

Mātai mokopuna – he tirohanga wairua, hinengaro, tinana, whatumanawa



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Nāu i Whatu te Kākahu, He Tāniko Taku

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He kupu whakataki

In 2017, *Te Whāriki a te Kōhanga Reo* was published in collaboration with Te Kōhanga Reo National Trust, formalising assessment or 'mātai mokopuna' practices within kōhanga reo. Mātai mokopuna makes visible the mana of mokopuna through discussions relating to the taumata whakahirahira (cultural settings), and the Māori dimensions of wairua (spirituality), tinana (physicality), hinengaro (cognition) and whatumanawa (emotion), hereafter referred to as 'te katoa o te mokopuna'. Underpinned by Kaupapa Māori principles our participatory action research project explored how whānau and kaiako used the taumata whakahirahira and te katoa o te mokopuna to give expression to the mana of mokopuna.

He whāinga

The overarching research question for this project was: *How do whānau and kaiako give expression to the mana of mokopuna through the dimensions of hinengaro, wairua, tinana, and whatumanawa?*

This question was explored through the following sub-questions:

- 1) What do whānau and kaiako understand in relation to mana, the taumata whakahirahira and the dimensions of hinengaro, wairua, tinana, and whatumanawa?
- 2) How does the *Te Tauira Whāriki* model support whānau and kaiako discussions about hinengaro, wairua, tinana, and whatumanawa?
- 3) What are whānau aspirations for their children and how do these influence whānau and kaiako discussions about mana, hinengaro, wairua, tinana, and whatumanawa?

He aha i whai tikanga ai tēnei rangahau?

Assessment within kōhanga reo has not been afforded the same attention and support as it has received within the English-medium early childhood sector. The limited research on assessment within kōhanga reo has led to expectations that kōhanga reo approach assessment in the same way as their English-medium early childhood counterparts. This research acknowledges mātai mokopuna as the approach used by kōhanga reo. The opportunity to recognise how the mana of mokopuna is strengthened through the taumata whakahirahira and te katoa o te mokopuna acknowledges the legitimacy of Māori value systems.

He kitenga

The key findings of the research showed whānau and kaiako expressions of mana were represented by one of three progressive stages. At each stage whānau and kaiako expressions increased in complexity as they gained confidence and knowledge about *Te Whāriki a te Kōhanga Reo*, specifically the taumata whakahirahira (E.g., Mana atua, Mana tangata, Mana reo, Mana whenua, or Mana aotūroa) and te katoa o te mokopuna (the dimensions of hinengaro, wairua, tinana, and whatumanawa).

TUATAHI – TE TIMATANGA

Te Timatanga represents the first steps of 'getting to know' *Te Whāriki a te Kōhanga Reo*. At this stage, the cultural learning experiences that whānau described were connected to one of the taumata whakahirahira (e.g., Mana reo or Mana aotūroa).

TUARUA – TE WHANAKETANGA

As whānau and kaiako became familiar with the taumata whakahirahira they started thinking and talking about two or three of the dimensions (i.e., wairua, tinana, hinengaro, whatumanawa) that make up te katoa o te mokopuna. For example, connecting a cultural learning experience to Mana reo and being able to articulate how the experience showed growth in terms of taha hinengaro (cognitive development) and taha whatumanawa (emotional development). This progression in whānau and kaiako thinking represented the next phase of expressions relating to the mana of mokopuna and is referred to here as Te whanaketanga.

TUATORU – TE PUĀWAITANGA

As whānau and kaiako became confident in talking about a few of the dimensions, they were able to work on the remainder, bringing to close te katoa o te mokopuna and signalling their ability to flourish – Te Puāwaitanga. Another important feature of Te Puāwaitanga was the ability of whānau and kaiako to connect cultural learning experiences to whakatauki.

Ngā taunakitanga

This project has offered insights into how kaiako and whānau can give expression to the mana of mokopuna. The findings suggest there are many ways to give expression to the mana of mokopuna as influenced by the aspirations of parents, knowledge of the taumata whakahirahira, and te katoa o te mokopuna. To give expression to te katoa o te mokopuna is also a progressive learning journey as whānau and kaiako find new ways to carve and shape out mātai mokopuna from Māori perspectives. Generating understanding will help avoid hegemonic discourses which impact on Māori lives, and the ongoing prejudice against kōhanga reo. Beyond kōhanga reo, the project invites conversations within educational services to reconsider the way in which we see the role of whānau in the lives of learners.

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