

Maoris and Technical Education

Technical Institutes and Full-time Students

by Noel Harrison

Head of General Studies Department
Wellington Polytechnic

This is the second of four articles about the new polytechnics and the opportunities they offer to young Maoris in search of training.

Over the last few years a new model student has appeared on New Zealand's educational scene — the Polytechnic full-timer. This is a student who has committed himself or herself to an intensive course of study which could last from one to four years, in preparation for a particular job.

Mata Mihini, an 18-year-old who gained University Entrance qualifications from Rotorua Girls' High School, is typical of these new students. Mata wants to be a journalist. She's interested in people, in public affairs, and in writing — all essential interests if she's going to be a successful journalist.

She's eligible to go to a university, but no university in New Zealand has a course which directly prepares a student for journalism. An arts degree would provide

a very useful general background but it is not intended to be preparatory training for work on a newspaper or in broadcasting.

The only form of training Mata can get is at the Wellington Polytechnic, which offers a one-year course of 38 weeks, more than 30 hours a week. This type of course is similar to many others provided for full-time students in a number of technical institutes.

Young men and women, mostly with University Entrance, can train to be electronic data processors, intending to move into the very rapidly expanding world of modern computers. Courses are run for secretaries, for architectural or engineering draughtsmen, fashion and clothing designers, for young people wanting a career in business administration, and for those wanting to become graphic or industrial designers.

Not all the seven technical institutes (in Auckland, Hamilton, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin) have the same courses, but the range is widening each year as increasing recognition is given to the value of such training.

Students who come to these courses all have one thing in common — they've

Mata Mihini, the only Maori girl studying journalism at the Wellington Polytechnic, with one of her fellow-students



40

already decided quite definitely what occupation they want to follow and are determined to get the necessary training. Their motivation is high, they know a considerable amount about the field they intend entering, and they study hard because they know what they want.

Mata's experiences have been typical of many other students, particularly those who have had to leave home to do their training. Mata's journalism classes start at 8.30 each morning when more than 70 full-time students arrive for almost a seven-hour day. She learns typing and shorthand — the mechanical skills journalists need — then studies the principles of journalism, and practices interviewing, collects material, writes reports, and edits stories.

Much of the work is practical — as close as possible to the real situations in which a journalist finds himself. About two or three weeks during the year Mata will work on a newspaper or with the New Zealand Broadcasting Corporation as part of her training. With other students she'll get a chance to experience the daily routines of news-collecting agencies.

In many ways the year's study and work is difficult.

Technical institutes are different in approach from secondary schools and universities. Training is intensive; all efforts are focused on one occupation; and a tremendous amount of work is done in a short time.

Though boarding bursaries are available for students living away from home, and a textbook allowance is granted, many students still face financial difficulties if they aren't helped by their parents. The long hours involved in study means there is very little time for students to add to their income by part-time work — as some university students are able to do.

Also, for those living in cities for the first time, there are inevitable problems of adjustment — homesickness, a sense of confusion and some bewilderment, loneliness and difficulties in finding suitable accommodation.

Most cope with these problems very well. Mata got over her homesickness in the first six weeks of the course, and has settled down to steady work. She's living with relatives, working hard, and making new friends.

'I didn't like Wellington when I first arrived,' she says. 'I didn't know anybody. But now, though the life is fast, I find I can keep up.'

When she finishes her course at the end of 1970 she has every chance of gaining a nationally-recognised certificate, and will try to get a job on a provincial newspaper.

Not all technical institute courses end in one year. Many other students carry on with either more full-time study or do part-time day and evening classes for two or three years to complete their certificates.

Some of the most important courses lead to the issue of New Zealand Certificates in Engineering, in Architectural Draughting, in Science and in Commerce. The status of these certificates is below that of a university degree but considerably higher than that of a tradesman's qualification. Most of these students come into what is called today the technician category.

Such fully-trained technicians are coming to be in great demand, in some cases being offered higher starting salaries than university graduates.

Today the technical institutes are offering a new type of training to young people who know what occupation they want to enter, and who have earned the necessary qualifications.

Sometimes these qualifications are a number of passes in certain subjects at School Certificate or University Entrance level. With the new single-unit system of sitting School Certificate more students are able to gain these qualifications without actually having what was called School Certificate.

This particularly opens opportunities for young Maoris who haven't passed all the subjects needed for entry into the sixth form.

So far, relatively few Maoris have found their way into full-time courses in the institutes. This is partly because fairly high academic qualifications are needed, particularly in the engineering, draughting, science and electronic data processing fields. But it's also partly because many young Maoris aren't aware of the types of course being offered.

Those who live in provincial areas aren't likely to see any of the new polytechnics in the major cities. Often, their secondary

continued on page 46

41

Using This Item

E here ana ngā mōhiotanga i tēnei whakaputanga i raro i te manatārua o te Karauna, i te manatārua o te Māori Purposes Fund Board hoki/rānei. Kua whakaae te Māori Purposes Fund Board i tōna whakaaetanga ki te National Library of New Zealand Te Puna Mātauranga o Aotearoa kia whakawhanake kia whakatupu hoki ā-ipurangi i tēnei ihirangi.

Ka taea e koe te rapu, te tirotiro, te tā, te tiki ā-ipurangi hoki i ngā kai o roto mō te rangahau, me ngā whakamātau whaiaro a te tangata. Me mātua kimi whakaaetanga mai i te poari mō ētahi atu whakamahinga.

He pai noa iho tō hanga hononga ki ngā kai o roto i tēnei pae tukutuku. Kāore e whakaaetia ngā hononga kia kī, kia whakaatu whakaaro rānei ehara ngā kai nei nā te National Library.

The Secretary Maori Purposes Fund Board

C/- Te Puni Kokiri

PO Box 3943

WELLINGTON

Waea: (04) 922 6000

Īmēra: MB-RPO-MPF@tpk.govt.nz

Information in this publication is subject to Crown copyright and/or the copyright of the Māori Purposes Fund Board. The Māori Purposes Fund Board has granted permission to the National Library of New Zealand Te Puna Mātauranga o Aotearoa to develop and maintain this content online.

You can search, browse, print and download for research and personal study. Permission must be obtained from the board for any other use.

You are welcome to create links to the content on this website. Any link may not be done in a way to say or imply that the material is other than that of the National Library.

The Secretary Maori Purposes Fund Board

C/- Te Puni Kokiri

PO Box 3943

WELLINGTON

Phone: (04) 922 6000

Email: MB-RPO-MPF@tpk.govt.nz