



Imagining possible worlds with young children, families, and teachers: sustaining indigenous languages and family pedagogies

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Imagining possible worlds with young children, families, and teachers: sustaining indigenous languages and family pedagogies

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Editorial Introduction and Invited Commentaries

Ko tōku reo, tōku ohooho; tōku reo, tōku māpīhi maurea; tōku reo, tōku whakakai mārihi.

This whakataukī (proverbial saying) was coined by Sir Timoti Kāretu, scholar and teacher extraordinaire of te reo Māori (and other languages) and Māori performing arts. The whakataukī speaks to the centrality of one's heritage language as being one's awakening; a language whose perfection countless generations have worked to nurture and pass on, and a language prized, priceless and prophetic. Language is the unique gift that enables the transference, through inter- and intra-generational relationships of thoughts, feelings and values to the real lives of past futures. Sir Timoti Kāretu captures the intensity of that importance to our lives as the whakataukī focuses on the human, emotive and symbolic significance of language to a good, free life. Likewise, this series of articles focusses on the importance of early literacies and the richness of young children's lives as they live in communion with their ancestral thoughts, their whānau and their futures. We pay particular attention to the pre-eminence of the transformative power of ancestral Indigenous languages to sharpen and to nurture into 'wokefulness' – to treasure the imaginative mindful power of creation and to embrace with dignity our Indigenous languages as we would any other treasured items of affection.

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*Invited researchers contributed a commentary on one article. Their names are listed as authors in the order in which their commentaries are sequenced, which corresponds to the articles in the special section.

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The cover graphic is specific to Aotearoa (New Zealand). The graphic is enveloped by a korowai, or kiwi-feathered cloak. Inspired by the warnings of Aperahama Taonui, who said at the signing of Te Tiriti o Waitangi on 6 February, 1840, '*E ngā rangatira, whakarongo mai! Kāua e ūwhia Te Tiriti o Waitangi i te kahu o Ingarangi, ēngari kia mau anō ki tōu kahu, te kahukiwi o Aotearoa nei*' (cited in *Ngā Haeata Mātauranga*, 1994) [To all dignified gatherers, take heed! Do not overlay Te Tiriti o Waitangi with the Union Jack, but hold fast to your unique cloak, the kiwi-feathered cloak of Aotearoa]. The graphic depicts the linen-covered, mountainous terrain of Aoraki, New Zealand's highest mountain peak, nestled in the range of Ka Tiritiri o te Moana (the Southern Alps), her braided rivers stretching from the mountains to the oceans on both sides of the Alps with all manner of life in between. We know Te Waipounamu (the South Island) is the waka that carried Ranginui's (the Sky Father's) children to meet Papatūānuku (our Earthly Mother). When the children were to return, their karakia failed, overturning their waka, which solidified and became the South Island. These features of land and language come together in 'pepeha' or tribal sayings that encapsulate Māori values, knowledge/s and human characteristics. The geographical shapes the personal identity, and mind-shaping worldviews. Māori ancestral journeys to Aotearoa happened in a series of migration patterns over thousands of years. Once settling in Aotearoa, the migrations stopped, and a unique Māori language and culture emerged from within the contours and contexts of the landscape depicted, which is Aotearoa, but connected over time and space to those ancestral migrations. This fine-tuning, as it were, of language to skies, lands and seas happening over many centuries, reflected in the graphic, signifies the importance of places and spaces to Indigenous languages.

In 1987, te reo Māori became the official language of Aotearoa. That was nearly 150 years on from the signing of Te Tiriti, and the prophetic words of Aperahama Taonui. Now, 180 years on, we are struggling to adorn our kiwi-feathered cloak of Aotearoa. Kiwi are endangered and so is our Indigenous language. The braided rivers and tributaries that pattern our landscape intertwine and intersect, moving towards allowing all the nation's children to become, at the very least, bicultural and bilingual in our land and language/scape. Tributaries into, and from, world cultures and languages form part of the landscape. Crucially, early literacies and the richness of ancestral stories provide many points of entry and exit for children to hold on to and tell their stories to weave into the landscape, so that their stories, too, become our stories. They become the colourful strands that fashion the kiwi-feathered cloak that is Aotearoa.

This Special Issue was generated by a collaborative network of researchers and community practitioners who came together to engage in critical discourse with colleagues who are focused on early oral languages and meaningful communication of young children, their families and teachers. The researchers convened to reclaim the narrative in the space of young children and families to honour the sovereignty of Indigenous and heritage languages, lifeways, and learning and promote collective action in research and practice that values and sustains family's languages, knowledges and pedagogies, and children's identities.

The collaboration was established through funding by a Royal Society of Te Apārangi Catalyst Seeding Grant (grant number CSG-UOA-1802). Researchers from four countries, representing six universities, partnered with community practitioners in Aotearoa. This context enabled sharing of existing knowledge and familiarisation of international partners with the local context and challenges, in particular, an

understanding of Aotearoa's unique heritage and Te Tiriti o Waitangi, which legally established the bilingual and bicultural foundation of Aotearoa.

With engagement with community partners (i.e., community practitioners, parent-coaches, early childhood teachers) onsite and in collegial conversations, we were able to ground our understandings of research, policies, and practices within their authentic work and lives. We were confident that, by working collectively and widely in this precious whānau/family and iwi/community space, we could do better for our youngest tamariki/children than the narrow, subtractive, deficit, remedial views of languages and cultures that have taken hold in the mainstream. The way we think and language our understandings influences perceptions, policies, and practices. We were determined to shift from problem-based to possibility-driven thinking, imagining, and research.

This set of papers was co-authored by members of this research-practitioner collective, who are focused on reclaiming the primacy of Indigenous and heritage languages, cultures and identities from life's start in oral languages and communication, family pedagogies, community engagement, and professional learning. The team includes Māori, Pasifika, and Pākehā (white European) researchers and community practitioners. Each paper acknowledges the domination of English-only and Eurocentric traditions and values *and* envisions a future in which Indigenous knowledges are sovereign. The insights from these papers provide an antidote – a new narrative, a narrative of possibility – that can counteract the diagnosis of English-word 'deficits', the explanation of differences as lack of opportunities and knowledges of families, and the resurgence of Eurocentric assessments of school readiness.

The papers are sequenced to critically examine the impact of policy, family pedagogies, community initiatives and context on young, emerging, bilingual children. The researchers go beyond problem description by offering empirical exemplars of possible worlds in which children and families reclaim sovereignty in Indigenous and heritage languages, knowledges, cultures and ways of being and learning. The papers offered a springboard for discussion by renowned researchers who were invited to contribute a short commentary on one article. The guest co-editors and authors hope that the articles and expert commentaries incite robust interactions that lead readers to advocate and enact narratives of possibilities in their worlds.

Invited Commentaries

The final section of this editorial comprises a commentary written by four esteemed scholars, each of whom was asked to provide responses and reflections on one of the four articles in this special edition. Distinguished Professor Graham Hingangaroa Smith provides the commentary for the article 'Te rangatiratanga o te reo: Sovereignty in Indigenous languages in early childhood education in Aotearoa'. Next, Diane Mara provides a response to 'Parents and whānau as experts in their worlds: Valuing family pedagogies in early childhood'. The third commentary, on the article, 'Ēhara tāku toa i te toa takitahi, engari he toa takitini: The power of a collective', is contributed by Professor Angus Macfarlane. The fourth and final commentary, on the article, 'Sustaining Indigenous languages and cultures: Māori medium education in Aotearoa and Aboriginal Head Start in Canada', was contributed by Professor Emerita Christine Sleeter. We are hugely appreciative of, and deeply grateful for, these most interesting commentaries, which provide further food for thought and additional questions and challenges

provoked by their readings of the articles. Ka nui ngā mihi ki a koutou ngā kaituhi rangatira mō o koutou whakaaro hōhonu e tautoko ana i te kaupapa nei.


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Commentary by Distinguished Professor Graham Hingangaroa Smith

Te Toi Ihorei ki Purehuroa

on

Te rangatiratanga o te reo: Sovereignty in Indigenous languages in early childhood education in Aotearoa

In the above-named article, the authors identify shortcomings that are situated within the broader education system, and which, in turn, are likely to detrimentally impact early childhood education. The authors describe the promises embedded in the Tiriti o Waitangi as having been ineffective in protecting and improving the cultural and language interests of Māori to date. They also problematise the ongoing issue of education and schooling policies as being significantly ineffectual and suggest that the issues related to language regeneration will, therefore, likely continue. As early years educators, they centre much of their commentary on the urgency and necessity for Māori language ‘regeneration’ within and through more meaningful reform in the whole education system but within the early childhood sector in particular. Moreover, they argue that a critical site for intervention within the sector is the need to create more culturally skilled educators and teachers and to also provide dedicated resources. Enhancing the learning capacity and capability of culturally competent teachers and educators would, they argue, potentially support Māori language regeneration.

In general, I agree with the arguments that the authors are making and would reinforce their claims by adding the following points.

There is a need to be more precise with the analysis of what is going wrong

We need to more accurately understand what is problematic, in order to be able to more accurately develop interventions. If we don’t correctly understand (or own up to) what is going wrong, our proposed transforming interventions will, correspondingly, be imperfect. In this regard, there is a need to be more critically definitive in the application of the Skutnabb-Kangas concept of ‘linguicism’ and to show more precisely how these insights might apply to, and transform, our situation in New Zealand. This includes, for example, how they might move beyond discursive descriptions of what is problematic to developing more practical solutions, and move beyond simplistic analyses to more in-depth and accurate understandings of the barriers to success. Te Kōhanga Reo, Kura Kaupapa Māori, Kura Tuarua and Wānanga were education initiatives that were driven by Māori whānau and Māori education reformers attempting to respond to the twin concerns of language revitalisation and high and disproportionate levels of school and learning underachievement.

Distinguishing between structuralist and culturalist forms of change

There is a need to also distinguish between culturalist change (*changing people* and their behaviours, e.g., racism, teacher attitudes and behaviours) and structuralist

change (*changing systemic elements* such as power, ideology, economics, policy). While both domains need to be transformed, there has been a tendency to focus on ‘deficits’ of people as the problem and there has been a corresponding neglect of focusing on transforming the structuralist elements of the system. The point here is that we need to, not only recognise racism as the actions of people, but also unpack the structural components that impel such thinking and actions. For example, the societal context of unequal social, cultural and power relations between dominant non-Māori and subordinate(d) Māori interests has been used by dominant groups to protect and sustain their dominant interests. This has been achieved by marginalising the competing interests of Māori through structuralist and culturalist means on the one hand, while simultaneously promoting and privileging dominant Pākehā culturalist and structuralist interests on the other.

The State system should learn lessons from Māori alternative education developments

The history of failure by the State system in developing change outcomes for Māori needs to be problematised and understood more profoundly. There is a need to pay attention to lessons to be learned from the Māori ‘self-development’ programmes of Te Kōhanga Reo, Kura Kaupapa Māori, Kura Tuarua and Wānanga. We need to understand why these initiatives are relatively more successful in attracting Māori participation despite the relative lack of resources as compared to State education options more generally. These alternative resistance initiatives developed out of Māori communities themselves with minimal State support and resourcing (and which continue to be comparatively under-resourced today). Yet, they remain popular options for many and, in some places, demand for such schools exceeds the ability to supply. The alternative Māori language initiatives that have arisen out of community might be understood as manifest critiques of successive governments’ failure to adequately deal with Māori language, knowledge and culture survival. They are also tangible critiques of the ongoing failure of State education provision in respect of Māori access, retention, participation and success in, and through, education. The problematic for the alternative Māori initiatives in gaining appropriate recognition and support from the State is that their presence positions, and makes overt, the the State’s history of colonising influence through the control over schooling.

Dominant power and the reproduction of inequities

The State, government politicians, dominant interest groups and individual gate-keepers are often able to select their advice and are able to manipulate priorities, and choose what is ultimately to be funded. Often Māori politicians themselves become actors for dominant group (party political) interests. In this sense they are often hegemonically co-opted. It helps the dominant agenda look as though Māori generally support the government’s intentions. These are important questions in the current policy climate. As Freire and Macedo reminded us all, ‘read the word, read the world’ (1987). It is important to also read the submerged meanings and politics behind the words – to have what has been termed a ‘proper literacy’ that can decipher the critical and political imperatives. For example, money has been sequestered in the budget for Te Reo Māori initiatives – but whose interests are served in the decision-making in regard to its ‘selected’ distribution?

I would argue that the government has created structures that significantly neglect the 'self-development' initiatives in favour of domesticating 'dissent' (patronising the 'squeaky' or 'critical' voices) – that is, the spend is often in the culturalist domain and neglects funding that might genuinely offer alternatives to State structures and policies that reproduce the mediocrity within the 'status quo'.

Teacher education: More intentional and meaningful change is required

The authors conclude their article by suggesting that a key site for intervention is located within teacher and educator training. The issue is more than the capacity and capability of teachers. There are numerous structuralist and culturalist issues that need critical interrogation. For example, the selection processes for teaching (more cultural diversity in workforce, more cross-cultural skills and competencies, attitudes, etc.); the initial teaching education curriculum and competencies need to be refreshed to align with the New Zealand curriculum reforms; there is a need to move beyond the production of instrumental pedagogues to understanding the politics and new theories of learning (learning to learn, etc.). There are particular concerns within the Early Childhood sector with a major shortage of educators, the retention of educators and the work and remuneration conditions for those who work in this sector.

Moreover, why is the Ministry of Education continuing to fund short-term 'sticking plaster' initiatives? For example, the Te Kotahitanga, Eke Panuku, Hurihanganui form pipeline programmes that involved working with teachers on their cross-cultural teaching competencies. While these initiatives might be important, they should have been short-term bridging programmes while initial teacher training and policies were brought into alignment with the new expectations. These programmes should have done themselves out of business over time – but they seem to have a life their own. The huge dollars put into these short-term interventions and their consultants should no longer have been necessary after a few years. The point, in reference to the arguments made in this paper, is that, if teacher education is to be an answer, there are many elements that need to be 'fixed up'.

In this sense, our struggle within education is not one struggle – we engage in multiple struggles, in many places and often simultaneously. Our resistance, therefore, must be the same – to many sites of colonisation and often at the same time. We need to move beyond being the recipients of the 'single policy' approach with respect to government intervention strategies. The fact that most of our peoples still remain socially and economically marginalised is evidence that selected policy formation has had limited effect. We must announce that *selected* and *singular* policy interventions are insufficient. There is no 'silver bullet'; no 'magic pill'; no 'single policy'. There is need to invest in 'change' on a broad range of fronts – a 360-degree approach. Some of these changes we need to take responsibility for ourselves, others are situated in a broader context, within the public policy domain.

I certainly concur with the authors of this paper in respect of their baseline argument: that the sustainable intervention into Māori social, cultural and economic underdevelopment is inextricably linked to a prior, or simultaneous, educational and schooling revolution.

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Commentary by Dr Diane Mara

Insignia of a Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit on Parents and whānau as experts in their worlds: Valuing family pedagogies in early childhood

Parents and whānau are experts in their worlds and that is why the values and practices within which they have socialised their tamariki must be respected. A growing number of families, as illustrated in the case studies in the article, 'Parents and whānau as experts in their worlds: valuing family pedagogies in early childhood', are ethnically diverse and are proud of their heritage languages. Their language connects them back to family, history, identity and maintains a sense of belonging crucial to health and well-being in a changing world. However, these cases also demonstrate how parents and whānau must actively respond within a relatively hostile and conflicted educational system and policy context. Equally, teachers must encourage partnerships and welcome support from whānau in areas where they currently have little experience, e.g., being bilingual. These case studies are important exemplars.

Considering the history and body of literature and research carried out in Aotearoa, it is regrettable that findings have had minimal influence on teacher pedagogical knowledge in early childhood education (ECE) teaching and learning. I agree with the authors that most discussion and professional knowledge has involved unchallenged assumptions of bilingualism as deficit. This provides one rationale for language marginalisation of family pedagogies because bilingualism is thought to adversely affect educational success. Bilingualism has been generally regarded as subtractive to the attainment of fluency in the English language – English being the language of cultural capital in the definitions of New Zealand educational success and achievement.

Although early childhood education is officially a non-compulsory sector of education in Aotearoa, its key features provide an alternative reality: very high participation levels, the often articulated developmental importance of early learning, the demands on families to access employment and the considerable private and public investment in early childhood has, by proxy, created a compulsory education sector. As stated in the case study described by Nola, parents experience a tension between the need for maintaining home language and identity while wanting their child to achieve success in the New Zealand education system.

Te reo Māori has had an impact by virtue of it being an official language of Aotearoa and the policy pressures which have come from outside educational institutions, including from the health sector, Treaty settlements, iwi development and political activism over many decades. The authors express the hope that the normalisation of te reo Māori and tikanga Māori will go some way in countering teachers' ideas that bilingualism is an impediment to learning. Brain research attests that bilingualism underpins cognitive flexibility (see Baker and Wright 2021).

The linguistic diversity of contemporary New Zealand continues to flourish through intermarriage, family reunification, immigration, migrant labour schemes, granting of employment visas, and so on. Increasingly, families are choosing to maintain their

languages because they are crucial to belonging and affiliating to their extended families and, in many cases, their faith and values. The communities of Aotearoa from which the tamariki come are multilingual with regional and global affiliations that affirm the validity of being bilingual. This is seen in the case study where children communicate online with grandparents or other extended family members overseas maintaining both their local and global identities.

The authors also critique the early childhood curriculum *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education 2017). This document has the potential as a framework for teachers to provide supportive contexts for bilingualism and multilingualism, asking kaiako (teachers) to consider, for example: 'How do kaiako recognise and respond to cultural, linguistic and developmental diversity in language acquisition, including when working with children using alternative methods of communication?' (p. 45).

Expectations to simply accept, recognise and respect a child's language are not proactive enough to assist the child to be a fluent bilingual. Kaiako must feel confident and be wise in their practices when they are non-speakers of the languages spoken by tamariki and their whānau. Since there is little professional development for kaiako concerning the monitoring of non-English language acquisition including *te reo*, teachers continue to feel less prepared to achieve this professional expectation.

The approaches to self-regulation, positive behaviour management and readiness for school dominant in current discourses are based on Western psychological paradigms requiring all tamariki to comply to a set of cultural values often completely different to their own and are thus they are already set up for failure.

This article highlights case studies which are exemplars of how teachers and parents can work together to support bilingualism. The linguistic backgrounds and experiences of the authors in these case studies position them as social beings and language experts alongside tamariki and their whānau.

Kaiako are not adequately prepared in their knowledge of linguistics, language structures and grammar and the dimensions of bilingualism. Teacher education and professional development comprise very limited coverage of semantics, syntax and vocabulary development and how these can be applied in developing informed pedagogical responses. Further, language divorced from everyday contexts, and cultural paradigms that are devoid of symbolic meaning or metaphor, limit the use of heritage languages in thinking and learning.

In a Pacific, culturally responsive, early childhood pedagogy framework, teacher knowledge and child response can be monitored and recorded when opportunities for learning using Pacific languages are provided grounded in the understanding that language is a cultural tool which enables communication of feelings, thoughts, and beliefs (Mara and Kumar 2013). Interactional exchanges that represent Teacher Knowledge and Behaviour are that a teacher: (a) understands language is a cultural tool to communicate thoughts, feelings, beliefs, ideas; (b) accepts and embraces all language symbols and forms communicated by Pacific children; and (c) understands that the link between language and identity never judges what children cannot change. The comparable set of interactional exchanges for Child Response and Behaviour are: (a) children are growing in their language development in their Pacific language as well as English; (b) their literacy skills and fluency are growing in one or more languages including Pacific heritage languages; and (c) children are able to easily switch between their languages and feel

encouraged to do so. Taken together, the two sets can be used to monitor opportunities for Pacific language use in ECE interactions.

Progress going forward in achieving natural and authentic bilingualism requires a greater focus on what tamariki and their whānau bring into early childhood services in relation to language, cultural identities, and cultural values. Equally, kaiako will need to be linguistically knowledgeable and skilled about the structures and syntax of languages spoken and semantics and be open to learning about cultural meanings and metaphors. Respect and responsive relationships as revealed in these case studies enable tamariki to think and process knowledge on their own terms as they confidently interact with their world and they find their unique places of belonging.

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Commentary by Professor Angus Hikairo Macfarlane

Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit on

Ēhara tāku toa i te toa takitahi, engari he toa takitini: The power of a collective

Never has the conversation on how to enact Māori-oriented, equity-based Parenting programmes been more critical than during this time leading up to Matariki. Not unlike the Matariki tradition, Talking Matters to Tamaki (TMTT) is intent on repositioning the emphasis so as to allow new growth to flourish – regeneration with an eye toward the future. The regeneration coincides with a growing interest for a partnership between the wider Talking Matters entity – the founding agency promoting the importance of talking with children in their first 1000 days of life. Each organisation contributes to the funding and shares decisions about future directions, hence the appropriate title of the paper. The rationale for blending Western and Māori streams of knowledge is supported by adopting the principles of a Braided Rivers/He Awa Whiria approach. The authors describe the He Awa Whiria approach and serve up a simple reminder that it is a form of research at an interface straddling two knowledge systems. Ideal, it would seem, for the intentions they had in mind, yet there is a hint that the approach has the potential to be viewed by some as an apparent divide between Indigenous knowledge and Western science. Good Western approaches cannot be, and are not, dismissed but any commentary that has links to the lived experience of whānau has to follow the line of thinking that embellishes the integrity of Mātauranga Māori. The authors skilfully and coherently describe how the programme has been co-developed with whānau from the outset and continues to evolve. Clear explanations are outlined in terms of how whānau participants are mentored by whānau and, importantly, how they intentionally build on the strengths and assets whānau already have to enrich language environments in their daily lives. This is in tandem with a recurring message in the article – that language learning is an ongoing interaction between the tamaiti and their environment, indeed akin to values (beliefs, assumptions, standards) in action. In Te Ao Māori, this is the reality of tikanga. Tikanga is more than ideals, it is the philosophical and moral foundation of a working alliance. Working values enhance the enablement of better decisions on how to proceed, since without them there is the potential for the programme to come adrift in the braided river.

The abstract of this article avoids making bold claims. It modestly states that the study is utilising Kaupapa Māori research methods as the means to describe a critical reflective narrative of a community-led parenting programme that makes space for whānau to re-centre Indigenous linguistic and cultural practices. In my view it succeeds by expressing that the feature of the programme in the study was its ethical and humane pragmatism. It is at that juncture, it may be claimed, that the researchers were true to themselves by adopting an approach suited to the context, maintained a real-life focus, stayed flexible, and developed a bias toward action. Maintaining a real-life focus is in the context itself was achieved – a community-led parenting initiative that focuses on babies' and young children's oral language. Staying flexible is achieved, for example, by the fact that international research is filtered and incorporated (based on the

contextual fit) and woven together with the rich local knowledge of parenting partners. The bias toward action (*mahia te mahi*) is demonstrated by the authors recounting their experiences (an example is recorded on page 294, Emma taking part in the *talanoa* session) – a mix of skills and techniques tailored to the insider/outsider research reality.

The authors present a path in oral language and parental support research congruent with a philosophy that promotes linguistic and cultural pluralism within the Aotearoa context. They recognise the value in a statement such as ‘we are beyond a “them” and an “us”’ and recognise that the sociocultural challenges we face in our sector is acknowledging that Eurocentric hegemony no longer has a place. It is becoming more and more common for social science researchers to conduct their activities within frameworks developed by Māori thinkers, with contributions from the Treaty partners. Over the last two decades, Māori epistemologies and kaupapa Māori research methods have taken on an increasingly significant presence, either on their own and in their own right – or alongside conventional scientific disciplines. Māori culture is intrinsically linked to the *whenua*, just as in this research the *tamaiti* is linked to the *whānau*, which gives these authors the legitimacy to enhance and focus their Māori-developed research contentions. This article adds to the truism that the richness of knowledge within Māori society, grown over generations of active living within dynamic communities, has the potential to co-create new research realities that have an integrity of their own.

Commentary by Professor Emerita Christine Sleeter

on

Sustaining Indigenous languages and cultures: Māori medium education in Aotearoa New Zealand and Aboriginal Head Start in Canada

Decolonising Early Childhood Education

This commentary situates Māori medium education and Aboriginal Head Start within the larger project of decolonisation. Drawing on the work of Latin American decolonial theorist Walter D. Mignolo (2007, 2018), it is argued that that schooling has served as a primary institution of the ongoing process of control over subjectivity and knowledge by attempting to replace Indigenous knowledge and languages with those of Europe. The two projects discussed by Rameka and Peterson offer valuable examples of the process of decolonising early childhood education in a way that is consistent with a framework for this work, while making visible some challenges involved.

In their article ‘Sustaining Indigenous Languages and Cultures’, Lesley Rameka and Shelley Stagg Peterson discuss research into two projects that, while located spatially distant from each other, share the common aim of revitalising and teaching Indigenous languages and cultures that have been forcibly suppressed through the epistemic genocide of European colonisation. Epistemic genocide refers to the extermination of cultural traditions and ways of knowing, and in the process decimating the power of Indigenous peoples to resist colonisation. Latin American decolonial theorist Walter D. Mignolo (2018) explained that European colonisers believed theirs was the world’s most highly developed civilization which, in their view, gave them the right to replace non-European knowledge systems with their own. Mignolo termed the process of colonization and imposition of a Western definition of reality as the colonial matrix of power, which defines what we should see, believe, and accept. He described the colonial matrix of power as creating ‘a powerful fiction, marked by a single totality’ (p. 196). Drawing from the work of decolonial theorist Anibal Quijano, Mignolo (2007) explained that the colonial matrix of power comprises ‘four interrelated domains: control of economy (land appropriation, exploitation of labor, control of natural resources); control of authority (institution, army); control of gender and sexuality (family, education) and control of subjectivity and knowledge (epistemology, education and formation of subjectivity)’ (p. 156). Schooling is a primary institution of the ongoing process of control over subjectivity and knowledge.

But that process is facing growing resistance, as illustrated in the interesting projects discussed by Rameka and Peterson: Māori medium schooling in Aotearoa (New Zealand) and Aboriginal Head Start in Northern Ontario, Canada. These projects represent resistance to, or de-linking from, the colonial matrix of power. Delinking ‘leads to de-colonial epistemic shift and brings to the foreground other epistemologies, other principles of knowledge and understanding and, consequently, other economy, other politics, other ethics’ (Mignolo 2007, p. 453). Writing about Māori education, for example, Penetito (2010) argued that what Māori really want is to

[K]now their own language; they want their traditional institutions (the marae, for example) to flourish; they are hungry to learn about their ancient history as well as their interpretations of colonial history; they are aware their ancestors keenly sought much that belonged to European civilization, and they want to honour that desire with at least the same amount of vigour as their tupuna demonstrated; they want to maintain those aesthetics that derive from the Māori world, which make them unique in the world; and, more than anything else, they do not want to be limited in any way in terms of where and how they regain these fruits. (p. 252)

For Indigenous peoples, language revitalization is foundational to decolonization (Battiste and Henderson 2009).

There is growing attention to what decolonisation might look like across the lifespan, including at the early childhood level. Writing from the perspective of the Caribbean, Escayg and Kinkead-Clark (2018) propose a framework for early childhood education that 'recognizes and resists the ongoing forms of neo-colonial domination and globalization such as the imposition of Western knowledge, culture, ways of knowing, and Western cultural artifacts' (p. 245). The framework suggests implications for curriculum, pedagogy, and the education of teachers.

The two projects that Rameka and Peterson discuss provide valuable examples of the process of decolonising early childhood education in a way that is consistent with the framework put forth by Escayg and Kinkead-Clark. Ramkea and Peterson's linked research studies examine early childhood education projects that aim to reclaim and revitalise the Māori language and culture (in the case of Aotearoa) and the Anishnaabemowin language (in the case of northern Ontario). Both authors report qualitative research into how these early childhood education projects are experienced by teachers, and in the case of the Māori medium project, parents and students. Both found strong support and positive outcomes for children, but also challenges deriving from the on-going legacy of colonisation, and particularly the challenge Indigenous adults face when working to revitalise a language they did not grow up speaking.

Both projects situate language revitalisation within a history of colonial imposition of the English language, as well as Western, especially British, knowledge and worldview. In both projects, the teachers want the children to have a strong grounding in their own identity and community, one that will enable them to face and navigate the multiple worlds they will inhabit. Learning occurs through relationships, and in the case of decolonised education, Indigenous teachers are essential because they are able to draw on their own process of culturally situated learning when they were children. I was especially intrigued by descriptions of children's play in Aboriginal Head Start, where the children took up culturally located behaviour modelled by Indigenous adults.

The authors cite research evidence that Māori and Anishnabeg children and youth thrive when their schooling is decolonised, when their experiences in the classroom build on and connect with their learning at home. In other words, we know that education like these two projects provides the grounding and confidence for academic achievement.

A particular value of this article is its showing of decolonisation as situational – embedded in specific places and times, involving specific people. As a result, decolonisation does not look exactly the same from one place to the next, and is not necessarily a smooth process. Māori medium education in Aotearoa still sits on the margins of the

education system, which limits the availability of resources it has access to. While Māori medium education has a longer history and wider usage than Anishnaabemowein medium education in Canada, Indigenous educators in both countries are having to figure out how to navigate language loss among parents and other Indigenous adults in order to support Indigenous language development of young children. The children are the community's future; sharing work such as this helps to build that future.

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