

“Pikau: A burden for one’s back...”

Notes from an address to Te Huinga Rangatahi, National Maori University Students Hui
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ABSTRACT

Maori expectations of the Picot Report have not been realised. The provision of increased choice through the structural rearrangement of educational administration has not provided the guaranteed support for Maori language and cultural aspirations that Maori people are seeking. Maori people have sought greater autonomy over meaningful decision-making related to education. Maori people have sought increased power and resources to assume greater control over their own lives as guaranteed under the Treaty of Waitangi. Maori people have lost faith in the continued trend of Pakeha people providing the ‘solution’ because these solutions are moderated by dominant Pakeha interests. The surface appearance of the Picot Report creates an illusion of working in favour of delivering Maori aspirations and needs in relation to language and culture. Unfortunately, a closer examination reveals that the submerged agenda of assimilation sits close beneath the surface - it is clear that we have either not learned from past mistakes or have deliberately chosen to ignore the lessons of past educational policy endeavours.

Background

The Picot Report has failed to address adequately issues related to Maori education. When compared with Pakeha (non-Maori) experiences, most Maori encounters with the New Zealand education system have been disastrous. Evidence of this is to be found in many areas of the overall education system whether in the high statistical profile of Maori pupils within school and classroom underachievement or in the small numbers of Maori students who attend tertiary educational institutions; whether in the lack of Maori pupils in upper streamed classes or in the disproportionate levels of Maori pupil truancy. The crises faced by many Maori pupils within education are also reflected in wider social and economic repercussions: in higher mortality rates, excessive criminal conviction rates, poorer health, greater welfare dependency, higher unemployment and so on.

Many present day difficulties experienced by Maori people within the education system can be attributed to the historical legacy of different policy initiatives. While the packaging of the policies has been altered from time to time, and despite the ‘goodwill’ implicit within these various efforts to interrupt these difficulties, Maori people have continued to fail and be failed by the system. For example, intervention strategies related to social policies of accommodation, assimilation integration (cf Walker, R. 1985; Smith, L. 1986) and more recently multiculturalism (c.f. Cameron, K., 1985; O’Regan, T. 1982; Harker, R. 1986) and biculturalism (Smith, G. 1985) have been attempted

with limited success for Maori people. At a more direct level within the classroom, intervention strategies have ranged from the use of pakeha religion as a medium of instruction (Beaglehole T. and Barrington, J. 1974; Sinclair, K. 1959); physical violence to reinforce the speaking of English language (Awatere, D. 1985; Henare, Sir J. 1986); employing sophisticated theories and practices aimed at rectifying cultural deprivation and, or, skills deficiencies (Ausubel, D. 1961; Forster, J. and Ramsay P. 1969) and more recently initiatives such as taha Maori (Smith, G. 1986). In spite of these good intentions the crises confronting Maori pupils within the education system remain.

It has only been recently that critical analyses of the Maori predicament within education have moved from concentrating on Maori pupils and their associated 'cultural baggage' as being problematic, toward focusing increased attention upon bringing the system and the structures within the system into question. This has resulted in more equitable emphases being given to both culturalist- (determining) explanations as well as to structure - (determined) explanations.

The predisposition of past educational policy makers to view 'education', 'schooling' and 'knowledge' as being inherently good, worthwhile and acting in the best interests of all concerned, has contributed to maintaining the status quo in regard to the continuance of Maori difficulties within education. Recent concern to centralise key questions related to the control of knowledge, e.g.

- What is to count as knowledge?
- How should knowledge be taught?
- Whose interests does this knowledge serve?

have clearly focused on previously 'taken for granted' structures, and as well, upon the functioning of the education system as a whole.

This critical perspective has long been held by many Maori people. Such criticism has been couched within overt acts of collective resistance (Smith, L. 1985; Walker, R. 1984; Smith, G. 1983; Awatere, D. 1985) through to many acts of individual protest. For example, the following song was composed during the 1950s by the famous Ngati Porou songwriter, Tuini Ngawai, from Tokomaru Bay.

TE MATAURANGA O TE PAKEHA
 (The knowledge of the Pakeha)
 HE MEA WHAKATO HEI TINANATANGA
 (Is propagated and nurtured)
 MO WAI RA? MO HATANA?
 (For whose benefit? For Satan's?)
 KIA TUPATO I NGA WHAKAWAI
 (Be careful of its temptations)
 KIA KAHA RA, KIA KAHA RA
 (Be strong, Be steadfast)
 (from Salmond, A. and Stirling, E., 1986)

Two of the most powerful and direct statements of resistance to aspects of the present Pakeha education system are to be seen in the development and continuing success of Te Kohanga Reo (language nurseries) and in the institution which has derived from Kohanga Reo, Kaupapa Maori Schooling (Maori philosophy and principles schooling), both of which have been established outside of the State education system. In the last six years, since the advent of Te Kohanga Reo developments in respect of Maori Education have been significant. Discussion and debate surrounding Maori education and educational policy making have been further highlighted with the advent of impending major reforms within New Zealand education, e.g. *Curriculum Review*, *Report of the Royal Commission on Social Policy*, *Government Review Committee on Te Kohanga Reo: Devolution of Maori Affairs* and of course the Picot Report. Many conferences on Maori education have also been held during the last six years: for example

1984	Maori Educational Development Conference N.Z. Maori Council; Turangawaewae
1984	P.P.T.A. National Education Hui P.P.T.A. Waahi pa
1985	Maori Economic Development Conference Government – Wellington
1985	Pacific Islands Education Forum P.P.T.A. Nga Tapuwae College
1986	N.Z.E.I. National Hui on Maori Education N.Z.E.I. Turangawaewae
1984, '85, '86, '87	National Hui for Te Kohanga Reo.

Added to this climate of prolific activity and interest in Maori education, has been an emerging debate among Pakeha liberal reformers, who are engaged in philosophical and territorial disputes related to the definition and re-definition of key terminology associated with the interrelation of economic and educational policies (Bertram, G. 1986). Thus, a link between education and the economy has become more pronounced, (Treasury Papers 1988) and now forms a major influence on current schooling and educational policy. This is the background scenario to Maori education against which the Picot Report has been developed. Despite current major developments, initiatives and activity in Maori education, the Picot Report fails to respond to the new directions and challenges posed by Maori people.

Preamble: Maori Language and Culture:

The Picot Report will have far reaching repercussions for Maori people, particularly in terms of issues related to language and cultural revival and survival. The Picot Report is an instrument which has the potential to facilitate the subversion of Maori language and cultural interests; it provides a vehicle for promoting the assimilation of Maori language and culture by dominant Pakeha cultural interests.

This detrimental circumstance is brought about in two ways: firstly by perpetuating the status quo situation of Maori within the state education system through maintaining the social and economic disadvantages which beset disproportionate numbers of Maori within the existing system. Secondly the Picot recommendations move beyond the 'neutral' position of 'mere indifference', toward mounting an overt attack upon Maori language and culture.

The narrow scope of this paper precludes the production of all the evidence to substantiate these claims, as such evidence in support of these assertions will relate to three areas: resources; administration and policy; and underlying ideological assumptions. Some general comments about the report need to be made at the outset:

- i. For the most part Maori aspirations and needs are ignored; they are not addressed directly.
- ii. Maori educational needs are projected within the Report as being 'singular' and all the same. The reality is that individual Maori needs and aspirations are quite different. As such a Maori individual may be anywhere along the continuum that at one end sees Maori people satisfied with what is provided within the status quo situation of education, as opposed to the other extreme, where Maori people are opting out of State Education into alternative Kaupapa Maori schools.
- iii. The Picot Report is based on some fundamental misjudgements of Maori needs and aspirations related to language and culture, illustrated in the following quote:

“It is also clear that the revival of Maori language and culture is not seen as an end in itself, but as a key to lifting the educational performance of children.” p. 65.

The fact is that many Maori people do see Maori language and culture as ends in themselves. They see and support the validity and legitimacy of Maori language, culture and knowledge. Implied in the statement is a belief in the cultural superiority of Pakeha forms of knowledge, culture and learning. Maori language and culture are only viewed as being useful to facilitate real/Pakeha learning. The perspective projected here is often referred to as self esteem theory - the use of Maori language and culture to make you ‘feel good’ while real/Pakeha learning takes place, (Smith, G. 1986).

- iv. The quote also shows quite clearly that the Picot taskforce has not learned from the misadventures of previous Maori educational policy making and has ignored totally the loud and clear messages which Maori people have articulated with regular monotony: at various educational Hui, within written submissions, to Curriculum Review, Waitangi Tribunal hearings, Royal Commission on Social Policy; and through the very existence of Kaupapa Maori Schooling.

The Picot Report fails to respond adequately to Maori expectations with regard to supporting Maori language and cultural survival:

- The inhibitive effect of Pakeha administrative structures on language and culture remain.
- Maori people themselves are made responsible for changing school structures to protect language and cultural interests. The State appears very reluctant to negotiate a set policy.
- Te Kohanga Reo experience has shown already the difficulties involved in influencing and changing local schools despite the goodwill of teachers, principals and the community.
- The report effectively supports the marginalisation of Maori Language outside of mainstream education by instigating the ‘opting out’ clause.
- The use of vague definitions in relation to community are confusing. Maori people would also be influence by the cultural notions of rohe, iwi, hapu, whanau. Also, Maori parents who might want to opt out to form a language based Kaupapa School would be organising themselves as a community of ‘interest’.
- every school effectively becomes a site of struggle where language and culture is to be contested. In effect, each school will now be holding a referendum on what is to count as Maori programming for language and culture.
- What are the consequences of the contradictory statements being made by the Minister of Education, who on the one hand has stated that the Picot proposals allow more ‘choice’ and greater opportunities for minority interest groups to realise their aspirations and on the other hand, has also stated that Boards of Trustees will not be hijacked by minority interest groups?

I now move to consider the implications of the Picot Report for Maori language and cultural aspirations in more detail, remembering that this analysis is confined to examining three areas: resource availability, administrative structures and policy, and some ideological considerations.

Resource Availability

The implication within the Picot Report suggesting that every school will respond to local cultural and language needs is flawed. At the present time there is an acute lack of personnel and material resources; there are not enough resources to cater for present demands. Competition for the existing meagre resources also occurs at present. Taha Maori programmes which are mostly concerned with meeting the needs of Pakeha pupils (developing biculturalism in Pakeha pupils) can

be shown to appropriate Maori resources away from Maori needs and aspirations in relation to language and culture. Competition for resources will be accentuated under Picot.

Maori needs would be better served through the consolidation of resources into particular schools to meet Maori needs as a priority concern, and to provide these resources in a manner which will develop programme depth. The spreading of resources too thinly across all schools will be setting in place programmes that are ineffective and are bound to fail. It is at this point that the Picot proposals become antagonistic to Maori language and culture.

Administrative Structures, and Policy:

Many of the inhibiting features of past policy initiatives have been replicated in the Picot Report. It seems necessary to restate these areas of discontent voiced with increasing frequency and volume by Maori people at Maori Education Hui; Education Courses: written submissions to various Government Departmental Review Committees, Commissions, Taskforces; Waitangi Tribunal Hearings, findings, articles; on Marae and in everyday conversations. The Picot Taskforce summarily dismiss the majority of these concerns (ref. p. 66 - 7.2.5) and proceeds to replicate many of these past errors, which, despite the 'good intentions' by which they were conceived and delivered, have acted detrimentally to the interests of Maori people.

1. The most consistent feature of previous policy endeavours has been the inconsistency of the policies. An important point is that there is no accountability for educational administrators when things go wrong some time in the future, despite the fact that their decisions may have a disastrous effect on a language or a culture.
2. Maori difficulties continue within all areas of education despite the good intentions embodied within policy intervention measures.
3. Policy strategies have nearly always been developed, organised, implemented or sanctioned by members from within the dominant Pakeha population or by 'co-opted' Maori people serving the interests of dominant groups.
4. Many of the policy initiatives have been based on research and theory developed outside of New Zealand.
5. Very little cognisance has been taken of the special status of tangata whenua or of the obligations implicit within the Treaty of Waitangi related to the preservation and maintenance of the language as taonga.
6. A consistent failure to acknowledge 'power' differentials related to subordinate and dominant group inter-relationships; as such, these policies have usually contained 'noble' notions related to equality democracy and fairness to all: processes of equivocation which moderate the needs of minority groups resulting in the maintaining of power inequalities: the preservation of Pakeha dominance and Maori subordination.
7. Policies have often been premised upon theories that are translated into victim-claiming scenarios; e.g. deprivation theories; deficit theories; self-esteem theories.
8. Policies which have been developed ostensibly to take account of the Maori perspective are often modified by dominant group mechanisms. For example:
 - a. through the use of marginalising rhetoric e.g. radical, activist, separatist, elitist, etc.
 - b. through misappropriation of meagre Maori resources to serve the needs of dominant Pakeha interests (as a priority concern over Maori needs and aspirations, e.g. Taha Maori through redeployment rather than creating more resources to meet the demand.

- c. through the creation of depositing mythologies to subvert minority Maori interests, e.g. Maori language is of no use, it won't get you a job.
 - d. through discriminatory and racist activity on the part of some administrators of educational policy, e.g. gatekeeping.
9. Policies have generally adopted a dominant monocultural perspective as to what should count as valid knowledge and as to how such knowledge should be taught and evaluated.
 10. Almost complete credence has been ascribed by policy makers to the liberal view that education is an equalising force. Little consideration has been taken of the critical notion of education as a domesticating force.
 11. Generally, policy initiatives have been additive in that they have usually been quickly conceptualised and hurriedly implemented either to quieten Maori protest, 'patch up' some area of dysfunction, or thwart some 'dangerous' Maori initiative. Such policies typically require no fundamental change to educational structures but are often more concerned with facilitating the victims fitting the 'mould' prescribed for them by dominant interest groups.

In summary, the administrative structures suggested by Picot will militate against the language and cultural interests of Maori people through

- i. pepper potting Maori educational administrators throughout different levels of the hierarchy, thus rendering them less effective because they are vulnerable to dominant group controlling techniques, e.g. co-option, marginalisation, etc.
- ii. Pakeha people continuing to have the major say in respect of Maori language and cultural decision-making. History has shown that this situation is antagonistic to Maori language and cultural aspirations.
- iii. the problem of whether or not the suggested structures will adequately serve Maori people, so that they are fairly represented on Boards of Trustees and are able to influence sufficiently, the design of school charters to meet their needs.

Ideological Considerations:

There are several underlying assumptions contained within the Picot Report which are potentially damaging toward Maori language and Culture. The most significant point concerning these ideologies is that they all embody the dominant Pakeha perspective and thereby primarily serve and protect Pakeha interests.

Another major assumption is that the structural changes that are proposed will allow everybody to have greater opportunities to realise their respective needs and aspirations. However, other variables which have to be considered and which may act against minority interest groups are numerical disadvantage (the majority of teachers, principals and administrators are Pakeha), socioeconomic factors and so on. These factors have worked against Maori aspirations related to language and culture in the past, and in fact represent the present Maori experience.

Other ideological assumptions entrenched within the Picot Report are false notions of fairness, equality, equity. Processes of equivocation serve to moderate minority Maori interests and aspirations through a concern to be fair to 'all'. As a consequence Maori needs and aspirations are subsumed within the concern to be 'fair' to everyone.

Under the Picot proposals everyone is assumed to start on an equal footing; the fact that Maori disadvantage suffered within the State system over the last one hundred and fifty years is ignored. Maori people do not start on an equal footing with Pakeha people, contrary to the views implicit within the Picot Report.

Conclusion

Maori expectations of the Picot Report have not been realised. The provision of increased choice through the structural rearrangement of educational administration has not provided the guaranteed support for Maori language and cultural aspirations that Maori people are seeking. Maori people have sought greater autonomy over meaningful decision-making related to education. Maori people have sought increased power and resources to assume greater control over their own lives as guaranteed under the Treaty of Waitangi. Maori people have lost faith in the continued trend of Pakeha people providing the 'solution' because these solutions are moderated by dominant Pakeha interests. The surface appearance of the Picot Report creates an illusion of working in favour of delivering Maori aspirations and needs in relation to language and culture. Unfortunately, a closer examination reveals that the submerged agenda of assimilation sits close beneath the surface - it is clear that we have either not learned from past mistakes or have deliberately chosen to ignore the lessons of past educational policy endeavours. I leave the last word to our tupuna who may have described the Report thus:

"He pounamu kakano rua!"

(A double grained piece of greenstone)

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