



Kaupapa Māori Assessment: Reclaiming, Reframing and Realising Māori Ways of Knowing and Being Within Early Childhood Education Assessment Theory and Practice

Lesley K. Rameka*

Wilf Malcolm Institute of Educational Research, Faculty of Education, University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand

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*Correspondence:

Lesley K. Rameka
lesley.rameka@waikato.ac.nz

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The history of schooling for Māori has been one of cultural dislocation, deprivation and subjugation. Māori children were viewed as outside the norms of development suffering from “intellectual retardation” which was attributed to disabilities related to acculturation. Traditional western assessment served to further these Eurocentric power ideologies that marginalise non-European peoples and cultures, such as Māori, as backward, inferior and deviant. Kaupapa (philosophical) Māori assessment can be viewed as an assessment approach that is derived from the Māori world, from a Māori epistemological perspective that assumes the normalcy of Māori values, understandings and behaviours. The validity and legitimacy of Māori language, cultural capital, values and knowledge are a given. Kaupapa Māori assessment works to challenge, critique and transform dominant educational perceptions of the Māori child, the nature of learning, pedagogy, and culturally valued learning. This article explores ways that kaupapa Māori assessment builds upon Māori philosophical and epistemological understandings to express Māori understandings of knowledge, knowers and knowings, in order to reclaim, reframe and realise Māori ways of knowing and being within early childhood and assessment theory and practice.

Keywords: kaupapa maori, early childhood, maori ways of knowing, whakatauki/ proverbs, purakau/narratives

INTRODUCTION

According to the UNICEF Innocenti Report Card 15, Aotearoa, New Zealand is ranked 33rd of 38 OECD countries for educational inequality across preschool, primary school and secondary school levels (UNICEF, 2018). The report states “New Zealand have the largest performance gaps and some of the largest shares of students not reaching [the] modest international benchmark” (p.19). Māori children are disproportionately represented in the group of children who are under-achieving (Ministry of Education, 2009). The impact of successive education policies is still felt today, by Māori children and their families, with many disengaging from education and consistently receiving disproportionately lower outcomes, opportunities and benefits (Rameka, 2012).

Assessment is the most powerful policy tool in education...and will probably continue to be the single most significant influence on the quality and shape of students' educational experience and hence their learning (Broadfoot, 1996, pp. 21–22).

The role of assessment relates directly to the needs of society at any given time in history (Broadfoot, 1996b; Gipps, 1999; Rameka, 2012). Kaupapa Māori assessment has an important role to play in the struggle for educational equality for Māori in Aotearoa, New Zealand's education system. Kaupapa Māori assessment builds upon Māori philosophical and epistemological understandings to express Māori concepts of assessment (Rameka, 2012). It involves a process of reclaiming, reframing and realising Māori ways of knowing and being as a basis for early childhood education (ECE) and assessment theory and practice. This article references two Kaupapa Māori Assessment research projects. The first, *Te Whatu Pōkeka: Kaupapa Māori Assessment for Learning: Early Childhood Exemplars* (Ministry of Education, 2009), aimed to develop a resource that would stimulate debate and encourage the sharing of experiences and perspectives of Kaupapa Māori Assessment practices. It focused on Kaupapa Māori early childhood services validating, sharing and building on the values, philosophies, and practices related to assessment based on kaupapa Māori culture and values. The second project, *Te Whatu Kākahu: Assessment in Kaupapa Māori Early Childhood Practice* (Rameka, 2012) aimed to make a change for Māori children by challenging, critiquing and transforming dominant educational perceptions related to views of the Māori child, the nature of learning, pedagogy and culturally valued learnings.

European Assessment of Māori

From the establishment of European schooling for Māori, missionaries regarded the civilisation of Māori as both a humanitarian and a religious duty. They positioned Europeans, more particularly upper and middle class Europeans, at the pinnacle of civilisation, more biologically evolved than any other race or class. This stratification of humans, and their associated levels of intellect and capabilities, was promoted by movements such as Social Darwinism and Eugenics, which advocated for racial improvements involving the culling of the weaknesses of the lesser races (Rameka, 2012). According to Harris (2007), p. 17, "The Eugenicists believed that intervention could either eliminate the flaws of the lower classes and black peoples, or manage them in ways that were acceptable to the white upper and middle classes."

Intelligence testing and child studies in the early 20th century were utilised to reinforce thinking about the racially inferior Māori child. IQ and mental ability tests provided evidence, confirming the presumption of inferior innate intelligence (Harris, 2007; Rameka, 2012). Furthermore, Māori children were considered to use a "restricted language code" and to be "suffering a pathology." These pathologies were deemed to result from a "deficient cultural background" (Walker, 1991, p. 9). Over successive years these deficit perspectives of Māori children continued to inform and justify successive education policies.

Durie (2006) states that "the stereotypic low achieving Māori student becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, compounded by policies... that target Māori because they are "at risk" rather than because they have potential" (p. 16).

Over time traditional western assessment served to further these Eurocentric power ideologies that positioned non-European peoples and cultures, as backward and deviant (Dahlberg et al., 1999). Broadfoot (2000) notes that assessment practices were also "...the vehicle whereby the dominant western rationality of the corporate capitalist societies typical of the modern western world, were transmitted into the structures and processes of schooling" (p. 204). These assessment practices reflected western thinking, exemplifying notions of rationality and power, and were instrumental in the development of western schooling, including its structures and procedures (Broadfoot, 2000; Gipps, 2002).

Traditional Māori Assessment

In traditional Māori society, learning was greatly valued. It often began before birth with pregnant women and new mothers taking part in learning opportunities with their children and unborn children to expose them to the histories and knowledge of their people. This learning progressed through life. Children needed to acquire the relevant skills, expertise and knowledge to contribute to the community, and in so doing support the wellbeing of present and future generations. Teaching and learning were therefore important community duties (Rameka, 2012). The community was also central to the assessment of learning, with learning, judged by the levels of family and community enthusiasm and support. Hemara (2000) maintains that:

Māori learners were assessed by their peers, teachers and all those who were affected by the results. When a whakapapa (genealogy) recitation or other activity was being performed the listeners sounded their approval or otherwise. This showed how well the learner lived with the information they had accumulated and how well the assessors knew the learner and the subject under scrutiny (p. 39).

There were many opportunities within Māori cultural gatherings for learners to demonstrate their knowledge development (Ka'ai, 2004). Expectations of learners included critically reflecting on their own performance with improvements expected when the next assessment opportunity occurred (Hemara, 2000). According to Barnhardt and Kawagley (2005) this type of education and assessment of learning was common in indigenous societies. They explain that Indigenous people, "traditionally acquired their knowledge through direct experience in the natural world. For them, the particulars come to be understood in relation to the whole, and the laws are continually tested in the context of everyday survival" (p. 10).

Although most of the transmission of Māori knowledge was through everyday living there were formal structures of learning in place commonly known to as whare (Melbourne, 2009). Whare or houses were not always physical structures instead were "metaphors for housing philosophies and identifying stages of

educational progression” (p. 75). Melbourne explains a Whare-Mauokoroa was where “...the child’s level of attention, inquisitiveness, or understanding would be gauged in order to help determine their natural tendencies” (p. 73), and decisions were then made as to what and where further learning or instruction could occur.

Another whare, the Whare Taikōrera, had a curriculum, based on a pedagogy of play, exploration and discovery. Melbourne (2009) states “the myriad of games that were such a favourite pastime of traditional Māori societies all served a purpose of challenging the intellectual, physical, emotional and metaphysical attributes of children” (p. 74). The games encouraged the development of not only important skills but also emotional discipline. Children who demonstrated the necessary ability and agility, as well as the required emotional and mental composure advanced to the next whare. The child progressed when all the required physical, mental and emotional abilities and skills had been proven.

This article will firstly, outline traditional Māori perspectives and attitudes related to knowledge, understandings about ways these knowings were passed down, and traditional images of the child or learner. Secondly a brief overview of Kaupapa Māori Theory is provided highlighting its centrality in addressing cultural and educational inequalities and disparities inherent within the education system. Kaupapa Māori assessment is then outlined and key features identified. Finally examples of how ECE services have reclaimed, reframed and realised Māori ways of knowing and being within early childhood assessment thinking and practice are articulated.

MĀORI KNOWLEDGES, KNOWINGS AND KNOWERS

Knowledge

From a traditional Māori perspective knowledge was a taonga (treasure), passed down from ancestors, therefore taken seriously, treated with respect and preserved intact. Knowledge did not belong to individuals, instead belonged to the community. Individuals were the store houses of the group’s knowledge and wisdom, with a responsibility to utilise it for the benefit of the collective and not for personal gain (Tolich, 2001; Rameka, 2012). (Makareti, 1986, pp. 151–152) makes the point that important tribal knowledge was shared from the elders:

... children learn much in the way of folk-lore, legend, genealogy, and tradition...The old man would teach them their line of descent from that ancestor, and from other noted ancestors back to the time of the arrival of the great fleet...They told the children how dear their home and lands were to them...they taught the names of birds of the forest, and the different tree and shrubs and plants...and wonderful stories of the mountains, rivers, and streams...They talked of these and many other things until the little people fell asleep. . . so they grew up with the stories and deeds of their ancestors.

Today, these traditional notions and knowledges continue to influence the beliefs of most Māori, with traditional values resonating strongly in contemporary Māori society (Harmsworth, 2013).

Knowings

Before Europeans arrived in Aotearoa, New Zealand, teaching and learning was sustained by sophisticated knowledge systems, structures, educational practices and principles. Teaching and learning involved a blend of processes that worked to maintain and broaden knowledge and foster understandings of ways to harness, sustain, and extend resource bases (Hemara, 2000; Berryman, 2008; Rameka, 2012).

Māori Marsden (1992) describes how the creation whakapapa (genealogy) provides a three dimensional perspective of the world, learning and knowledge acquisition. The first dimension te korekore, the realm of potential being and energy. It is where the “seed-stuff of the Universe and all created things gestate” (Marsden, 1992, p. 134), where there is infinite potential for growth and learning. The second, te pō, the realm of becoming, of stretching, uncertainty, hesitancy, negotiation and growth. Finally, te ao mārama, the realm of being, realization, enlightenment and clarification (Ministry of Education, 2009; Rameka, 2016).

Two key concepts are articulated in Marsden’s description of the unfolding world. The first is continuity, referring to a world that is continually being created and recreated, with no end point. This mirrors children’s learning and knowledge development, and consequently assessment, with children’s understandings and thoughts being continuously developed and redeveloped, defined and redefined. As with the Universe, learning has no end point, instead it is an ongoing life long process. The second concept acknowledges that the Universe is dynamic, a stream of processes and events that are linear rather than cyclical. He makes the point however that this lineal movement is a two-way process, referencing the “the spirits of the departed descending to Hawaiki and that which is in the process of becoming ascending to the world of light” (Marsden, 2003, p. 135). This concept refers to the two-way traffic of ideas, thinking and understandings, reflecting the dynamic nature of knowledge acquisition and learning. “Some knowledge and understandings, ascends from potential being, into the world of becoming where it challenges and stretches thinking, into the world of being, of enlightenment and clarification. Other knowledge and understandings descend from the world of being, from a place of knowing and certainty, to a world of becoming, or uncertainty” (Rameka, 2012, p. 67). Here once confidently held views, ideas and understandings are “challenged and interrupted, and if unable to stand up to the critique of becoming, are relegated to the world of potential being, or nothingness” (p. 66). Learning therefore is not just an accumulation of ideas and understandings but a vigorous process of unceasing “germination, cultivation and pruning” (p.66).

Knowers

Mokopuna can be translated as “grandchild/ren” and “child/ren.” Moko is a traditional tattoo, which is applied to the face and other body parts of both men and women, and are unique to their owners. (Love 2004, p. 50), explains

One’s moko was one’s sign; to see the sign was to know the person. A puna ...is a spring of water. Thus, the two concepts...combine as the representation of... the ongoing spring of the people. They are surface representations of the spring that originates within Ranginui [Sky Father] and Papatūānuku [Earth Mother] and flows through life until it reaches and becomes one with the sea. Children are the temporal signs or manifestations of the tupuna [ancestors].

Tamariki is another word for children. “Tama is derived from Tama-te-ra the central sun, the divine spark; ariki refers to senior most status, and riki on its own can mean smaller version.” (Pere, 1991, p. 4). Tamariki/Mokopuna were viewed as the repository of the wisdom, strengths, talents and treasures of their ancestors which they held in trust for future generations. They were the tribe and community’s greatest resource. Learning the required skills, attitudes to work, moral codes, and their roles and expectations was critical.

KAUPAPA MāORI THEORY

Since colonisation, Māori have struggled to have language, culture and land rights acknowledged and validated. Kaupapa Māori theory evolved from the increasing political consciousness and discontent in the 1970, 1980 s, about the prevailing western theorising and positioning of Māori as culturally, linguistically, intellectually and socially deficit (Berryman, 2008). Adding to this raised consciousness, was the growth of a Māori renaissance, in the late 1980, 1990 s, which centred on Māori cultural aspirations, philosophies, preferences, and practices (Bishop, 2005; Mahuika, 2008; Haitana et al., 2020). (Walker, 1996, p. 156) explains that, “After twenty-five years of trying to reform the education system from within to make it more bicultural, Māori leaders realised that the co-operative strategy was not effective.” Māori rejected the underlying prejudices present in previous educational initiatives and policies. “Kaupapa Māori responded to the dual challenge of imminent Māori language death and consequent cultural demise, together with the failure of a succession of government policy initiatives” (Bishop and Glynn, 1999, p. 62).

Kaupapa is a word for philosophy strategy, principle, a plan or a way to proceed. Within the concept of kaupapa is the notion of proceeding purposely and strategically (Smith, 1999). It involves resistance and revitalisation, from principles rooted in te ao Māori (Māori world) (Berryman, 2008). (Pihama, 2015, p. 6) states “This Kaupapa Māori knowledge is the systematic organisation of beliefs, experiences, understandings and interpretations of the interaction of Māori people upon Māori people, and Māori people upon their world.” Kaupapa Māori, according to Smith (1997) is both theory and transformative

praxis. It critiques and resists, existing structures, and seeks transformative strategies, in order to centralise Māori cultural perspectives and move Māori knowledge from its marginal position of ‘abnormal’ or ‘unofficial knowledge’, to equal in status to Western knowledge. According to Barnes (2000) “Kaupapa Māori begins as a challenge to accepted norms and assumptions about knowledge and the way it is constructed and continues as a search for understanding within a Māori worldview” (p. 4). This process of critical reflection, reclamation and reconciliation is a fundamental feature of the development and implementation of Kaupapa Māori assessment understandings and practices in ECE.

KAUPAPA MāORI ASSESSMENT

Kaupapa Māori assessment is deeply embedded within Māori ways of knowing and being which are fundamentally distinct to mainstream western assessment. Findings from the *Te Whatu Kākahu: Assessment in Kaupapa Māori Early Childhood Practice* (Rameka, 2012) research highlighted a number of key understandings underpinning kaupapa Māori Assessment.

Kaupapa Māori Assessment is Culturally Located

Kaupapa Māori assessment is an assessment approach that is derived from the Māori world, from a Māori epistemological and ontological base where the normalcy of Māori values, understandings and behaviours are a given (Smith, 1992; Rameka, 2012; Rameka, 2013). The validity and legitimacy of Māori cultural knowledge, values and language are taken for granted with Māori experiences, processes and systems seen as central to its theoretical base and philosophical framing. These systems include tools, symbols, shared meanings, patterns of reasoning, language, and customary practices that are a prerequisite to competently participating within a particular social group, culture or community (Weenie, 2008; Rameka, 2012).

Kaupapa Māori Assessment is Spiritually Located

From a Māori worldview, the spiritual and physical worlds are intimately connected with activities and events in the everyday secular world influenced and interwoven with powers from the spiritual world. Furthermore, all things can be seen as having spiritual origins and being directly connected to the gods, for example Māori worldviews and ideas of knowledge and learning originated in Māori understandings of the Universe and the creation of the Universe. (Berryman, 2008). These spiritual connections are inextricably linked to whakapapa (genealogy) and “being” Māori. Whakapapa is fundamental to Māori ways of knowing and is at the very core of what it means to be Māori (Mahuika, 2019). Kaupapa Māori assessment is located within these interpretive systems and therefore must value, and acknowledge these spiritual worlds.

Kaupapa Māori Assessment Reflects Māori Perspectives of Knowledge, Knowing and Knowers

Understandings of what children should learn, why it is important to learn, and how children should learn are key to supporting children's learning (Moss, 2008). Lund, (2008, p. 33) claims that "How learners' efforts are evaluated reflects a particular view of knowledge and what counts as relevant competencies, goals and results." The question with regard to assessment is, whose knowledge, knowings and competencies are recognised, validated and the basis for assessments. Māori definitions of knowledge, knowings and what is regarded as relevant competencies are inherent within Kaupapa Māori assessment.

Kaupapa Māori Assessment Reflects Māori Images of the Child

Kaupapa Māori assessment locates the child within Māori interpretive systems and emphasises the importance of knowing the child, who they are as Māori: their whakapapa (genealogy); their iwi (tribe), hapū (subtribe) and whānau (family); and their tūrangawaewae (place to stand) (Berryman, 2008; Cheung 2008). The child is perceived as taonga (treasures) with spiritual unity with the land, with the people, and with the Universe at large. The child is not only embedded within the spiritual world, he/she is also imbued with spiritual traits such as mana (power) tapu (sacredness), mauri (life essence) and wairua (soul), inherited from ancestors, and fundamental to their holistic wellbeing (Rameka, 2012). Kaupapa Māori assessment acknowledges the spiritual nature of the Māori world and spiritual traits within the Māori child.

Kaupapa Māori Assessment Involves the Reclamation and Reframing of Historical Māori Ways of Knowing and Being Within Assessment Theorising and Practice

Colonisation, land loss, assimilation, urbanisation, language loss, and successive discriminatory education policies have shaped and transformed historical Māori ways of knowing and understandings what it means to be Māori. Today Māori ways of knowing, and being Māori, involves the weaving of complex combinations of realities, understandings and experiences. Translating these complexities into ECE and assessment practice requires what Parker (2000) describes as an unmasking of identities that do not fit, that are not one's own, but have been unconsciously internalized. It involves the reclaiming of identities and understandings once denied to them, and reframing these for contemporary environments. This unmasking or reclaiming of historical Māori ways of knowing and being, requires an exploration of the cultural tools, practices, and artefacts, traditionally utilized by Māori to hand down knowledges, worldviews, values, histories, teachings, beliefs, genealogies, and arts to successive generations. These transmission techniques include: pūrākau (symbolic storytelling),

whakataukī (proverbs/sayings), waiata (songs/chants), whakapapa (genealogy recitations), whakairo (carvings), haka (dance), karakia (prayer), pakiwaitara (oral storytelling).

RECLAIMING, REFRAMING AND REALISING MĀORI WAYS OF KNOWING, BEING AND DOING

In the next section examples of how Māori ways of knowing, being and doing have been reclaimed, reframed and realised within early childhood assessment thinking and practice are presented.

Pūrākau – Traditional Narratives/Myths

Pūrākau is a term often used to refer to Māori and tribal narratives, myths and legends (Lee, 2009). The telling and retelling of stories is a critical element of retaining knowledge from the past and transmitting it to successive generations (Rameka, 2011; Rameka, 2012; Hikuroa, 2017; Woodhouse, 2019). Tribal narratives are metaphorical, in nature, in that the telling is fundamental to preserving moral and historical teachings and values. "They are an important part of Māori symbolism, culture and world views, and include philosophical understandings and thinking, cultural norms, and behaviours fundamental to Māori views of self and identity" (Rameka, 2016 p. 392).

Walker (1978) points out that mythology can be compared to putting a mirror on culture, in that it reflects the philosophy, behavioural aspirations and norms of the people. Myths operate in two ways: firstly, as an outward projection of the archetype providing a measure for perfect performance, and, secondly, as instruction and authentication, reflecting on current social norms, prescriptions and behaviours. These views of reality "permeate cultural narratives and logic, and are the basis of world views" (Rameka, 2013, p.12). Traditional Māori myths and legends were "deliberate constructs used by ancestors to encapsulate and condense their world views, their ideas about reality and their relationship between the spirit world, the Universe and man in easily assimilable forms" (Rameka, 2016, p. 393). They offered culturally authentic models for behaviour, including ethics, values, and morals that guided Māori ways of being interacting within the world (Patterson, 1992). Pūrākau are therefore part of the cultural symbolism that generates the foundation of a Māori worldview, one that is also maintained in many traditional cultural practices and still forms an important part of Māori society and identity today (Berryman, 2008).

Māui-tikitiki-a-Taranga was an ancestor hero, known throughout Polynesia. He had godly origins but also carried the seeds of humanity (Keelan, 2006; Rameka, 2011; Rameka, 2012). His names provide an insight into his character: Māui-nukurau (trickster), Māui-mohio (great knowledge), Māui-atamai (quick-witted), Māui-toa (brave) and Māui-tinihanga (of many devices). "He was quick, intelligent, bold, resourceful, cunning and fearless, epitomising the basic personality structures idealised by Māori society" (Walker, 1990, p.15). The Māui-tikitiki-a-Taranga narratives therefore

present a representation of culture, reflecting the philosophy, norms and behavioural aspirations of ancestors. The following Māui-tikitiki-a-Taranga assessment framing was developed by a Māori ECE service working on the *Te Whatu Kākahu: Assessment in Kaupapa Māori Early Childhood Practice (2012)* project. The service utilized Māui-tikitiki-a-Taranga characteristics as the basis for their assessment framing, identifying characteristics that reflected te Ao Māori and kaupapa Māori philosophy:

- Mana: identity, pride, inner strength, self-assurance, and confidence.
- Manaakitanga: caring, sharing, kindness, friendship, and nurturance.
- Whanaungatanga: developing relationships, taking responsibility for oneself and others.
- Whakatoī: cheekiness, spiritedness, displaying and enjoying humour, and having fun.
- Rangatiratanga: confidence, self-reliance, leadership, standing up for oneself and others, perseverance, determination, and working through difficulty.
- Tinihanga: cunningness, trickery, deception, testing limits, challenging, questioning, curiosity, exploring, risk taking, lateral thinking. (Rameka, 2012; Rameka, 2013; Rameka, 2016).

What is clear from exploring the Māui-tikitiki-a-Taranga narratives is that certain themes, morals, modes of behaviours do not necessarily align with western (teacher education) perspectives of acceptable behaviour and ways of being in the world. Notions such as whakatoī, translated as “cheekiness,” “annoying” or “teasing,” do not tend to be highlighted in mainstream ECE as appropriate behaviour, but make sense in the context of the indulged, precocious, high-spirited Māori child. An even harder concept to reconcile in education is tinihanga or “cunningness,” “deception” and “trickery,” which are recurring themes throughout Māori narratives and when utilised for the benefit of the community are valued and celebrated. The Māui-tikitiki-a-Taranga narratives present an illustration of culture, reflecting the philosophy, norms and behavioural aspirations which can provide pathways from the past into future including ECE assessment practice (Rameka, 2012; Rameka, 2013; Rameka, 2016).

Whakataukī – Proverbs/Sayings

Whakataukī are another means of handing down ancient wisdom and knowledge from the past to future generations, to guide people’s lives, and support aspirations for today and the future (Patterson, 1992; Hemara, 2000; Rameka, 2015; Rameka, 2016). An example is the well-known whakataukī “E kore au e ngaro, he kākano i ruiuria mai i Rangiatea” (I will never be lost; the seed was sown in Rangiatea), stresses that importance of knowing ones’ whakapapa (genealogy) and connections to Rangiatea (the Māori spiritual homeland). It not only underlines the importance of a secure Māori identity to the well-being of the individual, but highlights an interpretive system that encompasses Māori world views, including the spiritual origins and direct connections to the gods (Berryman, 2008; Rameka, 2015; Rameka, 2016).

Within whakataukī were messages about valued characteristics, personal virtues, modes of behaviour, life lessons, and appropriate courses of action (Rameka 2015). Patterson (1992) gives some examples:

- Mauri tū, mauri ora; mauri noho, mauri mate—*He who stands lives, he who sleeps dies* (p. 51)
- Kāore te kūmara e korero mō tōna mangaro—*The kūmara does not say how sweet it is* (p. 52)
- He ika kai ake i raro, he rāpaki ake i raro—*As a fish begins to nibble from below, so ascent of a hill begins from the bottom* (p. 55)

The importance of the past, and the authority given to the words and deeds of the ancestors, is clear in well-known whakataukī such as “Ehara taku toa i te toa takitahi engari he toa takitini” *I come not with my own strengths but bring with me the gifts, talents and strengths of my family, tribe and ancestors.* This whakataukī highlights the importance of children knowing who they are and their ancestors, as does, “Puritia ngā taonga a ngā tūpuna mō ngā puāwai o te ora, ā mātou tamariki” *Hold fast to the cultural treasures of our ancestors for the future benefit of our children* (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 51). Another “Kia mau koe ki te kupu a tou matua” *Hold fast to the words of your parent or ancestors*” (Patterson, 1992, p. 65) emphasises the value put on the words and messages of ancestors for successive generations. Another message is found in “E kore e hekeheke, he kakano rangatira” *I am not declining [like the sun], I am of chiefly stock*” (Patterson, 1992, p. 66). This underscores the relationship between rangatira “noblemen” or “chiefs” and children (Rameka, 2016).

The term rangatira can be translated as nobleman or chief. It encapsulates many Māori virtues, aspirations and human possibilities, including ideas of beauty, strength and courage (Patterson, 1992; Rameka, 2012; Rameka, 2013; Rameka, 2016). Within a Māori worldview, rangatiratanga (chieftainship) includes a focus on individuals reaching their highest potential in order to expand and deepen their talents and skills, thus strengthening and enhancing the whānau or collective (Macfarlane et al., 2005; Rameka, 2012). “A feature of a rangatira is their innate chiefly qualities, inherited from ancestors, qualities inherent in all Māori children” (Rameka, 2012, p.236). The following outline of rangatira qualities was identified as an assessment frame by a Māori ECE service who worked on the *Te Whatu Kākahu: Assessment in Kaupapa Māori Early Childhood Practice* (Rameka, 2012) project:

- Maia– confidence/competence,
- Haututu– exploring/seeking,
- Mahitahi– cooperation/group endeavour,
- Kawenga– taking responsibility,
- Manaakitanga– caring/nurturing/loving,
- Hiringa– determination/perseverance/persistence,
- Pukumahi– hardworking/diligence,
- Whanaungatanga– relationships/connectedness,
- Rangimārie–peacefulness/overall wellbeing.

CONCLUSION

This article outlines ways that kaupapa Māori assessment, utilising Māori philosophical and epistemological understandings, is able to contribute to ECE assessment theory and practice. Kaupapa Māori assessment contests historical educational perceptions of the Māori child, the nature of learning, pedagogy and culturally valued learnings and seeks alternatives that are embedded within Māori ways of knowing and being. It advocates for the unmasking and refuting of identities assigned to Māori by others, but sometimes unconsciously internalized, including perceptions of inferior intelligence, culture, knowledge and values, within an education system that upholds western cultural and educational superiority, privilege and truths. This unmasking and reclaiming requires an exploration of traditional Māori knowing, being and doing, and what it means to 'be Māori' in practice and how it impacts on contemporary early childhood

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teaching, learning and assessment theory and practice, including; routines; rituals; environments; curriculum and programme development; planning, assessment and evaluation procedures; communications with family and community; and appraisals.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The author confirms being the sole contributor of this work and has approved it for publication.

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Conflict of Interest: The author declares that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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