

CHAPTER ONE

System Failure

After thirty years of Professor Ranginui Walker, state schools are still cocking up. Nearly fifty years after the Hunn report, Maori educational achievement is still too low. It is our position that the mainstream state education system cannot change to accommodate the needs of Maori students. We base this position on two key observations: one, the change has not happened despite fifty or more years of trying; and two, it is easy to improve Maori educational achievement, as our experience in Papakura has demonstrated. This experience is detailed in later chapters.

We go a lot further than this and argue that state schools damage many Maori students. State school environments can be abusive. Low school and teacher expectations of achievement are reflected in Maori self-perceptions that they are dumb and worthless. This is aggravated by self-fulfilling expectations that Maori students behave poorly, are violent and abusive, and cannot be trusted. Schools mould and drive students, and state schools mould and drive some Maori students to suicide, some to prison and others to the dole queue or maternity ward.

The association between state schools and teenage Maori suicide has not received a lot of research attention in New Zealand, although the international literature recognises that schools can be precipitants, background factors and lifesavers (for example, we arrested an outbreak of teenage suicide by removing at-risk children from Papakura High School).

There is ongoing conflict between state schools and Maori and an

enormous amount of tension exists between state schools and Maori students. Evidence of this tension is found in the figures on attendance and exclusion. The Ministry of Education's figures for 2004 show that Maori secondary school students were very likely to be excluded by state schools, through stand-downs and suspensions, and very likely to exclude themselves from schooling through truancy. In both 2002 and 2003, six to 7 per cent of Maori students were stood down or suspended during the school year, and after each such incident it took an average of seventy-four days to return an excluded student to an educational setting. Maori boys were twice as likely to be stood down or suspended as Maori girls.

On a typical school day, 14 per cent of Maori fifteen-year-olds are absent, with 8.5 per cent truant. Maori girls are more likely to be truant than Maori boys. Another 14 per cent of Maori fifteen-year-olds are not at school because they have been granted an early leaving exemption. These exemptions are applied for by parents, most often at the school's suggestion, and granted by the Ministry if the student is likely to derive minimal benefit from mainstream education and has a job or training programme organised. The early leaving exemption has become a convenient way for schools and Maori to give up on each another. In 2004, 1424 early leaving exemptions were granted to Maori students, up from 298 in 1998.

These statistics on achievement and exclusion are dreadful, but not surprising if state schools are understood as incapable of meeting the educational needs of 40 per cent of Maori students enrolled with them, and as organisations that respond to frustration by putting the boot into Maori students.

The state school system is supposed to have checks and balances, but the response to these statistics by school boards, the Education Review Office, the Ministry of Education and successive Ministers of Education has been incomplete, inadequate and incompetent. In Chapter Four we look at the key issues in detail. For now, we shall just say that they are all different facets of the same problem – New Zealand's 'by Pakeha for Pakeha' education system does not have the capacity to meet the education needs of tens of thousands of Maori students.

This lack of capacity should come as no surprise. New Zealand operates a mainstream school system within which Maori have never succeeded. The state school system has not changed from the 1950s and 1960s when it did not matter whether or not Maori succeeded. Teacher training colleges, the Ministry of Education and the Education Review Office (ERO) all draw from a pool of experienced teachers, which means teachers with very little collective experience of Maori achievement. These people all reassure each other that their teaching is 'best practice', which leaves only one possible explanation – Maori fail to learn because they are defective in some important way. The role of schools then becomes to identify these defective students (a task within the competencies of primary school teachers because these students are the kids with brown skins who are often not at school, and when they are at school they are disruptive) and to ensure they are referred for diagnosis and management.

Most educationalists and Ministry bureaucrats would disagree with our claim that New Zealand's education system does not have the capacity to meet the education needs of tens of thousands of Maori students. The prevailing view is that schools can change to include these Maori students. Unfortunately, the merits of this view lie in its political expediency and its romanticism. There is no evidence, none, from anywhere in the world to support it. There is evidence that from time to time, when a particular combination of great teacher, great school and supportive board occurs within a mainstream school, such an inclusive approach can lift the educational achievement of all students in the class or school. There is no evidence that all schools, or even most schools, can meet the needs of Maori students when Maori are a significant proportion of the school roll.

Inclusion, as the term is used in the international educational literature, refers to a 'whole of school' approach to ensure that students, or groups of students, with special educational needs can have those needs met in a mainstream classroom. The ideology of inclusion has arisen in response to the 'deficit' model of an earlier academic generation. The deficit model maintained that students who did not achieve were defective in some way, and that they often needed to be removed from a mainstream

environment in order to have the defect corrected and their special educational needs met.

There was mixed evidence as to how well these special facilities met the educational needs of their students, and concerns as to the quality of staff and the inadequate resources in such specialist facilities. However, the special classes and special schools were swept away by the 1970s and 1980s dogma that people with disabilities should participate fully in the community. As the school day is such a large part of a normal child's day from ages six to sixteen, this philosophy required students whose educational needs had not previously been met in mainstream schools to return to those schools.

The ERO and the Ministry are important checks and balances in the system. They have the same critic and conscience role in respect of state schools that the universities exercise with regard to our society as a whole. However, both determinedly refuse to collect information on Maori student achievement in a way that allows valid comparisons between schools. Schools have never been required to demonstrate that they are meeting the educational needs of their students. In New Zealand, inclusion offers a simple, quick, and cheap approach when it comes to Maori students – teach teachers a few words of Maori, meet the local marae committee, start a kapa haka group, collect information on Maori student achievement, find alternatives other than stand-down or suspension to deal with poorly behaving Maori students – and she'll be right, Maori student achievement will lift. The approach does not work and cannot be expected to work. It cannot be expected to work because it is disassociated from the educational needs of the Maori child. These needs are nowhere to be found, when they must be central.

Our experience in Papakura is that by age eight a large number of Maori students are two years behind the literacy and numeracy achievement expected of an eight-year-old. They remain two years behind for the remainder of their time at state schools and leave secondary school without any formal qualifications and with disciplinary and attendance records that make them essentially unemployable as anything other than labourers.

However, not all schools in Papakura even report on Maori student achievement, and in only one, Drury School, is there any evidence that Maori students are achieving at the level expected for their age.

The reasons why brown schools are worse than white schools are not hard to find and they have little to do with 'deficits' in brown pupils. Most teachers and principals able to get jobs in a better area do so. Brown schools get to choose their teachers (if they get any choice at all) from those left-over. The parent representatives on the board of a brown school are chosen from a shallower pool of talent, and the school community is poorer so the school is less well resourced physically.

Many white schools, in contrast, recognise that they cannot meet the needs of certain Maori students, who then proceed to disrupt the learning of other students and to consume an inordinate amount of teacher time. These schools adopt 'zero tolerance' policies to exclude such Maori students. Rosehill College in Papakura is an example of such a school. The *Sunday Star-Times* of 18 September 2005 reported that at-risk and special-needs students at the Correspondence School now 'outnumbered its traditional rural, isolated pupils by three to one'. These new students had been expelled from state secondary schools, and 16 per cent of all excluded students studying through the Correspondence School came from nine schools, one of which was Rosehill College.

We are not criticising schools like Rosehill College that recognise that schools are not 'one size fits all' organisations. In fact we applaud Rosehill College for focusing on those students whose educational needs it can meet. Our question is: where do the Maori kids go? Correspondence School is not a good enough option.

Our claim is that mainstream state primary and secondary schools, as a group, are incapable of meeting the educational needs of approximately 40 per cent of Maori students. This is the proportion of Maori Year 11 students who do not meet the minimum numeracy and literacy standards for the award of NCEA Level One, i.e. they are at least two years behind their peer group. Some of these students are incapable of meeting the standards, but some Maori students who do meet the minimum standards could achieve at a far higher level than they do. Given the decision of the

Ministry of Education not to collect relevant information, 40 per cent is the best figure there is.

Our evidence for this claim comes from two sources. On the one hand, there is the long history of Maori underachievement despite determined efforts over the last forty years to raise the level of Maori achievement. If after forty years of trying it hasn't been done, it is reasonable to conclude that it can't be done within the existing system. On the other hand there is the ease with which we, operating without trained and registered teachers and without resources, have been able to lift the achievement of Maori students once they have been removed from state schools.

Ten reasons for failure

There are a number of reasons why the state school system cannot meet the needs of so many Maori students. Ten of these are, in no particular order:

- 1 The inadequate provision of early childhood education.
 - 2 The lack of good-quality information on achievement.
 - 3 The numerous and often competing priorities within state schools.
 - 4 The high incidence of incompetence, or of unacceptably low competence, among boards, principals and teachers of schools in low socio-economic areas.
 - 5 The insistence on treating Maori as brown-skinned Pakeha.
 - 6 The extreme reluctance of schools to share power with Maori communities.
 - 7 Maori parents and grandparents.
 - 8 Ideologies in education that capture the system for a time.
 - 9 Different interpretations from Maori and from Pakeha of how Maori are treated within the state school system.
 - 10 Maori education is not informed by the extensive knowledge that exists on contexts in which Maori learn.
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1. Inadequate provision of early childhood education

Too many Maori students begin primary school as pre-numerate pre-readers who have not learned the disciplines of 'docility' required for the operation of an effective mainstream classroom. These are failures of the early childhood education system to prepare Maori children for mainstream education.

As a consequence, much potential teaching time at primary school is lost in dealing with disorder and attempting to establish routines and behavioural norms. This reduction in teaching time is compounded by the increased absenteeism of Maori children. In part this may reflect an increased burden of childhood illness in the group, but Maori parents are also likely to keep their children at home, or to take them with them for the day, for all sorts of reasons – often just for company.

Good schools without many poorly prepared children like this can accommodate their needs, although this often means diverting resources from elsewhere. In other schools with an incompetent principal, an incompetent board and an inadequate budget for non-personnel resources, the new-entrant (Year 1) teacher is left to make the best of an intolerable situation. In the middle are those primary schools that identify these children, refer them to the Special Education Service and then wash their hands of responsibility for the child's progress. To them, a responsibility referred is a responsibility discharged.

The solution to this problem is to make appropriate improvements. There is nothing special about Papakura, and so the situation there may resonate with that in other areas of the country.

The first issue is that not enough Maori three- and four-year-olds are enrolled in early childhood education. This situation has been exacerbated by the Crown's insistence on early childhood education facilities employing a qualified teacher, as there simply are not enough teachers to go around. The Crown should insist on educational outcomes, not the presence of a trained teacher. Maori kids learn when someone of mana, with or without a formal qualification, delivers teaching in a kaupapa Maori fashion. What matters is the amount of learning that takes place and the preparation for life in a state primary school classroom, not the qualification.

The Ministry of Education exacerbates this shortage of facilities. For example, in Papakura the Redhill Playcentre closed down after a squabble about missing funds and the normal resulting destructive battle between factions. The playcentre was located on Ministry land in purpose-built Ministry-owned buildings. Rather than facilitating the development of a quality early childhood education centre on the site, the Ministry's preferred option is to operate a facility for young mothers. The Ministry's priorities are wrong, and early childhood education should not be robbed to remove one of the few disincentives for Maori girls to become pregnant.

The second issue is that while Papakura has five kohanga reo, the aim of kohanga reo is not to prepare children for success at a mainstream primary school but to produce confident, fluent Maori. This is a major ongoing area of dialogue between the kohanga reo national trust and the Ministry of Education. Kohanga reo prepare children for kura kaupapa Maori, not for a state primary school.

The third issue is the quality of existing early childhood education providers. The curriculum (*Te Whariki*) for early childhood education says nothing about what pre-schoolers should learn, and nothing about inculcating in them the listening skills, co-operation skills, docility and respect for the teacher required for success in a mainstream primary school.

There are four principles at the heart of *Te Whariki*. They are: empowerment; holistic development; family and community; and relationships. The curriculum has five strands, each with goals. They are documented on the following page. *Te Whariki* is process- rather than outcome-centred and takes a bit of getting used to. Its goals are often difficult to measure. How do you measure whether 'emotional well-being is nurtured'? If there is no measure of achievement, there is no way of knowing whether the goal has been realised, and no point in having that goal.

2. Lack of good information on Maori achievement

The problem of how to improve the performance of primary schools remains fundamental. The Education Act 1989 established state schools

Table 1: *Te Whariki – Strands and Goals*

WELL BEING Children experience an environment in which: Goal: Their health is promoted Goal: Their emotional well-being is nurtured Goal: They are kept safe from harm
BELONGING Children and their families experience an environment in which: Goal: Connecting links with the family and the wider world are affirmed and extended Goal: They know that they have a place Goal: They feel comfortable with the routine, customs, and regular events Goal: They know the limits and boundaries of acceptable behaviour
CONTRIBUTION Children experience an environment in which: Goal: There are equitable opportunities for learning irrespective of gender, ability, age, ethnicity, and background Goal: They are affirmed as individuals Goal: They are encouraged to learn with and alongside others
COMMUNICATION Children experience an environment in which: Goal: They develop non-verbal communication skills for a range of purposes Goal: They develop verbal communication skills for a range of purposes Goal: They experience the stories and symbols of their own and other cultures Goal: They discover and develop different ways to be creative and expressive
EXPLORATION Children experience an environment in which: Goal: Their play is valued as meaningful learning and the importance of spontaneous play is recognised Goal: They gain confidence in and control of their bodies Goal: They learn strategies for active exploration, thinking and reasoning Goal: They develop working theories for making sense of the physical, natural, social and material worlds

as largely autonomous state-owned business units, each governed by a board of trustees which has a majority of parent representatives, and each with a principal responsible for day-to-day management. Every state school has an entitlement to state funding. Schools are required to report to parents on the performance of their children, and to communities on the performance of students as a whole and of Maori students as a subgroup within that whole.

Primary school reports have been a joke for twenty years now. Many principals do not allow teachers to make negative comments on a child's report. The reports that are sent home to parents, especially from the worst schools, often do not contain information on achievement. This is ironic as the move to standards-based assessment made over the last ten to fifteen years is a move to reporting on what students can do. 'Johnny is making progress in mathematics' tells a parent almost nothing. Is he performing at an average level, is he behind, is he catching up, is he falling behind? Matters are worse than this in many primary schools as the truth about children's achievement is often concealed from parents. At parent-teacher interviews mum is told that Johnny is doing well when he is not.

In general, it is hard to get information from schools about student achievement. Each year a state school holds a public meeting where the annual report, which should, but often does not, contain summary information on student achievement, is presented. These reports are public documents and meant to be freely available to the public. However, the worst schools are the least likely to be forthcoming with these reports or copies of their charter.

The core problem seems to be that many schools do not assess student learning well or consistently enough to establish with any certainty that learning has taken place. The 2005 ERO Ministerial Briefing (ERO 2005) says, 'Assessment of student learning is challenging for some teachers . . . Teachers need to improve the ways they use assessment data . . . valid and reliable information on student achievement is not consistently available in all schools, or within schools.'

3. Numerous and often competing priorities within state schools

Many school boards, especially in low socio-economic areas, sweat the small stuff and miss the big picture entirely. Their chief priorities are managing the school's finances, managing the school's property and managing employment relations. The first two of these are issues that the ERO is always interested in, as a large amount of public funding passes through a school's bank accounts. A school that gets itself into

financial trouble invariably attracts a lot of ERO and Ministry attention. Employment issues always come before the board because the board, not the principal, employs all the staff.

Then the board has other statutory obligations: annual planning, including budget setting; updating the charter; monitoring student attendance (although this is normally delegated to the principal); community consultation; monitoring the performance of the principal; and student discipline hearings.

And there are always other issues to consider – requests by this or that group to use school facilities; meningitis or other health-related campaigns such as healthy eating and sun protection; sexuality and sex education; requests by community groups (e.g. churches) for access to students; values education; childhood obesity; social development of the students – on and on they go to make the monthly board meeting three hours long with everything seemingly equally important as the agenda moves from one area to another in a disconnected way. Somewhere in all this, Maori student achievement never rises to the top. Once or twice a year the principal may or may not present some kind of report on school-wide achievement to the board.

What these school boards lack is a sense of mission. They need a mission statement, a one- or two-line statement of the school's purpose, reinforced by an understanding of the contribution the various parts of the school make to the success of that mission. An example would be: 'XYZ School exists to ensure that all students achieve to their potential in the classroom, on the sports field, and in cultural and artistic activities.'

Such a statement focuses the school immensely. The school is about student achievement and nothing else. The board exists to provide the resources and ecology (to use a word current in education-speak) that:

- empower teachers to do their primary job of ensuring students achieve in the curriculum;
 - ensure that students learn basic sporting skills, are exposed to a range of sports and have the opportunity to pursue these;
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- ensure that students are comfortable in a range of cultures and can participate fully in their own culture; and
- ensure that students experience and learn basic skills in the arts and have the opportunity to pursue these.

The respective roles of boards, principals and senior staff, teachers, administration staff, cleaners and groundskeepers can all be derived from a simple, clear mission statement that also drives planning.

A clear sense of mission also sets priorities. Financial, property and attendance reports are not important in their own right. They are important only insofar as they provide information that can help the board achieve its mission.

The hypothetical mission statement above can be compared to this actual vision statement of a Papakura school on a twelve-month ERO review cycle, 'Pae Tata, Pae maunga, Pae Tawhiti, Pae Rangi,' which the school translates as, 'Reach for your immediate goals, Reach for the mountains, Reach unto the horizon, Reach unto the heavens.' How about learning to read, write and count?

4. High incidence of incompetence or unacceptably low competence

One of the recurrent themes of this book is that Maori receive a second-rate education. Too often they are taught by second-rate teachers led by second-rate principals in schools that are governed by second-rate boards that provide second-rate resources.

At the root of this problem is low-quality, dogma-driven teacher education. The number of providers of teacher education in New Zealand has exploded since tertiary-provider funding changed to depend on enrolment numbers. There are four different approval bodies for teacher training courses. The New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) accredits wananga and private training establishments. The NZ Polytechnic Programmes Committee does this for polytechnics as the Committee on University Academic Programmes does for universities. The Colleges of Education Accreditation Committee accredits colleges of education.

Four different bodies means four different standards. Teacher training is simple. The training organisation must ensure that the student teacher:

- knows the curriculum;
- can read, write and calculate (there are consistent reports that many teachers become registered without being competent in these areas);
- communicates well with students;
- knows how to teach in a way that ensures his or her current students (not his or her ideal students) will learn;
- can assess learning, both formatively and summatively, can use that assessment as a planning tool and can report the results of that assessment to students, parents and managers; and
- is able to contribute to the wider life of the school.

Unfortunately, much of teacher training has been hijacked by political correctness, by an ideology that teaching is bad while mentoring or travelling together is good, and by lectures on the Treaty of Waitangi. These things cripple teacher trainees. Teacher trainers in turn are often crippled by the poor quality of applicants admitted to courses by administrators desperate for bums, especially brown bums, on seats.

An unacceptably large proportion of teachers in brown schools are incompetent. This is not to say that these teachers would be incompetent in a top school, or even in a school in another part of town. Teacher competence is context-specific. Some, very few, teachers are competent teachers (i.e. their students achieve) in a wide range of school contexts – poor school, rich school, unsettled class, disruptive students, brown students, white students. At the other extreme are teachers who require extensive support and can then function adequately as teachers only in a narrow range of classroom contexts. In the middle are many teachers who do an excellent job in a range of schools and with the right support. However, many in this large middle ground are incompetent in a brown school with a poor principal and an unskilled board. A combination of factors (for example, lack of resources plus inadequate support from

the principal, plus a school-wide culture of noisy classrooms and high absenteeism) combine to make their teaching ineffective.

One teacher we know at a South Auckland intermediate school had a forty-dollar annual budget for classroom materials – newsprint, staples, dusters and so on. This was blown early on in the year, and after this she could not get staples for her stapler. Because she had no staples she could not change the wall displays. Because she did not change the wall displays she received an adverse evaluation. Because she received an adverse evaluation she felt unsupported, lost confidence and her job performance began to suffer.

While the underlying problem here is the school board's decision about where to spend its money, that problem causes ripples and in the end a competent teacher finds herself in a situation where she is no longer competent.

5. Insistence on treating Maori as brown-skinned Pakeha

New Zealand has a one-size-fits-all 'by Pakeha for Pakeha' school education system that has not met the needs of Maori students since the late 1970s when a qualification, such as School Certificate, became necessary to get a job. Harker (1979) realised that the present system did not meet the needs of Maori students. He thought that either Maori needed to change to fit into the system or the system needed to change to accommodate Maori, but believed that neither would happen and a degree of achievement disparity between the ethnicities would be a permanent feature of the system.

The point is that Maori are not brown-skinned Pakeha. What works for Pakeha in the classroom works for some Maori, but not for all. Many Maori miss out on education because they respond to a system that does not meet their needs by not attending (truancy) and by misbehaviour.

This is not a problem unique to New Zealand. All over the world, indigenous people have found that the education system imposed on them by immigrant colonising races has not met their needs.

6. Extreme reluctance of schools to share power with Maori communities

Both the deficit and integration models share the feature that control stays with the school. The majority of adverse ERO reports comment on the lack of effective consultation between the poorly performing school and its community, including its Maori community. In part, this reflects the attitude shared by many incompetent teachers and principals that they have special 'professional' knowledge about teaching and learning that parents do not have. These incompetents believe that any questioning of their decisions or opinions by parents reflects parental ignorance.

This attitude is like stepping back in time for us, coming as we do from the health sector. There was a time when doctors did not communicate with patients. This reflected a competence deficit in doctors and resulted in inferior treatment and management, as important relevant information was not properly taken into account when key decisions were made. The underlying problems with doctors were an inability to communicate coupled with genuine uncertainty about the best treatment option. However, rather than sharing the uncertainty, doctors tried to hide it and many were dragged kicking and screaming into the light. Some chose to retire rather than to change.

Doctors tried to hide competence deficits behind white coats and a refusal to communicate, in the same way that many principals and teachers do today. The glaring difference is that brain surgery is hard while teaching a kid to count, add, read and write are all easy. It is a pity so many teachers cannot do the job as well as parents could, and choose to exclude parents so as to conceal their own deficits.

7. Maori parents and grandparents

Many Maori grandparents do not appreciate the importance of schooling. In their day school was just somewhere they had to attend until they were old enough to get a job. It didn't matter if they did not get School Certificate because there were lots of jobs out there. If you didn't like one job, you just chucked it in and walked down the road into another. Their attitude is, 'I've done OK, and I never ...' They forget that their time

was the time of full employment, of the Department of Maori Affairs, of low-interest home loans for Maori. They can't help their mokopuna with today's homework and rather than admit their ignorance they say things like, 'Don't worry about that, Tama. I never knew any of that stuff and I've done OK, eh. She'll be right for you too.'

Many Maori parents attended today's schools. They needed to get School Certificate to get a job, but their school did not meet their educational needs. School was an unpleasant experience for them. They did not achieve and were told that they were stupid and lazy. Yet their experiences after leaving school have taught them that they were not stupid. They feel cheated and are not particularly supportive of schooling for their children because they recognise that New Zealand schools are often hostile environments for Maori. When their kids complain about school, these parents agree with them. They condone truancy because their experience is that school is a frustrating waste of time.

8. Ideologies in education that capture the system

Although education is an academic discipline with professors and with faculties in universities, it is not an experimental discipline. Controlled experiments comparing one approach to teaching, learning or assessment with another are almost unknown. Indeed, in the contest of ideas in education there is often no way of comparing approaches. As a consequence, educational theorists have an easy ride. They cannot be proven wrong and so one way of marking out a patch in academia is to propose a ridiculous idea, the only merit of which is that nobody has ever published it before. In New Zealand, there are some bizarre ideas. Partington (1997) wrote that 'one of the gravest weaknesses in current teacher education is the hostility of many prominent teacher educators to the very concept that educational achievement can be fairly and objectively assessed'.

The lack of tools to knock down ideas means that their proponents can use rhetoric, reputation and relationships to sway the academic community (as Professor Herbert Green did with cervical cancer treatment at the National Women's Hospital for a number of years). Ideologies, not tested

theories, dominate the landscape of education theory and tend to have their time in the sun when they capture bureaucrats and systems.

One such ideology is the belief that three- and four-year-olds at early childhood education centres should learn only through play. This comes as a pair with the strange idea that learning letters and numbers can never be play, a communal activity that children enjoy.

Another ideology, a self-serving one, is that trained and registered teachers are always better than untrained and unregistered teachers. This idea is obviously wrong, but the bureaucrats and those involved in training teachers say it firmly and with conviction in the hope that their perceived authority and expertise will obscure the evidence.

Various theories about how children should be taught to read have been promoted and had their day. The 1990s were characterised by the reading wars between educationalists who believed in a 'whole language' approach and those who believed in 'phonics'. There is now a compromise belief in 'decoding', where children are encouraged to develop reading strategies that integrate the information in texts – semantic, syntactic, visual, graphophonic.

9. Different interpretations of how Maori are treated in schools

Imagine a boy called Hone. He has been fighting in the playground and is stood down from school for three days. He is not allowed back at school until his parents have met with the principal and been told that Hone's behaviour is unacceptable. In the end, Hone is away from school for eight weeks and his attendance for the rest of the year is sporadic.

There are two sides to this scenario. The school will talk about standards, but will not change its own operation in a way that prevents Hone getting in a fight again. The effect of the school's actions is to deny Hone an education even though that was not the intent.

For their part, Hone and his parents see the interaction quite differently. Nothing happens to persuade Hone not to punch the other kid again, and it is quite likely that Hone's father responds to the ritual humiliation by wishing the bitch principal was a bloke so he could punch him in the head.

Now, think about Sylvia Ashton-Warner. Pat Nuku's memories of this teacher are recorded in Rachael Selby's book *Still Being Punished* (Selby 1999). Nuku was born in 1946 and was a native speaker of Maori until he had this strapped out of him at Omaha School when Mrs Henderson, as she then was, was his teacher. Ashton-Warner's book *Teacher* was largely grounded in her experiences at Omaha School. The library at the Auckland College of Education is named after her. She has a saintly reputation in Pakeha education circles, but is remembered by Omaha Maori for the physical abuse of Maori kids who spoke Maori. Two worlds. Two perceptions.

In 2004 our community published a newsletter that said we were pleased with our developing relationship with Redhill School and expressed the opinion, among others, that although Redhill School was a good school it did not provide educational opportunities for some Maori kids. The newsletter found its way to the school and was discussed at a board of trustees meeting, with three outcomes.

First, the board made it very clear that it did not have any relationship with our community. This was an interesting stance as our chairman was, and remains, an elected member of the board and half the students are members of our community. Funny people, these Pakeha, eh?

Second, the board declined to meet with us to discuss any concerns that it might have had. This is also a board that scratches its head each year during its self-assessment process when it considers how the school might improve.

Third, the board declared very firmly that all students at the school had educational opportunities. The school defined opportunity differently from us. It believed that all enrolled students had the opportunity to learn whenever there was a teacher in front of the class.

Someone in the Departures section of the international airport does not necessarily have the opportunity to go to Australia. There are prerequisites for international travel, most obviously a passport and a ticket. The person just happens to be in a place where people are in the process of going to Australia. Similarly, a child enrolled at school, or even a child in a classroom, does not have the opportunity to learn just because they are

enrolled or present. Not only are there prerequisites and co-requisites to learning, but also an opportunity is something that is actively taken up or rejected. It is also something that can be put out of reach. It is our belief that some Maori children at Redhill School do not have the opportunity to learn because they are never engaged with the school.

10. Maori education is not informed by knowledge of contexts in which Maori learn

A lot is known about Maori children as learners. It has been known to Pakeha educationalists for nearly 200 years but has not been used to inform the design and structure of education for Maori. Instead, Maori have been required to fit into a European structure.

Metge (1983) has described three learning contexts in pre-European Maori society. There were the *whare wananga* set apart from day-to-day life and used to impart *iwi* history, *waiata*, *karakia*, *whakapapa* and other restricted knowledge to selected youth by rote learning in a highly ritualised manner. There was 'education through exposure' where students were put in situations such as cultivation, childcare and *hui* that required them to participate and perform and where 'they were expected to work out what was going on and solve problems that arose' (Hemara 2000), with the support of teachers or family. There was one-to-one learning, sometimes over a decade or more, sometimes for only a few hours, where an expert took a child under his or her wing and transmitted knowledge.

In all three of the above approaches, Maori saw teachers and learners as a unit. They were not separate as in the European idea of 'child-centred'.

Wharehuia Hemara (Hemara 2000) has reviewed the goals and methods of Maori education before European settlement. Some children had to learn the history, genealogies and esoteric knowledge if these were to be preserved for future generations. All had to know the lore and customs, and the resources available to the community. Education took place in communities that valued their children highly. Hemara, along with others (e.g. Salmond 1991 and Elsdon Best), describes pre-European

Maori as indulgent parents. Hemara concludes that pre-European Maori education had the following features:

- Pre-European Maori used games and competition to build knowledge and skills.
- Learning was a gradual process with new learning hooked onto and extending what was previously understood.
- Learning was gender-specific: 'It was considered that women and men had different capacities that required harnessing for community well-being.'
- Learning occurred in small groups.
- The curriculum was relevant and mixed, with teaching opportunities often seized when they arose in the normal course of events.
- Streaming: not all learning was for everyone.
- Metaphor and allusion were frequently used, bringing an 'aura of familiarity' to new knowledge.
- Surprise was used to reinforce learning.
- Intergenerational teaching and learning, involving kaumatua and grandparents as well as parents, older siblings, uncles and aunts, was common.
- Peer assessment: 'Maori learners were assessed by their peers, teachers and all those who were affected by the results. When a whakapapa recitation of other activity was being performed the listeners sounded either their approval or otherwise.'