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A FOCUS ON TANGATA WHENUA ĀKONGA SUCCESS
AND TINO RANGATIRATANGA

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EXAMINING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE BSW HONOURS PROGRAMME AT EASTERN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY: A FOCUS ON TANGATA WHENUA ĀKONGA SUCCESS AND TINO RANGATIRATANGA

Charlotte Chisnell, Nicole Sattler and Rehia Whaanga

The primary aim of this research is to critically examine the effectiveness of the Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) Honours programme at Eastern Institute of Technology (EIT), with a specific focus on tangata whenua success and the promotion of tino rangatiratanga.

Our objectives are to:

- assess the impact of the Honours Programme on encouraging research, critical inquiry and tino rangatiratanga among students
- evaluate the inquiry-based pedagogy of the Honours programme and how it contributes to a culture of research and critical inquiry among students
- identify factors contributing to ākonga (students/learner) progression and success within the Honours Programme
- identify any challenges or barriers which could impact on ākonga progression

INTRODUCTION

The Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) Honours programme at EIT, developed in 2016, has adopted an inquiry-based pedagogy designed to encourage self-directed learning and improve academic achievement. This article aims to critically examine the theoretical foundations and empirical evidence supporting inquiry-based pedagogy, culturally responsive education and factors contributing to the success of Māori ākonga in higher education. How does the programme support Tāngata Whenua ākonga to exercise tino rangatiratanga within academic and professional spaces? Between 2016 and 2024 Māori ākonga represented 48% of the total students in the BSW program and had a greater proportion achieving 1st Class Honours in comparison to their peers.

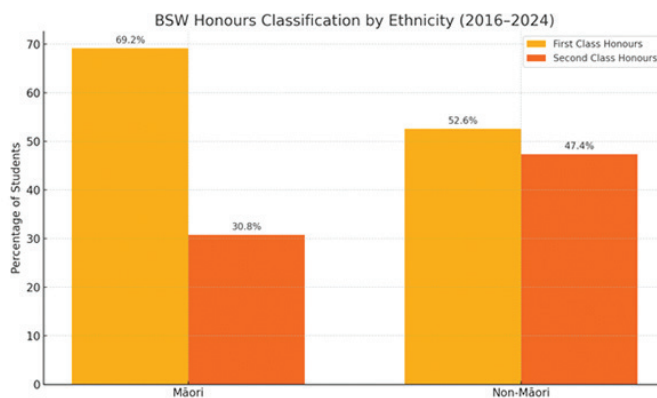


Figure 1. illustrates Honours degree outcomes by ethnicity, 2016–2024. Internal data, Eastern Institute of Technology.

Research demonstrates that inquiry-based learning can significantly enhance students' critical thinking, problem-solving abilities and overall engagement (Prince & Felder, 2006). In the context of social work education, inquiry-based pedagogy empowers students to address complex social issues, fostering practical skills relevant to their future professional practice (Beddoe & Duke, 2013).

Research by Bishop, Berryman, Tiakiwai and Richardson (2010) highlights that kaupapa Māori education, which is underpinned by Māori perspectives and practices, significantly improves Māori students' educational outcomes. These findings are further supported by Sleeter (2011), who found that culturally responsive education positively impacts student outcomes, particularly for minority and indigenous populations.

Pastoral care, which addresses students' emotional and well-being needs, is another crucial component of support in higher education. Jacklin and Le Riche (2009) found that effective pastoral support contributes to students' academic success by helping them navigate personal challenges and maintain motivation.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Inquiry-Based Learning

Inquiry-based pedagogy encourages students to formulate questions, investigate solutions and build new understandings, fostering a deeper engagement with the material and promoting lifelong learning skills (Savery, 2015).

A study by Hmelo-Silver, Duncan and Chinn (2007) highlights that students engaged in inquiry-based learning report higher motivation and satisfaction compared to those in traditional lecture-based courses. Additionally, Prince and Felder (2006) found that inquiry-based learning significantly improves students' ability to apply theoretical knowledge to real-world scenarios, a crucial aspect of social work education.

Ambrosino and Rivera (2022) focus on an inquiry-based laboratory module that incorporates ethological techniques to develop science literacy in Hawaii's high school students, which emphasises the connection between the local environment and cultural landscape. Busch, Cooper and Dyball (2021) discuss the integration of Indigenous knowledge systems into science education through inquiry-based learning, providing a platform for increased engagement and achievement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Probine et al. (2024) explore how inquiry-based project learning in early childhood education helps to develop well-being and better focus, through emphasising the importance of relationships and culture.

Brown (2017) provides a comprehensive review of the complementarity between culturally responsive and inquiry-based science education practices, highlighting implications for advancing equitable science teaching and learning.

Support systems, pastoral care and environment

Support systems in higher education, including academic support, pastoral care and community-based learning environments, are essential for student success. Tinto's (2012) theory of student retention emphasises the importance of academic and social integration in promoting student persistence and success.

Academic support structures, such as pastoral support, tutorials and small student cohorts, provide students with opportunities for developing meaningful interactions with peers and tutors (Gibbs, 2010). Research suggests that such factors are important for developing a supportive learning environment and enhancing student outcomes (Tinto, 2012).

Pastoral care, which addresses students' emotional and well-being needs, is another crucial component of support in higher education. Jacklin and Le Riche (2009) found that effective pastoral support contributes to students' academic success by helping them navigate personal challenges and maintain motivation. Tinto's (2012) theory of student retention emphasises the importance of academic and social integration in promoting student persistence and success.

Presented within the work of Mayeda et al. (2014) is the idea that indigenous students benefit from the support of indigenous role models, thus contributing to an environment which can ease the isolation many experience. Relationships within institutional settings appear fundamental when exploring the success of Māori (Airini et al., 2011; Bishop, 2003; Curtis et al., 2012; Hawk et al., 2002; Macfarlane et al., 2007; Mayeda et al., 2014). Strong and reciprocal relationships between student and teacher contribute to engagement and participation in learning, ongoing motivation and effective final success (Hawk et al., 2002).

Community and whānau-based collective learning environments are particularly important for Māori students, as they align with the communal and relational aspects of their culture (Durie, 1998). Studies have shown that these environments contribute to a sense of belonging and support, which are vital for Māori students' academic success (Macfarlane, 2015).

Culturally Responsive Education

Culturally responsive pedagogy affirms students' identities and promotes equity and inclusion (Gay, 2018; Sleeter & Zavala, 2020). Creating culturally safe learning environments is emphasised within the work of Macfarlane et al. (2007), who highlight that such spaces are not beneficial to Māori alone. These authors support the work of Airini et al. (2011) and Dither et al. (2011) in identifying that for Māori to thrive within tertiary settings, they need to be their authentic selves. Durie (2005) draws links between educational achievement and ethnicity; however also identifies that income and socioeconomic status do require attention. Macfarlane et al. (2007) suggest that the inclusion of the Māori student's culture and experiences is necessary to create environments conducive to Māori success.

Culturally responsive education recognises that students' cultural backgrounds significantly influence their learning experiences and outcomes. Studies have shown that culturally responsive teaching practices can enhance the academic achievement and engagement of Indigenous students (Bishop & Berryman, 2006). This is consistent with Ogodo (2024), who highlights the need for teachers to be culturally knowledgeable to respond to student diversity by using an integrative, holistic knowledge framework.

Ambrosino and Rivera (2022) focus on an inquiry-based laboratory module that incorporates ethological techniques to develop science literacy in Hawaii's high school students, which emphasises the connection between the local environment and cultural landscape. These findings are supported by research from New Zealand, where kaupapa Māori approaches have been shown to significantly improve Māori students' educational experiences and achievements (Smith, 2012). For Māori students, educational approaches that incorporate matauranga Māori, te reo Māori and tikanga Māori have been particularly effective in fostering a sense of belonging and academic success (Macfarlane, 2015).

Research by Bishop, Berryman, Tiakiwai and Richardson (2010) demonstrates that kaupapa Māori education, which centres Māori perspectives and practices, significantly improves Māori students' educational outcomes. These findings are further supported by Sleeter (2011), who found that culturally responsive education positively impacts student outcomes, particularly for minority and indigenous populations.

Napan, Connor and Toki (2020) explore inquiry-based learning and a Māori cultural pedagogy which focuses on transformative learning through the development of personalised inquiries within course content and process.

Tino rangatiratanga is a fundamental principle within Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Hollis-English, 2015) and central to Māori aspirations in education. In academic contexts, tino rangatiratanga reflects the right of Māori learners to assert their cultural identity, exercise autonomy over their educational journeys and have their knowledge systems valued and embedded within curricula (Smith, 2012; Bishop & Glynn, 1999). Educational approaches that foster tino rangatiratanga move beyond deficit systems instead creating spaces where Māori students can thrive, contributing to transformative change within institutions and wider society (Bishop et al. 2009; Macfarlane et al. 2007). Supporting tino rangatiratanga requires not only culturally responsive pedagogies but also structural commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

This literature review highlights the importance of inquiry-based and culturally responsive pedagogies in enhancing the educational outcomes of Māori students in higher education. By integrating these approaches into the BSW Honours Programme at EIT, the programme can develop a supportive and inclusive learning environment that promotes academic success and personal growth among Māori students. Future research should continue to explore the specific factors that contribute to the success of Māori students in higher education and develop targeted interventions to address any identified barriers.

METHODOLOGY, MĀORI-FOCUSED RESEARCH METHODS

The study adopted a qualitative design informed by a constructivist paradigm and underpinned by kaupapa Māori principles and tikanga as outlined by Smith (1997) and later Tuhiwai-Smith and Pihama (2023). Recognising that knowledge is socially and culturally constructed through human interactions and experiences. Focus groups were conducted with Honours graduates using purposive sampling.

The methodology for this research is qualitative, emphasising in-depth understanding and interpretation of participants' experiences. This approach is particularly suited to exploring complex social phenomena and is aligned with the constructivist paradigm, which values the subjective meanings individuals attach to their experiences.

In the context of Māori-focused research, the ontology recognises the importance of mātauranga Māori and the interconnectedness of individuals, whānau, hapū and iwi. This perspective acknowledges that knowledge is not only derived from empirical observation but also cultural practices, traditions and the lived experiences of Māori people (Mead, 2003).

Māori research methods and ethics must be guided by principles and tikanga that ensure the research is conducted in a manner that is respectful, culturally appropriate and beneficial to Māori communities (Tuhiwai-Smith & Pihama, 2023). Furthermore, *cultural considerations* as outlined in the work of Smith (1999, as cited in Waretini-Karena, 2023) have underpinned this research in all its phases and through respectful relationships with research participants.

Collecting and analysing personal stories and narratives from participants to understand their experiences and perspectives values the lived experiences of individuals and acknowledges the importance of storytelling in te ao Māori (Lee, 2009).

Research Methods

Focus groups are a valuable method in social science research, particularly for exploring complex social phenomena, gathering rich qualitative data and capturing the diversity of participants' perspectives. One of the key strengths of focus groups is their ability to generate interactive discussions, allowing participants to build upon each other's experiences and co-construct meaning (Barbour, 2018). This dynamic is especially useful when researching topics that are deeply personal, culturally embedded, or context-specific, as it provides insight into not only individual views but also social norms and group interactions (Krueger & Casey, 2014).

Focus groups enable researchers to observe how language, shared experiences and cultural understandings shape responses, offering depth that may not be captured through individual interviews (Barbour, 2018). In addition, they are particularly effective in empowering underrepresented or marginalised groups, as the group setting can foster a sense of safety, solidarity and shared voice (Liamputtong, 2011). This aligns well with kaupapa Māori and participatory approaches, where relationality and collective dialogue are central to knowledge creation.

Purposive sampling was used. Purposive sampling allows the researchers to select participants with experience and knowledge of the Honours Programme at EIT (Bryman, 2016).

Ethical and Cultural Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from EIT's Research Ethics Approvals Committee. The research was conducted in ways that honoured tikanga and protected te ao Māori worldviews, promoting equity, tino rangatiratanga and cultural safety. Participants were fully informed of the voluntary nature of their involvement and their right to withdraw at any time without consequence. Clear information was provided regarding confidentiality and informed consent and appropriate support mechanisms, including access to counselling, were made available should any distress arise. All data was stored securely and was destroyed following the completion of the research, following ethical guidelines.

Commitment was made to uphold the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi throughout all stages of this research. In doing so active effort was made to support rangatiratanga of all research participants and honour te ao Māori by embedding tikanga-based practices in participant engagement, data collection and analysis (Tuhiwai-Smith & Pihama, 2023). Research environments were designed to be culturally safe, inclusive and respectful of tikanga and matauranga Māori (Mead, 2003). The study also aimed to ensure that Māori perspectives were accurately represented in the findings, with a clear focus on promoting equity, social justice and tino rangatiratanga.

Thirteen graduates from the Honours programme were contacted and agreed to participate in the focus groups.

Qualitative data Analysis: Qualitative data was analysed using an inductive approach to data analysis that concentrates on condensing data to establish auditable links between the evaluation objectives and findings. Data was interpreted using comparative and thematic analysis. Thematic analysis aims to uncover themes in textual data at varying levels of complexity (Padgett, 2016).

Model of Data Analysis: Data was analysed thematically using an inductive approach (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Collecting and analysing personal stories and narratives from participants to understand their experiences and perspectives. This method values the lived experiences of individuals and acknowledges the importance of pūrakau in te ao Māori (Lee, 2009).

Findings: Following the process of thematic analysis, six sub-themes emerged from participant focus group kōrero; these are presented and then discussed under two broad themes: (1) Tino Rangatiratanga, Personal & Professional Growth and (2) Whanaungatanga, Relationships, Environment & Cultural Identity.

TINO RANGATIRATANGA - PERSONAL & PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

Empowerment, confidence and personal growth

The Honours programme was a transformative experience, pushing participants beyond their perceived abilities:

"The Honours year challenged me, but in the best way. It stretched my thinking and showed me I could achieve more than I thought possible." (3)

Many initially doubted their capabilities at an honours level, but emerged with stronger confidence and self-belief, hence the programme supported their empowerment:

"Success for me was achieving the standard I set for myself. I struggled earlier in my degree with full-time study and being a mum, so I challenged myself that if I committed to Honours, I would do it to the best of my ability." (8)

The challenge that came with this level of study was motivating and contributed to stronger confidence:

"There was just that extra level that I could reach and aim for and... it just boosts confidence in yourself and your ability to reach those high levels." (6)

The journey was not about academic success alone, it was about proving to both themselves and their whānau that they were capable of excelling at this level:

"I ummed and ahed for a very long time about whether or not I would do it... but I did it and I'm so glad I did. The sense of achievement was huge." (4)

Growth was evident from the same participant who went from a space of uncertainty to highlighting the significance of their achievement and its meaning for her:

"Graduating with Honours might not seem like a big deal to others... but to me, it meant the world." (4)

Many participants juggled their role and journey as parents and for others, this programme was an opportunity to be the first in their whānau to earn a degree, reinforcing their role and influence within their whānau:

"It was the wildest experience of my life. But I did it and I can stand so proud for all my babies and say, if I can do it, you can do anything." (7)

Thus, although honours study was challenging, it resulted in participants successfully achieving their high standards, overcoming doubt in their abilities and growth in confidence, accomplishing more than they were aware they could through dedication, effort and growing self-determination.

Academic and professional development

The academic rigour of the Honours programme provided valuable skills that students carried into their professional careers. Writing, critical thinking and working under pressure were frequently highlighted as skills that the participants use in their careers and that they attributed to the Honours programme in particular. Participants acknowledged that the ability to articulate ideas clearly, particularly in written form, was a crucial skill for social work practice that the Honours programme had prepared them well for:

"The level of academic writing is really transferable... We all have to write court reports and I think that's a level of social work that some struggle with." (4)

The ability to construct well-reasoned arguments and justify funding requests for clients was directly linked to the training they received in the programme:

"I can articulate myself really well now, especially when justifying why I need funding to support someone." (6)

The academic opportunities afforded to students of the Honours programme was noted as significant by the participants, leading to a greater sense of their own capabilities as social workers:

"That enabled me to submit a journal article and never in my life would I have ever dreamed that I could do something like that." (12)

Honours programme as a pathway to further opportunities

For many students, completing the Honours programme was a pivotal moment that shaped their future careers, instilling a sense of accomplishment and creating opportunities they had never imagined:

"I underestimate myself and I actually can achieve that kind of stuff. If I want to do something I can do it" (13).

"Being part of this programme has opened doors I never thought I'd walk through." (6).

Students emphasised that whilst the Honours programme might not lead to higher pay, the skills they gained, such as critical thinking, questioning and research, gave them a strong foundation for their careers:

“The ability to question and challenge things – it gave me such a good foundation to go explore the social work world.” (13)

WHANAUNGATANGA: RELATIONSHIPS, ENVIRONMENT & CULTURAL IDENTITY

Cultural Identity and Inclusion

The programme fostered a space where Māori students felt seen, valued and empowered to bring their whakapapa into their studies. It recognised the importance of te ao Māori and kaupapa Māori principles, supporting tangata whenua students to be themselves and bring their identity and experiences that shaped them into research and practice:

“I didn’t have to leave my culture at the door.” (8)

Participants expressed appreciation in conducting research that reflected their realities and communities, reinforcing their passion for social justice:

“This programme helped me find my voice, not just academically but as a Māori student committed to social justice.”(8)

Interestingly, a non-Māori participant offered her perspective in terms of the success of tangata whenua peers, concluding that it is due to their lived experiences as tangata whenua:

“They are so successful because they have that added layer of perspective and knowledge. Their ability to critique and analyse is on another level because of their lived experience.” (11)

Supportive learning environment

The strong support from research mentors, faculty and personal networks played a crucial role in students' success. Having a research mentor who provided guidance, prompt feedback and encouragement made the challenges of the programme more manageable:

“I felt hugely supported... My research mentor always had my back. Whatever questions I had, whatever feedback I needed – it was prompt. I never felt alone.” (6)

“I had such a fantastic relationship with my research mentor. I felt so supported to explore all my questions.” (13)

“I would ring up every week saying I was quitting and Charlotte would just say, ‘No, you’re not.’ That support system was invaluable.” (11)

Students also emphasised the importance of personal support networks, including whānau, friends and classmates. This holistic support system helped them navigate the intense demands of the programme:

“The support from my whānau was everything - my husband, my kids, my friends and even the people who brought me food when I couldn’t leave my desk.” (13)

Challenges and resilience

The programme was demanding, with significant academic and personal hurdles. Many students described moments of deep struggle, yet these experiences ultimately built resilience and determination:

"I had multiple breakdowns, crying my eyes out, not knowing if I was going to get through." (7)

"It was the tutors and the other students that got me through." (4)

Ethics approval was particularly stressful for students researching sensitive topics. Some had to revise their applications multiple times, which tested their confidence and perseverance:

"Ethics approval was massive... I had five goes at it. Every time it came back, it was another deflation." (11)

"I was on placement, in an intense role and I wasn't sure if I wanted to be a social worker anymore. But I reflected on my research and realised – I still did." (10)

DISCUSSION

This study provides a critical overview of Honours-level education in the Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) programme at EIT between 2016 and 2024. The findings contribute to the growing body of literature on academic equity, culturally responsive pedagogy and the structural supports required to sustain success among Māori ākonga in tertiary education. The discussion is focused on the themes of (1) Tino Rangatiratanga: Personal and Professional Growth and (2) Whanaungatanga: Relationships, Environment and Cultural Identity.

Tino Rangatiratanga: Personal and Professional Growth

Tuhiwai-Smith and Pihama (2023) highlight the significance of tino rangatiratanga not only as a fundamental principle of Te Tiriti o Waitangi but essential to supporting Māori aspirations centred in Māori systems. Despite strong support systems, participants faced substantial challenges. These ranged from personal hardships, grief, parenting pressures and financial stress, to academic hurdles such as ethics approval delays and the overwhelming intensity of concurrent field placements and research demands.

These experiences, though distressing, helped build ākonga resilience and contributed to their sense of achievement. Penehira et al. (2014) explore the concepts of resistance and resilience of iwi Māori, presenting the idea that resilience could potentially be a factor related to Māori identity captured within traditional ways and knowledge. Participants reported an enhanced self-belief and more confidence in their social work practice by overcoming these barriers.

Durie (2005) notes the need for alignment between institutional culture and student background, noting that cultural incongruence can intensify academic stress for Māori learners. Research by Bishop and Berryman (2006) and Macfarlane et al. (2007) further affirms that institutions must be attuned to the realities and systemic inequities Māori ākonga face to enable resilience to flourish.

Probine et al. (2024) and Hmelo-Silver et al. (2007) argue that inquiry-based learning helps to develop deeper engagement and richer educational outcomes. However, it can also impose substantial cognitive and emotional demands, which may disproportionately affect learners who may be experiencing systemic inequities. Yet, as Prince & Felder (2006) suggest, these conditions can also encourage critical thinking, identity development and professional readiness when scaffolded by responsive teaching practices and peer support, all of which were the reality for participants in this research.

Aligning also with the work of Beddoe (2013), participants' kōrero highlight growth in confidence in their abilities and a sense of empowerment following their journey as inquiry-based honours students. Furthermore, the skills that the participants developed during their time as students transferred into their roles later as social workers. Prince and Felder (2006) support the contribution of inquiry-based learning to the development of critical thinking and problem solving, as do research findings. This aligns with literature concerning the impact of inquiry-based pedagogies, the challenges associated and the final satisfaction that students experience within themselves (Hmelo-Silver, Duncan & Chinn, 2007). Consistently, literature highlights the potential of inquiry-based learning, relationships and culture for indigenous students and the significance of culturally responsive and inquiry-based teaching and learning practices (Brown, 2017; Probine et al., 2024), as did findings from this research.

Together, these findings reflect what Macfarlane (2015) calls raising possibilities, where learning environments should be culturally affirming to enable growth, equipping students to thrive as learners and social workers. Within the context of social work and social work education, self-determination is shown to be a powerful basis for all people, in particular indigenous populations (Busch, Cooper and Dyball 2021).

Whanaungatanga: Relationships, Environment and Cultural Identity

Supportive and Culturally Safe Learning Environment

Findings from the focus groups highlight the crucial role of whanaungatanga in promoting relational and cultural connectedness within the BSW Honours programme. Participants consistently emphasised that strong relationships with mentors, peers and whānau contributed to their success. These networks provided not only academic support but also emotional reassurance during times of stress, uncertainty and competing demands. Timely feedback, reassurance and the feeling of being genuinely supported were described as crucial. Such experiences highlight the importance of personalised and consistent academic relationships. These findings align with Tinto (2012), who suggests that academic and social integration are vital for student resilience and success. Jacklin and Le Riche (2009) similarly argue that support should be reconceptualised as relational rather than transactional, building on trust, reciprocity and authenticity. The literature consistently highlights that smaller cohorts, reciprocal relationships and culturally responsive mentoring are key to developing a sense of belonging (Macfarlane et al., 2007; Mayeda et al., 2014; Bishop et al., 2010).

Durie (2005) and Bishop et al. (2010) identify cultural disconnection as a significant barrier to Māori success in tertiary education. They highlight the importance of embedding te ao Māori and kaupapa Māori into the curriculum, pedagogy to challenge dominant academic discourses that can marginalise Indigenous worldviews (Bishop, 1998; Macfarlane, 2015).

Participants highlighted that culturally safe and supportive environments were essential for developing academic engagement and progress. They emphasised the value of being able to bring their whakapapa into the academic space, allowing the opportunity to conduct research informed by lived experiences. This reflects the principles of kaupapa Māori, which position cultural identity and lived experience as central to the research process and the production of knowledge (Bishop, 1998; Smith, 2012).

Participants noted that culturally responsive environments also encouraged a collectivist study support system. This reflects Māori pedagogical principles, which emphasise relationality, reciprocity and collective responsibility as central to meaningful education (Macfarlane et al., 2007; Bishop, 1998).

Whānau, peer and community support were central to participants' ability to navigate the demands of the Honours year. This aligns with Durie's (1998) emphasis on whānau-centred development and stands in contrast to deficit-based models that individualise student success and disengagement.

The presence of Māori and culturally responsive staff further reinforced this environment of belonging. Participants frequently named individuals who supported their academic and personal journeys, suggesting that relational pedagogy and role-modelling were instrumental. These findings are consistent with Mayeda et al. (2014) and Curtis et al. (2012), who stress the importance of Indigenous educators in supporting identity, safety and confidence.

Despite these strengths, there were systemic and personal challenges. Students faced stressors, such as managing the ethics approval process, placements, parenting and grief, whilst completing the Honours programme. As Hmelo-Silver et al. (2007) argue, while inquiry-based learning encourages critical engagement, it can also create additional cognitive strain and academic overload.

RECOMMENDATIONS/CONCLUSION

The findings illustrate that the BSW Honours programme at EIT supports the exercise of tino rangatiratanga, whanaungatanga and the development of supportive academic relationships among Tāngata Whenua ākongā by:

- creating relational and culturally supportive environments;
- equipping students with the skills to advocate for their communities and challenge inequitable systems; and
- inquiry-based pedagogy requires scaffolding that is responsive and adaptable, as well as being supportive of ākongā and their lives

However, the persistence of systemic barriers highlights the need for continued critical reflection and structural change. Institutional commitment to kaupapa Māori approaches, increased Māori leadership and further embedding of mātāuranga Māori in programme design are essential for strengthening tino rangatiratanga.

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Nicole Sattler has been a staff member at the Eastern Institute of Technology (EIT) since 2017. With a strong commitment to education, she is passionate about supporting student success and fostering inclusive, engaging learning environments. Her work focuses on enhancing student outcomes through innovative teaching practices and learner-centred support.

Rehia Whaanga is of Rongimaiwahine and Kahungunu descent. She is registered social worker and current Māori lead and academic at the Open Polytechnic of New Zealand. She taught in the EIT social work team for 16 years prior to this role. She has particular focuses in kaupapa Māori research, Māori success in education and indigenising social work and education.

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