

MAORI PARTICIPATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION  
TAINUI GRADUATES FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF WAIKATO, 1992 TO 1997

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is an examination of what factors contribute to the success of Maori who participate in higher education. The thesis is informed by the experiences of nine Tainui tribal members who received scholarships from the Tainui Maori Trust Board and who graduated from the University of Waikato between 1992 and 1997.

The thesis addresses two questions: what factors contributed to the success of Tainui graduates at the University of Waikato? What effect did programmes, policies and initiatives offered by the University of Waikato and the Tainui Maori Trust Board have on the academic success of Tainui graduates at the University of Waikato?

There are three main components to the thesis: a brief history of the University of Waikato and an examination of three documents (University of Waikato Charter 1991; Paetawhiti, the strategic plan 1993; Academic Audit Unit report 1997) and how they pertain to Maori; a history of the Tainui Maori Trust Board and an examination of the Tainui Education Strategy (1986, 1991), its review (1993) and scholarships programmes; and a study and analysis of the experiences of nine Tainui graduates from the University of Waikato.

Argued from an eclectic theoretical and methodological position, drawing from indigenous and western theories and research practices that emphasise a kaupapa Maori and tribal approach, the thesis identifies multiple factors that have contributed to the success of the Tainui graduates. These factors include family and parental support, mentoring, the role of finances, institutional support, and identity.

The thesis finds through examination of the documents, that the policies, initiatives and programmes of the Tainui Maori Trust Board and the University of Waikato have

ambiguous and at times conflicting aims and objectives in regard to Maori participation and graduation from higher education. The thesis also finds that the experiences of the graduates reveal that neither the Tainui Maori Trust Board nor policies relating to Maori at the University of Waikato played significant roles in the success of the Tainui graduates. Rather, the thesis finds that the success of the graduates is largely borne by their own efforts, which reflect western notions of success, but which also reinforce their identity as Maori, and as Tainui tribal members.

The thesis suggests that both the Tainui Maori Trust Board and the University of Waikato review their relationships with their tribal and Maori members (respectively), and recommendations are made to help develop a greater awareness of the contribution that both organisations can make to the success of Maori university students.