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Title: Enacting Tiriti-based practice in early childhood education in Aotearoa.

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Abstract:

The early childhood curriculum, Te Whāriki, suggests that educators consider the following reflective question: "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?" (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 56). Since Te Tiriti has become part of such early childhood education discourse in Aotearoa, teachers and teacher educators have engaged in consideration as to what this means in terms of their practice (Cubey, 1992; Rau & Ritchie, 2003,2006; Ritchie, 2002, 2007; Working Party on Cultural Issues. Rōpū Hanga Tikanga, 1990). This paper will utilise some data from a recent Teaching and Learning Research Initiative study, Te Puawaitanga (Ritchie and Rau, in press), to illustrate some possibilities for Tiriti-based enactment that honours the relationships between educators and whānau/families as central to the learning process and educational programme. Teachers in this view accept responsibility for generating programmes that reflect their commitment to Tiriti-based practice, involving tamariki and whānau of their centres as co-constructors in a process in realisation of the vision of Ka Hikitia – Managing for Success: Māori Education Strategy, 2008-2012, for Early childhood services to "promote and reinforce Māori cultural distinctiveness in the context of their teaching and learning environments" (Ministry of Education, 2008, p. 31).

Background:

The early childhood care and education community in Aotearoa have a proudly progressive history of commitment and responsiveness to social justice (May, 1992, 1997, 2001, 2006), including comparatively early recognition of the significance of Te Tiriti o Waitangi in both organisational structure and pedagogical practice (Cooper & Tangaere, 1994; Cubey, 1992; Hawira, Mitchell, & Baxter, 1990; Te Tari Puna Ora o Aotearoa/New Zealand Childcare Association, 1992; Working Party on Cultural Issues. Rōpū Hanga Tikanga, 1990). The strongly bicultural first national early childhood curriculum, Te Whäriki (Ministry of Education, 1996), promulgated somewhat incongruously during the National government's regime of the 1990s, is testament to the commitment of the early childhood care and education sector to a paradigm based in recognition of Mäori as the Indigenous people, language and culture of this land.

Despite this rhetorical commitment in organisational policies and curriculum documents, however, our colonialist legacy has meant that the huge majority of non-Mäori early childhood educators and teacher educators lack the skills and knowledge to implement these expectations. In 2006 the Ministry of Education reported that there were 533 Mäori registered early childhood teachers out of a total of 8091, (or 6.58%). The implications for te reo become clearer when we note that in the 2007 Ministry of Social Development Social Report reveals that only 1.6% of New Zealanders of European ancestry speak Mäori. Responses given in research asking early childhood teachers about their use of te reo may seem encouraging in that 75% of Pākehā early childhood teachers said that they use some Māori whilst teaching. However, 70% of these teachers reported themselves as speaking Māori "not very well" (Harkess, 2004, p. 12). Since language and literacy learning requires rigorous and comprehensive modelling of the requisite skills and vocabulary, it is clear that despite the stated intentions of policy makers, curriculum writers and many teachers, we face ongoing challenges with regard to ensuring equitable positioning of our Indigenous language and culture as a visible accessible taonga for all our tamariki, mokopuna and parents/whänau across the range of early childhood services.

Shifting Discourses:

Superseding the inherently racist theories of cultural deficit, deprivation and disadvantage, were a range of discourses that seek to recognise and validate cultures alongside that of the dominant middle-class Western construct. These include:
- culturally appropriate practice (Ministry of Education, 1993);
- culturally relevant pedagogy (Bartolome, 1994; Bowman, 1991; Darder, 1991; Ladson-Billings, 1995; O'Loughlin, 1995; Troyna, 1993);
- culturally responsive pedagogy (Gibbs, 2006; S. May, 1999; Osborne, 1991);
- culturally sensitive approaches (Gonzalez-Mena, 1992; Mangione, Lally, & Singer, 1993);
- culturally consistent and inclusive programs (Booze, Greer, & Derman-Sparks, 1996);
- culturally congruent critical pedagogy (Hyun, 1998);

- and educationally effective cultural compatibility (C. Jordan, 1985; Cathie Jordan, 1995).

All of these approaches recognise the "problem of discontinuity" between home and educational setting experienced by learners who are not members of the white middle-class dominant culture, and therefore do not share the same epistemological orientation (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 159). Attempts at implementing pedagogies based on affirmation of difference rather than a perception of deficit have been problematic however (Milner, 2007). Graham Hinangaroa Smith critiqued the 'taha Mäori' policies in this country for their tokenism and failure to deliver benefits for Mäori children (G. H. Smith, 1990). Similarly, Keri-Ann Hewitt, an Indigenous Hawaiian educationalist, wrote of her discomfort when she was required to impose culturally incompatible constraints such as preventing collaboration amongst children in a programme which ostensibly espoused 'cultural compatability' for Native Hawaiian children (Hewitt, 1996). Representation, legitimacy, and accountability to Indigenous people, as well as other ethnic groups, in the conceptualisation, resourcing and implementation of educational discourses, is central to ensuring cultural (and linguistic) integrity and validation (Bishop, 2005).

Recent post-modern, post-structural and post-colonial theorising has sought to uncover and recover pathways for Indigenous and other cultures within educational discourse and practice (Cannella & Viruru, 2004; Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence, 1999; Duhn, 2007; Mac Naughton, 2005; Viruru, 2005). This theorising is founded in recognition of ongoing residual uneven power effects of a legacy of colonisation, confronting educational policy-makers and practitioners to acknowledge the power and privilege attached to their positioning, and the pervasive hegemonic salience yet paradoxical invisibility of the dominant culture. We are being challenged to find ways to include voices that have been traditionally excluded from research and policy arenas, those of children, families and Mäori (Carr, 2000; Duhn, 2007; Graue & Hawkins, 2007; Jipson & Jipson, 2005; Kiro, 2005; Love, 2002; Mac Naughton, Smith, & Lawrence, 2003; Prout, 2000; Rau, 2007; A. B. Smith, Taylor, & Gollop, 2000; Soto, 2007).

Research:
The recently completed Teaching Learning Research Initiative[1] study, Te Puawaitanga – partnerships with tamariki and whānau in bicultural early childhood care and education (Ritchie and Rau, in press), utilised narrative research methodologies (Clandinin, 2007; Clandinin et al., 2006; Schulz, Schroeder, & Brody, 1997), informed by Kaupapa Māori and decolonising research and theoretical perspectives (Bishop, 2005; Jackson, 1992, 2007; Mead, 1996; G. H. Smith, 1997; L. T. Smith, 2005). The Mäori, Pākehā and Tauiwi educators involved in the study were all committed to enacting practices that are reflective of their commitment to honouring Mäori ways of knowing, being and doing. Data was gathered by and with a range of early childhood teachers and Playcentre facilitators from ten different early childhood centres throughout Aotearoa. Uitilising these narrative approaches, teachers as engaged co-researchers, sought the voices of children and families attending their centres. As co-directors of the project, we were very mindful of the power of our positioning as co-directors and report writers, and of the trust that had been placed in our hands to weave together a collective storying from the narratives that had been shared with us (Clandinin et al., 2006).

In previous research (Ritchie, 1999, 2002), some early childhood teachers were observed attempting to deliver on the bicultural expectations of Te Whäriki by somewhat instrumentally incorporating simple aspects from the Mäori language such as colours and numbers without any contingency to Mäori knowledges or tikanga. This was not the case in the Puawaitanga study, where the usage of te reo was integrally linked with enactment of tikanga. The following discussion draws on selected data from this study, which may illustrate some of the possibilities and strategies employed by teachers committed to strengthening the delivery of te reo and tikanga within their practice and programmes.

Katherine[2], a Tauranga kindergarten teacher, commented that the integration of te reo is important but equally important is that the "children to understand its concepts and contexts too." Penny is a very experienced head teacher in a Hamilton kindergarten. She leads very gently by example in enacting

[2] Names have been changed.

her centre philosophy founded in concepts of manaakitanga (caring) and whanaungatanga (relationships):

> As a Pākehā, I can be a good role model for our Pākehā families and show them it's not scary, it can be done, it's fabulous. And I say to them, 'Whanaungatanga is something that is universal. You don't have to be Māori to practice whanaungatanga. It's just a fabulous concept. We can all be there for each other'.

Data gathered during the study illustrates that the respect that these teachers emulate towards the Māori language and culture is further applied to other cultures present in the centre, children proffering positive recognition of difference.

The narratives from the teaching team of a Dunedin kindergarten, related their shared journey celebrating a kindergarten community honouring and inclusive of not only Māori, but of diversity, seen in their inclusive use of our third national language, New Zealand Sign Language:

> Our bicultural programme is fully integrated into [our kindergarten's] life. We teach sign language alongside te reo and it is a wonderful way for children to learn te reo. Often if no one can remember the kupu we are asking, then we do the sign and it triggers the kupu! … These tamariki are experiencing a bicultural education that is normal.

The inclusive respect for languages and cultures serves as a re-visibilising of culture(s), including a repositioning of the Mäori language and culture as normal and central to daily interactions, providing a counter-story to discourses that position 'mainstream' epistemology as 'normal', marginalising that of 'others'. Children who have learnt this respectful orientation may well be considered to be "fuller human beings for having access to multiple expressions of reality, and be better prepared to deal with the complexities of a shifting, shrinking world" (Delpit & Dowdy, 2002, p. 204). In the following narrative, the Dunedin teachers describe how their enthusiasm as learners of te reo, encourages and supports both Mäori parents who, through their children's involvement in the kindergarten, are becoming more engaged with te reo and tikanga, and also the empowerment of Mäori children as te reo speakers and leaders:

> We believe that commitment and daily practice of integrating te reo and tikanga Māori is very visible and supports our kaupapa – through Kahurangi's keen response to new kupu when she is excited to transfer this to home – this is the Te Whäriki principle of whānau tangata in action, it also shows the tuakana – teina strategy where she is the competent person sharing new info with others and helping them to this competency. We also celebrate the concept ako, where the role of teaching and learning is reciprocal, Kahurangi is the teacher with the new kupu.

> We know that she is proud of these accomplishments and know that the principle of whakamana is also enacted in our daily practice for her to demonstrate this. Seeing Kahurangi with this thirst for challenge and extension is like 'life-blood' to teachers who are also keen to keep passionate about delivering on a treaty-based curriculum. We believe that this reflects that Kahurangi feels valued with her learning, we take her seriously and she knows this, when we don't know the answer we are honest and say "I don't know" and together we are researching, often off to pukapuka or rorohiko. We see the glee in her eye when she asks us questions we don't know the answer too – authenticity is alive in our practice.

> We perceive Kahurangi's father Wiremu as feeling affirmed as a generation who missed the opportunity to live and learn his native tongue, his excitement and celebration of Kahurangi's new learning is welcomed and implemented into their family context. We see him as proud and willing to learn alongside his daughter, who is actively participating in reo in the kindergarten context. We believe this is non-threatening for Wiremu because we as teachers are non-Māori but supported by Māori resource teachers, so again the community of learners is embraced and practiced without anyone feeling whakamā. We also believe that the Te Whäriki principle of ngā hōnonga/relationships has been a key to this success - we have a relaxed and friendly relationship with this family which has enabled a non-threatening approach to building on reo together.

Through their enactment, and their narrativising of their process, the teachers in this study demonstrate that Te Whäriki (Ministry of Education, 1996), continues to hold promise for Tiriti-based early

childhood practice. For these educators, Tiriti-based practice is an enactment of whanaungatanga, or collective responsibility for wellbeing (Durie, 1997; Pere, 1982; G. H. Smith, 1995), as reflected within Te Whäriki which states that "The well-being of children is interdependent with the well-being and culture of adults in the early childhood setting; whänau/families; local communities and neighbourhoods", and requires that their cultures and knowledges are respected (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 42). As Carlina Rinaldi (2006) has signalled, wellbeing should be viewed through a collective rather than individualistic lens, recognising our inter-connectedness within communities, across cultures, and as planetary citizens.

Conclusion:

The legacy of our colonialist heritage is seen in the ongoing educational and socio-economic disparities for Mäori (Ministry of Education, 2007; Ministry of Health, 2006). Well-intended government policies to increase the participation of Mäori in early childhood education are unlikely to succeed until "quality, culturally validating early childhood services are locally available and affordable to these families" (Ritchie & Rau, 2007, p. 111). The teachers within this study demonstrate enactment of Tiriti-based pedagogies, inclusive and affirming of Mäori and other members of their communities. Whilst the Mäori teacher co-researchers were fluent speakers of te reo, the other teachers exhibited varying levels of competency, yet, as seen in the example above, sought strategies to support their ongoing language development. Many actively sought the support of Mäori colleagues and whänau in order to enhance their programmes' Mäori content.

Since our education sector remains largely monolingual, prospective teachers arrive at teacher education provider institutions with a 'deficit' in terms of proficiency in te reo, despite its 'official language' status. Teacher education providers are thus a potentially crucial intervention site in breaking the self-perpetuating cycle of the assumption of dominance and superiority by Western institutions throughout the colonial era. With the bilingual curriculum Te Whäriki as our overarching inspiration, and with its historically strongly progressive and socio-culturally responsive paradigm, early childhood care and education in this country is positioned to provide potentially powerful counter-narratives to colonialist and deficit pedagogies.

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