Original Research Study

Bicultural Meanings: What do Practitioners Say?

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Abstract

The New Zealand Government has an expectation that bicultural aspects of the early childhood curriculum, Te Whāriki (Ministry of Education, 1996), will be implemented. However, many educators report difficulties with this. This article reports on findings from three qualitative questions within a survey that explored practices and understandings of 'biculturalism'. Specifically the questions asked about definitions of bicultural, perceptions of the 'ideal' early childhood education bicultural curriculum and invited respondents to provide additional comments. Findings showed most respondents agreed that Te Tiriti o Waitangi/The Treaty of Waitangi, partnership, and te reo were integral to the bicultural curriculum. However, respondents also identified a number of tensions with which they had to contend: these included 'tokenism', expectation of Māori, and being confronted by Māori spiritual beliefs. It is concluded that early childhood teachers do have a vision of the bicultural curriculum and are committed to it, but can still struggle to implement it. They need to move beyond the theory of the bicultural curriculum, ritual and tokenism into discerning how to deliver (in other words the action of) the bicultural curriculum in an empowering context more broadly, rather than in small pockets of success. In this paper I use the more current terminology "Tiriti-based curriculum", (unless referring to the wording of the questionnaire) rather than bicultural curriculum.

Introduction

Discussion of bicultural development in Aotearoa/New Zealand starts with the signing of Te Tiriti o Waitangi /The Treaty of Waitangi in 1840, between Māori, the indigenous people and the Crown. Ritchie (2003) makes the link between Te Tiriti and the early childhood curriculum when she declares "The bicultural nature of *Te Whāriki* is a recognition of those Treaty obligations" (p.80). The Ministry of Education (1996) is also clear about the connection of *Te Whāriki* to Te Tiriti by stating: "In early childhood settings, all children should be given the opportunity to develop knowledge and an understanding of the cultural heritages of both partners to Te Tiriti o Waitangi. This curriculum reflects this partnership in text and structure" (Ministry of Education, 1996, p.9). *Te Whāriki* was written during the time of growing accountability to Māori. The resurgence of tangata whenua and Treaty concerns ensured that "government and its departments have addressed their obligations under Te Tiriti of Waitangi" (Mutch, 2003, p.118). The glossary of *Quality in Action*

(Ministry of Education, 1998) defines a bicultural framework as "a concept that implies the interaction, relationships, and sharing of understandings, practices and beliefs between two cultures: In New Zealand the term generally refers to Māori & non-Māori" (p.86).

There has been little research within the early childhood community on implementation of the Tiriti-based curriculum. The first research preceded the draft of *Te Whāriki*. Cubey (1992) investigated views of selected members of the early childhood community on Te Tiriti-based curriculum. At the beginning of her research the Ministry of Education directed early childhood centres to incorporate a commitment to Te Tiriti in their charters. Cubey sent out questionnaires to centres in the wider Wellington district, interviewed key personnel of three national early childhood organisations and observed educators at work within their centres. Cubey concluded from her research that although Te Tiriti inclusion in charters was now voluntary:

> …most early childhood staff have a positive attitude to incorporating the charter requirements on the Treaty into their programmes and practices ….
> All in some way have made a start to towards reflecting the Treaty in their centres, although there are those who are scarcely past the first post.
> (Cubey, 1992, p.68)

Teachers in her study were learning te reo and some were starting to make connections with Māori families. They were interested in increasing their knowledge through further professional development and wanted involvement from management and parents. However, the barriers of insufficient resources, time and funding were impeding progress. As well, they were concerned about imposing on already overloaded Māori families.

Ritchie (2000) states that she began her doctoral study of the early childhood Tiriti-based curriculum in 1996 - the same year *Te Whāriki* was published. Her sample comprised eighteen interviews with lecturers, early childhood teachers and providers of professional development. In addition, Ritchie completed thirteen observations, recorded class discussions and also surveyed recent early childhood graduates. She found that central to bicultural development was the "involvement of Māori to guide the process, and ensure that Māori aspirations for their language and culture are given due respect" (Ritchie, 2002, p.338). A core component of this was whakawhanaungatanga, which "focused on educators putting into practice their professional responsibility to build relationships with Māori families within early childhood centres and communities. Central to this relationship building is re-centring the position of Māori ways of knowing, being and doing" (Ritchie & Rau, 2006a, p.16). However, Ritchie warned that there is a "challenge for Pākehā educators to demonstrate that we are able to facilitate conditions which allow Māori to develop their sense of whanaungatanga, whilst resisting the urge to retain control" (Ritchie, 2002, p.362).

Burgess (2005) conducted ten face to face semi-structured interviews with early childhood educators from eight Auckland centres in order to investigate what they understood by biculturalism, and how this was reflected in their practice. She theorised that these educators fell into three groups. The first were committed to the Tiriti-based curriculum based on Māori pedagogy both personally and politically. They demonstrated this in their practice by integrating tikanga and te reo into their programmes. The second group valued all cultures including Māori as this enhanced children's learning. They saw bicultural practices as "things to be learnt like a curriculum subject" (Burgess, 2005, p.56). The third group held "neutral or negative opinions" (Burgess, 2005, p.73) of Māori culture and were more concerned to support a New Zealand focus. They included te reo as children enjoyed second language learning.

Building on their previous individual research Ritchie and Rau (2006b) together examined Tiriti-based curriculum particularly looking at whakawhanaungatanga. They were interested in discovering how Māori whānau were being encouraged to participate in mainstream early childhood services and what strategies were used to deliver Tiriti-based programmes (Ritchie & Rau, 2006a). Early childhood professionals were invited to respond to website discussions and emails. Additionally, over thirty individual and group interviews were conducted. Individual and collective co-theorising hui were also employed (Ritchie & Rau, 2006b).

Ritchie and Rau (2006a) found there was concern about tokenism, in utilising "superficial cultural icons, such as songs or dress-up clothing" (p. 17) but there were also pedagogical strategies such as whakawhanaungatanga, increasing fluency of te reo and tikanga. Welcoming processes, both initial and ongoing, were seen as crucial. Self reflection, embracing change and humility were important for non-Māori to bring to their bicultural journey. "For non-Māori, the challenge is to be open to shifting their operating paradigms in order to embrace and value Māori colleagues, whānau and communities" (Ritchie & Rau, 2006a, p. 19). Concerns were expressed of both the fear educators have in engaging with bicultural education and also that in their desire for this they may place unrealistic expectations and/or demands on Māori whānau.

In summary, there were some commonalities in this previous research which indicated that early childhood professionals had positive attitudes and saw that on some level the Tiriti-based curriculum should be implemented. They wanted professional development to increase their skills in te reo and knowledge of tikanga, which could lead to making connections to Māori families. They also indicated that involvement of Māori whānau to guide this process was desirable. However, issues with time, resources and concerns about tokenism and of imposing on Māori were also expressed. Qualitative findings from this survey were generally consistent with previous research (Burgess, 2005; Ritchie, 2002; Ritchie & Rau, 2006b).

Methodology

As part of my study on implementation of the bicultural curriculum, a questionnaire was devised and three hundred copies were taken to the Eighth Early Childhood Convention in Palmerston North in September 2003. Initially, few were uplifted by conference attendees so I personally handed out questionnaires as people arrived for a keynote. In all, 264 questionnaires were thus distributed at Convention and of these 61 were collected which represented a return rate of 23%. At a workshop a month later, an individual who had been at the Convention, distributed and gathered from a workshop a further 15 questionnaires which took the return rate to 27% (n=76).

Within the survey, question nine (definitions of 'bicultural'), ten (features of an 'ideal' bicultural curriculum), and fifteen (anything else), were qualitative. This article reports findings from these three questions. As the questionnaire was a preliminary scout to discover a range of views from the early childhood community about the Tiriti-based curriculum, the approach to gathering data was convenience sampling. Convenience sampling enabled data to be collected from a group that was already gathered and accessible, thus being able to take the opportunity to capture information from already existing respondents (Wellington, 2000). A possible flaw of this approach was that conference attendees surveyed were less likely to be new and/or unqualified teachers and this matter was not probed within the questionnaire. Nevertheless, it was found that the majority of respondents had worked in the profession for ten years, with most having either a Diploma of Teaching (n=32, 42%) or a

Bachelor of Education (n=26, 34%). Two thirds (n=49, 64%) of the respondents were New Zealand Europeans, with 16% (n=12) being Māori. As well as length of time in early childhood, qualifications, and ethnicity other demographic questions asked respondents if they were born in New Zealand and if not, how long they had been here.

Validity or trustworthiness means that the "researcher determines the accuracy or credibility of the findings…" (Cresswell, 2008, p. 266). The trustworthiness of the data was ensured through the use of the respondents' own words. They had the opportunity in responding to open-ended questions to write what was important to them. This invited "…an honest, personal comment from respondents. ... It puts the responsibility for and ownership of the data much more firmly in the respondents' hands" (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007, pp.329-330). It is for this reason findings are presented from verbatim responses, with the exception of spelling which has been corrected. I am mindful, however, that I brought to the analysis and selection of the data, my history, culture and assumptions (Crotty, 1998). Given the context and the ethics procedures involved in the survey it was not possible to check interpretations with respondents. However, I did check my interpretations (which had been arrived at with the aid of NVivo 7) with a peer by having them critically appraise my analyses (Merriam, 1998). I have, therefore, taken steps to ensure that not only are the data valid but have been interpreted in a robust and meaningful manner.

Findings and Discussion

In the following section the findings from the three qualitative questions are discussed, including statistical information on the number of responses. Respondents were asked for their definitions of 'biculturalism' and their vision of the 'ideal' bicultural curriculum. In addition, there was an opportunity for people to communicate about anything else on this topic that was relevant to them.

Definitions of Bicultural

The New Zealand national early childhood curriculum *Te Whāriki* was the "first bicultural curriculum statement developed in New Zealand ... and establishes, throughout the document as a whole, the bicultural nature of curriculum for all early childhood services" (Ministry of Education, 1996, p.7). I was interested to determine how respondents chose to define bicultural and whether or not there was agreement within the sector. I believe that in order to implement a Tiriti-based curriculum there needs to be some agreement as to what that encompasses. The first qualitative question invited respondents to define 'bicultural' to which almost 90 per cent responded (88%, n=67).

With Te Tiriti being the starting point of a discussion on 'biculturalism', it is not surprising this featured in responses, particularly in regards to having some understanding of the contract implicit within Te Tiriti. Replies from the respondents are in italics with R. (for respondent) and the number designated to them by me on their returned questionnaires, with those from 1-10 on posted by the Convention team to me; 100 on being put in the box at Convention; 200, on posted by respondents directly to me and 400 on from the workshop.

> Having an understanding of respect for the tangata whenua and working to honour the Treaty (R. 205).

A response from a Māori respondent which linked back to the importance of Te Tiriti was:

> Two cultures not one, cultural language, values, beliefs, practices, taonga,
> customs as a whole/holistic not part. Everything my people hoped for with
> Te Tiriti o Waitangi (R. 102).

When considering various definitions of bicultural development in the literature, the common theme of Treaty partnership between Māori and non-Māori is evident (Mason Durie, 2001; Metge, 1990; Ministry of Education, 1998; Reedy, 2003). Nearly half the respondents (47% n=36) incorporated some idea of partnership in their definition of bicultural development. It seems likely that respondents are either familiar with this literature or they have heard about it from teacher education providers or professional development courses. Respondents saw partnership as inclusive of Māori, receiving equal/equitable benefits.

> Māori culture and European expressed equally. Māori language and
> tikanga given equal status. Children and staff bilingual. Relationships built
> with local tangata whenua who are consulted about centre decisions (R. 8).

However, Durie (2001) cautioned that although bicultural development could be seen as partnership, this can lead to exploitation of the Māori partner who may receive no benefits from this. This theme was also explored by Johnston (2001) who made the point that bicultural development "incorporates two very distinct approaches for the inclusion of Māori in the education system" (p.12). The first, Māori-friendly, is a personal matter to include Māori culture, which is provided to reduce prejudice and discrimination. This would eventually lead to better educational achievement due to Māori having positive self-images (Johnston, 2001). Pākehā, however, remain in control. "Māori-friendly positions are weak because they are more about creating comfort zones for Pākehā to safely navigate potential cultural pitfalls created by Māori participation in institutional and research settings" (Johnston, 2001, p.15). However, rather than viewing Māori-friendly as 'weak', possibly this is the best we can currently hope for with mainstream early childhood educators as they are in transition or on a journey toward implementation of a Tiriti-based curriculum.

Johnston's second approach is Māori-centred which has as the focus the "unequal power-relationship between Māori and Pākehā by incorporating appropriate decision-making forums for Māori" (Johnston, 2001, p.13), which has produced specifically Māori initiatives: such as kohanga reo. As centre staff develop relationships with their Māori families and local iwi, partnership and shared decision-making will be viable. The move toward being Māori-centred can be seen in the following response.

> Recognising rights of indigenous people to actual expression of decision
> making in all aspects of life, while acknowledging the rights &
> responsibilities of the other peoples in NZ society (R. 132).

As can be seen by these replies to the question about the definition of bicultural development, respondents were generally in agreement that this incorporated commitment to Te Tiriti, recognised equity and power-sharing that acknowledged the rights and world views of both Māori and the Crown. However, responses also showed that whilst some early childhood teachers were moving to be Māori-centred, others were still in the transition from being Māori-friendly.

'Ideal' Bicultural Curriculum

This section investigated respondents' visions of their ideal bicultural curriculum, which had 64 responses (84%). As early childhood teachers strive to implement *Te Whāriki* I thought it was important to discover if there was any consensus or shared understanding on what could

be an ultimate aim - achieving the 'ideal' Tiriti-based curriculum. A starting point for defining the 'ideal' Tiriti-based curriculum could be could be the principles, strands and goals of *Te Whāriki,* which direct adults in early childhood centres to address bicultural issues, promote tikanga and te reo, to liaise with Māori people and include their contributions in programmes. *Te Whāriki* states "particular care should be given to bi-cultural issues in relation to empowerment. Adults working with children should understand and be willing to discuss bi-cultural issues, actively seek Māori contributions to decision making…"(Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 39). As well, Māori knowledge of spirituality, human development, stories, events, activities, places and artefacts should be included in the curriculum. As could be expected in responding to this question, teachers made links to *Te Whāriki*.

> Incorporating bicultural aspects of Te Whāriki. Te reo as an everyday every situation language experience - words, phrases songs. Integrated into the whole programme in a respectful way. Tikanga Māori also integrated in a holistic way. Commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi, consultation with local hapu, iwi etc. Including Māori parents whānau in bicultural consultation for the centre (R. 130).

The Ministry of Education (2004) also encourages the notion of reciprocal relationships:

Māori and Pākehā viewpoints about reciprocal and responsive relationships with people, places and things are evident. Children actively participate, competently and confidently, in both the Māori world and the Pākehā world and are able to move comfortably between the two (p.7).

Respondents considered teacher fluency with te reo and knowledge of tikanga and relationship were essential in being able to deliver the ideal Tiriti-based curriculum. This was reflected this in their responses, as the following showed:

> Māori and European culture equally reflected.   Both languages comfortably used. Teachers fluent in both Māori & English. Children secure and comfortable in their own cultural base & able to use both equally (R. 120).

One of the ways for centres to initiate partnership with tangata whenua is through building relationships with the families of Māori children who attend. This whānau approach is "facilitated through educator attitudes that maintain a climate and environment that are respectful and reflect Te Reo me ōna Tikanga" (Ritchie & Rau, 2006b, p.1). The following respondent also recognised partnership and the environment as being integral to the ideal Tiriti-based curriculum.

> Consistent meaningful use of te reo. Partnership with families - inclusion of collective viewpoint. Tuakana/teina relationships. Authentic use of environment, natural resources and Māori artefacts. Genuine respect for tikanga (R. 211).

Early childhood teachers can also gain the necessary skills and knowledge through provision of more bicultural education in initial teacher education and through professional development. Respondents acknowledged that professional development was essential to achieving their visions.

> Compulsory professional development for staff to pronounce Māori words (R. 203).

However, there were reservations, albeit not specific, about how that professional development should be presented:

> Professional support that is not threatening the respondents (R. 123).

Professional development needs to encourage and support participants to enable appropriate actions to occur. On the whole people are more responsive to being swayed than to feeling threatened. If, as a profession, we believe in and value the Tiriti-based curriculum, it is essential that early childhood educators are supported to achieve that vision. This means that early childhood professionals must work in partnership with Māori so Māori self-determination operates with respect to decisions about the education of their own children. This approach both honours and respects customs and languages of Māori and strengthens the integrity of all.

Opinions on Tiriti-based Curriculum

Thus far it has been noted that early childhood teachers who answered this questionnaire had some common ground both in their definition of bicultural and in their vision of an ideal Tiriti-based curriculum. However, what follows shows there was some discrepancy between beliefs and practice. Forty-four (58%) respondents answered the final question, which gave respondents an opportunity to write anything else that had not been covered by other questions. They identified a number of tensions associated with implementing the Tiriti-based curriculum such as being seen as tokenistic; educators' expectations of Māori; and being confronted by Māori spiritual beliefs. But respondents also wrote about their appreciation of support that was offered to them and shared strategies for implementing the Tiriti-based curriculum.

Support

The Ministry of Education produces material for early childhood educators aimed to support them in implementing the Tiriti-based curriculum and respondents appreciated this. *Quality in Action* (Ministry of Education, 1998) "has been developed to assist management and educators in early childhood services to implement the 1996 revised Statement of Desirable Objectives and Practices" (p.5) which is often referred to as DOPs. Each of the twelve DOPs has a section called Bicultural Signposts which suggests appropriate bicultural approaches. One respondent found these to be thought provoking:

> Bicultural signposts: I love the signposts in DOPs makes you really think about diversity within the centre/community (R. 2).

Other resources include posters, books and games written in te reo.

> The MoE games are very popular and also posters with commonly used English words [translated into te reo] re fruit/veges/welcomes/colours/shapes body etc (R. 131).

Once educators have built relationships with families, implementing the Tiriti-based curriculum through whānaungatanga becomes more viable. Support and acknowledgement from Māori was valued:

> At present we have a very supportive group of Māori families at the centre who acknowledge our commitment and offer their support especially in te reo as we are a multicultural staffing group (NZ, Iran, Sth Africa) (R. 413).

Respondents appreciated support from both the Ministry of Education and Māori that enabled them to more confidently and skilfully implement the Tiriti-based curriculum. In addition some teachers shared strategies they used to assist them implement the Tiriti-based curriculum.

Strategies

Being conversant with te reo was a strong feature of the ideal Tiriti-based curriculum so it was not surprising this was a focus of some strategies:

> We have a weekly phrase of te reo Māori which we use and teach not only
> ourselves but also the children and their families. We sing karakia before
> each kai time (R. 101).

Professional development was seen as effective for implementing the Tiriti-based curriculum and there was a suggestion that teacher education providers could also play a bigger part in developing the bicultural skills of qualified teachers. With the newly developed graduating standards in relation to Te Tiriti and te reo it is probable teacher education programmes will be instigating how they can best prepare successful graduates in this arena (Ministry of Education, 2007). Being in a position to influence or precipitate change was recognised as an effective mechanism for implementing the Tiriti-based curriculum. Grey (2004) found in her research that an effective leader was important to facilitate group processes to enable change. One respondent articulated her role in this in relation to Tiriti-based curriculum:

> I am the Senior Teacher for 13 kindergartens in the [geographic] region,
> and as such I have influence with the professional development and
> strategic direction of the kindergartens (R. 9).

Teachers employed ways to increase their skills whether at centre level or through professional development and were willing to share these. However, most responses in this section were about concerns and tensions educators' experienced in implementing the Tiriti-based curriculum.

Concerns and Tensions

Despite their commitment to the Tiriti-based curriculum and shared vision most (34 out of 44 or 77%) of the responses in this section were about concerns and tensions, such as lack of confidence and fear of being seen as tokenistic:

> I am saddened at how much 'lip service' I find among people proclaiming
> to want to promote biculturalism but not doing anything about it (R. 134).

One of the teachers in the bicultural exemplar project (Ministry of Education, 2004) expressed some similar concerns. "Many times when I move tentatively into things 'bicultural', I do so uneasily as the last thing I want to do is offer a token gesture. Yet to do nothing is worse" (p.19). These fears are not without some validity as this uncertainty can be interpreted as 'lip service' or tokenism both by peers and academics.

Early childhood teachers are still struggling with the Tiriti-based curriculum. My research suggests this is not yet sufficiently recognised. Moreover, as Colbung, Glover, Rau, and Ritchie (2007) state: "All too often, attempts at providing representation for cultures other than the pervasive western mainstream culture, are tokenistic and ineffectual, and at worst

inaccurate misrepresentations" (p.149). Given this criticism from both peers and academics it is not surprising that early childhood teachers retreat from these obligations.

Ritchie and Rau (2006b) found evidence of the fear that non-Māori educators feel about "moving forward in terms of Tiriti-based commitments, despite expectations of *Te Whāriki* and their own personal convictions of social justice and equity" (p.19). I argue that rather than being seen as tokenistic, attempts by educators, could be viewed as steps forward in an attempt to move along the what Bevan-Brown (2003) calls a continuum of bicultural development.

Whilst it has been thirteen years since *Te Whāriki* has been published, the early childhood community is still likely to reflect wider society's ability with te reo. According to the Māori Language Commission (2008) there are only 160,527 (5.6%) overall speakers of Māori language in Aotearoa New Zealand. Of these 30,042 are non-Māori who make up the ethnicity of the majority of in early childhood teachers. I contend, therefore, that early childhood teachers are less likely to be Māori or to speak te reo regardless of their ethnicity, which limits their ability to implement the Tiriti-based curriculum.

Several educators wanted the involvement of tangata whenua but not necessarily in a way that could be deemed Māori-centred (Johnston, 2001). As the following statement indicates the expectation was not about Māori self-determination or decision-making but about Māori providing the curriculum perhaps to abdicate non-Māori responsibility:

> I want to say more involvement by Māori in promoting their culture/ways etc though I understand for the older generation that there is this reluctance to speak up promote it (R. 404).

Although an effective approach is through whakawhanaungatanga, not all centres have Māori children or have yet built sufficient relationships for this to be effective. Nevertheless there were expectations for Māori to support the Tiriti-based curriculum.

> Bring Māori people into the centre to support the teachers e.g. with weaving skills, songs etc. Work closer with Māori people in the community (R. 133).

Several respondents felt that a Māori teacher would be helpful, although it was unclear if this was as a partner, to provide leadership and a role model or take sole responsibility for the Tiriti-based curriculum. However, this expectation was not so straightforward for the following Māori teacher struggling alone to implement the Tiriti-based curriculum:

> I am currently at an under twos centre and I'm the only teacher with Māori ancestry. We have books, songs and also use phrases in Māori. I feel that teachers need to commit to more professional development to increase knowledge about Māori culture - not just language (R. 122).

This Māori teacher was certainly looking for non-Māori to step up and be active partners in the relationship, which means non-Māori teachers need to be better skilled and confident to use those skills and knowledge. However for some the solution was to opt for multicultural instead. In this the ethnicity of families in the centre had an impact on the Tiriti-based curriculum and whether there should be more emphasis on the multicultural curriculum:

> In our centre we have a Pākehā high ratio 95% Pākehā, 2% Asian, 2% Māori 1% other. We do find that parents are not interested in things Māori and they believe we live in a multicultural society not bicultural. We struggle with our bicultural programme (R. 407).

Working within a bicultural framework does not exclude multi-ethnic programmes as Stuart (2002) points out bicultural is political and about power sharing, whilst multicultural is descriptive. Early childhood teachers aim to be inclusive in their practice and may feel some unease that the Tiriti-based curriculum could exclude other ethnicities. Rather, in Aotearoa/New Zealand, it could be a place to start the inclusion process, particularly in terms of Te Tiriti and what it represents. However, in relation to spirituality and religion for some respondents, inclusion was not seen as something to aspire to. Spirituality and religion can be an area of confrontation for people and this final question enabled respondents to discuss where aspects of the Tiriti-based curriculum, such as legends and stories of gods can be at odds with religious beliefs:

> Because we are a centre with a special character and need to keep it as such - because of our values, world view and Christian background we are unable to incorporate some aspects/views/values of a Māori world view i.e. aspects of spirituality/myths, legends (R. 122).

Whilst all Christians may not perceive Māori spirituality as oppositional to their religion, it is clearly an issue for some. However, it is worth noting that although *Te Whāriki* principle Kotahitanga (Holistic Development) and strands Mana Atua (Well-being) Mana Whenua (Belonging) and Mana Reo (Communication) (Ministry of Education, 1996) include Māori spirituality, nowhere does it prescribe specific inclusion of Māori gods although it would be a challenge to exclude them. It was, however, heartening that despite the difficulties and tensions there was only one respondent who expressed any doubt about the viability of implementing the Tiriti-based curriculum:

> We have still got a VERY long way to go on our journey toward becoming a bicultural centre. I don't believe we will ever achieve it based on my definition (R. 127).

This respondent may well have a valid point, given that it is thirteen years since the final version of *Te Whāriki* was published, and educators are still struggling to implement Tiriti-based curriculum. Perhaps *Te Whāriki* may be an unrealistic vision that cannot be implemented in reality. There is, however, room for questionning this, as during Māori Language Week August 1-7 2007, more people were positive about te reo being spoken in public broadcasting, according to the Sunday Star Times ("Phenomenal response to te reo surprises all," 2007). In the same article it was reported, Television New Zealand had over 1000 positive responses to the campaign compared to the usual number of about 200 and there were only 23 complaints.

Conclusion

Although the results reported in this study are now becoming dated, the implications retain currency. Moreover, three case studies which I am currently concluding suggest that the challenges inherent in implementing the Tiriti-based curriculum remain. Case study findings point to the need for ongoing, continuing, professional development; the imperative of adopting a whole of centre approach; and the crucial dynamic of connecting with and involving whānau and local iwi.

In this paper it has been argued that early childhood teachers, on the whole, appeared to have a shared vision and willingness to implement the Tiriti-based curriculum. However, lack of skills and inability to engage with tangata whenua hindered progress towards bicultural development. Nevertheless, their understanding of the Tiriti-based curriculum seemed to be similar to each other. Respondents from this survey acknowledged partnership, equity and

sharing, especially in relation to Māori/English languages as appropriate expressions of honouring Te Tiriti. They also discussed the importance of tikanga and showed some understanding of the significance of decision-making with tangata whenua. Links were made to *Te Whāriki* and respondents valued Ministry of Education resources which supported their moves towards implementing the Tiriti-based curriculum.

Amongst issues nominated, teachers communicated a strong desire for continuing/further professional development, particularly language skills and knowledge of tikanga. Teachers also felt that having an early childhood staff member of Māori descent would make a difference, though, how and why staff of Māori descent would make a difference was unclear. Respondents demonstrated a continuum of perception ranging from wanting a multicultural curriculum (which treats the Tiriti-based curriculum as only one of many) through to what Johnston (2001) called Māori-friendly and Māori-centred.

Knowledge of te reo, tikanga and confidence to work collaboratively with tangata whenua and courage to embrace the notion of power-sharing as yet has not been achieved, as the mainstream early childhood community struggle to move from Māori-friendly to becoming Māori-centred services. What is required for an effective Tiriti-based curriculum in early childhood, I believe, is for Aotearoa/New Zealand society to also become bicultural, starting with advancement in knowledge of te reo and tikanga. Already there is a demand for teacher education providers to include te reo in their curriculum to enable the next generation of children to develop these skills and knowledge (Ministry of Education, 2007). But there does need to be more effective action to enable centres to incorporate a whakawhanaungatanga approach. It may be that before teachers can embrace Tiriti-based pedagogy to inform their curriculum they need a prescriptive action plan which may even appear tokenistic in its inception. Additionally, what is required is compassion from peers and academics as early childhood teachers struggle with their own fears and limited skills to implement the bicultural aspects of *Te Whāriki*. I leave the final words to a respondent who seems to me to encapsulate the commitment and the dilemma with which early childhood teachers are left:

> I have been on a variety of courses over the years including papers on Treaty of Waitangi, Māori language, anti-racism course etc. I find the fear of getting it wrong or offending someone is a reason why I don't do a lot of stuff. To know the theory but not know how to put it in to practice in our kindergarten is why I continue to go on these courses (R. 410).

Appendix 1: Glossary

Aotearoa	New Zealand
Hapū	Sub-tribe
Hui	Gatherings, meetings, people coming together for a common purpose
Iwi	Tribe
Kai	Food.
Karakia	Blessing, prayer, ritual chant
Pākehā	New Zealander of European descent
Tangata whenua	Indigenous people of the land
Taonga	Treasures, both tangible and intangible, that are highly valued by Māori
Te Kōhanga Reo	The Language Nest - Māori immersion preschool
Te reo	The (Māori) language

Te reo me ōna Tikanga	Māori language and the values and cultural practices that it expresses and encapsulates
Te Whāriki	The woven mat
Tikanga	Cultural customs, protocols and principles
Tuakana/teina	Older child/younger child teaching/learning relationship
Waiata	Songs
Whānau	Wider family members
Whakawhanaungatanga	Building relationships with whānau of Māori children

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