

Re-claiming Traditional Māori Ways of Knowing, Being, and Doing, to Re-frame Our Realities and Transform Our Worlds

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Tiira wāhakaruri, wāhakariri ināianei, hei hāngai wāhakarua

(EMBRACE THE PAST, PREPARE NOW TO SHAPE THE FUTURE)

INTRODUCTION

The colonisation of New Zealand by the British was predicated upon the ranking of people into higher or lower forms of human existence and “assumptions of racial, religious, cultural and technological superiority” (Walker, 1990, p. 9). This was achieved, in part, by the economic growth and expansion of a Western imperialistic notion, which used colonisation as a vehicle for achieving power and control (L. Smith, 1999, 2008) perpetuating and enforcing the image of a successful, dominant Western elite over a perceived “lesser” inferior but conforming indigenous Māori culture (Johnston & Pratt, 2003). Māori were viewed as morally, socially, culturally, and intellectually inferior to Europeans. Hokowhitu (2004) stated the racial traits accorded to Māori included being depraved, sinful, idle, dirty, immoral, and unintelligent, the antithesis of those accorded to Europeans who were viewed as righteous, upright, intellectual, honourable, and liberal. With stereotypes such as these, the Māori child became schooled in the “psychology of colonialism.”

This chapter briefly discusses the history of European schooling for Māori including early-years education. It then explores the framings of the Māori learner, identity, and culture that resulted from the colonisation and European schooling for Māori. Finally, it investigates the need to reclaim and reframe Māori ways of knowing, being, and doing in order to make sense of the world and transform Māori realities.

THE HISTORY OF SCHOOLING FOR MĀORI

The history of European schooling for Māori in Aotearoa, New Zealand, is one of cultural dislocation, deprivation, and subjugation. Much has been researched and written on this by Barrington, Beaglehole, Belich, Binney, Bishop, Conesidine and Conesidine, King, Simon, Smith and Smith, and Walker. The early missionaries believed Māori lived in a state of "barbarism," with inferior intellect, language, and culture. Thus, in order to save their souls, Māori needed to be civilised and Europeanised (Belich, 2001; Harris, 2007; Hokowhitu, 2004; May, 2003, 2005). The aim of the early mission schools therefore was to interrupt the transmission of Māori culture, language, and worldviews and replace them with what was perceived to be the far superior and civilised European cultural norms, thus to transform Māori into "Brown Britons" (Belich, 2001).

Māori were schooled to provide a ready supply of workers but not to participate in higher education or access further employment opportunities. This limited curriculum was based upon the argument that Māori were "suited by nature to manual work" (Simon, 1998, p. 11). This two-tiered system of schooling was maintained over time and continued to be a source of cultural conflict and oppression for Māori children (Harris, 2007). Walker (1991, pp. 7–8) claimed that "this institutionalisation of racism within the Education Department and its schools explains the existence and entrenched nature of the education gap between Māori and Pākehā." These deficit perspectives of Māori have continued to inform and justify successive education policies. "State controlled education resulted in Māori being educated within a system that not only devalued them as a people but stressed the negative features of Māori knowledge and culture" (Berryman, 2008, p. 33).

The first infant school in New Zealand was reported in 1832 at Pahia. In 1833, Captain W. Jacobs visited the infant school, which taught around twenty-six young children, some European but mainly Māori. He was impressed with the moral culture of the school as much as with the school itself (May, Kaur, & Prochner, 2006). This is congruent with the aims and objectives of the British Infant School Society, established some eight years earlier, to save children from the deprivation of their home environments and to civilise them. May and colleagues

British street children and Māori young children. "An infant school education, whether it was to remove young children from the British gutters, or their Māori [kaingā's] [homes], would save them from their uncivilised and disorderly worlds" (pp. 3–4). William Yates's (1835) account of early New Zealand also emphasised the need for such remedies. He stated:

Formerly, a [Māori] parent would never correct a child for anything it might do; it was allowed to run riot in all that was vile, and have its own way in everything. The evil of this was palpable: in New Zealand, as in every other country, a spoiled child is a great plague; but if the pest was in any one place more severely felt than in another, it was here. Brought up in evil, and without restraint or law in their youth, it could be no great wonder if, as men, they indulged in every vice (p. 241)

Urbanisation in the 1940s and 1950s resulted in up to 70% of the Māori population migrating from the rural tribal areas to urban environments and schools, where Māori educational disadvantage became increasingly visible in urban primary schools and raised issues for both primary and early childhood education (Hokowhitu, 2004). Urban teachers were unprepared for the influx of Māori children, and often identified them as failures, lacking the basic experiences of Pākehā children (May, 2005). This also coincided with intelligence and language research of the time and the ideas of cultural deficits, which positioned Māori children as both intellectually and linguistically deficient (Bishop & Glynn, 1999; Harris, 2007). The Māori child was therefore viewed as outside the norms of development and in need of remediation. In 1946, anthropologists Ernest and Pearl Beaglehole argued that there was a "need to bring to bear upon the Māori child a somewhat different technique of infant and child training" so that they would "fit more clearly into the patterns of Pākehā civilisations. By the time the child comes to Pākehā school it is already too late" (cited in May, 2005, p. 72).

In 1961, the Department of Māori Affairs, Hunn Report, for the first time provided statistical evidence of Māori disadvantage in the areas of health, housing, employment, and education. It identified the impact of the two-tiered schooling system and the subversion of Māori culture on Māori educational achievement, reporting a "statistical blackout" in higher education (Walker, 1991, p. 8). Blame for any "statistical blackout" was placed squarely with Māori parents and culture (Hokowhitu, 2004). The focus of successive education policies and practices was to rectify the "Māori problem" and overcome the perceived cultural inadequacies of Māori children (Fleras & Spoonley, 1999; Simon, 1986). The effects of these policies are still evident today, with Māori children disengaging from the education system, and consistently achieving disproportionately lower results on national averages (Smith & Smith, 1990). Hook (2007) added that this dissociation has resulted in a "dichotomy of existence for Māori, alienation of the minority, disengagement from the education system, loss of language, and loss of culture" (p. 2).

FRAMING MĀORI

With the devaluing of the Māori cultural base, Māori became conditioned to dominant Western perspectives, and began to accept European representations of Māori culture, identity, and knowledge. What it meant in effect was that being Māori was defined by the coloniser in a situation shaped by colonialism (Memmi (1957). Nandy (1983) likened this to “cognitive colonialism” or colonialism of the mind in that the perceived images of the dominant culture are a construct of colonialism, a false paradigm. These images further the cause of a colonising empire by creating a powerful intelligent all-knowing Western image in contrast to a weaker, unintelligent, un-knowing indigenous. The erosion of the Māori culture, Māori knowledge, and Māori identity served to protect and promote the interests of non-Māori (G. Smith, 1988, 1990; Walker, 1987, 1990). It provided space for non-Māori to dictate which aspects of Māori culture and knowledge were beneficial and relevant to them, and which weren't, disregarding the rest as subsidiary and/or romantic (Bishop, 2008; G. Smith, 2009). Non-Māori were therefore able to justify their power positions and argue that it was better that they think for and act on behalf of Māori. Freire (1970, p. 112) framed this in the context of dominant elites, stating that the “dominant elites can and do think without the people—although they do not permit themselves the luxury of failing to think about the people in order to know them better and thus dominate them more efficiently.” With this ideology, they were able to present the interests of the more dominant group “as the interests of all groups within society, thereby concealing and denying that subordinate groups interests are not being met, or even that they may have different interests (Coxon, Jenkins, Marshall, & Massey, 1994, p. 13).

FORCED IDENTITIES

Forced identities are those that are formed under conditions of deprivation and have been distorted by the realities of living within a marginal status. They are primarily defined by outsider groups and forced upon others who have little control over the process. The power to describe and define normality has remained with the coloniser, as has the ability to marginalise and pathologise others. With the power to define came control over the educational process, and the ability to dictate which aspects of Māori epistemologies were acceptable for application within the schooling arena. Māori students were therefore subjected to watered-down perspectives of their own culture as seen through the eyes of the oppressor. Māori were often portrayed as simple-minded, happy-go-lucky natives who were obedient and *grateful* to the oppressor, or dirty, sinful, irresponsible, unintelligent, lazy

ourselves into. Within these stereotypical frames, Māori began to accept and even joke about the assigned cultural dispositions. Memmi (1957, p. 81) described this when he stated that “he [*sic*] talks of it with amused affability, he jokes about it, he takes up all the usual expressions, perfects them and invents others.” It becomes a survival mechanism, a happy-go-lucky, lazy, and unintelligent stance in life. The oppressed joke about their ignorance, their laziness, and their inability to compete with the oppressor, and after generations of exposure—their children believe it.

The inability of Western education curricula to place positive lenses on Māori children's identity, culture, and language perpetuates the concept that Māori culture and language are unintellectual, trivial, and strange. Māori knowledge is relegated to hobbies and extracurricular and after-school activities. The framing of Māori culture and identity as unworthy leads the Māori child to suffer an “identity problem because it binds them to minority group status with all its attendant disadvantages” (Walker, 1987, p. 176). Understanding and experiencing what it is to be Māori and accessing positive constructs of Māori success and achievement within educational and societal contexts are denied.

The loss of intellectual and cultural knowledges has been compounded by Māori being “constantly fed messages about their worthlessness, laziness, dependence and lack of ‘higher’ order human qualities” (L. Smith, 1999, p. 4). Berryman (2008) claimed that a “major contributor to this problem is that the years of colonisation have resulted in the coloniser, and not Māori, being largely responsible for defining what it is to be Māori” (p. 52). Within mainstream society, it is therefore no surprise to learn that Māori are failures at all levels of Western education paradigms.

RE-CLAIMING

It is only when the oppressed find the oppressor out and become involved in the organised struggle for their liberation that they begin to believe in themselves. This discovery cannot be purely intellectual but must involve action: nor can it be limited to mere activism, but must include serious reflection, only then will it be a praxis. (Freire, 1970, p. 47)

Reclaiming one's identity, or becoming the person one has always been, not only takes time but also is often a process of searching, learning, and unlearning (Parker, 2000). Reclaiming one's identity is a process of personal and cultural transformation that requires the unmasking of identities that are not one's own. Unmasking identities inherited as a legacy of domination and oppression such as slavery and colonisation are part of this process. These identities include negative attitudes to self that are oppressive and internalised. They also involve mostly unconscious beliefs about the superiority of the dominant culture and inferiority of one's own

Unlearning what has been unconsciously internalised is an important part of the process of developing a positive cultural identity.

Part of the process is learning their own history from the perspective of members of their own culture, reclaiming what has been lost or unknown to them, and reframing what has often been cast subconsciously as negative in a more positive way. (Tisdell, 2001, p. 147)

Berryman (2008, p. 28) suggested “that reconnection with one’s own heritage enables greater opportunity and ability to reclaim the power to define oneself and, in so doing, defines solutions that will be more effective for Māori, now and in the future.” Freire (1970) discussed the concept of “naming the world” whereby “those who have been denied their primordial right to speak their word must first reclaim this right and prevent the continuation of this dehumanizing aggression” (p. 61).

He asserted that the naming of the world is “an act of creation; it must not serve as a crafty instrument for the domination of one man by another.... The naming of the world, which is an act of creation and re-creation, is not possible if it is not infused by love” (p. 62). For Māori to identify and name ourselves as Māori means much more than to simply stand and declare: *I am Māori*. It means that we have learnt and are still learning from our educational past, that we are actively working to provide educational environments and curricula that permeate positive images of Māori as real and relevant for all children, of all races, toward the reclamation of Māori identities and, therefore, the transformation of our worlds.

Freire (1970) suggested that “reclaiming identity” is a living example of praxis of action and reflection and that true transformation and change can only be achieved if Māori learn to love or re-love ourselves first and not at the expense of the coloniser. To be able to forgive and then offer love and understanding of and for the aggressor is crucial in dismantling the violent acts of framing Māori and inflicting forced identities within Western educational constructs. The need to name comes not from the desire to oppress and dehumanise another, but to acknowledge, learn from, and move positively forward in the quest to become liberated and, in so doing, more human. As Freire (1970, p. 58) asserted, “the oppressed must unveil the world of oppression and through the praxis commit themselves to its transformation.”

Learning to reclaim ourselves as Māori and learning what it means to us to be Māori are small steps in the act of naming ourselves. The courage to accept the past and learn from it requires the strength to grow as a person, as a Māori person, and become more “human” rather than “dehumanise” another through our own insecurities, confusion, and internal dilemma (Freire, 1970). This process often involves internal conflicts, internal questioning, and self-doubt as we search to free ourselves from the restraints of negative Western constructs of identities (Fanon, 1967; Memmi, 1957; Nandy, 1983). Walker (1990, p. 235) supports this when he

Zealand) is not a gift conferred on the Māori by the oppressor. The Māori have to lead their own liberation struggle, a task Pākehā are free to join as auxiliaries.”

REFRAMING

Memmi (1957) discussed the need to leave behind the “borrowed language of the coloniser,” or in this context the borrowed educational philosophies and practices of non-Māori by establishing culturally appropriate educational pathways for Māori children, to benefit all children in Aotearoa, New Zealand. Reclaiming our ways of knowing, being, and doing is a theory of change. It attempts to empower communities by using the past as a learning tool in conceptualising what Māori need to do to ensure that our perspectives and knowledges are valued and represented appropriately. We need to “understand where the pain comes from and why.... All that mega-theory will not get us anywhere because without understanding, mega-theory does not mean anything; does not reflect reality; does not reflect people’s experience” (Monture-Angus, 1995, p. 20). If Māori are to re-claim traditional Māori ways of knowing, being, and doing, to reframe our realities and transform our worlds, then it must be within an educational framework that identifies with and represents the “words, ideas, conditions and habits central to [our Māori] experience” (Shor, 1993, p. 31). Reframing Māori epistemologies in educational environments sets an agenda for change. It challenges the traditional modes of power and control between the oppressor and the oppressed. Reclaiming traditional Māori ways of knowing, being, and doing is critical to reclaiming young Māori children, reframing their realities, and transforming their worlds.

KAUPAPA MAORI

Kaupapa can be translated as meaning strategy, principle, a way to proceed, a plan, or a philosophy. Embedded within the concept of kaupapa is a notion of acting strategically, of proceeding purposively (L. Smith, 1999). Kaupapa Māori is a movement of resistance and of revitalisation, incorporating theories that are embedded within te ao Māori (Berryman, 2008). “Kaupapa Māori speaks to the validity and legitimacy of being Māori and acting Māori: to be Māori is taken for granted. Māori language, culture, knowledge and values are accepted in their own right” (G. Smith, 1992, p. 15). Kaupapa Māori relates not only to Māori philosophies but also to actions and practices derived from such philosophies. Kaupapa Māori theory, therefore, is not new, nor is it a refurbished, refined, version of Western theories.

Kaupapa Māori is twofold: it provides a critique of existing structures, and seeks transformative strategies, thus creating space for other cultural perspectives to be recognised, and validated. This involves centralising the position of Māori knowledge, moving it from its marginal position of "abnormal" or "unofficial" knowledge to an equal status with Western knowledge. According to Barnes (2000), "Kaupapa Māori begins as a challenge to accepted norms and assumptions about knowledge and the way it is constructed and continues as a search for understanding within a Māori worldview" (p. 4).

Kaupapa Māori, according to G. Smith (1997), is both theory and transformative praxis. It has evolved from Māori communities and has succeeded in supporting fundamental structural changes in educational interventions. Kaupapa Māori theory has become an important and coherent philosophy and practice for raising Māori consciousness, supporting resistance and encouraging transformative action and reflection (praxis) in order to progress Māori cultural capital and learning outcomes within education. G. Smith (2003) referred to it as a revolution that involved a mindset shift of Māori people "away from waiting for things to be done to them, to doing things for themselves; a shift away from an emphasis on reactive politics to an emphasis on being more proactive; a shift from negative motivation to positive motivation" (G. Smith, 2003, p. 2).

Kaupapa Māori relates to learning and learners being seen as deeply located, embedded within Māori ways of knowing and being. Māori ways of knowing and being are fundamentally different from those of non-Māori, influenced and shaped by historical and contemporary interpretive systems or worlds. It is these interpretive systems that Māori learners inhabit, enact, and reflect in their learning. The systems consist of tools, patterns of reasoning, symbols, language, shared meanings, and customary practices that are required to competently participate within a particular social group, community, or culture (Weenie, 2008). Kaupapa Māori theory and practice provide a powerful vehicle to address the educational aspirations of Māori. As Mahuika and Bishop (2011) stated, "What has been identified as being essential is the realisation that at an abstract metaphorical level Māori cultural knowledge offers a framework for realistic and workable options for dealing with Māori educational underachievement" (p. 4). It is about affirming and legitimating Māori ways of knowing within wider New Zealand educational contexts.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, reclaiming traditional Māori ways of knowing, being, and doing, to reframe our realities and transform our worlds, aims to locate positive constructs of identity for the Māori child, which are grounded in the material existence of

experiential learnings of Māori (Freire, 1970). For as Marx pointed out, it is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness (Marx, 1958). It is about altering traditional constructs of education, of reclaiming and reframing Māori ways of knowing, being, and doing, in order to make sense of the world, to be an "active participant" and in so doing conceive faith in our epistemological frameworks, validating our sense of self and belonging within educational pursuits (Freire, 1970). A commitment to Māori epistemology is fundamental to reframing Māori realities. The relevance of the authentic "voice" of Māori and the experiential or lived experiences of that voice is the basis for positive, reflective, transformative action (Monture-Angus, 1995). As Freire (1970) wrote, "The oppressed must be their own example in the struggle for their own redemption" (p. 36).

Tirotowhakamuri, whakarite ināianei hei hāngai whakamua
(Embrace the past, prepare now to shape the future)

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