

Te Wharekura o Rakaumangamanga: The Development of an Indigenous Language Immersion School

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Abstract

In the early 1980s, the Maori people of New Zealand began a dynamic language revitalization movement. The establishment of Maori immersion programs in state funded schools constituted one major aspect of the movement. This article describes the development of the Maori language immersion program in one New Zealand school for children ages 5 to 17. In 1985, the first immersion classroom of 5-year-olds was established. Immersion classrooms were added year by year as the first class of children progressed through primary school, junior high, and high school. The first class completed the final year of high school in 1997, and students entered polytechnics or university programs in 1998. The article briefly summarizes the historical background, cultural context, and program of the school. Indicators of school performance, including student achievement on national examinations, are considered. The findings are examined in terms of a selection of the research and theoretical literature. This case study has implications for researchers and educators who are working in indigenous language schooling and for those who are interested in theoretical explanations relating to the success or failure of minority students in school.

In 1984, New Zealand's national Department of Education granted permission to a primary school in Huntly in the Waikato region of the country to establish Maori language immersion programs. When Rakaumanga School was redesignated as a bilingual school in July 1984, an outside observer might have had many reasons for pessimism about the future of the school. Nearly all of the 180 children, ages 5 to 12, were Maori, and the socioeconomic level of the community would later be classified as "1" on a scale of 1-10, where 1 was the lowest level. The first language of nearly all the children was English. There were almost no teaching resources available in Maori and no formal Maori curricula. No funding was available specifically to support Maori language instruction. There were few courses at teacher training institutions for Maori teachers, and there were too few certified teachers fluent in Maori to meet the national demand. The school had no computers or staff who were competent in the use of computers, and the buildings and furnishings were overcrowded and in dire need of refurbishment. No high school in the country offered a secondary program in Maori to meet the needs of students who might emerge from bilingual primary schools such as Rakaumanga. Parents

and other members of the local community had limited roles in the management of the school through the School Committee and the PTA.

By the end of 1997, however, the first group of six students had completed the 7th Form (the final year of high school) at Te Wharekura o Rakaumangamanga. (For convenience, the school is commonly referred to simply as “Rakaumanga”.) With the exception of English transition classes, these students had completed their entire school program in Maori immersion classrooms. All six entered polytechnics or university programs in 1998. Younger students at the school were demonstrating their achievements with good scores on the national School Certificate and Bursary examinations, and the Education Review Office had issued glowing reports based on their reviews.

The author visited the school in 1986/87 and completed a research paper using standard methods of participant observation, interviews, and reviews of historical and other documentary data (Harrison, 1987). She then became a permanent resident of the Waahi community, participating in several educational programs and countless community events over the following decade. She continued her association with Rakaumanga, serving as minutes secretary to the trustees and attending numerous meetings and events within the school. She utilized her extensive field notes, minutes, other documentation, and interviews to complete this article in consultation with members of the school staff and trustees.

Background

A Brief History of the Waikato Tribe

Ogbu (1978) and Barrington (1991) provided international audiences with concise histories of contact between Europeans and Maori, the indigenous people of New Zealand. Their descriptions included general histories of Maori schooling in the 19th and 20th centuries. Each of them pointed out the similarities between the impact of colonization on Native Americans and on Maori in New Zealand. They concluded that Maori school underachievement was related to New Zealand’s history of conquest, colonization, and indigenous subordination in much the same way that similar factors have contributed to underachievement of involuntary minorities in the United States.

As a rule, Maori do not see themselves as a single ethnic group but rather as members of more than 60 distinct tribes. The generic term is commonly used when it is necessary or convenient to refer to the indigenous people as a whole, but each tribe sees its particular history as important. The history of the Waikato tribe in the 19th and 20th centuries is of particular importance to this case study because Rakaumanga is located within the tribe’s territory, the majority of the school’s children are affiliated to this tribe, and specific traditional and historical conditions continue to influence the school and its program today.

In 1858, tribes from around New Zealand selected the Waikato chief, Potatau Te Wherowhero, as King. The political and spiritual movement

surrounding the King's selection became known as the King Movement. Te Wherowhero died in 1860 and was succeeded by his son Tawhiao who became the second Maori King. King Tawhiao's descendant, Te Arikinui Dame Te Atairangikaahu, was crowned as Queen in 1967, and she continued to serve as paramount leader of the King Movement at the time of this writing.

British and settler armies invaded the Waikato region of New Zealand in 1863, driving the Maori King Tawhiao and his people into exile in a neighboring region of the country for more than 20 years. Tawhiao and other members of the tribe returned to the region in the 1880s, but the government had confiscated 1.2 million acres of their land leaving only small parcels in Maori ownership. Because of the loss of its economic base, the tribe suffered terribly from poverty and disease through the remainder of the 19th century and through much of the 20th century.

However, almost as soon as the wars of the 1860s ended, Tawhiao and his descendants began to negotiate with the government for the return of the tribe's ancestral land (McCan, 1993). These negotiations continued into the 1990s and resulted in a major settlement in 1995. The remembrance of the land confiscation, the effects of the loss of the economic base, and the settlement negotiations were significant dimensions of the social and political context for Rakaumanga and its community during the development of the school's immersion program.

The Community

Huntly was a town of about 7,000 on the Waikato River, just south of Auckland, New Zealand's largest metropolis. The town's population was more than half Maori. The river divided the town into Huntly East and Huntly West. Rakaumanga was in Huntly West within walking distance of Waahi Marae and the Maori community surrounding the *marae*. (A *marae* can be briefly defined as a Maori community center.) Waahi was the home *marae* of the Maori Queen Te Arikinui Dame Te Atairangikaahu and her immediate family, including her brother, Professor Sir Robert Mahuta.

As Director of the Centre for Maori Studies and Research at the University of Waikato in nearby Hamilton, Professor Mahuta encouraged a number of researchers to investigate various aspects of the community of Waahi so a number of reports are available about the community (Centre for Maori Studies and Research, 1984; Egan & Mahuta, 1983; Mahuta & Egan, 1981; Shear-Wood, 1982; Stokes, 1977, 1978). A brief summary is given here.

The main township of Huntly East developed in the late 19th century because of the coal mines in the vicinity and because the railroad and main highway from Auckland passed along the east side of the Waikato River through the township. Maori residence in the vicinity dates from pre-contact times but was interrupted when the tribe was driven out of the Waikato region by the British and settler army in 1863-64. King Tawhiao's people returned to the area in the late 19th century, and Waahi and its community have served as an important center of the King Movement throughout the 20th century. The

King Movement, its history, ideology, spirituality, ceremonies, and other events were central to life in the Waahi community.

During the 20th century, Maori in and around Huntly West became farmers, coal miners, slaughterhouse workers, laborers, and tradesmen. In the 1970s, the New Zealand government decided to build a massive coal-fired power station on the west side of the river, immediately adjacent to Waahi Marae. This necessitated the relocation of Rakaumanga from a position north of Waahi to one south of the *marae*. It also set in motion political activity by Professor Mahuta and the Waahi community, which led to compensation from the government, the rebuilding of the *marae*, and continuing programs of small-scale economic and political development for the community. By the late 1980s, development activity began to focus on negotiating a settlement with the government over the longstanding grievance regarding the confiscation of more than 1 million acres of Waikato land in the 1860s.

The negotiations formally began in 1989 and continued until 1995. Professor Mahuta led the negotiations as principal negotiator for the Tainui Maaori Trust Board. (The Trust Board was the legally recognized authority of the local Waikato tribe.) The negotiations seemed to be important to everyone in the community. They were a constant topic of discussion. In the early stages, the tribe had to fund its own legal costs and other activities associated with the negotiations so many members of the community participated in fund-raising activities that contributed to the negotiation process. On one occasion, a train called The Tainui Express was chartered to take several hundred tribal members to Wellington. On arrival in Wellington, passengers participated in an emotional and moving display of tribal loyalty and strength during a march on the Court of Appeals where a case relevant to the negotiations was being heard. The negotiations and surrounding political action contributed to an atmosphere where people believed that positive political action would have positive social consequences.

Schooling, Language Shift, and Revitalization

As with other indigenous peoples in European colonies, the introduction of schooling to New Zealand Maori resulted in a shift away from the indigenous language toward the language of the majority society. By the 1980s, most Maori children in New Zealand were learning English as their first language. However, a major language revitalization movement began in the early 1980s. There have been a number of manifestations of this movement.

A claim was lodged with the Waitangi Tribunal, the tribunal that considers claims related to the Treaty that was signed in 1840 between Maori chiefs and representatives of the British Crown. This claim was lodged early in 1985 stating that the Maori language was a *taonga* (treasure) and that the government should enact legislation recognizing Maori as an official language. The Tribunal's 1986 finding was unequivocally in favor of the claimants (Benton, 1987, p. 68). Shortly thereafter, a Maori Language Act was passed that established Maori as an official language of New Zealand; the Maori

Language Commission was established with the stated purpose of undertaking activities to support the maintenance of the Maori language; and the government began to provide financial support for Maori language programs at several different levels of schooling. These events led to increased demands for Maori speakers to be employed as teachers in schools, in government agencies, in radio and television broadcasting, and in other institutions.

Another significant dimension of the revitalization movement was the establishment of *Kohanga Reo*, the early childhood Maori language “nests”:

Te Kohanga Reo programs were initiated in the early 1980s. The language nests are Maori language immersion preschool programs for infants from birth to five years of age. They were initiated in response to the realization that the Maori language was disappearing because children were learning only English, but it was also an attempt to place both the authority and the responsibility for the preschools with local family groups or *whanau*. (Harrison, 1993, p. 157)

By 1994, more than 13,000 Maori children were enrolled in 819 *Kohanga Reo* programs (Ministry of Education, 1995, p. 38). Maori educators soon realized that children would quickly lose the Maori they had learned in *Kohanga Reo* when they entered English-speaking primary schools at age 5. As more and more children entered *Kohanga Reo* during the 1980s, the pressure to establish Maori language primary school programs intensified. It is important to note that the immersion program at Rakaumanga depended on children entering school at age 5 with a background in Maori language developed during attendance at *Kohanga Reo*. Without the six local *Kohanga Reo* sending children on to primary school at Rakaumanga, the immersion program could not have operated as it did.

It is also important to note that Rakaumanga was not the only school in New Zealand seeking and gaining permission to teach in Maori. In 1994, the Ministry of Education recognized 28 schools as *Kura Kauapa Maori* (Maori philosophy schools), and some level of Maori medium instruction was taking place in 379 other schools (Ministry of Education, 1995, p. 40). Although Rakaumanga chose not to seek official status as a *Kura Kaupapa*, it was part of a general movement within the country toward the provision of Maori immersion or bilingual programs for those families who wanted to send their children to such programs.

Changes in teacher training affected the development of Maori immersion programs. Between 1986 and 1998, the number of Maori students at the University of Waikato increased from 417 to 2634. The number of Maori students in the Teachers College/School of Education grew from 87 to 572. Programs were established to teach the Maori language to Maori students, to train fluent Maori speakers as teachers, and to improve the fluency of certified Maori teachers. Some Maori-speaking teacher trainees were sent to Rakaumanga to complete a portion of their training under the supervision of Rakaumanga’s teachers. Although the University did not provide funding to

Rakaumanga to cover the costs involved, this arrangement enhanced opportunities for the school to recruit and train teachers to suit the school's needs. It would have been much more difficult for Rakaumanga to establish their immersion program if the new programs to train Maori teachers had not been established at about the same time.

Policy changes within the Ministry of Education improved the availability of teaching resources in Maori. A portion of the budget for resource development was set aside for development of resources in Maori including mathematics and science curricula. Although the commercial materials available were still extremely limited, those that were available helped to alleviate the persistent problem for teachers of preparing resources by hand.

School Restructuring

In 1988, the government issued *Administering for Excellence: Effective Administration in Education* (Taskforce to Review Education Administration, 1988), and in 1989 restructuring of the school system began in accordance with the recommendations in this report. From Rakaumanga's standpoint, the most important changes included the devolution of responsibility for recruiting staff, developing policies, and managing the school's operating budget to a locally elected Board of Trustees. Basic funding for all schools would be issued on a per pupil basis with supplementary funding for schools in low socioeconomic communities and for Maori language instruction. If a school could attract more students, it would receive more funds for its operating budget. Also, the Education Review Office (ERO) was established to review and evaluate the performance of schools. The ERO included a Maori division charged with bringing a Maori perspective to reviewing activities of schools with a Maori philosophy.

The restructuring helped to establish a context where it was politically possible for Rakaumanga to develop a Maori immersion program, but persistent political activity by the school community with support from the Tainui Maori Trust Board also contributed to change. Because there were three schools in different regions of the country—Rakaumanga in Huntly, Ruatoki in the rural Tuhoë region near the East Coast, and Hoani Waititi in South Auckland—seeking to expand their Maori immersion programs into the secondary level at about the same time and because of the national emphasis on language revitalization, it was difficult for the Ministry of Education to ignore the political pressure being generated by the Maori community in Huntly.

The School Program

A Community School

The school program was anchored in the local community. The complementary roles of the school and community were recurrent themes in the school's strategic plan, developed in 1993. The Waikato dialect of Maori

was the dialect of instruction. The curriculum incorporated history, customs, values, and the natural environment of the local community. School activities were closely linked to activities of the King Movement and to activities at local *marae*. Parents, elders, and other community members were encouraged to visit classrooms, participate as volunteers, join the trustees, engage in fundraising, attend parent-teacher conferences, and chaperone school trips. Fluent Maori speakers from the local community were trained by the school to serve as substitute teachers for one day at a time. The school's multipurpose hall served as a community education center where members of the local community were enrolled in informal or university Maori language classes in the evenings. Members of the community were encouraged to enroll in teacher training programs and were expected to return to the school to teach when they had completed the training programs.

The principal, Barna Heremia, described his relationship with the community:

If I need something to be done, I can call on anyone from Taniwharau Club or Waahi or the other *marae*. I can ask for anything from a *karakia* (prayer) to unveil something to a plumber. When they want me or something from the school, they just need to ring.

The parent community is more informed now because of the open door nature of the school. Parents have seen the success with the older students and that has added to their confidence. From the very beginning, it was important for the school to be out in the community. The school cannot survive insulated within its boundaries. The school is there at every major gathering, either the school as a whole or myself.

Although there were strong relationships between the school and community, the school made a concerted effort to remain neutral with respect to conflicts between factions in the community. There were a number of conflicts especially regarding the land claims negotiations and settlement. However, Rakaumanga's principal, staff, and trustees insisted that differences of opinion be respected and that those differences have minimum impact on the functioning of the school and the education of the children.

School Organization

In 1985, the first immersion classroom of new entrants (5-year-olds) was established. There were eight children in the first immersion group but the number later increased to nine when one student transferred from an immersion school in the Auckland region. Class sizes for classes following the initial group have averaged about 28 students, so patterns tested with the small group were later put into practice with larger groups. There were approximately 180 students in the entire school in 1985. As the first group of children grew older, immersion classrooms were added year by year until the primary school reached full immersion in 1992. Then, the school opened new classes at the junior high school level and, in 1995, at the senior school level. Six of the nine children in the initial 1985 classroom completed secondary school in 1997 and

continued into polytechnic or university programs. The second class (22 students) was in the final year of high school at the time of this writing.

When the school was redesignated as a bilingual school in 1986, the goals of the school were given as follows:

- Acquire sufficient fluency in the Maaori language to assure the maintenance of that language over time.
- Acquire knowledge of and confidence in their heritage to enable them to successfully confront contemporary institutions within New Zealand.
- Acquire appropriate academic skills and knowledge to allow them to succeed at the secondary level and in later life experiences. (Harrison, 1987, p. 21)

In 1993, when a strategic plan was developed, the goals were restated in more expansive language and new goals were added; however, the essential elements did not change (Te Wharekura Kaupapa Maori a Rohe o Rakaumanga, 1993). The strategic plan also stated that the school would operate as one unit for students from age 5 (new entrants) through high school (Form 7). There would be one governing board, one principal, one staff, and one guiding philosophy.

Curriculum Organization

In 1993, the Ministry of Education established a national curriculum framework for all primary and secondary schools in the country (Ministry of Education, 1993). The framework defined seven essential learning areas (languages, technology, mathematics, health and well-being, social sciences, art/performing arts, and science) and essential skills for all age levels from age 5 through age 17. The framework was broad enough to allow Rakaumanga to include local perspectives in the essential learning areas so that the Rakaumanga curriculum included local as well as mainstream content.

The school made every effort to utilize resources from the local community and the local environment. However, the system of national examinations for students at ages 15 to 17 meant that Rakaumanga students had to take examinations comparable to those taken by other students in New Zealand so mainstream resources—such as a science laboratory—were essential for successful student performance.

While the school's primary focus was on instruction in Maori, it also aimed to promote fluency and literacy in English for its students. The aim was for all children to become bicultural and bilingual so they could thrive in both Maori and in English environments. The assumption was that because children were living in a predominantly English-speaking country, they would learn English at home, in the community, and through the media. Children began formal instruction in English in English transition classes at about age 10 for 2 hours each week until they finished school.

Pedagogy

The group attending the retreat in 1993 agreed on the following principles of instruction (Te Wharekura Kaupapa Maori a Rohe o Rakaumanga, 1993, p. 4):

We believe that the curriculum must be based on a *Maori* pedagogy. An holistic approach must be taught through *te reo Maori* (the Maori language). Teaching must be *whanau* (family) based and must cater to the individual and to the collective group.

The principal described the school's teaching philosophy:

Our program is not just language. It is also Maori knowledge and practices. You cannot teach the language without teaching those other two things and you can't teach those other two things without the language. You can only understand the term by using it in the proper Maori context...

Teacher expectations equal student achievement. All of the teachers believe that their kids can succeed. Teachers see failure as their fault.

Resources

Teachers and parents created most of the Maori teaching resources by hand. The Learning Media division of the Ministry of Education provided some Maori teaching resources, but in some cases, teachers and parents created resources by pasting Maori text over the English text in books. The Ministry contracted Maori staff to develop science and mathematics curricula in Maori in the early 1990s.

Staffing

When Rakaumanga was designated as a "bilingual school" in the mid-1980s, all staff of the school were Maori but only a small number were fluent speakers of the language. As non-Maori-speaking staff moved on to other positions, fluent Maori speakers were recruited to replace them. By 1998, all teachers were fluent speakers. Two teachers had been raised in homes where Maori was the only language used. Four others had been raised in homes where Maori was the predominant language. The other teachers had learned Maori as a second language through university study.

In 1998, there were 25 certified teachers in the school. Six support staff were paid and six support staff worked voluntarily five days a week, every week that the school was open. There were about six other parents who worked voluntarily a couple of days a week.

Four of the teaching staff were members of the Waikato tribe, two were of European descent, and the others were Maori from other tribes. All of the support staff were from the local tribe. The principal described the motivation of the support staff:

Over half are from the old Native School. In the early years, we had to work really hard to change negative feelings about the school with parents. They were from a generation who went through real hard years when the school was suppressing anything Maori, but those same people are the ones that are here and are determined that their mokopuna (grandchildren) would have things they never received when they were here.

The principal had a preference for first-or second-year teachers because they were often highly motivated, were eager to prove themselves, and would offer fresh ideas on teaching techniques. If they were carefully supported, he believed they could be productive. He said:

With the exception of four teachers, everyone else began here as Year 1 teachers. All of them were part of those groups we helped train. They apply their own techniques about how a piece of learning should be conducted.

There is a curriculum but there is flexibility . . . We capitalize on the individual skills of teachers.

Assessment of School Performance

The Education Review Office

The ERO was established in 1990 with the primary responsibility of monitoring and reviewing performance of schools. One section of the ERO was staffed by Maori speakers. This division had responsibility for monitoring performance of schools with Maori philosophies. When conducting a review, the ERO sent a team to visit the school for several days. The team examined written documentation, observed in classrooms, and collected information from staff, members of the trustees, and others. Since 1990, the ERO had conducted both a compliance review and an effectiveness review at Rakaumanga. The 1997 Effectiveness Review Report summarized their findings:

The Wharekura o Rakaumanga provides a high quality educational service to students, whanau and iwi (tribe). Education is centred on holistic needs of all, resulting in the development and achievement of relative outcomes for all. A wharekura community with a shared vision contributes to its effectiveness. The challenge to the wharekura is the retention of this united commitment from all concerned parties, to ensure the kaupapa of the wharekura continues to grow from strength to strength. (Education Review Office, 1997, p. 9)

National Examinations

In New Zealand, the major measures of academic achievement at the secondary level were scores on national examinations. Students ordinarily took School

Certificate examinations at age 15 (Form 5). Students needed to pass the examinations in three subject areas before they could progress to the next grade level. At age 16, students ordinarily took 6th Form Certificate examinations. In the 7th Form (the final year of secondary school), students took Bursary examinations, which determined their eligibility to enter polytechnic or university programs.

Rakaumanga's first concern was with national examinations in Maori. The school negotiated with the New Zealand Qualifications Authority to accelerate the examinations in Maori so that students took these exams when they were three years younger than other students. The school believed that because its students were in immersion programs, they would be ready to take the exams three years in advance of other New Zealand students. By accelerating the Maori examinations, more contact time was available for study in other subjects in the 5th Form year and students would already have passed one School Certificate subject, thus alleviating some of the pressure associated with these examinations which were so crucial to the future of every New Zealand child.

The first group of nine students took the School Certificate in Maori at age 12 in 1992. All nine students passed. Six of these students took the 6th Form Certificate Maori in 1993 and Bursary Maori in 1994. All six passed each of these exams. The same pattern has prevailed for all students in classes following the first small group. All of the students who have taken the examinations at the accelerated times have passed all of the examinations in Maori.

In addition, the Maori Language Commission assessed Maori language competence of the students. All 5th, 6th, and 7th Formers from Rakaumanga, Hoani Waititi, and Ruatoki schools participated in *Kura Reo Wananga* (intensive language courses) with the Language Commission. The chairperson of the commission stated that students had, by the 7th Form, achieved a level comparable with the third year of university study in Maori.

Rakaumanga students also took examinations in English, math, science, geography, history, and graphic design at the 5th, 6th, and 7th Form levels. Students had achieved an 80% passing rate in all subject areas except English. The school negotiated with NZQA to offer all the examinations except English and art in Maori at the 5th, 6th, and 7th Form levels. The process for doing this was very complicated, and, as the result of the complications, the school had sought and obtained accreditation to assess student progress in terms of a new system of "unit standards" in the future.

School staff and parents were concerned about the low scores on the English examinations, and the school had requested that the Ministry of Education conduct research to assist them in identifying and solving problems with English achievement.

Growth in Student Numbers

Another easily calculated measure of success was the growing number of students who enrolled each year. No parent was compelled to send his or her child to Rakaumanga. A primary school with a predominantly Maori population and a

program taught in English was within walking distance of Rakaumanga. Huntly College, the town's central secondary school with a program taught in English, was also within walking distance. But Rakaumanga's enrollment expanded from approximately 180 to more than 300 between 1985 and 1997. There was no comparable expansion in the total population of Huntly during this period.

Secondary School Retention

Nationally, there had been a steady increase in the percentage of Maori students completing 7th Form from less than 5% in 1981 to about 30% 1994. The disparity between Maori and non-Maori persisted, however, with about 16% of Maori receiving a Seventh Form Award in 1994 compared with about 42% of non-Maori (Ministry of Education, 1995, p. 41).

The secondary program at Rakaumanga was too new and the numbers at Rakaumanga were too small for sensible statistical comparisons with other secondary schools in New Zealand. The school was pleased, though, with its retention rate. The principal described it as follows:

All of the 22 students started as new entrants (age 5). The stability of the student population is really important, critical. This group was originally 28. Two moved because parents moved. Three girls became pregnant. We tried to have them back but it didn't work.

Four students in the 7th Form have been in special education needs programs since they were 5. They have learning disabilities. They are now 17, turning 18. Kids drop out when they start to struggle. Those four would have dropped out if they had been at other schools. They are as much a part of Rakaumanga's success as the ones at university. These four want to go into trades: joiner, engineer, interior decorator, and brick layer. Those four are the only ones who have opted for a career in trades. The other 18 will go on to university or polytechs.

Those four are as much a success as anything else. The kids in that class, they love one another. The other 18 care about those four and they show they care. They are patient. For every success, everyone celebrates it.

Other Indicators

In 1992, Clive Aspin conducted research at Rakaumanga and used his findings to complete his Master of Arts thesis for Victoria University (Aspin, 1994). Aspin found that students at Rakaumanga who had been taught mathematics in Maori did better on mathematics achievement tests at age 10 than students at a comparable school who had been taught in English.

Perhaps the number of researchers who are attracted to a school can also be called a measure of success. Aspin (1994), Harrison (1987), Jefferies (McConnell & Jefferies, 1991), and Tuteao (1998) had completed research at the school. Haupai Puke and Anaru Vercoe were conducting doctoral studies at the school in 1998.

Discussion

Rakaumanga's principal was very careful about the claims that were made for the school. He said that Rakaumanga had demonstrated the following:

Learning in your own language and learning in your own culture do not in any way disadvantage you in carrying out examinations.

The Maori language immersion instruction for children ages 5 through 17 was the school's most notable characteristic, but the school also provided a notable example of academic achievement for indigenous children. In the Rakaumanga case, there were a number of factors operating in such a way as to hinder development of the program and success in school for Maori children (cf Ogbu, 1978; Barrington, 1991). These factors included a history of conquest and colonization, negative or unsuccessful experiences in school for several generations of Maori, loss of the indigenous language and the tribal economic base, low socioeconomic status, discrimination in employment, and high unemployment. At the same time, changes in policies and perceptions that occurred during the 1980s and 1990s can be identified that have been advantageous for the development of the immersion program. These changes included the following:

Recognition of the Treaty of Waitangi.

The Treaty of Waitangi came to be recognized in the 1980s and 1990s as an agreement for Maori and non-Maori to act in a partnership relationship in all aspects of life. Barrington noted the close relationship between recognition of the Treaty and the educational rights of Maori:

Much greater prominence is also now being given to the Treaty of Waitangi, signed in 1840 between the crown and Maori tribes as a basis for the resolution of land claims and as a symbol of the move for greater acknowledgment of the rights of the Maori partner in all areas of New Zealand life including schooling. (Barrington, 1991, p. 309)

Recent recognition of the partnership relationships inherent in the Treaty has led to the establishment of bicultural policies in government agencies, universities, and other institutions. These policies resulted in improved employment prospects for Maori, especially Maori who were fluent in the language, and these policies made it easier for Maori to survive in mainstream institutions. Bicultural policies also resulted in increased program offerings aimed at Maori students at all levels of the educational system, including polytechnics and universities. No one would claim that these policies have solved all the problems associated with colonialism in New Zealand, but most would agree that the policies represented an improvement over assimilationist or integrationist policies of the past.

Maori Language Policy

An on-going language revitalization movement in combination with political action and increased recognition of the Treaty contributed to the recognition of Maori as an official language of New Zealand. The national language policy supported the allocation of government funding for *Kohanga Reo* and other Maori language education programs.

Management and Governance Factors in Education

The restructuring of the education system, which began in 1989, established local boards of trustees with authority for formulating policies, hiring staff, and managing the operating budget. Local communities throughout the country—mainstream as well as Maori—were empowered. The Ministry of Education and the New Zealand Qualifications Authority retained authority for many decisions, but local boards of trustees gained authority for decisions that they hadn't previously enjoyed.

The national system of education in New Zealand provided stable funding for all schools based on a per pupil basis. Funding for Rakaumanga increased each year as the student population increased. The school received supplementary funding because of the low socioeconomic status of its student population, and a small amount of funding per pupil to support Maori language instruction. Additional funding supported Maori language instruction by providing positions such as the Resource Teacher of Maori.

Teacher Training

The system for training teachers in New Zealand facilitated the entry of Maori teachers into classrooms at Rakaumanga. All teacher trainees spent three years taking courses in teacher training institutions. These courses were primarily on campus, but trainees spent a few weeks in each of the three years working in schools under the supervision of experienced teachers. In the fourth and fifth years of training, teacher trainees worked full-time in schools under the supervision of experienced teachers with additional supervision from staff of the teacher training institution. The trainees received a full-time salary for the fourth and fifth years of training.

This system made it possible for Maori teachers to enter classrooms at Rakaumanga on a short-term basis during the first three years of their training. Then, at the beginning of the fourth year, they could become full-time salaried staff of Rakaumanga while they completed their training. New programs specifically for Maori teachers had been established at the universities of Waikato and Auckland as well as at other institutions in the 1980s and 1990s.

The New Zealand primary school principal was viewed as a headmaster rather than as an administrator or manager of the school. Individuals were appointed the position of principal because they were outstanding teachers. They did not have to have formal educational qualifications beyond their

teaching certification, but, for Rakaumanga, the principal did have to be a fluent speaker of Maori. This system facilitated the recruitment of someone who was Maori for the position of principal. (Fortunately, the principal at Rakaumanga was able to acquire the necessary managerial expertise through on the job experience and training.)

Community Factors

There were a number of significant factors in the particular community that were indirectly advantageous to the school. There was strong leadership in support of education from Te Arikinui Dame Te Atairangikaahu and Professor Sir Robert Mahuta. Dame Te Ata was a trustee for the national Te Kohanga Reo Trust, and she supported the development of local *Kohanga Reo* and other language instruction programs.

The land claim settlement negotiations led by Robert Mahuta gave hope to the local tribal community for an improved economic situation and greater autonomy in tribal affairs. The settlement itself provided funding for polytechnic and university scholarships for tribal members and for *Kohanga Reo* programs in the tribal area. From the early 1990s, Te Arikinui and other highly ranked community members presented the scholarships and educational grants at the annual Coronation celebrations in May.

Other community leaders and parents were deeply committed to the establishment of *Kohanga Reo* and to the immersion program at Rakaumanga. The six *Kohanga Reo* in the local area were essential in preparing children to enter an immersion program at Rakaumanga.

A stable student population at the school was the result of commitment on the part of parents to the goals of the school. The strong extended family ties within the local Maori community and the national benefit system also contributed to the stability of the student population.

Individual Leadership

The development of the immersion program at Rakaumanga might never have happened without the leadership of a small group of teachers and parents. This small group was committed to the maintenance and revitalization of the Maori language and to the establishment of a school program that would allow their children to study in Maori. For nearly two decades, this small group was involved in political action and negotiations with the Ministry of Education, which resulted in the development of the school. The principal gave this description:

In the early period people would lay their bodies down. A staunch, small number of committed people saw the vision. The biggest number in the community were uncertain or skeptical. Now that has shifted. The bulk of the people share in the realization. The small group are facilitators now. There has been a lessening of fanaticism.

This small group had clearly stated goals and strong individual leadership. Without the leadership of Barna Heremia, a teacher in the school since the

1970s and principal since 1990, the program might never have developed. The Chairperson of the Trustees, Taitimu Maipi, was also the Chairperson of the School Committee in the 1980s. Several members of the trustees had been staunch supporters of the immersion program since its establishment. Two teachers, Wiha Malcolm and Shirley Rarere, had been staff of the school since its redesignation as a bilingual school in 1984.

Related Literature

Indigenous Language Schooling

The Rakaumanga case has shown that a national language policy can contribute to the maintenance and revitalization of an indigenous language. Benton pointed out that, "The *ad hoc* nature of language policy formulation in New Zealand has been a feature of the national political culture since the country's establishment." However, in recent decades, there has been "... the acceptance of the special status of Maori, aided no doubt by perceptions of its symbolic value to a nation in search of a unique identity, and indeed of its potential economic values, but grounded in legal obligations reinforced by politically astute and determined activism" (Benton, 1996, p. 95).

The immersion program at Rakaumanga could not have developed as it did without the national Maori language policy. It was taken for granted in New Zealand at the time of this study that Maori people had the basic human right to use, maintain, and revitalize their traditional language. While the Rakaumanga community had to undertake substantial political action in order to convince the Ministry of Education that they could also use Maori effectively as a medium of instruction for children, New Zealand's language policy contributed to their ability to win that argument.

Unfortunately, there are no comparable language policies in North America to support the right of indigenous people to develop programs in their own languages. Burnaby described the fragmented schooling situation and its impact on a potential language policy for Aboriginal people in Canada: "The essential characteristic of this picture is that the administration of Aboriginal education is so fragmented geographically and administratively that coordination and cooperation on policy is virtually impossible" (Burnaby, 1996, p. 212).

In the United States, the Indian Nations at Risk Task Force recommended in 1992 that "... all schools serving Native students will provide opportunities for students to maintain and develop their tribal languages" (Ricento, 1996, p. 144). However, there are multiple factors that prevent implementation of this recommendation. Holm and Holm (1995, p. 150) reported that they were unable to extend instructional programs in Navajo beyond the fifth grade, and California recently passed an initiative to require "that all children be placed in English language classrooms" (Section 305 of the Initiative Statute: English Language Education for Children in Public Schools).

The Rakaumanga case suggests that policies should be established which would give Native American communities the flexibility to institute programs of community choice, including programs in Native American languages where such programs are desired.

The Rakaumanga case reinforces the importance of programs to prepare indigenous people as teachers and principals for indigenous language schools. Statements regarding the contribution of indigenous teachers to successful schooling for indigenous children appear repeatedly in the literature (Begay et. al, 1995; Holm & Holm, 1995; Lipka & Ilutsk, 1995). It is clear that the Rakaumanga immersion program could not have operated without the Maori teachers who constituted the majority of its staff, and the school could not have recruited sufficient numbers of Maori teachers without the programs at the University of Waikato designed for Maori teachers.

The Rakaumanga case points to the advantages of stable per pupil funding, as opposed to the fluctuating patterns resulting from various political shifts in the United States which caused such disruption at Rough Rock (McCarty, 1989).

The Rakaumanga case also reinforces the importance of school structures that empower local communities, especially local communities of indigenous people. Tuteao (1998), a member of the local Waikato tribe, identified empowerment as a major component of the ethos of the school, from the early years of the 20th century when the school was a Native School to the present day. Cummins (1997) and others have also written about the importance of self-determination among minority groups in North America. New Zealand's school restructuring in 1989 empowered the Rakaumanga community and facilitated the opportunity for them to develop a program that "worked."

Minorities and School Achievement

The Rakaumanga case sheds some light on another strand of research literature focusing on the relationship between involuntary or subordinate minorities and school achievement. In 1978, Ogbu proposed a theoretical explanation for the success or failure of minority students in school. One of the cases he used to support his theory was the case of Maori in New Zealand.

In 1991, Barrington developed a more detailed description of the history of relationships between European settlers and Maori, and the history of Maori schooling. Barrington's description supported Ogbu's view that Maori school underachievement could be attributed, at least in part, to a history of conquest, colonization, and subordination. Barrington added that school policy changes in recent years had the potential for improving Maori schooling, and the Rakaumanga case has shown that Barrington's optimism was justified. The grassroots movements to reclaim the right to teach in Maori which he described have had positive outcomes, at least in the one case described here.

Gibson (1991) pointed out that minority groups are dynamic in their adaptations.

The cultural models and educational strategies of minority communities are in a constant process of renegotiation. Mobility strategies change as the societal context changes and as the minority group's situation within a given society itself changes...

Educational institutions have become more responsive to the needs of minorities because the minorities themselves have refused to accept the status quo and have demanded that the system uphold their rights and address their needs. (Gibson, 1991, pp. 370-71)

Recent publications by Ogbu and Simon also emphasize the dynamics within minority communities and in the relationships between minorities and the larger societies: "Structural barriers and school factors affect minority school performance; however, minorities are also autonomous human beings who actively interpret and respond to their situation. Minorities are not helpless victims" (Ogbu and Simons, 1998, p. 158).

We see from the New Zealand case in general (Barrington, 1991) and the Rakaumanga case in particular that the relationship between Maori and the majority society has been a dynamic relationship with rapid change occurring on all sides in the past 15 years. Indigenous people can change but so can the majority societies and their institutions. In spite of a history of colonization and subordination, interaction between the development of appropriate policies, funding, and "beliefs about or interpretations of schooling" (Ogbu and Simon, 1998, p. 163) in one local community led to improvement in schooling for the community's children. Rakaumanga has shown that national policy changes and institutional adaptations can create contexts where it is possible for indigenous and other involuntary minority people to establish successful school programs for their children.

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