

Proposal Title

He Whai Taumarū: Indigenous, Wellbeing-Centred Future Pathways Navigation for Distance Learners

Format: 60-minute interactive workshop

Abstract

This workshop introduces He Whai Taumarū | Leaving to Learn, an indigenous, wellbeing-centred approach to career and pathways navigation developed at Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu, New Zealand's national distance learning school. Responding to the conference theme *Navigating the Future*, the session draws on the metaphor and methodology of ancestral Pacific wayfinding, where navigation relied on stars, environmental knowledge, and cultural wisdom rather than fixed destinations.

He Whai Taumarū reframes pathways work as wayfinding, placing identity, culture, and hauora (wellbeing) at the centre of exploration rather than treating career development as a series of choices to be made. The model integrates real-world learning experiences including shadowing, internships, and community engagement, supported by dedicated roles (kaiārahi and kaiwhakatere) that guide ākonga (learners) through uncertainty toward futures grounded in self-knowledge and connection.

Participants will explore the conceptual framework, engage with practical strategies, and apply these approaches to their own contexts through a facilitated wayfinding activity.

Workshop Objectives

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

1. Describe the key principles of an indigenous, wellbeing-centred pathways framework
2. Explain how identity, culture, and hauora influence future decision-making for diverse ākonga
3. Apply practical strategies that connect ākonga to authentic, real-world experiences
4. Evaluate how wellbeing-centred approaches can strengthen equity and engagement in their own settings
5. Adapt elements of He Whai Taumarū to different educational and cultural contexts

Rationale and Significance

Distance and online learners face distinct challenges in accessing meaningful pathways experiences. Geographic isolation, flexible timetabling, and diverse learning circumstances can limit opportunities for work-integrated learning, community connection, and the relational guidance that supports confident decision-making.

He Whai Taumarū addresses these challenges by:

- Centering ākonga identity and wellbeing as the foundation for exploration
- Creating structured opportunities for real-world engagement regardless of location

- Embedding dedicated navigation support through kaiārahi and kaiwhakatere roles
- Drawing on indigenous frameworks that honour relational, wholistic approaches to learning

This workshop contributes to the international conversation by demonstrating how indigenous knowledge systems can inform innovative, future-focused career development practice, particularly for ākonga in non-traditional educational settings.

Theoretical Foundations

The workshop integrates indigenous knowledge frameworks with contemporary career development and wellbeing research:

Indigenous frameworks

- Te Whare Tapa Whā (Durie, 1984) – holistic model of health and wellbeing
- Te Ara Pounamu (Te Kura, 2021) – personalised, relational learning pathways
- Mata Ārahi Manomano (Ringa Hora, 2024)– identity, leadership, and cultural grounding
- Wayfinding Leadership (Spiller, Barclay-Kerr, Panoho, 2013) - wayfinding, navigating, leadership

Career development theory

- Savickas, M. (2011) – career construction and narrative identity
- Law, B. (1981) – community interaction theory and opportunity awareness
- Reid, L. (2024) - leadership, career guidance programmes, curriculum models

Wellbeing and motivation

- Sopoaga et al (2024) Fonofale Model research
- Bishop, R. (2019) – culturally responsive pedagogy
- Clark et al (2025) Māori youth ecological study

Distance learning

- Moore, M. G., & Kearsley, G. (2012) – learner engagement and agency in distance education

Session Structure

Time	Segment	Description
10 min	Framing the Context	The changing landscape of work and learning; challenges for distance learners; reframing pathways as wayfinding
25 min	He Whai Taumaruru in Practice	Model overview and components (shadowing, internships, EOTC, community engagement); navigation roles; case examples
20 min	Interactive Wayfinding Activity	Participants map a wellbeing-centred approach to their own context; small group discussion

5 min	Synthesis and Reflection	Shared insights; key takeaways and next steps
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Workshop Methods

The session combines:

- Brief presentation with visual storytelling
- Facilitated whole-group and small-group discussion
- Hands-on mapping activity with provided frameworks
- Reflective practice and peer sharing

Participants will leave with a draft wayfinding map for their context and a summary resource outlining the He Whai Taumaruru model and adaptation strategies.

Intended Audience

This workshop is designed for:

- Career guidance and counselling practitioners
- Educators working in online, distance, or flexible learning environments
- Researchers in wellbeing, equity, indigenous education, and career development
- School and system leaders
- Policy makers with an interest in future-focused and culturally responsive education

Alignment with Conference Theme

This proposal directly addresses *Navigating the Future* by:

- Using indigenous wayfinding as both metaphor and methodology
- Positioning career development as navigation rather than selection
- Emphasising adaptability, identity, and wellbeing in preparing learners for uncertain futures
- Presenting innovative, real-world connected practice developed for diverse and geographically dispersed learners

Summary

He Whai Taumaruru offers a paradigm shift, from pathways as decision-making to pathways as wayfinding, grounded in identity, hauora, and connection. This workshop shares an indigenous approach to supporting ākonga in navigating their futures with confidence, purpose, and cultural grounding, contributing a distinctive perspective to global career development practice.

Presenter Information

Trudy Harrison - Kaiārahi-a-motu mō te Whai Taumarū | National Lead for Leaving to Lead, Te Aho o te Kura Pounamu, Ngāti Hako, Ngāti Rāhiri-Tumutumu, Tuhoe.