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THE DEVELOPMENT
OF MAORI ART
IN
EDUCATION
CASE STUDY
OF A
NEW ZEALAND SECONDARY SCHOOL

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements

for the degree
of Master of Philosophy in Development Studies
at Massey University
Palmerston North.

Julie M Paama-Pengelly

1994.

Abstract

Various theoretical approaches have accompanied the history of art development, with certain cultural products selected to represent 'art' most popularly defined in the Classical and Romantic periods of European art production. The rise of mass culture, and the changing relations of production, in the new industrial world have served to highlight the unequal access to power, status and rewards accorded to cultural products deemed 'art' as opposed to 'culture' under these definitions.

The ideologies of what constitutes art seem to disadvantage certain ethnic groups such as the Maori. This highlights fundamental conflicts between the definition of 'art' according to an imported European culture and an indigenous Maori culture. The case of '**Te Maori**' exhibition 1984 - 1985 raises the issue as to whether the selection of cultural products in New Zealand according to a European art aesthetic has been congenial to the development of Maori art. Alternatively, has it merely served as 'potent defence' of the current social structure of art.

Cultural definitions have increasingly become an issue in education at a broader level, as educational attainment of secondary school leavers has continued to be disproportionately lower for Maori than Pakeha as our nation fails to fulfil its development aims to promote equity for all social groups in New Zealand. Particular theories on the cultural 'mismatch' between Maori culture and the dominant 'habitus' of the secondary school have had some support from research into Maori career expectations, and point to the education system perpetuating social inequalities rather than addressing them. The selection of art as a worthy cultural product, as formalised in secondary school art studies, may similarly act to support the subversion of Maori art forms in their function as communicator, transmitter and recorder of Maori identity and culture. Art is defined in secondary schools according to the prevailing Pakeha dominant ideology.

Firstly the recognition of traditional Maori art is considered in terms of correct rendering of basic elements, and for a range of traditional Maori art. The importance of traditional Maori art contexts is discussed in light of the formal elements of Maori art and the wholeness of Maori culture and the school art syllabus is examined for its attention to these factors. Pupil knowledge and attitudes are surveyed in art classes of a particular East Coast secondary school and the results are compared according to ethnic groupings and gender differences, with a small group of Maori students from another East Coast school who have not had formal secondary school art education.

Maori art has a history and tradition that has evolved to encompass and embrace new elements, while still holding true to many traditional cultural contexts. It demonstrates continued growth and development in new contexts. Particular contexts are examined; art production and art significance inside the traditional meeting house. Methods and concepts are explored in the test schools to hypothesise on the level and requirements of contextualisation of Maori art in secondary schools.

The contemporary presence of Maori art, the viability and nature of this presence, is then examined in the light of judgements made by secondary school students towards certain contemporary Maori art works by Maori and non-Maori artists. This serves to highlight the criteria students are using to judge Maori art as 'Maori' and whether Maori art forms are being accorded a development and continuity - an inherent value - of their own.

Explanation of the tendency for education to ignore the needs of Maori and society towards Maori art cultural products is explored in the light of theories of the reproductive nature of education, and the findings in this particular research.

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