

KOHANGA REO
THE FOUNDATION FOR
KAUPAPA MAORI
& EDUCATIONAL CHANGE



ISSUES IN EDUCATION - number 3

Programme On Racism
NCC Box 9573, Auckland.

from

University of Auckland Centre for Continuing Education
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Te Kohanga Reo has to a great extent arrested the fear amongst a large number of Maori people that their language is dying. The fear that now arises, is where do our young go to from there? The present schooling process is clearly inadequate in developing further the linguistic competence of Kohanga Reo graduates.

BASIC STATEMENTS

1. The whole nature of schooling, including staffing bureaucracy and red tape, makes significant cultural change an extremely slow, frustrating, exasperating business.
2. It is the place of the school to transmit the culture of the nation. Maori is the other, often neglected, main cultural heritage of New Zealand.
3. Schools should be places where human relationships are given priority.
4. The potential of young Maori is barely touched upon but is nevertheless very real.
5. By returning to many traditional Maori values in partnership with parents, kaumaatua and community, perhaps young Maori potential can be realized.

PRINCIPLES

1. Maori means must be used to achieve Maori ends.
2. The mandate for all Maori programmes must arise from co-operation with parents, community, and, in particular, kaumaatua.
3. There must be parity in decision-making.
4. Maori attitudes, values, cultural skills and, most importantly, language must be taught in a Maori way.
5. Priority must be given to developing Maori children's self-image and concept by bombarding them with success primarily based on achieving Maori things in Maori ways.
6. Programmes of work build on the strengths children bring with them to school by discarding racist models of cultural deprivation and linguistic deficiency.
7. The marae must be seen and used as a natural complement to the school (and, in extension, to the total community).
8. Maori must be seen as part of the cultural heritage of ALL New Zealanders.

RECOMMENDATIONS

SOCIETAL

That Maori be recognised in law as the other official national language of New Zealand.

That the Media reflect more accurately the bicultural-bilingual nature of our society by:

- establishing a Television Production Unit to produce programmes in Maori (cf Te Karere)
- producing Radio and Television programmes which reflect Maori values and language in a style designed to capture children's imaginations (cf Korero Mai)
- producing Maori Radio Stations in the major areas where Maori live
- carrying a percentage of all news, advertising and features on and in Maori.
- establishing Maori Advisory Units.

That a permanent Trustee/Commission be established with responsibility for preserving and promoting the Maori language.

That Maori people themselves be encouraged to use Maori language functionally in all areas of society and education.

That all possible efforts be made to encourage the majority culture to accept the bicultural reality of New Zealand Society.

SCHOOLS

That the construction and decor of schools represent aspects of traditional Maori values, arts and crafts.

That ways and means of permeating Maori values, attitudes and language into all aspects of the life of the school be pursued.

That mature Maori be recruited and retrained to fill officially recognized and paid guidance and advisory roles.

That Form - VII schools be established in place of the existing Intermediate-Secondary structure.

That the Area school concept of Infants-Form VII be experimented with in urban areas.

PRIMARY SCHOOLS

That the concept of the 'Native School' be reinvestigated to cater for graduates of the Kohanga Reo.

That 'Bilingual Units' be established in selected Primary Schools strategically located so that they are accessible to children currently attending a number of Kohanga.

That the Education Department establish a register of all those fluent in Maori who would be able to staff such units.

That these schools be designated 'Special Schools' under Section 98 of the Education Act 1964.

That where bussing is necessary, the Education Department pay for the service.

That staffing in these units be of competent, trained, successful teachers, fluent in Maori.

That parents, community people and kaumaatua fluent in Maori be actively recruited to assist in these units as paid teacher aides.

That a liaison/advisory service be established whose task is to liaise between Kohanga Reo, Primary Schools and Education services. Fluency in Maori is a prerequisite of the officers in this service.

That the officers of this service be responsible to the Kohanga Reo Advisory Board.

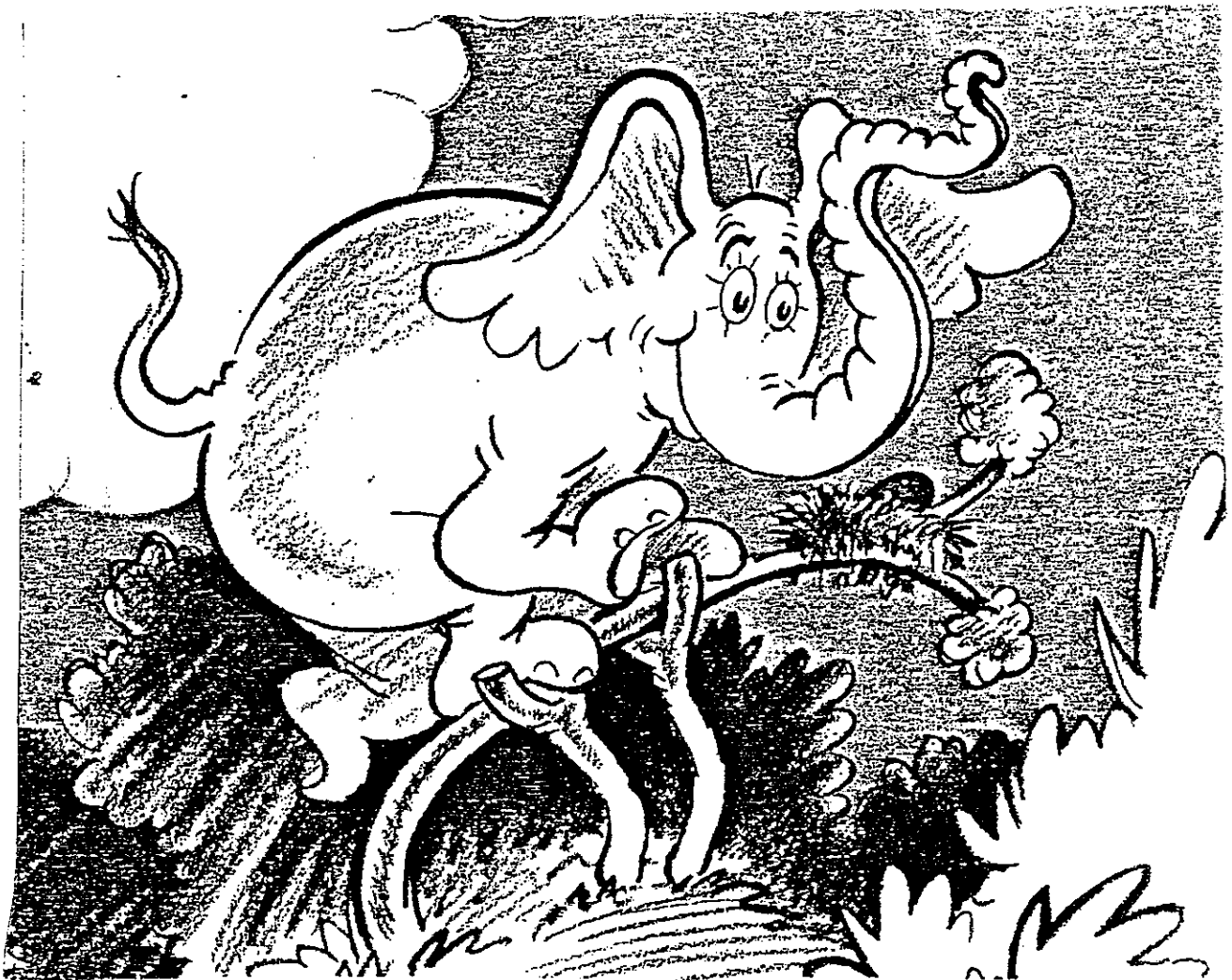
PRE-SCHOOLS (Specific Immediate Concerns)

That part of the Education budget be channelled toward Kohanga Reo comparable to that of the Kindergarten role.

That facilities be made available to train fluent speakers of Maori in principles of Early Childhood Care.

A FIRST STEP

- WHY WE TAKE OUR EIGHTEEN-MONTH-OLD CHILD TO TE KOHANGA REO



We are a pakeha family of three. Our roots in Aotearoa go back six and seven generations yet we are conscious that for all of that time we have lived as monocultural Europeans. Some of our ancestors were on the first ships that came to create Christchurch as a Church of England settlement - more English than England itself. As pakeha settlers we have lived as foreigners, isolating ourselves from the language, culture and rich heritage of the indigenous people of the land. But more than this, we have tried to isolate the Maori from their own culture and heritage. We have waged war on the Maori and tried to create them in our own image. As pakeha Christians we feel a deep sense of shame over the relationship we have forged with the Maori. When we hear the story of our relationship with them we hear a story of crucifixion, a story of oppression, conquest and injustice. We have been party to this crucifixion. Our shame causes us to seek to be part of a resurrection story. To live here with any integrity we must break out of our colonial mentality and oppressive way of relating to the Maori. We must learn to share power. We must learn what it means to be manuhiri, guests of the tangata whenua, the people of the land.

For us personally this means we must undergo a fundamental conversion and rebirth from monoculturalism to biculturalism. Our past lies firmly rooted elsewhere, but our present and we hope our future is in Aotearoa.

A first concrete step along the way is becoming bilingual. So since our daughter Gemma was fourteen months old we have shared taking her to Te Hau Kapua, one of two Kohanga Reo in Devonport. It is a major commitment as it involves three days of the week.

As pakeha parents we are very conscious that we have a choice as to which world we bring our child into. We are not only making a choice between a pakeha pre-school environment and a Maori one, we are also choosing for her community over individualism, co-operation over competition and a spiritual world over a secular world. We are also conscious that we are making a choice for future generations, a choice which many of our living generations do not accept.

At first we found Te Kohanga Reo strange. We felt foreign and alien. (Being pakeha in the minority we found ourselves asking the question "Is this what it's like to be Maori in pakeha society?") But as we got to know the people, a little language and the way of doing things we were able to relax more and feel a part of what was happening.

Te Kohanga Reo is much more than a place where language is learnt. It is a whole environment based on the whanau. Through it Maoritanga breathes and gives life to children and parents alike. The Maori world is experienced and named. Te Kohanga Reo is not a babysitting service, and it isn't something that is restricted to time or place. It is something living that is taken back into the home where it is nurtured and grows. Our family life has been deeply enriched by Te Kohanga Reo.

Through our commitment to a bicultural future for our family we feel ourselves becoming deeply affected by pakeha racism in the current debate over the Education Core Curriculum Review. If the pakeha-controlled education system will not cater for Maori needs, is there any alternative to separatism?

Sue Spindler + Mark Gibson
+ Gemma.