CHAPTER 3

Te Whāriki as a Potential Lever for Bicultural Development

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ABSTRACT

Te Whāriki, the early childhood curriculum of Aotearoa New Zealand, was developed in partnership with Māori, the indigenous people of this country. The writers were aware of the guarantees of self-determination and protection that were granted to Māori in the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi/Tīrōti o Waitangi. This chapter discusses the meanings and implications of the Treaty document, before considering content within Te Whāriki that recognises Treaty commitments. It draws on data from a study of how a commitment to the Treaty was implemented within a university education programme for early childhood teachers, in order to explore some of the issues and dilemmas that teachers face in applying the bicultural aspirations contained within Te Whāriki.
Introduction

Any understanding of the bicultural context and commitments of *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996b), the early childhood curriculum document for Aotearoa New Zealand, must be grounded in the Treaty of Waitangi/Te Tiriti o Waitangi. It was this treaty that enabled British settlement of the country, which the British Colonial Office had previously acknowledged to be under Māori dominion (Orange, 1987, p.21).

Article Two of the Treaty guaranteed to Māori tino rangatiratanga (self-determination over their lives and resources), which is posited here as fundamental to Māori well-being. The chapter also suggests that the concept of “bicultural development” provides a framework for Pākehā (New Zealanders of non-Māori ancestry) to fulfil their obligations under the Treaty. This process entails Pākehā working in partnership with Māori to support Māori aspirations.

The bicultural nature of *Te Whāriki* is a recognition of those Treaty obligations. This chapter will refer to specific aspects of the document to illustrate the extent to which early childhood educators are required to attend to these issues. This is followed by a discussion of the implementation of *Te Whāriki*, drawing on data from a recent study that explored the implications of a commitment to bicultural development in an education programme for early childhood teachers (Ritchie, 2001; 2002).

The Treaty of Waitangi as the context for bicultural development

The Treaty of Waitangi provides the foundation for a bicultural ethos in Aotearoa New Zealand (Grace, 2000, pp.24–5). Despite its significance as the document that legitimised the British presence in this country, leading to the colonisation and marginalisation of the indigenous people, the Treaty has only
recently become a focus of attention, as successive governments have acknowledged the injustice of many serious historical breaches of the Treaty. Although government agencies are now required to recognise the Treaty, there are problems in applying that recognition. Any such application must be grounded in a thorough understanding of the Treaty’s Preamble and Articles.

There are two versions of the Treaty, one in Māori and one in English. Of the Māori chiefs who were signatories to the Treaty, over 530 signed the Māori version and only 32 signed the English version (Orange, 1987, pp.259–60). There are several key differences between the two versions, which necessitates their parallel treatment.

The Treaty was an agreement between two parties – the tangata whenua (indigenous people) and the British Crown – about the future political organisation of the country. The Preamble to the Māori version clearly states the Crown’s intention to preserve to Māori their tino rangatiratanga (absolute authority) and their land; it also introduces the Articles that follow as “laws”, whereby settlers are invited to coexist with Māori in this country, under the governance (kawanatanga) ceded to the Crown in Article One (Way, 2000, p.19).

The Treaty of Waitangi has been described as a “treaty of allowance”, by which an alliance was formalised between Māori and the Crown (Grace, 2000, p.24). All residents of Aotearoa New Zealand whose ancestors are not Māori are included on the Crown side of the agreement. The legitimacy of their presence here lies in the Article One agreement by Māori to cede governance over their lands to the British Crown. Article Two of the Māori version guaranteed to Māori their tino rangatiratanga, which has been explained as “full authority, status, and prestige with regard to their (Māori) possessions and interests” (Waitangi Tribunal, cited in Brookfield, 1989, p.5); it
can also be interpreted as self-determination (Irwin, 1993; Smith, 1992, 1997). Tino rangatiratanga included Māori control over their lands, villages, and homes, and everything else of value (Kawharu, 1989, p.317; Sharp, 2001, p.38).

Article Three reinforced the Crown’s intention to protect Māori interests and give the Māori people the same rights as British citizens (Sharp, 2001, p.38). A fourth article, read out to the assembled chiefs at Waitangi, affirmed that Māori beliefs and customs (ritenga) had equal standing with the Christian faiths represented by the missionaries present (Colenso, 1890, p.32; Orange, 1987, p.53; Project Waitangi, 1992).

The Treaty can be seen to confirm the rights conferred on Māori by their indigenousness, their status as tangata whenua (people of this land). Yet Māori understandings of the Treaty were effectively dismissed by their Treaty partner when the Crown assumed sovereignty, as ceded in Article One of the English version, rather than exercising governance (kawanatanga) according to the Māori version. The Crown subsequently ignored the guarantees contained in Articles Two and Three of both the Māori and English versions. Moana Jackson (1992a) argued that this dismissal is symbolic of the philosophical colonisation and military and economic oppression inflicted by the Crown and its agencies. It is only since 1975 that the New Zealand government has recognised the Treaty, and some tentative moves have been made to give effect to the guarantees of 1840.

Implementing the Treaty effectively requires all Crown agents to honour the guarantee of tino rangatiratanga (self-determination for Māori) and to protect taonga kātoa (all things of value to Māori). Jackson (1992b) suggested that restoring the mana (power and status) of the Treaty would provide both a symbolic and practical framework for positive intervention, based on three key precepts: “the tangata whenua status of Māori
people; the partnership which the Treaty imposes upon them and the Crown, and the idea of biculturalism which grows out of it” (p.41).

The Treaty and partnership

The notion of “partnership” is thus implicit in the Treaty (Culpitt, 1994; Durie, 1991), and is considered by many to be one of its recognised principles (Bishop and Glynn, 1999, p.196; M. Durie, 1994; Durie, 1998, p.29; Royal Commission on Social Policy, 1987, p.19). The Waitangi Tribunal (2001, p.xxvi), in a discussion of health services, stated that partnership in the Treaty context means:

- enabling the Māori voice to be heard;
- allowing Māori perspectives to influence the type of health services delivered to Māori and the way in which they are delivered;
- empowering Māori to design and provide health services for Māori; and
- presenting a coherent and accountable face in order to sustain a high-quality relationship with its Treaty partner.

These principles apply equally to education and other public sectors. In addition, implementing the Treaty has other implications for Pākehā as Treaty partners. According to sociologist Paul Spoonley (1988), it “relies upon resolving the grievances which have arisen since 1840” and “requires the negotiation of an equitable relationship between Māori and Pākehā”, which in turn will require the implementation of anti-racist strategies (p.45).

Rangatiratanga: self-determination as the means for wellbeing

Rangatiratanga can be defined as the right of political authority that enables Māori to exercise self-determination in relation to
people and resources (Jackson, 1992c, p.175). Rangatira were the chiefly class in traditional Māori society. Chiefly power, although inherited, could be maintained or increased only through wise judgment that benefited the people of the hapū or iwi (Walker, 1990, p.65). Rangatiratanga refers to the exercise of chieftainship in order to sustain the wellbeing of all members of the group for which the chief or chiefs were responsible. This wellbeing depended on the necessary resources being protected and available. The chiefly hierarchy provided the structure and authority for this sustenance to remain viable. Thus rangatiratanga is not only about the management of resources, but also about the right and responsibility of chiefs to care for their people (Jackson, 1997, p.18).

The Waitangi Tribunal (2001) considers “that the active protection of rangatiratanga over possessions implies that the ability of Māori leaders to promote the wellbeing of their people, including their care and welfare, will also be protected” (p.xxvi). This concept of rangatiratanga as the exercise of chiefly authority to ensure the wellbeing of tribal members is one that has been consistent over time, despite the obstructions generated by British colonisation and a settler government that disregarded its Treaty obligations.

Successive governments have promulgated legislation and policies that have comprehensively diminished this right and, in refusing to recognise Māori aspirations for self-determination, have assumed control over Māori to the detriment of their wellbeing (Jackson, 1992d). The low status of te reo Māori, the history of poor Māori achievement in education, and other negative social statistics throughout the past 163 years have led to new pressures for Māori self-determination: “A theory of tino rangatiratanga presumes that Māori collectivities and individuals will be better served by processes and structures
which reflect Māori priorities as decided by Māori” (A. Durie, 1994, p.113).

The Māori reassertion of tino rangatiratanga, expressed in terms of parallel development, can be seen in the Kōhanga Reo movement, which is based on the whānau (extended family) and aims for the retention of Māori language and culture. Some Māori see kōhanga reo as the only viable option for securing the survival of Māori language, culture, and identity, and for ensuring justice for Māori (Awatere, 1984; Jackson, 1992e, 1992f). It is therefore important that Pākehā New Zealanders accept the viability of parallel Māori systems and their need for adequate resources.

However, the existence of such parallel models does not mean that change is no longer required within existing mainstream systems. The obligation to facilitate change within these institutions in support of Māori aspirations stems from the Article Three requirement to deliver equity for Māori (Waitangi Tribunal, 2001, p.xxvii). Tino rangatiratanga requires that the nature of the changes should be determined by Māori (Ramsden, 1994). This creates a problem for mainstream early childhood settings where the staff are not Māori. In many situations, teachers may be able to elicit support from Māori families attending the service or from professional development agencies.

**Bicultural development as a framework for implementing the Treaty**

“Bicultural development” may be a more useful term than “biculturalism” when describing an agenda for educational settings. “Bicultural development” (Metge, 1990, p.18; Royal Commission on Social Policy, 1987, p.14) is generated by a commitment to social justice and the Treaty of Waitangi. The term “development” implies an ongoing process of social change toward an equitable bicultural society (Metge, 1990). According to the Royal Commission on Social Policy (1987):
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 Māori people. It is an option which derives from the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi. (p.14)

Bicultural pedagogy, as an application of this concept to education, can therefore be seen as a political process (Akinyela, 1991). Its objectives might include the restoration of tino rangatiratanga and the survival of Māori culture and language. A primary goal of bicultural development is to increase Pākehā commitment to supporting Māori aspirations for tino rangatiratanga. A first step in this process is to acknowledge and combat a heritage of racist ideology. Only from this position of awareness and commitment should Pākehā have access to Māori cultural knowledge, and then only on Māori terms. Since Pākehā currently dominate and control political and educational agendas, it is essential that they accept responsibility for the bicultural development process (Culpitt, 1994), while maintaining accountability to Māori.

**Te Whāriki as a guiding document for bicultural development**

The development of *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996a) was a deliberate attempt at a Treaty-based model of bicultural partnership, by means of a collaboration between Helen May and Margaret Carr, from the University of Waikato, and Tamati and Tilly Reedy, appointed by the Te Kōhanga Reo National Trust (May, 2001, pp.244–5).

The draft version of *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1993) contained a section on “domains of appropriateness”, an extension of the concept of “developmentally appropriate practice”. This concept, promulgated by the National
Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), has been hugely influential in the United States (Bredekamp, c.1987). The draft of *Te Whāriki* was visionary in recognising multiple "domains of appropriateness", and in suggesting that the early childhood curriculum needed to consider learning experiences that were not only developmentally appropriate but also nationally, culturally, educationally, and individually so.

The section on nationally appropriate experiences suggested that all children should be enriched in their understanding and knowledge of the cultural heritage of both partners to the Treaty of Waitangi. The curriculum was seen as contributing to the sustenance of te reo and ngā tikanga Māori, making them visible and affirming their value for children from all cultural backgrounds (Ministry of Education, 1993, pp.13-14).

The section on culturally appropriate experiences recognised that:

One of the purposes of the curriculum is to make available to the next generation the knowledge, skills, and attitudes which are regarded as valuable by their culture. Different cultures have different child-rearing patterns, beliefs and traditions ... There may be differences in the way they make sense of their world, communicate with each other, and plan and live their lives. (Ministry of Education, 1993, p.14)

This concept of culturally appropriate education has similarities with other approaches, including:

- culturally relevant pedagogy (Bartolome, 1994; Bowman, 1991; Darder, 1991; Ladson-Billings, 1995; O'Loughlin, 1995b; Troyna, 1993);
- culturally responsive pedagogy (Osborne, 1991);
- culturally sensitive approaches (Gonzalez-Mena, 1992; Mangione, Lally and Singer, 1993);
• culturally consistent and inclusive programmes (Booze, Greer and Derman-Sparks, 1996);
• culturally congruent critical pedagogy (Hyun, 1998); and
• educationally effective cultural compatibility (Jordan, 1985).

There is a growing overseas literature focusing on issues of cultural diversity in early childhood education (see, for example, Clark, 1995; Creasor and Dau, 1996; Derman-Sparks and ABC Task Force, 1989; Hyun, 1998; Kendall, 1996; King, Chipman and Cruz-Janzen, 1994; MacNaughton, 1998; Mallory and New, 1994; Stonehouse, 1991). The literature from Australia and the United States advocates an inclusive approach, but lacks the emphasis on indigenousness found in the Treaty-based model of bicultural partnership developed in Aotearoa New Zealand.

When the final version of Te Whāriki (Ministry of Education, 1996a) was released, the section on culturally appropriate practice had been deleted. However, the commitment to the Treaty of Waitangi was still very evident in what was the first bicultural and bilingual curriculum document for Aotearoa New Zealand. The introduction states: “In early childhood settings, all children should be given the opportunity to develop knowledge and understanding of the cultural heritages of both partners to Te Tiriti o Waitangi” (p.9).

Te Whāriki (Ministry of Education, 1996a) explicitly requires early childhood staff to support the use of the Māori language:

[Since] New Zealand is the home of Māori language and culture ... the 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)

In the “Communication” strand, one learning outcome is that children develop “an appreciation of te reo as a living and relevant language” (p.76). More specifically: “The curriculum should include Māori people, places, and artifacts, and
opportunities to learn and use the Māori language through social interaction” (p.43). Teachers are required to ensure that: “Māori phrases and sentences are included as a natural part of the programme” (p.77).

Particular Māori content is also suggested:

- Activities, stories, and events that have connections with Māori children’s lives are an essential and enriching part of the curriculum for all children in early childhood settings. (p.41)
- There should be a recognition of Māori ways of knowing and making sense of the world and of respecting and appreciating the natural environment. (p.82)

Educators are expected to be aware of bicultural issues:

- Particular care should be given to bicultural issues in relation to empowerment. Adults working with children should understand and be willing to discuss bicultural issues, actively seek Māori contributions to decision making, and ensure that Māori children develop a strong sense of self-worth. (p.40)
- To address bicultural issues, adults working in early childhood education should have an understanding of Māori views on child development and on the role of the family as well as understanding the views of other cultures in the community. (p.41)

The document also makes it clear that educators should be proactive in identifying racism:

- The early childhood curriculum actively contributes towards countering racism and other forms of prejudice. (p.18)
- The expectations of adults are powerful influences on children’s lives. If adults are to make informed observations of children, they should recognise their own beliefs, assumptions, and attitudes and the influence these will have on the children. (p.30)
In addition, the curriculum invites educators to critique their own practice and programmes. The “questions for reflection” include:

- 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)
- In what ways is Māori language included in the programme? (p.76)
- What opportunities are there for children to experience Māori creative arts in an appropriate way and at an appropriate level? (p.80)

In line with the Treaty principle of partnership, Te Whāriki recognises that bicultural development in early childhood centres should involve local Māori:

- Decisions about the ways in which bicultural goals and practices are developed within each early childhood education setting should be made in consultation with the appropriate tangata whenua. (p.11)
- There should be a commitment to, and opportunities for, a Māori contribution to the programme. Adults working in the early childhood setting should recognise the significance of whakapapa, understand and recognise the process of working as a whānau, and demonstrate respect for Māori elders. (p.64)

In 1996 the Ministry of Education announced that, from 1998, all early childhood centres were to deliver curriculum that was consistent with Te Whāriki. This meant that a bicultural approach was no longer optional. This had huge implications for early childhood education in Aotearoa New Zealand, as Helen May (2001) recognised:

... the holistic and bicultural approach to curriculum of Te Whāriki, inclusive of children from birth, was a challenge to staff who were more familiar with the traditional focus on play areas and activities for children in mainstream centres. (p.248)
Implementing the bicultural commitment of *Te Whāriki*

The following sections discuss aspects of a study of the implications of a commitment to the Treaty of Waitangi for an early childhood teacher education programme (Ritchie, 2001, 2002). The study, the theoretical and methodological framework of which was based on the transformative praxis of critical pedagogy, drew on a range of sources, primarily interviews with nine Māori and nine Pākehā participants (including colleagues in the teacher training institution, professional development facilitators in the early childhood sector, and graduates of the programme). Other data used here came from student assignments during the project.

**The dilemma of a non-prescriptive curriculum**

*Te Whāriki* attempts to avoid the pitfalls of over-prescription by providing a framework that each setting can apply in its own unique way. This lack of prescription, while empowering well-qualified teachers, may be more problematic in centres where staff are not well equipped to meet the challenge (May, 2001; May and Carr, 1997). Because centres are inevitably selective when formulating their programmes, the Māori content in the curriculum document can easily be marginalised.

This tendency may be greater in centres whose philosophy is to plan in response to children’s interests, as interpreted by staff. If few Māori children attend the centre, or if staff are ill-equipped to identify and enhance the children’s Māori-based interests, even well-intentioned teachers may fail to deliver a bicultural curriculum. Many participants in the study considered that some early childhood teachers completely ignored the requirements for Māori content. As one Pākehā graduate commented:

> I have seen people use *Te Whāriki* really well, but they are not using the bicultural aspect of it. You know, absolutely excellent teachers too ...
Students made the same observation in written assignments:

During practicum and placements ... I have become aware of a number of early childhood educators who have chosen not to make an effort towards change within the centre in moving from the domination of Pākehā value systems to a bicultural stance ... Change inevitably means that not everyone will agree and some educators may feel unable to cope with this negativity. They may also be unable to really examine their own value systems and put the rights of the child ahead of their own attitudes and beliefs. Even in centres that have Te Whāriki as their curriculum document, I have seen all aspects of Māoridom ignored.

These comments suggest that the bicultural requirements of the curriculum are being viewed as optional by some teachers and management. This places the onus on the monitoring and support mechanisms offered by the Ministry of Education, the Education Review Office, and professional development providers. It is clearly a priority that these bodies identify and implement strategies to deal with such resistance, which may stem from a lack of commitment but also from a lack of confidence or competence.

**Lack of models for effective bicultural development**

Many participants in the study expressed disappointment with the lack of progress towards bicultural development in early childhood centres. One Māori participant commented:

... while we would like to see kindergartens and so forth take on the responsibility of bicultural development ... it’s not as good as we hoped it would be.

This poses difficulties for teacher education programmes, in that students are often placed for their block practicum in centres that make little use of te reo and tikanga Māori. Students then find it difficult to meet the practicum requirement to incorporate
te reo and tikanga in their planning and teaching, since staff are unable to support them and the children are initially unresponsive to this new material.

Bicultural “benchmarks”?

In the training provider’s region, which has a large Māori population, very few early childhood centres were demonstrating a strong commitment to bicultural development. A Māori participant wondered: “How far are we asking our centres to go in this whole area of bicultural development? There are no benchmarks”. There is no blueprint for what the philosophical commitment might mean, in terms of its application within early childhood centres, although Carr (1993) has sketched out some examples. In considering the curriculum strand of Mana Atua - Well-being, for example, Carr writes: “for many Māori, self-esteem, being centred, includes a spiritual dimension; the individual is not separate from those who have gone before ... [hence] the importance of whakapapa. A bicultural curriculum will attend to past, present, and future” (p.110).

Despite the lack of benchmarks for bicultural development, teacher educators have a responsibility to inspire their students to develop a vision they might strive towards as teachers. It may be useful to identify the ways in which some centres have attempted to implement a commitment to bicultural development, bearing in mind the emergent and context-specific nature of the process. However, descriptive examples can take on a normative character, serving as explicit guides or recipes (Simon, 1992, p.38). As Olson and Bruner (1996) point out, “mere descriptions can have ... the effect of creating what they first merely purported to describe” (pp.23–4).

A further consideration is that the dominant culture may redefine and appropriate things Māori (Smith, 1986). This is a
dilemma that is difficult to resolve. All cultures are constantly changing, shifting, and borrowing from each other, and this process includes the re-assignment of meanings. Ensuring that Māori control their own cultural domain can be problematic in early childhood centres with few or no Māori staff or families. Yet if Māori families perceive that a centre offers something Māori, they are more likely to attend in increasing numbers. Even when Māori are fully involved in the bicultural development process in a mainstream centre, the outcomes are likely to be unique to that context, and not transferable to other settings. The role of mainstream teachers in bicultural development should not be as gate-keepers, predetermining Māori content within the programme, but rather as “key-holders” (O’Loughlin, 1995a). They become the facilitators of a process whereby Māori participants ultimately define what and how tikanga and mātauranga Māori are used.

**Te Whāriki as validation for Māori content**

Pākehā and Māori participants in the study all valued *Te Whāriki* for its mandating of bicultural development. Fifty-two percent of the early childhood practitioners who provided feedback on the draft curriculum had commented on “the usefulness of the reminders of bicultural issues” (Murrow, 1995, p.20).

It is important that teacher education programmes cover, as a central knowledge base, the delivery of Māori content to the depth and extent required by *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996a). One Māori teacher educator felt that *Te Whāriki* provided an important validation of Māori knowledge, in that her students were more likely to take Māori aspects of the course seriously when they were required by *Te Whāriki*:

The other thing for Pākehā students is *Te Whāriki* makes what you do, or the Māori things you do, real. Whatever you’re doing
in class, and when you do link it to *Te Whārika*, [they say:] “Oh, okay, it’s real then.”

A Māori professional development facilitator highlighted the Māori content within *Te Whārika* as a fundamental part of her work:

For me the crunch stuff, in terms of utilising *Te Whārika* as a support, [a] total support system for themselves, is to weave through *Te Whārika* and to identify [that] the whole document tautokos [supports] Māori curriculum. To actually look at those specific comments that highlight marautanga [curriculum] Māori. “All our children shall have access to the heritage of both partners of Te Tiriti o Waitangi”. To go right through the document and pull out every principle, you know, kaupapa whakahaere [principles of *Te Whārika*] …

*Te Whārika* had so permeated the discourse of this participant that she described her facilitation of bicultural development in early childhood centres as supporting whānau to “weave their own whārika”. One of the Pākehā graduates described her two key planning tools as *Te Whārika* and her Māori dictionary. For one kindergarten team, *Te Whārika* served as their guiding principles and the basis for all their programme planning.

In contrast, a report by the Education Review Office (1998) criticised *Te Whārika* for failing “to give clear direction or guidance about what early childhood providers need to do to ensure that they are contributing positively to young children’s educational development” (p.3). It also reported that only 40 percent of the centres surveyed were delivering programmes that were consistent with *Te Whārika*, as required by the Ministry of Education in the Revised Statement of Desirable Objectives and Practices (1996b). (This level of compliance is not so disappointing, given that the requirement had not taken effect until August 1998.)
Interestingly, kindergartens had the highest percentage (58 percent) of effective implementation of *Te Whāriki*. The kindergarten associations' requirement for all staff to have a minimum diploma-level qualification is a likely factor in this result (Education Review Office, 1998, p.9). Helen May (2001) has stated that the philosophy of *Te Whāriki* was one that "resisted telling staff what to do, by ‘forcing’ each programme to ‘weave’ its own curriculum pattern" (p.246). The challenges inherent in the holistic and bicultural approach of *Te Whāriki* are compounded by the fact that the government does not currently require all early childhood teachers to be qualified: a minimum of one supervising person (the "person in charge") in an early childhood centre is required to be qualified, while the remainder of the staff can be untrained. There are implications here not only for minimum qualifications in the early childhood sector, but also for the levels of bicultural and bilingual competency that teacher education programmes require of students.

**Whanaungatanga as a process for bicultural development**

The study identified some of the dilemmas of bicultural development. It highlighted the essential inequity that exists for Māori within mainstream Pākehā institutions, whereby tino rangatiratanga can be exercised only at the discretion of Pākehā in positions of authority, thus making it a concession of the power-holders. Delivering on a Treaty-based commitment to bicultural development with a social justice agenda requires more than rhetoric. In teacher education programmes, delivering on this commitment is highly dependent on Māori educators, who hold the key to supplying authentic Māori content.

There are not enough Māori educators in mainstream early childhood services for them to be available on a daily basis in each setting. One particularly exciting finding of the study was
the suggestion of a "whanaungatanga approach" to involving Māori in early childhood centres. Enlisting Māori support in planning and delivering early childhood programmes is consistent with Article Two of the Treaty, in that it supports Māori self-determination in regard to their children's education and the protection of te reo and tikanga Māori. Whānaungatanga (building partnerships with whānau) recognises the centrality of whānau in Māori early childhood care and education. It is a tangible representation of Treaty-based partnership, between teachers as Crown agents and Māori families as tangata whenua. It is also consistent with the Te Whāriki principle of Family and Community/Whānau Tangata (Ministry of Education, 1996b), with Pere's "Wheke" model of Māori values (Pere, 1991), and with research that indicates the central importance of whānau involvement in kaupapa Māori education (Smith, 1995; Smith, 1997).

A whanaungatanga approach can be seen to operate on three broad levels within an early childhood setting: the interpersonal, the programme, and the structural. At the interpersonal level, staff need to pay attention to how they initiate and model interactions with children and with whānau. Obvious examples are the language and body language they use. The aim should be to build trusting relationships with whānau by communicating respect, warmth, caring, and understanding. This would include researching, respecting, and applying tikanga, including appropriate waiata, whakatauki, and pūrakau. It might mean ensuring that a teacher is available to welcome whānau and spend time getting to know them, and being responsive to their approaches; and that this is seen as a priority by the staff and management.

In the area of programme planning, implementation, and evaluation, a whanaungatanga approach begins with a strong
commitment to the Treaty of Waitangi and to bicultural development, clearly stated in the centre’s philosophy and other documents. This would require specific statements supporting the authentic use of tikanga and te reo Māori throughout the programme. Written planning could include specific Māori phrases to be introduced; tikanga to be focused on, such as respect for tipuna, the collection of kaimoana, and kawa regarding pōwhiri; relevant waiata and local legends; particular books and other resources; visits to Māori settings; and appropriate references to Papatuanuku, Ranginui, and Atua Māori. Hui could be arranged, with whānau being invited to participate in planning, implementing, and evaluating the centre’s programme, to ensure that bicultural approaches are relevant and appropriate.

At the structural level, centres can provide a welcoming and inclusive environment by giving visibility and positive status to taonga Māori. This might include having welcome signs in te reo; having a whānau area with cups of tea and comfortable seating; encouraging children to produce kōwhaiwhai and other Māori art forms; having the Treaty of Waitangi prominently displayed; showing respect for tikanga by not using food as an art or craft resource; and prominently displaying a wide range of books, posters, puzzles, and song-charts using te reo Māori and Māori themes.

When these elements are in place, Māori whānau will begin to feel comfortable about contributing to the centre’s programme. This was apparent in the study, for example in the following comments by a Pākehā teacher, who explained that she and her colleagues had been focusing on Te Whāriki’s expectations for Māori content:

Teacher: I think [we’ve been] looking at their families as individuals. And looking at who they are now and where they
have come from, and the people that are relevant to them ... Our big focus is trying to find information about people in the area from the past and important figures in Māori history.

JR: You are talking about very local [information], specific to your hapū [subtribe]?

Teacher: Yes, very local, and we have approached one of our grandparents, and she is sort of our kuia [woman elder] ... And yeah, she is sort of helping us ... to find out about relevant people, relevant events which we can incorporate into stories, books, pictures, whatever we want to do so that it is part of our programme.

A whanaungatanga approach is one that is inclusive and benefits all children and families. Several participants in the study commented that Pākehā children were becoming fascinated with aspects of their learning to do with tikanga and te reo, to the point where they were frequently asking teachers to supply them with Māori words and phrases. One Māori participant described her pleasure at observing some Pākehā children role-playing a Māori legend, and added: “It's becoming part of their knowing”. At one centre, parents made so many enquiries about a Māori legend the children had focused on that the teachers photocopied the next legend they were going to use and sent it home to all families, as part of their planning.

“Responsiveness”, “respect”, and “reciprocity” are words used in the early childhood literature to describe the characteristics of effective interactions between teachers and children (Podmore and May, cited in Brown et al., 1998, p.9). These words could equally be applied to the building of relationships with whānau Māori and other adults in early childhood centres. Tilly Reedy (1995) considered respect to be a central quality for Te Whāriki, which she described as:
A whāriki woven by loving hands that can cross cultures with respect, that can weave people and nations together. *Te Whāriki* is about providing a base that teaches one to respect oneself and ultimately others. (p.17)

A whanaungatanga approach also requires us to rethink the concept of the teacher as “expert”, since we cannot be experts in a culture that is not our own. Teachers from the dominant Pākehā culture require humility and sensitivity if they are to avoid misrepresenting Māori cultural symbols and meanings, and be aware of their limitations in facilitating bicultural development. For example, they need to be sensitive to the feelings of Māori parents and grandparents who may have been denied opportunities to learn their own language (Henry, 1995, p.16).

The devolution of “expertise” requires Pākehā teachers to give respectful validation to te ao Māori and its expression in the ways of knowing and habits of being of whānau Māori. This involves creating opportunities for Māori to voice their perceptions, and listening and responding to them. Furthermore, it should be recognised that non-Māori cannot speak for Māori. Respect can foster a climate of collaboration and genuine power-sharing, with the goal of whānau involvement in all aspects of the programme, including resourcing, planning, implementation, and evaluation.

**Conclusion**

*Te Whāriki* has heralded a new era for early childhood education in Aotearoa New Zealand. It signals a generational shift, from a mainstream curriculum that treated biculturalism as mere window-dressing, to a model that validates Māori as experts, affirms their contributions, and supports their aspirations. The Treaty of Waitangi provides the foundation (te tūāpapa) on which the whāriki of our curriculum can be woven and rewrapped, as
early childhood educators lead future generations of New Zealanders forward, modelling partnership and respect in an ongoing process of bicultural development. However, there is work to be done, and teacher educators and professional development providers have a huge responsibility to provide the momentum and sustenance that will make this vision a reality.

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