

## **Superdiversity and critical multicultural pedagogies: Working with migrant families**

### **Abstract**

*International social unrest in recent years has resulted in many people choosing or being forced to leave their home countries to seek better lives elsewhere, causing drastic demographic shifts. Yet, it has been pointed out that institutional policies and practices in many countries have not caught up with such changing demographics, which have contributed to concerns highlighted via the notion of ‘superdiversity’ (Vertovec, 2007). Due to the large influx of migrants over the past few decades, New Zealand and its early childhood education settings have become increasingly ethnically and linguistically diverse. The country is now being described as a ‘superdiverse New Zealand’ and is facing challenges emerging from ‘a level of cultural complexity surpassing anything previously experienced’ (Royal Society of New Zealand, 2013: 1). Furthermore, population projections (Statistics New Zealand, 2015) indicate that superdiversity will be a long-term phenomenon in New Zealand. Te Whāriki, the New Zealand early childhood curriculum, embraces diversity, recognising that the country ‘is increasingly multicultural’ (Ministry of Education, 2017: 1). In light of these concerns, this discussion paper considers the frameworks of superdiversity and critical multiculturalism with regard to transforming and developing policies and pedagogies that support working with superdiverse migrant children and their families by responding to migration-related equity and inclusion issues. This discussion has implications and relevance for both present and future early childhood education settings in New Zealand and in other countries with a large population of migrants.*

**Keywords:** Critical multiculturalism, early childhood education, migrant families, pedagogies, superdiversity

### **Background and introduction**

Since its inception, the notion of superdiversity has received much attention and has appeared frequently in public policies, academia, and scholarly writings across a range of disciplines (Meissner and Vertovec, 2015). Approaches informed by a superdiversity lens have an emphasis on migration<sup>1</sup>-related social issues resulting from contemporary complex migration patterns and statuses, and on inequalities and biases, rather than solely on cultural or ethnic diversity (Vertovec, 2007). Reporting of migration-related social issues, such as ‘migrant/refugee crisis’ and ‘terrorist attacks’, has sparked debates regarding the effectiveness of multicultural policies in various countries, and some world leaders have admitted the failure of state multiculturalism (BBC News, 2011; Telegraph, 2011; The Guardian, 2010). Additionally, critical scholars and educators who advocate for an equitable and inclusive learning and social environment for diverse children and families are sceptical about

multicultural education because they believe that it has failed to improve the academic achievements of learners who do not belong to the dominant social group (May and Sleeter, 2010; Rhedding-Jones, 2010; Sleeter and McLaren, 1995). This paper offers an application of the frameworks of both superdiversity (Meissner and Vertovec, 2015; Vertovec, 2007, 2015) and critical multiculturalism (May and Sleeter, 2010; Rhedding-Jones, 2010; Sleeter and McLaren, 1995) to interrogate some of the migration-related social equity issues relevant for early childhood education (ECE) settings in order to retool policies and pedagogies that cater for superdiverse demographics. While New Zealand's ECE provides the context of this paper, these two frameworks may similarly be applicable to countries with a diverse migrant population.

Due to its large population of migrants<sup>2</sup>, New Zealand is now being described as a superdiverse country (Royal Society of New Zealand, 2013). According to census results, 25.2% of the country's residents and 39.1% of 'Aucklanders' (peoples who reside in Auckland which is a large city in New Zealand) were born outside of the country (Auckland Council, 2014). There are more than 200 ethnic groups co-inhabiting this superdiverse country which is also home to more than 160 different languages (Royal Society of New Zealand, 2013). The *National Ethnic Population Projections: 2013-2038* indicates that this superdiversity phenomenon is here to stay (Statistics New Zealand, 2015). Latest statistics provided by the Ministry of Education (2018) accounting for the enrolments of children from different ethnic groups confirm the ethnic diversity of New Zealand ECE settings. In 2018, the dominant ethnicity, European/Pākehā<sup>3</sup>, only accounted for 48% of the enrolments, with the remainder comprising a diverse range of ethnic groups (Ministry of Education, 2018).

The New Zealand early childhood curriculum, *Te Whāriki: He whāriki mātauranga mō ngā mokopuna o Aotearoa*, first published in 1996, recognised New Zealand's 'increasing cultural diversity' and its multicultural heritages because 'there are many migrants in New

Zealand' (Ministry of Education, 1996: 18). Yet, a range of national reports prepared by the New Zealand Education Review Office<sup>4</sup> (ERO, 2004, 2007, 2013a) has identified that ECE settings responded minimally to cultural diversity. After two decades, *Te Whāriki* has been revised and updated (Ministry of Education, 2017). On the 'Foreword' page (written by the then Minister of Education), it is stated that 'this update reflects changes in the early learning context, including the diversity of New Zealand society today' (Ministry of Education, 2017: 2). On the following page, it highlights the nation's founding document, Te Tiriti o Waitangi (The Treaty of Waitangi), which recognises the first nation status of Māori, and explains that:

New Zealand is increasingly multicultural. Te Tiriti | the Treaty is seen to be inclusive of all immigrants to New Zealand ... Those working in early childhood education respond to the changing demographic landscape by valuing and supporting the different cultures represented in their settings (Ministry of Education, 2017: 3).

It might therefore be considered that the revised curriculum continues to embrace cultural diversity and difference. This paper, however, argues that a mere recognition of the 'increasingly multicultural' (Ministry of Education, 2017: 3) nature of New Zealand ECE and a declaration of commitment to inclusive practices are insufficient to respond equitably to the current unprecedented superdiversity phenomenon. A recent study that evaluated how *Te Whāriki* responds to this phenomenon of superdiversity establishes that the curriculum still focuses mainly on addressing cultural and language associated diversities, and that it has made little explicit connections to migration-driven diversities and inequalities (Author, 2019). For many new migrants, ECE settings may be the first environment where they experience their heritage languages and cultures being subordinated, marginalised, or not visible at all. Pedagogies used in ECE settings, therefore, are particularly crucial because migrants' experiences in this first environment are likely to influence how they participate and engage in other social settings in their host country in the future (Baraldi, 2015). In consideration of these

concerns, this paper promotes the application of the frameworks of both superdiversity and critical multiculturalism to construct policies and pedagogies that are responsive to migrant children and their families, and migration-driven inequality issues.

This paper will first unpack the frameworks of superdiversity and critical multiculturalism, highlighting their key ideas which include heterogeneity and complexity of migration patterns and statuses, and the politics of difference. A range of critical multicultural pedagogies will then be recommended in consideration of these key ideas, *Te Whāriki's* aspirations, and recent research findings from literature that examines migrant families in ECE settings. These pedagogies require teachers to critically analyse and transform policies and practices by including diverse knowledge of migrant families, and they have implications and relevance for the present and future education contexts both in New Zealand and in other countries with a large and diverse migrant population.

### Conceptual understandings: Superdiversity and critical multiculturalism

Critical multiculturalism scholars (May, 1999; Rhedding-Jones, 2010; Sleeter and McLaren, 1995) have promoted using this theoretical lens to address concerns regarding diverse ethnic and cultural identities, intragroup heterogeneity, unequal resources and power relations, and social justice and equity issues. These concerns, which are relevant to diverse migrants who do not belong to the dominant ethnic, language and cultural groups of the host country, are shared by Steven Vertovec, a 'superdiversity' scholar. Vertovec (2007) coined the term 'superdiversity' to describe an unparalleled demographic transformation due to mass global migration, and to highlight complex migration-related variables and social issues. Most migrants in the 21<sup>st</sup> century maintain close connection with their home countries and uphold their cultural and language heritages while integrating into the host country, and they are heterogeneous in terms of ethnic identity, language, culture and religion (Spoonley and Bedford, 2012; Vertovec, 2007).

The superdiversity approach highlights two additional layers of heterogeneity: migration status (for example refugees, skilled and investment migrants) and migration pattern (for example, permanent settlement in the host country and transnational migration which involves frequent commuting between the host and home countries). This approach encompasses the interplay of all variables related to migration (Vertovec, 2007).

Superdiversity is proposed as a ‘summary term’ to encapsulate a range of such changing variables surrounding migration patterns – and significantly, their interlinkages – which amount to a recognition of complexities that supersede previous patterns and perceptions of migration-driven diversity (Meissner and Vertovec, 2015: 542).

In light of mass global migration, Vertovec (2007, 2015) argues that it is now timely to diversify understandings of diversity because the traditional interpretation of diversity in relation to ethnicity, language and culture is no longer adequate to understand the superdiversity phenomenon, and he also emphasises that the strength of diversity is about differences and multiple perspectives. Whilst bias, power, and equity issues have always been key considerations of critical multiculturalism (May, 1999; Sleeter and McLaren, 1995), the superdiversity approach focuses on the new patterns of inequality and prejudice, and differential power relations driven by migration.

A range of researchers have suggested using a superdiversity lens to rethink and retool theories and policies (Blommaert, 2013; Meissner and Vertovec, 2015; Vertovec, 2007) because ‘most areas of service provision have not caught up with the transformations’ introduced by new patterns of migration (Vertovec, 2007: 1048). Recent research, for example, has called for the transformation and development of national curricula to respond to migration concerns (Author, 2019; Bajaj and Bartlett, 2017; Rizvi and Beech, 2017). The idea of transformation is also promoted in critical multiculturalism which will later be examined. This section will examine key ideas from both frameworks, including heterogeneity and inequality

issues in relation to new migration patterns and statuses, as well as the role of language and practice in the politics of difference. These key ideas will then be used to inform pedagogical suggestions in the final section.

*Migration patterns and statuses: Heterogeneous practices and inequality of resources*

Migrants experience at least two cultures, and they need to constantly shift their orientation between the cultures of their homeland and the adopted country (Author, 2018). An individual's migration pattern influences his/her length of residency and frequency of visiting the home country, and consequently his/her ability to understand and enact the host country's dominant practices, an ability that takes time to develop during the course of socialisation and becomes an additional set of embodied dispositions to make sense of the world. Migration patterns, therefore, have implications and they are key variables considered in the superdiversity framework.

To illustrate, transnational migration is a phenomenon highlighted in the study of superdiversity (Vertovec, 2007). Many contemporary migrants are transnationals who engage in frequent border-crossing, and spend time in both the host and home countries (Spoonley and Bedford, 2012; Levitt, 2001; Vertovec, 2007). Transnational migrant parents, therefore, may find it challenging to understand, appreciate and enact the expectations of the host country's ECE settings. Research shows that when transnational migrants express their perspectives regarding their children's ECE, they often use their home country's practices as terms of reference, and that some have no intention of adopting the practices of the host country but have adhered to the familiar practices of their homeland where they still visit often (Author, 2018; Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2007). There are also migrant families who intend to permanently settle in the host country and are keen to acculturate and integrate. As such, the parenting practices of migrants are heterogeneous. The notion of heterogeneity is emphasised in critical multiculturalism which argues that it is unjust to homogenise and categorise any ethnic or

cultural group into a collective with universal needs (May, 1999; Sleeter and McLaren, 1995). Teachers' awareness of complex migration patterns is significant in developing responsive and equitable policies and pedagogies.

International studies indicate that many migrant parents are education-oriented and encourage their children's academic success as a form of capital for upward social mobility (Dandy and Nettlebeck, 2002; Feliciano, 2006; Wu and Singh, 2004). In order to fulfil this aspiration, it is common for some migrants, Asian parents in particular, to engage their children in a range of numeracy and literacy activities by enrolling them in after-kindergarten/school activities in order to maximise their children's learning (Hibel, 2009; Wu and Singh, 2004). Research supports that children participating in these enrichment activities usually have higher academic results (Bodovski, 2010; Hibel, 2009). Nonetheless, these after-kindergarten/school activities are only affordable and accessible for some migrant families. For example, whereas skilled and investment migrants may have the economic capital to enrol their children in these activities, those with a refugee background often fled their home country with minimal financial resources. Their children may not have the option to participate in these activities. The varied capital that each migrant family possesses may influence children's subsequent accomplishment (Bodovski, 2010; Hibel, 2009).

Critical multiculturalism uses the availability of choices, relative to languages and cultures, to argue that those who do not/cannot use the dominant language or practise the dominant culture of the host country, are often being disadvantaged or excluded (May and Sleeter, 2010; Rhedding-Jones, 2010). One study that applies the superdiversity framework points out that contemporary migrants not only need to acquire the host country's culture and language to integrate, they also have to bond with, and seek support and resources from within their own ethnic community in the host country in order to maintain their heritages (Blommaert, 2013). Whilst these migrant families possess rich cultural heritages, it may take time for their

children to make sense of the dominant practices and expectations of ECE settings. The superdiversity approach scrutinises migration-related variables, such as migration patterns and statuses, and considers new layers of complexity when interrogating social inequality issues. A pedagogical standpoint that has not considered the politics of these variables and differences is likely to be inequitable.

### *The politics of difference*

An examination of the politics of difference provides possible explanations for the marginalisation of practices and exclusion of individuals who do not conform to the dominant and/or mainstream ideologies. Nonetheless, it is important to point out that language plays a key role in this marginalisation because it is often used (un)intentionally to reinforce binary differences and exclusion, and hence it needs to be problematised. Critical multiculturalism scholars warn that ‘western language and thought are constructed as a system of differences ... and as binary oppositions’ (Sleeter and McLaren, 1995: 45), and that through the use of language, perceptions of difference are socially and historically constructed, practices are shaped, and a hierarchy of knowing and being is maintained. This section will critique taken-for-granted language and highlight its role in perpetuating hierarchical and exclusive ideologies. As an example, using the term ‘ethnic minorities’ to describe some ethnic groups is problematic because it denotes and perpetuates the *minor* status of certain ethnic groups by contrasting their identity against the dominant status of the *majorities* (Sleeter and McLaren, 1995). The entities ‘East’ and ‘West’, which are commonly used to homogenise and binarise parenting, teaching and learning practices of ‘Eastern’ and ‘Western’ cultures, also run the risk of perpetuating unequal power relations, dismissing and excluding opposing epistemologies. Neither ‘East’ nor ‘West’ is a singular and static entity; instead the practices of each group are heterogeneous, plural and fluid (Nie, 2007).



Within New Zealand ECE, *Te Whāriki* states that early childhood teachers should value diversity and celebrate difference, and ‘this may involve, for example, making links to children’s everyday experience and to special events celebrated by families, whānau, and local and cultural communities’ (Ministry of Education, 2017: 20). Celebrations of certain festivities, such as the Māori and Chinese New Year, have thus become a common practice in New Zealand ECE settings (Author, 2011). However, it has been pointed out by Vertovec (2015) that superdiversity is more than celebration of different ethnic traditions. Briefly celebrating diverse cultural life styles and customs is not only insufficient, learning a limited amount about the lifestyle of ethnic groups may reinforce stereotypical and racist attitudes and assumptions about cultural practices, as well as binarising *others* and excluding differences (Author, 2011). A nuanced understanding of migration-related complexities, a recognition of the politics of difference, and a critical analysis of the role of languages and practices in perpetuating division and exclusion are prerequisite to implementing critical multicultural pedagogies.

### Critical multicultural pedagogies in superdiverse ECE settings

New and complex social inequality issues resulting from the global migration phenomenon have become abundant in learning institutions, and the notion of superdiversity has begun to be applied to the field of education to reassess and re-understand these issues (Cole and Woodrow, 2016). At the same time, critical multiculturalism scholars claim that multicultural education has failed to contest the privileges of the dominant social group, and that multicultural education needs to focus on and challenge inequality and power relations through the application of critical pedagogy (May and Sleeter, 2010; Rhedding-Jones, 2010). This paper argues that superdiversity scholarship aligns well with the theoretical framework of critical multiculturalism, and cross-application of both has the potential to reconceptualise education and enhance understanding of and responding to migration-related social issues in education settings.

Critical multiculturalism warns that conventional multicultural education policies that only aim at including everyone to give ‘equal learning opportunity to all’ have not considered the varied resources, capital and choices each individual has (May, 1999; May and Sleeter, 2010). By applying a critique based on an understanding of the complexities highlighted in the superdiversity approach, critical multicultural pedagogies can be used to support teachers to rethink the variables that are specific to contemporary migrant families. This section ties together and applies theoretical ideas from the frameworks of both superdiversity and critical multiculturalism to construct pedagogies that support teachers to working with diverse migrant children and their families. These pedagogies are also informed by findings from a range of studies that involved migrants with varied migration statuses and patterns, as well as by aspirational statements from *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 2017). The construction of these pedagogies requires teachers to first analyse critically and recognise the politics of knowledge, and be prepared to transform policies and practices. Previously examined concepts such as heterogeneous migration patterns and statuses, inequality issues and the politics of difference will be integrated into the discussion.

It is the intention of this paper to provide broad recommendations in response to the notion of ‘local curriculum’ as stated in *Te Whāriki*:

The expectation is that each ECE service will use *Te Whāriki* as a basic for weaving with children, parents and whānau [extended families] its own local curriculum of valued learning, taking into consideration also the aspirations and learning priorities of hapū [tribe or subtribe], iwi [extended kinship group, tribe, people] and community (Ministry of Education, 2017: 8).

By collaborating with diverse families and including their voices, teachers of each ECE setting can create a local curriculum that is responsive to members of the setting’s community. Broad pedagogies suggested in this section are intended to be applied fluidly across different ECE

contexts now and in the future, as the superdiversity phenomenon continues to introduce new and complex migration-related social issues. While the suggestions aim at being respectful and inclusive to all, it should be noted that they still have to be used sensitively by considering the particular languages, beliefs and cultural values of all families present.

### *Critically analysing and transforming policies and pedagogies*

This paper suggests using a transformative approach, a key feature of the frameworks of both superdiversity and critical multiculturalism, to critically analyse, challenge, review, and revise policies and pedagogies. This approach requires teachers to, first and foremost, recognise the existence of complex and multi-layered inequalities, and to engage in critical reflection and philosophical and pedagogical discussion. Critical multicultural education involves structural analysis in order to critique and politicise *knowledge*, specifically in relation to how dominant knowledge is constructed and legitimised historically, politically, culturally, and socially. It examines the role of institutions in reproducing and privileging dominant social and cultural ideologies, and in including or excluding certain practices (May and Sleeter, 2010; Rhedding-Jones, 2010; Sleeter and McLaren, 1995). Giroux (2001: 154) defines ideology as ‘a process whereby meaning is produced, represented, and consumed’. Common-sense ideology further becomes taken-for-granted knowledge that is treated as the ‘truth’ which gets to be reproduced (Giroux, 2001). A national curriculum serves ‘to include and exclude, emphasize and de-emphasize, and embrace and isolate different content knowledge ...’ (Au and Apple, 2009: 102).

Certain ideologies promoted in policies and curricula become legitimised knowledge, which subsumes *other* practices not endorsed institutionally. To illustrate, although the original version of *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996) recognised and embraced diverse childrearing practices, it also constructed, promoted, transmitted, and/or perpetuated many dominant ECE practices, such as child-centred learning through play and parent-teacher

partnership being the key pedagogical approaches (Author, 2011). Nonetheless, a New Zealand study shows that some migrants disagree with these approaches and continue to apply the childrearing practices of their home countries (Wu, 2011) – practices which are often not recognised in mainstream ECE settings. It is important for teachers to learn about these childrearing beliefs and practices by engaging in dialogue with families, in order to identify the potential misalignment between aspirations of families and expected practices in the settings, and to then consider ways of adjusting pedagogies or explaining the value of these pedagogies to families.

Banks (2006, 2009), who has written widely on multicultural education, believes that its major goal is to provide equitable learning opportunities for all by adopting a transformative approach which applies multiple and diverse multi-ethnic perspectives to view social issues. Furthermore, critical multicultural pedagogies embrace diverse (and even conflicting) values, beliefs and practices of all cultures (May, 1999). Recognising and adopting epistemologies that differ from mainstream ideologies will contribute to the construction of new knowledge which can be used to unsettle, challenge and transform dominant and institutionalised ideologies, to legitimise varied forms of knowing, and to deliberately develop inclusive policies and strategies (Banks, 2006; Sleeter and McLaren, 1995; Tesar and Arndt, 2017). For example, folklore and traditional music, songs and dance of diverse cultural groups that reflect differing ways of knowing, being and doing can be shared more often in ECE settings, so that children from early childhood are exposed to and develop a respect for non-dominant epistemologies. The notion of superdiversity similarly highlights the importance of transformation in service provision to cater for new patterns of migration-related social issues, and positions differences and multiple perspectives as strengths of diversity (Vertovec, 2007). A transformative approach requires the inclusion of families with diverse language and cultural backgrounds in democratic

and collaborative decision-making regarding institutional matters, such as policy development and programme planning (Banks, 2006, 2009).

*Including families' diverse knowledge and practices*

*Te Whāriki* states that 'teaching inclusively means that kaiako [teachers] will work together with families' (Ministry of Education, 2017: 13), and that when families participate in and contribute to the programme, 'children's learning and development is enhanced' (Ministry of Education, 2017: 20). This aligns with a transformative approach that encourages different parties to engage in critical dialogue and to work together through negotiation and collaboration, in order for all to learn something new, to change and improve outcomes, and to transform society (Banks, 2009; Guilherme, 2017). This subsection will provide a few inclusive strategies for teachers to enhance children's learning and development. However, research has showed that some migrant parents are not collaborating or working in partnership with their children's teachers (Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2007). Hence teachers in each context need to first investigate why certain families are not engaging before implementing any inclusive pedagogy. While language difference seems to be a common and obvious barrier that inhibits collaboration or partnership, transnational migrants who are still transitioning between the home and host countries may need more time to make sense of how to navigate and engage in their children's ECE setting. Those with a refugee background probably have endured traumatic events and require emotional support before they feel secure to engage with their children's teachers (Mitchell and Ouko, 2012). Banks (2002:120) further claims that some migrant parents 'lack a sense of empowerment and believe that their opinion will not matter anyway', and that it is unjust to assume that non-involved parents are disinterested in their children's learning.

Due to the existence of a hierarchy of knowledge, as highlighted in critical multiculturalism (May and Sleeter, 2010; Rhedding-Jones, 2010), non-mainstream knowledge

and parenting practices of migrants are likely to be subordinated to the dominant practices of the host country (Baraldi, 2015). *Te Whāriki* recognises that different cultural groups value different ‘knowledge, skills, attitudes and dispositions’ (Ministry of Education, 2017: 20) and it promotes using ‘inclusive and responsive practice that acknowledges diversity’ (Ministry of Education, 2017: 12). To realise this aspiration of *Te Whāriki*, teachers will have to first consider families and communities to be resourceful and capable, and their practices to be valuable knowledge. They will have to build relationships with migrant families, and initiate and engage in open, non-hierarchical and reciprocal dialogue with them about their childrearing knowledge so that differing parental aspirations are shared, recognised and included in pedagogical considerations (Miller and Petriwskyj, 2013).

Without parent-teacher dialogue, parental aspirations in terms of their children’s learning may not be explicit to teachers. Transnational migrant children often have to engage in lessons or activities organised by their family and ethnic community to learn their home languages (such as literacy classes) and heritage cultures (such as traditional dance classes), and to maintain their cultural identities and affiliations, so that they are not disconnected from their home country when they return (Author, 2018). These out-of-ECE settings’ experiences may be invisible to teachers, but they are important migration-related considerations for teachers to be aware of when building relationships with migrant children and families, and when planning for a programme and teaching strategies that are responsive and inclusive (González et al., 2005). Teachers also need to be sensitive that not all migrant families can afford to or have access to enrolling their children in these activities. For example, research shows that in New Zealand, families with a refugee background have difficulty in accessing ECE due to its high cost (Mitchell and Ouki, 2012), extracurricular activities may also be out of reach for these families. When there is no language barrier, verbal and written communication, such as inviting parents to describe their children’s strengths and interests in

the enrolment form and daily/weekly communication journal, can help teachers to understand each family at an individual level, and use this understanding to inform planning for children's learning (Byrd, 2016). It is the teachers' responsibility to find ways to resolve language barriers and to be equitable and inclusive, for example, by inviting parents or teachers from the same language group to provide support for translation.

Intentional inclusion of non-mainstream-centric resources, such as traditional stories and songs from particular migrant communities together with their values and perspectives, has the potential to prepare all children to embrace diversity, normalise diverse ways of life, reduce biases, challenge and reconceptualise the taken-for-granted dominant knowledge (Banks, 2006, 2009; Byrd, 2016). *Te Whāriki* supports this practice and states that children should 'experience the stories and symbols of their own and other cultures' (Ministry of Education, 2017: 25). Families can also be invited to share their migration stories, along with photos and relevant practices of their home countries. Nevertheless, it is possible that those families with a refugee background may not want to share their stories because memories of the homeland are too traumatic, and teachers have to be thoughtful and not impose this expectation on all families. It has been pointed out that diverse home languages are insufficiently acknowledged and utilised in education settings (González et al., 2005; May and Sleeter, 2010), even though including diverse languages in the learning environment has the potential to assure migrant families that their home languages are valued in ECE settings, and that they can continue using home languages in the host country. By including home languages and familial knowledge that children are already familiar with, children feel more connected to the learning settings and learning becomes more interesting, meaningful, contextualised and effective (Byrd, 2016; González et al., 2005). Family participation and contribution is also likely to increase (González et al., 2005).

This paper does not intend to suggest teachers throw away practices that might have worked well, such as cultural celebrations which are popular events in ECE settings, but it would encourage teachers to balance celebrations with a critical consciousness. Previous research has highlighted that tokenistic celebrations have the potential to reinforce ethnic biases, stereotypical attitudes, and binary and exclusion of differences (Author, 2011), and that *Te Whāriki* recognises the inadequacy of relying solely upon cultural celebrations to respond to diversity (Author, 2019). In consideration of the superdiversity and critical multicultural frameworks which do not support a ‘tourist approach’ regarding such celebrations (May and Sleeter 2010; Vertovec, 2015), this paper suggests that teachers bear in mind intragroup diversity and heterogeneity and to apply criticality when planning for and executing these celebrations, ensuring that the festivities do not perpetuate stereotypical assumptions. For example, involving diverse migrant families in preparation and decision-making processes will portray their cultural practices more accurately, and showcasing how members who belong to the same ethnic group may celebrate a certain festival differently can further challenge cultural homogenisation.

The sustained sharing of cultural practices on a regular, daily basis provides better opportunities than annual tokenistic festival celebrations for teachers and diverse families to develop a deep and positive understanding of one another’s cultures, to appreciate and embrace differences, to reduce prejudice and to help all families to feel respected and included, thereby fostering reciprocal relationships and a cohesive community (Miller and Petriwskyj, 2013). Regular informal social events that bring together diverse families may also serve as opportunities to break down the unknowns and help build relationships. More importantly, a sole focus on cultural celebrations ignores families’ aspirational differences regarding learning and teaching, which seem to be the primary concerns of most migrants who want to use



children's education to improve the life prospects of the family (Dandy and Nettlebeck, 2002; Feliciano, 2006; Wu and Singh, 2004).

Lastly, *Te Whāriki* states that it 'requires kaiako [teachers] to actively respond to the strengths, interests, abilities and needs of each child and, at times, provide them with *additional* [emphasis added] support in relation to learning, behaviour, development or communication' (Ministry of Education, 2017: 13). Considering the role of language in perpetuating inequality (May and Sleeter, 2010), this paper argues that the provision of this support need not be considered as creating 'additional' duties or responsibilities for teachers, when responding to the differing needs of each child is already a clearly stated expectation of the curriculum. Providing responsive support requires teachers' preparedness to transform policies and pedagogies, and to adopt contextually relevant, fluid and inclusive practices in superdiverse education settings (Cole and Woodrow, 2016).

## Conclusion

When ECE settings in many countries, including New Zealand, are enrolled with diverse migrant families whose parenting practices and expectations are often novel to most teachers, applying uncritically a static and universal pedagogical approach that simply supports the status quo is profoundly inequitable. This paper has suggested using the frameworks of both critical multiculturalism and superdiversity to inform policies and pedagogies to work with diverse migrant families. Both frameworks recognise the idea of heterogeneity and emphasise addressing social inequality issues. They propose using a transformative approach to rethink and improve policies and practices, an approach that is applicable in ECE settings.

Heterogeneity and transformation, however, imply a sense of unpredictability, the unknown, instability, and insecurity. These frameworks do not offer a 'quick fix' with a set of prescribed, straightforward and universally applicable strategies for teachers. Instead teachers have to work on building relationships and collaborating with migrant families in order to

negotiate a local curriculum that is responsive to diverse aspirations of participating families. This negotiation may involve unsettling ingrained beliefs and routines, and evoke a constant sense of doubt, which can be an uncomfortable experience; yet is recognised as an important element of critical pedagogy (Roberts, 2017). The application of both frameworks requires a willingness to listen and share decision-making, and an open-mindedness to evaluate and relinquish certain dominant practices and to transform pedagogies. These qualities may be difficult to enact in an environment where teachers are expected to conform and comply with externally prescribed and one-size-fits-all regulations, criteria and policies. The frameworks, therefore, rely on structural and intuitional supports, such as policies that include families in decision-making and that empower teachers to enact fluid pedagogies that cater for diverse families' aspirations, supported by low children-teacher ratios that enable teachers to develop close relationships with families, the availability of translators to break down language barriers, and most importantly, qualified teachers who have research and theoretical knowledge to engage in critical reflection and dialogue. These supports, unfortunately, are not always available in ECE settings.

It is also important to highlight that while both frameworks emphasise heterogeneity of diverse migrant and cultural groups, they fall short of addressing issues pertaining to indigeneity, and that the development of a superdiverse environment in New Zealand is believed to be complex because of the country's bicultural legislative system (Royal Society of New Zealand, 2013). In light of New Zealand's national and educational commitment to biculturalism and its founding document, Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Education Review Office, 2013b; Ministry of Education, 2013, 2017), it is therefore necessary for teachers to also apply theoretical approaches which recognise the tangata whenua (people of the land) status of Māori, alongside the frameworks of superdiversity and critical multiculturalism, to inform policies and pedagogies.

Finally, a transformative approach has the potential to reconceptualise ideologies and shift dominant perceptions. When their knowledge and practices are seen as assets to the host country, it is to be hoped that migrants will no longer be perceived as draining the host country's resources or upsetting the country's collective identity, and this shift in understanding will eliminate negativity towards them. Discussion and recommendations provided in this paper may also have relevance for initial teacher education and in-service professional learning, and for countries with superdiverse demographic landscapes, which are likely to be increasingly common in the future.

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<sup>1</sup> The terms 'migration' and 'immigration' are often used interchangeably in literature, but, within scholarly writings that examine the notion of superdiversity, the term 'migration' has been used consistently, and hence this term will be used throughout this paper.

<sup>2</sup> The term 'migrants' is used broadly in this paper to describe both voluntary and involuntary migrants.

<sup>3</sup> This broad category is used by the Ministry of Education.

<sup>4</sup> Education Review Office reviews all ECE services and schools regularly and reports on national evaluations on specific issues.