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RENARRATIVIZING OUR EARTH-CENTEREDNESS

A perspective from Aotearoa (New Zealand)

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Introduction

This chapter draws upon narrative research from Aotearoa that is informed by *te ao Māori*, a Māori worldview. These Māori onto-epistemologies inherently recognize and respect human relatedness and interdependence with(in) the physical and spiritual domains of *Papatūānuku*, the Earth Mother, and *Ranginui*, the Sky Father, along with their many children, the *Atua* (compartmental Gods, spiritual guardians) of domains including forests, people, oceans, winds, and cultivated foods. Because in this worldview people, along with other living creatures, are viewed as being descended from one of these *Atua*, Tāne Mahuta, we are closely related and spiritually connected to plants, insects, birds, and animals. Māori also include mountains, rivers, oceans, and trees as ancestors and spiritual guardians and thus care deeply and actively for these *whanaunga* (relatives).

Another aspect of *te ao Māori* is that elders are respected as the repositories of knowledge, the *kaitiaki* or guardians of the *tōhungatanga*, the collective wisdom. These knowledge guardians are also valued as role models, carers, and teachers of young children. This relationship is fundamental within the *Kōhanga Reo* movement that seeks to sustain *te reo Māori me ōna tikanga* (the Māori language and culture). A key Māori value to be sustained is that of *kaitiakitanga*, actively caring for the *Papatūānuku*, the Earth Mother, along with her mountains, rivers, and seas and all the creatures who rely on these for their wellbeing.

This chapter offers some examples of the dynamics of relationships between children, elders, and the earth in traditional Māori childrearing contexts as well as in more recent early childhood care and education paradigms. After drawing upon some narratives of traditional Māori childhoods and the significance of the bonds between *tūpuna* (elders) and *mokopuna* (grandchildren), the chapter offers a brief description of *Te Kōhanga Reo*, the Māori language revitalization and *whanāu* development early childhood programs. Next, some examples are provided from the early childhood curriculum for Aotearoa (New Zealand), *Te Whāriki—He whāriki mātauranga mō ngā mokopuna o Aotearoa* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996, 2017), which demonstrate the importance of relationships between children, ancestors, and our planet. The chapter will close with some narratives from research projects that illustrate the ways in which the knowledge of elders and respect for the Earth is valued and incorporated within early childhood care and

education settings. We can treat this Planet Earth like an expendable machine, or we can recognize that our dignity is dependent upon the respect we pay to the origins of our earthly life and upon the responsibility we take for its preservation (Mead & Heyman, 1975, p. 197).

Te ao Māori—the Māori world

Māori arrived in the islands of Aotearoa around the year 1200CE, and in the more than 500 years before the arrival of Europeans had developed their own unique onto-epistemology deeply grounded in their knowledge of the ecologies of their particular localities (Ritchie, 2013). The term “onto-epistemology” rejects the modernist division between knowledge and belief systems, recognizing the entanglement of ways of being, knowing, doing, and relating (Taylor, 2013). This knowledge had been adapted from their previous locales, which had been in much warmer, tropical climates. Many of the plants that they had brought with them to Aotearoa had failed to thrive in the more temperate conditions, necessitating a great deal of experimentation, intuition, and persistence in developing strategies for accessing resources for survival in the new land. These resources included food supplies, such as kaimoana (seafood), along with fruits, plants, birds from the *ngāhere* (bush, forest), and an extensive indigenous pharmacology (Tito et al., 2007; Waitangi Tribunal, 2011).

Māori onto-epistemology is deeply spiritual, with *wairuatanga*, spiritual interconnectedness, operating as an invisible web of inter-relationship between the tangible and intangible, the physical and the meta-physical. Furthermore, everything, every living or inanimate object, has its own spiritual force, or *mauri*. The concept of *mana wairua* requires that spiritual considerations are always present and need to be acknowledged (Ritchie, 1992). The Māori language demonstrates multiple, metaphorical levels of meaning, including spiritual inter-relationship of humans and the more-than-human realms. The word for land, *whenua*, is also the word for placenta. After the birth, the baby’s *whenua* (placenta) and *pito* (umbilical cord) are returned to a special place, often a particular tree, on that child’s ancestral *whenua* (land). These spiritual rituals acknowledge, celebrate, and solidify this special relationship of interconnectedness between people and their *whenua*. The Māori word that expresses their first nation’s status is *tangata whenua*—people of the land. Thus, the extensive losses of Māori land as the direct result of settler actions has had a deeply wounding spiritual impact on Māori, as well as severe economic effects (Pihama et al., 2014). The loss of lands, language, and capacity to enact these spiritual rituals of wellbeing and healing have diminished Māori capacity to sustain their wellbeing. This has also been compounded by a racist education system that for many years denied Māori the right to an education in their own language or to the caliber of education that would equip them to access academic qualifications (Walker, 2004).

Māori philosophers and *tōhunga* (spiritual experts) such as Rangimārie Rose Pere (1982/1994, 1991), Hirini Moko Mead (2003), Māori Marsden (2003), and Hohepa Kereopa (Moon, 2003) have provided us with detailed explanations of Māori cosmologies with regard to inter-relatedness with earthly kin. These feature concepts such as *wairuatanga* (spiritual interconnectedness), *mauri* (life force present in both living as well as in seemingly inanimate things), and *kaitiakitanga* (active guardianship) (Marsden, 2003; Moon, 2003). Māori have consistently sought to have their traditional values and practices recognized by the wider society, and for restitution for the losses of land and language. A landmark report by a government tribunal recommended that *rongōā Māori* (traditional Māori healing using indigenous plant remedies) and its sources of vegetation should be supported by the Ministry of

Health and the Department of Conservation as one strategy for remedying ongoing poor Māori health outcomes (Waitangi Tribunal, 2011). Significantly, a recent landmark piece of legislation honored Māori worldviews by giving legal recognition to the Whanganui river as Te Awa Tūpua (The River Ancestor) (Office of Treaty Settlements, 2014; New Zealand Parliament, 2017).

Role of elders in te ao Māori

Traditionally, elders had a key role in relation to child-rearing, which was an intergenerational, collective responsibility, shared by older siblings, both female and male, and elders of both genders. Renowned Māori anthropologist Te Rangi Hiroa/Sir Peter Buck explains that: “The etiquette of greeting and showing respect for one’s elders was taught early” (Buck, 1950, p. 357). What Barbara Rogoff and colleagues (1995) have described as “guided participation” is the paradigm of early learning found in Indigenous and traditional societies, whereby children observe and participate in everyday culturally valued activities, in which the roles of elders feature prominently. For Māori, “[c]hildren sat on the outskirts of public receptions and social ceremonies and learned what was expected of them when they grew up” (Buck, 1950, p. 357). Te Rangi Hiroa explains further that:

Much, if not most of the personal instruction in the early years, was received from grandparents ... The able-bodied parents were freed to devote full time and attention to the work which needed physical energy. The grandparents, who were too old for hard work, attended to the lighter tasks and the care of the grandchildren ... They told them stories and simple versions of various myths and legends ... The elements of a classical education in family and tribal history, mythology and folklore were thus imparted by male and female *tipuna* [elders] at an early age.

(Buck, 1950, p. 358)

Mihipeka, who was born in 1918, describes how she received knowledge from her grandparents during her childhood, whilst they lived closely with the land and sea:

There were times for stories, times for games, and that was usually in the early evening after everything was done. The koro [grandfathers] and the kui [grandmothers] used to sit down with the mokopuna [grandchildren]. That was their job, inserting knowledge into the children, and we were taught all sorts of things. That’s how we learnt. That’s how they passed the knowledge on to the children. They were the educators, the old people. The parents were busy getting food, they were strong and needed for the heavier work. Also they were absorbing knowledge themselves. Because you don’t become professors in the Māori world until you are old.

(Edwards, 1990, p. 47)

For Mihipeka, her elders were valued as guides and teachers who intentionally engaged children with learning to read the signs of nature:

The old people were never put aside. They were the professors, te tohunga of Māori education in all fields. At a very tender age we would be taught about the sea and its many functions. We learnt to be in awe, to respect, to honour and to be very grateful. The sea yields good and healing for the body. We were taken to the sea to study

the many signs of nature applying to the very safety of humans going out to do deep-sea fishing, to watch the seabirds and to listen to their noises, to watch the clouds – if the sky is clear, you are quite safe; if the wind is more vigorous, make for the shore.

(Edwards, 1990, p. 12)

Also inculcated at an early age were the laws of *tapu* and *noa* (being sacred/spiritually protected or ordinary/free of restriction), which once understood and adhered to, provided spiritual safety and wellbeing. Mihipeka Edwards describes how during her childhood:

nothing was done without a *karakia* [spiritual incantation/prayer]. It was just a whole way of life in those days, to pray. My *Kuia* [grandmother] and all the other old people, they ... accepted their spirituality ... I would go with my *Koro* [Grandfather] into the bush and he would always *karakia* if he wanted to cut a tree down to use for making posts or things like that. Everything was precious to them, because those things came from the creation, the bush especially.

(Edwards, 1990, p. 22)

Children also became well versed in *rongoā*, the healing properties and uses of indigenous flora. Mihipeka Edwards explains that: “We lived by nature, and our medicines were all in the bush. There was a plant for everything – infections, infected sores, sterilising, stomach upsets, blood poisoning, poultices – everything” (Edwards, 1990, p. 17).

Venturing to the coast on an annual basis to gather seasonal foods, Mihipeka also learned from her *kaumātua* (elders) the spiritual protocols that demonstrated respect for the *Atua*, the spiritual guardians of the various domains, including bush and ocean:

On our first trip down to the sea, the first thing our old people would do was to *karakia* to *Tangaroa* (the *Atua* of the seas) to ask his permission to take food from the sea ... *Kui* (Grandmother) used to say we must respect all things in the sea because it is a privilege for us. And the sea water has many healing agents. If you have boils, open wounds, sores, muscular problems, rough skin the sea is the healer ... Down we went to the *moana* (ocean). The first sound I heard was my *Kuia karanga* [spiritual calling] to *Tangaroa* the *atua* of the sea.

(Edwards, 1990, pp. 37–38)

After the seafood was gathered, prepared and about to be served, a *karakia* of thanks was said before eating. Once the pots and dishes had been cleaned away by the older children, the *whānau* [extended family] would gather and again acknowledge *Tangaroa*, saying together:

Ngā whakanui hoki	[Thanks and appreciation]
Kia koe te rangatira	[To you of high esteem]
Mō ēnei kai	[For this food]
Nau i hōmai	[You have given]
Hei oranga mō mātou	[To ensure our wellbeing]
Te atua o te moana	[The <i>Atua</i> of the sea]

(Edwards, 1990, pp. 39–40)

Her grandparents also taught her about their ancestral taniwhā, Mukukai who resides in the ocean as a “wairua tiaki,” or spiritual guardian.

With the coming of the British settlers, and despite promises to the contrary, the relentless process of colonization disregarded the spiritual guardians, desecrating sacred rivers, oceans, and lands in the service of profits and “progress.” Mihipeka laments the desecration of the gifts of Ranginui, Papatūānuku, and the Atua:

I realise now as I think back, that the seagulls, the many varieties, are the caretakers of the many shores of our beautiful land. Man has made so much work for them by letting body waste flow into the sea instead of turning it all into Papatūānuku to recycle. She, the mother earth, has her many creatures within her to do these particular kind of jobs. Instead, the Pākehā [people of British ancestry], with all his greed and arrogance and selfishness, thinks he knows everything. Turns all the filth like feces, urine, wastes from the factories and ships into the sea to kill the fish and shellfish. The energies from the salt water, I, the Māori, was taught, are a cure for many ailments. These are the gifts handed to us by the creator. Nā Ranginui anō i hōmai, mai noa atu ēnei taonga hei oranga mō tātou, aue te pouri e. [These are the gifts of Ranginui, the Sky Father, for our wellbeing, (a lamentation) of such sadness!—*translation by JR*]

(Edwards, 1990, p. 40)

Mihipeka’s grandparents’ teachings enabled her to respect the birds of the bush and the wisdom that can be learnt from them. When Mihipeka asked her Koro [Grandfather]: “What is that little bird, Koro?” he replied:

That is the grey warbler, the riroriro. She is a very aroha [loving] bird. This is the matua whangai [adoptive parent] for the pipiwharauoa [shining cuckoo] [who] pushes the riroriro eggs out [of the nest] and the poor riroriro ends up hatching the pipiwharauoa eggs. You see, Moko [grandchild], the birds teach us how to be kind, to share, to be just, to be aroha. They teach us to take good care of a manuhiri [guest], which are like the pipiwharauoa’s eggs. This pipiwharauoa doesn’t have time to hatch her eggs because she is too busy going from place to place to tell the many iwi [tribes] to hurry up and dig the soil, plant the kai [food] ... But you see Nature takes care, because the riroriro have already hatched one lot of babies before pipiwharauoa comes home ... from a faraway place for the springtime. It’s not really a lazy bird. That bird goes round telling everybody, “Hurry up. Get up and dig the soil. Prepare. The spring has come.”

(Edwards, 1990, pp. 58–59)

Teachings such as the above demonstrate a view of interdependence, inter-relatedness, attunement, and respectfulness with/in the world of the bush and ocean.

Te kōhanga reo

The Kōhanga Reo (literally, language nest) movement, is a national Māori immersion early childhood program focused on sustaining Māori language and traditions (Skerrett, 2007; Skerrett & Ritchie, 2016). Māori leaders initiated the movement in 1982 as a result of concerns discussed at a meeting of tribal elders in response to research that had demonstrated

that very few members of the younger generations were speakers of the language, and that there were few domains remaining where the Māori language was the vehicle of communication (Benton, 1997). It was feared, therefore, that the language might die out with the passing of that generation of elders. The founding concept of the movement was to bring elders, fluent speakers of the Māori language, together with babies and young children, in an environment where only the Māori language was to be spoken. In this way it was intended to revitalize the language in a manner that honored the traditional role of elders/grandparents in transmitting knowledge to their mokopuna (grandchildren). The emergence of the *kōhanga reo* movement precipitated a wider revolution of Māori reclaiming their rights to education that reflected their culture and identity (Smith, 2007), associated with ongoing Māori claims for settlement of historical grievances pertaining to the loss of lands, language, and traditional knowledges (Waitangi Tribunal, 2011). *Te Kōhanga Reo* is an expression of Māori *tino rangatiratanga*, the self-determination to live as Māori, via the medium of the language that articulates what it means to be Māori.

Te whāriki 1996–2017

The first New Zealand early childhood curriculum (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996) was written during an era of increasing recognition of the protections that should have been accorded to Māori under the 1840 treaty, *Te Tiriti o Waitangi*, whereby Māori had legitimized British settlement. The four key writers of the document represented in-depth knowledge of the early childhood education field, on the part of Helen May and Margaret Carr, and deep knowledge of the Māori language and culture, held by Tilly and Tamati Reedy. An extensive range of different sector groups contributed to the document, as well as an extended consultation period. The document, both in its form, content, and development process represented a partnership that honored Māori as Indigenous peoples. Māori language and knowledges were expected to be highly visible in all early childhood services, although this posed an ongoing challenge to the early childhood workforce, which was largely monolingual in English.

Te Whāriki (NZ Ministry of Education, 1996) recognized the role of elders within Māori (and other) communities. For example, in explaining the principle of Families and Community | *Whānau Tangata*, it stated that: “Culturally appropriate ways of communicating should be fostered, and participation in the early childhood education programme by *whānau* [extended families], parents, extended family, and elders in the community should be encouraged” (p. 42). In the Strand of Contribution | *Mana Tangata*, the document elaborated on the importance of Māori and elders’ contributions to the early childhood program:

There should be a commitment to, and opportunities for, a Māori contribution to the programme. Adults working in the early childhood education setting should recognise the significance of *whakapapa* [genealogy], understand and respect the process of working as a *whānau*, and demonstrate respect for Māori elders.

(p. 64)

In the Strand of Belonging | *Mana Whenua*, the link is made between Māori as *tangata whenua* [people of the land, Indigenous people] and *Papatūānuku*, the Earth Mother, pointing out the need for teachers to liaise with local *tangata whenua* and to promote respect for *Papatūānuku* (p. 54). Part B of the document, the Māori text, refers in depth to

the importance of the child knowing their genealogy, and feeling their connection to Papatūānuku, the Earth Mother, Ranginui, the Sky Father, and to their children the Atua, the compartmental Gods, who are spiritual guardians of oceans, winds, forests, and cultivations. It reinforces the importance of raising mokopuna (grandchildren/children) to learn the stories of Papatūānuku and Ranginui, and their children, and to realize their role as kaitiaki (guardians) of the whenua (land) (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996).

The “refreshed” version of Te Whāriki (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2017), contains a series of *whakataukī*, traditional Māori proverbs, threaded throughout the document to frame the introduction of each section. The *whakataukī* for the section on “Underpinning theories and approaches” is: “*Kia heke iho rā i ngā tūpuna, kātahi ka tika. If handed down by the ancestors, it would be correct*” (p. 60). The explanation provided is that “This *whakataukī* refers to intergenerational expertise and the respect Māori have for the wise counsel of the ancestors. It signals the importance of a credible, sound, theoretical foundation for teaching and learning” (p. 60).

Elders integral to early childhood pedagogies: some examples from research in early childhood settings in Aotearoa

This section draws initially upon research previously published in a report to the funder, the New Zealand Teaching and Learning Research Initiative (TLRI) (Ritchie & Rau, 2006). In this project we found that for Māori parents and early childhood educators, a salient feature of their aspirations was the affirmation and valuing of traditional models of intergenerational transmission of language and culture and the valuing of the natural world. The role of *kaumātua* (elders) was significant, both in supporting the daily activities and as repositories of Māori language and the traditional knowledge that they were able to share with *tamariki* (children) and *whānau* (extended families). As one of the educators explained:

I think our Nannies brought richness to our center. They just provided such awesome examples of *tikanga* [correct customs] and I knew that if I was unsure about something, I could just ask, and even at times they would predict and tell. And you need to be a humble person, but that was a really good experience for me to be able to step back and say: “Okay, no, I wasn’t right, and this is a really good thing to be learning.” [I really appreciated] their humour, even if the children weren’t directly interacting with them, they could hear them nattering away [in the Māori language], laughing and that’s just great because I can’t provide that for my children and I really want that role model in my children’s lives, having it within their early childhood [center] whenever we attended was just so precious.

(Sue)

Another educator highly valued excursions that provided children and their families with experiences in the natural world, generating feelings of spiritual connectedness with the whenua (land):

Oh, I think my ideal of a fully bicultural¹ Playcentre is that a lot of the time it wouldn’t be at the center. We’d be out, we’d be out at the beach and sit in the rivers, doing the real stuff: eeling, cooking what you catch, looking after wherever you are. And I talk about as a child growing up and spending a lot of time at the beach and picking pipis and how we could ride our bikes around the streets. And, as

long as you turned up for your kai [food], life was sweet. So what do you want for your children? It's so much the same. I want my children to swim and dive and ride kayaks and ride their bikes and play on the farms and get out and about and learn all these things. So I think fully bicultural means there has to be a huge connection to this land. And looking after what we've got.

(Miria)

Similarly, for Ana, opportunities for working with natural materials, such as flax, provided a source of learning of traditional knowledge:

Harakeke [flax] became a vehicle to disseminate education about Māori values about our Atua Māori [Māori Gods], about a way to behave, tikanga [correct customs], ae [yes], everything. And our tamariki [children] learned alongside of us, we just provided opportunity for them too, they could do it just like us.

In a later project, also funded by the TLRI, which focused on “caring for ourselves, others and the environment” these themes of the involvement of elders in early childhood care and education settings along with the valuing of the natural world were also apparent (Ritchie et al., 2010). One kindergarten teacher discussed how they were seeking deeper understandings regarding Papatūānuku, in consultation with their local Māori community:

Papatūānuku is another real strength [in our] philosophy. That at the moment is in draft and we're discussing it because what does the wider concept of Papatūānuku [mean]; we could say Mother Earth but there's a wider concept to it and we need to work with all whānau and with our local iwi about what does that mean to them.

(Head Teacher, Galbraith Kindergarten)

Teachers from another kindergarten sought guidance from a local elder, Huata Holmes, along with their Senior Teacher, Lee Blackie, in utilizing knowledges particular to Huata's Southern Māori iwi (tribe), the local Indigenous people. The teachers made links to the early childhood curriculum, *Te Whāriki* (NZ Ministry of Education, 1996) in their report:

We consulted with Huata Holmes, our kaumātua, for guidance, expert knowledge and inspiration. The Southern Māori perspective or “flavour” is important. Lee Blackie, our Senior Teacher, accompanied Huata and gave us a practical aspect that could sit side by side with Huata's ideas. In order to add authenticity and depth, we arranged for Huata to come and narrate his southern mythology/stories/pūrākau to the children and whānau [families] (Communication/Mana Reo Goal 3: hear a wide range of stories, *Te Whāriki*, p. 59) as told to him as a child by his grandmothers and great grandmothers (Holistic Development/Kotahitanga: recognition of the significance and contribution of previous generations to the child's concept of self, *Te Whāriki*, p. 41). Huata's kōrero [narrative] was excellent and by working together we have achieved more of a shared understanding. He told of the great waka [canoe] of Aoraki coming through the sky down to the South Island. He also used the waiata [song] Hōea te Waka [row the canoe] to support his kōrero [talk]. This has become a real favorite. His kōrero has supported our teaching of the importance of Papatūānuku in our lives.

(Richard, Hudson Kindergarten)

In another kindergarten the teachers and children focused on recognizing the indigenous plants that were growing in the grounds, and had identified that some of these were used by Māori for therapeutic purposes, as rongoā, and that these rongoā were also linked to kai (food). This led them to locate a book that shared the stories of local Māori healers, *Matarakau. Ngā kōrero mō ngā rongoā o Taranaki. Healing stories of Taranaki* (Tito et al., 2007). The teachers talked with the children about the story of one local kuia (female elder), Kui Trish, who had grown up at Rangatapu, their local beach. They reported that:

Kui Trish [relates how], she grew up at Rangatapu, Ohawe Beach. Life was simple and they were always well fed. The gathering and growing of kai [food] by her parents and whānau [extended family] was her rongoā [source of healing]. Their wellness as children was dependent on fresh air and food that had been either gathered from the sea or collected from the homegrown gardens. Kai was gathered and preserved. Everything was dried including dried whitebait and mussels. They made jams and pickles. She remembered her kuia walking down the hill with a kete kai moana [woven flax basket for seafood] to gather kai. They wove their kete with harakeke [flax] that grew nearby. Kai was gathered daily. Karakia [prayer] was said before gathering kai. They learnt the sounds of the sea, the signs of the incoming tide and the swiftness of the sea against the rocks. This was time to leave, even if their kete were not filled enough. They also gathered driftwood for the home fires. Whilst Kui Trish didn't have native bush around them, she acknowledged she has little knowledge about leaves used for rongoā. However, living at the beach provided all their rongoā.

(*Hawera Kindergarten*)

According to this traditional wisdom, as passed down to children by the elders, from their elders in turn, living closely and respectfully with the land and sea was the source of wellbeing.

Final thoughts

These brief excerpts from our previous research echo the stories told by Mihipeka of her childhood in the 1920s, of growing up under the watchful tutelage of her elders, participating alongside them in traditional practices of harvesting the fruits of forest and ocean, learning to accord due respect to the Atua (Gods) of these domains. Enabling children and their families to access these local histories and traditional knowledges via the wisdom of local Indigenous elders simultaneously provides authenticity as well as validating and affirming these knowledges (Ritchie, 2013, 2014).

Whilst *Te Whānaki* is an aspirational document, reviews of center practices indicate that considerable challenges exist for teachers who are not of Māori ancestry and experience in building the relationships that will offer them access to Māori onto-epistemologies (Education Review Office, 2012, 2013). The narrative assessment model promoted in early childhood care and education in Aotearoa requires that te ao Māori understandings be represented in pedagogical documentation, including a Māori view of the child, as portrayed in Te Whatu Pōkeka (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2009). Previous research has demonstrated the willingness and commitment of some teachers within the early childhood sector to authentically incorporate *te reo me te ao Māori* (the Māori language and worldviews) within their programs (Ritchie & Rau, 2006, 2008, 2013; Ritchie et al., 2010). Yet, unconscious bias and

the limitations of the current education system continue to work against this renarrativization (Blank, Houkamau, & Kingi, 2016).

The vast majority of New Zealand citizens do not speak Māori with any level of proficiency—the number of speakers in the previous census registered only 3.73% (Statistics New Zealand, 2013). *Te reo Māori*, the Māori language, encapsulates Māori ways of being, knowing, doing, and relating (Pere, 1991), and yet our national education system does not insist on *te reo* being systematically taught beyond the early childhood sector. Nor are Māori worldviews mandated as integral to the delivery of the primary and secondary school curriculum (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2007). Teacher education is a core site for transforming the practice of teachers and ultimately the education sector (Ritchie, 2015). Providers of “mainstream/whitestream” teacher education qualifications are not required to set either entry or exit standards for their graduates with regard to competency in *te reo Māori*. Consequently, the teaching workforce is not proficient in *te reo*. The recent proliferation of one-year teaching qualifications indicates the need for urgent attention to these aspects, since it is difficult to acquire a sufficient level of proficiency in a second language in the space of one year whilst also covering all the other components of the teaching qualification. Currently, the New Zealand education system is undergoing a wide-ranging review, and it is to be hoped that these issues will be recognized and changes put in place to ensure that, in time, all citizens of Aotearoa New Zealand become proficient in the language and worldviews of Māori, the original people of this land.

Note

1 ‘Bicultural’ refers to the two main cultural groups of Aotearoa, Māori and Pākehā (of European ancestry).

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