

Chapter Thirteen

Kura Kaupapa Maori and the Implications for Curriculum.¹

Introduction.

*The following chapter has been previously published. It was written while I was on leave in Wales in 1991 and then sent back to New Zealand for publication. I did not see it again until it was published in 1992. As with many contributions to anthologies the word limits are often very restrictive and there is little space to explore the wider ramifications of an issue or indeed explain the background to issues. Since its publication there have been a number of changes which have seen the development of more **Kura Kaupapa Maori** including a secondary school and which have sharpened some of the issues raised by this chapter. This introduction will provide some additional material related to the development of **Kura Kaupapa Maori**. I provide a personalised account of **Kura Kaupapa Maori**, not as I have already stated in the introduction of this thesis to be authoritative but to distance what I have been intimately involved in from the wider development of **Kura Kaupapa Maori**. Also as I have argued earlier, to be explicit about my involvement rather than pretend that I have been a bystander in this initiative, I have not been and am not disinterested. Rather than change the text of this chapter, however, I have decided to use footnotes to either elaborate or raise further issues which reflect changes in my own thinking since I first wrote this piece and then bring these together in the postscript. This a case of over-writing and under-writing the text! All the footnotes from the original text have been reworked, with additional references specific to this chapter of the thesis.*

¹ Published as Smith, L.T., 1992. '**Kura Kaupapa Maori** and the Implications for Curriculum' in *The School Curriculum in New Zealand: History, Theory, Policy and Practice*, ed. G. McCulloch, Palmerston North, Dunmore Press.

Kura Kaupapa Maori developed outside state schooling in 1986. Pockets of parental communities whose *Te Kohanga Reo* children were turning five, the age when children in New Zealand are able to start primary school, had begun to resist the taken for granted belief that their children would simply enrol at their local primary school.² Although the Department of Education had issued a policy statement suggesting that 'all' schools could cater for children from *Te Kohanga Reo*, this had proven to be unrealistic, as many schools could not, even if they so desired, provide a *Maori* immersion programme which would cater for children whose first language was *Maori*.³ The policy statement encouraged teachers to undertake more *Maori* language courses and to, 'find ways by which *Maori* language can be used in the classroom to sustain and extend fluency'. I was one of those parents who thought the policy statement to be unrealistic and a waste of resources. In an 'open letter' to schools written in 1984 I had set out the requirements schools would need to meet in order to satisfy what I saw as my daughter's needs. In the letter I said,

*'At three years old Kaapua's Maori is better than many people who have a School Certificate pass in Maori. She is confident and uses the language for a wide variety of purposes. She can ask questions, give instructions, tell stories, give excuses, talk on the phone, introduce herself, explain things, describe things and answer back! Imagine what she will be like at 5 years old. Furthermore, Kaapua is as expressive and competent in English as she is in Maori....I can remember how many times in the past teachers and schools have asked for Maori parents to become involved in their children's education. We have now become involved because we want to help determine the education our daughter receives....'*⁴

With a group of like-minded parents we began the process which has since lead to the recognition of *Kura Kaupapa Maori* as a distinct category of schooling in the Education

² Legally, children must be enrolled when they turn six.

³ *The New Zealand Education Gazette*, 1 February 1984, v.63, no.2, p.1, Wellington, Government Printer.

⁴ Later published as Smith, L.T., 1985. 'A Letter to the Teacher', in *English in New Zealand*, no.37, Association for Teachers of English, Stockton House.

Amendment Act 1989 and the development of such schools across the nation.⁵ As of 1994 there were thirty four state funded *Kura Kaupapa Maori* and one secondary *Kura Kaupapa Maori*. There are several schools still operating as private *Kura Kaupapa Maori*. The government has a policy of funding five new *kura* or schools each year. One of the hopes raised by *Kura Kaupapa Maori* was the possibility that *Maori* forms of knowledge, *Maori* ways of knowing, would be incorporated into the curriculum. At the same time, however, most of the parents engaged in this struggle in its early stage were committed to a notion of 'excellence in both cultures' that is, excellence in *Maori* ways of knowing and excellence in *Pakeha* or western ways of knowing.⁶ The following chapter was written with that sense of possibility.

This chapter discusses curriculum issues within the new schooling phenomenon of *Kura Kaupapa Maori*. These issues are not concerned so much with matters of specific classroom content but more with the wider context which informs current decision-making in these schools; for example what knowledge is selected and taught, how it is taught and how it is evaluated. Although *Kura Kaupapa Maori* is a relatively recent development, it has largely been the experiences of *Maori* parents, influenced considerably by their own past schooling practices and outcomes, which have tended to shape the various structures of these schooling initiatives. *Kura Kaupapa Maori* is an attempt to transform the pattern of these past educational experiences into one which offers increased success and life chances for *Maori* people and *Maori* society. The history of state schooling for *Maori* people has been a painful experience. It is an experience which *Maori* people have had to confront, to settle and to move positively beyond. This has involved periods of open activism as a reaction to past injustices. It has also involved periods where genuine attempts at resolution have been made. *Kura Kaupapa Maori* can be seen as an attempt by *Maori* parents to use schooling as a means of engaging in an historical struggle. In this sense it is not only a part of history. It may also be seen as an attempt to reconstruct and then move beyond the constraints of history.

⁵ Accounts of this are to found in Rata, E., 1989. 'Kura Kaupapa Maori', in *PPTA Journal*, Wellington, Post-Primary Teachers Association, pp.30-32.

⁶ Smith, G.H., 1991(b). 'Reform and *Maori* Educational Crisis: A Grand Illusion', in *Proceedings of the Post Primary Teachers' Association Curriculum Conference*, ed. P. Capper, Wellington, PPTA, pp.32-40.

Maori people have, since the beginning of the early mission schools, taken an active interest in the school curriculum and have also demonstrated a willingness to challenge the kinds of knowledge being taught to their children. There was a period when Native Schools were first being established where *Maori* parents were insistent on having access to good quality *Pakeha* knowledge.⁷ This interest coincided with colonial beliefs about what *Maori* children should learn and contributed to a heavy commitment within Government policies (also supported at this time by some *Maori*) towards *Pakeha*-oriented assimilationist schooling. Policies changed after the 1930s to allow for selected aspects of *Maori* culture to be included in school programmes, if not the formal school system, and focused mainly on arts and crafts. *Maori* culture as defined and constructed in this phase of *Maori* curriculum development, served to foster and maintain dominant *Pakeha* ideologies about *Maori* people. This view determined that a narrow range of *Maori* topics should be introduced to meet the needs of *Maori* children, for example stick games, folk tales, myths, action songs and the drawing of *Maori* designs.

This sanitised and distant version of *Maori* life became increasingly bothersome to *Maori* people. Schools for example were teaching *Maori* children about '*Maoris*' as if they no longer existed because they no longer wore 'grass skirts' or lived in traditional '*pas*'.⁸ Criticism by *Maori* people about the cultural myths which they perceived were being taught in schools became more intense. There were two viewpoints expressed. One *Maori* viewpoint was that schools should not teach anything about *Maori* language and *Maori* life at all because *Pakeha* teachers were both ignorant and ill-equipped to do so. A second view was that schools should in fact teach more about *Maori* life and customs and that suitable teachers should be selected and trained to do so. The inability of schools to pay serious attention to

⁷ *Maori* chiefs were very interested in the technological prowess of the *Pakeha* and initially seemed to think that knowledge about this technology could be gained through the missionaries. When it became apparent that biblical teachings did not offer insight into the kind of *Pakeha* knowledge *Maori* were seeking there was a marked decline in *Maori* enthusiasm for schooling. For further discussion of this see Simon, J., 1990. 'The Place of Schooling in *Maori* - *Pakeha* Relations', PhD. thesis, University of Auckland.

⁸ The use of 's' to pluralise *Maori* words (usually the use of '*nga*' placed before the noun indicates a plural form in *Maori* language) is a continuing problem. The *New Zealand Herald* for example, continues to add the 's' on to *Maori* words.

Maori debate about the curriculum caused increasing frustration and led to a growing scepticism and mistrust of the Department of Education. Many schools had already included what could be loosely termed a *Taha Maori* dimension in their school programmes a long time before the term *Taha Maori* became a defined part of curriculum debate. Literally *Taha Maori* means the *Maori* dimension and as a concept owes much to the bicultural reality of most *Maori* people. *Taha Pakeha* was the other dimension and *Maori* people lived within both worlds. However, *Taha Maori* became the term used to describe a specific curriculum subject. Unlike other school subjects it had no set syllabus or life of its own outside the boundaries of other subjects. *Taha Maori* in science, for example, could refer to the teaching of a topic on heat which had a unit related to *hangi* making.⁹

Although there was national support for the development of some *Taha Maori* topics it has never been adequately defined as an important part of the national curriculum. Initially there was some hope expressed that *taha Maori* would be given official sanction and indeed many schools moved to appoint staff in this area. However, there was mounting resistance to *Taha Maori* once it became clear, after the 1986 draft report of The Curriculum Review was published, that *Taha Maori* would be compulsory at the level of rhetoric only, schools which had already moved in this area had done so because individual principals had accepted the worth of *Taha Maori* for their own pupils. But there were still schools with large numbers of *Maori* students who resisted pressures to make curriculum change in this area. *Maori* disillusionment was intensified when the implications for the allocation of resources for *Maori* language teaching were analysed. There was a finite pool of money for *Maori* education and with greater emphasis being given to *Taha Maori*, other initiatives in support of *Maori* language education, such as those which responded to the needs of *Kohanga Reo* graduates, were severely disadvantaged. *Taha Maori* is important for the education of all New Zealand children but it has limited potential for *Maori* students who are already immersed in *Maori* life. It came to be regarded by many *Maori* parents as a 'watered down' view of culture which did nothing to validate the deeper underpinning's of *Maori* knowledge. For these parents, many of whom had become involved in other cultural initiatives such as *Kohanga Reo*, *Taha Maori* became a barrier to the more fundamental structures of both *Maori*

⁹ The use of rocks (ones which could stand being heated to a high temperature without exploding) to conduct heat to cook food.

knowledge and *Pakeha* knowledge.

Confrontation and the Recommitment of *Maori* People to Education.

Although *Maori* frustrations had been expressed in various ways for a number of years, a more explicit articulation of *Maori* views on state schooling came to the forefront at the *Maori* Educational Development Conference held at *Turangawaewae Marae* in *Ngaruawahia* in 1984. This gathering brought together conservative, liberal and radical *Maori* teachers, community people, policy analysts, government officials and educationists. Unlike many previous gatherings which had had an educational focus this conference was intent on achieving more than the sharing of frustration or the dissemination of information. There was a deliberate focus on finding solutions to the diverse range of difficulties *Maori* people were encountering throughout schooling. One clear message which emerged from the conference was that the answers to *Maori* educational failure lay outside existing educational systems and structures. Solutions had to be found within the domains of *Maori* society itself. There were calls from the conference workshops and the final plenary sessions for *Maori* students to boycott School Certificate examinations and for alternative *Maori* schooling to be established and supported.¹⁰ Although similar calls by individuals had been made for *Maori* people to opt out of mainstream schooling, the position taken by the conference was significant for at least two reasons. Firstly, because the conference participants represented a broad spectrum of *Maori* community, educational and political interests, agreement on this issue was not easy to achieve. Furthermore there was a general acceptance that the problems associated with schooling were so embedded in the structures of state education that *Maori* needs could not be accommodated without major structural change. Secondly, the conference was held at a time when the various forces which had been independently engaged in critique of the state education system, became associated with wider political unrest and resentment. This meant, for example, that the remits passed at the conference were regarded outside *Maori* circles as being worthy of serious attention, and they were discussed shortly after the conference by a national Post-Primary Teachers' Conference held at *Waahi Marae* in Huntly. Both of these factors contributed to a set of conditions and opportunities which led to the establishment of

¹⁰ Walker, R., ed., 1984. *Maori Education Development Conference*. Centre for Continuing Education, University of Auckland.

the alternative *Maori* schools known as *Kura Kaupapa Maori*.

The Emerging *Kaupapa Maori* Curriculum.

Kura Kaupapa Maori have a commitment to the survival of cultural knowledge. *Maori* language is still at risk as a living, community language, and one of the most successful ways through schooling of maintaining the language has proven in overseas experience to be through a total immersion approach.¹¹ However, *Kura Kaupapa Maori* are also attempting to do something more than a translation of existing curriculum into a total *Maori* language environment.¹² These schools have always claimed to be more than schools which teach through immersion in *Maori*. They originated from the *Kohanga Reo* movement and have applied similar beliefs related to the validity of *whanau*-based organisation, preferred pedagogical relationships and the importance of *Maori* teachings and practices. There is a genuine desire to teach children more 'authentic' forms of knowledge and to use the language to connect aspects of the culture which have been 'selected out' through colonisation practices.¹³

This issue has led to serious debate, for example, on the role of christianity in *Maori* society, especially where issues of spirituality and *karakia* are concerned. It is an extremely sensitive area because of the differences in commitment to belief systems held by parents.¹⁴ At

¹¹ We looked particularly at the Welsh and Canadian French models.

¹² Although those in *Kura Kaupapa Maori* are wary of simply translating the curriculum from one language into the other this has already happened through the processes of recontextualisation discussed in the previous chapter. For example, teachers in *Kura Kaupapa Maori* also draw on what they have previously learned (from schooling as well as from *Maori* sources) and recontextualise it as a form of pedagogic discourse. The critical issue which needs further examination is whether the ways teachers in *Kura Kaupapa Maori* recontextualise knowledge would radically alter the coding of such knowledge.

¹³ Although there are politics associated with any notion of 'authenticity', for *Maori* it is a 'measure' of how 'right' something feels, looks and sounds. Native speakers for example, can pick out non-Native speakers using a range of signals such as pronunciation, grammar, turn of phrase, use of the passive voice, choice of metaphors, style of presentation, ability to have 'read' the scene correctly and know how to connect with that scene, body language and movement. The most dramatic speakers who generally impress outsiders are not necessarily the better speakers.

¹⁴ However, many politically active parents regard christian beliefs as irreconcilable with *Maori* belief systems and suggest decolonisation *hui* for people who can not tell the difference!

present, in some schools, a similar compromise stance is taken on issues of dialect differences, that is, teachers teach from the basis of their own dialects and sets of beliefs, and parents provide the other appropriate dialects or alternative versions.¹⁵ The wider principle which these schools want to preserve in this case is the cultural significance of concepts of spirituality. This area of curriculum tends to be articulated within *Kura Kaupapa Maori* in terms of *Maori* knowledge and world-view.¹⁶ The schools are expected to provide a framework in which *Maori* knowledge and world-views can 'make sense' to and be interpreted in a modern context by *Maori* children who live in a world of computers and video games. Clearly there is a process of selection by the teachers and *whanau* of what knowledge should be taught. There is an acknowledgment that not only has the world changed but *Maori* people themselves have changed and some practices have long since lost their significance.¹⁷ There are forms of knowledge which are also being actively resurrected within the wider *Maori* community. The building of *waka* for the 1990 commemorations of the signing of the Treaty of *Waitangi* is a recent example. Some critics would refer to much of this revival as the 'bone carving syndrome', meaning an orientation to the past.¹⁸ This viewpoint disregards or is unaware of the degree of serious *Maori* debate which has been

¹⁵ *The problem of 'dialect' is not a serious problem in urban centers such as Auckland but is more of an issue in rural communities. What is regarded as more of a problem, is not so much dialect, but the issue of second language speakers of Maori whose level of fluency is not adequate for the demands made on them by children whose first language is Maori. The problem of dialect differences is probably more of a problem for policy makers and producers of texts. There has been a revival of iwi dialects however which adds to the diversity of Maori. The underlying grammar of the language is the same whatever the dialect.*

¹⁶ *Many would refer, for example, to Te Aho Matua which was written by the working party set up to argue for the inclusion of Kura Kaupapa Maori within the Tomorrow's School reforms to show what was distinctively different about Kura Kaupapa Maori. This document is not accepted by all Kura Kaupapa Maori. Some for example, find it too iwi specific. Others, like me, are wary of the way it is used by some in the movement as a piece of dogma used in meetings to decide who is 'on the kaupapa' and who is not. Te Aho Matua is part of a guiding philosophy set out in the early days of Kura Kaupapa Maori, it is open ended and includes a commitment to excellence, to the child, to Pakeha and Maori language and knowledge. There is nothing preventing Kura who do not agree with Te Aho Matua from writing their own versions.*

¹⁷ *This does not mean that future generations might choose to retrieve such practices. They are part of our cultural archive available as a discursive resource. Some recent examples of recovery of practices include full facial and body moko (although the technology has changed), use of healing practices and traditional medicines, learning of traditional waiata rather than western tunes, use of the haka as an expression of political disgust, various art forms.*

¹⁸ *The 'bone carving syndrome' refers to the development of pre-employment type courses where Maori students were taught bone carving as a means of finding out about their own culture and learning some 'skills' at the same time. There is much that was good about such courses in terms of the appeal it had for young Maori who were unemployed, but such courses on their own have not 'solved' the wider crisis of Maori unemployment.*

engendered by cultural revival.¹⁹

The *Te Maori* art exhibition to the New York Metropolitan Museum in 1984 and then its return home provided one context for debates to take place which were centred almost exclusively on forms of knowledge and critical understandings of the meaning of cultural knowledge. *Te Maori* provides an interesting example of the different layers of this debate. At one level attention was drawn to the conflicting definitions of *Maori* material culture by museums and art galleries. Museums have been the main repositories of *Maori* artifacts. The New York Metropolitan Museum was concerned with the 'art' of these items rather than their 'function'. The distinctions are important because they have been applied in ways which control the definitions of what constitutes 'culture', 'art', 'creativity' and 'technology'. At another level, however, there was another set of issues which the *Te Maori* exhibition highlighted. This concerned the relationships of people to things which they produced. For *Maori* people these art objects were not 'objects'. They were *taonga* or 'gifts' from the ancestors.²⁰ The *taonga* possessed a life force or *mauri* of their own. They belonged to specific sets of people, *whanau*, *hapu* and *iwi* who then had an obligation to protect and cherish these *taonga*. There were many other issues which *Te Maori* raised which showed the complexity of *Maori* knowledge forms and the contestability of the historical accounts provided by various experts.²¹ There are some examples of cultural knowledge forms currently being re-examined by some *Maori* which have assumed new significance or are being looked at more critically because of changing circumstances. Good examples of this can be seen in the roles played by women in *Maori* society, particularly in terms of *marae* protocol and decision making.²²

¹⁹ *There are much deeper issues of cultural revival which impact on concepts of leadership, of tensions between hapu and iwi politics, of issues related to gender, and the general questions related to 'who is making the selection and in whose interests?'*

²⁰ As '*taonga*' they were also protected under Article Two of the *Maori* version of the Treaty of Waitangi, *Te Tiriti O Waitangi*.

²¹ For more on the background of *Te Maori* read, Mead, S.M., 1986. *Magnificent Te Maori, Te Maori Whakahirahira - He Korero whakanui i Te Maori*. Auckland, Heinemann. For more about the impact of *Te Maori* on America read the personal account by, O'Biso, C., 1986. *First Light*. Auckland, Heinemann.

²² Some of the issues related to this have already been discussed in the previous section of the thesis.

Moving towards a *Kaupapa Maori* curriculum is a new development in the schooling of *Maori* children. In the past *whare wananga* catered for a selected group either of 'youths' or adults. Today's curriculum needs to cater for *Maori* children in a 'post-modern' era. Although the emergence of an innovative *Kaupapa Maori* curriculum clearly excites its proponents, there are many difficulties ahead. One example of such difficulties concerns the tension between reviving a culture, and constructing or 'reconstructing' a culture based on an already colonised view of what that culture was. One problem confronting *Kura Kaupapa Maori* is the danger that they will teach about a 'golden past' which may never have existed and definitely no longer exists today.²³ There is some worry that *Maori* parents who choose a *Kaupapa Maori* curriculum will limit opportunities for their children to participate in the 'real world'. *Maori* parents raise, as counter-arguments to these concerns, the well-documented failure of mainstream schools to prepare *Maori* students for the 'real world' evident in the high levels of *Maori* under-achievement.

At present the main safeguard against the construction of a curriculum based on a colonised version of 'tradition' is that there are still large numbers of resource people from different tribes who are widely recognised as being knowledgeable and expert within their culture. A larger pool of native speakers of the language and a tradition of oral debate ensures that claims about the past are scrutinised and challenged publicly and quickly.²⁴ The rigour with which details of *Maori* knowledge and tradition are examined by elders and tribal experts would probably surprise many non-*Maori*. Furthermore, oral traditions provide sanctions for the verification and contestability of knowledge, for example the formal *whaikorero* tradition

²³ Not only is this still a concern in 1995 but related to this issue is the construction of versions of culture which 'mask' new versions of inequalities.

²⁴ Although this does not necessarily occur quickly enough, as many people attempting to assert themselves as new leaders know when it is not appropriate to do this and tend to make their claims when the people around them are not so sure of *tikanga*. This has always concerned me as a parent of a daughter in *Kura Kaupapa Maori* and any versions of cultural practices with which my husband and I have disagreed has usually prompted a lengthy discussion at home and has informed our own decision making about such things as school trips. If one believes, as I do, in the concept of 'wairua' then exposing your child to situations where her 'wairua' is put at risk is problematic. We never allowed our daughter to go on school trips to other *iwi* areas for example unless one of us could accompany her or there was an adult from the same *iwi* as our daughter's with her at all times. It is difficult to describe in a 'nutshell' or a footnote.

of the *marae*.²⁵

Shifting the National Curriculum Focus away from Progressive Education.

Pakeha interests are well served within all of the different versions of the national curriculum. *Maori* parents have had to analyse and attempt to mediate these different versions of the curriculum in order to accommodate their cultural interests. The draft of The National Curriculum of New Zealand guidelines produced in 1991 indicates a significant shift from the proposals contained within the draft curriculum reviewed in 1986. The shift in emphasis within the National Curriculum guidelines has been rationalised in terms of New Zealand's poor economic performance and it is argued that New Zealand ought to conform to the international context underpinned by the ideologies of the 'new right'. Within this framework New Zealand schooling is criticised as being responsible for a lack of skills in the work force, a lack of competitiveness in the economic sphere and ultimately high levels of unemployment.

The new National Curriculum puts a greater emphasis on an instrumental view of education. It contains mixed messages for *Kura Kaupapa Maori* parents. One concern is that it marginalises *Maori* language by over-emphasising the significance of English language. Furthermore it introduces a new emphasis, based on developing trade links and competitive markets, to study foreign languages within the curriculum. Such a situation serves to undermine the worth of the *Maori* language. On a positive note, however, many of the features of the new curriculum reinforce *Maori* parental aspirations for their children. Also, *Kura Kaupapa Maori* schools are well placed to take a positive hold of the new curriculum, as in most instances they do not have vested interests in maintaining the old curriculum. Furthermore, they are supported by parents who are not only committed to success, but are also more willing, as a group, to take risks and to try new ventures which are equally committed to success.

The challenge of the new National Curriculum for *Kura Kaupapa Maori* is to reconcile its

²⁵ See for example, Salmond, A., 1975. *Hui, A Study of Maori Ceremonial Gatherings*. Wellington, A.H. & A. W. Reed, and Salmond, A., 1985. 'Maori Epistemologies', in *Reason and Morality*. ed. J. Overing, London, Tavistock, pp.240-263.

principles within the guiding philosophies of the *Kura Kaupapa Maori* movement.²⁶ This will need to be achieved without sacrificing the basic beliefs of the parents and without undermining or contradicting the *Kaupapa Maori* curriculum. One of the fundamental tenets of *Kura Kaupapa Maori* has been the right of *Maori* parents to make the meaningful decisions and choices about education and schooling of their children.²⁷ This implies a responsibility to balance the needs for *Maori* cultural and linguistic survival with other needs of the curriculum. Many *Kura Kaupapa Maori* schools have already had a focus on skills and outcome performance as promoted in the National Curriculum guidelines. This has been because of the need to demonstrate the success of such an approach to a sceptical and sometimes hostile *Pakeha* community.

The teaching of English literature and literacy skills has also been incorporated within some *Kura Kaupapa Maori* with very explicit guidelines and expectations. The schools currently teaching English are ones where the children have generally reached the age of nine or ten. In one of the schools for example, the children who are old enough, skilled enough already in reading and writing in *Maori* and motivated enough to want to take English lessons are taught using many of the principles of immersion teaching. They work in a total immersion English language environment learning the forms, rules and rituals of the language in a context set apart from their *Maori* language setting.²⁸ They are monitored closely by their teacher who works almost at a one-to-one level with them, although they attend as a group. The most important feature of this programme, however, is not the teacher or the setting but the children. These children expect and assume success. They can read and write in one language already and are orally fluent in English. Although there are obvious individual

²⁶ In 1995 I think the space to do this has become extremely limited. The new curricula statements reinforce an emphasis on skills and information, technology and entrepreneurship. The values implicit in the new curriculum reinforce concepts of the individual being trained to become a 'player' in the market. These values contradict, and are hostile to, any notion of collectivism or group orientation.

²⁷ Other reforms related to the administration and management of schools have also limited the possibilities for 'meaningful' decision making. Most of what counts as a meaningful decision has been taken away from communities (not just *Kura Kaupapa Maori*). What is left are decisions about how to make a few resources go a long way. The consequences for schools in 'poor' areas is that they are likely to be damned in Education Review Office reports (which is what has happened recently).

²⁸ This may take place in a separate room or after school. The 'after-school' option is sometimes driven by the need to pay extra for the teacher because there is no special funding allocated for the provision of English teaching in *Kura Kaupapa Maori*.

differences, the transition to reading and writing in English is at this early phase of development, not as difficult as first envisaged, and more importantly, no more difficult than what other children encounter when exposed only to the one language.

Other skills, however, which are stressed in the new curriculum do require highly specialised assistance. Technology and specialised science subjects are areas which require resource people who have not only highly developed skills in this area but also highly developed skills in *Maori* language. There have been some developments in the *Taha Maori* framework towards a more sympathetic science curriculum, for example Science *Aotearoa*, but there are a number of theoretical difficulties associated with such programmes.²⁹ *Kura Kaupapa Maori* teachers have tended to take the position that cultural boundaries should be protected rather than blurred by faulty attempts at fusing two different forms of knowledge and world-view. They argue that when *Maori* children have a sound understanding of *Maori* forms of knowledge, other forms of knowledge should be taught within their own cultural contexts. Both English lessons and the teaching of Japanese soroban or abacus in one *Kura Kaupapa Maori* are examples of ways in which knowledge and pedagogy which have other traditions have been selected and incorporated within the *Kaupapa Maori* framework.

Intervening in the Wider Crisis of *Maori* Education.

One of the more difficult relationships to draw, however, is between the efforts of *Kura Kaupapa Maori* which is still relatively small as a movement, and the wider crisis of *Maori* education. Obviously the issues of *Maori* educational under-achievement are complex and do involve a wide range of educational, social, cultural, political and economic concerns. The curriculum is just one part of the schooling enterprise and the expectation that curriculum on its own can intervene in wider societal problems is unrealistic. However, *Maori* criticisms of schooling over the last decade have tended to assemble around arguments related to the definition and significance of *Maori* forms of knowledge, *Maori* language and *Maori* experiences. This argument has been seen as crucial to any type of accommodation by state schooling to *Maori* needs. *Maori* people have not dismissed or generally argued against the

²⁹ See for example, Jesson, J., 1990. 'Science *Aotearoa*: The Politics of Curriculum Change', MA thesis, University of Auckland.

validity of *Pakeha* knowledge except in the highly contested area of New Zealand history and definitions of nationhood. Unfortunately, it has been assumed that by catering for cultural aspirations, schools will deny children other more important skills and knowledge.

Kura Kaupapa Maori and *Kohanga Reo* both contain elements which point to ways in which schooling can mediate, if not alter, the wider conditions in which many *Maori* families live by capturing their cultural aspirations and interests.³⁰ These initiatives have already demonstrated that they can involve *Maori* parents and their *whanau* in an educational enterprise. They have been most successful at cutting across social class groupings and providing a context of support which is culturally acceptable. There are numerous examples of how this works at a day-to-day level of schooling activity. Problems, for example, are seen as belonging to the *whanau* and not to individuals, this means that solutions are discussed at the *whanau* level, supported by the *whanau* and evaluated by the *whanau*. Single parents become part of a school-based *whanau* support and their children's educational needs are discussed like other children's needs by the *whanau* group which will usually have a range of ideas and expertise to share.³¹ With *Maori* language as a key component of the school environment it has worked to level out differences in the educational achievement levels of parents because often the parents who were most successful at school were the ones who were least exposed to *Maori* language. This means that key leadership roles are often held by parents who may also be categorised as 'working class'.

The question of the universal validity and power of traditional forms of the school curriculum connects in some ways with the dissatisfaction shown by *Maori* parents to many aspects of *Taha Maori*. *Taha Maori* was seen as being peripheral to the basic curriculum of schools and was designed more to make *Maori* children 'feel good' about themselves than to teach them worthwhile skills or knowledge. The stance most likely to be taken by *Kura Kaupapa Maori* is that much of the curriculum taught in schools to *Maori* children was actually designed to

³⁰ Smith, p. 38. Smith refers to one of these mediating conditions as '*Kia piki ake i Nga Raruraru o te Kainga*' or the mediation of socio-economic and home circumstances.

³¹ However these values can not be assumed. Not all parents have been socialised within *whanau* and there is not necessarily shared concepts and values about how *whanau* operate. These values have to be re-imagined through the collective processes of working together as a reconstituted *whanau*.

give them less than what they required. The high numbers of *Maori* students to leave school before sitting school certificate ensured also that they were ill-equipped for the world of work or even for basic survival. Implicit in this stance is a criticism, not just of what knowledge was taught to children, but also of how it was taught. Teachers, their attitudes and classroom practices were perceived by many *Maori* as being a major barrier to *Maori* achievement.

All of this tends to be translated, within some of the *Kura Kaupapa Maori* at least, into a very conservative selection of knowledge from the mainstream curriculum.³² It is argued by some in *Kura Kaupapa Maori*, that the mathematics curriculum, for example, should be stripped of all the 'non-essentials', and the focus should be on a systematic development of understandings and skills which will lead children directly and quickly into physics and other science subjects. This of course contradicts, not only most of the thinking in mathematics education, but also some of the thinking behind bilingual mathematics. In fairness to *Kura Kaupapa Maori*, however, it is important to recognise that they are only just developing in the curriculum area and the selections being made relate more to the availability of resources and to *whanau* attitudes than to an explicit articulation of views on these issues by the wider *Kura Kaupapa Maori* movement. There is also less of a tendency to accept or act on the assumption that knowledge is acquired developmentally. This is partly because there are no texts which set out the curriculum in *Maori* language, in the forms known and used in most other schools and partly also because it connects with *Maori* beliefs about how knowledge is acquired.

Kura Kaupapa Maori proponents argue that there are significant elements within *Kura Kaupapa Maori* which have the potential for more successful interventions at the wider level of *Maori* educational crisis. There are some things which *Kura Kaupapa Maori* have been able to do which other *Maori* communities who are minorities in their school communities have been unable to do. Decision making at a *Kura Kaupapa Maori*, for example, is carried out by a *whanau* who are all totally committed to the vision or *kaupapa* of the school. Although there is a great deal of debate and contestability of ideas within a *whanau*, there

³² One of the key issues here relates in part to the high stakes being played in relation to working in an alternative system. The 'conservative' selection is also a 'minimalist' selection of what is perceived as the basic items. Another issue relates to the reformulations taking place within a context of change.

is an explicit philosophy which binds all parents together. There are relationships beyond child-parent relationships which bind the people together and there is a commitment to ensuring that the children's education, social and spiritual needs are paramount. This one feature makes *Kura Kaupapa Maori* different from most mainstream schools. It does not on its own guarantee success or long term participation, but it does achieve levels of *Maori* parental support and active participation in state schooling which breaks the stereotype of the uncaring and disinterested *Maori* parent. Bringing *Maori* parents back into state schooling is a necessary component for educational achievement.

Evaluation and Assessment Issues.

Kura Kaupapa Maori have emerged at a time when the curriculum has already shifted quite significantly and may shift even further. The reforms of education have moved away from the restructuring of the bureaucracy to a focus on both the curriculum and assessment. Notions of standards and achievement levels, credentials and qualifications are all part of a changing climate. Assessment issues in *Kura Kaupapa Maori* area are complicated by two factors. One is the lack of instruments in *Maori* language which can actually measure achievement levels.³³ The other is the degree to which the parents are highly suspicious of evaluation and assessment.

Maori language is the medium of instruction in these schools. Because this is a whole new schooling development, new methods of evaluation and assessment have not yet been designed or tested across the wider *Kura Kaupapa Maori* movement. At present most of the schools use a variety of methods comparable to other state schools. These include personal profiles and in some cases the keeping of running records for reading. However, this remains the most under developed part of *Kura Kaupapa Maori* and, although there is some work being done by parent committees, it is too early to assess the impact of these systems. The wider movement of *Kura Kaupapa Maori* is undergoing an official trial with six schools taking part in an official evaluation. This evaluation is more concerned with the wider implications of *Kura Kaupapa Maori* and should not be confused with issues related to

³³ There is at least one study underway which is attempting to develop such instruments. The study group, *Kia Ata Mai Trust* are working in the *Waikato* region around Hamilton.

diagnostic procedures or feedback to parents. The major problem for *Maori* medium schools is the availability of resources to develop sophisticated instruments for diagnostic purposes or for achievement purposes.³⁴

The second concern, which impinges on the solutions to the first, relates to the intense mistrust many *Maori* parents have of assessment. Such things as teachers' reports, tests and records of progress are often regarded with anxiety or mistrust. Some of the schools which have been in operation for a longer time have managed to work through these concerns with their parents. However, the extent to which this mistrust is felt cannot be overestimated. Although many parents agree to different forms of assessment in principle they have often found ways of skirting the issue. For example, one of the schools agreed to parent interviews with the teachers but not one volunteered to organise them or set a date. Some parents are literally scared of teachers' comments on their children's performance and find it extremely difficult to raise their own concerns and question the teachers.

The wider context of reform in the area of standards and assessment levels follows closely on from the reforms in the curriculum. The arguments related to the new focus of the curriculum come together in the way that assessment is being conceptualised in the current context. Issues relating to the upskilling of the work force, the need to develop more entrepreneurial skills and create a competitive climate in education, obviously indicate where the emphases is being placed in terms of assessment. For *Kura Kaupapa Maori* this focus will become the ultimate measure of credibility for this type of schooling initiative.

Conclusion.

Kura Kaupapa Maori represents an effort by *Maori* parents to find a solution, through education, to a complex and multilayered crises which affects *Maori* language and cultural

³⁴ This is still one of the most under-developed areas of *Kura Kaupapa Maori* and is, in my view, becoming a major problem area, in that teachers in the system are under stress and having to react without the supportive tools needed to guide their own evaluation and assessment strategies. This creates more stress as parents put pressure on the system to account for what they perceive as a problem area. Some parents, for example, have taken their children out of a *Kura* and put them in an immersion *Maori* unit whose teacher was also a parent of a child in *Kura Kaupapa Maori* but who was perceived as a very good teacher.

survival and *Maori* socio-economic survival. *Kura Kaupapa Maori* were established during a period of major educational reform and upheaval. The ultimate effect of this has been to influence significantly the ways in which the curriculum has been conceptualised and interpreted within *Kura Kaupapa Maori*. The immediate challenge for those concerned to nurture the positive potential that these schools offer is to construct a curriculum which can meet the expectations of *Maori* cultural aspirations. This is the task which sits before those concerned with the development of the new national curriculum. The impact of these developments on the entrenched cultural and political formations of the established school subjects must be gauged in the months and years ahead.

Postscript: The Cultural Politics of Authenticity.

In the four years since this chapter was first written a number of issues remain unresolved within Kura Kaupapa Maori. One of these issues relates to what may be called the politics of authenticity and the struggle over which interest groups should determine what counts as Maori 'culture'. The context for these politics is external to Kura Kaupapa Maori but is being played out in very specific ways within Kura Kaupapa Maori. Like Te Kohanga Reo, Kura Kaupapa Maori provide an intersection in which Maori language, knowledge and culture are located within a very specific, social and historical set of conditions. The existence of such schools provides a cultural imperative to 'work things out'. The imposition of the state, the socio-economic realities under which Maori live, and the relations of power against which Maori struggle, virtually guarantees that the attempts to 'work things out' are under constant scrutiny by the media, various agencies of the state, and other interests hostile to Maori. In this context re-imagining new possibilities is a high stakes enterprise.

I will return to the discussion of the previous section, in which the concept of re-ordering cultural priorities was raised, to account for changes in Maori social relations under colonialism. I want to resurrect that concept in this context for Kura Kaupapa Maori represents an attempt to re-order and recentre Maori cultural priorities. As Nandy has argued, this process can 'release' new or previously sub-ordinate social groups which result in a reordering of priorities. Read alongside Fanon, who says that decolonisation is necessarily violent even at a psychological level, and Stuart Hall's reminder that political

movements have a messiness to them then the politics associated with determining what is traditional **Maori** culture is predictable. It is with these theoretical ideas in mind that I wish to discuss some of the specificities related to reframing and recontextualising **Matauranga Maori**, or **Maori** knowledge, into the classrooms of **Kura Kaupapa Maori**.

In theory it should be easy. The children have **Maori** as their first language and are already skilled culturally (although it needs to be remembered that they are children not experts in the arts of *whaikorero*!). They have already been immersed in a value system and practices which reinforce their identity as **Maori**. Their teachers, too, are culturally literate. This does not mean that parents have the same cultural proficiency as either the teachers or their own children. It is at the level of *whanau* (the parents, teachers, *kaumatua* and families of the children) that many of the politics associated with deciding what being **Maori** means are contested. At this level it means the struggles occur, and indeed according to the *kaupapa* should occur, to some degree in each and every *kura*. The *whanau* should be deciding these matters. In rural communities, because they have immediate access to their *iwi* context, these issues may be less contestible than in urban, multi-*iwi* contexts.

In practice it is not so simple. **Maori** parents are not homogeneous, do not necessarily speak **Maori** themselves, do not share the same background experiences, schooling experiences or cultural experiences. This plays an important role in why they have sent their children to **Kura Kaupapa Maori** in the first place. Many parents are vulnerable about their own identities. All parents have their own ideas about what it means to be a parent and bring these ideas into *whanau* discussions. Most parents are also young and a good many of them are on their own. In this context, the possibilities for 'new' forms of leadership to emerge are enhanced. In this context, what becomes 'privileged' are parents who are fluent in **Maori** and can claim authority over what counts as '*tikanga*', or customary practices. People who have also been part of the early struggles to establish **Kura Kaupapa Maori** are also 'privileged' in the sense that they have 'proven' to some degree their commitment to the *kaupapa* and have control over the history of the movement.

One of the tensions which allows for these interests to be invoked is the tension between tradition, or *tikanga*, and modernity. This tension has major implications for a number of

*different groupings of parents, for example, women, parents who do not speak **Maori**, parents who do not have ready access to expert **kaumatua**, parents who have their own identity issues, parents whose partners are **Pakeha**, parents who are **Pakeha**, parents who have not been immersed in their own **whanau** or **hapu** worlds. Those parents who do claim authority over what is correct **tikanga**, what was the 'real' traditional view or practice, and who refuse to justify their claims or discuss them, can and have become very powerful.*

*Why is this a problem? One of the reasons it becomes problematic is that what counts as 'culture' can become a fixed 'measure' or criterion for determining the weight of what someone may say. Another reason is that the possibilities for contesting accounts of **tikanga** become restricted to a few, and can be limited even further by switching the language of the discussion from English into **Maori**, and even further by co-opting the formal space of a **whaikorero** when **manuhiri**, or visitors, are present, to exclude women and exclude dissent. Also in **whanau** where there are parents from many different **iwi**, the possibilities for some people to claim a tradition for their **iwi** are even greater because there may be no one to dispute that account. In this way people are silenced unless they are strong enough to make a challenge.*

*A third reason for this being problematic, is that the whole concept of 'traditional culture' becomes fixed firstly in history, secondly in space, and thirdly in concrete. In other words, it is reduced to a closed system of knowledge with no possibility in that system for creative thought, for alternative views, for dissent. The danger of this is that the possibilities for us to constantly re-imagine ourselves as **Maori** become closed off, or reduced to dogmatic views about ourselves, which are unrealistic and unjust. The potential to 'close off' new possibilities concerns me, and yet I can accept that at some point boundaries between what we are and what we are not are important to establish and maintain. The dilemma is perhaps mine and is one which illustrates Hall's distinction between politics which has something 'at stake' and theory which has to be open ended. In a sense this story is unfinished. It is not a pessimistic story rather it is the stuff that culture is made of.*

A Brief Synopsis to Section Four.

This section examined the issues of making spaces for *Maori* within institutions and within the ways in which official school knowledge is produced pedagogically through schooling. In particular, two alternative discourses were analysed, *Taha Maori* and *Kaupapa Maori*. The context from which both of these discourses emerged is outlined in the introduction in relation to *Maoritanga*. This section needs to be read alongside the previous sections, which talked about the orientation to deficit theories which were well in place by the time *Taha Maori* emerged in 1984. The post-war developments in relation to the urbanisation of *Maori*, and the Hunn Report, which signalled the official end of the policy of assimilation, was discussed in chapter eleven. Chapter twelve is a more focused and localised account of what happens when *Maori* forms of knowledge become co-opted into official classroom knowledge. This chapter discusses a study based on Bernstein's notion of recontextualisation. It provides some answers as to why *Taha Maori* can not work in the radical way its initial supporters intended. Chapter thirteen situates the development of *Kura Kaupapa Maori* in opposition to *Taha Maori* and the mainstream curriculum. In this chapter I discuss some of the tensions inherent in such an option but also some of the possibilities that are open to *Kura Kaupapa Maori*. This chapter has another commentary in italics and in footnotes which give an up to date account of some of the issues which have developed since this chapter was first written and published. This section illustrates the difficulties of re-imagining as a project. Whilst space can be made, there are still other conditions which need to be met. Some of these, as spelled out in this section and the previous sections, relate to the recentring of *Maori* values, language and practices. Some of these relate to the reformulation of these features of being *Maori* within the contemporary context. As argued previously, such things do not happen in isolation. The high stakes being played, occur under the gaze of *Pakeha* and western eyes.