

Early Education



Volume 68 Autumn 2023

- *Reo Rua Pukapuka Pikitia: Strategies for developing Te Reo Rangatira*
- *Talanoa, vā and picturebook pedagogy to support Pacific identities in a kindergarten setting*
- *Using social stories as an intentional teaching strategy*
- *Children's mental health in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic*
- *Exploring the current climate of mathematics in early childhood education*
- *A data-informed look at sustained shared thinking*





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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.

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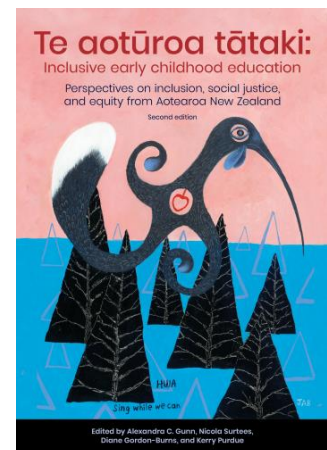
Book review

Te aotururoa tataki: Inclusive early childhood education: Perspectives on inclusion, social justice, and equity from Aotearoa New Zealand (2nd Edition)

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Te aotūroa tātaki: Inclusive early childhood education: Perspectives on inclusion, social justice, and equity from Aotearoa New Zealand (2nd Edition)



Reviewer: Tessa Putze

Gunn, A. C., Surtees, N., Gordon-Burns, D., & Purdue, K. (Eds.). (2020). *Te aotūroa tātaki: Inclusive early childhood education: Perspectives on inclusive early childhood education* (Second ed.). Wellington, New Zealand: NZCER Press.

ISBN: 978-1-98-854281-2

As an early childhood practitioner, reading *Te Aotūroa Tātaki* has been invaluable to my own understandings of inclusion. Each chapter is powerful. From opening the first page I had to indulge it all. Of course, Christmas break did give me the time to dive in. So, I do hope that this review helps kaiako to utilise the book as a tool to strengthen inclusive practice in their community. The authors acknowledge inclusive practice as “a sense of doing rather than of being done” (p. 242). We, as early childhood practitioners, have a fundamental role in inclusive education and building on the messages in this book.

This book gives an expansive exploration of inclusion. It widens the scope of inclusion to “women, people with disabilities, people identifying with trans¹, gender fluid, and non-binary gender experiences, sexuality diverse persons, Māori, pacific peoples, culturally and religiously diverse people, children and young people, people who are overweight or obese, people living in poverty, people with religious beliefs, and others with perceived differences” (p. 4). Inclusion is not limited to the diverse communities covered in this book, just as the editors of the book acknowledge. It is up to us to reflect on our own practices and uncover our own biases, to embrace and respect differences

in our communities. You might ask yourself, 'How do we know we are doing this?', 'How do we know we are being inclusive?' I would like to share this quote from the book as we can only progress from here:

"...kaiako who value difference as positive and who have positive attitudes towards human rights to full participation in communities of which they are a part, are progressing inclusion" (p. 239).

The different chapters highlight how essential reflective practice is in order to identify and challenge power relationships between what is viewed as 'normal' and the marginalization of differences to the perceived 'norm'. Most of the chapters draw on post-structural theory and critical theory to challenge how practices of kaiako, everyday language, policies and resources could be contributing to barriers of inclusion. Janette Kelly-Ware and Maggie Lyall in Chapter 11 and Alexandra Gunn et al. in Chapter 12 challenge and problematise the fixed perspective of gender being male or female and the stereotypes around gender still prevalent today. These assumptions around gender have negative implications for gender diverse tamariki and whānau. The authors advocate for a fluid understanding of gender and to challenge and resist discourses that position tamariki as a 'girl' or 'boy'. Practical advice is given on how to create spaces where kaiako, tamariki and whānau are welcomed through an open and honest space around gender diversity and trans and making this visible and welcomed in the language and resources used (see p. 189 -191 and p. 204 – 207). Chapter 9 also highlights this within the context of diverse family structures in which assisted reproductive technologies have been used. These chapters are great for kaiako to reference when challenging the imposition of gender norms.

Another key message in the book also draws upon how we can use our observations of the local environment to identify barriers to participation. A theory I found enlightening to

my own reflective practice is the materialist approach that was used by Nicola Surtees in Chapter 7 to assist our understandings around autistic tamariki. The concept of intra-action is used to describe how "people, spaces, objects, and practices" can affect one another. She reflects on how the intra-action of these things can make participation for autistic tamariki difficult or, alternatively, can positively influence and inspire active participation for all. It is about seeing the environment for "possibility not problems." It is seeing how the actions of tamaiti "are communicating something important about themselves or the environment around them" (p. 120). Kerry Purdue et al. in Chapter 6 (see p. 100) give some powerful, 'to-the-point' questions for kaiako to reflect on their language and actions used around disability that goes together with a materialist approach.

I particularly enjoyed Richard Manning's account about his morning walks alongside *Te Awa Waiwhetu* with his young tamaiti, James Manning, who was four years old at the time (Chapter 4). It goes to show how impactful being engaged with the landscape can be in gaining knowledge and relationships with local whānau, hapu and iwi. These walks were encouraged and advised by Erenoa Puketapu Hetet and pave the way for a place-based education that underpins the principles of *Te Tiriti o Waitangi and Te Whairiki* (2017). I strongly encourage this chapter to be read to really benefit from its messages of building authentic relationships with the land and tangata whenua, a fundamental element of place-based education. When considering a place-based education in the context of Aotearoa, New Zealand, Sonja and Angus Macfarlane in Chapter 3, give a helpful outline of the principles of *Te Tiriti o Waitangi*; Partnership, Protection and Participation (p. 4449). In Chapter 2, Mere Skerrett draws attention to how colonisation, to this day, impacts on the marginalisation of tamariki Māori as particular practices and values are favoured from a Pakeha worldview. She provides a compelling argument that inclusion of tamariki Māori will not be realised until there is "a shift in

discourse from early childhood teachers being 'teachers' to early years teachers being 'bilingual language teachers'" with reference to recent Teaching Council (2019) programme approval and review requirements (p. 32–33).

This book celebrates the richness and diversity of Aotearoa, New Zealand. It brings to attention the counter-narratives experienced by those marginalised by dominant cultural perspectives and norms. Rikke Betts and Sonya Gaches in Chapter 5 highlight the experiences of refugees in Aotearoa and how kaiako can use welcoming language that invite the rich expertise that refugee families bring. Chapter 5 outlines specific strategies for kaiako to use (and extend on) in order to learn from and use the home languages of diverse families in early childhood settings (p. 82). Chapter 10 is intriguing in its exploration of religion and spirituality. Bradley Hannigan identifies the contradiction between an education system built on a secular society ("where spirituality and religion are treated as private business" p. 160) and the curriculum document, *Te Whariki*, 2017, that recognises and upholds spirituality. Again, reflective practice is essential, and questions are given on p. 170 to initiate discussion around responsiveness to diverse religions and spirituality.

All of the chapters stipulate the importance of being flexible, open-minded and respectful in our teaching pedagogies regarding individual differences. This is opposed to thinking that one teaching approach will be effective for all children. Melanie Wong in Chapter 8 illustrates this in relation to giftedness in ECE. Kerry Purdue, Chapter 13, provides key insights in relation to holistic practices that invite tamariki and whānau to feel empowered in the choices they make in their physical well-being and health rather than discriminatory practices. With all the chapters considered together, a core message I have taken has been around the critical work we do as early childhood kaiako to advocate for an inclusive education that is built on reflective practice, action and diversifying teaching approaches.

This book is one to be at-the-ready when advocating for and reflecting on inclusive practice for kaiako at all levels of experience. I do note, just as the authors do, that it is to be used in conjunction with other resources, tools and literature to make for an inclusive practice that continues to progress and shift with the ever-changing landscape of early childhood communities.

Footnote

1. Trans* reflects an awareness that many different forms for naming gender and senses of gender identity are proliferating in social and political life (Gunn, Surtees, Gordon-Burns, & Purdue, 2020, p. 3).