Evaluation of Indigenous Pedagogical Practices for Native Hawaiian Academic Achievement

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Abstract: Native Hawaiians have experienced systematic political, racial, and cultural marginalization that has negatively affected educational attainment. This research proposal will aim to explore the associations between three indigenous pedagogical practices (experiential learning, cultural-based, and community-based) that are utilized in courses and academic achievement of Native Hawaiian students at the community college level. Although there has been many programs and practices being implemented to academically support Native Hawaiian students, there has been minimal efforts to determine if these practices work best for Native Hawaiian students. As community colleges in Hawaiʻi begin to focus their attention on serving the indigenous population of Hawaiʻi and work toward achieving their institutional measures and outcomes for Native Hawaiian students, it is critical to understand the Native Hawaiian learner. Utilizing the research methods of observation, personal interviews, and surveys, this research proposal seeks to answer the question - Are Native Hawaiian students achieving academically in courses that have implemented one or a combination of three specific indigenous pedagogical practices; experiential learning; cultural-based; and community-based at the community college level? The preferred pedagogical practice utilized by the Native Hawaiian learner seek to be determined.

Keywords: Native Hawaiian, Education, Community Colleges, Hawaii, Indigenous Pedagogical Practices, Learner, Experiential Learning, Cultural-based, Community-based, Learning.
Introduction

Native Hawaiians have experienced almost two centuries of systematic political, racial, and cultural marginalization that has negatively affected educational attainment. For years, the gap in success rates of Native Hawaiian students have grown in all disciplines of higher education. Historically, Native Hawaiians have been underrepresented in post-secondary enrollment and attainment of post-secondary certificates and degrees (Office of Hawaiian Affairs, 2014). Educational attainment has continually plagued the Native Hawaiian population and can be attributed to two historical processes that shed light on the disparity of Native Hawaiian students compared to their peers. First, the evolution of education in Hawai‘i has shifted from placed based transmission of knowledge to a system of Western instruction demonstrated through standardized tests, curricula, and content that has alienated Native Hawaiian students whose cultural roots suggest an inclination toward experiential learning in authentic environments (Kawakami, 2004). According to the U.S. Department of Education (2005), Native Hawaiian students continue to score below national norms on standardized education achievement tests at all grade levels. Secondly, the marginalization and socioeconomic adversity has transferred into the classroom, causing Native Hawaiian children to be disengaged and distrustful of social institutions such as school (Kawakami, 2004). Native Hawaiians live by a strong value system that has been implemented into their life. Often, these values are not included into the design of a western education system; therefore, students who have contradictory values are more likely to face challenges in school (Lucrecio, 2016).

This study will aim to explore the associations between three indigenous pedagogical practices that are utilized in courses (experiential learning, cultural-based, and community-based)
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and academic achievement of Native Hawaiian students at the community college level. This research will aim to answer the question: are Native Hawaiian students achieving academically in courses that have implemented one or a combination of three specific indigenous pedagogical practices—experiential learning, cultural-based learning, and community-based learning—at the community college level? The preferred pedagogical practice utilized by the Native Hawaiian learner will also be determined.

Before taking part in the qualitative research process and soliciting students and faculty to volunteer in this study, a large part of the research process will be reviewing literature that examine experiential learning, cultural-based, and community-based pedagogical practices, how they relate to Native Hawaiian academic achievement, and determining the preferred pedagogical practice of the individual learner based on classroom experience. This will be done through direct classroom observation and one-on-one interviews. Ten different courses from different disciplines that implement the specific pedagogical practices will be determined and the faculty will be consulted for permission in using their course in this study. Due to my employment at the community college where I will be conducting this study, courses will be chosen based on faculty I know that implement these types of practices in their courses as well as Native Hawaiian students that are enrolled in the same courses. Questionnaires and surveys will be utilized to determine the preferred pedagogical method of learning by the student and their GPA (high academic achievement) earned in the same course. The reviewal of the indigenous pedagogical literature is important to determine its link to the way Native Hawaiian students learn. Classroom observation of implemented pedagogical practices interaction with the Native Hawaiian student will provide an in-depth understanding of “how” the student is responsive to this style of learning. Finally, the questionnaires and surveys will aid the researcher in
determining a preferred method of learning that could be utilized by other teachers in other disciplines.

There are different ways of learning and thus, different ways of teaching. Numerous programs support students with disabilities, second language learners, and even adult learners. However, not many programs or practices address student cultural needs nor is there an abundance of academic research addressing cultural components in learning. Learning is dependent on the pedagogical approaches teachers use in the classroom (Learning Portal, 2018). It is paramount to increase the educational attainment of Native Hawaiians and indigenous populations alike. If it is determined that there are methods that work best for a specific population of students, these methods should continually be implemented in all areas of an institution that claim to be an “indigenous-serving institution.’’

For the purpose of this study, Native Hawaiian(s) is defined as the aboriginal people of the Hawaiian islands. Indigenous pedagogical practices are the ways in which knowledge is taught stemming from indigenous epistemology. In defining the three pedagogical practices that will be examined throughout this study, experiential learning emphasizes the indigenous concept of learning by doing (Antoine et al., n.d.). An emphasis on experiential learning means learning through observation, action, and reflection. This also means acknowledging that personal experience is a highly valuable type of knowledge and method of learning, and creating opportunities within courses for students to share and learn from direct experience (Antoine et al., n.d.). A cultural-based approach allows students to become familiar with the local indigenous culture, in this case Hawaiian culture and learn through evolution stories, star knowledge, relevant oral traditions, and the indigenous language (Phillips Indian Educators, n.d.). These cultural concepts should be interwoven into the course. Utilizing a community-based
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pedagogical practice engages students in the real work of building community through active participation in their community (Phillips Indian Educators, n.d.). Critical thinking and problem-solving are the key points of learning from a community-based approach.

**Literature Review**

This study is informed three streams of theory and research. The literature will work to provide an in-depth understanding of the problem: meeting the needs of the Native Hawaiian learner for high academic achievement. Secondly, the literature will validate the informed indigenous pedagogical practices of experiential learning, cultural-based, and community-based approaches. Sources that demonstrate implementation of indigenous pedagogical practices in the Hawaiian educational system will be explored. Linking pedagogical practices with high academic achievement will serve as the underpinning of this review.

To meet the educational needs of the Native Hawaiian learner in the classroom, it is important to consider why Native Hawaiians are not successful and what do they need. According to Kana‘iaupuni and Ishibashi (2003), “Hawaiian children consistently lag behind the ‘average’ student and are deprived of opportunities for intellectual engagement, social growth, and other aspects of quality education that help to pave the way to fulfilling futures” (p. 33). This suggests that a disconnect exists between what we are offering in public education and what effectively helps Native Hawaiian students learn and grow. Lino (2010) asserts that Native Hawaiian secondary students, through strengthening their levels of cultural connectedness, fortifies their cultural identity, increases their level of achievement motivation and helps them be more purposeful and intentional in their learning processes. This piece of literature indicates that Native Hawaiian learners are motivated to learn, if the learning has a cultural connect relevant to them. There is a disconnect between western and indigenous ways of
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learning that can be apparent. There is a need to understand that the exclusion of indigenous pedagogies can create barriers to academic success for indigenous students. Further, Antoine et al., (n.d.), indicates that the devaluation of Indigenous pedagogies can limit a genuine understanding of Indigenous culture and history for all students, and prevent people from learning how to exercise highly valuable and useful modes of thought which could potentially address many problems in the modern world. The literature suggests a need to consider indigenous pedagogy as valuable to the indigenous learner in order to find solutions to the problems that plague them. As the literature highlights what is needed and what is not needed for successful Native Hawaiian learning it is important to highlight the classroom as an area where the transformation of a student can have a large impact. Lipe, K. K., (2014) proclaims that teaching and implementing indigenous learning approaches can begin to transform our place of learning in reference to the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. She further implies that the transformation process of a student should come from transforming the classroom to meet the needs of the indigenous student.

As we continue to review the literature, the three different indigenous pedagogical practices in this study shall be assessed for validity and correlation to Native Hawaiian learning. O‘Toole (2014) states that indigenous learners are often visually oriented and struggle with discussion-based learning (O‘Toole, 2014). Thus, research suggests that implementing “indigenous learning-approaches” with indigenous learners can be most successful. This further supports the assumption that an institution whose mission is to be an indigenous-serving institution must intentionally implement indigenous learning-approaches. Further, “data show that students in culture-based Hawaiian public charter schools experience positive outcomes compared with Native Hawaiian students in conventional public schools (Thomas et al., 2012).
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Due to the positive data of culture-based Hawaiian public charter schools an expert indigenous panelists called for continued federal support for culture-based learning in general for the State of Hawai‘i (Thomas et al., 2012). Although this literature is an example of cultural-based education in charter schools and not higher education, the connection can be drawn to earlier educational success of a student transfers into post-secondary education if post-secondary institutions also implement indigenous pedagogical practices.

The literature provides sufficient evidence that cultural-based learning is important and has proven successful for the indigenous Hawaiian population of students. Now we turn to understanding experiential learning and community-based learning. Antoine et al., states that in traditional pre-contact societies, young people learned how to participate as adult members of their community by practicing the tasks and skills they would need to perform as adults. Thus, it is inferred that this practice should be emulated in the classroom. Developing opportunities for students to learn by doing. Gruenewald (2008) argues that “critical pedagogy” and “place-based education” are mutually supportive educational traditions, and argues for a conscious synthesis that blends the two discourses into a critical pedagogy of place. Further, Gruenewald concludes that “Place-based pedagogies are needed so that the education of citizens might have some direct bearing on the well-being of the social and ecological places people actually inhabit” (p. 4). He asserts that implementing experiential learning and community-based learning not only impacts the academic achievement of indigenous learners but also the place in which they live. This statement further underpins the extension of indigenous pedagogies past the institution in which it is employed. The effects span generations and a whole environment.

O’Connors’s (2009) findings indicate that experiential learning provides the Indigenous student with the task of being conscious about and taking responsibility for the reality of his/her
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own political and cultural awareness. His work provides communities and educators with a better understanding of educational approaches that successfully engage Indigenous students in the process of learning through the incorporation of Indigenous knowledge and methodologies through an experiential model. Building and educating indigenous students is as important as their connection to community. Engaging students in the real work of building community by active participation in their courses is paramount. Wilbricht (2017) examines ways in which land-based pedagogies can challenge colonial systems of power at multiple levels, while being critical sites of education and transformative change. The article affirms that despite the differences between everyone’s immediate family and community upbringing (differing religious/spiritual environments, language access, contact with grandparents and parents, access to traditions and practices, etc.) the five groups held similar conceptions of the salient values, practices and relationships which are conducive to perpetuating Indigenous knowledge. Community sustainability went hand in hand with cultural sustainability, both were found to be strongly interwoven and proved impossible to separate. Repeatedly confirmed, Native Hawaiians have faced an array of disparities and the process of indigenization is necessary for an intervention to be effective in addressing the needs of a cultural group (Trinidad, 2014). This article highlights the growing literature on indigenizing interventions and the important implications it has on different cultural groups. It is evident from the articles dissected in this literature review that indigenous pedagogical practices serve as the foundation for educating indigenous students.

While there are a plethora of sources that point to the effectiveness of indigenous pedagogical practices mainly cultural-based, experiential learning, and community-based it is essential to examine literature that link indigenous pedagogy with high academic achievement.
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This task proved extremely difficult when researching and selecting literature. The Learning Portal (2018) website indicates that “Effective pedagogy can lead to academic achievement, social and emotional development, acquisition of technical skills, and a general ability to contribute to society.” The issue brief by the Learning Portal suggest strategies that allow learners to strongly grasp pedagogical approaches. Teachers should incorporate meaningful teaching and learning aside from textbook, implement frequent opportunities to discuss and respond to questions, utilize local terms and language, and most importantly have a positive attitude towards student belief and capacity to learn (Learning Portal, 2018). Pedagogical practices are important as the literature suggest. This literature review has strengthened the argument for meeting the needs of Native Hawaiian students and transforming teaching approaches and ways of learning. While little work has been done on Native Hawaiians in postsecondary education, this research project can help to develop a better understanding of Native Hawaiian learners at the community college level and work toward implementing indigenous pedagogical practices in the classrooms.

Research Design and Methods

In order to study will aim to determine the associations between indigenous pedagogical practices (experiential learning, cultural-based, and community-based) that are utilized in courses at the community college level and academic achievement of Native Hawaiian students. Further, this research will work to ascertain whether Native Hawaiian students are achieving academically in courses that have implemented one or a combination of three specific indigenous pedagogical practices through a comparative analysis. Interviews and questionnaires will be utilized to determine the preferred method of pedagogical instruction by a sample of Native Hawaiian students.
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This research will take place at Kapi‘olani Community College—the campus in which I am currently employed. To begin the study, an extensive research process will need to be completed, which will focus on the specific pedagogical practices: experiential learning, cultural-based, and community-based. This research should indicate the reasoning behind implementing such practices at the community college level. Additionally, the “KCC Class Availability” website and the “KCC Course Catalog” that list courses and a description of what is covered in the courses will be utilized to determine specific courses that implement at least one of the indigenous pedagogical practices. Courses will be selected based on implementation of experiential learning, cultural-based, or community-based practices.

In relation to the course selection, I will select a group of 16 Native Hawaiian students for this study. My facilitator role within the Native Hawaiian Academic Advancement (NHAA) program allows me access to potential students of Native Hawaiian ancestry that would be able to volunteer for this particular study. There are currently 153 Native Hawaiian students actively participating in the NHAA program at Kapi‘olani Community College. Students will be asked verbally or through email if they would like to participate in this particular study. Student research participants will be required to be of Native Hawaiian ancestry, be born and raised in Hawai‘i, and currently attending Kapi‘olani Community College as a full-time student with twelve or more credits. Additionally, the student would need to be currently enrolled in or have completed a course that implements indigenous pedagogical practices. Students enrolled in these particular courses after the Summer 2019 semester will not be applicable to becoming a research participant for this study. It is important to note that the selection of courses and student research participants will need to coincide with one another. The courses will be selected based on the
students course schedule and the students will be selected based on the courses they are enrolled in. This method of selection will take two parts to move synergistically.

Once the potential courses and students are selected, the faculty will be consulted for permission to observe their incorporation of indigenous pedagogical practices during their class times. It is vital to select 10 courses or more that implement pedagogical practices and also enroll Native Hawaiian students to prepare for faculty declining to participate in the research. This is a precautionary measure to ensure timely completion and selection of course sample size. Ten Native Hawaiian students will be interviewed and also asked to complete a questionnaire that addresses my research questions. I would like the course sample size to span between five to ten disciplines. This will provide a good sample size and be able to show the discipline diversity of indigenous pedagogical practices. Moreover, this could potentially be valuable information for the institution in determining other courses that have not implemented indigenous pedagogical practices.

Ideally, the data for this research would need to be collected beginning April 2019 and ending in May as summer will begin and there will not be a good pool of potential students to select and observe. As a precautionary measure, I will have access to two courses that will enroll Native Hawaiian students – an Oral Communication course and an English Composition course. Both courses will be a significant to the research study as both courses are typically instructed from a Western perspective however, these particular courses are part of a pilot program infusing cultural-based learning for relevant understanding. I have made a list of a few courses that I have identified to utilize in this study based on my personal relationship with the instructors. Biology 124 lab, Ethnobotany, Oral Communication 151, English Composition 100, Hospitality 100,
Hawaiian Language 201, and Hawaiian Studies 100 are potential courses that will be examined during this study. I would like to include a Math, Chemistry, and Engineering course if possible.

Participant Protocol: I will pre-determine possible participants and select them accordingly. Once selected, I will schedule a possible time to meet with the student participants for an interview (Appendix A) through verbal discussion and also have them complete the informed consent form prior to our meeting. Once the interview is schedule, I will send a follow-up email as a reminder of the interview date, time, and location. The interview will take place in a closed room that will limit the distractions for the interviewee. I will welcome the student, introduce myself, thank them for participating and begin to explain the purpose of this interview. I will let the interviewee know that anything discussed in this interview is confidential and only for the sole purpose of this research study. The format of the interview will be relayed to the interviewee and the length of time to complete the interview shall take no longer than an hour. I will ask the interviewee if there are any questions before we begin. This will also be a time to clarify any doubts the interviewee may have as well. I will then begin the interview and explain the meaning of the different indigenous pedagogical practices (experiential learning, cultural-based, or community-based). The interview will be recorded with the Voice Memo Iphone app and notes will also be taken with pen and paper.

The qualitative data will be analyzed with memos and with categorizing strategies. Memos will be written after each interview to facilitate analytical thinking about the data and to help remember details that may not necessarily be included in the transcripts. The data will also be analyzed for common threads in the participant responses. Finding a preferred method of indigenous pedagogical learning will need to be determine during this process. Furthermore, the
grade of “B” or better will be considered high academic achievement and will work to correlate to indigenous pedagogical practices.

In order to avoid possible threats and to test the validity of my conclusions, I will employ the following strategy of comparison suggested by Maxwell (2013). It is important to address the “counterfactual” of what would have happened without the presence of the presumed cause (Maxwell, 2013). In this case, I will need to conduct a multicase study that analyzes the high academic achievement of Native Hawaiian students in courses with indigenous pedagogical practices and courses that do not implement indigenous pedagogical practices. The participants in the setting studied may themselves have experience with other settings or with the same setting at an earlier time, and I may be able to draw on this experience to identify the crucial factors and the effect that these have (Maxwell, 2013). This process will be instrumental in proving the validity of the research results.

**Preliminary Suppositions and Implications**

Although there has been many programs and practices being implemented to academically support Native Hawaiian students, there has been minimal efforts to determine if these practices work best for Native Hawaiian students at the community college level. As community colleges in Hawai‘i begin to focus their attention on serving the indigenous population of Hawai‘i and work toward achieving their institutional measures and outcomes for Native Hawaiian students, it is critical to understand the Native Hawaiian learner. Determining which indigenous pedagogical practices; experiential learning, cultural-based, and community-based have actually supported Native Hawaiian academic achievement will be critical in the way indigenous-serving institutions assess teaching pedagogy.
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This research has the potential to understand what works in post-secondary education for Native Hawaiian learners. Often, research is conducted, policies are implemented, and curriculum is changed without considering the perspective of the student and the effects on the learner. I hope to elevate the student voice in the way that supports their own academic advancement. The results of this study can inform administration on how to implement indigenous pedagogy practices in all disciplines. Consequently, this can be an evaluation of what the institution is doing right in supporting the 12% of Native Hawaiian students at Kapi‘olani Community College. Overall, this study will work to signal an important shift to a culturally relevant educational system. The Western education system has been detrimental therefore, it is imperative to bring forth place-based and indigenous transmission of knowledge within higher educational systems in Hawai‘i.

Conclusion

The study being conducted will work to understand the Native Hawaiian learner by exploring the associations between three indigenous pedagogical practices that are utilized in courses (experiential learning, cultural-based, and community-based) and academic achievement of Native Hawaiian students. The research will attempt to answer the question: are Native Hawaiian students achieving academically in courses that have implemented one or a combination of three specific indigenous pedagogical practices; experiential learning; cultural-based; and community-based at the community college level? The preferred pedagogical practice utilized by the Native Hawaiian learner will also be determined. The research is designed utilizing a site and participant and course pool to extract data. The data will be collected through interview and observation of indigenous pedagogical practices during classroom times. Successful indigenous pedagogical practices preferred by the Native Hawaiian learning is a
potential implication that could emerge from this study. Due to the historical underrepresentation in post-secondary education and gaps in success rates of Native Hawaiian students, this research will work toward validifying indigenous pedagogical practices that support Native Hawaiian academic achievement.
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Appendices

Appendix A – Interview Protocol/Questions

Questions:

1. How old are you?
2. Where did you grow up?
3. Are you the first in your family to go to college?
4. What year of school are you in?
5. What is your intended major?
6. Do you have any plans of transferring to a four-year University?
7. What classes are you currently enrolled in?
8. Of the classes you are taking, which one is your favorite course and why?
9. What is your current grade in the course?
10. Can you describe what you have learned in this course so far?
11. Can you describe ways you dislike learning in this particular class?
12. Based on your most favorite class we just discussed, does your instructor utilize experiences or the concept of learning by doing (outside classroom learning) in the course to help you learn? Can you explain?
13. Based on your most favorite class we just discussed, does your instructor implement indigenous practices (oli, Hawaiian language, Hawaiian culture, and Hawaiian stories) to help you learn? Can you explain?
14. Based on your most favorite class we just discussed, does your instructor require you to do real work of building community through active participation in community events or service to supplement the way you learn? Can you explain?
15. If you were to teach the course that you are taking, how would you want your students to learn the particular subject? Would you include hands-on activities, outside learning, or Hawaiian culture?
16. Of the three pedagogical practices shared with you at the beginning of this interview (experiential learning, cultural-based, or community-based), which would you say is the best way you learn? Is it a combination of all three or two of them, please explain?