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RESEARCH ARTICLE



Te Rangatiratanga o te Reo: sovereignty in Indigenous languages in early childhood education in Aotearoa

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ABSTRACT

Te reo Māori, the Māori language is a taonga (something highly valued by Māori) that should have been protected under Article Two of the 1840 Te Tiriti o Waitangi, the treaty that gave Britain the right to settlement of Aotearoa (New Zealand). Article Two guaranteed Māori absolute chieftainship over their lands, homes, resources, and everything of value. Thirty-five years ago the Waitangi Tribunal found te reo Māori is indeed a ‘taonga’ which the Crown is obliged to protect. In this paper we consider how the dominance of English language practices in education in Aotearoa and unequal access to Māori of power and resources has caused te reo to decline. We outline how the Waitangi Tribunal has identified treaty breaches, before considering recent education policy with a specific focus on the early childhood sector. We conclude by identifying the teacher education sector as a prime site for reinvigorating te reo Māori as both the repository of Māori knowledge and a national taonga. We highlight that whilst recent policy changes signal a governmental commitment to transforming the racist and linguicist legacy of educational policies, ongoing resourcing of support to the teaching profession will be required to ensure the success of these aspirations.

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Introduction

The late, renowned, Māori educationalist Rangimarie Rose Pere (1991) has written that ‘Language is the lifeline and sustenance of a culture’ (p. 9). The languages of the Indigenous people of Aotearoa have been melded over millennia, as they navigated across the Pacific eventually settling the islands of Aotearoa me te Waipounamu (now known as the North and South Islands of Aotearoa New Zealand). The Indigenous people eventually came to be known as the ‘Māori,’ this term coined in response to the arrival of the colonisers as a generic term for the diverse and various tribal populations.

Māori knowledge is reflected through the language in a variety of forms: naming lands, celestial beings, earthly deities, people, places, phenomena and things; whakapapa

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(genealogical interconnections); *karakia* (highly ritualised ceremonies, prayers and incantations); *waiata* (songs) and *pūrākau* (narratives and storytelling); and through *tikanga* (cultural ways of being and doing, spirituality and values) (Skerrett and Ritchie 2019). It should be noted that across numerous generations Māori people have consistently expressed the desire for their children to learn their language, intrinsically appreciating the centrality of the knowledges it contains to their identity and wellbeing (AGB/McNair 1992; Else 1997; Te Puni Kōkiri – Ministry of Māori Development 1998; Durie 2001; Waitangi Tribunal 2010; Ministry of Education 2013a, 2019a, 2020a; Statistics New Zealand 2014).

In 1975 the Waitangi Tribunal was established, a belated government response to historical and ongoing breaches of the 1840 Tiriti o Waitangi. In 1985 the Tribunal was given the mandate to explore historical treaty-related concerns. This Tribunal is a government-funded commission enabling tribes to present evidence of Crown treaty breaches. One of its early findings was in relation to the Crown's failure to protect the Māori language, a challenge made by claimant Professor Hirini Moko Mead (Waitangi Tribunal 1986, p. 20). This report stated that 'The Crown has failed to protect the Māori language as required by Article II of the Treaty' (section 9.1.5) and condemned the government for policies that had meant that the numbers of Māori speakers had dropped from 90% in 1913 to less than 5% in 1995 (section 3.3.2). It went further, stating that these policies had also resulted in Māori educational failure. A more recent Waitangi Tribunal (2010) 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* (the Māori language) and the safeguarding of dialects. Currently, 10.4% of Māori people, aged 15 and older, consider that they speak *te reo* fairly well (Stats 2020a). Meanwhile, only 4% of the overall population of New Zealand report that they can speak *te reo* (Stats 2020b). Despite revitalisation efforts over the past 40 years, *te reo* Māori remains endangered (King 2018).

After briefly introducing the notion of linguicism, this paper provides some historical background before canvassing 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.

English linguicism

The construct of *linguicism* (Skutnabb-Kangas 2015) is helpful in the analysis of the institution of English-only policies in the curriculum in New Zealand. Linguicism is aligned to the inscription of racism and presumption of white privilege in colonialist projects. Skutnabb-Kangas (2015) argues that, whilst the state (via whitestream teachers) may not 'intend to harm children' (p. 5), teachers do in fact cause harm, because the educational *structures* within which they operate are harmful. She defines linguicism 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, as is also seen in forms of 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 organised 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 97% Māori learners are situated¹) then the school's *structure* reflects linguisticism (and, by default, racism). *Practices*, such as those occurring within education systems, where people get unequal access to power and resources based on their language/s, reflect linguisticism (Skutnabb-Kangas 2015). 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.

Historical context

The large south Pacific islands of Aotearoa (New Zealand) were comparatively late to succumb to British colonisation. Although missionaries had first arrived in 1814, in 1835 a Declaration of Independence – He Whakaputanga o te Rangatiratanga o Nu Tirenī – 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, Te Tiriti o Waitangi, which was signed by a vast number 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 affirms Māori spiritual beliefs alongside Christian denominations (Orange 1987; Walker 2004).

Unfortunately, these assurances, in return for which Māori had agreed to British governance, were treated by the British settler-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 disregard for Tiriti commitments has been ongoing (Evison 1997; Walker 2004). The establishment in 1867 of four Māori seats in parliament, whilst ostensibly a gesture of inclusion, in reality served to constrain and contain Māori political influence, since it came about as the result of legislation aimed at individualising Māori collective land ownership thus entitling more Māori to vote. This surge in Māori voters would otherwise have meant that Māori could potentially have influenced the outcomes of elections. Curtailing their influence to four seats avoided this possibility. 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, whilst still facing ongoing struggles against treaty breaches due to the enduring structural inequalities resulting in the 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 and McCreanor 2019; Paine

et al. 2019). The cumulative effects of loss of language, lands, and the economic base that would have provided for Māori wellbeing and economic security, mean that Māori suffer from the negative impacts of both intergenerational trauma, and overrepresentation in negative social statistics such as educational failure, poor health outcomes, imprisonment, homelessness and so on (Gordon and MacGibbon 2010; Pihama et al. 2014; Ministry of Social Development 2016), 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' (Reid et al. 2018, p. 4) within our communities.

Waitangi Tribunal

In understanding the linguistic impact of education policies in Aotearoa, the research of David Williams (2001, 2013) is instructive. His commissioned report *Crown Policy Affecting Māori Knowledge Systems and Cultural Practices* (Williams 2001) overviews education policy from 1847 to 1871. Commencing with the 1847 Education Ordinance (New Zealand Legislative Council Ordinances, 1841–1853) 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 *civilise* 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 sufficed for the requirements of a barbarous race, but apparently would serve for little more. (as cited in Williams 2001, 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 being re-enacted a decade later. In the new version of the Act, the stipulation of English language instruction in section 9 again reiterated the sentiments contained within section 3 of the 1847 Ordinance. The 1867 Native Schools Act thus 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 (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, Swanson, a member of the Executive Council in 1876 and 1879, is recorded to have stressed the importance of 'one common tongue' and that he therefore wished 'Native' children to speak English in the playground as well as the classroom (as cited in Williams 2001, p. 118). He thought that 'English-speaking children should be enrolled with Māori in the Native

schools to assist in that direction’ (p. 118). Māori children were being made fit to become good English-speaking servants and farm workers (Simon 1998).

In 1986, nearly 150 years after the signing of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, and as a result of ongoing Māori activism, there was a landmark finding of the Waitangi Tribunal (1986). This report arose from a claim which was brought before the Tribunal comprising Chief Judge Edward Durie (Chair), Sir Graham Latimer and Paul Temm QC, by the late Huirangi Waikerepuru and Ngā Kaiwhakapūmau i te Reo Incorporated Society, in an endeavour to subvert colonial linguisticism. The Tribunal found that state (Crown) policies had endangered the Māori language, in breach of the commitments made in Te Tiriti o Waitangi of 1840. Further, it went beyond the endangerment of te reo Māori being seen as 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 of the 1986 Waitangi Tribunal Report on the Te Reo Māori Claim (WAI 11), 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 1986, 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 significantly*, affirmed te reo as an official language of New Zealand. It is our argument that the restoration of the Article Two Tiriti o Waitangi commitments to tino rangatiratanga (Māori self-determination and authority) and ‘taonga katoa’ (all things highly valued by Māori) including te reo are concomitant. Without restoration of this authority, the language will continue to languish due to the ingrained linguisticism that serves the agenda of the colonialist project and is sustained in neoliberal discourses.

The new Te Ture mō Te Reo Māori 2016 – 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 as follows:

- (a) to affirm the status of the Māori language as –
 - (i) the Indigenous language of New Zealand; and
 - (ii) a taonga of iwi and Māori; and
 - (iii) a language valued by the nation; and
 - (iv) an official language of New Zealand; and
- (b) to provide means to support and revitalise the Māori language. (Part 2, section 3.2, Te Ture mō Te Reo Māori 2016 – Māori Language Act 2016)

Government has also sought to support and revitalise 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 promoting it as a means of communication and a living language for all New Zealanders (Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori 2017). The stated goal in 2017, which sits in stark contrast to the historic discourses pertaining to perpetuating the dominance of the English language in the education system since the mid-1800s, 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 scrutinise the impact of te reo Māori in all government initiatives. Whilst it has been a long-term goal of the early childhood education sector to increase the amount of Māori language in education, the whitestream or general stream of education has been glacially slow and at this point in 2020 the stated goals of the early childhood curriculum *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education 2017) are just that: ‘stated’ but as yet without ‘substance.’ This issue of glacial progress of this agenda 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 in 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 (2012) 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 (reported in 2012) was the 1986 Waitangi Tribunal deliberation that the Māori language is a *taonga*, 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, the pace of growth 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 5 years, in large part due to the losses of older native speakers who spearheaded the movement; concerns of quality; undersupply of good teachers (not matching demands); excessive regulatory framework and centralised control leading to alienation of some of those involved in the establishment phase of the movement; and the lack of educational resources (Waitangi Tribunal 2012). The Waitangi Tribunal (2012) Report stated ‘The issue of teacher supply strikes us as crucial – the 1992 and 1995 surveys showed the potential market

for Māori language education, but the amount of Māori-medium education available has clearly never come remotely close to those levels' (p. 440–441).

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, disproportionately distributed predominately in the North Island (Education Counts 2019). The Waitangi Tribunal (2012) findings were that there has been serious prejudice against the *kōhanga reo* movement because of Crown (and its Ministry of Education) treaty breaches. These breaches, according to the Tribunal, have resulted in:

- inadequate recognition in ECE [early childhood education] policy for *kōhanga reo*;
- a decline in the proportion of Māori participating in *kōhanga reo*;
- adverse impacts on the reputation of the *kōhanga reo* movement;
- serious underfunding of the [national *kōhanga reo*] Trust for services provided and insufficient funding to *kōhanga reo*, 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* building;
- imposition of a regulatory regime including licencing criteria that has paid insufficient regard to the particular *kōhanga reo* environment; and
- an ERO [Education Review Office] evaluation methodology that remains focused on teacher-led models unbalanced against the important results that *kōhanga reo* provide for *te reo* transmission and *whānau* [extended families] development. (p. 335).

The above analysis shows how, despite political and legal developments to the contrary, linguicism endures by undermining Māori people's attempts to reverse it. As outlined in the Tribunal report, the rapid expansion of *Kōhanga reo* was halted by the loss of native-speaking elders, lack of well-educated, proficient speakers and teachers of *te reo* Māori, policy gaps, underresourcing, 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 (Waitangi Tribunal 2012). The frustrations and sense of foreboding have been well documented through the Waitangi Tribunal (1986, 2011) reports and by those working in the Māori language sector (see for example, Skerrett-White 2001; Ritchie and Skerrett 2014). Legal and political developments in the intervening years have proven that those concerns, unsurprisingly, persist.

Contemporary situation of *te reo*

Te reo Māori continues to be seriously threatened as outlined earlier in this paper. 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* 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 (Māori language immersion) 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 most recent Ministry of Education (2013a) policy on te reo Māori, *Tau Mai te Reo* states 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)

However, this statement is problematic in several ways. It reflects the current Ministry of Education’s privileging of the compulsory education sector over the early childhood care and education sector, the site of foundational early literacies; in the binary framing of ‘Māori medium’ (versus ‘English medium’); and as a separately taught subject in English-medium settings. 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. (Ministry of Education 1996, 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 revised *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education 2017), 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 to fulfil them within the early childhood sector remains variable. It is therefore important to consider the policy drivers that might enhance this situation.

Te reo Māori in current education policy

The third iteration of the government’s Māori education strategy, *Ka Hikitia – Ka Hāpaitia* (Ministry of Education 2020b) marks a radical shift from the previous two iterations

(2008, 2013b) in that it ‘calls out’ racism as a factor in the ongoing failure of the education system in Aotearoa to foster equitable achievement for Māori children and young people.

It makes the following commitments regarding te reo:

- Identity, language and culture matter for Māori learners.
- Our education services will support the growth and development of the Māori language.
- We will support the identity, language and culture of Māori learners and their whānau to strengthen belonging, engagement and achievement as Māori so that Māori learners can actively participate in te ao Māori, Aotearoa and the wider world. (Ministry of Education 2020b, Outcome Domains)

It also implicitly acknowledges that the historical disparagement of Māori rangatira-tanga (authority as affirmed in Article Two of Te Tiriti o Waitangi) needs to be redressed by including a strong focus on rangatiratanga, whereby it contains the expectations that:

- Māori exercise their authority and agency in education.
- Our education services will support whānau, hapū, iwi and Māori to exercise agency and authority over the education of Māori learners at all levels of the education system.
- We will support Māori to make decisions about the education of Māori learners. We will account to whānau, hapū, iwi and Māori for the education services we provide. (Ministry of Education 2020b, Outcome Domains)

In doing so, the strategy explicitly requires educators across all agencies and sectors to confront and eradicate racism, via commitment to the implementation of the ‘*Ka Hikitia* approach’:

- We will set clear expectations for education services and the education workforce to eliminate racism in our education system.
- We will provide leadership and professional development to support education services to work to eliminate racism.
- We will support everyone participating in the education sector, including Māori learners and their whānau to ‘call out’ racism, as we create professional and environmental norms that understand and prevent racism. (Ministry of Education 2020b, Implementing the Ka Hikitia Approach)

Furthermore, in moving this strategy beyond rhetoric into action, at least two key platforms are identified, the ‘Give Nothing to Racism’ programme (Human Rights Commission 2020) and the Ministry of Education’s (2020c) *Te Hurihanganui: A Blueprint for Transformative System Shift*. This Blueprint outlines a revolutionary kaupapa, a transformative agenda for education in Aotearoa. Along with a strongly articulated expectation of critical consciousness, it recognises the validity and legitimacy of te reo Māori, Māori culture, philosophy and principles. This lens insists that issues of the imbalance of power, the inequitable distribution of resources and the persistence of white privilege be critically examined. More than that, it provides the impetus to do something about it, as expressed in its design principles:

Te Ao Māori Including te ao Māori into everyday teaching and learning so ākonga Māori see themselves in education, and non-Māori ākonga understand and respect te ao Māori.

Tino Rangatiratanga Māori lead and make decisions about their mātauranga, tikanga and taonga.

Whanaungatanga Relationships in education should be like those in whānau, based on connection, care, respect and trust.

Te Ira Tangata Every person is a taonga *tuku iho* and has unlimited potential.

Mana Ōrite Under Te Tiriti o Waitangi, power and decision making is shared between Māori and non-Māori.

Te Hāngaitanga Everyone needs to work together and take collective responsibility for addressing racism and building a fair education system. (Ministry of Education 2020c)

The Blueprint supports the ideology that 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 notion that it is the Māori language that defines New Zealanders, *all* New Zealanders, as unique and from this place. The incorporation of te reo Māori fully into the core curriculum is the next step up for the education system across all sectors. In the final analysis, the full expression of the official status of the Māori language is yet to be recognised and reflected in practice in educational settings despite its legal and political recognition. The added dimension of education transformation to be less racist and less linguisticist is also an important one. Without expressly acknowledging the requirement for educators to challenge linguisticism and racism, and without the professional learning opportunities to support transformation in practice, *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education 2017) will simply be an instrument that perpetuates the status quo and is open to the oppression of neoliberal creep. Neoliberalism in the context of globalisation mean the system is always restructuring to suit the needs of the market, not the people (Ritchie and Skerrett 2014).

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 the Education Council) is the teaching profession's professional body. It oversees teacher registration conduct and teacher education qualifications. The recently promulgated *Our Code Our Standards* (Education Council 2017) upholds a commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi as foundational to education in Aotearoa. It 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 their work, to adhere to the statements in the code and demonstrate the standards outlined. Section 4 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 (formerly Education) Council 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 standard, which is to: ‘Demonstrate commitment to tangata whenuatanga [beliefs and practices of Māori] and Te Tiriti o Waitangi partnership in Aotearoa New Zealand’ (p. 18), is elaborated 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. (Education Council 2017, p. 18).

The Teaching Council – Matatū Aotearoa (2019b) is also aware that racism is a major barrier to furthering its professional agenda and thus has recently launched an anti-racism initiative (2021).

Teaching qualification providers are now required to address requirements of the 2017 *Our Code Our Standards* document in their programmes, with all teaching programmes currently needing to be reapproved accordingly. 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 2019a, p. 44). This is a significant shift in policy, which will require further guidance and monitoring if it is to be successfully applied. The Ministry of Education’s recent early childhood education ten-year action plan recognises the ministry’s responsibility to support teachers to ‘integrate te reo Māori into all early learning services’ (2019b, p. 27).

For Māori medium qualifications, the new teacher education programme requirements acknowledge the importance of modelling immersion in te reo, 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 2019a, 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 which are Māori universities. None of the 16 Aoraki or 'mainstream' providers offer a qualification focused on Māori immersion. This dearth of immersion teacher education provision places further pressure on mainstream programmes to deliver Māori-speaking graduate teachers who are also equipped to 'call out' racism as per not only the Teaching Council expectations, but also the Ministry of Education's *Te Hurihanganui* and *Ka Hikitia – Ka Hāpaitia* policies.

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 Māori 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 2018). This elephant is particularly intransigent. Since 1847 the colonial assumption of superiority has erased the Tiriti o Waitangi-based right of Māori to be educated in their own language. From its instigation, the Waitangi Tribunal has repeatedly called our attention to this ongoing problem. However, policy responses to date have failed to gain traction because of the lack of the direct challenge to the centre, the embedded institutional racism and linguicism that both underpin and reinforce the ideologies, structures and practices of settler colonialism. It is our hope that recent recognition in key education policy statements such as *Ka Hikitia – Ka Hāpaitia* and *Te Hurihanganui*, in finally acknowledging the entrenched racism within the education system, whilst simultaneously calling for recognition of rangatiratanga, Māori authority, and accompanied by the resourcing for extensive and well-facilitated professional learning opportunities for the entire teaching profession, may now lead to a major shift towards supporting the aspirations of Māori for the revitalisation of te reo, a tino taonga of our nation.

Note

1. See Education Review Office (2020)

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