

# Social cohesion and Aotearoa New Zealand's early childhood education: Intersectionality, interculturality, and decolonial restoration

Angel Chan<sup>i</sup>

Waipapa Taumata Rau | University of Auckland, New Zealand  
Orcid #: 0000-0001-5471-3522

and

Jenny Ritchie<sup>ii</sup>,

Te Herenga Waka Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand  
Orcid #: 0000-0003-2934-6355

## Abstract

This paper draws on intersectionality, interculturality, and decolonial theorising to scrutinise recent government policies in Aotearoa (New Zealand). It argues that these policies undermine recognition of Māori as tangata whenua, the original peoples of this land, and fracture social cohesion in our superdiverse nation. Policies scrutinised include the deletion of Māori language from government signifiers; revision of the school curriculum to de-emphasise Māori and local histories; and removal of the regulatory requirements for early childhood education to recognise Māori as tangata whenua and include diverse cultural knowledges. These recent policies undermine children's sense of belonging and threaten peaceful co-existence and mutual flourishing in Aotearoa. Pedagogies that embrace diverse intersecting identities and ways of being and relating foster intercultural dispositions, such as empathy, care and concern for others. In dialogue with our national early childhood curriculum, *Te Whāriki*, we imagine pedagogies that provide hope, sanctuary and cultural affirmation for children in Aotearoa.

Keywords: Decolonial critique, interculturality, intersectionality, social cohesion

Through inclusive and supportive pedagogies, early childhood education (ECE) teachers can generate a sense of community and sanctuary, vital for diverse families, particularly those who are not members of the dominant social and cultural group (Vandenbroeck & Peeters, 2013). The original Aotearoa New Zealand (hereafter Aotearoa) early childhood curriculum, *Te Whāriki: He whāriki mātauranga mō ngā mokopuna o Aotearoa: Early childhood curriculum* (Ministry of Education [MoE], 1996) was widely celebrated for its innovative, holistic, bicultural and sociocultural approach (e.g., Moss et al, 2016; Pence & Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2010). In its aspirational commitment to honouring treaty obligations<sup>1</sup> to Māori (the Indigenous Peoples of Aotearoa) to protect their language and values, *Te Whāriki* 1996 outlined a hopeful agenda for attention to the complexities of diversities of languages, cultures and histories. The curriculum's principles and strands expect EC teachers to empower children and families, and foster relationships, connectedness, and a sense of belonging. Two decades later, during which time we saw significantly increased numbers of diverse immigrants in Aotearoa, the revised *Te Whāriki* (MoE, 2017) articulated the need for "inclusive and responsive practice that acknowledges diversity" (p. 12).

Recent events in Aotearoa have forced a reckoning with our nation's responsiveness to Māori and immigrants concerning espoused notions of social cohesion. In 2019,

---

<sup>1</sup> These are outlined in the following section.

Aotearoa experienced a horrific terrorist attack on worshippers at two mosques in Christchurch. Since November 2023, we have witnessed the onslaught of neoliberal, anti-democratic and anti-Māori policies of the incoming coalition government. In this paper, we utilise intersectionality, interculturality, and decolonial theorising to scrutinise three arenas of recent government policies: the removal of Māori language from government signifiers, the school curriculum rewrite, and the ECE regulatory review. These policies threaten to undermine hope for cohesive and inclusive futures honouring Māori, those with settler ancestries, and recent immigrants.

*Te Whāriki* can be read as encouraging teachers to affirm diverse intersecting identities through fostering dispositions of intercultural awareness and respect, foundational to societal collective wellbeing and furthering the project of decolonial critique and restoration as per the vision of Jackson (2020) outlined later in this paper. As ECE scholars and teacher-educators, we aim to explore the potential of *Te Whāriki* to serve as a beacon of hope in the current context of anti-democratic and monocultural government policies. We first provide the context of this paper and share our stance on social cohesion before explaining the three theoretical domains applied in this paper. Then, we scrutinise and theorise the three selected policies. We conclude by reflecting upon the role of teachers and the potential of *Te Whāriki* in fostering pedagogies of hope and sanctuary, thereby promoting responsive and respectful social cohesion.

### **Background: Colonisation and the Fracturing of Social Cohesion**

The South Pacific islands of Aotearoa were colonised by Britain after the signing of the 1840 treaty, Te Tiriti o Waitangi | Treaty of Waitangi. Whilst allowing for British settlement (Article I), the treaty promised Māori that they would retain their self-determination over their lands, villages, and everything they valued (Article II). Māori were also affirmed as having equal citizenship rights alongside the British (Article III), and their belief systems were likewise to have equal status to Christian faiths present at the signing<sup>2</sup> (Orange, 2021). The treaty held the potential for a nation founded on equality and respect across differences, whilst upholding the rights of Māori. Yet, the settler government, constituted in 1852, ignoring these treaty obligations, excluded Māori from participation and decision-making. This deliberate strategy resulted in the imposition of rafts of legislation and policies to the extreme detriment of Māori wellbeing, through wars, loss of lands, resources, values and language (O'Sullivan, 2007; Simon, 2022; Walker, 2004). To illustrate, for many years, Māori children were denied their right to their language and punished for using it. Te reo Māori, the Māori language, was only recognised as our official language in 1987 after decades of Māori activism. Over time, the espoused intentions of education policies related to Māori shifted from 'assimilation' to 'integration', to 'biculturalism' (Bishop & Glynn, 2013). 'Bicultural' policies, whereby the Pākehā<sup>3</sup> majority retain control of decision-making and resources but make limited concessions to Māori, have largely failed to honour treaty obligations, nor to recognise and address the impacts of colonisation that have occurred through the deliberate denial of Māori rights to self-determination, including their language as per the treaty obligations outlined above.

Recent immigration policies aimed at attracting skilled workers (New Zealand Immigration, 2026a) and investors (New Zealand Immigration, 2026b) to the country have led to a radical demographic transformation, resulting in Aotearoa becoming superdiverse (Chan, 2020). Latest census results show that nearly 30% of the population

---

<sup>2</sup> Christianity is deeply implicated in the colonisation of Aotearoa. See for example: Mikaere, A. (2016). *Te Harinui: Civilising the Māori with school and church*. In J. Hutchings & J. Lee-Morgan (Eds.), *Decolonisation in Aotearoa: Education, research and practice* (pp. 48-57). NZCER.

<sup>3</sup> Pākehā is a Māori language term used to describe settlers of European ancestry, currently 62% of the population, Māori are 17.8%, with a range of ethnicities making up the remaining 20% (Stats NZ, 2024).

was born overseas from over 200 different birthplaces (Stats NZ, 2024). However, current neoliberal government policies continue to maintain Pākehā privilege with no priority given to fostering intercultural understandings between Māori, Pākehā, and the many other ethnic communities residing here (Salahshour, 2021). This lack of social infrastructure responsiveness has fermented ignorant, racist erosion of social cohesion. A recent Aotearoa survey found that less than half of the respondents felt positive about social cohesiveness (Eaqub & Collins, 2025).

An urgent focus on the need for social cohesion was highlighted after the livestreamed murder (by an Australian residing in Aotearoa) of 51 Muslim worshippers in two Christchurch mosques on 15 March 2019 (Manatū Taonga | Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 2025). This terrorist attack occurred despite the fact that Muslim women community leaders in Aotearoa had repeatedly attempted to alert government intelligence and security authorities to the increasing Islamophobic threats they were receiving (Bingham, 2022; Tolley, 2020). Yet, the authorities had remained fixated on the potential of acts by Muslim terrorists – a focus generated from the US-led ‘war on terror’ after the 9/11 attacks (Darder, 2025). In 2020, the global COVID-19 pandemic led to disinformation-fuelled anti-COVID-19 mandate social unrest in Aotearoa, culminating in a month-long occupation of parliament grounds, ended by police and resulting in a disturbing, violent confrontation (Hannah et al., 2022). These events generated mistrust and divisiveness in Aotearoa.

As ECE scholars and teacher-educators committed to social, cultural and ecological justice and respectful co-existence of diverse communities and our planetary co-habitants, we reflect on the implications for our work and for children and families’ wellbeing, not only of this recent national context, but also of the wider global geopolitical, ecological, social, economic and technological polycrisis exacerbated by rising anti-democratic policies (UNICEF INNOCENTI, 2023). We are particularly concerned by current hegemonic neoliberal government policies prioritising corporate profit, as evidenced in the EC sector (Mitchell et al., 2025). Additionally, by ignoring social obligations to foster intercultural understanding, such policies fail to utilise an intersectionality lens to make decisions responsive to the complexities of identities and communities. We wonder how this landscape impacts children’s sense of wellbeing, belonging and inclusion, and how EC teachers might apply the aspirations of *Te Whāriki* to respond with hope, nurturing a sense of sanctuary in these challenging times, and to reimagine inclusive pedagogies that foster cohesive ties for mutual flourishing. It is, however, critical to first critique the conventional espoused aspiration of social cohesion in Aotearoa.

### **Social Cohesion in Aotearoa**

We begin this section by outlining the importance of social cohesion in the Aotearoa context. A recent Aotearoa social cohesion survey (Eaqub & Collins, 2025), with a total sample size of 2631, reported that only half of the respondents “believe new immigrants enrich New Zealand life” (p. 31) and “migrant diversity makes New Zealand stronger” (p. 28). Ominously, 28 percent agreed that “increasing numbers of new immigrants are threatening New Zealand's unique sense of identity”, whilst “Māori (27%), Pasifika (27%) and Asian (22%) respondents were significantly more likely to have experienced discrimination in the past 12 months compared to NZ Europeans (13%)” (p. 31).

Whilst the concept of social cohesion is frequently employed in policies, there is little agreement on the concept’s meaning (Friedkin, 2004; Schiefer & van der Noll, 2017). We problematise conventional definitions of social cohesion that focus on advancing collective objectives, avoiding disagreements to prevent fracturing harmony, promoting loyalty and attachment, and enhancing the conditions of the wider group environment (Friedkin, 2004; Schiefer & van der Noll, 2017). Instead, we envision collectives

committed to mutual flourishing (Haraway, 2004). We consider the capacity to embrace differences and negotiate disagreements critical in advancing an inclusive and heterogeneous society where members are not expected to conform to hegemonic and homogenous attitudes and behaviour.

The 2020 *Royal Commission of Inquiry into the Terrorist Attack on Christchurch Masjidain (two mosques) on 15 March 2019* emphasises that in Aotearoa, “social cohesion must be founded on upholding Te Tiriti o Waitangi” (p. 655), recognising the collective sense of Māori identity and belonging, whilst “welcoming and supporting our increasingly vibrant and diverse population as an ongoing strength” (p. 656). Such aspirations sit uncomfortably juxtaposed alongside government policies currently undermining recent progress regarding honouring obligations to Māori, and their lack of attentiveness to considerations supportive of our superdiverse population. Addressing these serious concerns is vital to promoting social cohesion in Aotearoa (Gluckman et al., 2023).

Aotearoa researchers (e.g., the inquiry team in Royal Commission, 2020; Spoonley et al., 2020) acknowledge that social cohesion contributes to collective safety, peace and prosperity, but can be disrupted by divisive policies and disinformation propelled by social media. They highlight five key dimensions of social cohesion: belonging, inclusion, participation, recognition, and legitimacy and explain that in a cohesive society, individuals need to feel included in the broader community and its core institutions by participating in a range of social, cultural and economic activities, whilst their diverse values and practices are recognised and legitimised by public institutions. The *Social Cohesion in New Zealand* report (Eaqub & Collins, 2025) applies five similar dimensions to measure social cohesion: sense of belonging, sense of worth, social inclusion and justice, participation, and feeling accepted versus rejected, clarifying that in a cohesive society, people should feel “recognised and respected, be equitably included and have trust in others and in government organisations” (p. 36).

Peace and Spoonley (2019) propose using the term “cohesive ties” as an alternative to the abstract notion of cohesion and associated aspirations of harmony, collectivity, and sameness, explaining that such cohesive ties “manifest themselves in the small mechanisms that comprise interpersonal engagement and communication” across differences (p. 121). As ECE teacher-educators and researchers who regularly spend time in EC settings, we have observed many examples of these ‘small mechanisms’, whereby teachers have demonstrated intercultural dispositions of presence, empathy, care, and respect, meaning their EC centres serve as sanctuaries of hopeful engagement for children and families of diverse backgrounds. We have previously proposed using a place-based approach in ECE to connect diverse immigrant families with Māori and their cultures, thereby building a sense of belonging and social cohesiveness (Chan & Ritchie, 2025). With the support of *Te Whāriki*, ECE has the potential to foster cohesive ties within children’s everyday lives. The principles and strands of *Te Whāriki* (MoE, 2017) resonate with the dimensions of social cohesion outlined above. These include, for example:

- the principle of Relationships | Ngā Hononga: “Children learn through responsive and reciprocal relationships with people, places, and things” (p. 21)
- the strand of Belonging | Mana Whenua: “Children and their families experience an environment where connecting links with the family and the wider world are affirmed and extended” (p. 24)

These and other elements of *Te Whāriki* can foster intercultural dispositions of respect, empathy, and cooperation, as foundational elements of social cohesion. Nonetheless, the

current government's policies, as scrutinised later, pose a threat to the aspirations of *Te Whāriki*.

### **Theoretical Frameworks: Intersectionality, Interculturality and Decolonial Critique**

This section provides an overview of three theoretical domains, highlighting key perspectives useful for scrutinising recent divisive government policies and informing a pedagogy of hope in ECE.

#### **Intersectionality**

The term “intersectionality” was coined in 1989 by Professor Kimberlé Crenshaw to describe the complex and multi-layered disadvantages and discriminations endured, in particular, by Black women in the US. Intersectionality highlights interactions of social, cultural and economic complexities, since “people's lives and the organization of power in a given society are better understood as being shaped not by a single axis of social division, be it race or gender or class, but by many axes that work together and influence each other” (Hill Collins & Bilge, 2016, p.11). Importantly, intersectionality rejects essentialist and binary approaches by interrogating how categories such as ethnicity and gender overlap and interact within power relations that create and sustain domination, oppression, social hierarchies, discrimination and marginalisation (Cho et al., 2013; Hill Collins & Bilge, 2016). The *Social Cohesion in New Zealand* study (Eaqub & Collins, 2025) reports “layered discrimination [experienced by participants] due to being mixed race<sup>4</sup>, female or belonging to specific socioeconomic or cultural groups” (p. 32), illuminating intersected marginalisations in Aotearoa.

Intersectionality can be employed as an analytic tool to understand the complexities of overlapping identities, expose and interrogate the multi-layers of power and inequalities, and advocate for policy transformation and social justice (Hill Collins & Bilge, 2016; Konstantoni & Emejulu, 2017). Significantly, intersectionality “seeks to challenge and displace hegemonic whiteness in the naming and legitimating of particular kinds of politics, policy making and knowledge production” (Konstantoni & Emejulu, 2017, p. 8).

Research (e.g., Cho & Wang, 2020; Konstantoni & Emejulu, 2017) demonstrates children’s capacities for exercising their agency to position their intersecting identities fluidly and strategically across different situations and contexts, to protect their identities, and defend themselves against inequalities and marginalisation. These studies highlight the important role of teachers in creating an environment where children can explore, express and construct their diverse identities while respecting those of others. Our paper applies an intersectionality lens to examine the layered discrimination and injustice brought by recent government policies and to inform pedagogies that support children to embrace each other’s diverse identities, fostering intercultural competence.

#### **Interculturality**

Intercultural competence is essential to navigating “complex environments marked by a growing diversity of peoples, cultures and lifestyles” (UNESCO, 2013, p. 5), such as Aotearoa, where cross-cultural encounters are common and imminent. Children’s everyday experiences are influenced by cultural beliefs and practices (Layne, 2023) that

---

<sup>4</sup> We do not ourselves use the term ‘race’ as it is an unhelpful social construction based in false science and has been used to justify racial discrimination. We prefer to refer to people’s ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

shape their construction of identities, how they see their own and other people's worlds, and how they act and react to new cultural encounters (Hauerwas et al., 2021).

Unequal power relations in decision-making are concerns highlighted by intercultural education researchers (e.g., Dervin, 2023a, 2023b; Hauerwas et al., 2021; Zembylas, 2023). Despite sensing discrimination, children may not often be supported to understand, resist and advocate for cultural justice. Adults influence how children respond to intercultural encounters and inequalities; hence, it is important for EC teachers to proactively foster interculturality (Layne, 2023). Without an intentional effort to explore sensitive topics such as racism and discrimination, inequalities remain unchallenged and perpetuated. Teacher education, therefore, needs to support student-teachers in developing criticality and reflexivity in order to foster interculturality (Dervin, 2023b).

*Te Whāriki* (MoE, 2017) explains that children's identities are enhanced when teachers are "responsive to their cultural ways of knowing and being" (p. 12) and that young children understand "different cultures have different values and expectations" (p. 14). It expects teachers to explore their own positionality as well as supporting children to be "respectful of the cultural beliefs and world views of others" (p. 50). Nonetheless, simply fostering intercultural dispositions at an individual level is insufficient. It is also necessary to interrogate the histories and power of colonisation in reproducing and sustaining inequalities through social institutions such as education systems and settings (Zembylas, 2023). Dervin (2023a) acknowledges colonisation to be an imposed and "shameful form of interculturality" (p. 6). The following section expands on this critique, positing a pathway towards decolonial restoration as a key focus for educators.

### **Decolonial critique and an ethic of restoration**

Decolonial critique is highly relevant in Aotearoa given the history of colonisation outlined above. It provides a lens for critiquing the pervasiveness of presumptions of patriarchal European supremacy (Salmond, 2017), which underpinned colonisation, fuelled by motivations of profit and greed, divesting Māori of their lands, resources, and self-determination. Education has served as a key tool of the colonial project (Walker, 2004). This involved a deliberate degradation of the psyche, whereby both colonised and colonisers were deeply impacted and implicated (Fanon, 1968). Colonialism not only privileges cognitivism but also restricts the emotional repertoires made accessible to children (Ritchie, 2021). Burman (2016) points out how decolonial analysis can highlight the "complex and contested ways" (p. 42) that children, including their emotional wellbeing, have been and continue to be impacted.

What is also largely unrecognised in Aotearoa is the ongoing intergenerational trauma resulting from two centuries of debilitating colonisation (Pihama et al., 2014). Similarly, the strategies required for remedying this fraught situation are unrealised and need to be applied at policy, institutional, and pedagogical sites. Teacher education is one such site, providing a prime opportunity for decolonial critique, enabling future teachers to be active agents in critiquing and resisting colonialist hegemonies. Skilful pedagogies are required to challenge deeply embedded notions of white supremacy, privilege and entitlement (Omarjee, 2018) to understand the impacts of historical trauma (Pihama et al., 2014) and to access and apply the emancipatory power of such reclaimed visioning (Jackson, 2020). Yet, despite good intentions and visionary curriculum documents such as the original *Te Whāriki* (MoE, 1996), we have witnessed an ongoing struggle against forces of recolonisation, such is the hegemony of the Pākehā majority in Aotearoa (Ritchie, 2015; Ritchie & Skerrett, 2014).

A critique of decolonial theorising is that it needs to provide an alternative vision to the negativity of colonisation, and one such vision proposed by Moana Jackson (2020) is the

notion of restoration outlined below. Decolonial critique can not only identify and analyse the embedded presumptions and intentions of education policies, it can cultivate (re)imaginaries of ways of being. Indigenous worldviews, for example, are imbued with relationality that values other beings, including plants, animals, mountains, and oceans, recognising that human wellbeing is integrally dependent on the flourishing of the ecosystems in which we have co-evolved (Gauthier et al., 2025). Māori legal expert and visionary, Moana Jackson (2020), has posited key values for an ethic of restoration in the context of colonisation. These are the values of:

1. *Place* - the need to promote good relationships with and ensure the protection of Papatūānuku [Earth Mother].
2. *Tikanga* - the core ideals that describe the “ought to be” of living in Aotearoa and the particular place of Māori within that tikanga.
3. *Community* - the need to facilitate good relationships between all peoples.
4. *Belonging* - the need for everyone to have a sense of belonging.
5. *Balance* - the need to maintain harmony in all relationships, including in the exercise of constitutional authority.
6. *Conciliation* - the need to guarantee a conciliatory and consensual democracy. (p. 152)

Notably, these values of decolonial restoration honour the mutual obligations embedded within inter-relationality. They underpin pedagogical aspirations of fostering dispositions and praxis of mutual flourishing (Fettes & Blenkinsop, 2023). Donna Haraway has explained the new/old story of co-flourishing: “Co-evolution and mutual co-constitution in this story resolve into the figure of transcendent self-surpassing, not into a tale of mundane and mortal co-inhabiting, where the struggle for a practice of co-flourishing across categories might be sought” (2004, p. 300). Commitment to collectively (re)imagining decolonial restoration may offer a vision of hope to sustain us through troubled times.

### **Scrutinising and Analysing Policies**

In this section, we interrogate three policies recently introduced by our current government that undermine the nation’s responsibilities to Māori as per the treaty, and to the superdiverse population, with regard to supporting diverse intersecting identities, languages and cultural knowledges. Using the aforementioned theoretical lenses and in dialogue with *Te Whāriki* (MoE, 1996, 2017), we argue that these policies deepen social division in Aotearoa.

#### **1. Removing the Māori language from government signifiers and early readers**

Languages reside at the heart of cultures, inscribing their meanings, knowledges, values, sources of identities and signalling belonging (Harvey, 2013). Over recent decades, the Māori language has become increasingly visible in public spaces, such as education settings and in bilingual signage of institutions. However, immediately on taking power, the current government signalled its intention to diminish the visibility of the Māori language by requiring government agencies to use English titles (Tahana, 2024). This was a portent of a raft of anti-Māori legislation to follow, impacting Māori wellbeing across education, health, social services and the environment (Corlett & Tahana, 2024; Eketone, 2023). Having Māori names of government agencies (e.g., ‘Waka Kōtahi’ – metaphorically meaning a transportation collective – instead of the ‘New Zealand

Transport Authority') was a visible affirmation of Indigenous status, signifying for Māori a sense of belonging and collectivity. This is now being erased under the guise of eliminating 'race-based' policies (Eketone, 2023), in deliberate obfuscation of the treaty rights of Māori.

More recently, the Minister of Education has required her ministry to remove Māori words, which are part of everyday lexicon in Aotearoa, from the early readers used in the first year of primary schooling. These readers follow the monolingual phonetic structured literacy approach dictated by the 'science of reading' (Daalder, 2025; Dunlop, 2025; Smith, 2024). Subsuming Māori children's rights to language, identity, and belonging into an imposed monolingual homogenised 'equality' negates their status, inflicting a re-colonisation that demean Māori. This policy also reduces opportunities for new immigrant children to become familiar with the Māori language and the cultural meanings embedded therein, and signals to all children the hegemonic dominance of the English language (Smith, 2024), thereby weakening social cohesion.

*Te Whāriki* (MoE, 1996) was proclaimed the first 'bicultural' curriculum for Aotearoa. Affirmation of Māori and the treaty was evident in the title, cover illustration, and document content. The revised *Te Whāriki* (MoE, 2017) states that "Te Tiriti | the Treaty has implications for our education system, particularly in terms of achieving equitable outcomes for Māori and ensuring that te reo Māori not only survives but thrives" (p. 3). These signifiers of valuing the Māori language and worldviews in *Te Whāriki* (MoE, 1996, 2017) are a beacon of decolonial potential that stand in stark contrast to current government policies. We have recently learned that the Minister of Education has been advised to replace *Te Whāriki* with a teacher-directed curriculum "so that young children are taught the oral and symbolic (alphabetical and numerical) foundations needed for primary school" (ESOIA640, as cited in Holloway, 2025, para. 4).

## **2. Rewriting the school curricula**

Education has been a key site for the incoming government to enact its re-colonising policies. The previously widely consulted draft school curriculum, *Te Mātaiaho* (MoE, 2023), which aimed at enacting Te Tiriti obligations and being inclusive of all learners, was quickly removed from the MoE website. The teachers' union NZEI Te Riu Roa (2024) was alarmed "at the outright removal and erasure of Te Tiriti o Waitangi from the curriculum framework" (para. 4) and rejected the ministry's claim that the new curricula are based in "the science of learning" (para. 5). "What started as a Te Tiriti-based framework is now narrow and prescriptive. Specific references to Te Tiriti have effectively been removed from the curricula, pointing to direct political interference in the curriculum" (para. 6). All these changes were made rapidly with minimal consultation with the teaching profession.

The recently promulgated Aotearoa Histories curriculum, the first for Aotearoa, recognises Māori histories as foundational, significant and ongoing (MoE, 2022). Unsurprisingly, the current government has stated that it intends to 'restore balance' to this curriculum (Murray, 2024). Whilst undermining Māori status as tangata whenua (Indigenous People of this land), such seemingly innocuous notions of 'balance' "can work to undermine more inclusive, relational and honest ways of engaging with the past" (Burns, 2023, para. 1). As Burns explains, exploration of local Māori histories "can provide a foundation for a whole curriculum that both reinforces the special status of tangata whenua and supports a continuous exploration of the different connections communities have to this land and each other" (para. 6).

After the first year of delivery of the Histories curriculum, a national evaluation found that students enjoyed learning about local and global contexts and those which reflected their own cultures and experiences, and teachers reported increased student engagement

in learning (Education Review Office, 2024). A further study of eight schools found that teachers “had worked on developing their relationships with hapū [Māori sub-tribes] and iwi [tribes] and saw this as essential for teaching Aotearoa New Zealand’s histories” (Bolstad et al., 2025, p. 3). The early indications here of fostering intercultural understandings and cohesive ties may well be undermined by government tampering with this curriculum, depriving students and their families who are new to Aotearoa of the opportunity to learn local histories and connect with Māori, a learning opportunity vital to supporting new immigrants to develop a sense of belonging in Aotearoa (Chan & Ritchie, 2025).

### **3. Removal of the recognition of tangata whenua Māori and cultural significance from the ECE Regulatory Review**

With very limited consultation, the government released the report of the *Regulatory Review of Early Childhood Education* (Ministry for Regulation, 2024). The report clearly intends to further the market model for ECE provision in Aotearoa – the words “market/markets” appear 110 times, and “prices/price” 20 times. Instead of considering ECE as a social provision, the report labels ECE as a “market” – the phrase “ECE market” appears 33 times, such as “more competition in the ECE market” (p. 4), “a thriving ECE market” (p. 6), “ECE market failures” (p. 7).

The previous 13 criteria to assess curriculum standards have required licensed EC service providers to “plan, implement, and evaluate a curriculum that is designed to enhance children’s learning and development through the provision of learning experiences and that is consistent with any curriculum framework prescribed by the Minister” (New Zealand Government [NZG], 2018, p. 8). *Te Whāriki* has been the prescribed curriculum framework. The report indicates that the government will remove 11 of these criteria (Ministry for Regulation, 2024). To align with the focus of this paper, we have chosen to problematise the proposed removal of the following two criteria (C5 and C6), which we see as particularly detrimental to social cohesion in Aotearoa, since they had provided support for the aspirations of *Te Whāriki*, as well as hope for intercultural respect and decolonial re-envisioning:

C5 The service curriculum acknowledges and reflects the unique place of Māori as tangata whenua. Children are given the opportunity to develop knowledge and an understanding of the cultural heritages of both parties to Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

C6 The service curriculum respects and supports the right of each child to be confident in their own culture and encourages children to understand and respect other cultures. (NZG, 2018, p. 9)

The removal of these two criteria would undermine *Te Whāriki*, which has been recognised internationally as being culturally responsive and inclusive (Moss et al., 2016), once again marginalising Māori status as tangata whenua, along with mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledges). The Minister for Regulation stated that “The government is addressing ECE regulations to ensure child safety is priority number one, children’s education is number two, and parental choice is number three”, further explaining that “the ethnic background of the child shouldn’t have any bearing on this, and providers shouldn’t be forced to worry about the treaty when their priorities are keeping children safe and educating” (as cited in Stewart, 2025, para.10, 11). However, Te Tiriti and interrelations between language, culture and identity are emphasised in *Te Whāriki*, which aims to ensure that “children from all backgrounds to grow up strong in identity, language and culture” (MoE, 2017, p. 7).

A secure cultural identity is crucial for children's wellbeing and learning (Rameka, 2018). This is especially needed for Māori and those others, such as refugees, who have experienced the intergenerational trauma of colonisation (Pihama et al., 2014). Feeling a secure identity may similarly be challenging for others who do not belong to the dominant cultural group. An EC environment that encourages children to express their cultural identities confidently and to “understand and respect other cultures” (NZG, 2018, p. 9, C6) is vital for children to develop an intercultural worldview and competence, and to challenge inequalities (Layne, 2023). Without the stipulation of C5, EC teachers may not realise the importance of applying intentional strategies to rectify the adverse effects of colonisation on Māori, apply equitable pedagogies to advocate for Māori children and families, and support children and families, particularly those from diverse ethnic communities who are new to Aotearoa, to connect with Māori cultures and the histories of Aotearoa.

### **Concluding Speculations towards Pedagogies of Hope and Sanctuary**

Education is a key site for decolonial restoration and social transformation (Jackson, 2020). As teacher-educators, we are concerned that neoliberal and anti-democratic policies, as outlined above, create a socially divisive environment for children and families in Aotearoa. In this final section, we draw from our theorising to provide insights into pedagogies that offer hope and sanctuary through cultural validation. We begin by reflecting on the discourse of ‘social cohesion’ before considering the vitally important roles of teachers and *Te Whāriki*.

#### **Cohesion on whose terms?**

It is crucial to critique utopian notions of social cohesion as being hegemonic and assimilative in practice. Without taking a decolonial stance, it is largely presumed to involve inclusion within the mainstream society. The above examples of neoliberal and anti-democratic policies of our current government disregard Māori and those from diverse ethnic communities that make up our superdiverse society. We see a clear role for education to deliver a counter-colonial praxis, including recognition of treaty obligations to include Māori language, knowledges, and local Māori histories. Key to decolonial envisioning is fostering critical consciousness regarding power effects underpinning Pākehā hegemony and presumption of privilege, as well as enabling intercultural exploration of the connections members of diverse cultural communities have with one another and to the lands and places of Aotearoa. Embracing a pluriversal aspiration for social cohesion fosters mutual flourishing and a commitment to education that is responsive to the nuanced, multidimensional complexities identified in intersectionality theorising (Fettes & Blenkinsop, 2023). In the current Aotearoa context, this calls into question issues related to hegemonic policies overlaid with neoliberal premises that prioritise marketisation and privatisation, including ECE, for corporate profit over delivering equitable social infrastructure such as public, fully funded, high-quality, culturally respectful ECE provision.

#### **The role of teachers**

Identities are complex, fluid, intersecting, and shifting across time and places (Konstantoni & Emejulu, 2017), and their construction is shaped by everyday cultural experiences (Layne, 2023). The importance of creating learning communities where children can express and construct their diverse identities and resist marginalisation and exclusion has been highlighted in previous research (e.g., Cho & Wang, 2020; Konstantoni & Emejulu, 2017; Rameka, 2018). Clandinin et al. (2006) describe a US elementary school study in which they sought to understand how teachers responded to “children whose life story lines are different from their own” and to learn about how “teachers’ experiences with diversity in their own lives shaped their work with children’s

experiences of curriculum” (p. 113). Teachers, we recognise, are operating at the nexus of overlapping layers of identities, cultural communities, socioeconomic circumstances, and the affordances and constraints of education policies and funding.

Current contexts for education in Aotearoa include poor mental health, sadly evidenced in the highest adolescent suicide rate of the 42 Innocenti Report Card countries (UNICEF INNOCENTI, 2025). Contributing factors include the ongoing impacts of colonisation, such as intergenerational trauma, poverty, racism, and negative attitudes towards takatāpui (an inclusive term for Māori people of diverse gender and sexual orientations) and trans youth, and social media dissemination (Cederman, 2023). Teacher education has a key role to serve in supporting future teachers to affirm and support children’s diverse intersecting identities, foster intercultural competence (Dervin, 2023b; Layne, 2023), recognise Māori as tāngata whenua, and explore how to connect all communities to co-flourish in this land (Burns, 2023). To challenge social media-disseminated disinformation, it is imperative that teachers and families engage in dialogue to foster critical consciousness and dispositions for collective action. Most significantly, the construction of social cohesion requires a trust in others, including in government organisations (Eaqub & Collins, 2025; Gluckman et al., 2023). Unfortunately, recent government policies in Aotearoa are sowing mistrust and distrust, undermining and destroying cohesive ties.

### **The critical potentiality of *Te Whāriki***

*Te Whāriki* stands as a potential signifier of critical ECE pedagogies, reflected in ECE settings as sites of hope and sanctuary. The four principles that underpin *Te Whāriki* (empowerment | whakamana, family and community | whānau tangata, relationships | ngā hononga, and holistic development | kotahitanga), along with the strand of Belonging | Mana Whenua provide a roadmap for this potential. This inclusive vision can imbue and embed pedagogies that instil dispositions of trust, respect, empathy, care, and critical consciousness. Teachers can translate these aspirations into pedagogies of hope and sanctuary, offering small mechanisms that foster cohesive ties, through respectful and responsive “interpersonal engagement and communication” (Peace & Spoonley, 2019, p. 121) between teachers and diverse families and local Indigenous communities, thus respecting and embracing children and families’ diverse intersecting identities and ways of being, knowing, doing and relating.

### **References**

- Bingham, E. (2022). How pleas for help in the lead-up to the Christchurch attacks fell through the cracks - Chapter 1: The Iceberg. *Stuff*. <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/300598389/how-pleas-for-help-in-the-leadup-to-the-christchurch-attacks-fell-through-the-cracks--chapter-1-the-iceberg>
- Bishop, R., & Glynn, T. (2013). Achieving cultural integrity in education in Aotearoa/New Zealand. In J. Wearmouth, T. Glynn, R. C. Richmond, & M. Berryman (Eds.), *International perspectives on intercultural education* (pp. 38–71). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203064122-10>
- Bolstad, R., Bright, N., Palmer, G., Durie, K., & Barnes, A. (2025). *Teaching and learning about the histories of Aotearoa New Zealand. School leaders and kaiako experiences with early curriculum implementation*. <https://www.nzcer.org.nz/research/publications/teaching-learning-histories-aotearoa-new-zealand>
- Burman, E. (2016). Fanon’s other children: psychopolitical and pedagogical implications. *Race, Ethnicity and Education*, 20(1), 42–56. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2016.1150832>
- Burns, C. (2023, Dec 7). Why ‘restoring balance’ to the histories curriculum is not as innocuous as it sounds. *The Spinoff*. <https://thespinoff.co.nz/politics/07-12->

- 2023/why-restoring-balance-to-the-histories-curriculum-is-not-as-innocuous-as-it-sounds
- Cederman, K. P. (2023). The precarity of children's mental wellness in Aotearoa New Zealand. In M. O'Loughlin, C. Owens, & L. Rothschild (Eds.), *Precarities of 21st century childhoods: Critical explorations of time(s), place(s), and identities* (1<sup>st</sup> ed., pp. 109-124). Lexington Books.
- Chan, A. (2020). Superdiversity and critical multicultural pedagogies: Working with migrant families. *Policy Futures in Education*, 18(5), 560–573. <https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1478210319873773>
- Chan, A., & Ritchie, J. (2025). Exploring perspectives on identity, belonging, inclusion and social cohesion: Implications for place-based early childhood education. *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies*, 60, 451-468. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40841-025-00403-4>
- Cho, S., Crenshaw, K. W., & McCall, L. (2013). Toward a field of intersectionality studies: Theory, applications, and praxis. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 38(4), 785–810. <http://www.jstor.com/stable/10.1086/669608>
- Cho, H., & Wang, X. C. (2020). Fluid identity play: A case study of a bilingual child's ethnic identity construction across multiple contexts. *Journal of Early Childhood Research*, 18(2), 200–213. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1476718X19898746>
- Clandinin, D. J., Huber, J., Huber, M., Murphy, M. S., Orr, A. M., Pearce, M., & Steeves, P. (2006). *Composing diverse identities. Narrative inquiries into the interwoven lives of children and teachers*. Routledge.
- Corlett, E., & Tahana, J. (2024, July 24). Revealed: The impact of New Zealand's changes to policies affecting Māori. *Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/ng-interactive/2024/jul/29/new-zealand-coalition-government-policy-changes-maori-impact-revealed>
- Crenshaw, K. W. (1989). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A Black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics. *The University of Chicago Legal Forum*, 140, 139–167.
- Daalder, M. (2025, Aug 18). Govt continues campaign for English agency names. *Newsroom*. <https://newsroom.co.nz/2025/08/18/govt-continues-campaign-for-english-agency-names/>
- Darder, A. (2025). Imagining justice: Politics, pedagogy, and dissent. In A. Jolivéte (Ed.), *Research justice: Methodologies for social change* (pp. 13–25). Bristol University Press.
- Dervin, F. (2023a). *The paradoxes of interculturality: A toolbox of out-of-the-box ideas for intercultural communication education*. Routledge <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003371052>
- Dervin, F. (2023b). *Interculturality, criticality and reflexivity in teacher education*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009302777>
- Dunlop, M. (2025, Aug 13). Report reveals Minister's decision to ban te reo Māori words from all new early readers. *Te Ao Māori News*. <https://www.teaonews.co.nz/2025/08/13/report-reveals-ministers-decision-to-ban-te-reo-maori-words-from-all-new-early-readers/>
- Eaqub, S., & Collins, R. (April, 2025). *Social cohesion in New Zealand*. <https://helenclark.foundation/support-our-work/social-cohesion/>
- Education Review Office. (2024). *Teaching histories. Implementation of Aotearoa New Zealand's Histories and the refreshed Social Sciences learning area*. <https://evidence.ero.govt.nz/documents/teaching-histories-implementation-of-aotearoa-new-zealand-s-histories-and-the-refreshed-social-sciences-learning-area>
- Eketone, A. (2023). The Empire Strikes Back: Māori and the 2023 coalition government. *Aotearoa New Zealand Social Work*, 36(4), 12-18.
- Fanon, F. (1968). *Black skin, white masks* (C. L. Markmann, Trans.). MacGibbon & Kee.
- Fettes, M., & Blenkinsop, S. (2023). Designing education for eco-social-cultural change. In M. Fettes & S. Blenkinsop (Eds.), *Education as the practice of eco-social-cultural*

- change* (pp. 21-56). Springer Nature Switzerland. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-45834-7\\_2](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-45834-7_2)
- Friedkin, N. E. (2004). Social cohesion. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 30, 409–425. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.30.012703.110625>
- Gauthier, P. E., Chungyalpa, D., Goldman, R. I., Davidson, R. J., & Wilson-Mendenhall, C. D. (2025). Mother Earth kinship: Centering Indigenous worldviews to address the Anthropocene and rethink the ethics of human-to-nature connectedness. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 64, 102042. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsy.2025.102042>
- Gluckman, P., Spoonley, P., Bardsley, A., Poulton, R., Royal, T. A. C., Sridhar, H., & Clyne, D. (2023). *Addressing the challenges to social cohesion*. Kōi Tū: The Centre for Informed Futures. <https://informedfutures.org/challenges-to-social-cohesion/>
- Hannah, K., Hattotuwa, S., & Taylor, K. (2022). The murmuration of information disorders. Aotearoa New Zealand, mis- and disinformation ecologies and the parliament protest. *Pacific Journalism Review*, 28(1 & 2), 138–161. <https://ojs.aut.ac.nz/pacific-journalism-review/article/view/1266/1572>
- Haraway, D. (2004). *The Haraway reader*. Routledge
- Harvey, N. (2013). Principled practices: Respect and reciprocity through linguistically responsive pedagogy. *Early Childhood Folio*, 17(1), 19-23.
- Hauerwas, L. B., Kerkhoff, S. N., & Schneider, S. B. (2021). Glocality, reflexivity, interculturality, and worldmaking: A framework for critical global teaching. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*, 35(2), 185-199. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02568543.2021.1900714>
- Hill Collins, P., & Bilge, S. (2016). *Intersectionality* (1st ed.). Polity Press.
- Holloway, B. (2025, Aug 11). *Democracy begins in the classroom*. [https://www.icloud.com/iclouddrive/076TMbZKrEkiDtHn8ZmJngC7A#ESOIA640\\_Stanford\\_Rata\\_Comms\\_Aug\\_25](https://www.icloud.com/iclouddrive/076TMbZKrEkiDtHn8ZmJngC7A#ESOIA640_Stanford_Rata_Comms_Aug_25)
- Jackson, M. (2020). Where to next? Decolonisation and the stories in the land. In R. Kiddle (Ed.), *Imagining decolonisation* (pp. 133–155). Bridget Williams Books.
- Konstantoni, K., & Emejulu, A. (2017). When intersectionality met childhood studies: The dilemmas of a travelling concept. *Children's Geographies*, 15(1), 6-22. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14733285.2016.1249824>
- Layne, H. (2023). Interculturality, race and inequality in early years. In A. Jacobsson, H. Layne, & F. Dervin (Eds.), *Children and interculturality in education* (pp. 76–100). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003279341>
- Manatū Taonga | Ministry for Culture and Heritage. (2025). *51 killed in mosque shootings*. <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/51-killed-mosque-shootings>
- Ministry of Education. (1996). *Te Whāriki. He whāriki mātauranga mō ngā mokopuna o Aotearoa: Early childhood curriculum*. [https://web.archive.org/web/20170506164955if\\_/https://education.govt.nz/assets/Documents/Early-Childhood/Te-Whariki-1996.pdf](https://web.archive.org/web/20170506164955if_/https://education.govt.nz/assets/Documents/Early-Childhood/Te-Whariki-1996.pdf)
- Ministry of Education. (2017). *Te Whāriki. He whāriki mātauranga mō ngā mokopuna o Aotearoa. Early childhood curriculum*. <https://www.education.govt.nz/early-childhood/teaching-and-learning/te-whariki/>
- Ministry of Education. (2022). *Aotearoa NZ's Histories*. <https://aotearoahistories.education.govt.nz/content-overview>
- Ministry of Education. (2023). *Te Mātaiaho. The refreshed NZ curriculum*. <https://web.archive.org/web/20240508002304/https://curriculumrefresh.education.govt.nz/te-mataiaho>
- Ministry for Regulation. (2024). *Regulatory review of early childhood education*. <https://www.regulation.govt.nz/about-us/our-publications/regulatory-review-of-early-childhood-education-full-report/>
- Mitchell, L., Botes, V., & Kamenarac, O. (2025). Early childhood education as a public good: Challenges and possibilities. *Early Childhood Folio*, 29(2), 8-14. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.18296/ecf.1158>

- Moss, P., Dahlberg, G., Grieshaber, S., Mantovani, S., May, H., Pence, A., Rayna, S., Swadener, B. B., & Vandebroek, M. (2016). The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's international early learning study: Opening for debate and contestation. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 17(3), 343–351. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1463949116661126>
- Murray, A. (2024, April 4). 'Restoring balance' to history lessons: What are kids learning? *I News*. <https://www.1news.co.nz/2024/04/04/restoring-balance-to-history-lessons-what-are-kids-learning/>
- New Zealand Government. (2018). *Licensing criteria for early childhood education & care services 2008 and early childhood education curriculum framework*. <https://www.education.govt.nz/education-professionals/early-learning/licensing-and-certification/licensing-criteria-for-centre-based-ece-services>
- New Zealand Immigration. (2026a). Green list roles – jobs we need people for in New Zealand. <https://www.immigration.govt.nz/work/requirements-for-work-visas/green-list-occupations-qualifications-and-skills/green-list-roles-jobs-we-need-people-for-in-new-zealand/>
- New Zealand Immigration. (2026b). Acceptable investments for investor 1 and 2 resident visas. <https://www.immigration.govt.nz/process-to-apply/applying-for-a-visa/providing-evidence-and-documents-to-support-your-visa-application/acceptable-investments-for-investor-and-retirement-visas/acceptable-investments-for-investor-1-and-2-resident-visas/>
- NZEI | Te Riu Roa. (2024, October 31). *Narrow and prescriptive new curricula was never consulted on properly, says union*. <https://www.nzeiteriuroa.org.nz/about-us/media-releases/narrow-and-prescriptive-new-curricula-was-never-consulted-on-properly-says-union>
- Omarjee, N. (2018). *Reimagining the dream. Decolonising academia by putting the last first*. African Studies Centre Leiden. <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/68346>
- Orange, C. (2021). *The Treaty of Waitangi | Te Tiriti o Waitangi: An illustrated history*. Bridget Williams Books.
- O'Sullivan, D. (2007). *Beyond biculturalism. The politics of an Indigenous minority*. Huia.
- Peace, R., & Spoonley, P. (2019). Social cohesion and cohesive ties: Responses to diversity. *New Zealand Population Review*, 45, 98–124.
- Pence, A., & Pacini-Ketchabaw, V. (2010). Both/and: Reflections on recent Anglo/Western early childhood curriculum statements. *International Journal of Child Care and Education Policy*, 4(2), 15–24.
- Pihama, L., Reynolds, P., Smith, C., Reid, J., Smith, L. T., & Nana, R. T. (2014). Positioning historical trauma theory within Aotearoa New Zealand. *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples*, 10(3), 248–262. <https://doi.org/10.1177/117718011401000304>
- Rameka, L. (2018). *A commentary on Ngā Pou Here, ERO's framework for reviewing early childhood services with a particular focus on Mātauranga and Tikanga Whakaako*. <https://ero.govt.nz/how-ero-reviews/early-childhood-services/akarangi-quality-evaluation/te-ara-poutama-indicators-of-quality-for-early-childhood-education-what-2>
- Ritchie, J. (2015). Disentangling? Re-entanglement? Tackling the pervasiveness of colonialism in early childhood (teacher) education. In V. Pacini-Ketchabaw & A. Taylor (Eds.), *Unsettling the colonial places and spaces of early childhood education* (pp. 147–161). Routledge.
- Ritchie, J. (2021). Staying with the troubles of colonised emotional well-being of young children in Aotearoa (New Zealand). In T. Kinard & G. S. Cannella (Eds.), *Childhoods in more just worlds: An international handbook* (pp. 95-112). Myers Education Press. <https://books.google.co.nz/books?id=yriKzgEACAAJ>
- Ritchie, J., & Skerrett, M. (2014). *Early childhood education in Aotearoa New Zealand: History, pedagogy, and liberation*. Palgrave MacMillan.

- Royal Commission. (2020). *Ko tō tātou kāinga tēnei. Report: Royal Commission of inquiry into the terrorist attack on Christchurch masjidain on 15 March 2019*. <https://christchurchattack.royalcommission.nz/the-report/>
- Salahshour, N. (2021). A critique of New Zealand's exclusive approach to intercultural education. *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies*, 56(1), 111-128. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40841-020-00179-9>
- Salmond, A. (2017). *Tears of Rangī. Experiments across worlds*. Auckland University Press.
- Schiefer, D., & van der Noll, J. (2017). The essentials of social cohesion: A literature review. *Social Indicators Research*, 132, 579–603. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-016-1314-5>
- Simon, H. (2022). The critical juncture in Aotearoa New Zealand and the collective future: Policy issues in settler/invaser colonial Zombiism found in "Biculturalism". *International Journal of Critical Indigenous Studies*, 15(2), 118–142. <https://doi.org/10.5204/ijcis.2329>
- Smith, H. A. (2024, Aug 12). Bilingualism under threat: structured literacy will make it harder for children to hold on to their mother tongue. *The Conversation*. <https://theconversation.com/bilingualism-under-threat-structured-literacy-will-make-it-harder-for-children-to-hold-on-to-their-mother-tongue-236140>
- Spoonley, P., Gluckman, P., Bardsley, A., McIntosh, T., Hunia, R., Johal, S., & Poulton, R. (2020). *He Oranga Hou: Social cohesion in a post-COVID world*. Kōi Tū: The Centre for Informed Futures, The University of Auckland. <https://informedfutures.org/wp-content/uploads/Social-Cohesion-in-a-Post-Covid-World.pdf>.
- Stats NZ. (2024). *Census results reflect Aotearoa New Zealand's diversity*. <https://www.stats.govt.nz/news/census-results-reflect-aotearoa-new-zealands-diversity/>
- Stewart, E. (2025). The small regulatory shift that could have big impacts on mokopuna Māori. *RNZ*. <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/in-depth/560288/the-small-regulatory-shift-that-could-have-big-impacts-on-mokopuna-maori>
- Tahana, J. (2024, September 23). Māori language 'at risk' as a result of government policies, commissioner says. *Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/sep/23/maori-language-at-risk-government-policies-new-zealand>
- Tolley, P. (2020). Ignored by the state - How Muslim women tried to warn of impending danger. *RNZ*. <https://www.rnz.co.nz/national/programmes/insight/audio/2018737122/ignored-by-the-state-how-muslim-women-tried-to-warn-of-impending-danger>
- UNESCO. (2013). *Intercultural competences: Conceptual and operational framework*. <https://en.unesco.org/interculturaldialogue/resources/132>
- UNICEF Innocenti – Global Office of Research and Foresight. (2023). *Prospects for children in the polycrisis. A 2023 global outlook*. <https://www.unicef.org/innocenti/reports/prospects-children-polycrisis-2023-global-outlook>
- UNICEF Innocenti--Global Office of Research and Foresight. (2025). *Innocenti report card 19: Child well-being in an unpredictable world*. [www.unicef.org/innocenti/media/11111/file/UNICEF-Innocenti-Report-Card-19-Child-Wellbeing-Unpredictable-World-2025.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/innocenti/media/11111/file/UNICEF-Innocenti-Report-Card-19-Child-Wellbeing-Unpredictable-World-2025.pdf)
- Vandenbroeck, M., & Peeters, J. (2013). Democratic experimentation in early childhood education. In G. Biesta, M. de Bie, & D. Wildemeersch (Eds.), *Civic learning, democratic citizenship and the public sphere* (pp. 151-165). Springer. <http://hdl.handle.net/1854/LU-4180884>
- Walker, R. (2004). *Ka Whawhai Tonu Matou. Struggle without end* (revised ed.). Penguin.

Zembylas, M. (2023). A decolonial critique of 'diversity': Theoretical and methodological implications for meta-intercultural education. *Intercultural Education*, 34(2), 118-133. <https://doi.org/0.1080/14675986.2023.2177622>

---

<sup>i</sup> Dr Angel Chan is a senior lecturer at the University of Auckland's Faculty of Arts and Education. She received her doctorate from Massey University in Aotearoa. Her research areas include early childhood education, culture and identity, sociology of childhood, critical multicultural education, and superdiversity in education settings. Questions or correspondence can be made by using the following email address: [angel.chan@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:angel.chan@auckland.ac.nz)

<sup>ii</sup> Jenny Ritchie is a Professor of Education at Te Herenga Waka Victoria University of Wellington. Her research, teaching, and publications focus on education for social, cultural and ecological justice, including pedagogies applying Māori conceptualisations to foster wellbeing, and citizenship enactment to protect and care for the more-than-human world.