The New Global is Also Local: The Supervision of Indigenous Doctoral Students

Elizabeth McKinley¹, Barbara Grant¹, Sue Middleton², Kathie Irwin³, Les Tumoana Williams⁴

¹The University of Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand, ²The University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand, ³Te Whare Wananga o Awanuiarangi, Whakatane, New Zealand, ⁴Nga Pae o te Maramatanga, Auckland, New Zealand

We describe research that investigates theoretical, cultural and practical questions about the supervision of indigenous doctoral students in Aotearoa New Zealand (ANZ). For some time and in various forums, Māori doctoral students have consistently reported significant concerns related to supervision. Responding to these concerns, as well as to a national imperative to increase the number of Māori doctoral graduates, we have asked current and recently graduated students to talk their experience of supervision. We particularly asked them to describe teaching and learning practices within that experience. This paper shares preliminary findings from carrying out interviews and focus groups with about 40 Māori doctoral students from several institutions and across a wide range of disciplines.

Our research team represents a partnership between Māori and non-Māori researchers who are also doctoral supervisors from two universities and one whare wānanga (Māori tertiary institution). Another partner is the national Māori doctoral programme, MAI Te Kupenga (www.mai.ac.nz) coordinated by one of ANZ’s centres of research excellence, Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga. In undertaking this research, we want to understand the distinctive issues that may arise in the supervision of indigenous students within a post-colonial context, including how cultural matters and contested social relations intersect with research methodologies and practices. While supervision is in many senses a global practice, especially because of a preference for ‘travelling away’ for doctoral education, it is also at times deeply local.