

## **Fostering confluence for students in an indigenous tertiary institution by engaging traditional pedagogy: Ako Wānanga and the essential support services.**

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### **Abstract:**

*This paper intends to outline an indigenous pedagogy, Ako Wānanga as an encapsulation of how we are bringing our ancestors wisdom into our modern learning environments at Te Wānanga o Aotearoa. The challenge of effectively utilising pedagogies to unify kaiako (academic teaching staff), Te Pātaka Māramatanga (Te Wānanga o Aotearoa Library) and Te Puna Manaaki (Student Support) in a nurturing philosophy and practice for our taura (students) is being promoted to serve our learners where mainstream education did not meet their learning modality.*

*Ako Wānanga, utilises the four traditional principles of aro (reflection), ako (learning, teaching), te hiringa (passion, spirituality and motivation) and whanaungatanga (relationships) – enriches the academic and support services quality experience, thereby enhancing the opportunity for collaboration of the essential support services with academic staff for taura success. Our intention is to meet learning modalities of our taura (student) demographic.*

*The model for the essential services comes from the elements of our Māori community – the spring or Puna for water is represented by Student Support, the food store or Pātaka is represented by Te Pātaka Māramatanga – the Library and the Wharenui (shelter) is provided by Ako Wānanga with its principles embedded within it. This model for the essential support services provides the elements of manāki (to look after, show respect and kindness for) where our kaiako (academic staff) and taura (students) can come for food, water and shelter -warmth and protection.*

*The knowledge paradigms of our tupuna (ancestors), provides both the landscape and aspirations for the expression and the collaborative pedagogy that facilitates transformation through education for taura and kaimahi where they can nurture and be nurtured into states of reflection, empowerment and transformation.*

**Keywords:** Ako Wānanga, Indigenous Pedagogy, Indigenous Epistemology, Library, Te Wānanga o Aotearoa.

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## **Introduction**

The patriotic phrase, ‘Vive le France’ inspired the French people to persist in overcoming adversity and to let France live through engaging the hearts and minds of its citizenry. The theme of ‘Vive le "I" for indigenous’ provides a wonderful affirmation for the attainment of indigenous people in re-igniting our world views. It may be a celebration of accomplishment over adversity through the strengthening of cultural responsiveness and accountability not only in the context of libraries and information services but for the progression of indigenous knowing and being by fostering confluence for students in an indigenous tertiary institution.

Ako Wānanga as an indigenous pedagogy is being implemented and championed in a contemporary educational environment and will be discussed as a collaborative pedagogy. Insights on the relationships of kaiako (academic teaching staff), Te Pātaka Māramatanga (Librarians) and Te Puna Manaaki (Student Support) are being re-contextualised through engagement with Ako Wānanga, into Te Wānanga o Aotearoa’s indigenous educational context.

## **Background**

Te Wānanga o Aotearoa engages Māori philosophy, Māori world view, cultural principles and values to inform an indigenous pedagogy for transformation as noted by Smith (1999). Te Wānanga o Aotearoa was founded in response to a recognised need for an organisation to provide education to those who had not fared well in the mainstream educational system. It is a national provider of indigenous education in New Zealand and at its core seeks to provide whānau (family) transformation through education. The whānau is connoted in an intergenerational sense. In Aotearoa New Zealand, mainstream education historically had not provided space and recognition for Kaupapa wānanga - traditional knowledge systems. Kerr and Lambert (2012) state “when the cultural foundation of a Māori individual clashes with the academic realities of the construct of another culture, the result can restrict potential for thinking and being Māori” (Kerr and Lambert, 2012).

Māori learners identify and engage in education in a holistic way in direct correlation to the way that Māori engage in life. Educational researchers Bishop and Glynn (2011) found that taura who engaged in the mainstream educational sector found themselves lacking in the knowledge of their own indigeneity.

Schools and teachers have expressed the need to researchers for a more culturally appropriate teaching and learning pedagogy other than that of the dominant western approaches (Bishop and Glynn, 2011; Durie, 2003) As an indigenous educational provider, Te Wānanga o Aotearoa theorises, creates and engages in cultural pedagogies that are underpinned by indigenous epistemology.

In the 1980’s, the New Zealand government recognised pre – colonial traditional Māori educational systems and practices which resulted a decade later in the establishment of three Wānanga (tertiary institutions) with the potential to redefine Māori education in contexts informed by iwi (tribes), hapū (clans) and communities. Te Wānanga o Aotearoa as the largest indigenous tertiary provider in the world, aspires to: Provide holistic education opportunities of the highest quality for Māori, peoples of Aotearoa and the World” (Nin & Wetere, 2014)

## **Te Pātaka Māramatanga: Te Wānanga O Aotearoa Library**

Te Pātaka Māramatanga can be interpreted as a storehouse or repository, traditionally of food and Māramatanga signifies to understand, comprehend, receptivity and enlightenment. In the Ako Wānanga model, it is the food house to feed the people. Our logo symbolises:



- our potentiality;
- the notion of nurturing and caring;
- our people;
- the pathway to knowledge, and;
- the seed (or idea).

The designer, Shawn Appel represented it as the growth and knowledge for all those who come to use the resources within our ‘house of knowledge’ so that ideas may blossom with new outlooks and fresh ideas in harmony with our vision and mission statements.

The vision statement for our library is ‘Māramatanga’ – the pathway of enlightenment leading to Mauri Ora.

Our mission statement, ‘Kia whai i te Mātauranga’ – encapsulates the notion of creating space for Ako – the creative moment and our symbiotic relationship to the Ako principle in Ako Wānanga.

Te Pātaka Māramatanga has a diverse multi-cultural staff that provide library services to 32,000 students and 1,120 staff across more than 130 sites.

### **Te Puna Manaaki: Student Support**

Student support was developed in correlation with Te Pātaka Māramatanga Library services. It provides national services to meet the pastoral needs of a diverse, high needs community. It is represented as the Puna (well spring) nourishing the needs of taurā.

### **Indigenous Epistemology and Indigenous Pedagogy**

A more culturally appropriate pedagogy would need to incorporate a Māori worldview. The Māori worldview is defined as the, conceptualisation of Māori knowledge that has been developed through oral tradition. It is the process, by which the Māori mind receives, internalises, differentiates and formulates ideas and knowledge. Transformation occurs when learning has relevance to the mind of the recipient, learner or teacher.

The call for a more diverse cultural pedagogy that aligns with the Māori worldview has seen a greater commitment to transform educational initiatives that are more inclusive, integrated and meaningful for Māori (Macfarlane, Webber, Cookson-Cox, & McRae, n.d; Bishop and Glynn, 2011). This was further developed as Kaupapa Māori; Māori philosophy, Māori world view and cultural principles or values that inform an indigenous pedagogy for whānau transformation through education (Smith, Moko Productions, Nga Pae o te Maramatanga, & University of Auckland, 2004). It contains the elements of (i) self-determination; (ii) culturally preferred pedagogy; (iii) mediation of socio-economic impediments; (iv) extended family social structure and practice and (v) a collective vision (Roberts, 1999). Te Ao Māori (Māori world view) allows one to look and see timeless markers that have been left by

our ancestors. Pohatu (2008) asserts, “Te Ao Māori does not leave each generation to figure out how to undertake its purpose and obligations. It has fashioned enduring *hoa-hāere* (valued travelling companions) that journey through time, constantly available, waiting to get invited into our contexts, Kaupapa and relationships” (as cited in Hunia & Te Waananga o Aotearoa, 2008).

Therefore, a Māori worldview or cultural or indigenous epistemology is the premise for an indigenous pedagogy to have power to transform the mind of the teacher and learner. Māori values form an epistemological basis (Ka'ai, 2004; Barlow, 1991; Buck, 1950) for engaging Māori learners. The transmission of the indigenous epistemology and pedagogy is carried through the knowing, expressions and actions of our *kaiako*. *Kaiako* (teachers) play the central role in *tauirā* development and as identified by (Macfarlane et al., n.d.) are the essential driving force behind *ako* (teaching and learning) for *tauirā* transformation. They foster engagement, encouragement and success. The collaboration of *kaiako*, libraries and student support is essential to escalate a net of nurture and care to enable and empower *tauirā*.

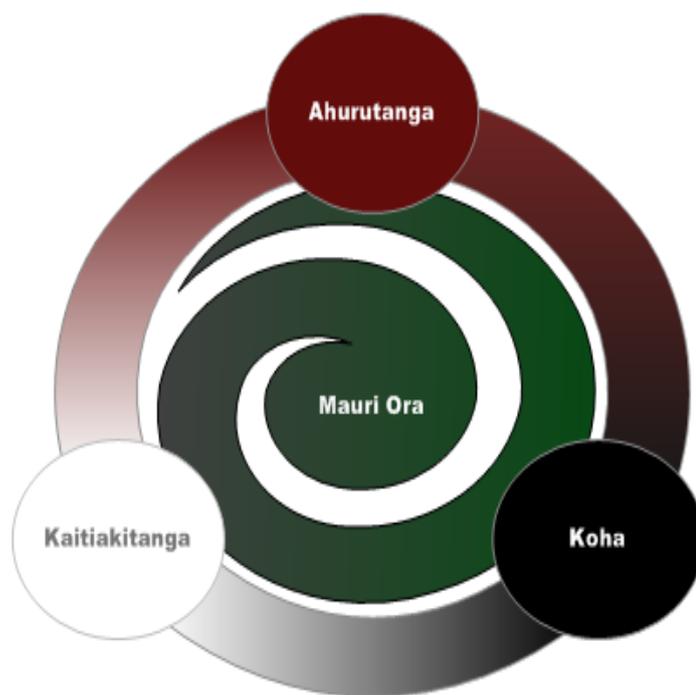
### **Organisational Principles and Values**

The Kaupapa (philosophy) Uara (values) form the premise for our indigenous epistemology and indigenous pedagogies. The enactment of the philosophy and the values epitomise the move from epithet to ennoblement of the soul of the learner instead of an outcome. Our Kaupapa embodies our intentions as an educational provider and affirms those intentions;

- Ki te whakawhiwhi i ngā mea angitū, ā, i ngā akoranga katoa tino teitei mō ngā Māori me ngā iwi o Aotearoa me te ao.  
To provide holistic education opportunities of the highest quality for Māori, peoples of Aotearoa and the world.
- Ki te waihanga i tētahi āhuetanga hei akoranga tikanga Māori.  
To provide a unique Māori cultural learning environment.

Our Uara (values) weave through our actions for the success and benefit of *tauirā* and our fellow colleagues. *Te Aroha* encourages us to have regard for one another and those for whom we are responsible and to whom we are accountable. *Te Whakapono* heartens our beliefs and the confidence that what we are doing is right. *Ngā Ture* emboldens us in the knowledge that our actions are morally and ethically right and that we are acting in an honourable manner. *Kotahitanga* inspires unity amongst iwi and other ethnicities – standing as one. Marie Panapa (2012) portrays Uarā in poetic rhetoric as being, the Puna (spring) from which flows the energy and the gifts to all people. If we allow it to flow into our lives, what a bonus that is. But from our lives, we must allow it to flow through and back to the *tauirā* (as cited in Aotearoa, 2012).

**Kaupapa Wānanga** as a values driven initiative encourages each staff member to strive to achieve balance (a state of *Mauri ora*) within his/her life. *Mauri ora* in its optimal state epitomises transcendence. The three other embodied elements of *Koha*, *Kaitiakitanga* and *Āhurutanga* constantly acknowledge to the success of our endeavours as contributing factors to *Mauri ora*.



**Koha** acknowledges that valued contributions are to be given and received responsibly.

**Kaitiakitanga** acknowledges that participants (including Te Wānanga o Aotearoa as an institution) at any time and place are always engaged in relationships with others, their environments and Kaupapa.

**Āhurutanga** acknowledges that quality spaces must be claimed and maintained to enable activities to be undertaken in an ethical and meaningful way. **Mauri Ora** acknowledges that the pursuit of wellbeing is at the core of all Te Wānanga o Aotearoa Kaupapa and activities. (Hoani, Hunia, & Te Waananga o Aotearoa, 2009).

Our philosophy, values and kaupapa provide a platform for defining and aligning our educational epistemology and pedagogy with indigenous ways of knowing, acting, feeling and being. It is this premise that inspires Ako Wānanga as a philosophy and framework at Te Wānanga o Aotearoa.

### **Ako Wānanga**

Ako Wānanga is a framework for aro (reflective practice) available to all kaimahi, as everything we do impacts on ako (teaching and learning) in some way. Tamiaho Herangi-Serancke (2008) states that the ako moment as “an awakening, when the wairua (energy of spirit), our Mauri (life essence), our histories, our lived experiences, our stories come together in one spontaneous moment of creative alignment, and the Tatau Pounamu, the doors of spiritual inquiry are opened, to reveal a moment that is truly uplifting, this is the ako moment. Quite often, it can come as a rush, a sudden explosive energy of intensity, much like a fire that wells up from within. Other times, it can come as peaceful as our awa, calm and serene on windless summer afternoons” (as cited in Hunia & Te Waananga o Aotearoa, 2008).

In the essential services and Ako Wānanga model, Ako Wānanga is represented by a traditional whareniui (meeting house) where the people are sheltered and taught. Ako Wānanga, references the empirically based Te Whare Tapa Wha (the four walls of a whare) model required to ensure strength and symmetry (Durie, 1998). Ako Wānanga builds on a traditional model representing our philosophy, values and principles. Whanaungatanga is seen as an interlinking form; aro, ako and te hiringa strengthen and support the building.



**Aro** (reflective practice) as the rear supporting column captures the concept of past and future in a notion of reflectivity critical to improvement. Meyer referring to Plato affirms that true intelligence is self-knowledge. You must know yourself. Self-reflection is inherent to what true intelligence supports and develops. I have to know what I believe and only then can I be clear about how to express it.

**Ako** embodies the dual nature (learn/ teach as well as being a teacher and learner) as the centre column showing how Ako is at the centre of all that we do.

**Te Hiringa** (spirituality, passion and motivation) is situated in the very front of building as you approach it and inspires our educational community in transformation through education.

**Whanaungatanga** (respectful relationships and connections) advances the centrality of relationships that we establish, build and maintain as a platform for educational success and is represented in the whareniui as the lower supporting board (similar to skirting) and upper supporting board (similar to the scotia) around the building interior. Meyer (2010) shares Malcom Naea Chun's (2010) thoughts about A'o (ako) asserting "A'o is the word for education, but it means much more. It implies both to learn (a 'o mai) and to teach (a 'o aku). This sense of receiving and giving supports the idea that relationships and belonging are primary actions in traditional Hawaiian society (as cited in Davies & Hoani, 2010).

### The Mauri Continuum

The Ako Wānanga model utilises a continuum that moves from a state of Mauri Moe (non-participation) through to Mauri Noho (willing but limited application), Mauri Tū (high proficiency informs practice) to Mauri Ora (transformative practice.) The Mauri continuum informs states of knowing, being and doing and participants can be shifting simultaneously through different states of Mauri in different activities within their praxis or in life.

## **International Library and Faculty Collaboration**

The library profession has long been engaged in working with faculty to improve outcomes for students. Julien and Given (2003) juxtaposes librarian and faculty reflections. They advance collaboration through relationship development and proposes social positioning theory as a construct to understand and construct identity. Leeder (2011) reinforces the relationship imperative in a five step programme for collaborating with faculty; (i) be confident; (ii) make the connection; (iii) reinforce the connection; (iv) build the relationship and lastly, (v) go collaborate. The vehicles for engagement vary from embedded information literacy, research for students, curriculum design, and research for staff to blended librarians in the digital information age, creating eBooks and increasing the role of librarians as co-educators with faculty. The common denominator is fundamentally based on relationships with faculty for the advancement of students. We have been engaging in activities with our faculty in processes outlined in the ERIAL project from DePaul University.

## **Application**

The alignment of faculty, librarians and student support under the indigenous lens of Ako Wānanga provides a vehicle to re-contextualise collaborative re-engagement for taura success. The philosophy, values and principles as indigenous principles make collaborative partners accountable for taura success and personal progress. This umbrella aids in overcoming barriers as we work together for the success of taura and each other. The Ako Wānanga model's strength is that it requires lived values from us.

There is resistance from some faculty who have nurtured and fed taura alone in the past under great duress. Their centralised role is evidenced in their involvement in all aspects of the taura experience. Te Pātaka Māramatanga seeks to provide the academic support to relieve and lift the burden on faculty in areas of information expertise. When provided in a context that relates to Māori perceptions and experience (Marshall, 2014), it can provide a space and place for community, discovery and research. Strengthening the library and student support role proposes to ease the burden of faculty and increase taura retention and completion.

The need for a strategic relationship with kaiako, to improve taura focussed outcomes was articulated over four years ago. The socialisation of Ako Wānanga with the Te Pātaka Māramatanga and Student Support as essential support services started in 2012 with the training of Ako Wānanga champions and a library champion was selected. In pre-semester teacher training sessions nationally in February 2013, collaborative presentations of Ako Wānanga, Te Pātaka Māramatanga and Student support to all staff across Aotearoa New Zealand invigorated a unified approach for taura success. Te Pātaka Māramatanga had a national training session on Ako Wānanga to define, identify and relate Ako Wānanga principles in our practice and it is taking time to imbed into our practice.

A symposium for Ako wānanga was organised in 2013 to elevate consciousness around Ako Wānanga with a subsequent Ako Wānanga research publication (Ako Wānanga, 2012; Davies and Hoani, 2010). The passionate and engaged Ako Wānanga team have identified the next step for 2014 is UIA- to increase **U**nderstanding, **I**mprove and encourage people to **A**sk where selected staff from the essential services nationally are invited to participate in further training days to embed Ako Wānanga as an epistemology and pedagogy within the hearts and minds of staff.

Ako Wānanga is a part of our 2014 business plan. Along with regular reports, librarians as Ako Wānanga champions and having the Ako Wānanga team as peers, Aro, Ako, Te Hiringa, and Whanaungatanga are now more evident in our management meeting and across management levels in the organisation. While participating in eTV training (cloud based TV programme resources), Ako Wānanga provided the ideal descriptors for the passionate and professional service that increasingly acknowledged indigenous practice.

The teaching and learning functions of information literacy sessions make it easy to translate the teacher / taura centric model in our practice. Team members will need to be courageous to reflect, learn and use the Mauri continuum as a pedagogy for improvement. However, our passionate librarians will easily translate our student centric model into indigenous based practice. We move from transactional to transformational and meaningful values based practice. We are very much on a journey of self-discovery and development of excellence in practice. It means that we as librarians challenge ourselves to express meaningful values with our kaiako. We can build upon the conscientious service ethic to foster confluence through nurture and empowerment of those for whom we care. The adoption of Ako Wānanga values is evidenced in our non-Māori colleagues, through passionate discourse, practice and speaking in Māori.

Our staff have the privilege of associating with scholars of the Māori world in Māori Language, Māori Navigation, Māori carving, Māori philosophy and Māori leadership. Under such tutelage, the philosophy, principles and values of Te Wānanga o Aotearoa can flourish. Are we fostering confluence for students in an indigenous tertiary institution by engaging traditional pedagogy? Yes and there is a long way to go to strengthen the mastermind alliance of kaiako, libraries and student support as essential support services with Ako Wānanga.

Taura when interviewed are as passionate as staff in recognition of the importance of uara and kaupapa wānanga in personal wellbeing and in education. It is an essential point of difference in their educational journey and they feel nurtured by it. We emphasise that they can go and create more meaning and purpose as they share it in their professional and personal life.

The principles of Ako Wānanga are a part of our language and the context is gaining significance. Passion was and is a part of Te Wānanga o Aotearoa and there is the opportunity to impute additional significance to our purpose for taura and ourselves in the Ako Wānanga model. Do we awaken ourselves to the confluence of wairua, Mauri, lived experiences and let them flow back to our taura?

The future will be contextualised within the hearts and minds of taura and kaimahi of Te Wānanga o Aotearoa. The future plan is to have more shared spaces for taura, kaiako, libraries and student support as essential support services. It is hoped that the values and philosophy will be represented and underpin our transformational exchanges at Te Wānanga o Aotearoa with taura and kaiako.

The commonality of transformation is a key driver to align the praxis of kaiako and the essential support services. The platform for shared engagement has been set and the path ahead is filled with hope as we have the opportunity to continue to build for tomorrow. The opportunity to nourish those that come within the mind and heart space of Ako Wānanga and the essential services receive far more than the symbolic provision of food, water and shelter.

The synergistic endeavour of kaiako and the essential services will have consequence for generations of time.

## **Conclusion**

A reflective wisdom of an Hawaiian elder as shared by a visiting Hawaiian epistemologist, Manulani Meyer (2010), exemplifies concepts of knowing and being stating “can I live out the truth they represent? This is why Haleakua, our beloved kupuna in Hawaii-Nui Akea, said, we must re-read our own thoughts we have written. Why? So we can see if we have become that which we spoke. Ako mai, ako atu. True intelligence is self-knowledge” (as cited in Davies & Hoani, 2010).

We must increase our self-knowing. Indigenous ways of knowing and being are a foundation for our indigenous epistemology and indigenous pedagogy at Te Wānanga o Aotearoa. It is informed by our kaupapa (philosophy), Uara (values) and incorporates Kaupapa Wānanga (values we live by) in a Mātauranga Māori epistemology - a distinctive body of knowledge that informs and transforms us and our educational community.

The essential support services and kaiako acknowledge the knowledge of the past to bring fruition to the present. Through a small re-conceptualisation of powerful values and philosophies, collaborative interactions of kaiako and the essential support services of library and student support can realise the desired confluence for the wellbeing and success of taura and us in a powerful lens that benefits all of our communities. We seek to provide the essentials of food, water and shelter for our whanau to transform. In utilising a traditional pedagogy, Ako Wānanga compellingly reaches to the indigenous soul with familiar principles and aspirational contexts for intergenerational sustenance.

While not the only way, this indigenous way of knowing and being carries with it the Mauri of Te Wānanga o Aotearoa as succinctly phrased by our inspirational leader, Bentham Ohia, ‘to achieve whanau transformation through education’. Whanau transformation translates to success being realised by one can be realised by the many and has the power to catalyse generations of our elders to the generations of their progeny in ways that acknowledge and empower all in their pursuit of Māramatanga and Mauri Ora. Vive le I for indigenous.

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## GLOSSARY

Āhurutanga	Creating safe spaces
Ako	To teach /learn; to be a teacher / learner
Ako Wānanga	An indigenous pedagogy utilising traditional principles of aro, ako, te hiringa and whanaungatanga
Aro	Reflective practice
Awa	River
Hapū	Clans or descent groups
Iwi	Tribes
Kaiako	Academic teaching faculty
Kaimahi	All staff of Te Wānanga o Aotearoa
Kaitiakitanga	Guardianship
Kaupapa Māori	Māori philosophy; Māori world view
Kaupapa Wānanga	A traditional knowledge system and living values for Te Wānanga o Aotearoa
Koha	Present, gift
Kotahitanga	Unity; standing as one
Manaaki	To look after, show respect and kindness for
Māramatanga	Māramatanga signifies to understand, comprehend, receptivity and enlightenment.
Mauri	Life essence
Mauri Moe	Non participation
Mauri Noho	Willing to participate; limited application
Mauri Ora	The pursuit of wellbeing; transformative practice; transcendence
Mauri Tū	High proficiency informs practice
Pātaka	Traditional storehouse for food
Puna	Spring of water
Tauira	Students
Te Aroha	Regard for one another
Te Hiringa	Passion; spirituality; motivation
Te Pātaka Māramatanga	The National Library for Te Wānanga o Aotearoa; a storehouse or repository, traditionally of food
Te Whakapono	The confidence that what we are doing is right
Toroa te Nukuroa	Research publication of Te Wānanga o Aotearoa
Tūpuna	Ancestors
Uara	Organisational values
Wairua	Spiritual element; energy of spirit
Wānanga	Māori tertiary institutions
Whanau	Family
Whanaungatanga	Relationships
Whareniui	Traditional Māori meeting house