

“Caucusing: Creating a space to confront our Fears”

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Abstract

Effective teaching about Te Tiriti/Treaty of Waitangi and the colonial history of Aotearoa/NZ to adult social work and counselling students is a challenge for many training programmes in Aotearoa/NZ. The goal of education in this area, promoted by the authors of this study, is to go beyond an intellectual fact gathering exercise to a deeper understanding about the nature of the relationship that exists today, between the peoples that represent the partners who signed the Tiriti/Treaty of Waitangi in 1840.

The authors of this paper have conducted research into the use of caucusing as a method in teaching some aspects of Te Tiriti o Waitangi to degree level students of social work and counselling studying in the School of Social Development at Wintec in Hamilton.

The authors will present material from their research including relevant literature and propose to engage with conference participants in discussion around the findings.

The authors contend that through caucusing a transfer of learning is possible since the relationships that exist within the classroom, between representatives of the signatories to Te Tiriti o Waitangi, in important ways, mirror the relationships the students are learning about. The point is made that learning does not occur in a vacuum and an opportunity exists because of this.

In the research it is found that there are some distinct differences between maaori and pakeha students reported experience of caucusing. Explanations for these differences are provided to some extent by the literature on white dominance. Comments from students highlight the shifts in understanding about the classroom relationships as the caucusing experience proceeds. The intense reactions that occur when the hidden dynamics of power and domination are revealed is also provided with explanation from the literature.