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The New Zealand controversy over the
Johnson Report: The context of the
*Report of the Committee on Health and
Social Education, Growing, Sharing,
Learning* (1977).

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ABSTRACT

In 1975 the New Zealand Department of Education established a Committee on Health and Social Education, with the aim of addressing curriculum issues that had remained unresolved since the Thomas Report of 1944. Among these concerns was the issue of sex education. This Committee, also known as the Johnson Committee, was conceived under a liberal Labour government but its recommendations were debated during the terms of office of two subsequent National Ministers of Education.

The work of the Committee on Health and Social Education was undertaken concurrently with the movements known as the Maori Renaissance and second wave feminism and within a climate of social and legislative change which included the Contraception, Sterilisation and Abortion Bill of 1977. When the Report of the Committee on Health and Social Education, *Growing, Sharing, Learning* (1977), was published there was little controversy over its sixty-nine recommendations on physical health, outdoor education, parent education, or community involvement in curriculum development. Its two recommendations on sex education however provoked a polarised debate lasting more than five years. In the context of this controversy a coalition of groups representing the Religious Right worked concurrently to oppose further liberalisation of the primary school health education syllabus. This lobby was led by the Concerned Parents' Association, the executive of which assumed the role of the "moral entrepreneur" to raise public awareness on issues of sex and moral education.

A range of theory is used to discuss the contextual antecedents of the controversy, the reasons for the controversy and why it became increasingly difficult for the educational policy community to exercise hegemony over the outcomes of the Report. This thesis reveals that the Report of the Committee on Health and Social Education encompassed a bicultural dimension, and was the work of a liberal educational community of interest. It examines the underlying causes of the ideological tensions of the controversy and the construct of moral cathexis is introduced, to explain the means by which the Religious Right was able to influence subsequent policy. It is argued that the same ideological tensions are inherent in contemporary attempts to encompass sex education within the state school curriculum.

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I wish to express my gratitude to my principal supervisor, Professor Roger Openshaw, for his wisdom, guidance, support and optimism throughout the period of this research. My thanks go also to Professor Gary Hermansson for his supportive feedback and advice.

I am grateful to the people who lived through the events described in this thesis for generously sharing with me their time and reflections. I salute them all for their contributions to the process of democratic debate and I respectfully acknowledge those who have already passed on.

This thesis is dedicated to my own patient and understanding family, to my parents, Mary and Harold Johnson, who began my journey, to my aunt and uncle, Eileen and Garfield Johnson who lived this one, and to my Whanau, past present and future. Garfield Johnson agreed to write a retrospective foreword to this study but because of ill health was unable to do this. I have used instead part of a speech he made to the New Zealand Association of Health, Physical Education and Recreation, in May 1982.

If there are parts of the report which you see as valuable, go ahead and implement them without waiting for political action – you might wait a long time. But try to see every part as hanging together. An overall approach is by far the most effective. That's why I see the health and social education programme as only a small part of the answer. To that end take whatever political action you deem most expedient, if you feel strong enough.

I would also like to acknowledge the contribution made by Garfield Johnson to Hillary College and the Otara community of the 1960s and 1970s as reflected in a retrospective tribute to his "teaching style" by former student Rawiri Paratene, at the time of the award of Johnson's Honorary Doctorate in Literature by Massey University.

Toia Te Waka Maatauranga!
Maa wai e to?
Maaku e to
Maau e to
Maa te whakaranga ake e to!

*Who should haul the canoe of learning?
I should, you should,
All within calling distance should haul this vessel*

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ACRONYMS

| | |
|---------|--|
| AAWNZ | Association of Anglican women of New Zealand |
| CARE | Citizens' Association for Racial Equality |
| CDU | Curriculum Development Unit |
| COME | Community Organisation for Moral Education |
| CPA | Concerned Parents' Association |
| CSA | Contraception, sterilisation and abortion |
| DG | Director General [of Education] |
| DPB | Domestic Purposes Benefit |
| EDA | Education Development Association |
| EDC | Educational Development Conference |
| EPC | Educational Priorities Conference |
| ERA | Educational Research Associates (America) |
| FPA | Family Planning Association |
| FRA | Family Rights Association |
| FUW | Federation of University Women |
| HART | Halt All Racist Tours |
| HSE | Health and social education |
| MACOS | Man, a Course of Studies |
| MWWL | Maori Women's Welfare League |
| NCW | National Council of Women |
| NDC | National Development Conference |
| NESC | National English Syllabus Committee |
| NRR | New Religious Right |
| NZCER | New Zealand Council for Educational Research |
| NZAHPER | New Zealand Association for Health, Physical Education and Recreation. |
| NZEI | New Zealand Educational Institute |
| NZEF | New Zealand Employers Federation |
| NZGCA | New Zealand Guidance and Counselling Association |
| NZPTA | New Zealand Parent-Teacher Association |
| PPTA | Post Primary Teachers' Association |
| PT | Physical training |
| SEICUS | Sex Education Information Council of the United States |
| SPCS | Society for the Protection of Community Standards |
| SPUC | Society for the Protection of Unborn Children |
| SSBA | Secondary Schools Boards Association |
| VTs | Visiting teachers |
| WEL | Women's Electoral Lobby |
| WHO | World Health Organisation |

GLOSSARY OF MAORI LANGUAGE

| | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Aroha | Love, caring, concern for others |
| Hapu | Smaller family branch of a tribe |
| Hikoi | The land rights march of 1975 |
| Iwi | Nation, tribe, source of strength |
| Kaumatua | Older respected man |
| Koro | Respected Uncle figure |
| Kuia | Older respected woman |
| Mana | Repute, prestige, influence |
| Manāaki | Concern for the wellbeing of others, hospitality |
| Manāakitanga | Working co-operatively to ensure the wellbeing of others |
| Marae | Common ground in front of the ancestral tribal house |
| Mihi | Formal greeting of welcome |
| Mokopuna | Grandchild, descendent |
| Nga Tamatoa | Young warriors |
| Pākehā | Of European ethnicity |
| Papa-tu-a-nuku | Earth mother in relation to the sky father |
| Powhiri | A formal process of welcoming visitors |
| Rangatira | A Chief |
| Ranginui | The universal sky father |
| Taha Maori | Aspects of Maori culture |
| Tanemahuta | Son of Papa-tu-a-nuku and Ranginui – guardian of the forests and its creatures |
| Tangaroa | Son of Papa –tu-a-nuku and Ranginui – guardian of the sea and its creatures |
| Tangata Whenua New Zealand | First people of the land of Aotearoa/ |
| Tangi | Funeral – both grieving and acknowledgement of ancestors and continuity of the cycle of life and death |
| Te Reo | Maori language |
| Te Tiriti o Waitangi | The Treaty of Waitangi |
| Tena Koe | Greetings to you |
| Te Kaunihere Wahine o Aotearoa | The National Council of Women |
| Tuakana-Taina/Teina | Support and guidance from older sibling or relative to younger one |
| Tupuna/Tipuna | Ancestors |
| Turangawaewae | Tribal homeland, place to stand tall, identity |

| | |
|----------------|--|
| Utu | An action of return or recompense that equalises |
| Wairua | The spiritual dimension |
| Whaikorero | Oratory on the Marae |
| Whanau | Family in its extended sense |
| Whanaungatanga | Membership, inclusion and participation in the extended family |

The Author accepts responsibility for the above definitions. They were compiled after consulting the dictionaries given in the reference list, to reflect the sense in which each has been used in the context of discussion throughout this thesis.