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Making a difference: The Role of the Māori Administrator in Universities

The *Tertiary Education Strategy 2010-2015* in Aotearoa/ New Zealand states that the Government aims to 'increase the number of Māori students achieving at the higher level' (Tertiary Education Commission 2010, p10). For this to be achieved universities need to play their part in assisting Māori students to progress beyond the undergraduate degree and into postgraduate study.

This paper draws on my Master of Philosophy research. My research will critically examine the role Māori administrator's play in the recruitment and retention of Māori students in universities in Aotearoa including culturally specific pastoral care, accurate course advice, information on degree requirements, appropriate learning pathways for students and supporting academic staff to track student progress through to completion. These additional responsibilities, which are often unrecognised by the university, demonstrates the important role a Māori administrator can make in retaining Māori students in the academy.

The Aotearoa University Context

In Aotearoa/New Zealand there are eight universities. The main university campuses are in Auckland, Hamilton, Palmerston North, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin. Each university is charged with providing a service through teaching, scholarship and research. Within the university

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structure, it is staffed by academic and non-academic staff. Non-academic staff includes, but is not restricted to, administrators, technicians, research assistants and senior managers. Administering education in Aotearoa has been referred to as a 'daunting complex' due to the variety of administrative functions (New Zealand Taskforce to Review Education 1985, p.8). Figure 1 below provides an overview of a central organisational structure of a university in Aotearoa/New Zealand.
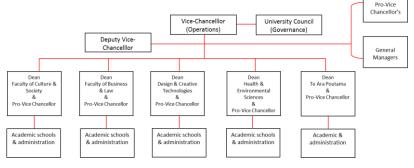
Figure 1: University structure

(Adapted from AUT, 2011)

Within this environment, the roles of administrators are sometimes ill-defined (Dobson & Conway, 2003). Good administrators, as defined by Martinelli-Fernandez (2010) are individuals who demonstrate certain skills and character traits. University administrators, in departments, schools or faculties adapt to a culture of high standards, combined with approachability, availability and a 'can-do' mentality (McCaffery, 2004), and as a result, contribute to the success of a department, school or faculty and its stakeholders. 'Success' can be defined in many ways. In this instance, success means identifying the skills, traits or knowledge bases necessary to

work with key stakeholders as an administrator in a university context (Lovell & Kosten, 2000).

The Māori Administrator

What sets Māori administrators apart from their non-Māori counterparts is that they undertake a role which is linked to Māori cultural concepts and behaviours of a tikanga (custom) nature which is best understood as a commitment to service the Māori community (Nikora, Levy, Henry & Whangarpirita, 2002). In this context, the Māori administrator takes on the role of whaea (mother, aunt, aunty) or matua (father, uncle) and provides a service in a culturally appropriate manner such as pastoral care.

The Māori administrator is often identified as a conduit between the student, the university and the whānau (family) (Durie, 2011). These cultural responsibilities, often unrecognised by the university, demonstrate the important role of a Māori administrator in an academic context which adds value to the university. The whānau is one of the characteristics described by David Kember. Circumstances in the home and family life can, at times, affect the student's decision to stay at university. In te ao Māori (the Māori world view), the whānau is regarded as an important feature of daily life. Not only does whānau relate to the immediate whānau, but it also includes the extended whānau as well. To Māori, the whānau relationship is an important characteristic as these whānau relationships can improve the educational success for Māori (Durie, 2004). The Māori administrator, as the conduit, can work through the cultural aspects alongside the student to allow for the student to make an informed decision about their studies.

Each university in Aotearoa/New Zealand have implemented mechanisms to support all students including Māori students. These include outreach and bridging programmes, financial incentives such as scholarships and marketing approaches to recruit and retain students. These

outreach programmes provide secondary school students with early campus experiences such as visiting a university campus and attending classes with university students (Garman & Mortensen, 1997). Māori students who attend the outreach programmes are often linked to and supported by Māori Liaison officers. Like Māori administrators, Māori Liaison officers act as a conduit between the student and the department, school or faculty. In this context, the role of the Māori Liaison officer is to take prospective Māori students to the relevant administrator who are seeking information about the nature of the courses, the workload involved and teaching methods before they commit.

Participation, Recruitment and Retention
The late 1990s saw a transformation of Māori participation in tertiary education in Aotearoa. From a period of relative exclusion, Māori participation, according to Mason Durie (2011) 'has evolved, reflected in the curriculum, the student body, the academic workforce, tertiary education policy, the establishment of tribal tertiary education institutions and indigenous research' (p73).

From the early 1980s to 2000, the rate of Māori participating in tertiary education increased by 20 percent (Durie, 2011). In 2002, Māori had the highest participation in tertiary education of any group aged twenty-five and over (Durie, 2011). Māori participation rates in tertiary education continued to exceed those of other groups in 2007. While the increases are small, a number of factors impact on Māori students participating and achieving in tertiary education. The factors impacting on participation include financial, undertsanding the benefits of tertiary education, role models, cultural responsibility and the quality of information provided to students prior to entering university. These factors can be a barrier to students, particularly Māori students participating in a university education. Therefore, this is an ideal

opportunity for the Māori administrator to provide assistance in breaking down these barriers.

Student retention

The large amount of research that has been undertaken on student retention has been based on Vincent Tinto's model of student departure. Tinto (1975) asserts that social and academic integration are essential to student retention. While Tinto's model is based on an assimilation framework, questions have been raised regarding the validity of his model in being able to fully and appropriately capture the experiences of minority students.

It has been suggested by Inglebert and Pavel (2000) that the underlying assumption of many retention models is that those from cultural backgrounds different to that of the institutions dominant culture need to adapt to the institution, with institutionalised attitudes relying on students assimilating to the culture of academia; thus the result being the student's culture is viewed as deficit. Jefferies (1997) also argues that this underlying assumption can be reflected in a range of behaviours among Māori, including adherence to a belief of which implies success in the mainstream system is based on an acceptance of the dominant culture to the exclusion of one's own culture.

The concepts of dual socialisation and biculturalism, challenges the assumption of separation, transition and incorporation. This is the extent to which an individual finds it possible to operate successfully between two cultural environments and adjust his or her behaviour according to the norms of each culture.   Māori administrators can assist students in transitioning between two cultures by navigating two landscapes, one of which is different from home realities, requires both individual and institutional responsibility.

The Kember and Rangihau Models

To explore administrative roles within the Aotearoa/New Zealand university system, a case study model will be developed using the administrative theoretical model devised by David Kember and the cultural perspective created by John Rangihau.
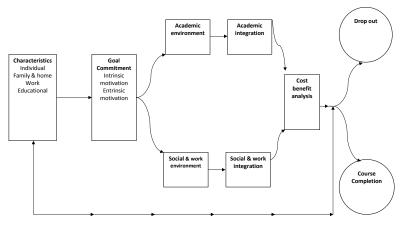
Figure 2: The Kember Model

(Adapted from Kember, 1990)

Kember's model, as outlined in Figure 2, was developed as an intervention to reduce students dropping out of university. His linear model takes into account the variety of reasons and interactions for drop out.   The variables associated with Kember's model include:

- Characteristics;
- Goal commitment;
- Environment and integration.

The individual, family and home situation, work and education characteristics included by Kember are linked to the subsequent components of his model and do not relate

statistically to students dropping out (Kember, 1990). Kember's model can be described as a recycling loop, in that it is a reflection of the movement of a student throughout the course of their study and takes into account the changing variables during this period.

Rangihau's Model

Another relevant theory is that conceived of the late John Te Rangianiwaniwa Rangihau, who developed a diagrammatical model which assisted non-Māori understand the Māori world-view more effectively. His model demonstrates the holistic nature of the Māori world-view and the inter-connectedness of Māori cultural aspects.
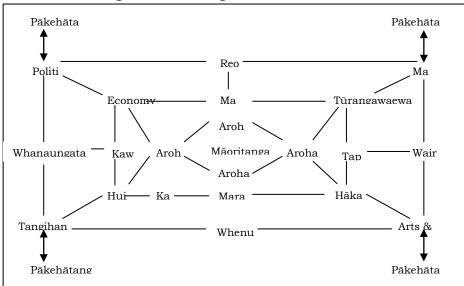
Figure 3: The Rangihau Model

(Adapted from Ka'ai & Higgins, 2004)

Rangihau locates 'Māoritanga' at the centre of the model, a term that was coined in the 1970s to describe the Māori world-view. As Ka'ai (2004) outlines, by locating the Māori world at

the centre of the model and Pākehātanga on the periphery, it depicts an interface with the Pākehā world and reflects a culturally specific framework from which to understand a Māori world-view. With the Māori world located at the centre of Rangihau's model, the researcher can position their research within that model as everything is inter-linked and based in a Māori world-view, the Māori values will then form the backbone of the research (Ka'ai, 2004).

The merging of two worlds
This table outlines the relationship between Kember's variables of characteristics, goal commitment, environment and integration and the cultural concepts of Rangihau's model.

Table 1: Merging variables and cultural concepts

Kember's variables	Rangihau's cultural concepts	Kember's variables	Rangihau's cultural concepts
Characteristics		*Environment*	
Individual	Tuakana/teina	Academic	Tuakana/teina
Family & home	Whanaungatanga	Social & work	Manaakitanga
Work	Aroha		Awhi
Educational	Manaakitanga		Kanohi kitea
	Awhi		Whanaungatana
	Kanohi kitea	*Integration*	
Goal Commitment		Academic	Tuakana/teina
Intrinsic motivation	Tuakana/teina	Social & work	Manaakitanga
Extrinsic motivation	Whananungatanga		Awhi
			Kanohi kitea
			Whanaungatana

Using the administrative theoretical model devised by Kember, and the cultural perspective created by Rangihau, a case-study model will be developed which will explore administrative roles utilising these models.

Conclusion

Literature on university administration can be classified as descriptive as it combines all facets of administration within the university structure. There is however, a dearth of literature written on the roles of Māori administrators. This research will examine the role which Māori administrators play in the recruitment and retention of Māori students in New Zealand universities. A case-study approach will be employed, drawing on the first-hand experiences of the researcher as well as the responses of a representative sample group of current and former students. The completion of this thesis will contribute to the corpus of literature written on university administration and in particular Māori administrators in tertiary contexts.

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