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Biculturalism in early childhood education in Aotearoa/New Zealand: A consideration of attitudes, policy, and practice

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This article discusses teacher quality and the preparation of high quality teachers in relation to bicultural and bilingual preparedness to teach into early childhood centres across Aotearoa/New Zealand. In particular, the divide across and between policy, legislation, the practice of educationalists understanding, and their skill and knowledge about quality outcomes for Māori children are looked at. Possibilities are presented that seek to enhance the educational achievement for all learners in Aotearoa/New Zealand, with particular emphasis on the voices and stories of *tangata whenua*.

Introduction

The principles and practice of biculturalism are foregrounded in Aotearoa/New Zealand's founding document, Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Māori version of the Treaty of Waitangi), and mandated in many policy documents and legislation. Within the early childhood education sector, even though many teachers (both preservice and inservice), along with their educators in teacher training facilities, may recognise and discuss the importance of biculturalism, a large majority of early childhood centres continue to educate children from a monocultural, monolingual perspective and position (Education Review Office [ERO], 2008, 2010; Ritchie, 2002, 2003; Williams, Broadley, & Te-Aho, 2012).

Reports published by the Ministry of Education [MOE] (2002, 2008, 2009a, 2009b, 2011a, 2011b, 2011c, 2011d) and ERO (2008, 2010, 2012) detail the government's expectations for strengthening bicultural and bilingual education (*te reo Māori me ngā tikanga-ā-iwi*). The message in these reports is clear: those involved in education need to be actively aware of the types of contributions and commitments required of them, so that Māori culture and language are nurtured and protected. The 2013-2017 Māori Education Strategy, *Ka Hikitia* (MOE, 2013) has a vision of Māori students enjoying and achieving education success as Māori. This vision includes that Māori identity, language and culture is valued and incorporated into their teaching and learning. It is vitally important that Māori see and hear their own narratives embedded within practices and assessments in the places where they work and play.

As educationalists with a strong interest in the recognition and use of Māori language and Māori cultural equity, we are working on a research project designed to investigate the efforts being made by the early childhood sector and



initial early childhood teacher education within Aotearoa/New Zealand to embrace the government's mandate to actively support the revitalisation and status of te reo Māori me ngā tikanga-ā-iwi (Māori language and culture). As part of this work, we recently piloted a survey designed to capture early childhood education student-teachers' attitudes and values with regard to biculturalism and biliteracy. We briefly present the findings of this survey in this paper, and then set and discuss them within the context of understandings of biculturalism in early childhood teacher education in Aotearoa/New Zealand. We discuss also the policy framework that informs the implementation of the principles and practice of biculturalism and biliteracy in the early childhood education sector.

Biculturalism in practice

Ideas as to what biculturalism “looks like” or *should* look like within the context of Aotearoa/New Zealand, in general, and educational settings, in particular, vary in the literature. However, the ones that accord with how we, as early childhood teacher educators, see biculturalism playing out in educational sectors within which we practise (i.e., tertiary and early childhood), are similar in theme. Manna (2003), for example, states that biculturalism means both Treaty of Waitangi partners being “treated alike and protected in the same way, to have participation in all things, and to have a say as equals, in partnership” (p. 38). Skerrett (2007) supports this position in her article on language relative to tino rangatiratanga (autonomy). She emphasises that a strong bicultural, bilingual (*te reo Māori me ngā tikanga-ā-iwi*) community is one where everyone takes responsibility for cultural continuation “so that [all] children will lead rich, meaningful [and] creative lives” (p. 11). Bishop (1996), May (2002), Salmond (1991), and Smith (2010) maintain that biculturalism is “a commitment that was founded on this country's postcolonial history” (p. 1) and that the significance, in terms of education, is the articulation “of the partnership between Māori and European [Pākehā]” (p. 4).

However, although Aotearoa/New Zealand's education system is touted as world class (Milne, 2009), there is considerable evidence that the promise of a partnership is not realised in many Aotearoa/New Zealand early childhood centres and schools. Māori students continue to fare poorly, on average and relative to Pākehā students, in both national and international studies of educational assessment and achievement, such as those conducted by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

Evidence also shows that Māori children who are educated in Māori-medium educational settings achieve better results than Māori children in English-medium educational settings (Tuuta, Bradnam, Hynds, Higgins, & Broughton, 2004; MOE, 2013). The difference in their education appears to be the importance ascribed to tikanga Māori (Māori customs and traditions [*ngā tikanga-ā-iwi*]). It would seem that an important aspect of Māori achievement is culturally responsive teachers who teach in culturally responsive settings. Indeed, many Māori parents want their children to learn their language, and they expect that their children will have opportunities to do this within English-medium educational settings (Ritchie, 2003).



While the educational community, government and other educational stakeholders acknowledge the vital importance of ensuring academic success for Māori (ERO, 2010), it is *how* the education they receive is delivered that will make the difference (Durie, 2001). Māori “underachievement” is accordingly increasingly being seen as something that cannot be put right by non-Māori methods of teaching and assessment; acknowledging and supporting Māori reality, with respect to living and learning (Durie, 2001), needs to be a necessary component of the educational space for Māori (MOE, 2009a). *Ka Hikitia* confirms this by stating that “Māori students are more likely to achieve when they see themselves, and their experiences and knowledge reflected in teaching and learning” (MOE, 2013, p. 3).

The policy framework

Many policies holding expectations that teachers and others will implement *ngā tikanga-ā-iwi* (*te reo Māori me ngā tikanga*) when working with children and when engaged in other matters relevant to *ngā ao Māori* (Māori worldviews) have been developed at the political level.¹ Certainly, there is a Crown requirement, with respect to the early childhood sector, that it advance from its *obligation* to develop a bicultural, bilingual curriculum document to the stage of being actively engaged in tangible bicultural, bilingual practice. The policy embedded in the early childhood curriculum document, *Te Whāriki* (MOE, 1996), is clear: “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” (p. 42). The document also stipulates that children be “given the opportunity to develop knowledge and an understanding of the cultural heritages of both partners to *Te Tiriti o Waitangi*” (p. 9). However, most government documentation does not specifically state that it is a requirement that teachers are bilingual, biliterate or bicultural; words such as ‘culturally response’ are loosely used to describe intentions.

Te Tiriti o Waitangi guarantees to Māori partnership, protection and participation. However, many commentators and researchers, among them Bishop (1996) and Smith (2003), argue convincingly that Māori continue to suffer the policies of colonial imperialism and assimilation, which not only contradict the intent of partnership in the Treaty but also impact adversely on the economic, social, educational and cultural status of Māori. Article One of *Te Tiriti* places responsibility on the government for protecting, promoting and working in partnership with Māori. Because teachers are in a governance role, they are required to adhere to the principles of that article. To effectively exercise that role, teachers must ensure that *te reo Māori me ngā tikanga* are protected and promoted and that meaningful relationships are developed with the learning community.

In 1997, the New Zealand Government acknowledged efforts to revitalise *te reo* by agreeing that the Crown had a duty to care for and protect *te reo Māori* as a living language. The government, accordingly, in partnership with Māori,

¹ The Māori Language Act 1977, Graduating Teacher Standards, Registered Teacher Criteria, Māori Language Strategy, Te Mangai Paho, Waitangi Tribunal Establishment, Lands Act 1948, Education Act 1989, and the Education Review Office are examples of where policies lie in relation to bicultural and bilingual recognition and development.



developed a Māori language strategy: *Te Rautaki Reo Māori* (Te Puni Kōkiri & Te Taura Whiri i te reo Māori, 2003). Efforts to embed the strategy in educational policies followed, such that teacher educators and teachers are now required to have knowledge of *tikanga* and *te reo Māori* and to work “responsively and effectively” within the bicultural context of Aotearoa/New Zealand (ERO, 2008, 2010; MOE, 1996; New Zealand Teachers Council, 2007, 2010). Although interpretation of what *working responsively and effectively* means in terms of practice remains, we suggest, contested, the direction behind policy is aligning with Article One of *Te Tiriti o Waitangi*. Honouring *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* places responsibility on teachers and centres to protect all things that are a *taonga* [treasure] to Māori, which includes *te reo Māori me ngā tikanga–ā-iwi*. Article Two of *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* refers to Māori having Tino Rangatiratanga [total sovereignty] over their ‘*taonga*’. Therefore, a partnership with Māori and the Crown (teachers, schools, educationalists) clearly needs to be in place.

With respect to the early childhood sector, both the Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations (2008) and the Graduating Teacher Standards (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2007) recognise:

that the Treaty of Waitangi extends equal status and rights to Māori and Pākehā alike ... [graduates will] use te reo Māori me ngā tikanga-a-iwi [principals, protocols and practices of the iwi (Māori tribes) of the local community] appropriately in their practice ... [and will] demonstrate respect for te reo Māori me ngā tikanga-a-iwi in their practice. (pp. 1-2)

Furthermore, *Tātaiako* (MOE 2011b), the cultural competencies for teachers of Māori learners, links with New Zealand Teachers Council graduating and registered teachers criteria.

The Registered Teacher Criteria (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2010) require fully registered teachers to meet key indicators of *ngā ao Māori* by demonstrating “respect for the heritages, languages and cultures of both partners to the Treaty of Waitangi”, working “effectively within the bicultural context of Aotearoa New Zealand,” developing and practising “the relevant use of te reo Māori me ngā tikanga-a-iwi in context” and “specifically and effectively address[ing] the educational aspirations of ākonga Māori, displaying high expectations for their learning” (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2012, pp. 70–71).

Despite these requirements, the most recent ERO assessment of partnership with *whānau Māori* in early childhood education centres concluded that “many centres reflected only a surface level understanding of te reo and tikanga” (ERO, 2012, p. 16). The review reminded all staff (managers and teachers) within those settings that they needed to speak *te reo Māori* “throughout the day in the context of children’s learning and play” (p. 16) and to “promote with whānau the benefits of a programme that reflects the language, culture and identity of Māori children” (p. 16). Further, *He Pou Tataki* (ERO, 2013), the guidelines of how ERO reviews early childhood services, discuss *tiriti*-based indicators that state that “Teachers [should] provide good quality language resources to support children’s first languages including Māori and Pacific.” (p. 38). The bicultural



curriculum indicators include that teachers be assessed on their use of *te reo Māori*, and that teachers are:

- Open to “listening to culture”, allowing space and time for *whānau Māori* to tell their stories, create their own images, and listen to their own voices.
- Teacher practice incorporates the principles of *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* (partnership, participation and protection)
- Programs include Māori concepts, knowledge, skills, attitudes, *reo*, practices, customs, values and beliefs
- Teachers use *te reo Māori*
- Teacher practice reflects the competencies in *Tātaiako* (MOE, 2011b).

(ERO, 2013, p. 39)

These directives indicated that little had changed in the two years since ERO’s stipulation that “managers and educators need to recognise the importance of acknowledging Māori children’s cultural identity and heritage” (ERO, 2010, p. 2), despite the office’s efforts over time, not only to lift teachers’ awareness of their cultural and linguistic obligations with regard to *te reo Māori* (ERO, 2008, 2010, 2011), but also to make clear the expectation that they actively further bicultural understanding in their workplaces. *Te Whāriki* (MOE, 1996), informed as it is by *Te Tiriti o Waitangi*, has a much stonger direction for teachers to support children to “...gain the knowledge of the nation’s languages” (p. 19) through “...languages flourishing in their communities ...” (p. 12). Further, teachers must “...include Māori people, places, and artefacts and opportunities to learn and use the Māori language through social interaction” (p. 43), and each child’s “...languages and symbols of their own and other cultures are [to be] promoted and protected” (p. 72-81). Children should have “...confidence that their first language is valued” and this directive is inclusive of *te reo Māori* and other “community languages” (MOE, 1996, p. 76). ERO (2013) suggest that “services must address Te Tiriti o Waitangi, and that this should be the driving force for the revitalisation of Māori language and culture” (p. 7). In essence, there is an expectation, we feel, that requires early childhood practitioners to achieve the aim of making early childhood centres’ bicultural and bilingual (*te reo Māori me ngā tikanga-ā-iwi*) practices seen, heard and felt by all who attend their services.

The pilot student survey

Method

At the beginning of the 2011 academic year and again at the beginning of the 2012 academic year,² we asked beginning first-year student-teachers (numbering 233 in total, 50 from Rangi Ruru College and 183 from Canterbury University, both in Christchurch, New Zealand) to participate in a pilot research project. We wanted to ask them, via a survey, about the types of bicultural experiences they had had and the attitudes they had brought with them to their

² The reason why we sought survey respondent in both 2011 and 2012 is that the Christchurch earthquake of 22 February 2011, which occurred just one week into the new academic year, adversely affected student participation in our study.



tertiary education. The survey was conducted within a few weeks of the students beginning their studies at the respective tertiary institutions.

Students were informed about the project by a person other than ourselves and invited to fill in a form that had been approved by the University of Canterbury ethics committee. The form provided written information about the project and asked students to give their signed consent to complete the survey. The form also assured responders of their anonymity to us, as the researchers. In an effort to have as many students as possible answer the questionnaire, we gave students a range of options for completing it. These included filling it out immediately, taking it home, or accessing it through the internet. Other than those students who opted to fill out the survey immediately, intending responders were given a week to return their paper. The majority chose to fill the form out on the day it was given to them. The questionnaire comprised 39 statements, an example of which is “Children can successfully learn Māori language as a second language at early childhood centres”. Students were asked to state their level of agreement with each statement by using a five-point Likert response scale, in which 1 was “strongly disagree” and 5 was “strongly agree”. Another 17 questions asked students to comment on provocations, such as: “Think about the word biculturalism. What comes to mind? List as many ideas as you can think of.” In the hope of receiving honest and frank answers to the 56 survey items, we assured the students that their responses would be anonymous, as only the project informer would have access to their initial named form.

Findings

Forty-seven of the 233 students completed the survey. The ethnicity of these students was predominantly Pākehā (European New Zealander), all lived in Christchurch and their average age was 20, with an age range of 18 to 55 years. All respondents but one was female, indicating the predominantly female intake into early childhood initial teacher education in Christchurch, New Zealand. Returned responses revealed that 50% of students had experienced minimal or no contact with ngā āhuatanga Māori (Māori aspects), including exposure to Māori language, visits to *marae* and other Māori spaces, and various other forms of association with *ngā ao Māori*.

When students were asked if they thought it was important for them, as student-teachers, to learn *te reo Māori*, all but one agreed that it was. Their reasons for this response varied, but overall centred on the notion that *te reo Māori* should be fostered because it identifies New Zealanders and is part of our history. The one student who responded with a no qualified the response by saying that, although teachers needed to have an understanding and respect for *te reo* and that they (the student) would like to learn it, all that teachers needed were “some phrases that can be used in everyday classroom use but not at a fluent level.”

Ninety-eight percent of the students thought having some knowledge of *te reo Māori* was important for themselves for a variety of reasons. For example, they said it was important to keep the language alive because it is part of Aotearoa/New Zealand’s history. They also said language is a part of Aotearoa/New Zealand’s culture that the people of this country should not want to lose. One responder stated that having *te reo Māori* knowledge would help them better understand the Māori children they were likely to teach.



In response to the question, “Should every child in New Zealand learn about Māori culture?” 32 of the students agreed that they should. The predominant reasons given for this response were that Māori culture is an important part of Aotearoa/New Zealand history and learning about Māori culture would help promote tolerance and understanding of diversity in society. Reasons given by those who disagreed with the idea that all children should learn about Māori culture included such notions as not everyone is Māori or from Aotearoa/New Zealand, some children and families may not want to learn about Māori culture, and doing so should be the child’s choice.

When the students were asked, “Should *te reo Māori me ngā tikanga* be learnt by Māori alone?” all said no. However, of those who had initially said not everyone in Aotearoa/New Zealand should have to learn *te reo Māori*, one respondent thought that, while the learning of *te reo Māori* should be compulsory for Māori, it should be optional for anyone else.

Overall, we considered that the majority of students showed an enlightened view of their bicultural/biliteral responsibilities, as future teachers, to *te reo Māori me ngā āhuatanga*. Their responses indicated that they considered learning about Māori language and culture, and promoting both in their eventual classrooms to be their duty.

Although some of the students seemed to have relatively clear ideas about what biculturalism meant to them, both as New Zealanders and future teachers, all of the students seemed to have little idea of how well the country, in general, and early childhood centres, in particular, were bicultural and bilingual (*te reo Māori me ngā tikanga-ā-iwi*) in practice. Students also appeared to have little understanding of what bicultural practice might mean in terms of their initial teacher education.

Discussion

The results of our pilot survey resonate with the findings of a nationwide study conducted in 2003 by Te Puni Kōkiri (the Ministry of Māori Development). The survey targeted family members with principal responsibility for the education of a child. These people were asked about their values, attitudes and beliefs in regard to *te reo Māori*.

Responses indicated that, while nearly all respondents considered that it was important for Māori to learn and retain the language, opinions differed in relation to the benefits of retaining it. For example, non-Māori (all those who did not identify as Māori) generally maintained that government support of Māori language was a “good thing” but they did not think it was particularly important for the government to be involved in this work or for them (the respondents) to learn *te reo Māori*. In comparison, Māori felt that it was not only a good thing for *te reo Māori* to be retained but that government involvement and society-wide learning of the language was of utmost importance (Te Puni Kōkiri, 2003, p. 21).

Sixty percent of the non-Māori respondents considered enough Māori was being spoken in the wider community. For these people, the use of *te reo Māori* had functional limits, beyond which there was “no need for it” (Te Puni Kōkiri, 2003, p. 22). The limits were considered to be “cultural purposes” and the status of *te reo Māori* as a “non-global language”, presumably rendering it as a language



that does not need to be taken as seriously as those languages that are spoken globally (Te Puni Kōkiri, 2003, p. 22). A later survey conducted by Te Puni Kōkiri in 2006 showed that there was a 10% drop from the 2003 survey in terms of those who thought *te reo Māori* should be learned in schools. Further, the 2006 survey recorded a drop in how non-Māori accorded respect for speakers of *te reo Māori*.

The alignment between our students' responses and the findings of Te Puni Kōkiri's 2006 survey suggests that attitudes may have changed little, and in fact declined from their 2003 survey, with respect to *te reo Māori* amongst non-Māori (in particular) over the past decade. We acknowledge, however, that our survey has thus far been conducted with only a small number of students representative of a particular group in society (young Pākehā women), and that their views and experiences may not speak for those of the wider Aotearoa/New Zealand adult population. However, we consider that the survey has merit for our purposes with regard to bicultural bilingual (*te reo Māori me ngā tikanga-ā-iwi*) practice in the early childhood education sector, and so will be using it, with a few modifications, to gather information about experiences and attitudes of not only preservice early childhood teachers, but also inservice early childhood teachers and teacher educators.

Our survey, and our wider project, for that matter, is premised on the understanding that people bring with them to teaching positions values and cultural beliefs that can and do impact on the way others accept, reject or decide what biculturalism means for them. In Aotearoa/New Zealand, we maintain an early childhood teaching profession where white women are the majority: 28,736 as of July 2010, as opposed to 3,669 Māori women, 1,421 Māori men and 10,704 Pākehā men (MOE, 2011c). These are the people who have the biggest influence on what is being taught in our centres and how. They are consequently responsible for incorporating Māori language and culture into the centres. Coupled with that, the hegemonic rhetoric of Jack Hunn's 1961 report of integration (see May, 2002), where he wrote that "pressure [ought to] be brought to bear on [Māori] to conform to ... the pakeha mode of life" (Hunn, 1961, pp. 14-16), a life, which May (2002) says Hunn equated with modernity and progress. Many of our students are children of the parents from the generation of the Hunn report, and we would argue they may well be products of his deficit ideology of Māori culture and language, supported as it is by the imposed English model of education.

We suggest that monocultural, monolingual teachers tend not to recognise that their own culture, values and beliefs are so deeply imbedded that they impact heavily on their everyday practices and, from there, on the attitudes and feelings of the children they teach. Seventy-eight percent of our Māori children attend English-medium early childhood centres (Early Childhood Analysis) and, as *Ka Hikitia: The Māori Education Strategy* (MOE, 2009b) points out, if these children are not to feel alienated in terms of who they are and from the learning presented to them in educational settings, then teachers need to strengthen their abilities as teachers to ensure Māori students live and learn as Māori.

Yet, from our positions as academics, teacher educators and of Māori descent, we frequently hear Māori teachers and/or teachers of Māori, as well as Pākehā teachers who are committed to biculturalism and bilingualism, say that they hear comments in their work from other teachers and parents that appear to justify



continuation of monocultural, monolingual practices in education. They report statements such as, “We don’t have any Māori children here [in this centre]” or “These children can’t speak English well enough yet [to warrant learning Māori]” or “Tikanga Māori—(Māori values) are more important [areas of learning] than is learning of te reo.”

While this information is anecdotal in nature, we suspect that it reflects relatively pervasive arguments that teachers employ to mask their lack of development and their abrogation to their policy responsibilities, including the early childhood curriculum, *Te Whāriki* (MOE, 1996), and their commitment to *Te Tiriti o Waitangi*. Verification of the attitudes and practices inherent in such statements is another imperative driving our broader research project.

Milne (2009), a Pākehā school principal from Auckland, discusses in her research that non-Māori teachers need to be brave enough to honestly examine their own prejudices, including where they come from and how this may impact on their values and practices. Indeed, our experience is that tensions are more likely to arise amongst those who refuse to provide for biculturalism and bilingualism than those who choose to work cooperatively towards learning about and initiating steps to include them.

We consider that all teachers, not just early childhood, are most likely to embrace the bicultural imperative if they truly value the place and status of Māori culture and language within Aotearoa/New Zealand’s education system. We also maintain that teachers’ understanding of that value can be heightened by awareness of work by researchers such as Barlow (1996), Colvin, Dachyshyn, and Togiasso (2012), Ritchie (2003), and others (ERO, 2012; May, 2002; Pere, 1991), who convincingly argue that language is the vehicle through which culture can truly be understood. Fishman (2001) goes so far as to claim that cultures can never be truly understood if “viewed” through the lens of another language, while Trumbull and Pacheco (2005) have found that, when children lose the language of their parents, they become cut off from many cultural meanings that can be conveyed only through that language. Further discussions need to take place in regard to the quality and the constructs in teaching and learning *te reo Māori* for teachers and children in early childhood.

Our experience in Aotearoa/New Zealand early childhood centres is that, in general, when the teachers endeavour to speak *te reo Māori* to the children, they rarely employ the integrated, descriptive and interesting contextual language they use when speaking in English. Instead, they tend to employ directives — come here, go there, wash your hands — because these repetitive types of command are usually more easily learned by second-language learners (Isenberg & Jalongo, 2009; Mihaka, 2008; Trumbull & Pacheco, 2005).

Another medium of language transference is waiata (song), which teachers, according to Mihaka (2008), generally say is easier for them to use, in part because children usually enjoy *waiata*. While evidence, such as that from the researchers just cited, does support the use of *waiata* in the pursuit of second-language acquisition, we have found that *waiata* in early childhood settings is predominantly performed during an organised daily mat routine, rather than used as a significant cultural and bilingual learning tool throughout centre programs. Research, such as that conducted by Young (2006), shows that “music as performance” typically has an adverse impact on children’s ability to



self-initiate music opportunities. It also tends to be culturally controlled. This research supports our experience in early childhood settings, wherein non-Māori habitually decide on which facets of Māori language and culture will be made evident to the children and how.

Paulo Freire (1972) stated that education is charged with subtle and not-so-subtle messages that adults, in particular, transmit knowingly but more often unknowingly, hence the danger of a type of education that may privilege one's own values and knowledges over those of other people. Gillborn (2005) also writes about the importance of students and teachers realising how much influence they carry within their role. Simmons, Mafire'o, Webster, Jakobs, and Thomas (2008) argue that people must first understand their own culture, for it is then that they can develop change directed towards bicultural practice.

According to Milne (2009), educators must also reflect on how *their* culture influences the culture of their respective educational settings and, from there, find a place in their value systems that allows for different values, languages and ways of being and knowing. They must find value in another culture so that the differences are celebrated rather than feared. The role of centre managers and teachers, in this regard, is firstly to become aware of their own personal positioning and then to facilitate change and to reflect carefully about their influence within centres. Milne (2009) also avers that we must understand the benefits of being Māori and non-Māori and accept that we do not have to be one people to grow as a nation.

This thinking reminds those of us involved in early childhood education that every person who attends an early childhood centre in Aotearoa/New Zealand has a culture that they bring with them to that environment (MOE, 1996; Hydon, 2011). Their culture includes not only their language, stories, clothing and artefacts, but also how they interact and behave, and their values, knowledge and beliefs. As Earl, Timperley, and Stewart (as cited in MOE, 2011b) point out, cultural responsiveness is

much more than introducing myths and metaphors into class. It means interacting with their [the students'] families to truly understand their reality; it means understanding the socio-political history and how it impacts on classroom life; it means challenging personal beliefs and actions; and, it means changing practices to engage all students in their learning and make the classroom a positive learning place for all students. (p. 3)

Teachers and managers in those centres, along with individuals training to teach in them who recognise this diversity in our learning communities have at hand the beginnings of realising not only safe bicultural practice and behaviours, but also multicultural practice and behaviours.

The alignment of the findings of our small pilot study of student-teacher beliefs and attitudes with other findings and commentary in the literature indicates that teachers, whether preservice or inservice, need much more support in order to gain the knowledge base they need to implement and teach within a bicultural context. We maintain, as do others (e.g., Fishman, 2001; Hornberger, 2006; MOE, 2004), that all teachers need to be involved in developing an ongoing responsive strategic plan for bicultural practice that is implemented throughout



their respective educational settings. Government policies and documentation need to have a clear and consistent focus on teachers achieving competency in speaking and teaching *te reo Māori me ngā tikanga-ā-iwi*. Further unpacking of what this will mean for educators needs to occur so that indicators that clearly identify directions for the effective use of *te reo Māori* by all educators is prominent and consistent. ERO (2012) has made a start by providing self review questions such as, “To what extent is Māori language, culture and identity integrated in daily interactions” (p. 28). With respect to early childhood education, we consider such a plan needs to be a fundamental practice that centre managers urgently engage with. We also believe that it is very important that children are exposed to the full richness of *te reo Māori*, as opposed to hearing only directives and nursery-rhyme mat songs that may not develop into higher ongoing learning. A strategic plan that enables staff to investigate and challenge their assumptions and extend their thinking (Mitchell & Cubey, 2003), would be, we think, a useful tool for practitioners and managers alike. Such a plan would focus on critical reflection and detail how this would be facilitated. The incentive and directive, however, needs to come from management, and its outcome, in the form of professional development, needs to be an intrinsic and ongoing part of the activity of all centre staff.

A best evidence synthesis study on professional development for early childhood centre staff (Biddulph, Biddulph, & Biddulph, 2003; Mitchell & Cubey, 2003) found that effective professional development happens over an *extended* period of time. It also found that “Critical reflection is particularly valuable in challenging deficit views associated with ethnicity, socio-economic status, child’s age, parental knowledge, and gender” (Mitchell & Cubey, 2003, p. 92). Williams, Broadley, and Te-Aho (2012) likewise advocate that teachers reflect on their own inherited perceptions of and ideas about Māori culture and that they unpack (decolonise) cultural assumptions and values that may possibly work against or undermine practice that is deemed “safe” within bicultural and bilingual contexts. Williams and colleagues argue that the ability of teachers to reflect in this way and then to translate those reflections into equitable pedagogical practices is vital in terms of developing, supporting and maintaining effective bicultural and bilingual standards and practices in educational settings.

Conclusion

Despite policy driving Aotearoa/New Zealand’s commitment to realising bicultural and bilingual values and practice in society, including educational settings, our pilot survey of early childhood student-teachers’ values and beliefs in relation to these matters and our review of relevant literature suggests that we have some way to go before reality reflects the promise. We concur with Rau and Ritchie (2005), who claim that effective bicultural practice in early childhood education starts with a “changing of the heart” — of student-teachers *wanting* to develop biculturally and bilingually for the benefit of the nation. They suggest that the focus in teacher training in this respect needs to be on supporting student-teachers in ways that give them the desire to change in whatever ways they need to. We recommend that teacher training institutions take the time to develop strategies that will support students to meaningfully engage with bicultural and bilingual contexts.



We consider that centre managers need to take the same approach, by supporting their staff to change in the ways needed. Williams et al. (2012) argue similarly when they state, "... no number of excellent resources or teaching framework will change pockets of resistance unless educators want to change and unless they understand that it is imperative that they do change" (p. 29). Professional development focused on reflective practice, especially with regard to values, beliefs and behaviours, has to be the starting point. The next step is development of centre-wide plans directed at embracing and implementing practice that values and supports biculturalism and bilingualism. Such plans should be clear that the use of *te reo Māori* is integral to becoming bicultural.

Milne's (2009) challenge to reflect on and then respond to these questions provides a useful frame of reference throughout this process: "What is the real colour of your spaces? In your environment, your charter, strategic planning, goals, teacher planning, contexts for study, assessment practices, teacher-student relationships, community interaction and relationships, who really has the power and whose knowledge really counts?" (p. 54). As educators who are advocating for bilingual bicultural recognition and practice, we, too will continue to ask those questions, not only of our students but also of ourselves and our colleagues.

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