

Māori Academic Challenges: Delivering Mātauranga Māori During COVID-19

Fiona Te Momo
Massey University
f.temomo@massey.ac.nz

Abstract

In March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted academic educational programmes in universities across the world, including Aotearoa New Zealand. For Māori academics who implement mātauranga Māori as a pedagogy, it became theoretically and practically challenging teaching virtually and online. The Te Taha Tinana, of Te Whare Tapa Wha model, created by aDurie in 1984 (Health Navigator, 2022) regarding the four dimensions of well-being, focuses on the physical presence, physical embodiment, and physical behaviour. This could not be easily taught virtually through a computer screen during COVID-19 lockdown. For Māori academics transitioning from teaching Mātauranga Māori in person to an online environment brought forth these challenges. The challenges re-emerged in August 2021 when New Zealand went into Level 4 lockdown overnight because of the new COVID-19 Delta Virus variant. In 2022, the Omicron variant caused many universities in Aotearoa New Zealand to continue their first semester teaching online.

Mātauranga Māori is a body of knowledge exercised by Māori people in New Zealand. Sadler (2007) argues Mātauranga Māori was first invented by Māori when Pākehā (English people) arrived in New Zealand. He suggests Mātauranga Māori is a paradigm where Māori define the parameters. Royal (2009; 2012) claims this knowledge was brought to New Zealand by Polynesian ancestors and is an evolutionary continuum of knowledge that relates to encountering the world as Māori with the focus on improving humankind. Le Grice, Braun, and Wetherell (2017) state Mātauranga Māori incorporates theories, practices, and protocols that are bound to relationships, people, and places in a world that supports Māori ambitions. This knowledge, for me an Indigenous Māori academic, incorporates the physical and spiritual worlds embracing the energies of the universe handed down by our forefathers. This position paper discusses the pedagogical challenges encountered during COVID-19 Lockdown for Indigenous academics to continue delivering programmes requiring indigenous expertise and human contact. It explores: 1) the Covid 19 Educational Barriers; 2) Online Academic Challenges; 3) Managing Cultural Shifts; 4) Sustaining Indigenous Pedagogy. It asserts that Mātauranga Māori contributes to the growth of Indigenous knowledge on a world stage and the challenges indigenous academics encounter brought by a global pandemic.

Introduction

Māori people are the native aboriginals of Aotearoa New Zealand (NZ). In 1840, Hapū (a subtribe but also the original name to represent tribes of native aboriginals) signed a treaty with colonizers representing the Queen of England and the British government called the Treaty of

Waitangi. This treaty enabled the British government of Queen Victoria to achieve legal entry into the country and facilitate their aim of colonizing the native aboriginals living as Hapū (Durie, 1994, 1998; Walker, 1990). Colonization was carried out in various ways by Britain, from deliberate wars to erase tribes and confiscate their resources to more subtle approaches, like naming the Indigenous people “Māori” and giving that name prominence in laws, policies, and educational institutions (Durie, 1998; Te Momo, 2009, 2012, 2021; Walker, 1990). The name Māori became the official term to identify the Indigenous race of Aotearoa NZ and demonstrated the power behind naming objects and people as a way for the colonizers to usurp Indigenous knowledge and manipulate the interpretation of history and literature (Te Momo, 2021; Walker, 2016). The power behind the intent to rename the native aboriginals and write a western version of history reinforced the colonization of the Indigenous people so that centuries later, beyond the 2000 millennium and through a global pandemic of 2020, 2021, and 2022, colonial processes embedded in laws, literature, policies, and publications remains a challenge (Te Momo, 2021; Walker, 2016). However, this challenge is borne by those academics who choose to “right the wrongs” of the past through educating the future generation of people in Aotearoa NZ and across the world.

Since March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way to deliver academic educational programmes in universities across the world, from internal physical classes to online virtual classes. Aotearoa NZ universities did not escape these disruptions. The pedagogy used to indigenise curricula by academic practices are reinforced through the cultural values of the Māori people. Applying Māori frameworks like Te Whare Tapa Wha, created by Durie (1994), which expresses mātauranga Māori, was difficult to implement in an online environment, especially when the framework was designed for addressing the spiritual, emotional, family, and physical engagement of people. The difficulties were exasperated when the internet lagged or became delayed because of the internet connections, or when it caused the lecturer’s and students’ images or discussion to freeze. For Māori academics engaged in explaining the depth of topics like Te Taha Wairua (spirituality) or Taha Hinengaro (mental emotions), the discussions were lost in translation. Often, the academic or students were left paused, waiting for the internet to reboot or restore itself, often not knowing whether to continue, stop, or start again. Subsequently, Māori academics looked at alternative approaches to teaching Mātauranga Māori in an online environment with limited resources. For me, it involved uploading videos, documentaries, or more literature on streaming sites for students. But the alternatives could not replace the in-depth learning that came from physical internal lectures.

Mātauranga Māori, as expressed by Indigenous academics, is a body of knowledge exercised by Māori people in New Zealand. Sadler (2007) argued Mātauranga Māori was first invented by Māori when Pākehā (English people) arrived in New Zealand before the 1800s. He suggested Mātauranga Māori was a paradigm where the Indigenous people defined the parameters. Royal’s (2009; 2012) interpretation of the entrance of Mātauranga Māori differed slightly as he asserted that Polynesian ancestors brought this knowledge to the country. He believed Mātauranga Māori to be a continuum of knowledge that is evolutionary and relates to encountering the world as Māori with the focus on improving humankind. Le Grice, Braun, and Wetherell (2017) stated Mātauranga Māori incorporated theories, practices, and protocols that are bound to relationships, people, and places in a world that supports Māori ambitions. I agree with these authors.

Mātauranga Māori, to me as an Indigenous Māori academic, incorporates the physical and spiritual worlds, embracing the energies of the universe handed down by our forefathers. This position paper reinforces the pedagogical challenges facing Māori and other Indigenous academics in translating education online, particularly when physical presence is essential to Indigenous knowledge sharing. It explores: 1) the Covid 19 educational barriers; 2) online academic challenges; 3) managing cultural shifts; and 4) sustaining Indigenous pedagogy. It asserts that Mātauranga Māori contributes to the growth of Indigenous knowledge, and it highlights the importance of Te Whare Tapa Wha and critical Southern theory of social work practice to the academy, on a world stage that faces the challenges of a global pandemic. Also, it purports the importance of biculturalism to assist in delivering this knowledge to academics across the world.

Social Work Practice – Historical Educational Barriers

European empires colonised countries like Australia, Canada, Hawaii, and the United States of America. The colonisation of these countries resulted in the Indigenous populations becoming minorities in their countries (Pulver et. al, 2010). The impacts on these Indigenous communities included various social problems, such as the dispossession of land, decline in population, deterioration of wellbeing and communal wealth, the loss of traditional knowledge and education, and the eradication of identity and pride. Lange (2011) stated that from 1769 to 1840, 10% to 30% of the Māori population had declined. However, the Māori population still outnumbered the European population until 1896, when they were about 46,000 Māori people alive. Many had died through illnesses brought over from the colonisers, and the impact of land wars between the settlers and the Māori people led to further population decline (Britannica, 2022). From 1840 to this present day, these Indigenous communities continue to suffer from the impacts of colonization, and statistics for Indigenous people within these countries have persistently shown them to feature high in the prison population, low in achievement for education, high records of drug and alcohol abuse, low in accessing appropriate housing, and low in health and wellbeing statistics (Durie, 1994, 1998, 2001, 2004; English, 2015; Te Momo, 2009, 2012, 2021; Walker, 1990, 2016). And recently, Māori have featured low in COVID-19 vaccination levels:

Māori lag other ethnicities when it comes to getting protected against COVID-19, despite being at statistically higher risk of infection and serious illness. Nearly half the cases in the Delta outbreak are Māori, who also make up nearly a third of those hospitalised with the virus, 63 percent of those eligible have had two doses, compared to more than 95 percent of Asian Kiwis and 83 percent Pākehā “The way that the vaccination has rolled out for Māori hasn't been designed for Māori - the Government has let us down,” Ngarewa-Packer told Newshub Nation. (Satherley & Shepherd, 2021, p. 1)

The arguments about the rationale for these outcomes become debates in universities, as scholars research and write about how Indigenous populations ended up in this situation. For example, Radio Waatea interviewed Dr Jensen who “quit the Government's expert immunisation advisory group in April, saying he wasn't being listened to. He said officials refused to let younger Māori qualify for the vaccine earlier, taking into account their shorter life expectancy and heightened risk factors” (Satherley & Shepherd, 2021, p. 1). This rationale for the exclusion of Māori is a

continuation of colonial history. Finding ways for these communities to heal, move beyond these impacts, and change the current statistics are issues that are the forefront of academic work for many Māori academics.

In the last four decades, Western perspectives of social work practice have provided frameworks to arrest the historical impacts and social problems experienced by Indigenous communities. From these perspectives emerged six practice models of social work that gained recognition: cognitive behavioural therapy, crisis intervention model, narrative therapy, problem-solving model, solution-focused therapy, and task-centred practice (Online MSW, 2020). These perspectives have been taught at postgraduate and graduate levels of studies in universities and have dominated literature, policies, and research (Online MSW, 2020). More significantly, at the front line of social work practice, at the intersection between client and social worker, lecturer and student, Western models of practice and Indigenous models of practice working bi-culturally have been promoted, implemented, and funded by governments. However, the outcome from these Western-driven initiatives continues to produce statistical failures of poor health and low educational achievements for Indigenous communities (Hollis-English, 2012; Eketone and Walker, 2015).

Indigenous writers such as Grey, Yellow Bird, and Coates (2016) argued the “social work profession’s involvement with Indigenous Peoples has frequently been viewed through the same lens as work with people outside these cultures” (p. 49). Although they acknowledge cross-cultural, anti-oppressive, or structural perspectives in relation to colonisation, social work practice is still viewed through a Western lens. The Western lens I refer to involves looking at the world through the eyes of someone who is non-Indigenous and has not encountered racism or discrimination. These eyes struggle to understand the Indigenous experience of being born into, or living in, a colonised country whereby the ethnicity of the colonisers is privileged and believed to be superior and Indigenous people are treated like subordinates in their mother country. Even though educational programmes may incorporate Indigenous concepts, the selected values are often chosen to advance Western aspirations. Consequently, Indigenous people are expected to embrace the educational programmes and achieve the expected outcomes. In addition, history has recorded statistical data demonstrating that Western aspirations to uplift Indigenous people utilising social work practices has been predominantly unsuccessful:

Social work has largely attempted to “Indigenize” social work in the same ways it has attempted to export its anglo-american methodology to non-Western nations. One of the most prominent aspects of Indigenous social work is an understanding of the history of these groups, which does not begin with colonialism (Grey et al., 2016, pp. 49-50).

Literature produced by Indigenous writers continues to call for this type of historical experience and narrative to change. This call has opened the door for scholars to research and write about Indigenizing the social work practice and require the profession of social workers to endorse “a niche in Indigenous social development where cultural relevance and political justice is more important than professional interests” (Grey et al., 2016, p. 57). More importantly, indigenising the social work practice must be led by Indigenous academics; otherwise, the colonialising of history will be repeated, whereby non-Indigenous peoples continue to write Indigenous stories

from Eurocentric perspectives. This would perpetuate the continuance of subtle colonisation – similar to the points made in the beginning of this article.

Mātauranga Māori – Managing Cultural Shifts

Mātauranga Māori is defined as Māori knowledge (Royal, 2009, 2012; Edwards, 2012; Mead, 2012; Sadler, 2012). Royal (2009) considers Mātauranga Māori to be “a complex idea that is difficult to grasp in written form. So many Māori ideas are like this due to their extraordinary dynamism” (p. 32). Also, Royal (2009) expands the description of Mātauranga Māori to be “a modern term for a body of knowledge that was brought to these islands by Polynesian ancestors of present-day Māori” (p. 31). To him, this knowledge grew and changed when the “arrival of European populations in the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries brought major impacts to the use of this knowledge, endangering it in many and substantial ways” (p. 31). Despite the colonisation of Aotearoa NZ, Royal stated some fragments and portions of knowledge remained and new knowledge was created. Therefore, the shift from old knowledge to new knowledge evolved to be a combination of both worlds.

Mātauranga Māori, to Edwards (2012), is a Māori worldview owned by Māori. This knowledge encompasses creativity and innovation, solutions, and endeavours, and it is very powerful when placed in Māori paradigms and contexts. “Mātauranga Māori is unashamedly a Māori-centric space, focused on Māori. It does not rely on seeking validity or approval from other worldviews, and it is not couched in the episteme of others” (p. 44). I concur that Mātauranga Māori is based on traditional Indigenous values that have survived the colonisation of Aotearoa NZ to incorporate theories and practices based on Māori knowledge, with the capacity to be holistic, transformative, and relevant for the positive development of the Māori people. In social work practice, Mātauranga Māori becomes important to learn, understand, and ensure practices are relevant to the Indigenous people who are recipients or beneficiaries of social services.

Online Academic Challenges

Indigenising the practice of social work involves educating the people in academies, particularly social work lecturers and students. It involves understanding the resistance from Indigenous people and Indigenous communities to engage with Western systems. Histories of ill treatment from Western colonial governments produced the suspicion many Indigenous communities have towards European governments, professional social workers, and educational institutions that colonized them across the world. Also, Indigenous people seek grassroots solutions to community problems outside of “social work’s territorializing agenda. Indigenous Peoples must be convinced that social workers support their just causes for land security, appropriate education and health and welfare services, self-representation, self-development, self-government and self-determination” (Grey, et al, p. 57). I agree. Working with and alongside Whānau (Māori families) in a social work context to address historical social problems on a regular basis, while simultaneously educating students in a university, is a challenging task. I hear our Māori people talk about the little faith they have in government systems and government agencies, which operate under the mantle of the professionalised social work service. When deconstructing the feedback from our Māori people, I find that Western systems are compartmentalised with rigid

frameworks that pursue a Western judicial system that makes it difficult to implement bicultural practices. By contrast, the social issues of our Māori people are holistic, can have historical, deep-rooted origins, and relate to various matters such as education, employment, health, housing, and land. Also, our Māori people tend to favour and respond more positively to real engagement and encounters where they meet government representatives and professionals physically. Subsequently, face-to-face human contact is a priority because in person, Māori people can feel the energy, spirit, and physical embodiment of a person. This type of engagement our Māori people desire cannot be easily taught or translated in an online environment. Fortunately for academies and institutions in Aotearoa NZ, these organisations ensure a cultural component whereby impending practitioners must engage with Māori people and experience being on a marae (Māori buildings for social/communal gatherings).

The marae has become an important place to teach in the social work curriculum. It requires staff and students to eat and live together for a short period of time to Whakawhanaungatanga – to get to know each other. This activity strengthens the indigenisation of a curriculum; it is also difficult to accomplish through an online environment.

Staying on the marae is an experience in itself as they share the wharenuī (large house usually for sleeping) with up to 60 others. All of these activities “breathe life” into the university classroom learning and make it “come alive” for some students. (Walker, 2012, p. 70)

The successful outcome from implementing this approach, says Walker, led to universities and educational institutions making “compulsory noho marae. Social work education provides a context for the viewing of and working with Māori” (p. 71). Applying noho marae to an educational curriculum fosters the growth of Mātauranga Māori and Te Whare Tapa Wha. The Māori development framework I teach nurtures the social, political, and economic growth of humankind by building cultural knowledge (social development) that informs decision making processes (political development) to enhance employment opportunities (economic development). This knowledge was seeded by Durie (1998; 2004), and in my work to indigenise the curriculum, staff and students are encouraged to read the writings of Indigenous authors. Some of the most prominent Māori writers in the history of Aotearoa NZ are Sir Apirana Ngata (Member of Parliament and first Māori academic to graduate with a law degree), Sir Peter Buck (medical doctor and Member of Parliament), and Sir Maui Pomare (medical doctor and Member of Parliament).

Māori philosophers like Ngata, Buck, and Pomare are utilised to show students how Māori leaders applied theory and practice to enhance the wellbeing of people. These academics and politicians lived over a hundred years ago, but their publications and contribution to education, health, and law are still utilised by many institutions across Aotearoa NZ. They were practitioners that operated from an Indigenous knowledge base, and they exercised Mātauranga Māori regularly. Fortunately, a century later, the online environment has provided a wealth of information about these leaders that includes videos, films, documentaries, and literature. In the past, the access to this information was difficult to attain and held mainly in Western organisations, but the internet has made this information accessible.

Mātauranga Māori and Te Whare Tapa Wha embrace the concept of Whakawhanaungatanga. These concepts and frameworks do not stand alone, and in order to gain a deeper understanding of their meaning, students must be educated about Māori values such as aroha (affection, sympathy), pono (values, principles), and tika (justice, fairness). Indigenous academics can model best practice principles, aligning the teaching aims and outcomes with research and publications that demonstrate a commitment to the Treaty of Waitangi. These practices establish a space where Mātauranga Māori and biculturalism can be cultivated so that students become comfortable and confident with learning about Te Ao Māori (Māori world) by being exposed to a lot of Māori content in classes like karakia (prayers), waiata (songs), wairua (spirit), and te reo Māori (Māori language). I am fortunate to be in an academy that produces graduate and undergraduate courses that are designed to grow Mātauranga Māori through disciplines like social work. The curriculum is constantly revisited and developed by academics, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, with the aim to provide students with bicultural content to prepare them for the workforce.

At the “coalface,” there are many situations social workers encounter in Te Ao Māori (the Māori world) where they are unprepared. Sometimes, in an unknown environment, social workers are thrown into a decision-making process where they have to assess the situation and take immediate action. If they are unprepared and, for example, break cultural protocols, the outcome can produce an unpleasant experience. The engagement on marae is an example where students and staff meet tribal people, are exposed to customary practices, and engage practically in cultural processes. The marae becomes another classroom. This type of wānanga (to meet and discuss, deliberate, consider) is essential for learning about issues such as cultural competency, social justice, and the Treaty of Waitangi. The students I take on to marae, mainly non-Māori, are safe to practice doing a karanga (cultural call out to the tribe), whaikōrero (speaking on behalf of the visitors), kōrero Māori (speaking the Māori language), and learning tikanga (Māori customs), without fear of being reprimanded for making mistakes or being judged or criticised. This is because the encounter is discussed in advance, and protocols are established between the academy and tribal representatives before being relayed to the students. It is important when working with tribal people and educating students that Māori academics are committed to growing Māori and Indigenous knowledge, creating a safe space for students to learn biculturalism, cultivating Māori scholars, and teaching aroha, pono, and tika. Also, the implementation of noho marae is significant to learning Mātauranga Māori and cannot be adequately replicated virtually as the human and cultural experience is lost. Therefore, the academy has normally chosen to suspend the noho marae until a time when COVID-19 lockdowns have moved from Level 4 to Level 1, and appropriate health and safety processes are put in place.

Te Momo, Te Momo, and I’Anson (2021) raise the same issues regarding the importance of teaching Mātauranga Māori and the outcome of this work during COVID-19 in 2020. They use the concept of Pōwhiri to analyse the services of academic institutions in Aotearoa NZ. They express that the notion of wairuatanga (spirituality) is key to educating students on Mātauranga Māori, as it incorporates spiritual and physical presence. Their study observed that when internal classes were cancelled, and students that preferred being taught on campus moved online, these students were not always focussed spiritually or physically. Also, when studying online at home,

there was a tendency for virtual classes to be interrupted by family members, pets, or weak internet connections. In their tables, data, and commentary, an insight into the New Zealand Indigenous academic experience was shared. The research outcomes highlighted which of the eight universities and 16 ITPs delivered indigenised programs at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. It also provided statistical data on the academies that were committed to indigenising their curriculums.

Sustaining Indigenous Pedagogy

Sustaining Indigenous pedagogy in the academy requires some compromising. In Aotearoa NZ, it involves the unification of Māori knowledge and Western knowledge. An example can be expressed with Mātauranga Māori and Māori social work practice, which consists of two concepts with overlapping and intersecting values. At the point of cross over, I suggest, resides Durie's (2001) Mātauranga and visions where Māori people are able to live as Māori and be global citizens. Also, Māori can live in good health amidst the reality of a modern society. It is at that overlap and intersection that social workers strive to see their clients and people they serve achieve a state of wellbeing, and where Māori knowledge ensures their wellbeing is nurtured, protected, and survives. English (2015) argues:

Māori social workers used tīkanga Māori to describe the positive processes they used in practice. They claimed that these processes are underpinned by the values and beliefs of Te Ao Māori. Many of the terms used to describe Māori social work were described as values and practices. An example of the dual interpretation is: tika and pono. These Te Ao Māori values encapsulate principles of honesty, integrity and respecting tīkanga. However, these values are also transformed into "verbs." They are translated into actions by the social worker taking the required care to be truthful and honest with whānau and clients. (p. 13)

Indigenous academics like Walker (2016) advocate for the mandatory registration of social workers. The importance of a compulsory registration is for social workers to follow codes of conduct, in which Māori values like tika (upright, just, fair, accurate, lawful, proper, valid) and pono (true, valid, honest, sincere) must be achieved. In addition, Walker, like Durie, is an advocate for Whānau Ora (family wellbeing) and discusses incorporating "Whānau Ora goals: self-managing, living healthy lifestyles, participating fully in society, confidently participating in te ao Māori, economically secure and successfully involved in wealth creation, cohesive, resilient and nurturing" (p. 66). Walker critiques government papers on vulnerable children, capacity-building to meet the needs of Whānau Māori, and "simple solutions of further surveillance as opposed to structural responses to poverty, health, housing and income maintenance" (p. 66). Walker asserts, like others, that incorporating Indigenous knowledge and involving Māori people is the future model for social work practice in Aotearoa NZ.

Te Whare Tapa Wha and Social Work Practice

Te Whare Tapa Wha is a famous Māori model used across the world. Throughout literature and policies for health in Aotearoa NZ, it is visible in government information, educational documentation, Indigenous writings, and academic institutions. Created and fashioned by the

Māori health expert Sir Mason Durie, the model was developed as a model of health in 1982 (Durie, 1984). It visionally personifies a house with four walls that are referred to as four dimensions: Te Taha Wairua (spiritual health), Te Taha Hinengaro (mental health), Te Taha Tinana (physical health), and Taha whānau (family health), which together form different parts of a whareniui (meeting house). The rationale that underpins the concept of Te Whare Tapa Wha as a house, is that when working with Māori people and their families, it is important to consider all these dimensions in a holistic fashion. Also, when one or more sides are weak, the house or person becomes imbalanced and prone to ill-health. Strategies are important for practitioners, in this case, social workers, to assist the individuals and their families to become balanced.

Te Whare Tapa Wha is the universal model put forth to improve the lifestyles of Māori. The holistic approach provides guidance on ways to improve and maintain the health and wellbeing of Māori. The approach also shows that optimum wellbeing and health (hauora) can be achieved when all dimensions of Te Whare Tapa Whā are in balance (Te Momo, 2009, p. 206). Implementing the Te Whare Tapa Wha model as a method to work with Māori families is important for them achieving wellbeing. Te Momo and Allan (2012) suggest that when working alongside whānau, it is essential to apply traditional Māori values and belief systems that are important to a Māori world view regarding health, as these customary experiences have the potential to increase Māori welfare. Te Whare Tapa Wha, for Allan's work as a Counsellor, involves demonstrating in a kinaesthetic way how the dimensions can be implemented in a person's life. Allan physically stands in her counselling room to name each of the walls of Te Whare Tapa Wha and the importance of each to the elements of health. This practice facilitates the sharing of knowledge between the client, audience, and herself, and the important information that is drawn from the interaction is transferred to the white board. The white board becomes a medium to double check the knowledge transferred is understood and acknowledged by all those involved. This reciprocal process is invaluable to bringing forth transformative outcomes. Using Te Whare Tapa Wha as a framework cuts across all races no matter the ethnicity of the person, and the majority of people resonate with this holistic demonstration (Te Momo, and Allan, 2012). Te Momo's teaches Te Whare Tapa Wha in the academy and draws from literature, theories, research, and practical experience to educate students. Unlike Allan's approach that is specific to the discipline of counselling and working with clients, Te Momo educates practitioners of various disciplines to identify how Te Whare Tapa Wha can work for them. By discussing these two different approaches, the model's ability to be universal and transportable is portrayed.

A common theme that emerges from implementing Te Whare Tapa Wha in practice is that Māori prefer to be treated holistically and not symptomatically. For example, in teaching, Te Momo highlights cases where Māori tangata whaiora (Māori clients) visit a medical doctor for cough symptoms and are prescribed medication that address ill-health resulting from the damp houses they live in, which contain mould or fungus. However, a holistic approach would involve medical doctors and social workers identifying the cause of ill-health then advocating on behalf of the clients to get the damp homes fixed, negotiating with landlords, or finding alternative, healthier homes. Therefore, Durie's (1984) Te Whare Tapa Wha is important when working with individuals and their families to produce positive outcomes because attention is given to the individual, the collective, and the surrounding environment. Durie (2001) has argued for

involving the individual and their families in interventions, so that the healing process is broad and has the capacity to balance the spiritual, cultural, economic, and psychological characteristics that make up a Māori identity. For social work practice, the Te Whare Tapa Wha model brings into cultural focus the six practice models discussed earlier.

Conclusions

This position paper claims that Indigenous academics faced many challenges teaching Mātauranga Māori during Covid19, while countries were locked down. The challenges were increased when the theories taught were designed to be on-site in academic institutions and universities, whereby the material required a practical component be delivered in person and working physically with people was an essential part of completing learning outcomes. In Aotearoa NZ, social work programmes have been enhanced when Mātauranga Māori was part of the curriculum. Without this combination of practical in-person delivery and theoretical background, an education program will perpetuate existing frameworks and Western systems that have failed Indigenous people. Understanding Indigenous knowledge as a way to transform the nature of working with Indigenous people has merit and value, and without this recognition, Western worldviews and Indigenous worldviews will oppose each other.

International literature for Indigenous people and social work practice highlights the importance of valuing Indigenous knowledge when working with Indigenous people (English, 2015; Gray, 2016; Walker, 2012). This paper agrees. Put simply, Western Euro-centric knowledge must resist colonizing Indigenous people and elevating Western knowledge above Indigenous communities, particularly when addressing social problems and aiming for successful social outcomes. History has shown how Indigenous people have worn the burden and abuse of poor decisions. This paper explores the educational barriers, online academic challenges, means of managing cultural shifts, and ways of sustaining Indigenous pedagogy. It highlights historical challenges Indigenous academics encounter when delivering education in a colonized country. Despite challenges, the paper showcases how Mātauranga Māori contributes to the growth of Indigenous knowledge by using Te Whare Tapa Wha and critical southern theory of social work. It also discusses the importance these frameworks have on a world stage that faces the challenges in a global pandemic. However, when Mātauranga Māori in Aotearoa becomes the basis of social work practice for working with Māori people, then changes occur. It enables social workers to implement bicultural practices based on Māori knowledge, as well as to deliver a blended style of teaching in classrooms virtually and physically on campuses. Most of all, the social work practice is transformed, ensuring Indigenous people and their families become the recipients of good practice, and the wider society indirectly receives the benefits when their citizens' wellbeing is improved.

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