Maori in Education: Partnership to overcome Disadvantage
by Derek McCormack & Catherine Husheer

Abstract:
The participation of Maori in post-compulsory education and training has increased over the last five years, although growth has not been consistent across the tertiary sector. Maori are under-represented in post graduate education and over-represented in foundation level programmes. These participation trends are related to limited participation and achievement at secondary school, as well as broader social conditions, including changing employment options. Significant progress in Maori education has been initiated by Maori communities themselves and their success is forcing mainstream providers to review the way they design and deliver their programmes.

Whaia ko te matauranga - Hei whitiki mo te iwi - Ka toa ai (Maori Proverb)
(Pursue the wisdom of knowledge so future generations may thrive and prosper)

Before considering this topic area from a New Zealand perspective, it is probably useful to declare our definition of "disadvantaged" in this context as the word can be problematic. We have adopted a fairly broad interpretation that includes groups that are under-represented or experience difficulties
accessing vocational education and training for a number of reasons. In New Zealand such “disadvantaged” groups are considered to be Maori, the indigenous people of Aotearoa New Zealand and some immigrant groups such as Pacific Islanders. Other disadvantaged groups include people with disabilities.

In this paper we will narrow our focus to look more closely at Maori participation and at the policies which have been implemented at the national level to improve Maori participation and educational attainment in vocational education and training. Perhaps even more significant than government policies in this area are the developments that have been initiated by Maori themselves in response to a growing desire to control their own destiny.

At the micro level we will also examine what a vocationally-oriented institution such as AIT is doing to meet its obligations to improve the participation rate and educational attainment of this group.

Maori participation in tertiary education is growing but at a rate substantially lower than the rest of the population. The growing Maori population is also experiencing significantly higher rates of unemployment than non-Maori (25% versus 10%) and lower rates of education generally (50% have no school or tertiary qualifications compared with 31% for non-Maori). At the policy making level there has been growing recognition that ethnocentrism has affected Maori participation in the past and that greater Maori control in education is required to turn this situation around.

One of the most important developments in New Zealand education in recent years has been the growth of Maori medium education stimulated by the revival of the Maori language (te reo Maori). Maori education delivery systems have been developed to meet the needs of the Maori community and to increase levels of achievement by their young people. The community based kohanga reo (or “Maori language nests”) were first established by Maori communities in the early 1980s as a way of preserving the Maori language.
These early childhood centres inevitable led to the development of kura kaupapa Maori at the primary level which have in turn impacted on secondary and tertiary providers. Te reo Maori is the main medium of instruction in these immersion schools and Maori cultural models guide teaching and learning.

The success of these programmes has boosted the growing demand for Maori education at higher levels of the mainstream education system. The Ministry of Education acknowledges this imperative in its strategic plan 'Education for the 21st Century': "A mainstream education system that is more responsive to Maori needs and aspirations is also needed to raise levels of expectation and achievement of Maori students to increase their experience of success."

Who are the Maori?

Maori are the indigenous people of Aotearoa/New Zealand. Although there is no written history before contact with Europeans, oral tradition and archaeological evidence indicate that Polynesian races (from whom the Maori are descended) inhabited New Zealand for about 1000 years prior to the arrival of Europeans. Maori numbers declined considerably from the early 19th century under the impact of European colonization and remained static for another 70 years. However today, due to significant intermarriage between the Maori and non-Maori populations, around 14% of New Zealand's resident population describe themselves as Maori. They are the second most numerous group and constitute a significantly younger population than the average. Thirty-seven percent of Maori are under 15 years of age, compared with 23% of the total population. The Maori population is expected to grow from 435 000 in 1991 to 672 000 by the year 2031, a rate that is twice as fast as for the non-Maori population.¹

¹ 'Facts New Zealand' published by Statistics New Zealand, 1992
The Treaty

Sometimes referred to as New Zealand's founding document, the Treaty holds a special place in New Zealand's constitutional history. It defines the relationship between Maori (the tangata whenua or "people of the land") and the British Crown who colonized the country last century. The Crown drew up the Treaty of Waitangi (which was signed by representatives of the Crown and Maori chiefs on February 6, 1840) to protect Maori land and resources in return for sovereignty over New Zealand. Despite this intention, large tracts of Maori land were appropriated by the Crown and early settlers. Grievances over land are now being addressed over a century later with Maori claims being dealt with by the Waitangi Tribunal.  

As well as protecting land and resources the Treaty established a principle of partnership between the two peoples which is at the heart of biculturalism in New Zealand. Partnership implies a broad and equal basis of participation in society, the economy and the government by Maori. It stands for self-determination but also for joint endeavour and mutual support and enrichment. The concept of partnership increasingly espoused in New Zealand has significant implications for the provision of TVE.

Since the signing of the Treaty, Maori have persistently demanded the rights guaranteed to them by the Treaty during long periods of disregard of it by those in power. During the last decade policies of successive governments have focused on resolving Treaty grievances. Iwi (the Maori tribal groupings) continue to negotiate with the Crown seeking justice for past wrongs and restoration of an economic base for their people.

The Economy

Over the past decade there has been a major shift in the direction of economic policy in New Zealand and these dramatic structural changes to

---

2 The Waitangi Tribunal was set up under the Treaty of Waitangi Act (1975) to consider claims by Maori under the Treaty. It was originally set up to consider only claims from 1975 onwards but its jurisdiction was extended to claims dating back to 1840.
the economy have been the focus of considerable interest around the world. The reforms implemented in the mid 80s were driven by the concern that living standards in New Zealand were declining compared with other OECD countries, and that the size of budget deficits and increasing public debt were reaching unsustainable levels.

New economic policies were introduced under the fourth Labour government which were intended to transform the economy into one that was more open, competitive and market-driven. Public assets such as Telecom, New Zealand Rail and forestries were either privatized or turned into state owned commercial enterprises. These reforms achieved mixed results initially. While inflation fell and government deficits were reduced, economic performance, measured in terms of output and employment, deteriorated. Hardest hit by the re-structuring was the lower paid workforce many of whom lost jobs or had their working conditions altered by the new Employment Contracts Act (1991). However since mid-1991 economic activity recovered and key indicators such as unemployment and inflation have declined significantly.\(^3\)

While the consensus seems to be that radical change was necessary if New Zealand was to become competitive in the international economy a widening gap between upper and lower socio-economic groups has formed which in turn has exposed or accentuated many underlying social inequities. Much of the recent reform and adjustment of TVE in New Zealand has been an attempt to mitigate these inequities.

Maori in Education

It is widely acknowledged that education is critical to improve social and economic position of all groups in society and "disadvantaged" groups in particular. In New Zealand, government initiatives have been designed to target these groups while, simultaneously, initiatives driven by the communities themselves have been acknowledged by government and

\(^3\) According to the Reserve Bank of New Zealand's September Executive Summary, the official unemployment rate is 6.2% (it was 9.1% in the 1994 March quarter) and the underlying inflation rate is 2.1% (projected to fall to 0.8% in 1998).
received funding. In recent years, Maori have successfully developed their own alternatives to mainstream education after generations of under-achievement in the traditional system. Since 1985 Maori language immersion programmes such as kohanga reo, kura kaupapa Maori, and wananga have run parallel to the mainstream system.

The past decade has seen has been a marked improvement in Maori educational achievement at all levels, partly attributable to government policy and to Maori initiatives but also driven by the economic imperatives of a deregulated economy and the need for workers to gain qualifications or “upskill”. While government and Maori initiatives have succeeded to some extent in raising the participation of Maori at all levels, wide gaps still remain between the performance of Maori and non-Maori in formal education.

According to the Ministry of Education’s ‘Education Statistics of New Zealand 1996’, of the total number of students enrolled in tertiary institutions at 31 July 1995, 10.9% (23,031 students) identified themselves as Maori. Although a small percentage of total enrolments, the growth rate is high compared to overall growth in enrolments. Historically Maori have been substantially under-represented in post-school education and training. However, since 1986 there has been a four-fold increase in the number of Maori enrolled in tertiary education - from 3,000 in 1986 to almost 12,000 in 1991.

Aligned with this trend is the growing recognition on the part of providers of post-secondary education of their responsibility to eliminate any barriers to

---

4 meaning "language nest"
5 meaning "school on Maori principles"
6 meaning "place of learning". The first two wananga were established in 1993 - Te Wananga o Aotearoa and Te Wanaga o Raukawa, a third is awaiting official recognition. Ten other Maori organisations wish to explore the concept of wananga status in the future.
7 When analysing the data available on Maori participation it is important to note that the systematic collection of ethnicity data from tertiary institutions only began in the early 1990s. Polytechnic data is more limited that teacher trainee and university data and little information is maintained on those studying in trade and technician levels. Although historical data is limited, current data on Maori participation is comprehensive and directly comparable to that collected in students from other ethnic groups.
entry. We discuss the individual TVE institution's responsibilities later in this paper.

The Ministry of Education and other government departments have long accepted participation in post-school training/retraining as the key to increased employment options for Maori.

The link with senior secondary school is crucial as tertiary institutions recruit a large proportion of their students from senior secondary schools. However, only 20% of the young Maori who left school in 1990 proceeded directly onto some form of tertiary education in 1991, less than half the rate for non-Maori school leavers (45%). Maori experience of the education system shows that they are less likely than non-Maori to remain in school to senior year levels and tend to leave school with fewer qualifications.

The proportion of Maori in the total population is around 14% but they still make up only 7% of the tertiary student population. They are more highly represented in teacher education programmes, accounting for almost 13% of all teacher trainees. Maori women outnumber men - in the case of teacher education programmes by three to one - although Maori men outnumber women in full-time study programmes, likely the result of the greater impact on young Maori of unemployment.

For non-Maori students university is still the most popular form of tertiary education, although recent figures show that polytechnics are making up ground. However Maori are equally likely to be enrolled in polytechnic programmes where they are better represented in the core age group (18 - 24 years). In polytechnics Maori students are more likely to be enrolled in full-time programmes rather than part-time programmes.

---

8 Ministry of Education 1991
8 based on 1991 census figures and the projected growth of the population (NB. The 1995 Census will be published next year)
Increasing the participation of Maori at all levels remains a priority issue for the Ministry of Education as noted in strategy four of the *Ten Point Plan for Maori Education*, there is a need to: "Develop policies that will increase Maori participation rates in post-school training/re-training and education to increase their employment options ... yet the strategies to do this have as yet not been clearly identified or articulated. Efforts to increase Maori participation in tertiary education will need, firstly, to address inequitable outcomes at the secondary school level, which block the movement of many young Maori to post-secondary education. In comparison with their non-Maori peers, many young Maori are currently outside the education system and are at a severe disadvantage."\(^{10}\)

As well as the issue of participation there is a need to promote equitable Maori representation across a broad spectrum of education and training programmes. According to *Maori in Education*\(^{11}\), "Maori participation is extremely low in fields that are critical to Maori economic development such as commerce, business management and administration, natural science, agriculture, horticulture, forestry, fishing, hospitality and tourism."

For Maori who have not had a good experience of mainstream education there is a need for bridging programmes aimed at mature students and run by many of the tertiary institutions themselves. This provides support to enable Maori (and other groups) to become independent learners and cope with the demands of tertiary study.

The Ministry's Report on *Maori in Education* states that the "need to accommodate, promote and support Maori education initiatives should not detract from the urgent need to address educational inequities within the mainstream education system." The report highlights improvements in participation and attainment but confirms "the very real disadvantage faced by Maori in the mainstream education system." As the great majority of

---

\(^{10}\) Ministry of Education 1991a) 

\(^{11}\) Maori in Education 1993
Maori students remain within the traditional system these issues remain critical.

Differentials in participation emerge at the early childhood level and become more pronounced at higher levels. On the question of attainment the report concludes that the "proportion of Maori students exiting the system with no qualifications remains high and at tertiary level there is a need to promote a wider range of study options to ensure an adequate representation of Maori throughout all sectors of the economy.

The Government continues to develop policies that will foster increased Maori participation rates in post-compulsory education and training to enable Maori to enter the workforce on an equal footing with non-Maori. Examples of these targeted programmes are:

1. **Skill Enhancement Programme**
   
   Formerly known as the 'Maori Vocational Training Programme, Skill Enhancement is specifically targeted at young Maori between the ages of 16 and 21 and is designed to provide relevant training on and off the job. It is funded and administered by the Education and Training Support Agency (ETSA) which is separate from the Ministry of Education.

2. **The Training Opportunities Programme (TOPS)**
   
   TOPS is the major provider of training to the young, low qualified and the long term unemployed. The purpose of the programme is to help participants gain basic skills, independence and recognised qualifications that lead to employment or further training. Maori are well represented in all these programmes.\(^\text{12}\) The programme is also funded through the Education and Training Support Agency.

\(^\text{12}\) In December 1993 41% of all TOPS trainees were Maori
3. **Student Support**

One of the major barriers to Maori participation in further education and training has been the cost factor. For many Maori families, the cost of supporting young people during their years of training has been prohibitive. There are indications that the *Student Loan Scheme* may be encouraging more Maori students than ever into tertiary education. The *Student Allowance Scheme* also provides financial support for Maori tertiary students.\textsuperscript{13}

However, the Maori submission to the *Ministerial Consultative Group on Funding Growth in Tertiary Education*\textsuperscript{14} points out that the Student Loans Scheme can also have the reverse effect to what was intended and serve to discourage people on low incomes. "Unquestionably the loans scheme and other recent changes have increased Maori participation in tertiary education. Some Maori groups view with caution the idea that a "user pays" approach will deliver the goods."\textsuperscript{15}

---

\textsuperscript{13} In 1993, 51% of Maori full-time students received a student allowance, compared with 43% of non-Maori. (in the *Annual Report on the Ten Point Plan 1993/94*).

\textsuperscript{14} This Ministerial task force was appointed in 1993 to advise the Minister of Education on how the substantial and continuing growth in tertiary education should be funded in the face of ongoing fiscal constraints. The group recommended that government consider 2 funding options which both include an increase in student contributions. For instance, under Option B students who have the potential to earn high incomes as a result of their training will make a contribution not exceeding 50% of their tuition costs. These payments would then be targeted to those groups who are presently under-represented in tertiary education.

\textsuperscript{15} The *Maori Law Review*, May 1994
A new national qualifications system was launched in 1992 and has been progressively phased in over the last few years. It was developed in response to the perception that New Zealand was ill-equipped to meet the increasing demand for skilled workers and that our international competitiveness was suffering as a result. There was also the widely held view that the existing system had too many barriers which discouraged students, especially from "disadvantaged" groups.

The new system provides a more integrated approach to education and training and offers a variety of pathways for people to gain nationally recognised qualifications. It applies to all post-compulsory learning up to post-graduate level. Qualifications consist of "packages" of units determined by professional and industry groups or by single providers.

Under the new Framework learning is now assessed and recognised in a consistent way wherever it takes place i.e. secondary schools, polytechnics, colleges of education, universities, workplaces and private and government training establishments, wananga, marae and community agencies. The framework recognises skills developed "on the job" as well as previous skills and learning which may be relevant to a qualification.

In its introduction to the National Qualifications Framework, NZQA (the New Zealand Qualifications Authority) states that “Historically, Maori have not been served well by the New Zealand education system. The result is that they are under-represented in many skill areas of the economy, notably those involving technical and management skills.... The Qualifications Authority is committed to developing Maori-based qualifications and ensuring that there is a Maori dimension, where relevant to qualifications.”
The Qualifications Authority consulted extensively with Maori and learnt that they wanted to take control of their own education and training programmes. They wanted to design and administer their own training programmes as well as participate as students.

The new Framework provides greater opportunities for Maori to do this by enabling them to gain recognised qualifications through their own private training establishments (PTEs) and wananga, colleges of education and universities. Furthermore the Framework now recognises Maori knowledge and skills.

Maori and non-Maori are now able to gain both Maori-specific qualifications and qualifications that include a Maori dimension. So what does this mean? Examples of Maori-specific qualifications are weaving (raranga) and whakairo (carving), while a Maori dimension can be incorporated into units of learning that go towards completing the requirements for a particular qualification. For example students studying for a relevant qualification in the fisheries industry would have to know about Maori fisheries and fishing rights which are protected under the Treaty of Waitangi, as discussed above.

Any group or individuals can set up a private training establishment and there has been a proliferation of them since the education reforms. Providers who want to offer nationally recognised qualifications must be registered by the Qualifications Authority. Registration is also required if the provider wants to apply for government funding. However other than registration and external quality checks, the provider maintains control over course delivery, content and context all of which are fundamental to Maori providers.

NZQA requires providers to put in place quality management systems which "allow the views of stakeholders, representatives of relevant industries .... Maori and other communities to be taken into account ... specifically external peers must be involved in course design, development and evaluation, including the development of new courses or papers and the moderation of
At present this level of consultation applies only to degree courses, however NZQA is in the process of reviewing its criteria and has issued a discussion document which aims to oblige providers to consult more extensively with their communities, especially Maori.  

---

16 Quality Assurance for Degrees and Related Qualifications, NZQA, July 1995

17 Sections relating to Maori include:
under Staff (section iii) “the organisation must pride evidence that there is appropriate emphasis on ensuring staff are competent in te reo Maori and tikanga Maori where this is neccesary to meet the needs of learners” and under Programme or Service Delivery (section v) that “there is appropriate provision for te reo Maori in assessment.”
Institutional Initiatives

At the institutional level providers have an obligation to work to promote greater educational opportunity for disadvantaged groups in their community. This legislative responsibility is spelt out clearly in the Education Act 1989 under which all educational institutions operate. The duties of the institution's governing Council are stipulated under the Act and include:

... "c) to encourage the greatest possible participation by the communities served by the institution so as to maximise the educational potential of all members of those communities with particular emphasis on those groups in those communities that are under-represented among the students of the institution."

In the case of Maori, the Council of the institution is bound by an additional obligation due to the constitutional place of Maori in New Zealand. The Act states that the institution is bound to: "b) acknowledge the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi." As discussed earlier, the Treaty embodies the special relationship between Maori and the Crown and affirms the exchange of sovereignty for the guarantee of protection and self-determination ("rangatiratanga").

In addition to legislative obligations under the Education Act and the State Sector Act, Goal Two of our Charter specifically refers to equity issues "to provide equal opportunities for all people whatever their gender, ethnic origin or special needs. AIT has developed a number of performance indicators which are used to monitor our performance in this area.

Groups that have been historically under-represented in tertiary institutions are also significant from a demographic perspective. A recent survey has highlighted the fact that by the year 2011 over 50% of all students in technical and vocational training in the greater Auckland area will be Maori

---

18 Tertiary institutions all have a governing Council (Schools have Boards of Trustees).
19 from the Education Act 1989, Functions and Duties of Councils, sect. 181 Duties of Councils
and Pacific Islanders, a trend which has huge implications for providers of education and training.

Each tertiary institution determines how it will meet its statutory obligations. We examine how the Auckland Institute of Technology deals with these issues and endeavours to effect a partnership with Maori in all facets of educational policy and delivery.

In response to our responsibilities under the Treaty and our Charter, AIT established a Maori faculty in 1992, the first stand-alone Maori faculty in New Zealand (traditionally Maori departments in universities and polytechnics are located within Arts or Humanities faculties). Te Ara Poutama is a dynamic example of our institution's commitment to the Treaty's "partnership principle" i.e. two people of equal standing. AIT also supports Maori cultural, social and economic aspirations through the provision of a framework which encourages the development and delivery of Maori-specific programmes - programmes that are unashamedly Maori in philosophy, content and delivery style.

The faculty is dedicated to Maori Development and its priority is to educate Maori, rather than educating non-Maori about Maori. Language is at the heart of the Maori education renaissance and Te Ara Poutama the emphasis is on applied language i.e. language that can be used by the practitioner in the workplace. This development mirrors what is happening in the Maori world and reflects the rapid growth in the use of Maori as a medium for instruction and learning. The growing numbers of young Maori who are bilingual has in turn created a greater demand for Maori language based programmes. As this younger generation enters the tertiary sector in the next

20 The faculty already offers programmes in growth areas such as Maori performing arts, economic development, social services, tourism, and youth development. These will be joined by programmes in health promotion and mental health in 1997. The faculty achieved a significant milestone with the accreditation of the first Bachelor of Maori Studies degree in New Zealand. Student demand has provided the catalyst for further educational developments such as a Masters degree which is in the planning phase.
few years, education providers will be forced to change to accommodate their needs.

The main advantage of establishing a distinctively Maori faculty is that it has been empowered to develop its own programmes to meet the needs of the Maori community. The faculty is also recognised by the Maori community as having a Maori structure and values and not merely an adjunct of the traditional academic organisation.

Maori cultural values are firmly embedded in all the faculty's programmes and this has enabled Maori who have not succeeded in the traditional educational system to learn in a supportive, nurturing environment that mirrors their own cultural values and way of life. Customs such as ritual opening and closing ceremonies are incorporated into the daily classroom routine and Maori elders (kaumatua) have a special role to play in the life of the faculty, ensuring that protocols are observed and also act as counselors for staff and students.

From 30 EFTS\(^2\) in 1992 and a limited range of courses at foundation and certificate/diploma level, the faculty now has 254 EFTS made up primarily of students working towards higher level qualifications such as the Bachelor of Maori Studies degree.

**Conclusion**

The outlook for Maori educational initiatives is assured and they will continue to expand and evolve to meet the educational needs and aspirations of the Maori people. Self-determination will continue to be the driving force for Maori as they use their growing economic resources to gain the skills they need to play a greater part in the new economy.

\(^{21}\) Equivalent Full-Time Student = method used by the Ministry of Education to convert student enrolments of many kinds, including part-time enrolments, into a single unit as a basis for the funding of tertiary institutions.
The challenge for mainstream providers is to work with Maori to provide the sort of educational delivery systems that are more conducive to Maori educational achievement. If they succeed, mainstream institutions will avoid the possibility of Maori turning their back on the traditional system and pursuing their own path.