Chapter 3
The History of Te Kura Kaupapa Māori o Te Koutu – The Politicisation of a Local Community

E tipu e rea, mō ngā rā o tōu ao;
Ko tō ringa ki ngā rākau a te Pākehā,
Hei ara mō tō tinana,
Ko tō ngakau ngā taonga a ō tipuna Māori
Hei tikitiki mō tō mahunga.
Grow up, oh youth, and fulfil the needs of your generation –
Making use of Pākehā skills for your material well-being,
But cherishing with pride
Your Māori cultural heritage.
Sir Apirana Ngata

Te Kura Kaupapa Māori o Te Koutu was set up in the early 1990s to provide an education in *te reo Māori* for Māori children who had graduated from local *kohanga reo*, literally language nests, or preschools where children were immersed in *te reo Māori*. The story of this school is one of a grassroots initiative in which a community engaged in direct political action, to provide the education that they viewed as important for their children. The need for such action came from a collective realisation that leaving their children in mainstream, English-medium education was likely to contribute to the demise of *te reo Māori*, the loss of connection to the children's Māori culture and academic underachievement. At each step in the establishment of the school, there were challenges. As the composition of the parent group changed and the survival of the school was no longer precarious, some of these challenges have had to be revisited. The story is primarily about the parents, some of whom became teachers or worked in other capacities at the school. Consequently, Uenuku Fairhall's narrative about the setting up of the school is interspersed with extracts from interviews with parents. Within this story, we bring to the fore the notion that mathematics learning was seen not only as a necessary set of knowledge and skills for living in the *Pākehā* (non-Māori) world, but also as a vehicle for reviving the Māori language, traditions, and customs.

Many Indigenous communities perceive a strong link between self-determination and education of their young people. The wish for Māori to use the schooling system for their own purposes was part of this worldwide movement. In the USA in the early 1970s, the Indian Self-Development and Educational Assistance

T. Meaney et al., *Collaborating to Meet Language Challenges in Indigenous Mathematics Classrooms*, Mathematics Education Library 52,
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Act emphasised this link between education and self-development (Apthorp, D'Amato, & Richardson, 2003). Nonetheless, self-determination was not always focused on academic success. In reviewing a 1989 case study on an American Indian school situated on Navajo land, Apthorp et al. (2003) wrote the following:

> The school's heralded outcomes in the late 1960s were not about academic success, but rather, about improved economic vitality, Navajo pride, and self-governance in the community. School jobs at Rough Rock doubled the local per-capita income. School board members acquired leadership and administrative skills for operating federal programs, which led to new facilities and roads, opening the door to the wider community. (McCarty, 1989, p. 5)

Schooling per se will not necessarily enable children to contribute to their communities achieving self-determination. An Indigenous community "may well recognize that schooling provides the skills necessary to survive in a technological world, but it will also blame the school for alienating students from their home culture, whether deliberately or unintentionally" (Cantoni, 1991, p. 34). Therefore, there is a need to specifically describe how Indigenous culture should be situated within an education system and thus contribute to an Indigenous community's self-determination. The framework for Māori educational advancement advocated by Durie (2003) is based on three fundamental goals or touchstones. These are: to "live as Māori", to "being Māori", and for Māori to actively participate as "citizens of the world". This final goal does not contradict the first one; rather it ensures that Māori children can fulfil the needs of their generation by moving effortlessly between the different spheres of their lives secure in their Māori culture. A strong education is considered a key strategy for easing these transitions.

The use of education to reinforce particular communities' values and beliefs has been an integral aim for education systems throughout the world. However, this role of schooling is perhaps more important when the community is a minority, with significant differences to the mainstream societies who generally established and ran the education system. Dewalt and Troxell (1989) documented how the Old Order Mennonite communities controlled their school curriculum in order to ensure that their children were socialised into the group's "cultural values and ethnic identity" (p. 311). As a consequence of this process, they "maximize[d] the group's economic independence and their resistance to mainstream life-styles and values" (p. 311). Students did arithmetic rather than mathematics and used textbooks published in the 1930s, which were "predominantly mathematical problems with no illustrations and minimal explanation" (p. 315). Children finished their schooling at the eighth grade and were then expected to farm or to keep house. With this schooling, children were unlikely to be able to function in the wider society. Dewalt and Troxell (1989) suggested that "[m]ost ethnolinguistic minority groups attempting to resist mainstream acculturation fail because, in contrast to the case of the Old Order Mennonite . . ., they have not been able to retain economic self-sufficiency, residential independence, and complete control of their own schools" (p. 308). In addition, the Old Order Mennonite communities were successful because their aim was to isolate themselves from the mainstream culture, and schooling was used to reinforce this. Māori have the opposite goal, that of ensuring that their children can operate in

the wider society from a solid foundation of their Māori cultural heritage, especially the language.

By the end of the 1970s, Māori were extremely concerned about the possible loss of their language (Rutene, Candler, & Watson, 2003). The causes for this loss were many and complex. Benton (1996) conducted intensive research in the 1970s on the use of *te reo Māori* in a variety of settings and found

> the century-long exclusion of Māori language from formal education gave rise to a disjunction between the language and new technology and new scientific and social concepts, all of which tended to be transmitted and discussed mainly or even exclusively in English. As the language became less associated with intellectual, technological and philosophical discourse, even 'Māori' knowledge (traditional history, cosmology and genealogical information, for example) became the preserve of those few families which could provide a parallel education in Māori outside the school. Even these, however, had no viable way of adapting the language to the demands of modern life, in an environment in which modernization had become synonymous with Anglicization. (p. 168)

On the other hand, Spolsky (2003) saw the banning of *te reo Māori* at school, since the nineteenth century, as only one factor which combined to bring *te reo Māori* to the brink of extinction. At the same time as the decline in the number of speakers was being noted, academic results for Māori students were acknowledged as being well below that of their *Pākehā* peers.

> [I]in mainstream schools, on almost all measures of educational achievement, the average achievement of Māori students is lower than that of non-Māori students. The disparity in achievement between Māori and non-Māori has been a feature of the Aotearoa New Zealand education system for more than a hundred years. (Rutene et al., 2003, p. 6)

The imminent loss of language combined with a growing anger at poor academic results galvanised Māori to re-evaluate education and schooling. They wanted to investigate how it could be used to support rather than hinder their children's ability to gain what Sir Apirana Ngata outlined as their right in the proverb that opened this chapter. In deciding to, Graham Hingangaroa Smith (2003b) described the impetus for Māori to set up their own Māori-immersion schooling system in the following way:

> A common catch-cry that was used as a justification was that *'we can't do any worse than the system is currently doing – there is only one way to go – upwards'*. (p. 9)

When *kōhanga reo* and *kura kaupapa Māori* emerged in the early and middle 1980s, the Ministry of Education seemed to ignore them, possibly believing them to be a short-lived phenomena. When Māori-immersion education did not falter and disappear, the Ministry remained unsure what to do, and it was not until 1990 that *kura kaupapa Māori* could apply for state funding (Rutene et al., 2003). As the discussion in Chapter 4 on the provision of bilingual examinations reveals, the Ministry of Education continues to be uncertain how to ensure the success of *kura kaupapa Māori.*

Schools that began to teach in *te reo Māori* did so as a result of a grassroots movement rather than as a result of a Ministry of Education initiative. Although Māori-medium education emerged partly from the "bilingual schools

movement", bilingual units are excluded in the definition of Māori-medium education. As observed by May and Hill (2005), in other countries, immersion education is regarded as one form of bilingual education and/or located on a continuum. As noted by Hornberger (2002), the Māori-only ideology in schools like *kura kaupapa Māori* is of such integral and foundational importance that the use of two languages, as is suggested by the term *bilingual,* is antithetical to those dedicated to Māori revitalisation. For the purpose of this book, Māori-medium education refers to those schools and immersion units that teach in the medium of Māori 81–100% of the time.

In this chapter, we document the history of Te Kura Kaupapa Māori o Te Koutu (Te Koutu) to illustrate the complexity of influences on its establishment and growth. Within this historical account of the school, we focus on the parents' perspectives, including why they wanted their children to attend Te Koutu. We use interview and meeting data from 1998 to 1999 when the school had been operating for only a few years, and interviews from a decade later. The original data came from a wider study looking at developing a culturally appropriate mathematics curriculum (Meaney, 2001). The second set of data came from interviews, which specifically asked parents about their reasons for sending their children to Te Koutu. Information about the history of Te Koutu comes primarily from Uenuku Fairhall who was involved in the school from its beginnings, first as Chairperson of the Board of Trustees and then as Principal from 1998.

The History of Te Koutu

Te Koutu was one of the schools that formed as a result of the grassroots initiative to revitalise Māori culture, language, identity, and self-determination. In 1992 in the regional town in which they lived, a group of parents whose children attended *kōhanga reo* began meeting. They were fearful that the children would lose fluency in *te reo Māori* if they were not able to continue in Māori-immersion education. They also felt that their older children were not being challenged in the mainstream classrooms. Their Māori language was already strong, and the educational programmes were not designed to match the children's specific needs. The parents wanted the language and cultural experience to be more profound than what they saw their older children receiving in the mainstream, English-medium schools. There was also a sense that, rather than just complain about the situation, they should become more actively involved to ensure that at least their younger children gained the education that they wanted them to have. Smith (2003b) described the shift in Māori parents' conceptions of what they could do in the following way:

> The 'real' revolution of the 1980's was a shift in mindset of large numbers of Māori people – a shift away from waiting for things to be done to them, to doing things for themselves; a shift away from an emphasis on reactive politics to and an emphasis on being more proactive; a shift from negative motivation to positive motivation. These shifts can be described as a move away from talking simplistically about 'de-colonization' (which puts the colonizer at the center of attention) to talking about 'conscientization' or 'consciousness-raising' (which

> puts Māori at the center). These ways of thinking illustrate a reawakening of the Māori imagination that had been stifled and diminished by colonization processes. (pp. 1–2)

Like other Māori parents (Reedy, 2000), those who set up Te Koutu desired an education for their children, which built on the language and cultural experiences from *kōhanga reo* as well as providing a strong academic foundation. Many of their younger children were close to school age, and although there was a *kura kaupapa Māori* close by, that school community wanted to remain small in numbers and enrolled only a very few children each year. Many *kura kaupapa Māori* felt that in staying small, they were able to ensure there was as much *whānau*, or family, involvement as possible (Rutene et al., 2003). Each child could be recognised as an individual whilst building relationships (Bull, Brooking, & Campbell, 2008). The involvement of family was seen as one of the key principles for *kura kaupapa Māori* that was likely to contribute to children meeting parental aspirations. When Uenuku was in his first year of being principal at Te Koutu, he suggested the following:

> You are not going to get a lot of support from parents if they feel that they don't make a difference. And Māori statistics aren't going to change no matter what the language is or no matter what the approach you use with their children until such time that education or the striving for education in its formal and informal sense comes more to centre stage in their lives. There were a lot of people who thought that education in Māori would automatically be advancement. The only advancement it's lead to in my way of thinking because it has forced parents to make a choice. To put them [their children] in or not and even by making that small choice meant movement in thought and idea and so that's what we have to do, we have to keep moving and creating choice and realise that parents are making important choices and that they are going to enjoy making those choices. (Uenuku, 16/8/1998)

In the same year, one of the parents expressed his desire to be involved in his children's education at Te Koutu in a similar way:

> I'm pro-Māori but without being anti-anything else, we've just got to look at the stats, the stats will tell us in this country that our people have low academic pass rates. I suppose I can even use myself as an example. It's just, we're not dumb, like we haven't been through these tertiary institutions for one reason or another and it's, you know, hey man, I'm not participating in that and I also believe in something like, which has been involved with a lot of this work which I have being doing now and goes something like this, if you are part of a process, within that ownership you can define how everything is used, how everything is worked. You know, it's just the same as if you think there is a problem. Whoever perceives there's a problem, also diagnoses it . . . my aspirations are not any lower than any other person who wants their child to be into things but I want to be part of the process . . . I value my time and I am jealous of my time but I also value my children, you know, their time. I'm not saying that my time is running out. No, but I've got to think the same as my parents gave all their time for me, then that's just part of the process. I do want to be in on setting up those, it's seems funny when you say you're setting up boundaries, because I don't want to set boundaries but to set up all those branches to return to. Yep, that's me. (P1: 8/11/1998)

Another parent expressed it more succinctly:

> I know another area [resource in developing the mathematics curriculum] that would help, would be like the desire for these children to succeed. Like there's an area of expertise in the sense that of all these people have made a commitment to their children's education by putting them through an alternative education model. (P2: 8/11/1998)

In 1992, the parents saw the success of the existing *kura kaupapa Māori* in their city and were interested in setting up their own one. Many of the parents had connections to education at different levels and saw that much could be achieved by embedding learning on a platform of Māori values. The two educational movers were Uenuku, who at that time was head of a partial immersion unit at the local high school, and a Ministry of Education officer, specialising in early childhood education as well as in the setting up of schools that moved children on from *kōhanga reo*. Other parents also had an education background. The parents, especially the mothers, desired an involvement in education because they wanted to be part of their own children's learning. For some parents, this meant overcoming their feelings of antipathy towards schools arising from their own poor experiences as students (Smith, 1991). This attitude can be seen in the comment from a mother about being involved in the mathematics curriculum project that was run at the school in 1998 and 1999.

> Just speaking from myself the advantages that we are getting [from being involved in the curriculum development project] are that we can start owning things. We can be in touch with it and then we can start when our kids come back [home]. We are familiar with the contexts, we are familiar with their work and then we can ask them not intelligently, but we can ask them without fear of the maths, so we don't say go away I'm busy. (P3: 8/11/98)

Research into successful home–school partnerships consistently shows that parental involvement in their children's education does result in increased academic outcomes (Bull et al., 2008). Weiss and Edwards (1992) discussed the need for parents and the school to hold "common sets of beliefs, expectations, values, and meanings about achieving a quality education for all the children" (p. 222), but in their research they found that there were no opportunities to negotiate those very beliefs, expectations, values, and meanings.

Being involved in different aspects of the education system meant that many of Te Koutu's parents felt confident to set up a new *kura kaupapa Māori*. It was by having an insider's understanding of the mainstream education sector that the parents had the confidence to spurn it and set up something different. The decision making not only contributed to an increased engagement in their children's education but also ensured that there was an opportunity to negotiate the sort of education that should be provided.

The influence of teacher education on these parents' views about what constituted a good education was profound. In 1998, one parent, who was working in a *kōhanga reo* and studying for an early childhood diploma, described how her thinking had changed about mathematics.

> Actually this is my last year. I'm doing the early childhood diploma. It's changed for me within, from my course. Say three years ago I didn't care about maths. You know it didn't worry me, or it didn't worry for my children, it would have, but, it didn't, maths didn't worry me three years ago but since I've been working, on my course, and implementing a lot of what I'd learnt from my course into *kōhanga [reo]*. A lot of these things have come out and maths has been one of them. I think looking at, we have blocks and different size blocks and my lecturers showed us how maths can come in using the blocks the different size, we've got one long, we've got two. We made, the *tamariki* [children] made two small

> ones, which would fit on one long block, and you know one, concept of maths they can get in *kōhanga* level. Dough play. They can identify sizes whose got more than the others. (P4: 8/11/1998)

However, there was a tension for some parents in that they felt that those who had been trained in mainstream teacher education programmes may be jaundiced in how they viewed the possibilities for children. The following extract from an interview comes from 1998, and similar ideas are discussed in Chapter 12.

> But then the teachers at the school have been grounded in mainstream teaching models, so I mean if it's, yeah their input is somewhat sort of ambiguous isn't it whether or not their input actually is really, really helpful, because obviously it's going to be but there's always that other flipside that it could be sort of tainted, it's not tainted if you really thought about it. (P2: 8/11/1998)

Some of the children of the parents, who were meeting in 1992, were attending the *kōhanga reo* situated on Te Koutu *marae*, a complex that includes a meeting house, dining room, and open courtyard. Shortly before, the *kōhanga reo*, which had been originally in the dining room called Karenga, moved to its own buildings on the *marae*. Consequently, the Te Koutu *marae* trustees were approached to see if they would be agreeable to the new *kura* using the vacated dining room. As Karenga needed some modifications before the school could move in, the school began in the garage at one of the parents' residence from the beginning of 1993. Fourteen children, aged between five and eight years, were initially enrolled. In May 1993, the school moved into the still leaking dining hall. The connection of the *kura* to Te Koutu, both the *marae* and the area, was significant. In 2008, one parent described the importance of this relationship.

> I'm from Koutu and my whānau has lived in Koutu forever. . . . No, Koutu born and bred, Koutu's in my heart so I had to say for me it was [a reason for choosing this school for his children]. I would have preferred my children to go to Rotorua Primary because that's the school I went to. It was my wife who wanted our *tamariki* [children] to come here. We only live round the corner and yeah that's the reason we send our *tamariki* here. No, it's cool, most of the teachers here are my relations. (P5: 10/9/2008)

In the beginning, the parents each paid $20 a week for the teacher. This allowed the school to be classified as a private school. As a result, *kura kaupapa Māori* were able to set up "systems of administration, a curriculum, and ways of teaching that were consistent with tikanga Māori (Māori cultural values)" (Rutene et al., 2003, p. 5). However, the number of children at Te Koutu soon rose to the point where a second teacher was needed. This would have been difficult to finance, so the school applied to the other *kura kaupapa Māori* in the city to become a satellite school. Officially, the children became students of the other *kura*, and the teacher was paid as a member of their staff.

From the beginning, parents had high expectations for language proficiency, cultural understanding, and a rich learning environment. The last point gave rise to a lot of discussion about how to implement this. Parents expected the teachers to go

beyond what they knew, so that the teachers became learners and contributed everything that they had. In 1998, one of the teachers described how decisions about the teaching were made.

> As a *whānau* [literally family but in relationship to a school means the extended school community], we can come together and say well, as a child I didn't get to learn that so I'd like my child to know about that and, you know, others will say, well, what is that? You know, we never had that when we were a child. So I'd say that when we get together as a *whānau* and we look at, at *kaupapa* [knowledge systems] that we have. Oh, you know, it's really funny because with the different points of views from everybody and of course, you know, we've got one or two who're teachers in other schools and you know, they think well, no I think it's better if we looked at it this way. (T1: 23/8/1998)

The level of involvement by parents was characteristic of the Māori-immersion sector. Irwin and Davies noted the following in 1994:

> The whānau of children in kohanga reo, kura kaupapa Māori, immersion and bilingual programmes are involved in hours and hours of work which is aimed at a fundamentally different level of involvement than is normally the case in other programmes of mainstream schooling or early childhood provision. (p. 80)

In 1998, one of the parents contrasted being involved with her sons in *kura kaupapa Māori* with her experience of being a parent for her daughter in mainstream education.

> At the time that she was these boys' age, I wasn't as active a mother in the school. I didn't ever question what maths was or what science was, I just went to the sports days, I didn't really care that much but that was the environment that those schools offered parents. *Kura kaupapa Māori* is something that we've only just well, we've been in it six years but we've just begun to realise how much of a big commitment it is and how much harder it is but that's the good thing. I get a say, I get to contribute to what's happening with my kids. (P6: 2/12/1998)

After 18 months, Te Koutu decided to request approval to be recognised as a special character school by the Ministry of Education. The Ministry restricted the number of new *kura kaupapa Māori* who could be set up (Reedy, 2000). In a special character school,

> parents are required to provide a statement of aims, purposes, and objectives which explain the ways, other than language, in which the character of the school will differ from ordinary state schools. These are included in the school's charter. The board may refuse to take pupils whose parents do not accept the character of kura kaupapa Māori. In other respects, the legal standing of the kura is the same as for any other state school. (Te Puni Kōkiri, 1993, pp. 6–7)

While the school was on probation for this official recognition by the Ministry of Education, the satellite arrangement stopped. Instead, the Ministry partially funded the school while it prepared its first report for the Education Review Office, who at this time determined whether schools were operating to an expected standard. Uenuku, as chairperson of Te Koutu, and another parent with an education background were in charge of writing the report.

At the beginning of 1996, Te Koutu gained official recognition, whereupon the school began to look for a permanent site. Te Koutu wanted to do things on its

own terms. So although advice was provided by the Ministry of Education, it was not always accepted as the community had become used to making their own decisions. Also, by this time, the Ministry of Education had gained some experience with *kura kaupapa Māori*. In 1997, there were 59 *kura kaupapa Māori* with official recognition who were teaching about 4000 children (Reedy, 2000).

The original idea had been to build classrooms on the *marae*, even though the Ministry of Education suggested that this might be logistically problematic. The architectural consultants employed by the Ministry of Education made the parents really think about what they wanted for their school. After much discussion, some parents still wanted to stay at the *marae*, whilst others wanted to look for a new site. This saw the beginning of a school style that was quite different to that of other *kura kaupapa Māori* in the city.

Although all *kura kaupapa Māori* operate in accordance with the guiding document *Te Aho Matua* (Kura Kaupapa Māori Working Group & Katarina Mataira, 1989) (this is described in more detail in Chapter 11), there was a lot of opportunity for difference in interpretation and therefore in the types of education to be provided. As had been the case when the school was set up initially, parents made decisions about their children's education. Some parents moved their children to the other *kura kaupapa Māori*, which had decided at that point to make more places available. Other parents felt that the emphasis on academic achievement at Te Koutu was too strong so they set up another *kura kaupapa Māori*. There was much discussion about the weighting given to different aims, such as language proficiency, cultural competence, and academic achievement. Therefore, it was not surprising to find that parents chose the *kura kaupapa Māori* which best matched what they considered to be appropriate for their children. Although not specifically about the decisions taken at this time, the following quote comes from the parent who had been studying for the early childhood diploma. Her comments show how parents were prepared to put their point of view about their children's education.

> Sometimes I have a bit of a problem with Uenuku myself, you know I say "hey, if you can't teach my girl maths, I want you to go out and find a way that means she's going to enjoy maths". You know we've had this conversation before, him and I. No, you find a way of introducing maths to her in a way that she can learn, you know at her pace, maybe because I always try to say that she's at a different pace than other kids, you know, and his method may not work for her and he may have to go and find other methods. You know, even to go back to hands-on method. You know that's more what I am trying to get at, is a lot of our *tamariki* [children], our Māori *tamariki* need that hands-on, you know. They are not so much want to sit and listen, and more want to touch, yeah. So I would like her to learn first hand experience things, three-dimensional. (P4: 8/11/1998)

One parent, whose children had attended Te Koutu for over ten years by September 2008, stated that she supported the school because it provided the education that she desired for her children. This was the same parent who in 1998 had contrasted her experience of *kura kaupapa Māori* with the mainstream school, which her daughter had attended. Choice about the education they wanted for their children was something that parents viewed as an important right.

> I think Māori as a whole are a bit introspective and tend to focus more on being Māori as New Zealanders instead of Māori on a global scale being able to compete and participate anywhere in the world because that's what I want for my children. I don't want them to think that New Zealand is the be all and end all of the world and I believe that Māori were traditionally explorers and we have forgotten that and New Zealand is the only place we totally feel okay and I don't want that for my children. (P6: Sept. 2008)

At the end of 1996, a site just outside of the traditional area of Te Koutu was offered to the school, but it was rejected because of the close bonds that had developed to Te Koutu. Early the following year, excess railway land that was close to the *marae* and within Te Koutu was chosen as the school site. This land had not been built on previously. It also offered an unbroken view of the mountain, Ngongotahā, a major spiritual landmark of the local tribe, Ngāti Whakaue. Figure 3.1 is a photo from the school grounds looking towards the mountain. The Ministry of Education was petitioned by Te Kura o Te Koutu to purchase the land on behalf of the original owners, Ngāti Whakaue, in order to secure a long-term lease as a school site. The Ministry of Education agreed as the cost of the land was offset by a rent-free period. Fortunately Ngāti Whakaue and the Ministry of Education had a long-standing tradition of cooperation, which greatly facilitated the negotiations.

The new school buildings were opened with 37 children and three classrooms in September 1998. Uenuku had become principal at the beginning of the year, after relinquishing his role as chairperson. Initial plans for the new school worked on the premise that there would be no more that 72 students. This reflected the desire to use the property/staffing formula to maximum advantage. By learning how the Ministry of Education worked, Te Koutu ensured that class sizes remained small, with no more than 20 children per class.

In the late 1990s, an application was made to the Ministry of Education for the school to be extended to a high school or *wharekura*. In 1997, there were only five *wharekura* recognised by the Ministry of Education (Reedy, 2000). Originally, it had been thought that when the children became older they would move to the other *kura kaupapa Māori*, which had already gained status as a high school. When the move was imminent for the first set of Te Koutu children, the other *kura* decided to

Fig. 3.1 From Te Koutu school grounds looking towards Ngongotahā

restrict entry to their own children. The *kura* felt that allowing Te Koutu children to enter at the high school level would disrupt the relationship that their own children had developed between one another and the school community.

As well, the parents of the three oldest children in Year 9 at Te Koutu wanted them to continue there. So, the school applied to the Ministry of Education for secondary school status. They did not realise that the *kura kaupapa Māori* representative body had set up procedures for the establishment of *wharekura* independent of the Ministry. Some other schools felt that Te Koutu had jumped the queue, when it was successful with its application to the Ministry. However, Te Koutu's application came to be viewed as a blueprint by several schools wanting a change in status.

Eventually, the pressure of applications for enrolment and the desire to expand the curriculum base for the secondary school students resulted in a steady increase in student numbers, until there were 207 students in 2010. The Ministry of Education has indicated that they would not like to see the school role rise above 250 students due to the size and configuration of the school site. In 2011, there are 25 staff members of whom 20 are teachers.

Notably, the pressure for an increased enrolment came from the success of the school. In the following extract, one parent described how she moved cities so that her children could attend Te Koutu:

> Tamsin: What I'm asking parents about is why did you send your children to this school?
> Mother: Well I was living in Turangi, at the time and they were always going to go to a *kura kaupapa Māori*. I wasn't happy where my kids were because they weren't made to speak Māori over there. I just happened to be looking at the TV and it had Te Koutu kids but it also had other schools kids on there. I was just listening to the way the kids from here spoke their Māori. You could tell it wasn't memorised and it was all natural so I come over here, moved over here. Oh, made sure they got in first and then moved over. (P7: Sept. 2008)

Governance and *Whānau* Involvement in the School

Many *kura kaupapa Māori* have gone through a similar process of expansion. Some have successfully maintained the *whānau* model of governance whereby parents and other caregivers have an extensive say in the school's management, albeit with increased specialisation. The rationale for the *whānau* approach to school management was to prevent parent alienation from the school and the abrogation of their responsibility towards their children's education. Te Koutu still wants to improve this parent–school relationship, but finds it difficult. The following extract comes from an interview with a parent in 1998. It describes in some detail the intensity of commitment that parents made to the governance of the school.

> Yeah. We just have a lot of meetings, a lot of discussions, a lot of things go like, different parts. Like if we're dealing with one subject, one part will go to one *whānau*. You know, everyone will get issued out something and then we bring it back like, yeah, you do, you're given one section and everyone goes out, research it as a *whānau*. We bring it back and discuss it, take the good points and that's just what we do all the time. (P8: 23/8/1998)

The first approach that the school adopted was to assign all parents to one of five areas of governance. Each area then elected its representative, or *māngai,* to Te Ohu Māngai (the committee of representative) who were then endorsed as the Board of Trustees in order to meet the requirements of the Ministry of Education. As time went on, it was found that some of the governance groups operated well, others not so well. So the school opted to vote for its five parental representatives and to dissolve the various governance groups. Internal management currently includes the principal and the heads of the junior, middle, and senior school and the teacher-in-charge of staff development and appraisal.

Even in the early years of the school, involvement with curriculum decisions around subjects, such as mathematics, was seen by many parents as being outside the scope of what they could contribute. They also respected the expertise that the teachers had. This can be seen in the following two comments from parents who were involved in the first project that looked at developing a culturally appropriate mathematics curriculum.

Tamsin: Is it better just to leave it to the teachers?
Parent: I don't know how the other parents feel but like I was saying at the beginning it seems to be a bit over my head, so for me personally I'm quite happy to leave it with the teachers. (P9: 20/6/99)

Well, who is it for us to say what our children need to learn? And why can't our children learn as much as we can give them. I don't know? Umm, I like the ideals and visions Uenuku has for the *kura* so I'm quite happy for him to choose and provide whatever he can for our children. I don't want to say our children only need to learn this because our children can learn anything, so, no that's pretty open-ended for me. (P10: 23/8/1998)

Unlike the economic situation during the establishment of the school, many parents are now in full-time employment, which severely limits the possibilities for involvement in the everyday running of the school. Initially, it was reasonably easy to find Māori-speaking parents who could assist in class or with extra-mural activities, but this is no longer possible. The high levels of commitment to the language and the culture are also not as strong. With the re-emergence of *te reo Māori* in public life in Aotearoa/New Zealand, people have become more complacent about the status of *te reo Māori* than they were in the 1980s. Unfortunately, intergenerational transfer of language has regressed as more and more parents expect Māori-medium education to assume this responsibility.

So far, 20 years of activity have produced no more than a handful of new speakers who might be expected to ensure natural intergenerational transmission to their own children. It has, however, made it likely that many of the graduates of the immersion and bilingual programs will want their own children to have a chance to learn Māori as their second language. In other words, the institutionalization of schooling in Māori and the establishing of community support (within the Māori community and in national government policy if not yet in non-Māori New Zealand ideology) are starting to set the conditions for continuity. (Spolsky, 2003, p. 569)

Nevertheless, as will be discussed in Chapter 9, the reliance on schooling to provide the transmission of *te reo Māori* falls on the individual teachers and their varying levels of linguistic proficiency (Reedy, 2000). As suggested by Reedy

(2000), the combination of many teachers being second-language learners of *te reo Māori* with the proliferation of new vocabulary to accompany subject areas is likely to give rise to profound language change. Native speakers, who had been so involved in the initial push for *kōhanga reo* and *kura kaupapa Māori*, may no longer recognise or approve of the language that the children are using in these institutions.

As well, the recent release of the report on the Māori language (Waitangi Tribunal, 2010) has indicated a startling drop off in the enrolment of Māori children in *kohanga reo* and Māori-medium primary and secondary education. *Kōhanga reo* do not provide long day-care services as needed by working parents in the current economic climate. If parents cannot send their children to Māori-medium early childhood education that meets their needs, then there will be fewer children with *te reo Māori* skills of a sufficiently high standard to enter *kura kaupapa Māori*. This suggests that the perception that Māori-medium schooling will maintain the language to a reasonable level may no longer be a valid one.

This challenge will soon be at Te Koutu's door. Te Koutu will have to review its priorities and practices to meet these external pressures whilst maintaining its core values and goals. They are currently considering the establishment of a transitional facility for preschool and school-age children to improve their proficiency in *te reo Māori,* so that they can transition smoothly into Te Koutu.

In the early years of Māori-medium education, a lot of parents saw themselves as change agents. Now, they seem to feel that the school is being well run, and so they no longer need to be advocates for their children. Improved Māori prosperity also means that the strong commitment to changing society is no longer there, and parents are more fickle in their commitment to the school. This does not mean that parents are abdicating their right to make choices about their children's education, rather that they see themselves as consumers instead of initiators of alternative schooling options. The following extended interview extract shows how over a decade after the school started, parents were making decisions about sending their children to Te Koutu because they felt that it provided the education that they wanted for their children. What had changed in the intervening years were the constituents of a good education in a *kura kaupapa Māori*. Improved academic results were perceived as having been achieved. Language and culture were still important, but the changing society also meant that education needed to encompass more than what had been identified when the school had first begun.

Parent: We chose to come to Te Kura o te Koutu because of that global aspect of the school because it encompassed what we saw as a future in terms of how kids particularly could get on in the world. What we were looking for is something where they could understand their own culture, number one, where they could learn English and ensure it was learnt properly and it wasn't only a secondary language but it was a language that was taught well and also we wanted a third language which ended up being Spanish because we saw it as a global language. The likeliness of our kids staying at home with us is near on zero.

Tamsin: Why is that?

Parent: Because the world's changing so rapidly that the likeliness that they would end up staying and working in New Zealand is for the beginning stages of their working career is not likely. For me, I saw it as the sheer fact that by giving them their own language they had security in who they were, number one. By ensuring that

> they had two other languages, English and Spanish, it ensured they could travel and learn more. If they chose to learn another language after that, they had the ability and the skills to do so. If they chose to work in a country that was on the other side of the world they would gain in the same opportunities as everyone else around if not more so. I have always thought New Zealanders as a whole have a very naive opinion of languages be that Māori or any other language so consequently, we allow ourselves to limit our children and I didn't want to do that. When I came down here, Rotorua wasn't the place I was going to come to. I came into the school in the school holidays. I met Uenuku and I was coming. That was the end of it. He had the same thoughts in terms of academia that I wanted that it was not just about our cultural aspects, which are highly important, but it was about ensuring that the kids had a good education across the board in every subject including maths and science and English, which was really important to me, and was the only way I could sell it to my husband. That's the reason we came. (P11: Sept. 2008)

In many ways, the change in perceptions about what the school should offer can be seen in how mathematics learning was discussed by parents in 1998 and in 2008. In the following extract, the parent talked about her concern that mainstream schools were allowing many Māori children to underachieve in mathematics.

> I guess because we haven't always seen it [mathematics] as having good results for the children. You know, like I know in mainstream schools a lot of children miss out, they don't achieve, or they don't feel good about themselves through the curriculums and programmes. So, I guess personally, I'd like to see our kids. I think confidence is the most important thing and so, if, if they're learning really happily and they're confident then they're going to learn maths and if they're not then they're not going to learn. I think mainstream school haven't really given children that. Like some of the children get it but not all of them. (P12: 23/8/1998)

The cultural relevance of mathematics also came into the discussions. One of the teachers, who was also a parent and later went on to set up her own school stated the following:

> We'd need to focus on things *kaupapa Māori* [Māori knowledge] within *kura kaupapa Māori,* so I would say that the curriculum doesn't totally look at, at that, doesn't look at *kaupapa Māori* in the big way, we would like it to. (T2: 23/8/1998)

This was elaborated on by a grandparent, who was the major caregiver of two children who attended Te Koutu in 1998 and 1999.

> Now my kids bring maths homework home and you sort of don't even understand the way they do the addition, times. Now it is different to how we were taught and we're teaching them different, the way we used to, the way we were taught how to do maths and I think that because of the *kura kaupapa Māori* that there's a lot of things our kids could learn through nature, through learning by using objects like in string games, using the stars. And it's just that I think that when they get older it gives them a better understanding. I mean, they'll see things broader when it comes to maths so we can see that the learning of the stars is a big thing for our Māori kids. And any different things through the bush, through nature. That all things comes back to maths too. (P13: 23/8/1998)

This grandparent's focus was on looking back to traditional ways of doing mathematics to gain inspiration for alternatives to how mathematics could be

conceptualised and taught. In contrast, parents in 2008 still mentioned these traditional mathematical ideas, but more in terms of Māori always having had mathematical expertise. This positioned Māori as confident mathematical users and learners without restricting them to only being able to learn mathematics in a traditional way. The following extract comes from the parent who in 2008 described her reasons for sending her children to Te Koutu. It was representative of the types of views expressed by parents at this time.

> Maths is not just about numbers that you see or do within a maths class, in a cultural aspect it is about stars, it is about *matariki* [winter solstice] and all those sorts of things. It's about when is the best time to plant the crops, it was all a mathematical equation. It was about gathering food, it was about lots and lots of different things and working out survival techniques. So, from a cultural point of view, maths was highly used, in a way that they [our ancestors] thought was practical. In terms of the current situation, some of those things are still used but maths is used in terms of science if they want to move ahead. My daughter is currently wanting to be a forensic scientist . . .. (P11: Sept. 2008)

From this parent's viewpoint, Māori people were always good at mathematics because they had used it within many aspects of their lives. Her expectation for her children was that mathematics would have the same role in their lives, both currently and also when they became adults.

Meeting Challenges in Establishing and Operating Te Koutu

Te Koutu began its life within a particular zeitgeist and the demands of that time. The decisions the school community made concerning the school and the status of *te reo Māori* are based on the complex interaction of historical, social, economic, cultural, psychological, legal, linguistic, and attitudinal factors. There have been many challenges along the way for the school community, from maintaining adequate funding to balancing the competing dictates of ensuring that children gained strong *te reo Māori*, as well as cultural awareness, skills and knowledge, and good academic results. Since its inception, Te Koutu's primacy in the revitalisation of *te reo Māori* has changed as the parents' sometimes-competing perceptions of their children's needs have shifted. This is reflected in a shift within a decade, of the primary role of *kura kaupapa Māori* from being the resurrection of Māori pride in their language and culture to that of the need for children to take their cultural heritage into the modern world.

For Māori parents who send their children to Te Koutu the norms about what to expect from sending their children to school have changed. In Kemmis' (2009) diagram, Fig. 1.2, education is perceived as contributing to the good for individuals and also for humankind. Schools, before the setting up of Māori-medium preschools and schools, contributed to the loss of Māori language and culture as well as academic underachievement of students. This did not result in the individual or the society gaining any benefit. The change in perceptions has changed outcomes, including gains in self-determination. However, not all challenges are resolved as changing societal conditions – the sayings, doings, and relatings of the practice

architectures – means that providing schooling needs to be a dynamic process. New challenges continue to arise. With the shifting societal conditions, the patterns of collaboration also change. Relationships between government agencies such as the Ministry of Education, parents, and teachers need to be re-established continually so that the challenges first can be recognised and then worked upon. Tensions in discussions about the direction of schools can lead to new possibilities coming into view. When parents resisted the direction that Te Koutu was moving in, it opened up opportunities for the establishment of new schools with different aims. Thus, resistance is not by itself a negative action, but rather can contribute to new opportunities being taken advantage of.

Participating in these evolving understandings about the role of schooling contributed to the politicisation of Māori parents. In a generation, they went from accepting that they had no role in education to ensuring that education provided for the ever-changing needs of their children. In many ways, this politicisation could not have occurred without ongoing cultural negotiation.

> Cultural negotiation is a process that makes schools' hidden values and processes visible to community and school while making the community's knowledge, values, and processes visible to schooling. Schooling then becomes explicit and open to choices – choices that can only be responded to at the local community level as they concern issues of culture, language, and identity. Through an exploration of their own cultural strengths and their particular goals and visions for their children, community and school can construct a curriculum of the possible – creatively devising content and pedagogy. (Lipka, 1994, p. 27)

Over time, the school community of Te Koutu has become more politically conscious. Sometimes this resulted in the core values and aspirations of Te Koutu becoming lost in playing the rules of the game as set by the Ministry of Education. Conforming to measures such as national standards and responding to more centralised compliance agents are an outcome of state funding. These dictates have interfered with Te Koutu's ability to make decisions about its educational priorities. As well, the philosophy of wanting Māori children to live as "citizens of the world" (Durie, 2003) meant that Te Koutu became more open to lots of new ideas, skills, and training opportunities, which other *kura* did not take up. The teaching of Spanish as a second language to all students in the school has led to groups of older students and teachers going to Mexico for three-month periods to take part in Spanish language schooling. However, like playing to the Ministry of Education's rules, some of the foundation ideas, which came from the setting up of the school, got lost in the mix. To maintain language revitalisation and the development of children's *te reo Māori,* proficiency will be an ongoing challenge for Te Koutu.