

A MĀORI AND PACIFIC LENS ON INFANT AND TODDLER PROVISION IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

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Abstract

While New Zealand has made major advances in educational provision, Māori and Pacific children continue to lag behind other groups, achieving disproportionately lower results on national averages (Marriot & Sim, 2014). Key to educational success for Māori and Pasifika children is the acknowledgement that they are culturally located and the recognition that effective education must embrace culture. Early childhood education has an important role in building strong learning foundations for young children; however, achieving this is a complex process, especially with regard to Māori and Pacific children in early childhood education. This article outlines findings from a 2014 nationwide online survey conducted with Māori and Pacific teachers working in Māori and Pacific early childhood services and language nests. Respondents were asked about traditional and contemporary caregiving practices for infants and toddlers and what barriers and enablers were faced in implementing these caregiving practices within their services.

Keywords

Māori, Pacific, infants, caregiving, traditions, practices

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Introduction

This article provides a contextual discussion on the nature of the research, the cultural communities and particular considerations surrounding the research, followed by an overview of early childhood education and the types of services available in New Zealand. It provides a summary of *Te Whāriki*, the Aotearoa New Zealand early childhood curriculum, and discusses its implementation. Lastly it outlines findings from a 2014 nationwide online survey conducted with Māori and Pacific teachers working in Māori and Pacific early childhood services and language nests. The article utilises the voices of respondents to highlight the findings from the research.

Context

This article sits within emerging discourses on Māori and Pacific peoples' education and the critical role that education plays in the lives of Māori and Pacific peoples. This idea is congruent with *Ka Hikitia—Managing for Success: The Māori Education Strategy 2008–2012* (Ministry of Education, 2009, 2013a), which emphasises the importance of education that is responsive to the identity, language and culture of Māori learners. The key message is that learners achieve more in education when the education provided builds on what they are familiar with and when it reflects and positively reinforces who they are, where they're from, what they value and what they already know. This is known as the “potential approach”, which is underpinned by three principles:

- Māori Potential: all Māori learners have unlimited potential
- Cultural Advantage: all Māori have cultural advantage by virtue of who they are—being Māori is an asset, not a problem
- Inherent Capability: all Māori are

inherently capable of achieving success. (Ministry of Education, 2009, p. 19)

Ka Hikitia: Accelerating for Success 2013–2017 (Ministry of Education, 2013a) reinforces the goals of increasing access and supply of high quality early childhood education and acknowledges the importance of Māori language provision. There is, however, little emphasis on culturally relevant practices in caring for infants and toddlers.

The *Pasifika Education Plan 2009–2012* (Ministry of Education, 2008) similarly acknowledges family, strong identities, multiple worlds, language and culture as significant factors in ensuring successful outcomes for Pacific learners. Reinforcing this, the *Pasifika Education Plan 2013–2017* (Ministry of Education, 2013b) strengthens the goal for engagement and consultation with Pacific parents and communities with a specific target of increasing the number of Pacific early childhood education services that teach a Pacific language or culture for over 50% of the time. Success in education is linked to positively harnessing Pacific peoples' worldviews within an enabling education system that works for children, their families and communities. The goal is to achieve better education outcomes for Pacific communities, which is critical for the future of Aotearoa New Zealand. A requisite accompaniment to goal setting and strategising is to be informed by culturally relevant theory, literature and perspectives, to which this work will provide a contribution.

This article uses the term “Pacific peoples” to broadly represent the Pacific groups represented in the research and discussions. The term “Pasifika” is a term coined by the Ministry of Education (2008) and used to refer to and define a collective group with Pacific heritage or ancestry who have migrated or have been born in Aotearoa New Zealand (Ministry of Education, 2008). This is aligned with education and given the nature of this work, which seeks the broader understanding that moves

beyond education, the term “Pacific peoples” more aptly represents an inclusive community voice. The people of the Pacific are a very diverse group, and maintaining a unique identity for the people of the Pacific reinforces cultural, geographic and linguistic identity. From this platform the research seeks to identify commonalities in patterns around raising infants and toddlers, and to also acknowledge and to be alert to divergent practices. Whilst emerging themes reinforce commonalities in the ways that Māori and Pacific peoples raise infants and toddlers, this field of research is in its infancy and an assumption that this may represent a Polynesian theoretical lens will not yet be drawn. It is to be hoped that with subsequent research underway, a strengthening of this position will occur.

The research

This research is located historically, contextually and geographically within Oceania, more specifically the Polynesian triangle. Increasingly the connections between Māori and Pacific peoples—Polynesian connections—have become evident (Mafile‘o & Walsh-Tapiata, 2007). These connections have promoted the building of networks, synergies and collaborations within and across parts of the Pacific as well as building the researchers and the systems that support research within and across Pacific communities (Sanga, 2012). Furthermore, strategic alliances and partnerships with Māori and other Indigenous peoples in the Pacific region have allowed new indigenous worldviews and aspirations to unfold (Kidman, 2012). From this position of connectedness a collaborative research base has enabled researchers to harness and build alliances, and strengthen positions for further development.

The article draws from findings from a Victoria University of Wellington Summer Scholarship programme in 2013/2014. A comprehensive literature review was conducted

exploring Māori and Pacific wide-ranging areas around traditional infant caregiving practice. A nationwide survey was sent to all early childhood services that were identified by the Ministry of Education as *kōhanga reo*, immersion Māori or bilingual service provision for Māori research participation. Online surveys were sent to Pacific language nests that were identified as immersion and/or bilingual language provision. There were a set of generic open-response questions asked of each setting. Questions were modified according to whether the services were provided to Māori or Pacific communities. Questions noted the demographics such as the type of service offered; for example, immersion or bilingual (Māori or Pacific). We asked what languages were used and what percentage of language was used; whether the services catered for infants, toddlers and/or young children. We then asked specific questions around cultural practices including:

- How does the service embrace traditional Māori/Pacific cultural caregiving practices and pedagogies around infant and toddler education, caregiving and feeding routines, sleeping, comforting, shared caregiving, *tuakana/teina* or other? Please give examples of these practices, ideas and challenges.
- What are the cultural practices and pedagogies around infant and toddler education and care? Please give examples of these practices, ideas and challenges.
- What are the barriers to implementing authentic cultural practices and pedagogies around infant and toddler education and care?
- What are the enablers to implementing authentic cultural practices and pedagogies around infant and toddler education and care?

The survey included respondents from *kōhanga reo* and Māori early childhood services, and from the main Pacific groups represented in

Aotearoa New Zealand: Samoa, Cook Islands, Niue, Tonga and Tokelau.

Theoretical framework

The research employed a socio-cultural theoretical lens. Rogoff (2003) reminds us that human development is a cultural process, which defines and prepares participation within cultural groups with language and cultural tools. Largely research and theory on human development is based on middle-class communities in Europe and North America (Rogoff, 2003, p. 4), which serves to draw universal “truths” around child development. This leaves little room for cultural variation with a deficit lens employed for those cultural communities who differ from the cultural “norms” expounded. Cultural research acts to reinforce that children acquire skills and knowledge based on the specific cultural activities of the community. Such research also serves to stem overgeneralisation of human development principles and practices, and accounts for similarities and differences across communities (Rogoff, 2003, p. 7). According to Rogoff (2003), Polynesian perspectives of infants and toddlers originate within the wider Pacific region. Gaining knowledge of Māori and Pacific infant caregiving practice will benefit and empower those within communities and assist in preserving traditional practices that might otherwise die out, and will make available a repertoire of cultural practice.

Western perspectives of infants and toddlers are not universal “truths” and there are tensions between those perspectives that have been espoused and normalised and the cultural practices of traditional Māori and, in particular, Pacific peoples with terms of reference and worldviews that differ to those located within a Western educational paradigm. It is hoped that these reclaimed knowledges and practices will inform wider educational audiences; in particular, teachers of infants and toddlers.

Increasing numbers of children aged under

2 are entering education and care settings in Aotearoa New Zealand (Glasgow & Rameka, 2013) and research conducted in Aotearoa New Zealand informs teaching practice (Dalli, Rockel, Duhn, & Doyle, 2011). Unfortunately there is little research on Māori and infant care that is informed by Māori and Pacific cultural practice. This research provides another perspective to guide practice for teachers of infants and toddlers.

Overview of early childhood education

Early childhood education has an important role in building strong learning foundations to enable young children to develop as competent and confident learners. In New Zealand the early childhood system integrates education and care, and covers children from birth until the age of school entry. Early childhood services operate within a range of different operating structures, philosophies and affiliations and function as teacher-led or parent- and whānau-led services. They offer a variety of full-day, part-day and casual provision and are primarily English language medium services. There are over 4,000 early childhood services in New Zealand ranging from kindergartens, education and care centres, home-based education and care, playgroups, and playcentres.

According to the *Annual ECE Census: Report 2013*, there were around 630 kindergartens in New Zealand (Ministry of Education, 2013c). Kindergartens cater for around 17% of all children enrolled in early childhood services. Of these, 17% are Māori children and 19% are Pasifika children (New Zealand Kindergartens Inc., n.d.).

Education and care centres are licensed and/or chartered early childhood centres that offer either all-day or part-day teacher-led services. In 2013 there were 2,351 education and care centres in New Zealand (Ministry of Education, 2013c).

Home-based and family day-care services are early childhood services either in the child's own home or in the home of an adult educator. In July 2013 there were 348 home-based and family day-care services (Ministry of Education, 2013c).

Playgroups are licence-exempt services where parents attend with their children and provide the play programme. Sometimes these groups evolve into fully licensed and chartered early childhood services (Ministry of Education, 2013c). Many Pacific early childhood services began as part of community initiatives and obtained a playgroup licence with assistance from the Ministry of Education, with many groups subsequently providing fully licenced services (Ministry of Education, 2013c).

Playcentres are early childhood services that are unique to New Zealand. There were approximately 447 playcentres in 2013 (Ministry of Education, 2013c).

There are also services that provide language-specific and culturally oriented programmes, such as Te Kōhanga Reo and Pacific language medium services. Our online survey was sent to each kōhanga reo, puna reo and Pacific language medium service in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Kōhanga reo are whānau cooperatives where the families are responsible for the overall management of the centres. They are sessional or all-day Māori language immersion early childhood institutions, and their primary aim is the maintenance of the language of the indigenous people of New Zealand through fostering young children's and parents' knowledge of te reo Māori and tikanga Māori. The centres are community-based and are administered by local management groups affiliated to Te Kōhanga Reo National Trust. Te Kōhanga Reo was established as a strategy for nurturing and revitalising the Māori language, culture and traditions and enhancing life opportunities, access to power and equality of opportunity (Consedine & Consedine, 2005; Irwin, 1990; Mutu, 1998; Pihama, Smith, Taki, & Lee,

2004). The first kōhanga reo was established in April 1982 (Ka'ai, 1991); by 2013 there were around 470 (Ministry of Education, 2013c). Te Kōhanga Reo returns in many ways to traditional pedagogical principles related to the intergenerational transmission of knowledge (Ka'ai, 2004).

Pacific language centres offer programmes based on the values and languages of Pacific Islands cultures such as Samoa, Tonga, Cook Islands, Niue, Tokelau, Tuvalu and Fiji. They range from licence-exempt family playgroups, meeting once or twice a week, to licensed and chartered centres. These programmes emphasise language development, both in Pacific languages and English, and increasing parental knowledge in early childhood care and education. The first Pacific language nest opened in 1985. Since then, many new Pacific services have been licensed. There were some 150 services reported using a Pasifika language in 2013, and Samoan and Tongan were the languages most used in these services (Ministry of Education, 2013c).

Early childhood curriculum

Te Whāriki: He Whāriki Mātauranga mō ngā Mokopuna o Aotearoa: Early Childhood Curriculum, the New Zealand Ministry of Education's early childhood curriculum policy statement (Ministry of Education, 1996), is a bicultural, socio-culturally conceived curriculum document, partially written in Māori, and founded on the aspiration that children "grow up as 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" (p. 9). It is specifically designed for children from the time of birth to school entry, and provides links to learning in school settings. It takes a child-centred approach, with integrated education and care elements. It emphasises the learning

partnership between teachers, parents and whānau. “Te Whāriki” translates to “a woven mat” that allows for diverse patterning depending on knowledge bases, beliefs and values which all may stand upon. Accordingly, “the whāriki concept recognises the diversity of early childhood education in New Zealand. Different programmes, philosophies, structures and environments will contribute to the distinctive patterns of the whāriki” (p. 11). It also recognises the importance of all children having opportunities to develop understandings and knowledge of the cultural heritages of both partners to Te Tiriti o Waitangi. It makes a number of statements that reflect these partnership aspirations, particularly around biculturalism, language and cultural identity.

Despite its socio-cultural ethos, a critique of *Te Whāriki*, in its final version, is that a considerable amount of Pacific content was removed. The draft version of *Te Whāriki* contains significant content with principles and practices that align closely and reinforce Pacific cultural and linguistic practice for early childhood education (Ministry of Education, 1993). Ministry of Education policy decisions during the finalising of the curriculum document meant key Pacific content was removed from the final version of *Te Whāriki*. As a consequence, teachers within Māori, Pacific and mainstream early childhood settings have less opportunity to gain a broader range of Pacific traditional cultural practice.

Implementation of curriculum

While teachers want the best for their students, achieving this is a complex process, especially with regard to Māori and Pacific children in early childhood education. One of the reasons early childhood services can fail to meet the needs of Māori and Pacific children, according to Bevan-Brown (2003), is that teachers are unaware of the role culture plays in learning and therefore lack understandings of how to address culture within their teaching (Mahuika,

Berryman, & Bishop, 2011; Mara & Marsters, 2009). Ritchie (2003) notes that meeting these needs for students

is subject to the extent to which a largely Pākehā 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)

The need to better support Māori and Pacific children to reach their potential was highlighted in findings from the Education Review Office (2010) report *Success for Māori Children in Early Childhood Services*. This report argued that services lacked strategies that focused upon Māori children as learners, treating all children the same. Services often included statements about Māori values, beliefs and intentions in their documentation, but these values were very rarely evident in practice. Effective processes to ascertain the aspirations of parents and whānau of Māori children were not evident either, and early childhood services had inadequate self-review processes to evaluate the effectiveness of their provision for Māori children. A nationwide review of Pacific literature also identified a need for comprehensive evaluative research on Pacific early childhood education to further achievement outcomes for children (Chu, Glasgow, Rimoni, Hodis, & Meyer, 2012). The Education Review Office (2013) report noted:

the lack of responsiveness to Māori and Pacific children in many of the services. Only two fifths of services had thought about how their curriculum might support Māori children to achieve success as Māori, and about one fifth of services had considered this for Pacific children. (para. 7)

This situation is exacerbated by increasing numbers of Māori and Pacific children who are enrolled in early childhood services in

Aotearoa New Zealand. According to Ministry of Education (2014) statistics there are increasing numbers of Māori and Pasifika children participating in early childhood services in Aotearoa New Zealand. Between 2010 and 2013, enrolments for Māori children were 92.3% and Pacific children 88.6%. Numbers of enrolments for children aged less than 2 years of age has also risen with an increase of 21% between 2007 and 2013 for this infant and toddler age group. This development has important implications for early childhood service provision in addressing the cultural needs of Māori and Pacific infants and toddlers. Whilst this demographic continues to grow, little research has been conducted around the implications of this social and educational trend. There is a noticeable gap in the literature on Pacific theory and practice for early childhood educational provision (Chu et al., 2012) and even less literature on Polynesian perspectives of infant and toddler provision (Rameka & Walker, 2012).

Congruency of Māori and Pacific cultural principles

Culture shapes the way we think and interpret information, and impacts on teaching and learning. Mahuika and Bishop (2011) 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” (p. 6). If the learner’s own culture is congruent with the culture of the learning environment they are then able to make meaning of new ideas and information by building on existing cultural understandings and experiences. Such congruence of culture allows learners to “bring who they are to the classroom in complete safety and where their knowledges are acceptable and legitimate” (p. 14). Delpit (1995) argues that “we all interpret behaviours, information, and situations through our own cultural lenses; these lenses operate involuntarily, below the

level of conscious awareness, making it seem that our own view is simply ‘the way it is’” (p. 151). Metge (1990) explains that because of this, Pākehā not only accept their culture to be normal or natural, they are unaware of its influence, not only on them but also on institutions such as education. The consequence of this normalisation of culture is that many Pākehā educators fail to appreciate the ways in which the education system reinforces their cultural values and beliefs.

Survey respondents also reported incongruences between current theory and ideologies, which were largely drawn from Western European models of infant and toddler provision (such as Resources for Infant Educators [RIE]), and Māori and Pacific worldviews and cultural practices. The RIE approach to infant caregiving has become increasingly influential in infant and toddler care in New Zealand and elsewhere. It originated in post-war Hungary and was developed by Pikler as a model of group care for infants that avoided institutionalisation with a limited number of caregivers. RIE and Pikler approaches share an emphasis on the importance of self-initiated activity, relationships with adults who respect children, and the child as an active partner (Petrie & Owen, 2005). Respondents felt another lens was essential to guide practice and promote cultural understandings and perspectives. The respondents identified as Māori, Samoan, Cook Island Māori, Niuean, Tokelauan and Tongan.

Traditional cultural practices

Respondents highlighted the importance of early childhood practices and pedagogies being reflective of their cultural worldviews, identities, protocols and behavioural expectations:

Our toddlers are exposed to cultural practices and pedagogies everyday through being immersed in activities such as karakia, kai karanga, pepeha, kapahaka waiata. Initially, their learning occurs through observation and

being given the opportunity to participate in the activities. We have annual celebration Māori calendar events such as Matariki and take our tamariki to the Koroneihana.

It's part of our philosophy to raise and nurture and educate our children in Samoan and the Faasamoa which is an important part of their gifts from God, the culture of their eyes, their skin, their hair, and be proud of who they are and be confident and competent as who they are and will then be able to welcome and accept others as who they are and will be confident and competent to take their place as leaders in their church, their families and in society either in Samoa or Aotearoa or wherever they will choose to be.

Intergenerational care, including grandparents and elders

In tribal society, child rearing of young children was the responsibility of the tribe (Rogoff, 2003). The relationship between grandparents and their grandchildren is highly valued and fostered within Polynesian culture. Predominately in Māori culture it was the kuia and koro who took a special interest and responsibility of the very young and their development (Makareti, 1986). Living and sleeping in an intergenerational environment allowed the transmission of important knowledge from the old people to the young—knowledge of history, stories, legends and their environment. Te Rangi Hiroa (1987) explains that “much, if not most, of the personal instruction in early years, was received from grandparents as a convenient result of three generations of the family living together in a common household” (p. 358). Intergenerational care and education, often involving grandparents or elders, was also highly valued by the respondents in the survey:

Effective relationships with whanau are integral to quality delivery.

Village concept of community involvement—strong networks with our church/elders.

Furthermore, aiga guidance was central to delivering the principles of fa‘aloalo, tautua and alofa. Respondents talked about the importance of seeking guidance to ensure cultural maintenance and that teachers felt affirmed by the presence of elders. Kaumātua, with their traditional knowledge and wisdom, were considered taonga and tohunga for teachers, who were sometimes still learning about their culture, language and traditional knowledge. The guidance of the kaumātua was held in high regard to ensure authenticity of their programme, with comments such as:

Kaumātua are sources of excitement, the tamaiti gets to show case their talent and know that he/she is accepted without question or judgement. “Ka pai moko, ano, ano” they know that koro, kuikui gives out hugs and hongis and extra treats . . . staff also are excited to be reaffirmed by Maori elders.

Our service also tries to gather information from the children’s grandparents and some important family members regarding their traditional care-practices. Such information support our service’s pedagogies around infant and toddler education, routines, settling in and comforting of both infants, toddlers and their families.

Respondents also noted the tensions around what may be considered best practice in early childhood infant and toddler care and what whānau, aiga or extended family expected. For example, a teacher approached a grandmother regarding her grandchild’s unsettled sleeping patterns and was informed:

My mokopuna likes to be, wrapped up tightly, held and rocked to sleep . . . This important information is crucial for the traditional well-being of this child.

Furthermore whānau relationships were upheld in the services, with all adults being viewed and viewing themselves as whānau members with whānau responsibilities:

All about FANAU!! All educators and workers are aunties and uncles.

Mixed-age settings

An example of the cultural disconnect between Western child development models and Polynesian perspectives is the terminology and categorising of children's development. Western child development models tend to view children as progressing through clearly defined stages of development from infancy, which is birth until 12 to 18 months, and then on into toddlerhood, which occurs between 12 months and three and a half years (Ministry of Education, 1996). Polynesian children's progress is monitored through different sets of criteria.

In line with this thinking, respondents highlighted the importance of mixed-age settings as a way of better reflecting traditional caregiving practices. They challenged the categorising of children and the segregating into specific group settings. They emphasised that mixed-age settings reflected these beliefs and were therefore compatible with traditional caregiving practices.

. . . the segregation of children, compartmentalising and categorising the Pacific children. Traditionally and culturally, Pacific children are "one" not an infant, toddler or young children . . . they are one being regardless of their age and developmental ability.

The setting is mixed-aged which is synonymous with traditional care giving, hence the tamaiti is free to move comfortably between all age groups. Additionally, it is recognised as having robust policies and procedures enabling quality care and education occur in a safe and secure manner.

Our toddlers always joined in with the older ones, even though they have their own age appropriate resources and activities. Older children are always willing to help, share and care for the younger ones.

The mixed-age groupings allowed relationships including tuakana–teina relationships to be developed, which were closely linked to quality education and care for all children. The tuakana–teina model of learning is a recognised model of learning across much of Polynesia (Crocombe & Crocombe, 2003). In a whānau context, caring for each other was also articulated in terms of tuakana–teina relationships (Glasgow, 2010). This was particularly emphasised by a respondent from a Māori setting who asserted 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.

Tuakana/teina: The tuakana supports the teina with "nose blowing" a spontaneous action to go get a tissue and lean forwards and wipe their friend nose . . . Our kaupapa nui will denote if tuakana/teina need separation time but our coming back into the main fold is a tikanga.

Respect

Current early childhood models of working with infants espouse a respectful approach to children that encourages independence in infants. These models have been embraced by early childhood teachers motivated by the desire to work respectfully with children in their care (Dalli et al., 2011; Petrie & Owen, 2005). Polynesian communities demonstrate many ways of showing respect for infants that may not fit these philosophical models, where

a sense of collective identity and belonging is desired rather than a focus on growing independence (Jenkins, Harte, & Ririki, 2011). Respondents described ways that they demonstrate respect; respect for who the child is and what they can contribute to the group, respect for the child's culture and respect for the child and family.

Attending the infants/toddlers milestones activities for example, birthdays is considered to be respectful as we acknowledge the infants/toddlers' family. Attending such family events is considered to be sign of "respect" and "appreciation" of their infants/toddlers, meaning, their children are more than just a daily responsibility and it also meant the service values infants/toddlers, parents and their families.

Value of RESPECTING the child and who they are . . . Everyone has a God given gift/talent to benefit the Village.

Spirituality

Spirituality plays a prominent role in the delivery of Polynesian early childhood programmes. Christianity and the role of the church influence the delivery of the early childhood language nest programmes. All Pacific respondents discussed the central place of Christian practice in their programmes and ways in which it was woven into their programmes. Infants and toddlers were exposed daily to prayers, hymns and Christian practice. In part, this is a legacy of the origins of the language nests, which were historically established by the church. Christian dogma continues to dominate programmes in contemporary service provision.

Daily devotion (*pure*) is incorporated in our daily routine . . . bible readings, national anthems and prayers . . . taking part in Cook Island annual events such as White Sunday.

Christian church celebrations all link to our centre philosophy and vision.

We participate in local church services, singing Christian value songs.

Māori respondents made reference to traditional Māori spiritual attributes and cultural norms, values and beliefs.

Karakia timatanga at a specific time when everyone adults and tamaiti gather together for the starting of our day "whakatau te mauri o te ra hou".

Water play, have fun but also water has its own "tupatotanga" (dangers). Tikanga is observed before we head out on an excursion involving transport, karakia for safe travel, involving ngahere hikoi, protocols are observed prior to hikoi. Carrying water only and small fruit already prepared, no discarding of rubbish and plucking branches or leaves from rakau as they are very much alive and healthy.

Enablers

The survey asked respondents what supported them to implement authentic cultural practices and pedagogies around infant and toddler education and care. Respondents highlighted two key enablers: knowledgeable teachers and appropriate teacher training and professional development.

Teachers' knowledge of language and culture

Predictably, the ability of the teachers to speak their particular language or dialect fluently or as a native language speaker was one of the most important enablers to culturally appropriate infant and toddler provision. Le Tagaloa (in Smith, Gollop, Marshall, & Nairn, 2000)

is insistent that Polynesian culture views language as the proper food and nourishment for children's growth. If deprived, children may develop different cultural values, such as becoming outspoken and individualistic and using the English language. This breaches fundamental tenets of appropriate cultural behaviour (Gonzalez-Mena, in Siraj-Blatchford, 2000; Taufe'ulungake, 2002). Language and knowledge of authentic traditional cultural practices were the two most sought after skills when seeking staff members and teachers in these services. Respondents reported the importance of staff

welcoming and greeting children and aiga in appropriate Samoan language and where respectful gagana are delivered with friendliness and respect.

Staff are fluent Samoan and English speakers. They welcome and greet the children, families, aiga in appropriate Samoan language / respectful gagana every day with a smile, with respect.

Having teachers of Cook Island descent and having teachers who can speak the Cook Island language . . . The service embraces the traditional language and culture of the Cook Islands through their everyday routines at the centre. This is seen very vividly throughout the centre for example: most staff speak the Cook Island language and culture fluently, other staff are currently receiving professional development based on the language and culture and are also having additional lessons from other staff at the centre . . . The centre's daily routine is designed to preserve the language and culture of the Cook Islands.

Centre Philosophy: Let the beauty of our language and cultural values be a guiding lamp for the children of tomorrow.

Key to authenticity is exposure to a range of cultural experiences e.g. powhiri, tamariki not

only being a part of it but running karakia in and out of the centre.

The centre's cultural pedagogies and practices also underpinned by the tokanga/kawa of the tangata whenua. However acknowledgement of other iwi is equally important and there is recognition of this.

Appropriate professional development

One service highlighted the importance of appropriate professional development, where services can share knowledge with other services. Cherrington et al.'s (2013) *Evaluation of the Ministry of Education-Funded Early Childhood Education Professional Development Programmes* highlighted the need for more targeted professional development provision for kaupapa Māori and Pasifika immersion services built on appropriate protocols and processes that set the scene for professional growth. The report stated that the foundation of professional development programmes for these services needed to be integrally built on Māori or Pacific values and understandings. This was upheld by a Samoan respondent who stated:

Professional development . . . so that staff can obtain knowledge which is then shared with all staff . . . Centres share practices with other Pasifika centres through presentations at Pasifika fono, conference and seminars.

Barriers

Respondents were also asked what barriers to implementing authentic cultural practices and pedagogies were faced. Much of the feedback on barriers related to early childhood regulations and expectations.

Regulations

Feedback from these communities reveals a need to work autonomously and independently, without the constraints imposed by government policy, which is often incongruent with the cultural worldview of the community. Māori and Pacific communities strongly voiced the need for “Government educational policy review to address the incongruence of two cultural worldviews”. Respondents expressed a desire for autonomy in providing culturally authentic caregiving practices, and frustration with educational theory and government policies that did not align with, or ran contrary to, traditional practice. One Māori respondent stated:

The ECE Regulations can be a barrier as it fails to recognise the cultural dimensions of Māori.

Having to justify to government departments why we do things [that are] our norm i.e noho po at the centre, noho marae.

The most obvious barriers is lacking of Pacific traditional and cultural practices and pedagogy literatures.

Sometimes in our service, our teachers struggle to implement their traditional practices and pedagogies with the contemporary and the 21 century child development theories.

Teacher education

Exposure to a Western education system has been significantly disenfranchising for Māori (Berryman, 2008) and a colonising process for Pasifika communities (Vai'imene, 2003). Education has been framed by a large assortment of Western theory to provide justification for teaching approaches and pedagogy. Most have occurred within timeframes and for particular purposes that have not aligned with

Polynesian worldviews and ways of being. Respondents felt that teacher training provision was seen as sadly lacking and not preparing student teacher trainees for working in culturally responsive ways. Participants asserted that they may have to unlearn some of the formal training they had received to be able to work in an authentic way with infants. A participant described that in her experience,

mainstream training is a barrier as it individualises the kaiako hence their professional knowledge, professional practice and professional relationships are mono cultural. I speak from experience, for when I came to work in the centre I currently work in a language nest, I found it difficult as I has become familiar with working as an individual in a team (in a mainstream setting) rather than working in a team. The sharing of expertise was something new for me in my role as kaiako but not new to me as Māori thus it was necessary to pull my mainstream pōtae off and go back to how I was raised.

Lack of resources

The lack of appropriate cultural resources was mentioned by a number of Pacific services as a barrier to provision.

The most obvious barrier is lacking of Pacific traditional and cultural practices, pedagogical literature.

Lack of resources available . . . the centre will normally have to make their resources for their children at the centre. Most staff will have to travel to the islands for their resources and experiences . . . to facilitate and generate ideas for the centre regarding authentic cultural practices and pedagogies.

Others felt that they were challenged by the Ministry of Education when their service was

“more than a preschool” and a service for the whole community.

I have argued the point with [the Ministry of Education] that “our position is *noku te whare, noku te whenua*” we have taught our *tamariki* to take pride and ownership of this building and the land it stands on, it’s more than a pre-school.

Implications arising from this research

Increasing numbers of Māori and Pacific children are enrolled in early childhood services in Aotearoa New Zealand. Numbers of enrolments for children aged less than 2 years of age entering early childhood services also continues to grow. Most Polynesian infants in care and education settings in Aotearoa are cared for by teachers who use a predominantly Western theoretical and principled framework in caring for children. These teachers are often unaware of the role culture plays in learning and therefore lack understanding of how to address culture within their teaching. This is certainly the case for the mostly monolingual, monocultural Pākehā teaching force, whose lack of knowledge and expertise of Polynesian caregiving practice and theory limits their ability to provide culturally responsive infant and toddler provision. All children have the right to be raised in culturally and linguistically responsive communities. This enables them to become enculturated within traditional practices, values, knowledge and, very importantly, the language of their community as a means to support a positive identity formation (Glasgow, 2012).

Key to providing culturally and linguistically responsive early childhood provision for Māori and Pacific infants and toddlers is the need for practices and pedagogies to be reflective of the children’s cultural worldviews,

identities, protocols and behavioural expectations. This includes immersion in cultural and linguistic activities, events and practices such as prayer, performing arts and song that reflect important cultural values, beliefs and practices. It also stresses the importance of communal and intergenerational caregiving practices and underscores the input of the extended family including grandparents and elders. In line with the emphasis on communal caregiving is the notion of peer caregiving, including the development of elder/younger relationships and the associated responsibilities. Mixed-age early childhood settings encourage and are compatible with traditional caregiving practices that challenge the categorising of children and segregation into specific age group settings.

Teacher education and professional learning and development opportunities play a critical role in supporting teachers to implement authentic cultural practices and pedagogies around infant and toddler education and care. If teacher education and professional learning and development utilises culturally informed theory, practices and pedagogies such as *fono*, it can enable the provision of culturally authentic provision for Māori and Pacific infants and toddlers. Conversely, if teacher education and professional development provision are underpinned by Western values, theories and practices, it will impede teachers’ abilities to deliver pedagogy and practices that reflect culturally authentic ways.

Respondents’ comments emphasised that there is a set of Polynesian caregiving practices and that this common set of principles, practices and beliefs around caring for infants and toddlers has been retained throughout the wider Pacific (Ikupu & Glover, 2004; Tupuola, 2000; Vini, 2003) and provides the basis for an emerging Polynesian theoretical model of infant and toddler caregiving practices. This is an important alternative to the dominant Western theories and practices that are prevalent in current early childhood regulations and provision, which was highlighted as one of

the main barriers to the culturally responsive provision for Māori and Pacific infants and toddlers. The wealth of traditional knowledge within the cultural language nest communities is invaluable and needs to be foregrounded in developing culturally responsive pedagogy for Polynesian infants. Closer investigation and stronger collaboration with Māori and Pacific language nest communities will enable theoretical principles to emerge.

Ultimately there is much to be gained by capturing Māori and Pacific Polynesian cultural and traditional knowledge for raising and caring for infants and toddlers. It honours practices that have been entrenched for centuries for peoples of the Pacific, and acts to both reinstate and preserve these knowledges. The process of revitalisation of cultural knowledge serves to counter hitherto dominant Western-based discourse on infant and toddler pedagogy and will provide a culturally constructed set of principles, practices and pedagogical approaches to guide early childhood educational provision in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Glossary

| | | | |
|-----------------------|--|-------------------------------|---|
| aiga | family | kapahaka | performing arts |
| alofa | love | karakia | prayers |
| fa'a aloalo | respect | karakia tīmatanga | opening prayer |
| Faasamoa | Samoan way of life | karanga | ritual chant |
| fanau | extended family | kaumātua | Māori male elder |
| fono | meetings | kaupapa nui | philosophy |
| gagana | Samoan language | kawa | protocols |
| hapū | subtribe | kōhanga reo | Māori early childhood education centres providing immersion Māori or bilingual English and Māori education and care programmes. They are administered by Te Kōhanga Reo National Trust. |
| hīkoi | walk | koro | grandfather |
| hongī | pressing together of noses as part of a ritual greeting between two people | Koroneihana | annual coronation celebration |
| iwi | tribe | kuikui | grandmother |
| Ka pai moko, anō, anō | That's good grandchild, again, again | marae | tribal meeting place |
| kai | food | Matariki | Māori New Year |
| kaiako | teacher | mokopuna | grandchild |
| | | ngahere hīkoi | bush walks |
| | | noho marae | overnight stay at marae |
| | | noho pō | overnight stay |
| | | Nōku te whare, nōku te whenua | This is our building, this is our land |
| | | Pākehā | New Zealanders of European descent |
| | | pepeha | traditional introduction |
| | | pōtae | hat |
| | | pōwhiri | welcome |
| | | puna reo | Māori early childhood education providing bilingual English and Māori education and care programmes |
| | | pure | prayer (Cook Islands Māori) |
| | | rākau | tree |
| | | tamaiti | children |
| | | tamariki | children |
| | | tangata whenua | people of the land |
| | | taonga | gifts, treasures |

| | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| tautua | service |
| teina | younger child or less experienced/ knowledgeable person |
| te reo Māori | the Māori language |
| Te Tiriti o Waitangi | the Treaty of Waitangi |
| Te Whāriki | a woven mat |
| tikanga | correct practice, custom |
| tohunga | experts, spiritual guides |
| tokanga | protocols |
| tuakana | elder child or more experienced/ knowledgeable person |
| tupatotanga | dangers |
| waiata | songs |
| Whakatau te mauri o te rā hōu | Settle the life force of the new day |
| whānau | family groups |

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