

Kia Hiwa Ra! Being watchful: The challenges of student support at Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiārangi

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Abstract: Support for indigenous students must be relevant and specific to the community from which the students hail. It may therefore be a decolonizing experience. At Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiārangi (TWWoA) a necessary but exciting opportunity has arrived to address the pedagogies used in student support to determine whether they are traditional, colonized or a hybrid of both. In this paper, Monte Aranga offers insight into the traditional Māori forms of vigilance and care which serve as precedents for contemporary learning situations; Carl Mika considers the effects that dominant Western practices of literacy have on the Māori body and thus on the spiritual facet of being Māori; and Susan Mlcek discusses the symbolic and pragmatic engagement of deliberate acts of teaching. It is argued that indigenous institutions must always be challenging commonly held notions of knowledge, learning and teaching so that culturally appropriate pedagogies of student support continue to emerge.

Keywords: curriculum design; literacy; Māori pedagogy; Wānanga

Introduction

‘Kia hiwa ra!’ We begin by explaining the terms and context of the phrase “Kia hiwa ra!” which is prefixed to our abstract above. It is an exclamation that was shouted from the palisades or stockades by sentries at specific times throughout the night to be “Alert” and “Watchful” (Williams, 1992, p.54) against potential disaster. On hearing this, other sentries and villagers would know that the sentry was awake and that all was well. This phrase is part of a larger injunction or whakaaraara (Williams 1992, p. 452) to be watchful, and in a contemporary context is used as an oratorical device before formal speeches by Māori orators. An extended version with a translation follows:

Kia hiwa ra! Kia hiwa!	Be watchful! Be alert!
Kia hiwa ra ki tēnei tuku,	Be watchful at this terrace
Kia hiwa ra ki tēnā tuku,	Be alert at that terrace
Kia apurua koe ki te toto	Lest you be overwhelmed
Whakapurua tonu	And the blood flows
Whakapurua tonu	
Kia hiwa ra! Kia hiwa ra!	Be watchful ! Be alert!

It is not difficult to see the relevance of this whakaaraara (chant) to keep the watch alert or give the alarm in time of attack, as the academic ritual of critical analysis at the Wānanga is itself a seeking out and type of dialectical engagement. This is especially the case when there is resistance from students to engage in practices such as overt criticism which can be seen as anti-social and anti-Māori by some students. However, it is not the aspect of being critical that concerns many Māori, especially if the intention is a positive one, but the cultural fact that one could inadvertently hurt other people’s feelings. It is made clear to students at this stage that critical analysis as a tool is not used as an ad hominem or a deliberate attack to the person, but is basically a close scrutiny of views and the logical entailment of those arguments. In this sense a

dialogical relationship (Freire, 1970, p.37) is maintained between student and lecturer in learning and transformation with the student's mana or self-esteem still intact and their understandings still valid. (Nakata, 2007, p.3). Students are further reminded of the rigor that Māori traditionally engaged in to ensure knowledge was retained accurately and not contaminated. Before long, robust discussion ensues.

Another Māori concept that is relevant to student support is the notion of "manaakitanga" which comes from the verb "manaaki" which means to "entertain" or "show respect" (Reed, 1984, p.25). There are other permutations of meaning that include; "to support", "take care of", "give hospitality to", "protect" (Moorfield, 2005, p.76). For our purposes, the notion of supporting and caring for students is appropriate here. Furthermore, manaaki is a compound of the words "mana" and "aki". The meaning of mana refers to secular and spiritual power, charisma, prestige, authority, control, status, authority, jurisdiction and mandate (Moorfield, 2005, p.76). The word "aki" is, according to Williams (p.75), a remnant of an ancient Polynesian article. But it is in the word "akiaki" which means "to urge on" that the connotation of showing kindness and respect is evident. In relation to helping students at Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiārangi, manaaki means to support them in their endeavours and to show respect and hospitality to them and their needs.

The act of manaaki or caring for someone has added social and spiritual dimensions, in that the carer is able to accumulate the intangible quality of "mana" or spiritual power and authority, which in itself is capable of being diminished or lost. A successful venture or activity increases a person's mana, and an unsuccessful one decreases it. A further characterization of mana introduces a metaphysical component in that:

Mana in turn can be seen as a (supernatural) power that can be present in a person, place, object or spirit. It is commonly understood as prestige, power or authority, but we might also say that such a status is derived from possessing mana. (Patterson, 1992, p.40).

This extraordinary quality is also seen as an indestructible force of the gods (Barlow, 1991, p.61) or ancestors which can be perceived to be one and the same - that is, elemental and spiritual, tangible and intangible. Mana Atua (power of the gods) therefore is an extraordinary quality within a person that is both spiritual and physical and condensed within the term Mana Manaia (extraordinary power). Our concerns with student support, however, revolve around Mana Tangata (individual power) where a person realizes their full potential as complete human beings by caring for and supporting others like students, or by students caring enough to fulfill their obligations by completing their studies successfully.

To continue with our lexical analysis, the addition of the suffix "tanga" to the word "manaaki" gives us "manaakitanga" meaning "hospitality" or "kindness" (Moorfield, 2005, p.76). There is also the added notion of showing "generosity" or "compassion", that is, by being kind and generous to others, one's well-being is enhanced and one's mana escalates within the community. There is a reciprocal notion at play here in which a balance of relationships is played out between the giver of manaakitanga and the receiver of manaakitanga. The ideal within this cultural determinant is to achieve a balance in which the measure of giving and receiving is one of equivalence. The practice of manaakitanga therefore, in relation to student support at Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiārangi, is not confined to providing only pastoral support, which in itself may advantage the institution rather than the student (Caccioppoli & Cullen, 2006), but encapsulates the achievement of balance from the institution together with academic staff and the student's own efforts to attain the required academic production outcomes for success. For a number of reasons many of our students are adult and/or second-time learners, who have been out of the educational system for a number of years and usually have the added burden of bringing up a

child single-handedly, while struggling to improve their skill base. Some have dropped out of an unsympathetic mainstream schooling system that did not cater for their learning and knowledge needs or even the way in which they saw the world (Nataka, 2007, p.2) so in this sense, Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiārangi offers them a largely indigenous environment in which to transform their lives. Accordingly:

The Wānanga subscribes to an on-going process of cultural empowerment to inspire its people and community to broaden and enhance their knowledge base to enable them to face the challenges of a multicultural future with confidence, assurance and dignity. (Awanuiārangi Student Handbook, 2007, p.5).

Of course the āhuatanga Māori (Māori tradition) and tikanga Māori (Māori custom) emphasis of tribal whare wānanga as enshrined within the 1989 Education Act, has its critics like Elizabeth Rata, who believe that although indigenous knowledge like science is important “...only science has a place in the work of a university” (Rata, 2007, p.38). Manaakitanga or support for indigenous learners extends therefore not only to assisting them with academic requirements and contingent needs but also in maintaining a culturally supportive environment in which to learn.

Speculating about disembodiment: literacy and Māori

When we indulge in academic writing then a disengagement from our bodies takes place. As we engage with the tenets and laws of academic writing we undertake more than just articulating ideas; as Māori we are additionally moving outside ourselves to get beyond feeling, emotion and spirit. Disembodying ourselves from the present in time and space moves us away from the chaff of the subjective and allows us to apparently think objectively. Connecting with students and educating them in the area of literacy means that we are encouraging them to also engage in this rupture.

In the following section we consider the spiritual effects of moving outside the body to enjoy what is considered to be literate writing and discuss some critiques of dominant constructs of literacy which have emerged from both Western and indigenous writers. We acknowledge that there are other types of expression that exist in the West that rely on performative expression, such as art and drama, but the focus in this article is on the *dominant* notion of literacy as an act of reading and writing. The primary aim here is to traverse the more subtle effects of dominant academic writing practice on what may be termed the *spiritual* facet of being Māori. It is argued in favour of a critical appraisal of literacy so that any attempt to give learning support in this direction results in a position of spiritual integrity for Māori

A critique of literacy

Indigenous writers may differ wildly from their Western counterparts about the definition and terrain of ‘literacy’. The Concise Oxford Dictionary of current English defines literacy as the ‘Ability to read and write’; in this article we critique that notion but then engage in an adaptation of the term so that it refers to a much broader phenomenon that existed traditionally. For the purposes of critique, Roburn states the matter succinctly when she arrives at her conclusion that “Liberation literacy is rooted in linear thinking, and in separating humanity from nature” (Roburn 1994, n.p). Evidently she has identified that the idea of literacy must be placed against the backdrop of a greater philosophical and historical project which has enveloped dominant Western thought since the Enlightenment. The project of the Enlightenment gave momentum to a

scientific knowledge of the world, deprived of sensorial understanding. It was during the Enlightenment that Descartes (1596-1650), who would become the father of modern philosophy, was seized by an inspiration which would prompt him to forward an understanding of the world based on intellectual certainty (Capra, 1982). Indeed, as to any role the senses had to play, he had this to say:

Thus I see that both here and in many other similar cases I am accustomed to misunderstand and misconstrue the order of nature, because although these sensations were given to me only to indicate to my mind which objects are useful or harmful to the composite body of which it is a part, and are for that purpose sufficiently clear and distinct, I nevertheless use them as though they could obtain direct information about the essence and the nature of external objects, about which they can of course give me no information except very obscurely and confusedly (Descartes 1964, p.137).

Newton (1643-1727) then advanced a mechanical view of the universe along with his theory that white light was unwavering and static once it separated into primary colours (Burwick 1987, p.32), a theory resisted by such philosophers as Goethe and Novalis as too distanced from the changing quality of light in nature.

The stage was set for a particularly mechanistic view of the world. The linear thought referred to by Roburn is symptomatic of this view and the privileged ability to articulate linearly would become the preferred means of communication from the Enlightenment onwards. Roburn is providing a counter to the meta-narrative of literacy and is considering a pragmatic critique of it through a spiritual lens. Firstly she is exposing the myth that literacy is 'liberating'; literacy is apparently liberating but only in a very limiting sense because it drives a wedge between man's full potential relationship with nature. Here we see an emergence of a counter to the meta-narrative of literacy and a move toward critiquing it through a particularly spiritual lens. However, the Eurocentric belief that indigenous peoples may not be liberated while adhering to the various forms and contents of their knowledge is an abiding one. As Freire indicates:

The dimensionality of time is one of the fundamental discoveries in the history of human culture. In illiterate cultures, 'weight' of apparently limitless time hindered people from reaching that consciousness of temporality, and thereby achieved a sense of their historical nature. (cited in Roburn, 1994).

Again, one can glimpse the apparent worth that a linear training in literacy is meant to offer. The use of the word "weight" as a metaphor to convey a sense of a burdensome type of knowledge is an interesting one, and suggests a yoke which must be thrown off in order to achieve full enlightenment. Liberation is hence realised by freeing the body of the weight of superstitious knowledge - knowledge based in emotion and spirit as well as thinking. Having occurred in the West in the scientific revolution, it then followed that indigenous peoples were to repudiate the notion that spiritual knowledge was valid. In contrast, however, many writers have contested such reasoning, and resurrected a certainty in traditional forms of knowledge (Linda Smith, 1999, p.191; Robinson, 2005, p.16; Cheryl Smith, 2007, p.70). Increasingly, in New Zealand, these attempts to respond to the dominant discourse of liberation literacy have found their physical expression in the establishment of various Māori institutions, such as Whare Wānanga (tribal universities), health clinics, and language nests. These organisations are founded on the belief that Māori knowledge needs to be given voice, and that there are other valid forms of knowledge besides Western ones

The subtle problem of the alphabet

One of the hallmarks of colonization is the Greek alphabet – the founding tool of literacy, if ever there was one. Interestingly this article is both written in the Greek alphabet and by indigenous writers, an obvious irony but not an atypical one. We are drawing on the tools of the colonizer to critique the colonizer and may even enjoy the exercise; however, because of its fundamentally disassociating nature, as we argue, the Greek alphabet is not a tool that Māori should be treating uncritically. In Western culture and now in the Māori world, the ability to manipulate and wield the alphabet is a highly privileged skill. However, the alphabet depicts the object with no resemblance to the object itself. It allows the wielder to talk *about* the object without it having to be present. The object can then be discussed in an abstract way; it does not have to be directly experienced or known, the speaker can command a distance from the object and thus speak rationally about it and, moreover, the object can be spoken *for*, not needing a voice itself. There is a sense of *removal* in the use of the alphabet; removal of the body and presence of the object being discussed and removal of the body of the subject from the object.

Although the removal of man's sensorial participation began with the introduction and use of the papyrus, of walls for drawings, and of clay tablets, Abram argues that "The sensible phenomenon and its spoken name were, in a sense, still participant with one another – the name a sort of emanation of the sensible entity" (Abram, 1996, p.100). With the introduction of the alphabet, however, the emphasis rested with the human utterance, a "gesture made by the human mouth". The introduction of the alphabet, and its dominance in the form of literacy, saw man create written language. A lack of voice, a lack of presence, became a lack of embodiment.

Traditional embodiment

When we as indigenous people consider the term "embodiment", we refer to the practice of reading the world through the whole body, and not just the eyes and mind. In discussing the West, Foucault referred to the growing use of *le regard* (the Gaze) in the classical age when he discussed the torture of a regicide and the spectacle it offered as a reminder of the constant surveillance of the sovereign. In the West, *sight* had become the most privileged sense, and could codify, examine, and, especially for Foucault, surveil quite objectively (Foucault, 1979, p.14). It is granted that there was still a privileged space set aside for art, painting, sculpture and poetry but this was diminishing in favour of the dominance of rationalistic writing. Thus these 'other' forms of experience were possibly more in line with indigenous ones.

The ascendancy of sight in post Enlightenment tradition stands in direct contrast to an indigenous perception of the world. Indigenous peoples have not always regarded sight as the main sense mediator of the world (although subconsciously they may do through the colonised lens). Dreams were one vehicle of access and reading various realms. Fixico (2003), a Native American writer, cited the example of Black Elk, holy man of the Oglalas. Black Elk recounted that:

I was standing on the highest mountain of them all, and round about beneath me was the whole hoop of the world. And while I stood there I saw more than I can tell and I understood more than I saw; for I was seeing in a sacred manner the shapes of all things in the spirit; and the shape of all shapes as they must live together like one being. And I saw that the sacred hoop of my people was one of many hoops that made one circle, wide as daylight and as starlight, and in the center grew one mighty flowering tree to shelter all the children of one mother and one father. And I saw that it was holy. (Fixico, 2003, p.4).

The sacred manner of seeing that Black Elk refers to is one where the entire body is involved in an interpretation of what is occurring. Clearly the whole hoop of the world is laid out for him to view in a sacred manner, where his body was on top of the highest mountain around. Through this dream he was able to have access to the connection that he perceived between all things. A ‘reading’ occurred. Similarly, Māori acknowledge that the earth is in fact a kind of writing that man may have recently altered but *did not create*. Therefore Māori have always practised reading, through the senses, the scribbles and residues on the face of the earth: the flow of lava down mountainsides, the location of trees that have been blown down, the way that birds fly onto land and so on. Sometimes this ability has even been discussed within formal Western institutions, admittedly without much success, due mainly to the inability of the institution to deal with the concept offered. In the Foreshore and Seabed case, for instance, the Waitangi Tribunal, a legal forum which hears Māori Treaty of Waitangi grievances against the Crown, considered the evidence of one informant:

While it is true that the Crown has captured some aspects of that Taonga via legislation (for example, fish) the holistic tangible and intangible cultural heritage remains imprinted through namings, events, histories, genealogies and current everyday practices. (Waitangi Tribunal, 2007)

The type of reading of the environment identified in this excerpt figured largely throughout the case and, although considered by the Waitangi Tribunal, was ultimately discarded in favour of a focus on ownership. This process reveals a failure to understand the subtle relationships between Māori and the earth, and a reversion to a largely static association with the environment based on measurement and quantity.

The ability of Māori to relate to the earth in the way alluded to by the above informant springs from their link with it through *whakapapa* (loosely translated as genealogy). Whakapapa could be seen as a spiritual association with everything such that the body is opened up to the terrain around it. The body then becomes able to read the terrain through its closeness with it, not through their division from each other. Relationships with other people were also galvanised by whakapapa; quite often these were underlain by natural phenomena and found expression in various traditional songs. In *A Lament for Te Huhu* for example (Ngata & Hurinui, 1974), Papahia grieves for his elder brother, Te Huhu, who had died. In it he draws on a mist formation, seen and felt at the same time, to give impetus to his grief:

E titiro ana ‘hau te puia tu noa	I observe the mist that stands
I runga i a Heke, tineia kia mate,	Above Heke, clear it away
Kia mate rawa hoki, kei tae hoki ake,	Dissolve it clearly, that it may not recur
E mahara ana roto ki te kino ra ia,	For the mind recollects the evil
Ka tauwehea nei, e i!	That was happily removed.

(Ngata, 1974, pp.14-15)

In the footnotes to this lament, a “cloud of evil resulting in disgrace” is referred to, caused apparently by the emanation from Heke’s personality. Heke was a personality who had fought against law and order, and if such a mist is seen standing from earth to sky it is seen as a portent of war. This stanza of the lament is important for a number of reasons. Firstly it shows that the cloud is perceived not just through sight – it is after all a “cloud of evil”. Hence the cloud is perceived emotionally too. Although the verb ‘titiro’ meaning to see with the eyes was used, the other important part of the stanza was the emotion it evoked – a part of the reading of the landscape. It also shows that signs could be read from the landscape to determine what was going to happen, and that these signs could manifest visually, emotionally and spiritually.

Māori additionally *created* literacy through carvings and weaving which were representative of ancestors and deities. These arts could divulge history and were often capable of speech. Within them entire universes were reflected and explained. Royal (2001, p.38) is one Māori writer who refers to the experience of learning in the context of the *wharehau* (which can be translated as meeting house). He discovered that his body was reflected in the *wharehau* and that he could learn his genealogy through tracing the events outlined in carving and in patterns contained in it. For him, along with many other Māori learners, learning and its counterpart, reading, existed within the potential of the body and its interaction with the environment.

Teaching: pragmatic & symbolic engagement

When we conceive of an effective indigenous student support model, it is important to avoid the minimal terrain of deficiency thinking (Australian Government Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council, 2005). Eluding such thinking requires us to consider appropriate learning strategies in a more holistic manner than mainstream support models would draw on. We then start to think about the ways in which adult learning fits in with the communities from which those adults hail. Aspects such as the ability of situated knowledge to define collective boundaries of engagement with learning become relevant, along with the possibility of the learner to promote access to learning opportunities. These aspects are underpinned by both appropriate cultural approaches and a overall understanding of social constructionism (sociology of knowledge) which could assist the institution in determining directions for teaching practice. In taking these considerations into account, issues that arise in indigenous higher education situations are not read exclusively in terms of narrowing gaps and providing instances of remediation because this sort of regard ignores the positive and distinctive contributions that our Indigenous learners bring to any learning environment.

Part of the role of the Wānanga, as ‘place’ to create worthwhile learning experiences for Māori learners, is in being active and vigilant in minimizing the effects of social knowledge that has a deficit focus and which threatens to become ‘real’ when people start believing it and allowing it to enter into their everyday life. Such socially-derived concepts take on hegemonic and causative powers, and are believed in part, because of powerful reinforcing institutions such as government departments, and other leading ‘mainstream’ institutions (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

Therefore, in designing and implementing a useful indigenous student support model, the inclusion of ‘situatedness’ as the notion that addresses the role of the context is realized through the concepts of *whakawhānaungatanga* (relationship-building), *mana* (personal qualities of the individual), *mauri ora* (knowing who we are), and *wairuatanga* (spiritual well-being of the individual). Constructivism of place, on the other hand, is aligned with this situatedness and is manifested through three main characteristics, context, collaboration, and communication, and all of these ideas in the right balance encourage individuals-within-communities. No Māori learner comes to the Wānanga ‘on their own’, or without the support of *whānau* (family and cultural context), *hapū* (sub-tribe and cultural context), or *iwi* (tribe and cultural context). They come as part of a unifying force of guidance and encouragement from the *tikanga* (customs and beliefs) of their *tīpuna* (ancestors) who are all there in their past, present and future aspirations (Durie, 2001).

Nevertheless, the reality of pursuing higher education is that our Māori learners require direct and indirect help on several levels which are not necessarily the same for other ethnic learner groups. For example, many students at the Wānanga come from extreme socio-economic contexts; isolated and rural, more often than not being of mature age with families and engaged in part-time

work. Other typical characteristics are: limited financial means and a lack of foundational study skills. The social support is given through academic learning development and ongoing pastoral care, but more importantly there is a focus on foundation learning. A working definition of foundation learning comes from the New Zealand Ministry of Education (2005) that stipulates,

Foundation learning covers competencies in literacy, numeracy and language. In practice, foundation learning for adults may be defined as the application of a complex web of reading, writing, speaking, listening, critical thinking, problem solving, numeracy skills and communication technology so that people can achieve their own goals in meaningful social, cultural, vocational and/or learning contexts. Foundation learning may be in English or Te Reo.

Foundational learning workshops provide one arm of a student support model at the Wānanga, and are manifested as “deliberate acts of teaching” (*ibid*) that focus on student and lecturer learning support. That support may at first appear to favour mainstream aspirations only. The focus of mainstream student support models has traditionally rested on such skills as the interpretation of an assignment or examination question or topic. This skill is then assumed to lead to successive orthodox stages such as how to write the actual assignment or answer the examination question; how to plan an oral presentation; how to write for meaning using different genres, and how to read for understanding and critical analysis.. These topics do not hold the same significance as the traditional and philosophical kaupapa (principle or issue) that inform a Māori worldview of knowledge. These principles include: *rangatiratanga* (‘a person of good character’), *manaakitanga* (‘elevating the personal qualities of others’), *whānaungatanga* (‘relationship building’), *wairuatanga* (‘the spiritual well-being of the individual’), *pūkengatanga* (‘the expression of skill, or the achievement of a standard of knowledge’), and *kaitiakitanga* (‘care, duty and responsibility for the survival of the knowledge of the Māori world’) (Collier, 2002).

Furthermore, Haraway’s idea that all knowledge is embodied and partial, that it is ‘situated’, and prone to ‘hiding and protecting’ the interests of those who propose and most benefit from it (1991, pp. 181-189), alerts us to the possibility of constructing a doctrine of objectivity. Such a doctrine, however, is usable but not innocent. With Haraway’s reminder we become aware of the likelihood that knowledge in a bicultural setting such as Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiārangi may also be partial and situated; these phenomena can impact on students who want to achieve not just in an academic environment but in work, play and life situations as well (Mlcek, 2006). The foundational learning support is not detached or an instance of unblemished objectivity, or even as Haraway writes, “the gaze from nowhere” (*ibid*: p.188), but a continual questioning and defining appropriate adult learning characteristics (Scott, Jansen, & Vinkenvleugel, 2006, p.82). Like the pastoral care support that is scaffolded with the behaviours that originate from the Māori worldview, knowledge is always relative to its social setting, and the outcome of an active process of fabrication *as well as* through the *re*-discovery of the pre-existent reality of our *tīpuna*.

One such learning context at Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiārangi is the three-year Bachelor of Mātauranga Māori Degree Programme which includes knowledge about all things Māori and supports students’ capacity to engage in foundational learning. In the spirit of *manaakitanga* however, the woven cloth that combines the integrative learning with the contextual learning is not just a process of enveloping the learner, but a representation of the *tikanga* of ‘utu’ or reciprocity. As Collier (2002, p.4) states, “Manaakitanga ... can be seen as a desirable principle of pedagogy whereby the positive actions of the tutor and the mana or personal qualities of the student are elevated and by the achievement of academic outcomes the mana of the tutor is likewise elevated”.

The uniqueness of this degree is that while it is multi-modal, it is delivered primarily to small communities on the marae, which is the designated safe meeting place and environment for Māori families and clan members. In the spirit of reciprocity, the lecturer is welcomed into the 'home' of the whānau members and learning is facilitated in a formal, yet collaborative cultural circle (Freire, 1972). In this way, the role of the lecturer-as-teacher is not rejected but the role of the student-as-subject in their environment, to act on their world, is elevated. The "vision from everywhere and nowhere" that is objectivity (Haraway, 1991, p.191), is overtaken by the input of the individual learner. Participating in the Mātauranga Māori Degree Programme is to participate in a type of authentic education that involves students in re-creating knowledge *with* their teacher. As Māori continue to re-establish and cement their place in an ever-changing world, foundational learning opportunities are a way of "making sense of, and trying to feel some sense of control over, these changes [which in turn] is central to becoming critically thoughtful" (Brookfield, 2001, p.51, authors' words in brackets).

Conclusion

'Being watchful' means critiquing the very essence of literacy and student support. Precedents exist which enable us to teach students to critique within a context of care and reciprocity. The imperative contained in the words 'kia hiwa ra' encourages the practice of critique as a type of vigilance. Kia hiwa ra combines with other key Māori concepts to challenge, fortify and support Māori learners; despite opposition from mainstream critics, practices such as *manaakitanga* continue to prevail within student learning contexts at Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiārangi.

Within the order of kia hiwa ra lies an additional belief that the body must be attentive; thus the body itself, in its attentiveness, is involved in *reading* the terrain. We then considered the role of literacy in the colonizing mechanism of disembodiment, and indicated that Māori read the earth with all senses and the whole body - without one particular sense working to the detriment of others. It is suggested that our own brand of reading through the body conflicts with dominant Western models of literacy; and when we ask students to write with precision and acuity, we are in fact encouraging a divorce from the body, that is, a kind of remove to an esoteric realm where the mind holds sway.

How this kind of hegemonic practice might be mitigated was the focus of the final part of this article. Here, being watchful means utilising a range of teacher expertise, skills and modes of delivery to cater for a broad range of learner contexts, capacity and capability. In turn, looking at the individual learner in a holistic sense requires deliberate acts of teaching in order for students to make gains in their literacy skills. There is ongoing engagement in focusing specifically on the different sets of skills a learner requires while developing new competencies. This process does not preclude attention to the quality of interrelatedness through a consideration of the 'whole'.

How we assist students to learn depends on critique. Drawing on the ancient tradition of critique, of being watchful, enables educators and students alike at Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiārangi to engage safely and attentively with the process of learning.

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