In April 2009 the Ministry of Education, Aotearoa New Zealand, plans to launch the Kaupapa Māori Learning and Assessment Exemplar (KMLAE) resource. Work on the resource began in 2003 and focused on developing Kaupapa Māori frameworks and exemplars of assessment. The intention was to explore cultural contexts and methods that contribute significantly toward nurturing all aspects of each child’s growth and development through assessment. The key principle underpinning this work is the utmost belief in the transformative power of ancient Māori knowledges as a foundation for Māori theorising and development. It is critical that Māori knowledge should not have to be validated by western theory and constructs. This article strongly argues that the rhetoric around reconceptualising or any other ‘ising’ is based on and privileges western theorising. This presentation will draw upon and validate Māori theorising about the world and the centrality of these truths to Māori development.

Kupu whakataki: Introduction.
A Kaupapa Māori approach to assessment privileges and empowers Māori children, and insists that the concept of a powerful, rich Māori child be at the heart of understandings about learning and assessment (Rameka, 2006). Māori children’s cultural capital is acknowledged and valued and their learning achievements are celebrated. Durie (2006) argues that celebrating success is important, but more importantly that Māori progress normalises success. Kaupapa Māori assessment is a powerful vehicle for the normalisation of success for Māori children and whānau. Tikanga Māori, Māori traditions, history and language are regarded as key elements in establishing the over-arching philosophy, theories and processes of the Kaupapa Māori Learning and Assessment Exemplar Project (Te Whatu Pokeka).

Te Whatu Pokeka: Kaupapa Māori Learning and Assessment Exemplar
Te Whatu Pokeka is the name given to this project. It describes the weaving of a traditional baby wrap made of softened muka from the harakeke plant. The tight and intricate weaving of these strands strengthens the outer layer of the wrap to shelter the baby from the elements. Carefully woven into the inside of the baby wrap were very fine feathers taken from the inside of the albatross wings, to provide warmth, comfort, security and refuge. As a metaphor this identifies a place of protection, warmth and safety, a place in which the baby will grow and develop. The Pokeka takes the shape of the child as he or she learns and grows, therefore, within the context of this project, the assessment is determined and shaped by the child.

Te Kaupapa o Te Whatu Pokeka: The philosophy of Te Whatu Pokeka
It was agreed in the initial discussions of Te Whatu Pokeka that the intent was to build an image of the Māori child specifically for this project. The search for this image began in a place and space long before any human existence. There was a belief that the answer to any question about learning, growing and development was grounded within a matrix of complexity, layered with multiple meanings at varying levels of consciousness. Key concepts and ideas from personal narratives contributed to building the philosophical foundation of this project. It was soon discovered that the key themes which emerged from the narratives related to three contexts: Māori creation stories as the starting point for any search for knowledge about te ao Māori; the conception and birth of a child as the recipient of this knowledge; and processes related to learning and practice as the enactment of this knowledge. It was discovered that across all three contexts were concepts of potential, evolution and intelligibility. This in itself was an amazing enlightenment which confirmed the nature of holism and the connectedness embedded in te ao Māori. The following discussion focuses on these concepts and contexts which were considered critical elements when working with and alongside Māori children within an early childhood context.

After many discussions and conversations, it was decided that a commonly used tauparapara would be the basis on which to build the philosophy of Te Whatu Pokeka. According to Rewi (2005) a tauparapara is the first utterance heard by an opening speaker in the many formal situations which are determined by tikanga Māori and Māori kawa. It is a tribal chant containing traditional or philosophical statements which usually contain genea-
logical references or links to whakapapa. It has also been described by Pat Höhepa (personal conversation, July, 2000), a Māori elder and scholar from Ngāpūhi, as a process which summons our ancestors to return and guide the ritual taking place. As with this project, we seek guidance from te ao wairua, as this resource begins its journey.

This tauparapara is acknowledged across various iwi and as with other accounts differs according to local tribal history. While variations are not unusual, there are general themes and concepts which are common. The following interpretations of the tauparapara were developed specifically for Te Wāhau Pokeka.

Te tauparapara
Links to ways of knowing
Following are general interpretations of different phases of the tauparapara with links to what children possess and bring with them to the learning context.

Te kore, te po
These concepts identify different periods of time and space. It was within these periods that the Māori child's legends, history, identity, symbols, knowledge codes and language were created. These are concepts that influence what children know and bring with them to any learning situation. Therefore, this is where māhiotanga is situated. Mead (2003) believes that people or children are not just a biological self but are connected to their history and traditions. An example of this is highlighted by Tilly Reedy (2003) who said that her ancestors left her:

...my whakapapa, my genealogical links ... to Maui, the demi-god of Māori mythology; to Paione, the god who arrived in New Zealand on the back of a whale ... I can trace my ancestry back to Maui who fished this land up out of the sea. (p. 52)

Tilly Reedy, through her stories, reflects a total connectedness to her history.

Te kukune, te pupuke, te hihiri, te mahara and te manako
These ideas describe the dynamics of energy and process (Royal, 2003). Within the context of learning these also identify the challenges, apprehensions, hesitations, as well as the quest for and concerns when dealing with the acquisition of new knowledge and understandings. This is where mātauranga is situated. Learning is a complex process and has no barriers. This is reflected in Eruera Stirling's (1980) commentary about his early childhood years and the learning that he received. He states:

As I grew a bit older the old man started to teach me history ... and then he'd go on and talk to me about genealogy ... he told me about the mana of the land ... how each ancestor came to own that land. (p. 90)

Eruera was only six years old when he received his first assessment regarding these blocks of land. So much was expected to be absorbed at such a young age; however, the challenge was achievable.

Ki te whēi ao ki te ao marama
This is a phase which describes emerging consciousness, sounds, hidden memories, activities of the mind, wisdom, the fusing of life and spirit, the domain of mauri or the essence of life (Royal, 2003). This is where maramatanga is situated and is where a child comes to understand new knowledge; a phase of enlightenment, realization, and clarification. Rose Pere (1997) states:

New knowledge for the child is not seen or regarded as more important than the everyday tasks a child can already perform with confidence ... new knowledge builds on what the child already knows. (p. 76)

This then encourages one to go back to the beginning and ask ourselves just what this knowing entails.

What emerges from the tauparapara is an impression of the Māori child as powerful with untapped potential (Hemara, 2000; Mead, 2003). As identified, the tauparapara identifies three major themes related to a child's ways of knowing. These are māhiotanga, mātauranga and maramatanga, which originally were articulated by Charles Royal (1988) as a research framework located within te ao Māori. We have taken these concepts and created a framework to highlight children's learning. Emerging from these ideas is the principle of intelligence which permeates every level of the tauparapara.

Within the narratives of Māori traditions and knowledge of ngā atua are the origins of concepts such as mana, wairua and mauri. These perceptions are closely linked to the existence of the Māori child and indicate that the child has a way of 'being'.
“Te Whāriki; the early childhood curriculum framework, identifies clearly what knowledge is important when planning and implementing programmes for children within a Māori immersion or kaupapa Māori based early childhood contexts.”

What is also critical to Māori pedagogy is the notion of which knowledge is privileged. Te Whāriki, the early childhood curriculum framework, identifies clearly what knowledge is important when planning and implementing programmes for children within a Māori immersion or kaupapa Māori based early childhood contexts.

**Te Whāriki: The early childhood curriculum framework**

Ngā taumata whakahirihia underpin all activities related to working with Māori children. The following are interpretations of these principles specifically developed for Te Whatu Pokeka. When using Te Whāriki as a guide to planning and implementing programmes for Māori children, as with all contexts, there are implications for assessing learning experiences and making visible children’s strengths.

**Whakamana**

Ko te whakatipu i te mana o te mokopuna te tino taumata hei whānanga mā tātou. Me tauawhi te mokopuna i roto i te aroha me te ngākau mārie, ā, me whakatō te kaha ki roto i a ia kia pakari ai te tipu o tōna mana whakahaere ... kua mōhio ia ki tōna mana āhua ake (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 32).

The main objective of this principle is for kaiako to enhance the mana of the child through providing an environment and relationships that respect and motivate him or her to be the best they can be in order for them to recognize their unique and distinctive strengths.

**Kotahitanga**

E rua ngā āhuatanga e pā ana ki tēnei wāhanga. Tuatahi, ko te whakakotahiitanga o ngā whakahaere mo te ako i ngā mokopuna ... ka taea ngā mahi katoa i te wāhanga kotahi, ara, te waiata, te kōrero, te hīkoi ... ko te tuarua, ko te whakakotahitanga o ngā māhi mō te tipu o te tinana, o te hineingaro, o te wairua, me te whatumanaawa. Kāore he wehewehehenga. Kāore he aukatitanga ... Tukuna tōna hineingaro kia rere arorangi, ā, āwhinatia ia ki te whakatinana ōna whakaro, ngā koroiingotanga o tōna wairua, me ngā haehaetanga ki tōna whatumanaawa (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 33).

In order to provide a holistic programme which caters for the mind, spirit and soul of the child, the strategies used by the kaiako must motivate a yearning and a passion to learn. These must tap all the senses such as emotions, intellect and spirit. Kaiako must support the child to express his or her ideas in order for them to explore freely their world and remain in touch with their universe.

**Whānau tangata**

Ko tētahi o ngā tino uara o te ao Māori kia mōhio mokopuna ki te whanaungatanga. Kā mōhio ia ko wai ia, ko wai ōna mātua tipuna, ko wai ōna marae, ko wai ōna tūrangawaewae ... Me whiri mai te whānau, te hapu, te iwi o te mokopuna ki te tautoko i ngā akoranga i a ia ... Kia tipu te mokopuna i roto i te aroha hei taonga whakahirihia mā tōna whānau, mā tōna āiwi, me tōna wahi noho (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 33).

Whakapapa and relationships are central to a Māori child’s existence. Programmes must emphasise the centrality of their traditions; their ancestors; their elders; their whānau, hapu and iwi; their marae; their community, in order for them to maintain an established sense of belonging and well being. Through this, Māori children will know that they are the link from the past to the future and will make a valuable contribution to the future of their iwi and society.

**Ngā hononga**

Mā te ngāwari i waenganui i te mokopuna me ngā tāngata ka pā mai ki a ia, ka piki te hiahi a te mokopuna ki te ako. Mā te takoto o te rangimārie i roto i ngā piringa me ngā hononga ki aua tāngata ka pakari anō te hiahi a te mokopuna ki te ako ... kua tau tōna mauri. Kua piki to ora, te mana me te ihi o tōna tinana, tōna hineingaro, tōna wairua, me tōna whatumanaawa (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 33).

Adults working with Māori children must establish meaningful and intimate relationships, encouraging and supporting them in a way that is un rushed, peaceful and tranquil by interacting in a manner that motivates and ignites a passion to learn. When the child’s body is emotionally, physically and socially well, the mauri is in a state of balance, the mind is active and learning has no boundaries.

**Te Whatu Pokeka**

While Te Whatu Pokeka draws on ideas and concepts from Māori traditions, it also guides future goals of education for Māori children, such as those identified by Durie (2003), which are to live as Māori; to actively participate as citizens of the world; and to enjoy good health and a high standard of living. Therefore this assessment model:

- is about children’s learning within a Māori learning context;
- implies that there are aims or goals for children’s learning;
- is based on Māori ways of seeing and knowing the world and Māori ways of being and interacting in the world;
- involves making visible learning that is valued within te ao Māori;
Ngā ahuatanga o te tamaiti: Ways of being

Te wairua o te tamaiti: The child is an emotional, spiritual being

The concept of wairua is derived from Māori cosmology, traditions and history. Wairua is a concept linked to spirituality, to the sanctity of each individual and the special attributes that a child is born with. This helps to define his or her place in time, space, and locality. "The child is heir to several spiritual attributes that are fundamental to the spiritual, psychological, and social well-being of the self" (Mead, 2003, p. 60). Wairua is intelligence, it has a language of its own, a language that children are tuned in to on a daily basis.

He mana tō te tamaiti: The child has power and potential

Tapu and mana are intertwined. Where tapu is the foundation of power, mana is the power, the realisation of the tapu of the child (Mead, 2003). The mana of children is derived from their links with atua. These spiritual powers are their immediate source of mana (mana atua) – they are the source of the children's tapu which also stems from their iwi, hapū, whānau (mana tangata) and from their land, their tūrangawaewae (mana whenua). The mana of a child needs recognition and must be nurtured. According to Shirres (1997), "Mana is the power of being, that is alive or active" (p. 37). According to Manulani Meyer (2004), mana is also intelligence and in this case a concept which gives life to the power of a child.

He mauri tangata: The child as an energetic life force

Mauri is a generic life force also described as a life principle (Kā'i & Higgins, 2004). People are born with mauri, and it remains with them all their lives. Mauri is an essential and inseparable part of the child. When the body is physically and socially well, the mauri is in a state of balance. Mauri harbours intelligence which is played out through the inquisitive nature of children.

Mauri is the life force that is bound to an individual and represents the active force of life. This enables the energy to be expended; the mind to think and have some control over how the body behaves. It enables the personality of the person to be vibrant, expressive and impressive (Mead, 2003, p. 54).

Therefore, these descriptions imply that Māori children arrive in this world as intelligent, spiritual beings that are powerful, with potential, energy, vitality, and an immense desire to know, understand, appreciate, comprehend and relate to the people, places and things around them. The following synopsis by D. Grace (personal communication, October, 2008), describes the uniqueness of the Māori child: 

Observe me as a child of my own indigenous culture. Provide me with an environment that accepts, values, and sustains my individuality so that I can truly feel safe as well as nurtured. Allow me to explore and interact with this environment so that I may reach my full potential.

This reminds us that as educators there are many aspects of a child that must be considered when planning and implementing programmes for children in Māori immersion contexts.

Tikanga whakaako: Ways of doing

The question then is: if the tauparapara describes a child's way of knowing and ngā ahuatanga o te tamaiti expresses the ways of being, then what are the implications for adults working with Māori children? What does this mean for their teaching practice (tikanga whakaako), or their ways of doing?

Te Whatu Pokeka proposes three aspects which are fundamental to working with Māori children. These are: Māori pedagogy (implementing culturally and socially responsive learning and teaching strategies); Te Whānau (Ministry of Education, 1996), the early childhood curriculum framework; and assessment of children's learning experiences based on the framework proposed by Te Whatu Pokeka.

Māori pedagogy

Learning and teaching within a Māori context is based on whanaungatanga and the application of tikanga Māori. Ako is a term which describes the science of both learning and teaching and defines that every teacher is a learner and every learner is a teacher (Metge, 1984; Pere, 1997). Māori pedagogy must underpin all teaching and learning practices if the unique and distinctive characteristics of the Māori child are to be nurtured. Māori pedagogy is holistic in nature involving the four dimensions of being which connect to the spirit, mind, body and heart.

Within Māori approaches to learning, both the learner and teacher engage in reciprocal, collaborative learning relationships (Hemara, 2000). A teacher in Māori immersion, Alamein Kopu, believes that by nurturing the wairua of our (Māori) children from start to finish they will have the confidence and pride in themselves to achieve to the best of their ability (as cited in Tapine & Waiti, 1997). Another aspect is the creation of an environment that is critical to Māori pedagogy. The following is a whakataukī which highlights the importance of preparing the best environment for learning and growing.

Kohikohia nga kākano, whakaritea te pārekereke, kia puawai nga hua.

Gather the seeds, prepare the seedbed carefully, and you will be gifted with an abundance of food.

A pārekereke is a traditional seedbed for growing kāmara seedlings. It is an appropriate analogy to describe the environment of the child. This environment must be carefully prepared so that it provides well for the growth and development of the child. The importance of planning and preparing this environment cannot be underestimated.

This whakataukī uses nga hua as a metaphor for children. It suggests that in order to get the best out of the child, adults are responsible for:

• preparing the environment;

• laying down the best nutrients to provide a nourishing environment for the child to ensure growth;

• providing the best of everything for the child to grow;

• being the right people who understand what is required to nurture the new growth – having the appropriate qualifications, expertise, and skills to lay strong foundations for the child's education.
"The development of the kaupapa of Te Whatu Pokeka would not have been possible without a backward glance for the future. Ancient knowledge is now today's knowledge, and so provides a definition of assessment for the 21st century."

- strengthens the place of Māori in the world;
- reflects the image of the Māori child which encompasses all dimensions of children's learning such as te taha tinana (physical), hinengaro (intellectual), wairua (spiritual), and whataumanawa (emotional);
- involves whānau and illuminates children's voices;
- recognises and applies the concepts of whanaungatanga, including awhi, tautoko, aroha, tiaki, and manaaki;
- enables kaikōrā to reflect critically on their own values, beliefs, and assumptions;
- empowers kaikōrā and provides information that will help to improve the ways in which their programmes cater for Māori children;
- ensures that the adults involved in the children's learning are consistent, constant, and constructive.

Finally

The kaupapa of Te Whatu Pokeka is a variation to a well known tauparapara amended specifically for the purpose of this development. From the tauparapara emerges the first part of the assessment framework which argues that children come with ways of knowing the world (mōhiotanga), that they learn (mātauranga) through experiences and challenges and that they seek and gain clarity (māramatanga) from the achievements, accomplishments and failures they encounter as they learn and grow.

The second part of the framework argues that Māori children possess a number of attributes derived from their history which spans back through time and space. From these concepts emerge an image of a Māori child as an emotional, spiritual being; as a powerful person with untapped potential and as an energetic life force. The notion of intelligence is implicit within all of these connections to children. This means that the Māori child has a way of being which in turn requires that adults working with and alongside these children must have an in-depth understanding of the children's contexts in order to plan culturally and socially responsive programmes.

Adult responsibilities is the third part of the framework which focuses on providing appropriate contexts of learning, drawing on knowledge relevant to the context, planning and implementing programmes and providing critique and analysis. This indicates ways of doing. Fundamental messages which emerge from this framework are that Te Whatu Pokeka is credit-based; it validates te ao Māori, establishes that Māori children and their whānau, hapu and iwi are integral to this process, and that this is a holistic model of assessment. The development of the kaupapa of Te Whatu Pokeka would not have been possible without a backward glance for the future. Ancient knowledge is now today's knowledge, and so provides a definition of assessment for the 21st century.

References


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ahuatanga</td>
<td>Characteristics, attributes, features of a person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ako</td>
<td>Teaching and learning are inseparable; all people are both teachers and learners</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hapu</td>
<td>Literally means to ‘pregnant’ and indicates a small grouping of people with genetic connections to iwi</td>
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<tr>
<td>Harakeke</td>
<td>Flax</td>
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<tr>
<td>Iwi</td>
<td>A derivative of ‘koiw‘ which means ‘bones’ and highlights genetic links between large groups of people</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kaiako</td>
<td>Teachers, educators</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kaupapa</td>
<td>Philosophy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kawa</td>
<td>Protocols and processes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mana</td>
<td>Power, influence</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mana atua</td>
<td>Source of power from nga atua</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mana tangata</td>
<td>Source of power from the people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mana whenua</td>
<td>Source of power from the land</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maramatanga</td>
<td>Understanding, clarity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marae</td>
<td>A gathering place of Māori for various rituals and celebrations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matauranga</td>
<td>Learning; discovery; realisation; apprehension; hesitation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mauri</td>
<td>Life force; life essence</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mohiotanga</td>
<td>Knowledge; knowing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Muka</td>
<td>Fibres from a blade of flax</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ngā hua</td>
<td>Seedlings; first fruit</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ngā Taumata</td>
<td>Māori principles of Te Whāriki, the early childhood curriculum framework</td>
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<tr>
<td>Whakahirihira</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Tamaiiti</td>
<td>Young child.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tapu</td>
<td>Sacredness, foundation of mana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tauparapara</td>
<td>Chant; incantation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Te ao Māori</td>
<td>Values, beliefs, ideas and practices based on concepts and contexts from a Māori world view</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Te ao wairua</td>
<td>Spirit world of the ancestors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tikanga whakaako</td>
<td>Learning and teaching within Māori contexts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tūrangawaewae</td>
<td>A place where one belongs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wairua</td>
<td>Spirituality; sanctity of the person</td>
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<tr>
<td>Whakapapa</td>
<td>Genetic links to nga atua Māori; ancestors, elders, parents; mountains, lakes, rivers and the sea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whakataūkī</td>
<td>Māori proverb or saying</td>
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<tr>
<td>Whānau</td>
<td>A small group of people, normally made up of four or five generations who occupy a particular place within the hapu and iwi</td>
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<tr>
<td>Whanaungatanga</td>
<td>Draws on the importance of whakapapa and collective responsibilities to one another within the contexts of iwi, hapu and whānau</td>
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</tbody>
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