learning are indeed an ‘under-appreciated and neglected focus for research, policy and practice in adult learning’. At this point it may be useful to introduce the term ‘identity capital’, which Schuller (in Schuller et al. 2004b) defines as ‘the characteristics of the individual that define his or her outlook and self-image’ (p. 20). Schuller’s understanding of identity capital is to some extent drawn from Côté’s work (e.g. Côté 2001; Côté 2005), which differentiates identity capital from other forms of capital such as human and social capital. While it may be helpful to see identity formation as a benefit or outcome of learning as Côté and others (e.g. Hammond 2004) do, it is perhaps better to refer to identity as both an asset and an outcome – something that can be both drawn on and built. Schuller et al. (2004a), for example describe the difference:

Identity capital embodies or generates returns to the individual, though it is odd to express it in these terms. Self-confidence and self-efficacy are themselves positive assets, but also generate further positive returns because of the way they enable people to function effectively (pp. 15-16).

In other words, when a person engages in learning he or she brings an identity to their learning and this is built in the process of learning. Additionally a failure to attend to the individual's identity capital may lead to short term competence but may not lead to sustained changes in practices required for long term. Wenger (1998, p. 268) argues that:

Deep transformative experiences that involve new dimensions of identification and negotiability, new forms of membership, multimembership and ownership of meaning... are likely to be more widely significant in terms of the long-term ramifications of learning than extensive coverage of a broad, but abstractly general, curriculum.

The danger is that where practices are embedded in culture and new ways of doing things are taught in order to transform those practices, in the short term conformance to competencies may be achieved but in the longer term – because the culturally embedded practice is still retained – the individual may well revert to the way they know to be true from their culture. An example of this might be where violent offenders are taught new skills for anger management – and demonstrate that they can use those skills – without a changed identity. Ultimately, the violent behaviours will return in accordance with their enculturated understanding of how to behave.

With this literature in mind, the paper turns to findings from the author's own PhD research, which was titled 'Vocational education and training (VET) as a tool for regional planning and management: Case studies from Australian tropical savanna communities'.

## **Findings from research about effective vocational learning in northern Australia**

The author's PhD research project asked three questions: 1. What are the indicators of well-being across the savanna?; 2. What is the link between education and learning and capacity-building in savanna communities?; and 3. How can education and learning be applied effectively to produce capacity-building outcomes? Using a mixed methods design, the project began with a statistical assessment of well-being in the savanna to answer the first question. This was used as a basis for site selection of four case studies of the effective application of VET. Three were in the Northern Territory and one was in Queensland. Qualitative data from the cases was analysed using qualitative data analysis software to answer the second and third questions and to build a theoretical framework. The findings and discussion presented in this paper represent a small part of the overall research project.

The data used for the research was 103 interviews with 132 respondents, who described 114 discrete training programs. Respondents were a mix of providers, trainees, industry representatives, government and community stakeholders. Respondents were asked to describe

a program that they considered ‘effective’ and to then explain why they thought it was.

Out of these interviews a total of 1015 responses were identified that related directly to ‘effective’ programs. These responses are essentially key extracts from the respondents’ descriptions of effective programs, coded using NUD\*IST™ and quantitized using MS Access™, according to one of the six categories: needs; motivators; enablers; delivery aspects; identity aspects; and outcomes. A summary of the 1015 responses is shown in Figure 1. The chart shows that the largest group of responses (24.2 per cent of all responses) related to delivery aspects of training. This was followed by identity aspects (21.8 per cent); enablers (17.0 per cent); motivators (15.4 per cent); outcomes (14.5 per cent); and needs (7.1 per cent).

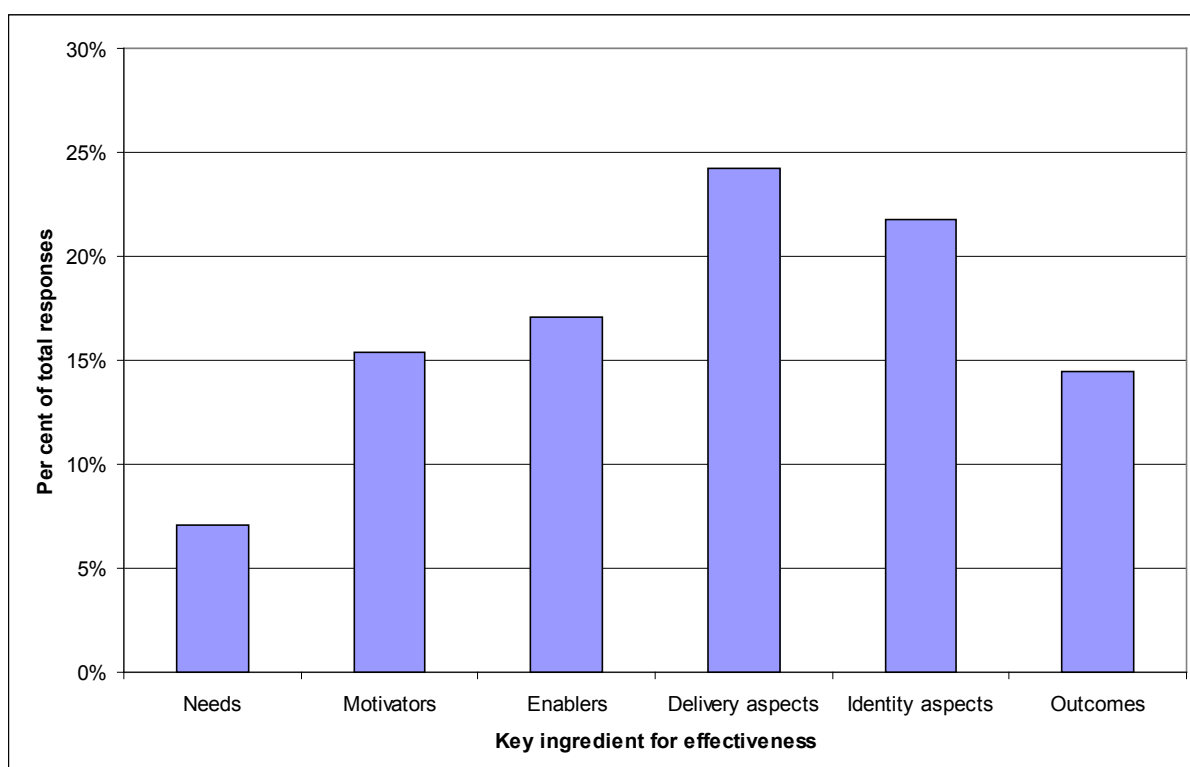


Figure 1 How respondents perceived key ingredients of effective training programs (n = 1015, multiple responses allowed)

While the relative strength of perceived effectiveness in terms of ‘delivery aspects’ (which related to content, qualification, delivery and the trainer) may not be surprising, what did come as somewhat of a surprise (given the literature on vocational learning for job outcomes) was the relative strength of the responses related to identity aspects of the training. That is, there were more responses in the interview data that related to effectiveness being related to identity than there were related to outcomes. For example respondents were more likely to suggest that training was effective because of what it did for their self-esteem, awareness of options and self-confidence, than what it enabled them to achieve in terms of job related outcomes.

Put in another way, respondents in this research felt that identity aspects of training were more important than what the training actually led them to be able to do.

The following case study is designed to illustrate in some detail the extent to which identity contributes to the perceived effectiveness of training. It is just one example of many that shows this.

*Case study: 'Planning your career'*

Mining communities in Australia are focussed on extracting minerals from the ground. Some communities are fly-in fly-out sites – shift workers only live in town while they are on a shift roster and then fly 'home' to where their family lives. Other communities are largely residential in nature – workers live in purpose-built towns and their families live with them there. This case study draws on research conducted in one such town in central Queensland.

To a large extent mines that support such communities depend on a range of specific trade skills to operate and maintain machinery required for the work. Traditionally in Australia these skills are held by males. While the patterns of employment are gradually changing, females in these communities – many of which are relatively remote – are either not employed or employed part time in a small number of administration, retail or financial support roles. Many women have a primary role in parenting children and many are actively engaged in community service work. Many are looking for opportunities to gain employment or build skills so that when they eventually return to an urban environment or their children 'move on' to further education or employment elsewhere, they have an opportunity to build their own career.

In one community an adult learning centre was set up and funded jointly by the mining company and the state education department to assist such women. The centre hosted a number of courses for a variety of purposes. One was called 'Planning your career'. As part of the research, the coordinator was interviewed and asked questions about 'what makes the training effective?'. Her responses are shown in an edited version of the transcript, in Table 1 on the following page.

Table 1. Examples from transcript that shows identity aspects and outcomes as a result of 'Planning your career'

**Transcript extract**

*It's a long-term program it goes for nine months. There are fifteen participants it's all free for them. There are ladies whose husbands are working seven day rosters there are ladies who are single parents. We have a Russian lady. We have a lady from Switzerland who hasn't been in town for very long. And I can just see their increase in self-confidence and skills is amazing. I sat in and did some interviews with them, pretend interviews with them, couldn't believe that they were the same people that I had actually inducted into the course three months prior. It was just amazing and obviously it's a course that's been tried and true because its been around for a long time but it's one that I can say has benefited people from [this community].*

*I can see that all individuals, participants, trainees and the community benefit from more training. Obviously the individuals benefit because it can then improve their ability, self-esteem particularly which we're seeing with planning your career course, ladies that have been out of the workforce for some time. Just reinforcing computer skills and growing in self-confidence. They are also helping their children when they go home with their training. So the kids are also – there's a bit of a flow on effect there – getting a bit more. Probably the kids are teaching their mums but it benefits the whole of the community because people like that feel more confident in taking roles as the secretary, treasurer, for the local soccer club or the swimming club or whatever. So I can see it as adult training and here computer training here has a flow on effect. We're also covering a bit in the planning your career course about being self employed. So it teaches the girls well OK why can't I open a shop, why can't I open a business, 'Why can't I could actually provide some training to someone else? Then I can take on a trainee'. So obviously that's increasing [the mining company's] productivity and generally [giving] back to the community again. So I think adult training here is providing a big service.*

**Identity aspects and outcomes identified**

Trainees' identities as migrants, single parents and stay at home wives noted.

Trainer observes change in self-concept.

Trainer observed change in personal identity.

Trainer perceives increase in self-efficacy/capacity and self-esteem.

Observes increased self-confidence.

This leads to identity changes as a parent and greater capacity.

Outcome noted in terms of engagement in community groups but it is because of their confidence.

Potential outcome: self-employment.

Potential return (outcome) for mining company identified.

A number of things are worth commenting on in this extract. *Firstly*, the number of identity aspects recorded is clearly larger than the number of outcomes noted. *Secondly*, the progressive identity change from migrant or single parent to skilled parent and contributing community member is woven into the respondent's commentary. *Thirdly*, the range of identities noted is not restricted to workplace identities – rather, the identities are related to family life, community life *and* life in the workplace.

## **Discussion**

While it is fair to conclude from the findings of the research described briefly above, that identity formation is an important product of vocational learning does this necessarily have any implications for adult learning practitioners? Should curricula be designed with identity formation in mind? A response to this might surely be: 'OK, training does produce identity changes in learners but that shouldn't derail us from focusing our attention away from skills formation'.

In response to this critique of the arguments presented it may be worthwhile returning to the literature for a moment. Erikson's (1980) argument that a failure to pay attention to identity, particularly in young people could have negative consequences for them and ultimately for society, is particularly pertinent here. If we see training as a vehicle to produce skills necessary for industry (as much of the literature seems to suggest) then we miss the point that training is about developing the capacity of *people*, who have – as the case study highlighted – multiple identities (at home, in the community and at work). Further, if identity change is viewed as a lifelong process that is affected by a combination of transitions through crises, events, experiences, rites of passage, role changes, social enculturation and acculturation processes, which may be 'constructed' or 'discovered' (Côté 1996) through any number of interactions, then the training experience of an individual is only one contributor to that process.

If, as the research findings presented here suggest, identity (trans)formation is an important product of effective training then one of the implications is that in order to be most valuable, training practices and delivery methods ought to build in strategies that will lead to a reconstruction of an individual's identity – or at least a challenge to an individual's pre-existing identity. Thus training and learning approaches that encourage both independent choice, contributing to individual self concept and interdependent 'contributors to civil society, both locally and globally' (Côté 2005), thereby contributing to a collective identity. Further to this, if identity change is important for the adoption and acceptance of new and better ways of doing things then this strengthens the argument for building or rebuilding an individual's identity. Failure to attend to identity transformation in some situations will result in short term compliant competence but soon result in a reversion to old practices as a result of the strength of the individual's alignment to a pre-existing cultural and social identity.

A second implication that emerges relates to training providers' understanding of learners' identities as they enter into the training experience. The result of not doing this is seen in many one-size-fits-all training initiatives where for example, unemployed people are expected to transition into work by participating in a training program. The learnings that have arisen out of Australia's *Welfare to Work* strategy (see for example Guenther, Falk & Arnott 2008), suggest that training which addresses the complexities of an individual's identity and at the same time offers additional support outside of the training environment, is more likely to work than when that complexity is not taken into account. Again in this situation the focus cannot simply be on building skills in an individual but must incorporate a range of personal and social interactions that engender a response in the learner, which says 'not only can I *do*, but I can also *be*'.

Taking this idea a step further, a third implication has more relevance for those providers who are working in cross-cultural contexts. In such instances, the onus is on the trainer to first understand the learner's worldview, which is intertwined with the learner's individual and cultural identity. Among the barriers that the trainer needs to come to terms with are the learner's language, his enculturated values, his spirituality and his knowledge of what is right and wrong. Too often, the expectation in mainstream training, is that the learner must make the effort to bridge this gap, but if providers are to take the importance of identity formation in training seriously, then surely it should be the other way round. Of course there are time and cost implications of providing training in this way. And often the government led policy, which drives service provision, does not take this fully into account.

Having put these propositions, the challenge now may be to test them with intentional development of programs in a variety of contexts, to determine a) how a training program might differ if identity (trans)formation was an intentional part of the learning process; and b) whether or not it is more effective than training conducted with skills and knowledge formation as the primary goal. Testing these propositions would require an evaluation framework that firstly identified a common set of effectiveness measures (initially for participants but later perhaps also for other stakeholders). It would then require some careful curriculum development around existing training programs. Then the training would need to be delivered using both the skills formation and identity formation modes, to similar groups of people. Evaluation of the two programs could then follow.

## **Conclusion**

The focus of vocational learning in Australia has clearly been on skills development with an emphasis on skills for jobs. The literature does not always show these kind of outcomes are the product of effective training programs and indeed there is some evidence that employability or 'soft' skills are important too. However, with a small number of exceptions, the literature seldom considers the role that identity plays in learning.

The research on which this paper is based shows that, for the 132 stakeholders surveyed, identity aspects of learning were more important than other outcomes, which were mainly related to jobs. What this may suggest is that training focused on skills development alone may be falling short of what learners really need – support for a transitioning identity. Therefore what could be required to meet that need is training delivery approaches that build in identity forming processes, supporting learning that encourages independent choice as well as interdependent contribution to the social and cultural sphere of learners' lives. Further, delivery that fails to take into account the complexities of individual learners' identities will undoubtedly be less effective than training that does. In addition, and of particular importance to cross-cultural contexts, the implication of this research may be that trainers may need to gain a deeper understanding of learners' social and cultural identities – creating the bridge between identities, instead of expecting learners to do this.

To test the propositions put in this paper, it is proposed that two similar training programs be delivered, one with a focus on identity and the other with a focus on skills and knowledge, and then evaluated.

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# THE IMPACT OF PEDAGOGICAL RELATIONALITY ON STUDENT SELF-IDENTITY

Blaine E. Hatt and Lynn Julien-Schultz

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## **Abstract**

Do teachers realize the impact of adult-child relationality on the development of students' self-identity? Do they appreciate the power they have to permanently shape a student's perception of self? This paper examines the prolonged impact that pedagogical exclusion and victimization have on student self-identity. The experiences of two adult educators, separated in time and circumstance, reveal that the impact of negative pedagogical relationality is residual in effecting a new ethnicity and is influential in affecting the perceived role of educators. Good practice involves intentionally attending the pathic in each learner to avoid creating teacher-student environments in which the development of student self-identity is potentially contested. Systems, responsible for teacher education, need to introduce programmes in pre-service and in-service professional development that recognize that student being and becoming is scaffolded through relationality and that teaching needs to be focused on the intellectual and spiritual growth of students. Where appropriate and responsible pedagogical relationality exists, positive self-identity can most deeply and intimately be developed.

## **Introduction**

The transactional curriculum of the classroom from moment-to-moment is based on the confluence of various resisting curricula: the mandated curriculum, the hidden curriculum, the null curriculum, the curriculum of lived experience of each student, and the curriculum of lived experience of the teacher. The pedagogical relationality that exists between the student's lived experience and the teacher's lived experience is paramount to achieving harmony in the nexus of learning. The teacher, in her or his role as a pedagogue, is the primary agent in creating an environment where the gnoseologica of learning (Freire 1997, 2007) can be called into existence and be granted a secure place within the community of learnership that is the classroom. It is

the teacher who establishes the level of rapport and respect within his or her classroom. It is the teacher that mediates, negotiates, reconciles, and resolves the conflicting tensions that exist between and among the various curricula. It is the teacher through her relationality with her students who calls into being the power, potential, and possibility of self-actualization. But, what happens to a student's self-identity when the pedagogical relationality between a teacher and a student is negative? What happens to the vulnerability of a child who is repeatedly told in the early years of formal education that she or he is 'slow', 'stupid', or, 'only suited for applied course work?'

This paper examines the lived experience of two educators, one an adult educator and the other an intermediate/senior pre-service teacher and the residual impact, even into adulthood, that negative relationality with grade-school teachers had and continues to have on their self-identity.

## **Literature review**

Erickson (1968) posited that identity formation among adolescents and young adults was a decision-making process that occurred as a result of sifting through a wide-range of choices. Commitments to personal orientations and philosophies respecting beliefs, principles, and values; interpersonal relationships; attitudes and aptitudes to employment; and, selection of profession or career goals involved exploring alternatives and examining a variety of proffered roles. Marcia (1980) theorized that the developmental process of identity formation began in a state of diffusion that led to series of explorations before reaching a commitment to self-identity. Oyserman, Gant and Ager (1995) introduced the view that identity formation is developed within the context of interpersonal and social encounters. Friere (1998) focused on the relationality between teachers and students as key in the development of student self-identity and emphasized the need for teachers to practice democratic intervention in defending the vulnerability of the weakest against the exploitation of the strongest.

Since the mid-nineties, a plethora of researchers have expanded, clarified, and sought to empirically test the models of identity formation presented by Erickson, Marcia, Oyserman et al. and Friere. The sense that students have of their relationality at school (personal, social and pedagogical) is a recurring ideation in recent theories of academic engagement and motivation for learning (Connell & Wellborn 1991; Eccles, Wigfield & Schiefele 1998 Stipek 2002). When students experience a sense of community at school, when they belong, when they have strong and supportive relationships with their teacher(s), and with their classmates, their motivational level and desire to appropriately participate in and contribute to the community of learnership in the classroom increases (Anderman & Anderman 1999 Birch & Ladd 1997; Skinner & Belmont 1993).

Students who experience a strong and supportive pedagogical relationality evidence a higher quality of work in the classroom, are more determined to succeed when faced with difficulties, are more well-adjusted and accepting of teacher feedback, and are more able to attend to and complete the task(s) at hand (Little & Kobak 2003; Midgley, Feldlaufer & Eccles 1989; Ridley, McWilliam & Oates 2000; Skinner & Belmont 1993; Wentzel 1999). Howes, Hamilton, and Matheson (1994), Hughes, Cavell and Jackson (1999), Meehan, Hughes and Cavell (2003), and Pianta, Steinberg and Rollins (1995) established that the quality in the early grades of teacher-student relationality is profoundly important in determining concurrent academic and behavioural adjustments in the present and for the future. Furthermore, Hamre and Pianta (2001) found that the effect of a quality relationship between teacher and student as identified in kindergarten had a profound affect on student achievement up to eight years later. Ladd et al. (1999) and Skinner and Belmont (1993) present the view that student engagement and the quality of teacher-student relationship appears to be reciprocal when students meet teachers' preference for students who are studious, serious, and self-regulated. Our phenomenological and hermeneutical study of Amy and Jane's lived experiences reinforces the disaffected school identities and the impact that such has on learning outcomes as presented in the research of Battistich, Solomon, Watson, and Schaps (1997). The earlier research of Skinner, Zimmerman-Genbeck and Connell (1993) foregrounds the long-lasting and devastating influence that negative pedagogical relationality can have on the development of a child's self-identity.

### **Amy's new ethnicity**

Amy is an adult learner in my ELL (English Language Learner) graduate course. She has been an ELL instructor for many years and now in mid-life has decided to advance her own professional development by getting her Masters degree. She is convinced that her new learning will prepare her to more effectively teach her students and possibly provide her with an opportunity to teach pre-service teachers who want to teach ELL in an adult education program. Amy is competent and confident in her teaching and is caring and compassionate towards her students. Her energy, her zest for life and learning, is infectious and her students frequently voice their deep appreciation for her and the many things she does to assist them in learning and in living.

It was mid-afternoon break and we were standing on the steps outside the building that housed our downtown classroom. Amy and I were chit-chatting, mostly about the recent change in weather and how much better we felt after a few days of sunshine. I watched as Amy's attention shifted away from me and our conversation and focused on an elderly woman walking across the street from where we were standing. For a long moment she just stared at the lady who was slowly making her way along the sidewalk. Her look appeared to be frozen in time but the change in her body language

was so apparent that I could tell that she was getting more and more upset the longer she looked at this person.

She abruptly turned to me and announced, 'We have to go in now.' I said, 'No, we have a few more minutes, let's enjoy the fresh air.' But she wasn't listening as she pushed past me to re-enter the building. I quickly followed and hurried to get in front of her. Taking her shoulders gently in my hands, I asked, 'Amy, what's wrong, what's got you so upset.' With tears in her eyes, she looked up into my face, 'that old woman I just saw was Miss Quint, she was my Grade 4 teacher.' I waited. She continued as she wiped away tears that were now starting to flow. 'Every day in Grade 4 she told me that I was slow, that I was stupid, that I was only in school until I got old enough to leave and pack fish in the factory just like my mother and my grandmother.'

I gently took her face in my hands and looking straight into her eyes, I whispered, 'Amy, that's just not true. You know that's not true. You are an accomplished woman, a great teacher. Your students love you, your children love you. You are not stupid, and you are definitely not slow. I have watched you teach in my class and in yours, you're brilliant'. 'Thank-you,' she said, 'I know you're trying to help me and in my head I know or I want to know that what you're saying is true but I haven't seen Miss Quinn in over thirty years, I honestly thought she was dead, but when I saw her today, I was nine years old again. I was sitting at my desk, my head down, my hands gripping the underneath edge of my desk feeling the sharp slap of every 'stupid', of every 'slow' she ever directed at me. I've worked my whole life to prove to myself that I'm not stupid, or slow, and I could do more than just pack fish!'

'You can!' I said, 'You know you can!'

Our conversation was cut short by the return of the other students to our class. Our course finished at the end of the week but I couldn't help notice that the high level of energy and enthusiasm that Amy had demonstrated in her learning and in her teaching, before seeing Miss Quinn, had waned.

(Rita, Personal Communication, 18 August, 2008)

In public schooling, none of us can escape having relationships with teachers. Indeed, this has been the case since the first pedagogues in ancient Greece and later Rome. A pedagogue, although a slave in the home of an aristocrat, was entrusted with custodial, parental, and educational responsibilities respecting the boy-child. Custodial responsibilities included the safety and security of the child to and from the place of instruction, the gymnasium, and other appropriate

venues. Parental responsibilities required the pedagogue to judge the child's behaviour; set standards of performance on assigned tasks; and, apply corporal punishment when deemed necessary and in keeping with the role of 'in loco parentis'. Educational responsibilities entailed tutoring the boy-child in rudimentary or elementary teachings as he completed his homework; reinforcing memorization of long passages of the great poets; and, ensuring alert attentiveness to the instruction given by the master teacher.

All of these responsibilities were predicated upon relationality. Always, the pedagogue was in an adult-to-child relationship with his student. Frequently, the pedagogue was an old, trusted, family servant of good character and good report. In such instances, the relationality between pedagogue and child was delightful for the pedagogue was pathically attuned to the vulnerability of the child. There were, however, instances of the horrific where pedagogues abused their power and mercilessly flogged their charges for every little offence. One such instance had dire consequences for the pedagogue. When Linus sought to punish Hercules for not being attentive and disciplined in his studies, Hercules, who lacked control over his anger and physical strength, in addition to his study habits, killed him. Relationality, to be truly beneficial, must be based on mutuality. If there is no attempt to develop meaningful reciprocity then relationality becomes a sword of destruction rather than a stylus of constructive learning.

It is apparent in Amy's experience with Miss Quinn that mutual respect and reciprocity were sadly lacking in their relationship. So much so, that 'over thirty years' later, she is profoundly disturbed by the remembrance of her experiences in Grade 4. Despite a successful career as an adult educator, Amy's sense of identity undergoes an abrupt psychic reversal when she is unexpectedly confronted by the appearance of a long forgotten teacher and forced to re-live the devastating effects of her youth. The memories of teachers who inspired, took notice and offered words of encouragement at just the right time, whose energy and enthusiasm for life was infectious and transformed the aspirations and abilities of their students are never forgotten. Neither, however, are those who demeaned the self-worth and severed the self-efficacy of their students. Danielwicz (2001) recounts : 'Even now in middle age, a time when I once imagined my life would be settled, I have outgrown neither the memories themselves nor my need to remember the formative episodes involving the teachers who inhabit my past' (p. 2). It is difficult for educators who daily practice the auspices of heart in teaching: pedagogical love, a deep sense of calling, and soulful connection (Hatt, 2008) to imagine a teacher not pathically attending to, and protecting the vulnerability of each child under her/his care and tutelage.

Gore (1998) applies Foucault's techniques of power in penal institutions to contemporary pedagogical practice. She identified eight techniques of power that were applicable to education: surveillance, normalization, exclusion, classification, distribution, individualization, totalization, and regulation. Miss Quinn uses normalization, exclusion, and classification in her

pedagogical practice with Amy. The greater impact of these techniques of power is that they are rarely used in isolation of each other. In her denouncement(s) of Amy, Miss Quinn uses select techniques of power in combination to indict and condemn Amy's individualization. As Foucault (1988) stated elsewhere: 'Power is not an evil...The problem is rather to know how you are to avoid...the effects of domination which will make a child subject to the arbitrary and useless authority of a teacher...' (p. 18).

Miss Quinn's verbal assaults of Amy: 'stupid,' (classification, exclusion, normalization); 'slow,' (normalization, classification, exclusion); and, '[you're] only in school until [you get] old enough to leave and pack fish in the factory just like [your] mother and [your] grandmother'

(exclusion, classification, normalization) are vile and sufficient in their domination to eradicate Amy's individualization. Her personal space has been invaded, ravished to the extent that Amy's sense of herself, her identity, is cast into a culture of silence reserved for the oppressed and dispossessed (Freire 1970, 2000). Amy is forced to accept as truth Miss Quinn's judgement of her. Foucault (1980) reminds us that truth and power are 'a chimera, for truth is already power' (p. 133). The combined force of pedagogical and juridical power is exponential. It violates the sanctity of Amy's vulnerability as a child and places upon her, at the tender age of nine, the daunting task of mounting a resistance against Miss Quinn's indictment. Foucault (1980) contends that resistance is symbiotic with power, it is 'in the same place as power' (p. 142), but when the place for self-identity has been obliterated by a stronger, devastating pedagogical force and when a concept of self-identity is imposed upon a self by a dominating and eradicating juridical form, then there is no interiorizing space for resistance. Additionally, in her powerlessness, there is no one that Amy can enlist to advocate for a pedagogy of personal identity development. There is no ethic of care for the self as practice in Amy's educational world-experience. She has been systematically and systemically victimized and sentenced to a life-time of unraveling a Gregorian knot, not of her own making, without the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of self-efficacy necessary to effect success.

The terrain of identity is highly unstable, dependent upon a plethora of internally and externally constituted factors including complex cognitive and non-cognitive knowing and understanding, and in many cases determined by the subjectivity of the individual. A measured analysis of the consistent, negative treatment that Amy receives from Miss Quinn reveals that Amy is: marginalized, fragmented, disenfranchised, disadvantaged, and dispossessed. Hall (1988) uses similar terms to describe the treatment that many immigrants have experienced in Western cities. Amy's subjective experience meets the traditional narratives of the history of oppression. Freire (1970, 2000) reminds us that '...the oppressed are not 'marginals,' are not people living 'outside' society. They have always been 'inside' – inside the structure which made them 'beings for others' (p. 74).

Amy is positioned within the culturally oppressive narrative of Miss Quinn's pedagogical practice and as such is not 'Other' but is a 'being for [an]other.' She is object rather than person to Miss Quinn. She is terrain, a dehumanized territory conquered by Miss Quinn and repeatedly subjected to undignified labeling. The recognition of her difference, rather than being the raw material for the construction of self-identity, is used against her to forge a politically and culturally constructed category akin to a new ethnicity (Hall 1992). This new ethnicity takes root in Amy's vulnerability and is destined to survive because Amy's emerging, instinctual understanding of her self-identity has been eradicated by the repeated 'sharp slap' of Miss Quinn's derogatory remarks. The natural, wide-eyed wonder of innocence within a nine-year-old child meets the caustic, narrow-minded intolerance of a domineering adult. The consequences are psychically catastrophic. Amy's inexperienced, tentative development of self-identity is razed and in its place Amy's conqueror imposes a view of identity upon her, as an object of being for another, until it is accepted as uncontested reality. After more than thirty years, Amy has not escaped the traumatic repercussions of her new ethnicity.

### **Resisting relations of power: Jane's contested identity**

I had a lot of tests when I was young but I don't know what tests they were – my parents told me I was ADHD but they heard it from one of my teachers. My teachers wanted to put me on Ritalin but my father refused. My parents were always supportive of me but my teachers were not supportive of me at all. I was a reluctant reader and I was always pulled out of gym class (I came to hate gym class) for a special education class.

I attended an all girls' school from Grades 9 -12. I was in a co-ed school to the end of Grade 8. I did not have a lot of friends in Grade 7 or 8 and they put me in a behaviour class where I didn't belong. I didn't find friendship in other children, I didn't associate with them, but I was definitely not a threat to myself or others! I had a Grade 8 teacher that told me to my face that 'I was slow!' I had another Grade 8 teacher who advised me to take Applied Courses in High School. Up until Grade 8, I had a reading difficulty. I wasn't very good at writing but my mother required me to copy a page-a-day from a book to improve my writing. She also required me to read one book a trip to my Aunt's each summer. My Aunt took me book shopping in Grade 8 and I read a book called *Young Joan*, a story about Joan of Arc. Later, in Grade 10, I read *1984* and, much later, in Grade 12, I read *Utopia*.

I chose to enroll in Academic courses within High School, because I knew – despite what past teachers had said about me – I was capable of success. My middle brother had a tremendous influence on me. He was gifted but teachers didn't respond well to

him. One teacher, in particular, in front of his peers, told him that he wouldn't amount to anything. That was a turning point in his early life. After this moment, he went on to make some unfortunate choices throughout his schooling. His choices profoundly affected me. Yet, realizing that my brother was intelligent really enabled me to see that teachers can be wrong. I knew he was intelligent, and I knew that it was not entirely his fault that his interest in academics declined. I would not allow my teachers' remarks to affect me, because only my determination mattered.

My reading continued to challenge me in High School but help came from my friends. One read the entire Twelfth Night to me one-on-one for several nights. That's when I came to know and enjoy Shakespeare. In Grade 10, I had a real difficult History teacher and my oldest brother helped me chapter-by-chapter to learn how to study.

When I was younger, I felt angry because there's nothing you can do when you're young except get angry. However, by about Grade 8, I began to rationalize, and I realized that my teachers and in-school mentors were just people and then I began to judge them and found them lacking just as they had judged me and found me lacking. My anger turned to determination and it has fueled me ever since. Now, I'm very control-oriented, strong in my organization skills and in my determination to get things done. But, I'm not very good at teamwork.

In my last practicum I was teaching Grade 8 Language, History, and Math but mostly Language. Dan doesn't try to do any work. His cognitive ability seems to be on par with his peers but his teachers have labeled him as 'stupid.' But, he wasn't stupid in my Language class. I was teaching poetry, specifically, acrostic poems. Dan wrote a great poem that he allowed me to keep for my personal record.

I was teaching another poetry lesson and Dan came in with his Special Education teacher at the end of the lesson. He sat with the other students and was trying to get involved in what remained of the class. I went over to him and gave him the assignment sheet and began explaining to him what we had done and what I wanted him to do. His Spec. Ed. teacher informed me that he couldn't do the assigned questions. Then in front of Dan, and before his classmates, and me, she began to modify the assignment. She reduced the number of questions, changed the answer format from full sentences to point form and stated that he would need more time than the other students to complete the assignment. It was very embarrassing and humiliating for me; and, I would assume for Dan as well – if it wasn't, I'm glad.

I had occasion to talk to the teacher next door in general terms about Dan, and he

simply said, 'I've seen Dan's test results and the results show that he's stupid,' which greatly implied that he believed Dan would not amount to anything. There was a culture of giving up on him throughout the entire school. Although my Associate Teacher was very encouraging of Dan and other special education students; in the staff room, I heard many references to Dan as an 'idiot,' and suggestions that he could never achieve what the other students could achieve. He had been diagnosed as having a language impairment; yet, in my poetry class, he was the only student in his group of 6 or 7 attending the deeper meaning(s) in Blake's poem 'The Poison Tree.' In the process of accommodating his learning style, I found that he was very bright but refused to do any work. One teacher referred to him as a 'tool.' That really upset me!

I thought mine was an isolated incident but I've found, with Dan, that instances like mine are more common than I had thought. I guess I'm just more sensitive to these experiences – I had my parents and my brothers as my advocates at school and at home, but Dan appeared to have no one. I was struck by a deep sense of injustice perhaps a carry-over, perhaps too much of what I felt. I'm not sure my reaction is or can ever be entirely rational.

(Jane, personal communication, 07 January 2009)

Jane's lived experience as a student is similar in many respects to Amy's. She experienced the debilitating effects of classification, exclusion and normalization on the part of her teachers. Her emerging sense of self-identity was negatively impacted by her teachers through labeling, separation from her peers during gym, assignment to a behavioural class for remediation of social skills, and counselling into an applied rather than an academic high school program. Unlike Amy's lived experience with a single teacher, Miss Quinn, Jane experiences a culture of oppression throughout her elementary school years. Her teachers, for whatever reason(s), combine, in Jane's perspective, to render her not as 'Other' but as a 'being for [an]other.' She is systematically disadvantaged, dispossessed, and displaced in her educational experiences. The resulting crisis of identity for Jane is not episodic, like Amy's, but is cumulative; the result of a series of mirrored experiences repeated from teacher to teacher throughout her elementary schooling. She is object rather than person to her teachers. She has been singled out, marked, for systemic victimization.

However, unlike Amy, Jane has advocates. The mitigating influence in her life that offsets the damaging pedagogical influences of school is her family. Her father's refusal to allow her to be placed on Ritalin, her mother's insistence that she improve her literacy skills in reading and writing, the middle brother who initially taught her to read and took care of her for a significant portion of her life, and the patient, chapter-by-chapter tutoring of her oldest brother combine to

scaffold Jane's psychic in the fragile development of her self-identity. Additionally, her family serves to insulate her and her vulnerability from the shock of being plunged into an educational world that acts upon her too forcefully and without regard for the uniqueness of her being and her potential for becoming. In Jane's experience, there is: no pedagogical attending of the pathic; no demonstration of the auspices of heart in teaching; and, no accommodating of her as a valued and significant Other (Hatt 2005). Familial love and affection support and sustain Jane and incrementally provide her with the strength and courage to be resistant: 'But, about Grade 8, I began to rationalize and I realized that my teachers and in-school mentors were just people and then I began to judge them and found them lacking just as they had judged me and found me lacking.'

Resistance, first manifested as anger, morphs into determination and finally into resolve. Jane rejects the counsel of her teacher to enroll in applied courses in high school. With a new, found sense of her efficacy, 'I knew I could do it,' Jane confronts the academic challenges of secondary and post-secondary education and succeeds. Family, friends and Jane combine to thwart the negative forces of pedagogues and schooling that threaten to leave her conflicted, worried, and potentially defeated. Her experiences have deepened her sense of social injustice and she adds this quality to her emerging identity. First for herself and then for others, Jane determines in her teaching to be an advocate for students who are marginalized, fragmented, disenfranchised, disadvantaged, or dispossessed by a dehumanizing educational system.

Unfortunately, before her sense of identity as a pre-service teacher can be established, Jane is forced to relive her experiential fear that certain students are victimized by teachers. She is dismayed that teacher negative attitudes concerning students with identified learning disabilities have not changed from her school days. She is upset, to the point of anger, that she is forced to witness a Special Education teacher, who should be an advocate for students, modify a student's work, in full view of his peers, based on a posteriori notions of categorizing and labeling. She cannot believe that she hears derogatory comments about her student, Dan, openly expressed in the staffroom; words such as 'idiot' and 'stupid' or 'tool'. She is appalled that teachers so easily and openly speak of students as objects. Jane's dismay reminds us that, 'preconceptions and prejudgments of the meaning may actually hinder or mislead us in interpreting its meaning' (Gadamer 1975, p.173). When teachers take it upon themselves to diagnose or determine a student's ability or capability without the professional qualifications or proper information, they run the risk of missing the innate potentiality and possibility of the student. Jane clearly sees so much potential in Dan especially in languages and she is perplexed and angered that her colleagues cannot see what she sees.

Jane's intense sense of social justice convinces her that she cannot justify pedagogical action that undermines the identity of a student. However, she is powerless to contravene the actions of

her teacher colleagues because she is not able to separate her emotions from the situation. The scenario with Dan is much too poignant for her and its residual trauma presses in upon her and forces her to inwardly revert to the basal emotions of anger and resentment. In the midst of this anguished torment, Jane is pulled back into her previous experiences as a student. Suddenly her own identity is compromised; the identity that she has worked so hard to build is now fractured. She feels powerless; compelled to relive her own childhood experiences as she pedagogically attends the pathic in her student, Dan. Surrealistically, Jane becomes Dan and Dan, for Jane, becomes Jane, the powerless, victimized child at school: 'When the teacher called him a tool, it upset me so much.' Her psychic transposing is so strong, so symbiotically tied to Dan, that Jane sees herself as the 'tool' thereby negating her identity as a pre-service teacher and re-establishing her fractured identity as a victimized child.

Jane is powerless to assume the role of pedagogue; she is child, not adult, and the blunting of her self-identity renders her incapable of helping either Dan or herself. Her perspective has become so narrow that she is blind to the possibilities for advocacy that her pedagogical relationality with Dan offers. The mirroring between Dan and Jane alters her self-identity, undermines her self-esteem, and negates her ability to act as an educator. Pathically, she has fully accommodated Dan's suffering but pedagogically she is not able to formulate a plan of action that will relieve his suffering or her own.

Her feelings of inadequacy or powerlessness are further compounded in her role as a pre-service teacher. She is acutely aware that if she strongly voices her opposition to the way Dan is being treated by the teaching staff, that she risks alienating her associate teacher who will ultimately judge her potential as an in-service teacher. Jane chooses passive resistance but in doing so, plunges herself into deep feelings of personal mistrust and confusion, 'I was struck by a deep sense of injustice perhaps a carry-over, perhaps too much of what I felt. I'm not sure my reaction is or can ever be entirely rational.' She stands by and watches the dismantling of her student's self-identity by a colleague, uncertain that in the process, new scars are not being added to her own fragile identity as a pedagogue.

## **Summary, Conclusions and Implications**

Amy and Jane each encounter a situation that creates a flashpoint, an all-consuming reliving of childhood, traumatic experiences perpetuated by a former teacher in Amy's case and by former teachers in Jane's case. Their involuntary responses are emotively and psychically similar and each re-experiences a denial of selfhood that results in the subjecting of personal will and agency to the power of the teacher. Their individual response is refractive and results in an immediate breakdown of self-identity. Whatever they perceive themselves to be or believe themselves to be is destroyed. Their life-world (Heidegger 1978) becomes reframed by an experience that

for each of them remains acutely traumatic. Each becomes more vulnerable. Amy needs the validation of another teacher to remind her who she is, where she is in her life, what she is doing, and to remind her of all her accomplishments. Jane, on the other hand, withdraws into her vulnerability thereby weakening her ability to pedagogically influence Dan's learning situation while at the same time, increasing her sense of social injustice, her defiance, and her personal resolve that she will not contribute to the demise of self-identity in any of her future students.

Both Amy and Jane experience the negative power of pedagogical relationality. There is nothing more powerful in teaching than the relationship that is developed between a teacher and her/his students. There are countless teachers who are aware of the incredible, positive, influence they have in the creation of identity. In their interactions with their students, they are daily reminded of how their students will remember them; their smile, their warmth, their caring and kind gestures. They are conscious of the negative impact that body language, injurious comments, ignoring, or dismissing a child, can have on the development of self-identity either at the moment or years later. But there are other teachers, as seen in Amy's and Jane's case, who seem to be unaware or uncaring of the negative impact their pedagogical relationality can and does have on children.

As difficult as it may be to entertain, there are those teachers within the profession who systematically engage in 'writing off' students. Their labelling, their categorizing, their grouping or classifying of students according to ability or disability leads to the creation of new ethnicities (Hall 1988) that are rife for discrimination. Such teachers take it upon themselves to limit their students' potential and determine their fate. It is unthinkable that in this day and age of multiculturalism in Canada that we would hear professional teachers in a staffroom making derogatory comments about a student: 's/he's not the sharpest tool in the shed,' 's/he's certainly not a gift to intelligence,' or 's/he was bred from the shallow end of the gene pool.' Such comments coupled with labels such as 'stupid,' 'dull,' 'idiot,' or 'tool' serve to devalue students from subject, worthy of validation, to object, unworthy of recognition.

Sometimes, teachers give up on their students claiming that because the student has been identified that s/he has therefore reached a plateau in her/his learning ability and capability. Belief in student possibility and potentiality is set aside and 'identified' students are allowed to do minimal work, to academically coast through the year, or their entire school career. This process might be referred to as systemic victimization. Students are segregated into special education classes or written up as losses even while being integrated into regular classes. Such terminal decisions are rationalized and given validation through psychological reports and justified by the recommendations contained in Individual Education Plans (IEPs); and, through actions initiated by school or district Identification, Placement and Review Committees. Students are often marginalized and segregated under the guise of accommodation, modification, or

Special Education. No child should be systemically victimized by an educational system or systematically deprived of genuine, meaningful, pedagogical relationships by the professionals (teachers, administrators, and support staff) who work within the system. The reality is that some teachers systematically, and some schools and districts systemically, victimize a portion of their student population. As Jane observed in the school where she was teaching, ‘There was a culture of giving up on him [Dan] throughout the entire school. In the staff room, I heard many references to Dan as an ‘idiot,’ he could never achieve what the other students could achieve.’ A culture of giving up on a student is a condemnation of the education system that allows it to occur.

However, it is not for a lack of education policies and statements that practices of exclusion and victimization occur. Governmental agencies, school boards and schools have been grappling for decades to create fair and equitable policies that address a person’s race/ethnicity, culture, religion, gender, social class, sexual orientation, and physical or developmental abilities. Boards and jurisdictions have provided training and programs for their teachers and students on accessibility, character education, and bullying. In many jurisdictions, accessibility standards are the rules that businesses and organizations, including schools and boards, now have to follow to identify, remove, and prevent barriers to accessibility. These standards are developed for customer service, employment, information and communications, transportation, buildings, and structures. Character Education emphasizes the importance of equity in inclusive schools that welcome and respect all students and provide each with an opportunity to genuinely feel a sense of belonging, and to inspire them to achieve to the best of their ability. Prevention and intervention policies and procedures provide students with an opportunity to learn and develop in a safe and respectful community; one, that fosters a positive learning/teaching environment and supports academic achievement for all students.

Safe Schools legislation has mandated a more progressive discipline approach, which suggests a continuum of prevention programs, interventions, supports, and consequences to address inappropriate student behaviour and to build upon strategies that promote and foster positive behaviours. The focus has shifted from one based solely on punitive action to one that encourages, indeed, requires appropriate corrective and supportive action. Schools are encouraged to utilize a range of interventions, supports, rewards and consequences that are developmentally appropriate. When determining a consequence, the principal must consider disability-related behaviour and racial harassment leading to a student’s behaviours as mitigating factors, and take into account the cumulative impact of suspensions, and/or exclusions on a student’s access to education.

Teacher training is presently focused on individual student learning with great deal of emphasis placed on Differentiated Instruction. Students are accommodated through a variety of teaching

strategies and pedagogical materials that differentiate the content, the process, and the product. Teachers are enabled through professional development to use a variety of techniques or devices to accommodate a variety of diverse students in their classrooms based on readiness, learning style(s), and interests. Vygotsky (1980) posited that social context and the interactions of the student within that social context play a fundamental role in the acquisition of knowledge. Teachers are key in providing specific interventions such as scaffolding that will move the student forward within their 'zone of proximal development' thus allowing the student to know success.

In addition to change in policy and professional development, change in the delivery of Special Education models has been the cause of great debate and has resulted in many changes in the delivery of programs that move away from parallel programming towards one focused on full-time integration. There is constant debate as to whether placement in mainstream programming is superior to special placement. There is debate as to who benefits from the integration and whether barriers such as class sizes and/or lack of educational assistant support have an effect on delivery and programming. Although policies of inclusion are great in principle, the successful implementation of any inclusive policy in education is largely dependent on the willingness of teachers and educators to support inclusive education.

Teachers who practice pedagogical relationality in their interactions with their students know that modifications and accommodations are necessary for some of their students and that for others with special learning needs, professional identification of the area(s) in need of attention is absolutely essential before the proper teaching and learning strategies can be applied. However, all of these interventions are administered not to label or categorize the student but to scaffold the teacher's belief in the student's innate potential as subject. When a student is repeatedly labelled, s/he will inevitably come to believe the labelling and act accordingly thus fulfilling the teacher's preconceived notion of her/his inability to succeed. Teachers need to appreciate the ability that they have to influence the lives of their students. Teachers have the opportunity to not only witness but to assist individuals to positively transform their lives and the world around them and in so doing, their pedagogical engagement in education becomes relational and is rooted in hopefulness (hooks 2003 p. 14). When teachers believe that learning is possible for each student, that individual learning is scaffolded through relationality, and that teaching is not merely sharing information but sharing in the intellectual and spiritual growth of our students then as hooks (1994) contends, 'the necessary conditions [are created] where learning can most deeply and intimately begin' (p. 13).

In order for teachers to recognize the full potential of relationality they need to attend the pathic in their teaching on a daily basis. Attending the pathic is the ability to accommodate the Other as self (Hatt, 2008). This is an ability that great teachers possess, an ability that is borne out

of intentionality, appropriateness, and responsibility and that is nurtured through discipline, dedication, and hard work on the part of the teacher, especially when that work is directed toward reaching a student who has given up or become disengaged in her/his learning. The teacher who attends the pathic in pedagogical relationality takes the time to care about her/his students as individuals, greets each of them in the hallway with a smile, and interacts one-on-one with each to discover personal likes and dislikes and to create a truly meaningful connection. Teachers who attend the pathic recognize that every student is unique and has something truly valuable to contribute to the classroom, the community, and the world. Teachers who believe in their students, their potential, and their inner good believe in themselves as catalysts that spark intellectual curiosity and wonder within their students for learning, knowing, understanding, and becoming.

A pathic teacher is a teacher who is passionate about her or his subject and extends this passion to all of her or his students regardless of whether the student is reluctant to learn or delayed in her/his achievement. The pathic teacher believes and advocates for her or his students and disdains any process or procedure that would result in any one of them being ‘written off’. Genuine pedagogical relationality is focused on attending the pathic and must be modeled in classrooms and schools on a daily basis and emphasized by school and board administrations regularly in professional development activities and in individual teacher growth plans. Alsup (2006) reminds us that, ‘...education is political and educational discourse holds cultural and disciplinary capital for school administrators...’ (p. 184). Pre-service teachers need to be enlightened to the political nature of education if they are to be sufficiently informed and empowered to change an educational system that can and does create ‘new ethnicities’ with some of its students. The power to become transformative in the lives of students; the power to engender and enculture positive self-identity within students lies in the transaction of the pathic in teacher/student relationality. Such transaction must be modeled in teacher education programs by faculty and associate teachers. It is this quality that distinguishes a teacher as a true pedagogue and it is the most important aspect of enactive teaching and engaged learning. The impact of relational pedagogy on student identity can and does last a lifetime.

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