

CHAPTER 2

MAORI EDUCATION IN NEW ZEALAND: A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This is a contemporary claim that has been granted urgency to deal with specific funding issues of TEIs known as wananga. Wananga are modern tertiary education providers based on an ancient Maori institution of advanced learning known as whare wananga.

Despite the narrow terms of reference of this claim, the Tribunal has found it impossible to look at the funding of wananga without examining the services that wananga provide and the objectives that wananga are both achieving and attempting to achieve. One of the principal objectives of wananga Maori is to establish a Maori-controlled system of tertiary education with an emphasis on the key principle of matauranga Maori.

The claimants assert that wananga are assisting to reverse the negative statistics of Maori in education and employment. In May 1998, the then Minister of Education, the Honourable Wyatt Creech, stated that wananga have made a positive contribution to addressing the tertiary education needs of Maori.¹ The underachievement of Maori in mainstream education and the low percentage of Maori pursuing tertiary education are of great concern to the Government, the Ministry of Education, and Maori educationalists.

Crown counsel noted that, owing to the urgent nature of this claim, it would not be able to engage fully with evidence presented by the claimants regarding perceived historical failures in relation to education generally.² The Tribunal accepts the Crown's position on this issue at this time, and accordingly will not make findings on these general issues. Nevertheless, in order to understand the claimants' argument that wananga are an essential component of Maori education, we have found it useful to receive and consider historical evidence on past Government initiatives in Maori education.

1. Document A9

2. Document A75, paras 12–15

2.2 BACKGROUND

The confines of this short report preclude a thorough examination of pre-European education in New Zealand. More in-depth accounts of pre-European Maori education can be found elsewhere.³ The Tribunal makes several observations below to assist readers to better understand this claim. These are drawn largely from claimant evidence and submissions and from knowledge held by the Tribunal.

Maori have always embraced the acquisition of knowledge as a means of maintaining their mana and enhancing their quality of life. This is common sense. Maori society valued knowledge and maintained various institutions for its preservation and its dissemination at different levels. The teaching of essential everyday tasks was a day-to-day activity and individuals learnt through observation and practical experience. Learning took place while tending gardens, gathering seafood, and performing other tasks essential to the welfare of the people.

In a very real sense, Maori were aware of the old adage that knowledge is power. Certain types of knowledge were regarded as tapu, and whare wananga and other institutions closely guarded access to tapu knowledge. Whare wananga, and in some areas more advanced institutions known as whare kura, facilitated higher learning for those of high rank and standing. Whare wananga taught iwi and hapu leaders advanced forms of knowledge essential to the welfare of their people. Examples of such knowledge included tribal whakapapa, the arts of warfare and peace, astronomy, navigation, agriculture, and whakairo (carving), to name a few. There are many others, all deserving of more detailed discussion than that raised in this report.

The ancient concept of whare wananga related to a mental process of learning, rather than a physical institution where learning took place. When an individual undertook instruction at whare wananga, their classroom was the world they lived in and learning could take place anywhere, at any time. Wananga education focused on developing mental discipline and adeptness in several different fields of study.

Through wananga, Maori educated their historians, keepers of whakapapa, tohunga with their specialist knowledge, teachers, manual labourers, conservators, and leaders. Maori education was, and still is, a graduated process of learning. Individuals with the appropriate skills would instruct those chosen for specific roles. Students would not progress until they had mastered each level of the learning process. The proper maintenance and transmittal of knowledge to succeeding generations was vital to the survival of iwi and hapu.

Maori were eager to participate in an exchange of knowledge with Pakeha on their arrival in New Zealand. The historical record is replete with Maori demonstrably adapting new forms of knowledge for their own use, as well as incorporating ancient traditions with imported knowledge to improve their own situation.⁴ The arrival of Christianity offered Maori new ideas about religion and also introduced literacy, a

3. For example, see S Percy Smith (trans), *The Lore of the Whare-Wananga: or Teachings of the Maori College on Religion, Cosmogony and History*, 2 vols, New Plymouth, Polynesian Society, 1913

4. See, for example, James Belich, *Making Peoples: A History of the New Zealanders from Polynesian Settlement to the End of the Nineteenth Century*, Penguin Books (NZ) Ltd, 1996

skill that Maori were quick to learn. An early example comes from the East Coast, where Ngati Porou established informal schools at which whalers and traders taught reading. Another example was the rapidity with which Maori adopted reading and writing in the Maori language. Missionaries first introduced reading and writing to New Zealand, and by the 1830s, Maori were flocking to the mission schools to learn these new skills.

The above brief background demonstrates that the concept of advanced learning was well established in traditional Maori society. The arrival of Europeans brought new ideas and knowledge, as well as the tools of literacy. Maori quickly engaged with the new ideas and tools and incorporated them within their own knowledge systems.

2.3 DR SIMON'S EVIDENCE

Dr Judith Simon, a research fellow with the International Institute for Maori and Indigenous Education at the University of Auckland, presented evidence to the Tribunal on behalf of the claimants.⁵ Her evidence provided an account of the history of State provision of education for Maori since 1840. While Dr Simon's evidence did not deal specifically with tertiary education, it argued that past legislative action played a significant role in disadvantaging Maori within the State's education system, leading to their under-representation in the statistics by which educational success is usually measured. A review of the legislation, based largely on Dr Simon's submission, is provided below.

2.4 THE EDUCATION ORDINANCE 1847 AND NATIVE SCHOOLS ACT 1858

The Education Ordinance of 1847 first provided for Government funding of mission schools. The support for mission schools continued via the Native Schools Act 1858. Dr Simon believed that the Government was using the schooling of Maori as a means of social control and assimilation, and for the establishment of British law. She provided as evidence a report by school inspector Hugh Carleton, who said in 1862 that schools were 'aiming at a double object, the civilisation of the race and the quietening of the country'.⁶ She also presented a report by George Clarke, the Civil Commissioner for the Bay of Islands, who had stated that 'schools will give the Government an immense moral influence in the country, such as is not to be attained in any other way'.⁷

Dr Simon argued that mission schools were used in an effort to replace traditional Maori culture with European concepts and ideals. This assimilative agenda was apparent in the report of school inspector Henry Taylor in 1862:

5. Document A51

6. AJHR, 1862, E-4, p 17 (doc A51, para 6)

7. AJHR, 1863, E-9, p 18 (doc A51, para 6)

In carrying out the work of civilisation among the aboriginal Native race, through the medium of school, some impediments to progress [could be] gradually overcome by a diligent course of training . . . and the first and most serious of all is that state of communism in which all kinds of property are held amongst them. Their present social condition bears testimony to the ill effects of such a system. Tribal rights destroyed personal ownership . . . few attempts have been made by the Natives to individualise property. In the school-room, by a careful and persevering system of appropriation we may gradually train them to a proper perception of and regard for the meum and tuum.⁸

Dr Simon asserted that the amount and type of knowledge made available to Maori through schooling was controlled. Intellectual development was afforded a low priority; manual instruction was high. She believed that this was a deliberate effort to make Maori a labouring class, and cited as evidence a report by Henry Taylor in 1862:

I do not advocate for the Natives under present circumstances a refined education or high mental culture: it would be inconsistent if we take account of the position they are likely to hold for many years to come in the social scale, and inappropriate if we remember that they are better calculated by nature to get their living by manual than by mental labour.⁹

2.5 THE NATIVE SCHOOLS SYSTEM

From 1867 to 1869, Maori received Government approved and funded education through the native schools system, which was established by the Native Schools Act 1867. Dr Simon believes that, in most cases, Maori provided land and finance for the native schools. The Department of Native Affairs administered the Act until 1879, from which time the schools operated under the Department of Education (which was established in 1877) as a separate system parallel to that of public schools.¹⁰

During readings of the Maori Schools Bill in 1867, some politicians expressed genuine concern to protect and promote Maori interests. Others, according to Dr Simon, were motivated by the opportunities that schools presented as vehicles of social control. She again cited Hugh Carleton, who asserted that ‘things had now come to pass that it was necessary either to exterminate the Natives or to civilise them’, as well as Major Heaphy, who stated that ‘Any expenditure in this direction would be true economy, as the more the Natives were educated the less would be the future expenditure in police and gaols’.¹¹

According to Dr Simon, the structure of the native schools system served to promote Pakeha knowledge as more important and valid than Maori knowledge. She believed that Maori cultural values and institutions were both consciously and unconsciously denigrated, while Pakeha-dominant class ideas and values were

8. AJHR, 1862, E-4, p 35 (doc A51, para 7)

9. Ibid, p 38 (doc A51, para 8)

10. Document A51, para 9

11. 10 September 1867, NZPD, 1867, vol 1, pt 2, p 863 (doc A51, para 10)

promoted.¹² Central to the native schools' philosophy was the limitation of the curriculum, designed to restrict Maori to working-class employment.

Efforts to subvert the limited curriculum were made at Te Aute College in the 1880s. John Thornton, the headmaster of the college, coached his most promising pupils for the matriculation examination of the University of New Zealand. In the 1890s, this produced the first wave of Maori university graduates, including Apirana Ngata, Te Rangihiroa (Peter Buck), Maui Pomare, Tutere Wirepa, and others. In 1906, a royal commission was established to inquire into Te Aute College. The commission put pressure on Thornton to abandon his academic curriculum and adopt a technical one centred on agricultural studies. Thornton refused, prompting the Department of Education to curtail financial scholarships. Some years later, Thornton's successor capitulated to official demands and replaced the academic curriculum with an agricultural one.¹³

Dr Simon stated that, following the release of the commission's report, major emphasis was placed on manual and domestic training for Maori. She quoted George Hogben, the Inspector-General of Education, who countered objections by Maori to a technical curriculum with the claim that it was necessary to make Maori recognise 'the dignity of manual labour'.¹⁴ Dr Simon also quoted W W Bird, the Inspector of Native Schools, who declared that the purpose of Maori education was to prepare Maori for life amongst Maori, not to encourage them to mingle with Europeans in trade and commerce.¹⁵ In 1915, Bird affirmed the Department of Education's assimilative policy in his annual report:

So far as the Department is concerned, there is no encouragement given to [Maori] boys who wish to enter the learned professions. The aim is to turn, if possible, their attention to the branches of industry for which the Maori seems best suited.¹⁶

Dr Simon found that, in 1931, T B Strong, the Director-General of Education, reaffirmed the policy of limiting the Maori curriculum:

Whenever I have come into contact with the education of dark races, . . . I have noted with surprise their facility in mastering the intricacies of numerical calculations. This fatal facility has been taken advantage of in the Mission Schools and even in the schools manned by white teachers to encourage the pupils to a stage far beyond their present needs or their possible future needs.¹⁷

Strong also claimed that education should lead the Maori boy to be a good farmer and the Maori girl to be a good farmer's wife.¹⁸

12. Document A51, paras 12–13

13. Ibid, para 13

14. AJHR, 1906, G-5, p 84 (doc A51, para 14)

15. Ibid, pp 94–95 (doc A51, para 14)

16. AJHR, 1915, E-3, p 10 (doc A51, para 14)

17. T B Strong, 'The Education of South Sea Island Natives', in Patrick M Jackson (ed), *Maori and Education: or the Education of Natives in New Zealand and its Dependencies*, Wellington, Fergusson and Osborn Ltd, 1931, p 194 (doc A51, para 15)

18. Ibid, p 192 (doc A51, para 16)

Dr Simon noted that, in the 1930s, the assimilation policy in Maori education was questioned by the Maori cultural revival inspired by Apirana Ngata. As a result, policy was changed to permit selected elements of Maori culture to be included within the curriculum of the native schools. It was, according to Dr Simon, the Department of Education that selected these elements, thus reserving the right to determine what constituted valid Maori knowledge. Deemed appropriate for inclusion in the curriculum were traditional myths and legends, arts, crafts, and music. Maori language was not included.¹⁹ Dr Simon quoted the Senior Inspector of Maori Schools, E W Parsonage, who stated that this policy change resulted from the ‘need for a regenerative force and a new approach to the Maori problem’. Selecting Maori cultural aspects, according to Parsonage, was the ‘surest way of reviving Maori pride in themselves . . . [to lift it] from the despondency into which it had retreated’. Parsonage demonstrated, according to Dr Simon, the hegemonic intentions of the Government’s policy when he wrote that ‘the policy also fully appreciated the fact that the Maori had to be fitted to live under prevailing conditions, where the Pakeha way was dominant’.²⁰

Further insight into the kind of life that the Government envisaged for Maori was provided in Dr Simon’s submission. Upon the opening of the first native district high schools, the Senior Inspector of Native Schools, T A Fletcher, offered his thoughts on what the curriculum should concentrate on:

home-making, home-making in the widest sense, including building construction and all its features, furniture-making, metal-work, and home gardening for the boys, and home-management, including cookery, home decorating, and infant welfare for the girls. The aim is to teach the skills and to develop the tastes that make the house not merely a place of habitation, but a home in the best sense of the word.²¹

It was not until 1945, Dr Simon noted, that school certificate or matriculation courses were offered at native district high schools. Increasingly, more and more Maori attended public schools rather than native schools. Dr Simon believes that Maori children in these schools were disadvantaged because there were no programmes to teach them English and their teachers often had low expectations of their potential. Maori children also faced racial discrimination from both teachers and fellow pupils.²² Meanwhile, the native school’s curriculum remained dominated by assimilative features. However, according to Dr Simon, from the 1950s the Government did attempt to include aspects of Maori knowledge, but assimilation agendas and, from 1960, ‘integration’ agendas (courtesy of the Hunn report) prevailed for each initiative. From 1969, native schools were discontinued and their pupils were taught the national curriculum. Although Maoritanga and taha Maori components of the curriculum, for example, received support and guidance from

19. Document A51, para 20

20. E W Parsonage, ‘The Education of Maoris in New Zealand’, JPS, vol 65, no 1, March 1956, p 6 (doc A51, para 21)

21. AJHR, 1941, E-3, p 3 (doc A51, para 17)

22. Document A51, para 23

Maori, Dr Simon believed that the content was always determined and controlled by Pakeha.²³ Government support was never offered to Maori to establish a Maori-controlled education environment or system.

As a result of past education policies, Dr Simon believed that Maori have been affected in the following ways:

- traditional Maori knowledge and methods of teaching that knowledge have been undermined and threatened;
- career options have been limited;
- resistance, negativity, and apathy towards school and education have developed;
- educational aspirations have been lowered;
- there has been an acceptance of manual labouring as a natural vocation; and
- teacher expectations of Maori achievement have been lowered.²⁴

In conclusion, Dr Simon noted that since the 1950s many policy changes had attempted to reverse the trend of underachievement amongst Maori at school. But despite some genuine efforts from educationalists to accelerate the performance of Maori pupils, little improvement in the statistics is evident.²⁵

2.6 THE MODERN ERA

This is not the first time that the Waitangi Tribunal has examined a claim concerning education. In 1986, the Tribunal inquired into a claim about the Maori language (Wai 11). Its report found that Maori children were not being successfully taught, and that the education system was being operated in breach of the Treaty. That report went on to state:

When such a system produces children who are not adequately educated they are put at a disadvantage when they try to find work. If they cannot get work that satisfies them they become unemployed and live on the dole. When they live on the dole they become disillusioned, discontented and angry. We saw such angry people giving evidence before us. They are no more than representatives of many others in our community. When one significant section of the community burns with a sense of injustice, the rest of the community cannot safely pretend that there is no reason for their discontent. This is a recipe for social unrest and all that goes with it.²⁶

In this Tribunal's opinion, this analysis remains as true today as it was in 1986. Evidence of rising crime, suicide, substance abuse, and welfare dependency and negative health statistics indicate that a general sense of hopelessness exists among many young Maori. A large number of young New Zealanders are being left to fall through the cracks of our education system and made to fend for themselves, often

23. Ibid, para 22

24. Ibid, para 24

25. Ibid, para 28

26. Waitangi Tribunal, *Report of the Waitangi Tribunal on the Te Reo Maori Claim*, 3rd ed, Wellington, Brooker's Ltd, 1993, sec 6.3.9

ending up in prison. We know that the Government, and its agencies, will share our concern that this trend not be allowed to continue.

In 1998, Te Puni Kokiri, the Ministry of Maori Development, published a report to the Minister of Maori Affairs entitled *Progress towards Closing Social and Economic Gaps between Maori and Non-Maori*. This report provided a ‘helicopter view’ of Maori progress across the education, employment, economic, and health sectors, and an assessment of progress made over time. When addressing economic status, the report said:

Since the mid 1980s Maori participation in all sectors of education has increased markedly. Despite this, disparities persist between Maori and non-Maori for most indicators of educational status. Historically, the scale of disparities between Maori and non-Maori participation and achievement have been so wide that improvements by Maori have had a minimal impact on reducing the difference. Compared to non-Maori, Maori are less likely to attend early childhood education, are less likely to remain to senior levels of secondary school, and are less likely to attain a formal qualification upon leaving secondary school. Maori are also less likely to undertake formal tertiary training, particularly in universities. Maori who are in tertiary training are more likely to be enrolled in second chance programmes.²⁷

Maori currently rank highly in the negative statistics of all social indicators from education to health. It would not be difficult to argue that the seeds of Maori underachievement in the modern education system were sown by some of the past education policies outlined in Dr Simon’s evidence.

As will be shown in this report, one reason Maori developed modern wananga was to address the current underachievement of Maori in tertiary education. Another primary reason was to help revitalise te reo Maori and matauranga Maori. To help achieve these aims, wananga Maori have successfully sought TEI status. Wananga believed that this recognition would secure a successful future, thereby enabling them to provide significant help in the development and advancement of Maori society. Chapter 3 goes on to describe the principles behind wananga and to give examples of the courses that they teach.

27. Te Puni Kokiri, *Progress towards Closing Social and Economic Gaps between Maori and Non-Maori: A Report to the Minister of Maori Affairs*, Wellington, Te Puni Kokiri, 1998 (doc A74(c)), p 6