



## Reflective Practices in Early Childhood Care and Education Settings:

### Some Examples from New Zealand Research



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*E kore au e ngaro he kākano i  
ruia mai i Rangiatea*

This whakatauki (proverb) refers to the original seed from Rangiatea, the spiritual homeland for Māori, stating that this seed will not be lost. It thus asserts both continuity and resilience, and implies that for Māori, their language and culture are the sustenance of this resilience (Grace & Grace, 2003, p. 29)



# Background

- History of colonisation of Indigenous Māori since early 1840s
- 1840 Tiriti o Waitangi/Treaty of Waitangi allowed British settlement in exchange for protections for Māori of lands, resources, etc
- Māori language impacted (along with losses of lands, cultural identity, self-determination)
- Māori have continually sought recognition of their rights to language, lands, resources
- Government has recognised these rights in legislation since 1975



# Current Māori Demographics

- Māori form approximately 15% of total population
- 79% of Māori children who participate in an early childhood service are in programmes other than Kōhanga Reo
  - [21% attend Te Kōhanga Reo (an early childhood service which operates via full immersion in te reo Māori - the Māori language)]
- 13.6% of early childhood teachers are Māori (Ministry of Education, 2013)



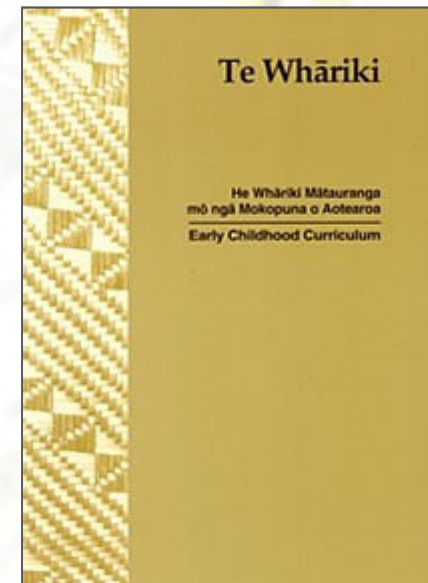


## *Te Whāriki. He whāriki mātauranga mō ngā mokopuna o Aotearoa: Early childhood curriculum*

“In early childhood education settings, all children should be given the opportunity to develop knowledge and an understanding of the cultural heritages of both partners to Te Tiriti o Waitangi. The curriculum reflects this partnership in text and structure” (1996, p. 9)

The Treaty of Waitangi/Te Tiriti o Waitangi was signed in 1840 and allowed British settlement of what was at that time a Māori nation.

The two ‘partners’ in this paradigm are firstly, Māori, and secondly, all those who have since become New Zealand citizens, ie, mainly of European descent.





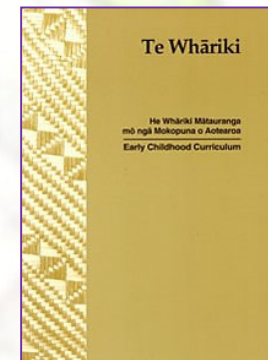
# *Te Whāriki. He whāriki mātauranga mō ngā mokopuna o Aotearoa: Early childhood curriculum*

Holistic, sociocultural, integrated and bicultural

Four foundational principles:

## *1. Empowerment – Whakamana:*

Early childhood care and education services assist children and their families to develop independence and to access the resources necessary to enable them to direct their own lives.





# Principles

## 2. *Holistic Development – Kotahitanga:*

“Cognitive, social, cultural, physical, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of human development are integrally interwoven” (1996, p. 41)

## 3. *Family and Community – Whānau Tangata*

“The wider world of family and community is an integral part of the early childhood curriculum” (1996, p. 42)





## 4. Relationships – Ngā Hononga

Children learn  
through responsive  
and reciprocal  
relationships with  
people, places, and  
things (1996, p. 43)



Photo:  
<http://www.educationaotearoa.org.nz/all-stories/2010/4/14/monoglots-no-more.html>





# Research Questions

1. To identify, explore, and articulate ways in which we are...the 'bicultural' early childhood curriculum, *Te Whāriki*.
2. Identifying ways in which children and families of different cultural backgrounds engaging with/in that 'bicultural' curriculum.
3. Exploring an ethic of care/manaakitanga: caring for ourselves, others and our environment .



# Research Projects

- Funded by the New Zealand Ministry of Education's Teaching and Learning Research Initiative
- Partner researchers:
  - early childhood educators
  - teacher educators
  - Iwi (tribal) Education Initiative
  - specialist educators (support children with disabilities)
  - professional development facilitators (provide ongoing support for teachers beyond initial training)
- Qualitative, narrative methodologies

(Ritchie, Duhn, Rau, & Craw, 2010; Ritchie & Rau, 2006, 2008)





# Education is **not** neutral

- Principle of empowerment recognises that all teaching is a political activity
- “Teaching and learning occur in socio-political contexts that are not neutral but are based on relations of power and privilege”  
(Zeichner et al., 1998, p. 166)



# Reflection as Central to Practice

- *Te Whāriki* contains questions for reflection associated with all the goals and learning outcomes in the document:
  - Questioning and reflecting on practice are first steps towards planning and evaluating the programme.
  - They encourage adults working with children to debate what they are doing and why they are doing it and lead to establishing an information base for continued planning and evaluation of the curriculum. (1996, p. 45).





# Reflective Questions in Te Whariki

- Strand of Belonging: Goal 1

*Children and their families experience an environment where connecting links with the family and the wider world are affirmed and extended.*

- In what ways are staff able to be a resource for parents, and families able to be a resource for staff? Can this be done in any other ways?
- What kinds of opportunity do the children have to go on outings or be part of cultural events? Would other available outings or events be appropriate?
- How is daily information about children shared with parents or family and between adults who work with children? How well does this meet the needs?



# Reflective Questions in Te Whariki

## Strand of Belonging: Goal 1

- What procedures are used to communicate with parents about a persistent problem, such as biting or not wanting to eat, and how effectively do these procedures contribute to resolving the problem in ways that are beneficial for the child?
- In what ways do the environment and programme reflect the values embodied in Te Tiriti o Waitangi, and what impact does this have on adults and children?" (p. 56)





# Te Whāriki as Challenge

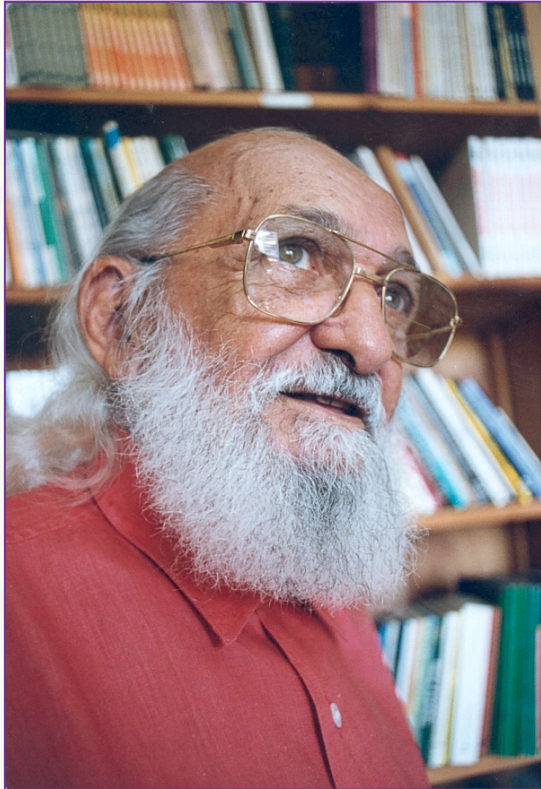
*Te Whāriki* has challenged our sector to transform from being very monocultural, based in Pākehā/western cultural assumptions and educational paradigms, to embrace and include Māori ways of knowing, being and doing.



# Keys to this Change Process

- Reflection
- Relationships
  - Honesty
  - Respect
  - Trust
- Commitment to a long-term process
- Openness to challenge and to change





# Praxis

“The process of reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it”

(Paulo Freire, 1972, p. 28)

Photo: <http://www.freireproject.org/content/photo-archive>



# Sociocultural theory recognises the child as a cultural being



Ani Doherty & her son Bob  
Photo:  
<http://mp.natlib.govt.nz/detail/?id=23073&l=en>

Once born the child inherits a number of rights called a birthright. The birthright includes:

- the right to be Māori and the attributes that come with it including *mauri* (life force), *wairua* (spiritual interconnectedness), *mana* (esteem, integrity, authority), *tapu* (sacredness), *whenua* (land) and *whanaungatanga* (family relatedness);
- the right to an identity and whakapapa as a member of the *whānau* (family), the *hapū* (subtribe), the *iwi* (tribe) and the *waka* (originating tribal group); (Mead, 1998, as cited in Joseph, 2007, p. 28).



# Holistic interconnectedness

That big concept of *wairua* [spiritual interconnectedness], and nurturing, caring and *waiaora* [wellbeing], and of course, that huge one for me where I see *tamariki* [children] embedded within is *mauri* [life force].

So I think it's that once again that connectedness with the, *whenua* [land] and for us to have that important role of nurturing and connecting children to *whenua* and those bigger concepts [Anahera]





# Relationships as Purpose

For to relate is to build and create relationships. It is about deciding to act. It is therefore activist. It is purposeful. The thing we must explore, though, to be effective, to make a difference, is what that purpose is? Is it social change, power redistribution, *tino rangatiratanga*, self-determination, autonomy ...?

(Whiu, 1994)



# Relationships, Love & Compassion

I think that's what it comes down to, is that relationship, because the Māori world, from what I observe, is so much about the family and about closeness and there's a lot of bonding there and it's a good lesson that we as Pākehā [European/white people] can learn actually, is to see that and to use that, and really have that love and that compassion with our children, and with the families, actually creating communities within the centres [Ariel]



# Ongoing Challenge

I think kindergarten's such a Pākehā institution and very clinical compared to the Māori way of supporting each other and that's a barrier that I've been trying to break down for a long time [Penny]



Photo: <http://www.educationaotearoa.org.nz/all-stories/2009/9/21/speaking-out-for-tamariki.html>





And so I've questioned my practices here, and one of my things was that I'm dead against early morning mat-times. It impinges on children's precious, precious time. So my concession was that the morning mat-time would be a Māori mat-time. We had to start the day with karakia (prayer), it's really important [Penny]



It's also our attitudes too though, because what we do comes from our hearts and I think a lot of the Pākehā [European/white] teachers, they've hardly started the journey and so they've got lots to learn. In fact they won't get anywhere until they start thinking in their hearts, that 'this is what I want to do'...



In most places, and I know there's wonderful teachers out there, but generally, because their world is Pākehā [European/white] and they have very, very little to do with the Māori world, it's like this alien land on the other side of the fence that they just have no idea about... the more you're in the Maori world, the more you learn, the more you let down the barriers that we've put up [Penny]





# **“KEEP OUT”**

Donna Awatere wrote in 1984 that there was a sign, visible only to Māori, above each kindergarten, playcentre, school or university which read:

**“Māori Keep Out: For White Use Only”**

Since non-Māori cannot see the sign, for them it does not exist, and they therefore see no need to take it down (Awatere, 1984, p. 21)



# Inviting Participation

I've door-knocked to get kids into the kindergarten and said to them, 'Oh look, do you want to enrol your child at kindergarten?'

They go, 'Oh, my kids can't come to kindy, that's for Pākehās'.

'No! Well who told you that rubbish?'

'Don't they have to go to kōhanga?'

I say, 'No, no. I'm a teacher there'.

'Are you?'

So it's really neat for them to know that kindergarten is not just for Pākehā whānau [Riana]



Photo:

<http://www.educationaotearoa.org.nz/all-stories/2009/9/21/speaking-out-for-tamariki.html>



## Inviting in the 'Other'

It's actually inviting the Other in, to be able to do that. So you put on your approachable, friendly - in a sense it's a mask - but after a while - at first it can be a mask, because you're not comfortable and you feel a little alien with it - but you're actually inviting the Other in and crossing those cultural divides in a sense [Katerina]





# Letting Go

When I think I went in with the idea that there was one way - my way. I look back and think I learnt a lot, I was humbled. It's a hard road.

I actually feel privileged to have been part of that process. Painful as it was at the beginning, it was almost like a grieving process, it really was a letting go of my own ego. Opening up to seeing and recognizing different values (Dana)



# Kia Manawanui - Commitment

I think the journey has been really long and really hard. There's been many battles fought - some won, some lost, in terms of wanting to deliver Kaupapa Māori [Māori philosophy] within kindergartens. Looking for support's been huge, knowing that I can't do this on my own. Through all the trials and tribulations I've come through, I know I'm here for the kids and for the whānau [families] and so that keeps me going [Riana]



Photo: <http://www.treaty2u.govt.nz/the-treaty-today/waitangi-tribunal/>



# Supporting Change as a Collective

*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 [Anne].*







# Some Findings

- ◆ Experiences reflective of tikanga Māori were enriching the early childhood programmes for the benefit of all children and families involved, particularly significant in their affirmation of Māori children's identity, and in engendering positive attitudes amongst non-Māori children towards Māori people and constructs
- ◆ Māori engagement and contribution in early childhood settings was being enhanced through programmes in which educators affirmed and enacted Māori values reflective of the local *mana whenua* (tribal authority)
- ◆ Māori and Pākehā colleagues working in partnerships demonstrating a genuine openness to multiple ways of being, knowing and doing (Ritchie, Duhn, Rau, & Craw, 2010; Ritchie & Rau, 2006, 2008)



“If we want to change the world we need to change the stories we tell” (Indigenous story-teller and author Thomas King, 2005)

Sharing time in reflective conversations generates new shared stories.



# Strength of the Collective



Stand like the kahikatea  
Stand against the storm  
Together, united,  
we will survive.

E tū kahikatea  
Hei whakapae  
ururoa  
Awhi mai, awhi atu  
Tātou tātou e  
Tātou tātou e.

Photo:<http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/photograph/27058/kahikatea-grove>





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