

**Lost in Wonderland:
Policy, Education, and Māori Realities**

by

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Abstract

The history of Māori society and education shows how Māori identity and culture have not remained static, but have been subject to ongoing processes of change. Despite many decades of policy initiatives, Māori underachievement in education remains of concern. This research uses the principles of Kaupapa Māori research methodology and narrative methods to explore the extent to which education policies can help Māori students to 'be Māori' and to 'succeed as Māori' in 2019 and beyond.

Principles of Kaupapa Māori work together with autoethnographic research methods to guide ethics in narrative research. As an insider-researcher who is embedded in this topic, I am careful to ensure that my stories are presented in a way that upholds the dignity and mana of Māori culture, and of the people who appear as characters. Use of original narratives exposes issues relating to my own educational experiences and cultural identity, and recounts the journey I have travelled to where I am today.

Past policies damaged the use and transmission of Māori language, and forced many Māori to become disconnected from their culture. Dual or multiple heritages and urbanisation are further factors in the changes in Māori identity. Dislocation from traditional cultural identity has been passed down to those generations of Māori who are currently students in education, endangering a Māori sense of pride in being Māori. The findings of this study suggest that educational experiences for Māori have been, and continue to be, strongly disrupted by government policies.

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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:

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Frances Reenie Hauraki

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This is for my Nanny:

You are my biggest role model, and the reason I never gave up when I thought I couldn’t carry on anymore. I will always strive to be as kind, loving and empathetic as you were during your long and dedicated career as a teacher.

Chapter One: Introduction

This dissertation explores the effectiveness of Māori education policy *Ka Hikitia: The Māori Education Strategy – Accelerating Success 2013 - 2017* (Ministry of Education, 2013a). The motivation for this research originates from my own experience of ‘succeeding as Māori’ and stems from my growing understanding of what ‘being Māori’ in the 21st century currently means for learners. History demonstrates a precedent of disrupting Māori culture achieved through education policies. As a result, culturally responsive strategies have been applied to education policy to support Māori language, culture and identity, in an ongoing attempt to lift education success for Māori. The current government policy strategy document for Māori education was initially published as *Ka Hikitia: Managing for Success 2008 - 2012* (Ministry of Education, 2008a) and has been refreshed and updated (as noted above) and is still current.

Background and context

Māori education achievement, or underachievement, has been a major focus of national education policy in New Zealand for at least 30 years (Office of the Auditor General, 2012). The overall strategy for Māori education is set out in the policy document *Ka Hikitia*, from which other policies derive, including *Tātaiako - Cultural Competencies for Teachers of Māori Learners* (Ministry of Education, 2011). These two policies demonstrate that the government’s approach to overcoming Māori underachievement is based on the idea of equity.

Equity policy considers two fundamentals: fairness and inclusiveness (Field, Malgorzata, & Pont, 2008). This means that elements of a learner’s status, including gender, socioeconomic status and ethnicity, should not be an obstacle to achieving education success. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) adds that there should be an element that requires a minimum standard of education for all. This implies that everyone should be able to complete rudimentary reading, writing and simple mathematics. In addition, the OECD believes these two dimensions are closely intertwined and integral to addressing school failure and can help to overcome the “effects of social deprivation which often causes school failure” (Field et al., 2008, p. 2). A primary tool for delivering equity is cultural competence. As a teacher, this means having an awareness of one’s own cultural identity and understanding of their views about cultural difference.

The New Zealand education system places Māori culture in the centre of *Tātaiako*. The policy suggests “knowing how to validate and affirm Māori and iwi culture, and applying that knowledge, [and] being able to lead and engage others in validating and affirming Māori and iwi culture” (Ministry of Education, 2011, p. 4), are essential criteria for maintaining teacher registration (Education Council, 2017). Equity also plays a key role in shaping the national early childhood curriculum, *Te Whāriki: He whāriki mātauranga mō ngā mokopuna o Aotearoa / Early childhood curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2017). The ECE curriculum is integral to my work in my role as an Early Childhood educator. Early in this document there are promises that “*Te Whāriki* is an inclusive curriculum – a curriculum for all children. Inclusion encompasses gender and ethnicity, diversity of ability and learning needs, family structure and values, socio-economic status and religion” (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 13).

Te Whāriki aligns with *Ka Hikitia*'s approach to identifying and achieving success through education which should enable “Māori to live as Māori within te ao Māori” (Ministry of Education, 2018, p. 1). *Ka Hikitia* refers to several key concepts throughout the document, including Māori potential; Māori self-development; and Māori success. These terms are used to support teachers and education leaders in improving results for Māori students. The Ministry of Education describes *Ka Hikitia* as a policy that “represents a move away from deficit, failure, problems and risks” (Ministry of Education, 2018, p. 1).

The deficits and failures the Ministry of Education is referring to are the ‘gaps’ first highlighted in the Hunn Report (Hunn, 1961). The Hunn Report identified that a disproportionate number of Māori students were failing in the education system. Findings from the Hunn Report examine the academic success of Māori learners in comparison to their non-Māori peers and plays a significant role in present education policy and how it is delivered in schools.

Research question and rationale

This dissertation investigates the research question: **How much can education policies help Māori to ‘be Māori’ and to ‘succeed as Māori’ in 2019 and beyond?**

Education policy has changed substantially during the ten years of my teaching experience. *Ka Hikitia* (Ministry of Education, 2008a) was updated (2013a); *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996) was revised for the first time in 20 years; and *Our Codes, Our Standards* (Education Council, 2017) replaced the previous code of ethics and registered teacher criteria.

Tātaiako (Ministry of Education, 2011) was released in 2011, and *Tau Mai te Reo* (Ministry of Education, 2013b) in 2013. These policy texts suggest a deliberate approach to supporting Māori learners and propose

shifting the emphasis away from Māori students being responsible for under-achieving in our compulsory education programmes, to look at how education can be delivered in the context of the vibrant contemporary Māori values and norms, reflecting the cultural milieu in which Māori students live. (Ministry of Education, 2011, p. 3)

These texts are targeted strategies for ensuring that Māori ‘succeed as Māori’ but the resulting advances in raising achievement have thus far been minimal (Office of the Auditor General, 2016). This dissertation investigates current education policy, and its ability to raise Māori achievement and help Māori to ‘be Māori’ without any further disruption to Māori identity. Through a synthesis of findings from writing personal narratives and critically reviewing academic literature, this research aims to identify in what way ‘Māori succeeding as Māori’ can be achieved through policy, and to what extent policy can support Māori ‘being Māori’ in the 21st century.

My story: what brings me to this research question?

I wonder if I've been changed in the night. Let me think. Was I the same when I got up this morning? I almost think I can remember feeling a little different. But if I'm not the same, the next question is 'Who in the world am I?' Ah, that's the great puzzle!
- Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland (Carroll, 2015) is a world-renowned children's story that deals with themes of identity, the journey from childhood to adulthood and the confusion that this transition entails. There are deeper themes of “otherness,” colonisation, and fitting into a world that is so very different from the known one. It is this story and these themes that resonate so strongly with my own upbringing and journey to solidify my identity, which have brought me to this research.

On paper, I have all the markings of educational success. I finished secondary school in 2009 with NCEA Level 3 and University Entrance. I now hold a Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood Teaching), having completed a three-year initial teacher education programme

whilst working full-time in an Early Childhood Centre. My academic record is strong. I ranked highly among my Māori and non-Māori peers alike. But it wasn't always like this.

I wasn't very good at school. I couldn't keep up with the other secondary school students. In failing to recognise my own potential, I compared myself to others, and was often unimpressed with how I fared. More importantly, I felt completely separate from the Māori world and any identity as Māori. I was Tweedledum and Tweedledee: two of a kind but never quite a whole. I should note that my skin is pale, and this often leads to assumptions that I am not Māori. Also, I did not grow up speaking te reo Māori. As a result, at my secondary school, there wasn't a place for me. I was too 'white' to lead the karanga at school pōwhiri; but was encouraged to participate in NCEA 'unit standards' as opposed to the 'achievement standards' many of my friends were taking. Pride in my ethnicity was low; banter about negative Māori stereotypes was often overheard at lunchtime. My focus, therefore, became about acceptance in any group that would take me. But I didn't fit: some doors were too small, and some doors too big. I could never quite find the right key to unlock the door meant just for me.

I arrived at the end of secondary school with the belief that growing up to be successful was as likely as Alice getting into that garden: Impossible. When it came time for me to leave school, I was like the Cheshire cat, who vanished with a grin and a sigh of relief – “Goodbye, education system!” My mother, a first-generation New Zealander, gave me two options: go to university or get a job, and because I never wanted to study again, I got a job. That job changed my life.

It was like falling down the rabbit hole into Wonderland; it felt foreign and new. It was my first experience of existing in a space where I did not feel the need to hide my cultural shame. It was an environment where culture and diversity were normal, accepted and encouraged. For the first time, being Māori was an asset; and success, I saw, could be gained by travelling more paths than I had known. My time spent working in an early childhood centre gave me a plan – get educated, get qualified. At work, I interacted daily with Māori women who like me were working, studying and raising families. These wāhine reminded me of the stories my father, who is Ngāpuhi and Ngāti Porou, had shared with me when I was little. These wāhine changed my narrative to include success. However, if I was Alice exploring a newfound thirst for knowledge and education, there were still barriers to my own achievement and success. Wonderland has dark corners too.

Throughout my training, I often encountered the Queen of Hearts and her outdated and discriminatory policies. The New Zealand education system is, quite simply put, white. And no matter how hard I attempted to insert a little colour, to paint a few roses, I would play my hand and still turn up the card that associated Māori with ‘underachiever.’ The more we examined in class what Māori culture was, for my non-Māori peers, the more I felt like I was losing a game of croquet, unlikely to finish, let alone win, and my experiences of being Māori were painted over. “Have some success” I was offered, but I looked around the table and there was none. “There isn’t any” said my school achievement record. I thought it uncivil to offer success without it being truly accessible. I suppose the Hare had a point; I mean, it isn’t very civil to sit down without being invited; but perhaps the Queen of Hearts knew that. I had naively invited the Cheshire cat back into my life, taunting me, asking me: **‘Are you Māori enough?’**

I continued my journey through Wonderland as an Early Childhood teacher. I ignored the Queen’s shouts of “off with your education success!!” I rattled off the problems Māori were facing in education so I could meet the registered teacher criteria. The problem, as pointed out for me by *Ka Hikitia*, was that Māori learners were lacking their identity, language and culture, and if they only had this, then they would be successful.

I was playing a game of cards, determined to prove that I could ensure Māori were succeeding as Māori so I could finally ‘trump’ an education system that had never worked in my favour. Every move felt wrong, and the other players kept telling me, ‘You’re mad.’ Deep down, I knew I never had any of the cake that included ingredients like Māori language, culture and identity. The policy version of ‘being Māori’ didn’t represent me or my experiences of being Māori, and so the cat appeared again to ask: ‘Are you Māori enough?’

My teaching journey screenplay is interspersed with situations where my own Māori identity is constantly being questioned. The actors ask for support to implement bi-cultural practice, but I can’t help but feel as if I am the one acting. The scene ends with the lead character questioning the reliability of my Māori knowledge. And as all roads tend to lead us, we arrive back at the beginning and the fundamental question:

“Who are you?” said the Caterpillar. Alice replied, rather shyly, “I—I hardly know, Sir, just at present—at least I know who I was when I got up this morning, but I think I must have been changed several times since then.”

Therefore, we are faced with the question that underpins this research. For Māori, trying to exist and thrive within an education system that has never reflected them, whose identities are taken, moulded and constantly changed: What does Māori ‘succeeding as Māori’ within the New Zealand education system look like?

Overview of dissertation chapters

This chapter has introduced the research context, explained the research question, and given an account of my background and motivation for undertaking this study. Chapter Two outlines the methodology, concluding with a brief narrative written in a poetic style, which explores the self-questioning and doubt that accompanies having a Māori identity in 2019.

Chapter Three presents the Literature Review, which critically explores the research question through relevant research and policy texts. Chapter Four contains four original autoethnographic narratives that act as both a source of data and an analysis of experiences relating to Māori identity. Chapter Five brings together key insights from all the information collected together in the first four chapters. Chapter Six summarises the findings to address and provide an answer to the research question, and presents an account of possible future Māori education.

Chapter Two: Methodology

The aims of research are to inform action and contribute to social understanding through the application of qualitative or quantitative methodology. Methodology in this dissertation is understood to include a set of commitments: about what knowledge is; which forms of knowledge are valued; how we study and acquire knowledge; and how we write about it.

There are many forms and traditions of methodology available to guide research, each with its own merits and limitations. The mathematical nature of quantitative research methods is argued to provide validity of research, however, the complex nature of ‘being Māori’ cannot be captured in school achievement figures and statistical data alone. Pursuing narrative research enables this study to explore the research question and create knowledge based on lived experiences (Flick, 2014). The methods and methodology chosen for this dissertation are underpinned by a desire to strengthen Māori identity through resistance initiatives and anti-colonial foundations (Mahuika, 2008).

Theoretical Framework

Māori have an intricate, holistic and rich knowledge base - Mātauranga Māori - interconnected with their relationship to the natural world and shared theological values and beliefs. “Kaupapa Māori is a way of doing things whereas mātauranga Māori is a way of understanding things” (Durie, 2017, p. 4), where traditional knowledge and beliefs embedded in indigenous Māori identity lend their constructs to contemporary Māori society perspectives. These insights position knowledge as constructed through social and historical concepts where realities are shaped by individual, lived experiences. This study uses the principles of Kaupapa Māori theory to present findings aimed at challenging the dominant deficit narratives of Māori education.

It is intended that this research enables New Zealand schooling to be explained from the perspective of a Māori student. This research is an opportunity to be heard, to lend my voice to the cause, and to challenge the Eurocentric notion of education constructed by Pākehā during colonial history, still current today. Kaupapa Māori as a philosophical framework, I understand, informs through an indigenous lens, the holistic image of ‘being Māori’ and ‘succeeding as Māori’ in 2019 and beyond. This post-colonial, or anti-colonial, methodology confronts

traditional forms of research by making a conscious effort to be undertaken by Māori, for Māori, with Māori, and with a desire to make a positive difference for Māori whānau, iwi and hapū (Walker, Eketone, & Gibbs, 2006).

Not unlike other approaches to research, the implications of participating in research originating in Kaupapa Māori theory are relevant. There is an inherent difference in the way Māori experienced history, and want it to be narrated, and the reality of how it has been divulged in New Zealand (Pihama, 2019), and these differences are relevant to the findings of this research. It also acknowledges through careful articulation of methods and strategies, the need to fairly represent Māori as Māori and challenge “the place of Pākehā history and power, re-positioning them as historians from elsewhere whose cultural and intellectual frameworks are inadequate for interpreting the histories and worldviews of the indigenous peoples here in Aotearoa” (Mahuika, 2011, p. 17).

As a Māori researcher, my role is twofold; to critique the previously constructed understanding of Māori success in education, and to affirm Māori self-identification. Kaupapa Māori, as a theoretical framework, aims to connect to Māori philosophy and values. At the heart of Kaupapa Māori theory is legitimation and affirmation of being Māori (Pihama, Cram, & Walker, 2002). The following list developed by Smith (2003, pp. 8-10) is not definitive, but offers six key elements involved in successful implementation of Kaupapa Māori research:

1. The principle of self-determination or relative autonomy
2. The principle of validating and legitimating cultural aspirations and identity
3. The principle of incorporating culturally preferred pedagogy
4. The principle of mediating socio-economic and home difficulties
5. The principle of incorporating cultural structures which emphasise the ‘collective’ rather than the ‘individual’ such as the notion of the extended family
6. The principle of a shared and collective vision / philosophy.

These principles collectively function to promote “the validity and legitimacy of Māori language, knowledge and culture” and “create the political space to enable the legitimate study and continuance of Māori language, knowledge and culture” (Smith, 2003, p. 11). Smith explains these principles as “not a study of Mātauranga Māori – Kaupapa Māori theory makes space for Māori to legitimately conduct their own studies of Mātauranga Māori in their own terms and own ways” (Smith, 2003, p. 11). Kaupapa Māori theory makes space for Māori

language, knowledge and culture to exist cross-culturally, and concerns itself with economical and structural change.

Indigenous research such as Kaupapa Māori endeavours to grapple with the unequal power dynamics between Māori and non-Māori to be “transformative in its aims” (Smith, 2003, p. 11). “It attempts to challenge existing theory as being culturally and interest laden” (Smith, 2003, p. 11) and supports the use of existing theory published by Māori which will support positive Māori advancement. Researchers who undertake work with this theory, will use methods that recognise “that indigenous struggle is neither singular nor homogenous; and that there is a need to ‘struggle’ on several levels and in several sites, often simultaneously” (Smith, 2003, p. 11).

Study Design

This research is about reclaiming power, reviewing and rewriting the dominant accounts of Māori education, and involves traditionally nonindigenous research tools with social constructivism and narrative research (Henry & Pene, 2001). As knowledge continues to be engaged with and understood, the qualitative methods used to collect and discuss data are dictated by the philosophical beliefs and social practices of Kaupapa Māori theory. The philosophical framework allows research to be guided by “ethical conduct and motivations in research work, without necessarily restricting or directing the ways data can be collected and analysed” (Stewart, 2018, p. 70), therefore, investigation of the research question will involve original autoethnographic narratives, or Pūrākau (Lee, 2009), synthesised with critical literature reviews.

Critical Literature Review:

To distinguish this research from other texts, a selected corpus of research and policy texts have been gathered. Critical reading and analysis of this corpus was performed in order to characterize the research milieu and thoroughly investigate the question through the literature.

There is a myriad of research pertaining to Māori education and the complexities involved in improving educational achievement. The research question being investigated in this study challenges the status quo situated in current education policy. It aims to explore the complexities of being Māori in 2019 and beyond, and how self-identification relates to ideas

of success, or lack thereof. As education policy, teacher training providers and education institutions focus on culturally responsive practice, this research aims to provoke the gap between current teaching approaches, and ‘succeeding as Māori’.

Original Autoethnographic Narratives:

In addition to critical literature review, original narratives are included that illustrate aspects of Māori identity in education through an “autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple levels of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural” (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 739). This type of data collection method applies Kaupapa Māori principles by acknowledging the unique sense of identity Māori people have, and legitimizing Māori culture in research. Autoethnography also serves as a form of inquiry about the self, although objectivity is often questioned with non-empirical methods of this type.

Whakawhanaungatanga is core to Māori culture, and autoethnographic narratives serve to invite the reader to become involved and experience the story of the autoethnographer. According to Ellis and Bochner (2000) “the mode of storytelling is akin to the novel or biography and thus fractures the boundaries that normally separate social science from literature” (p. 744) and re-positions the reader as a co-participant in the text. This is done to create emotional resonance between the reader and the researcher through narratives “that create the effect of reality, showing characters embedded in the complexities of lived moments of struggle resisting the intrusions of chaos, disconnection, fragmentation, marginalization, and incoherence” (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 744).

The narratives, which “function as an agent of self-discovery or self-creation, for the author as well as those who read and engage the text” (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 746) are underpinned by Kaupapa Māori theory, in that each of us has a story, and we have an obligation to future generations to tell “stories which reinforce their identity, build their self-worth and self-esteem, and empower them with knowledge” (Mita, 2000, p. 8). These stories “retell, recreate and creatively represent the pūrākau (which may include waiata, haka, poetry, drama, sculpting, painting, drawing, storytelling, and/or writing) in ways that connect to their own understandings and experiences” (Lee, 2009, p. 4).

These narratives, which are written as part of data collection and analysis for this research project, combine elements of four different narrative modes, shown in bold: **autobiography**;

personal recount, in which I am narrating professional experiences from my own perspective; **ethnographic fiction** - self-reflection by fictionalizing personal experiences to convey and connect understanding; and **imaginative stories**, or proposed scenarios of what could be. The narratives included in this dissertation are listed below:

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Ethical considerations

There are limitations of using autoethnographic writing as a non-empirical method, related to the ability to prove the validity of research, which also apply to Kaupapa Māori research (Anderson, 2006; Hoskins & Jones, 2017). To challenge these assumptions, this research will adhere to the methods and methodology outlined above, to ensure a high level of trustworthiness, credibility and objectivity is apparent. Ethical considerations are pertinent and ensure research avoids harm and is beneficial to the interests of the subjects of the research (Flick, 2014). The value of Tika, to be good, right, and correct, guides the ethical considerations in this research (Pipi et al., 2004) and is derived from the principle of the inseparability of Māori language and culture.

Māori researchers like me have an obligation to ensure they are adhering to the traditional standard of ethics, many of which are embedded in Kaupapa Māori theory. Kaupapa Māori researchers have developed the following Māori values, by which this study is guided:

- aroha ki te tangata (a respect for people)
- kanohi kitea (the seen face; that is, present yourself to people face to face)
- titiro, whakarongo ... korero (look, listen ... speak)
- manaaki ki te tangata (share and host people, be generous)

- kia tūpato (be cautious)
- kaula e takahia te mana o te tangata (do not trample over the mana of the people)
- kaula e mahaki (do not flaunt your knowledge). (Pipi et al., 2004, p. 144)

Researchers engaging in Kaupapa Māori research need to respect Māori knowledge and share it credibly, take care of the research participants and their privacy, and ensure that research is beneficial to Māoridom (Pipi et al., 2004). To this I will add relational ethics which “requires researchers to act from our hearts and minds, to acknowledge our interpersonal bonds to others, and initiate and maintain conversations” (Ellis, 2007, p. 4). This relates closely to whakawhanaungatanga, keeping the tika in relationships and ensuring that nobody’s mana is trampled on; that the necessary people have been consulted and informed of their role in the research; and, ultimately, being careful to uplift Māoridom for the benefit of all Māori (Rewi, 2014).

Am I Māori enough?

I am walking through an art gallery exhibiting famous portraits of chiefly-looking Māori people, all painted before 1900. They wear feather cloaks over their shoulders, blue-green cultural patterns etched on their faces, and feathers in their hair. Their impassive eyes survey a world that was theirs. The DNA in the nuclei of their cells and the blood running through their veins surely makes them Māori.

- I've been told I have Māori blood, but I can't see it.

I am listening to my grandfather speaking in a language that is foreign to me. From the tone of his voice, it sounds like he is not impressed - then everyone laughs. I missed out on the joke! Everyone else is smiling, sharing a knowing look. The language they speak surely makes them Māori.

- I've been told te reo Māori is my native tongue; but I can't speak it.

I'm watching a movie. Some of the people have dark brown skin that contrasts with their flax-fibre clothing; they seem to take care to stay well away from the pale-skinned others. Their nostrils are wide, their eyes even wider. The colour of their skin surely makes them Māori.

- I've been told Māori have brown skin, so is mine the wrong colour?

I'm sitting in the university student cafe, listening to a conversation between two people at the next table. They are talking about how it is unfair that Māori students receive scholarships, just because they're Māori. The scholarships surely make them Māori.

- I've got a student loan - does that mean I'm not Māori?

I'm filling in my census form: name, age, date of birth, ethnicity. I've been told I must tick the 'Māori' ethnicity box.

- I don't feel Māori.

Chapter Three: Literature Review

This chapter aims to explore the possible meanings of the phrases ‘being Māori’ and ‘succeeding as-Māori’ in 2019 and beyond, through critical reviews of research literature and policy texts. The first section reviews the history of schooling in New Zealand and the impact prior education policy has had for Māori language and culture. The second section analyses education policy such as *Ka Hikitia - Managing success: The Māori Education Policy* (Ministry of Education, 2008a) and their success in raising Māori academic achievement. The third section investigates the complex idea of ‘being Māori’ in the 21st century and, in the final section, what this means in relation to *Ka Hikitia*’s ambitious target for Māori to ‘succeed as Māori.’

The history of Māori in education

The current context of Māori education has been shaped by long-ago political beliefs and ever evolving policy text. Much of what has now transpired in education policy centres on addressing the results of past education policies. As such, Māori education is often discussed with emphasis on low academic achievement (Macfarlane, Glynn, Cavanagh, & Bateman, 2007; Pihama, 2019). This focus on placing Māori in the bottom tier of education success arose in the wake of the Hunn Report (Hunn, 1961). This report was significant because it highlighted the substantial differences in Māori education achievement, by comparison with non-Māori learners. What policy makers took from the Hunn Report was that improving Māori achievement should be a key government priority. Though the Hunn Report shed light on Māori achievement levels, Māori disadvantage in education goes as far back as early colonial history.

Before European settlement, Māori education was presented very differently by comparison with the Western education to which most settlers were accustomed. Traditional Māori education placed a large focus on passing down knowledge that would sustain life and maintain Māori culture. As more and more British settlers arrived, a process of deculturation within education occurred for Māori. This was due to the aims of the early government, who sought ways to introduce “Māori as quickly as possible into European ways” (Walker, 2016, p. 3). It was widely believed at the time that what was best for Māori was to introduce them to the practices and customs of ‘civilised life’ (Barrington & Beaglehole, 1974). To achieve this, the early missionaries introduced Eurocentric schooling in the form of Mission schools. These

schools were used as a tool to support Māori assimilation into Western culture through Christianity and the imparting of knowledge in reading, writing, arithmetic and, most crucially, ways of European life (Barrington & Beaglehole, 1974).

Initially, the early missionaries learnt te reo Māori in a bid to use the Māori language as a means to pass on their knowledge. All the same, the goal was ultimately for Māori to assimilate into European culture. From the beginning, education for Māori meant disrupting Māori identity by disturbing the natural process of learning Māori culture and language. The disturbance came in the transformation of Mission schools to Native schools. Subsequently, Native schools played a key role in disrupting the transmission of te reo Māori by ensuring that lessons were conducted in English. As a result, between 1900 and 1960, fluency in te reo Māori dropped from 95% to 25% (Office of the Auditor General, 2012). Te reo Māori became an endangered language, which in large part can be attributed to the general consensus among non-Māori that losing their “native tongue involves no loss to the Māori” (Greensill, Manuirangi, & Whaanga, 2017, p. 2).

The Education Ordinance Act allowed the government to implement a controlled curriculum, delivered in English, thus making schooling extremely difficult for te reo Māori speaking students. Māori became further discouraged from speaking their language by teachers using corporal punishment. This form of discipline against speaking te reo Māori facilitated the marginalisation of Māori, and prompted feelings of isolation in schools for many te reo Māori speaking students. Furthermore, corporal punishment worked as a deterrent, so that students and their families would refrain from using te reo Māori in schools, as well as in their own homes. Being disciplined for using and speaking in te reo Māori disrupted the intergenerational transmission of knowledge (Stewart, 2014a) and weakened the strength of Māori identity and society.

As the intergenerational transmission of knowledge declined, Māori became marginalised, not only in Pākehā communities, but also within their own communities. The marginalisation within schools, in collaboration with urbanisation and pepper-potting, ultimately led to a disproportionate number of Māori being and feeling disconnected from their culture. Native Schools created segregation by design, and provided a vehicle to suppress Māori identity. This was especially true after World War II, when the “government policies of assimilation, language domination, linguistic assimilation and hegemony had run its course culminating in the degeneration and loss of Māori cultural norms, collectivism, language and knowledge

systems” (Greensill et al., 2017, p. 3). School attendance became irregular for many Māori, and for some, non-existent.

Leaving school without any qualifications created and maintained an image that Māori were uneducated and, as a consequence, not suitable for occupations that required higher qualifications (Walker, 2016). The lack of cultural acceptance from early settlers saw the government creating education policy and curriculum that would lead to only one pathway. This pathway that would “lead the Māori lad to be a good farmer and the Māori girl to be a good farmer’s wife” (Waitangi Tribunal, 1999, p. 17).

The limits of Māori success are not a singular issue, but are buried in layers of colonial disruption and repeating socio-economic factors (Office of the Auditor General, 2016). The 2013 census (Statistics New Zealand, 2014) demonstrates how Māori make up only 14.1% of the population. Within this, they have maintained high incarceration rates, low education successes and are over-represented in low-socioeconomic communities. Interestingly, the Ministry of Education (2008b) cites research by Adrienne Alton-Lee, who conducted a quantitative study on Māori education success. Alton-Lee concluded academic performance is influenced more by Māori students’ ethnicity over and above socio-economic status. The study can be found in the booklet *Key evidence and how we must use it to improve system performance for Māori* (Ministry of Education, 2008b), which accompanied *Ka Hikitia* to offer an ‘at a glance’ reference for teachers. It indicated that

Māori student achievement can be explained by how Māori students are taught and treated in New Zealand classrooms, that socio-economic status does not explain all the differences in achievement between Māori and non-Māori, and that, in general, understanding the culture and background of Māori leads to better teaching and learning for Māori students. (Goren, 2009, p. 12)

Previous education policies and schooling have disrupted Māori culture, but have been largely unsuccessful in attempting to equalise Māori achievement. There have been, over the years, some efforts made to reverse colonial policies. Inserting the Māori language into education was led by establishing *kōhanga reo* (Ministry of Education, 2013b) which were Māori language nests which aimed to revive Māori language. As it stands, *kōhanga reo* is seen as a revolution (Walker, 2004) that can increase *te reo Māori* knowledge in the community. *Kōhanga Reo* are conducted entirely in *te reo Māori* with the hope that every child could be bi-lingual by the age of 5. Unfortunately, many students were and are still, unable to continue their schooling in *te*

reo Māori. This can be attributed to the lack of bilingual schools throughout New Zealand, so “despite trying to reverse colonial policies to suppress Māori language it continues to retreat” (Walker, 2004, p. 238).

Māori identity as presented in education policy

Ka Hikitia was designed to honour the potential of Māori and to enhance the performance of the overall education system (Goren, 2009). As the second nationwide policy framework, it reframes the initial Māori education strategy in 1999, and yet, strategies to improve Māori education and increase Māori student achievement are not new. The ‘1971 Report of the National Advisory Committee’ made a recommendation to education leadership and teachers asking that they understand, accept and respect the cultural differences for Māori. The report also suggested the school curriculum “find a place for the understanding of Māoritanga, including Māori language” (Goren, 2009, p. 7).

Over the last three decades at least, Māori achievement outcomes have been researched many times (Kukutai, 2004; Office of the Auditor General, 2012, 2016; Walker, 2016; Webber, 2012). Many commentators argue that the future success of New Zealand is intricately linked with the achievement of Māori students. It is “in the interests of all New Zealanders that young Māori thrive academically, socially, and culturally” (Office of the Auditor General, 2012, p. 7). Arguably, this statement creates both inclusion and exclusion at once. It is saying that Māori are different, and yet, what is good for Māori is good for everyone. It singles Māori out, implying that achievement levels are low for ‘all’ Māori. This statement suggests the need to lift achievement outcomes for Māori is required in order for all of New Zealand to prosper, not solely for the benefit of Māori in education. Māori are increasingly disengaging with education as the relentless focus on Māori underachievement singles them out. The stigma of underachievement encourages inequities between Māori and non-Māori achievement. However, this ‘whole of government’ focus denies that Māori education could ever be anything more than this.

Policy texts such as *Ka Hikitia, Tātaiako: Cultural competencies for teachers of Māori learners* (Ministry of Education, 2011) and *Tau Mai Te Reo: The Māori language strategy in education, 2013-2017* (Ministry of Education, 2013b) reflect and reaffirm the government’s priority that is Māori education. These reforms address the disparity for Māori in New Zealand education and are alleged to assist Māori equity in education. Interestingly, recent education policy

presents an unrealistic version of Māori language, identity and culture. As it stands, texts like *Ka Hikitia* (2008a) support the belief that Māori can only succeed in this one way, with “expectations placed upon them by others (both Māori and non-Māori) to conform to a national image of what a Māori person should be and how a Māori person should act” (Paringatai, 2014, p. 51).

This theme of language, identity and culture has been replicated and reused as fact consistently throughout *Our Codes, Our Standards* (2017), *Te Whāriki* (2017), *Tātaiako* (2011) and *Tau Mai te Reo* (Ministry of Education, 2013b). As a set of equity policies, they are required reading for all early childhood teachers, as well as teachers across all sectors, working in New Zealand. They stand alongside *Ka Hikitia*. It would be reasonable to presume, with an abundance of policy texts in place to support Māori in education, that some substantial progress would have been made. Yet Māori achievement levels have not significantly improved (Education Counts, 2015; Education Review Office, 2010; Office of the Auditor General, 2016).

Our Codes, Our Standards are the criteria by which all teachers maintain their registration in New Zealand, and include the aim of supporting Māori students to achieve success as Māori. As a culturally responsive text, *Our Codes, Our Standards* asks teachers to understand and recognise the unique status of tangata whenua in Aotearoa and the histories, heritages, languages and cultures of both Treaty partners (Education Council, 2017). It continues, recommending teachers examine their own cultural beliefs and create an environment that is culturally responsive for learners. It advises teachers to wholly support the educational aspirations for Māori learners by taking shared responsibility for “these learners to achieve educational success as Māori” (Education Council, 2017, p. 20). *Te Whāriki*, like *Our Codes, Our Standards*, requires teachers to support Māori children. It challenges educators through an expectation of honouring Te Tiriti o Waitangi. The text states “Te Tiriti | the Treaty has implications for our education system, particularly in terms of achieving equitable outcomes for Māori and ensuring that te reo Māori not only survives but thrives” (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 3).

While *Te Whāriki* and *Our Codes, Our Standards* refer to ‘Te Tiriti o Waitangi’, it is worth pointing out that *Ka Hikitia* only mentions the ‘Treaty of Waitangi’. It remains unclear, throughout all these documents, the intention, if there is one, behind using ‘Te Tiriti o Waitangi’ or ‘The Treaty of Waitangi’. Are they terms used interchangeably, or is there another reason why some documents are specifically referring to Te Tiriti o Waitangi? The use of te

reo Māori in education policy text assumes that all educators understand the terms. It can be disputed that there are two versions of the document: Te Tiriti o Waitangi/Treaty of Waitangi (Ministry of Justice, 2016). The Waitangi Tribunal agrees that Te Tiriti o Waitangi is not an exact translation of English into te reo Māori, and demonstrates the historical impact that using te reo Māori words in place of English words can have.

Ka Hikitia, and other policy texts, use Māori words as if they mean the same as the English word they are substituting. The use of Māori words in policy text, in an attempt to be culturally responsible, adversely maintains ineffective practices by educators. Most notably, is the concept of Ako, which has been adopted by education policy, and is often used by the Ministry of Education to acknowledge a method of reciprocal teaching (Ministry of Education, 2013a). The term ‘Ako’ was first published as an effective teaching and learning model by Dr Rangimarie Rose Pere (1982) and re-constructed as part of a set of teaching principles (Bishop & Glynn, 1999). Ako is multidimensional; it means to teach, to learn, to study, to advise and to instruct, all within the dimension of reciprocal relationships between learner, teacher, whānau, community and peers (Ministry of Education, 2019a). This is not mentioned throughout *Tātaiako*. Ako, in *Tātaiako*, becomes just one of five cultural competencies.

The text of *Tātaiako*, which is designed to explain cultural competencies for teachers of Māori learners, presents various different definitions of Ako. At first, it defines Ako as “practice in the classroom and beyond” (Ministry of Education, 2011, p. 5). Later it appears as “takes responsibility for their own learning and that of Māori learners” (Ministry of Education, 2011, p. 14). Finally, *Tātaiako* labels Ako as “reciprocal teaching/learning; parent, whānau, hapū, learner, teacher” and “Effective learning by Māori learners, Effective pedagogy, Effective curriculum for Māori learners” (Ministry of Education, 2011, p. 16). It is not hard to see why, based on this document, teachers have difficulty in understanding Ako and how to implement it in a classroom.

There is no definitive definition of Ako, and the use of Māori language continues to present an unrealistic version of Māori language terms. Moreover, *Ka Hikitia* speaks of ‘language, culture and identity’ as a catchphrase that is universally understood, but is lacking any explanation to help the reader understand how this can be achieved. To address this, *Tātaiako* is supposed to supplement *Ka Hikitia*. Together, these texts highlight the importance of relationships for student engagement, the significance of language, culture and identity, and the critical role whānau plays in learner education success. *Tātaiako* has the sole purpose to create culturally

responsive pedagogy in schools. As mentioned above, *Tātaiako* suggests five competencies to guide teachers' practice, one being Ako. The other four are Wānanga, Whanaungatanga, Tangata Whenuatanga and Manaakitanga.

These competencies are presented as if they encompass Māori culture, and as if they have the ability to support Māori education success. The limits were then set by *Tātaiako*, which employs a confined scope of competencies and provides limited support for teachers. As a resource designed for all teachers, it assumes non-Māori teachers comprehend the competencies and their multidimensional meanings. *Tātaiako*, and even *Ka Hikitia*, could be more successful in their implementation if the use of te reo Māori words were more clearly explained for the purposes and intentions of the documents.

Ka Hikitia attempts to rectify criticisms of past education policy through the major focus on 'language, identity and culture' and an emphasis on 'Māori succeeding as Māori'. This emphasis within *Ka Hikitia* can perpetuate Pākehā stereotypes of what a 'real Māori' is and can lead to Māori students being in 'double-deficit'. Essentially, Māori students fail twice, both in academic success, and in their own knowledge and understanding of Māori language and culture. A traditional version of Māori culture is being presented within schools, requiring Māori and non-Māori alike to redefine Māori identity within the context of the 21st century. This is something the government continues to try and respond to with policy texts. While policy texts continue to be developed and redeveloped, what is apparent is that culturally responsive practices need to be

examined by educators at all levels, including their own cultural assumptions and a consideration of how they themselves might be participants in the systematic marginalisation of students in their classrooms, schools, and the wider system. (Office of the Auditor General, 2012, p. 23)

The enhancing of Māori identity, language and culture, within *Ka Hikitia*, makes assumptions that all Māori are the same, with a singular cultural upbringing. This belief that all Māori are the same increases national stereotypes which often portray Māori as uneducated. As Māori continue to be identified on the lower end of education success, there is an increase in learners assigning low value to their culture (Moewaka Barnes, Taiapa, Borell, & McCreanor, 2013).

Text like *Ka Hikitia* support the belief that Māori can only succeed in this one way with "expectations placed upon them by others (both Māori and non-Māori) to conform to a national

image of what a Māori person should be and how a Māori person should act” (Paringatai, 2014, p. 51). Non-Māori expectations of Māori, and from within Māori, regarding what they should know or do perpetuate the idea that they are otherwise not ‘really Māori’. This supports feelings of inferiority and embarrassment, which has the capacity to manifest in feelings that inhibit their ability to feel pride of their Māori ethnicity and one’s ability to identify within Māori culture (Paringatai, 2014).

Mason Durie states “Māori education policies should aim to equip Māori children and rangatahi to be citizens of world, to live as Māori, and to enjoy a high standard of living” (Goren, 2009, p. 10). This much has always been true and is often cited in education policy as ‘Māori succeeding as Māori’. Education policy uses language as part of identity because it is “the lifeline and sustenance of a culture” (Ka'ai-Mahuta, 2011, p. 125) and integral to Māori. As te reo Māori within state education has received the most disruption, education policy now attempts to resolve the loss of language. To address this need, *Tau Mai te Reo* was created, which captures the vision for te reo Māori at government level as ‘Kia tau te reo’ which is defined as “a state in which the language thrives and cloaks the land and people” (Ministry of Education, 2013b, p. 2). *Tau Mai te Reo* believes

High quality Māori language in education is important because it:

- supports identity, language and culture as critical, but not exclusive, ingredients for the success of all learners
- provides all Māori learners the opportunity they need to realise their unique potential and to succeed as Māori
- gives expression to the national curriculum documents for early learning, primary and secondary schooling, which recognise the importance of te reo and tikanga Māori for Aotearoa New Zealand supports community and iwi commitments to Māori language intergenerational transmission and language survival. (Ministry of Education, 2013b, p. 7)

Tau Mai te Reo scaffolds *Ka Hikitia*’s promise to support Māori students by increasing identity, language and culture. However, *Tau Mai te Reo* places expectations on schools to deliver a credible classroom programme in te reo Māori, which presents an tremendous challenge to many teachers (Stewart, 2014b). It suggests that teachers have the necessary competence and skills needed to deliver content in te reo Māori. *Tau Mai te Reo*, alongside other policy documents, reinforce Māori education as a priority in the 21st century but continue to neglect

the complexities of being Māori in 2019. Furthermore, texts like *Tau Mai te Reo* and *Tātaiako* are also not relevant to Māori students who have been disconnected from Māori culture.

The complex nature of being Māori in the 21st century

Being continually defined solely based on my Māori ethnicity because I looked Māori and had a Māori name used to frustrate me, but it also scared me because for a long time I did not know what being Māori meant. I would avoid conversations with people I thought would judge my authenticity as a Māori. (Paringatai, 2014, p. 50)

The reality of Māori culture in 2019 is that many Māori descend from more than one ethnic grouping. Dual or multiple heritages and modern child-rearing concepts have changed the way Māori culture is explored and practiced in many homes (Te Huia, 2015). This is especially true for the 21st century where interpreting Māori culture, involves deciphering between traditional teachings and the increase in popularity of social media and digital technologies. Traditionally, Māori identity could be captured as

- A relationship with the land (which provides a sense of belonging);
 - Spirituality (which provides a sense of meaning, connection and purpose);
 - Ancestral ties (which provide ancestral-based wisdom and appropriate guidelines for living);
 - Tikanga Māori (customs which carry values and cultural practices unique to Māori people);
 - Kinship ties (which carry obligations to contribute to well-being of the family and extended family);
 - A sense of humanity (which involves a sense of belonging to a wider community).
- (Houkamau & Sibley, 2010, pp. 10-11)

This understanding of Māori identity can be found, without a doubt, in all current education policy texts for Māori. To its disadvantage, current Māori education policy that recognises Māori as being one identity, fails a proportionate number of learners who fail to self-identify within te ao Māori. Māori sense of identity within the 21st century is being challenged. Supplementary ways of ‘being Māori’ are part of Māori cultural heterogeneity (Durie, 2017).

1. Those who are ‘culturally’ Māori in that they understand Māori whakapapa (genealogy) and are familiar with te reo Māori (Māori language) and tikanga Māori (Māori customs)
2. A set of Māori who “identify as Māori but also operate effectively among Pākehā (White New Zealanders mainly of British descent)

3. Māori described as ‘marginalised’ who are unable to relate to either Māori or Pākehā identities. (Houkamau & Sibley, 2010, p. 8)

Ka Hikitia overlooks the evolution of Māori identity and treats ‘Māori’ as a category, as if assuming that all Māori identities are the same. For example, educators are encouraged to ask the families of their Māori students for advice on Māori matters, but this seems not to recognise that Māori families are seldom living in their own tribal areas and have often become disconnected from their language and culture. Being asked for such advice can then be unwelcome. For many Māori, their home is where they learn the values, customs and traditions of culture relevant to them and “whilst this may be true for some, for others the family environment, for whatever reason, is not always conducive to developing an inherent pride in one’s ethnic self” (Paringatai, 2014, p. 49).

The assumptions in *Ka Hikitia* fail to notice the complexities of Māori identity. The system for measuring achievement does not reflect that not all Māori are under-achieving. Many Māori identify similarly with other cultural groups. Māori may grow up alienated from their culture but live relatively good lives. These factors contribute to their shaping of Māori culture and how, or if, they express their identity as Māori. Being Māori and what this means, involves a self-evaluation. It involves negotiating how their identity is reflected in culturally responsive practices.

For many, ethnicity is a measure of cultural affiliation. Measuring race, ancestry and nationality plays no role in their self-perception of identity. This is especially true for those born to more than one ethnic group. Māori born with dual or multiple heritage “may be or become invisible and deny their experiences” (Grennell-Hawke & Tudor, 2018, p. 3). Cultural attributes and racial characteristics influence the self-identification or self-evaluation process many undergo when identifying as Māori (Paringatai, 2014), but negative stereotypes and an individual’s resilience to social pressures/social media can also determine if and how much Māori learners engage in education.

Māori students now, are compensating for the effects of past policy. Together, *Ka Hikitia* and *Tātaiako* are examples of major policy that have thus far been unable to lift Māori education achievement (Office of the Auditor General, 2016) and being Māori in 2019 requires more than just a policy text. It also requires Māori learners to overcome the negative stereotypes about Māori, which are promulgated through media and official versions of history. Overcoming

these negative stereotypes is essential in order for Māori people to find strength and pride in their own self-identity as Māori, and to come to see being Māori as an asset in education and in life. Being Māori in 2019 poses its own set of challenges and “just as a shift from rural to urban communities in the past led to alienation from whānau at home, so living abroad or being totally immersed in digital worlds while in New Zealand, could similarly foster alienation” (Durie, 2017, p. 2).

While *Ka Hikitia* has not achieved rapid success for Māori learners, what is clear is that Māori medium education has been shown to be successful for Māori. *Ka Hikitia* aims to support all teachers, but is unrealistic because non-Māori can never really ‘know’ what being Māori means. Māori medium education implies being in a learning environment where teachers and students alike inherently know what being Māori means. The difference between mainstream education and Māori medium education, such as kōhanga reo, wharekura kaupapa Māori, wānanga and kura kaupapa Māori is that the prime purpose is to revitalise Māori language, culture and community (Keegan, 1996).

Mainstream education cannot be, and will never be able to be, the main agency in conserving Māori culture. Education policy continues to concern itself with Māori succeeding on Pākehā terms, whilst trying to avoid the inevitable disassociation from Māori identity. Such a barrier can better be addressed or removed in Māori medium settings, which is what makes them more successful for Māori learners. Studies done on the benefits of Māori immersion education demonstrate environments that are contributing to complex and supportive learning spaces embedded in Māori values and belief systems (Keegan, 1996). It has been shown that Māori students have good reading, numeracy and comprehension in Māori immersion education as well as positive relationships with teachers and students, high motivation to succeed and good attendance (Education Review Office, 1995).

The dilemma: simple policies, complex realities

The current approach is not working in the sense of not leading to rapid overcoming of the ethnic gap in outcomes, but what is not so clear is whether there is a way for the approach to be changed so it would work, or whether it cannot work on principle. For the sake of Māori holistic health, this study recognises that “if living standards, occupational distribution, educational and health levels of the Māori were to be brought to approximate equality with general non-Māori standards” (Hill, 2009, p. 93) more needs to be done, but whether or not

education policy alone can solve this issue remains uncertain. Questionably, *Ka Hikitia*'s strategy of increasing Māori culture in the classroom is more effective in raising academic success for Māori learners when implemented soundly, without the need to address other socioeconomic factors (Goren, 2009).

Māori identity is broader and more complex than how it is presented in *Ka Hikitia* and other policy text, which use the phrase 'Māori language, culture and identity' as if this is a transparent phrase on which there is universal agreement. If education policy continues to surmise language, culture and identity as integral to 'Māori succeeding as Māori', what then can it do for the four-fifths of the population who do not possess knowledge of their whakapapa, te reo Māori and mātauranga Māori? (Te Huia, 2015). The 'Māori culture' has endured the interventions of school policy which lead to the disruption in Māori language and culture. It can no longer be assumed that traditional cultural indicators (te reo and tikanga Māori), which were an inherent part of Māori identity before European arrival, continue to be involved in the lives of all Māori learners. This 'one size fits all' approach to teaching does not suit all Māori students (Office of the Auditor General, 2012, p. 23).

On the other hand, 'being Māori' and identifying as Māori remains as relevant for Māori now as it ever was; it is a legal right and a birth right of all those who have Māori whakapapa. Māori people and culture have survived cataclysmic changes to date and will need to remain resilient in order to continue to survive, as the meaning of being Māori continues to change in 2019 and the future. The earlier experiences, of education for Māori, does offer insights into how best to avoid future errors in the decades to come. Mason Durie (2017) believes "the potential downsides of living in a 21st century context are magnified several times over" (p. 2).

The identity for Māori has, and will continue to undergo quite rapid changes making it problematic for those who value living in a traditional Māori world and for those who don't. This is especially valid for the number of Māori acutely aware of the unwarranted generalisations of Māori people and culture in their school community (Webber, McKinley, & Hattie, 2013, p. 50). While the uncertainty of success lingers over Māori education policy, it remains true that "retaining an identity that reflects 'being Māori' could be enhanced by new technologies and methods of learning that will enable Māori to be just that, no matter where they are in New Zealand or across the world" (Durie, 2017, p. 3).

Chapter Four: Narratives

There's this perception amongst many people in our society that Māori are a poor, uneducated, violent, criminal-seeking group of people who whine about not getting a fair deal. I certainly felt that way for a long time. Growing up, I was easily able to hide behind my white skin, but there was no hiding behind my last name, which was very easily identifiable. Why did I want to hide my Māori ethnicity? I guess I could thank the media for that.

Once were Warriors is a famous 1994 movie directed by Lee Tamahori that achieved a plethora of awards, including Best Film, Best Performance in a Dramatic Role (both male and female), Best Director and Best Soundtrack, to name a few, and those were just the awards given at the 1994 New Zealand film and TV Awards. It was seen around the world, but was especially famous in New Zealand. It was one hour and 42 minutes of sexual abuse, domestic violence, alcoholism and poverty. Was it about a Māori family? Yes. Could it be true for many families growing up in New Zealand? Yes. Did I cry when I saw it? Yes. Was it about my Māori family? No. Absolutely not.

Once were Warriors is not the only time Māori have been on TV. I could also thank the cartoon TV series *Bro'Town* and its satirical 'Jeff da Māori' for making me want to hide who I really was. 'Jeff da Māori' often had a snotty nose, lived with his mum and 8 dads and everyone was his cousin. Jeff didn't often wear shoes. I was 12 when *Bro'Town* came out, and it was on air until I finished secondary school in 2009. Did I have a snotty nose? Only when I was sick. Did I live with my mum and 8 dads? No, I lived with my mum and dad who have been married since they were 19. Did I go barefoot? Occasionally, I mean what 12-year-old didn't want to run around outside without shoes on?

There was a time when I was growing up where 'being Māori' was not something I was proud of. Most of this time was during my years in secondary school. The teasing, jokes, sly comments and outright bullying that occurred during my time in secondary school is something that I will always recall. It wasn't just on the playground where I felt less pride in being Māori either - it happened in classrooms, often caused by schoolteachers, unintentionally of course, but all the same, I wish I knew then what I know now about being Māori. If only someone had told me that:

1. It's okay to be Māori

2. There is no ‘one way’ to look and be Māori
3. There isn’t anything wrong with me because I can’t understand te reo Māori
4. I can be successful and Māori
5. I am good enough
6. I am Māori enough.

These are my stories. I started this journey with the poem “Am I Māori enough?” For a long time, I felt as if I didn’t deserve to be called Māori, but over time I have grown to understand that being Māori is not something I can hide away from, it is my birth right and it’s okay to be proud of that. It stands to reason that I have more than just *Once were Warriors* and *Bro ’Town* to thank.

Within these narratives I thank the many people in my life who helped me on my journey to knowing, understanding, and thus being proud of, my Māori heritage. I thank my mum, who taught me that embracing Māori culture will only strengthen who I am. I thank my nanny, who taught me to be proud of my name, and where I come from, even when stereotypes and nasty comments are thrown my way. I thank my dad, who remained staunch in his culture and passed that onto me. Lastly, I thank myself, for the journey I travelled and not giving up when everything tries to set me back. The final narrative, in Chapter Six mirrors the story in Chapter One and returns to Alice in Wonderland where there are six, no longer impossible things I can achieve before breakfast.

Nellie embraces Māori culture

When I was younger, I didn’t understand how a person was made up of different cultures. I was brought up knowing I was Māori. I only learnt about the other half of my heritage when I began filling out my family tree when I was 9. My dad’s side was full of people, while my mums only had meagre 8 people. I found out that my mum was raised very differently to the way my dad was raised. My mum grew up with only a distant link to her language, identity and culture, deriving from Utrecht, in the Netherlands. Over 30 years, she underwent a willing process of absorption and integration into her husband’s culture – the Māori culture. Slowly, te reo Māori began to tumble from her lips, and she found her place of acceptance in the rolling hills of Ramaroa in the Hokianga, Northland. Her story embraces the ideology that Māori and Pākehā can live harmoniously side-by-side, two cultures intertwining together, creating and constructing a quilt of love, acceptance, diversity, inclusion and belonging. I was accustomed

to growing up between the Māori world of my dad's and the Pākehā world of my mum: not only at tangi, but at mealtimes, Sunday church, daily chores and family celebrations. Thank you to my mum, who taught me that it was okay to travel between the two worlds, and that it is always okay to embrace my Māori culture. This is my mum, Nellie, and her story of choosing to embrace Māori culture, told in her own voice:

Nellie: “I lost my dad very early in life and it was my first experience of death, mourning and funerals. My family were sat in an unfamiliar room, and silent, while we tried to make sense of the event unfolding in front of us - we were looking at my dad in a casket. I remember the silence most of all. Nobody knew what to say, or what to do, and my siblings and mum were sitting there looking at their feet and holding their own hands. I chose to get up and say something to bid him farewell. In my heart, it felt like something was missing, but I didn't know what, or how to find it. Then before we knew it, he was gone, taken behind a curtain into the unknown while we ate cucumber sandwiches, and then, just went home.

My husband grew up with a different process, one that I felt was filled with grief and beauty, mourning and joy. It was a chance to say goodbye: A proper farewell and a celebration of life. I went with him once when his Aunty passed away. I had never known this Aunty, he had so many. We were to travel to the far north for three days.

“What, three days?” “I'm going to be sleeping where?” “Who is Koha?” - I had so many questions, and my husband patiently answered them all. Māori tangihanga last three days, we are welcomed onto a marae and together, tangata whenua and manuhiri, become one. We sleep alongside the tūpāpaku, we eat together, and everyone has a place and a job to do while we are there. Somehow, like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, it all fits together and works, with the help of koha to make sure all ends meet.

The contrasting differences between the world I knew and the world I was embracing begun to blend together. Gone were the cucumber sandwiches that reminded me of an empty room, instead, replaced with food prepared by many hands, loving hearts, and laughing souls.

As early as I lost my dad, I got to keep my mum for a very long time. She had lived a full and rewarding life before she passed on, content that she would be reunited with her husband after so very long. My husband, skilled in preparing for tangi, immediately began preparations, as he had done many times before for his own whānau. My siblings protested a “Māori Funeral”,

but I didn't want to have it any other way. I knew how I was sending my mum off and I took her home. Not to an empty room that I needed to drive to, instead to her home that had been her home since she first moved to New Zealand all those years ago. The familiar place where I could feel memories in the walls and echoes of her footsteps in the hallway.

I closed off the kitchen and the lounge room, respecting the sacredness between a tūpāpaku and kai. My daughter begun her karanga while my husband called back and led us into the home, I was raised in. I wept as I walked behind my mum, and her grandsons, my son and nephews, lifted her high. I sat by her night and day, listened to my husband delivering karakia, to the visitors coming and going, each welcomed in a similar fashion to me and my mum. I heard stories about her from her friends and our family. Over the next three days we laughed, we cried, we ate together and when it got too quiet, we sang. When it finally came time to say goodbye, I was as ready as I was ever going to be.

There were no cucumber sandwiches, but I found nourishment in saying goodbye to my mum through a traditional Māori tangi in a way that I never had when saying farewell to my dad. My husband's culture was the link that was missing all those years ago. Finally, my brother and sister came together, and we embraced, knowing that mum would not have minded that we left the cucumber sandwiches out this time".

Nanny's lessons

My name is my power, my talisman, my strength, my pride. It wasn't always though; growing up, I struggled with my name as much as I struggled with who I was as a Māori. I didn't understand the capacity something as simple as a name had over my identity, my self-esteem and my sense of pride in being Māori. It turned out that my name had more impact on developing my Māori identity than I had realised. My sense of belonging within Māori culture came in the most unlikely of fashion. I became conscious of the fact that my first name lacked an easy gender identification, unlike my sisters' girlish names. I was just learning how to write my name when the teasing started at school, and I became very jealous of other 'pretty girl's' names. I wasn't happy with my parents' choice of name, so went to my nanny for consolation. I found out that my name, even though it wasn't traditionally girly, inadvertently brought me closer to my Māori culture. Thank you, Nanny, for helping me gain pride in my Māori culture by teaching me about whānau, whanaungatanga and carrying the people who named me, and who I was named after, with me for the rest of my life.

I went to my Nan, upset about my first name, and she gave me more than I bargained for. While she prepared tea with three sugars and buttered the round wines, she told me about a friend she had had for her whole life. A beautiful wāhine was her friend, a taonga who laughed and cried with her at always the right time. Her name was Frances. While my mum was fretting over me in hospital, the no-nonsense, matron on duty referred to me as ‘that baby’. My mum turned to my dad and said, “We need to name our baby”. My dad, still in shock over my entrance into this world couldn’t think of a name. Struggling with an idea, he looked to his mum, and she gave him strength in one sentence: “Call her Frances, after my best friend.” This is where it all begun for me, a name, like an invisible thread, created a link between me and my nanny. She tied me to her, and her to me.

She poured another cup and continued her story, turning to my middle name. I told her how I had tried to make it prettier by pronouncing it *Reneé* and she offered a gentle laugh. “Did you know” she said, “that it is.” My forehead scrunched and the tea dribbled from my mouth, wide open in surprise. We laughed, and I tidied up while she told me that not only was I named for her best friend, but my parents had gifted me also, her name. While the invisible thread continued to weave between my nanny and I, she remembered fondly, growing up, the Pākehā struggling to roll their ‘r’s and enunciate the elongated ee. ‘Reh-neh’ became a firm ‘Reen’ and affectionately later Reenie. I was given the gift of transliteration, of western ignorance or perhaps defiance to speak her name correctly. This I know now; but my name wasn’t wrapped in mamae, it was wrapped in love and resilience. I pondered this at school the next day. It was third period English, and the teacher was standing in front of me discussing Shakespeare.

*What’s in a name? That which we call a rose
By any other name would smell as sweet*

I understood the analogy. My teacher was analysing Shakespeare’s sentiments. Would a Rose, called by another name, still be a sweet-smelling flower. I thought to myself “but a name has power? Does it not? Well at least, after my chat with nanny the night before, it did for me”. A name does have power. What is my power? It is my talisman against those who see only the white skin. It is my last name, that indicates to those who know, or don’t know, which family I am a part of. From dust we are born of the delicate and beautifully designed Papatūānuku and to dust we shall return, my bones laid near those who left this world when their tide was ready to withdraw back in the vastness of Tangaroa. I belong to these people, as they belong to me.

We are one, connected through a celestial thread, much like the invisible thread weaving me to my nanny and my nanny to me.

What does my name mean to me? It is my reassurance that I come from Māori ancestry. My name is an inheritance that I should be proud of. My name reassures me of my whakapapa, and it is that whakapapa that makes me Māori. My DNA, my genealogy, and the ancestral ties to my tūpuna, who walked this earth before me. My name had the power to bring feelings of shame, and jealousy. The negative stereotypes and teasing, I could overcome. Once upon a time it had power over my identity. Now, my name is my power, my talisman, my strength, my pride.

When ‘being Māori’ was frowned upon

My dad remembers his grandmother, Granny Ngā, had told her children that they ‘must go and learn the Pākehā ways, but to never forget where they come from’. Granny Ngā, got some of that right, so thank you, dad, for passing a part of this message on to me. I will never forget where I come from. At the time Granny Ngā said this, dad and his family were living rurally which meant he, and many of his siblings, began their schooling at a Native School.

My dad remembers the headmaster at the time trying to break the concrete with a sledgehammer and it re-bounding back at him. My Poppa, as dad recalls, took the hammer and easily broke the ground, after which he turned to the headmaster and suggested he stick to his job as a teacher. If you asked my dad what he learnt from his time in a Native School, it was that they studied the three ‘R’s - Reading, Writing and Arithmetic, and how to run as fast as you could away from the headmaster, who stuck to his job as a teacher, and his strap, referred to most affectionately as the ‘flogger’. There were fond memories of his time there as well, such as winning a competition to get the first ever pool installed, and, of course, being at a school where everyone is whānau.

Granny Ngā still believed they needed to go learn the Pākehā way, so his family moved to a fast-paced city, which was a far cry from the gentle calmness they were accustomed to. He was enrolled, with four of his brothers, at one of the most elite Grammar schools New Zealand has to offer. At one point, he was one of only four Māori on the attendance register, the other three were his brothers. When he first went to school, he used to trade marmite sandwiches with one of the other kids and said they were a delicacy to replace the takakau and butter packed in his

lunch bag. A marmite sandwich was, to him, a symbol of Pākehā life and showed everyone who might be looking that he belonged in that world too.

Food became his weapon, one that swung in his favour and he was quickly given preferential treatment by all his peers, especially when he begun taking lunch orders from the boys and selling pieces of fried chicken at lunch on the playground. His successful entrepreneur spirit earned him a nice penny until he was sick one day and his little brother, being asked about the chicken, went home and tattled on him to my nanny. His first taste of business might have ended, but side hustling was still on the menu.

His brother was very clever, my dad remembers, and outshone many of their peers in an English writing competition. My own dad, who finished his formal schooling after 5th form, was destined for success on the rugby field. He was already, at a young age, on the 1st XV, and took these talents to local clubs and eventually national club level. Tragedy struck early and a knee injury left him out for the count. After grieving his lost rugby career, he graduated with a Diploma in Public Sector Management.

His mum, my nanny, was clever as well. She attributes her smarts to reading. She always had books growing up, she was very well read and learned. She not only raised a family of nine children, but she managed to graduate from teachers training college and leave her mark on the sector. I guess you could say it runs in the family. My grandmother knew the importance of success in a Pākehā world through education and dedicated her teaching career to supporting low-income, Māori and Pasifika families with learning difficulties. She always packed 4-5 extra lunches for her workday and took her children's old clothes in to dress the children that didn't come with enough warm clothing. Her heart was big, but her efforts were bigger. She knew the struggles that Māori children faced in Western education and the socioeconomic pressures on their families that were silently passed onto the children, that put them at a disadvantage for learning before the school day had even begun. Her grasp on the English language was strong, and she used that to her advantage; as she knew well the penalties that came with speaking te reo Māori. She raised her children to all be masters of the English language and encouraged them to be successful in a Pākehā world; many of them choosing careers in public services and trades. My aunts and uncles are each proud of the long careers they held and stories they've accumulated over this time to share and reminisce about.

While they lived comfortably in this Pākehā world, my dad never forgot where he came from. Just like Granny Ngā said: Learn the ways of the Pākehā, but never forget where you come from, he is today, as ever, proud to be Māori, serving his iwi and keeping alive the traditions and customs of his culture. Carrying on the work of his father, he stands proud on his marae, a master of the English language and system, and integrating his Māori language and culture, to ensure the system doesn't take from Māoridom anything else. This is something that I too, am proud to be a part of.

Theresa and Terehia

There was a time, long ago, when my sister was trying to enrol in a course. She was at reception, trying to tell the doubting admin person that she was Māori. She had forgotten her birth certificate, but was trying to write down her family tree, to prove how many generations of Māori lineage she could remember. There were many gaps in her tree, and she was making no headway with the receptionist in proving she was, in fact, Māori. The manager had come out of his office to help, but he seemed equally doubtful. My dad, who had been waiting in the car, was no longer patient. He came through the double doors and asked her what was taking so long. The receptionist and manager eyed him up and down, the manager asked my sister "is this your dad?" and when she replied they let out a laugh, and my sister gave a sigh of relief. The manager explained that 'your dad clearly is Māori, don't worry about the paperwork, you're in'. This is something we often joke about in my family: my sister's unusual start to her career, how pale her skin is, and 'thank goodness our dad is black'.

We joke, like many do, because the racism we experience daily makes us uncomfortable. We laugh that when people question our integrity as Māori, we automatically argue that our dad 'is black'. Our only justification for being Māori to doubtful bystanders is that we didn't inherit our dad's skin pigmentation. My time at school was no different, I never felt Māori enough to sit with the Māori girls, and yet strangely, I never felt Pākehā enough to sit with the Pākehā girls either. This story is about my experiences in school being Māori. I thank myself, for growing enough to know that nobody can question my integrity as a Māori. I thank myself, for being secure enough to know, that even when I question it myself, that I will always be able to find my way back to the table that allows me to be Māori in exactly the way I am. It all begins in the quiet spaces of the library.

Sitting in the library with my two friends Terehia and Theresa. Theresa had just told us that the word 'Pākehā' is racist and derogatory towards non-Māori. I disagreed and she stood her ground. It was racist. To avoid a confrontation with one of my best friends, I agreed and left it there. After all, what did I know? I couldn't speak te reo Māori fluently, in fact, nothing about me was typically Māori. I agreed with Theresa quite often, it was easier than trying to defend something I felt I knew little about. Theresa greets me first thing in the morning and replies 'Good-Morning' to my 'Morena'. She ignores my 'Kei te pēhea koe?' and instead asks 'How are you?' I grew so accustomed to this; I didn't always notice it happening.

I wanted badly to be like my friend, Theresa, who was always comfortable. She walks into a room and immediately feels confident. She recognises the symbols on the wall, the language people are speaking and the tools they are using. Theresa can sing the songs that her mum sung to her with ease and always understands the dress code. Theresa is top of the class in almost all her subjects, except Māori class, but she doesn't care because that's not going to get her a job anyway, she tells me. Theresa walks down the street and people don't run or hide their bag from her. Everyone smiles at Theresa and says she is a wonderful girl who will go places.

My other friend, Terehia, is nothing like her. She was quiet, staying the background and out of sight as often as possible. She knew it was better to stand behind Theresa because nobody listened to her anyway. Terehia, was Māori, and knew that this was no advantage in school. It was a new school year, and time to choose subjects again.

Terehia: "I want to take te reo Māori as a subject; then I'll be able to talk to my Poppa in our own secret language?"

Theresa: "I'm going to take that too! Easy credits"

Me: "Can I take Te Reo Māori please Sir?"

Teacher: "I'm really sorry Frances, there's not enough students wanting to take that class and we don't have the staffing to be able to cover one teacher for only one student, anything else you would like to take?"

Theresa: "Bummer! That's okay, let's take PE"

Terehia: "I don't want to take anything else"

Theresa: "We're going to have so much fun; I hear there is a trip to the beach at the end of the year in PE too!"

Terehia: “But I want to take Māori”

Theresa: “and the teacher who takes PE is really young and fun, and it’s on after lunch so it’s like a double lunch time”

Terehia: “But I want to take Māori”

Theresa: “In year 11 we don’t even have to wear a uniform for PE either, we can wear mufti, so we’ll need to go shopping”

Terehia: “But I want to take Māori”

Me: “Yes! Can I take P.E please? - that was my second choice”

We ignored Terehia when she spoke out about wanting to do te reo Māori as a subject. She was used to being ignored, just like that one time she was asked to bless the food at morning teatime. She tried to say her karakia in te reo Māori and she completely messed it up. I knew she had, so did Theresa, but we didn’t say anything. Terehia noticed, she noticed more that nobody else seemed to be paying attention. Afterwards, people came up to her and offered praise for being able to bless a meal in te reo Māori. I know they were trying to be kind, but it only made Terehia feel worse. She had asked to learn te reo Māori as a subject, so she didn’t mess it up again, but nobody paid any attention to her.

As I was getting ready for another day at school, I only had to look in the mirror to know that I was Pākehā, that much had always been obvious to me. I had fair skin and green eyes. I used to think that I needed to look in the mirror and see a Māori too. I imagined an arbitrary checklist of what it took to be Māori; that if I maybe saw it in a mirror, or heard it on my tongue, if I had outside confirmation then it would be so.

It took a very long time to acknowledge that Terehia and Theresa were not two separate identities trying to co-exist. They were me, and I didn’t need to look in a mirror to know that anymore. Theresa is my Pākehā identity and being Theresa, nobody ever questioned my success. Terehia was my Māori identity, unsure, uncertain and often ignored, by myself and by others. Especially ignored at school. They asked non-Māori to perform at school ceremonies because they looked ‘more Māori’ than I did. They wanted me to bless their meals in te reo Māori, knowing well that I didn’t have the skills needed to be able to do so confidently. When I achieved, I was Theresa, but when I didn’t, I was Terehia: They made sure I knew that.

‘Being Māori’, for me, was therefore reliant on a list that I could tick off, just like the census I ticked, but being Māori, I later learnt, cannot be confined to a checklist. There are Māori that like seafood, and Māori that don’t. There are Māori that can speak te reo Māori and those that can’t. There are Māori that have brown skin and Māori who don’t. There are Māori who know their genealogy, and those that don’t. Those that fit into the ‘stereotypes’ and those that don’t. Māori who tick the ‘Māori ethnicity’ box in the census and those who tick ‘other’. There is no defining factor that makes a person a Māori or not; it’s a feeling. A feeling of connectedness, seen and unseen. Feeling connected to the wairua, feeling connected to the whenua, feeling connected to whānau. A feeling that cannot be seen in a mirror. It is obvious then, that it is up to me to choose which table I sit at. I choose to sit at a table that accepts me for who I am, a Māori success.

Chapter Five: Discussion

Being Māori in the 21st century is a complex topic. It can involve bringing the traditions of the past into the future and undergoing a self-conscious process of renegotiation. It is not the first time that Māori have needed to renegotiate their identity. Being Māori has been a constant process of needing to adapt to societal pressures. Post-colonisation, socioeconomic factors and advancing technology are all reasons Māori have needed to or are needing to change. The dilemma is the impact of generational trauma and how effectively this is reflected through current policy texts. *Ka Hikitia*, *Tātaiako* and *Tau Mai te Reo* are insisting on Māori learning within a Māori worldview, without considering that a large proportion of Māori people today have a family history in which generations have lived in a Pākehā world and do not know anything else. Furthermore, the gradual, relentless decline in the number of fluent te reo Māori speakers means that today, many Māori cannot speak te reo Māori. Many Māori families are struggling with multiple other issues, such as health, employment, home ownership, financial security, etc. In the light of these complex realities, it is questionable whether the current focus on academic success can be achieved by Māori education policy alone.

Examination of the narratives presented in previous chapters reveals three major themes: the perpetuation of stereotypes of Māori; the need to be proud to be Māori; and the dilemma of dual or multiple (Māori and non-Māori) heritage. The literature review presented an account of the history of education policy, and its impact on Māori culture; explored how Māori identity is portrayed in education policy; and described the development of Māori culture and identity today. The following sections synthesise the findings of the previous chapters to address the research question by exploring the complex nature of being Māori in the 21st century, and what this means for education and education policy.

Can education policy overcome history or socio-economic inequalities?

The Ministry of Education continues to argue that Māori achievement in education is improving, despite clear evidence showing that Māori are underachieving (Education Review Office, 2010). In comparison to non-Māori, studies indicate Māori are less likely to participate in early childhood education, or to leave secondary school with a formal qualification. Māori are also less likely to enrol in or complete tertiary education qualifications. Yet, statistics are showing that at least 65% of Māori have formal qualifications (Ministry of Education, 2019b).

The Ministry of Education is not wrong in arguing participation rates in education for Māori have increased. The disconnection between what the Ministry of Education is claiming and what is shown by statistics represents the unyielding disparities between Māori and non-Māori, which still exist in all aspects and levels of education. To acknowledge the disparities, education leaders and policy makers need to remember:

When a system produces children, who are not adequately educated they are put at a disadvantage when they try to find work. If they cannot get work that satisfies them, they become unemployed and live on the dole. When they live on the dole, they become disillusioned, discontented and angry. (Waitangi Tribunal, 1999, p. 31)

The system, which was historically designed by Pākehā for Pākehā, is trying to fit a square peg into a round hole. The square peg being Māori learners and the round hole the western paradigm of education. To shrink the disparities in education for Māori, more accurate versions of the history and trauma suffered by Māori need to be taught to all New Zealanders. Healing the trauma from the past needs to be considered in education policy through insisting that correct versions of Māori history are shared in schools. The impact of loss of te reo Māori and other negative historical events need to be taught, not only to Māori, but all New Zealanders. This will help all learners understand the significance of speaking te reo Māori for Māori learners, and help Māori who are disengaged from their culture to find a way to reconnect. This process could help: to ensure that Māori achieve success without further disruption to their language and culture; to reinstall cultural pride; and to allow Māori and non-Māori alike to understand what being Māori means in 2019 and beyond.

Māori potential has always been recognised within education policy, but is grounded in assumptions that schooling will ‘prepare’ Māori children to ‘fit’ within the existing dominant system. Māori medium education has a higher success rate for Māori learners than mainstream education because it offers Māori students something that cannot simply be recreated in mainstream schools. Māori medium education enables schools to provide a Māori-friendly space. This contributes greatly to the level of involvement Māori whānau have in their children’s education (Tākao, Grennell, McKegg, & Wehipeihana, 2010).

The deculturation of Māori has been linked to poorer overall health outcomes. For indigenous people, like Māori, health is viewed holistically, and secure identity can be linked to strong health. There are many variables involved that determine education success, such as health and

employment. Low socioeconomic status may relate to underachievement for Māori for a number of reasons: lack of resources, low income, caregivers' experiences and perception of education – all of these contribute to whether or not a learner will be able to achieve academic success.

On the other hand, not all Māori live in low economic households. Not all Māori are unemployed, and the statistics demonstrate that at least 65% of all Māori have formal qualifications (Ministry of Education, 2019b). Many Māori are healthy and living good lives. Unfortunately, there is still a disproportionately number of Māori living in low socioeconomic households. When learners go to school without any food, and wearing unsuitable clothing, focusing on academic progress is unreasonable (Taras, 2009).

It is still true that being Māori means affiliating to iwi through whakapapa, yet it is not feasible to assume that all Māori know their tribal links. During colonisation of Māori, many Māori were forced to move away from their traditional homes and were strongly encouraged to loosen their ties with their tribal origins. As families set up home in other parts of New Zealand, and later the world, strong links to their marae begun to diminish and many Māori became disconnected to their culture. The children born into these families are at a disadvantage and may have a harder time finding the missing links to their iwi. Some of these children may never have been to their marae and may not even know its location. This loss of cultural connections is a result of the generational trauma that occurred in earlier phases of colonisation.

Can education policy accurately portray Māori identity?

The experiences of Māori in education over the last 60 years have had a detrimental effect on Māori identity. Detrimental in that it caused a vast majority of Māori to disengage from their language and culture. As a result of past experiences, a large proportion of Māori have little knowledge of te reo Māori and tikanga. In the past, knowledge of te reo Māori and tikanga were considered integral cultural indicators for being Māori. While there was once a time when 95% of Māori could converse fluently in te reo Māori, that all changed as a direct consequence of education policy. The Native Schools Act encouraged punishing Māori for speaking te reo Māori, and in the 21st century, it seems Māori are further being punished for not being able to speak it now.

It is education policies like *Ka Hikitia* and *Tātaiako* that make it compulsory for schools to reflect Māori culture, including te reo and tikanga, so therefore they could help Māori and non-

Māori learn about these aspects of Māori culture. The strong emphasis on cultural responsiveness is a double-edged sword. On one hand, teachers are implementing Māori culturally-responsive pedagogy as required by *Ka Hikitia*, according to the guidance given in *Tātaiako*. On the other hand, *Tātaiako* portrays an unrealistic image of Māori culture, one with which non-Māori teachers struggle to make sense. It takes a lifetime to learn another culture, so how much can policy texts such as *Ka Hikitia* and *Tātaiako* possibly help non-Māori teachers understand about ‘being Māori’?

Trying to define Māori identity is difficult and has led to grouping Māori. This grouping process has had some advantages, on a broad spectrum, but preserves the idea that Māori are ‘one identity.’ Making assumptions about Māori who have little knowledge of their cultural heritage and of te reo Māori has created a hierarchy of Māori identity. Those Māori who have a stronger affiliation with their iwi, or more knowledge of Māori language and/or culture, are positioned as being ‘more Māori’ than others. This approach has not been helpful for Māori who struggle with their identity: it encourages cultural alienation. While there is an insistence from education policy to speak and incorporate te reo Māori, to attempt to revive te reo Māori, unfortunately, not all Māori speak te reo Māori or are comfortable using it. With limited funding, resources and available knowledge, not all students, especially Māori students, are able to learn their language, in schools or in their own homes.

‘Succeeding as Māori’ is a phrase used in education policy to express the aim of allowing Māori students to find academic success in education without being obliged to give up their identity. But policies such as *Tātaiako* present only one, stereotypical way of ‘succeeding as Māori.’ This means that Māori students are being asked to fit into an unrealistic form of Māori identity, which bears little similarity to complex and diverse Māori identities. The stereotypical presentation of Māori identity occurs repeatedly throughout *Ka Hikitia*, as if there is only one Māori reality – one way to be, and one way to act. Although its purpose is to support Māori to learn about their identity, language and culture, the limitations are clear. It creates and preserves a double deficit, by assuming that all Māori learners are embedded in their Māori culture, and it creates the illusion that responding in the way prescribed by these policies will benefit all Māori learners. It fails to address the needs of Māori learners who are disconnected from their Māori culture, and trying their best to survive in a postcolonial society (Mahuika, 2011).

Could schools better support Māori identity?

Ranginui Walker (2004) maintains that “Māori, as subjects of cultural invasion and with the marginalisation of their language in the school curriculum, have an inherently radical potential to transform the education system” (p. 344). This has already been demonstrated by success stories from Kōhanga Reo and Māori medium schools. Removing the western paradigm from education could provide new opportunities for Māori to succeed. Māori who go through programmes such as Kōhanga Reo and Kura Kaupapa have significantly better achievement rates than their peers who are enrolled in mainstream schools (Skerrett, 2010).

Māori education was, and still is, a graduated process of learning (Waitangi Tribunal, 1999, p. 4) and if New Zealand is wanting to move towards a future where uncomfortable racism has been eradicated, the best place to begin with is schools. The more Māori and Pākehā who know New Zealand’s history and the history of Māori, the more that New Zealanders will be able mutually respect each other and support each other’s education together.

There is strong evidence that the revitalization of Māori culture and identity is more successful when initiated from within the whānau itself. A lack of cultural identity has been linked to underachievement for Māori in education, and if whānau were to support a revival of culture in their lives, learners will have a better chance in achieving academic success. A process of self-identification needs to take place in order to accomplish this task, and not all Māori are interested in connecting to their tribal links.

Since the Treaty of Waitangi was signed in 1840, government policies have created a ripple effect of problems that sought to disrupt Māori language and culture. Whether or not education policy can amend this disruption is yet to be seen, yet there is no doubt that Māori is a resilient culture, and that Māori will continue to fight for the integrity of their peoples. For Māori who have lived in the Pākehā world for so long, the dilemma arises of how they can succeed in mainstream education without a secure cultural identity. For those with dual or multiple heritage, there is another dilemma: which world do they fit into to find success? It is confusing for young Māori who are disconnected from their culture, but that is not their choice or their doing.

While ‘being Māori’ will continue to evolve, it would seem that thus far, education policy has done little to actually help Māori to succeed ‘as Māori’. Māori medium schools are more

successful in helping Māori within a Māori worldview, but trying to recreate these strategies within English medium schools creates double-deficits and disrupts Māori identity further, replicating the errors of the past. If Māori are to be embedded in their culture and language, this process needs to begin at home, with whānau and self-reflection, not in schools. No amount of education policy is going to help Māori ‘succeed as Māori’, if students don’t want to recognise or acknowledge their cultural heritage, but it can help students to reach their full potential.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

Māori education success remains a priority for the government and is expected to be addressed by the work of the Ministry of Education, whose plans are described in education policy. The aim of this study was to investigate how much education policy can help Māori students to ‘be Māori’ and to ‘succeed as Māori’ in 2019 and beyond.

There are considerable contradictions and complications associated with ‘being Māori’ in 2019. Being Māori can mean many different things, for example, many Māori also share heritage from other cultures, and in any case, not all Māori students are not succeeding. But policy is a mechanism by which the complexities of the real world are rendered into simple form, so therefore, education policy is limited in the extent to which it can capture the complex terrain of Māori identities.

Drawbacks of the current approach to Māori education policy, identified and explored in the previous chapters, include the fact that the current policies are not relevant to Māori students who have been disconnected from Māori culture. By describing Māori identity in terms of ‘language and culture’ that are assumed to equate to the traditional, pre-European language and ways of life, the current policies can perpetuate Pākehā stereotypes of what a ‘real Māori’ is. This in turn can lead to Māori students being in ‘double deficit’ – disadvantaged in relation to the norms of school achievement; and disadvantaged again when they are judged as not having the expected Māori knowledge and skills - such as the ability to lead the school in a pōwhiri, karakia or other tikanga-based roles.

Māori-medium schooling has been shown to be more successful for Māori because Māori people are in charge of the school, the school is a Māori-friendly space, and Māori parents are therefore involved with their children’s education, to a much greater extent than for English-medium schools. Without these levels of involvement, trying to re-create a Māori-friendly space in an English-medium setting is arguably unrealistic, since non-Māori can never ‘know’ what being Māori means. What can happen is that non-Māori teachers are trying to follow the policies to create a version of te ao Māori in their classroom, but the results are a bit like Wonderland, in that they have very little in common with the realities of their Māori students’ lives. For these reasons, education policy can do very little to support Māori students to ‘be Māori’ and to ‘succeed as Māori’ in 2019 and beyond.

The following narrative is an imaginative vision of what education in New Zealand could feel like for a Māori learner. This vision is set in a future where ‘Māori education’ belongs to Māori, created for, and assessed within, te ao Māori in the 21st century. This story imagines Māori living in 2019, reflecting the complex nature of who Māori are now. It is free from any traces of western achievement standards, and instead embraces all Māori as already successful with the potential to be more successful, in their own way. In this future world, Māori are allowed to exist within their own image of Māori, not trapped by tradition, a romantic myth for Pākehā that depicts an untouched culture or attempts to re-write the traumatic colonial history imposed upon Māori. This future world is devoid of western perspectives that both confine and reduce possibilities for Māori people, and understands that being Māori means so much more than feather cloaks and pā living.

Forever Māori

*“Nonsense!” said Alice, very loudly and decidedly,
and the Queen was silent.*

I often think about my adventures in Wonderland and my time through the looking glass. The fantasy world that first greeted me wasn’t one that made me comfortable. Now when I dream, I dream of a different reality. The Cheshire is gone, having disappeared a long time ago.

I stopped justifying my reason to live here because validation exists within the normal. When I walk into classrooms there are images of all the versions I can be. I am a house living, jeans wearing Māori who is successful, by right, without having to pass a test to prove it. I am successful, and I can be more successful if I want to be. If I choose to travel the manual labour/farming/housewife road, then that’s accepted here. At school, I was acknowledged for being Māori and nobody assumed I was once a warrior, who lived in Bro’Town. Instead, they let me share my story, and embrace my lived experiences. If I was a warrior, it was because being a warrior today means I am strong, I am kind, I am brave, I am courageous, I am myself. I don’t need to protest, peacefully or otherwise, because peace exists between Māori and all others. I am not a ‘Māori’ token in this Wonderland, teetering on an achievement scale, instead I am a successful Māori. These words are not separated, they are equal, because I am equal.

I haven’t had to defend my right to be Māori since the cat vanished, for without the cat, nobody thought to question it. We all speak te reo Māori here, in the best way that we can. We speak English too, but only if we want to. There is more than just understanding that exists in this

place, there is acceptance without criticism. We have traditional customs and beliefs being valued everywhere, not just as a tick box of bi-cultural practice, but because everyone benefits from its inclusion. I am Māori in the way in which I am.

I no longer wonder if there is a place for me because the table has been laid intentionally, for me and for all Māori. When I'm in this new alternate reality, I am welcomed back with open arms, a powhiri of mutual respect and belonging, a karanga of those before me and those who will come after me. The education system is no longer a system, but a place in which knowledge is shared, and discovered together. I am not assessed against another, instead learning about what I want to know is more important than only listening to what others know. In this place, we build knowledge together and together we succeed. Literacy and Numeracy are not targets to meet, but skills I embrace that reflect my potential, my interests, my culture, my identity and the pathway I have chosen. Numeracy becomes a language we can all speak, literacy an equation we can all solve. In this world, I am successful, and I can see myself in the looking glass.

Final thoughts

This research was my own journey of self-discovery, an adventure of exploration, of finding new worlds, and greeting the impossible - I am Māori, and I am successful. I am not a statistic of underachievement in a system that only invites Māori to sit at the 'diversity' table. I cannot rewrite my past: I am a product of an 'inclusive education' where Māori were given pretty borders surrounding a white space. I shouldn't need to overcompensate for the failures of a broken education system. It is my biggest hope, that 'being Māori' in 2019 and beyond makes its next move in reaching the far side of the chessboard to transform from pawn to king. When this happens young Māori learners will know there are six, no longer impossible, things we can do before breakfast:

1. There's a story, your birth right, that is yours to tell.
2. You can be what you would seem to be.
3. You can have your reo Māori.
4. 'Under' will disappear from 'achievement'.
5. There is a place called success that we belong in.
6. I can be, I want to be, I will be Māori.

Glossary

NB: Translations are as used in this dissertation.

Māori word/phrase	English translation
Ako	Complex term: to learn, study, instruct, teach, advise
Aroha ki te tangata	A respect for people
Haka	Posture dance with actions and chanting
Hapū	Kinship group, clan, tribe, subtribe
Hokianga	A place in Northland, New Zealand
Iwi	Extended kinship group, tribe, nation, people, nationality
Ka Hikitia	Māori education policy
Kai	Food, meal
Kanohi kitea	The seen face; to present yourself to people face to face
Karakia	Ritual chants, say grace, pray, recite a prayer, chant
Karanga	To call, call out, shout, summon
Kaua e mahaki	Do not flaunt your knowledge
Kaua e takahia te mana o te tangata	Do not trample over the mana of the people
Kaupapa Māori	Māori approach or philosophy
Kei te pēhea koe?	How are you?
Kia tūpato	Be cautious
Koha	Gift, present, offering, donation, contribution
Kōhanga reo	Māori language preschool
Kōrero	To tell, say, speak, read, talk, address
Korowai	Feather cloak
Kura kaupapa Māori	Māori-language immersion schools
Mamae	Ache, pain, injury, wound
Mana	Prestige, authority, control, power, influence, status
Manaaki ki te tangata	Share and host people, be generous
Manaakitanga	Hospitality, generosity, showing respect and care
Manuhiri	Visitor, guest
Māoritanga	Māori culture, practices and beliefs, way of life
Marae	Māori community complex
Mātauranga Māori	Māori knowledge

Morena	Good Morning
Ngāpuhi	Main tribal group of Northland
Ngāti Porou	Tribal group of East Coast
Pākehā	New Zealander of European descent
Papatūānuku	Earth, Earth mother and wife of Ranginui (Sky father)
Pōwhiri	Rituals of encounter, welcome ceremony on a marae
Pūrākau	Myth, ancient legend, story
Ramaroa	Name of place in the Hokianga
Rangatahi	Younger generation, youth
Takakau	Unleavened bread (i.e. made without yeast)
Tangaroa	God of the sea and fish
Tangata whenua	Local people, hosts, indigenous people
Tangata whenuatanga	Knowledge of the whenua or land we come from
Tangi	Shortened form of tangihanga
Tangihanga	Rites for the dead, funeral
Tātaiako	Cultural competencies policy
Tau Mai te Reo	Māori language in education policy
Te ao Māori	The Māori world
Te reo	The language
Te reo Māori	The Māori language
Te Tiriti o Waitangi	The Māori version of the Treaty of Waitangi
Te Whāriki	Early childhood curriculum
Terehia	Māori form of Theresa
Tika	Correct, true, just, fair, accurate, appropriate, proper, valid
Tikanga Māori	Māori customs and protocols
Titiro	To look at, inspect, examine, observe, survey, view
Tūpāpaku	Corpse, the deceased
Tūpuna	Ancestors, grandparents - dialectical variation of tīpuna
Wāhine	Female, woman
Waiata	Song, sing
Waitangi	A place in Northland, New Zealand
Wānanga	Seminar, conference, forum, place of learning
Whakapapa	Genealogy, genealogical table, lineage, descent
Whakarongo	Listen
Whakawhanaungatanga	Process of establishing relationships

Whānau	Family
Whanaungatanga	Relationship through whakapapa or shared experiences
Wharekura kaupapa Māori	Māori immersion secondary school
Whenua	Land

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