New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies
https://doi.org/10.1007/s40841-024-00307-9

ARTICLE

Why have Liberal-Progressive Philosophies of Education Caused Little Liberation or Progression for Māori?

Maia Hetaraka[1]

Received: 11 October 2023 / Accepted: 6 January 2024

Abstract

There is much to celebrate about the liberal-progressive approach championed by New Zealand, which continues to be a prized feature of New Zealand education. Many liberal-progressive practices developed in New Zealand and contextualised for New Zealand students that sought to expand and enrich education were borrowed from Native Schools, Māori teachers, and Pākeha perceptions of preferred Māori pedagogies, giving rise to the perception that New Zealand education is bi-cultural in nature. This article offers critique of the key philosophies that have underpinned New Zealand education for the past 100 years to consider some of the challenges of liberal-progressive education for Māori. The philosophical foundations of a cutting-edge, creative, student-centred schooling system remain problematic for Māori and have been largely unsuccessful in expanding or enriching schooling for many Māori. A te ao Māori perspective of the foundational education philosophies highlights that the negative socio-political and educational positioning of Māori in New Zealand has been purposeful and well-coordinated.

Keywords Māori education · Philosophy · Liberal · Progressive

Introduction

Western schooling for Māori has transitioned through multiple iterations since its inception in 1816 under the sponsorship of high-ranking Bay of Islands chief, Ruatara, and the tutelage of missionary, Thomas Kendall (Jones & Jenkins, 2011). A barrage of laws ratifying racist colonialist, assimilationist and integrationist policies and practices have in recent times progressed to focus on the notion of cultural responsiveness through Te Puni Kokiri Ministry of Māori Development's Māori Potential approach. However, even with Māori Potential underpinning social policy for Māori, the philosophical structure of education continues to pose problems for

✉ Maia Hetaraka
m.hetaraka@auckland.ac.nz

[1] The University of Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand

Published online: 14 February 2024

English-medium education in delivering education success for Māori. Every iteration of western education has positioned Māori in very specific ways, initiating stereotypes about Māori as learners, consistently reiterating those stereotypes and therefore deeply embedding them into the structure of New Zealand education and social thought (Hetaraka, 2022).

Western politics and law can arguably be considered the embodiment of colonial superiority, and by 1847 the Crown vested in themselves the prerogative to control education for Māori by enacting the *Education Ordinance Act 1847*. Mutch (2013) posits that New Zealand education has been utilised as a "civilising force" (p. 101) from the time the Crown wrested control of schooling for Māori from missionaries, then became a means of social control for settler children in the late 1800s. However, Mutch (2013) attributes New Zealand's egalitarian and liberal-progressive philosophies that "permeated social, political and educational thought" (p. 99) for the enduring traditions of liberal-progressive philosophy in the New Zealand education system. Recognising the relationship between politics, social thinking and education supports an understanding that education philosophy is strongly tied to policy and law-making in New Zealand. Successive New Zealand governments have maintained control of the narrative for Māori education through ideologies that have saturated education laws and philosophies. Their pattern is to project cohesive philosophical thought across all aspects of society, leaving little space for alternative ways of knowing and doing. This approach is consistent with what Slater (2020) describes as the politics of uncertainty, where the impression of certainty—and active discouragement of uncertainty—is used to reinforce colonial authority and to dissuade settlers from comprehending structural violence and their potential complicity in maintaining it. In terms of real-life experiences and impacts for many Māori, many so called policy changes have amounted to little more than new names for unchanged policy. For example, colonisation as an education policy became assimilation, which in turn became integration, however, all have arguably maintained the underlying ideology of racial subjugation of Māori by Pākeha (Hill, 2009).

Due to international instability by the 1900s the political movement to be advanced by New Zealand education was that of nation building (Abbiss, 1998). Education became focussed on national development strongly driven by tenets of liberal-progressive philosophy (Mutch, 2013). This article will argue that while the transmission of consistent liberal-progressive messages across all sectors of New Zealand society established the cohesive socio-political conditions needed for nation building, it also created a Eurocentric environment that continued to erode Māori society, politics, and education. Key approaches of liberal-progressive philosophies that sought to create a balance in New Zealand education between the dualities of mind and body (or knowledge and experience) created by an exclusively liberal education system, will be considered from a Māori perspective. This article will explore, from a Māori perspective, the key foundational philosophies of New Zealand education, and the impact the philosophies of the early 1900s have had on the enduring perspectives of Māori in education. The following discussion will briefly discuss liberal philosophies that form the foundation of the western education system in New Zealand before investigating liberal-progressivism and stereotypes about Māori that have become deeply engrained in English-medium education. Importantly, the

critiques of both liberal, and liberal-progressive philosophies here are driven by a te ao Māori perspective, a view not often considered in the teaching and learning of New Zealand education philosophy.

An Interface Between Māori and Liberal Education

Liberalism, fuelled by the thinking of the Enlightenment period that drove imperialist ideology, has also driven education philosophy in western countries globally. In New Zealand, liberalism formed the basis of State sponsored education philosophy following the demise of missionary controlled education from 1846. General liberal education is argued by Bailey (1984) to have four key characteristics, liberation from the present and the particular; engagement in fundamental and general education; intrinsically worthwhile education; and the promotion of developing rational minds. An assumption of liberal education is that individual freedom paired with a rational mind will strengthen democracy and benefit society. In the New Zealand context, agents of the Crown determined that for New Zealand society to benefit from the indigenous population, Māori must first develop rationality by being colonised into Pākeha society, as evidenced by the initial curriculum of state sponsored schooling for Māori. Hetaraka (2022) details the purposeful and often aggressive colonisation of the Māori population, which also essentially established two education systems in New Zealand—one to teach indigenous students 'civility', the other to educate settler children through the tenets of liberalism. Consequently, the strictly liberal education of the initial New Zealand schooling programme was not intended for Māori students. This will later become a linchpin in the irony of New Zealand education philosophy.

Whilst Māori students were not the specific target for liberal philosophy, there arguably appear to be some alignment between liberal characteristics and Māori philosophies. For example, one principle of kaupapa Māori theory is the principle of socio-economic mediation, by which the negative stresses experienced by Māori communities can be alleviated through Māori research and initiatives (Smith, 1990). The belief that education can liberate one from their present circumstances is an ideology shared by many. Bailey (1984) argued "…knowledge and understanding sought for their intrinsic worthwhileness can have a general and powerful utility precisely because they are not trapped in response to the present and particular" (p. 22). In ancient times higher order Māori knowledge of the whare wānanga was revered for its intrinsic value, it is abstract and esoteric, it moves beyond physical realities, and connects to the workings of the universe. Many Māori continue to see these aspects of mātauranga Māori as highly valuable, yet these characteristics, which are reflected in liberal philosophy, have long been silenced and attempt to be discredited by liberalists.

The goals of liberal education for individuals to be empowered to make rational decisions for themselves, and to live free from subordination can, at a superficial level, be seen as aligned to the goals of the rangatiratanga movement. In recent times in New Zealand there has been an increase in those purporting to espouse freedom misguidedly attempting to align their goals of individual rights to freedom with the

concept of rangatiratanga. Members of democratic societies may find it difficult to challenge cornerstone liberal arguments for individual freedom at the expense of collective wellbeing because liberalism is a principle doctrine of western democratic philosophy. However, groups appropriating rangatiratanga as a basis for their arguments have grossly misunderstood the core Māori philosophy of the concept of rangatiratanga, in that individual freedoms are always and necessarily secondary to collective wellbeing, rights and responsibilities.

Liberal goals continue to be valued and reflected in education through the New Zealand curriculum (NZC) (Ministry of Education, 2007), initial teacher education (ITE) programmes also maintain the relevance of liberal philosophies in current education programmes. Indeed, liberal principles that elevate knowledge, that empower individual thought, and emancipation have an enduring worth and universal applicability. However, what many proponents of liberal education do not articulate is that these philosophies are culturally located in the west and developed in response to western problems (Pihama, 2016). The fundamental, general, worthwhile, and powerful knowledge privileged by liberal education is located exclusively in the knowledge of the west. Therefore, liberal philosophies advance Eurocentric agendas by actively excluding indigenous knowledges and languages (Battiste, 2013).

Classical liberal ideas such as individual freedom to make decisions, freedom from subordination to the State and church, self-reliant individuals and independent communities, liberation from the oppression of tradition (Siteine, 2017) must be understood in the context in which they were devised, seventeenth century England. This was a time and place where society in general was forced into subservience by a powerful monarchy, a ridged class system and an omnipotent church. It was largely from these three crushing forces that the general populace sought liberty, triggering the development of liberal theories. Nineteenth century ideas around liberty expanded to include equality, and a free market economy in the form of laissez-faire capitalism (Mutch & Tatebe, 2017). It can be argued that all expansions of liberal philosophies were in response to oppressive social and political structures and systems, and intended to enable individuals to flourish regardless of the circumstances into which they have been born (Bailey, 1984). As such liberal philosophies are at the core of democracy, a political system so highly valued in western society that its tenets give purpose to schooling in western countries, including New Zealand. Democracy, therefore, is the thread that binds competing educational philosophies, it provides the rationale for both departure from, and expansion of certain philosophies. Democratic goals are at the heart of all western education philosophy, a reality that is only problematic for peoples whose social structures were not underpinned by democracy, such as Māori.

The discourse of individual liberation from cultural domination has been used to position Māori culture and traditions as oppressive and restrictive, and has been a source of justification for the omission of Māori knowledges and language from education. Battiste (2013) argues that forced assimilation such as this provides the conditions for cognitive imperialism, the whitewashing of the mind. The 'liberal' ideologies of liberal-progressive philosophies are the aspect that has waged an ongoing assault on mātauranga Māori by attempting to discount the validity of the epistemological nature of Māori knowledge. From this perspective, liberal education

philosophy has driven colonisation by excluding and silencing any knowledge bases that fall outside of its own ways of knowing and objecting to knowledge from outside of its own epistemological frame (Tuhiwai-Smith, 2012).

Classical liberalism values abstract, individual, rational thought. Liberal philosophy had its genesis in seventeenth century England amidst suffocating social structures that severely restricted individual thought and growth. It was developed originally to liberate individuals from the constraints of tradition, but ironically in modern times has come to be seen by some as "…engendering a problematic unquestioning and uncritical respect for authority and traditional values" (McPhail, 2017, p. 83). Arguably, liberal education philosophy has become everything it initially sought to resist due to the dogged determination of some of its proponents to reject the notion that knowledge from outside of its own worldview can also be foundational, worthwhile, and powerful. In contemporary New Zealand education this doctrine of liberal philosophy continues to be a point of contention for many Māori who maintain the validity, rationality, and complex abstraction of Māori knowledge that is so vehemently denied by classical liberalism.

Carving a 'National' Identity Through Liberal-Progressive Philosophy

That the New Zealand education system is founded on liberal-progressive philosophy is rightfully a source of pride for many a New Zealand educator. Mutch (2013) highlights that the innovative, arts-based, and child-centred nature of early New Zealand education was a comparatively radical system produced by the alignment of political and education philosophy. The origins of the need to align educational and political agendas were World War One and the Great Depression of the 1920s and 1930s. These catastrophic events forced the argument for the philosophical shift in education from classical liberalism to progressivism as it became clear that the classical liberal schooling system based on privilege and selection was no longer serving New Zealand (Fraser, 1939). The case for the transition to progressive philosophy was built on the urgent need to convert the system "…to a truly democratic form where it can cater for the needs of the whole population over as long a period of their lives as is found possible and desirable" (Fraser, 1939, p. 3). The depressed economic state of the 1920s and 1930s exposed a severe lack of equal opportunities, perpetuated by the binary opposition in liberal education of the academic and the vocational. It became apparent to teachers that they were preparing the majority of New Zealand children for work that did not exist and therefore "…were facing a life devoid of hope" (Beeby, 1992, p. 132).

Former New Zealand Prime Minister Peter Frasers' (1884–1950) now famous 'objective' in his 1939 *Annual Report to Parliament,* signalled clearly that the intention for education in New Zealand was to transition toward progressive thinking by ensuring "…that every person, whatever his level of academic ability, whether he be rich or poor, whether he live in town or country, has a right, as a citizen to a free education of the kind for which he is best fitted, and to the fullest extent of his powers" (Fraser, 1939, pp. 2–3). Peter Fraser and Clarence Beeby (1902–1998) are often identified as the founders of progressive education in New Zealand (first with Fraser

as Director of Education and Beeby as his deputy, then Fraser as Prime Minister and Beeby as Director of Education). Both men utilised progressive ideology to influence the direction of New Zealand politics and to preserve democracy and egalitarianism through education. Their reform of education focussed on creating equal opportunity in order to stabilise the post-war economy, and progressive politics and education were viewed as vital in combatting anti-democratic impulses of the time (Mutch, 2017). World War One and the Depression that followed created a growing Pākeha underclass, which went against the aims of New Zealand's egalitarian society and was a key motivator in the shift to progressivism.

It seems a Pākeha underclass was contrary to egalitarian ideals, however, a Māori underclass was not seen by Pākeha society as problematic. In the same Parliamentary session of 1939 in which the pivotal transformations for New Zealand education were revealed, Inspector of Native Schools, Douglas Ball, expressed his pleasure in the progress of Native Schools in providing "facilities so indispensable to a practical and useful kind of training, and in the development, in the Native schools, of that emphasis on realistic, as contrasted with abstract, teaching which is generally conceded to be desired" (Ball, 1939, p. 1). An irony in the history of New Zealand education, as mentioned above, is presented by this statement. Schooling for Māori was already restricted to practical labour, or in progressive terms, experiential learning, and therefore was not considered in need of transformation, in fact it was touted as being the desired education programme. At this moment in history, as New Zealand education prepared to embrace the new and somewhat revolutionary progressive philosophy that contrasted so sharply to the stifling ideologies of liberalism, Māori were excluded on the basis that we had never had access to the abstract and academic content of liberal education in the first place.

So, while Native Schools would be excluded from the overall social and educational reforms, the inclusion of more creative practices into 'board' (now 'mainstream,' or English-medium) schools would now borrow and adapt concepts from the Native Schools programme to better engage Pākeha students and encourage creativity. Gerlich (2013) argues that Beeby's reforms, especially in the areas of physical education, arts and crafts caused a more balanced, child-centred and bicultural curriculum that enabled creativity and focussed on understanding. These aspects of the reforms appeared to be inspired by influential leader and Member of Parliament Tā Apirana Ngata who, in the 1920s, had initiated a training programme for teachers in Native Schools, largely taught out of Rotorua, as a strategy to put into practice the objective of the *Māori Arts and Crafts Act, 1926* to "…encourage the dissemination of knowledge of Māori Arts and crafts" (Ngata, 1926). Long before becoming the Director of Education, Beeby had attended this course and commended it as an excellent programme, as did Māori elders and parents, Native School teachers, and Fraser (Beeby, 1992).

Ngata's vision of reviving Māori confidence through visual arts (Walker, 1996) was appropriated to advance progressive ideals for Pākeha students by transferring the creative component of Māori 'arts' without the Māori knowledge base attached to the practices. Hetaraka (2022) argued it was racist, colonial philosophy converted to education policy (Taylor, 1863) that initiated the stereotype that Māori are by nature suited to practical learning styles. The appropriation

of Māori visual arts into the curriculum reinforced these stereotypes by valuing Māori creativity whilst simultaneously devaluing the knowledge associated with the creative practice. The appropriation of Māori creativity into western education, devoid of Māori ways of knowing, for the benefit of Pākeha students, has perpetuated and entrenched the stereotype that Māori are practical learners as espoused by the decision-makers in New Zealand education. Whereas many Māori elders advocate that Māori learn by engaging conceptually and physically with people, ideas, and environments. I also suspect that the practice of 'cherry-picking' aspects of te ao Māori under the guidance of progressive principles has given generations of well-meaning teachers a misguided belief that progressivism has honoured and valued preferred Māori pedagogies.

Pragmatic progressive ideologies that encourage sensory and experiential engagement with the world (Matapo & Roder, 2017) along with the idea that education is child-centred and functionally useful, has links to aspects of mātauranga Māori from the kauae raro, which deals with practically useful knowledge that enables purposeful and innovative contribution to society. In this way, progressive philosophy finds some alignment with Māori perspectives and can correlate relatively easily to Māori concepts. What continued to trouble many Māori about western education was the longstanding restricted access to an academic curriculum. In the 1940s, many Māori were vocal about the unjust duality between Māori schooling and that of their Pākeha counterparts (Beeby, 1992; Simon, 2000).

As English-medium education for Pākeha students increasingly co-opted progressive philosophies to push back on liberal ideologies that focused on knowledge and the mind, which were seen as restricting New Zealand's national prosperity, Māori were protesting the continuation of forced practical education that was excluding so many from full and equal participation in New Zealand society. The difference between Māori goals for education at the time, and the progressive goals of the State are illustrated in this recollection from Beeby (1992):

> I called a meeting where [Māori] parents could air their grievances. They objected to the curriculum, and I asked what else they wanted in it. The answer was 'Typewriting and Latin!'…On the subject of Latin I gave them an address, which Professor Percy Nunn would have applauded, on the concept of education through the use of the hands, in practical skills rather than words. As I sat down the leading elder asked, 'Did you take Latin at school, Dr Beeby?' I admitted to six years of it, and he retorted, 'And look where you got to!' Nearly half a century later, I have still not thought of an apt reply. (p. 210)

The progressive purpose of education in society that influenced both Beeby and Fraser (O'Connor, 2017), caused them to gladly view education as "…an arm of a wider policy of social reform…that education itself could cause change in society" (Beeby, 1992, p. 133). Indeed, the impoverished state of Pākeha society caused by the Depression had been transformed through education. Education for Pākeha was diversified by adding progressive theory and practice to the already established liberal curriculum, therefore making education more accessible. For Māori however, prospects of social transformation through schooling were limited. The restricted curriculum offered to Māori was not providing equality of opportunity, rather "…

policies and provisions could only serve to widen the gulf between Pākehā and Māori in terms of economic and political power" (Simon, 2000, p. 56).

The Native Schools regime of limited academic education placed a heavy emphasis on practical skills, which illustrated the State's stance in terms of what they considered the best fit for Māori assimilation into Pākeha society. The assumption was that Māori would assimilate, or 'integrate' into Pākeha society to such a degree that the only difference between Māori and Pākeha would be skin colour (Beeby, 1992). Based on this supposition, the Native Schools system would continue to restrict Māori education through lack of equitable access to an academic curriculum and an emphasis on domestic and labour training until 1969. Presentism might allow our contemporary view to accept this simply as something that has happened in our past. Criticality will remind us that consistent and intergenerational encounters with sub-standard education in the name of civilisation, assimilation or integration is not a quirk relegated to the past, but a fact that continues to impact negatively on many Māori lives. This is the version of education the State actively sought to embed and reinforce for Māori since 1847.

A Liberal-Progressive Picture: Sylvia's Powerful Imagery

A story about Māori has formed the foundations of literacy education, and progressive education globally through the work of educator Sylvia Ashton-Warner (1908–1983). As Mutch (2013) states "to many educators around the world, progressive education in New Zealand is synonymous with the story of Syliva Ashton-Warner teaching Māori children in a remote village…" (p. 99). Ashton-Warner was a ground-breaking New Zealand novelist, auto biographer and educator who held the belief that every individual possessed a 'key vocabulary', or set of words linked to their emotional life (Read NZ Te Pou Muramura, 2023). She linked her key vocabulary method to the daily lives and realities of the young Māori children she taught (Mutch, 2013). Ashton-Warner had an eccentric, non-conformist, and radical approach, not just to education, but to life, which aided her creative teaching approaches. This also, however, caused her to experience what she perceived as persecution at the hands of New Zealanders, specifically Education Department officials (Dobson, 2007). Ashton-Warner's approach to progressivism was largely ignored by authorities during her time because she was regarded as eccentric and too radical in her thinking, which did not align well to the 'new' progressive education reform that began in the 1940s (Jones & Middleton, 2009). However, while Ashton-Warner's work was largely ignored by policymakers of the time, her imagery has constructed both Māori and Pākeha in education in very specific ways that continue to influence contemporary New Zealand education.

Through Ashton-Warner's work *Teacher* (Ashton-Warner, 1980) we get a glimpse, from her perspective, of an important time for education in New Zealand, which spanned the late 1930s to mid 1950s (Read NZ Te Pou Muramura, 2023). Robinson (2010) argued that the way western liberal education has constructed knowledge, as academic and non-academic, has caused chaos and convinced many brilliant people that they are not. Ashton-Warner's work to push New Zealand education to think of

and centre the child through innovative methods that deviated from those prescribed by classical liberalism gives rise to the summation that perhaps she felt the same way. Her experience of New Zealand children taught her that the English, Scottish and American models on which our education system was based (Ashton-Warner, 1980; Simon, 2000) were inappropriate within our context and causing young New Zealand students to disbelieve their own educational capabilities.

Ashton-Warner's approach to teaching contrasted with the rigid style of the time, in fact her approach was in many ways exemplary of the liberal-progressive philosophies so desired by the government of the time. Ashton-Warner's methods meant that intensive learning took place through discussion, which was more in line with what many Māori were used to (Tawhiwhirangi, 2009). While her work is largely centred around methods she was experimenting with for teaching Māori students, Ashton-Warner (1980) also provides her perspective of Pākeha students and society. There is complexity in her perspectives of both cultures: many of the Pākeha students are presented as 'victims' of their respectable parents; Māori children are the products of a primitive, highly emotional, and often abusive people that must transition into Pākeha culture, a fact that appears to perplex her.

This complexity is illustrated in descriptions she records of key vocabulary sessions. Seven's 'old Mummy' arrives at the classroom door, "humble with natural dignity, a barefooted, tattooed Māori woman" (Ashton-Warner, 1980, p. 37) desperate to see the child she has raised in the hills alone, but who she has recently returned to his 'real' family so he can attend school—an example of the importance of schooling to Māori at the time. We learn that violent Seven has moved from a loving home to a home full of brothers who hit him. All this child wants is to return to his old mummy. Through this interaction, Ashton-Warner gains some understanding about Seven but laments that she cannot make a "good story of it and say he is no longer violent…" (Ashton-Warner, 1980, p. 38), but she has captured Seven's key words—'old Mummy', 'new Mummy', 'hit' and 'brothers,' which she uses to engage him in literacy learning.

In the same description, Ashton-Warner admits defeat to Dennis' mother. Dennis has apparently suffered a nervous breakdown at five and is "a victim of a respectable, money-making, well-dressed mother who thrashes him" (Ashton-Warner, 1980, p. 38). Her failure with Dennis is that she never captured his fear words as she did with Seven, because, according to her, Dennis' fears were unnameable. Dennis does later reveal his fears through a picture he draws of a terrible ghost facing a red alligator on a roadway. While the other children take part in lively and engaging learning activities, Dennis busies himself tidying the classroom while Ashton-Warner predicts his future life as "another neurotic, pursued by the fear unnameable…" (Ashton-Warner, 1980, pp. 38–39).

Through her work Ashton-Warner frames Māori and Pākeha in particular ways. Her framing is coloured by her own experiences, perspectives, and cultural norms, yet her perspectives and positioning have become deeply embedded in the fabric of New Zealand education and general social thought. While the barefooted, humble, and tattooed mother of one culture is starkly contrasted against the young, well dressed, wealthy mother of the other paints a strong and lasting image, it is not to say that Ashton-Warner favoured the respectable Pākeha image over that of

the rowdy, dramatic 'pā' life. She reveals a "revulsion…against respectability and the 'right thing' that Maoris (sic) and I find so intimidating" (Ashton-Warner, 1980, p. 72). She also points out that she often gets "the over-disciplined European five, crushed beyond recognition as an identity, by respectable parents, but never Maoris (sic)" (Ashton-Warner, 1980, p. 98). Yet, Ashton-Warner engages in direct conversation with the pretty, young, well-off Pākeha mother to better understand her student. The abusive behaviour of the Pākeha mother is diminished by her respectability, her violence is made palatable by her youth and beauty.

However, Ashton-Warner's perspective of Māori identities are also framed in ways that crush them. Mohi is undisciplined, Seven is violent, we also meet Rangi who is a "backward Māori" (Ashton-Warner, 1980, p. 43), and Puki who comes from a clever, but violent, family. In these examples all the fears and impediments of the Māori students are apparently observable and physical. Seven lives with the damage of being removed from his loving home into the hands of his violent brothers. Rangi lives in terror of the police, (however, his trauma—related to the police—is blamed by the headmaster on the actions of Rangi's drunk father, who had 'probably' threatened the children). Puki's mother and father physically, loudly, and often fight each other. Ashton-Warner does not silence these realities, her success in initiating reading and writing with these children is in utilising the words that fall from these realities. Whereas the fears of her Pākeha students are apparently unnameable, they become another generation afraid of the unknown. The argument here is not for silence, it is simply to point out the lasting impact of these images.

The difference in Ashton-Warner's interactions with Māori, and her interactions with Pākeha families also continues to be reflected in contemporary education settings. She engages in direct conversation about Dennis' thoughts with his "young, pretty mother in her big car" (Ashton-Warner, 1980, p. 38). Whereas she only learns the source of Seven's violence, or as I would interpret it, profound sadness, by a chance visit from his broken-hearted 'old Mummy.' Differential interactions such as these continue to be a feature in contemporary education. For example, a number of professional development documents (Education Council New Ministry of Education, 2013; Zealand, 2013) are intended to help education professionals facilitate interactions and relationships with Māori communities, but there appears to be no need to provide teachers with instructions for interacting with Pākeha, it would seem that these interactions come naturally and are considered normal.

The concept of effective relationships in education has become increasingly important in contemporary education (Education Council New Zealand, 2013). While Ashton-Warner did appear to have relationships with her students, which have come to be prized by New Zealand education, these relationships were observational, and those observations were coloured by her cultural perspective. Ashton-Warner's insistence of her personal witnessing, and therefore truth, of the dramatic lives of Māori is confirmed through the students' stories she publishes (Ashton-Warner, 1980). She gives a sense of her intimate, knowledgeable relationship with Māori students and families. However, alternative (Māori) perspectives of these relationships are provided by Penfold (2009) who believes Ashton-Warner did not learn much from the children, because in actuality she was rarely with them. Tawhiwhirangi (2009) points out Māori parents thought she was odd and would stay at the

school with their children all day, partly to keep an eye on their odd teacher. These examples illustrate that people involved in the same experience will often hold different perspectives of what is happening, particularly in education relationships. For all Ashton-Warner's experiential knowledge of the "loud-mouthed and disintegrated pa" (Ashton-Warner, 1980, p.86) that produced her students, there is no indication she had any perception of the how or why of the situations of these Māori families. They are presented as lively, colourful, violent people perceived only in the present in which she finds them.

Ashton-Warner's progressive education strategies are employed as a bridge between one culture and another (Ashton-Warner, 1980). The lives and realities of her Māori students, their words that are so full of life, then become valuable only as a platform by which they can access what Ashton-Warner herself describes as the dead vocabulary of New Zealand education (Ashton-Warner, 1980). Yet accessing this dead vocabulary is seen as necessary:

> The method of teaching any subject in a Māori infant room may be seen as a plank in a bridge from one culture to another, and to the extent that this bridge is strengthened may a Māori in later life succeed. This transition made by Māori children is often unsuccessful. At a tender age a wrench occurs from one culture to another, from which, either manifestly or subconsciously, not all recover. (Ashton-Warner, 1980, p. 31)

Ashton-Warner is aware that mediating the chasm between western and Māori cultures will devastate many Māori, and yet her only response, along with countless other educators, is to plough ahead with the 'necessary' task of transitioning. Complexly, Ashton-Warner is clear in her disdain for the notion of the 'respectable' Pākeha, yet it is this very respectability that is taken for granted as 'right'. Ashton-Warner criticises New Zealand (Pākeha) society as being a body of people whose inner resources have been atrophied by strong reliance on materialism and saturation in popular media (Ashton-Warner, 1980). She frames Pākeha society as unable to think for themselves and void of emotion. Yet a key focus of her work is to transition Māori students into this culture that she herself appears to disparage, so that they may succeed in life. At this point in our history, the notion of empowering and legitimising Māori knowledge and ways of being to enable success in New Zealand society is not even a consideration, the only viable option is to hasten the inevitable transition, or assimilation, from Māori culture into Pākeha culture.

While Ashton-Warner may not have influenced the direction of liberal-progressive education reform during her time, her work did become influential nationally and internationally, and her imagery of Māori and of Pākeha has been woven into the sub-conscious of New Zealand education. The stories of her students, which she used to motivate literacy learning, became 'the' Māori story. Her story of a vibrant, loud, violent, and disintegrating people became the perception of Māori in education and in society. The humble, bare-footed, primitive mother became 'the' Māori mother, and she is so vividly contrasted against the pretty, young, wealthy woman who became 'the' Pākeha mother. Ashton-Warner's work highlights that while she may not have fully understood her Māori students, she did love them, she saw in them life, vitality, and a sense of identity that she believed was missing from their

Pākeha counterparts. Her imagery is powerful, the stereotypes derived from them remain deeply embedded in the structure of New Zealand education. What New Zealand education often forgets is that Sylvia's story is one story about Māori, it is not our own story nor is it our only story.

Conclusion

Te ao Māori analyses of liberal-progressive philosophies and practices are few and far between, therefore it is difficult for education professionals to gain understandings of their impacts on Māori realities. A lack of analyses from Māori perspectives also maintains the white spaces (Milne, 2017) that encourage an uncritical acceptance of our systems. This article has investigated the role liberal-progressive philosophies have played in constructing education for Māori, and how they have constructed Māori in education. The western values of democracy have been identified here as foundational to educational and political philosophy in Aotearoa New Zealand, which has been problematic for Māori who have an alternative social structure, and a long history of exclusion from New Zealand's democratic processes.

A key role of education philosophy is the cohesive connection of education to the systems and values of society. New Zealand politics, society and education have been saturated with ideologies that have enabled education to be used as a tool to reproduce western social norms and knowledge. Dewey (1916) argued that education, in its broadest sense, is the "social continuity of life" (p. 2). In the New Zealand context, liberal-progressive education philosophy has reproduced, re-created, and centred the values, customs, and knowledge of Pākeha society. Whilst Māori ideas and concepts have been appropriated into the education system, they have not been embedded and therefore have a limited impact on the role schooling plays in the continuity of Māori society.

The liberal-progressive philosophies of the Labour Government, under the direction of Dr Beeby created more educational opportunities than any other administration (Simon, 2000). Abbiss (1998) argued that the egalitarian philosophy of the 1930s and 1940s would dominate public education thinking and practice, which provided the conditions for the development of an innovative New Zealand education system based on models provided by Britain and America, but with its own identity. In pursuit of fairness in education for all, egalitarian and democratic ideals formed the foundation of that identity (Abbiss, 1998), giving rise to what some perceive as the beginnings of a liberal-progressive, and bicultural education system (Mutch, 2013).

However, the New Zealand education system underpinned by these philosophies is nuanced and complex. On one hand the education programme initiated by the liberal-progressive philosophies of the early 1900s have supported New Zealand education to become more equitable, accessible, and innovative. On the other, these conditions did little to transform schooling for Māori. The curriculum for Māori was not advanced or diversified in the ways the curriculum for Pākeha students had been through liberal-progressive philosophy. This article has illustrated that the dual purposes of nation building for one culture and colonisation for the other has created

numerous ironies in New Zealand education. Perhaps the most impactful being that the liberal-progressive philosophical approach, which incorporated aspects of Māori ideas and concepts over the years did contribute to stability and the development of a national identity, however, this same system locked Māori in to positions of powerlessness by tightly controlling the education narrative and our access to education. Despite its intentions of equality, the political and educational liberal-progressive agenda caused education for Māori to become a site of cultural surrender and assigned Māori to an underclass (Walker, 2016) whilst maintaining the illusion of egalitarianism.

Glossary

kauae raro	socio-cultural, scientific, pragmatic knowledge. Literally the lower jawbone
Māori/iwi Māori	indigenous peoples of New Zealand
mātauranga Māori	Māori knowledge
Pākeha	New Zealanders of European descent (spelling is dialectal)
rangatiratanga	sovereignty
te ao Māori	Māori world/Māori worldview

Funding Open Access funding enabled and organized by CAUL and its Member Institutions.

Declarations

Conflict of interest The corresponding author states that there is no conflict of interest.

References

Abbiss, J. (1998). The "New Education Fellowship" in New Zealand: Its activities and influence in the 1930s and 1940s. *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies, 33*(1), 81–93.

Ashton-Warner, S. (1980). *Teacher The testament of an inspired teacher*. Virago.

Bailey, C. (1984). *Beyond the present and the particular (International library of the Philosophy of Education Volume 2)*. Routledge.

Ball, D. G. (1939). Education of Native Childre. In *Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives* (Vol. Session 1, E-03).

Battiste, M. (2013). *Decolonizing education: Nourishing the learning spirit*. Purich.
Beeby, C. E. (1992). *The biography of an idea: Beeby on education*. NZCER.
Dewey, J. (1916). *Democracy and education—An introduction to the philosophy of education*. Macmillan.
Dobson, E. (2007). Sylvia Ashton-Warner, 1908–1984. *Kotare, 7*(1), 163–176.
Education Council New Zealand. (2013). *Tātaiako; Cultural competencies for teachers of Māori learners*. Ministry of Education
Fraser, P. (1939). Report of the Minister of Education. In In *Appendix to the Journals of the House of Representatives* (Vol. Session 1, E-1). https://atojs.natlib.govt.nz/cgi-bin/atojs?a=d&d=AJHR1939-I.2.2.4.1&e=-------10--1------0--
Gerlich, R. (2013). *Education: Beeby's, tomorrow's and today's*. Education Review. Retrieved December 13, from http://educationreview.co.nz/education-beebys-tomorrows-and-todays/
Hetaraka, M. (2022). Myth-making: On-going impacts of historical education policy on beliefs about Māori in education. *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies*. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40841-022-00257-0
Hill, R. (2009). *Māori and the State: Crown-Māori relations in New Zealand/Aotearoa 1950–2000*. Victoria University Press.
Jones, A., & Jenkins, K. (2011). *He kōrero—Words between us: First Māori-Pākehā coversations on paper*. Huia Publishers.
Jones, A., & Middleton, S. (Eds.). (2009). *The kiss and the ghost; Syliva Ashton-Warner and New Zealand*. NZCER.
Matapo, J., & Roder, J. (2017). Weaving our whāriki: Re-imagining progressive philosophy in Aotearoa New Zealand early childhood education. In C. Mutch & J. Tatebe (Eds.), *Understanding enduring ideas in education: A response to those who "just want to be a teacher."* NZCER.
McPhail, G. (2017). Rethinking what it means to be a teacher through a mixed modality approach. In C. Mutch & J. Tatebe (Eds.), *Understanding enduring ideas in education: A response to those who "just want to be a teacher."* NZCER.
Milne, A. (2017). *Colouring in the white spaces: Reclaiming cultural identity in whitestream schools*. Peter Lang.
Ministry of Education. (2007). *The New Zealand Curriculum*. Learning Media.
Ministry of Education. (2013). *Ka Hikitia; Accelerating success 2013–2017. The Māori education strategy*. Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa.
Mutch, C. (2013). Progressive education in New Zealand: a revered past, a contested present, and an uncertain future. *International Journal of Progressive Education, 9*(2), 98–116.
Mutch, C. (2017). Understanding progressive education and its influence on policy and pedagogy in New Zealand. In C. Mutch & J. Tatebe (Eds.), *Understanding enduring ideas in education: A response to those who "just want to be a teacher."* NZCER.
Mutch, C., & Tatebe, J. (Eds.). (2017). *Understanding enduring ideas in education: A response to those who "just want to be a teacher."* NZCER.
Education Ordinance Act, 10 (1847).
Māori Arts and Crafts Bill, New Zealand Parliament (1926).
O'Connor, P. (2017). Progressivism—A person reflection. In C. Mutch & J. Tatebe (Eds.), *Understanding enduring ideas in education: A response to those who 'just want to be a teacher.'*. NZCER.
Penfold, M. (2009). Sylvia Ashton-Warner and Māori children: "I do not think Sylvia learned much from the kids." In A. Jones & S. Middleton (Eds.), *Sylvia and the ghost; Sylvia Ashton-Warner and New Zealand.* NZCER.
Pihama, L. (2016). Positioning ourselves within kaupapa Māori research. In J. Hutchings & J. Lee-Morgan (Eds.), *Decolonisation in Aotearoa. Education, research and practice* (pp. 101–113). NZCER.
Read NZ Te Pou Muramura. (2023). *Writers File: Sylvia Ashton-Warner*. https://www.read-nz.org/writers-files/writer/ashton-warner-sylvia#:~:text=Despite%20her%20resistance%20to%20teaching,and%20Fernhill%20(Hawkes%20Bay).
Robinson, K. (2010). *Changing education paradigms*. Retrieved November 29, 2018, from https://www.ted.com/talks/ken_robinson_changing_education_paradigms
Simon, J. (2000). Eueopean-style schooling for Māori—The first century. In J. Marshall, E. Coxon, K. Jenkins, & A. Jones (Eds.), *Politics, policy, pedagogy: Education in Aotearoa/New Zealand.* Dunmore.
Siteine, A. (2017). Daring to know: The liberal tradition and education. In C. Mutch & J. Tatebe (Eds.), *Understanding enduring ideas in education: a response to those who "just want to be a teacher."* NZCER.

Slater, L. (2020). A politics of uncertainty: Good white people, emotions and political responsibility. *Continuum, 34*(6), 816–827. https://doi.org/10.1080/10304312.2020.1842122

Smith, G. (1990). *Research issues related to Māori education* NZARE Special Interest Conference, Massey University.

Tawhiwhirangi, I. (2009). Learning without teaching: Sylvia Ashton-Warner's classroom as a seed for kōhanga reo. In A. Jones & S. Middleton (Eds.), *The kiss and the ghost; Sylvia Ashton-Warner and New Zealand.* NZCER.

Taylor, H. (1863). Native schools. Reports of inspectors. In *Appendix to the Journals of the House of Representatives* (Vol. Session 1, E-04).

Tuhiwai-Smith, L. (2012). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples*. Zed Book.

Walker, R. J. (1996). *Ngā pepa a Ranginui: The Walker papers, thought-provoking views on the issues affecting Māori and Pākehā*. Penguin Books.

Walker, R. J. (2016). Reclaiming Māori education. In J. Hutchings & J. Lee-Morgan (Eds.), *Decolonisation in Aotearoa: Education, research and practice*. NZCER Press.