Whakawhanaungatanga:

Dilemmas for mainstream New Zealand

early childhood education of a

commitment to bicultural pedagogy.

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Introduction

Since 1998 in Aotearoa/New Zealand[1] early childhood care and education services have been required to ensure that their programmes are consistent with the new early childhood curriculum, Te Whäriki (Ministry of Education, 1996a; 1996b). The curriculum acknowledges the primacy of the indigenous peoples, the Mäori, and their right to early childhood education provision that reflects, respects, and validates their culture and language. The curriculum recognises that since "New Zealand is the home of Mäori language and culture…curriculum in early childhood settings should promote te reo and ngä tikanga Mäori (Mäori language and culture), making them visible and affirming their value for children from all cultural backgrounds" (Ministry of Education, 1996b, p. 42). More specifically, it states that "The curriculum should include Mäori people, places, and artifacts and opportunities to learn and use the Mäori language through social interaction" (Ministry of Education, 1996b, p. 43). A learning outcome for children from the "Communication" strand suggests that children develop "an appreciation of te reo (Mäori language) as a living and relevant language" (Ministry of Education, 1996b, p. 76). Although clear in this bicultural intent, the implementation of this commitment is more fraught, given the context of 163 years of colonisation, which has marginalised Mäori people, their language and culture.

Early childhood education has the potential to offer a vitally important foundation for future learning, but is not being accessed equitably by Mäori (Else, 1997). In the past two decades, Mäori have shown their dissatisfaction with mainstream education by turning increasingly towards Mäori initiated and controlled education services,

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[1] Aotearoa is a Mäori name for New Zealand and is used here to recognise Mäori indigeneity to this country.

such as köhanga reo, a movement focussing on intergenerational transmission of te reo me öna tikanga (Mäori language and culture) to young children from their whänau (extended families). Yet many Mäori families still choose to take their children to mainstream early childhood services, which places the onus on these settings to meet their needs (Barrett-Douglas, 1989).

Power and the Positioning to Define "Quality"

Mäori children currently constitute one quarter of the total of children in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Over the next 50 years this proportion is expected to increase to the point whereby Mäori children will comprise one third of the total (Mäori Education Commission, 1999). However the longstanding disparity in the participation rates in early childhood services between Mäori and non-Mäori children is actually increasing (Te Puni Kökiri/Ministry of Mäori Development, 1998). In 1997 proportionately fewer Mäori four year olds were attending an early childhood service than in 1991, whilst for non-Mäori the participation rate has increased. Although the Ministry of Education is unable to provide recent statistics on the ethnicity or fluency in te reo Mäori of early childhood teachers, a 1992 Education Sector Census showed that only 4.5% of kindergarten teachers were Mäori (O'Rourke, 1992). Fewer Mäori work in kindergartens than in any other area of the education sector (Jahnke, 1997). Mäori children in mainstream education are being taught largely by Päkehä (people of European ancestry), 99.9% of whom are "not Mäori speaking or even Mäori-literate" (Kawharu, 1992, p. 23). Mäori children who attend mainstream early childhood services are therefore likely to be taught by Päkehä teachers who do not speak the Mäori language or understand a great deal about their culture, history and values.

In Aotearoa/New Zealand, the dominant Päkehä mainstream culture can be described as "the culture of power" (Delpit, 1988, p. 282). The discourses of mainstream educational institutions such as early childhood services reflect this culture of power. Päkehä individuals and groups are able to exercise power because their discourses have become institutionalised as normal, right, and desirable, thus privileging these people and silencing and marginalising alternative discourses such as those of Mäori (MacNaughton, 1995, p. 43).

Early childhood education services reflect the legacy of colonisation and the baggage of racism that pervades the discourse of mainstream New Zealand. Even though the curriculum mandates a bicultural approach to early childhood care and education in New Zealand, impediments to implementation of this include negative attitudes such as a dismissal of bicultural issues as irrelevant – "We don't have any Mäori children" or "Our Mäori families don't want that sort of thing" are common excuses. Even when a commitment to offering a bicultural programme is expressed by early childhood teachers, it is often tempered by a lack of competence compounded by a lack of confidence on the part of early childhood teachers who may be cautious about offending Mäori with inappropriate usages. This situation is not helped when in this country currently only the person in charge of the early childhood care and education centre is required to hold a teaching qualification.

Foucault has used the phrase, "the politics of knowledge", and describes a "process by which knowledge functions as a form of power and disseminates the effects of power" (Foucault, 1980, p. 69). According to James Marshall:

> Power/knowledge is located within the "deep" regimes of discourse/practice. It is knowledge that permits statements [about expectations and practices for children and programmes] to emerge and be legitimated as truth. It is produced by power and in turn produces power. (Marshall, 1995, p. 369).

Certain discourses, such as those of Mäori in Aotearoa/New Zealand, may be subordinated by the power effects within the dominant infrastructure, according to Foucault, who writes that:

> ... there exists a system of power which blocks, prohibits, and invalidates this discourse and this knowledge, a power not only found in the manifest authority of censorship, but one that profoundly and subtly penetrates an entire societal network (Foucault, 1977, p. 207).

Päkehä educators, as representatives of the dominant culture, are likely to define their educational objectives (such as "quality" early childhood provision) in ways that perpetuate the hegemonic dominant Päkehä discourse, unless they somehow manage to adopt a reflexive, critical stance. Shotter (1993) considers that it is possible to develop an awareness of the role of power that is inclusive and collaborative. He suggests that:

> …we must rethink the workings of ideology and power . . . as not exerted by individual agents in the control of cause and effect processes at the centre,

but as formative, to do with the shaping – in communication with genuinely different other people – of a collective, sharable form of life, so that all come to live in a 'world' of their own making (Shotter, 1993, p. 38).

Brief Overview of Study Paradigm

This paper is based on a doctoral study, which focussed on the implementation of bicultural development within early childhood teacher education in Aotearoa/New Zealand. "Bicultural development" (Metge, 1990, p. 18) is a social change process generated from a commitment to social justice and Te Tiriti o Waitangi/ the Treaty of Waitangi, the treaty signed between Mäori and the British Crown in 1840 that enabled colonisation of the country. The implication of 'development' is one of an on-going process of change toward an equitable bicultural society (Metge, 1990). According to the Royal Commission on Social Policy:

> Bicultural development has been proffered as an important element of any programme which has as its objective the advancement of the social and economic status of Mäori people. It is an option which derives from the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi (Royal Commission on Social Policy, 1987, p.14).

The research project utilised an eclectic, emergent, qualitative methodology utilising group and individual interviews during 1997 with 18 participants, all colleagues from the field of early childhood care and education. Eight of these (four Mäori and four Päkehä) were lecturers in the Department of Early Childhood Studies at the University of Waikato. Four professional development facilitators (three Mäori and one Päkehä) were interviewed for their expertise gained from working on Ministry of Education contracts to support early childhood educators following the introduction of Te Whäriki. Also interviewed were three Mäori and three Päkehä graduates from the pre-service early childhood teacher education programme at the University of Waikato, who were then teaching in kindergartens, and childcare, or working in related fields. Further sources of data included a series of observations in 13 different childcare and kindergarten settings, audiotapes of classes conducted within the early childhood degree at the University of Waikato, samples of University documents and student assessment, and an open-response written survey of graduates of the early childhood teacher education programme.

The interview data was coded emergently using qualitative data analysis software (NuDist). Transcripts and preliminary data sections were distributed to all

interviewed participants for their responses. Key ideas that had been raised were further discussed with Mäori participants at a co-theorising hui (meeting). This methodological process is consistent with approaches that highlight the need for participants to be involved in the theorising of data that they have supplied (Bishop & Glynn, 1999; Strauss & Corbin, 1999). Collaboration between the researcher, who was also an insider/participant, and the interviewed participants, resulted in a cooperative exercise of creating shared meanings (Aubrey, David, Godfrey, & Thompson, 2000, p. 127). This process of "making sense" through "a complex back-and-forth process of negotiation (Shotter, 1990, p. 164) has been variously termed "co-exploration" (Diller cited in Noddings, 1995, p. 93), "whitiwhiti körero" (Huata Holmes in Bishop, 1996, p. 104) and "spiral discourse" (Bishop & Glynn, 1999, p. 119).

Whanaungatanga and Bicultural Development in Early Childhood Centres

A key finding of the study was the identification of a "whanaungatanga approach" as a model for involving whänau Mäori (Mäori extended families) within early childhood centres. Whanaungatanga refers to kinship relationships, which are based on validation of whänau, or Mäori extended families. The concept of a whanaungatanga approach recognises the centrality of whänau and relationships to Mäori early childhood care and education. Adopting a whanaungatanga approach is dependent on Päkehä educators facilitating positive relationships with whänau Mäori, which encourage their participation within the educational programme of that early childhood service.

Enlisting Mäori support in determining and delivering early childhood programmes is a means for delivering to Mäori a capacity for self-determination regarding their children's education, and in overseeing the protection of the taonga (treasure) of te reo. It is also consistent with the principle from Te Whäriki, the early childhood curriculum, of Family and Community/ Whänau Tangata (Ministry of Education, 1996a), with Rangimarie Rose Pere's Wheke model of Mäori values (Pere, 1991), and with research that indicates that whänau involvement is centrally important in kaupapa Mäori education (Smith, 1995, 1997). (Kaupapa Mäori education has a Mäori philosophical base and is conducted through the medium of te reo Mäori – the Mäori language). In his theorising of kaupapa Mäori as a 'philosophy of social

transformation' Graham Hinangaroa Smith (Smith, 1995) has identified the concept of whänau as being pivotal to this process. Smith considers that:

> Whänau as a key intervention element within Kaupapa Mäori is able to make sense of and mediate the intricate and complex, (at times contradictory), discourses which envelop Mäori people attempting to maintain the viability and the legitimacy of their traditional cultural foundations in the confusing societal context created by the unequal power relations between Päkehä and Mäori (Smith, 1995, p. 22-23).

Several Mäori academics and educationalists have discussed key aspects of whanaungatanga (see for example Durie, 1997; Pere, 1982; Smith, 1995). In her model of traditional Tuhoe[2] whanaungatanga, Pere emphasises: aroha, which she defines as the commitment of people related though common ancestry; loyalty; obligation; an inbuilt support system; stability; self-sufficiency; and spiritual protection (Pere, 1982, p. 23). Graham Smith has observed that contemporary Mäori constructions of whänau, such as those found in Köhanga Reo and Kura Kaupapa, although not necessarily kinship-based, retain traditional values such as; manaakitanga (sharing and caring); aroha (respect); whakaiti (humility); and tuakana/teina (older children caring for younger) (Smith, 1995, p. 33).

A question that then arises is the consideration of how effectively Päkehä and other non-Mäori early childhood educators can be supported to develop an understanding of these key Mäori concepts, that are integral to whanaungatanga, in order to apply them within their work in early childhood education settings. To what extent can (and should) non-Mäori emulate qualities of "Mäoriness"? Can non-Mäori early childhood educators learn to act as Mäori do, in situations such as urban köhanga reo, where modern non-kinship-based whänau have been created and operate from a kaupapa (philosophy) of aroha, manaakitanga, and whakaiti?

"Responsiveness, respectfulness, and reciprocity" are words used in early childhood discourse in Aotearoa/New Zealand to describe characteristics of effective teacher interactions with children (Podmore and May, 1998, cited in Brown, May, Meade, Podmore, & Te One, 1998, p. 9). These qualities could equally be applied to building relationships with whänau Mäori and other adults in early childhood centres. The early childhood curriculum Te Whäriki is considered by one of its key contributors,

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[2] Tuhoe are an iwi, a tribe, of the Urewera area in the North Island.

Tilly Reedy, to emphasise respect as a central quality for the early childhood curriculum:

> Te Whariki a theoretical framework which is appropriate for all.... A whariki woven by loving hands that can cross cultures with respect, that can weave people and nations together. Te Whariki is about providing a base that teaches one to respect oneself and ultimately others (Reedy, 1995, p.17).

Respect is certainly a fundamental quality for Päkehä educators to demonstrate, and one which is related to that of whakaiti. Similarly, adopting a whanaungatanga approach requires the reconceptualising of the construct of teacher as 'expert', since we cannot be experts in another person's culture if we do not share that cultural background. Teachers from the dominant Päkehä culture will require both humility and openness, so that in remaining vigilant as to the limitations of the role of a Päkehä facilitator of bicultural development they may avoid pitfalls that can easily befall those who come from an uncritiqued paradigm of 'expert' or 'person responsible'. Mäori have expressed concern about appropriation of their language and culture (see for example Mead, 1996; Smith, 1990; Smith, 1999). Adopting this orientation may also enable non-Mäori to avoid misrepresenting Mäori cultural symbols and meanings whilst being sensitive to feelings that may be aroused in Mäori parents and grandparents who have, through assimilationist colonialist education policies been denied opportunities to learn to speak their own language (Henry, 1995, p. 16).

This devolution of 'expertise' requires that teachers demonstrate respectful validation of te ao Mäori, and its expression in the ways of knowing and habits of being (hooks, 1994, p. 43) of whänau Mäori. This means creating opportunities for Mäori to voice their perceptions, and listening and responding to these. Furthermore, there should be recognition that non-Mäori cannot speak for Mäori. The whanaungatanga approach involves the early childhood profession facilitating a climate of collaboration and genuine power-sharing, with the goal of whänau involvement in all aspects of the programme including planning, implementation, and evaluation.

Transformative Processes

There is a clear connection between knowledge and power (Noddings, 1995; O'Loughlin, 1992). A n aspect of the project of bicultural development that featured in the study was that of a repositioning of Mäori knowledge, from the margins to the

centre (hooks, 1984), of early childhood pedagogy. This applies both within early childhood centres and concomitantly within teacher education programmes, where the goal becomes the validation of te reo me ngä tikanga Mäori (Mäori language and culture). A Mäori participant in the study considered that the bicultural emphasis of Te Whäriki, the early childhood curriculum, was an example of this validation, "making Mäori things real" for Päkehä and other non-Mäori (whilst acknowledging that for those who identify as Mäori, Mäori "things" are already patently real). This validation requires Mäori people to be positioned at the centre of the process of defining and controlling the selection and delivery of te reo me ngä tikanga Mäori (Mäori language and culture) that is to be incorporated within early childhood service and teacher education programmes. For Päkehä this means a recognition of the need to be prepared to "let go" of that power, and move beyond a perspective which still sees support for Mäori as tied to retaining the "controlling" role, as Mäori participants described it. The bicultural development process is one that is operating not just at the level of individual cultural identities and differences, but also requires transformation of the structures of power within educational institutions that currently reflect the hierarchy of monocultural Päkehä dominance from our colonialist heritage (Giroux, 1995, p. x).

A Mäori participant described as "powerful" her experiences of seeing "the teachers, the kids, the families, all awhiing (embracing) the kaupapa" of bicultural development in early childhood centres. Mäori participants also described themselves as change agents who were working to shift people's attitudes to enable more respectful Tiriti-based partnerships. The transformation of pedagogy demanded by the bicultural focus of Te Whäriki, requires a concomitant reconceptualisation of teacher education pedagogies, a process which has been described by Mohanty (1994) as a transformative decolonisation of our understandings of cultures and knowledges:

> Decolonizing pedagogical practices requires taking seriously the different logics of cultures as they are located within asymmetrical power relations. It involves understanding that culture, especially academic culture, is a terrain of struggle (rather than an amalgam of discrete consumable entities) (Mohanty, 1994, p. 155).

Decolonising pedagogies also requires that teachers and students recognise their role as pro-active agents within this struggle. The role of teacher education programmes can be seen as being to equip graduates for their future role as change

agents (Zeichner, Grant, Gay, Gillette, & Villegas, 1998) in leading a transformation of early childhood provision to one which recognises the bicultural intent of Te Whäriki. This requires a reflexive orientation to people, processes, practices, policies, power and philosophy (Loucks-Horsley & Stiegelbauer, 1991, p. 34) not only on the part of lecturers, and our graduates, but of those in institutional leadership positions as well. Pedagogical strategies involve supporting students to move from positions of resistance and passivity utilising dialogical processes that affirm their positionings and extend their interpretative frameworks, generating a commitment to create new possibilities. This movement was expressed in a Päkehä student's comment to her Mäori lecturer: "It's easy not to try. I could leave it out there. I don't have to. It makes my life so simple. But, I will never know how successful I am until I try". Processes involved in generating this movement are consistent with Freirean education for the practice of freedom (Glass, 2001, p. 18). In this paradigm:

> Knowledge becomes founded on dialogue characterized by participatory, open communication focused around critical inquiry and analysis, linked to intentional action seeking to reconstruct the situation (including the self) and to evaluated consequences. The dialogue that distinguishes critical knowledge and cultural action for freedom is not some kind of conversation, it is a social praxis (Glass, 2001, p.19).

Traditional views of 'teacher as expert' are part of the transformation engendered through this dialogical process of critique. Teachers, in recognising the limitations of their knowledge of others' cultures, can develop partnerships with whänau which move beyond conventional models of delivering 'culturally appropriate' practice as defined by teachers/researchers as experts (Hewitt, 1996), to a repositioning of the cultural knowledges held by whänau as being central to the educational processes.

Bicultural development involves a transformation of both process and content of the educational 'package'. As the delivery of the early childhood centre or teacher education programme models partnership between Mäori and Päkehä, so does the content model a respectful coexistence, where both world views are afforded equal validation, and adults (and children) are supported to move beyond the tendency for over-simplified dichotomisation whereby one idea/worldview is seen to be right and hence another (the 'other') must be wrong.

Stephen Jay Gould (1999), in his discussion of the 'opposing' world views (magisterium) of science and religion, posited the application of a principle of

respectful non-interference which never-the-less allows for intense dialogue between the two distinct subjects (or worldviews). His writing, once applied to this study of bicultural development, suggests an alternative to the "melting-pot" ideology which underlies many multicultural approaches, whereby the desired outcome is a merger of any 'minority' into a large and pliant dominant culture, blurring the distinctions between the different cultural paradigms. Instead the aim should be for a paralleling of different perspectives that grants dignity and distinction to each (Gould, 1999, p. 51), opening children's (and adult's) minds to the range of possibilities both existing and yet to be explored that can inform their own processes of making sense of the world (Shotter, 1990, p. 164), and which will be enriched through having access to multiple cultural narratives, rather than being limited by a monocultural lens. The bicultural development project of pedagogical, social and cultural transformation involving decolonisation and a recognition of multiple discourses (O'Loughlin, 1995, p. 111) cannot be confined to the educational sphere (Mohanty, 1994, p. 152). Instead, as a Mäori participant pointed out, a much wider emphasis involving proactive public education through media exposure at the national level is required.

Conclusion

The bicultural emphasis of Te Whäriki, the early childhood curriculum, has potentially repositioned Mäori ways of being and knowing at the centre of early childhood discourse in Aotearoa/New Zealand. The curriculum is comparatively recent, and remains a paradox in terms of translation into practice since this implementation is subject to the extent to which a largely Päkehä early childhood teaching force are able to deliver on expectations that require a level of expertise that is beyond their experience as monocultural speakers of English with little experience of Mäori culture and values. The implications for teacher education providers are profound in that the three year period of teacher education provides a window of opportunity for applying transformative pedagogies which may enable future teachers to gain an understanding of and commitment to implementing bicultural development processes in early childhood education.

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