In this presentation I draw on three decades of my research into biculturalism in New Zealand. Focusing on Maori education in particular I compare the intentions of the early biculturalists with the present situation to ask: What is the current state of the separate Maori education system developed within biculturalism? Has the establishment of the separate kaupapa Maori education revived the Maori language? What about its effect on the achievement of Maori children? What is the situation of Maori children in mainstream education? And finally a theoretical question: What are the consequences of institutionalising ethnicity in education for New Zealand’s liberal-democratic society? Has New Zealand solved the problem faced by education systems in liberal-democratic countries with ethnically diverse populations: How to increase participation and achievement by marginalised groups yet maintain the role of schools as integrating institutions for the national polity. Or, has the opposite process occurred – that recognising social groups within the public sphere according to ethnicity leads to the re-racialisation of society, and by so doing, subverts the very universalism upon which liberal democracies are based. Today I will put the case that the latter is the outcome in New Zealand.

New Zealand, like other liberal-democracies in the 1970s rejected liberal ideas of integrating diverse populations into the social contract of the modern nation-state, turning to culturalism instead. Culturalism is a pre-modern concept of social organisation. It includes multiculturalism, biculturalism (the New Zealand version) and mono-culturalism. It is the
idea that a social group’s historical identity, which has a contemporary manifestation in various combinations of physical appearance, language, religion, cultural beliefs and practices, and so on, is the primary source of social belonging - one to be acknowledged politically. However, despite the rights discourse used to promote bi- and multi-culturalism and the racist discourse used to promote mono-culturalism, all three forms are racial ideologies. This is the case because the criteria for belonging to the social group is set down in the genetic link to the historical group. In New Zealand, Maori leaders are quite clear about this genetic criteria (Mahuika, 1998). For example, ‘If you are born a Maori, then you have to accept the consequences of that biological fact, and the culture that comes with it’ (Mead 1997). ‘A person who is 1/1024 requires only nine or ten generations ancestry to be identified with a full Maori. By contrast, a person who does not have one dot of Maori ancestry is unable to do this.’ (Winiata, 1988, cited in Tremewan, 2006, p. 110).

This causes one of several conundrums for liberals who support biculturalism. Efforts to gloss the race concept mean that there are two opposing official definitions of Maori identity. According to Statistics New Zealand (2005) ethnicity is the ethnic group or groups that people identify with or feel they belong to. Ethnicity is a measure of cultural affiliation, as opposed to race, ancestry, nationality or citizenship. Ethnicity is self perceived and people can belong to more than one ethnic group (my italics). Yet in an Orwellian separation of a word from its meaning and then attaching the word to the completely opposite meaning, the actual official practice contradicts the rhetoric and uses the genetic descent criteria. For example, a person must be a descendant of a Maori to be on the Maori electoral roll and education scholarships require evidence of Maori descent. This is not ‘ethnic identity of one’s choosing’.

The second conundrum facing biculturalists is the changing face of the project. Originally an attempt by the liberal-Left section of the new middle class to redistribute New Zealand’s considerable wealth to the marginalised – a group in which Maori dominated – biculturalism was propelled by a rights-based, re-distributive agenda featuring a social justice rhetoric. For the first decade, what I refer to as inclusive biculturalism was designed to bring Maori in from the margins of society, to give the liberal-Left an ethnic identity as ‘pakeha’ (a Maori term meaning white British settlers), and to revive the Maori language and other cultural practices. However, by the late 1980s, biculturalism had taken an exclusive form. It referred increasingly to a relationship between the corporate tribes and the government. The former
emerged as major players when the Treaty of Waitangi settlements, originally intended to compensate for historical injustices such as illegal land confiscations and to benefit all Maori, were awarded to those tribes that could prove their existence in 1840 – the year of the signing of the Treaty (Round, 2000, p. 668). From 1987 the corporate tribes have developed considerable economic and political ambitions.

It is not my intention today to discuss these ambitions in any detail except to say that the rights-based social democratic agenda of redistribution has been totally derailed by the emergence of the corporate tribe and its governing elite. Tribal wealth is based on the privatisation or proposed privatisation of considerable public resources, including land, fisheries, forests, minerals, geothermal resources, the foreshore and seabed, freshwater, and capital infrastructure (*Iwi Infrastructure and Investment*, 2010, p. ii). Tribal political ambitions now extend beyond the idea of a ‘partnership’ with the government – an interpretation of the Treaty that dates only to 1987 – to proposals for a constitutional arrangement (Durie, 2009).

Those Maori for whom biculturalism initially received its support have not benefitted. Chapple’s (2000, p. 115) warning that the Treaty settlements ‘risk being captured by the considerable number of Maori who already have jobs, skills, high incomes and good prospects’ added to an earlier warning by Poata-Smith (1996, p. 110) and also to my own (Rata, 1996). According to Poata-Smith the emphasis on culture in the struggle for equality ‘resulted in a dramatic expansion of opportunities for middle-class professional Maori in the state apparatus, education system, health and the media, but has been ‘an unmitigated disaster for the vast majority of working-class Maori whanau’ [extended families]. The unelected Maori Statutory Board on the Auckland City Council illustrates the types of positions and remuneration available to the middle-class professional Maori who occupy the structural positions made available by biculturalism. Indeed the Board’s task of auditing the Council’s adherence to the Treaty of Waitangi exemplifies such Treaty-informed work. In addition, there is a small and highly influential corporate tribal elite, whose wealth is the direct result of the Treaty settlements. A third group of Maori are those in whose name, biculturalism was first developed. These are Maori with no tribal affiliation who are ‘some of those most disadvantaged in society’ (Gill et al. 2010, p. 19). As a consequence of Treaty settlements, inequality between the elite, the new professional class, and the poor has actually increased. Callister (2007: 24) notes that ‘Maori living standards in 2004 showed
increased within-group inequality’ as the number of Maori in severe poverty increased, from 7 percent in 2000, to 17 percent in 2004 (Jensen et. al. 2006).

All this means that the initial social justice, redistributive agenda - the reason for biculturalism in the first place - has not been realised. Research is needed into understanding the current position of the biculturalists yet as I explain in tomorrow’s presentation, the control by a small group of academics over any research ‘of interest to Maori’ is such that critical research is near to impossible⁶. There is no doubt however that increasing numbers of New Zealanders are troubled by the adherence to the Treaty of Waitangi that is well institutionalised in New Zealand’s public organisations and policies as a result of its inclusion in legislation. A 1999 survey of attitudes to the Treaty and the Waitangi Tribunal found that the Treaty ‘is a major point of division within the country’. Only five percent of those surveyed ‘think that the Treaty should be strengthened and given the full force of law’ (my italics). ‘About 34 percent want the Treaty abolished’ (Perry and Webster, 1999, p. 74). Ten years later, and despite considerable promotion (see for example the Treaty Roadshow that toured the country for four months in 2006), the Human Rights Commission’s annual progress report on Treaty issues for 2009 (HRC, 2009) found declining numbers who agree that the Treaty is the country’s founding document (a central idea of the latter period of biculturalism).

However, my focus today is on the third conundrum facing New Zealand as a consequence of its adherence to exclusive biculturalism. Specifically I examine the project’s unintended consequences for education. I look at the situation for Maori achievement and the Maori language to ask what are the outcomes of biculturalism after 40 years?

**Maori education**

Approximately 14 percent of the school age population are identified as Maori. Of these, about 84 percent are educated in the mainstream system while about 16 percent of Maori students are in Maori-medium education. This is where the Maori language makes up 12 percent or more of the instruction. Nearly 4 percent are in the separate kaupapa Maori education system where 80-100 percent of the instruction is in the Maori language. This indigenous education system includes institutions for early childhood, primary, secondary, tertiary sectors, and the production of Maori indigenous knowledge (a subject I discuss
tomorrow). Kaupapa Maori is committed to educating children and young people into tribal society and into Maori knowledge through the medium of the Maori language. For example, a recent Ministry of Education document states that: ‘As Maori, tribal identity is paramount in development a strong sense of self.’ ‘Iwi-specific [tribal] curriculum enables the child to know their [sic] place in the world’ (Takao et al, 2010, p. 15).

Considerable claims are made for the success of the kaupapa Maori indigenous system. In this next section I examine the claims that kaupapa Maori is successful in its goals of raising Maori achievement and reviving the Maori language. I conclude that the evidence does not support these claims.

A SUCCESSFUL EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM?

According to:

G.H. Smith, ‘Maori have experienced a 25-year revolution and are on the threshold of a new wave of development and change’ (cited in Gerritsen, 2009: 11).

‘The significance of the transformation of thinking created by the development of Te Kohanga Reo was that, in the absence of organised resistance, there was enough critique to provide a counter hegemonic possibility.’(L. T. Smith, 2006: 250-1)

‘Maori participation in early childhood education and tertiary education or in health programmes would not have reached the heights it has if cultural frameworks such as kohanga reo had not been employed. The experience of the past 25 years is where a Maori cultural framework has been used; it has led to some quite major transformations” (Durie in Laugesen, 2009: 26).

Separate Maori institutions, have ‘made a major contribution to the education system as a whole by giving learners a new means through which to achieve education success’ (Education Information and Group Analysis 2009: 2).
‘. . .recent NCEA results confirm strongly the academic success of kura graduates (Ministry of Education, 2007) . . .' (Takao, Grennell, McKeeg and Wehipeihana, 2010, p. 18).

Those claims are taken up by international agencies:


‘New Zealand’s *kohanga reo* movement has demonstrated what a powerful force indigenous language revitalisation can be, not only for education but also for social cohesion’ (2010, p. 206).

‘The movement began in 1981 and ‘thirteen years later there were 800 kohanga reo catering for 14,000 children’ (2010, p. 206).

The Canadian Nunavut Project, in recommending that ‘a strong program of bilingual education must be adopted’ for the Inuit of the Nunavut territory, proposes a model based on New Zealand Maori language nests Berger (2006, p. iv). These are the early childhood centres, known as kohanga reo, that are the first stage of the kaupapa Maori (Maori-based or indigenous) education system. ‘New Zealand’s *kohanga reo* movement has demonstrated what a powerful force indigenous language revitalisation can be, not only for education but also for social cohesion’ (Berger, 2010, p. 206).


**What is the reality?**

**Kohanga reo**

- 1982 Establishment
This is a dramatic decline in kohanga numbers.

Kura kaupapa Maori (primary Maori schools based on tribal principles where instruction is 80-100 percent in the Maori language).

- ‘3.8 percent of all Maori students attend the kura’ (Education Counts 2006).
- 81-100 percent Maori medium of instruction, the number of Maori learners dropped from 1,092 in year 8 to 545 in year 9. (Education Counts 2009b, School Roll Summary Report of 2009).

These figures show a huge decline in the numbers of children attending both the kohanga and the kura. In addition, there is also a decline in students numbers in Maori-medium education (not kura kaupapa Maori) were 52-80 percent of the instruction is in the Maori language from 610 students in year 8 to 257 in year 9 (Education Counts 2010).

Tertiary Education

The kaupapa Maori approach is promoted as a successful means of addressing long-term Maori educational under-achievement. According to leading Maori educationalist, Professor Linda Smith, ‘The achievements in Maori education have been determined if not remarkable. Maori participation rates in tertiary education are high and Maori educational institutions have proven to be sustainable and resilient in the face of inequalities in the system’ (L.T. Smith 2006, p. 251). Wananga (Maori government funded tertiary institutions based on an indigenous Maori approach) are promoted as the way to attract young Maori males who have failed at school back into education by offering culturally appropriate basic education. There is a widespread perception that this approach is successful. According to media commentator, Garth George, ‘There is a quiet revolution occurring in education
throughout the nation and it is taking place in Maori-led institutions, the largest of which is Te Whare Wananga o Aotearoa’ (George 2009, p. A11).

However, Paul Callister’s research into the choice of tertiary institution, if any, ‘that have been successful at bringing young Maori men into basic level education’ found that while ‘wananga as a group have overall achieved real success in attracting Maori students, both numerically and as a percentage of their overall rolls, they are attracting relatively few young Maori men in level 1-3 courses’. Contrary to his expectation, Callister found that the non-ethnic ‘polytechnic sector have been the most successful in enrolling young Maori men’ (2009: 13).

Not only does the reality show a system that is not supported by the majority of Maori parents and a reality that does not support the rhetoric claiming its success, but claims that culturally based Maori education is successful in raising Maori achievement are also to be taken with a large grain of salt.

EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT

The long-term and on-going under-achievement of Maori, especially males (Clark, 2007), is a serious problem for New Zealand education. If ethnic or racial categories are used to differentiate student achievement, Maori students are at the bottom of the scale. According to Salmond (2009, p. 5) ‘66 percent of Asian and 44 percent of European students leave school with University Entrance and/or Level 3 NCEA (National Certificate of Educational Achievement), only 20 percent of Pacific and 18 percent of Maori students gain these qualifications’.

However, the Ministry of Education continues to support the cultural immersion approach in Maori-medium schools. The results for year 11 students in immersion education are used to justify this support. ‘Year 11 candidates at Maori-medium schools were more likely to meet both the NCEA literacy and numeracy requirements than the other Maori candidates’ (Education Information and Group Analysis 2009, p. 2). The UNESCO Report ‘Education For All’ (2010, p. 206) also uses the year 11 figures. ‘Year 11 Maori students in immersion schools have recorded significantly better achievement rates than their Maori peers in English-medium schools’ (my emphasis).
Yet the comparison of Maori achievement in these schools with those in the mainstream system is not straightforward, with the UNESCO claim that rates are ‘significantly’ higher not standing up to scrutiny. The only in-depth comparative analysis of year 11 Maori student achievement is a study of the 2003 – 2004 results by Murray (2005), updated in 2007. This does support Ministry findings that there was ‘a higher rate of attainment for year 11 Maori-medium students’ doing NCEA levels 1 and 2 compared with Maori in mainstream schools (Ministry of Education, 2005, p. 12). ‘Candidates in these settings were more likely to gain NCEA level two compared with their Maori peers in English-medium (mainstream) schools’ (2005, p. 13) and ‘candidates at immersion and bilingual schools (in 2003 and 2004) were more likely to gain a National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) than Maori candidates in English medium schools’ (Murray, 2005, p. 2).

However, it’s a matter of which statistics are used. Despite this comparison, other statistics show a problem. Murray also found that the ‘proportion of immersion school candidates to meet both the literacy and numeracy requirements was similar to the proportion of Maori in mainstream schools who met both requirements. In addition, mainstream Maori candidates were more likely to meet the numeracy than the literacy requirement’ (Murray, 2005, p. 9). Of serious concern is the ‘low achievement of (immersion and bilingual) students in the science learning area’ (Murray 2005, p. 2). ‘Around half (51%) of the Year 11 immersion school candidates who gained an NCEA (at any level) achieved no credits in science subjects. In comparison, 88% of Maori candidates in mainstream schools who gained an NCEA gained some credits in science subjects’ (Murray, 2005, p. 5).

In addition, Murray (2005) points out that comparisons between Maori achievement in Maori medium with mainstream schools need to be read with considerable caution. Given the small numbers of students in Maori medium education it is not yet possible to say that Maori medium education offers greater success to Maori students. Indeed, the 2007 comparison is between only 509 year 11 students in Maori-medium and a much larger number (11,079) Maori at other schools (Education Information and Data Analysis 2009, p. 26).

Murray is not alone in urging caution with respect to the statistics. Wang and Harkess (2007) note that from 2004 to 2006, Years 11-13 candidates at Maori-medium schools were more
likely to gain a typical level or higher NCEA qualification than their Maori peers at English-medium schools. But they too warn that the statistics must be treated with caution given that there are vastly more students in mainstream schools than in Maori-medium schools.

I have included Wang and Harkness’s figures because they show the extent of the difference in numbers, a difference that gives considerable weight to the need for caution in using the figures. Indeed, the difference is so great that the figures do not tell us anything useful. In Maori-medium education the figures are: Year 11, 460 – 540 students; Year 12 students, 280 – 340; Year 13, 150 – 250. Maori students in English-medium schools are considerably larger: Year 11, 11,394 students; Year 12: 7,118 students; Year 13, 4,115 students (Wang and Harkness, 2007, p.1-2).

Similarly, Earle (2008) also urged caution in interpreting the statistics. In his case, a comparison of Maori achievement at university found that ‘students from kura kaupapa Maori were somewhat less likely than other Maori students to pass all their courses’ (2008, p. 13).

**The Explanations**

In this next section I compare the explanations for the persistent low achievement of Maori students and subsequently for the solutions that are prescribed. There are two opposing explanations: one broadly class-based, the second broadly a culturalist explanation. The first argues that educational achievement is directly related to the resources available to, and the family cultural practices of, people at the lower end of the working class or in the inter-generational unemployed. The second – the indigenous Maori orthodoxy – argues that the cause of low Maori educational achievement is the result of unequal power relations established in the colonial period and remaining into the present day. I’ll say something about the class-based explanation before moving onto the culturalist one.

Not all Maori students are underachieving. There is ‘wide variation in the achievement levels within the Maori pupil population with the largest difference between Maori pupils who were high achievers and those who were low achievers ‘related to the availability of educational resources in the home’ (PISA, 2000, p. 21). It is likely that the increasing wealth gap *within* the Maori population (Callister, 2007) will affect education outcomes given that
the differences in formal attainment between students from schools in different socio-economic locations suggests a strong link between social-economic class and educational achievement.

For example, 25 percent of Maori who left school in 2005 had little or no formal attainment, two and a half times higher than for pakeha (i.e. British descent) students (Ka Hikitia, 2006). The majority of those Maori students are in low decile schools. (In New Zealand, decile categories are used to rank schools’ socio-economic location with low decile indicating low socio-economic location and high decile referring to schools in wealthy areas.) Twenty-one percent of students from decile 1-3 schools left school in 2004 with no formal attainment compared to six percent from schools in the decile 8-10 band. (DMAD 2006, p. 82). Given the high proportion of Maori students in decile 1-3 schools (78,952 in decile 1-3 compared with 20,643 in the decile 8-10 range [DMAD, 2006, p. 60]), it can be assumed that socio-economic class location is strongly implicated in Maori educational achievement (as it is with all other groups).

A number of sociologists of education in New Zealand do support the socio-economic class explanation for the educational under-achievement of a group of Maori. Research by Marie, Fergusson and Boden (2008, p. 183) found that educational underachievement amongst Maori can be largely explained by disparities in socio-economic status during childhood. This supports earlier research by Roy Nash (2001) and Simon Chapple (2000).

According to Chapple ‘it is sole Maori with low literacy, poor education, and living in geographical concentrations that have socio-economic problems, not the Maori ethnic group as a whole. There are probably also sub-cultural associations with benefit dependence, sole parenthood, early natality, drug and alcohol abuse, physical violence, and illegal cash-cropping. In other words the policy issue may need to be viewed primarily at a sub-cultural and socio-economic level rather than the coarse ethno-cultural level of Maori/non-Maori binaries.’ (Chapple 2000, p. 115). Wylie (2001) also noted that ‘While we found some differences in mathematics and literacy scores for children who came from different ethnic groups, most of these differences were reduced or were no longer significant once we took family income and maternal qualification into account. In other words, it is the resources available to children which matter to their progress, not their culture or ethnicity.’
Roy Nash’s family resource approach has spear-headed the class explanation over several decades (Nash, 1993, 2001, 2005, 2006). According to Nash, the ‘bulk of the Maori population is located in the working-class, indeed, into the lower skilled fraction, and as a consequence of that has adopted, through processes of acculturation into specific class cultures, practices with a distinctive character’ (2001, p. 35). It is the link between the class-located resources available to families and the type of cultural practices associated with class location that has fuelled the often heated debate amongst sociologists of education in New Zealand.

While cultural theorist support the view that resources matter, any suggestion that ‘practices with a distinctive character’, especially cultural practices associated with an ethnic group, are implicated is attacked as ‘deficit theorising’. Chapple’s description of sub-cultural factors was condemned in this way. Since the 1970s, Marxists sociologists of education and their social constructivist ‘descendants’ in the 1980s and 1990s have joined with culturalists in rejecting what is called the ‘blame the victim’ approach of deficit theorising (Rata, 2010). Worse still was research that found fault with Maori culture itself. This was the research of the pre-New Sociology of Education era. For example, Bray (1971) had concluded from his research into delayed gratification that many ‘Maori boys among both higher- and lower-ability groups, tend to view their main goals as relatively immediate’ (p. 75). His findings supported earlier research by Beaglehole and Beaglehole, 1946; Ritchie, 1963; Metge, 1967; Hoffman, 1969, that, as Metge (1967) notes, there is a ‘concentration of interest on the present rather than the future’ and ‘a happy-go-lucky attitude to time and money’ as ‘distinctly Maori’ (p. 59-60).

With the turn of the sociology of education to firstly marxist New Sociology of Education in the 1970s, and then to the relativism promoted by postmodernism, social constructivism, and culturalism in the 1980s and beyond (Rata, 2010), explanations that found cultural reasons for poor achievement were roundly turned on. ‘Deficit theorising’ was now considered part of the problem. Since that time the reasons for low educational achievement are explained using either a class or cultural determinism approach with strict avoidance of any causes that could be laid at the feet of family practices, especially if those families were Maori. Accordingly what determines poor educational performance can be found in the school’s adherence to the while middle-class capital of the colonising class, not in the family circumstances of the students.
Nash’s attempts to introduce a more sophisticated explanation that recognised both the effects of class location such as poverty and the types of class practices associated with particular sub-groups, particularly those in the inter-generationally unemployed section of the working class, continue to be rejected as deficit theory by culturalist theorists. In the current sociology of education climate in New Zealand, located as it is within the bicultural orthodoxy, any explanation that focuses on family practices as the problem is not just unacceptable to the discipline, if those practices are related to Maori, they are considered to be anti-Maori racism.

The culturalist explanation for Maori underachievement is so far opposed to Nash’s family resource explanation that it is difficult to believe that the same social phenomenon is being described. According to cultural theorists, Maori continue to live in colonial imposed structural inequality, expressed through culturally oppressive pedagogical relations between teachers and Maori students. For example, ‘what precludes significant advancement being made in addressing Maori achievement in mainstream education institutions, including teacher education institutions and classrooms, is that current educational policies were developed and continue to be developed within a framework of colonialism and as a result continue, consciously or unconsciously, to serve the interests of colonialism’ (Bishop, 2000, p.3).

Bishop is quite clear about the reason for Maori educational failure. ‘The ‘quality of the in-class face-to-face relationships and interactions between the teachers and Maori students is the most important influence on Maori students’ educational achievement’ (Bishop et. al, 2003). Teachers who maintain low expectations of Maori students or who fail to recognise their cultural identity continuing the colonial oppression. Roy Nash totally rejected this explanation. Using a quantitative study that ‘Maori students have broadly favourable perceptions of their teachers whereas a Ministry of Education funded interview-based research study (Te Kotahitanga) has produced an exactly contrary finding’, Nash questioned the motives of the ‘Ministry of Education that presents such information to school principals as important and reliable knowledge’ (2006, p. 26).

Despite these strong objections, the official solution is the culturalist one – to recognise cultural identity by providing separate Maori institutions – the indigenous Maori system of
kohanga reo, Maori medium primary schools, especially kura kaupapa Maori, and whare wananga. According to the Ministry of Education these separate Maori institutions have ‘made a major contribution to the education system as a whole by giving learners a new means through which to achieve education success’ (Education Information and Group Analysis 2009, p. 2). For those Maori who do not attend a kaupapa Maori type institution, the approximately 85 percent of Maori students who are in mainstream education, the solution is to change teachers’ pedagogy. This is the reason for the Ministry’s considerable and long-term support for the very well-funded Te Kotahitangi project being rolled out in New Zealand’s secondary schools (Bishop and Berryman, 2003).

Culturalism is an orthodoxy not confined to education. The hegemonic nature of these ideas throughout the country is most clearly shown in the favourable reception to a speech by the Maori Party’s co-leader, Tariana Turia, to the 2000 New Zealand Psychological Society Conference. Turia evoked a ‘holocaust suffered by indigenous people including Maori as a result of colonial contact and behaviour’, one that ‘inevitably wounds the soul’, requiring ‘generations of oppression since colonial contact’ ‘to be articulated, acknowledged and understood’. The outcome is ‘post-colonial trauma’ ‘passed down from the period of the Land Wars to current generations’ (Turia 2000).

The solution to ‘post-colonial trauma’ is to strengthen the essentialised Maori identity through cultural affirmation (Durie & Kingi 1997). It is considered that identification with the ancestral group will enable the descendants to first acknowledge, then reject, oppressive experiences, and to benefit from the revival of pre-colonial, pre-oppressive cultural integrity. Yet, research into marae-based courses found that this approach ‘does not support all categories of Maori people who are struggling with their ethnic identity (Van Meijl 2006). Rather it creates an unexpected crisis of identity for those Maori who are unable to identify in terms of cultural ideology as they believe they can never meet the orthodox criteria for recognition as ‘genuine Maori’ (Van Meijl 2006, p. 930). Van Meijl suggests that ‘the presentation of Maori cultural identity is fundamentally different from the self-representation of alienated young urban Maori people’, leaving the self of some Maori bewildered with their personal yet deviating notions of Maoriness (p. 931).

Despite nearly four decades of the culturalist orthodoxy in education, the fact remains that a proportion of Maori children and young people continue to fail at school and spend their
lives living with the consequences of this failure. The kaupapa Maori system has yet to prove it deserves its accolades. Indeed it is likely that the kura are contributing to student failure as a consequence of the lack of English language teaching in the schools. Tauwehe Tamati and I have analysed how much English language is taught in the kura. The findings are disturbing.

All schools are legally required to teach English (ERO, 2007a) yet this appears not to be happening in almost all of the kura. Our study of 25 kura kaupapa Maori Education Review Office (ERO) Reports written between 2005 and 2009 found that only 3 kura provided information on the teaching of English. The comments were minimal and did not provide information about the type of transition pedagogy nor the level of achievement reached by students in either conversational or academic English. According to one report ‘there are high expectations that students, staff and whanau [extended family] will be multilingual in te reo Maori [the Maori language], Spanish and English’ (ERO, 2007, p. 10). The second stated; ‘(s)tudents in years 5 to 8 are learning the skills of reading and writing in English as a separate subject (ERO, 2006a, p. 12), while the third report provided only slightly more information, saying that ‘(t)he whanau and staff fully support students to achieve full competency in the English language. Formal English language programmes are provided to students from year six’. This was followed by a brief description of assessment methods’ (ERO, 2006b, p. 14).

Despite the absence of any meaningful information about what English is provided in the kura, if any, the Ministry of Education document, ‘Te Piko o te Mahuri, The Key Attributes of Successful Kura Kaupapa Maori’ (Takao et. Al., 2010, p. 14) states that ‘Successful kura continue to develop strategies for the teaching of English as a second language so that their children may become fully competent in both Maori and English. The willingness to continually develop English language programs has eventuated in clear policy and effective practice in this area.’

The Maori language

The commitment by biculturalists to the kaupapa Maori approach is further strengthened by the claim that Maori-medium education will revive the Maori language. However, as with the claim for improving educational achievement, the evidence is contradictory, even
confusing, and suggests a less optimistic picture. For example, the Ministry of Education Annual Report on Maori Education 2007/08 (Education Information and Group Analysis, 2009) records the ‘research from Te Puni Kokiri (the Ministry of Maori Development) as showing “significant gains across all language skills and most age groups. Overall, results show more people are actively using their Maori language skills at home and in the community. Overall, between 2001 and 2006, speaking proficiency rose 4.2%, reading proficiency rose 9.6% and writing proficiency rose 5.2%”’ (Education Information and Group Analysis 2009, p. 20).

But, in the next paragraph, with reference to the 2006 census and the Survey on the Health of the Maori Language, the Ministry Report presents opposing evidence - strangely described as ‘highlights’. Apart from a very small increase in ‘the total number of Maori who can hold a conversation about everyday things in Maori language, an increase of 1128 people from the 2001 census’, the remaining statistics show a static or declining trend in Maori language use. ‘One-quarter of Maori aged 15 to 64 years can hold a conversation in Maori language (unchanged from 26.4% in 2001)’. ‘Just under half (47.7% of Maori aged 65 years and over can hold a conversation in Maori language (compared to 53.1% in 2001)’. The statistic that is worth noting, however, is that which shows a decline in Maori language use by younger people. ‘More than one in six Maori (35,148) people) (16.7%) aged under 15 years can hold a conversation in Maori language (compared to 19.7% in 2001).’ (Education Information and Group Analysis 2009, p. 20). Given these statistics, it is difficult to understand the statement in the Ministry report that ‘the survey shows significant (my italics) increases in the number of Maori adults who speak, read, write and understand Maori language’ (Education Information and Group Analysis 2009, p. 21).

The picture of Maori language decline is supported by Winifred Bauer’s (2008) research. She describes ‘a fairly bleak’ picture of Maori language use in the home in 2001, with children who attend Maori-medium education ‘not particularly likely to respond in Maori: only 9% of respondents in 2001 said that under twelves spoke Maori half or more of the time’. According to Bauer, this ‘suggests that for the most part, children are developing passive skills, and if they have active skills, they are not taking them out of the educational domain into the home’ (2008, p. 41). Sceptical of a reported increase in 2006, she argues that ‘the overall picture is one of decline rather than increase in the younger age groups’ (2008, p. 43). The children’s stronger language is English despite total immersion education in the
Maori language for the small percentage of Maori children in Maori-medium education. It is important to remember too, that of the small numbers of learners in Maori-medium education, the majority are in schools where the use of Maori as the language of instruction is less than 50 percent and may indeed be at the lower end – closer to 12 percent.

**Ethnic Identity and Ethnic Boundary Making**

Maintaining the culturalist approach to Maori education receives considerable support from the claim that the approach is working (something I have argued against in this presentation dispute) and given this claim, that because the numbers of Maori children are increasingly exponentially, it is important to not only maintain the approach but to strengthen it.

It is commonly accepted, indeed it is now a truism (for example, Brooker et al., 2010) that ‘future demographic realities’ (*Iwi Infrastructure and Investment Report*, 2010, p. ii) point to a ‘browning’ of New Zealand. According to the Report, ‘in Census 1951 we were 6.9% of the population. In Census 2006 that had grown to 14.6%. Statistics New Zealand’s future projections predict that in 2026 we will be 17% of the population’. It is entirely probable there will be more Maori and Pasifika children in our schools than Pakeha [white] well before the middle of this century’ (201, p. ii).

The social reality is far more complex. While the raw statistics state that the numbers of young Maori are increasing at a rapid rate, this may or may not be the case. As Bromell (2008) notes ‘Maori are neither a homogeneous group nor a closed population – all Maori also have European or other ancestry, and around half the Maori population identifies as both Maori and European’ (2008, p. 41). This is the result of the widespread intermarriage that has occurred for about two hundred years so that today ‘all Maori have some degree of non-Maori ancestry’ (Butterworth and Mako, 1989, p. 1).

There is a range of possible identifications available to the population that identifies as Maori. Callister (2003, p. 15) notes that ‘of all those who recorded Maori as one of their ethnic groups in the 2001 census, only 56 per cent recorded *only* Maori’. Indeed it is quite possible that many New Zealanders identified with several ethnic groups including Maori prior to 2006, but the prioritisation principle used by the Department of Statistics until that year meant that those who included Maori as one of their ethnic identities were
automatically assigned to the Maori category. This would increase the numbers of Maori but the actual situation is less straightforward.

In reality, the situation is as Chapple (2000, p. 104) describes: ‘Some people of Maori descent have a strong ethnic Maori identity; others have little or none. For some, their Maori identity is central to their lives; for others, different aspects of their social and personal identities . . . seem to take precedence’ (2000, p. 104). A study by Kukutai and Callister (2009) which asked young people who were Maori and European which main group they would identify with found that for those who were happy to pick a main group over half picked European. Callister (2008) has also found that a Maori person with a ‘white’ physical appearance is more likely to identify as both Maori and non-Maori, a group tending to be ‘socially and economically much better off than all other Maori’ (Callister, 2008).

For children in the education system, the allocation of Maori identity to those with Maori ancestry or to those who look Maori or to those who identify as Maori is a moving feast. The vagaries of allocation are captured in an education newsletter reporting on Ministry of Education views; ‘it is sometimes a difficult task for schools to identify which of their students are Maori’ (Team Solutions Newsletter, 2009, p. 2). Many New Zealand families have Maori and non-Maori members (including growing numbers of people from non-European countries) and as Chapple found (2000, p. 105) ‘the majority of Maori ethnic children growing up today have a non-Maori parent’.

**Conclusion**

I have interrogated the claims made for separate Maori indigenous education in New Zealand and argued that the claims cannot be substantiated. The question that needs to be asked is why, given the evidence and logic supporting the family resource explanation, has the culturalist one maintained its place as the orthodoxy in New Zealand education? It is an orthodoxy that pervades all areas of New Zealand public life. An example of the far reach of culturalism is Christopher Tremewan’s (2006) critical analysis of the New Zealand’s Anglican Church’s almost inexplicable division into three racial groups. There are other areas that suffer the same fate – in health, social welfare, and justice.
The answer to my question is of course long and complex. A short answer must suffice here. It is that biculturalism is a secular religion for some and a means for economic and political advancement for others. Indeed the quasi-religious commitment serves to justify the extent of interest group advancement for the small group of tribalists who have benefitted from the cultural turn taken by the liberal-Left since the 1970s. The success of strategies in advancing the cause of retribalisation in New Zealand can be traced to the development of a highly effective indigenous ideology from the initial bicultural project. My presentation tomorrow ‘A Critical Inquiry into Indigenous Knowledge Claims’ looks at the strategy of ideology production.

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1 A discussion of the three types of culturalism including their similarities and differences in available in ‘The Multicultural-Liberal Contradiction’, an unpublished chapter available from the author.
3 The cost of the unelected Maori Statutory Board to the Auckland Council illustrates the positions and remueration for professional Maori in local government.
4 ‘Pay and expenses for nine board members $494,500
Pay and expenses for non-board members sitting on council committees $50,500
Staff costs $946,500
Legal, communication, professional advice, tikanga $470,000
Engaging and reporting to the Maori community $280,000
Audit of council performance relative to Treaty of Waitangi $175,000
Research on wellbeing of Maori $650,000
Council support services $369,000
Total $3,435,500’
6 The third brokerage stage was the actions of these representatives in pursuing the interests of the two ‘partners’. For example, brokering the transfer of ownership of the Auckland volcanic cones and ‘untangling the claims in Tamaki Makaurau’ (Auckland) (a process conducted away from public involvement) earned ‘Sir Douglas Graham $177,264 in government fees’ (Tahana 2010c: A4). Treaty claims facilitator, Tukoroirangi Morgan ‘was paid $141,000 in director’s fees as well as a $100,000 success fee for completing Tainui’s Waikato River settlement. The Government also contracted Mr Morgan as a Crown facilitator to help move the iwi through the settlement process. Between November 2008 and March 1 (2010), the Office of Treaty Settlements (OTS) paid Mr Morgan $171,093.61 (Tahana 2010c: A4).
7 The phrase ‘the research involves a topic of particular interest to Māori’ is in the Applicants’ Manual (2009), University of Auckland Human Participants’ Ethics Committee.
8 Nash (2006) used data from the PISA ‘Programme for International Students Assessment’ research and the Progress at School study.

References


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Takao, Nuki, Grennell, Denis, McKegg, Kate and Nan Wehipeihana (2010) *Te Piko o te Mahuri: The Key Attributes of Successful Kura Kaupapa Maori*, wellington: Ministry of Education.


