

**No black-and-white answers:  
Cultural responsiveness and Māori students**

by

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## **Abstract**

Māori underachievement is a major and persistent leadership challenge affecting everyone in the New Zealand education system. Historical achievement statistics clearly show that over 30 years of culturally responsive policies have not realized their aim of equalising national educational outcomes for Māori. This dissertation investigates the extent to which culturally responsive policies can improve Māori educational outcomes.

Arguably, Māori educational inequality is proving to be resistant to policy interventions because the major causes of it are structural in the socio-economic sense. The thrust of current policy holds individual schools and teachers responsible for ensuring that Māori students succeed. This success is meant to be attained by applying culturally responsive practice. This dissertation investigates the logic behind this policy, drawing on two research approaches, namely, critical literature review and narrative research.

The main cause of Māori educational disparity is socioeconomic inequity resulting from a history of deliberate policies to relegate Māori into relative poverty and maintain relative Pākehā privilege. Yet these histories are rarely recognized in everyday discourse about Māori education. What is recognized is that there are no quick fixes to Māori educational inequity. If socioeconomic inequality was fully acknowledged as a major cause of educational underachievement, then a logical step to take would be to make efforts to reduce inequality. Such logic would controvert the ideological basis of neoliberalism, and there are some signs in New Zealand politics of a shift away from neoliberalism.

Long term improvements to Māori educational achievement will need to come from a shift in thinking away from resolution or settlement, towards a mind frame of ongoing national relationship based on the Treaty of Waitangi, and acceptance of some incommensurable cultural differences.

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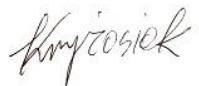
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## **Attestation of Authorship**

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the Acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

*Signed:*



Jacek Krzyżosiak

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# **CHAPTER ONE: Introduction**

The motivation for undertaking this research originates in my teaching and leadership practice in an Auckland secondary school with a high proportion of Māori and Pacific students. I undertook this study for the opportunity to explore the problem of Māori underachievement, which is a major professional and leadership challenge in schools like mine. At a larger level, inequity of school outcomes for Māori students is a persistent problem in national education in New Zealand, which affects everyone in the sector.

New Zealand is a multi-ethnic, post-colonial settler society with an indigenous Māori population of about 15% of the total national population, which is projected to grow over the next few decades to reach about 20% by 2038 (Stats NZ Tatauranga Aotearoa, 2017). Māori are unfairly negatively affected by the socio-economic inequality of New Zealand society, which among other indicators manifests in relatively lower academic achievement in the education system. Statistical inequity of outcomes for Māori has been a feature of the school system since records began.

## **Research question and rationale**

This dissertation investigates the following research question:

**To what extent can culturally responsive policies improve Māori educational outcomes?**

Since the 1960s a raft of various government policy initiatives aimed at overcoming educational inequality between Māori and non-Māori students have been implemented, most of them with limited success at best. The ongoing struggle to reduce the ethnic gap in education is manifest in the local sub-field of ‘Māori education research’ that emerged in about 1970 (Ewing & Shallcross, 1970; Watson, 1967) as a form of scholarship defined by deficit. Māori education has mostly been seen in such reductionist terms as ‘closing the gap’ - countered by the more recent idea of ‘success-as-Māori’.

Current policy holds teachers responsible for ensuring Māori students can succeed by using culturally responsive pedagogy. Māori equity and culturally responsive pedagogy are educational leadership issues because individual teachers and schools are increasingly expected to demonstrate how they are responding to Māori equity. Schools report on Māori student

outcomes in their annual reports, and culturally responsive pedagogy for Māori learners is built into the professional registration standards against which teachers are appraised. This dissertation investigates the thinking behind this policy, and the extent to which it is actually possible for culturally responsive education policy to equalise Māori education outcomes.

It can be argued that Māori educational inequality is proving to be immune to interventions because the major causes of it are structural in the socio-economic sense, but some inequity could possibly also be attributed to unacknowledged, unintended, covert and structural Eurocentric biases that operate in schools.

### **What brings me to this research?**

As a central European immigrant and teacher in a secondary school with a large proportion of Māori and Pacific students, I am confronted with questions of racial prejudice almost daily. This is a situation I was not prepared for by my childhood, since I grew up in a very ethnically homogenous social milieu in Poland.

My first influences that shaped my current worldviews were from my grandparents. Both sets of my grandparents had experienced cultural diversity when they were young, living in the western and eastern borderlands of Poland. I did not know my maternal grandparents because they died before I was born. When I spent time with my paternal grandparents, which was a considerable amount in my childhood, I was exposed to the secure, conservative Catholic worldview common within their community. It was a worldview characterised by the spiritual religious belief in the interventionist God who responded to one's thoughts and deeds. It did not by any means adhere to a strictly rational outlook, as is considered typical of modern thinking, inheriting the philosophies inaugurated by the Enlightenment of Western Europe.

By the time I was spending time with them, the community they lived in was monocultural, not culturally diverse. One aspect of the cultural diversity they had experienced in their youth was having to deal with people of different culture who invaded and occupied their homeland. As a result, they were happy to live their later years in an ethnically homogenous community. My grandparents and parents were among the people who were displaced from their homes in Poland after World War II as a result of political changes made to its geographical borders. Consequently, for the last three generations my family failed to develop a deep attachment to

the land where they were living. As a result of this family history, in that respect my outlook is probably quite different to that of indigenous ‘people of the land.’

The second layer of memories influencing the formation of my worldview are of life with my parents, when Poland was dominated by Marxist-Leninist philosophy. My parents, as with most Poles, did not really buy into it. They were politically opinionated, opposed to communism in private, but they were not activists; they retained my grandparents’ values to some extent, but were not as religious. The worldview of my home was in tension with the atheist Communist worldview imposed by Soviets on Polish public life. My own outlook was influenced to a great extent by this tension between opposing private and public worldviews, which made me distrust Marxist ideas.

The third layer of my political worldview developed when I went to do my undergraduate studies in marine biology and fisheries in the 1980s. It was a time when Communism had lost the ideological battle and were holding on to power almost entirely by force. Practically nobody trusted the official news, and underground illegal books and newspapers were in high demand. Almost everyone was pro-Western, liberal, modernist, patriotic yet contesting official ideology. The Catholic Church at that point provided limited refuge for the dissidents of all types of politics. Working for several summers as a student labourer in the Polish fishing industry, and later in a Norwegian fish processing plant, and seeing the contrast between the two, convinced me of the superiority of Capitalism over Socialism.

In 1981 martial law was declared in Poland and the Solidarity movement was crushed, following which personal freedoms were severely curtailed. Censorship became more strictly applied and consumer goods were in short supply, to the extent that food items, petrol, cigarettes and alcohol were rationed. There was an atmosphere of fear of the secret police; Soviet military intervention was a realistic prospect. This carried on for almost a decade during my late teenage and early twenties. It was a time and place in which it was difficult to be optimistic about one’s own future and that of Polish society.

In 1989 I migrated from Poland to New Zealand with hopes for a better life, since I did not expect to see much political change in my native country. Yet within months of migrating, the political landscape of Central and Eastern Europe had completely transformed, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the demolition of the Berlin Wall, and the resulting increased

freedom experienced by Poland and other Soviet satellite countries. Witnessing these events implanted in me a strong belief that major social change is possible, even against the odds. After two years of working as a labourer and waiter, I enrolled in a graduate degree in Biology. I had no idea, then, about the post-colonial legacy of New Zealand society. My worldview was optimistic, rational, scientific, liberal, and not very critical about the society around me.

I thought New Zealand society was liberal and free from corruption, reasonably fair and full of opportunities for most of the people. It certainly compared favourably with the ‘worker’s paradise’ of my younger years. At that point I felt I belonged in the centre-left of the New Zealand political spectrum. The next significant influence on my world view was teacher training in 2006. It was then I realised the extent of socio-economic inequality in New Zealand and the history of colonial oppression.

Tutors and lecture materials were contesting neoliberalism, praising Marxism, introducing postmodern ideas and challenging the post-colonial status quo. The experience that catalysed my outlook to shift further towards the political left was tutoring refugees in Hamilton. This was a required activity for the graduate diploma of teaching course. It showed me the challenges brought by poverty in this country. My teaching practicum in a low-decile rural school with a high proportion of Māori students was my first personal encounter with the legacies of New Zealand’s colonial past.

Since becoming a qualified teacher, I have taught Science at an ethnically diverse, low-decile secondary school in Auckland, where Māori students make up approximately 20% of the roll and Pacific students make up 50%. In Auckland, the wealth or poverty of the students who attend a particular state school is largely determined by the cost of housing in the surrounding area, which is an effective mechanism of social segregation. My school caters for students from socio-economically disadvantaged families. This teaching experience has dispelled any remnants of my belief in the New Zealand egalitarian myth.

### **Skin in the game**

An early situation when I became uncomfortably aware of being white-skinned was when I was working in a Norwegian fish processing plant in my early 20s. We were sitting around the table having some tea and talking, as we were just getting to know each other, and questions

were asked about my origin, so I said I was from Poland, which at the time was still under Soviet influence. This information was greeted by expressions of compassion for my coming from a poor and oppressed place, followed by the kindly comment ‘at least you are white’ from a German co-worker. I was quite taken aback by this casual line, especially because there were some Sri Lankan Tamil men also present in the group around the table.

Shortly afterwards, in the workers’ hostel, I was cooking a meal together with a group of Tamils, when we were joined by another worker from Africa. At that point the Tamil and African men began to banter about degrees of blackness of skin, with the Tamil men wondering how it is that they are blacker than the African man. They even put their forearms next to each other’s to see whose skin was really blacker. What struck me was that this contest was accompanied by lots of laughter and was clearly light-hearted.

The fascination with human skin colour is clearly widespread; for example, Vikram Seth’s novel *A Suitable Boy* describes the Indian ideal of beauty being associated with lighter skin. Skin colour is clearly something that students at our school think about a lot. If the student feels she or he was treated unfairly, they will often say ‘Just because I am black?’ As a teacher I recall sometimes thinking to myself, do they have a point? Unfortunately, classroom teaching is a fast-paced activity, and reflection, if it is done at all, is done afterwards. Another common response to perceived injustice that students would give is ‘You are racist!’ I would feel hurt inside by comments such as this, and I think to myself, is that so? European students, when for some reason they perceive a preference given to non-European students, would say ‘This is racist!’ - which is less personal in a sense.

Race confronts me not only in relating directly to students but also in the teaching artefact. The image below shows a microscopic slide labelled *Negro Skin 64, Made in U.S.A.* that I found at school while cleaning up a Biology storeroom.



It had likely not been used for years, as I found it in a dusty box buried under other things, but it must have been used at some stage, and was presumably bought by the school. Who was the person from whom the skin was taken? Was the sample obtained ethically? Was it possibly taken from an executed prisoner? Did it look different under the microscope from the skin of a white person? How was it that the N-word was used to label it? How would the students feel if it was used in class? Just by its very presence in the school, this item made me uneasy.

In terms of biology, the concept of ‘race’ is meaningless as there is more genetic diversity within each group traditionally designated as a ‘race’ than between those groups, therefore there is more overlap between groups. Simply speaking, biological ‘races’ do not exist. That does not stop the concept from functioning socially, so there is a paradox as we are the same but not the same.

I was asked an intriguing race-related question by some Pacific students: ‘Sir, are you white or black?’ This question seemed to me to have many possible meanings and interpretations, from the most literal, suggesting that I am well-tanned and less pale than they expected, to my non-Kiwi accent: maybe I do not speak like a typical white person? Or, I wondered to myself, perhaps they were effectively asking me, ‘are you one of us, or one of them?’ I was asked this question a few years after beginning work as a teacher, and I felt that maybe it meant the gap between me and my students had closed a bit. But it was probably more the case that they wanted to culturally ‘locate’ me. I often find myself responding to student questions about the location and history of Poland. My disclosures clarify the fact that I am indeed European, of Polish national identity. Talking about my own ethnic identity helps me to have a dialogue about the identities of my students, which are often composite and complex. Collectively, classrooms are like culturally diverse microcosms of society, with friendships forming between students from distant geographical and cultural origins. In spite of all the cultural differences, all the students share identity as Aucklanders.

## **Overview of the dissertation chapters**

Chapter Two investigates the research question through the literature, using research readings, policy texts and press reports to investigate how much culturally responsive education policies can improve Māori achievement in schools. Chapter Three discusses the research decisions; the theoretical, practical and ethical dimensions of the research project. Chapter Four presents

narratives written from insider positions within the culturally responsive teaching milieu. Chapter Five synthesizes the themes arising in those stories with findings of the literature review. Chapter Six recapitulates the dissertation findings, presents a possible future scenario for Māori education, and makes recommendations for leadership practice.

## **CHAPTER TWO: Literature Review**

This chapter uses readings of research literature, policy texts and press reports to investigate how much culturally responsive education policies can improve Māori achievement in schools. The first section presents brief statistical evidence to establish the current level of inequity for Māori. The second section overviews the history of Māori education to look for the origins of the current situation. The third section introduces policy responses to the educational inequity experienced by Māori. The final section evaluates the reported effectiveness of those policies, and the chapter ends with a summary of the argument developed.

Without considering the past it would be easy to follow the tendency to ignore the historical roots of the contemporary situation. Since schooling today is apparently fairly available to all families in New Zealand, inequity of educational outcomes for some ethnic groups seems to exist for no reason. By ignoring historical realities, blame for educational inequity can be located with students themselves and their families. Seeing the contemporary situation as a result of past policies and practices is necessary to understand the current educational inequality suffered by Māori. Reviewing the history of Māori education highlights the fact that Māori inequality has long been a feature of New Zealand education, and demonstrates the reality of Māori colonisation as an ongoing process that underwrites the thinking behind education policy and maintains social inequality (Walker, 2016). For example, almost every Māori family has a personal story of unfair dispossession of land in past generations, which still affects current (and hence future) generations.

### **The current status of Māori achievement**

The scale of current Māori disadvantage in education is identified in a briefing to the incoming Minister, produced after the 2017 national elections (Ministry of Education, 2017). Disparities begin with attendance statistics, where there is a significant gap in the number of Māori learners who attend school regularly, which is defined as 90%-plus attendance. In primary schooling, 61% of Māori learners attend school regularly, compared with 71% for all learners. In secondary schools the regular attendance rates are 43% for Māori learners, and 60% for all learners. Māori students are also over-represented in the statistics for chronic transience, which has a significant negative impact on educational outcomes.

At Year 4 of primary school, Māori students are statistically half a curriculum level behind Pākehā students in reading, writing and mathematics, and this gap widens as students age. As school leavers, 66.5% of Māori students attain Level 2 NCEA or higher, compared to 80.3% for Pākehā students. Only 19% of Māori school leavers achieve University Entrance, compared with 44% of European and 67% of Asian students.

These educational inequalities result in a stark contrast in access to the professions that provide the greatest financial rewards and social status, namely medicine, engineering and law. Nationally, students from the most deprived 30% of schools make up only 6% of the graduates from these courses (Johnston, 2018). This statistic reports a decile-related differential, but relates to Māori because the Māori student population is concentrated in the lower decile schools. How might an examination of history illuminate the origins of these disparities? The next section turns to an overview of the history of Māori education policy.

## **History of Māori education policy**

New Zealand educational policy directed towards Māori students can be divided into phases according to changing policy goals, starting with mission schools for conversion to Christianity, followed by the goal of assimilation to British culture, later giving way to integration, and in more recent decades turning to Taha Māori, biculturalism, multiculturalism and tino rangatiratanga (Walker, 1996).

### *Mission schooling*

European-style schools for Māori were first established by missionaries, starting in 1816. The missionaries aimed to convert Māori to Christianity (Stephenson, 2008; Walker, 2016) and create a Christian community, though they did not necessarily seek to fully impose European culture on Māori society. Missionaries were not willing to teach secular knowledge, which Māori desired (Walker, 2016). Initially missionaries also refused to teach English, wanting to protect Māori from non-Christian influences, but effectively restricting Māori access to European knowledge. Schooling was one element of a growing tide of cultural invasion of the Māori world (Anderson, Binney, & Harris, 2014, p. 190).

The Māori leaders who supported the establishment of Pākehā schooling are conjectured to have had very different expectations from the aims of missionaries: they wanted to adopt useful Pākehā knowledge for their own ends (Jones & Jenkins, 2008b). From 1820 the written form

of te reo Māori was developed in co-operation between the rangatira (leaders) and missionaries, whereby Māori learned to read and write, and missionaries developed a better understanding of te reo Māori. ‘Enthusiasm for reading was evident as soon as printed material in the Māori language became available’ (Anderson et al., 2014, p. 194). Instruction in mission schools was conducted in te reo Māori and literacy, regarded as a skill of substantial mana (prestige), spread quickly beyond the areas influenced by British. It is believed that the rate of literacy among Māori was higher at this point in colonial history than among the Pākehā then living in the country. This historical fact should put to rest any racist assumptions about the Māori inability to learn European skills. Māori literacy in te reo Māori was becoming useful in Māori political life, with many rangatira using letter-writing to build political alliances (Anderson et al., 2014, p. 196).

#### *Education as a tool for assimilation*

After the Treaty of Waitangi was signed, an increasing number of Europeans settled in New Zealand, and the educational policy of the colonial government evolved. Native schools continued to be established, and Māori communities displayed strong interest in education as means of their advancement, despite the divergence between their aspirations and those of the settler government (Anderson et al., 2014, p. 286).

The schools took an assimilationist approach, with a goal of instructing solely in English, for example, but some Maori communities were able to subvert that intention, and the schools instead became a focal point for communal pride and activity. (Anderson et al., 2014, p. 294) Policy was based on racist beliefs about the inherent intellectual inferiority of Māori, illustrated by the following statement attributed to Henry Taylor, a school inspector of the times:

‘I do not advocate for the natives under present circumstances a refined education or high mental culture... they are better calculated to get their living by manual than by mental labour’ (Walker, 2016, p. 23).

The language of instruction became English, mandated by law, and te reo Māori was systematically suppressed. The assimilationist intent of the Pākehā view of Māori education is illustrated by the following opinion, attributed to Native Land Court Judge Frederick Maning in 1873: ‘I have nothing to report except that if all your schools are going as well as that of Wirinake [i.e. Whirinaki] there will soon be no Maoris [sic] in New Zealand’ (Barrington & Beaglehole, 1974, p. 4).

The Education Act of 1877 established effectively two separate educational systems in New Zealand, one for Māori children that was rural, with a restricted assimilatory curriculum, and the other for the children of Pākehā settlers, which was academic and based on the British public-school system. This two-tier colonial educational system, aimed at assimilating Māori to the lower ranks of New Zealand society, continued albeit with some changes over the decades, including a change of name from Native Schools to Māori Schools after WWII, until the whole system was finally dismantled in 1969. Schools of the times systematically marginalised access of young Māori to full participation in politics and the economy.

Following WWII the Māori population underwent a rapid process of urbanization, changing from 80% rural in 1939 to 80% urban by 1986 (Meredith, 2012). Urbanisation spelt the end of the largely rural Native School system, as more and more Māori children enrolled in their local Board schools. Urbanisation and education in mainstream schools weakened the connection of Māori children to tribal communities and further undermined intergenerational transmission of te reo, as mainly young people moved to urban centres (Anderson et al., 2014, p. 64). The education system succeeded in converting most Māori to Christianity and in damaging te reo Māori almost to extinction. It did not, however, achieve its goal of fully assimilating Māori into British settler culture: Māori refused to assimilate, and New Zealand never became fully monocultural. Under Pākehā domination, Māori culture has been marginalised and attenuated, but never fully extinguished.

#### *The Hunn Report: constructing Māori underachievement*

The Hunn Report (Hunn, 1961) was the first official government document to explicitly identify the underachievement of the Māori school population. The Hunn Report introduced a new phase of educational policy based on integration, not assimilation, but this approach was still based on the structural dominance of European culture, and assumed the two cultures would merge (Bishop & Glynn, 1998). The Hunn Report ushered in the ending of Māori Schools in 1969, which meant Māori students were finally included in the national education statistics of academic achievement. The unified school system showed up the significant disadvantage suffered by Māori students, which heralded the beginnings of the local sub-field of Māori education research, a research tradition predicated on deficit. Explanations of Māori inequity included genetic and cultural deficiency (Bishop & Glynn, 1998). Ignoring cultural

differences between Māori and non-Māori is a way of marginalising Māori students and the impact of socio-economic deprivation (Macfarlane, 2004; Pihamo, Cram, & Walker, 2002).

After a period of post-WWII prosperity, the first oil shock of the 1970s marked the start of an acceleration in the growth of economic inequality in New Zealand that disproportionately affected Māori. Combined with renewed political activism by generations of urban Māori, this led to the establishment in 1975 of the Treaty of Waitangi Tribunal, tasked with redressing breaches of the Treaty. Māori education policy began to move towards biculturalism. Ranginui Walker explained educational underachievement of Māori students as arising from cultural alienation within the Eurocentric schools (Walker, 2004). Similar ideas were expressed by NACME, the National Advisory Committee on Māori Education (Hokowhitu, 2004).

Taha Māori was introduced in schools in 1975 to counteract the cultural alienation of Māori students, and to safely expose non-Māori students to cultural diversity. Taha Māori was purported to embrace traditional tikanga Māori, but in reality it was quite superficial, restricted to things like the use of Māori greetings and decorative elements in the classroom and school (Walker, 2016, pp. 30-31). ‘Essentially, Taha Māori represented a version of Māori culture so Eurocentric that Māori barely recognised it as their own’ (Hokowhitu, 2004, p. 198). True to the prevailing monocultural mindset, many teachers resisted even such tokenistic inclusion of Māoritanga in school life, while some accepted it as a first step towards biculturalism.

Around the time Māori Schools were dismantled, an interesting policy text appeared, titled *Māori children and the teacher* (New Zealand School Publications Branch, 1971). This document located the source of educational barriers experienced by Māori in linguistic and cultural differences between school and home, and urged schools to adjust their pedagogies to meet these needs. This policy is interesting to read in historical context as an early precursor for contemporary Māori education policies (Stewart, 2016). It noted the cycle of Māori economic disadvantage, and asserted these could be overcome by changes in education practice, thus placing an enormous burden of responsibility for social ills on teachers and schools. It implicitly acknowledges the adherence to racist deficit theories in the teaching profession, and in many ways is a classic statement of the case for culturally responsive policies for Māori students.

### *Introduction of neoliberal policies to New Zealand education*

The policies inaugurated by the 1984 Labour Government were based on neoliberal economic principles, and sought to rein in the burgeoning costs of the welfare state on which New Zealand based its reputation for egalitarianism and good ‘race relations’. The reconfiguration of education and other public policy happened in a rapid process known as the ‘New Zealand experiment’ (Kelsey, 1997) which has had ongoing negative impact on the Māori population over the decades since (Carpenter & Osborne, 2014).

Neoliberal reform of education required thorough overhaul of educational administration, which happened under the banner of Tomorrow’s Schools (New Zealand Department of Education, 1988). School governance and management were devolved to Boards of Trustees (BoT) elected by the school parent community, and principals were re-positioned as employees of the BoT. Schools were required to operate under a competitive business model, and education in general was framed as an economic or private commodity (Stewart, 2018c). This meant that schools in communities where trustees lacked business acumen suffered, in just one example of how these policies seemed designed to further disadvantage the poor.

In principle this governance model offered Māori communities the opportunity for input into the running of their schools, but this proved illusory since few Māori were elected to BoTs owing to the deadweight of monoculturalism. The model also shifted control of policy implementation from the Ministry to the school communities, or general public, who were often sceptical about bicultural initiatives (Hokowhitu, 2004).

Having been implemented, neoliberal policies have proved difficult to reverse, and continue to dominate New Zealand social life today, including education, well into the 21st century (Carpenter, 2014). Neoliberal policies and politics prioritise freedom of choice over fairness, competition over cooperation, and private over public interests (Thrapp, 2007). During this time, gaps have increased in educational achievement and incomes between people from high or low socioeconomic backgrounds, leading to a situation where education has little impact on upward social mobility. Decreasing opportunities for upward social mobility are particularly harmful to Māori, since they are over-represented in the lower socioeconomic strata.

## **Policy responses to Māori inequity**

As already noted, current policy strategies for Māori education are based on the central concept of **cultural responsiveness**, which is based on the understanding that injustice and racism towards Māori in education is the result of simple lack of awareness of cultural difference. The inter-ethnic conflict is thus reduced to a chain of misunderstandings that can be overcome by cultural competency training. In 2008, the Ministry of Education released their Māori education strategy, *Ka Hikitia* (Ministry of Education, 2008), with broad aspirational goals for Māori success in education, general society and te ao Māori (the Māori world). The Ministry interprets the phrase ‘ka hikitia’ as meaning to ‘step up’, ‘lift up’ or ‘lengthen one’s stride’ - a call for urgent action to counter Māori underachievement (Berryman & Lawrence, 2017). This policy originated from research associated with the *Te Kotahitanga* programme of research and professional development for secondary school teachers, which aimed to unsettle prevalent deficit teacher thinking patterns (Bishop, Berryman, & Wearmouth, 2014).

Liz Patara (2012) offers practical interpretations to help teachers implement *Ka Hikitia*. She defines cultural responsiveness as ‘responding to “the child’s cultural experiences”’ (p. 50). The first step is for teachers to increase their understanding of their own culture and associated biases. Next is building understanding of the systemic dominance of the Pākehā culture in education. Thirdly, acquire knowledge of the cultural background of learners. Patara argues that increased teacher cultural competence leads to less deficit theorising and therefore better educational outcomes for Māori students. She accepts the goals of *Ka Hikitia* and its potential effectiveness, provided it were to be properly implemented (Patara, 2012).

Mere Berryman and colleagues (2015) reviewed the implementation of *Ka Hikitia* in secondary schools, finding its success was limited, despite good will from school leadership and teachers. Introduction of policy alone was insufficient to disrupt traditional pedagogy that was claimed to maintain Māori underachievement. The authors prescribed three elements needed for *Ka Hikitia* to succeed in reducing Māori underachievement, namely, that school leadership and teachers must (i) deliberately engage with policy, (ii) learn from research what works for Māori learners, and (iii) possess ‘a relentless moral imperative for change’ (Berryman et al., 2015, p. 65). These elements locate responsibility for Māori educational success within schools and particularly with school leaders, and accept the assumption that the policy is sound.

Teachers and school leaders are expected to understand the principles of *Ka Hikitia* and to strive to fulfil the core vision of the strategy, ‘Māori enjoying and achieving education success as Māori’. Accomplishing the goals of this strategy depends on teachers in schools, because it works on the theory that teachers are fundamental to improving Māori students’ achievement. *He Kākano* ([www.hekakano.tki.org.nz/](http://www.hekakano.tki.org.nz/)) was a professional development project for school leaders, designed to assist with the implementation of *Ka Hikitia*. The evaluation of *He Kākano* found that Māori student experience of schooling varied widely between and within schools (Averill et al., 2014). This report highlighted the complex and fluid diversity of Māori identity within the school population, requiring diverse interpretations by students and families of what it means to succeed as Māori. This complexity requires strong understandings of individual students by the teachers to successfully respond to their needs, but the broadly Eurocentric basis of English-medium schools limits the ability of the teachers to be culturally responsive.

One response from a Māori family member was that achieving ‘as Māori’ can be seen as taking away a student’s right to achieve as an individual. ‘[To achieve as Māori means] taking away the person’s right to achieve as themselves’ (Averill et al., 2014, p. 36). This project showed there was a lack of uniform understanding of the phrase ‘enjoying educational success as Māori.’ Such lack of shared understanding of *Ka Hikitia*, and the finding that few teachers prioritise learning about Māori culture and history, do not bode well for successful implementation of the policy.

*Ka Hikitia* has been updated since its initial release and is still current. The 2013 version listed the following goals for realising Māori potential:

- Sustained system-wide change
- Innovative community, iwi and Māori-led models of education provision
- Māori students achieving at least on a par with the total population.  
(Ministry of Education, 2013a)

Māori students achieving at least on a par with the total population is a laudable aspiration, but *Ka Hikitia* offers no clear advice as to how this might be achieved. ‘Sustained system-wide change’ implies the ambition to address structural i.e. economic inequity and institutional racism. These macro-level societal issues are beyond the control of schools, and in the globalised economy, perhaps even beyond the control of the national government. Stating the aim of having an ‘innovative’ iwi-led education perhaps suggests the government plans to expand successful Māori-medium schools, and give more agency over education to iwi.

As a high-level policy strategy, *Ka Hikitia* is the basis for other Māori education policy documents, in particular *Tātaiako: Cultural Competencies for Teachers of Māori Learners* (Ministry of Education, 2011) and *Tau Mai Te Reo* (Ministry of Education, 2013b).

#### *Tātaiako: Cultural Competencies for Teachers of Māori Learners*

*Tātaiako* was developed to assist with the implementation of *Ka Hikitia* and claims to ‘support’ teachers (p. 4), yet takes the form of a highly problematic set of descriptors of cultural responsiveness to Māori, against which teachers are expected to be appraised (Stewart, 2016). It is based on a small number of profound Māori concepts that are so oversimplified in the documents that they become caricatures, with little likeness to Māori understanding, making it unlikely to offer any help to Māori students or their teachers. The document is not suitable as a checklist of competencies because the words used for the ‘competencies’ signify ‘values and cultural frameworks, not specific knowledge or skills’ (Stewart, 2016, p. 94). Lack of reference to the literacy and educational underachievement of Māori is consistent with avoiding saying anything that can be interpreted as deficit theorising. ‘*Tātaiako* provides no more than a starting point for a teacher who wishes to investigate Māori history and culture in order to more successfully teach Māori students’ (Stewart, 2016, p. 95).

#### *Tau Mai Te Reo, Te Ahu o Te Reo Māori*

One of the cornerstones of current culturally responsive policy in education for Māori is the commitment to strengthening the presence and use of te reo Māori in all schools. *Tau Mai Te Reo* is the policy document that outlines how support for te reo Māori in education will be pursued (Ministry of Education, 2013b). It explains the benefits and therefore the rationale for striving to be bilingual:

As an official language, the Māori language offers cognitive, cultural, educational, economic, social and linguistic benefits for all New Zealanders. These benefits support the development and celebration of our national identity, while at the same time protecting the distinctiveness of the indigenous people, increasing family and whānau (and community) cohesion, and contributing to economic opportunities. (Ministry of Education, 2013b, p. 7)

But the two goals of using te reo Māori and, by implication, Māori culture: (i) for forging national identity for all New Zealanders; and (ii) to protect the uniqueness of Māori people, seem to contradict each other. Moreover, the value of the language is commodified in this statement by tying it to economic opportunities.

To implement the *Tau Mai Te Reo* strategy, the current government has committed \$12.5 million (between 2019 and 2023) to *Te Ahu o te Reo Māori*, a programme of professional development for active teachers and non-teaching staff in schools. In its first years the programme will run in four regions (Waikato, Taranaki-Whānganui, Kapiti-Horowhenua-Porirua, and Ngāi Tahu i.e. the South Island) with the highest projected growth of Māori populations, but is envisaged to eventually be rolled out across the country. This programme goes some way towards providing time for teachers and other school workers to learn te reo Māori and is open to all schools and to school employees with all levels of existing competency (Ministry of Education, 2019).

The programme has ambitious objectives: to equip school staff to integrate te reo Māori into the education of all students in New Zealand, to enable an education workforce to use te reo Māori correctly every day. The documentation presents the belief that achieving this aim will improve learning outcomes and relationships for all students (Ministry of Education, 2019). The programme will be delivered by providers associated with local iwi and be grounded in communities, in the hope of creating stronger connections between schools and Māori communities, and greater influence by those communities on teaching and learning. It is hoped that this programme will contribute to systemic change that will lead to te reo Māori being valued and prioritized in education.

The *Te Ahu o Te Reo Māori* programme is part of the government's wider policy that aims for te reo Māori to be part of all students' education by 2025, though this aim lacks detail and does not specify exactly what part te reo Māori will play in students' education. The policy does NOT envisage te reo Māori being a compulsory subject in schools, and furthermore does not explain how it will lead to equalising Māori achievement in English-medium school subjects.

### **Can culturally responsive policies ameliorate Māori underachievement?**

Some scholars claim that culturally responsive policies are effective for improving the educational achievement of Māori students and should be continued, while others question their effectiveness because they do not address the larger socioeconomic disparity that drives underachievement. The statistics presented at the start of this chapter clearly show that over three decades of culturally responsive policies have not achieved the objective of equalising

educational outcomes for Māori to the rest of the New Zealand population. The current trends in educational policies go further than before to promote culturally responsive pedagogies as a panacea for Māori underachievement, in an atmosphere in which it is becoming increasingly difficult for teachers to question the effectiveness of those policies: their failure and alternative approaches are becoming undiscussable (Zerubavel, 2006).

Reports on *Ka Hikitia* by the Auditor General's office are optimistic about the intent of the policy but less so about the actual outcomes to date; nevertheless the final report contains a chapter *Every school needs to implement Ka Hikitia* (Berryman & Eley, 2017). At the time of its conception, *Ka Hikitia* was expected to lead to transformational improvements in education for Māori. The Auditor General reports attribute the failure to achieve the expected results to several factors, including reliance on good will and devolved responsibility; and ineffective communication from the Ministry to schools. In retrospect, this finding points to the current move towards compulsion for teachers to engage with te reo and tikanga Māori. On the school side there was (and probably still is) uncertainty about the meaning and application of the central vision of *Ka Hikitia*. These findings confirm what is widely acknowledged: there are no quick fixes to ethnic inequity of educational outcomes. When Māori students were surveyed about their experience of secondary school, there was no significant improvement between 2001 and 2015, indicating that seven years of *Ka Hikitia* not only failed to improve achievement, but also failed to disrupt systemic racism within the education system (Berryman & Eley, 2017).

One significant obstacle to the successful implementation of cultural responsiveness is the lack of accurate teacher knowledge of New Zealand histories (Stewart, 2018a). Teacher ignorance of how colonisation works is a major stumbling block in working with Māori students. Even if not every educator in New Zealand can learn Māori language and culture, all should learn accurate national histories. Pākehā hearing Māori counter-narratives of colonisation initially often experience emotions of guilt and fear of responsibility for the consequences of oppression (Hotere-Barnes, 2015). These negative emotions can form a barrier to the work required to develop decolonising practice in education.

Culturally responsive policies, on their own, can achieve only incremental improvements at best, because they do not address the core socioeconomic causes of Māori educational inequality (Thrapp, 2014). To broaden the notion of 'deficit thinking' to include any reference

to the influence of Māori socioeconomic status on educational success is both unjustified and counterproductive. Such policies may even be a deliberate strategy of distraction, designed to avert attention away from economic disparity (Lourie, 2016). Despite nearly 40 years of bicultural education policy, which has resulted in greater visibility and inclusion of Māori culture in education settings, there is still a significant achievement gap between Māori students and their non-Māori peers (Lourie, 2018).

Public attention was deflected from the socio-economic drivers of educational inequality to the inability of schools to accommodate cultural difference, hence attributing responsibility for Māori underachievement to schools and individual teachers (Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh, & Teddy, 2007). Placing the blame for Māori underachievement solely on schools absolved the government of responsibility. If socio-economic drivers were fully acknowledged, then a corrective action to diminish those drivers would be a logical step to take. Such logic would contradict ideological tenets of individual responsibility that are at the core of neoliberalism (Thrupp, 2014). Culturally responsive policies were unreasonably expected to counter Māori educational inequity resulting from increasing wealth inequality.

To go on putting effort into mitigating Māori educational inequality without addressing or even acknowledging intergenerational inequities is like putting a sticking plaster on an injury without looking for its cause. The current culturally responsive policies seem to promote the false idea that individual classroom teachers are responsible for continuing educational inequality, rather than wider historical and social processes. If we fail to adequately identify the probable causes of observable effects, we are likely to try to implement policies that are doomed to fail.

## **Summary of the argument**

At the level of the national population, there is a clear ethnic disparity for Māori in school outcomes. An examination of the history of Māori education shows that Māori underachievement has been continuous since it came into view in about 1970, as the Māori population urbanised and the Māori Schools system was finally dismantled, bringing the Māori population fully into national school statistics for the first time. Culturally responsive policies have been followed since the education reforms starting in 1984, but have made little impact on statistical inequities suffered by Māori. Maybe this is because to acknowledge, respect and make space for Māori culture and language in the classroom seems to be part of good teaching

practice and the educational rights of Māori students, rather than a transformative programme for overcoming the effects of the material poverty and its effects, as suffered at a far higher rate by Māori and Pacific families than the general population.

It therefore makes sense to ask to what extent it is possible for culturally responsive policies to improve Māori educational outcomes. In recent changes to the professional standards, all teachers must now demonstrate their commitment to using and developing their use of te reo Māori in the classroom, which considerably increases the pressure on teachers. Yet for teachers to use te reo seems tenuously linked to the achievement of Māori students in English, and begs the question of whether such policies can work if we ‘get it right’ – or whether they can work at all? Is our national education system focusing on teachers learning te reo at the expense of more productive measures, such as professional learning for teachers about the accurate histories of Māori-Pākehā relationships?

## **CHAPTER 3: Methodology**

This chapter explains the methodology of this research, focusing on the reasoning behind the decisions made in carrying out the study, under three main sections. The first section below identifies the key ideas and theoretical concepts that underpin thinking about the research question and its investigation in this project. The second section describes the study design and methods, and the third section considers pertinent ethical issues.

While school achievement data can be measured and reported in the form of statistics, the lived experience of students, parents, teachers and school leaders cannot be captured by quantitative means; rather, experience is much more richly communicated through subjective contextualised voices. Qualitative data may be less objective than quantitative data, but it rewards the investigator with a ‘rich description of the phenomenon of interest’ (Mutch, 2013, p. 45). The social reality of students, parents and teachers is co-constructed between them and the complex reality of the school environment, so in order to produce adequate descriptions of those realities, the research methodology must take account of all those complexities.

The question of the effectiveness of culturally responsive policies for Māori is too complex to investigate in a small postgraduate research project by using empirical approaches, so this dissertation turns to post-qualitative research methodology (St. Pierre, 2018) in using writing methods that take textual sources including the research literature, and the researcher’s own experience, as resources for data collection and analysis. The label of ‘post-qualitative’ in research signals a move further away from the residue of empiricism and scientism in qualitative research, but such research still remains under the broad heading of qualitative research – as shown, for example, by being represented in qualitative research handbooks (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

Methodology is concerned with the validity of research, which in quantitative methods is assured by statistical measures, and in qualitative empirical research is linked to the richness of data collected from insider participants about their experiences in relation to the research question. My study design includes writing stories of various types, including ethnographic fiction (Bruce, 2014), which in this study takes the form of narratives created by fictionalising

personal experiences, observations and reflections, in ‘typical’ school scenarios written about various aspects of implementing culturally responsive policies for Māori.

Before becoming a teacher, I worked in scientific research, and my science training definitely influenced how I see reality. When I began this dissertation research project, I wholeheartedly embraced the scientific mind frame of curiosity, but as my research progressed, I began to view knowledge and research more ambiguously. Should some questions be off limits? Is it acceptable for some knowledge to be privileged, beyond the reach of research? Is an insistence on objectivity the best way to understand how people make meanings in their lives, or is it a valid practice to ‘create truths out of shards of evidence, [to] make a point without tedious documentation? (Bruce, 2014, p. 33). These and other questions about knowledge presented themselves during this study.

Researchers can use creative writing practices to learn things about their research and themselves that would have been impossible to know or imagine using orthodox scientific research practices, genres and formats. Deliberately permitting the author to be present, however partially, in the text makes it possible to tell and retell the material in diverse ways. Consciously privileging the author’s presence in the text challenges the traditional idea of ‘validity’ of research and allows for a multiplicity of ‘truths’ (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2018, p. 823). To address the question of validity in post-qualitative research, alternative criteria proposed for evaluating scholarship written using creative research practices include:

- *substantive contribution*: does this piece contribute to our understanding of social life? Does this piece seem ‘true’ – a credible account of the ‘real’?
- *aesthetic merit*: is the text artistically shaped, satisfying, complex and not boring?
- *reflexivity*: does the author hold himself or herself accountable to the standards of knowing and telling of the people he or she has studied?
- *impact*: does this piece affect me emotionally or intellectually? Does it move me to try new research practices or move me to action?

(summarized from Richardson & St. Pierre, 2018, p. 823)

These criteria still fall within the definition of research found in the AUT *Code of Conduct for Research*:<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Auckland University of Technology Code of Conduct for Research. Retrieved from [https://www.aut.ac.nz/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0006/274371/AUT-CODE-OF-CONDUCT-FOR-RESEARCH-2019.pdf](https://www.aut.ac.nz/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/274371/AUT-CODE-OF-CONDUCT-FOR-RESEARCH-2019.pdf)

original, independent investigation undertaken in order to contribute to knowledge and understanding and, in the case of some disciplines, cultural innovation or aesthetic refinement. Typically involves enquiry of critical nature driven by intellectual positions. In some disciplines, may be embodied in the form of artistic works, performances and or designs that lead to new or substantially improved insights.

Each of the three sections below continues to discuss the nature of the research undertaken in this dissertation project through the lenses of theory, method and ethics.

## Theoretical Framework

Fact is one of our finest fictions.

- Ursula Le Guin, *A Fisherman of the Inland Sea*

According to the scientific worldview, the pursuit of knowledge should in principle be limited only by ethical boundaries or the technical limits of experimental methods; fundamentally if it is possible to know something, there is no reason not to know it. Reality is knowable within the acknowledged fundamental limits, in that there may be technical, financial or cognitive limits to the answers we can obtain using science, but there should be no limits to the nature of questions we ask. Science holds that objective reality exists independent of the observer, with few exceptions. Truth means the correspondence of the description or measurement to objective reality. This viewpoint assumes that scientific ways of understanding can also be used to explain social reality.

As I worked on this dissertation, I became progressively more aware of the difference in the ways of thinking needed to conduct scientific research and educational research. While science research requires (in principle) absolute alienation of the researcher as a person from the research material, the educational research of the type I carried out for this dissertation project begins by acknowledging the impossibility of such separation. One of the key differences between scientific and educational research lies in the contrast between the view of the role of writing in the two modes. Scientific thinking and writing works on the assumption that words are ‘objective, unambiguous, non-contextual and non-metaphorical’ (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2018, p. 820). This ‘naive realist’ (Honderich, 1995, p. 602) view of the relationship between

language and reality has been severely challenged, including by Ludwig Wittgenstein (Honderich, 1995, p. 912) who argued that words do not need clarity to carry meaning.

Post-qualitative research methodology, in contrast to the above description, takes writing as ‘always partial, local, and situational [and] our selves are always present no matter how hard we try to suppress them’ (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2018, p. 822). Because of the complexity of ourselves and our interactions with our social and physical environment we can’t analyse social phenomena in the deterministic mode, since we have (some) freedom to make decisions and construct our interactions with others.

The contemporary understanding of writing in social research is that ‘all writing is narrative writing’ (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2018, p. 820): the distinction between science and fiction writing resides in the claim for objectivity made by science. This demotion of the authority of science is part of the tradition of postmodern philosophy – meaning ‘beyond the modern’ in era but also beyond belief in the grand narratives (false promises) of modernity. Postmodernism as a philosophy matches post-qualitative research methodology in the practical sense of how to collect and analyse data for the dissertation. Postmodernism does not necessarily reject science as a knowledge system, but rejects its privileged position as universal, authoritative knowledge about everything. In recognising that all knowledge has its limits, we can also acknowledge that even partial, contextual knowledge can shed useful light on our complex social world. Postmodernism suspects all truth claims of masking and serving particular interests in local cultural and political struggles (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2018, p. 820).

Writing from this premise it is important for the author to understand and disclose her or his ‘position’ because experiences and memory are subject to inconsistent or even incompatible understandings influenced by power and dominant discourses. Even though it is not possible to reach consensus about all aspects of social reality, our social future is not fixed or pre-determined, and we have not reached the end of history, so we can definitely learn a great deal about the social world we live in from efforts to change it.

Roland Barthes questioned the centrality or even presence of the author in his essay *The death of the author* (Barthes, 1977), arguing that the essential meaning of the work depends on the interpretations of the reader, rather than the intentions of the writer. The linguistic turn in social science, inaugurated largely by the work of Wittgenstein, questions whether words are deeply

meaningful in themselves in correspondence to the ‘real’ things they attempt to capture, because ‘the thing itself always escapes’ (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2018, p. 828). Making meaning is no longer a simple match between word and world: social meaning is not discovered; rather, it is introduced or created. The task of social inquiry is not simply the production of meaning or understanding of the phenomena under investigation, but of asking what the processes of meaning making and dissemination reveal about how power relations work.

Alison Jones and Kuni Jenkins (2008a) present an example of ‘interminable difference’ between Māori and Pākehā interpretations of shared reality in their ‘post-interpretivist argument’ concerning a famous New Zealand historical event that took place at Rangihoua in the Bay of Islands, on 25 December 2014. This event is celebrated in (Pākehā) history as the ‘first sermon’ preached in New Zealand by Samuel Marsden, to an assembly of Māori at the site of the first European settlement in this country. But Jones and Jenkins reason that the Māori audience would not have understood Marsden’s words, and that Ruatara, the rangatira and host of the occasion, who is said to have translated Marsden’s sermon into Māori for his people, would much more likely have been making a political speech seeking support for his actions in allowing the Pākehā to settle at Rangihoua. Similarly, on the previous day when Marsden and his company arrived, his and other’s journals record an ‘entertaining, though terrifying, “sham fight”’ (Jones & Jenkins, 2008a, p. 128) which they believed was staged for their entertainment, between Ruatara’s people and some new arrivals at the beach. Jones and Jenkins read these accounts as more likely to be descriptions of a pōwhiri, the significance of which completely escaped the Pākehā eyewitnesses.

The point is that when read through Māori eyes, entirely different events and actors appear from those in the historical records made by Pākehā. The disjunctions in viewpoint indicate two materially different events occurring simultaneously: there was a fight and there was no fight; there was a sermon, and there was no sermon. The impossibility presented by this apparently contradictory proposition is deliberate; within the ontological tension of ‘x and not x’ we find the very difficulty we seek in order to force thought towards new possibilities (Jones & Jenkins, 2008a, p. 131).

The possibility of such apparent contradiction is clearly relevant in how Māori knowledge and viewpoints are included in educational policy and practice. As a school teacher and middle

leader, I need to constantly reflect on the ethical implications of engagement in the business of social change through education. The inter-ethnic relationship between Māori and Pākehā currently takes place within a socio-economic context of liberal democracy and late capitalism, the effects of which are curbed to some degree by the welfare state. Despite the moderating influence of representative democracy and the welfare safety net, the capitalist ideologies of individualism, freedom of choice, sanctity of private ownership and the profit motive completely dominate public life in New Zealand as well as the private lives of all its citizens. These underlying socio-economic forces shape the goals, structures and practices of state schooling at all levels.

## **Study Design**

Story is our only boat for sailing on the river of time.

- Ursula Le Guin, *A Fisherman of the Inland Sea*

In carrying out this research I drew on two different research approaches, namely, critical literature review and narrative research, which worked together and converged as the study proceeded. The two different approaches and modes of writing are explained below.

### *Critical literature review*

The first strand of my research was to investigate the question through the literature and text sources, using a process of careful reading, thinking and writing. In scientific research, a literature review is often considered little more than a prelude to the actual research, but a critical literature review collects information from a unique set of textual sources to construct an argument that investigates the research question. A critical literature review presents this argument and evidence in narrative (non-fictional i.e. objective) form. Accuracy of language and referencing are important aspects of the discipline of writing such a literature review and building up a convincing argument.

Questions like mine about Māori education have many layers of history and philosophy that can best be investigated through means of such secondary (i.e. without collecting primary data) research, using research literature as well as education policy texts. There is a vast literature on the rich history of Māori education, which dates back over 200 years (the first mission school

for Māori children opened in 1816) and plays a role in the whole Māori story ever since. Given this large literature and the many complex aspects relating to the improvement of Māori educational outcomes, it was necessary to carefully select the corpus of texts to be included. Besides research literature and policy texts, press releases and media reports are a third textual data source for writing about current and imminent policies and practices for culturally responsive Māori education.

### *Narrative research*

Stories are of innate interest, so to present data in narrative form is a way to engross the reader more deeply in the issue at hand. Narrative research is a system of simultaneous data gathering and interpretation, so ‘data collection and data analysis cannot be separated when writing is a method of inquiry’ (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2018, pp. 829-830). Narrative research tackles the intricacies of human experience in educational settings (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Narratives are suitable for educational research because they make it possible to depict the effects of policy within complex situations in schools (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996). The narratives allow us to find meanings in our observations and strivings for social justice.

The narratives included in this dissertation are as follows:

<i>Page</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Type</i>
2	What brings me to this research?	Autobiographical
4	Skin in the game	Personal recount
30	The school context	Personal recount
32	After the teacher-only day	Ethnographic fiction
38	After the Science Fair	Ethnographic fiction
41	Planning for Ka Hikitia	Ethnographic fiction
55	'44	Imaginative

The four types of narrative are described below:

*Autobiographical*: this narrative is an account of my own life story, from my childhood in Poland under a communist government to a middle leadership position in a low decile school in Auckland. The purpose of this narrative was to introduce me as the researcher and my personal viewpoint in relation to my research topic.

*Personal recount:* these first-person narratives are based on my personal professional experiences as an insider practitioner-researcher, working in a typical school situation where my research question matters. These narratives take the form of brief vignettes and straightforward reporting of relevant details or incidents that catalyse my interest in investigating this topic.

*Ethnographic fiction:* these narratives are woven out of many strands of experience and observation, from the vantage point of my own professional practice and education leadership. These narratives capture the complexity of culturally responsive rhetoric and practice, presenting typical incidents involving culturally responsive policies for Māori students in a powerful yet anonymous format. They take the form of invented dialogues between imaginary teachers, students and school leaders, the characters based on amalgamations of many real people I have encountered in schools. The first dialogue is between teachers in a staffroom, the second is between a teacher and a group of students, and the third is between members of a school senior leadership team.

*Imaginative:* this narrative uses creative writing techniques to write an imaginary story in something like a science fiction style, about possible projections into the future of culturally responsive education for Māori.

## **Ethical considerations**

The study design for this research project did not involve the collection of empirical data from anyone else, and therefore did not require formal ethics approval from AUTEC.

### *Relational ethics*

Narrative researchers must consider the same ethical concerns as researchers using other qualitative methods. Even though this project did not need official ethics approval, as a researcher I still have an obligation to protect the privacy and anonymity of people and institutions with whom I have worked and built up the experiences of culturally responsive policies for Māori students on which my narratives draw. Writing research narratives thus involves fictionalising one's experiences, just as any writer of fiction draws on their own experiences of people and social situations.

### *Relating to Māori*

I am carrying out this research as a continental European immigrant living in New Zealand. I do not consider myself to be Pākehā, because I understand this term as identifying descendants of White settlers who have lived here for several generations. As a non-Māori researcher, I am researching a topic about Māori education, which itself raises ethical questions:

- Is this research advancing the interests of Māori in education?
- Am I as the researcher cognisant of white privilege?

Most teachers of Māori students are non-Māori, so it seems both legitimate and important that non-Māori carry out some of the research in the area of Māori education. The ethical imperative for this research was to be able to answer the above two questions in the affirmative, from the point of view of my personal teaching practice and as a middle school leader. Positional leadership offers me the opportunity to influence the practice of other teachers in a way that leads to better understanding and engagement with the indigenous-settler relationship.

As an immigrant in New Zealand society I feel somewhat like an outsider in relation to the inter-ethnic relationship between Māori and Pākehā, with its burden from the past that still impacts on the present. This is not to deny that I benefit from white privilege, nor am I claiming some kind of moral ‘innocence’ in relation to social inequality for Māori. In this way I occupy a liminal position that recalls the wry question, am I black or white? This liminal ambivalent quality recurs in this research at various points and levels, throughout the discussions in this dissertation.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: Narrative Data**

This chapter contains four stories, of two types; the first called *The school context* gives a thumbnail sketch of the typical context of schools that are currently grappling with implementing culturally responsive policies for Māori students. This first story is of the ‘personal recount’ type, recording some pertinent practice facts and observations of the research question in action. This insider-researcher vignette helps set the scene for the reader. The other three stories present narrative data of the ethnographic fiction type, in the form of imaginary conversations between three key groups of people - students, teachers and school leaders – at the centre of this research. These conversations illustrate key ‘moments’ in culturally responsive teacher practice at various levels of the school hierarchy. These three dialogues and the characters in each are as follows:

*After the teacher-only day* - a group of teacher colleagues

*After the Science Fair* - a teacher and a group of students

*Planning for Ka Hikitia* - a group of senior school leaders

The first dialogue illustrates how teachers – the ‘front line’ of culturally responsive policies – typically think and talk amongst themselves about the policies. The second dialogue is situated in the relationships that non-Māori teachers have with Māori students. The third dialogue turns to the school leadership level of implementing cultural responsiveness. Taken together, these three dialogues represent the discourse of school conversations between key groups involved in cultural responsiveness for Māori students.

### **The school context**

The research question at the heart of this dissertation arises from nearly 12 years of teaching in a low-decile, high-Māori/Pacific secondary school in Auckland, and the many personal observations and experiences I have accumulated over that time. During these years, education policy in relation to Māori students has meant that demands placed on teachers like me to demonstrate cultural responsiveness to Māori have increased and become more formalised, now included in the professional standards and school appraisal processes.

Low-decile schools receive somewhat higher funding per student from the government in recognition of inequality, but schools in general have very limited ability to reduce poverty directly. Examples of small ways in which schools attempt to compensate for student poverty include providing free breakfast, subsidising costs of school camps, and providing a school doctor, nurse, dental clinic, and counsellors. Low-decile secondary schools tend to experience relatively high teacher turnover, which means that beginning teachers are an important ongoing part of the staff. High proportions of overseas-trained teachers are also a typical feature of such schools. Acquiring cultural competence in a specific school takes a considerable amount of time, so experience is beneficial in that respect; so new and beginning teachers have, by definition, limited experience.

Typical efforts such schools are making to become more culturally responsive to the needs of Māori include:

- introducing bilingual signage in te reo and English; and bilingual versions of various documents around the school;
- renaming key roles in the school with Māori names, e.g. the Form Teacher is renamed as the Kaitiaki;
- offering Te Reo Māori as a subject, recognising the crucial role of language in transmission of culture;
- introducing Māori performing arts as a teaching subject;
- providing opportunities for Māori students to celebrate their identity, and for non-Māori students to learn more about New Zealand's indigenous culture.

Such schools embrace external initiatives that aim to reduce educational inequality such as TeachFirst, Starpath Project, and Health Sciences Academy. These initiatives provide additional financial and human resources that enable richer learning experiences to be offered that would otherwise not be available to the students. Schools are required to invest human resources in terms of the efforts made by school leadership to pursue these kinds of opportunities when they arise. Cultural responsiveness is discussed with prospective teachers applying for vacancies and can have an impact on hiring decisions.

Even though Māori students in the school where I teach achieve somewhat better than average for schools in the same decile, their achievement is still below that of the total school

population, in spite of the initiatives described above. I observe the cognitive tension teachers experience on a daily basis, causing them to feel frustrated and sad; most of them are socially progressive and motivated to work towards social and cultural justice, yet they are working in a system powerfully geared to perpetuate social privilege, in which their efforts seem destined to fail. Every year, for example, the teachers spend time analysing NCEA results including the differences between ethnic groups. When external results arrive, there is a general feeling of doom and gloom in the staffroom, because despite all the hard work, the results are invariably disappointing.

### **After the teacher-only day**

A teacher-only day was held just before the school year started, and used for professional learning and development (PLD) focusing on pedagogies that would be more responsive to the needs of Māori students. At the start of the day, the facilitators had explained the rationale of the PLD to the teachers: if education changed to be more accommodating of Māori culture, then ALL the students' NCEA results would improve. The idea began to circulate: 'what is good for Māori students is good for all students.'

Since it is a Friday, some of the teachers keep discussing what was presented in the PLD during after-work drinks.

**Abe** is Māori and an experienced teacher of Social Sciences. He tends to be sceptical about the value of PLD in general, and of 'cultural responsiveness' in particular.

**Girish** is Fijian-Indian and immigrated as an experienced teacher to teach Mathematics in New Zealand just over two years ago. He has an idealistic approach to teaching and dislikes the domination of assessment in schools.

**Hayden** is Pākehā; he is in his early 30s and has taught Science for five years. He believes in the egalitarianism of New Zealand society and the level playing field tradition of schools.

**Julia** is Pākehā and a beginning teacher of English and History, who is determined to 'get it right.'

**Abe:** “Well, another day done, guys. At least we are not as tired as at the end of Term 4, so we can actually think about the stuff they are trying to make us do. What did you think about this PLD session?”

**Girish:** “I liked the history part when they explained about the Treaty of Waitangi and the differences between the English and Māori versions. And how the relationships between Māori and Pākehā changed over time. Certainly, useful for a new immigrant teacher like me. I did not even know there were wars over land after the Treaty was signed!”

**Hayden:** “Don’t worry mate – just as long as you keep learning. The official version of history is so screwed up - John Key is even on record as saying that New Zealand was the only British colony that was settled peacefully, and he was a prime minister!”

**Girish:** “That would definitely make me read more, but realistically, it was 150 years ago, so what does it have to do with me teaching Maths to the kids in Auckland today?”

**Julia:** “I did like the history part too, and I think it is still relevant because colonisation did not stop 150 years ago. In fact, colonisation is still going on, and the under-achievement we are trying to address is directly related to that. Girish, if your family lost a farm 150 years ago, all the subsequent generations would be poorer.”

**Girish:** “I did not think about it this way, but I can see you have got a point.”

**Abe:** “Yes, I think recovering our history and acknowledging the harm done would be a good starting point for our education, because the issues we have now did not start yesterday. Sadly, there is still a lot of wilful ignorance around. As someone said, history is an act of power. Yes, we teach about Parihaka in our history programme but very few kids take senior History. And how many teachers know about it? So, if we teachers do not know what happened and how it happened, it is easy to blame the kids or their families for their own hardship - a bit of “personal responsibility” and all that. But maybe those racist views are getting less common...”

**Girish:** “I am a bit baffled as to why we are focusing just on being responsive to Māori culture, since we are a multicultural society here. Look at our school - we have three times as many Pacific students as Māori, yet we are focusing just on Māori for a whole year of PLD.”

**Julia:** “Yes, we are multicultural in a sense, and we need to respect all students and their cultures, but only the Māori culture is indigenous to New Zealand. Based on the Treaty everyone here has an obligation to care for the partnership represented by the Treaty. It is partnership for all New Zealanders, not just for the Māori... hey, look – the drinks fridge has been opened, let’s get us some refreshments.”

**Hayden:** “Good idea!”

**Abe:** “Cheers everyone, here’s to the first PLD of the year. Hope this programme does not become just another thing we need to do, another tick-box in the appraisal document, another thing we are accountable for. We are so busy as it is, if it is not done properly, people will just pay lip service to it, and it will become tokenist varnish over deep prejudices.”

**Julia:** “I think it will not come to that, looks like the guys who run it know what they are doing. They seem to be well informed.”

**Abe:** “They may well be well-informed about stats and policy, but do they know the reality of the lives of our students? All this cultural responsiveness is just simply good, ethical teaching practice - it should be an expectation, like, as a matter of course. But, you know, teachers are part of the wider society, and there is still a lot of subterranean racism out there in this country. It may be less openly expressed nowadays but it’s still there. Just listen to Don Brash and co, or this car seller from Rotorua who accidentally left his honest opinion about the Māori customer on her phone. Yeah, definitely still there. So don’t expect any sudden improvement in exam results just because we are now ‘Māori friendly’.”

**Julia:** “What do you mean? They said that using this programme we can close the gap in ten years, and isn’t the point of doing this PLD to improve the stats and produce better employees? They have good results from the schools that were part of the last iteration.”

**Abe:** “Hey, I like your enthusiasm Julia, I hope you keep it. But the ideas of cultural responsiveness have been in vogue in New Zealand education for at least 30 years now, and the gap is still there; in some ways it is getting worse. Teachers need to be critical thinkers. They say the programme is rooted in Māori culture, but they are definitely not doing it the Māori way. It’s just a top-down imposition of ideas.”

**Hayden:** “Yeah, right. Just do it, and it needs to be documented! I feel like we are not being given a choice. We are encouraged to co-construct our teaching programmes with students, but when it comes to PLD it is all, you know, teacher centred. Evidently not practising what we preach here.”

**Girish:** “Coming back to your point, Abe, why are you pessimistic about the power of cultural responsiveness to improve results for Māori?”

**Abe:** “First of all, I am not against cultural responsiveness at all, or against giving culture and language more prominence in our education - that is all good, but it should be unconditional, not a means to the end. And by the way, the education is more than just producing good employees, it is about educating a person to be a member of the community, a happy human being, a Māori and a thinking, critical citizen. I think this focus on employability is a neoliberal agenda, and so is this cultural responsiveness.”

**Julia:** “What?!”

**Abe:** “I know, it sounds all so progressive. But let me take you through it. What is one of the most common uniform infringements for our students?”

**Julia:** “Hmm. What are you getting at?”

**Abe:** It is improper shoes, isn’t it?”

**Julia:** Yes, but still not getting your drift.”

**Abe:** “You see, polished leather lace-up shoes are expensive, and you know our kids, they grow fast, they run, they play hard on the asphalt courts, all in their shoes, the shoes get battered

and fall apart. And here comes Mrs Bell from the office with the duct tape, if you are not too scared of her, and fixes the shoes. But it's a temporary measure, doesn't last too long, so the next week the kid comes to school in cheap canvas shoes because the parents can't buy new leather shoes till the end of the school term. And what does the school do? Give the kid detention, send the letter home. You see, the system is punishing the student for being poor.

Do you think the bilingual signage will fix it? Talking about signage, it is often badly translated and the reo may be incompatible with some of the signage altogether. But I am digressing, and this is a topic for another conversation. Do we really believe that saying kia ora to the kids in the morning or kia kaha for encouragement will make much difference to the achievement of a student who lives in a car with their family because they can't afford to rent a home?"

**Julia:** "Do you think you might be indulging in deficit theorising here, blaming families for low achievement at school? Are you saying that kids from poor families can't achieve? Are we not supposed to utterly reject deficit theorising as an explanation for educational achievement levels? We are not expected to think this way!"

**Abe:** "If someone tells us what or how to think we should really be worried. I don't blame the families, I blame the system that has been oppressive for generations, and that includes education. Where we are with achievement is not an accident, we are here because of past and present policies that keep people in poverty."

**Hayden:** "Oh come on, that's stretching it a bit! Everyone has opportunities in this country - we are really egalitarian, not like old Europe."

**Abe:** "I beg to differ on that: we have never been as classless as we would like to think and in the last 30 years it has only got worse, and no, drawing attention to the effects of poverty is not deficit theorising. That is a misunderstanding at best, or more likely a deliberate manipulation by the powerful. I am not saying that the Māori kids are fundamentally unable to learn. Rather, many of them live in conditions not of their own making that affect their ability to learn in so many ways.

It is the stamp of poverty: it is hard to learn when you are hungry, and we do have food poverty in New Zealand. It is hard to focus in class if your housing situation is unstable, and maybe

there is family violence, and people try to escape reality. It all gets really stressful for the kids. We have a bit of a change with the new government; they at least acknowledge that we have a problem with child poverty, not like the last bunch who refused to measure it.”

**Julia:** “How does that relate to this PLD on cultural responsiveness?”

**Abe:** “Don’t get me wrong, I am not against cultural responsiveness as I said, but are they trying to use culture to improve education while socio-economic injustice is overlooked? Then they can blame schools and teachers for being incompetent and causing inequality. Yes, the Māori student voice tells us that they want to be treated with respect as Māori, and that is obvious - who would not? But to say that students are ‘culturally located human beings above all else’ - I find this idea of ‘above all’ problematic. It is like we are forcing identity on students. The respect for culture, all cultures in fact, has an impact in the classroom and the school, but to focus on just that obscures the bigger picture of poverty and economic injustice, and I think this is what the people who benefit from neoliberal economics don’t want us to think about.”

**Girish:** “So are you saying the culturally responsive pedagogies are used as a smoke screen?”

**Abe:** “Bingo, you’ve got it! Divert attention, constrict debate, blame the schools and keep your privilege, and hope no one will notice. Looks like the current Labour-led government acknowledges the inequality and wants to do something about it, but on the ground, we are still trying to do more of what never worked before.”

**Julia:** “The PLD facilitator told us that it is our job to bring the change, that we have the power, that good teachers know how to bring about improvements in achievement, we can’t just quit or give up.”

**Abe:** “Of course we can’t give up, and I don’t want to discourage you so early in your career, but I think we are barking up the wrong tree. If we don’t address the root cause of underachievement, we will never see improvement. We need to demand wider societal change, and teach that to the kids too. I guess it is easier in Social Studies than in Science and Maths.”

**Julia:** “Interesting how you see it, but I still think they had a point when they said we still have a problem with some teachers having lower expectations of Māori students, even the bright

ones, so the students fulfil those expectations. We can fix that even if we can't fix neoliberal capitalism.”

**Abe:** “Too right. We still, well some of us, operate within white privilege. We can do better within schools, but ignoring what happens outside schools is not helpful or honest. But yes, some teachers are less willing to recognise their privilege, let alone address it. And on top of that, we increasingly rely on overseas trained teachers, new arrivals in this country. It would hardly be fair to expect them to understand colonial realities of New Zealand.”

**Hayden:** “How do you understand the idea that we take personal responsibility for student learning?”

**Girish:** “That is a big ask. I can see how that can be used to make us look like we are failing students while the problems are mainly structural. And the stress on measurable outcomes will push us to teach to the assessment, not to mention that we need to collect evidence all the time. Do they think weighing the pig will make it grow faster? Indeed, the opposite may be the case; the little piglet might get stressed out from all that weighing.”

**Abe:** “Yes, I would say we spend too much time assessing, but with all the reviews of education going on there may be some change there. As we were told, our path to the pinnacle of excellence is all charted out and we have a strategy to rapidly improve how education works for all Māori students. Let's see if we still talk the same talk in five or ten years. Well, culture counts but so do socioeconomic conditions, and still not much talk about that. Hey, we won't solve our country's education issues on Friday afternoon, but worth talking about... I need to go pick up my kids, so have a good weekend guys, see you Monday.”

## **After the Science Fair**

The Science department had achieved its best ever success at the Science Fair: twelve students won awards, and, even more amazing, the majority of the winners were Māori students. How did it happen? All the teams had been part of the LENScience Mentor Programme, giving them exposure to real scientific research. It took a lot of coaxing and motivation from the Science teachers to ensure the completion of the projects. Sometimes the students needed to be found

on the basketball courts and sent to the Science labs during lunchtimes, and they worked on the projects after school and at weekends too.

The final day of poster preparations was an epic team effort, with all the Science teachers pitching in during their non-contact periods, doing what many parents of students involved in the Science Fair do. It went to the wire as the posters were delivered to the submission address by the school van, 20 minutes before the final deadline. All that anxious effort was richly rewarded when the results arrived! The students were proud, happy and boisterous at school when they heard the news. But on prize-giving night, there was only one other school there with any Māori students. Suddenly the boisterous, confident winning students were quiet and looked like they felt out of place, while students from more affluent schools carried themselves with self-assurance almost bordering on arrogance.

At lunchtime the day after the prize-giving ceremony, Mrs McAlister the Science Fair teacher holds a debriefing session with the winners.

**Mrs McAlister:** “Hi all, good to see you giving up your lunchtime to come to this meeting. Congratulations again to all of you. You have made all the teachers at our school very proud. We wanted to meet and talk about your experiences of taking part in Science Fair. We’d like to hear how it was for you.”

**Areta:** “It was great, I got really into my project after going on the field trip to Manukau Harbour. My nan was telling me how different it was in her young days, you could actually get mussels there and they were safe to eat, and the Trust is trying to restore it, so it was good to be involved. I liked winning the prize, too!”

**Hani:** “Yeah, it was great to go to the prize-giving - mostly we just go to sports dinners, but it was amazing to win in an academic competition, like, my parents and nan were really proud of me. They were happy to see our Principal there, but they did not feel warmly welcomed in that school - everything was too stiff.”

**Maka:** “True, my whānau said the same, and we were the only black kids, except for the girls from (name of school). Everyone was seemingly nice and polite, kind of feeling surprised that we were there.”

**Hani:** “And the mihi in te reo - it was ok, I mean I could understand what she was saying, but me and my whānau could tell she just learned to read the words. Not sure if she really understood what she was saying. It all sounded kind of fake. I’m not sure they should be doing that.”

**Maka:** “I’m not sure about that either - but at least she was trying, give her credit for that.”

**Wiremu:** “It depends - sometimes it feels like a fake respect, when white people learn a bit of te reo to advance themselves, because it is a done thing now, kind of fashionable thing to be woke. So, they say few words in te reo, but they don’t own up to the history - but maybe, if it is genuine, it could be the beginning of a new respect. Hard to say sometimes.”

**Maka:** “Yes, it takes effort and time to be fluent, but trying to learn is a small sign of trying to do the right thing.”

**Wiremu:** “Maybe, anyway it was good to be there representing Southside. I enjoyed working with my uni mentors, they helped us to set up a project and we worked in a real lab, they showed us around uni. I will be confident going there next year. Maybe we could be mentors for the younger kids from our school?”

**Mrs McAlister:** “Yes, that would be great. You should keep in touch with us here at school.”

**Maka:** “I’d be keen to do the Science Fair again next year - maybe I could get the premier award.”

**Mrs McAlister:** “Awesome, go for it.”

**Areta:** “But Miss, why is our school so budget?”

**Mrs McAlister:** “What do you mean?”

**Areta:** “You know. When we went to the prize-giving night, that school was so flash! The buildings were nice and clean, the landscaping was not like here, no leaks, even though it was raining hard.”

**Hani:** “And they had a massive as fish tank in the library, that was cool.”

**Mrs McAlister:** “But you still got better placings! Those other things are only about wealth. It’s a private school, which means the parents have to pay a lot of money in fees, so the school can afford nice facilities. Our school can only have what the government pays for. And, you know, they are paying for the re-build starting next year, isn’t that great?”

**Wiremu:** “Just after we leave, but that is all goods.”

**Hani:** “That’s not fair, that only the rich people can send their kids to nice schools.”

**Mrs McAlister:** “No, that is not fair. We need to make the most of the school we have - it is our school, remember.”

**Maka:** “Tane’s moving to a posh school next year.”

**Wiremu:** “Yes, Miss, he got a rugby scholarship, all paid up, hostel, food and uniform.”

**Mrs McAlister:** “Good for him, but such a loss for our first XV, and he is a good leader too. Well, you’d better go grab something to eat before your next class, and we need to start thinking about next year’s Science Fair...”

### **Planning for *Ka Hikitia***

At the end of each year, the senior leadership team (SLT) meets to conduct reviews of the school’s performance, and strategic planning for the next year. Principal **Bruce** and the four DPs - **Karen, Tama, Rory** and **Rachel** - are discussing continued implementation of the *Ka Hikitia* strategy for improving the achievement of the school’s Māori students.

**Bruce:** “Morena everyone, well, the teaching year is almost over - only prize-giving left, to celebrate the achievements of our students before the summer break starts for most of us. As we do every year, we need to think strategically about next year and collectively come up with ideas about what continues and what changes in how the school runs. So, let’s focus on the educational needs of our Māori students. This came up during meetings at the Ministry of Education that Karen and I attended, and our ERO report. I’d like to ask Karen to introduce the Ministry’s recommendations in this area, to start off discussions.”

**Karen:** “Hi everyone, well it is exciting to look forward to the new year and the challenges ahead. As you know about one-fifth of our student body declare Māori ethnicity. As with other schools, on average their educational achievement lags behind that of Pākehā students, and we as a school have a responsibility to change that. We need to strive towards the situation where Māori students achieve on par with the rest of the population; that is the Ministry’s aspirational goal. The good news is that at our school Māori student achievement is higher than the achievement of Māori students in other decile 3 schools. Well done to the students and the teachers. The challenge is, that in spite of the Ministry’s *Ka Hikitia* policy strategy being in place for the last decade, its potential is yet to be reached in fullness. In other words, as we know, the achievement gap persists.”

**Tama:** “So the strategy has not worked, yet we are being asked to do more of the same?”

**Karen:** “Oh Tama, why be so gloomy right from the beginning? As the Ministry sees it, progress on Māori education is still too slow, but they see reasons to be optimistic that *Ka Hikitia* will eventually enable Māori students to be successful. But coming back to remind ourselves what the strategy entails, basically it demands that we achieve equality of educational outcomes for Māori students and requires us as schools to embrace Māori aspirations for the recognition of the culture, language and identity so Māori can enjoy education as Māori.”

**Rory:** “I think we are already doing it, are we not? We have Māori language week, we have Whānau form class for the kids who are into their Māori identity, we are asked to make sure we pronounce Māori names correctly, we have a school marae, we teach Māori as a subject, we have a kapa haka group, we do powhiri at the beginning of the year and te reo phrases are edging in to our assemblies. Isn’t that enough?”

**Tama:** “Yeah, of all of that, Whānau form class and teaching te reo as a subject is probably most meaningful because there is some depth to those, but even there we face challenges, because there is little continuity, you see. Teachers who are fluent in te reo are in such high demand that in the last five years we have had five Māori teachers, well, good on them to follow opportunities, but that is not the best for our tamariki and our school.”

**Karen:** “True, it would be good to have more continuity, and yes Rory, those are all good things we are doing, and I hope they make a difference. But there is still more we could be doing, we have been asked to identify areas where we could increase the presence of Māori culture in our school.”

**Rachel:** “I have some ideas - I’ve been thinking about it for a while. We have the effective teacher profile in our school, right? It is all in English. In my previous school we used the Te Kotahitanga approach, and I think we could re-jig our effective teacher profile so it is aligned with Māori values, and we can put those Māori words in the document. That should tick the box. We could rename form teacher and call them Kaitiaki, and call female teachers Whaea and male teachers Matua. What do you think?”

**Karen:** “I think we could do some or all of those.”

**Bruce:** “Brilliant. And as you know, we are introducing Māori performing arts as a subject too, so the presence of the culture is expanding.”

**Tama:** “This could be a mixed blessing.”

**Bruce:** “How do you mean?”

**Tama:** “If the kids take te reo and Māori performing arts to Level 3 NCEA, assuming they pass they will get some credits, right? But 2 out of 5 subjects is 40%, so they will gain 40% of their credits from culture-related subjects, I am not saying it is wrong, but it could potentially limit their access to the tertiary courses, especially the limited entry ones.”

**Bruce:** “Yes, but the same could be said about any option choices that are not ‘academic’.”

**Tama:** “Exactly, so we need to extra careful when we advise our tamariki during course selection time.”

**Bruce:** “Good point. Also, with the money approved for renovations the Ministry suggested that we can use some of it to replace our English signage around the school with a bilingual version.”

**Tama:** “Well, te reo is an official language of Aotearoa, but I am not entirely convinced about this idea.”

**Karen:** “Why not?”

**Tama:** “Some of the Māori signage I have seen around institutions better funded than our school has left me underwhelmed.”

**Karen:** “The Ministry promised that if we use their contractors the quality of the translation will be excellent.”

**Tama:** “That well may be but some of the concepts are not obviously transferable. Same goes for using Māori words in Effective Teachers Profile. Like, for example calling school houses Whanau. We may have warm feelings for the kids in our care, and they may build a close bond but that does not make them whanau. You see the quality and the depth of commitment are different, there is a bit of a contradiction here, at school we are in professional relationships with each other, and those relationships can be strong, warm and productive, there is occasionally a degree of similarity to family relationships but using the word whanau or whanaungatanga in the professional setting? Not so sure. We go home when school is finished, and we are not obliged to take further part in lives of our students: they go back to their real whanau. And that is just one example of stretching or distorting the Māori concepts.”

**Karen:** “The Ministry has developed those strategies with the input from Māori and *Ka Hikitia* is supported by Māori.”

**Tama:** “I have heard that said, but have you seen the sculpture of the piano by Michael Parekowhai?”

**Rory:** “Yes, I have seen it. He took the actual Steinway grand piano and replaced all the black wood framing and cladding with traditional Māori carving in traditional red colour. It looks quirky, kind of funny, like he is taking the piss, excuse the language. Apparently, it is a reference to the movie *Piano*. I’ve heard it being played and it sounds perfectly tuned. I wondered, is it a European instrument decorated with Māori carving, or a Māori carving that has engulfed a piece of European high culture?”

**Bruce:** “Sound awesome - but the connection to our conversation is...?”

**Tama:** “To me it is a perfect metaphor for all the culturally responsive initiatives, though I am not sure what Michael would think about my interpretation of his work. What we seem to be doing is putting a cladding of Māori concepts and words over an essentially Western, or rather English, structure - the educational system. All the internal mechanisms and functions are colonial but we’re hiding the same instrument under a Māori casing.”

**Rachel:** “Maybe if we keep using this casing long enough it will transform the workings of the instrument and it will become authentic?”

**Bruce:** “OK guys, we are getting carried away. We are practitioners here and it is not our job to overthink things. People above our pay scale have consulted on this policy strategy and thought it through; we are tasked with implementing not analysing policy. We can offer our feedback, but we can’t deliberate endlessly. Maybe the culturally responsive initiatives have not closed the gap as yet, but there seem to be no harm from them either, and there is some evidence that they do improve achievement somewhat. So we will need to implement the changes that Rachel proposed. Are you happy to work on the effective teacher profile re-jig Rachel?”

**Rachel:** “Yes, I will get it sorted before our next meeting in mid-Jan”.

**Rory:** “OK, we can keep implementing cultural responsiveness, I think we should do it as a matter of course, but do we really expect to change the educational outcomes in a substantial way without addressing socioeconomic drivers of inequality? I don’t think so.”

**Bruce:** “That is a big question and really a debate for a different time and forum. Smacks a bit of deficit theorising, Rory. Besides, those issues can’t be address from within schools, and that’s where we are.”

**Rory:** “If we keep ignoring inequality of wealth as a driver of inequality of educational achievement, we will keep getting the same outcomes. The least we can do is acknowledge the obvious.”

**Bruce:** “And what then? We are not in position to redistribute the wealth, so we had best stick to our knitting and wait for the political changes to sort out the big picture. One more thing: as SLT we need to present a unified front. If WE don’t show belief in the transformative power of cultural responsiveness, the teachers won’t buy into it, and, you know, there are still some old attitudes out there. We also need to look after new teachers, and teachers who are new to our country, who do not necessarily understand the local dynamics.

Well, if there are no other questions around the implementation of cultural strategies, we might have a quick break now - our next session will be around setting achievement targets and strategies...”

## CHAPTER FIVE: Discussion

The stories in Chapter Four portray how culturally responsive policies work in school life through typical experiences and responses of teachers, students and school leaders. This chapter considers all the information presented in the previous chapters to address the question of the effectiveness of current policies for improving Māori educational outcomes.

A recurring critique of these policies holds that the root cause of Māori educational disparity is socioeconomic inequality and the impact of poverty, which returns attention to social justice, without denying the additional negative influence of ethnic discrimination (or its inverse: white privilege). Māori economic inequality is not accidental; it results from a history of deliberate policies, including war and large-scale land theft (Willmott, 1989), to relegate Māori into poverty and maintain Pākehā privilege. Yet these histories are seldom acknowledged in everyday discourse in or about Māori education.

This ‘subterranean’ idea surfaces in Chapter 4: in the first dialogue *After the teacher-only day*, the teachers discuss how focusing on culture and ethnicity draws attention away from socio-economic injustice, so tends to unfairly blame schools and teachers for outcomes that are largely driven by Māori poverty. This critique explains why academic outcomes for Māori students in English-medium schools have not improved significantly, despite over thirty years of culturally responsive educational policies, which are thus labelled a ‘distraction’ or ‘smokescreen’ (Lourie, 2016; Stewart, 2018b).

The second school dialogue in Chapter 4, *After the science fair*, highlights Māori student responses to the use of Māori language and culture by people who are not well-versed. Using Māori words, concepts and practices is prescribed by culturally responsive policies in order to demonstrate respect for Māori culture, but such uses can also be viewed as cultural appropriation and cause offence when done poorly. Māori researchers point to the threat that widespread appropriation by education poses to the integrity of Māori culture (Stewart, Tamatea, & Mika, 2015), though this danger appears to be overlooked by current policies, as discussed in more detail below.

The third school dialogue, *Planning for Ka Hikitia*, portrays diverse responses from school leaders to implementing culturally responsive policies, and a typical range of opinions about their effectiveness, from enthusiastic and uncritical to cynical and critical. A critical response questions the aim of the policies, seeing the goal of improving Māori achievement as narrow, and doubts if even this narrow goal can be achieved without addressing the socio-economic causes of Māori underachievement. The metaphor of a piano encased with Māori carvings raises three possibilities that relate to the ambiguous or liminal nature of the interaction between Māori as indigenous and Pākehā as settlers. Is the piano a dressed-up but still essentially Western object; is it an indigenized piano made Māori; or is it a fusion or hybrid with a balance between the two?

These three themes - Māori language and culture in schools, awareness of the historical basis of Māori poverty, and the liminal nature of Māori-Pākehā relationships - are further discussed in the sections that follow.

### **Te reo and tikanga Māori in schools**

Use of te reo Māori in English-medium schools is required by the new Practising Teacher Criteria against which the performance of all teachers is appraised (Teaching Council New Zealand, 2019). Criterion 10 requires teachers to ‘work effectively within the bicultural context of Aotearoa New Zealand’ and one of the key indicators for this criterion is that teachers ‘practise and develop the relevant use of Te Reo Māori me ngā tikanga-a-iwi in context’. But this requirement is very problematic since the overwhelming majority of teachers in English-medium schools are not Māori speakers, so their use of the language is at best superficial, and at worst offensive to Māori and speakers of Māori.

The requirement must therefore be taken to mean that all teachers must learn te reo Māori, but there are obvious constraints, even if teachers are highly motivated, which cannot be universally assumed. These constraints include lack of available time for learning, the diminished developmental flexibility of the adult brain, and limited exposure to the Māori language being spoken in daily situations. These combined constraints mean the use of Māori by teachers typically remains limited and often results in a form of tokenism (Jenkin, 2017). The danger seems clear of such tokenistic use of te reo becoming widespread, as the new requirement discussed above comes into play. Yet as explained in *Tau Mai Te Reo*:

A minimum of 50 per cent formal Māori language instruction is needed to achieve bilingual outcomes, coupled with sustained participation in quality Māori medium education for at least six years. (Ministry of Education, 2013b, p. 4)

This guideline logically also applies to teachers' learning of te reo, but how can this time commitment be managed for full-time teachers, who are already overworked? The implication is that working towards a truly bilingual teaching workforce would need to take place before entering the workforce, during secondary and tertiary education. The current shortage of teachers and the resulting campaigns to recruit from overseas (Collins, 2019) clearly present further barriers to achieving the lofty goal of all teachers speaking te reo Māori bilingually.

The current efforts to increase the use of te reo Māori in all schools are ironic considering it is only 35 years ago that Naida Glavish was nearly dismissed from her job as a telephone operator for greeting people with 'Kia ora' on the grounds that people would not understand the phrase (Morey, 2018). The reason for objecting to the use of kia ora was that clients would not understand its meaning. In 1999, when Hinewehi Mohi chose to sing the national anthem in te reo Māori at an All Blacks test in England, there was a considerable backlash in New Zealand against her decision (Husband, 2015). This anti-Māori attitude is still making headlines today: complaints against netball teams from Kura Kaupapa Māori speaking in te reo on the court were reported in June, 2019 (McLachlan, 2019). Such attitudes are clearly out of date, when te reo Māori has been an official language since 1987 (New Zealand Legislation, 1987).

But there are dangers in making it compulsory for all teachers to use Māori language and culture without critical understandings of Māori and Pākehā histories; dangers that are being ignored by advocates of culturally responsive policies, including Māori advocates (Berryman, Lawrence, & Lamont, 2018). There is the danger that expressing ideas from Western thinking with Māori words can harm the essence of the Māori language (Durie, 1998). There is the danger of detaching language from culture, which easily happens when there is a focus on using Māori names for things (Heaton, 2011), such as in the current crazes for bilingual signage, and for giving school roles Māori names. The typical early childhood practice of teachers using te reo mainly for directions (e tū, e noho – stand up, sit down, etc) misleadingly presents Māori as a 'bossy language' (Jenkin, 2017, p. 14).

These critiques highlight some of the tensions in making it compulsory for English-medium teachers to use te reo Māori in their classrooms, which raise the possibility that such a policy

could easily do more harm than good. Policies of cultural responsiveness have not achieved their aim of equalizing Māori education outcomes to date, so in response the expectations on teachers are increasing. But this policy trajectory overlooks the possibility that culturally responsive policies for Māori have not worked, are not working and will not work - unfit for purpose; unable **on principle** to equalize Māori educational outcomes, no matter how enthusiastically and completely they are adopted by teachers and schools.

### **Reclaiming the real history of Aotearoa-New Zealand**

Schooling has promulgated Eurocentric versions of New Zealand history that have helped to ensure the wider population was unaware of what happened in the country they inhabit. This process of ‘bleaching’ settler history is an important plank of colonization because it allows the descendants of the settlers to feel that their contemporary domination is legitimate. Without learning less biased accounts of the history of New Zealand, teachers will continue to struggle to overcome the typical Kiwi stereotypes and the cozy security of monoculturalism. Teacher ignorance of accurate New Zealand histories and ideologies of colonization will continue to undermine even the best implementation of culturally responsive policies.

Therefore, alongside efforts to make Pākehā teachers proficient in te reo Māori and tikanga, professional learning is needed to ensure that accurate histories of race relations in New Zealand are widely understood by teachers (Stewart, 2018a). Secondary schools are rooted in deceitful historical narratives, so it is important to reclaim a true account of the past in order to begin to close the gap between rhetoric and practice.

### **Binaries and liminality for thinking about biculturalism in Aotearoa/New Zealand**

The two languages and cultures of Māori and Pākehā are binaries, as reflected in the words ‘bilingual’ and ‘bicultural’ - even though much of what is called ‘bicultural’ in schools is more accurately termed ‘bi-ethnic’. The theoretical notions of binaries, boundaries and liminal spaces are therefore useful tools for interpreting aspects of educational Māori-Pākehā relationships (Stewart, 2018b).

The ‘binary’ is a philosophical and linguistic concept in the academic paradigm of **structuralism** (Honderich, 1995), in which the meaning and understanding of phenomena

depend on pairing them in well-delineated opposites: black and white, good and evil, man and woman, true and false, labour and capital, Māori and Pākehā. Such pairings are rarely if ever value-free: one of the terms usually holds a position of dominance over the other. Structuralism maintains that binaries are fundamental to thought expressed in language. This philosophical position characterizes mainstream Western thinking and so influences all aspects of Western social and political life, with two-party politics of left and right being one example.

But seeing ‘Māori and Pākehā’ as a binary is problematic: simplistic and essentialised. Binaries have come under political and intellectual criticism in recent decades from various directions: postmodernism, anti-colonialism, feminism and critical race theory, which tend to see differences as shades of grey rather than black and white. Poststructuralism is a philosophical tradition that specifically rejects the ‘grand narratives’ of modernity and interrogates the power relations embedded in language, i.e. the notion of ‘discourse’ as defined by Michel Foucault (McHoul & Grace, 1998). Rather than as a juxtaposition of two opposites, it may be more productive to think of biculturalism as happening in a liminal zone of cultural mixing.

Examples of physical liminal spaces include waiting rooms, elevators, hotel lobbies, and disputed territories or ‘no man’s lands.’ Temporal liminal spaces include parole, rites of passage, gender transitions, giving birth. Limbo in the Christian tradition is a state of undecidable destiny that is neither hell nor heaven. Bardo is a Buddhist concept representing an existence after death but before the next reincarnation. All these ideas share a common theme: liminal spaces of all kinds are spaces of ambivalence and confusion; in-between states, where the future is uncertain.

The scientific rational mindset is geared towards the resolution of problems and the seeking of ‘solutions’ which has the effect of causing discomfort when experiencing a liminal conceptual space. But liminal spaces have the potential for creativity and the surprise of novelty precisely because they are undetermined. New Zealand society has an opportunity to accept biculturalism as an ongoing liminal reality, full of unresolvable emotional contradictions and cognitive dissonances, as explained by Jones and Jenkins (2008) – already discussed above in Chapter Three. Rather than trying to make ‘biculturalism’ a solution to a problem of underachievement, this approach would open up the possibility of productive cross-cultural engagement (Stewart, 2018b). Instead of resolution or settlement, in Aotearoa-New Zealand we need to seek ways for schooling to operate as part of an ongoing national relationship based on the Treaty of

Waitangi, bearing in mind that ‘treaties are meant to be honoured, not settled’ (a statement attributed to Māori legal academic, Moana Jackson, 2016). In the enthusiasm for the promise of positive biculturalism, however, it is important not to once more lose sight of Māori interests and needs as a result of poverty imposed by colonial pasts.

[C]alls for dialogue and sharing turn out to be another form of epistemological imperialism. It is the cultural ‘other’ who are required to ‘share’ *their* difference/territory, in order, ultimately, for white people to know about them. (Jones, 2001, p. 290, note 1)

Feeling challenged about cultural assumptions can lead to discomfort for Pākehā educators. The fear of being criticized or showing cultural incompetence can lead to ‘Pākehā paralysis’ (Hotere-Barnes, 2015, p. 39), which can even lead the teacher to withdraw from situations in which they interact with Māori, and seek educational contexts where it is possible to be entrenched in privilege. A choice of not doing anything, even when made to avoid getting it wrong, is still an expression of privilege. Experiencing discomfort is expected in situations where one confronts loss of privilege or unpalatable truths, which points to the intensely emotive and subjective nature of the deeper learning that lies beneath the surface of culturally responsive policies. This state of discomfort also called ‘cognitive dissonance’ can be viewed as another form of liminal space - on the way to learning or enlarging one’s frame of reference.

New Zealand is already a place of considerable cultural hybridity, where art and literature draw on both Māori and Pākehā cultural traditions to produce works of unique quality. Binary conceptualizations offer little explanatory value concerning the diverse realities of Māori-Pākehā relationships (Meredith, 1998). The dichotomizing makes little sense in a country where intellectual, social, political and family histories of two peoples have been interwoven for over two centuries. The current popularity of adult courses for te reo Māori, shown by the fact that most have waiting lists, points to a desire for better understanding across the cultural chasm.

Cultural hybridity has acquired affirmative meaning as an advantage that allows one to negotiate difference with more fluency, and to build new forms of culture, despite colonial inequity and animosity (Meredith, 1998). Hybridity is seen as the remedy for essentialism that, when imposed by the dominant culture, makes ossifying demands on the indigenous, and

overlooks the fact that all cultures are constantly in the process of a hybridizing flux. Hybridity allows for new positions to arise that are outside of the dominant-subordinate binary.

### **Māori-Pākehā power-sharing in schools: examples and possibilities**

Perhaps some hope for bicultural education can be derived from examples of radically bicultural schools, such as Newton Central School and Kia Aroha College. Both schools have a special character designation and policies explicitly focused on indigenous cultural values. Both schools have a roll of over 40% Māori students and enjoy the strong support of their Māori communities. Both offer a mixture of English-medium and bilingual education pathways. In these schools, Māori students are taught to assert agency to shape their futures.

Newtown Central School is based on a Treaty governance system that works as an authentically bicultural institution (Bell, 2014). Key to the school's biculturalism is the way relationships affirm difference and decentralize things Pākehā within the school. 'Tikanga Māori is normalized here as is tikanga Pākehā' (Bell, 2014, p. 194). The whole model relies on interrupting invisible Pākehā norms and could possibly serve as a working model of bicultural practice for other schools to follow.

Developing a working model for bicultural education is difficult because of a lack of clarity or shared understanding of its ultimate goals. Who decides its purpose, and how can differences be resolved if opinions are divided? For indigenous people who are struggling to maintain their cultural identity, it is vital to be able to state 'this is who we are and what makes us distinct from you' (Bell, 2014, p. 117), otherwise their very survival as a people is endangered. Institutional bicultural policies could undermine indigenous identities if they are not developed and implemented by indigenous peoples.

Pākehā and other non-Māori will continue, for better or worse, to play a role in shaping the educational outcomes for Māori students, which will include struggling with the challenge of the place for te reo Māori in English-medium schools. The tensions between different approaches to best practice will need to be lived with, as part of the reality of living in a time when the old binaries are invalidated, and we find ourselves living in the in-between, liminal spaces of cross-cultural relationships with our cultural 'others'.

## CHAPTER 6: Conclusion

Māori education policy has been dominated by a way of thinking that is pre-occupied with the need to find ‘redemptive solutions’ for the problem of Māori education outcomes (Jones, 2007, unpaginated). This way of thinking assumes that overcoming Māori underachievement is a technical problem, comprehensible and solvable by policy. But Māori education is a complex phenomenon that involves many aspects: history, cultural difference, language and attitudes, and above all, an ongoing, living relationship between Māori and Pākehā, within New Zealand society.

Even within the dominant frame of reference, culturally responsive policies do not pay sufficient attention to the socio-economic factors that impact on Māori achievement. Unless the effects of colonial political and economic oppression are reversed, it is difficult to envisage that culturally responsive policies will have large, positive, lasting impact on Māori achievement in English medium schools.

Teaching has been referred to as ‘one of those “impossible” professions in which one can be assured beforehand of achieving unsatisfying results’ (Jones, 2001, p. 287), and cultural responsiveness may also be called one of those ‘impossible’ policies. The frame of reference of these policies is predicated on the unsound assumption that Māori achievement is ‘a problem, a *comprehensible* problem, *solvable* by best practices and reformed attitudes of teachers’ (Jones, 2007, unpaginated). This assumption ignores the benefit and necessity of a commitment to the ‘interminable struggle’ of the cross-cultural relationship between Māori and Pākehā. Rather than looking for solutions, we can work towards building better relationships that accept that the realities of Māori and Pākehā lives are in ‘interminable tension with each other.’ As educators, we can engage in this struggle, accepted as difficult, but also as a ‘positive and energized engagement, where each other is taken seriously’ (Jones, 2007, unpaginated).

The narrative below depicts a vision of education in a future New Zealand that has been radically reshaped by global political and natural forces.

What a ride! Twenty-five years... I started teaching in this school in 2019, shortly after completing my MEdL degree from AUT. How different the school was then - how different New Zealand was, and how different was the world! I started here just before the 2020 Iran War began, which led to the global conflict that was on track to destroy - or maybe deconstruct - most of the industrialized world's urban centres, before it was stopped in its tracks by the deadly uber-influenza pandemic. This pandemic not only ended the war, it wiped out one-third of the world's population. The human cost of the pandemic was truly horrible: nobody was spared - every family lost some loved ones. The consequences were immense, widespread and long-term. It was a turning point.

Carbon dioxide-induced climate change slowed down; as an effect of labour shortages produced by the pandemic, robotization of industries and agriculture accelerated. Consumerism abated, and the form of capitalism based on the idea of infinite growth finally ran its course. After an initial economic collapse, things started to improve around 2025, following the first Ardern and Peters Well-Being Budget of 2019. The economic system became more locally based, focused on equitable wealth distribution and community-building instead of the previous obsession with profit. The combined effects of robotization, decreased consumerism and the requirements of sustainability meant the nature of work changed from the production of profit to the creation of meaning, and work became less central to people's lives, with more time and energy devoted to other aspects of social life.

New Zealand demographics changed quite dramatically, with the influenza mortality rate highest among older people (well, I am here so I guess I may count myself lucky), who were more likely to be Pākehā, and as a result the proportion of Māori in the population increased even more rapidly than the demographic models had predicted, to the 40% Māori in the national population we now have. The median age of the population dropped from 40 in 2020 to 32 in 2022, before slowly climbing back to the current 37 years. The size of the population dropped from five million in 2020 to 3.5 million in 2022. With the population collapse in the source countries, immigration into New Zealand practically stopped.

With a smaller, younger national population, New Zealand was able to restructure the economy to carbon-neutral gearing, as the global economy did the same. Humanity avoided catastrophic climate change as the global economy became truly green, multipolar and well-connected, but much more locally based. A plant-based diet is now enjoyed by most of the world's population. New Zealand agriculture re-tooled from mainly animal pastoralism to robotized horticulture and native timber-based forestry. Marine aquaculture industries based on shellfish and plant-eating finfish flourished. The share of the high-tech industries in the national economy increased. The smaller population means there is no longer any shortage of houses.

Education had to adapt to the changes brought about by a smaller, younger population. Schools became smaller and regained the role of being community hubs. Classes are smaller and teaching is better resourced. With many other jobs in the economy occupied by robots, teaching became a higher-status profession. As teachers we are much, much less time poor. Three-day weekends mean the work-life balance is better for everyone. Students have more unstructured time to develop their individual interests, and after the addiction to screen-based activities faded, they are healthier and more resilient than the cohorts of 20 years ago. With smaller classes, better-resourced schools, and time to think between lessons, teachers can better respond to the needs of individual students and the collective needs of communities. Sports and cultural activities are vibrant and more highly valued, supporting the maintenance of less materialistic, healthier and hence happier communities.

As well as the differential effects of the pandemic on ethnic demographics, many Māori people have relocated back from Australia, which was more negatively affected by climate change, even though the worst possible catastrophic effects were avoided. This repatriation has also supported the increase of Māori to 40% of the national population, which gives Māori more political clout than for the past two centuries, returning the political balance of power between Māori and non-Māori to something more like its bilateral beginnings in the early 1800s. The Treaty of Waitangi settlement process became geared towards continuing relationship building, and the concepts of a fiscal envelope and final settlement were finally abandoned. All the confiscated land held by the Crown has been returned to Māori ownership, and is under Māori leases.

The reforms of the last 20 years, moving towards an economy focused on sustainable wellbeing, have alleviated many social problems. The changes in the economy, starting with

worker-owned enterprises and a banking system centred on the public service, catalysed a ‘virtuous cycle’ (as opposed to a vicious cycle) of socio-economic improvement. Over time the changes led to more equitable income distribution, which saw Māori health outcomes equalize and a dramatic drop in the crime rate. The Corrections Service is working itself out of a job with the help of effective re-socialization programmes for ex-prisoners, about half of whom are Māori.

Education plays its part too. A decolonized version of New Zealand history is taught to every school student in the country. Te reo is now spoken fluently by most of the Māori population, and natural intergenerational language transmission has been re-established. Artificial Intelligence (AI) translation technology has developed to the point where it is indistinguishable from human translation, so communication between people speaking different languages is now effortless. Some people chose to speak te reo only and rely on technology to communicate with English speakers, who in turn use AI translators to communicate in te reo. More leisure time has also meant that many more people have time to become bilingual.

More equitable socio-economic conditions had a flow-on effect to largely equalize education outcomes for Māori, which has resulted in parity of Māori representation in the professions, including medicine, law, teaching and engineering.

## **Implications for practice**

Some cautious recommendations from this study could be suggested:

- Professional development for teachers towards cultural responsiveness should include a strong component of the Māori-centred history of New Zealand so that teachers could have a grasp of the origins of racially reinforced economic inequality.
- Teachers’ ability to discuss the impact of poverty on education should not be curtailed in the name of avoiding ‘deficit’ theorizing.
- Culturally inclusive practices in schools should be encouraged as a matter of good teaching practice, not as a means to the end of ‘closing the gap’ for Māori.
- Educational policy should be part of the broader political change towards reversing negative socioeconomic consequences of colonialism.

- Māori people should ideally have full control over decisions related to the place of Māori culture and language in educational institutions, and the policies resulting from those decisions should be adequately resourced.

### **Final thoughts**

As a society we are facing issues of global magnitude: unsustainable levels of wealth inequality that threaten social cohesion; rapid ongoing technological change; increasing probability of global economic/military conflict; mass extinction; and climate change jeopardizing our long-term survival – if not as a species, then definitely as a civilization. The future of Māori education and the Māori-Pākehā partnership will play out in a political environment dominated by those global concerns. It is impossible to predict how events will unfold, but what is almost certain is that we are heading for, or in fact already entering, a period of unprecedented instability.

In such an environment it is even more important to ensure good quality education is accessed by all young people than in more stable times. Better educated people have a higher probability of making better collective decisions in times of challenge, so for a good proportion of citizens to underachieve educationally will undermine New Zealand's chances of adjusting and thriving in a difficult social and environmental future. It is therefore essential that the real reasons causing Māori educational inequity are acknowledged and addressed along with culturally affirming practices.

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