

Early Education



Volume 65 Spring / Summer 2019

- Politics of funding for Playcentre
- Walking the talk: Leadership in ECE
- Te Whariki and inclusive practice
- Soft skills of collaborative reading
- Joining a Kahui Ako
- Quality in ECE in China



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Editors

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The University of Waikato

Dr Karyn Aspden,
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Associate Professor Sally Peters,
The University of Waikato

Design and layout

Margaret Drummond

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Contributions

Contributions of articles and photos are welcome from the early childhood community.

Early Education welcomes:

- Innovative practice papers with a maximum of 3,500 words, plus an abstract or professional summary of 150 words and up to five keywords.
- Research informed papers with a maximum of 3,500 words, plus an abstract or professional summary of 150 words, and up to five keywords.
- Think pieces with a maximum of 1500 words.
- Commentaries on management matters with a maximum of 1500 words.
- Book or resource reviews with a maximum of 1000 words.

Contributions can be sent to the 2020 editors

Claire McLachlan:
cmclachlan@waikato.ac.nz

Karyn Aspden:
k.m.aspden@massey.ac.nz

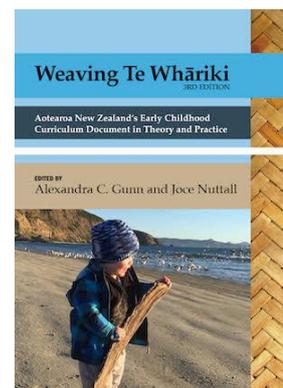
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Weaving Te Whāriki

Aotearoa New Zealand's early childhood curriculum document in theory and practice (3rd ed.)

Reviewed by Vijaya Tatineni

Gunn, A., & Nuttall, J. (Eds.) (2020). *Weaving Te Whāriki: Aotearoa New Zealand's early childhood curriculum document in theory and practice* (3rd ed.). Wellington, New Zealand: NZCER Press. ISBN: 978-1-98-854280-5
Cost \$65.00. Available from NZCER Press . Digital kindle edition is available on Amazon(\$17.25)



Edited by Alex Gunn and Joce Nuttall, this book is divided into three sections articulating various viewpoints on the new and refreshed Te Whāriki, the early childhood curriculum in New Zealand, released in 2017. The first section is: 'The development of Te Whāriki', includes four chapters that discuss the rationale for the rewriting Te Whāriki (Te One & Ewens) and reconceptualising professional learning (Cooper et al.). In addition, there is a conference paper by Lady Tilly Reedy and a profound understanding of the curriculum document contributed by Rameka and Soutar.

The second section of the book, 'Te Whāriki in Practice', includes seven chapters covering the challenges in teacher practice (Ritchie and Skerret), implementation with Pacific Islanders (Mara), working with infants and toddlers (White), and children with disabilities and their families (McCartney). In addition, there are chapters on assessment (Lee et al.), technology and child learning (Gunn and Reeves), and communities of learning (Gibbons and Farquhar).

The third section, with four chapters, positions Te Whāriki in the international contexts, a chapter by Marilyn Fleer comparing Te Whāriki with the Australian based Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF). Other international contexts include the Nordic and Danish perspectives on Te Whāriki (Broström), and the English view of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) by Wood and Nuttall. An interesting chapter on, "Rereading and reactivating Te Whāriki through post human childhood study lenses" by Tesar and Arndt shows the scope of Te Whāriki, which includes updated versions of research methodologies.

As an ECE teacher in New Zealand (NZ) and higher education lecturer in Australia, I think this book has a potential to impart some valuable lessons to any aspiring early childhood teacher. Although the three sections and the various chapters are essentially about the new and refreshed version of the bicultural early childhood curriculum, Te Whāriki, it brings forth chapters that encourage children to have a voice, a dire necessity in today's digital world with high rates of community disengagement. Te Whāriki is based on the profoundly

important Kaupapa Māori pedagogy, with the child in the centre protected by whānau (family), kaiako (teacher) and by the principles of empowerment, holistic development, family and community, and relationships. The outcomes for children are their well-being, belonging, contribution, communication and exploration. In the revised version of Te Whāriki, there is an inclusiveness in ways that educators are encouraged to look beyond the limits of the underpinning theories of the curriculum document, yet keep the cultural teaching of the child in the centre and protected and nurtured by the whānau and kaiako.

The conceptual themes that run through this book include children's voice in "curriculum construction, assessment and evaluation" (p. 2) and "recognition of children's efforts with teachers to create meaningful curriculum for all" (p. 2). These themes serve a useful purpose in teacher education, which is essential in moulding the thinking of preservice teachers and aspiring graduates of early childhood teacher education. Exposing students to this world-renowned early childhood curriculum and helping them contextualise to their own countries fulfils what this book says in Chapter 2, that "Knowledge and power set me free" (p. 25). Understanding another point of view will expand the thinking of early childhood teachers, a much-encouraged aspiration for the readers of this book. The involvement of the child in the creation of the curriculum is necessary because as teachers can only teach for the present job environments. Future generations will think differently and therefore the child in the present needs to have a voice during curriculum development.

Chapter 5, written by Ritchie and Skerret looks with empathy on teachers dealing with an increasing cultural super diversity in its nation, and positions multiculturalism in this bicultural early childhood curriculum. They note that the Ministry of Education (2017, p. 3) argues the curriculum must be inclusive of all immigrants 'whose welcome comes in the context of this partnership'. Another chapter (2) is clear in its attitudes and indications of the word aroha, a term translated as love, but a love with responsibilities and commitment and contributions of its members to the Whānau and community (Reedy, 1995 as cited in Gunn & Nuttall, 2020). Implicating, perhaps that the other cultures and its members will be acknowledged as they learn to contribute to the

bicultural society of NZ. This is an attitude I would like my students to learn during their course on Diversity, which discuss engagement with families and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities. Inclusiveness is not just tokenistic partnerships with other cultures, but pluralistic in nature as cultures learn to interact with each other. This is a sign of respect to all cultures.

There is much to learn from these chapters for postgraduate students as they examine educational leadership and curriculum development in other countries like New Zealand, especially the chapter by Fler which compares of EYLF and Te Whāriki. While the book's aspirations for the implementation of this curriculum are insightful and sophisticated in their articulation, it does not ignore the fact that there are challenges to the implementation of Te Whāriki due to funding realities, initial teacher education, professional development and the understanding of the debates around Te Tiriti Waitangi and its implications for the early childhood curriculum. The chapter "Deeper understanding of Te Whāriki" discusses the many challenges faced by teachers in implementing the curriculum and says that much hard work is to be done, "in order to actualise the promise" (Rameka & Soutar, 2020, p. 53). The book also gives scope for postgraduate students to be aspirational yet practical when creating curriculums for early childhood sector in their own practice. Postgraduate students should, however, keep in view the contextual factors of its local and national values of education, include children in its planning and embed it in theoretical and research-based pedagogy. Overall, I found this book a very worthwhile read.

Gunn, A., & Nuttall, J. (Eds.). (2020). *Weaving Te Whāriki: Aotearoa New Zealand's early childhood curriculum document in theory and practice* (3rd ed.). Wellington, New Zealand: NZCER Press.

Ministry of Education. (2017). *Te Whāriki He whāriki mātauranga mō ngā mokopuna o Aotearoa Early childhood curriculum*. Retrieved from <https://education.govt.nz/assets/Documents/Early-Childhood/ELS-Te-Whariki-Early-Childhood-Curriculum-ENG-Web.pdf>