

Story: Māori education – mātauranga

## Page 4. Māori church boarding schools

### Network of schools

A network of church-run boarding schools provided the main post-primary education option for Māori until the 1940s. The oldest of the church-run boarding schools started as mission schools, including St Stephen's School, Auckland (Anglican, founded in 1844), Wesley College, Auckland (Methodist, 1844) and Te Aute College, Hawke's Bay (Anglican, 1854). Hukarere Maori Girls' School, Napier (Anglican, 1875) and Queen Victoria School, Auckland (Anglican, 1901) were opened as sister schools to Te Aute and St Stephen's.

Other Māori church boarding schools included:

- Waerenga-a-Hika College, Poverty Bay (Anglican, 1856)
- St Joseph's Maori Girls' School, Napier (Catholic, 1867)
- Hikurangi College, Clareville, Wairarapa (Anglican, 1903)
- Turakina Maori Girls' College, Marton (Presbyterian, 1905)
- Otaki Maori College (Anglican, 1908)
- Te Waipounamu Maori Girls' College, Christchurch (Anglican, 1909)
- Hato Petera College, Auckland (Catholic, 1928)
- Hato Paora College, Feilding (Catholic, 1948).

### Cooking and cleaning

Not only **Pākehā** government officials advocated manual instruction in the church boarding schools. In 1903, after a small matriculation class (which was preparing its students for university) had been started at Hukarere Maori Girls' College, Māui Pōmare, who had been a beneficiary of the academic focus of Te Aute,

### The government scholarship scheme

From the 1880s to the 1920s the government provided limited assistance to the more able Māori students from the native schools to attend the church boarding schools. Support was in the form of a scholarship, tenable for two years. The two-year limit was indicative of the official view that generally Māori were more suited to manual occupations, and in particular to agriculture. As most native schools offered standards 1–4 (equivalent to years 3–6), the two further years were technically still at primary level (years 7–8, or intermediate level).

### Academic versus manual instruction

criticised the church schools for becoming too academic: ‘Educate the mothers to recognize the efficacy of the bathtub, cleanly warm clothes, plain and wholesome food, and you will regenerate the Maori quicker than by teaching the youths and maidens embroidery, Latin, and Euclid.’<sup>1</sup>

Te Aute College, under the leadership of John Thornton, led the way in providing an academic secondary education for Māori students. Under Thornton’s leadership Te Aute produced the first group of Māori university graduates from the 1890s, including Āpirana Ngata, Te Rangihīroa (Peter Buck), Māui Pōmare and Tūtere Wī Repa. The Manual and Technical Instruction Act 1900 further encouraged officials to advocate for increased manual and technical training in the church schools, stipulating that government scholarship holders take practical and agricultural courses. Māori parents, however, could not see the point of sending their children away to school to

learn how to be farm labourers.

## Agricultural education

In 1906 a royal commission investigated Te Aute, recommending that it add agricultural courses and scale back its academic stream. This was strongly opposed by headmaster Thornton. While Te Aute did introduce an agricultural stream, it was never particularly popular. However, other schools embraced agricultural education. The Maori Agricultural College was established at Hastings (Mormon, 1912), and both Wesley College (1922) and St Stephen’s (1931) moved to rural sites south of Auckland in order to provide practical farm education. In the 1920s continuation scholarships, which allowed a third year of study, were introduced.

## Troubled times – the 1930s and later

In the 1930s the church schools were beset by tough economic times and other misfortunes. Both the Maori Agricultural College and Te Aute suffered major damage in the Hawke’s Bay earthquake of 1931, closing the agricultural college permanently. Fires caused Hikurangi (1932) and Waerenga-a-Hika (1937) colleges to close, and Otaki Maori College was forced to close for financial reasons in 1938.

The introduction of School Certificate (a national exam) to the native district high schools in 1945 affected enrolments at Te Aute and Hukarere, and urbanisation saw Māori increasingly attending their local state secondary school. Hukarere was forced to close between 1969 and 1992, though the hostel remained open and boarders attended classes at Napier Girls’ High. Similarly, Te Waipounamu Maori Girls’ College had become a hostel only by the early 1980s and closed altogether in 1990. The remaining church schools integrated into the state system in the 1970s and 1980s, but declining rolls and other problems forced the closure of St Stephen’s (2000) and Queen Victoria (2001).

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### Footnotes:

1. Quoted in J. M. Barrington and T. H. Beaglehole, *Maori schools in a changing society: an historical review*. Wellington: New Zealand Council for Educational Research, 1974, pp. 172–173.
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