

New Zealand

New Zealand is an island nation located in the South Pacific, with its nearest neighbor, Australia, more than 1,000 miles to the northwest. New Zealand is a country about the same size as the state of Colorado. It is bounded on its western side by the Tasman Sea (which separates it from Australia) and by the Pacific Ocean on all other sides. The country's main landmass is comprised of North Island and South Island, but it also includes nearby Stewart Island, Snares Island, the Antipodes Islands, the Auckland Islands, the Bounty Islands, Campbell Island, the Chatham Islands, and the Kermadec Islands. In July 2009, New Zealand had an estimated population of 4,213,418, the ethnic origins of which were European (69.8 percent), Māori (7.9 percent), Asian (5.7 percent), Pacific Islander (4.4 percent), other (0.5 percent), mixed (7.8 percent), and unspecified (3.8 percent).¹

People of New Zealand

New Zealand's population is currently composed of four large groupings. Those of European background comprise the majority of the population, although it is projected that their percentage will decrease. The Māori population is likely to remain the largest minority through 2021, but its percentage is not projected to increase as significantly as that of the Asian and Pacific Islander groups. All minority percentages are expected to increase, with the fastest-growing minority being the Asians.²

Of Polynesian origin, the Māori people were the sole inhabitants of New Zealand before the arrival of Europeans. An influential European presence came with the British explorer Captain James Cook, who with a group of scientists spent six months studying the islands in 1769 and again for a more extended period beginning in 1772. Before the arrival of Europeans, the Māori knew of no other people than themselves.³

Although the Māori had no written language, they did have places of oral instruction called *whare wananga*. Taught by tribal leaders called *tohunga*, these schools trained selected boys for leadership positions by instructing them in Māori oral traditions, including tribal history, genealogy, lore, songs, and chants. As Anglo-European immigration increased and British sovereignty was established by the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840, a British style of education became dominant. For a considerable period of time, Māori cultural ideals and educational traditions experienced discriminatory treatment.⁴

In addition, Asian immigrants (primarily Chinese and Indian) and Pacific island immigrants from Samoa, Tonga, the Cook Islands, and other South Pacific

islands have also experienced cultural and educational disadvantages. In particular, Pacific Islanders (or Pasifika for short) have encountered educational disadvantages similar to those of the Māori.⁵ In recent times, however, New Zealand has undertaken concerted efforts to provide greater equal educational opportunity to all of its people.

New Zealand schools

Today, most New Zealand students attend public or “state” schools. Education is compulsory to age 16, and it is organized as follows: Primary school begins at age five and extends through Year 6 (or sixth grade in American terms); intermediate school includes Year 7 and Year 8; and secondary school extends from Year 9 to Year 13. Area or composite schools are found in rural districts and may combine primary, intermediate, and secondary schools at one site.⁶

In 1989, a Labour Party government initiated a major school reform movement that abolished the centralized national Department of Education and replaced it with a smaller Ministry of Education. Perhaps the most ambitious part of the reform was that each primary and secondary state school was turned over to locally elected boards of trustees with strong parental control. Two years later, a new government under the National Party added a market-driven school choice plan in which old attendance zones were abolished in favor of parents choosing which schools their children attended. One assessment indicates that the new independence was welcomed by many educators and parents because it allowed each school to assume budgetary, management, and hiring responsibilities and required more extensive local record keeping, but it also presented the need for principals and teachers to raise funds and market their schools. The school choice plan brought benefits to families in positions to take advantage of it, but it did little for poor families unable to afford the transportation costs and other expenses that went along with school choice. School choice also encouraged a new sorting of schools along ethnic, racial, and socioeconomic lines. Popular schools soon had more applicants than available openings, attracting academically motivated students from families of higher socioeconomic status (mostly people of European origin), while poorer schools soon became undersubscribed, serving mostly students with greater needs.⁷

Race and education in New Zealand

New Zealanders do not typically use the term *race*; instead, they prefer terminology that reflects cultural or ethnic differences. The first experiences of British education by the Māori came in the early nineteenth century when the Māori

culture was still strong, and they could benefit from the educational experience without having to give up Māori cultural preferences. By the late nineteenth century, however, the Māori were a minority unable to effectively assert their cultural ideals in schools that were based on an assumed superiority of Anglo-European cultural ideals. By the early twentieth century, the Māori language was forbidden even in Māori schools, and Māori cultural influence was further reduced under educational policies that attempted to assimilate them into the dominant Anglo-European worldview. In effect, the Māori became “racialized” in the sense that their culture was deemed inferior by New Zealand officialdom.⁸

By the 1970s, the Māori were demanding greater recognition of their culture and language in the schools. One result was that, in 1974, Māori studies became compulsory in the teachers colleges, and in-service courses were put in place for practicing teachers, principals, and school inspectors. By the 1980s, a movement called *Taha Māori* (or “Māori perspective”) brought greater acknowledgement of the Māori language and culture to the primary and secondary schools, including the establishment of state schools called *kura kaupapa Māori* (Māori immersion primary schools) and *kura tuarua* (Māori immersion secondary schools), as well as postsecondary institutions called *whare wanangas* (Māori houses of higher learning, or tertiary institutions). The trend was away from multiculturalism and toward a biculturalism that emphasized both Māori and Anglo-European forms of education. By the mid 1990s, the primary, secondary, and tertiary schools devoted to immersion in Māori culture and language seemed to be permanent fixtures in the New Zealand educational landscape.⁹

New Zealand education today

According to New Zealand’s Ministry of Education, students in few other countries perform as well in reading, math, and science as New Zealand students do. At the same time, a gap remains between the educational achievement and attainment of European/Pakeha students and their Māori and Pasifika peers. During 2005, for example, the majority of students in alternative (or remedial) education were young, male, and Māori. European/Pakeha and Asian/other students were on average about a year ahead of their Māori and Pasifika peers.¹⁰

In a continuing effort to deal with these inequities, the New Zealand Ministry of Education adopted an educational strategy to enable the Māori to live as Māori, participate as citizens of the world, and achieve better health and a higher standard of living. The ministry also sought to raise the quality of English language instruction, support the growth of kaupapa Māori education, and support greater involvement and authority in education by Māori citizens (such as greater

numbers serving on local school boards). Concerning higher (or tertiary education), the New Zealand government committed to increasing Māori participation in wananga and polytechnic education, and it sought to increase participation in the higher levels of tertiary education, including research-based post graduate studies.¹¹

A somewhat similar approach was also taken with Pasifika education. The ministry's stated goals were to increase their participation in early childhood education, improve achievement in literacy and numeracy, raise attainment levels of secondary school qualifications, and provide better teaching effectiveness for all students of Pacific island origins. Regarding tertiary education, the ministry's goals included increasing Pasifika participation, retention, and qualification in industry training, apprenticeships, and degree attainment.¹²

Although New Zealand continues to have some persisting educational inequalities, it appears that serious reform efforts have been taken to address those problems. New Zealand is a small country, but it has sometimes served as a laboratory for other, larger industrialized countries (in 1893, for example, it became the first nation to extend the right to vote to women).¹³ Perhaps its contemporary efforts to provide more equitable cultural and educational opportunities for its minorities will prove, once again, to serve as an important example from which other nations might learn.

Notes

- 1 Central Intelligence Agency, "New Zealand," *The World Fact Book*, at <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/nz.html> (accessed on April 14, 2010).
- 2 "National Ethnic Population Projections, 2006 (base)-2026 update," at http://www.stats.govt.nz/browse_for_stats/population/estimates_and_projections/nationalethnicpopulationprojections_hotp2006-26.aspx (accessed on April 23, 2010).
- 3 Anne Salmond, *Between Worlds: Early Exchanges between Māori and Europeans, 1773–1815* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997), 17–27; and Dora Alves, *The Māori and the Crown: An Indigenous People's Struggle for Self-Determination* (Westport CN: Greenwood Press, 1999), 3–15.
- 4 Salmond, 31–44ff; and Alves, 9–10. Also see David G. Pearson and David C. Thorns, *Eclipse of Equality: Social Stratification in New Zealand*, Studies in Sociology: 17, Ronald Wild, ed. (Boston: Allen and Unwin, 1983), 197–204.
- 5 Mary Donn and Ruth Schick, *Promoting Positive Race Relations in New Zealand Schools: Me Mahi Tahī Tātou* (Wellington, NZ: Research Section, Ministry of Education, 1995), 45–46.
- 6 Ministry of Education, "Schooling in New Zealand," at <http://www.schoolzones.co.nz/enrolment-zones/HelpPage.aspx> (accessed on April 23, 2010). More detailed information on New Zealand schools can be found in *Handbook of Contractual Obligations and Undertakings—Schools*, at <http://www.ero.govt.nz/ero/publishing.nsf/Content/Handbooks+-+Schools> (accessed on April 23, 2010).
- 7 Edward B. Fiske and Helen F. Ladd, *When Schools Compete: A Cautionary Tale* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2000), 3–11; and, by the same authors, "A Level Playing Field? What We Can Learn from the New Zealand School Reform," *American Educator*, vol. 24, no. 3: 2 (Fall 2000), at

- http://archive.aft.org/pubs-reports/american_educator/fall2000/LevelFall2000.pdf (accessed on April 22, 2010).
- 8 Donn and Schick, 20–21, 35–36.
 - 9 Donn and Schick, 41–44; and Graham Higangaroa Smith, “Keynote Address to the Alaskan Federation of Natives (AFN) Convention, Anchorage, Alaska, October 2003, at <http://www.ankn.uaf.edu/Curriculum/Articles/GrahamSmith/> (accessed on April 22, 2010). Smith is a professor at the University of Auckland, New Zealand, and his paper also contains a glossary of Māori terms that may help readers understand New Zealand usages in publications and national school reports. In addition, for a critical but sympathetic treatment of the Māori resurgence in the 1970s and their recent history, see James Belich, *Paradise Reforged: A History of the New Zealanders from the 1880s to the Year 2000* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 2001), 466–487.
 - 10 *Indicators Live: Education at a Glance 2009, Results for New Zealand*, at <http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/schooling/56219/5> (accessed on April 23, 2010); Minister of Education, *New Zealand Schools (Ngā Kura o Aotearoa) 08: A Report on the Compulsory Schools Sector in New Zealand 2008*, at http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/_data/assets/pdf_file/0020/6923/Schools_Sector_Report_2005.pdf (accessed on April 23, 2010).
 - 11 Māori Education Strategy, 2008–2012, at <http://www.minedu.govt.nz/theMinistry/PolicyAnd-Strategy/KaHikitia.aspx>; *Ka Hikitia—Managing for Success, Māori Education Strategy*, Part One, at <http://www.minedu.govt.nz/~media/MinEdu/Files/TheMinistry/KaHikitia/English/KaHikitia-2009PartOne.pdf>; and *Ka Hikitia—Managing for Success, Māori Education Strategy*, Part Two, at <http://www.minedu.govt.nz/~media/MinEdu/Files/TheMinistry/KaHikitia/English/KaHikitia-2009PartTwo.pdf> (all accessed on April 22, 2010).
 - 12 Ministry of Education, “Pasifika Education Plan 2009–2012,” at <http://www.minedu.govt.nz/NZEducation/EducationPolicies/PasifikaEducation/PasifikaEducationPlan.aspx> (accessed on April 24, 2010).
 - 13 Fiske and Ladd, 12–13.