

CHAPTER SEVEN

PARENTS AS FIRST TEACHERS:

THREE INGREDIENTS

THE FAMILY BACKGROUND

A major focus of the PAFT programme is that of "addressing the family background". The National Party mini-manifesto (1990) notes

"National will be carefully testing and developing this programme which has the potential to break families out of the cycle of failure that now condemns many to underachievement and dependence on the welfare state."
(National Party, 1990)

Intrinsic to this objective is an interventionist attitude based on a deficit view toward what is perceived as educational achievement and what type of family background is to be credited as valid. In this analysis underachievement has its roots in a belief that the home background is deficient and therefore unable to provide the appropriate knowledge and skills required for success in the school system.

Historically Maori people have experienced high levels of underachievement in the education system of this country. The

establishment of Missionary schools, under the umbrella of the Church Missionary Society (CMS), had the express objective of "civilising" Maori people in order to facilitate a process of christianity (Binney 1968). 'Benefits' of Pakeha society were introduced that would aid in the process of "civilising the natives" and thereby, in the eyes of the CMS, would ensure the acceptance of christianity. The introduction of a Pakeha schooling system stemmed from this philosophy and as one of the perceived 'benefits' provided a systematic means for dispersing selected forms of knowledge and skills required for the desired effect of christianising Maori people (ibid).

The 1847 Education Ordinance and 1867 Native Schools Act moved control over the education of Maori children from the hands of the Missionaries to the Settler government. The 1847 Education Ordinance provided a means of economic support for Missionary schools, this proved a more expedient option for Governor Grey than the establishment of a completely new system (Barrington & Beaglehole, 1974). Access to monetary support was however dependent upon the fulfilment of criteria as outlined within the ordinance, of particular interest here was the requirement that schools be boarding rather than day schools (Simon 1990). Governor Grey had specific goals in his advancement of such an objective, particularly the removing of Maori children from the "demoralising influence of Maori villages" in order to hasten their assimilation to "the habits of the european" (Barrington 1970).

The 1867 Native Schools Act presented the settler government with the necessary legislation for the establishment of a National system of primary schooling for Maori children. Parliamentary debates surrounding the Native Schools Act highlighted the education system was clearly perceived as a means by which to further agendas of assimilation of Maori people and social control.

From these beginnings the Pakeha education system has evolved and refined its methods and pedagogy related to assimilation policies as may be seen with the introduction of the concept of "Integration" as espoused in the 1960 Hunn Report (Simon & Smith 1990). The Hunn report expressed a desire to

"combine (not fuse) the Maori and pakeha elements to form one nation wherein Maori culture remains distinct...Integration, as stated, implies some continuation of Maori culture. Much of it, though, has already departed and only the fittest elements (worthiest of preservation) have survived the onset of civilisation."

(Hunn, J.K., 1960:15)

Throughout the Hunn report the assumption remains that it is Maori people that must 'change' to ensure "their adjustment to modern life", this process of change was to be achieved through the "elimination" of those Maori people whom maintain "minority complacency living a backward life in primitive conditions" by "raising" them to a position whereby they are "pretty much at home in either society, who like to partake in both". From this "raised" (i.e. Integrated) position Maori people may then "[choose] whether they remain 'integrated' or become 'assimilated'" (ibid.:17). Within this three tiered process 'Integration' is but an intermediary step toward the ultimate

goal of assimilation with the primary issue being one of the speed at which this process will occur (Simon 1986, Marshall 1991). Elements of Maori culture that are determined "worthy" of preservation are defined in a Darwinian paradigm of the 'survival of the fittest', those that are not are deemed as expendable, accordingly only select aspects of Maori knowledge are perceived as valuable in the facilitation of the assimilatory process.

The development of the 'Taha Maori' component in the School curriculum in the 1980s further exemplified a focus on the need to change Maori people in order to aid their success within the system. Graham Smith (1986) contends 'Taha Maori' is an

"instrument which at one level of influence is perpetuating the status quo within New Zealand schools and thereby maintaining the position of Pakeha dominance in relation to the control of education. A further consideration is that at another level of influence Taha Maori may not be concerned with merely maintaining the status quo position of Pakeha dominance, but in fact be actively promoting the acculturation of Maori culture."
(Smith, G.H., 1986:1)

'Taha Maori', according to Smith (1986), is based fundamentally in what can be termed a 'Self-esteem' model as illustrated in the following diagram.

Diagram Two: Self Esteem Theory

Taha Maori meets the needs of **all** pupils including the culturally different



recognising, valuing, catering for
and practicing cultural difference



leading to:

Positive Identity
Cultural Reinforcement
Self-esteem



which creates

A comfortable environment where
LEARNING is more likely to occur

Source: Smith, G.H., 1990

'Taha Maori' was therefore promoted by the Department of Education as a medium through which to raise the self-esteem of Maori children so that they are able to achieve more fully within the existing system. This model focused on Maori children and an attempt to change their attitudes, again an expression of 'deficit' theories that seek a micro change at the level of the child and neglects any analysis of the schooling system or questions of how and whose knowledge is constructed within the education system. Maori knowledge in the form of 'Taha Maori' is selected with the intent of preparing Maori children for learning the "real", i.e. Pakeha defined and controlled, knowledge (Smith G.H. 1986).

Processes of educational change concerning Maori children has focused predominantly within a 'victim-blaming' scenario. Maori children, Maori people have been viewed as being deficient and Maori underachievement defined in terms of Maori children lacking appropriate skills and knowledge. PAFT clearly maintains such an emphasis with a prime objective being one of changing the Maori parents, which is envisaged will provide a domino-type effect, leading ultimately to changing the Maori child to an extent to which they will achieve more successfully within the structure of the present education system.

The knowledge required by Maori parents has been developed by knowledge managers consistent with dominant group cultural definitions. The material available derives, on the whole, from Missouri and at no point provides any inclusion of Maori

perspectives on parenting, childrearing or education generally. Maori parents and families will be 'educated' and evaluated in terms of what the dominant group prescribes as appropriate practices and knowledge. Furthermore what constitutes a 'family' is couched within Pakeha definitions which assumes a particular type of family structure exists and which is viewed unproblematically.

THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE FAMILY WITHIN PAFT

Promotional material surrounding PAFT, training materials and speeches delivered by Dr Lockwood Smith all identify the programme participants as families with first born children from birth to three years. The concept of the 'family' is shown visually as a two parent, heterosexual, nuclear family unit, and as such the use of the term 'family' within the programme has on the whole become synonymous with these constructions. At no point in the material is there any deviation from these constructions and therefore they remain positioned as the 'normal' or 'natural' family unit. The nuclear family is actively promoted both overtly, through images, and covertly through the invisibilising of any family forms that are construed as being different from that which is the 'norm'. The promotion of the nuclear family in such a way thereby invisibilises the complex family structures within which Maori people are located within contemporary society.

For Maori people the nuclear family experience is far from the

'norm'. An analysis of the 1981 census by Horsfield and Evans (1988) revealed that only 45.5% of Maori households consisted of one family only, the remaining 54.5% are located within a range of household types, as is illustrated within the following table.

Table 1: The Percentage distribution of Maori and non-Maori Households by household type, 1981		
HOUSEHOLD TYPE	MAORI HOUSEHOLDS	NON-MAORI HOUSEHOLDS
One family only (Complete)	45.5	56.0
One family only (Incomplete)	15.7	10.2
One family plus others	18.2	7.2
Two families	3.7	1.1
Two families with other persons	2.2	0.3
Total family households	85.3	74.8
Non-family	5.8	6.1
One person	8.9	19.0
Total all households	100.0	100.0

1 A Maori household is any household in which the occupier of the household is of half or more Maori origin. The remaining households are defined as non-Maori.

In summarising the above table Horsfield and Evans note,

"The census definition of family is a narrow one. A census family comprises a husband and wife with or without unmarried children who are living at home. Maori households at this census were less likely than non-Maori households to be one-person, non-family, or two parent nuclear family households. They were more likely than non-Maori households to be one-family sole

parent households. They were also more likely to include additional family members alongside the nuclear family or to comprise more than one family." (Horsfield, A. & Evans, M., 1988:25-26)

The dominant group construction of what constitutes a 'family' fails to accommodate the varied ways in which Maori people have located themselves within a whanau structure. The term whanau is used within PAFT, however it is on the whole juxtaposed to the term family and is employed within a limited definition constructed by the dominant group.

The concept of whanau does not equate to the nuclear family concept used within PAFT. Whanau may be generally interpreted as 'extended family' consisting of up to three or four generations and was the basic social unit "under the direction of kaumatua and kuia" (Henare 1988). Whanau structures provide for a system of accountability and responsibility. It is a structure through which Maori societal and cultural norms may be reinforced and acts as a resource through which to obtain support, knowledge of the world and to receive necessary values and belief systems essential to both the individual and the society.

Historically the whanau is the first point of learning for the Maori child. Kuia and kaumatua provided the initial introduction to a wealth of knowledge and the skills that pertained to their development, it was they who took responsibility for the education of their mokopuna. Children received knowledge at a pace suited to their needs and as required to maintain their positioning within the whanau (Pere 1986). Until relatively

recent time in our history Maori children were collectively nurtured, raised and educated in this manner. This ensured the child had access to a range of adults and siblings whom all contributed to their accumulation of knowledge, language, values, and belief systems essential to the maintenance and continuance of Maori societal structures (ibid.).

A further problematic in the nuclear family structure is the positioning of Maori women, in particular the gender division of labour. Within the nuclear family women are positioned as the nurturer, primary caregiver, housekeeper and whose work is on the whole considered to be in the private sphere of the home. Domestic labour is defined as being of inferior status to wage labour on the basis of the lack of profit generated, the locating of women in the domestic labour force thereby places women within what is considered an inferior position. Such a positioning may be seen also within the public sphere of capitalist production.

Horsfield and Evans (1988) research provides statistical analysis of the situation of Maori women economically. It was found that in the area of paid work Maori women are found predominantly in the community services and manufacturing. Therefore, within wage labour Maori women are concentrated in areas that are in service to others, or that are viewed as unskilled and are, as a consequence, lowly paid. Clearly Maori women are exploited in terms of both their wage labour and their domestic labour, between which a "fundamental structural separation" exists (Davis

1981). These spheres can not, however, be seen as entirely autonomous of each other, rather each sphere is reliant on the other for its maintenance and definition (Cook 1985).

Domestic labour is essential in order to achieve reproduction of the labour force, therefore within capitalist ideology it is necessary to characterise womens position as 'home makers/housewives' as being a natural and just order, which in turn justifies " a natural sexual division of labour in which women produced children and men produced the means of production" (Bedggood, D.,1980:87).

The location of Maori women within such divisions of labour are even more complex. Maori women can not be located solely within gender power relations. The positioning of Maori women within society is one that requires race, gender and class considerations (Awatere 1980). Since colonisation Maori women have experienced a process of marginalisation, with definitions of Maori women being, in most instances, constituted through the voice of the coloniser. Maori women have been positioned in dominant Pakeha society as being 'other' than the norm, as Linda Tuhiwai Smith writes

"Maori women belong to the group of women who have been historically constructed as 'Other' by white patriarchies and white feminisms. As women, we have been defined in terms of our differences to to our colonisers. As both, we have been defined by our differences to Maori men, Pakeha men and Pakeha women. The socio-economic class in which most Maori women are located makes the category of 'Other' an even more complex problematic."
(Smith, L.T.,1992:33)

The positioning of Maori women as other has involved the subsuming of Maori women within dominant ideologies concerning gender roles. Colonial ideologies surrounding the role of women in society were used as a means by which to silence or marginalise Maori women. Missionaries and colonial representatives frequently disregarded the position of Maori women as rangatira in their whanau, hapu or iwi, based upon their eurocentric and androcentric beliefs. Ensuring Maori women knew their 'natural' place within a nuclear family model became an integral part of the civilising agenda.

The imposition of the nuclear family unit has operated to undermine Maori structures and consequently weaken traditional educational systems that were dependent on the whanau concept. As a unit the nuclear family isolates Maori families from each other and from the nurturing, knowledge and support provided within those structures. Another consequence of the nuclear family is increased mobility which in instances such as the rural-urban shift distances Maori people from their support systems and for many results in a loss of identity and sense of turangawaewae for following generations (Awatere 1984).

The effect of colonisation on Maori structures varied considerably throughout the country and the continued existence of Whanau, Hapu and Iwi is an indication of the strength of Maori resistance to colonial imperialism and Pakeha attempts to eradicate what they believed to be a system of 'beastly

communism'. However, when successful, the undermining of the whanau and its replacement with a nuclear family model furthered the assimilation agenda. Fragmentation of Maori institutions served Pakeha interests by producing "tension through a breakdown in cultural practices" (ibid.), including the access of Maori children to vital sources of Maori knowledge and language.

HOME VISITS

Essential to the implementation of PAFT is the 'Home Visit'. The concept of Home visits was one employed within the Missouri project and is one that will be utilised within PAFT. Parent educators will visit homes and provide education for Maori parents within the home environment. The role of the Parent educator is described by Dr Smith as

"the one doing the more of the watching and helping support the parents interacting with their children because what we're trying to build is the parents confidence and knowledge of how to support the development of their child. Parent educators in PAFT don't teach the children, that's not the idea at all, they support the parents, build the parents confidence in how to interact with the child better, how to make better use of their time with the child."
(Smith, Lockwood. 1992:4)

The introduction of Parent educators into Maori homes echoes the 'trojan horse' method employed in the establishment of Native schools in Maori communities. To promote assimilation Native schools

"were placed in the heart of Maori communities like trojan horses. Their task was to destroy the less visible aspects of Maori life: beliefs, value systems,

and the spiritual bonds that connected people to each other and to their environment."
(Smith, L.T.,1986:2)

The Native schools represented 'Pakehatanga' and the 'Headmaster' and teachers role models for exhibiting 'good' Pakeha habits and lifestyles (ibid.).

Of the four pilot areas: Gisborne, Whangarei, South Auckland and Dunedin, three have populations that consist of high proportions of Maori people. It is envisaged that the eight Pakeha Parent educators will enter Maori homes and show Maori people how to "interact with the child better" (Smith Lockwood 1992). They will provide the 'expert' advice for Maori people to become 'good' parents, continuing the 'deficit' philosophies inherent in the early educational policies surrounding the Native schools.

Research by Margery Renwick (1985), "Introducing Parents to Kindergarten" identified aspects of Home visits that are problematic for Maori people. In her research Kindergarten teachers associated with Home visiting noted that such visits placed pressure on parents, with many families feeling uncomfortable about being visited at home. Renwick notes that of all Home visits initiated only 4% were parent initiated, the remaining 96% were either teacher initiated or arranged in joint discussion. The hesitance of parents to initiate Home visits raises questions about the comfortability of parents of having 'experts' enter into their homes. Furthermore, her research shows clearly that for many Maori parents the experience of the Home visit is not a positive one, rather they are stressful,

uncomfortable, promote feelings of inadequacy in terms of their homes and food, and at times insensitivity on the part of the 'expert' further exacerbates the situation.

According to Dr Smith (1992) "cultural aspects of the Maori family life...[must be] properly addressed and respected" this is he states to be accommodated through the Plunket Society's employing of Maori "facilitators" whom will ensure that, firstly, no Parent educators make "cultural errors" and, secondly, that Parents educators "understand cultural circumstances and understandings" so as not to unintentionally offend Maori people. The Maori facilitators are given the role of 'cultural go-betweens', with an implicit objective being that they ensure the smooth transmission of knowledge between Parent educators and Maori people.

A parallel may be drawn between the position of Maori people as facilitators and the experiences of African-American people, in America, as "aides" in the Head Start programmes. Jacquelyn Mitchell, an African-American woman teacher in Head Start, notes

"Each of the ten classrooms of fifteen children in the prekindergarten/daycare program was taught by a teacher certified in early childhood education. I was the only black teacher. Each class was also staffed with a white teaching assistant who had at least fifteen units of a college credit. Aides with High school diplomas worked in those classrooms which included the very youngest children and children who attended a full day. All the aides were black. Presumably, their presence was to give the school its ethnic flavour - the programs attempt to assimilate the values of the community into the child."
(Mitchell, J., 1982:30)

As a African-American woman working within the Head Start programmes Mitchell identified both her own position as a teacher and those of the aides as being a part of an assimilatory process. That by having a 'black' experts and workers in the programme the monocultural frameworks of Head Start would be more effectively transferred to the black community.

Similarly the position of Maori people as facilitators within PAFT carries a covert assimilatory message. Like the self-esteem model described by Graham Smith in relation to 'Taha Maori' the objective of Maori facilitation is to guard against 'insensitivities' on the part of the 'experts' to promote a comfortable situation to ensure Maori people assimilate the knowledge provided by the Parent educators, which will contribute to the implicit objective of social control.

PAFT AS A FORM OF SOCIAL CONTROL

Education as a vehicle for social control is not new to Aotearoa. Early colonial education policies were directly related to issues of social control and land acquisition. Outlining Maori schooling processes Judith Simon (1992) asserts that a primary concern of assimilation policy was one of establishing British law, the means by which to secure power for the Settler government. Simon (1992) cites the writings of school inspector Hugh Carleton (1862) which states that schooling for Maori was aimed at a "double object, the civilization of the race and the quieting of the country" (Simon, J., 1992, :6).

An underlying aspect of PAFT is an implicit objective of social control. Although voiced as a non-targeted programme PAFT is focused primarily at Maori and Pacific Island families, this is implied within both the visual presentation of the programme and the selection of three pilot areas with high Maori or Pacific Island populations. The programme is aimed at increasing educational achievement of Maori and Pacific Island children, in particular. It is envisaged that increased achievement levels will reduce "dependence on the welfare state" (National Party 1990) and crime statistics.

The perceived relationship between parenting skills and crime has been articulated explicitly by Minister of Police, John Banks.

"Parents as First Teachers will aid in decreasing crime and jail usage. Parents must take responsibility for what their children do and teach them the appropriate attitudes towards right and wrong."
(Banks, J., National Radio, 1992)

Statements such as this outline a direct relationship between compensatory programmes such as PAFT and the belief in education as a means by which to promote desired value systems that are seen to contribute to social control within this country. The underlying assumption remains that the systems of social control as have been established by the dominant Pakeha group must be assimilated by all, the systems are assumed appropriate and the emphasis for change is placed upon the individual, in this case as parents. A second assumption exists in the assumed need to instigate policies that remain focused within an assimilatory mode, which infers that Maori parents require further change.

The deficit paradigm within which PAFT is located focuses on the assumptions that the dominant group definitions of what constitutes 'good' parenting provides the basis for a society that is constructed within a Pakeha epistemological view. The implementation of PAFT echoes earlier assimilation policy agendas that were a part of the colonial oppression of Maori people. Pakeha knowledge is promoted throughout the programme as the means by which to improve ones parenting skills, there is no inclusion or acknowledgement of Maori knowledge, of Te Reo Maori or Tikanga Maori, what is envisaged is the imposition of Pakeha knowledge forms and the displacement of Maori knowledge, definitions and constructions of whanau.

The promotion of PAFT as a programme that will improve the life chances of Maori children is expressed through a paternalistic mode that merely serves to conceal the social control element of the programme, which ultimately acts to further marginalise Maori people and perpetuate an agenda that promotes the assimilation of Maori people as the means by which to achieve within the existing mainstream education system.

LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

In 1990 Dr Smith presented a speech to the Second New Zealand conference on Research into Educational policy. Dr Smith highlighted statistics which he contended established the falling

rate of literacy and numeracy in this country. New Zealanders were becoming increasingly illiterate and Reading recovery, according to Dr Smith, was developed to address these problems but was not reaching enough children. Furthermore, he reported 95% of the 6 year olds experiencing reading problems "had regularly attended early childhood education in this country" (ibid).

Drawing on the research of Burton White and Dr Phil Silva (Otago University), Dr Smith surmised that language development from birth to 3 years played a major role in the learning patterns of a child, what was required was a policy, which in his words

"had to focus on the first three years of a child's life and it had to address the factors that predisposed language delay. Quite clearly, that meant identifying and remedying sensory defects, such as Otitis media with effusion, and also addressing the family background."
(Smith Lockwood, 1990:8)

The issues surrounding Otitis media, also known as Glue Ear, are complex and require discussion which is beyond the scope of this thesis. The effect of health problems such as Glue Ear clearly create problematic situations for children and as Maori children feature significantly in the incidence of Glue Ear it must be acknowledged as a concern and one that must be attended to. However, Dr Smith's contention that a programme such as PAFT will miraculously 'cure' this situation is both superficial and inadequate. In his analysis the health professional will successfully cure Maori children of Glue Ear, who will then move on to "succeed" in the education system.

This type of analysis is overly simplistic in that the problem of Glue Ear is situated within a plethora of economic and political issues pertaining to the present health system and societal structures as a whole. Pomare and deBoer (1988) note that low economic status, the process of urbanisation, changes in diet, and cultural alienation all play a role in the high incidence of illnesses within the Maori population, including that of Glue Ear. In incorporating structural considerations they call into question the relationship of existing health services to the obligations of the Treaty of Waitangi

"Implicit within the Treaty were concepts of Equity, Partnership and economic and cultural security, all of which contributed importantly to Hauora (spirit of life/health). Poor standards of Maori health may therefore be regarded as non-fulfilment of those Treaty obligations."
(Pomare & deBoer 1988:21)

Clearly the issues pertaining to Glue Ear are situated in a much more complex set of circumstances than can be 'cured' by one educational intervention programme.

A second aspect identified as having a major effect on language development is family 'disadvantage'. The emphasis given by Dr Smith to the family environment is highlighted in his use of the following quote by Edward Zigler

"My own reading of Head Start experiments is that we must change and entire family system so that it is a better background for the development of the child."
(Zigler cited in Smith Lockwood, 1990:8)

The environment of the 'disadvantaged' family requires major change in order to provide the 'correct' environment for "well

developed language skills" (PAFT Pamphlet 1992) to emerge.

Lindfors (1987) notes that analysis such as that provided by Dr Smith is based upon an underlying assumption that there exists a 'standard' english, and that which is defined as 'standard' english is considered the 'norm', the 'right' language form and any deviation from that form is of inferior status. She notes that such perceptions of language and language development are concerned with a "pathology" attitude to education, where the job of the educator is to define what is wrong with the children (diagnosing illness) and then to "eradicate" it (prescribing and treating). The "diagnosis" identifies those areas the teacher nominates as "problems", i.e. those that differ from societal expectations, and the treatment seeks to replace those 'problem behaviours' with those in line with the teachers way of being (Lindfors 1987). The "treatment" came in the form of compensatory programmes designed to 'correct' these 'problems' or 'deficiencies'.

Within Aotearoa discrepancies between achievement levels of Maori children and their pakeha peers brought about a deluge of theoretical explanations located within an environmental framework. Language programmes were developed by the Department of Education that emphasised the inadequacies of Maori childrens' language development.

"The English some Maori children speak away from school is likely to be a more restricted form of English than is met at school. Added to this, certain grammatical features may be transferred from the Maori language. In some cases this language may have shown itself to be satisfying and adequate for the needs of the home

and local community life but it is different from the forms of English usage that are taken by the schools as their standard."

(Department of Education cited in Smith, L.T.,1986:3)

Maori children are, again, perceived as requiring improvement. The 'standard' English usage of the schools is endorsed as the 'norm', with the English used by Maori children constructed as 'restricted' and 'different', that is an inferior form, with Te Reo Maori construed as a hinderance to the development of 'correct' english forms. The construction of Te Reo Maori in such a way may be viewed as a continuation of the colonial oppression of the indigenous language of this land.

THE POSITION OF TE REO MAORI WITHIN PAFT

For the Missionaries and early settlers a degree of fluency in Te Reo Maori was necessary in their contacts with Maori people. Te Reo Maori was a basic requirement for survival, it was also a vehicle through which to 'spread the word' of christianity. For the Missionaries learning the language provided a communication link into the day to day living of Maori people on both a spiritual and intellectual level and the later committing of Te Reo Maori to paper served further as a means of "infiltrating" Maori society (Smith L.T. 1989). Within the Missionary schools Te Reo Maori was the medium of instruction and communication, utilised by the Missionaries as a means by which to ensure their own needs and objectives were met, and was under little threat within the early colonial era (ibid.).

The 1847 Education Ordinance saw the first introduction of secular interests in the schooling of Maori people, which brought with it the first of a series of shifts in colonial attitudes towards Te Reo Maori. Included within the Ordinance was a requirement for instruction in the English language. This requirement went hand in hand with Greys objective of "speedily assimilating the Maori" (Barrington 1979) and saw the beginnings of a systematic stream of legislation that undermined the positioning of Te Reo Maori.

The 1867 Native School Act further entrenched the ideological attack on Te Reo Maori through the imposition of the following principle.

"21. No schools shall receive any grant unless it is shown to be to the satisfaction of the Colonial secretary by the report of the inspector or otherwise as the Colonial secretary shall think fit that the English language and the ordinary subjects of primary English education are taught by a competent teacher and the instruction is carried on in English language as far as practicable."
(Statutes of New Zealand, 1867:467-71)

Section 21 shifted the focus from one of instruction in English to English becoming the mode of instruction. The colonial positioning of Te Reo Maori at the time was articulated within the Parliamentary debates surrounding the Native Schools Act and is clearly illustrated in the following statement by Carleton

"They could never civilise them through the medium of a language [Maori] that was imperfect as a medium of thought. If they attempted it, failure was inevitable; and civilisation could only eventually be carried out by a means of a perfect language [English]."
(N.Z. Parliamentary Debates, 1867)

English was promoted as the 'superior' medium of communication as part of an ethos that was integral to an assimilationist policy (Walker 1987). With English being established as the language of instruction this confirmed its superior status and with it the values, social, cultural and moral belief systems that it carried (Spoonley 1988).

According to Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1989) these legislative moves led to Te Reo Maori being marginalised to an extent that it became a feature of the 'private' domain of Maori homes and the speaking of Te Reo Maori in the 'public' domain of Pakeha schooling became for many Maori children a punishable act. Physical punishment became a way of removing "the debilitating influence of Maori language". The survival of Te Reo Maori till the present day represents a form of resistance on the part of many Maori people who utilised Maori institutions, in particular the Marae, as vehicles through which to retain the use and transmission of Te Reo Maori (ibid.).

In regard to Te Reo Maori, PAFT may be viewed as a contemporary expression of colonial attitudes. Dr Lockwood Smith (1992) states that the language development emphasis in PAFT may include Te Reo Maori, however there is no evidence that Te Reo Maori will in fact be given any status whatsoever in the PAFT programme. There is no mention of Te Reo Maori within any of the papers delivered by Dr Smith nor within any of the information provided by Plunket concerning the programme.

The role of the Maori facilitators referred to by Dr Smith is one of guarding against cultural insensitivity on the part of the Parent educators. In regard to the competency of the Parent educators in Te Reo Maori Dr Smith notes,

"One or two of them [out of eight], I think, can speak Maori but not sufficiently, in a sufficiently sophisticated way to be able to support the Parent as well as I want to see"
(Smith, Dr L., 1992:9)

As such the status of Te Reo Maori is far from validated. If Te Reo Maori was held in any position of priority within the programme it would be expected that a clear proportion of the Parent educators were fluent speakers of Maori and that material concerning PAFT was inclusive of Te Reo Maori, neither of which is the case. The marginalisation of Te Reo Maori continues through PAFT and English maintains its colonial designation as the 'superior' language.