Hear us, and protect our mana
Amy Lavini, Massey University

Founded on stories of young peoples’ experiences of being “helped”, ‘Hear Us, and Protect Our Mana’ will look at positive approaches to student support. There is no question that most efforts to support vulnerable students and young people through their transitional phases of life are well intentioned. Unfortunately, good intentions are not enough for ensuring positive outcomes, and can sometimes even do more harm.

This presentation is about highlighting how we sometimes get it wrong but reassuring that it is not actually that hard to get it right. It is about understanding the underpinning values that are key to ensuring that students feel heard, understood, and most importantly, in control of their own journey. Based on findings from the presenter’s own experience and research (A. Lavini, 2011), along with supporting longitudinal studies, this presentation draws on leading international work in the realm of youth development and resilience.

The PARTH model (Resilience Research Centre NZ) and Whare Tapa Wha (Durie, 1994), will be explained as useful foundations for positive practices. The presentation will discuss the bringing together of theory and practice in reference to specific initiatives that are currently underway at Massey University.

Finally, it will be acknowledged that the balancing act of bureaucracy, risk-management, and doing right by the student, is real. Ways for navigating these challenges will be introduced and opened up for discussion.

Reference List:


Learning outcomes
- Attendees will hear the stories, positive and negative, of young people who have been through different support services in Aotearoa and abroad
- Attendees will appreciate the importance of seeing the student as the key-stakeholder in any supports that are put in place for them
- Attendees will leave with strengths-based tools for utilising when supporting students through their tertiary journey
Amy is the Head of Halls at Massey University, Manawatu. She is also the current President of the New Zealand Association of Tertiary Education Accommodation providers (NZATEAP). With a background in youth development, and community/student services, Amy is passionate about ensuring positive service experiences for students and young people when going through their various transitions of development. Key to this is the improvement of organisational structures, processes and values for ensuring support, advocacy and enabling of ‘on-the-ground’ staff. Along with 4 years in the University sector, Amy’s experience comes from working within organisations such as the New Zealand Police, YMCA, and Residential Facilities with the previous Child Youth and Family Services. Such experiences influenced the anecdotal aspect of her Master’s Thesis, A Youth Perspective: Collaboration for Youth Development within Aotearoa, New Zealand – from which her presentation has been influenced.