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**Biculturalism: The relationship between education policy and art education practice in secondary schools in Aotearoa New Zealand**

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**Introduction**

In this research I take the position that biculturalism in Aotearoa New Zealand is not so much a theoretical construct as a proclamation of a political stance. I aim to uncover the interpretations of biculturalism that have guided state education and to investigate practices which respond to what I call the ‘bicultural imperative’.

Although the research focused on art education in secondary schools, the enactment of statutes establishing bicultural policy in education has implications for other curriculum areas.

The motivation for the research arose from my role as a teacher educator with responsibility for training secondary school art teachers. Bicultural policy requires me to prepare students in respect of Māori art. Earlier research has made me conscious of the dilemma of firstly, a largely non-Māori secondary school teaching force required to fulfil bicultural obligations and, secondly, the comparatively few Māori holding the (Western) qualifications requisite for entry to tertiary institutions and colleges of education, and subsequent employment in secondary schools. My awareness also of the paucity of knowledge and experience that the majority of my predominantly non-Māori students have of ‘things Māori’ predisposes me towards affirmative action.

Two questions prompted my research on this topic:

- What is the political and social agenda that lies behind New Zealand’s bicultural education policy?
- What are the perceptions, behaviours and performances of the participants in relation to the bicultural curriculum imperative?

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I took as my starting point the Treaty of Waitangi signed in 1840 by over 500 Māori Chiefs, and by Governor Hobson, representing the British Crown. The intention was not to research the Treaty itself although the topic required an intensive search of the literature related to it and subsequent events.

The Treaty established the signatories as equal partners holding equal rights and privileges but the precise interpretation of this declaration of equality, and its legal status, has been argued ever since. The vast literature on the Treaty reveals that it conformed to prevailing colonial policy, but according to such as Kawharu (1989), Orange (1987), Brownlie (1992), and Renwick (1991) it was politically motivated and can be interpreted as an expedient solution adopted by the British Crown. The Treaty remains a central issue in New Zealand.

Claudia Orange, in the foreword to her seminal publication *The Treaty of Waitangi* (1987) claims, “The British considered that they had acquired sovereignty over New Zealand, but to Māori people the treaty had a very different significance”. Further, she claims that successive provincial governments quickly subverted the original intentions of the Treaty. She records Chief Justice Prendergast’s ruling in 1877 that the Treaty was a “nullity”, a declaration which held sway until the 1970s. This effectively rendered the Treaty, and the protections it was intended to give Māori, completely without force. Orange believes that “The gap between Māori and European expectations of the Treaty remains unbridged” (1987: 5).

The literature also suggests that imperialism, the maintenance of dominant Pākehā power and authority, has prevailed. Despite some evidence of often paternalistic, humanist attitudes, assimilation has been overtly and covertly the prevailing policy. Research by such as Jones, McCulloch, Marshall and Linda and Graeme Smith (1990), Pearson (in Macpherson, Pearson & Spoonley, 1991) and McKenzie & Openshaw (1997) reveals substantial disaffection with such policy. Orange considers that:

...confusion over the treaty arises from the way it has been used to further what the different parties have each considered legitimate interests and to validate certain assumed rights. Europeans, in particular, have shifted their position on the treaty to suit their purposes (1987: 2).

In the 1970s, a climate of liberal humanism prompted by 'Pākehā guilt' and responsive to Māori protest and affirmation of rights, led to enactment of statutes establishing bicultural policy. It was in 1975 that the School Certificate Art prescription was introduced. A most innovative art education document for its time, and one which endured until 2000, it was the first to include a specific requirement for students to study 'the significance and form of some examples of Māori art' (Department of Education, 1974).

In 1993, the Ministry of Education's *The New Zealand Curriculum Framework*, which includes Essential Learning Areas for the visual arts, specifies bicultural requirements for all schools. In the foreword states:

The Curriculum Framework acknowledges the value of the Treaty of Waitangi, and of New Zealand's bicultural identity and multicultural society (Ministry of Education, 1993: 1).

Another key Ministry of Education document, *Education for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, continues:

The Treaty of Waitangi establishes the right of Māori and non-Māori to all the benefits of education (Ministry of Education, 1994: 7).

The most recent curriculum statement, *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum*, declares that:

In Aotearoa New Zealand, all students should have opportunities to learn about traditional and contemporary Māori art forms (Ministry of Education, 2000: 71).

The most recent assessment statements for students in years 11-13 are the Achievement Standards for NCEA, the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (2000). At year 11, for example, an internally assessed standard in Visual Arts requires students to:

*Research art and artworks from Māori and European traditions and their contexts* (NCEA Visual Arts achievement standard 1.1, New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2000).

While statutes and documents may be definitive, Tim May claims that:

Documents do not simply reflect, but also construct social reality and versions of events...documents are not neutral artefacts...[they] are now viewed as mediums through which social power is expressed...They are approached in terms of the cultural context in which they were written and may be viewed as attempts at persuasion (May, 1993: 138-139).

Such a view raises issues of the relationship between definitive statements of law and the interpretations and implementations of them. Curriculum statements are binding requirements upon New Zealand schools. They emphasise that all students and not just Māori are to receive a bicultural interpretation of arts education. Although my research explored this relationship in a sample of secondary schools, I argue that it has significance beyond the classroom. To require that a nation sustain bicultural policies and practice has substantial social and cultural ramifications.

### **The Problem of Defining ‘Biculturalism’**

Although arguments related to the Treaty are unresolved its principles have been enshrined in government statute and shape the educational policies upon which my research was focused. It is these issues that both underlie and complicate a definition of biculturalism in New Zealand.

‘Biculturalism’ is a controversial issue. New Zealanders display a wide variety of views and attitudes. Some Māori groups seek independent sovereignty and reject what they see as the oppressive policies of a post-colonial government. By contrast, some Pākehā resent what they see as privileged treatment of Māori and reject any responsibility for their past treatment. There are both Māori and Pākehā (Jones et al, 1990) who are concerned about claims that Māori health, education, economic status, employment and criminality are of serious concern. Others such as Vasil (1998) maintain that Māori do not constitute a separate national community and that tribal organisation is the base of loyalty. Still others protest the need for multiculturalism rather than biculturalism (Whitecliffe in Boughton & Mason, 1999).

Eminent Māori scholar, Ranginui Walker, claims that the assimilationist policies which contradicted the intention of the treaty inflicted “on subsequent generations of Māori children an identity conflict that persists to the present day” (Walker in Bray & Hill, 1973: 111). He considers the destruction of their culture has developed both a defeatist and aggressive response from Māori who seek an identity outside the Pākehā conventions.

Māori artist and scholar, Robert Jahnke, sees biculturalism as a deliberate Western construct. To him biculturalism is a means by which the dominant and power-holding sector can ameliorate discontent and salve conscience without surrendering supremacy. He states:

One suspects that like those time 'dishonoured' terms like 'acculturation' and 'assimilation' (its) legitimacy is determined by political expediency. For biculturalism to be more than a pathetic fallacy requires empathetic negotiation across the boundaries of cultural reality. To presuppose a priority of vision defined solely by Western perception merely perpetuates the cultural capital of the elite as the sole criterion of cultural legitimacy (1995: 9-10).

Elizabeth Rata (Rata, 2000) commenting upon biculturalism, provides a cogent analysis of the evolution of what she terms the 'bicultural project', a bicultural partnership ideal of the 1980s designed to correct the wrongs of the past. For Rata, biculturalism was established by middle-class post-war Pākehā humanists as a response to Māori impatience with the failure of successive governments to recognise and deal with Māori disempowerment. It has, she considers, been short-lived. The new middle class has sensed defeat and retreated in the face of increasing ethnification and indigenisation by Māori who reject the paternalism of biculturalism and multiculturalism.

There are Pākehā such as Christie, at one time principal of Mt Albert Primary School, who see Māori as not taking advantage of what is offered by a beneficent government, of being given unfair advantages in terms of compensations negotiated under the Waitangi tribunal, and of provoking dissent by claims for independence and sovereignty. In one of his commentaries, 'Brainwashing in Schools', he states:

The situation is created in New Zealand where children with even a slight trace of Māori ethnicity, or none at all - and often none at all - are coerced into displaying 'Māori culture', into believing notions of kotahitanga, kingitanga, and rangatiratanga, and to assume a partisan ethnic stance... All such thinking, though based on bunkum, is taught

in schools by government directive and enforcement, with the support of academia from where it is piped throughout (Christie, 1999: 71).

What emerges in the literature is that there is difference of opinion about what constitutes 'biculturalism'. Whatever the truth of the matter, as an educator I must accept that biculturalism is written into state statutes for education.

As I discovered in this research, however, the effective implementation of such requirements is dependent upon and affected by the attitudes, opinions and behaviours of the participants.

### **The Problem of Defining 'Māori Art'**

Equally difficult for this research was defining 'Māori art'. It is as complex and differentiated as art of the Western world. Hakiwai explains that what the Western world has called 'Māori art', Māori call taonga:

Taonga or treasures embody all those things that represent our culture. The histories, myths and traditions, memories, experiences and stories, all combine to help define and identify us as Māori people...Our treasures are much more than objets d'art for they are living in every sense of the word and carry the love and pride of those who fashioned them, handled and caressed them, and passed them on for future generations (Hakiwai in Starzecka, 1996: 54).

Recognising the role of taonga is a critical dimension of the bicultural issue. Its place, and the reverence given it by Māori, give it the mana or status of cultural property, and hence requires under the treaty and subsequent legislation, protection by the state. It requires the maintenance of education in meanings, origins and mana. It combines all the forces of the arts, of music, drama, oratory, and carving to convey the ethos of the people.

Notwithstanding the above, which focuses on the interpretation of art and artefacts of pre-European contact, the literature reveals a significant variety of opinions, definitions and viewpoints as to what might be considered Māori art today. This variety is as evident in Māori scholarship as in Pākehā interpretation.

Eminent Māori elder and scholar, Hirini Mead, considers that:

Māori art is made by Māori artists working within Māori stylistic traditions of the iwi for the iwi (1984: 75).

He claims that many contemporary Māori artists are not making Māori art, yet concedes, “Māori artists in the art schools of the Pākehā are spearheading a movement to change the face of Māori art more radically than ever before” (1984: 75).

The necessity for Māori art to remain rooted within traditional practice and using traditional idioms and materials is rejected by such as Māori art curator, Rangihiroa Panaho (1987), who claims that it has always been innovative and responsive to change. He sees no problem with the contemporary artist’s use of Western materials and techniques in interpreting Māori ideology.

What the literature reveals is that the many positions regarding ‘what is Māori art’ make the interpretation and teaching of it, as defined in curriculum documents, a complex issue. My research revealed that it is an issue which has not been sufficiently acknowledged.

### **Implications of Biculturalism for Art Education**

A thorough analysis of policy and curriculum documents indicated that prior to the 1950s Māori art had been systematically neglected from art education in New Zealand schools. This neglect was grounded in policies of a dominant Pākehā society that, even in its ‘Native Schools’, adhered rigorously to a British model of



curriculum. Expatriate New Zealander, Graeme Chalmers believes that “art education was (and is) a major agent of colonisation and cultural imperialism”. He states:

In Colonial New Zealand art education was imperialistic and Eurocentric. It may not have been as blatantly and overtly racist as in South Africa, where, in the 1950s President Verwoerd was quoted as saying “When I have control of Native education, I will reform it so that the Natives will be taught from childhood to realise that equality with Europeans is not for them”. But throughout the colonised world there were, and are, many covert expressions of the same policy (Chalmers in Boughton & Mason, 1999: 176).

Hirini Mead, claims that:

Before *Te Māori* (1984) the study, protection, and care of, and the speaking about Māori art were largely the province and domain of the dominant culture. Māori art was a captured art, and museums could be regarded as repositories of the trophies of capture (1997: 181).

Following the *Te Māori* Exhibition in the prestigious Metropolitan Museum in New York in 1984, and subsequently in Chicago and Los Angeles, it became clear that the art of the Māori was internationally highly regarded. Such regard was not that 19<sup>th</sup> Century patronising curiosity about the artefacts of primitive tribes which earlier writers refer to, but recognition by world authorities of its aesthetic sophistication and symbolic power.

In the years since becoming a teacher educator, I have re-evaluated my earlier practices as a secondary school art teacher. In the 1970s I saw no problem in teaching Māori art. There existed enough of Mead’s ‘captured art’ in books and museums to satisfy the requirement of the *School Certificate Art* prescription that

students study 'the significance and form of some examples of Māori art'. For myself, and I suspect other Pākehā teachers, the emphasis lay in *recording the forms* of Māori art rather than understanding their significance.

My thesis (J. Smith, 2001) which informs this paper recognises the limitations of my earlier practice, which is I believe a national dilemma and formed the *raison d'être* of the thesis:

If the state requires that all students in all of its schools receive some education about the culture and arts of the Māori, who is to provide that education?

### ***The Methodology***

For the qualitative research which underpinned my thesis I chose an interpretative case study, a flexible methodology described by Bob Smith (2000: 112) as most commonly used 'to raise issues and inform dialogue about some institutional practice or innovation'. I sought through the fieldwork of an 'intrinsic case study' to explore the questions referred to earlier.

My research was localised within secondary art education, my specialist territory. The settings for the case study comprised *Ngā Kura Tuarua*, three secondary schools, which provided a variety of physical and environmental contexts. To protect their identity I named them *Te Kura Hine* (the girls' school), *Te Kura Tama* (the boys' school) and *Te Kura Hine-tama* (the co-educational school). The selection, based on Patton's (1990) 'criterion sampling', included low to high decile classification and ethnic composition. One had up to 50% Māori and/or Pacific Islands students, another a wide range of student ethnicities, and a third was predominantly 'white' mono-cultural.

Twenty-seven participants, nine in each school, and myself as the 'key instrument' (Eisner, 1991), were involved in the research. Participant perspectives were gained through qualitative methods suggested by Biklen and Bogdan (1992) and Wolcott (1992) – 'examining, enquiring and experiencing'. 'Examining' involved analysis

of curriculum documents, school charters, mission statements and art department schemes; 'enquiring' involved interviews with principals, art teachers, and students at years 10, 11, and 13; and 'experiencing' was achieved through school and art room observations.

The data provided by the phenomenological inquiry formed the substance of what Erickson (1986) calls 'narrative vignettes' in which I described events as vividly as possible to give the reader a sense of 'being there'. To add credence to my research I adopted Eisner's (1991) 'structural corroboration', multi-method techniques and analyst triangulation. I used the coding and categorising processes recommended by Strauss (1987), Biklen and Bogdan (1992) and Davidson and Tolich (1999) in order to focus on the interpretations which the principals, art teachers and students gave to their own actions.

If, as I discovered, an interpretivist case study methodology requires scrupulous documentation, cross-referencing, referral of field notes back to those interviewed, and a great deal of what Wolcott calls 'healthy scepticism' (Wolcott, 1994: 21), the issues of biculturalism also raised ethical concerns. Not only was I required to satisfy the Auckland College of Education and University of South Australia's ethical protocols, I had a 'self-imposed ethic' to respond to.

As a Pākehā teacher educator I am sensitive to Māori attitudes towards Pākehā intrusion into Māori cultural territory. There is a belief by some Māori scholars and artists that 'only Māori can and should teach Māori art'. At a hui at Massey University in 1996 there was a distinct hardening of attitude towards the protection of Māori traditions and knowledge and towards limiting access to those traditions and knowledge by non-Māori (Whitecliffe in Boughton & Mason, 1999).

Throughout the research I scrutinised my own involvement with both Māori and Pākehā participants, aware of Stake's reminder that researchers "are guests in the private spaces of the world" (Stake, 1998: 103). I valued Davidson and Tolich's

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advice about the ethical principle that must override every piece of social research in New Zealand - to think of New Zealand as a small town in order to protect the people in the study (Davidson & Tolich, 1999: 77-80).

### **Examining School Documents**

Although the 1942 Thomas Report contained only one reference to Māori, not in respect of art education but Social Studies, a detailed analysis of educational policy and art curricula documents indicates that after 1945 there was a growing sense of responsibility towards biculturalism. Since then, all art curriculum documents have included requirements to offer Māori art in programmes culminating in *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum* (2000). I noted in successive documents the increasing use of te reo, albeit with English translations.

Analysis of the three schools' documents – their charters, mission statements and art department schemes – showed a strong link between them and the nature of the schools and communities in which they are socially and economically located. Two sets indicated strong emphasis from Boards of Trustees and principals upon bicultural policy, while the third made no reference to biculturalism.

My research also focussed on how Ministry of Education and school documents were interpreted and acted upon by principals, staff and students. Contrasting points of view were expressed:

Principal, *Te Kura Hine*: The Treaty of Waitangi has had a substantial influence. The school's policy is called Tiriti o Waitangi...and it talks about Te Reo me ngā Tikanga (J. Smith, 2001: 82).

Principal, *Te Kura Tama*: There is no monitoring of inclusion of bicultural imperatives...Heads of departments are not required to report on whether the Treaty of Waitangi is referenced in schemes, a task I would not agree to personally (2001: 83).

**Enquiring – Analysing the Interviews**

Interviews and their documentation and analysis represented a major dimension of the research and are detailed in my thesis. The following comments are indicative of the variety of responses to my questions:

Principal, *Te Kura Tama*: I actually don't give a toss about the partnership (2002: 108).

HOD art, *Te Kura Tama*: A lot of boys from this school come from backgrounds where that prejudice is part of their culture at home... it's a very hard thing to fight against. I've had a letter from a parent saying I do not want my son to be taught Māori art and I want him to be taken out of the class when anything to do with that happens (2001: 93).

Principal, *Te Kura Hine-tama*: The school schemes would say the right things but what I am interested in is not what they're saying but what they are doing...putting subjects into a meaningful context. If you talk to Māori teachers they feel like they're carrying this huge burden... (2001: 82).

HOD art, *Te Kura Hine-tama*: I feel confident with the Māori students ... but I would feel very inadequate if I was asked to present my findings on teaching Māori art to Māori educators... and because I know that Māori are hard on Māori they would eat me alive (2001: 93).

Principal, *Te Kura Hine*: what actually has to happen is a change...that is both intellectual and emotional... so first you have to

know your history and...the sociology of indigenous peoples...and about the impact on a culture of a dominant culture (Ibid: 84).

HOD art, *Te Kura Hine*: I would like to think we are very explicit about the significance of Māori art. It's not just about going and drawing but the idea of knowing and understanding...we have made great effort to ensure that it isn't tokenism (2001: 88).

The major aim of the interviews with the nine Māori and nine Pākehā students was to establish the degree to which official curriculum requirements related to their art programmes. While the majority showed little understanding of the Treaty of Waitangi or awareness of 'bicultural imperatives' their comments showed there was a strong relationship between the kind of study they did of Māori art and the nature of their schools. For example:

Year 10 Pākehā girl, *Te Kura Hine-tama*: We look at the work at the marae. Our teacher takes us down there, we look at the panels and she tells us some things about the meaning...We do a lot of cultures. We're doing African... (2001: 101).

Year 10 Māori boy at the same school: We're lucky, people get to study whatever kind of art they like, their kind of art... I just love to take up more Māori than anything else (2001: 101).

Year 10 Pākehā boy, *Te Kura Tama*: Our course doesn't really include Māori or Pacific artists. For the last exam we had to sketch a tapa cloth and a statue of a figure (2001: 102).

Year 13 Māori boy at the same school: I don't know anything about my Māori background...I'm happy using European models (2001: 107).

Year 11 Pākehā girl, *Te Kura Hine*: In the work we've just done we had to incorporate both Māori things and European aspects...incorporated together, an equal amount of Māori things... Our course is bicultural, incorporating half European and half Māori – bicultural as in two cultures. I feel as if the Treaty of Waitangi sort of comes across in my work (2001: 104-105).

My assessment of the interviews with students suggests that the school's circumstances affect the confidence and responsiveness of students. Where a school's art programme was focused within a bicultural context, this was transmitted to students whatever their ethnic identity. Where tikanga Māori and Māori art have an insignificant place in a school's programme, in school policy, and in the school community, this was reflected in students' responses.

### **Experiencing – Observation of Classes**

The observations in art classes, which included the majority of the eighteen students interviewed, revealed that there was a strong correlation between the data collected through analysis of school charters and art department schemes, through interviews, and from observations. This correlation helped support the validity of the triangulation of data collecting techniques used in the research.

My observations, however, did reveal some information not so apparent in the document analysis and the interviews. They showed that the quality of art performance in respect of biculturalism depended as much upon economic circumstance, teacher knowledge and understanding of Māori art, the degree of teacher direction, and the resources available to students as it did upon school policy.

Student ethnicity did not appear to be a major factor affecting student attitude or performance. Some Māori students appeared disaffected in respect of Māori art.

Others saw their art programme as an opportunity to find and reclaim their cultural heritage. Some Pākehā students showed considerable empathy with, and knowledge of Māori art and its significance. Others were singularly lacking in knowledge or interest in any aspect of Māori life and culture. I detected too that the artistic merit of students' work, judged under the Western canon, might or might not correlate with some understanding of the cultural base from which it derived. Thus one could find so-called 'good' Māori art work executed in ignorance of its cultural antecedents. Correlation or connection, when it existed, arose from artistic practice which incorporated knowledge of the cultural base.

My observations revealed that the mandatory inclusion by the Ministry of Education of a bicultural dimension in the art curriculum in no way guarantees that all students gain some understanding of "the unique position of Māori in New Zealand society" or are brought to "acknowledge the importance to all New Zealanders of both Māori and Pākehā traditions, histories, and values" (*The New Zealand Curriculum Framework, Ministry of Education, 1993: 7*).

### **Conclusions**

The search for answers to my two questions - what is the political and social agenda which lies behind New Zealand's bicultural education policy? and, - what are the perceptions, behaviours and performances of the participants in relation to the bicultural curriculum imperative? - revealed that my task is complicated by many factors – historical, sociological, anthropological, economic, racial, political and educational. I arrived at the following conclusions:

- The Treaty of Waitangi, though not binding in law, has influenced the evolution of New Zealand society, including its policies for education.
- Māori have suffered the policies of colonial imperialism and assimilation which contradict the intent of the Treaty and have impacted adversely upon them in respect of economic, social and cultural status.



- Liberal humanist doctrines of the 1970s have led to government policies which endorse biculturalism rather than multiculturalism.
- Bicultural policy derives from a specific political and ideological stance not shared by all New Zealanders.
- Māori belief that their ‘arts’ are the central vehicle of their culture makes art education a significant dimension of curriculum for both Māori and Pākehā if true bicultural policy is to be sustained.
- What might constitute appropriate practice in terms of bicultural art education is not well defined and results in variable practice from tokenism to informed comprehension about things Māori.
- The imposition of current bicultural requirement may place unrealistic burdens upon teachers.
- The ideological bases of our bicultural policy require scrutiny, not least by those involved in teacher education and school reform.

I have not sought for, and have not achieved solutions. I am left with the sobering knowledge that what to begin with I thought of as enlightened government policy in a liberal climate towards the indigenous people of Aotearoa New Zealand may not be more than yet another piece of paternalism. I am left with a broad sea of difference amongst Māori as to how their culture and identity might best be sustained. They are acutely aware that there are so many who have in anger or indifference surrendered the task. Their task is harder in a climate which continues to exhibit wide divergence in Pākehā opinion, from overt racism to sometimes tentative and guilt-ridden liberalism. What becomes clear is that progress towards cultural equality requires both Māori and Pākehā to clarify what ideologies drive educational policies. That in itself is a huge task.

It is summed up well by Bob Smith:

It is axiomatic that our social world is epitomised by injustice, exploitation and political and economic domination. Not a day passes when we do not

experience, read about or discuss local, national or global examples of corruption, prejudice, political violence, environmental pollution and the like – all motivated to realise or maintain the advantage or profit of some at the cost or loss of others. Advantage and disadvantage are not natural events. They are human constructions (B. Smith, 2000: 209).

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