

Maintaining student-centered relationships: An innovative collaborative intervention programme that builds capacity by enhancing and sustaining communities

*Robert Hogg, Naumai Smith, Juliet Boon Nanai, Tammi Uluinayau, Colleen Leauanae,
Junior Sonny Samuela, Litiuingi Ahio*

Auckland University of Technology (AUT), Auckland, New Zealand

Abstract

New Zealand's education system is heavily dominated by Pākehā (New Zealand European) ideologies, despite education idiom regarding the implementation of multicultural pedagogies. Although a Pākehā tertiary education system is needed to function in a predominantly Eurocentric society, the end result for Māori (the indigenous people of New Zealand) has been one of disillusionment and disengagement. With the advent of colonization, the mechanisms used by Māori to teach and learn have become hindered and fragmented, abruptly reducing the primacy of those cultural identities that are meaningful and important to Māori. This paper presents an innovative collaborative intervention programme, which is currently situated within a mainstream University. The programme, namely, Tūhono (to join or connect), aims to provide culturally appropriate academic and pastoral support for Māori health students, by enhancing and sustaining relationships of trust with both internal and external communities. Tūhono, now in its third year of existence, was fashioned from a systematic review of the literature, coupled with concerted efforts from a team of staff (academic and allied) to develop a programme to address the academic under performance of Māori health students.

Furthermore, it is widely accepted that the tertiary education environment is continually changing and evolving, which often exacerbates a number of uncertainties, none of which are more important than funding. At present, Tūhono is primarily resourced from external funding, and as such, the continued existence of the programme is unknown from one year to the next. To ensure that Tūhono becomes fully integrated within the Auckland University of Technology's (AUT) Faculty of Health and Environmental Sciences ethos, a sustainability strategy consisting of specific capacity-building criteria (i.e., type of structure, formal linkages, presence of champions, effective leadership, resources, administrative policies and procedures, and expertise) has been developed and implemented. Therefore, the primary purpose of this paper is to outline, rationalize, and discuss the specific action points and outcomes of this strategy, which predominantly aim to ensure the long-term sustainability of Tūhono, by entrenching the programme within the faculty's day-to-day operations as business as usual.

Keywords: Innovation; Collaboration; Cultural appropriateness; Relationships; Leadership; Sustainability.
