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CHAPTER 1

Te Whāriki: Historical accounts and contemporary influences 1990–2012

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ABSTRACT

This chapter describes the historical context for the development of *Te Whāriki* and gives an account of how the document was written. Links are made between the initial design and development of the document and some of the ideological, educational and cultural issues of the time. The chapter concludes with a description of the 2012 context and draws some parallels with influences present at the time *Te Whāriki* was written.

Introduction

On 15 September 1990 the *New Zealand Education Gazette* advertised for proposals for a contract to “develop curriculum guidelines for early childhood education” (Ministry of Education, 1990, p. 4) and invited interested persons or organisations to apply. Part One of this chapter describes the contexts in which *Te Whāriki*, the early childhood curriculum document for Aotearoa New Zealand (Ministry of Education, 1993a, 1996), was developed in the early 1990s. The ideological, educational and cultural agendas of that time led to the emergence of an idea that was, prior to the late 1980s, almost anathema to early childhood education: national curriculum guidelines.

Part Two describes how the draft version of *Te Whāriki* was developed (Ministry of Education, 1993a) and its impact on early childhood education in Aotearoa New Zealand during that era. It includes responses to questionnaires and interviews with some of the people who, from 1990 to 1993, were involved in the working groups that drafted *Te Whāriki*, and with people in the Ministry of Education. Part Three then discusses the impact and influence of *Te Whāriki* in its third decade and looks at why this document has had such longevity, the challenges to *Te Whāriki*, and what the future of this internationally ground-breaking curriculum might be.

PART ONE

Contexts for the development of *Te Whāriki*

The ideological context

The education reforms of the late 1980s—variously described as “technicist”, “ideologically new right” and “monetarist” (Willis, 1994)—focused initially on administration and secondly on curriculum and assessment. During the 1980s there had been growing criticism of the administrative framework of the Department of Education from both the political left and right (Boston, 1990; Grace, 1990). The education system was considered to be over-centralised and unresponsive to community needs, and to have failed to deliver social and educational equity. Indeed, the educational failure of Māori had become a “statistical artefact” (Benton, 1990). Change was inevitable given the agenda of the fourth Labour Government. Almost every aspect of the public sector underwent some form of restructuring, driven by an economic ideology that devolved responsibility for service delivery yet retained fiscal control. Advisers to the government suggested that New Zealand’s long-standing ‘cradle to the grave’ approach did not work; instead, a bold social experiment was necessary, based on a philosophy of individualism and the supremacy of the free market (Kelsey, 1995).

The 1987 briefing papers to the incoming government (New Zealand Treasury, 1987) advocated the market-driven provision of government services, including education. The role of the state was to provide minimal backstop services for people who were

unable to exercise ‘choice’. Liberal ideals of social equity and equality of opportunity were replaced by a consumerist approach that presented education as discrete packages of services available to anyone to buy. It was argued that, since the choice to have children was a personal one, educating them was a private responsibility; it followed that the provision of education was also in the private domain. This argument created tension between two conflicting assumptions: first, that families were ready, willing and able to exercise choice; and, secondly, that communities were in a position to provide them with choice. Little was done to address vocal concerns from educational organisations, other than a clear message from within government to hasten the process of reform. The views of teachers, union representatives, academics, researchers and parents were considered to be biased because they clearly had a vested interest in the outcome: children’s education (Douglas, 1993).

In 1988 the Labour Government established a working group to “provide a short restatement of the purpose, place, form and function of early childhood education” (Department of Education, 1988a, p. iv). The resulting document, *Education to be More: Report of the Early Childhood Care and Education Working Group* (Department of Education, 1988b), was based on the five themes identified in the 1987 Royal Commission on Social Policy as underpinning all areas of social policy reform in New Zealand:

- implementing the Treaty of Waitangi
 - improving the social and economic status of women
 - providing a legislative environment which safeguards basic human rights and freedoms, and works towards the removal of discrimination
 - recognising the needs, contributions and traditions of Pacific Island peoples and other minority cultures residing in New Zealand
 - enhancing the family unit in New Zealand society
- (Department of Education, 1988a, p. v).

The release of *Education to be More* (known as ‘the Meade Report’) was followed by the Government’s response, *Before Five: Early Childhood Care and Education in New Zealand* (Lange, 1988), written concurrently with other policy reforms in the state education sector. *Before Five* gave early childhood education the same status as primary and secondary education, and was sanctioned by David Lange, who was both Prime Minister and Minister of Education at that time. Although its policy blueprint was not universally welcomed (Mitchell, 1996), its longer-term vision had been supported by early childhood educators in both community-based and privately owned services during wide consultation with the sector.

When the National Party won the 1990 election, Labour’s policy initiatives to improve the quality of early childhood education were quickly rescinded. The influential private sector lobby challenged well-established indicators of quality, such as qualified staff and reasonable pay and conditions. The lobbyists argued that the

increased costs of qualified staff would be passed on to families, thereby undermining another plank of the reforms: equitable access to early childhood services. This pressure led to changes to the licensing regulations governing centres and polarised the ensuing debates between state-funded and privately owned services as to what quality early childhood education was and how it might be achieved. Ironically, at a time when many aspects of service quality were under threat, the professional status of early childhood education was to be enhanced by the development of a national early childhood curriculum.

The educational context

Alongside the administrative reforms there began a process of curriculum reform. Although the development of *Te Whāriki* was not the beginning of the debate on early childhood curriculum in Aotearoa New Zealand, there had been no national agreement on the issue. Child-care centres, the kindergarten movement and Playcentre associations had developed distinct approaches to curriculum, but these were generally not formalised.

During the late 1980s the Department of Education ran a series of week-long residential courses at Lopdell House in Auckland to help develop its policy initiatives in early childhood education. Those invited to participate were broadly representative of the sector, and reports based on their discussions and recommendations from the courses were cited in the *Te Whāriki* proposal document as significant initial influences (particularly on the issues of infants and toddlers, a Pacific Island curriculum and home-based care). One such report contained a statement on early childhood curriculum, which included a list of principles to underpin any future development of a curriculum document (Department of Education, 1988b).

These reports reflected a concern that “downward pressure” from the school curriculum was a threat to the early childhood sector’s concepts of what made a “good child” (Department of Education, 1988a). May and Carr (1996) argue that *Te Whāriki* was developed as much to protect the interests of children before school as it was to promote and define a curriculum for early childhood, especially since the proposed *New Zealand Curriculum Framework* (Ministry of Education, 1993b), by prompting more systematic assessment in early childhood education, was potentially dangerous (Carr & May, 1993). They acknowledged, however, that the sector could gain additional strength and status by having clear links with the schools’ curriculum framework:

The issue here is that such dovetailing or interconnecting will now need to be a two way street ... initiatives in curriculum and assessment for the early school years, for example recommendations on the collection of information at school entry, will from now on need to take into account the curriculum for the first five years. (Carr & May, 1993, pp. 43, 49)

Cultural contexts

The cultural make-up of Aotearoa New Zealand added further complexity to the educational and economic reforms. The country's colonial past and its traditional ties to the United Kingdom were no longer the only influences on the population in the early 1990s. Successive waves of immigration, particularly from Pacific nations, had created an increasingly pluralist nation that was demanding recognition. This trend was coupled with a Māori renaissance epitomised by the *kōhanga reo* movement, which aimed to create "language nests" for *mokopuna/tamariki* Māori.

For decades Māori had been arguing against the assimilationist policies that had fuelled growing discontent among their people. During the 1980s Māori throughout Aotearoa New Zealand supported the development of *kōhanga reo* in a serious attempt to save *te reo Māori* (the Māori language). Hailed as a grass-roots revolutionary movement (Irwin, 1990), *kōhanga reo* focused on *mokopuna/tamariki* as the future speakers of *te reo Māori*. Immersion in *te reo* and *tikanga Māori* (Māori customary conduct) would empower these children, along with their *whānau*, *hapū* and *iwi*, to maintain the language and thus ensure its survival. Although the concept concerned young children, it did not identify itself as an early childhood education movement. Māori leaders argued that it was a social justice movement, a manifestation of *tino rangatiratanga* (self-determination) under the Treaty of Waitangi.¹ Māori activists and academics alike were clear that the existing system of education disadvantaged Māori and that the *kōhanga reo* movement was an example of a solution to this situation: by Māori, for Māori.

In response to concerns from Māori, the Minister of Education appointed an advisory body, known as the *Rūnanga Matua*, to the Ministry of Education.² Its role was to oversee the reform implementation process from a Māori perspective. Among its members was Tilly Reedy, who was to be one of the two Māori lead writers of *Te Whāriki*, and who was appointed to the early childhood curriculum development project by *Te Kōhanga Reo National Trust* (along with her husband, Dr Tamati Reedy). Even before work on *Te Whāriki* began, the *Rūnanga Matua* had identified concepts central to the promotion of *mana Māori* in education. Seeing *Te Whāriki* as a guide to "fulfilling the intent of the Treaty of Waitangi", the *Rūnanga* proposed "an infusion approach ... whereby *mana tangata*, *mana atua*, *mana whenua* and *mana o te reo* are considered as key factors".³ Thus the final form of *Te Whāriki* had its beginnings in Māori pedagogical and philosophical beliefs.

1 The Treaty of Waitangi is Aotearoa New Zealand's founding document. Based on the principle of equal partnership, it is a contract between some Māori tribes and the Crown, signed on 6 February 1840.

2 Correspondence from *Rūnanga Matua* to Ministry of Education, c. 1989. New Zealand Childcare Association/*Te Tari Puna Ora* Archive, Alexander Turnbull Library.

3 *Ibid.*

From the outset, the writers of *Te Whāriki* were committed to producing a document that honoured the Treaty of Waitangi. Compared to other early childhood services, *kōhanga reo* had a well-defined curriculum based on the survival of *te reo* Māori and *ngā tikanga* Māori. Helen May and Margaret Carr, as the two Pākehā (non-Māori) lead writers of *Te Whāriki*, challenged the way in which previous government funding had “not so far addressed the need for a Māori curriculum, although it has looked at *Taha Māori* in the mainstream curriculum” (Carr & May, 1990, p. 19). This shortcoming was something they intended to redress.

Te Whāriki went on to represent and reflect Māori politics and pedagogy. “I have a dream,” said Tilly Reedy (1993) at the launch of the draft version of *Te Whāriki* (see Chapter 2, this volume). This dream, articulated in the document’s framework for a curriculum, drew all early childhood services in Aotearoa New Zealand into the wider world of social and political contribution and participation. Traditional approaches to planning and programming for play, which focused on activities such as collage and play-dough, were challenged by broad educational ideals about democracy and social justice.

PART TWO:

Writing *Te Whāriki*

The contract

The request for proposal (Ministry of Education, 1990) called for tenders from potential contractors “to develop curriculum guidelines for developmentally appropriate programmes for early childhood education” (p. 4). Under “Responsibilities: Contractor” were requirements to:

- direct the development, review and evaluation of curriculum guidelines for early childhood education to produce a final draft. This process of development and evaluation should involve meetings with a consultative group of approximately 10–12 early childhood practitioners and persons with special expertise;
- select the reference group to achieve appropriate geographical, gender and cultural balance, including representatives of experienced primary, intermediate and secondary teachers. The names shall be approved by the Ministry;
- consult with ... organisations⁴ during the development of the final draft. (Ministry of Education, 1990, pp. 6 & 7)

The proposal

Helen May, a senior lecturer and chair of the Department of Early Childhood at the University of Waikato, had signalled to the early childhood field her intention to

⁴ The organisations listed here represented national early childhood organisations, unions and training providers.

spearhead a proposal from the Waikato region and received support from the sector to do so (Wells, 1990). When May and Margaret Carr drew up the proposed process within their contract proposal, it represented a re-conceptualisation of the curriculum development process, which had previously been dominated by Western models (May, 2002). This new model treated content, process, context and evaluation as interdependent features, an idea that could be traced back to the *Basic Principles for an Early Childhood Curriculum* developed at Lopdell House (Department of Education, 1988a).

The task was now to present this ambitious and complex vision in a format that would be acceptable to the Ministry of Education. The proposal used the metaphor of a native forest to illustrate both the model's strengths and the potential barriers to curriculum development. Key theorists—Piaget, Erikson, Vygotsky and Bruner—were likened to kauri trees, famous for their great height, but “because of the immaturity of very young children, and the non-compulsory nature of the services, the forest is also strewn with ideological disputes and conflicting beliefs” (Carr & May, 1990, p. 10). The kauri were signposts for a pathway through these “dangers”, but they were also representative: “[We] were concerned with the whole child and a developmental framework (Piaget and Erikson), and with learning in a social and cultural context (Bruner and Vygotsky)” (Carr & May, 1990, p. 10).

The writers claimed it was “concern for high quality early childhood care and education that prompts us to put forward this proposal” (Carr & May, 1990, p. 11). Two arguments were especially significant. One was a challenge to the dominant view that child care was a “second best” option:

We do not subscribe to that theory, and would like to set another in its place ... the child who has good quality care at centre and at home has a richer ‘tool-kit’ of learning strategies, friends and interests for making sense of the world than a child who is mostly cared for in one environment. (p. 11)

The second argument was that cultural sensitivity and equity were factors in the quality debate. Citing research that demonstrated that “the child who is bilingual has a cognitive advantage, in comparison with a mono-lingual child” (p. 11), the proposal indicated that the bicultural context was separate from the European curriculum, and distinct from the Māori curriculum. The Pacific Island context was a further consideration:

We wanted to present an inclusive framework in which Pacific Island language nests were able to negotiate statements about curriculum. At that time they were the only cohesive immigrant group. Our contact, Iole Tagoilelagi, was able to negotiate with PIECA (Pacific Island Early Childhood Association) on behalf of Pacific Island centres. It was a strategic endeavour to recognise a different type of context. (H. May, personal communication, August 2002)

The issue was indeed strategic. By highlighting these discrete philosophical positions, the proposal enabled the sector to “negotiate from a position of power. We wanted to reveal issues, not silence them” (H. May, personal communication, August 2002). Previous debates about early childhood curriculum at a national level had established a positive dynamic, and broad philosophical agreement was possible. “It was really important to have a vision for children—what made a ‘good’ child” (ibid.). This vision became part of *Te Whāriki’s* aspirations for children:

To grow up as competent and confident learners and communicators, healthy in mind, body and spirit, secure in their sense of belonging and in the knowledge that they make a valued contribution to society. (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 9)

The proposal also covered the development of specialist curricula for home-based care and special education. The final proposal offered inclusive guidelines designed to enable a diversity of services to strategically position their own beliefs about “what made a good child in the warp and weft of the framework” (H. May, personal communication, August 2002).

The relationship with ngā kōhanga reo

The proposal indicated a clear commitment to the Treaty of Waitangi and to a separate Māori curriculum. The principle of equal partnership embodied in the Treaty of Waitangi required that “any proposal for early childhood curriculum must include a specialist and separate Māori curriculum, developed by and for ngā Kōhanga Reo” (Carr & May, 1990, p. 12). It was proposed that the development of the curriculum guidelines be a “joint endeavour between ourselves and Te Kōhanga Reo Trust” (p. 12). As Carr and May explained:

Ngā Kōhanga Reo has consolidated a lot of previous work towards the establishment of a Māori curriculum and it is intended that there be an identifiable Māori curriculum as well as a curriculum which reflects our growth towards a bicultural society ... our proposed contracting of Te Kōhanga Reo and our budget considerations reflect this viewpoint. (Carr & May, 1990, p. 19)

The implications of this were profound. The Māori curriculum was not to be an ‘add-on’, nor was it to be ‘integrated’: it was to be separate. This fundamental shift gave new status to Māori pedagogy within early childhood education. A decade later May (2002) wrote:

This was a challenge. There were no New Zealand or international models for guidance. This became possible due to collaboration with Te Kōhanga National Trust and the foresight of Dr Tamati Reedy and Tilly Reedy who developed the curriculum for Māori immersion centres. (p. 31)

In an interview for this chapter, May added:

We had discussions with Te Kōhanga Reo Trust and we were clear that the Māori context was separate. We worked with Maureen Locke and Rita Walker on the bicultural curriculum, not on the Māori immersion curriculum for kōhanga. Tamati and Tilly Reedy worked on that with Rose Pere. Margaret and I often met with Tamati and Tilly to discuss how to weave the Māori and Pākehā concepts together. (H. May, personal communication, August 2002)

In addition, the writers established a set of reciprocal arrangements between the writers, researchers, working groups and the sector, and suggested there were longer-term implications for research and the production of resources. These implications included recommendations for professional development to support the implementation of the curriculum guidelines and proposals for research on assessment guidelines as part of the future development phase.

The contract: A Ministry perspective

The contract for developing the curriculum was the first early childhood contract managed by the Curriculum Division in the newly formed Ministry of Education. Caryl Hamer, previously employed in the Early Childhood Division of the Department of Education, was one of seven curriculum facilitators within the Ministry of Education who were responsible for developing curriculum documents across the education sector. A background in early childhood education gave Hamer extensive networks, including in Playcentre and child care. She described the curriculum development process as:

culture shock for us in early childhood. We were suddenly in the big wide world and that made it impossible not to have a curriculum or a framework. Right from the start *Te Whāriki* was a political document. (C. Hamer, personal communication, September 2002)

After consultation between the Ministry and the sector, a contract selection panel was set up to consider the proposals. Hamer recalled the panel's reaction to the Waikato proposal:

We were just blown away ... We had never seen anything like it in early childhood. It was very detailed and clear. I remember our main concern was the working groups—the Ministry was concerned that the contractors would end up with several curriculum documents. (C. Hamer, personal communication, September 2002).

The status conferred by her position within Waikato University was well understood by May. Moreover, the tertiary sector was used to preparing tenders for research, and this experience was helpful in writing the early childhood proposal. University funding was also available:

There was a budget for travel for the working groups and, while not enough, paid release days were allocated for meetings to discuss initiatives and directions, and

we budgeted for meetings with the Ministry in Wellington. (H. May, personal communication, August 2002)

Within the Ministry of Education, however, there were problems. Curriculum facilitators were not contract managers. According to Hamer, “the universities taught us about contract negotiations”:

We had no idea about costs. But it was an excellent proposal and we felt it would work because it was unaligned to any early childhood group, being based in a university, but also Helen May had childcare experience and Margaret Carr was from kindergarten. So we felt they would be acceptable to the sector. (C. Hamer, personal communication, September 2002)

May agreed that being non-aligned strengthened their proposal: “We didn’t choose organisations. We deliberately chose people we knew we could work with” (H. May, personal communication, August 2002). The contract was signed in December 1990 and the process of developing *Te Whāriki* started in earnest.

Background discussion papers, working documents and working groups

Once the contract was signed, the writers embarked on an ambitious 14-month consultative exercise that aimed to identify existing discourses on early childhood in all their diversity. The curriculum development process outlined in the contract was organised around specialist working groups in the areas of infants and toddlers, preschoolers, special education, home-based care, Pacific Island people, and Māori. These working groups were to develop guidelines that could be trialled, moderated and re-worked for the Ministry of Education’s advisory group.⁵ They would also consult with their networks for selective feedback on the early drafts of the guidelines.

A critical component was a set of background discussion papers prepared by the co-ordinators of the working groups. While these have not been published in their original form, most of the ideas they contain have appeared in subsequent writing about *Te Whāriki*. During 1991 and 1992 May wrote several papers (May, 1991b; 1991c; Early Childhood Curriculum Project, 1992h, 1992i) that outlined the considerations of a curriculum for infants and toddlers. These papers “acknowledge the international heritage of the early childhood curriculum as well as noting the distinctive features of early childhood education in Aotearoa–New Zealand” (May, 1991b, p. 2). In the conclusion to the same paper she wrote:

One of the tasks of the curriculum project will be to demonstrate a continuity of learning, caring, and development, (i.e. curriculum) from infancy to school age, but

5 The Ministry of Education selected its own advisory group, to some extent representative of the sector. This was originally chaired by Caryl Hamer and met regularly over 2 years to discuss the draft versions submitted by the Early Childhood Curriculum Project as part of milestone reports to the Ministry. Several of these meetings involved Helen May and Margaret Carr presenting material for consideration.

it will be important to ensure that within the common goals, the arrangement of the curriculum guidelines can articulate the distinctiveness of different developmental stages as well as different philosophical approaches to meeting these needs. (p. 7)

Carr (1991) identified several sources for the curriculum concepts:

- the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
- our knowledge of child development
- the role of the environment
- historical and cultural contexts. (p. 2)

She also identified three broad issues for consideration in the curriculum project. The first was the range of influences that had changed societal perspectives on the roles of families and of early childhood centres (or home-based care services) “that can provide a rich and responsive learning environment” (p. 3). The second issue was the complexity of an urbanised democracy:

We may still see ourselves as a democracy with unlimited social mobility and equality of opportunity, but the reality in the 1990s is one of increasing polarisation, unemployment and competition for jobs. (p. 4)

The third issue was the pluralist nature of multicultural society, “with a diversity of belief systems” (p. 5). These issues did not create “technical questions (how to do it), they create[d] philosophical questions (what are the goals)” (p. 2). Consequently, *Te Whāriki* would not be about content but would provide a framework for action, guided by philosophical principles. Underpinning these principles were universal goals and beliefs about the wellbeing of children and the culture of Aotearoa New Zealand as it affected early childhood care and education.

By the end of 1991 there was a set of draft principles and aims. May recalled an early meeting at which the Māori working group and the Māori members of other groups joined as one:

Tamati and Tilly Reedy presented the Project with a Māori curriculum framework based on the principle of empowerment. I can remember Tamati Reedy spent a day explaining ... the concepts and their origins in Te Ao Māori. It was a complete framework and included the five ‘wero’—aims for children. Margaret and I then worked with this framework to position the parallel domains for Pākehā, which later became the goals. These were not translations. (H. May, personal communication, August 2002)

May (2002) has also explained the origins of the document’s final name:

The title, *Te Whāriki*, suggested by Tamati Reedy, was a central metaphor. The early childhood curriculum was envisaged as a whāriki [which] translated as a woven mat for all to stand on. The Principles, Strands and Goals provided the framework which allowed for different programme perspectives to be woven into the fabric. (p. 32)

Subsequent discussions among the four lead writers focused on pedagogical assumptions, coupled with cultural and political aspirations. The curriculum for kōhanga reo focused on empowerment, contribution, and participation in society, and encompassed tino rangatiratanga (self-determination). It also went beyond a focus on the child to include whānau, hapū and iwi. The final version of *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996) reflects these discussions. As Carr and May (1999) explained:

The principles and aims of the curriculum are expressed in both Māori and English languages, but neither is an exact translation of the other: an acceptable cross-cultural structure ... was discussed, debated and transacted early in the curriculum development process. (pp. 57–58)

Working Document One: The Framework (Early Childhood Curriculum Project, 1992c) set out the guiding principles, aims and goals for the curriculum document, with a rider that:

further elaborations will be added to show what this means in the following contexts or settings: Māori Immersion; Tagata Pasifika; Infant Programmes; Home-Based; Toddler Programmes; Special Needs; Preschool Programmes; Bicultural [Programmes]. (p.1)

During 1992 the working groups developed these ‘elaborations’ in their own specialist areas and trialled them within their networks.

Jill Mitchell (1991), co-ordinator of the Special Needs Working Group, wrote that the project appeared to recognise “the right of all children to participate in a national curriculum irrespective of the extent or degree of their special needs” (p. 1). The group’s role was to elaborate on “what the curriculum statements and aims might mean in relation to children with special needs” (Early Childhood Curriculum Project, 1992g, p. 1). Each of the working groups was doing this work “firstly to test out the appropriateness of the framework and secondly, to provide a resource for the final document which will have a section on children with special needs” (p. 1). The section on special needs made it to the draft curriculum document (Ministry of Education, 1993a) but was removed in the final rewrite (Ministry of Education, 1996). Statements in the revised aims and goals about inclusion were seen by the Ministry as compensation for this omission. Not everyone saw this as adequate, though, arguing that the effect was to conceal (as opposed to revealing) the status of children with special needs.

The theme of a curriculum that merged developmental theory and sociocultural theory continued in Carr’s *Working Document Six* and *Working Document Seven* (Early Childhood Curriculum Project, 1992e, 1992f, 1992d). These examine the learning issues affecting preschoolers, as identified in the contemporary literature and by the team’s Preschool Programmes Working Group. These learning issues were categorised as: knowledge about people, places and things, and ‘know-how’ (skills and strategies); and attitudes towards learning:

The idea that children are developing more elaborated and useful ‘mini-theories’ or ‘working models’ about people, places and things in their lives is a useful one: such working theories contain a combination of knowledge-about, know-how, strategies, attitudes and expectations. (Early Childhood Curriculum Project, 1992e, p. 2)

This concept was expanded in *Working Document Seven*. Working theories were regarded as

increasingly empowering: useful for making sense of the world, having some control over what happens, problem-solving and further learning. Many of them will retain a magical and creative quality, and for many communities, such working theories about the world will be infused with a spiritual dimension. (p. 1)

The draft guidelines

Te Whāriki: Draft Guidelines for Developmentally Appropriate Programmes in Early Childhood Services (Ministry of Education, 1993a) was finally released in November 1993 and sent to all early childhood training providers, organisations and centres for a trial. May and Carr (1996) recalled that the Minister would not allow it to be called a draft curriculum “because it looked so different to the national school curriculum documents” (p. 63). The Ministry was also making a significant political statement in presenting two parallel curriculum documents that were “married” but retained a distinctive identity as Pākehā and Māori. Hamer recalled that it wasn’t a problem at the draft stage:

But when [the Māori document] went to the Minister before its final re-write, he refused to sign it off and demanded a translation. Well, it was sent to [the publishers] Learning Media who reported back that it was neither easy, nor appropriate to translate because the concepts were deeply Māori. (C. Hamer, personal communication, September 2002)

Eventually the Māori version was accepted and *Te Whāriki* became the first Ministry of Education document published in both Māori and English. It also broke new ground internationally: here was a national curriculum whose conceptual framework was based on the cultural and political beliefs of the minority indigenous people.

What happened between the draft and the final version?

Questions remain about what happened to the text of *Te Whāriki* once it had been trialled and evaluated by the sector. One can only speculate about the direction the Ministry of Education received from the then Minister, Lockwood Smith, during the final rewriting process. Examination of the text suggests that the political and economic agenda of the day was accommodated by including the language of accountability (Grace, 1990). The inclusion of learning outcomes had implications for assessment, a highly contested area that pits accountability and achievement measures against

beliefs about reflective teaching and qualitative understanding of children's learning. Hamer described the final part of the process:

Once the Ministry had collated the submissions on the draft, *Te Whāriki* then went to the Minister who set up his own advisory group. We didn't know who was on this group. After that, the Ministry contracted a writer who worked on the final draft. (C. Hamer, personal communication, September 2002)

There are marked differences between the draft and the final version, the major ones being the deletion of curricula developed by specialist working groups, the developmental continuum, the references, and the addition of "learning outcomes". These changes were regarded as a loss and were opposed by the writers (Carr and May, 1999, p. 63). However,

the early childhood community was relieved and somewhat surprised that the integral philosophy and framework of *Te Whāriki* survived the long complex political process from draft to final document. (p. 62)

A national curriculum for early childhood education was a cause for celebration in the sector. Aotearoa New Zealand's early childhood sector led the way internationally with a curriculum founded on an indigenous conceptual framework, which somehow managed to incorporate Māori and Western principles of learning and teaching alongside views of children as rights holders and citizens in a democratic society, and very 'kiwi' values about childhood in a country with a great backyard.

Embedding *Te Whāriki*

Despite the losses between the draft and final versions, there were some gains. Part of the negotiations for the development of *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996) included an undertaking by government to support the development of an assessment framework. Through research undertaken in the late 1990s, a formative assessment tool was developed, Learning Stories, based on a process of identifying children's learning dispositions and writing narratives about them (Carr, 2001). This resulted in a new set of resources, *Kei Tua o te Pae Assessment for Learning: Early Childhood Assessment Exemplars* (Ministry of Education, 2005). Both *Te Whāriki* and *Kei Tua o te Pae* have received international recognition as innovative examples of curriculum and assessment.

However, a quick overview of recent history illustrates that early childhood education policies, even when esteemed internationally, are vulnerable to political changes. The 1990s were dominated by neo-liberal economic theories, driving policies designed to enhance choice in a (supposedly) free market environment. The early childhood education (ECE) sector was adversely affected by a raft of policies dominated by a hands-off regulatory framework. Significant gains made to enhance the quality of provision during the 1980s were lost during the National Government's administration

from 1990 to 1993, which returned to the argument that the choice to have a child was private, and therefore education for that child was a private interest.

Under a Labour-led coalition government (1999–2008), spending in the New Zealand early childhood sector increased from NZ\$4 billion to more than NZ\$7 billion between 2002 and 2008, representing a shift both in fiscal priorities and in philosophical principles. A main driver underpinning the increased spending emerged from within the sector through the development of *Ngā Huarahi Arataki: Pathways to the Future* (Ministry of Education, 2002), a long-term strategic plan for early childhood. Consistent with government aims to increase participation in the workforce, and therefore access to early childhood services for working families, the strategic plan was founded on three key platforms: to promote children’s participation in ECE services; to improve the quality of ECE services; and to increase collaboration between agencies with an interest in ECE. *Te Whāriki* was firmly embedded within the discourse of quality, participation and collaboration, and research initiatives such as the Centres of Innovation (Ministry of Education, 2002) reflected this.

PART THREE:

***Te Whāriki* in 2012**

At the time of preparing this chapter the current National-led coalition government has also earmarked the ECE sector for investment and notes that, since the 2006/07 financial year, government subsidies have doubled from NZ\$617 million to \$1.3 billion in 2012 (Trevett, 2012). Minister of Education Hekia Parata has announced a budget freeze for most centres, but an injection of NZ\$110.9 million over the next 4 years for high-priority communities, with a particular focus on increasing participation rates from 94.7 percent to 98 percent by 2016 (Trevett, 2012).

So where does this leave *Te Whāriki*? Part Three (see also Chapter 14 of this volume) analyses the current economic, social and political landscape and its impact on policy in the early childhood sector to note similarities and differences between the early 1990s and 2012.

Current contexts

In 2009 Anne Smith claimed *Te Whāriki* as a taonga (treasure) encapsulating aspirations for children based on children’s rights. On a more sobering note, she observed that 2009 Budget cuts had effectively stalled the momentum towards improving quality services for children and for communities that had built up over recent years. The world-wide recession provided the Government with a rationale to alter and cut existing early childhood education policies (Te One & Dalli, 2010).

In 2012 there appears to be an unprecedented interest in the critical importance of the early years of a child’s life and the value of high-quality ECE. Substantial research

recognises that ECE of good quality has long-term beneficial educational, social, cultural and economic outcomes (see Mitchell, Wylie, & Carr, 2008). More recent research notes the high social and economic cost of a poor start in life (Commission on the Social Determinants of Health, 2008; Grimmond, 2011; New Zealand Government, 2011; Office of the Prime Minister’s Science Advisory Committee, 2011; Poulton, 2012) and identifies research gaps and issues within policy development and evaluation in the current climate. Overall, childhood is now considered a key period for investing in human capital development and reducing social inequities (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2012).

In response to this finding, Gluckman (Office of the Prime Minister’s Science Advisory Committee, 2011) recommended targeted investment for “increased access to and increased quality of, early childhood education for Māori and Pasifika whānau/families and for low decile communities” (p. 16). A targeted approach is supported in the Treasury’s 2012 Briefing to the Incoming Ministers (BIM), which argues for a smaller, more effective and efficient state services sector, with better expenditure prioritisation. Treasury recommends “further targeting of existing ECE funding to children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds” (New Zealand Treasury, 2012, p. 12). The Ministry of Education’s BIM states the need to strengthen links between the education system and the Government’s social and economic objectives through “carefully managed trade-offs” (Ministry of Education, 2012). The BIM promotes a vision of New Zealanders with the skills, knowledge and values to contribute to economic growth and prosperity.

At the heart of these briefings is an economic argument for targeted services. Arguments against this stance adopt a universal approach, based on all children’s right to services, and suggest that social equality is achieved through equitable funding arrangements (Herczog, 2012; May & Mitchell, 2009; Mitchell, 2012; Smith, 2012). In other words, ECE services for some children will cost more, but these costs should be as well as, not instead of, costs for ECE services for all children.

The current National-led coalition government has a goal of 98 percent of children participating in ECE by the time they start school and has recently announced substantial funding to support services in low socioeconomic areas to particularly encourage Māori and Pasifika children and families to engage in ECE (Te One, 2012). The relatively low participation rate in ECE for these target groups has been well documented by the Early Childhood Taskforce for Amazing Children (2011a). Not surprisingly, whānau/fanau want services that are culturally responsive and that respect reciprocal relationships inclusive of jointly negotiated goals for learning; in other words, where the principles of *Te Whāriki* are evident and clearly still relevant.

However, over the past 3 years policy changes in ECE have: reduced funding based on incentives for hiring qualified staff; cut requirements for qualified staff from

100 percent to 80 percent for over-2-year-olds, and to 50 percent for under-2-year-olds; ended the Centres of Innovation research programme; and reduced centrally funded professional development. Long-held aspirations for improved staff:child ratios for under-2s were quickly shattered in 2009 by announcements by the then Minister of Education, Anne Tolley. While some hope was restored that the level of trained staff would be raised over time, there have been no new announcements to indicate progress here. Many of these changes took effect immediately. Carmen Dalli reflected:

The regulatory environment in New Zealand does not help; in other words, centres are not compelled by regulations to staff their under-twos areas with qualified teachers and thus the age-old practice of putting your least-experienced staff in the under-twos area persists in many centres. In this way, *Te Whāriki* has not resulted in improving the quality of under-two year olds' experiences in group-based ECE as it has for older children. (C. Dalli, personal communication, July 2012)

Current practices

After almost 20 years as a national curriculum, *Te Whāriki* is now embedded in the early childhood sector. Its durability perhaps lies in an underlying philosophy based on principles of equity, empowerment, community engagement and holistic development. Dalli notes:

These are all still relevant and will continue to be so. Its status as an 'open curriculum' to me is a key strength; that it is a bicultural curriculum is another; that it reflects key values of this country; that it treats learning holistically rather than as discrete domains of knowledge. (C. Dalli, personal communication, July 2012)

Maureen Woodhams, National President of the New Zealand Playcentre Federation, suggests that *Te Whāriki* has not only created a coherent, agreed-upon focus for ECE; it has protected the sector from

increased 'technicalisation' of ECE practice. *Te Whāriki* has forced us as ECE educators (both of young students and of adults teaching students) to remain holistic, open-ended, and construct our own whāriki. (M. Woodhams, personal communication, July 2012)

Woodhams believes that *Te Whāriki* has been relatively unchallenged in New Zealand because:

Its development was not dominated by one part of the sector, such as a theoretical perspective, but actively included tangata whenua, parent-led, teacher-led perspectives although some of the inclusiveness was lost in the transition from draft to final. *Te Whāriki* foregrounds the right and opportunity for communities of families (I include their professional support in this) to define and work out the aspirations they have for their children. (M. Woodhams, personal communication, July 2012)

Norma Roberts and Helen Keats, both kindergarten senior teachers with more than 20 years' experience, comment:

Te Whāriki has had a really strong influence. We've now got a generation of teachers who only know *Te Whāriki*. Before we tried to adjust to the new curriculum by saying it was what we had always done and we used Piaget's theories which seemed to focus on individuals making their own choices about what to do and how to do it. Now we have moved to using sociocultural theories and teachers are only trained using *Te Whāriki* (H. Keats & N. Roberts, personal communication, July 2012).

When *Te Whāriki* was first released, the main focus of professional development was familiarisation with the framework. In 2003 Maggie Haggerty, a senior lecturer at Victoria University, described the response to the 1993 *Te Whāriki* trial as "overwhelmingly positive" (M. Haggerty, personal communication, September 2002). Dalli acknowledges that professional development to support *Te Whāriki* since its introduction has helped teachers to interpret it within their practice in a more sophisticated way than in the 1990s:

Resources based on the framework of *Te Whāriki*—like *Kei Tua o te Pae*, the Quality Journey, the Learning Stories approach to assessment and evaluation—have contributed to broadening teachers' talk and practice beyond the terminology of traditional areas of play and table top activities to include a wider understanding of the holistic nature of early childhood learning. (C. Dalli, personal communication, July 2012)

In 2007 Peter Moss observed that New Zealand was "leading a wave of early childhood innovation" (p. 27). More particularly, he argued that New Zealand's integrated system of ECE services brought some coherence to delivery as well as addressing issues of equity and access. His analysis clearly links the principles of *Te Whāriki* to early education as

a broad and holistic concept that covers children, families and communities, a concept of 'education-in-its-broadest-sense' in which learning and care really are inseparable and connected to many other purposes besides. (Moss, 2008, pp. 7–8)

Dalli noted this wider impact alongside her other concerns:

I think this broader understanding is evident in the reports from the Centre of Innovation projects which illustrate how some teaching teams have run with the ideas in *Te Whāriki*—the principles and strands—to create very exciting ECE programmes. (C. Dalli, personal communication, July 2012)

The fact that the national curriculum was based on principles and had no prescriptive content (e.g., disciplinary domains such as mathematics or science) was, and to some extent remains, challenging for the sector, particularly when asked to articulate what children are learning:

Initially we worked only with the goals and strands but now we focus much more on the principles. Now we see more and more evidence of the principles of *Te Whāriki*

in the statements about philosophy. Teachers are always discussing the principles and referring to them, sometimes at the expense of content knowledge. (A. Collings, H. Keats, & N. Robertson, personal communication, July 2012)

This is reinforced by Dalli's observations:

Teacher education programmes have changed dramatically too because of *Te Whāriki* and these have had flow-on effects—such as creating a more articulate workforce. On the downside, the danger has been that the skills associated with using 'table top' activities to their full potential may not be getting the full attention they traditionally had in teacher education programmes—with the risk that they become time-fillers rather than activities/experiences that are understood for their full learning potential. (C. Dalli, personal communication, July 2012)

Challenges: From concept to reality

Dalli (2011) is one of many to observe that, despite widespread acceptance at the time, possibly tinged with relief, the curriculum did not explicate aims, objectives and measurable outcomes for learning. *Te Whāriki's* child-centred pedagogy, with its rights-based framework (Te One, 2009), is "neither a guaranteed outcome in day-to-day practice, nor necessarily an unproblematic one" (Dalli, 2011, p. 3). As early as 1996 Joy Cullen identified tensions between theoretical understanding and practice arising from *Te Whāriki*. While this has been ameliorated to some extent, new critiques of *Te Whāriki* have emerged (see, for example, Alvestad, Duncan, & Berge, 2009; Dalli, 2011). Challenges for the past decade have been *how* to recognise learning, *what* to record, and *how* to document. In terms of current thinking, Natalie Cook, an experienced professional development facilitator with a background in education and care services, comments:

Te Whāriki is the lens through which teachers recognise learning. Sometimes it is the only lens by which learning is recognised. Content knowledge and additional theories and frameworks can be overlooked as valuable tools for understanding how children learn. (N. Cook, personal communication, July 2012)

Woodhams adds a different perspective:

Being non-prescriptive has been identified as a weakness by some, but I disagree—it is only a weakness if one approaches education from a managerial perspective of expecting the exact implementation of practices in every case. This is anti the empowerment of parents/children/whānau which is the foundation of Playcentre (and anti-professionalism in the teacher-led part of the sector). Being non-prescriptive does mean that it is harder to 'teach'. In my experience this is equally true for qualified/trained teachers as for trained Playcentre educators, and depends on applying theory to practice and experience/confidence. (M. Woodhams, personal communication, July 2012)

Assessment in the early years was revolutionised by Margaret Carr’s dispositional, transactional framework for Learning Stories, which arguably bridged the gap between curriculum and practice because Carr positioned assessment as *embedded* in curriculum rather than as a separate process. Considerable resources have been invested in developing Learning Stories (Carr, Lee, & Jones, 2004, 2007, 2009; Carr & Lee, 2012). Smith (2011) notes *Te Whāriki*’s focus on motivational aspects of learning rather than on fragmented skills and knowledge, and argues that:

It encourages teachers to support children’s ongoing learning dispositions—for example, to persevere with difficulties rather than giving up and avoiding failure, difficulty or negative judgements from others. Dispositions to learn are ‘habits of mind that dispose the learner to interpret, edit, and respond to experiences in characteristic ways’. (Carr, 1997, p.2) (cited in Smith, 2011, p. 153)

This is not always straightforward for teachers, and has proved challenging:

The curriculum provides us with little support to effectively recognise and document progression in children’s learning. For example, how learning becomes increasingly complex with higher order thinking resulting in transformation, creativity and innovation are difficult constructs to identify within *Te Whāriki*. Teachers need to understand the theories. (N. Cook, personal communication, July 2012)

The change to assessment practices as a result of Learning Stories has been profound, and, notwithstanding ongoing critique (see Blaiklock, 2008; Hedges, 2007), Learning Stories and the exemplars provided in *Kei Tua o te Pae*

help turn *Te Whāriki* into a reality ... they preserve the holistic nature of children’s learning, are sensitive to context and acknowledge the complexity of children’s learning. (Smith, 2011, p. 156)

Challenges have also emerged from recent OECD reporting on early childhood education in Aotearoa New Zealand (Taguma, Litjens, & Makowiecki, 2012). The OECD regularly appraises, among other measures, the quality of early childhood education provision across its member states. According to the OECD (Taguma et al., 2012),

a common curriculum framework helps ensure an even level of quality across different providers, supports staff to provide stimulating environments for children and supports parents to better engage. (p. 7)

They describe *Te Whāriki* as “a progressive and cogent document regarding the orientation and aims of ECE” and one which “emphasises the importance of and respect for cultural values and diversity” (Taguma et al., 2012, p. 25). Overall, New Zealand ranks highly on international measures (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2012). Dalli suggests that

a key reason for its continued good press is that it is based on principles that are universally valued within the sector as well as more generally in New Zealand society. (C. Dalli, personal communication, July 2012)

That said, the OECD report suggested that implementation of *Te Whāriki* could be strengthened by learning from other countries' approaches to:

- strengthening parental involvement in curriculum design or implementation;
- reflecting on children's agency (rights) and child-initiated play; and
- further improving the communication and leadership skills of staff for effective implementation. (p. 25)

The Early Childhood Taskforce, while acknowledging the ongoing relevance of *Te Whāriki's* content, recommends a comprehensive review of its implementation (New Zealand Government, 2011, p. 106). Drawing on national Education Review Office (ERO) reports, the Taskforce notes that reports "while valuable, are insufficient for an informed assessment [of the implementation of *Te Whāriki* in practice] to be made" (p. 111). For example, the ERO report *Implementing Self Review in Early Childhood Services* (2009) noted ERO's own limitations, arguing that the wide variation between services indicated that more work to support effective implementation of self-review was needed to realise the full potential of *Te Whāriki*.⁶ For example, in attending to children's social and emotional competence, 45 percent of services were highly effective and the remaining 55 percent ranged from mostly effective (38 percent), through somewhat effective (14 percent) to ineffective (3 percent) (Education Review Office, 2011).

One further challenge remains. The ERO review of partnership with Māori whānau in 2012 noted that, while 78 percent of services had built positive relationships with whānau, only 10 percent had built the "effective and culturally responsive partnerships" required for meaningful dialogue and exchange (Education Review Office, 2012, n.p.). *Te Whāriki's* status as an international 'first' that gave primacy to the image of an empowered Māori child with a rich, meaningful and relevant cultural repertoire is contradicted by current discourses that class Māori tamariki as "at risk and under privileged" (May, 2009, p. 300). Dalli (personal communication, July 2012) notes that the aim of a truly bicultural curriculum remains "a distant lodestar".

Emerging critique: A sign of good health

Many have noted the recent accumulation of critical evaluations of *Te Whāriki*. These range from pedagogical, pragmatic concerns about a disconnect between aims and content, where teachers use *Te Whāriki* to justify existing practices, to concerns that the transformational potential of *Te Whāriki's* aspirations towards a socially just society remain unrealised. Duhn (2006) reminds us also of the function of a curriculum as

6 The Education Review Office is trialling a new self-review process in 2012/13.

a potentially technicist instrument. In the same vein, Gibbons notes that, on the one hand, by drawing on the sociology of childhood the intent of *Te Whāriki's* principles can be seen as empowering the child to learn and grow; while, on the other hand, there is an image of an endangered child, subject to increased surveillance authorised by government policies and practices (Gibbons, 2005, cited in May, 2009). Sandy Farquhar (2010) extends the debate with her critical interpretation of *Te Whāriki's* aspirations, seen in current terms:

The competent capable learner is now a child suited to the needs of capitalism; a flexible worker adapted to the ever-changing requirements of the market ... Each child must become a private citizen, self-responsible, self-governing, multicultural and cosmopolitan. This child is managed by centralised mechanisms, such as standards and testing. (Farquhar, 2010, p. 192)

The new imperative for education to be focused on skills and knowledge for the economy is clear in the Ministry of Education's BIM (2012). Carmen Dalli (personal communication, July 2012) noted that

the current educational discourse of 'measuring outcomes' within a context of economic austerity and fiscal constraint is putting increased pressure on educational agencies to produce evidence of the difference that the educational 'spend' makes on outcomes.

This could be a challenge for an open-ended curriculum that resists predetermined outcomes. When set alongside Farquhar's analysis, this possibility signals a distinct change in educational priorities. Concerns about this sea change were expressed by a group of kindergarten senior teachers:

The current government focus seems to be on quantifying outcomes rather than qualifying learning. We need to make sure *Te Whāriki* sits in context with other early childhood lenses. Teachers fear National Standards may replace *Te Whāriki*—that the government wants us to prove educational outcomes rather than improve them. Introducing National Standards into primary school is really concerning. How will that affect the early childhood curriculum framework? What pressure will [the] National [Government] place on ECE? How will *Te Whāriki* be placed in response to these? Will training providers gear teachers up to talk about this? (A. Collings, H. Keats, & N. Roberts, personal communication, July 2012)

Equally concerning is the lack of progress towards developing distinctive practices for under-2-year-olds, the biggest growth area in the sector and one in need of urgent attention if the present government's priorities are to be taken seriously:

One disappointment I have about ECE in 2012 is that despite *Te Whāriki* highlighting that the curriculum for under-2 is a specialised one, and not a scaled-down version of the 3- or 4-year-old programme, the transformations that have occurred in programmes

for 3- to 4-year-olds are not visible to the same extent for younger children. For example, there is not enough study focused on the under-2s in teacher education programmes across the country. (C. Dalli, personal communication, July 2012)

Conclusion

Te Whāriki has been analysed, admired, praised, criticized, deconstructed and debunked, but it has not been a dead document lying on a shelf. (Smith, 2011, p. 157)

This chapter in the previous edition ended with a warning:

the early childhood sector in Aotearoa New Zealand would do well to remember that previous governments have overturned widely agreed longer-term policy directions in the past, as the experiences of the education sector in the late 1980s and early 1990s show. (Te One, 2003, p. 42)

When first released in 1996 as the official curriculum for early childhood education in Aotearoa New Zealand, *Te Whāriki* gained widespread acceptance throughout the early childhood sector. At that time both sides of the political spectrum used the economic crisis of the late 1980s as a rationale for retrenchment, restructuring and reform of the state education sector. Similar reforms are expected in the political and economic environment of 2012. Gains made in the early childhood sector under the previous Labour-led coalition government are under threat as the vision espoused by *Pathways to the Future* (Ministry of Education, 2002), the long-term early childhood education strategic plan, are superseded by the findings of the Early Childhood Taskforce (New Zealand Government, 2011). Debates about targeted (as opposed to universal) services, the need for trained teachers and learning outcomes—similar issues to those debated during the times in which *Te Whāriki* emerged—are on the education agenda once more. The school sector has had National Standards imposed and charter schools are mooted.

These policies bring new challenges to the education service, its teaching force and its national curriculum documents. The ECE sector is not immune to the trickle-down effects of school sector impacts but, unlike during the activism of the 1980s and 1990s, when key influencers in the sector strategically and deliberately united to cement the status of *Te Whāriki* and to influence *Pathways to the Future*, the question now is: Can the ECE sector push back as the hard-won status of the profession is threatened?

This chapter presents an overview of the socio-political environment at the time *Te Whāriki* was developed and first released, as well as an account of perspectives on *Te Whāriki* today. The draft version of *Te Whāriki* reflected the idea that curricula need to be culturally and nationally appropriate. Internationally this notion has been widely recognised and supported, and *Te Whāriki* remains a model curriculum (OECD,

2012). In the 1990s *Te Whāriki* created a point of solidarity in an unsympathetic and at times adverse political climate (Dalli, 2002). In 2002 the release of *Ngā Huarahi Arataki: Pathways to the Future* (Ministry of Education, 2002), the long-term strategic plan, influenced the regulatory environment so that the principles of *Te Whāriki* were included as measures assessed for compliance within the regulations governing licensed early childhood services. Now the sector faces an uncertain future as it awaits policy announcements following the Early Childhood Taskforce's recommendations to the Government. The question of the full realisation of *Te Whāriki* requires multiple-level actions through integrated policy (regulations and funding), research, and ongoing training and qualifications.

With or without administrative sanctions, *Te Whāriki* is on the educational map. Its durability lies in a conceptual framework that interweaves educational theory, political standpoints and a profound acknowledgement of the importance of culture. That remains unchallenged. The last words of this chapter are left to one of its original authors:

Broadly, I would say *Te Whāriki's* strengths are that it continues to fascinate and interest and challenge—both internationally and amongst teachers in New Zealand. (H. May, personal communication, June 2012)

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