

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### *Funding Maori Educational Achievement*

*What is at issue here is whether the dominant Pakeha education system in general and schooling in particular will ever be able to provide a mode of education which can free itself of its historical colonising baggage and genuinely meet Maori students needs and aspirations.*

Smith 1997, p. 253.

Within Maoridom there are four voices offering solutions to the problems in the compulsory education sector, as these are variously perceived. Pre-eminent among the voices is Professor Mason Durie. Professor Durie is Assistant Vice-Chancellor (Maori) at Massey University. He is a giant among men, and his approach has been to look at the stars, at the truly big picture, and to try to change that. He has worked with Maori to develop an agreed set of outcomes that Maori desire from the education system. This view, that the education system should deliver the outcomes for Maori that Maori want from it, stands in marked contrast to the Pakeha view that the system should deliver the same outcomes for Maori as it does for Pakeha, and that the ongoing problem is that it does not. He has worked in the Pakeha world with the goal of ensuring that Maori are integral to policies, structures, and processes rather than being tacked on or consulted after decisions have been made or structures are in place.

We look through the other lens of the telescope, not out at the stars but into our small part of the world, Papakura, and we ask how can the educational achievement of these kids – that one and that one and that

one – be improved right now, next year at the latest, because this year's wasted schooling is gone forever. Durie's approach promises much for future generations, but today's young Maori at schools like Edmund Hillary, Mansell Intermediate and Papakura High School will not benefit from it. Indeed, Durie's approach, while promising much, guarantees nothing. It relies on a trickle-down effect in an education system that has a large number of dams and even more swamps.

The second voice comes from the universities and teacher colleges and is directed at teachers and policy-makers. We have been heavily influenced by Professors Russell Bishop and Ted Glynn. They are leaders of a group of like-minded academic educationalists. For years their messages have been 'culture counts' and that outcomes, in achievement, behaviour and attendance, are determined not by the child but by the 'ecology' of the school: the overall mix of teacher, pupil, principal, administration, board, buildings, resources, expectations and school culture. Unfortunately, this voice has not penetrated into Papakura's worst schools where the principals and teachers still choose to believe that Maori misbehaviour and Maori underachievement are the result of deficits in Maori rather than of competence deficits in themselves. Unfortunately too, this voice is a peripheral voice in education theory that continues to be dominated by the mantra that socio-economic status, not schooling, determines academic achievement. The reality is that the socio-economic status of a school's pupils determines the quality of its teachers, board and resources. Deficits in these are the barriers to educational achievement.

Third are those recurrent fringe and iwi Maori voices clamouring for total Maori control of educational resources for Maori: 'Give us the money and we will decide what to do with it.' The history of Maori control of Crown resources is that these get poured into boxer shorts, flash cars, overseas trips, alcohol, pokie machines and the wallets of friends and family members rather than into health gain or educational achievement. The idea is nice but the implementation is a con.

Finally, there are the Maori providers led by Te Wananga o Aotearoa. The story of Te Wananga o Aotearoa and the related story of the demise of its founder, Dr Rongo Wetere, is an illuminating illustration of both the

tenacity of Maori and of the importance of getting the incentives right. Te Wananga o Aotearoa acted, in the last few years of Dr Wetere's reign, in accordance with the funding incentives before it. These did not, as it turned out, produce the kind of wananga that the Crown found acceptable. Matters were compounded by real problems with course quality; with the validity of enrolments; with the siphoning-off of government money into family coffers; with management; and with Dr Wetere's refusal to acknowledge that some of the Crown's concerns were valid.

Maori education, in particular schooling from ages six to sixteen, has one goal and one goal only, and that is to prepare Maori children to compete in a world market for work skills. Because success in the workforce is not just a matter of qualifications – it requires an ability to get on well with oneself and with others, as well as a range of interests – a generic mission statement for a New Zealand state school could read, 'XYZ School ensures that all students achieve to their potential in the classroom, on the sports field, and in cultural and artistic activities.' Low levels of Maori educational achievement are an important issue within this goal and its derivative generic mission statement. None of the four voices above provides a satisfactory solution.

Professor Durie proposes that we wait until the system is changed, at which time the rising tide will lift all boats. This approach provides little for those Maori kids who could achieve national qualifications during this waiting period but who will not, and who will leave school with nothing but negatives. Nor does it guarantee that in this future system, which delivers the outcomes for Maori that Maori want from it, Maori will value educational achievement.

The Picot report and the subsequent Education Act of 1989 were supposed to be a rising tide that lifted all boats. Instead, the gap between our high and low achieving students has widened with school-level control of decision-making, reflecting the wide range of competencies at school level. Some boards and principals are vastly superior to the old Department of Education, but others are vastly inferior – and Maori kids go to the inferior schools.

The Maori academic educationalists recognise the problem, but



unfortunately cannot yet provide full answers to the key follow-up research questions about how to effect a change in school ecology or how to establish an appropriate school ecology. The reason for this is that these are empirical, not theoretical or ideological, questions. To find the answers it will be necessary to try different approaches.

The Maori voices clamouring for Maori control of resources do not offer solutions. They are merely pushing a political viewpoint and they propose a very wasteful, uncontrolled way of finding out what does not work.

Maori providers, and providers to Maori, will follow the incentives in a system where the government is merely one source of incentives. Others include iwi, parents, and ego.

In *Maori Health* we proposed a three-pronged approach to achieving Maori health gains. First, it was important to remove the obstacles to Maori health, principally the bro-reaucracy. Then it was a matter of getting the incentives right so that providers were rewarded for achieving Maori health gains. Third, it was important to allow innovative new entrants to participate in the market for Maori health gain.

The education and health systems are different in one crucial respect. The health system has the capacity to produce Maori health gain, given the right incentives, and the aim of allowing competition from new entrants is to move things along more quickly. The compulsory education sector does not have the capacity to increase Maori educational achievement to the degree required. This lack of capacity is evidenced in two ways: the inability to produce gains of the required magnitude despite forty or more years of trying; and the ease with which we have produced such gains in children well behind their peers and with established behaviour and attendance issues, without the use of either trained teachers or orthodox administration support.

This lack of capacity requires much more active management of existing schools where Maori are not achieving. In some cases, nurturing and mentoring may be all that is required. Others may require drastic pruning, with boards replaced by managers, principals removed and teachers sacked.

The education system's present lack of capacity for Maori educational achievement is directly related to the lack of accountability in the system. Who is to blame for the capable Maori teenager who leaves Papakura High School after ten or eleven years in the education system unable to add nine and eight together in his or head, and who struggles to read, sounding each word out, and who cannot even start to write a paragraph? Papakura High School sends a number of these students out into the world each year. There are many people or groups at whom the finger can be pointed – the child, the parent or parents, the schools, the wider Maori community (perhaps the Papakura Urban Maori Authority), the government. At least, in this case, it doesn't seem to be the Papakura District Council's fault. But does the buck stop anywhere? In education, it does not.

It is interesting to compare this situation with a comparable case in medicine. Imagine a child who has been through a large number of hands, each of which has had the chance to diagnosis and to treat the problem. None has done so effectively, and as a result the child at age fifteen or sixteen has a significant disability which will be costly to fix but which will probably go untreated, and which may lead to early death. There are a number of examples like this in medicine where the diagnosis is missed or where the diagnosis is made but the treatment offered is ineffective. These include foetal alcohol syndrome, a variety of mental illnesses, heart valve disease, rheumatic fever, diabetes, a variety of tumours and slow-growing cancers, child abuse and tuberculosis. In all of these, regardless of the contribution to the problem made by the patient, the family or even the environment, it is the doctor who is accountable if the disorder is not diagnosed and managed appropriately.

Early death is an outcome of educational underachievement. When premature Maori deaths are analysed, educational underachievement emerges as a major risk factor. A key difference between doctors and teachers, and a key reason why doctors are professionals and teachers are not, is that there is a disciplinary body in medicine which will say to a doctor, once all the finger-pointing and attempts to shift blame are over, 'Maybe they could have done so, but you should have done so and that

is why we are making this finding against you.' Doctors and nurses are accountable for their actions and for their omissions. Teachers, principals and school boards are accountable very rarely, if at all.

Funding gains in Maori educational achievement is a fourfold process:

- 1 Remove the obstacles in the system.
- 2 Make teachers, principals and boards accountable.
- 3 Get the incentives right.
- 4 Promote the development of innovative providers.

### **Remove the obstacles in the system**

There are four main obstacles: competing priorities for school resources; the lack of nationwide assessment in literacy and numeracy; teachers in the Ministry of Education and ERO; and schools attempting to be all things to all pupils.

#### **Competing priorities for school resources**

The core business of schools is schooling, and until this has been achieved schools should not diversify into health promotion, values education or any other activity that distracts teachers, the principal, and the board from doing their job.

Schools are seen by any number of community groups, and often by the Crown, as a captive audience. This is compounded by an ideology among educationalists that there are a number of things schools do or should do, such as social development or producing well-rounded individuals, which are equally as important as schooling. This is social engineering, not schooling.

#### **The lack of nationwide assessment in literacy and numeracy**

Once schools are focused on schooling they need measures of academic performance. Within the compulsory education sector there is widespread opposition to nationwide standardised assessment. The primary teachers'

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union, the NZEI, is a prominent voice here. The general claim is that there is too much assessment, that while students are being assessed they are not being taught, and that somehow it is wrong to compare children who learn at their own pace in their own way.

The reality is that many primary school teachers, principals and schools are terrified of standardised assessment in Years 4, 6 and 8. They are terrified because nationwide assessment would lead directly to the ranking of primary schools, both individually and by town or suburb.

The NCEA Level One results provide meaningful information on the performance of secondary schools. They show that Papakura High School is below the national average for all schools, and below the national average for schools of its type. One natural line of enquiry from here is to investigate the performance of primary schools that contribute to the third-form roll at Papakura High School. It may well be that pupils from these schools are miles behind when they start at Papakura High and, in fact, catch up a little there. Or, perhaps, kids from local primary schools are average or slightly above when they enter Papakura High and then fall behind.

Forty per cent of all Maori students do not achieve the minimum literacy and numeracy requirements of NCEA Level One, i.e. after three years of secondary school they are still performing at a primary-school level. Yet, almost all primary schools claim that all their pupils are doing well and that there is little or no difference between the performance of their Maori and non-Maori pupils. This inability of most primary schools to report accurately on Maori student achievement is the single biggest reason why a nationwide system of student assessment, with results recorded by the NZQA, is required.

The arguments against nationwide standardised assessment are weak. Teaching and assessment go hand in hand for every minute of every lesson. It is not a case of one or the other. It is a matter of both or neither. Nationwide standardised assessment has the important benefit of benchmarking an individual teacher's own assessment of her student's learning. She will know whether her judgement that Johnny is above average is correct or wildly misplaced.

The argument that children are harmed by assessment which shows them to be below average is silly. Children know how well they are doing compared to the other kids in their class. They know who the dummies and the brain-boxes are. The huge benefit of assessment is that it allows the identification of specific problems that can be addressed. Nationwide standardised assessment identifies poor schools and, over time, poor teachers. If Miss White's class consistently does worse than other classes in the school or area, or if Miss White's Maori students consistently do poorly, then Miss White probably has competency deficits that need to be addressed.

#### Teachers in the Ministry of Education and the ERO

One of the striking differences between the administration of the health and the education sectors in this country is that doctors and nurses have been eliminated from control of the health sector while teachers have a great deal of control in the administration of education. Doctors and nurses were replaced as managers of the health system when costs became a real issue. They were far too interested in patient benefit. Perhaps more important, though, they were not the right people to make resource-allocation choices and could not decide between choices such as restricting either orthopaedic or dermatology services. Bean counters and economists could make these choices, although often on arbitrary and dubious grounds, and they became the key decision makers in the health sector. The message is that once the health sector had set cost-containment as its priority, it employed managers who could do that.

If Maori student achievement is to be the priority in Maori education, what role have former teachers got in the Ministry of Education or the ERO? The answer is: a huge role if they have a record of lifting Maori student achievement, and no role at all otherwise. Unfortunately, in a central administration which contains too many former teachers, there are too few people with the skills to determine whether a school or principal is producing Maori student achievement, and even fewer people who are able to diagnose the causes of a problem in this area once it is



identified, and then to put in place and implement a plan that will result in an adequate improvement in Maori student achievement.

#### **Schools attempting to be all things to all pupils**

The incentives in the current funding system are for schools to enrol every child they can, and then to ignore those children. Funding is per head, not according to the amount learned. A direct consequence of this is that schools enrol a number of children whose educational needs they cannot meet.

The Education Act 1989 does not allow state schools to turn students away, other than in some special circumstances, and the expectation is that state schools can meet the education needs of the full range of pupils in their area. This simply is not true.

We applaud schools like Rosehill College that have thought about the students whose educational needs they cannot meet and have put processes in place to discourage these children from enrolling, and to exclude them if they choose to enrol anyway.

If more schools were like Rosehill College there would be a group of students in each suburb for whom the Ministry needed to find an education provider, rather than the present system where these students are placed in schools that cannot meet their needs, and their brains are left to rot.

#### **Make teachers, principals and boards accountable**

New Zealand operates a no-fault system for student failure, whether Maori or Pakeha, in education. Academic achievement is thought to require a lot of things to go right at the same time – student, teacher, principal, board, home environment and so on. When students, particularly brown students from poor homes, do not achieve it is easy for principals, schools and teachers to say, 'We tried, but the odds were against us and you only beat the odds sometimes.'

Accountability for student achievement will get rid of this no-fault system. Put simply, boards are responsible for providing the resources required for teaching and learning; principals are responsible for the

academic infrastructure (yearly academic, sporting, artistic, and cultural planning; school-wide curriculum delivery; summative assessment collation reporting and feedback; mentoring, advice; and school-wide achievement); and teachers are responsible for individual learning.

An individual student's failure to progress is a critical event and should provoke internal reflection on resource provision, academic infrastructure and individual teaching with a 'where could we improve' rather than a 'name and blame' mentality. Sometimes, perhaps most of the time, there are external causes of student failure such as transience, alcoholic parents or mother in jail, and the particular school is not able to compensate for this.

The relative failure to progress of an entire class is a clear indication that the teacher needs support, on the understanding that if improvement does not occur, the teacher may be better suited to a different school. An incompetent teacher at one school may flourish at another.

The relative failure to progress of an entire school should jeopardise the continued existence of the board and the continued employment of the principal.

### **Get the incentives right**

Although there are incentives other than financial incentives, this is a chapter on funding Maori student achievement, and financial incentives alone are enough to lift Maori achievement in education dramatically.

There is a subsistence level of funding which all schools should get in recognition of common base costs. This should include minimum award rate wages for its staff and should cover things like administration costs, ground and building maintenance, core teaching and learning resources. We are advocating a return to bulk funding but at a basic level below the current average operating grant plus wages.

The mission of our generic school is: 'XYZ School ensures that all students achieve to their potential in the classroom, on the sports field, and in cultural and artistic activities'.

We propose that this base funding will be reduced (schools will in effect be fined) for non-achieving schools and for schools that do not

meet minimum attendance and behaviour standards. The goal of this disincentive is to discourage schools from enrolling students whose education needs they cannot meet, or at least to encourage them to exclude truants and bullies quickly.

Schools should receive extra payments for each sports team, cultural group and extra-curricular artistic activity it provides. Schools can decide internally how much of that extra payment the teacher responsible for the team or group receives. Schools will receive further extra payments for teams that win and for students that achieve representative honours.

The bulk of the extra payments schools receive will be decided on the basis of the results achieved in the national standardised assessment. Schools will be paid according to the improvement made by their students relative to the improvement achieved in the past by students of the same age and socio-economic status. In addition, we propose that schools be paid a bonus according to their decile achievement within their socio-economic decile. A school in the top 20 per cent of decile three schools would receive a greater payment than a school in the bottom 20 per cent of decile three schools.

The strengths of this system of financial incentives and disincentives are obvious. Better schools would find themselves with more resources and the opportunity to become better still. Middling schools will face strong incentives to become good schools. A number of schools will die quickly, starved of financial resources, and this is exactly what we hope to achieve because innovative initiatives will arise in their place.

### **Promote the development of innovative providers**

There are two groups of Maori students in any town or suburb that are of concern to us. These are the children whose educational needs no local school has the capacity to meet, and the children currently attending a poor school that would fail under the performance payment regimen we advocate. Most of the children attending a poor school will be picked up by an existing school that can meet their needs on the closure of their current school.

The Maori children whose educational needs no local school has



the capacity to meet are a significant proportion of Maori children. Our estimate is 40 per cent, the proportion of Maori Year 11 students who do not meet the minimum literacy and numeracy requirements of NCEA Level One. Many of these children do not require the input of specialist services such as RTLB or the truancy service. Indeed, many of them would be better off learning from community members rather than trained teachers with all their acquired ideological baggage and remoteness from these children's life experiences. They require an environment in which they can learn, and there are many simple ways of achieving this. We come back again to our initiative in Papakura, which has transformed non-achieving poorly behaved children into enthusiastic, competitive, collaborative learners who complain that there is no school on the weekends but accept (grudgingly) that we need a day for rugby league and another day for church, rest and jobs around the house.

The development of innovative community solutions to Maori underachievement must be encouraged and funded but not controlled by the Ministry of Education. The Ministry needs to realise that it does not know all the things that might work. However, it does know many approaches and structures that are unacceptable.