

# Australian Journal of Teacher Education

---

Volume 26 | Issue 1

Article 2

---

5-2001

## "Watch This Spot and Whose In It" : Creating Space for Indigenous Educators?

Patricia M. Johnston

*Massey University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ro.ecu.edu.au/ajte>



Part of the [Bilingual, Multilingual, and Multicultural Education Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Johnston, P. M. (2001). "Watch This Spot and Whose In It" : Creating Space for Indigenous Educators?. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 26(1).  
<https://dx.doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2001v26n1.2>

This Journal Article is posted at Research Online.  
<https://ro.ecu.edu.au/ajte/vol26/iss1/2>

## “WATCH THIS SPOT AND WHOSE IN IT”: CREATING SPACE FOR INDEGENOUS EDUCATORS?

**Patricia Maringi Johnston**  
**Massey University**

Within Aotearoa/New Zealand, a bicultural relationship between Maori<sup>1</sup> and Pakeha<sup>2</sup> has produced a number of initiatives that are striving to be more inclusive of Maori needs, interests and language within the education system. The education system is attempting to ‘create space’ for Maori to be more proactively involved in decision-making forums with the integration of Maori knowledge and practices also occurring in areas like policy, research and teaching.

This article discusses some of the difficulties associated with ‘inclusiveness’ in terms of how Maori are being accounted for within frameworks and parameters controlled by the dominant group Pakeha. Furthermore, this article examines examples of how Maori attempt to negotiate within and around difficult terrain that continues to position them as research subjects, educational under-achievers and additives within policy mechanisms inside/outside of educational contexts. In turn, the article proposes appropriate measures and practices as indicated by Maori educationalists and argues that creating space for indigenous educators involves far more than simply allocating positions and places to those who identify as indigenous. Creating space includes recognition of world-views and knowledge bases that are distinctly indigenous, which also have the potential to contradict and create conflict with dominant world-views.

Waitere-Ang and Johnston (1999b, p.3) have argued that inclusion for Maori through the education system has been a long somewhat messy journey. Debates about what inclusion means (how we think about/conceptualise it), the policies written

to define it in terms of how we might act inclusively (our pedagogy/ how we enact it), and how we come to decide if we have been inclusive or not (our assessment of the situation – our track record), consumes a significant proportion of indigenous analysis and critique. One of the problems with the notion of inclusion is that within the education system the dominant group Pakeha has attempted to include Maori but the focus appears to have been one that physically includes us, yet excludes our knowledge, language and beliefs. Demands made by Maori for inclusion in education beyond a mere physical presence, has evoked a number of challenges resulting in changes to the education system based on a re-think of what education in Aotearoa/New Zealand constitutes and represents. As a result of such challenges, the education system has passed through four distinct education policy phases: assimilation, integration, multiculturalism and biculturalism.

Judith Simon (1990) refers to phases of ‘relationships of dominance/subordination between Maori and Pakeha’, identifying Maori resistance and challenge to State defined education policies and practices for Maori education. She examines how relations between Maori and Pakeha have been shaped, noting that progression through the four phases is marked by Pakeha becoming more aware of Maori seeking greater cultural inclusion within the education system and henceforth, control over decision-making processes that relate to their needs, interests and aspirations.

Inclusion through assimilation for example, required Maori to homogenise and blend with Pakeha, to be assimilated culturally, economically and socially into a Pakeha

defined and controlled society. Assimilation centred on civilising Maori and was about introducing them to universally perceived Western notions of superior cultural and social norms; inclusion was premised on Maori rejecting their own cultural, political and social norms and being incorporated physically (physical presence) into society.

In education however, the reality of inclusion meant that Maori were actually excluded from mainstream schools and segregated into Native Schools. Teaching practices were modelled on hierarchies of evolutionary superiority (and corresponding positions of inferiority) as Maori received a different curriculum from Pakeha children. The education system was utilised as the means to imbue Maori with Western forms of knowledge (Johnston, 1998); inclusion related to Maori learning their 'place' within the new society as domestic workers and labourers.

Through integration, inclusion was first mooted in the Report of the Department of Maori Affairs released in August of 1960, known widely as the Hunn Report. In this document it was argued that the evolutionary development of Maori and Pakeha was a process that clearly involved the integration of both 'races' to form one. However, inclusion was based on selected and particular aspects of Maori culture (like the language) being accommodated within the schooling system, but while officially sanctioned, received no support for development in schools. Inclusion was more about Maori integrating into Pakeha society (albeit with some 'cultural baggage' in tow), than about Pakeha and Maori coming together with the 'best of both cultures' to form a new society.

The move to multiculturalism in the early 1970s resulted in conflict between Maori expectations and Pakeha interpretations for inclusion in education. At the base of multicultural ideas were beliefs and conceptions about the inclusion of cultural differences in schools. Kathy Irwin (1989,

p.4) argues that multiculturalism established the premise for cultural diversity as a central observable feature of New Zealand's social structure, (rather than as a feature that had to be assimilated or integrated). Instead of requiring all cultural groups to adopt the ways of the dominant group Pakeha, multiculturalism fostered the inclusion of cultural diversity, distinctiveness and differences of all ethnic minority groups.

By focusing on all other ethnic groups however, Pakeha did not have to address the rights Maori were arguing were theirs - rights embodied within concepts like *tangata whenua*<sup>3</sup> and the Treaty of Waitangi<sup>4</sup>. The interests of Maori were expected to compete against the interests of all other ethnic minorities, thus effectively negating Maori concerns with regard to inclusion of their language and culture into school contexts. Multicultural policies also obscured any Treaty relations between Maori and Pakeha, as the importance of the Treaty was underplayed and subsumed beneath a diversity of other ethnic interests. However, Maori contested and challenged multicultural rhetoric and what eventuated was recognition for the importance of the Treaty. That recognition was to develop into a bicultural relationship between Maori and Pakeha.

Interpretations of biculturalism are not without their problems. I have argued elsewhere (Johnston, 1998) that the notion of biculturalism incorporates two very distinct approaches for the inclusion of Maori into the education system. The first approach is a personal one that aims specifically to make individuals bicultural, personalising biculturalism as an individual matter. In this context, biculturalism focuses purely on culture by providing access to Maori culture as a means to reduce children's (and adults') prejudices and discrimination toward matters Maori. In the education system, the focus on culture and creating a positive environment for Maori children was equally believed to be a means of facilitating educational

achievement, as recognition of Maori in the curriculum theoretically would provide positive self-images that would lead to greater educational performance.

The second approach, while including a cultural aspect, also recognises that unequal power-relationship between Maori and Pakeha exist. The stance is thus one of activism, contestation, resistance and protest that culminate in challenges by Maori to the State's ineptness in addressing Maori interests and aspirations in the education system. Such challenges have produced structures that are more specifically Maori initiated like for example Kura Kaupapa Maori and Te Kohanga Reo, Maori medium education institutions that developed outside of the mainstream education system and thus, outside of Pakeha jurisdiction and control. These Maori initiated educational contexts are based on pedagogical, ideological and philosophical inclusions of Maori knowledge and world-views.

The cultural and structural approaches to biculturalism have generated two very distinct methods for including Maori within research, teaching and policy processes. I refer to the first set of assumptions as Maori-friendly (Johnston, 1998). They underpin an approach that aims at sensitising environments, individuals and groups towards matters Maori, based on cultural/personal recognitions of biculturalism. In education policy processes, such an approach would be concerned with involving Maori throughout various levels of those processes in culturally appropriate ways. However, a Maori-friendly approach would not address the unequal power-relations between Maori and Pakeha, so Maori involvement would occur within parameters controlled by Pakeha. Under a Maori-friendly approach, Pakeha would remain firmly in control.

In contrast, the second set of assumptions is a 'Maori-centred' approach that places Maori at the centre; it recognises structural

(as well as cultural dynamics) and locates them as pivotal to addressing issues for Maori within education. More importantly, Maori-centred approaches are underpinned by philosophies that aim at addressing the unequal power-relations between Maori and Pakeha by incorporating appropriate decision-making forums for Maori.

What Maori-friendly and Maori-centred approaches have demonstrated (Johnston, 1998) is that although issues and representations of inclusion may vary across contexts, few are detached from struggling with conceptions of power and how power affects interpretations and outcomes for inclusion. Because the power to define education continues to be debated within contexts that we have no control over (Waitere-Ang & Johnston, 1999b), the outcomes in terms of who is occupying what space, are not necessarily those that are in the best interests of Maori educators. One such example of power and control relates to the distinction to be drawn here between those who work in the area of indigenous education and indigenous educators.

I claim to be an indigenous educator, not because my field of research or teaching is in the area of indigenous studies, but because I have a whakapapa (genealogy) that links me to a specific place in Aotearoa/New Zealand. That link positions me as tangata whenua – a person of that whenua (land). Other indigenous peoples have referred to themselves as first nations, people of the land, Pacific Nations, Pacific People's etc. Outside of my whenua (land) context, I am not tangata whenua but certainly I can draw connections, links and affiliations to those who are indigenous within their own lands, because issues like colonisation and exploitation are relevant to indigenous people more globally.

Some of those who teach and research in the area of indigenous education are not necessarily indigenous to the context within which they teach. This is one of the areas that indigenous analysis and critique

is currently engaging. The struggle over representations of voice and who can speak on behalf of whom is one that I have seen on a number of occasions - fought quite vocally in academic circles. At the end of 1993 for example I witnessed such an encounter while attending a "Confronting Racism" conference at the University of Technology in Sydney. A white Canadian academic spoke of her research and the experiences of First Nation Canadian Indian women. She was called to task by members of the audience over her representation of these women and challenged on the basis of who was she to speak on their behalf; why were these women not given the opportunity to represent their own views, particularly seeing that the research spoke of their life experiences. Indeed, at a conference in Bristol (England) last year, I sat in on a presentation by an academic who choose to speak about Maori (who was not Maori) and who showed no accountability to those whom she had conducted the research upon.

Her paper generated much debate as every indigenous person in that room, from countries that included Uganda, Australia, Canada, Israel, Bosnia and Fiji challenged this academic on many platforms that included ethical, moral and theoretical considerations. Issues discussed related to 'who gets to speak on behalf of whom', 'what forums the information is disseminated in' and 'insider/outsider perspectives influencing interpretations of research data'. These are not new questions raised by indigenous people and certainly members of dominant groups will continue to be challenged by such questions as they choose to claim indigenous education as their centre.

One area in particular that is generating considerable discussion and debate is that of educational research. Waitere-Ang, and Johnston (1999) in attempting to address the plethora of concerns that confront indigenous groups in terms of questions raised by our engagement within research,

have argued the existence of at least four theoretically different research frontiers that have impacted and continue to impact on issues of inclusion for Maori. They are; The unnamed frontier (a universalised neutral frame) – research that is based on unchallenged and unquestioned 'norms' represented as scientific and pure. The universal naming of indigenous groups occurred on the basis of a blueprint locating them from the centre of that 'neutral' frontier, as far away as possible from scientific purity and objective scientific rationality. And yet, that positioning sought not only to distance indigenous peoples from the truth but also to invert their truth, to position them as the mere objects of research.

The colonial frontier (the identified frame) – homogenising grand narratives, meta narratives recognising other through the filters of its own validity checks. To bear witness from a position of relative safety the cultural genocide of one view of the world, subjugated to the political and imperial filters of another – an end of a culture through ideological death of us – physically present but ideologically absent. Historically the colonial frontiers have been the forces of supplication and domestication that suggests 'sameness/one people' but treats similarity differentially. We have come to know such forces as colonisation, imperialism, assimilation, subjugation and dependency.

The indigenised frontier (the cultural additive frame) that subsumes/consumes Maori within their research frameworks. Rarely in this position are Maori at the centre in research contexts rather the indigenised frontier signifies our partial inclusion – to be physically present with the illusion of being ideologically present. Recognised as different within this frontier, Maori are afforded the position of partial acceptance, the parallels of which can be seen in Maori friendly approaches where the ethnic additives become the adornment of unchanging structures and processes.

The indigenous frontier (the cultural and structural frame) – centring the narrative – the view from here allowing us to be both

physically and ideologically present - a position that allows us to know self, conceptualise our own problems and theorise our own lives (Smith, 1999). Thus at one level it provides the blessing of metaphysical connection to place, people and life-ways while at another the analytical tool to parry and thrust/assert a way of knowing self and the world to which we contribute (Waitere-Ang & Johnston, 1999, pp.4-5).

Our inclusion within the unnamed and colonial frontiers for example, is distinctly based on our participation in education as the research subjects – those under ‘interrogation’. Challenges to these traditions of research are being driven by critiques that recognise:

the position of the researcher as expert and all powerful;

the tendency for research to be done by white middle class men, studying and creating a literate account for a myriad of less powerful ‘others’, that is, research being driven by the interests and values of the already powerful; and

the assumption that objectivity is achievable or even desirable in some instances (Waitere-Ang & Johnston, 1999, pp.9-10).

The culmination of such challenges has resulted in movement towards indigenised frameworks for inclusion. Indigenised frameworks however still firmly place control of educational contexts within the hands of dominant groups.

The indigenised framework while clearly demonstrating movement away from more traditional research frameworks can only ever be Maori-friendly in approach because its prime directive is based on involving Maori throughout various levels of those processes in culturally appropriate ways. Under a Maori-friendly approach, we see the inclusion of ethnically diverse researchers, verbal consent as a culturally sensitive way to access groups and perhaps the lead negotiator being Maori. In institutional contexts, an example of ‘Maori-friendly’ techniques is

representation on committee’s, contributions to teaching in Maori but clearly maintenance of the status quo. Maori-friendly approaches contribute little towards addressing the needs and interests of Maori, but instead are more about ‘ticking boxes’ being seen as sensitive and understanding towards Maori.

Johnston (1998) argues that Maori-friendly positions are weak because they are more about creating comfort zones for Pakeha to safely navigate potential cultural pitfalls created by Maori participation in institutional and research settings. However, Maori-centred approaches move beyond cultural safety nets to encompass Maori aspirations for autonomy and self-determination as a means to establish the forms and forums for Maori participation in research.

The indigenous frontier draws from the work of a growing number of Maori academics who are developing research methods and methodologies couched within a cultural paradigm that positions ‘Maori as the norm’. The result is frameworks that are visibly relevant and contextualised as Maori. Three that are identified here are; Maori Centred Approaches (Durie, 1997; Durie, 1998; Waitere-Ang, 1998); Kaupapa Maori (Mead, 1996; Smith, 1997); and a combination of both approaches (Johnston, 1998). These approaches posit a ‘taken for granted’ position in which the cultural locations of the researcher and the participants are made transparent.

Durie (1997) for example maintains that certain factors need to be present in a Maori-centred approach: (i) whakapikitanga - enablement, (ii) whakatuia - integration, and (iii) Mana Maori - Maori control. In the context of research, the first principle posits activities that ‘should aim to enhance people so that either their position improves as a result of the research or they are better equipped to take control of their own futures’ (Durie, 1997, p.10). The second recognises holistic

Maori views linking well-being, culture, economics, social standing into a matrix that takes account of the individual, the collective and the complex interactions between past and present. The third principle locates the locus of control of research involving Maori, or aspects of Maori society, culture or knowledge with Maori - issues of intellectual property rights, guardianship and management of research design and processes (Waitere-Ang & Johnston, 1999).

Linda (Mead) Smith (1996) and Graham Smith (1997) incorporate some of the same facets as Durie (1997) in terms of Kaupapa Maori theory and practice. Kaupapa Maori involves a plan: a programme or a set of principles 'which incorporate Maori preferred ways of operating and embracing Maori values' (Mead, 1996, p.201). As a theory, Kaupapa Maori is related to being Maori that does not posit objective distanced forms of scientific inquiry. It predicates the validity and legitimacy of Maori as taken for granted and the survival of Maori language and culture is assured. Maori ways of knowing have validity and legitimacy; people can make strategic changes that have emancipatory potential and theorising our understandings and experiences is an important activity for Maori (Mead, 1996, pp. 27-29).

I have argued (Johnston, 1998) for a position that incorporates both a Maori-centred and Kaupapa Maori approach. Fundamentally, both approaches focus on structural rather than cultural factors, placing Maori at the centre thus questioning decision-making processes and identifying how Maori are excluded from 'inclusion'. More importantly, these approaches are underpinned by a philosophy that aims at addressing the unequal power-relations between Maori and Pakeha.

#### Let The Battle Begin

The meeting ground between the indigenised and indigenous frontiers is a

territory that is being fought and struggled over at the academic level as indigenous people vie to be heard, seen and represented within academia, a position where two worlds are meeting and colliding. The struggle is one that contests dominant ways of knowing and representing the world (Smith, 1999) where academic terrain is up for negotiation and where dominant world-views are contested as being not the only legitimate forms of methodologies, pedagogy and knowledge.

At a seminar presentation in Bath (England) last year for example, Johnston & Waitere-Ang, (1999) were challenged in relation to 'what counts as inclusion' for Maori researchers. Clarification was sought on a position that we appeared to be arguing: that inclusion related specifically to Maori designing the research projects and carrying out the research themselves. We clarified our position by stating that the operative word in terms of research was on; that Maori are no longer passive in the face of research that is being conducted on them; that the shift has been to one where research is being conducted 'with' Maori communities, groups and individuals.

We argued that non-Maori do and continue to undertake research on Maori communities, groups and individuals, but what has changed is that research is increasingly being challenged to consider Maori involvement in decision-making roles. Maori communities are ever increasingly declining to participate in research that does not give them meaningful input. Ownership over the information and even the contributions that Maori make in terms of what happens to our tissue samples, experiences and knowledge, are now being carefully negotiated within research contexts.

This is not to say that non-indigenous people cannot be located in indigenous teaching or research positions, rather, taking cognisance of the powerful positions where members of dominant groups are often located, the challenge is to equally

recognise the subordinate context that indigenous researchers and educators are often required to inhabit.

The challenge then is one of 'creating space' for indigenous knowledge, beliefs, cultural perspectives, methodologies, philosophies and world-views within academic, research, teaching and policy archives. At times academia in particular has accused us of being 'precious' or exclusionary, of employing separatist methods and processes that 'shut-out' those who are not 'insiders' and who wish to engage. And yet, the exclusionary forces of scientific and western methodologies, of academics, research archives and the right of Western forms of knowledge to describe, label and categorise us, has never, until very recently, been put 'on the table' for discussion. That discussion will continue to be wined and dined over for some time to come.

Creating space has many different approaches that include incorporating indigenous studies (in New Zealand Maori Studies) into University degrees, teacher training and curriculum subjects. Other approaches comprise of appointing indigenous people into tertiary positions, state agencies or including them in roles of consultation or participation. While some of these approaches have indeed, helped to generate support, 'creating space' is also about the recognition that indigenous communities require 'breathing space' to recover from the onslaught of colonial exploitation of our resources, our bodies and our minds. The continual haranguing that indigenous people have received through colonisation towards our ways of life, our stories, our culture and our people have left some fairly devastating results in terms of unemployment, social inadequacies and educational under-achievement. We are battered people. The healing process afforded by 'breathing-space' might actually mean that 'creating space' might have to wait it's turn, as we seek to re-connect to places, people and life-ways that colonisation has disrupted.

Creating space however, is also about 'vacating space', of accepting indigenous people's rights to ownership of their own knowledge, culture and world-views. Vacating space is recognition that those referred to in the 'walk' (research), the 'talk' (policy) and the 'chalk' (teaching), might like to occupy those spaces themselves. Our displacement from our own centre has resulted in our inclusion being interpreted as commentators, consultants and advisors. Part of the problem is that, historically, some members of dominant groups have chosen to champion causes, to represent those who in the past have been voiceless. However, what is becoming more and more evident is that the unheard and unsaid are no longer accepting the position of being voiceless and invisible. 'Watching this spot and whose in it', has thus also become one of watching this space and noticing who's not in it. Who are we really creating space for?

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> The term Maori refers to the indigenous population of Aotearoa/New Zealand. I use the term Maori in recognition of the relations between Maori and Pakeha, but my use of the term does not imply homogeneity of Maori ideas, desires or expectations.

<sup>2</sup> The term Pakeha is an equally difficult term. What Pakeha means and represents is a relational one with Maori. Neither term can be discussed in isolation, as their existence relies on the existence of the other.

<sup>3</sup> Translated as people of the land – indigenous.

<sup>4</sup> A document signed in 1840 between various Maori and 'the Crown'. The treaty is recognised as the founding document for New Zealand society.



---

**Bibliography**

- Durie, A. (1998). *Me Tipu Ake Te Pono: Maori Research, Ethicality And Development*. In T. Hauora (Ed.), *Te Oru Rangahau: Maori Research and Development Conference*. Massey University: Palmerston North.
- Durie, M. (1997). *Identity, Access And Maori Advancement*. Keynote address at New Zealand Educational Administration Society Research Conference, New Directions in Educational Leadership: The Indigenous Future. Auckland Institute of Technology: Auckland, July 6-8<sup>th</sup>.
- Hunn, J. (1960). *Report of the Department of Maori Affairs*. Wellington: Government Printers
- Irwin, K. (1992). 'Becoming an Academic: Contradictions and Dilemmas of a Maori Feminist'. In S. Middleton & A. Jones (Eds.), *Women and Education in Aotearoa*. Wellington: Bridget Williams Books Ltd.
- Johnston, P. (1998). *He Ao Rereke. Education Policy and Maori Educational Under-achievement: Mechanisms of Power and Difference*. Unpublished PhD Thesis in Education, University of Auckland, New Zealand.
- Johnston, P., & Waitere-Ang, H. (1999). *The Ethics of Researching in a Multicultural Context*. Seminar Presentation, University of Bath, England, September 14<sup>th</sup>.
- Simon, J. (1990). *The Place of Schooling in Maori-Pakeha Relations*. Unpublished PhD Thesis, Anthropology, University of Auckland, Auckland.
- Smith, G. (1991a). *Reform and Maori Educational Crisis: A Grand Illusion*. Monograph No.3, Research Unit for Maori Education. Education Department: University of Auckland.
- Smith, G. (1991b). *Tomorrow's Schools and the Development of Maori Education*. Monograph No.5, Research Unit for Maori Education. Education Department: University of Auckland.
- Smith, G. (1997). *The Development of Kaupapa Maori: Theory and Praxis*. Unpublished PhD Thesis, Education, University of Auckland, Auckland.
- Smith, L. (1986). 'Te Rapunga I Te Ao Marama: The Search for the World of Light'. In G. Smith (Ed.), *Nga Kete Wananga, Te Kete Tuarua*. Maori Studies Department, Auckland College of Education: Auckland.
- Smith, L. (1992). *Maori Women: Discourses, Projects and Mana Wahine*. In S. Middleton & A. Jones (Eds.), *Women and Education in Aotearoa 2* (pp. 33-51). Wellington: Bridget Williams Books.
- Smith, L. (1999). *Decolonising Methodologies; Research and Indigenous Peoples*. Dunedin: University of Otago Press.
- Waitere-Ang, H., & Johnston, P. (1999a). *In Absentia: Mana Wahine in Institutional Contexts*. Paper presented at The Women's Studies Association Conference Hui Raranga Wahine, Victoria University, Wellington, November 5<sup>th</sup> -7<sup>th</sup>.
- Waitere-Ang, H., & Johnston, P. (1999b). *If All Inclusion in Research Means is the Addition of Researchers That Look Different, Have You Really Included Me At All?* Paper presented at 1999 AARE - NZARE Conference, Global Issues and Local Effects: The Challenge for Educational Research, Melbourne.
- Yeatman, A. (1993). 'Voices and Representation in the Politics of Difference'. In S. Gunew & A. Yeatman (Eds.), *Feminism and the Politics of Difference* (pp. 228-245). Australia: Allen and Unwin.