

Ngā Taonga Whakaako: Bicultural competence in early childhood education ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

Access full report online [PDF] ^[2]

Excerpts from the executive summary:

The research study emerged from the authors' experiences as early childhood teachers and as initial teacher early childhood lecturers in the tertiary education sector. The development of bicultural competency is a fundamental foundation to the provision of quality early childhood education in Aotearoa New Zealand. To address the issue of teacher bicultural competence to apply knowledge of te reo me ōna tikanga, the following research objectives were developed:

1. To conduct a comprehensive literature review of the use of kaupapa Māori to develop bicultural competency in early childhood education.
2. To canvass the perceptions of a range of early childhood practitioners, both Māori and non- Māori, of bicultural competency in early childhood education.

Pivotal to the research project was the assumption of the validity of kaupapa Māori theory and practice as the underpinning of the bicultural model of practice, without challenging the preeminence and importance of te reo Māori me ōna tikanga in early childhood education delivery.

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Biculturalism in Aotearoa New Zealand involves a commitment to Māori language and culture, te reo Māori me ōna tikanga. Te Whāriki, the early childhood curriculum, is based on Māori pedagogy and philosophy, and the importance of responsive and reciprocal relationships in early childhood settings. The literature review acknowledges Te Whāriki as an exemplar of recommended bicultural practice in early childhood education. It also demonstrates the need for transformation at all levels of the early childhood sector in order to realise the vision of a fully bicultural early childhood sector. Moreover, this transformation has to occur at the individual educator level and permeate all levels and layers of practice from the education of early childhood education teachers to the development of new services and programmes and the design and enactment of policy and legislation.

The research study identified that the early childhood curriculum goal of integrating Māori ways of knowing and being within early childhood settings has not been attained universally in mainstream services. Despite good intentions, it is difficult for teacher education programmes and lecturers to achieve a consistent bicultural approach in their courses as there are significant challenges to bicultural commitment. There was some concern among research participants that graduate and registered teachers may not be fully equipped to meet the Graduating Teacher Standards, in particular Standard 3 (b), Standard 4 (e) and Standard 6 (e). The research data also revealed perceptual differences toward te Tiriti o Waitangi. For Māori it is a partnership document binding both parties. Many Pākehā perceive it as a document for Māori.

Many of the research participants strongly indicated the need for bicultural learning and bicultural resources with a kaupapa Māori base to support their development of bicultural teaching. Arising from the research are several implications: teachers need to acquire further knowledge of kaupapa Māori theory; and they need to know their own culture before bicultural understanding can be embedded in early childhood contexts.

Related link: Te whāriki: Early childhood curriculum [ENG] ^[3]

Region: Australia and New Zealand ^[4]

Tags: pedagogy and curricula ^[5]

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