Can the goldfish see the water? A critical analysis of 'good intentions' in cross-cultural practice

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ABSTRACT

We claim to hold values that our students are responsible and autonomous adults whose success in our courses is best facilitated by our understanding of and respect for their specific backgrounds. We wish to be judged on these values by feedback provided by our students and those with whom we work. However, how well, if ever, are we able to 'see the water,' the cultural conditioning that leads us to act in ways that seem supportive of our students to us, but may be perceived differently by them?

In this paper, we present conflicting evidence around perceptions of our practice. We discuss where things have gone well, and where interventions have possibly been traumatic for the recipients. We question whether, and how, our practice cross-culturally can be safe. We challenge ourselves and others to think carefully about our responsibilities to our students, whether our privileged positioning obliges us to share and if so, how that sharing can occur in ways that validate and equally respect the values of those with whom we work.

I. INTRODUCTION

The authors have worked in tertiary education for between twelve (Bruce) and thirty (Pip) years. Both have worked at a local polytechnic; in addition, Pip has worked in two different universities and also a Māori wānanga (tertiary education provider). Over the years that we have worked in education, we have seen a significant increase in the numbers of both overseas and Māori students accessing tertiary education. The overseas students have been sought by tertiary institutions here largely for economic reasons – to add to government funding for the institution. Most overseas students in New Zealand, on a percentage basis, come from mainland China or from India. As Bruce's practice at the Waikato Institute of Technology (Wintec) has been with these students, it is their strengths, perceptions and interests that his comments in this paper address as he has sought to be as effective a teacher and programme manager in Information Technology as he can. Pip's cross-cultural experience, by contrast, has mainly been with Māori staff and students, both at the then Waikato Polytechnic (now Wintec) where she was a staff developer, then at Te Wānanga o Aotearoa where she was research manager, and now at the University of Waikato, where she works in staff development.

Significantly, both our current institutions are built on land confiscated from the local Tainui Māori tribe during the land wars of the 1860s, and to whom our institutions now pay rent. Later settlers in New Zealand had their occupancy legitimated through the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840, although this has often been noted more in the breach than the observance (see Ferguson, 1991; Orange, 2004; Walker 2004). Partly in recognition of the need to address the 'partnership' promoted under this Treaty, at Wintec in the 1980s and 1990s a week's "Culture, Identity and Learning" course was part of the mandatory

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twelve-week teacher education programme for all new staff. This required staff to consider their own cultural positioning and how it might affect the ways they interacted with students from other cultures, although mainly focusing on the strengths and interests of Māori students. Both authors undertook this course when they joined the polytechnic. At the university where Pip currently teaches, there is no mandatory teacher education, let alone requirement to investigate one's own cultural positioning. There is an introductory day as part of induction, in which aspects of Māori ways of being are investigated, but it is relatively easy for staff to avoid attendance. At neither institution is there any mandatory education on how to engage effectively with the wide range of international students who now come to New Zealand for education.

Both of us, as indicated in our abstract, "claim to hold values that our students are responsible and autonomous adults whose success in our courses is best facilitated by our understanding of and respect for their specific backgrounds and learning preferences." We would claim that developing cultural sensitivity is an important part of becoming better teachers; of making educational practice more responsive to and facilitative of students' experience and potential for success. But how do we develop this understanding and respect, given our own cultural positioning, and is it even possible to do so? This question motivates our practice, and forms the substance of this paper, an initial exploration of the values, ethics and achievements (or otherwise) of our work to date. We commence our exploration with some relevant literature.

II. LITERATURE

In a paper of this size, it is not possible to provide a comprehensive literature review. However, recent writing from a variety of researchers throws light on the difficulties of cross-cultural educational practice. Loomba (2005:42) noted that "Knowledge is not innocent, but profoundly connected with the operations of power" (see also Foucault, 1980). The point was reinforced by Meyer's (2005) argument about the colonising effects of 'standardised' quality assurance processes for indigenous educators. Meyer stated that "The fact that all interpretations are not given equal authority brings politics into philosophy" (2005:unpaginated) as she investigated indigenous notions of quality assurance applied during a World Indigenous Nations Higher Education Consortium (WINHEC) accreditation visit to a New Zealand wānanga.

Meyer, in her paper, reiterated WINHEC's commitment to detailing "our epistemological right to exist in ways specific to place and people" in opposition to "extrinsic/temporary value systems that engage with comparison and judgment" (op. cit.). She argued for a three-way understanding of quality assurance that incorporates body, mind and spirit, as these are understood by indigenous peoples. "All three points on the body, mind, spirit continuum are vital within an enduring epistemology that brings us deeper into the ideals of quality assurance found in institutions of higher learning" (op. cit.) Quoting Patanjali (2003), Meyer noted that "*Indigenous peoples must interpret our systems of higher education embedded in our own triangulation of meaning*" (italics hers). This kind of critique challenges us as educators to consider in what ways the pedagogical and assessment processes that we apply to our students – at individual as well as at institutional level – might be embedded in cultural positioning that leaves out indigenous ways of knowing and being that could enrich us all, if only we knew about them and found ways of incorporating them.

It is not necessarily even a matter of applying non-indigenous judgments to education. Rather, some of the 'facts' that are conveyed through education may be incorrect, and call into question through whose lenses those 'facts' should be viewed. In their 2008 paper, Jones and Jenkins advanced a strong argument against the viewing of initial contact between British missionaries and local Māori in an organised way in 1814. Existing accounts of the meeting were conveyed by British writers in English, and suggested a 'sham battle' by Māori, followed by a 'sermon' delivered by missionary Samuel Marsden. Jenkins, providing a Māori perspective on what might have occurred, revisioned the occasion as a powhiri (traditional Māori welcome to strangers, that may have looked like a sham battle to the British) followed by a 'translation' of Marsden's address by a local chief, more likely to further his own development plans rather than being a

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verbatim version of Marsden's words. No accounts exist from the perspective of Māori who were actually there at the time. So the authors advanced their alternative interpretation of events in ways that take into account cultural practice from a Māori perspective, as a way of addressing the 'silence' in existing accounts. But such accounts question received wisdom, so the study challenges educators to consider whether "a new reality [can] appear when we read between the lines" (Jones & Jenkins, 2008:139).

The 'silence' and 'invisibility' is not just silence with regard to so-called facts, as the study above suggests. Rather, it extends to cultural positioning in general, the 'non-innocence' of the knowledge that we as educators convey, and the ways in which we convey that knowledge. Hence, our suggestion that the goldfish does not see the water, and that indeed, in our attempts to practise with good intentions, we may actually do harm. We claim, in this paper, that good intentions are not enough. In fact, good intentions – unless illuminated by intense and informed self-critique – can be downright dangerous. An Australian researcher, Damien Riggs (2004: 2), commented that "In pointing to the 'unmarked status' of whiteness[1] (in white discourse) I hope to problematise its status as untitled", as the paper considered "how all white people are implicated in systems of oppression that shape the white Australian nation". Unless we, as educators, pay close attention to our *own* cultural positioning, the privileges that it conveys and the non-neutral nature of what it is that we teach, then we risk further contributing to systems of oppression in our own classrooms when we interact with students whose cultural backgrounds differ from ours. In the rest of his paper, Riggs critiqued notions of benevolence as 'inherently hierarchical' practices and that "in order for us to challenge our location as 'good white people' we need to respond to the critiques that indigenous people are making, and to do so by challenging our own frameworks" (op. cit, p. 7). He cites an important quote from indigenous Australian writer Lilla Watson: "If you have come here to help me, you're wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together" (op. cit., p. 1).

It is against such a background demonstrating the need for self-awareness that U.K.-based authors McNiff and Whitehead (2005) encourage teachers to practise self-study, and model it themselves. In Chapter Two of their book, the authors discussed the tensions inherent when educators find themselves in situations where "it is impossible to realise our values, or even to live in the direction of our values". So "we experience ourselves as living contradictions, because we hold values that are systematically denied in practice" (McNiff & Whitehead, 2005:28). Rather than becoming paralysed by the contradiction, the authors suggested that a way forward is to devise action plans that help educators to imagine, and work towards, a resolution of the situation. It was just this type of problem and action that motivated Pip's PhD thesis (Bruce Ferguson[2], 1999) so we can attest to its effectiveness in helping educators to see some forward movement, even if the intervention does not result in major systemic change.

However, in a cross-cultural situation, it can be hard to decide how to move forward safely, both from the individual educator's perspective, and that of his/her students. In the next section of the paper, we consider ways in which we have each tried to intervene; how we have tried to do so 'safely' for all, and to what extent (if at all) we think the intervention has been effective.

Bruce:

I administer and teach on two programmes: the Bachelor of Information Technology (BInfoTech) and the Graduate Diploma in Information Technology (GradDipIT). The BInfoTech has around 20% International students, from many countries but mainly from China, while the GradDipIT usually has between 95%-100% International students, almost exclusively from India.

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[1] While the terms 'whiteness' and 'blackness' permeate the postcolonial literature, usage in New Zealand is for Māori/Pakeha, indigenous/non-indigenous, or tangata whenua (people of the land)/tauiwi (foreigner, those who came later). Colour-based terminology is not common at all.

[2] Pip writes academically under her maiden name (Bruce) with her married name, Ferguson. When she and Bruce write together, this is just confusing for readers, so she uses solely Ferguson.

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We are used to the concept of unequal power when talking about teachers and students. As teachers, we hold most of the power, and this colours both what we say and how our students respond. But is it the case, to parody Orwell[3], that all teacher-student relationships are unequal, but some are more unequal than others? On top of this is the intercultural imbalance, and it may not only be cultural but racially-based as well. "The idea that whiteness is the normality from which others deviate is such an insidious and subtle idea that it may well be the biggest single factor that keeps white privilege in place." (Ryde, op. cit., p.38)

My first intervention is around an issue where both staff and students see only their own cultural water: that of plagiarism. Traditionally the School of Information Technology has come down hard on plagiarism. When it has been discovered, there is no warning given, but an immediate, severe punishment handed out, usually a Fail for the entire paper in which the plagiarism occurred. The warning, we reasoned, had already been given at Orientations sessions where students were told, "This is your first and only warning – do not plagiarise in written assignments, do not cheat in exams." Underlying this short sharp message is the implication that students will "know" that plagiarism is "wrong".

Should that not be enough of a warning? Well, no, as it turns out. One cohort of Indian students began plagiarising from assignment one. We failed them on the complete paper. They appealed to the Dean and won, on the basis that although some teachers had reinforced the "no plagiarism" rule in their classes, others hadn't, and Wintec needed to be consistent. Interestingly, this was not a student argument, but rather the Dean's conclusion after she applied her rationale to the case: if this went to court, would Wintec have a defendable position? The Dean, from background and experience, is less an Academic manager than a Business manager, and so, in effect, she was placing a commercial cultural overlay across the academic case. We may not yet be seeing the water, but we now sense that it is getting murky.

Students continued to plagiarise. We failed them on the complete paper. They appealed to the Dean and won, on the basis that although they had been consistently told about plagiarism, it had not been given to them in a written format, which they could take away and study, thereby negating any disadvantage they had in trying to understand a spoken, verbal policy. We wrote a complete booklet, somewhat ambiguously entitled "A Student's Guide to Plagiarism", with the shortest Executive Summary ever – "Just don't do it!" – and we put an insert into the Student Handbook.

Plagiarism continued. This time, they inserted references at the end of some paragraphs, but with no indenting and no quotation marks, so it was unclear where student work stopped and copied work started. This time, yes they knew plagiarism was wrong, "but Sir, we simply forgot to insert the quote marks. We are poor students struggling with a difficult language and a high academic workload and we are supporting ourselves in an alien country with part-time shift work, and we are very tired, because we were up until 4 a.m. finishing this just in order to meet your assignment deadlines, so please, Sir give us one more chance to correct what is really just an understandable oversight". So what is going on here? Are we simply faced with a bunch of unprincipled and unethical students who will do anything to achieve a pass?

I have been lucky enough to visit both India and China, the two countries which provide most of our International students. I have observed teaching in some University classes and have talked to a number of those teachers about their methods. It is clear that while sources are acknowledged, it is perfectly acceptable or even desirable for students to provide unattributed material in their written assignments, without academic sanctions applied. Laidlaw (2010), who worked for Voluntary Services Overseas in China for five and a half years, reports a colleague at a Chinese University saying "But everyone does it". After all, if they can provide what the experts are saying, and get the context right, then they have satisfied the question. This is tied very closely with rote learning principles, where students develop highly sophisticated memory skills which enable them to regurgitate whole paragraphs from their textbooks into an exam paper.

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[3] Orwell, G 1945, *Animal Farm*, Ch. 10, accessed 29 July 2010, from http://www.george-orwell.org/Animal_Farm/index.html

So my original warning and assumption that students would just know that plagiarism was wrong was completely incorrect. I am certain that if I was to accuse any of these students of behaving unethically, they would be shocked and upset. They simply have a different frame of ethical reference and why should that be any better or worse than mine, *per se*? However, many of these students *are* going to seek employment in countries other than China. In these countries, plagiarism is frowned on; therefore I think I *should* help them to adjust their perception of this behaviour.

Another, perhaps more complex, situation occurs in the related area of exam cheating. Personally, I get very worked up when I have to deal with students who have been caught cheating in exams or tests. They are essentially subverting our academic systems and, if not caught, will be devaluing our degree in the marketplace and in academia.

Any student who cheats is sent to me for an initial interview. After listening to their side of the story and determining that there are no extenuating circumstances, I give them a quite savage dressing down. With domestic students, I find that from then on, they are very circumspect around me, they don't meet my eye, they are, in a word, ashamed.

With International students, the amazing thing to me is that they revert to their normal selves within twenty-four hours. They are talking to me as if the whole affair has never happened. There is no evidence of any grudges held for making them spend a small fortune on repeating the paper, nor is there any sign of ongoing contrition. It is as if the whole affair never happened and again it certainly does seem to be less an awareness of any ethical breach but rather an acceptance that a (legitimate) strategy was tried, it did not succeed, so they get on with life.

Until I had these experiences, I certainly could not see the water that I was swimming in or recognise it for what it was – a cultural overlay, not an objective truth. And until I went to their countries and gained a tiny understanding of their education system, I could not see their water either.

Two colleagues of mine have each spent a semester teaching at a University in China. They would still not claim to be experts in the area but it has been good to see that they are now running seminars for those teachers at our Institution who have no such experience and in a small way, this is beginning to colour the water for us all.

Pip:

I have had a long interest in the colonising effects of education on Māori students and their families. My Masters thesis (Ferguson, 1991), addressed the impact of the loss of their land and their language, coupled with breaches of the Treaty of Waitangi, on Māori students' ability to gain equitably from our education system. At that time, I described "Māori underachievement" and, although I was beginning to understand the systemic disadvantage that Māori students faced, the thesis does not show an understanding of ways in which *my* practice contributed to that disadvantage.

However, reading for the thesis introduced me to the work of Freire, who argued that "Oppressors.. …cannot find in [the power they wield] the strength to liberate either the oppressed or themselves. Only power that springs from the weakness of the oppressed will be sufficiently strong to free both" (Freire, 1972, p.21). It is this kind of power from 'the oppressed' that I see being exercised now through writers such as Linda Tuhiwai Smith, in her *Decolonising Methodologies* (1999), and writers such as Meyer, published in the WINHEC Journal. But it can still be a hard struggle for non-indigenous educators to negotiate changes to their own practice in ways that Freire recommended. In trying to find non-oppressive ways forward, we can still blunder. I now want to present a case study of an attempt that I made, while research manager at Te Wānanga o Aotearoa (TWoA), that intended to combat past oppression but may have inadvertently added to it.

In 2003 the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) implemented the first round of a research assessment and funding exercise entitled the Performance Based Research Fund (PBRF). This operates

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along similar lines to the British Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) although it is measured at the individual, rather than the unit, level. It was in 2003 that I was first appointed to be research manager at TWoA, and, in conjunction with senior managers at the institution (all Māori) we had to decide whether or not the Wānanga would join in this exercise. Time was short. My argument was that if we did not participate, then the erosion of previously-received government funding for research would mean that Māori taxpayer money would go to fund research in non-Māori tertiary institutions only. Our Wānanga would miss out. I believed that this would be detrimental to our institution and further add to oppression that the institution had already experienced. (They had had to take the government to the Treaty of Waitangi Tribunal in 2001 to recoup establishment costs that were provided to non-Māori institutions. They won). We decided to join in, and a frantic round of 'outing' researchers in the institution and recording their outputs in the TEC-specified way ensued.

This paper is not the place to record the full story – see the work that my team members and I took to a HERDSA[4] Conference in 2004 for that (Tawhai, Pihera & Bruce Ferguson, 2004). But what happened subsequently showed me that 'good intentions' could have negative consequences. I happened to cross swords with a senior manager a year or two later, and he accused me of introducing 'viruses without vaccines' into the Wānanga. This was an allusion to British soldiers who had allegedly given blankets infected with smallpox to indigenous Americans, thereby causing the demise of thousands. The clear implication was that he perceived some of my work at TWoA as noxious to the institution.

"I get by with a little help from my friends!" (The Beatles, 1967). Andrea, Eileen and Pip at a recent meeting.

To say that I was shocked is an understatement. I checked the perception out with the then Tumuaki (CEO) of the institution who did not agree with the statement. However, as time has passed and I have reflected, I have come to see that from the senior manager's perspective, his claim was defensible. There are, indeed, aspects of the PBRF that are at best unhelpful, and at worst antithetical, to Māori ways of researching. Indeed, I was subsequently a member of the Sector Reference Group (representatives of several universities, polytechnics and other tertiary providers) that advised the TEC on later iterations of the PBRF. I co-wrote a paper with a Māori member of that group critiquing aspects of the PBRF (Smith & Bruce Ferguson, 2006). And just this year I have received from the Wānanga, with whom I still have warm connections, a copy of their 2009 Research Register *He Pataka Tangata, He Pataka Kai*. In this, Te Kapua Hohepa-Watene reflects on research development at the Wānanga, using the metaphor of a canoe to do so. Te Kapua wrote:

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[4] Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia

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As the flag was being raised [on the canoe] a bird called 'PBRF' landed on it and asked if it could change the shape and colour of the flag. The kaiarahi [leaders] were not happy with the proposed changes and said, "Kaore [no]. If we changed the flag it wouldn't look, feel or fly right," so the bird flew away (p. 7).

From this comment it is obvious that, for some in the Wānanga, the PBRF was not appropriate. The institution has decided not to participate in the next round of PBRF, due 2012, despite losing government funding for their research. At a recent visit to the Wānanga, I was told that the compromises they had had to make to 'fit' with PBRF had been deemed to be too great. With the best of intentions, I had failed to see their water.

A much briefer, but successful, example of developing awareness of the need for guidance in cross-cultural practice and the issues that this can raise involved a project evaluating a professional development programme for teachers of Māori students in mainstream schools. This was undertaken mainly in 2008, by Eileen Piggot-Irvine, Andrea Elliott-Hohepa and myself. Eileen, the project director, works for Unitec New Zealand; at the time Andrea and I were self-employed contractors. Andrea's presence was vital to this project, as she advised and guided us on gaining entry, providing appropriate hospitality, and safely conducting interviews with Māori students and their families. She helped us to appreciate and work through our ethical commitment to reciprocity (*utu*, in Māori terms) which meant that we pledged to 'take back' face to face, the research results to those from whom they were gathered. As Kearns and Dyck (2005) wrote,

Far more promises of 'feeding back' results are made than are kept (p. 87).

The budget had been exhausted by the time we came to taking back results, so both Andrea and I organised to take these results back at our own expense, which necessitated inter-island travel for one of us. But with Andrea's guidance on the importance of *utu*, we ensured that this was done. (Funds were eventually found to reimburse us for this expense). The whole research experience was an important insight into 'another fish's water' as we discussed differing interpretations of events while travelling together, and writing up the results. It paralleled the insights provided by cultural safety experts such as 'Aunty Ma' (Marie Panapa) to me when I worked at the wānanga. Aunty Ma's warmth and tolerance of/support for my 'good intentions' was a balm to my occasionally wounded spirit.

III. DISCUSSION

From the examples we have provided, limited though they be in terms of our breadth of educational practice, we would raise questions about whether and how we could improve our practice. There is little point in being overwhelmed with guilt and shame for well-intentioned but unhelpful practice. Guilt and shame are positive emotions only to the point that they prompt us to consider better ways of practising with those negatively affected by our actions. Soul-searching and commitment to change is a far more appropriate response than breast-beating. Ryde, who analysed these emotions in her 2009 work with others, wrote:

My feeling is that, through being alive to a sense of guilt about racist attitudes, we can tackle our own patterns of dualistic thinking and the racist attitudes that result. That way we can work towards a change in societal attitudes

(Ryde, 2009, p. 96)

Ryde proposed a cycle demonstrating the stages that white 'helping professionals' (which could apply equally well to educators) encounter when they start to tackle their own racism. It is important to note in this cycle, the first of two she proposed, that one can return to the 'same' starting point; it is not as though the learning is once and for all. Having 'stepped into the same puddle' many times ourselves despite best intentions, we both appreciate this aspect of Ryde's work. The cycle is replicated below in figure 1.1.
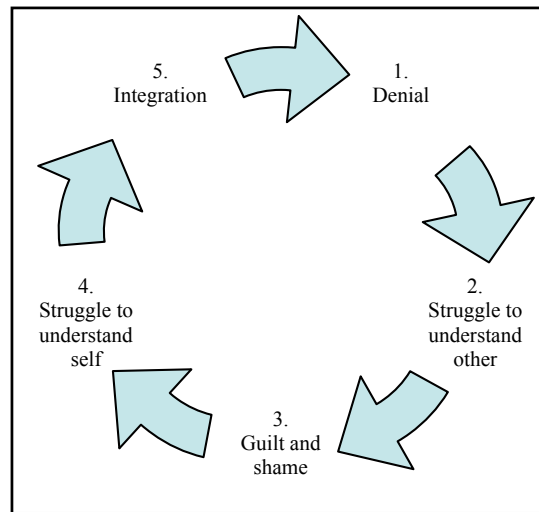
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Figure 0.1: Cycle of white awareness (Ryde, 2009, p.50)

Ryde talked about the ways in which guilt and shame could be narcissistic - "putting ourselves and our feeling in the centre of the frame" (op. cit., page 100) . This can lead to indigenous people feeling as though they should act to help us resolve our distress, hence putting further pressure on them. Rather, it is important for those from the dominant culture to do their *own* work, seeking to analyse their own practice and to work to address power imbalances. Freire, conversely, argued that the oppressors needed the help of the oppressed to free both groups from the dehumanising effects of oppression (1972). However both authors believe that personal awareness by the oppressors is insufficient – praxis is needed. Ryde wrote:

> In today's world with fast communication and ease of movement around the globe it becomes more and more important that we own our complete humanity and recognise and repair the harm we do. At the same time we cannot expect those whom we have harmed to forgive us….My inquiry into guilt and shame has shown me that dialogue across cultures is important, but not sufficient if power differences are not taken into account

(Ryde, 2009, p. 107)

In this section above, Ryde draws attention to the importance of not 'stopping' our exploration at the level of personal consciousness, but also taking responsibility to challenge and attempt to improve systemic problems that contribute to conscious or unconscious racism. Her second, expanded cycle appears below in figure 1.2.
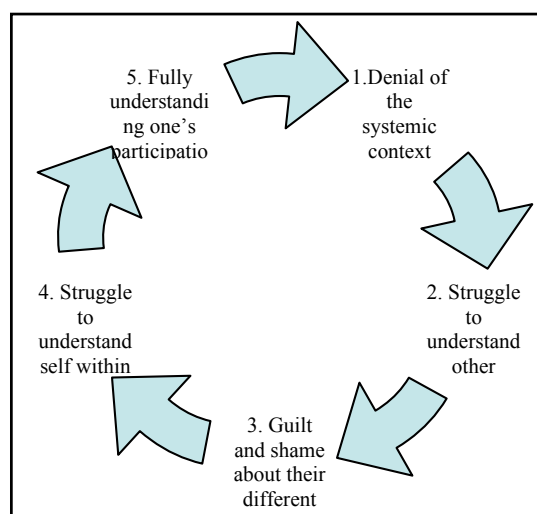

Figure 1.2: A further turn of the cycle of white awareness (Ryde, 2009, p.53)

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This second cycle moves the work from a purely 'self-centred' investigation to one in which systems are also examined.

One way in which educators can work to address power imbalances and strive to participate more equitably within 'a web of relationships' is to recognise their own privilege and seek to share the benefits of this by working alongside indigenous peoples. Professor of Māori Education at the University of Waikato, Russell Bishop (1996, p. 18), has argued that Pakeha [non-Māori] should also be involved with Māori in research, because "for Pakeha researchers to leave it all to Māori people is to abrogate their responsibilities as Treaty partners". And Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh and Teddy (2007, p. 8) said:

> Māori calls for self-determination are often misunderstood by non-Māori people. It is not a call for separatism or non-interference, nor is it a call for non-Māori people to stand back and leave Māori alone, in effect to relinquish all responsibility for the ongoing relationship between the peoples of New Zealand. Rather it is a call for all those involved in education in New Zealand to reposition themselves in relation to these emerging aspirations of Māori people for an autonomous voice

> **(Bishop, 1994; Smith, 1997; Durie, 1998).**

A similar argument could be made for recognising the aspirations of later immigrants such as Bruce's Chinese and Indian students. But how do we go forward safely, when the potential for oppression is so evident? It would be easy for Pakeha and other non-indigenous educators to feel frozen and unsafe, given the potential for oppression. However, this avoids the obligation that Bishop and others consider that the 'beneficiaries' of education owe back to those who have not received such favourable treatment. Smith has argued that one of the strategies for building indigenous research capability is for "Engagements and dialogue between indigenous and non-indigenous researchers and communities" (Smith, 2005, p. 92). In Pip's context, there has recently been dialogue about the need for Pakeha supervisors to work alongside Māori colleagues who have recently gained PhDs, to co-supervise student work. The institution's policies dictate that skills need to be gained and attested to before one's name is placed on the register of approved supervisors. So choosing to work alongside newer Māori supervisors when asked, is a way that we can share the skills that we have acquired, although the supervisor/supervisee relationship needs to be carefully negotiated.[5] In the long run, this should lead to a situation in which sufficient Māori supervisors are available for Māori postgraduate students, who will then gain supervision from those who really understand and see 'their water'.

Another way that power can be shared can occur if institutions are encouraged to stretch their notions of who is appropriate to supervise indigenous students' work. In 2004, when attending the ALARPM Conference in Darwin, Pip learned of an Australian university that had accredited an indigenous student's mother as a co-supervisor, owing to her understanding of the work that the student was doing. The university's 'stretching' of its notions did not yet extend to paying the mother as a supervisor, but at least it was forward movement. In these kinds of situations, non-indigenous staff can learn how to supervise with some degree of cultural safety, while students gain appropriate supervision. This seems like a win-win situation for research, and we will continue to investigate ways of practising as teachers that provide this sort of collaboration for co-liberation (see Bruce Ferguson, Chapter 3, in McNiff & Whitehead, 2000).

IV. CONCLUSION

As we strive to meet the standards that we have set ourselves, to articulate these and seek to demonstrate whether and how we have met them (McNiff, 2008, Whitehead, 2008, 2009) we have to learn how to work safely and effectively without giving up because the battle is too hard. We have to continue to challenge ourselves not to sink back into 'normal' practice when it's normal for us, but oppressive and

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[5] A great example of how this process can be negotiated appears in Helen Taiaroa's videoed description of her PhD study with a Pakeha supervisor. See http://tur-media-db1.massey.ac.nz/mediasite/Viewer/?peid=7bd635a198234a65be3cd2d6e19c8104

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alienating for our students. We need to find ways in which our students can 'see themselves in the picture' (Nakhid, 2003) and not just see themselves, but see their ways of being, valued and promoted.

But, as Ryde's work shows, we have to be constantly alert lest the 'magnet effect' pulls us back into harmful and ignorant practice. We need to be aware that, as Thomas Jefferson wrote many centuries ago, "Constant vigilance is the price of freedom". It is all too easy for us to slip back from 'position five' of developing awareness on Ryde's cycles of white awareness, to position one again when we are faced with a different situation. Cultural ignorance is like a hydra-headed monster; no sooner do we lop off one head than another can spring up where we least expect it.

In our educational institutions, we must be aware that a one-sided cultural perspective has been incorporated into our curriculum, quality assurance systems, employment processes, pedagogical methods, assessment practices and research paradigms. Nevertheless, it is good to see the extent to which both indigenous and white authors around the world are now naming and challenging this dominance. We are slowly developing awareness of its negative effects on peoples whose ways of being may be superior for educational achievement not only for them, but possibly for all of us. In the recent professional development evaluation project that Pip was involved in, it was frequently claimed by schools running the programme that "What's good for Māori has been good for all".

Somehow, as conscientised and conscientising educators (Freire, 1972), we have to loosen up, let go and learn to embrace wider ways of understanding education. If we can do that, education may change for the better for *all* participants in that endeavour.

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