On the front foot: Indigenous leadership in Aotearoa/New Zealand higher education

[a]Rhonda Povey[1], [a]Michelle Trudgett, [b]Susan Page and [a]Stacey Kim Coates

[a]Office of the Pro-Vice Chancellor, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education, Strategy and Consultation, Western Sydney University, Australia

[b]Centre for the Advancement of Indigenous Knowledges, University of Technology Sydney, Australia

[1] Contact. Rhonda Povey. Email: r.povey@westernsydney.edu.au

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Abstract

Despite increasing representation in higher education, Māori leaders are still seeking to overcome historical inequities and racial discrimination. This study investigates the circumstances of Māori leadership in higher education from a strength-based standpoint, highlighting the critical role Māori academics fulfil in senior leadership positions in Aotearoa/New Zealand universities by exploring Māori perceptions of the scope, influence and challenges of their senior leadership roles. These perceptions are described by five participants in the study and supported by literature predominantly authored by Māori academics. The qualitative study is underpinned by Political Race Theory, linking race and power at the individual level as well as at the institutional level.

Findings give voice to senior leaders' answers to the critical question: how can Indigenous leadership secure sustainable, transformative change in Aotearoa/New Zealand universities. The response to this question is underscored by the notion of shifting leadership positioning from the back-foot reactive politics to a front-foot status of strategic and transformative leadership. Reporting on Stage Five of an Australian project - *Walan Mayiny: Indigenous Leadership in Higher Education,* this study is the second in a series of three international case studies investigating Indigenous leadership in higher education.

Key words: Māori; higher education, leadership; university; governance; Indigenous

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Māori leadership in the higher education sector has historically been influenced by colonisation, racial discrimination, marginalisation (Pio et al., 2014) and empty promises of biculturalism (Bell, 2006; Theodore et al., 2016). Nevertheless, Māori academics have been speaking back; writing about experiences at universities has a long tradition, Ngata and Buck (1986) arguing the practice has been going on since at least 1925. Following in the footsteps of three Māori academics Ngata, Pomare and Buck, who became inspirational leaders and

powerful role models (Durie, 2005a), cohorts of Māori academics are emerging as significant advocates for change in higher education.[i]

Yet while the sector holds an international reputation for Māori academic scholarship (Kidman et al., 2015), the position, power and purview of Māori senior leaders in universities continues to be undermined. The burgeoning presence of neoliberalism challenges Indigenous influence on governance (Kidman & Chu, 2017) and globalisation of knowledge not only threatens to undermine Māori identity in the sector but also the positioning of Māori leaders to enable transformative change. In a sector founded on the dispossession of Māori language, culture, land and language (Pihama et al., 2019), globalisation and neoliberalism further undermine progress made by those seeking a true partnership with the Crown, as set out in Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

This paper builds on existing research by exploring Māori perceptions of the scope and influence of their senior leadership roles in higher education. These perceptions are described by five participants in the study and supported by literature predominantly authored by Māori academics. This study investigates Māori leadership in higher education from a strength-based standpoint, suggesting answers to the critical question of how Indigenous leadership can secure sustainable, transformative change in Aotearoa/New Zealand tertiary education? The response to this question is underscored by the notion of Māori leaders shifting from being positioned by back-foot reactive politics to being on the front-foot leading change.

Literature review

Overview of the sector

The significance of Māori leadership in tertiary education institutions should not be understated, with Māori led research supporting the notion of an interrelationship between effective leadership and success of participation in the sector (Durie, 2005a, 2009; Mercier et

al., 2011; Potter & Cooper, 2016; Shore, 2010). Since 1999, Māori participation in higher education had transformed from one of relative exclusion to increased participation at all levels (Durie, 2009), a position that boded well for leadership in the sector. Nevertheless, more recent data is disappointing, with overall faculty participation rates showing Māori continue to be significantly under-represented in the sector (McAllister et al., 2020). In 2017, the Aotearoa/New Zealand Ministry of Education recorded 10,360 academics employed in higher education, of which 495 are Māori, or about 4.8% of the total academic workforce (Kidman, 2018). This figure is disappointing, considering the overall Māori population percentage is 16.5% (Weir, 2019). Of the 1,060 full professors in Aotearoa/New Zealand universities 35 were Māori; that is less than 4% of the Aotearoa/New Zealand professoriate (McAllister et al., 2019). Additionally, very few senior leadership positions, for example Deputy Vice Chancellor, Vice Chancellor, Pro Vice Chancellor, are filled by Māori academics (McAllister et al., 2020). The higher education sector in Aotearoa/New Zealand is also renowned for globalisation of faculty: Aotearoa/New Zealand employs the highest number of international academics in the world, with some departments being wholly comprised of global scholars (Kidman & Chu, 2019). The resultant landscape is not only competitive, but also highly ethnicised, with Māori scholars disadvantaged in higher education institutions founded on Pākehā principles.

Māori leadership positions are further disadvantaged by a high staff turnover (Potter & Cooper, 2016) and late entry by academics into the sector (Kidman & Chu, 2017). Studies investigating succession planning call for leadership training to cement the impact of Māori leadership (Mercier et al., 2011), by 'creating and maintaining spaces within the academy and fostering the development of young Māori academics' (Matthews, 2011, p. 3). However, supporting the advancement of Māori staff through recruiting, mentoring and capacity building to accelerate career progression to senior levels is not a national priority (Staniland

et al., 2020). Additionally, research by Nana et al. (2010) showed Māori scholars enter their academic career at a later age than Pākehā , taking longer to build a career and thus creating a different career trajectory. The consequent compressed tenure then negatively impacts on the creation of a sustainable research workforce (Kidman & Chu, 2017), and there is a high staff turnover because academics join the workforce at a later age and then retire. High staff turnover also negatively impacts on leaders' ability to oversee long-term plans through to their completion. The 'swinging door' therefore impacts on mentoring, as fluidity in the workforce limits the development of relationships that pass on knowledge and experience of the sector (Asmar & Page, 2018).

Te Tiriti o Waitangi

The status of the Aotearoa/New Zealand higher education sector as being in a genuine bicultural partnership with the Crown and protected by Te Tiriti o Waitangi is highly contested. Despite claims Te Tiriti o Waitangi is intended to represent cultural fairness, inclusion and equality (Crocket, 2009), many Māori argue it has been dishonoured by the Crown through the theft of land, devaluing of language, wars, legislation and disease (Pio et al., 2014). Although the Treaty of Waitangi Act (1975) was intended to create a vehicle for redress and restitution and brought higher education within reach of reform (Durie, 2009), it is still overlooked by successive governments. While Māori are enshrined as partners to Te Tiriti o Waitangi, and reference to Te Tiriti o Waitangi is embedded in tertiary education documents,[ii] many factors combine to obstruct its scope and aim (Barrow & Grant, 2019). Tokenistic nods to Te Tiriti o Waitangi in governance structures as well as under-representation of Māori at all levels in higher education (Kidman et al., 2015; McAllister et al., 2020) combine to form significant structural barriers to equality.

Neoliberal rationalisation of the sector

Implementation of institutions' Te Tiriti o Waitangi responsibilities and commitments to Māori peoples are further corroded by whitestreaming. As a response to the burgeoning impact of neoliberalism, whitestreaming, or the restructuring of universities to protect and maintain Anglo-European systemic power often by rationalising departments (Ritchie, 2014), represents a wider societal bias favouring Pākehā status (Bell, 2006). A comprehensive study conducted by Potter and Cooper (2016) reports 101 of the 242 (41.73%) faculty participants in the Aotearoa tertiary sector claim whitestreaming was happening in their institution, and 57 participants (23.55%) reported having their positions changed away from a sole focus on Māori education (p. 15). The study concludes Māori are subjected to repositioning as one special interest group amongst many, further undermining the intended partnership that underpins Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

At the same time, the rise of neoliberalism in Aotearoa/New Zealand universities has promoted an increased emphasis on economic growth in the sector (Barrow & Grant, 2019). Critics have identified a paradigm shift to a transnational business corporation model operating in a competitive global knowledge economy, with the concomitant commercialisation of knowledge (Shore, 2010). Arguably, conflating economic investment with the public good can be divisive within an institution, as stakeholders vie for 'status, resources and influence' (Kidman & Chu, 2017, p. 8), and are undermined by auditing techniques that threaten collegiality and knowledge sharing (Shore, 2010). Neoliberalism then places added pressure on the already vexed Māori-Pākehā partnership.

In this complex and volatile space, questions of how Māori senior leaders can best navigate the landscape and architecture of the sector are important. This study seeks to answer the research question: how can Māori senior leaders best exert influence to secure transformative changes in Aotearoa/New Zealand higher education?

Methodology and method

The Indigenous leadership study

This paper is part of an Australian project, funded by the Australian Research Council, that explores and evaluates the roles, responsibilities, and influence of senior Indigenous appointments in the higher education sector. The project, *Walan Mayiny: Indigenous Leadership in Higher Education* [iii] is comprehensive, ranging from the experiences of recruiters responsible for the recruitment of senior Indigenous positions in Australia - Stage One (Trudgett et al., 2020), through to Indigenous Australians who hold Indigenous-specific senior leadership positions - Stage Two, senior executive positions - Stage Three, and Indigenous academics -Stage Four (Coates et al., 2020b). Stage Five reports on international Indigenous experiences of leadership in higher education, with papers on Canadian and American experiences under review at the time of publication. The project will culminate in a final paper synthesising all five stages, presenting a model of best practice for embedding sustainable and ethical Indigenous leadership structures in higher education. It is not our intention to generalize Indigenous peoples' perceptions and experiences: this paper will acknowledge distinctiveness but will also respond to the commonality of experiences of colonisation.

Indigenous research methodological approach

As part of a study with decolonising intentions (Coates et al., 2020a), this paper endorses critical methodologies built on the foundational principles of an emancipatory imperative, political integrity and privileging the Indigenous voice (Rigney, 1999). In advocating for decolonisation of research, Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) proposes research methodologies be critiqued for racial and political biases that privilege colonial perspectives. Decolonisation is only possible when the biases inherent in institutional structures that uphold colonialism are questioned (Falk & Martin, 2007), and therefore Political Race Theory (PRT) (Guinier & Torres, 2009) is a framework well suited to the purpose of this study. Guinier and Torres note

PRT is grounded in Critical Race Theory: PRT has overtly political intentions that acknowledge oppressive conditions and also challenge the structures producing inequalities. By linking race and power at the individual level as well as the institutional level, PRT offers an appropriate and useful 'method of analysis to signal systemic failure and to catalyse institutional innovation' (Guinier & Torres, 2009, p. 15).

As one non-Indigenous and three Indigenous Australian authors, we recognise the limitations of researching the Aotearoa experiences of colonisation. While Indigenous peoples have common experiences of colonialism, their experiences are also distinctive (Bodkin-Andrews & Carlson, 2016). This study respects the uniqueness of communities' experiences and acknowledges the significance of Kaupapa Māori (Māori philosophy, world view and cultural principles) (Smith, 2003) in Aotearoa. We have incorporated some Māori language where appropriate, yet as Australian researchers, we have been cautious about appropriating language into study without a deep understanding of its cultural significance.

Data collection

Data in this study is drawn from five of the eight universities in Aotearoa/New Zealand, however, some participants reference their experiences in other institutions in the sector, such as the polytechnics and/or the Wānanga.[iv] Because the size of the sector is small, we were able to locate participants by searching New Zealand university websites to identify Māori people who held senior leadership positions. Eight Māori senior leaders were then invited to participate in the study: five accepted, one agreed to participate but was not able to confirm their availability and two people did not respond to the invitation. While the small sample size may be seen as a limitation of the study, the authors contend more data does not necessarily lead to more information when interviews are deep and rich (Ritchie et al., 2003), as such interviews allow for a thorough understanding of the living experiences and perspectives of the participants.

Four of the five interviews were conducted in person, with the interviews ranging in length from twenty-eight to seventy-seven minutes and led by two interviewers. The fifth interview was conducted via email; the interviewee submitting a written response to the questions. Each participant was asked fourteen questions and the four transcripts were transcribed before being then sent to the participants for their approval.

Data analysis

Data from all five participants was analysed using the NVivo 11 software package. The analysis was performed by the first author and shared with the team upon completion. The first author deductively coded the data by using a descriptive approach of question number (Neale, 2016). Data was then reviewed inductively, by reviewing the main concepts and ascribing key themes In this way, the rigour of analysis was improved by combining both deductive and inductive analysis (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Additionally, this data analysis method captured the complexities, differing perspectives, and also points of agreement (Bazeley, 2013). All the participants have been de-identified, with names and gender concealed. In consideration of the small number of senior leaders in the sector, participants have not been given a pseudonym nor have they been traced across the paper. Respect for Indigenous contributions are of paramount importance (Povey & Trudgett, 2019), therefore all participants were asked to review their transcripts and approve the content to be used in analysis.

Findings: being on the front foot

This section of the study will outline how Māori senior leaders are navigating successes that are shaping transformative change, whilst firstly operating within the constraints of Pākehā designed governance architecture of the sector, and secondly experiencing the added pressure of globalisation and commodification of the sector. Although successes are substantive, the

status of equity remains a work in progress: Māori senior leaders acknowledge such challenges and are forthright in tendering solutions.

Realisation of power

Some participants reported a strong connection between the description of their senior leadership positions and the associated authority to enact change within the institution. For example, one Senior Leader described their purview as inscribed in the structure of the university. Every Council meeting must include a at least one Māori leader, and their leadership position gives the participant:

> Full authority and accountability for all decision making in their faculties ... I get to influence and
> approve all strategies related to the success of Māori staff and students.

Senior Māori Leaders also report the significant challenge of being cast in the ambiguous role of a position of power, yet not empowered to exert influence within their sphere and expedite transformative change. Embedded in the discussion of senior leaders' purview is the unresolved injustice of the sector functioning as a governing agent of the Crown, rather than structurally, ideologically and symbolically acting in partnership with Māori, as set out in Te Tiriti o te Waitangi. A Senior Leader questioned the governance and ethos of the institution:

> We report to the Vice Chancellor which in itself is potentially problematic for the notion of partnership
> – because the Treaty is a partnership between Māori and the Crown So where's the partnership model
> there? We're not in partnership, we are 'governed' by non-Māori.

While the participant conceded 'most people want to do what's right', concern was expressed that conservatism of the sector undermines Māori leaders' intentions to develop 'a quite specific Māori intervention'. The participant further commented that such initiatives are often met by accusations of 'apartheidism and separatism' from non-Indigenous colleagues and administration, reflecting the ongoing racial tensions that arise as Māori leaders position themselves to leverage sustainable power and influence the right to a partnership in governance of the institution.

Changing the institutional matrix

The injury caused by the lack of institutionally sanctioned autonomy is present in the form of systemic constraints on Māori leadership. Four of the five Māori senior leaders in this study call for changes to institutionalised colonial structures that go beyond surface initiatives:

> I worry that we are doing what I would call surface change - not deep, structural change. We seem to be turning into a cultural performance entity and not one that is transforming the academic environment.

As established in the literature, globalisation and neoliberal rationalisation increasingly influence structures and governance of the higher education sector in Aotearoa/New Zealand, perpetuating colonial milieu in a way that continues disadvantaging Māori leadership (Kidman & Chu, 2017; Shore, 2010). However, one participant explained the power of strategic planning to shape the future of Māori leadership in their institution: 'It is Indigenous sovereignty we're fighting for'. In a standout example of leadership, another participant was able to counter economic rationalisation in a way that worked to change the colonial matrices of power (Ndhlovu, 2015) to Māori advantage. A systemic review lead by a Māori Senior Leader resulted in the development of a strategic outcomes framework with separate outcomes for Māori staff and students, thereby ensuring there was an equitable outcome from top-down systemic changes:

> The review was partly to unpack us from Pasifika and then unpack us from the non-Indigenous managers who had a stronghold on support services and academic support.

In this detailed explanation of the complicated streamlining of the university, the senior leader describes a strategic plan that firstly separated Māori and Pasifika departments, to the advantage of both Māori and Pasifika 'who now have more staff support and feel like that are getting somewhere'. The strategic planning also separated the Māori leader from a non-Indigenous line of management and accountability, reducing the colonial power and influence in their department. The senior leader did note 'it took two years to get through the

review process', nevertheless, in this instance, the transformative agenda of creating system change has in fact worked to 'change the matrix to suit our people'.

Building capacity and succession planning

The notion of building capacity of future leaders was identified as a priority by four of the five participants, and succession planning was also perceived as a primary concern. One participant clearly articulated this issue:

> If we're not thinking about the next generation then, what's the point?

However, participants contend Māori leaders are challenged by the complexities of succession planning and how to best advocate for younger academics to take up leadership roles:

> I tried to push this when I was [title redacted] - ways of trying to support the Māori academy so that we
> have a natural progression of people who can come through. One of the things that challenges me is,
> what do we need to be able to provide the next set of leaders?

In consideration of high staff attrition rates, colonial governance architecture and the shifting functional identity of the sector, findings of this study show Māori leaders are seeking solutions to prepare to further influence the sector.

Strong cultural identity and meaningful relationships

The cultural significance of relationships between Māori leaders and community is reiterated by all participants in the study, who agreed that fulfilling cultural obligations and responsibilities is crucial to strong Indigenous leadership. The extent of the interconnectedness between culture and leadership for Māori senior leaders is revealed by a participant who describes the duality inherent in the Indigenous leadership role:

> We do tons of things with our students. So it's even hard to quantify or put into words in terms of a
> particular program that we might run, … we're all Māori staff (and) are connected to community
> somewhere.

Cultural leadership is evident in the embedding of Māori values into the university's coda:

I was instrumental in the introduction of [name of institution deleted] values of tika, pono and aroha.[v]

Our values are those by which I live. They are of course the values I believe are required of a

rangatira.[vi]

Kaupapa Māori instigated by senior leaders has the potential to influence management strategies, as explained by a Māori Senior Leader:

But as an Indigenous practice, we believe we're still accountable to each other. So, in terms of pure

management, I'm accountable to the pro vice chancellor for divisional matters, but then they'll also

view that I'm accountable to the local iwi[vii] in terms of the protocols that we have with the local iwi.

Nevertheless, given the history of challenges experienced by Māori senior leaders in the university sector, in the area of developing understanding of the meaning of relationships, much remains to be done:

But I feel like that cultural shift in behaviour and attitude shift is gaining momentum but it is hard,

because people were, like, I need a result now. I'm, like, you're not going to get a result now. This

relationship is hard. You're building relationships, and they expect you to be there for the long term. It's

not for the length of your project.

Genuine relationships take time and commitment in order to ensure the relationships are trusted and sustainable. One participant suggested an understanding of Kaupapa Māori in the workplace is essential, a standpoint in contrast to emerging neoliberal agendas of performity:

Universities need to build trust with community. It might take us a generation before we get people to

trust us more, but I said, we're Indigenous; we're here for the long game.

Amidst the calls for cultural inclusion and prioritisation of Kaupapa Māori in universities, a powerful warning is given:

One other element that we need to be vigilant about is the PVC or DVC Indigenous positions simply

being about cultural support. While these elements are important you also need someone who is skilled

in the critical politics of the institution and who can lead structural change as may be required.

Although the importance of cultural support is acknowledged, the participant is drawing our attention to the possibility that transactional leadership roles can reduce a leader's capacity to enact systemic and transformative change.

Powerful leadership

Participants expressed a firm determination for meaningful change driven by strong, fierce and agential leadership. When asked to define leadership, one participant delineated management and managerialism from leadership, proposing leadership is about:

> Prestige, mana, individual bearing and stuff like that, versus the sort of managerialism responsibility we get weighed down with.

Another participant in the study agreed on the importance of the individual bearing, contending personal leadership attributes are significant factors:

> I would say that irrespective of the title DVC, PVC, CEO and so on it is the leadership of the person in leading the changes that makes the difference in the institutional environment.

Along with these attributes, the ability to assert sovereignty within the institution is helped by experience, and by being candid:

> I'm pretty experienced and I don't really want to mess around playing pretend games. I'm pretty upfront with what needs to happen.

The ethos driving the determination for transformative change is succinctly captured by a Senior Leader, who made the following summation:

> These struggles have made us stronger, more committed, and sorted out what we're for and what we're against.

Discussion

Our findings show Māori senior leaders are calling the higher education sector to account, making demands for long-term and proactive strategic planning, increased employment of Māori academics in leadership roles, viable succession planning, strategies to enact Te Tiriti o Waitangi partnership, and the brokering of power to force the hand of transformative change. In order to create space for a range of responses to promote Māori leadership in the sector, findings are grouped thematically (Hohepa & Robson, 2008).

Values

The first theme in this discussion is values: in particular, the values embedded in Kaupapa Māori that underpin transformative leadership roles. Guinier and Torres (2009) pinpoint collective cultural identity as being significant element of transformative action. Participants expressed a strong desire to strengthen Māori identity in the sector, confirming the dictum that Māori want to be Māori: senior leaders are calling for recognition of 'Māoriness' (Pio et al., 2014, p. 682) through acknowledgement of language, knowledge, culture and values. Staniland et al. (2020) argue denying one's identity in the workforce not only leads to meaningless work, but also often results in compromising cultural identity and values, thereby reducing incentives to undertake reform strategies. As argued by Wikitera (2011), Māori leadership in mainstream contexts, such as universities, can demand compromises and pose many challenges to Māori cultural identity within a colonial workplace. The synergy of cultural identity and career can be problematic (Pio et al., 2014), and, as discussed by Staniland et al. (2020), often Indigenous identity and the Aotearoa/New Zealand higher education sector are at odds with each other as universities are 'still battling with underlying assumptions of fit and the significance of value and identity congruence' (p. 602).

Participants in this study demanded the sector realise the value of Māori identity by holding the university accountable to the principles of equity and justice, particularly in framing yearly reviews, culturally responsive job descriptions and inclusive strategic plans. Durie (2005b) argues:

> It is illusory to develop policies, programmes and practices that purport to be 'blind' to race and ethnicity. … Unless ethnicity is reflected in policies, diversity will be masked, best outcomes compromised, and an assimilatory approach fostered. (p. 10)

In this way, honouring Te Tiriti o Waitangi becomes a secured proposition, ensuring accountability to partnership is inscribed in the sector's ethos, and guaranteeing Māori right to be Māori. The Māori worldview then becomes rudimentary in visioning for the future of the university.

As relationships are fundamental to Māori life (Hohepa & Robson, 2008), underscoring trust and professionalism (Shore, 2010), participants then attest to the significant value placed on developing and sustaining meaningful relationships in their senior leadership roles. Whether it be relationships with colleagues, networking, relationships with senior management, students, a predecessor in their role who acted as mentor and role model, or relationships with the community and between the university and the community, participants agree relationships significantly contribute to reinforce Māori identity in higher education institutions. Hohepa and Robson (2008) contend relationships and organisational aspects of an educational institution are not discrete aspects and are central to effective leadership, an observation borne out by all participants in the study.

However, participants also propose relationships and trust are under threat in regimes dominated by auditability, 'measurement performativity and surveillance' (Shore, 2010, p. 27), wherein academics and leaders are positioned to 'set aside personal beliefs and commitments' (Ball, 2003, p. 16). We are also reminded relationships take time, bringing to bear the importance of temporal considerations of relationship building to front-foot planning and strategic actions.

Roles as agents of change

Katene (2010) argues that as conflict between European colonisers and Māori escalated, the call for Māori leadership styles responsive to imposed change came to the fore; a situation that has not abated to this day as traditional cultural leadership continues to be battered in the seas of neoliberal changes and the demands of globalisation. Durie (2005a) argues Māori leadership has implications for 'academic direction, research, managerial responsibilities, policy making and governance' (p. 12). Findings from this study show senior leaders value transformative leadership, that is future focused and change oriented leadership, seeing themselves fulfilling a crucial role leading this transformation.

It stands to reason that transformative change must be enabled by systemic and structural reform led by Māori senior leaders; this is a position unequivocally supported by all participants in the study, and reinforced by literature (Durie, 2005a; Guinier & Torres, 2009; Kidman, 2018; Pio et al., 2014; G. H. Smith, 2000; Staniland et al., 2020). Both participants and literature (Durie, 2009; Kidman, 2020; Kidman & Chu, 2017; McAllister et al., 2020) call for significant changes to governance and management structures through increasing the representation of Māori academics in senior leadership roles. Moreover, participants also called for more than increased numbers, as the realisation of Māori power needs roles positioned to influence and infiltrate the ivory tower syndrome (Mercier et al., 2011), moving beyond institutional rhetoric of commitment to equity (Barrow & Grant, 2019), whether it be having your voice heard at the table, accessing funding, or resisting whitestreaming of Māori led faculties and departments, as identified by Potter and Cooper (2016). Additionally, Mercier et al. (2011) report Māori leaders are reclaiming and creating tailored spaces for example through professional development and increasing support networks and programmes, thereby physically, intellectually and spiritually restructuring the university.

The dominant discourse of the five interviews was one of a resistance through front-foot, or proactive, planning. The wheels of change can move slowly, meeting much resistance with each turn, and all participants spoke of the need for long-term planning to counter the disadvantageous, slow pace of incremental gains. In the absence of long-term and strategic planning, fragmented initiatives and stand-alone policies mar the landscape, resulting in reduced impact which is often accompanied by a loss of the community confidence (Durie, 2005a). Furthermore, the most common form of planning, reactive planning, is in response to a crisis and lacks strategic direction. Reactive planning may also position initiatives so they become the politics of distraction, as leaders are positioned responding to, explaining or

accounting for initiatives in response to colonising strategies (G. H. Smith, 2003) further undermining authority, autonomy and the ability to lead. In contrast, participants argue strategic and proactive planning may very well ameliorate the impact of colonial hegemony and undo the damage caused by overt and covert expressions of power.

The benefits of senior leaders' futures-orientation also applies to succession planning. Rrecruitment, retention and progression of Indigenous academic staff plays a vital role in transformative agendas (Asmar & Page, 2018; Dang et al., 2016; Martin et al., 2017), and, in the Aotearoa context, when managed by Māori senior leaders, succession planning has the potential to facilitate long term change. Participants saw themselves as playing a key role in ensuring sustainable leadership, through 'growing our own capacity for self-development', and mentoring that is 'building the capacity for leadership in the future and succession'.

Responsibilities

All participants reported cultural responsibilities as a defining element in their leadership role, supporting the notion that the distinctiveness of Māori leaders' responsibilities lies in the 'duties and associated accountabilities that are bestowed upon Māori educational leaders by the communities they serve' (Hohepa & Robson, 2008, p. 36). With less room and time for community and community engagement as a consequence of neoliberal trends (Shore, 2010), participants argued for their right to fulfil the full responsibilities incumbent with Māori leadership.

The inculcation of Māori values throughout the institution is a responsibility bestowed on senior leaders (Katene, 2010; Matthews, 2011; G. H. Smith, 2000) with participants endorsing this responsibility. However, carrying this mantle of responsibility is fraught with difficulties, as participants commented on their experiences of tokenism, cultural exploitation, race hierarchy, and Pākehā shallow and self-preserving engagement with Te Tito to Waitangi. When referencing partnership relationships, participants expressed

disappointment that their efforts to advance Te Tiriti o Waitangi obligations are frustrated by structural and systemic obstacles. Research in the field shows leaders are not alone, as academics across Aotearoa 'expressed considerable cynicism about the translation of these symbolic relationships into institutional practice' (Kidman & Chu, 2017, pp. 14-15).

As identified in literature (Pio et al., 2014), and by participants, a key responsibility of Māori leadership is about caring for community, both in the present quotidian and in future visioning. Maintaining relationships with community, securing tailored spaces for Māori students and staff, transition planning, the appointment and mentoring of Māori staff to senior roles, modelling of leadership and modelling of leadership, are all front-foot responsibilities.

Conclusion

For almost two centuries Māori leaders have been speaking back to the colonisation of their land, language, culture and pedagogy, acting as a buffer between their people and external pressures to conform to Pākehā ways (Matthews, 2011). Threats to tenable Māori governance structures in higher education are evident on several fronts, from globalisation of the sector, rationalisation based on diversity, neoliberal agendas and ongoing efforts by colonial powers to retain the status quo by undermining parity and partnership as enshrined in Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Although the technologies of colonisation have changed, challenges to Māori authority as leaders have persisted. In response, Māori determination to assert sovereignty has also persisted: leaders continue to strengthen their position, and, as the findings of this study show, within the higher education sector senior leaders are mobilising an emancipatory agenda as agents of change. Māori senior leaders are challenging Pākehā power constructs at the institutional level, asserting power through a collective identity and creating solidarity in the face of polarisation (Guinier & Torres, 2009). Māori senior leaders are determined to be on the front foot, leading transformative change that will ensure 'autonomous interaction, not

subordination and domination' (Pio et al., 2014, p. 680). By mobilising leadership roles and

responsibilities underpinned by Māori values, Māori leadership in higher education is

creating a proactive platform for change.

Acknowledgements

Conflict of Interest

We declare we have no conflict of interests to disclose.

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[i] While this study focuses on Māori people, the authors acknowledge the ongoing marginalisation of the Indigenous peoples of diverse Pacific nations who have settled in Aotearoa largely since the middle of the twentieth century.

[ii] The Tertiary Education Strategy 2014-2019 clearly identifies the Ministry's obligation to honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi through supporting Māori aspirations, language and research. See Ministry of Education (2020).

[iii] *Walan Mayiny* means 'strong people' in the Aboriginal Wiradjuri language of the Central-West of New South Wales.

[iv] Kim McBreen (2019) identifies polytechnics as being tertiary institutions with a focus on vocational training, certificate and diploma level teaching. Wānanga provide learning and research based on Māori practices and philosophies, with each Wānanga determining its own educational priorities.

[v] Tika, pono and aroha are principles of action. Tika being the right way to do things, right ordering of relationships, pono is the principle calling for honesty and integrity, and aroha is the principle of expressing empathy, compassion and joy for others (Pio et al.2014).

[vi] Rangatira is a person who holds senior ranking in Māori society (Katene 2010).

[vii] Iwi is translated to mean tribe (Katene 2010).

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