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MACRITANGA

A STUDY OF TEACHER SENSITIVITY

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts at Massey University.

by

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ABSTRACT

For many years it has been recognised, both by official and unofficial sources, that as a group, Maori children do less well in school than Pakeha children. The major explanations for this have usually involved reference to lower socio-economic status or linguistic variables. While not denying that these variables are important, this study has attempted to place much greater emphasis on variables related to the discontinuity between the teachers' background and the sub-cultural and minority group status of their Maori pupils.

Ranginui Walker's statement that teachers are predominantly monocultural and not sensitised to react to biculturalism or the minority group needs of Maori pupils, was taken as a hypothesis.

A Questionnaire was designed and circulated amongst groups of Pakeha teachers and psychologists. A group of Maoris was also selected to complete part of this Questionnaire. The results suggest that by and large Pakeha teachers seek few experiences which would lead them to a greater understanding of the "Maori side" of their Maori pupils' lives. Furthermore they appear to have a poor knowledge of Maoritanga. This conclusion was found to be true of teachers in areas where there was a relatively high percentage of Maori pupils, as well as their counterparts in areas where relatively few Maori pupils are on school rolls.
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