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Publish or Perish: Māori, Pāsifika, and International Indigenous Scholars' Critical Contribution to Public Debates through the Invited NZARE Symposium, International Organisations Session, AERA 2017, San Antonio, Texas

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Publish or perish: Māori, Pāsifika, and international Indigenous scholars' critical contribution to public debates through the Invited NZARE symposium, International Organisations Session, *AERA 2017*, San Antonio, Texas.

Abstract

The commentary centres on the preparation and collaboration of Māori, Tongan, nehiyaw, and Native Hawaiian cognoscenti at *AERA 2017* (Kēpa, Stephens, & Manu'atu, 2017; Kēpa, & Stephens, 2016). In the contemporary era where publish or perish has become the dictum for academics amid the mushrooming of numerous journals, the New Zealand Education Act (1989) offers sanctuary, par excellence, for Indigenous scholars to collaborate. The Act offers the burgeoning forte of Indigenous cognoscenti, neutral positions beyond the received wisdom for the publication of quality research, exemplary enthusiasm and devotion to good spirits interwoven with affection and sympathy for other people. Thereby, the Indigenous scholars are provided impartial platforms, where the outcome of our relentless toil to know Indigenous wisdoms and western science finds expression in writing collaboratively. Propitiously, the Act enables the scholarly community to publish, not only for purely informational value; the law enables our writing of appreciation for beautiful ideas and things. Critically, the Indigenous scholars are enabled to publish with the purpose to perish prevailing beliefs that Indigenous knowledges do not proffer 'truth' or scientific fact.

The starting point ...

For Māori and Pāsifika (Kēpa & Manu'atu, 2012) scholars, the language of the New Zealand Education Act is fortunate: the academy is more than a "service provider". The Act regulates the role and responsibility of the university scholars to go beyond the neutral messages of scientific facts to contribute critically to public debates. Also, the regulation's language declares the freedom of the scholars, "within the law, to question and test received wisdom, to put forward new ideas and to state controversial or unpopular opinions" (section 161(2)(a)). Explicitly, the Act asserts that the universities accept a role as "critic and conscience of society" (section 162(4)(a)(v)). These sections of the law are the starting point for the act of collaboration by the Māori, Tongan, Nehiyaw, and Native Hawaiian scholars' to "put forward new ideas and to state controversial or unpopular opinions".

The critical position or interest of this commentary on the dictum is cultural and spiritual. The critical contribution is strengthened by the conviction of the late Ranginui Walker (1990) when he wrote in the text entitled, *Ka Whawhai Tonu Matou. Struggle Without End* that:

We, as a people, have become involved in procedures which are foreign to our way of life. To put forward our view, we have had to undergo a whole learning process, trying to understand planning applications, rights for intakes, rights for discharge, rights of objection and appeal, water and soil legislation, planning legislation only to be told that despite all these procedures, there is no provision for spiritual and cultural matters Māori to be taken into account (p.257).

With this we want to express our respect to the work of Linda Tuhiwai and Graham Hingangaroa Smith because the innovation and change that has come about through their active involvement in putting Māori, Pacific, and international Indigenous scholars on the world stage must not be forgotten. From 2002-2010, Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga, the Māori Centre of Research Excellence (CoRE) which was composed of national universities, wānanga, and

multiple discipline areas, hosted, then, only by the University of Auckland, focused on addressing the differences-for-the-worse in Māori participation and success in tertiary education and research training (Kēpa, 2010). A CoRE ambition was to realise a total of 500 Māori PhDs in five years. To reach the target a number of considered programmes were introduced, including the idea of a separate writing retreat for Māori PhD candidates, begun in 2004, and for senior Māori and international Indigenous scholars, started in 2006. Of the authors of this commentary, the Māori, Tongan, and Native Hawaiian scholars have been retreatees in the International Indigenous Writing Retreats (IWRs) (Kēpa & Stephens, 2016). The conception of a critical dialogue between worlds means learning, for example, to become a Māori in the familiar community, a Māori in the university, a Māori in professional practice, a Māori in a privileged place such as the retreats (Kēpa, 2010).

The IWRs were organised differently to the Aristotelian notion of intentionally directed activity of knowledge already possessed by the intellectual. The sanctuaries were neither an exercise of intellectual pursuit or study nor an exercise of progressing by logical inference from known premisses to unknown conclusions. These retreats were not a version of oriental meditation consisting of the retreatees relaxing our muscles and letting our body and soul roam haphazardly to acquire new visions and education. The retreatees understood that we were privileged by the CoRE and that our purpose was to publish and to perish the beliefs that Indigenous knowledges are subordinate to scientific facts. Culturally, the retreats were the space wherein a critical mass of Indigenous scholars wrote as critics and conscience of Māori and New Zealand society, of international Indigenous societies, and of global society (Kēpa & Stephens, 2016).

Kaungāfonongá (fellow travellers), Halafonongá (route, pathways) & Fakaholofonongá (making the struggle pleasant) ...

In truth, the beauty of the presentation at *AERA 2017* commenced at the IWR held in Taupo in July 2015. Two of the retreatees came up with the idea to publish a book about the CoRE's retreats, and to focus the writing on the idea of good spirits interwoven with beauty and information, and affection and sympathy for other people (Kēpa & Stephens, 2016). During the sanctuary, each retreatee was visited by the two editors to clarify the idea, each prospective author was invited to contribute a chapter to the book with the purpose to add to the literature in the field of Indigenous Peoples and research, which is now a legitimate concern in many disciplines. Among the Māori values drawn upon were tuakana and taina [a respectful relationship of age and education], and pono [a reality of truth and beauty]. The contribution on dialogue was addressed by the Tongan scholar in the chapter entitled, *Fakakoloa he kaungāfonongá* (Manu'atu 2016). The Native Alaskan cognoscente was invited to write the chapter called, *Whakahihiko/Inspirational, recharging/Dinayetr* (Leonard 2016). Three Māori scholars who had retreated to previous IWRs agreed to write the chapters on their insights of ako [teaching and learning], tika [ethics], and tūmanako or manawa ora [hope] (Kēpa & Stephens, 2016).

Beautiful words, like tuakana, taina, pono, ako, tika, and tūmanako or manawa ora in Māori language and culture; kaungāfonongá, in Tongan, and dinayetr in Deg Xinag entail a devotion to a spirit of vigour leading to some form of act of appreciation for beautiful ideas and things, not only for absolutely informational value. Because the words are not of English language and culture, the terminologies suggest an act of provisional freedom whereby a Tongan scholar, for example, is at liberty to think and write, in Tongan language, pleasant thoughts that have been systematically suppressed, and that are integral to a struggle of hope that would bring

about publishing improvement. Accordingly, the community of kaungāfononga [fellow travellers] moved back, forwards, side wards, up and downwards on the halafononga [route and pathways] making the struggle to write about our language and culture pleasant rather than wretched.

Consider now three acts of preparation for *AERA 2017*: firstly, the launch of the manuscript entitled, *Diversity in community: Indigenous scholars writing*, which aligns with the CoRE's research theme, *Mauri Ora-Human Flourishing* (Strategic direction. Ahunga āta whakarite 2016-2020), at Waipapa marae, the University of Auckland. The volume is unique in dealing with mutual learning for the mutual benefit of Māori, Pasifika, and international Indigenous peoples. A highlight of the manuscript is the ideas from the writers in retreat from the ordinary world sharing dialogue, sharing pain and suffering, success and accomplishments. Whānau [an extended family], hapū [a group of extended families], kāinga [a Tongan extended family], aiga [a Samoan extended family], tribes, doctoral candidates, supervisors, and senior researchers are all likely to appreciate the book which is the contribution of knowledge by the writers from diverse cultures, education institutions, and disciplines. Mostly, the volume will appeal to those creating a space for writers of diverse cultural ideas.

Next, at the *NZARE 2016* conference, the symposium by four of the contributing authors, emphasised to audience that publishing to perish prevailing oppressive beliefs teaches a scholar about style, narration, argument, critical dialogue, and truth telling (King, 2012). The educators were made familiar with the idea that strenuous reading, say 4 to 6 hours daily, is at the heart of a scholarly life. A few were introduced to the value of reading in the mother-tongue as well as English language. All of us were reminded that through reading a writer becomes at ease with the process of writing; constant reading of material will put a writer into a position where we can write eagerly and without timidity. Importantly, reading offers a writer a relentlessly increasing knowledge of what has been studied and what hasn't, what is stale and what is fresh, what works and what just lies there dying or dead on the page. Preparation like reading deeply and widely in diverse languages will make scholars less likely to make a fool of ourselves. As with all aspects of the art, the scholars' writing will improve with practice, nevertheless practice will never make us the perfect writer. The harder a writer tries to be clear, the more we will learn about the complexity of the language(s) in which we write. Succinctly, good writing is both an art and a learned skill; Indigenous scholars cannot succeed as writers unless we read, think, and write a lot.

Before we finish discussing the preparation for *AERA 2017*, the authors recall that Māori society is a treasure of scholars who can do wonders when we commune and work together. Few Māori (Grace, 2015), though, have been explicitly prepared as writers, and fewer still have been instructed in the intricate art of maintaining research productivity without sacrificing work-life balance. At the *Ngā Pae o Te Māramatanga International Indigenous Research Conference 2016* in November, the symposium by five of the contributing authors provided a perfect opportunity to inspire, upset, breakthrough, and understand better the Indigenous scholarly experience of writing. The desire by the Māori and Tongan scholars was to deliver an outstanding event of harmonious cultural and academic relevance, which covered issues confronted by Indigenous scholars in the western academy and the tribal institution. We were confident that the audience would benefit from our high value panel presentation. The mainly Māori, Pāsifika, and international Indigenous audience responded enthusiastically to the presentation around the questions:

Are you interested in knowing what schemes existed for Indigenous Māori doctoral candidates and senior Māori scholars in Aotearoa, New Zealand from 2002 to 2014?

Are you interested in knowing what programmes existed for these scholars for learning to write better and for research training in tertiary education?

Are you interested in knowing how you can unlock your writing potential to publish rather than to perish?

Through both symposia, we had presented how our own writing potential has been unlocked while in retreat and what this means when working against the mantra, ‘publish or perish’ that is firmly embedded in academic politics. As well, emergent issues like Māori academic politics and our thoughts on improving relationships between academic politics and Indigenous scholars writing were communicated.

At San Antonio, Texas, in the International Organisation Sessions at *AERA 2017*, the three contributing authors were joined by our international Indigenous colleagues as the chair and the discussants. The authors discussed the values of tuakana-taina, fonongá, and pono enthusiastically. In Māori and Tongan society, knowledge continues to be highly valued and vital for these group of people’s spiritual, cultural, and social wherewithal. In both societies, tuakana-taina is a significant cultural principle. The order of birth impels rather than compels seniority, commonly, though, the oldest child carries the mana, prestige, and authority as the tuakana [older sibling] to the taina [younger sibling].

In the IWRs, the principle (i.e. Tuakana-taina) was drawn upon to enhance scholarly writing. Tuakana-taina *is* about a relationship by Māori with Māori, by Tongans with Māori, and by international Indigenous scholars with Māori and Tongan scholars and vice versa to write, to share knowledge and ideas, to enjoy each other’s company, laugh, debate; to be mentored and supported within a community of researchers to deal with the dictum, publish or perish. In creating this sanctuary for new and experienced scholars, we were encouraged to know being Māori, Tongan, and Native Hawaiian as beautiful. Every taina or novice was encouraged by a tuakana or senior scholar, and vice versa, to strengthen our cultural values and systems, to think beautifully about our research, and to know that to publish to perish the idea of provisional freedom is a combination of social activism, theory and, pleasure.

As a Tongan perspective of education, the IWR is a tangible, political, spiritual and cultural interface of Māori and Pasifika peoples in the western academy in Aotearoa, New Zealand. At AERA 2017, through the Tongan conception of fononga and the derivations of kaungāfononga, halafononga, and fakaholofononga, the Indigenous audience was offered ideas deeply rooted in Tongan culture and spirituality to change-for-the better the neutral debate of received wisdom (Manu’atu, L., Kēpa, Pepe & Taione, 2016). While, also, affirming the distinctive role and responsibility of all scholars to engage the particular and global society at a more profound echelon than that of transmitting facts: namely in the common pursuit of knowledges. This kind of retreat brings together Māori and Pasifika scholars in an affirmative and vibrant meeting, and is an indication of how we can work collaboratively as a tour de force, elegant, rich in insights, and correct in all details, rather than competitively.

By considering the spirit of pono and the conception of a ‘write’ or righteous retreat to create goodwill and to silence critics of passion, the audience was provided with ideas of a sanctuary of belonging and inclusion in which Indigenous scholars might write words of pono or truth and beauty in peace and tranquillity. In Māori language and culture, the word pono refers to love, beauty, authenticity, light and truth. This pono is a spirit of immaculate love and perpetual light, emanating from within people—our battles, our superstitions, and from our mystical insights and knowledges, intensifying and enhancing our sense of satisfaction and

happiness. Pono is about satisfaction, goodness, vitality and living, and not about fear, supine seclusion and pessimism. Thoughtfully, no distinction is made between satisfaction and goodness or words of truth.

The ending point ...

Writing is all about praising tuakana-taina, fononga, pono, beautiful ideas and things, and appreciating other people that enfold a diverse community of Indigenous scholars who teach and conduct research with our communities. We are human beings, after all, with a purpose in life: to write to change all of the dissatisfaction through not only social activism and theory, but, through artistic activism and pleasure in publishing to perish the assumption that the university may be a dispiriting and lonely place for Indigenous scholars, our language and culture are not revered, our tribal histories are unclear, and that Indigenous Peoples are confronted with policies that disadvantage us. Writing by Indigenous scholars in appreciation of ideas, people, and things is more than an output; artistic activism is Mauri Ora-Human Flourishing.

Diversity is about acknowledging the privilege offered by the CoRE to conduct the research we love to do. Although there is still a lack of qualified people and funding to conduct research with Indigenous communities; few like-minded people with whom to write, dialogue, to regain a spirit of satisfaction, and a sense of vitality, the spirits of trust and integrity with the principles of loyalty and our hard work will not only ensure that we survive in the academy, but flourish. Indigenous scholars *are* innovative, creative, and imaginative, and our critical effort is not only to swell the cadre of writers in the university and the tribal institutions, but, also to make a significant contribution to sustained Indigeneity that is deeply embedded in culture and good spirits.

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