EXPLORING THE POTENTIAL OF TE WHĀRIKI IN SUPPORTING A DECOLONISING EDUCATIONAL REFORM IN CLASSROOMS.

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This is dedicated to all Māori children who have been underserved by our education system and to the hope of a better future.

ABSTRACT

This thesis begins with a deep belief in the potential of Te Whāriki, a bicultural curriculum document born of the dual heritages of Aotearoa/New Zealand, to support the educational reform needed. There is a need to decolonise our classrooms and create contexts for learning where Māori students feel they can belong and also thrive. The pathway to achieving this reality is complex. It requires a deep foundational understanding of our shared histories in order to move from deficit positions about Māori learners to ones of agency and hope. While strong relationships are important it was by connecting with Māori metaphors that we were able to move beyond the rhetoric and begin to build shared understandings and greater respect for knowledge from te ao Māori. The process of whakawhiti kōrero or dialogic and iterative sense making furthered our combined theorising. The whakataukī and metaphors embedded in Te Whāriki were foundational to these contexts as they strengthened our collective abilities as teachers to make the learning more meaningful and fun.

This research process provided me with valuable insights into the way my own power and beliefs can inhibit potential collective learning. Despite this it was the content of Te Whāriki that helped to enable the learning of myself and my participants, creating safe and supportive contexts for our collective learning to begin to grow.

While this research strengthened my own beliefs in the potential of Te Whāriki it also assisted my participants to become more open to this potential as well. In this endeavour, time was required to engage with the more expert other, whether this was from other people or through the use of artefacts. The relational and culturally responsive pedagogy that we had learned to implement in our classrooms was also able to be connected with, as our shared unlearning and learning flowed.

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Finally to my children Lola and Hadley, you are my inspiration. To know you is to know you were born of greatness, full of inherent value and potential. It was through this that I came to understand and see this in all children, what a gift.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The relational and pedagogical intersectionality between the intent and content of the curriculum Te Whāriki (The Woven Mat, Ministry of Education, 2017) with cultural relationships for responsive pedagogy is exciting. This led me to consider the potential of Te Whāriki to further support the theoretical and pedagogical development of teachers in primary schools. A more critical view of cultural responsiveness requires an acknowledgement of how power manifests itself within interactions and how this power is rooted in our colonial history. It also requires us to consider that the systems, structures and policies that surround us, are too a social construction born out of this same history (Bishop,1997).

Te Whāriki and cultural relationships for responsive pedagogy both share Kaupapa Maori, Critical Theories and Sociocultural Theory as part of their theoretical base (Berryman & Eley, 2017; Ministry of Education, 2017). This shared foundation alongside the familiarity of curriculum documents for teachers indicates real potential for primary school teachers to use Te Whāriki as a lens through which to view and reflect on their classroom praxis. For teachers to actively work to decolonise our education system and raise outcomes for all, they must be supported to reflect deeply about their teaching and learning. In order to reconceive of their roles in schools, engage with critical praxis and build new bicultural and bilingual ways of being with their students, with whānau and with each other. This thesis contends that Te Whāriki has the foundational and theoretical basis to achieve this.

In order to further investigate and understand these considerations, in this thesis I will explore the following research questions

Research questions

- How can a deeper understanding of Te Whāriki support the indigenisation and decolonisation of state-run primary classrooms and schools in New Zealand?

- How might Te Whāriki support teacher agency and culturally responsive practice?

- In what ways can Te Whāriki support teachers to acknowledge realities they are socialised not to see and become culturally responsive practitioners?

- In what ways can Te Whāriki support primary school teachers to see and react to issues of power in their classrooms and schools?

This thesis is made up of five Chapters. Chapter One outlines the justifications and theoretical basis for this study, within the context of previous research and thinking. Chapter Two explains my methodology and presents my methods. Chapter Three presents the research findings. Chapter Four discusses the main themes in relation to the research questions. Finally, Chapter Five considers the limitations of the research and implications for future research and thinking.

CHAPTER 1 -LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1 Introduction

In this chapter I position and justify my research in the context of previous, related research and thinking. I outline our history and its influence on the construction of Aotearoa / New Zealand society founded in a history of colonisation and steeped in racialised inequity. I explore how New Zealand schooling sits within this structure, how colonial frameworks manifest and the unequal power relations these create. I then consider the devastating effects on Māori students, their whanau (family and extended family) and ultimately on all people of Aotearoa. Aotearoa and New Zealand are the Māori then English names for our country and in this thesis, I use these names interchangeably.

I then outline a number of policy and praxis responses including a focus on transition to primary school as a weak point, where children's experiences are known to affect their educational journey and the rise of play-based learning as a result. Within this mix of policy and praxis future focused learning, decolonisation and indigenisation, Ka Hikitia (meaning to step up and aimed at the system and schools, Ka Hikitia is both a Māori strategy and policy) and cultural relationships for responsive pedagogy are also discussed.

Finally, I explore the potential of the Te Whāriki curriculum as a theoretical foundation through which teachers can critically question the structures they work and live within and how they affect their interactions within their classrooms and schools. The intent and whakapapa (genealogy) of Te Whāriki are outlined along with its underpinning theories and principles. In this thesis Māori words are translated the first time they are used.

1.2 Our history and the construction of our society

Long before my ancestors left Europe with dreams of adventure, wealth and ultimately power and domination, Tangata whenua (people of the land) recognised as our nation's first people and known today as Māori, lived and thrived in this land. Here they developed a way of knowing and being through their understanding of the world, an ontology and epistemology that is valid and valuable (Berryman,

2008). They used this knowledge to develop and participate within a thriving economic system, trading extensively across New Zealand and beyond (Bishop & Glynn, 1999). After European settlement, Māori entrepreneurship continued to grow as they forged successful business relationships with the new settlers. As Tukaki (2018) explains "Māori supplied the towns and cities that sprang up with livestock and crops. This soon extended to developing business relationships internationally, and Māori traded in the South Pacific and Australia" (para. 2).

Although it can be said that these initial relationships held mutual benefits, this was not the case for long. As more settlers arrived, they brought with them their own ways of being and knowing, an ontology and epistemology born out of their own history within their home countries. Although these ways were not inherently bad it cannot be denied that it was here that beliefs such as social Darwinism, a hierarchical ranking of races where whites are superior to all others (Eley, 2020, p.237) and imperialism were conceived, grew and were used to justify colonisation itself. Considering this, it is not surprising that these reciprocal benefits born of another worldview began to change.

1.2.1 Doctrine of Discovery

The ways of being and knowing that would prove to be devastating for Māori are clearly illustrated within the Doctrines of Discovery. As Ngata (2018) explains, this 'legal' document originated "out of the Vatican in the 15th and 16th centuries. It gave the monarchies of Britain and Europe the right to conquer and claim lands, and to convert or kill the native inhabitants of those lands" (p. 51). Not only was this reasoning grasped in the hands of the new arrivals it also sat firmly in their hearts and minds and it "sculpted a societal reasoning of European superiority over all that are non-white and non-Christian, which was accompanied with a sense of supreme European entitlement to all non-white, non-Christian lands and resources" (Ngata, 2018, p.14). And, as Jackson explained in his 2012 address to the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, the "Doctrine of Discovery opened up the bodies and souls of indigenous peoples to a colonising gaze which only saw them as inferior, subordinate, and in fact less human than them" (para. 3). The value and legitimacy or lack thereof of any other peoples the colonisers may meet on their adventures of discovery had clearly already been decided, long before they landed

on the shores of Aotearoa and looked into the eyes and lives of our first people, already here.

1.2.2 Colonised frameworks and mythtakes

The beliefs held by white Europeans about the inherent power and worth of their own culture in relation to others have continued to fuel and direct their acts. They informed the expectations of the burgeoning colony and built the colonial frameworks, belief systems and ultimately myths that justified a deficit view and disregard of Māori. An important tool in this process was the pursuit of 'research'.

The arrival of European colonists in Aotearoa/New Zealand led to "Māori people being one of the most researched people in the world" (Bishop, 1997, p.25). This very research became a devastating tool "implicated in the production of Western ways of knowing and in denying the validity of Māori knowledge, language, and culture" (Smith, L, 2000, p.225). Denying the validity and value of 'being Māori'. This research involved the removal of Māori cultural elements from the contexts in which they were created, the removal from the contexts in which they made sense, it removed them from the insights of Te Ao Māori (the Māori world). As Bishop (1997) states, it:

> simplified and commodified Māori knowledge for 'consumption' by the colonisers... It has developed a social pathology approach by focussing on the supposed inability of Māori culture to cope with human problems, implying that Māori culture was and is inferior to that of the coloniser in human terms (p.36).

In this way it served a useful purpose to the colonisers of justifying the systematic acquisition of Māori land and the attempted annihilation of Māori culture. Another devastating effect of this research was to control and manipulate the cultural narrative about what it means to be Māori, so much so that "myths created as part of the dominant discourse are taken up by Māori as truths, so that a deeper psychological problem is created. Māori begin to believe the myths constructed about themselves" (Bishop, 1997, p.29). Moana Jackson refers to these myths constructed about Māori as mythtakes.

Through the application of colonisation Māori people have had research imposed upon them and have had the biased results used to justify calculated and ongoing attempts at their disempowerment and cultural destruction. As L. Smith (2021) explains "the term 'research' is inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism. The word itself, 'research', is probably one of the dirtiest words in the Indigenous world's vocabulary". The distrust and disgust at this word is understandable as Western research on Māori created and sustains a colonial framework, justified by these deliberately constructed mythtakes, that continues to dominate New Zealand society today (Jackson, 2020).

1.2.3 Construction of our education system/ factory model

Upon this foundation New Zealand's education system was built which "from its inception took on board a set of 'values', 'ideals' and 'standards', more or less coherent with the cultural history of Britain and Europe" (Penetito, 2004, p.90). These values and ideals served the colonisers at the expense of Māori, as Pihama and Lee-Morgan (2019) assert:

> Education was both a target and tool of colonialism, destroying and diminishing the validity and legitimacy of Indigenous education, while simultaneously replacing and reshaping it with an 'education' complicit with the colonial goals. Schooling as a colonial structure served as a vehicle for wider imperialist ideological objectives (p. 19).

Although the Treaty of Waitangi later promised partnership, participation and protection as Bishop (2005) outlines it was not enough to influence deep seated beliefs:

> The history of Māori and Pākehā relations in New Zealand since the signing of the treaty has not been one of partnership, of two peoples developing a nation. Rather the history has been one of political, social, and economic domination by the Pākehā majority and marginalisation of the Māori people through the removal of available discourses of loyalty, partnership, power-sharing, neutrality, and so on. (p.58)

These beliefs continue today and are evident in past and present reform efforts. As reported by the Office of the Auditor General (2012), in the late 1980s and 1990s New Zealand's educational policies resulted in "educators focusing on social backgrounds, parenting, and other societal influences. This has been described by the Ministry and other commenters as deficit thinking" p.15. This meant that educators could place the blame for underachievement upon the children themselves, their families and their homes.

As Sleeter (2015) explains it, the framework of our education system as well as any attempts to reform it sit clearly within a factory model of schooling. Sleeter goes on to describe three factors that illustrate the factory model system. Firstly it is "highly inequitable, reproducing social stratification based on race and class. Using structures such as tracking, factory model schooling sorts young people for unequal positions" (p.112). It seems New Zealand has embraced these practices even more than most. As of 2013 we had the highest rate of ability grouping in the OECD, "in fact, the OECD posited in a 2017 economic report that one reason for New Zealand's PISA decline in the early 2000s could be the country's high rate of ability grouping" (Bolton, 2017, p. 30). Alton-Lee (2021) in the Ending Streaming in Aotearoa report goes on to explain:

> English-medium education in Aotearoa is one of the most streamed education systems in the world. Leading educational researchers and economists have quantified the harm of streaming in lost opportunity to learn, bullying and stigma affecting the future of children with costs to the whole of society. It pervades across primary, intermediate and secondary schooling with ability grouping even in early learning (p.4).

The second factor Sleeter (2015) refers to is a standardised curriculum, "based on a White upper-middle class worldview that limits perspectives, funds of knowledge, and intellectual inquiry, and bores the diverse students in schools" (p.113). Finally and perhaps most concerning, this model, "is oriented around compliance with and maintenance of the status quo, rather than social transformation" (p.114).

This model is extremely limiting as it positions teachers as managers rather than facilitators of learning, and according to Leland and Kasten (2002), "fosters a spirit

of competition. Much like competing business associates, children soon learn that there is more to be gained from working alone than from sharing ideas" (p. 9). In this way it has influenced what teachers do but also what they understand learning to *be*, top-down, individualised, linear, disconnected and industrial. This colonial, factory model of schooling system was never meant to be fair or empowering and unsurprisingly it is not, "despite proclamations of being new and better, most school reform efforts are variations of factory model schooling... anchored in a steeply hierarchical capitalist and racist structure, was never designed to benefit everyone" (Sleeter, 2015, p. 111)

1.3 Implications of our racialised historical past

Our history does not just sit quietly in our past, it looms large everyday as it is from here we have grown. The results of this racialised past are easy to find, Māori people on average, own less property and earn less money, they make up 50% of our prison population while being 14% of the national population (Department of Corrections 2007). Māori people on average live eight years less than non-Māori (Ministry of Health, n.d.). Despite this evidence of inequity being easy to obtain, the temptation when faced with such damning statistics seems to deny and turn away (DiAngelo, 2011) to lean on the mythtakes so carefully constructed to theorise the problem as being due to the deficit inherent in Māori people themselves. These negative statistics are also mirrored within our education system with Māori students much more likely to disengage from schooling and overrepresented in stand downs and suspensions. New Zealand's preference for streaming and ability grouping is influenced too by our colonial history and more harshly impacts Māori. As Tokona te Raki, Māori Futures Project found in their Ending Streaming in Aotearoa (2021) report, "for Māori, streaming is especially damning. Stereotyping, deficit thinking, and racism all play a role that leads to extension classes being predominantly European and foundation classes largely Māori and Pasifika. This leads to further stereotyping and to the risk of Māori and Pasifika students internalising these stereotypes" (p.7). Few areas of our education system are exempt from this devastating attempt to batch and sort:

> At primary school it is often called in-class grouping. From earliest days, students know if they are in the top or bottom group for

> reading or mathematics. The top groups get more challenging work and the expectations are higher. At secondary school, it is often known as banding. There is the extension class, a middle band, and the foundation class, sometimes referred to by students as the 'cabbage class'. How we stream students is in itself, a dangerously flawed process with the result that there are schools in New Zealand where over 40 percent of the Year 9 Māori cohort are placed in foundation classes. (Tokona te Raki, Māori Futures Project, 2021, p.7).

These considerations clearly indicate that Māori experience multi layered racism within New Zealand schools, at the individual, school, system and policy levels (Alansari et al., 2020). As the Ministry of Education acknowledge:

> There is much room for improvement in how well the education system is performing for particular groups of students and this needs urgent attention and focus for change. Too many Māori students are left behind and disengage from education before gaining the skills, knowledge and qualifications needed to reach their full potential. The negative impact of this on students, their whānau, wider communities and New Zealand is significant. Immediate and sustained change is needed (2013, p.5-6).

Internationally when ranked for equity New Zealand's education system sits 33rd out of 38 countries (Gromada et al., 2020). Despite the undeniable obstacles faced by Māori students, built into the very structures of our schools, we spend less money trying to correct this and as The Tomorrow's Schools Independent Taskforce (TSIT) asserted:

> The gap between our highest and lowest performers is wide compared with other countries and we have fewer students from poor homes who perform well… unlike many other OECD countries, we put fewer resources into supporting our students who come from disadvantaged homes (2018, p.29).

We also suffer through our devastating rates of youth anxiety and suicide

(Appelhoff, 2013), the 2015 OECD's PISA international survey of 15-year-old students wellbeing cited by the TSIT (2018), showed, "students in New Zealand report above average rates of schoolwork related anxiety, are less likely to have a sense of belonging at school and are more likely to report being bullied at least a few times each month" (p.31).

Clearly Māori have been most disadvantaged in the collision of our colonial past and present. But it is too simplistic to then suggest that the current ways of working are bad for Māori and therefore good for Pākehā. Living and working within an inequitable system based on myths of superiority that we cannot or will not see, is limiting and not good for anyone. As the Office of the Auditor General (2012) stated when discussing Māori students "New Zealand's future prosperity is inextricably linked with the achievement of these students… It is in the interests of all New Zealanders that young Māori thrive academically, socially and culturally" (p.7). For Pākehā educators understanding our own place in the inequitable structures created around and with us is important, we must understand our privilege. Margaret (2018) suggests "regardless of personal politics or wealth, as Pākehā we all benefit from the dispossession of Māori. There are no exemptions from Pākehā privilege". (para. 12–13). As a Pākehā I understand that it was through my own ancestors' disregard for the value and potential of Te Ao Māori that we lost invaluable insights into different perspectives of our world. Although mourning the invisibility of one's privilege can be harrowing it must be done. Otherwise we will continue to struggle with our own identities, to be anxious and fearful to interact, learn and indeed unlearn with our Treaty partners (see Kiddle, 2020). A deliberate, determined response is clearly needed, we must together learn from our past when conceiving of the changes urgently required in our schools.

1.4 Responses

Change is needed. It is also clear that this work must start in schools, in order to positively affect New Zealand and wider society as a whole, for as Sensoy and DiAngelo (2014) state "because schools are among the most powerful institutions wherein social stratification is reproduced, they are also where it must be challenged" (p.8). We have the opportunity to build something better "as educators, we must purposely architect a physical, social, and emotional place called school

that nurtures the body and soul of the community with hope, belonging, empathy and becoming" (SooHoo 2015, p.255). As educators we must begin by understanding how this system was built, the historical, social and political causes (Bishop, 2005), as well as our own part in sustaining it (Alton-Lee, 2003; Berryman, et al. 2015; DiAngelo, 2011). Although this will be difficult work there is a lot to gain, for as Alton-Lee (2017) attests "formal education can make a difference not just for individuals, but also for social cohesion, economic growth and adaptation. Or, education can influence student learning and attitudes in ways that are counterproductive to valued goals" (p.2). We have the agency to make a difference by changing not only what we believe, but also what we do and how we think, for as Bishop (2005) states:

> The major influence on Māori students' educational achievement lies in the minds and actions of the majority of their teachers…. Changing this theorising, through teachers themselves challenging their positioning within such a discourse, is a necessary condition for improving Māori student educational engagement and achievement (p.83).

The inadequacies within our education system have not gone unnoticed and many interventions, reforms and initiatives have been attempted. It is interesting to consider which epistemologies these responses have their roots embedded in as according to Alton-Lee et al. (1987), "neither research programmes nor curriculum packages which come out of a dominant Pākehā culture will be sufficient to accomplish the fundamental changes that are required" (p.209), therefore, the solutions do not sit within the colonial frameworks they seek to dismantle (Lorde, 2003).

Next, and to test these contentions, I discuss five responses, two that have their ideological roots within a colonised framework: a focus on transition/play based learning; and '21st century learning'. I will then follow with three responses with their roots more embedded within an indigenous or bicultural framework: Ka Hikitia a Māori policy response; cultural relationships for responsive pedagogy, reform focused on indigenising and decolonising classrooms and finally Te Whāriki a curriculum response.

1.4.1 Transition/ Play-based

In the last ten years transition to schooling has become an area of focus for the Ministry of Education. During this time a series of documents and recommendations were produced. This area is of particular relevance to this research as it is the transition between early childhood education and primary schooling in New Zealand where Te Whāriki naturally sits. Transition has garnered attention as it is an experience that can have positive or very negative effects on a child's future learning. Peters (2010) in her Transition to School Literature Review states that "almost any child is at risk of making a poor or less successful transition if their individual characteristics are incompatible with features of the environment they encounter" (p.2). This is a concerning statement when considered alongside an understanding of the environment they encounter at primary school and how it came to be. Inevitably Māori students and their whānau will experience less cultural continuity (Krieg, 2016) with school than their Pākehā counterparts, who '"already see themselves everywhere" (Corlett, 2020, p.43). The impact and importance of transitions on the educational journeys of Māori students' is reiterated in its inclusion as a key focus in the Māori education policy Ka Hikitia– Accelerating Success 2013–2017:

> Successful transitions in education occur when students develop a strong sense of belonging in the new setting and feel proud and supported in their identity, language and culture. Successful transitions are critical in enabling strong education pathways for Māori students (Ministry of Education, 2013 p.24).

When summarising the factors that influence a positive transition to school, Peters (2010) emphasises the features of a school environment that fosters children's wellbeing, belonging and positive engagement with learning. She includes responsive, reciprocal, relationships between all concerned, as key features of a successful transition going on to state that:

> A successful transition will include teachers who affirm the child's identity and culture, connect with and build on the children's funds of knowledge from early childhood education and

> home, and hold positive expectations for success which includes seeing promise in new entrant learners rather than deficits (p.73).

The Education Review Office (2015) has also explored transition to school and suggested some factors influencing success or otherwise, they included:

> Culturally responsive teaching and assessment contributed to children's sense of themselves as confident learners; Children's previous interests, strengths, prior knowledge and dispositions for learning were known and used to develop relevant and responsive learning for children; Schools' practices helped children and their families develop a sense of belonging (p.1).

It makes sense that children treated in this way will flourish. How to fit these ideals into a colonial, factory model of schooling, how to even conceive of them alongside the limitations of a concept of learning taught to us by this very model is more troublesome. An example of the tensions between the ways of being required of educators and the frameworks they work within can be seen with the introduction of the National Standards. This policy was made mandatory in New Zealand Primary and intermediate schools in 2010 and as Wylie and Berg (2013) explain "the policy rationale was to improve student achievement by setting out expectations, standards of the knowledge and skills students should have at each year level in reading, writing and numeracy". A policy that sat perfectly with a linear, industrial, disconnected view of learning. The impact of this policy, especially within the early years of primary school, was swift and led to The Report on the Advisory of Early Learning (Ministry of Education, 2015) stating, "expert advice made it clear that a downward 'push' in assessment practices into the first year of school in response to National Standards is having an undesirable effect on teaching practices" (p.27). This report went on to assert "we believe primary schools should consider using Te Whāriki, rather than the New Zealand Curriculum, as a framework for planning, assessing and evaluating in the first year of school" (p.29). The Ministry of Education elaborated on this suggestion by stating "tensions remain between the approaches Te Whāriki and the New Zealand Curriculum advocate to learning, but policy frameworks have consistently

recognised that a play-based curriculum offers the best learning experiences for the early years" (2015, p.29).

As a result, there has been a resurgence of 'play' as a vital and appropriate means of learning for young children. This has given rise to a wave of 'play based learning' or 'learning through play' in primary schools as teachers try to decrease the dissonance between how they are teaching and the research they are reading. Unfortunately, the well-meaning teachers initiating these programmes are trying to insert these ideas into the existing systems, processes and ways of being; into a colonised framework or structure that is ultimately constraining them.

1.4.2 Future focused learning

Another area of interest has been the focus on '21st century learning', learning which is focused on the future, on our changing world and the challenging and complex 'wicked issues' that face us (Bolsted et al. 2012). It acknowledges that our education system is not keeping pace with the rapid changes. It does seem likely that the skills people need today are very different to the skills needed 50 years ago and different again to the skills needed in the next 50 years. Alton-Lee (2017) asserts that "different pedagogical approaches are required for these new global goals; pedagogical approaches that not only develop curriculum understandings but also involve and support children in taking effective action so that they experience a sense of agency" (p.5).

It seems that a focus on '21st century learning' requires a widening of our views of achievement, beyond just the academics so prized within the factory model. As the TSIT (2018), suggested:

> Future changes in the environment, society, and the economy will require more of schools and educators. They will require a deep appreciation of the values, knowledge, skills, competencies and dispositions that learners need if they are to lead successful lives as local and global citizens. To do this we must develop a more collaborative system that supports the achievement, health, wellbeing and sense of belonging in our students' physical and virtual worlds (p.27).

No change will be made to the success or otherwise of transitions to primary school or to how well we are prepared for the complex problems we face in an ever-changing world unless we understand how our systems and structures have been socially constructed. Built on ideologies of superiority and individualism in which these "new skills" cannot thrive. In order to avoid the failure of past responses that are predicated on colonial frameworks, we must work deliberately together with our Treaty partners on responses that will first understand and unlearn then deconstruct and reshape.

1.4.3 Ka Hikitia

Māori education strategies have been released regularly since 1999. Ka Hikitia itself grew from an internal ministry document developed in 2006, Ka Hikitia: Setting Priorities for Māori Education (See Berryman & Eley, 2017, p.95). This strategy then developed into Ka Hikitia: Managing for Success 2008–2012 (Ministry of Education, 2008), followed by Ka Hikitia: Accelerating Success 2013–2017 (Ministry of Education, 2013). The latest iteration, Ka Hikitia – Ka Hāpaitia (Ministry of Education, 2020) sets out a 30-year vision. Despite changes through refreshes and relaunches the essential foundations remain consistent with that identified by Ritche and Rau (2010):

> The primary focus of *Ka Hikitia* is its tension to generate a significant shift in discourse away from historical colonialist messages of deficit ideology, which have blamed Māori families, culture, and socio-economic disadvantage for the educational failure of Māori children, avoiding the spotlight being placed on the underlying discourses of the education system, and the resulting practices of its managers and educators (p.3).

Unfortunately, these policies have not yet led to the transformative change required. The Office of the Auditor General (2013) in particular was damning of its implementation, not the potential or value of the policy itself but rather with its launch, introduction and facilitation:

> The Ministry of Education (the Ministry) introduced Ka Hikitia slowly and unsteadily. Confused communication about who was

> intended to deliver Ka Hikitia, unclear roles and responsibilities in the Ministry, poor planning, poor programme and project management, and ineffective communication with schools have meant that action to put Ka Hikitia into effect was not given the intended priority. As a result, the Ministry's introduction of Ka Hikitia has not been as effective as it could have been. (p. 7)

This policy requires a deliberate reconstruction of our colonial factory model and a re-conception of success as Māori. It requires new understandings of our history, our differing epistemologies and ontologies and reimagining the potential that lies here for all New Zealanders. As such, surely deserving of the highest priority.

1.4.4 Cultural Relationships for Responsive Pedagogy

As the changes needed to improve outcomes for our Māori students and in fact for all learners have become more obvious, the need to change classroom interactions to culturally responsive has become more apparent and more accepted. Many recent reform efforts include references to ideas such as cultural relationships, cultural competencies and cultural responsiveness. A deep understanding of these ideas is not simple because it requires teachers to inquire deeply into the motivations and beliefs that influence their relationships and interactions. More effective relationships and interactions are explained more extensively within the six dimensions of Cultural relationships for responsive pedagogy which include, whanaungatanga, whakapapa, kaupapa, wānanga, ako and mahi ngātahi (see Berryman et al, 2018). These metaphors were developed out of the voices of Māori youth, their whānau and some of their teachers (Berryman & Bishop 2006). The three relational dimensions, whanaungatanga, whakapapa and kaupapa explore the kinds of relationships required within and across schools and classrooms, to provide the base through which responsive pedagogies can be enacted. These pedagogical interactions include wānanga, ako and mahi ngātahi and ensure new understandings are built on the prior knowledge and experiences of the students themselves, rather than just upon the expertise of teachers. Working together the dimensions provide "leaders and teachers with an effective way of initiating and developing meaningful cultural relationships with their Māori students such that power to enhance the mana

of the other can be a truly shared venture" (Berryman et al., 2018 p. 9). That is, they create reciprocal contexts for mana ōrite (the same personal authority and power), where learning is interconnected, empowering, ongoing and invaluable. They also sit within the Ako: critical contexts for change model (Berryman & Eley, 2017) as being essential to the transformative reform required in our schools.

If, as Lyle suggests (2008), knowledge is understood to be something that people do together rather than something they acquire, then it is of real concern that traditional transmission teaching continues to be the dominant pedagogy in our schools (Alton-Lee, 2003), This despite the fact that it is understood "New Zealand, education environments that reflect a Māori worldview and ways of working (for example, with respect to whanaungatanga and ako) offer significantly enhanced learning opportunities for all students" (Education Review Office, 2016, p.30). Pākehā have nothing to fear from a wider understanding of what knowledge and learning can *be*, as it has been shown that what works for Māori works for all (see Education Review Office 2016, p.12).

The metaphors of cultural relationships for responsive pedagogy garner their potential by being rooted in a Māori world view. They come from a way of being and of understanding the world that is outside of the current colonised, Western factory model of schooling. We therefore must be careful to avoid simply translating them into the colonial, Western frameworks and structures that already exist. Appropriating and applying them superficially with little real knowledge of the full implications will change nothing. Instead changes must be understood as an insight into another way of being together, a mandate to transform our schools through our relational interactions that are cultural and determined by a worldview that sits outside of colonisation.

1.4.5 Decolonisation and Indigenisation

The issues we face as well as the responses required are complicated. They require not just tweaks to what we are already doing but rather a deep resetting of what we do; the how and why. Or, as Gorski, (2008) concludes, "not only subtle shifts in practice and personal relationships but also important shifts of consciousness that prepare us to see and react to the socio-political contexts that so heavily influence education theory and practice" (p.515). All reforms and responses must seek to both

decolonise and indigenise our schooling system. To decolonise we must become and remain critically aware of the colonial systems and structures that surround us, we must consider how our histories influenced these systems and the way power is affecting outcomes and be prepared to disrupt and change these structures. To indigenise these structures, we must acknowledge the value and potential of te ao Māori and be prepared to listen and learn from Māori. We must understand why a restoration of this potential is needed, not because of a lack of inherent value but rather because of the results of colonisation's dedicated attempt to disrespect and disregard Māori knowledge, in all of its forms. Everyone within our education system must work to ensure new understandings from Māori perspectives are able to influence our actions, not as translations into an existing space but rather as an insight into an entirely different, socially just, and mana ōrite way of being.

The literature signals that to enable these changes we as educators must be acutely aware of the value systems behind our actions and the frameworks that informed them. We must seek both structural and cultural shifts, committing to the constant, iterative interplay between conscientisation, resistance and transformative praxis (G. Smith, 2004). Expecting educators to create the needed shifts while using concepts that may well be inconceivable from within the colonised factory model framework within which they work, whilst meeting the demands of the very system they seek to undo, is clearly no small task.

But hope remains given that in Te Whāriki there exists a transition point between the two. This curriculum framework explicitly lays out a theoretical basis for learning which connects strongly with critical and kaupapa Māori theories. In so doing it provides a grounding for the decolonising and indigenising thoughts and actions that the transformation of our education system requires.

1.5 Te Whāriki

Te Whāriki is the early childhood curriculum document for New Zealand. It was first published in 1996 and it:

> sought to unify a diverse sector around a shared aspiration for children and an agreed framework of principles, strands and goals that teachers, educators and Kaiako [teachers], children,

> families and whānau would use to weave their own unique curriculum whāriki. Highly regarded in New Zealand and internationally acknowledged, Te Whāriki was one of the first national curriculum documents for early childhood education. (Ministry of Education, 2017, p.7)

A revised edition, published in 2017, ensures the vision remains the same "that children are competent and confident learners and communicators, healthy in mind, body and spirit secure in their sense of belonging and in the knowledge that they make a valued contribution to society" (Ministry of Education, 2017, p.6). This vision along with the rest of the document was developed in Aotearoa New Zealand in better recognition and response to our dual cultural heritages. As Rameka (2015) explains "Te Whāriki is a bicultural document, an example of how traditional Māori and Pākehā (New Zealanders of British descent) values, concepts, worldviews and philosophies have been integrated into a modern, bicultural, educational document" (p.82). Here Māori must be recognised as tangata whenua and a shared obligation for protecting Māori language and culture must be assumed, only then can it be assured that Māori are able to enjoy educational success as Māori (Ministry of Education, 2017).

To consider Te Whāriki alongside the colonial factory model of education discussed earlier is interesting, especially as "Te Whāriki can be viewed as a counter-colonial document, its content validating the relationship between Te Tiriti o Waitangi partners as an integral sociocultural context for early childhood education in Aotearoa" (Ritchie & Rau, 2010, p.2). Given the explicit links to the New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007) used in schooling, Te Whāriki can provide some practical support for teachers across the education system to intersect with the dimensions of cultural relationships for responsive pedagogy. To develop their understandings of the how and why of cultural relationships with their students upon which deliberate pedagogical responses can be built. As Reedy and Reedy, two of the original Te Whāriki developers stated in a keynote address presented to New Zealand conference on Early Childhood Education and Care in 2013, and later cited by the Ministry of Education (2017):

> The real strength of Te Whāriki is its capacity to establish strong and durable foundations for every culture in Aotearoa New Zealand, and in the world… Te Whāriki rests on the theory that all children will succeed in education when the foundations to their learning are based on an understanding and a respect for their cultural roots (p.1).

Te Whāriki is built upon six underlying theories and approaches: Kaupapa Māori theory, Critical theories, Sociocultural theories, Pasifika approaches and Emerging research and theory. Upon these sit the four principles of Empowerment Whakamana, Holistic Development Kotahitanga, Family and community Ngā hononga and Relationships Ngā hononga. As Te Whāriki states "these principles are the foundations of curriculum design and a guide for every aspect of pedagogy and practice" (Ministry of Education, 2017, p.16). There are then five strands which describe areas of learning and development including Wellbeing Mana atua, Belonging Mana whenua, Contribution Mana tangata, Communication Mana reo and Exploration Mana aotūroa. Each of these then have related goals and strands. The goals are for kaiako (teachers) and describe what is required of them to create the environment for learning while the learning outcomes use broad statements to highlight valued learning.

1.5.1 Underlying Theories and approaches of Te Whāriki

Te Whāriki contains six underlying theories and approaches. To reiterate, these include Kaupapa Māori theory, critical theory, sociocultural theory, bioecological model, Pasifika approaches and emerging research and theory.

1.5.1.1 Kaupapa Māori theory

Te Whāriki lists Kaupapa Māori theory as one of its underlying theories. Kaupapa Māori Theory belongs to and is created by Māori. Bishop (2005) states "Kaupapa Māori is a discourse that has emerged from and is legitimized from within the Māori community" (p114). Further to this, Smith, G. (1992) asserts that "Kaupapa Māori speaks to the validity and legitimacy of being and acting Māori; to be Māori is taken for granted" (p.13). It is a philosophy, a practice, a way of knowing conceptualised in a uniquely Māori space, or according to Bishop (2005), "we know that there is a

way of knowing that is different from that which was taught to those colonized into the Western way of thought. We know about a way that is born of time, connectedness, kinship, commitment, and participation" (p.131).

Although the colonisation of Aotearoa and its all-encompassing effects are important to any attempts to define kaupapa Māori it is also crucial to recognise that "a Kaupapa Māori position is predicated on the understanding that Māori means of accessing, defining, and protecting knowledge existed before European arrival in New Zealand" and has "always been legitimate within Māori cultural discourses" (Bishop 2005, p.115). As Mahuika (2008) explains it, "kaupapa Māori theory provides a platform from which Māori are striving to articulate their own reality and experience" and "inherent in this approach is an understanding that Māori have fundamentally different ways of seeing and thinking about the world and simply wish to be able to live in accordance with that specific and unique identity" (p.4). Within Te Whāriki itself it states when discussing Kaupapa Māori, "at its core is the retention of the Māori language and culture, which provides a foundation for positive transformations and brings about educational, social and economic advancement" (Ministry of Education, 2017, p.61). The presence of this thinking within Te Whāriki supports all teachers to acknowledge, value, support and ensure the legitimacy of being Maori, whatever their own cultural background.

1.5.1.2 Critical Theory

Te Whāriki states that it "reflects research that adopts critical theoretical lenses to examine the influence of social conditions, global influences and equity of opportunity on children's learning and development. Critical theory perspectives challenge disparities, injustices, inequalities and perceived norms" (Ministry of Education, 2017, p.62). Considering the effects of colonisation on our society, these ideas are vital when conceiving reform, as Eley (2020) states critical theory is "oriented toward critiquing and changing the world" (p.36) These theories can be seen clearly within the principles of Te Whāriki and "in guidance on how to promote equitable practices with children, parents and whānau" (Ministry of Education p. 62).

Critical Theory is clearly important when addressing issues of equity for our Māori learners because as L. Smith (2000) asserts, "most discussion about Kaupapa Māori

is also a discussion about critical theory, in particular the notions of critique, resistance, struggle, and emancipation" (p.228) it seeks to expose the concealed power relations that exist within society. Critical theory is vital when developing teachers' cultural relationships for responsive pedagogy as "culturally responsive approaches need to be located within an analysis of oppression" (Bishop et al. 2013, p.4).

1.5.1.3 Sociocultural theories

The Sociocultural theories that underpin Te Whāriki refer to and build on the theorising of Lev Vygotsky, Jerome Bruner and others, "who researched young children from cognitive and cultural-historical perspectives", here it is considered "that learning leads development and occurs in relationships with people, places and things, mediated by participation in valued social and cultural activities" (Ministry of Education, 2017, p.61). For teachers, this means that they must have an in-depth understanding of how learning happens socially and culturally. With each other and with "materials, artefacts and tools and the signs and symbols of societies and cultures" (Ministry of Education, 2017, p.61). This must inform all their day to day decisions and interactions, as Eley (2020) explains "curriculum decisions on what should be learnt, and when, should, therefore, be identified through a child's interests, knowledge and prior experiences – not standardised at state level according to a child's age and grade" (p.33).

Additionally, teachers are learners too and these ideas apply to their own development:

> Rather than rely solely on transmission or transactional practices, a socio-cultural view of learning can also guide how we make decisions across the school and Kāhui Ako. This can inform how we learn from our colleagues, it can also inform how we broker relationships to engage with whānau and the Māori community. (Poutama Pounamu, n.d.-a, para.15)

Te Whāriki summarises the three interrelated ideas that influence learning in this model "genetic, developmental and environmental factors interact, enabling and

constraining learning. Thinking and language derive from social life and that individual and social action and behaviour are influenced by participation in the child's culture" (Ministry of Education, 2017, p.61).

1.5.1.4 Bioecological models

The Bioecological model of learning relies on the theorising of Urie Bronfenbrenner and it suggests "learning is located within the nested contexts and relationships of family, community, and wider local, national and global influences" (Ministry of Education, 2017, p.60). These contexts surround the developing child starting with the home system, The Microsystem then Mesosystems, Exosystems and Macrosystems. A fifth was added in 2005, the Chronosystem, "acknowledging that the dimension of time, both within the child's lifetime and historical events and changes within the child's cultural group, also impacted on development" (Eley 2020, p. 30). Te Whāriki refers to this when it states "Bronfenbrenner's most recent ideas challenge kaiako to recognise that children's worlds are rapidly changing and connected across time" (Ministry of Education, p. 61).

This model seeks an aligned system focusing on the wellbeing and development of every child, and:

> considers the reciprocal individual–environmental influences that drive learning and development. This approach seeks to understand how the characteristics of the developing person, including their dispositions, knowledge, experiences and skills, interact with aspects of the environment to invite or inhibit engagement (Ministry of Education, 2017, p.61)

The Bioecological model acknowledges the power of the world around a child to influence how they see themselves, their inherent value, and their power as learners, and therefore their success in doing so. This is why the Goals within Te Whāriki are for the kaiako, describing the characteristics of the environments and pedagogies that are needed for all children to be empowered.

1.5.1.5 Pasifika Approaches

Pasifika approaches are also mentioned as an underpinning approach within Te Whāriki, this acknowledges the place of these cultures within New Zealand. It also draws attention to the homogenising difficulties of the term 'Pasifika' and states that this approach draws on multiple "ethnic specific ways of knowing and being" (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 62). Within Te Whāriki Pasifika approaches are explained by asserting that children are valued as treasures and hope for the future, their care therefore being a collective responsibility. This viewpoint connects to the Māori view of children where, as Pihama et al., (2004) explain through the term 'tamariki' translated as children in English, "Tama is derived from Tama-te-rā the central sun, the divine spark; ariki refers to senior status, and riki on its own can mean a smaller version" they go on to explain therefore that "children are the greatest legacy the world community has" (p. 22). Within Te Whāriki Pasifika approaches are further explained:

> These approaches view respect and reciprocity as crucial for learning and value. They also stress the notion of multiple relationships between people and across time, places and ideologies and the ability to navigate between familiar and unfamiliar worlds, different Pasifika world views, and Pasifika and non-Pasifika world views. Pasifika approaches typically use and value metaphors and models, which provide an authentic means of connecting the familiar with the unfamiliar (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 62)

1.5.1.6 Emerging Research and Theory

The final approach listed in Te Whāriki is Emerging Research and Theory and it states "Advances in the study of infancy and childhood and development across the lifespan continue to expand our understandings" (Ministry of Education, 2017, p.62). There has been a connection through this area to the importance of emotions to learning (Dumont et al. 2012) and the negative effects of fear on learning (Ramirez, 2014). These perspectives could help support teachers to move beyond the Factory Model of schooling and to think more about the holistic nature of

children, their wellbeing and the importance of positive learning dispositions (Claxton & Carr, 2002, p.1).

1.5.2 Principles of Te Whāriki

Four Principles or Kaupapa Whakahaere underpin Te Whāriki, "these principles are a synthesis of traditional Māori thinking and sociocultural theorising" (Ministry of Education 2017, p.60) and are intended as a guide for all aspects of pedagogy and practice.

1.5.2.1 Empowerment - Whakamana

This principle recognises that every child has a right to experience an environment and curriculum that is empowering, "viewed from a Māori perspective, all children are born with mana inherited from their tīpuna. Mana is the power of being and must be upheld and enhanced" (Ministry of education 2017, p.18). In order to honour this, children must have agency over their own actions, "they must be respected and valued. This means recognising their rights to have their wellbeing promoted and to be protected from harm and to experience equitable opportunities for participation and learning and for rest and play" Ministry of Education, 2017, p.18).

1.5.2.2 Holistic Development - Kotahitanga

This principle recognises that children develop holistically, that thought must be given to cognitive (hinengaro), physical (tinana), Emotional (whatumanawa) and Spiritual (wairua) aspects of the child. As Te Whāriki states these contexts will "affect what children learn from any particular experience. A holistic approach sees the child as a person who wants to learn, the task as meaningful whole and the whole as greater than the sum of its parts" (Ministry of Education, 2017, p.19).

1.5.2.3 Family and community - Whānau tangata

Here the importance and interdependence of each child's wider family and community is acknowledged, as Te Whāriki states "children learn and develop best when their culture, knowledge and community are affirmed and when people in their lives help make connections across settings" (Ministry of Education, 2017, p.20). Respectful relationships must be developed so that the knowledge and

experiences that sit outside of traditional schooling are valued within the educational setting, they are accepted, understood and built upon in meaningful ways.

1.5.2.4 Relationships - Ngā hononga

Ngā hononga outlines the importance of relationships that are respectful and encouraging where acceptance and warmth are the norm. Here relationships are considered to be wider than just relationships between people, instead reciprocal responsive relationships are required between people and places and things. It also goes on to explicitly add a Māori perspective where "connections to past, present and future are integral to a Māori perspective of relationships. This includes relationships to tīpuna who have passed on and connections through whakapapa to, for example, maunga, awa, moana, whenua and marae (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 21).

1.6 Summary

This literature review provides a strong argument that our history still effects the experiences of Māori students in our schools and that transformational change is needed. It also confirms the strong theoretical links between Te Whāriki and the responsive relational and cultural contexts that this requires.

CHAPTER 2 -METHODOLOGY AND METHOD

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter I outline the dimensions of culturally responsive methodologies, and position myself as an emerging culturally responsive researcher. I then share the methods that arose as my understandings of this methodology influenced the iterative design of the research procedure.

2.2 Culturally Responsive Methodologies

Culturally responsive methodologies emerged from the theorising of both Kaupapa Māori theory and critical theory, and is presented by Berryman et al. (2013) as an alternative, participatory research framework. Berryman et al. contend that: "These methodologies challenge all forms of traditional research paradigms that devalue or dehumanise research participants. They encourage instead a research stance where establishing respectful relationships with participants is central to both human dignity and the research" (p.1).

Within this research I position myself as a Pākehā researcher, intensely interested in deconstructing impositional ways of being and thinking into and reconstructing new emancipatory ways of knowing. Or, as Berryman et al. (2013) explain "culturally responsive methodology is an intensely introspective process that requires researchers to challenge what they have previously learnt and to invent or reconstitute new liberating and humanising alternatives" (p.16).

Although caution must be taken when attempting to narrowly define culturally responsive methodologies, three dimensions have been outlined by Berryman et al. (2013) including that the research "embraces cultural and epistemological pluralism, deconstructs Western traditions of research, and that it recognises the primacy of relationships within a culturally responsive dialogic encounter" (p.399). Additionally, Berryman et al. state that "culturally responsive research is a conceptual companion to culturally responsive pedagogy which values students' backgrounds and cultural experiences to inform pedagogy" (p. 5), therefore the consideration of the six metaphors of cultural relationships for responsive pedagogy (see Berryman et al, 2018) throughout the research process can strengthen this

methodology. An understanding of this pedagogy provides insight into how to enact culturally responsive methods where:

> Not only are the participants' cultural lives considered essential to the research design but also the lives of the researchers, as both sides bring their collective resources and wellbeing together to construct a process of relevant and significant meaning making" (Berryman et al., 2013 p. 5).

My methods also grew from these methodological processes and are outlined below.

2.3 Method

My research methods fit within culturally responsive methodologies. I have included the use of Māori metaphors as entry points to practices and understandings from Te Ao Māori, illustrated through whakataukī and the metaphors from Te Whāriki itself. The methods include: whanaungatanga -strengthening relationships and networks; whakawhitiwhiti kōrero - dialogic sense making; and group focused interviews as conversation. The analysis, both grew out of and contributed to this dialogic process as I engaged in the research as an Insider/Outsider. I worked with my research participants in the gathering and final analysis of the evidence using Grounded Theory

2.3.1 Māori metaphors as entry into Te Ao Māori

For many people raised within Western ways of viewing the world, learning to resist the status quo, of telling participants what they must do, and instead enacting culturally responsive methodologies, requires a huge change in thinking. Such a change in thinking can be ignited by understanding that other legitimate knowledges exist and then valuing these multiple ways of knowing and being, this epistemological pluralism. In New Zealand for example, through understandings of the legitimacy, value and potential of Kaupapa Māori and Mātauranga Māori. As Bishop (2005) states "we know that there is a way of knowing that is different from that which was taught to those colonized into the Western way of thought. We know about a way that is born of time, connectedness, kinship, commitment, and participation" (p.131). The use of Māori metaphors as a method can help to open

the possibility and deepen these understandings through the legitimation of different contexts for knowledge creation and learning.

2.3.2 Whakataukī

Whakataukī are Māori proverbs where the wisdom of the past can be used to understand our past in order to inform and align with our present. Interactions with whakataukī can connect us with a Māori way of knowing and understanding the world, they can provide "a door to the Māori world. They contain the wisdom, knowledge and values passed down through the generations, and so can contribute meaningfully to teaching and learning" (Rameka, 2016, p.395). Te Whāriki reveals the potential of whakataukī with the inclusion of 12 Māori metaphors, alongside their English translation and interpretation.

2.3.3 Te Whāriki

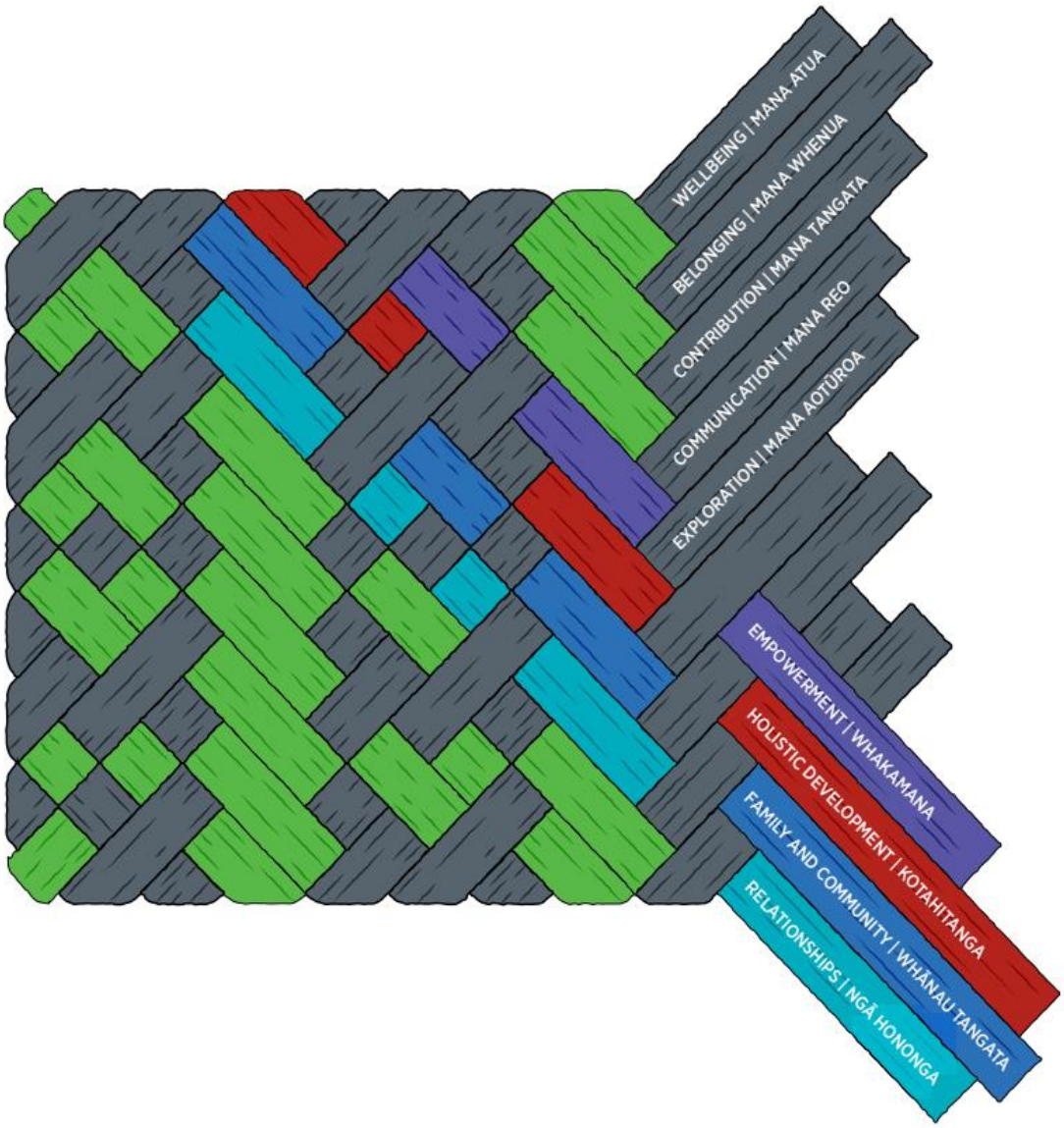
Kaupapa Māori is also clearly evident in the metaphor of Te Whāriki, within the woven mat itself, here the structure of the curriculum is explained through the concept of raranga (weaving). Where all elements within the system interconnect and influence each other:

> the whāriki or woven mat is used in this document as a metaphor for the curriculum, in which four curriculum principles are interwoven with five curriculum strands. settings weave together the principles and strands, in collaboration with children, parents, whānau and communities, to create a local curriculum for their setting. Understood in this way, the curriculum or whāriki is a 'mat for all to stand on' (Ministry of Education, 2017, p.10).

This quote is clearly demonstrated in figure 1 showing the four curriculum strands woven, together with the five curriculum strands, into a whāriki as the foundational mat for learning and learners. This whāriki or curriculum as a woven mat is clearly presented in Figure 1 that follows. Therefore, both the act of using whakataukī and the metaphors within raranga and Te Whāriki were foundational to this research.

Figure 1

Kōwhiti Whakapae Whāriki



From Ministry of Education, 2017, p.11

2.3.4 Whanaungatanga

The process of whanaungatanga means the establishing of relationships, of relating well to each other and of developing and strengthening networks. Therefore, whanaungatanga can encapsulate the foundation of relationships required if learning and research is to involve transformational, cross-cultural sense making. If careful consideration is given to whanaungatanga, to relating to each other in culturally responsive ways "sustaining relationships may lead to unlocking meaning

and messages implicit in indigenous ways of being" (Barrett, 2018, p.73). Nurturing these types of relationships in a research space takes deliberate consideration as it runs counter to the "traditional research paradigms that devalue or dehumanise research participants" (Berryman et al., 2013, p.1) instead valuing and humanising participants must be given priority as part of the research process itself. As Pennicott (2020) states these relationships involve:

> listening beyond the words and responding to the person in front of us rather than responding to our assumptions of who they might or should be. Within the metaphor of whānau the concept of knowledge is regarded as belonging to the whole group or whānau (p.11).

From this base of strengthened relationships, Whakawhitiwhiti kōrero, or dialogic sense making and conversations can flourish and in turn strengthen whanaungatanga. As previously stated, these relationships are not only between people but they can also represent more complex relationships, such as amongst and between people, their kaupapa or agenda and the theoretical frameworks that are seen as important. When contexts are created in which these frameworks can be interacted with, with curiosity and with each other, collective sense making can be iteratively applied and new conceptualisations and possibilities can be built.

2.3.5 Group focused interviews as conversation

In order to enable collective sense making opportunities the context must allow for conversations and ideas to flow, unconstrained where, as Bishop (2005) explains:

> people get a chance to state and restate meanings, to revisit their meanings, and to modify, delete, and adapt their meanings. The discourse spirals, in that the talk may seem circulous and opinions may vary and waver, but the seeking of a collaboratively constructed story is central (p.122).

Group focused interviews as conversations can create such a context. Here the structure of the interviews is open enough to allow new ideas to develop but also encourages conversations and meaning making to be focused on concepts and theoretical frameworks, "building iteratively a reciprocal dialogic relationship based on mutual trust" (Bishop, 1997, p.33). This is important for teachers as it is

here, within the relationships between people and their theorising that transformative praxis can grow.

As a researcher these interviews as conversation require a deliberate relinquishing of power so that the group can take the conversation and explore it in directions that they think are relevant and important. This requires a willingness to not know, to learn, to be unfinished, or as SooHoo (2015) states:

> by surrendering 'knowing' for humility of not knowing, the full potentiality of the human race comes into focus. Unfinishedness is the watermark for open-mindedness, respect and humility. Our consciousness of our unfinishedness and our vulnerability as human beings move us towards one another, breeding co-learning and co-creation (p.253).

The research relationships are strengthened by the participation of the 'unfinished' researcher whereby "the notions of researcher objectivity and subjectivity are rejected as this approach acknowledges the researcher as a member of the research group" (Ford, 2010. p.62) rather than as directing and taking from the research group. In this joint endeavour, answers to the research question may not be as direct but require a much more iterative, to-an- fro and spiralling sense making.

2.3.6 Whakawhitiwhiti kōrero: Dialogic sense making

The semi-structured nature of these interviews and a focus on the importance of whanaungatanga creates the space for ideas to flow and conversations to develop unconstrained. Here, whakawhitiwhiti kōrero, dialogic sense making can thrive. As Berryman (2007) describes:

> Whakawhiti kōrero is a term used to describe the oral exchanges or discussions that occur in order to bring enlightenment to any given situation. Literally the two terms whakawhiti (to interact) and kōrero (to talk) provide a metaphor for collective sense making that is driven by discourse and is played out rather like a balanced conversation between people of equal status (p.86).

This too requires a deliberate relinquishing of power on the part of the researcher

as this process requires and builds relationships “in which risk taking is encouraged, where there is no shame in being a not knower and where it is understood that everyone brings with them knowledge, ways of knowing and experiences of value to share” (Pentecost, 2020. p.18).

2.3.7 Insider/Outsider

The introspection required of a culturally responsive researcher means recognition and consideration of the researchers own positionality. Of the overlaps and intersections of their own experiences of how they sit both inside and outside of the research context. Traditionally the researcher sits firmly in the seat of the outsider, researching upon the ‘other’. Alternately within this more participatory framework the researcher is as much a participant as the participants themselves, a co-learner rather than an observer. Or as viewed by Berryman et al. (2013):

> Culturally responsive research methodology is the conjoined work of both the researcher and the participants(s) of carving out a liberatory research pathway toward mutual respect and freedom from domination. The cloth from which this conceptual framework is born is the resistance to research conventions where the researcher unilaterally dominates and exerts power over the participants (p.4).

Therefore as a teacher who has taught in this school with these people and who has used Te Whāriki in this way, I am an insider. Additionally as co-learners, we all grew up in New Zealand, we all attended school and went on to train as primary school teachers and here, we were all colleagues working together at the same school and as such we are all insiders. But for myself I also sat on the outside, I initiated the research and decided on the topic, ultimately the research occurred because I instigated it. Although I sat with them in the school I sat without them in the university space and I sat without them as I wrote. I also cannot deny that as Pākehā I sit outside of te ao Māori. At times my life and my work intersects with te ao Māori but I exist outside, together with the majority of my co-researchers in this collaborative research and sense making endeavour. These differing and overlapping positionalities are by no means a bad thing, in fact it is through their acknowledgement that more coherent ways of understanding ourselves and our world can begin to develop and new ways of being in the future can begin to form.

2.3.8 Reflective Journals

Prior to the research process I provided reflective journals that were private to each participant and myself. These journals provided a space for each of the participants to express and share any thoughts or ideas they might have about the research; before the sessions began and throughout the process.

2.3.9 Grounded Theory

Within the use of grounded theory, the data that was gathered, in this case the transcripts from our co-learning sessions and any entries into reflective journals was used to generate the themes of our shared theorising. The themes come from a careful iterative analysis of our voices. In order to do this it was important to approach the research process with a limited 'plan', the process needed to remain open to change as the iterative nature of the research progressed. Here the procedure was flexible and responsive, without "preconceived notions of where the research will lead to or what the concluding hypothesis will find out" (Murfitt, 2019, p.13).

Also within grounded theory thinking can grow out of existing theory, as Berryman (2007) explains "theory may be used to generate areas of investigation that in turn serve to generate new data, and new theorising. Providing there is relevance, and the researcher is rigorously matching theory with data" (p.100). The data and the theoretical analysis of that data are in "continuous interplay" (Strauss, & Corbin, 1994, p.273). Underlying theory and approaches within Te Whāriki as well as within culturally responsive methodologies, continuously interacted with our voices to generate and co construct our new shared theorising.

2.4 Participants

Including myself, participants were all members of the same syndicate, at a New Zealand primary school. The school catered for students in years one to six with almost 50% being immigrants to New Zealand and English Language Learners. Approximately another quarter of the students identified as Māori. The school provided a choice of both Māori and English medium pathway options and had a decile rating of two. As the Ministry of Education states:

> School deciles indicate the extent the school draws their students from low socio-economic communities… For example, decile 1 schools are the 10% of schools with the highest proportion of students from low socio-economic communities, whereas decile 10 schools are the 10% of schools with the lowest proportion of these students." (para 2). There had been a decrease in student numbers over at least the last three years (n.d.).

The syndicate we were all part of was structured slightly differently to the other English medium syndicates in the school where children transitioned between junior and senior syndicates. Instead this was an English medium syndicate based on the structure of the Māori medium syndicate. Here the classrooms were mixed age and ability and the children stayed with the same peers and group of teachers throughout their primary schooling. This structural change had been in place for three years and was referred to by senior management and others in the school as being a 'trial'. The syndicate consisted of four classrooms, two of the classrooms were years 0-3 (ages five to eight) and two were years 4-6 (ages eight to eleven).

There were five teachers in this syndicate including myself. Previously I was team leader and had been since the syndicate was formed three years prior. One other teacher who had been there since the formation of this syndicate was now the syndicate leader; she is Māori. There were three teachers new to the syndicate that year with one starting in term 2 to release a teacher on leave. They were all Pākehā and had all been at the school for at least three years. The placing of teachers within syndicates was not by choice but rather this was decided by school senior management.

All teachers had some experience with cultural relationships for responsive pedagogy, both through the Poutama Pounamu blended learning course (Poutama Pounamu, n.d.) and engagement with the Poutama Pounamu co-inquiry process. The co-inquiry process required us all to inquire into our professional teaching and learning acts in the classroom through the six principles of cultural relationships for responsive pedagogy. Although the depth to which co-researchers had engaged with these experiences varied greatly, there was shared experiences and prior knowledge

to be built upon. Many of the concepts discussed were familiar to varying extents, to all participants.

In addition to this professional learning each of the three new teachers were involved in other in-depth professional development. One was as a Mathematics Support Teacher (MST), another was participating in Accelerating Learning in Literacy (ALL) both of these programmes came with additional financial incentives from the Ministry of Education (Ministry of Education, n.d.-a). The third was studying with The Mind Lab (The Mind Lab, n.d.). These all required significant personal commitment.

2.5 Research Procedure

2.5.1 Getting buy-in from participants

I approached all the potential participants and shared an information sheet about the proposed research. Participants then gave their informed consent to participate. Prior to our learning/research sessions together everyone was given a digital reflective journal in which they could write any ideas or thoughts they might have prior to or after our sessions. This was shared only between each individual participant and myself.

2.5.2 The learning/research sessions

The sessions took place during four scheduled team meetings. This was in order to lessen any additional workload. The start of each of our sessions began with karakia (prayer) and whanaungatanga where time was devoted to reconnecting with each other in order to support the growth of positive relationships, rather than rushing into what might be considered the research work itself. I also provided drink and food that I had baked and we shared this. After whanaungatanga and food we began the group focused interviews as conversation and whakawhiti kōrero. After each session I reflected on what I had found so that the next session was able to build on learnings from the previous one. In this way the procedure, as it is set out next, is not just linear or event driven. Rather it inter-connects with the next session, sometimes it continued into other parts of the school and it finally made its way into my findings. I do this to explicitly show the interdependent, spiralling nature of the whakawhitiwhiti kōrero procedure that we followed into our teaching and learning

and into this thesis. Each of these formal learning and research sessions were recorded, transcribed and given back to my colleagues for verification and annotation. However, with those participants where our research conversations overflowed informally into other school times and contexts, these sessions were not formally taped.

Session One

This whole session was focused all the way through on whanaungatanga and devoted to building relationships of trust. This was a deliberate challenge to traditional research power structures, and was awkward at first. I committed to bringing my authentic self to the research and was open about my positionalities, I explained how I had come to this research both professionally and personally. I also shared my understanding of culturally responsive methodologies, about the way I was determined to work, how the sessions would be iterative and there was no overall 'plan'. I shared my hope that we would be co-researchers. I then asked my co-researchers to share their own prior experiences of Te Whāriki and any excitements or trepidations they had about participating in this research.

On reflection

After this session, because their combined prior knowledge of Te Whāriki or use of Māori metaphors had been quite superficial, I realised we needed to begin with the theory behind Te Whāriki and that we might do this using the whakataukī to be found within Te Whāriki itself.

Session Two

This session again began with whanaungatanga after which we read and considered the whakataukī, "Tū mai e moko. Te whakaata o ō mātua. Te moko o ō tīpuna. Stand strong, O moko. The reflection of your parents. The blueprint of your ancestors" (Ministry of Education, 2017, p.17). I also placed a printed photograph of some of the students within our syndicate alongside and we shared our connections to and understandings of our learners themselves.

We then laid out printed copies of the six underpinning theories and approaches from within Te Whāriki (critical theories, kaupapa Māori theory, sociocultural theories, bioecological model, pasifika approaches and emerging research and

theory) as well as the four principles of Te Whāriki (Empowerment, Whakamana, Holistic Development, Kotahitanga, Family and community, Whānau tangata and Relationships, Ngā hononga). We took turns using a die to choose an underpinning theory or approach to connect with one of the principles of Te Whāriki. As each person verbalised a connection they also physically connected the statements with wool and then pen. In this way, all of our ideas about Te Whāriki began to be connected and woven together.

On reflection

After this session I noticed how our group was coming together over the visual representation; how the visual representation had provided a hands-on support to allow our conversations to flow more easily. We came together other the photos of the children we serve. I decided to bring this artefact to the next session and continue using materials to help scaffold the learning through our whakawhitiwhiti kōrero.

Session Three

The whakataukī we discussed after whanaungatanga in this session was "ehara taku toa i te toa takitahi engari he toa takitini. I come not with my own strengths but bring with me the gifts, talents and strengths of my family, tribe and ancestors" (Ministry of Education, 2017, p.12).

The representation from Session Two, of the theoretical basis for our discussion was again placed in the middle of our group. We then added the six metaphors of cultural relationships for responsive pedagogy (whānau, whakapapa, kaupapa, wānanga, ako, and mahi ngātahi). We interacted with this representation and as we talked we began pointing to, reading and/or reading out specific parts then linking these to our own thoughts. Slowly our representation was being co-constructed and developed through whakawhitiwhiti kōrero as our artefacts had begun to physically and metaphorically anchor and widen our discussions and theorising.

On reflection

After this session, I knew that, because of time constraints, there was only one conversation remaining and I wanted to share the ideas where there are explicit

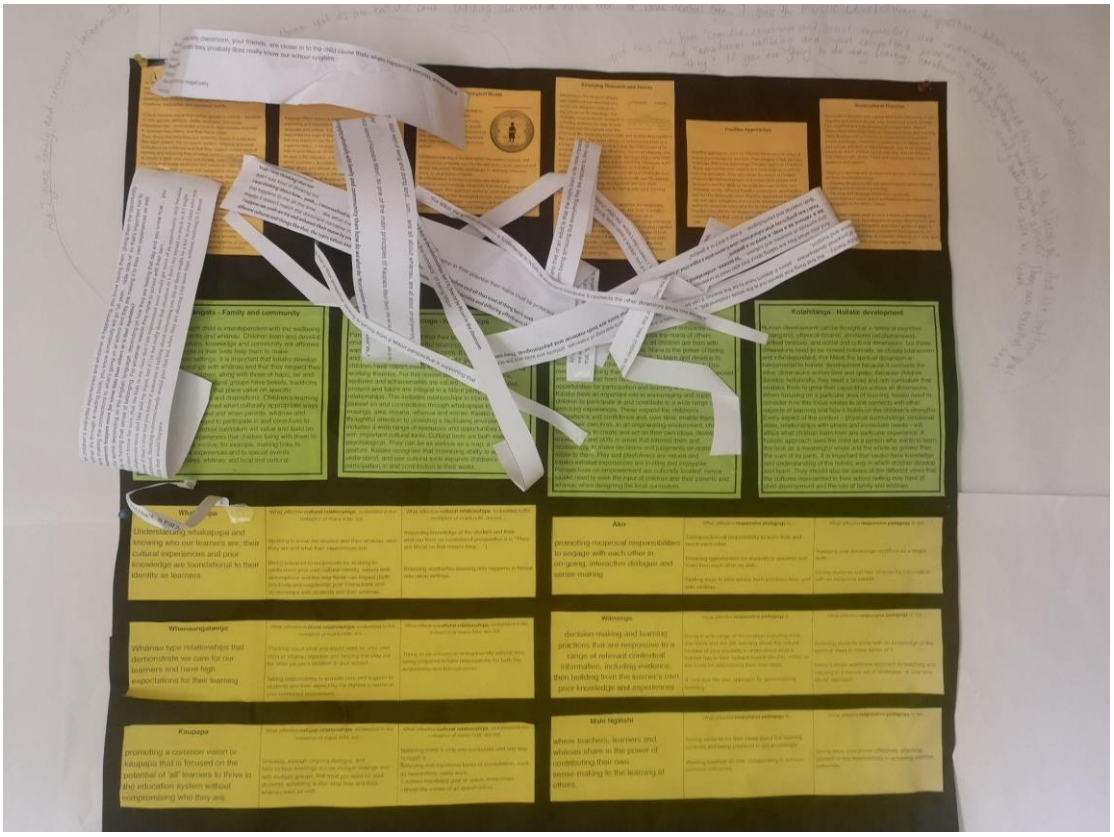
links between Te Whāriki and “Pathways to school and kura” (The Ministry of Education, 2017, p.51).

Session Four

Again, this session began with whanaungatanga and then we read and discussed this whakataukī “kotahi te kākano, he nui ngā hua o te rākau. A tree comes from one seed but bears many fruit” (The Ministry of Education, 2017, p.51). This whakataukī came from the section within Te Whāriki where it discusses pathways to school and kura. I then shared how the visual representation of our dialogic

Figure 2

A developing visual representation



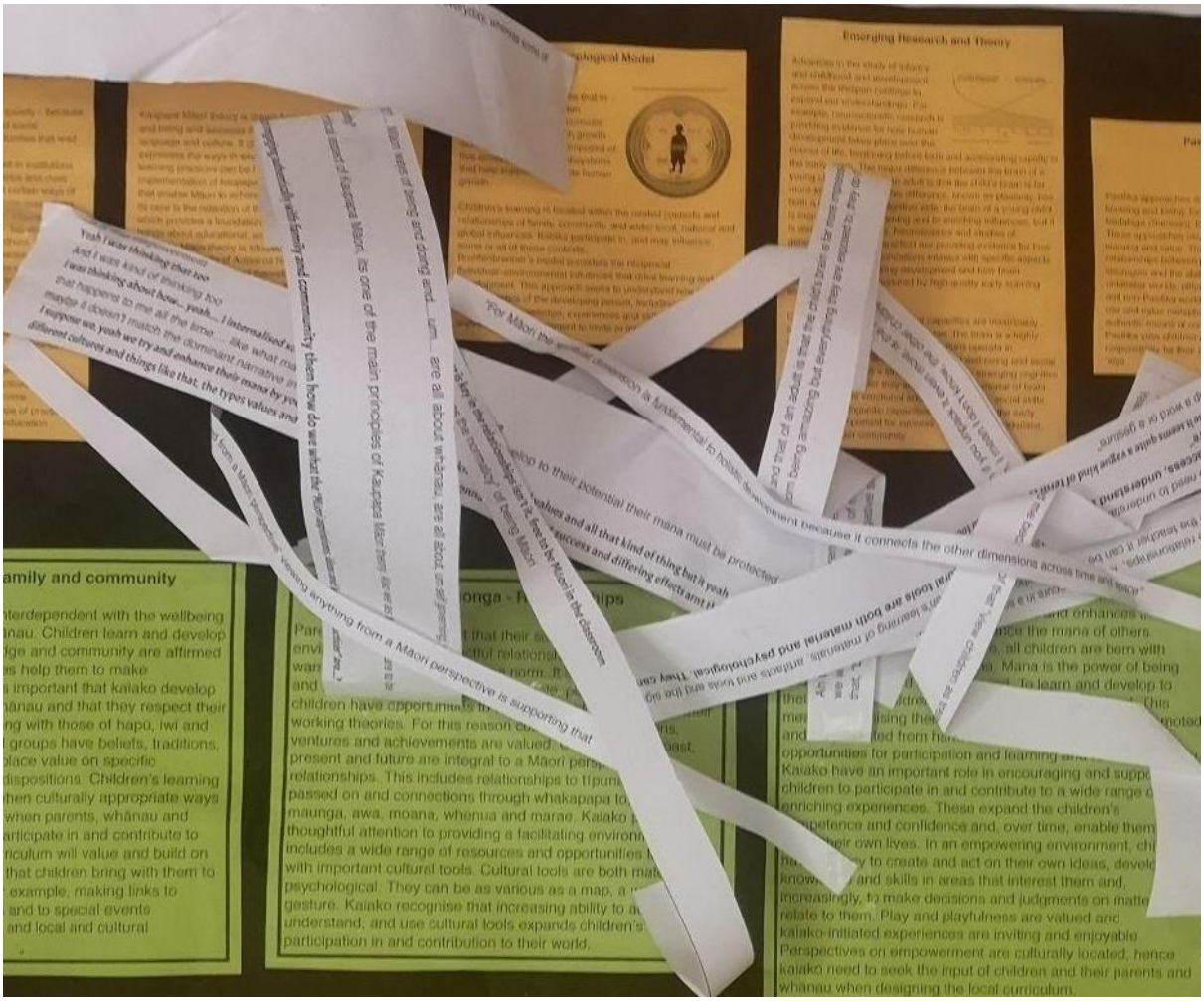
conversations was developing as shown in Figure 2 on the following page.

This showed the theoretical frameworks and approaches, and the principles of Te Whāriki and the metaphors of cultural relationships for responsive pedagogy that we had interacted with during the previous sessions. This representation was much neater with colour coding of the concepts and extracts from our printed transcripts

showing our words layering on each other and intertwining together as concepts were interconnected. This representation can be seen in Figure 3 on the following page. These transcribed quotes did not have names on them so as not to trigger any whakamā (embarrassment) or fragility.

Figure 3

A closer view of connecting voices



I also shared how Te Whāriki connects with the New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 20017) through the strands into the key competencies and learning areas.

Finally, I shared and we discussed the "links to the New Zealand Curriculum and Te Marautanga o Aotearoa" that the Ministry of Education (2017, p. 53-57) explicitly lays out. In this section links are highlighted between the strands of Te Whāriki (Wellbeing, Mana atua, Belonging, Mana whenua, Contribution, Mana tangata, Communication, Mana reo and Exploration, Mana aotūroa) and the Key competencies and Learning areas within the New Zealand Curriculum.

The transcripts from these sessions and extracts from their reflective journals became the data that I then analysed by looking for the common themes and then trying to understand what these common themes were telling us. These are presented as a collaborative story where voices taken from the transcript are used to exemplify the main learnings from our sense making through this process of whakawhitiwhiti korero.

2.6 Ethical considerations

Ethical approval was sought from the University of Waikato, ethics committee and received. The co-researchers and the principal were emailed an information sheet and a consent form. The co-researchers were clear that they could withdraw from the process at any time without any disadvantage. Their own data from the transcribed co learning sessions were able to be withdrawn up until they had approved each transcript. When approving the transcripts and journals they had the opportunity to review or amend if they wanted to. All ethical requirements were attended to throughout this research.

CHAPTER 3 -FINDINGS

Introduction

In this chapter, I present my evidence in two parallel, separate but interdependent sections. The first section is contextual and chronological showing how the research journey developed with the voices and experiences iteratively influencing the next session. Here too I share the aesthetic renderings of the experiences that developed alongside our sense making, and identify how these highlighted the themes that carry through into the second section.

The second section is a collaborative story organised around the themes found in the first. Throughout the learning conversations I used my voice and that of Te Whāriki to help participants take a more critical stance. Our collaborative story interacts with the foundational theories and approaches embedded in the whakataukī and principles of Te Whāriki as well the metaphors of cultural relationships for responsive pedagogy. Initially this collaborative story highlights the foundational and pervasive deficit discourses that have continued to be maintained through schooling. We then move from foundational deficit beliefs, through a pathway of conscientisation, challenging many of these old beliefs and developing new beliefs. While new pathways forward are indicated, the power of our western colonial frameworks prove too powerful to disrupt and the mythtakes shared in the first session endure into the last.

Laying the context for our Learning

Session One

In attendance were Aria, Maria, Jack and Sarah (all names are anonymised for purposes of maintaining confidentiality).

During the initial session while others seemed comfortable Sarah seemed to find it difficult to accept the open, responsive nature of the research process that I had been trying to do. Sarah wanted a definitive response:

Are we going to be looking at us decolonising the curriculum and making it more culturally responsive? or are we looking at how we are using Te Whāriki in our current classroom?

She asked a series of questions throughout the session as she struggled with the open nature of our discussions:

Sarah: *So are we looking at our curriculum document? or are we looking at national standards?*

So we are looking at the literacy progressions? So we are looking at the people that constructed the document?

So the research that you're doing, that you want to gather evidence about, is the use of Te Whāriki curriculum moving up through the years of primary, *using that as the driving curriculum and does it have more benefits than the NZC* [New Zealand Curriculum]*?*

Is our key competencies with this? I'm just trying to get my head around where all the things happen.

The questions continued as I proved unable to provide an answer that allayed her concerns:

Sarah: *So if you turn that* [Te Whāriki] *into teacher speak, is that what we are looking at?*

Yes that's what we are asking the kids to do, but as a teacher how would I be facilitating this?

I think I've become very confused with what we are actually going to do. I get the decolonisation, like with NZC but I'm trying to figure out how? So you are saying that the Te Whāriki curriculum, certain aspects of that and we are looking at how we can intertwine that with the NZC?

Sarah concluded with:

I'll probably do some independent research and then come and say, I need this.

Her final statement clearly indicating her positioning after my first attempt at being open and collaborative in our learning and research. In indicating that she would do her own research, it seems to me now that she may well have been inferring that if I couldn't do my job, that is to tell her what to, do she would need to do that herself.

At the time when I reflected after this session, I realised we needed to begin with broader concepts; with the theories and approaches and resulting principles that underpin Te Whāriki, in order to consider what learning is and how it occurs. Unless this happened early in the learning through research process the temptation to fit Te Whāriki into our existing frameworks and avoid new learning and unlearning could become too powerful. This initial session and the questions from co-researchers made me realise how important it was to anchor our conversations in these theories by having them physically in front of us. I began to consider the possibilities of providing a visual representation of our encounters through dialogic whakawhitiwhiti kōrero. From here I determined to bring wool to physically connect to the theories and principles as we discussed them. Additionally, I chose to add a dice and game element, this was to build relationships, provide the possibility of levity and an opportunity to physically move around. I also decided to include whakataukī from within Te Whāriki during all later sessions. I hoped these would provide an opportunity for insight into te ao Māori, a legitimate alternative starting point for our discussions, a door into a Māori world view and way of deepening our understandings about what this might mean for us.

Session Two

In attendance were Aria, Maria and Jack. Sarah was unable to attend.

During this session we used a die to choose which theories or approaches we would consider in making connections to the principles. These had been printed off onto cards ready for use if needed. Although the die itself did not directly affect the connections made, it did help to bring a sense of festivity and fun to the session, which supported whanaungatanga and helped grow vital relationships of trust and respect. Lots of laughing and joking could be heard throughout the session. As we talked about the theories, approaches and principles, we physically made connections between the cards with wool and then with pen. In this way we worked to bring consciousness to the responsive dialogic space by providing a visual

representation of where our whakawhitiwhiti korero had taken us. My efforts were positively affirmed:

> Melissa: *I also printed them off if you want to look like that*
>
> Jack: *Rad [short for radical meaning good or excellent]*
>
> Maria: *It is weaving isn't it? You're weaving.*

Using the wool and pen in this way added an aesthetic frame to our discussions and shared connections. It allowed for further exploration of different ways of knowing, of epistemological pluralism, or, as Nodelman (2013) asserts, "a culturally responsive methodology values multiple ways of knowing. Knowledge framed aesthetically allows for multiple perspectives" (p.168). During these interactions we were able to connect to the Māori metaphors of raranga and to the artifact and metaphor of Te Whāriki. With this frame in front of us our conversations flowed more easily as our thoughts, ideas and concepts became more connected.

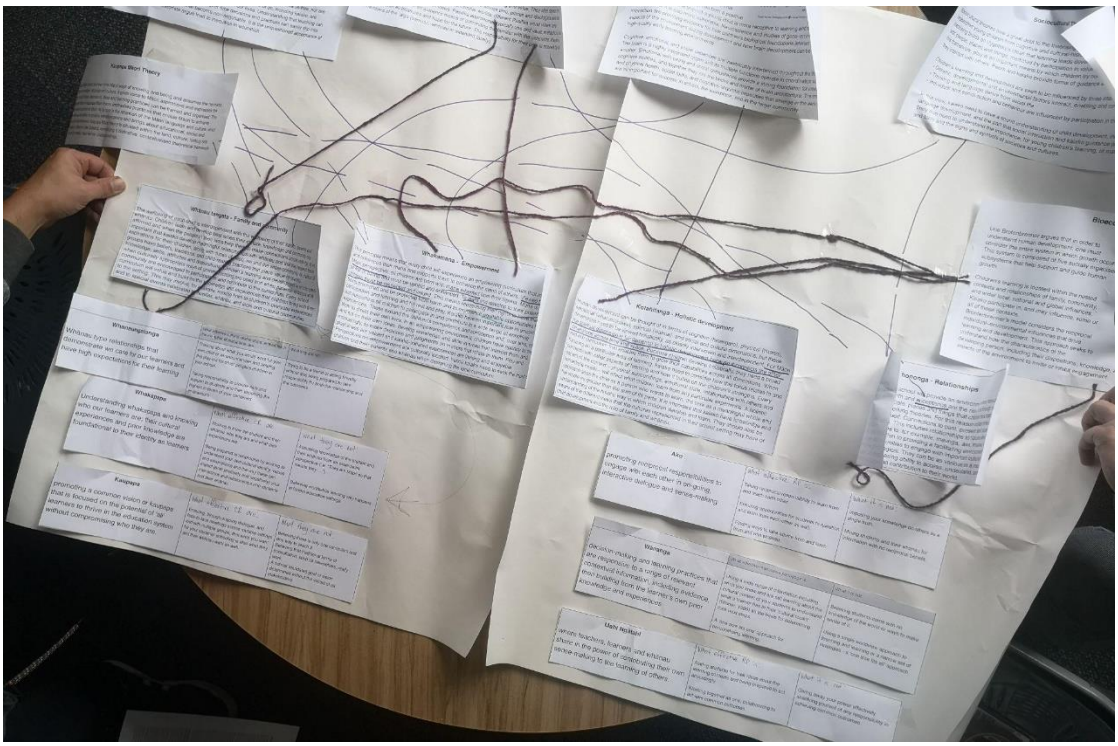
Session Three

In attendance were Aria, Jack and Sarah with Maria coming for the first half of the session.

As the weaving and grounding of our conversations in the concepts in front of us had worked so well during the previous session I continued with this process in the third session. The artifact we had developed together sat in front of us, this time with the metaphors of cultural relationships for responsive pedagogy added below our previous thinking from the session. This is shown in Figure 4 on the next page.

Figure 4

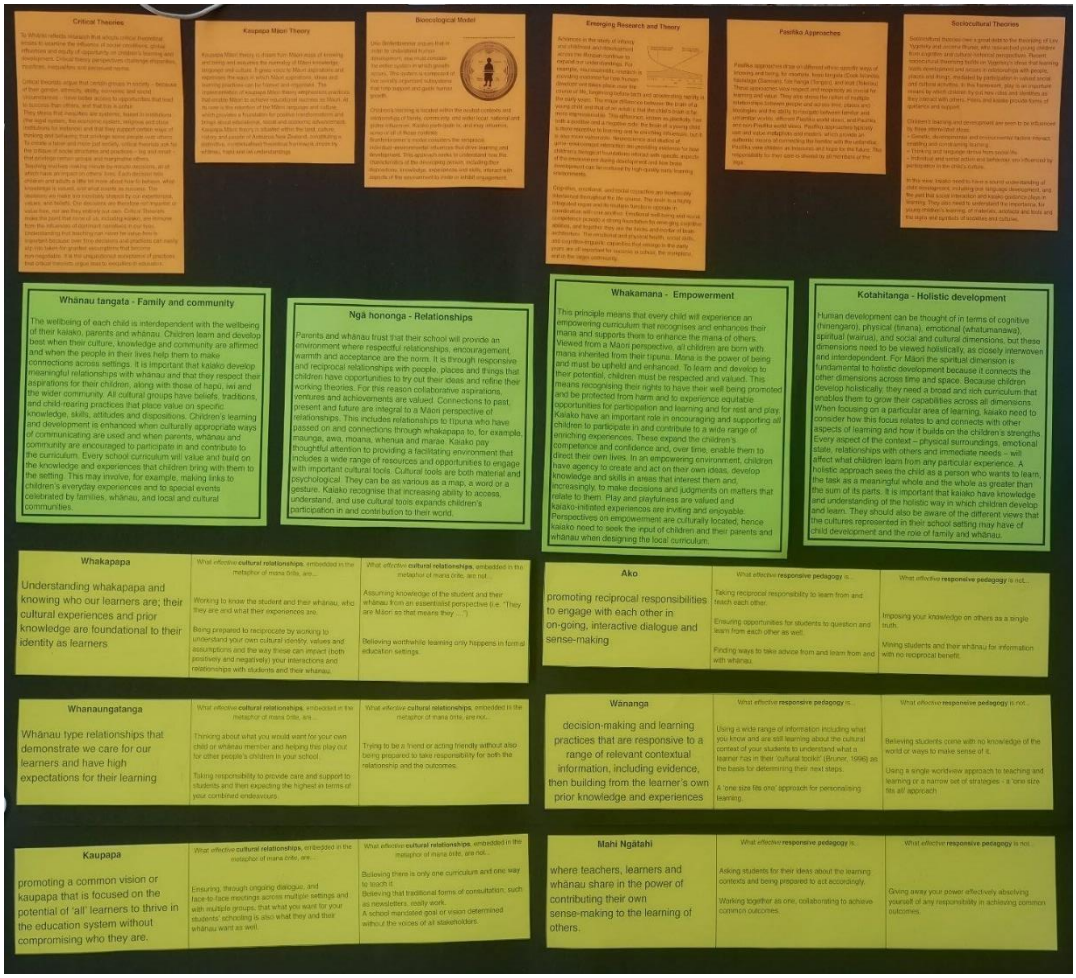
Making connections with wool



I was excited by the way our framework had supported and contributed to our discussions and therefore developed a more refined visual representation. The six underpinning theories and approaches in orange along the top, the four principles in green and the six metaphors of cultural relationships for responsive pedagogy at the bottom as shown Figure 5 on the following page.

Figure 5

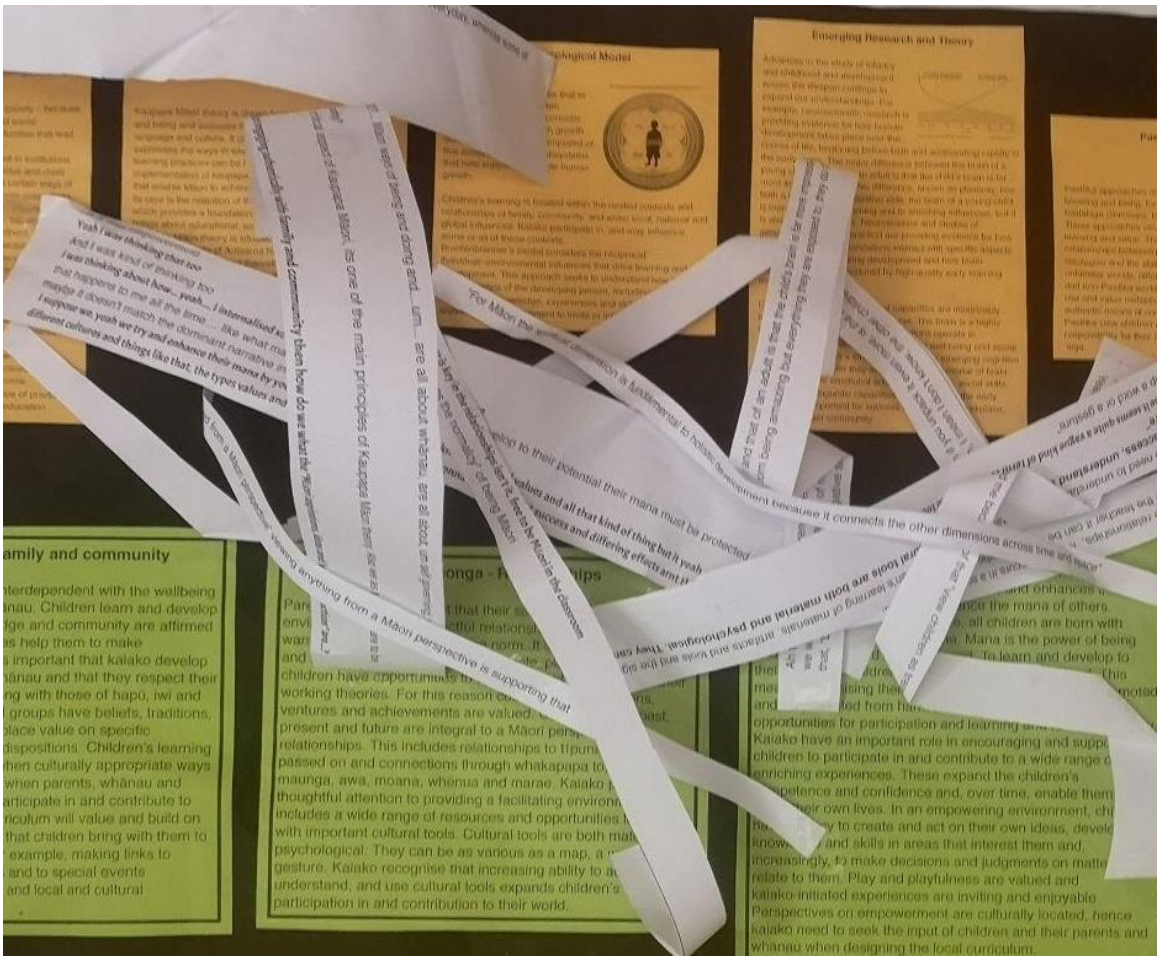
A more refined visual representation



As I transcribed the earlier sessions this sense making stayed with me. I noticed how our voices layered upon one another and connected between ideas. I found and printed sections of our conversations that clearly linked between concepts. I connected these voices between the concepts they discussed, continuing the metaphor of weaving this can be seen in Figure 6 on the next page. This session was further developing my own understandings of our research within the responsive dialogic space, of whakawhitiwhiti kōrero and our developing collaborative story.

Figure 317

Expanding on raranga



Session Four

In attendance were Aria and Maria.

I was excited to share the visual representation of our emerging collaborative story but unfortunately as we neared the end of the year commitment to our research waned and neither Jack nor Sarah attended. During this session we looked into the strands of Te Whāriki and made connections to the key competencies of the NZC. It was a difficult session with so few people, the two colleagues present enjoyed looking at the visual representation but it elicited very little discussion.

After this final session I continued to resist "exclusive linear text representation" and promote "artistic, aesthetic, dialogic representations" (Berryman et al. 2013, p.16) by expanding on this imagery as I further explored the transcripts. Here I

considered our conversations within a visual representation of our words with colours showing the entwining and weaving of our voices as they connected to theories and ideas. It became a visual representation of our research within the responsive dialogic space, of our developing collaborative story. This was important to my thinking and is valid here as "culturally responsive methodology encourages aesthetic renderings of any aspect of the lived and research experience as ways to both make meaning and to disseminate research" (Berryman et al. 2013, p. 18). Figure 7 below shows the underlying theories and approaches coded orange, the six principles green and the metaphors of cultural relationships for responsive pedagogy blue. All these are repeated around the original framework to widen the possibilities of a two-dimensional representation. I then took the parts of our conversations I had coded earlier and wrote our words connecting on the paper between the ideas we were discussing.

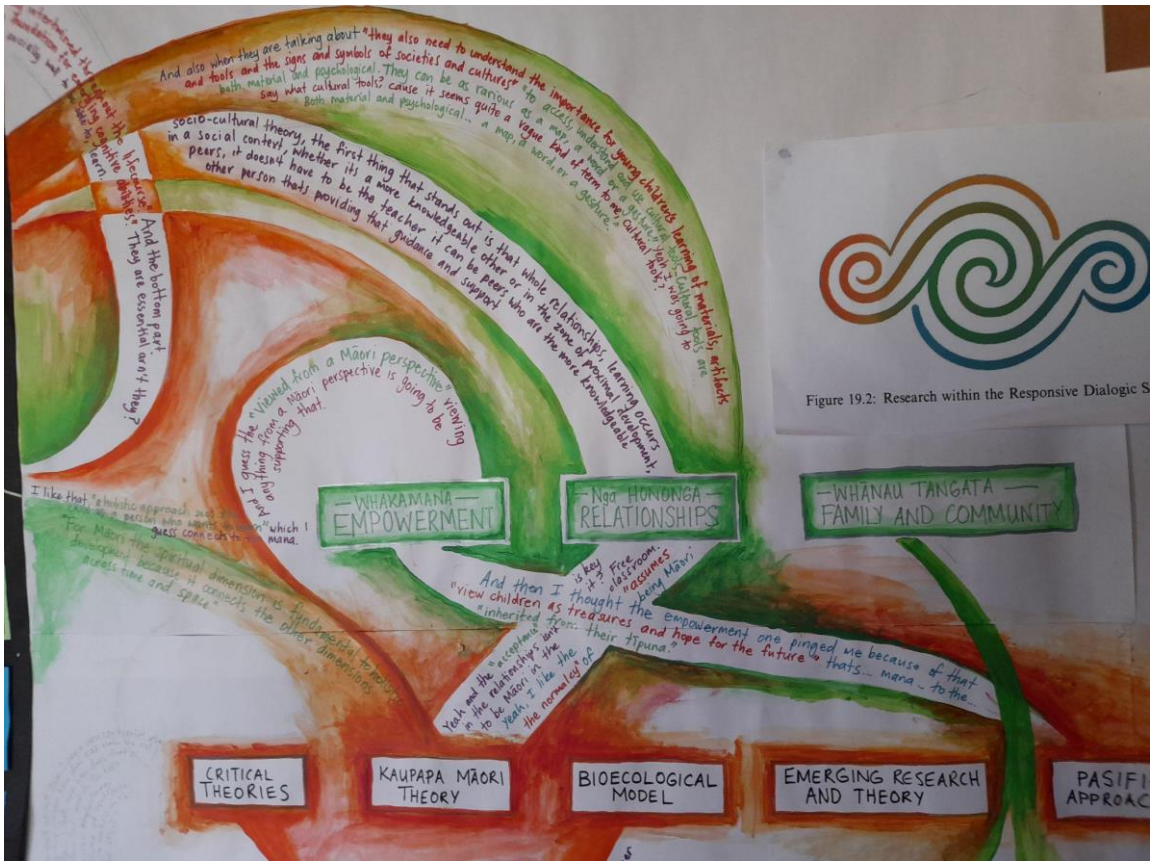
Figure 7

Our developing collaborative story

Within these connections different voices were represented by different colours. The times we quoted directly from the theories, approaches, principles or six metaphors were coded in the corresponding colour. In this way I could see how our thinking grew together and how the framework of Te Whāriki had influenced our theorising a closer view can be seen in Figure 8 below.

Figure 8

A closer view of our developing collaborative story



As I explored the data in this way I began to notice four themes within our story. Firstly, the foundational and pervasive deficit discourses that have continued to be maintained through schooling could be heard, especially in our early conversations. Secondly our story tells of us beginning to challenge some of our old beliefs, beginning to develop new beliefs and finally exploring new pathways forward. These themes form the structure of our collaborative story that follows.

Our Collaborative Story

Foundational Beliefs

Our story begins with embedded colonial discourses of power manifested through our voices, especially early in the research process. Here co-researchers share the mythtakes, as explained in my literature review on page 5, as beliefs in the inherent deficits of cultures other than those of the colonisers that existed across the school. They share their deficit beliefs about the lack of socialisation in the homes of some of their students impedes their ability to teach them.

Deficit theorising

When discussing the whakataukī during the second session Maria struggled to reconcile with ideas of inherited deficits:

> *What stood out to me was the reflection of your parents and how I guess the influence of parents on a child's life is so critical isn't it? And their upbringing and I remember as a child looking up to my parents, admiring them I guess. The installation of values as a reflection, I look at some of the children in my class and think, when they are a little exasperating. I think, oh actually they are a reflection of that home life, the parents, maybe grandparents, that have impacted on why they are the way they are and you know for us we have probably had values and parents that we do look up to and these children don't necessarily have the same, nurturing and belonging, connecting. I'm thinking of one in particular. But that's why they are what they are and the way they are, they are reflecting [the values of their homes] and while it is good actually to reflect those positive values in your family there might be a blueprint for some not so positive values as well. That impacts us as well.*

Rather than support insight into Te Ao Māori where mokopuna (grandchild or descendant) are encouraged "to stand strong, proud in the knowledge that they are the embodiment of all those who have gone before them" (Ministry of Education 2017, p.17), the whakataukī gave insight instead into the influence of colonised frameworks and how embedded discourses of power manifest, when teachers decide the worth of the community around them. Here a hierarchy of values is clear,

where some are more positive and valid than others. These conflicting value systems were highlighted by Maria's struggle to reconcile her own values with those of others when discussing caste systems:

> *Yeah so that's where I struggle with values like that from another culture which is so different to mine, because I would like people to be treated equally, because we are all people, rather than because we were born in this family as opposed to this family.*

Missing from this sense making was the consideration of how our colonial past has influenced this hierarchy and therefore our abilities to understand the values of others. Additionally, the co-researchers told of narratives and mythtakes that flow across the school. The mythtakes they shared were strong and appeared to work collectively to decide the value of students' cultures within the classroom. I used my voice to encourage a more critical view:

> *What ways do you notice that?*
>
> Maria: *Well I don't but I know that with the [particular ethnicity named] culture, because I haven't had a student in my class, but I know that it has been noticed in the school.*
>
> Melissa: *So how?*
>
> Sarah: *You've got the few, you have got the boys are put on a higher status.*
>
> Melissa: *But how do you notice that?*
>
> Sarah: *You get the way they treat the girls in the classroom, they expect the girls will do things for them.*
>
> Jack: *And the girls will naturally do things for them too, I'm not saying they are enabling them or anything, the girls are in the habit of tidying up after the boys because that's what they do at home. You even see it, sadly enough with a lot of them and female teachers and things. A lot of the boys won't really respect a female teacher the way they would a male teacher.*

My questioning here at the very least forced the pervasive, deficit discourse out into the light where it could be further examined.

Lack of socialisation outside of school

Another block to seeing the potential and worth of our students was the mythtake of a lack of socialisation, or the lack of social skills developed in the community for getting on with others. There was also the belief that whānau increasingly could not or would not provide these values and understandings through the home. Maria for example said:

> *I think, you know, particularly in the junior classrooms with kids starting school there's not a lot of that socialisation… because for whatever reason I don't necessarily think that those basic socialisation skills are taught in the home anymore because parents are working. They are tired when they get home and kids do not necessarily know how to play together nicely. I'm not saying they haven't learnt some of those skills at kindy but perhaps because of the nature of preschool and early childhood?*
>
> Sarah: *And that's changed, so much.*

Jack expressed a similar sentiment when discussing the challenges of a year 0-3 class in his reflective journal prior to our first session. This time the mythtake is his contention that some of these students lacked resilience:

> *I have some concern that the introduction of new behaviours into the classroom may have a negative effect on existing students who are susceptible to learned behaviours and/or don't possess the resilience to social and emotional setbacks.*

Influence of the factory model

Deficit theorising and the influence of the factory model of schooling, as discussed on page 7, were evident when Sarah discussed the National Standards policy and the curriculum:

> *That's what I'm trying to get my head around. I teach from the curriculum. I don't teach the National Standards, I teach the curriculum.*

This viewpoint ignores that we all sit within the wider societal and political context, and this includes the school and the curriculum itself. The influences of the Western factory model of school were further expressed by Maria in her reflective journal after our first session. Maria's entry was centred around her concerns with being in a mixed age and mixed ability classroom. Maria had written:

> *The start of four new entrants in Room 18 has changed the dynamics in the classroom and the older students are relied on to support their smooth transition to school (Tuakana/teina relationships). There is now a group of 6 young students who need intensive support for learning and play. A class visit to [the local kindergarten] recently highlighted the very different environments of kindy [Kindergarten] and school. Mat time for listening to a story etc is "optional"* [author's own emphasis] *at Kindy. It is clear that the five-year-old boys have not been a part of this as they are needing to build self-management skills (like sitting still for short periods of time) and social skills (like listening to others) at school for our mat time or circle time. This teaching of self-regulation and reiteration of positive social behaviour is repetitive for the older students. Kindy could help with the transition to school by preparing students for aspects of the school environment before they leave and school could also assist the transition with resourcing a new entrant area for play-based learning - particularly outdoor activities.*
>
> *A year 0-3 single cell classroom does not make for an easy transition and as a parent I would not have wanted my five-year-old to join a single space class such as this. One way I can see it working however, is within a shared collaborative teaching space, such as in [classroom name] or [classroom name]. This would allow teachers to collaborate and separate students into groups according to their learning needs rather than having one teacher trying to cover such a wide range of learning needs in a single space.*

Here, constraining beliefs about age, sex and ability could be heard as well as a resulting reliance on ability grouping so that they could teach groups of students in the same way and using the same materials.

Dissonance with the mixed ability class groupings can be seen throughout the story. Aria offers her perspective in her reflective journal prior to our first session. Aria wrote:

> *During our team hui today when talking about the roll drop at school and asking for ideas on ways we can promote our school to the community some teachers in my team had a passionate discussion about their thinking around this. Some of them believe it is because parents are not wanting their children to start school at five sharing a class with year 2 and 3 [six- and seven-year olds] students they want it to be a straight entrance class [only five-year olds]. When I asked if they had examples of parents bringing this up they said they hadn't. I wasn't sure how to address it or help them to look at it from another perspective because to me it is clear the long-term benefits of having years 0-3 and 4-6 class make ups. I think they need solid examples of the benefits of a vertical syndicate [mixed ages in the same class] but I am unsure how to give them that.*

To her the benefits of this type of class grouping were clear, but, in practical terms, how to make them viable within a colonial factory model of schooling was not.

Sarah too indicated the influence of the colonial factory model of schooling when she explained a method of planning with The Key Competencies (Ministry of Education, 2007) that supports her as manager of these skills to have greater power over their transmission:

> *On my planning sheets and when I plan I always have the key competencies down the side and I always look when I'm teaching something, how can I link it in all of these aspects? and some of them you might be doing relating to others, but it is going to be different for different kids in your class. So it is just making notes like relating to others of child A, might just need a little bit of guidance but child F or Z might need a lot more scaffolding in that context, in order to be able to relate.*

Foundational deficit beliefs, in the minds and hearts of our teachers, are ones that impede learning. It is therefore important to hear them in our collaborative story as

before issues of power can be effectively responded to, they must be seen and understood for what they are and potentially what they might be doing.

Challenging old beliefs

As our sessions progressed we began to challenge our old beliefs.

Developing critical consciousness

The foundational idea of critical theory within Te Whāriki supported us to become more critically consciousness when discussing our own experiences of attempting to connect to our students' own prior knowledge and experiences. Maria explained how important it was to engage with and link to what learners were saying:

> *We are always trying to make those links to children's everyday experiences and whatever is happening, you know giving them the opportunity to talk about what comes up for them. Whether it is through reading a book, it is important not to negate that and go with it, because they are making the connections to what's going on at school and they are linking it to their own experiences as well.*

When asked if she thought this happened more for some learners than others because of the teachers' culture, Maria suggested:

> *Well it probably naturally happens more for some depending on the English language, depending on how they are feeling that day. You can only do your best to ensure everybody is having that sense of belonging.*

Aria suggested that perhaps students more like her did get more of an opportunity:

> *I would assume that the kids in my class that I represent most would get more of an opportunity, only because I vibe with what they are saying so I might elaborate more and add my input, but if I don't see myself so much in it I might not draw it out of them as much. I don't know if that's true but you know if someone is talking about something you did or there might be a kid in your class who you see yourself as being like, subconsciously would give that kid when they are sharing a bit more time, without realising it. I mean obviously you would try not to but naturally that would happen.*

When considering this idea of the subconscious influence of cultural continuity (Krieg, 2016) Maria explored how a lack of cultural continuity may in fact enhance the ability to connect to prior experiences:

> *I think I'm almost the opposite, sharing an experience that I know nothing about. I'm more likely to go "tell me more" because I don't know anything about it. That's the whole ako learning from each other being modelled and I want to find out too. If they talk about what happened at church on Sunday or their camping experiences or something like that, or dinners, what did you have? How did you cook that? Because [student's name] was saying "I helped cook dinner" so what did you cook? and she told me about something I don't know anything about.*

As our conversations progressed we focused more closely on the framework before us. Maria made a connection to critical theory:

> *It is true isn't it? because teaching can never be value-free or value neutral even, I guess maybe the holistic development to question, whose values? and which values? Is it also empowerment?*

Together we strengthened our understandings about equity and the possible effects of a disconnect with knowledge systems in schools. Jack suggested:

> *I suppose we try to enhance their mana by imparting, our knowledge and values but obviously with different children, different cultures and the types of values and knowledge that you impart are going to have different success and differing effects, aren't they? Based on each child.*

Connecting this idea to the principle of whānau tangata, family and community from Te Whāriki further developed Jack's critical consciousness and he left his question hanging for us all to consider:

> *It is not like it comes from a wrong place or anything like that, but at the end of the day if it is different to what they value at home what they value in their community…?*

These insights into valuing the understandings of others continued to grow and strengthen amongst our group with Maria suggesting that the students' perspectives were important:

> *It is their perspective that is important to them, so that's the value in it isn't it? Because that's important and significant in their lives.*

These ideas lead Aria to consider the dominant culture as the status quo, and what this means for other perspectives:

> *The status quo never has to be justified, it just is, but anything considered different is always challenged and questioned. The status quo is never challenged, they never have to justify their thinking but the other group do.*

Viewing from Māori perspectives

As the sessions progressed co-researchers became more open to considering the insights into Māori perspectives within the whakataukī. During the third session connecting the whakataukī with the empowerment - whakamana principle from Te Whāriki supported us to consider children and therefore our role as teachers from a Māori perspective: Aria brought in the learning that all children were born with their own mana [personal power and integrity]:

> *I like this part "all children are born with mana inherited from their tīpuna", no matter what or who their tīpuna are they are all born with mana and society can strip that away from them, without us even being aware.*

> Jack: *I was thinking about that, I was connecting mana to creativity, like a child is one of the most creative beings on the planet and really when they come to school it is all about striping that creativity from them and basically instilling them with what we value is important, and the same thing with mana, children are stripped of it and basically we impart what we believe, you know our idea or our vision of mana is. In the best-case scenario, we are putting our idea of what mana is, in the worst case we are not even considering it.*

> Aria: *The "Kaiako's role is to encourage and support all children to participate in and contribute" not always lead them*

Insight into te ao Māori furthered when we connected the six metaphors of cultural relationships for responsive pedagogy to the whakataukī during the third session and further considerations of Māori perspectives were elicited:

> Maria: *Whanaungatanga*
>
> Aria: *To whakapapa because it is all about mana*
>
> Sarah: *And where they have come from and their history, their genealogy*

Making connections to the whakataukī we were considering continued to add to our thinking:

> Jack: *Yeah, the combination of those two is the very definition of that whakataukī.*
>
> Aria: *And mana because you are born with that, and if you don't acknowledge the inherited mana then you are not accessing whakapapa, cultural identity very well.*

Unlike our earlier session this thinking was more in in line with the explanation provided by The Ministry of Education (2017):

> In Māori tradition children are seen to be inherently competent, capable and rich, complete and gifted no matter what their age or ability. Descended from lines that stretch back to the beginning of time, they are important living links between past, present and future, and a reflection of their ancestors. These ideas are fundamental to how Māori understand teaching and learning (p.12).

When considering the principle of kotahitanga - holistic development, Jack also had insight into Māori perspectives which challenged his previous beliefs and grew his thinking:

> *And also relationships, and only because I'm just picking out the key word that "they also stress the notion of multiple relationships between people and across time", we think about relationships between people but this is about being between people, places, times and ideologies but we always think about relationships as being a personal thing.*

Developing New Beliefs

The development of new beliefs was supported by the concept of cultural continuity which came up early on in our discussions. When considering the whakataukī during our first session Aria had explained:

> *The reflection of your parents and then blueprint of your ancestors, I think relates a lot to all of these children, evenly. It doesn't matter where they come from but a lot of our role is making sure that their parents' reflections and the blueprint of their ancestors are seen in our room and our teaching. What we value is super important to creating belonging for these kids and without belonging they can't learn their best and be their best.*

Jack also touched on cultural continuity when exploring this metaphor:

> *It is a projection of your original value, but it can be distorted, that's where the metaphor of the ripple actually really comes into play. Where school is that ripple, there is a reflection of the children but because they are not in their home environment that reflection is slightly distorted based on how they feel when they are at school and the people that are around them.*

Connections to sociocultural theory

Interacting with the socio-cultural theories presented in Te Whāriki expanded and deepened previous understandings of these ideas:

> Maria: *Socio-cultural theory, the first thing that stands out is relationships, learning occurs in a social context, whether it is a more knowledgeable other in the zone of proximal development. It doesn't have to be the teacher, it can be the peers who are the more knowledgeable other person that's providing that guidance and support.*

Maria went on to question the meaning of 'cultural tools' which lead to a deeper understanding of these and of sociocultural theory as a result. As our discussions progressed Maria shared how connecting with socio-cultural theory caused some dissonance with her deficit views of socialisation expressed earlier:

There is all this choice and freedom and obviously kids are egocentric. I'm more of a Vygotsky person as far as your learning is through social interactions with other people so unless you can socialise with another person how does that feed your learning, how does that actually feed that learning together? Because it is not all about me and imparting, this is what you should know. Perhaps that's my educational background and maybe at times that's my fall back but sometimes there is explicit teaching, obviously because kids don't know what they don't know. But having the kids have that sense of discovery and learning from one another partnering with other people in their learning. So, kids are the partner sometimes, teachers are the partner sometimes.

Connections to Bioecological models

When links were collaboratively and explicitly made between theories and ideas, we began to conceive of a wider context and the possible effects on the experiences of children:

Aria: *So this line here "children's learning is located within the nested contexts and relationships of family, community, and wider local, national and global influences" all of those factor into their Tīpuna which is then passed into their inherited mana that they have*

Jack: *I'm going to put this here, this relationship, ngā hononga because, well all of these things although they look compartmentalised they are not mutually exclusive, are they?*

Melissa: *I think that's what the Mesosystem is, they are all affecting each other*

Jack: *Exactly so their cultural values are going to affect their peer groups, or the school system in their exosystem is going to affect their classroom, or the national customs are going to impact the religious settings, or mass media, they are all interlinked.*

Aria: *That goes into these parts because it is their whole wellbeing, spiritual and emotional.*

Further conversations centred around bio-ecological models of child development provided insights and opportunities to develop new beliefs into the impact on children of all layers in the model:

> Maria: *I like it because it is got those immediate things, family classroom, your friends, closer in to the child because that's what's happening every day, whereas some of those, extended ones, like the school system they [family] probably don't really know our school system.*
>
> Aria: *No but it does impact them.*
>
> Maria: *It does impact the classroom doesn't it?*
>
> Aria: *Massively, yeah.*
>
> Melissa: *And even impacts the teacher positively or negatively*
>
> Aria: *And the family*
>
> Maria: *And in medical institutions?*
>
> Melissa: *"The wellbeing of each child is interdependent with the wellbeing of their kaiako, parents and whānau"*

Further developing critical consciousness

Interacting with critical theory within the framework of Te Whāriki and the six metaphors of cultural relationships for responsive pedagogy enabled some discussion about our own responsibilities to enquire into our own value systems, in order to understand those of others:

> Aria: *It just depends where they are situated in the world at the time*
>
> Sarah: *That lead to great discussion*
>
> Melissa: *Is that kind of whakapapa?*
>
> Aria: *Yeah*
>
> Sarah: *It is all their history and what they bring with them*

Melissa: *"being prepared to reciprocate by working to understand your own values, cultural identity and assumptions and the way these can impact both positively and negatively your own interactions and relationships with both students and whānau" I guess that's it*

Aria: *Why am I thinking that about them, because you can't control other people*

Melissa: *Or what am I thinking, and how does that effect maybe how I act*

Aria: *Or what I value in my class*

Although some of the ideas being discussed might be considered confronting or challenging it was interesting to hear enjoyment being had during these conversations.

We began to inquire into our own value systems and where they sit within the classroom:

Maria: *Is it appropriate to value different things in different situations? Can you value certain things at school to have a functioning classroom that might not be the same values at home? Is it situational?*

Jack: *Also as teachers we do a lot of modelling, so you know you have got to model valuing everything basically because we are trying to teach children to value things whether it is an idea or whether it is an object or whatever. We have to model valuing everything, I couldn't give a stuff about that pencil on the mat there if I was at home, I'd probably just pick it up and chuck it in the bin, but I have to value that pencil because I am teaching others to value belongings because it might not be theirs it might belong to somebody else or it costs somebody else money, all that kind of thing.*

Maria continued to consider the concept of value within her classroom:

That's right, that's a value that you do feel is important to instil, it is somebody's property, it is equipment that's useful in the classroom, even though it is a simple thing, a pencil, it still has value.

New Pathways Forward

Valuing Te Ao Māori

The presence of Kaupapa Māori theory and the connections we were making to the surrounding ideas sparked insights into how much we have to learn in order to value Te Ao Māori. Nevertheless, our interactions with Te Whāriki in front of us helped to widen our thinking about the place of Te Ao Māori in our classrooms:

> Maria: *This probably fits with that one, doesn't it? Māori ways of being and doing are all about whānau, self-governing, relationships*
>
> Melissa: *So how does it connect to family and community?*
>
> Maria: *Because whānau is such an important critical aspect of Kaupapa Māori, it is one of the main principles of Kaupapa Māori theory. Also we as teachers are to be like a whānau*
>
> Jack: *Whānau is the be all isn't it?*
>
> Melissa: If *we are the teacher and we are not engaging authentically with family and community then how do we know what the "Māori aspirations, ideas and learning practices" are? and 'viewed from a Māori perspective" viewing anything from a Māori perspective is supporting that "for Māori the spiritual dimension is fundamental to holistic development because it connects the other dimensions across time and space"*
>
> Maria: *The acceptance is key in the relationships isn't it, free to be Māori in the classroom*
>
> Melissa: *"assumes the normalcy" of being Māori*

The presence and influence of the framework of Te Whāriki sitting in front of us was evident in our discussions as quotes from it and memories from earlier sessions became interwoven with our words:

> Aria: *This part "Learner identity is enhanced when children's home languages and cultures are valued in educational settings and when kaiako are responsive to their cultural ways of knowing and being. For Māori this*

means Kaiako [teachers] need understanding of a world view that emphasises the child's whakapapa connection to Māori creation", I think it goes to the mana one, as well as to whakapapa. Also, my second was, "that all children have rights to protection and promotion of their health and wellbeing, to equitable access to learning opportunities" and it is got "with the concept of mana", so that would be under this one (empowerment) and this one the holistic one because it is spiritual, mental, emotional.

Melissa: *I was thinking about the part, there under an inclusive curriculum, where it is talking about barriers, "and removing any barriers to participation and learning. Barriers may be physical (for example, the design of the physical environment), social (for example, practices that constrain participation) or conceptual (beliefs that limit what is considered appropriate for certain children)" and that made me think about critical theories from yesterday about "challenging disparities, injustices, inequalities and perceived norms"*

Potential of Māori metaphors to extend understandings

The metaphors of Te Whāriki, raranga and the whakataukī were integral to our discussions. They anchored our thinking and provided a basis for both how the sessions progressed and the theorising we did together. Physically weaving our thoughts together made real our whakawhitiwhiti kōrero, our dialogic sense making. Where we could interact openly with the theory in front of us and the research itself. When we connected privilege to our experiences of a card game 'Scum', where winning players get more and the losing less. Our voices can be heard layering on each other and weaving together:

Aria: *Like Scum [card game]*.

Melissa: *Yes*

Aria : *We played scum and we found that its actually all about privilege.*

Melissa: *Which I had never realised before.*

Aria: *I've got a handful of privilege, you get given lots of good cards when you're the winner.*

Melissa: *The more you get the more you have.*

Aria: *And you just keep getting mightier and mightier, but it is because of your privilege, everyone's giving you what they have.*

Maria: *And it is harder.*

Aria: *And then it is really hard to get out from the bottom.*

Melissa: *It is so much harder, and you feel so good when you are at the top.*

Aria: It is basically society man.

Melissa: *I also connected that to this whakataukī, that's the reason why that's important because all children come with great things.*

Aria: *And it enables their participation.*

Insight into decolonising structures

Some hints of an understanding of the limits of our current schooling systems and the beginning of thoughts of reconstruction could be heard in our third session. Sarah began by saying:

And it says at the bottom under inclusive curriculum "Kaiako seek to develop mutually positive relationships with mokopuna and to work with whānau to realise high expectations" and that also links in there because if you don't have the partnership with the family and that mutual respect then you are not going to have a relationship with that child as you move forward.

Aria: *And it is your perception of what is a high expectation.*

Sarah: *What I particularly liked just further down from there they said "Children's capabilities often fluctuate from day to day" its realising they have their good days and they're not so good days, their families have good days and not so good days and they bring that with them to school. We need to realise that and connect with the kids about that.*

Sarah then considered these ideas in the context of the assessment processes required by our school:

> *Doing one standardised test on one day is not a good option, if you look at everything you have done throughout the year, from their books and from their discussion. That's what we want to be doing. Not sit down, do this, we are going to grade you on this. It says the "curriculum for early years must be flexible enough to accommodate these fluctuations", it is not just early years it is all years, and that's one thing we probably need to bring through from Te Whāriki into the NZC.*

An interchange during our final session showed insight into the depth of theorising required of teachers:

> Maria: *And we are all coming for our own backgrounds.*
>
> Aria: *That's why it is so important to always examine why you do what you do.*

Despite this and all our previous conversations, Maria expressed very similar concerns and foundational beliefs around socialisation in our final session that she had during our first:

> *It just seems to me that a lot of children are starting school without the social skills, maybe that's because it is not being taught that much in the home, parents are relying on kindies to teach it, or schools to teach it, I just think they are coming to school without even knowing how to ask for something, they don't know how to wait their turn, some of those really basic, just social skills, that's what it feels to me. Rightly or wrongly it falls on us as educators to do a lot of that social skills teaching, certainly in the early years.*

Summary

These findings show our collective journey together through the research process, as well as the journey I took as an emerging culturally responsive researcher. It shows how intertwined these journeys were, starting with the iterative nature of

layering the context for our learning out and reflecting on that and then, the collaborative story of our experiences that ensued as a result.

CHAPTER 4 -DISSCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter begins by discussing the pervasive nature of power in our colonised society both in the context of research and schooling. I connect with my research findings to discuss and provide answers to my research questions showing how heavily interdependent the answers to these questions were. I answer each research question in turn then again signal the interdependent nature of these common threads.

4.2 Research contexts of power and imposition

In answering my research questions, I must first acknowledge that my research questions were based on my own prior experiences with Te Whāriki, the connections I had to it and the potential I saw within it. My findings indicate that this was not the case for my participants who, for the most part, had had little prior experience with this document. I have learned that our sessions together would have been more beneficial if I had prioritised time and provided my participants with opportunities to develop their own connections and understandings of the potential of Te Whāriki. While this should have happened before I began telling them about it and before we began to study the document itself, this would have had the downside effect of requiring more of their personal time. This presents an issue of power that I had not foreseen before embarking on this research. Despite what I had thought at the time and what I had aspired to do, my starting points did not fully consider the perspectives of others.

Early in my research I expressed a desire for the participants and I to be co-researchers but upon reflection this could never be the case. While I was almost hypo aware of issues of my own power, how this played out within the research itself cannot be ignored. I had previously been the team leader and in that way my position in the school was dominant to theirs. Te Whāriki was my area of interest. I wanted to pursue it, I was enthusiastic about it, and I had a deeper understanding of it and what I saw as its potential. This insight has broadened my own understanding and interest in the role of the more able other from socio-cultural theory to teaching and learning and the role of a culturally responsive researcher

endeavouring to undertake research in more participatory ways. Because of these starting points; my research question and my leadership level in the school, power and imposition to some extent were undoubtedly in play during this research no matter how much I had sought to undertake this research in the most participatory ways. Merely saying we were co-researchers did not make it so. The answers to the research questions are now contextualised by these critical understandings.

4.3 Research Question 1: In what ways can Te Whāriki support primary school teachers to see and react to issues of power in their classrooms and schools?

Initially the suggestion of Te Whāriki as a possible tool for use in primary schools brought to the surface several foundational beliefs from participants about power, about learning and about the children themselves, especially the Māori students. These embedded discourses can be heard in the deficit beliefs (see Office of the Auditor General, 2012) shared by participants. Included was a belief that students and whānau lacked 'appropriate' socialisation or resilience to change or to facing the challenges offered through learning. In contexts such as these, any underachievement can be blamed on deficits within homes, families and the children themselves, rather than anything we as teachers have agency over or any power to change. With this view the valuable understandings and connections that sit within whānau and community will not be accessed because the underlying belief is that this knowledge is of no value. The factory model of schooling, where already established positions of power are recreated and perpetuated (see Sleeter, 2015) also has a huge impact on the acts and beliefs of teachers. Had I too, albeit unwittingly, become a representation of telling teachers what to do therefore they needed to resist my 'telling' and rationalise why? This could be heard in the voices of my participants especially when discussing other changes in the school including our mixed age level classes and ability grouping.

The fact that Te Whāriki explicitly outlines its underpinning theories and approaches provided us with explanations about what learning is, how it works and the power-sharing conditions which work to either enhance or inhibit it. Interacting with these theories did provide insights into these conditions by providing the theory for us to apply within our kōrero to our reflection on our shared practices.

This was extremely useful and helped to further our discussions and in turn our understandings.

I did at times put on the table a consideration of how our colonial past has influenced power within our classrooms, however, I believe our discussions would have benefited from a deeper understanding of this. Especially how a hierarchy of values and knowledge, born of this past, continues to inhibit our abilities to understand the worlds of others. However, time and the pressures of their work, stopped me from doing so.

To reiterate, Te Whāriki can be a useful resource from which to understand how issues of power play out in primary schools and classrooms but this requires time and dedicated support for conscientisation and new understandings to emerge. This learning was most effective when conversations occurred overtime and when people felt safe to say what they believed. Time allowed for both challenges to be put on the table and unlearning to occur.

4.4 Research Question 2: How might Te Whāriki support teacher agency and culturally responsive practice?

The interconnections between Te Whāriki and culturally responsive practice or more specifically cultural relationships for responsive pedagogy are explained on page 16 of my literature review. I believed that these understandings were important for all of us as a staff and that they connected to the professional development that we had all embarked on that year. When I decided to pursue this research, I thought this would be an area of common understandings. However, I underestimated the extent to which they had been able to talk about their practice or make links to the theorising within their PLD (professional learning and development) throughout the intervening period of time. Therefore, I did not provide opportunities for my participants to make sense of this themselves before we began our sessions. The connections between Te Whāriki, teacher agency and culturally responsive pedagogy would have been strengthened by participants being able to take the time to make their own sense of how the theoretical base of Te Whāriki and that cultural relationships for responsive pedagogy align and intersect.

Culturally responsive practice does require a deep understanding of power within our classrooms, including our own power as teachers to have agency over who we relate to, how we act and what we believe. Because we had some common understandings of culturally responsive pedagogy and we shared common practices, Te Whāriki did support participants to strengthen our individual and shared understandings by helping us all to develop a new way of looking at the contexts in which we taught. A deeper appreciation of Te Whāriki also helped participants to relate their own contexts for learning to a different bicultural and bilingual curriculum. Importantly, the embeddedness of te ao Māori in Te Whāriki pushed us into seeing and working to understand a worldview that we were far less embedded in. This emerging critical consciousness provided opportunities for reaching beyond the rhetoric to begin developing awareness and insights into more authentic Māori perspectives. These perspectives helped lead us towards considering children in terms of their inherent greatness and potential, their mana and their abilities to lead their own learning. The principle of whakamana and the Māori metaphors from whakataukī, supported and extended our understandings about the innate possibilities within every child. A view that was far removed from the deficit discourses that emerged from our first session together.

The Māori metaphors in Te Whāriki also heavily influenced the way we interacted with each other and how our learning grew. The literal and metaphoric weaving of our ideas and the concepts in front of us provided an anchor point for us and later gave me insight through a visual manifestation of the spiralling nature of whakawhitiwhiti kōrero and dialogic sense making, both in building research relationships and as pedagogy.

Giving particular attention to the validity and importance of whanaungatanga during the research process was important and meant that our discussions deepened over the course of the sessions. Laughter, warmth and connections grew and as the learning became better scaffolded, and at the same time challenging but fun, participants became increasingly willing to consider situations from other points of view.

Connecting to the concepts in critical theory through Te Whāriki also supported the development of our critical consciousness. Through this we began to consider the

possible negative effects of a lack of cultural continuity between home and school. This challenged ideas about teaching being value-free or even culture-free. Our collaborative story shows us beginning to explore how this may affect our abilities to understand the values of others and of the requirement to question the pervasive status quo of inequity provided to Māori learners through schooling.

Opportunities to challenge our historical understandings and beliefs would have been strengthened by also layering in the history of our country so that the reasons why Māori understandings are not valued within our society were more explicit and also part of our shared understandings. This may have provided an opportunity to challenge collective mythtakes about a hierarchy of knowledge systems where the Western one is superior as discussed on page 4 of my literature review. If this was able to be seen, participants may have considered this as limiting and unfair and most importantly then believing they have the agency to resist these discourses.

4.5 Research Question 3: In what ways can Te Whāriki support teachers to acknowledge realities they are socialised not to see, in order to become more culturally responsive practitioners?

It is not enough that damaging old beliefs are simply challenged, space must be created for new emancipatory beliefs to take their place. This is a complex process as it requires us to see what we are socialised not to see. From our collaborative story it appears that connecting with the critical and sociocultural theories and bio-ecological models of learning within Te Whāriki began this process. Then layering in the metaphors of cultural relationships for responsive pedagogy widened our thinking so that we were utilising a different way of viewing our work.

This research process was relatively short and essentially event driven. Most participants went from event to event with little or no additional reflection or discussion of the ideas and theories first presented and discussed. Decolonising, by acknowledging realities we are socialised not to see, is a big ask. This requires new concepts and beliefs to be developed over time with regular opportunities to potentially resist and unlearn our past experiences so that we can take our new theorising into our praxis. Instead, most participants had other professional learning commitments that the school was paid by the Ministry of Education to participate in. This professional learning did not involve consideration of colonisation let alone

attempt to come to terms with decolonisation, instead it was similar to the top down reforms within the factory model focused described by Sleeter (2015) that took precedent. These are discussed in my methods on page 36.

4.6 Research Question 4: How can a deeper understanding of Te Whāriki support the indigenisation and decolonisation of state-run primary classrooms and schools in New Zealand?

Māori metaphors and Kaupapa Māori theory within Te Whārikī are an opportunity for insight into te ao Māori. The whakataukī and the metaphors of raranga can be a doorway into a Māori world view and, in this research, they were examples of legitimate starting points for our theorising about te ao Māori. However, these metaphors have no power if they are only considered and understood through a colonised framework. This is most likely to result in the appropriation of Māori knowledge as a transactional tick box exercise and the use of whakataukī as rhetoric. The critical theory within Te Whāriki initially excited me as a way to support the critical consciousness required to challenge this framework, but this alone was not enough.

Again, this would have been enhanced by building a collective understanding of our colonial past and the mythtakes that emerged. In order to decolonise, we must first understand colonisation. This could have been extended by thinking about how this history influences our society, our school and indeed our acts of teaching and learning in the classroom. Again, the legitimacy, validity and potential of te ao Māori needs to be more fully respected and understood alongside the wider context of our shared colonial history, meanwhile its misuse, appropriation or lack of acknowledgement or complete absence in some cases will continue to be construed as lacking in inherent value.

Our conversations did ignite some thinking about the need to reconstruct our system and possible changes that might be made. Our collaborative story indicated connecting types of assessment with the underpinning theories and approaches of Te Whārikī as a starting point for this. While our sessions did ignite some deeper thinking and more understanding of Māori perspectives. Māori metaphors and Kaupapa Māori theory within Te Whārikī provide an opportunity for insight into te ao Māori and into Te Whāriki itself. The whakataukī and the metaphors of raranga

were examples of legitimate starting points for our theorising about te ao Māori. However, these metaphors have no power if they are only considered and understood through a colonised framework. This is most likely to result in the appropriation of Māori knowledge and whakataukī as rhetoric or worse still becoming an expert on Māori knowledge. The critical theory within Te Whāriki initially excited me as a way to support the critical consciousness required to challenge this framework, but I learned that this alone was not enough.

Again, this would have been enhanced by building a collective understanding of our colonial past and the mythtakes that emerged. This could have been extended by thinking about how this history influences our society, our school and indeed our acts of teaching and learning in the classroom. Again, the legitimacy, validity and potential of te ao Māori needs to be more fully understood alongside the wider context of our shared colonial history. Meanwhile its misuse, appropriation or lack of acknowledgement or complete absence in some cases will continue to be construed as lacking in inherent value.

Summary

Our conversations did ignite some thinking about the need to reconstruct our system and possible changes that might be made. Our collaborative story indicated connecting types of assessment with the underpinning theories and approaches of Te Whārikī as a starting point for this. While our sessions did ignite some deeper thinking and more understanding of Māori perspectives these new understandings lost their influence from one session to the next. The pervasive effects of our history proved too powerful to overcome within our four sessions together. This is evidenced by some of the deficit narratives heard in our early sessions and continuing into the last.

CHAPTER 5 -CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

In this final chapter I outline my conclusions by sharing two important learnings. The first is about the implications of how my own power manifested within this research as a teacher with teachers who were also colleagues and friends. The second is the importance of carefully scaffolding the learning for learners and of making learning fun. Following this I outline how we were able to move beyond appropriation and rhetoric to learn from the wisdom of Māori metaphors. Finally, I outline the limitations of my research and consider implications for New Zealand and beyond.

5.2 Power relations

It is true that culturally responsive methodologies require an intense and 'critical' consideration of the way power manifests itself within the research process. Despite my best intentions, what I understood at the outset of my research was not enough to prevent me from falling into the trap of becoming an impositional researcher myself. I let my own beliefs in the potential of Te Whāriki and the sense making I had already made, supersede the right of my participants to make this sense for themselves. I did not allow for my own unfinishedness, instead I held authority as the knower where I had already decided that the potential of Te Whāriki was great and I initially worked to assimilate others into this view.

Understandably, starting from this point meant my participants initially could not see themselves in the research process, they struggled to connect with what we were doing and were reluctant to engage. Although disappointing for me at the time, this was important in my own conscentisation where I realised I needed to change my approach, I needed to work to enable participation rather than just request it and expect it. Fortunately, by changing my approach and making the learning fun and more attractive we were able to come together and begin sense making collectively. A more relevant starting point may have been asking for participants to opt in, to choose for themselves to be a part of this research, to have the power to come to the table of their own accord. These understandings are explicit in the critical theories that underpin Te Whāriki.

5.3 The importance of scaffolding and making learning fun

Humans are social beings, born to learn, born to learn together. It became clear that learning must be scaffolded with multiple entry points, identifying and validating prior cultural knowledge and experiences. When this was provided participants began to engage, they became more open to new ideas and confident in their abilities to contribute. Alongside this scaffolding, when explicit attention was given to providing contexts for learning that were attractive and enjoyable, that is, where we shared food and drink, where we laughed and where we had fun together had a huge influence on engagement and the resulting learning. This too is true within the classroom, where teachers need to understand when learning is fun then learning is more powerful. In these contexts, children will engage more, they will want to repeat the experience and they will be more likely to be motivated to choose to be involved in future learning experiences. These understandings are embedded in the socio-cultural theory that underpins Te Whāriki.

5.4 Moving beyond appropriation and rhetoric

Māori metaphors proved to be a powerful tool in expanding our thinking. It was through this wisdom that our thinking became deeper. They enabled us to expand our understanding of new concepts by connecting to our own ideas. For me as a researcher they also helped me to begin to conceive of the meaning and potential in whakawhiti kōrero and spiralling dialogic sense making. These connections would have been strengthened by knowing of our colonial history, of the effects on our bicultural society and how this continues to be why te ao Māori is not considered valid in many places today. This is important learning as if we do not know why something is not valued we believe it is because it is not of value or to be valued.

5.5 Limitations of the research

The limitations of my research include the small sample size and the short period of time we had together to do this work. Additionally, my own enthusiasm for the topic, the decisions I had already made about its potential proved to be a limitation. I could not see past it, I expected others to see what I saw. I was blind to the impositional nature of what I was expecting.

5.6 Implications for New Zealand Schools

Aligning Te Whāriki with cultural relationships for responsive pedagogy did stimulate new learning, providing insights into our beliefs and practice. If these sparks can be ignited it stands to reason that they can be then nurtured and grown. A deep reflection into our ways of being can be confronting but it can also be affirming. However, within schools this work should not be done by teachers alone. Leadership needs to be learning alongside their teachers. They must understand the conflicting worldviews when they ask for culturally responsive practice alongside the traditional structures within the school, especially those for monitoring, tracking and assessing children. Indeed, the possibilities for reform would be further enhanced by also including whānau and the wider community in this learning. Then whānau can contribute as their children's first teachers in ways that knowing and relating to the learner are central to understanding where they have come from and where to go to next.

5.7 Implications for other indigenous learners

There are implications here for other indigenous learners around the world. If sparks of understanding can be ignited in Aotearoa by interacting with a Māori world view through a curriculum document then these understandings can also be ignited when considering the world views of indigenous peoples in other colonial settings and contexts. This is especially true if the learning occurs alongside a growing understanding of the shared histories. If not, why these indigenous epistemologies are not currently being widely valued and the potential within these epistemologies will continue to be re-storied, become mythtakes and potentially wasted. The real risk though is that yet another generation of Māori learners will be disadvantaged by the very system that has been set up to serve them and their families and colonisation will continue to maintain power over how they are defined. We must remember instead that these children are born of greatness, full of possibility and potential carrying the strengths of all those who have gone before them.

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