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CROSSING THE CULTURAL DIVIDE: FUSING INDIGENOUS EPISTEMOLOGY WITH STANDARDS- BASED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR IN-SERVICE TEACHERS

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Abstract

This study reports findings from a yearlong professional development for in-service teachers, which fused national standards in literacy and technology with culturally specific place-based learning. Participants focused on how immigrant populations impacted agricultural and ranching practices on the Big Island of Hawaii, and how this system helped create the deeply rich multicultural population of Hawaii today. Local storytellers, cultural practitioners, tree saddle craftsmen, slack-key guitarists, and writing project directors worked with participants to creatively develop interests and learn stories of place and people. Instructors facilitated participants in creating place-based writing, preserving history, and publishing their work with digital strategies. Using, blogs, wikis, digital movies and podcasts, participants applied the place-based learning to enhance their *'ike maui*-knowledge of place. In addition, these teachers replicated this model of learning with their own students. Findings suggest that this professional development supported participants in developing sensitivity to indigenous epistemology. It also provided them digital tools to express and publish their experiences. Implications of this case study are that place-based learning, indigenous epistemology and national standards for literacy and technology can be combined to further greater understanding of both the home culture and national standards.

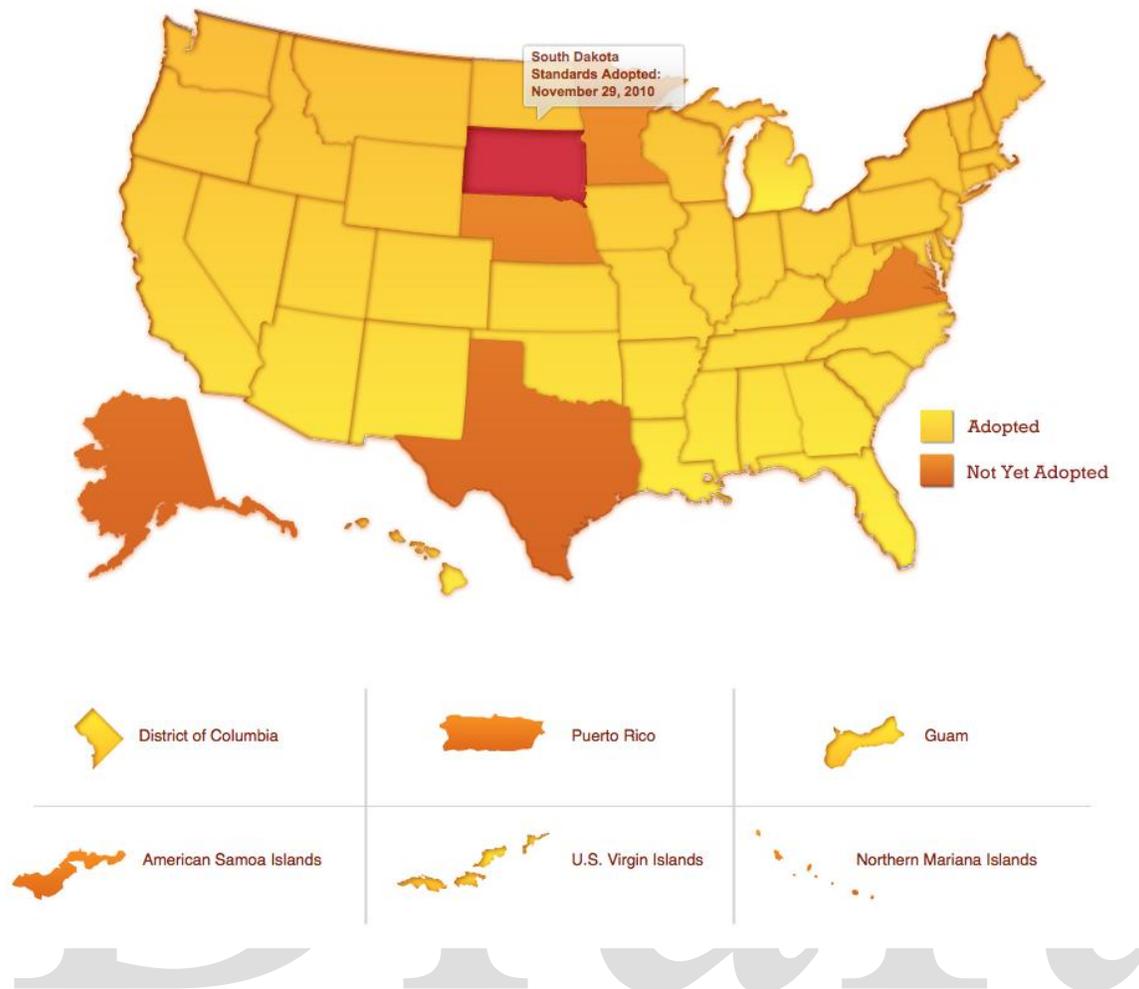
Introduction and Statement of Problem

Hawaiian K-12 educators face unique challenges as they seek to implement the requisite standards-based education in a state separated from the mainland by 2500 miles and separated sociologically by generations of ancient tradition and cultural practices. In order to meet federal guidelines and norms, students must follow the guidelines of federal standards. In order to prepare to do this, in 2010 the Hawaii State Board of Education formally adopted the common core standards with implementation planned in gradual stages and full implementation of math and English/Language Arts being complete in 2013 (Transforming Hawaii's Public Schools, 2010).

The Common Core State Standards define the knowledge and skills students will need to graduate high school fully prepared for college and careers. The standards are:

- Aligned with college and work expectations;
- Clear, understandable and consistent;
- Built upon strengths and lessons of current state standards;
- Informed by other top performing countries, so that all students are prepared to succeed in our global economy and society; and
- Evidence- and research-based.

In compliance with the need to have high achieving schools, Hawaii has an action plan for the implementation of the Common Core Standards. Currently, 45 states and three territories have adopted these standards.



Hawaii's State Superintendent for the Department of Education, Kathryn S. Matayoshi (2011) introduces the state's Strategic Plan for 2011-2018. In this plan, she revealed that Hawaii's goals are threefold:

1. Assure all students graduate college- and career-ready through effective use of standards-based education;
2. Ensure and sustain a rich environment and culture for life-long learners; and
3. Continuously improve the effectiveness, efficiency, and responsiveness of the educational system.

These goals are supported by guiding principles, but do not contain any direct or indirect reference to an epistemology of indigenous peoples; rather, they are focused on norming Hawaiian students with the continental United States common core of standards. Goal #2 seems to address the rich environment and culture for life-long learners, but upon closer examination of the principles that support it, one finds instructional leadership and professional learning and school and family partnerships. Going deeper into the strategic plan, state measures reveal that what is being assessed is:

- Percentage of ninth-grade students retained.
- Achievement gap for the Native Hawaiian and disadvantaged subgroups in Reading and Mathematics.
- Percentage of classes taught by highly qualified and highly effective teachers.
- Percentage of students that report they feel safe at their school, by school type.
- Percentage of elementary and secondary students receiving a *usually* or *consistently* rating on all General Learner Outcomes, Hawaii's indicators of 21st century skills, at the end of the school year.

Hawaii has implemented cultural instruction from local *kumus* (teachers/cultural leaders) from within the community that the schools serve. In addition, textbooks have been adopted that focus on Hawaiian history. However, there is an emphasis on epistemology that is acceptable on the mainland, but is not specific to indigenous populations of host cultures in states such as Hawaii. This dichotomy leads to a cultural divide in not only *what* the host culture learns, but *how* it learns. Educators in Hawaii are faced with

meeting nationally accepted standards—the common core. Concerned with the drop in literacy scores for elementary native Hawaiian populations, the state is implementing programs that use an epistemology consistent with mainland ways of making knowledge in order to increase these scores. These include:

- System alignment and Performance Monitoring.
- Standards and Assessment.
- Data systems to support instruction.
- Great teachers and great leaders.
- Turning around persistently low achieving schools.

(Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform, 2012)

But, Hawaii DOE has not closed the conversation with Hawaiian leaders. The superintendent has created the Hawaiian Education Outcomes Council as an advisor group. The Council consists of Hawaiian service providers and funders who identify existing services and investments and align resources to reduce the achievement gap for Native Hawaiian students. In SY 2010-11, the Council provided an environmental scan of community assets.

Positioned between national standards and Hawaiian epistemology is the Hawaiian DOE. Since the funding for the Race to the Top program (ED.gov, 2012) comes from national resources, the HI DOE must address their requirements in planning school reform and, at the same time, be responsive to the communities they serve by being open to the Hawaiian communities' input. One way to accomplish national standards and meet the

goals of the Hawaiian host culture is through professional development of in-service teachers.

Literature Review and Inquiry Questions

Social anthropologists Jean Lave' and Etienne Wenger (1991) first identified situated learning as learning that is socially constructed within the context that it is applied. This view is particularly interesting for indigenous populations when considered within Gruenewald's (2003, p.7) critical pedagogy of place where "a critical pedagogy of place aims to evaluate the appropriateness of our relationships to each other, and our socio-ecological places (p. 7)" He posits that a

Critical pedagogy of place ultimately encourages teachers and students to reinhabit their places, that is to pursue the kind of social action that improves the social and ecological life of places, near and far, now and in the future.

Pedagogy of place is particularly relevant for Hawaii, the 50th American state that is separated from the rest of the states by 2500 miles of Pacific Ocean, and metaphorically by an ocean of cultural disenfranchisement (Hirtle, 2011). This began in the aftermath of the work by 19th century American missionaries and the overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy by American and European planters and businessmen in the early 20th century. In this cultural genocide, Hawaiians were banned from most of their cultural heritage, including dancing the hula—the ancient method of storytelling through rhythm and movement, speaking the Hawaiian language, and pursuing local farming and fishing

practices that had sustained them for centuries as they lived and prospered in relative isolation from the rest of the world.

Marginalized because of their lack of Eurocentric beliefs and practices, Hawaiians took on the role of the oppressed, both economically and culturally, in this land where they had once enjoyed sovereignty. Hawaiians, along with immigrant groups that included Japanese, Filipino, Portuguese and Chinese, became the working class that helped support the patriarchal plantation system that became the cornerstone of Hawaii's economy. In the 1970's a renaissance of Hawaiian culture began to emerge and "in the face of grassroots movements, legal restrictions on the use of Hawaiian in Schools were removed, and Hawaiian was once again made an official state language (together with English in 1978)" (Warchaeur, Donagy and Kuamo'o, 1997).

Of particular concern to the Hawaiian people are their indigenous epistemologies. Lehua Veincent, indigenous educator, doctoral candidate, and principal of Keahukah Elementary in Hilo, HI posits that ways of knowing are inextricably linked to "one's genealogy, one's history, and one's place; for this is where knowledge begins (2010)." Thus in order for meaningful connections to occur in the process of learning, educators must understand the foundational knowledge that sets learners unique to a specific place, apart from other individuals of different places. He terms this foundational knowledge *'ike maui*.

Ike maui is the foundational knowledge that is passed from one generation to another within a community as a way of securing one's own identity to family,

community, and land. *'Ike maui* sets forth traditional knowledge that provides the needed connection to new knowledge introduced (as cited in Hirtle, 2011).

In order for in-service teachers to know the family, community and land (*aina*) so that they could integrate Hawaiian epistemology and values into their standards-based lessons, Dr. Jan Ray and I took in-service teachers to the *aina* to provide them the opportunity to learn *'ike maui* of the communities they observed. At the same time, we had them use writing and technology to express what they were learning, thus meeting national standards and host culture traditional values. We sought to understand how increasing in-service teachers' own foundational knowledge of the host culture through experiences in the *aina* might be translated into technology-driven multimedia writing experiences, and if and how these teachers' experiences were integrated in these teachers own classrooms.

Description of Program and Methodology

The following is the description published for the Professional Development:

This course, located in three historical places, focuses on how agricultural and ranching practices were impacted by the immigrant populations which supported them, and how this system helped create the deeply rich multicultural population of Hawaii today. Local storytellers, cultural practitioners, tree-saddle craftsmen, slack key guitarists, and writing project directors will work with participants to creatively develop interests and learn stories of place and people. Instructors will facilitate participants in creating place-based writing, preserving history, and

publishing their work with digital strategies. This course extends over three Saturdays where participants meet face to face. In addition, three asynchronous online modules will be available for students' digital literacy development. Finally, participants will create a portfolio for their implementation of this practice and share this in a fourth face-to-face conference in April.

Specific Objectives.

Teachers will be able to perform the following:

1. Read and discover material for use in the classroom that describes a place.
2. Select appropriate material for use in classroom grades K-12 related to journeys of discovery.
3. Mentor students through a writing process that is place-based.
4. Use place to allow students to reflect on the impact of culture, place, and history on their lives today.
5. Create digital products for students to express their place-based writing and experiences and art as a means of expressing their personal journey.

Activities to Achieve Objectives.

1. Attend three place-based class sessions conducted by instructors.
2. Attend three online sessions to develop digital literacy products.
3. Participate in activities designed to foster literacy expressions of the impact of culture, history and place on contemporary living in Hawaii.

4. Participate in collaborative teaming activities that provide opportunities for participants to interact, exchange ideas and share experiences with other participants.
5. Apply the information gained and maintain sustained effort for improved classroom instruction related to writing.
6. Develop a portfolio that contains key course information, strategies designed and implemented in the classroom, and participant reflections.

Contents of Learning Portfolio.

Each participant's learning results portfolio may contain a variety of documents but each document MUST have a caption. Captions transform documents into evidence and assist teachers in articulating their thoughts. A caption is a statement attached to each document in the portfolio that describes

- What the document is
- Why it is evidence
- What it is evidence of.

Requirements for Learning Results Portfolio.

- Two Lesson plans for teaching a unit on Place with a teacher reflection after each lesson is taught.
- Lesson plans must incorporate place, culture, and history
- Journal entries (blog posting) of the teacher's response to content covered during the training session and the impact on their classroom.

- Evidence of student learning related to content covered during each class session: writing and implementation of digital literacy including movies, podcasts, or blog postings.

Analysis, discussion of findings, and conclusion will be presented as part of the program presentation.

- Six student writings that may be reflections, journals, surveys, or some other form of response to a lesson. (Select high, medium, low--rubric attached to each piece and caption)
- Culminating reflection by the teacher at the end of the course describing what was learned and how the content impacted their teaching.

Method of Data Collection and Analysis.

The methodology utilized is grounded theory analyzed for causal comparative relationships. In-service teachers' products and their student products were analyzed separately by coding using constant comparative analysis, memos and theoretical outlines.

Participants.

Eight teachers were participants, seven teachers from the Big Island and one from Oahu. All were in-service teachers. There were five women and two men. One of the women taught in a Kamehameha School (Hawaiian schools funded from the Bishop Estate for children of Hawaiian heritage) and one of the men taught in a charter school dedicated to

inquiry-based learning and outdoor education. Range of years in service was three to 20 years.

Time Frame.

The study occurred over three face to face and three online sessions from September 2010-May 2011.

Data Analysis, Discussion of Findings and Conclusion

The data analysis, discussion of findings and conclusion will be presented at the HIUC conference.

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