

Abstract

'Language Policies Across the Curriculum' (LPAC's) have gained increasing prominence in recent times as curriculum innovations which can be implemented at the school level. The benefits attributed to LPAC's most often concern the possibilities they engender for empowering minority students through the recognition and inclusion of minority languages within the curriculum. However, as with many previously heralded innovations, there is a noticeable discrepancy between the enthusiastic endorsement of LPAC's in the literature and their successful implementation in schools. Many schools are ambivalent about LPAC's and/or implement them to little effect.

It is argued here that if this is to change, schools need to recognise the organisational, pedagogical and relational demands that the development of an LPAC at school-level entails. These demands are not insignificant but Richmond Road School in Auckland, New Zealand will be discussed as an example of what can be achieved when these considerations are taken into account.

Stephen A. May Politicising the language curriculum: A road paved (simply) with good intentions?

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Introduction

There has been increasing criticism, in recent years, of the preoccupation in modern linguistics with analysing language in isolation from the social conditions in which it is used.

As Bourdieu comments, somewhat ironically, of this process:

bracketing out the social ... allows language or any other symbolic object to be treated

like an end in itself, [this] contributed considerably to the success of structural linguistics, for it endowed the 'pure' exercises that characterize a purely internal and formal analysis with the charm of a game devoid of consequences. (1991: 34)

In confining the notion of linguistic competence to the coding and decoding of grammatically well-formed utterances, the social and political conditions which legitimate language use and reproduce it in its dominant forms are simply ignored (Thompson, 1984). This has much to do with the distinction drawn in linguistics between the internal form of the language and its outworking in speech as seen in Saussure's 'langue' and 'parole', and Chomsky's 'competence' and 'performance'. While there are important differences between these two accounts (Chomsky's model is more dynamic in its attempt to incorporate the generative capacities of competent speakers), both approaches rest on the notion that language can be constituted as an autonomous and homogenous object, amenable to linguistic study (Thompson, 1991). Developments in discourse analysis and the ethnomethodology of conversation have come some way to redressing this. Hymes' (1972) notion of 'communicative competence' has highlighted the need to address the social competencies required by speakers for language 'in use' within their speech communities, and an increasing range of studies are examining the differences between social and cultural groups at the level of discourse strategies employed in conversation, particularly in relation to education and the educational performance of minority groups (see, for example, Gumperz, 1982; Labov, 1972; Philips, 1972; Scollon & Scollon, 1981). These latter studies have explored the cultural boundaries of discourses and the miscommunication which occurs when these boundaries are not recognised, and go on to suggest that in such miscommunication lies at least some explanation for the poor performance of minority children within the educational process, which assumes the discourse practices of the dominant group to be universal.

However, while these developments have recognised the heterogeneity of speech communities and the language practices associated with them, there is still much to be done

in relating these practices to the processes of domination and legitimation which underpin them. It is one thing, after all, to recognise and describe differences in discourse strategies as they affect the educational performance of minority groups, it is quite another to unmask the reproductive processes which underlie these and which lead the school to prefer certain discourses (those of the dominant group) over others. As Fairclough comments, along these lines:

although 'locally' explanatory descriptive work may seek to identify at least local determinants of features of particular discourses, descriptive work generally has been little concerned with the effects of discourse. And it has certainly not concerned itself with effects which go beyond the immediate situation. (1985: 753; emphasis in original)

This situation has changed somewhat in more recent times with the development of a critical conception of discourse analysis, most notably 'critical language awareness' advocated by proponents like Fairclough (1989; see also Clark et al, 1990; 1991), and the burgeoning 'language policy across the curriculum' (LPAC) movement in schools. Both approaches attempt, at least in theory, to situate discourse practices within a broader framework of social and cultural relations and to alert both pupils and teachers to the oppressive conventions of language use (Corson, 1990a). The unproblematic acceptance of school language and discourse as 'natural' rather than as socially determined is also highlighted in these approaches, as is its role in supposedly determining the academic potential of pupils. Unmasking the inherently political nature of the language curriculum in this way is seen as the most effective means of contesting the marginalisation of minority students within education.

What I wish to pursue in this paper is the effectiveness, scope and demands of one of these emerging language policies; the concept of a 'Language Policy Across the

Curriculum'. The implementation of these policies at school level has generated considerable interest and enthusiasm in the literature for the potential benefits which might accrue to minority children (see, for example, Corson, 1990a; Marland, 1977; Maybin, 1985; McPherson & Corson, 1989). These theorists have argued that inclusive language policies which recognise and incorporate minority languages within the curriculum are the key to empowering minority children whose languages and cultures have been marginalised, until now, in the educational process.

Such a conception brings us a long way from earlier linguistic preoccupations which avoided the social (and cultural) legitimation of language within education, but having said that, putting a politicised approach to language use into practice in schools, is easier said than done. The implementation of LPAC's at school level is beset with difficulties and the reasons for this most often centre on: a lack of agreement in schools over the aims and scope of an LPAC; an inability to involve all teachers in the development of an LPAC, thus ensuring their support for the policy; and an inability to change school structures to match the inclusive intentions with which LPAC's have been largely associated. What results, as has been the case with many other educational innovations, is an enthusiastic endorsement in the literature and an ambivalent and desultory pattern of implementation among practitioners. This is well illustrated by Corson's observation that such policies

are viewed by a growing number of educationists as an integral and necessary part of the administrative and curriculum practices of modern schools, yet relatively few schools anywhere have seriously tackled the problem of introducing them. (1990a: 1)

For all its good intentions, achieving a school-based language policy which is inclusive and empowering of minority children, is no easy task.

If LPAC's are to avoid being one more of many failed educational innovations, the ambiguities surrounding their structure and purposes and the resulting problems which schools face in their practical implementation need to be addressed and clarified. In this regard, it is necessary to recognise the difficulties which inhere in any attempt to establish school-based curriculum development (see Skilbeck, 1984; Stenhouse, 1975). As Skilbeck observes, if the school is to establish and implement school-based curriculum development (such as an LPAC) it needs to be challenged:

to take bolder initiatives: to equip itself as a centre of educational development; to restructure; to build itself into the educational system, not stand apart; and to achieve and demonstrate a practical capability for directing and organizing curriculum change. (1984: 207)

Skilbeck goes on to suggest that

[i]n taking these actions, it is less the independence and self-reliance of the school that need to be fostered than its readiness and ability, as an organization and a community, to think and act relationally. (ibid: 278)

To explicate how schools might begin 'to think and act relationally' about an LPAC, as an example of school-based curriculum development, it is useful to view its components as divisible into four broad areas:

1. The identification of the specific language needs of the school.
2. The process of consultation and decision-making within the school and between the school and its local community.
3. The support of a national policy which allows schools the autonomy to undergo 1. and 2. and to recommend and implement the changes that emerge from them.
4. The changes in the structures of the school which result.

Unless all of these components are present the effective development of an LPAC, it is argued, will not occur. The following discussion focuses on each of these aspects in turn.

Richmond Road School in Auckland, New Zealand will be discussed as an

example of a school which has taken cognisance of these implications and is successfully outworking them in practice. Richmond Road is a school which demonstrates in its approach to language policy all of the characteristics of school-based innovation which Skilbeck outlines and, in particular, demonstrates a capacity 'to think and act relationally' which is seldom seen to such an extent elsewhere. In so doing, it is outworking an LPAC which is making a difference for minority children, not only in principle but also in practice.

1. Identifying Language Needs

An LPAC should be a curriculum policy which arises out of the language needs of the school. It should be cross-curricular in its concerns, breaking down traditional subject boundaries, and should involve (and continue to involve) the whole school community in its development and implementation. Given this, the aim of an LPAC will be to find and agree on the solutions necessary for addressing the language needs of the school. The identification of these issues, in practical terms, will also require the school to adopt a consultative and collaborative approach to decision-making. Within the school, questions need to be asked of staff concerning their attitudes and opinions about language and its place in the curriculum. This can be supported by the documentation and dissemination of current teacher practices which highlight how language is integrated (or not integrated) into the curriculum by individual teachers. If teachers are unsure about the intentions of an LPAC, or antagonistic to it, the consultative process should reveal this and should hopefully form

the basis for further discussion on points of concern. Recognising the wider context in which the school is situated should also result in a closer working relationship with parents in the community. The establishment of an LPAC, as Maybin (1985) suggests, must be guided by the language expectations that local parents have for their children. A supportive

national educational climate will further aid the development of locally tailored language policies.

With this in mind, Skilbeck's procedure for analysing curriculum problems can be adapted

to outline what questions an LPAC might begin by asking:

Within the School.

1. What is the existing language curriculum?
2. What is the students' experience of this?
3. What is the language context of the school and the language needs of the students.

Are student language needs being met?

4. What are the strengths and capabilities of the staff?
5. What are the internal resources available to implement changes to the language curriculum?

The Wider Environment.

6. How can the school language policy more accurately reflect the nature of the community it serves?
7. How should the school respond in its language policy to educational developments at a national level?
8. What outside resources and support can the school draw on?
9. What changes, proposals and developments in curriculum practice and ideas can the school use in developing and implementing an LPAC?

(Adapted from Skilbeck, 1984: 234).

2. The Democratisation of Schooling

The identification of the language needs of the school is, in itself, no easy task although the inquiry process may serve the useful purpose of exposing the language hierarchies in operation within the school (Thompson, 1984). Once these issues are identified an LPAC can set out what the school intends to do about these areas of concern, provide staff with direction within a discretionary and flexible framework, and provide a statement of action

that includes provision for follow up, monitoring and revision in the light of changing circumstances. The term 'whole-school policy' (Marland, 1977) describes these intentions well. Marland has argued that whole-school policies would analyse the skills and knowledge required in a particular curriculum field, endeavour to establish how these

can best be acquired and developed, and plan contexts and activities to provide the best opportunities for practice and use. This would be articulated in a policy document and would be carried out by teachers 'in the activity context when teaching occurs at the precise point of need, according to the policy, and drawing on the shared knowledge.' (1977: 12)

It is clear within this context that not all LPAC's presently operating in schools can be called whole-school policies. The processes attendant on such policies have also, consequently, not been followed (or have only been followed in part) and it is for this reason that many schools have encountered difficulties in their implementation. It is one thing, after all, to identify language diversity, quite another to attempt to enact that diversity within the curriculum. If the historical dominance of majority language usage in schools (and the power relations implicit in this) are to be undermined in any significant way an LPAC will also need to have a considerable impact on both the processes of teaching and on school organisation. This can best be achieved by the development of a model for collaborative decision-making within the school.

Effective school-based curriculum development requires the participation of teachers in the significant curriculum issues that schools face. Teachers, however, have not always been regarded as essential to the curriculum development process and it has only been recently, in fact, that schooling has begun to move away from a centralised approach to school curricular and school policy decision-making. This centralised approach has, for example, dominated the New Zealand State system for most of its history (McGee, 1980). Bennis et al (1976) have described this approach as 'top down' curriculum development where teachers are simply regarded as passive 'receivers' of the curriculum wisdom handed down by policy developers. Top-down strategies where power and influence are seen to rest with the developer assume that initiatives for change proposed 'outside' schools should be obediently followed by those 'inside' schools and exclude teachers (as well as parents

and students)

from the dialogue and debate about the formulation of educational reform in general (Smyth, 1989), and curriculum reform in particular. The role of the teacher as a free and responsible

professional person cannot be fulfilled when direct participation in significant aspects of curriculum policy including its planning, designing and evaluating, is denied them in this way (Skilbeck, 1984). It has led many teachers to be dismissive of theoretical concerns and indifferent, and even hostile to, outside pressure for engaging in curriculum development.

As Hodson observes of the New Zealand context:

imposed curriculum change is frequently unsuccessful because it is inappropriate to local needs, unappreciative of local resource constraints, and frequently misinterpreted or even actively resisted because of unshared values and expectations. (1986: 31)

This position is gradually changing with the recognition that the local knowledge that teachers bring to curriculum decision-making is a necessary part of schools being able to adapt curricula to local circumstances. The transition, however, has not been an easy one because a history of accepting direction and control in decision-making in important curriculum areas from outside educational agencies sees schools still coming to terms with themselves as autonomous institutions (Corson, 1990a). Developments in action research do offer, though, a direction which schools can follow. The action research paradigm encourages teachers to become 'internal-researchers' or 'co-investigators' in curriculum research (see Bonser & Grundy, 1988; Keiny, 1985; Kyle and McCutcheon, 1984; Roby, 1985; Rudduck, 1985; Schon, 1983) and also argues for the development of 'critically informed action' (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988). Critically informed action requires that those involved in curriculum decision-making become experts in the particular field of concern and also asks them to take account of any theoretical knowledge (beyond that normally associated with

everyday professional knowledge) that might be of use to them. Once this is achieved participants can plan action together, act and observe individually and collectively, and reflect together (Carr & Kemmis, 1983; Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988). They then should be able to reformulate more critically informed plans because this cyclical approach allows for flexibility and responsiveness in dealing with continuing emergent concerns, needs and developments. Policy guidelines that are developed can be continually evaluated against the real world of the school and adjusted accordingly.

The organisational structure of the school as administered by the school management will also have a large influence in establishing a climate of teacher decision-making autonomy. The move towards greater participation in policy decision-making requires a redefinition in schools of authority relationships because school organisations which are hierarchical and

conservative in respect of decision-making can easily inhibit or frustrate curriculum and policy innovation (Skilbeck, 1984). Hierarchical structures impede attempts to work collaboratively on curriculum policy development whereas a collaborative policy-making approach, if successfully implemented, allows for the effective democratic participation of all those staff who want to be involved. As Scrimshaw (1975) has suggested, the characteristics of a democratic school should include the following:

1. Any internal policy decisions should be made by all those persons directly affected by it, or their representatives.
2. Decisions are taken only after full and free discussion of the issues involved.
3. All members of the school community must accept the obligation to help carry out and enforce these decisions. (1975: 63)

What distinguishes the democratic school, he argues, is not so much the nature of the policy it controls as much as the way it divides decisions about that policy among the various groups constituting the school community. Involving staff in the

construction of policies can diminish lack of cooperation, or conflict, because it encourages those involved to give the policy some measure of loyalty and support (Corson, 1990a). Teachers' morale is improved when they can participate in decisions about school and classroom policy and collaborative procedures have the potential for offering new dimensions to teacher professionalism (Kyle and McCutcheon, 1984).

There are, of course, demands in such an approach. The time and commitment that a collaborative enterprise entails, for example, place additional demands on staff but, as Goodhand (1986) argues, these constraints can be ameliorated if the task of collecting information is shared widely and if there is a continuous process of information collection and dissemination. The effectiveness of this collaborative approach in policy decision-making at school level and the theoretical literacy that it encourages in teachers as a result of their direct involvement in this process will be further outlined in the discussion on Richmond Road.

The demands may be great but the possibility of successful implementation within schools of policies pursued in this way is high because policy is more likely to be supported when staff have been involved in the decision-making process and understand fully the reasons for a particular decision (Goodhand, 1986). As Skilbeck candidly suggests, the development

process should include '[all] those who have a right to be there, those who can contribute and those whose absence could create difficulties.' (1984: 243) This recognition also highlights the need to extend Scrimshaw's contention for the involvement of those directly affected by a particular policy decision to include those who, while not directly affected, nevertheless have legitimate claims to participation in curriculum policy decisions. The involvement of the wider school community (including, obviously, parents) falls within this latter category and the representation of their interests within the school

is an important issue which needs to be addressed if, as Corson suggests, schools that adopt a collaborative approach to decision-making are to move towards more 'closely negotiated policies designed to suit the needs of the school, its clients, and its social context.' (1990a: 2)

3. National Policy and the Formalisation of Community Involvement

The specific collaboration required in the development of an LPAC can best be achieved through the democratisation of schools. This clearly highlights the role of the teacher in curriculum decision-making. Skilbeck recognises this crucial involvement of teachers but also places it within a wider context when he suggests that 'school policies, including curriculum policies, embody and express the preferences and decisions of community groups, and of governments both local and national.' (1984: 10)

Schools need to reduce the social distance between themselves and the communities they serve by involving parents in school policy making, particularly in the discussion of school language policy. Corson suggests that 'schools collaboratively managed [in this way] and with agreed and working policies are more likely to be places of staff and community commitment.' (1990a: 59). Maybin (1985) also observes that schools which have made a firm commitment to work more closely with parents have found an enormous range of activities is possible in the implementation of an LPAC. Closer community involvement in school decision-making, however, needs to be supported by a national policy which recognises the value of this. A national policy should ideally promote the fostering of links between schools and their local communities generally, and articulate a co-operative language policy that reflects the needs of ethnic and community groups in particular.

Two recent (and conflicting) national policies in New Zealand can be explored in this regard. The Curriculum Review (1987) responded to 31,500 submissions received over a three year

period from individuals and groups (including students, parents, school committees, teacher organisations, Maori and Pacific Island groups and community education organisations) concerning the aims, purposes and direction of New Zealand education. It clearly aimed to site curriculum development at the level of local communities and was regarded as an ambitious attempt to manage large-scale educational change by incorporating small-scale approaches appropriate to local conditions (Corson, 1988). There was thus a strong emphasis in the review on school and community based planning of the curriculum within guidelines approved by the state (Codd 1990).

The Curriculum Review aimed to formalise community involvement in school curriculum decision-making but it also, in so doing, was concerned to articulate a whole-school approach to language policy which reflected the specific concerns of the ethnic and community groups with which it had consulted. These concerns were reiterated by the Department of Education towards the end of 1988 when it published a draft National Curriculum Statement for New Zealand Schools in response to the review. This included a whole-school language policy which recognised the close relationship between the languages that students use, their identity, and their culture. Although it required students to be fluent in English as the common language of communication in New Zealand, it also recognised Maori as the language of the tangata whenua. Literally, 'the people of this land', i.e. the Maori as the indigenous people of New Zealand. and a necessary and natural part of the language curriculum in schools, and argued for the recognition and affirmation of the home languages of other ethnic groups in the curriculum (Department of Education, 1988; see also Benton, 1990; Hawley, 1987).

The Curriculum Review argued for a national framework which allowed for the development of cooperative and inclusive language policies at school level. School communities were encouraged to develop their own language policies aimed at meeting local needs but based on equity principles outlined in a national policy. This kind of

educational climate is crucial
to the development and spread of LPAC's.

The intentions of the review, however, have been overtaken by the more recent reforms in educational administration outlined in *Tomorrow's Schools* (1988). The principle of partnership

between community, parents and teachers is also strongly upheld in the rhetoric of this document and may appear, as such, to simply be an extension of the review's concerns to foster community involvement and collaborative decision-making at the local level in schools. However, the ostensible devolution of the control of schools to the local community which *Tomorrow's Schools* has advocated, including the recognition of Maori, and of other ethnic groups, may simply serve to mask the actual consolidation of centralised control over the curriculum (see Codd, 1989; 1990; Codd et al, 1990).

The centralist stance of the new reforms is seen in the control of the curriculum which is now exercised over schools at the local level by the two newly created educational agencies (the Ministry of Education and the Educational Review Office), through the binding nature of the institutional charter. In the context of curriculum development, the effect of institutional charters is hard to assess as yet but as Codd et al. point out 'the scope for autonomous prescription [for the development of curriculum] within charters is limited.' (1990: 18) The politicisation of accountability, which has accompanied the debate on these reforms, is also likely to discourage rather than encourage curriculum innovations in schools because teachers are more precariously situated in the new regime, and because the increased administrative and financial burden that schools will have to carry may draw resources and enthusiasm away from curriculum issues. With regard to the latter, as schools confront what may become an increasingly competitive educational environment, curriculum issues like an LPAC, which could be regarded as 'peripheral' to academic achievement, may particularly suffer from this redirection of resources and enthusiasm.

In excluding all matters relating to curriculum or the nature of teaching and learning the structure of the new reforms also fails to acknowledge that educational administration has a significant role to play in the creation and control of the curriculum (Codd, 1989). It fosters a conservative and product-oriented curriculum and it indicates that we may already be reverting to the centralised top-down approach to curriculum development that we in New Zealand had only so recently emerged from. Smyth comments that such educational reforms see the progressive bargaining away of real decision-making power to bureaucrats and administrators and 'a growing and enforced separation between those who do the work of teaching, and those who make the significant decisions about that work.' (1989: 57; emphasis in original) The rhetoric of school autonomy does not match the reality of centralised direction

and this does not augur well for robust and innovative curriculum policies, like an LPAC, that are developed democratically within schools to serve local needs. The principles of accountability and efficiency effectively militate against any notions of collectivity in curriculum decision-making. It remains to be seen whether the demise of The Curriculum Review will be a critical factor in stifling further development of LPAC's in New Zealand.

4. Effecting Structural Change: A Case Study of Richmond Road School

While there might be some dispute about the conduciveness of the present national educational climate in New Zealand to the successful development and implementation of school level LPAC's, one primary school in Auckland does provide us with an exemplary model of just what can be achieved. The educational approach of Richmond Road School has been discussed in recent literature (see Cazden, 1989; Corson, 1990b; May, 1991; 1992; in press) but for the purposes of this discussion the characteristics of the school may be briefly outlined again. The following information about Richmond Road has been gathered over the

course of the 1990 school year from interviews and informal discussions with the newly appointed principal, Lionel Pedersen, and with numerous other staff members on the structure and operation of the school.

The Background

Richmond Road School is situated in the inner city area of Auckland, New Zealand, and is a multi-ethnic state primary school. The school had, as of February 1991, 213 pupils and 18.2 staff. Staff include representatives of most cultural groups to which the majority of pupils belong. The school's ethnic composition is predominantly Polynesian and consisted of, as at April 1989, 21% Samoan, 18% Maori, 18% Pakeha, 13% Cook Island, 13% Tongan, 6% Niuean, 3% Indian, 2% Tokelauan, and 5% other (including: Fijian; West Indian; Malaysian; and Japanese).

The school has on site: a Kohanga Reo (a Maori language pre-school immersion unit; literally, 'language nest') that has been operating for five years; an A'oga Fa'a Samoa (Samoan language nest) that started in the first term of 1989; and an Apii Reo Kuki Airani (Cook Island language pre-school) that started in 1990. The school itself offers a Maori bilingual programme, a Samoan bilingual programme, and has begun, in 1991, a Cook Island bilingual programme.

There are also two mainstream English programmes operating, as well as an inner city second language unit for recent arrivals that teaches English through the mother tongue. These are arranged in vertical ropu. The Maori term for 'group(s)' which are based on the model of the family and of the non-graded New Zealand rural school. Each ropu consists of the entire range of pupils from new entrants through to Standard 4 (5-11 years old) and children stay in the same ropu, with the same teachers, right through their primary schooling. Parents, on bringing their children to the school, are given the choice of which ropu they wish their children to go into. This overcomes the significant problem of ambivalence or confusion for parents as to the role of home languages in the school (Corson, 1990a), because parents are able to

clearly identify what the school offers in comparison to others and can then make their choice within the variety of language structures the school itself offers. Teachers have the same pupils for eight years and this means that staff come to know the families particularly well, further fostering community and school interchange over this time.

The vertical/family groupings of children and the various language options they represent have arisen from the vision of the previous principal, Jim Laughton, and his desire to see the school curriculum reflect the ethnic diversity of the community it serves. Jim Laughton came to the school as principal in 1972 and died in September, 1988 (see Cazden, 1989 for a discussion of his influence). The concept of family (or whanau) reflected in the structures of the school is based on the wider relational commitment exhibited between the school and its local community. This relational commitment is further demonstrated by the collective approach to teaching that has been adopted by the staff of the school in conjunction with these structural changes. The largely open plan setting of the school allows for most of the ropu to be taught in 'shared spaces' and a principle of the school is that there always be two teachers in every room. This allows the ropu to be further divided into 'home groups' of 16-20 pupils who are the responsibility of each individual teacher. These small numbers are a reflection of the currently favourable staff to student ratio which is a product historically of generous staffing entitlements for multi-ethnic schools such as this in New Zealand, combined with a rapidly falling roll which inner city schools, like Richmond Road, have more recently faced. Lionel Pedersen, the current principal, argues, however, that the ropu can effectively operate with much greater numbers (as they have done in the past when student numbers were much greater) because of the varied individual and collective teaching arrangements and the variety of resources available at all levels (see below). The shared teaching and the instructional peer relationships characteristic of the ropu may, in fact, actually be inhibited by a lack of numbers because children of different ages and ability in the vertical groups are thinly spread. Home groups are the basic teaching groups and it is the pupils in them that are monitored and reported on to parents by individual teachers.

The team teaching approach that the ropu structure demands requires a highly structured timetable so that pupils can become familiar with daily routines and can gain security from knowing what comes next. Individual ropu have some autonomy in deciding on the composition of their own programmes (although each programme must be approved by the staff as a whole) but once these have been established children in a particular group will know that at certain times each day they do particular activities; for example, shared reading at 11.30 am. Each day may vary in what it offers, depending on the overall balance of the weekly programme, but children are always aware of what any given day holds for them. Hodson (1986) argues that children learn best in this type of secure environment where they can explore, test, share, communicate and develop their ideas in an atmosphere of trusted confidence. He goes on to suggest that teachers will best achieve a revolution in their own curriculum understanding and expertise if they adopt similar

methods. This collectivity is very apparent in the staff of Richmond Road and it also encompasses the management of the school where the principal and the two associate principals work collaboratively as an administrative team. The associate principals rotate this responsibility, spending two weeks in a class which they share with another teacher, and two weeks in the office. This ensures that the administration does not lose touch with what is happening in the classroom and is aimed at preventing potential isolation between those who administer and those who teach in the school. Responsibility is shared and non-hierarchical relationships are emphasised. As the current principal, Pedersen, argues, the aim of the school is to break down pedagogical isolation, by rejecting artificial class grouping by age, and through shared administration and teaching.

This collaboration is closely allied with staff development generally and curriculum development in particular. The collective approach to teaching allows individual teachers to be released every morning to look at curriculum issues, and staff meetings, which are held every Tuesday after school and regularly continue into early evening, focus on cooperation

and staff development. This involvement in curriculum development by staff is also supported through the organisation of staff into curriculum teams which deliberately cut across the ropu teaching teams. These teams develop resources for the curriculum during the course of the year (which must include all ethnic groups represented in the school community), supervise these materials, and provide support for staff working in other areas. The involvement of all staff in this process leads to a significant coherence and consistency across the curriculum and a great deal of mutual support between teachers (Cazden, 1989).

This participation is extended to the school community through an open door policy which encourages full community consultation and involvement in the discussion and development of curriculum policy.

The discussion of curriculum issues within the school is well established, wide-ranging and inclusive. As Marland suggests, a well informed staff (and, one might add, community) 'is able to respond to all issues within the total context of an institution ... and is able to participate in educational debate.' (1977: 6) A knowledge of educational theory is regarded as the essential pre-requisite to achieving this at Richmond Road. Pedersen argues that 'there is no substitute for [wide] teacher knowledge' and suggests that the result of this has been 'that the actual knowledge of the mechanics of teaching [among the staff] is massively high.'

More than this though, it fosters the principle that teachers are learners also. He states that his aim is to develop staff weaknesses, not strengths; if learners can learn, why can't teachers? What is emphasised as a result is process rather than product and this is exactly why, Pedersen suggests, the school has been able to successfully implement a whole-school language policy, because teachers have had a sufficient basis in theory to understand the educational intentions involved and have thus been able to fully implement them. Corson reiterates this point in discussing the difficulties of understanding the concept of 'language

across the curriculum' (LAC):

One answer to this problem for LAC is for teachers to be given greater access to theory, which is professional knowledge about the processes of language and learning, coupled with better information about what children can be expected to do and what they are doing in progressive settings. (1990a: 84-85)

The result at Richmond Road is a critical pedagogy, as described by Smyth which 'move[s] beyond theorising about our practice along the lines of "this works for me" ... to ask questions instead about why we act as we do, and whose interests are served by continuing in this manner.' (1989: 57) It has been a long process to get to this point and has had much to do with the previous principal, Jim Laughton, and his commitment, over a period of sixteen years, to establish this critically informed pedagogy within the school (see Cazden, 1989; May, in press). As Maybin (1985) notes, working through a language policy means talking about and working through curriculum change and this is neither a short nor easy process. Pedersen reiterates the difficulty of this process in his comment; 'if you believe that every child can progress, it's just the rates that differ, then teachers have got to believe that too and that was a very hard barrier for Jim [Laughton] to break down.'

The Rationale

The breaking down of structural barriers is central to Richmond Road's concern to contest the marginalisation of minority groups in education. The school recognises and endorses Bourdieu's observation that the dominant form of language is reproduced in these schools, usually without opposition, because the notion of linguistic competence is divorced from the social and political conditions which legitimate its use (Thompson, 1984). It is this process and the relations of force implicit in it that Richmond Road consciously aims to resist by promoting the recognition, affirmation and celebration of cultural difference within the school. The role of language(s) is seen as central to achieving this aim, since as Bourdieu

suggests, 'language is not only an instrument of communication or even of knowledge, but also an instrument of power' (1977; cited in Thompson, 1984: 46), but is framed within the broader context of respecting cultural autonomy and difference. As Pedersen argues, 'the school is about a way of living rather than just language. It is no use knowing the language at the expense of cultural tradition - all it becomes then is a translation, however fluent, of Pakeha culture.' The fostering of language is important but the cultural context which it represents, and from which it comes, should never be lost from sight. This accords with Baker's observation that '[t]o support a language without supporting its attendant culture is to fund an expensive life-support machine attached to someone culturally dead or dying.' (1988: 100)

The bilingual structure of the school is determined within this broader context. The children's use of their first language is encouraged wherever possible within the school and, in the case of the Maori, Samoan and Cook Island bilingual ropu, is formalised in a bilingual curriculum. The bilingual ropu are based on a dual-language medium philosophy where during half of each morning and every other afternoon, the teachers speak only the minority language to the children and the children are encouraged to respond in the same language (Cazden, 1989). Pupils are not required, however, to speak the language prescribed if they do not wish to and as Cazden observes, this might be a weakness of the programmes since low status languages such as these need as much support as possible within the school to avoid being swamped beyond it (ibid). The school's approach is, however, consistent with its broader conception of the role of language(s) in the fostering of cultural identity. It also accords with the identification of choice as a crucial variable in the success of bilingual programmes (see Baker, 1988; Cummins, 1983; Holmes, 1984) and simply extends that notion to include children as well as parents and the wider community. Moreover, the bilingual ethos of the school clearly endorses a maintenance rather than a transitional view of bilingual

education (see Apple & Muysken, 1987; Baker, 1988; & Romaine, 1989). As the previous principal, Laughton, eloquently argues,

bilingual education ... wisely conceived ... [can] make a difference - as an act of respect and humility by the powerful, as an expression of confidence and determination by the powerless, [and] as an exercise in genuine communication among all. (1985a: 1)

The importance of the mother-tongue, then, permeates the language philosophy of the school. Language and culture are regarded as an area of strength and competency for all children and the teachers recognise and acknowledge Goodman's observation that if as teachers they undermine a child's language they also undermine that child's ability to learn (Richmond Road School, 1983).

These intentions are supported, as we have seen, by a dynamic and relational approach to policy development. The democratic policy development that characterises the school involves both teachers and parents in decisions about the language needs of the school and operates within the wider language expectations of the local community. The result sees the adoption at Richmond Road of a whole-school language policy which recognises the close relationship between the languages that students use, their identity, and their culture. Moreover, these connections are actively fostered and given expression through the structures of the school.

One of these pivotal structures is the vertical whanau (family) or ropu grouping established within the school by Jim Laughton. Laughton saw such groupings as a means of giving 'institutionalised power' to minority children who might otherwise not have had access to it in a society where dominant power relations are perpetuated through schooling (Richmond Road School, 1986). His aim was to increase the alternatives for minority children through the ropu structure: by increasing the age and ability range children were

familiar with; by providing children with opportunities to experience a variety of roles (of both inferior and superior status) and to develop an appropriate range of social skills; and by assisting the growth of self respect through the recognition of ethnic diversity and the wide range of skills, interests and cultural perspectives children would bring to the group as a whole. Such an organisation, he argued, gives more power and choices to everyone. There is more room for independence but this is paralleled by the expectation that responsibility towards the whole group be accepted:

[i]nherent within the whanau organization is the integration of belief systems which emphasize group rather than individual values. If cultural maintenance is to be a priority at Richmond Road School then stress must be placed on values which contribute to the strength of the group as a whole rather than on those which are individualistic. This kind of system is necessary to support cultural transmission in the curriculum. (Richmond Road School, 1986: 3)

This means that cultural features which emphasise collectivism take precedence over those which are individualistic and this forms the basis of cooperation rather than competition which characterises the ethos of the school. Acceptance of this kind of responsibility is inherent in family group organisation; socially, by demonstrating care for others, and educationally through peer support activities such as paired reading. The latter activity, for example, sees children with competency at any particular reading level, not necessarily the best in the group, involved in working with other children who are at earlier stages of development. This encourages the growth of skills which will lead to independence within a supportive, cooperative environment and is consistent with the values of the minority cultures of many of the students:

Family grouping ... rests on the idea of integration of differences - differences of

ethnicity, age, ability, gender, interest and knowledge. These factors are brought together so children may grow in knowledge, appreciation and respect for themselves and others they are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning and [to] support the learning process of those around them. (ibid: 4)

In order for this to occur children need access to resources they can use independently and collaboratively. Resources are available in the form of 'boxed books' and 'fluency kits'. The former, for example, consists of sets of graded reading material from five to eleven years which are issued fortnightly to the various ropu. But for the most part resources are developed by teachers within the school, particularly through the development of 'focus' resources. Teachers prepare these resources at ten levels of reading independence and children are able to use this material without the teacher's control or superimposed opinions about what the outcomes will be. This allows children opportunities to explore and investigate ideas in a variety of different ways, either individually or cooperatively, and depending on style, preference and interest. If a child at one level of literacy, for example, wants access to resource material at a higher level, she or he can negotiate with another child at the appropriate level of literacy for any activity. Each child knows their own level of reading independence and those of others within the ropu because the information is displayed on charts, not, as in many cases, as a means of ranking, but rather, as a means of identifying for children whom they can go to for support and whom they can assist.

Each reading level is organised into four different learning arrangements: superior/inferior; cooperative; collaborative and independent. Superior/inferior arrangements are those which

usually characterise the school curriculum. One person, who is almost always the teacher, conveys information to those who lack it, who are invariably the pupils. Richmond Road accepts that superior/inferior arrangements are a part of educational life,

but does not endorse the notion that the teacher should always occupy the former position. A pupil, or a parent for that matter, may be recognised as having expertise in a particular field (such as a particular language or culture) which they can be called upon to impart in the classroom.

The contrast between these two approaches is captured by R.S Peters' distinction between 'assigned' and 'provisional' authority (cited in Richmond Road School, 1983). Assigned authority focuses on the responsibility of the teacher to dispense knowledge while provisional authority is described by Peters as that held by the person 'who knows the most' in a given situation. Cazden's observation that '[w]hoever has knowledge teaches' (1989: 151) at Richmond Road, articulates the school's endorsement of this latter view.

Cooperative arrangements put children into shared situations where they support each other while completing a task. These groups are usually self chosen and encompass a wide range of skills and ability. They foster the notion of cooperation rather than competition and aim to reduce children's fear of failure through an active participation in a supportive system which demands corporate rather than individual accountability. Collaborative arrangements bring children together in situations which require shared understanding because those involved have different information that they are required to put together to complete a task. This involves children in the sharing of information, the negotiation of meaning, and debate, until consensus is reached. Children are free to express a wide range of their own ideas, beliefs, values and attitudes in order to produce a shared conclusion, although it is the process of negotiation rather than the eventual outcome which is emphasised.

Independent arrangements allow every child the opportunity to operate individually at her or his own speed and level, with materials suited to individual needs and interests. In this way, independence is developed and the child is encouraged to take responsibility for his or her own learning. This learning is still, however, tied to the underlying principle of cooperation because it aims to encourage the acceptance of responsibility for knowledge

already held,
rather than independent learning at the expense of others. Encompassing
all the various
learning strategies are resource materials designed to introduce concepts,
theme approaches
and base stories to the whole group. This gives the coherence and
continuity necessary for
drawing together the variety of activities which children can be involved
in.

The accurate matching of instructional materials to the child's levels of
reading competence
is an essential prerequisite for all these learning arrangements and
requires a constant
ongoing monitoring to ensure that accurate matching does occur. Regular
oversight of
individual reading is maintained within home groups and running records of
children's
reading progress are kept. These records include not only reading levels
but also skills or
cues used, needed or misused. The instructional level, where a child reads
fluently,
independently and with understanding, requires 95% accuracy with at least a
1:3 self
correction rate, while the easy reading level (for library and taking home)
is 98 - 100%.
Laughton argues that the monitoring process can determine this because it
'entails
observation of behaviour in familiar contexts using familiar processes,
[but is] often focused
on unfamiliar content.' (1985b: 1) Its purpose is to find out how the
student operates, and
the function of familiarity 'is to facilitate access to underlying
competence, imperfectly
reflected at best in the student's performance.' (ibid) Monitoring, he
argues, should, as a
result, replace testing as the principal form of assessment in schools
because the latter is more
concerned with finding out what a student does not know and is, as such,
intrinsically less
effective in gauging the competencies and skills of students.
Historically, also, assessment
based on testing has played the role of legitimising the disabling of
minority students
(Cummins, 1986).

Finally, Richmond Road's approach to written language incorporates similar
ideals and

strategies to those adopted in reading. Koch's (1982; cited in Richmond Road School, 1983) description of the writing process as 'learned terror' for many children is recognised as characteristic of many approaches to writing in schools, and is specifically avoided by Richmond Road. Emphasis is placed, instead, on making writing fun. Writing is de-emphasised as a separate activity and encouraged as a necessary part of other curriculum activities. This accords with the principle of language experience, which characterises the language programme as a whole, where children are encouraged to develop and expand language in the context of experiences, books and/or events. Closely allied to this is the recognition of children as experts in the writing process. The different cultural, linguistic and personal responses children incorporate into learning to write, and the experimentation necessarily involved in such a process, are encouraged while the notion of teaching a 'correct' writing model is discounted. As a result a variety of writing activities are employed: private writing; supported writing; and cooperative writing. Private writing is characterised by little,

if any, teacher correction. Children are encouraged to express themselves freely in writing and to view writing, accordingly, as an effective means of personal communication. A time is set aside each day for writing of this kind which is not corrected and is only shared at the child's discretion. Private writing can also include pre-writing or rehearsal which emphasises for children the developmental nature of the writing process. Supported writing involves providing a framework for writing such as the retelling of favourite stories, the completion of stories or the writing of stories from a different point of view. Whatever framework is adopted, however, support is always available to the children when required. Cooperative writing sees children working together in accomplishing a task which includes written work.

The Policy

Richmond Road demonstrates the kind of environment in which a whole-school language

'critically informed action' (see Carr & Kemmis, 1983; Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988) also accords with the school's aim to create 'self-sustaining self-improving systems' and to place more importance on process than on product (Richmond Road School, 1983).

In implementing these ideas certain values are prerequisite: difference is never equated with deficiency; co-operation is fostered not competition; cultural respect is seen as essential to developing a pluralistic society; and the school's function to this end is directed towards increasing a child's options rather than changing them. Such a conception also highlights the arbitrariness of detailing a 'language' policy since the fostering of language(s) cannot be separated from the cultural context from which it springs nor from the type of society one would wish to see result. Richmond Road locates its view of the role of languages in the school within a wider frame of reference; that of recognising and affirming cultural respect, autonomy and difference through the structures of the school. The following policies attempt to reflect this aim:

Nau te rourou, Naku te rourou
Ka ora te tangata

Your food basket, My food basket
Will give life to the people

ff

1.Introduction

1.1The school remains committed to fostering cultural pluralism through the recognition, inclusion and maintenance of languages other than that of the majority group; both within the curriculum, and in the life of the school generally.

1.2The basis of any further policy development must continue to reflect the dynamic language needs of the school and the language expectations of the wider school community.

1.3Policy development will continue to be based on a process of collaborative and

informed decision-making by staff and management, in consultation with the community.

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2.School Organisation and Management

2.1Organisational Objectives

2.1.1The organisational policy of the school is based on the following tenets:

- i) To increase the age and ability range of organised groups of students;
- ii) To encourage teacher commitment to individual students by increasing length of association;
- iii) To provide for greater common purpose among teachers by reducing the classification categories of the school;
- iv) To institute a pattern of delegation which emphasises responsibility for individual students throughout their schooling.

2.2School and Ropu Organisation

2.2.1The school structure, in 1991, will consist of five New Entrant - Standard 4 vertical ropu. This will include: a Bilingual Maori unit, a Bilingual Samoan unit (extended in 1990 to cover the full age range (previously NE - Std. 3), and the establishment of a Cook Island bilingual unit during the course of the year.

2.2.2Plans for the establishment of the Cook Island bilingual unit in 1991 will be negotiated with the local community. The Cook Island pre-school, Apii Reo Kuki Airani, is already accommodated on site and is run by community representatives.

2.2.3Negotiations are in process for recapititation to Full Primary School status. Because of the establishment of intermediate schools in the New Zealand education system which have children for the two years (11-13 yrs.) prior to their entering high school, most primary schools in New Zealand have been legislated as 'contributing' rather than 'full' primary schools. This was not always the case, however, (Richmond Road was a full primary school until the establishment of a local intermediate in 1976) and recent legislative changes have allowed primary schools to recapititate if they so wish. Richmond Road has subsequently done so in 1992,

extending the family groups to 5-13 years. It is proposed that the school add the options of Form 1 and Form 2 in 1992. The retention of Forms 1 and 2 is consistent with the organisational objectives of the school and recognises, in particular, the holistic context of the Maori and Samoan (and Cook Island) cultural options. For these students bilingual options presently cease at Standard 4.

2.3 Staffing

2.3.1 Criteria for the selection of staff to the school should include:

- i) An applicant's willingness to learn the systems in operation at Richmond Road;
- ii) The applicant's willingness to negotiate a broader meaning than the usual authoritative and transmissionist role of the teacher;
- iii) Whether the applicant's appointment to the staff will increase its diversity and/or more closely reflect the school population.

2.4 Staff Development

2.4.1 The programme of staff development will continue along the established lines of weekly teacher release, resource development in curriculum focus teams and training opportunities at staff meetings and special in-service days.

2.4.2 The goals of staff development remain the furthering of staff knowledge in the curriculum, management and organisation of the school, the sharing of this with the wider community, and the engendering, through this process, of the key components

of cultural maintenance and access to power in a learning environment for adults and children.

2.5 Resources

2.5.1 Curriculum teams will continue to provide 'focus resources' - making materials for the social studies programme - on ten reading levels and for use in four learning modes: superior/inferior; cooperative; collaborative; and independent.

2.5.2 Reading materials ('boxed books' and 'fluency kits') will continue to be maintained and added to.

2.6 Community Consultation and Involvement

2.6.1 All school and curriculum policy decisions are to be developed in consultation with the school community.

2.6.2 The co-option of kaumatua (Maori elders) and Pacific Island leaders onto the Board of Trustees Boards of Trustees, elected from the wider school community, are responsible for the management of their respective schools. Previously, primary schools were administered by local education boards which were abolished in 1989 under the administrative reforms in New Zealand education which occurred at that time. acknowledges the important position of the Tangata Whenua in the school community and the reciprocal relationship between the school and community leaders.

2.6.3 Board of Trustees meetings are to be held regularly and all community members can attend and participate. All decisions are to be arrived at by consensus by those in attendance as this constitutes the major forum for official community consultation.

2.6.4 The involvement of parents, either formally or informally, in the life of the school is a continuing priority.

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3. The Curriculum

3.1 Bilingual Education

3.1.1 The bilingual ropu are based on a maintenance principle of dual-language medium instruction which aims to maintain and enrich the mother tongue(s) of minority children through the school system.

3.1.2 A Cook Island dual-language medium bilingual unit will be established in 1991 along with the present Maori and Samoan units.

3.1.3 Parental choice concerning the involvement of children in these programmes is seen as critical to their success.

3.1.4 The notion of choice should be extended to the pupils within these programmes who may be encouraged, but should not be coerced, into speaking the language prescribed.

3.2 Language Experience and Reading

3.2.1 A principle underlying the reading/language programme is that of 'language experience' where children are encouraged to develop and expand language in the context of experiences, books or events.

3.2.2 Establishing the instructional level appropriate to the child's reading ability is regarded as essential to fostering competence in reading.

i) Children should be matched at their reading levels not their age level.

ii) Regular oversight of individual reading needs to be maintained, at least

once a term with all children and more often for lower levels, and running records are to be kept.

iii) The instructional level should be at 95% accuracy with at least 1:3 self

correction rate and easy level reading should be at 98-100%.

iv) Peer support should be encouraged, particularly through paired reading, to complement the support given by the teacher.

v) Accurate matching, careful monitoring, and teacher and peer support should develop confident and competent readers.

3.2.3 Reading materials (boxed books and fluency kits) are available for children with reading ages under 11 years. The school library is available for children with reading ages over 11 years.

3.3 Written Language

3.3.1 Writing is encouraged as a necessary part of other curriculum activities as well as an activity in itself.

3.3.2 A variety of writing activities are encouraged: private writing (including sustained

silent writing); supported writing; and cooperative writing.

3.3.3 Children are to be regarded as experts in the writing process. The notion of teaching a 'correct' model of writing is discounted and experimentation in children's writing encouraged.

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4. Conclusion

4.1.1 The language policy will continue to be revised yearly as part of the ongoing curriculum development established within the school.

4.1.2 The revision process will continue to recognise and incorporate developments in theory and the changing needs and circumstances of the school.

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Conclusion

While it is not suggested that this particular school model be explicitly followed, Richmond Road does illustrate how the formulation and implementation of school-based curriculum development, in the form of an LPAC, can be effectively achieved by the school. Returning to Skilbeck's (1984) observations on school-based curriculum development, it is clear that Richmond Road School is a relational school. The pursuit and application of curriculum innovation and development in language policy has led to a fundamental restructuring of the school. This change in school organisational structure and pedagogical practice has been based on collaborative decision-making at a staff level and an open interchange between the school and its community with regard to the language needs of its pupils. There has been a recognition in all of this of the political motivation and role of the school in working to this end. As Pedersen states, 'a whole [school] language policy has to be about

whole life; about
social and political structure and change; otherwise it's a waste of time.'

What Richmond Road clearly indicates is that the effectiveness of an LPAC entails much more than the identification of the language needs of the school, although this in itself is no easy task. If politicising the language curriculum via the development of LPAC's is to take hold in schools and be regarded as more than just another faddish curriculum project, the theory behind 'language policies across the curriculum' needs to be linked to practices of organisational and pedagogical change within schools. The representative and inclusive language concerns of an LPAC need to be operationalised in a representative and inclusive approach to decision-making. Traditional hierarchical structures of decision-making need to be replaced by a collaborative approach within the school which enables staff to be fully informed and involved in the theory and practice of change to the language curriculum. The formalisation of links between the school and its local community will also help to achieve the interchange required to develop a language policy that reflects the concerns of that community. Finally, this local collaborative framework needs to be supported by a national educational climate which fosters (or at least allows) both the equity considerations that underlie an LPAC concerning the recognition and use of languages within the curriculum, and the autonomy that schools require to develop these representative intentions at the local level. Only when all these factors are present will 'language policies across the curriculum' begin to achieve, to any significant degree, their emancipatory aims. The demands on

schools of such an approach (organisationally, pedagogically and relationally) may be great, but Richmond Road shows that it can be done.

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