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Contributions of articles and photos are welcome from the early childhood community. Please keep copies of any contributions as we cannot guarantee to return what is sent. Cover photos need to be 'high resolution'.

Subscriptions

Where next for Early Education?

Thank you to those subscribers who have helped us plot the course for another year of *Early Education*. There was strong support for maintaining the printed version of *Early Education* and 97% of those responding to our survey indicated they would pay more in order to retain the printed option. We will continue to explore on-line options for 2015. But for 2014, *Early Education* continues in its familiar printed form. **2014 subscriptions are now due.**

Those of us who edit *Early Education* continue to see its importance in helping to knit together the diverse sections of the early childhood community and ensuring an affordable way that teachers can share their stories, as well as academics bringing their research into the country's e.c. staff rooms for ongoing critique, debate and conversation.

Thank you also those subscribers who recognise that your subscriptions are needed to keep *Early Education* viable. We appreciate your ongoing commitment.

Passion

Commitment to the kaupapa

If you are looking for a job in early childhood, how often do you see the word 'passion'? Recent research suggests that many ads for e.c. teachers in this country have that descriptor (Clark, 2013). What does it mean to have passion? What is an employer looking for?

If you look into the history of the word, passion is closely aligned with the Passion of Christ: his painful and fulsome commitment to his death by crucifixion. This sets a very high bar for commitment. Presumably if an employer is looking for passion, there is a hope that this teacher will have an exceptional sense of service. Viewed skeptically, this could mean that this passionate teacher might have less desire for a robust hourly wage or salary. However, in the best sense of 'service', a passionate teacher can be understood as caring and open to the unexpected; to show resilience in the face of challenge and a sustained commitment to effort beyond the temporal. Maintaining a sense of advocacy, not just for 'my e.c.e. centre' but for the well-being of children and their families would be evidence a passionate commitment. Our correspondent in Australia, Iris Duhn, articulates how new regulations in that country are sapping e.c. teachers' morale; new funding regimes which penalize services who take their children off the premises. What does advocating for children's wellbeing mean in this context?

There is passion evident in the creation of the ECE Special Interest Group (SIG) which is celebrated here with four keynote addresses redeveloped into updated papers for the readers of *Early Education*. Since 2009, the ECE SIG has been holding research hui associated with the annual conference of New Zealand Association for Research in Education (NZARE). The depth of commitment to enormous kaupapa is evident here: Anne Smith's focus on policy that reflects the rights of children, Lesley Rameka's work to document how Maori worldviews can shape an indigenous and dynamic (even disruptive) framework for assessment of young children; Jenny Ritchie's call for an ethic of care based on Maori principles; and Janis Carroll-Lind's frank assessment of the challenges faced by infants in non-parental care. All these authors have worked for years to research, to analyse, to articulate, to advocate, to share.

Two peer reviewed articles show long term commitments as well. Andrew Gibbons and Sandy Farquhar's article is grounded in a collegial conversation that has lasted seven years – and continues. In considering narratives that illustrate the becoming and the being of an early childhood teacher, it is in turn whimsical and strident. Working theories is the focus of sustained interest for Vicki Hargraves who carefully considers how teachers can work creatively in constructing for themselves how children's working theories can be

interpreted. This requires real engagement and curiosity about children and how they think and challenges superficial photo-focused documentation masquerading as learning stories.

To be judged as having passion is different than recruiting for passion. The passing of our friend and colleague Nicky Chisnall (see Ana Pickering's tribute) provides an opportunity to recognise the power of being grounded in humane principles which Nicky found in her sustained and diligent deep inquiry into the life and writings of Maria Montessori. We knew Nicky as a passionate bridge builder, between Montessori the woman and Montessori the movement; between Montessori method and the context of Aotearoa New Zealand; between the Montessori community and the wider early childhood sector. We will miss her calm and insightful dedication to a cause that was greater than her employment. We will miss her passion.

Sue Stover and Claire McLachlan
Editors

Reference

Clark, B. (2012). Minding the P's: Passion in professionalism in early childhood education in Aotearoa New Zealand. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood 13*(4), 344-347. doi. org/10.2304/ciec.2012.13.4.344

The ECE SIG 2013

In 2013, the ECE SIG group is planning a day of presentations as part of the NZARE Annual Conference 26-28 November at the University of Otago, Dunedin. Using the theme '*Outing* creative and innovative research inside - outside early childhood education', the day's programme includes a Keynote presentation, followed by concurrent sessions on "Research: Methodology, design and ethical issues"; "Current Developments and the Implications for ECE Research and Practice"; and "Writing for Research Publication".

More information about the ECE SIG from:

http://www.nzare.org.nz/sigs/early-childhood-education-sig.html

More information about the annual conference of NZARE:

http://www.eenz.com/nzare13/

Letter from Frankston

Victoria, Australia

Dear colleagues, friends and students in Aotearoa

It is a pleasure to write to you from across the (in)famous Ditch. It is also a challenge. I used to write letters to my friends and family when we first immigrated from Germany to Auckland. This was before the internet and before skype, when letters still arrived in exotic looking envelopes.

Regardless of the format, a letter from abroad still carries the promise of difference. At its best, it ignites new stories, gives new impressions, and opens up new views of the world. It is in the spirit of such 'travellers' tales' that I write this letter. As Trinh Minh-ha, filmmaker, academic and writer, points out, a traveller's tale involves narratives and practices of border crossings, of being and becoming "between a here, a there, *and* an elsewhere" (1994, p. 9). Another fellow traveller, Eva Hoffman, famously argues that language itself carries place, self and incommensurable difference. For me, who has lived in New Zealand for 20 years, speaking the words "New Zealand Aotearoa" for instance has a quality to it that is specific. It speaks to me of my longing for the Pacific Ocean and its islands when I grew up in Germany. It still carries faint echoes of nuclear-free politics which posed a counterpoint to my childhood in Germany's Cold War climate. Between "a here, a there and elsewhere" is a way of life for me and it lingers in my thinking and writing about early childhood.

My letter, then, is a letter about looking back, looking forward and moving sideways. It is a traveller's tale about first impressions of childhood in metro Melbourne and about New Zealand-Australian (or rather Victorian, since Australian policies are dominated by State as well as Federal governments) similarities and differences when it comes to early childhood policies and ways of 'doing' early childhood education. I am going to focus my traveller's tale on my first encounters with Australian/Victorian EC practices and policies.

Australian early years' policy is currently focused on implementing a quality framework that will support the lifting of standards across Australia. In Victoria, early childhood services work with two curriculum frameworks. There is the *Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF)* and then there is the *Early Years' Learning Framework (EYLF)* which is part of the Council of Australian Government's reform agenda for early childhood which is a key component of the Australian Government's National Quality Framework for early childhood education and care.

Iris and friend enjoying the Australian outdoors

The National Quality Framework commenced on 1 January 2012 for most long day care, family day care, preschool (or kindergarten) and outside schools hours care services.

The National Quality Framework aims to raise quality and drive continuous improvement and consistency in education and care services through:

- a national legislative framework

- a national quality standard

- a national quality rating and assessment process

- a new national body called the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority

(Department of Education, 2012).

In addition there is the drive for qualification of staff, alongside the debate over low pay and demanding working conditions within the sector (Davies & Trinidad, 2013). My first impression of the policy debate in Australia is that it is intense and driven by politics. One of the key arguments is that "if the level of female employment were to match male employment, Australia's GDP would be boosted by 11%,

which is equivalent to $25 billion" (AWCCI, 2013, p. 6). This is only one aspect of the debate, however, it is a powerful argument. 'Quality' in this context is about convincing mothers that their children will be fine in childcare. It is about establishing a discourse of early childhood professionalism that reassures parents.

A small research grant from Monash has enabled me to gain first impressions of educators' perceptions of challenges and possibilities in this intense context. Talking with early childhood educators highlights that many of them are feeling pressure from all sides. Many educators are studying and are keen to integrate new knowledge into their practices, yet regulations and constant demands for accountability prevent innovation and development of new practices.

In some cases, it seems that the intense focus on regulation actually hinders practices that are 'high quality' by curbing what can be done. An example of this is that in the past educators would have a 'long night' in the kindergarten where children and families spend time together experiencing the familiar kindergarten environment after hours. This was an exciting event which disrupted the normality of routines and practices and created opportunities for children, educators and families to come together as a community. This event depended on enthusiasm and on support from the kindergarten and most importantly, it relied on educators' willingness to plan this evening and to be there in their own time. For the first time in many years, this year educators were unable to organise this much-loved and highly anticipated event because of new regulations that make it impossible to use the premises outside of regular hours. Funding is now tied up with attendance on the premises which means that physical absences, for instance, field trips, count against funding. Time away from the kindergarten has to be made up to retain funding. However, time outside of regular hours does not count as funded time and in fact 'after hours' events require a level of administrative effort that makes it unrealistic to pursue such ideas. Clearly, an important local 'quality' event that supported the establishment of relationships within the kindergarten community has fallen victim to new federal regulations which aim to establish a discourse of professionalism based on accountability.

Another example of regulations impacting on practice is that due to risk-averse policies, it is now almost impossible to take children off the premises in the first place. Excursions to the local letterbox to post a letter home, or visiting the local park become extraordinary exercises in paperwork, involving potential cuts to funding. It is not surprising that children's involvement in their local communities is severely limited. In fact, I have not seen children on an excursion to the beach with their local kindergarten or child care centre. The beach is an amazing part of the natural environment here in Frankston and it offers powerful opportunities to develop a place - responsive curriculum with the children.

As a sociologist of childhood, I found that these first impressions make my heart sink. At a time when the child-friendly cities' initiative has been around for a decade now

(Tranter & Malone, 2008), it is clear that there are enormous tensions between policy, understandings of what constitutes 'quality' in early years' education and new principles that are embedded in policy, for instance the emphasis on sustainability.

My traveller's tale makes me consider big questions:

How are children going to learn to build sustainable communities if the very opportunity for 'community experiences' beyond the physical boundaries of the early years' services are becoming impenetrable?

How are educators going to deal with the demands of pushing practice to integrate complexities and multiple perspectives when the very frame for action is becoming tighter?

From talking with educators, it is clear that it is not a lack of enthusiasm or a lack of interest that governs what is possible. It is a shift towards new levels of accountability and regulations that tightly structure what can be done, by whom, when and where.

Liebe Gruesse,

Iris Duhn

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UNCRC and rights based EC policy

How are we doing in New Zealand? [1]

Anne B. Smith

On 20th November 1989 the United Nations General Assembly agreed to adopt the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and opened it for ratification. New Zealand ratified the convention in 1993, profoundly influencing our policies and the way we conceptualise children. It has provided a moral imperative to action and a rationale for change (Freeman, 2007). Children's rights, however, do not receive widespread public or political support in New Zealand, so it is important that governments and local agencies are educated about UNCRC.

In 2004, the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) remedied the omission of early childhood education (ECE) from the original UNCRC by holding a day of discussion on children's rights in early childhood (defined as below eight years of age). This discussion resulted in the publication of General Comment No. 7, (2005) (published in September 2006), which contains a set of recommendations which explicitly address dominant assumptions about early childhood. The CRC was concerned that *young* children as rights holders were not being given sufficient attention by state parties in their laws, policies and programmes.

The General Comment drew attention to several articles of particular importance in early childhood (a time of both vulnerability to harm and potential to benefit from quality environments), in particular, Article 6, which is the child's right to survival and development. The wording here sits well with our early childhood philosophy:

> … the right to survival and development *can only be implemented in a holistic manner*, through the enforcement of all the other provisions of the Convention, including rights to health, adequate nutrition, social security, an adequate standard of living, a healthy and safe environment, education and play (articles 24, 27, 28, 29 and 31), as well as through respect for the responsibilities of parents and the provision of assistance and quality services (articles 5 and 18) (my *italics*) (United Nations

Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2006, para 10).

The General Comment is critical of countries and regions where early childhood is fragmented and given low priority. It emphasizes the importance of quality standards, and qualifications for staff including for those who work with young children.

The mechanism through which the CRC monitors whether countries are meeting their obligations, is the submission of periodic reports to the CRC. Non-governmental organisations also present a report, and their representatives meet with the CRC in Geneva, which then examines each report and makes "concluding observations." New Zealand's 3rd and 4th Periodic Report was submitted in November 2008, providing information on relevant activity undertaken by the Government that responded to the UN Committee's 2003 recommendations. Of particular concern were New Zealand's issues of poverty and corporal punishment.

Poverty, especially during early childhood, is a toxin which can have an impact across the life span setting children off on cumulative negative developmental trajectories with diminished health and educational outcomes (Hertzman & Wiens, 1996). Article 27 recognises the right of every child to a standard of living which promotes adequate physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development. Poverty is more prevalent in New Zealand for families with children under six years old, compared to families with children in any other age group (Ministry of Social Development, 2008). In 2007 the child poverty rate was 20% for children aged 0-6, 16% for those aged 7-11 years and 14% for those aged 12-17 years.

The CRC (2003) recommended that the State took measures to assist parents, in particular single parents, to ensure the child's right to an adequate standard of living was met. In New Zealand, child poverty did indeed fall from 29% in 2001 to 16% in 2007 (Ministry of Social Development, 2008), which reversed the trend of increasing poverty since the late 1990s. This was mainly due to the Working for Families

(WFF) package, which was introduced in stages between 2004 and 2007. WFF aimed to improve income adequacy for working parents through a family tax credit, accommodation supplements, and childcare and after school care subsidies. Single parent families, however, still experienced significantly higher poverty (42%) than those in two parent families (9%) in 2008.

While poverty levels in 2008 were reported as improving (Ministry of Youth Affairs, 2008), we should be concerned at the ongoing level of child poverty, especially for Māori and Pacific children. WFF only applies to families where parents are working, which means that families on benefits are ineligible, despite their economic hardship, so that the wellbeing of young children with non-working single parents is at risk. We were 23rd out of 25 countries in the adequacy of our parental leave policies, placing our families with babies and young children at risk with our policies (Duncan, 2009a; UNICEF Report Card, 2008).

The second big issue is **corporal punishment**, a common method of discipline for young children (Gollop, 2005; Ministry of Health, 2008). In 2007 we went some way towards implementing UNCRC Article 19, children's right to protection from all forms of physical and mental violence. The Crimes (Substituted Section 59) Amendment Act 2007 was passed on 21 June 2007. We joined 25 other countries in the world with similar legislation. This reform removed the defence provided by the previous law (section 59, Crimes Act 1961) so that parents who are prosecuted for assaulting their child can no longer argue that the force they used was reasonable in the circumstances. In a remarkable cross party agreement, all parties (except ACT and individual members of other parties) supported the Bill, which was voted into law by 113-8 majority on 2nd May, 2007 (Taylor & Smith, 2008; Taylor, Wood & Smith, 2011).

A public referendum in 2009 showed that most people opposed corporal punishment becoming a criminal offence. The results of the referendum illustrate the government's failure to provide education for the public about why it was necessary to change the existing law. In contrast, the German government, which changed its law in 2000, launched a two year nationwide multimedia strategy to advertise the change in the law under the motto "More respect for children" (Bussmann, Erthal, and Schroth, 2011). Moreover, prohibiting corporal punishment is linked with a decline in violence against children (Bussman et al., 2011).

In Sweden childrearing violence was outlawed in the late 1950s accompanied by regular and ongoing public education to maintain public awareness.. Despite the lack of public education, there are some encouraging signs in recent studies (Children's Commissioner, 2008; Lawrence & Smith, 2009; Ministry of Health, 2008) that parents are using less physical punishment.

Realising children's rights in early childhood education

UNCRC Article 29 says that the education of the child should be directed to "the development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential"; the goal being to "empower the child by developing his or her skills, learning and other capacities, human dignity, self-esteem and self-confidence". This sits alongside Article 6 (the right to survival and development) and Article 2 (non-discrimination).

The UNCRC says that governments are responsible for promoting optimal development (Woodhead, 2005), so they need to make ECE a high priority and resource it appropriately. Participation in high quality ECE has a dramatic impact on whether children can develop to their fullest potential (Katz, 2003; Mitchell, Wylie & Carr, 2008; NICHD, 2006).

In 2002 there was in New Zealand quite a radical shift in ECE policy towards increased participation and quality in ECE, with the introduction of the government's strategic plan, *Nga Huarahi Arataki* (Ministry of Education, 2002). This 10 year plan "provided vision and coherence to the early childhood sector in New Zealand, focusing on our social and educational areas of greatest need" (Duncan, 2009a, p. 7). The plan acknowledged that having qualified teachers leads to better quality and outcomes for children. The goal was that 80% of all EC staff would be registered or completing qualifications by 2010 and 100% by 2012. The plan also aimed to introduce more favourable teacher-child ratios and group size (especially for the under twos), more effective delivery of *Te Whāriki*, and more professional development. The plan included the establishment of six Centres of Innovation on a three-year cycle "to showcase excellence and innovation in ECE" (Ministry of Education, 2002, p. 10). This initiative resulted in many national and international presentations by COI teachers and researchers, to packed audiences, enabling innovative curriculum and policy initiatives to be showcased and disseminated.

The introduction in 2007 of 20 hours free ECE for three and four year-olds was a further effort to increase participation, the amount of time children are in ECE services and affordability for parents. Most parents were very positive about free ECE and said that it had enabled their children to participate, and resulted in family savings (Mitchell & Hodgen, 2008).

A UNICEF Report Card (2008) set 10 benchmarks suggesting basic standards for early childhood services - including parental leave, an ECE national plan, training, and staff:child ratios. New Zealand met six of the 10 benchmarks, while the Nordic countries did better, and Australia met only two.

Judith Duncan (2009a, 2009b) has looked at the data critically, pointing out that our greatest challenges come from the benchmarks we did not achieve, particularly that we spend less than 1% of GDP on ECE. (The other three

failed benchmarks were inadequate parental leave, absence of universal child health provision, and high child poverty rates.)

The government's 2008 Periodic Report to the UN Committee mentions New Zealand's high rate of participation of under-five year-olds in ECE, the introduction of 20 hours of free ECE for three and four year-olds, discretionary grants and the Promoting Participation project. Ninety-five per cent of children participated in ECE before attending school in 2007; the cost of ECE was reduced by 34% for most families; and progress had been made towards increasing the number of qualified staff in ECE (Ministry of Education, 2008). Sixty per cent of all early childhood teachers were registered or qualified in 2007 (an increase from 49% in 2002).

Despite the positive figures and increasing levels of participation overall, the problem of the gaps between participation rates according to income and ethnicity, remained. There were still considerably more (98%) European/ Pākehā children entering school with ECE experience, than Māori (91%) or Pasifika children (84%).

In 2008 there was qualified optimism that New Zealand was making satisfactory progress towards meeting its Article 6 and 29 commitments, to support children's development and the achievement of their optimal potential, through increased participation in ECE services and improvement of ECE quality. However, because of the inequalities in participation there was a concern about whether all children were getting the benefits of ECE so implementation of Article 2 on non-discrimination was problematic. We were, however, moving in the right direction.

The erosion of quality

The 'iron triangle' of structural quality in ECE identified in research (Smith et al. , 2000) is adult-child ratio, staff training, and group size. Recent policies have chipped away at these aspects of structural quality, and they influence process quality.

- *Ratios:* After lengthy consultations over the revised regulations for ECE in 2008, the government decided not to implement them. The Minister also decided to rescind previously agreed ratio changes to lower the ratios for 2 to 2 ½ year-olds (they were to drop from 1:15 or 1:10 to 1:5) and in sessional centres (from 1:15 to 1:14). This is a disappointing example of not improving quality to support the rights of the youngest and must vulnerable children in EC centres.

- *Qualifications:* In 2009 the Minister of Education announced an extension of the timeframe for achieving 80% teacher registration by 2012, and the scrapping of the 100% target. In the five years to 2008, the increase in qualified and registered ECE teachers rose by 11% (Ministry of Education, 2008); this showed that it is possible to increase the number of trained staff.

- *Implementation of Te Whāriki:* Our most precious resource in ECE in New Zealand is *Te Whāriki*. It helps to implement Article 29 of UNCRC, which has similar broad goals. Effective implementation of *Te Whāriki* requires

qualified teachers and access to professional development (Mitchell & Hodgen, 2008). Yet government funding for professional development programmes to support *Te Whāriki* and for assessment resources (*Kei Tua o te Pae* and *Te Whātu Pokeka*) has ended.

- *Centres of Innovation:* The COI initiative provided encouragement and support for new ideas arising out of best practice in ECE, providing resources and research support in partnership with teachers. The projects had been providing models of good ideas for the EC sector, empowering EC teachers and helping them to develop professional expertise and to showcase effective teaching and learning practices. The COIs were abruptly terminated with only a few weeks notice, after a huge amount of work had gone into their planning and creation (Ministry of Education, 2009). This was unnecessary and inexcusable, wasteful of the time and money and another erosion of quality.

Summary and Conclusions

The UNCRC and General Comment 7 (United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2006) give New Zealand obligations in terms of children's rights. In this paper I have argued that while progress has been made in implementing Article 27 and Article 19 to reduce poverty and violence for children, we have some distance to go in terms of fully realising these rights for young children. Rates of participation in ECE have increased and there has been some progress in improving quality but there are still inequities in terms of participation.

Sadly there have been some worrying signs that progress towards the CRC vision of a holistic high quality ECE for all young children, has halted. Whilst 20 hours of ECE for three and four year-olds has been retained, an erosion of quality ECE is visible in not improving ratios, extending the timeframe for achieving 80% qualified staff, cessation of Professional Development focused on *Te Whāriki*, and ending the COIs. We should resume our journey towards being one of the most advanced countries in the world in the quality of our ECE and our commitment to children's rights.

A postscript from a 2013 standpoint

Poverty: One in four children in New Zealand are now living in poverty, and the rate of child poverty among two-parent and sole-parent families is above the average for countries in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). The rate of child poverty increased from 22% in 2007 to 25% in 2009. The cost of housing is a major contributor to these poverty figures. We have the seventh highest rate of child poverty in the OECD, and a higher rate than the UK (Expert Advisory Group on Solutions to Child Poverty, 2012). Child poverty in the mid-1980s was at half of its current level. In the recently released UNICEF report (2013), we were ranked 21st out of 35 nations for Children's Material Well-Being (a measure of poverty). This is more than three times worse than Finland, and below the UK (16th) and Australia (19th).

There is every indication that child poverty is an even greater problem now than it was when I originally wrote this paper in 2009, and that very little has been done to ameliorate it. The government's setting up an expert advisory group on poverty (because of its coalition agreement with the Māori party) has done much to highlight the issue of child poverty in New Zealand, though so far there has been little movement towards implementation of the recommendations of the report.

Corporal Punishment: New Zealand is the first and still the only English-speaking country to have made corporal punishment illegal, but there are now 34 countries in the world that have abolished physical punishment, an increase from 25 in 2009. There is encouraging evidence that attitudes towards physical punishment are changing and that parents are less likely to use it in the six years since the law change in 2007. The Office of the Children's Commissioner commissioned an Omnibus survey in 2008, repeating a question used in an earlier study in 1981 when 92% of men and 86% of women had endorsed the use of physical punishment in some circumstances. By 2008 the approval rating had decreased to 58% and less than a third of parents thought that physical punishment should be a regular part of child discipline (Children's Commissioner, 2008; Taylor et al, 2011).

By 2013 a further survey using the same question showed that only 40% thought that physical punishment should be part of physical discipline (Wood, 2013). There is still a long way to go in the government putting resources into educating and informing the public about the laws on corporal punishment, and campaigns to reduce family violence rarely seem to highlight the dangers of violence for children.

A recent review of the legislation (New Zealand Police, 2013) showed that in the period of the 11th review (December 2011 to June 2012), there were 355 child assault events attended by police. Police did not prosecute any 'smacking events' (but issued warnings in most cases). They prosecuted nine 'minor acts of physical discipline' which nearly all involved children being hit around the head or face – for example "Case three involved a father striking his two-three year-old daughter in the mouth with an open palm. He pled guilty and was convicted. His sentence was 12 months supervision" (p. 3).

Those convicted received suspended sentences, supervision orders, community work, or sentences 'to come up if called upon'; in one case referral to a violence intervention programme, and in another prosecution without conviction. Of the 252 parents of children who were assaulted (punishment resulting in an injury), 133 resulted in prosecution. While none of the reviews addressed the question of whether children were any better off under the new legislation, they showed clearly that there was no evidence of parents being criminalized.

Early Childhood Education: While the Labour-led Coalition Government had been committed to quality participation for all children, 100% qualified teachers, and funding driven by the costs of quality, the National Government's policies continue to emphasise containing cost, value for money, accountability and targeting. The 2010 budget announced that the government would cut the highest funding rate for centres with 100% trained staff. The Minister of Education, Anne Tolley, argued that there was no research to show that centres with 100% qualified teachers were better than those with 80% qualified teachers. She was unconvinced by arguments that all of the research showed that more qualified staff was associated with higher quality. The top funding rate now goes to centres with 80% of trained staff. This illustrates a significant policy shift which:

> … … undermines the universal tenets of ECEC funding formulae linked to affordability and access for all children, the costs of quality, and investment in the infrastructure of quality such as qualified teachers, professional development, curriculum and research. There has always been targeted funding for selected children, centres and services but it was on top of universal subsidies (May, 2013, p. 150).

Three professors of education, myself, Helen May and Margaret Carr warned in a press release that the government ran a great risk of undermining the quality of education in New Zealand by eroding reforms in the early childhood sector (Carr, May, & Smith, 2010). Helen May said:

> For some years New Zealand has been internationally regarded as a flagship in creating the necessary infrastructure of early childhood policy around issues of quality, qualifications, access and curriculum. There was still more to do, and the undermining of these policies is dispiriting, and even embarrassing, as there is continuing worldwide interest in our policy initiatives (Carr, May & Smith, 2010, p. 2).

We warned that in the media emphasis on the costs to parents, that the issue of quality was being ignored and that research showed that quality was what helped create good outcomes.

In 2010 the National government set up a Taskforce on ECE chaired by Michael Mintrom, an economist from University of Auckland (formerly from Treasury). The Taskforce, of which I was a member, was of a very different composition and process from previous policy groups I had been involved with. The EC Taskforce was focused on economic outcomes, efficiency, targeting, and accountability. A mantra runs through the report that policy design principles should:

- *respect fiscal constraints,*

- *ensure efficient use of government funds.*

- promote *fairness* both of access to services and educational outcomes

- *create a predictable environment for service providers*, and

- promote *administrative simplicity* and help achieve *low compliance costs*. (Emphasis in the original)

(Early Childhood Taskforce, 2011, p. 73)

Joce Nuttall (2013), said that the report showed "an intensification of the language of risk, performance

measurement and accountability", and that "the price of these initiatives also had to be paid, chiefly through a reduction in professional trust, and an increase in accountability and bureaucratic intervention that now seems commonplace" (p. 2).

There were some positive things in the 2011 report, such as arguments for investment in high quality ECE services, professional development, innovation, and integrated wrap-around services. The Taskforce, however, suggested a move towards targeted services and away from a universal funding model. If the recommendations are fully implemented (in a fiscally neutral environment), the provision of 20 hours of ECE (subsidised at the same rate as currently) for all three and four year-old children would be impossible. The recommendations suggested strongly differentiated payments for 'priority groups' – Māori, Pasifika, children from lower socioeconomic groups and children with special education needs. This would mean that families with non-priority children would have to pay more, resulting in a fall in overall participation rates.

I am not against additional funding for high priority groups, but such targeting should only occur against a backdrop of universal coverage. Rates of participation are currently increasing, but they would probably fall if there was targeting of ECE services – an outcome not desired by the government and also a move backwards from the trends in the OECD countries to provide at least two years of free ECE provision before children go to school. The National government, however, has stated that it will retain the 20 hours policy but it is so far unclear whether subsidies for some families will be decreased.

ECE policies have also been affected by the government's coercive approach to the treatment of welfare beneficiaries. In September 2012 the government announced that it would be compulsory for the children of welfare beneficiaries to attend early childhood centres for at least 15 hours a week from the age of three years of age. If parents do not comply, their welfare benefits will be halved (Bennett, 2013). Although there will be flexibility for social sector agency staff to work with parents to make suitable arrangements, the compulsory nature of the policy is worrying for ECE staff, and likely to disrupt the positive relationships between staff and parents.

Moreover it is unlikely that all beneficiary parents will have access to high quality early childhood services for their children in their local areas, since there is more availability of services in higher income areas. The policy of halving benefits would be likely to have a negative effect of children, as would participation in ECE that is not of high quality. Research generally shows that particularly for low-income children, participation in low or mediocre quality early education exacerbates rather than alleviates problems (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2007). These moves further confirm that children's rights are not a priority for the current government.

Since the National government took power in 2008 amidst a period of financial downturn, the fortunes of ECE are in a holding pattern and to some degree a decline. As usually happens in times of financial hardship, the rights of children are not prioritised. We are moving away from a rights based framework for early childhood policy towards targeting 'priority children'. The current government is intent on a pathway of "aligning political investment in ECEC with interventionist social strategies intended as a priority to redress the 'risks' created by 'vulnerable families and communities'" as opposed to a continuation of a policy of "viewing ECEC as a right for the young child citizen" (May, 2013, p. 166).

Conclusion

In 2011 the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child reported back on New Zealand's third and fourth report. The Committee expressed its concern that only 20 free hours of ECE were available and that there was limited access for many children. Unfortunately they did not address the issue that early childhood quality was being compromised by recent policies, but in my view there is ample evidence that this is the case.

Unfortunately there has been very little sign of any more positive progress towards recognising children's rights since my presentation in 2009. A concern for children's rights remains invisible within the current government policy initiatives.

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Culturally relevant assessment

Kaupapa Māori assessment in early childhood education[1]

Lesley Rameka

Tihei Mauriora! Ki te Whai-ao, ki te Ao-mārama.
Ka tu kei runga, ko wai koe?
Ko Tū, ko Rongo koe, ko Tāne koe.
Ko te manuhiri i ahu mai i Hawaiki, nau mai.

This sneeze is the sign of the new life, in this world.
And when you are mature, who shall you be?
You shall be Tū (god of war), Rongo (god of vegetation),
Tāne (god of man and forest).
To you who come from Hawaiki,
We welcome your presence.

(Marsden, 2003, p. 11)

This chant according to Māori tradition is part of the dedication used at the birth of Māui-tikitiki-a-Taranga, the demigod, ancestor superhero of the Pacific. It was also sometimes used to welcome visitors on to marae, linking the visitors with the spiritual world and powers of the Māori gods, Tūmatauenga, Rongomatāne and Tāne Mahuta and to Hawaiki, the spiritual Māori homeland. It also provides a model of the universe that dates back thousands of years (Shirres, 1997); a model made up of two intimately connected worlds: the spiritual and the material. These worlds are closely linked with activities in the everyday material world coming under the influence of and interpenetrated by spiritual powers (Reilly, 2004a; Shirres, 1997). Consequently people are connected with the universe, with the world of spiritual powers, the world of the gods.

Perceptions of reality, including what is viewed as real, probable and possible, relate to ideas of what reality is, including the way the world is structured, ways of knowing and being, and traditional experiences (Wearmouth, Glynn & Berryman, 2005). Furthermore, these views of reality permeate cultural narratives and logic and are the basis of worldviews.

Traditional Māori narratives are part of Māori symbolism, culture and worldviews. Walker (1978) claims that mythology can be likened to a mirror image of culture, reflecting the philosophy, norms and behavioural aspirations of people. According to Marsden (2003), traditional Māori narratives

such as the Māui narratives were deliberate constructs used by ancestors to condense their worldviews and ideas about reality. Narratives provided morals, values, ethics and formative elements that were central to the culture and that guided ways of being and interacting within the world.

This article will explore how the Māui narratives not only contribute to our perceptions as Māori in New Zealand society today, but can provide both a guide to understandings of being and interacting within the context of early childhood. It will also discuss the journey of the Best of Both Worlds Bilingual Preschool (BBW) in the development of their Māui assessment framework. The rationale for using the framework and the features of the framework will be explored, along with exemplars developed by the centre to reflect the framework.

Reconsidering assessment

Located in Papakura, South Auckland, BBW serviced a low socio-economic community with a high population of Māori and Pacific Islands families. The founders of the centre were frustrated at the rate of Māori educational underachievement that they were witnessing, especially within South Auckland, and they established the centre in 1995 with the specific goal of supporting children to achieve academically in the New Zealand education system. They believed that by exposing children to the 'best of both worlds', including all aspects of Māori worlds and western worlds, children would be better prepared to succeed in the education system, or in spite of the education system.

Prior to 2002, BBW was using a variety of assessment approaches, borrowed from other centres, aimed at measuring skills, finding gaps and filling them. The supervisor (Ruth) stated that the assessments had little fit or coherence with the service philosophy and were being completed primarily to meet the requirements of outside agencies such as the Education Review Office and Ministry of Education (MoE), rather than to highlight children's learning for educators, whānau and children.

In 2002, BBW began work on the MoE-funded project: *Kei Tua o te Pae* (Ministry of Education, 2005). It aimed at supporting teachers to develop practices that incorporated

assessment and quality learning experiences. Ruth reported that participating in the project:

> ... made us look at assessment and how we do things. It was one thing to do observations but looking at the continual picture and where to from here really made us reassess our way of assessment.

A year later in 2003, work began on *Te Whatu Pōkeka* (Ministry of Education, 2009). This MoE-funded project focused on developing a professional support assessment resource for Māori early childhood services that would validate Māori values, philosophies and practices, and explore cultural contexts and methodologies.

According to Ruth, working on the *Te Whatu Pōkeka* project made them realise that they were, in fact, not 'the norm' and that it was important to express and reflect this difference in their assessment practices:

> First we did the [Kei Tua o Te Pae] project ... but I felt as though it was just really conforming to what was already out there and just using their guidelines like the learning stories ... [Te Whatu Pōkeka] was a chance for us to see ... to put in our assessment ... what we believed and what is ... not so much the norm.

For teachers at BBW, participation in these assessment projects allowed them to take another look at their assessment rationales and processes, including the exploration of what kaupapa Māori assessment meant for them as individuals and as a team. This process required reflection on what made them Māori, what made them different to mainstream centres, and how this was and could be reflected in the centre.

As 'being Māori' relates to 'who one is', it was not easy to separate this from 'what one does'. Nor was it simple to differentiate Māori early childhood practice from generic early childhood practice. The process required exploration and articulation of what the centre did that was specifically Māori, what elements expressed and reflected 'being Māori', and dialogue on why these practices, routines and understandings were important to 'being Māori'. According to Ruth, they realised:

> .... there's a very big difference between European culture and our culture, what is acceptable and what is not acceptable. We are very different.

Recognition of what made them Māori, what they valued, how they viewed the world and how this was reflected in centre practice and assessment processes, was key to the development of understandings. A further realisation was that Māori assessment did not have to parallel Pākehā or western assessment; that it was acceptable to be different, that, in fact, difference was crucial if it was to fit with or make sense to Māori.

Assessment frames

Over the research period, BBW explored a number of assessment framings, all of which were derived from strong Māori philosophical and epistemological foundations. These framings included:

- Mapping the development of mana, aimed at supporting and enhancing the inherent power of the child, in order for them to succeed and achieve.

- Tāne and baskets of knowledge, related to 'levels of engagement' and how to cater for children who were interested in delving deeper into specific areas or activities.

- Ngā Atua Māori, focused on how the characteristics of each atua could be utilised to assess children's learning. This framework required that kaiako [teachers] examine each atua and flesh out aspects that related to valued learning for children.

In early 2005, Māui emerged as a focus of interest. The service had for many years viewed Māui as a mentor, an inspiration for the service practice and operation, and teachers were able to articulate their understandings of how Māui's characteristics could be utilised in assessing teaching and learning. What became clear from the work was that the answers to their questions on assessment framings were already part of kaiako thinking and had been all along. What was needed was a reimagining of that thinking in terms of assessment.

The articulation of Māui-tikitiki-a-Taranga as an assessment frame involved exploration and interpretation of his characteristics. It also involved trial and error, ongoing discussion with community, whānau and knowledgeable others, and further research. Ruth recalled:

> Once we realised we used Māui continuously we then started defining what Māui meant to us as a mentor. His characteristics were what we strived to encourage or facilitate in our children.

Māui's place as mentor and inspiration for centre practice and operation was cemented.

Māui-tikitiki-a-Taranga

Māui-tikitiki-a-Taranga was the ancestor hero, known throughout Polynesia. He was, according to Walker (1990), the most important cultural hero in Māori mythology. His significance comes initially from his birth circumstances and then from his subsequent accomplishments. In Māori hierarchical society where social status was bound by birth order, Māui, the youngest of five brothers, was inherently low in status - Māui-pōtiki (youngest child).

However, through his resourcefulness, adventurousness and determination, Māui was able to overcome this disadvantage and become a model and benefactor for humanity. He was the prototype culture hero who overcame disadvantages and barriers to achieve fame and prestige. He served as a model, characterising personal qualities and traits valued in Māori society:

Māui-mohio (great knowledge),

Māui-atamai (quick-wittedness),

Māui-toa (bravery).

According to Walker (1990), "He was quick, intelligent, bold, resourceful, cunning and fearless, epitomising the basic personality structures idealised by Māori society" (p. 15).

Maui was also a trickster who used deception to achieve many of his accomplishments. This is where he derived his names:

> Māui-nukurau (trickster)
>
> Māui-tinihanga (of many devices).

Māui assessment framework

Best of Both Worlds Bilingual Preschool developed an outline of the theoretical framework for assessment focusing on Māori understandings, Māui narratives and children's learning and development. This assessment framework includes the following values, attributes and characteristics:

- *mana*: identity, pride, inner strength, self assurance, confidence

- *manaakitanga*: caring, sharing, kindness, friendship, love, nurturance

- *whanaungatanga*: developing relationships, taking responsibility for oneself and others

- *whakatoi*: cheekiness, spiritedness, displaying and enjoying humour, having fun

- *rangatiratanga*: confidence, self reliance, leadership, standing up for oneself, perseverance, determination, working through difficulty

- *tinihanga*: cunningness, trickery, deception, testing limits, challenging, questioning, curiosity, exploring, risk taking, lateral thinking.

Mana

Mana can be translated as 'prestige, power, or reputation', but, it also has a deeper meaning of 'spiritual power and authority'. Mana is inherited from tūpuna [ancestors], however, until it is actioned, it is only potential power (Hemara, 2000; Marsden, 2003; Metge, 1995). Mana is accrued and actioned through one's service to whānau, hapū, and iwi (Keelan & Wood, 2006).

It could however be lost, thus great care was taken to ensure that children's spirits were never broken, and that children had every opportunity to assert themselves within and across the wider extended whānau (Hemara, 2000). *Te Whāriki* affirms the importance of mana, stating:

> Ko te whakatipu i te mana o te mokopuna te tino taumata hei whainga mā tātou. / *Enhancing the power/ status of the child is the highest objective for us all* (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 32).

So Māui-pōtiki (youngest child), being the last born of five brothers, was inherently low both in status and in the family hierarchy. Through his deeds he was able to acquire mana and serve his community. This not only provides a model for younger siblings to follow if they dare, if they have the required qualities and abilities to aspire to leadership roles in the community, but it also highlights the importance of mana acquisition to the community (Walker, 1990).

For BBW, the enhancement of each child's mana was fundamental to the centre's philosophy and aspirations of addressing Māori educational underachievement. The expression and assertion of mana included standing up for oneself and others (being courageous), confidently stating ideas and thinking, and having a positive view of others and one's own: abilities, views, relationships, and place in the world. For this to happen children needed to know 'who they were and where they belong', and acknowledge and respect this in others.

Manaakitanga

Manaaki is derived from the word 'mana.' Manaaki can be translated as "to entertain or befriend, to show respect or kindness" (Patterson, 1992, p. 148). Hirini (1997) links identity with the kinship group, referring to the Māori view of self as fundamentally non-individualistic. Manaaki denotes what the social group members owe each other in feeling and displaying love and affection, giving and helping (Patterson, 1992; Rameka, 2007).

Māui's feats can be seen as a quest for mana. More importantly, his feats benefit humanity through sharing with his human descendants. For example he obtained the secret jawbone of his ancestress Muriranga-whenua, thus providing humanity with the important knowledge of bone weapons and

An aspect of Maui: Is manaakitanga evident here?

An aspect of Maui: Is rangatiratanga evident here?

fish-hooks and he fished up Te Ika a Māui (the North Island). These deeds supported and provided sustenance for his people (Keelan & Woods, 2006; Walker, 1978), and were acts of manaakitanga.

Manaakitanga for BBW is reflected in behaviours that reflect the mana inherent within each person. It includes showing respect and kindness to others, caring, sharing and being a friend. It requires that children develop empathy and connectedness with others, social and communal identities, and understandings of roles and responsibilities associated with those identities.

Whanaungatanga

The whānau (extended family) is the basic social unit of Māori society, the inner circle of kinship, the smallest unit of societal organisation (Reilly 2004b). Whanaungatanga (kinship) comes from the word whānau and refers to the way Māori view, maintain and strengthen whānau relations. It involves rights, responsibilities, obligations and commitments among members that generate whānau cohesion and cooperation.

In Māori society, where being surrounded by whānau was considered the natural way of being, a person without whānau/family was viewed as an aberration, outside the bounds of normal human life (Reilly, 2004b). It is understandable therefore that Māui, a miscarried child cast into the sea by his mother, would make it his mission to find and reconnect with his whānau.

BBW recognised that assessment approaches must support the connectedness of the child as a central being embedded within whānau [family], the visible and invisible worlds, the living and dead. This idea strongly links the child with his or her whānau, hapū [extended family], iwi [tribe], history, whakapapa [geneology] and identity (Hemara, 2000). Children's self-esteem is, therefore, not a matter for the individual. Rather, it depends on positive relationships with others, and it is reflected in the way children develop and maintain kinship relationships, take responsibility for themselves and others, and connect with others.

Written by Parewai's mother, the following story highlights how children are able to express whanaungatanga and manaakitanga, and nurture the mana of others, by taking

responsibility for another's wellbeing. Despite their young ages, these two children are able to ask for and receive compassion, empathy and reassurance:

Kaua e haere, Paawai! / *Don't go, Paawai!*
Today when I went to pick up Parewai (aged 2 years 4 months) from kōhanga [Maori 'language nest'], we were walking out the gate towards the car, and Tū (same age), began calling out "Kaua haere Paawai, kaua haere [Don't go Parewai, don't go]". She was holding onto the bars of the gate with her face between two bars as if in jail. She looked very sad and Parewai went back. They touched hands affectionately and talked quietly, face to face. This went on for a few minutes, then, Parewai turned to leave. Tū called out again "Kaua haere, Paawai" and again Parewai turned back. The talking and touching took place again and finally Tū said "See ya". Parewai replied "See ya" and both went happily their different ways.

It was amazing to see the affection, and caring these two girls had for each other. I was very touched to see my baby being so loving towards her hoa [friend].

- **Manaakitanga:** Parewai acknowledges and is respectful of Tū's feelings and takes responsibility for her friend's wellbeing.

- **Mana:** Parewai's action not only acknowledges Tū's mana but also reflects her own 'mana' and understandings of manaakitanga.

- **Whanaungatanga:** Parewai has developed a strong relationship with Tū and therefore has a commitment to her friend.

Whakatoi and whakakata

Whakatoi can be translated as 'cheeky', 'annoying' or 'teasing'. Whakataka can be translated as 'to make people laugh'. These characteristics can be understood more clearly when we look at traditional Māori childrearing practices. Children were the centre of attention and affection, often indulged, fed on demand, undisciplined and wilful. Traditionally it was important that children assert themselves and the mana of their whānau. Children were therefore encouraged to be spirited, and chastisement was very rarely condoned.

Māui was the youngest of the family, the pōtiki. Pōtiki held a special status in traditional Māori society. They were considered taonga [treasures] and were often the favoured, more indulged, precocious child. When Māui reunited with his mother, she treated him as the most favoured child.

An aspect of Maui: Is tinihanga evident here?

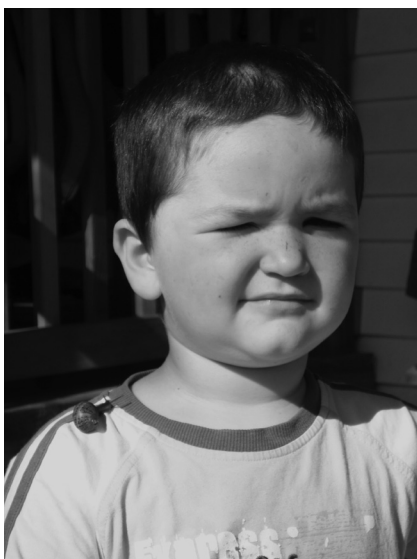**An aspect of Maui: Is whakatoi evident here?**

The following exemplar describes Te Hirea (4 ½ years), Dujournae (2 years), and Ariana (2 years 3 months). It was written by a teacher at BBW and illustrates how whanaungatanga roles and responsibilities are enacted, or more precisely, attempt to be enacted, in the centre. It also highlights the spirited Māori child, the confident cheeky child:

These babies don't whakarongo! *These babies don't listen!*
Today Te Hirea asked if she could be my helper/kaiawhina with the younger children for the nappy changes and I agreed. We held hands as we walked to the changing area, four children and Te Hirea, the helper. All the children sat down awaiting their turn to change. While I was changing the first child, I heard Te Hirea say "E noho darling, darling whakarongo, titiro ki a Ariana" [Sit down, darling. Listen. Look at Ariana]. After a few more tries at getting the children to sit, Te Hirea pointed at Dujournae and in a stern voice said "E noho or turu kino!" [Sit down or naughty seat!].

I finished the change and quickly stepped in because Dujournae was becoming quite unhappy, saying, "Whaea [Aunty] Estelle will take over now". I did have a laugh to myself but laughed even more when Te Hirea put her hands on her hips and said "Whaea, these babies don't whakarongo [listen]. Can Ihipera (another child) help you tomorrow?".

- **Whanaungatanga:** Despite the difficulties, Te Hirea takes on her tuakana responsibilities with enthusiasm and authority even in the face of perceived 'disobedience' from the babies.

- **Whakatoi:** Te Hirea displays spiritedness and a touch of cheekiness in her ability to clearly articulate what she will and will not agree to. The above also exemplifies confidence and self-assurance characteristics associated with **rangatiratanga**.

Rangatiratanga

Rangatira is a term for 'leader' or 'chief'. Rangatiratanga can be translated as chieftainship and encapsulates many of the Māori virtues, aspirations and human possibilities including ideas of beauty, strength and courage (Patterson, 1992). Although not born into the rangatira role, through his deeds and accomplishments Māui was able to meet these responsibilities. Keelan & Wood (2006) propose a model of leadership based on Māui's adventurous spirit, his observation skills, and ability to plan and reflect on outcomes. In this model, leadership is a combination of:

- having an adventurous spirit that takes advantage of opportunities;

- possessing an ability to observe, plan, work hard and learn; and

- accepting a responsibility to nurture, mentor, share and be grateful.

These rangatira qualities contribute to BBW's assessment framework. They illustrate valued learning for Māori while providing social prescriptions for model behaviour.

Tinihanga

Oral literature contains many examples of the use of deceit and trickery to attain important knowledge and skills. For example:

Ko te tui whakapahuhu a Kahukura. *There is the slip-knot of Kahukura's string* (Karetu, 1987, cited in Patterson, 1992, p. 59).

This whakatauakī [proverb] relates to how a man uses a slip-knot that comes undone to delay events in order to discover the secret of how to make fishing nets. In this way the use of trickery and deceit is commended as a way of gaining important knowledge and information (Patterson, 1992). Walker (1978) states that trickery is not only about gaining knowledge, it is more importantly about achieving outcomes that are socially acceptable. Deceit and trickery are acceptable if they result in gaining mana. The intention, whether good or bad, is not of importance.

Māui was the arch trickster, which is a key element to his achievements (Patterson, 1992), which include, obtaining the secret of fire from another ancestress, concealing himself to trick his brothers and trying to pass through the body of Hine-nui-te-pō while she is asleep, to conquer death.

Cunning and resourcefulness were, therefore, valued and key

An aspect of Maui: Is mana evident here?

An aspect of Maui: Is whanaungatanga evident here?

to acquiring knowledge and achieving desired outcomes. It was vital that children gain the knowledge and skills required for life, such as ingenuity, resourcefulness, lateral thinking, cunning and, sometimes, a modicum of deception. These qualities indicate depth of thinking and reflection, the ability to forward plan with an emphasis on possible and probably outcomes, an understanding of human nature including emotions and social conventions, strategic positioning and the ability to utilise resources.

The following exemplar considers the efforts and achievements of George, a child aged one year eight months. Written a BBW staff member, it reflects a rich, competent child who displays determination, problem-solving skills, persistence and strength of character, all characteristics of a great chief.

Tumeke George! / *Awesome George!*
George was playing with a toy in his area with his friends. He then turned around and threw it over the gate into the babies' area. He tried to climb up over the gate, tried to unlock the gate, he kicked the gate, and then tried to crawl under the gate. He wanted his toy one way or the other. After being unsuccessful at getting the gate opened George then lay on his stomach and pulled himself under the gate using his arms. It took George a couple of minutes to get in the baby area but he finally did it with a big smile on his face. He picked up his toy, looked at it for a bit, then threw it back over the gate to his area. George then got back on his stomach again and crawled back under the gate. George then picked up his toy on the other side and started playing with it, showing all his friends. The look on George's face when he had retrieved his toy was as though George had just climbed a mountain.

- **Rangatiratanga:** George displays wonderful perseverance and determination to retrieve his toy. George is able to work through the difficulty of retrieving his toy. He attempts a number of strategies before achieving his goal. Lateral thinking.

- **Tinihanga:** George takes a risk and succeeds in his chosen task. Tumeke [fantastic] George!

- **Mana:** George is so proud of his achievement. His smile is a mile wide. He rangatira mō āpōpō tēnei! [A chief of tomorrow!].

Final comments

The Māui narratives contribute to our perceptions of Māori in New Zealand society today, and can provide legitimate pathways for future schooling change and development. They provide a culturally authentic way to re-orientate and interact within the world, as Māori. For BBW, Māui is a mentor, an inspirational being whose characteristics can be emulated to support Māori children's educational success. Assessment for BBW is contingent on recognising and further supporting Māui characteristics in children. Children have Māui characteristics and abilities within them, and it is our responsibility to nurture these wondrous superhero qualities, to celebrate and honour our children and ensure their potential is realised in what the future holds.

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Through their lens

Politics and complexities of infants and toddlers in childcare[1]

Janis Carroll-Lind

The Children's Commissioner has a statutory responsibility to inquire into and report on any matter that relates to the welfare of children. He or she must form views independent of Government and the government then has a legal obligation to listen to those views.

In 2011 the Office of the Children's Commissioner (OCC) released its report entitled: *Through their lens: An inquiry into non-parental education and care of infants and toddlers* (Carroll-Lind & Angus, 2011). At the time, Dr John Angus was the Children's Commissioner and I was the OCC's Principal Advisor, Education.

We prioritised this inquiry for three reasons:

1. How we care for under two-year-olds in New Zealand has been changing quite rapidly in the past few years, with much greater use being made of formal education and care services (rather than parental and informal care). For the first time formal childcare services was growing fastest for under two-year-olds and a change of this magnitude merited investigation.

2. There has been considerable debate in research and academic circles about the impact of childcare on infants and toddlers. This is part of the context in which many parents are making decisions about when to return to paid work and what care arrangements to make. It was important for there to be soundly based information about it.

3. The discourse around formal childcare contains many adult voices and adult interests: those of parents, providers, professionals, politicians. There is always a risk in such situations that the perspectives and interests of children will be crowded out to the periphery. As the OCC is an independent advocate for children, it was important for its inquiry to examine the policies and practices through the lens of children's interests, rights and well-being (as opposed to parents' financial and career aspirations or the government's aim to get women into the workforce).

The following discussion covers the findings of this research inquiry about the sorts of policies and practices that are in the best interests of infants and toddlers.

Policy, regulations and funding

Policy and regulatory settings in Aotearoa New Zealand are complex, with some incoherence across policies and regulatory regimes. Of particular relevance to infants and toddlers is the paid parental leave policy. As an example of policy incoherence, its development and implementation seems quite separate from early childhood policy. Similarly, public health issues are separate from issues of educational development.

New Zealand's early childhood services (ECS) are characterised by their diversity in ownership, service and management structures and philosophical approaches. There is also a complicated, interacting mix of licensing, regulation, monitoring and funding incentives, all of which have an influence on services.

In respect of funding, and government funding in particular, the inquiry identified childcare subsidies going well into mid-ranges of family incomes. Early childhood funding is political. Compared to many other countries, New Zealand has quite limited and inflexible paid parental leave provisions.

At the time of the inquiry, over 80% of early childhood centres' funding came from Government. Centre-based subsidies are not means tested but they are substantial, and at the time of this inquiry were meeting over 50% of the actual costs in centre-based care.

Amounts paid by parents in fees, according to the Statistics New Zealand Survey (2010) were mostly below $100 per week, although some parents pay much more if their children are attending ECS full-time.

Policy settings in ECS provision

There are some important policy settings that make the provision of early childhood education (ECE) in New Zealand quite distinct from other countries. Early childhood education is not compulsory but the government strategy is to increase participation of three and four-year-olds. This non-compulsory aspect means that there are always debates

as to how much the government should contribute to ECE.

Education and care is provided by non-governmental organisations and not directly by the State. This has helped to sustain the considerable diversity that is a feature of New Zealand's early childhood sector and is consistent with the value attached to parental choice.

Non-government provision contains some elements of market provision. A consequence of this has been that the corporate sector has had the best capacity to fund the building of new centres, bringing a growth in the proportion of commercial services. Early childhood services vary in ownership, governance and commercial purpose and government is agnostic to those variables.

This country has a 'user pays' system but a heavy government subsidy, resulting in a complicated mixture of subsidies and fees, in which fees operate for many as a 'top up' to the subsidy. This means that:

(1) the government subsidy is effectively to the provider and is not transparent to the user (the parent), or available to them to use in other ways, which is not uncommon in subsidised services; and

(2) the amount paid by parents in fees is very visible and also the subject of political debate. Dropping the word 'free' from the '20 hours free ECE' policy signalled that the National government saw parent contributions as vital to providing ECE in the future.

There is extensive regulation but relatively light monitoring of ECE services. Government (via the Ministry of Education) regulates provision. Despite its breadth this regulation is not particularly heavy in many areas. Regulations set minimum standards to ensure basic levels of quality. The structure and nature of services means the government has to provide incentives and rely on providers to make the desired changes. Relicensing provisions have been relaxed and the public health monitoring regime is variable.

Finally, the traditional focus of the early childhood sector has been on the education of three and four-year-olds through a well-respected curriculum and teacher qualifications. Having so many infants and toddlers enrolled in ECS is a relatively recent phenomenon.

The OCC report concludes that paying attention to the interests and wellbeing of infants and toddlers is a little underdone in the current New Zealand policy, regulatory and practice settings around parent support and early education and care. Furthermore there is an obligation under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC) to take account of the best interests of the under-2s attending formal ECS.

The recommendations in the report set out a pathway to remedying this in order to achieve change.

Key policy implications

Internationally, New Zealand has been envied for its

How does national policy privilege the well-being and belonging of very young children?

"integrated and coherent national approach to funding, regulation, curriculum and qualifications" (Moss, 2007, p. 33). Nevertheless Joy Cullen (2008) warns that "the positive international image early childhood education in New Zealand now promotes does not, however, negate the responsibility of policy makers, practitioners and academics to ask the hard questions about the outcomes of a publicly-funded early childhood education system" (p. 1).

Focusing on the interests of infants and toddlers does in itself have implications for policy. The key policy implications of the inquiry's findings are:

(1) Policies that support parental care in the first 12 months of life

Long periods in childcare in the first few months of life, while not necessarily harmful, are not optimal. Questions remain as to the potential risks for under-1s if they experience many hours in formal ECS or changing patterns in their care (Rutter, 2008). This suggests that policies should support parental care as much, if not more, than non-parental care.

Current policy settings in New Zealand have been influenced by goals of increasing the labour force participation of women and increasing their access to childcare. Many parents interviewed for this inquiry felt they did not have a choice about returning early to work, or

that their choice was very constrained and determined by factors other than their preference. Proposals to extend paid parental leave have been rejected by Government because of the costs involved. However, increased use of childcare for infants also has cost implications for government because of the very high levels of subsidy (direct, such as through the Working for Families funding; and indirect via childcare subsidy).

It would be in the best interests of infants for some work to be done from a child's perspective on the cost and benefits of support, covering support for paid leave and for parental and non-parental care, and seeing the two provisions as complementary contributions to an infant's development.

(2) Policy settings that allow for flexible use of formal early childhood services for under-2s

Supporting the use of quality education and care for optimal infant and toddler development and learning requires policy, regulatory and funding settings that allow for and encourage flexibility in service provision. Ideally infants and toddlers should be able to access services that fit their needs, for as long as is useful, and on as many days of the week as is appropriate. It is hard to accommodate such flexibility in the real world of service provision, where providers need to juggle enrolment-driven funding streams with less flexible staff costs.

This inquiry found evidence of reductions in flexibility. The rigidities were related to:

• waiting lists and supply side pressures that limited flexibility in starting dates;

• regulatory regimes that had providers move from sessional to all day provision; and

• funding regimes which incentivised providers to stipulate minimum periods of usage and to offer special deals for longer care.

These findings prompted the recommendation that the policy, regulatory and funding structures for infant and toddler service provision be reviewed for their impact on flexible access to services.

(3) Policies and regulatory settings that support quality provisions

The importance of the quality of service for infants and toddlers was a key finding of this inquiry. Several aspects of quality were identified that are directly subject to policy and regulatory settings and to funding structures: group size, ratios, teacher qualifications and physical surroundings (e.g. space and noise).

Of concern is that some of those regulated minimum standards were found to be set too low in aspects of service quality for infants and toddlers. Currently there are no regulations at all around group size in New Zealand, yet the research literature is clear that small group sizes are a vital element of quality care (Dalli et al., 2010; Goelman et al., 2006; Lally, 2009, Munton et al., 2002). It is how the under-2s are grouped within the early childhood centre that makes a difference to quality. Less is best and the younger the child, the smaller the group should be (with six being identified in the literature as the most ideal number). The politics of reducing compliance by removing regulations such as the maximum number of children allowed on one license on one site raises further concerns around group size and the subsequent risk to quality.

What is important is the relationship between the quality of service provision and the *interaction* between registration, regulations and funding structures. Licensing and regulations prescribe a base standard but they are minimum standards only. It is primarily the responsibility of the sector, or the private contract between parents and centres to ensure the health and safety and other standards of their children. In other words, these structural conditions simply set the minimum benchmark and in some instances, our minimum standards do not compare favourably with those of other countries.

(4) Policies that support the provision of a knowledgeable and skilled workforce

To mitigate the risks that arise from their vulnerability and stage of development and learning requires knowledgeable and skilled staff to work with the under-2s.

Again, New Zealand has a complicated set of regulations and funding incentives to achieve this policy goal of knowledgeable and qualified staff. Issues have arisen about the nature of the qualifications. For example:

• minimum qualifications and professional learning of home-based educators,

• meagre infant-toddler content in some initial teacher education programmes,

• the extent to which qualified staff are necessary to meet quality standards, and

• the distribution of qualified staff within a service providing for under 2-year-olds and over 2-year-olds.

Current regulations require 50% of staff to be qualified, registered teachers. This inquiry found evidence that many mixed-age centres are deploying their qualified teachers to work with the older children, leaving the infants and toddlers to be cared for by unqualified staff.

The decision to move away from fully subsidising up to 100% qualified staff, and to cap it at 80% has engendered a heated debate within the sector, driven by concerns that it will increase fees to parents and/or have providers reducing the quality of service.

Key practice implications

(1) Quality education and care

Currently there are challenges in how to maintain the emphasis on quality that has been such a feature of the history of New Zealand's early childhood sector. Important for all age groups, the provision of quality education and care for under-2s is critical because of its fundamental period in a child's development. High quality infant and toddler childcare supports learning and development, whereas poor quality can undermine it.

Structural and regulatory elements are not necessarily indicators of quality by themselves. Rather, they set up the conditions for quality practice (Goelman et al., 2006). Nor does quality provision depend on any one theoretical position, provided the practices are good (Penn, 2009). While many elements of practice contribute to successful learning and development, it is the interrelationship between those elements that underpins the quality of the education and care provisions.

The OCC report identified eight interrelated structural and process dimensions that underpin quality education and care provisions for infants and toddlers:

- high adult to child ratios,

- small group sizes,

- staff qualifications and skills,

- positive and responsive care relationships,

- superior environments,

- parent involvement,

- attention to health and safety requirements, and

- effective pedagogy through a socially, culturally, and developmentally appropriate curriculum are all important elements of a quality service.

Similar to other research studies (e.g., ERO, 2010; Mitchell & Brooking, 2007; Podmore & Meade, 2000; Rockel, 2010; Smith, 1999; Wylie, Thompson, & Kerslake Hendricks, 1996), this inquiry found the quality of early childhood services to be variable, with evidence of both high quality and poor quality ECS for infants and toddlers.

Findings indicate that practice needs to give greater attention to the specific interests and needs of the many new infant and toddler users of early childhood education and care. Three particular aspects requirements stood out:

- more emphasis on responsive caregiving;

- more attention to specific knowledge, skills and professional learning about infants and toddlers; and

- greater attention to managing the health interests of infants and toddlers. These implications will be discussed in turn.

(2) Practices that enhance responsive education and care

Anne Smith (1999) reports that the 'people component' affects quality, thus dynamic variables such as expressiveness and sensitivity of staff (i.e., relationship aspects) have a major impact on quality. The quality of relationships can ameliorate the elevated risks around brain development and attachment for infants and toddlers.

Responsive caregiving is known to be a key element of quality, yet this concept is not always well understood. Nor does the 'primary care system' terminology align well with some ECS. Whether the environment is individualistic or collectivist, it is critical that responsive interactions occur in ways that support infants and toddlers to form healthy attachments.

(3) Education and professional learning that increases knowledge about and skilled work with infants and toddlers

The majority of early childhood professionals (teachers, teacher educators and early childhood researchers) who participated in the inquiry reported a lack of infant and toddler content in many initial teacher education (ITE) programmes. The fastest growth area in ECS is in under-2 enrolments, however, there has not been a corresponding shift in the content of those programmes, with most of the curriculum content still pitched at three and four-year-olds.

Many teachers revealed they had had no practicum or prior experience before working in the under-2 area. There was a call for core content to include

- how infants develop and learn;

- assessment of health indicators;

- early intervention including identification of potential developmental delay and disability.

There was widespread support for all teachers employed in the under-2 area to have professional development on working with infants and toddlers and for the introduction of postgraduate papers and qualifications on infant-toddler specialisation. There was also support for reviewing home-based regulations to increase levels of support for educators' skills and knowledge.

(4) Better management of the health related interests of infants and toddlers

A key finding was the call from both the health and early childhood professionals for a better overlap between health and education in relation to policy development, regulation and operational planning. Participating teachers expressed anxiety at having to diagnose illness in infants and because of the overwhelming support for health professionals to

work more closely with educators, taking a multidisciplinary and integrated services approach makes sense.

Findings from this inquiry indicate that without policies and practices to mitigate risks, the health and wellbeing of infants and toddlers could be compromised in formal ECS. Disease transmission and exposure to infection from both viruses and bacteria is a significant health issue in New Zealand's ECS and of particular concern for under two-year-olds, and in particular, infants less than 12 months old because of their under-developed immune systems. Poor quality environments in terms of hygiene, space, temperature and noise bring added health risks to infants and toddlers (Bedford & Sutherland, 2008). To change hygiene behaviour, it is necessary to examine the practices because the increased vulnerability and risks faced by the growing number of infants using childcare underscores the need for greater monitoring of how well services are mitigating risks.

Conclusion

While formal non-parental education and care does take account of the interests of infants and toddlers (provided it is of good quality and risks are well managed), this should be better reflected in current policies, regulations, and practices that support both parental care and non-parental education and care. The Office of the Children's Commissioner's report concluded that parents and early childhood services require more support for parental care of those under 12 months, some tightening up of important quality standards in the provision of formal non-parental care for infants and toddlers, and greater attention to the knowledge and skills and professional learning of those who work with under 2-year-olds. Our youngest citizens deserve no less.

Ahakoa he iti, he pounamu (All be it small, it is a treasure).

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Hanging on to hope in troubled times

Ethics of care as foundation for pedagogies of relationality[1]

Jenny Ritchie

As a multiplicity of environmental concerns emerge with increasing frequency and intensity, our awareness of the seriousness of the climate crisis deepens. On a daily basis as we witness the increasingly devastating effects of cyclones, droughts, huge floods and bushfires, along with ocean acidification, ozone depletion, freshwater shortages, species habitat destruction and extinction, chemical pollution, resource depletion, and earthquakes; the repercussion of which are exacerbating the impact on communities of the inequity of resource distribution, poverty, and war.

Our reaction to this overwhelming onslaught might be to retreat into our supposedly safe domain as early childhood education practitioners and academics, feel a sense of powerlessness, dismissing these 'matters of concern' (Latour, 2004).

Drawing from recent research, this paper focuses on pedagogical strategies to strengthen our relationality as global citizens, in both human and more-than-human realms. These strategies are founded in an ethic of care along with Māori concepts such as *arohatanga, kaitiakitanga, manaakitanga* and *wairuatanga*.

Early childhood care and education

Almost 30 years ago, Carol Gilligan (1982) described how ethics of justice, care and nonviolence involve the notion of care for self and a recognition that interconnection enables relationality to transcend perceived differentials in 'power', inherent in "the vision that everyone will be responded to and included, that no one will be left alone or hurt" (p. 63). She saw the self and other as interdependent, and that "life, however valuable in itself, can only be sustained by care in relationships" (p. 127).

Laurent Daloz (1990) built on this notion of caring for the self as intrinsic to caring for others. For Daloz, "good teaching lies in a willingness to attend and care for what happens in our students, ourselves, and the space

between us. Good teaching. . . is a stance of receptivity, of attunement, of listening". He wrote that "If learning is about growth and growth is about trust, then teaching is about engendering trust, about nurturance, caring for growth. Teaching is thus preeminently an act of care" (Daloz, 1990, p. 237). Since the growth of trust diminishes "the need to protect a mask, each can afford to hear the other more fully and can learn more deeply. Thus the relationship becomes the caring context for the dialectic, the culture out of which a transforming synthesis can spring" (p. 183).

In exploring an ethic of care, Nel Noddings (1995/2007) argued for this fundamental principle: "Always act so as to establish, maintain, or enhance caring relations" (p. 188). For Noddings, dialogue is the medium for enactment of ethical relationality. "In addition to showing what it means to care, we engage our students in dialogue about caring. On one level, dialogue is such an essential part of caring that we could not model caring without engaging in it". Further, she said that "Children need to *participate in caring* [my italics] with adult models who show them how to care, talk with them about the difficulties and rewards of such work, and demonstrate in their own work that caring is important" (Noddings, 1995, p. 191). Noddings positions an ethic of care as central to relationality with Others who are different to ourselves: "In both the ethic of alterity and the ethic of care, we seek to enhance the other's growth, but we do not threaten the other's Otherness, and we do not define for another exactly what he or she must do or be" (p. 196). "The ethic of care binds carers and cared-fors in relationships of mutual responsibility" (Noddings, 1995, p. 190). This sits in marked in contrast to the prevailing individualism of Western capitalistic endeavor. For Noddings, "a major aim of the ethic of care is to prevent the very separation that induces the dualisms exploiter/exploited, oppressor/ oppressed, moral agent/object, and so on" (Noddings, 1995, p. 190). She invites a critical approach which "encourages us to stay in touch with our own feelings and accept our embodied condition" (p. 195), as we simultaneously strive to recognize, non-judgmentally, the emotionality of the

Other. This is a relationality that is truly alive in responsive engagement between self and Other. This is also the reason why I choose to use the phrase 'early childhood *care* and education', re-validating care as central to our professional practice as teachers (Dalli, 2006).

Notions of care are intrinsic to Māori conceptualizations such as *aroha, manaakitanga, wairuatanga* and *kaitiakitanga*, which recognise our interdependence and interconnectedness as planetary cousins, along with trees, birds, insects, fish and other living creatures, fellow descendants of Papatuanuku and Ranginui, the Earth Mother and Sky Father. Rangimarie Rose Pere defines *aroha* as the commitment of people related though common ancestry; loyalty; obligation; an inbuilt support system; stability; self-sufficiency; and spiritual protection (Pere, 1982).

Māori, like other Indigenous peoples (Rose, 2002) have unique philosophies of sustainability located in place (Penetito, 2009). In offering *manaakitanga,* one's mana is upheld through demonstrating care for others. *Wairuatanga* recognises the spiritual realm, and the interconnectedness of humans and the more-than-human within this. *Kaitiakitanga* is the obligation to actively care for the earth, sky, rivers, lakes, forests, wetlands and oceans and all co-habitants of these domains.

Responses to the current ecological crises might include a Western shift to similar forms of bioregional sustainabilities as were/are practiced by Māori and other Indigenous peoples. Bioregionalism is defined by Plant (1991) as "learning to become native to place, fitting ourselves to a particular place, not fitting a place to our pre-determined tastes. It is living within the limits and the gifts provided by a place, creating a way of life that can be passed on to future generations" (p. 216).

Edward Said also called for an "ethic of global caring" (1993, p. 21), and twenty years later, we saw the global 'Occupy' movement provide an example of this, as people reacted to the hugely inequitable distribution of economic resources being exacerbated by the greed of late neoliberal capitalism (D'Annibale & McLaren, 2009). In *Culture and imperialism*, his expose of the "hegemony of imperial ideology", Said (1993) called for "critical awareness of the embeddedness of this legacy in our academic canons and their complicity in maintaining hegemonic consent to imperialism" (p. 12). In this country, since 1975, when the then Labour government gave legislative recognition to Te Tiriti o Waitangi, for many of us our particular and unique national response has been proactive decolonisation with Te Tiriti o Waitangi the guiding frame. And from 1996, in early childhood, *Te Whāriki*, (Ministry of Education, 1996) has served as our map. *Te Whāriki* remains a profoundly visionary document in its demonstrable recognition of the Tangata Whenua/Tangata Tiriti relationship and validation of relationality aspects such as emotional and spiritual wellbeing. *Te Whāriki* is indeed a 'tino taonga' of early childhood education, valued nationally and internationally.

In research we also should also be enacting this ethic of care in regard to the 'Other' (Smith, 1999). I want to acknowledge my longstanding research relationship with Cheryl Rau which has underpinned our three projects funded by the Teaching and Learning Research Initiative (TLRI) (Ritchie, Duhn, Rau, & Craw, 2010; Ritchie & Rau, 2006, 2008). This research has aimed at working with teachers committed to honouring Te Tiriti o Waitangi and its expression within *Te Whāriki* to illuminate pedagogical possibilities of enactment based in this commitment. I honour also the wisdom and work of those wonderful teachers, children and families who have been part of the studies.

Our philosophy for our research methodology has been to engage in a dialogical critical approach, consistent with the work of Noddings (2007), Daloz (1990), and of course, Paulo Freire (1972), whereby we have sought to provide spaces for people to share narratives of their experience (Clandinin, 2007). It has truly been our privilege to have shared these research journeys with our teacher colleagues, children and families, and their wider communities also.

As part of a research collaboration led by Professor Gaile Cannella of the University of North Texas, Cheryl Rau, Mere Skerrett and I have been exploring a Deleuze-Guattarian-inspired "everyday and immanent practice" of ethics which will enable a critical analysis of policy and pedagogical inclusions and exclusions of young children:

> Underlying this theory of practice is the view that social organization results from a spontaneous, creative and open-ended process of actualization, in which social forms emerge and transform as an effect of the shifting relations of power that bodies enter into. This view compels a renewed focus on agency and the ethics of relations between bodies. Above all, Deleuze insists that each self has a primary responsibility to cultivate and practice an attitude of relation to others that enables the emergence of ethical social forms (Bignall, 2007, p. 208).

In light of the current increasing awareness of ecological crisis, and in keeping with Indigenous epistemologies, the 'Others' in our frame include the earth and the 'more-than-human' with whom we co-inhabit our planet (Haraway, 2008).

Here in New Zealand, the 'Rena' ecological crisis near Tauranga has rammed (literally) home to us that our geographical remoteness does not automatically grant us immunity from ecological crises. In a recent talk in London, I asked:

> What pedagogical responses are possible in the face of such blatant disrespect and disregard for our positioning as inter-related members of our biosphere? How can it be that the ordinary people of the world have been so dispossessed of the power to protect their children and their land and seas that these disasters are occurring? (Ritchie, 2011, p. 2).

Some answers to these questions are evident in our TLRI research.

The first example comes from Marion Dekker who was head teacher at Maungatapu Kindergarten in Tauranga (Ritchie et al., 2010). Marion picked up on an idea from the teachers of Richard Hudson Kindergarten in Dunedin who had identified in their initial review of current practice, that their 'kindergarten treaty' was an aspect of generating an ethic of caring that they already had in place at their centre, which included five topics to keep children safe and happy, such as not hurting other children.

So this notion of a 'Kindergarten Treaty' idea intrigued Marion, and she wrote:

2/5/08 Ideas and Thoughts for our Treaty Developing a Treaty

We were keen to explore the concepts of *manaakitanga* through the kindergarten environment by using the Treaty concepts to share ideas such as: care for self/others and the environment. Through honouring Te Tiriti o Waitangi, Article 2, talks about the care for lands, forests and fisheries. As a team, at the beginning of each new term we talk with the children about a contract which allows them to think about what is okay and not okay behaviour. The children understood the notion of a 'deal' together to keep yourself/others safe, and respecting our environment. Quickly we were able to establish an agreement. Signing the Treaty allowed the children to take ownership to this process and intention of the content, empowering the children to self and peer monitor. We talked with the children about 'What is a Treaty?' and 'Why is it important to have one?'
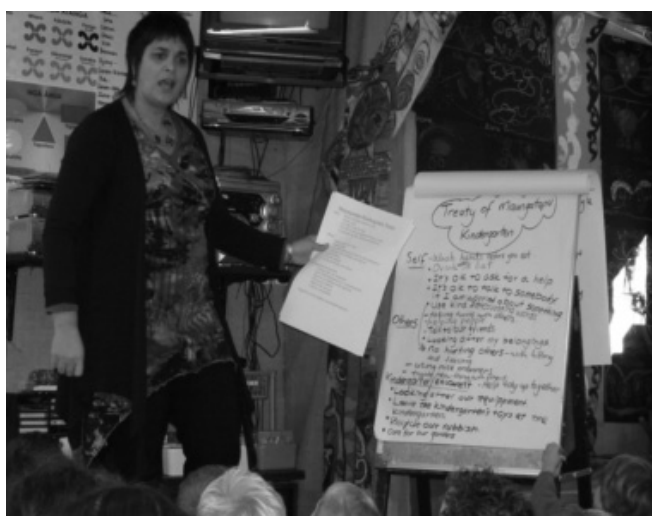
Marion Dekker and tamariki of Maungatapu

Maungatapu Kindergarten—creating our treaty

During the data collection stage of our second TLRI project (Ritchie & Rau, 2008), the Māori Queen, Te Arikinui Dame Atairangikaahu died. It appeared that for a period of the week of her tangihanga that our entire nation mourned the loss of this beloved leader. Educators, children and their whānau/families participating in the study were clearly touched by this event.

Maungatapu Kindergarten teachers recorded the following mat-time discussion, an example of their proactivity in focussing on this important kaupapa:

Teacher (T): Something special has been happening on the news on TV that is very sad but very special for Māori people. Does anyone know what has been happening?

Child (C): The Māori Queen died. I just knew 'cos Josh told me that the Māori Queen died.

T: Tino pai and that was really, really sad as, you know what? She was a fantastic lady and she was fantastic for the Māori people because she brought everyone together like one big group like a team so they are really going to miss her and it was a really special day for the Māori people.

C: The Māori lady made, the Queen made another lady to get all her people to help.

T: Yes she did and I wonder is there going to be a new Queen or is there going to be a King?

C: A King. Both of them and a new Queen.

T: The Māori Queen has a son, her oldest son, and he's going to be the new Māori King. I was just thinking I noticed on the TV there was something special about where she was living. Did anyone remember what her house looked like?

C: It was like at my brother's school.

T: I think maybe they had a special time when they came together to remember Te Ata but did anyone

remember when they looked at the TV did they see anything special about where she was living?

C: I know about Queens and Kings. Kings and Queens live in castles.

T: Some live in castles but do you know where Dame Te Ata lived? We could see all the Māori people standing together but behind them I could see something that looked a little bit like… (points to kindergarten wharenui).

C: Different.

T: It was a bit different - but look she's giving you a good clue.

C: Marae.

T: A marae that they lived on and on that marae there was a house a special house that they lived in. It was a little bit like our—what's the name of our beautiful building that we have made here?

The Wharenui at Maungatapu Kindergarten

C: A wharenui.

T: Well done and what happens in the wharenui then I wonder?

C: You take your shoes off.

T: You do and why do you take your shoes off?

C: 'Cos you might get dirty feet. Get the wharenui dirty, it might make it dirty. You might have muddy feet.

T: What do you think they might do in a wharenui? Have you been to a wharenui, J.?

C: It wasn't a real one it was only at the museum.

T: What did it look like?

C: It was really cold.

T: It was quite cold was it? What did you see in the wharenui?

C: Carvings. Māori carvings.

In this transcript, we saw the teacher firstly drawing the children's attention to the significant event of the death of Te Arikinui Dame Te Atairangikaahu. She then made links to the wharenui that had been constructed at the kindergarten, and encourages children to reflect on tikanga and their own experiences of wharenui.

Galbraith Kindergarten in Ngāruawahia attended the tangihanga of Te Arikinui Dame Te Atairangikaahu and documented the event by creating a book:

Today our Tamariki had a wonderful discussion about the Māori Queen, Dame Te Atairangikaahu. We talked about her and the tangi and what our children had learned about the Māori Queen and the protocol surrounding her tangi. Our tamariki had the opportunity of being at the centre of it all and for some it was the first time they had experienced a tangi. This was an amazing experience for all of us and may be the only opportunity our tamariki ever have of being at a tangi of this magnitude and importance. To honour Dame Te Atairangikaahu's memory we made a book of all the newspaper cuttings that children had brought in to kindergarten. Our Friday morning children cut out the clippings and glued them on to cardboard which we laminated.

Pera Paekau and Pat Leyland from Bellmont Kindergarten –Te Kupenga in Hamilton described for Cheryl and me how they supported each other and their kindergarten whānau through this period while Pera was deeply involved in the tangi:

Pat: Every day we would dedicate our karakia to Te Atairangikaahu and to Pera, because we missed her, and every day we would talk about what Pera was doing out there and why it was important, and when she came back she could tell us about what did happen. And you sang karanga for us and some of the things that happened for the waka, all those things you did actually in a loud strong voice, and I reckon since that happening you've used the reo more and more in the centre. And I think I remember you saying that that was one of the things that gave you so much strength was that whole week of the tangi, and from there the book was made with all the pictures and the children's words.

I think that was the most exceptional thing was what the children said. And four-year-olds saying something like "The Māori Queen died and she was like the rain and the wind". That is very, very strong and so even while Pera was away every day we had newspaper cuttings on the board and children would stand there or sit there and talk about what was happening and why people were crying and then they'd talk about their Grandmas or Granddads who died and their dogs who died and pets and I think it helped them understand what it meant for someone to die. And

the parents were involved with the conversations and would come and talk about what the children were saying at home to what was happening there as well.

Children were drawing pictures at home and bringing them in to the kindergarten. Here is one example:

22.8.06 Laura's drawing of the "māori queen in her box" on Taupiri Mountain after looking
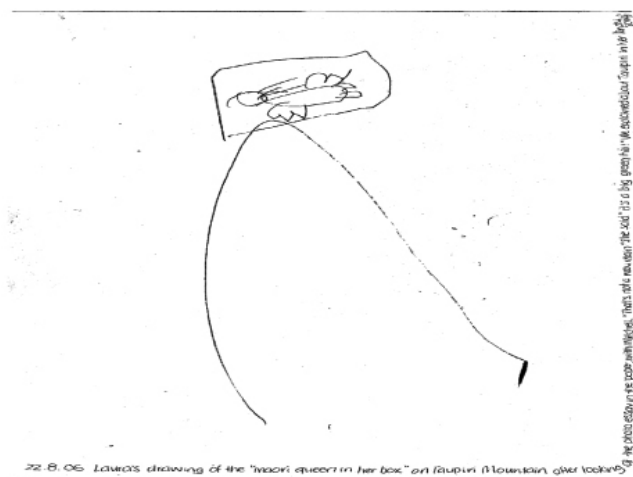
Laura's drawing of the "Māori Queen in her box" on Taupiri Mountain

The following year, through their Tainui connections, Bellmont Kindergarten -Te Kupenga was invited to attend the unveiling ceremony on the anniversary of the passing of Te Arikinui Dame Te Atairangikaahu. The teachers carefully prepared the children first, practicing what they would experience at the pōwhiri.

Pat: And then we went to Tūrangawaewae, we were waiting outside on River Road and then just before we went in they started the 'HEI RUNGA, HEI RARO' and two of the boys I was with, their ears pricked up and: "That's what Pera said", so it was familiar, and so when they went on everyone was very calm, very peaceful, they weren't confused. They just followed the grown-ups and sat on chairs and listened and when they got restless we gave them little bags of goodies....

We were a mixed bunch. We were a few Māori and mostly Pākehā, so we kind of stood out a bit because we were very white. Not everybody came so that the people were the ones who wanted to come and the other thing was we'd actually taught them what to do or talk to them about what they were doing; we had the display about the marae over there, and people could see what was happening, and so they were prepared.

Pera: And the thing about it, I'd like to acknowledge the parents, they all wore the black kākahu, you know to show respect . . . and it was just beautiful how they just got together as a whānau and we went and it was quietly done, and our tamariki were just . . .

Pat: Beautiful. And they were calm, they were very peaceful. No one was running around screaming; they were laughing and talking to each other—but totally

at ease. What was also special was our Whaea brought along her daughter and the two of them sat and talked to our Mums about what it meant and I think that's what they needed to hear was what was going on, what were people saying, what was the procedure, because they were sitting there seeing the whole thing—it's all very well to talk about it at a distance, but when you're right there it's also comforting to have people saying what's happening—reassuring. Whaea was helping us and guiding us all the while and just reminding us gently all the time, "This is what you need to do." She was our kaitiaki and it certainly showed in how the parents responded and she would sit and talk to the Mums and explain things to them before, during and after, so this is how it could happen because we had the support and all this aroha just given to us very gently and very lovingly.

It is apparent from the above narratives, the careful, caring way in which these teachers worked on these relationships.

In 2011 several weeks after the grounding of the Renga on the Astrolabe Reef near Tauranga, I revisited the teachers, children and some parents of Papamoa Kindergarten in Tauranga, interested in finding out how they had been responding to their local environmental crisis. The Rena had grounded in the first week of the holidays, which had allowed a little time for the teachers to prepare their approach prior to the recommencement of sessions. They decided to set up some provocations, in order to allow children to express their understandings and feelings regarding what they were experiencing.
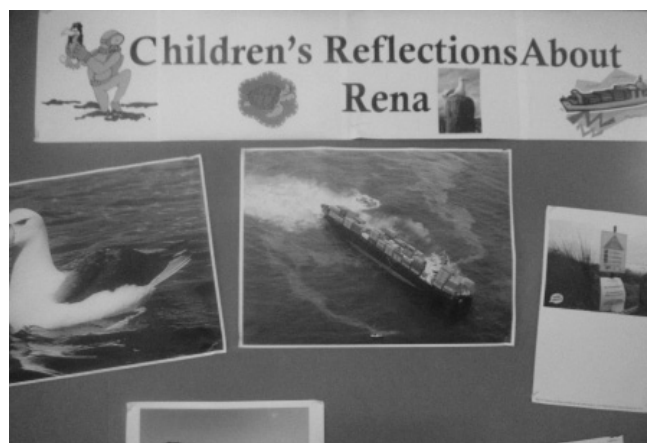
At an afternoon mat-time, they recorded the following discussion from the children:

B1: My dinosaur was saving the big shark and he was a rescue dinosaur. And my shark ate the oil.

B2: Containers have fallen off the boat. Though. The red boat that's stuck. The Rena. It's going side-to-side and they're going to get the oil out. Rena's friends are going to help her.

L: The Rena spilled. All the oil went out of the boat into the water.

N: There were 100 boxes and it killed a duck. Uncle Blake's car floated away.

J: The boat got stuck. My dinosaur saved the whales and the boats and stingray and the dolphin. The penguins were covered in oil too.

D: I saw a black bird covered in the oil on the beach.

The disturbing sight of oil-coated birds provoked several children to produce stories where imaginary creatures rescue the situation. Later the children were observed enacting similar themes outside in the kindergarten river.

B1: Look at all the oil in the water (pretending stones are oil). I'm the rescue man (picking stones up).

[B1 and A go inside and bring out sea creatures and dinosaurs.]

B1: Mine's a rescue dinosaur. It's eating the oil, so is the stingray.

J: My dinosaur is picking up the oil and bouncing it on the rocks.

A: Help! Help! My whale is stuck in the oil.

J: I'll help you.

Children attending a morning session shared their understandings of the situation:

J: The shells are talking to us from the ocean. Telling us the stories. These are magic shells. This one is saying there is oil on the dolphins and the crabs. My friend Mike has got a big barjoo and he can get the oil.

B: I want to get out of this water. I want to move to a different beach. Do you know where Bay Farm is? There's a bridge and lots of water, clean water.

J: More containers are tipping off. We need lots of big boats to help.

B: He was a big fella and he got too drunk…. Too fat to drive the boat. The police took him cos he crashed the boat. He can't see.

M: Maybe he fell asleep.

J: Look what happened and that bird! Oil.

J2: Maybe his curtains were shut.

D: Maybe some water splashed onto his window so he couldn't see.

S: The guys didn't see where the reef was.

B: We can't go to our beach. We will have to go to M's Spain beach.

S: Do you know why the boat got stuck in the ocean? Because the reef is so big in the ocean..

…

D: The sea told me there is oil in the sea.

…

S: The boat got stuck, the reef made it stop.

Teacher: What's a reef?

S: A mountain under the sea.

E: The oil has come in on the rocks.

T: The other boat is pumping oil off the boat.

K. How can they clean up the oil? Maybe all the mans and army will pick the oil off the beach and the rubbish trucks.

M2: I saw big lumps in the water.

C: You can't swim in it or you'll die.

M: I am sad about the oil.

T: Why are you sad?

M: Because there's a big crack.

T: What do you think will happen to the crack?

M: The oil will come and go in a big hole.

These teachers created openings for children to express not only their theories, but also their feelings and concerns. On the Monday before I visited, they had been on an excursion for a walk around Mauao, (Mt Maunganui) encountering first hand Air Force personnel engaged in clean-up procedures. In their first four days these Air Force volunteers had picked up two and half tonnes of oil-impregnated sand.

During my visit, photos from their excursion were being circulated as further provocation. Children had produced pictures and stories. Their understandings were complex and detailed, and their art stories, dialogue and play demonstrates the resonance that they feel for their beach, the sea and its creatures.

The teachers gently opened up space for the children to explore their feelings and understandings in relation to the desecration of their foreshore and the ocean birds and other creatures whose lives were destroyed. The sense of connection was evident, as was the children's grief at the loss. This embodied connectedness with our places is a source of collective healing enacted through an ethic of mutual care. It resonates with Australian anthropologist Deborah Bird Rose's work drawing on the knowledge of Australian Indigenous peoples (Rose, 2002). This notion of an ethic of care is embedded within pedagogies of place and enacted through *kaupapa* Māori conceptualisations (Ritchie & Rau, 2013a, 2013b).

This connectivity is potentially empowering. It enables a

becoming that calls us to take care of the places and people with whom we are connected. It offers an expanded concept of self, and thus an expanded concept of self-interest. It reconfigures dialogue to include place, and brings us face to face with the real here and now of our lives. A permeable and becoming self is an unfinished project and thus invites considerations of mutual care. An ethic of care could thrust itself into our bodies and minds through awareness of our own unfinished vulnerability. Ecological selves require an ecological dialogue in order to sustain the country in the self and the self in the country. The early childhood care and education sector is ideally positioned to provide children and families with support in enhancing this dialogue of caring for self, others and the environment.

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An ethic of creative practice

Talk about being an early childhood teacher!

Andrew Gibbons and Sandy Farquhar

Abstract

Our paper explores some narratives and ethics about being a qualified early childhood teacher, emphasising the importance of teachers' talk (conversation). We develop a narrative combining questioning, story, memory and policy analysis to share our on-going discussion. We relate two personal stories about teacher education alongside some philosophical thinking and a critique of recent policy developments affecting early childhood teachers' professionalism. One aim is to engage with the idea that to be a *qualified, professional t*eacher is uniquely personal *and* social. Another aim is to emphasise the importance of teachers sustaining conversation without necessarily reaching conclusion and consensus. Instead, we suggest that teachers' professionalism involves an *ethic of creative practice.*

Prelude and method ... A fish out of water

As teacher educators, we (the authors) have engaged in numerous conversations about qualifications and professionalism with each other, with colleagues, with students, and with the wider community, interested as they all are in what goes on in early childhood education. We bring together a few ideas about qualifications, professionalism and contemporary policy constraints in order to argue for teachers' creative and ethical practice. Our paper is a philosophical story that draws upon various forms of narrative (story, teachers talk, memory) in order to develop the idea that being qualified to teach and/or being professional involve engagement with one's self and with others. That interpretation is at the heart of teachers' work. This is not to say that other ideas about professionalism are unimportant, or that theories and subject matter are irrelevant. Rather, our intention is to focus on what we see as the hidden curriculum of complexity in teachers' stories and conversations. We reflect on this complexity and argue the importance of attending to the ways in which teachers' experiences inform their decisions.

We begin this section with a discussion of the importance of listening to teachers' stories, emphasising their questioning of their actions and motivations in being an integral part of their professionalism. This is followed with a discussion of the way in which narrative – the mode of this paper – can usefully support teachers' practice. To structure the paper we have used key themes from the publishing house of Dr Seuss. This work is of interest here because it is quite familiar to many teachers, it is widely regarded as very philosophical, and it is evidence of one of the many forms of narrative that can inform a creative ethics of early childhood teaching. The next section begins with two 'originating' personal memories. This is followed by a discussion of recent policy in regard to teacher qualifications. In these sections we unpick the way in which various kinds of narrative inform the way teachers think, listen and tell. We emphasise that these narratives, be they personal, social or political, involve an imperative of creative endeavour by teachers.

It may be difficult to pinpoint where a certain way of thinking, or a lasting desire, takes hold. Why we became teachers, for instance, is often not an easy question to answer, and there can be more than one response. In this paper, the issue became a question of how teachers think about professionalism and the ways qualifications matter in light of recent research (Meade, et al, 2012) and policy developments (Education Workforce Advisory Group, 2010). Although we engage in creative play with personal and policy narratives, we acknowledge from the outset the difficulty of marrying a poetic approach to teaching with the hard edges of policy. Despite this difficulty, we argue for the importance of talking about teaching – the kind of talk that happens every day in centres, in many nuanced ways. We suggest that this talk helps teachers to make sense of teaching, in ways that enrich their professional identity and the curriculum in which they are active and constructive participants.

The classic tale *A fish out of water* (Palmer, 1961) from the Dr Seuss collection provides a strong theme for this approach. This book illustrates the power of storytelling to remind us why it is important to listen. The not very subtle and, of course, quite educational messages in this work concern the importance of rules to a little goldfish named Otto. By analogy, we learn what happens if we don't listen to those rules, take them seriously, and be aware how they impact on our judgments. While we are not too concerned here about the implications for following the rules of our profession, we are interested in what it means to listen. The 'listening' of interest to us in this paper, concerns teachers' stories about being teachers, the role their stories play, and the value of sharing these stories for their practice.

In the spirit of the iconic *Teachers talk teaching* (Middleton & May, 1997), we argue that elements of a 'good' conversation

are important to teachers and elevate teacher conversation and reflection as important sources of knowledge. Teachers draw on theory and knowledge of their profession in their conversations with each other. They also bring with them understandings of their worlds that fall outside the standardised measurement paradigm, making it difficult to encapsulate their work within quality management systems. It would be difficult, for example, to quantify or standardise the implications for our own teaching of the experiences we relate in the excerpted conversations (next section). Yet, telling stories, sharing and contesting ideas, are important to many of the educational traditions that make up the complex cultural communities of Aotearoa New Zealand.

Conversation is a powerful resource for teachers. In conversations, stories reveal the experiential nature of teaching and learning. So we are interested in how to be more open to listening to ourselves as teachers. We are also interested in the creativity that comes from our everyday conversations about teaching, particularly when teachers' narratives and ethics are subject to national surveillance and quality measures, and where teachers must constantly document evidence of what they do in relation to research, regulations and policy.

Teachers' conversations are clearly well suited to narrative inquiry – a mode of research that engages with participant experiences and understandings of their lived world. Narratives about daily practice might, then, following the work of Martin Heidegger (1993), 'lead a way'. Narrative is central to the ways early childhood teachers teach and assess (Ministry of Education, 2004), and to how they provide evidence of their professionalism (see, for example, *Early Education, 52*). It is also a critical element in the practice of reflection that is required to complete early childhood education teaching qualifications (Kane, 2005; O'Connor & Diggins, 2002). For some teachers, more important than all of these reasons, is the possibility that a teacher's understanding of her own narrative opens up the rich narratives of the children and adults with whom she works, and the ways in which these different narratives both resonate and inform ongoing practice.

Two teacher educators talk teaching, 2007-2013 ... *Put me in the zoo*

In *Put me in the zoo* (Lopshire, 1960) a zany story unfolds of identity and belonging. The central character sets about explaining his story to an attentive audience, with the hope of finding just the right kind of home. This story asks questions about being in the right place and about what it means to belong and be welcome. Ideas of being welcome and belonging have recurred in our conversations since 2006 when we began informally discussing the teaching profession in relation to narrative and ethics. We were attempting to make sense of our roles in teacher education, and also to challenge certain elements of professional knowledge that appeared to be creating quite strict boundaries and expectations, in a sense 'colonising' what counts as early childhood teacher education. Some of these expectations were coming from government policy, while others were coming from within teacher education institutions. The following brief excerpts are from a longer dialogue and conference presentation about being a 'qualified' teacher (Farquhar & Gibbons, 2006). They show both the apparent superficiality of personal stories and the reflective engagement that such stories make possible.

Sandy

Years ago, not long after I had completed my teaching diploma, I spent a short time in an Asian community child care centre overseas. My experience made me re-evaluate much of what I had been taught in the academy. The centre was dark, unventilated, lacked space and resources. I had previously worked in relatively spacious, often noisy, always busy, free play New Zealand kindergartens. So this was a dramatic change. The children were occupied with their 'letters' and puzzles for hours. The atmosphere was quiet, intense and focussed. Children's brief exchanges with teachers were often wordless. The teachers were kind but there appeared to be no teacher modelling, direction and involvement. I was at a loss. I spent the first day or so trying to engage and initiate conversation, looking for learning opportunities, teachable moments, etc. By the end of my first week, the children began to approach me, wordlessly at first – as they did with the other teachers – for assistance, a cuddle, a word of encouragement. The children spoke English well and after a number of weeks they were keen to engage with me… After a while I was conscious of increasing sound levels and activity: I was conscious of my voice shattering the silence as I modelled and questioned (as I had been taught to do). However, what I had been taught in the academy had been destabilised and I felt inadequate. Looking back now, I believe I was trying to find my way – without imposition – I was a visitor after all; however, I was also a teacher – what did this mean?

Andrew

Thinking back to my participation in the diploma of teaching at the Auckland College of Education in the early 1990s, my feeling that I 'ought to' keep things in play comes out of the context of the course, where it seemed there was little if any centralized surveillance of the programme. Each stage of my diploma was the first delivered, so in some ways the staff were experiencing the birth of a new phase in early childhood education; in some senses they were experiencing the actual birth of early childhood education as an identified and bordered sector. Whether or not it was the intention of those involved in designing and implementing the College diploma, the play of the diploma set into play new borders for education. A diploma made regulation of the sector in some way fit with a mythical shared national vision, a supposed investment in early education, more-or-less guaranteed by teacher education, registration regulation and surveillance. This, I am sure, was not the intention of many of my mentors, and, paradoxically, the lasting narrative for me was one of challenging these borders and disciplinary mechanisms. Now, in a lecturing role, I find myself engaging with students on a daily basis who are involved in a relationship with the borders that I am required to patrol in some way.

These excerpts, although different, both inform critique of the qualifications discourse in education. For example, Sandy's story highlights the need to understand curriculum in different cultural environments, while still remaining 'outside'. Andrew's story problematises the relationship between professional qualifications and regulatory control. Teachers are involved in these kinds of encounters every day, so engaging with conversations that seek different understandings is an important endeavour. After seven years of conversation, we are both still

engaged in discussion about our roles as teacher educators, what it means to be 'qualified', and how to interpret various policy developments. We have sustained a range of conversations without seeking conclusion or consensus. Personal narratives, we have found, are important ways into understanding larger political narratives. Both kinds of narrative inform our thinking around professionalism, policy, and teachers' practice, and each contributes quite different ways of thinking about teaching. From this, we suggest that teachers' professionalism could incorporate an ethic based on conversation and *dis*sensus: an *ethic of creative practice*.

Moving on from personal narratives, the following section engages with another kind of narrative, in the form of critique of policy and research.

Policy and research narratives ... *Oh the places you'll go*

In the story *Oh the places you'll go!*, Seuss (1990) writes of being confident and competent in our power to narrate our own stories, a theme that we believe should resonate with teachers in a world that is quite uncertain. One uncertainty is the future of early childhood teaching qualifications. Almost all teacher education providers in Aotearoa offer level 7 degree-based, early childhood qualifications, with many offering graduate diplomas as well. The strategic plan (Ministry of Education, 2002) intended to achieve 100% qualified teachers across the ECE by 2012. This policy was halted by a new government in 2010, implementing cuts in research and professional development funding. Around this time, the Ministry published a *Vision for the teaching profession* (New Zealand Government, 2010), heralding a change in policy in regard to teacher qualifications. Among other things, it recommended moving qualifications to postgraduate level in order to "improve the status of the profession" (p. 4) – clearly a significant move for teacher education. However, early childhood education teacher education was not included in this vision. In fact, there was not a single reference to early childhood in the entire document. Early childhood teacher education was also excluded from the Ministry's initial request for proposals for postgraduate teacher education programmes.[1]

One narrative promoted by the *vision* document and the political machinations around postgraduate teaching qualifications might be represented by a large pair of sharp scissors, set to sever the strands that have woven early childhood teaching into the wider profession. The story is that the needs of children and teachers are no longer commensurate across the compulsory and early childhood sectors, and that early childhood teachers have reached their qualification ceiling. The policy omission is a clear signal that early childhood teacher education does not belong in the government's vision for teaching, and that the education system, in particular the teaching profession, does not include early childhood teachers. This issue is of strong interest to us, prompting further thought about legitimation and circumscription of teachers' practice. One conversation now in play among early childhood teacher educators throughout Aotearoa concerns the future of early childhood in the teacher education sector. The early childhood academic community has worked tirelessly to meet the requirements of the 2002 to 2012

strategic plan, working with students, Associate Teachers and the Ministry, gathering ideas, developing curriculum, and keeping pace with higher education expectations regarding research outputs. The government's omission of early childhood from its vision excludes the early childhood community from the kinds of conversations open to the compulsory sector and necessary for a vibrant and informed profession – conversations about what kind of community/society we are promoting, and by extension, what education should be about.

A counter narrative is one of the hegemony of teacher qualifications in early childhood education, a narrative that emerged in part to weave early childhood into the teaching profession. Yet in so doing, this counter narrative has created a powerful centre of its own, hence creating margins. What counts as quality teaching is a particularly important element of this centring of the profession and what counts as knowledge within that profession. Such centring results in the question of ethics being reduced to a debate about who is a good or bad teacher, rather than dealing with how these notions are constructed. Recent research (Meade, et al., 2012) using measures of quality teaching are pertinent examples that take much as given in order to maximise a particular given of quality.

These two positions – the narrative and counter narrative – entail the acceptance of a shared vision, albeit a different vision for each. Meade et al.'s (2012) research on the nature of a teacher's work uses the literature to assert a consensus on the contribution of qualified early childhood teachers to society. The Ministry's *vision* document uses other literature to assert that the entire education system needs to attract the best people that society has to offer through the development of postgraduate qualifications. Meade et al. ask that we accept the value of teacher qualifications. The vision document asks that we accept a particularly economic educational narrative in which early childhood education is clearly diminished in value.

What relationships can we now discern in current documents and discourses of professionalism in education, and specifically those about qualifications? Notably, three journals have focussed special issues on professionalism: *Early Education, 52* (2012); *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood, 11*(1) (2010); and the *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, 16*(2) (2008).

There have also been some important research and commentary (Carr & Mitchell, 2010). A key theme across these volumes is a critical engagement with a limited notion of professionalism derived from a "paradigm that is by no means appropriate for relational, dialogic and complex practices in early childhood" (Urban, 2010, p. 4; see also Dalli, 2013).

The challenge here is that teachers need not and should not simply accept policy edicts from 'on high' about the relative importance of early childhood teachers. Further, though, the challenge is that teachers should talk about issues openly, and negotiate elements of their lives and the lives of their communities. Engaging with this kind of challenge is a kind of ethic that we regard as a teacher's creative practice.

A narrated ethics ... just be

In this final section we talk about elements of ethics and creativity that lead a way for our teaching. An ethic of creative practice

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1 At the time of writing, early childhood teacher educators are united in lobbying government for inclusion in the development of Initial Teacher Education postgraduate qualifications.

involves an approach to teaching that places notions of participation, encounter and hospitality central to teachers' practice (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005). This kind of practice seeks out and indeed engenders pedagogical action that may go against the grain, suggesting different viewpoints and actively forestalling consensus or teleological thinking; for instance, the kind of thinking that attempts to justify assessment of children's learning in terms of particular social and/ or economic purposes. Within an ethic of creative practice, the emphasis is on the journey, not the destination. The point here is not to provide closure or certainty on any particular destination for our metaphorical travel. Rather, the journey, itself, is valued for the kinds of conversations we have on the way, and is all the richer for those conversations. We want to protect these conversations because they 'just are' – a deep philosophical theme that emerges in the Seuss story of the *500 hats of Bartholomew Cubbins* (1972) through the trials of a young man in a world where everything must have a purpose, everything must be efficient, and these purposes and efficiencies are of great benefit to an elite few – a very recognisable story perhaps.

We see it as an important professional responsibility to ensure conversations are heard and valued in an open space, and to resist the temptation to limit ethics to 'this or that' sort of practice. The moments and spaces in which teachers discuss the practice of being an early childhood teacher *are* ethics and narrative. We are obviously not talking about increasing workloads by documenting our teacher narratives. Our ethics and our narratives emerge in and around our relationships, made possible through conversation and relationships with one other.

With a strong focus on narrative pedagogy prevalent in early childhood education, we would like to see teachers and teacher educators *devote* time to conversations with one other about teaching practices and philosophies. However, we know, based on our conversations with teachers and other teacher educators, that many early childhood teachers have little time for such activities. In some centres, such a lack may be interpreted as mere oversight or as other issues taking more immediate priority. In other centres, teaching/ learning conversations may be actively discouraged for fear of undermining authority. Conversations in these places may easily be construed as a form of resistance, whether private ('under the radar'), or in the open for all to see. Either way, we suggest that teachers keep a note of their already obvious, existent, and easy conversations about teaching as artefacts to reflect upon, as a form of on-going and collegial practice. We think it would be worth trialling a process where teachers observe what they talk about over a period of time and then ask questions about what this talk means.

Conversation as a mode of teaching, research and learning might be better used in teachers' lives to support a contextualised pedagogy that is both complex and challenging. Within the teaching profession, teachers are assumed to be critical and reflective. This implies a careful relationship with the theories and policies that define our professional identities. We believe that such involvement entails both narrative and ethics; not telling people how to think, but engaging in the challenges of contesting narratives. It is not our purpose to reconcile competing ideas about early childhood education. We don't want everyone to agree on what constitutes quality teaching. We are also not trying to incite revolution! Rather, the purpose of such conversation is to reveal teachers' work in an experiential, empirical way, and to enable a play with ideas from the

spaces within which teachers work – an ethic of creative practice.

You have brains in your head

You have feet in your shoes

You can steer yourself

Any direction you choose.

You're on your own. And you know what you know.

And YOU are the guy who'll decide where to go

(Seuss, 1990, p. 2)

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What are working theories?

What should we do to support them?

Vicki Hargraves

Te Whāriki **describes the principal learning outcomes for early childhood education as forming working theories and developing dispositions for learning. These are complex outcomes that are difficult to assess and to plan for. Dispositional learning has been an important focus for the early childhood sector in terms of professional development and support, and yet, in comparison, working theories as an outcome has had much less focus (Hargraves, 2012).**

Working theories is an equally complex notion, and requires some unpacking if it is to be a useful concept to support early childhood teachers' assessment and planning. This article seeks a definition of working theory and attempts to place working theory theoretically within current learning theory. It also offers some examples and makes some suggestions as to ways teachers might respond to children's working theories.

Hedges & Jones (2012) suggest that working theories are "evolving ideas and understandings formulated by children as they participate in their family, community and cultural lives" (p.38) which are "modified and refined on the basis of new experiences and new thinking, and through their engagement with others" (p.37). Peters and Davis (2011) emphasise function in their description of working theories as "one way in which children draw on their existing knowledge to make sense of their world and, as children learn, these theories are extended and refined" (p.5). Both sets of researchers note the on-going progression of 'working' theories.

A definition of working theory can put together from the descriptions given on page 44 of *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996). Here I have organised the description according to several themes:

- **Working theories contain a *combination* of knowledge, skills and attitudes**

  "Knowledge, skills, and attitudes are closely linked. These three aspects combine together to form a child's "working theory" and help the child develop dispositions that encourage learning ... working theories contain a combination of knowledge about the world, skills and strategies, attitudes, and expectations."

- **Working theories are based on *experiences* with people, places, things**

"In early childhood, holistic, active learning and the total process of learning are emphasised .... Children develop working theories through observing, listening, doing, participating, discussing, and representing within the topics and activities provided in the programme."

- **Working theories have the *functions* of making sense and learning, controlling events, and solving problems**

  "Working theories become increasingly useful for making sense of the world, for giving the child control over what happens, for problem solving, and for further learning."

- **Working theories *develop*: they become more elaborate, useful, applicable and connected**

  "Children are developing more elaborate and useful working theories about themselves and about the people, places, and things in their lives.... As children gain greater experience, knowledge, and skills, the theories they develop become more widely applicable and have more connecting links between them."

Summarising these themes in *Te Whāriki's* description, there can be said to be three key features of a working theory: combination or connection of experiences, function, and development.

Thus a definition might include these three features, and read:

Working theories combine knowledge, skills and attitudes drawn from experiences with people, places and things. Working theories function in making sense of experience, controlling events and solving problems, and develop in order to become more useful and applicable, more elaborate and interconnected.

Centres might like to engage in a similar process to identify a definition that supports their understandings based on the three features identified here (i.e. combination or connection, function, and development).

Using this definition, teams of teachers might identify a working theory by asking three questions:

1. Does it connect different pieces of knowledge, skill and

attitude? Does it make connections between the child's different experiences?

2. Does it meet a function for the child? Does it help the child to make sense of something, or to act more effectively in their environment?

3. Is it dynamic, developed over time and likely to continue developing with more experience? Is it thinking in progress?

While the 'working' part of working theory seems easy to interpret, theory is a technical term that has an explicit definition as well as a everyday usage. 'Working' seems to refer to the developing aspect ('work in progress', provisional), the idea that a child's theories should be always being modified and improved. It could also refer to the functional aspect: does the theory work for the child's purpose? Within the scientific discipline of cognitive psychology, 'theory' is defined by its function, where it is seen to be used specifically for explanation and prediction (Christmann & Groeben, 1996; Gopnik & Meltzhoff, 1996; Inagaki & Hatano, 2002).

This means that although 'theorising' sounds like a grand activity done only by scientists and academics, in actual fact we theorise everyday a number of times throughout the day. In fact, life would be very difficult if we did not have the ability to theorise.

Imagine getting on a bus. Because you recognise that the vehicle coming towards you is a bus, drawing on your prior experience, you are able to infer that a) the bus will continue to the destination named on its front; and b) that the driver (again, recognisable by his or her uniform) knows where to go. You can probably theorise roughly how much the journey will cost (you offer a $5 note rather than a $50).

This range of working theories about buses saves a lengthy conversation with the driver and makes the whole bus journey more efficient for everyone. These working theories are not fixed, so that even as an adult, your theories can continue to develop and become more elaborate: when the bus service moves to an electronic bus card system, you will be able to modify and improve your working theory.

The cognitive literature also suggests that in order to provide this explanatory or predictive function, theories have a particular structure. A theory involves making connections between experiences and events, identifying causal relationships (Anderson et al., 2001; Gopnik & Meltzhoff, 1996; Inagaki & Hatano, 2002), and connecting concepts to an argument, even if implicit (Christmann & Groeben, 1996). For example, when looking out of the window on a sunny blue-sky day in summer, you can theorise that it will be a hot day. This might lead you to choose a short-sleeved top. In that case, your theory is structured somewhat like this: blue sky + hot day = short-sleeved top. Your argument is that blue skies mean hot days, so you hypothesise that a short-sleeved top will keep you cool, although you don't usually state it like a testable theory!

Of course, this is a simplistic example, and it is important to remember that the development of working theory does not necessarily follow a linear path, but rather consists of interlinked ideas (Peters & Davis, 2011). The examples of children's working theories that follow suggest these interlinked ideas rather than simple equations.

Examples from children

Drawing on some real-life working theories of the children I work with, the definition of working theories as types of thinking which *combine* or *connect*, *function* and *develop*, seems useful. These examples come from some episodes of talking, thinking and building that took place with a group of children in my centre just after the Christchurch earthquakes had occurred. Probably because these events were prominent in adults' conversations and on television, we noticed in our centre that the children began to 'play' earthquakes, to develop their understanding. Some of the theories which I identified were:

Working theory (1): Monsters cause earthquakes: monsters "lifted up the house and shaked it"

The child enacted an earthquake by shaking her building. In her working theory, she seemed to *connect* several ideas:

• Earthquakes involve shaking

• To shake something you have to pick it up

• Monsters are big and can pick up houses.

This theory meets a specific *function*: to explain how earthquakes occur. It *developed* from a conversation in which the first suggestion from the child was that the monster was inside the house shaking it, and was later elaborated by the group of children into demonstrating a range of potentially destructive actions on the part of the monster: jumping, kicking, pulling off a chimney....

Working theory (2): Signs are used to prohibit particular actions

During one activity in which the children built with blocks on the table, and then shook the table to make the buildings fall down, another child developed a theory to stop her friends from shaking the table. She found a small business card and placed it in front of the buildings, telling everyone: "This says 'no shaking'".

She had *connected* some observations, knowledge and a disposition for solving problems and taking control:

• Shaking breaks the buildings

• People don't want their buildings to break

• We need to stop the shaking

• Signs can tell people to stop.

Her purpose or *function* was to better control what was happening in the immediate 'world' of the building activity. Her theory was provisional and in *development*, particularly as how the other children responded was likely to influence her theory.

Working theory (3): "My bear's going to drive away because he hears an earthquake coming"

An interesting variation on the combinatory structure of working theories was the regular way in which children used working theory to connect or combine a range of materials with their thinking. For example, one child had a great interest in transport, and quickly put a miniature toy bear together with a bottle lid to be his car. His theory was "my bear's going to drive away because he hears an earthquake coming".

This theory made the following *connections* with his knowledge

• People are scared of earthquakes

• People run away from things they are scared of

• If you have a car, you could drive away instead.

Importantly, *developing* his thinking along these lines enabled him to follow his interests in transport, but also to use his building skills to build an extended road section. His theory *functioned* to connect the materials he wanted to use together to further his interest.

While the concepts of connecting, functioning and developing were found to be useful for identifying working theories, a second question relates to determining how to respond to working theories when we recognise them. A brief review of the learning theory literature can help to determine some teaching strategies.

Theoretical influences

Working theories as a concept can be connected to prominent learning theories including Piaget's constructivism and sociocultural theory. Determining the theoretical underpinnings of the concept of working theories can then help us determine appropriate pedagogical actions.

Piaget's constructivism suggests that children learn through experience: in fact, when they have an experience, they hold it in mind until further experiences connect with it and begin to form a pattern. These patterns are known as schema (Meade & Cubey, 2008). Schemas are like working theories: provisional knowledge structures that are modified leading to cognitive development.

Sociocultural theory is implicated in *Te Whāriki*'s insistence on the importance of sociocultural experience for forming working theories: "Children develop working theories through observing, listening, doing, participating, discussing, and representing within the topics and activities provided in the programme" (Ministry of Education, 1996, p.44). Working theories are likely to be socially constructed with other adults and children, and from sociocultural experience, then employed in on-going sociocultural situations.

This sociocultural understanding is the focus of the definition of working theory by Hedges and Jones (2012): working theories are "tentative, evolving ideas and understandings formulated by children (and adults) as they participate in the life of their families, communities and cultures and engage with others to think, ponder, wonder and make sense of the world in order to participate more effectively within it" (p.36). Indeed, the use of sociocultural experience to construct the working theory may be one reason why the term working theory was used instead of knowledge in *Te Whāriki*. Carr et al. (2009) explain that in *Te Whāriki* "much knowledge is couched as 'working theory' with the implication that it is uncertain and may look different depending on one's prior experience and the context" (p.7).

Another theoretical perspective is provided by complexity theory, a theory relatively unknown in early childhood education. Complexity theory describes the development of complex systems (examples of which include ant colonies, or schools, but also an individual's system of knowledge) through connection making. These connections take place because many different elements are in interaction, leading to complex and unpredictable effects (Davis & Sumara, 2006). In nature, for example, a change in an organism's environment would have unpredictable and complex effects because organisms interact with their environment and adapt and respond in order to survive. All kinds of complex systems, including schools and bodies of knowledge, also constantly modify their own structures in response to experiences. This theory, then, would also explain knowledge in terms of its combinations, its ever-developing nature, and its functions. It has clear parallels with the definition of working theory put forward here.

How we might respond

A constructivist viewpoint would suggest that in order to help children construct their own knowledge, working theories or schema, teachers should focus on providing objects and providing experiences. Documentation, such as through learning stories, would also be useful, in enabling children to reflect on those experiences. Sociocultural strategies emphasise group work and group talk, and particularly the role of the adult, who would provide guided participation within activities, facilitate understanding by highlighting, commenting, questioning, and suggesting, and use the specific strategies of scaffolding and co-construction.

There is an important point to note about the use of these strategies, because strategies will always be guided by the teacher's values. For example, depending on the kind of knowledge development they value, teachers can provide more or less open-ended, and more or less focused activities for children. Simply by providing objects for children to explore, teachers provide open-ended exploration for children with no end or objective in mind. Documentation of those experiences or the talk accompanying them, in contrast, may focus children's thinking on particular elements. Scaffolding is likely to lead to specific outcomes for children, whereas co-construction is more likely to enable diverse and unpredictable outcomes.

Complexity theory can help us here in determining what level of open-endedness and focus, specific or diverse outcomes, might be useful for helping children to develop more complex or elaborate working theories. Complexity

theory recognises that a careful balance should be maintained between open-ended and tightly focused activities. Too much open-endedness can be confusing or chaotic, while too tight a structure can inhibit development. Thus in order to develop complex outcomes (complex working theories) it would be important to have rich, open contexts for learning from which children could draw unusual or surprising elements. However, within this context, the teacher could play a role in focusing, or pointing children to important characteristics – in the earthquake example, the teacher might point out and emphasise the concept of shaking, or of destruction. Because complex working theories would make many connections between concepts, the teacher could also focus on emphasising connections between ideas. Teachers can draw on their indepth and intuitive knowledge about each child, their learning strategies and their unique context in making these decisions. However, while focusing, the teacher also needs to demonstrate a "flexible responsiveness" (Davis, Sumara & Luce-Kapler, 2000, p.144) to the new ideas that children might draw from the rich context in which they are learning, even when these ideas are perhaps not common-sensical or easily related to the topic in hand.

An interesting strategy which is offered by complexity theory to balance the need for both open-ended *and* focused environments for learning, is that of "enabling constraints" (Davis & Sumara, 2006, p.136). This refers to providing an activity which has clear boundaries or constraints, and then allowing children to be imaginative and creative within those boundaries.

An example from my own teaching is that of inviting children to "build a house that won't break in an earthquake" and delimiting some materials. If you have ever been part of team-building exercise in which you have had to attempt to build a functioning bridge out of several sheets of newspaper, you will know that these constraints can often enable some very creative solutions!

One final strategy that might be useful is an attitude on the part of the teacher that no theory is ever complete, and an expectation that children can continue to generate many ideas and solutions. Teachers can repeatedly ask: "And what else?" Further, any knowledge generated should not be accepted or celebrated as 'right', but treated as a "source of ambiguity" (Langer, 1997, p.132). Teachers would then respond to children's ideas with language such as "could be" ("yes, it could be a monster shaking the houses") which keep ideas open. An alternative response such as "yes it is", or "no it isn't", effectively shuts down the train of ideas. Uncertainty opens up possibilities (Langer, 1997) and provokes imagination (Carr et al., 2009).

Conclusion

If we come to see working theories as developing combinations of connected ideas that have a function to help children explain or control their world and solve their problems, we might be more easily able to recognise when children are engaging in theorising work. There remains an important question regarding how we wish to respond, whether we wish to scaffold children's thinking to the 'right' answer or theory, or whether we wish to encourage creative and imaginative thinking that leads to a diverse and surprising range of theories. While constructivist and sociocultural teaching approaches are more familiar to teachers, complexity theory might offer some new ideas for responding to children's theories in a way which helps children to develop complexity in their thinking.

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Tribute to Dr Nicola Chisnall

(1955-2013)

Dr Nicola Chisnall was a person that touched lives of many people. This was evident from the number of family, friends, colleagues and students who attended her funeral in Auckland on September 24, 2013. Nicola was diagnosed with cancer in 2011 and throughout her cancer journey she continued teaching, researching, writing and thinking about her passion – Montessori education.

I believe there are few people worldwide who can articulate with any authority the relevance of Montessori education in the 21st century. Nicky Chisnall was one of these rare people - she combined her practical experiences as a teacher with academic rigour to reveal new understandings about a century-old educational philosophy and she posed ideas that challenge all educators who care about enhancing the status of children.

Nicky first heard about Montessori education in London in the 1970's and on her return to home she met some young children who attended a Montessori preschool in Palmerston North. She was curious about the way these children were able to concentrate, so went to the library and found some books by Dr Montessori and in this way her own journey in the Montessori world began.

As Nicky learnt more about Montessori and became more experienced with children, she discovered that Dr Montessori's ideas on peace, justice and community resonated deeply with her. Nicky's first degree had been in social sciences and as a recent graduate she had been involved in research for the NZ Council of Social Services that focused on social services and support for local communities in Northland. As a new parent she was also active in the early 1980's helping to establish a community centre and toy library in her own neighbourhood of Wellington.

In 1982, she became involved as a parent in one of the first Montessori preschools in Wellington. Nicky and her husband Dave Stott were both involved in the establishment of Wa Ora Montessori School in Lower Hutt which opened in 1988. Nicky was one of the first early childhood teachers at the school. In 1995 she decided to open her own Montessori early childhood centre and her interest in the connection between Montessori education and peace was reflected in the name that she chose – Rangimarie Montessori Children's House. In 1999, Nicky decided to

Nicky Chisnall, Montessorian and gardener

enrol in a Masters of Education at Victoria University of Wellington and she was excited to get back into the world of research.

Her Master's thesis was completed in 2002 and reflected on the revival of Montessori education in New Zealand from the mid-1970's. She interviewed founders of Montessori centres and observed children in classroom settings to discover how teachers in New Zealand interpreted Montessori philosophy in belief and practice. The challenge she posed in her Master's thesis was whether Montessorians in New Zealand were 'darning old cloth' or engaging in the creative process of weaving a 'new pattern in the Montessori whariki' or mat.

In a career that already included many 'firsts', in 2002 Nicky was appointed to AUT University and began a Montessori specialty degree. Nicky was responsible for writing and delivering the degree and for creating a place for Montessori within the university.

When Nicky began her research for her PhD, she travelled to Europe to find sources of archival information in Italy, Amsterdam and the British Library in London. Nicky used critical theory to contextualise the socio-historical background of the Montessori movement and to examine the currency of Dr Montessori's vision of social justice for the child and subsequent world peace. Her research revealed women like the suffragette, Sylvia Pankhurst who were inspired by Dr Montessori, women

who were also passionate about social justice for children. Nicky has discovered, researched and written in-depth about aspects of Montessori history not yet well known by the international Montessori community.

Another aspect to Nicky's doctorate was her focus on teacher formation and she conducted case studies of the experiences of newly qualified teachers from the degree programme. She found that teachers who had experienced a Montessori teacher preparation that focused on critical reflection were able to continue to craft and refine their practice, retain their spiritual engagement with the children and use their theoretical knowledge to continually think of ways to give children further autonomy and agency.

Nicky discussed in her doctoral thesis the concept of a 'framework for peace and social justice'. She believed that the elements in this Montessori framework are unique in their combination but valuable for all people: the dignity and respect that Montessori educators accord children; the mixed social setting which offers all sorts of relational learning; the authentic learning opportunities which are real, natural and sustainable; the freedom that allows children to make individual and group discoveries; and the gift of time to aid concentration and support problem solving. Nicky graduated with her PhD in 2012.

The Montessori educational community owes Nicky a huge debt for the respect with which Montessori education is viewed by the wider early childhood sector in New Zealand. Nicky's research, her commitment to tertiary students, her quiet intellect, her diplomatic and respectful approach to all, have opened many minds and doors to Montessori education.

Her contribution is highlighted by Helen May, Professor of Education at Otago University, who was Nicky's Masters supervisor and an examiner for her PhD. She told Nicky:

Your contributions to the early childhood sector in this country are enormous: as a scholar and writer, researcher, teacher, teacher educator and political advocate. Working across all fronts has been necessary for the flourishing of 'Montessori' as something pertinent and relevant and unique to this country. You have contributed so much to the Montessori weaving of the early childhood whāriki in Aotearoa- New Zealand.

Two initiatives currently being undertaken by Montessori Aotearoa New Zealand can be linked directly to Nicky's work. She noted in her PhD that critical reflection on Montessori pedagogy will be enhanced by what she described as "a similar orientation in peers as they challenge and support each other in their reflections on practice" and she was also clear that Dr Montessori urged teachers to see our pedagogy as an "on-going work of observation and research". This is the approach being taken in the current Montessori Journey to Excellence Pilot Programme, funded by MANZ and facilitated by Massey University. Nicky hoped that reflections shared between teachers would lead to a new vitality in the Montessori professional community and this is beginning to happen as pilot participants model a learning community, engaged in

critical inquiry, supported and challenged by their peers. The social justice aspect of her research has provided the impetus for the second initiative by Montessori Aotearoa New Zealand and on September 21 a small group of Montessori teachers and educators began a focus on Montessori for Social Change.

At the Montessori Aotearoa New Zealand Conference in April, Nicky was honoured with the presentation of a book of tributes collected from friends, colleagues and students. At this presentation, I explained how I remembered that years ago Nicky highlighted the significance of the number of times the word 'love' appeared in Dr Montessori's writings. Nicky had reminded teachers that "this is the task...to look at your school or centre and see how you have set it up to receive and use **the energy of love**".

Dr Nicola Chisnall exemplified how to use the energy of love. She took this key part of Montessori philosophy and embodied love in her daily life. She was a quiet person who provided many people with inspiration; not just by what she achieved but more importantly by who she was and how she lived her life.

I would like to end with a karakia. In this blessing we thank Dr Montessori and **all the people** who have sustained Montessori in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Nicky – you have been one of these people and we will always think of you when we say this karakia together in the decades to come.

Kei konei tātau hei poipoi
i ngā tamariki,
rangatahi me ngā whānau
Kei te mihi
ki a tākuta Montessori
me ngā tāngata katoa
i tautoko i Montessori i Aotearoa
Ka āwhina tātau
i ngā kaiako
ka tohu i ngā tamariki
Ka ārahi i tēnei whenua rangimarie.

Dr Nicola Chisnall with her husband David Stott; processing to her graduation 2012

Contributors

Dr Janis Carroll-Lind is a qualified teacher and currently the Director of Research and Postgraduate Programmes at Te Tari Puna Ora o Aotearoa/NZ Childcare Association (NZCA). While employed as the Principal Advisor (Education) at the Office of the Children's Commissioner, she wrote the report: *Through their lens: An inquiry into non-parental education and care of infants and toddlers* with Dr John Angus, the previous Children's Commissioner. Immediately prior to her work at the Office of the Children's Commissioner, Janis lectured and researched at Massey University College of Education in Palmerston North.

Iris Duhn moved from the University of Auckland to Monash University in April 2012. Her particular research interests are education for sustainable futures, specifically in urban contexts, and childhood. She is keen to immerse herself more fully in an exploration of childhood in its relation to the more-than-human world which ties in with her interest in critical concepts of 'place'.

Sandy Farquhar is a Senior Lecturer in early childhood teacher education at the Faculty of Education, University of Auckland. Her current research includes narratives about newly-qualified early childhood teachers' experiences of teaching. Her main interest are philosophy and pedagogy of early childhood, and theories of narrative and metaphor. Sandy is a convenor of the interdisciplinary, narrative and metaphor special interest network.

Andrew Gibbons is an Associate Professor in Early Childhood Education at the School of Education, AUT University. Andrew's central interests include the work of Albert Camus, the philosophy of early childhood education and the philosophy of technology. He has published on a wide range of educational policies and practices, including curriculum studies, educational research, human development theory, technology and education, and the professionalisation of early childhood education. He is co-editor of the online *Encyclopaedia of Educational Philosophy and Theory*.

Vicki Hargraves is an early childhood teacher and the Centre Leader of AUT Early Childhood Centre. She recently completed a Master's degree for which her thesis focused on the curricular concept of 'working theories'. She is interested in curriculum and pedagogy in early childhood, and is particularly interested to support children's creative thinking. Her planned PhD thesis looks to develop an understanding of the philosophies of education that focus on enhancing creativity in curriculum for children.

Ko Tararua te maunga

Ko Ohau te awa

Ko Tainui te waka

Ko Ngāti Tukorehe te iwi

Lesley Rameka is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Educational Psychology and Pedagogy, Faculty of Education at Victoria University of Wellington. She has worked in a number of early childhood arenas including: teaching in Te Kohanga Reo for nine years; working as a professional development coordinator and Project Director for Early Childhood Development; and more recently lecturing in early childhood at the University of Waikato and Academic Leader for the Bachelor of Teaching at Te Tari Puna Ora o Aotearoa. She was a coordinator on the Kei Tua o te Pae: Assessment for Learning Early Childhood Exemplars project and Project Director for the Te Whatu Pokeka: Kaupapa Māori Assessment for Learning Early Childhood Exemplars. Lesley's doctoral research explored how Kaupapa Māori approaches to assessment validate Māori ways of knowing and being within early childhood services. Lesley's research interests include Māori perspectives of Infants and Toddlers, Māori pedagogy and leadership.

Ana Pickering is the executive officer of Montessori Aotearoa New Zealand. She has been involved in Montessori education since 1991, in New Zealand and also taught for a year in Qatar. Ana is currently completely her Master's of Education at Victoria University of Wellington. Her thesis responds to Dr Chisnall's recommendation for Montessori teachers to see their pedagogy as an "on-going work of observation and research". Ana is also involved in the research for the Montessori Journey to Excellence Pilot Programme currently being facilitated by the Centre for Educational Development, Massey University.

Jenny Ritchie is an Associate Professor at Te Whare Wānanga o Wairaka - Unitec Institute of Technology, Auckland, New Zealand. Her teaching, research, and writing has focused on supporting early childhood educators and teacher educators to enhance their praxis in terms of cultural, environmental and social justice issues.

Anne Smith is a Professor Emeritus at the University of Otago and Adjunct Professor at Southern Cross University, New South Wales. She was Director of the Children's Issues Centre between 1995 until 2006, and is continuing to publish and advocate about children's rights. Her book *Understanding Children and Childhood* is about to be released.