Abstract: This is a discussion paper about access to, and participation in learning opportunities for Māori learners in New Zealand, and Indigenous learners in Australia. Teaching and learning practice in three separate institutional education programmes—one in New Zealand and two in Australia—highlight the problematic nature of inclusion based on competing knowledge systems and frameworks. These systems relate to differing worldviews about how knowledge is privileged and disseminated within society. One view is that whiteness behaviour, through a western worldview, is the erasure of inequality because it presents as the norm in many adult education teaching situations; quite often manifested as indulgent practice, but one that also reinforces the hegemony of normativity. In contrast, an Aboriginal/Indigenous worldview is one that places knowledge within a spiritual realm; constantly resituating the individual into the nexus between individual and cultural ties. The discussion here, is about ideas of whiteness behaviours being present in curriculum delivery, whereby mainstream ideals produce planes of engagement that encapsulate white subjectivities which are both visible and invisible, and represent just one chronology of whiteness. That is, consciously and unconsciously patterned behaviours of delivering curriculum, no matter what the discipline area, have the potential to produce accessibility and achievement, but many would argue that these same behaviours also reproduce inequalities. Ideas from the above theme, take on a whole new perspective with a focus on building workplace and academic skills to the exclusion of cultural identity development. Acquiring skills has the potential to provide another form of competence, yes, but may also undermine learner confidence in being able to transition successfully to further community or higher education programmes. For example, such development alone does little to improve and strengthen literacy, language and numeracy capability for learners to be able to access and undertake tertiary studies, but may do more to compound debates about whiteness behaviours implicit in the post-colonial criticism of ‘whose interest is being served’.

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**Abstract**
This is a discussion paper that looks at access to, and participation in learning opportunities for Maori learners in New Zealand, and Indigenous learners in Australia. The aim of presenting ideas that come from teaching and learning practice in three separate institutions and education programs – one in NZ and two in Australia - is to highlight the problematic nature of inclusion based on competing knowledge systems and frameworks.

The competing systems relate to differing worldviews about how knowledge is privileged and disseminated within society. One view put forward as part of an area for discussion, is that whiteness behaviour, through a Western worldview, is the erasure of inequality because it presents as the norm in many adult education teaching situations; quite often manifested as indulgent practice, but one that also reinforces the hegemony of normativity (Mlcek 2009a). In contrast, an Aboriginal/Indigenous worldview is one that places knowledge within a spiritual realm; that resituates the individual out of space and place, and into the nexus between individual and cultural ties.

The discussion here, is about ideas of whiteness behaviours being present in curriculum delivery, whereby mainstream ideals produce planes of engagement that encapsulate white subjectivities which are both visible and invisible, and represent just one chronology of whiteness. That is, consciously and unconsciously patterned behaviours of delivering curriculum, no matter what the discipline area, have the potential to produce accessibility and achievement, but many would argue that these same behaviours also reproduce inequalities. Alongside the above theme, this paper also extends ongoing critique of a focus that builds workplace and academic skills to the exclusion of cultural identity development. Skills
development has the potential to provide another form of competence, yes, but may also undermine learner confidence in being able to transition successfully to higher education programmes or further community education programmes. The argument is explored that such development alone does little to improve and strengthen literacy, language and numeracy capability for Indigenous learners to be able to access and undertake tertiary studies, but actually does more to compound debates about whiteness behaviours implicit in the post-colonial criticism of ‘whose interest is being served’.
Introduction

This paper explores ideas about the ways that Māori and other Indigenous learners, as well as those from minority ethnic backgrounds, participate in higher education learning and lifelong knowledge acquisition. An overall introduction to the topic highlights the problematic nature of teaching and learning practices that are often grounded in both Eurocentric and mainstream ideologies. Throughout the paper, the discussion about competing knowledges brings together threads of exploration about the way that cultural markers both exclude and include learner and teacher participation, for example, because of Whiteness, different worldviews, or socioeconomic status, as well as the social construction of knowledge and help to inform people’s lived experiences (Orbe and Harris 2008: 78). In particular, two main themes, from Durie (1994, 2001), in reference to an Indigenous critique of ways of knowing, and Newman (1998), about a critical theoretical perspective on the development of technical and instrumental skills, are used to weave an analytical substance around the above threads.

The social purpose of lifelong education ought to be about developing self-worth and identity amongst individuals and communities. In the case of post-colonialist and assimilationist ideals that work counter to the above sentiment in so many drastic and far-reaching ways, the situation becomes critical even for survival. In living with competing knowledge systems, there are tensions that exist in pedagogical approaches to meaningful teaching and learning engagement that relate to both Indigenous learners and those from a multi-cultural context. For example, how do we strike a balance in the way we provide tutorial support and academic foundational studies within a tertiary education setting, that achieves useful outcomes for our students in order to augment their lifelong learning journeys? There are various debates about the privileging of Indigenous knowledge(s) as being the best vehicle to promote effective intercultural communication, and the acquisition of meaningful education.
But, the juxtaposition of ideas that refer to how outcomes of knowing what, knowing how, knowing why and knowing whether to, are decided, raises questions about whether practitioners construct activities in order to strive for a practice–context that is acceptable to Indigenous-specific learning environments, or to address mainstream education situations. Tensions arise around ‘gate-keeping’ practices that have the propensity to both include and exclude.

Teaching reading and writing as discrete entities from the instruction and development of Indigenous knowledge(s), and especially oral language, can be problematic. That is, the isolation of one before the other, or the dominance of one over the other, delivers minimalist outcomes that exclude the importance of multiple ways of communicating to demonstrate literate capabilities (Aranga, Mika and Mlcek 2008). In relation to delivering curriculum, current research directions about effective pedagogies that relate to Indigenous learners now espouse the term ‘culturally competent’ (Centre for Indigenous Studies, Charles Sturt University 2010 [online]), and there are other ideas about the interconnectedness of pedagogies that privilege the use of dialogue with communities to share local ways of doing things (Yunkaporta 2007-2009 [online]). Like ‘culturally appropriate’, practice is designed to address the divide between inclusion of Indigenous learners as having knowledge of how they want to learn, and the exclusion of these same learners to not knowing how they ought to learn. Tensions arise around what is knowledge, who has it, and what can be done with it. An interesting comparison can be made to the different ways that practitioners generally embrace the cultural worlds of non-English speaking background (NESB) or culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) students, and Indigenous learners [for example Māori and Aboriginal Peoples]. In the first case, the practitioner is more than happy to reinforce identity development or to demonstrate knowledge through sharing aspects of culture such as food,
dress and habits. There is still an ambivalence however, in the way that Indigenous learners are included, or not, in curriculum studies.

The indulgent practice shown to the first group could also be seen to be culturally competent because of the implicit and explicit respect shown for identifying and celebrating cultural difference. However, this identification and celebration of cultural difference is just one component of developing cultural competence and is arguably the least important aspiration of a more broad definition of culturally competent practice that incorporates the following dimensions: the process of becoming aware of assumptions about human behaviour, values, biases, preconceived notions and personal limitations (Lum 2005); the process of actively seeking to understand the different worldviews that others hold; the process of developing and practising appropriate and relevant strategies that are culturally sensitive, and the process of critically analysing the extent and level to which organisational structures and institutional forces both impeded and enhance cultural competence (Sue 2006: pp. 24-25). Given the ‘invisibility’ of the whiteness behaviours that appear to restrict practice merely to one of celebration without critical intent, is this the kind of ‘effective’ pedagogical framework that is appropriate for our engagement with Indigenous learners?

Considerations for appropriate curriculum for Indigenous learners range from needing to place Indigenous standpoints at the centre of Indigenised curriculum (Carey 2008), to recognising Indigenous culture as a positive resource (Durie 2006). In the delivery of such considerations, and regardless of whether the focus is a vocational or general academic one, Indigenous researchers and practitioners, at both college and university institutional levels, ask for an awareness of the transformative effects of Indigenous knowledge(s), and the support not only of a ‘post-colonial’ dialogue, but an ‘anti-colonial’ dialogue (Langton 2005) to preserve Indigenous ways of knowing against pressures from other narrow directions. The
call from Indigenous educators, who want to make or maintain a difference, is that research goes hand-in-hand with ways of learning. Durie (2005) posits ideas about Indigenous knowledge:

*While it is often valued because of its traditional qualities, the perception of indigenous knowledge and culture as applicable only to the distant past ignores the thrust for development that is part of the indigenous journey. Arising from the creative potential of indigenous knowledge is the prospect that it can be applied to modern times in parallel with other knowledge systems (2005: 304).*

For Durie (2005: p. 307), the underlying principles of “learning and research at the interface” include mutual respect, shared benefits, human dignity and discovery. Durie’s ideas continue to inform the binary of Indigenous learning and research at the ‘interface’ by expanding students’ educational experiences, the dimensions of their understanding whilst ensuring cultural safety, as well as capacity building. Further discussion about learning and knowledge acquisition with regard to cultural sensitivity and relevance involves an ongoing process of exploration, reflection and evaluation about knowledge systems, learning traditions, and the place of teaching and learning solutions in helping to develop identity.

**Competing knowledge systems**

In this paper an understanding of ‘competing knowledge systems’ holds several interpretative tensions because they also include sites of tension. From an ideological perspective of education curriculum for example, Indigenous education models used in both New Zealand and Australia to empower individuals, seem ‘powerless’ alongside the focus on building workplace skills in both countries, and yet there is a strong case to be made that up-skilling individuals and communities for the purpose of capacity-building to find employment, has similar implicit and explicit empowerment outcomes. At the very outset of this part of the
discussion some clarification about how empowerment, for example, is manifested through viewing two different ‘knowledges’ – Indigenous and Whiteness – can shed further light on the ‘competing’ nature of knowledge systems through the social construction of learning and education. This construction of knowledge raises further critical dimensions when compared to the different ‘knowledges’ experienced in quite different lifelong education scenarios – that is, on the one level knowledge acquired through university study, and the other at the technical and vocational level of predominantly colleges and training organisations.

**Indigenous Knowledge**

While not exclusive to just Māori and Australian Aboriginal people, nevertheless, their acquisition of knowledge is unique; through distinct “epistemological and metaphysical foundations [that] date back to the beginning of time and the creation of the universe” (Mahuika 2008: 1), and has particular significance as a decolonising and empowering force. The manifestation of such knowledge through strong kinship and community lines is a resonating characteristic of an Indigenous knowledge paradigm. That knowledge is maintained through cultural spiritual practices, and despite the continual burden of the “colonising gaze” (hooks 1992: 2).

**Whiteness**

Historically, being ‘white’ was seen as a marker for how other racial categories were compared, that is, ‘being white’ was seen as a “sign of normalcy, importance and privilege” (Orbe and Harris 2008: 77). Whiteness has evolved from this earlier focus by those who considered themselves to be ‘unraced’ compared to the ‘other’, to current definitions and practice of Whiteness that is still a “social construction which produces race privilege for white people by appearing ‘neutral’, unlinked to racial politics, universal, and unmarked”
(Rowe and Malhotra 2006: 168, cited in Orbe and Harris 2008: 77). Participation in continuing or lifelong education opportunities for both Māori and Australian Indigenous learners are inevitably impacted by several different cultural elements including the presence of Whiteness and Indigenous knowledge paradigms.

**Competing knowledge systems within different education opportunities**

In Australia, post-compulsory education and training (that is, school is compulsory in Australia and NZ between the ages of five/six-fifteen/sixteen or even seventeen depending on the locality and circumstances) can be accessed through at least two avenues – vocational education through schools and colleges, or tertiary [university] study. Both types of educating situations are permeated by the driving force of the market mechanism and value of efficiency which have become major driving forces in our society today; quite simply they determine the future of work and the work of the future (Owen and Bound 2001, Marginson 2000). Both types of situations respond therefore, to the changing nature of skills shortage in Australia (Skills Australia 2008), as well as the connections between what people are learning within institutions and future employment opportunities (Bradley 2008: 181). In order to respond to market imperatives, there has been movement in Australia’s tertiary [university] sector, between and within higher education and vocational education training, so that learners can either retrain to increase their employment prospects, or retrain for a different career (Harris et al 2005).

The nature of that training and education, despite being galvanized by ‘market pressures’, raises questions of appropriate learning and teaching practice, and more fundamentally, whose interest is being best served?
‘Competing knowledge systems’ in practice

The author’s educational affiliations are presented here as examples at one level, of potential competing knowledge systems. From an institutional level, these affiliations extend to being part of Charles Sturt University [CSU – National University of Inland Australia], Technical and Further Education [TAFE] New South Wales [NSW], and Te Whare Wānanga ō Awanuiārangi (Tribal University - NZ), because these are the education sites in which observation of learning and teaching practice provided examples over 30 months since January 2006 to June 2008. CSU is one of largest providers of tertiary distance education within Australia and overseas and also provides strategic educational opportunities for regional and isolated rural communities. TAFE NSW is one of the largest providers of vocational education and training in Australia. Te Whare Wananga ō Awanuiārangi is one of just three accredited tribal universities in NZ, offering several levels of qualifications from community and vocational training, to undergraduate and postgraduate degree programs.

The three institutional examples are nominated as ways to illustrate practitioner and learner engagement in curriculum that is both symbolic, and challenging, and raises dynamic yet pedagogical oppositions in the way that tutorial support and foundational studies are delivered to achieve useful outcomes for Learners. The argument is made here that different ways of constructing and representing knowledge already consume Indigenous learners who seek to identify who they really are, and so the focus on developing vocational skills before identity development, tends to minimise their focus.

The teaching practice within the above three examples related to both distinct and yet overlapping roles. Distinct, because they all involved working with Indigenous learners – Māori or Australian Aboriginal students. Overlapping, because they all involved academic
learning support and skills development to address foundational, formative, and summative levels of learning and assessment. In the first example, the role at CSU involved course coordination, developing, writing, and teaching [delivering] social work and human services curriculum to community members from a large inland regional town in New South Wales. The program is a combined university and TAFE ‘co-enrolment’ partnership between CSU / Western Institute of TAFE for the Bachelor of Social Work degree program (Mlcek 2009b). The program continues; it is small with approximately 40 adult learners, including 10% Indigenous learners, making up the four-year program. Previous experience with TAFE NSW involved the second example and the role of delivering critical literacy, language and numeracy support for a group of 18 Australian Indigenous learners undertaking a vocational diploma program in workplace training and assessment, at a local community TAFE College. For the third example, the time at the Wananga NZ, was taken up with the role of Director of Foundation Studies for the whole tribal university; in both strategy and implementation of student academic support programs to several disciplines. For the purpose of this discussion, the particular Wananga program involved approximately 23 adult learners undertaking the Bachelor of Teacher Education-Primary degree program.

Each one of the roles involved teaching adult learners with ages ranging from 18 years to 50+ years. As noted, the roles included an explicit academic learning skills and mentoring arm to their implementation. Additionally, at all three institutions the idea of ‘foundational studies’ was equally aligned to development at one level of generic academic skills such as reading, writing, reflecting, analysing, and communicating, and on another level, to the development of critical literacy, language and numeracy development.
A further interpretation of competing knowledge systems provides a platform for both philosophical and critical theoretical perspectives to be contrasted. Through the gaze of different worldviews, for example, pedagogical manifestations can appear inclusive, or start to become exclusive. Adopting a critical theoretical perspective to critique how to do things, a summary of ideas from Newman (1994) provides an example of a ‘whiteness’ narrative that is also a useful analytical framework of how to see things, particularly in a mainstream educational environment whether a vocational education training college or a university situation. There are three distinct domains of activity in which we act, learn and generate knowledge (Newman 1994: 98):

*The instrumental or technical domain, in which we act, learn and generate knowledge in order to manage and control our environment; the interpretive or communicative domain, in which we act, learn and generate knowledge in order to understand our human condition and to interact with other human beings; and the critical or emancipatory domain, in which we act, learn and generate knowledge in order to better understand ourselves and the psycho-cultural assumptions that constrain the way we think and behave.*

In applying Newman’s ideas as an analytical framework, we can address problems and issues differently in the different domains through a range of activities that move from commonsense logic of comparing and choosing the most appropriate options in the instrumental domain, to solving problems in the interpretive domain, “by rational discourse, by sharing ideas in discussion and seeking consensus”. Further, in the critical domain, problems are solved through a process of self-reflection. During this latter process, we might consider and even alter “the structures of values and assumptions which constrain the way we perceive, think and act”.
But is the above process relevant and true for Indigenous learners? Perhaps an answer to this question lies somewhere in between levels of expectation and outcomes that are derived out of the dominant curriculum discourse and the application by Indigenous learners to engage in different sites of learning. That is, there ought to be some logical progression of pedagogical practices within Indigenous education, and the way that educational practice can be identified through the Indigenisation of research methodologies (Tuhiwai Smith, 2006: 143). The sentiment from Tuhiwai Smith (2006) in New Zealand, is also reflected in the Bradley Review of higher education pathways for Australian Indigenous peoples (Bradley Report November 2008), that addresses the need for sustainable and flexible provision of educational opportunities through celebrating Indigeneity; culture, language and ways of knowing, and responding to local needs.

All too often however, mainstream situations provide far more scrutiny of the appropriateness of activities and outcomes, than ideas of mainstream expectations, because of the inherent political dimension surrounding access, equity, inclusion, fair and culturally-specific assessment, and reasonable adjustment. That is, despite calls to education policy designers to provide avenues for learning and teaching to be appropriately ‘Indigenised’, the reality of learners wanting to transition into tertiary studies, or of tertiary institutes wanting to accommodate Indigenous learners, is that their success will depend on the extent and ability to which they can acquire appropriate academic skills for the learning journey ahead. In many cases these skills will relate to foundational or literacy, language and numeracy skills that provide strategies for reading, writing, organising, researching, critical reflection, analysing, and learning to learn. In some situations foundational competence will be evident through the learner’s capacity to transfer skills from one learning context to another.
However, when a critical theoretical perspective is employed to understand the way that mainstream curriculum is delivered, quite often there is an emphasis on instrumental solutions to issues that are located in the interpretive and critical domains. A mismatch of expectations and outcomes within Indigenous education arises from a clash of discourses, different modes of perception, and different sets of psycho-cultural assumptions (Newman 1994: 99). Furthermore, at a fundamental level, “the principle of indigeneity is essentially based on a world view that emphasises the link between people and their natural environment as a fundamental starting point for most indigenous peoples” (Durie 2006: 11). Blackstock (2008) supports the key elements behind Durie’s theme: that the relationship between communities and their natural environment provides an ecological context for human endeavour. Anomalies about engagement arise when the what and the why of knowledge development is scrutinised and seen to be somehow divorced from the how of that development. Vocational education ventures do provide opportunities for developing applicable skills in tandem with useful employment gains (Pearson 2001). However, vocational competence and the transference of work skills minimises or ignores the relationship of Indigenous wellbeing to an emphasis on the use of unique languages, on the use of custom and group interaction, on the evolution and dominance of distinctive systems of knowledge and methodologies, and on the use of an environmental ethic that is strongly grounded in spiritual and cultural perpetuity.

In contrast to the ideas of focusing on technical and instrumental skills’ development alone, Durie (1994, 2001) puts forward a model of learning for Māori that recognises Te whare tapa wha [the four walls of the house] of engagement. This same model resonates with similar ideas of Australian Indigenous learning that is strongly characterised by the ‘individual-within-community’, and not separate from community (Elliott and Keenan 2009, Nakata
In his model, Mason identifies the four walls as helping to uphold the ‘foundations of the house’ – engagement with the supports of Wairua, Tinana, Hinengāro and Whānau. Underlying the whare tapa whā model is the consistent theme of integration (Winiata 1988) and is expanded in the table below (reproduced from Durie [Te Iho online]).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Taha Wairua</th>
<th>Taha Hinengaro</th>
<th>Taha Tinana</th>
<th>Taha Whānau</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Key Aspects</td>
<td>spiritual</td>
<td>mental</td>
<td>physical</td>
<td>extended family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>the capacity for faith and wider communion</td>
<td>The capacity to communicate, to think and to feel</td>
<td>The capacity for physical growth and development</td>
<td>The capacity to belong, to care and to share</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mind and body</td>
<td>Health is related to unseen and unspoken energies</td>
<td>Good physical health is necessary for optimal development</td>
<td>Individuals are part of wider social systems</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the above integration, we can see the importance of *spirituality* at the helm of the model.

**Examples of knowledge systems – the case studies**

The following examples of the author’s practitioner experience of student learning support, in three different case study situations, cover different curriculum ideas, themes and foci. They are examples from different institutions in NZ and Australia and are examples of post-compulsory learning situations which inform this discussion. They also provide the basis for an understanding of the way that different ‘knowledge systems’ impact Indigenous education. The ‘whiteness’ framework made up of Newman’s (1994) narrative about domains of activity that incorporate the instrumental, interpretive, and critical or emancipatory elements is used as a tool to analyse each system of knowledge. The initial analysis notes how individuals can act, learn and generate knowledge, but is then scrutinised through a contrasting Indigenous critique, which is also aligned to a Māori model of learning.
Foundational skills as tacit knowledge in oral traditions

Case study 1: At the tribal university in New Zealand, academic foundational studies that have their genesis and benchmark in mainstream education expectations, strive to find a legitimate place alongside the struggle to privilege Indigenous oral traditions on the one hand, with academic mainstream rigour on the other. *Strive and struggle* (Hickling-Hudson and Ahlquist 2003), allows for two pedagogical approaches to blend in marae-based educational programmes. Māori learners engage in transition programmes, as well as graduate and postgraduate studies, and their programmes are highly audited in terms of content and assessment strategies. The expectation is that all learners will address any and every assessment task in the same way that mainstream outcomes are reinforced; whether in Te Reo Māori or not, the same rigour of attention to grammar, lexicon, logic and critical analysis is expected in all written and oral work. Learners acquire these technical academic skills alongside a deep passion to develop and improve traditional language and cultural skills/knowledge.

The predominant ‘knowledge system’ in this context does not arise from the comparison and choice of the instrumental domain, and nor is it linked primarily to liberation ideals implicit in the critical or emancipatory domain, but is in fact more indicative of the interpretive domain. The intensity of the challenge faced by the learners within this domain requires much more than ‘indulgent’ cultural practices to achieve curriculum delivery. Habermas (1981) identifies this phase as an ‘historical-hermeneutic’ domain which is typified by interaction of the individual on his/her surroundings, where knowledge is subjective and grows out of everyday life. The focus of hermeneutical knowledge is to understand the assumptions underlying everyday life and become part of initiatives to make changes.
Practitioners interested in providing relevant education to Indigenous learners however, would also see this example of a knowledge system as a way to problematise mainstream curriculum delivery, and to cement knowledge and practice. That is, through a process of balancing the positive effects of bicultural and bilingual education in a strong family and community setting, self-determination provides the ‘decolonising’ effect (Pearson 2001) to produce more equitable educational situations.

**Tutorial support impacts identity development**

Case study 2: Effective tutorial support in a skills focused training programme in TAFE NSW was designed specifically for Indigenous learners. At its outset, strategies were put in place to acknowledge and establish the important relationship between skilled support to engender persistence and cultural affirmation amongst learners (Walker 2000).

The predominant ‘knowledge system’ in this context wants to be interpretive, but because of the nature of the actual curriculum outcomes to match competency-based vocational outcomes, there are tensions against adopting a rational discourse to determine the assessment of competency. Members of the support staff are often involved to ‘get’ learners through their assessment tasks in an instrumental fashion. Indigenous-appropriate assessment has little place in a time-engendered programme that matches each stage of a unit of competency with a competent, or not-yet-competent acknowledgement. While Langton (1993) deals with ‘cultural competency’, her ideas about a burgeoning Indigenous critique that identifies crucial Indigenous and non-Indigenous participation in collaborative understanding of how to work together, is important in this context because it addresses the cultural importance of relationship building for Indigenous people. That is, it is through interactions of the above nature that cultural difference is explored, power relations negotiated, and relationships established. Carey (2008: 6) suggests that “competence
necessitates a profound awareness of the ongoing and dynamic nature of intersubjective and intercultural interactions between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples”. Unfortunately the time factor behind competency-based education and training has provides time for relationship-building.

**Teaching and learning solutions for rural Indigenous learners**

Case study 3: Engaging Indigenous learners in a partnership and co-enrolment arrangement between diploma studies at TAFE NSW and undergraduate degree studies at Charles Sturt University, include current and prospective solutions that are grounded in the desire to involve learners as collaborative participants in order to access education for sustainability (Panko and Ljubica 2004). However, the ubiquitous nature of rural isolation on the one hand, and technological non-sophistication on the other, provides further levels of disorientation and incapacity for Indigenous learners. These disadvantages are overlaid with low socio-economic status, lack of preparedness to commit to and complete an academic degree programme, and the confinements of ‘individualised and competitive’ study.

The predominant ‘knowledge system’ in this context is challenged by actions that evolve from the *critical and emancipatory* domain. Participation by highly disadvantaged Indigenous groups is linked to notions of liberation, where accumulating knowledge is used to analyse power relationships to try to break through the ‘frozen’ beliefs in society about Indigenous learners. As long as these beliefs and activities are not seen to become part of some “classic post-colonial paradigm” that maintains the centred position of power relationships informed by colonialist ideologies, then the efficacy of Indigenous worldviews to inform an emancipatory and critical knowledge system is not just about the opinions from
marginalised voices, speaking from the periphery, about the legitimacy of that power (Carey 2008: 7).

**Discussion**

There is a paradox within the understanding of the colonised beginnings of Australia and New Zealand activity, and the far-reaching effects on the current education systems in both those countries today. Those countries have “simultaneously resisted and accommodated the authority of an imperialist Europe” (Hickling-Hudson and Ahlquist 2003: 64), and then tried consistently over many years and through different government regimes to find a voice within competing knowledge systems in which at worst they have been ignored, and at best become victims of appropriation of cultural symbols to be used as tools for learning. Carey (2008) supports Langton’s (1993) theorisation of anti-colonial practice being a marker of the “broader anti-colonial impetus driving the Indigenisation of curriculum” (Carey 2008: 7). And there are calls from many practitioners to address the ‘Eurocentric’ or Western worldview of implementing curriculum through a process of ‘unmasking whiteness’ (McKay 1999) as part of a broader global context. That is, by exploring the characteristics of the Eurocentric curriculum, the practices and assumptions of ‘whiteness’, that are often so accepted as the norm that they become ‘erased’ and beyond question for many teachers, can then be critiqued in the critical and emancipatory domain.

The juxtaposition of ideas that refer to how outcomes of *knowing what, knowing how, knowing why* and *knowing whether to*, are decided, raises questions about whether practitioners construct activities in order to strive for a practice–context that is acceptable to Indigenous-specific learning environments, or to address mainstream education situations. While there is little doubt that learning situations for Indigenous learners offer empowerment and transformation, theories of *persistence* and *sustainability* are more appropriate for
describing the ways that Indigenous learners and teachers overcome tensions between competing knowledge systems. But there does need to be some serious application of sound pedagogical practice that unapologetically enables Indigenous learners to gain a foothold of acknowledgement within the expectations of mainstream education discourse. That is, enabling practices are still important when they are targeted specifically to meet Indigenous needs and aspirations. For example, in the case of Indigenous Australians, culturally inclusive courses are highly successful because they create a ‘cultural space’, which gives them specific recognition and control (Walker 2000), but they also need much more than that.

Deliberate acts of teaching have been mentioned before in the literature surrounding foundational studies (Mlcek, Stephens and Timutimu 2006, Mlcek, Timutimu, Mika et al 2009, New Zealand Ministry of Education 2005), and the power of their application is easily overlooked. However, not to the literacy, language and numeracy practitioner whose pedagogical radar employs strategies that utilise Indigenous and valid cultural recognition to ensure useful outcomes. The process is an ongoing one that includes reflection and critical analysis. In considering the CSU case study above, this paper recognises the unique situation of Indigenous learners’ groups whereby for example, no other equity groups have experienced the same historical and social influences as Indigenous Australians. Discriminatory treatment, more often than not fuelled by blatant racism, experienced by Indigenous students in the Australian education system, coupled with the lack of recognition and isolation of Indigenous knowledges, values and perspectives within the university arena, still prevail (Anderson et al. 1998, Bin-Sallik 1991, Walker 2000). However, there are also positive outcomes; many Indigenous people who have eagerly grasped the opportunity to experience university studies have overcome historical education disadvantage, as well as cultural, and in many cases financial and geographic barriers to achieve academically (DETYA 2000).
As stated previously, Mason Durie’s (1994, 2001) model of learning for Maori, is premised on deep spiritual connections of the individual to wider social systems.

A similarly effective and ‘hands-on’ tutorial support model comes from the students of the Bachelor of Teaching [online] at Te Whare Wānanga ō Awanuiārangi who proposed the following insights to the question of what is an appropriate Indigenous model of tutorial support. They included a juxtaposition of ideas in several different forms and levels of caring not unlike Durie’s identification of Māori capacities (Durie 2006): manāakitanga – to care; pupuri tāonga - to provide guardianship; whakamana - to provide empowerment and prestige; whakatakato tikanga - to be well-planned and organised; whakapūmau tikanga - to promote heritage and culture; whakawhānaungatanga – to provide collective action, decision-making and consensus; proficiency in Te Reo Māori (language of Māori); and community and whanau support as well as support from teachers regarding academic writing. In fact their ‘model’ represents plural frameworks in nature and specificity, suggesting emphases can come from different influences depending on the individual’s worldview and experience. That is, Māori-specific understandings of educational support are “attuned to Māori realities and to Māori worldviews” (Durie 2006: 2).

**Reflection on practice**

Educational outcomes for Indigenous learners still remain in a critical state compared to those for most other ethnic groups. The model of education offered should be under scrutiny as the source of poor outcomes because of its limitations in promoting indulgent practices or an inappropriate deficits model of engagement. There remain current flaws adopted from a neo-colonial model of education that privileges whiteness pedagogies (Moreton-Robinson 2004) in curriculum delivery, while propagating alienation and withdrawal from some education
situations, not only by Indigenous learners but also by other disadvantaged groups. While the gap is diminishing, this withdrawal is still significant through absenteeism, attrition rates, poor literacy and numeracy skills, and high levels of examination failure. This model has to be redressed; when there is ownership of the curriculum and teachers/practitioners work collaboratively to develop an effective bilingual and bicultural programme for learners, then Indigenous self-determination can become a reality (Hickling-Hudson and Ahlquist 2003). If learning is contextualised, made culturally relevant, deliberate and authentic, learners will become more engaged in their education. This process does not have to be framed around a logic of opposition (Nakata 2007), but there has to be a place where Indigenous knowledges are always challenging dominant knowledges, but also fully legitimated as actual knowledges in their own right.

There are many dilemmas in the process of developing culturally and linguistically authentic education not least of which is captured in the preparedness of practitioners. To prepare teachers to implement authentic pedagogy for Indigenous learners, they need to be provided with a different kind of teacher education that helps to identify and establish a multicultural framework of practice. This framework has to include challenges to practices driven by racism, and notions of superiority, whiteness blindness to injustice (Kincheloe and Steinberg 1998), constructions of Aboriginality from a colonial imagination, as well as a committed practice to Indigenous and non-Indigenous dialogic action. The framework of practice must also move away from whiteness behaviours in which “post-colonial accommodations of cultural difference run the gauntlet of coopting, and appropriating, Indigenous difference in an effort to validate its own claims to tolerance and diversity” (Carey 2008: 9).

In ‘reorienting whiteness’, I make a case for the reorientation of worldviews, and in so doing, I re-enforce my own epistemological stance. By comparing a western/whiteness worldview to
that of an Aboriginal/Indigenous worldview, I am actually resituating ‘whiteness’, after orientation to the western/whiteness worldview, and then re-orientation to the Aboriginal/Indigenous worldview that is more in keeping with the idea of ‘cultural perpetuity’ (Blackstock 2008). Blackstock suggests using questions related to comparing worldviews that privilege individualism (the more universal western/whiteness view) or collectivism (the more Aboriginal/Indigenous view) in order to determine the kinds of behaviours and systems that each view generates. She also uses and compares the self-actualisation motivational model made popular and famous by Abraham Maslow – Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs – to a First Nation’s model whereby the hierarchy is ‘turned on its head’. Instead of the individual rising through at least five stages of motivation to reach the level of ‘self-actualisation’, the Indigenous worldview shows self-actualisation as the beginning of questioning who am I, where do I come from, what is my community, who are the elders I can go to for help, what is the knowledge I need to survive? In striving for ‘cultural perpetuity’ at the top of the Indigenous worldview model, the individual-with-community helps develop ‘community actualisation’ and an expansive concept of time plus multiple dimensions of reality.

Conclusion

If we revisit the ideas of the New Zealand health educator Mason Durie and Indigenous-Australian scholar Michelle Carey, and compare these with the cultural perpetuity model espoused by First Nations Canadian social worker Cindy Blackstock, we have a collective model of education that can grow from an organic and dynamic knowledge system that is valued by Indigenous learners in New Zealand, Australia, and Canada. Symbolic meaning for Indigenous learners comes from the recognition that no one learning style suits all Indigenous
peoples – they are as heterogeneous as any ethnic grouping in the world – and dialogic engagement has to be at the heart of successful lifelong education.

Indulgent practice serves little purpose for meaningful engagement with Indigenous learners. Neither is this practice effective for CALD students despite the best intentions of wanting to celebrate cultural difference. This latter idea is premised on a universal theme of inclusion and access that is often used unknowingly to promote whiteness behaviours – such as ignoring the importance of spiritual well-being for Maori and Indigenous identity development - that at best demonstrates indulgent practice, and at worst racialisation of peoples to maintain their marginalised status. Practitioners cannot practise ‘unknowingly’ otherwise they perpetuate racist behaviours. They require attention to a more participatory model that recognises the life experiences of individuals, but also the knowledge of individuals-with-communities to effect a more culturally appropriate and effective pedagogical framework in order to deliver real educational equity for Indigenous students.
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