



TEACHING & LEARNING  
RESEARCH INITIATIVE  
NĀU I WHATU TE KĀKAHU, HE TĀNIKO TAKU

# Te whakapūmautia te mana: Enhancing mana through kaitiakitanga **Final report**

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# Introduction

Wellbeing is fundamental to an individual's ability to function and live well (Durie, 1998). Wellbeing statistics in New Zealand highlight that Māori have some of the worst levels of educational attainment, high levels of unemployment and incarceration, decreasing levels of home ownership, lower than average incomes, higher than average mortality rates, inequitable access to healthcare, and the highest levels of suicide since records began (Chalmers & Williams, 2018).

From a Māori perspective, wellbeing, or hauora, involves spiritual, physical, mental, emotional, and social wellbeing (Durie, 1998). Mana and kaitiakitanga encapsulate the relationships central to Māori understandings of hauora (Dobbs & Eruera, 2014). *Mana* translates as "authority, control, influence, prestige, power" (Hemara, 2000, p. 68). Royal (2007) adds "*Mana* is central, fundamental and foundational to the traditional Māori worldview. Almost everything in traditional culture was somehow linked to mana and it is upon mana that one might construct a perspective on the nature and purpose of education" (p. 42). Perceptions of mana are therefore critical to understandings of the Māori world, and the Māori person, including mokopuna (Huriwai & Baker, 2016).

All mokopuna are born with mana from their parents and ancestors (Marsden, 2003). Recognition of mana is important for mokopuna, along with understandings of how to accrue and enhance mana through kaitiakitanga (Marsden, 2003). Tiaki means, "to care, protect, conserve, or save". Kaitiaki are agents that perform kaitiakitanga, or active guardianship (Paul-Burke & Rameka, 2015). Through kaitiakitanga mana can be enhanced (Reedy & Reedy, 2013).

The early childhood education (ECE) curriculum *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 2017) recognises the obligations arising from Te Tiriti o Waitangi and the status of Māori, as tangata whenua. It makes a number of statements that provide tikanga and practice expectations for kaiako in relation to cultural values such as hauora, mana, and kaitiakitanga: "Kaiako should have an understanding, of Māori approaches to health and wellbeing and how these are applied in practice" (p. 26); "Viewed from a Māori perspective, all children are born with mana inherited from their tīpuna. Mana is the power of being and must be upheld and enhanced" (p. 18); and "Kaiako recognise the relationship mokopuna have with the environment. They support them to fulfil their responsibilities as kaitiaki of the environment" (p. 42).

The premise of this kaupapa Māori research project is that mana is a fundamental element of hauora (Reedy & Reedy, 2013). The project reflected on ways that ECE affords mokopuna opportunities to recognise mana and understand ways to accrue and attain mana through being kaitiaki of themselves, others, and their environment, thereby contributing to a collective sense of wellbeing. The overarching intent of the research was to expand kaiako understandings of mana and kaitiakitanga, and ways mana and kaitiakitanga could be championed in ECE, through: exploring kaumātua/kuia, ECE kaiako and mokopuna, perceptions of mana and kaitiakitanga; investigating ways that mana and kaitiakitanga are being enacted by mokopuna and kaiako in ECE; and identifying what tools, artefacts, processes, and practices support the enactment of mana and kaitiakitanga in ECE services. The project aimed to develop evidence-based understandings, with associated strategies and exemplars of teaching practice that could be shared with kaiako in ECE services.

## Research questions

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

# Description of research

The 2-year project involved four phases. Phase One, *Kohikohinga Pūrākau* (2020), entailed collecting pūrākau, from 12 kaumātua/kuia on their perceptions of mana and kaitiakitanga and childhood memories of how mana and kaitiakitanga were enacted within their whānau, hapū, and communities. These perspectives were then analysed and theoretical understandings that provided a foundation for the subsequent phases of work developed. In Phase Two, *Taunaki Puna Reo* (2020–2021), the theoretical understandings were shared with 15 kaiako in three Māori-medium ECE services. During this phase, kaiako perspectives, theorising, and practices that reflected mana and kaitiakitanga were documented. Phase Three, *Taunaki Auraki* (2021), involved working with three English-medium services and 12 kaiako to capture perspectives, theorising, and practices. In Phase Four, *Whanaketanga Ariā* (2021), data from all phases of the research were analysed to provide a foundation for pedagogical understandings and practice.

The project followed the ethical and quality assurance processes set out by the Human Ethics Committee of the University of Waikato. All steps were taken to ensure that the project, at all levels of investigation, was ethical, professional, and equitable for all participants. Consents were obtained from all research participants including kaumātua/kuia, kaiako, whānau (for mokopuna), including permission to publish excerpts utilised in this report.

Kaupapa Māori methodological principles and understandings provided the cultural and ethical foundation for the project, with Māori ways of knowing, being, and doing central to the research design, analysis, and intended outcomes. Kaupapa Māori has been described as perceiving the world from a Māori epistemological perspective and assuming the normalcy of Māori values, understandings, and behaviours (Rameka, 2015).

Wānanga with individuals and groups was an important feature of the research design. Wānanga were traditionally places of learning where oral traditions, lore, and valued understandings were preserved and passed on. Today, wānanga have been re-interpreted to represent understandings and practices that derive from tikanga Māori, including the interpretation and practising of Māori knowledge within contemporary contexts (Whaanga-Schollum et al., 2015). Within this project, wānanga were captured in ways that aligned with participants' wishes and circumstances. For example, they were either audio-recorded and transcribed, or notes were taken, or participants were able to write their contributions. There were 10 wānanga with kaumātua/kuia, nine individual and one group wānanga. Due to service closures, COVID-19 cases, staffing issues, isolation requirements, and workloads, wānanga with kaiako were much more difficult to quantify. Each service had at least three team face-to-face or Zoom wānanga; however, there were many more individual hui, phone calls, Zoom hui, and catch-up hui whenever possible.

A pūrākau, narrative, storying approach (Elkington, 2011) was utilised when working with wānanga participants. Pūrākau refers to a collection of traditional oral narratives that contain "philosophical thought, epistemological constructs, cultural codes, and worldviews that are fundamental to our identity as Māori" (Lee, 2009, p.1). Pūrākau were collected from 10 kaumātua. The collecting of pūrākau from kaumātua/kuia acknowledged the depth of knowledge and understandings that kaumātua/kuia possess, and how their wisdom can provide a foundation for contemporary ECE theory and practice.

The kaupapa Māori approach to data analysis emphasised interpreting and understanding information that was intertwined with tikanga Māori and Māori knowledge (Cunningham, 2000). The thematic analysis was an iterative process that involved returning to the data and literature to fine-tune the analysis, theorising, and developing understandings. A number of types of data were gathered during the research including: pūrākau; kaiako reflections and evaluations; notes from kaiako focus group interviews; whānau feedback/comments; mokopuna feedback; photos; and mokopuna assessments.

The COVID pandemic impacted on all phases of the research, including kaumātua/kuia and kaiako availability; inability to travel to meetings; kaumātua/kuia, mokopuna, Kaiako, and research team health concerns and restrictions; service closures; kaiako workloads; and inability for the research team to meet.

This resulted in the need to cancel, postpone, or move online planned face-to-face meetings, shorten or overlap the research phases, and change the makeup and numbers of participants available to engage in the research. For example, in Phase One, travel restrictions and health considerations meant that planned kaumātua/kuia wānanga moved online, impacting on availability, online access, and a drop in the number of participants. The shortened time frames to analyse findings and meet with services meant it was not always possible to share the findings from the previous phases of work.

## Phase One: Kaumātua/kuia pūrākau

Kaumātua/kuia pūrākau were analysed and key themes identified. From the themes, a summary of ECE teaching and learning implications was articulated. These implications were further explored to broaden the implications and construct a theoretical framing for kaiako that addressed required teaching practices, processes, content knowledge, contexts, and pedagogical understandings associated with the enhancement of kaitiakitanga, mana, and wellbeing (see below). The kaumātua/kuia pūrākau themes include the following.

**Aroha me manaakitanga** (Love and caring): Almost all pūrākau highlighted that learning was first and foremost about aroha and manaakitanga, rather than mana and kaitiakitanga. Although "kaitiakitanga" and "mana" were not words kaumātua/kuia and ECE leaders heard growing up, the tenets of kaitiakitanga and mana were learnt through activities such as gardening, gathering kai, gathering resources for weaving, etc.:

Mana and kaitiakitanga? These are not words that I knew growing up ... we looked after everything around us because all things were tapu. The tapu of tāngata is because of the mana that we have as people.

I grew up with the notion of 'aroha'. That was one kupu that we all knew. We were taught to show aroha by caring for others, being kind, respectful, and helping others whenever we could.

**Ā tōna wā** (In their own time): The pūrākau were mainly focused on what parents, grandparents, and whānau had said or expected. Because the terms "mana" and "kaitiakitanga" were not utilised, the wisdom and guidance that was being shared was often not recognised until much later, sometimes on becoming a parent or reaching adulthood, as explained in the kōrero below:

I did not understand the meaning of kaitiakitanga until I was much older ... but it was always around me ... manaaki our whānau.

**Waiho mā tō mahi e kōrero** (Learning through experience): Most pūrākau highlighted that understandings of hauora, mana, and kaitiakitanga were acquired through experience. They were not taught directly. Rather, deeper understandings were acquired over time, as they undertook activities and tasks:

I believe that mana and kaitiakitanga were actually being indirectly ingrained within our very being.

I wasn't aware that this was enacting mana. I was also unaware that I was growing up learning the role of a kaitiaki. It sure did instil in me the deep understanding of the whakatauki 'Tiaki i a Papatūānuku, ka tiaki a ia i a koe'.

**Whaiwāhi** (Community and contribution): A common theme across the pūrākau was the deep sense of community and contribution that was directly related to mana and kaitiakitanga. Whānau mana was associated with the ability to feed and care for the whānau and community. The following pūrākau underscores this sense of contribution:

... harvesting huge kūmara but never seeing them on their table because they were given away ... Manaaki for our whānau and maanaki for our whenua. I also remember how my grandparents were always out in the gardens looking after the māra.

**He rā anō āpōpō** (Sustainability and preserving taonga): All pūrākau involved learning about what needed to be preserved and cared for, including reo, tikanga Māori, moana, taiao, whenua, kai, and taonga. Growing, gathering, and sharing kai was a common theme throughout almost all pūrākau:

We enjoyed what the moana had to offer us but we were always told to take only what we needed as 'he rā anō āpōpō'.

The reason we moved our garden from one spot to another after a couple of seasons was to give the land time to rest.

**Tōku Māoritanga** (Language and culture): Kaumātua/kuia explained that whānau had clear roles to support kaitiakitanga in line with tikanga, which were not debatable. Expectations and tasks were described and it was anticipated that there would be consequences if these were breached:

We are also kaitiaki for our taiao and all the resources that have been gifted to us, such as our whakapapa [genealogy], te reo, tikanga, values, and all our cultural traditions.

If you couldn't look after them then there were serious consequences.

We all are born with mana and it's how we support our next generation of rangatahi in our reo and tikanga to lead our iwi and to care for our kaumātua.

**Wairuatanga** (Spiritual connectedness): Keeping safe and understanding what you could and could not do was important. This was directly related to tapu and noa and not trampling mana. Understandings and "lived" experiences of the spiritual world, growing up "as Māori" and the importance of kaitiakitanga to safety and hauora were common themes in the pūrākau:

We looked after everything around us because all things were tapu then. The tapu of tāngata is because of the mana that we have as people.

The midwife did a karanga when my nephew was crowning. Not only does the mana of the mother grow while she is hapū, but at the birth, her baby straight away comes with a mana that only the gods could give this pēpi.

**Whakatipuranga tīpuna** (Intergenerational transmission): Many of the kaumātua/kuia grew up with one or both grandparents. Grandparents passed on teachings about weaving, gardening, spirituality, and Māori ways of knowing, being, and doing. Often it was the grandparents who explained expectations:

On arriving at the marae his grandparents would explain ... me pēnei, me pērā, kua e pēnei, kua e pērā ... nā reira i mōhio mātou ... me whai ana tohutohu kei raruraru.

**Ngākau māhaki** (Knowledge and humility): When exploring the characteristics of mana and kaitiakitanga, there was recognition that kaumātua/kuia were kaitiaki of te reo and tikanga in each iwi. Kaumātua/kuia were knowledge keepers of each iwi. Their mana was linked to knowledge around tikanga, reo, and the kawa of their iwi, but alongside that was humility. It was not about enhancing their own mana but was related to maintaining the mana of te reo, tikanga, marae, and community:

I also have seen the next generation of kaumātua and kaihautū taking their place as kaitiaki of te reo me ona tikanga for our iwi ... The characteristic that all of these people possess is mana ... I think mana is knowledge about the kawa and tikanga of your iwi and that of the mana whenua ... but alongside that it is the humility that these people possess.

## Summary of teaching and learning implications—Kaumātua/kuia pūrākau

Despite kaumātua/kuia not having heard of the terms, "mana" and "kaitiakitanga" in their childhoods, the tenets and values associated with mana and kaitiakitanga were integral to their childhood experiences and worlds. Four main implications for teaching and learning in ECE emerged from the kaumātua/kuia pūrākau. Learning about mana and kaitiakitanga:

- developed over time and was predominantly experiential, learnt through physically being in the environment, taking part, participating in activities, contributing, adhering to rules, and following instructions, rather than direct teaching and learning

- required the development of knowledge and understandings of their worlds, how they operated, safety, practices, and expectations related to te āo Māori, the marae, whakapapa, te reo, tikanga, tapu/noa, kawa, and the maintenance of mana
- involved developing an affinity with and emotional connectedness to their worlds, through learning about their place in that world, their whakapapa, tribal history. From this learning came a sense of being part of their worlds, belonging to their worlds, rather than being a separate entity from their worlds
- was associated with the development of mokopuna understandings and affinity to their worlds was understandings of how to care for their worlds and what is required for their worlds and those that inhabit them to flourish. To do this they needed to be able to identify with their worlds and develop a sense of spiritual connectedness and responsibility of personal and collective oneness.

## Ngā Rongo a Matea Ako

From the summary of teaching and learning implications, a theoretical framework entitled *Ngā Rongo a Matea Ako* (Rameka et al., 2022) was developed that further probed implications for ECE teaching and learning practices, processes, content knowledge, context, and pedagogical understandings required to support mokopuna to enact mana and kaitiakitanga. This framework was shared with kaiako and provided a foundation for the research in the subsequent phases of the project. Findings from ECE kaiako in Phases Two and Three have strengthened the framework. *Ngā Rongo a Matea Ako* identifies four rongo, or perceptions, outlined below.

**Te rongo ā tinana** (Physically experience and engage in their worlds): In order for mokopuna to learn about kaitiakitanga and mana, they must first and foremost have opportunities to physically engage with and experience their worlds, and the contexts in which they function.

**Te rongo ā hinengaro** (Intellectually develop knowledge and understandings of their worlds): If mokopuna are to take on kaitiaki roles of any description they must have opportunities to develop knowledge and understandings of their worlds, including understandings of the natural, social, physical, material, and spiritual worlds, tribal narratives, and cultural expertise and practices.

**Te rongo ā ngākau** (Emotionally connect to and develop affinity with their worlds): Mokopuna must also develop an affinity with and a connectedness to their worlds, especially an emotional connectedness. To do this they must be able to identify with their worlds, develop a sense of belonging, and a personal and collective identity.

**Te rongo ā wairua** (Spiritually contribute to their worlds): Finally, mokopuna must learn to contribute to their worlds in meaningful ways. Contributing to their worlds requires the enactment of learnings, action, commitment, and responsibility. In order for mokopuna to contribute to and develop a sense of responsibility for their worlds they must have authentic opportunities to give, be generous, demonstrate caring and compassion, and in this way demonstrate their understandings of aroha, manaakitanga, kaitiakitanga, and mana.

## Research questions

The three research questions provide the framing for the presentation of ECE data. Analysis of the kaiako and mokopuna data highlighted a number of themes and possible implications for kaiako in ECE related to pedagogical understandings, content knowledge, and contextual requirements. Excerpts from kaiako team/individual interviews and mokopuna assessments in Phases Two and Three with Māori-medium and English-medium kaiako are utilised in the following sections.

# RQ 1. In what ways do/can mokopuna in ECE services enact mana and kaitiakitanga?

We found that mokopuna in ECE services enact mana and kaitiakitanga in a number of ways. Links to the Ngā Rongo a Matea Ako framing are identified in each of the excerpts of enactments.

**Aroha me mārire** (Concern and caring): There were numerous examples of mokopuna enacting mana and kaitiakitanga through caring, helping others, being kind, showing concern, and keeping others safe. This was commented on by most kaiako who felt proud of the compassion, empathy, and kindness expressed by mokopuna in their services:

I have noticed that you love to play hostess, serving cups of tea, making cakes and playing whānau games. You have a real sense of looking after others—*Exemplifying Te rongo ā wairua. (Mokopuna assessment, English-medium centre)*

You ... have a kind heart ... you often respond to friends who need help or might be feeling sad—*Exemplifying Te rongo ā wairua. (Mokopuna assessment, English-medium centre)*

He ... went around the papatākaro and did his own little safety check and he brought some big logs which are in the papatākaro for play ... 'Whaea, whaea, we gotta take this away, kei whara pēpi!.. he's trying to make this environment safe for these pēpi—*Exemplifying Te rongo ā wairua. (Kaiako, Māori-medium centre)*

**Rangatiratanga** (Leadership): Mokopuna displaying strong leadership qualities did so through undertaking kaitiaki roles and responsibilities, including standing up for and advocating for others and the environment (*Te rongo ā wairua*). Mokopuna may also feel confident to question kaiako, if required, to voice their concerns and this was clearly an expression of mana and kaitiakitanga. What was apparent when mokopuna took on these roles and responsibilities was they assumed the roles and responsibilities themselves, viewing them as their roles, rather than being directed to these roles by kaiako:

He planted the marigold seeds and they grew ... he's taken responsibility and he always points out that we can't actually pick the plants. He goes into the garden, has a check around to make sure all the plants are ok, so that's his area. Now that he's got that responsibility he feels like he's the kaitiaki for the māra. But that gives him mana too. He's got that strong mana but he's also got responsibility to make sure the māra is all good ... We don't have to push them to do it ... They take on the responsibility, that role as kaitiaki—*Exemplifying Te rongo ā tinana, Te rongo ā ngākau, Te rongo ā wairua. (Kaiako, Māori-medium centre)*

It's about them taking the lead. It's about them having the mana to take the lead ... the fire alarm went off and we had to get to the field and she was helping tēina across the field as well ... that is rangatiratanga she took that upon herself—*Exemplifying Te rongo ā tinana, Te rongo ā ngākau, Te rongo ā wairua. (Kaiako, Māori-medium centre)*

**Tiaki te taiao** (Caring for the environment): A large number of kaiako comments focused on caring for the natural environment. The role of kaitiaki was associated with a clear obligation to nurture and protect the physical and spiritual wellbeing of the taiao, and the natural systems that surround and support it:

We've been talking about tiaki i te taiao. We speak a lot to our tamariki about ngā atua Māori. In term two when we went to the moana, we talked about tiaki i a Tangaroa and they've remembered ... and they talked about the rapahi in the ngahere. And they don't want to leave it there but we don't want them to pick it up, so there's that strong sense of kaitiakitanga. And they'll say we have to tiaki i a Papatūānuku—*Exemplifying Te rongo ā tinana, Te rongo ā hinengaro, Te rongo ā ngākau, Te rongo ā wairua. (Kaiako, Māori-medium centre)*

And it's the importance of knowledge. They know about Tangaroa, they know about the whenua, they know about the importance of tiaki, even when you say don't touch that. It's so strong—*Exemplifying Te rongo ā hinengaro. (Kaiako, Māori-medium centre)*

**Tiaki te māra** (Caring for the garden): Like the taiao, the māra was a focus of attention for many mokopuna. There were numerous examples of mokopuna taking on responsibilities to care for the plants to ensure they grew strong and healthy:

Our children speak directly to the kai in the māra as loving, nurturing guardians, 'Kia kaha te tipu', 'Kia ora, kei te pēhea koutou i tēnei rā? Kia kaha rā', 'Kia matomato te tipu o ngā hua kia pakari kia ora mātou'—*Enactments link with aspects of Ngā Rongo a Matea Ako. (Mokopuna assessment, Māori-medium centre)*

And even our māra for kai, they've always sort of been included and they're learning about how to care ...  
And they just naturally are within it—*Te rongo ā tinana, Te rongo ā hinengaro. (Kaiako, English-medium centre)*

**Tuākana/tēina** (Older/younger relationship): Examples of tuākana/tēina relationships and responsibilities in practice were evident in many of the narratives from the ECE services. These roles and responsibilities were driven by a sense of obligation, concern, and care. This is explained by kaiako in the following comments and assessment exemplar:

Ruamano is there to either offer his hand to protect pēpi or he's like 'Watch our pēpi' and then he'd say 'Hei, kei konei te pēpi' if they lother mokopuna are coming really quick on their paihikara or scooters. He makes a lot of people aware of where the tēina are—*Exemplifying Te rongo ā tinana, Te rongo ā wairua. (Kaiako, Māori-medium centre)*

## Summary

For kaiako and mokopuna, the enactment of kaitiakitanga and mana centred on being kind, caring, sustaining, protecting, nurturing, standing up for, and advocating for the people, places, and things in the lives including: Papatūānuku, Tangaroa, hoa, pēpi/tēina, taiao, and māra/kai. The focus for mokopuna tended to centre on doing what was required, rather than enhancing their own status or being noticed by others. Their enactment of mana and kaitiakitanga also tended to be an expression of their affinity with, and understandings of, the importance of adhering to the values, practices, and cultural expectations or understandings, including concepts such as aroha, manaakitanga, rangatiratanga, and whanaungatanga. Often, traditional rituals, customs, and events provided opportunities to support the enactment of mana and kaitiakitanga.

## RQ 2. What does the enactment of mana and kaitiakitanga look like for mokopuna and kaiako in ECE?

The next section explores ways that kaiako and mokopuna recognised, articulated, and further supported the enactment of mana and kaitiakitanga in ECE. The excerpts are mostly taken from kaiako team and individual wānanga, and mokopuna assessments (identified in text). Links to the Ngā Rongo a Matea Ako framing are identified in each of the excerpts.

**Mahia te mahi** (Mana not the driver): Although the enhancement of mana was the outcome for all the examples in ECE, it was not the driver of the action for mokopuna. Mokopuna were mostly unaware that their actions enhanced their mana; rather, they focused on caring and doing what was required. These actions are evident in the following korero:

... today we went for a small hīkoi ... and Mahinarangi picked up these paru as tōkena. I said to leave them, but Mahinarangi said the leaves can't touch the noke underneath ... we had talked previously about the leaves disintegrating and going into the earth and feeding Papatūānuku—*Exemplifying Te rongo ā tinana, Te rongo ā hinengaro, Te rongo ā ngākau, Te rongo ā wairua. (Kaiako, Māori-medium centre)*

**Te reo mataora** (Keeping language alive): The role of nurturing and fostering te reo Māori was viewed as an important aspect of mana and kaitiakitanga for kaiako. The mokopuna in the episode below may not have recognised that her mana was being enhanced through the interaction, but kaiako acknowledged that, not only did the mokopuna facilitate language learning, she also enhanced her own mana and that of her tēina:

Tuākana explaining to tēina about how to care for the taonga. She used words like 'tiaki' and when giving tēina a turn to play with it ... she used the words 'tohatoha koa' and 'tatari'. She made time for each tēina to have turns. She responded to tēina questions. She then left and the tēina stayed and mirrored what the tuākana did. E.g., one of the tēina used the words 'tatari' and 'tohatoha'—*Exemplifying Te rongō ā wairua. (Kaiako, Māori-medium centre)*

**Mana whakatipu** (Enhancing mana): Mokopuna supporting and guiding others through sharing their time, understandings, perspectives, and knowledge with others was another example of enacting mana. It involved developing understandings of how to share their knowledge and experience with others, thereby strengthening the understandings of others:

The tamaiti realise that they can do that [guide others] for themselves and they can achieve and they are building their own mana. The other tamariki recognise, it's not just us building their mana but it's trying to recognise each other's mana, build up each other's mana ... which they definitely are doing—*Exemplifying Te rongō ā ngākau. (Mokopuna assessment, Māori-medium centre)*

Enacting mana through tamariki sharing their experiences about their world, their whanau, and their interests. Tamariki discussing what is important to them in their lives, and other tamariki having the opportunity to learn about their hoa and their lives—*Exemplifying Te rongō ā ngākau. (Mokopuna assessment, Māori-medium centre)*

**Kōrerotanga—Kōrero a waha, a tinana, a kanohi** (Communication): Kaiako made the point that mana can be felt as well as seen. They explained that mokopuna communicated mana and kaitiakitanga in numerous ways and that it is crucial for kaiako to recognise these communication methods and further support their enactment:

Where the relationship between mana and kaitiakitanga work together. You can feel it and see it in the tamariki and how they communicate, both verbal and non-verbal—*Exemplifying Te rongō ā ngākau. (Kaiako, Māori-medium centre)*

**Kawe mana** (Mana of occasions and groups): Mokopuna recognising, respecting, and upholding traditional ceremonies and rituals was linked to the enactment of the mana of individuals and the collective (i.e., marae, kōhanga, hapū, and iwi). For Kaiako, it was important that mokopuna learn about, participate in, and contribute to ceremonies, rituals, and important cultural events:

Her papa spoke for her and her big sister was there and was very proud, and her mama. It was a big moment for the whole whānau. That's kawe mana. Her papa came in for her huritau and he sung in Egyptian, Samoan, and Irish and all the other cultures. It was really nice that they stood and they kept their other cultures alive—*Exemplifying Te rongō ā ngākau. (Kaiako, Māori-medium centre)*

**Te āo Māori** (Māori worldview): For Kaiako, the enactment of mana and kaitiakitanga assumed the normalcy of Māori knowledge, language, and culture. Kaiako stated that, when mokopuna view the world through Māori lenses, their connections to te āo Māori are concrete, experienced physically, spiritually, emotionally, and cognitively:

Not only does this strengthen your connection and awareness to our culture but it links you to your tūpuna. In celebrating this your mana motuhake is strengthened. You are affirmed as a Māori tamaiti, with a rich heritage and strong creative skills both i te kainga [home] with māmā and here i te Puna Reo—*Exemplifying Te rongō ā ngākau. (Kaiako, Māori-medium centre)*

Start everything from the perspective of origin in te ao Māori—*Exemplifying Te rongō ā ngākau. (Kaiako, Māori-medium centre)*

**Mana atuātanga** (Mana from the spirit world): Kaiako understand that all mokopuna are born with mana, inherited from atua, through whakapapa, from ancestors and parents. The recognition and enhancement of mana is one of the most important contributions kaiako can make to the holistic hauora of mokopuna. They are then able to experience mana Atuatanga in a real and authentic way:

On the atua side of things, they experience our atua in real life, not through a book about atua Māori, it's through kaitiaki whenua. Tāne Mahuta standing in our corner. Tāwhirimātea, feel the wind blowing. They go

to the moana. Making connections. Tangible. Concrete. It's a real thing for them, it is not something they read about or some sort of fairy tale, it's part of their world now ... Kaitiakitanga is a huge aspect of that. We've all got our own mana. It's how we nurture it—*Exemplifying Te rongo ā tinana, Te rongo ā hinengaro, Te rongo ā ngākau, Te rongo ā wairua. (Kaiako, Māori-medium centre)*

**Whakapapa** (Genealogy): For kaiako, mokopuna developing a sense of belonging through knowledge of whakapapa supports mokopuna connectedness to their worlds. This connectedness strengthens the sense of identity, self-assurance, and confidence critical to the enactment of mana and kaitiakitanga:

Mana and kaitiakitanga is reciprocal. It has to be shared in terms of our learning together, sharing together. It's all about Whakapapa—*Exemplifying Te rongo ā hinengaro, Te rongo ā ngākau. (Kaiako, English-medium centre)*

Whakapapa is valued and whānau are integral to all we do ... Because we know their whakapapa. They become more taonga to us because we know who their grandparents were, who their great-grandparents were. We've had that relationship with those people, with those whānau—*Exemplifying Te rongo ā ngākau, Te rongo ā wairua. (Kaiako, English-medium centre)*

## Summary

The enactment of mana and kaitiakitanga was perceived differently by kaiako and mokopuna in ECE services. Mokopuna were mostly unaware that their actions enhanced their mana. For mokopuna, the enactment of mana and kaitiakitanga directly related to relationships, roles, and responsibilities. Mokopuna were driven by a sense of obligation, concern, and care, often the result of a reaction or a response to a situation or activity, and a strong desire to "do what was right". For mokopuna, the required actions tended to be clear and straightforward, and sometimes involved mokopuna questioning or reminding kaiako about the correctness or appropriate of responses and actions.

For kaiako, recognising the enactment of mana and kaitiakitanga required recognition of, adherence to, and incorporation of values and customs associated with te āo Māori, te āo wairua, te reo, tīkanga Māori, tupuna, whenua, taiao, marae, and whānau, hapū, and iwi. The enactment of mana and kaitiakitanga intersected with the development of a sense of connectedness, belonging, identity, and wellbeing.

## RQ 3. What people, tools, artefacts, processes, and practices contribute to enhancing mana and kaitiakitanga for mokopuna?

The next section examines data from Phases Two and Three in ECE services and identifies the people, tools (community/hapū/iwi knowledge, kaupapa, waiata, pūrākau, taiāo, pepeha), artefacts (pou, whakairo, pukapuka), processes (routines, policies, teachings), and practices (haerenga, environments, pedagogies) that are utilised to support the enhancement of mana and kaitiakitanga.

**Tauratanga** (Role modelling): Through role modelling respectful, mana-enhancing behaviours and attitudes, kaiako can support mokopuna to take on responsibilities associated with mana and kaitiakitanga. The role modelling strengthens the development and maintenance of relationships and connectedness within the service, whānau, and communities:

I think I can really say that our teaching practice—we role model a lot of the te ara Māori values. *(Kaiako, English-medium centre)*

We believe that mana is a right of virtue for them and we try to sustain this through our teachings and modelling towards each other. *(Kaiako, English-medium centre)*

We work as a collective, and we have expectations that our tamariki will work as a collective as well ... where the tuākana takes over and kind of does the caring, does the manaaki, gives the aroha. *(Kaiako, English-medium centre)*

**Hāporitanga** (Connecting to the community): It is important that kaiako understand the significance of activities outside of the service, and work to bring the community into the service:

We have our own mana. It's how we nurture it. Bringing in new learning from home into the puna to inform our programme and the way we teach also is how we action mana. *(Kaiako, Māori-medium centre)*

Manaakitanga is one of the most important concepts to Māori people as it secures the strength of our whānau and communities. *(Kaiako, Māori-medium centre)*

... but what you're talking about is bringing the community in ... what's outside the kindergarten in, that's the environment. *(Kaiako, Māori-medium centre)*

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

They're always out on the weekend—hunting, fishing, whatever the seasons are. And they know the seasons of kai—when to gather, and they bring that into our kindergarten. *(Kaiako, English-medium centre)*

We extend their learning by preparing the kai. Showing them how to cook the kai. From the start ... from plucking of the ducks, the gutting of the fish, smoking lambs' tails in the sandpit, all that type of thing is all done there. *(Kaiako, English-medium centre)*

Hemi and Hamiora are from Korohe and are experienced at getting kai pertaining to our area. Hemi and Hamiora's tūpuna used to hunt and fish for their survival back in the day. Hemi sharing his knowledge gives him the opportunity to be a kaiako and provide tamariki with experiences from our area. *(Kaiako, English-medium centre)*

**Whenuatanga** (Connecting to the land): Recognising the critical place of mana whenua in the service's programme was another key aspect of the enactment of mana and kaitiakitanga identified by kaiako:

In order for the child to understand her/his role as kaitiaki, a relationship with the land is vital—this is tangata whenua. *(Kaiako, English-medium centre)*

I was thinking of our localised mana whenua. Our connection to the marae ... We all work on the marae. And so do half of the kids here ... And it's, 'Oh I seen you whāea at the marae'. So, there's lots of deeper connections. *(Kaiako, English-medium centre)*

**Haramaitanga** (Open-door policy): Building relationships with whānau and mokopuna adds to a sense of connectedness. An open-door policy ensures whānau feel comfortable, respected, and welcome, and part of the service's whānau. This sense of respect, aroha, āwhina, and whanaungatanga is key to the expression of mana for mokopuna:

Looking after anybody that walks through our doors. Having the open-door policy. It doesn't matter who you are ... We make them belong. *(Kaiako, English-medium centre)*

Our kaupapa within this kindergarten is all about aroha. Whakawhanaungatanga is a very big thing, with building relationships the ultimate goal and challenge. *(Kaiako, English-medium centre)*

**Ātuatanga** (Connecting to deity): Recognising the importance of ngā atua Māori and integrating them into their practices in ECE supports the enactment of mana and kaitiakitanga. This requires understanding of the realms of ngā atua, which in turn provides a sense of authentic learning of Māori values, and supports confidence to enact mana and kaitiakitanga:

... we acknowledge that 'the mana' of children is derived from their links with atua ... one of the ways that we nurture the mana of every child is through making connections with these kaitiaki, through our environment, tikanga, waiata, and storytelling ... and the names and domains of Te Atua. *(Kaiako, Māori-medium centre)*

Our environment supports tamariki to develop understandings of kaitiakitanga, they learn about Atua and their responsibilities for their domains, tamariki learn their responsibilities as kaitiaki of Papatūānuku, the māra, rongoā. *(Kaiako, Māori-medium centre)*

Go to Tangaroa. And that's how you can relate it back to atua ... the kids can physically see the kōura come in ...Visually see the atua that looks after the sea, where that kai has come from. *(Kaiako, Māori-medium centre)*

**Tipunatanga** (Connecting to tīpuna): Recognising the mana of tīpuna is evident when kaiako explain that they know the mokopuna, they know their whakapapa, their parents, grandparents, and tīpuna through living in the same community. There is a strong sense of whanaungatanga and connectedness with mokopuna and their tīpuna:

You have mana passed down to you from your whānau, tupuna, and ngā atua. I look at you and see a kuia. You are still a young kōtiro but somehow you seem to have a lifetime of skills in looking after others with cooking and baking ... you are following in the footsteps of your nannies, or even tūpuna before them. *(Mokopuna assessment)*

We see them as taonga, because you know all the generations. They've got the characteristics of their nanny, 'You're just like your nanny on the marae...'—that mana comes from tīpuna ... inherited mana ... You know them so well, you ... see them as taonga, because you know all the generations. *(Kaiako, English-medium centre)*

**Iwitanga** (Connecting to iwi): Connecting to iwi and hapū was seen as integral to enhancing the mana of mokopuna in services. Whakapapa connections and growing up in the rohe strengthen these connections:

And we all have that strong connection to Ngāti Tūwharetoa. So Tūwharetoatanga is very much woven in our programme. Our tamariki know about their maunga, their awa ... their marae, their pepeha. *(Kaiako, English-medium centre)*

Their marae. They stand at the marae ... [and say] 'That's my marae whāea!' *(Kaiako, English-medium centre)*

**Te Hirangatanga o te reo** (Keeping language and culture alive): For kaiako, nurturing and fostering te reo and tikanga Māori was viewed as an important aspect of kaitiakitanga and mana enactment. The comment below demonstrates kaiako understandings of how mokopuna can facilitate language learning and at the same time enhance the mana of both the tēina and the tuākana:

Our curriculum speaks about whakamana te tamaiti and as kaiako we have a responsibility through our reo, tikanga, and daily programme to bring it to life. *(Kaiako, Māori-medium centre)*

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

So, if you want to compare it with an English-speaking centre ... [kaiako] help [mokopuna] with their routines ... to help build up their independence so they can do it for themselves. We see it differently, it's about the child's mana, it's different world views ... the goal is not independence, the goal is recognition of mana and supporting one's own and others' mana ... growing their mana is a huge thing for them in terms of their growth, their abilities, their ideas about themselves, you know, that they are competent and confident, that's what you are talking about. Learners and doers. *(Kaiako, Māori-medium centre)*

**Aiotanga** (Calm and peaceful environments): Recognising the importance of a safe, inviting, and calm environment was stressed by kaiako in one service. They explained that this was critical to a sense of belonging, wellbeing, identity, and mana:

And they can feel that, as soon as they walk in. It's a peaceful environment. Yeah, a lot of parents ... they've actually said, that as they come in they feel ... it's calm ... They feel at home, they feel welcomed ... also recognising their mana, being valuable people. Mihi to everyone that comes in ... kids that need a cuddle, we'll go up and give them a cuddle, manaaki them ... having a cuddle in the morning ... not allowing them to get anxious. *(Kaiako, English-medium centre)*

## Summary

We identified a series of important/key processes and practices that contributed to the enhancement of mana and kaitiakitanga. These included activities and events, such as trips to the moana, ngahere, or marae that deepened mokopuna recognition of, connectedness with, and sense of knowing te āo Māori. Likewise, kaiako also talked about the benefits associated with engaging in activities linked with tiaki te taiao and Papatūānuku; attending community events, ceremonies, and activities; and learning pūrākau, waiata, mahi toi, and whakapapa related to mana whenua. These types of activities and learning contexts all supported relationships with te āo Māori, moana, whenua, ātua, and taiao. Supporting the connectedness with significant people in mokopuna lives was also important, including connectedness with hāpori, tīpuna, hāpū/iwi as well as whānau and kaiako. For mokopuna, this reinforced a sense of connectedness, belonging, identity, respect, confidence, and oneness with their worlds.

To enact mana and kaitiakitanga, mokopuna must acquire knowledge and understandings of their worlds, the cultural norms and expectations of the worlds, and the possible consequences of their actions or inactions. These knowledges and understandings allow mokopuna to stand strong in their beliefs, to express their concerns and perspectives, to take the lead when required, and to stand as rangatira for themselves, others, and their worlds. In order for this to occur, kaiako must be able to confidently share the relevant knowledges and understandings with mokopuna, encouraging familiarity with the context, understandings of the associated expectations, and an ability to take on rangatira roles and responsibilities.

The range of tools and artefacts associated with: hunting and fishing activities (e.g., whānau/hapū/iwi knowledges of catching, preparing, and cooking and preserving kai sources—plucking of the ducks, the gutting of the fish, smoking lambs' tails); nurturing the māra, rongoā and taiao (e.g., whānau/hapū/iwi knowledge of and responsibilities for Papatūānuku); and connecting to maunga, awa, marae, whenua (e.g., waiata, pepeha, and storytelling). Kaiako explain the importance of bringing the practices, processes, tools, and artefacts utilised in the community into the service, and, in so doing, creating deeper connections and relationships with the mokopuna worlds.

## Implications for practice

As stated previously, the *Ngā Rongo a Matea Ako* framing identifies four rongo or perceptions that we believe have important implications practice in ECE services. These implications are articulated below and links to the New Zealand ECE curriculum framework, *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 2017), are also identified.

**Te rongo ā tinana** (Physically experience and engage in their worlds): From an ECE perspective, a focus on the context of learning, within ECE services, the whānau, wider communities, and environments, is critical. For mokopuna to experience and engage in their worlds, they must be exposed to a wide range of contexts, experiences, artefacts, cultural tools, processes, and practices. Regular opportunities to access their worlds allows mokopuna to interact with the people, languages, values, resources, and cultural norms and expectations fundamental to their worlds and the entities that inhabited them. *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 2017) states:

[Exploration—Mana aotūroa] is about supporting infants, toddlers and young children to explore, learn from, respect and make sense of the world. Their exploration involves all aspects of the environment: natural, social, physical, spiritual and human-made. (p. 48)

**Te rongo ā hinengaro** (Intellectually develop knowledge and understandings of their worlds): In ECE, this learning must be supported by knowledgeable, capable, and committed kaiako who are able to facilitate the required learnings for mokopuna. Relevant content knowledge and pedagogical expertise are central to this transmission of both new and traditional knowledges. Along with a presence in, interactions with, and familiarity with the worlds of mokopuna, kaiako must understand how to utilise learning resources such as whakapapa knowledge, tribal teachings, pūrākau, waiata, as well as books, pictures, posters, and focused discussions to support mokopuna learning. *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 2017) states:

Children construct knowledge as they make meaning of their world. Knowledge is cultural, social and material. It draws on cultural, aesthetic, historical, social, scientific, technological, mathematical and geographical information. (p. 24)

**Te rongo ā ngākau** (Emotionally connect to and develop affinity with their worlds): The implications for kaiako relate to the need to “know the mokopuna”. *Te Whatu Pōkeka* (Ministry of Education, 2009, p. 50) asks three questions related to Māori perspectives of knowing the mokopuna: *Ko wai koe? Nā wai koe? I ahu mai koe i hea?* (Who are you? From whom are you? Where have you come from?) For Kaiako, therefore, not only do they need to know mokopuna temperaments, personality traits, likes and dislikes, interests, and talents but also their whakapapa, their whānau, hāpū, iwi, and their marae and turangawaewae. *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 2017) states:

Te Whāriki acknowledges that, for Māori, the child is a link to the world of the ancestors and to the new world, connected to people, places, things and the spiritual realm; they belong to whānau, hapū and iwi and they are a kaitiaki of te Tiriti o Waitangi. (p. 54)

**Te rongo ā wairua** (Spiritually contribute to their worlds): Kaiako contribute to mokopuna learning of kaitiakitanga through providing opportunities to give and be responsible; reminding mokopuna of the need for aroha, manaaki, and respect in interactions with people, places, and things; and recognising, valuing, and further encouraging these caring empathetic behaviours in mokopuna. *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 2017) states:

Kaiako recognise the relationship mokopuna have with the environment. They support them to fulfil their responsibilities as kaitiaki/carers of the environment. For example, kaiako encourage mokopuna to observe nature without harming it. (p. 50)

## Conclusion

ECE has a critical role to play in supporting mokopuna identity development, their sense of belonging, and overall wellbeing:

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

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

What this research is indicating is that more focus needs to be placed on physical, emotional, and spiritual connectedness to the context (te āo Māori) and not just the intellectual, detached, individualistic focus so often utilised in kaiako professional development. This emphasis is just as critical for mokopuna in ECE, in that mokopuna must have opportunities to connect: ā Tinana, physically experiencing and engaging in their world; ā Ngākau, developing emotional connectedness to and affinity with their worlds; ā Wairua, spiritual learning and contributing to their worlds; as well as ā Hinengaro, intellectual development of knowledge and understandings of their world.

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