



Recognising the Role of High Quality

**Early Childhood Care and Education in
Engaging Tamariki/Whānau in Wellbeing Advocacy**



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OVERVIEW



- Longitudinal impacts of child poverty
- Benefits of high quality early childhood care and education (ECCE)
- Potential of Te Whāriki, the early childhood curriculum as a focus for tamariki/whānau empowerment
- Climate change, public health, and ECCE
- Early childhood education centres as sites of community transformation, with children exercising agency and advocacy in this process - examples from recent research

LONGITUDINAL IMPACTS OF CHILD POVERTY

- The Christchurch Health and Development Study of a birth cohort of 1265 children born in Christchurch in 1977 has revealed that at age 30, children reared in poor families fared less well than children reared in more affluent families in terms of:
 - educational achievement
 - earnings at age 30
 - rates of welfare dependence
 - crime
 - mental health problems
 - early pregnancy/parenthood (Fergusson, Horwood, & Gibb, 2011, p. 24)

- “The first one thousand days of a child’s life are critical in determining whether or not that child will be a healthy, mature and productive adult” (Infometrics/Every Child Counts, 2011, p. iii)
- “Emerging research in neuroscience and developmental psychology suggests that poverty early in a child’s life may be particularly harmful because the astonishingly rapid development of young children’s brains leaves them sensitive (and vulnerable) to environmental conditions” (Infometrics/Every Child Counts, 2011, p.7)

CULTURAL INEQUITY OF POVERTY

○ Ethnicity of child	Total numbers of children	<i>Child Poverty Rate*</i>	Numbers of chn in poverty
Pākehā/European	645,300	16%	103,248
Māori	220,931	27%	59,651
Pasifika	110,300	40%	44,120
All children	898,700	23%	206,701

* (Source: Statistics NZ Census 2006, as cited in Henare, Puckey, Nicholson, Dale, & Vaithianathan, 2011, p. 27)

- Of the 200,000 children living below the poverty line in our country, just over half are Māori (59,651) and Pasifika (44,120). Māori and Pasifika have hardship rates two to three times higher than other groups. They are more likely than other groups to live in over-crowded households. Māori and Pasifika children have two to three times poorer health than other groups (Henare, Puckey, Nicholson, Dale, & Vaithianathan, 2011, p. vii)

- This difference reflects the relatively high proportion of Maori children living in sole parent beneficiary families (43% of DPB recipients are Maori). [CPAG case against government for tax credits]
- As for other years, the poverty rate in 2011 for older New Zealanders (7%) was lower than for any other age group (eg 14% for 25 to 64 year olds, and 21% for dependent children). (Ministry of Social Development, 2012, p. 4) [Benefits of universal (free) provision should be applied in the ECCE sector also]

ALL CHILDREN ARE VULNERABLE

- All children are vulnerable and require care, protection and supportive nurturing.
- How different groups of children thrive and achieve is dependent on the quality of those elements, their family circumstances, the impact of various government policies (e.g. tax, social support, housing, health, employment, education, income security, transport) and/or the behaviour of adults answerable for their wellbeing.
- The concept of “vulnerability” is diverse and influenced by social, emotional, physical and environmental factors (UNICEF, 2012, p. 12)

UNIVERSAL ECCE PROVISION IS BEST

- There is clear evidence that universal access to quality ECEC is more beneficial than interventions targeted exclusively at vulnerable groups.
- Targeting ECEC poses problems because it is difficult in practice to identify the target group reliably, it tends to stigmatise its beneficiaries and can even lead to segregation at later stages of education.
- Targeted services are also at more risk of cancellation than universal ones. (European Commission, 2011, as cited in Taylor et al., 2012, p. 6)

SOCIAL CORROSION OF POVERTY

- [There are] non-material as well as the material manifestations of poverty. Poverty has to be understood not just as a disadvantaged and insecure economic condition but also as a shameful and corrosive social relation ...
- The non-material aspects include ... lack of voice; disrespect, humiliation and assault on dignity and self esteem; shame and stigma; powerlessness; denial of rights and diminished citizenship (Lister, 2004, p. 7, as cited in Perry, 2011, p.16)

CHILDREN'S VOICES ON HOW POVERTY AFFECTS THEM

- ◉ Left out...Get picked on at school...Stress...Shame...Low self-esteem...Unhappy...Lonely...Sad...Depressed ...Angry...Feelings of worthlessness. (as cited in Egan - Bitran, 2010, p. 15)
- ◉ Not enough love...Neglect... Abuse...Molester...Child molestation...Rapist...Rape...Emotional abuse...Physical abuse...Bashed...Alcohol and violence...Parents not caring...Family violence...Gambling and violence. (p. 18)
- ◉ Troubled...Family-Less...Stress...Mad...Mental...Jealous... Lonely...Low self-esteem...Lost...Desperate...Angry...F***ed up...Worthless...No family...Very angry person and tagging...Could become a bully...Suicide. (p. 20)
- ◉ You're useless! You're nothing! I'm useless...I'm nothing...What did I do wrong? (p. 19)
- ◉ When you are poor you can get angry. Frustration can get worse then comes VIOLENCE. (p. 19)

HIGH QUALITY ECCE ADDRESSES POVERTY

- It is not inevitable that children raised in poor families will experience poor outcomes...Providing support and services that invest in children, and build skills and the capacity of their parents and the community where they live, can lift children out of poverty (Children's Commissioner's Expert Advisory Group on Solutions to Child Poverty, 2012, p. 3)
- ECE can mitigate the effects of poverty and risk for children (Children's Commissioner's Expert Advisory Group on Solutions to Child Poverty, 2012, p. 36)

BENEFITS OF HIGH QUALITY ECCE

- High quality early childhood care and education services can be a powerful equaliser, reducing disadvantages in low-income families (Fletcher & Dwyer, 2008, p. 66)
- Consistent evidence from a large body of international and New Zealand evidence found ECE participation is positively associated with gains in mathematics and literacy, school achievement, intelligence tests, and also school readiness, reduced grade retention, and reduced special education placement (Mitchell, Wylie, & Carr, 2008, p. 2)

- “Good quality ECE has greater benefits for children from low socioeconomic families, but children from middle and high socioeconomic families also gain” (Mitchell, et al., 2008, p. 7).
- However, it is important to note “the especially negative effects of poor quality early childhood education for children, who come from families at risk, is another clear finding” (Smith et al., 2000, p. 121).
- Strong public funding, policymaking and monitoring, regulation and goal-setting are crucial factors in ensuring this quality provision (Barnett, 2008, as cited in Infometrics/Every Child Counts, 2011, p. 37)

COMPONENTS OF HIGH QUALITY ECCE

- The existing research base shows positive outcomes (cognitive, learning dispositions, and social-emotional) of ECE participation for learners in the short and long term.
- These were most evident in centres rated as good quality in respect to:
 - responsive and stimulating adult-child interactions
 - rich learning environments
 - qualified teachers
 - adult:child ratios and group sizes that enabled teachers to work with small groups of children or interact one on one with individual children (Mitchell, Wylie, & Carr, 2008, p. 7)

- The early childhood services that contribute to positive child and family outcomes are settings characterised by:
 - intentional teaching
 - family engagement with ECE teachers and programmes, where social/cultural capital and interests from home are included, and both family and teachers can best support the child's learning [and emotional wellbeing]
 - a complex curriculum with opportunities for “sustained shared thinking” rich teacher-child interactions, engaging programmes, peers learning together, and assessments with valued outcomes in mind (Mitchell, Wylie, & Carr, 2008, p. 7)

CURRENT INEQUITABLE PROVISION

- Differential patterns in educational access and outcomes that occur in early childhood education become pronounced in upper primary and at secondary school
- Increased access to and increased quality of early child education for Māori and Pasifika whānau/families and in low decile communities are needed (Gluckman & Hayne, 2011, p. 11)

- Currently 40% of the early childhood care and education sector is private/for-profit
- Gaps in the availability of ECCE that mean Māori and Pasifika children in low-income areas are undersupplied with available early childhood centres. In parts of Auckland only 30-40% of children are able to attend local early childhood centres due to a shortage of places
- Inequity of current participation demonstrates the folly of leaving the growth of early childhood provision to the private sector, since market forces work in inversion to socio-economic need
- Recent changes to funding for qualified staffing and group-size will jeopardise quality provision in this country(Ritchie & Johnson, 2011, p. 161)

ECCE SERVICES AS SITES OF ETHICAL COMMUNITY-BUILDING

- “The early childhood setting is often their first experience of community outside their home” (Elliot, 2010, p. 12)
- ECCE services should “provide warm and welcoming settings that draw on family strengths, becoming hubs within the community and, in some cases, sites for integrated services” (Ministry of Education, 2011, p. 6)

YOUNG CHILDREN, COMMUNITY AND CITIZENSHIP

- Children need opportunities to demonstrate their capacity as participatory citizens, but adults are also required to transform the way they relate to children in acknowledging their citizenship identities, so that children's participation can be accommodated.
- Children need to be engaged with *as citizens* so they can actively participate as citizens.
(Phillips, 2010, p. 366)

CLIMATE CHANGE, PUBLIC HEALTH, AND ECCE

- **“Climate change is the biggest global health threat of the 21st century”** (Costello et al., 2009, p. 1693)
- Major threats to global health from climate change through changing patterns of disease, water and food insecurity, vulnerable shelter and human settlements, extreme climatic events, and population growth and migration (Costello et al., 2009, p. 1693)
- Adverse health outcomes are likely to be greatest in low-income countries and in poor people living in urban areas, elderly people, children, traditional societies, subsistence farmers, and coastal populations (Costello et al., 2009, p. 1701)

LATEST OECD ECCE REPORT

- New Zealand's Te Whāriki is a progressive and cogent document regarding the orientation and aims of ECE.
- The document clearly lays out what is expected of staff and child development with useful examples.
- The curriculum:
 - provides continuous child development through the use of one national framework for ECE;
 - puts the community at the centre of the curriculum;
 - strongly focuses on well-being and learning;
 - ensures age-appropriate content;
 - emphasises the importance of tolerance and respect for cultural values and diversity;
 - and is well aligned with primary schooling (Taguma, Litjens, & Makowiecki, 2012, p. 25)



OECD REPORT...

- Capitalising upon its strengths, New Zealand could further enhance quality through its curriculum. Other country practices would suggest such options as:
 - 1) strengthening parental involvement in curriculum design or implementation;
 - 2) reflecting [more] on children's agency and child-initiated play; and
 - 3) further improving the communication and leadership skills of staff for effective implementation. (Taguma, Litjens, & Makowiecki, 2012, p. 25)

TE WHĀRIKI - EARLY CHILDHOOD CURRICULUM: PRINCIPLES



THE PRINCIPLES, STRANDS, AND GOALS FOR THE EARLY CHILDHOOD CURRICULUM

THE PRINCIPLES

There are four broad principles at the centre of the early childhood curriculum.

Empowerment

The early childhood curriculum empowers the child to learn and grow.

Holistic Development

The early childhood curriculum reflects the holistic way children learn and grow.

Family and Community

The wider world of family and community is an integral part of the early childhood curriculum.

Relationships

Children learn through responsive and reciprocal relationships with people, places, and things.

NGĀ KAUPAPA WHAKAHAERE

E whā ngā kaupapa whakahaere kua whakatauria hei kawē i tēnei tikanga i roto i ngā kōhanga reo. Ko te mahi a ēnei kaupapa he whakatakoto huarahi mō ngā taumata whakahirahira me ngā tūmanako mō ngā mokopuna. I tua atu i tēnā ko te ārahi i ngā mahi ako, a, ko te āwhina hoki i ngā mahi ātari.

Ko ngā whakamārama mō ēnei āhuatanga katoa ka whai ake.

Whakamana

Mā te whāriki o te kōhanga reo e whakatō te kaha ki roto i te mokopuna, ki te ako, kia pakari ai tana tipu.

Kotahitanga

Mā te whāriki o te kōhanga reo e whakaata te kotahitanga o ngā whakahaere katoa mō te ako a te mokopuna, mō te tipu o te mokopuna.

Whānau Tangata

Me whiri mai te whānau, te hapū, te iwi, me tauwiwi, me ō rātou wāhi nohonga, ki roto i te whāriki o te kōhanga reo, hei āwhina, hei tautoko i te akoranga, i te whakatipuranga o te mokopuna.

Ngā Hononga

Mā roto i ngā piringa, i ngā whakahaere i waenganui o te mokopuna me te katoa, e whakatō te kaha ki roto i te mokopuna ki te ako.

TE WHĀRIKI - EARLY CHILDHOOD CURRICULUM: STRANDS

○ **Mana Whenua * Belonging**

- Whakapapa, tūrangawaewae - social and emotional wellbeing, equity, justice, fairness, being in community, interconnectedness

○ **Mana Tangata * Contribution**

- Mana, manaakitanga - responsibility, recognition, security, generosity, hospitality, kindness, nonviolence, peaceful relationships, intra and inter-personal awareness

○ **Mana Atua * Wellbeing**

- Wairuatanga, mauri - relational and spiritual wellbeing, health

○ **Mana Reo * Communication**

- Te Reo Māori - heritage/home languages and cultures

○ **Mana Aotūroa * Exploration**

- Kaitiakitanga - environmental/ecological sustainability

(Ministry of Education, 1996)

TE WHĀRIKI

- Through “working and playing together, children develop a sense of responsibility for the well-being of others and the environment” (p. 98)
- Children should be supported to attain “a recognition of Māori ways of knowing and making sense of the world and of respecting and appreciating the natural environment” (p. 82)
- Children should be supported in developing a relationship with the natural environment and a knowledge of their own place in the environment; respect and a developing sense of responsibility for the well-being of both the living and the non-living environment; working theories about the living world and knowledge of how to care for it (p. 90)

CONSULTING WITH CHILDREN REPORT

- Children (three to eight years old) often included the natural world in their illustrations of what they valued and wished for.
- There were often images of the outside worlds in which there were birds in the sky, flowers blooming, and trees and grass growing.
- These children's enjoyment of animals was also apparent (Mac Naughton, Smith, & Lawrence, 2003, p. 51)

*T. gently holds a butterfly on his hand telling us
"Don't touch it's wings or it will die".
(Raglan Childcare and Education Centre)*



METHODOLOGIES

- Methodological paradigm:
 - narrative research methodologies (Clandinin, 2007); kaupapa Māori (Bishop, 2005); ethnographic modes (Aubrey, David, Godfrey, & Thompson, 2000)
- Data gathering:
 - audio and video-taped interviews; discussions with teachers, parents & children; field notes by researchers; photographs; examples of children's art and stories; centre pedagogical documentation
- Analysis and co-theorizing :
 - dialogical negotiation of meaning (Siraj-Blatchford & Siraj-Blatchford, 1997); collaborative storying (Bishop, 1996, 1997).

TITIRO WHAKAMURI, HOKI WHAKAMUA. WE ARE THE FUTURE, THE PRESENT AND THE PAST: CARING FOR SELF, OTHERS AND THE ENVIRONMENT IN EARLY YEARS' TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Research project funded by the New Zealand Teaching and Learning Initiative (Ritchie, Duhn, Rau, & Craw, 2010)
- Ten early childhood care and education settings from across Aotearoa
- Acknowledgement to co-directors, teacher co-researchers, children and families
- Reports available at <http://www.tlri.org.nz/tlri-research/research-completed/ece-sector/titiro-whakamuri-hoki-whakamua-we-are-future-present-and>

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What philosophies and policies guide teachers/whānau in their efforts to integrate issues of ecological sustainability into their current practices?
- How are Māori ecological principles informing and enhancing a kaupapa of ecological sustainability, as articulated by teachers, tamariki and whānau?
- In what ways do teachers/whānau articulate and/or work with pedagogies that emphasise the interrelationships between an ethic of care for self, others and the environment in local contexts?
- How do/can centres work with their local community in the process of producing ecologically sustainable practices?

WIDE-RANGING COMMUNITY- BUILDING WELLBEING PRACTICES...

- Cultural sustainability through use of traditional cosmological narratives.
- Teachers generating a sense of healing and sanctuary within their early childhood centre spaces.
- Gardening, recycling, and food preparation as part of the daily and seasonal shared rituals of caring for each other and the planet.
- The sharing of excess food produce in reciprocal cycles within the centre communities.
- All these practices being underpinned by a sense of wairuatanga, or spirituality (Bone, 2005; 2008).
- Some teachers coined the term “community empathy” to describe what they felt was occurring within their centre practice.
- Children advocating within their communities.

MANA ATUA, WAIRUATANGA - SPIRITUAL WELLBEING

- *Papatuanuku (Earth Mother) and Ranginui (Sky Father) look after all of us. The sun, wind, rain and air look after the plants that look after us. We are nurturing our tamariki (children) to look after their environment.*
- *In caring for our natural environment, the tamariki are developing respectful relationships with nature whilst nurturing their health, well-being and wairua (spirituality/soul) within. The children freely interact with our garden to express their inner thoughts and emotions. [Hawera Kindergarten]*



MANA ATUA: HEALING, SANCTUARY, NURTURE & WELLBEING

Sitting in the sun

What do we do when the sunshine comes out in winter?

- *We follow it! It was such a beautiful day we decided we wanted to eat our lunch outside. The teachers moved the big kai table out and it felt like a party. The sparrows enjoyed our crumbs afterwards and the teachers didn't have to mop the floor! We wanted to have a really long lunch outside and eat all our food. Then it was back inside for a lie down on our beds, then outside for more playing in the sun!*
- *We discuss the weather and how sunshine makes you feel. We discuss how living things need sun to grow. We discuss eating healthy food and resting to help look after ourselves so we don't get sick. The children cope with a degree of change in the daily routine.*

(Raglan Childcare and Education Centre)



KAITIAKITANGA & MANAAKITANGA

- Children in many of the centres took active responsibility for gardening, harvesting and preparing and sharing their produce



“T. by his actions of watering, watching and investigating changes over time, is linking food from our plants and care and respect for Papatuanuku [Earth Mother]” (Penelope, Raglan Childcare and Education Centre)

MANAAKITANGA : RECIPROCITY, SHARING

- *Our OOOBY (Out of Our Own Back Yards) bowl at Raglan Childcare is overflowing! We have harvested our tomatoes as they come ripe and parents and teachers are bringing in fruit and vegetables from their own back yards. Today we enjoyed sweet-corn from E's garden. C left an enormous watermelon on the kitchen bench— much too big for the OOOBY bowl, but big enough to share half upstairs with the under two's and half down stairs—delicious!
[Penelope, Raglan Childcare and Education Centre]*



'COMMUNITY EMPATHY'

- *“Our kindergarten is genuinely focussed on community empathy. The children had their termly visit to St Andrews Rest Home, in line with caring for others. It is a good chance to associate with the elderly in our community, and is within walking distance through Kew Park”*
(Richard Hudson Kindergarten)



MANA TANGATA - CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY WITHIN THEIR COMMUNITIES

- The children took responsibility for caring for their environment.
- They came to expect that recycling would be offered, and this led teachers at one kindergarten liaising with local schools around this expectation
- Children at one childcare centre wrote a letter to their local store, asking for wheel-chair access to be provided.

10/6/8
The other day we were a bit late for school, Petra wanted to pick up the rubbish around the neighbourhood. She said there was rubbish on The Earth Mothers' Body (Papatuanuku) She is quite concerned about smoke going into Rangī the Sky fathers' lungs + it would be hard for him to breathe! We want to do a beach clean up too.

Note from
Petra's mother,
Richard Hudson
Kindergarten

MANA TANGATA - CONTRIBUTING TO INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

Our Visitor from Kenya 2008

Margaret Ouku-Mowbray came to talk to the children about Kenya. The children made up a range of questions to ask her.

- *Where is Kenya?*
- *How do you get from Kenya to NZ?*
- *What do the people eat?*
- *What animals are there?*

Margaret told them about all the different wild animals to be found in Kenya, then S. asked "Are the children scared?" Margaret said they are not because the wild animals do not live in the town.

Margaret sang a song to us in Swahili and we sang back to her. M., S. and K. did a haka for her.

We learnt that people in Kenya are just like us - they eat the same sorts of food, their bodies are like ours but their skin is darker. They are poorer than us so we are going to collect our old shoes, clothes and books to send to the Kenyan children.

(Raglan Childcare and Education Centre)



NESTINGS OF COMMUNITY BUILDING - CENTRE, LOCAL, NATIONAL, INTERNATIONAL NETWORKING

- Everyday community building through rituals of relational, cultural and ecological wellbeing sustainability
- Wider transformational effects into the wider community through children and parent/whānau advocacy

CHALLENGES

- Human Rights Commission recommendation to the Māori Affairs Select Committee *Inquiry into the Determinants of Wellbeing for Māori Children* that the government affirm the rights of Māori children as expressed in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children (UNCROC), the UN Convention on the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP) and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) including the:
 - need to address unacceptable levels of systemic inequality that undermine the wellbeing of Māori children
 - intimate link between the wellbeing of Māori children and the wellbeing of their whānau, communities and the ecosystems in which they live (Human Rights Commission, 2012, p. 31)

MOVING AWAY FROM 'VULNERABILITY' DISCOURSES

- Climate change poverty and child abuse can be constructed and treated as narratives of vulnerability and protection
- Our challenge is to shift this focus towards “children’s active participation and agency in efforts to prevent, prepare for, cope with, and adapt to climate change and extreme events... facilitated through child-centred programmes, child rights-based approaches,
- children’s engagement in related policy spaces (Tanner, 2010, p. 340)

PREPARING CHILDREN FOR SUSTAINABLE FUTURES

- Children’s “lives today, and the lives of future generations of children and young people, are and will be affected by the impacts of climate change, environmental degradation and increasing global inequality.
- However, today’s children and young people are also the decision-makers of the future, and those decisions will be based on learning, experiences and values gained during their childhoods.
- They also have an active role to play in our efforts to live more sustainably now” (Renton & Butcher, 2010, p. 161)

THE EARTH CHARTER...

RESPECT AND CARE FOR THE COMMUNITY OF LIFE

- Respect Earth and life and all its diversity
- Care for the community of life with understanding, compassion, and love
- Build democratic societies that are just, participatory, sustainable, and peaceful
- Secure Earth's bounty for present and future generations
(UNESCO, 2011)



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