

Early Education

Volume 57 Autumn / Winter 2015



- How healthy are children in e.c.e.? •
- Young children in museums and galleries •
- Battling to consensus •
- Talking about ECE and literacy in Sweden and NZ •
- Honouring Beverley Morris, CNZM •

Contents

Early Education vol. 57 Autumn / Winter 2015

ISSN 11729112

Editorial: Change and continuity	3
Lyn Foote <i>A political advocate for quality e.c.e.</i> Helen May	4
Letter from Tauranga Jayne White	5
Akobarn <i>Developing NZ-Sweden early years teaching-researching collaboration (Peer reviewed)</i> Valerie Margrain and Elisabeth Mellgren	7
Eyes-on learning <i>Very young children in art galleries and museums (Peer reviewed)</i> Lisa Terreni	14
Young children's well being <i>Regulations, policies and directions for research</i> Claire McLachlan	19
Battling our way to collegial conversations <i>A 'community of inquiry' (Peer reviewed)</i> Judy Watson and Sue Smorti	24
Playing with children <i>The enduring message of Beverley Morris, CNZM</i>	28
Book Reviews:	
The politics of inclusion <i>A review of 'Te Aotūroa Tātaki: Inclusive Early Childhood Education: Perspectives on inclusion, social justice and equity from Aotearoa New Zealand'</i> Reviewer: Alison Warren	33
Countering colonising narratives <i>A review of 'Early Childhood Education in Aotearoa New Zealand: History, Pedagogy, and Liberation'</i> Reviewer: Gary Leaf	35
Contributors	36

'Early Education' is a professional journal for people involved and interested in early childhood education. A partially peer-reviewed journal, it is published twice a year by the School of Education, AUT University.

Advisory Board

Kerry Bethell, Carmen Dalli, Lesieli McIntyre,
Jenny Ritchie

Editors

Dr Claire McLachlan, Massey University

Dr Sue Stover, AUT University

Design and layout:

Ben Watts

Our thanks to our reviewers:

Vivienne Hogan, Kerry Bethell, Sue Dockett, Hannah Wilson, Abigail Hackett, Robyn Reid, Anne Grey, Jenny Ritchie, Lesley Rameka, Christa Napier Robertson

Our thanks for the photos

Many thanks to kaiako, tamariki and whanau of Mokopuna ki Clendon Early Childhood Service, Manurewa, Manukau; and to the parents and children of New Windsor Playcentre, Mt Roskill, Auckland.

Other photos were supplied by the author/s.

The covers:

New Windsor Playcentre has a regular 'outdoor session' involving infants, toddlers, young children and their parents. On the front cover, Gabriel's toes and tongue tell the story of concentration involved in climbing on wobbly rungs while his father's hand tell a story of scaffolded risk taking. The back cover has several stories. One is about the pleasure following the exertion of tree climbing; the faces of Lizzy, Anna, Clare and Lacey tell this story. The other story is more subtle. In the background is William looking up at Matty, who is still in the tree.

Contributions

Contributions of articles and photos are welcome from the early childhood community. Please keep copies of any contributions as we cannot guarantee to return what is sent. Cover photos need to be 'high resolution'.

Contributions can be sent to the editors:

Claire McLachlan:

Email: c.j.mclachlan@massey.ac.nz;
phone: 06 3569099 ext. 84390

Sue Stover

Email: sue.stover@aut.ac.nz ;
phone: 09 921 9999 ext. 6027

Deadline for contributions to volume #58 is 1 August 2015.

Subscriptions

Subscriptions run for a calendar year. Late subscribers receive back issues for that year (this may be supplied digitally – as .pdf files)

Annual subscriptions are as follows:

Students: \$20 (please supply a copy of current student ID)

Individuals: \$30

Organisations/Centres: \$35

International subscribers are asked to add a further \$10.

To request a current subscription form, please email:
eejournal@aut.ac.nz

Back issues available for \$10 each. Contact us on:
eejournal@aut.ac.nz

Change and continuity

In the company of very young children, time can play tricks on me. A generation can disappear for a moment. As a grandmother regularly attending playcentre, I find myself calling to my grandson – but using the name of my youngest son (who was at playcentre with me 20+ years ago).



Sometimes two generations can disappear. Reading historic accounts of family life and wallowing in the photos, sometimes I forget for a moment who is in the photo – the continuity of experience is so strong. It could be my mother, it could be me. But in this photo, it is my grandmother, Ina, who is holding the baby. She was a new mother in 1918. She was aged 20, and had been married for nine months, having waited until after World War I to marry. She was lucky – her beloved never had to kill anyone and he came into family life with sound body and mind. So many families were scarred by the experience of that war.

These thoughts are with me as I consider continuity and change in our early childhood sector. The articles that arrive for consideration in *Early Education* continue to provoke and challenge. But the people who write are changing, and the people we refer to when we write are changing too.

In the past few months we as a sector have lost some deeply influential people. Internationally, we have seen the passing of Brian Sutton-Smith, who drew on his post-World War II experiences in this country even while he played a larger role internationally in theorising the significance of ‘play’ in the human experience.

At a more local level, we in Auckland have farewelled Adam Buckingham, who found a niche for himself as the ‘trash to treasure’ advocate for recycling in e.c.e. and promoted the role of men in early childhood teaching.

At a national level, we farewelled Lyn Foote from the University of Otago who died late last year. Lyn was part of our editorial board for over a decade and we’re grateful to Professor Helen May who in this issue has positioned Lyn as a feisty advocate for childcare, as well as more recently, a gifted teacher educator.

And in this issue, we continue to recognise the need to advocate:

- For children’s wellbeing – Claire McLachlan draws our attention to ‘what we know’ about children’s physical activity and nutrition in the context of early childhood settings and points to the gaps in our knowledge about

what happens for children in e.c.e.

- For children’s access to public places of art and of history – Lisa Terreni walks us through the how and the why of moving groups of children into museums and art galleries.
- For opportunities for learn through creative conflict – Judy Watson takes us through one organisation’s ‘battle for consensus’ in the fraught domain of setting standards for kaupapa Māori in context of assessing student teachers.
- For a chance to sustained international collaboration – through the ‘Akobarn’ project, Valerie Margrain and Elisabeth Mellgren have crafted an ongoing dialogue between New Zealand and Swedish early childhood academics and students.
- For opportunities to publish locally – Alison Warren and Gary Leaf consider recent publications by local authors which push the boundaries on inclusive practices and on kaupapa Māori in e.c.e.
- For opportunities to learn from our elders – we celebrate the decades of Beverley Morris’s critical engagement in our sector with a chance to reconsider ‘what has changed?’ in regard to parents’ involvement in their children’s early years.

In our next issue of *Early Education*, we are planning a tribute to Professor Judith Duncan who died in late March of a rapid onset form of Motor Neurone disease. But it is fitting that we acknowledge her passing here. Just a few months ago, Claire McLachlan and I were working closely with Judith who guest edited the previous issue of *Early Education*. Judith insisted that it was an issue that would only feature those who – in one way or another – were associated with Canterbury University’s ‘EYE’ network: Early Years’ Experience. The diverse contributors included international high flyers, graduate students and first-time authors. Judith was an exceptional networker and someone who enabled others to grasp opportunities to research – starting with their own contexts. The ripples from her work will continue even while we farewell her.

*Toitu he whenua, whatungarongaro he tangata
No reira moe mai e te tuahine haere haere haere
ki tua o te arai
na te atua hei manaaki...*

The land is permanent, man disappears.
So sleep, elder sister ...
go to the other side of the horizon...
the lord will guide and support you...

Sue Stover (with Claire McLachlan)
Editors

Lyn Foote (1945-2014)

A political advocate for quality early childhood education (ECE)

Helen May



In 2010 the National Government announced wide ranging funding cuts to ECE that undermined many of the gains of previous years. Of course Lyn (on the right; with her friend and colleague Fiona Ellis) was out on the streets, an action that has been periodically necessary for ECE in Aotearoa NZ. Lyn was also smiling because the Otago University ECE students were also in the march, many of them working as organisers.

Lyn was the long time co-ordinator/director of EC programmes at the University of Otago and her death in 2014 deprives us of a true champion for quality early childhood education for all children. Lyn was a passionate political advocate, as well as a hands-on practitioner, teacher educator and researcher, whose career spanned 40 years. The Early Childhood Research Hui, organised annually for many years by Lyn and colleagues, brought hundreds of ECE teachers from the lower South Island to the University, for a day of debate, sharing and learning about the most recent or concerning political, research and professional issues. This was truly a 'town and gown' occasion.

Lyn cut her 'political teeth' on the heady Dunedin politics of childcare that emerged in the 1970s with Anne Smith as one of its central players. This was a group of women determined that childcare – which at the time had NO government funding support for centres or for training – should be a quality experience for children and a support for women and families. This strident feminist Dunedin approach was a little shocking to others and particularly to

politicians who saw childcare centres as a 'dumping grounds' for 'unwanted children' by 'neglectful mothers' who went 'frivolously' to work.

In 1981 Lyn established the first Dunedin training base for the New Zealand Childcare Association to provide a certificate qualification for staff working in childcare. In 1987 Lyn was appointed to Dunedin College of Education to establish a one-year childcare certificate course. This was short-lived. In 1988 Dunedin College of Education was one of the first colleges to provide the new 3-year integrated teaching qualification, inclusive of kindergarten and childcare, children from birth to school age, and which established parity of qualifications across the primary and ECE sectors.

Lyn remained a long time member of the Childcare Association and a conference attendee where possible. I interviewed her at the 49th Annual Conference in 2012. I asked Lyn about the changes she had seen over the decades:

Some of the fight has gone. I can remember going to lively conferences where people were fired up and arguing and the voting was important. It is not happening now to the same degree. People have given up. I was concerned when the Minister of Education [Hekia Parata] was talking to the delegates earlier and she said 'thank you' and I thought 'thank you for what?! You have cut ECE funding.' But everyone sat there politely and no one booed. No one got up and said, 'It is not good enough what is happening to us.' ...We need more fight from the sector. We had our march a couple of years ago [in Dunedin] but we have not protested since. In the early days of the Association it was like a protest movement and when I joined, it still had remnants of Sonja Davies and her fight as a feminist. But this has stopped.

Lyn's fiery passion for a better deal for children and ECE never dimmed. Her contribution to ECE is, however, wide ranging embracing a deep interest in the under three-year olds and she was active in orchestrating significant changes in the infrastructure of early childhood teacher education. Lyn also had an international outlook. She was a keen member of OMEP and over some years worked on various government EC development projects in Niue and the Solomon Islands.

Lyn's life in ECE, with others, characterizes what is internationally unique about ECE leadership in this country. It has a mix of excellent scholarship, but never separate from political activism, advocacy and engagement with the profession.

Letter from Tauranga

It's always hard to get back into focus after a glorious New Zealand summer but this year has been especially challenging. This is because I write from my new home in Tauranga where I am surrounded by the most beautiful mountain ranges and mighty ocean which arrest my gaze and draw me to contemplate their magnificence. Yet this vista is by no means a distraction - these mountains and sea cause me to think about our work in the early years too. It's easy to forget that these features of the landscape, like all things, were not always as they are now. Their 'becoming', in constant yet often unseen dimensions of time and space, represents a unique and subtle formation that has been forged through years of engagement with each other and the conditions around them. In this long journey of 'becoming' – a concept we in NZ ECE know only too well – I am reminded of the Russian term 'obrazovanie' which offers a means of embracing this complexity.

I was first introduced to this term last year by Russian scholar Alexander Lobok (2014), as part of a conference. In his (translated) words:

Obrazovanie is ... a process of forming a new reality, a new entity. It is precisely in this sense that we talk about the formation of mountains, continents, planets... But also with regard to the formation of a person, i.e., education. The education/obrazovanie of a person is the formation of his/her personality, his/her "I", his/her individuality IN RELATION TO CULTURE (emphasis in the original) (p. S1).

Obrazovanie is closely aligned to the German notion of 'bildung' which also emphasises formation. As Craig Brandist (2014) explains, an interpretation of this term might be described as "permanent enrichment of individuals through efforts to engage with the world as a whole" where each person moves constantly towards a "horizon of being". In this sense, both terms help us to consider 'becoming' in education as a movement beyond our own little piece of the world, to an extension of ourselves through engagement with others (and vice versa) and to a relationship of mutual enrichment. It is a slowing down of time to provide space for contemplation at its highest level – in awe of what is before us, in wonder of what we experience and in consideration of this impact on ourselves and others. In terms of the work we do with children we are also challenged to consider the role of 'teacher' as less concerned with processes of enculturation based on the transmission of sacred knowledge towards some desirable endpoint. Instead, there is a profoundly ethical challenge to encounters of dialogue that stand in awe of the miracle that takes place in each and every experience of life, in every act or moment. If we are honest, we know it is impossible to teach in any other



way since we cannot claim to know the future for anyone, let alone the youngest child whose trajectory is so far beyond our grasp.

During my sabbatical last year I had the privilege of such contemplation – both during the time I had to read about these ideas as I prepared my book (see White, 2015), but also by talking with teachers in the United Kingdom. I was staggered to discover the overwhelming emphasis on future based outcomes for teachers in the early years. Instead of engagement with awe and wonder, children seemed to be cast as 'known' through an overwhelming emphasis on checklists, tests, evaluations and so on; each rating children against variables that isolated behaviours according to what was of policy interest (for example, social regulation was the hot potato during my visit). I saw little consideration of the unique *bildung* of learners as persons of culture(s) or members of a complex multi-discursive world. No sense of humility about what might be claimed about their lives in this orientation was welcomed according to their view. The quest was simple – test and report; set objectives and deliver. Prove to OFSTED that you can shape this child into the kind of citizen that is needed (whatever that means). Teachers repetitively told me that they did not want to teach in this way, yet they were immobilised and seemed helpless to 'be' otherwise (this is not to say that this is all they were doing, but only that anything else wasn't valued and therefore took place on the edges of their practice). It seemed very difficult to these teachers to talk of love and laughter in these spaces or to contemplate mystery and wonder. Most definitely there was no tolerance for uncertainty in this ideologic space.

I wonder if there is a message in this for us here in Aotearoa NZ? As I return to the mountains and sea I am reminded of how fortunate we are to have a curriculum that invites uncertainty in the folds of its pages. In this sense *Tē Whāriki* is still in formation too. I think that *obrazovanie* is heralded in its allegiance to nature – both in an appreciation of the conditions through which we flourish and the firm resolve that the child is capable and competent in their own right. It is also present in the unspoken meanings of the *te reo* Māori that we have been gifted.

My wish for us in the year ahead, and in the wake of yet more policy ‘consultation’, is that we first look to our own space and place for inspiration – to nature at its fullest potential. Here we can consider knowledge in a much broader, ontological sense, and stand in awe of each child and their own formation as a privileged encounter. Not knowing is thus a legitimate and, in my view, moral, encounter of ‘becoming’ for teachers and children alike. It is a relationship that we can all embrace.

Jayne White

Key references:

- Brandist, C. (2014). Bakhtinian pedagogy in historical perspective. Keynote to the Fourth Interdisciplinary Conference on the Limits and Perspectives of Mikhail Bakhtin, 15-17 January, Ngaurawahia, New Zealand. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cLMdgMOqHI4>
- Lobok, A. (2014). Education/*obrazovanie* as an experience of an encounter. *Dialogic Pedagogy: An International Online Journal*. 2. <http://dpj.pitt.edu/ojs/index.php/dpj1/article/view/84/40>
- White, E.J. (2015). *Introducing dialogic pedagogy: Provocations for the early years*. Routledge: London.

Update on the 2015 Early Childhood Convention



He Wai Whakariporipo

Making waves in Early Childhood – surviving the storm

11th Early Childhood Convention

1 - 5 October 2015

Rotorua Energy Events Centre, Rotorua

We are a small organising committee of four.

As well as a very busy convention organiser Anna Burns, the committee members are: Mary Simmonds; Lei McCluchy-Mita; Beverly Waru and myself Elizabeth Pakai and of course our Kui Kui Maureen Jehly (Locke).

- The website is www.conferenceinnovators.co.nz then follow the links to the ECE Convention site.
- Abstract submissions have now closed and applicants will be notified mid June of the result. We have had an awesome response from the ECE community both nationally and internationally.
- Registrations are now open and we look forward to a large representation for the convention as it has been eight years since the last one.
- We still have vacancies for sponsorship and stalls.
-

Keynote speakers have all been confirmed:

- Mihipeka Raukawa-Tait
- Diane Longboat
- Dr Anne Salmond
- Clare Wells
- Dr Lance O'Sullivan
- Dr Helen May
- Dr Mera Penehira
- Conference Dinner Speaker – MP Te Ururoa Flavell
- Master of Ceremonies is Kingi Biddle

We will have regular updates on the website and we look forward to hosting you all at a gathering of like minds.

Nga mihi nui ki a koutou katoa.

Na Elizabeth Pakai – Chair 2015 ECE Convention Committee.

Akobarn

Developing NZ-Sweden early years teaching-researching collaboration

Valerie Margrain and Elisabeth Mellgren

Drawing together two key terms in early years education, 'Akobarn' is a unique word created for a teaching-research collaboration between New Zealand and Swedish early years academics and their institutions. The Akobarn project was initiated in 2009, with data collection for an initial literacy-focused project collected in 2010-11, involving staff and student teachers from Massey University, NZ and from the University of Gothenburg, Sweden.

After providing some background information about the Akobarn project, this article provides an overview of key similarities and differences in early years education (ECE) between NZ and Sweden. This is followed by the initial research which involved collection of images of environmental text in (birth to age 8) environments across the two countries.

Developing the international collaboration

This project began when the New Zealand author (Valerie Margrain) made contact with a Swedish professor seeking contact with a like-minded colleague at a similar career stage who would like to engage in a collaboration. The authors were subsequently introduced and shared their motivations for working together. Valerie had lived in Sweden as a teenager and has remained interested in Swedish society, plus wanted to extend her research skills.

The second author, Elisabeth Mellgren, had experience with international collaborations, but not beyond Europe, and wanted to enhance confidence in English language for herself and her students.

Through email exchanges the authors shared perceptions and understandings of each other's contexts, including the authors' perceptions that New Zealand ECE has a strong reputation for effective literacy education, and that Sweden is widely applauded for its quality ECE provision.

Our conversations and wider reading led us to discover areas that differ, including: aspects of discourse, hours of child participation, management, funding, and teachers' conditions of service. Aspects of ECE that we found to be similar between New Zealand (NZ) and Sweden include curriculum, rate of overall child participation, and teacher qualifications. These areas of difference and similarity are explained further within this article.

Discourse

A small but pertinent difference between the two countries is with reference to discourse. Sweden refers to 'förskola' (preschool), while in NZ 'early childhood education' is the official terminology.

The first author has heard academic colleagues in NZ claim that terms such as 'pre-school' devalue ECE by positioning it as only having value in terms of getting children ready for school, and they argue that early

Naming the collaboration

'Ako' is the Māori word for both teaching and learning; 'Barn' is the Swedish word for child. Our countries share a commitment to quality care and education, and our curricula are child-centred. In English a barn is a farm building, a place providing warmth and shelter. The notion of shelter can be applied to early years education and our work to ensure that children are safe, and nurtured. The barn concept was been incorporated into our Akobarn logo design with the external framework of the logo. The image of shelter can be applied to ECE and our work to ensure that children are safe, and nurtured. The barn concept was incorporated into our Akobarn logo design with the external framework of the logo. The blue and yellow (blå och gul) colours of our Akobarn logo design connect to the Swedish flag, thus acknowledging the Swedish partners.



Akobarn

New Zealand-Sweden Teaching-Research Nexus



Akobarn logo (designed by Lisa Margrain, 2010).

childhood education (ECE) has its own contribution to make in the lives and learning of young children.

In Sweden, regardless of terms used, society does value ECE and recognises the pedagogical importance of ECE services. Sweden has long held a tradition of women's economic independence and contribution to the workforce, alongside a strong emphasis on children's rights and quality service provision (Skolverket, 2004).

Child participation

Compared to many countries, both NZ and Sweden have ECE high participation rates, although more children attend on a part-time basis in NZ. At the time of the project, ECE participation in Sweden was 68% for children under 2 years, 97% for children aged 3-6 years, and 98% attendance in the pre-school class for 6-year olds (Skolverket, 2010). In NZ, 94.8% of Year One school children (five-year-olds) were reported to have participated in early childhood education at some time (Ministry of Education, 2011a).

However, statistics become confounded in NZ through double counting – if a child attends two different services they may be counted twice. It is also important to note that participation statistics alone do not acknowledge the extent of attendance within any given week. In Sweden pre-school attendance of 7-8 hours per day is common, while in NZ there is huge variation but an overall average attendance of only 20.1 hours per week (Ministry of Education, 2011b). Some children attend 50+ hours and other may only attend one 3-hour session per week.

Management and funding

A key difference between NZ and Sweden is the level of management from government, with Swedish government being directly involved in almost all services. On contrast, the New Zealand Government delegates management to providers. In Sweden the funding and fees are the same in both private and public preschools, but there are in fact very few private preschools. Operational responsibility for ECE services and schools are both managed in Sweden by municipality boards. Responsibility for quality service provision is seen as a social commitment from the state.

In NZ although the government provides funding, it does not directly manage any ECE services or mandate fee levels; all are managed by private businesses or community groups, sometimes clustered under umbrella organisations. Schools are individually and autonomously managed by boards of trustees, largely composed of elected parents.

Parent fees for early childhood education are generally much higher in NZ, and Government funding is much higher in Sweden, though this is confounded by enrolment differences between the countries. OECD findings (2007) indicate that for two earner families, child care costs were 7.5% of net family income in Sweden and 26% of net family income in New Zealand. For single parent families, these figures were 5% of net family income in Sweden and 42% of net family income in New Zealand.

At the time of the research, annual funding per child in Sweden was 13,280 Euro (NZ\$25,067) in early childhood, and 9,000 Euro (NZ\$15,633) in pre-school class and after school services (Skolverket, 2010), but in NZ the average funding was lower at just NZ\$7,165 (4,125 Euro) for early childhood (Ministry of Education, 2011b). One reason for lower funding in NZ may be that it is calculated in NZ as a per hour rate, and in NZ participation has lower average hours than for Sweden. In Sweden education and childcare are integrated and children have support programmes before and after school as part of the central schooling system.

In terms of overall central investment in education, both countries have relatively strong central investment. In 2008 Sweden spent 4.3% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) on education and NZ spent 4.1% of GDP; the EU average was 3.5% of GDP and the OECD average 3.6% of GDP (OECD, 2011).

Curricula

Both Sweden and NZ have child-centred sociocultural curricula. The NZ early childhood curriculum *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996) was one of the first developed in the world, holistic in nature, and with bicultural foundations (Te One, 2013), and has strongly influenced the development of the school curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007). The Swedish curricula (Skolverket, 2010, 2011) has been recently revised to include more goal oriented application for children's learning, and the preschool teachers have more responsibility as pedagogical leaders in the working team.

Teacher-child ratios are far better in Sweden than in NZ, with Sweden offering a ratio of one teacher for every five children

ECE teacher qualifications and higher education

Both NZ and Sweden have experienced recent rapid credentialing of early childhood education teachers. In 2010, 42% of Swedish ECE teachers had a Diploma of Teaching or higher (Skolverket, 2010), while in New Zealand, it was 60% (Ministry of Education, 2011b). In both countries this number continues to climb – in 2013, for example, 73% of New Zealand's early childhood teaching workforce was qualified (Ministry of Education, 2013).

Staff conditions of service

At the time of the research, pre-tax salaries were higher in Sweden with preschool teachers in Sweden earning on average 32,775 Euro per annum (around (NZ\$56,000). NZ kindergarten teachers earned 26,557 Euro (NZ\$44,000) on average. However, NZ teachers in other ECE services earned a lower average salary at 24,143 Euro per annum

(NZ\$40,000). It does need to be stressed that for both countries, these averages were drawn from a wide range of individual salaries, depending on qualifications and experience, and for NZ from a wide range of employers. We have not attempted to compare cost of living. However we can report that for these salary levels, tax in Sweden were 31% and in NZ 19.54%.

Teacher-child ratios are far better in Sweden than in NZ, with Sweden offering a ratio of one teacher for every five children. In NZ the ratios are at least one adult for every five children under two years of age, but one adult for every ten children over two years of age (ECE Taskforce, 2011).

Working hours are similar between NZ and Sweden, although municipal management and national unionisation in Sweden ensures more consistent support for teachers. In Sweden full time teachers generally work a maximum of 34

hours per week contact with children and have additional paid non-contact professional time. In NZ full-time teachers generally work 40 hours per week with variable non-contact arrangements; most employees have individual contracts determining salary and conditions of service.

Union membership in New Zealand is voluntary, and significantly less than in Sweden. The overall national workforce union membership in 2003 was 78% for Sweden, but only 22.1% for New Zealand (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2008).

Transition to school

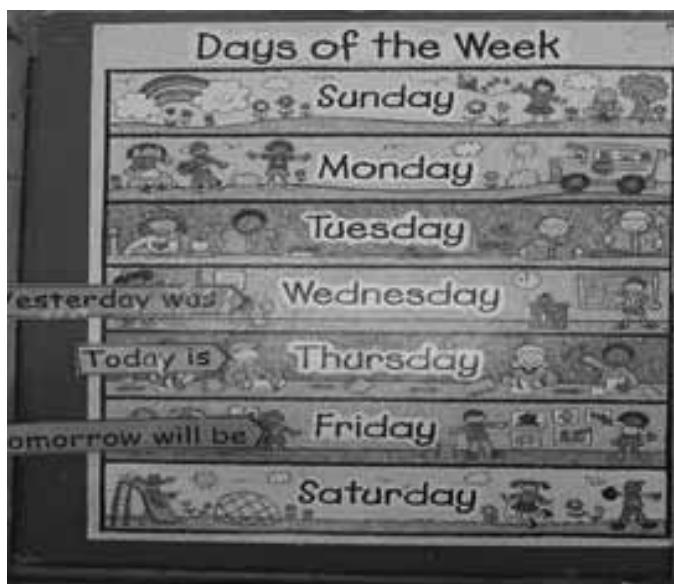
Swedish and NZ children begin school at different ages, and with different transition traditions, although learning most certainly occurs regardless of whether children are in early childhood or school settings.



Book display from New Zealand



Book display from Sweden



Days of the week chart from New Zealand



Days of the week chart from Sweden

Figure 1. Text in early years environments: New Zealand and Sweden.

NZ's 'rolling' entry is often a curiosity to Swedish colleagues. In NZ children are not required to begin school until age six, but they may start at any time after age five and it has become a cultural tradition that almost all children start school exactly on their fifth birthday, meaning that the class has new enrolments continuously throughout the year. NZ early childhood education services take children from birth to age five (though not many stay beyond age five), and primary schools from age five to around age 13.

Swedish children begin school at an older age than NZ children. In Sweden, early childhood education (förskola or preschools) provide for children aged one to six years of age, with many six-year-olds attending preschool classes (förskola klass), and primary schools catering for children seven to sixteen years old. In Sweden children begin school in autumn each year, in single age cohorts. The children start school in late August the year they have their seventh birthday as a single group; all start their first year of primary school at the same time.

The New Zealand students, the majority of which were monolingual, were humbled by the competence of the Swedish students in using English.

The cultural differences of start date and age lead to differences in practices and settings between NZ and Sweden, particularly regarding the education of five and six year old children. Five-year old children in Sweden will be in pre-school, and in NZ five-year-olds will have started school. In NZ class sizes in junior primary classes often vary across the year as children reach birthday milestones. That is, a Year One class will commonly start with small numbers and build in size and children turn five and transition to school.

These cultural differences become significant if one compares the experience of a six year old in Sweden in pre-school class and only beginning to learn to read formally, while for six year olds in NZ will be in their second year of school. New Zealand children are commonly assessed at age six on a range of aspects of early literacy (Clay, 2002) so that children reading at the lowest levels can be identified and offered intervention support such as Reading Recovery programmes. Learning about such cultural differences in teaching practice informed the thinking our student teachers brought to their understanding of early literacy learning and challenged their assumptions about practice.

The Early Literacy Teaching-Research Nexus

The researchers – Elisabeth and Valerie – share a strong interest in ensuring that our collaboration included cross-cultural teaching activities involving our student teachers

and ourselves as teacher-learners. As busy programme leaders and lecturers, we needed to align teaching and research to work efficiently, but also wanted to do so to optimise quality learning experiences for our students and ourselves.

As we were both teaching early literacy to undergraduate student teachers, we began our collaborative activity by aligning an assignment task so that the students in each country would be completing a common set of activities. Building on the research by Gustafsson and Mellgren (2002), we asked student teachers during 2010-2011 to collect images of text in early years education settings (early childhood, preschool or the first three years of school). Following the collection of images by the student teachers, they were then offered the opportunity to share the images with other student teachers internationally, and engage in cross-cultural discussions. The cross-cultural discussion dimension of the project was embedded in our higher education studies, enabling student teachers and staff to visibly see how the use of signs and symbols are influenced by culture. Deeper examination of the images also enabled consideration of early years practices and values.

Learning through the project

Initial analysis of the images provided evidence of cross-cultural similarities and differences. Subsequent analysis of early literacy purposes, for example how teachers label, display books and notices, and ensure children's access to resources is reported in a literacy-focused article (Mellgren & Margrain, 2015). For this article, we focus on the finding that many of the images were of contexts familiar to student teachers across both countries; text and literacy learning are valued artefacts in both Western countries. Figure 1 illustrates this commonality by showing similar book displays and use of charts naming the days of the week.

In both countries, the images collected by students included examples of labels and wall displays that gave children support in decoding meaning; for example being supported by pictures, symbols and colour coding. However, there were also some examples of text used in early childhood centres which children would be unlikely to be able to read, and which made us reflect on who the text was for, and the purpose for display.

In many instances text appeared to be for the benefit of the adults only. While some children read fluently at an early age (Margrain, 2005), the majority of children in early childhood would be unable to read lists of rules and other extended written texts, or words on storage containers without picture cues.

We also learned about the values and insights of the student teachers in terms of what they chose to take pictures of. NZ student teachers often included Māori language and images in their effort to demonstrate bicultural competence, and this aspect was intriguing to the Swedish students. Some student teachers from both NZ and Sweden included other multicultural examples (see Figure 2). The bicultural and multicultural content was often expressed as a statement

to adults about the values within the environment, and not necessarily as a tool to support children's literacy. The commitment to valuing diverse cultures was common to teachers in both Sweden and NZ, though the specific cultural groups represented amongst immigrant families differed.

We found that student teachers learned effectively about cultural difference by finding the familiar through what was initially unfamiliar. Some monolingual (English-speaking) NZ early years student teachers had not previously thought about linguistic diversity and were surprised to see new alphabet letters å, ä, and ö. Some of these NZ student teachers were overheard to be questioning why a picture of a pig was positioned next to the letter G in a Swedish alphabet poster, rather than next to the letter P. While it is to be expected that they would not know the Swedish word 'gris' (pig), it was surprising that they articulated an assumption that all languages should be inherently the same as English. The student teachers were able to confront their own assumptions about alphabetic code connections between letters and iconic images illustrating the first sound in a word. For example, in O=Orange in English (Apelsin in Swedish), O=Ost in Swedish (Cheese in English).

Many NZ student teachers recognised for the first time that this code changes between different languages. The

student teachers were then able to translate this recognition to an understanding of language learning in the early years as the children develop their understanding of text and code. Across both countries, student teachers reflected on the process of catching the alphabetic code in their work as early years teachers, including children and families who are second language learners. The Swedish students were engaging in the project using English, which was perceived by them to be a valuable learning experience. The New Zealand students, the majority of which were monolingual, were humbled by the competence of the Swedish students in using English.

Student teachers learned broader things about each other's countries and cultural contexts by viewing the text images across countries. Selected images were shared with student teachers as examples both before data collection so that the student teachers could have interesting models, and afterward so that they could participate in peer feedback processes. For example, photographs of 'cubby holes' (storage boxes or 'fack') for children were taken to show labelling as text, but these also demonstrated that the storage spaces are larger in Sweden than in NZ because of the need for more cold-weather clothing.

Unexpectedly, the different usage of capital letters led to reflection on difference in literacy practices. While both NZ



Figure 2. Multicultural text in ECE: Sweden and New Zealand

and Sweden young children are encouraged to use literacy tools and emergent writing is valued, the specific use of capital versus lower case letters varied between the two countries. In Sweden, it is recognised that young children often find it easier to form the blocked shapes of upper case letters (eg. 'A' and 'E' versus 'a' and 'e'), and it is their choice to use these forms. Swedish early years teachers support approaches that value children using literacy methods that are part of their own path to literacy. In NZ teachers are discouraged from modelling capitals other than for initial letters because of the belief that reading will progress more easily if children recognise the lower case letters, so writing and reading should use the same forms.

This cultural difference, though embedded within common literacy practices and programmes, led to many interesting discussions with teachers and colleagues about what is valued in literacy and why. Are there differences between the value we place on reading versus writing? This reflection and discussion is of more importance than the observation of difference.

Amongst the most powerful learning gained was through peer sharing, and conversations which were both rich and unexpected

Discussion

Findings from a 2005 review of OECD teacher education policy across 23 countries indicated "growing interest in the lessons that might be learned from teacher policies and practices employed elsewhere. Experience from one context cannot necessarily be transported to another context without being filtered through cultural context, but nevertheless we argue that the value of professional learning from international collaborations can be powerful and should be supported.

The elements of the Akobarn project reported in this article illustrate opportunity for participants in international projects to engage in both constructivist learning and sociocultural understanding. Participants broaden knowledge and understanding (Adler, 2002), while simultaneously engaging in social activities from a distance as active participants and meaning makers (Dabbagh & Bannan-Ritland, 2005). Learning is a sociocultural activity that occurs at the nexus of the familiar and unfamiliar, influenced by cultural and historic perspectives (Vygotsky, 1978).

Although designed as a literacy learning experience and assessment activity, the process of data collection was influenced by broad cultural practices and understandings (Dahlgren & Olsson 1985; Gustafsson & Mellgren, 2002, 2005; Marton & Booth, 1997; Pramling, 1983,

1994; Vygotsky, 1962). In order to catch the written code, young children need support to become aware of explicit phonological features of spoken language. Early years teachers play a crucial role in this process, but need to provide this support with understanding that cultural contexts are important for learning. The project brought to the fore that while spoken language is universal, literacy is mediated by cultural practices and understandings (Vygotsky, 1962).

The international collaboration provided opportunity for higher education students and staff to learn more about literacy by examining common practices and then discovering differences; thus the unfamiliar within the familiar. As we described practices in early years education and literacy teaching to each other and learned of both commonalities and differences, we had many opportunities to reflect on the values and beliefs that underpinned our practices.

These opportunities were enriched by the opportunity to learn of ways that higher education was delivered, schools and preschools organised, literacy fostered, and social support delivered. In particular, sharing examples of our higher education students' work with each other's classes provided powerful catalysts for learning and reflection for us all. Amongst the most powerful learning gained was through peer sharing, and conversations which were both rich and unexpected. In this way although the topic focus was of environmental literacy text, the learning was far deeper and reflective.

While the initial Akobarn project completed several years ago, collaboration continues in new forms: University of Gothenburg has invited Massey University to participate in a five-university international Masters degree project with a shared paper on play in ECE, which involved additional lecturers and higher education students (Massey, 2015). The collaborative research into environmental literacy has sparked further comparative inquiry: New Zealander Gwen Gilmore, working at Victoria University in Melbourne, is currently replicating the findings of the initial Akobarn research with Australian students gathering images of text from Vietnamese ECE settings.

Conclusion

An international teaching-research collaboration can support many strategic outcomes. The collaboration between NZ and Swedish partners reported from the Akobarn study fostered cross-cultural understanding, enhanced learning within our specific areas of teaching and research interest, supported development of research, and engaged our higher education students.

In the Akobarn project cross-cultural learning was most powerfully experienced by student teachers when connected to their examination of what was originally thought to be familiar practices and artefacts, while also bringing challenge and critique to their reflection. Deepening examination of differences brought cultural diversity to the fore and provided opportunity for consideration of cultural

values and beliefs alongside specific content knowledge. The experience of partnership provided a range of constructive and valued learning experiences.

We conclude with proverbs from each of our countries that affirm the value of partnership:

Poipoi te kakano kia puawai.

Nurture the seed and it will flourish.

Delad glädje är dubbel glädje (och delad sorg är halv sorg).

Shared joy is twice the joy (and shared grief is half the grief).

References

- Adler, E. (2002). Constructivism and international relations. In C. Walter, T. Risse & B. A. Simmons (Eds.), *Handbook of international relations*. London, UK: Sage.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2008). Trade union members. Retrieved 27 January 2015, from <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4102.0Chapter7202008>
- Clay, M. (2002). *An observation survey of early literacy achievement* (2nd ed.). Auckland: Heinemann.
- Dahlgren, G., & Olsson, L-E. (1985). *Läsning i barnperspektiv*. Göteborgs Studies in Educational Sciences Göteborg, Sweden: Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis.
- ECE Taskforce. (2011). *An agenda for amazing children: ECE Taskforce report*. Retrieved November 1, 2011, from <http://www.taskforce.ece.govt.nz/>
- Gustafsson, K. & Mellgren, E. (2002). Using text in pre-school: A learning environment. *Early Child Development and Care*, 172(6), 603-624.
- Margrain, V. (2005). *Precocious readers: Case studies of self-regulated learning, social support and spontaneous learning in the early years*. Unpublished PhD thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, Wellington.
- Massey University. (2015). 265.738 *Children's Play and Learning in a Goal-Directed Teaching Practice*: Paper description. Retrieved January 14, 2015, from http://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/learning/programme-course-paper/paper.cfm?paper_code=265.738
- Mellgren, E., & Margrain, V. (2015). Student teacher views of text in early learning environments: Images from Sweden and New Zealand. *Early Child Development and Care*, DOI: 10.1080/03004430.2014.1003554
- Ministry of Education. (1996). *Te whāriki: He whāriki matauranga mō ngā mokopuna o Aotearoa*. Wellington, New Zealand: Learning Media.
- Ministry of Education. (2007). *New Zealand curriculum*. Wellington, New Zealand: Learning Media.
- Ministry of Education. (2011a). *Statistics: Early childhood education*. Retrieved November 10, 2011, from <http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/ece2>
- Ministry of Education. (2011b). *Early childhood management information*. Retrieved November 10, 2011, from <http://www.lead.ece.govt.nz/ManagementInformation/Staffing/AdultChildRatio.aspx>
- Ministry of Education. (2013). *Statistics: Early childhood education*. Retrieved 21 January 2015 from <http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/ece2/annual-ece-summary-reports>
- OECD. (2005). *Creating effective teaching and learning environments: First results from TALIS*. Retrieved June 29, 2012, from <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/17/51/43023606.pdf>
- OECD (2007). 'Childcare costs', in *Society at a Glance 2006: OECD Social Indicators*. OECD Publishing. http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/soc_glance-2006-11-en
- OECD. (2011). *Education at a glance 2011: OECD Indicators*. OECD Publishing. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2011-en>
- Pramling, I. (1983). *The child's conceptions of learning*. Göteborg, Sweden: Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis.
- Pramling, I. (1994). *Kunnandets grunder. Prövning av en fenomenografisk ansats till att utveckla barns rätt att uppfatta sin omvärld*. Göteborg, Sweden: Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis.
- Skolverket. (2004). *Förskola i brytningstid. Nationell utvärdering av förskolan*. Rapport 239 Stockholm Fritzes. Retrieved July 17, 2013 from www.skolverket.se
- Skolverket. (2010). *Läroplan för förskolan Lpfö 98, Reviderad 2010*. Ministry of Education. Retrieved November 10, 2011, from <http://www.skolverket.se/om-skolverket/publikationer/visa-enskild-publikation?id=2442>
- Skolverket (2011). *Curriculum for the compulsory school, preschool class and the leisure-time centre 2011 - Lgr11*. Retrieved November 10, 2011, from <http://www.skolverket.se/publikationer?id=2687>
- Te One, S. (2013). *Te Whāriki: Historical accounts and contemporary influences 1990-2012*. In J. Nuttall (Ed.), *Weaving Te Whāriki: Aotearoa New Zealand's curriculum document in theory and practice* (2nd ed.) (pp. 7-34). Wellington, New Zealand: NZCER.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1962). *Thought and language*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Eyes-on learning

Very young children in art galleries and museums

Lisa Terreni

When I was kindergarten teaching in a multicultural, inner-city suburb of Wellington in the 1990s, one of our favorite (and cheapest) excursions was a trip to the New Zealand Dominion Museum, the old national museum and art gallery. I remember the sense of anticipation and palpable excitement as we all climbed up the big stone steps, wondering what treasures we would encounter within this grand old building. Once inside the museum educators were always very welcoming of our children and families, and guided us through many of the remarkable art exhibitions that were held there.

Art galleries can be rather daunting places, particularly for those who have not had much experience visiting or working with children in this setting (Bourdieu & Darbel, 1991; Terreni, 2014), but it was by participating in and observing these initial museum educator-led sessions that the teaching team grew in confidence about how to work with young children in this context. Consequently, as our confidence and competence grew, we began to explore other galleries further afield – the Dowse, Pataka and the Wellington City Gallery.

Often we were not able to have museum educator-led sessions because the early childhood sector often does not have ready access to these services (Terreni, 2013a). So we would self-guide instead. Nonetheless, they were always successful visits and the excursions gave the teachers, children, and their families, many new and exciting experiences with traditional and contemporary art.

It was largely because of these formative experiences that my interest in the use of art galleries by the early childhood sector has continued over the years. When I needed to find a topic for my PhD, it did not take long to recognise that this was an area of visual art education that needed more exploration and research. This article explores many of the issues that have arisen from this research, and revisits some of the ideas discussed in an earlier paper (Terreni, 2001). I am hoping that it will encourage more early childhood teachers to use art galleries (and museums) for excursions, and also provide some basic guidelines for visiting.

Why young children should visit art galleries

The value of providing children with learning opportunities with people, places and things is an inherent part of the curriculum. Te Whāriki identifies that it is important for teachers to provide children with

opportunities to see and experience “... the stories and symbols of their own and other cultures” (Ministry of Education, 1996, p.78), and museums and art galleries are places that provide an exciting and fertile source of these things. In these places of learning children are likely to experience art and objects which can inspire, challenge and provoke new learning (Clarkin-Phillips, Carr & Paki, 2012).

Whilst it is perhaps not practiced extensively in early childhood settings, one of the roles of the early childhood teacher is to give children a range of experiences in art appreciation as well as in art making. In other words, children need opportunities to see and experience visual art (their own and the art of others), and have the opportunity to discuss, reflect, and even critique this work.

Art galleries and museums, which often house the very best of a nation's (and the world's) material culture, are valuable resources for enriching the aesthetic development of young children, as well as enhancing many other aspects of their learning. Many early childhood researchers have identified that art galleries and museums are good for fostering children's aesthetic awareness (see for example, Danko-McGee, 2000; Eckhoff, 2008; Kindler, 1997; Savva & Trimis, 2005). This is because they are full of beautiful, interesting and, sometimes, provocative objects that can be studied carefully.

The types of learning that occur in art galleries and museums

Museums and art galleries present children with a type of learning environment that is very different to their early childhood centre. Whilst many early childhood teachers earnestly believe that children need interactive, hands-on experiences to optimise their learning, it is important to keep in mind that sometimes it is necessary to teach children about the different behaviours that are needed in certain educational settings. For example, how to behave in and use a library, how to visit a marae, or how to engage with art work or objects in an art gallery or a museum.

Often in the art gallery or museum setting, it is an eyes-on learning experience (rather than hands-on) in which children begin to learn to visually decode objects (Jewitt & Kress, 2003; Moore, Francis & Dwyer, 1994), and make meaning through looking and questioning. In a 21st century world where visual messages are increasingly prevalent, this is an extremely useful skill to foster (Healey, 2000).

Other aspects of learning that occur in the art gallery

and museum include: cognitive, aesthetic, kinaesthetic, affective (emotional), social, and cultural learning. Burnham and Kai-Kee (2011) believe that good teachers can enhance children's cognition in galleries and museums by using objects and art works to "...stimulate their curiosity and imagination, provoke thought, and connecting the viewers' prior experience with the objects" (p 46). This approach fits nicely with the early childhood curriculum's emphasis on fostering and engaging children's interests in learning experiences.

Falk (2009) believes that "all meaning-making, even of the most logical topic, involves emotion, just as emotions virtually always involve cognition" (p. 147), and that affective (emotional) learning is a vital contributor to memorable museum experiences. It can be argued that because visual art depicts a myriad of different topics and subjects, it is highly likely that some art works may sometimes provoke strong emotional responses in the viewer. Teachers, therefore, can encourage children to express varied emotions when encountering art, and help them "... to understand that art provides representations of life, including the experience and expression of feelings" (Stylianiades, 2003, p.155).

Whilst much of the activity in an art museum involves a high level of cognitive activity which is often 'eyes-on' rather than hands-on, children can be encouraged to interpret art works with their bodies. Hackett (2014) notes that even physically moving within this type of space can contribute to young children's learning. Sculpture and 3 dimensional installations are art forms that lend themselves well to this kinaesthetic type of interpretation. Art galleries and museums sometimes have sculpture in outside spaces or gardens that can enable movement experiences, as well as allowing touching (Piscitelli, Everett & Weier, 2003). Some art museums provide a workshop/studio space for children to be able to engage in hands-on art making experiences after visiting an exhibition. If these are unavailable on a visit, however, teachers can also provide similar opportunities back at the centre.

Bell (2011), and Clarkin-Phillips, Carr, & Paki (2012) believe that museums provide rich opportunities for children to experience the diversity of cultures in their communities. They argue, for instance, that experiences in New Zealand art galleries and museums can help children (and teachers) explore aspects of Māori culture through the



A toddler intrigued by art object from the exhibition *I started it...you finished it* by Paola Pivi at the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne 2014

collections, which often impart cultural histories as well as depicting current issues. These can be effectively used to encourage discussions about diversity.

Clearly, art galleries and museums have the potential to provide many rich learning opportunities for young children in early childhood settings, but another extremely important reason for visiting them is that teachers are in a powerful position to help combat some of the known barriers to visiting art galleries and museums; barriers that can discriminate against young children and their families.

Barriers to art museum and gallery visiting

There have been many studies which have identified obstacles to museum visiting (see for instance, Bennett & Frow, 1991; Hood, 2004; Mason & McCarthy, 2006). Many of these findings can be applied to visiting preschool children and their families (Terreni, 2013).

French sociologists Bourdieu and Darbel (1991), who undertook a large scale research project investigating the types of visitors that frequent art galleries, argue that these institutions attract visitors who are white, educated and middle class, and that visiting art galleries is less likely to

be included in the leisure or educational activities of lower socio-economic groups. Their research recognised that education is an effective tool for helping children appreciate, understand and value many forms of visual art, as well as cultivate a love of art. One of the important roles of schools, they argued, was to provide programmes that would help with the “inculcation of artistic culture” (1991, p. 60) by providing excursions to galleries. They firmly believed that organised trips to galleries and museums by schools and early childhood centres could play an extremely important role in the equalising of this opportunity for all children.

However, museums and art galleries may be difficult to access. Issues relating to transport are particularly relevant to parents of preschool children, especially those who do not have their own private transport. Organised excursions by early childhood services to museums or galleries, using appropriate methods of transport, can help overcome this difficulty. Likewise, the cost of visiting museums or art galleries can involve costs which are prohibitive for some families. Whilst early childhood centres may also find costs challenging, fee subsidies by management committees or accessing funding from grants (lotteries, community arts grants, grants from philanthropic trusts), can help overcome this obstacle.

Art galleries in particular have often been criticised for being exclusive and excluding of specific groups. Sandell (1998) argues that “the exclusion of minority groups from the political, economic and social dimensions of society is reflected in the museum which fails to tell the stories of those groups and denies them access to its services through mechanisms of exclusion” (p. 408). Nonetheless, many museums and galleries in New Zealand today are interested in breaking down this perception and are working towards making their institutions more accessible (see, for instance, Hakiwai, 2005).

However, my own research is indicating that art galleries are still not particularly accommodating of the early childhood sector (Terreni, 2013b). Unfortunately, one of the reasons for this is that the Ministry of Education’s funding for learning and education outside of the classroom (LEOTC) is exclusively for the primary and secondary school sectors, which means that early childhood groups sometimes cannot easily use the services of art gallery educators to guide their visits. However, by developing a relationship with local museums and galleries, early childhood teachers can sometimes negotiate access to their services. Equally, early childhood teachers can also develop their own skills and museum literacy in order to undertake successful self-guided visits within these settings.

Preparing for a visit to an art gallery or museum is important

Care needs to be taken preparing for a visit to a museum or art gallery. This is to ensure that learning and teaching opportunities, as well as enjoyment, are maximized, that the visit is a success, and that the early childhood group will be welcomed back!

It is important to know whether an exhibition will be suitable for the children. Information about current exhibitions in museums and galleries can be gained by ringing the gallery or museum staff, joining their mailing lists, or looking on their websites. Reading reviews of exhibitions can also be very useful to identify appropriateness and, once an exhibition has been deemed suitable, it is helpful for the teaching team to visit the exhibition particularly if it is the first visit to the venue. Reconnoitring can help determine what the children will focus on when they are there, the layout of the exhibition (which helps with determining group size and the coordination of groups within the venue), finding a central gathering point and, perhaps, talking to the gallery or museum educators about key points of interest (Piscitelli, Everett & Weier, 2003).

Preparing children for a visit involves several things. To start with, learning the rules of the art gallery or museum is vital and this can be practiced in the centre before visiting actually takes place. Talking about and/or practicing things like: not touching objects, being relatively calm and quiet in the gallery space, and how to look at objects carefully, are important things to know about (Andrewes and Johnston, 2011). For instance, putting masking tape on the floor around certain objects can help children understand where they can stand in relation to the art object. Showing pictures or photographs of the objects the children are likely to see when they are there is also helpful for introducing children to new art forms or the objects – often images can be found on the gallery’s website. This may also help them become familiar with some appropriate art vocabulary e.g. exhibition, sculpture, carving, picture frame, brushstrokes. Art gallery educators often work with groups of children, sitting in front of art works. These are not dissimilar to mat-time sessions, so children will also need to know how to participate in group discussion sessions if working with an educator from the gallery or museum.

If parents are accompanying the children, it is really important to inform them prior to the trip about what they will be seeing and how to work with the children in the setting (Gross, 2014). For instance, giving them some appropriate questions to ask children in order to create opportunities for discussion about the objects, and encouraging them to listen to children’s responses to objects carefully (adults often report how delightful the children’s responses can be). This not only maximizes learning opportunities for the children, but also for the parents themselves.

Working in the gallery or museum

Ideally, small groups work best in art galleries and museums but if you have to go in a big group, it is best to divide into smaller groups once inside the exhibition space. Each group should have a teacher and parents who can facilitate the children’s learning process.

How you work in an art gallery or museum, however, will depend a lot on your centre’s pedagogy and approach

to learning. It can be really helpful to have your initial visit guided by a gallery or museum educator who has expertise in this area. Creating a good relationship with the institution before a visit can really help with negotiating this!

Some museums and galleries offer professional development for teachers on how to effectively work with children in the art gallery or museum. However, reading about different teaching approaches is extremely helpful too, and there are some excellent resources that can assist teachers with ideas and strategies that they can apply successfully to meet their group's individual and unique needs.

Work by Clarkin-Phillips, Carr, & Paki (2012) has identified the types of resources, which they call boundary objects, that can be effectively used within in the museum and after the visit so that children can "...make connections between the [centre] kindergarten and the museum. These can include: sketchbooks, laminated photographs of exhibits and artefacts, and learning stories that document children's experiences in the museum and at the kindergarten" (p. 8).

An important thing to negotiate with the gallery or museum is the taking of photographs. If the institution agrees, make sure that photos of the children interacting in the gallery/museum environment are taken, so that they can be used back at the centre. If the gallery or museum do not agree to photographs, this is usually because of the gallery's duty to protect the copyright of the exhibited artists work.

Follow up learning experiences after a visit

Back at the early childhood centre, the follow-up to the visit is just as important as the preparation and the actual visit (McNaughton, 2010). This can provide an exciting and dynamic focus for the programme, and reinforce the children's learning that occurred. There are various ways in which this can be done:

- Discuss what the children saw, their impressions of the visit, what they remembered, and what they liked. Use the children's sketches, photos and/or video recordings of the visit for encouraging discussion and reinforcement of new concepts or ideas presented by the exhibition.
- Give children plentiful opportunities for art-making in response to their visit, helping them to experiment with materials and techniques that may have been used by artists in the exhibition. This allows "... children to represent and translate what they had observed at the museums (Clarkin-Phillips, Carr & Paki, 2012, p.8).
- Developing an exhibition of the children's own art work can be another dimension of learning activities after a gallery visit (McNaughton, 2010).
- Identify aspects of the exhibition that may be appropriate for exploration in other areas of the programme, e.g. maths, science, music.
- Develop learning stories or ebooks so children can

re visit these at a later date, and so that families are informed about the learning that occurred for the children (Jones, 2011).

Conclusion

Clarkin-Phillips, Carr and Paki (2012) suggest that "... an outcome for young children of deliberate teaching in museums ... is a repertoire of meaning-making practices that travel across contexts". From my own experience, as an early childhood teacher and as a researcher, it is clear that positive experiences in art galleries and museums can help young children, their parents, as well as their teachers, not only develop positive attitudes towards visiting these rich places of learning, but can also help children acquire a range of new meaning-making skills.

Early childhood educators can play a vital role in facilitating exciting experiences in art galleries and museums, helping to diminish the barriers to access for these young visitors (Bourdieu & Darbel, 1991). Importantly, excursions such as these can add fascinating and stimulating new dimensions to a centre's programme.

References

- Andrewes, L. & Johnston, M. (2011). The gallery as an educational space: Art connoisseurs at St Andrews Epsom Early Childhood Centre. *ecARTnz*, 4. Retrieved from http://www.elp.co.nz/ecartnz_e_magazine_on_arts_education.cfm
- Bell, D. (2011). Questions from museums: Gallery educator's conversations about art. *ecARTnz*, 4. Retrieved from http://www.elp.co.nz/ecartnz_e_magazine_on_arts_education.cfm
- Bennett, T., & Frow, F. (1991). *Art galleries: Who goes? A study of Australian art galleries, with international comparisons*. Australia: Australian Council for the Arts.
- Bourdieu, P., & Darbel, A. (1991). *The love of art: European museums and their public*. (C. Beattie & N. Merriman, Trans.). Cambridge: Polity Press. (Original work published 1969).
- Burnham, R., and E. Kai-Kee. (2011). *Teaching in the art museum: Interpretation as experience*. Los Angeles, CA: Paul Getty Museum.
- Carr, M., Clarkin-Phillips, J., Beer, A., Thomas, R., & Waitai, M. (2012). Young children developing meaning making practices in a museum: The role of boundary objects. *Journal of Museum Management and Curatorship*, 27(1), 53–66.
- Clarkin-Phillips, J., Carr, M., Beer, A., Thomas, R., & Waitai, M. (2011). *The world upstairs: Children connecting two learning contexts*. Retrieved from http://www.elp.co.nz/ecartnz_e_magazine_on_arts_education.cfm
- Clarkin-Phillips, J., Carr, M. & Paki, V. (2012) *Our place: Being curious at Te Papa*. Retrieved from <http://www.tlri>.

org.nz/sites/default/files/projects/9265-Summaryreport.pdf

- Danko-McGee, K. (2000). *The aesthetic preferences of young children*. Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press.
- Eckhoff, A. (2008). The importance of art viewing experiences in early childhood visual arts: The exploration of a master art teacher's strategies for meaningful early arts experiences. *Early Childhood Education Journal* 35(5), 463-72.
- Hackett, A. (2014). Ziggling and zooming all over the place: Young children's meaning making and movement in the museum. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, 14(1), 5-27.
- Gross, R. (2014). *Preparing children for art museums*. Retrieved from <http://arts.gov/art-works/2014/preparing-children-art-museums>
- Hakiwai, A. (2005). The search for legitimacy: Museums in Aotearoa New Zealand: A Māori viewpoint. In G. Corsane (Ed.) *Heritage, museums and galleries: An introductory reader* (pp. 154-162). London, UK: Routledge.
- Healy, A. (2000). Visual literacy: Reading and the contemporary text environment. In R. Campbell & D. Green (Eds.), *Literacies and learners: Current perspectives* (pp. 155-172). Hazelbrook, NSW, Australia: Prentice Hall.
- Hood, M. (2004). Staying away: Why people choose not to visit museums. In G. Anderson (Ed.), *Reinventing the museum: Historical and contemporary perspectives on the paradigm shift* (pp. 150-157). Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press.
- Jewitt, C., & Kress, G. (2003). *Multimodal literacy*. New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- Jones, C. (2011). Our trip to the New Dowse: A learning story. *ecARTnz*, 4. Retrieved from http://www.elp.co.nz/ecartnz_e_magazine_on_arts_education.cfm
- Kindler, A. (1997). Aesthetic development and learning in art museums: A challenge to enjoy. *The Journal of Museum Education* 22, (2/3), 12-16.
- Moore, D.M., Francis M. & Dwyer, F.M. (1994). *Visual literacy: A spectrum of visual learning*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Educational Technology Publications.
- Piscitelli, B., M. Everett, and K. Weier. (2003). *Enhancing young children's museum experiences: A manual for museum staff*. Retrieved from <http://southbank.qm.qld.gov.au/Learning+Resources/Kids+and+Families>
- Mason, D., & McCarthy, C. (2006). The feeling of exclusion: Young people's perceptions of art galleries. *Museum Management and Curatorship*, 21, 20-31.
- McNaughton, E. H. (2010). *The language of living: Developing intelligent novices at the Suter Art Gallery*. Unpublished MPhil thesis, Massey University, Palmerston North. Retrieved from <http://mro.massey.ac.nz/handle/10179/2189>.
- Ministry of Education. 1996. *Te Whāriki: Early childhood curriculum: He Whāriki Mātauranga mō ngā Mokopuna o Aotearoa*. Wellington, NZ: Learning Media.
- Sandell, R. (1998). Museums as agents of social inclusion. *Museum Management and Curatorship*, 17(4), 401-418.
- Savva, A. & E. Trimis (2005). Responses of young children to contemporary art exhibits: The role of artistic experiences. *International Journal of Education and the Arts*, 6(13), 1-23.
- Stylianides, I. (2003). Significant moments, autobiography, and personal encounters with art. In M. Xanthoudaki, L. Tickle and I. Sekules (eds.) *Researching visual arts education in museums and galleries: An international reader* (pp.153-165). Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic.
- Terreni, L. (2001). *Making the most of museums: An early childhood educators guide to maximizing learning and teaching opportunities in museums and art galleries*. Retrieved 27 June, 2010 from <http://www.lead.ece.govt.nz/~media/Educate/Files/oldECE/museums.pdf>
- Terreni, L. (2013a). *Children's rights as cultural citizens: Examining young children's access to art museums and galleries in Aotearoa New Zealand*. *Australian Art Education* 35(1), 93-107.
- Terreni, L. (2013b). *"I know what that is it's modern art": Early childhood access to and use of art museums in Aotearoa New Zealand* (Unpublished PhD proposal). Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand.
- Terreni, L. (2014). It's a matter of distinction: Bourdieu, art museums, and young children attending Early childhood services in New Zealand. *International Art in Early Childhood Journal*, 4, 1-10.

Helpful web-based sources:

For guidelines on preparing to visit an art gallery, see for example: <http://www.guggenheim.org/new-york/education/school-educator-programs/school-tours-and-visits/preparing-for-your-visit>).

For teacher resources to support a visit, see for example: <http://blog.tepapa.govt.nz/2014/03/10/teacher-professional-development-visual-culture-and-visual-arts-in-ece/>)

For further useful reflections on the experience of e.c.e. centres using museums and galleries, see

(1) , 2011, issue 4 -(http://www.elp.co.nz/ecartnz_e_magazine_on_arts_education.cfm);

(2) Te Papa Tongarewa, the national museum of New Zealand, has an excellent blog for early childhood teachers that illustrates successful encounters in their museum. See <http://blog.tepapa.govt.nz/category/education/early-childhood-education-education/>).

Children's well being

Regulations, policies and directions for research

Claire McLachlan

In a compelling editorial, Professor Michael Peters (2013, p. 1) argued:

If a country's net moral worth is to be judged in terms of the health of its children, then for a first world country New Zealand's standing is appalling: it has slipped dramatically since the early twentieth century when its infant mortality was among the lowest in the world. This was the era of the welfare state when there was free public health care. ... Beginning in the late 1980s and especially since the 2000s, as a result of neoliberal welfare policies and low government spending on children New Zealand has slipped into the bottom third of all countries alongside India and Mexico.

Internationally it is recognised that New Zealand's high rates of child poverty are impacting on their health (OECD, 2009). It is also recognised that increasingly, children are spending significantly more time in early childhood settings and that 1/3 of toddlers are classified as overweight or obese (Ministry of Education, 2013; Ministry of Health, 2013).

This paper examines what is known about the policy and regulatory environment that shapes early childhood settings, and the implications for physical activity and nutrition of young children. Current research is examined and areas for further research identified.

Nutrition, physical activity and health

The 2002 New Zealand Children's Nutrition Survey of children aged 5-14 years showed that nearly one third of school-aged children were overweight or obese (Ministry of Health, 2003). In the same study, 17.5% of the children did not have a physical education class in the previous week, 12.5% did no physical activity on the previous weekend, and 40% watched over two hours of television on each weekend day. By 2011, nearly one third of New Zealand children were classified as overweight or obese which included children as young as two years old (Ministry of Health, 2013). Pacific and Māori children were 2.5 and 1.5 times more likely to be obese than other children, respectively. Very young children are spending more time in early childhood settings. Average hours enrolled per week are increasing (21.7 hours in 2013, up nearly 40 minutes from 2012). However, little is actually known about nutrition and physical activity in the ECE context.

In their study of ECE outcomes, Mitchell, Wylie and

Carr (2008) found that apart from research on cortisol levels, the evidence on health outcomes is not robust and that most studies of health outcomes for young children rely on parent reports and indicate short-term outcomes related to current ECE experience. There is a suggestion that children may catch more infections (ear, nose, and throat) through ECE participation, and that young children attending all-day centres may experience higher cortisol levels (symptoms of stress). However, where centres are good quality, cortisol levels tend to be lower, and ECE experience can decrease cortisol levels where there is parental stress or extremes of emotional expression. Mitchell et al. (2008) suggest that ECE programmes that include health support may improve health outcomes for children.

The regulatory environment for physical activity and nutrition in ECE

According to the current regulations (New Zealand Government, 2008), in order to maintain their license to operate, ECE centres must meet the minimum standards such as ratios, space, curriculum, safety and to deliver the legislated curriculum (currently *Te Whāriki*). They must also have a successful regular review by the Education Review Office using established criteria. However, choices are left to centre owners and teachers for decision making about physical activity, dietary choices and the ways food is offered to children, as long as they can demonstrate practice that is consistent with the regulations and the curriculum.

Amongst the regulations, some stand out as being of particular interest in terms of nutrition and physical activity:

1. *Regulation 45: Premises and facilities*

Centres must make decisions about feeding children, which may be based on routines, cultural issues, centre philosophy or organisational practices, space, length of attendance and so forth.

2. *Regulation 46: Health and safety*

Food must be served at appropriate times to meet the nutritional needs of each child while they are attending. Where food is provided, it must be of sufficient variety, quantity and quality to meet these needs. A record of all food provided (except provided by parents) must be kept for 3 months after food is served. Records are kept for compliance and allergic reaction purposes. An ample supply of water must be available at all times, and

be accessible to older children independently. Children must be supervised while eating at all times.

3. Regulation 46: Food and nutrition guidelines

Centres can provide meals, ask parents to provide meals or do a combination of both. Parents need to be informed of “normal practices” concerning food in each centre, such as bringing fruit for morning tea.

As these regulations suggest, there is considerable scope for difference in interpretation. Centres are advised, but not instructed, to use Ministry of Health resources, such as *Healthy eating for babies and toddlers from birth to two years old* (2008). The Ministry of Education (2007) document, *Food and nutrition for healthy, confident kids* outlines the principles of *Te Whāriki* in relation to food and nutrition.

Although these guidelines provide good advice, their implementation assumes that teachers have strong understandings of learning and development and know which resources to use, how to assess skill progression, and understand what appropriate degrees of challenge would entail. Interestingly, the Australian Government has gone further with its development of National Quality Standards aligned with the Early Years Learning Framework, with explicit guidance on practice (Active Healthy, 2014).

Teacher knowledge of nutrition and physical activity

A scoping exercise for Sport NZ (Kolt et al., 2005) found that many ECE teachers lack sufficient knowledge or confidence to implement the guidelines in *Te Whāriki* and other documents, which teachers said stemmed from inadequacies in their initial teacher education. Initial teacher education (ITE) programmes occur in a range of delivery modes with 26 different providers. Most ITE programmes have a crowded curriculum and students may have only an hour or two on nutrition and physical activity in their qualification as preparation for understanding children’s needs. Kane’s (2005) review of NZ teacher education programmes found that “domain” (subject content) knowledge was not often taught to ECE teachers; internationally many teachers lack knowledge and confidence in domain knowledge to support children’s learning (McLachlan, Flee & Edwards, 2012). Teacher knowledge is another important focus for research.

Adding to complexity is the fact that setting menus for children is not necessarily the responsibility of early childhood teachers, as some centres are managed (and menus set) by non-qualified owners. There is anecdotal evidence that many children are fed “easy food” – high carbs, high fat, and mass produced – which can be eaten with the fingers to cut down on washing utensils and staff supervision. Centre owners may employ cooks, and not use dieticians for nutritional advice. An Auckland dietician recently suggested to me that centre policies of “rolling” morning teas, lunches and afternoon teas are also problematic. She argued centres engage in this practice philosophically to let children make choices, but



Balls are a prompt for movement.

Photo courtesy of Mokopuna ki Clendon e.c.e.

nutritionally this leads to both overeating and under eating and that many young children cannot articulate that they are hungry. This is another issue worthy of further research.

Research on nutrition and physical activity in ECE

Although it is commonly assumed children are naturally active, there is growing evidence that many children do not have sufficient physical activity prior to school entry and that the vast majority of activity they do engage in is of low intensity, which does not ensure children gain improved bone density, aerobic fitness and motor skills (Gubbels, Van Kann & Jansen, 2012). At present the amount and kind of physical activity to be effective, and the role of educators, equipment, and the play environment in an ECE setting to promote health and to prevent or reduce obesity in children, is not known (Krombholz, 2012).

There are few insights in New Zealand on what the common nutrition practices in ECE settings are, but a US study found that teachers in Head Start centres (federally funded for low socioeconomic communities) had inadequate understandings of infant nutrition and how to promote physical activity, although this was influenced by qualifications and experience (Davis et al., 2013). International research also suggests children’s eating, physical activity, and sedentary behaviours are learnt in the home that this environment impacts on children’s weight (Campbell & Hesketh, 2007).

Internationally there is evidence that physical activity in children has decreased significantly in the last 20–30 years and that this has resulted in increased obesity levels (Gunner, Atkins, Nichols & Eissa, 2005). There is evidence that regular physical activity in young children may result in enhanced motor development, improved bone health, increased cognitive function, reduced risk of cardiovascular disease, being overweight or obese, and increased likelihood of being physically active in later life (Barnett et al., 2008). However, there is limited evidence that physical activity alone will reduce obesity; inadequate nutrition also needs to be addressed (Timmons et al., 2007).

The National Association for Sport and Exercise (NASPE) (2002) in the USA recommends that preschool-aged children participate daily in 60 minutes of structured moderate to vigorous physical activity and a further 60 minutes or more of unstructured free play. The guidelines suggest that young children need to develop movement skills that are building blocks for more complex tasks; that play environments should meet or exceed safety standards for large muscle activities; and that teachers should facilitate the child's movement skills. Sport NZ (2007) guidelines echo NASPE and similarly suggest ECE settings should be safe, facilitate activity and not restrict movement for long periods.

Although NASPE and Sport NZ guidelines are reasonably clear, there is an implicit assumption that ECE teachers will understand motor skill development and will know how to set up an appropriate play environment to encourage it. However, Tucker (2008) found that children in childcare are less likely to achieve daily requirements for physical activity than children at home. Tucker's (2008) systematic review of 39 studies on children's physical activity in ECE centres revealed that only 54% of preschool-aged children met the recommended daily physical activity guidelines published by NASPE (2002). Brown and colleagues (2009) similarly found that children were engaged in sedentary activity 56% of the time during periods outside, while Hannon and Brown (2008) found that children were sedentary for 49% of outside time. These findings challenge the idea that children are naturally active and suggest children are not sufficiently active in child care.

A scoping exercise for Sport NZ (Kolt et al., 2005; Oliver et al., 2006; Oliver & McLachlan, 2006) found that people – the adults in children's lives – were the major barriers to physical activity opportunities being offered in ECE. Limited information, knowledge and skills were the most common identified concerns; both pre-service and in-service professional learning were limited. Teachers identified they lacked confidence in providing a wide range of physical activity opportunities.

Furthermore Coleman and Dymont (2012, 2013) suggest that social factors influencing children's physical activity in child care settings is currently under theorised and lacking research. Their studies suggest that policies, practices and perceptions of teacher role all constrain children's opportunities for physical activity and that some teachers do not see involvement in children's physical play as part of their role.

It has also been debated how much risk is reasonable in ECE settings, influencing how much physical activity children get. One growing concern is that centres and families are too protective of children and may limit experiences due to concerns children will be harmed. Research in NZ suggests toddlers get less opportunity for physical activity and outdoor play than older children (Stephenson, 1999, 2003; Lockie & Wright, 2002) and that risk taking is limited by teachers. In a study of one-year olds, Stephenson (1999) found how, despite toddlers'

eagerness to get outside, they were restricted to inside environments for the purposes of protecting health and well-being. Because the outdoor environment offered so few restrictions and routines, toddlers appeared more competent and confident outdoors than they did in the more restricted indoor environment. A later study with 125 ECE centres in Christchurch confirmed a higher priority was placed on outdoor play for older children, and children under two years had the least outdoor access (Lockie & Wright, 2002). Key factors that influenced the level of access to outdoors were found to be environmental features, routines, and staffing.

Coleman and Dymont (2013) found that rough or challenging play is often considered an unacceptable risk to children's safety by teachers, confirming that safety issues and concerns about risky play limit children's physical activity opportunities. Little, Wyver and Gibson (2011) similarly found that adult beliefs about children's risky play constrained both experiences and responses to risk-taking behaviour during play; decision making was further constrained by the regulatory environment.

However, there is growing evidence that physical activity intervention programmes in ECE are effective in promoting improved activity and motor skill development in children and teachers' knowledge and skills (Davis, et al., 2013). In a Scottish study, Body Mass Index (BMI) and motor skills were measured to evaluate the effectiveness of regular physical interventions (three 30-minute sessions per week over six months) (Reilly et al., 2011). The results showed that while BMI was not affected, children in the intervention group gained higher scores in movement skills tests than control children, suggesting other long term benefits such as confidence to engage in physical activities, which effects weight.

Krombolz (2012) similarly found that the motor development of children in ECE was promoted by offering more opportunities for physical activities in child care centres in Germany. The duration of the intervention was 20 months, and children received at least one weekly 45-min. session of physical education and physical activities sessions (20 min.) on the other days. Children in the intervention group surpassed children in the control group in motor performance (body coordination, physical fitness, and dexterity). Children with higher BMIs in the intervention group had better motor scores than children with higher BMIs in the control group, but the intervention had no effect on body weight, BMI, or skinfold thickness.

A recent New Zealand study by Deborah Pigou (2013) investigated the effects of a nine week, child-centred physical activity programme for 90 toddlers aged 12–24 months. Using a randomised controlled design, the toddlers were split into two treatment groups stratified by age and gender, which completed nine weeks of one hour physical activity classes using the "*Jumping Beans*" programme or normal physical activity programme. Measurements of body mass, height, overall development, safety skills, balance and parent supervision were undertaken as pre- and post-measures. Results showed the intervention was successful in



A swing can invite children to test their strength.

Photo courtesy of Mokopuna ki Clendon e.c.e.

improving overall safety skills and the ability to complete some agility tasks, but there were no differences in overall development, measures of balance or supervision aspects.

Problems, solutions and possible research

Many factors influence nutrition and physical activity in ECE settings. The regulatory environment sets minimum standards, but these are interpreted via philosophy, community or cultural imperatives. *Te Whariki* (Ministry of Education, 1996) provides the primary policy document, but utilises a ‘competence’ model of curriculum (McLachlan, et al., 2012), emphasising that teachers and children have control over the content, pacing and sequencing of the curriculum; also interpreted through lenses of philosophy, community and culture.

Within such models, teacher knowledge is imperative to ensure teachers are receptive to changes in children’s learning and development and have robust understandings of developmental, social and cultural domains. A clear tension exists between the curriculum, the regulatory environment and teachers’ perceptions of their role in children’s nutrition and physical activity, exacerbated by a lack of available research evidence on what works to support children’s nutritional and physical activity needs in ECE. With Massey colleagues from College of Health, I will be doing further research on physical activity and nutrition in ECE settings in 2015 to address this gap.

Although the numbers of qualified teachers is increasing, so too are the numbers of children enrolled in ECE, thus

creating an on-going shortage of qualified teachers. Those with current qualifications are likely to have had little preparation on nutrition or physical education in ITE programmes and decreased opportunities for professional learning under the government’s Budget for Education. Teachers are responsible for decision making about physical activity and nutrition in the curriculum, but this may be constrained by fear of risk and litigation, lack of knowledge, or strong discourses about the types of opportunities offered to children. Notions of “cotton wool” children are common and are reinforced by the rigid regulatory code for outdoor play environments (NZ Government, 2008). Research suggests that teachers’ knowledge is likely to be broad based rather than specific and findings by Kolt and colleagues (2005, 2006, 2007) suggest that many NZ teachers lack knowledge and confidence to implement physical activity in their ECE settings. Increasing learning about physical education in ITE is one solution, but in-service professional learning or the support by a professional in the ECE setting is probably a more realistic solution.

Conclusions

The ECE sector in New Zealand is arguably one of the most complex in the world because of the diversity of services and philosophies and the multicultural, multilingual population it serves. There are inherent difficulties in ensuring that children receive high quality ECE, despite government’s aspirational statements. Increasing numbers of children are participating in ECE, but there is limited research on how their health is being promoted within ECE settings, particularly in full-time child care. Given rising rates of obesity in NZ children, further research on both nutrition and physical activity in children under the age of five enrolled in ECE services is of considerable importance.

References

- Active Healthy. (2014). *Early childhood/National quality standard*. Retrieved from: <http://www.getactivegoldcoast.com.au/settings/early-childhood-national-quality-standard.php>
- Barnett, L.M., van Beurden, E., Morgan, P.J., Brooks, L.O., & Beard, J.R. (2008). Does childhood motor skill proficiency predict adolescent fitness? *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise*, 40(12), 2137–2144.
- Brown, W. H., Pfeiffer, K. A., McIver, K. L., Dowda, M., Addy, C. L., & Pate, R. R. (2009). Social and environmental factors associated with preschoolers’ non-sedentary physical activity. *Child Development*, 80(1), 45–58.
- Campbell, K.J. & Hesketh, K.D. (2007). Strategies which aim to positively impact on weight, physical activity, diet and sedentary behaviours in children from zero to five years. A systematic review of the literature. *Obesity Review*, 8, 327–338.
- Coleman, B. & Dymont, J. (2013). Factors that limit and enable preschool-aged children’s physical activity on child care centre playgrounds. *Journal of Early Childhood Research*, 11(3) 203–221.
- Davis, S., Sanders, S. Fitzgerald, C., Keane, P., Canaca, G. & Rolker-Vector, R. (2013). CHILE: An evidence-based preschool

- intervention for obesity prevention in Head Start. *Journal of School Health*, 83(3), 223-229.
- Dyment, J. & Coleman, B. (2012). The intersection of physical activity opportunities and the role of early childhood educators during outdoor play: Perceptions and reality. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*, 37(1), 90-98.
- Gordon, F.K., Ferguson E.L., Toafa, V., Henry, T.E., Goulding, A., Grant, A.M., & Guthrie B.E. (2003). High levels of childhood obesity observed among 3- to 7-year-old New Zealand Pacific children is a public health concern. *Journal of Nutrition*, 133(11), 3456-60.
- Gubbels, J.S., Van Kann, D.H.H., & Jansen, M.W.J. (2012). Play equipment, physical activity opportunities, and children's activity levels at childcare. *Journal of Environmental and Public Health*, 2012, 8. doi: 10.1155/2012/326520
- Gunner, K.B., Atkinson, P.M., Nichols, J. & Eissa, M.A. (2005). Health promotion strategies to encourage physical activity in infants, toddlers and pre-schoolers. *Journal of Pediatric Health Care*, 19, 253-258.
- Hannon, J. C., & Brown, W. H. (2008). Increasing preschoolers' physical activity intensities: An activity-friendly preschool playground intervention. *Preventive Medicine*, 46(6), 532-536.
- Kane, R. (2005). *Initial teacher education: Policy and practice. Final report*. Wellington, N.Z.: Ministry of Education.
- Kolt, G.S., Schofield, G.M., McLachlan, C.J., Oliver, M. Lucas, P., Maddison, R. & Walters, S. (2005). *Active movement: Scoping Exercise and Programme Evaluation*. Centre for Physical Activity and Nutrition Research, Auckland University of Technology.
- Krombolz, H. (2012) The impact of a 20-month physical activity intervention in child care centers on motor performance and weight in overweight and healthy-weight preschool children. *Perceptual & Motor Skills: Exercise & Sport*, 115(3), 919-932.
- Little, H., Wyver, S. & Gibson, F. (2011). The influence of play context and adult attitudes on young children's physical risk-taking during outdoor play. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 19(1), 113-131.
- Lockie, C., & Wright, J. (2002). The golden kiwi childhood – is it a lottery? *New Zealand Research in Early Childhood Education*, 5, 157-167.
- McLachlan, C., Fleer, M. & Edwards, S. (2012). *Early childhood curriculum: Planning, assessment and implementation* (2nd ed). Melbourne, Vic. Australia: Cambridge University Press.
- Ministry of Education (1996). *Te Whāriki: he whāriki matauranga mō ngā mokopuna o Aotearoa: early childhood curriculum*. Wellington: Learning Media.
- Ministry of Education (2007). *Food and nutrition for healthy, confident kids*. Wellington: Learning Media.
- Ministry of Health (2003). *2002 National Children's Nutrition Survey*. Wellington: Ministry of Health.
- Ministry of Health (2008). *Food and Nutrition Guidelines for Healthy Infants and Toddlers (Aged 0-2): A background paper – Partially revised December 2012*. Retrieved from: <http://www.health.govt.nz/publication/food-and-nutrition-guidelines-healthy-infants-and-toddlers-aged-0-2-background-paper-partially>
- Ministry of Health (2012). *The health of New Zealand children 2011/2012*. Retrieved from <http://www.health.govt.nz/publication/health-new-zealand-children-2011-12>
- Mitchell, L., Wylie, C. & Carr, M. (2008). *Outcomes of early childhood education: Literature review: Report to the Ministry of Education*. Wellington: New Zealand Council for Educational Research.
- National Association for Sport and Physical Education (2002). *Active start: A statement of physical activity guidelines for children birth to five years*. Reston, VA: National Association for Sport and Physical Education Publications.
- New Zealand Government (2008). *Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008*. Retrieved from <http://www.legislation.govt.nz/regulation/public/2008/0204/latest/DLM1412501.html>
- OECD (2009). *Doing better for children*. Retrieved from: <http://www.oecd.org/social/familiesandchildren/doingbetterforchildren.htm>.
- Oliver, M. & McLachlan, C. (2006). Physical activity: An overview of policy and practice in early childhood education and care. *Early Education*, 40, 15-19.
- Oliver, M., Schofield, G.S., Kolt, G.S. & McLachlan, C.J. (2007). Physical activity in early childhood: Current state of knowledge. *New Zealand Research in Early Childhood Education*, 10, 47-68.
- Oliver, M., Schofield, G. & Kolt, G. (2007). Physical activity in preschoolers: Understanding prevalence and measurement issues. *Sports Med*, 37(12), 1045-70.
- Peters, M.A. (2013). Children in crisis: The New Zealand case. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 45 (1), 1-5.
- Pigou, D. (2013) *Child centre physical activity: Effect on motor skill development in toddlers*. Unpublished Master of Science thesis, Massey University, Albany, New Zealand.
- Reilly, J. J., Kelly, L., Montgomery, C., Williamson, A., Fisher, A., McColl, J. H., Lo Conte, R., Paton, J. Y., & Grant, S. (2011). Physical activity to prevent obesity in young children: cluster randomized controlled trial. *British Medical Journal*, 333, 1041. DOI:10.1136/bmj.38979.623773.55.
- Sport NZ (2007). *Active movement resources*. Retrieved from: <http://www.sportnz.org.nz/en-nz/young-people/Ages-0-5-Years/Active-Movement-Resources1/>
- Stephenson, A. (1999). Images of empowerment: The outdoor experiences of one year old children. *Early Childhood Folio*, 4, 8-12.
- Timmons, B.W., Naylor, P.J., & Pfeiffer, K.A. (2007). Physical activity for preschool children – how much and how?, *Applied Physiology, Nutrition and Metabolism*, 32, S122-S134.
- Tucker, P. (2008). The physical activity levels of preschool aged children: A systematic review. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 23, 547-558.

Battling our way to collegial conversations

A 'community of inquiry'

Judy Watson and Sue Smorti

The telling of stories is fundamental to how human beings live and explain their lives (Bruner, 2002) and conflict is an inevitable aspect of life in communities. Consequently, when our teacher education team decided that we needed to look at how consistent our individual assessment of students' teaching practice was, we decided on a narrative inquiry as a research methodology. We had no idea that our inquiry would take so long or involve so much intense debate and conflict. Our story became one of contrasting cultural views, of clashing personalities and of how we negotiated our way through to greater understanding of each other and acceptance of other ways of thinking.

Introducing our Community of Inquiry

Part of our teacher education organisation's deeply-held philosophy is its commitment to bicultural practice. The teaching programme is infused with Te Tiriti-based practices – all students learn te reo me ngā tikanga Māori (Māori language and ways of doing things) as part of all their papers as well as through the everyday practices in place in each teaching base. Lecturing staff in each of the teacher education sites includes a pouako, a lecturer who provides teaching and leadership in mātauranga Māori me te reo Māori (Māori knowledge and Māori language). The teaching base where this community of inquiry was carried out had two pouako who worked alongside the other five lecturers. Staff who are less proficient in te reo Māori are encouraged and supported to challenge themselves and develop their knowledge and skills, and all staff, no matter what their level of expertise, are expected to both teach te reo Māori in class and to integrate te ao Māori (a Māori world view) throughout their teaching. This combination of high expectations of bicultural practice and mixed abilities is a challenge equally for the staff and the students.

Each teaching team is encouraged to undertake a community of inquiry every year to improve practice – the area of assessment of teaching practice became the trigger for our community of inquiry project. Students in the 3-year Bachelor of Teaching programme are assessed for their academic performance and for their teaching practice. Lecturers visit students four times a year, three times in the students' home centres and once in their four-week

practicum. The students are assessed by their lecturers against 18 teaching standards and nine dispositions, or attributes, of good teachers. The standards are based on the Graduating Teacher Standards set by the New Zealand Teachers' Council (2007). Entwined within both the standards and the dispositions are clear expectations that bicultural practice will be evident in students' teaching, in their thinking and in their professional behaviour. An area which excited particular interest for the lecturers was how much te reo Māori was sufficient within each teaching standard and what actually constituted sufficient evidence of bicultural thinking. Unsurprisingly, none of the seven teaching staff assessed the standards and dispositions in the same way. Pouako expected much more te reo Māori than others, what was deemed evidence of bicultural practice varied widely between staff members, and a new lecturer was confused and frustrated by conflicting answers. Not only were these issues significant but also, beyond the assessment of bicultural practice, were the vastly differing professional experiences, knowledge and personal beliefs and values of team members. For example, the teaching experiences of team members comprised kohanga reo, playcentre and mainstream early childhood settings including both kindergarten and education and care settings. After a while these differences began to niggle and nag and the question grew, "Is it possible to achieve greater uniformity and consistency across the assessing lecturers?"

From storming to norming

Our investigation began informally in mid-year with no particular methodology other than to discuss two standards at each fortnightly staff hui for one hour. Immediately strongly held views became evident and feistier members of the group dominated discussions. "Hide the axe days" was the tagline for the staff meeting days as emotions at times took over! Wānanga, a Māori approach to debate (Mead, 2003), involves open, vigorous, no-holds-barred discussion which continues until everyone has had their say and some kind of agreement is reached. It was important for the group, in theory, that everyone should contribute but even so, this forceful style of debate was not comfortable for some team members. Our inquiry grew so naturally out of its environment but it was, at times, messy and passionate. In

their research on collaborative inquiry groups, Holmlund, Deuel, Slavit and Kennedy (2010) focus on the importance of fostering collegial conversations rather than polite conversations that merely share teaching strategies. They argue that congenial conversations avoid conflict, and may be ineffective; whereas collegial conversations encourage substantive dialogue involving critical thinking that leads to an improvement in teaching and learning. As we had experienced, collaborative inquiry can involve conflicts of personality, values and practices.

Clearly we had become more determined to make our community of inquiry into an ongoing group story rather than simply a discordant collection of individual viewpoints

Our unstructured collaborative inquiry approach could not continue constructively. To use Tuckman's (1965) group development theory, we had come through the 'storming stage' where the dominant personalities take over and the quieter ones sit back waiting for the tempest to subside. We were ready to head into the 'norming stage' where there was more potential for us to develop into a cohesive unit. Following the suggestion of one staff member, Mary, we considered how we could proceed more formally so that we were properly documenting our thinking and working towards consensus, whilst still honouring both Western and Māori research methods. An article by Tillema and van der Westhuizen (2006) provided us with the way forward. The authors note the importance of "reflective dialogue" as a process for uncovering the implicit beliefs and concepts held by individual members which, when challenged and discussed, led to further learning and knowledge construction. Our team's vigorous debates held the potential to be reflective, but we now needed to start drawing our discussions into a more ordered debate. Staff hui minutes at this point note that "we can discuss all we want to but ultimately if we don't reflect on that dialogue, we won't make any progress."

For Mary, the article by Tillema and van der Westhuizen (2006) legitimised some of the emotions and complexity of our experience so far and as a result she became more accepting of where everyone was at in their individual development. Another lecturer, Jade, reflected that the article highlighted the individual differences in team members – there was commitment to collaborate but each person was approaching this collaboration in a different way. As part of this agreement to work more constructively and reflectively together, we drew up a team contract of relationship principles in order to keep us focussed on a collaborative approach. We agreed to foster "mutual respect and understanding" and to use "effective communication".

Clearly we had become more determined to make our community of inquiry into an ongoing group story rather than simply a discordant collection of individual viewpoints.

Formalising the inquiry process
- The Community of Inquiry pulls together

We now committed to a more formalised approach under the leadership of Mary. We were drawn to the idea of narrative inquiry as everyone in the team had their own perspective on the standards and the dispositions and everyone had their own story to tell about what these benchmarks meant to them. Narrative inquiry is built around the meaning that we and others give to our stories. Meier and Stremmel (2010, p.249) say "...narrative, as both a method and phenomenon of study, is a way of thinking about and making sense of experience."

However we wanted to do more than that – we wanted our shared narratives to lead to some kind of change although whether this was a change to consistency or to consensus or to a written outline of expectations, we were not sure. But we did want action to arise from our debates. Our research methodology, therefore, became a mix of narrative inquiry and action research, that is, action research based on our understanding of research that would lead to action or change to, potentially, both our individual and to our institutional practices (Pushor & Clandinin, 2009).

Our first step within our more formal process was to record and transcribe our discussions. Our audio-recordings meant that everyone could take part (previously the minute-taker had been unintentionally excluded from the discussions), we had accurate records and we would, therefore, be able to analyse what we were saying. This move was a significant point in our research journey – not only did it help us to really listen to each other, but also to understand what our own 'bottom lines' were. For example, Ruby, who was quite new to the organisation, wanted a clear list of criteria to guide her assessment of students. "We need to have some in-depth study of it [and print it out for] ourselves. Having it visual, and having it here in the office so we can see it and be reminded". Hine, on the other hand, wanted to see te reo and ngā tikanga Māori (protocols, ways of doing things) integrated throughout the teaching standards. "If we are using those terms and that terminology all the time, that's how students come to start thinking of it, understanding it in an everyday context. Because if they know what manaakitanga (reciprocity) [means] and we are talking about it all the time, then it's something they will know".

Mary encouraged us to focus on the idea in Tillema and van der Westhuizen (2006) that collaborative enquiry requires robust debate, contrast, contradiction out of which comes new thinking. She suggested that we come to our meetings with our own ideas about the standards and dispositions under discussion and be prepared to justify those ideas. The requirement to 'justify' caused a little consternation for some, but over time, particularly in

relation to te ao Māori, there was a growing sense of ease with the theoretical and professional bodies of knowledge from which our beliefs and practices had grown. The following extract from one of our recorded discussions implies the growing collaborative atmosphere amongst the team.

Marara: ... I want to go back to what Mary was saying, you know, when we're looking at the standards in relation to our students, maybe it actually reflects on who we are as a team and the way that we dialogue and have relationships with each other so that we sit down and we have these rigorous discussions not only in team meetings but also, too, over coffee, you know, when we're travelling in the car and we're having conversations and sharing with each other after we come back from a visit. I just had a really interesting visit, you know, and usually that's a good opening thingy for 'OK, it's coffee time, folks'.

Susan: Yes because it can be those challenges, you know, how do you respond to certain things? You think, O God, I haven't heard of that, or I never thought of it that way, you know, I need to do a bit more on that.

Marara: Yeah, so we do do a lot of discussion, informal discussion around the place.

Discussion was beginning to flow more freely and reflectively – so it was on to the next stage!

Dealing with discovery

We needed to start analysing our discussions to deepen our understanding of our own and others' perspectives. Cassidy et al. (2008) describes community as being individuals who come together for a shared purpose; and while individuals might work together, they will not necessarily be in agreement, as they strive towards a shared understanding. However, by now we were getting better at hearing and appreciating each other's perspectives. The challenge Mary now posed was to read and reflect on our own contributions to the discussions and come up with our significant 'themes'. Analysing our own 'stuff' turned out to be quite confronting and a couple of lecturers did not manage to do this for various reasons. As we read through the transcripts, we identified consistently-appearing ideas from our own perspective as well as through the eyes of our colleagues. Those that were able to complete this work each identified three themes as interpreted through our own worldviews, personal understandings and individual personalities.

For most of us, this was a defining moment in our story – at last we were able to recognise what we had been working through! Reading and thoughtfully mulling over these transcripts enabled us to detach ourselves a little from the emotions of our differences so that we were able to ponder on other beliefs and ways of looking at assessment. We were now able to consider 'the other' (Dahlberg, Moss & Pence, 2007). Interestingly, our most commonly identified themes reflect the growth in understanding that had been gently blooming behind the scenes. The themes that we

identified were: an evolving narrative based on individual understandings; tikanga (ways of doing), wānanga (discussion), whanaungatanga (relationships), manaakitanga (reciprocity); individual personalities; subject content knowledge, and intersubjectivity between team members.

The transcripts allowed us to see our differences – what an important discovery! We quickly realised that each person was very different. Each lecturer was easily identifiable in the transcripts – some were very quiet and some presented as being more frustrated with the dialogue. We had clear interests and foci. With our opened eyes and minds we could see that we were all contributing something valuable to the team. We found it was reasonable to have differing beliefs about different standards and began to view the teaching standards through multiple lenses. As our perspectives changed, so too did our practice. We were able to have robust discussions and challenge each other's thinking. Further to our professional discussions about the teaching standards, we accidentally discovered that 'progress' brings 'change and improvement' (Pushor & Clandinin, 2009). We made progress through dialogue by advancing a distributed inquiry and reaching common understanding. However, shared understanding does not necessarily mean consensus (Tillema & van der Westhuizen, 2006).

Happy ever after? Our story wraps up

Did we answer our initial question, "Is it possible to achieve greater uniformity and consistency across the assessing lecturers?" The team's opinion was divided on this question. We definitely believe that our assessment of teaching practice has strengthened. We feel more confident in discussing students' progress with them and are more able to be flexible in our interpretation of the standards and dispositions – it is no longer a one-size-fits-all approach. One lecturer noted, "That whole thing about sharing our strengths has increased the knowledge base of all of us – we are all different but we now have a much broader knowledge." Another found that, because of her stronger knowledge base she felt confident to be more open in her conversations with students and to discuss with them how we could support the student to grow. Marara had felt before that she had been the gatekeeper in relation to tikanga Māori – now it was clearly listed in a number of the standards and she felt that it was now safe to bring it to the table for discussion. At the beginning of our community of inquiry some of our team were keen to develop clear criteria that would allow each lecturer to assess the teaching standards in the same way. We now realised that, considering our differences, this could not happen. The passionate arguments for and against particular interpretations of certain standards, in particular those standards focussing on te reo Māori and bicultural practice, softened as it became clearer that what we were doing was reaching a common understanding.

Our story has identified a number of implications for our own community of practice. It also has the potential to offer insights to other teacher educators. Our key

finding was that different lecturers interpret the assessment criteria differently, even in relation to the same standard, and that students need to understand and accept this. Discussions between the lecturer and the student in their centres are now much more collaborative and if a standard is not exhibited during observation, the student can still provide examples of practice. Collaborative learning was also achieved within our teaching team. We all gained new perspectives from each other and new techniques for addressing each standard and disposition. Since acknowledging and confronting personality and power issues within the team, we have become better at accommodating each team member and some of our work frustrations have dissipated. The following extract from our final formal discussion gives some idea of this development.

Jade: I'm mindful it's now 20 past 10. It's been a very valuable discussion.

Mary: So we've approached it from a different angle, which seemed to me to work a bit better than just sitting down and discussing the standard.

Alice: It was what was on top, eh.

Mary: Makes it a bit more real. I was the one who brought it to the table so how was it for the rest of you?

Alice: Really useful. It's a standard that I go out there and know if it's not there. Know what I mean? It's one of those instinctual things. I could tick off – you did this, this and this, and tick off all the standards, but it's either there or it's not. They've either got that awareness or not... does anyone else find that? Subjective decision, eh?

Jade: A professional one, though.

Most importantly, awareness that we could have a bicultural view to each standard shifted the perspective of our team again. We are all more comfortable with how we assess tikanga and one of our pouako was immediately able to see bicultural pedagogy surrounding the entire process and project – for example, tikanga (ways of doing things) and wānanga (discussion).

The 'happy- ever-after' ending that we all like for our stories must, of course, be tempered by reality. Some of our team have left and a number of new lecturers have joined, other issues have arisen and personality differences are always present. The learning from this particular inquiry, though, is still influencing both our assessment of students' teaching and our team's approach to our individual diversity. Our inquiry into how we assessed the teaching standards and dispositions began volubly, assertively and individually. There were difficulties throughout the research process, for example, differences between team members and strongly held positions. The community of inquiry helped draw the team together and gave us a focus whilst also providing a more controlled platform on which to share our views and to discuss our differing perspectives. Adopting a research leader and committing to reading and reflecting on our own contributions to the discussions allowed our increasingly collegial discussions to become more congenial and more

reflective (Holmlund, Deuel, Slavit & Kennedy, 2010). Listening to both colleagues and students has become more important and we are much more accepting and appreciative of each other's perspectives. Our assessment of students' teaching practice has become even more diverse! And we believe now that this is valuable.

The following quote from our final research discussion provides both the endpoint of this story and the beginning of many others. "It has united us even though we are very different people; it has united us as a group of individuals. It has contributed to our understanding as professionals – it has helped us to grow."

Naku te rourou nau te rourou ka ora ai te iwi

With your basket and my basket the people will live

References

- Bruner, J. (2002). *Making stories: Law, literature and life*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Cassidy, C., Christie, D., Coutts, N., Dunn, J., Sinclair, C., Skinner, D. & Wilson, A. (2008). Building communities of educational enquiry. *Oxford Review of Education*, 34(2), 217-235.
- Dahlberg, G., Moss, P., & Pence, A. (2007). *Beyond quality in early childhood education and care. Languages of evaluation (2nd ed.)*. Abingdon, Oxon, UK: Routledge.
- Holmlund Nelson, T., Deuel, D., Slavit, D. & Kennedy, A. (2010). Leading deep conversations in collaborative inquiry group. *The Clearing House*, 83, 175– 179.
- Mead, H.M. (2003). *Tikanga Māori: Living by Māori values*. Wellington: Huia.
- Meier, D. R. & Stretton, A. J. (2010). Reflection through narrative: The power of narrative inquiry in early childhood teacher education. *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education*, 31, 249-247.
- New Zealand Teachers' Council. (2008). *Graduating teacher standards*. Retrieved from <http://www.teacherscouncil.govt.nz/content/graduating-teacher-standards>
- Pushor, D. & Clandinin, D.J. (2009). The interconnections between narrative inquiry and action research. In S. Noffle & B. Somekh (Eds.), *Sage handbook of educational action research*. (pp. 290-300). Thousand Oaks, CA.: Sage.
- Tillema, H. & van der Westhuizen, G. J. (2006). Knowledge construction in collaborative enquiry among teachers. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, 12(1), 51 – 67.

Playing with children

The enduring message of Beverley Morris, CNZM

In the 2015, New Year's Honours list, Beverley Morris was made a Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit for services to early childhood education. This is one level down from being made a 'dame' and is yet another honour for Beverley – she was earlier given the QSO (Queen's Service Order). While she has devoted decades of her life to Playcentre (she is a life member of the Federation), Beverley's interests have always been broader than one sector – she has been reaching out to parents for over a half a century, encouraging them to learn from and with their children.

In honour of Beverley's history of 'picking up her pen' to advocate children's right to play, we are republishing here an article first published in *Education* in 1977, including some of uncaptioned photos that accompanied it. We are also privileged to have Beverley's reflections in 2015 about the article published 37 years earlier and her current thinking.

Birth to 5 Years

Beverley Morris

We all know that children learn and develop human skills through play. But some are given more chance for this than others. Parents should be aware of how much they can help their children in this respect. They need to offer them, from birth, as many opportunities as possible for stimulating play.

But surely the urge to play is innate and will function without any attention from parents! An incident from Maria Montessori's biography illustrates how strong this urge is. She was walking in a city street when she noticed a blind beggar whose little son was sitting beside her. Far from being depressed by his circumstances, the boy was utterly absorbed in throwing pieces of tattered paper into the gutter and watching them swirl away in the watery channel.

If play is a natural attribute of children, why should an article be necessary on how to play with one's children? There are many reasons. Some aspects of modern living, for example cramped living space, are not conducive to children's play. Parents must become aware of how to promote play in spite of small rooms and tiny sections.

Some parents will have had poor preparation for this role if they have not experienced good play themselves as children. Even those who did may have forgotten, or not realised, what elements contributed to the freedom they enjoyed to play with natural materials. Certainly few will have discussed the value of play unless they are members of an early childhood education group.

With advanced standards of living, parents might not realise that they may have to forgo keeping up with neighbours while their children are young because play

often means untidiness, mess and noise. Some parts of the section and house must be available to the younger generation.

Many parents are rightly concerned about the safety element in play. No child under five can be left for any length of time without adult supervision. Naturally this caretaking can be shared and the environment can be made safe, but it is a mistake to become too protective. To learn, the child must push through the boundaries of his present knowledge and in doing so, tread new paths or risk new adventures. The adult's job here is to act as a safety-net, should trouble occur.

Again, parents should avoid the Victorian notion that a child should not be allowed to do something which he* enjoys. Play is sometimes regarded as "sinful", as an activity opposite to "work", as light pastime or entertainment, or as a matter unworthy of study because it concerns the inconsequential prattling and waywardness of the child.

During the past ten years, research has demonstrated that some of the most critical learning occurs between



Beverley Morris, 1976

* 'He' is used for simplicity

ten months and eighteen months of age. Parents will have noticed the many popular books, paperbacks and magazine articles which have appeared recently, explaining how they can maximize the child's learning by providing play opportunities.

Proposals for "playing" with a baby from birth to three months may sound surprising, and even more so when found under the chapter heading, "On being A Clown". This is from the book by Brian and Shirley Sutton-Smith, *How to Play with Your Children (and When Not To)*. The ability to clown, to make funny faces, and burble a range of sounds in front of the baby is crucial. Research shows that in these early weeks, babies imitate facial gestures and mouthings which are the basis for later speech. Even at this stage, it is worthwhile extending the infant's horizons. While he is seemingly staring into space, he is advancing in knowledge by becoming familiar with shapes and forms. He also needs human contact. Cuddling and fondling the baby, while talking or singing to him, are play responses. The infant's brain is being programmed from the first day of life (and, in some respects, earlier) chiefly by motor activity and stimulation of the five senses. Being carried on an adult's back, in a sling, gives the baby a wider range of perspectives and movement than if he is placed in a cot, and in creases the opportunities to discriminate amongst shapes, colours and sounds. It is a good idea to prop him up where he can watch people, or watch the interplay of light on furnishings or leaves of trees. Mobiles or wind-chimes can be hung near his cot.

By about sixteen to twenty weeks, the infant is beginning to make unco-ordinated grasping movements. These can be encouraged by giving him rattles, a rubber squeeze-toy, a small safe mirror to flash light, or a gay paper decoration. When he can grasp efficiently, toys can be strung on elastic so that they can be easily grabbed, lost and grabbed again. He will need simple safe objects to pull to his mouth.

Soon his body becomes his playground. Toes and fingers are put into his mouth, knees are clasped, and his mouth becomes the source of useful information about the nature of things. Grasping the hair of those who bend over him induces chuckles and other signs of pleasure.

Many babies become attached to soft, cuddly toys and these may be retained as a "security blanket", acting as a comfort when they suffer separation from the family or are upset in any way.

Children vary in their need for this "transitional object", whether it is a piece of cloth, a doll, or a stuffed animal, but it does reduce stress and may help to develop imagination. D.W. Winnicott offers some interesting views on this subject in his book *Playing with Reality*.

In the second half-year, the child needs a variety of objects to experiment with. His playthings can be found in most homes among household utensils. Such items as durable plastic spoons, tumblers, egg-cups, pot-lids, wooden spoons, nesting metal bowls, and thick cardboard boxes stimulate his play, but he will not concentrate on these for long. Adults

are required to lift him up so that he can peer at mirrors, glance through windows and admire pictures on the wall.

When the baby can crawl, he can explore space with his whole body, not just his eyes and hands. Adults have to set the boundaries for play in such a way that the young investigator is not continually frustrated.



For a present on the first birthday, grandparents could be advised to buy a large set of blocks, a book of nursery rhymes or the components of a sand-pit - all guaranteed to be useful for many years.

As the child enters his second year, and becomes mobile, the world is his oyster. He is meeting so many things for the first time in his short life and is wanting to handle everything so that adults have to guard him against dangerous situations. He should be given as much latitude as possible in order to learn for himself. An assortment of toys and play articles, kept in a carton, will be tipped out daily to rediscover what he needs for a new game. Dr Ira Gordon points out, in *Baby Learning through Baby Play*, that the supermarket can become a place of learning if the parents are willing to describe the goods they are buying and allow the child to handle and pack them.

All children of this age need muscular activity. The child can be taken for walks or can push prams or carts about. If he is a climber, then the parents must make adjustments to their mode of thinking, and to their furniture, to cope with this.

If these walks are accompanied by talk, he will start to understand though he cannot respond to the flow of words.

A scrapbook can start the one-year-old's library. Pictures of ordinary everyday objects recognised by the baby can be pasted in the book. The nucleus can be added to as the child acquires more ideas and words. Ultimately, it may become a personal reading book when words are placed by the pictures.

The fast rate of language development after eighteen months opens new vistas for play. Now he can ask for accessories for his games; he can converse with a playmate. His "pretend" games become intensified as he imitates the routines that he is familiar with. Large cartons are transformed into beds, houses, and buses. (Beatrice Schenk de Regniers wrote a book on the theme - *A Little House of Your Own*.)

A small tricycle gives the child a sense of height and speed. Parents can sometimes come down to his level for

play. Water and sand offer endless variation for play at home. As his manual dexterity increases, he will manage wooden jigsaws with large pieces, hammer-peg toys, posting boxes and other manipulative equipment. A toy telephone or discarded handset will offer dramatic games and help him come to terms with this rival for his parents' attention. Some simple furniture such as a table and chairs, an easel and big boxes will stimulate imaginative play, but the child should be encouraged to improvise, and not expect to be given exact replicas of domestic appliances. If the adults throw out hints such as - "Let's make this into..." the child is helped to think in symbols, thus increasing his reasoning power. A set of light, hinged pieces of hard board, about one metre square, can turn into a house, shop, fort or den.

To enrich these developments in play, parents should plan excursions to new and interesting locations, such as the railway station, the wharves, the airport, the zoo and the beach. Then these visits can be referred to in subsequent conversations - "Do you remember the petrol-tanker we saw last Sunday? This one is a milk-tanker." The language of the child is greatly dependent on the input of the people around him. Every possible situation should be exploited in this way.

There is no need to worry about his understanding of a time-scale - it is only gradually that he registers the difference between past and future. Reading him well-chosen library books (at least two per day) helps him sort out concepts of time, space, enumeration and comparison.

If a bedtime routine of reading to the child is established, parents are likely to hear at this time of small matters that have been worrying him, and can seize the opportunity to dispel them. The short period of personal communication builds up a good relationship that can be continued in the same way into school and college years.

In the two- to three-year-old range, two children can play together amicably for a limited length of time, especially where there is space, ample equipment and a supervising adult, but it must be recognised that they are still self-centred and cannot sustain long interaction. Mastery of the world becomes an overwhelming desire of the near three-year-old. "Watch me!" he cries. "Look, I can do it!" Good feelings and hilarity arise if, sometimes, the adults relinquish their authority roles and let the child order them about. Another way in which the child can push his world around, and reduce it to manageable proportions, is by playing with miniature cars, houses, dolls' furniture, or toy animals. These he can position to match his own ideas of suitability. True scale is not necessary, but a wide range of model toys is - accept long-abandoned sets from older relatives and friends, and provide storage. One can never tell what set of interests will originate in his make-believe play. It is best to leave options open as long as possible.

The key to the preschool child's approach to play is his increasing wish to be in the company of other children, whether at home, in his neighbourhood or in an early childhood education centre. His body is stabilising in



growth, his language is adequate for social exchange, and he is capable of extending into the realms of fantasy. Adults who want to foster social play will provide dress-up clothes, and junk items such as boxes, sacking, tyres and pieces of wood for the construction of towers and vehicles.

At the age of four, the child's play has the quality of work, because he has to try out his ideas. He will appreciate being permitted to join in housework and gardening jobs. Good carpentry tools are essential for some of the preschooler's projects. Parents are warned against buying cheap toy carpentry sets with tools that break and cause frustration. Cooking with real ingredients can be undertaken under the eye of the adult chef. Even plain sewing is not beyond the skill of the four-year-old if he is given instruction.

Because the young child needs outlets for creativity, parents should have a supply of paper, poster paint, large brushes, crayons, ball-point pens and the materials for making play-dough. If he wants to make a Batman or Zorro costume to play out adventures seen on television, he will need cardboard, scissors, glue, sellotape and string. Parents are encouraged to save useful packaging and bric-a-brac when they see their child using what he has made from it for one purpose today and another tomorrow.

At the preschool stage, the expression of ideas in play leads the child to ask many questions about people and things in his environment. These queries must be answered honestly with explanations in simple words.

If the child is enthusiastic about playing with words and numbers, parents can aid his recognition of them by placing charts around his room and by showing him how to reproduce chosen items. Some children will acquire a knowledge of these through watching such television programmes as *Sesame Street* and this can be built on.

In regard to television programmes, parents have to make decisions about how much viewing to permit the children and what programmes will be selected. Each household must make its own rules, which will effect compromises between the educational input and entertainment value. The parents' concern will be about providing attractive alternatives at times.

When the child goes to school on his fifth birthday, the urge and necessity to play do not automatically decrease. The time available for free play is lessened, but play remains necessary, both as a safety-valve for new adjustments demanded by teachers, as well as a relaxation from being one of a large group. For these reasons, the school child must have access to the natural materials - water, sand, clay and trees - which offer endless possibilities for creativity at home as well as at school. He will still need quantities of useful junk material to extend his fantasy games and will probably start (and stop) making collections of shells, cards, stones, and so on, as if confirming his dependence on personal possessions, and establishing order on a world that appears rather chaotic.

Why is it so important to have good play as a child? Erik Erikson believes that those who do have good play become the adults who are confident that they can control their own lives to a certain extent, who show flexibility and who enjoy life through remaining playful. Parents who see these aims as worthy goals for their children will make the effort to play with their children, withdrawing when they are not wanted and rejoining them when the children have achieved what they set out to do by themselves. A respect for individual differences and the child's right to play is paramount.

Bibliography

- Sutton-Smith, B. and S., *How to Play with your Children (and When Not To)*, Hawthorn Books, 1974.
- Dodson, F., *How to Parent*, W.H. Allen, 1971.
- Dickinson, S., Ed., *Mother's Help*, Fontana, Collins, 1975.
- Somerset, G., *Vital Play in Early Childhood*, N.Z. Playcentre Federation, 1976.
- O'Leary, S., and Webb, A., *Fun for Kids*, A.H. and A.W. Reed, 1975.
- Burton L. White and Jean C. Watts, *Experience and Environment Vol. 1*, Prentice - Hall, 1973.

A postscript, 2015

I cannot remember whether this 1977 article was commissioned or if I offered it for publication but I can recall the context of those times. In 1977, I was President of the NZ Playcentre Federation while teaching at the Department of Adult Education, Victoria University of Wellington.



Beverley Morris, 2015

In the 1970s there was a flush of new Playcentres opening round the country despite the huge community effort involved.

Research on early childhood development was burgeoning in the USA and England but was not available to many parents (or primary school teachers) so in this article I tried to cover many aspects of old and new knowledge, a kind of mini -course in child development.

By this time women were benefitting from further educational opportunities, improved methods of contraception and in better economic circumstances could look forward to paid employment. The 1975 International Year for Women and subsequent conferences raised issues concerning the education and care of young children of women returning to work. My determination that young children had the right to play and a right to be understood was motivation for writing.

PLAY was not a popular word in conservative NZ society, but I equated it with LEARNING and GROWTH.

Re-reading the article, I see my ideas about children, parents and play haven't changed much. I would probably want to put more emphasis on some aspects. For example, I think parents and ECE workers have a strong responsibility to introduce the child to basic natural materials such as water, sand, fire, soil, plants, wood etc. in order to learn how to control these in real play before entering the realms of virtual reality. I believe that children absorb the principles of modern technology at their own pace and that play is also the best method of learning the skills required.

The role of the teacher is to present ideas about the world and support the interest which arises out of this exploration.

My liking for "junk" material persists and I deplore so many commercially -sourced play goods being provided in ECE centres because they can blunt creativity and fantasy play.

Except through my extended family, my experience with ECE today is limited, but I shall always be concerned about the quality of the teachers, their selection and training and whether the management of the centre is based on a timetable that meets the needs of the children or is for the convenience of the staff.

Parents should be as fully involved in ECE centres as possible. I hope that NZ will work towards the system in Scandinavian countries where state paid parental leave is available for up to two years and attendance at ECE is part-time.

The best play or education as understood by trained adults will enable our children to participate in our troubled world with the confidence that they will find solutions to the multiple global problems.

The politics of inclusion

A review of Te Aotūroa Tātaki: Inclusive Early Childhood Education: Perspectives on inclusion, social justice and equity from Aotearoa New Zealand

Diane Gordon-Burns, Alexandra C. Gunn, Kerry Purdue & Nicola Surtees

NZCER Press, Wellington, 2012

Reviewer: Alison Warren

I am reviewing a book known to many teachers and teacher educators, and it is timely to evaluate its continued relevance to rapidly changing educational and social contexts of Aotearoa New Zealand. The authors' insights and analytical tools comprehensively address issues of inclusion and exclusion in social contexts of Aotearoa New Zealand. Further, the authors empower teachers to consider issues of inclusion and exclusion, and how power relations produce these.

Te Aotūroa Tātaki was edited by four early childhood academics from University of Canterbury with an impressive track record of writing about issues of inclusion and exclusion in Aotearoa New Zealand. They recruited the services of similarly experienced writers to address their areas of specialisation, such as Sonja and Angus MacFarlane, who share a planning framework based in Māori tikanga values. By bringing contributions from such writers together into one volume, Gordon-Burns, Gunn, Purdue and Surtees make their work more accessible to early childhood teachers and student teachers, who enact inclusion and exclusion in everyday lives of tamariki and whānau.

The chapters are similarly structured to link complex theoretical ideas to teaching practices in accessible ways. The editors rightly acknowledge the important contribution of Paula Wagemaker, contract editor for the University of Canterbury College of Education. The editors give priority to accessibility to authors' ideas, and so practice inclusion in academic writing. Ka pai tō koutou tautoko o ō mātou whakaaro!

The book is structured in ten chapters, with Chapter One and Ten as Introduction and Conclusion, respectively. Each of the other eight chapters addresses an issue of inclusion and exclusion in early childhood education in Aotearoa New Zealand. These are clearly outlined in two Forewords from Professor Anne Smith and Professor Russell Bishop, and in the Introduction. The editors also contribute chapters: Diane Gordon-Burns and Kerry Purdue address inclusion for children with disabilities and their families, Alex Gunn critically discusses constructions of disadvantage for boys and men in early childhood education, and Nicola Surtees contributes a powerful chapter about how

families and kinship may be understood with regard to same-sex parented families. Other issues covered are: inclusion of tikanga values for Māori tamariki and their whānau (Sonja and Angus MacFarlane); place-based education and *tangata whenuatanga* (Richard Manning); economic disadvantage (Glynne Mackey and the late Colleen Lockie); racism and culturally competent early childhood teaching (Gina Colvin, Darcey M. Dachyshyn and Jo Togiasso); and inclusion of religious and associated cultural identities (Bradley Hannigan).

Sociocultural and poststructural theoretical approaches are crucial to this book. The editors claim a social-constructionist view that understands individuals' and communities' ways of being as shaped within social contexts and power relations. Their unpacking of key aspects of Foucault's theories about discourses and perceptions of truth, knowledge and 'normal' (pp. 9-12) should be required reading for every teacher and student teacher. Russell Bishop explains how this theoretical approach accounts for the frustrating continuation of marginalisation and privilege. As the editors state, "Even though Aotearoa New Zealand supports, through policy and legislation, socially just, equitable and inclusive early childhood education, inclusion nevertheless remains difficult to enact" (p. 7).

The early childhood curriculum *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996) provides a "touchstone" (p. 180) to discussions of inclusion and exclusion. *Te Whāriki* sociocultural principles of empowerment/whakamana, holistic development/kotahitanga, family and community/whānau tangata and relationships/ngā hononga are foundational to inclusive early childhood education. Sonja and Angus MacFarlane state that *Te Whāriki* "provides a robust rationale and an inherent expectation that mainstream early childhood services will put a bicultural curriculum in place" (p. 26). However, Education Review Office national reports (2010, 2012) show that many early



childhood settings fall short of expectations, and Māori tamariki and their whānau are too often marginalised. The authors show how marginalisation and exclusion arise within dominant discourses and offer hope for social justice through inclusive practice that resists exclusionary discourses: “change for inclusion has to be advanced at the political, early childhood centre and personal levels if Aotearoa New Zealand is to fully dismantle exclusion and provide a fair, just and democratic education for all” (p. 17).

Te Pikinga ki Runga is a planning framework presented by Sonja and Angus MacFarlane as an educultural approach incorporating Te Tiriti o Waitangi human rights principles of partnership, protection and participation. They frame wholeness and wellbeing within mātauranga Māori: hononga (relational aspects), hinengaro (psychological aspects), and tinana (physical aspects). The fourth dimension is an overarching domain of mana motuhake (self-concept), described in the text (p. 33), or mauri (unique essence), shown in the grid depiction (p. 31).

The framework addresses richness and complexities of Māori cultural self-identities, giving lie to impressions of inclusive bicultural teaching practice as simply speaking a little te reo and providing puzzles and books. Te Pikinga ki Runga affirms tamariki and whānau Māori as culturally located, and offers early childhood teachers from non-Māori cultures a framework “to untangle some intricacies for educators in their work with tamariki Māori – and indeed, with all children and their whānau” (p. 36).

The concept of kinship is used by Nicola Surtees to reframe understandings of what families are, and to include diverse families in early childhood education. Drawing on a qualitative research study, she recounts experiences of three “family constellations led by lesbians and gay men” (p. 44). Surtees analyses some diverse ways these ‘constellations’ disrupt as well as reflect heteronormative understandings of family. Kinship frameworks provide inclusive ways for teachers to tentatively communicate with families, and remain open and non-judgemental about “manifold possibilities for practising intimacy and care” (p. 52). Kinship moves away from normative ideas about families, by focusing on connections among people.

Although this chapter certainly remains current and relevant, ways of ‘doing family’ are becoming more diverse with scientific progress in fields of reproduction and genetics, changes in societal attitudes towards surrogacy, and dynamic combinations and recombinations of ‘family constellations’. Discourses are never static, and we all gain from educational research and theorising that explore dynamic discourses and discursive practices.

Early childhood teachers’ perceptions of inclusive bicultural practice are troubled in Richard Manning’s chapter on place-based education and complex cultural practices. It raises questions that must (and should) worry mainstream education in Aotearoa New Zealand: *who* is including *whom*, and what happens when teachers of the dominant culture ‘include’ from positions of privilege? Can

marginalisation be perpetuated through ‘inclusive’ practice? Manning critically unpacks a situation where children in an early childhood centre are taught a haka when teachers are unaware of the historical and cultural significance it holds for some in their community. He links *Te Whāriki* principles whakamana/empowerment and whānau tangata/family and community to teachers’ responsibilities to communicate with, be informed by and respect people and knowledges within their communities.

Huakina mai/opening doorways encapsulates communication and engagement in Te Pikinga ki Runga (p. 30). Glynne Mackey and Colleen Lockie seek to open doorways by providing tamariki and whānau with opportunities for active citizenship in early childhood settings. Economic disadvantage restricts children’s and families’ access to resources and services, and so restricts participation in experiences such as sport and education. Active participation in decision-making is affected by access and by exclusionary attitudes, such as images of children as incompetent and vulnerable. Mackey and Lockie advocate for equity pedagogy, through teaching practices such as:

- restorative justice through ethic of care approaches to resolving conflicts peacefully, activities such as gardening that teach interconnectedness of living thing; and
- taking part in purchasing decisions as critical consumers.

These practices do not remove economic disadvantage but mitigate effects of poverty through opportunities to be active citizens.

Cultural competency for teachers within discourses of white settler hegemony in Aotearoa New Zealand raises questions of exclusion through racism for marginalised Māori tamariki and whānau, and for non-Māori minority cultures. Gina Colvin, Darcey M. Dachyshyn and Jo Togiasso view cultural competency for teachers of the dominant culture as problematic within an education system embedded in Pākehā cultural values. Cultural competency involves recognising that culture is the everyday way people live their lives (p. 101), and awareness of complex cultural identities. Culturally competent teachers from the dominant culture are aware that they, and people with Māori, non-Māori minority and complex mixed heritages, have worldviews shaped by culture. These worldviews must be recognised in inclusive education settings. The author unpacks the terms ‘biculturalism’, ‘multiculturalism’ and ‘interculturalism’. Inclusion through cultural competency is becoming better understood through resources such as *Tātaiako* (Ministry of Education & New Zealand Teachers Council, 2011), resources designed to support bicultural education (Williams, with Broadley, & Lawson Te-Aho, 2012), and research into perceptions of bicultural teaching practice (Warren, 2014).

Constructions of boys and men as disadvantaged in early childhood education are examined by Alex Gunn using Foucault’s discourse theories. Gunn advocates for a gender diversity lens of openness to diverse gender expressions. Dominant assumptions of gender essentialism based on

biological and social theories categorise people as either male or female, and constrain expectations on possible ways to be. Gender discourses of boys' underachievement and the feminised teacher workforce rely on assumptions that all boys and men need particular ways of relating and learning that the present education system does not provide.

Gunn argues that inclusive teaching practice involves being open to "multiple ways children experience and express gender diversely in their everyday lives" (p. 129). This chapter is a challenging read for student teachers unfamiliar with the theory, and contributes a valuable reorientation to a current debate: "What is fair for different boys, men, girls and women who are engaged in early childhood education?" (p. 116).

Inclusive teaching practices for social justice involve teachers' openness to difference and diversity, and awareness of how self-understandings, truth and knowledge are shaped within discourses and power relations

Religion and associated cultural identities are topical issues of inclusion and exclusion, with current global spread of ideological conflicts among Islam and 'the West', involving Aotearoa New Zealand. Inevitably, early childhood educators here are faced with issues of religious cultural identities and their expression. Bradley Hannigan discusses inclusion of religious cultures and religious aspects of culture in our secular early childhood education system. When secularism is constructed as normal, then expression of religious cultures seems "perverse, foreign, abnormal" (p. 139). Secular discourses exclude people whose religion significantly shapes their identities. Inclusive practices could include: student teachers becoming better informed about religious diversity in teacher education programmes, stronger links between children's home and early childhood settings, and providing children with learning resources about diverse religions.

Inclusive education for children with disabilities and their families is "about rights, social justice and equity" (p. 155) for Diane Gordon-Burns, Kerry Purdue, Benita Rarere-Briggs, Robyn Stark and Karen Turnock. A comprehensive framework supports an inclusive education system in Aotearoa New Zealand, in tension with exclusionary "cultures, policies, pedagogies, organisational structures and resourcing" (p. 157). The authors draw on research to describe structural and education practice factors shaping inclusion or exclusion. Each factor is unpacked in accessible and thought-provoking ways, empowering teachers to

practice inclusively: discourses of disability, service policies, teaching and assessment practices, degree of collaboration among professionals, learning environments and communities, management and leadership, and resourcing.

The conclusion reiterates that everyday language and practices shaped within discourses form teaching practices of inclusion and exclusion. Inclusive teaching practices for social justice involve teachers' openness to difference and diversity, and awareness of how self-understandings, truth and knowledge are shaped within discourses and power relations. The editors advocate for teachers' political engagement to challenge dominant exclusionary discourses and their discursive practices of marginalisation and privilege. A range of critically reflective questions challenges teachers to use ideas from this book in everyday teaching practice.

This book is an extremely valuable resource for early childhood teachers in Aotearoa New Zealand. Dominant exclusionary discourses powerfully shape our society and education system. Teachers have responsibilities as government agents to enact inclusive policies and documents. Viewing inclusion and exclusion through human rights, social justice and equity lenses challenges teachers to make things different. Critical discussions about inclusion and exclusion must continue in these times of social and global change, possibly through another edition to this book, and certainly through teacher education programmes using this resource.

He moana pukepuke e ekengia e te waka

A choppy sea can be navigated

References

- Education Review Office. (2010). *Success for Māori children in early childhood services*. Wellington: Education Review Office.
- Education Review Office. (2012). *Partnership with whānau Māori in early childhood services*. Wellington: Education Review Office.
- Ministry of Education. (1996). *Te whāriki: He whāriki mātauranga mō ngā mokopuna o Aotearoa: Early childhood curriculum*. Wellington: Learning Media.
- Ministry of Education, & New Zealand Teachers Council. (2011). *Tātaiako: Cultural competencies for teachers of Māori learners*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.
- Warren, A. (2014). Negotiating discourses: A Pākehā teacher educator's exploration of bicultural teaching practice. *New Zealand Journal of Teachers Work*, 11(1), 127-140.
- Williams, N. N., with Broadley, M., & Lawson Te-Aho, K. . (2012). *Ngā taonga whakaako: Bicultural competence in early childhood education*. Wellington: Ako Aotearoa.

Countering colonising narratives

A review of Early Childhood Education in Aotearoa New Zealand: History, Pedagogy, and Liberation

Jenny Ritchie & Mere Skerrett

New York, NY: Palgrave, 2014

Reviewer: Gary Leaf

'Early Childhood Education in Aotearoa New Zealand: History, Pedagogy, and Liberation' gives readers an insight into two perspectives of early childhood education (ECE) in Aotearoa New Zealand as well as to provide for them an opportunity to peruse the outcomes of recent research undertaken by its two authors: Jenny Ritchie and Mere Skerrett.

Both authors draw on that experience as well as on their elders' works, recent research projects and the works of Frantz Fanon, Linda Smith, Paulo Friere, Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. Skerrett and Ritchie come from different backgrounds within early childhood education; Ritchie's in child-care and kindergarten and Skerrett's in Kohanga Reo (ECE Māori immersion centres).

The book is in two parts. Part A, is titled 'Māori early childhood care and education' and Part B 'Indigenizing whiteman early childhood and education practice in Aotearoa New Zealand'. Part A contains three chapters produced by Skerrett which are premised upon notions of fairness, rights, and social justice — indeed all three chapters centralize Skerrett's aspirations for early childhood education for Māori children which is underpinned with the belief that survival of te reo Māori is absolutely critical and very much dependent on processes such as intergenerational transmission and continued application in Māori education.

In chapter one, Skerrett aptly describes the content of all three chapters as 'concerned with the countering of colonization through a discourse analysis with a view to re-centering Māori language in education' (p.11). Skerrett focuses on issues such as historical and contemporary influences on Māori education, the de-hegemonizing of settler historiographies in New Zealand, and institutionalised racism.

Part B also comprises of three chapters. Produced by Ritchie, each chapter is unique, but collectively they can be summarised with the title that Ritchie has used for chapter four i.e. contextual explorations of Māori within "Whiteman" early childhood education; 'Whiteman'

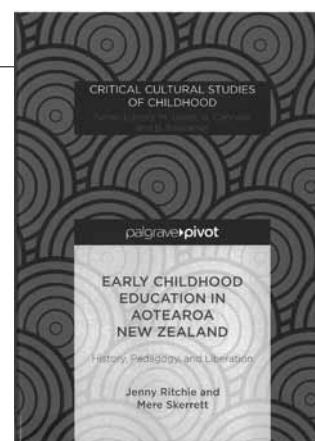
meaning educational pathways that were mapped out by non-Māori (i.e. Aotearoa education authorities). Then, in a similar fashion to Skerrett, Ritchie provides a guided narrative for readers through historiography relating to the introduction of 'Whiteman' early childcare and education services within Aotearoa through to the approaches taken in contemporary Aotearoa New Zealand.

Overall, my impression of *Early Childhood Education in Aotearoa New Zealand* is that it is a good book particularly in terms of the two differing perspectives. Skerrett's appeared to be a very intimate and personal perspective whereas Ritchie's approach was more calculated and seemingly given from an 'outsider's' perspective of Māori education.

In this reviewer's opinion, this book can be counted as a worthwhile contribution to the field of Aotearoa New Zealand education particularly early childhood Māori education. So on a scale from 0 – 10, I would give the book a 7 as there are some issues. Both authors' narratives are swathed in academic terms, such as *dehegemonize* (changing the authority and power structure), *renarrativization* (changing current narratives) and *territorialization* (changing the boundaries of current territories for example in education) and even newer terms such as the one coined by Skerrett which is '*linguafaction*' (language eradication, land alienation, and culture shock due to colonization).

Terms like this will make parts of this book very challenging reading for non-academic (and I suspect for some academics as well).

Nonetheless, if the reader is willing to persevere through the academic jargon then s/he will discover that the authors offer two very salient and poignant opinions.



Contributors

Gary Leaf is a senior lecture in the School of Education at Auckland University of Technology. He has been involved in Māori education in the North and South Island for more than 30 years and began his tertiary career at Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiārangi where he is currently completing a PhD.

Helen May is a Professor of Education, and the former Dean of the University of Otago College of Education. She has been involved in advocacy work and advisory roles regarding a range of policy initiatives in both New Zealand and international settings and is the author of a number of books on the history and politics of early years education.

Valerie Margrain is a Senior Lecturer at Australian Catholic University, teaching in the areas of early childhood, inclusive education and gifted education. She has worked in early childhood, primary schools, special education, Reading Recovery and higher education settings. Valerie's research focuses on strength-based assessment, gifted children, and early literacy. Valerie is a New Zealander with a strong interest in Swedish culture and education and has visited Sweden on many occasions.

Claire McLachlan has led the Early Years Education programmes at Massey since 2006 and is now Director of Undergraduate programmes for the Institute of Education. Claire's primary research interests are in early literacy, physical activity, early childhood curriculum, assessment and teachers' beliefs about practice. She has five recent books on curriculum, literacy and assessment published by Cambridge University Press, Palgrave Macmillan and Elsevier. In 2012 Claire was awarded a Massey University Research Award for distinction in educational research and promoted to Professor of Childhood Education. Claire is married to Simon, lives in Cambridge, but works in Auckland, and she has three adult children and six gorgeous grandchildren.

Elisabeth Mellgren is a Senior Lecturer at University of Gothenburg, teaching in the area of early childhood literacy. She has worked in early childhood, pre-school and higher education settings. Elisabeth's research focuses on early literacy and transition between pre-school, pre-school-class and primary school. She visited New Zealand in 2010.

Sue Smorti's involvement in early childhood education began in 1987 as a parent in Playcentre, and has continued as a teacher, professional development facilitator and lecturer. Her particular interests are science and technology, and leadership.

Lisa Terreni works as a senior lecturer at Victoria University of Wellington Faculty of Education, in the School of Education. She teaches in the areas of visual art, and diversity. Prior to teaching at Victoria University, Lisa worked as a kindergarten teacher for many years and was a professional development provider. She is also an artist.

Alison Warren is an early childhood teacher educator who holds the position of Leader Education Delivery at the Nelson teaching base of Te Tari Puna Ora o Aotearoa/ New Zealand Childcare Association. Her early childhood experience started with involvement in the Playcentre movement alongside her own children. She also has experience as a visiting teacher for a home-based early childhood provider, and in childcare centres. Alison is a doctoral student at University of Canterbury, researching the topic of teachers' emotions. Her research interests are teacher identities, professionalism, bicultural teaching practice, and poststructural and posthumanist theories. Contact: alison.warren@nzca.ac.nz

Judy Watson has been involved in early childhood education as a teacher, centre supervisor, senior tutor and lecturer for the past 25 years. She has particular interests in the areas of professional practice, early literacy and leadership in early childhood.

Jayne White has a long-standing interest in education spanning over thirty years now, with a particular and lingering emphasis on early years pedagogy. Her interest in various aspects of teaching and learning span the domains of infant and toddler education, educational philosophy, play & creativity, democracy, environmental education, assessment and evaluation. As Associate Professor at University of Waikato, located in Tauranga where she teaches undergraduate and post-graduate studies, Jayne is also Associate Director of the Centre for Global Studies, and a member of the Early Years Research Centre. Jayne's work focuses on the complex processes and practices of meaning-making in contemporary 'open' societies. She engages with a variety of methods to support her work, including the extensive and original use of 'polyphonic video' - and other means of visual ethnography, which emphasise 'seeing' as an interpretative event of 'between-ness'. At the heart of her practice lies a strong emphasis on dialogic pedagogy, and the ways in which teachers can best engage within complex learning relationships. To this end, Jayne explores philosophical ideas and their potential contribution to pedagogy.



ISSN 1172-9112

