

# Quality assurance in tertiary education from a Māori (Indigenous) Perspective.

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## **Abstract**

The Concise Oxford Dictionary (1976, p.909) defines the word *quality* to mean ‘possessing a high degree of excellence, concerned with maintenance of quality (quality control)’. What is not made explicit in this definition is the fact that the idea of *quality* is located and determined within a western European cultural tradition. The aim of this paper is to explore what Māori people (the indigenous people of New Zealand) require by way of quality in higher education. The cultural historical context of the education of Māori will be examined. This paper will then explain the two-stage approach adopted by Māori. First, the efforts towards the inclusion of Māori knowledge in mainstream education, and second, the development of an alternative higher education system for Māori. Finally, this paper will describe the requirements of New Zealand law relating to accreditation and quality assurance, its shortfalls when applied to wānanga, and introduce the steps that wānanga are taking towards an autonomous system.

## **Introduction**

In the nineteenth century, education in the west European tradition was presented to Māori by the colonising Pākehā (settlers of European descent) as a civilising and politically neutral enterprise. But the question of whose knowledge and what constitutes knowledge for inclusion in the curriculum was inherently ideological and political (Apple, 1979, p.vii). Māori knowledge being ‘subjugated knowledge’ in Foucault’s (1980) terms was disqualified as inadequate, naïve and located low down on the hierarchy of knowledge, beneath the scientific level of cognition. The consequence of that disqualification was the erosion of Māori language and culture to the point of immanent Māori language death identified by Benton (1979). Loss of language, culture and identity in the face of the invading culture was socially debilitating for Māori. The alternatives were assimilation or a ‘return to knowledge’ through local criticism outside the established regimes of influence and power (Foucault, 1980, p.81).

Many Māori rejected assimilation and opted for a return to knowledge whereby quality in education meant the reproduction of their own language, culture and social usages. But in doing so, they also accepted the need to function effectively in the invading and dominant culture. Thus, Māori who were committed to their identity as Māori are by definition bicultural (Apple, 1979, p.6).

In opting to maintain their own culture, Māori developed a two-stage strategy. The first stage involved proposals for ameliorating the alienating effect of mainstream education by pressing for the inclusion of Māori knowledge in the curriculum. This task preoccupied Māori intellectuals for eight decades of the twentieth century. Although largely accomplished, it is still a work in progress. The second stage, begun in 1980, was marked by Māori initiatives to take control over their own education from pre-school through to the tertiary (post compulsory) level. This too is work still in progress.

## **Incorporation of Māori Knowledge in the Education Curriculum**

### ***The efforts of Sir Apirana Ngata***

New Zealand schools were established in the nineteenth century. The Native Schools established in 1867 were artefacts of colonialism designed to ‘process people’ as well as to ‘process knowledge’. They served as ‘agents of selective tradition and cultural incorporation’. Sir Apirana Ngata, farmer, politician and the leading Māori intellectual of the twentieth century drew that conclusion long before it was penned by Apple in 1987. Ngata (1928, p. xiii) wrote—

There are Māoris, men and women who have passed through the Pākehā *whare wānanga* (highest school of learning) and felt shame at their ignorance of their native culture. They would learn it if they could, if it was available for study as the culture of the Pākehā has been ordered for them to learn. ...It is possible to be bicultural.

In 1923, Ngata translated that insight into transforming action by persuading Parliament to support the publication of research into Māori culture. He clearly understood the nature of power and knowledge - that is, the ability of the state to generate ‘truth’ through research activity and thereby manage the social and political economy. Ngata’s efforts culminated in the establishment of the Māori Ethnological Research Board to publish the work of Best, Buck and Skinner. Ngata adroitly used the imprimatur of the Board to persuade the senate of the University of New Zealand to include Māori language as a subject of study for B.A. To placate potential opposition, Ngata compromised. He pleaded that Māori be admitted into the curriculum among the foreign languages. The senate stonewalled the request on the grounds that there was no literature to support a teaching programme (Walker, 1990, p.195). Ngata

overcame that objection by citing the work of Sir George Grey, *Nga Mahi a Nga Tupuna*, (Māori myths and traditions) the Māori translation of the *Bible* and *Ngā Moteatea* (songs, chants poems).

Ngata's own collection of songs, chants, poetic laments and lullabies was published in 1924 as supplements to the Māori newspaper *Te Toa Takatini*. *Ngā Moteatea*, with translations and annotations, was subsequently published in three volumes by the Polynesian Society, with the first volume appearing in 1959. As the epitome of quality and scholarship, preparation of the materials subsequently used in *Ngā Moteatea* earned Ngata the award of a Doctor of Literature from the University College of Canterbury in 1948.

The Senate's agreement to admit Māori language as a degree subject took a further twenty five years to translate into action, but not without prompting from Ngata. At the Young Māori Leaders Conference that he organised at Auckland University College in 1939, Ngata asked the delegates to consider whether Māori language, traditions, history and literature should be taught in schools at the secondary and tertiary level. He also pressed the university to establish a chair in anthropology in the hope of luring his colleague Dr Peter Buck back from Hawai'i. The conference recommended the establishment of a Māori social and cultural centre for adult education through Auckland University College, Auckland Teachers College, the Workers Educational Association and the Auckland Technical College (Peters, 1990, p.p.190-191).

### ***Māori penetration of the Academy***

The outbreak of World War II delayed Māori penetration of the academy until 1949 when Maharaia Winiata was appointed as a tutor in Māori adult education at Auckland University. He was augmented by the appointment of Bruce Biggs as lecturer in Māori language in 1951, and Matiu Te Hau in 1952 as a tutor in adult education. The pedagogy of the adult education tutors concentrated on what might be termed cultural reconstruction, validation and incorporation of Māori knowledge into the academy, albeit in the marginalised Department of University Extension. Biggs, domiciled in the Anthropology Department, provided academic respectability to the enterprise with his emphasis on quality research in Māori and Polynesian linguistics. The breakthrough made at Auckland was emulated over the next thirty years by the establishment of Māori studies at all teachers' colleges, polytechnics and universities.

In this early period of Māori penetration of the academy, students invariably found the university alien and intimidating. They tended to major in Māori Studies and Anthropology where they felt culturally comfortable. In order to increase recruitment and spread Māori students across all faculties, Māori academic staff decided to establish marae (Māori meeting and learning places) on campus to make the university more user-friendly and culturally

welcoming to Māori. It was a protracted ten-year struggle. Victoria University of Wellington opened Te Herenga Waka Marae in 1987 and Auckland University opened Waipapa Marae the following year. Other tertiary (post-compulsory) institutions did likewise. The modification of tertiary (post-compulsory) education provision to accommodate the two founding cultures of the new nation was extended to incorporate the cultures of Tangata Pasifika (people of Pacific descent) with the opening of the fale (Pacific meeting and learning space) at Auckland University in 2004.

Although Māori staff and cultural symbols had the desired effect of increasing Māori participation in tertiary education, the university was still an intimidating institution for students from schools located in low-socioeconomic areas, or low decile schools as described by the Ministry of Education. Their sense of cultural alienation was heightened in faculties with competitive and limited enrolment. Students who enrolled in medicine, law and engineering under MAPAS, the Māori and Polynesian Admission Scheme, were particularly vulnerable to criticism of debased entry standards. To ensure their survival, students formed their own study networks and support groups for their preferred mode of group learning.

### ***Legal Requirements relating to Quality Assurance***

The Māori effort to make tertiary education more responsive to the indigenous culture of New Zealand, and by extension the Pacific, was complemented by the Hawke Report 1998. Hawke advocated the decentralisation of post-compulsory education and training, and also recognition of Māori claims to education under the ‘principles’ of the Treaty of Waitangi.’ Education was subsequently aligned with the government’s treaty settlement policy by an amendment to Section 181 (b) of the Education Act 1989 requiring University Councils to ‘acknowledge the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi’. The law required tertiary education institutions to take account of the Treaty in their defining documents, including mission statements, charters and profiles (Walker, 1990, p.346).

Initially, universities made a ritual bow to the Treaty by acknowledging its principles but little else. In the first cycle of university audits by the New Zealand Universities Academic Audit Unit in 1995, the inclusion of a treaty section obliged universities to develop their understanding of the treaty and its place in the life of the nation. David Woodhouse, Chief Executive Officer of the academic audit unit, helped them with an extensive paradigm of ‘Audit Factors Relating to the Treaty of Waitangi’. The salient features of treaty compliance pioneered by Woodhouse (1992, p.20) include—

- Māori participation in decision-making at all levels
- regular consultation with Tangata Whenua (the indigenous people of the land)
- Iwi (tribal) input into charters and profiles

- visible symbols of Māori culture in an institution
- staff development courses on treaty awareness
- support mechanisms for Māori students
- relevant courses dealing with Māori knowledge and culture
- support for research projects relevant to Māori.

Treaty compliance was new territory for tertiary education institutions. Following the first round of general audits, two universities, one polytechnic and the Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners commissioned their own audits on treaty compliance. The reviews by Walker (1998a, pp.3-4; 1998b, pp. 12-26; 2001a, pp.3-5; 2001b, pp.8-10) show that they were interrogated on measures taken to—

- increase recruitment, retention and graduation of Māori students
- provide learning support for Māori students
- recruit Māori staff
- identify students with academic potential for induction as junior staff; and
- increase Māori participation in governance and management.

The emancipatory thrust of treaty audits was sanctioned by the Ministry of Education's Tertiary Education Strategy released in 2002. The Tertiary Education Commission optimistically looked forward to 2007 when, according to the Strategy (Ministry of Education, 2002, p.29)—

- Māori will exercise greater authority and responsibility within the tertiary education system
- Māori communities will increasingly engage with a tertiary education system that is more supportive of the Māori world view, and which is inclusive of Tikanga Māori (customary practice).

These statements by the commission define the end point of the two-stage strategy initiated by Māori intellectuals to make mainstream tertiary education more user-friendly to Māori students. As indicated earlier, it is still work in progress.

## **An alternative for Māori in Tertiary Education**

### ***The Establishment of Wānanga***

The second stage of Māori taking control over their own education at the tertiary level was initiated by Professor Whatarangi Winiata of Victoria University of Wellington. On his return from Canada in 1978, Winiata was horrified to learn that his own tribe was facing Benton's dire prognosis of Māori language death. He launched the Generation 2000 project,

Whakatapuranga Rua Mano, with the objective of quadrupling the number of Māori language speakers in his tribe by the turn of the century.

Between 1978 and 1981, Winiata made four submissions to the Government on behalf of his tribe, the Raukawa Marae Trustees, to fund a Māori institute of learning. Notwithstanding that the teaching of courses in Māori language, customs, and hapu (sub-tribal) and iwi (tribal) history had been started by voluntary staff, they were rebuffed. Undeterred by the unfavourable response, the Raukawa Trustees established Te Wānanga-o-Raukawa, their centre of higher learning at Ōtaki.

In 1984 the Wānanga began offering its first degree-level programme, a Bachelor in Māori Administration. Although the degree had no official recognition, the Raukawa Trustees had confidence in the ability of their own people to deliver quality teaching to the students. The objective was to produce bilingual and bicultural administrators capable of working for their own people or in the public service.

Winiata's vision of establishing a wānanga to satisfy Māori educational and cultural aspirations, not adequately met by mainstream tertiary institutions, was validated in 1988 by the educational reforms under the Ministry of Education's *Tomorrow's Schools* policy. The provision for 'special character schools' and Hawke's recommendation recognising Māori claims to education as a treaty right, were incorporated in the Education Amendment Act 1990. The act allowed for the establishment of colleges of education, polytechnics, universities and wānanga (Walker, 1990, p.346). The act states—

A wānanga is characterised by teaching and research that maintains, advances and disseminates knowledge and develops intellectual independence, and assists the application of knowledge regarding *ahuatanga* Māori (Māori tradition) according to *tīkanga* Māori (Māori custom).

Three wānanga were accredited by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) under the legislation; Te Wānanga-o-Raukawa (based in Ōtaki), Te Wānanga o Aotearoa (based in Te Awamutu) and Te Wānanga o Awanuiārangi (based in Whakatane). Although these three institutions have much in common in terms of their pedagogy for *ahuatanga Māori* (Māori tradition), they have their own distinguishing characteristics.

At Te Wānanga-o-Raukawa, Professor Winiata focuses the pedagogy on Iwi/Hapu studies, the socio-political organisational groupings of Māori culture that was subjugated and damaged by the colonial enterprise of the nineteenth century. Much of the research at this wānanga is concentrated on the recovery of suppressed knowledge on Iwi and Hapu as a

contribution to redefining *ahuatanga Māori*. The prodigious research outputs of the students are lodged with their own tribal archives.

For Dr Rongo Wetere, the Chief Executive Officer at Te Wānanga o Aotearoa, one of the fundamental objectives for the institution is increasing Māori participation in tertiary education. With 10 campuses and an enrollment of over 33,000, Te Wānanga o Aotearoa is the largest tertiary institution in New Zealand. It is the most successful institution at bringing in second-chance adult students and stair-casing them on to higher education.

Dr Garry Hook, the new Chief Executive Officer at Te Wānanga o Awanuiārangi, has in the space of two years redefined the objective of the Wānanga to become one of the elite providers of tertiary education in New Zealand. As a scientist, Dr Hook has dedicated the Wānanga to increase the output of Māori scientists, a gap that was until recently neglected by mainstream universities.

### ***Accreditation and Quality Assurance of Wānanga***

Degree proposals from wānanga are subjected to a rigorous process of scrutiny and approval by the NZQA. Wānanga have to convince a panel of stakeholders in tertiary education, including polytechnics, colleges of education and universities, that they are capable of teaching degree-level programmes. The degree requirements laid down by the NZQA (2003, p.1-13) include—

- capacity to support a degree-level programme in terms of facilities, resources, and quality management systems
- qualified staff who are engaged in research
- the title aims and learning outcomes of degree proposals are coherent
- appropriate delivery and learning methods
- assessment procedures that are fair, valid and consistent
- student guidance and support systems
- provisions for evaluation and review of programmes; and
- provision of facilities for research and support for staff engaged in research.

Although all three wānanga have had their degree proposals accredited by NZQA, they do have a problem arising out of their special character regarding '*ahuatanga Māori*'. In this respect wānanga are boutique providers of tertiary education. Their core programmes are Māori language, culture and customary usages. Accreditation panels have no problem measuring these against existing degrees in universities. But with the extension of the field into iwi/hapu (tribal) studies and whakapapa, (Maori epistemology, equivalent to Foucault's genealogy of knowledge) accreditation by NZQA becomes problematic. The problem is

compounded when a proposal is submitted in the Māori language complete with cultural values such as wairua, (spirituality) aroha, (love, compassion) whanaungatanga (kinship, relationships) and manaaki (care for, support, hospitality). In this case NZQA has to rely on the expertise of an all-Māori accreditation panel.

As the wānanga expanded their degree-level programmes into education, science and business, the NZQA requirements became a straitjacket constricting the expression of '*ahuatanga Māori*' in these domains. In attempting to meet the requirements of NZQA in a degree proposal for a Bachelor of Māori Business for example, the proponents often end up with a 'me too' look about their degree. But as Māori extend *ahuatanga Māori* into these domains, as they are doing in teacher training and pre-school education, then it becomes apparent that the NZQA paradigm for assessing wānanga degrees is outmoded. Consequently, Te Taihū o Nga Wānanga, the national association representing the three wānanga, is proposing that NZQA devolve power to accredit degrees to a Wānanga Qualifications Validation Authority. A precedent has already been set for that to happen by the devolution of quality assurance functions in polytechnics to APNZ, the Association of Polytechnics in New Zealand (NZQA, 2003, p.51).

Legislation for a Wānanga Qualifications Validation Authority is currently in draft form, pending an appointment with the Minister of Education. In the meantime Te Taihū o Nga Wānanga is pressing ahead through WINHEC, the World Indigenous Consortium on Higher Education, to establish an international indigenous system for quality assurance and degree accreditation. To this end, a panel from America, Hawai'i, Australia and New Zealand was convened in July 2004 at the three wānanga. The panel considered the draft document Guidelines for Accreditation of Indigenous Higher Education Programmes. The panel interrogated three programmes, one from each wānanga using the guidelines. A pre-school training programme, derived entirely from Māori (indigenous) epistemology received the highest rating.

## **Conclusion**

Quality in higher education for Māori (indigenous) people means the inclusion and reproduction of their own language, culture and whakapapa (epistemology) in both mainstream and wānanga (indigenous) tertiary institutions. Implicit in this project is matching quality assurance requirements as defined by NZQA.

Wānanga have successfully met quality assurance criteria set by NZQA in the delivery of higher education. But, in the development of wānanga since their inception in 1992, they have outgrown the NZQA framework. The next stage in their development is the delivery of quality assurance in terms of indigenous epistemology in the international arena. The

establishment of WINHEC is a step in that direction.

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