

Whakawhanaungatanga in Praxis: Transforming Early Childhood Practice in Aotearoa through Honouring Indigineity



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Colonialist Legacy

- “Survival of the fittest” and “fatal impact” (Belich, 1988, p. 299)
- Ethnocentric white supremacist assimilationist education policies (Smith, 1995; Walker, 2004)
- Losses of land, language, identity
- Ongoing struggle for justice

“Māori ways of speaking were also colonised through the subjugation of te reo Māori, to be replaced by English.

This, at times violent, process of colonisation caused a disruption in the intergenerational transmission of Māori language, Māori knowledge and, as a consequence, disrupted Māori lives and Māori societies” (Skerrett, 2007, p. 7)

E.C.E. in Aotearoa

- Kōhanga Reo began in 1981
- Tino Rangatiratanga
- Intergenerational transmission of te reo, the Māori language, through Māori immersion
- Other early childhood services attempt inclusion of te reo and tikanga
- Autonomous and progressive sector

“Education to be More”

- A 1988 government-commissioned report into early childhood education identified access to te reo and tikanga Māori (Māori language and culture) as a characteristic of “good quality” early childhood services (Meade, 1988).

Te Whāriki

- First early childhood curriculum for NZ
- First bilingual curriculum
- Developed by a partnership between Māori and Pākehā academics
- Framework came out of a Māori epistemology
- Wide consultation within the early childhood community

Beyond DAP

- **Nationally appropriate – reflecting heritages of both wider and indigenous language and culture**
- **Culturally appropriate – inclusive of diversity**
- **Educationally appropriate – recognising prior learning and responding to interests of learner**
- **Individually appropriate – respectful of children's different temperaments and needs**
(Draft Te Whāriki, 1993)

Sociocultural Orientation: Principles

Whakamana : Empowerment

- The early childhood curriculum empowers the child to learn and grow.

Kotahitanga : Holistic Development

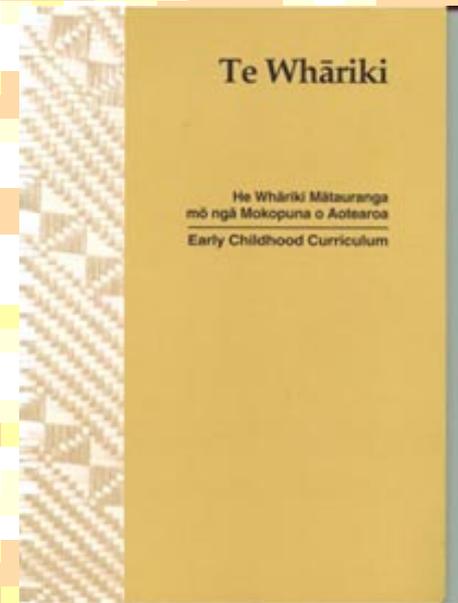
- The early childhood curriculum reflects the holistic way children learn and grow.

Whānau Tangata : Family and Community

- The wider work of family and community is an integral part of the early childhood curriculum.

Ngā Hōnonga : Relationships

- Children learn through responsive and reciprocal relationships with people, places and things.



Strands

Mana Atua : Well-being

- The health and well-being of the child are protected and nurtured.

Mana Whenua : Belonging

Children and their families feel a sense of belonging.

Mana Tangata : Contribution

- Opportunities for learning are equitable and each child's contribution is valued.

Mana Reo : Communication

- The languages and symbols of their own and other cultures are promoted and protected.

Mana Aotūroa : Exploration

- The child learns through active exploration of the environment.

Sociocultural Influences

- Bronfenbrenner's ecological model (in Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 19)
- Vygotsky's sociocultural theorising
- Children, families and educators exist within the wider political sphere
- A dialectical interaction – we are influenced by this, but also we are able to influence it through our own advocacy

Culture is central to identity

Children's home discourses "are vital to their perception of self and sense of community connectedness" (Delpit, 1993, p. 293).

"In order to teach you, I must know you" (Native Alaskan educator cited in Delpit, 1995, p. 182).

Te Whāriki expectations

- “New Zealand is the home of Māori language and culture”, “curriculum in early childhood settings should promote te reo and ngā tikanga Māori, making them visible and affirming their value for children from all cultural backgrounds” (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 42).
- “The curriculum should include Māori people, places, and artifacts and opportunities to learn and use the Māori language through social interaction” (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 43).

Te Whāriki expectations

- A learning outcome for children from the “Communication” strand suggests that children develop “an appreciation of te reo as a living and relevant language” (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 76).
- Teachers are required to provide experiences which ensure that “Māori phrases and sentences are included as a natural part of the programme” (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 77).

- The overwhelming majority (93.1 %) of early childhood teachers working in services other than Kōhanga Reo are not Māori (Ministry of Education, 2004) and do not speak Māori or have an in-depth understanding of tikanga Māori.
- 27% of Māori children attend Kōhanga Reo (2006 figures reported in Education Gazette).

- Only 1% of non-Māori early childhood teachers use the Māori language more than 30% of their teaching time.
- Although 75% of Pākehā* early childhood teachers use some Māori whilst teaching, 70% of these teachers described themselves as speaking Māori “not very well” (Harkess, 2004).

*Pākehā are New Zealanders of European ancestry

How do teachers enact these undertakings?

- During my doctoral research observations within 13 different early childhood settings in the Waikato area (Ritchie, 1999).
- Use of te reo was very limited
- Under-utilisation of resources such as books in te reo

Reo limited to the three “c” s:

- Commands, eg, “Haere mai ki te whāriki...”
- Colours
- Counting

And songs, usually at least one waiata at a mat-time.

“That’s a very important one about commands. Commands, commands, commands, it means directive, directive, directive. Negative, negative, negative. Maori is being presented as a negative language.” [Kaumātua from our later Whakawhanaungata study]

Whakawhanaungatanga

- Funded by the Teaching Learning Research Initiative, administered by the NZCER
- Two year study
- Data gathered by and from a wide range of early childhood teachers, teacher educators, a Māori Tribal Education Initiative, and professional learning providers

Whakawhanaungatanga

- Enactment of ways of being that honour te reo me ōna tikanga
- Teachers focussing on building relationships with Māori and other families
- Welcoming as ongoing
- Daily rituals such as karakia

Anne

Two workshops I attended brought me back to the realisation that kōwhaiwhai patterns, Māori legends etc., while being important, are not as important as relationships.

From the moment any family comes through the gate the relationship is starting to be built...

So now I spend time beginning to build that relationship, talking with the family in a quiet, friendly, natural way, listening, making connections, and not doing too much talking myself.

***I've become more relaxed and have less guilt about my lack of knowledge. I need to be secure in my own culture and values while appreciating and valuing those of others
[Anne]***

Penny

I have no expectations of what a family should or should not give us because they have gifts and taonga that are not mine, and there's no ways that I can make them give them to us, so all we can do is make this place as warm a place as possible where they would like to spend time and if anything comes because they're here, then that's an absolute blessing and a real treasure that they've shared.

So we share what we have with them...

Our joy is just that their children are here and that they're prepared to share their greatest treasure with us, and we want to show them how marvellous their children are. So I'm very wary of being pushy about 'Can you come and do waiata with us?', 'Can you come and do that?' To me that's the Pākehā grasping and I'm very, very conscious of that.

We're trying to do it the other way, 'What can we give to people?' [Penny]

Māori aspirations: Our place

And so for [my three children], when they walk in to [our Playcentre], it is not just some building. This is their place and to them it was almost just another room in their house. And it certainly felt that way to me too [Hariata]

Shared values

The reason why I got involved in [our Playcentre] started right from when I first walked in the gates, and the feeling that I perceived and I felt from the whānau and tamariki that were there ... there was just a lot of the same goals that I wanted for my tamariki [Moana].

Whanaungatanga

I feel that [her Playcentre] has allowed, like, whanaungatanga, and it's going to be a life-long whānau I expect personally for myself and my tamariki. You know, yesterday we just had a clean-up session at [Playcentre] and my son said, 'They're our cousins aren't they?' And we're not related to X and her family, but yes, we're all [connected through] whanaungatanga and that's how we perceive all the children and I like it because you feel comfortable with who your children are with, and all sharing the same goals [Moana]

Valuing our Nannies

I love seeing Nannies in the Playcentres, it's very few in Playcentres, but I think our Nannies brought richness to our centre. They just provided such awesome examples of tikanga and I knew that if I was unsure about something, I could just ask... [I really appreciated] their humour, even if the children weren't directly interacting with them, they could hear them nattering away [in te reo], laughing and that's just great because I can't provide that for my children and I really want that role model in my children's lives, having it within their early childhood centre whenever we attended was just so precious [Sue]



Rakara Chadwick
Wanganui 1921

Harakeke became a vehicle to disseminate education about Māori values about our Atua Māori, about a way to behave, tikanga, ae, everything. And our tamariki learned alongside of us, we just provided opportunity for them too, they could do it just like us [Ana].

Children alongside

Oh, I think my ideal of a fully bicultural Playcentre is that a lot of the time it wouldn't be at the centre. We'd be out, we'd be out at the beach and sit in the rivers, doing the real stuff, you know, eeling, cooking what you catch, looking after wherever you are. And I talk about as a child growing up and spending a lot of time at the beach and picking pipis and how we could ride our bikes around the streets. And, as long as you turned up for your kai, life was sweet...

Kaitiakitanga

So what do you want for your children? It's so much the same. I want my children to swim and dive and ride kayaks and ride their bikes and play on the farms and get out and about and learn all these things. So I think fully bicultural means there has to be a huge connection to this land. And looking after what we've got [Miria].

Transforming our practice



It's a mountain where the summit is shrouded in mist so you can't see the top. You also need your team to come with you.

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