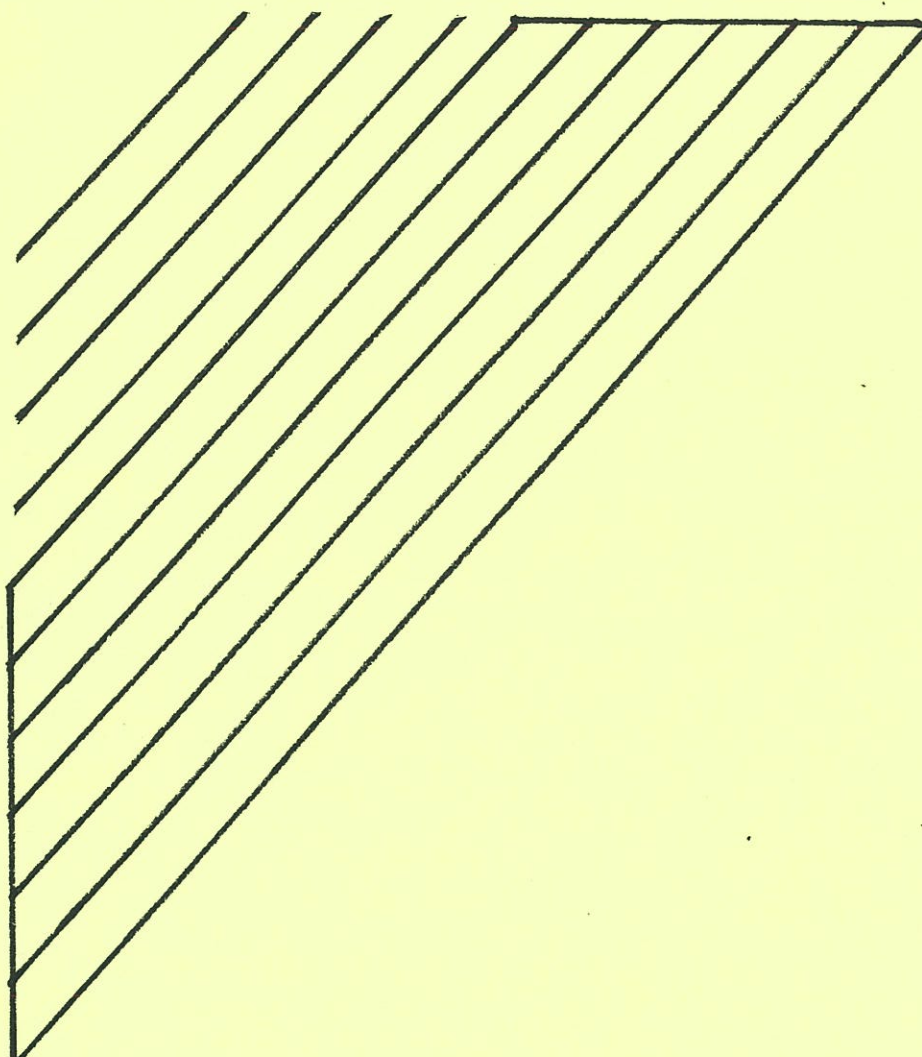


# THE MAORI RESPONSE TO EDUCATION



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## INTRODUCTION

European expansionism into the Pacific in the Nineteenth Century saw Anglican missionaries establish themselves in New Zealand in 1814. For the missionaries, conversion of the indigenous Maori population to Christianity was synonymous with transforming the Maori from barbarism to civilized life. Maori practices and social usages were regarded as abominations to be extirpated.

The missionaries were the advance party of cultural invasion which in Friere's analysis "involves a parochial view of reality, a static perception of the world, and the imposition of one world view upon another. It implies the superiority of the invader and the inferiority of those who are invaded."

The Pakeha invader was not slow in reifying his sense of superiority by building it into the institutional structures of the new society. The mission schools taught only the standard subjects of the English school system, namely English, reading, writing, arithmetic and catechism.

Governor Grey who saw assimilation as resolving the position of the Maori in the new society strengthened the mission schools. His 1847 Education Ordinance earmarked one tenth of government revenue to subsidise church schools which would take children away from "the demoralising influences of their villages". Clearly education was the instrument by which the Pakeha was to subvert Maori culture and establish a monocultural social order.

In 1867 Grey established the Native Schools system for Maori communities. Essentially the Native Schools used the same syllabus as the public board schools. The one concession to Maori pupils was the expectation that teachers in junior classes would have sufficient knowledge of Maori to induct new entrants and establish school routines. Thereafter English as the medium of instruction was to displace the Maori language altogether.

Progress in Maori education was slow. In 1897 the Native School Inspector attributed lack of progress to difficulty with the English language. The fault lay with the Maori and not with the education provision. This shifting of blame validates Friere's contention that "for cultural invasion to succeed, it is essential that those invaded become convinced of their intrinsic inferiority".

After 1900 the authorities took a hard line against the native tongue. Children were forbidden to speak Maori within the precincts of the school. Over-zealous teachers administered corporal punishment to children who failed to comply with the unwritten regulation. Gradually this oppressive policy began to take effect. In 1900 over 90% of school entrants spoke Maori as their first language. By 1960 this had fallen to 25%. In 1930 an attempt by the New Zealand Federation of Teachers to reverse this policy of language suppression by having Maori included in the curriculum was blocked by T.B.Strong, the Director of Education. In Strong's view "the natural abandonment of the native tongue involves no loss to the Maori".

In extending his analysis of cultural invasion, Friere sees the elite leaders of the dominated society to a large extent acting as mere brokers for the leaders of the metropolitan society. Certainly Ngata, perhaps the greatest Maori leader of this century, acted as broker in the manner described by Friere. At a Maori Welfare Conference in 1936 he said that if he were to devise a curriculum for Maori schools he would make English four out of the five subjects of instruction. Three years later, Ngata changed his mind. He concluded that there was nothing worse than a person with the physical identity of a Maori but could not speak his own language. Thus, Ngata as a man of vision perceived as did Friere thirty years later that "at all stages of their liberation the

oppressed must see themselves as people engaged in the ontological and historical vocation of becoming more fully human".

Although Ngata's perception changed, the subversive role of education towards Maori culture and identity was firmly entrenched by what Friere terms the "depositing myths" indispensable to the preservation of the status quo. For example, Maori language was held to be inferior because it had no "literature"; English was the language of commerce so there was no "use" for Maori. At a more insidious level these myths established the superiority of the Pakeha and inferiority of the Maori. Thus Maori people were told they were good with their hands, therefore they made good carpenters and truck drivers. The effect of these depositing myths is that the invader "imposes his own contours on the vanquished who internalise this shape and become ambiguous beings 'housing' another".

A study by Vaughan using pictures and dolls to establish ages of ethnic awareness showed that Pakeha children had sorted ethnic categories as early as five and six years of age. Maori children on the other hand identified themselves as Pakeha up until the age of seven and in some cases as late as nine. Vaughan reasoned that this phenomenon of cross-ethnic identification is not a misperception of reality but an indication of a desire to become like the Pakeha. By that age children have learned (from the invader's depositing myths) that minority status is inferior. Eventually they realise that the task of transcending social, cultural and ethnic boundaries (except in the case of gifted individuals under appropriate circumstances) is almost impossible. They then accept their identity as Maori. It is at this time during the middle elementary school years that Maori children become withdrawn and troublesome. By the time they reach high school, absenteeism and truancy are well established as patterns of adjustment to the uncongenial nature of schools.

#### TRANSFORMATION FROM MONOCULTURAL TO BICULTURAL EDUCATION

Friere's view that "knowledge of the alienating culture leads to transforming action resulting in a culture which is being freed from alienation: is borne out by the Maori experience. The basic philosophy for this transformation was laid down in a poem penned in a child's autograph book by Ngata. Although some of the imagery is lost in translation it does convey the concept of cultural synthesis as discussed by Friere:

Grow, tender shoot, for the days of your world!  
 Turn your hand to the tools of the Pakeha for the  
 well-being of your body.  
 Turn your heart to the treasures of your ancestors  
 as a crown for your head.  
 Give your soul unto God, the author of all things.

Ngata himself initiated the long fight for cultural recognition to have the Maori language introduced into the New Zealand University Colleges. After a twenty year battle, Maori studies was established at Auckland University in 1951. To refute criticism from the Professor of Romance Languages that Maori did not merit elevation to the status of academic study because there was no literature, Ngata collected the oral literature of the Maori and published the two volume work Nga Moteatea (songs and poems).

In the meantime other forces were at work which were to have a profound effect in transforming the education system from its monocultural assimilationist philosophy to recognition of biculturalism. The primary variable was the rapid

recovery of the Maori population from the trauma of colonisation. From its lowest point of 45,549 in 1901, the population almost doubled to 82,326 by 1936. By the 1971 census the Maori population was 227,414 - close to 10% of the total population.

The second significant variable was the urban migration. Up to 1926 only 9% of the Maori population lived in towns and cities. By 1956 this had increased to 24% and by 1971 over 50%. By 1958 the rural-urban shift meant that 71% of Maori children were being educated in public schools. These schools were not equipped with teachers to deal with Maori children. The education gap between Maori and Pakeha which had hitherto been masked by the capacity of the tribal hinterland to absorb the failures could no longer be ignored. In 1960 the Hunn Report identified a statistical "blackout" of Maoris in higher education. At secondary school only 0.5% of Maori children reached the seventh form, compared with 3.78% for Pakehas. Maori representation at university was only one eighth of what it should have been.

Maori people responded to the findings of the Hunn Report in a dynamic manner. They launched a vigorous fund-raising campaign in 1962 for the Maori Education Foundation proposed by the report. One of the effects was heightened interest in education. Maori Education Advancement societies were formed in Wanganui, Bay of Plenty and other places. Maori Leadership conferences organised by Auckland and Victoria Universities used the Hunn Report as an important study document to promote interest in Maori education. At this time the play centre movement was launched in New Zealand and Maori people accepted it wholeheartedly because it revolved around parental involvement and community control.

The lowering of entrance qualifications from matriculation to school certificate in the immediate post-war years for teacher training together with the institution of a Maori quota had a profound effect on the teaching profession. Over a ten year period close to 400 Maori were trained as teachers before the quota system came to an end with the abolition of the Maori schools in 1969. Thereafter as teacher training intakes were oversubscribed, qualifications were raised and fewer Maori people gained entry into teaching.

The Maori teachers began transforming the education system by increasing the Maori cultural content of their social studies programmes and pressing for other reforms as well. In 1960 Maori studies courses were established at Auckland and Wellington teachers' colleges. Up to this time the Education Department was a monocultural Pakeha preserve. The secondment of the late Mr. J. Waititi to the Department to write a Maori language text established the first foothold. Waititi, like Ngata before him, immersed himself in the task of transforming the education system.

Increasingly the Officer for Maori Education and the Inspectors of Maori Schools found themselves consulting Mr Waititi on Maori education. Mr Waititi's efforts at consciousness-raising within the Department culminated in his appointment in 1963 as assistant to the Officer of Maori Education.

The Hunn Report together with growing Maori consciousness stimulated a fertile period of reassessment of the suitability of educational provision for Maori pupils. In 1967 the New Zealand Education Institute's report on Maori education reflected the growing awareness of biculturalism:

A modification of opinion and policy has slowly upgraded the place of Maoritanga in New Zealand society. This reversal has been brought about by the Maoris themselves, but many present ills are the direct result of misguided past policies. It must be remembered that the Maori is both a New Zealander and a Maori. He has an inalienable

right to be both and to be consciously both and he is likely to be a better citizen for being both.

An even more potent report was produced by the National Advisory Committee on Maori Education in 1971. The report established what Maori people wanted from the education system.

- 1) That cultural difference need to be understood, accepted and respected by children and teachers.
- 2) That the school curriculum must find a place for the understanding of Maoritanga, including the Maori language.
- 3) That in order to achieve the goal of equality of opportunity, special measures need to be taken.

Half the members of the committees that produced the NZEI and NACME reports were Maori, thus validating Friere's view that the great humanistic and historical task of the oppressed is to liberate themselves and their oppressors as well.

Maori assertiveness for cultural recognition was difficult to deny. Existing strategies of cultural denial had obviously failed to promote social equality by assimilation. In 1966 the report of the Maori Education Foundation noted that 85.5% of Maori pupils left school without any recognised qualifications. By 1969 the figure had been lowered to 79% (see Table 1). But this was not a substantive gain as the figure was lowered by recognising one and two subject passes in school certificate and not by complete passes.

TABLE 1

Source 1969 Report Maori Education Foundation	NUMBER		PERCENTAGE	
	Non-Maori	Maori	Non-Maori	Maori
ATTAINMENTS				
University Scholarship	134	-	0.3	-
University Bursaries examination	2,163	8	5.0	0.2
Higher School Certificate	2,564	53	6.0	1.0
University Entrance	5,011	73	11.7	1.4
Endorsed School Certificate	4,277	273	10.0	4.7
School Certificate, 3 or more subjects	6,039	218	14.0	4.3
School Certificate, 2 subjects	2,510	189	5.3	3.7
School Certificate, 1 subject	2,634	293	6.1	5.7
Other	17,685	4,034	41.1	79.0
	43,017	5,105	100.0	100.0

The statistical blackout of Maoris in education identified by Hunn was still there after a decade of effort. The stage was set in the seventies for the acceptance of new strategies. Attention was drawn to the denial of Maori identity as perhaps the most important single factor within the school situation that incapacitates a child's ability to relate to school. This observation has been made elsewhere by Foote that "when doubt of identity creeps in action is paralysed. Only full commitment to one's identity permits a full picture of motivation. Faith in one's conception of one's self is the key which unlocks the physiological resources of the human organism, releases the energy (or capacity as Dewey would say) to perform the indicated act".

Fortunately Maori assertiveness and proposals for the adoption of alternative strategies in education for Maoris coincided with the advent of liberal men in the hierarchy of the Education Department. Even more fortuitous was the appointment of a liberal Minister of Education in the 1972 Labour Government. The Minister of Education in the 1975 National Government was equally liberal and actually took the trouble to learn the Maori language and sit the school

certificate examination.

The 1970s were marked by rapid reforms in education that substantially reversed the former policy of assimilation by cultural denial. By 1973 all seven teachers' colleges had established courses in Maori studies. In 1974 the Education Department, in response to the challenge of Nga Tamatoa<sup>1</sup> to broaden Maori language teaching in secondary schools<sup>2</sup> by instituting a one year training course for native speakers of Maori, established the programme with an intake of 46 adult students in the first year. Since that time more than 170 teachers of Maori have been trained under the scheme.

Within the Education Department itself, five new positions for specialist advisers in Maori education were established in 1973. A further position for the South Island was established in 1975 as a consequence of the Southward migration of the Maori population.

Maori studies and Maori language courses now became fashionable in both primary and secondary schools. In response to the demand, the Education Department created thirty new positions for Itinerant Maori Teachers (ITMs). Each ITM was responsible for advising on course development in seven primary schools in a given area.

The impact of Maori language teachers, specialist advisers in Maori education and Itinerant Teachers of Maori has been remarkable. Prior to 1970 only ten secondary schools taught Maori language. Nine years later the Maori language was being taught in 171 secondary schools to 15,000 pupils (there are 397 secondary schools in New Zealand). Bicultural education is so much in vogue that close to 50% of these pupils are non-Maori. At the primary school level where the growth is even greater the ITM staff has been expanded to 40. There are 250 primary schools offering Maori studies to 50,000 pupils.

School field studies to both rural and urban marae are now commonplace. Annual oratory contests in Maori language, cultural competitions and festivals are promoted between schools on both a regional and national basis. The value now placed on Maori identity and culture in schools is reflected in the growing pride of Maori children and the widening respect for biculturalism in the general community.

## CONCLUSION

In the last century the English colonists who settled New Zealand sought to impose their culture on the indigenous Maori population. Institutional structures were transplanted from England to New Zealand with little or no attempt made to accommodate them to the needs of the Maori people. Indeed, the education system was not only monocultural, but actually used as an instrument to subvert Maori culture and implement the policy of assimilation.

Maoris resisted education. Although much of their traditional culture was eroded, sufficient of it survived the trauma of colonisation so that Maori people remain culturally distinct from the Pakeha New Zealander. Associated

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1 Maori activist group formed 1970. Their original challenge was to develop Maori language teaching in Primary Schools. This was modified



with the population recovery after the turn of the century was a vigorous regeneration of Maori culture. That regeneration of Maori numbers and cultural aspirations made themselves felt in the education system in the 1960s. Maori people transformed the education system to recognise and accommodate to the fact that there were two main cultural streams in New Zealand society.

The inclusion of Maori language and culture in the education system after more than a century of exclusion is a remarkable reversal of policy. That transformation was accomplished by Maori infiltration of the teaching profession and then the Education Department itself. A similar transformation has occurred in the Department of Maori Affairs where Maori people now hold the senior positions.

As Maori people approach the 1980s, the task ahead is to transform other bureaucracies such as the departments of Justice, Welfare and so on, to reflect the bicultural and multicultural nature of New Zealand society. The transformation of the education system provides the model. It is an encouraging start and indicates that minorities are capable of ordering their own destiny and maximising their own choices and life chances.

R. Walker  
1979

#### NOTE

The 1980s have brought newer and bolder attitudes towards education among Maori people, reflected in movements like that for Kohanga Reo, and for the further adjustments which those children will require throughout the system. Increasing awareness of the urgency of the situation in which the Maori language is declining is reflected in other pamphlets in this series.

The Maori Education Development Conference, at which many of the papers were presented, represents a consolidation and empowerment of Maori opinion which is already putting further pressure on the education system to meet the needs and aspirations of Maori pupils. In fact there is a growing pressure to transfer resources outright, to enable Maori teachers, working with the Maori community, to respond directly to those needs and aspirations.