

Introduction

‘Language is the lifeline and sustenance of a culture’ (Pere, 1991, p. 9). ‘Māori knowledges melded Māori ancestors in the lands of Aotearoa and the surrounding oceans for over a thousand years before the coming of the “white man”. Māori elders embodied knowledge and a strong desire to perpetuate certain forms of knowledge, reflected through the language in a variety of forms; naming people, places, phenomena and things, waiata (songs), karakia (highly ritualised ceremonies, prayers and incantations), whakapapa (genealogy), pūrākau (narratives and storytelling), and through tikanga (cultural ways of being and doing), spirituality and beliefs’ (Skerrett & Ritchie, 2019, p. 50). Māori whānau (families) have consistently expressed the desire for their children to learn their language (Waitangi Tribunal, 2010).

The Waitangi Tribunal provides a forum for Māori treaty grievances to be researched from both Māori and Crown (government) perspectives. One of its first reports was in relation to the Crown’s failure to protect the Māori language (Waitangi Tribunal, 1986). This report stated that ‘The Crown has failed to protect the Maori language as required by Article II of the Treaty’ (p. 49) and condemned the government for policies that had meant that the numbers of Māori speakers had dropped from 90% to less than 5%. It went further, stating that these policies had also resulted in Māori educational failure. A more recent Waitangi Tribunal report pointed out that despite the huge initial success of the Māori language movement, the government had failed to develop policy that would assist in the revival of te reo and the safeguarding of dialects (Waitangi Tribunal, 2010). After canvassing the policies and curriculum in relation to te reo Māori with a focus on early childhood care and education we argue for urgent prioritisation of the preparation of Māori language teachers who have the requisite skills, knowledges and fluency in te reo to turn the tide of this second wave of loss of language speakers.

Historical context

The large south Pacific islands of Aotearoa (New Zealand) were comparatively late to be colonised. Although missionaries arrived in 1814, in 1835 a Declaration of Independence - He Whakaputanga o te Rangatiratanga o Nu Tireni - proclaimed the islands to be a Māori sovereign nation (Waitangi Tribunal 2014). This meant that when Great Britain belatedly

decided to colonise this land, they needed to seek the agreement of Māori, which was obtained via the 1840 Tiriti o Waitangi | Treaty of Waitangi (Orange, 1987; Walker 2004). The Māori version of this treaty, which was signed by a vast majority of chiefs, allows in article one for the British Crown's kawanatanga (governance) whilst affirming in its second article Māori tino rangatiratanga (chiefly authority) over their lands and all things of value to them. The third article states that Māori are to have equal citizenship rights (to those of the colonisers). A fourth protocol includes Māori spiritual beliefs as being affirmed alongside Christian denominations.

Unfortunately, these assurances turned out to be treated by the colonisers as irrelevant to their colonial project, with the declaration ignored and the treaty both disregarded and repeatedly breached. The settlers established their own government in 1852 excluding Māori from political decision-making within the colonial sphere. Māori frustration at the continued ignoring of the Tiriti promises has been ongoing (Evison, 1997; Walker, 2004). It is only since 1994 when New Zealand adopted a mixed member proportionate electoral system that Māori have had a sense of being represented and heard in parliament, and yet continue to face ongoing struggles against treaty breaches due to the enduring injustices of colonialism.

Both the historical and contemporary breaches of the treaty can be attributed to the deeply ingrained assumption of white superiority and resulting inherent racism that continues to impact Māori wellbeing (Moewaka Barnes & McCreanor, 2019; Paine et. al., 2019). The cumulative effects of loss of language, land, and the economic base that this would have provided mean that Māori suffer from the negative impacts of both inter-generational trauma, and over-representation in negative social statistics such as educational failure, poor health outcomes, imprisonment, homelessness and so on (Gordon & MacGibbon, 2010; Ministry of Social Development, 2016; Pihama et. al, 2014). And recent reports confirm the ongoing racism Māori face on a daily basis (Jackson, 2018; Ministry of Education, 2019a). Without drastic intervention, our nation's education, health, and other systems will "continue to reinscribe racism and white privilege" within our communities (Reid et. al., 2018, p. 4)

English linguisticism

Skutnabb-Kangas' (2015) construct of *linguicism* is helpful in the analysis of the institution of English-only policies in the curriculum in New Zealand, leading to the inscription of racism and presumption of white privilege. She argues that, whilst the state (via whitestream

teachers) may not “intend to harm children” (p. 5), teachers are in fact harmful because the educational *structures* within which they operate are harmful. She defines linguisticism as

ideologies, structures and practices which are used to legitimate, effectuate, regulate and reproduce an unequal division of power and resources (both material and immaterial) between groups which are defined on the basis of language (p. 1).

Linguicism involves clear discrimination based on which language(s) people speak and how they speak them, like the discrimination involving the social constructs of race, gender, and class. The agents of linguisticism are the *ideologies*, *structures* and *practices* of colonialism. Further, if an educational system is organized so that all teaching happens through the medium of the dominant *colonial* language and the teachers are monolingual in that dominant colonial language (as is the case in the whitestream New Zealand system—where most Māori learners are situated) then the school’s *structure* reflects linguisticism (and, by default, racism). Most *practices* where people get unequal access to power and resources, based on their language/s, reflect linguisticism. How the ideologies, structures and practices of linguisticism in New Zealand have played out is evident in the following overview of sociohistorical political and legal developments.

Waitangi Tribunal reports

In a report commissioned by the Waitangi Tribunal¹ in 2001 for the indigenous flora and fauna claim called *Crown Policy Affecting Māori Knowledge Systems and Cultural Practices* (Waitangi Tribunal, 2001) David Williams covered the area of education policy from 1847 to 1871. Commencing with the 1847 Education Ordinance (New Zealand Legislative Council Ordinances, 1841–53) when Governor George Grey legislated for language shift from Māori to English throughout the state-funded mission schools, Williams argued the idea was to hastily *civilize* and *assimilate* Māori children. In the ensuing years there was pressure from a variety of places to put greater emphasis on an English-only curriculum. A long serving Member of the House of Representatives in 1857, Hugh Carleton, said

...I consider that too much stress cannot be laid upon the acquirement of the English language. I believe that civilization cannot be advanced beyond a very short state through means of the aboriginal tongue. The Maori (sic) tongue

¹ A commission which has been established to examine Māori claims for restitution for breaches of the 1840 Tiriti o Waitangi (Treaty of Waitangi) signed between sovereign nations, the British Crown and Māori.

sufficed for the requirements of a barbarous race, but apparently would serve for little more (cited at p. 116).

Similarly, Williams argued, reports on Native Schools in 1858 made the English language a “prominent feature of the instruction” (p. 116). This led to the 1858 Native Schools Act a decade later, where the stipulation of English language instruction was re-enacted in section 9, as it had earlier been in section 3 of the 1847 Ordinance. Debate continued. The subsequent 1867 Native Schools Act progressed this shift to instruction in English. Williams quoted Carleton from the New Zealand Parliamentary Debates in 1867 as saying “things had now come to pass that it was necessary either to exterminate the Natives or civilize them” through language (cited at p. 117). This was occurring right in the middle of land wars between the settler government and Māori, when Māori communities, particularly in the north island, were being decimated, leading to wholesale land alienation and confiscations. Governor Grey successfully diverted missionary school education from what is now considered sound additive bilingual pedagogical practice to deficit subtractive pedagogical practices (Skerrett, 2017) creating a hierarchical power base for English-speaking children. Further, according to Williams, a government official at the time, Swanson, is recorded to have stressed the importance of ‘one common tongue’ and wished Native children to speak English in the playground as well as the classroom. He thought that “English-speaking children should be enrolled with Māori in the Native schools to assist in that direction” (cited at p. 118). Māori children were being fitted to becoming “good English-speaking servants” (Simon, 1998). The linguistic policies of inclusion and exclusion by ‘fitting’ Māori children according to the Māori language they spoke was advanced in education. It took just 10 years to strengthen the linguisticism through legislation.

Nearly 150 years after signing Te Tiriti o Waitangi (1840), 1986 saw a landmark finding of the Waitangi Tribunal in an endeavour to subvert colonial linguisticism. It found that state (Crown) policies had endangered the Māori language, in breach of the expectations in Te Tiriti o Waitangi of 1840. Further, it went beyond the endangerment of te reo Māori being a legal and political shortcoming, to allocating additional responsibility for the widespread educational ‘failure’ of Māori as residing within the education system itself, clause 6.3.8 stating;

The education system in New Zealand is operating unsuccessfully because too many Māori children are not reaching an acceptable standard of education. For some reason they do not or cannot take full advantage of it. Their language is not adequately protected, and their scholastic achievements fall far short of what they

should be. The promises in the Treaty of Waitangi of equality in education as in all other human rights are undeniable. Judged by the system's own standards Māori children are not being successfully taught, and for this reason alone, quite apart from a duty to protect the Māori language, the education system is being operated in breach of the Treaty (Waitangi Tribunal 1986b, p. 38).

The Tribunal concluded that the Māori language could be regarded as a 'taonga' (treasured possession) and in July the following year the Māori Language Act (1987) declared te reo Māori to be a 'taonga' and an official language of New Zealand.

The new Māori Language Act 2016

On April 14, 2016, the new Māori Language Act 2016 was passed into legislation repealing the old 1987 Act. Its stated purpose is to affirm (or reaffirm) the status of the Māori language as the Indigenous language of New Zealand; a taonga (as defined by the old Act); A language valued by the nation and an official language of New Zealand (p. 29). It also sought to legislate provisions to support and revitalize te reo Māori through the *Maihi Karauna*—the Crown's Māori Language Strategy which gives effect to raising the status of te reo Māori as an official language and to promote it as a means of communication and a living language for all New Zealanders (Te Taura Whiri i te reo Māori, 2017). In opposition to the terms of language in the whitestream of the compulsory English-language sector established in the mid-1800s, the stated goal in 2017 includes a strong desire to:

- Increase the percentage of students who have access to te reo Māori (now 22%).
- Set a goal for universal availability of Māori language teaching in schools.
- Set a goal for incorporation of Māori language in the *core curriculum*.
- Improve the standard of teaching across all levels to enhance success rates in acquisition for children.
- Increase the numbers of Māori teachers of te reo Māori (p. 6, emphasis added).

Added to that there is also a strong desire to scan for the impact of te reo Māori in all government initiatives. Whilst it has been a long-term goal of the early years sector to increase the amount of Māori language in education, the whitestream general stream of education has glacially slow and at this point in 2020 the stated goals of 2017 are just that 'stated' but as yet without 'substance'. The issue of glaciality is indicative of an unwillingness to depart too far from the ideologies, structures and practices used to legitimate the apparatus of the colonial nation state of 1847 reproducing the unequal division of power and resources dedicated to English-language provision at the expense of Māori-language provision. This idea is reflected

in the Kōhanga Reo claim to the Waitangi Tribunal which found the Ministry of Education in breach of Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Te Kōhanga Reo Waitangi Tribunal claim and report

The precedent to the Kōhanga Reo Waitangi Tribunal claim was the 1986 Waitangi Tribunal deliberation that the Māori language is a ‘taonga’ (treasured possession) leading to the Māori Language Act being passed into legislation the following year. Twenty-five years later the Waitangi Tribunal (2012) traced the pattern of declining enrolments which paralleled closures of Kōhanga Reo centres. After the expansionary momentum of the 1980s when the number of Kōhanga Reo rose by an average of 80 per year to reach 809 Kōhanga with nearly half of all Māori enrolments in ECE in 1993, it then slowed, abruptly flattened and declined steadily to 586 Kōhanga with a roll of 9,808 in 2001. This marked a decline of 181 Kōhanga Reo in just five years (p. 28). Currently, only 17% of Māori children are enrolled in Kōhanga Reo which accounts for only 10% of the available early childhood services and 444 actual centres (Education Counts, 2019). Correspondingly the number of Māori language speakers has declined to 21.3% in 2013 (New Zealand Ministry of Social Development, 2016). The most recent Waitangi Tribunal (2012) findings are that there has been serious prejudice to the Kōhanga Reo (TKR) movement because of Crown (and its Ministry of Education) Treaty breaches. These have been:

- inadequate recognition in ECE policy for TKR;
- a decline in the proportion of Māori participating in TKR;
- adverse impacts on the reputation of the TKR movement;
- serious underfunding of the Trust for services provided and insufficient funding to TKR, which has led to a decrease in capital expenditure posing a relicensing risk and exposing 3,000 mokopuna (young learners) to the possibility of losing their *Kōhanga Reo* buildings
- imposition of a regulatory regime including licensing criteria that has paid insufficient regard to the particular TKR environment; and
- an ERO evaluation methodology that remains focused on teacher-led models unbalanced against the important results that TKR provide for te reo transmission and whānau development (p. 335).

The speedy apparatus of the institution of a linguistic system through the 1847 Ordinance’s requirement that instruction in the English language form a necessary part of the school system, reiterated again in the next decade when section 3 of the Ordinance became section 9 of the 1858 Native Schools Act shows how rapidly linguistic legislation became operationalised through its institutions. The above analysis shows how, despite political and legal

developments to the contrary, linguicism is enduring by undermining Māori people's attempts to reverse it. Kōhanga Reo's rapid expansion was undermined by the lack of well-educated, proficient speakers and teachers of te reo Māori, policy gaps, under resourcing, shifting responsibilities from a Māori-centred (Māori Affairs) government agency to the Ministry of Education in 1989 and a hostile environment to Māori English bilingualism. The frustrations and sense of foreboding have been well documented through the Waitangi Tribunal reports (see Waitangi Tribunal 1986, 2011) and from those working in the Māori language sector (see Skerrett-White, 2001). Legal and political developments in the intervening years have proven those concerns, unsurprisingly, remain current.

Contemporary situation of te reo

Te reo Māori continues to be seriously threatened. In the most recent statistics available, only 11% of Māori reported that they “could speak te reo very well or well, 12 percent could speak fairly well, and 32 percent could talk about simple/basic things in te reo. The remaining 45 percent could speak no more than a few words or phrases” (Statistics New Zealand, 2014, p. 8). Amongst non-Māori, only 3.44% are speakers of te reo. It is recognised that “The future of Māori language is tied to the ability for te reo Māori to be spoken in homes in the years of infancy as well as the use of te reo Māori within other settings, including within the education sector” (Growing up in New Zealand, 2015, p. 4). Yet, “only 2% of Māori whānau [families] speak te reo for half the time and only 0.4% speak te reo nearly all the time” (Nelson, 2018, p. 1).

This means that Māori language use in educational settings, and in particular access to Kaupapa Māori settings, is crucial for the re-vernacularisation of te reo:

Educational factors impact on te reo Māori ability. Half of the 16,500 Māori who had been enrolled in both kōhanga reo and kura kaupapa could speak te reo Māori very well or well. Overall, 92 percent could speak more than a few words or phrases in the language. (Statistics New Zealand, 2014, p. 5)

The current Ministry of Education policy on te reo Māori, *Tau Mai te Reo* (2013) recognises that:

The Ministry of Education and education sector agencies play a critical role in supporting Māori language acquisition and revitalisation in early learning, primary, secondary and tertiary education sectors. Māori language in education includes both

Māori medium education and ‘Māori as a subject’ in English medium education settings. (p. 4)

This statement is problematic in several ways. It reflects the current Ministry of Education privileging of the compulsory education sector over the early childhood care and education sector in the binary framing of ‘Māori medium’ (versus ‘English medium’) and as a separately taught subject. Since 1996 the early childhood curriculum *Te Whāriki* has required the entire early childhood sector to be bilingual in te reo Māori and English, stating clearly that: New Zealand is the home of Māori language and culture: curriculum in early childhood settings should promote te reo and ngā tikanga Māori [culturally located values and practices], making them visible and affirming their value for children from all cultural backgrounds” (p. 42). Early childhood pedagogies in Aotearoa do not segregate te reo Māori as a subject to be directly taught, but instead have the expectation that, in accordance with language acquisition theory, children will learn te reo through its inclusion throughout the programme. The following are examples from the updated version of *Te Whāriki*, in relation to expectations of teachers in relation to te reo:

- Kaiako [teachers] enhance the sense of identity, belonging and wellbeing of mokopuna by actively promoting te reo and tikanga Māori.
- Kaiako pronounce Māori words correctly and promote te reo Māori using a range of strategies based on relevant language learning theories. (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 43)

Whilst these are laudable aims the capacity within the sector remains variable. What are the policy drivers that might enhance this situation?

Te Reo Māori in Policy and Curriculum

The second (phase two) iteration of the Ka Hikitia strategy is *Ka Hikitia – Accelerating Success 2013-2017* (Ministry of Education, 2013a) is five-year strategy which covers early learning, primary, secondary and the tertiary education sectors. It asserts that it is the *education system* that needs to step up in terms of how the education system performs “... to ensure Māori students are enjoying and achieving education success as Māori” (p. 5). It acknowledges that immediate, rapid and sustained change is needed. A central focus is the knowledge that “...students do much better when education reflects their identity, language and culture” (p. 6). There are two underpinning critical factors for Māori to excel and reach their full potential. The first is quality provision and pedagogical leadership supported by effective governance; the second is iwi (Māori) community engagement.

There are five guiding principles for the whole of the education sector;

1. *The Treaty of Waitangi* - giving expression to how the Treaty principles, particularly that of partnership between Māori and the Crown, are applied in education.
2. *Māori potential* - The Strategy continues with the Māori potential approach that every Māori child can make a valuable social, cultural and economic contribution to the well-being of their whānau, their community and New Zealand as a whole, and achieve.
3. *Ako – a two-way teaching and learning process* - The notion of *ako* (teaching and learning) is grounded in the principle of reciprocity and the inseparability of student and whānau; educators' practices are informed by the latest research and are both deliberate and reflective.
4. *Identity, language and culture count* - Children and young people achieve when their identity, language and culture are valued and included in teaching and learning in ways that support them, and
5. *Productive partnerships* - The Strategy promotes a team effort. It requires everyone who plays a role in education to act and work together. Productive partnerships are based on mutual respect, understanding and shared aspirations and are productive where there is an ongoing exchange of knowledge and information.

The Māori language focus in education has as an outcome that all Māori students have access to high quality Māori language education (p. 27). The strategy states “Māori language in education is critical for the Crown to meet its Treaty obligations to strengthen and protect the Māori language” (p. 28) and that “Effective Māori language educators have a high level of Māori language proficiency and are experts in second language acquisition” (p. 29). It suggests that iwi play vital roles in strengthening Māori language in education provision by providing supports, helping with Māori language in education teacher recruitment, providing professional development and iwi-specific curriculum and ensuring Māori language is supported in the homes and marae. Whilst this aspect of the strategy may be inspirational, it remains aspirational.

The second focus—early learning states “All Māori children participate in high quality early learning” (p. 31); and that “Strong early learning experiences provide critical foundations for success in later education” (p. 32). However, one of the dilemmas of this sort of focus is

the decided lack of reference to *Māori language* education in early learning being part of a *quality* and *strong* early learning experience so these two foci remain somewhat vague and therefore easily disregarded. The lack of cohesion between the first focus area that “all Māori students have access to high quality Māori language education” (p.27) and the second focus area that “All Māori children participate in high quality early learning” (p. 31) is disconcerting. A simpler way of articulating a focus would read “All learners have access to, and participate in, high quality Māori language early learning”. That is, Māori language should be a part of the core curriculum in early years education and beyond, for all learners. This has implications for initial teacher education, teacher professional development and adequate resourcing. It gives expression to the idea below that it is the Māori language that is what defines New Zealanders, all New Zealanders, as unique and from this place. The incorporation of *te reo* Māori (Māori language) fully into the core curriculum is the next step up for the education system but, since 2017 with the election of a new Labour Government, the lack of any direction or strategy is glaringly obvious. In the final analysis, Māori language status has yet to be recognised and reflected in practice in educational settings through the core curriculum despite its legal and political recognition. The added dimension of education transformation to be less racist and less linguicist is also an important one. Without expressly acknowledging the requirement for educators to challenge linguicism and racism, *Te Whāriki* 2017 will simply remain an instrument perpetuating the status quo and open to the oppression of neoliberal creep. Neoliberal advancements in the context of globalization means the system is always restructuring to suit the needs of the market, not the people.

Current early childhood care and education initial teacher education

If we are to turn the tide in favour of *te reo* Māori, a key covert dynamic that must be impacted is the ongoing inherent racism within the dominant discourses of our nation, including the education sector. Initial teacher education is one such vector with potential to influence the changing tide. The Teaching Council Aotearoa New Zealand | Matatū Aotearoa (formerly Education Council), the teaching profession’s professional body, oversees teacher registration conduct and teacher education qualifications. The recently promulgated Code and Standards (Education Council, 2017) in upholding the commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi as foundational to education in Aotearoa, is underpinned by four core (Māori) values:

Whakamana: empowering all learners to reach their highest potential by providing high-quality teaching and leadership.

Manaakitanga: creating a welcoming, caring and creative learning environment that treats everyone with respect and dignity.

Pono: showing integrity by acting in ways that are fair, honest, ethical and just.

Whanaungatanga: engaging in positive and collaborative relationships with our learners, their families and whānau, our colleagues and the wider community. (Education Council, 2017, p. 2)

All beginning and registered teachers are now required to reflect these values in the work, to adhere to the statements in the code and demonstrate the standards outlined. Section four of the code contains the expectation that teachers will respect their trusted role in society and the influence that they have, by

1. promoting and protecting the principles of human rights, sustainability and social justice
2. demonstrating a commitment to a Tiriti o Waitangi based Aotearoa New Zealand
3. fostering learners to be active participants in community life and engaged in issues important to the wellbeing of society. (Education Council, 2017, p. 12)

The first item of the teaching standards is entitled Te Tiriti o Waitangi partnership, with the term partnership referring to tangata whenua (Māori) and tangata tiriti (those who do not have Māori ancestry and are thus present in Aotearoa due to the treaty). The sub-points of this standard are as follows:

- Understand and recognise the unique status of tangata whenua in Aotearoa New Zealand.
- Understand and acknowledge the histories, heritages, languages and cultures of partners to Te Tiriti o Waitangi.
- Practise and develop the use of te reo and tikanga Māori.
- Demonstrate commitment to tangata whenuatanga [beliefs and practices of Māori] and Te Tiriti o Waitangi partnership in Aotearoa New Zealand. (Education Council, 2017, p. 18)

The Teaching Council is also aware that racism is a major barrier to furthering its professional agenda and thus has an anti-racism initiative underway (Teaching Council | Matatū Aotearoa, 2019a, n.d.).

Teaching qualification providers are now required to address the new Code & Standards in their programmes, with all teaching programmes currently needing to be reapproved to demonstrate this capacity. Programmes for ‘English medium’ qualifications must demonstrate that: “Candidates selected for entry into an English medium programme must be assessed on their te reo Māori competency as close as reasonably practicable after entry” and “must

progressively monitor and support competency in te reo Māori during the programme, using sound practices in second language acquisition” (Teaching Council | Matatū Aotearoa, 2019b p. 44).

For ‘Māori medium’ qualifications, the importance of modelling immersion in te reo is acknowledged in that “Programme content must be delivered in te reo Māori for a minimum of 81% of the programme for Māori medium immersion programmes and 51% of the programme for bilingual programmes” (Teaching Council | Matatū Aotearoa, 2019b p. 37). Currently there are only two providers of Māori immersion early childhood qualifications, Te Wānanga o Raukawa and Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiārangi, both of these are Māori universities. None of the 16 Aoraki or ‘mainstream’ providers offer a qualification focussed on Māori immersion.

Conclusion

In this paper we have made the case for urgent prioritisation of the preparation of Māori language teachers who have the requisite skills, knowledges and fluency in te reo Maori to turn the tide of language loss. A linguistic analysis has identified the inscription of racism and presumption of white privilege. The ongoing covert embedded racism in the education system and wider society remains the elephant in the room (Smith, 2019). This elephant is particularly intransigent. Since 1847 the colonial assumption of superiority has erased the Treaty-based right of Maori to be educated in their own language. From its instigation the Waitangi Tribunal has repeatedly called our attention to this ongoing problem. The policy responses, such as *Ka Hikitia* have failed to gain traction because of the lack of the direct challenge to embedded institutional racism and linguisticism.

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