

AWARENESS OF RACISM AND ANTI-RACIST STRATEGIES FOR EARLY
CHILDHOOD EDUCATION - LOPDELL 7-10 FEBRUARY 1989

This course met immediately after Waitangi Day from Tuesday 7 February to Friday 10 February, the total working time being three full days. Despite a feeling of time-pressure, a great deal was accomplished, and this is presented in the following sequence:

A. Clarifying what racism is, and why anti-racism is needed.

B. Summary of advice to the department.

C. Guidelines for the implementation unit and its working parties, including separate comment to the working party on National Guidelines for ECE.

D. Set of draft documents for a starter resource kit on anti-racism for early childhood centres and administrators.

The report also carries the following appendices:

Appendix 1: Address and phone list of course-members

Appendix 2: Notes of the proceedings of the course

Appendix 3: Memorandum sent 13/2/89 to M O'Rourke, V Burns and J. Tapiata, with attachments

A. COURSE-REPORT

Members of the "Awareness of Racism and Anti-racist strategies for ECE" course, Lopdell Centre, February 7-10 1989, acknowledge that racism exists within early childhood education in New Zealand.

What is racism?

Racism exists when the dominant group assumes that its culture, values, priorities and methods are more important than those of others. When the dominant group sets up and maintains the institutions in a country, they are able to require others to conform. Pakeha are the dominant group in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

Racism is about beliefs

Racism is about practices

Racism is about power-based domination

Whether we like it or not, whether we know it or not, as Pakeha we benefit from a system designed for us, by us, which discriminates against Maori and ethnic minorities. If we continue to be silent about racism, and blind to the effect it has on others, we are condoning it. As a result, children are being effectively groomed to live and continue creating a racist society.

Why anti-racism?

Anti-racism is a way of changing the situation outlined above. Anti-racism means those of us in the dominant group working actively to counter racism. We must take the opportunity to work in an anti-racist way if we are to begin giving children the skills and knowledge to act in a just and fair way. It is only through the on-going process of anti-racist education that this can be achieved.

Both personal and institutional racism exists within New Zealand early childhood services. For example:

Administration From Head Office of the Department to local centre level, management structures are set up and operate according to monocultural values.

Working with children Lack of awareness of implicit messages within the programme and curriculum in early childhood centres produces racist results.

Working with parents and the community Teachers and workers generally do not have the commitment, knowledge or skills to counter racism when working with parents and the community.

The implementation of Before Five enables us to rethink curriculum and policy in New Zealand early childhood education and seems an ideal vehicle through which to change the conditions described above. Indeed the

intention to do this is implied under 4.1.1. in that document's reference to the Treaty of Waitangi.

The problem of racism is social in its widest sense and calls for affirmative action and teaching strategies stretching far beyond the immediate educational services as well as within each service.

It is likely that significant resistance to changing covert and overt racism will be encountered by the most motivated and articulate workers in their attempts to incorporate guidelines on anti-racism into their curricula. The changes required include attitudinal shifts in all early childhood education people at every level of these services.

This is an enormous and complex task and cannot be achieved merely by increasing expectations and downward accountability on centre workers. Teachers and administrators will need expert help, facilitation and whanau support in order to accomplish changes within curriculum and and centre life.

The Department places itself in a highly vulnerable position in its choice of strategies for change. There is a basic contradiction in using an all-pakeha Implementation Team, for instance, to produce and early childhood education service which recognises the Treaty of Waitangi: this contradiction is unlikely to escape public attention. As the Implementation Team is already formed and timeframes set, the time available to redress this is short.

While supporting the role of the Runanga Matua in ensuring that the results of Working Parties are in accord with the Treaty of Waitangi, there is an important and necessary generative role for Maori people working in early childhood services in the implementation of Before Five.

There is no evidence that this is currently happening or will happen. Important pre-conditions for attitudinal change include establishing trust. The Department should be aware that the task it has set itself within the early childhood education sector is impossible without these preconditions, and acknowledge its role as a powerful model of behaviour.

B. Summary of Advice

1. That the department of education acknowledge the Statement of Intent from the National Course on Nga Mea Maori in ECE, held in September 1988, by distributing a copy of this statement to all Implementation Working Parties.

2. That suitable facilitators be identified to prepare and train centre workers in anti-racist practice.

3. That an anti-racist resource kit be produced for centre workers and administrators including a checklist or checklists of desirable features in an anti-racist centre. (Note: this was begun on the course, see Report, D, and it is suggested that the new Ministry contract the Early Childhood Development Unit or other suitable resource unit to further develop such a kit as part of their ongoing responsibility for inservice training of early childhood personnel.

4. That Maori ECE workers be coopted onto the ECE Implementation Team.

5. That the composition and selection procedures for working parties be negotiated with Maori ECE people. Representation by tangata whenua should be substantial, and include significant chairing of working parties, thus demonstrating a real commitment to bicultural partnership.

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C.

Anti-Racism Guidelines for all Working Parties to
consider when implementing "Before Five"

1. That the "Statement of Intent" from the Taha Maori in ECE course (Lopdell, September 1988) (appended) be used as a basic working document for all working parties. All processes and outcomes of the working parties must be consistent with this document.
2. That Maori are participating at all levels of the decision-making process in the structure being developed.
3. That there are procedures for Maori to negotiate for resources to meet their self-determined needs.
4. That steps are being taken to ensure that Tikanga Maori and Te Reo Maori are available at all levels throughout early childhood education.

Anti-racism considerations for the Working Party
formulating National Guidelines, Charters and Licences

1. NATIONAL GUIDELINES

When forming National Guidelines the Basic Principles for an Early Childhood Curriculum as prepared at the Lopdell Centre, Auckland, 15-19 Feb, 1988, must be upheld.

Prime consideration should be given to the following:

That all children experience an environment in which THEY LEARN WHO THEY ARE. So that all children can develop a feeling of self-worth, they must learn to understand, appreciate and be confident in their own culture, the culture of the tangata whenua, and the culture of Aotearoa/New Zealand. (No.1)

That all children experience an environment where LEARNING IS NOT LIMITED BY RACE OR COLOUR. The curriculum shall honour the promise of the Treaty of Waitangi to the Maori people on Maori language and culture. It will recognise, respect and respond to the aspirations of tangata whenua and all cultures which make up the society of Aotearoa/New Zealand. (No.10)

2. STAFFING

It is essential that "Professional support for staff" include anti-racism resource personnel and materials. (Before Five 4.1.3)

3. CHARTERS

Statements on curriculum objectives, management and accountability must reflect positive anti-racist strategies. (Before Five 4.2.4)

4. LICENCES

That all licences will only be approved by the Ministry where staff development reflects positive anti-racist programmes. (Before Five 4.3.1)