

## PPTA Position on Te Kotahitanga

*This paper was discussed at Te Roopu Matua on 27 March 2009 and at the Executive Professional Issues Advisory Committee (PIAC) on 2 April 2009. The full Executive Committee received this paper at their May meeting.*

### Background

In January 2007, PPTA commissioned Professor Roger Openshaw of Massey University to conduct an “independent review of Te Kotahitanga Phase 3. This will involve joint development of a questionnaire in association with NZPPTA, library and archival searches in Palmerston North and in Wellington, critical analysis of all relevant project documents, and utilisation of PPTA teacher survey data”.

PPTA commissions research on all sorts of topics, and when the research is done by an independent researcher, we do not restrict their academic freedom by binding them to come up with a particular set of findings. This would be most improper and against all research ethics. We do, on the other hand, reserve the right to monitor the quality of research done when we are funding it, and PPTA staff were members of an advisory team set up to read and provide critical commentary on the draft review report prior to its being handed over formally to the client on completion of the contract.

### Reasons for Commissioning This Research

PPTA was concerned that no independent evaluation of the Te Kotahitanga project had been done up to that point in time, yet our National Office and Field Offices had been required to respond to a significant number of inquiries, e.g. from members including principals wanting to know what PPTA's view of the project was, from members who were feeling pressured to participate, and from members who were concerned about the workload associated with participating.

The proposal to conduct research arose from a request by Russell Bishop that PPTA provide **one** representative to participate in his reference group for Phase 3 of the project. The Professional Issues Advisory Committee recommended, after a lengthy discussion, that “PPTA propose to Professor Russell Bishop that there be **three** PPTA representatives on the advisory group: an Executive representative, a Te Huarahi representative, and a PPTA staff member, and that PPTA ask to make a presentation to the first session attended.” However, Executive felt that it did not have sufficient independent information on the project to adopt such a role. It decided instead that commissioning an independent evaluation would be a more useful course of action at that time.

In the search for someone to conduct the research, Massey University was approached first, given their record of willingness to engage in academic critique of government policy positions. Inquiries in that direction ascertained that Professor Roger Openshaw would be willing to conduct the research, and his impressive CV as a researcher (see Appendix 1) and the respect in which he is held throughout the education research community, led PPTA to invite him to agree to a research contract.

### The Research Process

Four research questions were developed by Professor Openshaw:

- Does Te Kotahitanga incorporate a valid approach as a professional development project?
- Is Te Kotahitanga underpinned by a particular, and dominant, ideology (culturalism) that predisposes its team towards adopting certain approaches and embracing particular conclusions whilst negating other approaches as being politically unacceptable?
- How professionally valid and intellectually rigorous are the internal structures and mechanisms of the project?
- Is the evidence of improved student achievement as a result of the professional development robust, and are the gains sufficient to justify the expenditure of government and school resources (in terms of money and time) on the project?

Professor Openshaw recommended that the research report consist of three sections:

- A theoretical historical background.
- A critical study and analysis of the documentation.
- A survey of teachers across the twelve schools involved in Te Kotahitanga Phase 3.

The questionnaire used for the survey was developed by Professor Openshaw and critiqued by other Massey University staff and PPTA staff. For practical reasons, the survey was distributed through PPTA networks, but stamped addressed envelopes were provided for its return.

On two occasions, representatives from all twelve branches were brought together at a meeting in Auckland with PPTA staff and Professor Openshaw. The first meeting was 31 March 2007, where branch representatives were taken through the questionnaire and asked to support its having the highest possible return from staff. The second meeting was on 13 October, just prior to the launch of the report. At this meeting, branch representatives were given a preview of the report and an opportunity to discuss it with its author.

The branch representatives included a number of lead facilitators for Te Kotahitanga, and could by no means be described as a group with a single shared viewpoint on the project.

The final sample for the survey was about 30% of the total possible, which is a high level for this kind of survey. Of these, 225 were current participants in Te Kotahitanga and 39 were former participants, so only 44 had never participated. The sample therefore was strongly weighted towards teachers who were participants in the project.

### **The Research Report**

The report was launched in October 2007, and Professor Openshaw served as the main spokesperson for the report, as was appropriate in the light of his authorship and his academic independence. The report was issued to all branches at the time of the launch.

A set of 'key messages' was developed by PPTA's media team, for use by PPTA spokespeople. These key messages are attached in full as Appendix 2, but in summary the four messages were:

1. The claims for the project's success made by the Phase 3 report are not conclusively proven by the data.
2. Key assumptions underpinning Te Kotahitanga are questionable.
3. Data from the survey conducted as part of the review suggests that the professional development programme needs modification.

But on the other hand:

4. Teachers are generally keen to participate in professional development projects that are focused on improving classroom practice (see extract from 2007 STCA claim for support for professional learning, attached as Appendix 3).

The executive summary of the report, which was circulated as part of the report, is attached as Appendix 4.

### **Executive's Position**

There was no executive decision about the research report subsequent to its launch, in fact Executive has never even 'received' the report, let alone 'adopt' it, so it is not true to suggest that the findings of the research have been "endorsed by NZPPTA", as Professor Keith Ballard of Otago University claimed in his address to the Te Kotahitanga conference late last year. He was in error when he made that claim, and he hasn't ever checked his facts on this with PPTA, nor has he responded to an email from PPTA staff correcting his assertion. This is disappointing behaviour in an academic, for whom the ethic of ensuring factual correctness should be pre-eminent. Funding an academic to conduct research is not the same as endorsing the report that follows.

At the same time, PPTA staff are satisfied that the report is of high quality, i.e. well evidenced, well argued and balanced. This does not mean that everyone who reads it will agree with it. That is the case with much research.

### **Criticisms of the Report**

At the time of the launch, there was a criticism received at PPTA from an academic from Canada who was closely involved with the Te Kotahitanga project as an external advisor. This criticism was of the structuring of the questionnaire and the wording of some of the questions. While there was some basis to some of her criticisms, the problems with the questions did not invalidate the conclusions that the report had drawn from the survey. Most of the questions she criticised had not in fact been analysed for the report because we had seen the problems ourselves when the data was processed.

Professor Keith Ballard, in an address to a Te Kotahitanga conference in November 2008, criticised the Openshaw report and PPTA's involvement in it. The relevant extract from his paper is attached as Appendix 5. It is important to note that Professor Ballard did concede that the survey produced evidence of some worrying aspects of Te Kotahitanga, particularly that nearly half of the respondents hadn't felt completely free to make their own decision about whether to participate or to opt out. This is an issue that PPTA had discussed previously with Russell Bishop, and he shared our concern but seemed to believe he had no power to change this. The problem continues to the present day.

He also, as stated above, claimed that PPTA had endorsed the report, which PPTA has not done.

He does concede that the survey revealed a willingness of teachers to engage with high quality practice-based professional development, something that PPTA has been saying about its members for a long time, in the face of successive governments who won't fund this properly.

This challenge to Professor Openshaw by Professor Ballard is part of the normal cut and thrust of academics' critique of each other's work. It is just disappointing that he used his slot at the Te Kotahitanga conference to attack PPTA, without having ever engaged with us in discussion about the report, either before the conference or afterwards. I also understand from Professor Openshaw that Professor Ballard has failed to respond to any of his attempts to engage with him either. The most appropriate position on this for PPTA, though, is to leave the academics to their debates.

### **What are Members Told About the PPTA Position?**

Members seeking information about "the PPTA view on Te Kotahitanga" have been advised to read what they can of the multitude of publications by the Te Kotahitanga team, and to read the Openshaw report as another view, and to make their own decision. They have been told that PPTA has a neutral view, recognising that, like any professional development programme, there are pluses and minuses, and that the balance will differ depending on the school, the context and the teacher. On the other hand, members seeking help because they are feeling bullied or pressured to participate have been told about the ethical requirements of any research project, that participants must have freedom to opt in or out at any time. The problem with this, as Professor Openshaw explains in the report, is that Te Kotahitanga is both a research project and a professional development project, and the ethics become blurred. Where members appear to have been subjected to mistreatment by their employers, Field Officers take action on their behalf.



TK REPORT

## **Roger Openshaw**

Professor Roger Openshaw holds a Personal Chair in History of Education in the School of Educational Studies, Massey University College of Education. He had six years teaching experience in New Zealand primary and intermediate schools prior to becoming a university researcher and teacher. His current research interests include the history and politics of literacy in England and New Zealand, social studies and citizenship education, school curriculum policy and history, the politics of ethnicity, and the changing nature of educational theory and practice. He has written/co-written/edited/co-edited many national and international articles together with nineteen books and monographs including: Openshaw, R. & Soler, J. (eds) (2007). *Reading Across International Boundaries. History, Policy and Politics*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age; Rata, E. & Openshaw, R. (eds) (2006). *Public Policy and Ethnicity. The Politics of Ethnic Boundary-Making*. London: Palgrave MacMillan; Soler, J. & Openshaw, R. (2006). *Literacy Crises and Reading Policies. Children still Can't Read*. London and New York: Routledge; Nozaki, Y., Openshaw, R. & Luke, A. (eds.) (2005). *Struggles Over Difference. Curriculum, Texts, and Pedagogy in the Asia-Pacific*. Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 2005, the last being the recipient of an Outstanding Book Award in 2006.

## ***Evaluation of Te Kotahitanga – Phase 3 by Professor Roger Openshaw***

### **Key Messages**

#### **5. The claims for the project's success made by the Phase 3 report are not conclusively proven by the data**

- The data does not take into account other initiatives that may be operating in individual schools alongside Te Kotahitanga, e.g. the Literacy or Numeracy Initiatives, the Student Engagement Initiative, Extending High Standards projects, ICT cluster participation, etc. Improved student outcomes may be attributable to these other projects rather than, or as well as, Te Kotahitanga (pp.13-14).
- There are no control groups with which to compare outcome data (pp.13-14), and the project's implementation can differ from school to school, e.g. by treating target students differently: *"There have been specific attempts (bribes) to TK students to improve figures such as attendance when other groups in the school have not received such incentives"* (p.40).
- The report does not present student data from all 12 schools in Phase 3 (p.14).
- Numeracy and literacy data is collected as evidence of improvements in Maori student achievement as a result of the programme. However, this data is relevant to only some of the subject areas taught by Te Kotahitanga participants, who teach across the full curriculum (pp.13-14).
- There is insufficient baseline data on teachers in the project to claim that participation in Te Kotahitanga had significantly changed their teaching (p.15).
- The use of effect sizes is statistically flawed (pp. 14-15).

#### **6. Key assumptions underpinning Te Kotahitanga are questionable**

- The report overstates the capacity of teachers to alone shape the achievement of students, and understates the impact of home, peer and individual effects (p.10). The ideology of 'cultural essentialism' understates the diversity of Maori students and consequently over-simplifies the task of remedying the under-achievement of some but not all Maori students. It fails to take account of the intersecting influences on achievement of socio-economic difference, family values differences, and other factors (pp.23-30).
- The report adopts a 'blame and redemption' model involving surveillance and control of teachers aimed at shaping their practice by changing their mental models (p.21). It labels teachers as engaging in 'deficit theorising' of Maori students, but the evidence for this collected for the Phase 1 report was flimsy and has not been collected again in relation to the teachers in this phase. Respondents to the survey rejected this labelling vigorously (p.37 and p.45). One respondent said that Te Kotahitanga had *"overtones of a religion the basic tenets of which are extremely disparaging of teachers. In my 30+ years of teaching the overwhelming majority of teachers have been keen to do their best for all students including Maori. Even most of those who, at a depressed moment, might espouse the wicked 'deficit theorising' statements will in fact show in their classrooms a determination to try to assist all students to succeed. Having created this problem TK seeks to provide answers. Russell Bishop comes as the*

*Messiah and tells us a range of answers, many of which are not new and are part of basic good teaching” (p.45).*

- The report lacks a sense of the history of education, by making claims for having ‘discovered’ the importance of power-sharing, co-construction of curriculum, and positive relationships in the classroom (pp.8-10).

## **7. Data from the survey conducted as part of the review suggests that the professional development programme needs modification**

- The research is undermined by elements of coercion in its implementation in some schools. Significant proportions of respondents had not felt free to decide whether or not to participate in Te Kotahitanga, and did not feel free to opt out if they were participants (pp.32-36).
- There was worrying evidence of a bullying culture around participation in the project in some schools, evidenced by comments such as “*continual pressure from principal to participate*” (p.33), “*Staff who did not opt in received written letters from principal expressing principal’s concern*” (p.34), “*Staff members who have opted out of doing TK or who have withdrawn are ‘unofficially’ blacklisted...*” (p.35).
- Few respondents believed that the data collection processes were transparent and rigorous, and there was a common perception that the data collection was not neutral, evidenced by comments such as “*We will take any data that backs the project*”, “*TK is swift to interpret any success as proof of its own interventionist value when that is not the case: e.g. there have been some very good and successful interventions carried out at this school that have been the work of people **not** in TK*” (p.40) and “*Any gains in our school are attributed to TK – no credit given to many other programmes going on in school*” (p.45).
- Only about half of respondents believed that their participation in the project had improved their professional relationships with Maori students or the achievement of their Maori or non-Maori students (p.43). Respondents’ views were very mixed on this, with many believing that the programme simply confirmed existing practice, e.g. “*I always was working on lesson learning intentions, clear success criteria, good academic feedback and feedforward and utilising student prior knowledge. It’s a little irritating TKP seems to have claimed these as its own inventions*” (p.44).
- The programme is insufficiently resourced to compensate teachers for the extra time involved, with few teachers receiving any tangible recognition of this (pp.44-45).

**On the other hand:**

## **8. Teachers are generally keen to participate in professional development projects that are focused on improving classroom practice**

- Respondents highly rated the induction hui as a professional development opportunity (p.41).
- Respondents generally valued the co-construction meetings, but this depended on the composition of the groups and the quality of their facilitation (pp.41-42).
- Respondents generally rated highly the pedagogical model presented through the Effective Teaching Profile (pp.38-39).

## **2007 STCA claim for support for Professional Learning**

Those claims were shaped by membership feedback largely in the absence of progress on consideration of resourcing of professional learning in the relevant workstream. The Ministerial Taskforce's original recommendation which led to the workstream being asked to do that was because of their findings about the variable levels of PD that teachers engaged in to the extent of total absence for many.

It is clear to us that teachers are willing to engage (and the ACER report confirmed this), and frequently have done at much of their own costs, in their own professional learning. It has been acknowledged by the previous Ministers that the implementation of NCEA has largely been born on the backs of teachers – albeit with some funded PD inputs at some points.

Now with greater emphasis on each student reaching their potential through analysing evidence and the latest focus on personalised learning, teachers will need to engage in further on-going learning to ensure the best learning opportunities are there for all students. Without greatly improved and guaranteed individual resourcing it is an unrealistic expectation of teachers – and contrary to the Shared Vision reached by PPTA, MOE and STA in 2005. The Shared Vision is still referred to in 2.2 of the current STCA.

## **Executive Summary**

Māori educational underachievement is a major issue for New Zealand society and concern to adequately address the problem is justifiably, widespread. Te Kōtahitanga contends that the central issue in Māori educational underachievement is teachers positioning themselves in non-agentic positions because of their adherence to deficit theorising. Hence, its remedy is equally simple – by changing teachers' attitudes to Māori students and their culture teachers will come to use the power of their own agency to see, 'wonderful changes in Māori students' behaviour, participation, engagement and achievement in their classrooms' (Phase 3 Report, 2007, p.189). The currently high level of political support for Te Kōtahitanga has major implications for teachers, students, pedagogy, school organisation, and teacher training in New Zealand. It also has the potential to re-kindle public debate regarding the wider issues of professional autonomy and teacher accountabilities.

Whilst this review is broadly supportive of the goals sought by the Te Kōtahitanga writers, it is highly critical of both the Phase 3 Report and its operationalisation as a professional development programme for teachers. These criticisms fall into three major groupings:

- a) The claims made for the success of the project are by no means conclusively confirmed by the data presented.
- b) The project's location within the recent school effectiveness/school improvement paradigm together with its strong and uncritical adherence to a culturalist ideology renders many of its assumptions and remedies highly questionable.
- c) The data produced by the questionnaire distributed as part of the review process casts considerable doubt on its viability as a professional development programme, without major modifications.

The first section of this review contends that whilst Te Kōtahitanga provides a timely reminder to those currently involved in education that student achievement may be improved by developing sound and flexible learning-teaching relationships, the writers ignore the fact that such strategies have been a feature of many New Zealand secondary schools for some decades. Likewise, the claim that secondary schools have historically failed to listen to Māori aspirations is difficult to sustain. More significantly, Te Kōtahitanga is based on the proposition that a) teacher effects are central to Māori educational underachievement, and that b) teachers substantially contribute to Māori student failure. These are over-simplistic conclusions that disregard considerable evidence to the contrary. The data provided by the Phase 3 Report does not adequately support Te Kōtahitanga's claim to dramatically improve the academic performances of Māori students due in part to the failure to provide for adequate control groups, especially given the operation of several other programmes in secondary schools.

This discrepancy, however, is but a symptom of deeper, underlying problems. In the second section of this review, it is suggested that there are two major underlying reasons for Te Kōtahitanga's dogmatic adherence to a single 'magic bullet' solution to Māori students' underachievement. The first reason is that the project is situated within a global school effectiveness/school improvement research paradigm, whose drawbacks it largely shares. It exemplifies a process of blame and redemption; surveillance and control. By substituting 'teacher' for 'child', it aims to save the teacher for society and to rescue society through the teacher. Accordingly, it contributes to the displacement of collaborative professionalism by imposing externally imposed notions of 'best practice'. The second and more fundamental reason for the insistence on a single major cause of Māori educational underachievement, however, is that the Te Kōtahitanga writers display an uncritical adherence to the ideology of culturalism. Hence, the highly contestable view that teachers pathologise their students through failing to empathise with Māori culture is a central tenet of culturalist faith that permeates both methodology and data.

Many of the problems noted above were amplified in the teacher responses to a survey conducted by NZPPTA in April/May 2007. These responses are analysed in section three of this review. They reveal that, whilst teachers strongly sympathised with the broad aims of Te Kōtahitanga, they also identified a number of serious flaws with the project as a professional development programme. Many respondents drew attention to what they saw as an intense and unjustifiable pressure placed upon them both to opt into Te Kōtahitanga, and to stay in, resulting in alienation and sometimes victimisation that detracted from staff collegiality and ultimately led to de-professionalisation. Teachers also draw attention to weaknesses in data collection and presentation, and expressed concern about time commitment and resourcing.

**Extract from Ballard, K., Teaching in context: Some implications of a racialised social order, paper presented at Te Kotahitanga conference, 23 November 2008**

### **Ideas as context**

Educational historian Roger Openshaw was invited by the New Zealand Post Primary Teachers' Association (PPTA) to "review the Te Kōtahitanga project" (Openshaw, 2007, p.iv). Openshaw's methodology did not include interviews with participants and he did not undertake observations of teacher professional development sessions or practice in classrooms. What Openshaw does provide in what he describes as his "comprehensive, independent and scholarly review" (p. v) are data from a questionnaire survey; criticism of data in the Te Kōtahitanga Phase 3 report (Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh & Teddy, 2007) that is presented to support a claim that Te Kōtahitanga has enhanced student achievement; critical commentary centred around the role of teachers in student achievement; and some ideas on Māori culture (3). In this section of my paper I will focus on some of the ideas about Te Kōtahitanga that Openshaw (2007) provides and that have been endorsed by the PPTA who commissioned and published the review.

For the review the PPTA sent out "[a]pproximately 1000 questionnaires" and received 308 responses. Of these 264 were from teachers who had participated in Te Kōtahitanga (225 present and 39 former participants, p. 31). As a brief summary of some of the findings from the questionnaire survey the data show that 48.7% of respondents said they had not felt "completely free" in making the decision to participate in Te Kōtahitanga (p.33) and 52.8% of current participants said they did not feel completely free to opt out (p. 34). There were comments of feeling pressured and bullied, including by employment contractual arrangements and school policy requirements for participation. The idea that we can be "completely free" to determine our actions in professional or employment contexts warrants some thought. Nevertheless, these questionnaire responses suggest an area for further investigation in terms of programme evaluation and development, and also an area for possible action in terms of teacher wellbeing.

Without diminishing the significance of reported experiences of pressure to participate, such further analysis should consider research indicating that in areas that challenge long held beliefs and values, in programmes of anti-racism for example (a similar context is that of anti-disablism), such responses may occur and may not accurately reflect programme intentions or processes (Hyttén & Adkins, 2001; Lawrence & Tatum, 1997; Malin, 1999; Rizvi, 1992). To understand such issues in Te Kōtahitanga would require research that observes programme activities and involves talking with teacher and other participants. Interpretation of the research data might then be undertaken with awareness of the kind of studies I discuss in the previous section of this paper that examine experiences of anti-racism projects in education and professional development settings.

The questionnaire responses in the Openshaw report identified some other concerns, including a perception that Te Kōtahitanga is blaming teachers for low student performance and a view that the programme is not attending to issues beyond teacher influence that may impact on achievement (p. 38). Responses also provided comment on various aspects of the Te Kōtahitanga approach to teacher professional development. Nevertheless, 63.4% of respondents agreed that Te Kōtahitanga could “dramatically improve Maori student performance” (p. 36); a “large majority” said that the Effective Teaching Profile was “either beneficial or highly beneficial” (p. 38); 65% of the teachers rated the facilitators “highly for credibility” (p. 42); and 59% responded in agreement to the proposal “that their teaching has improved as a result of participation in Te Kōtahitanga” (p. 42). Overall, the data from this self-selecting sample indicate for Te Kōtahitanga some areas requiring critical attention but also some key areas of significant achievement.

In his report Openshaw has two sections of commentary on Te Kōtahitanga. In the first section Openshaw claims that the programme is part of the school effectiveness movement that supports, and is supported by, a neo-liberal ideological position.

Since the time of the Lange Labour government (1984-1999) neo-liberal ideology and its beliefs in markets and managerialism has formed the basis for educational policy and practice in New Zealand. The school effectiveness movement is closely aligned with the individualistic model of human behaviour that the neo-liberal belief system promotes. Like Openshaw I am of the view that the school effectiveness approach is distrustful and controlling of teachers (Ballard, 2003; 2004a) and limits the scope and creativity of the curriculum and of teaching in classrooms (Ballard, 2004b)). However, I do not believe that Te Kōtahitanga is part of the school effectiveness model. The school effectiveness model is positivist, technicist and managerialist in its approach. I see no evidence of these in the relationship-focused kaupapa Māori model of Te Kōtahitanga.

The school effectiveness movement often claims that an aspect of education is in ‘crisis’ and that teachers should be held responsible for this and for resolving the problem. Openshaw says that Te Kōtahitanga is part of the school effectiveness approach because Te Kōtahitanga writers have referred to a ‘crisis’ in Maori education and because they attend to the role of the teacher in student achievement. He offers no other evidence for his claim.

There are educational researchers, myself included, who oppose neo-liberal ideology and the school effectiveness movement but who also have identified an issue of significant concern in education and who work with teachers on ways of understanding and addressing that concern (Ballard, 2004c; Lingard, 2001; Slee, 2001). New Zealand researcher Martin Thrupp (1999), for example, says that a failure to address the problems of schools in poor areas will have “educational and social prospects [that are] truly alarming” (p. 196), a description that school effectiveness people would readily grasp. Thrupp emphasises that schools alone should not be held responsible for poor achievement in such settings and writes of his opposition to the school effectiveness model in this regard (Thrupp, 2008, has endorsed the Openshaw 2007 report). However, he also says that teachers should “strive to do their best by the students in their care” (p. 183). Clearly the idea of an ‘alarming’ problem (‘crisis’) and

teachers 'doing their best' (which would surely include professional development) can and does exist outside of the school effectiveness field.

Researchers John Smyth and Robert Hattam (2004) have studied Australian high school students who have been expelled or who have dropped out early. On the basis of student ideas for improving education they present recommendations that include attention to issues beyond the school setting. However, their recommendations for within school action include enhancing teacher student relationships; developing teacher sensitivity to "class/gender/racist/homophobic harassment"; and "confront[ing] teacher-student harassment by requiring a rethinking of pedagogy" (p. 193). Smyth and Hattam recommend "transforming the *culture of the school*" (p. 194, emphasis in original) so that "all students experience success" (p. 184). In the context of their work and its opposition to neo-liberal politics and policies this challenge to teachers does not carry an implication that they are part of the school effectiveness movement.

It seems to me that asking teachers to consider if the assumptions they work with could be harmful to some students need not be part of what Openshaw (2007) calls "simply finger pointing and apportioning blame" (p. 9). When such concerns are presented within the context of the school effectiveness approach then blaming teachers and implying their responsibility for overcoming social ills is an integral part of that model. However, the same concerns can be presented in an alternative context of ongoing teacher learning and professional development in which critical thought allows for the possibility that changes in teacher approach are needed and recognises that such changes are of value to teachers and students. If this were not the case then just about all professional development could be assessed as blaming teachers for what they do not know or do.

Education, including teacher education through professional development, is about change. Change implies recognition that on the basis of values or of data some ideas and practices are to be preferred over others. For example, Gloria Ladson-Billings (2008) suggests that instead of talking about an "achievement gap" shown by minority children we should talk of repaying an "education debt of longstanding inequities and educational disenfranchisement" (p. 236). Outside of the school effectiveness movement such a critical evaluation of the ideas behind our work is a basis for ongoing professional development rather than a basis for attacking teachers.

In the field of disability, for example, research indicates that the belief system known as the medical model is the basis for discrimination and exclusion experienced by many disabled students in the New Zealand school system (Ballard, 2004c). In this context the United Nations (Munoz, 2007) says that in order to achieve social justice for disabled students it is necessary for policy makers and teachers to reject medical model (deficit) thinking and work with alternative positions which emphasise disabling environments rather than impaired persons.

The United Nations recommendations on disability in education are consistent with the New Zealand Disability Strategy (Minister for Disability Issues, 2001) to which schools are required to comply. It seems to me that this approach to disability is very much like the attention that Te Kōtahitanga gives to changing the ways in which teachers construct their relationships with students. Like the Te Kōtahitanga criticism of deficit

thinking about Māori educational achievement, disability researchers recognise that teachers who hold a deficit position on disability reflect the predominant socio-cultural context in which such assumptions are the norm. That does not mean, however, that disabled people and their allies should not ask teachers to examine their thinking and practices in order to improve levels of educational participation and achievement for disabled students. Further, encouraging such critical thought by teachers does not in itself imply allegiance to the school effectiveness model.

Nevertheless, Openshaw (2007) claims that asking teachers to examine their ideas and practices around culture as an aspect of teacher-student relationships is to impose a school effectiveness approach. Also, he suggests that such an approach directs attention away from the influences of social class and of economic and home factors on school achievement. Openshaw emphasises that these factors are the responsibility of politicians, government agencies and communities rather than teachers.

From my reading of the literature there are some researchers who study the role of social class and class-mix in educational achievement and who fail to consider in any substantial way issues of culture, ethnicity and racism. There are some researchers who focus on culture, ethnicity and racism and who give only limited attention to class structures that may shape actions and opportunities within and beyond an ethnic group. In both fields of study at present the issue of inequality as an independent and powerful variable (Wilkinson, 2005) is rarely evident.

To the extent that such an incomplete analysis applies to Te Kōtahitanga I do not see this as warranting the 'school effectiveness' accusations presented by Openshaw. Rather, it presents a context requiring more thought and more research (as Te Kōtahitanga researchers intend, see Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh & Teddy, 2007, p.185) so we might consider, for example, the case presented by American black writer bell hooks (2000) that "class matters" but also evidence such as that from American researcher Michelle Fine and her colleagues ( Fine, Weis, Weseen, &Wong, 2000) who describe their efforts to match samples on a class basis in studies of poverty in American cities. They found that the within class experiences of white and non-white Americans were not the same and that for African Americans race and racism "saturates every pore of their lives" (p. 112; see also Krugman, 2007). This is consistent with New Zealand data from the Ministry of Health and University of Otago (2006; Blakely et al, 2007) studies that show ethnicity and racism to be influences that are interrelated but that also have powerful actions independent of the influences of poverty and class. On the basis of such data the emphasis that Openshaw (2007) gives to socio-economic status is not supported.

The second area of commentary in Openshaw's (2007) Report involves his ideas on Maori culture and their implications for Te Kōtahitanga.

Openshaw writes that many Māori academics are part of a "newly emergent middle class capitalist neo-tribal elite" (p. 23) who adhere to an "ideology of culturalism" (p. 24). Openshaw says that "culturalism" emphasises the role of culture in individual experience and is similar to "fundamentalism" (p. 24). Such an approach, says Openshaw, is aligned with an "indigenous nationalism" that has "some of the

characteristics of pre-war fascism” (p. 25) involving a “brand of mystical, anti-rational and holistic ideas regarding ... cultural unity...” (p. 25).

Openshaw claims that attention to cultural matters in Te Kōtahitanga means that insufficient attention is given to issues of economic conditions, social class and family resources. He says that this approach by Te Kōtahitanga is a deliberate ploy by the “Māori elite” to direct attention “away from themselves and on to schools and teachers” (p. 27) through a process of “indoctrination” in a “culturalist ideology” (p. 28). He also says that the early childhood curriculum Te Whaariki and work on reading with Māori and Pasifika children in South Auckland by researcher Stuart McNaughton are part of an “ideology” of “culturalism” and a “further tightening [of] the regime of surveillance on teachers” (p. 23) which could lead to performance pay for teachers and a voucher system for education (p. 48). It would seem that for Openshaw and the PPTA if projects have Māori and Pasifika involvement they are to be opposed.

Openshaw (2007) describes the writers of Te Kōtahitanga as elite “neo-tribal” Māori (p.23) who he says are ‘contemptuous’ in their approach to deficit explanations of Māori school achievement (p. 10 & 11). He says that he finds their work “irksome” (p. 8), “very strange” (p. 14), and that it involves a “culturalism” that has aspects of “fascism” (p. 25; note 4).

Openshaw references his comments on a Māori elite and on culturalism to researcher Elizabeth Rata (for example, Rata & Openshaw, 2006; Rata, 2006) who is listed as a member of the advisory body (5) to the Openshaw (2007) report (p. v). Rata (2008) says that individual Māori share more in common with other social groups than with the claimed common interests of what she refers to as a “primordial” Māori ethnic group whose “various social practices” include “body-snatching” at funerals (p. 3).

Rata also claims that the “wheelers and dealers” of the neo-tribal elite have more in common with their pakeha business world equivalents than with “those Māori” who, quoting Chapple, (2000 p.115), she says have “low literacy, poor education ... benefit dependence, sole parenthood ... drug and alcohol abuse, physical violence and illegal cash cropping” (Rata, 2008, p.3). This group, says Rata, should be considered as part of a low socio-economic sub-cultural group rather than ethnic group (Rata, 2008, p.3). Rata presents no data to support this claim (p.6). In contrast, the Ministry of Health and University of Otago (2006) data show Māori and non-Māori to have different experiences of similar socio-economic positions (p. xii).

According to Rata (2008) the basis of a democratic society is the individual (p. 4). Rata claims that to protect nationhood and “a common national identity” (Rata, 2006, p. 5) requires that we do not give political recognition to ethnic groups (although ethnic identity can be adopted as a “private” choice – Rata 2006, p.3) and must reject “tino rangatiratanga projects, such as the Kaupapa Maori system in education” because they involve a “subversive process” that intends to replace “New Zealand’s liberal democracy ...[with] an undemocratic ethno-nationalism ...” (Rata, 2007, p. 1). Rata (2006) says that such a process, led by “well educated elites” has resulted in genocide, for example in Rwanda and in Cambodia under Pol Pot (pp. 5-6). This seems meant to suggest that educated Māori represent a threat of violence in New Zealand.

Researcher Alison Jones (2006) has noted that although Elizabeth Rata is Pākehā she is often assumed to be Māori and has been referred to as “the Maori Don Brash” in the New Zealand Herald newspaper (p. 1). Given her support for the Brash comment on ‘blood’ (Rata, 2006, p.2) and for Brash’s individualistic notion of ‘nationhood’ (Rata, 2007) such a label may not be surprising. Also, just as Brash’s statements on Māori have been seen as racist (Editorial, 2004, p.12) so to has this charge been directed at Rata’s work (Pihama, 2004). Whatever the case in this regard, no doubt those who see Māori as comprising a self serving ‘elite’ along with benefit dependent growers of illegal crops who engage in ‘body-snatching’ at funerals (Rata, 2008, p.3) – and those who agree with Rata (2007, p. 5) that Mason Durie’s ideas on citizenship are “nonsensical” - will value her work and its prominence in Openshaw’s (2007) report together with the PPTA’s endorsement of that.

Openshaw (2007) presents a strongly negative account of Māori culture and of the motivations and aspirations of Te Kōtahitanga. The support of the PPTA for these ideas seems likely to encourage a context in which Māori views are not well received. Openshaw (2007, pp. 24-30) sees the political recognition of a Māori ethnic group as problematic, while for Rata (2008) such recognition is a threat to democratic processes. These ideas are consistent with the position taken by Brash (2004) in his Orewa speech in which he denied the “constitutional status of Maori...as secured by the Treaty of Waitangi” (Barber, 2006, p.13). If such ideas were acted on then removing political recognition would further reduce Māori access to resources and power. The Ministry of Health and University of Otago (2006) research has shown that Māori at present have relatively limited access to resources and power and that this creates a ‘racialised social order’ with negative effects on Māori health and wellbeing. The idea that Māori should have less political recognition seems likely to worsen that clearly harmful context.