

Understanding Power Relations through Attempts at Self-Determination by Indigenous Māori Learners over Time

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Abstract

The racialized, historical legacy of colonization has resulted in intergenerational disparities for disproportionate numbers of Indigenous students across the globe including Māori learners in Aotearoa New Zealand. In this paper, we consider two secondary-school reform initiatives aimed at improving the schooling system for Māori learners. Evidence gathered in 2001, using group-focused, interviews as conversation, reveals the experiences of Māori learners and families in *Te Kotahitanga*. Almost two decades later, evidence from survey tools that allow for the experiences of Māori learners and families to be triangulated alongside the experiences of their educators, are also considered. Consistent with historical literature, these voices provide examples of power relations that undermine their education success as Māori. Māori learners believe that to succeed they must either tolerate this situation or remove themselves from schooling. The potential for Māori led solutions and shared humanity is silenced and overpowered through the positionality of colonial power and privilege.

Keywords

Indigenous Māori, Colonization, Power Relations, Self-Determination, Tolerance

1. Introduction

The research in this paper explores different historical beliefs behind the relationships that began between the indigenous people, known today as Māori, and the colonial settlers in *Aotearoa* New Zealand. These racialized beliefs are foundational to the power relations present across systems set up by the Crown (Bi-

shop & Glynn, 1999) and, may well be responsible for the intergenerational disparities facing Māori in society today (Berryman, 2022). In this research, we wanted to understand and make connections between the racialized, historical beliefs about Māori, the subsequent power relations, and intergenerational disparities for Māori. To undertake this research, we retrospectively consider evidence from Te Kotahitanga (Bishop et al., 2014) and Building on Success: *Kia Eke Panuku* (Berryman, 2016); two school reform initiatives aimed at increasing Māori engagement and success through secondary schooling. Te Kotahitanga draws from the voices of Māori youth and their families, gathered from group-focused interviews as conversation in 2001. *Kia Eke Panuku* uses evidence from *Rongohia te Hau* (Berryman, 2013), a set of processes including survey and observational tools that allow for Māori youth and families to talk about their teaching and learning experiences (Berryman et al. 2024). These experiences, triangulated with teachers' perceptions of their teaching and learning, are used as a backdrop against which to consider the potential of education initiatives aimed at engaging Māori learners and reforming disparities.

1.1. Initial Relationships between Māori and Settlers

Recent Māori scholars (Jackson, 2021; Mutu, 2018; Ngata, 2019) have asserted that the cultural relationships between the Indigenous peoples of Aotearoa and the Crown were cemented as early as the 1400s when a succession of European Popes issued a series of decrees or papal bulls. These papal bulls allowed European explorers to “discover” and seize lands inhabited by Indigenous peoples, on behalf of those who maintained power in Europe (Harjo, 2014; Watson, 2010). Under Pope Nicholas V, various papal bulls allowed full seizure of non-Christian lands and the enslavement of native, non-Christian peoples in Africa and the Americas. Other decrees followed, further endorsing the rights of “discoverers” to seize land and enslave Indigenous peoples in the name of European, Christian monarchs. In 1496, King Henry VII, issued a decree to allow explorers to claim lands occupied by “heathens and infidels” on behalf of England (Davenport & Paullin, 1917; Miller et al., 2010; Mutu, 2018). This decree connects colonization to the Indigenous peoples of Australia, Canada, and Aotearoa. In 1769, Captain Cook claimed the North Island of Aotearoa for King George III of England.

Much of these relational beginnings were silenced (MacDonald, 2018) when historians drew on 18th century records from European explorers such as Cook, Banks and Du Fresne to tell the stories of discovery and first contacts. Hemara (2000), presenting a Māori-centric perspective, wrote that initial contacts between *tāngata whenua* (people of the land) and Europeans were driven by curiosity and trade. Jenkins (2000) describes the historical relationship between Māori and early non-Māori settlers, in terms of *aitanga*, concluding that Māori brought immense strength, integrity, diplomacy, and determination for a respectful, productive relationship with the colonizers. The desire of Māori leaders for an ongoing, peaceful, and mutually beneficial relationship with the British

crown was evidenced by *He Whakaputanga* and Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Henare, 2003; Mutu, 2004). These two agreements, signed by Māori, sought to formalize respectful relationships between Māori and the colonial office. At this time, Māori outnumbered settlers by at least forty to one. However, as waves of settlers arrived there was a pressing need for land, with the British seeking authority and power over the lands and resources maintained by Māori. European beliefs, as evidenced in the Doctrine of Discovery, were key to the exploitation that followed. This situation is maintained, in other colonial states, to this day. In Aotearoa, subsequent education policies worked to assimilate Māori into a European society within power relations dictated by the colonizer (Bishop & Glynn, 1999).

1.2. Historical Look at Native Schools for Māori

With the Native Schools Act in 1867, the settler government established a separate and secular “native school” system for Māori children under the control of the Department of Native Affairs (Ward, 1983). This was an assimilation policy with two specific features: civilizing Māori children and extending Pākehā social control to within Māori villages. Māori were required to commit resources, specifically land for the schoolhouse and teacher’s residence, and, if able, contribute to the teacher’s salary (Barrington, 2008). Education provided within native schools was deliberately out of touch with Māori (Barrington & Beaglehole, 1974), with educators at the time believing that Western education had the potential for good for those Māori who accepted it (Openshaw, Lee, & Lee, 1993). Education led to a growing insistence on the sole use of English in classrooms and on the school grounds which teachers enforced by denigrating and banning *te reo* (the language) Māori, commonly with a degree of physical punishment that was previously foreign to Māori (Simon, 1998).

Māori attitudes to formal schooling varied widely. Some tribes accepted that the knowledge and skills offered in schools would enhance their children’s opportunities to engage in the world of the Pākehā and they petitioned for schools to be established within their communities (Openshaw et al., 1993). Many believed the educators of the day who told them that native schools were in their best interests, and many were willing to leave the Māori language, and all other aspects of being Māori, in the home. Māori elders recognized this new knowledge would complement traditional knowledge and culture, both of which they understood were needed to survive in a Pākehā dominated world (Simon, 1998).

The Education Act of 1877 made education free, compulsory, and secular for settler children, but not for Māori. Openshaw et al. (1993) suggest education officials wanted to encourage schooling for Māori children rather than enforce it. Simon (1998) connects this to the determined social engineering happening through the dual system of education which favored and promoted settler interests while de-humanizing or nativizing Māori. Native schools provided a rural and manually focused syllabus while public schools were required to meet a

more academically demanding curriculum and generally had better qualified teachers (Openshaw et al., 1993). In 1909, schooling became compulsory for Māori, with native schools continuing the systematic breakdown of Māori culture, customs and language with culpability firmly accorded to the dominant colonial power (Simon & Smith, 2001; Ward, 1983). For example, William Taylor, an inspector of Native Schools, was recorded in the Appendices to the Journals of the House of Representatives (AJHR, 1862) as saying “Native habits of filth and laziness also impede the progress of civilization” with Māori language itself seen as being:

...another obstacle in the way of civilization, so long as it exists there is a barrier to the free and unrestrained intercourse which ought to exist between the two races, it shuts out the less civilized portion of the population from the benefits which intercourse with the more enlightened could confer. The school-room alone has power to break down this partition between the two races (p. 6).

As well as the belief that education would lead to harmony between the two races, there was a clear indication, in the same document (AJHR, 1862), about what education could be expected to do for the Natives and how the Natives could expect to contribute to society:

I do not advocate for the Natives under present circumstances a refined education or high mental culture; it would be inconsistent, if we take into account 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 (p. 38).

The deficit racialized beliefs within the Doctrine of Discovery were being perpetuated by the Director of Education, T B Strong in 1931. In response to an attempt by the New Zealand Federation of Teachers to introduce Māori language into the curriculum, Strong asserted, “...the natural abandonment of the native tongue involves no loss to the Māori... [Education] should lead the Māori lad to be a good farmer and the Māori girl to be a good farmer’s wife” (Office of the Auditor General, 2012). Indeed, the pervasive belief at the time, was that Māori values and cultural practices limited progress and that “assimilation into their ‘superior’ European culture was the only option” (Anderson et al., 2015: p. 279).

The dual system of native and public schools continued up until 1969 when Native schools came under the control of district boards of education. Māori and settler children attended both public schools and native schools, depending on locality and availability, although most settler children attended public schools (Openshaw et al., 1993). Education was used for the systematized assimilation of Māori children and their families into colonial society where they were being educated to assume the role of manual laborers or to bear the next generation of manual laborers. Of this period, Penetito (2004) contends:

from its inception, the education system in New Zealand took on board a set of “values”, “ideals” and “standards”, more or less coherent with the cultural history of Britain and Europe, that had evolved over several hundred years...these values and ideals revolve around the right to private property, the nuclear family, evidence and due process (p. 171).

The societal priorities of the colonizer were viewed as superior to the collective institutions of Māori, with communal law and the culture of Māori continually being ridiculed, quashed, and prohibited (Jackson, 1992; Penetito, 2004; Smith, 2000; Ward, 1983). Rather than the equal power relations envisioned by tribal leaders who negotiated Te Whakaputanga the power relations between Māori and the Crown had become one of master-servant.

Taonui (2015) defines the imposition of the education system for Māori as intended assimilation through the eradication of their own culture and identity. To achieve this, unequal power relations with Māori have been maintained across the Crown’s systems with the result that the lived reality of Māori continues to be pathologised and therefore the system perpetuates social inequality (Shields et al., 2005). Māori have been subjected to oppression and suppression through education and excluded from decision making and other positions of power. The consequences for Māori, from the time of the signing of te Tiriti have been egregious. According to Jackson (1992):

For Māori, the attack on their soul was so terrible it led to a weakening of faith in all the things which had nourished it. The demeaning of the values which cherished it, the language which gave it voice, the law which gave it order, and the religions which was its strength, was an ongoing process which ultimately affected the belief of Māori in themselves. (p. 4)

For many Māori, these deliberate acts of assimilation, led to a weakening of faith in what it meant to be Māori and a perceived “tolerance” for how being brown was being positioned. Mills (2022) discusses this self-blame as a moral psychology skewed, “toward privileging [the colonizer], taking the status quo of differential racial entitlement as normatively legitimate, and not to be investigated further” (p. 40). Freire (2005) contends these discourses of tolerance and resignation stem from “self-depreciation [which] is another characteristic of the oppressed, which derives from their internalization of the opinion the oppressors hold of them” (p. 63).

The 1970s and 1980s saw this same situation create for some Māori, an intensifying of political consciousness and a shift in mindset (Bishop, 1996) away from that of the dominant colonial discourse towards one that has been termed Kaupapa Māori. Kaupapa Māori theory involves challenging previous Western ideas of what constituted valid knowledge, so that rather than abuse and degrade Māori and Māori ways of knowing, it allows Māori communities to take ownership and supports the revitalization and protection of all things Māori. However, for this to occur, the centrality of power must be understood and imbalances within these relationships must be addressed.

2. Implications for Today

From the advent of state schooling in Aotearoa, Māori students have experienced marginalization and belittlement, as seen in the continuing high rates of exclusion, and the disproportionately lower rates of attendance and achievement, relative to non-Māori (Ministry of Education, 2022). Since the Department of Māori Affairs report (Hunn, 1961), reviewed the state of education for Māori, numerous Government education initiatives have been designed to address the disparity between Māori and non-Māori (Berryman & Eley, 2017). Many of these initiatives, devised from a Western perspective and imposed by the government over decades, have had little positive impact on Māori engagement and achievement and society has shown little concern (Office of the Auditor General, 2016a, 2016b). Given the historical context, the ongoing disparity was frequently explained away as cultural and academic deficiencies located within Māori. However, Māori learners interviewed from the beginning of this century, were more likely to define it as “racism” which they located with some of their teachers and peers (Bishop & Berryman, 2006).

In 2018, the Ministry of Education acknowledged its own failure with respect to Māori learners. Amidst multiple events, including publication of the Education Matters to Me report by the New Zealand School Trustees Association and the Office of the Children’s Commissioner (2018), that highlighted racism in schools, the Secretary for Education, reported, “the underachievement of Māori students is chronic, intractable and systemic” (Espiner, 2018). She explained that “in the schooling and education system and beyond we have an issue of unconscious bias” (Espiner, 2018). Referring to bias as unconscious suggests we are unaware of our judgements and assessments of people and the resulting decisions or actions we take. King (1991) uses the term “dysconscious” to describe an “uncritical habit of mind (including perceptions, attitudes, assumptions and beliefs) that justifies inequity and exploitation by accepting the existing order of things as given” (p. 135).

As a nation, our ability to have conversations about racism is quite recent. This is due to a combination of influences including the one-sided historical record of the coming together of Māori and non-Māori, that has been endorsed through education. Much of this history was silenced (MacDonald, 2018) as many of the brutal deeds instigated by officials and perpetrated by colonial forces against Māori were whitewashed. The nation’s ongoing ignorance of the distinctly different promises made at Waitangi in the 1840s and the power assumed and maintained by the Crown as a result, has undoubtedly supported this. Power has maintained and perpetuated white privilege for people of European descent, as has our collective inability to respond effectively to questions of racism or white fragility (DiAngelo, 2018). Questions about racism such as, what is it or how does it come to be on these shores are conversations that are needed. There is little doubt that if we cannot respond effectively when we are faced with white fragility, the outward displays of emotion such as anger, argumentativeness, hurt

or withdrawal from a situation that is stressful, we maintain and “reinstat[e] white racial equilibrium” (p. 247).

The Issue of Whiteness

Whiteness is always constructed and impossible to separate from racial dominance. The formation of whiteness as a standpoint, has been key to the socio-political processes inherent in seizing land and building nations (Frankenberg, 1997; Harris, 1993). In Aotearoa, ideologies of racism and white supremacy are a manifestation of our history of colonization (Jackson, 2019). Whiteness equates itself with “normal” and “universal,” remaining transparent in contrast with identified others who are seen as deviant. Knaus (2018) maintains that:

The simplistic notion of education as a universal idea necessarily applied to Western schooling serves as the problematic foundation under which “best practice” is viewed...diversity reflects simply adding in ethnic content and/or ethnic students, which allows mainstream academia to remain steeped in the foundation of whiteness (p. 7).

Critically examining whiteness allows racism to be understood as a structural phenomenon that has shaped many societies. Racism’s workings must be identified (Bonilla-Silva, 1997; Leonardo, 2004; Picower, 2009), and recognized if we are ever to understand and acknowledge our own historical responsibilities and entanglements. To uncover the foundations of our society and knowledge systems in colonial practices is to begin a process of “unlearning” whereby we can begin to question and challenge “received truths.”

MacDonald and Reynolds (2017) argue that a critical understanding of how race and racism frame educational experiences would allow educators to address the palpable challenges faced by culturally marginalized students. They suggest that culturally responsive pedagogy alone is unlikely to bring about systemic change as, “...the theoretical aspect of critical engagement...is silenced during implementation” (p. 56). Rodriguez (2011) contends that when issues of inequity are linked solely to cultural differences, power relations are often ignored, and the dominant cultural norms and discourses remain steadfast. Furthermore, Berryman et al. (2023) specify that teacher blindness to the predicament of their Māori students perpetuates an epistemology of silence that enables the status quo of white privilege to remain firmly in place.

3. Method

To better understand how power relations have continued to play out this century, we turned to the literature and to the experiences of Māori learners and their families over two separate points in time. The first point looks at evidence gathered from five secondary-schools in 2001, from what became Te Kotahitanga, a school reform initiative. The second point, is taken from 2014 to 2016, using qualitative comments from Rongohia te Hau surveys, and gathered from 25 secondary-schools participating in Kia Eke Panuku. Implementation of Rongo-

hia te Hau begins with the co-construction of a continuum of teaching and learning as first described by the original Māori learners in Te Kotahitanga. This process then uses tools, designed for gathering different sets of evidence in relation to teachers' implementation of cultural relationships and responsive pedagogy across the school. Evidence includes classroom walk-through observations and complimentary surveys from students, whānau and teachers. For the purposes of this section, we purposively sample Māori students', families', and teachers' survey comments. A thematic analysis using constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2015), whereby themes, grounded in the experiences raised most frequently by these participants provide the evidence was used to analyze the evidence which are presented as direct quotes in a collaborative story (Bishop, 1997). This overall retrospective analysis was undertaken by a group that included original facilitators of these reforms and processes.

4. Findings

4.1. Te Kotahitanga Māori Learners and Families

Research from the start of this century aimed to understand how to better engage Māori students with schooling and therefore achieve greater success. Following findings from a scoping exercise (Bishop et al., 2001), open-ended questions and group focused interviews as conversation were used to understand the experiences of Māori learners, and other groups concerned with their learning, in five, state, secondary schools (Bishop et al., 2003). Using their own criteria, school leaders divided Māori learners into two groups, engaged or non-engaged. Subsequently, the voices of these two groups of Māori learners were presented alongside members of their families, their teachers and school principals (Bishop & Berryman, 2006).

Learners from both groups reported schooling as being very negative. They reported few positive experiences about being Māori in schooling, and they spoke of the negative stereotyping they experienced just from being Māori (Bishop & Berryman, 2006). Non-engaged Māori students linked these negative experiences to racist teachers and peers, suggesting that:

Some teachers pick on us Māori. Some teachers and kids are racist. They say bad things about us. We're thick. We smell. Our uniforms are paru [dirty]. They shame us in class. Put us down. Don't even try to say our names properly. Say things about our whānau. They blame us for stealing when things go missing. Just cause we are Māori. (p.11)

If they pushed back against this type of attention they were often removed from class:

When you play up you get withdrawn from class. Yeah, you get sent out. Sometimes it's not your fault, but you don't get a chance to tell your side until you get to the deputy principal. So, you tell your story and are allowed back, but you're shamed out. It's stink. (p.11)

Engaged Māori students believed that their teachers did not see them as academic achievers, and many believed Māori were singled out as problematic:

We are nothing Māori if we are good in class, but we are Māori if we smoke pot or whatever. It's not just at this school either. I was a nothing Māori in class at intermediate, but I was a Māori in the kapahaka group there. (p.80)

Family members voiced similar concerns about negative stereotyping contributing to poor belief in themselves as Māori:

Some have poor self-esteem about who they are. They fail academically, and then schools give the message that Māori only do well in kapahaka and some sports. You know, if you are a Māori, you can sing and play the guitar, that kind of mentality. (p.133)

All groups talked about feelings of powerlessness to stop schools from appropriating Māori culture and using it for their own purposes:

Some other examples of this mentality are that the kapahaka [cultural performance] group is good enough to be pulled out for visitors, for prize-giving but not good enough to be part of the curriculum. The school says when and where they want the kapahaka group to perform. The kapahaka tutors aren't paid, and the girls have to practice mainly out of class time. What does that say about the importance of Māori? (pp. 133-134)

Many Māori learners and whānau were frustrated by feeling that they were not being listened to. In the main, engaged, and non-engaged learners reacted to this situation in two different ways causing division between these groups. Engaged Māori learners felt that if they wanted to achieve, they had to leave their Māori culture at home and separate themselves from the non-engaged Māori learners at school. This could have appeared as though they were tolerating the school's assimilation of them, while their separation from non-engaged Māori learners perpetuated the negative stereotyping that they had identified and complained about (Bishop & Berryman, 2006).

Non-engaged Māori learners agreed that they did act out in the classroom, this was often explained as a way of coping with the derogatory way they often felt that they and their cultural values were being subjected to. Some Māori learners explained their lack of tolerance as their only means for asserting self-determination. This lack of tolerance to what they saw as unfair treatment further entrenched the negative stereotyping and saw them likely to be caught up in the school's behavior management systems, stood down or withdrawn from classes or the school. This included the issue of absenteeism; many admitted to wagging (taking days off) or more commonly they dropped out of classes run by selected teachers (Bishop & Berryman, 2006).

In terms of what would engage them in learning, engaged and non-engaged students identified that their relationships with teachers was the most influential factor. They emphasized the importance of:

teachers' caring for them, having high expectations of them, knowing what students needed to learn, how to lead students to this knowledge and being able to manage classrooms in ways that supported their learning. In addition, Māori students revealed that the ways in which teachers taught, that is how they interacted with Māori students and the teaching strategies they used, influenced these students into either becoming engaged with learning or not. (p.254)

From the experiences of these students, the Te Kotahitanga Effective Teaching Profile and subsequent school reform emerged. This profile aligned with both what Māori students said would engage them more with learning and what the literature at the time was saying about culturally responsive pedagogy (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1995). Importantly, these Māori learners wanted to attend and have positive schooling experiences and they knew what would achieve this. They were asking to experience education but succeed as Māori. Engaged Māori learners compromised their cultural identity to succeed and tolerated inequities, racism, and mediocre learning experiences. Non engaged students were not willing to tolerate this and in turn resisted the system. This resistance ultimately saw them leave school before their official leave date, or be stood down, sent to Alternative Education, be expelled, or excluded.

4.2. The Voices of Kia Eke Panuku Māori Learners and Family Members

Building on Success followed directly after Te Kotahitanga and, as the name suggests, initiatives proposed were expected to build on the success of previous reform initiatives. The responses that follow come from a subset of schools in the lower North and South Island of Aotearoa, regions that had not previously participated in Te Kotahitanga. While learners were never grouped in any way other than by year group, their experiences suggest that schooling did not always support their learning. The voices in this paper come only from Māori learners, however, non-Māori learners in the same surveys, similarly complained about the pedagogy (Berryman et al., 2023). Like the Māori learners in Te Kotahitanga the power relations between themselves and their teachers was important. Students' responses suggested that some teachers disrespected them:

Some of the teachers here think that we learn by them [teachers] yelling at us and not actually talking to us and helping us to achieve. Only some of them are fun and talk to us as if we are equal, others talk down to us because they are higher up. Students need a bit more respect.

They believed schooling should be supportive and helpful:

I feel as though school is an environment which is supposed to encourage learning with teachers who are helpful, while some teachers excel at this, others need to up their game.

Some teachers aren't very helpful at this school and only three or four

teachers that I've had throughout my years have worried about my education and are willing to help me achieve my goals.

Again, Māori learners wanted to learn:

To be honest I don't particularly like school, but I like to learn, and school does that, so I do enjoy that bit.

They also believed they had some important ideas that teachers weren't listening to:

One problem I see is that teachers refuse to listen to our ideas about how we learn, and some go to the length of ignoring those, like myself, who speak out against the current system.

Māori learners explained the unfairness of not being listened to and constantly being negatively judged:

I feel like for me being a Māori student I have to try harder because of the bad reputation most of the Māori kids have at my school.

They raised the idea of facing barriers because they were Māori:

There is quite often a barrier between the teachers and students, and you can't be yourself without being judged.

This concern was also raised by family members who said:

Some teachers are proactive and show they care through their teaching styles and one-on-one when required, whilst there are others who could not really care less about my daughter.

At times she has felt that some of her teachers do not know how she works best and have not engaged with her properly or have taken her questioning as a sign she is testing them rather than she is seeking clarity in the tasks.

Power relations, manifested by teachers, played out in a variety of ways. Students explained:

Some teachers care about my learning, some teachers don't, some teachers respect students, some teachers don't, some teachers also see being a teacher as a way to be better than students and treat them like they are less than them...that's just the way it is.

They could readily identify teachers who wanted to have a positive relationship with them, however, they believed that this relationship did not always extend to teachers helping them to learn. Some Māori students who wanted success at any cost tolerated the teaching they experienced and looked for other opportunities to learn. One student said:

College has been alright; it's supported me with my sports and fitness, but the education side is a bit rough. Some teachers know how to work with students and other teachers just tell us what to do instead of teaching. They

lose the point of teaching. Some just tell and others explain and show. I guess that's just how it goes.

Other Māori learners believed this treatment was biased and unfair. They became disengaged, stopped attending classes or let people know of their frustrations:

Some stuff we're learning is so boring, why don't we get a say in what we learn?! Some teachers are good, but some don't know how we learn.

School is boring most of the time... I don't really do my work because I'm that bored.

Some teachers make school really boring and depressing. I don't go to those classes often.

Family members shared their concerns, suggesting that some teachers were unwilling to change:

Some of the older teachers who are nearing retirement are not willing to make any changes to the way they teach and only teach the students that are high achievers in the class and tend to forget about the students who struggle.

Teachers respect me and my child/children and we respect them [an item in the survey] should be answered separately as we respect the teachers, BUT the teachers don't respect us as parents.

Racially negative stereotypes and the school's power to define or assimilate learners' identities was clearly identified and being resisted. One family member shared that:

They [students] have to be white to be right—teachers don't listen—they think they know what it means to be Māori—they tell me about Māori success—a pretty quick look at the school's results tells you this is all rhetoric—they still have a punitive discipline system of meanness detentions—there is nothing more demotivating for students than this archaic system that makes teachers feel good and kids feel like criminals.

Whilst others commented:

If they [students] are asking questions, they are very rarely listened to... Basically told to stop disrupting the class and sent out. More understanding of my children is needed.

Our son is shy about being Māori. He knows that being Māori isn't the "done" thing at [the school]. It happens on the side but isn't integrated into the school ethos.

Many teachers do not understand how Māori students learn and they are not willing to change their practice to suit Māori learners. Most teach in a very traditional way—they do not empower the students to lead their own learning.

Parents were concerned that their children were not allowed to lead their own learning, and they believed that their cultural identity was being compromised by racist teachers:

I am very disappointed on occasions where my child is placed in a position of having to choose between her culture and other club activities... Having to make a choice between something she is passionate about (which could develop into a career, if given the opportunity) and her culture, is so wrong. There are some very racist teachers...my daughter feels disadvantaged by being Māori.

4.3. Links to Classroom Teachers

In Kia Eke Panuku schools, the overall classroom walkthrough evidence and teachers' survey comments showed that while teachers talked about the importance of positive relationships with learners, traditional transmission pedagogy was being used by most teachers and Māori learners were being talked about and treated quite differently to their non-Māori peers. Many teachers believed that cultural affirmation and sustainability was provided by having a school cultural group or bilingual signage and iconography around the school. The addition of cultural activities belonging to the "minoritised group" such as these, have emerged from a colonial education system that has systematically redefined and prescribed what being Māori means and therefore what an appropriate response is. These activities are often seen as separate to the curriculum and pedagogy of teachers. We have referred to such activities as "Brown Frills" (Berryman et al., 2023). One teacher, apparently blind to the culture of Māori learners being deliberately redefined or erased through educational policies of assimilation, or their own deficit theorising, justified it in survey responses as:

A lot of Māori students at this school are disconnected from their roots and therefore their values are not Māori-based but a mix of Modern European/gang/low socio economic/and disconnected cultural values.

Another teacher justified negative stereotypes as:

Some [Māori students] seem determined to live up to the non-achieving stereotype and are just not interested in attempting to better themselves or their current situation in life through education.

While this had improved somewhat, over the three years of Kia Eke Panuku, many teachers showed in the surveys that they still believed their pedagogy was far better than families and Māori learners said it was. Although examples of cultural brown frills were provided at the school level, Māori learners were clearly tolerating or resisting, unequal power relations and unhelpful transmission pedagogy in classrooms. The brown tolerance or resistance shown by Māori learners and their families continued to be overpowered by the historical power and privilege being perpetuated by the Crown through the school.

5. Implications for the Future

Our history shows that impositional power relations have happened to Māori at least since the beginning of formal education. Many Māori clearly understood that knowledge from both English and Māori worldviews were needed to be successful, but they understood and tolerated that Māori knowledge would have to be protected and nurtured in their homes. The speed and thoroughness with which Māori knowledge would be removed from schools and subsequently homes, was unprecedented. The resistance of Māori to this situation and the emergence of Māori determined solutions such as Te Kōhanga Reo and kaupapa Māori education settings followed in the 70s. Comparative evidence from kaupapa Māori education settings is starkly different. These learners, learn as Māori, and they are more likely to lead the nation in both academic achievement and cultural participation. Unfortunately, however, there may be as few as 3% of Māori learners in what constitutes Kaupapa Māori settings (News Hub, 2023). The consequence for many Māori continues to be Intergenerational harm.

School reform initiatives since the turn of this century provide consistent examples of power relations, maintained by the system. The voices of Māori youth and families, gathered a decade apart, evidence the power relations that undermine students' belief in themselves as Māori and detrimentally influences their success in schooling. In both Te Kotahitanga and Kia Eke Panuku, some Māori youth were tolerating this status quo and “played the game” to achieve educational success, albeit at the expense of their culture. This was in stark contrast to youth who were not prepared to tolerate behaviors they experienced as unfair or racist and either disengaged from schooling or resisted and was effectively removed from schooling.

In 2020, a new solution to solve the problem of educational disparities for Māori learners and their families was launched. The latest **Education and Training Act (2020)** now requires schools to give effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi, the principles of which include *kāwanatanga* (governance and more recently co-governance), *tino rangatiratanga* (ability to exercise authority) and *ōritetanga* (interdependent relationships, bringing rights and responsibilities to both groups). The launch itself was poorly socialized as many school leaders and newly elected, school governance members indicated at national conferences in 2022, that while they knew about the National Education and Learning Priorities (NELPs) they had not made the connections to some of their new requirements required of the Act. Section 127 of this Act now requires schools, through their Boards, to be:

- working to ensure its plans, policies and local curriculum reflect local tikanga Māori, mātauranga Māori and te ao Māori.
- taking all reasonable steps to make instruction available in tikanga Māori and te reo Māori.
- achieving equitable outcomes for Māori learners.

After more than a century and a half of belittling and removing Māori culture from schooling and embedding intergenerational failure for Māori into the hearts

and psyche of the nation, this solution—write these requirements into the Act and make schools accountable—appears at first glance to be disingenuous. However, with the required support and socialization it could work.

The promise of te Tiriti, for both parties, intended *ōritetanga*, a power-sharing relationship of mutual benefit for a harmonious and peaceful future together, each accepting the obligations to nurture the other yet respecting the right of both to self-determination—a profound and visionary basis on which to build a nation (Henare, 2003; Jackson, 2017). Underpinning this promise is a sense of rightness that comes from people accepting their obligations to each other (Jackson, 2017, 2019; Mutu, 2019). However, an Act that could make this situation a reality was neither celebrated at its launch, nor effectively socialized by the government of the day to educators or indeed to the consumers of schooling. Rather, the act was formalized with schools given a reporting requirement via the NELPs; in effect continuing to deny this historical power-sharing promise.

In Aotearoa, the over-representation of Māori in almost all our nation's negative social indicators, undoubtedly remains a major national challenge. Unfortunately, the pattern of power relations is at the mercy of whichever political party is governing. By the end of 2023, a new triparty, coalition government was in place and clearly questioning the positioning and role of the Treaty of Waitangi, whichever language version was being used or part of the system was being referred to. Potentially a return to the historical experience received from the Crown's response to the Treaty of Waitangi for Māori—the intentional imposition of the colonizer's worldview and the belittlement of Māori. Māori students will continue to be metaphorically told to leave their culture at the school gate to participate in education; to show tolerance or be forcibly removed by a system that does not want to hear them. Unfortunately, the potential for *ōritetanga* or respectful, interdependent power relations and shared humanity that was promised to both signatories, Māori, and non-Māori, through the articles of te Tiriti o Waitangi will once again be silenced. Power relations between the colonizer and Indigenous groups are an area where much research needs to be undertaken in Aotearoa and other parts of the world. Perhaps if the hearts and minds of our nation, heard and understood both sides of our stories, we would strengthen our shared beliefs, move past the rhetoric of our shared histories, to a point where we can reconcile our differences and move forward with purposeful and shared action. We believe that when teachers work with Māori learners in a more proactive, power-sharing manner, aspirations for educational advancement are promoted and more rewarding outcomes are experienced for all concerned. When we can do this, equity, excellence, and shared humanity in schooling can be the reality for Māori learners and for all learners.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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