



Mā pango mā whero ka oti  
te mahi:

## Digging for Māori Values at Te Tai o Poutini Polytechnic

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## Mā pango mā whero ka oti te mahi

In “Te Ao Hou” (1954) “Mā pango mā whero ka oti te mahi” is about:

By black and red together it is done.

*Red (whero) refers to the kōkōwai - a mixture of shark oil and red ochre - which was smeared on the body of the chief. The rank and file workers (plebians) looked black by comparison. This saying means that only by the united labour of chiefs and commoners can the task be accomplished. It was a powerful appeal in calling for volunteers. The saying has fallen out of use because chiefs are no longer smeared with red ochre and because, as a wit succinctly put it, ‘We’re all chiefs nowadays!’ All these sayings were used to eulogise and stimulate the energetic qualities of man and to extol the virtues of co-operative effort. These make it clear that the old-time Māori frowned upon the idle person who shirked his responsibilities and who side-tracked the strenuous occupations of the community. The irritated leader was bound to fling an acrid remark to demolish the loafer.*

Leadership in the classroom is an individual and group activity, and the above proverb puts the demand and completion of the task before the social hierarchy of the chiefs. In so doing the group mentality and the collective investment into ensuring that objectives are met and the virtue of labour and industry are extolled.

*That’s why I stayed. Because of them, they’re the ones that pulled me through.*

(Student participant)

This quote epitomises the findings of this research.

## Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	2
Mā pango mā whero ka oti te mahi.....	2
Executive Summary.....	5
Introduction .....	7
Literature Review.....	9
Participants .....	12
Methodology.....	14
Results.....	15
Discussion.....	20
Māori Values in Vocational Education – Good Practice Signifiers .....	22
References .....	23

## Executive Summary

Tai Poutini Polytechnic is a vocational tertiary education provider that operates from Greymouth on the West Coast of New Zealand and delivers vocational education all over New Zealand. This study focused on Tai Poutini's Digger Schools which operate in the North and South Islands and which provide students with skills and knowledge to prepare them for civil construction and extractive industries. These Digger Schools have historically achieved higher Māori participation and completion rates than the institutional average and it had been theorised that this may be due to high alignment with Māori values.

The initial stage of the research focused on reviewing the literature about Māori conceptual frameworks to identify possible models from which to capture the various phenomena that might be exhibited in the learning institution if Māori values were present. Although these theoretical positions offered an initial wide view of the concepts that were to be studied, they were not necessarily applicable to the vocational education context. As such, it was decided that a grounded theory approach would offer a methodology that would allow for the tikanga of the classroom and its links to retention be the principal driver for the development of any theory or model. Hence, qualitative data (student interviews and observational field notes) were analysed to provide evidence of how cultural values might manifest in the learning environment.

Participants were students who were enrolled in formal qualifications offered by Tai Poutini Polytechnic Digger Schools. In total, five teaching environments from three different geographical areas (Auckland, Hamilton and Invercargill) were observed between June and September 2014, and 32 participants were interviewed which was 35% of all students enrolled at the time of the study. The interview participants volunteered and did not need to identify as Māori.

Analysis of the data indicated that there were three main concepts/values from te ao Māori (the Māori world) that were clearly manifested in this educational environment.

These main values were:

- manaakitanga,
- whanaungatanga and
- whakapapa.

The expression of hospitality and generosity is the value of manaakitanga. The expression of the importance of relationships is whanaungatanga and whakapapa is the importance of connection to family. The other values that did not feature as much as these were: mauri, tapu and noa, mana, and whare wānanga. Te reo Māori was definitely used by those students who had a grasp of te reo when greeted or interviewed but was not considered in itself to be a contributing factor towards retention.

Encouraging a connection to family and to the group underpinned by the qualities of connectedness and sustainable relationships appears to have promoted and supported the high success of Māori students in this particular tertiary setting.

More work is needed to understand the implications these findings have for teaching, learning and pastoral care in the tertiary teaching environment. Although this study indicates that Māori values were clearly present in the education environment studied, this does not in itself indicate that they were solely or directly responsible for the educational success of these students. Further work needs to be done to see if these values can be translated and transferred into different learning contexts, with a view to improving the retention rates of Māori students in other subject areas, and ultimately therefore improving Māori success in tertiary education.

## Introduction

Educational performance for Māori students in the tertiary sector is an intricate part of the Tertiary Education Strategy (TEC, 2014-2019). Hence, an educational environment where Māori are enjoying high levels of success is of particular interest. Evidenced-based research has the potential to enhance past and present theoretical notions of teaching and pedagogy and provide insights on the field being studied.

Central to this study then was to establish if Māori values and concepts had a role in the high retention rates of students in the Digger Schools. This involved analysing the perceptions and beliefs of students in regard to difficulties and barriers they experienced during their learning journey and their personal motivations for engaging in tertiary study. To do this required the researchers to determine a research methodology that could provide rigor and validation to the study and ensure that any findings would be underpinned by empirical data.

Initially, it was intended to scope the research topic around te whare tapa whā framework (Durie, 1994) as a potential theoretical model to guide the research. It then became apparent that models that describe the Māori world view as a whole, may have limited utility in capturing a limited set of phenomenon. This provoked the question as to how suitable the tapa whā model was for this study. There was risk that the study might have inevitably become an exercise of “*fitting*” and “*validating*” data into a set of predetermined categories that may or may not be relevant to the main research question. In this case, to ascertain if there was engagement by students with Māori values, and to determine which values found expression in student testimony and behaviour. Although not inexhaustible the values of manaaki, whanaungatanga, mauri, tapu and noa, whakapapa, mana, whare wānanga and te reo Māori are easily recognisable and are fundamental as part of a system of virtue and ethics, and cultural norms in te ao Māori. As such, these values formed the basis of the search – digging for evidence of any of these Māori values in the Digger Schools.

Identifying Māori values in the field first requires some debate as to the legitimacy of the concepts and the validity of the methodology that would be used, as these values are inextricably culture bound. Can they exist without any pre-existing notion of what they are in the minds of those that are present and still be part of a causal behavioural system instituted to measure the notion of the quality of education through retention? What can we identify to be the actual concepts at work that are credible, and can be linked to the reasons for student persistence? Using grounded theory, the field researcher collects the data about tikanga and mātauranga Māori and so the conceptual platform cannot be developed without awareness of the vast area that is being negotiated.

The awareness of this risk is paramount given that this is a grounded theory approach where the role of the researcher is to show a departure from their own discriminations and allow the field or the wānanga to take place. Tikanga as procedure or as a custom or as a systematic approach towards ethical theory, whether it is historically rooted into tribal customs maintaining the polyphyletic transmission of knowledge, or it has developed independently as a set of principles in a classroom setting with learned and intuitive knowledge guiding the way – either way, it requires a theoretical sensitivity in knowing that what is currently being described within the arena of tikanga is as much measured by knowledge of procedure but the embodiment of the tikanga as well. As it emerged through the process of self-measurement it became a measurement in itself.

Being tika or developing the appropriate response in any given scenario is the essence of tikanga, it has established itself through time as a set of conventions or principles that has endured, and has shown durability as it has been consistently used as cultural norms. Tribal difference abounds however; an essential dimension of tikanga is the precept that knowledge retention for tribes is the belief that customary difference and diversity although fragmented is the source of its strength.

Heterogeneity and tikanga are synonymous in that they serve to understand the diverse nature of life and people and develop over time. Important to understand is while tikanga is deeply rooted in Māori cultural norms and beliefs it embraces diversity, it flourishes when challenged by other world views and is pliable to meet differing institutional pressures.

Whether on a marae as part of the whānau/hapū or iwi network or an individual in a normal every-day setting, the process of qualifying the engagement with mātauranga Māori and its deeply rooted values is decidedly complex.

Observing a value in isolation from others, and the extent to which they can be separated from each other for the convenience of analysis is precarious given the close contextual relationships that many Māori values hold. For example: whanaungatanga and manaakitanga can be viewed as both sharing the role of guiding the same virtues of enhanced relationships with people and the environment. However, despite the fact they both strive towards the same thing they can both find expression in different ways. Whanaungatanga heavily relies on manaakitanga or the virtue of hospitality to foster and engender its own purpose while there may or may not be familial connection or a community connection as a reason to show your manaakitanga. In fact both these values at times were



noted as occurring at the same time in the field, and may have been evidenced through one statement that showed a commitment to these values.

With language being considered to be the most definitive pathway towards understanding culture and a classroom setting with the subject matter that does not have a focus on learning language (as in the Digger Schools), the extent to which students may have had the knowledge or not to participate in their culture was not immediately clear. Having to forgo the expectation that students may or may not be able to express their knowledge about their commitment to Māori values in te reo Māori meant a radical departure from the essentialist perspective which in the current revitalisation climate may tend towards. Instead of a deficit model approach then, we used methods that enabled the field to express itself in its own constructed paradigm, regardless of ethnic background or knowledge. Effectively, this allowed for the idea of developing a grounded theory approach.

## Literature Review

The paucity of literature in te reo Māori about Māori customs and concepts is crucial in understanding the role of the Māori academic in spanning the current hiatus of knowledge difference. The first ever monolingual dictionary of the Māori language “*He Pātaka kupu te kai a te rangatira*” was only recently published in 2008. Monolingual language communities have been formed to aid in the revitalisation of te reo Māori and are shown through the advent of immersion schools in the early childhood, primary, secondary, as well as tertiary sector. This has enabled the development of a new generation with a platform to launch the growth and development of Māori language over the next 25 years (Ka'ai, Moorfield, Riley & Mosley, 2004). This cultural phase is continuing to evolve and is now complementing the existing bicultural climate in *Aotearoa*/New Zealand. The current acceptance that the translated lens of Māori values and concepts is sufficient in providing a bona fide description of Māori culture may suffice for now however, as the monolingual and redeveloped monocultural lens emerges with the present generation into the multi-diverse environment of New Zealand the translated descriptions of Māori concepts will be enriched further with far more depth and contextual relevance.

Māori values and concepts have been a significant part of the New Zealand historiography, (Ka'ai, et al, 2004), New Zealand customary laws (Te Matahauariki Research Institute, 2013), New Zealand education methodologies (Smith, 1999) and a New Zealand political socio-economic face (Walker, 1990; King, 1992). Scholarship on Māori values whether sourced from the ethnological roots (Best, 1924) of academics trained in the philosophical

discipline (Patterson, 1992) and Māori scholars themselves focused on transmitting knowledge of the above to future generations (Mead, 2003), has had extensive and a far reaching amount of dialogue, reflection, and debate to provide a generous platform to help teachers and learners alike to understand the basic value system of te ao Māori.

Depending on the relevant social context and the level of cultural competency knowledge and political support (whether institutional or governmental) participation within the strata of Māori norms and values is not an unreachable task. It is encouraging that the resulting scholarship has played a role in addressing the cultural and educational needs of Māori in health (Durie, 1994, 2000), the legal field (Stephens & Boyce, 2013; Te Matahauariki, 2013), or in education itself (Smith, 1999; Bishop, 2006). As Māori student needs have become more specific within differing educational settings, the field needs techniques that can be validated or reconstructed and are able to be empirically justified.

Māori scholarship within the education sector has seen an increase of literature and matauranga Māori that envelopes nearly all subject areas in both the lower and higher levels of the qualification system. Generally the foci has been on improving Māori student success but with differing research scope and driven by differing institutions. Particular research supported by Ako Aotearoa has shared a similar scope but with a different institutional lens focusing on improving Māori student's success (Te Kupenga Matauranga o Taranaki, 2011; Curtis, Wikaire, Lualua-Aati, Kool, Nepia, Ruka, Honey, Kelly & Poole, 2012). Other literature that is more specific to the secondary classroom (MOE, 2011) provides a list of cultural competencies which are the same values that emerged throughout this research.

There is a consensus with this research and the ideas of Curtis, et.al (2012) where it was suggested that: "Educational institutions need ensure teaching methods are interactive and creative, provide opportunities to link theory to practice". This can be reinforced through community interaction and a link to community settings where participation in one's own identity is part of the teaching and learning environment (Te Kupenga Matauranga o Taranaki (TKMoT), 2011). Where social alienation can become a factor for a Māori student in a classroom environment using an effective bicultural approach as a method of improving Māori student success has achieved success comparably to other students (Greenhalgh, Walker, Tipa-Roger, & Hunter, 2011).

Focusing on partnerships (Greenhalgh et al, 2011) and cultural responsiveness (MOE, 2011), an effective mentoring process that engages the students into learning, and, if able to incorporate Māori knowledge, cultural norms and values will be highly recognised and valued by Māori students (Kerehoma, Connor, Garrow, & Young, 2013). When tribal knowledge is being taught the most suitable and comfortable learning environments are

those that are supportive, inclusive, a lot of group learning takes place, as does a high level of interaction with the community, and the ability to freely express their own cultural identity (TKMoT, 2011).

Matauranga Māori or Māori knowledge is now the abiding term used widely in Māori education networks, it used to be “*taha Māori*” (Hokowhitu, 2004) but now the above terms has gained traction over the last twenty years (Mead, 2012). Explaining the full complexity of *Matauranga Māori* Mead explains:

*Matauranga Māori is thus made up of a core of traditional knowledge plus the values and ethics that go with it, and new knowledge, some of which we have added as a result of our discoveries and research, and some we have borrowed outright from Western knowledge and from our experiences of living with exponents of other belief systems and other knowledge systems. We are now reshaping, rebuilding, reinterpreting and reincorporating elements of matauranga Māori to make it fit the world we live in today.*

Whether the whole scale of cultural knowledge within the matauranga Māori paradigm is needed or not, the idea of focusing on a particular set of values and connecting it to another phenomena of retention is precisely the point that Mead discusses in reincorporating elements of Matauranga Māori and making relevant today (Mead, 2012). Just as significant is the rise of the distinct tribal knowledge sphere that is just as interrelated, if not still autonomous (Doherty, 2012). It was not uncommon during this research for students to express an aim of participating within the wider family networks following the completion of their studies. Currently, *Te Hono o te Kahurangi*, a kaupapa Māori principles and *wharehenui* concept is the National Qualifications Authority Evaluative Quality Assurance Framework identifies eight key principles of relevant for a quality matauranga Māori context (NZQA, 2013).

The eight key concepts are: *Rangatiratanga*, *Nga Tikanga*, *Manaakitanga*, *Turangawaewae*, *Whanaungatanga*, *Kaitiakitanga*, *Te Reo Māori*, and *Pukengatanga*. The ridge pole or the “*tahuhu*” of the house has the function of providing an overarching connection to the other values or the other parts of the house. In the case of this model the ridge pole was given the concept of “*Manaakitanga*” which coincidentally was an explicit value shown throughout this research. Coincidentally, the other two values of *Whanaungatanga* and *Te Reo Māori* which were of a high frequency also form part of the principles in the *wharehenui* house design.

Where there is a workplace focus the importance of cross-cultural awareness, including understanding of Māori values beliefs and practices will raise the success and outcomes for Māori students (Kerehoma et al., 2013). According to Kerehoma et al., (2013) encouraging

culture, connection to family, group-work underpinned by the qualities of connectedness, and sustainable relationships also promotes the high success of Māori students in the workplace.

## Participants

The study involved observation of the classroom and interviews with students enrolled in formal qualifications offered within Digger Schools that were delivered across New Zealand (Auckland, Waikato and Southland). The formal qualifications that the students were enrolled in were the Certificate in Civil Plant Operations (Introductory) and the Certificate in Civil, Quarrying and Mining (Introductory).

Participants volunteered from two cohorts in Auckland, two in Hamilton and one in Invercargill over the period between June and September 2014. From these cohorts of students, 32 participants were interviewed which was 35% of all students enrolled in the qualifications at the time of the study.

According to 2013 TEC Educational Performance reports, 28% of Tai Poutini Polytechnic's students identified as Māori. The Digger Schools studied had a much higher Māori population than the institutional statistic (at 28%) with 51% of students identifying as Māori. Pasifika people were also represented in higher numbers most probably due to two cohorts being in the Auckland region.

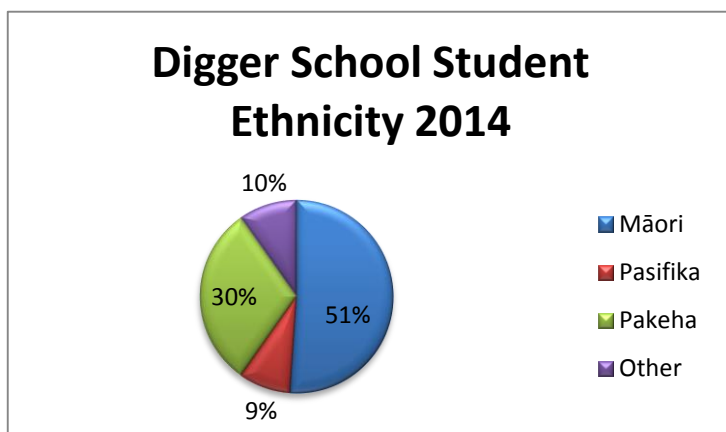


Figure 1: Digger School Student Ethnicity 2014

This aligns with the population demographics of the civil trade based workforce where statistics indicate that Māori are 50% or more of the workforce in this industry (Department of Labour, 2009).

The ethnicity of the student cohorts that participated in this study varied from 67% Māori (Hamilton cohort) to 19% in Invercargill.

The institutional statistic for Māori course completions in 2013 was 80% compared to 81% for all students enrolled in the institute. At the time of this publication, not all the courses of the cohorts studied were complete. However, the two cohorts that were complete did indicate an average course completion rate for Māori students of 85% in Auckland, and 99% in Hamilton (Table 1), which is higher than the 2013 institutional statistic of 80%. This indicates that the cohorts studied were still exhibiting the phenomena of Māori enjoying high levels of educational success.

Completion Rate All Students	Completion Rate Māori Students only	Cohort
82%	85%	Auckland 1
99.7%	98.5%	Hamilton 1

Table 1: Completion Rates of Digger Schools studied 2014

The cohort of students studied ranged in age from 16 years of age to 65. It is interesting to note that the Invercargill cohort had younger students with half of the students being under the age of 25 years of age.

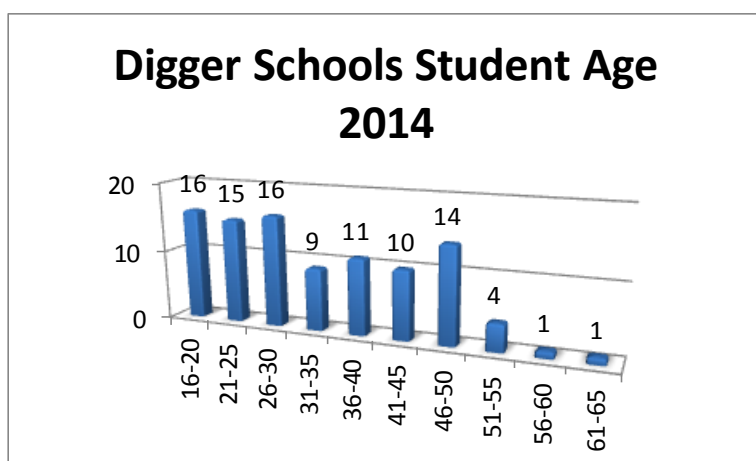


Figure 2: Digger School Student Age 2014

## Methodology

When engaging in an enquiry, the paradigm that the researcher is viewing the phenomena or issue from will often dictate the inquiry methods used to collect or extract data (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). The researcher attempts to understand a situation by interpreting different data sources in context, in order to identify themes.

A study that seeks to understand the subjective world of the individual is said to be interpretive (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007) which suggests that the researcher is attempting to interpret the world view of the subject, using methods or tools that would be commonly associated with ethnographic studies such as interviews, narratives and observations.

This was a cross-age inquiry investigating perspectives of cohorts of participants of different ages producing a 'snap-shot' view of the population being studied (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). Cross-age inquiries can provide information that indicates changes in inherent attitudes that may have occurred as a result of changes to industry or society over time and can therefore be useful for indicating changes in perspectives, making it appropriate as a method for gathering data for this study.

With the qualitative data gathered from observation and semi-structured interviews, analysis included the identification of general themes by matching, comparing, ordering, contrasting and aggregating notes, then moving towards more focus and more specific clustering (Cohen et al., 2007; Stake, 1981). Using actual quotes and thick descriptions of observed actions aligning with categories also provided framework for the inference of meaning.

In particular, field notes from observation studies and verbatim interview transcripts were inspected for statements and events of significance that revealed Māori values. The explanations of actions and the knowledge behind the actions or practice were then analysed, deconstructed and categorised to enable depth (layers and complexity of information) and breadth (variety of topics) of content that would support the end result (i.e. the statement that provides manifestation of the Māori value). Statements within categories were questioned by a disinterested peer to support the categorising process as it required the researcher to clearly rationalise the distinction between statements in different categories.

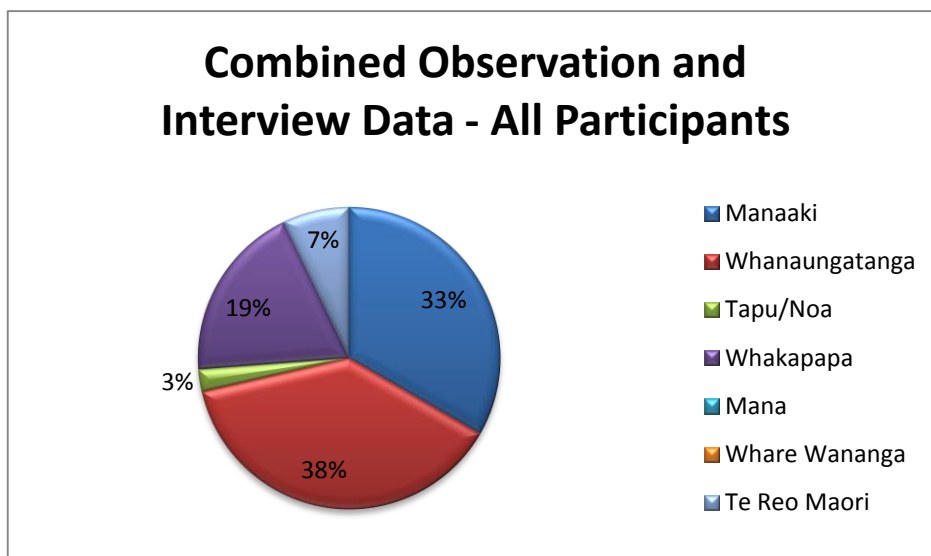
Potential ethical concerns were identified and addressed before the commencement of the study and this included avoidance of coercion, ensuring informed consent, considerations of confidentiality (for the student participants) and security of information.

## Results

During the investigation, the field researcher observed 23 actions that were identified as being aligned within the paradigm of Māori values. Within interviews, there were 169 statements that were identified as aligning within the paradigm of Māori values.

Māori Value	Interview Statements	Observation	Total
Manaaki	55	6	61
Whanaungatanga	53	7	60
Tapu/Noa	2	-	2
Whakapapa	28	5	33
Mana	4	-	4
Whare wananga	2	-	2
Te reo Māori	25	5	30

**Table 2:** Collation of Interview and Observation Data against Māori Values



**Figure 2:** Combined Observation and Interview Data - All Participants

From this analysis of the results from the combined interview and observation data, three values that were most commonly evidenced were:

- Manaaki (32%)
- Whanaungatanga (31%)
- Whakapapa (17%)

Te reo Māori was not indicated by students as a reason for staying and engaging in learning, but was none the less clearly present in the learning environment, as evidenced by way of using Māori words, and names.

The three Māori values of *manaaki*, *whanaungatanga* and *whakapapa* were exhibited in all study sites, including those with high Māori participation rates (between 67% and 50% Māori in Auckland and Hamilton) and with lower Māori participation rates (Invercargill 19% Māori, 75% Pakeha). Te reo was also evident in all sites studied.

The two most predominating values were: *manaakitanga* and *whanaungatanga* (See Figure 3).

The following definition from Prytz Johansen in *Exploring Māori Values* (Patterson, 1992) provides an apt description of *Manaakitanga*:

*Manaaki creates community. In the kinship group it both arises from the community and creates it and therefore is a double necessity, or rather a matter of course. Manaaki ties people so that nobody knows who gives and who receives. It is impossible for us to tell whether a Māori shows manaaki for his own sake or for that of others. He does so for the sake of kinship.*

The essence being that the catalyst for the creation of a community, whether it is a student based or not, the above definition and the support from interview transcripts shows clear manifestation of the philosophy of *manaakitanga*.

Whether it is an exercise for their own family networks as one student pointed out:

*My reason for joining wasn't to get a job cause my old man back at the east coast and I just wanted to go back and fix it up that*

For another student who was committed to her role as a Mother and made the statement:

*So my family they my main inspiration especially my daughter getting me going in the morning and that...*

Or even the son who is supporting the Mother in his own family. He made the comment:

*I joined the course just to help my mum*

When wider family networks are involved the sense of collective obligation to the kinship group starts to emerge. One student commented:



*Um, my family support, from back home all my whanau supports me. Um, especially my mum, she's proud. And my cousin. Uh she is- she's a lot of support. All the bro's support me.*

Classroom etiquette is closely aligned to the value of *manaakitanga* and was expressed in many ways:

*Yeah yeah everyone looks after each other for help and stuff.*

*Like If someone makes a mistake, everyone's just like oh- we'll- we'll- we'll like help you out with that.*

Students who come from various educational backgrounds can struggle at times with the theoretical element in the courses studied, but find solace in the knowledge that their peers are there to lend support. This aspect of *manaakitanga* was best summarized by the following:

*We have a weakest link in this classroom but we all have each other's back, you know. If we see him... um... like, kind of um- lagging behind, where- in the theoretical side of um the classroom. Then we go over you know, and we give him a hand.*

Employment and the role of the tutor are intimately connected as part of the classroom solidarity; many a student expressed a heartfelt gratitude for the knowledge and expertise of the tutors and their role in improving their job prospects and in life in general. One student commented:

*But even X [Tutor] can even help us find work which is even better. And plus he knows all the good stuff. All the ins and outs.*

If a student encountered difficulties to complete the tasks the support they received was duly noted. One student said:

*Like it's hard but the tutors- like when we have problems we just ask the tutors, can you break it down to us more simple? Or more easier and they just give us like our more easier way to do it. But they still let us figure it out ourselves; And they just give us the bigger picture of what's gonna- what's gonna outcome for us.*

Even the little details of preparation of student time to attend and ensure a consistency of attendance is noted by one of the students:

*Yeah, yeah uh come to family environment. Uh- uh, we start uh motivating each other before we start class. 30 minutes. And uh drop him off or pick by uh the tutors.*

Despite the fact the scope of the research focused on particular Māori values it didn't necessarily preclude other people from other ethnicities from showing an appreciation for this type of classroom environment. The following quotes illustrate the above point.

*As a Tongan like I feel like I'm a Māori and I'm not that different. Like, I don't care if I'm Tongan and I - um I think- think that everyone is the same.*

Another student from Chinese background made the following remark:

*No matter whether you're Pakeha Māori or Chinese. We have four Chinese here it's quite good they enjoy this situation around the classroom.*

The inextricable link between the statements above and *manaakitanga* cannot be underestimated. Reilly in the Chapter entitled "*Whanaungatanga in Ki te Whai Ao ki te Ao Marama*" (Ka'ai et al, 2004) argues that it is better to start with the common cultural value amongst the differing social structures that occur in Māori society. This shows how a group's sense of community can be described without locking it into a static sequential kinship group such as the whanau, hapu and Iwi model (Reilly, 2004).

Important to note is Reilly's use of Dame Joan Metge's definition of whanau and therefore the essence of *whanaungatanga* which shows the dual nature of *whanaungatanga* - similar to *manaakitanga* whereby its outcome was met through its initiation and also has a broad application. She states (Reilly, 2004):

*Real life whanau do not and should not be expected to conform too closely to the constructed model. Each has its own character, its own degree of integration and effectiveness, created and recreated out of the interaction between the personalities of its members and the circumstances of time and place.*

The way in which this value was expressed showed a resonance with the above. Signs of respect by addressing people properly featured highly. One student said:

*I try and make it a point to shake their hands every morning say hello in their language every morning.*

They also share humour in learning to understand each other. One comment follows this stating:

*And now? Far... just can't get enough of each other ae. Everyone understands each other, and we can joke with each other... to a point, you know. And then we end up... we end up learning as well as being hungry for more information.*

Respect for tutors again follows the route of *manaakitanga* but has a perception of the role of mentoring within a classroom environment. To the point a student made it quite clear...

*That's why I stayed. Because of them, they're the ones that pulled me through. Like on our homework and stuff. Um like for motivation, and like giving each other examples of how to make it easier on ourselves.*

The group mentality is part of the collective responsibility that is clearly needed in a high health and safety environment. Gaining acceptance of each other's role is essential in meeting the requirements of the job. *Whanaungatanga* is a key aspect of this and is illustrated by the following comment.

*We work together it doesn't matter who's on the machine everyone can accept there's other responsibilities about the job.*

If a gender imbalance occurs then it is natural for the process of *whanaungatanga* to address that. A female student commented on her perception of this situation:

*...there was a lot of support and especially with the Māori males even with females helping me along.*

Similar for another student the pull of family and aspirations tied to his skill acquisition in the digger classes showed an external pull from *whanaungatanga*. He iterates:

*I really wanted go back asap really or if I could go back tomorrow I would or today I want to go back and start helping out cause they're cutting down trees at the moment.*

When one student comments that since the outset of the course the feeling of comfort was created from simple introductions, the primary role of *whanaungatanga* which is to make everyone familiar has been met. One student's comment:

*I think I just loved the first day we got introduced to each other...*

Adding to alleviating any social discomfort is also the role of *whanaungatanga* which is to create a sense of family. Familial terms arose as if these relationships were the norm and tended to guide the impression that this was preferential. One student said:

*Then we go over you know, and we give him a hand. And being brothers and sisters to them. To each other.*

Another student was more direct:

*Everybody here - I consider them more family. Cause we're pretty close.*

*Whakapapa* and te reo Māori did not feature as highly in terms of the statements within the data (at 15% and 17% of data, see Figure 3). The student responses showed a definite link to the concept of genealogical connection and a level of awareness of te reo Māori, but lacked the contextual depth as shown by the other two values. For the most part students who knew their whakapapa would present their mihi when the opportunity was given, but others who had less knowledge on their Māori identity didn't contribute. The extent to which these two concepts were engaged with would depend on knowledge of familiar lines of genealogy, and people who are able to engage with each other in te reo Māori. Where the main purpose of the course was to teach the required skills to drive diggers and other machinery it was understandable to hear a low level of te reo Māori being spoken.

## **Discussion**

Using a cross-aged, naturalistic and interpretive approach to examine the potential link of high retention rates in the Digger classes of Te Tai o Poutini polytechnic to the existence or engagement with Māori values enabled the researchers to gain evidence that Māori values were indeed present in the learning environment studied.

The surfacing of the two main values *manaakitanga* and *whanaungatanga* is not to be underestimated given that these had high level of support from the read literature. The observations confirmed the process in action in all areas studied while the transcripts although retrospective, demonstrated the particular social milieu that was able to broadly apply the above concepts into the classroom situation. Even though the Invercargill cohort had lower numbers of Māori students (at 19%) the main values were clearly evident.

While pastoral care is already a concept that is common in tertiary education, the utility and cultural value of *manaakitanga* and *whanaungatanga* to add to the stock of tools and competencies for teachers as demonstrated in this project has potential to drive more success for Māori students.

The sense of community in all of the Digger classes was extraordinary, given the diverse background of the student members as well as the basic challenges of meeting course requirements. The role of student/teacher was apparent but the deeper lines of relationship were explored and engaged with seeing the student pride and resilience to want to complete, while maintaining the ethic of group solidarity throughout. *Manaakitanga* isn't a surface value – it is fundamentally a human ethic of striving to discover virtue through the act of virtue itself.

Understanding *whanaungatanga* and applying the concept at the same time reveals its true nature. Similar to *manaakitanga* it provokes the individual or group into action to engage with the virtue of creating social unity and social comfort in any given context. The transcripts revealed a high level of respect for peers, students, family and the job opportunities created out of achieving their qualifications. An underpinning concept that promoted the cohesion of the group and sustained the virtue of completion via the unity of the class was a key factor in terms of inspiring the students to higher levels of achievement.

When describing the role of all New Zealanders in the present socio-legal context Alex Frame in *Grey and Iwikau a journey into custom, Kerei raua ko Iwikau Te Haerenga me nga Tikanga* (2004), Frame poignantly says: “*As New Zealanders we are all contemporary participants in this great trek undertaken by Grey and Iwikau towards the flourishing of humanity, through understanding, both of diversity and commonality.*”

While all effort was taken not to influence the outcome of this study it has to be recognised that the lead researcher as a Māori male may have influenced the outcome. It is possible that Māori values and attitudes might have occurred or been expressed more often than might have been normal, merely due the presence of the researcher. This is acknowledged, and care was taken not to inform the participants about what the researcher was looking for. It can also be argued that manifestation of Māori values such as those identified in this study would either have been present or not, and therefore the influence of the researcher should have been limited.

Further study would confirm the transferability of these concepts within other educational environment across discipline areas and irrespective of ethnicity. The concepts of caring, sharing and peer support are not new to education, but these findings provide a new empirical framework with which to engage in new conversations about retention.

## Māori Values in Vocational Education – Good Practice Signifiers

The classroom environment studied had definite signifiers of Maori concepts/values in action in particular, *manaakitanga* and *whanaungatanga*.

The main signifiers were:

- Preparedness and readiness of the class to receive “*manuhiri*” or visitors
- Collective responsibilities of hospitality and comforting of visitors were shared
- Teacher/student relationships in a relatively informal situation were genuine and respectful
- Social alienation of individuals was not evident – all students appeared engaged and comfortable
- Teacher and peer mentoring were qualities that were embraced and appreciated
- Ethnic, cultural and gender difference were qualities that were respected and understood
- Self-awareness and self-responsibility were values that derived from the journey and goals of the collective
- Social hierarchies sourced outside of the classroom weren't as important as the social functioning of the classroom
- Goals of learning and qualifications were clearly defined and attached to improved well-being
- Teaching and learning strategies were structured to reflect the social and educational diversity of the classroom

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