

Contested Spaces: Indigeneity and Epistemologies of Ignorance¹

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“...ignorance is not something simple: it is not a simple lack, absence or emptiness, and it is not a passive state. Ignorance of this sort – the determined ignorance most white Americans have of American Indian tribes and clans, the ostrich-like ignorance most white Americans have of the histories of Asian peoples in the country, the impoverished ignorance most white Americans have of Black language – ignorance of these sorts is a complex result of many acts and many negligence’s.”
(Frye 1983, 118)

Introduction

The academy remains a highly contested space for indigenous scholars where complex layers of ignorance are acted out on a daily basis buttressed by a vast array of pervasive and oppressive institutional systems and structures that generate and reinforce ignorance. From the moment an indigenous scholar enters the academy as a new entrant and throughout their student experiences perhaps as junior low paid faculty or entering tenure track and promotion, the indigenous scholar faces the sustained impact of normative and privileged ignorance. Attempts by indigenous scholars to indigenize the academy are fraught because it requires us to navigate a complex terrain that is hostile to indigenous perspectives on the production of knowledge. In this chapter I draw on Charles Mills concept of epistemologies of ignorance and the works of other critical philosophers who have expanded on Mills analysis, in order to understand the various forms and patterns of ignorance as they apply to the indigenous experience within the confines of the academy, and to examine how they’re actively produced and sustained; the politics of what is not known and what role they play in supporting dominant group privilege.

In Aotearoa New Zealand the idea that mainstream tertiary institutions as collective entities are somehow external to the realities of indigenous life and therefore irrelevant, is embedded in common place descriptors that categorise the academy as either ‘western’ ‘Pākehā’ ‘European’ ‘white’ or ‘mainstream’. The terms are used interchangeably in indigenous discourse underpinned by assumptions that the indigenous scholar will be required to leave their Māori/tribal identities ‘at the gate’ in order to achieve the cognitive switch necessary to comply with and adapt to officially sanctioned programmes, structures and processes. Each category serves to either preclude certain possibilities inscribed in the indigenous mind that the hallowed sanctity of the ivory tower is beyond the reach of ordinary brown folk or they enter the academy and in so doing ‘learn to see the world wrongly’ (Mills, 1997: 18) based on evasion (such as the conceptual erasure of tribal language, histories, knowledge and culture) and self-deception (such as the superiority of the English language and Eurocentric worldviews).

Charles Mills concept of an ‘epistemology of ignorance’ emerges from his notion of the racial contract, an alternative frame to recognise and understand racism as a political system using the vocabulary and apparatus developed for contractarianism. Based on the social

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contract tradition, the racial contract offers a powerful lens to show how the polity structures the norms, privileges, benefits, opportunities and distributions of wealth of society. While a contract may be seen to be an agreement between people, according to Mills the racial contract "...is not a contract between everybody ("we the people") but between just the people who count, the people who really are people ("we the white people")" (C. Mills 1997, 3). And as a condition or membership of such a polity, an epistemology of ignorance is advocated whereby "...one has to see the world wrongly, but with the assurance that his set of mistaken perceptions will be validated by white epistemic authority, whether religious or secular' (C. Mills 1997, 18).

Mills mapping of 'white ignorance' is useful because it offers a structural analysis of how oppressive systems generate ignorance, the pervasive forms and features of ignorance as a basis for "...reformulating an epistemology that will give us genuine knowledge" (C. W. Mills 2007, 16). Ignorance in this context is more than not knowing simple facts or displays of prejudicial behaviour; but rather it can be understood as non-knowing where race has played a determining role. The erasure of indigenous knowledge, achievements and history from the societal canon; the reduction of populations through introduced diseases, wars and policies; the usurpation of customary forms of government and social structures; building western societies on appropriated territories and vacated spaces through the displacement of decreasing indigenous populations and increasing immigrant population (Tully 2000), are examples of the determining role of race in the grand narrative of a civilising colonial history; the primitive native juxtaposed with the developed, civilised European.

According to Mills, white ignorance is patterned on false belief the idea that incorrect reasoning leads to misconceptions, and the absence of true belief the acceptance of a proposition that has been examined, found to be logically sound and which corresponds to facts of reality. And because white ignorance varies across populations, and is not necessarily confined to white people since "...blacks can manifest white ignorance also", as an organising concept white ignorance should be thought of as a cognitive tendency (C. W. Mills 2007, 20-23).

The link Mills makes between ignorance and interactive cognitive processes such as perception, conception, memory and so on, is instructive. The point is made that such processes are constantly interacting shaping cognition which in turn is influenced by an individual's socialisation². Common among indigenous peoples is a perpetual incredulity at the inability of white folk to comprehend ('to see us' and 'to hear our voices') and to be cognisant of the indigenous world even when the facts of indigenous realities past (historical) and present (contemporaneous) are set before them. In other words ignorance by white folk operates with a particular kind of social cognition that distorts reality (C. W. Mills 2007) for brown and black folk. Epistemologies of ignorance become a constitutive norm and cognitive tendency that underpin categories of Eurocentrism. Cognitive processes lead white folk to reinscribe the indigenous reality to a false belief and misconception that they would have us believe is the truth.

In the south pacific nation of Aotearoa New Zealand, mainstream universities are essentially Eurocentric organisations structured on dominant group values, ethics, standards, culture and aspirations. They are patterned on an unassailable conviction that by emulating Ivy League

² For an indepth discussion see Mills, 2007, 23-36.

institutions of Europe and North America as exemplary and superior based on epistemologies of ignorance, justifies embedding Eurocentric curricula, systems and modus operandi at every level of the institution. Overlay this with home-grown values associated with biculturalism (Māori and non-Māori) and an acknowledgement of the Treaty of Waitangi, the founding document of Aotearoa, then the biases and non-knowing of the dominant group become even more apparent. Attempts to indigenise the academy are filtered through skewed institutional lens and in the process such attempts are derailed, undermined or marginalised.

Take for example the institution of pōwhiri, a formal Māori welcome, which has been adopted and become fairly common place in New Zealand institutions most often taking place on institutional marae. Such marae are a fairly recent addition to institutional facilities, usually presided over by the obligatory elder, where the customs and processes of pōwhiri are approximated if operationalised outside of tribal contexts. Marae and pōwhiri are deep symbols of Māori identity, cultural values, intergenerational socialisation patterns, ethical practice and processes that have been irreparably impacted by the effects of colonisation. Most non-Māori know little about marae protocol and feel uncomfortable with the pōwhiri process often culminating in the ludicrous situation where non-Māori faculty act as strangers in a process that they themselves have agreed to, and in an institutional context where they hold majority power. Few non-Māori are socialised into Māori culture despite 200 years of European/white settlement, and there exists a fear of Māori cultural practices based on epistemologies of ignorance. A narrative of one event that bears witness to categorical barriers for non-Māori in the ‘welcome ceremony’ provides a relevant case study for analysis.

In one university in Aotearoa New Zealand a new Maori-centred programme was launched and the first intake of twenty seven first year students and several hundred of their family and friends gathered for the welcoming ceremony on the university marae. It was a momentous day for many reasons. It had taken four years to reach this point when the first students finally arrived. Significantly, the entire ceremony was conducted in the Maori language in accordance with tradition not often witnessed within the university environs. For the families, who represented the many tribes of Aotearoa, it was a proud occasion and the culmination of intergenerational aspirations embodied in the family member they were now supporting on their first day at university. For the students, all of whom are fluent speakers of Maori language, the day was overwhelming. Although the context of pōwhiri within a marae setting is familiar to them which helped ease frayed nerves, nevertheless, the combined weight of whānau expectations evident in the stirring speeches of the elders and the rousing waiata (songs) and haka (dance) performed by the students and their families as embellishment for each speech, made it all the more palpable.

Earlier in the day, in a separate ceremony, about 100 first year students in the mainstream general initial teacher education programmes were also welcomed on to the university marae. Most of these students were non-Māori New Zealanders unfamiliar with the process of a pōwhiri and who do not understand the Māori language. To accommodate this lack of knowledge and experience, the ceremony was conducted in both English and Māori languages. A few students brought family members along in support but otherwise this was a predominantly student/university-only affair. Unlike the later ceremony for the kaupapa Māori immersion students there was a significant presence of university faculty in attendance. Class timetables restricted the length of time allowed for the welcome ceremony so there was a limit to

the number of speakers on behalf of the host and of the guests. As a result the event was all done and dusted in less than 20 minutes followed by a cup of tea and a cookie.

By contrast it took an hour to welcome the twenty seven Kaupapa Māori immersion students and their families, another hour to launch the programme and several hours for the hākari, the celebratory dinner, which followed. And later that evening when their families returned home the students were ushered into the wharehau (meeting house) to begin their first class of a week-long wānanga (lecture series) lasting late into the night.

These two separate ceremonies of welcome for students held in the same institution on the same day for the same purposes in the same cultural context of the university marae with some of the same actors (Māori and non-Māori faculty) in attendance, are underpinned by binaries of knowledge systems drawn from an epistemological understanding of the indigenous world on the one hand and a general ignorance of it on the other.

Cultural spaces as contested

Whether in urban settings or in tribal homelands the marae remains a special place on which to hang an identity as the indigenous people who once owned the whole country of New Zealand (Walker 1990). Institutional marae were established by Māori educators in the late 20th century as the primary means by which they could legitimately infuse Māori epistemology and pedagogy in the delivery of teacher education within a culturally relevant space (Penetito 2010). A major goal of these marae was to counter the Eurocentricity of mainstream institutions by conscientising “...Pākehā students to the Māori world view as a means of transforming their attitudes to being open to cultural difference and diversity; from embracing Te Tiriti o Waitangi to adapting to the needs of our Māori children in their classrooms” (Ka'ai 2008, 193-194). In the context of Eurocentric institutions, the marae represents a contested space where the needs of the majority non-Māori are often taken into account and the cultural ground moved to accommodate them. Marae are important symbols of Maori culture, identity and values and as such provide a relevant context and site for cultural continuity.

In the events leading up to the welcome ceremonies there was resistance to a separate welcome ceremony for students in the kaupapa Māori programme. The majority group of non-Māori senior faculty reasoned that, rather than separate events, a combined pōwhiri for all students was an opportunity for the non-Māori students to learn from the Māori students, to share in Māori culture and to come ‘together as one’. These are legitimate ideals and goals to aspire to where there is intercultural exchange and learning in an ‘informalized’ education between cultures. This standpoint becomes problematic however, when the burden of upskilling about values and cultural perspectives is placed on the indigenous group as if it were their sole responsibility, and no expectation held of the dominant group in terms of a two way cultural exchange (H. Tomlins-Jahnke 2005). In such intercultural situations, the onus is almost always on indigenous people to do the work of informing the ignorant. Furthermore, coming ‘together as one’ is not so much about accounting for indigeneity but about dominant group interests. This is what Charles Mills considers the complacent luxury of ignorance that upholds ‘blind spots’ where limitations of thought and action leads to only the interests of the dominant group being considered (C. W. Mills 2007). In other words who gets to be ignorant and uphold the privilege of not knowing are those who not only have the luxury of ignorance but hold the power to be ignorant.

Linda Alcoff suggests explaining ignorance as a feature of substantive epistemic practice and that such practices as “...wilful ignorance...” and “...socially acceptable but faulty justificatory practices are structural” (Alcoff 2007, 40). This requires a structural analysis of the ways in which oppressive systems produce ignorance. Alcoff argues that substantive differences between knowers involve complex judgements and that some epistemic advantages and disadvantages are not the same for all but accrue to social and group identities. It depends on the situatedness of the knower. Epistemic situatedness is based on four premises related to the knower’s position in time and space; the ways judgement calls are enacted; knowers are not mutually interchangeable; and that “...knowers are at once limited and enabled by the specificities of their locations” (Alcoff 2007, 42).

For example returning to the welcome ceremony as a basis for analysis from an indigenous standpoint is instructive. There were several underlying reasons why Māori faculty considered separate ceremonies were necessary. It was deemed inappropriate that at the launch of a flagship programme predicated on contributing to the survival of the Māori language, the institution would welcome new students and their elders (fluent speakers of Maori) in a cultural ceremony where the English language predominated. Apart from the moral ignorance of such a proposition, Māori faculty reasoned that operating a cultural ceremony in English would send a message to Maori communities generally and the Maori language sector in particular about the institutions commitment, or lack thereof, to the revival and long-term survival of the Māori language the institution claims to support.

Institutional memory loss, evasion and self-deception belies the politics of unknowing that shaped 19th century colonial policy which banned the speaking of Māori language from school precincts till the middle of the 20th century, and subjected Māori children to corporal punishment if they contravened even if they were unable to speak English. As a result Maori language remains seriously endangered. In 1999 Māori language was declared an official language but only after a Treaty of Waitangi claim was brought against the New Zealand Government representing the Crown. In its deliberations, the Waitangi Tribunal found that in respect of the Māori language the Crown had been operating in breach of the Treaty.

A significant consideration for Māori faculty was concerned with upholding the mana of the marae, the Rangitane within whose tribal area the university resides, the university staff and students past and present; and it was important to uphold the mana of the university. Protocol necessitated allowing time for any number of elders to stand and speak on behalf of their families. Therefore controlling the number of speakers, as was the case with the mainstream ceremony, was simply not an option without causing offense to the tribes in attendance. There was also the cultural practice of catering for the guests with a celebratory feast in honour of the occasion. Compare this with the ‘tea and cookie’ scenario provided to complete the mainstream ceremony which did not go unnoticed by Māori faculty. The concept of manaaki tangata, hosting and providing food and nourishment for guests, is a core value in Māori culture and the mana of the home people (in this case the university but by implication the Rangitāne as well) depends on their ability to adequately host. Often at important occasions it is not the event itself that is long remembered but the food and generosity of the hosts. The adage upheld by ancestors that it is better to offer too much food than too little is one that remains true and is still adhered to today.

Taking these factors together within the context of an institutional marae setting and the formalities of pōwhiri there was agreement among Māori faculty that the occasion should be carried out according to tikanga Māori or what is right customarily. Their judgement call

brought to bear knowledge, experience and understanding of the cultural values, traditions and protocols associated with marae-based ceremonies. Furthermore, they were aware of what was relevant in order to mitigate any risk the institutional lack of knowledge might expose, such as causing offense to tribal communities even unintentionally.

The unquestioned entitlement assumed by the dominant group serves to excuse them from any need to understand. It was only when it was clear that dominant group interests would be compromised in a combined event by sitting through a long ceremony they did not understand; listening to a language they did not know and no guarantee that the imposed tight time schedule would prevail that an agreement was reached to proceed with separate ceremonies. Māori faculty agreed that students should be given an opportunity to learn at a pōwhiri. They explained that according to customary practice, once the students at the earlier ceremony have been welcomed onto the marae, they then assumed a relational status as one with the 'home' people of the university. The mainstream students would then be eligible to exercise this newly acquired relationship and assist the university faculty in welcoming the kaupapa Māori immersion students later in the day. However, efforts by Māori faculty to provide an authentic learning opportunity were largely ignored by the dominant group and as a result they remain in a state of unknowing and missed the chance to experience the full expression of the pōwhiri beyond that of symbolic effort (Asante 1995).

By contrast the kaupapa Māori immersion students possess a level of knowing about the significance and process of the pōwhiri that comes from a deeply lived experience of the Māori world and knowledge of the Māori language. Most are graduates of an alternative kaupapa Māori system of education and schooling that developed in Aotearoa by Māori for Māori outside of the 'mainstream' system. Their schooling has promoted what counts as credible knowledge in te ao Māori (Māori world) and te ao hurihuri (the global world). They are grounded in an identity and genealogical connection with the flora and fauna, the land, mountains and waterways of Aotearoa. Global perspectives of the earth and its environment, people of the world and their societies are thus understood from their position and situatedness as tangata whenua, first people of the land. Within the alternative kaupapa Māori system of education it is not only a preoccupation with content and subject matter that counts but also interpersonal relationships that give knowledge its full meaning (Malewski and Jaramillo 2011, Penetito 2010).

Eurocentric patterns and practices that naturalise and permeate an entire hegemonic social fabric within higher education serve to buttress and sustain the power and multiple modalities of ignorance such as class, race and gender to promote and or sustain unjust social orders (Code 2007). Unwittingly, teachers have become complicit in the active production of 'not knowing' that operates in multiple and varying ways such as at the level of curriculum, teaching, philosophy, and teacher-student relationships (Jaramillo 2011). African philosopher Molefi Kete Asante makes reference to 'the tragedy of ignorance' as a condition of Eurocentric education. In the United States "...the African American child has suffered disproportionately, but European children are the victims of mono-culturally diseased curricula" (Asante 1995, 338).

The Euro-centricity of the New Zealand history curriculum recently led one Maori member of parliament to express her concern that "...schools are supposed to be teaching New Zealand history, and as part of that New Zealand history we would expect those schools to be talking about Maori history, but in fact we find that so many schools do not" (Tomlins-Jahnke and Warren 2011, 21). To give one glaring example, an analysis of the New Zealand

secondary school social studies curriculum shows that units of study relating to the history of the Treaty of Waitangi, the nation's founding document, constitute 1.5 per cent of the total curriculum (Tawhai 2007). As McClaren so succinctly put it "...what we have in schools today are epistemologies of empire, that remain trapped in the 'what is'!" (McLaren 2011, xv).

Omissions and exclusions that lead to significant gaps in knowledge within our schooling system raises important questions about the role of education in ensuring citizens are informed and knowledgeable about the history of the nation and its people. What is the role of teacher educators in preparing graduate teachers for engaging with indigenous learners and their families? How do indigenous educators influence the racialized political hierarchy of knowledge that undervalues indigenous epistemology at all levels of education and society?

Underpinning these questions, at least in Aotearoa New Zealand, is the knowledge that 90% of Māori children are located in mainstream schools taught by a majority non-Māori teaching workforce. A large number of this workforce have little knowledge of how to engage effectively with Māori children and their families that leads to successful educational outcomes (Penetito 2010, Simon 1990). Māori children in mainstream schools are invariably positioned in the so called 'tail of underachievement' within statistical fields based on deficit theories. Māori learners are categorised by the state as 'priority learners' and as such grouped alongside learners who are Pasifika, low socio economic status (SES), special educational needs (SEN) and English as an Additional Language (EAL). The power of ignorance by inciting such categories obfuscate the fundamental fact that Māori as tangata whēnua the first peoples of the land, hold a Treaty of Waitangi relationship with the Crown (state/government) as well as citizenship rights that extend to all New Zealanders including Pasifika peoples, new migrants and others with special needs.

By and large tribal leaders consider Māori children are at risk in the mainstream schooling system which has led to some tribes collaborating with the Ministry of Education in efforts to ameliorate such risks through developing tribal cultural standards and emphasising place based education as a way of influencing curriculum and to engage with Māori learners and their whānau (NKII 2009, H. Tomlins-Jahnke 2011, Penetito 2010, Tomlins-Jahnke and Graham 2014).

Malewski et al argue educators need to "...challenge the ambivalence and...ignorance we witness in the construction of curriculum, teaching practices, research guidelines and policy mandates in schools" (Malewski and Jaramillo 2011, 1). Epistemologies of ignorance refers to the active production of 'not knowing' through actively obstructing or limiting the range of possibilities for the full participation of all people in society. What it offers are alternative perspectives to the assumptions underpinning disciplinary knowledge including the selection of what counts as knowledge that goes into "...building up a canon of central texts and ideas that make up a field" (Malewski and Jaramillo 2011, 2).

A focus on epistemologies of ignorance can be a positive endeavour because it allows us to name and direct our attention to the gaps, omissions and exclusions that our students and communities encounter within dominant institutional settings. And to focus attention on the global and systemic forms in which the selective process of what counts as worth knowing is institutionalised (Malewski and Jaramillo 2011). Within the academy the conditioning influences of race are not accounted for in the intellectual agendas and practices, the epistemological standards, the canons and curricula subscribed to, and the sociological and demographical compositions of the various communities of the academy (Outlaw 2007). The

damaging consequences of epistemologies of ignorance as it affects indigenous peoples in the academy is what this paper is concerned about.

A case study:

The way ignorance of indigenous people is systematically cultivated and how current interests serve to block indigenous knowledge within the academy can be seen in the experiences of developing and implementing an indigenous centred initial teacher education (ITE) programme. If we understand ignorance as being "...socially produced and distributed systematically across generations and legitimated by making it rationally pervasive" (Outlaw 2007, 198) then education is a principal way to effect systemic production, mediation and legitimation of ignorance to achieve specific kinds of ordering of structures, processes and practices. The results are a differentiated provisioning clearly apparent for example in accreditation processes that legitimate pedagogy, curriculum and systems universal across universities. What happens when the complacent luxury of ignorance is disrupted? How does the privilege of not knowing, work against marginalised indigenous communities within the academy? If structures reinforce ignorance then in what ways are relationships forfeited when ignorance rules or takes precedence? What space is contested and at what cost?

Take for example the case of an indigenous faculty in Aotearoa who introduced a new indigenous centred ITE qualification into the academy that replaced an outdated indigenous programme. It took four long, hard years of struggle to navigate the myriad of institutional barriers and contesting systems that underpin the approval processes of the university as well as those of a state external accreditation process.

An Academic Review of the outdated programme some years earlier by a panel of national and international indigenous educators provided the recommendations upon which the new ITE programme was to be based. The majority of the panel were Maori thereby suggesting the institution recognised who is appropriate to carry out a critical examination of a Maori centred programme and why, given the locus of such knowledge resides among Maori and indigenous educators in the field. By and large the panel recognised the worth of the programme but in an updated form.

Prior to the programme review, government policies (TEC 2005, MOE 2007) provided a potentially strong, positive and supportive political environment within which to justify such a programme. There was and still remains, a serious problem of Māori teacher supply. As a distinctive university based ITE programme (marae based, kaupapa Māori centred, provider partnership with the Māori education sector), the potential for further development was high. This included taking account of tribal aspirations such as Māori language planning and identifying Kura kaupapa Māori systems as their preferred settings for the education of Māori children. The new programme thus aligned with tribal education plans as well as government policy and university priorities.

However the plan for the new programme was at risk as the university moved to close small 'uneconomic' programmes brought on by, among others, government cutbacks, burgeoning debt and a significant downturn in student numbers. Low enrolments in the old programme were the result of a combination of factors both internal and external. Internally these were, reduced resource allocation such as low staffing levels and funding provisions; the unilateral application by university administrators of selection processes and entry criteria conceived for mainstream programmes; and the lack of consultation about key administration decisions (e.g. the sudden cancellation of enrolments; excluding the programme as an option on

application forms; lost application forms of known applicants) that when taken collectively, served to negatively impact on the old programme overtime. It was simply a case of the academy operating systems and processes that privileged mainstream agendas while disadvantaging indigenous programmes thereby naturalizing patterns of inequality and oppression.

The development of the new qualification included a series of consultation meetings with key experts and with the Māori education sector. There was much optimism and excitement from these communities about what was envisaged and how ideas from the sector could be incorporated. Concomitant engagement with the university approval system was not so straight forward. An early notice form was submitted to the national Committee on University Academic Programmes (CUAP) responsible for approving programmes within the New Zealand university system. Over the following two years the CUAP proposal for the new Māori centred degree was submitted back and forth, stalemated between four university committees each charged with oversight of the academic merits and structure of new programmes.

There was little criticism of the proposal regarding the content and conceptual framework, all the same, bureaucratic barriers were erected where agreement could not be reached, mostly around technical, administrative or formatting of the CUAP proposal document. For example, the full name of the degree was changed to fit the number of characters assigned by the university's computer software. Although not a requirement of a CUAP proposal, part the way through the process, a new policy requiring a business case for all new programmes was added to the administrative tasks. There was also a national moratorium on new teacher education programmes imposed by the Minister of Education which required the Ministers permission to be lifted.

While other mainstream CUAP proposals were assisted by university administrators knowledgeable and experienced in the art of technical bureaucracy that a CUAP proposal required, such resources were not so forthcoming for the indigenous proposal. Furthermore, the focus for approval had shifted from administrative issues to a more substantive problem regarding whether or not the new programme would be fiscally viable. Measuring viability was based on the enrolment history of the 'old' programme which was delivered 'face to face' rather than on projections based on the online/internal mixed delivery mode proposed for the 'new' programme. There was no such history upon which projections could be made but the Māori education sector had given insights about the appeal of an accessible ITE programme to Māori communities. With this in mind, Māori faculty argued that the online delivery mode would make the programme more accessible to prospective students across the country.

As oppositional barriers grew and continued to obstruct passage of the CUAP document important deadlines were missed and sponsorship of the proposal at critical steps of the approval process proved unreliable. At the root of the problem is the fact that Indigenous centred programmes promulgates knowledge that is rarely sanctioned, confirmed, validated or verified as authoritative. This is due in large part to the academy's mistaken perception regarding the relative superiority of Eurocentric tools as standards to measure indigenous programmes assumed and preconceived as inferior. Thus systemic beliefs that underpin the institutions complex systems and review processes, and senior faculty and administrators devoted to preserving the status quo makes it nigh impossible for indigenous initiatives to succeed.

A decision by Māori faculty was to go outside the university and seek assistance from the community. The politics of indigenous community partnerships and pro-activity in advancing indigenous education under the rubric of self-determination has been a critical factor for example in increasing access and participation of Native Hawaiian people in teacher education programmes through Ho'okulāiwi: Centre for Hawaiian and Indigenous Education at the University of Hawaii (Maaka and Cashman 2012). The Ho'okulāiwi experience demonstrates powerful ways in which institutional barriers that conspire to control access to resources are circum-navigated through an appeal to community and political leaders. But action by community leaders is only guaranteed where there is evidence of reciprocal and authentic long term commitment to the community by indigenous academics situated within the academy (Maaka and Lenchanko 2008, Maaka and Cashman 2012, M. J. Maaka 2009).

The strategy by Māori faculty of appealing to the Māori community was aimed at involving a key organisation within the Maori education sector. The approach was to identify a shared problem (Maori teacher supply), to assist with finding solutions and, in partnership, to develop structures that enable the solutions to evolve in ways that embody the long-term vision of a strong Maori society. An important factor for the community in supporting the Māori ITE programme was the strong relationships with Māori Faculty that had been built up over many years. Many of the MESH members and their whanau are alumni and well known experts who have 'walked the talk' in the politics of Māori education in Aotearoa. From the outset Māori faculty sought from MESH their combined knowledge, experience and expertise about what counts in the preparation of Māori graduate teachers by having members assist with reconceptualising and writing the new programme. The assumption was that the credibility of the programme within the Maori education sector depended in large part on the university's association with MESH. At the same time, MESH members recognised the advantage of utilizing the institution's vast distance learning facilities. Access would support their vested interest in ensuring a well-qualified workforce and an increased and sustainable teacher supply.

Conclusion:

The combined weight of community and academy partnerships for indigenous participation in the academy has served to disrupt the complacent luxury of ignorance, at least on the surface. The space remains contested and on-going systemic critique is required to highlight the structural factors in the production and reproduction of injustice. The privilege of not knowing, works against marginalised indigenous communities within the academy. Structures that reinforce ignorance result in indigenous peoples forced to take positions and where some support the status quo. Relationships are forfeited when ignorance rules and takes precedence over indigenous priorities. The alarming spectacles of appointments that serve to weaken indigenous leadership in the academy or the selection of indigenous privatised intellectuals to professorial positions within corporatized academies³ are emerging additions to the inventory of ignorance. The tacit reliance on ignorance of and disregard for the particularity of indigeneity will ensure the academy remains a contested space.

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