The development of kaupapa Maori: theory and praxis

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Abstract:
This thesis examines educational and schooling resistance initiatives of 'Kaupapa Maori' which have emerged in the New Zealand context. Of significance in this work is the central organising concept of 'Kaupapa Maori' which has developed from within organic community contexts in response to the reproduction of state: dominant: Pakeha interests both 'within' and 'through' schooling and education. The arguments in this thesis position 'Kaupapa Maori' as a theory and transformative praxis and suggests that these new formations of resistance mark a significant shift within Maori transformative strategies. While these arguments are generally situated within the broad field of critical theory, they are also concerned with contested, multiple relations of power. In the New Zealand context these complex relations can be represented as a struggle between 'dominant: Pakeha: state interests and subordinate(d): Maori: iwi interests'. Gramsci's notions of 'intellectuals', 'hegemony' and 'war of position' provide key insights which are used in this thesis to develop arguments around the making of intellectual space for 'Kaupapa Maori'. This work develops critical insights into 'what counts' as meaningful educational transformation for Maori. Beyond this, it also provides critical interrogation of the notions of conscientisation, resistance and transformative praxis; it invokes 'war of position' in developing educational resistance against dominant: state: Pakeha interests; it argues for the notion of 'utopian' idealism within emancipatory practice; it tests critical theory understandings against the practical circumstances derived from the lived experience of Maori; finally this thesis repositions Kaupapa Maori not just as a cultural practice, but as a structural intervention which makes space for cultural practice.

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