A commentary on Ngā Pou Here, ERO's framework for reviewing early childhood services

With a particular focus on Mātauranga and Tikanga Whakaako

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Introduction

This paper draws on research evidence to provide a commentary on Ngā Pou Here, the Education Review Office's conceptual framework for evaluating processes and practices in early childhood services. It is one of a series of expert reviews designed to inform an update of the framework. The aim is for Ngā Pou Here to be an effective tool for evaluating the capacity of a service to promote positive learning outcomes for all children and sustain a process of ongoing improvement.

Ngā Pou Here explores four key areas:

* Pou Whakahaere – how the service determines its vision, philosophy and direction to ensure positive learning outcomes for children
* Pou Ārahi – how leadership is enacted to enhance positive learning outcomes for children
* Mātauranga – whose knowledge is valued and how the curriculum is designed to achieve positive learning outcomes for children
* Tikanga Whakaako – how approaches to teaching and learning are responsive to diversity and support positive learning outcomes for children.

This paper has a particular focus on Mātauranga and Tikanga Whakaako, and responds to the following questions:

1. What is the significance of Mātauranga and Tikanga Whakaako in terms of promoting Māori children's learning and progress?
2. What dimensions of practice associated with Mātauranga and Tikanga Whakaako have the greatest impact on positive learning outcomes (as defined in Te Whāriki) for Māori children?
3. What do we know about how the influences and dimensions work together to promote and support improvement in an early learning service context?
4. What are the implications for the conceptual framework that underpins ERO's evaluation indicators (ECE)?
5. What are the most important considerations in the framing, defining, identifying and selecting of the indicators, and their potential use in internal and external evaluation in early learning services?

Mātauranga is a body of knowledge that is framed in certain ways. When developing curriculum it is important to ask *whose* knowledge is valued and how this enables positive outcomes for all children. The inclusion of mātauranga Māori enables all children to develop understanding of the significance of Māori as tangata whenua, through the use of te reo Māori, Māori symbols, learning experiences that focus on the environment (taiao) through the lens of atua Māori (guardians of the forest, sky, earth, wind, rain, storms, earthquakes and volcanoes), pūtaiao (science) and hangarau (technology). Mātauranga Māori communicates something fundamental about the Māori world, something distinctive and valuable. It encompasses both ancient and modern forms of knowing and enlightenment.

The inclusion of Mātauranga Māori across the curriculum enhances the mana and wairua of Māori children by validating their ways of knowing, being and doing. At the same time it provides all children with knowledge and information that extends their learning and understanding of the world they live in (Education Review Office, 2013, p. 17).

Tikanga whakaako, also known as Māori pedagogy, is a term used to describe teaching and learning that is appropriate for Māori children in an education context. Deeply embedded in tikanga whakaako is the concept of ako. Ako acknowledges that teaching and learning are reciprocal processes in which teachers are learners and learners are teachers.

Tikanga whakaako also recognises that the learner, educator and whānau cannot be separated. By embracing the concept of tikanga whakaako, educators are able to build caring and purposeful learning relationships where everyone's contribution is valued and everyone's potential recognised. A critical issue for Māori pedagogy is whose knowledge (mātauranga) is privileged (Education Review Office, 2013, p. 17).

Te Tiriti o Waitangi

Te Tiriti o Waitangi is our nation's founding document. It guides education with regard to participation, power and partnership: for Māori as tangata whenua, and for non-Māori as signatories. It is a driving force for the revitalisation of Māori language and culture. The principle of partnership embodied in the Treaty is required to be reflected in the practices of each early childhood service. This requires inclusive practices, whereby the service works collaboratively with whānau to advance the learning and wellbeing of tamariki Māori.

Early childhood services are required to provide a curriculum that acknowledges and reflects the unique place of Māori as tangata whenua and that helps children develop knowledge and understanding of the cultural heritages of both Treaty partners (Education Review Office, 2013).

Te Whāriki

Te Whāriki: He whāriki mātauranga mō ngā mokopuna o Aotearoa Early childhood curriculum was introduced in 1996 and updated in 2017. *Te Whāriki* recognises Māori as tangata whenua and acknowledges a shared obligation to protect Māori language and culture and ensure that Māori are able to enjoy educational success as Māori.

Te Whāriki places the child at the centre of the curriculum, with a vision for children who are:

> competent and confident learners and communicators, healthy in mind, body and spirit, secure in their sense of belonging and in the knowledge that they make a valued contribution to society (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 6).

Initial comments

I want to acknowledge the writers of the current Ngā Pou Here framework. It is clear that Māori understandings and practices have been integrated into Ngā Pou Here and the indicators. My intention in this paper is to contribute to the further development of that original work. I acknowledge ERO's desire to position tamariki/children at the centre of the kaupapa and to situate the indicators within a bicultural framework. My starting point for this commentary, which addresses the five questions posed by ERO, is ERO's own whakataukī:

> Ko te tamaiti te putake o te kaupapa
> Children are at the core of the work

1. What is the significance of Mātauranga and Tikanga Whakaako in terms of promoting Māori children's learning and progress?

A series of tamariki questions can provide an appropriate starting point for exploring and understanding the significance of Mātauranga and Tikanga Whakaako for tamariki learning and progress. These questions aim to gauge how well kaiako know tamariki – culturally as Māori, as whānau/hāpu/iwi, linguistically and holistically – and how well they reflect, represent and respect this knowing in curriculum design, teaching and practice. These questions include:

> Mātauranga: Do you know me? Do you know who I come from? Do you know where I come from.
> Tikanga Whakaako: How do you represent me? How do you represent who I come from? How do you represent where I come from?

Do you know me? How do you represent me?

Culture

Culture, according to Spencer-Oatey (2012), can be viewed as a shared set of basic assumptions, attitudes and values, views of life, beliefs, procedures and behavioural conventions. Culture is shared by a group of people and communicated from one generation to the next, influencing how the people behave and their interpretations of what behaviours mean (Matsumoto, 1996). Spencer- Oatey (2012) asserts that:

- culture is manifested at different layers of depth;
- culture affects behaviour and interpretations of behaviour;
- culture can be differentiated from both universal human nature and unique individual personality;
- culture influences biological processes;
- culture is associated with social groups;
- culture is always both socially and psychologically distributed in a group, and so the delineation of a culture's features will always be fuzzy;
- culture has both universal (etic) and distinctive (emic) elements;
- culture is learned;
- culture is subject to gradual change;
- the various parts of a culture are all, to some degree, interrelated;
- culture is a descriptive not an evaluative concept (pp. 3–15).

Worldviews or views on life are integral to culture. According to Hart (2010), they can be understood as mental lenses that are engrained ways of viewing the world. They are perceptual, cognitive, and affective maps that are continuously utilised to make sense of the social terrain. They are developed over a person's lifetime through socialisation and social interaction. "[Worldviews are] encompassing and pervasive in adherence and influence. Yet they are usually unconsciously and uncritically taken for granted as the way things are" (p. 2).

According to Koltko-Rivera (2004), worldviews are sets of beliefs and assumptions that describe reality. They are made up of assumptions on such subjects as the nature and meaning of life, human nature, and make-up of the universe. Worldviews are interpretive lenses used to understand reality and one's existence, or way of being, within it.

Hart (2010) claims that different indigenous worldviews have much in common, having developed from peoples' close relationships with the environment. According to Simpson (2000), commonalities include these shared understandings:

- knowledge is holistic, cyclic, and reliant on relationships and connections to living and non-living beings and entities
- there are many truths, and truths are dependent upon individual experiences
- everything is alive
- all things are equal
- the land is sacred
- relationships between people and the spiritual world are important
- human beings are not the most important thing in the world.

Identity

Culture, worldviews, ways of knowing the world, and identity or ways of being in the world are inextricably linked. Identity is a construct, used to describe who one sees oneself to be and how one fits into one's social world. Identity is multifaceted and fluid, continually changing as one experiences new ideas, systems and people (Hawaikirangi-Pere, 2013; Paringatai, 2014; Spencer-Oatey, 2012; Te Huia, 2015).

According to Paringatai (2014), identity is not automatically allocated to individuals; rather it begins developing in infancy and is constantly modified throughout adolescence and adulthood. Gee (2000) makes the point that interpretive systems and culture systems, which include world views, are fundamental to any interpretation of identity:

> One cannot have an identity of any sort without some interpretive system underwriting the recognition of that identity … The interpretive system may be people's historically and culturally different views of nature; it may be the norms, traditions, and rules of institutions; it may be the discourse and dialogue of others; or it may be the workings of affinity groups. What is important about identity is that almost any identity trait can be understood in terms of any of these different interpretive systems (p. 108).

Māori cultural identities may be perceived through a number of interpretive systems, all closely interwoven. The key is found in Māori understandings of the creation of the universe and of whakapapa (genealogical) relationships to the universe and everything in it. Whakapapa provides a continuous life line that links those who existed before to those living today, and encompasses everything passed from one generation to the next, from one ancestor to the next, and from the deceased to the living (Berryman, 2008). Whakapapa connects Māori to people and land; past, present and future; to the spiritual world and the universe (Barlow, 1991; Te Huia, 2015; Dobbs, 2015; Durie, 2001; Lawson-Te Aho, 2010;

Mead, 2003; Te Rito, 2007). Smith (2000) adds that whakapapa is a way of thinking that is fundamental to almost every facet of a Māori worldview.

Whakapapa is therefore at the very core of what it means to be Māori, identifying who one is, where one is from, and where one belongs. It informs all relationships and provides the foundation for the inherent interdependence and connectedness of all things: beginning of the world, gods, environment, people – past present and future – and land (Barlow, 1991; Berryman, 2008; Cheung, 2008; Dobbs & Eruera, 2014; Dobbs, 2015; Durie, 2001; Graham, 2009; Harmsworth & Awatere, 2013; Lawson-Te Aho, 2010; Mead, 2003; Mikaere, 2010; Rameka, 2012; Rangihau, 1977; Te Huia, 2015). Whakapapa reifies connections to past generations and to generations to come (Ministry of Justice, 2001; Williams, 2004). Patterson (1992) adds that it is one's whakapapa that makes you who you are, literally.

The development and retention of a sense of connectedness to people, place and the wider physical and spiritual worlds is related to whānau and whanaungatanga. 'Whānau', which means 'to give birth', is the basic family group in Māori society. 'Whanaungatanga' refers to the way Māori view, maintain, and strengthen whānau/hapū/iwi relations. It involves rights and mutual responsibilities, obligations and commitments that generate whānau/family cohesion and cooperation (Dobbs, 2015; Jenkins, Harte & Ririki, 2011; Pohatu, 2015; Reilly, 2004). Whanaungatanga connects the individual to kin groups, providing them with a sense of belonging and, therefore, strengthening all members of the group (Berryman, 2008; Mead, 2003; Pohatu, 2015; Pere, 1984). Whanaungatanga incorporates philosophies and practices that reinforce the spiritual and physical harmony and wellbeing of the group.

Language

Language is a vital component of all cultures. It is a means of transmitting customs, worldviews, valued beliefs, knowledge and skills from one person the next, from one generation to the next. It reflects a people's cultural environment and ways of viewing the world. Language is both a communication tool and a transmitter of values and beliefs. "Language is the window to a culture, and transmits the values and beliefs of its people" (Reedy, 2003, p. 70); it is the life line and nourishment of a culture (Pere, 1991). For Māori, te reo is sacred because it was given to the ancestors by the gods and is therefore a means to know the gods (Barlow, 1991). Love (2004) adds that te reo Māori is an aspect of wairua, stemming from and integral to the spiritual realm. It has a life force, a living vitality and a spirit.

The Ministry of Social Development (2016) asserts that the Māori language is not only a central element of Māori culture, but it is also important for participation and identity and closely linked with personal mana. Barlow (1991) adds that te reo is a source of power and a vehicle for expressing identity. Underpinning these ideas is a recognition that Māori are custodians of the culture and the language, which was inherited from the ancestors and the gods (Mead, 2003; Te Huia, 2015). Knowing and speaking one's language correlates with one's wellbeing and sense of identity (Hawaikirangi-Pere, 2013; Te Huia, 2015).

Moorfield and Johnston (2004) explain that:

> Tradition, values, and societal mores were transmitted orally from generation to generation … Waiata (song), especially oriori (an instructional chant), and korero pūrākau (myth, legend and historic tales) also played a large part in intergenerational transmission of knowledge and values, as did whakataukī (proverbs about social values), whakatauakī (proverbs that urge particular actions or behaviour), and pepeha (statements of tribal identity) (p. 36).

Children and childhoods

Perceptions of the child, childhood, and child development emerge from particular cultural, historical, and social structures and relationships, and change in accordance with movements in the wider contextual structures and relationships. Rogoff (2003) makes the point that human development is a cultural process that prepares the child for, and defines the scope of, their participation in the cultural group and wider society. She states that "people develop as participants in cultural communities. Their development can be understood only in the light of the cultural practices and circumstances of their communities" (p. 3–4).

Historically, Māori viewed the tamaiti as 'he taura here tangata': 'the binding rope that ties people together over time' and 'te kāwai tangata': the 'genealogical link' that enhances family relationships (Metge, 1995; Patterson, 1992; Reedy, 1991; 2003). The tamaiti was perceived as a spiritual being who inherited spiritual traits from the ancestors that were fundamental to their spiritual, psychological, and social wellbeing (Mead, 2003). These spiritual traits included but were not limited to *tapu*, *mana mauri*, and *wairua*.

Tapu can be translated as "being with potentiality for power" (Mead, 2003, p. 32). According to Mead, personal tapu is a person's most important spiritual attribute. It is the sacred life force that reflects the state of the whole person. It is a personal force field that can be felt and sensed by others. It influences all other attributes.

While tapu is the potentiality for power, *mana* is the actual power, the realisation of a person's tapu. Mana can be translated as "authority, control, influence, prestige, power, psychic force, effectual, binding, authoritative … and take effect" (Hemara, 2000, p. 68). It also has the deeper meaning of 'spiritual power and authority' (Love, 2004). Mana is a crucial aspect of how Māori perceive the world and of the self, with almost all activities linked to upholding and enhancing mana.

Mauri is inherently related with other metaphysical attributes, including tapu, mana and wairua. Mauri is a generic life force, the spark of life. All living things have a mauri and all things are connected (Barlow, 1991; Mead, 2003). Mauri is an essential and inseparable aspect of the tamaiti. It is an active sign of life, an attribute of self. The tamaiti is born with mauri, and it remains with them throughout their life. When they are physically and socially healthy the mauri is in a state of balance known as *mauri tau* ('the mauri is at peace'). It is therefore important to nurture and protect the mauri of the tamaiti (Mead, 2003).

Wairua is an unseen energy that impacts upon all aspects of a person's being. According to Durie (1985) it is an essential dimension of Māori health. All tamariki are born with wairua, which can be translated as 'soul' or 'spirit' (Mead, 2003, p. 54).

Knowledges

There are major differences between Māori and non-Māori perceptions of rights to knowledge. Non-Māori hold that individuals have inherent rights to knowledge so it should be universally available. But for Māori, knowledge is perceived as a taonga, passed down from the ancestors. It is therefore to be taken seriously, treated with respect, and preserved intact. Knowledge does not belong to individuals; rather, it is the property of the hapū and iwi. Individuals are repositories of the group's knowledge and have a responsibility to use that knowledge for the benefit and mana of the group, not for personal gain (Bevan-Brown, 1998; Tolich, 2001).

According to Royal (2009), mātauranga Māori is distinctive knowledge created by Māori from their living circumstances, worldviews and experiences, and "... the state of a person's knowledge is inextricably tied to their 'interior world' – the level of their understanding, their thought life, their ability to learn, and more" (p. 91).

Do you know who I come from? How do you represent who I come from?

Whānau, hapū and iwi

Traditionally, Māori society has been organised and identity expressed in terms of kin-based descent groupings. Walker (1996) makes the point that kin-based connections, and belonging to the social unit, are central to the individual's sense of wellbeing. In former times, identity formation and maintenance was a fairly straightforward exercise founded on kinship and living in a community. There are three main kinship classifications in traditional Māori society: *whānau*, *hapū*, and *iwi*.

Whānau, which means 'to give birth', is the basic family grouping, which functions as the social and economic unit for day-to-day living and activities. A whānau consists of relatives who are descended from a recent ancestor: three or four generations living and working together. Whānau is often referred to as a pā harakeke (flax bush). The rito or inner shoot represents the tamaiti while the outer leaves – parents, grandparents and extended whānau – protect and nurture the shoot so that it will grow and develop. This analogy emphasises common roots and the combined strength of the collective (Metge, 1995; Royal-Tangaere, 1991).

The *hapū* is the basic socio-political unit within Māori society, consisting of a number of whānau. 'Hapū' also means 'pregnancy', which conveys a sense of common ancestry, of being 'born of the same womb'. "The term hapū emphasises the importance of being born into the group and also conveys the idea of growth, indicating that a hapū is capable of containing many whānau" (Ministry of Justice, 2001, p. 32). Hapū is a dynamic social and political structure, autonomous in the management of its own affairs but part of a larger, complex

web of kin networks on which it depends for its operation. One of the main tasks of a hapū is the defence and preservation of alliances with other hapū and the iwi.

An *iwi* or tribe comprises a number of related hapū that derive their identity from a common ancestor. This concept is fundamental to defining who people are (Maaka & Fleras, 2005). 'Iwi' can be translated as 'bone', making a connection to the bones of ancestors, which are sacred. The iwi is the largest political and economic unit in Māori society. Iwi are independent units that, historically, occupied tribal lands and defended their lands and political integrity against others. "The basic role of the iwi was to protect, where necessary, the interests of individual members and constituent whānau and hapū and to maintain and enhance the mana of the collective" (Ministry of Justice, 2001, p. 35). Iwi can therefore be identified by their territorial boundaries, which are of immense social, cultural and economic importance (Barcham, 1998; Hohepa, 1978; Rangihau, 1977). Tribal history is recalled by reciting prominent landmarks and the ancestors who lived there. In this way oral history helps cement occupancy of, and authority over, iwi land.

Land

Whakapapa connects people to *whenua* ('the land'). Māori trace their genealogy back to Papatūānuku (Earth Mother), so they not only live *on* the land, but are also *of* the land (Ministry of Justice, 2001). Graham (2009) states:

> Whakapapa identifies who I am, where I am from and in doing so identifies a place that I can proudly call my tūrangawaewae [tribal lands]. It is this whakapapa knowledge that gives an individual or collective a sense of purpose that … grounds us to Papatūānuku … my whakapapa and iwi affiliations are my biological and kinship credentials that form my Māori identity and by alluding to my tūrangawaewae I have established a connection to my wāhi tapu [sacred place] (pp. 1–2).

Land is fundamental to Māori identities and sense of belonging. A symbolic and physical connection to the land is embedded in the word *tangata whenua* ('people of the land') (Williams, 2004). Whakapapa identifies who one is, where one is from, and where one belongs (Graham, 2009). This relationship provides a sense of unity and harmony with the environment. Te Rito (2007) explains that "Having knowledge of whakapapa helps ground us to the earth. We have a sense of belonging here, a sense of purpose, a raison d'etre which extends beyond the sense of merely existing on this planet" (p. 4). Rather than a commodity, land is seen as a source of identity, belonging and continuity that is shared with the dead, the living and the unborn (Ministry of Justice, 2001).

From a Māori worldview the relationship, both physical and spiritual, to whenua cannot be overstated. The physical relationship is about geographical connectedness to important natural features such as a mountain, river, or place. The spiritual relationship is about connectedness to mountains and rivers, and to Papatūānuku.

The traditional view of the taiao (natural world) has a place for everything, both living and non-living. Everthing living is seen in terms of connectedness and relationships rather than ownership or control. As Marsden (2003) asserts:

> [T]he resources of the earth did not belong to man [sic] but rather, man belonged to the earth. Man as well as animal, bird, fish could harvest the bounty of mother earth's resource but they did not own them. Man had but user-rights (p. 67).

This connectedness and relationship carries with it the requirement to care for, nurture and safeguard the natural world.

Contemporary Māori identities

Before the arrival of Europeans there was no concept of a Māori identity. Māori had no name for themselves, only for their tribal connections (Maaka & Fleras, 2005). The use of 'Māori' ('normal' or 'ordinary') as a cultural identifier only came into being following the arrival of Europeans, when the tangata whenua had to differentiate between themselves and the culturally very different newcomers (Durie, 1998; Webber. 2008). Prior to this, Māori had differentiated between groups based on their tribal affiliations and territorial features: "… [I]dentity reflected historical, social and geographic characteristics. The original inhabitants of New Zealand did not refer to themselves as Māori; rather they were Rangitāne or Ngāti Apa or Tūhoe or any of the forty or more tribes" (Durie, 1998, p. 53).

Colonisation, assimilation, land loss, language loss and urbanisation have transformed notions of Māori identity. Contemporary frames emphasise increasingly diverse and complex positionings that require negotiation of fundamentally different terrains, with different sets of assumptions, behaviours, values and beliefs. These include changing ideas about how worlds are constituted, and ways of acting, being and belonging within those worlds.

Some Māori choose not to identify as Māori due to negative perceptions associated with being Māori, however the majority of Māori still choose a Māori identity. Raerino (2007) argues that "a Māori is a Māori until they reject being Māori or Māori things" (p. 30). McIntosh (2005) adds, "I maintain that Māori, as a people, have never stopped being Māori. The point rather is that what counts as being Māori has always been problematic" (p. 43). Contemporary Māori identity derives from both unity and diversity: on some levels Māori are unified; on others they are divided by their distinctiveness (Maaka & Flera, 2005). Māori are not homogeneous and there is no one Māori cultural 'type'. Penetito (2011) concurs, stating that there is no such thing as 'the Māori identity', only Māori identities; furthermore, according to Kukutai and Webber (2017), no one identity is more authentic than another.

> Māori live in and between two worlds (at least) – Te Ao Māori, the Māori world, and the world at large. Some choose to situate themselves differently in either world, and some give up trying to live in either world and create their own (e.g., gangs). They are nevertheless, by virtue of descent, Māori (Nikora, 2007, p. 104).

Maaka and Fleras (2005) emphasise how urbanisation, coupled with exposure to English-language media, has generated identity problems for Māori youth, who are "caught between cultures – desiring the two, comfortable with neither and rejected by both" (p. 70). This has led to many Māori living at the margins of both Māori and mainstream societies. McIntosh (2005) adds that, for many, exclusion or marginality is the norm, with disadvantage experienced from birth.

McIntosh (2005) makes the point that an inability to converse in te reo Māori can not only exclude participation in many Māori settings, but can also engender a sense of shame. She states, "The sense of shame experienced by those who are non-speakers is very real" (p. 45). She adds:

> While not disputing the idea to be Māori means that one would recognise or acknowledge the significance of certain things (for example, whakapapa, iwi, hapū, te reo, kawa and tikanga), identifying as Māori does not mean that one is absorbed into an undifferentiated ethnic mass … To be Māori is to be part of a heterogeneous identity, one that is enduring but ever in a state of flux (McIntosh, 2001, pp. 142–143).

Berryman (2008) concurs, adding that not knowing one's whakapapa or being a speaker of the Māori language, which is the situation for many Māori, does not indicate a lack of desire or rejection of the Māori language and culture.

Early childhood education

The fundamental goal of any education system must be to achieve the best educational outcomes for its students, and in Aotearoa New Zealand that includes Māori students.

Mahuika, Berryman and Bishop (2011, p. 6) explain that "In a very real way our culture acts as a kind of blueprint for the ways we interpret information and the importance we attach to various types of information". As previously mentioned, individuals interpret information, behaviours and situations through their own particular cultural lenses, which for the most part operate involuntarily, below the level of consciousness. This can make it appear that one's cultural view is simply the 'normal or natural way it is' (Delpit, 1995). A consequence of this normalisation of culture can be a lack of awareness of the ways in which culture shapes how one thinks and interprets information (Metge, 1995). If the learner's own culture is congruent with that of the kaiako and the learning environment they are able to make meaning of new ideas and information by building on existing cultural understandings and experiences. Congruence of culture allows learners to bring who they are into the education context in complete safety, knowing that their knowledge and understandings are legitimate and acceptable (Mahuika, Berryman, & Bishop, 2011).

Kaiako want the best for their students but achieving this is a complex process (Marriot & Sim, 2014). According to Bevan-Brown (2003), one of the reasons for this is that kaiako are unaware of the importance of culture in making meaning of learning and, therefore, have not learned how to address culture within their teaching practice. Consequently, they continue using teaching and assessment practices that do not respond to the cultural needs of Māori

learners (Mahuika, Berryman, & Bishop, 2011). Ritchie (2003) explains that the ability of kaiako in early childhood education (ECE) to address culture in their practice …

> is subject to the extent to which a largely Pākeha early childhood teaching force are able to deliver on expectations that require a level of expertise that is beyond their experience as mono-cultural speakers of English with little experience of Māori culture and values (p. 10).

There is little doubt that a secure cultural identity is essential for wellbeing and for educational and societal participation and success. It is a key factor in people's sense of self and their relationships with others (Hohepa et al., 2010; Macfarlane et al., 2014; Lave and Wenger, 1991; MSD, 2016).

Identity formation is an extremely complex, ongoing, culturally located process. It begins in early childhood (Harris, Blue, & Griffith, 1995; Kukutai & Webber, 2017) as tamariki actively construct their identities in relation to growing understandings of their cultural heritage. Kukutai and Webber (2017) make the point that our socialisation as 'racial-ethnic-cultural beings' starts early, within the whānau, and continues from early childhood onwards. This being the case, it is important that kaiako develop deeper understanding of Māori ways of knowing so that they can actively support the construction of positive identities for tamariki Māori (Macfarlane et al., 2014). As Durie (2003) argues:

> [T]he essential difference [between Māori and other New Zealanders] is that Māori live at the interface between te ao Māori (the Māori world) and the wider global society (te ao whānui). This does not mean socio-economic factors are unimportant but it does imply that of the many determinants of educational success, the factor that is uniquely relevant to Māori is the way in which Māori world views and the world views of wider society impact on each other… As a consequence, educational policy, or teaching practice, or assessment of students, or key performance indicators for staff must be able to demonstrate that the reality of the wider educational system is able to match the reality in which children and students live (pp. 5–6).

2. What dimensions of practice asssociated with Mātauranga and Tikanga Whakaako have the greatest impact on positive learning outcomes (as defined in *Te Whāriki*) for Māori children?

In the section I firstly identify Māori dimensions of practice, both traditional and contemporary, that support positive learning outcomes for Māori tamariki. I then make links to the Learning Outcomes and examples of good kaiako practice found in *Te Whāriki*.

Education and educating

Before the arrival of Europeans, teaching and learning was supported by highly sophisticated knowledge structures, educational practices and principles. It involved a mix of processes aimed at maintaining and extending knowledge, and understanding how resource bases could be harnessed, sustained and extended (Berryman, 2008; Hemara, 2000; Salmond, 1983). According to Te Rangi Hiroa (1987) and Makareti (1986), the education of a young tamaiti happened primarily within the whānau. Living and sleeping in an intergenerational environment allowed for the transmission of important knowledge from the old to the young: knowledge of history, stories, legends and the environment. Education was focused on preparing the tamaiti for living, for active participation in Māori society. Learning experiences had immediate practical application. As the tamaiti matured the tasks became more complex. Berryman (2008, p. 11) states that "learning within these traditional contexts included a variety of cognitive, oral, auditory and visual processes aimed at maintaining and extending cultural mores and knowledge." Tamariki absorbed cultural mores by following adults and learned through observation, imitation and practice. All aspects of life were open to the tamaiti, including public assemblies. There are early accounts of sons of chiefs, aged about four or five, being present at important meetings where they sat, listened attentively, asked questions, and had them answered considerately by the adults. In this way they learned valuable lessons about the roles and responsibilities of a chief (Jenkins, Harte, & Ririki, 2011).

Learning processes included imitation, play and intentional instruction. Stories, games, whakapapa, waiata and karakia provided the tamaiti with information about the world and their place in it (Heuer, 1969; Jenkins, Harte, & Ririki, 2011; Pihama et al., 2004). Melbourne (2009) maintains that, "The myriad of games that were such a favourite pastime of traditional Māori societies all served a purpose of challenging the intellectual, physical, emotional and metaphysical attributes of children" (p. 74). Hemara (2000) adds that skills and abilities were recognised early, and teaching focused on extending and developing those strengths.

Oriori is one example of a traditional pedagogical method. Oriori, or inspirational and motivational lullabies, were composed for babies, highlighting behaviours to be emulated. For a very young baby who could not understand the words, the oriori acted as a socialising tool, and for anyone else listening, it reinforced the spiritual nature of the tamaiti. Over time, the tamaiti would gradually come to understand the meaning and intent of the oriori (Hemara, 2000). Oriori would contain information about mythology, tribal history, and whakapapa. Sung repeatedly, they embedded in listeners the whakapapa and the qualities of the tamaiti, and reinforced how they should be treated. As Jenkins and Harte (2011, p. 12) explain,

"[Oriori] were a poetic and repetitive way to fix personal, whānau and cultural messages in the minds of the listeners."

Metge (1983) identified five principles evident in historical Māori education that have significance for contemporary ECE teaching and learning:

1. *Ako,* which means to teach and to learn, with little distinction between the two roles. Ako assumed a power-sharing relationship between the kaiako and the learner. Knowledge was co-constructed and learning interactive: a "unified cooperation of learner and kaiako in a single enterprise" (p. 2).
2. *Story-telling* was a means of transmitting complex information about history and genealogy. Stories came in many forms: prayers, songs and carvings.
3. *Memory and rote learning.* From a young age tamariki experienced oral recitals conveying important information and knowledge; as they grew and matured so did the scope of the recitals.
4. *Learning through exposure* involved being exposed to or modelling a wide range of formal and informal rituals and experiences. Under the mentorship of kaiako the learner participated actively with the expectation that, when the time was right, they would take over the teaching.
5. *Learning in groups.* Group learning was a way of integrating new learners into groups of experienced members, where learning occurred through the role modelling around them.

Communal caregiving

In traditional Māori communal settings, caregiving was not the sole responsibility of the birth parents (Howard, 1970; Morehu, 2005), rather it was shared by the extended whānau and community (Patterson et al., 2006; Rameka & Glasgow, 2016; Metge, 1976). The tamaiti belonged to the whānau collective, and everyone was involved in their care, development and socialisation.

Wiremu Kaa states that the practice of communal childrearing is "not an abdication of responsibility, it's a sharing of responsibility, a preference for the third party" (cited in Metge, 2015, p. 9). Communal living facilitated extended family support because it meant that at all times there were adults in close proximity to babies and infants. Ritchie and Ritchie (1981) asserted that collective caregiving increased the likelihood of positive outcomes for tamariki in terms of their wellbeing and development. As a caregiving structure this system ensured the wellbeing of mothers and whānau as well as tamariki. Collective caregiving saw to character development, provided specific, skilled training, and ensured that alternative 'parents' were available to support tamariki when needed. Metge (2015) makes the point that communal childrearing practices assisted in the development and maintenance of the mana of the tamaiti.

Tuakana/teina pairings are an important feature of the Māori communal caregiving model. This is the practice of older siblings caring for younger siblings. The practice, which often took place without adult supervision, aided socialisation (Jenkins, Harte, & Te Kahui Mana Ririki 2011; Ritchie 1962) and demonstrated the value of sharing resources, time, knowledge and

understandings. The tuākana–tēina relationship provided role modelling for younger tamariki, supporting them to learn through relationships and interactions with others across ages (Morehu, 2005). It was a tool for developing skills that were necessary for the transmission of culture and language (White, O'Malley, Rockel, Stover, & Toso, 2008). It supported the transition from dependency to independence (Ritchie & Ritchie, 1981). Traditionally, the tuākana–tēina partnership was viewed as an essential vehicle for mediating and promoting some of the most important cultural learnings, messages and practices (Gallimore, 1981). The practice of tuākana/tēina contributed to intergenerational knowledge transfer by promoting the free flow of knowledge between generations (Walker 2016).

ECE provision for Māori tamariki requires the implementation of practices and pedagogies that reflect the cultural world views, identities, protocols and behavioural expectations. This highlights the need for a collective approach to educating and nurturing tamariki, which calls into question the growing ECE practice of *primary caregiving*, in which a single adult is primarily responsible for the caregiving of any particular child. A communal approach will also encourage peer caregiving, including the development of tuākana/tēina relationships and associated responsibilities. Rameka and Glasgow (2017) assert that tuākana/tēina pairing is an aspect of traditional Māori kinship and caregiving practices that has important implications for teaching and learning in contemporary ECE contexts. They argue that tuākana/tēina learning is not just a culturally responsive pedagogical approach but also an important cultural tool for empowering tamariki learning and agency. The opportunity for tuākana and tēina to mix together in a safe, nurturing, encouraging and normalised space is crucial. Settings that separate tamariki by age inhibit tuākana–tēina relationships as tamariki have limited opportunity to interact with those in other age groups. Rameka and Glasgow argue that learning through relationships between older and younger tamariki, encapsulated in the tuākana/tēina model of learning, needs to be considered and foregrounded in ECE teaching practice.

Culture, identity, language and land

For Māori to enjoy educational success, educators need to recognise that tamariki are culturally located, and that effective education must embrace culture.

To understand the tamaiti it is essential to understand those spiritual elements of the Māori person and the Māori world such as *tapu*, *mana mauri and wairua* (Shirres, 1997). These elements are fundamental to Māori constructs of the tamaiti and holistic wellbeing and, therefore, to Māori views on childrearing and child development. For Māori, spiritual harmony or balance is crucial for tamariki wellbeing and development; imbalance or disharmony in the natural forces can have an adverse impact. To ensure balance is maintained, the physical and spiritual dimensions of the tamaiti and his world must be acknowledged and reconciled. According to Mead (2003) this means caregivers have a responsibility to nurture the spiritual aspects of the tamaiti. To ensure balance and harmony in the tamaiti and their world, attention must be paid to both their spiritual and physical needs (Ullrich, 1994).

Culture also defines how many aspects of tamariki development are viewed, including 'stages'. Rameka & Walker (2012) argue that terms such as 'infants and toddlers' do not accurately describe Māori babies. Traditional terms related to the ability of tamariki to drink and eat. *Piripoho* is used for babies from birth to when they are able to sit independently: 'piri' translates as 'attached' or 'connected', while 'poho' relates to the chest or upper body, so 'piripoho' conveys the sense of closeness, of being held to the chest or heart; piripoho is also the word for breastfeeding. This is a time when babies require security and when they are using their senses to become familiar with their surroundings. *Kōnakunaku* is used for tamariki who have moved from breastfeeding to solid foods. *Nakunaku* translates as 'to mince or shred', and relates to the chewing of food. Traditionally, food was chewed by adults and fed directly mouth to mouth until the tamaiti was able to chew and swallow it unaided.

Culture, or more specifically, whanaungatanga, influences theorising about attachment. Whanaungatanga connects the individual to kin groups, providing them with a sense of belonging and therefore strengthening each member of the kin group (Berryman, 2008; Mead, 2003; Pere, 1984). Atwool (2006), argues that, for Māori, 'whanaungatanga' is a more appropriate concept than 'attachment'. Whanaungatanga is a protective factor, increasing resilience and positive outcomes for tamariki and their whānau. Whanaungatanga contributes to the psycho-social development of the tamaiti, but only if they are culturally grounded and connected, with a secure base that that has been established through positive interactions and relationships with those involved in their care and upbringing (Atwool, 2006).

As stated earlier, land is fundamental to Māori being and belonging. Urbanisation and alienation from land has had a devastating effect on identity: personal, social and spiritual, severing whakapapa and tangata whenua connections to the land. For 70% of urban Māori, all ties to the land were completely lost (Walker (1989). As a consequence, large numbers of Māori were unable to fully connect with their tribal roots or to integrate into the wider Pākehā-led society (Durie, 1998; Maaka & Fleras, 2005; Raerino, 2007). As McIntosh (2005) describes it:

> The dominant paradigm of Māori society argues that … whakapapa established place and home. In this sense, urban defranchised Māori who have no knowledge of their whakapapa may find themselves culturally homeless, a potent element of a sensed alienation from both Māori and non-Māori society. (p. 42)

For urban Māori, hāpu, iwi markers and traditional places of identity are mostly elsewhere, so developing identity and a sense of belonging becomes that much more complex. For some, this has meant developing pan-Māori identities (O'Regan, 2001: Nikora, 2007). McCreanor, Penney, Jensen, Witten, Kearns, and Barnes (2006) suggest that Māori can strengthen identity and find a sense of belonging in an urban environment by developing relationships with the mana whenua (those with territorial rights and authority in the region) and developing knowledge about their culturally significant geographical markers and locations (Barlow, 1991). McCreanor et al (2006) also highlight appreciation of the natural environment as a strategy for developing a sense of identity and belonging in an urban setting. Attachment to the natural environment, including beaches, parks, forest and bush reserves, can reawaken

and re-establish important cultural relationships and responsibilities. For ECE in contemporary urban environments, such cultural identity markers are vital for developing identity and belonging in tamariki (Rameka, in press).

Culturally responsive pedagogy

According to Gay (2002), culture can be viewed as a powerful resource for student learning. Gay (2002) defines culturally responsive pedagogy ''as using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively" (p. 106). This interpretation is based on the premise that, when knowledge and skills are situated in the learners' worlds, experiences and frames of reference, they are more likely to have interest and appeal, be meaningful, and be easily learned.

It is argued that, for Indigenous students, culturally responsive pedagogy must be connected to the languages and norms of local Indigenous communities (McCarty & Lee, 2014). Culturally responsive pedagogy is grounded in kaiako–student dialogue, because without such dialogue, kaiako continue to draw on essentialised ideas of learners derived from their own cultural backgrounds. In other words, kaiako need to develop awareness of the community and family cultures of their learners, and develop pedagogically through interaction with the learners.

Real change is only possible, however, by uncovering what Bishop (2012) calls the *hidden curriculum* and analysing the power relationships that impact school effectiveness and learner achievement. This means moving beyond essentialising, tokenistic, and/or stereotypical investigations into culture and cultural identity (Hynds et al., 2014). Research highlights that nurturing learners' self-esteem and affirming their identity and cultural values is closely linked with success in learning (Berryman, 2008; Bishop et al., 2007). Mutual respect and power sharing by kaiako and learners is essential for facilitating engagement and subsequent educational success (Bishop et al., 2007).

Māori responsive pedagogy

Although culturally responsive practices as student–kaiako dialogue, development of community knowledge, and power sharing are essential for effective teaching and learning, I would argue that the term 'culturally responsive pedagogy' once again positions Māori within the increasingly diverse cultural milieu that is present-day New Zealand. It does not reflect their unique position as tangata whenua, or as signatories to te Tirito o Waitangi. Furthermore, *Te Whāriki* affirms that te Tiriti, which embodies "a commitment to live together in a spirit of partnership and the acceptance of obligations for participation and protection" (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 3) has ongoing implications for education:

> Located in Aotearoa New Zealand, this vision implies a society that recognises Māori as tangata whenua, assumes a shared obligation for protecting Māori language and culture, and ensures that Māori are able to enjoy educational success as Māori (p. 6).

I therefore maintain that a more appropriate term would be *Māori pedagogy.* Pihama et al. (2004) argue that kaupapa Māori provides principles and practices that are an appropriate basis for Māori educational pedagogy.

Kaupapa Māori

Kaupapa can variously mean strategy, principle, a way to proceed, a plan or a philosophy. Embedded within the concept is the idea of acting strategically, of proceeding purposively (L. Smith, 1999). According to Berryman (2008), Kaupapa Māori is a movement of resistance and revitalisation, incorporating theories that are deeply embedded in te ao Māori. It involves perceiving the world from a Māori epistemological perspective and assuming the normalcy of Māori values, understandings and behaviours (G. Smith, 1992). This means moving Māori knowledge in from the margins, where by implication it is 'abnormal' or 'unofficial', to the centre, where it has equal status with Western knowledge. In essence, Kaupapa Māori is a theory for social change. It is a "Māori philosophical approach to a field of practice or theory that focuses on challenging well-established Western ideas about knowledge" (Eketone, 2008, p. 1). Kaupapa Māori pedagogy, therefore, actively legitimates and validates te reo Māori, mātauranga Māori, tikanga Māori and āhuatanga Māori.

The difference between kaupapa Māori and culturally adapted or responsive programmes or curriculum is that kaupapa Māori has its roots in the Māori world (Superu, 2015). According to Wirihana & Smith (2014), whether whānau have a deep understanding of te ao Māori or not, access to te ao Māori is essential for the wellbeing of tamariki and whānau, hapu and iwi. Furthermore, Levy (2007) argues that initiatives that fail to align with Māori worlds and aspirations may do more harm than good for Māori. While the pursuit of aspirations may be a universal principle and a universal right, Māori aspirations emerge from a foundation of 'being Māori'. Fundamental to those aspirations is the ability to participate fully within their communities, to maintain their uniqueness as Māori, and to succeed as Māori. At the heart of Māori aspirations is the Māori view of relationships with others, the environment, culture/traditional practices, reo and Māori development, plus the desire to participate fully in both Māori and western societies as Māori.

Te Whāriki: Strands

For each strand *Te Whāriki* offers guidance for Māori pedagogy by: defining valued learning in Māori terms, articulating relative aspects of Māori worldviews, and outlining expectations of kaiako. In this way the document supports kaiako to deepen their understanding of tikanga Māori and te ao Māori.

The five strands are:

Mana atua | Children understand their own mana atuatanga – uniqueness and spiritual connectedness
Wellbeing | Children have a sense of wellbeing and resilience
Mana whenua | Children's relationship to Papatūānuku is based on whakapapa, respect and aroha

Belonging | Children know they belong and have a sense of connection to others and the environment

Mana tangata | Children have a strong sense of themselves as a link between past, present and future

Contribution | Children learn with and alongside others

Mana reo | Through te reo Māori, children's identity, belonging and wellbeing are enhanced

Communication | Children are strong and effective communicators

Mana aotūroa | Children see themselves as explorers, able to connect with and care for their own and wider worlds

Exploration | Children are critical thinkers, problem solvers and explorers.

Te Whāriki: Learning Outcomes

The Learning Outcomes are broad statements of valued learning. Each has Māori wording designed to broaden understanding of the learning that is valued:

Over time and with guidance and encouragement, tamariki become increasingly capable of:

Mana atua

- Keeping themselves healthy and caring for themselves |te oranga nui
- Managing themselves and expressing their feelings and needs |te whakahua whakaaro
- Keeping themselves and others safe from harm |te noho haumaru.

Manu whenua

- Making connections between people, places and things in their world |te waihanga hononga
- Taking part in caring for this place |te manaaki i te taiao
- Understanding how things work here and adapting to change |te mārama ki te āhua o ngā whakahaere me te mōhio ki te panoni
- Showing respect for kaupapa, rules and the rights of others |te mahi whakaute.

Mana tangata

- Treating others fairly and including them in play |te ngākau makuru
- Recognising and appreciating their own ability to learn |te rangatiratanga
- Using a range of strategies and skills to play and learn with others |te ngākau aroha.

Mana reo

- Using gesture and movement to express themselves |he kōrero ā-tinana
- Understanding oral language and using it for a range of purposes |he kōrero ā-waha
- Enjoying hearing stories and retelling and creating them |he kōrero paki
- Recognising print symbols and concepts and using them with enjoyment, meaning and purpose |he kōrero tuhituhi
- Recognising mathematical symbols and concepts and using them with enjoyment, meaning and purpose |he kōrero pāngarau

- Expressing their feelings and ideas using a wide range of materials and modes |he kōrero auaha.

Mana aotūroa

- Playing, imagining, inventing and experimenting |te whakaaro me te tūhurahura i te pūtaiao
- Moving confidently and challenging themselves physically |te wero ā-tinana
- Using a range of strategies for reasoning and problem solving |te hīraurau hopanga
- Making sense of their worlds by generating and refining working theories |te rangahau me te mātauranga. (Ministry of Education, 2017, pp. 24–25)

Te Whariki also provides examples of kaiako practices that promote the Learning Outcomes and that relate specifically to Māori values, beliefs, skills and worldviews:

Mana Atua

- Kaiako respect Māori beliefs by carrying out everyday caregiving practices in line with cultural protocols. For example, they uphold the concept of tapu and noa by separating soiled personal items from kitchen laundry.
- Kaiako develop their own knowledge of te reo Māori, tikanga Māori and Māori world views so that they are better able to support children to understand their own mana atuatanga.
- Kaiako facilitate tuakana/teina relationships and ensure that mokopuna have opportunities to manaaki and take responsibility for others. Kaiako trust mokopuna to manage these relationships and to indicate when they need support. (p. 28)

Mana Whenua

- Kaiako are cognisant of the concept of tangata whenua and the relationship that Māori have to each other and to the land. This guides kaiako relationships with whānau, hapū and iwi. Kaiako share appropriate histories, kōrero and waiata with mokopuna to enhance their identity and sense of belonging.
- Kaiako support mokopuna to engage respectfully with and to have aroha for Papatūānuku. They encourage an understanding of kaitiakitanga and the responsibilities of being a kaitiaki by, for example, caring for rivers, native forest and birds. (p. 33)

Mana Tangata

- Kaiako recognise mokopuna as connected across time and space and as a link between past, present and future: 'He purapura i ruia mai i Rangiātea'. They celebrate and share appropriate kōrero and waiata that support mokopuna to maintain this link.
- Kaiako support mokopuna to stand proud and firm (tū tangata) by building and maintaining relationships based on respect and reciprocity. (p. 38)

Mana Reo

- Language and culture are inseparable. Kaiako enhance the sense of identity, belonging

and wellbeing of mokopuna by actively promoting te reo and tikanga Māori.

- Kaiako pronounce Māori words correctly and promote te reo Māori using a range of strategies based on relevant language learning theories. (p. 43)

Mana Aoturoa

- Kaiako are aware of the history of Māori exploration and navigation. They encourage mokopuna to connect to this legacy by providing safe and challenging environments and experiences.
- Kaiako recognise the relationship mokopuna have with the environment. They support them to fulfil their responsibilities as kaitiaki of the environment. For example, kaiako encourage mokopuna to observe nature without harming it. (p. 48)

3. What do we know about how the influences and dimensions work together to promote and support improvement in an early learning service context?

To answer this question I will discuss what recent research literature is saying about Māori educational change. It is important to note that, while the body of research literature with a specific focus on Māori ECE is growing, it is still fairly limited. For this reason, I have widened my literature search to include relevant research on Māori education and wellbeing.

Richard's (2017) doctoral study, *A critical analysis of a culturally responsive pedagogy: Towards improving Māori educational achievement*, examined how one English-medium school provided culturally responsive practice that improved the educational achievement of Māori learners. The findings revealed that, although the teachers were keen to see their Māori students succeed and tried different strategies to bring this about, for example, demonstrably caring for and connecting with their students, the students and their parents did not always experience such strategies in a positive way. The research found that implementing culturally responsive pedagogy across a school required deliberate change on the part of every staff member. For some this meant taking a more agentic stance; for others, it meant identifying what strategies were needed and then working to develop them. Richard states "Culturally responsive discourses involve agents of change within teacher perspectives or perceptions regarding their Māori students" (p. 108).

A report by Dobbs (2015) entitled *A literature review of Indigenous theoretical and practice frameworks for mokopuna and whānau well-being* identified a set of best-practice principles for social workers working with Māori learners. Although the report focuses specifically on social work, the principles identified by the author have resonance with ECE, and with ERO's Ngā Pou Here indicators. The principles include:

> Whakamanawa, highlights words like, encouragement, inspiring and instilling confidence to achieve and freedom. It has great significance in dealing with Māori learners.
> Kaitiakitanga, is about fulfilling the vital obligation for 'taking care of'. It requires safe spaces, respectful relationships, integrity. Kaitiakitanga is about building and looking after relationships and can support practitioners with understanding relationships and wellbeing when interacting with Māori learners.
> Manaakitanga, is about support, care, hospitality and protection of others. It emphasises actions and acts of kindness and hospitality.
> Wairuatanga, often manifests itself through tikanga, cultural integrity, mātauranga Māori, and cultural sensitivity.
> Rangatiratanga can be viewed as chiefliness. It is also about collective rights to participate in decision making, as it was an assertion of the right of the Rangatira to make decisions on behalf of the iwi and/or hapū.

A report by The Tertiary Education Commission (2012), entitled *Doing better for Māori in tertiary settings*, focused on literature that identified common barriers, enablers and opportunities for Māori transitioning to tertiary education and, subsequently, succeeding in

their studies. It found that, for Māori learners, their sense of belonging derives from seeing their experiences, culture, values and worldviews being reflected in the teaching and learning. Where this is lacking or merely an 'add-on', the environment can lack relevance and leave students feeling marginalised and isolated. The literature highlights two interrelated aspects:

1. the integration of Māori cultural values and tikanga into the learning environment and curriculum
2. the way in which teachers are able to integrate the Māori community into the teaching, learning, assessment and programme delivery.

When these issues were taken seriously Māori learners were able to develop their cultural knowledge and identities in the tertiary environment and experience it as a place where they belonged. The literature review identified that tikanga and Māori values should be embedded within and across the curriculum to ensure that tikanga is "lived and practised, and not just a theoretical construct". Two other factors that were found to be particularly important were the student–teacher relationship and how the values of aroha, manaakitanga and whānaungatanga were practised within the programme.

A study by Hawaikirangi-Pere (2013), *Māori cultural identity and education*, asked Māori whānau how they saw cultural identity in relation to their children's education. All the interviewees identified as Māori but most had little or no knowledge or understanding of te reo Māori and were not involved in cultural practices. Mixed ethnicity and urbanisation were both factors in this loss of cultural identity, which (as the data demonstrated) had progressed to the younger generations and influenced the priorities of whānau. The findings suggested that the educational experiences of Māori learners have been, and continue to be, strongly influenced by government policies enforced before and during the period in which they attended school. The research clearly indicated that a secure cultural identity can enhance a learners' overall well-being and improve their potential for educational success.

Ongley's (2014) study, *A bicultural curriculum for toddlers: Living it every day*, aimed to empower teachers and find strategies for integrating te ao Māori into the curriculum for toddlers in ways that were natural as well as simple and effective. The strategies included using te reo, tikanga Māori and waiata, and introducing traditional symbols and patterns. It was believed that having strategies would give teachers a sense of ownership of their actions. The study found that singing waiata was one of the most effective methods of teaching te reo to both tamariki and kaiako. Pakiwaitara was also an effective method of introducing a bicultural curriculum. During the research it became clear that mokopuna learning depended greatly on the level of teacher involvement. Furthermore, the extent to which teachers developed their understanding of te ao Māori and their ability to effectively implement Māori practices was directly linked to their willingness to give things a go. It was realised that Māori and Pākehā curricula don't contradict each other; indeed, they can coexist within a single curriculum and be utilised for all tamariki. Ongley argued that to avoid tokenism the whole team needed to participate equally, as a team, contributing and persevering together.

In their report, *Ka Awatea: An iwi case study of Māori students' success*, Macfarlane et al., (2014) used success attributes drawn from eight tribal ancestors to determine domains of success, and then evaluated the relevance of these attributes in contemporary educational and societal systems. They argued that all educators should be aiming to strengthen the success motivation of Māori students by strengthening their cultural identity. They add, "Māori students displaying well-integrated cultural traits are better equipped to achieve success in many aspects of their lives, and the quality of their educational engagement will determine the willingness of the student to remain and persist with formal education" (p. 39). The authors found a clear correlation between recognition of and support for a student's cultural identity and their subseqent acquisition of knowledge and skills. They claim that Māori learners who are well integrated and confident in both the Māori and western worlds are more likely to be successful.

Milne's (2013) thesis, *Colouring in the white spaces: Reclaiming cultural identity in whitestream schools*, compares mainstream education to a child's colouring book: not only is the background uniformly white, the outlines dictate where colour is permitted. In mainstream schools, where the white background is the norm, tamariki learn the place of colour and to stay within pre-determined boundaries and expectations. Milne describes the 25-year journey of two schools, which, together with their communities, determined to reject alienating educational environments in favour of relevant, culturally located, bilingual learning based on secure cultural identities, stable relationships and aroha (authentic caring and love). It was hoped that the study would encourage other schools to identify and name their own white spaces, and to make learning equitable for indigenous and minoritised students. Over time the focus of the research shifted from how Māori and Pasifika learners could develop secure cultural identities in mainstream schools to the barriers that currently prevent this from happening. The language also shifted: 'developing a cultural identity' was reframed as 'reclaiming educational sovereignty and the right to be Māori' in school, while 'mainstream' schooling was more accurately described as 'whitestream' schooling.

Tribal knowledge in early childhood education: a Ngāti Te Ata Waiohua case study (Cornhill, 2014) examines how tribal knowing is implicated in teaching and learning in early childhood education. Tribal curricula and pedagogical approaches to the teaching and learning of young children are examined through kaiako narrative. The study argues that Ngāti Te Ata Waiohua tribal epistemology was powerful in providing a site of freedom, innovation and transformation for the care and education of young children. It brings into focus the intersection between this epistemology, the Ngāti Te Ata Waiohua early childhood education service, and pedagogical approaches to teaching and learning. In this way it stimulates further thinking about the symbiotic nature of tribal development and early childhood education.

Cruse's (2017) study, *Whānau stories: Creating meaningful engagement and wellbeing for the indigenous culture of Aotearoa New Zealand,* is based on the premise that meaningful whānau engagement in early learning contexts can empower whānau and honour the commitments to partnership, participation and protection found in Te Tiriti o Waitangi. The thesis examines what constitutes meaningful engagement for whānau in an ECE setting, and how meaningful engagement can assist whānau to enjoy increased wellbeing. The author

listened to whānau Māori as they described how meaningful engagement was created for them and then went on to explore the links between engagement and whānau wellbeing. The study found that, for the participants, engagement had three phases: establishing, developing and solidifying. Furthermore, once created, meaningful engagement can lead to flourishing, indicating a relationship between engagement and whānau wellbeing.

Paenga's (2017) study, *Whakamana Māori: sociocultural perspectives of Māori education in Aotearoa,* explores the journey Māori have taken with regard to education, examining the observations of Māori teachers, parents and boards of trustee members, and the experiences of tamariki Māori in educational settings. The study identifies four overarching themes: te ao Māori, tino rangatiratanga, ako, and tangata whenua. The author argues that for outcomes for Māori to improve, whānau, teachers, management and governance must reconsider their worldviews and practices to better align them with the cultural needs of Māori learners, and recognise that historical injustices have ongoing impacts on learners.

Fleming's (2016) research explored the literature that compares Māori and western perspectives on attachment, along with the implications for psychotherapy. I would argue that her findings are also applicable to early childhood education. The author maintains that the longstanding emphasis on singular attachment relationships does not take account of the perspectives of Māori, for whom care by the whānau (siblings, extended whānau, and community) has always been the norm. Fleming explains that, for Māori, attachment tends to be horizontal, with more than one attachment figure, instead as hierarchical and didactic, as is the norm in western approaches. This multiple caregivers concept is especially relevant in collective cultural and societal structures, but it has not been widely recognised in the literature. According to Fleming there is a risk that vital aspects of Māori health and wellbeing will be overlooked if Māori perspectives are not acknowledged.

A study by Thompson (2017), Ngā tāpiritanga: In what ways are indigenous Māori perspectives on attachment similar to and different from western psychoanalytic perspectives on attachment and what are the implications for the practice of psychotherapy in Aotearoa New Zealand? A kaupapa Māori critical literature review, used the Hokowhitu, a life-skills programme for rangatahi, to gauge whether Māori initiatives by 'Māori and for Māori' really help Māori. The study found that the most important aspect of the methodology was that it removed the power factor associated with western-styled education, opting instead for the tikanga of 'tuakana, teina'. As a result the dynamics associated with the dominant cultural approach were negated and the focus shifted on to teaching methods and knowledge that validated Māori culture.

Karu's (2015) study, *He Pī Ka Rere: An early childhood education approach to a cultural milieu,* explored issues around the inculcation of te reo me ngā tikanga Māori – Māori language customs and values – in early childhood educators in a tertiary setting. It examined what tertiary staff were doing to prepare those with limited knowledge of the language or culture to meet the expected standard. The study found that not all non-Māori participants were able to locate concepts such as ako, whakawhānaungatanga, mana, mana atua, mana whenua, mana tangata, mana reo and mana aotūroa in their true sense because they lacked cultural

reference points. She concluded that mainstream early childhood educator programmes were failing to meet their commitment to bicultural development. By failing to centralise Māori perspectives they were failing to normalise Māori language, culture and experiences. The author explained that what was achieved was "merely a token gesture of commitment, superficial to the Māori language, culture and custom" (p. 36).

In a study titled *Āta: a theoretical base for best practice in teaching*, the author (Forsyth, 2014) examines her own teaching based on the Āta philosophy and principles, and explores ways of developing a theory of best practice. The study found that basing teaching on Āta principles assists in the development of respectful classroom relationships and suggests that this enhances student learning. The five principles are:

> Āta-haere: Be intentional and approach reflectively
> Āta-whakarongo: Listen with reflective deliberation
> Āta-noho: Give quality time to be with people and their issues
> Āta-whakaaro: Think with deliberation, considering possibilities
> Āta-korero: Communicate and speak with clarity.

The findings indicate that the positive effects of Āta-based teaching may not be restricted to any particular classroom environment, and that teacher qualities identified by students as essential for their learning could be developed by embracing the philosophy of Āta. As outcomes from the study the author recommends greater recognition of the value of cultural knowledge in the education system, acknowledgement of the depth of knowledge contained in te ao Māori, and development of a bicultural model of teaching based on the philosophy of Āta.

Pohatu (2015) introduces Mātauranga-ā-whānau as a "site and source where Māori have the daily opportunity to use our own images, sources, people, experiences, words and knowing, locating messages, then interpreting them into our contexts" (p. 38). She points out that whānau is a recognised source of applied knowing and experience on which Māori can draw, adding that it offers a conscientising, internalised lens, a unique cultural source of potentiated power. The site brings out the significance of belonging to a distinct body of people with unique experiences and legacies. The cultural approach of inviting earlier generations to enter into new spaces, and reaching out to tīpuna through time, ensures a meaningful contribution can be made.

4. What are the implications for the conceptual framework that underpins ERO's evaluation indicators (ECE)?

When identifying implications for the conceptual framework that underpins ERO's evaluation indicators, I intend to use a *Teaching and Learning Research Initiative* report by Rameka et al. (2017), *Te Whātu Kete mātauranga: Weaving Māori and Pasifika infant and toddler theory and practice in early childhood education,* to highlight key points. This report examined ways in which Māori and Pasifka cultural knowledge had supported the development of responsive theory and practice for the care of infants and toddlers in ECE settings. In this commentary I will discuss the findings from Māori early learning services. Although the research specifically focused on theory and practice relating to infants and toddlers in ECE settings, I would argue that the findings are relevant to tamariki of all ages.

The research involved participants working to reclaim traditional knowledge and understanding, reframe the reclaimed knowledge and understandings for contemporary contexts, and realise the reframed knowledge and understandings in local early childhood contexts. Reclaiming traditional knowledge involved collecting whānau/hāpu/iwi/community pūrākau/narratives about traditional and contemporary education and care of mokopuna. Common themes emerged, and these have been discussed earlier in this commentary. They include:

- *Communal caregiving:* Communal childrearing responsibilities within extended families/whānau was a major theme that emerged from all the services. Many kaikorero, interviewees recalled guidance from elders, aunties, uncles, grandparents, siblings, and cousins.
- *Intergenerational caregiving:* A large number of pūrākau described the role of grandparents in childrearing. Intergenerational caregiving was important for the transmission of knowledge, culture and traditions to future generations.
- *Tuākana–tēina:* Another key caregiving practice identified across services was tuākana–tēina, with older siblings or cousins taking responsibility for feeding, bathing, nurturing and sleeping with the infants. As a consequence, strong, enduring relationships were forged between siblings and whānau.
- *Tūrangawaewae-ahikāroa:* A recurring theme in pūrākau was the importance of maintaining iwi, hapū, rohe, nation connections so that young tamariki were able to develop a strong sense of belonging and identity, knowing who they were and where they came from.
- *Hikihiki pēpi*: Many pūrākau included examples of babies being carried on the hip or back of adults and tamariki as they went about their day. Carrying babies ensured the development of strong bonds with whānau.
- *Religion and spirituality, karakia:* Pūrākau from all the services stressed the importance of spirituality, karakia and religion. Religious activities were woven into the fabric of daily family life, with spirituality, and karakia or prayers involving tamariki from an early age.
- *Waiata and song*: Kaikōrero referred to being immersed in waiata, oriori, mōteatea and karakia, as well as traditional recitations, when waking and or going to sleep. These

practices entrenched in tamariki understandings of their roles and responsibilities, knowledge of whakapapa and tribal connections, and a strong sense of belonging and identity.

Key themes

Out of the interviews with kaikorero from the various participating Māori Puna Reo services, key themes emerged. While these themes have particular significance in their original contexts, aspects are applicable across ECE.

Te Puna Whakatupu o Raroera Te Puawai.

- The place and use of wai (water) within specific contexts, and importance of the Waikato river to the people of Waikato, Tainui, were reoccurring themes. The research found that the mana of infants and toddlers could be strengthened by developing understandings and practices associated with wai. This could be seen when infants and toddlers used wai to self-regulate, to whakaāio-calm and whakahohe-energise; were able to physically and intellectually communicate their hononga wairua-spiritual connectedness to wai, understood their whakapapa to wai, Waikato awa-river, and ua-rain; and when they engaged in wai experiences where they were able to affirm, support and lead others.

Te Puna Whakatupu o Whare Amai

- A key theme was the importance of relationships with people and place, which included tuākana–tēina relationships as a caregiving practice. The research emphasised that cultural practices, values, and understandings associated with mana whenua enhanced tuākana–tēina relationships when tamariki: were familiar with and took the lead in tikanga Māori, cultural practices, routines, and rituals related to mana whenua; took responsibility for themselves and others, showing manaakitanga, aroha and tiaki; observed, copied and felt empowered to have a go at activities, routines, and cultural practices such as pepeha, karakia, waiata; were confident to ask for support, and understood they would receive it.

Te Puna Whakatupu o Ngā Kākano o te Mānuka

- Pūrākau highlighted the use of traditional waiata, mōteatea, oriori and karakia to help babies establish their identity, roles and responsibilities. Research found that mōteatea could be used in a number of ways to enhance and embrace the rangatiratanga of infants and toddlers: as a waiata to soothe, calm, invigorate, and support; as an assessment tool to highlight the aspirations of the mōteatea words; as reo rotarota-sign language by kaiako, tuākana, and sometimes teina, to support positive tuākana–tēina behaviours; woven by kaiako and tamariki through every aspect of the programme.

Research findings

From the project there emerged a number of commonalities that address the research questions.

How can Māori and Pasifika cultural knowledge support the development of culturally responsive (Māori and Pasifka responsive) theory and practice for the care of infants and toddlers in contemporary early childhood settings?

Māori cultural knowledge can support the development of Māori responsive theory and practice by making connections with and deepening understanding of Māori worldviews, constructs of the tamaiti, and whānau/communities.

What traditional Māori and Pasifika cultural knowledge can be reclaimed as a basis for contemporary infant and toddler practice?

Traditional Māori cultural knowledges that can be reclaimed include cultural values, understandings, beliefs and practices that reflect Māori worldviews. Every case study service identified the need to embed and normalise Māori worldviews within practice. By doing this, a context is created in which iwi/hapū/tīpuna, rohe/whenua/communities can be maintained, thereby enabling infants and toddlers to develop a strong sense of themselves, who they are culturally, and where and how they belong. This supports the establishment of roles and responsibilities, knowledge of whakapapa, and tribal connections.

How can traditional Māori and Pasifika cultural knowledge be reframed to provide new theory and practice for contemporary infant and toddler education?

The case study services used a range of cultural tools, practices and artefacts to reframe cultural knowledge for contemporary infant and toddler education. This involved immersing infants and toddlers in environments where connections and relationships inherent in whakapapa, shared intergenerational caregiving, and tuākana–tēina partnership were embedded. Cultural practices such as waiata, oriori, mōteatea and karakia were an important part of this process, as was the integration of a range of culturally valued tools and artefacts such as pakiwaitara. Recognising and supporting culturally valued traits, competencies, behavioural aspirations, and norms such as mana and rangatiratanga, were regarded as vital in an early learning context.

What will reframed traditional Māori and Pasifika cultural knowledge look like when implemented (realised) with infants and toddlers in contemporary early childhood services?

Reframed Māori cultural knowledge will: reflect kaiako connectedness to, relationships with, and understanding of learning valued by cultural communities within the local context, and highlight Māori cultural tools, practices and artefacts. Whānau, kaiako and tamariki will experience an environment where:

- Māori culture and cultural knowledge, values, practices and beliefs are taken for granted and embedded within the service programme, practices and operation
- connections with culture, families, whānau, iwi, hapū and mana whenua are maintained

and continually strengthened in all areas of the service's operation

- tamariki are supported to develop a strong sense of who they are, where they come from, and where they belong within the contemporary ECE contexts.

5. What are the most important considerations in the framing, defining, identifying and selecting of the indicators, and their potential use in internal and external evaluation in early learning services?

Rameka et al. (2017) highlight various implications for Māori responsive theory and practice. These entail kaiako and professionals developing connections to, relationships with, and understandings of, Māori worlds, families, communities, and tamariki. Most Māori mokopuna are in ECE services where they are cared for by kaiako who look at the world through predominantly Western lenses and frameworks of values, beliefs and understanding. Māori cultural values, beliefs and understandings can be essentially a cultural overlay, veneer, or something nice to have, rather than integral to early childhood provision. To move beyond the veneer stage, the lenses used by kaiako, organisations and institutions have to change. This means:

- Māori cultural knowledge and competencies must be foregrounded in Initial Teacher Education, with a particular emphasis on cultural ways of viewing the world, values, and practices
- Māori cultural tools, practices and artefacts must be authentically and meaningfully utilised in early childhood services. Doing this will require greater depth of kaiako understanding and cultural knowledge, and respectful integration and implementation of strategies
- Māori culturally valued knowledge, beliefs, and traits must be recognised as valid, valuable, and relevant, and be authentically integrated into programmes
- cultural practices and behavioural norms and expectations must be recognised as inseparable elements of Māori worlds, to be modelled, encouraged and valued
- cultural learning must be acknowledged as an ongoing process of inculcation. For this reason it is critical that the appropriate context for cultural learning be created.

Traditional Māori practices and beliefs relating to caring for infants and toddlers offer a valuable alternative to the western theory and practice that currently predominates in early childhood regulations and provision. Māori whānau/communities are storehouses of cultural knowledge and practices, and keepers of the history of the people. To access this knowledge and these practices, kaiako must recognise that:

- cultural worldviews are located in specific community contexts, so it is critical that connections be made to whānau, community and the land on which the service is located
- whānau and community contributions are fundamental to the development of culturally located infant and toddler practices
- they need to seek expertise from those in the community if they are to develop culturally located skills and embed them in practice.

Māori constructs of infants and toddlers differ in kind and emphasis from the western constructs that are espoused by early childhood theorists and normalised in practice. Culturally responsive early childhood provision for Māori infants and toddlers requires

pedagogies and practices that are reflective of their worldviews, identities, protocols, and behavioural expectations. This means recognising that:

- cultural traits, values and competencies such as mana and rangatiratanga are valued learnings, skills and attributes
- infants and toddlers are competent, no matter their age, with traits and characteristics inherited from their ancestors
- culture is critical for identity development, sense of belonging, and lifelong learning
- tuākana–tēina caregiving is a collaborative approach to infant and toddler care and education, and, therefore, a culturally responsive pedagogy
- tuākana–tēina caregiving is essential for optimal teina and tuākana learning in early childhood services. Mixed-age early childhood settings encourage, and are compatible with, traditional/tuākana–tēina caregiving practices
- kaiako foster tuākana–tēina relationships and skills by planning activities and events that promote collaboration and by stepping back and allowing enduring bonds to develop (we argue that the role of kaiako needs to be reviewed and de-centred to allow for a more collective caregiving regime).

Final comments

This commentary focuses on Ngā Pou Here: Mātauranga and Tikanga Whakaako. These pou require us to ask such questions as:

- Mātauranga: Whose knowledge is valued and how is the curriculum designed to achieve positive learning outcomes for children?
- Tikanga Whakaako: How are approaches to teaching and learning responsive to diversity and how do they support positive learning outcomes for children?

I have explored the significance of the two pou in promoting tamariki learning, the dimensions of practice associated with the learning, and what is known about how the influences and dimensions work together. I have then discussed implications for Ngā Pou Here, including considerations to be taken account of when selecting indicators for internal and external evaluation.

I believe that at the heart of Ngā Pou Here are questions about kaiako knowledge and the ways in which kaiako knowledge is represented in practice. I would argue that the most relevant questions for kaiako are:

- Do you know the tamaiti as Māori?
- In what ways does your teaching practice and curriculum development support the tamaiti to succeed as Māori?

It is clear from the research that the majority of kaiako do not have a good understanding of the tamaiti as Māori, and despite the best intentions they do not have the skills and knowledge to support tamariki to succeed as Māori. Lacking the appropriate cultural references they find it hard to connect to Māori values, understandings, and – in their true sense – concepts such as *mana, mana atua, mana whenua, mana tangata, mana reo* and *mana aotūroa*. As a consequence, services tend to offer a cultural overlay, veneer, or nice-to-have gloss, rather than embed te ao Māori and tikanga in all their teaching and learning. This must be addressed if the aspiration, 'Māori succeeding as Māori' is to be achieved, and ERO's whakataukī exemplified.

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Ko te tamaiti te putake o te kaupapa
Children are at the core of the work

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