

UNPACKING MY KETE:

Ko Te Kore- the child has potential

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In 2009, the Ministry of Education launched its resource *Te Whatu Pōkeka*, Kaupapa Māori assessment and learning exemplars. It was a resource that focused on assessment of Māori children in Māori early childhood settings and as Rita Walker said:

“The intention was to explore cultural contexts and methods that contribute significantly toward nurturing all aspects of each child's growth and development through assessment.”

Walker, R. (2008 p.1)



In 2015, it is exciting to see non-Māori services really begin to engage with this assessment framework, as it does provide support for teams to develop bicultural understandings and practices. Some teams have sought out professional learning opportunities that have supported them in their journey to unpack this document, while others are working through it on their own. In my own journey, I too attended several professional learning opportunities and it was through dipping into the resource over and over again, and engaging in pedagogical discussions with colleagues

that my understanding grew. My aim was to be able to truly value the language, culture and identity of children.

As Jenny Ritchie so aptly put it “We cannot be expert in another person’s culture if they do not share that cultural background.” (cited in *Kei Tua o te Pae*, Book 3 p. 4). I do not pretend to be an expert but want to share with those interested what I feel will be useful in their journey to understand kaupapa assessment. My hope is that this article will make you curious and inspire you to want to investigate *Te Whatu Pōkeka* further, with the aim of incorporating its kaupapa into your teaching practice.

So let's start with what's meant by kaupapa. *Kei Tua o te Pae*, Book 3, uses an abridged version of the principles outlined by Glynn and Bishop. Kaupapa: “Children achieve better when there is a close relationship, in terms of language and culture, between home and school.” Te Tiriti of Waitangi – The Treaty of Waitangi - guaranteed to protect Māori taonga, therefore, early childhood services and centres programmes must address Māori cultural needs. It involves the active development of a Māori child’s cultural knowledge, skills, reo, values, customs, beliefs and identity as an integral part of the programme.

One of the first aspects that I began to understand was how the tauparapara, which was specifically developed for *Te Whatu Pōkeka*, contains several key concepts: the Māori creation story, conception and birth of a child, and

processes related to learning and practice.

Te ōrokohanga o te ao	Te whānau tangata	Te āuatanga o te tamaiti
The Birth of the world	The conception and birth of the child	The Learning Child

These three ideas all talk about potential, and possibility, apprehension, challenge and resilience as well as new knowledge and new learning. This tauparapara is considered appropriate because it talks about three periods of learning.

Mōhiotanga	Mātauranga	Māramatanga
What a child already knows and what they bring with them highlights new beginnings, new knowledge, new discoveries.	This is a time of growth for the child. A phase of increasing potential, negotiation, challenge, and apprehension when dealing with new ideas.	This is when a child comes to understand new knowledge: a phase of enlightenment realization and clarification.

It is imperative that as teachers, you take the time to truly understand the following concepts if you are wanting to be authentic in providing a learning environment that supports Māori children to learn as Māori.

The *Te Whatu Pōkeka* framework is made of three parts. The first of these is **ways of knowing**. Māori believe that children come with ways of knowing the world. They are deeply connected to it and influenced by it. There are three phases to ways of knowing;
 Mohiotanga - prior knowledge that the child has and brings with them.
 Mātauranga - the struggle that comes as they acquire new knowledge and begin to understand it.
 Maramatanga - a feeling of achievement and understanding that comes from the struggle.

The second part of the framework talks about **ways of being**. Māori believe that the child, “through their journey to conception, are adorned with their own

mana (potential and spiritual power); mauri (living essence), and wairua (spiritual self), inherited from their ancestors.” (*Ministry of Education, p. 3*) For Pākehā it can be difficult to begin to understand these concepts initially, as they aren’t easily translatable. I remember in a workshop I’d attended, Rita Walker said

“Te Reo Māori is often translated but should in fact be interpreted. Māori language is taonga because every word has a whakapapa, where it has come from, and different meanings.”

At this stage of my journey my interpretation of these concepts are;
 Mana - that which resides in the head, the child’s self belief, their potential.
 Mauri - that which resides in the chest and can be seen through the child’s actions, their energy and life force.
 Wairua - that which resides in the area of the pito, therefore this is about the child’s emotions and spirituality.

I have seen many ways that teams gather the child’s whakapapa, their kōrero hitori and even their tokū ingoa from whānau as a way of building a relationship, however, more often than not many of these taonga get filed away in portfolios or placed on the walls, where the only revisiting that occurs is by the child. Teachers need to be thinking carefully about what they want to do with what they discover, in order to be able to plan programmes that are culturally appropriate and responsive and for whānau to see that teachers truly value these precious taonga they have shared.

This leads us nicely to the third part of the framework. This is about the adults that surround the child, our teaching practice, our **ways of doing**. This is where teachers need to be thinking about how they are going to support and nurture the child’s **ways of knowing** and **ways of**

being. We need be noticing what these children want us to notice and hearing what they want us to hear. Then we can be truly responsive, helping them to realise their potential.

In ERO's framework for review, *He Pou Tātaki*, Tikanga Whakaako, focuses on teaching and learning that is appropriate for Māori children. I loved the example that Rose Pere, in her article *Ako* (1997), spoke of. She spoke of the difference it makes to a child being involved in an experience that resonates with them, rather than one where they are just 'going through the motions.' She shared the example of a child learning about geometrical shapes and how more meaningful and engaging it would be if this took place in the natural environment while engaged in a meaningful task rather than with plastic shapes on a table inside. In nature they would be engaging with their whole body and mind. Another of the concepts that Tikanga Whakaako, Māori pedagogy, is based on is whanaungatanga, and as such authentic partnerships are critical here - partnerships between the child, their whānau and the teachers, where each feels their contribution is valued.

Ka Hikitia also highlights productive partnerships between teachers, Māori children, whānau, and iwi.

Parents and whānau play a critical role in supporting their children's learning right from the start. Evidence shows that learning outcomes are enhanced when parental involvement in school is sustained and focused on learning activities.

Identity, language and culture count – knowing where students come from and building on what students bring with them. Productive Partnerships – Māori students, whānau and educators sharing knowledge and expertise with each other to produce better outcomes.

These principles form the basis of *Tātaiako*. The competencies are about knowing, respecting, and working with Māori children their parents, whānau and iwi, so that their aspirations and knowledge become an integral part of your pedagogy and centre life.

It's important to also remember that all the principles of *Te Whāriki* - Empowerment, Family and Community, Holistic Development and Relationships - also speak about partnerships, ako and supporting the child as a whole. When teachers implement all of the principles they are in turn nurturing the mana, wairua and mauri of Māori children.

Teaching teams that have unpacked *Te Whatu Pōkeka* have begun to write bicultural assessment documentation that incorporates the concepts mohiotanga, mātauranga, and maramatanga. They are helping to unpack the child's kete, their 'funds of knowledge', and they are using what they discover to help them create a learning environment that is supportive, not only of that child but of whānau, hapū and iwi also. Their Learning Stories are one of the ways they are letting whānau know that they value what has been shared with them. Their words have had the power to build authentic learning partnerships. Teaching and assessment must be a collaborative activity where whānau and teachers both have a valued contribution and we must be mindful to write Learning Stories that are thoughtful, meaningful, respectful and inclusive, remembering to interpret not translate te reo Māori.

If you are interested in reading how other teachers have written Learning Stories using this framework then you can find some on ELP's website.

<http://www.elp.co.nz/local1.cfm>

Glossary:

Ako – to learn, to teach, we are all teachers and learners.

Hapū – sub tribe

Iwi - tribe

Karakia – prayer

Kaupapa - a set of values which people have agreed on as a foundation for their actions

Kete – basket, kit

Kōrero hitori – history

Mana – power, spiritual power.

Mātauranga – learning, apprehension, challenge, resilience, discovery

Maramatanga – understanding, clarity

Mauri – living essence, the essential quality and vitality of person

Mohiotanga – knowledge, knowing, understanding

Pito – umbilical cord

Reo – language

Taonga – a treasure, something prized

Tauparapara – chant, a type of karakia

Tikanga whakaako – Māori pedagogy

Tokū ingoa – my name

Whakapapa - recitation of genealogies

Whānau – family, can be several generations who are connected to a hapū and iwi

Whanaungatanga – relationship, sense of family connection, collective responsibility

Wairua - spirit, soul - spirit of a person which exists beyond death

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