Evaluation Indicators for ECE Reviews: ERO's conceptual Framework: *Ngā Pou Here*

A commentary from a Pacific perspective: Te Pou Matauranga me Tikanga Whakaako

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Introduction

The purpose of this commentary is to provide a Pacific perspective on how ERO's Ngā Pou Here Framework and indicators, particularly as they relate to the Pou Mātauranga and Tikanga Whakaako, could be revised. Drawing on the research evidence, I begin by discussing the conceptual framework, noting the cultural connection between Māori and Pacific values and knowledge in the Ngā Pou Here model. I then provide background context to the wider issues of Pacific education.

In the following sections I discuss the two Pou, using Pacific literature and research and weaving with a Pacific voice. In this way I respond to the questions:

- What is the significance of Matauranga and Tikanga Whakaako in promoting Pacific children's learning and progress?
- What dimensions of practice associated with Mātauranga and Tikanga Whakaako have the greatest impact on positive learning outcomes (as defined in *Te Whāriki*) for Pacific children?
- What do we know about how the influences and dimensions work together to promote and support improvement in an early learning service context?

I then discuss implications for the conceptual framework, seeking to answer the question:

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

Finally, I discuss key considerations from a Pacific perspective, responding to the question:

- 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?

Pacific peoples

The term 'Pasifika', or 'Pacific peoples' encompasses many different groups, as noted in *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 2017). However, an emphasis on diversity-for-all has led to a homogenising process in which all cultural groups tend to be 'lumped in together' (Robinson & Jones Diaz, 2006). It is important therefore to ensure that the specific requirements of each Pacific Nation is considered (Rameka & Glasgow, 2017). However, certain fundamental principles and a shared worldview underpin the various Pacific peoples and transcend the boundaries between them. Based on this premise, I outline a number of factors that have been shown to promote successful learning outcomes for Pacific children. Crucial considerations are the primacy of cultural and linguistic knowledge and a strong sense of identity.

Conceptual framework

The Conceptual framework, Ngā Pou Here, is designed to help reviewers evaluate ECE services' capacity to promote positive learning outcomes for all children and sustain a process of ongoing improvement. This framework aligns with Pacific models of education such as the Fa'a faletui model. *Fale* is 'house' and *tui* means 'to thread through' (Rimoni, 2016). Rimoni maintains that Fa'a faletui involves capacity building, and knowledge building by people working in communities of practice. Fa'a faletui enables the collection, sharing and validation of different levels of knowledge within Samoan society, and the weaving of these different levels within the Samoan community.

The Matauranga and Tikanga Whakaako pou reinforce much of what is valued in terms of the learning and development of Pacific children. From a cultural perspective, knowledge and ideas are conveyed through metaphor and narrative. As discussed, the metaphor and imagery of Ngā Pou Here provides a culturally sound model for Pacific early childhood education. Several groups have gone on to adapt it for their particular Pacific Nation; for example, in the Cook Islands it became Te Vaka (ERO, 2015). The adaptation process was empowering for those involved because they were able to express their unique identity within a culturally relevant frame.

Background context

In this section, we discuss research literature that draws our attention to Pacific education in a wide context. First, we make four observations:

1. Anderson, Anderson, Hare and McTavish (2014) claim that providing care, education and support for young children has become institutionalised, and dominated by experts, even though in some cultures and contexts families provide this care themselves.
2. The normative view of child development, in which all children pass through predetermined stages, has become ingrained in early childhood literature and discourse to the extent that cultural and social differences across contexts have often been ignored.
3. In the modernist view, the child is seen as a "unified, reified and essentialised subject – at the centre of the world" in which the child may be viewed and treated as apart from relationships and contexts (Dalhberg & Moss, 2006, p.46).
4. Views of children and families, and of teaching and learning, are often infused with middle-class, western and/or Eurocentric values and ideologies, and it is through a lens of this colour that the cultural practices of young children and their families are often examined (Cannella & Viruru, 2004).

Rogoff and others have contributed to our understanding of how child learning and development differ in different cultural communities (Rogoff, 2003; Lopez, Correa-Chavez, Rogoff & Gutierrez, 2010). Rogoff points out that while human development is a cultural practice the study of human development has been based largely on research and theory coming out of middle class communities in Europe and North America. She demonstrates

that there are vast differences in the expectations that adults have of children. For example, in some communities older children look after younger children when, in other communities, an adult would do this.

Turning our attention to the Pacific context, Tanielu (2004) maintains that education systems in Pacific nations such as the Cook Islands and Samoa were determined by the colonisers, with aims that reflected the culture and needs of literate British society. As already noted, western values, ideology and theory have been pervasive and persuasive. This trend remains widespread, with Pacific education giving priority to voices and worldviews from 'the outside', which, Koya-Vakauta (2016) suggests, amputates our capacity for human agency.

In 2001, a gathering of Pacific educators and academics raised the idea of reconceptualising Pacific education. This group initiated a drive that continues to this day. The aim is twofold: to counter pervasive Western bias and to ensure consideration of culturally located practices that are based on Pacific knowledge, practices and ways of being. Taufe'ulungake (2002, p. 18) asserts that Indigenous peoples of the Pacific need to create their own pedagogy, rooted in their own Pacific values, beliefs, assumptions, knowledge, processes and practices. Education is vital for the survival, transformation and sustainability of Pacific peoples and societies (Pene, Taufe'ulungake & Benson, 2002).

The call for a stronger focus on Pacific pedagogy has also come from within Aotearoa (Glasgow, 2010; Mara, Foliaki & Coxon, 1994; Pauvale, 2011 & Tuafuti, 2016), where the Pacific population, mostly born in the country, is steadily increasing. Ninety-eight percent of Pacific people in Aotearoa live in urban areas; 66% live in Auckland (Statistics New Zealand, 2013). Of all ethnic groups the Pacific population has grown the most since the 2001 census; it is predicted that it will reach 480,000 by 2026. Clearly, this growth needs to be planned for and stronger measures implemented to improve educational outcomes. There needs to be a stronger Pacific focus on building a strong Pacific pedagogy for a growing Pacific population.

The main Pacific groups in Aotearoa are Samoan (144,138), Cook Islands Māori (61,839), Tongan (60,333), Niuean (23,333), Fijian, (14,445) and Tokelauan (7,176) (Statistics New Zealand, 2013). Other groups include Tuvaluan, Tahitian and Kiribati. Auckland has the largest Polynesian population in the South Pacific.

The development of the draft version of *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1993) involved wide consultation with Pacific communities, but when the final version was published in 1996 much of the Pacific content had been removed; this content was not recovered in the recently updated version published in 2017. As a consequence, ECE teachers have been at a disadvantage when trying to plan and implement culturally responsive curriculum for Pacific children.

The Pasifika Education Plan 2013–2017 (Ministry of Education, 2013) places the Pacific learner and their parents and communities at the centre. From this core emanate the activities that support identity formation and the language and cultural practices of each Pacific group. These practices are underpinned by the methodologies, theories and knowledge of the different Pacific groups: Fa'a Samoa, Faka Tonga, Faka Tokelau, Faka Niue,

Akono anga Kuki Airani, and Vaka Viti. The Plan envisages success in terms of "vibrant, dynamic, successful Pacific learners, secure and confident in their identities, languages and cultures".

The Pasifika Education Plan established goals for early learning:

- Pacific children start school well prepared for education success.
- All Pacific parents, families and communities understand and value the importance of early learning.
- Early childhood education services are culturally intelligent and effectively engage Pacific children, parents, families and communities.

It also set targets for improvement:

- the percentage of children starting school with ECE experience will increase from 86.2% to 98% by 2016
- by 2016, increase the number of Pacific Language services teaching in a Pacific language or culture for at least 50% of the time
- increase the percentage of Pacific learners with special education needs, aged 0–5 years, accessing early intervention services from 9% in 2012 to 13 % in 2016
- by 2017, 85% of ECE services reviewed by ERO are effective for Pacific children.

Clearly, the Plan calls for closer attention to the educational experiences and needs of Pacific children in a range of ways.

Commentary on Mātauranga

I will now focus on the Mātauranga pou, addressing in turn the four sub-sections: responsive curriculum, understanding children and families, assessment and planning and professional knowledge (ERO, 2013, p.20). I will expand on each area by weaving in Pacific research and literature to provide a Pacific perspective.

Responsive Curriculum

A key question in relation to Mātauranga is 'Whose knowledge is valued, and how is the curriculum designed to support positive learning outcomes for children?' (ERO, 2013, p. 21). A curriculum that promotes successful learning for Pacific children will be based on the principles set out in the Pasifika Education Plan, plus the material included in the draft (but not the final) version of *Te Whāriki* (1996).

Te Whāriki (2017) states that the retention and transmission of Pacific identities, languages and cultural values was the driver for the emergence of Pacific ECE services, with the first opening in 1984. It goes on to explain that language-specific guidelines and implementation advice are available for each of the main Pacific populations and that these guidelines set out processes, methodologies, and approaches considered culturally and linguistically suitable when working with Pacific children, fanau and aiga.

The field of Pacific early childhood education research conducted in Aotearoa is growing and available to inform contemporary practice. Pauvale (2011), Sauvao (1999) and Tuafuti (2016) claim that Pacific children build identity and belonging when cultural values, beliefs and knowledge are included in their learning and development, so they call for curriculum that is strongly connected to Pacific values. As educational practices designed to promote life-long learning will be founded on strong cultural and traditional practice, curriculum should provide children with opportunities for cultural learning that supports the development of a strong identity and sense of belonging to their homelands. Tuafuti (2016) writes of the aspirations and expectations of children to learn and maintain Samoan language and culture based on epistemological beliefs that have been passed down from generation to generation. In this way she highlights the importance for education of connecting to people's lives and the aspirations they have for their children. According to Tuafuti, group sessions must be regarded as prime time for cultural and linguistic learning.

Traditional Pacific learning is often transmitted orally, and in storytelling, therefore designated time and space is required in daily practice to allow this learning to take place. By participating in mat-time activities, children learn to present confidently in front of the group and, claims Tuafuti, how to behave when they go back to the village. She uses the example of the tautalatala (talking chief), who stands to represent the village.

For many Pacific peoples, spirituality – particularly Christianity – has a central place in ECE practice (Makirere, 2009; Rameka, Glasgow & Fitzgerald, 2016). The church continues to play a prominent and influential role in the Pacific language nest. In our 2016 study (Glasgow & Rameka, 2016), Pacific respondents stated that Christian practice and ways were woven into their programmes; for example, *pure* (daily devotions, including Bible readings and prayers) were incorporated into daily routines, and special events such as White Sunday (Cook Islands) were celebrated. One respondent stated wrote "Christian church celebrations all link to our centre philosophy and vision" (p. 143). Including children in community events such as White Sunday and community gatherings gives them opportunities to learn the ways of behaving in society. By a process of 'peripheral participation', and from an early age, children learn social and cultural protocols and skills from community experts. In time they will take their place as capable and confident members in their community of practice (Wenger, 1998). Eventually it will become their turn to impart this knowledge to the next generation, and so the culture is maintained and sustained.

A responsive curriculum for Pacific children will sustain and promote Pacific languages. Pacific languages have been in decline for decades. Hunkin-Tuiletufuga (1998) noted a steady downgrading of Pacific languages for such reasons as misguided advice, lack of concern and interest by Pacific communities, the education system, and the influence of wider society. Despite the development of Pacific language nests in the early 1980s (Burgess, 2004; Ete, 1991) the use of Pacific languages continues to decline (McCaffery, 2015). This is particularly true of the languages of the New Zealand Realm States (Cook Islands, Niue and Tokelau): by 2015 they were defined as intergenerationally extinct. The languages of Samoa and Tonga are also in danger, with just 35% of the population of each nation under 15 able

to speak them. Strengthening Pacific languages clearly needs to be a priority for early childhood education.

Understanding children and families.

Parents and fanau play a pivotal role in Pacific education, so the Ngā Pou Here image of the child supported by parents and fanau is an appropriate cultural metaphor. In the draft version of *Te Whāriki* (1993), the principle of family and community asserted that the family should be involved in all decision making related to the child's education and development. Similar messages appear in *Te Whariki* (2017); see for example, Family and Community (p. 20), Belonging (p. 31), and Considerations for leadership, organisation and practice (p. 35). Within this environment Pacific children learn about their responsibilities and obligations to their family, church and community (Wenger, 1998), and about the importance of belonging and sharing. In Pacific programmes family members share responsibility for the welfare of the child and play a key role in imparting skills such as listening, memorisation and observation (McIntyre, 2008). Lauvale (2011) asserts the importance of ensuring that parents are fully consulted on their aspirations and argues that these should form the basis of a centre's programme and philosophical approach. Participants in our 2015 study (Rameka & Glasgow, 2016) said that clear, open communication and effective relationships with parents, grandparents and aiga were significant enablers, supporting Pacific children to develop positive identities and achieve positive learning outcomes. They saw the involvement of family and community as crucial for an effective cultural programme – "it's all about fanau" (p. 142) – and all educators as aunties and uncles. Other respondents stressed the importance of involving aiga in all decision making, and that effective relationships with fanau were integral to quality programme delivery. As noted earlier, most young Pacific parents are now Aotearoa-born and urbanised; they need stronger support from cultural elders and mentors to maintain their cultural identity and knowledge. Looking to the resources within family and aiga is likely to prove valuable in guiding young parents into cultural understandings. In this way tuakana and teina will work together to build requisite skills and knowledge (Rameka & Glasgow, 2017).

Assessment and Planning

The Continuity of Early Learning: Learning Progress and Outcomes in the Early Years project (Mitchell, Cowie, Clarkin-Phillips, Davis, Glasgow, Hatherley, Rameka, Taylor & Taylor, 2015) investigated assessment practice in three ECE centres that were either immersion or bilingual in the home language and culture. In these centres, language and culture were woven into the fabric of the curriculum because it was recognised that this was crucial for their preservation. The report documents culturally relevant curriculum practices such as threading the home language and culture through the curriculum, and committing to passing on cultural values and valued learning. Narrative assessments were used to highlight culture and valued learning. Teachers recognised that early learning was enhanced when children started learning their language as babies, in the home. They also recognised that the communities they served were becoming more diverse and multicultural, though the home

culture and language continued to prevail, and saw the importance of imparting knowledge and skills to the next generation.

Cultural values can be viewed as learning outcomes. For example, one of the centres in the Mitchell, et al. (2015) study took an holistic approach, and treated values such as respect as legitimate and important learning outcomes. The centre's focus was on relationships, on promoting a sense of belonging to the collective and to the family – parents and fanau. Cultural values were viewed as important for families. A Samoan a'oga amata said their vision was to weave the language into learning, because language learning was so important for children born and raised in Aoteroa. In this centre, assessment consisted primarily of gathering information about the parents' aspirations and the children's interests and then writing learning stories. One respondent commented, "What we do is look at each child's development holistically but also the programme is delivered in Samoan. It is desired that the language is maintained through their further stages of education and to prepare for any challenges ahead" (p. 63).

The vision of a Cook Islands punanga reo was for their children to know their identity, language and culture. Assessment primarily involved giving parents feedback orally and through visual displays, portfolios of learning stories, and work samples. It was a source of pride that parents who were once children at the punanga reo were now bringing their own children along to White Sunday services. It was reiterated that this was a language nest, so learning the Cook Islands language and culture was at the heart of the kaupapa and an important learning outcome.

Like the first, the third language nest in this study was Samoan. For this service it was important to have strong links to the community, which they looked to for spiritual guidance and caring. Assessment was done mostly via observations, learning stories and parental feedback. For New Zealand-born Samoans, the service provided exposure to Samoan culture and language. The service had a mix of cultures but the focus was on teaching the Samoan culture because it is only by doing so that it will be sustained for the generations to come.

Pacific ECE services make their valued language, culture and identity outcomes explicit in written assessment documentation and in wall displays that typically include images from the home country and examples of the home language. In addition to their core function of inculcating language and culture in young children, services consider it important to support families to feel a sense of belonging and community (Mitchell, et al., 2015).

Professional knowledge

There is a danger that the western educational influence that Tuafuti (2016) refers to as 'imposed knowledge' and 'imposed relevance', which has become a 'living present' for Pacific people, will become traditionalised. The author notes that parents struggle to decide what is and what is not relevant in their child's education. Pacific communities have often internalised the colonised ways of the dominant group (Cummins, 1996), consequently they have privileged western education and regarded English as superior to their mother tongue.

Likewise, teachers have favoured western theory and pedagogical approaches over traditional models (Koya-Vakauta, 2016).

Glasgow and Rameka (2017) found it imperative that teachers could speak their own language or dialect fluently, and assert that members of the community had the right to retain their home language. Le Tagaloa (in Smith, Gollop, Marshall & Nairn, 2000) says that Polynesian cultures view language as food and nourishment for children's growth, and if children are language-deprived they may develop different cultural values and a preference for the English language. When Pacific ECE centres are looking for staff, the two most sought-after attributes are Pacific language skills and knowledge of traditional Pacific cultural practices. Respondents in this study mentioned how important it was that staff welcome and greet children and aiga in the Samoan language, and that gagana is used with friendliness and respect.

To strengthen teacher professional knowledge and practice, Pacific models and theories of learning require closer investigation. This will highlight practices such as ako, and tuakana–teina (Rameka & Glasgow, 2017). Teachers should be knowledgeable in such areas as herbal medicines, traditional planting and fishing skills, protocols for formal ceremonies such as the he 'ava ceremony, and be fluent in at least one Pacific language. We need to call on skilled and knowledgeable members of the Pacific community to be mentors/tutors for children and teachers. This may mean reconceptualising the role of teacher so that there is a place for community members to be engaged for their cultural expertise to ensure authenticity in language and cultural learning.

Teachers need to be able to access professional development in language and cultural knowledge. Cherrington, Shuker, Stephenson, Glasgow, Rameka, Thornton & Nager (2013) highlight the need for professional development built on appropriate protocols and processes that targets Pacific immersion services.

I would argue that it is time for professional development to be made available to teachers in mainstream services, focused on building their cultural and linguistic competence to work with Pacific children and fanau. This would promote greater congruence between the culture of the learner and the culture of the learning environment. A high level of congruence allows learners to bring who they are to the classroom in safety and with the confidence that their knowledge is acceptable and legitimate (Mahuika & Bishop, 2011). As Metge (1990) explained, the alternative is that western culture is normalised, with Pākehā teachers viewing what Pākehā children do as normal and natural and, conequently, failing to appreciate the ways in which the system reinforces their own cultural values and beliefs. Respondents in our study (Rameka & Glasgow, 2015) identified incongruences between current theories and ideologies drawn largely from western models of infant and toddler provision, and Pacific worldviews and cultural practices. They felt that, to guide practice and promote cultural understandings and perspectives, another cultural lens was essential.

Commentary on Tikanga Whakaako

I now provide a commentary on Tikanga Whakaako, in which I discuss the four areas: relationships, teaching and learning, te Tiriti-based practice, transitions and environments. For each area I provide a Pacific perspective, discussing why it is important for promoting the learning and progress of Pacific children and highlighting dimensions of practice that have the greatest positive impact for Pacific children

Relationships

As noted in the previous section, family and community involvement is crucial for achieving positive learning outcomes for Pacific children. The draft version of *Te Whāriki* (1993) asserted that adults should be aware of Pacific islands cultural practices connected with family relationships, including relationships between siblings. Lau'vale (2011) noted that parents found it empowering to be consulted on their aspirations, and that a strong relationship between the service and the parents gave agency to the child and others in the community. The participants in our 2015 study (Glasgow & Rameka, 2016) believed that effective, long-term and consultative relationships with fanau were a key to quality provision. It was also vital that aiga be involved in the programme, promoting the values of fa'aloalo (respect) tautua (respect) and alofa (love).

Pacific cultures greatly value intergenerational relationships, particularly the grandparent–grandchild relationship. In tribal societies childrearing was the responsibility of the tribe (Rogoff, 2003). Respondents in our study (Rameka & Glasgow, 2015) made it clear that intergenerational care and education continues to be highly valued. One advocated the village concept of community involvement and building strong networks with elders and church. Others talked about seeking the guidance of elders to ensure cultural maintenance and an authentic ECE programme. They noted that teachers felt affirmed by the presence of elders. The wisdom and traditional knowledge of elders were considered taonga (gifts) by teachers still learning about their culture and language. The adults we interviewed in the three Pacific services all saw themselves as fanau members, with fanau responsibilities, making it clear that these communities of practice embraced a very broad conception of membership.

Western and Polynesian models of child development differ significantly as can be seen, for example, in the terminology and categories used. While western models tend to view children as progressing through clearly defined stages of development, from infancy to toddlerhood to young child, Polynesian models use rather different criteria. Bearing this out, respondents in our study (Rameka & Glasgow, 2017) found that mixed-age settings better reflected traditional caregiving practices and they challenged the practice of categorising and then segregating children by age. Traditionally and culturally, Pacific children are 'one', not an infant, toddler or young child. They are one being regardless of their age and developmental ability.

Tuakana–teina relationships, which are a recognised model of learning across much of Polynesia (Crocombe & Crocombe, 2003), are considered essential by Pacific educators. Mixed-age grouping allows such relationships to be developed. Our study found that cultural learning occurred between tuakana and teina, and that learning should take place together, under one roof, without barriers or walls, rather than parcelling the infants off into age groups (p. 142).

Teaching and learning

To enable positive learning outcomes for Pacific children it is important to examine teaching and learning through a cultural lens. Most Pacific children today have been deprived of their language and culture. For them, education has proven to be a disenfranchising and marginalising experience.

Pacific ECE is a specialist field that requires cultural and linguistic expertise and knowledge, but this is above and beyond what most teachers are able to offer. They want the best for their Pacific children but achieving this is a complex process. Bevan-Brown (2003) posits that teachers are unaware of the role culture plays in learning and therefore lack understanding of how to address culture in their teaching. Ritchie (2003) claims that meeting the needs of Māori children is dependent on the extent to which a largely-Pākehā teaching force comprised mostly of monocultural speakers of English with little experience of Maori culture and values can deliver on expectations. Teachers are similarly constrained by a lack of skills and knowledge when working with Pacific children and families (Tuafuti, 2016).

A nationwide review of Pacific literature identified the need for comprehensive evaluative research on Pacific ECE, which could advance achievement outcomes for children (Chu, Glasgow, Rimoni, Hodis & Meyer, 2012). The Education Review Office (2013) reported a lack of responsiveness to Pacific children in many ECE services – only one fifth of services had thought about how their curriculum might support Pacific children to achieve success, a situation that becomes even more serious as enrolments of Pacific children continue to increase. Yet little research is being done on the implications of this social and educational trend (Rameka & Glasgow, 2015).

Current teacher training is inadequate in terms of preparing trainees to work in culturally responsive ways. Indeed, in our 2015 study (Glasgow & Rameka, 2016), we found that teachers sometimes needed to unlearn some of their training to be able to work in culturally authentic ways. The paucity of cultural resources and pedagogical literature was seen as another impediment to responsive programme provision.

Te Tiriti-based learning

Pacific peoples acknowledge the central place of tangata whenua and recognise their own positioning as tauiwi and tangata Pasifika. In our study (Rameka & Glasgow, 2016) we observed the bicultural curriculum in place in Pacific ECE settings: te reo and tikanga Maori were woven through the programmes, and Māori practices such as blessing kai and blessing the first fish caught (by giving thanks to Tangaroa) were seen to align with Pacific beliefs and

practices. In our research we noted that cultural connections between Māori and Pacific peoples were increasingly being recognised (Rameka & Glasgow, 2015).

Transitions

The Pacific parents involved in the Continuity of Learning project (Mitchell, et al., 2015) were proud of their children's progress and achievement in the ECE setting and linked this success to their cultural and language learning. Their main concern was that their children's skills and talents would be recognised as they went through school.

The Cook Island teachers were concerned that the school system promoted western culture and values, and wanted to see the cultural gap bridged. A Samoan parent expressed the hope that their child's culture and language would be maintained, and that he would not lose important values such as respect for others and himself. Parents, particularly those with only a limited understanding of their language, worried that their children would lose the home language and culture if it was not reinforced at school. A Cook Island parent said that she was 'gutted' that she could no longer speak her own language and expressed the fear that her daughter, who had been learning the language in the ECE setting, would lose it (p. 68). Parents felt their best hope for cultural and linguistic continuity was to try and find a school that had a Pacific teacher.

A study by Sauvao (1999) found that when children transitioned to schools without a bilingual programme they lost cultural and linguistic skills, yet she could find only one school with a bilingual programme for new entrants. When children with highly valuable language skills and cultural knowledge left the aoga amata and went on to school they did not receive due recognition for their skills and knowledge, nor were they given ongoing support to retain them. Clearly the transition to school creates significant needs that have yet to be addressed.

Environments

In our recent Teaching and Learning Research Initiative publication (Rameka & Glasgow, 2017) we worked with Māori and Pacific language nests that strongly and authentically represented their cultures. Each setting was rich in cultural artefacts including natural resources such as shells, and beads and woven products. These resources were used to enhance cultural and linguistic learning. In each case the buildings were either designed or adapted (for example, as a fale environment) to cater for tuakana–teina relationships. The outdoor environments included tropical plants such as banana, hibiscus, and taro. Teachers used these to inform the children about traditional ways of planting and cooking food. Teachers mostly wore traditional dress such as puletasi and mumu, in this way reinforcing the cultural dimension of learning environment. Cultural practices such as inati (Tokelauan custom of caring and sharing) (p. 17), making and using lava lava (Cook Island sarongs) (p. 15) and composing Samoan lullabies (p. 19) connected the children to their cultural backgrounds and created contexts in which alofa (love) could be expressed and gagana (language) used. Daily routines included sharing food together (rather than as a rolling

lunch) because sharing food was seen as an important means of strengthening relationships, and blessing the food together highlights the importance of nourishing the spirit as well as the body. A culturally-rich environment is vital for the delivery of an authentic Pacific ECE curriculum.

Implications for the conceptual framework

Strongly woven through the above commentaries are the concepts of language, culture and identity. These must underpin any approach that is designed to strengthen pedagogical practices for Pacific peoples.

Culturally responsive practice and theory requires teachers to deepen their cultural knowledge and their understanding of Pacific education and practice. This will involve building connections and relationships with Pacific people and children.

Whilst I have drawn solely on Pacific research and literature, it is important to note that most Pacific children in Aotearoa are cared for and taught by teachers who, to a greater or lesser extent, see the world through a western lens and have western values and beliefs. There is therefore a disconnect with Pacific values. Addressing this disconnect will require the following :

- foregrounding Pacific cultural knowledge, values and competencies in Initial Teacher Education, with particular emphasis on cultural ways of viewing the world, values and practices
- recognising that 'Pacific peoples' includes different cultural groups with unique identities
- recognising that maintaining and revitalising Pacific languages is now an acute issue, so practices to support Pacific languages must be built into ECE programmes
- authentically and meaningful implementing Pacific cultural tools, practices and artefacts in ECE services and deepening teachers' understanding and cultural knowledge, and respectful integration and implementation of strategies.
- recognising Pacific culturally-valued knowledge, beliefs and traits as valid, valuable and relevant, and integrating them authentically into programmes
- recognising cultural practices and behavioural norms and expectations as valid, valuable and relevant, and integrating them authentically into programmes
- acknowledging that cultural learning is an ongoing process of inculcation and that it is critical, therefore, to create a context that facilitates cultural learning.

Traditional Pacific caregiving practices and beliefs offer an alternative to the western theory and practice that currently prevails in ECE regulations and provision. Pacific fanau and communities are richly resourced in terms of cultural knowledge and practices; they are keepers of history and knowledge. To access these funds of knowledge ECE teachers must recognise that:

- cultural worldviews are located within specific community contexts and fanau, and links back to the homelands are vital

- fanau/community contributions are fundamental to the development of culturally located ECE practices
- in order to enable culturally located skills to be developed and embedded in practice, cultural expertise must be sought from those in the community.

Practices and pedagogies need to reflect children's cultural worldviews, identities, protocols and behavioural expectations. This requires recognition that:

- cultural traits, values and competencies such as tautua, alofa, and fa'aaloalo are examples of valued learnings, skills and attitudes for Pacific children
- tamaiti are competent no matter their age, with traits and characteristics inherited from their ancestors
- culture is critical for the identity development, sense of belonging and lifelong learning of Pacific tamaiti
- tuakana–teina relationships require an integrated, collaborative and culturally responsive pedagogical approach
- tuakana–teina relationships are essential for learning and mixed-age settings encourage, and are compatible with, traditional tuakana–teina caregiving
- teachers promote tuakana–teina relationships by planning suitable activities and events and then stepping back and allowing enduring bonds to develop
- the role of the teacher needs to be reviewed and de-centred to open up space for a more collective approach to learning and development.

Important considerations for the framing, defining, identifying and selecting of indicators and for their use in internal and external evaluation

Language, culture and identity

Language, identity and culture must be foregrounded as outlined in the following considerations.

- Language and culture, and how they support identity for Pacific children, are key considerations. Curriculum that is culturally-located and informed by Pacific values, knowledge and practice are key to ensuring positive learning outcomes for children.
- Maintaining and revitalising Pacific language is now an acute issue. ECE services need to build their capacity to promote and teach Pacific languages, particularly those classified as endangered (McCaffery, 2015). The Ministry of Education will need to drive the development of resources that enable the teaching of Cook Islands Māori, Vagahau Niue and the Tokelauan language.
- Relationships and family and community: aiga need to be a stronger presence and involved at all levels of ECE; this will require the role of teacher to be reconceptualised. Community elders (a diminishing resource) need to be considered as tuakana for building the cultural capacity of teachers and ECE programmes.
- Strengthen Pacific pedagogical approaches.

- Create environments that reflect Pacific cultures to support development of language, culture and identity.
- Increase the number of Pacific teachers.
- Use valued cultural practices such as tuakana–teina and ako, oratory and spiritual practices.
- Enlarge the definition of learning outcome to include Pacific cultural values, practices, and knowledge.
- Broaden the notion of quality to include Pacific perspectives: family involvement and intergenerational involvement. Children who are learning their home language and cultural practices and have a strong sense of identity are evidence of a quality programme.
- Include practices that are cultural norms for Pacific peoples when considering learning outcomes for Pacific children.
- Foreground authentic practice that is based on Pacific ways of knowing and doing and that is more than skin-deep.

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