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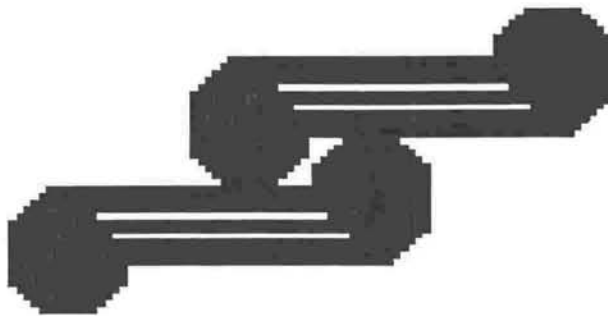
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He Ao Rereke

Education Policy and
Maori Under-achievement:
Mechanisms of Power and Difference



by

Patricia Maringi G. JOHNSTON

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of
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1998

Mo Nga Tupuna o Ngai Te Rangi - Ngati Ranginui

Tu moke moke ana au i runga Mauao
Ka hoki mahara kia ratou ma
Ko enei ra nga nohonga tupuna
O Ngai Te Rangi o Ngati Ranginui
Timata ra taku haere i Otawhiwhi
Kei reira ra tu mai koe Tamaoho
Hoki whakaroto au ki Katikati
Rereatukahia ko Tamawhariua
Haere tika tonu au ki te Pirirakau
Kai Omokoroa ko Tawhitinui
Kei Te Puna ko Paparoa ko Tutereinga
Ko Potuterangi
Heke tonu atu au ki tatahi
Tiro whaka waho au ki Motuhoa
Tiro whaka muri au ki Rarapua
Kupapa atu au ki raro Okemoke
Piki tonu atu au ki Pukewhanake
Whakawhiti atu au te awa Wairoa
Ko Ngati Kahu ko Ngati Pango
Peke atu au ki Peterehema
Kei reira ra ki Ngati Hangarau
Kei Otumoetai kua ngaro ratou
Hoki whakaroto atu ano taku haere
Ngai Tamarawaho kei Huria
Rere tika tonu au ki Hairini
Tu mai koe ko Ranginui
Ko Ngai Te Ahi ko Ngati He

Tiro muri whenua ki Waimapu
Tiro runga maunga ki Taumata
Rere tika tonu au ki Maungatapu
Rauna atu taku haere ki roto Waitao
Ko Tahawhakatiki ko te Whetu
Tu mai koe Ngati Pukenga
Kei Maungatawa ko Tamapahore
Nga papaka enei o Rangataua
Rere tika tonu atu taku haere
Ki Hungahungatoroa ki Whareroa
Te iwi kaunei ko Tukairangi
Peke atu au ki Waikari
Kei reira ra ko Tapukino
Kau atu te Moana ki Matakana
Ko te Rangihouhiri
Kei Opureora ko koe ra
Ko Tuwhiwhia
Kei te Kutaroa ko Tauaiti
Kai Rangiwaewa te Haka a te Tupere
Kei Opounui Romainohorangi
Moe mai ra koro Tupaea
I raro i te marumaru o Te Maunga
Tiro whaka waho ki aku moutere
Ki Motiti ki Tuhua tu mai koutou Ngai Tauwhao
Hoki, piki ano ki runga Mauao
Hei whakamutunga mo enei haerenga
I roto Te Moana o Tauranga
E tau nei e Hi!

Abstract

In acknowledging continual educational under-achievement of Maori children, this thesis investigates the relationship between education policy and Maori under-achievement. It argues that under-achievement is framed within boundaries of changing recognitions and realisations of power and difference: that conceptions of difference have influenced education policy and schooling practices for Maori.

Theoretically, the thesis examines 'what counts as difference' and 'what differences count'. In recognising that unequal power relations between dominant and subordinate groups produce distinct views about difference, 'what counts as difference' encompasses the perspectives of dominant groups and 'what differences count', subordinate groups. The former view is developed to expand the basis for investigating 'Pakeha conceptions of difference', and the latter, 'Maori conceptions'.

The thesis traces the interactions and relationships of 'difference' and 'power', and examines, historically, how they have contributed to and sustained Maori educational under-achievement. The contribution of these conceptions of difference to informing schooling practices is investigated through four sequential 'Classification Schemes' of Assimilation, Integration, Multiculturalism and Biculturalism.

The thesis argues that Biculturalism is based on a positive view of Maori cultural differences, and examines the extent of Maori influence on four recent education policy making processes. The thesis also acknowledges a Maori focus on the importance of structural differences for addressing their needs. On the basis of those two different perspectives, the thesis develops the concepts 'Maori-friendly' and 'Maori-centred', to examine processes, and structures and the relative influence of Maori on mainstream policy forming processes.

The thesis shows that Tomorrow's Schools, Education for the Twenty-First Century and the Maori Affairs Select Committee Inquiry encapsulate different degrees of both Maori-friendly and Maori-centred approaches, though arguing that ultimately, it is Pakeha conceptions of difference that inform and influence all the policy forming processes. However, the fourth policy process examined was originally a wholly Maori-centred initiative – Te Kohanga Reo. The thesis points to and traces the incorporation of Te Kohanga Reo into the mainstream education system and its consequences for Maori, and concludes that structural differences ensure continuing Pakeha control over Maori conceptions of difference and henceforth Maori educational under-achievement.

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Abbreviated Terms

AJHR	<i>Appendices to the Journals of the House of Representatives.</i>
AforE	<i>Administering for Excellence</i>
E21C	<i>Education for the 21st Century</i>
E21C (dd)	<i>Education for the 21st Century: Draft Document</i>
MASC	<i>Maori Affairs Select Committee</i>
MCD	<i>Maori Conceptions of Difference</i>
MEG	<i>Maori Education Group</i>
MLFF	<i>Maori Language Factor Funding</i>
MoE	<i>Ministry of Education</i>
MOOHR	<i>Maori Organisation of Human Rights</i>
MWWL	<i>Maori Women's Welfare League</i>
NACME	<i>National Advisory Council for Maori Education</i>
NZEI	<i>New Zealand Educational Institute</i>
NZPPTA	<i>New Zealand Post Primary Teachers Association</i>
PCD	<i>Pakeha Conceptions of Difference</i>
T/Ss	<i>Tomorrow's Schools</i>
TKR	<i>Te Kohanga Reo</i>
TPK	<i>Te Puni Kokiri</i>
TRU	<i>Tino Rangatiratanga Unit</i>
WCD	<i>What Counts as Difference</i>
WDC	<i>What Differences Count</i>
WES	<i>What do we Want from our Education System?</i>

Diagrams

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Preface

This thesis examines notions of difference. In writing it I have come to realise that I have always known about difference.

My life has been arranged by neat little 'boxes' that have sought to label and position me along predetermined pathways that were not authentic or true representations of who I am. The boxes and their labels did not empower me. Nor did they validate me. Instead, they confused me, sought to distance me from my origins, denying me the right to be who I am.

I spoke Maori at school just the once. A boy in front accused me of swearing and saying some dirty words. My arguing with the teacher that 'e noho' meant sit down (because I couldn't see the blackboard) seemed to infuriate her.

I got the strap.

It was my first day at school.

I never spoke Maori at school again.

Children at school told me I was different from them, because my Pakeha father and my Maori mother made it so. Having parents from two different 'races' was not unheard of in the 1960s but it wasn't widely accepted either.

The prejudices were related to notions about racial contamination and the danger of mixing bloods. My father's bloodline was thought to improve the 'native stock'. My mother's bloodline was thought to contaminate the 'colonial stock'. I was the resulting contamination and the messages about my 'mixed blood' were made clear – far too often.

Some of the words used to describe me were

“Half-caste, half-caste, dirty little half-caste”

“Half cast, Quarter caste, Stick your finger up your a...”

Some just came straight out and called me a nigger.

Kids would do mean things to us at school. I remember being made to drink soured milk left in the sun all morning. My sickness added to the hilarity that my discomfort was seen as by other children.

I tasted my first worm when I was six years old and the leaves of a 'pepper tree' that I was forced to chew left blisters in my mouth for days. I was angry at primary school. I stole children's lunches, not to eat, just to get even. I sabotaged their work and hid their schoolbags.

I used my wits to outsmart them and beat them.

I learnt to retaliate.

I learnt to survive.

Some kids wouldn't play with me. I was a 'dirty Maori' and it didn't matter how hard I scrubbed my skin, I still stayed brown. I have scars on my elbows from being dragged around a tennis court, the legacy of idle curiosity as to whether or not 'Maoris' had red blood or black.

I was always made to feel inadequate and the feeling that I was never worthy followed me around most of my schooling days. I noted the few Maori children at the schools I attended. My brothers and I were usually either the only Maori children or one family of a few. We put up with the meanness of being singled out and humiliated. We noticed that we were the only children ever strapped. We endured the sarcasm and territory – cannibal, savage, damn native – that went along with being Maori.

I always felt inferior, of never belonging, so I pretended I was something I was not.

I resisted being 'different'.

I resisted being Maori, and for awhile, the boxes and their labels won through.

For many years I wandered between two worlds, accepted by neither desperately seeking to be claimed. I bear the scars of that knowing, of living difference, of experiencing that dosage on a daily basis. I have borne it, resisted it, and survived it.

Things changed when I went to a Maori boarding school and finally felt at home. But even then, I learnt that being Maori meant I was expected to do some things and not others. I learnt conformity, I did what I was expected to, but I learnt about injustices and I learnt to rebel.

I aimed to be something that was beyond my 'station' in life. I wanted to be a vet but Maori girls didn't do those sorts of things. They became nurses or teachers, or better still, married

a boy from a Maori boarding school and had children, lots of them - barefoot and pregnant, the phrase that haunted my days. None of those options appealed to me. I wanted to be a vet, so I enrolled at university in 1979.

I enrolled at the wrong university, but I couldn't be a vet anyway because I didn't have the subject backgrounds needed for a veterinary degree.

Maori girls didn't do science subjects either.

We did geography, clothing and biology.

The differences between the two worlds were racial and we experienced racism at the cutting edge.

We learnt that we were different.

We learnt that it was our fault.

We learnt to be ashamed.

The irony is, that we as Maori are different - different from Pakeha, from Tauwiwi and even from each other, but our differences have not been controlled or defined by ourselves - they have been controlled for us by Pakeha. Our differences have been constructed negatively, and we have been led to believe that our 'Maoriness' is inferior to the point that we have come to believe in our own language and culture as inadequate.

Difference is very much a part of who and what we have become. It has shaped our lives. It has destroyed some, emotionally scarred others, angered, frustrated and maimed us but despite those experiences, we have survived. Difference continues to affect us. The scars we carry are those that relate to our culture, our language and our knowledge - what we believe in and who we are.

We have always known about difference but we have had to relearn and teach ourselves that difference does not mean inferior. We are reclaiming our differences, to define what differences count for us, challenging the dominant discourses and practices that represent us. We have opened those boxes and confronted their contents, changing the labels to claim our own authenticity, our own truth and differences.

We are teaching our children to fulfil their differences. Their experiences should not be the same as ours.

We want them to learn that being Maori is positive.

We want them to learn their reo, their tikanga.

We want to excel in their differences.

We want them to be different.

We want them to be Maori.

This research has given me the opportunity to explore and examine difference, to identify the ways in which Maori are constructed, defined and represented as different, to explain for myself and make some sense of my knowing difference, to 'name my pain',¹ to understand racism, to understand why my differences.

This thesis examines notions of difference. In writing it I came to realise that I have always known about difference. Until I wrote it, I could not always say why.

¹ hooks, b. (1992) *Black Looks: Race & Representation* Boston: South End Press.