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A PHILOSOPHICAL EXPLORATION OF SOME UNSTATED  
EDUCATIONAL PRESUPPOSITIONS CONCERNING  
POLYNESIAN EDUCATION IN NEW ZEALAND.

A thesis presented in partial  
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Paul Eric Whitehead.  
1973.

ABSTRACTA PHILOSOPHICAL EXPLORATION OF SOME UNSTATED  
EDUCATIONAL PRESUPPOSITIONS CONCERNING  
POLYNESIAN EDUCATION IN NEW ZEALAND.

The prime concern in a multi-racial society should be to encourage harmonious race relations in a system which aims at 'equality'. The Education system is one way of achieving this objective. Historically New Zealand educational policy has emphasised assimilation or its later more euphemistic derivative integration. This policy effectively increased the rate of acculturation but only at the expense of Polynesian culture and 'Maoritanga'. Subsequent academic failure, coupled with a steady decline in enthusiasm for formal education has resulted in the Polynesian devaluing education for other more tangible rewards.

Innovation in educational policy aimed at providing the Polynesian with an education which is intrinsically valuable to him, has been slow. This despite the immediate urgency and despite the findings and recommendations of the various Commissions and Committees set up by Government. Specifically, what is needed is the type of innovation which will encourage a greater degree of involvement by both pupil and parent; innovation that will effectively close the gap in attainment level between Polynesian and European.

In examining this problem it becomes obvious that the assumptions which may be widely held, either consciously or partly or wholly unconsciously, concerning education must also be explored so that the various types of innovation can be analysed in terms of their effect in the system and on the community. An examination of these presuppositions is necessary to allow for, and to counteract, possible bias which may interfere

with any recommendations which may ensue. Also, it allows for critical thought and reflection on that assumption so that the universal tendency to make no systematic attempt to explain and justify the principles on which the education system is based can be avoided.

These presuppositions can be found within existing or implemented policies and have largely determined the various policy statements: educational, racial, social, recreational, penal. Any one of these presuppositions, once exposed and found to be an immediate influence, can be examined to determine just what extent they have influenced, or are influencing, the Polynesian educational structure. A variety of alternatives and possible solutions could instead be implemented.

The principle objective then is: to explore these presuppositions and possible alternatives in order that the resultant recommendations might be implemented in an attempt to raise the level of Polynesian under-achievement. The four main steps in this process are:

1. To show that any one educational presupposition 'may' be held or that it is widely held, consciously or unconsciously.
2. To show what effect this presupposition has had, or is having, upon the Polynesian educational system.
3. To examine this effect and to explore the possible variations and solutions of diverse alternative policies.
4. To arrive at and to recommend what action might be taken to alleviate the discrepancies and inequalities that are found to be important determinants of Polynesian under-achievement.

The solutions and recommendations that are advanced in

this thesis have been the result of careful analysis and examination of the unstated presuppositions, the principal factors affecting them and the principles in which they are embedded. These recommendations are not intended to be prescriptive. They are not the only possible recommendations but are perhaps the most appropriate. They are the end product of an inductive logical inquiry utilizing the findings of empirical research where available and appropriate. Some of them have already been implemented since this thesis was begun. However, it is not desirable, nor necessary, to remove them simply because they have been implemented and therefore rendered obsolete. The argumentation for them, in fact, is given greater credence in a world that views philosophical inquiry as merely a priori. These recommendations must be retained to allow for the continuity of argument and the facts which support them.

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