'Ko te ira tangata, he ira atua'

Exploring an indigenous Ao Māori early childhood curriculum

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education (Early Years) at Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand.

Aroaro Tamati

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Abstract

Te Whariki – early childhood curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1996) is New Zealand’s, world renowned, early childhood curriculum document. It is widely heralded as a progressive and dynamic curriculum framework for learning and teaching in the early years because it seeks to be culturally, philosophically and developmentally meaningful (David, 2001). Te Whāriki is described as a “new conception of curriculum” (Carr & May, 2000, p. 67) where local, national and cultural voices have been able to speak “strongly and loudly” (p.58).

However, some Kaupapa Māori early childhood settings, such as Te Köpae Piripono, a Māori immersion early childhood centre in New Plymouth, of which I am a founding whānau, have struggled to make authentic connections with the Te Whāriki, particularly with its usefulness as a practical working document. This study sought to explore the idea of an Ao Māori (Māori worldview) early childhood curriculum as the basis for planning, assessing and documenting children’s learning, in other words, a culturally and practically appropriate “whāriki” for Te Köpae Piripono.

The study firstly involved interviewing representatives from four Māori immersion early childhood services about how they negotiate curriculum. It found that Kaupapa Māori early childhood settings have difficulties relating to and using Te Whāriki. Centres therefore use Te Whāriki in different ways and access other curriculum models. The study then sought to explore ideas about what an indigenous Ao Māori early childhood curriculum might look like. This involved interviews with people who have an understanding of indigenous Taranaki knowledge. The study found that an indigenous Ao Māori worldview cannot and should not be seen as a singular, universal concept. Individual iwi have their own existential explanations of the world and the negotiation and re-construction of this local knowledge is a critical part of the process of exploring an indigenous Ao Māori curriculum. It is, therefore incumbent on whānau of Kaupapa Māori early childhood settings to take responsibility for negotiating their own Ao Māori early childhood curriculum within a process of engagement and co-construction with their wider context of whānau, hapū and iwi. The study suggests some principles and concepts with which Te Köpae Piripono might explore its own Ao Māori curriculum. These include the concept of whakapapa as a framework for recognising, describing, and responding to children’s learning; and the use of atua dispositions in providing the dynamic detail of the authentic documentation of children’s learning. The study also raises questions about the impact that the proposed legislating of Te Whāriki might have on this indigenous re-construction of curriculum.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

E aku iti, e aku rahi tēnā koutou katoa. Tēnei te mihi ki a koutou katoa, i whakaee kia tautoko mai i taku mahi rangahau, i whai wāhi hoki ki te kōrero mai ki a au mo tēnei kaupapa, te marau kōhungahunga Ao Māori mo a tātou tamariki mokopuna. Tēnā koutou mo ō koutou whakaaro, ā koutou kōrero me to aroha mai ki a au, i a au e haere ana i runga i tēnei huarahi rangahau.

This thesis has come to fruition out of the shared desire of the whānau of Te Kopae Piripono to rear our children on Kaupapa Māori - speaking the language of our ancestors and at home with indigenous Māori concepts and practices. I would like to acknowledge the support, encouragement and inspiration you the whānau have given me throughout this research journey.

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And to my husband, Howie, and my children Moerangi, Te Waikapoata, Hawaiki and Erana, thank you for your love and support throughout this journey. Arohanui.

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<tr>
<th>Māori Term</th>
<th>English Term</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>āhuatanga ako</td>
<td>styles of learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aroha</td>
<td>love/compassion/consideration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aroha ki te tangata</td>
<td>love/compassion/consideration for others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>atua</td>
<td>supernatural ancestors; offspring of Ranginui &amp; Papatūānuku)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>atua matua</td>
<td>members of the primary family of Papatūānuku &amp; Ranginui</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hāhi</td>
<td>Christian denomination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hapu</td>
<td>sub-tribe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haumiatikutike</td>
<td>child of Rangi &amp; Papa, represented in the form of uncultivated foods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hinengaro</td>
<td>cognition/thoughts/the thinking mind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hui</td>
<td>meeting/gathering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hui kaitiaki</td>
<td>teacher meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ihi</td>
<td>essential power and force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iho matua</td>
<td>person’s connection with ancestors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>io</td>
<td>belief of a supreme being (held by some iwi)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ira atua</td>
<td>supernatural life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iwi</td>
<td>tribe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kai</td>
<td>food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kai Tahu</td>
<td>tribal group of Te Waipounamu (South Island)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>karakia</td>
<td>prayer/indigenous incantation/focus statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kaumātua/pahake</td>
<td>Māori elder</td>
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<tr>
<td>kaupapa</td>
<td>philosophy/ideology</td>
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<td>kaupapa Māori</td>
<td>Māori paradigm</td>
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<tr>
<td>kei tua o te pae</td>
<td>early childhood assessment exemplars</td>
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<tr>
<td>koha</td>
<td>gift/contribution</td>
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<td>kōrero</td>
<td>dialogue</td>
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<td>kotahitanga</td>
<td>unity</td>
</tr>
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<td>kui/kuia</td>
<td>female elder/grandmother</td>
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<tr>
<td>kura kaupapa Māori</td>
<td>Māori paradigm primary schools</td>
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<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Translation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mana</td>
<td>prestige, standing/power, authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mana ao tūroa</td>
<td>te whāriki strand: exploration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mana reo</td>
<td>te whāriki strand: communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mana tangata</td>
<td>te whāriki strand: contribution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mana whenua</td>
<td>te whāriki strand: belonging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>marae</td>
<td>meeting place (courtyard) and associated complex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>māramatanga</td>
<td>enlightenment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>matakite</td>
<td>psychic/extra-sensory perception</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matariki</td>
<td>constellation: Pleiades</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mātauranga Māori</td>
<td>traditional Māori knowledge and learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mauri</td>
<td>life force/essence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mauri ora</td>
<td>life principle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mokopuna</td>
<td>grandchildren/great grandchildren</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ngā iwi</td>
<td>tribal groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ngā hononga</td>
<td>relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ngā taumata whakahirahira</td>
<td>aims of te whāriki</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ngā tūmanako mo te mokopuna</td>
<td>goals for children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ngākau</td>
<td>feelings/how you display your emotions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ngā rangi tūhāhā</td>
<td>celestial domains/heavens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ngāwari</td>
<td>relaxed/easy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>noa</td>
<td>free from the constraints of tapu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Papatūānuku</td>
<td>earth mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pono</td>
<td>integrity/genuine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pūmanawa</td>
<td>natural talents/genetic capability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>puna waihanga</td>
<td>creative talents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ranginui</td>
<td>sky father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reo</td>
<td>language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rohe</td>
<td>region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rongomātāne</td>
<td>child of Rangi &amp; Papa, represented in the form of cultivated foods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tākuta</td>
<td>doctor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tama-nui-te-rā</td>
<td>the sun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tamariki</td>
<td>children</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tānemāhuta
Tangaroa
Tāwhirimātea
tapu
tātai whakapapa
Te Aho Matua
te ao
te ao Māori
te ao tawhito
te hunga tangata
te ira tangata
Te Korowai
te pō
te puna waiora
te reo
te reo Māori me ōnā tikanga
Te Rūnanganui o Ngā Kura Kaupapa Māori
te tino uratanga
te tuakiri o te tangata

Tīka
Tikanga
Tikanga Māori
Tino rangatiratanga
Toi ora
Tūmatauenga

Tumukāuru
Tumukātake
Waiaata
Wai

child of Rangi & Papa/concept of the forest
child of Rangi & Papa/concept of the sea
child of Rangi & Papa/concept of the atmosphere
sacred/restricted
genealogical descent
charter for kura kaupapa Māori (Māori immersion primary schools)
the world/wider environment
Māori world
the world of our ancestors, especially pre-contact
humanity/human component
humankind/human genes
curriculum document for Kōhanga Reo.
darkness/night
spiritual component
Māori language
Māori language, customs and traditions
National association of Māori immersion primary schools
prime aims and objectives
educational approach for young children by Katerina Mataira (2000)
truth/accuracy/fairness
protocol
Māori protocol
self determination, sovereignty
health/wellbeing
child of Rangi & Papa, represented in the form of war
director of Te Kōpae Piripono - management
director of Te Kōpae Piripono - curriculum
song/music
water
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Maori</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>energy/spirit/traits</td>
<td>wairua</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>excitement/thrill</td>
<td>wana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>workshops/seminars/meetings</td>
<td>wānanga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>awe</td>
<td>wehi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mother/teacher</td>
<td>whae/whaene</td>
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<tr>
<td>empower</td>
<td>whakamana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>genealogical descent</td>
<td>whakapapa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>proverbial sayings</td>
<td>whakatauki</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>family/families/community</td>
<td>whānau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>family and community</td>
<td>whānau tangata</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mat</td>
<td>whāriki</td>
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<tr>
<td>building/house/centre</td>
<td>whare</td>
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<tr>
<td>seat of emotions</td>
<td>whatumanawa</td>
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<td>strands</td>
<td>whenu</td>
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