

# Women

pected children to make their contribution, how many academically bright children were going to succeed within the state system? How much harder would it be if the parents of these children felt inadequate about academic matters?

Have things changed for Maori girls today? What is important in their present education? How can Maori mothers exert a positive influence on their future?

The Department of Education statistics showing the probable destinations of those Maori girls who left school, from 1975 to 1980 reveal a gloomy trend.

## Good housekeeping

When local district high schools were set up in the early forties, secondary education became more readily available, but its emphasis, for girls, seemed to be on good housekeeping. A model cottage featured largely, designed to give girls experience in the art of cooking and entertaining. Staff and students were usually invited to a delicious lunch, well laid out and served. Cleanliness and neatness were also stressed. In fact, such was the attention to health and hygiene, that every student had tooth-brush drill before lessons began.

The academic success of girls in external public examinations was sporadic to say the least — partly because home study facilities were inadequate, but mainly because most of the girls were overworked at home. Enterprising teachers in district high schools, however, were often so dedicated to pushing students with potential through these examinations that it was not unusual for them to take such students into their own homes for coaching. One teacher told me that, a month before the School Certificate examinations, he would run every night from house to house, pick up his students and take them to school for a 2-hour coaching session. Another teacher gathered up his students at the weekends for tutoring.

Girls, like boys had a better chance of academic success in boarding schools. There were five of these for Maori girls — two in Hawke's Bay, one in Auckland, one in Marton and one in

	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980
Total number of Maori girl school leavers	3430	3730	3727	4108	4308	4077
Further full-time education	236	239	275	324	339	481
Total number taking up professional and technical work, other trades and apprenticeships, sales, clerical work, etc.	2114	2208	2045	2061	1848	1518
(Numbers for professional and technical work are given in brackets)	(31)	(299)	(223)	(172)	(180)	(130)
Destination unknown	1316	1522	1682	2047	2121	2078

\* This figure probably represents a rise in the number of girls wishing to take up the opportunities which were offered in technical institutes and other tertiary institutions by, for example, the Department of Maori Affairs, vocational training courses, (Job Entry Courses), or by the Government's Young Persons' Training Programme schemes. This indicates a change in attitude, but there is still considerable reluctance among Maori girls to take full advantage of such training schemes as do exist today.

Christchurch. I don't think that the subjects offered at these boarding schools were any more attractive than those offered at district high schools. But the environment was different. It was constant, structured and secure — secure because, although the girls were removed from strong kinship links and obligations, yet Maoritanga and a spiritual awareness of people and things were perpetuated.

The figures showing the attainments of Maori girls in the public examination system, however, do show a little lightening of the gloom. Although the gap between the attainments of Maori girls and non-Maori girls is still wide, it has been closing since 1975. But the rate at which this is happening is still very slow.

Attainments of Maori girl school leavers compared to those of non-Maori girl school leavers at three key levels from 1975-1980. Source: Research and Statistics Division, Department of Education. Results expressed in percentages.

I have been teaching for twenty-five years. As a Maori, I am saddened by what is happening to our children in the city and now of the city. Since 1950 the Maori population has become mainly an urban dwelling people. For at least half of my teaching career I taught in isolated rural areas, and for at least half of my life so far, I was living in rural Maori society. It is very clear to me how different urban Maori society is from the one in which I was nurtured.

Here in the city of Auckland, we, the

Maori, are going through a crucial period of adjustment in which parental responsibilities have been eroded. Some of our parents do not even know where their adolescent children are during the week-ends, and in extreme cases, some young people go missing for a week or more.

At a Wananga conference in May, 1979, a Pacific Island visiting nurse told us rather apologetically that the most neglected homes she visited were Maori ones. Ill-health is still too marked amongst our children. Too many are still going to school with lice in their hair, with ear, nose and throat troubles, and too many are absent from school. Are Maoris today such bad parents?

The unacknowledged fact is that most mothers have to be second-income earners in order to meet the demands of urban living. To compound their problems, the extended family is not so readily available to assist them with the upbringing of their children. So their older daughters are now in the unenviable situation of having to cope with family responsibility alone.

What contribution, therefore, can Maori mothers make? I believe that they will be able to raise the quality of their family lives only if they insist that their husbands share in the task of bringing up their children. For too long it has been accepted that the women alone have the responsibility for their children's education and physical and spiritual well-being.

What have the schools to contribute? ▶

Attainment	1975		1976		1977		1978		1979		1980	
	Non-Maori	Maori	Non-Maori	Maori	Non-Maori	Maori	Non-Maori	Maori	Non-Maori	Maori	Non-Maori	Maori
University Entrance	19.22	3.67	18.81	3.81	20.79	4.64	19.97	4.55	19.89	4.92	21.15	6.28
School Certificate												
in 3 or more subjects	12.65	5.54	12.23	5.44	12.40	5.44	12.48	5.72	11.98	6.36	11.88	6.40
No attainment	28.88	67.96	28.44	66.57	26.14	65.87	24.81	65.29	25.13	61.30	24.02	61.12