



Whakapūmau te Mana: Implications for Early Childhood Practice

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ABSTRACT

Wellbeing is fundamental to an individual's ability to function and live well. Māori have some of the worst wellbeing statistics in New Zealand (Chalmers & Williams, 2018). From a te āo Māori perspective mana (power, authority) and kaitiakitanga (guardianship) encapsulate the critical relationships inherent in Māori understandings of wellbeing. These relationships highlight the interconnectedness and interdependence of humans with the people, places and things in their worlds, and the responsibilities associated with these people, places and things. This article discusses findings from a Teaching and Learning Research Initiative funded project, Te Whakapūmautia te mana: Enhancing Mana Through Kaitiakitanga (2020–2021), and outlines implications for early childhood education (ECE) from the findings. The aim of the project was to investigate ways that ECE provides mokopuna (grand/child/ren) opportunities to recognise mana and understand ways to attain mana through being kaitiaki (guardians) of themselves, others and their environment, thereby contributing to a collective sense of wellbeing. The article focuses on kaiako (teacher/s) understandings of mana and kaitiakitanga and how they are currently reflected in contemporary ECE services.

INTRODUCTION

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, Wellbeing is “*the state of being comfortable, healthy, or happy*” and is essential to one’s ability to function and live well (Cram, 2014; Durie, 1998). New Zealand Wellbeing statistics highlight that Māori have some of the worst levels of educational achievement, high unemployment and incarceration levels, declining rates of home ownership, lower incomes, higher mortality rates, inequitable access to healthcare and the highest levels of suicide since records began (Chalmers & Williams, 2018). The UNICEF (2020) *Innocenti* Report Card 16 ranks New Zealand 35th out of the 41 EU and

OECD countries, in terms of child wellbeing outcomes across social skills, physical health, academic, and mental well-being.

From a Māori worldview, wellbeing or *hauora*, involves, physical, spiritual, mental and emotional, and social wellbeing (Durie, 1998). *Mana* and *kaitiakitanga* encapsulates the relationships central to Māori understandings of hauora (Dobbs & Eruera, 2014). Kaitiakitanga recognises the role of humans, including mokopuna (grand/child/ren) to undertake active guardianship and responsibilities. (Paul-Burke & Rameka, 2015). *Tiaki* translates as, 'to look after, nurse, care, protect, conserve or save'. Kaitiaki are agents that action the task of kaitiakitanga, or active guardianship (Paul-Burke & Rameka, 2015). Kaitiakitanga recognises how humans including mokopuna, undertake active guardianship and associated responsibilities. Kaitiakitanga denotes the practical doing. The concepts and practices of kaitiakitanga have developed over generations of use and guardianship. Through kaitiakitanga mana can be enhanced (Reedy & Reedy, 2013). The tenets of kaitiakitanga originated from an epistemological world view where the perceptions of nurturing, connecting caring and safeguarding was framed on connectivity and relationships with the world (Paul-Burke & Rameka, 2015).

Mana translates as "authority, control, influence, prestige, power" (Hemara, 2000, p. 68). It encompasses understandings of spiritual power and authority (Love, 2004). Barlow (1991) describes mana as "the enduring, indestructible power of the gods. It is the sacred fire that is without beginning and without end" (p. 60). Mana is a crucial aspect of Māori perceptions of the world and of the self, with almost all activities linked to upholding and enhancing mana. (Shirres 1997). Royal (2007) states that "*Mana* is central, fundamental and foundational to the traditional Māori worldview. Almost everything in traditional culture was somehow linked to mana and it is upon mana that one might construct a perspective on the nature and purpose of education" (p.42). Furthermore, a Māori way of describing a person's worth is to speak of their mana (Shirres, 1997). Pere (1982) adds that mana also relates to "being influential or binding over others and that quality of the person that others know he or she has" (p.32). It is about mana being bestowed on the person, as a result of responsibilities and expectations. Mana was not actively sought by the person, it was bestowed as a consequence of their involvement or responsibility (Tapiata et al, 2020). Perceptions of mana are central to understandings of the Māori world, and the Māori person, including mokopuna (Huriwai, & Baker, 2016).

All mokopuna are born with mana inherited from their parents and ancestors (Marsden, 2003). There are different forms of mana including, *mana atua*, which is the "enduring, indestructible and sacred power of the atua" (Love, 2004, p. 28). *Mana atua* or "divine right from AIO Matua" (Pere, 1991, p. 14) is the most important form of mana. This form recognises and acknowledges the "absolute uniqueness of the individual" (p. 14). This essence of godliness is from Tāne who breathed life into te ira tangata, the human element, therefore conferring a godly essence to his human descendants (Reedy, 2003). *Mana Whenua* relates to mana from the land, one's relationship with the land, and one's sense of identity, and belonging to the land (Barlow, 1991; Hemara, 2000). Barlow (1991, p. 61) describes *Mana Whenua* as "the power associated with the possession of lands; it is also the power associated with the ability of the land to produce the bounties of nature". Reedy (2003) highlights an aspect of mana whenua that associated with children and childbirth, that of burying the child's

umbilical cord and placenta (also translated as whenua) in their land, symbolising a reconnection with ancestral roots – *whenua ki te whenua*. Reedy states that these traditions and practices ensure that “the child has a spiritual unity with the land, with its people, and with the universe at large. A sense of identity is inculcated in the child...The spirit of the land lives in the child” (2003, p. 70). *Mana tangata* is the connectedness with people. *Mana tangata* according to Reedy (2003), “encompasses the spirit of generosity and reciprocity; of caring for others and creating enduring personal relationships” (p. 69). It involves *mokopuna* developing an understanding of themselves as important links between the past, present and future, and the importance of contributing and supporting the common good. *Mana Reo* refers to the development and power of language and communication (Barlow, 1991). According to Barlow (1991, p. 114) “[l]anguage is the vehicle by which thoughts, custom, desires, hopes, frustrations, history, mythology, prayers, dreams and knowledge are communicated from one person to another”. Furthermore, the Māori language was given by the gods to ancestors and so it was sacred. It was a means of communicating with the gods, to know the will and power of the gods. It had *wairua* (spirit) and *mauri* (life force). *Mana Aotūroa* is mana that originates from the environment. *Mana Aotūroa* translates to ‘light of day’ or ‘this world’. When the word *aotūroa* is broken into its three sections, ‘ao-tū-roa’, “it relates to the infinity of the universe, and implies an extensive breadth of all the elements that make up the universe. Humankind is an important element of the universe” (Early Childhood Development, 1999, p. 24).

Early childhood education has a critical role to play to ensure *mokopuna* have culturally responsive environments that enhance their learning. *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 2017), the early childhood education (ECE) curriculum recognises the status of Māori, as *tāngata whenua* (people of the land) and the obligations related to Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Te Tiriti o Waitangi has implications for education in terms of achieving equitable outcomes for Māori. *Te Whāriki* utilises mana to frame learning and development aimed at supporting *mokopuna* to “develop the capabilities they need as confident and competent learners” (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 16). It makes a number of assertions related to mana including:

- *Mana atua* / Children understand their own *mana atua* – uniqueness and spiritual connectedness (p. 26);
- *Mana whenua* / Children’s relationship to Papatūānuku is based on *whakapapa*, respect and *aroha* (p. 31);
- *Mana tangata* / Children have a strong sense of themselves as a link between past, present and future (p. 36);
- *Mana reo* / Through *te reo* Māori children’s identity, belonging and wellbeing are enhanced (p. 41);
- *Mana aotūroa* / Children see themselves as explorers, able to connect with and care for their own and wider worlds (p. 46).

Te Whāriki also articulates a number of statements about *tikanga* (culture/customs) and practice expectations for *kaiako* related to cultural values, such as, *hauora*, *mana* and *kaitiakitanga*: “*Kaiako* should have an understanding,

of Māori approaches to health and wellbeing and how these are applied in practice” (p. 26); “Viewed from a Māori perspective, all children are born with mana inherited from their tīpuna (ancestors). Mana is the power of being and must be upheld and enhanced” (p. 18); and “Kaiako recognise the relationship mokopuna have with the environment. They support them to fulfil their responsibilities as kaitiaki of the environment” (p. 42).

This article outlines initial discussions from a Teaching and Learning Research Initiative funded project, *Te Whakapūmautia te mana: Enhancing Mana Through Kaitiakitanga* (2020–2021), and considers implications for early childhood education (ECE). The project aimed to explore ways that ECE presents mokopuna with opportunities to identify mana and appreciate ways to gain mana through being kaitiaki (guardians) of themselves, others and their environment, and in so doing contribute to a mutual sense of wellbeing. This article centres on kaiako (teacher/s) understandings of mana and kaitiakitanga, how they are reflected in contemporary ECE services and how they could be reflected further.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. In what ways do/can mokopuna in ECE services enact mana and kaitiakitanga?
2. What does the enactment of mana and kaitiakitanga look like for mokopuna, and for kaiako in ECE?
3. What are the people, tools, artefacts, processes and practices that contribute to enhancing mana and kaitiakitanga for mokopuna?

DESCRIPTIONS OF RESEARCH

The two-year Teaching and Learning Research Initiative funded project involved four phases of work. The first phase, *Kohikohinga Pūrākau* (2020), required collecting pūrākau (narratives/stories) from kaumātua/kuia on *mana* and how it was enhanced through *kaitiakitanga*. The second phase, *Taunaki Puna Reo* (2020-2021), involved working with kaiako in three Māori Medium ECE services to identify practices that supported the enactment of mana and kaitiakitanga. In the third phase, *Taunaki Auraki* (2021), researchers worked with three English medium ECE services to capture the understandings and practices, and in the fourth phase, *Whanaketanga Ariā* (2021), data from all phases of the research was analysed to provide a foundation for pedagogical understandings and practice in ECE.

Kaupapa Māori principles and understandings afforded the ethical and cultural foundations for the project, with Māori ways of knowing, being, and doing central to the research design, analysis, and intended outcomes (Berryman, 2008; Lee, Pihama & Smith 2012; Rameka, 2015). Kaupapa Māori has been described as recognising the world from a Māori epistemological perspective that assumes the normalcy of Māori values, behaviours and understandings (Smith, 1992).

Wānanga (meetings) with individuals and groups were an important aspect of the research design. Traditionally wānanga, were places of learning, where oral traditions, lore and valued understandings were preserved. Today wānanga have been re-interpreted to exemplify understandings and practices derived from tikanga Māori (customs), including the elucidation of Māori

knowledge in contemporary contexts (Whaanga-Schollum et al., 2015). In terms of the research, wānanga were seen as meetings with individuals or groups. Wānanga, were either audio recorded and transcribed, notes taken, or written participants contributions, depending on participants wishes.

A Pūrākau, a narrative, storying approach (Elkington, 2011), was utilised in the research. Pūrākau describes a collection of traditional oral narratives that contain “philosophical thought, epistemological constructs, cultural codes, and worldviews that are fundamental to our identity as Māori” (Lee, 2009). The collecting of pūrākau from kaumātua/kuia recognised the wisdom, traditional understandings and values that they possess and how important these taonga (gifts) are for the development of contemporary ECE theory and practice.

This article utilises quotes from kaiako in research phases two (Māori Medium ECE services) and three (English Medium ECE services) to highlight kaiako understandings of mana and kaitiakitanga. It focuses on Research Question 3: *What are the people, that contribute to enhancing mana and kaitiakitanga for mokopuna?* The *Ngā Rongo a Matea Ako* theoretical framework has been utilised to structure the discussion. The framework was developed utilising the kaumātua/kuia pūrākau in phase 1 of the project. Kaiako quotes offer understandings for kaiako in ECE on possible tools, artefacts, processes, practices, teaching and people who contribute to ECE teaching and learning.

NGĀ RONGO A MATEA AKO

Ngā Rongo a Matea Ako framework focuses on understandings of what content knowledge, and contextual and pedagogical understandings, are required to support mokopuna to enact mana and kaitiakitanga in ECE. Kaiako quotes discuss how kaiako implement these understandings.

Te Rongo ā Tinana (Physically experience and engage in their worlds)

For mokopuna to learn to enact kaitiakitanga and mana, they must firstly have regular opportunities to engage with and experience their worlds. The research discussions indicate that learning about kaitiakitanga and mana was experiential, with understandings acquired and deepened over time, through engaging in activities and tasks, participating in activities, being in the environment, observing, following instructions, and taking part.

In terms of ECE, a focus on the context of learning within ECE services, the whānau, the wider communities, and environments, is required. In order for mokopuna to engage and experience their worlds, they need to be exposed to a wide range of contexts, artefacts, cultural tools, processes and practices, and experiences. Regular, ongoing opportunities to access their worlds supports mokopuna to interact with the people, languages, values, resources and cultural norms and expectations which are fundamental to their worlds and the entities that inhabited them. Kaiako discussions identify the following requirements and discussions.

Haramaitanga (Open door policy)

Building relationships with whānau and mokopuna adds to a sense of connectedness. An Open-door policy ensures whānau feel comfortable,

respected, welcome, and part of the service's whānau. This sense of respect, aroha (love), āwhina (support, help) and whanaungatanga (relationships, kinship) are key to the expression of mana for mokopuna.

We role model a lot of the te ara Māori values ... [We] Look after anybody that walks through our doors. Having the open-door policy. It doesn't matter who [they] are, ... We make them belong.

Our kaupapa (philosophy) within this kindergarten is all about aroha. Whakawhanaungatanga (building relationships) is a very big thing, with building relationships the ultimate goal and challenge.

Hāporitanga (Connecting to the community)

It is important that kaiako understand the significance of activities outside of the service, and work to bring the community into the service.

We [have] our own mana. It's how we nurture it. Bringing in new learning from home into the puna (Māori medium ECE service) to inform our programme and the way we teach also how we action mana.

Manaakitanga (caring) is one of the most important concepts to Māori people as it secures the strength of our whānau (families) and communities.

...but what you're talking about is bringing the community in ... what's outside the kindergarten in, that's the environment.

In one service mokopuna were exposed to and participated in activities associated with hunting, fishing and preparing kai, both in the kindergarten and in the home and community.

They're always out in the weekend—hunting, fishing whatever the seasons are. And they know the seasons of kai (food)—when to gather, and they bring that into our kindergarten.

We extend their learning by preparing the kai. Showing them how to cook the kai. From the start ... from plucking of the ducks, the gutting of the fish, smoking lamb's tails in the sandpit, all that type of thing is all done there.

Aiotanga (Calm and peaceful environments)

Recognising the importance of a safe, inviting and calm environment was stressed by kaiako in one service. They explained that this was critical to a sense of belonging, wellbeing, identity and mana.

And they can feel that as soon as they walk in. It's a, peaceful environment... a lot of parents actually said that as they come in they feel ... it's calm, peace ... They feel at home, they feel welcomed. [We're] also recognising their mana. as being valuable people. [We]mihi to everyone that comes in. [If]. kids need a cuddle, we'll go

up and give them a cuddle, manaaki them. [We don't] not allow them to get anxious.

Te Rongo ā Hinengaro (Intellectually acquire knowledge and understandings of their worlds)

In order for mokopuna to assume kaitiaki roles of any description, they must acquire knowledge and understandings of their worlds, how their worlds operate, and what sorts of support is required to ensure the health of their worlds. This requires kaiako to share knowledge of the worlds, the natural, social, physical, material and spiritual worlds, tribal narratives, and cultural practices and expertise.

The research indicated that learning must be supported by knowledgeable and capable kaiako who can facilitate the required learnings for mokopuna. Pedagogical expertise and content knowledge are critical to the transmission of new and traditional knowledges, as is the ability to notice, recognise and respond, to further enhance the learning. Along with the presence in, interactions with, and familiarity with the worlds of mokopuna, kaiako need to understand how to utilise learning tools and resources such as whakapapa knowledge, tribal teachings, pūrākau, waiata, as well as books, pictures, posters and focused discussions, to support mokopuna learning. Kaiako discussions identify the following requirements and discussions.

Ātuatanga (Connecting to deity)

Recognising the importance of ngā atua Māori and intergrating them into their practices in ECE supports the enactment of mana and kaitiakitanga. This requires understandings of the realms of ngā atua, which in turn provides a sense of authentic learning of Māori values, and supports confidence to enact mana and kaitiakitanga.

... we acknowledge that 'the mana' of children is derived from their links with atua (god, guardian). One of the ways that we nurture the mana of every child is through making connections with these kaitiaki, guardians, through our environment, tikanga, waiata (song/s) and storytelling ... and the names and domains of te atua.

Our environment supports tamariki to develop understandings of kaitiakitanga. They learn about atua and their responsibilities for their domains, tamariki learn their responsibilities as kaitiaki of Papatūānuku (Earth Mother), the māra (garden), rongoā (natural medicines).

Go to Tangaroa. And that's how you can relate it back to atua. The kids can physically see the kōura (crayfish) come in, ...[They] visually see the atua, that look after the sea, where that kai has come from.

Te Hirangatanga o te Reo (Keeping language and culture alive)

For kaiako nurturing and fostering te reo and tikanga Māori was viewed as an important aspect of kaitiakitanga and mana enactment. The comment below demonstrates kaiako understandings on how mokopuna can facilitate language

learning and at the same time enhance the mana of both the tēina [younger child/sibling] and the tuākana [older sibling/child].

Our curriculum speaks about whakamana [enhancing prestige, power] te tamaiti and as kaiako we have a responsibility through our reo [language], tikanga [customs] and daily programme to bring it to life.

Matauranga (Cultural learning)

As stated in the introduction *Mana* is fundamental to the Māori worldview, with almost every aspect of tikanga Māori linked to mana. Mana is not only inherent in understandings of the Māori world, but it is also critical to perspectives of the Māori person, including the young mokopuna. For Māori medium ECE services who operate from a Māori worldview, understandings of mana and kaitiakitanga are central to the everyday operation of the service, impacting on almost every aspect of the values, pedagogical understandings, cultural norms, and practices. What was clear from discussions with kaiako was that this was not the case for English Medium services. Support was required to deepen understandings of cultural competencies, relevant pedagogical knowledge and expertise and associated with Māori worldviews, aspirations, and knowledges. These requirements are emphasised by kaiako.

Staff did some Professional Development... over a 3-year period. [It was] little steps. [It] was important to make our learning authentic and genuine. Learning together as a team supported us becoming stronger together with tautoko (support).

A [professional support tutor] introduced te āo Māori (Māori world) concepts, ihi (essential force), wehi (awe), wāna (energy, excitement). Understanding these concepts were important and we worked hard to understand how we would embed these teachings in our practice.

One becomes empathetic and understanding of people's journeys... Any teacher implementing a tikanga process needs basic knowledge, and te reo.

There is a real definite mind shift. Honouring your role in the partnership for Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

... [it was] little pieces and layer and weave. It takes time. Don't put it to one side. Keep it real by making time to have individual pedagogical discussions. It's easier now, because you get a better feeling of things now. It is not a check list, it is about their mana, mauri, wairua (soul, spirit). [It] is about a deep knowing and understanding and deep respect.

You have to be willing to be a learner and be vulnerable and asking for help and continue to grow. Whenever implementing things, the feeling is true and authentic.

Te Rongo ā Ngākau (Emotional connected to and develop affinity with their worlds)

In order for mokopuna to embrace kaitiakitanga, it is important that they develop an emotional connectedness and affinity with their worlds. To do this they must be able to identify with their worlds, to feel a sense of belonging to their worlds, and to acquire a personal and collective appreciation of identity in their worlds. This is realised through learning about their place in the world, their tribal history, cultural ways of knowing, being and doing, their whakapapa, and language associated with the world. This generates a sense of being part of the worlds, belonging to the worlds, and not being separate and detached from their worlds.

The implications for kaiako include the need to 'know the mokopuna'. *Te Whatu Pōkeka* (Ministry of Education, 2009, p. 50) asks three questions that relate to Māori perspectives of knowing the mokopuna: *Ko wai koe? Nā wai koe? I ahu mai koe i hea?* (Who are you? From whom are you? Where have you come from?). For kaiako, not only do they need to know mokopuna temperaments, personality traits, likes and dislikes, interests, and talents but also their whakapapa [genealogy], their whānau, hāpū [subtribe], iwi [tribe], and their marae [tribal meeting place] and turangawaewae [place to stand]. Kaiako discussions identify the following requirements and discussions.

Whenuatanga (Connecting to the land)

Recognising the critical place of mana whenua in the service's programme, was another key means of supporting the enactment of mana and kaitiakitanga identified by kaiako:

In order for the child to understand [their] role as kaitiaki, a relationship with the land is vital - this is tāngata whenua (people of the land).

I was thinking of our localised mana whenua (people with authority over the land) [and] our connection to the marae. We all work on the marae, and so do half of the kids here. And it's, 'Oh I seen you whāea (aunty) at the marae'. So, there's lots of deeper connections.

Tīpunatanga (Connecting to tīpuna)

Recognising the mana of tīpuna [ancestors] is evident when a kaiako explains that they know the mokopuna, they know their whakapapa, their parents, grandparents and tīpuna, through living in the same community. There is a strong sense of whanaungatanga and connectedness with mokopuna and their tīpuna,

You have mana passed down to you from your whānau, tupuna and ngā atua.

I look at you and see a kuia (female elder). You are still a young kōtiro (girl) but somehow you seem to have a lifetime of skills, in looking after others, with cooking and baking. You are following in the footsteps of your nannies, or even tūpuna before them.

We see them as taonga (precious gifts), because you know all the generations. They've got the characteristics of their nanny. 'You're just like your nanny on the marae'. That mana comes from tīpuna. [It's] inherited mana. But that would be the same with all your tamariki. You know them so well, you, see them as taonga, because you know all the generations.

Iwitanga (Connecting to iwi)

Connecting to iwi and hapū was seen as integral to enhancing the mana of mokopuna in services. Whakapapa connections and growing up in the rohe [region] strengthens these connections.

And we all have that strong connection to Ngāti Tūwharetoa (central North Island tribe). So Tūwharetoatanga is very much woven in our programme. Our tamariki know about their maunga (mountain), their awa (river), their marae (meeting house/place), their pepeha (tribal saying).

Their marae. They stand at the marae ... [and say] 'That's my marae whāea!

Kiritautanga (Enhancing self-worth and self-esteem)

Some discussions took place on goals of development in ECE. Kaiako questioned the ECE focus on the development of independence in mokopuna, stating that for them the enhancement of mana was more valued in the puna and kōhanga reo. Although the emphasis was on supporting confidence, self-esteem, skill development, and deeper understandings of the world, it was more aligned to mana enhancement, and interdependence rather than independence. Kaiako reiterate this difference in the following korero:

So, if you want to compare it with an English-speaking centre... [kaiako] help [mokopuna] with their routines, to help build up their independence so they can do it for themselves. We see it differently, it's about the child's mana. It's a different world view... The goal is not independence, the goal is recognition of mana and supporting one's own and other's mana. Growing their mana is a huge thing for them in terms of their growth, their abilities, their ideas about themselves. You know, that they are competent and confident. Learners and doers.

Te Rongo ā Wairua (Spiritually contribute to their worlds)

Finally, mokopuna must learn to contribute to their worlds in meaningful ways. Linked to the development of mokopuna understandings and affinity to their worlds is the development of knowledge about how to care for their worlds, and what is required for their worlds and those that inhabit them, to flourish. Contributing to their worlds requires the enactment of learnings, commitment, action, and being responsible. For mokopuna to learn contribute to and develop a sense of responsibility for their worlds, they must have opportunities to give, demonstrate caring and compassion, be generous, and be able to demonstrate their understandings of aroha, manaakitanga, kaitiakitanga and mana.

Kaiako promote mokopuna learning of kaitiakitanga through: providing opportunities to give and be responsible; reminding mokopuna of the need for aroha, manaaki and respect in interactions with people, places and things; and, recognising, valuing and further supporting empathetic and caring behaviours. Kaiako discussions identify the following.

Tauratanga (Role-Modelling)

Kaiako role modelling respectful, mana enhancing behaviours and attitudes supports mokopuna to take on responsibilities associated with mana and kaitiakitanga. The role modelling strengthens the development and maintenance of relationships and connectedness within the service, whānau [extended family], and communities.

I think I can really say that [in] our teaching practice, we role model a lot of the te ara Māori values.

We believe that mana is a 'right of virtue' for them and we try to sustain this through our teachings and modelling towards each other.

We work as a collective, and we have expectations that our tamariki (children) will work as a collective as well. ... The tuākana (older child, sibling) takes over and kind of does the caring, does the manaaki (caring, supporting), gives the aroha (love).

CONCLUSION

Early childhood education has a critical role in supporting mokopuna identity development, their sense of belonging and overall wellbeing. *Te Whāriki* states:

Early childhood is a period of momentous significance for all people growing up in [our] culture. By the time this period is over, children will have formed conceptions of themselves as social beings, as thinkers, and as language users, and they will have reached certain important decisions about their own abilities and their own worth. (Donaldson, Grieve & Pratt, 1983, cited in Ministry of Education, 2017, p.23)

The recognition and enhancement of mana is one of the most important contributions kaiako in ECE can make to the holistic wellbeing of mokopuna. Kaitiakitanga supports the enhancement of the mana and therefore the wellbeing of mokopuna. For kaiako developing understandings of mana and kaitiakitanga, and ways to implement the appropriate content knowledge, pedagogical practices and contextual requirements, are critical to mokopuna developing a strong sense of identity as Māori, as kaitiaki and as beings with mana and worth.

There is no doubt that kaiako want all mokopuna to be healthy, happy and able to achieve. Māori, however, continue to lag behind other groups, achieving disproportionately lower results on national averages (Statistics New Zealand, 2018). One of the contributing factors is that English Medium kaiako are mostly unaware of the role that culture, language and identity play in learning, and therefore lack understanding of how to address these aspects within their

teaching. Some 19 years ago Ritchie (2003) claimed that kaiako understandings of ways to meet the needs of mokopuna Māori, were “subject to the extent to which a largely Pākeha early childhood teaching force are able to deliver on expectations that require a level of expertise that is beyond their experience as mono-cultural speakers of English with little experience of Māori culture and values” (p.10). This situation has not changed markedly despite decades of professional support to aid the implementation of the bicultural requirement of the *Te Whāriki*. What this research identifies is that more focus needs to be placed on kaiako connecting physically, emotionally and spiritually to te āo Māori, and not just the intellectually, detached, individualistic focus so often utilised in professional development. This emphasis is also critical for mokopuna learning, in that mokopuna must have opportunities to connect: *ā Tinana*, physically experiencing and engaging in their world; *ā Ngākau*, developing emotional connectedness to and affinity with their worlds; *ā Wairua*, spiritual learning and contributing to their worlds; as well as *ā Hinengaro*, intellectual development of knowledge and understandings of their world.

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Arapera (Ngāpuhi, Tūhoe) ensures that Te Rito Maioha maintains bicultural integrity by bringing a cultural voice to her work and ensuring that as an organisation Te Rito Maioha are responsive to the needs of Māori and Pacific students and employers. Arapera is adamant that leading and championing te ao Māori tikanga protocols and principles among kaiako, tauira and tamariki provides a strong foundation to ongoing learning and knowing about te ao Māori me ngā tikanga and celebrating our language, culture and identity.