

The Relationship Between Student Achievement and Self-esteem through Cultivating Cultural Identity:

From the Point of View of the Policy of Cultural Education in New Zealand

Yoshiko OBA

文化的アイデンティティ醸成による学力と自尊心の関係
－ニュージーランドの文化教育政策の視点から－

大 庭 由 子

Abstract

The school teachers in New Zealand try to encourage their students with their attitude that all teachers should be generous toward cultural diversity. This attitude might be a great suggestion to teachers in other countries who pay too much attention to PISA results.

Keywords : PISA, culture, diversity, identity

1. Introduction

New Zealand used to strive to be the United Kingdom of the South Pacific. Immigrants from Britain worked hard to improve their labor force in order to build a stronger nation after arriving in New Zealand. As a result, many immigrants from around the world who came to New Zealand to work were accepted. Only immigrants from the U.K. were accepted in the beginning. However, New Zealand began to cooperate with Asian countries after the U.K. joined the European Union. This relationship between Asia and South Pacific countries allowed New Zealand to become a multicultural country. The policies implemented to build up their labor force led to the creation of a multicultural society which recently has caused problems within the education system.

The indigenous people of New Zealand, the Maori, and immigrants from U.K. signed the Waitangi Treaty in 1840. This treaty is considered to be the backbone of New Zealand politics and highly influences various national policies.

Even though the Maori population decreased dramatically, it started to recover after the last war. As for their cultural studies, children are learning multicultural circumstances under a basic bicultural policy. This theme of teaching, which was inherited from the U.K., was added to the curriculum in 1993 and practiced until the end of the 20th century. They reinforced their children's literacy ability with storytelling methods and IT programs at

schools. The program was considered a success because the students of New Zealand occupied the top ranking in the world according to the 2000 PISA results.

However, there has been a steady declination in New Zealand's PISA results in the last decade. A lot of governmental research has been dedicated to the reasons for this decline. The teachers' attitude toward these results has had no impact on their way of teaching, though the government has tried to change their educational policy since the New Curriculum in 2006.

In this paper, we will examine recent teaching philosophies and the teachers' cultural generous attitudes toward their students.

2. PISA Ranking in NZ

This is the PISA ranking in NZ during the last decade.¹

	2000	2003	2006	2009	2012
Reading Literacy	3	6	5	7	13
Mathematics	3	12	11	13	23
Science	6	10	7	7	18

It is clear that the declination in PISA scores in 2003 triggered the introduction of the New Curriculum in 2006. How effective these changes were can be seen in the PISA results of 2012.

Here are some key points:

- New Zealand's average scores in mathematics, reading and science have declined since 2009.
- New Zealand's performance in these subjects has also declined relative to other countries.
- However, New Zealand's average achievement in mathematics, science and reading remains above the OECD average.²

Ms. Judith Nowotarski, who is the NZEI (New Zealand Educational Institute) president, worries about the government's wrong direction for the past five years and believes that the reason for this declination is that "Growing inequity and long term poverty have a big impact on student achievement." OECD deputy education director Andreas Scheicher admitted that in the PISA findings, choice and competition have not lifted student performance in countries that have adopted that approach, such as the U.K.. Those countries which also follow a competitive model, in turn to face a declined assessment are Australia, Canada, Sweden, and Finland. However, those countries which recently took over the top ranking position, also prefer a competitive model.

The minister of Education, Hekia Parata, is still insisting that her government's policies are right. She says that the results do not come from one factor but from other reasons, including

¹ <https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/topics/research/pisa/pisa-2015> 15/08/2016

² <https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/topics/research/pisa/pisa-2015> 15/08/2016

a significant increase in the number of teachers with poor teaching practice, and poor behavior cultures in some schools.

Ms. Parata proudly refers to the investment in education. She states, “during tight fiscal times we have invested \$9.7billion in education – the highest it has ever been – and in the top 20 percent in the OECD for spending as a percentage of GDP.”³ And also she says, “we have set a Better Public Service target of 85 percent of 18 year olds having an NCEA⁴ Level 2 or an equivalent qualification by 2017.” The OECD considers proficiency Level 2 as the baseline level at which students begin to demonstrate the competencies that will enable them to participate actively in life situations. Further details about New Zealand education levels will be explained in the next chapter.

3. New Curriculum in NZ

Since the government faced a drop in PISA scores in 2003, they implemented the New Curriculum for the improvement of poor student performance. The features of the New Curriculum, which started in 2006, set up levels for the curriculum that correlate with what year each student belongs. Every subject is divided into eight levels and students are expected to reach some sort of progress in each level. If the teachers have various levels of students in their classes, it seems to be very hard for them to teach everyone at the same time. For example, students who belong to year seven class (the first grade of intermediate school) are expected to learn according to their level from level three to level five.

Here are curriculum examples of three different levels in Social Science in 2008.⁵

Level 3

Students will gain knowledge, skills, and experience to:

- Understand how groups make and implement rules and laws.
- Understand how cultural practices vary but reflect similar purposes.
- Understand how people view and use places differently.
- Understand how early Polynesian and British migrations to New Zealand have continuing significance for tangata whenua and communities.
- Understand how the movement of people affects cultural diversity and interaction in New Zealand.

³ <http://www.radionz.co.nz/news/national/229756/nz-well-down-in-education-rankings> 15/08/2016

⁴ (notice for NZEI)

The New Zealand Educational Institute (NZEI, in Maori: Te Riu Roa) is the largest education trade union in New Zealand. It was founded in 1883 and has a membership of 50,000.[1]

The NZEI Te Riu Roa is New Zealand's largest education sector union. It represents around 50,000 primary and area school principals, as well as early childhood and primary teachers and school support staff working across the education sector. This includes administration and teaching support in secondary as well as primary schools and early childhood centres as well as support staff in special education and school advisory services

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Zealand_Educational_Institute22/05/2016

⁵ Inquiry Planning Social Studies at Murrays Bay Intermediate 2008.

Level 4 • 5:

Students will gain knowledge, skills and experience to:

- Understand how people pass on and sustain culture and heritage for different reasons and that this has consequences for people.

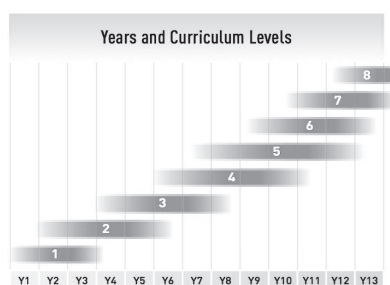
The teachers have to prepare their own curriculum according to these basic level indications. It is very hard for each school to prepare a suitable and specific curriculum for their students.

According to the “Years and Curriculum Levels”, every level is expanded to three years. This means that the teachers can give their lessons according to student levels within three years.

Here are some examples of an individual school curriculum.

In intermediate schools, the curriculum for level 3 and 4 is divided throughout the year. This is another example of these levels in Social Science during Term 3 in 2010.⁷

(chart 1)⁶



Students will gain knowledge, skills, and experience to:

- Understand how cultural practices reflect and express people’s customs, traditions and values. (Level 2)
- Understand how time and change affect people’s lives. (Level2)
- Understand how cultural practices vary but reflect similar purposes. (Level 3)
- Understand how the movement of people affects the cultural diversity and interaction in New Zealand. (Level 3)
- Understand how people remember and record the past in different ways. (Level 3)
- Understand how pass on and sustain culture and heritage for different reasons and that this has consequences for people. (Level 4)
- Understand that events have causes and effects. (Level 4)
- Understand how cultural interaction impacts on cultures and societies. (Level 5)
- Understand how the ideas and actions of people in the past have had a significant impact on people’s lives. (Level 5)
- Understand how people define and seek human rights. (Level 5)

⁶ The New Zealand Curriculum, the Ministry of Education, 2007, p.44.

⁷ Curriculum Overview Term3, 2010.

In 2008, every level refers to cultural diversity and heritage. However, the curriculum in 2010 shows a mixture in levels in Social Science with reduced cultural descriptions.

Finally, the latest curriculum of Social Sciences in 2015 is as follows:⁸

Students will develop skills and understanding in the following areas;

- That the production of some products use destructive/polluting processes
 - Cheap products (clothes) are produced cheaply because the workers are paid so little.
 - Sweatshops exploit unskilled labour.
 - We can be much more informed consumers
 - Fishing Slavery
 - Animal Testing
 - Blood Diamonds
- (omission)

There is a clear difference between the curriculum of 2008, 2010, and that of 2015. The curriculum in 2015 shows no cultural diversity or heritage descriptions.

In the next chapter, we will examine results of the teachers' questionnaires that lead to controversial opinions about the cultures in New Zealand.

4. Ethnic Group Identity in the Students' Assessment & Teachers' Attitudes toward PISA Results

According to the references in Chapter 3, cultural diversity is still a focus in the curriculum. However, teachers have come to let their students catch up to the competitive global trends. The purpose of social science has been changed to pursue economic prosperity or preservation of the environment, which are common social issues of the world.

On the other hand, the national curriculum of social science still refers to bicultural diversity in ways such as the following:⁹

Identity, Culture, and Organisation – Students learn about society and communities and how they function. They also learn about the diverse cultures and identities of people within those communities and about the effects of these on the participation of groups and individuals. The principles of the New Zealand Curriculum in 2006 also refers to the basic cultural diversities.

High expectations, Treaty of Waitangi, Cultural diversity, Inclusion, Learning to learn, Community engagement, Coherence, Future focus¹⁰.

⁸ Curriculum Overview Term3,2015.

⁹ the Ministry of Education.,op.cit.,p.30.

¹⁰ the Ministry of Education.,op.cit.,p.7.

(chart 2)¹¹

Ethnic distribution of children and young people (%), 1996–2006

	1996	2001	2006
0–17 years			
European	77.0	74.3	72.4
Māori	24.1	24.0	23.7
Pacific peoples	10.0	11.0	12.1
Asian	6.3	7.4	9.7
Other	0.7	0.9	1.2
18–24 years			
European	77.9	71.3	67.1
Māori	19.3	18.9	18.1
Pacific peoples	7.6	8.8	8.9
Asian	7.1	11.8	16.7
Other	0.5	0.9	1.3

Source: Statistics New Zealand, five-year ethnic population estimates

Notes: (1) People identified with more than one ethnic group are counted once in each group reported.

(2) To maintain consistency over time, those identified as ‘New Zealander’ in 2006 have been included in the European ethnic group.

Chart 2 shows the ethnic distribution of children and young adults in New Zealand. PISA scores are recorded only for children at age 15. This means we can match the distribution of these ethnic groups to the diversity of students who take the PISA exam. We can see that especially the number of young Pacific and Asian people have increased from 1996 to 2006. As a result of these changes, urban schools which have a rather high percentage of ethnic students have the obstacle of teaching students whose first language is not English. So teachers are commonly finding it difficult to keep their bicultural policy with the background of multicultural education.

As we see changes in teachers’ concepts toward cultural diversities, we should look at the results of a questionnaire taken in 2015. Twenty teachers out of thirty at Murrays Bay intermediate school in Auckland answered the questionnaire. Though the results might not be reliable because of the small sample size, some tendencies of the teachers’ attitude became clear. The purpose of this questionnaire was mainly to ask them if their students’ assessment declined in the last decade.

Here are some excerpts of the questionnaire.

¹¹Children and Young People: Indicators of Wellbeing in New Zealand 2008., Ministry of social Development., p8.

Q1. According to New Zealand's recent decline in PISA numbers for 2012, do you believe that the students' ability has declined?

Yes: 10 No: 9 No idea: 1

Q3. What do you believe are some possible reasons for the recent decline in the students' evaluation?

A: Schools have accepted too many new teachers in the early 2000s.

B: Schools have accepted too many students who cannot speak English in the last decade.

C: The school curriculum and the way of teaching might have some problems.

D: All of the above.

E: Other

A: 0 B: 1 C: 9 D: 0 E: 13

Q5. Do you believe the New School Curriculum, which has been implemented since 2006, is working effectively at your school?

Yes: 14 No: 2 No idea: 4

Q6. In what ways do you include Maori culture in lessons at your school?

A: Whenever Maori culture relates to lessons.

B: During special occasions which closely relate to Maori culture.

C: Students are given a chance at least once a week according to the school curriculum.

D: All of the above.

E: Other

A: 5 B: 1 C: 3 D: 08 E: 3

Q7. How do the students cultivate their own identities through your school's curriculum?

A: Teachers give the students opportunities in lessons in order to acknowledge their pride as KIWIS.

B: Students learn about their own identities especially in Social Science fields.

C: Students learn about their own identities through multicultural school surroundings.

D: All of the above.

E: Other

A: 2 B: 2 C: 3 D: 13 E: 2

Q9. Do you think you have to give the students additional learning materials in order to increase scores for the next PISA results?

Yes: 11 No: 6 No idea: 3

Q10. Do you think you need another change for education in New Zealand?

Yes: 9 No: 5 No idea: 6

The teachers seem to believe that the New Curriculum is working quite well. However, they feel that they do need a change. This is a particularly controversial attitude toward the present school curriculum. Teachers are not sure how to teach their students about Maori culture any more, even though the Maori language is the second official language of New Zealand. Most teachers also believe that Maori culture should be the first culture that students learn in their schools.

Conclusion

The official government report concerning the results of PISA 2012 never refers to the rapid growth of English as a second language students. However, most teachers know that this is an important contributing factor for the students' poor result. This could be the reason the answers of Q1 on the questionnaire were so divided. It seems apparent that teachers in New Zealand continue to feel the difficulties of cultivating their students' identity as KIWIs through the school curriculum. Even through the struggle, teachers believe that the most significant attitude is to let their students know that they are doing everything they can to provide a happy environment for their students and not pay too much attention to recent PISA scores.

This paper is supported by the research expense of Yasuda Women's University in 2015.

[Received September 29, 2016]

Contributor: Professor Masaaki NAKASHIMA (Department of Primary Education)