Teaching Entrepreneurship to Indigenous and Other Minorities: Towards a Strong Sense of Self, Tangible Skills and Active Participation Within Society

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Successful commercial enterprise born of entrepreneurial activity is increasingly recognised as a means through which the world's impoverished Indigenous minority peoples might attain financial independence. Previous research has shown that owner-operators of successful Indigenous commercial enterprises have little to no entrepreneurial training and that the key to successful entrepreneurship education for Indigenous peoples is the combination of an empowering pedagogical approach and socio-culturally relevant content. This paper is the product of over a decade of independent research within North America, Australia, New Zealand and Ireland that examined the attributes of successful Indigenous entrepreneurs and educational programs that benefited Indigenous students.

INTRODUCTION

This paper is primarily concerned with the effective teaching of social skills and the development of self-esteem under the guise entrepreneurship to minorities. It argues that a pedagogical approach that operates on the principle that entrepreneurial training is capacity building that seeks to enhance self-esteem and reinforce cultural identity can generate economic intelligence. Further, it demonstrates that with modification, this pedagogical approach has wider application to the creative engagement of Indigenous minority peoples in their learning of financial literacy and enterprise.

Effective entrepreneurship training for Indigenous peoples and other minorities are education programs that provide not only socio-cultural applicability, but also a pedagogical process that meets the necessary criteria to attain 'academic legitimacy' (Kuratko, 2005: 579). This inquiry is the product of some fifteen years of work across several academic disciplines including business, management, anthropology, history, education and Indigenous epistemology. This has given rise to the author's increasing appreciation of the conditions that have empowered and thwarted Indigenous entrepreneurs in Australia, North America, New Zealand and Ireland through the investigation of not only mainstream institutional entrepreneurship programs, their applicability to the minority marketplace and their minority-focused financial literacy education programs; but also Indigenous-run community-based enterprise development projects.

The dilemma is that mainstream education does not necessarily work for Indigenous people for this education 'system' through its general academic practice, curriculum and teaching strategies seeks to impose its way of perceiving and understanding the world on minority people by inserting them into pre-existing academic discourse and pre-existing social orders. In so doing, it requires conformity. This frequently leads to minority students asking themselves the question: to what degree will I engage in

learning and at what personal cost (Mann, 2001; Hockman, 2010). It also often gives rise to Indigenous people having to repress their own sense of self, culture, voice and educational desires, which effectively works to 'de-Aboriginalise Aboriginal people' (Heitmeyer, 1998: 198) Education scholars concerned with such issues of minority alienation, engagement and empowerment are increasingly aware that Indigenous students need more than this from an education 'system'. Hocking is an advocate of 'blended learning' that selectively integrates into the mainstream system social and cognitive elements that are meaningful to minority students and of an inclusionary pedagogy that embraces a range of differences and enables minorities to draw on their own knowledge bases to demonstrate that they are learning (Hocking, 2010). Whereas Shepherd, supports within a mainstream context, (as he does not delve into minority research), a pedagogy that more broadly addresses emotion and the management of emotions. More specifically, Shepherd is concerned with the emotions and creativity that need to be engaged within successful entrepreneurial activity (Shepherd, 2004: 283). The importance of the holistic engagement and management of emotion is taken up again in this paper when it examines the different barriers that Indigenous students of entrepreneurship must face. This is a significant issue given the degree to which the pedagogy that underpins entrepreneurship and enterprise education varies across institutions (Gibb, 1996; Pittaway & Cope, 2007). For reasons of simplification, this inquiry like others before it into education pedagogy conflates enterprise and entrepreneurship as one and the same (Pittaway & Cope, 2007).

An enormous increase in the development of entrepreneurship education and related research trends have combined to finally lay to rest the myth that entrepreneurs are born and not made (Katz, 2003; Kuratko, 2005). Debate has evolved beyond whether entrepreneurship might be encouraged through education or taught as an academic discipline to what precisely should be taught and how precisely should it be taught remain the unanswered questions (Drucker, 1985; Katz, 2003; Kuratko, 2005; Ronstadt, 1987). Previous research has revealed that minority entrepreneurs have emerged in unprecedented numbers, this phenomenon can be linked to the mainstream development of entrepreneurship education (Kuratko, 2005) and that they face many obstacles and difficulties that other entrepreneurs do not (Chananti & Greene, 2002; Foley, 2005; Fredericks & Foley, 2006; Greene, Hart, Gatewood, Brush & Carter, 2003; Gundry & Welsh, 2001; Kuratko, 2005).

While it is increasingly recognised that minority entrepreneurs are confronted by different obstacles, it is less appreciated that conventional entrepreneurship education discourses and praxis are:

> *discriminatory, gender-based, [Euro] ethnocentrically determined, ideologically controlled, sustaining not only prevailing societal biases, but serving as a tapestry for unexamined and contradictory assumptions and knowledge about the reality of [Indigenous] entrepreneurs* (Ogbor, 2000: 605).

Ogbor (2000) argues that the structuring principle in wider society similarly reflects and consolidates the privilege and power of dominant groups. Entrepreneurship scholars such as Katz (2003) Kuratko (2005) and Shepherd (2004) most likely are not mindful of this injustice for issues such as inequality are not discussed in their writings and they are immersed in the power structure of the dominant group in entrepreneurial literature. Furthermore, entrepreneurship discourse in the main further entrenches divisions between socio-cultural groups on the basis of race, ethnicity and gender through processes including classification and codification that are more often than not the privilege of Western-educated white men at the forefront of American entrepreneurship discourse (Foley, 2005; Ogbor, 2000).

Matters pertaining to Indigenous entrepreneurial education cannot be found within this discourse. For this specialist field of academic inquiry, researchers need to look elsewhere.

METHODOLOGY

The research methodology was informed by a range of academic disciplines and a systematic review of academic literature (Tranfield, Denver & Smart, 2003; Pittaway, Robertson, Munir, Denver and

Neeley, 2004). This was applied to multiple case studies within independent research projects (Yin, 2002; Eisenhardt, 1989) across various national contexts. Based on empirical evidence, this inquiry adopted a thematic approach to research that was both focused and unified (Thorpe, Holt, Pittaway & Macpherson, 2006).

A CLIMATE OF ECONOMIC CRISES, PEDAGOGICAL HEGEMONY AND SILENCED MINORITY AGENCY

The fraught historical context of an emerging global focus on Indigenous entrepreneurial education needs to be explained for the reader. As recently as 2009, the United Nation's World Economic Forum recognised the need for more inclusive entrepreneurship education and the role this might play in solving major challenges such as poverty and human suffering. Its report argued that:

> … *Entrepreneurship has never been more important than it is today in this time of financial crisis. At the same time, society faces massive global challenges that extend well beyond the economy. Innovation and entrepreneurship provide a way forward for solving the global challenges of the 21st Century, building sustainable development, creating jobs, generating renewed economic growth and advancing human welfare...Entrepreneurship education can be a societal change agent; a great enabler in all sectors...all members of society need to be more entrepreneurial ... The time to act is now* (World Economic Forum & Global Education Initiative, 2009).

While different schools of thought on entrepreneurship education do exist throughout the world today, it is clear that western academic thought and pedagogies dominate most entrepreneurship education models. The greater majority emphasise the need for competitiveness, rely on abstract reasoning, and tie linear models of teaching and business planning to western models of teaching, learning and business. Western institutions almost without exception tout these models as the essential frameworks for successful entrepreneurship.

By contrast, the role of traditional Indigenous entrepreneurship in both pre-colonial and postcolonial economies and societies is most often ignored. Recent adaptations by Indigenous people to their traditional modes of entrepreneurship are also too frequently overlooked or poorly understood by most western academics, governments and business leaders. One unfortunate result of this is the nominal support received by Indigenous minorities for their own economic activity and their own entrepreneurial initiatives. Indigenous entrepreneurship – like histories of Indigenous resistance to and Indigenous negotiations of colonial power before it (Stanner, 1968) – is statistically 'silenced' from reportage of the development of Australian and New Zealand economies. Research undertaken by the author in Canada, North America, Japan, the Pacific and Ireland all supports the same conclusion: Indigenous entrepreneurs are under-represented in national economic statistics (Foley, 2010B).

It is widely recognised that there is a desire among many of the world's 300-500 million Indigenous people to rebuild their communities and/or to provide for their family (University of Minnesota, 2003; Peredo, Anderson, Galbraith, Hoing, and Dana, 2004). Moreover, empirical research has demonstrated a development that is not so well known: Indigenous people are increasingly undertaking trade-based and/or structured education, and this is linked to rising levels of Indigenous entrepreneurial success (Foley, 2009). Recent empirical case studies tell us that the dominant intrinsic motivator for Māori and Aboriginal entrepreneurs is the need to better provide for their nuclear family: to put food on the table and a roof over their heads (Foley, 2006, 2008A; Fredericks & Foley, 2006). These findings challenge earlier research that argued that Indigenous entrepreneurship was primarily motivated towards meeting community and heritage obligations (Lindsay, 2005). Australian anthropologist, Lorraine Gibson, however provides insights into the dilemma that many Indigenous entrepreneurs experience when engaging in the dominant western economy. She observes:

> *[The] sense of self, for most, is not determined by engagement in the capitalist division of labour; indeed, the greater the engagement in the capitalist economy, the more problematic and fraught a sense of self and a belonging can become* (Gibson, 2010: 137).

The tension between this diminution of the 'sense of self' and the need to maintain a strong sense of self through connection to Indigenous cultural values and practises in order to creatively engage in learning and entrepreneurship is rarely well understood by non-indigenous scholars and governments. The New Zealand-based Indigenous entrepreneurship educator, Ahikaa, adopts a holistic vision. It seeks to develop and empower the individual, the family <u>and</u> the wider community. Its philosophy affirms the writer's wider research findings, which identify the discovery and the unlocking of the potentiality of the Indigenous 'sense of self' as the foundational building block of Indigenous entrepreneurial success (Foley, 2000; Foley, 2005; Ahikaa, 2011).

A glance at some sobering twenty-first century educational statistics in New Zealand enables the researcher to more fully appreciate the importance of findings that connect increased Indigenous education to increased levels of Indigenous entrepreneurial success. A mere twenty-eight percent of Māori aged fifteen years and over have a post-school educational qualification and forty percent of New Zealand's Māori population have no formal education qualification, which is significantly higher than twenty-five percent for New Zealand as a whole without formal qualifications (Statistics New Zealand, 2006). When these crucial statistics are combined, it becomes clear that nearly two in five members of the Māori population fifteen years and older have no formal educational qualifications. While some segments of the Māori population undoubtedly have achieved solid economic development since the late-twentieth century, very high levels of unskilled Maori workers cyclically give rise to high levels of unemployment, poverty, overcrowded housing, reduced life opportunities for children and increased levels of all the following indicators of human suffering: poor diet, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, obesity, drug and alcohol abuse, mental and physical trauma, crime and incarceration, domestic violence and so on (New Zealand Ministry of Health, 2010). Poor education arguably and inevitably leads to poverty. This feeds a pattern of descent into welfare dependence and a raft of accompanying negative social and economic outcomes (Cotterill, Rosandich, and Rosandich, 2009). This reality is in stark contrast to the mischievous 'myth' of Māori 'privilege' that is regularly propagated and circulated by popular media and some politicians, most notably in the wake of individual treaty of Waitangi settlements. To provide background, Treaty of Waitangi claims and settlements have been the cause for social tension in postcolonial New Zealand race relations and politics since 1975. Throughout the past three decades, New Zealand governments have provided formal legal and political opportunities for Māori to seek redress for breaches by the Crown of the guarantees established in the Treaty of Waitangi since 1840 through the Waitangi Tribunal. While it has helped put to rest a number of significant longstanding grievances, the process has been subject to a much criticism. They range across a spectrum from those who believe that the redress is insufficient to compensate for Māori losses, to those who see no value in revisiting painful and contentious historical issues. Despite these attempts by government to redress injustices towards Maori and Maori disadvantage, Māori remain statistically the most under-educated, most highly unemployed, poorest, least healthy, most under-housed, most over-jailed and youngest-dying social group in New Zealand (Statistics New Zealand, 2006). An education program that assists even a small percentage of this marginalised population to take on the role of an active and productive participant in society is at the very least 'economically cost effective' (New Zealand Government, 2009).

While these deplorable statistics are mirrored all around the world for Indigenous peoples, this paper has highlighted Māori circumstances for this minority is the subject of one of more case study analyses to follow. Entrepreneurship education for Indigenous people is a specialist field. The following discussion provides insights into this emerging area of academic interest.

THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF INDIGENOUS ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Some of the latest scholarship both reminds us that entrepreneurial activity is complex, at times chaotic and lacks any notion of linearity, and revisits the perennial question: given all these pedagogical challenges, "can we teach it" (Neck & Greene, 2011). This paper has already endorsed the argument that entrepreneurship can indeed be taught (Katz, 2003; Kuratko, 2005). The teaching of entrepreneurship to Indigenous peoples, however, involves accepting responsibility to not only facilitate the discovery of latent individual talents and the development and implementation of skills so that students may creatively engage with and excel in highly uncertain environments (Neck & Greene, 2011). It must also adopt an inclusive pedagogy, establish a balanced understanding of cross-cultural dimensions of relevant issues (Mackinlay & Barnley, 2010) and foster blended learning. A heavy investment of intellectual capabilities has focused on identifying entrepreneurial 'traits' so that these can be taught in the classroom, beginning with the economic work of McClelland (1965). Around that time, Collins and Moore (1964) identified one core trait of entrepreneurs as the need for independence. Stephens & Jarillo (1990) later identified the psychological characteristics of individual entrepreneurs and Brockhaus and Hiorwitz (1986) contributed a set of personality attributes: the need for achievement, an internal locus of control, the high risk-taking propensity and a tolerance for ambiguity. As business schools grappled within MBA programs with the problem as to how to best teach such traits, researchers including Milner (1996) codified the following personality patterns of entrepreneurs: the 'personal advisor', the 'empathetic super salesperson', the 'real manager' and the 'expert idea generator'. The personality and psychological trait theory of entrepreneurs has since been expanded by researchers and educators. Despite extensive research, there remains no clear causal link between psychological traits research and entrepreneurial behaviour (Cooper, Dunkleberg & Woo, 1988), thereby leaving open the question: are entrepreneurs born or made? There is little known evidence to suggest they are born. Rather, while some have traits, others obtain the necessary skills through a combination of education and skill acquisition (Mazzarol, 2006). This paper works on the premise that entrepreneurs are not born, entrepreneurship skills are neither mysterious nor born of magic. Rather, entrepreneurship is an academic discipline that can be taught (Drucker, 1985; Katz, 2003; Kuratko, 2005). This position then raises another question: how best might Indigenous entrepreneurship be taught and learned?

One particularly concerning aspect of entrepreneurial education content is that it was designed by and is still predominantly reflective of a white, male, bourgeois, Christian mentality. Like management education, it remains dominated by the masculine gender (Ely & Padavic, 2007; Neck & Greene, 2011). The pedagogical implications of entrepreneurial education until the late 1980s, was one of the potential entrepreneur having to fit into to a conformist 'observe, describe and measure approach' that supported pre-existing 'categorisations and correlations' (Christensen and Carlile, 2009). With the growing realisation that entrepreneurship was indeed multidisciplinary, came the borrowing of analytical tools from other disciplines to further develop theory and interactive models. Theoretical refinements influenced teaching and research accordingly. The pursuit of academic rigour and legitimacy gave rise to preferred pedagogies including case study analysis and business plan writing, which educational institutions widely deemed to be 'safe' teaching methods. Entrepreneurial education thus became a linear process (Neck & Greene, 2011). Pedagogical debate has centred on whether entrepreneurship education should advance in a predictive and linear process, or entail both the development of a toolkit of skills and techniques, and practiced experimentation that encourages creativity and innovation (Neck & Greene, 2011). Neck and Greene (2011) observe that while entrepreneurship education is important, it remains constrained by out-dated mainstream approaches. They among others argue that entrepreneurship education requires a new approach that is based on action and practice: a method that is people dependent but not dependent on a given type of person. This philosophical approach must also incorporate a view of learning as a method and the method as being primary to specific content. They advocate that teachers need not teach a discipline but rather teach a method for the individual, to enable and empower 'the self' to 'navigate the discipline' (Neck & Greene, 2011: 68).

The following case studies focus on the ways in which different Indigenous minorities with a low level of mainstream education and skill sets engage in the learning process. This includes the discovery and exploration of 'the self' – personal strengths, weaknesses, motivations and goals – and engagement with emotions and desires that are often neglected in 'normal' educative processes (Savin-Badin, 2000; hooks, 1994). It demonstrates that for the Indigenous student, the classroom need not be a restrictive, repressive and reductive experience that is predominantly shaped by their need to perform rituals and emotional responses that are valued by the dominant system of meaning and pedagogy (hooks, 1994). After briefly reviewing recent developments in Australia and Britain, this paper outlines ways in which Neck & Greene's (2011) approach has been introduced into Indigenous entrepreneurship education by Ahikaa in New Zealand.

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS IN ENTREPRENEURIAL PEDAGOGY: AN ALTERNATIVE

In Australia, the former national liberal government under the prime ministership of John Howard initiated a leadership/entrepreneurship training program known as the 'Enterprise Learning for the 21st Century' project. This initiative was taken up by far too few schools: only forty-seven Australia wide (DEST, 2007). One school that did have the foresight to implement this educational project during the 2004 to 2006 period was the Castlemaine secondary school and adjoining Tertiary and Further Education (TAFE) College in rural Victoria. They accepted the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) funded project with very positive outcomes. When funding for the manager ceased, so too did the initiative. The Castlemaine program very likely became one of the more successful school 'enterprises' due to the entrepreneurial drive and business expertise of the manager, which gave rise to numerous business ventures and industry consultations within the subject areas of Art, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies and English. Students for example established businesses including agricultural production, processing and retailing; book production and distribution; and advisory services to a local century-old iron foundry in business planning, modern methods and product diversification. Two Aboriginal students later proceeded from the DEST project to TAFE education. Had there been a more substantial level of Indigenous student participation, this case study would have been more informative (Pers. Com Castlemaine School Staff, 2006).

Enterprise gestation from within an educational setting however is not a novel concept. A decade or so earlier the Judge Business School at the University of Cambridge in England implemented Social Enterprise teaching and research along similar lines. This produced much positive work-based economic development in the Midlands District which was targeted towards low socio-economic minority groups. It sought to empower minorities groups through training and implanting leadership qualities into individuals (Tracey, Phillips and Haugh, 2005).

Monash University, Gippsland Campus commenced an innovative program several years ago targeting local Indigenous students in the 'Koorie Footprints to Higher Education' program. The philosophy is to encourage a reinvigorated way of thinking about university and Koori community engagement in the Gippsland. An outreach approach is used that makes possible a growing 'Footprint' symbolic of a confident and promising impression of what further education can provide for aspiring Koori Gippsland students and communities by building on the self-esteem of the individual in small steps utilising concepts taken from entrepreneurial development philosophy (Heckenberg, 2006), somewhat similar to scaffolding techniques (Rose, Lui-Chivizhe, McKnight and Smith, 2004).

Taking these developments further, one outstanding organisation that seeks to motivate and empower troubled, economically-at-risk minority groups through teaching entrepreneurship – and most especially youth living in difficult environments – is the New York-based Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship (NFTE). Founded by businessman turned educator, Steve Mariotti in 1987 – who was in 2010 awarded the USASBE Entrepreneurship Educator of the year – NFTE has since reached over 400,000 young people from low income communities, mostly from minority groups. Mariotti has expanded this non-

profit educational operation across twenty-one American states and twelve countries, including New Zealand.

The Entrepreneurship New Zealand Trust delivers a set of NFTE-licenced educational programs that it modified to meet the special needs of local Indigenous people. It operates under the name of Ahikaa, which is a Maori word that means 'keeping the home fires burning'. This is a two pronged reference to growing locally-based entrepreneurial spirit, skills and activity; and through this, to maintaining both Maori control of all things Maori and Maori identity and well-being. Ahikaa programmes primarily target Māori and other Indigenous Pacifica peoples with the aim of building self-confidence, self-motivation, visionary capabilities and entrepreneurial talents and abilities through education. It seeks to empower individuals, families and communities through providing youth with the necessary tools to foster economic sustainability, to enable their full participation in local economies, to link them to a broad range of networks and thus promote the wider well-being of 'the self' and his/her family.

Ahikaa seeks to build upon the existing human capital of Māori youth, (who typically experience poor educational outcomes, akin to those experienced by Aboriginal Australian youth). The Ahikaa pedagogy often identifies unrecognised talents, skills and other resources within the 'person'. It develops these and new skills to significantly increase the individual's social capital. Empirical research has shown that Indigenous human and social capital levels are frequently considerably less than those of members of mainstream settler society, which results in adverse environments for entrepreneurial interaction including networking. This differential is often the product of not only colonial and postcolonial policies of forced social separation and segregation, forced de-Indigenisation and assimilation, and family disruption and dispersal through the forced removal and alienation of children. It is also the outcome of a series of draconian educational policies that in many cases continued until anti-discrimination legislation was introduced during the 1970s. Almost without exception, these policies gave rise to Indigenous minorities being trained only to a level suitable for unskilled manual labour (Foley, 2008B, 2010A).

With correct implementation and management, the Ahikaa program has enormous potential not only for Māori, but also for Indigenous Australians and other minority groups in Australia. This includes the growing refugee and asylum seeker population. The effectiveness of its successful delivery lies in the philosophy and pedagogy of the education program. And in the skilled educators who are purposefully trained in this innovative pedagogy.

After an extensive five-year international search for an appropriate educational program and pedagogy, leading Maori academic, educator and Waitangi Treaty negotiator, Professor Sir Ngatata Love, brought NFTE to New Zealand in 2005. After examining research conducted on NFTE program outcomes by Harvard and Stanford Universities, and Babson College, Sir Ngatata Love identified the NFTE program as highly credible and particularly suited to minority peoples. With generous public and private sector support during the initial stage – including that of Westpac Bank – Sir Ngatata Love formed an advisory team comprising academic, business and community (tribal/and pan-tribal) members and commenced operations from Victoria University in Wellington. It also established additional centres in collaboration with selected 'grass-roots' organisations within target communities. From the outset, this advisory team and later a board of management sought to establish educational pathways that embodied a fusion of NFTE entrepreneurship educational programs with the entrepreneurial traditions of Polynesia and *tikanga* (socio-cultural values) of New Zealand Maori. The resulting vision of Entrepreneurship New Zealand Trust is to provide people of all ages with the necessary skills to:

- first, recognise and capitalise on their strengths
- second, utilise their existing resources most effectively
- third, maximise their individual and group potentials
- and finally, develop, and maintain their own businesses while maximising commercial opportunities

Through its delivery of the NFTE-inspired Ahikaa programs, Entrepreneurship New Zealand Trust is committed to both growing the skills of individuals, families and communities in financial literacy, and

providing tools to enable them to actively participate in local, national and international economies. It works with and within its targeted communities and has built strong networks of Ahikaa graduates who regularly engage with each other, thereby continuing and sharing their learning while providing ongoing support to each other.

Until now, Ahikaa has directed most of its attention towards youth and families who are already disengaged from schools. These youth are the embodiment of current negative educational statistics that indicate that near to fifty percent of Māori leave the compulsory school system with no academic qualifications whatsoever. Working within community centres, *marae* (Māori meeting houses) and educational facilities in the poorest areas – often with third generation gang families – Ahikaa has produced some impressive results. With a client group that has largely been 'written off' by mainstream educators, research tells us that program graduates attain significant gains in self-confidence, self-motivation and a clear sense of career direction. Furthermore, sixty percent of Ahikaa program graduates engage in further career-focused education within twelve months (Cocker and Love, 2009).

In a similar vein to the former DEST-funded Enterprise Learning for the 21st Century project in Australia that sparked student enterprise initiatives from within the education system, Ahikaa is now targeting this study body. The Ahikaa curriculum has been aligned with the National Qualifications Framework in New Zealand, and Entrepreneurship New Zealand Trust is now partnering with mainstream educational organisations. Together they are implementing school-based programmes with the aim of lowering school attrition rates among Maori youth.

Based on the research undertaken by NFTE New York, young people in low-income neighbourhoods harbour similar desires to those of more advantaged young people. They too want a good education, to earn enough money to live well and to make their family proud. Too few however have a clear pathway to get there. What is worse, is that many feel that society expects them to fail. Fifty percent of minority youth in the United States drop out of High School. Statistics are slightly higher in Australian and New Zealand at fifty-four percent (ABS, 2008: 4; ABS, 2007). Eighty-one percent of American students state they would not have dropped out if school programs were more relevant to their real life (NFTE, 2007). During 2011, Steve Mariotti (NFTE, New York) published a list of twenty-four life skills that he believed every young person should know and argued that should these concepts be imparted in schools, this might help to reduce this negative attrition trend (Mariotti, 2011). Ahikaa's school intervention program also seeks to reverse this trend. It aims to make high school more relevant to the preparation of minority (mainly but not exclusively Indigenous Māori) youth for their successful engagement in their local economy. While twenty percent of youth in the United States live in poverty, almost sixty percent – or three times this figure – of Aboriginal youth in Australia live in poverty (Hughes, 2007). The statistics in New Zealand are similar for both Maori and wider Pacifica youth.

IRELAND'S INDIGENOUS MINORITY: THE TRAVELLER

Accomplished female entrepreneur, athlete and philanthropist, Liavan Malin, introduced the New York-based NFTE program to Ireland in 1987. NFTE Ireland is now running programs in Dublin, Limerick, Donegal and Belfast. It has plans to further expand its programs within Ireland in the near future (NFTE Ireland, 2008) and has worked with Traveller groups in West Belfast and elsewhere (Doherty, 2011). Foroige took over Ireland's NFTE program in 2008. This National Youth Development Organisation engages over 50,000 youth annually. Like Ahikaa, Foroige is a community-based organisation. It has developed a unique and flexible pedagogy and is the leading youth organisation across both Northern and Southern Ireland. Research tells us that Foroige not only increases participants' business knowledge. It also increases heightened education and career aspirations, and assists a significant number of young entrepreneurs to continue to run their businesses (Doherty, 2011).

Ireland's Indigenous minority is widely known as the Traveller and less so as the Pavee. The Republic of Ireland's 2006 census revealed that the unemployment rate for Travellers was seventy-five percent compared to only nine percent of the general working-age population (Central Statistics Office, 2007). After making some allowance for a cash economy among the Traveller population, the high levels

of unemployment and of the seasonality or stagnation of a regular income does create severe socio-economic problems for Traveller families. Most notably, during the protracted winter period. More specifically, sixty-three percent of Traveller children under the age of fifteen had already left school (compared with only thirteen percent of children nationally), and Traveller participation in higher education was less than one percent (comparison with thirty percent of the Irish population nationally (Central Statistics Office, 2007). On a transnational basis, ninety-two percent of Ireland's Indigenous Traveller peoples have no higher qualifications, compared to forty-two percent of Aboriginal Australians and twenty-five percent of Maori New Zealanders (Central Statistics Office, 2007; ABS, 2006; Statistics New Zealand, 2006). Based on international statistics alone, there is undoubtedly an urgent need for NFTE-style educational programs tailored to meet the special pedagogical needs of Ireland's Indigenous Traveller community.

The Irish Traveller situation has been compounded by recent cutbacks in national educational programs by the Irish Republic. Its reduction of specialised teacher programs (Irish Traveller Movement, 2011) is short-sighted and bordering on tactics of racial discrimination. When discussions are taken into account between United Nations' advisory groups and the former Australian Human Rights Commissioner about the outcomes of similar exclusive practices, such developments in Ireland might be loosely classified as cultural genocide (Reyhner & Singh, 2010). These cutbacks will undoubtedly in the short term give rise to the downward cycle: of poorer educational attainment, increased poverty as the uneducated becomes increasingly dependent on manual labour, overcrowded substandard housing, followed by an escalation of preventable diseases, reduced socio-economic standards and early death. This pattern is visible across the greater majority of third-world countries, Aboriginal Australia and poorer regions of New Zealand. Recent research tells us that Travellers are invariably discriminated against within 'settler' schools (IT Sligo News). It also highlights that the lack of attendance by Travellers at settler schools is not only because of on-going discrimination (Cavailero, 2011; Danaher, Kenney & Leder, 2009). It is multi-faceted. Non-attendance can also be viewed as an assertion of Traveller identity when parents feel that such schools are disempowering for them and their wider minority community. Both the 1995 Task Force report on the Travelling Community (Report of the Task Force on the Travelling Community, 1995) and a report by the Department of Education (2006) identify the needs for more inclusionary pedagogy and better-funded specialised education assistance. While Traveller teachers in the past had provided Traveller children with such opportunities to enjoy their human right to meaningful education, this has since been withdrawn.

Speaking on Morning Ireland, the Ombudsman for Children, Emily Logan, identified these cutbacks in resource teachers as an example of a "poor choice in education". She argued that:

> *the number of teachers cut in traveller education (773 out of 1200) was disproportionate and that with competing interests for resources, we need to be careful about slashing or cutting budgets by a certain percentage and that more information should be gathered and a child impact analysis was needed* (Independent Irish Catholic News, 2011).

This tragic loss of culturally-relevant formal education, general literacy and development of human capital will create a greater need for NFTE Ireland to develop and deliver their programs to minority Indigenous youth along the lines of Ahikaa. This raises the important question: who will fund these programs? Foroige have run specific programs for Traveller youth in Northern Ireland. They were however forced to cease them prematurely due to staffing problems. Early indicators tell us that Traveller youth engaged enthusiastically in the programs and outcomes were promising (Doherty, 2011). During the second-half of 2011, the author interviewed twenty Travellers below the age of twenty five years who had all left school at the age of fifteen or sixteen. Eighteen of the twenty stated they would have liked to have continued to senior school or college with the aim of achieving employment or a better job. Based on the writer's preliminary investigations and as yet unpublished research findings, as well as other published reports (Department of Education, 2006), there is an urgent need for Foroige to extend their operation in Ireland to cater for the specific educational requirements of Traveller communities.

CONCLUSION

Modified NFTE programmes in Ireland and New Zealand have become global leaders in providing entrepreneurship training, program resources, more inclusive pedagogies, and more socio-culturally relevant learning tools to low-income minority communities around the world. These resources have influenced and aligned with a number of national and international education and entrepreneurship education standards. NFTE's earlier work has influenced private and public perceptions of the capability of youth to learn entrepreneurship concepts and to participate actively in business ownership. Multi-longitudinal research undertaken by Harvard's Graduate School of Education indicates very positive outcomes in general education and the capacity to develop business initiatives.

Ahikaa has incorporated into its education programs the concepts that cross-cultural educators teach more generally under the banner of 'leadership'. This might also be adopted in Australia to maintain Aboriginal forms of pedagogy. There is as yet no tertiary institution or organisation that is prepared to adapt this successful program to the specific needs of Aboriginal Australians.

Public intellectual, Aboriginal activist and anthropologist, Professor Marcia Langton, has recently identified a significant shortcoming in Australia:

> *This problem has contributed to a relative absence of analysis of the economic history of Aboriginal Australians, fostering instead an approach that prioritises the political and cultural rights of indigenous people above the kinds of life–enhancing circumstances that are necessary for them to participate in the economy and create wealth. This kind of essentialism has also resulted in a disregard for the rights of indigenous people as individuals, rather than as communities seeking self-determination, especially with regard to the rights of women and children* (Langton, 2011: 1)

Similar inabilities to apprehend the needs of Indigenous minorities also exist in New Zealand. Neck and Greene argue that Pakeha (non-Maori) are unable to analyse situations and act appropriately due to the inhibiting endurance of colonial paradigms and a general inability to accept 'new' pedagogical approaches to learning (Neck & Greene, 2011). Ahikaa is a teaching and learning program that develops the Indigenous 'self', Indigenous minority families and communities. It is an innovative program that many mainstream and academic institutions have thus far been unable to fully comprehend and/or replicate.

Socio-economic advances by Indigenous minorities are not normally attained through large sweeping programs that cost millions of dollars of public spending driven by bureaucrats with little regard for the outcomes that Langton advocates (2011). A current Australian Research Council-funded project undertaken by the author tells us that hundreds of thousands of dollars have been spent during the past three decades on uncoordinated financial literacy programs for Aboriginal Australians. Not only are these programs mostly uncoordinated and unnecessarily replicated across various states and national institutions, they lack credible methods of outcome measurement and public accountability. This includes the measurement of the effectiveness of financial literacy programs that too often succeed only in keeping a small army of predominantly non-Aboriginal consultants and bureaucrats employed and handsomely remunerated. Based on two years of research by the author, financial literacy education of Aboriginal Australians has been largely ineffective. For the most part, it has been a total failure. Qualitative case studies indicate that the mainstream education system places the blame for this failure on Aboriginal families. By contrast, Aboriginal families believe that the reason why their children have such poor literacy skills lies rather in the failure of insufficiently skilful educators and the education system more broadly.

NFTE programs delivered by community organisations Ahikaa and Foroige provide a promising alternative to mainstream education. The responsibility lies firmly within the entrepreneurship skilling program itself. They have demonstrated that it is possible to engage the minds and hearts of Indigenous

communities through blended pedagogies that are designed in collaboration with and work for Indigenous minorities.

The New York-based NFTE program initiated this educational development in 1987. New Zealand is delivering a purpose-designed program for Maori through Ahikaa. Ireland has shown that it can do likewise with Indigenous minorities. It remains to be seen if Australia can adapt an Ahikaa-type program for its Indigenous youth at risk rather than continue to pay small armies of consultants and bureaucrats to deliver largely ineffective programs. As demonstrated, pre-existing mainstream educational programs too often give rise to alienated, under-educated and under-employed Indigenous minority youth who then get trapped in a downward spiral and become social welfare statistics.

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