

A future for Māori education Part I: the dissociation of culture and education

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Abstract: Education is of vital importance to the future of the Māori people; however, Māori education is in a state of flux often described as confused, and problematic. Neither mainstream secondary nor mainstream tertiary education seems to provide ideal education for Māori because of the relatively low success rates for Māori people coming from a Māori background. In this first part of two papers on Māori education in Aotearoa, a number of factors important to Māori education are identified and examined with regard to their significance in the achievement of educational success. The contention is that many problems have arisen because of a system that, for Māori, has generally tried to separate education from Māori culture. This separation has arisen primarily from an unwillingness of government to recognize the importance of Māori culture in the education of Māori people. The educational system in this country has been built according to Eurocentric cultural norms with the hope, and perhaps expectation that Māori will conform. It appears that many fundamental problems have arisen from the attempts by mainstream to build a monoculture, and in the process dissociate Māori culture from education resulting in both the degradation of Māori culture and the disengagement of Māori students from education. The repercussions of this dissociation may be far reaching affecting all aspects of Māori society and health. These ideas may also be relevant to other indigenous peoples who have experienced similar disjunctive processes regarding their culture and education.

Keywords: Indigenous education, Māori education, Māori culture, secondary education, self determination, tertiary education

Introduction

The Hui Taumata Mātauranga hosted by Tūwharetoa at Tūrangi has spoken with determination for a future wherein Māori gain greater and greater control of their own destinies. The Māori consciousness has shifted from state dependency towards self-sufficiency (Durie, 2003, p.198), and the road to that self-sufficiency is intimately tied to education. Without education Māori are doomed to impoverishment and dependency. However, we must be very clear that the education needed for Māori to meet its own expectations is not exactly the education offered by government to the general public. General education provides only for those comfortable with mainstream aspirations and mainstream purposes, and does not address specifically the needs of Māori.

Statements concerning the state of Māori education may, for the purposes of this paper, require treating the subject as black or white, but reality is more in the region of dark grey. While we may congratulate ourselves for the enormous advances that have been made in Māori education over these last 25 years, we recognize that there is still a long way to go. The list of achievements in the world of Māori education as described in the latest report published by the Ministry of Education (Maharey, et al., 2006) is impressive. In addition to the basic statistical data concerning student and staff achievements, the report describes several innovative and apparently highly successful approaches to Māori education that offer hope for a bright future. Those programmes such as Te Kotahitanga and the culturally-responsive teaching models developed at Te Puna Mātauranga o Whanganui that have promise of being successful, are as yet in their early stages and the long term effects have yet to be revealed. However, there is a willingness on the part of government to try new

approaches recognizing that there is no single solution that will provide all the answers. For example, the Ministry of Education has developed partnerships with over 20 iwi and Māori organizations with emphasis upon Maori input into the development of educational plans as well as helping iwi with governance training and the career development of Māori teachers (Maharey et al. (2006), p.28). This willingness to experiment is pushing Aotearoa to the forefront of indigenous education development in the world today. In this paper, I have examined some of the problems with Māori education and attempted to identify some of the underlying reasons for those problems. While one might speculate and hypothesize, only time will determine the accuracy of these conjectures and the effectiveness of any changes made in building a positive future for Māori education.

Problems With Māori Education

There are problems in the current educational system for Māori because of four major deficiencies:

1. Māori education is oriented towards the mainstream culture both in terms of content and delivery.
2. It fails to prevent dropout from secondary and tertiary education for Māori.
3. It fails to provide Māori education to highest levels of university achievement excepting through mainstream institutions, and
4. It fails to provide and sustain acculturation for Māori within a Māori framework.

Māori people exist in two worlds and are expected to perform credibly in both. This dichotomy of existence may be the foundation of many of the stresses and strains that Māori experience daily including alienation from a mainstream society that is sometimes deaf to minority pleas for help, and blind to inequities forced upon them by unwelcome subliminal assimilation policies conducted in the name of democracy. Loss of culture including language has left many Māori without firm foundations leading to loss of confidence and a sense of individual inferiority. However, enormous advances have been made over these last 50 years in the integration of Māori into Pākehā society, but with the rise in urban Māori the integration of Māori into Māori society has taken a backseat and seems to be on the decline.

Loss of cultural identity may be a foundation for violence, poor educational performance, joblessness, criminality, poor health, and propensity towards diseases such as diabetes and obesity. Dichotomy of existence is a factor common to all indigenous peoples and together with the inevitable cultural degradation, underlies many of the social ills common to those colonized by Europeans. The inevitable conflict between colonizers and those colonized is stressful and debilitating.

With the education system geared to the needs of mainstream, why do we feel so surprised when Māori struggle to make their way? With the loss of land and the subsequent dispersion of Māori to cities is it any wonder that so many Māori feel inadequate in both Māori and Pākehā worlds? Loss of land meant loss of language and culture, because the education of Māori intimately involved oral instruction and visual observation from early childhood within the marae setting. How does culture survive when the haukāinga (true home) is in one place but the children are in another? Even today, return to the haukāinga for most occurs only on special events such as tangi (funerals). Māori education for three or four days per year does not make for a strong education and does not ensure the survival of Māori culture.

While the place of learning is significant, the style of learning is also important. Those removed from their foundations usually recognize their loss of culture intensely, and are often at loss with what to do. Many seek instructions from mainstream tertiary institutions, and some attend Māori wānanga hoping to fill that subliminal hunger for identity. To a large

extent the drive to acquire Māori learning has come from those who have felt deprived, but the time has come whereby it is the haukāinga that should be calling its children home. Unfortunately, the resources for educational activities within the marae setting are insufficient, and quite often those of the ahi kā (those who occupy the land) are ill-prepared, or unwilling to teach because their mana tends to be tied up in knowledge acquired over a lifetime. From my own people I have heard the concept of wānanga mocked, and the idea of teaching the young other than through the process of allowing them to observe, ridiculed. Fortunately, not all of our elders see life this way, and many recognize the urgent need to educate not only our young but themselves too.

What Do Māori Want, Or Don't Want?

What do Māori want or don't want? These are difficult questions, but in general terms it may be stated that Māori do not want to be assimilated. Why would any people wish to be assimilated by another? To abandon the accumulated wisdom, language, history, and practices of a culture and replace it with someone else's is rather unlikely. Māori want to be part of, and to contribute to, the nation according to their own talents and experiences. They want to be allowed to contribute their genius, and their flavour to the mix and not just on the rugby field or in the world of entertainment. The items listed in Table 1 summarise the major reasons, and it is suggested that they are the same for all other ethnic groups, including Pākehā. If it is accepted that these wants and don't wants are universal, then why are they so hard to achieve?

Table 1, What Do Māori Want or Don't Want?

Do Not Want	Do Want
To be assimilated. To be poor and struggling. To be in hand out programmes. To be forever marginalized.	To be part of this nation. To be free to practice their culture. To be respected. What is rightfully theirs as Treaty partners. Equality as citizens. A voice in government. An education.

The ethnicity of Aotearoa, as indicated in Table 2, is taken from the Social Report 2006 (Benson-Pope & Hughes, 2006) of the Ministry of Social Development. It can be seen that the dominant culture is that of Europeans accounting for 80.0% of the population in the year 2001. Māori represented only 14.7% of the population, and therefore it might be argued that from a democratic point of view, why indeed should the Māori minority be accommodated? The answer goes back to the Treaty of Waitangi which at the time, when population demographics were the reverse, Māori were in the majority. Perhaps Māori should have asserted its democratic rights to limit Pākehā migration, but chose not to. Today, Pākehā are predominant in this country and appear to assert their rights as the ruling majority at every turn. Consider for example, what happened with the foreshore and seabed fiasco. Nevertheless, the terms of the Treaty of Waitangi remain in force and Māori will continue to assert their rights under the treaty. Also, from the table the browning of Aotearoa continues or as some often think, Māori assimilation policies continue to progress.

Table 2. Ethnicity of Aotearoa

Ethnic Group	Population Year 1991	Year 1991 (%)	Population Year 2001	Year 2001 (%)
European	2,783,025	83.2	2,868,009	80.0
Māori	434,847	13.0	526,281	14.7
Pacific peoples	167,070	5.0	231,801	6.5
Asian	99,756	3.0	237,459	6.6
Other	6,693	0.2	24,924	0.7

The question “What do Māori want, or don’t want?” was answered by Mason Durie in his 2001 presentation to the Hui Taumata and his words have been utilised by the Ministry of Education in their Māori Education Strategy. As quoted by the Ministry of Education (Maharey et al., (2006), p23), Durie said:

“Although education has a number of other goals including enlightenment and learning for the sake of learning, three particular goals have been highlighted as relevant to Māori: 1. enabling Māori to live as Māori, 2. facilitating participation as citizens of the world, 3. contributing towards good health and a high standard of living.”

Few would disagree with these sentiments; however, concerns expressed in this paper, surround the policies and methods developed to reach these goals.

The educational system is not perfect, especially for Māori. The proportion of Aotearoa school children who are Māori has remained relatively constant over the period of 1996 to 2005, at around 21% (Maharey, et al., p.74).

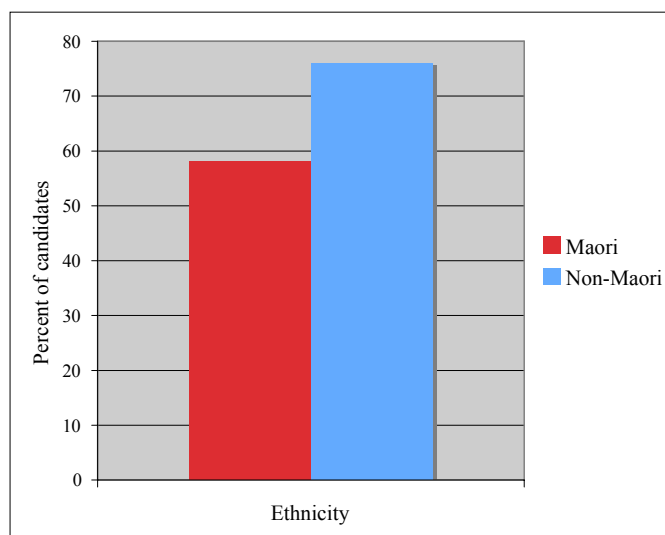


Figure 1. Ethnicity of students who met both literacy and Numeracy requirements for NCEA, Level 1. 2004 (Maharey et al., 2006, p.76)

Māori lag behind Pākehā in secondary school achievement as measured by those who met the literacy and numeracy requirements for NCEA, level 1 (Figure 1). The gap is substantial (58% versus 76%) although one that the secondary school sector is hoping to bridge. More

disturbing, however, is the suspension rates of Māori (both male and female) from schools (Figure 2).

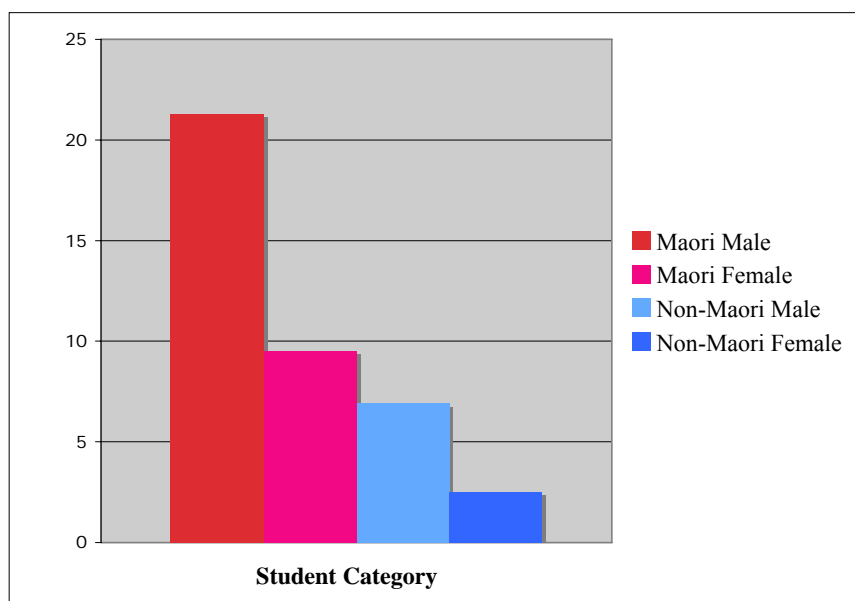


Figure 2. Suspension rates per thousand students in secondary schools in 2005. (Maharey et al., 2006, p. 81)

In 2005, approximately 48% of all suspension cases involved Māori students (Maharey et al., 2006, see p, 81). Further, suspension of Māori students far exceeded that of Pākehā,-- a problem with the system that must be addressed immediately.

The Need for Māori Education

Education of Māori fosters the public good and the overarching goals of Aotearoa. It removes people from hand-out programmes and allows them to become contributing members of society. There have been times when Māori participation in society was defined by government policies to ensure that they did not encroach beyond their place in life (Simon & Smith, 2001). Those days are in the past, but not entirely.

The aim of all education is so-called “rational autonomy” from both individual and societal points of view (Winch & Gingell, 1999), but does this mean different things for Māori and Pākehā? In many ways “rational autonomy” means the same for Māori and Pākehā. It means having some semblance of control over one’s life, and it means having choices. For Māori “rational autonomy” means the choice of a job, not just being forced into something that the system permits at the bottom end of the socioeconomic ladder. Māori want freedom to speak their language and to practice their culture without interference from the dominant culture.

In posing the question “What do Māori want?” the answer Mason Durie gave was, “To live as Māori.” (Durie, 2003, p.199; Benson-Pope & Hughes, 2006)”. Unfortunately, “To live as Māori,” is becoming blurred as more and more Māori move to urban environments, and today that freedom of choice requires a degree of autonomy that can be achieved only through education. Autonomy comes with having a well paying job, and when the mind is predisposed to the recognition of opportunities, being able to act on those perceptions. With education comes choice and empowerment.

In spite of advances in education, Māori children are behind mainstream in developing literacy and numeracy skills, are less likely to graduate from high school, far less likely to get a job even when they have equivalent qualifications, will earn less income, experience more grave health problems and have higher mortality rates than non-Maori (Durie, 2003, p.157; Benson-Pope & Hughes, 2006). However, these societal problems are not unique to Māori. The same words may be used to describe Australian Aborigines (Rigney, 2002) as well as other indigenous peoples around the world (Rao, & Walton, 2004). It appears that all indigenous people suffer from the same grave disadvantages virtually disease for disease and word for word. The common factor may be that of a dominant culture engaged in the throes of assimilating a minority, and the question is, is that sufficient to lay the foundations of health disorders such as obesity, diabetes, high suicide rates, cancer, heart disease and other problems of indigeneity?

The proportion of secondary school leavers with qualifications higher than NCEA Level 1, for Māori and Pākehā is shown in Figure 3. For Pākehā that proportion is now over 70% while for Māori it is under 50%. Underachievement by Māori within the secondary schools appears to be a substantial problem. How to bridge that gap is less clear.

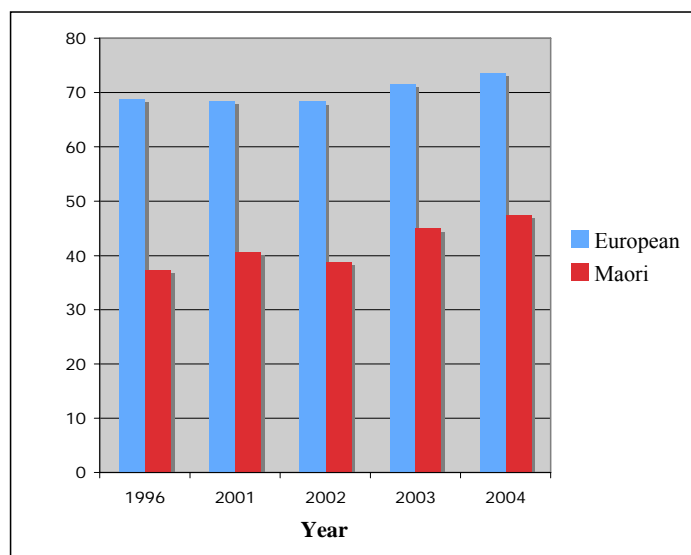


Figure 3. Proportion (%) of school leavers with qualifications higher than NCEA Level 1 (From Benson-Pope and Hughes, 2006, p37)

The proportion of school leavers with qualifications higher than NCEA Level 1 show that Māori lag behind European scholastic achievements in the secondary schools. Note that before 2004, these included Sixth Form Certificate, Higher School Certificate, Entrance Qualification and University Bursary. From 2004, the equivalent qualifications are: 30 or more credits at at NCEA Level 2, NCEA Level 2, 30 or more credits at NCEA Level 3, and NCEA Level 3 or higher.

There are many factors that have led to underperformance by Māori in tertiary institutions in this country. These factors appear relevant to most ethnic groups around the world who have undergone or who are undergoing forced assimilation by a dominant group who control educational budgets and who practice, intentionally or not, cultural hegemony. Open and/or overt racism can lead to withdrawal and under performance (Deyhle, 1995; Kiang, & Kaplan, 1994; Plummer & Slane, 1996). Māori facing culturally unfamiliar surroundings can also lead to isolation of the individual. The tendency has been to blame the victim often assuming

genetic reasons for poor performance. Poor educational performance is not a sign that Māori lack intellectual capacity, but is more likely to be a symptom that the system itself is not working well. As with every other race, some Māori are intellectually gifted, while others are able to get by, and some are discounted as dismal failures. For Māori the distribution curve appears to be skewed in favour of personal failure.

Most teachers are not racists. Most teachers are well-meaning good people. Unfortunately, many believe that good teaching is enough, that good teaching can transcend the racial divide. However, sensitivity to Māori needs is essential regardless of the skill level and may well be lacking for those inured in Eurocentric cultural values. In addition, cultural insensitivity may well be a matter of cultural ignorance. Other teachers believe that education is also a means of assimilating Māori and to a degree this is true. Certainly, knowledge concerning the dominant culture provides safety for Māori as a means to survive. Education is essential for the learning of life skills although for some teachers this has nothing to do with heritage or culture. It is all about teaching civic, vocational, and intellectual skills, the skills they presume are needed to survive in today's world (Gay, 2000).

The Nature of Disadvantage

The problems facing indigenous educators today are the same ones that educators faced 50 years ago in dealing with the educational problems of the disadvantaged (Loretan & Umans, 1966), and to a degree, the approach to solving the problem has simply been transferred from the disadvantaged to the culturally diverse, and as with the disadvantaged of 50 years ago we are still in the place of characterizing and analyzing their deficiencies. In the past, time was spent teaching the disadvantaged to conform to mainstream ideologies and invariably without success.

We need to understand more fully the nature of disadvantage and in particular the nature of disadvantage to Māori people. What is the disadvantage? Problems associated with the learning of disadvantaged people are well recognized (Loretan & Umans 1966) and have been the subject of numerous studies. However, in spite of the fact that disadvantaged white, black, and brown people have been studied and talked about for decades the problem has not gone away, and the disadvantaged remain with us. The definition of disadvantage has been debated and discussed interminably with little progress from its first recognition and formulation in the early fifties. What is it that renders indigenous people disadvantaged even in the face of economic parity as is sometimes the case?

What kind of disadvantage affects the ability of people to learn? What kind of disadvantage results in a reduction in longevity, and a propensity towards diabetes and obesity? There is no single answer when it comes to disadvantage other than that which enforced assimilation imposes on indigenous peoples. Education is recognized as one of the few methods by which the stresses of disadvantage may be overcome, a way to achieve parity, but it is not simple. Education is a complex of whānau, community, school, teachers, parents, students, and the State. While the thesis of this presentation is indeed education, there are many other relevant factors concerning disadvantage, but none so important as education. For success in education, a balance is needed between the interacting and often conflicting factors that allow the student to grow in confidence as well as in knowledge. As Durie pointed out, "education policies themselves will not overcome the effects of poor housing, unsafe streets, alienation from customary land, low incomes, polluted environments, or physical and mental abuse" (Durie, 2003, p. 203).

Freire (1972) divided the world into the oppressed and the oppressors. He placed the liberation of the oppressed in the hands of the oppressed, but even more astonishing he placed the liberation of the oppressors also in the hands of the oppressed. These radical views on

education simply point out that both oppressed and oppressors are imprisoned in the structures of society, and that there is an interdependence on each other; a shared responsibility. Another concept that Freire introduced is that of humanization which holds that only through education can an individual begin a transformative process involving critical analysis of his or her environment that results in that environment becoming more human or humanized (Freire, 1972). This process of humanization is one that oppressed people are able to achieve only after ascending to a state of consciousness available to them through the discipline of learning. The educational mysticism presented by the views of Freire has contributed strongly to the development of what has become known as kaupapa Māori.

Is Culture Important?

Blaming the victim mentality does not solve the problem of disadvantage nor does blaming the oppressor. Bernard Lewis (1997) observed that “when people realize that things are going wrong, there are two questions they can ask. One is, ‘What did we do wrong?’ and the other is ‘Who did this to us?’ The latter leads to conspiracy theories and paranoia. The first question leads to another line of thinking: ‘How do we put it right?’ (as quoted from Landes, 2000, p7). We must choose very carefully which of these two questions are to be addressed, because the end results are quite different. Latin America chose conspiracy theories and paranoia which led to economic ruin and repression, whereas in the second half of the nineteenth century Japan chose to put things right and its people prospered. There are many examples of success and failure of nations whose basic culture overcame or failed to overcome economic disadvantage.

Delgado-Gaitan and Trueba (1991) defined culture as a dynamic system of social values, cognitive codes, behavioural standards, worldviews, and beliefs, used to give order and meaning to our lives as well as the lives of others. As Gay (2000, p. 9) pointed out, culture determines how we think, what we believe, and how we behave. Thus for Māori people raised with traditional influences, the imposition of a Euro-centric education is not easily accepted. Invariably, reinterpretation and repositioning takes place that involves remodeling of cultural foundations.

Ethnicity as a foundation for achievement cannot be divorced from other factors that affect achievement. Educational fertility is the sum of many factors including experience and culture, and reductionist approaches that attempt to separate out factors that consider only intellectual achievement tend not to work in the absence of support structures, and cultural sensitivity. Race, culture, and ethnicity are important, but the urgings of mainstream for Māori to transcend these apparent limitations places the onus in the wrong camp. Attempts by mainstream to overcome the problems that lead to Māori under achievement, while often well-meaning, have been doomed to failure mainly because of the deficit orientation of those engaged in the implementation. That is, such interventions have traditionally focussed on what is wrong with Māori, and the skills and abilities they don't have. Tampering with structure rarely results in revolution, and what is needed most is a revolution in attitude on the part of Māori in order to rise above the negativity that tends to hold us back. This is not a call for the overthrow of Māori culture, but it is a call for a revolution in attitudes, and the only way that can be achieved is through education.

Basically, culture is the sum total of beliefs, values, and attitudes upon which a society is based. These beliefs, values, and attitudes have arisen over millenia as societies have attempted to deal with hostile and changing environments. Rules of culture have arisen to protect and enable societies to survive. Unfortunately, in this modern world not all cultures are created equal, some struggle to make their way in the world while others seem to thrive. The differences between cultures have been the subject of much attention as governments try to identify factors that lead to prosperity and wealth for its citizens (Harrison & Huntington,

2000). Cultures tend to resist change although those that adapt and adjust quickly to new circumstances and new opportunities tend to be more successful than those that do not (Porter, 2000), provided the basic principles upon which a society is founded has values conducive to productivity, thrift, education and self-discipline (Landes, 2000). There is no doubt that there is a global convergence around a culture of productivity. The question for Māori is how to achieve prosperity and yet still retain indigenous identity?

The answer to this question lies in identifying the common factors responsible for success and prosperity in those external societies, such as Japanese, South Korean, German, and American and incorporating or adapting those factors to Māori needs. There is no doubt that thrift and hard work is part of the answer and that self-discipline and education is another. Ideally, these factors need to be inculcated into our national psyche, to become part of our culture, to be embraced, and to be heralded. None of this threatens the foundations of Māori culture and indeed could actually lead to it being strengthened. These character traits appear to underlie the prosperity of economically successful nations and their absence seem to underlie the failure of less successful nations. The choice comes down to us and to what we want to be.

The major key to transformation of society is education. Not overnight education but generational education that results in basic attitudes being honed for success. If we as an indigenous people can achieve attitudes of self-confidence with expectations of success, while at the same time retain our basic philosophies of aroha and manaakitanga then we will maintain our identity and be the stronger for it. The end result will be economic prosperity for Māori. It has been achieved by others so why not use their example and adjust ourselves accordingly (Delgado-Gaitan & Trueba, 1991).

What has been said applies not only to Māori society but to Pākehā as well. The adoption of thrift, self-discipline, education, and hard work must become part of the national psyche and only thus will our nation be raised up. Calls for a new society dedicated to innovation and international business are wonderful, but without a belief in the basic principles of hard work, thrift, education and self-discipline by which we live, very little will be achieved. Enhanced productivity is the pathway to economic prosperity.

What are the Differences Between Māori and Pākehā Cultures?

There are many similarities between Māori and Pākehā and there are differences that become heightened from time to time. Much of the Aotearoa culture is common. For example, both cultures shop primarily at Supermarkets. Both attend movie theatres, both watch TV and both cultures have been heavily colonized by the Christian church. The list is long and one could end up legitimately asking, what are the differences between the two cultures?

There are the obvious differences such as language, tikanga, and history but for many Pākehā, Māori are a mystery. Friendliness between the two cultures manifests itself in so many ways including intermarriage, sports, working buddies, and at the pub after work. On the surface there might seem to be harmony between the races and in the main it is true; however, the cultural needs of Māori are not being met and this is a problem.

Consider Figure 4 wherein Pākehā culture is represented by the cream coloured oval and Māori by the purple. Where the two cultures overlap is represented by the brown colour. Historically, it was the intention of the dominant Pākehā culture to assimilate Māori and make this one culture perhaps allowing some degree of brown to contaminate the cream. Nevertheless a single culture was intended and education, or lack thereof, was one of the primary tools whereby this assimilation was to be achieved. The reality is, however, that Māori do not wish to be assimilated, but nor do they wish for Pākehā to disengage.

There are aspects of Māori culture and Pākehā culture that are not shared. For example, the rituals of encounter as practised by Māori are not shared by the two cultures although occasionally Pākehā may participate. Leadership of Aotearoa society is not shared by the two races although occasionally an individual might cross the race divide and be viewed by both as acceptable in a leadership role. The histories of the two cultures are not the same.

However, the cultural reality is that Māori and Pākehā now share this country and much of our culture is shared, but some still remains exclusively Māori or exclusively Pākehā. That which is not shared affects how each race views and interprets the common ground.

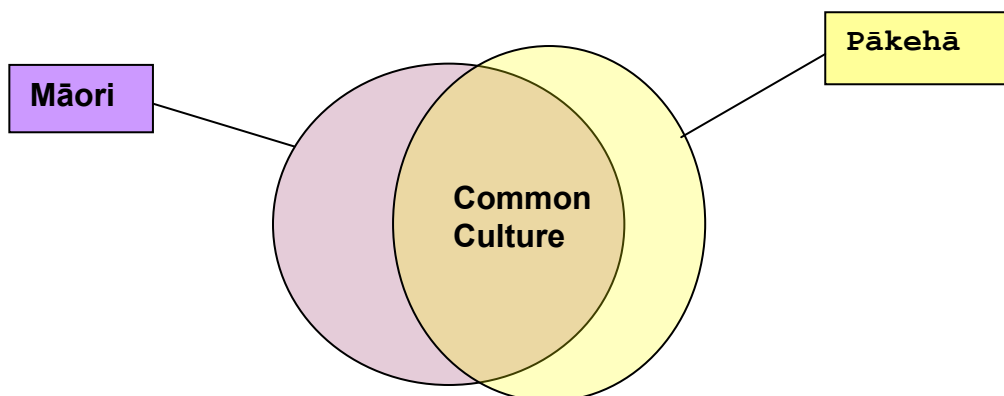


Figure 4. Interactions between Māori and Pākehā cultures represented by overlapping areas.

A feature of Figure 4 is that it illustrates that Māori and Pākehā have cultural perspectives that influence the parts that are shared and this is what becomes important for educational receptivity. As a corollary, it would seem that the unshared portions have a filtering effect that colours that which is shared. That which is not shared affects how each race views and interprets the common ground. When a single education is available to both Māori and Pākehā the way in which that common education is viewed and approached is dependent very much on that part of the experience which is not common. What either race gets out of this common education is very much dependent on those experiences which are not shared. Increasing the cultural values does not reduce the experience of common education because the goal is to bring Māori up to the needs of modern society. The lessening of Pākehā cultural values also helps to strengthen the Māori cultural values of education although does not eliminate it. It is important that the end product be a useful valuable member of society, i.e., a good citizen able to function in the world and to contribute to it.

This idea of cultural overlap and the significance of cultural perspectives was first presented by Metge (1967), who also recognized the limitations of a two-dimensional representation of a dynamic and ever changing milieu of two culturally distinct people. Metge, however, rejected the idea of Māori and Pākehā being two separate entities as she says, “different in kind and mutually exclusive.”(Metge, 1976). While the two-dimensional model has its limitations it also has its value insofar as it clarifies our understanding of relationships between the two cultures. Metge rejects cultural exclusivity and perceives a deep cultural intermeshing that leads to what she called, “complementary opposition” where each culture locked in its struggle with the other, somehow through that struggle leads to a single whole that is stronger and indeed defining in terms of nationhood. The reality is however, that cracks within the structure of any society are in fact unlikely to reinforce and will, in the main, ultimately contribute to its downfall. In place of “complementary opposition” the preferred position should be one of “complementary respect” where we each recognize our differences and indeed celebrate those differences.

Māori and Pākehā cultural values also have a profound effect on how each race responds to and interprets education. Intensification of the Māori cultural values in education and the simultaneous softening of the Pākehā cultural values results in a distortion of educational themes in such a manner as to render the system in a more Māori-friendly manner.

How does Government View Māori Culture?

There are times when Māori are the invisible people. Their views are often either not heard and/or completely disregarded by their Treaty partner, the Crown. Consider what happened with the foreshore and seabed question where Māori views and claims were ignored.



Figure 5. A proud moment in Māori history.

The photograph (Fig. 5) was taken outside Parliament in September of 2004 during protests against the decisions by government concerning the foreshore and seabed. The Māori claims were disregarded. The late Tame Te Maro, a man of highest integrity, is seen leading from the front.

According to the Social Report 2006 (Benson-Pope & Hughes, 2006), published by the Ministry for Social Development, Māori are not doing too badly having improved their educational position since 1996. For the Ministry the desired outcome is that “Everybody has the knowledge and skills needed to participate fully in society. Lifelong learning and education are valued and supported” and it is against this outcome statement that the advancement of Māori must be measured. The pivotal word in this statement is “society” and for the Ministry of Social Development it is quite clear that they mean Pākehā society only, not Māori society.

The Ministry of Social Development has been ethnically inclusive in their report but only insofar as those minority groups relate to the state of mainstream. Māori is an official language of Aotearoa, but the Ministry hopes for “A good level of literacy in English,” not a good level of literacy in Māori. Māori are simply accorded the recognition of an ethnic minority in their own country. Nevertheless, Māori would like to embrace the ideals of the Ministry of Social

Development and ensure that “everyone within has the knowledge and skills needed to participate fully” in Māori society.

Even the opposition, the National Party, who might be expected to take the opposite view of the Labour Party is complicit. For example, quite recently (September 25, 2006) an article appeared in the New Zealand Herald (Stokes, 2006) wherein Don Brash, the Leader of the National Party, was reported to have raised the question as to whether “Māori remained a distinct indigenous group because few if any full-blooded ones remained.” What better way to alienate Māori than to question their status as a distinct people?

As the government moves towards the elimination of race-based programmes, alienation of Māori will undoubtedly spread and so too will its intensity. The history of Māori is strongly tied to the attempts by mainstream cultures to assimilate people they have colonized, and surely the lessons learned from the failed attempts of the English to assimilate the Welsh, the Irish, and the Scots and all the misery surrounding those attempts would have left an imprint. The fact is that assimilation is a bad idea leading to resistance, violence, and misery for both the colonized and the colonizer. Let us hope that the lessons of the twentieth century have been learned, because it doesn't have to be that way.

Summary and Conclusions

The first step in overcoming disadvantage is to identify the underlying reasons that have led to the basic problems in the first place. In a complex world, that process of identification is far from easy. However, the success of Māori educational environments in the education of Māori, although limited at this time, suggests that one important factor might involve the relationship between culture and education. The dissociation of education from Māori culture is clearly a fact that Māori have had to deal with ever since Pākehā began to organize their education about 150 years ago. The imposition of a Eurocentric education on Māori, while well intended, may have led to and reinforced many of the negative aspects of colonization; aspects such as racism, feelings of unworthiness, lack of confidence, despair, self-indulgence, social and economic disadvantage, poor academic performance, and disengagement. The question now becomes, “Well what are we going to do about it?”

Māori are moving away from dependency; blaming the colonizer for all our ills has run its course. The Hui Taumata, for example, has become a means by which we examine ourselves and in particular how we examine the strategies that will uplift our people into a future of economic prosperity and well-being. However, doing something about our state in life does not mean that we will abandon our legitimate complaints and the seeking of redress; not at all. Nor will we abandon our culture but will continue to strengthen it; all cultures evolve and ours will too. There are things that Māori must change, and there are ideas that we must embrace if we are to prosper as a people. Probably, the most important is the inculcation of education into the very foundations of who we are, and what we do; that is, a reintegration of Māori education with Māori culture.

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