

# Supporting Cultural Awareness for Teaching Staff in a Polytechnical Institute

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## Abstract

How academic staff and leadership show cultural awareness to students in a tertiary education environment can be highly beneficial to students of diverse cultures, and may help them to succeed in their studies. Students who feel valued are more likely to persevere through difficult times in their personal lives, when they feel that their teachers are genuine in supporting them. Leaders and academic staff may also find that their professional and teaching relationships are satisfying and productive when the organisation they work in promotes cultural awareness positive towards each other.

The challenges of the current performative environment in tertiary education puts management and teaching staff under pressure to produce good student results. Even so, many teachers continue to build successful educational relationships that play important roles for their students' successes. Despite the abundance of evidence and policy available to support schools in New Zealand, policy written specifically for management and educators working in the tertiary sector appears to be somewhat lacking.

This dissertation reports on research written about schools and tertiary education that shows the value of relationship building with students, as well as the challenges of working in a performative environment in tertiary education that has prevailed over the past few years. The research was an appreciative inquiry conducted in a Polytechnic in Auckland. The results demonstrate the benefits of education providers showing cultural awareness not only to their staff, but also to their students, who are often happy to recommend their provider to others, when they feel they have been supported in their learning journey.

Data was collected with the help of a small sample of staff and students from one Campus through online survey, interviews and a focus group discussion. This study was designed to investigate how participants thought cultural awareness in their area was supported by leadership, and strategies, and their experiences. The results show that both staff and students felt that cultural awareness was shown best when authentic

relationships were formed between staff and students, in an environment that was supported clearly through strategies that were clearly articulate by leadership.

This study not only adds to what is already known about the value of showing cultural awareness to students and staff, but also provides good evidence that policy and systems help to define how cultural awareness can be extended in the tertiary sector.

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## Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work, and that to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material to which a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree of diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke.

Signed

Date 11/11/2019

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## Ethics Approval

In accordance with the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC) the final ethics approval for this research project was granted on 11 April 2019 (Ethics Approval number 19/76).

Ethics Approval to enter Manukau Institute of Technology as a researcher, was granted on May 17<sup>th</sup>, 2019 (Ethics Approval number E-26).

## Chapter 1: Introduction

### 1.1 Context for this study

The purpose of this research is to find out what governance expectations and leadership practices at Manukau Institute of Technology (MIT) support an environment where staff show, and where students experience cultural awareness. MIT is where I taught my trade of baking for eleven years, during which time I came to appreciate the importance of developing educational relationships with my students who came from many different countries. In this chapter, I introduce myself and how I connect to the research topic. After that a rationale for the research is set out, followed by the structure of this dissertation.

I became interested in finding out how academic staff at MIT perceive cultural awareness and how that influences their work while I was studying for my graduate diploma in tertiary teaching. I realised that many of my students seemed to engage more deeply in their learning when they realised that I was genuine about getting to know them in class. At the same time, I noticed my approach to teaching becoming more relaxed as I gained confidence in my abilities to connect to students, while some of my fellow lecturers seemed to struggle with student engagement in their classes. I wanted to find out how MIT's support for teaching staff is perceived by the lecturers, and how that support connects to the student experience. Further to this, I wanted to find out from relevant publications what gaps there might be around the topic of how cultural awareness is supported in tertiary education. I hope that the findings from my study will make a positive addition to that body of knowledge.

To me, being culturally aware means first of all being conscious that everyone has a story and a place that they come from. Their places are often very different from mine, and so I try to accept people as they are and respect their ways of being (Bishop & Glynn, 2003; Tangihaere & Twinaime, 2011). When people consider what 'cultural' means, I believe they often mean their ethnicity, their family, iwi and hapu, and people sometimes don't consider culture beyond that. Throughout this research, I remained mindful that the concept of culture at an organisation such as MIT could also include

the forms of relationships with people ranging from leadership to staff to students, alongside individual diversity.

## 1.2 My position in the research

The threads of investigation for this research are important to me, in part because of my own experiences growing up in New Zealand in a Dutch immigrant family, learning how to fit into the New Zealand culture that had different rules and expectations to those I experienced at home. Before I became an educator, I had trained in the Netherlands as a professional pastry baker, and from the time I graduated with my diploma in pastry baking I trained newcomers to my trade. As I became more confident in passing on my own baking knowledge, both in the baking industry and in the tertiary education environment, I began to realise that expression of cultural behaviours, including recognising people's names and ways of working together to learn together, influenced my students' retention of knowledge. These experiences gave me some insight as to how people of all cultures can respond in a learning environment. My experiences also helped me to realise that my own way of teaching and working with my classes could influence not only how my students learned, but also how my colleagues adjusted into teaching life. I hoped to find out from the research, if leadership, academic staff and students at MIT had similar experiences.

Learning to recognise how my own teaching expression might have been influenced by an awareness of culture has helped me to be open to the experiences my colleagues and students had in the classroom. My knowledge of what it is to be 'not Kiwi', together with studying overseas in a different language means I also understand the challenges faced by students and staff from outside New Zealand coming to grips with education in New Zealand and at MIT. During my studies to become a tertiary educator, I gained a consciousness of the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and how I can apply the principles of participation, partnership and protection in my actions on a daily basis. In this research, I wanted to see how staff and students at MIT connected with that knowledge, and how that might have influenced how they teach and learn within the spirit of the Articles of Te Tiriti. I hoped that they would feel encouraged to be themselves while recognising each other's ways of working and being (Tangihaere & Twiname, 2011), after having been involved in this research. At the same time, I

wanted to know how staff at MIT are navigating the complexities of working in a performative environment (Ball, 2003) where professional development planning has often relied on funding linked to student outcomes (Rubie-Davies, Hattie, & Hamilton, 2006; Tertiary Education Commission, 2014).

The New Zealand government recognised in 2019 that the current vocational education model MIT is part of, needed an overhaul to make it more able to meet the needs of learners and be financially viable (New Zealand Government, 2019). This announcement was preceded by MIT's changes to the leadership and academic structures from 2016 – 2018, in response to budget deficits and declining enrolments (Collins, 2018; Manukau Institute of Technology, 2019), around the same time that other Industry Training Providers [ITPs] announced proposals to also reset their management structures. The consequences of these changes influenced participant's responses during the data collection.

It is important that I acknowledge, that while I conducted my research at the institution in which I work, no person taking part in this research was in my direct line of management or line of reporting. I decided to use reflexive loop (Argyris, 1977) techniques to conduct solutions-based reason and rationale in the discussions in my research journal. This process allowed me to review my experiences after running the interview sessions and focus group. Using reflexivity by reflecting on my past experiences, beliefs and expectations (Larrivee, 2000; Robertson, 2013) in tertiary education, and allowing those reflections to be conscious of my further interactions, helped me to be transparent about my subjectivity, while focussing on what the participants shared with me. To that end, MIT as an Institute is identifiable throughout this study, for the purposes of keeping the institute informed about what people shared regarding their positive experiences of cultural awareness at MIT.

### 1.3 Rationale and significance

Carrying out this study allowed me to explore a topic that I have been interested in for the past five years. I have worked with colleagues who, while respected in their field, have had to balance teaching their industry knowledge with learning how to teach in culturally aware ways. Using culturally aware ways of teaching can encourage student participation and help students become academically successful where in the past they

may have struggled to engage or succeed. The findings of this study will be shared with the participants and with the institute. In this way, good practices and experiences can be shared across the institute, in the hope that the findings will help staff and students on their own journey to become more culturally aware. Hopefully, staff and students will feel also enabled to support those around them, and help them to succeed. These findings will also contribute to a currently small body of literature available in the tertiary sector in New Zealand about people's experiences and perceptions of cultural awareness.

#### 1.4 Research question

The aim of the research was to conduct an appreciative inquiry that would enable me to share what governance expectations and leadership practices at Manukau Institute of Technology (MIT) support an environment where staff show, and where students experience cultural awareness, through an attempt to answer the following question and sub-questions:

What are leaders doing in a Polytechnic to support an environment where staff implement Ministry of Education and Institute policies to show cultural awareness and where the students experience cultural awareness?

- What are students experiencing?
- What are staff perceptions of their own and others' cultural awareness?
- What are the leaders' perceptions of how cultural awareness is supported at the Institute?

#### 1.5 Overview of structure

This dissertation is made up of five chapters.

Chapter One sets out the context and rationale for this study and outlines the aims and questions this research explored.

Chapter Two is a critical examination of the wider literature in schools and tertiary education, both in New Zealand and overseas. This chapter looks at the topics of cultural awareness in education; governance and organisational expectations for

cultural awareness; recognition of cultural awareness by leadership and academic staff; and the importance of staff - student relationships.

Chapter Three discusses and justifies the methodology used to conduct this research. The methods of data collection and analysis are described. Also discussed is the ethical approach taken to work with the participants, and the issues of trustworthiness for this study.

Chapter Four offers a summary of the findings from the surveys, interviews and focus group discussion that formed the basis of the data collection for this research. The themes identified from the findings are as follows: a) factors that support cultural awareness at MIT, b) strategy and policy communication and influences, c) how staff show cultural awareness, and d) relationships between staff and students.

Chapter Five considers the significance of the emergent findings from the data analysis. This chapter is structured into headings that reflect the research questions: a) what are students experiencing, b) what are staff perceptions of their own and others' cultural awareness, c) what are leadership's perceptions of how cultural awareness is supported at MIT, and d) Ministry of Education and MIT policies.

Chapter Five also addresses the implications of this research followed by the potential for further research. Implications are headed by the following topics: a) benefits of showing cultural awareness in tertiary education, b) the importance of knowing what students experience, c) staff's perceptions of cultural awareness influence the way they work, and lastly d) the need for consistent leadership and governance approaches to cultural awareness. Finally, this chapter sets out the conclusions that I have drawn from the data analysis and seeks to determine how the research questions have been answered.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### 2.1 Introduction

In this review of the literature, research outlining some cultural practices that could help tertiary educators engage with their culturally diverse students, and implementation of professional development is discussed in conjunction with some foundational work from the primary and high school sectors both in New Zealand and overseas. Various New Zealand government and MIT organisational strategies have also been studied, along with some insights into the relationships between the intention of policies and the effects that policy implementation can have on staff who work under it and students who experience the effects of that enactment.

Many tertiary educators coming into education have up-to-date industry skills, but bring limited knowledge on how to teach their industry expertise to an often very diverse ethnic group of students. The value of educators cultivating effective and productive learning relationships to meet the cultural needs of students in primary and high schools (Bishop, 2010; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1995) is also explored.

This chapter has been structured as follows: firstly, possible meanings for cultural awareness are discussed. Next is the significance of cultural awareness and how it can be effective in learning and teaching relationships. Lastly, in line with the research questions, this chapter has been grouped further into the three themes listed below:

1. *Governance and organisational expectations for cultural awareness* recognises Ministry of Education [MoE] and strategic and synthesised reports, and MIT policy documents.
2. *Recognition of cultural awareness by leadership and academic staff* explores some professional development and teaching and learning approaches by Tertiary Education Organisations [TEOs] including MIT, in response to expectations by the government. This theme also looks at how professional development undertaken by academic staff can help develop cultural awareness and enhance the student / staff relationship for learning.

3. *The importance of staff – student relationships* recognises how culturally aware relationships between teaching staff and students can enhance students' self-confidence and ability to succeed academically.

The purpose of this research is to find out and share how leadership practices at MIT support an environment where staff implement NZQA [New Zealand Qualifications Authority] and the institute's policies to show cultural awareness, and where the students experience cultural awareness. In order to facilitate an overview of the literature review's themes and overlapping elements, a conceptual framework (see Figure 1) showing relationships between cultural awareness and stakeholders in tertiary education has been developed. This model represents my visualisation of what I have come to understand as being the most influential factors in determining how well cultural awareness might be shown in a tertiary setting. Cultural awareness is at the centre of the model. When the model is in balance, overlaps between governance and staff awareness of policy and the effectiveness of student and staff relationships can influence the degree to which governance and students experience academic success. If the model becomes out of balance whereby success, policy or relationships are more dominant than the others, the positive effects of cultural awareness may be diminished, causing difficulties in maintaining successful educational relationships for governance, staff or students.

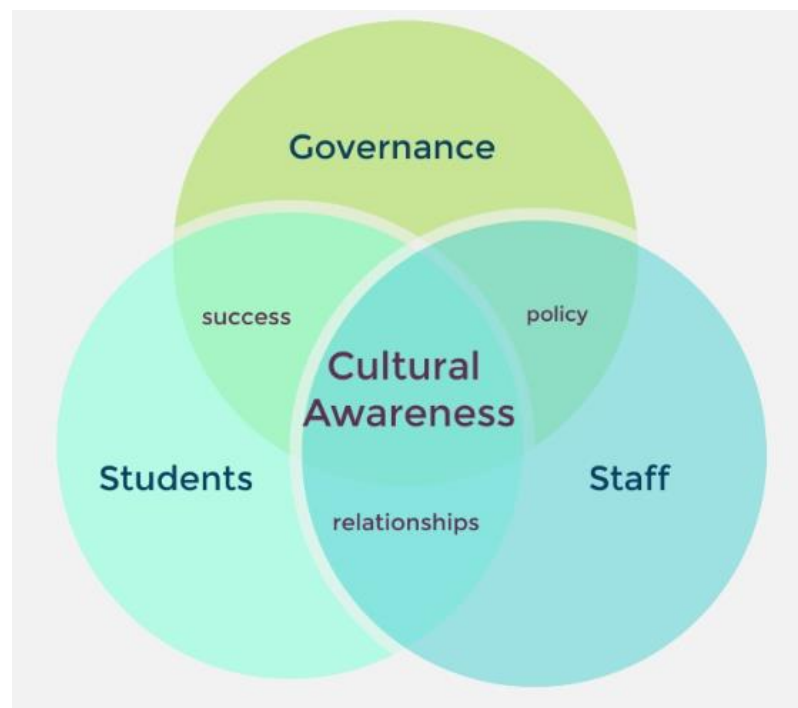




Figure 1: Conceptual framework for cultural awareness in tertiary education

## 2.2 Review of literature

### *Cultural awareness in education*

The words ‘cultural awareness’ could potentially be replaced by the following terms: cultural competency, cultural diversity, cultural capability, cultural consideration, and cultural responsiveness. These terms can all be regarded in terms of their contribution to how a person shows their understanding of the differences between people from other backgrounds and countries and themselves, especially differences in attitudes and values. Geertz (1973) wrote that culture is a web of significance that people themselves have spun. An integral part of the learning conversation with students is achieved when educators recognise their students’ cultural backgrounds and create “positive, non-judgemental relationships” (Bishop, 2010, p. 59). In order to recognise and embrace culturally responsive practices, an understanding of cultures and identities can help educators to develop collaborative learning relationships (Bishop, 2010; Santamaría, Webber, Santamaría, Dam, & Jayavant, 2016) with their students by attending to the needs of all students (Larke, 2013). Culturally responsive, or capable educators are aware of the diverse cultures in their student groups, and work with their students using strategies that help the students engage in learning. To have an awareness is to be cognisant, so to have or to show cultural awareness can be seen as taking into consideration a person’s cultural background and ways of interacting within their current context.

### *Governance and organisational expectations for cultural awareness*

The Ministry of Education has communicated its anticipation that tertiary providers provide cultural awareness training for their staff by utilising their “research and networking capacity to develop and share information on what works for Māori students in education and implement this into their particular tertiary context” (MoE, 2013, p. 33). Professional development for tertiary educators (Davis, Fletcher & Absalom, 2010; Ministry of Education, 2013; Robinson & Lai, 2010; Zeichner, 2006) to improve the way that they work to improve their students’ confidence to learn for academic success (Bishop, 2010; Chauvel & Rean, 2012; Timperley, Kaser, & Halbert, 2014) can be delayed, or passed over by an ITP when educators are employed to begin

teaching immediately during term time. Where professional development for teaching staff is postponed, effective implementation may be compromised. This can have an undesirable impact on the pedagogical proficiency educators need so they can successfully teach their professions skills to culturally diverse groups of students (Boereboom, 2019; Chauvel, 2014; Suddaby, 2019).

Where tertiary organisations are challenged to implement their policy requirements for completion of professional development in a defined timeframe, teaching industry standards sometimes come at a cost to good educational practices. These challenges usually arise where casual teaching staff take longer to complete their teaching qualification, and where academic staff to student ratios are higher than 18 (Coolbear, 2012) which in 2019 may be up to 50 students per class. Tertiary educators who find themselves balancing teaching skills for employment and meeting performance thresholds set by the government (New Zealand Productivity Commission, 2016), are also sometimes challenged to develop relationships with their students that are conducive to learning. Up until the end of 2018, MoE policy determined funding rates allocated by the Tertiary Education Commission to tertiary providers. The policy of linking funding to performance caused difficulties for TEOs to reach the targets for retention and success set by the Tertiary Education Strategy's *Ka Hikitia* (Ministry of Education, 2013). Consequential loss of funding to an organisation can result in diminished resourcing available for educator training (Ball, 1993; Rubie-Davies, Hattie & Hamilton, 2006). Delays in long-term changes to organisational thinking and application to implement changes for affirmative pedagogy might ensue. Coupled with longer term declines in student enrolments and consequential further reductions in funding, a number of ITPs, including MIT, have restructured their organisations to counter the subsequent imbalances in academic structures in 2018 and 2019. Subsequent disruptions to any planned organisational changes in pedagogy potentially hinder students who come from socially underprivileged circumstances while the organisations settle into their new rhythms of working, teaching and learning.

Although Māori and Pacific student enrolment numbers have increased in tertiary education for New Zealand (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD]) during the past 15 years, their retention and success rates overall have not advanced proportionally (OECD, 2015; MoE, 2013). It would appear that the lack of

improvement to success rates for Māori and Pacific students is occurring even though the implementation of the policy *Ka Hikitia* (MoE, 2013) was designed to support student success in all aspects of education. One of *Ka Hikitia*'s five focus areas is to improve participation and achievement rates for Māori at tertiary education so that Māori have increased employment opportunities, which in turn can deliver better social and economic benefits for New Zealand (MoE, 2013). There seems to be a gap in the policy, in that strategies for students are well documented, but development and completion of professional training for academic staff appears to be left to the individual organisations to implement (Coolbear, 2014; Suddaby, 2019). A greater consistency in tertiary provider's requirements for professional development (Coolbear, 2014; Suddaby, 2019) including training for teaching and cultural awareness would most likely improve outcomes for students from diverse backgrounds including New Zealand's priority learners: under 25, Māori and Pacific students (Tertiary Education Commission, 2014).

The business-oriented principles of economics and justification of academic results against funding received have forced mechanisms of judgement measuring excellence and affected policy in education since at least the 1980s (Adams, 2016; Ball, 1993; Braun, Ball, Maguire, & Hoskins, 2011). Such measuring of outputs and decision making about how resource should be allocated have inevitably led to competition for government funding. "Policy is complexly encoded in sets of texts and various documents and it is also decoded in complex ways" (Braun et al., 2011, p. 586). How policy is then enacted in an organisation, can be reliant on how well the policy is understood by those who have to work with it (O'Neill, 2012; Siteine, 2017), and how the organisation mandates the policy, whether it is from government or from the organisation. Policy enactment might be done for compliance reasons rather than because staff using it are invested in successful policy implementation for the good of their students or the good of their organisation. Where the relationships between national policy and social standards are embraced (Adams, 2016; Braun et al., 2011), then effective implementation of policies are more likely to happen. The granting of funding for tertiary education providers has become heavily reliant on performance of staff, students, and national success rates (Braun et al., 2011) against objectives set by

governments in their attempts to improve social outcomes for socio-economically challenged groups in the community.

MIT is unique in that it is a large Polytechnic situated in the heart of South Auckland. It has a diverse student body, with 38% Pacific students and 18% Māori, totalling 56% of MIT's students in 2017 (MITa, 2018), whereas 27% of staff at MIT in 2017 were Pacific and Māori. The school partnership model and strategy *Te Ara Hou* (Santamaría et al., 2016), supports cultural characteristics to be integrated into the school environment by promoting *whanaungatanga* (building relationships) and *whānau* (family) for the school environment. Through its Strategic Plan (MITb, 2018) and academic policies, MIT leadership currently supports the demonstration of culturally supportive education strategies and developing educators' understanding of cultural awareness (MITb, 2018). When educators develop learning relationships with their students based on cultural acceptance and understanding (Bishop, 2010), tertiary students benefit by feeling supported and able to complete their studies.

Up until the early 1980s, many education policies and strategies focussed on the integration and assimilation of Māori students in New Zealand schools through the delivery of British based learning systems (Stephenson, 2006). These approaches have been recognised as contributing to marginalising consequences for students (Bishop & Glynn, 2003). The New Zealand Ministry of Education commissioned studies and enacted policies from the late 1990s to 2000s to change assimilative approaches in school education towards advocating the use of culturally responsive teaching strategies where students are the focus (Dreaver & Chiaroni, 2009; MoE, 2013; Mugisha, 2013). Educators who recognise how their own behaviours in the classroom can encourage students' academic engagement and success can be said to be trying to "insert culture into education instead of inserting education into culture" (Ladson-Billings, 1995; p.159). For example, when educators recognise the student's own cultural backgrounds through correct pronunciation of names and words, and encouraging the use of cultural themes and visual motifs during presentations and group work, students are likely to be more comfortable in their learning and improve their results (Bishop, 2010; Dreaver & Chiaroni, 2009; Mugisha, 2013). It is important, too, that cultural awareness focusses on the cultivation of equal educational relationships between educators and students, both in the school setting and in

tertiary education, where educators sometimes have longer term experience from their industry profession than from their pedagogical knowledge.

*Recognition of cultural awareness by leadership and academic staff*

Part of this research is aimed at finding out how MIT supports educators who come from an industry background. These academics bring with them up-to-date vocational knowledge but not necessarily the means to teach those skills effectively to culturally diverse groups of students. While research findings carried out from within the school sector in the past twenty years are relevant for the tertiary sector, it could be argued that both educational sectors take similar approaches to culturally responsive teaching (Chauvel, 2014; Larke, 2013). It should also be recognised that adults bring their own knowledge, and can contribute their knowledge as they learn.

Transformative learning is dependent on an individual's growth of epistemic cognition, or way of knowing and constructing knowledge. How people make meaning of their experiences and give them significance, is central to how people find the limits of their knowledge and learn (Mezirow, 2000). Epistemic cognition comes from the person's societal environment. It is shared by their culture, and channelled by the group's beliefs, consciously or not. As acknowledged by Jenkins (1983), educators' responses to students' dialects, colloquialisms and perceived socio-economic statuses could prolong unfair unconscious bias regarding gender and ethnicity, which can have unfavourable effects for transformative learning. Transformative learning can come about (Mezirow, 2000) if ITPs provide consistent professional development to foster their educators embracing their adult student's knowledge.

Academics need to be supported in their development of cultural awareness (Jenkin, 2016) and methods to teach skills including the literacy, numeracy and technological skills that students need to participate in society (Ladson-Billings, 1995) and succeed while they learn. The concept of organisational learning (Cardno, 2010), recognises the importance of leadership's ability to deal with elements or variables that govern the impact on the conditions under which people work. In order that an organisation's leadership's intent for professional development is successful, the leaders must model behaviours that all members of the organisation can adopt and value themselves (Argyris, 1982; Cardno, 2010). Following on from this, differences in culture for

minority groups may become more readily acknowledged in the classroom when the organisation's values have been adopted by its staff members.

MIT aims to enhance staff capabilities through continued professional development so its academic staff are up to date in their vocational field as well as in tertiary education (MITb, 2018). This commitment to recognising academic staff who perform well is in line with MIT's teaching and performance strategies, and a decision to review the structure of the career path for academic staff is a newly developed strategic measure for MIT which will be implemented over the next five years (MIT, 2019). The success of culturally aware instruction for the longer-term demands ongoing development and support from both management and teaching colleagues (Geertz, 1973 as cited by Jenkins, 2016). Internal factors are integral drivers to consistent delivery of culturally responsive teaching.

Ladson-Billings (1995) and Gay (2000) both used their own knowledge to consider cultural responsiveness within the dynamics of teaching. They showed the importance of intellectually independent and critical thinking in schools. Their way of teaching allowed their students to become empowered by making their decisions independently, solving problems and using self-reflection. Gay (2000) worked together with her students to establish "esteem, empathy and equity" (Gay, 2000, p. 220) as a way of encompassing their diversity and cultural differences. Together with her students, she shaped teaching and learning through her honest and truthful approach to education. While these findings are from primary and high schools in the United States of America, the insights gained around improving student success through being culturally responsive could be brought to the New Zealand tertiary setting. Research in New Zealand schools supports these findings (Bishop, 2010; Bishop & Berryman, 2010; Santamaría et al., 2016), however, research in tertiary education is lacking. Larke's (2013) research contributes to a much smaller body of work related to tertiary education. Her findings show that academic staff in American universities who develop their own cultural identity and demonstrate cultural caring and competency in the classroom, would bring a consistent delivery to students of diverse backgrounds, and support their academic successes (Larke, 2013). Furthermore, Zeichner (2006), found there was a need for educators to be taken seriously as professionals. Their value as educators was becoming undermined by shifts in pedagogy and curriculum

requirements to performance-based assessment. This trend began to compromise educator's professional judgment and decision-making autonomy in response to the needs of their individual classes. Although Zeichner's (2006) work stems from America, a similar trend might be found in New Zealand where tertiary teaching staff are not required to undertake professional registration in the same way the school teachers do. Furthermore, tertiary teaching staff are not always well supported to begin their journey into the pedagogical intricacies of teaching (Maurice-Takerei, & Anderson, 2013), and they can often take years longer than expected to complete their teaching qualifications. This might be attributable to teaching loads, and at other times it may be that completion of professional development is not followed up consistently by management.

#### *The importance of staff – student relationships*

Teaching staff who recognise identity and culture in themselves, and who practise their own culture in the classroom, can add depth to their classroom relationships (Afrin, 2017; King Miller, 2015). An ability and willingness to share culture can bring authenticity to the teaching space, and can give students the confidence to be themselves when they recognise their educator's acceptance of cultural behaviours and expression of self. When the central premise is the success of the students, Gorski (2008), states that "a series of shifts in consciousness .... may inform a more authentic intercultural education" (p. 517). Rather than simply being committed to the organisation's policies leading to expected outcomes, Gorski (2007) posits that intercultural education has a broad range in which cultural identity can prosper more successfully than multicultural education. The latter can tend to recognise culture but does not always embed it into the delivery for students. In New Zealand, presenting culturally aware practices includes sharing *karakia* (short reflective statement or prayer) before and after a session as a way of acknowledging the work and the willingness of all involved to contribute. Pronouncing people's names correctly is another small way that educators can show their good intent, that can quickly become an expected and welcome aspect of working together. Educators who have low expectations of student success based on who they are, or what social position they may hold, can contribute a major impediment to Māori students by displaying deficit thinking (Bishop & Glynn, 2003). Deficit thinking as explained by Gorski (2008), comes

about through perceived cultural shortcomings, and not through systemic inequalities. He argues that authentic interculturalism informs shifts in practice by questioning who holds the control and power within a group, and whether the group relationships are socially balanced.

Cultural awareness relies on people to act justly and impartially so that deficit thinking can be rejected. In an educational setting, deficit thinking can be counteracted when educational leaders encourage each other to be active agents of change by enabling culturally responsive teaching to strengthen educator and student relationships (Bishop, 2010). Teaching successes can also be attributed to dialogue teaching (Bain, 2004), which places emphasis on how attitude and success work together to allow deeper engagement with learning and with each other. Bain (2004) gives in-depth descriptions of ways that learning enhances students' confidence and academic successes resulting on more in-depth learning. He discusses how good teaching helps students over time to absorb knowledge and acquire skills more confidently, rather than remembering what do to without necessarily remembering why. Transformative learning brings the ability for students to think through problems better, and not just regurgitate knowledge. The concept of deep learning was first developed in Sweden by Marton & Säljö (1976). Deep learning is not so much about what both educators and students have to remember, but about what they understand. It is important to recognise that before deep learning can be achieved, some self-knowledge will be required by both educator and student, which can be achieved through self-reflective practices.

According to Larrivee (2000), "self-reflection ... is more a way of knowing than a knowing how" (p.299). She explains that people are often unaware of the effect that filters of their perceptions of themselves have on their work (Larrivee, 2000), nor are they are aware of their mental models. She suggests making sure to spend time on reflection. A leader's critical self-examination of their work methods can be successful when they use their knowledge of self to become open to thinking and possibilities that can improve their actions by filtering their assumptions. Larrivee (2000) examines how beliefs and behaviours can strengthen resilience and the ability to accept change and learn from it. She encourages an individual approach to critical self-development which is reminiscent of the Spiral of Inquiry (Timperley et al., 2014) as a way to reflect



on-action, whereby a person cannot decide how or what to improve unless they understand what is happening.

A study of tertiary staff (Prebble et al., 2004) showed a lack of evidence in New Zealand at the time that professional development for academic staff directly impacted on students' success. It was often the academic's confidence in the effectiveness of their own teaching practices that transferred to their culturally diverse students, encouraging students' own self-belief and enhancing their academic success. The study also found that further targeted research would be beneficial to confirm these findings. The using of a teaching framework and good university teaching practices aimed at closing the parity gap through the use of non-lecture-based classes (Airini et al., 2011) highlighted successes in this research which focussed on how students experienced culturally responsive teaching practices.

A gap in knowledge of how academic staff in tertiary education are supported and developed to deliver teaching using culturally aware strategies was therefore discovered. Having said that, Leach's (2011) work on retention and success for students of diversity in the New Zealand high school and tertiary sector, emphasises that some teaching staff tend to treat their students equally without acknowledging any student's cultural background thus avoiding favouritism (universally), while others make sure that their students are treated within their cultural backgrounds, and taught with a variety of methods (individually). The dilemma of achieving "an appropriate balance between diversity and unity" (Leach, 2011, p. 250) poses a challenge for teaching staff to recognise culture without highlighting ethnicity, and at the same time recognising other forms of diversity by treating all students 'universally' and the same. The problem Leach (2011) highlights here is the possibility of losing the individual connection that Bishop (2010), Bain (2004), Ladson-Billings (1995) and Gay (2000) propose are so central to students' academic successes.

### 2.3 Summary

Showing cultural awareness includes being conscious of the fact that everyone has a story and a place that they come from. Their places are often very different from their peers and their lecturers, implying a need for the recognition of people's diversity of culture and character, for the promotion of authentic learning relationships. The

literature shows that education in school and in tertiary education across the globe is most effective when academic staff can develop understanding and respect with their students (Leach, 2011) so that transformative learning (Mezirow, 2000) can take place in a supportive environment. The performative education environments (Ball, 2003; New Zealand Productivity Commission, 2016) of recent years in New Zealand have had a negative impact on retention and success for many students from diverse cultural backgrounds. The decline of student success has occurred in spite of strategies (MoE, 2012; MoE, 2014; MITb, 2018) and expectations from government that ITPs use their research capabilities to decide how academic staff should receive professional development to increase cultural awareness in their institutes (MoE, n.d.). Teaching staff who are able to show their awareness of cultural diversity in their teaching can help to reduce the parity gap and enhance their students learning experiences, while TEOs such as MIT have developed new organisational structures and strategic plans aimed to address the issues of parity and success (MIT, 2019), however, the benefits to teaching delivery will not be apparent immediately.

## Chapter 3: Methodology

### 3.1 Introduction

The purpose of the research was to find what leadership practices at MIT build and support its academic staff's cultural awareness, and how students experience cultural awareness. I wanted to increase my awareness of the relationships between leadership intent to support cultural awareness, and the forming of cultural awareness. This chapter discusses the rationale to my research approach, the setting in which the research took place, the participants, data collection, analysis methods and ethical considerations.

### 3.2 Rationale for research approach

As stated in Chapter One, I know what it is like to be 'not Kiwi', being the child of immigrant parents. Having studied overseas in a different language I also understand the challenges faced by students and staff coming to grips with education in New Zealand and at MIT. My cultural and social background enables me to empathise with the diverse people I work with so I can offer them support to become more effective in their own teaching roles. During my studies for tertiary education I became more aware of Te Tiriti o Waitangi's principles of partnership, protection participation and equity, and how I could work effectively with those around me within the spirit of the Treaty Articles by respecting their ways of working and being. Furthermore, my eleven years as a lecturer allows me in my current role to recognise how learning relationships develop in an educational setting.

The research question and supporting sub-questions to guide the study, were:

*What are leaders doing in a Polytechnic to support an environment where staff implement NZQA and MIT policies to show cultural awareness and where the students experience cultural awareness?*

- *What are students experiencing?*
- *What are staff perceptions of their own and others' cultural awareness?*

- *What are the leaders' perceptions of how cultural awareness is supported at the Institute?*

Even though my own experiences in the tertiary setting influenced my approach to this study, I was not looking for specific responses to my research questions. I wanted to construct meaning around the thoughts and experiences the participants shared with me, so I looked for the overlaps and links with those experiences, and the participants' thoughts around how they saw cultural awareness. My 'constructing and representing' (Wisker, 2001, p.24) of the research topic sits within the constructivist paradigm. This paradigm (or way of thinking and conceptualising) (Creswell, 2013), is one in which research is carried out from within people's experiences, where meaning is made by more than one person, where interpretations differ because people use their own understanding to interpret their knowledge and experiences, which results in more than one perception of the events researched. I worked with leaders, lecturers and students to find out how and why people interact as they do within teaching and learning, and within the bounds of the institute and the tertiary education sector.

Constructivism has a worldview (ontology, or way of being) of relativism, whereby "meaning is constructed through interactions between consciousness and the world" (Scotland, 2012; p. 11). Because my research explored people's experiences with cultural awareness, I hoped to draw out the relationships from the experiences discussed with my participants, and connect them to the world of MIT and how the institute expresses its intentions towards supporting cultural awareness. The epistemology, or the way in which knowledge is gained and shared, and the way meaning is constructed, can also be seen as how a researcher works with their participants (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007), which for constructivism is transactional and subjectivist, or personal (Creswell, 2013).

This study was an appreciative inquiry, which is a search for solutions that already exist. It explores what works well in a system, and finds out what else can be done to improve a situation. Appreciative inquiry is a thought process that should not be bound by guidelines and manuals (Hall & Hammond, 1998). It is an analytical process that explores what goes well, rather than discovering what to improve, and brings a consciousness to an organization that serves to improve. While my research was aimed

at finding out what was working well, it was not necessarily focussed on finding solutions. However, if the participants wanted to share suggestions that might help improve some of the issues they highlighted, I was happy to record them in the findings. I hope that in giving my participants an opportunity to share what they found worked well for them, they could contribute to the social construction of a shared future (Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2005), and, further, that my research has contributed to improving organisational consciousness for a tertiary setting. My theory on how leaders, academic staff and students perceive and experience cultural awareness would be developed and influenced by sets of meanings that gave me insight and understanding of people's behaviours (Cohen et al., 2007; Mack, 2010) and reactions.

Because of the opinions and knowledge that the participants and I brought to the research setting, I needed to make a conscious effort to analyse the data objectively (Mack, 2010), to work effectively within the constructivist paradigm. I decided to be open and transparent about my position within this research by informing the ethics committees and my participants of my prior knowledge of the research setting, because I recognised that remaining objective throughout this study might not be a realistic goal. I also worked to remain aware of my responses to the processes while gathering information and analysing the data generated by the surveys, interviews and focus group discussion, by committing to a reflexive approach in the construction and analysis of this research.

Using the case study methodology to frame the appreciative inquiry allowed me to explore how MIT's policies and leadership practices support the intent of developing cultural awareness for academic staff. It also allowed me to find out if there are influences of that awareness on how staff work with their students. Because the intent of case study is to shed light on a phenomenon often larger than the actual case, "the objective is to build and test general causal theories about the social world on the basis of one or two cases" (Seawright & Gerring 2008, p. 295). 'Thick' descriptions (Geertz, 1973) are desirable in a case study because of the meaning and context they give to the case, bringing a depth to the data during analysis, therefore allowing the complexity of the research to be shown.

My case study was a study of just one case due to the constraints of this dissertation. The case study was bounded by placing it at one of MIT's three campuses and the staff and students with whom I worked in that campus. The location, however, was not the focus (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017). The point of using a single case study as my methodology was to explore the relationships between organisational intent and enactment by leadership and academic staff alongside cultural awareness in a specified setting. The use of a single case study approach helped me to find out on a small scale at MIT how students and staff perceive the cultural awareness of tertiary educators to be supported by leadership, and how that benefits academic staff in their classrooms. Using a variety of sources of information enabled me to look at multiple aspects of the phenomenon and each one contributed to my understanding of the research topic as a whole (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

### 3.3 Research setting

I have worked as a lecturer at MIT for eleven years. My understanding of academic staff matters such as balancing curriculum delivery with pastoral care while managing quality matters allows me to recognise many of the issues current staff and students face. The insights I have gained through my own experiences as an educator and as a student gives me some confidence in my role as quality support for academic staff, and as a researcher. Hopefully the outcomes of this research will help academic staff and leadership feel able to recognise and respond to cultural diversity within the bounds set by MIT. Staff's learning and relational conversations that come from this research could help the institute's staff to work together in ways that support their students' goals and aspirations (Gunter, 2006; Hohepa, 2013).

It was important to me that I conducted this study at my workplace because my desire to find out staff and student's perceptions cultural awareness at MIT came about during my teaching years at MIT. During the research period, I worked within the dual role of staff member and researcher. My study developed and was influenced by sets of meanings yielding insight and understanding of people's behaviours (Creswell, 2013; Mack, 2010), and reactions that could not be reached from another perspective. To that end, access permission was obtained from the MIT Ethics Committee. Any assumptions I made while gathering information were therefore bound to be

subjective, because not only did I bring my own knowledge and opinions, but so did my colleagues. As such, I needed to analyse the data in a manner appropriate to an appreciative inquiry.

Finding out what MIT's leadership practices are that build and support academic staff's cultural awareness helped to triangulate my awareness of relationships between leadership intent and the formation of cultural awareness in this institute. Because of the unique position I hold as an insider, I knew which strategies and approaches MIT uses to promote the institute's intentions for supporting cultural awareness with its academic staff, which I then referred to in the staff survey (Appendix B).

Mack (2010) contends that maintaining objectivity is important in order to work effectively within the constructivist paradigm. Since I had recognised that my assumptions were bound to be subjective, I needed to be transparent and truthful when analysing the data. I used reflexivity by reflecting on my past experiences, beliefs and expectations (Larrivee, 2000; Robertson, 2013) in tertiary education. By allowing those reflections to inform my further interactions, I was able to be transparent about my subjectivity, while focussing on what the participants shared with me. This approach helped me to take when making decisions as to my interactions with the participants and analysing the interviews, which in turn, enabled me to formulate my interpretations of the data more authentically.

### 3.4 Participants and participant eligibility

For the purposes of this research, the participant groups involved were educational leaders, academic staff and students. MIT is a place of cultural diversity, and as such, this research targeted the breadth of that diversity by finding out how cultural awareness is expressed and experienced at MIT, albeit from a small sample within one of MIT's three Campuses. MIT's physical position is in South Auckland, and half of the institute's students are Māori and Pacific, with 24% of staff claiming the same background (MITa, 2018). I wanted to work with the Institute's managers, lecturers and students so I could explore why they interact as they do within MIT's intent to support cultural awareness. Since this study was to look through the lenses of leadership, academic staff and students to gain their perspectives of what cultural awareness in the Polytechnic Institute means, I looked for links and overlaps with the

participants' experiences, thus constructing meaning around the thoughts and experiences that were shared with me.

Staff participants were initially selected through my professional network, on the basis of being representative of how they support cultural awareness within their roles. This method of selection is called purposive sampling (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2013), whereby not every member of the wider population (i.e. the whole of MIT) had the same opportunity to be included in the research sample. It allowed me to find and select people who could share representative knowledge of MIT that was of particular interest to me for this research topic.

Eligible staff were those who have worked at MIT since at least July 2018, included lecturing staff, their managers as well as academic and student support staff who specialise in teaching strategies for staff and study strategies for students. Eligible students had studied at MIT since at least July 2018. The time frame was set so that the participants would be able to draw on their knowledge and experiences of MIT's approaches over a minimal period of two semesters.

### 3.5 Data collection and data analysis

Staff and students were first invited to participate in an online survey (Appendix B: (b)), and of the staff who subsequently expressed their interest in participating in an interview, four were selected. Although the time frame to respond to the invitation was initially set at two weeks, the delay I experienced in gaining ethics approval from MIT meant that I extended the recruitment phase until I had been able to send out invitations for participation. I selected the staff interview participants to gain as broad a range of ethnicity, teaching backgrounds and subject areas as possible from the nine respondents interested in the interview stage. Since three of the four students who completed the survey indicated their interest in the second stage of the study, selecting students to participate in the focus group discussion ended up being unnecessary.

Data was gathered using three methods: survey, interviews and one focus group discussion (Appendix B). Collection of the data began when I sent out 30 invitations to complete my staff survey, which 13 people completed. Nine participants expressed



interest in taking further part, and in the end, four staff agreed to take part in an interview each, of which one was a Head of School, and the rest were academic staff members representing three Schools. Nine survey participants were women and four were men, six identified as being Pacific or Māori, and five others indicated that they were of New Zealand or similar cultural backgrounds (see Table 1 below).

Table 1: Staff Survey participant information

Gender	Ethnicity	Area of work	Teaching Level	Length of time at MIT
Male: 4	Māori: 4	Leader: 3	Degree: 5	Over two
Female: 9	Samoan: 2	Lecturer: 9	Certificate: 3	years: 7
	NZ European: 5	Staff Facing Support: 1	All levels: 1	3 semesters: 2
			No answer: 4	

Through rating scales and some open-ended questions, the survey revealed to some extent what participants thought (Cohen et al., 2013) about cultural awareness and influences on educational relationships for student success. I used the data collected from the survey to confirm some key topics for both the interview sessions and focus group discussions, which were explored further during the interviews and focus group discussion.

The interviews themselves were held after the semester break, and were spread over the space of four weeks, because of delays in communications during the break time. Scheduling the interview with the Head of School was challenging, and on the day, bad weather and heavy traffic caused this person to arrive late. The interview itself was intense and informative, as were the others.

While I was co-ordinating the staff interviews, I started recruiting students, which also proved to be challenging. Not only did I have to find a way to connect to them and generate interest in my research topic, I also had to take into account the end of term, so I was mindful not to put pressure on students during the assessment weeks. Even with the help of the Student Council, it was six weeks before I was able to make the survey link available to students, which came about after I was invited to present to a class who were preparing for their own research project. I had been invited to

introduce myself and my project to this class with the intention of recruiting participants. I helped them in return by discussing the recruitment process, and sharing my experiences developing the research documentation.

All four students taking part in the survey were women in their final stages of degree study – in fact one of them had just completed her study and had recently been employed at MIT by the time the focus group discussion took place. She was keen to participate since she was still enrolled as a student during the recruitment phase. On the day, two students participated in the focus group discussion. Student survey participant information is shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Student Survey participant information

Gender	Ethnicity	Study Level	Length of time at MIT
Male: 0 Female: 4	Māori: 1 Samoan: 1 NZ European: 2	Degree: 4	Over two years: 4

The role of MIT staff and students was central to the research because they shared their own experiences about what they found to be supportive for culturally aware educational relationships and academic success. I shared the transcripts back to the people participating in the interviews and focus group discussion, to confirm accuracy of recording. Participants were also offered a summary of the dissertation once the research is final, which is also a requirement of the MIT Ethics Committee. As a result, the participants might indirectly be seen as stakeholders due to the effects of any potential decisions made by the Institute as a result of the study's findings.

Because the research was an appreciative inquiry, the purpose of the study was to find out what is working well, so it was realistic to think that potential avenues for change arising from the research would have a positive effect for the institute. Building constructive relationships and recognising the place of those relationships, social responsibilities and equity of the parties in the research, helped me to foster positive interactions (Hudson, Milne, Reynolds & Smith, 2010) during the research with my participants as I planned and conducted this study.

I used Nvivo software which enabled me to make sense of the audio and written data obtained from the surveys, interviews and focus group discussion. While I was listening to staff participants during the interviews, I recognised recurring topics that were confirmed by the students during the focus group discussion. I began organising the selected data into coded sets (nodes) by selecting text relevant to the questions I asked my participants. These indexed sections (Elliott, 2018) were then coded again and gathered into subsets that I felt represented more concentrated collections of thoughts and examples of these thoughts. I gave each of these 'coded on' nodes (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013) a short description so I could remember my reasons for these labels (Appendix C) when writing the findings and discussion charter. Text analysis and grouping of the data in these nodes helped me to identify the main themes which were then examined for trends and patterns (Elliott, 2018; Bazeley & Jackson, 2009), highlighting how tertiary staffs' cultural awareness influences educational relationships and students' success.

The coding categories I initially set corresponded with the survey and interview questions, and I highlighted comments were that I felt were specific responses to the questions. Coding on from these sets of information, I broke them down into subsets and ran queries to find relationships between frequently recurring words and concepts that had been discussed by both staff and students. I also found the visual representations NVivo generated to be particularly helpful in giving me a more holistic overview of the sentiments that participants shared with me. Because I transcribed the four interviews and single focus group discussion myself, I became very familiar with the material. While preparing the transcriptions for analysis, I started confirming recurring ideas and words from the various data collection methods. Grouping these words and ideas into categories (coding) according to content, allowed me to discern patterns and recurrent words. Making queries using word searches helped me to pinpoint frequencies of key words within the various responses, and confirmed that the questions I had asked could develop into themes for analysis. Repeating themes included communication between staff and students, how leadership and staff showed support to students, and how leaders acknowledged their staff and students. Topics that resonated with me the most included the importance of clarity in communications; staff-student relationships and how people show they value these

they work with. For example, one student recounted how her class appreciated their Indian lecturer routinely wearing an All Black's jersey to class on game day.

### 3.6 Ethical Considerations

Because participant's values were included (Guba & Lincoln, 1994) in my research, it was fundamentally important to this constructivist methodology that I developed a strong ethical framework. While planning the research mechanisms, I needed to ensure that I respected the ethical positions of my participants, as well as maintaining good relations with them. It was also important that I remained conscious that "ethics is a matter of principled sensitivity to the rights of others" (Cavan, 1977, p 809). As Guba & Lincoln (1994), recognise, it was important that I made sure I could model some of the cultural awareness I sought to understand in my interactions with the participants, who came from diverse cultural backgrounds, and would have had their own expectations as to my approach when working with them. During the face to face sessions, I invited participants to introduce themselves in their traditional manner. Some of the participants appreciated my offer to share a *karakia* (short reflective phrase) at the beginning and end of the session to promote a thoughtful and open environment.

As the researcher, my own unique knowledge of the context in which this study was conducted meant I brought not only my own knowledge and paradigms with me, but also subjective opinions and prior knowledge. Using reflexivity by reflecting on my past experiences, beliefs and expectations (Larrivee, 2000; Robertson, 2013) in tertiary education, helped me to be transparent about my subjectivity, while focussing on what the participants shared with me. Rather than aiming for objectivity, I knew I would have to make careful decisions around my interactions with the participants and analysing the interviews and focus group discussions. By triangulating my research with the Heads of School, the educators and students, and how those interactions and analyses resonated with me as the researcher, I was able to formulate my interpretation of the data more authentically.

While the research progressed, the power balance between the researcher and participants was expected to shift, because of my own positioning in the research (Brooks, Riele, & Maguire, 2014). As a researcher, the power I held was over the information I gathered from leadership, academic staff and students, and how I planned to use it. At the same time, I realised that I was also somewhat vulnerable for the same reasons, that participant could have expected things from me in my research capacity, that would not be appropriate to share, such as sharing anecdotes and insights about staff or students with other participants, or with people outside of the research. By allowing the participants to join in the research on their own terms, I hoped to foster my participant's commitment to the study so that we were all able to learn from what findings came out of it (Bishop & Glynn, 2003).

The relationships of power I held were also affected by the diversity in culture and ethnic background, and the length of time participants may have been working or studying in the Institute. As such, the power was held in various contexts (Brooks et al., 2014) and by various people during the face to face sessions. It was important as the researcher that I remained mindful of the positive nature of an appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider et al., 2005), so I structured the interviews in such a way that participants' positive experiences could be highlighted, while maintaining their mana (power and respect) (Hudson et al., 2010). Because I have worked as an academic staff member at MIT for eleven years, I recognise many of the issues current staff and students face while at MIT. My understanding of academic staff matters such as balancing curriculum delivery with pastoral care while managing quality matters could have put me in a difficult position as a researching student at AUT. I recognised the possibility that I might encounter matters brought to me in my researching role by students that I may have felt obliged to bring to the attention of leaders at MIT, or that I might discover things that I should act on in my role as an employee at MIT.

Because of how they know me in my role at MIT, participants did sometimes want to discuss problems they had been struggling with. I did my best to resolve these instances by directing their attention back to the more positive aspects of the issue they were describing, which was mainly successful. This approach did lead to some in-depth discussion, and some relief from the participants when they realised that they could identify what was actually working for them. This was especially so with regards

to the improvement to some of MIT's strategies over time, as discussed in Chapter Five.

Ethics approval was granted by the AUT and MIT ethics committees, in accordance with the research guidelines for both organisations (Appendix A). Gaining ethics approval from MIT allowed me as a member of staff at MIT studying towards a qualification from another institution, to carry out research with MIT staff and students. As the researcher and as an employee of the Institute, I was able to organise access to the staff, students and relevant organisational policy documents required to support this study.

### 3.7 Issues of trustworthiness

So that they could be confident of their privacy, interviews (Appendix B) were conducted with the staff participants. Although an interview did not guarantee me of gaining the entirety of the truth that I may have hoped for (Cohen et al., 2013), in this case I felt that the benefits of having one on one conversations outweighed the drawbacks. By asking open-ended questions that invited the contributors to give considered responses by talking about their experiences and perceptions, I tried to encourage a positive interview experience that helped the participants to feel their contributions were valuable to the research.

One focus group discussion (Appendix B) was held with two students. Students in particular may feel more comfortable or confident by being interviewed along with their peers. Although I introduced myself as a researcher and a student at AUT, I was recognisable as an employee at MIT, however, I was confident that a group of students feeling more relaxed because they were together, would yield more detailed information than they might have as individuals.

Consent forms (Appendix B) were read and signed by participants at the beginning of the interviews and the focus group discussion. They included a confidentiality clause and information describing the data storage protocols. In the findings, identifiers have been used instead of pseudonyms or participant's own names, in order to protect their identities as much as possible, also because of the small sample size. The consent

forms also reminded participants of their right to confidential treatment as well as the importance of respect for each other's privacy.

Because I work within the institute I researched in, I was obliged to be discreet when conducting sessions with the participants. I assured the participants that anything they shared for the purposes of the research would be treated with discretion, and that their participation would not affect their work or study circumstances in any way. Participants were informed that any recorded information that might identify them will be stored securely at AUT, and destroyed after six years.

### 3.9 Summary

Framing the research around an appreciative inquiry meant that I could look for what was working well when finding out about cultural awareness at MIT. I was aware that this could be seen as a sensitive topic, and so I made a conscious decision to look for stories that would enhance the discussion and look for the good in people's experiences. The goal was to collect narratives illustrating what works for both staff and students, so those experiences could be built upon and show understanding (Creswell, 2013; Mack, 2010) rather than uncovering distress and negativity.

Using a case study within the appreciative inquiry gave me appropriately bounded limitations (Seawright & Gerring, 2008) within which to work, as well as a clear and achievable goal, which was necessary due to the limited scope of this research. The structure of the activities that participants engaged in allowed me to acknowledge the relationships they had within MIT and with each other, so that they could be themselves and we could build authentic relationships within the scope of the study. Ultimately, such recognition allowed me also to work in an ethical manner by respecting who the participants were, and their place at MIT.

Being an employee of MIT while presenting myself as a student of AUT during the data collection stages allowed me the flexibility to adjust my own perspective when representing myself as a researcher. It also allowed me to navigate the MIT environment with confidence. Moreover, having ethical approval from both organisations to conduct my research ensured that the research had a clear structure.

Having the support of a well-structured research plan meant that the study could be conducted with integrity, as long as I remembered that I was representing myself as a student and researcher, not as a staff member of MIT (Brooks et al., 2014). In doing so, my way of working with the participants remained consciously respectful (Hudson et al., 2010) through my awareness that I was not quite on 'home ground' at MIT while working in my research capacity. It was also helpful to have a smaller scope of participant engagement, as that allowed me to become confident in my role as a researcher while mostly working with participants that I knew and respected as people belonging to MIT.



## Chapter 4: Findings

### 4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this research was to discover and share what leaders are doing at MIT to support an environment where staff can show cultural awareness towards their students, and what students experience. As described in Chapter Three, data was gathered from Heads of School, lecturing staff, and student support staff through a combination of online survey and individual interviews. A survey was also sent to student participants, some of whom participated in a focus group discussion. The sample range recommended by the peer reviewer during the research proposal development stages was to survey a maximum of 30 people, to interview no more than four members of staff, and to limit the focus group discussion to four students. In the end, thirteen staff responded to my thirty email requests, three of whom were leaders. Nine staff showed interest in an interview, and four students completed their online survey, of whom two attended the focus group discussion. These response rates enabled me to manage the data for analysis without becoming overwhelmed by volume.

The table below shows the labels I used to identify the participants instead of using their real names. Using a code for each participant and removing any reference to School name and subject area further removed the risk of identification by anyone from MIT reading the outcomes of this research.

Table 3: Participant Identifiers

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Staff Survey Participant</b>	<b>Student Survey Participant</b>	<b>Interview Head of School</b>	<b>Interview Staff</b>	<b>Focus Group Discussion with Students</b>
Identifier	StffS1 - 13	StdtS1 - 4	IH1	IP1 - 3	FGD1 - 2

## 4.2 Identifying themes

The participants' responses to the questions they were asked during the surveys and contributions to the interviews with staff, and the student focus group discussion helped me to identify the themes below (Appendices B, Tools):

- Factors that support cultural awareness at MIT
- Strategy and Policy communication and influences
- How staff show cultural awareness
- Relationships: staff and students

The survey findings are noted first, after which results from the interviews and focus group discussions are detailed within the themes. The surveys were used to collect some initial thoughts from staff and students on their perceptions of the mechanisms that they felt support and acknowledge cultural awareness at MIT. The responses helped me to finalise the questions for the face to face sessions, and to open the discussions by sharing the findings from the surveys.

## 4.3 Survey results

Both surveys began with my definition of cultural awareness to help the participants consider cultural awareness as they completed the survey. The surveys consisted of a variety of question formats including choices from a list of strategies, open ended responses and ratings on a scale of 1-5 stars, with 5 stars showing the highest rating.

### *Staff Survey*

This online survey was sent to leaders, academic staff, and support staff. The pie chart from the survey shows that breakdown of staff's areas of work (Figure 2):

Figure 2: Breakdown of staff participants

7. Please choose the area of work that matches your position the best

[More Details](#)

● Leader	3
● Lecturer	9
● Student facing support	0
● Staff facing support	1



Staff were asked to rate three aspects of how they experienced cultural awareness at MIT on a scale of 1-5, 5 being the most well supported and 1 the least well supported, as shown in the screenshot of the survey results below in Figure 3:

Figure 3: How staff rated their experiences

9. How well do you feel cultural awareness is supported by MIT's strategies and policies?

[More Details](#)

13

Responses



3.31 Average Rating

10. Thinking back to when your first months working at MIT, what was your overall impression of cultural awareness by people in your area?

[More Details](#)

13

Responses



2.85 Average Rating

11. How well do you feel your own cultural needs and expectations are met while working at MIT?

[More Details](#)

13

Responses



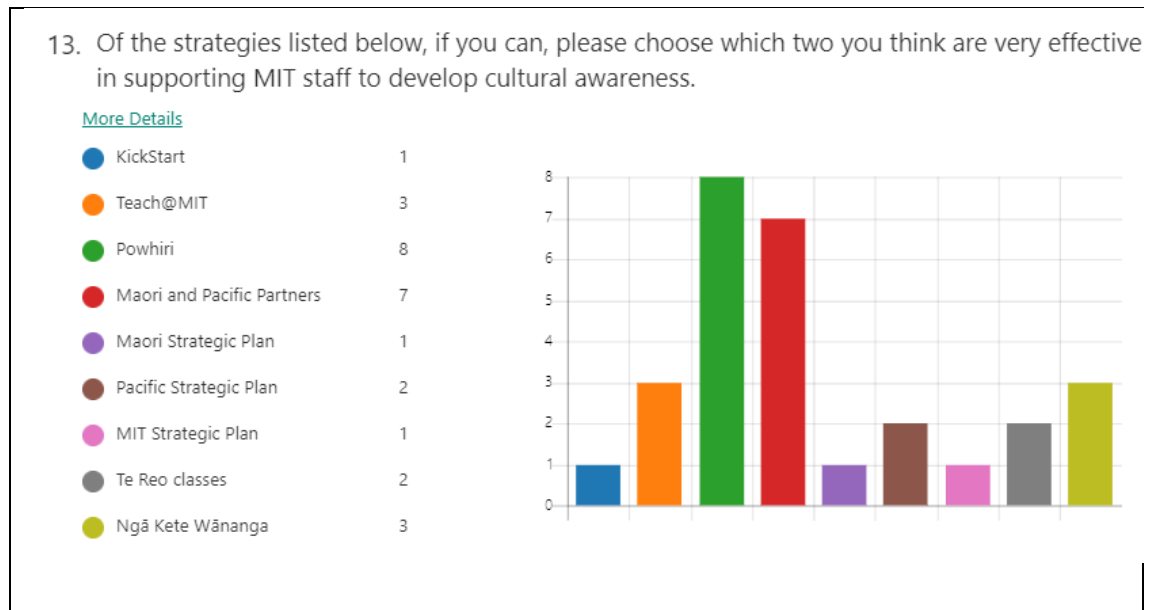
3.38 Average Rating

The bar charts below give a visual indication of each respondent's rating for these questions. They do not show any further details such as gender, ethnicity or teaching area. As rating response example, Question 9 asked how well staff felt cultural awareness was supported by MIT strategies and policies. Of the thirteen respondents, four rated 4/5 stars and nine staff rated the policies at 3/5. This averaged out and

[illegible]

The survey results also indicated that while they were aware of MIT's marae Nga Kete Wananga, the Strategic Plan and the powhiri, both leadership and academic staff identified inconsistent familiarity with the Institute's Māori and Pacific Strategic plans. Furthermore, leadership and academics were significantly less aware of the current academic staff induction processes. These strategies and procedures have all been implemented since the academic restructure was executed in 2018, however they were acknowledged as a validation of staff's approaches and ways of working (Figure 5) to show cultural awareness in their schools.

Figure 5: Effective strategies



Staff saw the powhiri and Māori and Pacific Partners (Partners are part of MIT’s recently implemented collaborative approach to team work and leadership) as being the two most effective strategies because they are both direct forms of engaging in culturally aware ways. “It allows for gaining more understanding of cultural practices and norms through sharing” (StffSP13), and they allow “the participant to reflect on their experiences and practice skills” (StffSP12).

#### *Student Survey*

The student participants were all women in their final year of study. By the time the focus group discussion was held, one participant had just completed her degree and was recently employed by MIT. We agreed to proceed with her input because of the short time of employment during the time she was involved with this research. The survey questions were in a similar format to the staff survey, and it also generated pie charts and star ratings. Three students were from the same school. Overall, student responses were positive. Had each question been answered, the response rate might have been different, as questions 9 and 10 were not answered by all participants. These questions asked students about their initial contact and experiences with staff during the enrolment process and first weeks in class. Three of the four students had quite a lot to do with their administrator during the enrolment process, and felt reasonably well supported during that time. All four students felt that

their lecturers showed cultural awareness in the first weeks in class (Figure 6). The anonymous nature of the survey meant I could not find out why some questions were not completed.

Figure 6: Student's early impressions of how cultural awareness was displayed

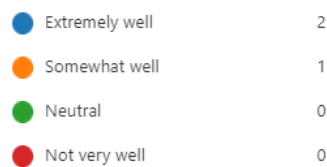
9. During the enrolment process, did you have a lot of contact with the admin / AskMe team?

[More Details](#)



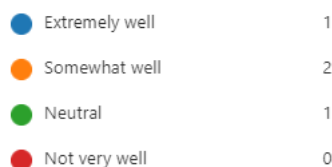
10. How well do you feel the admin / AskMe people showed that they recognised and responded appropriately to you and your cultural background?

[More Details](#)



14. Thinking back to your first three weeks in class, how well do you feel that lecturers at MIT showed cultural awareness?

[More Details](#)



As in the staff survey, students were asked to rate aspects of how they experienced cultural awareness at MIT on a scale of 1-5, 5 being the highest rating, as shown in the screenshot of the survey results below (Figure 7):

Figure 7: How students rated their experiences

15. How well do you feel your cultural needs and expectations have been met while studying at MIT?

[More Details](#)

4

Responses



3.25 Average Rating

16. In general, do you feel that MIT works in culturally aware ways to help support you while you study?

[More Details](#)

4

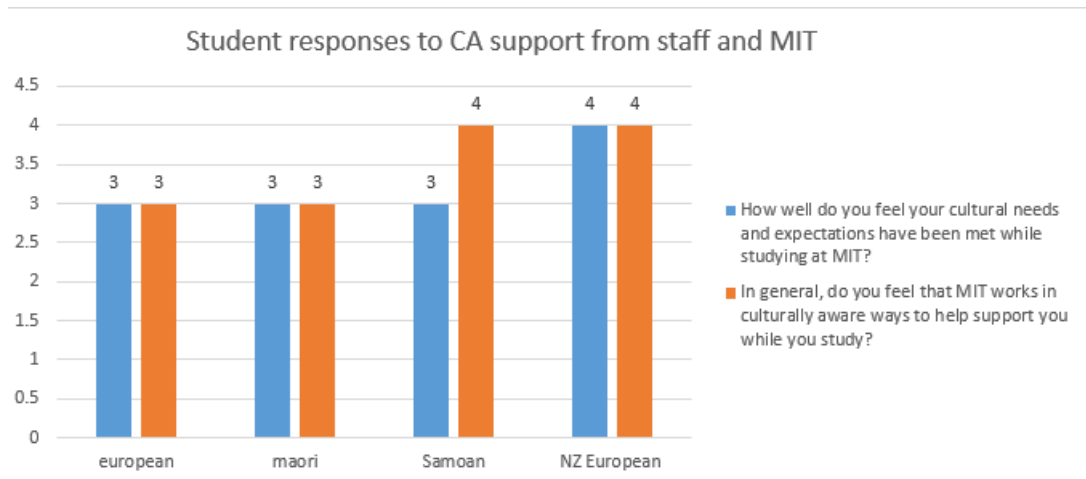
Responses



3.50 Average Rating

The bar charts below (Figure 8) give a visual indication of each respondent's rating for these questions. Question 15 asked how well students felt their cultural need and expectations were supported by MIT staff. Of the four respondents, three rated 4/5 stars and one student rated MIT's response to them at 3/5, averaging out at 3.25/5. This response is 9.2% higher than student's impressions of how MIT as an organisation works with them in culturally aware ways for Question 16.

Figure 8: How well students felt culturally aware support was shown by staff



The survey results also indicated that students felt welcomed by MIT during the powhiri. They appreciated meeting our kaumatua (Marae elder) and one stated that she felt “no matter what culture we were – we had a place at MIT” (StdSP4).

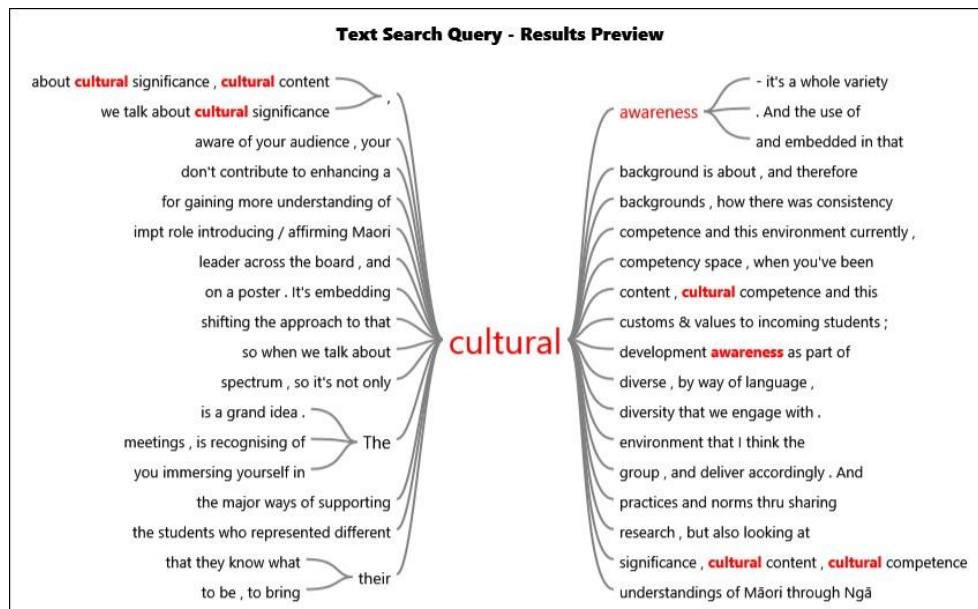
#### 4.4 Analysing the data

The focus group discussion with students was my last face to face contact with participants. During this session I was able to confirm ideas such as the value of relationships and recognising individuals as highlighted by the staff during the interviews. I triangulated these ideas further using NVivo, as discussed in Chapter Three, Methodology. These topics included culture, relationships, support and strategy.

##### *Factors that support cultural awareness at MIT*

This theme was identified when I explored elements from the data showing what participants said they felt support cultural awareness. Figure 9 below is an example of such text search query for the word 'cultural' from within the coding set 'Cultural Awareness' that had been coded on from the initial coding exercise. Snapshots like this allowed me to see the overlaps in the relationships between staff and students' responses to the questions as I analysed the data.

Figure 9: Text search query on the word 'cultural', staff comments



Cultural awareness that enables staff and students to develop learning relationships that help students succeed academically, can be described as being true and sincere. Both staff and student participants were certain that feeling valued and experiencing genuine acts of caring and support in their interactions would contribute to good relationships, which added to students' confidence and success.



*Value the staff, take care of the staff, acknowledge them, build them up. Because this is what I believe; when you feel good about yourself and when you feel MIT as an organisation values ... you go out of your way (IP2)*

Students said that feeling cared for gave them the confidence to keep going even when things got tough and they had to work extra hard to complete their courses:

*If there was an issue that came up at home with the family he would always assist and give extra pastoral care - or I needed an extension he would say "just apply", so - very accommodating for the needs. (FGD2)*

One staff member took this idea further when they stated that

*the greatest positive thing out of all of this is, that the staff members are still focused on student success, and that they feel that we still succeed with our students. We get good results and our students get good jobs. That's the best thing. I mean graduation is the best thing since sliced bread. (IP3)*

The Head of School discussed the institute's Partner model, and explained that "having an DCE (Deputy Chief Executive) Pacific and an DCE Māori provides awareness all the time that there is a focus there". Added to this acknowledgment of the partnership model where the Māori and Pacific Partners are led by the DCEs, was academic staff's ability to access the Māori and Pacific Partners so they could confirm and build on their pedagogy, but this leader was also mindful that

*you don't want to say 'there's Pacific, that is a thing' because then it becomes 'other'. You don't want to say 'there's Māori, that is a thing' because then it becomes 'other' (IH1),*

indicating that it would be preferable to give staff knowledge that allows for

*a subtle shift in a way that students engage through presentation, or soft skills, or maybe a subtle shift in the way information is delivered. But I shouldn't be able to pick it up. It should just be an organic growth from how that staff member delivers (IH1).*

Staff wanted to know that the leadership and management were authentic in their valuing lecturers as academics. Examples of value included effective training. Academic staff would be taught in the same way and for the same outcome. Resources such as working internet connections and screens in the classrooms were seen as enablers for

teaching, that allowed staff to concentrate on building culture and relationships with their students.

One student discussed how she felt her lecturer supported and acknowledged her culture when she shared that “Everybody was the same as far as they were concerned, and culture didn't come into any of it” (FGD1). The second student’s experience was different in that she was given specific strategies so that her assignment group could recognise how they worked in a group situation. This gave the whole group the confidence to try overcoming the diverse challenges they had as local and international students working together. The students both felt well supported and able to ask their lecturer for help when needed. The student participants felt genuinely cared for and acknowledged by their lecturers, indicating the authenticity of cultural awareness students experienced from their lecturers.

#### *Strategy and policy communication and influences*

Both staff and students acknowledged the turbulent times of the past three years including the 2017 shift to quarter delivery whereby students would enrol into a form of rapid learning taking eight weeks of study instead of the more traditional 16-week semester of study. Another topic of discussion was the recent restructuring of academic and administrative hierarchies (2018 and 2019). The participants all talked about the logistical challenges with having powhiri at another campus where the Marae is located. The physical separation gave some participants the feeling that they were less spiritually connected to the Marae as well as the rest of MIT, located four kilometres away in the suburb of Otara, than they had been in the past. They felt that internal communications are not always cohesive. Students were not shy to bring up their concerns at the lack of information from leadership in the past, including the shift from 17-week semesters to the 8-week quarter delivery in 2017. They were also proud to see their feedback implemented through the administrative restructuring that brought about a one stop shop for student enrolments, pastoral care and financial transactions in 2019. “With the Reretahi Project which is AskMe! now, they had a lot of our feedback in it, so that made me feel valued as a student” (FGD2).

One staff member believed that “the system should be supporting the people because it's the people that come .... with that culture” (IP2).

Staff thought that the Strategic Plan, and the Māori and Pacific Strategic Plans were good plans, and leaderships' communication of progress could strengthen the wider organisation's implementation of the Plans. They agreed that the Executive Leadership team could send more frequent and consistent messages that would enable the Schools to take a more cohesive approach to implementing the Strategic Plan in their own areas of focus. One such example related to the sharing of School information and data analyses regarding priority groups (Māori, Pacific and under 25) that the Heads had not been told was being collected. The Head participant felt that an informed approach would allow for collated data results to be discussed meaningfully with academic staff. Articulating key accountabilities showing how they could be met, and keeping staff informed on how they could contribute to those accountabilities would also strengthen staff's connections to MIT's current strategic goals. This participant also felt that support should come

*from the Partners, I think that that's the main conduit between what's happening at the larger institutional level and what's happening at the coalface... there just needs to be a really clear understanding of what the Partners do, and how they build those relationships, because otherwise they just become a figurehead (IH1)*

Interestingly, although teaching staff were well aware of government's strategies for priority group students and expected success rates, they sometimes showed little connection to, or awareness of the accountabilities required by the institute's recent procedural updates to professional development and induction for new teaching staff: "the perception is that it's very good that they have these policies but ... what is accentuated is the pass rate. Why didn't you get the 85%?" (IP3), indicating a possible shift in focus area by leadership that may not have filtered through to academic staff. By the same token, this interviewee did recognise the value in MIT's Certificate in Tertiary Teaching which has "been beefed up over the years, and it has a sound structure, and I think it is a grand idea" (IP3). He also appreciated the knowledge gained from the courses on Te Tiriti o Waitangi that MIT requires all teaching staff to complete within two years of their employment. Staff therefore mostly recognised the value in MIT's strategies and policies, even if they were not always up to date with the latest changes, while students were proud of their involvement in some of MIT's more significant changes in recent approaches to the student experience. Staff were also

quite open in sharing their opinions on whether the institute shared pedagogy, good practice and an organisation-wide approach to cultural awareness effectively. When reminded of the annual teaching symposium and excellence awards, they were sometimes unaware that these events had taken place, and put that down to their workload and other commitments making it difficult at times to keep up with MIT-wide communications on these topics. The diversity in delivery models also tended to make institute wide sharing of good practice on a wide scale a logistical challenge.

#### *How staff show cultural awareness*

The majority of staff identified the powhiri, and the Māori Partner and Pacific Partner staff members as the most effective strategies to support staff at MIT in developing their cultural awareness because of the personal nature of these interactions. Students said that staff using their own cultural knowledge and experience to relate to their students helped them feel valued and respected. Furthermore, lecturers who showed understanding of the pressures from home and customs faced by students, and gave support as well as boundaries that helped their students succeed, were deeply appreciated. Boundaries included lecturers ensuring students remained within the academic limits of their courses by giving them information regarding processes and time limits for extensions of submission dates for assessments. One student had to attend a traditional Samoan funeral and missed out on two weeks of class during an eight-week quarter. The support she received from her lecturer helped her to pass the course.

*I felt cared for, I felt secure in my life. I mean, the end goal is to finish your study, and when things like that happen it can make you feel anxious, and usually things happen in multitudes. Everything goes wrong at once, so yeah, it made me feel secure, and it made me feel loyal you know, to MIT, sort of like it's "they care for me, so I'm going to care for them back (FGD2)*

One staff member shared how *pepeha* (a way of introducing yourself in Māori by sharing the places you come from and the people you are connected to) can put students at ease and helps to break the ice when getting to know their new lecturer

*it's all about pepeha, some people .... share their pepeha, and that gets a lot of interesting reactions from the students themselves. You .... hear them talking about it afterwards and saying 'hey I had this' umm, you*

*know, if you had Māori students going 'that's cool, I didn't realise you were like that, where you come from' and they say 'your canoe is a BMW' [laughter] (IP3)*

Further to this, staff created the space for their students to connect to each other.

*getting to know the students and then encouraging them to be, to bring their cultural diverse [sic], by way of language, by way of interaction, their values and beliefs, and how they communicate with each other, and at the same time sharing (IP2)*

Students valued receiving constructive feedback from their lecturers. One student explained how good it made her feel, that her lecturers took note of what she was doing. She also shared how proud she was of her successes and wanted others to attend MIT so they could have a similar supporting learning journey.

*It was really helpful for those who needed it. If you had an issue, you knew you could go and talk to them, and they would always help you, not give you the answers, but help you out and point you in the right direction (FGD1)*

Staff told how awareness of culture is shared in practical ways such as “the way ... we open meetings and we close meetings is recognising .... that we engage with cultural awareness” (IH1), and lecturers including Māori and Pacific organisations as case studies in their teaching. Working as a team to identify strategies that would best help students, and drawing upon each other’s cultural strengths helped to unify one teaching team with a high proportion of staff new to adult teaching.

*the DCEs Māori and Pasfika ... work together with the CE [MIT Chief Executive] to make sure that the Strategy or the three strands work together. And I notice that. (IP2)*

Culture was also recognised by staff and students as comprising of more than ethnicity and nationality, although these two factors were significant topics during the interviews and focus group discussion. Sometimes the discussions turned to ‘inclusivity or diversity across a whole variety of different spectrums .... we have a much broader range of students from different groups than we have ever had in the past” (IH1). The Head recognised that clear structures of support for people of diverse gender identities are still being put in place at MIT. This participant acknowledged that to

discuss this topic more fully would require another conversation at another time. Students also touched on the possibility of culture representing family, as well as changes in the cultures of their classrooms and campuses. One student transitioned into the eight-week delivery and a rapid learning model, while the other student moved from Otara Campus to Manukau Campus with her whole School. This student lost her main lecturers after the academic restructure in 2018 and reported significant changes to the class culture: “we're still a class now, we are still studying, but there's not that closeness and togetherness that we used to have” (FGD1). All in all, culture was seen to be influenced by people's behaviours as much as organisational expectations.

#### *Relationships: staff and students*

Relationships played a big part in the conversations with all participants. For the students this began with their powhiri onto Nga Kete Wananga where one student stated that “the welcoming gave me a sense of reassurance that it doesn't matter where I come from, we all have a place at MIT”. Their lecturers used humour to help make students feel more at ease with each other. Students valued other for their ability to treat every student the same, “and culture didn't come into any of it” (FGD1). Learning about cultural perceptions, mannerisms and acceptable behaviours on different culture was another positive experience for one of the students. She felt it was a very strong learning component. The lecturer who stood out for her “always kept a very professional relationship, but at the same time, made an effort to get to know the student” (FGD2). This lecturer was very successful in creating unity in the group work by teaching the class how to work effectively in groups through self-knowledge and strategies to work with different personalities.

The value brought to students by the Māori and Pacific student advisors was recognised by both students, even if the practical support was perceived to be somewhat unevenly distributed where the Pacific Support was more proactive. The support given by MIT in difficult times was recognised as a highlight during the Christchurch mosque shootings in March 2019, when a remembrance area was set up on the campus so students could continue to pay their respects after a two-minute silence, which was appreciated by both students. The more recent measles outbreak in September 2019 was brought up as an example of MIT's commitment to look after

students, with a quick response to look after the 71 students that needed to be immunised. This was completed within 24 hours. These occasions were both described as being “a time for togetherness” (FGD2), which improved relationships between students and support services.

The students found clarity from MIT leadership was sometimes lacking when structural changes such as the 2017 change to eight-week delivery and the Campus move in 2018 were being planned. “To understand one another you need to be open and clear” (FGD2). They felt that more frequent communications explaining the rationale behind the change in delivery mode, and more planned support to transition into the new Campus environment would have been welcomed. The students shared how much more consultation they felt had been taken into consideration which resulted in a more approachable and responsive administration team (AskMe!) in 2019. Suggestions that were implemented from the consultations with students included the one-stop shop mentioned earlier, and a more open seating arrangement. The students now experienced a more open and friendly relationship with the enrolment staff, and a modernised environment which felt more welcoming than before. This was in contrast to some of the staff participants who felt that the newly implemented AskMe! required time for refinement so that academic staff and students could get better information and support when needed.

When staff were asked what were the greatest enablers of cultural awareness, they answered with people, visibility, support and powhiri. People talked about connections to the community where the students themselves came from. Increased visibility and support through the partnership model implemented by MIT’s leadership sent a strong focus and awareness to staff and students, the community and relevant industry. Some of the academic staff felt the partnership model was still gathering momentum and its effectiveness was somewhat dependent on the individual Partner’s approach to working with staff. Equally, the Partners brought support by enabling staff and students to access the information and tools where needed for culturally aware teaching and learning. Working in these different ways seemed to bring people together for positive outcomes. “I think that it helps us be on the same page from the very beginning of anything as we develop a new programme or a new system” (IP2). One staff member described the welcoming on to the Marae by the *kaumatua* (male

Māori elder) as a good starting point to build relationships with new students and staff:

*Papa Ku, he made it feel like, you know, 'hi guys I'm your friendly uncle. anytime you want to have a chat, come in and have a chat'.... our international students were quite blown away by it. I think ... they felt ... this is a different sort of place to what they're used to. And I think the powhiri is probably one of the major ways of supporting cultural awareness. (IP3)*

Another staff member talked about the need for enrolled students to balance their study challenges when facing responsibilities and strong cultural ties. As her students progressed, they expressed their gratitude for the understanding their lecturers showed them. The lecturer shared this ethos about her own mentor and the influence that this relationship had on her ability to respond to her students:

*when you have support from someone .... you feel valued yourself, you feel acknowledged. It kind of fills you up .... I think we're also making that effort to understand each other .... it builds up your confidence and you can just go and give your all to students .... they're responding to me; I'm responding to them. You know, it is like a dance. We dance together (IP2)*

#### 4.5 Summary

The findings show that within this small sample of participants there was a consistently steady message that educational relationships work well in an environment of open communication that informs and supports staff and students. Culture does not have to be directly singled out to encourage respect and success in an academic environment, but it does play an important part when staff and students are getting to know each other. When staff and students are able to acknowledge the places people come from, and respect the differences in approaches to interactions for learning, genuine educational relationships can enhance academic success.



## Chapter 5: Discussion

### 5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this appreciative inquiry was to find out and share leadership practices that support an environment where staff implement culturally aware practices, and to find out what students experience. In order to conduct this research, a small sample of leadership, academic staff and students from Manukau Institute of Technology participated in surveys, interviews and a focus group discussion to gather data. It is important to remember that the focus of this study was to find out how staff and students perceive the support offered them by the institute which would help me to analyse their positive experiences. From time to time, however, the participants shared some thoughts and opinions which were not so affirmative. These findings have also been taken into consideration in relation to the literature.

In this chapter I have outlined the main findings as they relate to the literature on how cultural awareness is supported at MIT by showing how the study has answered the research question and sub questions:

What are leaders doing in a Polytechnic to support an environment where staff implement Ministry of Education and Institute policies to show cultural awareness and where the students experience cultural awareness?

- What are students experiencing?
- What are staff perceptions of their own and others' cultural awareness?
- What are the leaders' perceptions of how cultural awareness is supported at the Institute?

The limitations of my research, and possibilities for further exploration of how cultural awareness is experienced in a Tertiary Education Organisation concludes this chapter.

### 5.2 Discussion

My findings show that the staff and students who took part in this research acknowledged the value of an institute-wide approach towards recognising equitable conduct as being important to educational relationships that contribute to academic

success. The participants all agreed that sharing of traditional culture including powhiri and karakia were central components of the successful organisational strategies at MIT that promoted cultural awareness, because they were seen as hands-on ways to practice cultural norms through sharing. In keeping with the literature, it seemed important to the participants of my study that they were appreciated and recognised as valued members of the staff and student bodies at MIT. My research contributes to a small body of evidence that the support provided by leaders of a tertiary education organisation in New Zealand has a strong influence on staff's approaches to, and students' experiences of, cultural awareness.

#### *What are students experiencing?*

The support students received from their lecturers and how they experienced cultural awareness seemed to be an important factor to their success. Based on comments by one of the students, the findings appear to show that experienced lecturers may give more cohesive support to students, and connect with them more easily than some newer staff. An important way to get students and teaching staff in tune with each other educationally is called dialogue teaching (Bain, 2004). As discussed in Chapter Two, dialogue teaching that elicits deeper engagement is encouraged when educators establish ways to work together with their students. This approach appears to corroborate other literature promoting effective student - teacher relationships (Bishop & Berryman, 2010; Gay, 2000; Santamaría, et al., 2016). It also appears to confirm a need for professional development allowing academic staff to build their confidence to teach effectively, which in turn can help improve student success (Prebble et al., 2004) because students feel supported and acknowledged by their lecturers. As I stated when explaining my position in the research in Chapter One, I found that getting to know my students and being able to engage with them on their own terms was an important element for students' academic success. I had not understood this well myself, until I completed my own professional development as an educator of adults and became able to recognise some of the challenges my own colleagues experienced where they did not have similar knowledge bases to mine (Davis, et al., 2010; MoE 2013; Robinson & Lai, 2010).

Student participants were clear about their feelings on the positive effects culturally aware behaviours by staff at MIT have on their success as students. One of the

students discussed her appreciation of lecturers who treated everyone in the same way, regardless of their culture. Her description did not appear to be in keeping with Leach's (2011) description of the 'universal' teaching position that tends to focus on the 'humanity' of students rather than their cultural position, which does not appear to be a particularly supportive way of working with students. Conversely, this student seemed to feel that her lecturer's years of experience in education met the needs of the culturally diverse students in her class when she challenged her students to achieve high academic standards. This approach is known to be appreciated by Māori and Pacific students (Bishop, 2010; Tangihaere & Twiname, 2011). The same student said that she felt valued by her lecturers, who continued to share knowledge after the lecturers had left MIT. This follow-up behaviour is consistent with the bonds that can be established by using culturally responsive teaching approaches as described by Larke (2013), King Miller (2015) and Ladson-Billings (1995).

Students shared their perspective of appreciating MIT leadership and staff, who showing their concern for students' success through aspects such as showing compassion by pronouncing names correctly and sharing culturally important rituals, and giving practical assistance to students during times of stress. For example, help given by MIT to students during the measles outbreak was particularly appreciated. These responses are echoed in New Zealand studies which acknowledge that culturally responsive pedagogies raised levels of teaching and student outcomes for students of different cultural backgrounds (Bishop & Glynn, 2003; Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh, & Teddy, 2007). It was unclear from the student who appreciated her lecturers treating everyone the same, what cultural practises her lecturers used within the classroom, and it would have been beneficial to this study to find that out.

The students indicated that they appreciated being kept informed when significant changes were to take place at MIT. It became clear that communications and changes needed to be carefully considered by MIT leadership in order to allow students to feel involved and cared for throughout the process. From their perspective, the students liked to be told why changes were being planned, and they shared that they would have liked more support when some of the changes were implemented. Examples where more communication would have been helpful included the change to the quarter system and coping with rapid learning in 2017, as well as the move from Otara

to Manukau in 2018. In cases where students said they successfully processed the changes to their circumstances, they sometimes found their own ways to construct the knowledge they required (Mezirow, 2000), in relation to their familiarity of the learning environment they had come from. How MIT staff informed and supported their students' learning could be identified through the assistance provided that would help students adapt to the new environment (Prebble et al., 2004), and subsequently be able to learn the skills they needed to succeed in society (Ladson-Billings, 1995). The students also described how having targeted support and workshops to attend could have helped many students cope better with the transitions, and settle into the new routine. They would have liked some more clearly planned approaches to major changes that were implemented. In 2019, MIT offers students a range of resources in its public-facing website that they can easily access. These resources are designed to help students succeed in their study. It is not clear however, whether these resources were available in 2017 and 2018, nor was it clear how many staff members and students knew of them at the time this research was being conducted. Prebble et al. (2004) also identified a gap in research student support in tertiary study. While my research has not focused on the effectiveness of support services at MIT, the findings do contribute to the wider field with regards to how students respond positively towards during times of change.

Changes in the culture of some classes occurred after the major events discussed in the findings. The changes from the semester to quarter delivery, and the 2018 academic restructure saw the loss of many lecturing staff. The student participants did not always know the reasons for the changes, but they did notice changes in the culture of some of their classes as after the changes were implemented and new teaching staff came into the institute. It could be argued that my student participants were using critical self-development in this part of the focus group discussion reminiscent of Larrivee's (2000) reflective processes and Timperley et al.'s (2014) Spiral of Inquiry, in their recognition of their lecturer's engagements with them. The responses students shared reiterate the importance of establishing effective learning relationships that can lead to student success (Bain, 2004; Bishop, 2010; Gay, 2000; King Miller, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 1995). Furthermore, my research corroborates that how major changes are handled by a TEO can have an impact on students' learning

experiences. My study also highlights the importance of maintaining a teaching framework that encourages students from diverse cultural backgrounds to remain engaged (Airini et al., 2011). It appears from the findings that lecturers worked hard to support students at MIT, sometimes under challenging circumstances.

One of the students shared her perspective of having been involved with the AskMe! project to improve student experiences with the enrolment process, and she shared how important it was to her that she had been able to influencing the outcome for positive change. She discussed how pleased she was to have helped create a more friendly and approachable environment for new students to get organisational support when they needed it. This approach to having student involvement with new strategies is in line with Gay's (2000) way of collaborating with students to establish esteem, empathy and equity. Leadership working with students to achieve better outcomes is an important element of showing cultural awareness as stated by Bishop and Glynn, (2003) and Tangihaere & Twiname (2011) because students feel included and valued. These researchers argue for creating an environment that can help ensure that awareness of culture is embraced and upheld while showing respect for students. The inclusion of students to contribute to change projects could be a good approach for the institute to continue with. A difficulty may arise, however, from the perspective where some academic staff shared their thoughts that this project was not very successful. This was because from the staff's perspective, they seemed to find it was more difficult to get students enrolled in the right courses, and to get students the right help, than before the changes.

*What are staff perceptions of their own and other's cultural awareness?*

Staff members appeared to appreciate MIT's marae and the powhiri because they felt these were important ways of expressing an awareness of Māori culture, for example, when welcoming international students to MIT. Showing cultural awareness in this way, expresses a focus by MIT leadership to make sure that staff develop knowledge of what students need to succeed (Dreaver & Chiaroni, 2009; MoE, 2012; Mugisha, 2013). MIT's long-term organisational strategy of introducing cultural awareness to staff and students through the sharing of cultural customs including the powhiri, has proven its success over the years. It is likely to continue its success, given that the Māori and Pacific Partners and the strategic plans have strengthened the institute's focus towards

a more conscious incorporation of culture (MIT, 2018) into its daily work. Bishop, (2010) and Tangihaere & Twiname (2011) show clear reasons to continue supporting the development of cultural awareness. An example is the commitment by MIT leadership and staff to maintain existing ways of establishing staff and student relationships which could most likely enhance the cultural awareness shown to students at MIT. The delivery of consistent staff professional development should help improve outcomes for priority learners (Coolbear, 2012; Jenkin, 2016; Suddaby, 2019) as long as academic staff continue recognising cultural awareness in themselves and in others, which may add depth to classroom culture (Afrin, 2017; King Miller, 2015). My research suggests that continued commitment by MIT leadership and academic staff could be effective in continuing current effective ways of establishing and maintaining staff and student relationships.

When sharing their thoughts on what others do to show cultural awareness, staff had fewer specific observations, but disclosed quite readily their own experiences of how effectively the institute's leadership showed cultural awareness. The partnership model where the Māori and Pacific Partners work with academic staff on behalf of leadership to confirm and strengthen the curriculum delivery and teaching strategies, was well regarded where the Partners were actively engaged with teaching teams. This approach, however, seemed to be dependent on the Partner's style of engagement rather than working effectively where the Partners would all use a common approach across the campus. The effectiveness of this kind of professional development for tertiary educators was studied in 2004 in New Zealand by Prebble et al. It appears that Prebble et al. (2004) support the idea of continued investment by leadership in staff development to improve delivery, in line with the partnership model MIT has implemented. One leader participant mentioned that it was important that a clear understanding of the Partner roles was established throughout the institute, so they could be a conduit between leadership and teaching staff, further validating the importance of communications around strategy implementation (Adams, 2016).

Staff generally seemed to feel that it was helpful to have MIT strategies that set the direction of the institute's teaching philosophy, and that the policies helped lecturers to express what that would look like in practice. When staff engage with policy, they begin to bring it to life, as it were, by enacting the words. Adams (2016) and Braun et

al. (2011), support the notion of policy setting the direction for institutional work, however, the “process of realisation and formation imbued with human endeavour” (Adams, 2016, p. 295) was not yet immediately relevant in some academic staff’s work at the time this research was conducted. In the eyes of some academic staff and leadership participants, following the MIT Strategic Plan was still a work in progress. They seemed to be somewhat disconnected to the process of developing the strategic plan, despite some of them having given feedback during the early development stages. Lecturing staff also shared their thoughts that the circulation of the institute’s academic development and learning and teaching policies every few years for review did not necessarily deepen everyday approaches to curriculum development and delivery. My findings were broadly in line with research where Timperley and Parr, (2009) found that “for policy to have an impact on any system, making sense of the policy change messages is critical to their implementation” (p. 137). Prunty, (1985) indicated similar criticisms when he questioned whose values have been recognised when policy is written. The challenge lies not only with the policy writers who are tasked to find ways of addressing recognised social issues, but also with those who will have to interpret and enact the policy (O’Neill, 2012; Siteine, 2017). This could also be the case at MIT, based on participants’ opinions on the success of MIT’s current strategies.

Support for staff to become academics sometimes appeared to be less consistently followed up by the institute, possibly as a result from the performative circumstances of the past years (Ball, 1993; Rubie-Davies et al., 2006), where funding constraints sometimes led to less professional development being made available to staff. The implications of postponements can delay changes in organisational thinking intended to improve effective teaching methods (Ball, 1993; Rubie-Davies et al., 2006). Such delays in delivering professional development to new staff (Adams, 2016; Zeichner, 2006) suggest that not all academic staff were able to connect cultural awareness and pedagogy in their classes. My research revealed instances where some staff teaching in conjunction with their colleagues, seemed to need formal training. For example, some academic staff appeared to struggle with different approaches to teaching, raising the question of what discussions were taking place amongst teaching teams before delivery started. One of the difficulties highlighted during this study appeared to be

staff availability to undertake professional development (Maurice-Takerei & Anderson, 2013), and attend events where good practice would be shared. Participants also acknowledged that the focus of professional development would shift over time as certain aspects of cultural awareness and expression were learned and absorbed into staff's way of working.

*What are leadership's perceptions of how cultural awareness is supported at MIT?*

All three leaders who completed the survey acknowledged the powhiri, Te Reo classes and the marae as being very effective strategies that engage staff in cultural awareness. One leader identified the Māori and Pacific Partners as an effective mechanism for sharing knowledge of cultural awareness. This leader's perspective appeared to be such that because these strategies were available to everyone, they allowed staff to engage directly with MIT's cultural norms through sharing practices, and gave staff an opportunity to reflect on their experiences and skills. In practice however, it may not have been altogether the case, because my findings also showed that the Partner model did not appear to be consistently established throughout the whole of MIT.

During the interview, the Head of School seemed to recognise the Partner model as an effective way of showing that MIT has a focus on improving cultural awareness by working to improve outcomes for priority groups of students, through enhancing academic staff's knowledge and curriculum delivery. This leader's perspective was that showing cultural awareness should be an implicit way of working by all staff. Cultures would not be singled out individually, which is supported by research (Bishop, 2010; Santamaría et al., 2016). The Head also indicated the need for a consistent understanding of the institute's strategic plans through publicising how accountabilities would be achieved by staff at MIT. This approach could further embed culturally aware practices at MIT and help continue to foster the building of inclusive and open relationships between leadership, staff and students.

The Māori and Pacific Partners' purpose is to help the schools embed narrative and storytelling into the teaching delivery. This approach to cultural awareness is part of MIT's strategic plan (MITb, 2018). The leader participant felt that more consistent follow up by the institute would help staff to be more able to incorporate its



intentions. It appears that the way that MIT expects its policies and procedures to be enacted, mandated and understood by academic staff is not quite clearly understood by a number of the participants in this research. The strategy therefore, has been created, but as one participant queried, if the Partners don't get to the schools, then how would this narrative approach be enacted (O'Neill, 2012; Siteine, 2017), and how could leadership ensure effective ongoing support (Geertz, 1973 as cited by Jenkins, 2016) is provided? My research has shown that how well cultural awareness and responsiveness might be experienced by staff and students appears to be related to the way leadership is enacted (Ball, 1993; Chauvel, 2014b; Coolbear, 2012).

#### *Ministry of Education and MIT policies*

The Ministry of Education and the Tertiary Education Commission's strategies of recent years have established approaches intended to ensure that vocational educators in the tertiary education organisations throughout New Zealand become aware of how their students interact and learn. Schools in New Zealand have the strategy guidelines and expectations of Ka Hikitia (MoE, 2013) as one of their foundational approaches to curriculum delivery. The tertiary sector has been given more implicit instruction through the Tertiary Education Strategy (Tertiary Education Commission, 2014), whereby the clearest instruction states that institutes are expected to use their resources to decide what works best for them. MIT's Strategic Plan (MITb, 2018) appears to follow TEC guidelines, with the aim of improving academic success for students identified as priority learners.

It was apparent that staff wanted to be well informed regarding the manner in which MIT expected policy to be carried out. If academic staff could relate to the connections between government policy, learning and social expectations, then staff actions and policy intent could complement each other and encourage culturally aware behaviours in the institute to support student success rather than outcomes becoming "measures of productivity...or displays of output" (Ball, 2003, p.216). At the same time, it is important to recognise that adult learners bring their stories and their own knowledge (Chauvel, 2014b; Larke, 2013). Because of the shared connections, if students are acknowledged by academic staff, their learning journey could be enhanced. The government has stated its expectation that TEOs implement their own ways of developing and using policy for professional development, and expressing cultural

responsiveness, although for schools it is stated. This difference in policy expression leads me to wonder if this might be because schools teach under 18-year olds, while tertiary is for adults, who are independent. As Ball, (2003) describes, the system of accountability in education constantly judges performance and output, but is not always clear on what exactly is expected of the organisation. This is recognised by some of the staff and leader participants of this research. It would appear from my research that staff participants believe the institute's follow-up regarding expectations of how policy should be implemented, could be improved. Furthermore, nurturing staff's understanding and willingness to work within the boundaries created by the rules and regulation of any organisation are fundamental to its long-term success.

MIT faces the challenge of enacting agreed procedures for induction and professional development where 'just-in-time' employment of new academic staff often sees them entering the classroom soon after arriving at the institute. The need to professionalise tertiary education has been debated in New Zealand since 2012 (Coolbear, 2012; Maurice-Takeri & Anderson, 2013), where around 44% of teaching staff are in part-time employment, and around 25% would be over 50 years old by 2016 (Coolbear, 2012). Although the literature acknowledges differences in approach (Chauvel, 2014; Coolbear, 2012) by some TEOs for professional development requirements for full time and part time teaching staff to qualify with their teaching qualifications, it would appear that MIT makes no such distinction. It is possible that it is a conscious decision, so that all academic staff undergo the same level of teaching development. Chauvel (2014), and Coolbear (2012) also acknowledge a lack of clarity in general as to how much the institutes valued the completion of educational and cultural development training. This could explain the issue for newly employed academic staff needing to decide how and when to commence their professional development into education while balancing learning how to teach with extensive industry knowledge and little experience in pedagogy.

### 5.3 Limitations of the study

The scope of this study was limited to one of MIT's three Campuses, and to a small number of participants within that Campus. Because my research contributed to the partial completion of the requirements for a qualification, the sample of participants

had to be limited so that amount of data gathered for analysis could be processed respectfully and in a timely manner. By limiting the survey to 30 people I was able to collect enough initial information regarding people's thoughts on cultural awareness at MIT to establish some potential themes, which were further elaborated on during the interviews and focus group discussions. I interviewed four staff members, of whom one was in a leadership role, and 3 were academic staff. Such a narrow scope of roles meant that the responses participants gave during the interviews could only give the beginnings of patterns and themes once the analysis had been completed. Comparing staff experiences with those of students and relating that back to other studies, allowed my interpretations to be validated by the literature, but this is by no means exhaustive nor is it definitive. The small sample size could be easily replicated into the two other Campuses at MIT for further investigation. If this was to occur at a later date, the triangulation and subsequent analysis of the data collected from all three MIT Campuses would then give a more thorough picture of how cultural awareness is supported and experienced at this institute.

Because the students and I did not know each other, I needed to find ways to get to know them so that they would be willing to participate in my study. I ended up relying on my professional networks, which brought me to the MIT Student Council and an interested colleague who saw a way to engage her own students with a current piece of research. This mitigated some of the challenges in getting people to do more than an online survey, however the participants' ability to commit was impacted by the timing of the end of term assessments and holiday breaks that coincided with my own requirements to complete this work. The limitation of participants to those who have been studying or working at MIT for at least one semester could also affect the data collected, because this sample is too limited to give an overall impression of experiences from staff and students during their MIT journey. A general consensus as to successful teaching and relationship building strategies that could strengthen current approaches to showing cultural awareness in a tertiary setting appear to have been found.

## 5.4 Implications

The data collected in this research contributes to the existing research around the values of recognising culture in education in New Zealand. More specifically, the findings contribute to the small body of research around staff and students' experiences of cultural awareness in tertiary education, as recognised in the literature review. This section highlights some factors that may enhance current practices and experiences of how cultural awareness is experienced and perceived in an Industry Training Organisation such as MIT. It also demonstrates what further benefits might result from further research on this topic for tertiary education in New Zealand.

### *Benefits of showing cultural awareness in tertiary education*

Students and staff alike consistently confirmed the importance of being recognised for who they were as individuals, and how much they appreciated authenticity when working together. For some of the participants, the matter of showing cultural awareness was not necessarily defined by ethnicity, but by the way staff and students worked together and showed their willingness to acknowledge each other as individual people first, before culture or ethnicity taking precedence. Once working relationships had been established, if cultural expectations had the potential to impact on students' successes, then positive support from their lecturers gave students the confidence to persevere and ultimately, to complete their studies. Where staff felt able to work well together as academic teams, they noticed the culture of their work ethics improve, which in turn gave them the confidence to work more effectively with their students. Leadership participants confirmed these sentiments, reiterating how important it was that they work with their staff in a consistent partnership model to enhance the delivery to students. Ensuring a more constant implementation of policy could help to resolve challenges where staff have not always connected the purpose of policy to support effective teaching and compliance with MIT and NZQA requirements.

Further research would confirm the breadth of these findings and potentially into other areas of tertiary education, for example with Private Training Enterprises and Polytechnics in other parts of the country where the teaching staff and student populations have a cultural diversity different to that of MIT.

*The importance of knowing what students experience*

Having insights into what students need to feel safe and secure enough to continue through and complete their studies allows leadership and academic staff to reflect on the effectiveness of current processes. This research confirmed the importance of communication and consistent messaging to students and staff (Bishop & Berryman, 2010; Cardno, 2012) from the institute regarding changes in structure and policy so leadership and lecturers could continue supporting students' self-confidence and affirming their choice to study at MIT. In doing so, the institute could help students settle quickly into new routines and maintain their confidence that their study would not be compromised.

*Staff's perceptions of cultural awareness influence the way they work*

Academic staff shared a need to be acknowledged and supported in their teaching. Having access to streamlined professional development for pedagogy and for cultural awareness helped them to feel they were making strong and authentic contributions to the success of their students (Chauvel, 2014; Timperley & Parr, 2009). Not all staff felt the need to be explicit in showing their awareness of people's cultures, but they did value having opportunities to share their own practices and learn from their peers. Staff also highlighted the importance of consistent messaging from their leadership. They were cognisant that MIT's strategies and policies could enhance shared understandings and collaboration when examples of how successes could be achieved were shared, and when ways to work within policy expectations were enacted on a daily basis by leadership and academic staff.

*The need for consistent leadership and governance approaches to cultural awareness*

The MIT's commitment to supporting student success was clearly articulated through the Strategic Plans (MITb, 2018), the Partnership model and the policies for professional development. The establishment of a shared understanding appeared to be challenging in an organisation where leadership was physically removed from the staff working on the Manukau Campus, and where staff felt they needed clearly articulated goals on how to enact the plan. It appeared that staff and leadership felt the challenges of engaging consistently with institute wide sharing of good practice. These challenges were experienced within a structure where the consequences of offering a wide range of delivery and scheduling were yet to be cohesively analysed.

Although these observations are consistent with the literature (Adams, 2016; Prunty, 1985; Siteine, 2017), it must also be noted that the staff and students were proud of their associations with MIT, whether as students or as members of staff.

## 5.5 Conclusion

This appreciative inquiry gave staff and students at MIT an opportunity to share their perceptions and experiences of leadership practices that support cultural awareness at one Campus, 18 months after a significant change to the academic structure had been implemented. The participants were keen to have their voices heard. While some of the topics of discussion highlighted their concerns around the effectiveness of some aspects of the new structure, the participants were generally confident that many of the current cultural practices at MIT did help them to feel acknowledged, accepted and supported as individuals.

### *Governance and leadership influences on the expression of cultural awareness*

The aim of many policies and strategies is to encourage learning relationships between staff and students where students feel safe to persevere and succeed. Establishing learning relationships with students works well for lecturers who have years of experience, but it can be a challenge where staff teams are newer and are finding their own ways to work according to industry expectations while becoming confident educators. The logistical challenges of freeing up staff time for initial induction into recognised teaching approaches and expectations of creating an inclusive educational environment can delay how well students and staff build mutual trust through their learning relationships (Ball, 1993; Chauvel, 2014; Coolbear, 2012; Suddaby, 2019). The organisation could reasonably expect its staff to be somewhat self-managing and make sure they are up to date with changes in direction of adjustments to strategy. It would also be reasonable to expect staff to read the organisational communications and updates of policy, so that they can participate effectively in the institute's celebrations such as the annual teaching symposium and teaching excellence awards, but how lecturers keep their motivation to take part in these activities within the logistical challenges of balancing teaching time and professional development time where the course delivery is so widespread across the calendar year, is yet to be addressed.

The modelling of the behaviour to be adopted by staff (Argyris, 1982; Cardno, 2010) and the relationship between national policy and social standards to be embraced could lead to the effective implementation (Adams, 2016; Braun et al., 2011) of policy. It could highlight issues that occur if organisational strategy is not well expressed and followed up (Cardno 2010). My study suggests that it is important for MIT to deliver a consistent message for policy and strategy. There may be a case for leadership to deliver a consistent message through Heads of School to staff and students, but this lack of clarity also appears to be reciprocated by academic staff. Some lecturer participants appeared to have the perspective that they did not have enough contact with their leadership. The challenge to address this point is not only made difficult by busy staff schedules, but also because of delivery constraints where semesters and quarters prevail, with an increased organisational load for marking and more frequent preparation for new cohorts while the institute navigated financial constraints. Unless occasions to share good practice such as Teaching Excellence Awards and Learning and Teaching Symposia become mandatory to attend, a certain lack of cohesion with the delivery of professional development and sharing of practices is likely to remain.

#### *Staff's impressions of cultural awareness at MIT*

Some staff participants indicated that they felt the cultural awareness they displayed came from their own experience, rather than being developed through following policy and organisational direction. However, they also appeared to realise that professional development for cultural responsiveness and awareness offered by MIT to all academic staff was beneficial for those staff new to adult education, and consequently to MIT's culturally diverse student body. The staff perspective was also that professional development and support for academic staff (Jenkin, 2016) needed to be timely if it was to be of benefit to staff and students. This finding is in line with research from Boereboom (2019), Chauvel (2014) and Suddaby (2019). Lecturer's perceived challenges to getting professional development underway implied that professional development was not always competed or followed up well by the institute. This part of my research could indicate that staff participants may have felt that the institute's intentions were not followed up effectively if staff did not feel well informed about what kinds of professional development they should undertake. My research highlighted a possible gap in staff's knowledge of what MIT expected of staff

for professional development about how they could show cultural awareness to their colleagues and students. The students shared how important it was that MIT leadership and teaching staff communicated effectively before implementing structural changes that affected the students' enrolments and interactions with staff who went the extra mile to support them. The partnership model was praised by staff as a successful strategy that helped them reaffirm their good practices in curriculum delivery, and interactions with students. Staff did think, however, that the partnership model could be made more cohesive through a stronger focus on articulating its connection to the Strategic Plan, and having more specific goals and statements regarding how the model could be implemented. My research contributes to a small body of evidence that the support provided by leaders of a tertiary education organisation in New Zealand has a strong influence on staff's approaches to, and students' experiences of cultural awareness.

#### *Final thoughts*

The institute's policies and strategies for learning and teaching development express the institute's intent to raise student retention and success. This study has shown that cohesive communication and effective implementation of these strategies through policy and procedure might be more effective with a clearer connection to academic staff's duties in line with policy. In general, leaders and academic staff were aware of the existence of MIT's policies and procedures, and stated their anticipation of further communications from MIT governance as to more precisely stated accountabilities to achieve these goals.

All participants recognised the value of having a marae that welcomed everybody into the MIT whanau, and they all appreciated the opportunity to attend a powhiri to welcome new staff and students. They also appreciated the custom of sharing karakia and waiata, although lecturing staff were also pleased to be able to make their own choices as to how and when individuals would share these customs. These customs were seen to be strong foundations for engagement and for some, were fundamental to their learning relationships, as both staff and students felt acknowledged, no matter where they might have come from.



The scope of this appreciative inquiry has confirmed that the current body of literature for the tertiary sector on leadership strategies that encourage staff and students to engage in culturally aware educational relationships, could be enhanced. The need for consistent and effective communication channels between leadership, staff and students in many aspects of a tertiary education organisation has also been highlighted.

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## Appendices

## Appendix A: Ethics Approval

### a) Ethics Approval AUT



#### Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC)

Auckland University of Technology  
D-88, Private Bag 92006, Auckland 1142, NZ  
T: +64 9 921 9999 ext. 8316  
E: [ethics@aut.ac.nz](mailto:ethics@aut.ac.nz)  
[www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics](http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics)

11 April 2019

Ruth Boyask  
Faculty of Culture and Society

Dear Ruth

Re Ethics Application: **19/76 Supporting cultural awareness for teaching staff in a Polytechnical Institute**

Thank you for providing evidence as requested, which satisfies the points raised by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC).

Your ethics application has been approved for three years until 11 April 2022.

#### Non-Standard Conditions of Approval

1. Amend the withdrawal statement at the start of the survey since withdrawal of data is not possible in an anonymous survey.

Non-standard conditions must be completed before commencing your study. Non-standard conditions do not need to be submitted to or reviewed by AUTEC before commencing your study.

#### Standard Conditions of Approval

1. A progress report is due annually on the anniversary of the approval date, using form EA2, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/researchethics>.
2. A final report is due at the expiration of the approval period, or, upon completion of project, using form EA3, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/researchethics>.
3. Any amendments to the project must be approved by AUTEC prior to being implemented. Amendments can be requested using the EA2 form: <http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/researchethics>.
4. Any serious or unexpected adverse events must be reported to AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.
5. Any unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project should also be reported to the AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.

Please quote the application number and title on all future correspondence related to this project.

AUTEC grants ethical approval only. If you require management approval for access for your research from another institution or organisation, then you are responsible for obtaining it. You are reminded that it is your responsibility to ensure that the spelling and grammar of documents being provided to participants or external organisations is of a high standard.

For any enquiries, please contact [ethics@aut.ac.nz](mailto:ethics@aut.ac.nz)

Yours sincerely,

Kate O'Connor  
Executive Manager  
Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee

cc: [monique.brik@manukau.ac.nz](mailto:monique.brik@manukau.ac.nz)

## b) Ethics Approval MIT



17 May 2019

Monique Brik  
Academic Centre (Quality and Capability Partner)  
Manukau Institute of Technology

Dear Monique

**REF:** E26- Ethics Approval  
**SUBJECT:** Research Project, Supporting cultural awareness for teaching staff in a Polytechnical Institute

I am pleased to inform you that your ethics application for the above research project has been approved by the MIT Ethics Sub-Committee (MITEC).

Ethics approval is granted until May 2022. At the completion of the project, or at the end of the period of approval (whichever occurs first), please submit a brief report to MITEC outlining the completion date, and outcomes of the research project. Please include the MITEC reference number (stated at the top of this letter) with your report. In the event that the project is not complete by the approved date, a new application will need to be made to the Ethics Committee.

Please note that if any major changes are made to the project, a new application for ethics approval will be required.

Please request approval in writing from the relevant Head of School/s if classroom time is required to collect data for this research project.

We wish you all the best with your research.

Yours sincerely,

Cath Dickey, Ethics Sub-Committee Chair



## Appendix B: Tools

### a) Participant Information Sheets Staff

#### *Communications Letter to Staff*

Dear xx,

My name is Monique Brik, and I would like to invite you to participate in my research study on how cultural awareness is supported at MIT, and in particular, what students are experiencing, what staff's perceptions are of their own cultural awareness and that of others, as well as what leaders' perceptions are of cultural awareness. The research study makes up my dissertation for the final year of my study in the Master of Educational Leadership and Auckland University of Technology.

The study will focus on staff and students' experiences of cultural awareness. The research question is:

**What are leaders doing in a Polytechnic to support an environment where staff implement Ministry of Education and Institute policies to show cultural awareness and where the students experience cultural awareness?**

- Are you interested in sharing your experiences of cultural awareness at MIT?
- Have you been working at MIT since at least July 2018?

If you answered 'yes' to both of these questions, and are interested in participating in a research project in 2019, please contact me:

[monbrik@gmail.com](mailto:monbrik@gmail.com) or phone 027 568 8094 for further information. An information pack will be sent to you on request.

Thank you for your consideration.

Nga mihi,

Monique

**Approved by Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 11/04/2019.**

**AUTEC reference number 19/76**

## Staff Information Sheets



### Participant Information Sheet for Staff: Survey

Date Information Sheet Produced: 16/02/2019

#### Project Title

Supporting cultural awareness for teaching staff in a Polytechnical Institute

#### An Invitation

My name is Monique Brik, and I would like to invite you to participate in my research study. The research study makes up my dissertation for the final year of my study in the Master of Educational Leadership and Auckland University of Technology. The research question is:

**What are leaders in a Polytechnic doing to support an environment where staff implement Ministry of Education and Institute policies to show cultural awareness and where the students experience cultural awareness?**

Because I will be conducting this research at my place of work, ethical approval has been given by AUT as the provider of supervision, as well as from Manukau Institute of Technology (MIT) to ensure ethical requirements have been met for this work.

#### What is the purpose of this research?

The purpose of this study is to conduct an appreciative inquiry to share and build upon what leadership practices at MIT are doing to support an environment where staff show cultural awareness, and where the students experience cultural awareness. Because MIT is situated in the heart of South Auckland, with many of its students and staff being Maori and Pasifika, I believe it will benefit both MIT and the community to carry out an appreciative inquiry because this kind of research focusses on what is working well at MIT. I hope to find out what students are experiencing, what staff's perceptions are of their own cultural awareness and that of others, as well as what leader's perceptions are of how cultural awareness is supported at MIT.

#### How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

You have been identified as being an MIT staff member working either as academic staff or as leadership support to academic staff through my professional network at MIT. I am interested in finding out about your positive experiences of how cultural awareness is experienced and shared at MIT.

#### How do I agree to participate in this research?

If you agree to take part in my research, then please enter the web link below or use the QR code so you can participate in a short online survey.



<https://bit.ly/2XiASu5>

By completing the survey, you indicate your consent to participate in this research study.

Your participation in this research is voluntary (it is your choice) and whether or not you choose to participate will neither advantage nor disadvantage you. You are able to withdraw from the study at any time.

#### What will happen in this research?

You may be asked to participate in two activities. The first activity is a confidential online survey which will include tick box and open-ended questions. It should take about ten minutes to complete. The survey will focus on your experiences of cultural awareness during your employment here at MIT.

If you are interested in participating in a second activity, you will be given an opportunity to express your interest at the end of the online survey.

#### What are the discomforts and risks?

It is not likely that you will experience any risks or discomfort by completing the online survey.

**What are the benefits?**

The benefit for you to take part in this study is that you will have the opportunity to share your positive experiences of cultural awareness and how that may have enhanced your ways of working at MIT, with the researcher. The benefit for me is that you will be allowing me to access rich data to complete my studies. The benefit to MIT is your willingness to share positive stories about your cultural awareness and how that has helped you to work effectively.

**How will my privacy be protected?**

Any data collected will be used solely for the purposes of this research. Throughout the research process, your identity will remain confidential. Pseudonyms will be used to identify your data in the findings. Physical information will be stored securely and digital data will be password protected. The data will be destroyed after six years.

**What are the costs of participating in this research?**

The only cost to you is about two hours of time spread over the completion of an online survey, your presence during a second activity, and the time needed to read the transcript of the interview and if you want to, reading a summary of the dissertation once completed.

**What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?**

You have two weeks to consider this invitation and return your reply by completing the online survey. The survey will close at midnight on Thursday July 11<sup>th</sup> 2019.

**Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?**

Yes, you can request a summary of the results when you complete the survey, and at the interview.

**What do I do if I have concerns about this research?**

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Ruth Boyask, [ruth.boyask@aut.ac.nz](mailto:ruth.boyask@aut.ac.nz), 09 921 9999 ext 7569

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTC, Kate O'Connor, [ethics@aut.ac.nz](mailto:ethics@aut.ac.nz), 921 9999 ext 6038.

**Whom do I contact for further information about this research?**

Please keep this Information Sheet and a copy of the Consent Form for your future reference. You are also able to contact the research team as follows:

**Researcher Contact Details:**

Monique Brik, [monique.brik@manukau.ac.nz](mailto:monique.brik@manukau.ac.nz), 027 568 8094

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on *type the date final ethics approval was granted*, AUTC Reference number *19/76*.

## Staff Information Interview



Date Information Sheet Produced: 31/03/2019

### Project Title

Supporting cultural awareness for teaching staff in a Polytechnical Institute

### An Invitation

My name is Monique Brik, and I would like to invite you to participate in my research study. The research study makes up my dissertation for the final year of my study in the Master of Educational Leadership and Auckland University of Technology. The research question is:

**What are leaders in a Polytechnic doing to support an environment where staff implement Ministry of Education and Institute policies to show cultural awareness and where the students experience cultural awareness?**

Because I will be conducting this research at my place of work, ethical approval has been given by AUT as the provider of supervision, as well as from Manukau Institute of Technology (MIT) to ensure ethical requirements have been met for this work. Your choice to participate or not to participate in this research will neither advantage nor disadvantage you.

### What is the purpose of this research?

The purpose of this study is to conduct an appreciative inquiry to share and build upon what leadership practices at MIT are doing to support an environment where staff cultural awareness, and where the students experience cultural awareness. MIT is unique in that it is a large Polytechnic situated in the heart of South Auckland, with many of its students and staff being Maori and Pasifika. I believe it will benefit both MIT and the community to carry out an appreciative inquiry because this kind of research focusses on what is working well at MIT. I hope to find out what students are experiencing, what staff's perceptions are of their own cultural awareness and that of others, as well as what leader's perceptions are of how cultural awareness is supported at MIT.

### How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

You have been identified to participate in the research because you have indicated your interest in taking part in an interview after completing the online survey. You need to meet the criteria by being an MIT staff member who has worked at MIT for at least one semester; that is, you have worked at MIT at least since July 2018. I am interested in finding out about your positive experiences of cultural awareness at MIT.

### How do I agree to participate in this research?

By completing the survey, you have indicated your consent to participate in this research study.

Your participation in this research is voluntary (it is your choice) and whether or not you choose to participate will neither advantage nor disadvantage you. You are able to withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose to withdraw from the study, then you will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to you removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of your data may not be possible.

### What will happen in this research?

You have been selected to participate in a second activity, which is to take part in an interview to discuss in more depth what your experiences of cultural awareness mean to you as a staff member at MIT. The interview will take approximately one hour and will be held at MIT premises, or at a seminar room at AUT, whichever you prefer. Some refreshments will be provided at the beginning of the interview.

I will facilitate the interview. I will also make audio recordings of the session, and take some handwritten notes. These audio tapes and notes will be transcribed into text for analysis. In the online survey, you will be asked if you are interested in taking part in the interview.

### What are the discomforts and risks?

Because I have worked as an academic staff member at MIT for eleven years, I recognise many of the issues current staff and students face. My understanding of academic staff matters such as balancing curriculum delivery with pastoral care while managing quality matters could put me in a position as a researching student at AUT, where I discover things that I may need to act on in my role as an employee at MIT. I may also encounter matters brought to me by students in my researching role that I may feel I need to bring to the attention of leaders at MIT. In the event that something like this would happen, I will contact my research supervisor to discuss appropriate action.



By presenting myself as a researcher and student of AUT for the purposes of this research, and at the same time recognising my place as an employee at MIT, I should be able to lessen some of the possible conflicts of interest that you may recognise, because as a researching student, I represent a more equal standing with you as the participants.

In the findings, MIT as an Institute will be identifiable, for the purposes of keeping MIT informed about people's positive experiences of cultural awareness at MIT. Every effort will be made to protect your identity, and your name will be changed in the findings.

**What are the benefits?**

The benefit for you to take part in this study is that you will have the opportunity of sharing your experiences of positive cultural awareness and how that may have enhanced your study experience at MIT, with the researcher and the other participants. The benefit for me is that you will be allowing me to access rich data to complete my studies. The benefit to MIT is your willingness to share positive stories about your lecturer's cultural awareness and how that has helped you to succeed in your studies.

**How will my privacy be protected?**

Any data collected will be used solely for the purposes of this research. Throughout the research process, your identity will remain confidential. Pseudonyms will be used to identify your data in the findings. Physical information will be stored securely and digital data will be password protected. All data will be destroyed after six years.

**What are the costs of participating in this research?**

The only cost to you is about two hours of time spread over the completion of an online survey (already done), your presence at the interview, the time needed to read the transcript of the interview and a summary of the dissertation once completed, if requested.

**What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?**

You have had two weeks to consider this invitation and you have returned your reply via the online contact form.

**Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?**

Yes, you can request a summary of the results when you complete the survey, and at the interview.

**What do I do if I have concerns about this research?**

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Ruth Bovask, [ruth.bovask@aut.ac.nz](mailto:ruth.bovask@aut.ac.nz), 09 921 9999 ext 7569.

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTEK, Kate O'Connor, [ethics@aut.ac.nz](mailto:ethics@aut.ac.nz), 921 9999 ext 6038.

**Whom do I contact for further information about this research?**

Please keep this Information Sheet and a copy of the Consent Form for your future reference. You are also able to contact the research team as follows:

**Researcher Contact Details:**

Monique Brik, [monique.brik@manukau.ac.nz](mailto:monique.brik@manukau.ac.nz), 027 568 8094

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 11/04/2019, AUTEK Reference number 19/76.

## Staff Survey

### Supporting cultural awareness at MIT: STAFF Survey

The purpose of this survey is to find out about your positive experiences of cultural awareness as an MIT staff member. To me, being culturally aware means first of all recognising that everyone has a story and a place they come from. Their places are often very different from mine and that means I need to be mindful that I accept people as they are and respect their ways of being. Thank you for taking the time to look at this confidential online survey. By completing it, you give evidence of your consent to take part in this research. It does not collect any contact details. The survey is made up of about 15 questions and should not take longer than 10 minutes to complete. If you wish to be considered to take part in a second activity for this research, a link to a separate form is available at the end of this survey where you can share your contact details for further information. The contact detail form is not linked to this survey. Ngā mihi, Monique

1. Please give your consent by checking each box.

- ☐ I have read and understood the information provided by Monique Brik about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 31/03/2019
- ☐ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- ☐ I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (my choice) and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without being disadvantaged in any way.

2. I agree to take part in this research. Please choose one:

*I have worked at MIT at least since July 2018.*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

3. Thank you for your time. Ngā mihi, Monique

4. How long have you been at MIT?

Select your answer

5. Are you...?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

6. Which ethnic group you identify with the most?

7. Please choose the area of work that matches your position the best

Select your answer

8. What level of study do you primarily teach in?

Select your answer

9. How well do you feel cultural awareness is supported by MIT's strategies and policies?



10. Thinking back to when your first months working at MIT, what was your overall impression of cultural awareness by people in your area?



11.How well do you feel your own cultural needs and expectations are met while working at MIT?



12.Which of the strategies listed below, are you aware of / have been involved with / have read about?

- ☐ KickStart
- ☐ Teach@MIT
- ☐ Powhiri
- ☐ Maori and Pacific Partners
- ☐ Maori Strategic Plan
- ☐ Pacific Strategic Plan
- ☐ MIT Strategic Plan
- ☐ Te Reo classes
- ☐ Ngā Kete Wānanga

13.Of the strategies listed below, if you can, please choose which two you think are very effective in supporting MIT staff to develop cultural awareness.

- ☐ KickStart
- ☐ Teach@MIT
- ☐ Powhiri
- ☐ Maori and Pacific Partners
- ☐ Maori Strategic Plan
- ☐ Pacific Strategic Plan
- ☐ MIT Strategic Plan
- ☐ Te Reo classes
- ☐ Ngā Kete Wānanga

14.Can you please tell me why that is?

15.Would you like to take part in another activity for this research?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

16.If you would like to take part in another research activity, then please click on the link below. The link will take you to an online form requesting your contact details so that I can send you an Information Sheet about that activity. <https://bit.ly/2CVv9ig>

17.Thank you for your time. Ngā mihi, Monique

*Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 11/04/2019 AUTC Reference number 19/76*

## Consent Form Interview Staff



### Consent Form - Interview

**Project title:** *Supporting cultural awareness for teaching staff in a Polytechnical Institute*

**Project Supervisor:** *Dr Ruth Boyask*

**Researcher:** *Monique Brik*

- ☐ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 31/03/2019
- ☐ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- ☐ I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that they will also be audio-taped and transcribed.
- ☐ I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (my choice) and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without being disadvantaged in any way.
- ☐ I understand that if I withdraw from the study then I will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to me removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of my data may not be possible.
- ☐ I agree to take part in this research.
- ☐ I wish to receive a summary of the research findings (please tick one): Yes ☐ No ☐

Participants signature: .....

Participants name: .....

Participants Contact Details (if appropriate):

.....  
 .....  
 .....

Date:

**Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 11/04/2019**

**AUTEC Reference number 19/76** Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form

## *Interview (Staff) Indicative Protocol*

### RESEARCH QUESTION:

What are leaders doing in a Polytechnic to support an environment where staff implement NZQA and MIT policies to show cultural awareness and where the students experience cultural awareness?

### INTRODUCTION:

Hello and welcome. Thank you for taking the time to come and talk with me today. We are here to take part in an interview. Let us begin with a karakia:

He aroha whakato, He aroha puta mai.

If kindness is sown, then kindness you shall receive.

I'd like to introduce myself with a pepeha, and then I invite you all to introduce yourselves in the way you like best:

Everyone introduces themselves

Please take some time to have a drink and something to eat before we begin.

The results of this interview will be used for evaluating your thoughts on how cultural awareness is supported at MIT.

You were selected because you are a staff member at MIT.

### **Guidelines**

There are no right or wrong answers, only points of view.

The session is being tape-recorded, and we are on a first name basis.

I ask that you turn off your mobile phones but if you are expecting an important call, please set the phone to silent and take the call outside. Please return to the room as soon as possible.

Before we begin please take the time to read through the consent form, sign it and give it back to me.

INTERVIEW or FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION takes place for about 40 minutes

### **At the end of the session:**

Thank you so much for your time and contributions to this interview, I really appreciate your efforts. Are there any final thoughts to end the time together?

### **Karakia to end the session:**

E hara taku toa | te toa, takitahi engari he toa takimano:

My strength is not that of one, but that of many.

Thank you for your time

## *Academic Staff Interview Indicative questions*

### **Interview Questions Staff – Academic and Support**

1. How do you feel you show cultural awareness to your students?
2. What, if anything can you share about how your colleagues show positive cultural awareness towards their students?
3. Thinking about the strategies listed below, when staff were asked what they were aware of / have been involved with / have read about, the strongest response was for xxxxx

KickStart, Teach@MIT  
 Powhiri, Maori and Pacific Partners  
 Maori Strategic Plan, Pacific Strategic Plan  
 MIT Strategic Plan, Te Reo classes, Ngā Kete Wānanga

Out of these, which ones do you think would give staff the most support in developing their own cultural awareness?

4. What can you tell me about MIT's expectations to build cultural awareness as set out in the Staff Development and the Teaching and Learning Policies?
5. What do you think are the greatest enablers of cultural awareness at MIT?
6. How w do you think that cultural awareness might be enabled / supported consistently?
7. How do you think MIT can give staff the most support in developing their own cultural awareness?

## Leadership Staff Interview Indicative questions

### Interview Questions Staff – Leadership

1. What, if anything, can you share about how academic staff show positive cultural awareness towards their students?
2. How do you feel leadership and systems at MIT enable cultural awareness to be shown towards students studying at your Campus?
3. Thinking about the strategies listed below, when staff were asked what they were aware of / have been involved with / have read about, the strongest response was for

KickStart

Teach@MIT

Powhiri

Maori and Pacific Partners

Maori Strategic Plan

Pacific Strategic Plan

MIT Strategic Plan

Te Reo classes

Ngā Kete Wānanga

Out of these, which ones do you think would give staff the most support in developing their own cultural awareness?

4. Thinking about the strategies listed below, when staff were asked what they think are very effective in supporting MIT staff to develop cultural awareness, the strongest response was for

Powhiri

Maori and Pacific Partners

In summary, because they allow the participant to reflect on their experiences and practice skill, and Partners allow for more understanding of cultural practices and norms through sharing. Would you like to add anything to that?

5. What can you tell me about MIT's expectations to build cultural awareness as set out in the Staff Development and the Teaching and Learning Policies?
6. What do you think are the greatest enablers of cultural awareness at MIT?
7. How do you think that cultural awareness might be enabled / supported consistently?
8. What do you think MIT can do to give academic staff the most support to develop their own cultural awareness?

## b) Participant Information Sheets Students

*Student Study Advertisement***Supporting cultural awareness in a Polytechnical Institute**

My name is Monique Brik, and I am a Masters student at AUT. I would like to invite you to participate in my research related to how students and staff at MIT experience cultural awareness.

- Are you interested in sharing your positive experience of cultural awareness at MIT?
- Have you been studying at MIT since at least July 2018?

If you answered 'yes' to both of these questions, and are interested in participating in a research project in 2019, please contact me:

[monbrik@gmail.com](mailto:monbrik@gmail.com) or phone 027 568 8094 for further information. An information pack will be sent to you on request.

Thank you for your consideration. Nga mihi,  
Monique

**Approved by Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 11/04/2019.  
AUTEK reference number 19/76**



## Student Information Sheet

<h1>Participant Information Sheet for Students</h1>	 <p>TE WĀNANGA ARONUI O TĀMAKI MAKAU RAU</p>
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### Focus Group Discussion

Date Information Sheet Produced: 31/03/2019

#### Project Title

Supporting cultural awareness for teaching staff in a Polytechnical Institute

#### An Invitation

My name is Monique Brik, and I would like to invite you to participate in my research study. The research study makes up my dissertation for the final year of my study in the Master of Educational Leadership and Auckland University of Technology. The research question is:

**What are leaders in a Polytechnic doing to support an environment where staff implement Ministry of Education and Institute policies to show cultural awareness and where the students experience cultural awareness?**

Because I will be conducting this research at my place of work, ethical approval has been given by AUT as the provider of supervision, as well as from Manukau Institute of Technology (MIT) to ensure ethical requirements have been met for this work.

#### What is the purpose of this research?

The purpose of this study is to conduct an appreciative inquiry to share and build upon what leadership practices at MIT are doing to support an environment where staff show cultural awareness, and where the students experience cultural awareness. MIT is unique in that it is a large Polytechnic situated in the heart of South Auckland, with many of its students and staff being Maori and Pasifika. I believe it will benefit both MIT and the community to carry out an appreciative inquiry because this kind of research focusses on what is working well at MIT. I hope to find out what students are experiencing, what staff's perceptions are of their own cultural awareness and that of others, as well as what leader's perceptions are of how cultural awareness is supported at MIT.

#### How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

You have been identified to participate in the research because you have indicated your interest in taking part in a focus group discussion after completing the online survey. You need to meet the criteria by being an MIT student who has studied at MIT for at least one semester; that is, you have studied at MIT at least since July 2018, and you are 20 years old or over. I am interested in finding out about your positive experiences of cultural awareness at MIT.

#### How do I agree to participate in this research?

By completing the survey, you have indicated your consent to participate in this research study.

Your participation in this research is voluntary (it is your choice) and whether or not you choose to participate will neither advantage nor disadvantage you. You are able to withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose to withdraw from the study, then you will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to you removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of your data may not be possible.

#### What will happen in this research?

You have been selected to participate in a second activity, which is to take part in a focus group discussion with three other students to discuss in more depth what your experiences of cultural awareness mean to you as a student at MIT. The discussion will take approximately one hour and will be held at MIT premises. Some refreshments will be provided at the beginning of the discussion.

I will facilitate the focus group discussion. I will also make audio recordings of the session, and take some handwritten notes. These audio tapes and notes will be transcribed into text for analysis. In the online survey, you will be asked if you are interested in taking part in the focus group discussion.

#### What are the discomforts and risks?

Because I have worked as an academic staff member at MIT for eleven years, I recognise many of the issues current staff and students face. My understanding of academic staff matters such as balancing curriculum delivery with pastoral care while managing quality matters could put me in a position as a researching student at AUT, where I discover things that I may need to act on in my role as an employee at MIT. I may also encounter matters brought to me by students in my researching role that I may feel I need to bring to the attention of

leaders at MIT. In the event that something like this would happen, I will contact my research supervisor to discuss appropriate action.

By presenting myself firstly as a researcher and student of AUT for the purposes of this research, and secondly recognising my place as an employee at MIT, I should be able to lessen some of the possible conflicts of interest that you may recognise, because as a researching student, I represent a more equal standing with you as the participant.

In the findings, MIT as an Institute will be identifiable, for the purposes of keeping MIT informed about people's positive experiences of cultural awareness at MIT. Every effort will be made to protect your identity, and your name will be changed in the findings.

#### **What are the benefits?**

The benefit for you to take part in this study is that you will have the opportunity of sharing your experiences of positive cultural awareness and how that may have enhanced your study experience at MIT, with the researcher and the other participants. The benefit for me is that you will be allowing me to access rich data to complete my studies. The benefit to MIT is your willingness to share positive stories about your lecturer's cultural awareness and how that has helped you to succeed in your studies.

#### **How will my privacy be protected?**

Any data collected will be used solely for the purposes of this research. Throughout the research process, your identity will remain confidential. Pseudonyms will be used to identify your data in the findings. Physical information will be stored securely and digital data will be password protected. All data will be destroyed after six years.

#### **What are the costs of participating in this research?**

The only cost to you is about two hours of time spread over the completion of an online survey (already done), your presence at the focus group discussion, and the time needed to read the transcript of the discussion, and a summary of the dissertation once completed if requested.

#### **What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?**

You have had two weeks to consider this invitation and you have returned your reply via the online contact form.

#### **Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?**

Yes, you can request a summary of the results when you complete the survey, and at the focus group discussion.

#### **What do I do if I have concerns about this research?**

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Ruth Boyask, [ruth.boyask@aut.ac.nz](mailto:ruth.boyask@aut.ac.nz), 09 921 9999 ext 7569.

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTEK, Kate O'Connor, [ethics@aut.ac.nz](mailto:ethics@aut.ac.nz), 921 9999 ext 6038.

#### **Whom do I contact for further information about this research?**

Please keep this Information Sheet and a copy of the Consent Form for your future reference. You are also able to contact the research team as follows:

#### **Researcher Contact Details:**

Monique Brik, [monique.brik@manukau.ac.nz](mailto:monique.brik@manukau.ac.nz), 027 568 8094

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 11/04/2019, AUTEK Reference number 19/76.

## Consent Form Focus Group Discussion Students



### Consent Form – Focus Group

**Project title:** *Supporting cultural awareness for teaching staff in a Polytechnical Institute*

**Project Supervisor:** *Dr Ruth Boyask*

**Researcher:** *Monique Brik*

- ☐ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 31/03/2019.
- ☐ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- ☐ I understand that identity of my fellow participants and our discussions in the focus group is confidential to the group and I agree to keep this information confidential.
- ☐ I understand that notes will be taken during the focus group and that it will also be audio-taped and transcribed.
- ☐ I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (my choice) and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without being disadvantaged in any way.
- ☐ I understand that if I withdraw from the study then, while it may not be possible to destroy all records of the focus group discussion of which I was part, I will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to me removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of my data may not be possible.
- ☐ I agree to take part in this research.
- ☐ I wish to receive a summary of the research findings (please tick one): Yes ☐ No ☐

Participant's signature: .....

Participant's name: .....

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

.....  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....

Date:

**Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 11/04/2019**

**AUTEC Reference number 19/76**

*Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.*

## Student Survey

### Supporting cultural awareness at MIT: Student Survey

The purpose of this survey is to find out about your positive experiences of cultural awareness as a student at MIT. To me, being culturally aware means first of all recognising that everyone has a story and a place they come from. Their places are often very different from mine and that means I need to be mindful that I accept people as they are and respect their ways of being. Thank you for taking the time to look at this confidential online survey. By completing it, you give evidence of your consent to take part in this research. It does not collect any contact details. The survey is made up of about 18 questions and should not take longer than 10 minutes to complete. If you wish to be considered to take part in a second activity for this research, a link to a separate form is available at the end of this survey where you can share your contact details for further information. The contact detail form is not linked to this survey. Ngā mihi, Monique

1. Please give your consent by checking each box.

- ☐ I have read and understood the information provided by Monique Brik about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 31/03/2019
- ☐ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- ☐ I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (my choice) and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without being disadvantaged in any way.

2. I agree to take part in this research. Please choose one:

*I am an MIT student who has studied at MIT at least since July 2018, and I am 20 years old or over.*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

3. Thank you for your time. Ngā mihi, Monique

4. How long have you been at MIT?

- ☐ Two semesters
- ☐ Three semesters
- ☐ Two years
- ☐ More than two years

5. Are you....?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

6. With which ethnic group you identify the most?

7. What area are you studying in?

- ☐ Business
- ☐ Digital Technologies
- ☐ Health and Counselling
- ☐ Nursing

8. What level of study are you enrolled in?

- ☐ Certificate
- ☐ Diploma
- ☐ Degree

9. During the enrolment process, did you have a lot of contact with the admin / AskMe team?

- ☐ Yes  
☐ No

10. How well do you feel the admin / AskMe people showed that they recognised and responded appropriately to you and your cultural background?

- ☐ Extremely well  
☐ Somewhat well  
☐ Neutral  
☐ Not very well

11. Did you attend a Powhiri when you first started at MIT

- ☐ Yes  
☐ No

12. Did you attend your Powhiri at Manukau Campus or at MIT's Marae?

- ☐ Yes  
☐ No

13. If you can, please tell me one thing about the Powhiri that meant it was a positive experience for someone from your cultural background.

14. Thinking back to your first three weeks in class, how well do you feel that lecturers at MIT showed cultural awareness?

- ☐ Extremely well  
☐ Somewhat well  
☐ Neutral  
☐ Not very well

15. How well do you feel your cultural needs and expectations have been met while studying at MIT?



16. In general, do you feel that MIT works in culturally aware ways to help support you while you study?



17. Would you like to take part in another activity for this research?

- ☐ Yes  
☐ No

18. If you would like to take part in another research activity, then please click on the link below. The link will take you to an online form requesting your contact details so that I can send you an Information Sheet about that activity. <https://bit.ly/2K4lfzV>

19. Thank you for your time. Ngā mihi, Monique

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 11/04/2019 AUTEK Reference number 19/76

## *Focus Group Discussion Indicative Protocol*

### RESEARCH QUESTION:

What are leaders doing in a Polytechnic to support an environment where staff implement NZQA and MIT policies to show cultural awareness and where the students experience cultural awareness?

### INTRODUCTION:

Hello and welcome. Thank you for taking the time to come and talk with me today. We are here to take part in an interview.

*Everyone introduces themselves*

Please take some time to have a drink and something to eat before we begin.

### INTRODUCTION

**Before we begin, please take the time to read though the consent form, sign it and give it back to me.**

The purpose of this FGD is to find out about your experiences of cultural awareness as an MIT student, by sharing your positive thoughts and experiences.

### Guidelines

There are no right or wrong answers, only points of view.

The session is being tape-recorded, and we are on a first name basis.

I ask that you turn off your mobile phones but if you are expecting an important call, please set the phone to silent and take the call outside. Please return to the room as soon as possible.

Let us begin with a karakia:

He aroha whakato, He aroha puta mai.

If kindness is sown, then kindness you shall receive.

I'd like to introduce myself with a pepeha, and then I invite you all to introduce yourselves in the way you like best:

Ko \_\_ Puketapu \_\_ toku māunga

Ko \_\_ Waikouaiti, Otakou \_\_ toku awa

Ko \_\_ Manurewa \_\_ toku kainga

Ko \_\_ Brik \_\_ toku whanau

Ko \_\_ Monique \_\_ toku ingoa

Tihei Mauri Ora

Before we begin, I'd like to remind you that this session will be recorded. Once we have started we will go around the group one by one and each say our names so that later on I can distinguish each of you when I transcribe the recording ready for analysis.

To me, being culturally aware means first of all recognising that everyone has a story and a place they come from. Their places are often very different from mine and that means I need to be mindful that I accept people as they are and respect their ways of being.

*FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION takes place for about 40 minutes*

### At the end of the session:

Thank you so much for your time and contributions to this interview, I really appreciate your efforts. Are there any final thoughts to end the time together?

### Karakia to end the session:

E hara taku toa i te toa, takitahi engari he toa takimano:

My strength is not that of one, but that of many.

Thank you for your time

*Focus Group Discussion (Students) Indicative Questions*

Focus Group Discussion Questions – Students

1. Thinking back to your first two or three courses at MIT, what kinds of things do lecturers at MIT do that makes you feel they show cultural awareness?
2. What is the cultural background / nationality of your main lecturer?
  - 2.1 How do you think your lecturers' own cultural awareness might influence how they worked with you in class?
  - 2.2 How well do you feel your cultural needs and expectations were satisfied?
  - 2.3 Can you give an example of when you felt your own needs were met?
3. In general, how well do you feel that MIT works in culturally aware ways to help support you while you study?
  - 3.1 Can you list some things MIT has put in place to support your cultural expectations while you study at MIT?
  - 3.2 What makes you feel valued as a student at MIT?
  - 3.3 In general do you feel that MIT works in culturally aware ways with you as a student?
    - a. Can you give an example of that?

Are there any other times you experienced positive cultural awareness at MIT that you would like to share with me?

## Appendix C: Code Book from NVivo nodes

### Cultural Awareness Code book

#### Nodes

Name	Description
Coded on - Authenticity	What do the participants perceive to be authentic ways / examples of showing CA, and what can be improved?
Coded on - Challenges	what challenges exist for CA to flourish?
Coded on - Communication	Gaps in communication by leadership
Coded on - Enablers for CA	
Leadership	Includes Heads of School, EGMS, DCEs
Gaps in leadership support	where people have said something is missing
Leader's perceptions of own CA	How do leaders think CA is supported at MIT?
What are leaders doing to support	
MIT	What strategies and policies that staff can explain?
Quotes	things people said that are worth keeping
Relationships	What do relationships contribute to staff and <u>students</u> experiences and perceptions of CA at MIT?

Name	Description
Sentiments	What I have identified as being positive or negative from the coding I had done
Moderately negative	What I saw as being somewhat negative comments
Moderately Positive	What I identified as moderate but still positive comments
Negative	What I saw as not good
Positive sentiments	What I have coded as being positive from the files
Very negative	what I saw as a possible problem
Very positive	What I have identified as being very positive from the data
Staff	
Colleague's CA	Staff's perceptions of colleague's CA
How do staff show CA	What to staff say about how they show CA to their students?
Staff perceptions of CA	What do staff think about how they show cultural awareness themselves?
Students	
What are students experiencing	Clear communication, equal treatment, respect as individuals
What do students expect	Mostly taken from staff comments. Students wanted to be safe and know what they needed to do
What enables CA	consistent enabling of CA at MIT



## Appendix D: List of Abbreviations

AUT	Auckland University of Technology
CA	Cultural Awareness
ITO	Industry Training Organisation
ITP	Institute of Technology and Polytechnic
MIT	Manukau Institute of Technology
NZQA	New Zealand Qualifications Authority
NQF	New Zealand Qualifications Framework
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
TEO	Tertiary Education Organisation
TEC	Tertiary Education Commission

